Rabindranath Tagore

Gitanjali
(Excerpts)

1861-1941 - India

1913 Nobel Prize for Literature

Dedicated to Sant Kirpal Singh
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 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 for 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 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.
Your worshipper of old wanders
ever longing for favor
still refused.

Day passes by after day and You
are not seen. If I call You not in
my prayers, If I keep You not in
my heart, Your love for me still
waits for my love.
If Thou speak 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  
Your voice pour down in golden  
streams breaking through the sky.
I had gone a-begging from door to door in the village path, when Your 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 I thought 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. Your glance fell on me and You came down with a smile. I felt that the luck of my life had come at last. Then of a sudden You did hold out Your right hand and say, "What have you to give to me?"
Ah, what a kingly jest was it to open Your 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 You.

But how great my surprise when at the day's end I emptied my bag on the floor to find a least little grain of gold among the poor heap.

I bitterly wept and wished that I had had the heart to give You my all.
When I go from here 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.
You have taken me as Your partner of all this wealth. In my heart is the endless play of Your delight. In my life Your Will is ever taking shape.

And for this, You who are the King of kings have decked Yourself in beauty to captivate my heart.
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?
Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens. Ah, love, why do You 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 You that I hope.

If You show me not Your face, if You leave 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.
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.
I know not from what distant time
You are ever coming nearer to meet
me. Your sun and stars can never
keep You hidden from me forever.

In many a morning and eve Your
footsteps have been heard and Your
messenger has come 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.

It is as if the time were come to wind up my work, and I feel in the air a faint smell of Your sweet presence.
I have no sleep tonight.

Ever and again I open my door
and look out on the darkness.
I can see nothing before me.
I wonder where lies Your Path!

By what dim shore of the ink-black river, by what far edge
of the frowning forest, through
what mazy depth of gloom are
You threading Your course to
come to me, my friend?
From dawn till dusk I sit here before Your door, and I know that of a sudden the happy moment will arrive when I will see You.

In the meanwhile I smile and I sing all alone. In the meantime the air is filling with the sweet perfume of promise.
That I want You, only You -
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 You, only You.

As the storm still seeks its end
in peace when it strikes against
peace with all its might, even thus
my rebellion strikes against Your
love and still its cry is -
I want You, only You.
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 will be wise this time and wait in the dark, spreading my mat on the floor; and whenever it is Your pleasure, my Master, come silently and take Your seat here.
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 You, and that You are 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.
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 Your door in his company.
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.

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.
When I woke from my slumber and opened my eyes, I saw You standing by me, flooding my sleep with Your smile.

How I had feared that the Path was long and wearisome, and the struggle to reach You was hard!
Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight.

You ever pour for me the fresh draught of Your wine of various colors and fragrance, filling this earthen vessel to the brim.

My world will light its hundred different lamps with Your flame and place them before the altar of Your temple.

No, I will never shut the doors of my senses. The delights of sight and hearing and touch will bear Your delight.

Yes, all my illusions will burn into illumination of joy, and all my desires ripen into fruits of love.
I know You as my God
and stand apart -
I do not know You as my own
and come closer.

I know You as my father and
bow before Your feet -
I do not grasp Your hand
as my friend.
I am like a remnant of a cloud of autumn uselessly roaming in the sky, O my sun ever-glorious!

Your touch has not yet melted my vapor, making me one with Your Light, and thus I count months and years separated from You.
On many an idle day have I grieved over lost time. But it is never lost, my Master. You have taken every moment of my life in Your own hands.

Hidden in the heart of things You are nourishing seeds into sprouts, buds into blossoms, and ripening flowers into fruitfulness.
Time is endless in Your hands, my Lord. There is none to count Your minutes.

Days and nights pass and ages bloom and fade like flowers. You know how to wait.

Your 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 Your altar is empty of all offerings to the last.

At the end of the day I hasten in fear lest Your gate be shut; but I find that yet there is time.
Master, I shall weave a chain of pearls for Your neck with my tears of sorrow.

The stars have formed their anklets of light to deck Your feet, but mine will hang upon Your breast.
Spiritual delights comes from You and it is for You to give or to withhold them.

But this my sorrow is absolutely my own, and when I bring it to You as my offering You reward me with Your Grace.
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 night 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.
Death, Your servant,
is at my door.

He has crossed the unknown sea
and brought Your 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 Your
messenger who stands at
my door.
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.
On the day when death will knock at your door what will you 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.
Oh, the last fulfillment of life,
Death, my death,
come and whisper to me!

Day after day I have kept watch
for you; for you 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 you in depth of
secrecy. One final glance from
your eyes and my life will be
ever your 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.
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 your world with its careless treasures. Rare is its lowliest seat, rare is its meanest of lives.

Einstein and Tagore

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.
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 neighbors 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.
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 traveler, and though there are dangers on the way I have no fear in mind.

Tagore and Gandhi

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.
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.
May your soul be happy; journey joyfully.
(Rumi)

Kirpalct@yahoo.com