

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

POETRY

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Poetry

**Gitanjali, The Gardener, Fruit-Gathering, The
Crescent Moon, Stray Birds, Lover's Gift and
Crossing, The Fugitive, The Child, Songs of
Kabir, My Golden Bengal, With Author's
Autobiography**

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MY BENGAL OF GOLD

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My Bengal of Gold (Precious),
I love you.

Forever your skies, your air set my heart in tune
As if it were a flute.

In spring, O mother mine, the fragrance from your
mango groves
Makes me wild with joy
Ah, what a thrill!
In autumn, O mother mine,
In the full blossomed paddy fields
I have seen spread all over sweet smiles.

In spring, O mother mine, the fragrance from your
mango groves
Makes me wild with joy
Ah, what a thrill!
In autumn, O mother mine,
In the full blossomed paddy fields
I have seen spread all over sweet smiles.

O mother mine, words from your lips
Are like nectar to my ears.
Ah, what a thrill!
If sadness, O mother mine, casts a gloom on your

face,
eyes are filled with tears!

AMAR SHONAR BANGLA

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Amar shonar Bangla,
Ami tomæ bhalobashi.

Chirodin tomar akash,
Tomar batash,
Amar prane
Bajæ bãshi.

O ma, phagune tor amer bone
Ghrane pagol kôre,
Mori hæ, hæ re,
O ma, ôghrane tor bhôra khete
Ami ki dekhechhi modhur hashi.

Ki shobha, ki chhæa go,
Ki sneho, ki mæa go,
Ki ãchol bichhæechho
Bôter mule,
Nodir kule kule!

Ma, tor mukher bani
Amar kane lage shudhar môto,
Mori hæ, hæ re,
Ma, tor bôdonkhani molin hole,
Ami nôeon ami nôeonjôle bhashi.

THE MORNING SONG OF INDIA (JANA GANA MANA)

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THE MORNING SONG OF INDIA (JANA GANA MANA)

Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people, dispenser of India's destiny. Thy name rouses the hearts of the Panjaub, Sind, Gujarat and Maratha, of the Dravida and Orissa and Bengal; it echoes in the hills of the Vindhya and Himalayas, mingles in the music of the Jamuna and Ganges and is chanted by the waves of the Indian Sea. They pray for thy blessings and sing thy praise. The saving of all people waits in thy hand, thou dispenser of India's destiny.

Victory, Victory, Victory to thee.

Day and night thy voice goes out from land to land calling the Hindus, Buddhists, Shikhs and Jains round thy throne and the Parsees, Mussalmans and Christians. The East and West join hands in their prayer to thee, and the garland of love is woven. Thou bringest the hearts of all people into the harmony of one life, thou dispenser of India's destiny.

Victory, victory, victory to thee.

The procession of pilgrims passes over the endless road rugged with the rise and fall of nations; and it resounds with the thunder of thy wheels, Eternal Charioteer! Through the dire days of doom thy trumpet sounds and men are led by thee across death. Thy finger points the path to all people, Oh dispenser of Indias destiny!

Victory, victory, victory to thee!

The darkness was dense and deep was the night. My country lay in a deathlike silence of swoon. But thy mother arms were round her and thine eyes gazed upon her troubled face in sleepless love through her hours of ghastly dreams. Thou art the companion and the saviour of the people in their sorrows, thou dispenser of India's destiny,

Victory, victory, victory to thee!

The night fades; the light breaks over the peaks of the Eastern hills; the birds begin to sing and the morning breeze carries the breath of new life. The rays of the mercy have touched the waking land with their blessings. Victory to the King of Kings, Victory to thee, dispenser of India's destiny.

Victory, Victory, victory to thee.

Rabindranath Tagore

GITANJALI

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GITANJALI

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.

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.

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!

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.

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.

Today 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 quite, face to face with thee, and to sing dedication of life in this silent and overflowing leisure.

Pluck this little flower and take it, delay not! 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.

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.

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.

O Fool, 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.

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 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, the

lowliest, and the lost.

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 of 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.

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!'

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.

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.

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.

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?

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.

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.

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.

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 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 that this perfect sweetness had blossomed in the depth of my own heart.

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?

In the deep shadows 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. Oh my only friend, my best beloved, the
gates are open in my house — do not pass by like a dream.

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?

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.

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.

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?

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.

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.

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.

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.

‘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.’

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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'.

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.

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.

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?

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?

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 today 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.