

**THE
BOATMAN BOY AND FORTY POEMS**

by
SOCHI RAUT ROY

Introduction
Dr. Kalidas Nag

Translated by
**Harindranath Chattopadhyay
B. Sinha**

**PRABASI PRESS
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by the same author

THE BOATMAN BOY AND OTHER POEMS, 1942
POEMS (*under print*)

A symposium on the author's works

SOCHI RAUT ROY—A POET OF THE PEOPLE

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To
MY FATHER

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The poem *The Boatman Boy* was rendered into English in 1942 by Sri Harindranath Chattopadhyay, one of the eminent poets of India, along with *The Dying Who Never Die* and *When Hunger Burns* from my books *Baji Raut* and *Abhijan*. I am greatly indebted to Sri Chattopadhyay for his valued help and cooperation. These poems were published first in 1942 under the name *The Boatman Boy and Other Poems*. All the above three poems have been included in the present volume. In this edition the second part of the chapter 'Return' of *The Boatman Boy* has been added by me containing the English translation of some stanzas which were left out in the first edition. My thanks are due to Sri K. K. Saha and Sri P. Sama Rao for their kind help and assistance in this direction. The poems *Aeroplane* and *To the One I Remember* have been rendered into English by Sri Protap Bonnerjee.

Versions of many of the poems included in this book have appeared before, in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, *The Bombay Chronicle* (Sunday edition) *The Modern Review*, and *The Bihar Herald*. Acknowledgements are made as due to the editors concerned.

The poems included in the sections 'Tandulipi' 'Ablugnyan' and 'Apocalypse' have been rendered into English by Sri B. Sinha. Some of the poems of the latter section were originally written by me in English and were given final shape by Sri Sinha. I have to thank him for his continued help and co-operation.

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Calcutta-24
November 1954.

S. RAUT ROY

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INTRODUCTION

The rivers, Bhagirathi of Bengal and the Mahanadi of Orissa, fertilised immense fields feeding millions of souls, and cutting their way through ageless rocks into the Bay of Bengal. Orissa and Bengal have collaborated through centuries in the fields of literature and Art. Vaishnava Humanism forms the bed-rock of the spiritual life of Utkala-Banga, placed in significant juxtaposition in our national anthem composed by Rabindranath Tagore.

Sochi Raut Roy the poetic child of Orissa has spent so many years of his creative life in Bengal that he is a veritable adopted son of Bengal like the Statesman-litterateur, Harekrushna Mahtab who can address mass meetings in Oriya as well as in Bengali. Raut Roy also is inter-penetrated with the genius of Bengal while he remains the outstanding Oriya poet of the new age. Not only does he read the Bengali classics, but also he composes now and then poems in Bengali. Some of the poems—the English renderings of which have been included in this book, were originally written by him in Bengali. Such bilingualism is, indeed, very rare amongst the modern writers of the two sister provinces. It is significant therefore, that the young Oriya poet comes to Bengal for cultural consummation as well as to have the English version of his poems published from Calcutta for an international audience.

Raut Roy grew up from adolescence to youth in an age of disillusionment following the unfinished war of 1914-18. The classical pattern of poetry was

collapsing with the classical structure of society. The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the transformation of Turkey into an Asian Republic, and lastly, the Freedom movement in India revolutionised the trends of thought of the younger generation. The socio-economic malaise and readjustment gave a new tone and texture to the poems of the thirties. The imageries and symbols of the new poets of the cataclysmic age, staggered between the sublime and the ridiculous. Conventional critics and the decorous public were shocked to the marrow of their bones. What they could tolerate in prose were found intolerable in poetry ; and yet the modern poets like Elliot, Ezra Pound ; and Joyce, with a mystic perversity, persisted in weaving into poetry, the slangs and lingo of the common man in the street corner far from the cosy and conventional drawing rooms of the blasé Art-lovers. Meanwhile the Gandhian challenge to the British imperialism with its refrain of 'Quit India' introduced a new dynamism in the dithyrambic odes to Freedom composed by young poets like Raut Roy greeted by the poet-leader Harindranath Chattopadhyay as "Buglers of Art." Naturally some of Raut Roy's verses were banned by the then British Government, for he insisted on singing, on unmusical themes like 'Bread,' 'Food,' 'Gallow,' etc. But he emerged as a people's poet, immortalising Baji Raut the 'Boatman Boy' killed by the British bullet. His ode to Man thrilled the heart of thousands and he was far too deeply rooted into the soil not to feel the convulsions of the earth in this age of revolutions. War, famine, communal riots, and the crushing climate

of frustration—pervading the cold-war period—have all left their marks on his poetry (as illustrated by the imageries employed by him in ‘The Khakis,’ ‘Balance-Sheet,’ ‘Atlas,’ ‘Alaka Sanyal’) and such themes, mark his poetry with the stamp of the age in which he is born.

‘Asphalt streets littered with hungry men and women’, have stunned him for a moment. The ‘encampment of Asharha’ has held him back for a while. He has paused for a minute to hear the steel-town calls. But he has never ceased marching forward. His steps have always been directed to new horizons, till he discovers and rediscovers himself as a pulsating life-centre in the vast ocean of Humanity.

As a born-poet he has ever tried to rise above contemporaneity and to reflect the cosmic vision, the eternal synthesis in which all discord and dualism melt into the supreme monism of *Advaita*. Thus amidst harrowing death he writes on the ‘joy of living’ in the apocalyptic vision. In some of his poems, composed directly in English, we detect signs of neo-symbolism and a rare emotive vigour, specially in poems on Nature and Love ; for poets may face many problems, but they rise above them ;—soaring in the region of eternal grace which redeem their works from being problematic.

The subtle symbolism as evinced in his poems ‘Cloud-Burst’, ‘Night-Sowing’, ‘Fisherman’, ‘Cloud-Symphony’ reveals his power and grasp of beauty and his keen sensitiveness to the eternal values of Nature and Love.

Sometime, our poet betrays surrealist touches showing his affinities with his brother poets abroad ;

and we know that the poet crossed and recrossed the dark waters of the Indian Ocean visiting Australia, New Zealand, etc., on a Government of India deputation. It is but natural on the part of a poet who belongs to Humanity that he will furrow the deep waters, traversing dangerous seas and unfathomable oceans, witnessing the 'strange corroborees' under the 'bluegum shades', and wandering across 'plateaus, ravines and promontories'.

In introducing to the public these poems in English garb, we must remind the readers that the supreme achievements of a poet is to be discovered not in a translation but in his native idiom. Raut Roy is a modern poet with an international outlook, but he is the Oriya poet par excellence. The age-old music of Oriya poetry vibrates through and through his compositions, and he comes in a true hierarchic succession of the great poets of Orissa who watch, from above, with paternal solicitude, the career of this new luminary in the horizon of Utkal literature. The monumental music of Konarak belongs as much to the past as to the future, and the soul of renascent Orissa would offer to Mother India ever new symphonies suggested by the creations of Raut Roy. We want more poets of his vision and his profound love of Man and Nature. We are sure that all lovers of poetry would understand and appreciate the unerring message and music of Sochi Raut Roy, the poet.

To help the readers follow the light and shade and the tonalities of his variegated compositions, we give, at the end, a few quotations referring to the major *repartition* of his poetic symphony.

His cosmic conception embracing the creation entire and the 'life eternal' and his feeling of oneness with the objective world are vividly expressed in the following stanzas picked up from his poem 'Requiem' :

"The bells toll. . . . the five bells.
The sun arches over the western brow,
The soft feel of a sea-green night,
Midst mossy quiet of dark. . . .

In this earth,
And creation's dust
I'm scattered
Like verticals of light diffused.

The flood-tide of my being
Streams like ichor
In godly veins ;
Bursts in blooms
In the grass and sky :
To the colloquy of god-shapes
I hearken,
Upon the cloud-coasted airy arches ;
And from the eternal Ever
The moments I snatch.

The moment's mirror
Reveals the world. "

(Requiem)

Another example of his vision and interpretation of life and death can be given.

"To be adrift. . . . to brave the boundless space,
the negation of time,

To leave the death desexed and hairless here,
 And then enter the zion-gates of life
 purged of death and being.
 The twitterings of land birds signal earth
 The angling merlin's silver call
 drops from the dark blue heaven,
 Like pearls falling into a deep dark well
 Resonating to the reclaiming voice of land."
 (Cloud-Burst)

His superb symbolism will be evident from the lines that follow :—

'The black horizon I seek
 With dactyls of sound
 In sound-whorls.
 Three trees bent with aboriginal sin,
 The green crescent,
 The flutist under the peacock sky,
 Resonant swan-vowels
 Lit by lotus-fire.
 I wait for the diapasonal word,
 The Signature
 Soham.'

And again:—He seeks fulfilment in the surcease of his cause-nexus.

'My cinder-shadow at my feet,
 Burnt out by the sun in the verbs of his fury,
 In that meridian moment
 Is my fulfilment
 That negates me.....''

And finally we hear the cry of his soul:—

'Tattered and riven by the seven winds
 Like confetti from a town of dreams

I fade.....

Like a fading opera

That looks unreal in the white of dawn.'

(Apocalypse)

He loves the earth and her beauteous form, and sings of the 'terra firma' in manifold melodies.

'The earth with its

arras of sea-dark

Keeps me enchained

entombed for a moment that is tide.

Its soft alluvial plains

Its topaz lights and shade

Its cloud-banks portending rain,

Green furzes

And verdant fields

By three rivers washed....'

His love of nature is intense, dark and intensive and an almost sexual interpretation can be made of his approach to the impersonal phenomena of nature.

'In and out I weave :

Upon the wave-bosom I lie,

Face buried in their cheek, foamy-soft,

Couchant, up-turned, half-reclining

on airy waves cushioned,

Alabaster river floors

tide-serrated ;

The curly waves, I ravage

Arms flailing on their yielding bosom

suck in their gurgling joy,

spit it out,

Crunch the water tendons

and then,

down the awed river spiral

descend.'

(Fisherman)

The sense of defeatism and confusion experienced by the present generation in the wake of a relentless cold-war are amply portrayed in his poems, combined with a message of innate dynamism and robust optimism characteristic of the poet. He expresses the disintegration and the state of chaos vitiating the present international atmosphere, by means of subtle imageries and exquisite symbolism which lend unique charm to the poems and save them from being drab reporterie.

He is aware of the century's titan losses in an 'Orpheus moment' and visualizes the danger of total annihilation of the civilisation by its own creation with the click of an 'Artemis-switch' like Actaeon who was devoured by his own hounds.

He dreams of Peace on the eve of the New-Year dawn and looks ahead with eyes full of expectancy to :—

'Columbine days
Pinioned against a sky-line honey-coloured.
like white lilies....'

—the words symbolising the white-robed Peace fluttering to earth like a 'snow-white dove from a blood-red angry sky.'

To Man he sings:—

'All hail !
Greetings of the Dawn.
I sing the epithalamium
of darkness and light.
To man I inscribe my muse.....'
(Ode to Man).

The abstractions of Nature are infused with a new life and imbued with almost a throbbing personality through his words, for example, we read in 'The Fisherman'—

'Amidst endless rollers
I plunge :
Locked round the waves,
I hug their proud, provoking, heaving breasts ;
My lashing arms
grind the water piers to smithereens :
A tumbling crystal tower
cascades in a tinkling silver shower.'

Many such lively and sparkling lines can be quoted from his poems to illustrate his personal and intimate approach to Nature.

The love poems of Raut Roy show various moods and tonalities and range from physical to spiritual. From the deep and impulsive lines of the 'Barricade the Break of Day' to the sublime utterances in 'The Music of the Spheres,' we find varietal statements of attitudes and thoughts and whatever be the import of these variations, the sincerity and the intrinsic simplicity of his poetic heart are clearly discernible in all his poems on Love.

'Carnation lips riddled with bite,
We shall sip the honeyed dew.....
A midnight of unfastened hair,
Bar the morning's inroad.....'

The accent on the physical aspect of Love in these lines gradually shifts to the spiritual realisation of the beatitude of love and the poem 'Dhvani Lok'

(The Music of the Spheres) emerges as a supreme utterance of the sublimation of the sex when we hear :

'In the sphere of resonance, we shall meet,
A meeting not of the eye,
 but in an aura of soulful sonority ;
On the checkerboard of diverse tunes,
 hemmed in by the haze of multiple notes.....
Where the fragrance of life-blossom
 melts into the sonata of non-life.....
Silhouettes....only silhouettes.'

Poetry is the supreme statement of life. Raut Roy's poems bear the massive message of his flowering soul and reveal a rare power and beauty which are his own. They vibrate with the hieroglyphic revelations of the poet's many-coloured personality, consecrated to Art and Beauty.

Kalidas Nag

November 1954.

THE BOATMAN BOY

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

THERE ARISES SOCHI RAUT ROY

Revolutionary Poet of Orissa.

THE whole world to-day is going through significant and cataclysmic changes which promise to lead to its entire transformation, both in structure as well as substance. The war of today is not just accidental ; nor are they due to "divine causes" as the less realistic, the intellectually dishonest among us, would wish men to believe. It is the logical outcome of a network of political and economic causes—the necessity in human life of a readjustment towards better existence and greater human values. War is like a terrific typhoon which threatens the calmly sailing ships on apparently placid waters ; war is like a whirlpool, which at a gulp, swallows all around and about it whirling. Nothing and nobody escapes its ravages, its sacrifices, its bitter demands ; and in its time, each one of us becomes an urgent instrument for the expression of new values and new meanings, while thousands have yet no clear idea either as to the causes or the significance of human struggle, there are, however, some who are automatically transmuted into fine recordists of that struggle. Not all, even among the sensitive class of artists, are able to pluck the realist's vision for their material. . . . specially the artists who belong to the already effete

class of the bourgeoisie—artists who are in the position of the notorious “washerman’s ass which belongs neither to the washerman’s hut nor to the *ghat*.” For they have lost touch with the virile and massive art-inspiration of the people which from the time immemorial, has fed and nourished life and art in their periods of decay ; and being imbued with false values forced on their minds by the very class which they serve, though apparently free within its system, and which exploits them, they are not able with appreciable ease and clarity, to get into touch with the living, massive vision of the future—the vision of a new humanity arising out of the death of a broken and extinct past red with annihilation and destruction and exploiting tyranny.

Singer of True Immortality

To be able to sing today of life and of the struggle that is on and the struggle to come; to sing of want and human sorrow and of the hope welling in the hearts of the people of the world, is to be able to sing of true immortality. Such a singer, such an artist, such a poet makes history for man—and a new religion, the religion whose only god and justly too, is very man, woman and child paving to their utmost height in a structure of leisure, bread and culture.

Young Buglers of Art

In every country of the world today the younger writers are coming out as the precursors of this new

world and this new age. Everywhere, we hear them like bugles, blowing across the spaces notes of freedom, notes of fight. India although she is still lagging behind the other countries of the world in respect of revolutionary literature and art, is still slowly but surely producing her strong young 'buglers'. In every province of India we come across signs of revolutionary writing and thought. In Orissa, I have come across the young revolutionary poets—a few, but whose influence is being felt all over the province. One of the leading revolutionary writers is SOCHI RAUT ROY a young lad of barely twenty-four who has made his personality felt in Orissa. When that ugly and blood-curdling incident—the shooting and bayonetting of Dhenkanal boatmen—took place, Sochi arrived on the scene with a mighty song celebrating the courage of those boatmen, the cowardice of the tyrants who slew them, and specially the immortal example of young boatman boy BAJI RAUT of barely twelve, whose name has now become a household one in the homes of revolutionary thinkers and writers. This song of Sochi's begins with the powerful invitation to the tyrant :

“Shoot, shoot as steadily as you can,
Our breasts are bared to your bullets !
Keep aside your wooden *lathis*,
For we damn it all,
Our breasts are made of rocks !”

The song caught on, even as flames catch on in a forest—lighting up all the night with its lurid glare !

Thousands and thousands sang it—it rang like a message of release struck from a giant gong hung from the ceiling of the firmament. It was not a song any more, it became a machine-gun—a dangerous weapon which must be withheld. The song was proscribed in the State. It still is. But its effects on the masses have been ineffaceable.

Sochi's Banned Verses

Sochi had written a volume of verse which was also practically banned. It is a verse of high compelling quality, verse that speaks to the people in the language of the people. Oriya—the language of Orissa—is undergoing a change—an alchemical change. It is being moulded by him into the golden music of the authentic soul of a people now awakening to new life.

A People's Poet

Sochi is one of those rare cases of "declassing" which has been taking place among the modern writers who come face to face with reality and realism. It is a gradual process—this changing from mere intellectual and distant appreciation of the values of hideous wretchedness and hunger existing everywhere to a dynamic and living spiritual and mental experience of them. The revolution which has already long been ushered in is working its way into our very brain-stuff and life-stuff and dream-stuff. There is no escape from it for anybody who is at all virile and destined to survive.

Not An Ivory Tower Poet

Those whom it leaves unaffected already belong to the past. Indeed, the Ivory Tower Poet has had his day—and it has an history, being comparatively a brief one. The ivory tower has crumbled under machine-fire and bomb-bursts and left the poet standing naked under a bare lightning and thunder-infested sky which looks on like a blatant stare—and whose innumerable stars suddenly change their imagery and from the twinkling eyes of God become the stinking sores on the body of space! In one of his books Sochi Raut Roy deals with subjects like “Bread”, “Food”, “Spain”, “Gallows” etc.—subjects which are neighbours to the starving millions and the revolution which is born of hungering stomach. The following lines of a poem which I have translated from his book *Abhijan* will illustrate the point clearly—

I. the poet of labour stand
With pen for weapon held in the hand.—
I stand and dream of the day to come
When men shall rise out of martyrdom,
Rise in the dawn of freedom when
A new red sun and my poet's pen
Shall sign the charter of Man for Men!

A new red sun is surely rising out of the stark darkness of the past—a sun that marks the forehead of a new morning for man, even as the castemark of the religion named humanity. And the poet's pen will sign—must surely sign “the charter of man for men” if it is going to be worthy of its name—and prove to the world Shelley's famous pronouncement :

“Poets are the unacknowledged
legislators of the world—”

changing only the adjective from ‘unacknowledged’
to ‘acknowledged’.

Harinaranath Chattopadhyay

“Kaiser-I-Hind”,
Bombay,
15-2-1942.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE "BOATMAN BOY"

THE hero of the major poem in this book is a boatman boy of barely twelve, namely Baji Raut who fell a martyr to imperialist bullets of British Raj and its feudal underlings in India. He was but an ordinary human being, a mere dot in the vast multitude of man. But he has now grown to be a great force or should I say a mighty institution that inspires and vitalises a nation ! The personality of this little boatman boy has now assumed almost classic significance with an abiding value. He has now ceased to be merely himself and has become a part of ourselves—'the blood of our blood, the flesh of our flesh and the soul of our soul'—inspiring us all to new heights of self sacrifice for the cause of the people. His life is an epic of sacrifice—a saga of patriotism and a heroic struggle against all forms of oppression of man by man.

The Historic year 1938 and the Orissa States :

The Native States of Orissa, known in Oriya as "*Andhari Mulak*" or pockets of darkness, were awakened to a sense of new life and a new collective movement in the historic year 1938. The people of these States were so long leading a sort of dwarfed and crippled life deprived of all chances of growth under the heels of an already effete feudal system nurtured by the paramount British power. They had neither freedom of association nor of expression.

Millions and millions of half-fed and half-clad people were living in a state of abject poverty and utter destitution whereas a few Ruling Chiefs and their minions were at their expense leading lives of utmost luxury and plentitude.

Under the Feudal System :

A highly centralised absolutism was the prevailing order of the day under the Orissan feudal system. The Governments of these petty Native States were arbitrary in character and naturally callous to the aspirations and needs of the people ; and the vast masses of the population did not possess even the rudiments of civil rights. The sub-structure of society was composed of an unhappy mass of sub-human beings who were not only deprived of the elementary rights to civic life but were also saddled with an unending series of irritating and humiliating obligations.

These were the days of British Rule in India. British Imperialism had as its junior partner a network of feudal Zamindars, Land-lords and Rulers of the Native States who were sucking the life-blood of the people to the last drop. The words of these Zamindars and Rulers were law and any organised attempt to introduce responsible government in these States was ruthlessly suppressed by the State troops which were reinforced when necessary, by mercenary military forces lent by the British Government. Thousands of brave workers of 'Prajā Mandals' were locked up in prisons—their properties were confiscated, and their relatives were put to regular torture

and disgrace, while their women folk were often raped by the heartless soldiers of the State who were hired to play havoc with the people in revolt.

A state of lawful lawlessness was rampant in these States.

The systems of forced labour and compulsory exaction of money in the name of "*Bethi*" and "*Veti*" and "*Magan*" in addition to the already heavy taxes and levies were common practices resorted to by the State Durbars.

The vast multitudes of peasants and day labourers who peopled these regions slept like colossal giants ignorant of their own strength; they cursed their own fate holding their past birth responsible for their inconceivable suffering and misery. A morbid fatalism and a spirit of false stoic resignation paralysed their minds, while their bodies were subjected to the tyranny of privilege, custom and monstrous exploitation by the forces of feudalism and imperialism.

But soon a new revolutionary movement was afoot, and the brave people of the Orissan Native States were roused from their century-old torpor. "People's Front" was formed in almost all the Native States of Orissa and the "Praja Mandals" or organisations of the States people were set up to organise and co-ordinate the people's struggle against oppression and plunder. The State authorities tried their level best to nip the movement in the bud. They banned public meetings, promulgated orders under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code prohibiting all organisational operations including delivering speeches in public.

The Historic Movement :

But the daring people of Dhenkanal (a Native State of Orissa) did not pay any heed. They formed their Praja Mandals and put forward a memorandum before the Ruling Chief demanding among other things, freedom of speech and freedom of association. But their petition was rejected and their leaders were thrown into prison. A series of repressive measures followed suit in rapid succession. Public meetings were banned. The State police reinforced by mercenary troops from the British Raj several times and at places opened fire at defenceless people assembled to discuss their problems in a peaceful manner,—thus indiscriminately killing many and wounding many more. The womenfolk were raped wantonly by the soldiers. When the tragic and ghastly story of this 'legalised barbarism' was narrated in person to the late C. F. Andrews at Cuttack by two actually raped women rescued by the author of these poems, the former simply burst into tears and could not utter even a single word of consolation as he was much too overcome by emotion and agony.

However, the gallant people of Dhenkanal kept loyal to their cause and carried on peaceful agitation for the assertion of elementary civil rights and democratic government to be formed by elected representatives of the people instead of by a hereditary ruler and his hirelings. They remained peaceful and non-violent up to the last moment never yielding to provocative tactics played by the oppressors.

The Daring Boy of Dhenkanal :

Baji Raut, born at the village of Nilakanthapur in Dhenkanal State in Orissa was then barely twelve. He came of a poor family and had none to look after him except his poor old mother.

His mother worn and weary and impaled by age used to earn her bread by grinding and husking paddy at the quern at the houses of the more fortunate and well-to-do villagers, while Baji, the turbulent child of Nature whistled away the hours by playing upon a pipe while ferrying his little boat across the foaming river Brahmani under the blue sky.

The 10th of October 1938 :

The fateful night of the 10th of October, 1938, came. It had been raining incessantly for the last three days. The night was dark and the sky and hills looked ogreish every time the patterns of the clouds that covered them changed. Baji was fast asleep on the bank of the Brahmani river inside the little thatched shed of his ferry boat fastened to a tree. He had been posted there by the *Praja Mandal* as a sentinel to watch over the 'ghat' and to see that the boat was not used by the troops of the State Durbar to cross the river for carrying out their murderous game of killing and looting people, and burning down the houses of peaceful villagers across the river who were found sympathising with the *Praja Mandal* workers.

At dead of night, the police troops arrived at the bank of the river where Baji's little boat was

fastened, after having opened fire upon a peaceful crowd in the village Bhuvan, just two miles away from the place. They had already killed two persons in that village night before and wanted to cross the river now. They roused Baji Raut and demanded his boat to be taken across.

Baji looked at the troops with drowsy eyes still moist with fleeting dreams.

An Offering to Imperialist Bullets :

The troops pointed their guns at his breast and repeated their demand in a still coarser voice. Baji was roused to grim realities. The winds were howling and thunder-clouds clapped across the distant sky. But the little hero stood undaunted and an inspired voice rang out—"This boat of mine belongs to the Praja Mandal. It cannot be hired out to you—the enemy of the people."

But the police had not come there to hear words of gallantry from a tender boy of twelve. One of them shook his tiny body violently while another struck his head with the heavy butt of his gun.

The pale body of the little hero collapsed like a young 'Sal' struck down by a sharp gust of wind. His skull was fractured and blood was oozing profusely.

However, he did not succumb immediately. He got up, jumped to the river bank from the boat tied ashore, and called out to the workers of the Praja Mandal in a loud and resonant voice. His voice was heard by the villagers who were asleep in their homes, and like a siren it warned them of an approaching

storm. Soon after, other workers of the Praja Mandal appeared on the scene. They fastened the rope of the boat tightly to their waists and stood on the bank like trees deeply rooted in the soil. The police cut the rope that fastened the boat and rowed away.

Symbol of Heroic Sacrifice and Struggle :

But the story does not end here. After rowing away the boat a few yards the troops loaded their guns and fired a volley at the silent crowd standing on the bank. A few were killed instantly and many were wounded fatally.

Baji Raut, Hurushi Pradhan, Lakshman Mullick Raghu Nayak, Guri Nayak, Nata Mullick and Fagu Sahu were among the brave deads who fell martyrs to imperialist bullets. The dark lonely night of a still darker land witnessed the martyrdom of seven tall fighters of our land, and every one of them a Hero.

The dead bodies of the martyrs were later brought to Cuttack, the capital of Orissa and after the post-mortem, were cremated on a single pyre by the author and his friends.

The poem that follows seeks to immortalise the heroic sacrifice and the burning patriotism of the young hero Baji Raut who stands today as a supreme symbol of a deathless struggle against the forces of darkness and reaction.

Baji Raut is dead—Long live Baji Raut.

Sachhidananda Raut Roy

Calcutta-24.

September 1942.

RED FLOWER

THIS is no funeral-flame, Comrade !
No funeral-flame, but freedom's leaping flame
To cleave the country's darks of death and shame ;
A sacrificial mystery
Of death turned life Flame beyond price !
Lo, you have offered unto history
The century's supremest bud of breath,
Extremest symbol of high sacrifice,—
Our boatman-boy, proud conquerer of death !

He took the world by storm,
Valour's own master-stroke !
Time hath discovered in that little form
The authentic leader of the starving folk,
Fire-laurelled boatman of the country who
Will steer it like a boat and bring it through.

Nay, Boatman ! you shall not renounce the oar
Until that boat has touched the shore.

Again and yet again
A voice calls out to him, but calls in vain :
“Go not the hour is full of fate,
Young Boatman, wait !”

In front there looms a heavy storm, and under
The lightning and the thunder
The king and the fool soldiers of the king
Are waiting to unleash tyrannic forces ;

The lightning-fire keeps yellowing
The gaping blank of vast inanity
Which men call heaven ;
The thunder is bellowing,
Keen blasts howl on and on,
A naked night is here, a night without a dawn !

The river rises foaming at the mouth
Like to a reckless stallion mad with drouth,
Rises and rolls and overflows its bank
The darkness is a giant's clutch that closes
Round forest, meadow, paddy-field,
All is an unrelieved, inky blank !

What does he care, this fractious child of ours,
For bayonet thrust and bullet showers ?
What does he care, this hero-hearted thing,
For the king or the soldiers of the king,
Cursed hirelings of the State,
What does he care for elemental powers
Vomitting bitter hate ?

To bullet-showers and bayonet-thrust
He gave himself as an offering.
Red flower of flowers !
One of the choicest flowers of Indian dust !

Far stubbornner than storm,
More clamorous than thunder-cloud,
Yea, far more deep and intricate
In pattern and in rhythm
Than dark-blue billows bursting in the night.

Out of the hard, bare rock of circumstance
He throbs and bubbles like a thirsty spring
Rushing onward onward !
Drunk with life's heady current
Out of the darkness, dawnward !

So young in years,
Withal so ripe with revolutionary wisdom !
Heroic laughter midst a nation's tears !

Life could not keep him
Enslaved captive,
Could not hold him with its lure of colour,
With its river-musics,
With its twilight-hush and morning-wonder !
Too narrow these for him,
For him whose heart was one wide revolution,
Red revolution
More colourful than sunset,
More hot than twenty million funeral-pyres !

Death split in sudden dread
And made a straight and sudden path for him ;
The iron army of a coward system
Shivered and split and made a path for him ;

O where ?
Where has our hero fled ?
Beyond our poor pathetic night and day,
Beyond our pathetic laughter and despair.
He has fled,
The cage of clay has blended with the clay,

His body of dust
Hath kissed and courted
The dust of a whole country that he loved !

But the fire in that body
The fearless and unflickering fire
Burns in our hearts forever,
Dances a dance of life in our dead hearts.
His memory is as a fortress now,
An adamantine fortress builded
Out of his blood and bone and wounded flesh.

Lo, Death has made
Out of this young life's insignificance
Each man's significance,
Freedom's unchallenged master !
The world's tempestuous child,
So reckless and so wild,
With all the revolution in his blood,
Now grows to odours vernal,
Having become eternal
And fiery sucker at the breast of mud !

The crematorium,
Catching his little foot-prints hath become
'A place of pilgrimage,
The bier, bearing his body, turned a shrine.

Poet of Revolution, Baji Raut !
Your dying note
Has changed to an undying inspiration
For an entire tyrant-trodden nation.

Dipped in your blood death's pen
Hath written
A song of immortality for men.

The sun shudders to read it,
The gaudy storm turns pale,
Reading it, the black night blooms to laughter !

Nay, Time dare not forget :
Your memory, a meeting-place, is set—
For generations who shall come hereafter.

You were the ruthless trial
Of all the ugly and intriguing past ;
You were its court of judgement
Where it was tried, and with your dying breath,
Condemned to death !

Poet of future freedom !
Your dying was a poem,
Embodying its doom.

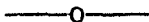
Your dying was a poem
Which hath made Death itself turn pale and die.
For in it
Dwells a dark resonance
Darker than the old resonance of death.

So, let it lie.
Let the past lie, canker-corrupted corpse,
Hidden away from human memory,
Signed by your blood, sealed by your memory.

The giant darkness drowns,
While night is one large yawn of opium-black,
And indigo-dark waters idly mutter.

O Dead ! why are you silent ?

Ah nay, your very death is loud with life,
With future liberated life,
With life, a flaming carnival of freedom !



TO THE POET

TARRY a while, O poet ! Let your Muse
Accept in this historic hour of hours
His garland woven out of many hues,
Warm offering of young unfading flowers.
Nay, not of flowers but flames that bloom and leaf
Out of a nation's grief.

Death weaves his memory into a chain
Of glory for the naked throat of life ;
Rich immortality out of his pain,
Sheer liberation from that hour of strife
That slew him while he stood, and fear-estranged,
Fulfilled a revolutionary's duty !
Already through his dying earth has changed
From so much ugliness to so much beauty.

O he is like a slender-throated bird
Which soars and sings
While round its flight all heaven is struck and stirred
To a wide sense of wings
Fire-tinged, unfettered, high :
O he is a bird of freedom now
Who rests no more upon the crooked bough
Of wasteful agony, but sweeps the sky !

O poet ! may the music at your mouth
Pour out like one wild cataract of fire
To celebrate the name of **BAJI RAUT !!**

Let the full music at your throats be fire
And let that fire burn up the hideous black
Of slavery and shame . . . Let it inspire
The storm-enwombed heavens to heave and crack
Into the new-born freedom of the world !
O may it be a banner wide-unfurled
Caressing air to rhythms which can pull
The void out of our lives and make them meaningful ;
Yea, meaningful of beauty, power and peace,
Of human progress nevermore in chains.

Poet ! Arise ! let every song release
Man from his bondage until naught remains
But one tremendous laughing liberation !

Cry out, cry out across the darkened years,
From your eye's quiver let the arrowy tears
Hurtle and cleanse the hoary mists that wrap
The broken body of a breadless nation !

Let shaggy forests ring, let rivers run
And mighty echoes kiss the mountain-cap,
And a new majesty inform the sun
And a new flight-capacity, the birds,
Inspired by your words !

Yea, lotus-eater Poets of our climes !
The world is taking on another shape
From what it wore in the grey bygone times
When song for you was just a fine escape,
For you, self-isolated in a swoon
Nourished on decadent dream.

That day is done !

His death hath blown a redness in the moon,
A living revolutionary redness
In every dawn and every rising sun !
Songs of ešcapism are songs of deadness
And how shall you escape when everywhere
He shoots keen shafts of fire through the air,
When his swift personality hath sealed
The sky, the water and the waving field ?

Modern Valmiki ! Wipe away your tears,
Wipe out the old remembrance of the dart
That shot a wooing dove
And drew the hot blood from its waning heart
Depriving its poor mate of innocent love !

Gaze on that selfsame sight,
Eyes lit with a new light,
And lo, the shot bird bleeding red and warm,
Becomes our little hero's wounded form ;
The form of one so young, so wild, so fresh,
Blood of our blood, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh !
Entire humanity hath bled in him !
Seeing this ghastly sight the sun becomes dim !
Waken all nature to another note
With the new prophet power in your throat !

Enough have you, O Poet ! sat and sung
Of Beauty in her isolated tongue !
Of Beauty which is all afraid to see
The blood, the ugliness, the agony,
A challenge to her smugness and repose !

Behold ! the blood of Baji Raut has tinged
The evening sky, and passed into the rose,
And, with its scarlet, clouds of morning fringed.

Enough of birds and stars and laughing spring
What can they mean to men in suffering ?
What can they mean to mothers who survive
Their martyred sons ?

Now let your poet's pen
Interpret the deep tragedy of men,
Interpret the black magnitude of sorrow
Which makes Today a tomb to close around
Tomorrow !

The death of martyrs purchase your hands
To write of life and life's inordinate strife ;
The death of little Baji Raut demands
That you become interpreters of life,
And sing of the dripping wounds, the weeping eye
And of the vacant and disgraceful sky,
Echoing a whole people's starving cry !

And when your songs
Have solved life's anguish and revenged its wrongs,
When earth is full of leisure, bread and light,
Let Beauty come again with starry night.

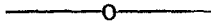
Let then the beautiful morning sun
Thro' mansions and hamlets proudly peep
And beauty born of pearly dews
Let the earth in radiance keep,

Stars rush out and the blue-gold moon
Her nectar pour on the dolphined sea,
With ebb and flow in his surging breast
Roll on in passion's ecstasy.

Let autumnal songs earth's bosom fill
And the redolence of vernal blooms ;
Bees hum while butterflies play
To the tunes of gossamer fancy's looms.

Let beauty bring
Into our ken again her rainbow ring
Her bright largess scattered wide and far,
Her morning mistiness and twilight star.

Ah, then and then alone
When men are given bread instead of stone,
Beauty shall truly come into her own.



TO THE MOTHER

WEEP no more, Mother ! Weep no more !
O wipe away those tears of wild unrest.
History and the people of the world
Are chanting of that triumph of your breast,
Our country's burning triumph, Baji Raut.

He was yours once, yea ! yours alone,
But now a world proclaims him as its own.

Over and over again
He comes, the nursling of each mother's pain ;
Through a thousand Springs and Summers
He is re-born,
This hero comes forever
In the world's yet-unborn new-comers.

Mother ! each future babe
Returns your own to you :
In every child caress him,
Unto your bosom press him,
With all a mother's passion !

Night and morning
He wakes and finds
Himself become an image in men's minds ;
In Freedom's battle
Fighters remember him and draw new courage,
Inspired certainty,
From him more intimate than battle-wounds,

More personal than dyings in a battle.
O what a gift to have given to the nation !

.....

There, in a far-off village
You win poor bread by grinding at the quern,
Your weary fingers working at the quern
Dipping and diving into its grain-heaped hollow ;
Your shrunken woman's body,
Your trembling aged body,
Your brave, though broken body
Grown neighbour unto heat and dust and toil,
While in your deepest heart the young voice whispers
"Mother, O Mother !"

Your cloth so soiled and tattered
Catches two drops of sad unpublished tears
Trickled from the red edge of sleepless eyelids
Your tears remain unpublished in the world !

Your grief is choked ere it can find a groan
What light-and-shadow pictures of the past
Travel across your mind, Mother ?
What countless images of him
Arise before your vision and grow dim ?

Do you remember, Mother !
How, when the blue-black clouds of July covered
The naked spaces,
Their inky shadow wooed and won the river,
And how his little boat would also then
Woo and win the bosom of the river ?
Care-free and laughter-crowned

He crossed the crumpled water like a crane
Under the swooping night !

Sometimes when honey-bees
Held busy congress in the coconut trees
There, in your village, Mother !
Loud with discussion
Counting their losses and their victories
In honey-kingsdoms,
You waited breathlessly to catch
One echo of his footfall ;
And sometimes your heart shot a sudden pang
Even as a hunter-bird, prey-cager, searches
Upon a stormy day
Its prey, and of a sudden knows
The stabbing agony of offspring-loss
And when the homing moon dipped in the west
You yearned to rescue him from night's dark clutches ?
And hold him warmly cling to your breast.
Do you remember, Mother ?

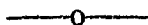
O grant me as a rare boon
That anguish burning like a funeral flame
Inside your shattered frame, Mother
Out of that selfsame anguish will I raise
A giant pinnacle to pierce the moon !

Give up your fret, Mother !
Do not forget he grows significant
And moves in a whole nation's memory.
He is remembered by the rising race :

In every triumph and defeat
His climbing foot-falls beat
Making us dauntless in defeat and wise in victory.

He has become the flame of life itself
A prophet-tongue of fire
To lead us and inspire
Valour within our hearts to beat like drums !

To you, O tongue of truth, O flame unbending
We bend
In salutation, brave departed friend !



TO THE WAYFARER

TARRY a while, O Traveller ! by his grave :
In fretful mood he lies here, proud and dumb.
Wild grasses o'er his slumbering body wave,
And o'er his head ephemeral insects hum.

Departing summer flowers, before they die,
Invite him to their rituals of good-bye ;
He takes no heed of them but lies alone
Without a stir, without a faintest moan.

Before his grave, O Traveller ! bend your face
Since it has now become pilgrim's place.

His bosom lies under the dust, the stones,
What forest-fire burns in his little bones !

It is too late. Now he has made his choice :
While he was yet alive nobody's voice
Except his mother's called in love to him ;
Nobody cared to understand his grim
Struggle and sorrow Now he has left us all
And will not answer though we call and call.

Is it not marvellous how this little dead
Hath cast a giant shadow everywhere ?
Its dust, a piteous handful, blown and spread
Over the whole wide country, layer on layer ?
How the whole earth his memory hath worn,
Even as yellow moonlight by brown fields of corn !

How his remembrance now has all become
A beacon-light to future martyrdom ?

He hides his face behind a sable shroud
Like an autumnal moon behind a lurid cloud ;

O silent wayfarer ! are you so blind
That you cannot behold him in your mind
He is like night which in a dark self-screening
Reveals the more its own deep mystery and meaning.

Behold him not with this dull body's eyes :
But spirit-sight can take him by surprise,
But spirit-ears can catch the resolute
Essential music of his distant flute.

The new-moon night, veiled in half-lights and dim,
Defines the veiled inscrutable soul of him.
He meets us every moment and departs,
His absence is a presence in our hearts.
Bow down, O Traveller ! and humbly press
Your head upon his grave in gratefulness.

Death is a grey stone-tablet to his name
Inscribed in letters of ascending flame
Hid by the dust of time and the small night
Of our forgetfulness, away from sight ;

Wayfarer ! weep a while, and with your tears
Wash out this dusty insult of the years,
Rescue the lost inscription, read and see
In him a symbol of true immortality !

Time's rugged waves cannot efface or dim
The everlasting memory of him,
O Traveller ! during his life's little day
We knew him vaguely. Now he cometh nearer
Ever since Death hath taken him away ;
In life we were divided,—Death has made him dearer.

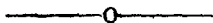
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When autumn-winds blow loud
Under the richly-floated autumn cloud,
Remember him, remember him who blew
Upon his boatman's solitary pipe :
When, monsoon-lashed, the flood came rushing through
Like to a heady horse, dark stripe on stripe.
Remember that he rode upon its back,—
His laughter free and revolution-ripe,—
Slashing and striking through the stormy black !

he

Where has fled, O where ? Nobody knows :
Only the evening star with tongue a-glow
And the pale crescent, cradled in repose,
Whisper : "We know.
We know where he has gone, scorner of death !
Lo, he has passed into the country's breath . . ."

The hills resound and tempests hurl a gaudy
Challenge of lightning, to the dumb dark air :
He has become a fire in everybody,
Prophet of hope housed in each man's despair !!



RETURN

IN the funeral dark we stand and burn
Your body on the pyre stretched at ease,
Its ashes greyly scatter on the breeze,
The earth itself become your funeral-urn !

You shall return again, you shall return
After what long unkindled centuries
Returning you will be the wine that warms
A million beings and a million forms !

Are you aware, O Comrade !
That you who, in this hour, lie cold and dumb
Will rise again assuming myriad bodies
Of grand generations yet to come !

That you will come again in sudden power
In some far twilight hour,
Embodiment of imperishable breath
Crossing the granite frontier-gates of Death
O for that selfsame moment thrilled with fate
In fiery ecstasy, in breathless awe we wait !

The past has played its many-coloured game,
Tomorrow will a-sudden stand and claim
You, which poor Today hath miserably missed !
You are Tomorrow's for you now exist
And loom, a future glow forever cast
Upon the future by the red historic past !

Alas ! Today ! you have retained but dross
The gold has vanished from your idle grip :
You have become the poorer for this loss
Your thirst remains unquenched upon your lip !

You could not feel him, grasp him, comprehend
His magnitude, his majesty, his might !
O hide your face in shame, Today ! and bend
Your head and hide it in a veil of night
The sudden vanishing of his proud face
Has filled your own forever with disgrace !

Comrade ! forget the past with all its sores,
The future with new hope and joy is yours !
Forget the foolish herd of Today
Nourished on Death, fond prophets of decay !
Your dying is a debt by them incurred
Which but in wretchedness they shall repay.

O Singular attainment of our land !
Forgive this blind and unenlightened herd
Who could not fathom you, nor understand !

O fire-red horse of revolution ! run
Athwart the centuries from sun to rising sun !

When in some soft toil-weary twilight
Night and day will meet in a tryst,
After long aeons you will return
In cycles of life, ever fresh as lush-green corn,
Tearing the tricky mournful nets
Of Time which very soon forgets.

When you return, these eyes for you a-thirst
Will be the very first
To recognise you and spot
Your towering head with red vermilion dot !

Since I, too, shall return through future poets,
Poets to sing of you come back through centuries :
Yea, through some future poet I will sing
Of life unfettered and man's deathless spring !
I, too, shall come again, my spirit crowned
With liberation through your dying won !
Out of the ashes of the burning ground
I will arise, like to the morning sun,
Lighting your sky with splendour and with song
To celebrate your glory that is never done !

I, too, shall heed not the gloomy gate of Death
And on the mount of my grave revive ;
In numerous notes the song of your life I'll sing
One with a thousand poets I shall ever live
To read to the world the hymns your death did bring
Yea, I'll read them aloud, aloud in rever'd breath.

Yea, I will greet you,
When you return through twenty million soldiers
Sounding their bugles, twenty million bugles,
Flaunting their banners, twenty million banners,
Friend, I will meet you
And rapturously deck
With my first garland your young heroic neck.
For the sacred soliloquy of your life
Through its brief and baleful breath
Bespeaks of an immortal voice
Made resonant by your death.

II

THE past and future in your equity
When judged by you became
Despised, disrupted ; the past's all barren ;
And mighty future won your name,
For death shall sing your songs unsung
In a voice of fervid futurity.

We mourn not for you, for well we know
It were not meet to mourn your death
The twelve great springs are immolated though
Messengers come from Flora's clime to bid
Them enter into the realm of eternal spring
Where vernal flowers will great suavity bring.

You know, Comrade !
When waves and waves from the boundless deep of
time
Will disappear till nought is left behind
There enisled, you then in a new life's prime
Shall on thousand souls pour a spirit red
Elixir-bred !

You shall deeply despise
The doom of death an odium,
And remounting, like a full-bloomed flower
In our country's vast heart shall blossom
In the bedewed, propitious twilit hour
In wondrous surprise
That future I nurse as tho' in a trance
And worship it with my folded hands.

O immortal futurity !

All that in past's grave buried are
And in Today's heart no dwelling get,
In tomorrow's sky shall resuscitate
And course through our country's myriad minds
In streams of scintillant light.

Your tale shall hold the reins of history,—
Time's winged galloping steed,
Flying in the sky of eternity
Shall conquer death, its proper meed !

The beauteous dawn when you shall return !
Ah, that dawn ! How luscious and brave !
Mid millions of men I'll spot you out
While countless eyes will rest on you,
With drums a-beating and conches a-blow,
And cannons spouting up their roseate floods
Shall wreath with their starlets the glory won !

Whenever the starless cinnabar sky
Will bring the darkening days of dearth
And tyranny's breath will poison the earth,
Agonised men will helplessly cry.

O Bird of fire !

Athwart the sombrous vales of that darksome night
Anon, you'll come when our times are hard,
You must be a torch in our darkened sky
To stir us into a great upheaval
What with the deluge of all-blinding light
Your wing-clappings may make !

The entails of demon by your beak
Shall be tattered and torn,
And you will sow the seeds
Of accord and peace
Nurtured in unity and fire of revolution !

You will erase the pictures of death,
That are black as blackness could be,
And by the sheen of your feathers draw
Freedom's dawn on the canvas vast
Of darksome Eternity !

Like the spying evening hours that spot
The hasting twilight copper-grey,
We shall summon you everyday
And deck with flowers your homing chariot.

The longitudes of oblivion we shall cross
And call you from the sunset's purple land,
Under the republic of nocturnal stars
Inviolable and deathless you'll forever stand.

Whenever starvation, tyranny and want
Clench the earth in an infernal vice,
Mothers' breasts run thin and dry
The air gets befouled with their children's cry
And mothers their tears instead on them pour
On their dying children's lips gone dry

O speed of [~]Lighting !
Will you afar then stay ?
Who in the secret den of death can keep you, say ?
Will you yet sleep with your wings inclosed

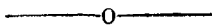
Or spread them anon to drop down again
To our gruesome land immersed in decay ?

Through sundry cycles of life and death
You will hold the earth in close embrace :
Coming with storms you will still the stress
Of earth with raindrops, your tears.

Revolution itself is what you are
Its spirit, progress, present, future all
In one, for you are renovated ever
To drive your country's darkness away
And sanctifying it from decay
You unwind the rainbow's charms withal.

Your indomitable spirit shall always stand
A sentinel on the mighty mount of history !
The banner hoisted shall forever flaunt
Your emblems of eternal victory !

Revolution's Phoenix—you shall ever come
And make a stalwart stand, mid your country's storm ;
Rip up the old order like a tornado :
And forge in the new in a wondrous form.



ABHIJAN

(1936-1939)

NOCTURNE

(1937-1947)

THE DYING WHO NEVER DIE !

HUNGER burns like a bloody heat.
Give me a share of food to eat.
Like a beggar I pray from morn to eve
For my share which I have a right to receive.

Do you forget, do you forget
That rice comes out of our toil and sweat ?
What ! is your heart more hard than stone
That it does not melt when it hears our groan ?

This world is full of plenty and wealth
Stocked and stored and gotten by stealth.
The rich man walks with his head held high
And passes us by, just passes us by—
Us the dying who never die.

Does he forget, does he forget
We water his rice-fields with our sweat ?
Without respite we toil and toil.
We turn and sow and till the soil.
Till our blood runs dry and our weak bones crack
And day-light grows to a glare of black.

Our wants and the wants of our starving sons
Are the handiwork of the wealthy ones.
Whose craft and cunning, whose greed and grab
Have made each of us a tomb-stone slab.

Their haughty human foot is pressed
Upon our helpless human breast.

The few on the many have set a ban
And now man feeds upon the flesh of man.
The wide green earth and the naked mud
Are stricken with death and stained with our blood !

I the poet of labour stand
With pen for weapon held in the hand—
I stand and dream of the day to come
When man shall rise out of martyrdom,
Rise in the dawn of freedom when
A new red sun and my poet's pen
Shall sign the charter of Man for Men.*

* Translated by Harindranath Chattopadhyay.

WHEN HUNGER BURNS

WELL-FED Master ! we are starving ! give us bread !
In your hands you hold our life—the life of the living
dead !

Our children on the foot-paths lie, lifeless as any log,
They are not destined even to eat the leavings of your
dog ! !

We are starvation-stricken men whose blood is a ruddy
fog,—

O how we wish in our hearts of heart that we were
your dog instead !!

On a cushion of yielding rubber your dog lies safe
and warm,

Its fur soft-white as the suds of soap, lends lustre to
its form !

Unlike its own our body is coarse with dust and dirt
and toil,

Coarse and hard and chapped and scarred—it would
make your dog re-coil—

All rough and rude and ridiculous for want of a drop
of oil

Weary and worn and tattered and torn like the sail
of a boat in a storm !

The milk is dry in the women's breasts which sag and
droop so sad,

And their children wildly gnaw at clay—starvation
has made them mad !

At times they tug at those very breasts which lack of
food has dried,

Tug and tear at them in the hope of reaching at milk
inside

They are scorched with hunger, these helpless ones
yea ! scorched with hunger, and drouth
For their mothers' breasts are only as bags of dry,
dead skin in their mouth

They haven't even the strength to cry,
By slow degrees they suffer and die,
If only they'd perish at once, perchance it would make
their mothers glad !!

Who strives to save us in our struggle, who heeds our
strangled moan ?

Bent by your burden our backs have become as frozen
and frigid as stone

Subservient to your grim commands our brows keep
trickling sweat,

Our mouths are dumb for they dare not speak ;—with
foam of fatigue they are wet

Our growth is checked and our breath is choked, until
we nearly forget

That we were born of human mothers, builded of
blood and bone.

Our grown-up daughters hide themselves, because
their bodies are bare,

Between themselves they haven't even a piece of cloth
to share !

They shriek to heaven for mercy, they cry to God in
pain,

“O save us from this living hell !” —they shriek and
cry in vain !

Since they were born in a living hell, and there they
must remain.
While heaven is but a blank of blue and God mere
rainbow-air !

Yea ! God and heaven, Master ! are golden visions
which
Exist in the imaginations of the idle rich !
For us who starve for months and months, whose
empty stomachs seem
To pay an endless ransom to Death who reigns
supreme,
They can, at best be pretty words far-echoed in a
dream,
--Mere hollow names to those in whom hunger has
reached its pitch ! !*

* Translated by Harindranath Chattopadhyay.

NOCTURNE

DARK and primal : deep and resonant—O
Thou art like night
Mystery-furl'd in the sopor of thy soul,
Eloquent in thy murky silence though
Dark-blue, blue-dark, deep-dark Beauty's roll
In thy rhythm electron-like vibrate
'Pon the night-drenched sky and in me
In strains of delight.

Be thou for ever like night unto me
Cloak me by thy blanket of darkness dense
In the depth of the morphean charm of thine,
Ever afraid of the espial of world I pine
At the sight of light and in swart suspense
Shelter seek in thee like a frightened child.
O ! buoy me under thy petaline pinions mild
And shield by thy unkempt hair in thee !

A-thirst I stand for thy mighty darkness—
Darkness void of colour and sound,
My heart beats fast in fear and I quiver
Like a leaf leaden astray in storm,
I feel like plunging in thy form
From deep to deeper in thee for ever
Forgetting myself silent and spell-bound
I find me lost in the mighty Subconscious.

O let the soothing gloom whose spring
Gushes from the depth of thy being

Settle slowly o'er my breast,
And keep me by thy hair conceal'd,
In the dew-drop silence of thy soul
The azonic azure of thy lake of love—
Love that knows not colour, fragrance, sound
O keep me in that Delight's deluge drowned.

Where light to shade is wed
In the midnight of thy ample love
There unconscious on thy wings let me lie
In resonant dark, Subconscious-led,
Void of sound or Sound within the Sound
Symphony of Sombre within the Sombre
Or a night within the Night all around
Let in countless epicycles quiver.

Afraid of seeing or being seen
With uncanny fear I tremble within,
Mystic and occult, gelid fear,
Engross me by thy warmth O marrow !
And enisling me in thy blue-dark Sea
The ark of hope for shelter steer.
Demented to thee I tightly cling
In thy flaxen hair—O bury me !

Deep I dive into thy darkness divine
Ample and unknown. Methinks it's beyond my ken,
Enfolded in a blind and deafening ecstasy
I hear and hear not the throbs of thine in me.
I feel and feel not the rapturous perfume
Of thy floating flaxen unkempt hair.

Breathe into me thy sweet meaning—the meaning of
thy love
(Or meaning colour—it has none save infinitude)
Engulf me by thy pattern own—the pattern of opiate
dark,
Lead thou me on to the landscape where Unknown
is the spouse of Known.

STORM

BEHOLD O dear it's up—the swishing storm
 Let's say—"Hail to thee",
Mounts and woods, and waves before it bend
 All in respectful glee.
It's body and soul in light and shade are bathed
 On this crowning day,
It's crowned itself and in the feel of earth
 Has roused a goose-flesh gay.

Receive it with thy welcome, O fear-stricken
 With clos'd doors say not nay,
Hither O dear it's come—the swirling storm
 "Hail to thee"—let us say.

My love's courier, it's brought to thee
 The message of life in Death,
Behold its ambient flash in the sky
 In the whirlwind its signet-ring.
Come storm, be one with the gale in me
 The surge of surviving sea,
Sing her my paeon of love that conquers death
 To the tune of life's lute-string.

THE AEROPLANE

CONDUCT your vessel, boatman of the skies
Through these soft, fleecy clouds whose varied shapes
Resemble tigers, elephants or wolves,
Or reptiles unknown and strange—of Afric pools :
Some float like pink deer with extended horns
While gossamer strands of moonlight lie outstretched
Upon the wires of telegraphs below
Like pieces of the severed strings of kites.

Let the sweet air of India strike the wings
Of that great bird which serves you as a boat.
Observe the narrow streaks the rivers make
While glistening garments of the peasant maids
Shine out like specks of mica in the sun
On winter afternoons, and there beyond
Lie Chitrotpala's woods of cane like teeth of dragons
dead.

Let the name of India in the ethereal blue
Appear in sky-writing, O Charioteer of the skies.

TO THE ONE I REMEMBER

IN Autumn haze a lone Dak Bungalow.
There blossoms of a Neem tree scent the air,
And all around are peaceful fields of grain
Vast-acred onion and mustard crops.
As though great flocks of parrots and canaries
Had settled on the countryside around
To bring alive this pattern of bright hues.

A musical instrument from the hamlet there
Sounds its sweet poignant notes across the fields :
Perhaps a wedding soon is to take place
In that quaint village over by the wood.

And all at once you came into my mind
There as the moonlight bathed the forest glades
And fireflies emerged in their great hosts
To lend romantic lustre to the scene.

A thousand Mays were captured in your eyes
Your lips, too, held the smiles of countless moons,
And yet I felt I had savoured all
An empty husk remaining now with me,
Like Southern winds deprived of moisture all
By greedy gulps of parching desert tracts
Striving in vain to quench a deathless thirst.

And then I felt that all was just false and vain,
That I am destined all my future days
To harbour unfulfilment in my heart,
And thus did I interpret your dear love.

PANDULIPI

(1937—1947)

AVIGNYAN

(1947—1949)

SHAHJAHAN

A dying Emperor
Imprisoned in his marble palace.
Misty eyes gazing at his consort's tomb,
As the lamp of life splutters in limbs palsied.
Massing clouds, inky black,
Hide the moon and scowl over a dream in marble.

'Open the casement, Jahannara,'
The Emperor cried.
'Let me see !
'On just a night like this
'She left
'The heavens wept, and winds shrieked
'As I kissed her closing eyes.
'My royal coffers, I emptied all,
'And locked my love in marble,
'Secure from the stealing hand of Fate ..

'Curse me :
'At the crossroads of life and death,
'Now I hear her moan—
'An Emperor makes his Queen immortal,
But Shahjahan's woman lies in dust, forgotten."

'A proud Emperor, I heaped my gold
'To proclaim to the world an Imperial Grief :
'In the marble bauble I built for her,
'Me, I wanted to immortalise.

'Look, Jahannara, years hence . . .
'Fate is on the march !
'Walls crumble, the stones scattered,
'The bones of an Emperor lie in marble dust,
'Beside the skeleton of his beloved Queen.

'But, Oh God !
'May the Taj for ever survive.
'Shahjahan's frozen tears,
'A lover's wail for his lost beloved,
'An undying Mumtaz in a marble dream ..

THE DEAD WHARF

A lamp in stone, on a pedestal of rocks,
Lighthouse of a lost century-
Bleak granite, like the camel's hump,
Stretching to the distant sky,
And a rusty anchor, fathoms deep,
Buried at its feet in a dream endless.

These golden sands,
Now parcelled into serried fields of corn,
Were once the playground of waves.
Dazzling like the heron's wings,
A thousand sails flitted across its vast expanse.
Lofty masts,
Peeping over the veil of ages.
Crowd around the fringing cactus.

An endless stream of vessels,
Kissed the emerald shores of Java, Sumatra, Borneo,
And with cloves and cinnamon laden,
Came across this iron viaduct,
Along these railway tracks.

The abandoned landings of an extinct port,
Echo the ankle bells of hurrying feet.
A fair face veiled,
In a Sari, leafy plantain-green,
The offering of rice upon the sacred plate,
Forgotten, and uncared.
Who now dreads a sister's tongue,
Wrapped in thoughts of love to come ?

Footfalls

The Sadhava bride,
Starts from her waking dream.

Oh, just a lonely kite hunting worms
On the shores of the limpid blue.
Beyond distant hills, the cartwheels creak
And creep along a saffron path.

In lonely paddy fields
Sits a half-naked famished tiller,
Wearing a palm-leaf crown.
Fish-laden wagons rumble past,
Flood-flowers startled in their mossy beds,
Bits of shadow against Chilika's blue,
A deserted wharf in sleep eternal.

A TEMPLE IN RUINS

LOOK at the shattered temple portals
Amidst the grave-yards of Konarak.
Sulphury butterflies flaming around bush flowers,
Where the Asvatha spreads its trembling shade,
And a broken Vishnu lies in dust,
A vision reared its lofty head,
An impersonal dream in stone.
Centaur maids and dancing beauties,
Jostled with alluring Jaksha women.

This Parvati in granite lived and loved :
These Naga beauties, emerald elfin girls,
Wept and smiled behind village veils.
Stony steps of shaded pools,
Where the water pitchers they rested,
Or the lonely banks of a river,
Could unfold a thousand tales, long forgotten.

To the shores of Chandrabhaga,
A sculptor came one day,
Dreaming of a cloud-kissed temple.
As his chisel fondled the sleeping rocks,
Centaur maidens woke and smiled ;
Naiads trooped in dancing chorus,
And the heavy breasts of Urvasi heaved.

Like a tawny calf,
Leaping out of fold,
The first rays of the sun

Rend the blue curtain of waves
And hasten to kiss the magnet diadem.

The sand deer and the black antelope
Keep gazing at nothing, in a vacant stare ;
And my restless eyes
Search for them who lived one day and loved.
Where unseen flowers bloomed,
And verdure swayed,
The seasons flitting across a smiling land,
They lived like us, in joy and pain,
In an age buried beneath a hundred years.

TO CHANDRAVATI

UNDER a canopy of vast translucent blue,
Pulsing in passion,
A heart bared and uninhibited.

The same old, old sky today,
Criss-crossed by window bars,
The pale glow of a dying sun
Tattooing the trembling leaves.
An unfathomed blue,
Caught between courtyard walls.

What little you gave,
I treasure.
What I received not
Is for another's dreams.
I love you
And that's all that matters ;
The grand finale to a life's query.

A bleak moon
Keeping a lonely look-out,
Like a turban bleached and starched.
Who said,—
Such resin-gold moonlit nights
Were only meant for the two of us ?

Over the bitumened streets of sleeping China-town.
A hearse groans on its way.

A stone's throw,
At the kerb,
A soldier sits in an empty eating-house
And sips a lukewarm tea.
Bleared eyes,
Peeping o'er the rim of a yellow cup,
Gazing at his own visage
In the straw-coloured brew.

Stragglng bustee lights
Have quietly disappeared.

A homing pigeon returns to her roost :
Where are you,
O where ?
Braving the boundless blue,
Or under the shelter of a cage.
Repaired ?

AN INVOCATION

THE unleashed winds fly tearing mad,
Clouds of Indra roar :
Look !, musing bard,
Thy ivory tower of dreams comes crashing down.

Locust hoards
Have invaded the flower beds,
Drumming death in their wings.
A thundering salty sea
Eats into the vitals of smooth coral gates,
And overruns the lotus-eater's land.
The garden of poems is choked.
Tales of mighty Egypt
Buried under a limitless swamp of aniline.

The purple hues of Sravasti,
Dravid's azure haze,
No longer weave a silken tapestry in the skies ;
All is gone
The dreamhouse domes shattered by earthquake,
Reptiles creep in the debris heap.

The light is out, darkness reigns :
The disillusioned soul of a weary century
Hovers over a prowling taxi cab,
A sleepless watchman on his lonely rounds,
A harlot waking from her barren dreams :
Way out ?
Or, is there any, at all ?
The factory towers of steel belch in reply.

Like a consumptive, the wind coughs.
The feeble voice of a million throats,—
'Awake, the night is gone.'
The Avenger's clarion blast . . .
A mute century has issued summons.

The faint whisperings of a pale suburban dawn,—
'Escapist ! halt. . .
'Forget thy clipped wings, rise mute Mainak.
'Brihannala ! dream no more,
'To hell with the eunuch's castanets.

'Gone are the inglorious years of hiding.
'Raise aloft the blazoned pennon,
'Awake to the music of clattering steel,
'The smell of burning coal,
'Wafted over the village brook
And serrated fields of paddy.
'A meadow-path, saffron-powdered,
'Lost between the steel-town gates.

From loins of the sun,
A new life is born :
Tears, sweat, and blood,
A plaintive sigh of man and maid.

Lift thy voice mighty bard,
Skies echoing over an once-great race,
A cluster of Karabi blooms like new-pricked blood,
Smiling in the dawn of darkened nights.

CHANDRABHANU'S LETTER

THIS chandelier of stars,
Was it lit for us,
Labanyavati,
When my watch dials
Eighteen minutes, midnight past ?

Street beggars quarrel,
A tin moon is covered with clouds,
The earth below is mist :
Like a Kadamba flower
The moon turns red.
A star-lit sky
Muffles the earth
Like the piebald skin of a stag.

Palashes Palashes. . . .
Roads and lanes
Look like a rooster's plume ;
The streets carpeted
With Palasha-wool.

What's the latest hit
In the world of films ?
Love-making of a prince, perhaps !
Crystal clouds
Glint like snow-flakes ;
A cool breeze
Lulls the footpath beggars ;
A millennial famine is ushered in.

Asphalted streets,
Littered with hungry men and women :
My mind roves
From this world to you,
Returns to reality grim,
And keeps rebounding in the vault of a vacant sky.

Dark tattered clouds
Vomit frothy gall :
A pitchy dark, black-opium :
A siren shrieks—
Pause,
Then a shriek again :
A metropolis slumbers
Have you forgotten too
Labanyavati ?

Flanks of a distant hill
Tremble :
With tears
Bathing your Sambhu breasts
Chandrabhanu ends his missive.

THE KHAKIS

THE sickle of a soapy moon
Wax-polished against a mahogany sky.
A distant factory chimney
Coughs from dawn to dusk.
The early morning Mail
Clangs across the iron bridge,
Spanning a paddy-fringed nameless river.

The usual hour,
Poets say,—
For parted Chakravak love birds
To begin their nightly wail

On a sudden,
I meet Protima Naik.

A care-worn pimply face,
Sunken cheeks,
The weary look of defeat in every limb,
She clings hard to a drab leather case.
The mildew of years have grown
Upon what had one day
Been an armful of cherry blossoms.
A flame, hooded in Khaki.

Against a skyline of ultramarine,
Mingling with the brown of dusty fields,
Face to face
We stood,

At the conflux of a dream,
And a cruel Now.
Behind us
Lay the carcase of a couple of years.

“Doing well ?”
I asked in a voice not my own.
Silent, she stood
And smiled,
A khaki smile !

Just a couple of years ?
No.
Aeons :
Forlorn, futile, ferocious hours,
Blasted days of a warring world.

A student
Pouring over his tomes,
A lantern flickering
In the mortuary, close by.

An engagement perforce broken,
Sudden death of an ailing father,
Legacy of a load of debts,
And then,—
A famine, man-made
Sealed up the last hopes of an M.A. in Philosophy.
Then,
Nineteen Forty-three arrived
To lap up whatever was still left.

Nights of gnawing hunger,
Days of knocking,

Shelter of the Civil Supplies, at last.
Pay ?
Not so bad :
And that's all that need be said.

Was she smiling ?
In the curve of her chafed lips
Did the memory of a dream still survive ?
A paper flower :
A sad grimace in Khakis :
Or, stars winking behind her eyes ?

Oh, let Protima smile
An aimless khaki grin

EVENING IN U.P.

A cool evening
Upon a secluded hamlet
Softly breathes,
As the coy Sirish
Perfumes the waters of Ganga.

From my hurtling airplane,
I look below :
How swift the shadows spread
Across the barley fields.

Lower,
My eyes meet the muddy banks of Ganga,
Sprouting with the green of a new life,—
A Manikarnika in smiles.

Along the blue highway of ether,
A hazy trail of speed
Leaves the winds flustered
In the dusk of a paling Ishan.

Browning wheat
Fringe the grey waters.
A lovely farmer girl,
Wheat-coloured,
Winds her way back :
Milk and cochineal
Flood the evening Ganga,
As a Brahmany kite hurries home
High above acres of barley and rye.

Lonely village walks
Along lavender rows.
A tiny bird
Upon a telegraph post,
Wagging its tail unconcerned :
The wires hum—
A message in the twinkle of an eye :
And,
Of what import ?

The distant sky
Washed in milk and purple,
Fades beyond Arcturus.
In waters lotus-bedecked,
A village Uloopi
Unrobes for evening bath.
Love at first sight !

Ah : U.P. !

BARRICADE THE BREAK OF DAY

THE night ends ;
A night of fragrant flowers :
But ere the sun draws his bow,
We will bar him love,
And blow out the lamp of day.

The light of dawn
Dimmed behind the clouds of hair,
A day shut-out,
A fragrant night, detained,
For you and me.

In the dark of unbraided coils,
Entangled,
I lose my way :
Light knocks to return baffled
From the portals of a dusky land.

On the twin hills of your rounded breasts,
Entrenched, I shall lie :
Carnation lips riddled with bite,
We shall sip the honeyed dew.

Our mingling breaths would raise a storm,
And rear an army of clouds !
From behind the walls of your heaving breasts--
We shall fight the intruding sun.
Sweat beads from tired limbs
Blending with musk and lotus dust,

A torrent of unloosed hair
Showering petals of rose :

A wind-tossed purple night.
Your onyx eyes,
An unplumbed horizon,
A nocturne of love . . .

Upon my brow
The mark of your sweat,
Dew-drops of a night of love,
And a mere man turned immortal.
Dawn may come and call in vain,
The day shall never break.

The sweet jingle of your bangles,---
The Jhilly calling,—
A midnight of unfastened hair,
Bar the morning's inroad :
You and I
Shall hold the night prisoner,
And barricade the break of day.

MARGOSA IN BLOOM

THE Neem has flowered.
Honey-greedy,
The bees go mad.

Behind the lattice of Keya shrubs,
Along the canals stretched,
A pair of eyes :
Impatient for a country lass
To come for her daily bathe.

The wine of idling,
A banquet of green,
Gurgling of a nameless brook,
The welcome of Moong and turmeric,
Russet bistre of a new-furrowed land,
And the odour of dank earth,
Call us to a dream-repast.

This is best :
A lonely Dak Bungalow,
Biscuit-coloured ;
A giant Margosa in flowers,
An awning of lucent blue,
And a crowd of jostling bees.
Who cares for hearth or home ?
This is best :

Upon the chipped steps of a lonely rest-house,
We meet :

For the first time,
I know you today
Often, though, we've met before,
Did we really meet ere now ?

The Bul-Bul,
Famed amidst Iran's roses ;
But in the sands of Sahara
Could it recall its name ?

OBLIVION

DAWN !

Sleek, dark, silken, snaky coils
Descend in a black deluge ;
Velvet-glossy, knotless, looping curls,
Unfurled pennon of a death
Unabashed,
Shimmering hair that underwrites the night.

A flood
Of curling, fragrant, sifted dusk :
Cobwebs of ebony black,
A silhouette world, shivered in joy.
A dark trellis :
Curtain over a night's pantomime.

Hastina's gilded cupola
And amethyst turrets,
In delicious oblivion swept away.
The death-god laughs
To destroy and create anew.

Behold ! the night is dead.
A silken, smothering dark
Of unbraided curls,
Come tumbling down in a snaky torrent.

GEOMETRIC

(To Bhudevi)

PARALLEL lines of stately palm,
Green-turbaned,
Stand guard over the canal waters.
Receding fields
Of multi-coloured squares,
Light yellow, burnished gold and vivid green,
Are lost in a purple sky-line.

Over a triangle of swaying trec-tops
Floats the pennon of scudding clouds.
An awning of leafy green
Spread for the two of us.

Up swift-flowing Teesta
The sailor rowed ;
Over the cloud-dark Meghna
He sailed.
Upon the limpid Ganga
His bark went skimming,
But where was the land of his dreams ?

The wind had risen
Over the dark water of Krishna,
A mad swirl held the bark :
And a diamond-golden mermaid
Crossed the sailor's path

Whatever had been
Uptil now,
Crashed
And came to less than nought.
The unsung melody of a mermaid's glance
Woke him to an unknown realm.

The coral maid's urgent eyes,
Swirling Krishna's waves,
A crazy sailor looking for a dream,
A swan drifting in the blue,—
The overture to a life unknown ?

ON FLOWS THE KRISHNA

ON flows the Krishna ;
Bhudevi looks on,
Her eyes misty with
Asharha clouds.
The wizard's touch
Transmutes the tears of a Jaksha bride
To a symphony of love.

For ever a sojourner,
No Ujjain for me :
The greeny fringe of Sipra,
I remember no more ;
But the inroad of clouds
Swells my heart,
And a burthen repeats itself,
Ah ! I'm in disguise.

My Sami-bough !
A stranger
I've hidden in thee my arms,
My fiery quivers ;
A blazing crest, concealed
Behind an intriguing misty haze.
Faith lost,
From the chosen path deviated,
In a death-stupor under your lulling shade . . .

My era of hiding ends.
Love's intoxication,

The first breath of a cold earth
Dispels.

Let's go ;
Return.
Leaving Ujjain, past the flowing Sipra
The steel-town calls,
My sinews throb to the summons of day.
An iron age
Rich in sweat and blood and tears,
Beckons.

Leave the flowing Krishna behind,
The blue haze of Sal, forget ;
The checker-board of Palasha,
Let it be :
The drama of a sun-set, unheeded.

Mysterious Asharha won't hold us back ;
Over the dusty borders
Of a hard and real world,
Our steps, we shall turn.

Over steep inclines,
Down long descents,
Ploughing through ebb and swell,
Hasten along narrow winding trails
Into a brick and mortared stony world.

Cast for a twentieth century Act,
We hie,
I lead,
You follow me.

Let us go back.
The encampment of Asharha, left behind.
Follow me, Padma,
Come, let's depart.

A nest abandoned,
The blue bird and his mate
Rise in flight over the barren dunes

UNTIMELY RAINS

THE dusky invasion of untimely clouds
Touched my heart with swan-down.
Yellow fields wave where the village ends,
But the flute player where's he ?
Scowling darkness fills the sky,
A gleam of gold in fields nearby :
Ripened corn, or the clouds' lightning curls ?
The harvest hasn't been gathered yet.

A deserter from the cities,
A run-away from the brick and concrete kingdom,
Flying from a cement-plastered world,
I come to taste the sap of naked earth :
I come, I, Sochi Raut Roy

Raindrops crowd the telegraph wires,
In the fishermen's colony, the walls have just collapsed,
A carpet of sapphire unrolled
Beneath the mango trees in a nearby orchard,
And, on a sudden,
I start chasing dreams ..

Cuttack ages ago
A narrow lane near the old collectorate,
An ancient dwelling caved in walls,
Mossy sodden floors
Cramped with a thousand things.
Decorations, mahagony, glass-set arches
And the light footfalls of a timid fairy,
Calling. Calling.....

A house of a noble blood
Dusty graves

In the falling dusk
The iron horse clatters on.
Roscid fields,
The odour of dank straw
And sodden earth,
The brick-red flame of a smoky lantern
Under the thatched roof
Of a pathetic village railway station.
Behind the clouds
Between the trees,
The antics of an impish moon ;
And an unruly East wind
Bent on horse-play.
Down the village path I meet
Vinodini Sahu,
Last year she was just a kid this high :
"Reading Sahitya Sopan" she smiled at me.
The simple lines of her writing book,
Written by a tender hand,
Called the clouds and set up an untimely rain !

Days and yet more days
Not a bad holiday, after all.
The dull red of the village roads
Change to ochre-black.
A steel-town fades away
Behind a pall of smoke

A CROSSING-OVER

NOT a mere flight, this :
But a crossing-over,
On a moon-bedazzled night,
In a blue-gold sky.
Onward !
Ship of the air.

Come, sit by me,
And speak, my companion of the skies.
No lover of mine,
A bride of none,
Just a mate in the crossing-over.

Play at love,
I seek not :
Nor aspire for thy heart ;
Only sit by me, if you will

A steaming cup of tea
In this freezing cold,
The dazzle of your smile,
A snow-white hand,
Pearly procelain of your nails,
Soft velvet eyes,
The fragrance of your tousled hair ;--
And,
That's all I ask.

Beneath us,
A glamorous night

Washed in blue and gold.
A moon-flood-lit highway
Glitters like polished steel.

Before us
Stretched—
An unplumbed silence :
And a storm of unspoken words
In our wake . . .

The speedbird flies.
A wild buck looks up, startled,
To stand guard over his feeding doe.
The milk of unripe corn
Oozing at every bite
As she tugs at the lush green blades.

A second cup of tea
In this biting cold,
And a fresh cigarette

Look :
Spires, meadows, turrets,
And the lone campanili
Of another city locked in sleep.

Won't you speak ?
The sky is ablaze,
Stars are out on their lonely promenade,
A distant lighthouse
Mournfully blinks,
And the Mrigasira's hours are over.

To the east,
And farther east . . .
Forests of Bhurja,
And a far away gleaming blue.
A little south,
Burma
Malaya
Acres of lofty sal,
Rubber plantations,
Unmapped savannas,
Bangkok . . .
A distant blue of the Pacific.
Then,
High over Hong Kong,
Straight to the gates of Sanghai.

A China transfigured,
Vast, glorious,
Symbol of a new tomorrow. . . .

We're a shooting star,
From earth catapulted.
Faster, and yet faster,
Hurtling through the ether waves,
Rending the arrayed clouds . . .
The earth swims in a daze,
The sky is shivered,
A ring-dance of swirling atoms . . .

Faster,
And faster still.
Who knows whither ?

Fire and sky,
Winds, and the Deep,
Mercy

Faster,
And yet faster,
Speeds the chariot,
The chase must never cease :
To a new horizon,
A bigger life,
A dream unravelled.

RELEASE

A blind lane
Gropes for the highway.
Scummy pools,
Wisting for unfathomed seas.

Alleys,
Meaningless lines upon a tiny palm :
Tin sheds,
Tiled huts,
Row upon row of low roof-tops
Stumbling over tortuous lanes,
Hooked talons of an ogre.
A hurtling falcon,
Rends the air
Like a shrill whistle-blast,
As it darts across a cloudless vault.

A narrow stream is lost in a morass,
The blind lane to a death-trap leads :

A crowd :
So many of them have come,
Gone back,
And returned again :
A rigmarole of footsteps :
But, a way out ?
Never :

A tinsel sun glares,
The rains are afraid to come,

Smoke, soot, and the smell of urine,
A stunted, famished love.

Did you know the rules of the game,
The codes of a Pagan Youth ?
Once out from the gaol of love,
It's not the fashion to recall the past,
To know a prison mate.
It takes but the twinkling of an eye
To wipe clean memory's slate,
And turn over a fresh new leaf.

Cruel ?

Oh, no.

A foregone Q.E.D.

A tiny drop of love

Couldn't last a moment

In the feverish game of fathoming each other's heart.

Could we ever be free ?

Really released

From the tyranny of a tired love :

Ah !

Love would be ours for ever and ever, then.

The blind alley

Would have discovered the highway,

A lost stream would reach the Deep.

A HOLIDAY

LET'S run away,
Get out of this prison of a cribbed life,
To a new land,
Where our hearts might blossom
Under a different sky.

What shall we do
With *this roadster* ?
Better abandon it here :
Barefoot,
Miles and miles we shall go,
Lost in a green wilderness.

Like village waifs,
Upto the knees in mud and dirt,
We'll chase *one another*,
The monsoon winds
Caressing our bodies bared;
And upon the sodden grass
We shall sit awhile,
Far away from a hectic world,
In the gathering evening shadows,
Under the silent smile of the gazing stars.

The evening shadows
Will creep around
To lap unrobed limbs,
We'll wear the velvet dark,

A mellowed cloud-cast night
Seeping through.
Come,
Let's steal to the tryst
With a loving dark.

Blades of green
Soaked in rain,
We'll pluck and hold in bite;
And like a buck and his mate
Tugging at juicy tops,
Taste the sap of a drenched earth.

A brace of birds, fled their cage,
We shall wander as we choose;
And wade through the auburn lights
To sup at a Chinese inn,
The red and blue and amber glow
Lighting up both for each.

Over lonely footpaths
And asphalt streets,
Aimless we shall stroll ;
Hours and hours,
Under dazzling lights,
And then drop in for a late-night show ?

PAST THIRTY

(To N.)

THE cloud-rich, amethyst sky
Of a July night,
An earthway steeped in bluish milk.
Shadows of geese on their wings,
Across a sea of grass,—
A squadron of flying fish;—
The tremor of their fins
Set the orbit of your life and mine
Vibrating.

Along the swan path,
Through the blue ether of a grey sky,
A burthen of speed runs :
And a lone Territorial,
I stand guard.
Is this my bivouac,
Under the milky way of a pair of humid eyes ?

We're not of this world :
Citizens of the sun,
Our lives are at tangent.
Sky and earth overstepped,
We meet at the temple-gates of life,
On the horizon's edge,
At Orion's doors.

A golden lion,
I awake :

As the hills echo, and woods reverberate,
In the dark,
Under the shelter of stars,
Across hill and dale and sodden grass,
Beyond the lightning's life
Of a July night.

Past thirty years
Of blind groping,
In daily round, circumscribed,
And to cinders burnt,
In the blaze of your
Twenty-four summers.
I lose my way :
In the mellowed dark of your rain-fragrant hair,
Grove,
And lose my way again.
Awakened,—
Flash from dream to dream,
From a home to the open heath.

A new flood
Invades my life :
A scented night of cloud-dark hair
With untended flowers,
Winking stars in the fields of heaven.

From a hearth,
To under the sky,
On a road that leads to the end of the world :
Across the threshold of thirty.
Have I turned a lone swan in flight,
From one dream to another,

Seeking the warmth of life,
Flying the cold of death,
From one mute beckoning
To a signal dream-wrought.

THE BALANCE SHEET

ANOTHER sun dies,
Light is failing,
Dirge of a glorious day.

Let's go
Across the notched coconut poles,
Over the grazings,
To the city's end.
Where acre on acre of fallow fields
Stretch beyond tiny plots of straggling paddy,
Some potato fields,
Lanes of bitters,
And crowded thickets round semmy pools.

A warrior
Stands at the city gates,
Statue of a fighter,
Killed in the world upheaval.
Grey patches
Look like rotting wounds upon his limbs,
Edges have been chipped away,
A bad mauling by cruel years.
A valorous horseman in his saddle,
A bold mastiff at his heels,
Gone to an inglorious sleep at a small town-end.

Lighter than glow-worms flitting,
'The winking fighters of the air
Play bo-peep with the clouds.

An awed world
Stands attention below.
A dead warrior,
A cold mastiff,
Balance Sheet of the Twentieth Century

Didn't you hear of the 'One World' plans,
Of Freedom and Human Rights
Didn't you know ?
A Brave New World's glorious promise,
Didn't it colour your dreams ?

All's well with the world, brother ;
Or, was it just a gamble,
With a thousand score of lives as pawn ?

Words fly, plans differ,
Discussions and meetings galore :
But you are in limbo, now.
Droning, man-made moths,
Gold-tipped wings glittering in the setting sun
Burrow behind the clouds
Seeking new worlds to destroy.

Your world and today will never meet.
Like drift-wood,
You and I move apart,
And yet farther apart.
Your dreams
Never saw the light of day.
For you,
The promise of a golden harvest
Turned to be a mocking chimera.

Like you,
Poets have sung of a glorious dawn,
Of a golden age to come.
What foolish babes to gaze in a mirror,
And think cherubs are smiling back :

You and we can perhaps never meet :
You are a handful of dust,
And we are determined to die.
You've lost in an Orpheus minute
A century's titan gains ;
We're to be killed by our own hounds,
With the click of an Artemis-switch,
Today, or may be any day
In an ionian fire . . .

A heavy bomber zooms
Over meadows starry with heliotrope ;
A reptile's beady eyes,
Glittering like blue-green diamonds.
Get mixed up with Bluebells

A ghostly moon
With faltering steps climbs the sky.
A flight of pigeons return to roost.
In the violet hour of dusk.
Those who came from a home
Have homes to go back.
And a world forlorn
Dreams under misty autumn skies.

KONARAK

THESE praise-encumbered stones,
A delicate work of art
For connoisseur eyes ;
Heaped-up bones, to me,
Of a thousand toilers.

The world gasps,—
How under a chisel's touch
The calyx of life unfolds,
And the rhythm of a wondrous form
Pulsates through the sleeping stones.

A fount of joy since the dawn of time,
A treasured work of art,
An epic in stones :
For the forgotten myriads,
An ageless cenotaph.

Those that worked the chisels
And plied the hammer to please a king,
Like beasts of burden,
Those that toiled
To raise this masterpiece, inch by inch ;
Sculptors, masons, countless craftsmen,
Do you know them now ?
Their tears and sweat swelled the brine ;
A small tribute
Of twelve hundred souls
For the glory of the jaded rich.

The ukase of Muse
Oblation of a thousand souls,
Scores of hamlets wiped away,
Cheap price for a carnal feast.
An etching in blood
Of Vishu Maharanas,
To entice the ennuye eyes ;
A voluptuous orgy
In the freizes of stones,
An undying testimony of a decadent art.

Strings of celestial beauties,
Glamour girls,
Unrobed and paused for dance ;
Lotus-buds, half-bloomed,
Rippling under tasselled corsets

But ask not for the nameless hundreds ;
In a life-long mute penance,
They died at their king's behest.
Unhonoured, unwept, unsung,
Master-toilers,
Forgotten twelve hundred,
Do you know them,
The nameless gods ?

The smiles and tears,
Love and pain of common man,
The quiet joy
And patient sorrow
Of uneventful humdrum lives ;
Their work and play
And harvest dance,

The tales of their weal and woe
Who shall record,
Or try to understand ?
Mere man,
A pariah
In the Durbar-Hall of a prurient Muse.

Let the world, hands cupped,
Drink at empyreal beauty's chute :
Penurious and unskilled,
I seek in vain
To give a name to the nameless souls
Hovering o'er their marble corpse—
Under the argus sky,
Against the backdrop of moon-dappled night.

Let the nude danseuse parade her charms,
The nymphs and mermaids
Inveigle the world,
Twelve hundred immortals
Bartered their souls
For a deathless memorial
Of an epicurean dream.

ALAKA SANYAL

WHEN first I saw you, Alaka Sanyal,
In the Videha palace,
The wondrous Falguna twilight
Lay upon the earth
Like the golden skin of a million stags.

Was it really you,
Or had it been a vision ?
I kept arguing with me,
And meanwhile you were lost.

Years rolled.
Perchance I glimpsed you, alone,
In the Baranabata-Hall.
Behind its gorgeous pillars,
Your ravished shadow
Faded, I know not where

The world I ranged for you ;
From the clutches of Gandharv Chitrarath,
Set you free ;
A pair of pulsing ivory orbs
Proclaimed my victory.

Then again,
You were lost to me

For ages and ages together,
An unceasing vigil I kept ;

Till perhaps,
In the cloisters of Nalanda
As class-mates
When we met again,
The cunning craft of your hair's toilet
Intrigued my eye.

You went your way,
I turned to mine :
And since then,
I have been seeking you
Across the lonely sands of time.

From the Kalinga capital
To cardamom isles,
The fragrance of your raven hair
Led me on
To the distant land of pomegranate blooms ;
Across barren heaths
And forests virgin,
Behind the glassy saw-edge curtain,
I seek my prisoner
To bring her freedom's gift.
The prison-gates I've opened wide,
But my bond-maid,
Where's she ?
The black rider upon his magic steed,
In mist dissolved.

But at last
Past the treacherous sands of ages,
I meet you, now.
The cinders of Noakhali
Had kept you hid from me

BALANCE

HOPES of revival gone,
In mad divining rapt,
Values upset,
Have I lost my balance ?
Home, or wilderness,
Who would say ?

A restless stream
Hungering for the sea,
In a constant search
For lower, and yet lower levels,
I meander :
Farther and farther still,
In a bewildering maze of time and space,
Incompatible with myself.

A firm foot
On the solid earth planted,
For the next step, an uncertain pause ;
One eye upon a routined world,
And the other at tangent to the stars ;
Where's the still centre of an eddying earth,
The lone flutist
That calls the tune to the ring-dance unending ?

In the haze of a narrow vision,
The fish-eye target scarcely spied,
Who would lend the seer's lamp
To stop my random quests ?

If it's Fate's decree,
That my everyday life
Mustn't run parallel to my heart's desire,
Why complain ?

At right angles, it shall be :
Impinge my days,
And crumble to dust in a relentless war.

Rather than third-rate poetics,
Or an idle peace,
A fighter's creed shall be mine ;
The twin shafts of a rebel spirit
And withering satire,
My armoury.

The unthinking rabble,
An eager animal crowd
Heading for holy places
In quest of easy salvation ;—
Contemptible cowards :
Mere onlookers,
At the end of a bout dispersing,
Yet thirsting for excitement anew.

But one boon I seek—
Only a foot of land
To rest my uncertain step

APOCALYPSE
(1953-1954)

APOCALYPSE

IN the cobwebs of cross-desires,
Spun by spider-Time,
From the firespindle of myself,
I whirl
Hung on the Ixion sky.

The golden blood
Courses through the fuse of my veins
To the trees of age,
Starflames my manna :
This wheel of life
Round the burning axle gyrates,
Shaped by ancestor seed,
And a starry desire
To be.

The salamander Ego
Woven into sky-patterns ;
By its terrene fate
Cast upon the sea-shores of microcosm,
Takes earthbound shapes
With ceaseless caesura recurring,
In earth-silences seeking the halcyon peace.

Like meteors moving in the dark
Across winds transmarine,
From flame to flame,
One space to another,
From my totality I splint,

To fall in the abysmal deep,
Like an arrowy column of fire,
To shoot
With mercury speed in a new becoming.

Mnemosyne

Looks at the ageless mirror of Time
While her robes and make-up are changed time to time,
For each shadow-play of life,
From one existence to another.

The earth with its clay-faces
And arras of sea-dark,
Keeps me enchained,
Entombed for a moment that is tide :
Its soft alluvial plains,
Its topaz lights and shade.
Its cloud-banks portending rain,
Green furzes
And verdant fields
By three rivers washed :

In bouts of pleasure and pain,
Desire that begets desire,
In miasmal fumes,
An witness to the spiring swan
That is myself,
I look for the Sign.

The black horizon I seek
Rippling with dactyls of sound
In sound-whorls,
Three trees bent with aboriginal sin,
The green crescent,

The flutist under the peacock sky,
Resonant swan-vowels
Lit by lotus-fire.
I wait for the diapasonal word,
The Signature—
Soham.

I am He and Everything,
The origination and the end,
The seed, the fruition eternal,
Alpha and Omega

My cinder-shadow at my feet,
My spectral double,
Burnt out by the sun in the verbs of his fury,
In that meridian moment
Is my fulfilment,
That negates me.

In the surcease of my cause-nexus,
I seek the Initial,
Release.
The acme of my fulfilment
In creation's aura.

Tattered and riven in the seven winds,
Like confetti from a town of dreams
I fade,
Like a fading opera
That looks unreal in the white of dawn.
The songs of my deepest silence
Stirs the mute dust
That bursts into the music of a swan

ECCE HOMO

TIME, the Great Waylayer,
Or, the dream bark
Of an unseen wizard :
Drifting
From the known to shores unknown ;
And thence,
To the limits of knowing,
In ever-widening sweeps.

A mirror in a turret-top
Of an Upper Room,
Reflecting the upturned faces
Of Then and Now ;
A conclave
Of twilight and the early hour.

A prismoid spiral,
That images me in millions.
A ceaseless cycle
Threading the beads of births and deaths
Of untold lives
And ends, never dreamed ;
Rapids of irresistible urge
Echoing through the aeons :
The fleeting moment,
A moving image of eternity...

The ego and ultra-ego,
Today, and all non-days,

Are phases of the One Unique :
Abridged prototype
Of the nameless *Eternal*
Without a form.

Around my hundred lives
And deaths countless,
The whirl-dance of intransigent Time.
From the first flush of dawn,
Reaching to sunset's gory gates,
Since ages immemorial,
Right upto the split-second ;
Out of an oblivion, unremembered,
Till the birth-cry moment,
The rainbow span of Time
To misty horizons stretch.

Flung from Time's cross-bow,
I boomerang :
One moment.—
A self-centred lotus,
Hedged in by a thousand petals,
And on a sudden,
Erupting into reckless luxuriance ;
A virgin's golden womb,
Unknown-impregnated.

Cross-roads of days and climes,
By-passed,
Eventide to roseate dawn,
Garish noons yielding to blue-green nights,
The honeyed look of eyes
Unashamed,

Haunting curve
Of a stranger's lips ;
In auroral effulgence bathed,
Crossed the tropic of dreams ;
To my closet
I return :
The flaming arrow
Back in its quiver.

A wayfarer,
I shall wander again,
From the Ganges to Volga's shores,
From the cloud-capped *Himalayas*
To the blue *Pacific*,
Over ice-bound Penguin isles,
Across plateaus, ravines
Promontories and bush tracts,
In strange corroborees,
Amidst the yellow leaves
Under bluegum shades.

Tired of limbs,
Heart over-wrought,
I seek asylum in your 'still centre.'
O Time,
Take me back,
Round thy pivot
Rewind me,
Restored to my essence
Unalloyed.

The 'I' and all besides 'I',
This day, and nihil days,

This illusory carnival of the earth,
The Prime Cause and its nexus,—
Let all dissolve,
And reach fulfilment
In fullness Supreme . . .

The cycle complete,
Goal in sight,
End of the trail,
Requiem

REQUIEM

THE bells toll the five bells.
The sun arches over the western brow ;
The soft feel of a sea-green night,
Midst mossy quiet of dark ;

Stop me :
Hold me back ;
The full leading to greater fulness,
And thence to the sea
Of fulfilment complete,
The droplet of my identity lost . .

Arbiter of time,
Or, shall I call it
The Cause Primordial,
Dissolve me to my substance
That is more than mere 'I'.

In this earth,
And creation's dust,
I'm scattered
Like verticals of light diffused ;
In the leaves and grass,
Water, earth and atmosphere,
In all that moves,
And all that's immobile.

Round the corners
Of recurrent creation,

Sprawling over the checker-board of life,
My fiery essence
Like all-enveloping light,
Upon the fly-leaf of Time,
Against the backdrop of ages,
A moving picture

Restore me thou
To the immanent flame,
Of which I'm but a phase.
But separate,
In my own existence, as well.

I'm a spark of the Elemental Flame,
The blaze
That creation sprouts from :
A spot of water,
The brine that nurtures life :
The sky,
The air,
The Five Elements,
I am Life itself.

And yet,
Outstripping these,
I extend,—
'I' and all that's not 'I' :
All's one,
The Reality manifest,
'I' that exists.

I am the Cognisant.
Again,

A ripple of life a-flower,
The index of Cognisance Supreme.

I'm Joyousness ;
Aware of the throb
Of my pulsing being,
Blossoming in a myriad forms
In the meadows of life,
In beatitude unending,
And withdrawing
To my own orbit, again.

'I' and whatever is more than 'I',
An indivisible whole ;
Only in the pulse-beats of Time,
In the awareness of a separate existence,
The difference lies ;
Like a tide that's a burst of the sea,
And yet seems to be a stream.

The floodtide of my being
Streams like ichor
In godly veins ;
Bursts in blooms
In the grass and sky ;
To the colloquy of god-shapes
I hearken,
Upon the cloud-coasted airy arches ;
And from the Eternal Ever,
The moments I snatch
To play with the solitary instant.

The moment's mirror
Reveals the world ;

And

A formless, ageless, changeless, 'I'.
Eyes that see,
But never long,
Peer at cold Reality
Etched upon a fleeting second.

From the meaning of a name,
I stray ;
Like the light that spreads from the lamp
To be lost to itself ;
Me, I spread,
And gather myself in, again.

I'm the mid-flame
Of five-flames :
The moment that splits
A single flame from the double,
Is not for me :
In the many-coloured hues
Of the five-flamed lamp,
I am :
And what I am not.

CLOUD-BURST

DARK swirling waters
 vicious hiss of countless gorgon heads,
Mad rush of foaming blood,
 swamping the channels of my veins.
Vaulting clouds mass in the sargasso-sky
In deep unangled sibilance.
My bark canoe wind-crossed,
Trapped between wind-fins.
The ancient oars furrow deep
 in and between the hiatus of water
Between dark reefways
 and moss-pavilioned tree-tops,
 (now submerged in water)
In furrowed water-hollows,
 under which continents of dark impulses
 are buried,
And essaying passions' settlements drowned,
 in yawning chasins of waters unferried

Hyphening the two immensities of ago and hence,
No ark or arcade in the deluge found,
Except the leaf-canoe
 on which the bisexual seed floats,
The two Primals,
Purusha and Prakriti
Far from the natal grounds,
Cordoned by the multi-hooded dragon
 from the maws of sienna earth
In watery furrows,

Under the flushing crimson of thunder-blasts,
Wafted by sea-midmost surf
To the carmine centre of a new creation.

The rivers gurgle in flooded ecstasy,
The veiled and virgin rivers, no unicorn-riven,
Gorsy banks that never echoed the hunter's horn,
Where oroads, nymphs and mermen
 in summery nights frolicked,
Amidst purple cameo cliffs of triangled shapes
By mauve-yellow fuchsia fornixed,
Under the orange-gold cirrus of the westering moon.

Now they spate and dance at the odour of the sea.
The amazon rivers in blinded ecstasy,
The sweet-salt and ochre-blue waters commingle :
Merino clouds coagulate
And pile up under the blazoned and misty sky.
The time-benegating seed
Bursts into multitudinous plurality,
Begets the world,
And the vowel-earth with its cache and manna is
 reborn.

The yet-to-be, the inchoate begins,
Taking form from the annealing clay.
Answering to the summons of a redeeming cosmic tune.

The Word appears
The syllable sonorous like submarine bells,
From a thousand leagues beneath the sea—
'Ayamaham Vo',
Lo : I've-come !
Resounding through the sky and earth

Like reverberations of a remote gong
Coming through torrential rains.

Ageless. . . boundless waters. . . .
Floods that fill the voids of watery wastes
Scuddled spheres of eyes, ears and hands,
The five-ised senses
Drift in a mad helpless swell
Eyeballs, fingers, tongues. . .
Swept in the wake of Charon's ferry,
In furrowed water-copulas,
Dazed by subterranean fumes

To be adrift. . . to brave the boundless space,
the negation of time,
To leave the death desexed and hairless here :
And then enter the Zion-gates of life
purged of death and being ;
The twitterings of landbirds signal earth,
The angling merlin's silver call
drops from the dark blue heaven
Like pearls falling into a deep dark well,
Resonating to the reclaiming voice of land

ATLAS

A long and dreary cold-war night ended,
I wake to greet the New Year Dawn,
looming large upon the swan-high peaks.

Columbine days, agami of peace,
pinioned against a skyline honey-coloured,
like white lilies on waters skyey-blue.

Guide to the first steps,
Cerberus at the portals of Time,
O Janus !
Looking ages back and aeons ahead
from the atalaya of time,
Do you spy the white-robed peace,
like snow-white dove, fluttering to earth
from a blood-red angry sky ?

Yesternoon was a nightmare of infinite chaos ;
Endless gutters leading to gulleys equally vile,
Strewn with the bone-bits of a sepulchred past
(mouldy and desecrated).

Fjording the ravines of war,
famine and pestilence-brewed by the cruel Atropos,
engulfing all in its toothless yawn,
We, the hollow men, into splitmen turned,
planted upon the dung-heap of lies,
and put to sleep, civilisation-doped.

Will tomorrow be the avant courier of peace,
bearing the icons of the Prince of Love,

Vouching compassion and the quality of a dynamic love
in philomel voice :

Or, will it be just an empty gourd,
filled with the vacuity of our wisdom,
the hollow of our cipher souls ?

A mountain of scuttled dreams,
lighting the way to rollicking follies
in winding alleys that never end.

O God of unfolding !

The past is but a saga vainglorious
of all our sisyphian toil.

Its charnel-house is littered with the bones of our kins,
Who will not rise on the third day,
or any other day ever :

Who were slaughtered for a hairless cause
That defeated and killed itself the day it was born.
The air musty with the fumes
that we inbreathe day in and out.

The world is riddled with sibyl voices,
Poverty, squalor and class,
Cinderella of faith abandoned,
Mighty Sicunders turned into purse,
Their gallantry under blue paper buried,
A dazed world looks upon eery streets

Fair Nemesis ravished,
Charters of Justice devoured by silverfish,
in darkened silos, void of air,
Bullying oracles of Delphic dailies
monitor our thoughts
with brazen words that sleep with the winds ;

In a seminary of lies,
A hot-house of counterfeit dreams.
Devoured by our own inventions,
Like Actaeon's bones,
Our winged days are meaningless,
Mummied butterflies on plastic flowers
In the show-windows of civilisation displayed

The loquat-white moon
Unrobes
On sandbanks, chalk-hills and skewbald bamboo fringes,
near limestone cliffs,
glinting under a spray of fuscous clouds.

Let the oriole new year burst from the oriflamme
clouds,
heralding the death-knell of the past.

The neutral light of day
proclaim the 'Just City',
the promised land of the Phoenix,
And mark our Ulysses-journey's end ;
The happy terminus,
where the world is free from lies and flies,
and the farrago of wooded myopic words

Let each of us carry on his shoulders
as much of the world as he can,
like Atlas
(or the hundred-hooded Vasuki)

And then alone can the world be purged
of its mountain sins,
The Atlanta-race of War and Desolation cease,
The mad-dance of skull-garlanded Kali come to a stop.

And then. . .

The salmon-day will spring

from the boundless sea of time,

with the redeeming voice of peace
eagling towards the sun.

A purple night effloresce

under an agora of luminant stars,

impearling the rims of the sky
with its azonic glow :

Like a milk-white banner unfurled,

A crescent of doves in the calyx of east.

from the edge of Canopus to the bright-eyed Mira

Whither.

O geminy-headed Janus !

Will our steps, in the New Year, be addressed ?

VIGNETTES

I. *Night-Sowing*

I PLOUGH the reddish brown uplands,
 earth-flesh, rich, red, blood-built,
The plough-shear rips open the midnight mud
 leaving its trail on the rain-soaked fallow fields.

Overhead, behind the caravan clouds,
 a slice of moon-burst ;
A shower of airy mist
 in between the chromium warp and woof of a
 cobweb-dream.

Pneumas, yoked in twos,
 plough through slumbering hours,
 as couples lie locked in sleep
 resigned to a mooning minute.

Like scintillas of flame
 I scatter the seed corpuscles,
 in earthy follicles
 carded shreds of white and red.

Flames of a new life,
 A phosphorus glow upon the shores of
 midnight waters.

Recent harvest,
Flame-sprout of a new seed ;
The raging tumult of ancient blood
 flooding through my veins.
From behind blazing metal cupola
 of my progenitors' realm :

Uncounted hands
Stretch out for oblations,
 an ear of this years corn,
For my offerings they mutely wait,
 their pulse-beats throbbing in my blood.

In the deepmost furrow-veins of earth
 I sow the seeds ;
Like sparklers showering fiery bits of flame
 in the womb of the earth.
Under the guava-coloured moon
 I come to tryst,
I,
And my earth.

II. *The Song of the Reapers*

THIS year's crop,
 a golden harvest,
In my sickle arms a lush sheaf ;
This hill, dale and forest fringe
 husband a mountain stream.
A half-moon hangs upon the sky,
 the shadows retreat
 and lie low in the shallow lagoon.
I wield my scythe
 in the bright replenished air ;
From the hidden cupboard of the earth,
 I cull the fragrance of its musky navel.

The tremor of the greeny fields'
 rippling love
Undulate, and step back like water-screws ;

Like shore-rims, you hold them still,
land-locked,
my meniscus passions asleep,
Flooding the world when they wake,
Sky-kissed,
Star-mirrored,
Garnered in each blade of corn,
The life-cell beyond time-reach.

III. *A Stream*

WHO knows,
From which forest's dishevelled dark
The stream winds her way
along a snaky path,
Coursing across my bosom,
a tortuous silvery in and out.

Unruly wisps of gipsy hair
of a truant maid
Flutter against the face
of a greying parched earth.
Under the scrutiny
of a council of stars,
The stream hurries,
Cleaving its way through a cubist's multi-hued art.

Like my love,
the river plays hide and seek ;
One moment here,
and gone, the next :
From afar,
a fitful gleam comes riding the winds ;

Yet,
Meseems, behind the drawn arras
 of every next-door room,
She combs her streaming hair :
Melting away at my foot-fall echo,
The filament of her loveliness
 stays glowing in the drowsy air.

IV. *The Tree*

WHEN we stood at the farthest limits
 of a brace of skies,
 at the intersection of twin `nights,
Perhaps we were turned to a tree.

Limbs a-flower,
Humming bees crowding round,
A mighty giant astride the forests ;
Uncounted boughs,
Camaraderic of arms and lips,
 knee and eyes,
An erect trunk,
Roots deep in the vitals of earth,
A pervasive essence seeping through the veins.

Under the dank dark of night,
 where stars hold synod,
Spiked through the heart of the earth
 the tree rears its head.
Thick green glistening wings,
Tendrils, shoots,
A million cell-core,
Leaves and buds,

Joy and love,
Sprouting life,
A congealed greenish flame floodlights the starry skies.
Out of the womb of the earth,
A tree is born ;
A murmuring lone forest-soul.

The Tree

(II)

IN the dark, we stood,
A pair of marooned trees, blended into one,
 ghosted like the ribs of stone :
A dim lantern shimmering frostily from the boughs,
Cold woody stars
 shooting from our enchanted clay,
Wisps of air entrapped
 in our windy turrets.

Rooted, we stood,
 like pillars of stone,
 stars of water shooting the rapids :
A smoky quarter-moon of light
 dappling the sky ;
Unconscious and deep,
 in somnolence frozen,
A tree of sleep,
Wedded to the dust,
Searching fingers probing the vitals of the earth.

'DHVANI LOK'

(Music of the Spheres)

I. *The World of Voices*

IN the sphere of resonance,
 we shall meet.
A meeting, not of the eye,
 but in an aura of soulful sonorousness :
On the checkerboard of diverse tunes,
 hemmed in by the haze of multiple notes.
In every sound
 with its distinct hue entwined,
Your thought-image takes shape :
Woven in the criss-cross colours
 of multiple melody,
Your diverse echoes keep me embalmed :

In the hieroglyphic maze of form and flesh,
 smell, colour and rhythm,
I catch a glimpse of thee :
Lose for a moment,
 to hold it again :
But, Oh when shall it be,
Beyond all reach,
In the realm of pondering,
Where words fail,
 and the mind fears to tread ?
Silhouette of sounds,
Where the fragrance of life-blossom
 melts into the sonata of non-life,

In the blaze of beauty
 which no eye may ever see,
Upon the non-terrestrial plane
 without sound and colour,
Silhouettes only silhouettes

II. *The Serenade*

Is it a drink of honey,
 or heaven's ambrosia,
 in the goblet of the sky :
In the whisperings of air,
 is it love that speaks ?
The soft breaths
 shiver like first love,
Rainbow lilting notes
 ripple like the stream.
Peeping from behind a curtain of green,
 a beautiful fairy queen :
A bird's twitter,
A bride,
A brook gurgling by.
The earth,
 lips parted in sweetest dreams,
A serenade nonpareil.

The scorching breath of noon
 Swoons in every tautened note,
Underwriting the sounds that reach the ear ;
Like the deepest peal of thunder
 sleeping at the bottom of the sea,
 and floating up to the world of hearing,

Negating the senses,
In the suggestiveness of notes ethereal,
Broiled in sun-fire.

III. *The Tree-Murmurs*

In the ballet of moonlight and midnight-shade,
the tree murmurs,
Whispering notes in low octaves :
In the husky voice of the woods,
its soul speaks in rain and shine.
To the missive of the skies,
trees know the only answer.
Over miles and miles of barren sands,
or in verdant woods,
In meadows,
River-steppes.
Or, gorsy stretch in water-lanes,
Standing alone,
The tree whispers to itself
in a low, sultry voice,
Words of undying hope.
The tree itself
is the promise.

IV. *A Chant*

MUSIC,
Of the flight of a swan,
or the gurgling brook,
or of a fragrant voice,

Is just an index :
Muted notes of a soul
 riddle the pathway of the sky
 and leave an unseen trail.

Melting,
 (who knows where)
Some may chance to hear,
 or, may never know ;
 but that is just by the way.
The end of music is music.
Notes, with notes commingle :
In the wilderness of the sky,
 melody loses its way.
The whole history of everything
 is the essence of a soul
 getting lost in another's.

V. *Voices in the Dark*

SOFT and dark
Voices in the dark and solitary room
 beat their wings like mossy-grey moths .
Worms of voices,
The craggy walls echo through their dead lips
To the fading footsteps of tombstoned days
The Voices gently stir,
 taking foggy shapes and vanish
Into the frozen garden out of doors
 where fins of lifeless trees point to the sky.
Darkness hovers like a lover's ghost
 over the tomb of a girl lying cold.

Soundless clatter of the planets moving
through the alleys of heaven,
drowned in quietude
like laughter in sleep.
Dead voices hear and speak.

Walls whisper thro' their shaggy cracks
The shadows on the staircase
rise in Infanta's flesh
by sudden cyprian touch,
(fingers of time pointed at them)
They fade away and are lost
amidst the dead trees outside,
washed by the gilt lime of the moon
hung from heaven's archipelago.
Tides of shadow-faces roll by.

Dark voices,
Still voices speak,
Walking in sleep
through the needle-eye of time.

CLOUD-SYMPHONY

OPALESCENT clouds, indigo-hued,
 misty festoons, mansions billowy,
 creamy froth that melt at touch,
 rain-bloated, pulpy swells :
Cloud vines screening the sky hedges,
 where the cloud belle romps in meadows of
 ultramarine.

Glistening pencil lines,
Syringes-full of dazzle ;
The unknown hunter twangs his golden bow,
Chasing the wild herd of stampeding clouds.
Glittering scintilla :
Jewels of the cloud-courtesans ?

Atop the roof of the skies,
 the cloud maidens dry their hair ;
New-hatched, swan-downy, cloud heaps,
 wisps of cloud-flax from bursting buds,
 float over the prairies of heaven
 as the stealthy air brushes its lips o'er them.

Raw infant clouds,
Sullen heifers at bay,
Snow-white polar mammoths floundering through
 azure depths ;
The wish-fulfilling cow,
 flooding the vaults with the limpid stream of
 Ganga,
 like the mighty tusker of Indra.

Shreds of milk-white arrasene,
 tiny bits of cloud-fragments.

Cloud !
Dispenser of Life,
Give us rains,
 —the life-giving shower ;
O give us food,
 the barren earth sprouting with seed.

The butter-soft velveteen earth shivers in joy
 with swaying corn stretching to distant ends ;
On this clay-orb,
 the life-foetus throbs in the womb of earth
 enceinte.

Indra,
Give reins to thy seven stallions :
Unleash the host of winds ;
Alert the eight guardian gods
 against the first day of Ashardh.
Lovers away,
 in the brimming eyes of the lonesome maids,
 would you discover the new lyric of the rains ?

Gall to parted lovers,
 to the passion-mad, you grant their heart's
 desire,
 in the dropping flowers from tresses unloosed,
 as they rise from the couch of love.

Rider of the skies !

Upon your sombre, mighty, sweating arms,
 bear us the message from the far distant stars.
Bring us the breath of life,
 a whiff of the seas that girdle our earth.
Lazing rivers to raging torrents turned,
 dried pools teeming with life,
 frogs in chorus croak,
 the thirsty chatak has had its fill.

Come back,
Return, O cloud,
My dusky lover, look !
 the parched earth thirsts for thee,
Come, and make it multiply.

My cloud tendril,
Your darkened brows loom heavy like thunder mist,
 in torrents the shower'll come ;
Unguent of the eyes washed away,
The utter deliciousness of the new rains
 mirrored in the rainbow plumes of the dancing
 peacock.
 your heart beat shall pulse in its joyous steps.

A-shiver with fright,
Heart lost in the fragrance of rain-drenched earth ;
In mighty titan joy,
The torrents pour,
Bathe the stalwart palm and Tamala clumps.
In the face of the demon fury of the raging gales,
The thunder guffaws in mockery.
O maniac warrior-maid,
The whip-crack of thunder in the rain-ceased sky,
 is it but thy heaven-splitting laugh ?

Winsome, dark,
 the clouds gather once again.
Soft rumblings
 whispers of first shy love.
In the cuticles of greening earth,
O'er sun-baked leas and woods,
 hills and mango groves,
 the moth-wings of cloud-wind dance
 under the shadow of the lone damsel's anxious
 eye,
Playing hide and seek amidst the leaves of Neepa.

Raindrops drum :
Pat the satiny cheeks of a twilight maid ;
In the veins of earth
Mothering the crops to come,
Coursing through my blood,
The memento of the Mother Eternal.

ODE TO MAN

A mailed fist
 gags the Aonian fount of poesy,
The perennial flow of my creative muse
 is lost in the morass of baffled lives untold.

Progeny of Time,
 I'm the ruler of the seasons ;
My dream-garden flower-bedecked,
 of varied colours and diverse tones under a
 zinc-bright sky.

But you are the arch-enemies of peace :
 ruining all in the death-embrace of your octopus
 arms ;

The make-believe paradise
 is turned to barren sands,
 death-wail haunts the torrid air,
 unreasoned terror crowding in ghoulish shapes.
Like the torsos of blasted trees
 in the light of a beggarly noon,
Your slaughter-post casts its headless shadow
 upon all the world.

O what's this ?
Like a mortgaged and abandoned home,
 the earth stands drained of light and life.
Who's there to ponder ?
Brains, waste-paper-stuffed,
 scribbled with motely creeds,
 sweet-tongued humbuggerly ;

Like Alemene's womb
heavy with the seeds of Zeus in disguise.

Where's man ?

On the one hand, an impersonal pawn,
that fidgets to sell himself to the highest
bidder :

A few hirsute hands
moving him ceaseless over a checkerboard.

A race of men,
bowing like forests of spineless reeds,
tails wagging, like pets,
and yet bragging.

On the other, against him arrayed,
The all-devouring State
not people-owned, but owning them ;
an end in itself :

A moth-eaten map of pseudonymous people
unrolling in an anemic light.

Wordy duels and opinions conflicting,
passage-at-arms,
blustering, windy philippics
sting like sleet through loudspeaker hordes,
and like myriad mattocks pick the ears.

In Aspasian tongue
the eunuch thought-nisus some try to woo ;
others hold aloft
an image of asphodels
Elysian amaranth moly ;

In slattern voice
a few carp and threaten.

Babel of a thousand tongues,
whirlpool of divergent views.

Where's man ?

Of him I sing,

I dream :

I shall not cease,

my cassandra-voice I'll raise,

the seer's gaze shall be mine,

The urge of the sylph imbued, .

rich with the carvings of endless life.

I sing of Dawn . . .

Underneath the striped antimony sky,

runs the middle way

underlining twilight's trusteeship.

All hail !

Greetings of the Dawn.

I sing the epithalamium of darkness and light,

To man I inscribe my muse . . .

THE FISHERMAN

UPON the bosom of unbounded waters
 me I hurl,
Cast my net,
 a-shimmer in the silvered breeze,
Where gold-orange fish sport on airy wings,
 tearing through watery ridges
 to kiss the lips of gasping waves.

From the vault of nadir,
 to the watery floor,
Under the blue-white translucent crystal arch,
 tides come and go :
Pisces, coral-coloured,
 golden, pinky, emerald, ochre-hued,
 scarlet, bubbly, water-speckled,
 and marguerite.

Amidst endless rollers
 I plunge :
Locked round the waves,
 I hug their proud, provoking, heaving breasts ;
My lashing arms
 grind the water piers to smithereens :
A tumbling crystal tower
 cascades in a tinkling silver shower.

The curly waves
 I ravage :

Arms flailing on their yielding bosom,
suck in their gurgling joy,
spit it out,
crunch the water tendons,
and then,
down the awed river spiral descend.

Along unguessed water leas
I plough ;
Where coral candelabrum
hang upon wavy colonnades.
In and out I weave :
Upon the wave bosom I lie,
Face buried in their cheek, foamy-soft,
Couchant, up-turned, half-reclining,
on airy waves cushioned ;
Alabaster river floors
tide-serrated,
Ringed in by an aureole of penumbra,
Below the skyey rim,
Under the blare of a garish noon.

In the dark,
Wrapped in the woolly cloak of black,
quietly I trundle :
Over open heaths,
Across the king's highway,
to what unknown

Impenetrable,
Cold,
A touch-stone solid dark :
And e'en at its core
a blotch of glowering red

Like the leering eyes of a sot awake all night.

Headlong

I fly :

Floundering through the dark,
searing the heart of inky night
with fleeing fiery steps.

Over the sodden grass I hie,

not knowing whither :

yet striving towards the distant looming dark ;

I run :

And yet I run :

Heading for the blood-red eyes,

With sobbing breath,

till my dragging steps can pull me no more,

my lifeless limbs kiss the dust,

and on the muddy wet,

shudder to stillness in the burnt-out air.

The velvety feel of dark

seep through my pores ;

An intense icy-thrill sears my veins :

And then,

A syringe-full of fire spreads like molten lead.

Every single blade of hair stands rigid,

and the mute limbs quiver.

The darkness grins :

a cold inane smile ;

Meaningless and erratic,

like the giggle of an ebony-coloured barbarian girl.

OVERTURE

HOLD me in the flaming dark,
 your darkness screening me from a
 world tallow-eyed.

Cradled in your arms,
Beating against your heaving breasts,
 let my stunned heart repose.

In the odour of your sweat,
In the trill of thy earth,
In the pulseless cold,
 I hear the call of life :
The life whistling thro' the reeds of light and shade,
The life that answers in animal joy
 in the crinkled air.

In your mascara eyes,
 a glimpse of the coiled waves in play :
 in the breakers tumbling o'er the water ceiling,
 and the watchful eye of the king-fisher.

This night . . .
Clumps of darkness mushroom o'er a darkened world.
Crowding . . .
Shrouding . . .
Piping in the fluffy air.

In the emerald tendrils of leafy shade,
 under the collyrium brow,
 the dancing shadow comes to sudden life :

Dies out ;
Behind the wings of a sleek, cool, green
 a blinding flash :
 the silvered comb of light carding the dark.
A gush of vacuous dazzling smile
 reaching for the sky-edge
 from end to end

Over distant tree-tops
 come the sweet strains of the new rains ;
In sudden bursts of the crashing drums,
 cymbals untold, clanging,
 an overture that tugs at the heart.

THE JOY OF LIVING

LIFE-WORLD summons me
Hemmed in by the waters of life,
 where the five elements fuse and become one

Life quivers in the sky—
 in the light of day,
 in rain,
 upon each blade of grass ;
On earth and water,
 in the air and sky,
 the undying smile of life,
 call of the living, warm with blood

We're a pencil of blue
 in the unbounded ocean,
 a dot of light in the milky way ;
We're but a fading streak of geese in flight,
 heading for the Manasa lake
 in quest of light undying

Such riot of life in the trees,
Such abundance in the greeny grass,
Such bountiful love
 heaped upon a tiny flower, a blaze of red

A wee bird,
 like a coloured bauble
 floating, flitting through the sky ;
A carmine dab of sunset,

How sweet,
How wondrous upon the sky's cheek

These lips,
These eyes,
Tears and smiles,
These whispered words,
 all seem to be a fountain of life . . .

The flower's fragrance,
The song of birds,
Hail and sunshine,
The mart of motley colours,
 red, blue and saffron,
Feel and smell,
Pain that hurts,
 facets of the one life :
 mutations of the elemental Life-soul ;
 Life multiplex . . .
Like the diverse bits of sun
 upon dissimilar water-faces mirrored

Such tumultuous life in the leaves,
Such ample living in the greenery and blooms,
 the glow of the same life in the tree-medusa . .

Such love in the hearts of men,
Such peace, such longing,
 bubbling on the flood-tide of life,
 thronging,
 and dying out upon the dregs of life.

Joy and sorrow,
The curved scimitar of hate,
 bubbles, all of one life,
 and man's but a mute witness.

No sorrow,
No senility,
Where's death or the limits to time ?
Trampling over the milestones of hours,
 the victorious tread of Life. . . .

In my heart of hearts I hear the call ;
Like a droplet hearkening to the call of the sea,
 of life limitless,
 that brooks not climes, aeons or men.

Endorsement of the life
 that begins not, nor ends,
 I stand :
I'm the witness to the bountiful joy
 of the life that is never spent.

When my life-lotus
 opens its thousand petals
 in the fragrance of the sun,
Pervading the ocean-girt expanse of earth,
 the dome of heaven and host of winds,
Meseems I blossom,
 under the awning of All-Life.

NOTES

1. *Valmiki* : The composer of the Ramayan. As he sat one day, deep in meditation, on the bank of 'Tamasha', one of a brace of herons (*Krauncha*) fell dead on his lap. Eyes ablaze, the sage looked up and saw a hunter approach bow and arrow in hand. Words, of course, which later became a famous couplet, issued from his lips. This couplet bears two interpretations ; the first and apparent meaning being—O hunter ! you shall never achieve fame since you have shot down one of mating herons. The hidden meaning is—O thou emblem of truth and enlightenment (Rama), eternal glory is thine, the slayer of one of the Raksha couple (Ravana) steeped in vileness.
2. *Chitrotala* : Another name for the river Mahanadi watering most part of Orissa, Chota Nagpur, falling in the Bay of Bengal.
3. *Shahjahan* : the Moghul Emperor who erected the magnificent marble mausoleum *Taj-Mahal* at Agra for his wife Mumtaz (*d* 1629). *Jahannara* his daughter.
4. *Chilika* : Famous lake in Orissa, some 44 miles long by 12—15 miles wide, but depth averages 6 ft., in low water. Lying S.W. to the Bay of Bengal, between Furi and Ganjam, the water remains salty from December to June, and in the monsoons the salt water recedes, and it becomes a fresh-water lake. The lake which was originally a bay, is shut in from the sea by a sandbank which steadily increases in size. In remote past, it was a flourishing port and the centre of maritime trade between Orissa and many a country overseas.
5. *Sadhava* : Sea-faring merchant class of ancient Orissa, who amassed great wealth through sea-trade with Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Ceylon, Burma and China.
6. *Konarak* : Konarka, Kondaditya, Arka-kshetra, Rabi-kshetra, Padma-kshetra. A temple of the sun-god. Abul Fazl speaks of it in *Ain-i-Akbari*—a sum equal to 12 years' revenue of the kingdom was spent in building this granite leviathan. The side walls (according to him) are 150 cubits high and 19 cubits thick. Situated on the south-coast of Orissa, it is famous for its superb sculpture.
7. *Aswathva* : The *ficum religiosa*.
8. *Vishnu* : (from 'Vish' to pervade, to extend) A divinity of Hindu Trinity. He is associated with Brahma the creator and Siva the

destroyer in the Trimurti or triad, in which his character is that of a preserver.

9. *Jaksha* : Kuvera, the Jaksha overlord, banished one of his men for a year to the Ramagiri hills (Chitrakuta range of Bundelkhand). Naturally, the Jaksha had to leave his bride behind. On the advent of rains, his separation grew unbearable and he deputed the clouds to carry his message of love to his pining bride : subject-matter of Megha-Doot (cloud-messenger) by Kalidas.
10. *Parvati* : the daughter of Himalaya and Menoka. She spent years in hard penance to woo Siva who took her as his consort. A lovely maid.
11. *Chandrabhaga* : The site where Konarak was built, in the south-coast of Orissa. In Hindu mythology, Shamba, the son of Krishna, prayed to the Sun-god at this place and got cured of his leprosy. Hence this place came to be known as 'Surjya-kshetra'.
12. *Indra* : Chief of the immortals, the wielder of thunder, the rain-god, the god of good harvests.
13. *Sravasti* : Also called Sravasti-puri. Situated on the south bank of Tapti (Oiravati) river in the district of Gonda in Ajodhya in U.P. Once a famous holy place for the Budhists and a centre of culture. Fa Hien and others have given glowing accounts of it. Now a heap of ruins. Dr. Cunningham identifies Sravasti with the present village of Seih-Mahet.
14. *Dravida* : A highly civilised and cultured race, believed to be original people who occupied India, particularly the Southern half, —before the Aryan invasion of the land.
15. *Mainak* : Son of Menoka, and the Lord of mountains. He was the leader of a band of winged rebels who challenged Indra, the god of thunder. Indra hurled his bolt and burned their wings. Mainak was spared from being killed, but promised never to rise against Indra, again.
16. *Brihannala* : The Pandava Chief lost the game of chess to the Kaurava king. The terms were that the Pandavas would go into the wilderness for twelve years, the last year being a period of hiding. If they should be traced during this period of hiding, they would have to go into wilderness over again. Arjan, an intrepid warrior, disguised as an eunuch, lived the life of a dancer and a teacher of music, during the period of forced hiding in the palace of Virat.

17. *Chandrabhanu's letter to Labanyavati* : Chandrabhanu and Labanyavati are the hero and heroine of the ancient Oriya *Kavya* 'Labanyavati' by the great poet Upendra Bhanja.
18. *Palasha* : *Butea frondosa*. Habitat—India, Burma, N.W. foothills of the Himalays. The flowers are mostly flaming red though other colours are also seen.
19. *Sambhu* : A name for Siva. In a derivative sense it means a source of pleasure. In love lyrics Hindu poets often use this word to imply the breasts of a woman. Both are 'Swayambhu' or self-born ; dome-shaped, source of pleasure. The nail-marks of a lover upon the breasts of the beloved are likened to the crescent of the moon on Siva's head. (Cf. Kucha-sambhu-sire nakha-chandrakala).
20. *Chakravaka* : Ruddy Sheldrake. It is believed that the pair separates every evening to be reunited at the break of day.
21. *Manikarnika* : Burning *Ghat* at Benares in U.P.
22. *Brahmany Kite* : *Haliastur Indus*. In Bengali known as *Sankh-Chil*.
23. *Uloopi* : Daughter of Kauravya the Naga king, courted Arjun the Pandava hero and got a son by him. The kings of Tripura trace their descent from them.
24. *Jhilli* : The cricket.
25. *Hastina* : Hastinapur. An ancient city in the district of present Meerut, said to be the capital of the Kuru kings.
26. *Teesta* : Also Trisrota, a river in North Bengal. Rises in Tibet, falling into the Brahmaputra.
27. *Meghna* : The combined waters of the Padma and Brahmaputra take this name. It is so deep and wide that it looks more like a sea than a river.
28. *Krishna* : Also Krishnaganga, Krishnabeni. About 800 miles in length, it rises in the Mahabaleswar ranges in the Western Ghats, and traverses the entire width of the Deccan, particularly Andhra.
29. *Ujjain* : Capital of Malwa (now in Gwalior District). Also known as Avanti, Bishala. Ptolemy calls it *Ozene*. It was the capital of Vikramaditya whose court-poet was Kalidas.
30. *Sipra* : River in Ujjain, immortalised by Kalidas.

31. *Sami-bough* : *Sami* Acacia Sumia (Prosopis Spicigera). The Pandavas, while going into forced hiding, hid their arms in the Sami-bough.
32. *Asharha* : Also Asardha. The months of June-July, hence the first month of the rainy season.
33. *Bhujja* : Habitat—the Himalayan regions, 14000 feet above sea level. The bark and leaves of these trees were used as writing material in India and her Northern neighbours before paper arrived on the scene.
34. *Mrigasira* : (1st f Orionis) Positioned like the deer's head, hence the name.
35. *Bishu Maharana* : Leader of the band of 1200 artisans who were responsible for the exquisite workmanship of the temple of Konarak.
36. *Bideha* : Another name for old Mithila, present Tirhut, the birth-town of Sita the consort of Rama.
37. *Barnabata* : An ancient township mentioned in the Mahabharat, beyond Hastinapur, on the banks of the Ganga. Some identify it with Allahabad, others are of the opinion that it was the area north of Cornal, the place where the Pandavas had their palace.
38. *Chitrarath* : Gandharva king Angaraparna. Friend of Kuvera. Once he suffered an inglorious defeat at the hands of Arjun while he was carrying away by force, some of the Kaurava ladies.
39. *Nalanda* : 30 miles south of Patna, on the banks of the Falgu river. It was once a famous Buddhist University.
40. *Kalinga* : An ancient kingdom with an area of about 700 sq. miles. It included parts of present-day Bengal, Madras, the Central Province and most of Orissa.
41. *Noakhali* : Town in Pakistan, notorious for the communal riots of 1947.
42. *Vasuki* : The Naga-king described in Hindu mythology as one carrying on his hundred hoods the entire earth. The king of the underworld.
43. *Kali* : The wife of Siva, as the goddess of destruction.

("Indian words have no accent. They are uttered like an even, continuous stream of syllables"—Bharati Sarabhai, in *"The Well of the People."*)

In Oriya 'ri'-kar is pronounced as 'ru'-kar, e.g., Krishna is pronounced as Krushna, and Brihannala as Bruhannala.)