

POETRY

OFFERINGS

Rabindranath Tagore



1

Every day, O lord of my life, I shall stand before thee. With hands folded, O lord of the universe, I shall stand before thee. Beneath thine boundless sky, in solitude and lonely places, with a lowly heart and eyes full of tears, I shall stand before thee. In this wondrous world of thine, beyond the far shore of my labour, in the midst of all the worlds and all the people, I shall stand before thee. When my task in this thy world at last is done and finished, O king of kings, alone and in silence, I shall stand before thee.

2

In this house of mine, with thine own hand, light thou the household lamp. Let every realm of sorrow find its fulfilment, receiving thy light. Let every hidden darkness in every corner be filled and made blessed; seated in thy holy radiance, let me dwell in love among those who are dear to me. In this house of mine, with thine own hand, light thou the household lamp. Thy lamp of the world beyond has an undying flame; let its touch turn to gold all the dark stains upon me. In this house of mine, with thine own hand, light thou the household lamp. Whatever lamps I light give nothing back but smoke and burning; let not the darkness at my own door and window shut out thy shining. In this house of mine,

with thine own hand, light thou the household lamp.

3

At night as I lie down, I turn thee over in my mind, O thou who dwellest within. At dawn, the first moment I open my eyes, I shall look upon thee, O thou who dwellest within. Waking, and sitting in the pure white light, bowing at thy feet in gladness, keeping thee in my thought, I shall surrender the day's work to thee, my lord — O thou who dwellest within. As I labour at the day's tasks, moment by moment I tell myself: when the work is done, at evening I shall come and sit with thee. Sitting at home in the evening hour, I think how, in thy vast midnight sea, the tired heart's every care and ache will sink down and grow silent — O thou who dwellest within.

4

May thy melody sound forever, sound forever, in the grove of my life. May thy throne reign forever, reign forever, upon the canvas of my heart. Bearing on this body the fragrance of thy paradise, in this beautiful world, may it be adorned forever, forever adorned. May thy melody sound forever, sound forever, in the grove of my life. May every small distinction fall away before thy blessing; may thy sweetness unfold and

spread through my heart in the rhythm of thy song. Beholding thy pure and silent smile spread across the sky, before thy glory let all pride bow down in shame, forever in shame. May thy melody sound forever, sound forever, in the grove of my life.

5

If ever this door of my heart should remain shut, break it down, and come into my soul — turn not back, my lord. If some day the strings of this lyre should fail to ring out thy beloved name, yet pause here a moment still — turn not back, my lord. If ever, at thy call, the darkness of my sleep should fail to break, wake me with the pain of thy thunder — turn not back, my lord. If some day upon thy throne I should carelessly seat another, O king of my three worlds — turn not back, my lord.

6

Even when the world seizes my mind, when my spirit will not wake, still, O lord, I bow before thee, and sit to sing thy song. O thou who dwellest within, forgive this empty offering of mine — this worship without flowers, this song without devotion — even when the world seizes my mind, when my spirit will not wake. I call thy name with a dry and parching

throat, still hoping that upon life's road a rich, deep rain
of love may fall into my heart. Trusting only that thou
thyself wilt fill me at last with thine own nectar, in this
one faith I offer up the song of my empty heart — even when
the world seizes my mind, when my spirit will not wake.

7

Whatever joy I have known in this life, by day and by night,
in the midst of it all, today, I shall remember thee, lord of
my life. The day thy whole world thrilled with a boundless,
unaccountable delight, that day thy gaze fell and rested on
my own eyes. In the midst of every joy, I shall remember
thee, lord of my life. Again and again, with thine own hand,
through taste, through fragrance, and through song, thou hast
reached in from without and touched me deep within. Father,
mother, brother, my beloved family, my friends, my sons —
entering every heart along with them, thou hast remained
beside me still. In the midst of every joy, I shall remember
thee, lord of my life.

8

As the words of a poem fall bound within the bonds of its own
rhythm, so, in that same discipline, shall I hold thee fast
within my soul. Thou shalt make the very limits of my heart

tremble; thy boundless glory shall resound in me; thou shalt take shape in my life in an ever-changing form of joy — as the words of a poem fall bound within the bonds of its own rhythm. Thou shalt give motion even to the trivial labour of my ordinary days; thine image shall dwell in every atom of this body of mine. In the midst of every play of love, I shall offer my seat to thee, king of my heart; sailing on into thy boundless world, my life shall move like a vessel upon the sea — as the words of a poem fall bound within the bonds of its own rhythm.

9

Without understanding, I have understood thee — I know not how, nor what. I never come to the end of thy meaning, and yet I have understood thy word. In my very breath, beyond each passing instant, through the touch of feeling and of pain and thought, who is it that moves through my whole body and mind, bringing me tidings of thee? Without understanding, I have understood thee — I know not how, nor what. Thy kingdom fills every world within every world; that message came to me in a single flash, when, deep within my heart, I beheld thy capital — the very capital of the universe.

Without understanding, I have understood thee — I know not how, nor what. In the deep and hidden stillness within my own

self, wherever I have come to know thee, there I have found
all language struck forever silent, forever defeated. Without
understanding, I have understood thee — I know not how, nor
what.

10

Let those who are near remain near — they can never know what
this heart knows: that closer than love itself, thou dwellest
within it. Let those who speak go on speaking; I turn away
from none of them — they do not know my soul is already
filled with thy unspoken word. Silently, without ceasing,
thou dwellest within this silent heart of mine. For thy sake,
my lord, never shall I bid another leave his own path — every
love that exists shall, through all love, draw me on toward
thee. In every love, thy love shall come to dwell within this
heart of mine. May I hold always to this one practice — thy
bond with every living thing; may I carry, through the
company of all, thy worship into this heart. In the meeting
of all people, thy meeting shall awaken within this heart of
mine.

11

Doubt, thick and wrapped in darkness, devours the world; yet,

in its very midst, dwells a certainty beyond all doubting.
Amid the storm of argument and the dust of speech, the blind understanding wanders in distress; but faith abides within itself, and knows no fear at all. However many dangers spin along life's road in their whirling wind, within them stands an unshaken peace, unmoved, unshadowed. Slander and loss, the terror of death, the ceaseless flight of poisoned arrows — in everlasting meditation, everlasting joy: that alone can never be destroyed.

12

Easily, effortlessly, the pure lotus blossoms into joy in the water's lap, untroubled by where it drifts, rolling from dust into dust. So, just as easily, let me too be immersed in joy, my whole being sunk in thee, so that in the poverty of true worship all my doubt may burst and bloom away. Wherever thou art, I shall never search for the path; I shall ask no traveller the way. I shall wander, and return, within thee alone, my lord, wherever I may turn. When I am merged into the womb of thy sky, the flood-tide of thy joy shall rise and overflow; thy breath shall come rushing forever into my breast.

13

All pride I shall cast away; but thy glory I shall never let go. I shall call out to every one, and tell it, on the day I win even a glimpse of thee. When thy call comes, how could I ever keep it hidden? In every word, in every deed, my worship of thee shall show itself. All pride I shall cast away; but thy glory I shall never let go. Whatever honour I have won by my own labour — that day it shall all fall far away; only, holding thy honour in my heart, my whole being shall rise up ringing in a single note. Even the traveller on the road shall pause; thy message shall show itself upon my face, as I sit, in thy joy alone, amid the great, sounding instrument of this worldly life. All pride I shall cast away; but thy glory I shall never let go.

14

However far I journey, carrying my life and mind into thy boundlessness, nowhere is there sorrow, nowhere is there death, nowhere is there parting. Death only wears the mask of death, and sorrow only becomes a well of sorrow, when I stand apart from thee and look upon myself alone. O thou who art whole, close to thy feet all that ever was still is, still is, still is; there is no fear, no fear at all — that fear is only mine — through these fleeting days I do nothing but weep and long. The inward shame, the burden of this world — in a

single instant they melt into one, if only I may grasp thy true form in the midst of this life.

15

As darkness fell, I lit the lamps of the night. Put them out now, O my heart — put them out today, and throw open every door. In my house today I do not know when the morning sun's light has come; there is no more need of the earthen lamp — let it lie forgotten in the dust. Put out, O my heart, the lamp of the night; throw open every door. Hold — do not lift the tune today upon the broken strings of the lyre. Silently, O my heart, come and stand at thine own outer door. Listen — this morning the whole sky, all the light, all the wind, are singing of thee alone, lifting up their vast voice. Put out, put out the lamp of the night; throw open every door.

16

The devotee is surrendering his life at the feet of the Lord — O humble soul, bow down thy head, folding thy hands again and again. The stream of union is falling in showers; waves of nectar are flowing on; lay thy head upon the ground, and receive this rain of blessing. The devotee is surrendering his life at the feet of the Lord. See how that light falls and spreads across his wide, open brow — let even a single

grain of it fall and settle upon my own head too. All around him lies an ocean of peace, eternal, endlessly full; stand a moment upon its shore, O my heart, and grow still. The devotee is surrendering his life at the feet of the Lord.

17

I hold on to little; and so, whatever leaves me, simply leaves me. Vainly, along the riverbank, I try only to cling to the current, while wave after wave strikes my breast and rushes on, I know not where. I hold on to little; and so, whatever leaves me, simply leaves me. But whatever goes, and whatever still remains — if I offer it all up to thee, then nothing is truly lost; all of it lives on, gathered into thy majesty. How many suns hast thou already drawn into thyself, and lost not one atom, one single mote — shall not my own small acts of worship, too, cross safely over into thee? I hold on to little; and so, whatever leaves me, simply leaves me.

18

Today thou hast sent the messenger of death to the door of my house; fulfilling thy summons, that face has crossed over to my shore. Tonight is thick with darkness, and my heart is heavy with fear, and yet I shall keep a lamp burning at the

door, and, bowing, welcome him in. Today thou hast sent the messenger of death to the door of my house. With folded hands, and eyes brimming with anxious tears, I shall worship him; I shall worship him, offering the wealth of my very life at his feet. Having fulfilled thy command, he will go; my morning will have turned to dusk; and sitting beside thee in this now-empty house, I shall offer up myself. Today thou hast sent the messenger of death to the door of my house.

19

Every day I will sing thy song, sweet and clear, if thou wilt give me words, if thou wilt give me the tune. If thou dwell in my mind upon the lotus just unclosed, if thou fill this life to the brim with thy love — every day I will sing thy song, sweet and clear. If thou listen to my song, standing here before me, if thy generous eyes rain down their nectar — if thou lay thy hand, tender with care, upon my sorrow, if thou keep far from me the pride that rises with joy — every day I will sing thy song, sweet and clear.

20

To whomever thou givest thy banner to bear, to him thou

givest also the strength to bear it. To the great labour of thy service thou givest also the devotion to endure it. This, then, I ask, with my whole heart: along with sorrow, give me the rescue that lives inside sorrow; I do not wish to be spared the gift of pain from thy own hand. Let sorrow be the jewel upon my brow, if with it thou give me devotion too. Give me whatever work thou wilt, only let it never make me forget thee; let it never entangle my heart in the net of trifles. Bind me with as many cords as please thee, yet keep me free, turned always toward thee; keep me in the dust, and make that dust pure, for it is the dust of thy feet; keep me lost in the world below, but never let me forget thee. Along whatever path thou hast given me to wander, let me wander, and let it lead at last to thy feet. Let all my labour carry me onward, taking from me every weariness. Hard is this path, this deep forest of the world — how much renunciation, how much grief, how much burning of separation — but bearing life and death together, let me find life even in death. At evening let me come to my nest, at the feet that shelter all the world.

21

I sit at the landing, absent-minded, and the fair hour drifts

away. I will not launch my boat upon this wind unless it blows toward thee. The day passes, oh, the day passes, the sun goes down to its setting. I cannot see the road; on the far shore the fields lie grey, dusted with dusk. I have found no home, and yet my heart would go, would go. O Pole Star, where thou keepest thy watch, I do not know the way to that quarter. So many days I have rowed this boat, rowed it along this path — a hundred times it has all but gone under — and on this path I find no more courage. See, with a hundred cords my boat lies bound fast to the shore. When wilt thou loose the rope for me? Only if I can set sail shall my life be saved. Where is the wind that fills the breast, the open wind of the sea? Where is the great song that shall fill my ears — where is the great song of the sea?

22

At noon, in the city, from street to street, when the flood of toil rushes on in its swollen current through a hundred branching ways, the city's pulse swells hot and beats, and dances, dashing itself against walls of stone — on every side the wayfarers hurry, the chariots race, the dry dust flies — then suddenly, closing my eyes, I behold, in the midst of that vast forest of men, thy infinite solitude, thy seat; in the midst of the tumult thy silent court reigns in stillness.

In every sorrow, every joy, in every house, over every heart,
every thought, every striving, as far as sight can reach,
this alone I see: thou, O God who art beyond all company,
sitting there alone.

23

Today the peace of late autumn spreads over all creation. In
the empty field, in the bright noon, a wide stillness lies
outstretched, without sound, without motion, weary, its wings
of gold-green spread across the horizon. The thin thread of
the river makes no song today, writes no letters today upon
its sandy bank. Far and wide the villages lie with eyes
closed, basking in the sun, drowsy and spent with sleep. In
this stillness I hear, in blade after blade of grass, in dust
upon dust, in every pore of my body, in world after world, in
planet, sun, and star, through all time, the murmuring dance
of atom and atom — an endless surge of sound circling round
thy seat.

24

Again and again I think, idle, that today has been wasted,
the hours lost, the day lost. Yet nothing has been lost, O
Lord — all those moments thou hast taken unto thyself, thou
who dwellest in the innermost heart. Hidden deep within, in

secret, unseen, at some hour of thy leisure, thou hast roused
the seed into the sprout, coloured the bud into full bloom,
ripened the flower into fruit, sweet with juice, and turned
the fruit again into seed. I, heavy with sleep, worn out with
weariness upon my bed of idleness, thought that all work lay
abandoned. But waking at dawn, I opened my eyes, and saw my
garden full.

25

Once more put the lyre into my hands; once more let the lost
songs come back to me. Suddenly, in the hard winter, the
lotus-beds die upon the lake of the mind, and the wild geese,
flock upon flock, fly away in ranks to the far south, to the
reed-white banks of some lonely river; and again in spring
they come flying back, bearing with them the murmurous joy of
return — so let all my songs that have flown away come back
again, and fill this silent life with their tumult; and this
time let them sing the strain of the sea-shore, the wondrous
tales of an unknown king's unreachable kingdom, the
marvellous tidings of a boundless solitude.

26

This wave upon wave of life that runs, day and night, through

the veins of my body — that same life has gone forth to
conquer every far corner of the world; that same life dances
through the universe in a rhythm and beat beyond telling;
that same life, silently, moves with gladness through every
pore of the earth's dust, in blade after blade of grass by
the million, unfolding itself in leaf and flower — and, year
after year, sways in the boundless ebb and flow of the ocean
of birth and death that spans the world. I feel that this
endless life has made me great in every limb. That vast pulse
of ages upon ages is dancing today within my own veins.

27

Body, mind, and life grown into one — what wondrous play is
this within my own frame! What light, what sky, what burning
lamp is this, this eternal theatre of day and night! What
green earth is this, restless in the sea, hard upon the
mountains, tender in the leaves of trees, dark in the forest!
What vast and manifold web of creation is this, woven without
pause, like a magic wrought upon the very instrument of my
senses! Within each single living thing, a whole immense
universe. This is thy nuptial bed, O my King — within this
small self of mine, an infinite seat, boundless and
wondrously fair. O sovereign of the universe, in body, in
mind, in life, what a wonder I am!

28

Come then, O Lord, and sit in this blessed hour upon this great throne built of my body and my mind. In this blue sky that spreads before my two eyes, leave no empty space for any other; in my sea, my hills, my forests, my gardens, in my heart, in my body, in company and in solitude, be thou there. In the hushed watches of the moonlit night, upon this shadow-land woven of joy and sorrow, come and sit in the very midst. Give the taste of peace to the water of my tears; pass thy gracious hand over all my memories; descend to me in the sweet and gracious form of a beloved's love. Bound in every bond of this world, and yet bound by none — let thy great freedom abide with me, night and day.

29

Slowly the light fades from the pupils of my eyes; this vast earth, little by little, dissolves like a shadow, taking with it its seas, its hills, its forests, its gardens. This many-coloured song of the universe grows faint upon the fine hundred strings of the harp of the senses; the world-picture, painted hue upon hue, thou drawest slowly away, with a gentle hand, from my whole heart and frame; the many burning lamps that shone at every gateway of the senses thou puttest out,

one by one; and after that, in the middle of the night, upon the pure deathbed thou thyself hast spread with thine own hand — there, in that silent seat beyond all worlds, come thou and sit alone, in utter solitude.

30

Freedom won through renunciation — that is not mine to seek. In the midst of countless bonds, in great joy, I shall taste freedom. This earthen vessel of the world thou wilt fill again and again, pouring into it, without ceasing, thine own nectar of many hues and fragrances. Like a lamp of a hundred thousand wicks, my whole world shall be kindled into light at thy flame, within thy temple. To shut the doors of the senses and sit in the posture of the ascetic — that is not my way. Whatever joy there is in things seen, in fragrance, in song, thy joy shall dwell in the midst of it. My passion shall rise transfigured into freedom; my love shall stand fruiting into devotion.

31

I wander through thy world like one entranced, O Lord who enchants the universe. Before my eyes lies the calm, joy-laden, infinite sky; and the full golden overflow of an autumn noon enters my veins and mingles with my blood its

warm and drowsy spell. All things beguile me. In a hundred
strange tongues thy world makes me weep and makes me laugh;
all thy men and women draw me hither and thither with cords
of many a pain, with the pull of desire. That enchanted mind
of mine I have laid, like a lyre, upon thy lap — strike now
upon its hundred strings of passion, and wake from it, O
Lord, thy own wondrous music.

32

Alone in my bed last night, I sat thinking, by myself, of the
many tales of my past life; and in that hour I heard thee
speaking within my mind — "O thou intoxicated one, thou
entranced one, thou forgetful of thyself — thou hadst left
every one of thy doors wide open; and with all the flickering
shadows of this restless world, with all its errors, all its
dust, all its sorrow and grief, all its good and evil, all
its songs and scents, the world came pressing into thy
unguarded dwelling. And through that same open window,
unknown to thee, I too came down, times without number. Hadst
thou barred the door and sat repeating only my name, by what
path, then, could I have entered thy heart?"

33

I had made no preparation then, O Lord; yet with all the

world, thou didst come unknown into my heart, laughing, on many a blessed day; and upon many a passing moment thou hast left the mark of the infinite. I gather up now those moments signed with thy hand — and find them scattered through my memory, mingled with so much dust, entangled about so many trivial joys and sorrows of the passing hour. O Lord, thou didst not turn away in scorn, having seen that heap of dust, that playhouse of mine. In the midst of my play I caught, again and again, the sound of thy footsteps — and today I hear that same sound ringing together with the music of the universe, amid the moon and the sun.

34

Thou dost turn none away. The more I give thee my heart and mind, the more room I find to take all others into my life. Where hatred, with insult, drives anyone from the door, thou departest along with him; where pride, full of contempt, shuts the door against the lowly, from there thou turnest back; where envy sits in a corner of the heart and bores, with its hot spike, into thy very seat — there thou dost not remain. Thou abidest only where every one finds, without difficulty, a place of his own. When a petty king arrives, his servant cries aloud, "Make way, stand back, all of you!" But when thou, the great King, comest, with thee comes the

whole universe, following at thy heels.

35

Last night, in laughter and jest, in song and talk, half the night slipped away in the company of friends; and when, carrying the weariness of that joyous, sleepless hour, I came back at last to my quiet dwelling, I stood in the dark courtyard. The cold wind passed its tender hand over my hot, tired body, and in a moment brought peace to my restless blood. In a moment my heart fell silent, stilled, like an empty theatre when the lamp has gone out. I looked up; and in that same moment my mind crossed the boundless night and stood in the world of stars. And then I saw — we had been playing, all this while, with hearts unafraid, in the endless courtyard of thy silent palace.

36

I do not remember from where I came, to this pilgrimage of earth, among countless fellow travellers; my boat has come to berth at the landing of the blue sky's sea. On every side, day and night, I hear the vast conch-call of the world sounding, blown by a million million lives. All this while I have kept company with fellow pilgrims, men and women, at the wayside inn on the edge of the town; in bathing, in drinking,

the afternoon has slipped away in tales, in laughter, in song
— now I have come to thy temple, O Lord; here, alone, bowing
at thy feet, let me complete the worship of this life. After
this I must journey on to a new pilgrim-shore, O Lord of the
earth.

37

O great King, for a moment thou must grant me sight of thee,
in thy lonely dwelling place. There thou wilt call me away
from every other light into thine own; away, alone, from all
joy and sorrow, from all companionship, from every bond of
labour upon this earth. O God, I have entered thy temple
together with all the pilgrims of the earth, while the door
stood open at the hour of the evening rite. When the lamps
are put out and the worshippers go their way, each to his own
path and his own house, the door will close; and the quiet
darkness will merge me at last into thy feet. Lifting up one
small lamp of this my life, I shall behold thee alone,
forgetting the whole world.

38

At dawn, when the conch shell rang out in thy courtyard, men

and women, baskets filled, left their homes and went by the cool forest path, dew-fresh and murmurous with new sound. But I, absent-minded, lay in a shaded grove thick with leaves, on the grassy bank of a little river, in the soft breeze, among the sweet songs of birds. I did not go, O God, to thy worship — I did not even look to see who passed along the road. Today I think it was well that I strayed, for then the flowers were still in bud — see, they are opening now, the whole day through, even today. It was only in the afternoon that I filled, at last, this basket for thy worship.

39

O King of kings, in thy hand time is without end. None can number it; night and day come and go, ages upon ages blossom and fall away. For thee there is no delay, and no haste — thou knowest how to wait. For a hundred years together thy slow preparation goes on, only to bring a single flower-bud to bloom. But time is not ours to keep; and so all of us, together, snatch and struggle for it; none can bear another's delay. And so, O Lord, in finishing first the service of every other, the hours slip away — and, alas, thy plate of offering is left standing empty. I come running at the wrong hour, my heart full of fear — and find, when I arrive, that thy time has not yet passed.

40

So long as I had not seen thy sign, a fistful of dust had kept it hidden from me. But now that I have seen it, I gaze with delight, and find it burning, throughout the world, in darkness and in light; that sign blossoms on branch after branch, flower after flower; it runs, tracing its mark, along shore after shore of the sea, along coast after coast of the earth, swift upon crest after crest of the foam-flecked wave; upon peak after peak of the white-crowned Himalaya it wakes and stands still, gazing upward — that same silent sign. Turned away from thee, I know not what I was holding to, in those days. I had read it upside down, and so I could not understand the meaning of that letter, written large across the whole world.

41

He who threatens the unbeliever, saying that punishment will be his who brings thee no worship, that the messengers of death will drag him to the gates of hell — he is thy slanderer, and no devotee of thine at all. O King of this whole universe, thou hast kept thyself hidden, more than all else, within thine own glory. Even the tiniest grain of sand in thy creation, even the fleeting dewdrop, proclaims itself,

on every side, in a form more visible than thine own.

Whatever is thine, this world has forever gone on calling its own, and so deceiving itself — yet that theft of the thief is never once found out. Thou art in no hurry to make thyself known.

42

This, then, is the pride of love, the glory of devotion. It goes forth on its tryst into thy inaccessible, barred, infinite, silent, and utterly lonely solitude, its golden plate of worship heaped with offerings. Thou hast not asked for worship; it is love that longs to worship thee — it goes searching, a single lamp in hand, through the innermost recess of the heart. And gazing, it finds thee sitting there alone, filling its whole heart. Startled, it puts out its lamp, and finds then that the infinite sky cannot hold thee. The worship of a whole lifetime it offers up at thy feet, in the water of its tears. Worship unbidden, O thou who movest in secret, a search unsummoned — that is love's own pride.

43

How many masses of snow lie sleeping, deep among the stone ramparts of the far, sky-piercing Himalaya. O great Ocean, thou callest none of them from out of thine own depth. Shut

in upon themselves they remain, and the music of the world never sounds in their ears. Under the morning sun's rays, the snow that melts, that falls as a river, that breaks its bonds and runs free — O great Ocean, even that snow has never heard thy call. Upon that far peak of Gangotri, who is there to hear thy deep and solemn song? By what deep pull, in the very rush of its own current, it comes to find thee — that, only the river itself can know.

44

Whatever thou hast given, O Lord, to the dwellers of this mortal world, even after it has fulfilled every earthly hope, is never left empty and spent. Of itself, in the end, it goes seeking thee, and thee alone. The river hastens on its daily labour, and yet its endless current, having finished all its tasks, falls, without ceasing, as a perpetual offering of water at thy feet. The flower fills the whole world with its own fragrance, and yet is not fulfilled thereby — its final meaning lies only in its worship of thee. Thy worship does not rob the world of anything. Whatever the poet says in his own song, different people take from it different meanings, each after his own fashion; but its very last and truest meaning runs only toward thee.

45

That devotion which cannot keep patience with thee, which in a single moment grows wild with dance, with singing, with the frenzy of feeling gone to intoxication — that reeling, knowledge-losing, foam-flinging torrent of devotion's own wine — I do not ask for, O Lord. Give me, instead, devotion that is the very taste of peace — a vessel of blessing filled with mild nectar, set at the doorway of this house of the world. Give me that immortal devotion which shall spread through the whole of my life, hidden and deep, which shall lend strength to every task, which shall bring to fulfilment, in joy and in well-being, even my failed and thwarted good intentions. Let it give contentment to every love, comfort to every sorrow, and to every joy a brightness that does not burn. Let it hold back the tears of feeling, and let my heart remain full, grave, and unintoxicated.

46

As a child, drinking the milk that melts from a mother's love, laughs, drowsy with contentment — so, in my youth, I drank deep of the welling sweetness of feeling; I played my flute in the wild fifth note, and lay, like a child soothed and cradled, upon the breast of Nature, in a happiness all its own; and morning, night, and evening, like brides,

brought me, each in a different vessel, honey of many colours, smeared with the scent of flowers. If today that rapture, that overwhelming of feeling, has come to its end, if the enchantment of Nature's touch has drawn far away — I do not grieve. Thou hast now brought me out of the village into the palace of the King; give strength now to my heart, and show me the form of Truth, hard and unadorned.

47

I have come and taken my stand in the midst of blows and clashing. My armlets, my earrings, my necklace, my whole heap of ornaments, I have unfastened and cast far away. Put into my hand, with thine own hand, thy unfailing arrows, thy quiver that never empties. Initiate me into arms, thou master of the battle. Let thy mighty father's love ring out today in a stern command. Honour me in the new dress of a warrior, with the heavy burden of hard duty, with pain not easy to bear; array my body with the ornament of wounds. Bless thy servant alike in successful striving and in striving that fails. Do not let me lie sunk in the soft lap of feeling — make me able, make me free, upon the field of action.

48

From this unfortunate land, O thou who art all goodness,

drive far away every petty fear — fear of men, fear of kings,
and fear of death besides. This stone-weight laid upon the
faint-hearted and the weak, this endless grinding torment,
this daily sinking into the dust, this hour-by-hour
self-abasement, this rope of servitude within and without,
this trembling, bowed-down head, this forever surrendering,
again and again, at the feet of a thousand masters, of all
pride in human dignity — this vast heap of shame, crush it
and cast it away with a stroke of thy foot. In a morning of
blessing, let us lift our heads into the boundless sky, into
the wide light, into the open air.

49

In a dark burrow lives the blind reptile; it does not know,
it does not know, the jewel-lamp set upon its own brow, nor
the least gleam of sunlight. So too this blind country lives
in darkness, O King who metes out justice — the shining jewel
thou hast fastened upon its forehead it does not care for,
does not know; it does not know thy light. Forever it carries
the grief of its own existence, the weariness of its own
birth. Thy great ideal it has broken into pieces, each to its
own small measure, and left lying in the dust. O Lord, to
behold thee, alas, it cannot even lift its head upward. That
one boat which is the trust of a hundred thousand lives —

broken into fragments, how shall it cross the sea?

50

Those who have broken thee into a hundred pieces, made thee small, and lie sprawled upon the ground, hearts satisfied and half-asleep — upon their heads the whole earth today has carelessly set its foot. Those who, scorning all human worth the whole day long, only play at worshipping thee, lost in the mere enjoyment of feeling — that tribe of aged children is today the plaything of the whole world. Those stunted dwarfs who, making thee equal to themselves, heap dishonour upon thee — who shall grant them dignity? Those who, by their own incantations, dare to breathe life into thee — who shall grant life to them? And those who portion thee out, piece by piece — who shall grant them the stream of oneness?

51

O King of kings, to bow before thee one must climb upward — there, with open arms, call me up that far, rugged, difficult mountain path; carry me forward, day by day, upon that great road thy chosen sons have walked, step after step, winning for themselves a sorrow greater than death. O thou who dwellest in the innermost heart, the unquenched self that lives within me — let me know it, and make it known, through

sorrow. Let no fear dim it, let no greed set it trembling.
Let it remain shining bright upon the path of knowledge; let
it give light to every deed of this life; let it make even
the rest of death a thing of greatness.

52

Those who lay sprawled at the wayside inn at the edge of the
hard road, overcome with feeling, senseless with drinking of
its sweetness, those who never once kept themselves alert and
awake — those bewildered fools never knew when the whole
company of the world's pilgrims had journeyed on to the far
mountain, sounding their conch of victory! All the long day
they did nothing but make a plaything of thee, and play with
it. They have crippled action with empty ritual, they have
killed knowledge in the prison-house of scripture, they have
narrowed the vast universe within the walls of their own
small room, shutting fast every door and window — and now,
today, they weep. Night has fallen — where now the pilgrim,
where the road, where any direction at all!

53

Thou art the refuge of all — is this only an empty word? Fear

is only this: a want of faith in thee, O King. Fear of men?
Why fear of men, O Guardian of all men? What lasting
acquaintance have I ever had with any man? Fear of kings —
for whose sake, O King of kings? He in whose heart thou
dwellest finds, even within a prison, thy lap spread wide as
the three worlds; free is he, even in that house of bondage.
Fear of death — for what reason, O thou who art deathless? If
this brief two-day life should come to its end, will thy
giving then run dry — is thy store, O Lord, so poor in life
as that? Shall I go on clutching at life in that same
unbelief? Where, then, is any man, where any king, where
anyone at all to fear! Thou art forever; and I am forever
thine.

54

The great honour thou hast given me, creating me with thy own
hand — so long as life remains in me, let me never bear to
see it insulted. The light thou hast kindled through day and
night — let me keep its flame held highest of all, shielding
it with my own life from every slight. My humanity is thy
very image; in the greatness of my soul is thy own majesty,
great Lord! Whoever sets his foot there and brings dishonour,
laden with contempt — though he be the greatest king upon the
whole round earth — let me, with all my strength, condemn him

as a rebel against God. Let everything else go; let me hold thy glory safe within my own.

55

Whatever rights thou hast entrusted to me, without ever diminishing them by the smallest fraction, I shall lay them whole at thy feet, keeping them unshaken through danger and through death. Only then shall life be worth the living. Let knowledge remain, forever, free and unshackled. Let devotion never bow down in fear before anyone on this earth. Let every good endeavour bear no hindrance from any power; let the soul, day and night, in an unchecked stream, run with all its striving toward thee, breaking every bond. Let this be written always upon my heart: "To let another snatch away the charge of rights thou hast given me is itself to disobey thee."

56

If, in fear and in shame, head bowed forever and without end, a life bears insult and injustice — then in that faint-hearted life, alas, thy truth grows dimmer with every passing hour. A weakened soul cannot hold thee with firm conviction. A feeble life makes even thee small and feeble, in its own likeness — while all thy commands lie unheeded,

and its days pass away in a kind of stupor. Heap upon heap of falsehood comes and devours it from every side. False in speech, false in conduct, false in heart, trampled beneath the very falsehood upon its own head — it cannot rise up and drive that falsehood away. The one who, in insult, bows his head, fear-struck through and through, surrenders — to that very falsehood — thy throne.

57

O highest God of all gods, in the shade of the trees of the hermitage, a voice deep as thunder once proclaimed, over all things, in fire, in water, throughout this whole moving and unmoving world, in every great tree and every herb, the one, undivided, undying unity of a single God. That generous utterance belongs to this India. Those who were strong, and free, fearless and simple of heart, unbound by any chain, who walked with proud and shining courage, crossing forest, river, mountain, and stone — they, upon one vast and great path of truth, found thee present in the whole universe. Nowhere yielding to any inner refusal, with full strength they pierced through the whole of creation.

58

They saw this: that the whole moving and unmoving world pours

forth as a cascade flowing out of pure joy. Every flame of fire trembles in awe of thee; every breath of wind moves by thy power alone; carrying out thy command, death goes to and fro, day and night, murmuring through all creation. The mountains have risen upward at thy single gesture; the rivers race in every direction to thy music. Moon and sun, planet and star, everywhere in the void, tremble forever within thy boundless life. They lived, always, in this dwelling place of the universe, only in awe of thee, and only through that same awe made fearless — bright-faced, and content, in the pride of standing under thy rule, before the very eyes of the Lord of all the worlds.

59

Where have we come to be, how far away — in this weary town of crumbling, lampless walls, in this broken house, beneath the frowning brows of a thousand masters, backs bent, heads bowed, walking behind a thousand others at the crooking of a commanding finger, trembling at a single sideways glance — we have taken upon our own heads a thousand codes of another's rule. Our shrunken bodies tremble, building up the very shadows of our own imagining. Sitting in the darkness of evening, in a joyless house, the impoverished soul dies a hundred thousand small deaths of fear. At every step, with a

startled heart, flinging itself down into the dust — and in that very act, denying thee. We run from road to road as though we were children who had lost their father, in a fear-ridden world without a ruler, without a God.

60

Once, beneath some forest canopy of this India, some great soul — who wast thou? — with what strength of joy did you cry aloud, on high: "Hear, O peoples of the world; hear, all you sons of immortality, you gods who dwell in the divine abode — I have known Him, the great Being who shines beyond all darkness. Knowing Him, and gazing toward Him alone, you may cross over death; there is no other way." Who will bring back to this India, once more, that great mantra of joy, that lofty, life-restoring word, that supreme, death-conquering proclamation, sounded through heaven and earth alike, that utterly fearless and everlasting message of immortality? O India that lies dead — there is only that one way; there is no other path.

61

This death must be cut through — this net of fear, this heaped and hardened rubbish of dead matter, this lifeless refuse. We must wake, wake now, in this bright morning hour,

in this wakeful world, in this very field of action. Casting far away the blindness we have made of our own two eyes, every hindrance to knowledge, every hindrance to action, every hindrance upon our own path, every hindrance of custom and of judgment — we must take hold, instead, of the free bird's own song, in a joy wide, high, and unconfined. Piercing through all darkness, we must look up, heads raised, into one whole realm of light, into the boundless universe. We must proclaim, with a mind free of all doubt: "O you gods who dwell in the divine abode, we too, like you, are sons of immortality."

62

The hope of reaching thy feet, O great King, I have not given up. Through all this degradation, all this shame, still I have not given up hope. How thy law weaves its own hidden magic, in secret, beyond the sight of every eye, no one knows. At thy own appointed hour, in a single moment, the impossible arrives from no one knows where, revealing itself in its own light, wearing the shape of a thing forever awaited and forever possible. Thou, who dwellest in the innermost heart, art present even in this shamed and shame-filled land — unknown to anyone, in heart after heart, in house after house, wakeful through the night and the day,

thy hidden power is at its work. I have not given up hope, O
great King!

63

With what awakening thou wilt rouse this fallen India, O
great Lord, at what great hour — that lies beyond my
imagining. What her work shall be, what her strength, what
her adornment, O God, what path shall be her path, in what
glory she shall stand upon the utmost summit of splendour, to
make manifest the light of thy majesty in a new dawn!
Tonight's sky has strung its garland of lights, has arrayed
its own platter of darkness, and holds it above the head of
the earth, by an ideal that is not the ideal of morning,
great Lord! The light by which the east shall rise and wake
is not yet present in the eye of this night.

64

The sun of a century has today gone down amid blood-red
clouds; today, in a festival of violence, weapon rings
against weapon in death's own mad and terrible melody. The
pitiless serpent of civilization has, in the blink of an eye,
raised its crooked hood, its hidden fangs full of fierce
venom. Self-interest has clashed against self-interest, greed
against greed has broken into open war — and in that

churning, world-ending turmoil, barbarism, dressed in gentleman's clothes, has risen up from its bed of mire. Casting off all shame, all modesty, monstrous injustice, wearing the name of love of one's own nation, seeks to drown righteousness beneath a flood of force. The poets cry out, rousing terror, singing the snarling, snatching song of jackals over a burning-ground.

65

Self-interest ends always in violent ruin. Suddenly, at the height of its own swelling, a terrible blow tears it, scatters it, crushes it to pieces, in a darkness of storm ringing with the clamour of doom. Never, for very long, does the vast law of the universe grant any room to the arrogance of a single self. The more self-interest is fed, the more the fire of its greed and hunger grows — until it would swallow the whole floor of the earth itself as food, without question, into its own belly. When monstrous hunger is fed by monstrous feasting, without pity, without shame — then, roaring, thy fierce thunderbolt comes down. Love of nation goes rushing in search of its own death, sailing the ship of self-interest straight toward the hidden mountain.

66

This streak of blood-red at the western edge is never the gentle ray, the written promise of dawn, of thy new morning. It is only the terrible, world-ending blaze of evening. The funeral fire, on the shore of the western sea, is throwing up its sparks, the last fiery embers flung from the torch of a greedy civilization bright with self-interest. This striving after mere power, in the midst of such a burning-ground, is not thy worship, O keeper of the universe. Thy joy, thy light that floods the whole creation, lies hidden, perhaps, upon the shore of the eastern sea, in the long patience of a humble, silent darkness of sorrow, in an initiation of utter dispossession, wet with tears, waiting long, long, for its own sacred hour.

67

For that highest, most perfect morning, O India, stay awake through every sorrow, simple and pure of heart — keep thy soul free within every bond, and with flowers and with sandal-paste keep the temple of thy own inner greatness adorned and fragrant, thy sorrow-bowed head laid always, silently, at His feet. There is no one in this world who can rob thee of Him — hold to that pride, and remain, in the midst of every fear, fearless within, carrying the imperishable honour given by His own hand. However low a

place may be thine upon this earth, make it His footstool,
that seat of His, whose single grain of foot-dust is this
whole universe.

68

When the first light of that generous daybreak opens its calm
and compassionate eye upon the cloud-piercing, white-crowned
summit of sunrise, O grieving, wakeful land, let its first
song rise and ring in thy own voice, its first note of
proclamation. Stand arrayed, then, anointed with sandal,
bathed and pure, a very Brahmin, and, head lifted high, sing
out thy hymn of praise — "Come, O Peace, daughter and diadem
of the Creator, putting to shame the blood-lit torches of the
demons of the night." Thy vast contentment is the very
jewel-treasury of the Lord of all the worlds. Thy patience is
a strength not of this earth. Thy humility is thy highest
crown, His own reward to thee.

69

Take thy burden of sorrow from His hand alone, O grieving
one, O thou who hast nothing. Thy very want shall put on a
radiance of riches, if it stays bowed at His door. There is
no other — none, none, none — there is no one else in all the
three worlds before whom thy head may rightly fall. He

remains present in the form of a father; in every father I bow to Him. His right hand rests upon the sceptre of justice; with bowed head I take up His rule upon myself. His very toes rest upon greatness itself; at the threshold of all that is great, I make myself humble, and worship Him. Feeling it as the very touch of His hand, I lift up sorrow itself, and wear it, upon my own head, as glory.

70

The sceptre of thy justice thou hast thyself placed in the hand of every one. Upon every one, O King of kings, thou hast laid the burden of thy rule. That great honour, that difficult task, may I bow and take upon my own head, in all humility. In doing thy work, may I never fear anyone at all. Where mercy would only be a feeble weakness, O thou Terrible One, let me be capable of sternness there, at thy own command. Let true words flash upon my tongue like a bright, keen sword, at thy own bidding. Let me hold thy honour, taking my place upon thy very seat of judgment. Let thy scorn burn to straw, alike, both him who commits injustice and him who merely submits to it.

71

O thou mute, silent one, why dost thou stay so still, thy

heart shut fast? In this world so full of speech, joyless
 one, hast thou no word of thy own at all? Has no truth ever
 fallen upon thy eye? O poor, impoverished one, is there no
 new strain of song left in thy throat? The great ocean,
 kissing the very edge of thy house, sings its endless tale;
 east and west, how many rivers race on forever with their
 murmuring noise, become a living, flowing stream of music.
 Only thou hast never seen that plain and visible light,
 which, in truth, in song, in joy and in hope, blossoms ever
 anew in language after strange language. Thy own truth, thy
 own song, lies shut away, reigning, day and night, only among
 the dry, crumbling leaves of some withered scripture!

72

Where the mind moves without fear, and the head is held high;
 where knowledge is free; where the walls of the house have
 not, by day and by night, broken up the earth into narrow,
 fragmented plots; where words come welling up from the very
 wellspring of the heart; where the stream of work runs
 unobstructed, in every land, in every direction, toward a
 thousand different fulfilments — where the barren desert-sand
 of petty custom has not swallowed up the running channel of
 reason, has not broken manhood into a hundred pieces; where
 thou art forever the one guide of all action, all thought,

all joy — into that heaven, Father, strike with thy own
merciless hand, and wake India at last.

73

I love, O God, this land of Bengal — the wide,
horizon-spanning fields where a generous peace dwells
forever; where, beneath the open blue sky, in clear and
shadowless light, the Bhairavi's own melody sings out in the
voice of renunciation; where a lonely sweetness rings its
small anklet-bells along the silent riverbank in a soft,
flowing murmur of waves; where a simple tenderness, mingling
with the shade of trees, wraps its edge around the gentle
village home; this dwelling of mine, steeped through and
through, in sky, in air, and in light, with contentment, with
goodness, with love — grant me this blessing: that whenever
thy messenger brings word, I may, with a joyful heart, leave
it all behind, and go, at thy own summons, into sorrow, and
into death.

74

Where the murmur of this river never sounds like a mother's
own soft voice; where the tender, fertile earth is never
dressed, festival after festival, in ever-new colours, in the
pride of youth, through spring, through autumn, through the

rains; where a shut and narrowed sky never lets day and night open into their own full bloom; where the mother-tongue never comes and goes, like the goddess of good fortune, through the inner chambers of the heart; where imagination, night and day, turns back, unrecognized, from a stranger's door, into the bare road again — even there, if ever I must go, let my mind still be able, easily, to draw toward itself, in an unbroken stream, thy own everlasting joy, from every quarter, from every place.

75

Thy touch lies fastened upon every limb of mine, night and day, O Lord of my life; keeping this ever in mind, I will keep this body of mine pure. Thou dwellest in my mind, O highest wisdom — remembering this always, in every thought, in every meditation, I will make every effort to keep every falsehood far away, and cast it off. Thy unshaken seat is fixed within my heart; holding this in mind, I will govern and master every crooked hatred, every ill-will, and keep love blooming, unclouded and pure. Knowing this as the very essence — that thy strength is in every action — I will make thee known in every deed I do.

76

He whose endless rule, throughout this unthinkable universe, in world after world, is made manifest forever in every single atom; He, under whose raised finger's shadow the great history of mankind, age after age, goes always forward upon this earth — that great Lord takes His seat within my own consciousness, in every passing moment; by His light alone my eyes are bright with sight, by His touch alone my body is filled with the very joy of life. Wherever I walk, wherever I remain, wherever I dwell, let me remember this with every breath I draw, and carry always, upon my own head, His pride, and my own humility.

77

Grant my mind, O most worthy one, this one boon: never to count the loss of wealth as a loss of the mind's own peace. Let the worth of that wealth with which thy world overflows — from this humble grass beneath my feet to the far heavens above, in light, in music, in the treasure of beauty — remain always, in my own mind, a free, strong, calm, and simple contentment. Let me never lay the blame on fate, for any sorrow, any loss, any want. Let no bitterness ever be born in me at the loss of some small fragment, within this whole moving and unmoving universe. Let there be no place for me, if there must be none, in the society of the rich — but let

my seat, in the midst of this world, remain everywhere. This,
O God, with a single, undivided heart, is the one boon I ask.

78

Why is it so hard to hold this thought — that Thou art above
all things, that Thou art with me night and day, present in
every passing moment, far off and near at hand; that whatever
is, is, only because Thou art? Yet the instant I step into
the throng of men, the instant someone comes to me bearing
praise or blame, carrying his anger, his envy, his pride, at
once the world looms up like a mountain, hiding the sky
above; shame and fear, greed and discontent rise like waves;
and in the glare of the one diamond that blazes on a man's
crown, I can see no other light, in heaven or on earth. When
a man stands before me, why, in that very moment, do I forget
that I am standing before Thee?

79

Those who have called Thee dearer than a son, more precious
than riches, dearer than every kinsman in the whole wide
world, closer than the innermost soul — at their feet I long
to lay down my heart. That love, so simple and calm, so deep
and unstinting; that certainty beyond all doubt; that close
and easy current of union; that steadfast, single aim of the

spirit; that unhindered movement, in every deed, always within Thee, held in a grave and tranquil heart — O Thou who dwellest in my inmost being, how shall I ever attain it? Step by step, breath by breath, let me draw the stream of Thy love into my heart, in simple trust.

80

O Boundless One, from where Thou art, beyond all reach of thought, the wordless music of joy comes falling, unseen, unattainable, as the Ganges falls from her Himalayan height. That peak which pierces the clouds of meditation, where the first streak of gold showed itself at the world's dawning, amid the primal dark; where the weary evening sun of the world shall set in its last red glow; where cluster upon cluster of nebulae, the shining vapor of ever-new worlds, gather to its breast and wheel in the passion of creation, like torn clouds, through age after age — toward that unapproachable, unthinkable height I will keep the window of my heart flung open, night and day, O Thou who art without end.

81

At once Thou art the sky, and Thou art the nest. O Beautiful

One, within that nest Thy love lies close and deep; every moment, in shifting color, in fragrance and in song, it encircles the enchanted heart on every side. There Dawn comes, bearing a golden plate in her right hand, carrying a garland of sweetness to lay, in silence, upon the brow of the earth; Evening comes with a lowered face across the field left empty of its cattle, by a pathway without a mark, bringing a golden pitcher brimming with the waters of peace drawn from the western sea. But where Thou art the very sky of our souls, the boundless field in which the spirit wanders, there shines only a white radiance; there is no day, no night, no living thing, no color, no fragrance — no, not even a word.

82

With Thy love Thou hast made me blessed, Beloved. And yet I would not keep my heart forever sunk in sweetness alone. Where Thou hast given Thyself, tender one, bound in the many-colored cords of beauty, in such tenderness, such love, in so many forms — there I will not linger, held fast, in the proud languor of Thy love. I will not tie my heart down, tangled, in the cord of contentment. Where Thou art beyond me, there my innermost soul forever runs, drawn by the pull of the infinite, through all its bonds — where there spreads

the boundless peace, the wide freedom, that has no end. Let not Thy sweetness hold me bound; let it draw me, instead, toward Thy majesty.

83

O farthest of the far, O nearest of the near — where Thou art near, there Thou art mine; where Thou art far, there I am Thine. Near, Thou art ever new, in ever-changing guise, through joy and sorrow, birth and death. Thy song calls out to me from water and earth and sky, in the midst of all my labor; it sounds in a hidden voice, hour upon hour, in the hollow chambers of my heart, Thy mantra of blessing. Where Thou art far, there the soul, losing every shore, surrenders itself utterly, spending itself away in the fullness of joy, into Thy boundlessness. Near, Thou art the working shore of the soul's own river; far, Thou art the sea of peace, endless and deep.

84

Free me, free me from the unbreakable chains of blame and praise. If that heavy burden should fall away, then easily, among men, I shall return again to the work of the world — for only Thy will shall prevail, my Lord. Bowing low at the edge of Thy feet, I will take up, in silence, and hide within

my heart, both Thy punishment and Thy reward alike — and in noiseless passage I shall walk on through the midst of the field of labor, carrying a single-hearted devotion through countless tasks, surrendering my unswerving course to a thousand endeavors, by one everlasting strength of faith — as a river runs on, through a thousand towns, gathering its many labors into one course, and carries its unbound waters onward to the sea.

85

The storm has gathered, thick with darkness, O Lord of my life. On every side the rain sweeps down in streaming veils; the cruel lightning flashes and laughs with a sidelong glance; the wild wind has risen and set the forest groves in turmoil. Today Thou callest me to the tryst, O enchanter, O Lord of my life. In this world drenched with tears, I will not stay shut in by any sorrow, any fear, any idle task. Let this lamp of mine not go out, again and again, upon the slippery path of darkness; let Thy call sound to me upon the damp wind. In this ring of sorrow the storm has today wrought a deep solitude — let today be an hour of utter union with Thee.

86

Long has the drought lasted, O Indra, ah, so long, within my heart. I see the horizon terribly bare; nowhere is there a moist, glistening streak — no one brings the green tidings of the fresh rain's downpour. If it be Thy will, O God, bring the roar of thunder, with the wild storm loud as doomsday. Moment by moment, with the crooked lash of lightning, startle my horizon on every side. Take away, take away, Lord, this fierce, this silent, this vast and soundless burning, this unbearable fever of despair. Look on me, Lord, look, as a mother looks with brimming eyes upon her child on the day of the father's wrath.

87

This garden of my mind stands like a beggar, its arms withered and dry, held wide these many long days, staring up in anguish at the sky. O Lord, in this fierce noon, when will the wandering wind suddenly come, from some far country, and in the eager branches, in the blink of an eye, whisper from leaf to leaf its rustle of gladness, till every grove and border thrills with expectation? From somewhere the deep, fear-not thunder will roll, and Thy gathered grace will fall in dense array, wrapping all things round in its close shade. And after that, the abundant rain. And after that, on the morning following, in the gentle rays of the risen sun, over

the barren flower-garden, I know not from where, a profusion
of blossoms for worship will rise up and unfold.

88

This I will accept: how one becomes two, I know nothing of it
at all. How anything comes into being, how one creature
becomes another, how something exists in whatever form, what
is called body, what is called soul or mind — unable to
understand, I shall forever gaze upon this universe with a
silent, wordless heart. Of that whose farthest edge I can
never reach, whose beginning and end lie beyond me, how shall
I grasp its meaning, its truth, even for the space of a
single breath? This alone I know: it is beautiful, it is
vast, it is a great terror, it is manifold, it is unknowable
— and it has stolen my heart. This I know — that knowing
nothing, unknowing, the whole mind-stream of creation rushes
on and on toward Thee.

89

Through the great lion-gate of life I passed, into this
wondrous mansion of the world; that moment is unknown to me.
What power made me blossom, in the lap of this vast mystery,
at midnight, in the great forest, like a bud? And yet, when
at morning, lifting up my head, I opened my eyes and looked

upon the earth, robed in blue, woven through with threads of golden light — when I beheld the world inlaid with joy and grief — in that instant this unknown, boundless mystery seemed, all at once, like a mother's breast: wholly familiar, wholly my own. That formless power, beyond all knowing, that power of dread and wonder, has taken, before me, a mother's shape.

90

Death, too, is unknown to me. Today, because of it, moment by moment, I shiver and tremble with dread. To take my leave of this world, my eyes brim with tears, and I clutch at life, calling it my own, with both my arms. O fool — who was it made this life, this world, so utterly your own, from the very moment of your birth, without your knowing, before ever you willed it? On the morning of death you will look again on that unknown face, and know it in an instant, as though it had always been familiar. Because I have loved my life so much, I have come to believe that I shall love death, too, just as surely. Lifted from the breast, the infant cries out in fear — and in a moment finds comfort again at another place upon its mother's breast.

91

Diminish my desire, O Lord of my life. It only wages war,
clutching at one tiny grain, against the vastness of things.
Staking the whole world as its wager, it longs to win only a
single seed's worth. Level down that small kingdom of desire,
and grant me instead the great dominion of contentment. That
unbidden wealth which, in countless forms, from the light of
dawn to the dark of night, has fashioned boundless splendor
upon land and water — that joy within everyone's reach is the
most priceless, the rarest thing of all. That vast and simple
joy, full-petaled as a hundredfold lotus — who will bring it
to me, from between the water, the land, and the sky, and set
me afloat upon the stream of that simplicity!

92

The arrogance of power, the greed of self-interest, like a
plague, spreads before our very eyes today to engulf the
world. From land to land its poisoned touch turns peaceful
villages to ash and ruin. That calm simplicity, radiant with
wisdom, steeped through with tenderness, cool with
contentment — that once dwelt beneath the hermit-groves of
India. A mind unburdened by the weight of things once spread
its wide and generous blessing over every land and water;
into every clod of earth, into every living creature, an
unbounded meditation entered, as though all things were kin.

Today, that spirit destroyed, where the heart once dwelt a heap of goods has come instead; where contentment once dwelt, ostentation has come; where peace once dwelt, the warfare of self-interest has come.

93

Be not ashamed, be not ashamed, O India, to carry thy simple life, wrapped in a plain white shawl, with a calm and gentle face, before the scornful glance of that power-drunken, pleasure-loving West, so proud of its riches. Heed not what they say. Let thy greatest wealth remain within thy heart; let it stay at home; let it remain the unseen crown upon thy serene brow. That which looks so great, which has piled itself into heaps before the eye — do not fall down before it, again and again, overwhelmed. Set the free soul upon the throne of poverty, and fill thy heart full in the very leisure of its emptiness.

94

O India, thou hast taught the king to lay aside his crown, his scepter, his throne and land, and to wear the garb of the poor; thou hast taught the warrior, in righteous battle, at every step, to forgive his enemy, and, forgetting victory and defeat, to hold back his arrow. Thou hast taught the laborer,

with a mind made one in yoga, to offer up all longing for reward as a gift to the Eternal. Thou hast taught the householder to extend his house to neighbor, to kinsman, to guest, and to the orphan. Thou hast bound pleasure fast to restraint; with a pure renunciation thou hast made even want and poverty shine bright; thou hast turned wealth, through righteous deeds, into a blessing; thou hast taught us, casting off self-interest, through every sorrow and joy, to keep the world forever turned toward the face of the Eternal.

95

O India, the wealth that thy teaching has given wears little outward show; it looks poor to the eye, and yet within, its splendor knows no bound. Today, amid civilization's endless pomp, its loud self-vaunting, its luxury fattened on the blood of the poor, amid the roaring clamor of numberless wheels, amid the fearsome and barbarous iron-armed demon blazing in blood-red fire with a supreme insolence — who now, without flinching, with a tranquil heart, will hold fast, alas, to that silent glory, in its gentle and humble guise, so rare, so free of all anxious striving? Who will keep filled, within their own inner storehouse, that generous treasure of the soul?

96

That inner wealth we have let slip and lost. That is why we bow our heads in shame; that is why hunger and grinding want gnaw at every limb; that is why the Brahmin's simple robe no longer commands honor; there is no strength of meditation left, only the empty motion of chanting; purity has become nothing but a habit, without heart, without meaning. Within contentment there is no more vigor, only a heap of inertia; religion, lifeless, presses down upon us like a burden, stiff and hard. That is why today we rush in crowds to snatch up the West's cast-off garments, to hide our ancient poverty. A vain effort, brothers — all adornment hangs heavy with shame where the heart itself is wanting.

97

My strength is very small, O lover of the lowly; but my hope is not small. In Thy waters and Thy lands, in the midst of Thy living world, wherever I go, wherever I stand, I seek everywhere a place of my own. In Thy deed of gift I shall write down and claim Thy whole creation as mine. Carrying myself, day and night, by my own strength alone, I grow weary at every moment. That weary heart I will set down in the midst of all that is Thine, and make all that is Thine my own. My own small sorrows and joys press down upon my head

like a water-jar, an unbearable weight. Let me break that jar and plunge into the sea of the universe — then easily its vast waters will flow over my head, and the weight will be gone.

98

At times, now and then, when weariness comes and, in a single instant, devours the light within; when fatigue comes creeping with slow steps, bit by bit, and makes the very stem of my worship of Thee droop and wilt — even then let me not be afraid; even then let an unshaken hope remain awake, turned toward Thee. Leaning upon Thee, in that night of weariness, let me lay down my whole heart, without fear, in the dust of the road, and call upon sleep. Let me not, with what strength remains, raise up, from a tired heart, the thin and faltering noise of a poverty-stricken worship. Bring night to the eyes of day, only that it may wake again to a light made new.

99

This is my final plea before Thee — sever all my weakness, root and branch, with a firm hand, from the very depths within, my Lord. Grant me strength to carry joy, and to keep that joy steadfast. Grant me strength in sorrow, that I may

look past it with a face serene and smiling. Grant strength to my devotion, that it may prove itself in action, that love and tenderness may flower into virtue. Grant me strength never to despise the small and the humble, and never to grovel at the feet of power. Grant me strength to hold my mind, alone, above the pettiness of every day. Grant me strength to lay my head at Thy feet, and hold myself steady, unshaken, through every night and day.

100

In whatever house Thou hast placed me, here in this world, in that house I will dwell, forgetting every sorrow. Only, in Thy mercy, keep, with Thine own hand, one door of it left open, night and day. In all my labor, in all my leisure, let that door stand open for Thy coming; let the wind blow through it upon my heart, carrying the risen dust of Thy feet. Through that open door Thou wilt enter into this house of mine; and through that very door, I too shall go out. Whatever other joys I find, or fail to find, keep, I pray Thee, one joy alone for me. That joy belongs to Thee and me alone, my Lord; watch over it, and never let it sleep. Let no other joy come to cover it over; let the dust of the world never fall upon it; lift it clear of all the world's noise, and hide it, tenderly, within Thine own embrace. Let my

beggar's bag fill up with whatever joys it will — but that one joy, keep it only for me. However many faiths may break and fall away, my Lord, let one faith still remain, clinging fast within my heart. Whatever fire I am made to bear, let it, in the bearing, brand Thy name upon my breast. When sorrow enters into the very core of me, let it come bearing the mark of Thine own hand; however harshly cruel words may strike at me, let Thy melody rise, awakened, through every blow. If a hundred faiths should break within my soul, let my mind still cling fast to that one faith.