

Gitanjali

RABINDRANATH
TAGORE

TRANSLATED BY
WILLIAM RADICE



Penguin

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Gitanjali
Song Offerings

a new translation

by

William Radice

with an Introduction

and a new text of Tagore's translation based on his manuscript



PENGUIN BOOKS

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tomār sonār thālāy sājāba āj dukher aśrudhār
(*Gitanjali* 80/83)

In green India among quiet
trees that bend over blue water
lives Tagore …

‘In Green India’, in *Look Back, Look Ahead: The Selected Poems of Srečko Kosovel*,
translated by Ana Jelnikar and Barbara Siegel Carlson

Introduction

> These poems of mine are very different from other literary productions of the kind. They are revelations of my true self to me. The literary man was a mere amanuensis—very often knowing nothing of the true meaning of what he was writing …
>
> Letter from Rabindranath Tagore to William Rothenstein, 30 December 1912

1.

A new translation of Rabindranath Tagore's most famous book *Gitanjali* seems timely because of three consecutive anniversaries. 2011 is the one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of Tagore's birth in 1861. 2012 is the centenary of the publication of Tagore's own translation of *Gitanjali*. 2013 is the centenary of the Nobel Prize that followed directly from the unprecedented success of the book. In terms too of the direction that literary studies have taken in recent decades a new translation of *Gitanjali* seems in keeping with the *Zeitgeist*. A brilliant book by Tagore's compatriot Sukanta Chaudhuri, *The Metaphysics of Text* (2010) charts the increasing sensitivity of scholars to the indeterminacy of texts: the 'real' or 'definitive' text of a literary work being difficult to define, and its identity being inseparable from its reception history or 'afterlife'. *Gitanjali* had a most extraordinary afterlife, which through numerous secondary translations continues to expand and develop. But what made *Gitanjali* unique was its lack of a precise 'original'. There are examples in world literature of works whose originals

have been lost and which have only survived in translation.[1] But it is hard to think of any other case of a writer conceiving a work in translation without a precisely defined source.

In 1910 Tagore published a Bengali book called *Gitanjali*. It consists of 157 lyric poems, many of which are songs. It was followed by *Gitimalya* (1914) and *Gitali* (1914). It is convenient to refer to the three books together as 'the Gitanjali phase',[2] to which also belonged the plays *Raja* (1910) and *Dakghar* (1912, translated as 'The Post Office', 1914). The English *Gitanjali* with its subtitle 'Song Offerings' overlaps with the Bengali *Gitanjali* by just over half: 53 of its 103 poems are from the Bengali *Gitanjali*. The remaining poems come from ten other books which mostly do not belong to the Gitanjali phase as such. Diverse though these sources are, I would say that the English *Gitanjali* is derived from three types of poem. There are song-like poems of the Gitanjali phase proper; there are intricate, sometimes sensuous, sometimes austere sonnets that Tagore published in *Naibedya* ('Offerings', 1901), including what in India has become his most famous poem of all—'Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high' (No. 35); and there are lighter, ballad-like poems from *Kheya* ('The Ferry', 1906).

Would-be translators of *Gitanjali*, therefore, have two options. Either they can do a new translation of the Bengali *Gitanjali*, or they can attempt a retranslation of all the poems that are in the English *Gitanjali*. The first option has already been taken by Brother James Talarovic in 1983,[3] and by Joe Winter in 1998.[4] In the present book I have chosen the second, more audacious option. Audacious it certainly is, because Tagore's own translations of these poems have acquired a classic status; they were the basis of his international reputation, and his Nobel Prize in 1913 was given specifically for *Gitanjali* (with some mention too of its follow-up volume *The Gardener*) and not for his achievements as a poet in Bengali.

In his book, Sukanta Chaudhuri discusses the media by which texts can be transmitted, whether manuscript, print or electronic,

and how, with any work of literature, 'this material embodiment affects the signifying function of the text'.[5] The English *Gitanjali*'s material embodiment, first as a limited edition published by the India Society in London in November 1912 and then by Macmillan in March 1913, was profoundly affected by W.B. Yeats's passionate and influential Introduction. Without Yeats's imprimatur, it is difficult to imagine that Thomas Sturge Moore would have been successful in his recommendation of Tagore to the Swedish Academy for the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature. Again, it is hard to think of another example of a literary work owing so much of its impact to an Introduction written by a famous writer from an entirely different culture. Moreover, Yeats's involvement was not limited to the writing of an Introduction. He played a highly active role in the preparation of the book for the press, making changes and adjustments to Tagore's drafts and taking possessive control of the proofs.

What was the manuscript from which Yeats worked? How did it come into existence? What is the relationship between that manuscript and the text of *Gitanjali* in Tagore's English translation that we have today? These are questions that have to be answered carefully if we are to understand precisely what the present book is attempting to do.

2.

Of the 103 poems in the English *Gitanjali*, 83 of them can be found in what has come to be known as the 'Rothenstein manuscript'. This was a small 'note book in blue roan'[6] that Tagore's close friend and loyal correspondent for thirty years, William Rothenstein, carefully preserved.[7] It belongs now with the Rothenstein papers that are in the Houghton Library at Harvard. There are 86 translations in this manuscript, three of which were not used in the English *Gitanjali*. Of the remaining 20 poems, twelve of them exist in what is known as

the ‘Crescent Moon Sheaf’,[8] a file of miscellaneous manuscripts that is also among the Rothenstein papers. That leaves eight for which no manuscript has survived. The translations in the Rothenstein manuscript are neatly and clearly written, with very few erasures or corrections. This suggests that they were a fair copy of rougher drafts that have not survived.[9] Tagore’s own account of how he came to do these translations is well known from a letter he wrote in his niece Indira Devi. It was written on 6 May 1913 in London and refers to the delay in Tagore’s departure for England that had arisen from illness:

> You have alluded to the English translation of *Gitanjali*. I have not been able to imagine to this day how people came to like it so much. That I cannot write English is such a patent fact that I never had even the vanity to feel ashamed of it. If anybody wrote an English note asking me to tea, I did not feel equal to answering it. Perhaps you think by now I have got over that delusion. By no means. That I have written in English seems to be the delusion. On the day I was to board the ship, I fainted due to my frantic efforts at leave-taking, and the journey itself was postponed. Then I went to Shelidah to take rest.[10] But unless the brain is fully active, one does not feel strong enough to relax completely; so the only way to keep myself calm was to take up some light work.
>
> It was then the month of Chaitra (March–April), the air was thick with the fragrance of mango-blossoms and all hours of the day were delirious with the song of birds. When a child is full of vigour, he does not think of his mother. It is only when he feels tired that he wants to settle himself easily in her lap. That was exactly my position. With all my heart and with all my holiday I seem to have ensconced myself comfortably in the arms of Chaitra, without missing a particle of its light, its air, its scent and its song. In such a state one cannot remain idle. When the air strikes one’s bones they tend to respond in music; this is an old habit of mine, as you know. Yet I had not the energy to gird up my loins and sit down to write. So I took up the poems of *Gitanjali* and set myself to translate them one by one. You may wonder why such a crazy ambition should possess one in such a weak state of health. But believe me, I did not undertake this task in a spirit of reckless bravado. I simply felt an urge to recapture through the medium of another language the feelings and sentiments which had created such a feast of joy within me in the days gone by.
>
> The pages of a small exercise-book came to be filled gradually, and with it in my pocket I boarded the ship. The idea of keeping it in my pocket was that when my mind became restless on the high seas, I would recline on a deck-chair and set myself to translate one or two poems from time to time. And that is what actually happened. From one exercise-book I passed on to another. Rothenstein

> already had an inkling of my reputation as a poet from another Indian friend.[11] Therefore, when in the course of conversation he expressed a desire to see some of my poems, I handed him my manuscript with some diffidence. I could hardly believe the opinion he expressed after going through it. He then made over the manuscript to Yeats. The story of what followed is known to you. From this explanation of mine you will see that I was not responsible for the offence, which was due mainly to the force of circumstances.[12]

The second exercise book that Tagore mentions in this letter has not survived. It may be that the twelve *Gitanjali* translations that are in the Crescent Moon Sheaf were copies or remnants of some of the contents of the second exercise book. Of the eight for which we have no manuscript we know that English *Gitanjali* No. 53, based on a poem in *Gitimalya*, must have been done in England as the Bengali source for the translation was itself written in Hampstead on 25 June 1912. No. 64 in the English *Gitanjali* was published in the *Modern Review* of November 1912—i.e. earlier than the India Society edition of *Gitanjali*—with the note: 'This prose translation of one of his poems was one of the three read at the dinner given to Mr Tagore in London in July last.' English *Gitanjali* No. 68 was based on another poem in *Gitimalya* that was written in Hampstead on 23 June 1912. But accurate dating of Tagore's translations is difficult, as he did not put the date and place of composition at the end of them, as was his wont with his Bengali poems.

3.

Given the existence of these manuscripts, how precisely can we chart the process by which the manuscripts eventually emerged as a published book? I am concerned here not so much with what Mary Lago, editor of the thirty-year correspondence between William Rothenstein and Tagore, has called 'the cultural chain reaction that brought Tagore to the attention of readers in the West'.[13] This story has been told many times and in many places, the key events being: the lecture given on 13 January 1910 at the Royal Society of Arts by Ernest B. Havel, former principal of the School of Art in Calcutta,

where a sarcastic response by the chairman Sir George Birdwood led directly to the formation of the India Society in June of that year; the famous soirée on 7 July 1912 at Rothenstein's house in Hampstead, when Yeats read out the translations that Tagore had given to Rothenstein; the India Society dinner on 10 July at the Trocadero Restaurant at which Yeats delivered a speech that foreshadowed the Introduction that he would write to *Gitanjali* two months later; the publication of *Gitanjali* with Yeats's Introduction first in a limited edition by the India Society and then by Macmillan; the explosion of rapturous reviews, beginning with 'Mr Tagore's Poems' in the *Times Literary Supplement* of 7 November 1912; the recommendation by Thomas Sturge Moore of Tagore for the Nobel Prize; the news of the prize that reached Tagore in Santiniketan on 16 November 1913; and the snowball effect that was to turn Tagore into, arguably, the most famous writer in the world. Instead of this familiar ground, I want to consider *Gitanjali* not as a cultural event but as a book.[14]

We know that W.B. Yeats's involvement in the preparation of *Gitanjali* for the press began immediately after the dinner on 10 July, for on 11 July Rothenstein wrote to congratulate him on his 'noble occupancy of the chair' saying: 'We must arrange to meet one day next week to go over the poems. Will you lunch & then sit & work afterwards? I think that will be better than waiting for the evening—Tagore is an early rester.' [15] Yeats's first letter to Tagore on 15 July 1912 was a response to that suggestion:

> Dear Mr Tagore,
>
> I'm afraid there has been some misunderstanding as to the day on which I was to go through the translations with you. As I had some odds and ends of work connected with my players to settle, I wrote to Mr. Rothenstein suggesting Thursday and he wrote to me—I have the card before me—to say 'Yes, next Thursday will do excellently' and now he writes that it should have been Tuesday. I am so sorry that I cannot get free tomorrow. Are you free Thursday? If not Saturday would suit me. I am looking forward greatly to talking over the poems with you. I am still reading them continually.
>
> I enclose a letter which has come for you.

> Yours,
> W.B. Yeats.
>
> One of the defects of our language is the resemblance between ‘Tuesday’ and ‘Thursday’.[16]

Bikash Chakravarty, editor of Yeats’s letters to Tagore, concludes that ‘it seems unlikely that Tagore and Yeats could have had many sittings together over the poems; for Tagore spent nearly the whole of August in the English countryside, first at Butterton in Staffordshire, then at Stroud in Gloucestershire. Yeats also left for “Les Mouettes” (Maud Gonne’s house) in Normandy at the end of July, taking with him the manuscript of the translations, obviously working on them and writing an introduction.’[17] Evidence that it was indeed the manuscript that Yeats took with him to Normandy is provided by James Cousins in his autobiography, jointly written with his wife, *We Two Together* (1950). Maud Gonne had invited Cousins to stay at Les Mouettes while Yeats was there; hence this vivid description:

> That night, after dinner, he read, as only he could read, a number of poems from a manuscript book that he had in his suit-case, and of which he had, Madame Gonne told us, an extraordinarily high opinion. They were not strictly poems, but pieces of lyrical prose translated from the Bengali poems of an Indian, Rabindranath Tagore, by the poet himself. The artist, William Rothenstein, had come across the poet while in India, and had realised something of his eminence in his own country. The poet had recently visited England, and Rothenstein had got from him the book of prose translations and handed them to Yeats, who had gone on fire with the fullness in them that told that the renaissance of poetry had appeared in India.There was a move to have them published, and he was pondering their significance for the writing of a preface. From poem to poem Yeats went from hour to hour, annotating, expatiating, rejoicing, till we were all afire with a new revelation of spiritual beauty.[18]

If Yeats was ‘annotating’, he may have had with him not only the manuscript but also a typed copy that we know from a letter to Rothenstein of 4 April 1915 existed but which was subsequently lost.[19] Tagore wrote:

> Though you have the first draft of my translations with you I have unfortunately allowed the revised typed pages to get lost in which Yeats pencilled his

corrections.[20]

The loss of this typed copy has been a handicap to those who would wish to reconstruct precisely Yeats's role in the revision of the manuscript for publication. Only in the Crescent Moon Sheaf do we have two manuscript pages on which his pencilled emendations can actually be seen (see Appendix B, p. 157). Gauging the extent of Yeats's revisions and suggestions, therefore, requires a great deal of patient detective work. A valuable start on this has been made in English by Shyamal Kumar Sarkar in two articles in the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, and in Bengali by Saurindra Mitra in *Khyati-akhyatir nepathye*.[21]

4.

Both these studies are impelled not only by a desire to understand the exact relationship between the manuscript of *Gitanjali* and the published text but also to interrogate the claims that Yeats made in a private letter to the publisher Sir Frederick Macmillan on 28 January 1917. This letter has become somewhat notorious. Yeats had by this time become disillusioned with Tagore and was possibly even envious of his success. He wrote:

> I send *A Lovers Knot*.[22] It is rather an embarrassment. I hope you will not mind if I write to Tagore that you have asked me to make as few alterations as possible as American publication hurries us. I can add from myself that his English is now much more perfect. You probably do not know how great my revisions have been in the past. William Rothenstein will tell you how much I did for *Gitanjali* and even his MS. of *The Gardener*. Of course all one wanted to do 'was to bring out the author's meaning', but that meant a continual revision of vocabulary and even more of cadence. Tagore's English was a foreigner's English and as he wrote to me, he 'could never tell the words that had lost their souls or the words that had not yet got their souls' from the rest.[23] I left out sentence after sentence, and probably putting one day with another spent some weeks on the task. It was a delight and I did not grudge the time, and at my request Tagore has made no acknowledgement. I knew that if he did so his Indian enemies would exaggerate what I did beyond all justice and use it to attack him. Now I had no great heart in my version of his last work *Fruit-Gathering*. The work is a mere shadow. After *Gitanjali* and *The Gardener* and *The*

Crescent Moon (exhaustively revised by Sturge Moore), and a couple of plays and perhaps *Sādhanā*, nothing should have been published except the long autobiography which has been printed in the *Modern Review*, a most valuable and rich work. He is an old man now and these later poems are drowning his reputation. I told this to Rothenstein and he said 'we must not tell him so for it would put him into the deepest depression.'

I am relieved at your letter though I would not like to tell Tagore so. I merely make ordinary revisions for press for there is nothing between that and exhaustive revising of all phrases and rhythms that 'have lost their soul' or have never had souls. Tagore's English has grown better, that is to say more simple and more correct, but it is still very often flat.

Excuse my writing so much unasked criticism, but I have been deeply moved by Tagore's best work and that must be my excuse.

I am still prepared to make the old exhaustive revision if you wish it, but it would take time and I shall hope you do not wish it.[24]

In Saurindra Mitra's view, this letter contains a number of misleading, even mendacious statements. He argues that careful comparison of *Gitanjali* with the manuscript will show that Yeats's claim that his revision had been 'exhaustive' is a gross exaggeration; his imputation that Tagore had no sense of the nuances of English words is unfair; to describe Tagore—fifty-six in 1917—as 'an old man' was positively slanderous. As well as closely examining the evidence, Mitra summons to the defence of Tagore several witnesses: Ernest Rhys, who in his book *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biographical Study* wrote that 'anyone who takes the trouble to compare the pocket book with the printed text will find that the variations are of the slightest';[25] Allan Wade, Yeats's editor and bibliographer, who in his collection of Yeats's letters wrote: 'The selection published in the book was made by Yeats out of an immense mass of material, but he made hardly any alterations in the English of the translations, which were by Tagore himself';[26] and above all William Rothenstein who in his autobiography *Men and Memories* wrote:

I knew that it was said in India that the success of *Gitanjali* was largely due to Yeats' re-writing of Tagore's English. That this is false can easily be proved. The original MS. of *Gitanjali* in English and in Bengali is in my possession. Yeats did

> here and there suggest slight changes, but the main text was printed as it came from Tagore's hands.[27]

The rumours that Rothenstein alludes to here—that Tagore might not have done the translations himself—appear to have arisen from an episode that Tagore himself referred to in a letter to Sturge Moore on 17 January 1914:

> An incident will show you how the award of the Nobel Prize has roused up antipathy and suspicion against me in certain quarters. A report has reached me from a barrister friend who was present on the occasion when, in a meeting of the leading Mohamedan gentlemen of Bengal, Valentine Chirol told the audience that the English '*Gitanjali*' was practically a product of Yeats. It is very likely he did not believe it himself, it being merely a political move on his part to minimize the significance of this Nobel prize affair which people naturally consider to be a matter for national rejoicing. It is not possible for him to relish the idea of Mohamedans sharing this honour with Hindus.[28]

Sturge Moore replied to Tagore on 7 April:

> No lie about you has a chance of being so well published as the truth and every one will sooner or later meet its absolute contradiction. It is part of the price men pay for fame, to be lied about.[29]

Tagore's close friend and associate at Santiniketan, the Revd. C.F. Andrews was outraged at this charge, writing to Tagore from England on 25 March 1914:

> I cannot tell you how indignant I was to hear from him [Rothenstein] about Chirol's utterance concerning Yeats and your poems. It is hateful and miserable and contemptible … There is not a breath of a rumour of it over here and there never will be. I wonder where Chirol picked it up.[30]

Tagore's own, characteristically subtle comment on the controversy over Yeats's contribution can be found in his letter to Rothenstein of 4 April 1915 (see above, p. xxv). By this time Tagore had acquired more self-confidence as a writer in English (a self-confidence that he was later to lose again: see below, p. xlviii), and had been arguing with the poet Robert Bridges about changes that Bridges wished to make to poems from *Gitanjali* for inclusion in his anthology *The Spirit of Man*. Tagore wrote:

> Of course, at that time I could never imagine that anything that I could write would find its place in your literature. But the situation is changed now. And if it be true that Yeats' touches have made it possible for Gitanjali to occupy the place it does then that must be confessed. At least by my subsequent unadulterated writings my true level should be found out and the faintest speck of lie should be wiped out from the fame I enjoy now. It does not matter what the people think of me but it does matter all the world to me to be true to myself. This is the reason why I cannot accept any help from Bridges excepting where the grammar is wrong or wrong words have been used. My translations are frankly prose,—my aim is to make them simple with just a suggestion of rhythm to give them a touch of the lyric, avoiding all archaisms and poetical conventions.[31]

Where differences between the manuscript of *Gitanjali* and the published text can be found, can we assume that they were Yeats's doing? The loss of the typed copy that Yeats marked up makes it difficult to prove this completely, and both Sarkar and Mitra argue that Tagore was well capable of making revisions himself, and may indeed have done so when the manuscript was typed up for Yeats to annotate. Moreover, there were others in Tagore's circle who wanted to put their oar in. Yeats was very annoyed by a change that crept in between his revision of the text for publication and its appearance in the India Society's edition. On 9 January 1913 Yeats wrote to Tagore:

> The other day I started to read out No. 52 to a friend. When I came to the last paragraph I was most sorrowful to find the magnificent 'no more coyness and sweetness of demeanour' was changed and the whole poem half ruined. I fell on Rothenstein at once and accused that Fox Strangways of it. The Amateur is never to be trusted.[32]

The musicologist A.H. Fox Strangways acted as Tagore's agent in his early dealings with Macmillan, and Yeats took a strong dislike to him, writing to Rothenstein on 7 September 1912:

> I have had an interminable letter from a man called Strangways suggesting alterations in Tagore's translation. He is the sort of man societies like the India Society fatten. He is a manifest goose. I want you to get the society to understand that I am to edit this book and they are to send me proofs as any other publisher would. I cannot argue with a man who thinks that 'the ripples

> are rampant in the river' should be changed because 'rampant' suggests to his goose brains 'opposition to something'.[33]

Tagore apologized to Yeats for this in his letter of 26 January 1913, saying that it was in fact C.F. Andrews who had changed the phrase in question to 'no more shy and soft demeanour'.[34]

My own view on the extent of Yeats's role is that his proprietorial tone in this and other letters, Tagore's own acknowledgement of his input, and a lack of any evidence to the contrary all oblige us to assume that the changes between the manuscript and the published text *were* Yeats's doing. With later books Tagore stood up for himself more (to Yeats's annoyance), but in 1912, overwhelmed by the praise he had received at Rothenstein's soirée and by the honour that Yeats was paying him, he was not in a position either to resist Yeats's emendations or suggest alternatives of his own.

Were the changes improvements? If one reads both Shyamal Kumar Sarkar and Saurindra Mitra without examining the evidence oneself, it is tempting to conclude that the answer to that question is largely a matter of taste. Sarkar, as an admirer of Yeats the poet, is more sympathetic to the changes than is Mitra. Sarkar is happy to accept as an improvement, for example, the change of the last line of *Gitanjali* 35 from 'there waken up my country into that heaven of freedom, my father!' to the celebrated 'Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.'[35] Mitra, by contrast, objects to an alteration in No. 39 of a line in the manuscript that reads 'break open the door, my king, and come in with thy regal splendour' to 'break open the door, my king, and come with the ceremony of a king', complaining that the substitution of the rather Yeatsian word 'ceremony' is less good as a translation of the Bengali '*raj samaroha*'.[36] And so forth. I shall give below my own conclusions about Yeats's impact on Tagore's punctuation and phrasing, and in Appendix D on p. 215 I have given in detail the analysis on which my conclusions are based. But first I would like to consider two areas of difference that quickly become obvious without painstaking

analysis but which neither Sarkar nor Mitra nor any other critic I have come across has focused on at all: namely, the alterations to the paragraphing that run right through the published *Gitanjali*, and the radical changing of the order of the poems.

5.

In order to quantify the changes to the paragraphing and the order of the poems in *Gitanjali*, I started to construct the tables that eventually became Tables 1 and 2 in Appendix A (p. 144) and Table 4 in Appendix D (p. 215). Working from the Rothenstein manuscript (I did not have time to access the poems in the Crescent Moon Sheaf), I found that some striking and novel features emerged. My most surprising and clinching discovery came at the end, when I reached poem No. 83 in the manuscript. At the end of that poem there is a line and a squiggle which indicate clearly that Tagore felt that he had reached the end of the sequence.[37] The poem became No. 58 in the published English *Gitanjali*, but its content confirms that he intended it as a concluding poem, as it begins with the words (in his translation) 'Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song'. Up to that point in the manuscript all the poems had been carefully numbered. The remaining three poems (Nos. 60, 61 and 62 in the English *Gitanjali*) are all from *Sisu* (1903), his book of poems about children that was his main source for *The Crescent Moon*. They really belong with the poems in the Crescent Moon Sheaf, which contains other poems from *Sisu*. It therefore seems to me undeniable that the English *Gitanjali* as first conceived by Tagore before his trip to the West consisted of 83 poems only. Maybe the publication of these translations was remote in Tagore's mind, or had not even occurred to him. But the line and the squiggle and the careful numbering of the pages indicate that the sequence was conceived and executed as a single creative work.

A general consideration of the style of Tagore's translations, as written in the Rothenstein manuscript, should begin not by looking

at details of phrasing but at the overall effect, which as with any poetic work owes a great deal to form, layout and paragraphing. Had the translations been done in verse rather than prose, then line endings and line spaces would have played a major role. But since these are prose poems in Tagore's translation, paragraphing is of the utmost significance. Table 4 (p. 220) shows that only 25 out of the 83 poems are the same in their paragraphing as the published *Gitanjali*. The most extreme differences between the paragraphing in the manuscript and text can be found in the poems from *Naibedya* (1901). In Bengali these are fourteen-line sonnets, though rhymed in couplets rather than following a Shakespearean or Petrarchan pattern. All of these are translated in the manuscript as single pieces of prose with no paragraph breaks at all. An obvious example to take would be 'Where the mind is without fear' (English *Gitanjali* No. 35), but let us look instead at No. 73 in the manuscript (English *Gitanjali* No. 36). In the manuscript it reads as follows:

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

This became in the published version:

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

The manuscript version has a personal, intimate effect—precisely the kind of thing that one might write in a private notebook. The published version is much more incantatory, and has become a

prayer for public use. Indeed passages from *Gitanjali* are used in Unitarian worship to this day.[38]

There can be no denying that the poems of *Gitanjali*, whether in manuscript or in their published form, were the work of a deeply religious man. However, Tagore disliked formal religion, and left the Brahmo Samaj, the important nineteenth-century Bengali religious and reform organization that his father Debendranath headed from 1843.[39] I don't think he would have wanted his highly personal and private religious struggles to become public prayers, though this was for many readers a major part of their appeal.

The 'biblical' character of the English *Gitanjali*, not only in its phrasing in places but more importantly in its paragraphing, with the poems broken up into 'verses' as in the Authorised Version of the English Bible (1611), conformed to the Christ-like impression that Tagore made on those who were present at the famous soirée in William Rothenstein's Hampstead home. The words of May Sinclair, Thomas Sturge Moore and Frances Cornford have been frequently quoted:

> It was impossible for me to say anything to you about your poems *last night* because they are of a kind not easily spoken about. May I say now that as long as I live, even if I were never to hear them again, I shall never forget the impression that they made. It is not only that they have an absolute beauty, and perfection as poetry, but that they have made present for me forever the divine thing that I can only find by flashes and with an agonizing uncertainty …
>
> Now it is satisfaction—this flawless satisfaction—you gave me last night. You have put into English which is absolutely transparent in its perfection things it is despaired of ever seen written in English at all or in any Western language.[40]

> Yeats and Rothenstein had a Bengalee poet on view during the last days I was in London. I was first privileged to see him in Yeats' rooms and then hear a translation of his poems made by himself and read by Yeats in Rothenstein's drawing room. His unique subject is 'the love of God'. When I told Yeats that I found his poetry preposterously optimistic he said 'Ah, you see, he is absorbed in God.' The Poet himself is a sweet creature beautiful to the eye in a silk turban, he likes Keats and Wordsworth best of English poets, has read everything including my work. It is a pleasure merely to sit beside him, he reposes the mind and the body. Speaks very little but looks beneficent and intelligent …[41]

> I must write and tell you both what a wonderful thing it has been to see Tagore. I now understand all you say. He *is* like a saint, and the beauty [and] dignity of his whole being is wonderful to remember … [and] made me feel that we in the West hardly know what real gentleness and tenderness are. With us they are so often mixed with sentimentality and weakness. But with them it goes with power and dignity at its most extraordinary—a sort of revelation. I can now imagine a powerful and gentle Christ, which I never could before. He says [that] in India for 10 years except you he never saw an English person. *What* are the English doing? We are blind barbarians sometimes.[42]

C.F. Andrews used the same sort of language in his article for the *Modern Review* (an English language journal published in Calcutta, edited by Ramananda Chatterjee) called ‘An evening with Rabindra’.[43] Andrews was part of the group that helped Tagore to prepare *Gitanjali* for publication (sometimes to the annoyance of Yeats: see above, p. xxxii), so could he have played a part in persuading Tagore to introduce many more paragraph divisions into his translations to give them a biblical ring?

For those who wish to argue that Tagore was himself edging towards shorter paragraph divisions in his translations, some evidence is provided if we look at the poems that are actually songs. (See Table 2, p. 150 for information on which are poems and which are songs.) In the published *Gitanjali* many of the poems that are songs have four paragraphs, and Tagore may have himself decided that this was the best way of representing the four-part structure that the vast majority of his songs have. (I say more about the structure of Tagore’s songs in Section 9 of this Introduction below.) The very first poem in the English *Gitanjali* has four paragraphs, as does the manuscript version. There are other songs that in the manuscript have two or three paragraph divisions and it may have come to seem simple and natural to Tagore to turn these into four-part poems once he had hit on the four-paragraph method as a way of representing the structure of his songs. Nevertheless, the preference that C.F. Andrews and others in Tagore’s circle might have had for biblical verse divisions might itself have influenced Tagore towards this decision.

Of the 25 poems in the Rothenstein manuscript whose paragraph divisions are the same as in the published version, about half of these are from *Kheya* (1906). These are ballad-like poems in strophic form with regular metres and rhyme schemes, and Tagore represents the verse divisions in the original by paragraphs in his translation.

We now need to consider the effect of Tagore's ordering of the poems in the Rothenstein manuscript, as compared with their ultimate order in the published *Gitanjali* which—as Tables 1 and 2 (pp. 145–53) show—was very different indeed.

6.

I found that the best way to analyse the order in the Rothenstein manuscript and published text was to list the sources from which they were taken and to indicate clearly which are poems and which are songs. For this, see Table 2, p. 150, in which poems are in bold and songs are in plain type. The table further indicates—with capital letters—the poems and songs that were added to the 83 that came from the Rothenstein manuscript (i.e. the 80 from the main sequence that were used, plus the three translations from *Sisu* that were written on spare pages at the end of the notebook). In his article on the autograph manuscript of *Gitanjali*, Shyamal Kumar Sarkar writes:

> The arrangement of the lyrics in print differs completely from that in the Rothenstein MS. While it may be an impossible critical pursuit to find out the logic of the arrangement both in the manuscript and in print, a logic certainly there was especially in print and the application of that logic demanded both time and effort. Whatever principle of classification of the poems Yeats might have been aware of he has referred to it in very general terms like '… the moods of that heart in union and separation'.[44]

Personally, I disagree that there is logic in the order of the poems in the published English *Gitanjali*. Table 2 shows—at a glance—that songs and poems, the different books from which the translations

were made, and the 23 that were added to the 80 from the main sequence were jumbled together in an utterly random way. Yeats and the others who helped Tagore prepare the book for the press may have thought that they were arriving at some kind of aesthetically satisfying order, but they could not, whatever their role, have based their opinions on any understanding of the sources of the translations or the relationship between the 83 in the Rothenstein manuscript and the others that were added later. Could Tagore have arrived at this order on his own? I doubt it. In a letter to Tagore dated 23 October 1912, Rothenstein wrote: 'I have been going through all the translations & putting them in order.'[45] This suggests to me that an order had been arrived at through meetings with Yeats and others, and Rothenstein was now putting the poems together in that agreed order.[46]

Look in contrast at the order of the poems in the Rothenstein manuscript. It immediately suggests to me coherence, judgement and planning. Not planning in the sense that Tagore had worked out exactly what the order would be before he started to do the translations, but a plan that as the book developed became increasingly clear in his mind and which gave it a creative shape.

The selection begins with four songs from *Gitimalya*, which was published after the Bengali *Gitanjali* itself. The reason why they are there at the beginning is that Tagore was writing the poems and songs in *Gitimalya* while recuperating in Shelidah. At the same time he was starting his translations, so it was natural that he should begin with songs that he had newly written. The first poem in the manuscript (which became No. 44 in the English *Gitanjali*) was a song dated 17 Chaitra 1318 (30 March 1912). The second translation in the Rothenstein manuscript (which became No. 89 in the English *Gitanjali*) was of a song written on the following day, 18 Chaitra 1318 (31 March 1912). The third poem in the Rothenstein manuscript (which became No. 1 in the English *Gitanjali*) was written slightly later on the 7 Baishakh 1319 (20 April 1912).

Tagore had by this time left Shelidah and returned to Santiniketan, and the place of composition is given as Santiniketan at the bottom of his Bengali manuscript. The fourth translation (which became No. 98 in the English *Gitanjali*) was of a song written on the same day.[47] The fact that the third and fourth translations were done from songs written in Bengali after he had left Shelidah suggests that the Rothenstein manuscript is indeed a fair copy of translations that he had done in Shelidah and immediately after, and which he then arranged into what at the time seemed to him a sensible order. The point is that *Gitanjali* as originally conceived and to which Tagore was later to give the subtitle *Song Offerings* began, naturally enough, with six songs. A poem was then introduced from *Gitanjali*, No. 7 in the manuscript (No. 96 in the published *Gitanjali*) in order to show that his projected collection of English translations would include poems as well as songs. If we compare this with the list in Table 2 of translations in the Macmillan text we can see that from the beginning poems and songs were mixed up. Nos. 8 to 36 in the Rothenstein manuscript are also from the Bengali *Gitanjali*. Most of them are songs—notice the big group of songs numbers 8 to 18—but two poems are introduced to break the pattern (Nos. 19 and 20) and form a block of poems from No. 25 on. But notice how the principle of song composition is maintained by the introduction of a song at No. 27 and at No. 34. We then have a group of songs from *Gitimalya* and *Gitanjali*; of the *Gitimalya* songs, some were originally written at Shelidah, others a bit later in Santiniketan. The balancing of songs with poems is continued with Nos. 47, 48, 51, 55 and 56, bringing us to a turning point in the collection at which Tagore moves on from the songs and poems in *Gitanjali* and *Gitimalya*. This radical turning point—a kind of fulcrum—is a song not from a book of poems or songs but from a play, *Achalayatan* (1912). It is a song, a very wonderful and popular one, but it also has the energy of a poem. The context of the song in the play is complex and interesting, and I have written about this in an article.[48] Some will

argue that the song as placed in *Gitanjali* has become detached from that context, but I think Tagore must have had in mind the revolutionary impact that the song has at this point in the play. *Achalayatan* is about an oppressive, stultifying ashram, in which the boys who are educated there are deprived of all freedom. One of the boys in the ashram, Panchak, rebels against the orthodoxy of the ashram and slips out of it to meet communities that are beyond its grip. Another boy called Subhadra commits the heinous sin of opening a window in a wall of the ashram in order to look outside. The Acharya in charge of the ashram, however, reassures his colleagues that the ashram's 'guru' will soon come to restore order. But when the guru arrives he turns out to be a force for change and revolution, breaking down its walls and letting in light. The light pours in 'as if the whole sky is rushing into this abode', and the boys of the ashram sing the song to the light that Panchak, has taught them: *Alo, amar alo, ogo alo bhuban-bhara*. My table shows, most interestingly, that Tagore made this song No. 57 in the Rothenstein manuscript and also in the English *Gitanjali*. I cannot believe that this is a coincidence. He must have thought of it as having a central, pivotal place in the collection. Even though the translations in the published *Gitanjali* were presented in such a totally different order, by placing this song at exactly the same point he may have wistfully cast his mind back to the sequence as he had originally conceived it.

The poem that he chooses from *Gitimalya* to follow the song from *Achalayatan* was not included in the published *Gitanjali*. It is puzzling that it was left out, for it is a very fine one in Bengali and in Tagore's translation. I have included it in my translation, along with the other two poems in the Rothenstein manuscript that were left out. Notice how in Tagore's own translation it has a vigour and dynamism that appropriately follows the song from *Achalayatan*:

> More life, my lord, yet more, to quench my thirst and fill me. More space, my lord, yet more, freely to unfurl my being.

> More light, my lord, yet more, to make my vision pure. More tunes, my lord, yet more, stirring the strings of my heart.
>
> More pain, my lord, yet more, to lead me to a deeper consciousness. More knocks, my lord, yet more, to break open my prison door.
>
> More love, my lord, yet more, to completely drown myself. More of thee, my lord, yet more, in thy sweetness of grace abounding.

Notice the call for pain and exhaustion. This leads naturally into the group of poems from *Naibedya*, for pain and exhaustion are among the emotions they describe. The most famous of these poems, No. 72 in the Rothenstein manuscript and No. 35 in the published *Gitanjali*, implies pain in a penultimate line that Tagore left out of his own translation: *nij-haste nirday aghat kari, pitah*. I have preserved the line in my own translation. The group of poems from *Naibedya* are followed by a group from *Kheya*, but notice at the end how Tagore restores the Song Offering theme by introducing a song from *Gitanjali*—No. 80 in the manuscript, No. 83 in the published text—concluding his collection with three song-like poems that are also from the Bengali *Gitanjali* itself.

All in all, this is a selection and arrangement which makes aesthetic and creative sense. It was true—far truer than the published *Gitanjali*—to Tagore's instincts and feelings and cultural heritage (I go into this further in Section 9 below), and for that reason I have decided to put my own translations in the order of the Rothenstein manuscript and not in the order of the published text. The additional 23 poems I have given as a separate section called 'Additional Poems', arranging these poems in the chronological order of their Bengali originals.

7.

What effect did the extensive differences between the manuscript and the published text of *Gitanjali* have on how Tagore later regarded the book? To answer this fully, I need here to say something about the changes to the phrasing and punctuation. Unlike the more general issues of the paragraphing and order, one

can only appraise such changes by close attention to detail. There is no space for that here; instead I have presented it in Table 4 in Appendix D (p. 215).

The conclusions I reached after constructing this table surprised me—they were not just a matter of personal taste. Starting with the premise that the *Gitanjali* of the Rothenstein manuscript has coherence and integrity, my question with each individual change was, 'Was this necessary?' I counted altogether 326 changes. But the changes that seemed to me necessary were only 32 in number. Moreover, I counted 13 obvious errors in Tagore's English that were overlooked by Yeats and left uncorrected. Other people carrying out the same exercise might come up with slightly different figures, but I do not think the ratio between them would be different. Where a whole sentence has been recast, it's difficult to know whether to count this as one change or more. I've been generous to Yeats in counting such changes as one. On the other hand, I've counted every comma or semicolon that I consider to be intrusive or unnecessary.

In the light of this analysis, I don't feel that Yeats was dishonest in his claim in 1917 that his revision of *Gitanjali* had been 'exhaustive'. He was exaggerating when he wrote to Frederick Macmillan, 'I left out sentence after sentence', but his revision did not have the lightness of touch that some have claimed for it. The big question, however, is whether his interventions produced a result that was worthy of Tagore, and whether they affected Tagore's attitude to *Gitanjali* and to his translations generally, once his Nobel Prize had lost its shine.

I earlier said that Tagore's confidence as a self-translator and as a writer in English ebbed and flowed during the years (see above, p. xxxi). The success of *Gitanjali* and the award of the Nobel Prize for a while boosted his confidence: hence his rather prickly exchange of letters with Robert Bridges. Tagore reported on the spat in a letter to Rothenstein dated 20 August 1915:

> I got Dr Bridges' letter last week and the following is the extract of the concluding portion of my reply to it: 'I think there is a stage in all writings where they must have a finality in spite of their shortcomings. Authors have their limitations and we have to put up with them if they give us something positively good. If we begin to think of improvement there is no end to it and difference of opinions are sure to arise. Please do not think that I have the least conceit about my English. Being not born to it I have no standard of judgement in my mind about this language—at least, I cannot consciously use it. Therefore I am all the more helpless in deciding whether certain alterations add to the value of a poem with which my readers' minds have already become familiar. I know, habit gives a poem its true living character, making it seem inevitable like a flower or fruit. Flaws are there but life makes up for all its flaws.'
>
> Why doesn't Dr Bridges try to translate some of my poems directly from the original with the help of his Bengali friends in Oxford?[49]

Tagore stood up for himself on that occasion, and a reluctance to let W.B. Yeats play as big a role in the editing of his translations after *Gitanjali* and *The Gardener* appears to have been one reason for Yeats's cooling towards him.

However, in Tagore's various comments and reflections on his translations over the years, ambivalence and doubt are more frequently to be found than self-confidence. In his much-quoted letter to his niece Indira Devi about the genesis of *Gitanjali*, the account of how the translations came to be done is followed by a long paragraph in which he expresses further uncertainty about his command of English:

> No sooner had we got ourselves settled in Urbana than requests for lectures started to come. I do not know English, but because I have to say so in the English language no one believes me—they say, 'You speak very fine English.' I still haven't mastered the art of avoiding such requests. It's easier for me to give a lecture than to say again and again that I can't give one. They've even pushed me into publishing some lectures in America. I have won some acclaim from this, but I still feel as if they were written accidentally. In the English language there are all these slippery things like articles, prepositions, 'shall' versus 'will': they can't be got right with common sense—they have to be learned. I have the notion that they're all living somewhere in my 'subliminal consciousness' like worms underground. When I let go of the rudder and sit down to write with my eyes shut, they all come creeping out of the dark to do their stuff—but if I look at them in the light of full consciousness they wriggle off again all higgledy-

> piggledy—so in the end I feel that I can't rely on them at all. That's why it's still true to say that I don't know English …[50]

Much later, on 26 November 1932, he wrote in a similar vein to William Rothenstein:

> Poets are proverbially vain and I am no exception. Therefore if I cherish even an exaggerated notion of the value of my own poems which are in Bengali I am sure you will half humorously tolerate it. But I am no such fool as to claim an exorbitant price for my English which is a borrowed acquisition coming late in my life. I am sure you will remember with what reluctant hesitation I gave up to your hand my manuscript of Gitanjali feeling sure that my English was of that amorphous kind for whose syntax a school-boy could be reprimanded. The next day you came rushing to me with assurance which I dare not take seriously and to prove to me the competence of your literary judgement you made three copies of those translations and sent them to Stopford Brooke, Bradley and Yeats. The letter which Bradley sent you in answer left no room for me to feel diffident about the merit of those poems and Stopford Brooke's opinion also was a corroboration. These were enthusiastic as far as I remember. But even then I had no doubt that it was not the language but the earnest feeling expressed in a simple manner which touched their hearts. That was aptly enough for a foreigner and the unstinted praise offered to me by those renowned critics was a great deal more than I could ever expect. Then came those delightful days when I worked with Yeats and I am sure the magic of his pen helped my English to attain some quality of permanence. It was not at all necessary for my own reputation that I should find my place in the history of your literature. It was an accident for which you were also responsible and possibly most of all was Yeats. But yet sometimes I feel almost ashamed that I whose undoubted claim has been recognised by my countrymen to a sovereignty in our own world of letters should not have waited till it was discovered by the outside world in its own true majesty and environment, that I should ever go out of my way to court the attention of others having their own language for their enjoyment and use. At least it is never the function of a poet to personally help in the transportation of his poems to an alien form and atmosphere, and be responsible for any unseemly risk that may happen to them. However, you must own that you alone were to blame for this and not myself. To the end of my days I should have felt happy and contented to think that the translations I did were merely for private recreation and never for public display if you did not bring them before your readers. Please thank Yeats once again on my behalf for the help which he rendered to my poems in their perilous adventure of a foreign reincarnation and assure him that I at least never underrate the value of his literary comradeship. Latterly I have written and published both prose and poetry in English, mostly translations, unaided by any friendly help, but this again I have done in order to express my ideas, not for gaining any reputation for my mastery in the use of a language which can never be mine.[51]

On 24 May 1921 Tagore wrote in a letter to Sturge Moore from Stockholm about the inadequacies of an English translation that had been done of his novel *The Wreck*, and then went on to say:

> But I suppose I have no right to complain, for I am convinced that I myself in my translations have done grave injustice to my own work. My English is like a frail boat—and to save it from an utter disaster I had to jettison the most part of its cargo. But the cargo being a living one it has been mutilated: which is a literary crime that carries its own punishment.[52]

He was equally blunt in a letter to Edward Thompson on 5 August 1921:

> Dear Thompson,
>
> You are right in your diagnosis. I become acutely conscious of cracks and gaps in my translations and try to cover them up with some pretty designs that may give them an appearance of wholeness. The moral is, I should never have handled your language. However, as you are willing we shall try to do some reparation before it is too late. This year it's going to be a very busy year for me, but I hope sometime in the cold season it would be possible for me to meet you.[53]

Tagore was particularly candid in letters he wrote in the last decade of his life to his then secretary, the poet Amiya Chakravarty. Here are three extracts:

> Don't forget the proposal to print all my English poems in one collected volume. It would be good to get them all checked by Yeats or some other active poet. There are some terribly jejune things among them—perhaps they need to be purged of all the weaker lines. It would be good if I could be present myself. But don't count on that unlikely eventuality. I've done great injustice to myself in my translations. Maybe it was because I was translating my own writings that I was so slipshod and arrogant.
> (23 October 1934)

> You must have received those signed books of mine by now. I was struck when I glanced through them by how careless my translations were. I did not give enough time to thinking about the extent to which their essence can be lost through a change of language—I feel ashamed at this now. I appeal to you not to depend on my judgement but to use your own judgement. There's a greater danger of misjudgement from my quarter than from yours.
> (11 December 1934)

> The life-stream of literature flows in the veins of language; if it is impeded then the heart-beat of the original composition is stopped. The subject-matter of

> literature becomes inert, if there is no life in it. I feel this all the time when I turn up my old translations. You perhaps know that when a calf dies and its mother doesn't want to give milk because of its loss, then an artificial simulacrum of a calf is made by skinning it and filling the skin with straw. The similarity of its smell and appearance to the real thing makes the udders of the cow ooze milk again. Translation is like that stuffed cow: it has no genuine appeal—it's a deception. I feel shame and regret when I think of it. If the work I have done in literature is not ephemeral or provincial, then whatever merit it has will have to be discovered in my own language. There is no other way to discover it. If anyone is deprived by the time this will take, then that's his loss—it's no fault of the author's.
>
> (6 January 1935)[54]

It is clear from all seven of the letters I have just quoted that Tagore had constant, gnawing doubts about his command of English, and these were undoubtedly a major cause both of his uncertainty about the quality of his translations and of his expressions of regret that he had done them at all. But there were, I believe, other reasons for this disillusionment that went beyond matters of language. We need first to understand how deeply Tagore cared about his translations and choice of poems for translation at the time he did them in 1912, before his trip to the West. He clearly chose songs and poems that he felt were expressions of his inmost self. The quotation that I have given as an epigraph at the beginning of this Introduction expresses that idea ('They are revelations of my true self to me …'), as does another letter to Rothenstein on 15 December 1912, in which Tagore wrote from America about a review of *Gitanjali* that had appeared in the *Athenaeum*:

> I have read the review of my book that appeared in the Athenaeum. Do you know, that is the kind of criticism I expected all along. It is not hostile, you can even call it appreciative, but you feel that the reviewer is at a loss how to estimate these poems. He has not got a standard by which to judge these productions, quite strange to him. He sees some beauty in them but they arouse no real emotion in him, so he imagines them as cold—he thinks they have no red life blood in them. He cannot believe that they are quiet and simple, not because there is lack of enthusiasm in them but because they are absolutely real. I can assure you they are not literary productions at all, they are life productions.[55]

In view of Tagore's very personal feelings about the *Gitanjali* poems, would Yeats's attitude to them have pleased him or disturbed him? The gushing hyperbole of Yeats's Introduction to *Gitanjali* certainly attempted to connect the poems with 'life', or with a life force:

> The work of a supreme culture, they yet appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes. A tradition, where poetry and religion are the same thing, has passed through the centuries, gathering from learned and unlearned metaphor and emotion, and carried back again to the multitude the thought of the scholar and of the noble.[56]

Yet Yeats's Introduction was full of misconceptions—ignorant of the sophisticated hybrid culture of nineteenth-century Bengal from which Tagore stemmed, and naive in its assumptions that Tagore came from a culture in which poetry, song and religion were one and the same thing. In a letter to Jagannanda Roy, Tagore expressed embarrassment about Yeats's Introduction:

> This book of mine has been sent to the press. I've read the Introduction that Yeats has written. It shames me to read it. No doubt it decks me in valuable ornaments, but they are what one would call excessive ornaments.[57]

A year later, in a conversation with Edward Thompson on the day that news of the Nobel Prize reached him, Tagore agreed with Thompson's view that the Introduction was 'misleading and ill-informed' and said: 'I don't like the essay myself. Parts of it are quite wrong.'[58]

Tagore's disquiet over Yeats's Introduction was shared by his close friend C.F. Andrews, who on 6 October 1912 wrote to Tagore:

> I have written to Mr Rothenstein about that sentence in the introduction [by Yeats]. I do hope it may be omitted. I wish the introduction were more worthy of the poems. I read it over again, yesterday, in the train, and it was altogether unsatisfying and very superficial.[59]

I do not have documentary evidence of this sort to prove it, but I do believe that the changes that Yeats made—to the order and selection of the poems, to the paragraphing, to the punctuation, and

above all to Tagore's choice of words and phrases—would have contributed to Tagore's growing feeling over time that in the English *Gitanjali*, as presented and edited by Yeats, he had betrayed his true self. That feeling would have been exacerbated by his doubts about his subsequent—increasingly slapdash—translations, which were done mainly to meet an international demand. The subtle relationship between poetry and song; the careful way in which he had chosen representative poems from a number of contrasting books; and the creative pleasure that in a mood of confidence he described in a letter to J.D. Anderson of 14 April 1918 as 'a magic which seems to transmute my Bengali verses into something which is original again in a different manner';[60] all that had been spoiled. Add to that his weariness and disillusionment with extreme fame, and it is no wonder that Tagore felt increasingly sick at heart about what had initially meant so much to him, but which in its edited, altered and published form was to have such uncontrollable consequences.

8.

We now need to move away from the historical understanding of the relationship between the manuscript of *Gitanjali* and the published text, and focus for the remainder of this Introduction on what *Gitanjali* actually is. This at once raises the intriguing 'metaphysical' issues I mentioned at the beginning, for if it is true, as I have argued, that the published *Gitanjali* is in many respects a betrayal of what Tagore originally had in mind, we need to understand what it was that he had in mind. In other words we need to arrive at a conception of a 'real' *Gitanjali* that embraces the original Bengali poems on which Tagore's translations were based, incorporates the Rothenstein manuscript, takes account of what *Gitanjali* later became in its published form with the additional poems that were added but which cannot be precisely identified with any of these.

I have mentioned already, and emphasized with my epigraph at the beginning of this Introduction, that Tagore believed that the poems he selected for translation represented his deepest self. This cannot be said too often. Here is another quotation that makes the same point, from later in the long letter to Indira Devi from which I have already quoted twice:

> My elder sister has sent me her translation of her novel *Phuler Mala* [The Flower Garland]. If she knew the literary market here she would understand why her writing will not be appreciated. What they are looking for here is 'reality'. We on the other hand have very little truck with 'reality'—we don't even miss it when it is absent. But I will be misunderstood if I say this, because my own compositions have been accepted. If you ask me why, I will tell you that in my case I was not consciously writing poetry when writing the songs of Gitanjali. They were an expression of my inmost feelings, they were my humblest prayers, my sincerest *sadhana*, and a reflection of my joys and sorrows.[61]

The main problem with Yeats's presentation of *Gitanjali* in his famous Introduction, and which might indeed have hurt the sensitive Tagore, despite Yeats's lavish praise, was that Yeats did not see Tagore as an individual, as a man in a specific time and place who felt and thought and suffered. He saw him as a representative of something bigger:

> A whole people, a whole civilization, immeasurably strange to us, seems to have been taken up into this imagination; and yet we are not moved because of its strangeness, but because we have met our own image, as though we had walked in Rossetti's willow wood, or heard, perhaps for the first time in literature, our voice as in a dream.[62]

This could hardly be more explicit. Yeats found in the *Gitanjali* poems and in Tagore himself a symbol, a type, an icon. This set the tone for the way in which Tagore was regarded internationally throughout his post-*Gitanjali* career. Harold Hjäne, chairman of the Nobel Prize Committee, used similar language in his citation speech, adding some further bizarre notions of his own:

> At one period, some time ago, there occurred a break in the busy round of his activities, for he then felt obliged, in accord with immemorial practice among

> his race, to pursue a contemplative hermit life in a boat floating on the waters of the sacred Ganges river.[63]

Supervising his family estates in the Padma River region of north Bengal in the 1890s, Tagore did indeed enjoy travelling around in a houseboat. But this was a boat that befitted his *abhijat* (aristocratic) background, and though he was separated from his family for most of that time, this was not the 'immemorial practice' of asceticism and withdrawal from the world that Mr Hjäne appears to have had in mind.

Recently, excellent work on the Tagore–Yeats relationship has been done by Dr Michael Collins of the Department of History at University College London. A chapter he has written called 'False encounters: Rabindranath Tagore, W.B. Yeats and Irish Orientalism' stresses that 'the link between theosophy, mysticism and the nationalist impulse was important to Yeats even in the mid 1880s' and that in Tagore, Yeats found what he wanted to see. Influenced by the Vedantic teachings in Dublin of the theosophist Mohini Chatterjee, 'Yeats's rudimentary error was to assume that he could read into selected aspects of Tagore's poetry a general philosophy of calm.' Dr Collins goes on to argue that Yeats's conception of Tagore was extremely limited. He writes: 'The problem for the Tagore–Yeats relationship was that—on the basis of his limited and misdirected education in theosophy and Indian philosophy—Yeats assumed that the devotional Vedantic poetry of *Gitanjali* was all there was to Tagore. But it was not the only Tagore. As we know, he also published numerous essays, philosophical works and novels, most of which were largely ignored by the likes of Yeats.'[64]

I don't myself agree that the poems of *Gitanjali* are somehow distinct from the rest of Tagore's work, and that they express an exceptional quality of spiritual calm. My discussion of them below—and I hope my new translations themselves—will show that the real *Gitanjali* was far from calm, and the theory of '*Gitanjali* exceptionalism', as I have called it in a lecture, is false.[65] But it is

undoubtedly true that Western admirers of *Gitanjali* when it first came out, with Yeats as the leader of the chorus, found in the poems an exceptional quality of self-mastery and calm. Why they should have done so, even on the basis of Tagore's own translations, is for me the most mysterious aspect of the book's *succès d'estime*.

Another crucial feature of the real *Gitanjali* that was not perceived by its Western admirers was its musicality. True, Yeats knew in a vague way that many of the poems were songs, predicting in his Introduction that 'travellers will hum them on the highway and men rowing upon the rivers.'[66] Ezra Pound too in his review of *Gitanjali* —'the first genuinely critical appraisal of his work to appear in a Western journal',[67] characterized Tagore as a 'troubadour'.[68] But no one had any idea of what they were actually like as songs, and Tagore himself seems to have made no attempt to explain to his Western audiences their musical structure.

I have argued in an article that we cannot properly understand the relationship between *advaitavad* (non-dualism) and *dvaitavad* (dualism) in Tagore unless we consider the role and significance of music.[69] In the content of the *Gitanjali* poems—their imagery, themes and emotions—he was essentially a dualist: the emphasis is always on relationship, on an interplay between the poet and the divine. But as a musician, Tagore was a non-dualist, and one of the fundamental things that a new presentation of *Gitanjali* must do is convey the fluctuation between dualism and non-dualism that arises from the relationship between poetry and song. I have therefore translated the poems that are songs in a way that I believe will convey their song-like character (see below, p. lxvii). Awareness of the songs will blend with the numerous images of music that occur in both songs and poems, and will thus give new life and reality to *Gitanjali* as a book of 'Song Offerings'.

Some may argue that by doing this I have over-emphasized the distinction between poetry and song. The Bengali poet and critic Sankha Ghosh has argued[70] that this was a period in Tagore's

creative output when the distinction between poetry and song virtually disappeared. Certainly, many of the poems from the Bengali *Gitanjali* or from *Gitimalya* that are not actually songs could easily be songs, had Tagore written a melody for them. But if a poem has been set to music—particularly in the case of Tagore who wrote melodies for his own poems—then it takes on a new character. The melody is, as it were, 'married' to the poem, and it is as impossible thereafter to think of it purely as a poem as it is to think of a married person as single.

The intensity with which Tagore realized his highest states of feeling in music was another factor that made the *Gitanjali* poems so personal and special to him. In an important article published in 1963, 'Tagore in translation', Buddhadeva Bose, a major figure in twentieth-century Bengali poetry and criticism, wrote:

> It is on record that while composing the Bengali lyrics, he was like a haunted man, roaming at night among the *shal* trees of Santiniketan, filling pages while travelling by trains or bullock carts, piling up as many as five or six during a single day. Of this mood of rapture it seems these translations were a by-product: we should note that in the spring and summer of 1912 he was at the same time translating and writing new pieces in Bengali.[71]

The 'real' *Gitanjali* that I am trying to arrive at in the present book must take account of that rapture, and never forget that it combined poetry with song.

It was a rapture that, as a self-translator, Tagore was never to recover again. Bose argues in his article, as have many others before and since, that there is a deterioration in the quality of Tagore's own translations after *Gitanjali*. I have myself not yet given close attention to the later translations, but certainly from my experience of translating Tagore's brief poems,[72] and my comparison of the Bengali originals with Tagore's translations in *Fireflies* and *Stray Birds*, I would agree with Bose's view that 'the nadir is reached in *Stray Birds*, containing aphorisms like "In heart's perspective the distance looms large" and "We live in this world when we love it"—

whereon the best comment is silence.'[73] A number of reasons and excuses can be offered for this deterioration: the pressure of fame, the demands from publishers and readers to produce more books, a sheer lack of time to give the translations the care they deserved. But the simplest reason was that Tagore's heart was no longer in them in the way it had been when he translated the *Gitanjali* poems. In a letter written as early as 17 August 1913, he wrote to Rothenstein:

> My dear friend,
>
> I am still occupied with my proofs and my manuscripts and I hope I shall be free by the end of next week when I shall come and see you. The nature of my work is fitful though it keeps me tied and I am thoroughly tired of this enforced idleness which robs me of my true leisure. I can assure you, since you are away from here London has no attraction for me and my life has become desultory. The difference is very great for me, the difference between the last summer and this—the difference between the time when I was translating my 'children' series of poems one by one and reading them to you and the time when I am getting the Ms. ready for publication. Now it is a mere business and it tires me. This cold blooded literary craftsmanship, this weighing of words and expressions is utterly wearisome. I am pining for touch of life, for the warmth of reality—and that is the reason why the call of my Bolpur school is getting to be more and more insistent. I have drained dry my wine cup here and now I must go back there where my food is waiting for me. Give my love to Mrs Rothenstein and the dear children.
>
> Ever yours,
>
> Rabindranath Tagore.[74]

'Cold blooded literary craftsmanship'—the application of conscious thought to translations that worked best for him when he relied on unconscious instinct[75]—is a telling phrase, and Tagore's impatience with it here should be added to profound self-expression, deep musicality, and creative rapture as fundamental aspects of the real *Gitanjali*.

Keeping these four aspects in mind, juggling them like four balls in the air, obliges us to think once again of *Gitanjali* as a whole. I have already made clear that I believe the order of the poems in the Rothenstein manuscript takes us closer to the creative reality of that

whole than the miscellany that was eventually published. It is for that reason that my own translation follows the Rothenstein sequence rather than the published sequence. Let me now combine the aesthetic logic of that sequence (discussed in Section 6 above) with other elements that make *Gitanjali*—or the 'real Gitanjali' as I like to call it—a coherent whole.

9.

I mentioned earlier the variety of poems that are to be found in *Gitanjali*—a variety that was concealed not only by the random order of the Macmillan text but also by Tagore's way of translating all the poems into the same kind of prose poetry. As I said earlier (p. xvi), the sequence of poems in the Rothenstein manuscript basically consists of three poetic genres: songs, sonnets and ballads. The additional poems that were later added to the book included poems from a number of other collections; but since these poems, beautiful though they are, were additional and extraneous to *Gitanjali*, I shall not consider them here. I believe that when Tagore conceived *Gitanjali* as written in the Rothenstein manuscript, he included these three types of poem in order to give the sequence unity and balance. There is a very interesting essay called *Bikar-sanka*, delivered as a sermon at Santiniketan in December 1908 and included in *Santiniketan*, the two-volume collection of Tagore's sermons that Visva-Bharati brought out in 1949. I have written about this essay in a lecture that I gave in Santiniketan in 2008.[76] The title is difficult to translate. It means 'fear of aberration, perversity, deformity, imbalance'—i.e. it is about balance and all that can make for imbalance. Tagore considers three different spheres: that of the perfect poem, the perfect woman and the perfect soul. For all of these he identifies three elements that have to be brought into harmony. In a perfect poem, the *kabyer kalebar*, or 'poetic body', in which metre, rhyme and language are fitted together in a decorous and harmonious way, has to be combined with *jnana* (knowledge)

and *bhava* (feeling). A perfect woman combines *hri* (modesty), *dhi* (wisdom) and *sri* (beauty, or 'joy in beauty'). For the perfect soul he takes three key concepts that can be found in the famous prayer in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (1.3.27) that we should strive to progress

> from untruth to truth
> from darkness to light
> from death to immortality

Truth is *satya*, light is *jyoti* and immortality is here understood as *ananda* or joy. Focusing for now on the three elements that make a perfect poem, I find that it is easy to identify the three types of poem in *Gitanjali* with one or other of these. Of course in all the poems one should find all three, but I find it reasonable to say that in the songs or song-like poems of *Gitimalya* or the Bengali *Gitanjali, bhava* or feeling is to the fore; in the sonnets of *Naibedya*, *jnana* (knowledge or rationality) is dominant; and in the poems from *Kheya*, we are very aware of the *kabyer kalebar*, the poetic body, for these are most definitely poems rather than songs and are intricate blends of narrative, character, imagery, metre and rhyme. Just as a perfect poem needs to contain all three, so a perfect book of poems or sequence of poems should contain all three and bring them into balance and unity. I feel that the *Gitanjali* of the Rothenstein manuscript does this, and one reason why it does is that the different types of poem are to some extent separately grouped. If they were all mixed up as they are in the published text, we would not be so aware of the contrasts and relationships between them.

I'm speaking here with the Bengali originals in mind, rather than Tagore's prose translations. Although we must not forget the conundrum I mentioned right at the beginning of this Introduction, namely that *Gitanjali* does not have a single identifiable Bengali source, nevertheless the 'real *Gitanjali*' has to take account of the underlying existence of the Bengali poems, contrasted as they are in style and form. Thus in my own translation I have done my best to

reflect the three styles clearly and strikingly. For the songs, I have preserved the repetition of lines that occurs when the songs are sung. These repetitions are by no means arbitrary. There is firstly the basic principle that the *sthayi* or 'chorus' of the song comes in again at the end of the *antara* or second section, and also at the end of the *abhog* , the fourth and final section of the song. The degree to which the *sthayi* is repeated, whether just the first line of it or the whole of it, is strictly laid down by the notations for the songs that have been preserved in the *Svaralipi*, the long sequence of folios published by Visva-Bharati in which the melodies of the songs are notated. In some cases where the melodies were not written down with complete accuracy (Tagore did not do the notations himself but left it to other people), performance tradition has established which lines to repeat and how many times. Occasionally the *sthayi* is not repeated at the end of the *antara* (see for example Nos. 49 and 58, pp. 67 and 80), and there is also variation in the extent to which lines in the other sections of the song are repeated. I have tried in each case to establish what the repetitions are, and reproduced them faithfully in my translation. I have done this because it seems to me that the repetition of lines immediately indicates to the reader that this is a song text, as repetition is associated with the words of songs the world over. I have also put the *antara* and the *abhog* in italics, as a way of indicating that the melody of these two sections is always the same. This is one of the most magical aspects of the structure of *Rabindrasangit*.[77]

In my translations of my songs, I have not used metre and rhyme, even though these can be found in the Bengali originals. I did not feel it necessary to use them, because when the songs are sung we are not particularly aware of the metre or rhyme, although there are no doubt subtle ways in which the verse metre interacts with the musical rhythm or *tala*. For the poems from *Gitimalya* and *Gitanjali* that are poems rather than songs, even though they may be very song-like in style, I have, however, used metre and rhyme, though I

have not of course tried to match Tagore's metres and rhyme schemes exactly.

For the poems from *Naibedya*, I have used the English or Shakespearian sonnet form. Tagore's poems in this book, with one or two exceptions that are more song-like in style—see for example No. 3(86), p. 119—are rhymed in couplets, rather than in the ABAB, CDCD rhyme scheme of the Shakespearian sonnet. But the English sonnet seems to me the most natural equivalent to Tagore's fourteen-line poems.

For the poems from *Kheya*, I have used a variety of strophic forms, with metre and rhyme, full rhyme where I could manage it, sometimes half-rhyme, in order to come as close as possible to Tagore's formal and metrical effects. My hope is that, by alternating these translations with Tagore's own translation in a new, manuscript-based text, I will convey to the non-Bengali reader a poetic reality that the poems have in Bengali but lack in Tagore's translation alone.

The balancing of the three types of poem is one way in which unity and coherence is achieved in *Gitanjali* as originally conceived by Tagore. There are other factors too. One is an overall quality of rhythm that runs through all the poems and songs—and indeed one can say runs through all Tagore's creative works. In his own translations, as originally written and before they were tampered with by Yeats, there is also a distinctive and compelling rhythm. Yet the very marked way in which the *punctuation* was altered by Yeats (we have to always assume that it was Yeats who did this) made for a very different rhythmic effect from what Tagore originally intended. In the Rothenstein manuscript, he uses commas sparingly; at first when I read the manuscript I was tempted to put some commas in; but on reflection I found that in almost every case it was better to go with Tagore's instincts and leave them out. His use of commas was never based on grammatical convention. Whereas Yeats put in commas because he felt that they were conventionally

necessary, Tagore used commas in order to define his rhythmic 'breath groups'. Combined with the sparing use of paragraph divisions, the minimal use of commas makes for a pace and an energy that is very different from the more sonorous and biblical manner of the Macmillan text. One simple but crucial difference is that Yeats almost invariably inserted commas before 'and'. This is a feature of the English Bible ('In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God …' etc.). It slows the pace and removes energy and turbulence. The paragraph divisions also slow the pace. I hope that readers of my new translation, alongside the new text of Tagore's translation, will find that the two complement each other in a stimulating way. If I have been able in my own translations to capture something of the rhythmic effects of the Bengali originals, then it may also be possible for readers to hear those effects in Tagore's own prose translations.

Let me now return to the sequence of the poems and consider how it contributes to overall balance and coherence. I am speaking here not about the stylistic variety, the balancing of poems and songs and the grouping of sources that I have discussed earlier. I am concerned rather with the way in which the sequence unfolds, moves forward, expands, and eventually arrives at completeness. To explain what I mean I shall have to reach for metaphors. One might be that of a pair of scales. A key concept in *Gitanjali*—and a recurrent phrase in the Bengali—is *sukh-dukh*, 'joy and sorrow', 'pleasure and pain'. Imagine that *sukh* is in one pan of the scales and *dukh* is in the other. As the sequence develops more and more contrasting pairs are brought in such as man and God, world and spirit, adult and child, death and life, dark and light, male and female, land and river, earth and sky, etc. As the separate poems or songs go on adding these elements, the scales can tip one way or the other, sometimes up towards joy and ecstasy, sometimes down to depression and despair. The point is that by the end of the sequence one should feel that the scales are equal.

Another metaphor could be that of a vast mural, rather like the mural that Tagore's associate at Santiniketan, Benodebehari Mukherjee painted for the Hindi-Bhavana. It is 23.07 metres long and 2.44 metres high, and I am told that Binode did not embark on his great project with a plan or 'cartoon' such as the great Italian masters of the fresco used. There was an improvisatory, spontaneous quality to the mural. This same quality can be found in *Gitanjali* and indeed in many of Tagore's creative works. It was something that made him very much an Indian poet, rather than a European one.

Broadly speaking the European conception of form is architectural. There is a ground plan; sections and details are added according to the plan. This approach has roots in the Latin and Greek world; was revived in the Renaissance; and carried through to the eighteenth century, the Romantic period, and the classic works of twentieth-century Modernism. The Indian conception of form is much less pre-planned, much more spontaneous. Compare the sonata or the symphony in Western classical music, with its separate and carefully contrasted movements, with the way in which a raga is expounded in a performance of Indian classical music. There are phases in that exposition: the slow *alap*, the medium tempo *jor*, the fast tempo *jhala*—with both *jor* and *jhala* using a rondo-like structure (*gat* in instrumental music, *bandish* in vocal music) in which a recurrent theme alternates with florid improvisations. But these phases are not like movements in Western music; each one emerges from the one before, and by the end of the performance the audience should feel that all aspects of the raga have been communicated and the skills of the musician have been demonstrated to the full. As we read *Gitanjali*—the real *Gitanjali*—we should feel that there is a similar kind of unfolding, that gradually as one poem follows another all aspects of life and death have been brought in, and by the end we have reached *purnata*, 'fullness' or 'completeness'. So to the metaphor of a mural we can also add that of the performance of a raga in Indian music.

When *Gitanjali* achieved its stunning success in the West, many people found in the poems a unique quality of simplicity, almost innocence.[78] Of course simplicity can be found in many of the poems, but I think it is wrong to conclude that simplicity—the stripping away of all adornments as is famously expressed in poem No. 17, p. 136 (which was not, incidentally, in the *Gitanjali* of the Rothenstein manuscript)—is what drives the whole work along. There is a fine article by a British scholar of Spanish, R. Johnson, in which he finds connections between that poem, Yeats's poem 'The Coat', and a poem by Juan Ramón Jiménez (who with his wife Zenobia Camprubí Aymar translated *Gitanjali* and other English works by Tagore into Spanish). The connections between these three poems are indeed interesting, but I think it would be wrong to extrapolate from them an argument that would put stripping away or disrobing or the removal of ornaments as the central preoccupation of *Gitanjali*. To see *Gitanjali* in that way is incompatible with the work's complexity and richness.[79]

It is instructive to look at the way in which the sequence begins and at the way in which it ends, and to compare this with the beginning and ending of the published text of the work. The *Gitanjali* of the Rothenstein manuscript begins on a note of great simplicity with the poem that I have translated as 'I love to watch the road'. This, if you like, is like a kind of *alap* that leads into the work that is to follow. By the time we get to the end of the sequence we have had a huge variety of poetic experiences, some of them simple, many of them much more complex. The poems from *Kheya* that come towards the end of the sequence are all rich and complex. The very last poem in the sequence is a poem about *ananda* or joy, but a joy that includes everything: death as well as life, pain as well as pleasure. The published *Gitanjali* also begins on a note of simplicity: the first poem is No. 3 in the Rothenstein manuscript, and therefore belongs to the group of songs at the beginning. But there isn't the same sense of simplicity gradually acquiring more

elements and becoming more complex, because the poems in which simplicity is presented as an ideal are mixed up with the other poems throughout the work, and at the end we again return to simplicity with the poem about the poet's 'one salutation to thee, my God'. This scattering of more simple poems among more complex ones made for an overall impression of simplicity.

Another thing that is markedly different about the two sequences is the way in which poems about death are grouped towards the end of the published *Gitanjali*. In the Rothenstein manuscript, many of these poems come much earlier on, and this is much more in keeping with the way in which Tagore would have conceived *Gitanjali* as a *sadhana*, a spiritual striving that would embody the prayer from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad that I quoted earlier. To end a poetic work with a (rather Victorian) focus on death as in the published text of *Gitanjali* seems alien both to Indian tradition and to Tagore's sensibility and outlook.

If *Gitanjali* was, as I believe, conceived as a continuous unfolding, then it should be read as a whole, not dipped into like an anthology. I hope that my new translation, combined with the new text of Tagore's, will encourage readers to read it complete, although there may of course be individual poems that they like particularly which they will want to reread. As they journey through the sequence, they will notice how one poem leads to another, how a theme that appears in one poem is taken up further in the next. They will also notice how sharp contrasts are used to correct the balance—radically and sometimes quite violently.

10.

If Tagore's struggle to achieve balance in the poems and songs of *Gitanjali* is often tormented and turbulent, it is not difficult to understand why. His works of the Gitanjali phase emerged from a period of intense spiritual crisis and personal suffering. Niharranjan Ray, still one of the best commentators on Tagore's creative works,

describes so well the way in which Tagore's personal life impinged on his writing that I quote from him here:

> While, however, his external life was so active, he suffered bereavement after bereavement. His wife's death in 1902 was followed by the death, six months later, of his daughter Renuka and five years later, in 1907, of his son Samindranath. Meanwhile, one of the poet's dearest younger colleagues, a most sensitive mind and a promising poet, Satischandra Ray, died early in 1904, and the poet's father, who had nurtured the poet's soul through the formative years, passed out about a year later, in 1905. These great personal losses (the poet had suffered such losses earlier too, including the death of a dearest love, a most poignantly tragic one, and it was his lot to suffer more in later life) had *seemingly* no affect on his external life; his poetry hardly ever directly reflects the terrible pain, the deep anguish that any spirit as sensitive as Tagore's must have suffered at such partings and bereavements.
>
> But did they have no impression on his inner spirit? They must have had; a process of transmutation of the substance of pain, grief and anguish, caused by the physical loss of the beloved ones, seems to register itself on the songs and lyrics of any period or phase that follows such losses, and the resultant effect became an integral part of the poet's being and becoming. The facile interpretation of romantic sublimation will be out of place in the context of a life that Tagore lived, especially when it is remembered that, whatever activities he engaged himself in, he regarded them as a means of culturing his own self, that is, building up his personality as he understood it. To him the creation of art and poetry, thought and other activities were all but means to that end. The process of transmutation referred to above was thus the essential discipline of the senses and the mind, indeed of the total being, dictated and conditioned by the ideology of self culture or *Atma-samskriti* that governed the poet's life. This rigorous discipline, practised for long and with the assiduousness of a researcher in a science laboratory, transmuted the substance of desire and passion, of pain and anguish, of grief and suffering into that of love and faith, of tenderness and harmony, of hope and gratitude. From Tagore's point of view, it was a process of unceasing enrichment of one's personality …[80]

Tagore's own explanation of these arduous processes lay in his famous concept of the *jiban-debata* ('life-god'). In essays that were later brought together into a volume called *Atmaparichay* ('Of myself', Visva-Bharati, 1943), he gave special attention to the *jiban-debata* and there is much in these essays that is relevant to *Gitanjali*: indeed they contain passages in which he quotes and comments on poems written during this period. Two aspects are of particular importance. One is that the *jiban-debata* always represents a *creative*

principle. It connects Tagore's own poetic creativity with the creative processes of the universe as a whole. The other crucial point is that the *jiban-debata* makes sense of even the darkest, most painful, and most confused thoughts, feelings and experiences. Everything has a purpose; from everything there are lessons to be learned. One should read the *sadhana* of *Gitanjali* with this constantly in mind.

In this Introduction I have constantly stressed the personal aspects of *Gitanjali*, and it is to the personal that I now return as I bring this Introduction to a close, mentioning too my own experience of translating these great poems and songs.

In an essay written in 1917, and included in *Atmaparichay*, Tagore wrote:

> A person's reputation is based on the way he is known to the outside world. If this external identity does not agree in any way with his inner truth then a split enters his existence. Because a person is not only what he is inside himself, he exists largely in the way he is known to all. 'Know thyself' is not the final truth; 'let thyself be known' is also of great importance. The attempt to let oneself be known is everywhere in the world. So it is that my inner religion fails to lock itself up within itself—it must necessarily go on making itself known to the outside in various ways that are both apparent and still not apparent to me.[81]

It seems to me that *Gitanjali*—his selection of poems for it, and his translation of them into a language of international currency—was above all a way of 'letting himself be known', a deliberate self-revelation. But ironically, Tagore the person, the suffering and sometimes confused individual, became trapped and thwarted by his immense fame and charisma. He must have known this would happen, for there are poems in *Gitanjali* in which he speaks frankly and prophetically about the price and burden of fame—No. 32 for example, or No. 33, which was left out of the published text of the work.

How many people, after Tagore won the Nobel Prize, could relate to him as a person rather than as an icon? Among his Western friends, I would say that William Rothenstein wins hands down as

the one who was on the closest and most honest personal terms with Tagore. The warmth and naturalness of their relationship will have been evident from the quotations I have given from their long-running correspondence. Rothenstein was perhaps helped in his relationship with Tagore through not actually being one of his associates at Santiniketan. Those that were—C.F. Andrews, William Pearson, Leonard Elmhurst—were inevitably in awe of Tagore the 'Gurudev', however deep their love and respect for him.[82] With Yeats, there seems to me to have been no real friendship or relationship at all.[83] Michael Collins rightly gave the title 'False Encounters' to his chapter on Yeats and Tagore that I referred to earlier; it has long been a puzzle to me why Mary Lago gave to her excellent edition of the Tagore–Rothenstein correspondence the title 'Imperfect Encounter' when their relationship was, in my view, about as perfect as a friendship can get.

Among Tagore's many admirers and correspondents from abroad, his German translator Helene Meyer-Franck had a real rapport with Tagore as a person, though she only briefly met him once.[84] Another, very young admirer who not only shared Tagore's universalist ideals but also empathized with him as a person was the divinely gifted Slovenian poet Srečko Kosovel. I have used the opening lines of his poem 'In green India' as an epigraph to this book, as its imagery seems to capture with haunting lucidity Tagore as a man in a time and a place.[85] Among the many Bengalis with whom Tagore worked closely and had close friendships, I am struck by the warmth and naturalness of his late letters to the poet Amiya Chakravarty, who became his secretary but was much more than an underling. Despite or maybe because of the age gap between them, Amiya was a man to whom Tagore could open his heart.

Amiya Chakravarty was the intermediary for a meeting in 1938 between Tagore and an English visitor to India, John W. Rattray.[86] Rattray wrote a wonderfully vivid and touching account of that meeting for the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, showing deep understanding

of Tagore. I like this article so much, that I have given it complete in Appendix E (p. 233). Tagore was by this time a man of 77 and in failing health. The passage that is of particular poignancy and relevance to this Introduction concerns a question mark that Rattray had found in *Gitanjali* and which puzzled him. Tagore's distress at discovering, after so many years, such a serious mistake in the text of *Gitanjali* must have brought back many painful and ambivalent feelings about its success in 1912–13. Would the mistake have occurred if the book had not been taken out of his hands? If people had known and understood him better, would the mistake have remained unnoticed for so long?

A century has passed since then, and I offer the present book, with my new translation and the new text of Tagore's translation, as a restitution. I want the reader to discover in it the real *Gitanjali* and —so far as this is possible through translation—the real Tagore. Opinions will vary among Bengalis as to whether the poems and songs of *Gitanjali* are among Tagore's greatest works or not. But no one can deny that these are the works in which he gave most profoundly of himself. An indicator of this is the simple fact that they require hardly any commentary or annotation. If they had been, as Yeats put it, 'the work of a supreme culture' they would have required a lot of annotation, for there would have been much that was unfamiliar to Western readers. But there was—and still is—no need for that, because Tagore is essentially speaking from the heart.

When Tagore's contemporary the great English composer Edward Elgar completed his masterpiece, *The Dream of Gerontius*,[87] he wrote at the end of the score a quotation from Ruskin:

> This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved, and hated, like another; my life was as the vapour, and is not; but this I saw and knew: this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory.[88]

I believe that Tagore would himself have been able to write 'the best of me' at the end of *Gitanjali*, the real *Gitanjali* in which his own

English translations were deeply bound up. They were the best of him in that he was truer to himself in them than in almost anything else he wrote. They were the best of him in the sense that he tried in these poems and their translations to bring the Indian and Western sides of his nature into complete harmony.

It has taken me a long time to work round to *Gitanjali*. When my work on Tagore and Bengali literature started in the 1970s, I was wary of Tagore's most famous book. His translations in it had not appealed to me; I felt that it and his subsequent books of English translations gave only a limited impression of his range and output as a poet; and I wanted, when I started the translations that were to appear as *Selected Poems* (Penguin, 1985) to represent that range. *Selected Poems* included only one poem from *Gitanjali*, No. 51 (No. 76 in the manuscript), a poem from his earlier book *Kheya* which is not perhaps typical of *Gitanjali* as a whole.

Even though as the years went by I came to appreciate Tagore's poems and songs of the *Gitanjali* phase much more than in the past, I don't think I would have dreamt of doing a new translation if it had not been suggested to me by Udayan Mitra of Penguin India in Delhi. When he suggested it as something that would be suitable for Tagore's one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary year (2011), I was flattered but remained doubtful. Tagore's own translation had such classic status; how could I muscle in and do a new translation of my own? But as soon as I started doing the translations in my home in Northumberland in September 2009, I quickly felt a great sense of excitement and purpose. A very fortuitous and generous offer of a visiting professorship at Visva-Bharati had come my way, and I decided to use it to complete the work. I arrived at Santiniketan at the end of August 2010 with 42 of the translations completed. This left a very large number still to do, and I had also not done any work at all on the Introduction. The process of completing the book, with the quite unexpected discovery that the standard published

text of *Gitanjali* was in many respects a travesty of what Tagore had intended, became an extraordinary and intense voyage of discovery.

In a way that made me understand better than ever before what Tagore meant by the *jiban-debata*, I found that the work took on an uncanny pace and inevitability of its own. The creative process when it is at full stretch seems to operate at a quite different level from one's normal eating and sleeping existence. This is what Tagore had felt when writing the poems and songs of the Gitanjali phase; this is what Elgar alluded to by his quotation from Ruskin; and it was what I felt every day and every minute of the two months that I spent completing the book.

I felt it particularly acutely because, eleven days after my arrival, I slipped and fell heavily, fracturing and dislocating my right wrist. This was not, of course, a life-threatening injury; but it was painful and awkward enough to make the completion of the book an enormous challenge.

At one level, I certainly have to thank my own *jiban-debata* for this book's completion. But at another, more practical level I have to thank numerous people without whom it would have been utterly impossible for me to finish it on time. So as well as expressing my gratitude to Visva-Bharati for inviting me as a visiting professor, providing me with superb facilities and for dealing (initially at the Pearson Memorial Hospital) with my accident with great efficiency and kindness, I would like to thank: in Rabindra-Bhavana, Udaya Narayana Singh (director), Nilanjan Bandyopadhyay (special officer), the late Ajit Kumar Das[89] and Mafijul Islam (librarians), Tushar Kanti Singha, Utpal Kumar Mitra and Shovan Kumar Ruj (archivists), Gadadhar Bhandari (technical assistant), and Nabodita Sarkar (research assistant); from the Visva-Bharati Study Circle, Sandip Basu Sarbadhikary; in Sangit-Bhavana, Indrani Mukhopadhyay (principal) and Manini Mukhopadhyay; from Kala-Bhavana, Siva Kumar Raman; from the Ratan Kuthi guesthouse, Purnachandra Das, Krishnacharan Das, Visvadev Adhikari and

Swapan Kumar Das; from the *dhopa* (laundryman) and rickshaw-wallah communities of Santiniketan, Budhuba Rajak and Ramprasad Sahani; my neighbours in Panchabati, Purevtogtokh Khambin and Agiimaa Togtokh from Mongolia, with their enchanting son and daughter Basudai and Anu; also in Santiniketan, Martin Kämpchen and Rajendranath Sarkar; in Kolkata, Sutanuka Ghosh (who typed the new text of *Gitanjali* from the manuscript), Sukanta, Supriya and Aparna Chaudhuri, and Debashish Raychaudhuri (who double-checked the repeated lines in my translations of the songs); in Slovenia, Ana Jelnikar; in Britain, my family and their families, too far away while I was in India but always in my thoughts; John Stevens, Matthew Pritchard, Jonathan Katz, Hanne-Ruth Thompson, Michael Collins, Sue Killoran and Derek McAuley; and above all Monwara Seetul, who typed the entire Introduction—footnotes included—from dictated sound-files and did a huge amount to get the book into its final shape. I dedicate this book to them, with special and admiring mention of the medical professionals whose skills made it possible for me to recover so well.

Santiniketan, 6 November 2010

Gitanjali Reborn

Gitanjali: Song Offerings, as translated by Rabindranath Tagore in his famous book of 1912, has been with us for a century and has been further translated into all the major languages of the world. It is a book that many readers feel they already know. In this new book, commissioned by Penguin India for the one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of Tagore's birth, I offer *Gitanjali* in a new incarnation. A brief overview may be helpful.

1. The present volume contains an entirely new translation of all the poems that were in Tagore's English book *Gitanjali*, which was a different book from his Bengali *Gitanjali* of 1910. The English *Gitanjali* overlaps with the Bengali book by just over half, but the other poems in the collection were taken from a number of other Bengali books by Tagore.
2. My new translation attempts to distinguish the various styles and forms in the Bengali original that Tagore was not able to convey in his own, prose translations. Sonnets I translate as sonnets; ballads I translate as ballads; in all the poems where metre and rhyme are important I try to find flexible English equivalents. The songs, however (many of the poems in *Gitanjali* are songs), I have translated in a way that I hope will instantly convey their song-like character. I preserve the repetitions of the lines that are obligatory when the songs are sung, I indicate the four-part structure of the song by inserting line-breaks, and I also put the second and fourth part of the song in italics. This is to evoke the way in which, in almost any song by Tagore, the fourth part has the same melody as the second part.
3. Alternating with my translation is an entirely new text of Tagore's own translation. This follows not the standard text that was published in 1912, introduced and edited by W.B. Yeats, but the manuscript that has been preserved among the William Rothenstein papers at Harvard. This manuscript has 83 poems, as opposed to the 103 in the published text, and their order is quite different. Both my own translation and my new text of Tagore's follow the manuscript order, restoring three poems that were dropped when *Gitanjali* was published. The remaining poems are given in a section called 'Additional Poems'. They include three that were on spare pages at the end of the 'Rothenstein manuscript', and twenty more

from other sources. One of those sources may have been a second manuscript volume (now lost), but twelve of the twenty have been preserved in a separate bundle of manuscripts at Harvard, known as the 'Crescent Moon Sheaf'.

4. My long Introduction explains the complex relationship between the manuscript and the published text, and argues that a text that follows the manuscript—with minimal adjustments—brings us much closer to Tagore's original conception of the book. The shortcomings and distortions of the standard text are explored in further detail in Appendices to the book. One of these (Appendix B) gives the only three of Tagore's manuscripts for *Gitanjali* that actually show Yeats's emendations. (The typed copy on which Yeats made the bulk of his changes is lost.)
5. Finally, so that readers are able to compare in one volume my new translation, Tagore's translation based on the manuscript (with my own editorial adjustments referenced in footnotes), and the text with which they may already be familiar, Appendix C gives the standard 'Macmillan text' as printed in the *Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore* in 1936, and also gives Yeats's Introduction.

For those who already know and love *Gitanjali*, this book may offer a novel and perhaps unnerving experience. But if *Gitanjali* is to win new readers and admirers in the second century of its existence, it needs to take on an avatar that is suited to our age, as well as restoring to Tagore 'the real *Gitanjali*', a poetic endeavour that he cared about deeply, but which Yeats's editing, the Nobel Prize, the numerous secondary translations and the canonical status that it acquired, rather took out of his hands.

W.R.

Gitanjali

Song Offerings

1 (44)

I love to watch the road
I love to watch the road
Sunshine and shadows play,
    rain comes
        and the spring
I love to watch the road
I love to watch the road

People pass to and fro
    bringing news
People pass to and fro
    bringing news
I'm happy to live in my thoughts
    when the breeze cools,
        cools me gently
I love to watch the road
I love to watch the road

All day with wide open eyes
    I'll sit at my door alone
If the time comes for you to be suddenly here,
        I'll see you

All day with wide open eyes
    I'll sit at my door alone
If the time comes for you to be suddenly here,
        I'll see you

Meanwhile, sometimes,
    I'll inwardly laugh and sing

Meanwhile, sometimes,
I'll inwardly laugh and sing
While a scent on the breeze floats,
floats past me
softly
I love to watch the road
I love to watch the road
Sunshine and shadows play,
rain comes
and the spring
I love to watch the road
I love to watch the road

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

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

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

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

2 (89)

I'm finished with shouting for attention
Instead, soft words in the ear
I'll express my feelings henceforward
only in songs
I'm finished with shouting for attention

People charge down the highroad,
mad for a purchase or sale
People charge down the highroad,
mad for a purchase or sale
I'm taking time off
at the height of the day
Despite all my work this call has come—
who can say why?
I'm finished with shouting for attention

If in my garden flowers have sprung up
out of season,
then let them bloom
Let noontime bees come gently buzzing
If in my garden flowers have sprung up
out of season,
then let them bloom
Let noontime bees come gently buzzing

I've spent so much time in a fight
between evil and good
I've spent so much time in a fight
between evil and good
My heart is now drawn to frivolous play
at a lazy time
A call to no work has come—
who can say why?
I'm finished with shouting for attention
Instead, soft words in the ear
I'll express my feelings henceforward
only in songs
I'm finished with shouting for attention
Instead, soft words in the ear

No more noisy loud words from me, such is my master's will. Henceforth I deal in whispers. The speech of my heart will be carried on in murmurings of a song.

Then hasten to the king's market. All the buyers and sellers are there. But I have my untimely leave in the middle of the day, in the thick of work.

Let then the flowers come out in my garden, though it is not their time, and let the midday bees strike up their lazy hums.

Full many an hour have I spent in the strife of the good and the evil but now it is the pleasure of my playmate of the empty days to draw my heart on to him, and I know not why is this sudden call to what useless inconsequence!

3 (1)

You've made me limitless,
it amuses you so to do

You exhaust me, then fill me up again with new life
You've made me limitless,
it amuses you so to do

You've roamed so many mountains and riverbanks
with this little flute
You've roamed so many mountains and riverbanks
with this little flute
You've played so many flourishes, round and round again
Whom shall I tell how many?
You've made me limitless,
it amuses you so to do

At that nectar-touch of yours
my heart has lost its edges
and with that vast ecstasy
words gush out
At that nectar-touch of yours
my heart has lost its edges
and with that vast ecstasy
words gush out

You fill my single cupped hand
with gifts day and night
You fill my single cupped hand
with gifts day and night
Never used up, however many ages run
Always more for me to take
You've made me limitless,
it amuses you so to do
You exhaust me, then fill me up again with new life
You've made me limitless,
it amuses you so to do

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

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new. At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in a great joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable. Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass and still thou pourest and still there is room to fill.

The necklace I'll hang round your neck
is my badge of defeat
I'll hold back now from any show of strength
The necklace I'll hang round your neck
is my badge of defeat
I'll hold back now from any show of strength
The necklace I'll hang round your neck
is my badge of defeat

I know, I know, my pride must be cast on the waters,
my soul must be cracked open by stabbing pain
And tunes must be played on the flute of my hollowed-out heart
and all that is stony in me must melt in tears
The necklace I'll hang round your neck
is my badge of defeat

Lotus-petals are shed, layer by layer
The honey inside can't forever be stashed away
Lotus-petals are shed, layer by layer
The honey inside can't forever be stashed away

Someone's eye is upon me, beating down from the sky,
someone's silent call outside my house will fetch me
Nothing will that day remain of me, nothing—
for I must submit to a death higher than all
The necklace I'll hang round your neck
is my badge of defeat

I will deck thee with the trophy-garland[1] of my defeat. It is never in my power to escape unconquered. I surely know my pride will go to the wall, my life will burst its bounds in exceeding pain, and my empty heart will sob out in music as like a hollow reed, and the stone will melt in tears.

I surely know the hundred petals of a lotus will not remain closed for ever and the secret recess of its honey will be bared. From the blue sky an eye will gaze upon me and silently will call me out in the open. Nothing will be left for me, nothing[2] whatever, and utter death shall I receive at thy feet.

5 (14)

You save me by denying me
the many things I want
You fulfil my life by looking after me
so sternly
You save me by denying me
the many things I want

For those great gifts I do not ask for—
Air and light and health and mind and breath
For those great gifts I do not ask for—
Air and light and health and mind and breath
You each day make me fit for you
By sparing me from overmuch desire
You save me by denying me
the many things I want

I sometimes forget, sometimes
follow your path
But cruelly you refrain from leading the way
I sometimes forget, sometimes
follow your path
But cruelly you refrain from leading the way

This is your kindness, I know, I know
To turn me back to make me yours
This is your kindness, I know, I know
To turn me back to make me yours
You round my life and make me fit for you
By sparing me from incomplete desire
You save me by denying me
the many things I want
You fulfil my life by looking after me
so sternly
You save me by denying me
the many things I want

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

Day by day thou art making me worthy of the simple great gifts that thou gavest to me unasked—this sky and the light, this body

and the life and the mind—saving me from perils of overmuch desire.

There are times when I languidly linger and times when I waken up and hurry in search of my goal, but cruelly thou hidest thyself from before me. Day by day thou art making me worthy of thy full acceptance by refusing me ever and anon, saving me from perils of weak uncertain desire.

6 (63)

So much of the unknown
you've made known to me
You've given me a place in so many homes
You've made the distant near, my friend,
and made the stranger a brother
So much of the unknown
you've made known to me
You've given me a place in so many homes

When I leave my familiar surroundings
I worry about how it will be
When I leave my familiar surroundings
I worry about how it will be
I forget that amidst the new
you are always there
You've made the distant near, my friend,
and made the stranger a brother
So much of the unknown
you've made known to me
You've given me a place in so many homes

Wherever and whenever you take me
in life, in death and throughout the world
You who are familiar with everything
will make me know all
Wherever and whenever you take me
in life, in death and throughout the world
You who are familiar with everything
will make me know all

When you are known, no one is alien
There are no obstructions, no fears
When you are known, no one is alien
There are no obstructions, no fears

You are wide awake in everything—
I feel that I always see you
You've made the distant near, my friend,
and made the stranger a brother
So much of the unknown
you've made known to me
You've given me a place in so many homes

Thou hast made known to me friends whom I knew not. Thou hast given me seats in houses not my own. Thou hast brought the distant near and made brother of the stranger. I am uneasy at heart when I have to leave my accustomed shelter; I forget that there abidest thou the changeless old in the changing new. Through birth and death, in this world or in others, wherever thou leadest me it is thou the same one companion of my endless life who ever linkest my heart with bonds of joy to the unfamiliar. When one knows thee then alien there is none, then no door is shut. Oh, grant me this my prayer that I may never lose the bliss of the touch of the One in the play of the diverse many.

7 (96)

Let me pronounce these words the day I go:
Nothing compares
With what I've seen,
With what I've come to know.

The hundred-petalled lotus that upon
This sea of light
Blooms—I've drunk
Its nectar: let me to everyone

Speak of this good fortune on the day I go.
This world of forms
In which I've played
Allows what has no form to show

Its beauty: with my eyes I've witnessed this.
That which can't
Be touched has touched
And hugged the whole of my body—thus

If all of this must end, then let it go.
These are the words
Which on the day
I leave I want you all to know.

When I leave from hence let this be my parting word that what I have seen is unsurpassable. I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus yonder that expands on the ocean of light and thus am I blessed, let this be my parting word. In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of him that eludes all forms. All my living body and limbs have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch—and if the end comes here let it come—let this be my parting word.

8 (18)

Cloud piles on cloud
Gloom grows
Why keep me waiting
alone by the door?
Cloud piles on cloud
Gloom grows

On working days I've various tasks
among various people
On working days I've various tasks
among various people
Today I'm just sitting,
breathless for you
Cloud piles on cloud
Gloom grows

If you don't turn up
If you choose to slight me
How shall I get through the day
in such rain?
If you don't turn up
If you choose to slight me
How shall I get through the day
in such rain?

I fix my eyes on the distance—
I stare, just stare

I fix my eyes on the distance—
I stare, just stare
My feelings wander, howling
with the wild wind
Cloud piles on cloud
Gloom grows

Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens. Ah love, why letst thou me[3] wait outside at the door all alone? In the busy moments of the noontide work I am with the crowd but in this dark lonely day it is only for thee that I hope.

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

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

9 (22)

Today
In the murky chaos of Sraban[4]
You came with secretive steps,
avoiding all eyes
Silent, silent as the dark
In the murky chaos of Sraban

The dawn has shut her eyes
The wind pointlessly moans
The dawn has shut her eyes
The wind pointlessly moans
Someone has draped in dense cloud
the innocent blue of the sky

The woods are empty of birdsong
All doors are shut
You travel alone
a road bereft of travellers
The woods are empty of birdsong
All doors are shut
You travel alone
a road bereft of travellers

O lonely friend, O dearest
My door is open for you

O lonely friend, O dearest
My door is open for you
Do not ignore me,
do not fade like a dream
In the murky chaos of Sraban

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

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

The woodlands have hushed their songs and doors are all shut at every house. Thou art the solitary wayfarer in this deserted street. O my only friend,[5] my best beloved, the gates are open in my house—do not pass by like a dream.

10 (79)

If in this life I am never to see you, lord,
May I always remember
I haven't seen you
May I never forget
May I feel distress at this even in dreams
May I never forget
May I feel distress at this even in dreams

However long I may live
in the world's hurly-burly
However much wealth may fill my hands
May I always remember
I've gained nothing
May I never forget
May I feel distress at this even in dreams

If I lazily
rest by the road,
If I carefully spread out a bed for myself
in the dust
May I always remember
the whole of the road
still stretches ahead

May I never forget
May I feel distress at this even in dreams

However happily I may rise
to the sound of the flute
However elaborately I may adorn my house
May I always remember
I haven't brought you home
May I never forget
May I feel distress at this even in dreams
May I never forget
May I feel distress at this even in dreams
If in this life I am never to see you, lord

If it is not my portion to meet thee in this my life then let me ever feel that I have missed thy sight—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

As my days pass in the crowded market of this world and my hands get full with the daily profits, let me ever feel that I have gained nothing—let me not forget for a moment.[6]

When I sit by the road side tired and panting, when I spread my bed low in the dust, let me ever feel that the long journey is still before me, let me not forget for a moment.[7]

When the laughters are loud, when the festive nights are gay, when I fill my rooms with decorations, let me ever feel that I have not invited thee to my house—let me not forget for a moment.[8]

11 (74)

There's no more time
Shadows fall on the world
Come, come to the ghat
to fill your water-pot
There's no more time
There's no more time

The evening sky is uneasy
when waters murmur
The evening sky is uneasy
when waters murmur

They call me, call me to the path
with their delicate sound
There's no more time
There's no more time

Now there's no one on the deserted path
coming and going
Waves rise, rise on the river of love
The breeze is anxious
Now there's no one on the deserted path
coming and going
Waves rise, rise on the river of love
The breeze is anxious

I do not know whether I shall return
or whom I shall meet today
I do not know whether I shall return
or whom I shall meet today
On a boat at the ghat that unknown person
is playing a veena

There's no more time
There's no more time
Come, come to the ghat
to fill your water-pot
There's no more time
There's no more time

The day is no more, the shadow is upon the earth. The time is for me to come to the stream to fill my pitcher.

The evening air is eager with the sad music of the water. Ah, it calls me out into the dusk.

In the lonely lane there is no passer-by,[9] the wind is up, the ripples are rampant in the river.

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

12 (59)

This, O Stealer of my Heart,
this is your love
The golden light that dances in the leaves

This, O Stealer of my Heart,
this is your love

The clouds that float with lazy pleasure
across the sky
The clouds that float with lazy pleasure
across the sky
The breeze that anoints the body
with nectar—
This, O Stealer of my Heart,
this is your love

My gaze sails on rivers
of dawn light
That bring your message of love
into my soul
My gaze sails on rivers
of dawn light
That bring your message of love
into my soul

Your face looks down at my face
and touches my eyes
Your face looks down at my face
and touches my eyes
My heart today takes the dust
of your feet
This, O Stealer of my Heart,
this is your love
The golden light that dances in the leaves
This, O Stealer of my Heart,
this is your love

Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love, O beloved[10] of my heart, this golden light that dances upon the leaves, these idle clouds sailing across the sky, this passing breeze leaving its caresses upon my brow.

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

I'm here merely to sing your songs
Allow me a tiny place at your court
to do so
I'm here merely to sing your songs

I'm not fit for any other work in your world,
lord, not fit
I'm not fit for any other work in your world,
lord, not fit
Tunes just rattle in my idle soul
I'm here merely to sing your songs

When praise for you swells in the silent temple
of night
Then order me to sing, O King
When praise for you swells in the silent temple
of night
Then order me to sing, O King

When the veena envelops with golden melody
the sky at dawn
When the veena envelops with golden melody
the sky at dawn
Grant me the honour of not keeping me apart
I'm here merely to sing your songs
Allow me a tiny place at your court
to do so
I'm here merely to sing your songs

I am here to sing thee songs. In this hall of thine I have a corner seat. In thy world I have no work to do, my useless life can only break out in tunes devoid of purpose.

When the hour strikes for thy silent worship at the dark temple of midnight, command me, my king, to stand before thee to sing. When in the morning air the golden harp is tuned, honour me, my lord, by asking for my presence.

14 (46)

When will you come for your merger with me?
Will moon and sun still keep you
hidden somewhere?
When will you come for your merger with me?

So many times at morning and evening
your steps have rung out
So many times at morning and evening
your steps have rung out—
Secret envoys within my heart
have beckoned
When will you come for your merger with me?

O passer-by, a frisson all over
gives me tremblings of delight
O passer-by, a frisson all over
gives me tremblings of delight

I feel today that my time has come
and my work has run out
I feel today that my time has come
and my work has run out—
The wind, great king,
seems to bring your fragrance
When will you come for your merger with me?
Will moon and sun still keep you
hidden somewhere?
When will you come for your merger with me?

I know not from what distant time thou art ever coming nearer to meet me. Thy suns and stars can never keep thee hidden from me for aye. In many a morning and eve thy footsteps have been heard and thy messenger has stepped in within my heart and called me in secret.

I know not why today my life is all astir, and a feeling of tremulous joy is passing through my heart. I feel as if the time has come to wind up my works and I feel in the air a faint smell of thy sweet presence.

15 (70)

Can you not join in this rhythm?
Can you not join in this rhythm?
The jettisoning, drifting away and dissolving joy of it?
Can you not join in this rhythm?
Can you not join in this rhythm?

Can you not open your ears
To the music the veena of death plays
Can you not open your ears
To the music the veena of death plays
all over the sky
in the sun, the stars, the moon?
Can you not feel the fire that cascades
with the joy of its burning?
Can you not join in this rhythm?
Can you not join in this rhythm?

With mind-blowing flurries of song
It hurtles who knows where
It never looks back
The racing, rolling joy of its forward movement
can never be checked
With mind-blowing flurries of song
It hurtles who knows where
It never looks back
The racing, rolling joy of its forward movement
can never be checked

With the stamping of the feet of that joy
The six seasons wildly dance
With the stamping of the feet of that joy
The six seasons wildly dance,
a flood is unleashed in the world,
a symphony of scent and colour
Because of the joy of letting go,
of casting aside, of dying
Can you not join in this rhythm?
Can you not join in this rhythm?

Is it beyond thee to be glad with the gladness of this wild rhythm? To[11] be tossed and lost and broken in the whirl of this fearful joy? Listen, canst thou hear from every direction of the sky, from all the sun, moon and stars, the harp player of death smiting forth a fiery[12] round of music pulsing in burning joy!

The hurricane of maddening tunes is carrying onward all that ever is. Everything moves, they stop not, they look not behind, they can never be kept bound in bonds—they are snatched and swirled and borne on by the liberating joy.

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

16 (49)

You came down from your throne
You came down from your throne
You came to the door of my lonely house
You stopped and stood there, lord
You came down from your throne
You came down

I was sitting alone, lost in thought
I was singing a song
I was sitting alone, lost in thought
I was singing a song
The tune of it reached your ears
You came to the door of my lonely house
You stopped and stood there, lord
You came down from your throne

In your heavenly court there are so many songs,
so many masterly singers—
My artless song today
struck a chord in your love
In your heavenly court there are so many songs,
so many masterly singers—
My artless song today
struck a chord in your love

You picked from music's totality
a single poignant tune
You picked from music's totality
a single poignant tune
You came to honour me with a garland
You came to the door of my lonely house
You stopped and stood there, lord
You came down from your throne
You came to the door of my lonely house
You stopped and stood there, lord
You came down from your throne

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

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

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

17 (39)

When the life in me dries up
Come with a stream of kindness
When the life in me dries up
Come with a stream of kindness
When the sweetness in me disappears
Come with a song's nectar
When the life in me dries up
Come with a stream of kindness

When my work becomes menacing
and crowds me all round
with its roaring
When my work becomes menacing
and crowds me all round
with its roaring
Steal into my heart, O quiet Lord,
with noiseless steps
When the life in me dries up
Come with a stream of kindness

When my miserable mind, huddling in a corner,
meanly shuts you out
Fling open the door, O generous Lord,
and enter majestically
When my miserable mind, huddling in a corner,
meanly shuts you out
Fling open the door, O generous Lord,
and enter majestically

When my stupid cravings
blind and entomb me

in mountains of dust
When my stupid cravings
blind and entomb me
in mountains of dust
Come, O pure and unsleeping Lord,
with explosions of light
When the life in me dries up
Come with a stream of kindness
When the life in me dries up
Come with a stream of kindness

When the heart is hard and parched up come upon me with a shower of mercy. When grace is lost from life come with a burst of song. When tumultuous work raises its din on all sides shutting me out from beyond come to me, my lord of silence, with thy peace and rest. When my beggarly heart sits crouched, shut up in a corner, break open the door, my king, and come in with thy regal splendour. When desire blinds the mind with delusion and dust, O thou holy one,[13] thou wakeful, come with thy light of thunder.

18 (97)

When as a child I played with you,
who knew who you were?
I had no fear, I had no shame,
my life was riotous
When as a child I played with you

You called me so many times at dawn
as if you were my playmate
You called me so many times at dawn
as if you were my playmate
I laughed and ran around with you
through so many woods and fields
When as a child I played with you

You sang at that time so many songs—
who knew what any meant?
I only knew they sang to my soul
and my dancing heart ran riot
You sang at that time so many songs—
who knew what any meant?

I only knew they sang to my soul
    and my dancing heart ran riot

Today now that our games are done
*   what's this I suddenly see?*
Today now that our games are done
*   what's this I suddenly see?*
Unmoving sky, the silent moon and sun,
*   the world so humbly waiting at your feet*

When as a child I played with you,
    who knew who you were?
I had no fear, I had no shame,
    my life was riotous
When as a child I played with you

When my play was with thee I never questioned who thou wast. I knew nor shyness nor fear, my life was boisterous. In the early morning thou wouldst call me from my sleep like my own comrade and lead me running from glade to glade. On those days I never cared to know the meaning of songs thou sangst to me. Only my voice took up the tunes, and my heart danced in their cadence. Now when the playtime is over, what is this sudden sight that I see? The world with eyes bent upon thy feet stands in awe with all its silent stars.

19 (19)

O Silence, if you won't speak,
    If you don't say a word,
I'll accept in my heart
    Your price must be paid.

I'll be silent myself,
    As patient and bowed
As the night when unblinking stars
    Are displayed.

Dark ends. There'll be dawn,
        dawn, dawn—
Your voice will crack open the sky
    With a golden cascade.

Then, in my nest, will the birds erupt
With your tune?
Will my jasmine burst out with the flowers
Your music has made?

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

The morning will surely come, the darkness will vanish and thy voice will pour down in golden streams breaking through the sky. Then thy words will take wings in songs from every one[14] of my birds' nests and thy melodies will break forth in flowers in all my forest groves.

20 (6)

Tear me, oh tear me—
there isn't much time.
That I might fall, be shed to the dust—
Fear of this starts to climb.
I know not if in your garland
this flower will find a seat;
But let at least the wounds you inflict
be in its fate.
Tear me, oh tear me
before it's too late.

The day will end before long—
the dark will be here.
The moment for worship will pass
before I'm aware.
No matter what colour in the flower,
what scent stirs the heart,
Take it as a service to you
while the time is right.
Tear me, oh tear me
while still there is light.

Pluck this little flower and take it, delay not! I fear lest it droop and drop into the dust. It may not find a place in thy garland but honour it with a touch of pain from thy hand and pluck it. I fear lest the day

ends before I am aware and the time of offering goes by. Though[15] its colour be not deep and its smell be faint use this flower in thy service and pluck it while there[16] is time.

21 (77)

Though I think of you as God, I keep apart
I do not love you as mine
Though I think of you as God, I keep apart
I do not love you as mine
I bow to your feet and call you father,
but do not clasp your hands as a brother
Though I think of you as God, I keep apart
I do not love you as mine

Where you yourself have come down to be mine
with such simple love
Where you yourself have come down to be mine
with such simple love
I do not warmly clasp you to my breast
and call you my friend
Though I think of you as God, I keep apart
I do not love you as mine

To those among whom, lord,
you are a brother among brothers
I do not turn my eyes
To those among whom, lord,
you are a brother among brothers
I do not turn my eyes
Why do I not share my wealth with them
in order to fill your hands?
Why do I not share my wealth with them
in order to fill your hands?

I do not rush to join in their sorrows and joys
in order to stand before you
I do not rush to join in their sorrows and joys
in order to stand before you
Drowning my life in continuous work
I do not plunge into the great ocean of life
Though I think of you as God, I keep apart
I do not love you as mine

I know thee as my God and stand apart—I know[17] thee not as my own and come not closer.[18] I know thee as my father and bow to thy feet—I grasp[19] not thy hand as my friend.

I stand not where in thy simple great love thou camest down and didst own thyself as mine, there to clasp thee to my heart and take thee as my comrade.

Thou art the Brother amongst my brothers but I heed them not; I divide[20] not my earnings with them thus sharing my all with thee.

In pleasure and in pain I stand not by the side of men and thus stand by thee. My life to give up I shrink and thus miss plunging[21] into the ocean of life.

22 (65)

O God of mine
O God of mine
What is this nectar you want to drink,
  filling my body and soul?
O God of mine
O God of mine

O Poet, is it your wish to see your own, total reflection
  in my eyes?
Staying silent in my entranced ears,
Do you want to listen there to your own song?
O God of mine
O God of mine

Your creativity speaks a multifaceted message
  through my articulate mind

Merging it with your love, lord,
  you summon up all my songs
By giving yourself to me,
You see your own self exquisitely portrayed
O God of mine
O God of mine

What divine drink wouldst thou have, my God, from this overflowing cup of my life? My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through my eyes and to stand at the portals of my ears

silently to listen to thy own eternal harmony? The world is weaving words in my mind and thy joy is adding music to them. Thou givest thyself to me in love and then feelest thine own entire sweetness in me.

23 (9)

I'll carry myself on my own head
    no longer;
I'll no longer be at my own door
    a beggar.
Hurling this burden down at your feet,
I'll contemptuously break out—
I'll take no more interest in it,
I'll speak not a word about it,
I'll carry myself on my own head
    no longer.

My objects of desire,
    the moment I touch them,
        lose their light.
No, I want no more
    what my filthy hands
        have brought.
I won't stomach anything more
    unless you're the lover:
I'll carry myself on my own head
    no longer.

O fool, to try to carry thyself upon thine own[22] shoulders! O beggar, to come to beg at thine own[23] door! Leave all thy burdens on his hands who can bear all and never look behind in regret.

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

24 (10)

Humbler than all and lower than the low
That is the place where your feet reign
    behind all, beneath all

Among those who have lost all
Humbler than all and lower than the low

I bow down before you
but my bending gets stuck somewhere
I bow down before you
but my bending gets stuck somewhere
It doesn't reach down to the place below shame
where your feet reach
Behind all, beneath all
Among those who have lost all
Humbler than all and lower than the low

Arrogance finds no perch in the realm where you wander
Shorn of ornaments, dressed in the rags of the poor
Arrogance finds no perch in the realm where you wander
Shorn of ornaments, dressed in the rags of the poor

We count on companionship with you
in places of wealth and grandeur
We count on companionship with you
in places of wealth and grandeur
But you make friends with those who have no companions
in a region my heart doesn't reach
Behind all, beneath all
Among those who have lost all
Humbler than all and lower than the low

There is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest and lowliest and lost. When I try to bow to thee my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest and lowliest and lost.

Pride can never get access to where thou walkest in the garb of the humble among the poorest and lowliest and lost. My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest and lowliest and lost.

25 (90)

If to your door at the end of the day
Death were to arrive,
What present would you give him?

I'd place before him
All I've gained through being alive—
I wouldn't send him empty-handed away,
Were he to come to my door
at the end of the day.
The autumn and spring nights,
The many evenings and dawns,
The flavours that to life's bowl they bring,
The many flowers and fruits,
Dark and light's
touch in the heart's
pleasures and pains—

All I've acquired,
All for so long I've prepared,
Would at last to him be given away,
Were Death to come to my door
at the end of the day.

On the day when death will knock at thy door what shalt thou offer to him?

Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my life—I will never let him go with empty hands. All the sweet vintage of all my autumn days and summer nights, all the earnings and gleanings of my busy life will I place before him at the close of my days when death will knock at my door.

26 (91)

O last fulfilment of this life of mine—
Death, my death,
Speak to me, give your words breath.

All my life I've been awake for you—
I've carried for you my joy and my pain.
Death, my death,
Speak to me, do not feign.
All I've gained, all I am, all my hopes
Unknowingly have rushed towards you—
All my love too.

Now my wedding with you will come,
And at my unveiling your gaze
Will make me forever the bride I've waited to be

for so many days.
Death, my death,
Speak, give words to what your gaze
conveys.

I've stitched a garland for you
In my mind's inner room.
When will you smilingly, silently appear,
dressed as a groom?
I'll lose my own home that day—
Who's mine, who's foreign, who can say?
Alone in the night I'll be—
Take me as your wife away.
Death, my death.
Speak to me, show me the way.

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

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

All that I am, that I have, that I hope and all my love have ever flowed towards thee in depth of secrecy. One final glance from thine eyes and my life will be ever thine own.

The flowers have been woven and the garland is ready for the bridegroom. After the wedding the bride shall leave her home and meet her lord alone in the solitude of night.

27 (56)

This is why you delight in me,
why you descend
Otherwise, master of all three worlds,
Your love would be a lie
This is why you delight in me,
why you descend

I'm part of your bringing together,
Your spasms of feeling
course through my heart
I'm part of your bringing together,
Your spasms of feeling
course through my heart

Your waves of longing take manifold forms
in my life
This is why you delight in me,
why you descend

This is why, though you are king of kings,
You keep on returning to my heart
in enchanting dress
You are always awake, lord
This is why, though you are king of kings,
You keep on returning to my heart
in enchanting dress
You are always awake, lord

This is why you are here, lord,
This is why your love is in the love
of those who love you
This is why you are here, lord,
This is why your love is in the love
of those who love you
Your form is expressed to the full
when two become one
This is why you delight in me,
why you descend

Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full. Thus it is that thou hast come down to me. O thou lord[24] of all heavens, where would be thy love if I were not!

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

And for this, thou who art the king of kings hast[25] decked thyself in beauty to captivate my heart. And for this thy love loses itself in the love of thy lover and there art thou perfectly seen in the complete union of two.

28 (11)

Prayer and worship and rite—
cast them aside.
In a nook of the closed temple,
why hide?

Groping in your mind's dark,
What pooja-object do you seek?
Open your eyes and look:
God doesn't stay inside.

He's gone to where farmers labour
to hack the soil,
To where stone-breaking for a road
takes a year of toil.
He's there in the flood and the heat;
His hands are plastered with dirt;
Be like him, strip off your shirt
to be level with all.

Release? Where will you gain it?
Where is it found?
Taking on shackles of creation,
God himself is bound.
Forget about trances or poojas;
Throw away trays of flowers;
Rip clothes, get grimy, get sweaty;
get down to his ground.

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

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

Deliverance?[26] Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation;[27] he is bound with us all for ever.

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

The day the Commander sent his crack troops,
    Where was their firepower hidden?
  Where was their armour? Where were their shields?
    No sign of any weapon!
  So poor, so feeble, so ill-prepared,
  Blows rained down, with nobody spared,
The day the Commander sent his crack troops.

The day the troops returned to Central Command,
    Where again was their power?
  Missiles and swords had fallen away,
    For peace to smile and flower.
  Goals they'd sought their entire life
  Abandoned now without any strife,
The day the troops returned to Central Command.

When first they came out, the warriors, from their master's hall, where kept they hidden their vast powers? Where were their armour and their arms? They looked poor and helpless and arrows were showered upon them from all sides on the day they came out from their master's hall.

When they marched back, the warriors, to their master's hall, where[28] again did they hide their powers? Dropped down their swords and their bows and arrows, peace was on their brow, and they left behind them the fruits of all their life on the day they marched back to their master's hall.

30 (101)

I've sought you beyond my mind
In song
My whole life long.

My songs have taken me
From place to place
In time and space.

I've tried in the world with the stroke
Of my hand in my songs to feel
And heal.

They've taught me so much,
Shown me such secret ways—

Picked out in the sky of my heart so many stars.

When my journey through this mystery—
Through many strange lands of weal and woe—
Ends, into what mansion at evening will I go?

Ever in my life have I sought thee with my songs. It was they who led me from door to door and with them have I felt about me, searching and touching[29] all my world.

It was my songs that taught me all the lessons I ever learnt, they showed me secret paths, they brought to my ken many a star in my heart's horizon. They guided me all the day long to the mysteries of the country of pleasure and pain, and, at last, to what palace gate have they brought me in the evening at the end of my journey?

31 (34)

May just a bit of myself be left—
the bit, Lord, that's you.
May I see all points of the compass,
May everything merge in oneness,
May love for you be ceaseless,
Supplied by what is surplus
in me—
the bit, Lord, that's you.

May only what I don't hide be left—
the bit, Lord, that's you.
May this be what holds and stays,
May its playfulness fill my days,
May all that is left comprise
The wristband-knot love ties
in me—
the bit, Lord, that's you.

Let only that little remain of me by which I may call thee my all. Let only that little of my will be left by which I may feel thee on every side, may come to thee in everything, may offer to thee my love every moment.

Let only that little remain of me by which I may never hide thee. Let only that little of my fetters be left by which I am bound with

thy will and thy purpose is carried in my life—which is the fetter of thy love.

32 (29)

He who by my name is kept in hiding
Within the prison of that name is dying.
  Everything else by day and night forgetting,
  Towards the sky that name forever piling,
    I lose within its dark
      My own true spark.

Dust on dust, layer on layer impacting,
Higher and higher that name of mine I'm rearing.
Lest anywhere a crack or hole is forming,
My heart is ever fearful and unresting.
  As I this lie refine,
    I lose what's mine.

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

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

33 (NOT INCLUDED IN THE PUBLISHED TEXT)

The day you wipe out
  my name, lord,
    that day I'll be free.
I'll be reborn in you
  instead of in a dream
    made by me.
Your writing's crossed out
  by the line
    of my name.
How much longer
  must I carry the evil
    of that kind of fame?

It steals clothes from others
  for its own

fancy dress;
It stamps on all
other music
itself to express.
Enough of this name!
I'll take only yours
to my lips.
I'll become one with all
when my name
into namelessness slips.

On the day thou breakest through this my name, my master, I shall be free and leave this phantasy of my own creation and take my place in thee.

By scribbling my name over thy writing I cover thy works. I know not how far such a horror could be carried.

This pride of name plucks feathers from others to decorate its own self and to drown all other music it beats its own drum. Oh, let it be utterly defeated in me and let the day come when only thy name will play in my tongue and I shall be accepted by all by my nameless recognition.

34 (103)

With one namaskar, lord, one namaskar
Let my whole frame prostrate itself in this world
With one namaskar, lord, one namaskar

Like the rainy-heavy clouds of Sraban[30]
Let me bow with the weight of my feelings
Like the rainy-heavy clouds of Sraban
Let me bow with the weight of my feelings
With one namaskar, lord, one namaskar—
Let my mind and heart be laid
at your palace-door
With one namaskar, lord, one namaskar
Uniting in one rapid stream—
Sweeping my soul away
With one namaskar, lord, one namaskar—
Uniting in one rapid stream—
Sweeping my soul away

With one namaskar, lord, one namaskar—
Let all my songs come to rest in your sea of silence

Like wild geese on their way to Lake Manas,[31]
So through all my days and nights
Like wild geese on their way to Lake Manas,
So through all my nights and days
With one namaskar, lord, one namaskar
Let my spirit fly
to your sea of vast extinction
With one namaskar, lord, one namaskar
With one namaskar, lord, one namaskar

In one salutation to thee, my lord, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet.

Like a raincloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed showers let all my mind bend down at thy door in one salutation to thee.

Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee.

Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee.

35 (32)

All the people around me
who love me
Bring thick strong bonds
to tie me.
Your love's an advance on theirs;
Yours are quite different ways—
You do not bind me,
You watch me covertly,
You give me liberty.

Lest I forget them, the others
make sure they're always in view.
Yet day after day is passed
without seeing you.
I may or may not call out;
You leave me to do what I want.

For you it's enough
to keep me in sight
to check I'm all right.

By all means they try to hold me secure who love me in this world. But it is otherwise with thy love which is greater than theirs and thou keepest me free. Lest I forget them they never venture to leave me alone. But day after day passes[32] and thou art not seen.

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

36 (17)

I'm waiting to hand myself over
to Love.
It's late in the day, and I know all the faults
I have.

People come to bind me with rules,
to tie me with laws;
I first run away, then blithely welcome
the grief they impose.
I'm waiting to hand myself over
to Love.

They rebuke me, and what they say
is quite fair—
Let them pile it on my head!
I shan't care.

The day now is done,
The trading has gone;
They came out to fetch me, were cross
when first they couldn't catch me.
I'm waiting to hand myself over
to Love.

I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last at his hands. Thus[33] it is so late and thus am I guilty of such omissions.

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

People blame me and call me heedless—I doubt not they are right in their blame. The market day is over and work is all done for the busy. Those who came to call me in vain have gone back in anger. I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last at his hands.

37 (72)

How deeper than deep he is
How deeper than deep he is
My pain, my awareness owe their existence
to his fathomless touch
How deeper than deep he is

He brings enchantments to my eyes,
plucks my heart's veena-strings
He brings enchantments to my eyes,
plucks my heart's veena-strings
He awakens such rhythms
of joy, pleasure, sorrow, delight
How deeper than deep he is

How magical the robe he weaves
from gold, silver, green, blue
His feet stretch out from beneath it
When I touch them I swoon with rapture
How magical the robe he weaves
from gold, silver, green, blue
His feet stretch out from beneath it
When I touch them I swoon with rapture

Many days, many ages pass
as he secretly charms my soul
Many days, many ages pass
as he secretly charms my soul
Many are the ravishing names and identities
he constantly showers
How deeper than deep he is
How deeper than deep he is

It is he, the innermost one, who wakens up my consciousness with his deep hidden touches. It is he who reads magic incantations upon my eyes, and joyfully plays on the chords of my heart in varied cadence of pleasure and pain. It is he who weaves the web of this

maya in evanescent hues of gold and silver, blue and green, and through its folds lets peep his feet at whose touch I forget myself.[34] Days come and ages pass, and it is ever he who moves my heart in many a name, in many a guise, in many a rapture of bliss and sorrow.

38 (5)

Allow me just to sit with you for a bit,
for a brief time merely
Whatever work I have in hand today
I'll finish it later
Allow me just to sit with you for a bit

If I get no glimpse of your face
my heart knows no rest
If I get no glimpse of your face
my heart knows no rest
The wider I wallow in work,
the more I am adrift in a shoreless sea
Allow me just to sit with you for a bit

Spring has come to my window today
with breathy eagerness
Happy-go-lucky bees come buzzing
They criss-cross the glades
Spring has come to my window today
with breathy eagerness
Happy-go-lucky bees come buzzing
They criss-cross the glades

Today is a day for just sitting together,
staring at each other's eyes
Today is a day for just sitting together,
staring at each other's eyes
At ease, at leisure, I'll sing you a song
about life's surrender
Allow me just to sit with you for a bit,
for a brief time merely
Whatever work I have in hand today
I'll finish it later
Allow me just to sit with you for a bit

I ask for a moment's indulgence to sit by thy side only for a very little while. All the works that I have in hand I will finish afterwards.[35]

Away from the sight of thy face my heart knows no rest nor respite and my work becomes an endless toil in a shoreless sea of tasks.[36]

Today the summer has come at my window with its balmy sighs and murmurs and[37] the bees are plying their minstrelsy at the court of the flowering grove. Now it is time to sit quiet face to face with thee and to sing of dedication[38] of life in this silent and overflowing leisure.

39 (20)

On the day the lotus bloomed
On the day the lotus bloomed
I knew nothing
My thoughts were elsewhere
I'd prepared no tray for it
I remained oblivious
On the day the lotus bloomed

Sometimes my heart is driven mad
It races as if impelled by a dream
Sometimes my heart is driven mad
It races as if impelled by a dream
The scent of something sweet seems to float
somewhere on the southern breeze
On the day the lotus bloomed

I'm swept off my feet by that scent
to lands beyond lands
The world seems to gasp with longing for it
at the first surge of spring
I'm swept off my feet by that scent
to lands beyond lands
The world seems to gasp with longing for it
at the first surge of spring

Why was I not told that it isn't far away?
That it's mine, mine
Why was I not told that it isn't far away?

That it's mine, mine
That a sweet-scented creeper was already in flower
in the garden of my heart
On the day the lotus bloomed

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

Only now and again a sadness fell upon me—and[39] I started up from my dream and felt a sweet trace of a strange smell in the south wind.

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

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

40 (94)

At the time of my leaving,
please, all of you, be glad
Shout 'Victory'
At the time of my leaving,
please, all of you, be glad
Shout 'Victory'
The dawn sky is rosy—
my path too should be gorgeous
Shout 'Victory'
At the time of my leaving,
please, all of you, be glad
Shout 'Victory'

Don't worry about what I'll take with me—
I'll go with empty hands
Don't worry about what I'll take with me—
I'll go with empty hands,
carrying only
the promptings of my heart,
but
Shout 'Victory'
At the time of my leaving,

please, all of you, be glad—
Shout ‘Victory’

I’ll wear a garland as if dressed for a wedding,
not for the road
I shan’t be afraid of the snags and dangers
I may have to meet on the way
I shan’t be dressed for the road
I’ll wear a garland as if dressed for a wedding,
not for the road
I shan’t be afraid of the snags and dangers
I may have to meet on the way
I shan’t be dressed for the road

When my journey is over,
the evening star will rise
When my journey is over,
the evening star will rise—
a plaintive flute will play
at the door of my house in Rag Puravi,
but
Shout ‘Victory’
At the time of my leaving,
please, all of you, be glad
Shout ‘Victory’
At the time of my leaving,
please, all of you, be glad
Shout ‘Victory’

At this time of my parting, sing cheers to me, my friends! The sky is flushed with the blush of dawn and my path is beautiful.[40]

Ask not what I have with me to take there. I start on my journey with empty hands and expectant heart.

I shall put on my wedding garland. Mine is not a traveller’s gray garb, and though there are dangers on the way I have no fear in my mind.

The evening star will come out when my voyage will be done and the plaintive notes of the twilight melodies will be struck up from the king’s gateway.

I’ve earned my release, dear friends,
give leave to me
I bow to you all as I go
I’ve earned my release, dear friends,
give leave to me
I bow to you all as I go

I’ve handed back the keys to my house
I claim it no more
I’ve handed back the keys to my house
I claim it no more
I ask you all today to wish me well
I bow to you all as I go

For many days I was your neighbour
I took far more from you than I gave
For many days I was your neighbour
I took far more from you than I gave

The night is turning now to dawn
The corner-lamps have gone out
The night is turning now to dawn
The corner-lamps have gone out
The call has come, so now I’ll leave
I bow to you all as I go
I’ve earned my release, dear friends,
give leave to me
I bow to you all as I go

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

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

We were neighbours[41] for long, but I received more than I could give. Now the day has dawned and the lamp that lit my dark corner is out. A summons has come[42] and I am ready for my journey.

42 (21)

My boat must be sailed now
It’s getting too late to wait on the shore
Alas
My boat must be sailed

The blossom is over,
spring has gone
Tell me, what am I doing
with this basket of wilting flowers?
Alas
My boat must be sailed

The water is rising, swelling,
waves heave
Dry leaves patter to the ground
round desolate trees
The water is rising, swelling,
waves heave
Dry leaves patter to the ground
round desolate trees

Where oh where to look
with blankness of mind?
All air, all sky shudders
with that flutesong over the water

Alas
My boat must be sailed now
It's getting too late to wait on the shore
Alas
My boat must be sailed

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

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

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

What emptiness thou gazest upon! Dost thou not feel the thrills passing though the air with the notes of the faraway song floating from the other shore?

43 (23)

You have a tryst somewhere this stormy night,
O my close companion
You have a tryst somewhere this stormy night,
O my close companion

The sky wails as if dismayed
There's no sleep in my eyes
The sky wails as if dismayed
There's no sleep in my eyes
Opening the door, O dearest,
I look out again and again,
O my close companion

I can see nothing outside
I wonder where you are walking
I can see nothing outside
I wonder where you are walking

Beyond a distant river somewhere
On the edge of a thick forest somewhere
Beyond a distant river somewhere
On the edge of a thick forest somewhere
In deep darkness somewhere
you're finding your way,
O my close companion
You have a tryst somewhere this stormy night,
O my close companion

Art thou abroad on this stormy night on thy journey of love, my friend?[43] The sky groans like one in despair. I have no sleep tonight. Ever and again I open my door and look out on the darkness, my friend!

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

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

44 (84)

I see your viraha[44] everywhere all the time
In every world
It takes so many forms
in woods and fields and sky and sea

It silently waits all night in the stars
with unblinking eyes

In leaves and in monsoon rains
your viraha swishes and streams

Your viraha is multiplied by the anguish
of so many homes
It echoes in so many loves and longings
and pleasures and pains

Wrenching me all my life,
melting and pouring in so many songs and tunes,
Your viraha swells to overflowing
deep in my heart
I see your viraha everywhere all the time

It is the pang of severance that spreads from world to world and gives birth to shapes innumerable in the infinite sky.

It is this sorrow of separation that gazes in silence all night from star to star and becomes lyric among rustling leaves in the rainy darkness[45] of July.

It is this overspreading pain that deepens into loves and desires, into sufferings and joys in human homes, and this it is that ever melts and flows in songs through my poet's heart.

45 (16)

I've been invited to festivals of joy in the world
A privilege, a privilege it is to be alive
I've been invited to festivals of joy

My eyes have ranged wide, glutting
their desires on beauty
My eyes have ranged wide, glutting
their desires on beauty
My ears have immersed themselves deeply
in music
I've been invited to festivals of joy

You've given me the chance to play the flute
at your festivals
I've roamed them, fashioning songs
out of tears and smiles
You've given me the chance to play the flute
at your festivals

I've roamed them, fashioning songs
out of tears and smiles

Has the time now come
to go and see you in your court?
Has the time now come
to go and see you in your court?
To sing a song of victory to you—
that's what I want
I've been invited to festivals of joy

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

It was my part at this feast to play upon my harp and I have done all I could. Now, I ask, has the time come at last when I may go in and see thy face and offer thee my silent salutation?

46 (26)

He came and sat beside me
but I didn't wake
He came and sat beside me
What sleep was it that held me
so unluckily?
He came and sat beside me
but I didn't wake
He came and sat beside me

He came in the silent night,
veena in hand
He came in the silent night,
veena in hand
A solemn ragini[46]
played in my dreams
He came and sat beside me
but I didn't wake
He came and sat beside me

I rise and watch the southern breeze
go mad
The hovering scent of his body
floods the dark
I rise and watch the southern breeze
go mad

The hovering scent of his body
floods the dark

Why does my night pass by
with him so near yet not near?
Why does my night pass by
with him so near yet not near?
Why did the touch of his garland
not brush my neck?

He came and sat beside me
but I didn't wake
He came and sat beside me

He came and sat by my side but I woke not. What a cursed sleep it was, oh miserable me! He came when the night was still; he had his harp in his hands, and my dreams became resonant with its melodies.

Alas, why are my nights[47] all thus lost? Ah, why ever do I miss[48] his sight whose breath touches my sleeping brow!

47 (99)

I know
That you will take the rudder
If I let it go.

What's to be, will of itself be:
This struggle to steer
Leaves me all at sea.

Drop the rudder, drop it!
Just quietly watch,
Sit.

Stay where you are.
Leave everything now
To fortune's star.

I've kept on trying to light
Lamps
That have gone out.

Busy with this,
I've become to all else
Oblivious.

But now I'll wait
In the dark
With my sari spread out—

For you to take
Your seat
Whenever you like.

When I give up the helm, then the time will come for thee to take it, I know. What there is to do will be instantly done. Vain is this struggle for me.

Then take away your hands and silently put up with your defeat, my heart, and think it your good fortune to sit perfectly still where you are placed.

These my lamps are blown out at every little puff of breath and trying to light them up again and again I forget all else. But I shall be wise this time and wait in the dark, spreading my mat on the floor—and whenever it is thy pleasure, my lord, come silently and take thy seat here.

48 (12)

I've travelled for such a long time,
over such a long way;
I first set out on my journey
at break of day.
Round planets and stars weaving,
Marking my course with my roving,
Such worlds, peaks, forests passing,
more than I can say.

Coming the closest of all
means wandering far;
The paths to the simplest tunes
are the hardest there are.
After knocking on foreign doors,
Home's where the answer lies;
We search outside for the rays
Of our inmost star.

Because I so much desire
to say 'You are there',

There are many directions and paths
    that hold my stare.
‘It’s you, it’s you’—such knowing,
Through so many channels flowing,
Streams from the grief of asking,
    ‘Where, oh where?’

The time of my journey is vast and the way long. I came out on the chariot of the first flash of light and pursued my voyage through the wildernesses of worlds leaving my track on many a star and planet. It is the most distant course to come nearest to thyself and that training is the most intricate which leads to an utter simplicity of tune.[49] The traveller has to knock at every alien door to come to his own and one has to roam through all the outer worlds to reach the innermost shrine at the end. My eyes strayed far and wide before I shut them and said ‘Here art thou!’ The questioning cry of ‘Oh where?’ melts into tears of a thousand streams and deluges the universe with the flood of the assurance of ‘I am!’

49 (27)

Where’s the light, the light?
Ignite it with the fire of longing
    The lamp is there, but no flame
    What is this doom on my brow?
Death would be preferable
Light the lamp with the fire of longing

Pain’s envoy sings, ‘O breath of life,
    God stays awake for you’
Pain’s envoy sings, ‘O breath of life,
    God stays awake for you
Shrouded in the dark
He calls you to a tryst
Valuing you for your sorrow,
    God stays awake’

The sky is crammed with clouds
    Rain pours down
In the depth of this night for what
    Am I suddenly awake?

Why is my breath thus caught?
  Rain pours down

Lightning, flaming for an instant,
  just makes the darkness thicker
Lightning, flaming for an instant,
  just makes the darkness thicker
I do not know where, far away,
A song with a bleak tune
Drags my life down a path
  where the dark thickens

Where's the light, the light?
Ignite it with the fire of longing
  Clouds thunder, wind howls
  Time passes, but this deep night,
Black as a whetstone, doesn't pass
Light love's lamp with my breath
Ignite it with the fire of longing

Light, oh where is the light? Kindle it with the burning fire of desire! There is the lamp but never a flicker of a flame—is such thy fate, my heart! Ah, death were better by far for thee!

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

The sky is overcast with clouds and the rain is ceaseless. I know not what is this that stirs in me—I know not its meaning. A moment's flash of lightning drags down a deeper gloom on my sight and my heart gropes for the path to where the music of the night calls me.

Light, oh where is the light?[50] Kindle it with the burning fire of desire! It thunders and the wind rushes screaming through the void. The night is black as a black stone. Let not the hours pass by in the dark; kindle[51] the lamp of love with thy life!

50 (3)

How magically you sing, how you sing!
Amazed I listen, just listen

How magically you sing, how you sing!
Amazed, I listen, just listen
The light of your music
floods through the world
The light of your music
floods through the world
The breeze of your music blows through the sky
The hurtling river of your music smashes through rocks
How magically you sing, how you sing!

Though I think of singing straightaway
My voice can't find a tune

I want to speak, but my words are obstructed—
defeated, I weep from within
I want to speak, but my words are obstructed—
defeated, I weep from within
By weaving a web of music around me
You've thrown me into a trap
How magically you sing, how you sing!
Amazed, I listen, just listen
How magically you sing, how you sing!

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

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

My heart longs to join in thy song but vainly struggles for a voice. I would speak but speech breaks not out[52] in song and I cry sorely baffled. Ah, thou hast made my heart captive in the endless meshes of thy music, my master!

51 (71)

This is your fancy—
That I should be bigger than you,
Enhancing your light
With my colourful artistry.
You keep yourself distant,
Call forth various tunes from my instrument,

Find solace for your disengagement
In my reaching for you.

Songs that long for connection
Fill your great sky.
Such smiles, tears, hopes, fears,
Such a palette of emotion,
Such waves falling and rising,
Such dreams fading and forming
As if you make from my making
Mastery over you.

See how my pictures adorn—
Painted in thousands
By the brushes of night and day—
Your secretive screen.
You sit there excluded,
Prettified: what I've concocted
Hides the undecorated
Straightforward you.

This carnival combination
Spans the whole sky today:
You, me, near, far—
Our game's dissemination,
Your humming, my buzzing,
Breezes enlivening,
Your daylong coming
In my going to you.

That I should make much of myself and turn it on all sides—thus casting coloured shadows on thy radiance, such is thy *maya*. Thou settest a barrier in thine own being and then callest thy severed self in myriad notes. This thy self-separation has taken body in me. The poignant song of severance is echoed through all the sky in many-coloured tears and smiles, hopes and fears, and waves rise and fall, dreams break and form. In me is thy own defeat of self.

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

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

52 (55)

Your drowsiness hasn't yet cleared
You haven't opened your eyes
Thorns in the woods have burst into flower—
    don't you know that?
Sluggard, sluggard—
    don't you know that?
Wake up, wake up
Don't waste time
Your drowsiness hasn't yet cleared
You haven't opened your eyes

At the end of a dreadful road
In a bleak, impassable land somewhere
At the end of a dreadful road
In a bleak, impassable land somewhere
    a friend is sitting alone
Whatever you do, don't let him down
Wake up, wake up
Don't waste time
Your drowsiness hasn't yet cleared
You haven't opened your eyes

So what if the parched sky shimmers
     with the savage heat of the sun?
So what if the earth everywhere is swathed
    by a blanket of scorching sand?
So what if it's throttled by thirst?

Look into your mind
Don't you see joy?
Look into your mind
Don't you see joy?
    Sorrow has a flute that follows at your heels
It plays, it calls, it calls you with a honeyed song
Wake up, wake up
Don't waste time
Your drowsiness hasn't yet cleared
You haven't opened your eyes
Thorns in the woods have burst into flower—

don’t you know that?
Sluggard, sluggard—
don’t you know that?

Wake up, wake up
Don’t waste time
Your drowsiness hasn’t yet cleared
You haven’t opened your eyes

Languor is in thy heart and the slumber is still on thine eyes. Has not the word passed to thee that the flower is reigning in splendour among thorns? Wake, oh wake up! Let not the time pass in vain!

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

What if the sky pants and trembles with the heat of the midday sun—what[53] if the burning sand spreads its mantle of thirst! Is there no joy in the deep of thy heart? At every footfall of thine, will not the harp of the road break out in the sweet music of pain?[54]

53 (100)

It’s time to dive down in the sea of forms
to find the jewels without form
It’s time to dive down in the sea of forms
to find the jewels without form
I’ll no longer sail from ghat to ghat
I’ll head out to sea in my worn-out boat
I’ll no longer sail from ghat to ghat
I’ll head out to sea in my worn-out boat
It’s time to dive down in the sea of forms
to find the jewels without form
that are there

The time has come
to stop being battered by the waves
The time has come
to stop being battered by the waves
I want to plunge down to the depths
to the deathless ambrosia
It’s time to dive down in the sea of forms
to find the jewels without form
that are there

I'll dive down with my soul's veena
to the song that cannot be heard with the ears,
the song that is perpetual there
in that court at the bottom of the sea

Binding myself to that infinite tune—
weeping when I can no longer play it
Binding myself to that infinite tune—
weeping when I can no longer play it
I'll lay my silent veena
at the feet of the One who is silent
It's time to dive down in the sea of forms
to find the jewels without form
that are there[55]

I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless. No more sailing from harbour to harbour with this my weather-beaten bark. The days are long past when my sport was to be tossed on waves. And now, losing myself into the bottom of bliss I am eager to die into deathlessness.

Into the audience hall at the fathomless abyss where swells up the music of toneless strings I shall take this harp of my life. I shall tune it to the notes of Forever,[56] and, when it has sobbed out its last utterance, lay down my silent harp at the feet of the Silent.

54 (45)

Have you not heard, not heard his steps?
Have you not heard, not heard his steps?
He comes, comes, comes
Every age, every moment, day and night
He comes, comes, comes
Have you not heard, not heard his steps?

The tunes I have crazily sung in my mind
The tunes I have crazily sung in my mind
All echo and re-echo with his coming
He comes, comes, comes

On spring days through the ages
down woodland paths
He comes, comes, comes
On louring monsoon nights,

on his chariot of clouds
He comes, comes, comes

In crescendos of grief in my heart his footsteps pound
In crescendos of grief in my heart his footsteps pound
The touch of his hand turns my joys to gold

He comes, comes, comes
Have you not heard, not heard his steps?
Have you not heard, not heard his steps?

Hast thou not heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes. Every moment and every age, every day and every night he comes, comes, ever comes. Many a song have I sung in many a mood of mind, but all their notes have always proclaimed, ‘He comes, comes, ever comes.’

By the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest path he comes, comes, ever comes. By the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot of clouds he comes, comes, ever comes. In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press my heart and it is the golden touch of his feet that makes my joys shine.

55 (2)

When I’m told to sing by you,
I swell with pride.
When I look unblinking at you
I’m watery-eyed.
All that in me is bitter and wrong
Wants to melt in the nectar of song;
I long to fly with my prayer
like a bird in the air.

My songs by their colours
please you.
This song itself by its powers
brings me before you.

I touch with my singing
feet I can’t reach with my mind.
Forgetting myself in music’s raving,
I call my master a friend.

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

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

I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a singer I come before thy presence. I touch by the edge of the far spread pinion of my song thy feet which I could never aspire to reach. And drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friend who art my lord.

56 (42)

We'd planned that you and I would idly float,
  Just float alone in a single boat:
With no one divine or human knowing our quest,
  Nor where or when we would come to rest.
    Adrift in a shoreless ocean
  The songs I'd sing for your delectation
  Would, like the waves, lack verbalization.
Yet you would silently smile at what they expressed.

Has the time for this not come? Must work still call,
  Here on the shore as the shadows fall?
Birds from across the sea in the fading light
  Are all to their nests now bound in flight.
    When will you come to the ghat
  To cut the mooring-rope so we can start
  And like the lingering sunset float
Our aimless vessel into the depths of the night?

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

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

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

seabirds come flying to their nests. Who knows when the chains will be off[57] and the boat, like the last glimmer of sunset, will vanish into the night?

57 (57)

Light, light, light, oh light
that fills the world!
Eye-bathing light by which
our hearts are swirled.
Light, light, light, oh light
that fills the world!
Eye-bathing light by which
our hearts are swirled.

Light that dances, brothers, rolling
our lives along;
Light that twangs our heartstrings like
the veena's song.
Sky awaking, planet laughing,
breezes swirled:
Light, light, light, oh light
that fills the world!
Eye-bathing light by which
our hearts are swirled.

Streams of light for sails of thousands
of butterflies;
Waves of light where dancing jasmines
buoyantly rise.
Streams of light for sails of thousands
of butterflies;
Waves of light where dancing jasmines
buoyantly rise.

Gold in the sky, jewels in the clouds
beyond compare;
Smiling trees, oh brothers, heaps
of joy in the air.
Overflowing heavenly river,
nectar hurled:
Light, light, light, oh light
that fills the world!
Eye-bathing light by which
our hearts are swirled.[58]

Light, my light, the world-filling light, the eye-kissing, heart-sweetening light! Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the centre of my life; the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love; the sky opens, the wind runs wild—laughter passes over the earth!

The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light. Lilies and jasmines surge up on the crest of the waves of light. The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems in profusion. Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and gladness without measure. Heaven's river[59] has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is all abroad.

58 (NOT INCLUDED IN THE PUBLISHED TEXT)

Give me more, more, more life
My spirit filling, my thirst quenching
    in your world, world
Give me more, more, more life
My spirit filling, my thirst quenching
    in your world, world
Give me more, more, more space

More light, more light
    lord, poured
        into these eyes
More light, more light
    lord, poured
        into these eyes
Give me more, more, more music,
    filling my flute with tunes

Give me more pain, more pain
Give me more consciousness
Tear open all doors, smash down all walls
Give me more pain, more pain
Give me more consciousness
Tear open all doors, smash down all walls
Give me more release, more release

More love more love,
    that the 'I' in me
        may drown
More love, more love,
    that the 'I' in me

may drown
Give me more, more, more streams
of nectar to drink
Give me more, more, more

More life, my lord, yet more, to quench my thirst and fill me. More space, my lord, yet more, freely to unfurl my being.

More light, my lord, yet more, to make my vision pure. More tunes, my lord, yet more, stirring the strings of my heart.

More pain, my lord, yet more, to lead me to a deeper consciousness. More knocks, my lord, yet more, to break open my prison door.

More love, my lord, yet more, to completely drown myself.[60] More of thee, my lord, yet more, in thy sweetness of grace abounding.

59 (76)

Every day I shall,
O master of my life,
Stand before you
Every day I shall,
O master of my life,
Stand before you
Pressing my hands together
O lord of the world
Pressing my hands together
O lord of the world
I shall stand before you
Every day I shall

Beneath your uncrossable sky,
alone and secluded
Beneath your uncrossable sky,
alone and secluded
With humble heart and tears in my eyes
I shall stand before you
Every day I shall

In this multidimensioned world of yours
On the shore of this ocean of action
In this multidimensioned world of yours

On the shore of this ocean of action
In the midst of world-scurrying crowds
I shall stand before you

When my work in this world
is finished
When my work in this world
is finished
O king of kings, silent and alone
I shall stand before you
Every day I shall

Day after day, O lord[61] of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face. With folded hands, O lord[62] of all worlds, shall I stand before thee face to face.

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

In this workaday world of thine, surging with toil and struggle, among bustling crowds shall I stand before thee face to face. And when my work will be done in this world, O king[63] of kings, alone and speechless shall I stand before thee face to face.

60 (81)

This worry comes to me again and again:
I've squandered time, let fruitless days go by.
But that's not true: in every time there's gain,
For you, O lord, whose all-encompassing eye
Sees all, can use each moment. Hidden deep
In my mind are secret seeds that you convert
To shoots, buds when coloured by you that leap
Into flowers; into those flowers you then insert
Juice of delicious fruits; in every seed
Potential. Sapped with utter exhaustion, I lay
Inert and half-asleep on my bed and thought
That all my time for work had drained away.
But then I woke; the light of morning caught
My eye; I looked at my garden; saw how hours
Of idleness had filled it with new flowers.

On many an idle day have I grieved over my lost times.[64] But they are never lost, my lord. Thou hast taken every moment of my life in thine own hands. Hidden in[65] the heart of things thou art nourishing seeds into sprouts, buds into blossoms, and ripening flowers into fruitfulness.

I was tired and sleeping on my idle bed and imagined all works had ceased. In the morning I woke up and found my garden full with wonders of flowers.

61 (69)

The wave upon wave of life that night and day
Rushes through every vein of this body of mine
Is the great triumph of life that, in the same way,
Dances worldwide with marvellous rhythm and line—
Is the same life that soundlessly, joyously through
Every pore of the earth's skin upwardly pushes
Blades of grass in their billions, stimulates new
Flowers and leaves—year after year it gushes
And swings like tides of birth and death that grow
And ebb on the world-ocean endlessly.
I feel that those ceaseless waves of life now flow
In my limbs, a source of immense strength in me.
That vast vibration, age after age advancing,
Through all my veins today is dancing, dancing.

The same stream of life that courses through my veins night and day runs through all the world and dances in rhythmic measures. It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers. It is the same life that is rocked in the worldwide ocean-cradle of birth and death, in ebb and flow. I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world-life.[66] And I feel with pride the life-throb[67] of all ages dancing in my blood this moment.

62 (73)

Freedom through disengagement—that is not
My way. I'll taste it rather in countless chains
Of ecstatic delight. Filling the earthen pot
Of the world again and again, your nectar rains
Down in myriad scents and colours. The flame
Of your temple-lamp ignites millions of wicks
That light my entire world. It's not my game
To shut like a yogi the door of my senses. Tricks
Of joy that are present in sights and scents and songs
Are where I'll look for your own joy at the centre.
Deluded perhaps I am, but freedom throngs
Forth from the world-consuming fire of my rapture.
    Freedom, for me, only becomes complete
    When passion and devotion's fruit meet.

Deliverance[68] is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in the thousand bonds of delight. Thou ever pourest for me the fresh draught of thy nectar of various colours and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim. My world will light its hundred different lamps with thy flame and place them before the altar of thy temple. No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. All the delights of sight and hearing and touch will burn into illumination of joy and all my desires will ripen into fruits of love.

63 (43)

I didn't, lord, think of myself as part
Of the whole cosmos; whenever you—master
Of all—without my knowing stole into my heart
On many glad days, I smiled. Those instants, long after,
Could be read as signs of infinity. Observing them
Now, I see in them all your signature, strewn
In the dust of so many memories, a frame
Of ephemeral pleasure or sorrow encasing each one.
You didn't, lord, ignore or turn away
From the childish house I built in the dust.
The sound of your chariot-wheels that in my play
I caught from time to time as you rode past
    Is now the world-encompassing music I hear,
    In earth, moon, sun—ringing out loud and clear.

The day was when I did not keep myself in readiness for thee; and entering my heart unbidden even as one of the motley crowd, unknown to me, my king, thou didst stamp thy seal of eternity upon many a fleeting moment of my life. And today when by chance I light upon them and see thy signature, I find they lay scattered in the dust mixed with the memory of joys and sorrows of my trivial days forgotten. Thou didst not turn thee back in contempt from my childish play among dust, and the steps that I heard in my playroom are the same that are echoing from sun to sun.

64 (82)

O Great Lord, Time in your hands is unending.
Beyond all counting, days and nights arrive
And pass, ages forming and then expending.
You do not permit delay, yet never strive
For speed. You know how to wait. For hundreds of years
You slowly prepare the blooming of one bud.
Time is not in our hands; our jostling careers
Grasp at what, once missed, can't be made good.
Our service to you, Lord, only comes after
Tasks we spend too long to complete. Empty
Of gifts, alas, now falls our plate for your pooja.
But when at wrong moments, fearful and hasty,
We rush to you, we find we are not too late:
There's time still left for us; it doesn't abate.

Time is endless in thy hands, my lord. There is none to count thy minutes. Days and nights pass and ages bloom and fade like flowers. Thou knowest how to wait. Thy centuries follow each other perfecting a small wild flower.

We have no time to lose, and therefore with us there is such a mad scramble for opportunities. We are too poor to be late. And thus it is that time goes by in paying[69] my dues to every querulous[70] claimant and thine[71] altar remains empty of all offerings to the last. At the end of the day I hasten in fear lest thy gate be shut but I find that yet there is time.

65 (75)

Even when you have given, lord, all
That dwellers in this mortal sphere might need
To meet their hopes, your hands can never fall
Empty—for back in the end your gifts must speed.
A river flows without end: when all its work
Is done, it still has water left daily
To wash your feet. A flower can never lack
Scent for your pooja, even after completely
Filling the world. Yet what you take as pooja
Can never leave the world short. The songs
Of a poet speak to others in whatever
Way makes sense to them; but something belongs,
    Finally, only to you: a last word
    That runs to your arms and only by you is heard.

Thy gifts to us mortals fulfil all our needs and yet run back to thee undiminished. The river has its everyday work to do and hastens through fields and hamlets; yet its incessant stream is engaged in the washing[72] of thy feet. The flower sweetens the air with its perfume, yet its last service is to offer itself to thee. It is never a performance of thy worship to rob and make the world poorer. From words uttered by the poet men take meanings as it suits their needs—yet[73] their last meaning always points to thee.

66 (NOT INCLUDED IN THE PUBLISHED TEXT)

In every person's hand you've put a rod
Of justice. Everyone without exception
Must enact your discipline, O God,
O king of kings. May I this fearsome action,
This stern honour carry with my head
Devoutly bowed. May I in this your work
Never fear anyone. May I instead
Of weakly condoning evil never shirk
Your harsh commands. May truth's words on my tongue
Flash like a sword's sharp blade at your call. May
I uphold your name, taking my place among
Those who apply your judgements. They must pay
    Who misdeeds do or misdeeds countenance—
    With wrath like fire that burns up grass at once.

Thy rod of justice thou hast given to every man[74] on this earth and thy command is to strike where it is due. Let me take up that harsh office from thy hand with bent head and meek heart. Where forgiveness is sickly and self-indulgent give me the strength to be cruel. Let truth flash out from my tongue like a keen sword at thy signal and let me pay my best homage to thee by righting wrong with all my power. Let thy wrath burn him into ashes who does what is unjust or suffers injustice to be done.

67 (4)

Ruler of my life, day and night your touch
Is on all my limbs: bringing this always to mind
I'll keep my body pure. And because you reach
My mind and all minds with your knowledge, I'll send
—Remembering this, and applying my every effort—
Each lie and falsehood far from all
My deepest imaginings, all my thought.
Recalling always how you sit so utterly still
In my heart, I'll discipline every devious
Hatred in me, all waverings from the good—
And keep unspotted and blooming with fullness
My capacity for love: be always what I should.
  Knowing to the core your strength's in all I do,
  I'll be, in all my works, a publicist for you.

Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that *thy* living touch is upon all my limbs. I shall ever aspire to keep all untruths out from my thoughts knowing that *thou* art the highest truth that hast kindled the light of reason in my mind. I shall ever struggle to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love open knowing that thou hast thy seat in the inmost shrine of my heart. And it shall ever be my endeavour to reveal thee in all my actions knowing that it is *thy* power which gives me strength to act.

68 (67)

You are the sky; you also are the nest.
Beautiful is the intense love you bring,

In varied scents and sounds and colours dressed,
Charming us always, forming a safe ring.
This is where Dawn, holding in her right hand
A golden dish on which a garland lies,
Silently comes to place its sweetness round
The forehead of the earth at each sunrise;
This is where Evening crosses the cattle-free
Pastures with her golden pitcher to lift
Waters of peace out of the western sea.
But you are also where our souls drift,
  The sky whose pure expression is unstirred
  By day, night, life, scent, colour or any word.

Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well. O thou beautiful,[75] there in the nest it is thy love that encloses the soul with colours and sounds and odours. There comes the morning with the golden basket on her right hand bearing the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth. And there comes the evening over the lonely meadows deserted by herds, through trackless paths, carrying cool draughts of peace[76] in her golden pitcher from the western ocean of rest.

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

69 (40)

For so long, for so long such drought,
Indra, god of rain, in this heart of mine.
I scan the bleak horizon—nix, nought,
Nowhere even a fleck of a watery line—
Nothing anywhere bringing a cloud-cool,
Blue-green hint of impending rain.
If you so wish, lord, bring cruel,
Destructive, raucous, thunderous storms of pain,
Whip me with curved lightning to strip back
This still, sullen, carapace of heat, so vast,
So bitter, so lonely. Look at me, lord, like
A mother when she helplessly gazes with moist,

Tender eyes at her child on horrible days
On which its father's foulest rages blaze.

The rain has held back for days and days, my God, in my arid heart. The horizon is fiercely naked—not the thinnest cover of a soft cloud, not the vaguest hint of a distant cool shower. Send thy angry storm, dark with death, if it is thy wish, and with lashes of lightning startle the sky from end to end. But, call back, my lord, call back this pervading silent heat, still and keen and cruel, burning the heart with dire despair. Let the cloud of grace bend low from above like a tearful look of the mother on the day of the father's wrath.

70 (95)

1.
The moment when I first came through life's gate
Into our stunning dwelling-place on earth,
I didn't know a thing. What power, what fate
Had laid me in this enigma, like the birth
At night, in some vast forest, of a bud?
Yet when at dawn I raised my head and saw
With open eyes, at once I understood
That this our planet with its treasure-store
Of joys and pains—this place unknowable,
Unfathomable—is—just like a mother's
Breast—fully familiar after all.
The power—formless, huge—that ignorance smothers
Takes on a shape I didn't need to fear:
A mother's living presence, tender, near.

2.
Death is unknown too. These days at times
I quake and shudder with the fear of it.
To have to leave this world—the horror climbs,
Brings tears to my eyes and makes me want to pit
My strength against it, hold life with both arms.
O fool—who was it gave you—long before
You wanted anything—the world's sweet charms?
When Death dawns, the unknowable will once more
Be known—you'll recognize his face. Surely
If I have loved this life so very much
I'll love Death too when I can see him clearly?

A child—for fear of losing the warm touch
Of his mother's breast—begins to wail. But then,
Moved to her other breast, he's calm again.[77]

I was not aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life. What was the power that opened me out upon this vast mystery like a bud in the forest at midnight?[78] When in the morning I looked upon the light I felt in a moment that I was no stranger in this world, that the inscrutable power without name and form had taken[79] me in its arms in the form of my own mother. Even so, in death the same unknown will appear as ever known to me. And because I love this life, I know I will love death as well. The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away but finds[80] its consolation in the left one at the very next moment.[81]

71 (25)

When fits of tiredness overwhelm me, snuff
The flickering candle-flame of light within;
When pooja's lotus-stem's not strong enough
And bit by bit exhaustion closes in;
Then even so let me not be afraid,
Let hope remain unbroken and awake,
That through this sapping night my trust be laid
On you, that prostrate in the dust I stake
My all, unflinching, summoning sleep to bring
Me where I praise you feebly, body, mind
And means so poor I cannot dance and sing.
Into the eyes of day, that they may find,
On waking up, a surge of morning light,
Please pour the blank of sleep, the dark of night.

Let me never lose hold of hope when the mist of depression[82] steals upon me blotting out the light that is in my heart and the flower of love droops in lassitude. In the night of weariness let me give myself up to sleep without struggle, resting my trust upon thee. Let me not force my flagging spirit into a poor preparation of thy worship.[83] It

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

72 (35)

A fearless place where everyone walks tall,
Free to share knowledge; a land uncrippled,
Whole, uncramped by any confining wall;
Where speech wells from the heart; where rippled
By millions of varied aspirations a great
River of action surges through an infinity
Of channels, rushes and gushes in fullest spate
In all directions to every home and locality;
A place where reason's flow is not soaked up
By barren desert-sands of bigotry,
Where niggling rules and dogmas do not sap
Its vigour, but joy in work and thought has mastery—
With pitiless blows, Father, from your hand,
Bring India to that heaven; wake this land.

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; where knowledge is free; where the world has not been frittered into fragments by narrow domestic walls; where words come out from the depth of truth; where sleepless striving stretches its strenuous arms towards perfection; where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way in the dreary desert sand[84] of dead habit, and where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening[85] thought and action —there wake up my country[86] into that heaven of freedom, my father!

73 (36)

This is my last appeal to you, O Lord:
That from my heart of hearts you cut my feeble
Failings out with your unflinching sword.
And make me able to withstand my idle
Pleasures by making them hard to bear. And give
My sorrow the power calmly, smilingly
To ignore itself. And make my devotion brave
Enough to shine in my work, bloom in its quality,
Goodness and love. And steel the small man in me

Not to be envious, not to grovel at the feet
Of the grand. And from all triviality
Train me to rise up high and stand apart.
    Make me a hero—one whose steady brow
    Will day and night before you always bow.

This is my prayer to thee, my lord—strike,[87] strike at the root of all poverty in my heart. Give me the strength to lightly bear my joys and sorrows. Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service. Give me the strength never to disown the poor and bend my knees before insolent might. Give me the strength to raise my mind high above all daily trifles. And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love.

74 (41)

Where and why are you standing and waiting,
    Shadowy, hidden by all?
Dusty wayfarers push you aside
    Allow you no kind of role.
I pick you flowers, sit under a tree,
    And lay them out on a tray:
Each passing wayfarer takes one or two—
    They're gone by the end of the day.

First morning, then noon, then evening fades,
    Sleepiness drags at my eyes;
I'm mocked by all as they make their way home—
    Shame makes me ill at ease.
I sit and hide my face like a beggar,
    Pulling my sari tight round:
If asked what I want, I say not a word
    And lower my eyes to the ground.

How can I pluck up the courage to say
    It's you, only you I want?
That I watch the road day and night, in hope
    It's you for whom I'm meant?
My poverty's all I can offer to you
    As a tribute to your wealth:
Held back by pride from telling a soul,
    I survive by silent stealth.

I look in the distance and think to myself
This grass will be your seat:
There'll be when you come a sudden to-do—
The lamps will all be alight.
On your chariot glittering banners will fly,
And flurries will sound on the flute.
Filled with your splendour, the earth will quake:
My spirit will dance about.

The wayfarers then will watch you, stunned,
As your chariot comes to a stop.
You'll get down smiling and scoop me up
From the dust to your chariot-top.
In rags, unadorned, I'll ride to your left,
With shame, pride, joy unfurled;
With quivering nerves, like a trembling creeper
I'll stand before all the world.

But now the day's done—no chariot's here:
Oh where do its wheels spin?
Meanwhile such crowds have passed in droves
With so much racket and din!
Are you still waiting, shadowy, mute,
Behind all the others, alone?
Must a beggar-girl's shame be shed in tears?
Will you leave her in rags on her own?

Where dost thou stand behind them all, my lover, hiding thyself in the shadow? They push thee and pass thee by on the dusty road, taking thee for naught. I wait here weary hours spreading my offerings for thee, while passers-by come[88] and take my flowers one by one and my basket is nearly empty.

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

Oh, how, indeed, could I tell them that for *thee* I wait, and thou hast promised to come? How[89] could I utter for shame that I keep for my dowry this absolute poverty of mine for thy royal favour of acceptance? Ah,[90] I hug this pride in the secret of my heart.

I sit on the grass and gaze upon the sky and dream of the sudden splendour of thy arrival—with[91] all the lights ablaze, golden pennons flying over thy car, and they at the roadside standing agape when they see thee come down from thy seat to raise me from the dust and set at thy side this ragged beggar girl atremble with shame and pride, like a creeper in a summer breeze.

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

75 (50)

I'd been out begging from village to village
When you came out in your carriage of gold.
  Dreamlike and dazzling,
  Dress so amazing—
Only a king could be so bold!

'My bad times are over,' I thought, 'I needn't
Go back to roaming from door to door.'
  I rushed out keenly—
  Assumed you'd throw grandly,
For me to snatch greedily, alms galore.

You stopped your carriage, got down to approach me—
I felt as your smile shone into my eyes
  My cares were over:
  Your hand came nearer—
'Give something to me.' That *was* a surprise!

That you, an emperor, should beg from a beggar!
I looked to the ground in confusion and pain.
  That you should be lacking!
  You must be joking!
But then from my bag I picked out a grain.

I turned out the bag in my hut. What's this?
Amidst my gleanings, a grain of gold!
  I'd given near-nothing!
  My eyes were streaming—
You should have had all that my bag can hold!

I went abegging from door to door in the village path, when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream and I wondered who was this king of all kings!

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

The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile. I felt that the greatest good fortune of my life had come at last to me—till of a sudden[92] thou didst stretch thy right hand and ask 'What hast thou to give to me?'[93]

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

But what was my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor to find a least little grain of gold shining among the poor heap! I bitterly[94] wept and wished that I had heart to give thee my all.

76 (51)

Our work was over for the day, and now the light was fading;
We did not think that anyone would come before the morning.
  All the houses round about
  Dark and shuttered for the night—
One or two among us said, 'The King of Night is coming.'
We just laughed at them and said, 'No one will come till morning.'

And when on outer doors we seemed to hear a knocking noise,
We told ourselves, 'That's only the wind, they rattle when it blows.'
  Lamps snuffed out throughout the house,
  Time for rest and peacefulness—
One or two amongst us said, 'His heralds are at the doors.'
We just laughed and said, 'The wind rattles them when it blows.'

And when at dead of night we heard a strange approaching clangour,
We thought, sleep-fuddled as we were, it was only distant thunder.
  Earth beneath us live and trembling,
  Stirring as if it too were waking—

One or two were saying, ‘Hear how the wheels of his chariot clatter.’
Sleepily we said, ‘No, no, that’s only distant thunder.’

And when with night still dark there rose a drumming loud and near,
Somebody called to all, ‘Wake up, wake up, delay no more!’
Everyone shaking now with fright,
Arms wrapped close across each heart—
Somebody cried in our ears, ‘O see his royal standard rear!’
At last we started up and said, ‘We must delay no more.’

O where are the lights, the garlands, where are the signs of celebration?
Where is the throne? The King has come, we made no preparation!
Alas, what shame, what destiny,
No court, no robes, no finery—
Somebody cried in our ears, ‘O vain, O vain this lamentation:
With empty hands, in barren rooms, offer your celebration.’

Fling wide the doors and let him in to the lowly conch’s boom;
In deepest dark the King of Night has come with wind and storm.
Thunder crashing across the skies,
Lightning setting the clouds ablaze—
Drag your tattered blankets, let the yard be spread with them:
The King of Grief and Night has come to our land with wind and storm.[95]

The night darkened. Our day’s work[96] had been done. We thought that the last guest had arrived for the night and the doors in the village were all shut. Only some said, the king was to come. We laughed and said ‘No, it cannot be!’

It seemed there were knocks at the door and we said it was nothing but the wind. We put out the lamp and lay to sleep. Only some said ‘It is[97] the messenger!’ We laughed and said ‘No, it must be the wind!’

There came a sound in the dead of the night. We sleepily thought it was the distant thunder. The earth shook, the walls rocked, and it troubled us in our sleep. Only some said, it was the sound of wheels. We said in a drowsy grumble ‘No,[98] it must be the rumbling of clouds.’

The night was still dark when the drum sounded. The voice came ‘Wake up, delay not!’ [99] We pressed our hands on our hearts and

shuddered with fear. Some said ‘Lo,[100] there is the king’s flag!’ We stood up on our feet and cried ‘There is no time for delay!’

The king has come—but where are lights, where are wreaths! Where is the throne to seat him! Oh, shame, oh utter shame! Where is the hall, the decorations! Some said ‘Vain[101] is this cry! Greet him with empty hands, into thy rooms all bare!’

Open the doors, let the conch-shells[102] be sounded! In the depth of the night has come the king of our dark dreary house. The thunder roars in the sky. The darkness shudders with lightning.[103] Bring out thy tattered piece of mat and spread it on the courtyard. With the storm has come of a sudden our king of the fearful night.

77 (52)

I thought I’d ask you for—
I didn’t have the pluck—
    the garland you wore
Last night round your neck:
I didn’t have the pluck.
I thought in the morning
    at your leaving
The frayed garland would
        be lying
    at the foot of the bed.
Like a beggar I went to look
    when dawn broke
    because last night I could
        not speak.
I didn’t have the pluck.

No, it’s not, no, it’s not
    a garland—
It’s your sword:
    blazing with light,
    heavy and hard
        as thunder:
It’s your sword.
Frail light through the window
    falls on my pillow:
Birds with their twittering sound
    ask me what I’ve found.

No, it's not, no, it's not
    a garland
        or plate
    or perfumed water-pot:
It's your fierce sword.

So I think and ask, what's this,
    what's this you've given?
Where can it be hidden?
    I have no space!
        What's this,
    what's this you've given?
Weak as I am and shy,
        how can I
    wear such a thing?
To store it in my heart
    will cause me hurt:
    Yet I'll try—
Bearing with pride
    the pain of your sword.

In this life from now on
    I won't fear.
In my work from now on
        you'll win.
    I won't fear.
Death will be my friend
Because of what this morning I found
    in my house.
I'll choose like a bride to stay very near
        your sword,
and because it destroys
        all ties
    I won't fear.

King of my heart,
    if you reappear,
I'll no longer be showily dressed—
I'll keep my body clear.
I'll no longer hide in my home,
I'll no longer slump in the dust,
Weeping for you to come—
    I'll feel no shame.
You've given me your sword to wear.
I'll keep my body clear.

I thought I should ask of thee—but I dared not—the rose wreath thou hast on thy neck. Thus I waited for the morning, when thou didst depart,[104] to find a few fragments on the bed. And like a beggar I searched in the dawn only for a stray petal or two.

Ah me, what is it I find! What token left of thy love! It is no flower, no spices, no vase of perfumed water. It is thy mighty sword flashing as a flame, heavy as a bolt of thunder. The young light of morning comes through the window and spreads itself upon thy bed. The morning bird twitters and asks 'Woman, what hast thou got?' No, it is no flower,[105] nor spices, nor a vase of perfumed water —it is thy dreadful sword.

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

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

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

78 (80)

I'm like a cloud drifting,
At close of autumn
  Lost in your sky.
You dazzle for ever,
But still haven't melted
My darkness to vapour—
  You've passed me by:
No touch of your sunbeams,
No light intermixing,

Condemned to be separate
    I'm left high and dry.

If that is your fancy,
If that is your whimsy,
    Then try a new game.
Play with this remnant,
This trivial fragment,
Till I and your glitter
    Are one and the same
Let winds blow my colours
Hither and thither,
Till jumped up from nothing
    I match your name.

Then when your playing
Is over and done with,
    Let me then fall
As tears in deep darkness—
Becoming at morning
Nothing but pureness,
    No colours at all—
And a bright sea of openness,
Smiling with coolness,
Will absorb my whiteness
    Beyond recall.

I am like a remnant of a cloud of autumn uselessly roaming in thy sky, my sun ever-glorious! Thy touch has not yet melted my vapour making me one with thy light and thus I count months and years separated from thee.

If this be thy wish[106] and if it is thy play then take this fleeting emptiness of mine, paint it with colours, gild it with gold, float it on the wanton wind and spread it in varied wonders.

And again when it shall be thy wish to end this play at night I shall melt and vanish away in the dark and in the smile of the white morning shall permeate a coolness[107] of purity transparent.

79 (78)

On the day of Creation, when
    Our Maker's work was done,

In deep blue space, the stars, like blooms,
Blossomed one by one.
The gods now took their seats to view
The novel state of play—
To hear as well the choir of stars
That rocked the Milky Way.
‘Bravo!’ they cried, ‘what joy, what fun,
So grand a show to view:
The magic of the star-choir’s beat
Swings moon, sun, planets too.’

A member of the assembly then
Suddenly pointed out
A gap in the garland, a bloom of fire
It should not be without.
As if a veena’s string had snapped,
The concert now was stopped:
A team of gods set out to find
The star that had been lopped.
‘By that star’s great light’ they chorused,
‘Heaven itself was blessed!
It was the brightest of the lot—
It sang the very best.’

Since then our human world as well
Has sought that missing star.
Unseen by day, it seems at night
To dwell too high, too far.
We stare with sleepless eyes, we yearn
For that star more than any:
We say, ‘Our world is blind because
It’s missing from the many.’
The rest of the midnight stars, however,
Silently laugh at this.
‘The search is false: the choir’s complete:
Nothing is amiss.’

When the creation was new and all the stars shone in their pristine splendour the gods held their assembly in the sky and sang ‘Oh, the picture of perfection! the joy unalloyed!’ Then[108] suddenly someone cried—‘It seems that somewhere there is a break in the chain of light and one of the stars has been lost.’ The golden string of their

harp snapped, their song stopped and they cried in dismay—‘Yes that lost star was the best, she was the glory of all heavens!’

From that day the search is unceasing for her and the cry goes on from one to the other, that in *her* the world has lost its one joy! Only in the deepest silence of night the stars smile and whisper among themselves—‘Vain is this seeking! Unbroken perfection is over all!’

80 (83)

I’ll lave your golden plate today
with suffering’s stream of tears
I’ll lave your golden plate today
with suffering’s stream of tears
I’ll form from them, O mother,
a string of pearls for your neck
I’ll form from them, O mother
a string of pearls for your neck
I’ll lave your golden plate

Moon and sun are a garland
round your feet
Moon and sun are a garland
round your feet
But on your breast will gleam
my suffering’s jewels
I’ll lave your golden plate

Wealth and crops
are yours to use as you wish
giving them to me
taking them away
as you please

My suffering is a private thing—
you know the gems that are real
My suffering is a private thing—
you know the gems that are real
With your beneficent grace
you’ll buy these jewels of mine
I’ll lave your golden plate

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

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

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

81 (38)

I want you, you—
This is what I seem to be always
    saying in my mind.
Everything else
That I go around striving to find
Seems false, false—
    I want you.

Like the night
    hiding within itself
        a prayer for the light,
So in the turbulent depths of my mind
    I want you.
Like peace longing with all its might
    for itself
        when storms strike,
So even when it's you I wound,
    I want you.

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

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

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

82 (37)

I thought that all that lay ahead of me
had reached its end;
My path was lost, my work was done,
All means exhausted that were mine to spend,
And worn-out life in grubby clothes
In dull retreat was all that now remained.

But what is this unending playfulness I see?
What lurking newness flows?
As old words die up on my lips,
Within my heart a new song subtly grows,
and where my old path ends
You show me fresh, untrodden shores.

I thought that my voyage was at its end at the last limit of my power—that[109] the path before me was closed, provisions were all exhausted and the time had come for me to take shelter in a silent obscurity. But I find that thy will knows no end in me. And when old words die out on the tongue new melodies break forth from the heart and where the old tracks are all lost a new country[110] is revealed with its wonders.

83 (58)

As if with all raginis my last song is filled—
As if its tune can all my joys unfold:
The joy with which the soil of the earth smiles,
That in the restless trees and leaves uncurls;
The joy with which those close companions, life and death
Wander insanely all across the earth—
These are the joys which in my closing song unfold.

The joy that comes in clothes of raucous storms,
Whose laughter shakes awake life's sleeping limbs;
The joy that waits to shine in sorrow's tears
Or blooms in the blood-red lotus-gifts that pain confers;
The joy that scatters all things in the dust,
Which no last word has ever quite expressed—
These are the joys which in my closing song unfold.

Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song—the joy that makes the earth flow over in riotous excesses of verdure, the joy that sets

the twin brothers—life and death—into mad capers over the whole world, the joy that sweeps in with the tempest shaking and waking all life with wild laughter, the joy that sits still with its tears on the open red lotus of pain, and the joy that throws everything it has upon the dust and knows not a word.

Additional Poems

1 (92)

One day this precious gift of sight will cease—
My last blink will forever seal my eyes.
The following day will dawn the same as this,
The world will wake to see the same sunrise.
The noisy play of the world will carry on—
In homes, the time will gladly, sadly pass.
Thinking of this, towards this world I turn
And look at it with new-found eagerness.
The simple things that didn't seem to count
All now take on a value beyond price:
Places or lives of which the least amount
Of note was taken now more than suffice.
    Away with all I've got or didn't get!
    Give me what's humble: things that I forget.[1]

2 (88)

Broken temple-god!
The strings for your hymn are torn from the veena
No more does the conch
Proclaim to the sky at evening your worship.
    Your temple is solemn and still—
Broken temple-god!

Deserted your house:
Now and then floats the wistful fragrance
Of new spring leaves.
It tells of flowers that will not form your pooja
    Or be placed at your painted feet.
Deserted your house.

Your bereft priest
Wanders around all day as if exiled,

Begging for alms.
In the shade of woods at twilight he lingers,
Famished the whole day through.
Your bereft priest.

Broken temple-god!
So many feasts have passed you in silence,
So many nights without praise!
On the day of Bijaya[2] so many new idols
Have sunk—more than I can say.
Broken temple-god![3]

3 (86)

You sent an envoy of death tonight
to my door:
Bringing your call, he travelled across
to this shore.

The night's so dark, my heart's unsteady
with fear;
But lamp in hand, I'll open the door
to him here.
You sent an envoy of death tonight
to my door.

With folded hands I'll honour him, tearful
with grief.
I'll lay at his feet the whole wealth
of my life.

Obeying your order, he'll leave: my dawn
will be grey.
Alone, I'll sit and submit myself
to your sway.
You sent an envoy tonight. He came,
went away.

4 (87)

She's in my house no more, no more, no more.
I wander about, I do not find her here.
What's absent from this little patch of floor
Is gone for ever: she won't reappear.
Your house is huge, its walls encompass all:
I've come, O lord, to search and find her there.

Beneath your sky, as evening shadows fall,
I stand with tearful eyes: I wait and stare.
No face, no hope, no thirst, no happiness
Can ever, ever be lost from that vast realm.
I've brought my heart to you in my distress—
Give her, give her, she's gone, so overwhelm
    The gap in my house with heavenly streams of such
    Wholeness that they can never lose her touch.[4]

5 (61)

The sleep that comes to Khoka's eye,[5]
    Banishing all woes—
Can anyone tell me where it lives
    And how it comes and goes?
        I've heard that in some land of story,
        In forests firefly-bright yet murky
        Two parul-buds[6] there make a cosy
            Nest for sleep to lie.
It floats from there to Khoka's eye,
    That's how it comes and goes.

The smiles that come to Khoka's face
    Waking him out of sleep,
Can anyone say from which far land
Those sunny smiles leap?
    I've heard that in some cloud of autumn,
    Dewy infant sunbeams glisten—
    When Khoka's morning smiles open,
        They bear those sunbeams' trace.
That's how in his lips and face
    Those sunny smiles leap.

The gentle tenderness that brings
    Such grace to Khoka's skin,
Can anyone say where once it hid
    Before its birth within?
        The silent grace that in his mother's
        Body from her youth still lingers,
        That wordlessly such sweetness utters,
            That's from where it springs—
The gentle tenderness that brings
    Such grace to Khoka's skin.

The blessings with whose kind caress
    Khoka is wrapped around,

Can anyone tell me how they fell
Like fresh rain to the ground?
Springtime's new and soothing breezes,
Fragrance that the monsoon carries,
Paddy-fields that autumn hurries—
All of these express
The blessings with whose kind caress
Khoka is wrapped around.

Look at Khoka's fresh young form—
His face, his open eyes.
Tell me who will bear his weight
And where that cradle lies?
The One upon whose lap is rocking
The world with its resplendent cladding,
And sun, moon and stars is holding—
He will keep him warm.
Look at Khoka's fresh young form—
His face, his open eyes.

6 (62)

When I put a colourful toy
Into your pink hand,
Then I understand
Why in water and clouds
Such colour shines
And why on flowers are drawn
Such colourful lines:
This I understand
When I put a colourful toy
Into your pink hand.

When I sing to you
And make you dance,
Then in my heart at once
I know why in the leaves
I hear a song.
And why the river's ripples
Purl along:
This I know at once
When I sing to you
And make you dance.

When in your eager hand
I put sweet cream

And soon a sticky stream
Daubs your face and arms,
I suddenly know
Sweets that in fruits and purest
Waters flow:
This is how they seem
When in your eager hand
I put sweet cream.

When I stoop down to kiss
Your upturned face,
In how your smiles race
I discover the same joy
In light from the sky
And nectar that breezes rush
To my heart and eye:
I soar to that happy place
When I stoop down to kiss
Your upturned face.

7 (102)

I brag that I know you to one and all
And many would say the pictures I draw
Reveal what you are in various guises.
Then someone or other pipes up, raises
The question, 'Who *is* this?' How can I answer?
'I haven't a clue,' is all I can stammer.
They mock me for that, but I don't consider
I'm guilty of error.

In song after song, I've told such tales
About you: I can't keep secret what fills
My mind. Someone or other chips in,
'But what do the songs you write all *mean*?'
What can I give them by way of an answer?
'Search me!' is just about all I can mutter.
They jeer; you look on benignly and titter.
You see no blunder.

That I don't know you—how to keep up
That claim? At random moments you peep,
Only to give me the slip. On silvery
Nights when the moon is full, you nearly
Throw off your veil: for less than a blink
I see you, know who you are, I think.

My heart's aflutter, my eyelids quiver—
    You've taken over!

I've wanted often to rope you down
With words. I've wanted to make you my own
With songs. The golden traps I've set
With metres! The quite exquisitely flat
Seventh I've played on my flute! I doubt
If I've ever caught you. But do what's what.
Elude me, steal me, it doesn't matter.
    You're still my treasure.[7]

8 (64)

Among the reeds along the deserted river,
    I called and asked her, 'Why
Do you slowly take this path, your sari-end
    Hiding your lamp from every eye?
    The lamps in my house aren't yet alight:
    Put it there, my dear, for the night.'

Raising her dark eyes in the gathering dusk
        to briefly glance at my face,
She said, 'I want to float my lamp, that's why
    I've come tonight to this lonely place.'
    I watched the lamp from the reeds and saw
    It idly drifting far from the shore.

I called her over to ask as twilight turned
        to night's complete gloom,
'If all the lamps in your house are lit, why bring
    This one outside? What for? For whom?
    Why not leave it there for the night?'

Raising her eyes again, looking as if
        her thoughts were far away,
She said, 'I wanted this lamp to shine in the empty
    Dark sky at the end of the day.'
    I looked up into the sky to stare
    At her lamp now idly flickering there.

In the small hours of that pitch-black moonless night,
        I asked her, edging near,
'What has impelled you, my friend, why is the lamp
    You hold so close to your breast so dear?
    The lamps in my house aren't yet alight:
    Why not leave it there for the night?'

Raising her dark eyes, looking at me
for a brief moment, she said,
‘I’ve brought this lamp so that its part now can
In a great lamp-festival be played.’
I gazed at the lamp on the river and saw,
Idly glittering, thousands more.

9 (48)

The waves rose high beneath the sky,
The birds trilled out their song;
Pendulous blooms festooned the path
On both sides, all along.
The sunrise tinged the morning clouds
But none of us paid heed:
Distracted by our own affairs,
We rushed ahead at speed.

We sang no songs for the joy of it,
We didn’t indulge in play;
We looked not left nor right, nor at
Bazaars along the way.
None of us spoke a word or laughed
Or let our hair hang down;
The hotter it grew the faster we flew
Until it was nearly noon.

The sun was in mid-sky, and doves
Filled forests with their sound;
A fierce hot breeze blew through the trees
And swirled dry leaves around;
And herd-boys in the banyan’s shade
In heavy slumber sank;
And I then on a patch of green
Lay down on the riverbank.

The others in our party took
One look at me and sneered;
Turned up their noses, kept to the path
And not for a moment veered.
I saw them fade in the dense shade
Of trees far down the road:
Many the fields and lands to which
They must have sternly strode.

Good luck on your grim path of woe,
Good luck as you hold to it!

I would if I could rejoin you, but
    My heart would not be in it.
I'd rather stretch and blithely bask
    In bottomless ignominy—
In birdsong's hoot and twirls on the flute
    And rustlings in the spinney!

I've handed my lazy body now
    To Mother Nature's love:
I take delight in the dance of light
    In the shady bamboo-grove.
The scent that scuds from mango-buds
    Has made me weak at the knees—
By dozing tugged, my eyes are drugged
    By the hum of buzzing bees.

This green and sunny life of ease
    Has stolen into my heart;
I now forget precisely what
    Impelled our journey's start.
I've poured into my consciousness
    Shadow and song and scent:
Who knows when into total sleep
    I slid, exhausted, spent.

When from the blank of sleep at last
    My eyes began to clear,
I found *you* standing at my head:
    Oh when did you appear?
Your smile it seemed had enveloped me
    While I unknowing slept—
When still I thought the path for me
    Many more leagues had kept.

And all of us when we set out
    Had meant to stay alert;
And if by night we weren't in sight
    Of further shores, we thought
That we would never reach the goal
    For which our hearts had bled;
But when I stopped, I found that you
    Had come to me instead.

10 (54)

I didn't ask for anything
    I didn't speak my name.

When you took your leave of me,
Bashful I became.

I sat alone beside the well,
Deep in the neem's[8] shade;
Others had with water-pots
Returned to where they stayed.

They had on leaving called to me,
'Come, it's noon, it's late.'
Somehow I could not shake off
My silent, pensive state.

I didn't hear your footsteps when
You hobbled close and said,
With weary voice and plaintive eyes,
'I'm thirsty, nearly dead—'

At once I rose and rushed to fetch
Fresh water from the well
To pour into your outstretched hands,
Your thirstiness to quell.

Koels[9] somewhere chirped amidst
The rustling of the trees
Acacia-blooms along the paths
Scented the midday breeze.

When you asked me for my name,
I suddenly felt shy
What had I done that you should want
A name to know me by?

I had simply given you
Some water from the well:
To ask my name rewarded me
More than I can tell.

It's late and by the well-side still
Koels keep up their tune;
The neem still rustles; I just sit
And linger long past noon.

11 (47)

At night I watched for him to come:
With dawn now comes the fear
That I will now fall fast asleep

And he will then appear—
Suddenly on the path he'll be,
Standing at my gate:
He knows the path and house, despite
Their murky, jungly state.
O friends, I beg of you,
Don't stop him; let him through.

And if then at his footsteps' tread
I don't on my own awake,
I ask, dear friends, that none of you
Should my deep slumber break.
Nor do I want to be aroused
By morning's grand birdsong,
Its burst of light, its breeze that drives
The bakul-scent along.[10]
Let me, please, sleep on,
Unstirred by anyone.

For oh the sleep is best from which
Unconsciously I rise
Because I sense the touch of his hand
That on me gently lies:
All slumberous confusion cleared
By seeing his soft gaze—
The radiant light of his smiling face
Setting my smile ablaze!
A vision that will seem
To match my wildest dream.

Oh may he shine before my eyes
Before all other light!
Oh may his beauty be the dawn
That ends my lonely night.
And with my first astonished joy
At seeing his tender stare,
Oh may my soul leap up in bliss
And find him everywhere.
Please none of you wake me:
Let him be the first I see.

12 (60)

On the shore of the world-sea,
Children play.
Endless sky stretching

Above their heads unmoving;
Deep blue water foaming—
    Dances all day.
Merrily on the shore
    They meet and play.

They build their sandcastles,
    They play with shells.
The leaves they gaily scatter
Upon the vast blue water
Are rafts, toy-boats that saunter
    While ocean swells.
On the shore of the world-sea,
    They join in play.

They don’t know how to swim,
    Or how to fish;
The diver dives for pearls,
The busy merchant sails,
They make from clods and pebbles
    What they wish.
They crave not wealth or jewels;
    They do not fish.

The ocean laughs and surges,
    The beach runs wild;
Awesome waves rolling
Are to the child’s hearing
A rocking and a singing
    Of mother to child.
The ocean sports, plays games:
    The beach runs wild.

On the shore of the world-sea,
    The children play
Tempests rage with anger,
Boats sink in far water,
Death’s messengers caper—
    The children stay.
On the shore of the world-sea
    They meet and play.[11]

13 (31)

Who’s bound you so harshly,
        prisoner?

My master's bound me
in shackles of thunder.
I thought that no one
than me could be bigger.
I treated the wealth of my king
as my plunder.
I lay down to sleep
on the bed of my master
and woke to discover
I now was gaoled
in my own store of treasure.

Who's forged the chains,
O prisoner?

I myself
am their careful maker.

I thought that the world
would succumb to my thunder,
That all would acknowledge
me as sole master.
The iron chains
were my own long labour.
Such fire, such forging—
no shackles are stronger.
When the work was over
I found what I'd forged
had made me a prisoner.

14 (13)

I haven't yet sung the song
I've come here to sing:
I'm still in search of a tune
to which to cling.

I haven't yet fixed the notes
or fastened the words;
But deep in my being I feel
what the song needs.
Its flower hasn't yet bloomed;
just a wind slides.

I haven't yet seen a face,
nor heard a voice;
I merely detect sometimes

a foot's pace.
I sense someone coming and going
in front of my house.

I've stayed here all day long,
preparing a seat;
But how to attract attention?
I've no lamp to light.
The one I most hope to catch
I haven't yet caught.

15 (33)

They came to my house
today.
They said, 'We'll sit in a side-room,
out of the way.
We'll help you with the pooja,
Take a portion of the offering later,
if we may.'

So they parked themselves in a corner,
deferentially,
Dressed meagrely, dirtily, shabbily.
Night came. I saw how huge they'd grown:
temple-invaders,
pooja-stealers,
their hands unclean.

16 (30)

I come outside alone
to meet you face to face.
As I walk through the silent night,
what stalker is this?
I try to shake him off;
I loop and double-track;
But as soon as I think I've escaped him,
he's back.

As he moves he rocks the earth,
so pressing are his needs.
He insists that all I say
should be in his words.
He's me, Lord, me—
there's no shame in that.

So why do I balk at approaching your door
with his rat-a-tat-tat?

17 (7)

This song of mine has thrown away
all ornaments;
It's kept for you no pride any more
in garments.
Trinkets that fall between
Divide us like a screen;
Their jingle-jangle pushes away
what you say.

My poet's vanity in front of you
doesn't hold;
Greatest of poets, I want to lay at your feet
the world.
If I can make from life a simple flute
painstakingly,
You'll fill all its holes with your own
melody.

18 (8)

The child whom you dress like a king
in necklace and jewels
Loses all joy in play
because of the burden he feels.
For fear of rips and tears
or stains from the dirt,
He holds himself far from the crowd,
worries if he moves about—
The child whom you dress like a king
in necklace and jewels.

So why, mother, that king-like attire,
that necklace, those jewels?
Rather, fling the door wide,
Let him run down the road
in sun, wind, dust and mud,
For he'll otherwise have no claim
On the place of ordinary meeting,
Of all-day changeable playing,
Of the thousandfold symphony blending
stream upon stream—

The child whom you dress like a king
in necklace and jewels

19 (28)

I'm blocked and I want to break loose
But if I try, it hurts
I'm blocked and I want to break loose
But if I try, it hurts
I want to approach you to ask you for freedom
But if I come near, I'm ashamed
I'm blocked and I want to break loose
But if I try, it hurts

I know that you are what is best in my life
There's no other wealth like you
I know that you are what is best in my life
There's no other wealth like you
But my house is stuffed with trash and clutter
that I can't chuck away
I'm blocked and I want to break loose
But if I try, it hurts

Rubble obscures you by shrouding my heart,
heaping up death
I detest it to the full
but I love it too
Rubble obscures you by shrouding my heart,
heaping up death
I detest it to the full
but I love it too

I've so much to pay, such lies have banked up
Such waste, such pretence
I've so much to pay, such lies have banked up
Such waste, such pretence
Yet when I try to ask you to give me what's best,
fear grips my mind
I'm blocked and I want to break loose
But if I try, it hurts
I'm blocked and I want to break loose
But if I try, it hurts

20 (66)

That which all through my life
has been hinted at merely;
That which even the light of dawn
can't capture clearly—
In my life's last gift,
In my life's last song,
Will today, O God,
to you belong—
That which even the light of dawn
can't capture clearly.

That which words, in the end,
can never bind;
That for which a song
no tune can find—
Which secretly, silently,
Is kept by novelty
From the world's eyes
in baffling obscurity—
That which even the light of dawn
can't capture clearly.

I've wandered in search of this thing
from land to land;
The built and the shattered in my life
surround it like a band;
In my dreams it stayed on,
Everywhere, everyone
Partook of it, yet
it remained alone—
That which even the light of dawn
can't capture clearly.

It's what so often many people
have quested for,
But often they're forced to linger
outside its door—
Strange to say, I
Hoped I might fly
To where I might know it
in my own sky—
That which even the light of dawn
can't capture clearly.

If day is done and birdsong ends
    and tired breezes stir no more,
Then thickly shroud me, cast me down
    to densest dark's profoundest floor—

For likewise you have slowly sealed
    the earth in secrecy of dreams,
And eyes by drooping eyelids veiled
    are as a closing lotus seems.

In one now destitute on the path,
    whose clothes are soiled, whose wounds are sore,
Who shattered by the grime and shame
    is robbed of strength to journey more,

Let deep and secret tenderness
    cover his wounds and shroud his pain,
And let pure draughts of soothing dark
    heal shame, and bring fresh dawn again.

22 (68)

The rays of your sun come
    with outstretched hands
        to my world.
Why at the door of my home
    do you stand all day?
What do you want to hold?

I only know, when darkness falls
    and you return,
        the cloud
    that veils you is made
    of tears, and brings
    a tremulous message,
Inlaid with glittering songs.

You clasp that cloud-veil to your breast:
It's filled with new shapes and colours—
The light, the fleet.
The soft, the green, the black.
Colourless as you are,
You love it for those,
        and thus
You cover your own light
    with a shroud of tenderness.

Lovely indeed is your bracelet,
studded with stars
Lovely indeed is your bracelet,
studded with stars

It beams and gleams with gold and gems
of many colours
Lovely indeed is your bracelet,
studded with stars

I find your sword more beautiful—
etched by the lightning's sweep,
I find your sword more beautiful—
etched by the lightning's sweep,
Its colour blood-red as Garuda's[12] *wings*
when the sun sets
Lovely indeed is your bracelet,
studded with stars
It beams and gleams with gold and gems
of many colours
Lovely indeed is your bracelet,
studded with stars

The agonizing edge of your sword
flashes like awareness
at life's very end
Whatever in the mind is left
will be burnt in a trice
by its piercing, fearsome fire
The agonizing edge of your sword
flashes like awareness
at life's very end
Whatever in the mind is left
will be burnt in a trice
by its piercing, fearsome fire

Lovely indeed is your bracelet,
studded with stars
Your sword, O thunderbolt-hurling god,
is made more beautifully still
Your sword, O thunderbolt-hurling god,
is made more beautifully still
Lovely indeed is your bracelet,
studded with stars
It beams and gleams with gold and gems

of many colours
Lovely indeed is your bracelet,
studded with stars

A Note on the Texts

My constant companion while working on this book was the very useful bilingual edition of *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* edited by Subhankar Bhattacharya and Mayukh Chakraborty and published by Parul Prakashani, Kolkata, 2007. As well as giving the Bengali originals of all the poems and the (1918 Macmillan) text of Tagore's own translation it contains eight essays by contributors from several countries (including one by me on 'Tagore the world over: English as the vehicle'), items such as Tagore's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech, and a generous number of colour plates of Tagore's paintings.

In preparing the new text of Tagore's translation, the facsimile edition of the Rothenstein manuscript, compiled and arranged by Abhik Kumar Dey and published by Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 2009, was invaluable.

The Macmillan text in Appendix C was initially downloaded from the internet and carefully reconciled with the text as printed in the 1939 reprint of *Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore* (Macmillan, London, first published in 1936). I chose this rather than the separate editions before it, because I felt it allowed maximum opportunity for unintended misprints in the earlier editions to be corrected and the fairest possible hearing to W.B. Yeats. It was also the last edition to appear in Tagore's lifetime.

To hear the songs in *Gitanjali*, I found the CD ROM *Gitabitan Live* (ISS, Kolkata, 2002) very convenient but also listened to many recordings in the Audio-Visual Department of Rabindra-Bhavana,

Santiniketan. Five songs that Mr Gadadhar Bhandari there could not find recordings of were beautifully sung for me in Sangit-Bhavana by a PhD student, Manini Mukhopadhyay, with her supervisor Professor Indrani Mukhopadhyay in attendance.

Appendix A

The following Tables 1 and 2 show at a glance how radically different the order of the poems in the Rothenstein manuscript was from the published text of *Gitanjali*. In Table 1 the opening words for each of the translations are taken from the Rothenstein manuscript, not from the Macmillan text (there are some differences). For the additional poems, however, I use the wording that is found in the Macmillan text. Although there are manuscripts for fifteen of the additional poems (three of them at the end of the Rothenstein manuscript and twelve of them in the so-called 'Crescent Moon Sheaf'), I do not consider these manuscripts so significant, as Tagore was now being influenced by Yeats and others, and his translations can no longer be regarded as his own completely unaided work. The special value of the Rothenstein manuscript is that it contains translations that Tagore did before any editorial intervention. For more on the manuscript sources for the additional poems, see Appendix B.

Table 2 gives the source books for all the poems in *Gitanjali*—the poems that are in the Rothenstein manuscript and also the additional poems that were added to the published text. The random way in which the poems and songs were reorganized is very evident from these lists. Whereas in the Rothenstein manuscript there is a clear sense of the difference between songs and poems as reflected in their grouping, and also a clear attempt to balance and shape the collection in terms of the books from which the poems and songs were taken, in the Macmillan text poems and songs are mixed up

quite arbitrarily, as are the source books from which the songs and poems are taken. This, as well as Tagore's way of translating all the poems and songs in the same prose-poetry style, had a homogenizing effect. Readers were kept in ignorance of the variety in the collection. The contrasts of style and form in Bengali—the marked differences between the songs of the 'Gitanjali phase' itself and the sonnets from the much earlier book *Naibedya* and the ballad-like poems in *Kheya*—is something that I have tried to bring out in my own translations.

Table 1: Rothenstein MS sequence compared to the Macmillan text

MS		MT
1	This is my delight, thus to wait and watch	44
2	No more noisy loud words from me, such is my master’s will	89
3	Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure	1
4	I will deck thee with the trophy garland of my defeat	98
5	My desires are many and my cry is pitiful	14
6	Thou hast made known to me friends whom I knew not	63
7	When I have leave from hence let this be my parting word	96
8	Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens	18
9	In the deep shadow of the rainy July	22
10	If it is not my portion to meet thee in this my life	79
11	The day is no more, the shadow is upon the earth	74
12	Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love, O beloved of my heart	59
13	I am here to sing thee songs	15
14	I know not from what distant time thou art ever coming nearer to meet me	46
15	Is it beyond thee to be glad with the gladness of this wild rhythm?	70
16	You came down from your throne and stopped and stood at my cottage door	49
17	When the heart is hard and parched up	39

18	When my play was with thee I never questioned who thou wast	97
19	If thou speakest not I will fill my heart with thy silence and bear it	19
20	Pluck this little flower and take it, delay not!	6
21	I know thee as my God and stand apart	77
22	What divine drink wouldst thou have, my God, from this overflowing cup of my life?	65
23	O fool, to try to carry thyself upon thine own shoulders	9
24	There is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest and lowliest and lost	10
25	On the day when death will knock at thy door what shalt thou offer to him?	90
26	O thou the last fulfilment of life, Death, my death, come and whisper to me!	91
27	Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full	56
28	Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!	11
29	When first they came out, the warriors, from their master's hall	85
30	Ever in my life have I sought thee with my songs	101
31	Let only that little remain of me by which I may call thee my all	34
32	He, whom I enclose with my name, is dying in this dungeon	29
33	On the day thou breakst through this my name, my master, I shall be free	NOT INCLUDED
34	In one salutation to thee, my lord, let all my senses spread out and touch this world	103
35	By all means they try to hold me secure who love me	32

in this world
36 I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last at his hands 17
37 It is he, the innermost one, who wakens up my consciousness with his deep hidden touches 72
38 I ask for a moment's indulgence to sit by thy side only for a very little while 5
39 On the day when the lotus bloomed, alas, my mind was straying 20
40 At this time of my parting, sing cheers to me, my friends! 94
41 I have got my leave. Bid me farewell, my brothers! 93
42 I must launch out my boat—I must 21
43 Art thou abroad on this stormy night on thy journey of love, my friend? 23
44 It is the pang of severance that spreads from world to world 84
45 I have had my invitation in this world festival 16
46 He came and sat by my side but I woke not 26
47 When I give up the helm, then the time will come for thee to take it 99
48 The time of my journey is vast and the way long 12
49 Light, oh where is the light? Kindle it with the burning fire of desire! 27
50 I know not how thou singest, my master! 3
51 That I should make much of myself and turn it on all sides 71
52 Langour is in thy heart and the slumber is still on thine eyes 55
53 I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms 100

54	Hast thou not heard his silent steps?	45
55	When thou commandest me to sing it seems that my heart would break with pride	2
56	Early in the day it was whispered that we should sail in a boat	42
57	Light, my light, the world-filling light	57
58	More life, my lord, yet more, to quench my thirst	NOT INCLUDED
59	Day after day, O lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face	76
60	On many an idle day have I grieved over my lost times	81
61	The same stream of life that courses through my veins night and day	69
62	Deliverance is not for me in renunciation	73
63	The day was when I did not keep myself in readiness for thee	43
64	Time is endless in thy hands, my lord	82
65	Thy gifts to us mortals fulfil all our needs	75
66	Thy rod of justice thou has given to every man	NOT INCLUDED
67	Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure	4
68	Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well	67
69	The rain has held back for days and days, my God	40
70	I was not aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life	95
71	Let me never lose hold of hope when the mist of depression steals upon me	25
72	Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high	35

73	This my prayer to thee, my lord—strike, strike at the root of all poverty in my heart	36
74	Where dost thou stand behind them all, my lover, hiding thyself in the shadow?	41
75	I went abegging from door to door in the village path	50
76	The night darkened. Our day's work had been done	51
77	I thought I should ask of thee—but I dared not—the rose wreath thou hast on thy neck	52
78	I am like a remnant of a cloud of autumn uselessly roaming in the sky	80
79	When the creation was new and all the stars shone in their pristine splendour	78
80	Mother, I shall weave a chain of pearls for thy neck with my tears of sorrow	83
81	That I want thee, only thee, let my heart repeat without end	38
82	I thought that my voyage was at its end at the last limit of my power	37
83	Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song	58

There is a line and squiggle under this last poem. This and its content ('Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song') indicate that the original Gitanjali sequence as conceived by Tagore ended here. (See Introduction, p. xxxiv.) The next three poems were miscellaneous additions, without numbering, and should therefore be classified with the Additional Poems that are not in the Rothenstein MS.

[84] On the seashore of endless worlds children meet 60
[85] The sleep that flits on baby's eyes—does anyone know from where it comes? 61
[86] When I bring to you coloured toys, my child, I understand 62

Of the remaining twenty, the following twelve are in the 'Crescent Moon Sheaf' (see Appendix B):

I know that the day will come 92
Deity of the ruined temple! 88
In desperate hope I go and search for her 87
I boasted among men 102
The song that I came to sing 13
When it was day they came into my house 33
I came out alone on my way to my tryst 30
My song has put off her adornments 7
The child who is decked with prince's robes 8
Obstinate are the trammels 28
She who ever remained in the depth of my being 66
If the day is done 24

This leaves eight for which we have no MS:

Death, thy servant, is at my door 86
On the slope of the desolate river 64
The morning sea of silence 48

I asked nothing from thee	54
The night is nearly spent waiting for him in vain	47
‘Prisoner, tell me, who was it that bound you?’	31
Thy sunbeam comes upon this earth of mine	68
Beautiful is thy wristlet decked with stars	53

In my own translation, I have given the Additional Poems in the chronological order of their composition in Bengali (see Table 3 below).

Table 2: Sources

MS	MT
1/44. Gitimalya 7	1/3. Gitimalya 23
2/89. Gitimalya 8	**2/55. Gitanjali 78**
3/1. Gitimalya 23	3/50. Gitanjali 22
4/98. Gitimalya 24	**4/67. Naibedya 75**
5/14. Gitanjali 2	5/38. Gitimalya 20
6/63. Gitanjali 3	**6/20. Gitanjali 87**
7/96. Gitanjali 142	**7. GITANJALI 125**
8/18. Gitanjali 16	**8. GITANJALI 127**
9/22. Gitanjali 18	9/23. Gitanjali 105
10/79. Gitanjali 24	10/24. Gitanjali 107
11/74. Gitanjali 26	**11/28. Gitanjali 119**
12/59. Gitanjali 30	**12/48. Gitimalya 14**
13/15. Gitanjali 31	**13. GITANJALI 39**
14/46. Gitanjali 34	14/5. Gitanjali 2
15/70. Gitanjali 36	15/13. Gitanjali 31
16/49. Gitanjali 56	16/45. Gitanjali 44
17/39. Gitanjali 58	**17/36. Gitanjali 151**
18/97. Gitanjali 68	18/8. Gitanjali 16
19/19. Gitanjali 71	**19/19. Gitanjali 71**
20/6. Gitanjali 87	20/39. Gitimalya 17
21/77. Gitanjali 92	21/42. Gitimalya 16
22/65. Gitanjali 101	22/9. Gitanjali 18
23/9. Gitanjali 105	23/43. Gitanjali 20

24/10. Gitanjali 107	**24. GITANJALI 157**
25/90. Gitanjali 114	**25/71. Naibedya 98**
26/91. Gitanjali 116	26/46. Gitanjali 61
27/56. Gitanjali 121	27/49. Gitanjali 17
28/11. Gitanjali 119	**28. GITANJALI 145**
29/85. Gitanjali 123	**29/32. Gitanjali 143**
30/101. Gitanjali 132	**30. GITANJALI 103**
31/34. Gitanjali 138	**31. KHEYA (*Bandi*)**
32/29. Gitanjali 143	**32/35. Gitanjali 152**
33 not included [Gitanjali 144]	**33. GITANJALI 80**
34/103. Gitanjali 148	**34/31. Gitanjali 138**
35/32. Gitanjali 152	**35/72. Naibedya 72**
36/17. Gitanjali 151	**36/73. Naibedya 99**
37/72. Gitimalya 22	**37/82. Gitanjali 124**
38/5. Gitimalya 20	**38/81. Gitanjali 88**
39/20. Gitimalya 17	39/17. Gitanjali 58
40/94. Gitimalya 21	**40/69. Naibedya 86**
41/93. Gitimalya 26	**41/74. Kheya (*Pracchanna*)**
42/21. Gitimalya 16	**42/56. Gitanjali 83**
43/23. Gitanjali 20	**43/63. Naibedya 33**
44/84. Gitanjali 25	44/1. Gitimalya 7
45/16. Gitanjali 44	45/54. Gitanjali 62
46/26. Gitanjali 61	46/14. Gitanjali 34
47/99. Gitimalya 6	**47. KHEYA (*Jagaran*)**
48/12. Gitimalya 14	**48. KHEYA (*Nirudyam*)**
49/27. Gitanjali 17	49/16. Gitanjali 56
50/3. Gitanjali 22	**50/75. Kheya (*Kripan*)**
51/71. Gitimalya 15	**51/76. Kheya (*Agaman*)**
52/55. Gitimalya 18	**52/77. Kheya (*Dan*)**

53/100. Gitanjali 47	**53. GITIMALYA 30**
54/45. Gitanjali 62	**54. KHEYA (*Kuyar dhare*)**
55/2. Gitanjali 78	55/52. Gitimalya 18
56/42. Gitanjali 83	56/27. Gitanjali 121
57/57. Achalayatan	57/57. Achalayatan
58 not included [Gitimalya 28]	**58/83. Gitanjali 134**
59/76. Naibedya 1	59/12. Gitanjali 30
60/81. Naibedya 24	**60/[84] . SISU (title poem)**
61/69. Naibedya 26	**61/[85] . SISU (*Khoka*)**
62/73. Naibedya 30	**62/[86] . SISU (*Kena madhur*)**
63/43. Naibedya 33	63/6. Gitanjali 3
64/82. Naibedya 39	**64. KHEYA (*Anabasyak*)**
65/75. Naibedya 44	65/22. Gitanjali 101
66 not included [Naibedya 70]	66. GITANJALI 149
67/4. Naibedya 75	**67/68. Naibedya 81**
68/67. Naibedya 81	**68. GITIMALYA 29**
69/40. Naibedya 86	**69/61. Naibedya 26**
70/95. Naibedya 89 & 90 (2 poems)	70/15. Gitanjali 36
71/25. Naibedya 98	**71/51. Gitimalya 15**
72/35. Naibedya 72	72/37. Gitimalya 22
73/36. Naibedya 99	**73/62. Naibedya 30**
74/41. Kheya (*Pracchanna*)	74/11. Gitanjali 26
75/50. Kheya (*Kripan*)	**75/65. Naibedya 44**
76/51. Kheya (*Agaman*)	76/59. Naibedya 1
77/52. Kheya (*Dan*)	77/21. Gitanjali 92
78/80. Kheya (*Lila*)	**78/79. Kheya (*Haradhan*)**
79/78. Kheya (*Haradhan*)	79/10. Gitanjali 24
80/83. Gitanjali 10	**80/78. Kheya (*Lila*)**

81/38. Gitanjali 88
82/37. Gitanjali 124
83/58. Gitanjali 134

[84] /60. SISU (title poem)
[85] /61. SISU (*Khoka*)
[86] /62. SISU (*Kena madhur*)

81/60. Naibedya 24
82/64. Naibedya 39
83/80. Gitanjali 10

84/44. Gitanjali 25
85/29. Gitanjali 123
86. NAIBEDYA 18
87. SMARAN 5
88. KALPANA (*Bhagna mandir*)
89/2. Gitimalya 8
90/25. Gitanjali 114
91/26. Gitanjali 116
92. CAITALI (*Durlabh janma*)
93/41. Gitimalya 26
94/40. Gitimalya 21
95/70. Naibedya
89 & 90 (two poems)
96/7. Gitanjali 142
97/18. Gitanjali 68
98/4. Gitimalya 24
99/47. Gitimalya 6
100/53. Gitanjali 47
101/30. Gitanjali 132
102. UTSARGA 5
103/34. Gitanjali 148

Key:
Songs in plain text
Poems in **bold**

Additional Poems and Songs in CAPS

Table 3 gives the bibliographical information on which the chronological order of the Additional Poems in this book is based. A question mark indicates uncertainty about the exact date, so the order with those is tentative. The wide date span shows how the Additional Poems made *Gitanjali* much more of an anthology than it was in the Rothenstein manuscript.

Table 3: Additional Poems: chronological order of the Bengali sources

No. in this book	Opening words (MT)	Bengali source	Bengali date	CE date	No. in MT
1	I know that the day will come	Chaitali (*Durlabh janma*)	18 Chaitra 1302	1895	92
2	Deity of the ruined temple!	Kalpana (*Bhagna mandir*)		1900	88
3	Death, thy servant, is at my door	Naibedya 18		1901	86
4?	In desperate hope I go and search for her	Smaran 5		1903	87
5?	The sleep that flits on baby's eyes	Sisu (*Khoka*)	Sraban 1310	1903	61
6?	When I bring to you coloured toys	Sisu (*Kena madhur*)	1310	1903	62
7?	I boasted among men	Utsarga 5	for *Kabya-grantha*	1903–04	102
8	On the slope of the desolate river	Kheya (*Anabasyak*)	25 Sraban 1312	1905	64
9	The morning sea of silence	Kheya (*Nirudyam*)	6 Chaitra 1312	1906	48
10	I asked nothing from thee	Kheya (*Kuyar dhare*)	9 Chaitra 1312	1906	54
11	The night is nearly spent waiting for him in vain	Kheya (*Jagaran*)	10 Chaitra 1312	1906	47
12	On the seashore of endless worlds	Sisu (title poem)	6 Bhadra 1313	1906	60

No. in this book	Opening words (MT)	Bengali source	Bengali date	CE date	No. in MT
13	'Prisoner, tell me, who was it that bound you?'	Kheya (*Bandi*)	9 Baisakh 1313	1906	31
14	The song that I came to sing	Gitanjali 39	27 Bhadra 1316	1909	13
15	When it was day they came into my house	Gitanjali 80	29 Jyaishtha 1317	1910	33
16	I came out alone on my way to my tryst	Gitanjali 103	14 Asharh 1317	1910	30
17	My song has put off her adornments	Gitanjali 125	1 Sraban 1317	1910	7
18	The child who is decked with prince's robes	Gitanjali 127	2 Sraban 1317	1910	8
19	Obstinate are the trammels	Gitanjali 145	22 Sraban 1317	1910	28
20	She who ever remained in the depth of my being	Gitanjali 149	24 Sraban 1317	1910	66
21	If the day is done	Gitanjali 157	29 Sraban 1317	1910	24
22	Thy sunbeam comes upon this earth of mine	Gitimalya 29		23 June 1912	68
23	Beautiful is thy wristlet decked with stars	Gitimalya 30		25 June 1912	53

Appendix B

A complete facsimile of the ‘Rothenstein manuscript’ of *Gitanjali* can now be seen in the edition of it published by Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata (see A Note on the Texts, p. lxxxv). So only one page of it is reproduced here—the last poem, No. 83 in the main sequence. The concluding line and squiggle indicating that the sequence is at an end are clear to see, and the neatness and confidence of the handwriting—the sparseness of erasures or corrections implying that this was a fair copy, not a first draft—are typical of the manuscript as a whole.

As shown in Appendix A, three of the 83 poems were omitted from the published *Gitanjali*, but the three poems that were written on spare pages at the end of the notebook were included instead, and twenty more poems were added to make a total of 103. Twelve of these can be found in the ‘Crescent Moon Sheaf’, a bundle of manuscripts preserved among the Rothenstein papers at Harvard. The second of Shyamal Kumar Sarkar’s two articles on the manuscript of *Gitanjali* (see Introduction, p. xxvi, fn. 21) focuses on the pages in this bundle. He speculates whether they might have originally formed at least part of a second manuscript book (now lost), in which Tagore’s ‘translations of the *Gitanjali* poems spilled over from the original notebook with which he had started’.[1] Some evidence for this possibility is provided by Rathindranath Tagore’s statement in *On the Edges of Time* that his father had carried the manuscript of *Gitanjali* and *The Gardener* to England in 1912, for the

Crescent Moon Sheaf does indeed contain some translations that were included in *The Gardener* (1913).

Could a new text of what I have called the 'Additional Poems' in *Gitanjali* be made on the basis of these manuscripts? There are three problems with this. Firstly, there are eight poems for which we have no manuscripts at all. Secondly, the sheaf is miscellaneous—there is no clear plan or sequence. Thirdly, it is difficult to be sure which translations were done before he arrived in England. At least one of them—'In desperate hope I go and search for her', based on Poem No. 5 in *Smaran*, Tagore's collection of poems in memory of his wife—was definitely done in England, for it is mentioned in a letter Tagore wrote to Rothenstein on 16 July 1912 after Rothenstein's mother had died: 'I do not know what made me sit down to translate three of my poems, all on the subject of death, directly I came back from Cambridge yesterday … I feel I must send you the first one of these translations—the original of which sprang from a direct experience of death.'[2] This poem, copied out in the letter, became No. 87 in the published *Gitanjali*, while the other two translations (also from *Smaran*) were included in *Fruit-Gathering* (1916). The manuscripts certainly look like Tagore's unaided work, but anything done in England—with Yeats and others now giving him advice—would have lacked the purity of creative concentration that the translations in the Rothenstein manuscript had.

In general, however, the kind of differences that occur between the manuscripts in the Crescent Moon Sheaf and their published form in *Gitanjali* are of the same kind as can be noted in the poems in the Rothenstein manuscript. There are far fewer paragraph divisions; there are fewer commas; in two of them—'Deity of the ruined temple!' and 'I boasted among men'—'thou' is changed to 'you'; phrases and vocabulary are adjusted here and there. The changes are carefully described by Shyamal Kumar Sarkar in his article. Occasionally the changes lead to a version that is slightly

less accurate or complete than the manuscript but not enough—in the case of these twelve poems—to be worth quibbling over.

For those who wish to argue that Tagore was capable of making revisions and adjustments himself, and did not always accept what Yeats or others suggested to him, the manuscripts in the Crescent Moon Sheaf provide some evidence. For two of the twelve that were included in *Gitanjali*—'My song has put off her adornments' and 'She who ever remained in the depth of my being'—there are two manuscript versions, with no indication that the differences between them are attributable to anyone other than Tagore himself. A third poem—'I know that the day will come'—has a typed version as well as a manuscript. The typescript is closer to the published text than the manuscript, suggesting that the manuscript was done earlier.

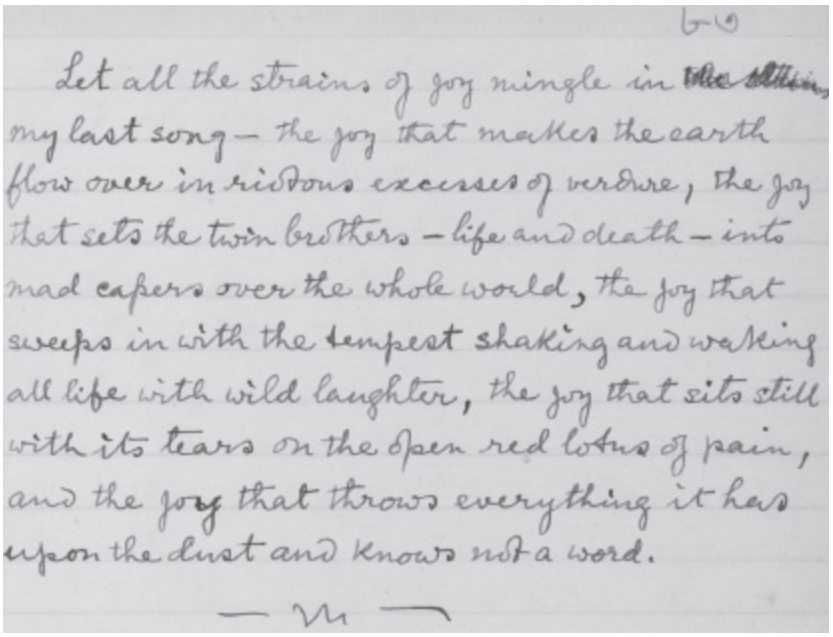
Of special interest are the manuscripts of 'Deity of the ruined temple!' and 'In desperate hope I go and search for her', as these are the only manuscripts for any of the poems in *Gitanjali* where Yeats's actual alterations can be seen. These two manuscripts are reproduced here. In the case of 'Deity of the ruined temple!' (*Gitanjali* No. 88), Shyamal Kumar Sarkar observes that 'Yeats's emendations have gone into print', and he is approving of them, finding 'longing for favour still refused' more felicitous than 'ever wistful of unconferred favour', and 'an improvement in the cadence' in the conflation of 'The deity of the ruined temple! Many a festival day comes to you in silence' to 'Many a festival day comes to you in silence, deity of the ruined temple.'[3]

In the other manuscript, 'In desperate hope I go and search for her' (*Gitanjali* No. 87), two of Yeats's emendations have *not* found their way into print, and this provides some ammunition to those who wish to argue that Tagore was capable of making revisions himself or resisting changes suggested by others. A barely decipherable alteration to 'My house is small and what once is lost from there can never be regained' does not appear in the published text, which differs again from the manuscript though not in

accordance with what Yeats has suggested ('My house is small and what once has gone from it can never be regained'). Instead of 'in the allness of the universe' at the end, Yeats has (quite reasonably) suggested 'in the fullness of thy world', but this change has not been made in the published version.

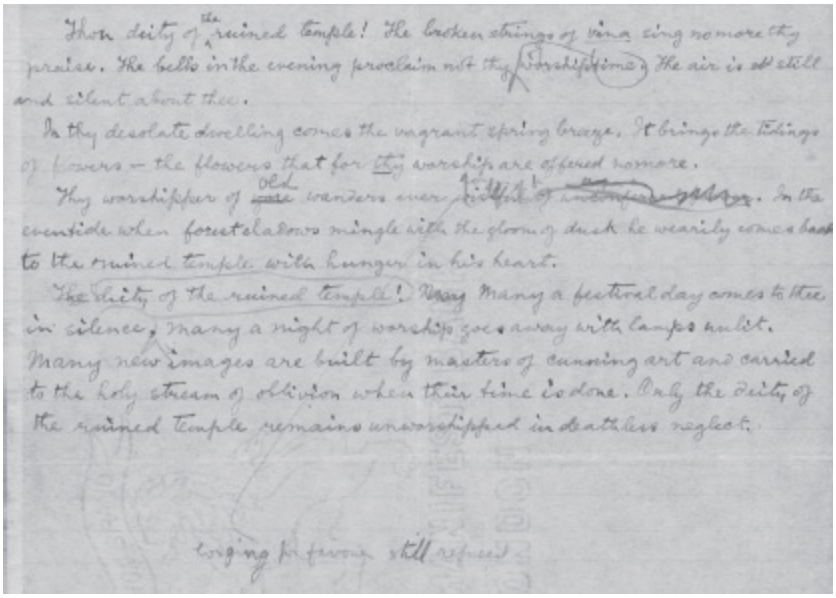
Of these, Sarkar writes: 'What do these restorations of the original readings mean? Why were the suggestions of Yeats passed over? The answer that immediately suggests itself is that Tagore was selective in accepting the emendations of Yeats. Or could these restorations have been the result of Yeats's own afterthought?'[4] But he rightly concludes that in the absence of the full typed copy in which Yeats pencilled in his pre-publication changes (see Introduction, p. xxv), these questions are impossible to answer.

In the facsimiles given here of these two poems, the other two poems below 'In desperate hope I go and search for her' are from *Fruit-Gathering* (No. 47) and *The Gardener* (No. 56). In the latter, note Yeats's insertion of 'her' before dance. This has not been made in the published text ('she dances in the bubbling streams …') and there are other changes that cannot be attributed to Yeats. For by the time Tagore prepared *Fruit-Gathering* for the press, Yeats's revisions—so far as one can tell from his comment to Frederick Macmillan ('Now I had no great heart in my version of his last work *Fruit-Gathering*'—see Introduction, p. xxvii)—had probably become too cursory to be accepted.



Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song — the joy that makes the earth flow over in riotous excesses of verdure, the joy that sets the twin brothers — life and death — into mad capers over the whole world, the joy that sweeps in with the tempest shaking and waking all life with wild laughter, the joy that sits still with its tears on the open red lotus of pain, and the joy that throws everything it has upon the dust and knows not a word.

Gitanjali MS: bMS Eng 1159 (1), page 84 recto [though the number top right is '83' in Bengali script]



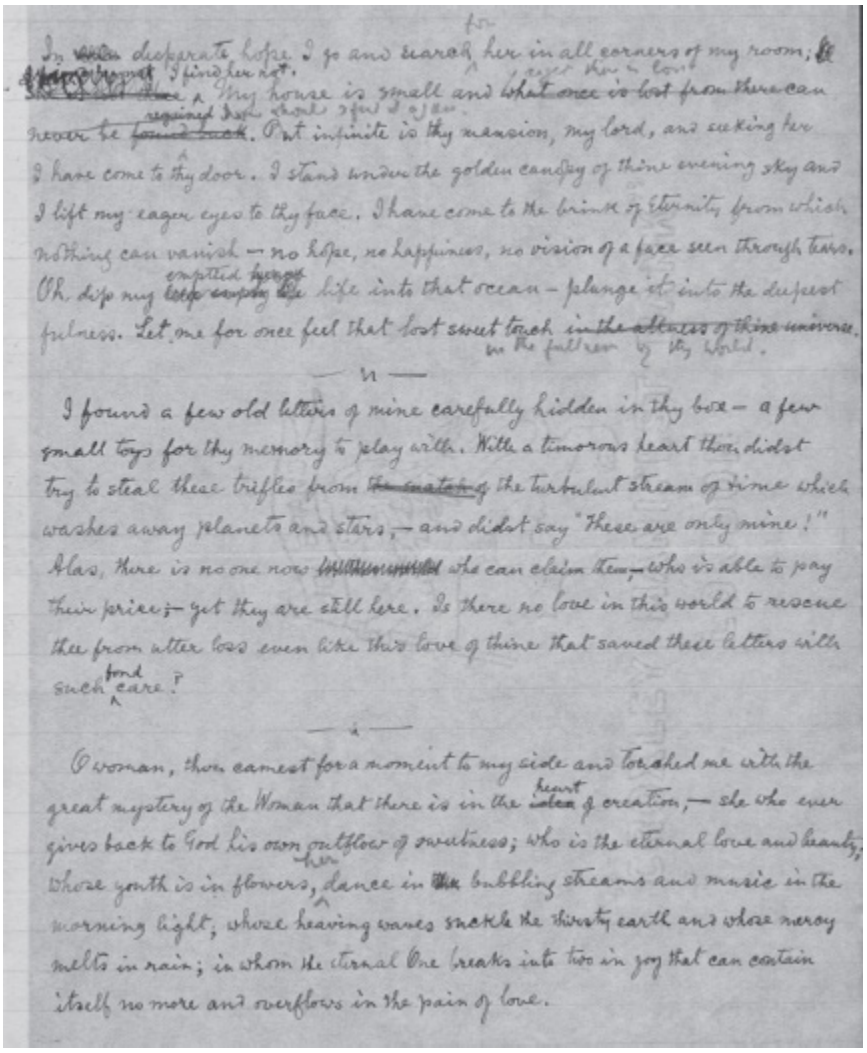
Thou deity of the ruined temple! The broken strings of vina sing no more thy praise. The bells in the evening proclaim not thy worship time. The air is still and silent about thee.

In thy desolate dwelling comes the vagrant spring breeze. It brings the tidings of flowers — the flowers that for thy worship are offered no more.

Thy worshipper of old wanders ever [illegible]. In the eventide when forest shadows mingle with the gloom of dusk he wearily comes back to the ruined temple with hunger in his heart.

The deity of the ruined temple! Many a festival day comes to thee in silence, many a night of worship goes away with lamps unlit. Many new images are built by masters of cunning art and carried to the holy stream of oblivion when their time is done. Only the deity of the ruined temple remains unworshipped in deathless neglect.

Crescent Moon MS: bMS Eng 1159(5): E100013897 No. 1826260



In desperate hope I go and search for her in all corners of my room; I find her not. My house is small and what once is lost from there can never be found back. But infinite is thy mansion, my lord, and seeking for her I have come to thy door. I stand under the golden canopy of thine evening sky and I lift my eager eyes to thy face. I have come to the brink of eternity from which nothing can vanish — no hope, no happiness, no vision of a face seen through tears. Oh, dip my emptied life into that ocean — plunge it into the deepest fulness. Let me for once feel that lost sweet touch in the fullness of thy world.

— 11 —

I found a few old letters of mine carefully hidden in thy box — a few small toys for thy memory to play with. With a timorous heart thou didst try to steal these trifles from the waters of the turbulent stream of time which washes away planets and stars, — and didst say "These are only mine!" Alas, there is no one now who can claim them, who is able to pay their price; — yet they are still here. Is there no love in this world to rescue these from utter loss even like this love of thine that saved these letters with such fond care?

— 12 —

O woman, thou earnest for a moment to my side and touched me with the great mystery of the Woman that there is in the heart of creation, — she who ever gives back to God his own gulflow of sweetness; who is the eternal love and beauty, whose youth is in flowers, her dance in the bubbling streams and music in the morning light, whose heaving waves suckle the thirsty earth and whose mercy melts in rain; in whom the eternal One breaks into two in joy that can contain itself no more and overflows in the pain of love.

Crescent Moon MS: bMS Eng 1159(5): E100013897 No. 18262606

Appendix C

The text below corresponds to *Gitanjali* as printed in the first reprint (1939) of *Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore* (Macmillan, London, 1936). It therefore still contains the rogue question mark in poem No. 76, which was not corrected till the second reprint (1950). See Introduction, p. xxx and Appendix E, p. 233. The collected edition dropped the subtitle, title page, dedication, Yeats's Introduction and the Note at the end. These are given here.

RABINDRANATH TAGORE
GITANJALI
Song Offerings

A collection of prose translations
made by the author from
the original Bengali
with an introduction by
W.B. YEATS

to WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

These translations are of poems contained in three books—Naivédya, Kheyá and Gitánjali—to be had at the Indian Publishing House, 22 Cornwallis Street, Calcutta; and of a few poems which have appeared only in periodicals.

INTRODUCTION

A few days ago I said to a distinguished Bengali doctor of medicine, 'I know no German, yet if a translation of a German poet had moved me, I would go to the British Museum and find books in English that would tell me something of his life, and of the history of his thought. But though these prose translations from Rabindranath Tagore have stirred my blood as nothing has for years, I shall not know anything of his life, and of the movements of thought that have made them possible, if some Indian traveller will not tell me.' It seemed to him natural that I should be moved, for he said, 'I read Rabindranath every day, to read one line of his is to forget all the troubles of the world.' I said, 'An Englishman living in London in the reign of Richard the Second had he been shown translations from Petrarch or from Dante, would have found no books to answer his questions, but would have questioned some Florentine banker or Lombard merchant as I question you. For all I know, so abundant and simple is this poetry, the new renaissance has been born in your country and I shall never know of it except by hearsay.' He answered, 'We have other poets, but none that are his equal; we call this the epoch of Rabindranath. No poet seems to me as famous in Europe as he is among us. He is as great in music as in poetry, and his songs are sung from the west of India into Burma wherever Bengali is spoken. He was already famous at nineteen when he wrote his first novel; and plays when he was but little older, are still played in Calcutta. I so much admire the completeness of his life; when he was very young he wrote much of natural objects, he would sit all day in his garden; from his twenty-fifth year or so to

his thirty-fifth perhaps, when he had a great sorrow, he wrote the most beautiful love poetry in our language'; and then he said with deep emotion, 'words can never express what I owed at seventeen to his love poetry. After that his art grew deeper, it became religious and philosophical; all the inspiration of mankind are in his hymns. He is the first among our saints who has not refused to live, but has spoken out of Life itself, and that is why we give him our love.' I may have changed his well-chosen words in my memory but not his thought. 'A little while ago he was to read divine service in one of our churches—we of the Brahma Samaj use your word 'church' in English—it was the largest in Calcutta and not only was it crowded, but the streets were all but impassable because of the people.'

Other Indians came to see me and their reverence for this man sounded strange in our world, where we hide great and little things under the same veil of obvious comedy and half-serious depreciation. When we were making the cathedrals had we a like reverence for our great men? 'Every morning at three—I know, for I have seen it'—one said to me, 'he sits immovable in contemplation, and for two hours does not awake from his reverie upon the nature of God. His father, the Maha Rishi, would sometimes sit there all through the next day; once, upon a river, he fell into contemplation because of the beauty of the landscape, and the rowers waited for eight hours before they could continue their journey.' He then told me of Mr. Tagore's family and how for generations great men have come out of its cradles. 'Today,' he said, 'there are Gogonendranath and Abanindranath Tagore, who are artists; and Dwijendranath, Rabindranath's brother, who is a great philosopher. The squirrels come from the boughs and climb on to his knees and the birds alight upon his hands.' I notice in these men's thought a sense of visible beauty and meaning as though they held that doctrine of Nietzsche that we must not believe in the moral or intellectual beauty which does not sooner or later impress itself upon physical things. I said, 'In the East you know how to keep a family illustrious. The other

day the curator of a museum pointed out to me a little dark-skinned man who was arranging their Chinese prints and said, '"That is the hereditary connoisseur of the Mikado, he is the fourteenth of his family to hold the post."' He answered, 'When Rabindranath was a boy he had all round him in his home literature and music.' I thought of the abundance, of the simplicity of the poems, and said, 'In your country is there much propagandist writing, much criticism? We have to do so much, especially in my own country, that our minds gradually cease to be creative, and yet we cannot help it. If our life was not a continual warfare, we would not have taste, we would not know what is good, we would not find hearers and readers. Four-fifths of our energy is spent in the quarrel with bad taste, whether in our own minds or in the minds of others.' 'I understand,' he replied, 'we too have our propagandist writing. In the villages they recite long mythological poems adapted from the Sanskrit in the Middle Ages, and they often insert passages telling the people that they must do their duties.'

I have carried the manuscript of these translations about with me for days, reading it in railway trains, or on the top of omnibuses and in restaurants, and I have often had to close it lest some stranger would see how much it moved me. These lyrics—which are in the original, my Indians tell me, full of subtlety of rhythm, of untranslatable delicacies of colour, of metrical invention—display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all my life long. The work of a supreme culture, they yet appear as much the growth of the common soil as the grass and the rushes. A tradition, where poetry and religion are the same thing, has passed through the centuries, gathering from learned and unlearned metaphor and emotion, and carried back again to the multitude the thought of the scholar and of the noble. If the civilization of Bengal remains unbroken, if that common mind which—as one divines—runs through all, is not, as with us, broken into a dozen minds that know nothing of each other, something even of what is most subtle in these verses will

have come, in a few generations, to the beggar on the roads. When there was but one mind in England, Chaucer wrote his *Troilus and Cressida*, and thought he had written to be read, or to be read out—for our time was coming on apace—he was sung by minstrels for a while. Rabindranath Tagore, like Chaucer's forerunners, writes music for his words, and one understands at every moment that he is so abundant, so spontaneous, so daring in his passion, so full of surprise, because he is doing something which has never seemed strange, unnatural, or in need of defence. These verses will not lie in little well-printed books upon ladies' tables, who turn the pages with indolent hands that they may sigh over a life without meaning, which is yet all they can know of life, or be carried by students at the university to be laid aside when the work of life begins, but, as the generations pass, travellers will hum them on the highway and men rowing upon the rivers. Lovers, while they await one another, shall find, in murmuring them, this love of God a magic gulf wherein their own more bitter passion may bathe and renew its youth. At every moment the heart of this poet flows outward to these without derogation or condescension, for it has known that they will understand; and it has filled itself with the circumstance of their lives. The traveller in the red-brown clothes that he wears that dust may not show upon him, the girl searching in her bed for the petals fallen from the wreath of her royal lover, the servant or the bride awaiting the master's home-coming in the empty house, are images of the heart turning to God. Flowers and rivers, the blowing of conch shells, the heavy rain of the Indian July, or the moods of that heart in union or in separation; and a man sitting in a boat upon a river playing lute, like one of those figures full of mysterious meaning in a Chinese picture, is God Himself. A whole people, a whole civilization, immeasurably strange to us, seems to have been taken up into this imagination; and yet we are not moved because of its strangeness, but because we have met our own image, as though

we had walked in Rossetti's willow wood, or heard, perhaps for the first time in literature, our voice as in a dream.

Since the Renaissance the writing of European saints—however familiar their metaphor and the general structure of their thought—has ceased to hold our attention. We know that we must at last forsake the world, and we are accustomed in moments of weariness or exaltation to consider a voluntary forsaking; but how can we, who have read so much poetry, seen so many paintings, listened to so much music, where the cry of the flesh and the cry of the soul seems one, forsake it harshly and rudely? What have we in common with St. Bernard covering his eyes that they may not dwell upon the beauty of the lakes of Switzerland, or with the violent rhetoric of the Book of Revelations? We would, if we might, find, as in this book, words full of courtesy. 'I have got my leave. Bid me farewell, my brothers! I bow to you all and take my departure. Here I give back the keys of my door—and I give up all claims to my house. I only ask for last kind words from you. We were neighbours for long, but I received more than I could give. Now the day has dawned and the lamp that lit my dark corner is out. A summons has come and I am ready for my journey.' And it is our own mood, when it is furthest from A Kempis or John of the Cross, that cries, 'And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well.' Yet it is not only in our thoughts of the parting that this book fathoms all. We had not known that we loved God, hardly it may be that we believed in Him; yet looking backward upon our life we discover, in our exploration of the pathways of woods, in our delight in the lonely places of hills, in that mysterious claim that we have made, unavailingly on the woman that we have loved, the emotion that created this insidious sweetness. 'Entering my heart unbidden even as one of the common crowd, unknown to me, my king, thou didst press the signet of eternity upon many a fleeting moment.' This is no longer the sanctity of the cell and of the scourge; being but a lifting up, as it were, into a greater intensity of the mood of the painter,

painting the dust and the sunlight, and we go for a like voice to St. Francis and to William Blake who have seemed so alien in our violent history.

We write long books where no page perhaps has any quality to make writing a pleasure, being confident in some general design, just as we fight and make money and fill our heads with politics—all dull things in the doing—while Mr. Tagore, like the Indian civilization itself, has been content to discover the soul and surrender himself to its spontaneity. He often seems to contrast life with that of those who have loved more after our fashion, and have more seeming weight in the world, and always humbly as though he were only sure his way is best for him: 'Men going home glance at me and smile and fill me with shame. I sit like a beggar maid, drawing my skirt over my face, and when they ask me, what it is I want, I drop my eyes and answer them not.' At another time, remembering how his life had once a different shape, he will say, 'Many an hour I have spent in the strife of the good and the evil, but now it is the pleasure of my playmate of the empty days to draw my heart on to him; and I know not why this sudden call to what useless inconsequence.' An innocence, a simplicity that one does not find elsewhere in literature makes the birds and the leaves seem as near to him as they are near to children, and the changes of the seasons great events as before our thoughts had arisen between them and us. At times I wonder if he has it from the literature of Bengal or from religion, and at other times, remembering the birds alighting on his brother's hands, I find pleasure in thinking it hereditary, a mystery that was growing through the centuries like the courtesy of a Tristan or a Pelanore. Indeed, when he is speaking of children, so much a part of himself this quality seems, one is not certain that he is not also speaking of the saints, 'They build their houses with sand and they play with empty shells. With withered leaves they weave their boats and smilingly float them on the vast deep. Children have their play on the seashore of worlds. They

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

W.B. YEATS
September 1912

GITANJALI

1

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

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

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

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

2

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

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

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

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

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

3

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

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

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

4

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

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

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

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

5

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

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

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

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

6

Pluck this little flower and take it. Delay not![1] I fear lest it droop and drop into the dust.

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

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

7

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

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

8

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

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

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

9

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

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

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

10

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

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

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

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

11

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

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in

shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

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

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

12

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

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

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

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

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

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

13

The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day.

I have spent my days in stringing and in unstringing my instrument.

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

The blossom has not opened; only the wind is sighing by.

I have not seen his face, nor have I listened to his voice; only I have heard his gentle footsteps from the road before my house.

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

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

14

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

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

There are times when I languidly linger and times when I awaken and hurry in search of my goal; but cruelly thou hidest thyself from before me.

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

15

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

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

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

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

16

I have had my invitation to this world's festival, and thus my life has been blessed.

My eyes have seen and my ears have heard.

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

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

17

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

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

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

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

18

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

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

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

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

19

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

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

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

20

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

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

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

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

21

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

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

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

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

22

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

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

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

23

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

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

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

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

24

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

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

25

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

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

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

26

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

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

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

27

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

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

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

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

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

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

28

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

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

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

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

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

29

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

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

30

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

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

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

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

31

‘Prisoner, tell me, who was it that bound you?’

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

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

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

32

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

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

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

33

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

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

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

34

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

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

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

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

35

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action—

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

36

This is my prayer to thee, my lord—strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart.

Give me the strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.

Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.

Give me the strength never to disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might.

Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.

And give me the strength to surrender my strength to thy will with love.

37

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

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

38

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

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

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

39

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

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

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

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

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

40

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

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

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

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

41

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

The morning time is past, and the noon. In the shade of evening my eyes are drowsy with sleep. Men going home glance at me and smile and fill me with shame. I sit like a beggar maid, drawing my

skirt over my face, and when they ask me, what it is I want, I drop my eyes and answer them not.

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

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

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

42

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

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

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

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

43

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

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

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

44

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

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

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

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

45

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

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

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

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

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

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

46

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

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

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

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

47

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

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

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

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

48

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

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

The sun rose to the mid sky and doves cooed in the shade. Withered leaves danced and whirled in the hot air of noon. The shepherd boy drowsed and dreamed in the shadow of the banyan tree, and I laid myself down by the water and stretched my tired limbs on the grass.

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

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

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

49

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

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

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

50

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

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

The chariot stopped where I stood. Thy glance fell on me and thou camest down with a smile. I felt that the luck of my life had come at last. Then of a sudden thou didst hold out thy right hand and say, 'What hast thou to give to me?'

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

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

51

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

It seemed there were knocks at the door and we said it was nothing but the wind. We put out the lamps and lay down to sleep.

Only some said, ‘It is the messenger!’ We laughed and said, ‘No, it must be the wind!’

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

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

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

Open the doors, let the conch-shells be sounded! In the depth of the night has come the King of our dark, dreary house. The thunder roars in the sky. The darkness shudders with lightning. Bring out thy tattered piece of mat and spread it in the courtyard. With the storm has come of a sudden our king of the fearful night.[2]

52

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

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

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

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

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

53

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

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

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

54

I asked nothing from thee; I uttered not my name to thine ear. When thou took'st thy leave I stood silent. I was alone by the well where the shadow of the tree fell aslant, and the women had gone home with their brown earthen pitchers full to the brim. They called me

and shouted, ‘Come with us, the morning is wearing on to noon.’ But I languidly lingered awhile lost in the midst of vague musings.

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

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

55

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

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

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

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

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

56

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

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

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

57

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

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

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

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

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

58

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

59

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

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

60

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

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

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

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

On the seashore of endless worlds children meet. Tempest roams in the pathless sky, ships are wrecked[3] in the trackless water, death is abroad and children play. On the seashore of endless worlds is the great meeting of children.

61

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

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

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

62

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

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

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

When I kiss your face to make you smile, my darling, I surely understand what pleasure streams from the sky in morning light, and what delight that is which the summer breeze brings to my body—when I kiss you to make you smile.[4]

63

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

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

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

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

64

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

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

In the moonless gloom of midnight I asked her, ‘Maiden, what is your quest, holding the lamp near your heart? My house is all dark and lonesome—lend me your light.’ She stopped for a minute and thought and gazed at my face in the dark. ‘I have brought my light,’

she said, ‘to join the carnival of lamps.’ I stood and watched her little lamp uselessly lost among lights.

65

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

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

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

66

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

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

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

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

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

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

67

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

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

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

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

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

68

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

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

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

69

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

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

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

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

this moment.

70

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

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

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

71

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

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

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

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

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

72

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

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

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

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

73

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

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

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

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

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

74

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

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

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

75

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

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

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

Thy worship does not impoverish the world.

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

76

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

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

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

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

77

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

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

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

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

78

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

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

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

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

Only in the deepest silence of night the stars smile and whisper among themselves—‘Vain is this seeking! Unbroken perfection is over all!’

79

If it is not my portion to meet thee in this life then let me ever feel that I have missed thy sight—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

As my days pass in the crowded market of this world and my hands grow full with the daily profits, let me ever feel that I have gained nothing—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

When I sit by the roadside, tired and panting, when I spread my bed low in the dust, let me ever feel that the long journey is still before me—let me not forget a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

When my rooms have been decked out and the flutes sound and the laughter there is loud, let me ever feel that I have not invited thee to my house—let me not forget for a moment, let me carry the pangs of this sorrow in my dreams and in my wakeful hours.

80

I am like a remnant of a cloud of autumn uselessly roaming in the sky, O my sun ever-glorious! Thy touch has not yet melted my vapour, making me one with thy light, and thus I count months and years separated from thee.

If this be thy wish and if this be thy play, then take this fleeting emptiness of mine, paint it with colours, gild it with gold, float it on the wanton wind and spread it in varied wonders.

And again when it shall be thy wish to end this play at night, I shall melt and vanish away in the dark, or it may be in a smile of the white morning, in a coolness of purity transparent.

81

On many an idle day have I grieved over lost time. But it is never lost, my lord. Thou hast taken every moment of my life in thine own hands.

Hidden in the heart of things thou art nourishing seeds into sprouts, buds into blossoms, and ripening flowers into fruitfulness.

I was tired and sleeping on my idle bed and imagined all work had ceased. In the morning I woke up and found my garden full with wonders of flowers.

82

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

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

Thy centuries follow each other perfecting a small wild flower.

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

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

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

83

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

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

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

84

It is the pang of separation that spreads throughout the world and gives birth to shapes innumerable in the infinite sky.

It is this sorrow of separation that gazes in silence all nights from star to star and becomes lyric among rustling leaves in rainy darkness of July.

It is this overspreading pain that deepens into loves and desires, into sufferings and joy in human homes; and this it is that ever melts and flows in songs through my poet's heart.

85

When the warriors came out first from their master's hall, where had they hid their power? Where were their armour and their arms?

They looked poor and helpless, and the arrows were showered upon them on the day they came out from their master's hall.

When the warriors marched back again to their master's hall where did they hide their power?

They had dropped the sword and dropped the bow and the arrow; peace was on their foreheads, and they had left the fruits of their life behind them on the day they marched back again to their master's hall.

86

Death, thy servant, is at my door. He has crossed the unknown sea and brought thy call to my home.

The night is dark and my heart is fearful—yet I will take up the lamp, open my gates and bow to him my welcome. It is thy messenger who stands at my door.

I will worship him with folded hands, and with tears. I will worship him placing at his feet the treasure of my heart.

He will go back with his errand done, leaving a dark shadow on my morning; and in my desolate home only my forlorn self will remain as my last offering to thee.

87

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

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

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

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

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

tears.

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

88

Deity of the ruined temple! The broken strings of *Vina* sing no more your praise. The bells in the evening proclaim not your time of worship. The air is still and silent about you.

In your desolate dwelling comes the vagrant spring breeze. It brings the tidings of flowers—the flowers that for your worship are offered no more.

Your worshipper of old wanders ever longing for favour still refused. In the eventide, when fires and shadows mingle with the gloom of dust, he wearily comes back to the ruined temple with hunger in his heart.

Many a festival day comes to you in silence, deity of the ruined temple. Many a night of worship goes away with lamp unlit.

Many new images are built by masters of cunning art and carried to the holy stream of oblivion when their time is come.

Only the deity of the ruined temple remains unworshipped in deathless neglect.

89

No more noisy, loud words from me—such is my master's will. Henceforth I deal in whispers. The speech of my heart will be carried on in murmurings of a song.

Men hasten to the King's market. All the buyers and sellers are there. But I have my untimely leave in the middle of the day, in the thick of work.

Let then the flowers come out in my garden, though it is not their time; and let the midday bees strike up their lazy hum.

Full many an hour have I spent in the strife of the good and the evil, but now it is the pleasure of my playmate of the empty days to draw my heart on to him; and I know not why is this sudden call to what useless inconsequence!

90

On the day when death will knock at thy door what wilt thou offer to him?

Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my life—I will never let him go with empty hands.

All the sweet vintage of all my autumn days and summer nights, all the earnings and gleanings of my busy life will I place before him at the close of my days when death will knock at my door.

91

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

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

All that I am, that I have, that I hope and all my love have ever flowed towards thee in depth of secrecy. One final glance from thine eyes and my life will be ever thine own.

The flowers have been woven and the garland is ready for the bridegroom. After the wedding the bride shall leave her home and meet her lord alone in the solitude of night.

92

I know that the day will come when my sight of this earth shall be lost, and life will take its leave in silence, drawing the last curtain over my eyes.

Yet stars will watch at night, and morning rise as before, and hours heave like sea waves casting up pleasures and pains.

When I think of this end of my moments, the barrier of the moments breaks and I see by the light of death thy world with its careless treasures. Rare is its lowliest seat, rare is its meanest of lives.

Things that I longed for in vain and things that I got—let them pass. Let me but truly possess the things that I ever spurned and overlooked.

93

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

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

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

94

At this time of my parting, wish me good luck, my friends! The sky is flushed with the dawn and my path lies beautiful.

Ask not what I have with me to take there. I start on my journey with empty hands and expectant heart.

I shall put on my wedding garland. Mine is not the red-brown dress of the traveller, and though there are dangers on the way I have no fear in mind.

The evening star will come out when my voyage is done and the plaintive notes of the twilight melodies be struck up from the King’s gateway.

95

I was not aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life.

What was the power that made me open out into this vast mystery like a bud in the forest at midnight?

When in the morning I looked upon the light I felt in a moment that I was no stranger in this world, that the inscrutable without name and form had taken me in its arms in the form of my own mother.

Even so, in death the same unknown will appear as ever known to me. And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well.

The child cries out when from the right breast the mother takes it away, in the very next moment to find in the left one its consolation.

96

When I go from hence let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable.

I have tasted of the hidden honey of this lotus that expands on the ocean of light, and thus am I blessed—let this be my parting word.

In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of him that is formless.

My whole body and my limbs have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch; and if the end comes here, let it come—let this be my parting word.

97

When my play was with thee I never questioned who thou wert. I knew nor shyness nor fear, my life was boisterous.

In the early morning thou wouldst call me from my sleep like my own comrade and lead me running from glade to glade.

On those days I never cared to know the meaning of songs thou sangest to me. Only my voice took up the tunes, and my heart danced in their cadence.

Now, when the playtime is over, what is this sudden sight that is come upon me? The world with eyes bent upon thy feet stands in awe with all its silent stars.

98

I will deck thee with trophies, garlands of my defeat. It is never in my power to escape unconquered.

I surely know my pride will go to the wall, my life will burst its bonds in exceeding pain, and my empty heart will sob out in music like a hollow reed, and the stone will melt in tears.

I surely know the hundred petals of a lotus will not remain closed for ever and the secret recess of its honey will be bared.

From the blue sky an eye shall gaze upon me and summon me in silence. Nothing will be left for me, nothing whatever, and utter death shall I receive at thy feet.

99

When I give up the helm I know that the time has come for thee to take it. What there is to do will be instantly done. Vain is this struggle.

Then take away your hands and silently put up with your defeat, my heart, and think it your good fortune to sit perfectly still where you are placed.

These my lamps are blown out at every little puff of wind, and trying to light them I forget all else again and again.

But I shall be wise this time and wait in the dark, spreading my mat on the floor; and whenever it is thy pleasure, my lord, come silently and take thy seat here.

100

I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms, hoping to gain the perfect pearl of the formless.

No more sailing from harbour to harbour with this my weather-beaten boat. The days are long passed when my sport was to be tossed on waves.

And now I am eager to die into the deathless.

Into the audience hall by the fathomless abyss where swells up the music of toneless strings I shall take this harp of my life.

I shall tune it to the notes of for ever, and when it has sobbed out its last utterance, lay down my silent harp at the feet of the silent.

101

Ever in my life have I sought thee with my songs. It was they who led me from door to door, and with them have I felt about me, searching and touching my world.

It was my songs that taught me all the lessons I ever learnt; they showed me secret paths, they brought before my sight many a star on the horizon of my heart.

They guided me all the day long to the mysteries of the country of pleasure and pain, and, at last, to what palace gate have they brought me in the evening at the end of my journey?

102

I boasted among men that I had known you. They see your pictures in all works of mine. They come and ask me, ‘Who is he?’ I know not how to answer them. I say, ‘Indeed, I cannot tell.’ They blame me and they go away in scorn. And you sit there smiling.

I put my tales of you into lasting songs. The secret gushes out from my heart. They come and ask me, ‘Tell me all your meanings.’ I know not how to answer them. I say, ‘Ah, who knows what they mean!’ They smile and go away in utter scorn. And you sit there smiling.

103

In one salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet.

Like a rain-cloud of July hung low with its burden of unshed showers let all my mind bend down at thy door in one salutation to thee.

Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee.

Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee.

Appendix D

The following table is the result of my own analysis of the changes that were made to the Rothenstein manuscript when *Gitanjali* was published in 1912. I have based my analysis on the Macmillan text as printed in *Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore* (1936; 1939 reprint). (There were some slight differences in the first edition published by the India Society, one of which Yeats strongly objected to and insisted should be reversed in the Macmillan edition: see Introduction, p. xxxii.) [1] In my Introduction I considered the general effect of the changes to the order of the poems and to the paragraphing. Any analysis of changes to punctuation and phrasing, however, requires more detail than there was space for in my Introduction; hence this appendix.

I did not start constructing this table with any preformed notions. I knew that changes had been made to punctuation and phrasing, but I was not sure how many or how significant they would be. I decided to try and count the changes by putting them into different categories. The changes to the paragraphing could be simply dealt with by the figures in the first column on the left: they confirm that there are many more paragraphs in the published *Gitanjali* than there were in the Rothenstein manuscript. The next column lists the corrections that I consider to be justifiable. I have also made them in my own new text of *Gitanjali* based on the manuscript, though my decisions do not always correspond with the Macmillan text. The last column on the right lists errors of the same sort, though with these the corrections were not actually made when *Gitanjali* was published.

The remaining columns may suggest a certain bias on my part. Others may not agree that the many commas and semicolons that were added in the published text were intrusive; and what I consider to be excessive corrections, unnecessary alterations, changes based on misunderstanding, and sloppy punctuation could be regarded by some as a matter of opinion. But my footnotes on many of these alterations will indicate that I have tried to apply objective standards. I have rarely said that I simply prefer the manuscript text to the Macmillan text, although in most instances I do.

My analysis is based on several assumptions. Firstly I have had to assume that W.B. Yeats was responsible for virtually all the published changes. As I explained in my Introduction, this cannot be finally proved, as the typed copy on which he made his emendations has not survived. However, all the other evidence we have, not least Yeats's own large claims later on that he had exhaustively revised Tagore's translations, oblige us to assume that they were Yeats's work, unless evidence to the contrary turns up. Secondly I have assumed what perhaps Yeats did not assume, namely that the translations in the Rothenstein manuscript were not rough drafts but were considered final versions. In the Introduction (pp. xix and xliii) I have explained why I believe this to be so. If it was, then I do not believe that it is justifiable to make more than minimal changes to the work of a poet who had fully established himself by 1912 as a major literary figure in his own country, and whose reputation had actually spread to England before his arrival in 1912. Yes, the translations did need some editing, as Tagore himself was ready to admit. But the general quality of his English not only in the translations but in his lectures, essays and addresses gives no support to the view that his English was so weak that it needed the kind of 'exhaustive' revision that Yeats claimed it did.

My third assumption is that Tagore brought to his translations much of the same rhythmic and stylistic sensitivity that can be found in his Bengali writings. His sparing use of commas does not stem

from ignorance of conventional English usage. It reflects his desire to achieve distinctive rhythmic effects. When I read Tagore's translations in the manuscript, as opposed to the Macmillan text, I hear the rhythms of his Bengali. There is a rapidity of movement, a rhythmic drive, and sometimes a kind of breathlessness which is in keeping with the mood of the poems. Punctuated in the way that he wanted, his translations do not seem 'biblical'. The biblical character of the English *Gitanjali* which was noticed by many seems to me to have been largely a product of Yeats's editorial interventions. The use of 'thee' and 'thou' does not alone make the style biblical. The punctuation, and in particular Yeats's obsession with inserting commas before 'and' (which is a feature of the Authorised Version of the English Bible), as well as the use of subjunctive verb forms and certain archaic turns of phrase that are not to be found in the manuscript are the main cause of the biblical impression that the published *Gitanjali* made. The use of capital letters on words like 'king' further contributed to its aura of piety.

Constructing the table was not a totally exact science: it is difficult, for example, where we have the complete reworking of a sentence to decide whether this should be regarded as one alteration or many. I have generally regarded such reworkings as one alteration; but on the other hand I have separately counted instances of changes that might run through a whole poem such as a change from 'thou' to 'you', and I have also counted every comma or semicolon that I consider to be intrusive or rhythmically disruptive. Even if there is scope for argument about my figures, when they are totted up the conclusions that have to be drawn are undeniable and really rather shocking. I have calculated that Yeats made 326 alterations altogether to the Rothenstein manuscript (I am not considering here further alterations that he may have made to the additional poems). Of these 32 seem to me justified. I repeat, only 32 out of 326. Moreover there were 13 obvious errors that he missed. In my own new text of Tagore's English *Gitanjali* there are 100 changes (less

than a third as many), and most of them are very, very small. Nowhere have I reworked whole sentences; and where adjustments needed to be made I have always tried to go for the simplest and most economical solution.

Of course I am working a century later than Yeats, with different attitudes and assumptions, and a knowledge of the Bengali original that he did not have. A more sympathetic case for Yeats could certainly be made. [1] But even allowing for Yeats's handicaps and the circumstances of the time, it does not seem to me that he did his job well. If we look carefully at what he did, we will reach the conclusion that much of the barbed criticism that was later levelled at the English *Gitanjali* (I leave out of the discussion here Tagore's later English books) arose not from the English of his own unaided translations but from his English as mangled, confused and misunderstood by W.B. Yeats.

TABLE 4: Rothenstein MS versus the Macmillan text

MS no./ MT no.	paragraphing	justified correction	intrusive commas	excessive correction	unnecessary alteration	misunder-standing	sloppy punctuation	errors not corrected
1/44	S							
2/89	S							
3/1	2/4							
4/98	2/4		1	1[1]				
5/14	3/4		2					
6/63	1/4				2			
7/96	1/4		3					
8/18	3/4	1	3					
9/22	S		1					
10/79	S							1[2]
11/74	4/3					1[3]		
12/59	S							
13/15	2/4		1		2			1
14/46	2/4				3			
15/70	S		3		1[4]			
16/49	S		3		1			

MS no./ MT no.	paragraphing	justified correction	intrusive commas	excessive correction	unnecessary alteration	misunder-standing	sloppy punctuation	errors not corrected
17/39	1/5		3			1[5]		
18/97	1/4		1		2[6]			
19/19	2/3	1	2		1			
20/6	1/3	2	3					
21/77	S	1	3		2[7]	1[8]		
22/65	1/3					1[9]		
23/9	2/3		1		1			1[10]
24/10	2/4		8		3[11]	1[12]		
25/90	2/3							
26/91	4/3							
27/56	3/2				2			
28/11	S	2	2		2			
29/85	2/4		1		9	2[13]	1	
30/101	2/3	1			1		1	
31/34	24		1		6	1[14]		
32/29	S		3		2	2[15]		
33 not included								
34/103	S				2			

MS no./ MT no.	paragraphing	justified correction	intrusive commas	excessive correction	unnecessary alteration	misunder-standing	sloppy punctuation	errors not corrected
35/32	2/3		1		1			1
36/17	3/4			1	3			
37/72	1/4	1		2	2			
38/5	3/4		2		2			1
39/20	S				3			
40/94	S				5			1
41/93	S	1			1			
42/21	S				4			1
43/23	3/4	1			2			
44/84	S		1		1[16]			1[17]
45/16	2/3		2		1[18]			
46/26	2/3	1				2[19]		
47/99	3/4		1		4[20]			
48/12	1/6		4[21]		5[22]	1		
49/27	4/6	2	2				2[23]	
50/3	S	1	1					

MS no./ MT no.	paragraphing	justified correction	intrusive commas	excessive correction	unnecessary alteration	misunder-standing	sloppy punctuation	errors not corrected
51/71	3/5		1		6			
52/55	3/5				4[24]			1[25]
53/100	2/5				5[26]			
54/45	2/6		1		3[27]			
55/2	3/5		1		2			
56/42	3/4	1	3				1[28]	
57/57	2/5				3			1[29]
58 not included								
59/76	3/4	3			5		5[30]	
60/81	2/3	2			1			
61/69	1/4				3	1[31]		
62/73	1/5	1	1		4[32]			
63/43	1/44				6[33]			
64/82	2/6		2	1	1			
65/75	1/5			1	4	1[34]		
66 not included								
67/4	1/4		3		2	5[35]		
68/67	2/5	1	2			1[36]		
69/40	1/4				1[37]			

MS no./ MT no.	paragraphing	justified correction	intrusive commas	excessive correction	unnecessary alteration	misunder-standing	sloppy punctuation	errors not corrected
70/95	1/5	3		1	1[38]			1
71/25	1/3	1			1[39]			
72/35	1/7			1[40]				1[41]
73/36	1/6				2[42]			
74/41	S	1	4		4	3[43]		
75/50	S		1		9			
76/51	S	1			6		1[44]	
77/52	S	2	1		3			
78/80	S		1	1[45]	2			
79/78	3/5	1	1		1			
80/83	S		1		1			
81/38	S				3			
82/37	1/2		3		1	1		1[46]
83/58	S		1		4			

Totals:
Yeats (assuming it was him) thus made 326 changes altogether, of which 32 were, in my opinion, justified. He missed 13 errors that should have been corrected. In my own new text based on the MS, I have made 100 changes, most of them very small. My footnotes to the new text indicate the MS reading in each case.

Key:
paragraphing: = S: same paragraphing in the MS as in the Macmillan text (MT); or e.g. 2/4: 2 paragraphs in the MS and 4 in the Macmillan text (MT).
justified correction = there is a grammatical error that needs correction; my emendation may differ from Yeats's, but only trivially
intrusive commas = commas or semicolons inserted that are not really necessary and which break Tagore's rhythmic flow
excessive correction = places where some correction is necessary, but Yeats has gone too far instead of opting for the simplest solution
unnecessary alteration = changes or deletions that are not grammatically necessary: it is debatable whether they are

improvements
misunderstanding = changes which show misunderstanding or ignorance of what Tagore meant
sloppy punctuation = inconsistent or careless punctuation: Tagore's punctuation in the MS may not be perfect, but Yeats's alterations are not perfect either
errors uncorrected = obvious errors in Tagore's English that were somehow let through; or other errors or inconsistencies that should have been smoothed out

[1] The missing article before 'trophy-garland' in the MS version certainly needed fixing, but Yeats's amendment is excessive and confusing. It implies that 'trophies' are in themselves 'garlands of my defeat'. But Tagore is saying that the particular 'trophy-garland' he will present here will be an emblem of his defeat. The plural seems unlikely, because in India one garland is normally presented, not many. (In Bengali grammar a noun without article can be singular or plural, and in translation one has to decide from the context whether singular or plural is appropriate.)

[2] In the MS here, Tagore puts '&c' at the end of paragraphs 2, 3, 4. This is obviously an attempt to represent the repeated *sthayi* or chorus when the poem is sung. He does not do this anywhere else in the MS, so it was not a practice he adopted. In the MT of this poem, however, the repetitions are given in full. This is inconsistent with the rest of the book, so I regard it as an editorial error to have let it through. In the MS here,Tagore puts '&c' at the end of paragraphs 2, 3, 4.

[3] This is the only poem in the Rothenstein MS in which there are more paragraphs than in the MT—4 instead of 3. In his MS, Tagore correctly reflected the four parts of the song with four paragraphs (see Introduction, p. xxxix); moreover the four paragraphs indicate a progression in time—1. The decision to go the stream 2. The advance of dusk 3. The walk along the lane 4.

The arrival at the stream. Merging paragraphs 2 and 3 shows insensitivity to that progression.

[4] The first half of this poem was considerably shortened in the MT, very much to its detriment in my view. This has the weight of much more than one unnecessary alteration.

[5] Changing ‘with thy regal splendour’ to ‘ with the ceremony of a king’ (see Introduction, p. xxxiii) is notonly unnecessary, it alters the effect and misrepresents what Tagore is saying here.

[6] Tagore’s MS suggests that he dithered over whether to write ‘thou wert’ or ‘thou wast’. The MT has ‘wert’, but I think Tagore wrote ‘wast’ over ‘wert’ rather than vice versa, perhaps because he liked the way ‘wast’ echoed ‘was’ in ‘my play was with thee’.

[7] More important than the unnecessary changing of ‘I grasp not’ to ‘I do not grasp’ is the restructuring ofthe poem’s last sentence. Tagore’s sentence may be grammatically odd but has a much stronger rhythm—and is ‘great waters of life’ an improvement on ‘ocean of life’?

[8] The change of tense—‘camest’ to ‘comest’ and ‘didst own’ to ‘ownest’ upsets the dynamic of the poem: a chance to know God as a brother was offered but not taken. The past tense is used in the original.

[9] Tagore uses capitalization more sparingly than the MT (e.g. ‘king’ is always l.c.), so it is safe to conclude that ‘my Poet’ is not arbitrary. God as a poet is a very fundamental idea in *Gitanjali.*

[10] Tagore is not quite secure in his use of ‘thy’ and ‘thine’ as attributive adjectives (he has no problem with ‘thine’ as a predicate pronoun). Before a vowel, ‘thine’ is preferable; before a consonant, ‘thy’. Yeats has corrected some of these but not all.

[11] An unnecessary change that was also plain careless was to change ‘and lowliest and lost’ at the end to‘the lowliest, and the lost’, breaking Tagore’s refrain.

[12] To change ‘there’ at the beginning of the poem to ‘here’ is contradictory and nonsensical, as it undermines the separation

Tagore feels both from God and ‘the poorest and lowliest and lost’.

[13] Shifting ‘first’ in the opening sentence upsets the meaning: the point is not that they came out first (before others) but that they came out for the first time. Similarly insensitive is the shifting of ‘again’ in the second half of the poem. To say ‘marched back again’ is pleonastic; the hiding of their power again is what Tagore is interested in here.

[14] In the reworking of the last sentence, ‘carried out’ for ‘carried’ reveals a misunderstanding. Tagore’s translation is quite free here, but there is nothing in the original to suggest the ‘carrying out’ or completion of a purpose but rather a ‘binding with thy will’ which is continuous and open-ended.

[15] Changing ‘dying’ to ‘weeping’ is not only unnecessary, it waters down Tagore’s meaning. Fame is fatally destructive, it doesn’t just make the prisoner weep. Making the opening relative clause restrictive by removing Tagore’s commas may seem more logical, but the comma after ‘He’ gives a sacred, awestruck emphasis to the soul that is being destroyed.

[16] Tagore wrote ‘separation’ in the first line at first in the MS, then changed it to ‘severance’. He retained ‘separation’ in the second paragraph, as an effective variation that also helps to convey the complexity of the Indian term *viraha.* (There are quite a few other instances where Yeats removes Tagore’s deliberate variation of vocabulary.)

[17] A definite article was obviously missing from ‘in rainy darkness of July, especially as in 54/45 we have ‘the rainy gloom of July nights’. Cf. note 25 below.

[18] Why change ‘harp’—which is clear and universal (most cultures have harps of various sorts)—to‘instrument’, which is impossible to visualize?

[19] To change ‘oh’ to ‘O’ here is crass, because ‘oh miserable me!’ is an exclamation, not a vocative. Changing ‘Ah, why ever I

miss' in the MS to 'Ah, why do I ever miss' is more reasonable, but the exclamatory Bengali *kena go* suggests that Tagore had 'ever' as in 'Why ever did he say that?' in mind here, not 'ever' = 'always'. It accounts too for his exclamation mark after 'brow'.

[20] Of the 4 unnecessary alterations in the MT of this poem, one is laughable (even in 1912 people wouldhave been alive to another meaning of 'at every little puff of wind') and the other baffling: trying to light the lamps 'again and again' (MS) is fine, but forgetting 'all else again and again' (MT) while trying to light them is impossible to conceptualize.

[21] Of the 4 unnecessary commas that are inserted into the MT, the comma in 'Oh, where?' seems absurd in what is clearly a single utterance. 'The questioning cry' just before it has been split into 'The question and the cry', but if the comma is intended to reflect that division, how can 'Oh' be a question?

[22] 'the utter simplicity in tune' in the MS needed correction, but 'the utter simplicity of a tune' in the MT makes no sense. A tune is not inherently simple: it can be simple or complex. What Tagore obviously has in mind is a kind of tune or music that is utterly simple, hence my own emendation to 'an utter simplicity of tune'.

[23] In the MS Tagore often combines a comma with a dash. I have amended these to a dash only. In the MT, a dash only is generally used, but here suddenly we have 2 dashes + comma.

[24] 2 of the alterations I regard as unnecessary are from 'thine' to 'your'. There are other instances where this has been done. Why? When Tagore has so frequently used thou/thy/thine, why (inconsistently) change this to you/your/yours? Tagore does make the distinction sometimes, to reflect different second person pronouns in Bengali (*apni/tumi/tui*), or simply because he wants a plural 'you', but 'thine' is perfectly appropriate herefor the intimate Bengali *tor*.

[25] Some may argue that ‘in sweet music of pain’ is acceptable here, but leaving out articles when a noun is defined by a following adjectival phrase is the kind of mistake made by Indian speakers of English that I think Tagore would have wished to avoid— hence my emendation to ‘in the sweet music of pain’.

[26] One of the 5 unnecessary alterations in the MT of this poem almost counts as a misunderstanding: Tagore’s capital letter on ‘the Silent’ at the end is necessary because of the personification of the abstract ‘Silent’. With lower case, one is forced to understand ‘the silent’ as silent people—which is not what is meant. The equally significant capital ‘F’ on ‘Forever’ has also been missed.

[27] Another case where ‘thou’ has been changed to ‘you’ for no good reason. The straightforward ‘makes my joys shine’ at the end has become ‘makes my joy to shine’—an example of how the MT is quite often moreprecious or archaic than the MS.

[28] Tagore has commas after ‘ocean’ and ‘smile’, but curiously in the MT the comma after ‘smile’ has (inadvertently?) been dropped.

[29] How did ‘The heaven’s river’ get through?

[30] See Introduction, p. lxxx and Appendix E, p. 233 for the rogue question mark at the end of all five sentences that survived unnoticed in reprints of the MT throughout Tagore’s lifetime. It was not there in the MS and questions are in no way implied by the Bengali.

[31] Changing ‘this world-life’ in the MS to ‘this world of life’ shows insensitivity to Tagore’s meaning here: the world is for him a living thing—a Gaia-like being—it is not a world that happens to contain life. And whywas his perfectly clear and grammatical final sentence—‘And I feel with pride the life-throb of all ages dancing in my blood this moment’ twisted into obscurity?

[32] Changing ‘the thousand bonds of delight’ to ‘a thousand bonds of delight’ may seem insignificant but in fact it has a trivializing, randomizing effect. Cf. ‘a thousand kisses’ with ‘the three thousand names of Allah’. And ‘wine’ instead of ‘nectar’ is alien to India.

[33] I could produce reasons for preferring in every case the words of the MS to the MT of this poem, but I’ll limit myself to saying that ‘from sun to sun’ is much immediate and Indian than ‘from star to star’. The sun is often identified with Brahman in Indian tradition, immensely close and powerful. Stars are more remote.

[34] ‘men take what meanings please them’ in the MT misunderstands Tagore’s point here: in the MS he writes ‘men take meanings as it suits their needs’—the meanings they take might not necessarily please them.

[35] ‘knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind’ misconstrues Tagore’s subtle meaning here. His (perfectly acceptable) sentence in the MS should be understood as ‘thou that has kindled the light of reason in my mind art the highest truth’. Changing ‘struggle’ to ‘try’ weakens Tagore’s meaning: ‘struggle’ implies he might not succeed in driving evils from his heart—it is not just a pious prayer. Finally, removing Tagore’s underlining (= italics) from ‘*thy* living touch’, ‘*thou* art’ and ‘*thy* power’ weakens his emphasis and makes his meaning less clear.

[36] ‘Hand’ and ‘arm’ are the same word in Bengali, and at first I wondered if Tagore meant ‘on her right arm’. But Dr Geeti Sen in a lecture in Mumbai in December 2010 showed a painting by him of a woman in a swirling red sari balancing a basket on her hand held up high above her head. This must be what Tagore had in mind here. The MT changes it to ‘in her right hand’, which suggests a tiny basket.

[37] Deleting Tagore's comma after 'But' may seem a natural piece of editing, but the sentence has greater rhythmic and emotional force with the comma in place. Because Tagore uses commas sparingly, they nearly always have a rhythmic and emotional purpose: they are not there just for the sake of grammatical convention.

[38] Tagore's modest 'I know I will love death as well' becomes the more portentous 'I know I shall . . .' in the MT. His 'will' is quite often changed to 'shall', for no good reason.

[39] Was Tagore's beautiful first sentence cut by mistake?

[40] The revision of the end of this poem has been much admired and quoted, but I find nothing wrong with the MS version other than 'waken up' which can be simply amended to 'wake up'. Tagore's l.c. on 'father' in the MS is also less churchy and grandiose than 'Father'.

[41] Surely 'into the dreary desert sand' counts as an obvious error that should have been corrected? I have amended 'into' to 'in'. It cannot mean 'its way to' which is the only possible meaning of 'into' here. I was gratified to see that the anonymous annotator of the 1914 reprint of *Gitanjali* whose copy is preserved in Rabindra-Bhavana, Santiniketan (see Appendix E, p. 234) also corrected 'into' to 'in'.

[42] Changing 'poverty in my heart' in the MS to 'penury in my heart' in the MT is odd. Penury is associated with lack of money; poverty is much wider in its application.

[43] 3 of the alterations to this poem in the MT are sufficiently problematic to count, I think, as misunderstandings. 'shadows' suggests the shadows of trees, but 'shadow' in the MS suggests the shadow formed by the crowd, which is what Tagore surely had in mind here. Ignoring the underlining (= italics) on 'for *thee*' removes emphasis and clarity. And replacing 'should wait' to 'would wait' at the end removes the obligation and contrast with 'Is it only thou who wouldst stand . . .?' The lover has a

choice; the speaker has no choice. Changing ‘should’ to ‘must’ would have been more acceptable.

[44] Tagore’s punctuation of speech is different from how it is done in the MT. Being generally sparing in his use of commas, he usually does not insert a comma before a speech after ‘we said’, etc. I have not changed this in my new text, removing the comma if he inserts one inconsistently. In the India Society and early Macmillan editions, the speech punctuation in this poem was erratic. It has been rationalized in the 1937 edition on which Table 4 is based, but a comma is still missing after ‘We stood up on our feet and cried’.

[45] ‘permeate in a coolness’ in the MS needed adjustment, and maybe Tagore’s sentence is not entirely clear, but the reworked version in the MT is even less clear.

[46] Was ‘and the time come’ in the MT a misprint? Because of ‘was closed’ and ‘were exhausted’ before it, it has to be read as an ellipsis for ‘the time was come’. The MS has the more normal ‘and the time had come’. The missing ‘a’ before ‘new country’ is surely a mistake that should have been corrected.

Appendix E

‘I Shall Stand’

By John W. Rattray

This article was published in the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. 14, No. 1, May–July 1948, pp. 43–52. See Introduction, p. lxxx for my high regard for it. The numbered footnotes are my own, and I have adjusted the punctuation here and there.

As regards the story of the rogue question mark in *Gitanjali* 76, which is the main subject of Rattray’s article, its history can be traced through various editions up to the present day. The mistake was in the first edition published by the India Society in 1912, and in all Macmillan editions in London, New York and India—both in separate editions and the *Collected Poems and Plays* that was first published in 1936—throughout Tagore’s lifetime. The earliest editions I have found in which the mistake has been corrected are *Collected Poems and Plays* (London, 1950) and *Gitanjali* (London, 1953). Macmillan editions since then appear to have been free of it, including the pocket editions published by Macmillan India from 1974. However, in 2000 Macmillan India published a deluxe edition with photographs in which the mistake has reappeared. It can also be found in the edition with manuscript facsimiles of the original Bengali poems published in 2003 by UBSPD in Delhi in association

with Visva-Bharati; the bilingual edition published by Rabindra-Bhavana, Santiniketan in 1999; and the bilingual edition published in 2007 by Parul Prakashani, Kolkata (though curiously in this edition the question mark occurs at the end of the first sentence but not the other four).

I have not checked translations of *Gitanjali* into other languages, but I imagine the mistake has been faithfully reproduced, for nearly all them were done from Macmillan's pre-war editions.

Checking through all the editions held by Rabindra-Bhavana, I found two of particular interest. One was a copy of the beautiful 1927 Macmillan edition of *Gitanjali* and *Fruit-Gathering* with illustrations by Nandalal Bose, Surendranath Kar, Abanindranath Tagore and Nobendranath Tagore. Whoever owned it (the library's copy records that it was 'received from S. R. Ichastagir') must have realized the question mark was wrong, as all five are blanked out. Even more interesting is a copy of Macmillan's 1914 edition of *Gitanjali* (i.e. an early reprint of the 1913 first edition). It has copious pencil annotations by someone who had evidently looked at the Rothenstein manuscript and had, like me, become very dissatisfied with the alterations that were made. The excessive paragraph divisions clearly annoyed him, and he has comments such as 'Tagore was right!' Alongside No. 76, he writes (legibly—many of his annotations are hard to read):

> Why is this cast in the form of a question. why not an assertion 'I shall' in each case. or let it stand as 'shall I' but remove the notes of interrogation & place an exclamation note instead each sentence.!

I wish I knew who this perceptive reader was and when he made these notes. (I write 'he' in ignorance of the reader's gender.) I think of him as a kindred spirit, reaching conclusions similar to my own, but not having the opportunity that I have to make them public. All that can be surmised from his use of 'notes' rather than 'marks' is that he was not a native speaker of English, and that he was not a Bengali either, as he makes no reference to the Bengali originals.

For three years I lived almost next door to Rabindranath Tagore in Calcutta—but was not aware of it. At that time Tagore was about forty-five, and unknown outside the carefully selected circle of which the Tagore family was the hub. Within it literature, poetry, and music were fostered, and a rich social and cultural life maintained with graceful case.

If I had known of my proximity, it would not have meant anything to me then. Those who go to the land of another race for personal gain, do not have the minds with which to make entirely virtuous awards as to first things: they confuse the primeval with the primary. And the young sahib was taught that the proper place of the Indian was the home—the home of the occupying race; alternatively, the field, the factory, and the office, good servants content with their wages and with their masters, who might sometimes be very good, according to their sometimes not very bright lights. To the young sahib it was mostly a case of (to adapt Wordsworth) 'the Indian by the Hugli's brim, a useful servant was to him. And he was nothing more.'[1] The facts of learned judges, distinguished civil servants, barristers, and poets had to be accepted as interesting phenomena, but must not be allowed to form precedents. Thus was a Peter Bell of a later day menaced by shades of the prison house,[2] but happily I, not quite hopelessly late, beheld a glimmer of light and felt its source with as much joy as my meagre endowments could yield.

Unlike other chota sahibs I did not take to India that characteristic of British home-life by which games and sport become the industry of the weekend. Every few hours of leisure I had were used to explore the city for miles round: Tollygunge (there were no modern flats there then), Kalighat, Chitpore, Sealdah, Serampore, Nimtollah, Howrah, the lanes and byways.

And there were the bazaars, and the places where the *mistiri log*[3] colonised pursuing their crafts until the going down of the sun, and sometimes after that, by feeble flaring smoky lamps. Everyone I contacted showed me the most charming friendliness, and some would, with pleasant little fussings, wipe a box or bundle for me to sit.*

Every 'leave' was spent in seeing a little more of the people. Thus I got glimpses of, and visited the great areas between, Darjeeling, Benares, and Amber (Rajputana); Calcutta, Wardha, and Bombay; Delhi, Agra, and Turicorin with a prized visit to Madura, all of it engrossing me, and awakening me. And when illness directed me Home, in little more than three years, it was not the 'brightest gem in the British crown' that I left, but a tremendously vast and wonderful land, with millions of poor, kindly, and terribly vulnerable people for whom I found I felt something like affection.

And then it was I heard about the Poet Tagore and sorrowfully realised what I had missed. In the score of years that followed, I read him with increasing satisfaction and deepening respect, and his teaching took on for me something of the quality of the Bible. *Gitanjali* and *Fruit-Gathering* especially became sources to which I might go for understanding and comfort, but also for strength and re-vitalising: wisdom distilled from human experience in dark valleys, passed through without bitterness, and to great enrichment. I dreamed of a day when I might go back and meet him. Meanwhile Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, Barrister-at-Law, but describing himself officially as peasant or weaver, came into prominence, and despite all the contumely emptied on him by the British Press—with a few redeeming exceptions—I recognised in him another of the Great. When, in regal meekness he left a prison, where he had been thrust by an authority incapable of understanding him, and undertook the toil of coming to the Round Table Conference in London in 1931, the Misses Lester who were his hostesses at Bow, most kindly enabled me to meet him and Mira Ben. His noble

comportment under all circumstances; his humility and supernatural self-sacrifice; his simplicity and straightness, his impregnable integrity and wiseness, won my allegiance to his great and reasonable cause. He seemed to me the spiritual brother of the Poet Tagore who in 1919 had in true high-mindedness renounced the knighthood (that had never seemed to me to sit comfortably on him) because of the reprehensible events in Amritsar in April that year.

Work for the society named the Friends of India led to my meeting Professor Amiya Chakravarty, then of Balliol. In 1925 it fell to me to organise a public dramatic reading by Mr. Laurence Housman of some of his own work.[4] Housman was President of the Friends of India, and I secured Chakravarty for the chair—a fine double draw towards raising funds.

In extracting from Professor Chakravarty data for publicity I discovered that he had been Tagore's literary secretary for six years, travelling with him in Asia, Europe and America. (In the year of Housman Lecture he was Senior Research Fellow at Brasenose.)

When my plans to visit India in 1938 were made, I wrote to Chakravarty and received a reply from Lahore in which he told me that he would be delighted to introduce me to the Poet Tagore. Arrived in Bombay, I found that he expected to be in residence at Santiniketan, and would make the introduction personally, which was very happy news for me. After meeting with Gandhiji—which is another story—I went on across India to Calcutta.

A peculiar circumstance in my experience as to Santiniketan is, that while no one had, or ever has, said to me that its precise locality must be deemed a confidence, it was only when I had to get there that I probed the vagueness of 'near Calcutta'; and I have never heard any one volunteer more than that. 'Near Calcutta' had meant to me Howrah, or Sealdah, or Garden Reach, or one of the suburban 'pores.'[5] I might have remembered that in a land where

you may spend four or five nights in a train, ‘near’ is relative. It took me five hours from Calcutta.[6]

I always feel that an automobile is not the means by which one ought to traverse a small Indian town or village. It seems somewhat overbearing, and an imposition on a quiet-living folk; but Indian hospitality, studying a Briton, had provided this form of transport, and having silently confessed to Heaven my sense of sin in thrusting my vulgar modernity upon an inoffensive people, I adjured the driver to go slowly, and gave myself up to again enjoying the scene.

It was curious to feel myself slip into an aura of familiarity that was akin to coming home, but how different from the bustle of Britain! Here, time did not seem a taskmaster, but a companion, the day-to-day needs occupying lives, without creating a pall of exhausting urgency. How memory was stimulated by the smells, that potent contribution to the faculty without which man would be less than a beast. There were the smells of earth itself and of cattle; of burning wood and dung; of cooking, and tobacco smouldering in hubble-hubbles; of strange food and exotic growing things, all enfolded in the Indian heat. And the sounds! Oxen bells, and of hakari drivers’ goading cries; of itinerant artisans and tradesmen; of small shopkeepers and pedlars, all eking out a meagre livelihood; of children at play, their elders gossiping or chaffering, and over all that easing sense of time no longer urgent. How familiar, and friendly it all felt; and again, how humble and terribly vulnerable. It was all completely engrossing. It was so very absorbing that it did not seem many minutes since I had left the small railway station and entered the little town, when I found myself in a bit of country that had become park-like. I realised that this must be the tract of land which had formerly been a bare and desolate place—the haunt of robbers—but which the Poet’s father, the Maharshi Devendranath, had redeemed. And he called the name of the place SANTINIKETAN for he said, it is to be The Abode of Peace; and

there I was, approaching a lofty iron gateway with an inscription worked in over it, in an arc of metal.

It was delightful to find Amiya Chakravarty in residence, and I had not been many minutes in my room when—there he was at the verandah door greeting me benignly and saying that I would not know him in Indian dress. I wondered if he would know me, in shoes, shorts, half-sleeved shirt and topi! I thought him a great 'swell' in his correct white; surtout, jaunty tubulars, and smart sandals, all as natty as you please. Anyhow, there we both were, he giving me the grand welcome, and I feeling very happy.

On a memorable day, a generous hour before twilight, my friend Amiya came to conduct me to meet the Poet. The serenity of a cultured Indian is of the quality which only the East seems to have been able to evolve to so great a degree; and I was favoured in having for companion one whom contact with the West had not marred, one who had been the Poet's daily confidant for years, and who remained a trusted friend. He was taking me into the presence of a seer, a mystic, a poet and one in whom the life-stream of compassion ever flowed; and I rested in the assurance that he would mediate for me in my very conscious need.

Strolling through a part of the precincts new to me, we passed on by a gateway through a small thicket, to emerge on an open place laid out in gardened beds; and on the distant side of them, a bungalow—a real pucca-built, Indian bungalow, that immediately made the impression of being just right. Not of great size, it was a few feet above the ground, surrounded by a wide pavement and deep verandah reached by a short flight of graceful shallow steps. About it was an air of permanence, of something well-done; and through the window I got a view of pleasant decoration, and of hangings; and shelves and shelves of books. This, said Amiya, was the Poet's home, but explained that, not being quite well, he was living in his son's house where we were now going. I was impressed by its modesty, and in the same moment, as to its being a perfect

human dwelling. The large house which we now approached seemed rather to tower and I found myself wishing I had been to meet the Poet in his own home that seemed to fit him as water does a fish.

As we approached the portico, a uniformed servant rose and gravely salaaming took out umbrellas and vanished. Salaaming is apt to be confused in Western minds with recognition by the 'poor Indian' of the superiority of Great White Chieftainship. This is a pity. It has in it, respect, but no less, courtesy; and in such a case as this, I feel that it includes respect felt for the one who is represented by the gesture; the courtesy due to any guest of the household, and a subtle hint—which certain types need—that respect and courtesy will be correct in those who enter. If this is a free translation, it is sobering, or bracing, as may be most suitable.

The servant returned in a few moments with a verbal message to the Professor, and responding, he led me round to a wide verandah on the left.

There, seated behind a simple, wide table, and looking the embodiment of veneration and wisdom, I set eyes upon Rabindranath Tagore, at the age of seventy-seven, an impressive age in India.

As I approached, he bestowed a smile upon me, and extended his hand, inviting me to sit opposite. He was clad in white with a downy-looking *chuddar* disposed round his neck. His head was bare, the hair a crown of white with a regal gleam in it; the beard just not-white, long and not thick. The skin was no more than sallow; the nose a little disappointing but very kind; the forehead less deep than I expected. But the eyes! They were large, deep-set, rich brown, full of kindness and gentleness glowing as with wise things behind, that waited for understanding hearts to be touched by them. On the face were lines of experience that almost certainly included sorrow; the whole figure one of benignity, and the regal wisdom that is bestowed on those who live in unceasing awareness of eternal

verities. I instantly felt a barbarous child, foolish and stupid. But, I also felt happiness in just sitting in his presence. His voice was rich and gentle and he spoke in English with a fine choice of words. Soon after the preliminaries he said in a voice matured and ratified by age, 'I am not now in close touch with affairs', a matter of fact, no doubt, but I seemed to catch in it a low assessment of 'affairs' compared with where his own treasure lay. Amiya had been horrified when I told him how in commercial farming, cows were now milked by machinery, and he repeated this to the Poet. He seemed like one smitten, and looked at me as if he hoped I might make a correction. His head shook a little and he said with wistful resignation, 'Man is just an intelligent animal'. I quickly sensed that he was liable to be soon wearied. I was not sure that he was not being too gracious in seeing a stranger of no importance, so I did not delay longer in broaching a subject that had been on my mind for years. Let me remind those who read this of No. LXXVI in *Gitanjali* by quoting it in full to make quite clear what follows:

> Day after day, O Lord of my Life, shall I stand before thee face to face. With folded hands, O Lord of all worlds, shall I stand before thee face to face?
>
> Under thy great sky in solitude and silence, with humble heart shall I stand before thee face to face?
>
> In this laborious world of thine, tumultuous with toil and with struggle, among hurrying crowds shall I stand before thee face to face?
>
> And when my work shall be done in this world, O King of kings, alone and speechless shall I stand before thee face to face?[7]

I said over the first few lines, and added, 'I have always, always, felt that "Shall I stand before thee face to face?" is *not* a question. I've always felt that it is a prayer, in the spirit of, May it be that I shall enjoy that Presence!' The poet instantly lit up, as if the eyes as well as the ears were listening. He had become all alive, and I was aware of Amiya moving forward in his chair by my side. Then as with one voice, the act rehearsed, both spoke in Bengali, reciting, and stopped together precisely. The Poet evinced utter astonishment. In a voice into which I now heard a quaver come,

firmness mingled with remonstrance, he said with great decisiveness, 'But there is *no* "question" about it. I am saying "SHALL I STAND BEFORE THEE FACE TO FACE: I SHALL STAND BEFORE THEE FACE TO FACE." I do not understand.' He looked across at Amiya who shook his head as one does when there seems no explanation. They both quoted again. I produced from my pocket my copy of *Gitanjali* and opening it at the place, slid it across the table towards the poet. 'See,' I said, 'it is the mark of interrogation that is the mischief, is it not?' I saw him scan the lines of his own creation with an interest and eagerness that seemed to be suffused with pain, and in the ticking seconds I had time to fear that I had distressed him. How long a few seconds can be! A silence enwrapped us. Both poets seemed as those to whom something has been revealed. I was astonished, and even a little frightened by the effect of my query and the confirmation that I had sensed the true attitude of the poem.

He kept on scrutinising the lines as is the way of incredulity, and at last he spoke again. '*Yes, of course; that mark of interrogation ought not to be there.'* I, in turn, felt at a loss but found myself murmuring rather than saying, 'And no one has noticed this; and all up and down Britain, in the book and on illuminated sheets this printer's error is making the poem wrong.' The poet kept on conning, as one goes over what one is facing having to believe, toying the while with a large fountain pen. The atmosphere eased a little and, prompted by that pen in his hand, I said, 'Would you be so kind as to put your pen through the first mark of interrogation please?' He did not speak, but very deliberately put his pen nib and the blackest of ink, through *all* the marks of interrogation. I watched the hand that seemed to tremble the merest quaver, and saw him linger as he did the last. Then obeying another thought, I said, 'Might I have your initials at the end please? It would be very kind.' Again he did not speak, but added R.T. in a good firm hand. He sat turning over the pages this way and that, and lighted on the facsimile of the

sketch of himself that is frontispiece to the book.* As is something quite new, he gazed down at it with every sign of being engrossed in what he looked like at fifty-one in his very prime, possibly reflecting that now he was of the aged. But before he quietly slid the book back to me, he had most kindly signed the portrait and thus made it a prized book, a great treasure.

As he returned the book to me, Amiya said, 'Think of Mr. Rattray, who does not know Bengali, understanding the truth of the poem so well!' The Poet smiled; and the spirit of a blessed fraternity seemed to descend, in which for a few rare seconds, I felt that they had included even myself. We sat a little in quietude, and then I seemed to see the Poet wilt a little. I recalled his song of the great freedom, 'By all means they try to hold me secure who love me in this world, but … thou keepest me free' and I rose saying, 'You are weary now I think. I will go.' He smiled again and our hands met across the table. He pressed mine, and I leaned over and kissed his. I said, 'It has been a great honour to meet you Sir: Blessing on you always.' I stepped back, we exchanged *namaskar* and in a few moments Amiya and I were silently strolling down the wide path. Then, in his rich simplicity that conveyed more than the words, he said with gratifying geniality, 'That was very, very nice: a very successful interview'; then on again in the silent dew of darkness.

… And so came gentle night to seal a great day in my life within the Abode of Peace. Seated at my verandah door, and looking out into the dark sky, lit by many stars, I could hear the yodelling peculiar to Indian music, supported by the urgent syncopation of a tom-tom. Into my mind came, and comes again the music and spirit of a great Christian prophecy:

> The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose …. And the glowing sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground, springs of water …. And a highway shall be there. Upon it shall be writ in gold THE SACRED WAY. Over its stones the unclean shall not pass nor foolish men who are but wayfarers. It shall not be for those: but the redeemed shall walk there.*

Index to the New Translation

72 A fearless place where everyone walks tall
35 All the people around me
38 Allow me just to sit a bit, close by
AP8 Among the reeds along the deserted river
83 As if with all raginis my last song is filled
AP11 At night I watched for him to come
40 At the time of my leaving
AP2 Broken temple-god!
15 Can you not join in this rhythm?
8 Cloud piles on cloud
65 Even when you have given, lord, all
59 Every day I shall
69 For so long, for so long such drought
62 Freedom through disengagement—that is not
58 Give me more, more, more life
54 Have you not heart, not heard his steps?
46 He came and sat beside me
32 He who by my name is kept in hiding
37 How deeper than deep you are
50 How magically you sing, how you sing!
24 Humbler than all and lower than the low
AP7 I brag that I know you to one and all

AP16 I come outside alone
AP10 I didn’t ask for anything
63 I didn’t, lord, think of myself as part
AP14 I haven’t yet sung the song
47 I know
1 I love to watch the road
44 I see your viraha everywhere all the time
77 I thought I’d ask you for
82 I thought that all that lay ahead of me
81 I want you, you
75 I’d been out begging from village to village
23 I’ll carry myself on my own head
80 I’ll lave your golden plate today
AP19 I’m blocked and I want to break loose
2 I’m finished with shouting for attention
13 I’m here merely to sing your songs
78 I’m like a cloud drifting,
36 I’m waiting to hand myself over
45 I’ve been invited to festivals of joy in the world
41 I’ve earned my release, dear friends
30 I’ve sought you beyond my mind
48 I’ve travelled for such a long time
AP21 If day is done and birdsong ends
10 If in this life I am never to see you, lord
66 In every person’s hand you’ve put a rod
53 It’s time to dive down into the sea of forms
7 Let me pronounce these words, the day go
57 Light, light, light, oh light

AP23 Lovely indeed is your bracelet
31 May just a bit of myself be left
42 My boat must be sailed now
22 O God of mine, what is this nectar you want to drink
64 O Great Lord, Time in your hands is unending
26 O last fulfilment of this life of mine
19 O Silence, if you won't speak
79 On the day of Creation, when
39 On the day the lotus bloomed
AP12 On the shore of the world-sea
AP1 One day this precious gift of sight will cease
76 Our work was over for the day, and now the light was fading
28 Prayer and worship and rite
67 Ruler of my life, day and night your touch
AP4 She's in my house no more, no more, no more
6 So much of the unknown
20 Tear me, oh tear me
AP20 That which all through my life
AP18 The child whom you dress like a king
29 The day the Commander sent his crack troops
33 The day you wipe out
52 The fog hasn't yet cleared
70 The moment when I first came through life's gate
4 The necklace I'll hang round your neck
AP22 The rays of your sun come
AP5 The sleep that comes to Khoka's eye
61 The wave upon wave of life that night and day
AP9 The waves rose high beneath the sky

11 There’s no more time
AP15 They came to my house
73 This is my last appeal to you, O Lord
27 This is why you delight in me
51 This is your fancy
AP17 This song of mine has thrown away
60 This worry comes to me again and again
12 This, O Stealer of my Heart
21 Though I have knowledge of God, I keep apart
9 Tonight
56 We’d planned that you and I would idly float
18 When as a child I played with you
71 When fits of tiredness overwhelm me, snuff
AP6 When I put a colourful toy
55 When I’m told to sing by you
17 When the life in me dries up
25 When to your door at the end of the day
14 When will you come for your merger with me?
74 Where and why are you standing and waiting
49 Where’s the light, the light?
AP13 Who’s bound you so harshly
34 With one namaskar, lord, one namaskar
68 You are the sky; you are also the nest
16 You came down from your throne
43 You have a tryst somewhere this stormy night
5 You save me by denying me
AP3 You sent an envoy of death tonight
3 You’ve made me limitless—it amuses you so to do

Index to the New Text of Tagore's Translation

43 Art thou abroad on this stormy night on thy journey of love, my friend

39 At this time of my parting, sing cheers to me, my friends!

35 By all means they try to hold me secure who love me in this world

8 Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens

59 Day after day, oh lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face

62 Deliverance is not for me in renunciation

56 Early in the day it was whispered that we should sail in a boat

30 Ever in my life have I sought thee with my songs

54 Hast thou not heard his silent steps?

46 He came and sat by my side but I woke not

32 He, whom I enclose with my name, is dying in this dungeon

13 I am here to sing thee songs

78 I am like a remnant of a cloud of autumn uselessly roaming in the sky, my sun ever glorious

36 I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last at his hands

53 I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms

41 I have got my leave. Bid me farewell, my brothers!

45 I have had my invitation in this world festival
14 I know not from what distant time thou art ever coming nearer to meet me
50 I know not how thou singest, my master!
21 I know thee as my God and stand apart
42 I must launch out my boat—I must
77 I thought I should ask of thee—but I dared not—the rose wreath thou hast on thy neck
82 I thought that my voyage was at its end at the last limit of my power
70 I was not aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life
75 I went abegging from door to door in the village path
4 I will deck thee with the trophy-garland of my defeat
10 If it is not my portion to meet thee in my life
19 If thou speakest not I will fill my heart with thy silence and bear it
34 In one salutation to thee, my lord, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet
9 In the deep shadow of the rainy July
15 Is it beyond thee to be glad with the gladness of this wild rhythm?
37 It is he, the innermost one, who wakens up my consciousness with his deep hidden touches
38 I ask for a moment's indulgence to sit by thy side only for a very little while
44 It is the pang of severance that spreads from world to world
52 Langour is in thy heart and the slumber is still on thine eyes
28 Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads
83 Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song

71 Let me never lose hold of hope when mist of depression steals upon me
31 Let only that little remain of me by which I may call thee my all
67 Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure
57 Light, my light, the world-filling light
49 Light, oh where is thy light? Kindle it with the burning fire of desire!
58 More life, my lord, yet more, to quench my thirst
80 Mother, I shall weave a chain of pearls for thy neck with my tears of sorrow
5 My desires are many and my cry is pitiful
2 No more noisy loud words from me, such is my master's will
26 O thou the last fulfilment of life, death, my death, come and whisper to me!
23 O fool, to try to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders
60 On many an idle day have I grieved over my lost times
33 On the day thou breakst through this my name, my master, I shall be free
25 On the day when death will knock at they door what shalt thou offer to him?
38 On the day when the lotus bloomed, alas, my mind was straying
20 Pluck this little flower and take it; delay not!
51 That I should make much of myself and turn it on all sides
81 That I want thee, only thee, let my heart repeat without end
11 The day is no more
63 The day was when I did not keep myself in readiness for thee
76 The night darkened. Our day's work had been done.

69 The rain has held back for days and days, my God
61 The same stream of life that comes through my veins night and day
48 The time of my journey is vast and the way long
24 There is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest and lowliest and lost
1 This is my delight, thus to wait and watch
73 This my prayer to thee, my lord,—strike, strike at the root of all poverty in my heart
68 Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well
3 Thou hast made me endless
6 Thou hast made known to me friends whom I know not
27 Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full
65 Thy gifts to us mortals fulfil all our needs
66 Thy rod of justice thou has given to every man
64 Time is endless in thy hands, my lord
22 What divine drink woulds't thou have, my God, from this overflowing cup of my life
29 When first they came out, the warriors, from this master's hall
47 When I give up the helm, then the time will come for thee to take it, I know
7 When I leave from hence let this be my parting word
18 When my play was with thee I never questioned who thou wast
79 When the creation was new and all the stars shone in their pristine splendour
17 When the heart is hard and parched up
55 When thou commandest me to sing it seems my heart would break with pride

74 Where dost thou stand behind them all, my lover, hiding thyself in the shadow
72 Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
12 Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love, oh beloved of my heart
16 You came down from your throne and stopped and stood at my cottage door

Index to the Macmillan Text

23 Art thou abroad on this stormy night

94 At this time of my parting, wish me good luck

53 Beautiful is thy wristlet, decked with stars

32 By all means they try to hold me secure who love me

18 Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens

76 Day after day, O lord of my life

86 Death, thy servant, is at my door

88 Deity of the ruined temple!

73 Deliverance is not for me in renunciation

42 Early in the day it was whispered

101 Ever in my life have I sought thee with my songs

45 Have you not heard his silent steps?

26 He came and sat by my side but I woke not

72 He it is, the innermost one, who awakens my being

29 He whom I enclose with my name is weeping in this dungeon

10 Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet

15 I am here to sing thee songs

80 I am like a remnant of a cloud of autumn

17 I am only waiting for love to give myself up

5 I ask for a moment’s indulgence to sit by thy side

54 I asked nothing from thee

102 I boasted among men that I had known you
30 I came out alone on my way to my tryst
100 I dive down into the depth of the ocean of forms
50 I had gone a-begging from door to door in the village path
93 I have got my leave
16 I have had my invitation to this world's festival
46 I know not from what distant time thou art ever coming
3 I know not how thou singest
92 I know that the day will come
77 I know thee as my God and stand apart
21 I must launch out my boat
52 I thought I should ask of thee
37 I thought that my voyage had come to its end
95 I was not aware of the moment
98 I will deck thee with trophies
79 If it is not my portion to meet thee in this life
24 If the day is done, if birds sing no more
19 If thou speakest not I will fill my heart with thy silence
87 In desperate hope I go and search for her
103 In one salutation to thee, my God
22 In the deep shadows of the rainy July
25 In the night of weariness let me give myself up to sleep
70 Is it beyond thee to be glad with the gladness of this rhythm?
84 It is the pang of separation that spreads throughout the world
55 Languor is upon your heart
11 Leave this chanting and singing
58 Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song

34 Let only that little be left of me whereby I may name thee my all
4 Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure
57 Light, my light, the world-filling light
27 Light, oh where is the light?
83 Mother, I shall weave a chain of pearls for thy neck
14 My desires are many and my cry is pitiful
7 My song has put off her adornments
89 No more noisy, loud words from me
9 O Fool, try to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders!
91 O thou the last fulfilment of life, Death
28 Obstinate are the trammels
81 On many an idle day have I grieved over lost time
90 On the day when death will knock at thy door
20 On the day when the lotus bloomed
60 On the seashore of endless worlds children meet
64 On the slope of the desolate river among tall grasses
6 Pluck this little flower and take it, delay not!
31 ‘Prisoner, tell me, who was it that bound you?’
66 She who ever had remained in the depth of my being
71 That I should make much of myself
38 That I want thee, only thee
8 The child who is decked with prince’s robes
74 The day is no more, the shadow is upon the earth
43 The day was when I did not keep myself in readiness for thee
48 The morning sea of silence broke into ripples of bird songs
51 The night darkened
47 The night is nearly spent waiting for him in vain

40 The rain has held back for days and days
69 The same stream of life that runs through my veins
61 The sleep that flits on baby's eyes
13 The song that I came to sing
12 The time that my journey takes is long
44 This is my delight, thus to wait and watch
36 This is my prayer to thee, my lord
67 Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well
1 Thou hast made me endless
63 Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not
56 Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full
75 Thy gifts to us mortals fulfil all our needs
68 Thy sunbeam comes upon this earth of mine
82 Time is endless in thy hands, my lord
65 What divine drink wouldst thou have
62 When I bring to you coloured toys
99 When I give up the helm I know that the time has come
96 When I go from hence let this be my parting word
33 When it was day they came into my house
97 When my play was with thee
78 When the creation was new
39 When the heart is hard and parched up
85 When the warriors came out first from their master's hall
2 When thou commandest me to sing
41 Where dost thou stand behind them all
35 Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
59 Yes, I know, this is nothing but thy love
49 You came down from your throne

[1] Examples are: the *Buddhacharita* (‘Acts of the Buddha’)—half of this second-century Sanskrit epic poem is lost, but complete translations exist in Chinese and Tibetan; Roman comedies by Plautus and Terence that are adaptations of lost Greek originals; Greek Gospels and other early Christian writings which survive in Coptic versions; and three and a half songs missing from the *Charyapada* (the oldest Bengali text) that have been recovered through Tibetan translations.

[2] I take the phrase from Sankha Ghosh’s insightful book on Tagore’s poems of this period, *E amir abaran* (Papyrus, Kolkata, 1980).

[3] Published by the University Press Limited in Dhaka; republished as *Show Yourself to My Soul*: *A New Translation of Gitanjali* (Sorin Books, Notre Dame, Indiana, 2002), with a Foreword by William Radice and an Introduction by David E. Schlaver.

[4] *The Gitanjali of Rabindranath Tagore*, translated from Bengali by Joe Winter (Writers Workshop, Kolkata, 1998; republished in 2000 by Anvil Press Poetry, London, as *Song Offerings*).

[5] Sukanta Chaudhuri, *The Metaphysics of Text* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 52.

[6] As described in the Houghton Library catalogue.

[7] Available now in a facsimile edition compiled and arranged by Abhik Kumar Dey (Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 2009).

[8] So called because many of the manuscripts in the sheaf are from Tagore’s collection *The Crescent Moon* (1913).

[9] I believe this to be so, even though Tagore later called the manuscript a ‘first draft’. See below, p. xliii.

[10] The Tagore estate in the Padma River region, now in Bangladesh.

[11] This was Ajit Kumar Chakravarty, a young teacher at Santiniketan, who had gone to Britain in September 1910 to study at Manchester College, Oxford. In an interesting essay in Bengali on

the preparation of the English *Gitanjali*, Bikash Chakravarty argues mainly from correspondence between Tagore and Ajit that more was being done to pave the way for Tagore's arrival than has been supposed, and that in doing the translations Tagore had more deliberate aims than his own account implies. Rothenstein mentions in his autobiography, *Men and Memories* (1932, p. 262), that Ajit had given him an exercise book containing translations that Ajit had done himself, and it seems that he and other Bengalis in Britain were making efforts to bring Tagore's poetry and stories to the attention of magazine editors. Personally, I can believe that translations by others may have partly motivated Tagore to try his own hand at translating his poems, but I cannot believe that he set out for England with a preconceived strategy for taking the literary world by storm. See Bikash Chakravarty, *Ingrejite Rabindranath o anyanya prabandha* (Punascha, Kolkata, 2010), pp. 91–120.

[12] Letter from Tagore to Indira Devi Chaudhurani, 6 May 1913. This translation by Indira Devi herself was published in *Indian Literature*, Vol. 2, No. 1, October 1–March 1959 (Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi), pp. 3–4. The original can be found in *Chithipatra* (Letters of Tagore), Vol. 5 (Visva-Bharati, 1944), pp. 19–28.

[13] *Imperfect Encounter: Letters of William Rothenstein and Rabindranath Tagore 1911–1941*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Mary M. Lago (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1972), p. 2.

[14] I have myself told the story in two lectures delivered in Stockholm in November 2000: 'Tagore and the Nobel Prize' and 'Translating Tagore', published in my book *Poetry and Community: Lectures and Essays 1991–2001* (DC Publishers, New Delhi, 2003).

[15] Richard J. Finneran, George Mills Harper and William M. Murphy (ed.), *Letters to W.B. Yeats* (London, 1977), Vol. 1, p. 247. Quoted by Bikash Chakravarty p. 156 (see next note).

[16] *Poets to a Poet, 1912–1940*, Letters from Robert Bridges, Ernest Rhys, W.B. Yeats, Thomas Sturge Moore, R.C. Trevelyan and Ezra

Pound to Rabindranath Tagore, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Bikash Chakravarty (Visva-Bharati, Calcutta, 1998), pp. 143–44.

[17] Ibid., p. 157.

[18] James H. Cousins and Margaret E. Cousins, *We Two Together* (Ganesh and Company Limited, Madras, 1950), p. 161. James Henry Cousins (1873–1956) was an Irish writer, playwright and actor. He worked closely with Yeats at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin, and had several plays performed there until a quarrel with Yeats led to a split in the Irish National Theatre movement. He wrote widely on Theosophy, travelled to India in 1915 at the invitation of Annie Besant, and spent most of the rest of his life there.

[19] Tagore's letter to Rothenstein of 26 November 1932 implies that Rothenstein did the typing or had the poems typed (see below p. l). Later, Tagore's son Rathindranath became his father's typist. Rathindranath came on the 1912–1913 trip to the West, along with his wife Pratima and Somendrachandra Dev Burman, a Santiniketan student. In one of the letters written to Rothenstein by Tagore after he had moved on to the USA, he writes: 'I have done revising all my translations I had in hand and Rathi is busy typing them.' (*Imperfect Encounter*, p. 105).

[20] *Imperfect Encounter*, p. 195.

[21] Shyamal Kumar Sarkar's first article, 'On the autograph manuscript of *Gitanjali* (*Song Offerings*)', was published in the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. 43, Nos. 3 and 4, November 1977–April 1978, pp. 234–62; the second article, 'The manuscript of *Gitanjali*: a supplementary note', was published in the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. 44, Nos. 3 and 4, November 1978–April 1979, pp. 150–75. Saurindra Mitra's book (the title means 'In the green-room of repute and disrepute') was published by Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 1977; his detailed discussion of the *Gitanjali* manuscripts is on pp. 21–82.

[22] This must have been an earlier title for *Lover's Gift*, published with *Crossing* in 1918.

[23] Yeats's quotation may have come from a letter from Tagore to him that has not survived, or he may be quoting from memory. On 5 January 1913 Tagore wrote to Ezra Pound from Urbana, Illinois: 'Then again I do not know the exact value of your English words. Some of them may have their souls worn out by constant use and some others may not have acquired their souls yet.' (Rabindra-Bhavana archives)

[24] Simon Nowell-Smith (ed.), *Letters to Macmillan* (London, 1967), pp. 291–92.

[25] Ernest Rhys, *Rabindranath Tagore: A Biographical Study* (London, 1915), p. 97.

[26] Allan Wade (ed .*), The Letters of W.B. Yeats* (London, 1954), p. 570.

[27] *Men and Memories*, p. 301. Fourteen poems are given in Bengali in the manuscript: Nos. 1–4, 6–8, 37–42, 52.

[28] Cited by Saurindra Mitra, p. 35. Sir Valentine Chirol (1852–1929), polyglot, journalist and amateur diplomat, was foreign editor of *The Times* from 1899 to 1912. An expert on Germany, he also had a lifelong interest in India. He was appointed to the royal commission on the Indian Civil Service, 1912–16, and wrote three books on India, including *Indian Unrest* (1910).

[29] Ibid., p. 37. The letter can be found in full in *Poets to a Poet*, p. 195.

[30] These witnesses are all cited by Saurindra Mitra, pp. 41–42.

[31] *Imperfect Enounter*, p. 195.

[32] *Poets to a Poet*, p. 146.

[33] Quoted by Shyamal Kumar Sarkar, pp. 256–257. R.F. Foster in *W.B. Yeats: A Life, I: The Apprentice Mage 1865–1914* (Oxford, 1997) also quotes the letter (p. 47), saying the actual date was 'probably 17 Sept.'

[34] Shyamal Kumar Sarkar, p. 257.

[35] Ibid., p. 254.

[36] Saurindra Mitra, p. 50. ‘Ceremony’ of course immediately evokes ‘The ceremony of innocence is drowned’ in Yeats’s famous poem ‘The Second Coming’.

[37] See Appendix B, p. 157 for a facsimile of this page. True, a squiggle also occurs at the end of Poems 2, 3 and 4 in the MS, but (a) it is much smaller and less emphatic there and (b) it may have taken Tagore a few poems to realize fully that he was constructing a sequence.

[38] For example, there is a hymn, ‘Now I Recall my Childhood’, based on *Gitanjali* 97, ‘When my play was with thee I never questioned who thou wert’ (No. 18 in my translation) in the British Unitarian hymnal, *Hymns for Living* (Lindsey Press, 2001 reprint), No. 299. A note says: ‘Recast from Rabindranath Tagore, 1861–1941. From the *Collected Poems and Plays of Rabindranath Tagore.*’ A canticle based on *Gitanjali* 10, 11 and 12 can be found in a book called *Every Nation Kneeling and Other Services of Prayer and Praise* (1954), compiled by Will Hayes for use in his Church of the Great Companions in Kent. Yvonne Aburrow in ‘The Daystar of Approaching Morn’ in the Unitarian journal *Faith and Freedom* (Autumn & Winter 2009, Vol. 62, Part 2, No. 169) says of Tagore that he ‘continued to be esteemed by Unitarians, and an extract from his *Gitanjali* was read at the funeral of John Andrew Storey (1935–1997)’, a noted hymn-writer. Connections between Unitarianism and the Brahmo Samaj (and therefore with the Tagore family) go right back to Rammohan Roy, the founder of the Samaj, who was being cared for by Unitarians when he died in Bristol in 1833.

[39] In 1866 there was a schism: the Brahmo Samaj of India was formed and led by Keshub Chandra Sen until a further schism in 1878. Debendranath remained head of the Adi (‘original’) Brahmo Samaj till his death in 1905 but focused more on his inner spiritual life than on institutional religion.

[40] Letter from May Sinclair dated 8 July 1912; quoted by Rathindranath Tagore in his autobiography *On the Edges of Time* (Orient Longmans, Calcutta, 1958), pp. 117–18. Mary [May] Sinclair (1863–1946) was a prolific novelist and philosopher, with a commitment to feminism, idealism, psychoanalysis and psychical research. Appreciation of her work was revived by feminist critics in the 1970s.

[41] Undated letter from Thomas Sturge Moore to Robert Trevelyan, quoted in *Imperfect Encounter*, pp. 17–18.

[42] Ibid, p. 19. Frances Cornford, who was a granddaughter of Charles Darwin and wife of the Cambridge classical scholar Francis Cornford, was not present at the soirée on 7 July 1912 but met Tagore that month in Cambridge. The letter is dated 15 July 1912 and was written to Rothenstein.

[43] *The Modern Review*, August 1912, pp. 225–228.

[44] Shyamal Kumar Sarkar (1977–78), p. 243. Sarkar is quoting here from Yeats's Introduction to *Gitanjali*. See Appendix C, p. 169.

[45] *Imperfect Encounter*, p. 55.

[46] The only Westerner who realized that *Gitanjali* was actually quite a miscellaneous collection was its French translator, André Gide. See his Introduction, translated by Chinmoy Guha in *Gitanjali: Song Offerings* (UBSPD in association with Visva-Bharati, New Delhi, 2003), pp. 268–84. Gide writes: 'Since I have nothing but praise for the book, I would like to begin by pointing out a serious flaw in it. The book may be slender but it is badly assembled. By that I do not mean that it does not match with our Western rhythms, our metres, our measures. No, but we come to know from a short note printed at the end of the book that *Gitanjali* is made out of disparate bits and pieces originally published in Bengali in 3 volumes: *Naibedya, Kheya* and *Gitanjali*—which lends its title to this garland. Other poems, too, scattered here and there, which appeared in various magazines,

merrily divert our minds.' (p. 268). Gide is alluding to a note that appears in separate editions of *Gitanjali*. See Appendix C, p. 165.

[47] These dates are from Prasanta Kumar Paul, *Rabijibani*, Vol. 6 (Ananda Publishers, Kolkata, 1993), pp. 280–82.

[48] 'Sum ergo cogito: Tagore as a thinker and Tagore as a poet, and the relationship between the two' (*Asian and African Studies: Rabindranath Tagore and His Legacy for the World Today*, Vol. 14, Issue 1, May 2010, Department of Asian and African Studies, University of Ljubljana), pp. 17–36.

[49] *Imperfect Encounter*, pp. 211–12.

[50] *Chithipatra* (Letters of Tagore), Vol. 5 (Visva-Bharati, 1944), p. 22. My translation; 'subliminal consciousness' is in English.

[51] *Imperfect Encounter*, pp. 345–46.

[52] Letter of 24 May 1921, in Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson (ed.), *Selected Letters of Rabindranath Tagore*, with a Foreword by Amartya Sen (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 272–73.

[53] Ibid., pp. 275–76.

[54] My translations. The first two of these extracts are from manuscript letters preserved at Rabindra-Bhavana, Santiniketan. The third letter was later published in the journal *Kabita*, Year 9, No. 5, Asharh 1351, pp. 240–44.

[55] *Imperfect Encounter*, pp. 74–75.

[56] See Appendix C, pp. 167–68.

[57] Letter of 2 Asvin 1319 (18 September 1912), published in *Visva-Bharati Patrika*, Year 26, No. 3 Magh–Chaitra 1376, pp. 260–61. My translation.

[58]See Harish Trivedi (ed.), *Rabindranath Tagore: Poet and Dramatist* by Edward Thompson (OUP, Delhi, 1989), p. a11.

[59] See Hugh Tinker, *The Ordeal of Love: C F Andrews and India* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1979), p. 62.

[60] 14 April 1918, quoted in Uma Das Gupta (ed.), *Rabindranath Tagore: My Life in My Words* (Penguin India, New Delhi, 2006), p.

169. James Drummond Anderson (1852–1920) published *A Manual of the Benali Language* in 1920. Tagore exchanged letters with him about Bengali metres.

[61] Quoted and translated by Uma Das Gupta in *My Life in My Words* (Penguin India, New Delhi, 2006), p. 161.

[62] See Appendix C, p. 169.

[63] See 'Tagore and the Nobel Prize', in my book *Poetry and Community: Lectures and Essays: 1991–2001* (DC Publishers, New Delhi, 2003), p. 213.

[64] See Ch. 5 in Michael Collins, *Empire, Nationalism and Inter-Cultural Dialogue: Rabindranath Tagore, Writings on History, Politics and Society* (Routledge, London, 2011).

[65] '"This song of mine has thrown away all ornaments": translating Gitanjali today', Rabindranath Tagore memorial lecture, Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata, 2 December 1909; published by NSOU in 2011.

[66] See Appendix C, p. 168.

[67] *Imperfect Encounter*, p. 44; the review appeared in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* (Chicago), Issue 1 (December 1912), pp. 84–86. It was accompanied by six poems from *Gitanjali*—a flyer for the India Society edition that had just appeared. Interestingly, the paragraph divisions conform almost completely to the Rothenstein manuscript. For example, 'I was not aware of the moment when I first crossed the threshold of this life' (No. 95) appears as a single paragraph, as in the MS, instead of as the five that it has in the book. This suggests that the paragraph divisions were introduced at a very late stage. Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry*, took the poems from copies sent to her by Pound that do not appear to have survived in the *Poetry* archive—unlike poems from *The Gardener* that were published in the June 1913 issue, which have survived in copies that were probably typed by Pound himself. For further details, see Shailesh

Parekh, *Tagore* & Poetry, *Chicago* (Rabindrabharati University, Kolkata, 2010).

[68] Pound exaggerated the musical dimension, writing in his review: 'All this series of a hundred poems are made to music, for "Mr." Tagore is not only the greatest poet of Bengal, he is also their greatest musician. He teaches his songs, and they are sung throughout Bengal more or less as the troubadours' songs were sung through Europe in the twelfth century.' *Poetry*, pp. 92–93. In fact 62 of the 103 poems in *Gitanjali* are poems, not songs.

[69] See 'Painting the dust and the sunlight: Rabindranath Tagore and the two *Gitanjalis*' in Amalendu Biswas, Christine Marsh and Kalyan Kundu (ed.), *Rabindranath Tagore: A Timeless Mind* (The Tagore Centre, UK, 2011), pp. 277–88.

[70] In *Ei amir abaran*. See fn. 2 above.

[71] 'Tagore in translation', *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature*, Vol. 3, 1963 (Jadavpur University, Kolkata), p. 25.

[72] *Particles, Jottings, Sparks: The Collected Brief Poems* (HarperCollins, New Delhi, 2000; Angel Books, London, 2001); new edition as *The Jewel That Is Best: Collected Brief Poems* (Penguin India, New Delhi, 2011).

[73] 'Tagore in translation', pp. 33–34.

[74] *Imperfect Encounter*, p. 119.

[75] Cf. (p. xlix above) his reflections to Indira Devi about his 'subliminal consciousness'.

[76] Forthcoming in *Towards Rabindranath*, a book from Visva-Bharati for the 2011 anniversary.

[77] For more on the structure of *Rabindrasangit*, see my article 'Keys to the kingdom: the search for how best to understand and perform the songs of Tagore', in Kathleen M. O'Connell and Joseph T. O'Connell (ed.), *Rabindranath Tagore: Facets of a Cultural Icon*, a guest-edited issue of the *University of Toronto Quarterly*, Vol. 77, No. 4, Fall 2008, pp. 1095–109; a fuller version of this article can be

found in Kathleen M. O'Connell and Joseph T. O'Connell (ed.), *Rabindranath Tagore: Reclaiming a Cultural Icon* (Visva-Bharati, Kolkata, 2009), pp. 123–47.

[78] Tagore himself tended to describe the poems in that way. But in calling them 'simple' he meant above all that were honest and true. See his letter to Rothenstein of 15 December 1912 (p. liv, above).

[79] See R. Johnson, 'Juan Ramón Jiménez, Rabindranath Tagore, and "La Poesía Desunda"' (*The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 60, No. 4, October, 1965), pp. 534–46. The poem by Jiménez he discusses is No. 5 in *Eternidades* (1918, 'Vino, primero, pura …'). Yeats's poem 'The Coat' is in *Responsibilities* (1914). Towards the end of his article Johnson makes a further interesting comparison with Tagore's play *Chitrangada*, translated as *Chitra* (1919). Chitra is a princess who has been brought up as a prince because Siva, who had promised that her family should only have male descendants, had broken his word and left the family with a daughter, not a son. Chitra falls in love with Arjuna, one of the heroes of the Mahabharata. As their love develops the time comes eventually for Chitra to throw off her ornaments and reveal herself to him as the woman she actually is. Johnson is absolutely right to read this play as being about the discovery of one's true identity, and this is certainly a very important aspect of *Gitanjali*—see the concluding section of my Introduction below. It is the self-revelation that is important, rather than the assertion of simplicity over complexity.

[80] Niharranjan Ray, *An Artist in Life: A Commentary on the Life and Works of Rabindranath Tagore* (University of Kerala, Trivandum, 1967), pp. 159–60. The book is an English version of an earlier study in Bengali, *Rabindra-sahityer bhumika* (New Age Publishing Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata, Baishakh 1348 [1941]).

[81] *Of Myself (Atmaparichay)*, translated from the Bengali by Davadatta Joardar and Joe Winter (Visva-Bharati, Kolkata, 2006, by arrangement with Anvil Press Poetry, London), p. 21.

[82] Rothenstein's bookplate inside the notebook that contains the *Gitanjali* manuscript has the motto 'To truth alone obedience'—a principle that it is not always easy to maintain in the presence of unique eminence.

[83] I say this despite the fulsomeness of Tagore's Bengali essay on Yeats of 1912. A translation of this was included in *Rabindranath Tagore and William Butler Yeats: The Story of a Literary Friendship*, a souvenir of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Yeats (University of Delhi, 1965, edited by R.K. Das Gupta). In the essay, Tagore saw Yeats's poetry as an expression of 'the soul of Ireland' just as Yeats found in *Gitanjali* the soul of an ideal India.

[84] See Martin Kémpchen and Prasanta Kumar Paul (ed .), *My Dear Master: Correspondence of Helene Meyer-Franck and Heinrich Meyer-Benfey with Rabindranath Tagore* (Visva-Bharati, Kolkata, 1999; second edition 2010).

[85] I became acquainted with the work of Srečko Kosovel (1904–1926), who left behind a massive and influential oeuvre in poetry and prose despite his absurdly short life, through supervising Dr Ana Jelnikar's London University PhD thesis, 'Towards Universalism: Rabindranath Tagore and Srečko Kosovel; A Joint Perspective in a Disjointed World', 2009. Kosovel felt Tagore to be a kindred spirit not only as a poet (he took from Tagore 'The Golden Boat' as the title of his first collection of verse) but as a thinker whose universalism offered a way out of the 'coercive nationalisms' that were rampant in early twentieth-century Slovenia. See Ana Jelnikar, 'Rabindranath Tagore and Srečko Kosovel: at home in the world', in Lenart Škof (ed.), *Indian Studies: Slovenian Contributions* (Sampark, Kolkata, 2008), pp. 63–80. The rest of 'In Green India' evokes the timeless and universal, so it matches well what Tagore in his *Jibansmriti* ('My Reminiscences', 1917) described as 'the subject on which all my writings have dwelt: the infinite in the finite and the finite in the infinite'. It reads: Time there is spellbound, a cerulean circle, the clock tells neither month nor year but ripples in silence as

if from invisible springs over ridges of temples and hills of trees. There nobody's dying, nobody's saying goodbye—life is like eternity, caught in a tree …

[86] I would like to know more about Rattray, and would be pleased to hear from readers who have any information.

[87] An oratorio completed in 1900 for chorus, soloists and orchestra to a text by Cardinal John Henry Newman, *The Dream of Gerontius* tells of the journey of the soul beyond death, and is not a million miles from *Gitanjali* in its spirituality and introspection.

[88] From *Sesame and Lilies* (1865). The sentence is in the lecture 'Of Kings' treasuries' where Ruskin distinguishes between 'the books of the hour, and the books of all time'. See Brian Trowell, 'Elgar's use of Literature' in Raymond Monk (ed.), *Edward Elgar: Music and Literature* (Scholar Press, Aldershot, 1993), p. 229.

[89] Ajit Babu very suddenly and tragically died of a heart attack during my stay, a great loss to Rabindra-Bhavana as well as to his wife and young son. He had been exceptionally helpful to me in the library, and also most kindly invited me to inaugurate Durga Puja in the School-Bagan area of Bolpur. This was a very great honour, and I shall treasure the memory of that colourful, warm-hearted occasion.

[1] deck thee with trophy-garland [this and subsequent footnotes to the new text of Tagore's translation give the MS reading for each emendation I have made]

[2] for me nothing

[3] letst me

[4] Fourth month of the Bengali calendar, the second of the two monsoon months; July–August.

[5] Oh my only friend,

[6] moment etc.

[7] moment etc.

[8] moment etc.

[9] passerby

[10] Oh beloved

[11] to

[12] firy

[13] Oh thou holy one

[14] everyone

[15] If though

[16] it

[17] apart,—I know

[18] come closer.

[19] feet, I grasp

[20] not, I divide

[21] to plunge

[22] thy own

[23] thy own

[24] Oh thou lord

[25] kings, hast

[26] Deliverence?

[27] creation,

[28] hall where

[29] in searching touch

[30] See fn. 3, p. 15.

[31] Sacred lake, famous for its wild geese, on Mount Kailas, where Siva dwells.

[32] But day passes by after day

[33] Thus why

[34] my self

[35] The works that I have in hands I will finish all afterwards.

[36] task

[37] murmurs; and

[38] sing dedication

[39] me,—and

[40] lies beautiful

[41] neighbors

[42] Summons have come

[43] night, on thy journey of love my friend

[44] Pining, longing for the absent lover; a very important concept in the Vaishnava tradition, in which Radha pines for Krishna as a metaphor for the human longing for divine perfection.

[45] in rainy darkness of July

[46] Female form of a raga in Indian classical music.

[47] why my nights are

[48] Ah, why ever I miss

[49] the utter simplicity in tune.

[50] light!

[51] dark, kindle

[52] breaks not in song [but Tagore first wrote ‘wells not out’: in crossing this out his line through ‘out’ may have been a mistake]

[53] sun,—what

[54] in sweet music of pain?

[55] The imagery in this song owes something to the famous Hindu myth of the churning of the ocean. When Indra and the other gods lost their vigour because of a curse, Vishnu restored it by directing

them to churn the ambrosial ocean that surrounded him. ‘Fourteen jewels’ were produced by the churning, including Vishnu’s wife Lakshmi, Indra’s flying horse Airavata, and the Kaustubha jewel that Vishnu and his incarnation Krishna wear on their chest.

[56] For ever,

[57] would be off

[58] From Tagore’s play *Achalayatan* (1912). See Introduction, p. xliv. Although it is a song with a splendid melody, and I have given the repetitions it has when sung, it also has the energy of a poem, so I have used metre and rhyme as well.

[59] The heaven’s river

[60] my self

[61] oh lord

[62] Oh lord

[63] Oh king

[64] time

[65] into

[66] world life

[67] life throb

[68] Deliverence

[69] to pay my dues

[70] quarrelous

[71] thy altar

[72] at washing

[73] needs,—yet

[74] everyman

[75] Oh thou beautiful

[76] draught of peace

[77] Tagore made these two sonnets from *Naibedya* the basis of a single translation.

[78] in midnight

[79] has taken

[80] to find
[81] in the very next moment
[82] when mist of depression
[83] thine worship
[84] into the dreary desert sand
[85] everwidening
[86] waken up my country
[87] My lord,—strike
[88] passersby come
[89] come. How
[90] acceptance. Ah,
[91] arrival,—with
[92] at last to me. When of a sudden
[93] to me!'
[94] Heap. I bitterly
[95] Translated for my *Selected Poems* of Tagore (Penguin, 1985). In the book from which it was taken, *Kheya* ('The Ferry', 1906) it was given the title *Agaman* ('Arrival').
[96] works
[97] said, 'It is
[98] grumble, 'No
[99] 'Wake up! delay not'
[100] said, 'Lo
[101] said, 'Vain
[102] conchshells
[103] in lightning
[104] thou departest
[105] nor flower,
[106] thine wish
[107] permeate in a coolness
[108] When
[109] power,—that

110 new country

[1] The only poem in *Gitanjali* from Tagore's book *Chaitali* ('The Multi-coloured', 1896), where it was given the title *Durlabh janma* ('Precious life').

[2] The 'victorious tenth': the tenth and last day of Durga Pooja, Bengal's main Hindu festival. The huge clay images of Durga that are made for the festival are immersed and returned to the elements from which they came.

[3] The only poem in *Gitanjali* from Tagore's book *Kalpana* ('Imagination', 1900), where it was given the title *Bhagna mandir* ('Broken temple'). A collection of Tagore's songs to date published in 1909 with the title *Gan* ('Songs') mentions the existence of a melody and *tala* (time signature) for this poem, but no actual tune has survived, and the reference may be a mistake.

[4] Taken from the book *Smaran* ('Remembrance', 1903), a book of sonnet-like poems that Tagore wrote in memory of his wife Mrinalini Devi who died in 1902 aged 30, when Tagore was 41.

[5] Affectionate name for a small or baby boy, the youngest son in the family.

[6] The parul tree has large, red, bell-shaped flowers that bloom from April to June.

[7] From *Utsarga* ('Dedications', 1914). In 1903–04, *Kabya-grantha*, an edition of Tagore's collected poems to date (with songs and dramas too) came out in nine volumes, published by Majumdar Library and edited by Mohitchandra Sen. It was arranged thematically, and Tagore wrote special introductory poems for each of the 28 sections. This witty poem introduced the section called *Sonar tari* ('The Golden Boat'). Later, Tagore published the introductory poems in a separate book, *Utsarga*.

[8] The margosa—a large tree with beautifully clustered narrow leaves.

[9] The kokil or koel is often translated as 'cuckoo', but it is a different species. It has a shrill, dominating call, rising up the scale,

ending with a softer, cooing sound.

[10] The bakul tree produces small, white, sweetly scented flowers.

[11] This and Nos. 61 and 62 in the published *Gitanjali* were taken from Tagore's book *Sisu* ('The Child', 1903), a book of poems about children that he wrote when he was looking after his youngest daughter and son after his wife Mrinalini Devi died in 1902. His son Samindranath was already ailing and was to die in 1907. *Sisu* was the source for his English book *The Crescent Moon* (1913), and the three poems were reprinted there. Manuscripts of them can be found at the end of the Rothenstein manuscript, unnumbered and outside the main sequence. See Introduction, p. xxxv and Appendix B, p. 157.

[12] King of birds; Vishnu's vehicle.

[1] Shyamal Kumar Sarkar, op. cit., pp. 150–51.
[2] Ibid., p. 155.
[3] Ibid., p. 166.
[4] Ibid., p. 167.

[1] In separate editions of *Gitanjali* this appeared as ‘and take it, delay not!’ I have therefore not counted it in Appendix D as among the changes that Yeats made.

[2] The capital letters on ‘King’ in this poem did not appear in separate editions of *Gitanjali*, so in Appendix D I have not counted them as Yeats’s doing, though in other places he did capitalize ‘king’.

[3] Separate editions of *Gitanjali* print ‘get wrecked’ here.

[4] In *Collected Poems and Plays*, this and the preceding two poems Nos. 60 and 61 were removed and given only in *The Crescent Moon*.

[1]Sisir Kumar Das in his edition of *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Volume One: Poems (Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, 1994), Notes, p. 602 finds four differences between the India Society edition of 1912 and the Macmillan edition of 1913:

	India Society	*Macmillan*
Poem 30	my Lord	my lord
Poem 51	Someone has said	Some one has said (fifth paragraph)
Poem 52	shy and soft demeanour	coyness and sweetness of demeanour
Poem 87	my Lord	my lord

Swapan Majumdar, in his bilingual edition of *Gitanjali* (Rabindra-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, 1999), *Granthaparichay*, p. 266, notes two places in the India Society edition where, in Yeats's Introduction, lines quoted from the poems are slightly different from how they are in the text: 'And because I have loved this life …' instead of 'And because I love this life …' (No. 95), and 'entering my heart unbidden as one of the common crowd …' instead of 'entering my heart unbidden even as one of the common crowd …' (No. 43). These discrepancies were rectified in the Macmillan edition. He also finds that five poems were missing from the Index in the India Society edition. In noting these differences 'apart from punctuation', he also implies that there are some punctuation differences. I have not been able to compare the two editions minutely, but so far as I can see punctuation and paragraphing are exactly the same.

[1] See, for example, Warwick Gould, 'W.B. Yeats on the road to St Martin's Street, 1900–17' in Elizabeth James (ed.), *Macmillan: A Publishing Tradition* (Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2002). On pp. 198–201 of this essay Gould describes Yeats's unsucessful attempts to get Sir Frederick Macmillan to add to Tagore's next book 'a short essay on

his prosody' to 'remind readers and reviewers that they were reading translations of poems, which in the original had very exact and difficult forms, & not the work of a facile mind, choosing the easiest form.'

[1] The allusion is to lines 248–50 in ‘Peter Bell’:

A primrose by a river’s brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

[2] As in Wordsworth’s ‘Intimations of Immortality’.

[3] ‘artisan people’.

[*] The only rudeness I have ever suffered from Indians was from two in the retinue of a minor rajah, who having been to the West, seemed to have suffered badly from association with the poorest manners there.

[4] Laurence Housman (1865–1959), novelist and dramatist, younger brother of A.E. Housman.

[5] = *paras* (localities).

[6] It now takes two and a half hours by train but still about four hours by (fast, modern) road, so Rattray did well to drive there in five hours.

[7] The poem is set out somewhat differently in the *VBQ* text of Rattray’s article, but as I don’t know if this was his doing or the editors’, I have given the standard layout with the rogue question marks, and the capital letters on ‘Lord’ and ‘Life’ that Rattray gives.

[*] It is the 1914 Macmillan edition. The sketch-portrait was done by Rothenstein in 1912. I do not know of any other correct version of this particular song. There cannot be many (if any) so corrected.

[*] This rendering is from ‘Isaiah: A cosmic drama’: J. Todd Ferrier: The Order of the Cross, London.

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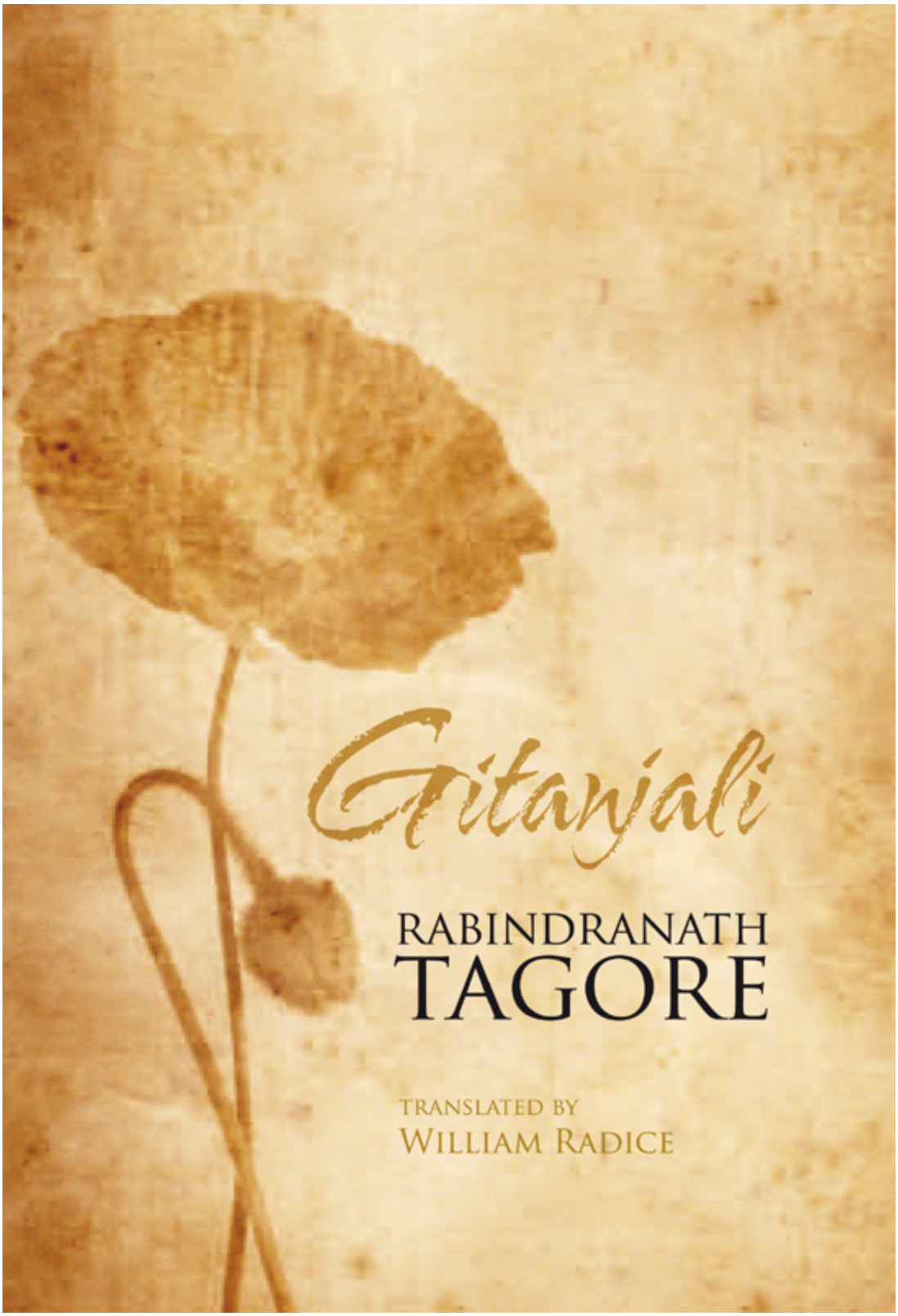
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