

THE TEMPLE TULIPS

PURAN SINGH

INTRODUCTION

(First Edition)

This collection entitled *The Temple Tulips* consists of six sections. The first section *He and I*, presents the situation of the human being in relation to the Divine in terms that might quite appropriately be applied to love among two human beings, particularly man and woman. This concept of love for the Divine originated probably in early *bhakti* period in India and was called *Prema Bhakti*. More particularly, it is the dominant sentiment in *Bhagvat Purana*. There is practically no trace of it in the *Upanishads* and in *Bhagvad Gita*. There the infinite is posited more philosophically than emotionally. Just when the emotional factor became dominant and why is not possible to determine specifically. But if we take the help of a later technique of analysis of the human personality, that is, psychoanalysis, it can be averred that it originated at a time in Indian history when the human situation became very nearly intolerable for sensitive minds.

These sensitive minds, of their very quality, could not cope with their situation in the way of action, that is, the way of *Karma Yoga*. Nor could they take an attitude of total indifference, of what has been called *sannyas* in Indian religious philosophy and stoicism in the Greek and European traditions, generally. It was an attempt to seek detachment from the human situation, not in an absolute way, but by forming an attachment with the Divine that should be stronger than any type of human attachment.

Thus in what would now be called the political situation, the *bhakta* assumed that God the Most High, was more of a king than any worldly ruler, that God the Giver is more of a giver than any human alms-giver, that God the creditor is more generous than any human being lending money to another, and finally that God is a far better object of love than any human being.

Echoes of this sentiment can be clearly heard in the Christian tradition, but the Sufi creeds of West Asian Muslim lands gave a louder expression to it, when they defied the human ruler under the protection, as they imagined, of God, the Absolute and Highest ruler, when they extended the promise held out in the Kuran of intercession on behalf of the sinners if they surrendered themselves completely to the charity of a divine leader and when they contended that a desperate type of love between man and woman which disregarded all social discipline and law, was a substitute for love of God Himself and indeed they called it substitute love, *Ishq-i-Majazî*; and that this was the first stage on the way to Divine Love, *Ishq-i-Haquiqli*.

The Indian concept of *Prema Bhalcti* was a form of such a surrender, too, but it seldom became so desperate as the *Ishq-i-Majazî* of the Sufis. But it certainly provided a strong lever to the human being to keep himself in a state of balance against sorrow, despair and repression emanating from any source. This, particularly, is the kind of *Prema Bhakti* practised by the Sikh Gurus.

The Sikh Gurus did not conceive of this love as a desperate challenge to repressive social law. In fact, they made it an idea for the wife to cherish for her husband, for the Sikh for his Guru and for the human being, in general, for the Divine. The Indian mind was well familiar with this as an ideal for the Indian wife who must love, obey and consider her husband not as a mere human being, but as God, the Divine Himself. And this ideal relation the Gurus transferred to the sphere of the human being's relation with God. The love of man for God is always described in terms of the love of the wife for the husband and presumably just as man cannot choose his God, the husband was not the choice of the wife, he was divinely chosen or appointed for her. This is in contrast with the mode posited in the stories of *Ishq-i-Majazî* in Sufi and later romantic love, though there also the choice was claimed to have been ordained, even preordained by God Himself.

The two Sikh poets of the modern period, Bhai Vir Singh and Puran Singh combine the Sikh mode of love with the Sufi mode, perhaps unconsciously, purely through a romantic sensibility induced by their contact with English romantic poetry and novel of the nineteenth

century and of their readings and interpretations of Punjabi Sufi love and *kissa* poetry. Puran Singh adds to it the influence of the American poet Walt Whitman also, who was in a way a Freudian before Freud.

There is, of course, also the old Indian Vaishnavite influence to reckon with, which makes the Divine lover, an elusive, intangible element, for which the human being has always to keep vigil and wait. Puran Singh, more than Bhai Vir Singh, makes his ideal lover or beloved, elusive in this way. According to the Sikh Gurus the Divine, unattainable in an absolute sense, was relatively realisable through the Guru. But for Puran Singh, he is realised in rare moments and that also as a feeling. His *He and I* presents exactly such a situation of hide-and-seek.

The title of the second part, *The Wandering Minstrel*, interestingly throws out a suggestion that in it Puran Singh is speaking of his own spirit. Indeed, Puran Singh reminds one of Mathew Arnold's *Scholar Gypsy*, though luckily, Puran Singh did not get lost to the world as Arnold's friend did. But he does beckon his love to come to him 'on the bank of death'. For him 'the star-lit sky is a letter in the hands of my love', with whom, he lies 'for ever without meeting at all'. And he is not quite sure if the Bangle-dealer selling blue bangles and the Turbanned Man, who is asked to buy those bangles for his love are not one and the same person, Puran Singh himself. This wandering minstrel is so full of romantic observation that no woman with bangles can escape his eye. The bangled Brahmani of the Jammu hills whose bangles of ruby-red glass slip elbow-ward from her delicate wrist's as she tosses her snow-white arms up is surely not going to.

But, however, far this minstrel may have wandered his heart is ever in his native land of Punjab where oranges blossom 'while the lover is gone far away to distant Ladakh', where yellow-turbanned boys fly kites on house-roofs and some 'maiden yonder on the roof may catch 'the falling kite cut in mid-air' so that it 'flutters to fall into her arms like a wounded bird shot down from high'. And things grow 'so dangerously alive'.

Somewhere he sings as the Kusumbha-gatherer of the Punjab, or becomes a philosopher who watches peasants gathered at the fair at Katas Raj, but his jewels burn at their sight, except the jewel of *Ram Nam*, that has no price except His grace.

But for all that this minstrel is a loving worshipper of Guru Gobind Singh whom he sees as the God on whose right hand 'the white hawk' is perched and who goes everywhere on 'a purple horse'.

The Burning Candles are the lyrics of the Sufis, Shah Hussain and Bullah Shah translated into a still more poetic English, or imitation of Punjabi rhythms or from stanzas from the famous epic, *Rana Surat Singh*, whose author, Bhai Vir Singh, Puran Singh adores next perhaps only to his Gurus.

In *Hari Mandir* Puran Singh sings of the Golden Temple of Amritsar to which Sikh mothers, like those of the forty Sikh Martyrs as well as beggars flock, as moths round a flame. And this reminds him of the private temple of Mira Bai, in her house and in her heart, or the idol whom Nam Dev makes drink milk, or the Mughal in whom he sees the Lord Krishna. Or it is the Persian shepherd of the poem of Maulana Jalal-un-Din Rumi, or Prahlad chanting the name of Han against all the injunctions of his father. And he thinks in this context of Al Ghazzali of Iran, Ayaz the slave minister of Mahmud of Ghami, of Dhruva, and finally of Guru Gobind Singh revisiting the Punjab.

As an Indian Minstrel he must visit the Himalayan Pines whose charm even foreigners, minstrels or not, cannot resist. As Puran Singh himself remarks, the poems in this section 'these songs contain the music I heard, as the flower-veiled winds rustled through the pines, and went past me, touching with their breath the sun and the moon, sitting in the holy shades'. And among these is a dialogue he had with an ancient pine, who replies to his query with the words, 'I saw Him once, and laid my head at his feet. With His own hands he lifted me up. Proud in the joy of his touch, I now hold high my head wearing the cloud-turban and wistfully gaze towards the sky, awaiting his return'. This is indeed the apotheosis that Indian sages have throughout the ages longed for. Whether they ever achieved it, will ever remain a moot question. These pines

are to Puran Singh 'ascetic, naked, poor and lonely', in whose heart perhaps God lies hidden as on a throne. But there is nonetheless amidst these pines, 'a little hut waiting for me!' Its door is left ajar for me to enter. Within the heart of a woman is beating, the little hearts of the children, unborn thumping in her of those hearts. In her embraces I forget the flowers of the hills, the pines and the wondrous snows.

The Roses of Kashmir is fitly dedicated to that great lover of Kashmir, Bhai Vir Singh. It contains Puran Singh's responses of all the beautiful, sad and mad things in Kashmir, its four gardens, its lakes, its apple trees and mulberries, its chinars and poplars, the fields of saffron, and 'the mystic lotus of the snow-peaks'. He travels along the way his master. Guru Hargobind, came to Kashmir, to lay 'his forehead down at the temple of Bhagbhari in Srinagar' whose door-sill he kisses as he kisses the door-sill of the Golden Temple at Amritsar. And finally he is struck with the charm of a beautiful woman of Kashmir washing clothes on the river-bank at Srinagar, whose 'own clothes were soiled with toil and pain woe and the dirt and filth of life', but who was nevertheless beautiful, sparkling like a gem in mud.

He thinks of building for her a palace of marble and gold and pearl on the river-bank, and 'almost wishes he could conquer worlds to make her happy and to be idly busy in transmuting little pearls of dew into stars by just striving them into her flower-washed tresses'. Then he closed his eyes and saw the palace built for her, 'the whole white palace was full of her images in marble', while 'she stood on the door a princess'. But 'as I touched her bare white feet with eyes closed, I woke up with a sudden shock. I saw my lips were wounded by the touch of the hooves of a black, long-haired hill-goat'.

This is the strange illusion that deceives both gods and men, so that they bleed at the heart. And Puran Singh certainly does.

*Panjab Agricultural University,
Ludhiana*

S. S. SEKHON

CONTENTS

Part I

HE AND I

1. The day of naming him	3
2. At the well	3
3. Strange are his ways	3
4. At his feet	4
5. Ever since I met him	4
6. My fixed star	5
7. The king of life	5
8. The all-attracting	6
9. Met at last	6
10. I am never alone	6
11. I do not aim	7
12. When I became alive	7
13. When I died	7
14. The night when he was with me	7
15. Separation	8
16. Come as thou comest	8
17. The Barge of my beloved	9
18. He left me	9
19. My cup of joy	9
20. If thou be mine	9
21. I knew not the value of his gift	10
22. I thought I knew	10
23. Love me more	10
24. My love	11
25. My love! Why are things upside down?	11
26. My boat was tossed in a storm	12
27. Majanu and Leila	12
28. Live with me, Love!	13
29. Salutation	13

Part II

THE WANDERING MINSTREL

1. The Wandering Minstrel	17
2. Come my love to me	19
3. My sweet heart's letter	19
4. The Panjabi bride	20
5. The blue bangles	21
6. My youth was a secret garden	21
7. To my woman wherever she be	22
8. To the sweet liar	23
9. The Bangled Brahmani	23
10. Out of the heart of the Pothohar Poetess	24
11. This world is an illusion	28
12. The oranges blossom in the Panjab	28
13. The hour of union	29
14. The blossomed fields of the Panjab	29

15. Chakvi—Chakva	30
16. The song of the Kusumbha—gatherer of the Panjab	32
17. Guru Gobind Singh	35
18. The philosopher at the people's fair at Katas Raj, near Choha Saidan Shah Panjab	37
19. The God of the Christian and the Jew	46
20. Leila and Majanun	47
21. The necklace of pearls	48
22. Guru Grantha	48
23. Her maiden prayers	49
24. Give me the sign of your coming	51

Part III

THE BURNING CANDLES

1. I seek the refuge of thy love	57
2. In a dream came my love to me	57
3. Haste, O physician haste	58
4. The jewel of my heart has come	58
5. Turn by turn	59
6. The song of dawn	59
7. Hir's curse	60
8. Hir's prayer	61
9. I had begun a dance	61
10. The poor people and God	61
11. The saint's kindness	62
12. To the beloved	62
13. Flight within a trance	63
14. O space-devouring goddess	65

Part IV

HARI MANDIR

1. Hari Mandir at Amritsar	69
2. The temple beggar	69
3. The secret of prosperity	70
4. The Sikh mothers fear not	70
5. The Sikh mothers you know not	71
6. The Sikh mothers the forty Sikh martyrs	72
7. Tuka Rama	72
8. The King of Leisure	72
9. The mother	73
10. I own no other as my king	73
11. All is in his hands	74
12. I am of my song, Mother	74
13. His father's idol	75
14. Offerings	75
15. The Mughal	76
16. A Persian shepherd	76
17. Prahlad	77
18. Al Ghazzali of Iran	77
19. Dhruva and his mother	78
20. Ayaz	78
21. His golden boat	79

22. The Panjab revisited	79
23. The roadside trees	81
24. The child-tree	81
25. Karma	82
26. The pomegranates of Kandhar	83
27. What is life	84
28. The Jasmine bush	84
29. My salvation	85
30. The red pitcher of clay	86
31. All the world is soiled	86
32. Society and solitude	87
33. Wherefore this stillness?	88
34. To a courtesan	88
35. The stone-breaker of Vindhya	89
36. The heathen shrine	90
37. One deep wonder	91

Part V

THE HIMALAYAN PINES

1. Give me back my larger me	95
2. My future bliss	96
3. The king gives me the gift of Poesy	96
4. The offering	97
5. The message bearer	97
6. The fatal fire	97
7. The tired falcon	97
8. The mad man	98
9. The little ones of the pine trees	98
10. Expectation	99
11. Life and death	99
12. The great unknown	100
13. The darkness of love	100
14. The light of the mountains	100
15. His footfalls	101
16. An old comrade	101
17. The children of dawn	102
18. The Himalayan Winds	102
19. The light that creates thought	103
20. My moon of moons	103
21. The heart of a stream	104
22. The man with the candle	104
23. When love visits me	105
24. The song of the reapers	105
25. It is best for me	106
26. Night takes me away from every door	106
27. I am so faithless to my love	107
28. The roses of my love	107
29. In a lonely wooden hut	107
30. The bread of love	108
31. Her infinite caprice	108
32. My sisters of the sky	109

33. Pines! O Pines!	109
34. The endless journey	110
35. The distance between you and me	110
36. Do not ask me whom I love	110
37. The mystic sanctuary	112
38. Every morning I feel he comes to me	113
39. The almond-eyed shepherd girl of the Himalayas	114
40. Love is calling	117
41. The 'Realities' are unreal	118
42. The Himalayan Pines	119
43. A sudden freedom	120

Part VI

THE ROSES OF KASHMIR

1. O why did he love me so much?	125
2. Mingling of joys and sorrows	125
3. The Raiment of the little lamp	125
4. The paradise of nothing	126
5. My abashment	126
6. The lotus of my bosom	126
7. In joy of our dream	127
8. My lover and I	128
9. A woman has gone insane on the Dall	128
10. The way my master came to Kashmir	129

FOUR GARDENS OF KASHMIR

1. Four gardens of Kashmir	129
2. The Nasim	130
3. The Shalimar	130
4. The Nishat	131
5. Chashma-Shahi	131

THE BEAUTY OF KASHMIR

1. The beauty of Kashmir	132
2. Come, O ripe red apple of youth	133
3. A woman under the mulberry	133
4. A dialogue in the enchanted vale	134
5. The sleeping lotuses on the lake	135
6. Inspiration of joy	135
7. On her paths	136
8. The Kashmir girl of Pampur	136
9. On seeing an oil painting of a Kashmiri woman	137

ILLUSIONS OF LIFE IN KASHMIR

1. The basket bearers	138
2. The poplar on the River Bank	138
3. A Chinar midst the poplars in autumn	138
4. The shadows of the sky	139
5. The fisherman	139
6. The sunrise	139
7. The mystic lotus of the snowpeaks	139

8. A strange illusion	140
9. The saffron in blossom at Pampur	141
10. The autumn winds	142
11. The Lakes of Kashmir	142
12. The Kashmir autumn	142

THE SPIRIT OF THE KASHMIR MOUNTAINS

1. The Jhelum River	143
2. At Domel	143
3. Chinari	144
4. The delicate chains	145
5. The charmed bowls lying on the way to Kashmir	145
6. The snow-clad heights	146
7. The spirit of the Kashmir mountains	146
8. The dawn at Srinagar	147

WITH THE DWELLERS OF KASHMIR

1. With a shepherd	148
2. With a roaming Fakir	148
3. With an idol-worshipper	149
4. The lament of Pandit Nur Din of Kashmir	152
5. With the bride of the valley	153
6. With an artist	154
7. The Namaz of a Musalman maiden of Kashmir	155
8. With the outgoing river	156
9. The love romance of the rose of Kashmir	157

PART I

HE AND I

PURAN SINGH

I
THE DAY OF NAMING HIM

UNTIE the knots of your garments, O Zephyrs blowing soft,
As ye blow, dropping roses on the path.
 This is the land of the Beloved,
 And to-day is the day of naming Him.
Fill the day with roses, O clouds of the sky,
Cover the face of the Earth with roses,
 This is the Land of the Beloved,
 And to-day is the day of darning Him.

II
AT THE WELL

I SAW a group of girls drawing water at the well, filling their red earthen pitchers of clay;
 and as they collected the precious waters they spilled more than they gathered.
I saw them pass with pitchers full of water poised on their heads,
 slowly wending their way homeward, singing as they went about the Path of Life;
I followed them I knew not why.
When I looked again, I saw it was He, smiling on me and leading me.

III
STRANGE ARE HIS WAYS

STRANGE are the ways of my Beloved!
His beauty and power are new every moment, and His
 Form changes; no one can say, "I know Him."
The moonlight wounded Him one night, and the kindling sun of the following noon healed His
 wounds.
When a king asked Him to draw near, He refused and went away;
But He stopped and clothed a beggar in gold and kissed him.

IV
AT HIS FEET

LEAVING time and thought behind, I fly,
I cut the illusion-cocoons that I have woven around me.
Flying out of myself for ever, I faint and faint at His feet.
As a babe in the mother's lap I drink His light in my soul, concealed from all.
I go as a cloud at night veiling the stars in myself.
But I sit drinking dew with the turbaned flowers in the morning, at His feet.
At the sight of His creation Love turns his key on the doors of my heart.
By His goodness I have gained freedom within the prison doors, at His feet.

V
EVER SINCE I MET HIM

SINCE I met Him, life has been as sweet as death, the revealer.
My narrow bosom holds in its awakened fire the soothing glance of His lotus eyes;
The beauty of the Infinite flashes in my soul.
I anoint my forehead every morn with the gold of the dawn,
 I touch my lips with the red dye of His dream;
I wear the radiant vastness of Heaven,
I make ear-rings of snow-white jasmine and hang round my neck garlands of marigold;
I go everywhere as light as joy, as new as love.
Since I met Him I have not been lonely.
At the dead of night, when the world is all asleep, He is by my side.
I feel Him as the baby feels its mother, and I sleep again.

VI MY FIXED STAR

LOVE passes me by.
I travel in search under the stars, but ever find myself again where I started;
I look at the stars and think again of His Love—my fixed Star.
I ride on tides, I go forward, but I find the waters have all ebbed away,
 and sands flow under my feet;
I strain my eyes to the blue waters and think again of His Love—my fixed Star.
I go treasuring the rainbow wings of the flowerlike flies, and I find the dead, autumn leaves, red
 and yellow, in my hands at the last,
Looking at destiny and the many fates, I think again of His Love—my fixed Star.

VII THE KING OF LIFE

THE thread of life is in His hands;
My heart beats low and fast as He moves the thread.
He is in the inmost chambers of my soul, and yet I find Him not.
Oh! to be close to Him!
I rend my clothes when life moves not, I grow insane and sane by turns, but it avails not;
When the King of Life comes I forget all complaints.

VIII THE ALL-ATTRACTING

HE was on the snowy heights, playing on his flute.
The herd of musk-deer gathered on the snows, caught in the net His music had cast;
He was too gay to conceal His joy, the fragrant music leapt beyond the mountain walls.
The whole procession of the Seers, the stars, came and bowed their heads and bore His joy away.

IX MET AT LAST

I do not remember how I came to be in His arms,
My bosom, like that of a frightened bird, met His, but I do not remember how.
I drank the cup of Nectar from His hands, but I do not remember when.
One glance from Him and it dawned on me how I had longed for ages to be in His arms.
But I do not remember when.

X
I AM NEVER ALONE

I TOUCH Him in my sleep and I kiss Him in my dreams.
He is my Light and my Darkness.
The flowers fall from the sky to welcome me;
And I drink the light of His eyes in the sun;
On the backs of the stars I ride,
And I find Him everywhere, the Ever-Unseen.

XI
I DO NOT AIM

I DO not aim, He aims for me,
I only let go the arrow at His touch,
I only respond.

XII
WHEN I BECAME ALIVE

WHEN I sprang to life, I never felt I was alive,
I felt His Word in me, His Song in my blood.
I felt an infinite impatience to slowly dissolve my flesh and bone into joy and song and dance
and death.

XIII
WHEN I DIED

WHEN I died I did not know I was dead;
The red-lacquered cup of my lips dropped from me in the dust and the nectar of His Song was
spilled.
I had stopped; but the dust began singing Him.

XIV
THE NIGHT WHEN LIE WAS WITH ME

IT has rained loveliness countless times before, it is raining loveliness now.
And countless times again it shall rain loveliness hereafter.
But it never rains for me now as it rained once that night when He was with me.

Beautiful is the dark mystic night, the stars hang as gems in her tresses. And sweeter still is the
half insane lonely night wearing the moon-jewel on her forehead.
But the night is never again to me what it was when He was with me.

XV SEPARATION

AGES and ages had passed, and we had met.
I thought I should never leave Him again, I thought I was sure of myself now.
As He spoke I saw sparks of fire falling from His lips, my strength was gone again, I forgot Him
in His Song.
Ah! We met in an eternal separation.

XVI COME AS THOU COMEST

THE night turns against me, my love!
The *Sal* forests which lent loveliness to our meeting have changed.
Nothing seems intimate as of old; all creation is dark.
Things, it seems, will never be what they were, the morn will never break. All things are
dropping down like leaves of darkness.
Pray delay no more, come from behind as is Thy wont.
Close my eyes with the palms of Thy hands, and gather me in Thy embrace.
In this delight let me conquer death.

XVII THE BARGE OF MY BELOVED

I STAND and wait for the coming of the barge of my Beloved;
The sea crouches at my feet; but the sea is nothing.
The barge of my Beloved comes; ah! the sea is everything to me;
I touch its mane, I love to hear its roar. The sea is my soul,
As the barge of my Beloved comes sailing on its waves.

XVIII HE LEFT ME

HE left me, rode on a horse and went away,
I sank in thought, and my head dropped between my knees;
“How long will he stay away from me?”
I saw into the blue sky of my mind, saw that He was already riding on His horse to the city of my
heart.
I looked up and He was there, wondering why I felt so lonely in His very house.

XIX MY CUP OF JOY

MY cup of joy is in His hands, I drink when He lifts it to my lips,
My eyes are brimful of tears, and my heart is full of a hundred little offerings, and His goodness
overwhelms me.
I cannot distinguish pain from joy, "me" from "Thee".
All things are One Person, all things are His Flesh and Blood.

XX
IF THOU BE MINE

I NEED no church nor mosque, if Thou art mine; if my face turns to the direction where Thou
art, if I am bathed in the light of Thy glance, and my mind thinks not, I have religion
enough in me;
Enough, that I have One who receives the offerings of my heart.
Thou art my Prophet, God, Mecca, Mosque and Shrine.

XXI
I KNEW NOT THE VALUE OF HIS GIFT

HE strung a pearl on a thread, and put the sacred thread round my neck. The pearl on my
breast, like a star, glittered, then slept with me.
But I knew not the value of His gift.
One day it fell off my neck; I saw Earth and Heaven run to pick it up.
But I knew not the value of His gift.

XXII
I THOUGHT I KNEW

I THOUGHT I knew what my joy would be like when I met Him, but I was deceived. Ah! I
knew my ignorance when I met Him.
I thought I truly imagined the bliss of His kiss, but I knew not till he came.
What I thought was knowledge had the dullness of death; but my ignorance beyond knowledge
brought me to His love.

XXIII
LOVE ME MORE

LOVE me more, still more, my Beloved!
Let not a single moment flit by,
Nor a blade of grass be common;
Pour into me oceans of thy love;
And be more to me, still more, my Beloved!
Touch my eyes, restore my sight,
Cure my blindness, let one of us be renewed!
My sight grows dim with the monotony of the things I see.
By myself I die, restore me to life again, my Beloved!
Plunge me in the icy silver waters of midnight,

Drown me in the liquid gold of the infinite every day,
Kill me with joy of Thy return—ever new to me.
And let Time pass dancing through my mind, ankle-bells round his feet ringing the music of Thy
speech in my ears.

XXIV
MY LOVE

I AM half insane looking for something that I know but cannot name.
They say all the hills are aglow with His splendour; and it is strange how wild I am with joy at the
sight of the snow-peak that is more than itself. I am set in an undetermined moment of
beauty. The soul-lit snow ravishes me, for I know love.
I run out of myself with rapture when the soul-mystery of that strange woman at some strange
moment bestows on me what I have been trying to get from all things, all my life.
They say He is everything; but after centuries of thirst for a moment's glimpse of Him I find
Him just One Strange Thing.

XXV
MY LOVE! WHY ARE THINGS UPSIDE DOWH?

WHY are things upside down for me, Love?
The crowds gather, it is Spring; the cups of scented sherbet go round, the women sing, and men
listen, and they throw flowers at each other in self-intoxication;
The new brides sit under the trees waving, in idle languor, their little fans of palm-leaves.
The maidens are swinging in the swings; they are wearing shawls of rainbow hues which the
breezes gently drag away as they pass, touching their black curls;
The pollen of the mango-blossom flies about in joy and abandonment, and the incense of
pleasure curls up from every heart that thinks of love.
But as they laugh and dance and sing, my soul quivers with fear: why are they so merry, Love?
Is it Youth? The sherbet? The mango blossom? or the Spring.
Or is it that ancient thing called Love? Or a new meeting after death?
Or is it Thou that art now there; and gone out of Me?

XXVI
MY BOAT WAS TOSSED IN A STORM

MY boat was tossed in a storm, but I saw my Redeemer in faint outline, riding the storm.
His horse was restive; but His grip was tight on its dark grey mane;
And the storm was but a spray of anger blowing out of the nostrils of His horse.
I dropped the oars, and let go the boat on the surf.

XXVII
MAJANU AND LEILA

I HAD heard she would come to appraise the jewels and valuables of the world and that all the
jewellers and sellers of costly merchandize had assembled at the main bazar:
I too gathered my collection in a little basket, and came with the others.

The whole world, gathered there, came to look at the porcelain I had brought, and all was traced to the ancient authors of thought; in one Confucius drank his tea, in another the Vedic singers, their *soma* juice; the black bowl was from King Ashoka, and the white was Alexander's flower-vase;

Midst this universal chorus of well-informed praise, I stood bewildered, because I had collected them all in a simple way from the winding pilgrim routes of life. No elation came to me because I had brought what no one else possessed that day.

Leila came, the princess of my heart; she saw and appraised each seller's craft and art.

But when my turn came my basket was upset,

At my feet lay a lamenting heap of broken pots.

XXVIII LIVE WITH ME, LOVE!

COME to me, Love; live with me;

Come, Beloved ! but destroy all ceremonials of welcome.

Stop my prayers in my mouth and undo all my vows;

Overpower me, my Lord; draw my conch shell and bells from off my hands;

Extinguish the little lamps that I have lighted to receive Thee.

Come, my Love; put the palms of both Thy hands against my pale cheeks in this utter darkness, and lift my face towards Thyself, and thus show me the Light of God;

Come, my Love; lift me in Thy embrace and teach me there, in complete confidence, the darkness of all earthly light and the dullness of all knowledge.

XXIX SALUTATION

HE has gone to the North, in the direction of the snows.

Look in that direction, through the darkness of both day and night.

"Name Him" with the lips of the flame He was lit in the shrine of thy heart, and lay thy head on the grass, thinking of Him.

He stands just there, blessing thee.

PART II

THE WANDERING MINSTREL

PURAN SINGH

I
THE WANDERING MINSTREL

I STAND on every door—a wandering minstrel, with my eyes half closed, striking my *vina* in the
old way now on one knows,
I vanish and the song alone remains on every door.

It is the little beating heart,
The quivering voice of the baby new-born,
It is the Heaven of youth, the perfume of virgin life,
It is the dumb passion of flowers,
and the cry of the bird for her mate across the waters of the river at night,
It is the silent swell of a bosom that waits for its rest on another,
And the loud red cry of the eyes that have met;
It is the unending journey to the shrine of love.

My religion is a simple love-song freed from the strings of my *vina*.
As it flies in air like a voice of Heaven
My song gathers the voices that resound in the memory of ages,
And I sing of the painful tales of a thousand hearts, the stories of a thousand wars of love.

The long-forgotten tunes rise again, perfecting my voice in an instant.
I sing the Vedic chants again, those high-pillared melodies of the very sky and the stars,
I sing of the calm compassion of that infinite human love of *Tatbagata*, I sing of the freedom
from the bondage of self and *karma*, I sing of the *nirvana* of the Lord of Peace;
I sing of the times when God in flesh, Jesus, talked to the sweet faced, high-statured women on
the wells of Palestine;
And Zoroaster speaks again, I hear him with my ears put close to the throbbing *vina* of my own
heart.

And the Pathan *muazzin* puts all his wild and untutored passion into his savage cry sent abroad
from the roof of his village mosque— *Allab-u-Akbar*.
And at his call, the sword comes out of nothing and it flashes like a hundred lightnings of the sky
and a thousand hands appear and a thousand voices raise the cry.
And in the holy war the humanity dies that comes not to the mosque,
And from the battlefield red with the blood of men, I pass into depths of silence of a full-moon
night at Pun and hear Chaitanya's *Hari bol, Hari!* And while listening, I see my strings
beat like the concourse of a thousand human hearts.

Many hundred voices of the despised damsels uprush on my string, the tunes of sadness of vice
made virtue by their life,
I know not their names, but I reintone their forgotten lilt with holy chants,
Perchance my singing breaks their fetters beyond the grave.
I am the Hindu, the Muslim, the Christian, the Fire-worshipper.

I am the Buddhist, I am the man chosen both out of the black races and the white races of man,
I am bidden by the saints to proclaim the sainthood of sinners;
In a cosmic tumult of faith, in the mercy of the unseen God, I sing the infinite self-
contradictions of life.
In the loneliness of a secret passion for ever I live for myself,

In the cave of my heart, one name resounds, and in all the voices I hear the voice of my own Beloved.

I am not vast, I am small and selfish, my passion is personal, I always am like a babe in its mother's lap;
I do not think, I drink milk of the sweetness of love and I sleep and sing the peace of slumber.

II COME MY LOVE TO ME

COME, my love, to me, on the bank of death,
The Death-stream sings the song of life and is for ever in flow,
Here is the unknown joy of a future life floating like a dream in sleep; like a sun-lit cloud diffused
on the sky, like a new-born colour on the face of the dawn.
Come, my love; we breathe together the fragrance of illusion that is in the odour of the trail of
the musk deer on the snows, in the mid moon-night below the pine shadows that sleep
alone on the heights.
Come, my love, we lie together,
And sleep in each other on the bank of Death
As the winds caress our tresses softly,
As the gentle waves of the Death-stream bathe our feet,
Come, my love, we die to live together.

III MY SWEET HEART'S LETTER

THE star-writ sky is a letter in the hands of my love, as she sits alone on her roof at night,
waiting for her lover, and writing her letter with the fire of her eyes:
I wonder what does my love, trembling under the thick dark of night, say in her letter of this
star-writ sky.
She says no one else knows the fire-letters of love she writes,
It is the language of the eyes of love, which youth teaches in the garden of the roses that bloom
on her roof,
It is the silence between her soul and her lover;
It is heard unheard; only in the hush of that night of our meeting.
The everlasting call of love comes out of nothing,
And the birds cry to each other from shore to shore, agitated by her love of me.
The light of her face falls all about me,
And we lie together in each other for ever without meeting at all,
As our kisses fall on our lips like a shower,
And our bones shiver with the passion of thought.

IV THE PANJABI BRIDE

(1)

MY love lives in the woodland of veils,

The veils are of violet, violet silk, and under the veils my love trembles with a million reveries of the joys that no one knows.
And no word comes out from there but a gentle rustle of her silks, and the mystic passion-sound of her bangles of gold, striking one another, as she moves under the veils with the sweetness that has not yet smiled its maiden smile in the presence of her lover.

(2)

I MET her when all the lamps were blown out, and the room was dark, and we could recognise each other by letting hands seek for hands and arms find arms;
I met her in a simple embrace in which we quivered like two notes of a song;
And no word we uttered,
For we did not yet know each other;
Under showers of the bliss of the gods, we slept, waking in our dreams, she in my arms and I in hers, my head resting on her elbow and hers resting in mine arm.

V

THE BLUE BANGLES

(A reminiscence of a Panjabi folk-song)

THE Bangle-dealer has come.
O Turbanned Man, buy me those bangles— those bangles of blue-coloured glass,
The blue-coloured glass, Beloved;
The Bangle-dealer sells bangles red and blue and gold.

Snow-white are my wrists,
The blue glass would match well the fairness of my arms,
Buy me those bangles of blue-coloured glass.

I would not wear, I would not wear these bangles you have brought,
These bangles are old and my youth is fresh and new
The Bangle-dealer has come.
O Turbanned Man, buy me those bangles, those bangles of blue-coloured glass.

VI

MY YOUTH WAS A SECRET GARDEN

MY youth was a secret garden;
I raised high walls of stone all round,
And I locked the doors and barred the gates of East and West and North and South,
And I would not unbar the door to anyone else;
Late at night alone, alone, I would go, and see my garden-youth like a jewel shining in the dark.

From the moon-blue sky,
A man came like a dream afloat on waves of light,
He alighted in my garden, as morn comes soft with its unspread wings;
I could not say “hey” to him, nor “aye” I said, he was like no one else I had seen or known.
I was taken unawares, was he a god or a man?
Not as other men are, he had the beauty of God, he was someone else.
With his one smile, sudden did my youth burst into a flaming blossom,
I could not say “hey” to him, nor “aye” I said, he was like no one else I had seen or known.

VII
TO MY WOMAN WHEREVER SHE BE

My woman unless you have made a thousand mistakes and I have made two thousand more,
Perhaps we shall never find our way to each other.
But when found, come, my great, good woman, to me.
And I will come straight to thee.
Give me thyself, entire thyself to me, Love.
Thou art the youth-strung, Heaven-alive string of God's *Vina*:
Holding thee in my arms, I wish to sing the name of my God.

I am a wandering minstrel, a heart all ragged with pains of pleasure, no skill, no art, no voice of
music I own, nothing that they say makes a man.
But with thyself in my arms,
Thou, one-stringed *iktara* with thy throbbing heart in mine, my God-given perfection of love,
thou, my woman,
What care I if they neglect me, and pass me by, for I shall never own anything more than thee,
For lost in the mute quivering of thy heart,
I am truly lost in God.

VIII
TO THE SWEET LIAR

YOU live in the sacred shrine, the *thakurdwara* of golden minarets, Beloved:
And you tell me always, always, you would come to me silently at night—
You would come when you could get away.
You break my heart always.
And I gather but pieces of thy broken promise every night
You say you would come,
But you don't come,
You are a true sweet liar.

IX
**THE BANGLED BRAHMANI (THE BRAHMAN WOMAN
OF THE JAMMU HILLS WITH BANGLES)**

(A reminiscence of a Panjabi folk-song)

All, the Brahmani with her bangles of ruby-red glass on the ascent of the Jammu hills in the winy
pride of her life in tide,
Ah, the Brahmani with her bangles of ruby-red glass, that slip elbow-ward from her delicate
wrists down, as she tosses her snow-white arms up out of the falling broad sleeves of her
shirt, in careless joy of her youth.
The hills are aglow with her,
As one hears the jingle of her bangles of ruby-red glass;
As she lifts her black veil from her face fair as the moon: she pants for breath, and her heavy
young breasts, as she ascends the steep rough paths, rise and fall;
And she puts both her silver hands on her slender little waist and cries "O Ma"!

She halts a while full erect to have a breath of the free mountain air,

And arranges with a tender wave of her hand her tresses that madden all the hilltops:
The Brahmani with her bangles of ruby red glass in the winy pride of her life in tide!

She can safely unveil her face,
And show lightly the woman she is
For no one known to her is about,
The strangers cause no restraint,—
The many hill-villagers, the half-starved beasts of the Raja of Cashmere, like the pack-animals
with burdens on their back and their *bukkas* in their hands go smoking up their tar-
choked pipes in sad content of despair, yet singing in the wild air their hill chants of love,
And they are as the many pine trees straight and bent that forever ascend the hills,
And she midst them sparkling like the untaught secret of life.

X OUT OF THE HEART OF THE POTHOHAR POETESS

WHENEVER I see a shining plate of bronze or brass,
I sigh, alas!
What has happened to the human heart,
It is smoked with half-burnt doubts of the otherness of its own life-beat;
The goldsmith melts silver by puffing up both his cheeks with his breath and blowing in so much
blast;
Me seems he overknows his art,
For I melt the silver of my limbs by merely looking at my hands and arms and calves.

I clasped a tree that stood alone in the desert sand,
With my breath it suddenly bloomed into the glory of its purple blossom.
I was struck with the power of my breath, and I murmured as it passed:
“Where is the Breath that would make a woman blossom thus?”

A bird was crying in the cage,
A little red-tailed *keburdu* of the Panjab,
And the cry was more than the bird itself it had the expanse of the Heavens.
It overwhelmed my soul.
I unbarred the door of the cage for it,
The bird flew out but hovered within my veil, perhaps it mistook my veil for the sky:
I drew my veil close and the bird was caught again,
But it did not cry this time, it only crooned and quivered on my throbbing breast,
It had the sense of play,
I raised my veil, it flew rushing upward in the sky,
We never met again.

His younger brother snatched my manuscript of verses out of my hands,
And ran out into the courtyard and began reading them aloud;
I asked him not to,
But he would not listen,
He would fain annoy me,
He wrenched the manuscript out of his hands,
And tore it into pieces.
Why should they read what I write only for myself?

They say the flower blooms well on the burning bush,
It dies when it is torn from its place of birth.
But I am the flower that withers in its youth here,
I wish someone may pluck me from here,
And scatter me on the Paths of Love.

The gardener's daughter brought me two palmfuls of white jasmine flowers wet with dew.
"These are for you, dear new Bride," she said.
Tears fell in my palms overflowing the jasmine flowers,
And me thought the jasmine flowers too were tears of someone else.

I want to bathe in the village stream,
And after I had bathed
I floated down those jasmine flowers;
"Go to Him who loves,
"Whose city I know not, nor His name," said I.

The stream laughed and said:
"He dwells yonder, I know His hut,
"Only yesterday he had asked me to give you His love,
"Today you send him only flowers,
"And not your love, new Bride."

I looked deep on the flowing stream,
It mirrored back my face,
"Go, naughty girl," said I,
"You are carrying with my flowers already the whole of myself and what is mere love?
"If He asks again for me,
"You pour yourself again and again at His feet,
"And pour at last my image that you are carrying in your breast."
The stream laughed again and said:
"I brought you his love in my silver splashes,
"I came and loved your limbs in joy of his message,
"And you only give me flowers and an image of yourself.
"How can images be caught at all, my lassie?
"Give some message of love, new bride,
"For a message is best returned by a message, my girl.

"I would not be roaming on these banks,
"Alone, my darling.
"And I would not be offering prayers to God,
"If I knew what is love,
"And if I knew how to love.
"My lover is hidden somewhere still,
"Though they say I am not a woman that is wed,
"I get mere words of hope coming from thy mouth, O pretty stream,
"Or a sweet voice thrills me from a bird swinging on the branch over-head.
"Are mere words love?

"I have not understood yet,

“You go, my dear little cherub, dancing,
“And give Him flowers bedewed with my tears,
“If he ask for a message, say I looked deep into your eyes,
“If more, say she hath no words,
“If more, say she lay dead on the rushes in agony of not knowing yet where in this world is the
one who loves.

XI THIS WORLD IS AN ILLUSION

O MOON-FACED love!
Thy ear-rings shaking in thy ears,
And the diamond pendants sparkling like fresh dew in thy hair,
And the necklace of pearls on thy neck,
And the rings of ruby and sapphire on thy fingers, the emeralds glowing on the wrists,
And thy gold amulet bound with red silken chords on thy right arm,
And the smile-wave on thy lips, that laves thy little round chin,
The hidden laughter of thy black eyes,
And the dawn-sparkle of thy forehead high;
Ah! all combine, all combine to make me thy slave;
And they laugh at us and say, “Ah! this world of ours is an illusion.”

XII THE ORANGES BLOSSOM IN THE PANJAB

THE oranges are in blossom in the Panjab;
And thy lover is gone far away to distant Ladakh;
O sweet girl of the Panjab: dip both thy cup-shaped palms in the swift, white stream of the
orange blossom, and let the blossom-stream engulf thee entire.
Be a queen covered with the flowing wreaths of flowers, flowing, flowing in a stream of
fragrance to far off shores;
For there halts thy lover beside his mule on the mountain-side near old Ladakh, and breathes
deep with both his sniffing nostrils the fragrance of thy heart full of orange blossom,
And says, “Ah Ram! No oranges of the Panjab bloom here, and yet I wonder, I breathe the
familiar fragrance of the orange blossom shaking in the ear-rings of my beloved.
“As I did breathe once when I lay under the orange blossom of the Panjab with her arms
entwined round my heart, O God.”

XIII THE HOUR OF UNION

THE rivers flow and ask me, where is Love?
And which the hour of Union?
The mad river, of all people to ask me of the hour of Union, O Beloved!
And what can I reply? Which day, which hour, which night it may be Thy pleasure,
O Beloved!

XIV
THE BLOSSOMED FIELDS OF THE PANJAB

THE chaste abandon of the blossomed *sarson*¹ has lit the land with the joy of gold,
Standing on high roofs of the cities of old the yellow-turbaned boys are flying kites
And their kites flop their yellow wings as the flying birds of gold.
The girls of the Panjab wear yellow *pallas*
And the *pallas* flutter like the canary-wings of the butterflies that hover over the honeyed *sarson*.
There is a strange quickening of the life-throb in the Panjab.
A maiden yonder on the roof has caught the falling kite cut in mid-air, and now the kite flutters
to fall into her arms a wounded bird shot down from high.
All things have grown so dangerously alive.

XV
CHAKVI-CHAKVA²

Chakvi: Has the night of separation come?
Or is it death?
For blindness engulfs me down,
Your voice I hear across the river,
But where is your face?
But Beloved! My Beloved!

Chakva: It is the dark sea of separation,
I wish I had large wings to cover the night.
The pain of loneliness has seized me,
But we hear still each other's voice!
On that shore yours,
On this shore mine,
My Beloved! My Beloved!

Chakvi: It is not night, it is death,
For I am breathless.
No radiant air of love is left for me,
My tongue is parched, and my soul is faint,
My Beloved! My Beloved!

Chakva: This cruel night is not to be,
The day already weaves the bridge of rays across,
My wings feel the beating of a new life coming,
And a new sight of the unseen future flows within my heart,
A little while more, and then no more;
My Beloved! My Beloved!

Chakvi: My frail breath might not last, the lamp of my heart might blow out before the
dawn,
A little while more and I may be no more,
My Beloved! My Beloved!

Chakva: The night is but a passing phase.

And the architects of light are spanning the gulfs,
The seven-coloured bridge of rays is in the hands of the Titans,
And there are they throwing it across;
And how can you cease to be my love,
When the sweetest thought of me is you!
My Beloved! My Beloved!

Chakvi: But the blast of blinded vision might prove too much,
This death-hush might drown the song of life,
And we may never meet again,
My Beloved! My Beloved!

Chakva: But our two breaths are tied together,
Maybe only by the broken threads of life.
How can you die without me? How?
A little while more, a little more,
And I will be by your side,
As of yore as of yore!
My Beloved! My Beloved!

Chakvi: But my feeble wings are tired of beating,
The hope itself sinks with every joyous rise
As your voice comes floating on the air,
As if you yourself have come, but it is only a cry.
The pain is much too severe now,
How can I live? Not any more.
My Beloved! My Beloved!

Chakva: This severe, severe pang is life,
And thou art in deeper depths of night,
This death-like thing is love!
My Beloved! My Beloved!

Chakvi: More faint, more faint grows your voice,
And still more painful rents are made,
And my heart is breaking through the night,
And will it be, we meet again?
My Beloved! My Beloved!

Chakva: There, there sprouts the day
Behind those dark banks of mists,
There yonder is the spark of light,
And it shall be, we meet again!
My Beloved! My Beloved!

XVI

THE SONG OF THE KUSUMBHA-GATHERER OF THE PANJAB

1.

I GO gathering *Kusumbha*, *Kusumbha*,

The red *Kusumbha* that blooms wild and free in the grassy meadows of the Panjab.
It is the colour of life flying, dying as soon as it is born.
It is the fire of passion in this false, false world, that is flying, dying as soon as it is kindled;
It is the quest of youth, a longing for this mirage, mirage world, that flies and dies as soon as it is reached.

2.

Fleeting, fickle, too fickle, alas!
Ah, false, false is the red dye of *Kusumbha*.
It is the colour of fortune that dyes *Kusumbha-red* but a passing moment with a vain, rich pleasure,
O *Kusumbha* blooms wild, wild in the grassy meadows of the Panjab.

3.

Fleeting, fickle, too fickle, alas!
Ah, false, false is the red passion of a young Panjabi,
It is the colour of the love-promise that dyes *Kusumbha-red* a dying moment of life.
O *Kusumbha* blooms wild, wild in the grassy meadows of the Panjab.

4.

Fleeting, fickle, too fickle, alas!
Ah, false, false is the red colour of life itself,
It is the colour of Illusion that dyes *Kusumbha-red* a vain breath with love,
O *Kusumbha* blooms wild, wild in the grassy meadows of the Panjab.

5.

Fleeting, fickle, too fickle, alas!
Ah, false, is the red dye of *Kusumbha*,
And the lap of my garment is full with these red, red lies!
It is like the lap of sky trembling with the sunset glories that fly, that lie.
O *Kusumbha* blooms wild, wild in the grassy meadows of the Panjab.

6.

A young Panjabi met me,
A beardless youth from a village, passing by
When I was plucking *Kusumbha*.
O *Kusumbha*, blooms wild, wild in the grassy meadows of the Panjab.

7.

He stood for a while looking at me,
And his eyes turned *Kusumbha-red*,
The *Kusumbha* was gathered in my hands,
And the *Kusumbha* was in his eyes,
His eyes turned into two *Kusumbha* buds,
O *Kusumbha* blooms wild, wild in the grassy meadows of the Panjab.

8.

He just stood by me in the meadows,
His eyes *Kusumbha*, *Kusumbha* red
As I plucked the *Kusumbha* buds,
He stood speechless,
I only sang of *Kusumbha* blooms wild and free,

It is like the colour of life flying, dying as soon as it is born.
But the people of Amritsar sang our simple meadow story,
And the song rang through the whole Panjab.

9.

“O his eyes became red like *Kusumbha* buds,
As he looked at her plucking *Kusumbha*,
As she sang:
Fleeting, fickle, too fickle, alas!
Ah, false, false is the play of me and thee,
It is the flower of youth that dyes *Kusumbha-red* our eyes with passion,
O *Kusumbha* blooms wild, wild in the grassy meadows of the Panjab.

10.

“A beardless young man from the village came,
And he stood listening as she sang:
Fleeting fickle, too fickle, alas!
Ah, false, false is the *Kusumbha* bud,
It is the bud of lips that dyes *Kusumbha* red our soul with song,
O *Kusumbha* blooms wild, wild in the grassy meadows of the Panjab.

11.

As her feet tripped tipsy on the grass,
And she went gathering *Kusumbha* buds, flying, flying, dying, dying.
The young man went gathering her, as she fled before him, eluding him, as a trembling moth
flies before a running child.
Fleeting, fickle, too fickle, alas!
Ah, false, false, is the *Kusumbha* bud.
As fugitive as a dew drop on the leaf of grass,
O *Kusumbha* blooms wild, wild in the grassy meadows of the Panjab.

12.

It is the colour of life flying, dying as soon as it is born,
It is the fire of passion, in this false, false world, that is flying, dying as soon as it is lit.
It is the quest of youth, a longing for this mirage, mirage world, that flies and dies as soon as it is
reached.

XVII GURU GOBIND SINGH

1.

Have you seen the night with black eyes,
That waylays the pilgrim on the path of love,
Whose one finger shuts off the sun and the moon,
Whose cloaks swallow up all directions?
She sits across the road with eyes closed in calm knowledge that the pilgrim cannot escape her,
And how greedily she looks from the corner of her eyes on the jewel of faith concealed in the
pilgrim's heart, whose unseen ray she cannot hide in all her darkness.
The pilgrim cannot pass, all doors are shut, the infinite vastness itself is a mighty bolted gate.

The pilgrim cries but no one hears, as a man in dream cries in vain for help to his friends standing outside his realm of sleep.

2.

Have you seen the prisoner whom the gang of robbers has thrown in the dark cell for the crime of having a sweet voice, a beautiful face and a great mind?

He cannot think what these gentlemen think,

And he cannot do what they do,

So he must be made blind, deaf, dumb and lame, crushed between the high prison walls.

3.

Have you seen the sudden blackening of the sky by the fury of the red-eyed owl,

And the white hawk is caught in the black iron cage and flutters in vain within,

He beats his head against the hard iron sky. The red-eyed flower laughs as the hawk cries.

4.

Have you seen the victim, a man bound with cords of the green *kusha* grass, made ready with saffron paste and rice to be killed as a sacrifice before the idol of *hate* made of black stone, with two diamonds set in hollow sockets for his eyes?

And have you seen the eyes of the victim turned upward under the lids in deep-drawn prayer?

5.

Have you heard the drums of war resound in the Heaven, unknown, black sky, that terrific tearing up of that quivering of a hundred lightnings, that great glowing up of the pillars in the house of life with the passion of God?

And the end?

When the slaves again see the light of God, and the freedom of His love,

Then only great paths burn again with light,

The net of Death is torn, the iron cage is shattered,

And every trembling blade of grass finds an infinite direction.

Have you seen the white hawk perched on the right hand of God,

And God seen going everywhere on a purple horse?

Have you seen that little charmed jewel of prayer, hidden in the heart of man,
and its feeble flame

For the new setting of which a new universe of love and joy takes its birth?

XVIII

THE PHILOSOPHER AT THE PEOPLES'S FAIR AT KATAS RAJ, NEAR CHOHA SAIDAN SHAH, PANJAB

(A crowd returning from the Fair of Katas Raj stops for a while on the road-side, under the shade of a banyan tree and falls into a talk).

1st. I have sold my whole mule-load of wheat.

2nd. And I have bought a black cow with a snow-white calf, it gives about forty pounds of milk a day, a wonder of the Majha breed. My children would go mad playing with the sweet white calf.

3rd. I have sold a cart of hay, but the buyer cheated me,
I have got much less for it than I had counted on; the buyer confounded my arithmetic.

- 4th. And I have bought a blue-white mare, my mare is a beauty, it is a real winged fairy of heaven. It can put one across the frontier in a night, beyond the blind, gripping hold of law. It is swift like the wind.
- 5th. I have bought the sweet melons of Katas, a basketful of them, a whole melon goes to each of my children and no one will know what delight the other got, and yet each will know in his own mouth the delight of the other.
- 6th. And I have sold, alas! at a loss two black bullocks,
For my creditor pressed me.
I am not sorry for the smaller number of coins I got,
But I weep at the life-long separation from my two comrades with whom I had played since my boyhood. They were little calves when we became friends.
This separation causes a void in my life,
I feel so lonesome.
I wonder why the creditor took my live bullocks for dead pieces of silver he once gave me, the magic pieces that like newly caught sparrows flew away from the hollow of my palm, as he put them there.
I ask, is this justice to deprive me of my living comrades in lieu of dead metal?
- 7th. Talk not, my village-fellow, of these creditors,
they are not men, they are merciless machines, they are dead.
This silver and gold have been slowly poisoning them and have killed them.
These fellows would not give a copper piece to their wives even if they weep for hours for one.
How can you expect justice from them, far less mercy?
- 8th. My friends: I have proved quite unbusinesslike, but it was not my fault,
I saw a virile, peasant girl with magnetic black eyes which pulled my heart out of me,
I forgot all my business and kept all days of the fair looking at her, as she sat or stood or talked or laughed, selling as she was in exchange for corn the green vegetables of Katas.
And I sold all the goods for a glance, buying vegetables again and again at her stall.
- 9th. I am a potter living in a village just a mile from here, you know Kotdila.
I have sold my earthen pots at my own price,
For summer has set in and my pots are touched with the Himalayan magic my ancestors put in my hands,
And I sold mere clay for a heap of shining gold and silver, this is a bargain, aye.
People are fools, like children when they wish to buy a fancied toy, and pay any price you may ask.
After all, the world pays what value you put on your own art and labour and craft:
It is my trade-secret, you know.
My pots give icy crystal water in hot burning summer.
- 10th. I have done no buying and selling,

For I came putting on my new Peshawar *lungi* with ends woven with gold thread, to see the fair.

I stood wondering how much movement is given to the limbs of man by his hunger and thirst for these little things of wear and tear, this grass and grain of man, things that come for sale in the bazaar. Who says man hankers after higher things of the soul?

He might casually look up to them and see once in a while the sky; otherwise he is only a bullock bound with a strong rope to his manager.

I saw the pivot on which whirls this magic wheel of life in the fair of the world in its animal hunger and thirst.

11th. Ha! Ha! The other friend goes home with a better profit than yourself,
At least he swallowed a living, moving girl through his hungry eyes, And you fool
go home with only an empty regret.

12th. *(A young man beaming red with health of the country life, open air and hard labour on the plough)*

This fair is a world in itself,

I sold here what I had brought with me from home,

And I am taking home in lieu of those what others produced,

In this exchange I feel is life,

I have found in this mingling the sweetness of God,

Here in this fair, the family of man is enlarged without his knowing,

And I tell you, I have neither gained nor lost, there is no profit and loss that can be counted here in terms of silver and gold; those that count thus are illusion-bound in their own fancied values of things.

After all when one is hungry, no one can bite his yellow gold, nor when he is thirsty sip his molten silver,

My fair day, my friends, has been full of harvests undreamt of, till I reaped them suddenly like this in a day. I came alone, a little stripling of a man, but I go back a thousand men, myself and more.

13th. Hey! Hey! A veritable young philosopher amongst us.

14th. But why dost thou not speak?

(addressing a youth-iridescent Fakir come suddenly on the scene)

O roaming, ash-besmeared long-tressed saint-like thing, with a yard long pair of iron-tongs, which you come flinging at us.

What have you to say?

Is it the usual dole of charity that brings you here?

The Fakir.

All is true, every word of what you have said,

I have no quarrel with you,

I too came to the fair of Katas, to see men and things.

But, alas. I saw only the village bullocks gathered here, and with them gathered the sadhus who beg with black cocoanut bowls in hand the doles of charity from the animals when they are in the mood to give.

I saw those animals push each other to have morsels of grass and water first to themselves. This is all the movement round this manger-world you call life.

Alas, I found no buyers of my goods,

I searched for one amongst you who might have sight enough.
But I go back to the hills with my merchandise, as I came, singing my
Ram, Ram and flinging my iron tongs at you, as you see.

An old Peasant. What have you, my friend, to sell? This *Ram, Ram* we all say at home, till
our jaws get tired. I have passed a whole age doing this, but truly I have
not got as much of satiation even once, as one feels in drinking a draught
of sweet sherbet on a summer day, or in a mouthful of the melon of
Katas.

All together. *Ram, Ram.* Yes, we all know, it is only good when we are bathing with
cold water. Afterwards where does it go when we hurt the day with spears
of desire in our fury of chase?

The Fakir. Eyes! Eyes! True sight is a gift of Heaven.

All together. (*Opening their eyes*)
But we are not blind, we all have large eyes.

The Fakir. Pearls! Pearls! Pearls of the sky!

All together. Hang pearls. We are too poor for buying pearls. We labour from year's
end to year's end with all our wives and children and hardly get a
mouthful of maize-bread and a bowl of whey, we have no living concern
with pearls.

Another. We have no leisure for pearls.

young. For ever with but one wear!

peasant. Have you got the corn seed, the maize seed?
The time of sowing is drawing near.

Another. Have you got the secret of rain if the monsoon fails?

Another. Are you an alchemist? Can you transmute iron into gold?

Another. Have you got the panacea for the sickness of our children and our
women?

Fakir. Gems, gems, rare, rare!

All together. Show us, show us.

Fakir. Sapphires of the Himalayas! Rubies of Badakhshan! Pearls of Ceylon!
Diamonds of Golconda! Emeralds of Panna.

All together. (*Crowding round the Faqir in a crick*)
Show us, show us.

Fakir. (*Opens out his little wallet and a heap of gems is laid bare.*)

Here are my pearls and gems, the very sight of which gives new sight to men *who have a vision* of them like this.

All together.

(Wonder-struck, with their eyes wide open and their mouths agape)

Ah! what an infinite Heaven of gems shines in his small purse of a wallet. *All are for a moment lost in wonder and have sunk deep into a profound silence. All get a new sight by this dip into an infinite value; and of this new sight and sensation every one of the crowd becomes self-conscious but one cannot explain it to another, nor even to himself and yet by looking at each other in silence, all feel the glow of a new life. And as they look at each other, they feel they are getting more and more inebriated as if they were drinking cups after cups of an unknown wine from each other's eyes.*

All.

(Putting out their hands like so many beggars)

Let us see those gems of yours. Let us touch them. Put one on the palm of each one of us. Let us touch and feel your gems.

Fakir.

(Whose gems have gone, his apple, red cheeks have turned pale, shaking his wallet inside out and striking it against his upspread left-hand palm).

Friends, my gems and pearls and diamonds and rubies and sapphires all have vanished. They have become the new sight of your eyes, the glow of life that has excited your very blood; the light bloom of joy that is on your faces is caused by the burning up of my gems at your sight, as I opened my wallet to your gaze, and here what is left to me in the bargain is dust that I shake out in the air. The intoxication in your eyes is the blood of my jewels.

All.

And their price?

Fakir.

You mean you can pay it if I ask, with all your bulls and kine, with your pots of clay, your wheat and rice, your lands and wells and those thatched mud-walled huts?

All.

But where are your jewels? What is their price? Let us touch them. Why have you concealed them? Where have they gone?

Faqir.

Price, price?

The jewels have all burnt at your sight. They caught fire and their flame has leapt into your souls,

And their ashes I have gathered.

Their price? My folly of displaying them to you.

My teacher had told me to show them to no one, not even to the moon and the stars, but I have been a fool.

One.

We do not understand what he is talking.

It is some magic.

Ah, these fellows go about tricking, tricking.

Second.

I must run away. O, O.

My cart has gone off the road, the bullocks are with their forelegs already in the hollow.

Third.

O, where is my mare? How we silly fools forgot ourselves!

- Fourth. My donkey laden with wheat?
O Pinu, O Pinu, my boy, where are you?
See it may not stray into some one's fields and we lose what we have gained at Katas.
- Fifth. The basket of these wild dried black *amlokas* (wild primroses) has fallen off the head of my wife. Never mind, my woman.
Pick them up, a little earth gathering along adds to our profit.
(All run away to their own business and disappear one by one at the farthest turn of the road, except the Fakir who takes his seat under the banyan tree. A boy is seen coming back from the crowd, a young man with the freshness of a new youth).
- The Boy. *(Approaching the Fakir who is saying Ram, Ram, his lips moving and a rosary of wooden beads in his hand also moving)*
May I have a word with you, Sir?
- Faqir. Yes, my boy, whence are you?
- The Boy. Sir I too came to the fair and I am returning home from the fair.
Sir, you have burnt your jewels away, I saw you burning them.
But how is it your *Ram, Ram* you have not given away?
The people went away, as much animals, after seeing your jewels, as they were before. Of what good has been the sparkle of your gems after all, imparted to these huge buffaloes and cows, I understand not.
So, Sir, you came to the fair to show some kind of a magic fireworks.
Sir, I only ask what is the *Ram Ram* that is on your lips? Is it also a jewel that you are burning in your breath to ashes, or is it a parent gem, the one that becomes many?
You have just burnt one dear treasure of them on the roadside before a pack of animals in a moment's merriment; much too rich is the glow perhaps to be retained within one's heart.
- Fakir. O boy, you are so old in wisdom. Your mother, I am sure, is a woman of faith, who has taught you with her milk so much of this ancient secret of Asia.
Thou hast eyes.
Yes, my boy, I can make fireworks of the gems of my joy, but how can I give away the very Giver of that joy—my *Ram, Ram, Ram*— the charmed stone?
- The Boy. But the fair is now all dispersed, I am left alone,
My mother sent me to buy *Ram, Ram*.
“*Ram, Ram,*” she said.
But I have found no seller.
You have got it,
Do you sell, sir?
I implore you, sir, to sell one *Ram, Ram* to me, or else what will my mother say? That I could not buy her a single piece of *Ram, Ram*.
- Fakir. What price did your mother give you for it, my boy?

The Boy. My mother said to me,
 "The price we pay for the sunlight,
 "The price we pay for air,
 "The price we pay for the sight of the stars,
Go, my boy. The seller of *Ram Ram* asks no price,
 "For the price of *Ra,m Ram* is His pleasure, His
 "Favour, His Grace."
So I came.

Fakir. *(Glowing like a golden orb of the sky, his face becomes large like that of creation.)*
 O Son, Say *Ram!*
(The boy says Ram and falls down in joy He is lying unconscious under the banyan
tree. There is a deep blue lightning spark, the Fakir vanishes like a soul in the body of
the boy as it seems of possibly he melts away like a vision in air.)

This process is a cosmic process by which *Ramananda* gave *Ram Nam* to the famous Kabir.

XIX THE GOD OF THE CHRISTIAN AND THE JEW

THE GOD of the Christian and the Jew, of the Hindu and the Muslim, they say, is one,
They are quite sure, I am perhaps not,
But why?
God is everywhere.
And all is God.
Alas, I am of a lesser caste than the Seers.
I see light only round the feet of my Beloved.
It is dark for my dim eyes beyond His face.
God's wine flows through all eyes, they say.
But my hand trembles, I cannot lift the cup from anywhere.
As I lie under the shade of a tree,
Self-starved, neglected by everyone,
Here comes a man answering my prayers, with bread and water and wine, and he himself lifts the
 cup of life to my lips.
When I furiously take His hands in mine and cry—He is God, He is God—
They say I sing all cosmic strains.
But in my opinion, I am Not a philosopher,
I am a mere man who opens his eyes like a flower to catch the rays of his own sun.
Every morn, every eve, every day, and every night
I eat and drink my God.
I am superstitious, quite, perhaps a lot,
For in frail little superstitions I find the honey of truth, as the bee finds it in flowers.
God of the Christian and the Jew, of the Hindu and the Muslim is one,
And God is everywhere,
But to speak the truth I always meet Him in a friend.

LEILA AND MAJANUN

Leila knocked at Majanun's door of mind, which was shut from within;
"I have come," she said,
"Rise my lover, awake.
"Whom thou hast been searching long comes seeking thee at last.
"Open thy door and let me in."
"Who art thou?" came a faint voice from within, "Leila, Leila I."
"Thy Leila, Thy Leila."
"My Leila is me,"
And when the voice came from there,
Majanun lay dead in Leila's arms.

XXI THE NECKLACE OF PEARLS

Have you seen the necklace of pearls of seven strings
That He gave me, ill set with an emerald after every tenth pearl,
And every day I wear it on my neck,
It rests on my bare bosom,
I touch it and feel so rich at the very touch,
Every pearl speaks to me the secrets of His love,
And the necklace of pearls is my angel-companion.
No one feels my secret love,
And how can anyone else see my dream of beauty without my sleep?

XXII GURU GRANTHA

Once God was flowing low in me.
There is the soul's ebb and tide in the sea of love.
My life had flickered and faded, it was almost gone!
All of a sudden, I ran for life, went and touched *Guru Granth*,
I lay in deep slumber touching the Song of the Guru, flesh to flesh,
When I rose from there, I was shimmering with the tremendous beauty of a thousand colours of
the great passion of a young woman newly in love.

XXIII HER MAIDEN PRAYERS

(1)

HOW rare is thy coming down to me,
And rarer still my going up to thee!
It is by God's favour, we have met,
Do not go away so soon from me.
Let me breathe a little more the breath of the rapture of thy face,
Make this moment of meeting a little longer,
A little longer, pray,

Stay a little while more.

(2)

Let my speech sink down like a pebble thrown in the sea, and let my silence sing.
Let my flowers and lamps and saffron and rice and worshipping place drop down from me,
Only my tears dropping in dust welcome thee.
Make this moment of meeting a little longer,
A little longer, pray,
Stay a little while more.

(3)

Let my mind cease thinking.
I should not know what to do in the confusion of this sudden pleasure,
And I should tear gold-threads from my silk *palla* in nervous shame and offer the crushed
 threads of gold with trembling hands, without knowing what I am offering thee.
Nor should I be able to utter my prayer.
Make this moment of meeting a little longer,
A little longer, pray,
Stay a little while more.

(4)

I should catch hold of the edge of thy shining garment.
But would it mean I wish thee to stay a little more?
I should fall with clasped hands at thy feet.
But would it mean thy being mine in life?
I should spread my arms across the door.
But would it mean I obstruct thy infinite way with my finite cross of arms?
Or should I die before thee the death of love?
But would it mean I wish to lie in thine arms?
Make this moment of meeting a little longer,
A little longer pray,
Stay a little while more.

(5)

It is the favour of Heaven that descends,
It is the mercy of God that rains from above!
Ah, let it rain a little more,
O Beloved, even now wouldst thou go?
Make this moment of meeting a little longer,
A little longer, pray,
Stay a little while more.

II

(1)

MY Master, if thou art going,
And thou must go,
Leave thy image in my eyes
That I may lave thy fire with my tears.

(2)

My Master,
If thou art going,
And thou must go,
Pray, go putting thy foot on my heart of wet, wet clay.
That I may worship thy foot-print in the temple of my heart.

(3)

My Master,
If thou art going,
And thou must go,
Pray, give a tongue to every hair of mine,
And to every tongue a song,
And to every song the rhythm of the Infinite,
That I may pass my lonely days in singing Thee.

(4)

My Master,
If thou art going,
And thou must go,
Pray touch my every limb with thine own hands and sign thy name in the book of my heart,
And put in my neck a sacred jewel with thy name engraved in burning glows,
That others may know, I am a pilgrim, to the temple of thy face.

XXIV GIVE ME THE SIGN OF YOUR COMING

(1)

MY Master, I am tired of the people knocking at my door in your name,
They come and go and stay and say things which make my celestial sight dim and blurred,
They leave me a sadder woman than I ever am made even by my loneliness,
For a hundred times I open the door in vain to welcome you in disguise
And I find you not, only cruel illusions of men and women
Teach me now the hidden thrill, the unheard ring of the touch of your hands on my door, that I
 may not have to go mad with so often opening my doors and meeting so many *not-you's*
 in your name.

(2)

Teach me how to make you out when you come in disguise.
In a woman what is your sign of coming?
 Is it the melody of limbs?
 Or the ripeness of maidenhood?
 Or the eternity of motherhood?
 Or the pale moon of sin?
 Or the burning sun of virtue?
 Are you the widow, or the wedded woman?
 Or the girl that plays the pebbles in the dust?
In a man then? Are you a warrior, or a devotee, or a king, or a slave? Would you come as a
 prince or as a beggar? Will it be the word of courage or the beam of the forehead star or
 the simple divinity of a common man, what will be your sure sign?

Master! I am puzzled as many gods assume your shape as in Damyanti's *snnyamvara* they assumed the form of Nala, her chosen husband.
 Fix a sign up for my understanding. Will it be a kind look from deep black eyes, a loving smile on some one's lips?
 But then how to make that vital difference between your smile and of those who smile on purpose?
 Let it be a flash of sword in the sky of my mind, the closing up of my eyes by your dazzling splendour.
 But then bow to make that vital difference between you and lightning?
 Let it be a certain amount of pressure on my lips of your incoming kiss, but it might be just as much as of others. Let it be the seeing of stars rising in the sky.
 But how to make the vital difference between your coming and that of the rise of stars in the sky?
 Let there be no such symptom then as the outer World can also show.
 Say when you come, I should be quite new to myself, light, fragrant, pure, laved, and it should be a feeling felt within, by myself alone, known to no-one else.
 And when I might feel your coming, the perfume of jasmine should be emitted by my flesh, or of rose, the very perfume of song in which you may be coming to me.
 Fix it up then that I may rest in you with my doors shut to the outside world.
 No one then shall be able to guess why I do not open my door to everyone that knocks as before.

(3)

I may lie quiet on the mat of rushes you once gave me,
 And I may not know if there is anything more than yourself,
 Waiting for you to come and live with me for a while.
 If it can be so, let it be my Lord forever thus.

(4)

My eyes be half-closed with the inebriation of your name resounding in my remembrance,
 And my gait be full of a delicious languor, and I might as well fall at every step and lie wherever I may fall.

(5)

I may know naught, but that you are kind and you are my God!
 I do not wish to wake from this joy of nothing.
 But if you wish me to rise,
 Then put in my hand a mace and thunder by which I may chisel your name on rocks and rivers,
 Or give me a smile by which I may win the whole world of men and women to the song of your glory,
 Or give me your inexhaustible bread which I may distribute as your grace, filling the stores of man, bird and beast, the partaking of which may make them, in joy of the perfect life, songsters of your infinite gift.
 If there be no need of such things yet,
 I do not wish to wake from this joy of nothing.

Footnotes:

1. The yellow flowers of *sarson* and *toriya* in the fields of the Panjab during the winter are very gay.

-
2. Anas Casarea: the pair are stranded on opposite banks of the river during the night and sing out their pain till the sun brings them together again. A symbol of immortal love in Indian folklore.

PART III

THE BURNING CANDLES

PURAN SINGH

I
I SEEK THE REFUGE OF THY LOVE

BY SHAH HUSSAIN¹

I HAVE a myriad faults, but only you or I know them,
Countless are my sins, but only you or I know them.
Come this way, my Love; some day, some night, my Love!
I have often rebuked these eyes for foolish tears, but the tears still trickle down one by one, my
Love!
Come and cover me, my Love, in thy forgiveness,
And as of old, honour thy slave, my Love!

II
IN A DREAM CAME MY LOVE TO ME

BY BULLAH SHAH

IN a dream came my love to me,
In dream, he slew me with a glance from his eyes;
I was half-slain like Zuleikha in a dream.
I am aching now with love,
My eyes are red, I see new, new worlds.
I see the world-veiled God and the God-veiled saint.
Inayat²—in the deep of my heart,
As the veils lift, as the veils lift.

III
HASTE, O PHYSICIAN HASTE

BY BULLAH SHAH

HASTE, O physician, haste!
A death-like swoon is seizing me.
Is it love or a cup of poison?
The sun again is hidden from my view,
Only the sky looms intense scarlet with the dye of His feet.
Come again, my love, come again!
Haste, O Physician, haste!
A death-like swoon is seizing me.

IV
THE JEWEL OF MY HEART HAS COME

BY BULLAH SHAH

THE jewel of my heart has come, rosy with the hues of love,
Turn out sentinel Time, let him not strike the hours now.
Let this union night last for ever
Hours are the enemies of love; command the sentinel to drop his mallet and gong, give him leave
for ever.
Let this union night last for ever.

O comrades mine, run, I pray; raise a high wall against the coming day, let this night last a million years.
The jewel of my heart has come, rosy with the hues of love.

V TURN BY TURN

BY BULLAH SHAH

TURN by turn, they draw water at life's well.
Turn by turn, they come with their pitchers of clay held in their arms.
Some are filling, some have filled, and some are waiting at the well, tossing their arms laden with red, lacquered bangles of ivory and glass,
And in their ears bunches of ear-rings shake as they talk and laugh.

VI THE SONG OF DAWN

(In imitation of a Panjabi rhythm)

THE night is ended, yonder breaks the dawn,
The morning star comes riding on his dark-blue camel.
Silver-bells are ringing at the neck of His camel;
His camel is dancing on the sands.

(A devotee runs out of the lingering darkness, her hands outstretched to the light, as a song of the dawn to the stars.)

O beautiful owner of those deep-lit eyes,
Thy camel is dancing on the sands,
And the dawn is breaking from thy camel-back.
As the silver bells chime the rhythm of my soul,
Lift me up and seat me close to thyself.
Stay thy camel for just a while, and take me across the sands.
From thy eyebrows flies the white Bird of Freedom,
And beneath the upspread wings sparkle the virgin snows of the pure.
Black and long are the tresses that clustering fall about thy neck in fragrant profusion.
Stay a while and let me drink the light that is you.
O beautiful camel-rider, stay thy camel, pray.
I trust my fate to those God-lit eyes of thine.
Give me the alms of thy love,
Lift me and seat me close to thyself.
Thou knowest the needs of love, and thou art king.
Stay thy camel for the twinkling of an eye, and carry me across the sands.

VII HIR'S³ CURSE

THEY have dyed my hands with *mehndi*.⁴
Ah, the wedding dye? or blood?
And they wish me to wed to-morrow.
They may wed me to-morrow but only to Ranjha.

They have forbidden me to love him, and they have turned him out of their land.
The joy of our love dies to-day, and great grief is born for both of us.
They may wed me to-morrow; but I will wed only Ranjha.
As we went to the well how gaily we played with pitchers and will cool water, throwing it at each other.
As he and I sat together in the meadow with the buffaloes, we whispered our vows of love in each other's ears
Allah; Let the lamps of the 'Bride's Chamber' burn these 'wedding baskets';⁵

VIII HIR'S PRAYER

(In imitation of a Panjabi rhythm)

COME into the temple of my heart, beloved!
There is no one else, I alone burn a solitary temple lamp awaiting you.
I did not know that you would leave me and go. O how different was the promise of your eyes when we first met!
Come show me the *kangana*⁶ round your wrist, for you remember our wedding is yet to be solemnized.

IX I HAD BEGUN A DANCE

I HAD begun a dance,
All my soul was dancing with song, as the ripples on the stream dance with the wind;
My song was hushed into silence, and I lost the rhythm of my limbs. But He came out of empty space and looked at me.

X THE POOR PEOPLE AND GOD

HIS love feeds all; He provides for the smallest bud that blows.
He goes even to the little lonely creeper hanging athwart a heap of dried thorns, tells it to grow and it grows.
Its every shoot clings to His arm, and its every tendril entwines round a thorn and feels that it is God's own Arm.
Hanging on thorns, the creeper puts forth its youth of buds, emits the perfume of joy, and knows not it is growing on thorns.

XI THE SAINTS KINDNESS

ON the bank of the river, Beas, he heard the moaning of a distressed girl.
She had flung her hair back in despair, she was pale.
He had deserted her, he who had whispered so much of his passion in her ears.
For one single mistake in her prime of life she was going to drown herself.
No human being she thought would now be kind to her, when he was too unkind and treacherous;
She sought the shelter of the river and of death, strange solace and joy from which youth springs.

But the man of God came softly close to her, he embraced her as a father would embrace a long lost daughter.
He touched her hair as with motherly love, and listened with soft emotion to her story of woe.
He cannot save her by being her father, or her brother
For she cannot live until someone acknowledges her guilt as his own.
The heart of the man of God rang with the agony of feeling that night.
And the world knew next morn that the saint had married the girl.
But did the world know he was her saviour?

XII TO THE BELOVED

(After Gopal)

YOUR silence is death to me,
And your word of love is life.
Oh, why have you been silent so long?
The heart of love breaks, but it wakes whole again to Love.
And so it has been, O Beloved! since the world began.
Love misunderstanding not, no mist can cloud the face of Heaven for long.
Let go, my Beloved, the moments that are fleeting, forget all past regrets;
Come, embrace the present hour in me,
And know God is Love.

XIII FLIGHT WITHIN A TRANCE

(Translations from Rana Surat Singh—the treasure of blank verse of the modern Panjab)

I WAS severed from my body, I was flying upward in the blue, higher and higher as flies the kite:
And from above the forest I saw the river and the hills as a bird in flight sees the lower earth:
I wondered how I had been separated from my body, and why my body lay so dead there, and I
so alive.
I was lighter than the cloud, I was more intangible than the breeze, I shone like a diamond, I was
a soul.

I flew higher and higher till I saw a region of light, a light that fell in wonder-drenching showers,
bright as diamonds, and soft as the smile of flowers;
It drew my soul, it was the light of the Unseen;
The breath of the breezes of life came and touched me,
Their perfumes stole through my soul like silent music.

I saw countless beings there, all made of light.
And there advanced a figure of light who clasped me in her arms;
It was as if I had met a sister of mine after centuries of death.
In her embrace I felt
Eternity in myself; but I could not even there forget my prince.

“O heavenly Friend; knowest thou where my Prince is? I am a bird in search of my mate,” cried
I.

“O Sister; be calm,” said she, “Thy Prince lives in *Sacha-Khand*— the Self-region of the soul
where is Nirvana, beyond all these spheres which you now see.”

“Where is the land of the Beloved Prince? Which way?

Pray take me to him,” said I.

“It is by no means in my power of flight to take you to the land of Nirvana; but I will take you as far as I can,” said she.

Then she flew with me, holding me like a cloud of light by her hand, till we alighted in the Golden Land of Bliss. It sparkled with ineffable goodness; oceans of joy rolled as pure knowledge of Self; the bright laughter of life swam as white flowers of the Infinite, and the Voice of God rang from soul to soul.

As I entered this Realm of the Immortals I saw I had dropped my garments of light and wore a subtle flame as became the inner region of the soul. I saw that here every thought was a thing I could create.

And here was Love, as ample as air and water on earth, and I felt I would see my Prince here; But my guardian angel saw my thought as if it were a figure of light like ourselves, and she said: “Thy Prince lives still higher, this is the Realm of Creative Mind.”

We flew still higher; and I saw that I changed again my flame-garment to a still finer mantle of fire; but I did not know how my garment had changed. We reached the Land of Ecstasy.

Here I saw the music of God creating life itself. The word becomes flesh here, and the flesh word. Intelligence is chiselled here, and Consciousness given shape; the Infinite is hewn into the beauty of the Finite. I thought I would find my Prince here, but she again saw my wish in my very heart, and said; “Wish not to see thy Prince in the water colours of thine own ecstasy. Make no portrait of thy Prince when thou canst see him in the deepest depths of thy soul.”

From wonder to greater wonder we still flew as prayers fly, till we alighted in the Region of Grace. I was flying on the wings of my thought of Him (for ever unforgot) when I heard her say:

“Behold, there in distance yonder, shines the Self-Region of Soul, the Abode of Nirvana. No one returneth from there, the wheel of birth and death is shattered at the feet of this Supreme Light. O beautiful Queen of Love : be prepared, be strong and drink as much as thou canst of the God-bright rays of yonder land. There is the *Sach Kbanda*. There lives thy Prince.”

XIV

O SPACE-DEVOURING GODDESS

(RANI Rajkaur on her way to the Temple of Initiation is caught in a storm and she matches her pain of love with the fury of the sky.)

O SPACE-DEVOURING GODDESS; O Sister of the sky;

Flash on the world of the Beloved beyond the sky;

I am restless as thyself, and lam searching my beloved everywhere.

O lighting, go to him on the other side with news of me;

Tell him that the bride he left behind on earth is more restless than thy spark.

There is no cure for her, the more her limbs have rest the more they ache with love.

O Sister lighting: give him this my message:

“I am not worthy of Thee, O Beloved; but what matters it if thou art kind? The lightless moon fuses in glory bright with the light of the sun; what is poor moon compared with me, love, if Thou be kind.”

O Sister lightning: on thy shoulder take me across to him; lay me gently at his feet, and let me quench my thirst in eternal contemplation of my Beloved.

Footnotes:

1. Shah Hussain, Bullah Shah and his master, Inayat Shah Kadiri, and the Mohammedan Fakir, Mian Mir of Lahore, all were close associates of Guru Arjan Dev, the composer of *Guru Grantha* at the Golden Temple and they constitute the illustrious galaxy of the new Sikh-Muslim school of *Nam* culture in the Panjab. It is remarkable that this brotherhood composed their songs in the language of Guru Nanak, the Panjabi vernacular. These poets freely used the very phrases of Guru Nanak in honour of his hallowed memory.
2. Bullah Shah so often names his Master in his songs. These ring the very rocks of the Panjab to life, as the drums beat and the pipes play and the joy-wild mystics and songsters dance and sing them on the tomb of this saint-poet at Kasur.
3. Hir is the heroine of Panjabi lyrics, Ranjha is her beloved man.
4. Wedding dye, henna.
5. In the Panjab the “wedding baskets” are inverted flower baskets which provide the auspicious seats for both the bride and the bridegroom under a canopy as they sit chanting from the holy books and asking the stars to witness their vows.
6. *Kangana* is the auspicious red woollen wristlet worn by the bridegroom on the wedding-day in the Panjab.

PART IV

HARI MANDIR

THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

PURAN SINGH

I
HART MANDIR AT AMRITSAR

FROM the middle of the Lake of Immortality emerges the Golden Lotus of myriad petals, the
Brahma Lotus, as the sun rises out of the sea on the dark worlds.
The blue ocean, lit with the magic smile of the new dawn dances with the morning hymns of
praise; joy floats on the surface of the waters.
Is it the birth of God's World? Or has the First Hour of Creation come?
I die in depths of passion, on the marble floor of the Golden Temple, as the honey of His grace
falls soft as dew on me.
The bee forgets the flower in the perfume of my death, and doves hover around, cooing the
Song of Love.
It is the Ecstasy of finished labour, the realised life; it is the appeasement of the ever-unclosed
eyes of those that are pining in separation, and the joy of the slumber-sealed eyes of
those that have met.
It is the garland of loving hands round the waist of the Beloved, it is the palm of thankfulness.

II
THE TEMPLE BEGGAR

O PILGRIM; give me the gifts you have brought for me.
But only if you can forget them as the forest its flower, as the tree its fruit.
As the whole river gives a beakful of water to a bird; the river flows and the bird flies away.
Do not give to me, O pilgrim; if you are feeling pitiful,
For then, you are as poor as I, and I cannot accept your gifts that are heavy with pity.
Give me clothes to wear and ornaments for self-decoration,
But only if you have not come resolved on self-sacrifice.
I never can give thanks for little things like these.
I have joy enough of the jewels that shine in my heart.
What are these toys of silver and gold you have given me?
Ah, you cannot understand me, if you think I can accept alms from you,
I have joy enough of my jewels, bright as the sun and the moon.
I have joy untold in myself.

III
THE SECRET OF PROSPERITY

THAT Sikh lady is prosperous without much thought.
But no one knows the thrill of joy hidden in her heart; she is surely more than others are, for her
eyes are for ever fixed in the direction of His coming.
She fetches water from the well, grinds the corn, kneads the flour, bakes the bread, but her eyes
are fixed in the direction of His coming.
She looks up to the sky; watches the sunrise and the sunset, and beholds the stars rise on her ripe
corn fields, and sheds a tear because no one looks in the direction of His coming.
She milks her cows twice, as others do, when day and night meet, but she pours first for Him the
milk from her cows in the direction of His coming.

IV

THE SIKH MOTHERS FEAR NOT

THE rulers of Lahore, in olden times, cast a Sikh youth in prison. He was the only child of a Sikh widow; for no other crime save that he was a Sikh they would murder him if he offered not allegiance to their injustice and wrong-doing.

The mother could do nothing, she shut herself in her room,
And her soul, tranced in agony, passed in vision to the Beyond, and stood before her Master:
“Lord take the child in Thy care; he must owe allegiance to on one but Thee.”
“Fear not, daughter.” said Guru Gobind Singh; “here comes your son.”
And there she met her son arrayed in shining armour of light.

V

THE SIKH MOTHERS YOU KNOW NOT

WHILE the dawn was yet young a Sikh mother emerged out of space, and was seen moving towards the Golden Temple at Amritsar.

“Whither are you going, mother?” said Dewan Kauramall, a minister of the Mughal ruler of Lahore.

“To the Guru’s Temple,” said she, “to-day assemble there the Guru’s Khalsa, *the holy ones*, and I have come to bathe myself and my child in the current of *Nam*.”

“But the opening of the temple to the Khalsa to-day is treachery,” said the Dewan, “The imperial forces are here to kill every one that enters the temple.

To-day there will be a general massacre of the Khalsa.”

“What matters it, O good man,” said the Sikh mother, “if my blood be mingled with the waters of Immortality, it is no death?”

“Have pity on your innocent child,” said the Dewan.

“I love him so I bring him with me; this death is life for us. You do not know,” said she, and passed on.

VI

THE SIKH MOTHERS THE FORTY SIKH MARTYERS

FORTY of the Faithful deserted Guru Gobind Singh—unwilling to starve with him, unwilling to stay and die at Anandpur where the Guru was besieged.

They sought shelter in their homes, but the doors were shut against them, and a cry leapt from the Sikh mothers and from the Sikh sisters and wives

The brave women bade them go back; there was no refuge for those who had turned their backs on the Guru.

“No Sikh mother shall own her son, nor a Sikh woman her man, who turns his back on the Guru. There is life in death with Him, it is nowhere else.”

And they died fighting for the Guru,—the forty martyrs.

VII

TUKA RAMA

I GO to get fuel, I go to get fuel. My wife tells me we must have fuel.

The axe is in my hand, I am in the wood. Lo, where stands the peepul tree;

If I strike it with my axe, the tree will give wood, as my wife tells me.
O what have I done? I have made a wound, blood drips from the peepul tree.
My Lord, I have wounded Thee!

VIII THE KING OF LEISURE

A SIKH Sadhu, king of leisure, met in his rambles astray black kid on the pasture-land.
The kid raised its little hairy head to the Sadhu, and the Sadhu sat by its side, took it in his lap,
offering it morsels of young grass leaves.
The saint felt the thrill of acceptance of his love-offerings to God, come to him as a black kid,
when the shepherd surprised him from behind and snatched the little kid away.
“Oh, he has pulled down a dream-shrine of God, they do not let even God take rest,” said the
King of Leisure.

IX THE MOTHER

“MOTHER, mother;” cries Ramakrishna Paramahansa as a prostitute advances to worship him.
“Mother of the Universe! Why are the garments of the Mother so tattered to-day? Why are the
limbs of the Mother so bare?”
“Mother, Mother! She should be wearing the garments of the rays of the sun, and the beams of
the moon interwoven with the leaves of the forest;
“Mother, mother,” he says, and goes away.

X I OWN NO OTHER AS MY KING

BY MIRA BAI

I OWN no other as my king, the Lord of cows is mine;
My Gobind! My Gopal!
On His palms the mountains stand; and the oceans wash His feet;
To me He is the only one who bears sceptre and crown.
My Gobind! My Gopal!
I tried to hide Him in my heart, but I could not; the whole world knows about it now.
My Gobind! My Gopal!
With tear-drops I nourished the seed of His love, now it has overgrown me; the whole world
knows about it now.
I own no others as my king, the Lord of cows is mine; My Gobind! My Gopal!

XI ALL IS IN HIS HANDS

MIRA BAI

THE Rana sends me a cup of poison, and orders me to drink it;
I drink the nectar of His love, the thought of my Gobind unpoisons the cup.
The Rana sends me an angry snake in a sandal box;
I open the box, the snake crawls at my feet, the snake too is my Gobind's slave.

The Rana is angry; let him be angry, he can turn me out of his land.
My Gobind, be not angry. I go, the earth is wide, and all is in His hands.

XII I AM OF MY SONG, MOTHER

BY MIRA BAI

THEY say Mira is the light of her family,
But her father says Mira has disgraced her race.
“I have disgraced the name of my race, mother,” says Mira,
“But forbid me not that I seek Him,
“I cannot stay away.
“The thatched hut where He dwells is my song, mother,
“And your palace is my curse.
“Good-bye, mother, good-bye;
“I am of my song, mother, good-bye.”

XIII HIS FATHER'S IDOL

BY NAMA DEV

(One day Nama's father sent out and asked his son to do the usual worship of the family-god for him.)

“I BRING the golden bowl of milk? I have milked our white cow for Thee, I have brought
Thee pure milk,
“Drink, my Lord, drink my Gobinda;
“I too adore Thee, I too pray to Thee as my father prays.
“I too bring the golden bowl of milk;
“Drink, my Lord; drink, my Gobinda;
“If Thou dost not deign to drink to-day, my Lord,
“What will the people say, “The Nama doth not pray?”
Drink my Lord, drink, my Gobinda.”
God laughed and drank the bowl of milk.
And Nama saw that the marble Idol moved its hands, and heard what the Idol spoke to him.

XIV OFFERINGS

BY NAMA DEV

O BRING me a pitcher of water, I would bathe my God.
But countless are the living creatures in His waters, and He has already bathed there;
O bring me fresh flowers from the forest, I would make a flower offering to Him.
But a hundred bees live in the scent of flowers, and the flowers like winged angels havoc offered
themselves to Him.
O bring me milk of cows, I will give my God a love-repast.
But the calf has drunk its milk from its mother, and my God has had His repast.

XV
THE MUGHAL

BY NAMA DEV

(A Mughal met Nama near Dwarka, the holy city of Krishna, and forcibly pressed him into his service to carry a load for him. Nama gazes deeply at him, and sings aloud in his own reverie.)

HAIL, hail, My Krishna,
How sweet is Thy service! How light with love is Thy load to-day!
It is Thou, my cloud-coloured Chief! How can there be any Mughals in the holy city of the Beloved?
O whither, Friend? O whence?
Speak truly, truly, friend, it is the holy Dwarka!
Divine are the Mughal-folds of Thy turban today!
And soul-sweet is Thy speech,
Thy face of love enchants me.
It is Thou; it is Thou; my cloud-coloured Chief!
How can there be any Mughals in the holy city of the Beloved?

XVI
A PERSIAN SHEPHERD
(In imitation of Maulana Jalal-ud-din)

O IF Thou would come to me,
I would perfume Thy tresses with oil, I would comb them and weave them into braids like those of a Persian maiden. Come, my God; and sit by me in the restful places of the pasture land;
O God; if Thou wouldst come to me,
I would wish Thy clothes, and would spread for Thee my white woollen blanket on the grass, for Thee to sit on and rest.
O God, if Thou wouldst come to me,
I would fetch Thee cool water from the spring, and give Thee milk fresh from my sheep.
O God, if Thou wouldst come to me to-day,
A hundred bleating sheep would run to Thee, and my little lambkins would frisk about Thee.
Come and sit by me in their restful places of the pasture land.

XVII
PRAHLAD

A THRILL went through the land, as he rose and danced, and sang:
HARI! HARJ! HARJ!
On water, on land, he said:
HARI! HARI! HARJ!
The king had him cast headlong from a mountain, but a flood of song came rolling down:
HARI! HARI! HARJ!
The king cast him into the fire, and out of the fire the shining Prahlad emerged singing:
HART! HART! HART!
As he rose and sang:
HARI! HARI! HARI!
The trees and the mountains danced after him:

HARI! HARI! HARJ!

XVIII
AL GHAZZALI OF IRAN

AL GHAZZALI sat under a silk-tent pitched for him by his devotees, they who had renounced self-interest in love. Its ropes were of silk, its pegs of gold: and the joy of his devotees knew no bounds.

“Hath not Al Ghazzali renounced all earthly things?

Then why doth he sit in splendour?” said an unenlightened one who came to beg of Al Ghazzali the light of life.

Al Ghazzali, baring his bosom, said: “The pegs of gold are not nailed in my bosom, but only in the ground.”

XIX
DHRUVA AND HIS MOTHER

Dhruva: My mother; can every one be a king?

Mother: Yes, my child, all those who seek Him and meditate on Him in the forest.

Dhruva: I will go to the forest, mother, and meditate on Him.

Why does not every man become a king, when it is as simple as loving Him?

XX
AYAZ¹

IN the stillness of night, Ayaz stole out of the palace and went into the secret treasury of Mahmud, where no one would disturb him.

Ayaz opened a box of gold encrusted with diamonds and rubies, and took out its priceless contents:—his own black blanket and his staff, two things of old that he had when he wandered a poor shepherd on the hill of Central Asia.

He spread his woollen blanket on the floor, aglint with the rays of diamonds and pearls, knelt on it before his God, tears streaming from his eyes.

“O Allah! Protect me from the harm that prosperity does to man, protect me from the blindness that the rays of rubies cause; save me from the friendship of kings who cany death and slavery in their hands.

“O Allah! Keep my poor heart, given to Thee, safe in Thy favour, that it may still burn with prayer and thankfulness.

“Keep that love-radiating face of Thine before my eyes as it was when Thou earnest from behind the hills and inflamed my heart.

“My Allah! May my eyes still remain moist, and my eyelids under their lashes still hold tears of joy as when my eyes beheld Thy creation.

“My Allah! Protect Thy dumb millions in Thine own love and faith. Thou art merciful, God. Send Thy forgiveness, Thy love and Thy grace to every one who carries Thy Image.”

XXI
HIS GOLDEN BOAT

GURU Gobind Singh crossed the river in the fisherman's boat and put a gold mohur in his hand,
The fisherman, folding his hands, said;
"Sire; why dost thou pay in gold? On this false river of material illusion I have brought thee across in a frail dream-boat, but ferry me in thy golden boat when I come to cross the river of death."

XXII THE PANJAB REVISITED

"WHO waits for me in the Panjab?" said Guru Gobind Singh.
And a hundred figures of light, His old minstrels and poets stood up, each playing the *vina* and bowing their heads to him.
And the whole heaven of angles gathered there, and a million eyes of prayer opened at His wish and sang with their soul-looks as the *vina*-strings trembled like the moonbeams in running waters with the Song of His Praise.
Guru Gobind Singh revisits His Panjab.

The Panjab was all asleep, not a soul was able to realize the majesty of that night of His Coming on earth.
A humble labourer, a simple Sikh, sat in the heart of that night bedewed with the *Raga Nidra*, filling the still void of earth with his birdlike hymn of one deep syllable-You.....OO...; You.....OO...; TU-HI; TU-HI; TU-HI.....!

No one was there, not even the breeze stirred, not a breath of life. He sat under the star-crowded sky, aching with the Song of the Beloved.

A moment he gazed at a group of stars he saw gathering in the east; a moment he turned his gaze to those in the western sky as if he heard some faint echoes of the song he was singing in his sleep of ecstasy.

He turned to the south and then to the north, trying to catch some unknown voice from a far-off planet that came joy-vibration to the harp-string of his heart.

At last in a corner of the sky in the north-east he discerned the light of wonder. His silver limbs of sleep and song lay motionless, and his two eyes lay wide open like two windows of a house that the owner forgets to shut at night.

The brave Sikh plunged into the blue sea of the sky above him, and lay helpless in soul-transparency, touching and smelling and drinking the music of the *Niranlcar*, the Infinite.

He heard a hundred *vinas* playing to his ears, and he saw a hundred angef~ pass before his eyes, and yet with his mortal ears he heard nothing, with his mortal eyes he saw no one.

He rose and went to work in the morning with the sun-rise in his eyes, and told his comrades that the night before he had seen strange beings in the sky, and heard the song-tremblings of a hundred *vinas*.

No one understood him, but he murmured with his lips,
"Oh, The *Vinas* the *Vinas*;"

“I saw,” he said, “some one coming out to the angelic choir to tell me a name that I have forgotten.

“I watched a hand pass before me, I dimly saw a sapphire on his ring, and it sparkled so rarely, as the august Figure of Power passed me! O the rare sapphire!

“I saw the edge of His shining turban, saw there the sign of the splendour of a million orbs!

“I feel pure as I never felt before, I love my soul!”

But no one understood him, and he worked all day long as a humble labourer.

“There waits one for me in the Panjab” said Guru Gobind Singh.

“My friends, henceforth all wait upon him and play the *vinas* of *Nam* in his room;

“Let the music of Heaven follow him wherever he goes,” said Guru Uobind Singh.

XXIII THE ROADSIDE TREES

ONCE I went where no one knew me.

The shadows of the roadside *sheesham* and *neem*, parched and leafless, came like the startled host of faithful farmers of ancient India², their silver ring of ancient *swagat* they gave their gods now long dead;

The quivering shadows held me captive in their hard bony arms, whispering in my ears, “We have been waiting for you since we were born. God he thanked we have met!”

XXIV THE CHILD-TREE

THE old tree has shed its fruit, and the sylvan soul of the child-tree rises out of its lap to catch it; The child has caught the fruit and claps its hands in joy.

XXV KARMA

WHEN I was an infant, my parents gave me a wooden horse, and they called it by a name which they later gave me.

As I used to drag the horse behind me by a string from its neck so I was dragged about in life by my name!

Tired of being dragged thus I searched my neck for the string to snap it, but I found that it was not there.

They see my deeds, and not my soul, and yet they say they are right.

They praise me for what I have already shed from me.

Ah! What are deeds? I do as others do, I am a rogue or a saint by imitation or by the accident of birth,

A lamb if I am born of a sheep, a wolf if I am born in a wolf's lair.

The noble soul in me rebels against my grosser stuff that is the mere accident of time and space.

Of what use is my individual will A merest bubble flowing on the surface of oceans in flood.

Who should blame me, when I am blown about by the Infinite as He wills!

Men read the destiny of creation by the fall of an apple!
But what man dares read Me, who permeate through countless ages and regions of life yet
undiscovered, the spheres of the ever Unknown.

I caught my name in the closed palm of my hand; they said I was caught;
The palm was forced open, but ah! there was nothing,
The world was abashed to have called me what they called me.
I am, they say, what my Karma is, but they know not that the grace of Heaven falls on me.
The Garuda³ comes from on high and flies in the vast azure of the soul; then cuts my Karma
into lifeless mass, as the preying bird flying in mid-air cuts into two the locust!
When I see Him my Karma ends,
The golden songs rain on me from the Invisible.

I caught my name in my closed palm; my friends assembled to open my palm and see the secret
of my song; they opened it and saw there was nothing.
No one, not even myself, can love me so much as my God within me.
And I am to my God what in truth I am, not what my deeds are, nor what my deeds in seed,
thought, are.
I cannot be what I am by *my* love of Him, for I am ever besmeared with the grossness of the
finite:
I am but by His love *of me*,
I am life where no Karma has power, I am thought that is of His mind!

I am little flower growing in His flower-vase.
He orientates my axis aright, He bends it and straightens it as He likes,
I am the flower of His smile.

XXVI THE POMEGRANATES OF KANDHAR

O WORLD-Famous tree of Kandhar!
Show me your heart that is so abundant in its peace of God; you give away your ripe fruits, and
in return ask nothing.
“I am not what you seek in me,
“I am a prisoner of this ancient soil, my skin is brown and my bark is winter-tom, I am just a
tree!
“Come in spring, my friend, for then the tree of Kandhar is in flower!
“Come, when the leaves turn pale, for then the tree of Kandhar is in fruit!”
Your fruit are like poems, the blood drops of your heart.
And the rubies of Kandhar glow so red beneath a pale brown skin.
In your heart resounds the music of life.
And the Creator hides in you, the one who is manifest in His pearl songs in the sky.

XXVII WHAT IS LIFE

“WHAT is life? I asked of a flying bird,

“Is it freedom, a flight in the blue, or a note of joy or love?”
The bird fell down with an arrow half-buried in its heart; it fluttered on the ground, two drops of
blood dripped from its heart;
The little blood-drops incarnadined the earth.

XXVIII THE JASMINE BUSH

BY BAHU

THERE is a bush of jasmine in my heart.
The waters of immortality flow into me, and it grows.
A leaf-bud of mine sprouts to-day, and another after ages.
The tender jasmine endures a hundred storms that seek restlessly to root it out of me; it endures
the flashes of a hundred lightnings.
But the saints water it with their blood, and the jasmine bush in me grows and grows.
I bloom at last, the jasmine blossom fills me, perfuming my heart and brain.
From every bud and flower prayer rises from me like fragrance!
Peace be to all!

XXIX MY SALVATION

I GATHERED the riches of the earth; elephants loaded with gems and jewels were mine;
But madness possessed me, I wanted still more.
Then I renounced everything and turned a sadhu. I went to live in a hut on the riverside.
O God! Desire endeth not!
Love beginneth not!
The heart filleth not!
And life knoweth no rest!

A beautiful woman made me forget myself; her youth, her eyes and her soul-love were so god-
like.
I kissed the hem of her garment, I knelt before her; and she gazed with unutterable meaning into
mine eyes: she was irresistible, I laid myself at her feet!
Our child had little bells on its anklets, and these bells of joy were ringing in our home by the
river-side.
O God! Desire endeth not!
Love beginneth not!
The heart filleth not!
And life knoweth no rest!

I burnt myself to ashes; I thought I would thus cleanse myself.
I did a hundred penances, but the dust of vanity still settled on my hair,
And a hundred ghosts sprang from my ashes and I was still where I had begun.
Youth had changed into old age, I had earned no virtue yet.
O God? Desire endeth not!
Love beginneth not!
The heart filleth not!

And life knoweth no rest!

One day we had a strange Guest whose presence struck us with awe and love and wonder; even
His white clothes washed and hung on the trees moved our hearts.
His looks thrilled us with sensations we had never known before.
Parting from us, He put His hand on me and on the forehead of my wife and child and said:
“This is it, my children!
Live in Glory!”
Since then our souls have learned to pray; love floods us! We are content.

XXX
THE RED PITCHER OF CLAY
(After the tune of a Panjabi song)

THE little pitcher of clay rides on the waist of that fairy maid,
And round its neck goes her ivory-bangled arm.
Oh, I would break the pitcher of red, red clay, and rescue the fairy maid!

The pitcher softly replied:
“Break me not, I am full of His nectar now!
“I have passed the cycle of pain on the potters’s wheel.
“I had my kneading in a hundred waters; and the rounding and shaping and thumping from my
Almighty Maker.
“I have been baked in His furnace.
“I am full of His nectar now, up to the brim of my lips red with the speechless joy of ripeness.”

XXXI
ALL THE WORLD IS SOILED

BY KABIR
(In Guru Grantha)

ALL the world is soiled with *maya*-mire, He alone is pure!
The sun and the moon are stained, He alone is pure!
The day and the night are dark, the gods too are bone and flesh,
The wind and water and fire are *maya*-besmeared.
Siva and Brahma and Indra are tarnished,
No one and nothing is white. He alone is pure!

XXXII
SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE

I SOUGHT the company of women so beautiful, alluring and sweet, and of men so strong,
loving and fearless.
But they understood me not; I was too wild to suit myself to their pattern.
But still I loved them, and they loved me.

I went to the land of snows, and sought the violets that bloom around. There lay the silence of wonder in full expanse. Amid pure scents of plants and flowers my eyes closed and my hands dropped to my sides; and I slept enveloped by Beauty.

But as I rose my bosom quivered with emotion, and in that mood even my foes seemed dear; I thought thieves and robbers kind company.

The violets were as calm as before,
They heaved not a sigh of joy, nor did the snows melt with me.
Neither they die nor hate nor love.
Violet sleep feeds with dream and rest, and I come and spend it on men and women who are indifferent to all but themselves.

Now I seek the living light that floods the rocks with youth, and fills the rivers with song, the soul that fills both men and flowers and makes the snows all so white, the soul that is one with God, is God Himself.

Now His visions rise before me from the faces of man and rock and river,
I see Him in the vastness of the grass-lands, and in the eyes of man;
My eyes are now full of the vision, and I sit on the road-side and dissolve myself in His glory.
I have understood now; man is kind, and woman loves, and nature feeds me with life, because God is mine and I am His.

XXXIII WHEREFORE THIS STILLNESS?

(Lines written at the time of pause, during the rainy season, the rain cooling after the scorching noontday sun)

WHEREFORE this stillness? Where have the cities of grey and peacock clouds vanished? Is the music fair of the celestials ended?
It rained and I ran out of doors to greet my friends of old, whose familiar voice I heard in the rain.
Ah! It rains no more!
The leaves and branches, in whose rustling whispers I had heard the hidden notes of my soul, shake no more.
Wherefore this stillness?

XXXIV TO A COURTESAN

EVEN you, O sister mine!
Listen a little while to the prayer that rises unbidden in me as see you a homeless wanderer.
I can no more control myself to tell you of the secret relation between you and me.
Look at me well, look deep into me; I am your brother, though much poorer than yourself in gifts divine.
But as I see you dancing a tear starts in my eye.
We are of the family of the *Naam-dead!*
The tear hangs on my eyelid; then one rises in thine.
Ah! wipe it not away.

XXXV

THE STONE-BREAKER OF VINDHYACHAL

(Lines written on seeing a young woman breaking stones on the roadside from morn till eve, sitting on the bare rocks beneath a thin thatching of thorns supported on four little sticks, her umbrella to provide the semblance of a shade.)

THE POET

O LARGE-LIMBED daughter of the sun! How thou sittest breaking stone with a heavy hammer in thy hand, morn, midday and eve under the canopy of thorns, so little sheltered from the scorching sun of these summer months when even the green leaves wither on the branches!

Thou art no less than a queen in thy limbs, in thy majesty of form full of supreme womanly grace! Nature still lifts the Umbrella of Honour over thy head and seeks to provide thee a shade!

I wish I too were a stone-breaker sitting by thee, singing and breaking stones and asking thee to do naught but wait by me and bless my sturdy arms as they labour for thee, and not a mere man who plunges his head deep into his own bosom and passes by.

Alas, what use is life when our sisters and mothers labour on the roadside!

O daughter of the sunshine! As thy heavy hammer falls straining all thy ribs, I think the goddess of wrath is breaking all the temple-idols of the Hindu race, that down-trodden race which is compelled in hunger to turn out its mothers, sisters and wives to break stones on the roadside. Was it not the divine role of our race to feed itself with life and love, and to rock its children with song, and fill the whole land with the laughter of the playing boys!

What use now is our worship of the Cow—the fast-dying symbol of our worship of the mother and our infinite respect for her sex—when our mother has come out of the temple to feed herself, and we have no offerings in our hands for her!

THE STONE-BREAKER

Why dost thou stand, O strange friend! thus looking at me, and murmuring something between thy lips?

The hot sun will kill thee.

THE POET

O why dost thou labour so hard, thy limbs were not made for breaking stones?

THE STONE-BREAKER

My husband and I labour for our children, we cannot bear that they clutch at my tattered clothes and cry for bread when I have no loaf for them. We must labour, my friend, there is no other way.

We thank our God there are stones in vindhyachal here in plenty for us to break, and that He gives us bread even out of these hard black lumps of rock.

XXXVI

THE HEATHEN SHRINE

THIS world is a heathen shrine covered by the magic sky. No outer voice is heard here in its bustle of inarticulation, the eternal oceans roll above and below, and the storm-girt shrine lives on.

The hammers of Mahmud, the idol-breaker, lie in pieces all about, the eternal arches of the shrine glow with the star-jewels buried in its ancient bricks, the fragile lamps of the sun and the moon are hanging in its vaults.

It is a heathen shrine where myriads of idols sit relentless on their thrones and rule; the statues of ancient clay breathe and move, their breath is warm, and they look at one another, they love and hate, a mocking prevails, and the dead rise to recognise their own.

Life shines here in ruby lips and black eyes; it moves in the music of limbs; it feeds the soul and nothing dies here; only the idols sleep and wake.

XXXVII ONE DEEP WONDER

DID I not tell you, O man, O woman, To come under the infinite sky?

Away with these superstructures of cities and these houses your graves!

Off with veils!

Away with these lies of the process of daily lying to yourself!

Before God and man be your true selves. March into the open.

Melt into each other. O wondrous things made of light and song,

Ye in millions and millions in ye!

The blood of the sun is in your veins, the immense life of man and nature, the past is in you and the future!

Ring into earth and sky the song of the Soul,

Sing the one deep Wonder in one intense feeling of God

Footnotes:

1. Ayaz was the beloved slave of Mahmud of Ghazni. He was the living gem amongst all the jewels that Mahmud had collected in his loots from the kings and priests of Asia and India. Ayaz brought light to Mahmud's heart here on earth, and to his path after death.
2. In ancient times the Indian farmers used to welcome their guests by singing songs of welcome and washing their feet with water.
3. Garuda is the bird of Indian mythology on which God Vishnu rides; Garuda eats up the snake of illusion.

PART V

THE HIMALAYAN PINES

PURAN SINGH

NOTE

By a mere chance, I passed into the heart of the pine-woods of the Himalayas. These songs contain the music I heard, as the flower veiled winds rustled through the pines, and went past me, touching with their breath, the sun and the moon sitting in the holy shades.

Simla
August, 1923

PURAN SINGH

I
GIVE ME BACK MY LARGER ME

(1)

ALAS! my hungers are more to me than God's fair creation,
My passions sweeter to me than the noblest beauty,
My human aims greater to me than the aims of the Creator;
My sick ignorance clearer than the light of stars;
In my hand is a rapier to slay unawares those whom I most love;
My fealty to friendship is a betrayal of my Saviour.
For a few pieces of silver I sell my Christ.
Even *Han Nam* and its goodness I exchange for a passing pleasure.

(2)

O Pine forests! let me lie amongst the fallen pine needles that I may be part of your cool
innocence.

(3)

O Rivers, flow over me, sink me in your majestic sweeps, and wash me in the boundlessness of
your waters.

(4)

O Plough-man, bury me and plough me into the soil with thy share that the winds may bear me
away like the corn-scented dust, singing at last the song of freedom.

(5)

O Swordsman, unsheathe thy burning scimitar. With one flash, free me from my fettered self.

(6)

Mother Earth, take me back to thy bosom, let a myriad feet trample me and make me selfless as
thou art.

(7)

O Stars of the sky, take me up into your eyes, that I may see what I am in truth, in reality.

(8)

My God, conceal me in the roots of Thy Universe; in the flowers, in the streams, for there I am,
Impatient as the bubble in the stream, both to be and not to be.

II MY FUTURE BLISS

MY GOD, meet me now when no one else is near us for I am sick of others;
I seek Thy shelter like a wounded doe, to pass into the shades of the valley.
Only in the calm loneliness of Thy meeting, beneath the deodar pines of the Himalayas, can I
attain my future bliss.
Come, give to me the death-like kiss of Thy passion, and salvation from the stranger duality of
myself.

III THE KING GIVES ME THE GIFT OF POESY

ONCE I stood in the doorway of that Melodious Chanter on whose shoulders rest both sun and
moon;
I saw the oceans of godly music rolling at His Feet, and I knew not my own need;
I knew not what I would ask of Him.
He smiled and touched me on the shoulder,
And giving me two small violets, said:
“I give thee the gift of Poesy.”

IV THE OFFERING

HIDDEN deep within the jungles of faith, upon a rock patterned with vermilion
A poor Bhil laid an offering of a garland of forest leaves,
He made an offering, shed a tear, and bowed before the Unseen.

Today, O God of the Skies, Thou comest after ages
Wearing the very same garland of forest leaves.

V THE MESSAGE BEARER

I AM like the horse waiting for its rider, to bear the cooling fire of Thy word
I carry thy message,
shaking the heart of the earth, with the wild, rhythm of my proud dance, a dance of light
and thunder;
But I keep Thy message hidden in my own breast.

VI THE FATAL FIRE

I AM the bird whose outspread wings
seek the fatal fire
thou hast kindled in the hearts of men,
Seeking in my flight Thy infinite presence.

VII
THE TIRED FALCON

I AM the falcon, tired of flying for my food;
I return to Thee, my Love.
Hide me from myself in Thy bold embrace
That I may no longer be seen by
 the birds that scream for fear at my sight.
Let me lean henceforth on myself.

VIII
THE MAD MAN

I AM a man maddened by those unfathomable secrets
Thou hast poured into my breast,
 of Thy love, Thy sorrow,
 and the destiny of Man.
I am filled to overflowing with them, as a meadow is filled with blades of grass;
I am intoxicated as the cherry and the plum can no longer hold the flower folded within the bud,
 but must burst into blossom as soon as spring alights upon their branches.
There are times when standing in my grey locks by the road-side I imagine myself a tree
That suddenly, feeling Thy breath upon it, has flowered.
And in my joy I throw a flower-shadow upon the path, the path illumined by Thy tread,
And thus I stand until, indeed, I know myself as a tree and not a man.

IX
THE LITTLE ONES OF THE PINE TREES

AS I passed into the wood,
The little ones of the pine tree brought in their dew-wet mountain laps the primeval joys of their
 forest life;
With the mist of their innocent hearts they washed my feet;
Kneeling they slipped little rings of flowess, pink and blue, on to my toes and fingers;
In my ears they fixed ear-rings of grass and they bathed me in the wreaths of their smiles.
I stood still and let them adorn me with their sylvan gifts.
They fashioned me into a pine with creepers clinging around my waist, and moss and ferns upon
 my arms.
For a while I was joy of their frons' licking.

X
EXPECTATION

I ASKED an ancient pine:
“Why standest thou thus from ages past with thy feet firm rooted in the Himalayan rocks?
“Is it pride that makes thee hold thy head aloft defying the angry glances of the lightning?
“Or art thou a stern ascetic,

whose penance never ends?”

The pine replied:

“I saw Him once, and laid my head at His feet.

“With His own hands he lifted me up.

Proud in the joy of His touch, I now hold high my head wearing the cloud-turban and wistfully
gaze towards the skies,

Awaiting His return.”

XI LIFE AND DEATH

THE heart of the pine forest is young,

The leaves tremble soft, like lips lately kissed,

The soul sings for ever in the flowing brooklets and streams

And from the floating clouds tears continually drop.

The pines wave freely in summer and bend as though with age in winter,
borne down by snow and storm.

At night time they seem to die and lie enwrapped in a black shroud,

Only when the moon shines up on the mountains, waking softly from death,

They seem to rise and sail secretly upon a silver-sea of light.

XII THE GREAT UNKNOWN

MY bosom swells with the intense peace of His unseen presence,

As I pass beneath the shades of these ancient deodars of the Himalayas,

Finding no one, I clasp the standing pines in my arms.

In them, I feel the substance of my God and I seem to touch the holiness of awakening life.

In the littleness of our love, we stand together joyous in the presence of the Great Unknown.

XIII THE DARKNESS OF LOVE

I AM the grey mists wandering in the heart of the pine-clad hills,

Softly I cover the eyes of the new-born pines, protecting them from the splendour of the sun,

For I know they need the quiet brooding darkness of my love, as much as his brilliance.

XIV THE LIGHT OF THE MOUNTAINS

I AM a new-born babe left by my parents on the bare brown earth of the mountain path.

Too poor to lift me to their bosom,

they went their way shedding tears.

But I was a child from Heaven with a word in my mouth.

Yet they heard not;

From the fountains of life a river of milk came flowing towards me.

Yet they saw not.
Too poor to lift me to their bosom, they went their way shedding tears.
I sucked my thumb and lay where they had left me.

XV
HIS FOOTFALLS

WHOSE message comes thus?
What moment is this in which eternity seems to tremble with so sweet a thrill?
The myriad leaves of the pine forests are quivering in the expectation of the peace His kiss will
bring,
And as they shake, the hill-tops seem to tremble beneath the footfalls of a myriad gods.
Lost in wonder, I however betwixt life and death.

XVI
AN OLD COMRADE

YOUNDER in the distance, I espied a lonely hill,
A lonely hill covered with deodar pines.
And as I went close to it, I laughed, for on this hill
I recognised my old comrade, his long, matter locks still hung around him, but the old floods of
passion were frozen for ever in him.
He had been the stormiest of us all.
And now, how calm he sits with the eyes closed in a death-like rapture.
The valley lies at his feet like an empty cocoanut shell.
I tried to renew his acquaintance
But absorbed in the peace within his own bosom, he has ceased to respond to my idle curiosity.

XVII
THE CHILDREN OF DAWN

TOWARDS night-fall, I came home after a whole day's wandering among the deodar woods,
And as I laid my head upon the pillow to sleep,
The deodar-woods entered in through the windows and doors of my heart, filling, the little hut of
my mind with their merry rustle, wrapping me in their odours.
The woods and I are brothers, born of the Spirit of Dawn,
For together we have drunk the milk of life from the golden pitchers of her breasts.

XVIII
THE HIMALAYAN WINDS

ONCE dwelling in a hut in the pine woods,
I saw the unseen things,
The woods were full of unheard voices,
And as I lay, my head leaning against the window of my hut, I was startled by the laughter of
bathers in the ocean of light above;
Figures of flame came splashing across the waters of the

Infinite and stood before me, forms of beauty forever soaring heaven-wards on sky-coloured wings, imprisoning me in the magic of their myriad glances.
Lilies, roses, poppies and tulips, feel in trembling showers around me and a hundred times I swooned at the touch of their kisses.
Among the deodar leaves was the rustle of the maidenly robes of the winds hurrying from the Himalayas,
And as they gathered around me I mingled my breath with theirs.

XIX

THE LIGHT THAT CREATES THOUGHT

ON a dream-born midnight I saw a green tree thick with leaves bent low with the weight of a myriad fruits,
And as I looked it seemed to me I saw a young maiden in the window of high mansion, drunk with the joy of youth, tossing her braided hair in the air.
Dumb with wonder I followed spellbound into this land of dreams,
And the tree said:
“I am the heart of life that is to beat;
“I am the mind omniscient, still unknowing;
“I am the light that creates thought,
“I am the faith, the soft glow of love, the joy of God hidden in the voice of man,
“I am the evanescence of beauty pervading all things, the quintessence of glory ever-lasting.”

XX

MY MOON OF MOONS

IT is the Id Moon
Veiled Muslim women come out to see her and with their fingers up-lifted to the skies beckon others of their faith to come;
But the Id moon is only a little fleck on the smile of my beloved; yet to see her, my moon of moons, whole cities of beautiful women stream along the thoroughfares.

A hundred flower-faces tremble, pale with envy, as they wait in singing throngs on the road-side for a glimpse of her.

As she appears each one of them seeks to catch the whole of her beauty in their little hearts, each one desiring the Infinite.

Only I stand aside, apart from these jostling troupes of her devoted lovers, listening to a distant message coming softly from her who is so close, even in the little beatings of my heart.
And I feel the hidden fountain of her love flowing towards me.

And she consoles me thus;
“My love, it is only Thee I love
“To others I give as thou seest
“But a few stray kisses and way ward gifts;
“But upon thee I bestow my whole love
“And for thy sake God becomes a small man.”

But I know not why she speaks thus to me?
For every maiden of this world has her wedding vow from her, scrolled in letters of light on her
very soul.

XXI
THE HEART OF A STREAM

THE tree cast his shadow on the flowing stream, seeking to capture her heart by giving his own.
It was love at first sight,
And the stream said to the tree, "Come, beloved, dwell for ever in my heart;
"My soul is enraptured of thee."
And the tree fell captive to the charm of her maidenly love confessed.
Poor tree!
For with all her confessions of love on her lips, her silver feet unconsciously moved to another,
an Unseen Lover.

XXII
THE MAN WITH THE CANDLE

HIDDEN below the needle-shades of deodar leaves,
I saw a Cloudman passing above their heights with the moon in his hands like a candle
And he plunged the light of the moon into the shades below,
And instantly I saw a hundred silver pools of light gush forth from the shades, all sparkling;
And a hundred images of the cloud-man bathed in those pools, pools that trembled in the falling
shadows of the wind-kissed pines.

XXIII
WHEN LOVE VISITS ME

COLDER than the Himalayan morn,
Brighter than the blue diamond of the moon risen upon the hills on a clam, white night after the
snowfall,
My love came forth from the woodlands with outspread arms, as the sun rose.
And instantly all other joys fled from me as she gathered me in her arms.

XXIV
THE SONG OF THE REAPERS

THE hill path beat softly below my feet with the footfalls of a thousands more that had gone
before me,
While from the hilltops the snowy snatches of a liquid song came flowing down to me.
A group of hill-women, half-hidden behind the bushes were reaping grass with their scythes,
singing the hymns of the mute pines.
"They have gone
"But we still see their faces
"Under the throng of these pines life gathers its everlasting joys.
"Here the past and the present mingle their voices,

“We gather the twigs of grass for our calves, and we sing the song of woods at sunrise.”

XXV
IT IS BEST FOR ME

IT is best for me if men do not like me,
For only then the little ferns and flowers beckon me to share in their joy.
It is best for me if friends turn their back upon me and go away,
For then I find the sky bending low to kiss me,
And the winds drying my tears with the hem of their garments,
And the joyous blue bells in the grass break forth into happy laughter,
Yet though friends forget me, it is strange that I am always in the company of men and women
that once loved me.

XXVI
NIGHT TAKES ME AWAY FROM EVERY DOOR

NIGHT takes me away from every door,
She steals me away, as the fairy steals away the Prince of Beauty while he sleeps on his palace
roof;
And where she hides away with me, I do not know.
I do not remember now where we have been,
Only I still feel the warmth of her secret caresses, and hear the music of her sweet kisses,
Faint remembrance of the language of her passion lingers with me,
Though I have forgot all about her mysterious mansions where I lay upon her bosom, so
consciously unconscious.
No one knows howl pass my life with her in those unknown places,
No one can rescue me from her fascination.
She, she comes! galloping on her black mare, to carry me off beside her on the saddle,
Yet no one has heard the ringing hooves of her mare but I,
Every night is a romance,
And every day a dull recall of the night's deep sensations,

XXVII
I AM SO FAITHLESS TO MY LOVE

I AM so Faithless to my love,
But I do not know why.
As I leave her below in the valley, I hear her calling, calling,
While I lie unconscious on the hill-tops in the arms of beauty as she breaks like the dawn upon
the mountains,
In the peace of remembrance, the love-sound of my heart blossoms again into a crimson flower.
I am so faithless to my love
But I do not know why.

XXVIII
THE ROSES OF MY LOVE

I TRY to forget the roses of my love that bloom in the valley below, by gathering into my eyes
the divine faces that beam in the first blush of the virgin dawn on the snowy heights of
the Himalayas.
But their beauty so pierces my heart, that I long all the more for my love in the valley below, and
my heart is shattered and wounded by their arrow-like glances.

XXIX
IN A LONELY WOODEN HUT

LYING in a lonely wooden hut below the pines,
Deeming myself alone, forgotten by my friends like a dead yesterday,
I lived charmed by the pleasure of my own sadness;
But my friends would not let me be, because their love for me had become infinite like the
gladness of life itself.
During the night, they came in the moonbeams to my bedside and softly kissed my eyelids,
rousing me with old memories to dream new dreams;
And I had not slept long when the dawn with her long, thin fingers, opened my windows, and let
in the whole heaven of love—the sky, the sun, all came in, assuring me of the love of my
friends.
As the day nestling in its high nest among the pines
I still lay alone in my wooden hut.

XXX
THE BREAD OF LOVE

I WENT with a black bowl in hand to beg the bread of love;
And as I went all came out, many offering no more than the merest crumbs of courtesy,
Yet some, kinder ones, shed tears, and other offered a meal of honeyed words;
But there was nowhere sufficient and the little each had he would keep to himself.
As evening fell and the lamps were lit,
I saw a woman with a tiny lamp in hand, coming unbidden towards my unlighted hut,
She came and sat by me seeming to light the room with her presence.
When I looked up, she had gone,
The lamp that had been in her hand, I was now holding in mine.
A star come down from the sky,
My hut was full of light, and my bowl full of the Bread of Love.

XXXI
HER INFINITE CAPRICE

WHEN I saw her caressing the poor,
I coveted poverty,
But when I saw her pass on to high palaces of pleasure,
I coveted pleasures.
I followed her footsteps,
But I could never keep pace with the gait of her infinite caprice,

At last, in death-like despair, I gave up my desire for winning her favour, and slept by the
 roadside, broken pebbles for my bed,
When I woke, she was sitting by me, laughing,
And her earrings shook in her ears, in wild endeavour to make captive my soul.

XXXII
MY SISTERS OF THE SKY

BY the merest chance on the turn of a mountain path,
I met the morning zephyrs, radiant, glad, enwrapped in pine-perfumes;
Meseemed, they were a cluster of nymphs from the mid-sky who met me with a cry of joy as
 sisters in the Panjab might meet a long-lost brother,
They gathered me in their arms and covered my forehead with their kisses.
My eyes closed in rapture;
Fevered and tormented, I was soothed again with calm delight,
And I thought I lived again in that sky home of mine, so long forgotten.

XXXIII
PINES! O PINES!

PINES! O Pines! your breath resounds with prayer,
And your love shines in the eyes of flowers that bloom below in showers of your kisses,
From far off winds come riding on storm-footed horses seeking the fragrance of those divine
 heights of yours
And from under your bare brown feet fountains gush forth as though in love with all things.
High mountains dwell in the very dust of your breath;
And yet to me you seem ascetic, naked, poor and lonely!
Or does God lie hidden on the throne of your heart?

XXXIV
THE ENDLESS JOURNEY

I AM a pilgrim on an endless journey,
Going for ever to Him;
But I never arrive,
Only when He comes suddenly to me, then I understand His pleasure.

XXXV
THE DISTANCE BETWEEN YOU AND ME

THE distance between you and me seems as vast as the skies that glow and pale and burn to
 ashes,
But when I fall down and kiss the grass and dust of this earth in Thy Name,
In the tremble of my lips distance fades between us.

XXXVI

DO NOT ASK ME WHOM I LOVE

ONCE I loved a princess.

I could not breathe unless her eyes were fixed on mine;

I could not live without her voice piercing my very soul.

Continually I longed to hear her speech; and endlessly I tried to chant what she spoke in my ears;
I loved the very sound of her name, I sang it on my sitar; it was rich and ravishing, its repetition
overwhelmed me.

I felt I would die the moment I could no longer hear the music of her gait.

Ah, do not ask me whom I love,

For whom I love I know not myself.

After a little while, a beggar girl, a girl of pleasure, passed me.

In her ears were little pendants fashioned by the new spring for her, plum flowers;

I clasped her to me and we went arm in arm along the paths that wound restlessly up and down
through the woods.

O God! how should I live now if she were not to greet me

With that Holy Revelation that descends upon me from her smiles?

Do not ask me whom I love.

For whom I love I know not yet myself.

A mule driver passed me, leading his young mule, on the road to Tibet.

He had decorated her with black wool trappings embroidered with trinkets, and tasselled knots
hung low on either side, shaking like the lilt of a hill-song in the air.

In her ears he had placed red poppies; and round her neck were hanging yellow garlands of little
brass bells, and a blue pendant was set on the star of her forehead.

And as he led her up the slopes under the pines, she followed prancing with all her bells jingling
in answer to his words of joy.

The sight and the sweet sound of the mule following her care-free master, tore all the seals from
my heart,

And I followed them far on their road to Tibet.

Do not ask me whom I love,

For whom I love I know not yet myself.

A spring-storm of flowers blew around me,

As my feet were caught in the wet forest clay.

Again I was lost to myself.

And when parting, I almost cried.

Do not ask me whom I love

For whom I love I know not yet myself.

The hill stream like a crying baby I take in my lap,

And I swing it for hours in my arms, singing my lullabies to it, lullabies of a Name that was laid
on my tongue as a sacred drop of honey that had dripped from the moon at night.

Do not ask me whom I love,

For whom I love I know not yet myself.

There is a little hut waiting for me;

Its door is left ajar for me to enter,

Within the heart of a woman is beating, the little hearts of the children, unborn thumping in her?
of hearts

At night I go and lie with her.

In her embraces, I forget the flowers of the hills, the pines and the wondrous snows.

I rest on her bosom till she forgets I am there.

And so it happens

Do not ask me whom I love,

For whom I love I know not yet myself.

I love to leave the land of dreams, and like the bullock under the ploughman's yoke, strain my
body to feed the children of men.

I love to labour, and will suffer long if it be only for a stray kiss given to me by my child, or to
hear the sound of its little birdlike twitter, as it first struggles to form the speech of man,

In sad pleasure I should love to be still for ever.

Do not ask me whom I love,

For whom I love I know not yet myself.

XXXVII THE MYSTIC SANCTUARY

MESEEMS I saw beneath the deodars of the Himalayas, a pageant of men, women and children
gathered on the sacred stairs of a little sanctuary,

Which sparkled like the distant vision of a snow-covered cone, engoldened by a rising sun,

And a perpetual stream of pilgrims wound up and down over the glimmering steps—

But meseemed I saw like a deep shadow, an outworn, cast-out pilgrim sitting alone upon the
lowest step.

This dark little man was the key to the mystic sanctuary,

The sacred stairs were made of his song,

And they led into his heart.

In his song were the colours of the crowds gathered on the sacred stairs.

And in reality the secret shrine, like the sun risen out of the sea, shone as the Golden Dream out
of his heart.

This man of the sun-coloured love.

XXXVIII EVERY MORNING I FEEL HE COMES TO ME

EVERY morning I feel He comes to me;

He comes spryly right up to my bed while I am fast asleep

And imprints unseen a kiss upon my lips and goes away, leaving the light of His love scattered on
my pillow and on my bed.

My lips wake to an untaught prayer as his serving maids—my eyes— bathe me in the dew-
showers of those unbidden tears falling soft and silent,

And as they fall the universe of buds seems to flower into the song of life!

As I join my palms and look heavenward, the forest trees and mountains rise with me, adoring
Him!

His one kiss upon my lips seems to be printed everywhere, for the very flesh of creation cries with
the un-utterable pain of pleasure.

I feel the inadequacy of my love for Him,

He comes, bestows His love upon me, waking all my passions for Himself,

And this love I seem to change into a hundred vanities in my own name.

XXXIX

THE ALMOND-EYED SHEPHERD GIRL OF THE HIMALAYAS

It was an almond-eyed shepherd girl of the Himalayas, clad in a snow-white robe fastened at the waist with a tassel of the red silk twings of pahan.¹

Gathering the full-blown flowers of rose and dahlia, she moved quickly here and there, and as she went she carolled notes which might have been freed from the throats of those golden birds of the snow that soared upward, rushing higher and higher into the blue!

And I saw her return from her garden, her lap full of flowers, vanishing songs of the prides and vanities of youth!

For a while she stood on the grassy mound of the hill-top like a vision suspended in the air, her eyes cast upon the setting sun;

And he wearing a crimson turban seemed to halt by the secret side of the opposite hill peeping from behind the waving pines, gazing upon her with a deep farewell.

His face still turned towards her, he sank down unwillingly with lingering steps, like a mariner going to the great blue sea, leaving his sweetheart on the sandy shores of memory.

The girl too was sad, her eyes filled with tears, her face was suffused with the blushes of unconfessed love; and silently she showered the deep red roses and dahlias from her lap, as he went down; and the valley seemed to be filled with her flower-offerings bedewed with tears.

I saw her again in the dream dawn of my mind,

And she wore on her wrists and arms the flowers of the valley and the mountain; sparkling dew-diamonds shone in her ears, and her lap was full of roses;

She was decorating herself, and had no thought at all for others.

I was besieged by her beauty; a simple shepherd girl alone in the forests so superbly adorned with the delicate dream-lie flowers—a flower herself in woman's form.

I loved her tresses clustering in curls on her winged shoulders;

I loved her eyes cast down upon herself

I loved her little white hands fluttering as two white doves, busy adorning herself with flowers,

All un-noticed I stood beside her as if I were a tree,

And my un-uttered thoughts, my myriad leaves, sun-kissed by her beauty, trembled with the breath of a passing wind, a passing pleasure that perhaps never could be mine.

At last she looked up and her black eyes smiled into mine,

So that I really swooned away with pleasure

She spoke, but before, her words reached my ears, they were changed and fell upon the ground in a spray of flowers;

And as she smiled, a rain of pearls fell from her eyes, like a monsoon shower; I was caught in the spell of her magic person, as I might be in a clear sky from which the stars were falling.

She was a dream,

And as I opened my eyes, she vanished,

And as I closed them again, there she was and the bills rang with her laughter.

She had got up from her seat, and her white robe flowed like a veil of stars over her limbs of light, so that I thought I saw a cascade of sparkling water falling, falling.

Vision came upon me as I saw her gazing on the valleys below,

And hardly had I questioned,

“Is life but a full-blown flower whose beauty death must gather to himself?

“Art thou the death of everything?”

When I saw a hundred flowers burn up and dissolve like windborne, moon-lit clouds,
 And seeing them die, I cried like a man in a dream, at this universal disaster.
 But a spring-breath from her lips touched the heap of dead flowers, and more glowing than
 before they were kissed back into life and the gardens were gay as before and after.
 Another question was born in my mind,
 “Art thou like then, before whose breath-wings death flies like an angel to the skies?
 “Art thou thyself creating all these flowers of life that die to a sweeter life hereafter?
 “I thought God loved only the proud, vain beauty that blooms for a moment and is past, and so I
 too thought it better to drop and die like a flower whose youth is past;
 “But I see the spring-wafts of the breeze of love, bring life to the dead, even to the hard rocks.
 How they bloom with pleasure in spite of all these strange and tragic disasters!
 “This life is but a small measure of His Mercy, and death a call of His to an intenser pleasure.
 “Its the endlessness of thy own self-decoration, O simple shepherd girl, what we understand as
 immortal bliss?”
 And she answered;
 “Know, passer-by, the zephyrs of the eternal spring of heaven blow through my mind, and in my
 breath burns the image of the sun, and in my soul rings noble laughter.
 “Death or Life are no concern of Love.
 “To touch His limbs with our lips—whether dead or alive—is immortality, is pure knowledge, is
 faith and passion everlasting.”
 And saying this she ran past me with outspread arms to receive the sun.

Again, on the same hill, she sat, offering him the flowers of the valley and the mountain.
 Again the sun descended from the sky, all laughter, and coming close he kissed her and poured
 upon her tresses the ray-streams of God’s light that flowed over her like a thousand
 streams of nectar,
 While she sat like a saint in rapture with crossed legs on the rock, receiving her Master.
 And at her feet lay the flowers of joy of the realm of immortality.

With open eyes I saw it was the same almond-eyed, simple shepherd girl, that had met me on the
 mountain;
 Her flock of sheep followed her quietly, only the little lambkins were bleating and running to her
 side for the inviting morsels of tender blades of new-born grass, which she strewed upon
 the hill-paths as she went,
 And as she went past me, she smiled, and I poured out my soul in reverence, wondering from
 whence and how the messages of my God come to me so often hidden in unknown faces
 such as hers.

XL LOVE IS CALLING

THE veiled Bride of the Cloud, the Snow-Peak, held the cloud in her azure arms, as spoke to turn
 with all her woman’s art of entreaty,
 “The earth my darling!, is so ungreatful!
 “Thou triest to make a sky of it, yet it still remains unblessed and wretched.
 “Its throat is still parched, its skin is athirst and its mouth filed with the dust of desire.
 “Of what use then are they gifts showered to continuously upon it?
 “Come, my darling! consent to stay at home with me,
 “And conceal thy lightnings for ever in my ecstatic rapture.
 “I am saddened to see thee wasting thy sweet self in love of others, who can never learn thy
 lesson.

“Thou art giving away thy soul for nothing; baring thy bosom to hearts of clay.
 “Come, consent to stay at home with me!”
 But the Cloud replied:
 “Sweet God has given away both me and thee, to those ‘others.’
 “I cannot stay at home with thee, my love, more than for a while,
 “I cannot be what thou sayset,
 “My body is made of the sighs of man,
 “And my soul of his tears.
 “When I see the earth athirst for God,
 “I must go as her cup-bearer carrying floods from the sky in my cup of tears;
 “Then for a moment, the meadows are green and the mountain laps are filled with flowers;
 “For a moment, the little streams swell into mighty rivers,
 and the parched earth is bathed in tears,
 “For a moment, the cows and buffaloes raise their heads to Heaven, and the *peebia* cries,
 “For a moment, heaven and earth meet,
 “For a moment, man is God,
 “You and I are born to die.
 “Let us die while bestowing our love!
 “Dost thou not see when lam weeping that it is God’s mercy raining music, everywhere?”

XLI THE ‘REALITIES’ ARE UNREAL

I LOVE to watch the day as it rises trembling like a hundred flickering lights in the wind-rustled shadows of the tall deodar trees, when the ‘realities’ of the earth, kissed by the dream of the rising sun, shine out, illumined illusions of the *maya* of the moment;
 When the valleys look like cups of light overflowing with white wreathes of foam,
 And the pines rise in their hundred spires as a city of deserted temples whose priests have fled away, afraid of their own deities,
 When the winds blow through the conch-shell space, sound it as Hindus do for the morning prayer,
 And little violets clamber up the hills, ringing their tiny bells, fallen from the hands of those fugitive priests.
 Then the village maidens, unawares, enter the invisible holy precincts, feeling a sudden onrush of rapture, and they gather below the pines, laughing, laughing for joy in their God-kissed youth.
 These simple folk, living in their little sylvan hamlets in the deserted city of temples, live on the holy green grass-floors, and scent the fragrance of gods without knowing how close, how near they are, standing by them, inspiring them with life, love and joy.
 The pine trees, and the winds and flickering lights of the holy shadows, the silver brooklets muttering prayers, like monks with their beads, all combine here, to weave nets to catch the unrealities, the little hymn-snatches of the hill-girls, the warbles of the forest birds, and the myriad foot-beats of the little cherubs praising God under the broad golden canopy of sun rays draped and swung from spire to spire.
 In this city of deserted temples, those unrealities of flying beauties alone are real.
 Here clouds enfolding the pines in their tresses say, “Better than light are tears.”
 Better than thought is the stir from the long-armed breezes swooping down from the snows;
 Better than life is love that lives in the faintest, frailest illusions of beauty which must die, in spite of itself, all unwept, unmourned under that clear, cold scrutiny of reality, made stale by being worshipped too much.

XLII
THE HIMALAYAN PINES

CROWDS of pine trees assembled on the hills to bid me farewell
And I felt I was leaving the beloved hermits of old. It was as though I were dying to a whole
continent of loving friends, friends who healed all my pains.
I had come to them a world-sick wanderer and they had opened wide their doors and let me in.
Now when I was going they gathered at their doors to bid me their infinite, deep adieu.
What is this strange hermit-friendship of theirs?
They pour wonder-born silence into the secret recesses of being; the quintessence of soul.
Not a sigh escapes them from beneath the weight of that cross they bear continually for others,
They accompany no one down the hills, and will not leave their mountain seats, even for love. It
were as if they sought to create new pangs in those they loved.
They have renounced the world; the world must seek them, and not they the world.
How often I have prayed to the pines;
“Initiate me into the secret of the crucifixion of the flesh; Let me be with you for the bliss that
dwells in the very grasses under feet, as the tear-bathed moon rises from them, yonder
into the sky.”
“I long to sip the silver peace of night from the great eyes of God that open in this sky to yours.”
And as I departed the pines replied;
“You are going down, already transformed by us.
“In you, we go down seeking new forms of transient joy, flashes of our own woods and skies;
“In you we go to see how the eyes of God shine in the eyes of the woman you love, and how the
snowy summits heave within her bosom.
“How in her slender stature is the grace of the pine and how our arms toss in her arms, so
keeping you for ever in our embrace.
“In her heart you will find a nest made of our fragrance;
“While you are walking arm in arm with her at night,
“We too shall pass in the sky of your mind, across your love-lit eyes.
“For the same tear-bathed moon will shine upon us both, forever.

XLIII
A SUDDEN FREEDOM

LONG after,
It was in a town in the plains.
I saw a group of dawn-rapt deodars enter the very chamber where I was sleeping:
I ran into their outstretched arms,
And abandoned myself to their greetings;
I felt as though the forests themselves had come to clasp me in their wild embraces. And in their
face I saw a new day breaking in upon me.
“Look,” they shouted like excited boys;
“At last love has bestowed upon us too, these strange things—the limb, the eye, the heart and the
tongue:
“On our own feet, we have walked down from the hill,
“So strange is the experience of stepping to you.”
“Look,” they said again, shaking me with their long arms of delight,
“Our feet have been washed free of clay, clay that chained us down to the rocks, such helpless
prisoners.

“Look at our arms freshly fashioned by the hands of our Maker!

“Hands! Only just formed, virgin new in their moving,

“We can lift our arms. We can come and go as we will.

“Our long penance is over.

“Look,” they shouted again and would not wait for a reply.

“Freedom has come to us too from the door of Love,

“It is in our hands and feet, our eyes, tongues, hearts!

Our senses are all sharpened, all intense.

“This rose-coloured freedom is sweeter than the pale-face peace we might have won,

“Our action is nobler than the placid calm of still gazing.

“We see Light, for the first time our eyes kiss the sun,

“And this restlessness of being is larger, ampler, better than all that has gone before.

“Death here is brighter than the far-seeming perpetual life of the hill and the pine.

“Look,” they said again, breathless with the joy of utterance,

“Our new limbs are quivering with the music of pleasure,

“Every hair thrills with the universal being,

“We never tire of speaking, for only now have we got our tongues,

“And when we seal our lips, our hearts beat faster.”

Footnotes:

1. A perennial shrub with long pink branches, used for basket making in the Himalayan hills.

PART VI

THE ROSES OF KASHMIR

To

BHAI VIR SINGH JI

PURAN SINGH

IN THE SHIKARA WITH MY LOVER

I

O WHY DID HE LOVE ME SO MUCH?

ON the blue waters of the lake in that little *shikara* with my lover,
I was ill with life and thought.
Kindly, kindly he laid me down,
I felt he laid me down on his heart;
In a sweet bosom-to-bosom perfection I died,
O why did he love me so much?

II

MINGLING OF JOYS AND SORROWS

THE moon was on the mountains when I was lying in the *shikara* by my lover,
The little lamps of burning gold seemed as scattered steeples of some temples buried in the liquid
darkness.
It was the mingling of joys and sorrows in a yonder world;
It was the music of the cosmic silence of the bride-like evening.
All passion was released for the moment from its restless life.
Touching the moon on the mountain,
I passed beyond myself.

III

THE RAIMENT OF THE LITTLE LAMP

I LOOKED into the gloom gathered on the lake,
The high peaks of Kashmir looked like black giants,
And I crouched too close to his side with fear.
“Fear not” said he,
“This vast gloom is what clothes the little lamp that twinkles on the yonder hill.”

IV

THE PARADISE OF NOTHING

O! THE frail little *shikara*.
What an infinite dream it carries!
Death sleeps here in the arms of love,
The passion of youth and that ineffable beauty of soul kiss each other on a wooden plank.
In the sleep of beauty melts away all harsh music of form into the sweet paradise of Nothing.

V

MY ABASHMENT

I THOUGHT he was my man with me in the *shikara*.

My dream was shattered when I saw him at midnight walk on the waters and his arms reach the sky,
The sky opened up to him as he lightly touched its golden curtains;
A face peered in divine splendour behind and smiled at me.
I suddenly felt ashamed of my pride of his love of me, as if of my utter nudity; he was all celestial and I of earth.
O why I felt so superior once when he was putting those ruby earrings in my ears so passionately?

VI THE LOTUS OF MY BOSOM

I KISSED him, I thought it was love,
My lips touched the wooden plank and the delicate rose of my lips was wounded.
I locked him in my bosom, I thought my soul was fusing into his,
But suddenly the blossomed lotus of my bosom untasselled itself into a hundred cries that wandered on the waters as stray petals of my heart.
O God! my lover is a *voice* that calls and calls for ever away from everything, from me, him and her,
Ah, if every particles of my flesh could but reply and go for ever to where He calls.

O God, my lover is the *name* that burns in the sun,
Ah, if my bones and flesh could flame up like the morning flowers that blossom in a flood.

O God, my lover is the light trembling on the yonder purple hills, Ah, if I could capture the infinite joy in the fluttering wings of life, If the whole sunlight were caught in the trembling canary fans of a butterfly.

O God, my ever-elusive lover is beyond the quivering roses of my lips.
Ah, if I could kiss the stone, the tree, the earth and the sky in an ever-evanescent dream of my lover.

O why talk of soul and God and love in vain?
When I and my lover lie together in the *shikara* on the Dali,
The very hills vanish to make us alone,
The stars retire into the black depths,
In that sacred union of all things in me and my lover,
All talk is profane, insane.

VII IN JOY OF OUR DREAM

WHEN I and my lover in that *shikara* dreamt of love,
We saw out secret love lighted many hearts.
The gentle breezes softly awoke and sweetly kissed the shadows trembling on the face of the lake.
The hills tossed their arms in air and embraced the yonder crescent in the clouds.
The sky itself secretly stole and met the earth under the *chinar* grove.

And in joy of it all, the happy gods lighted their little oil-lamps of stars.

VIII MY LOVER AND I

WE lie together in the *shikara*
My lover and I,
But as the bathers in the Gagribal strip themselves bare before entering deep into the liquid
spiritual transparency of the lake,
We have also to fling our garments of bodies on the dry shores.
We lie in the *shikara* together,
Not my lover and I,
But our garments.

IX A WOMAN HAS GONE INSANE ON THE DALL

HER *shikara* roams like the human mind on the lake,
It is a bare wooden plank, the dried frame of the old Eve,
But she says, it is Universe.
She has her own sun and moon and stars and skies, she decorates her boat with her own jewels,
She hardly has a cloth to cover her body, but she says her garments are as many as the lakes and
green meadows in Kashmir; woollen home-spun drying in the sun hung on a blue rope.
And for the while she wears the green leaves of the *chinar* and the poplar the whole spring in
blossom as her veil-cloth, she is so vain with glory.
She is a wild, wild woman.
She says she is wedded, though no one ever saw her bridegroom.
She paddles alone her boat always, but says she has her lover in her arms.
And they say at midnight she is radiant like the moon and her *shikara* floods the lake with the
light that illumines her face.
A woman has gone insane on the Dali.

X THE WAY MY MASTER CAME TO KASHMIR

I LAID my forehead down at the temple of Bhagbhari¹ in Srinagar,
In a glance I saw my forehead become the whole road to the Golden Temple at Amritsar,
And my Master coming to Srinagar. And I did kiss the door-sill of His Temple at Amritsar while
at Bhagbhari.
One kiss given to His door-dust at Bhagbhari becomes a whole age-long pilgrimage of my lips to
Amritsar imprinting kisses on His path that goes to Amritsar.

FOUR GARDENS OF KASHMIR

*“The shades here, O love,
Heal the wounds of life.”*
—Bhai Vir Singh

I FOUR GARDENS OF KASHMIR

WE are four princesses in our right.
Too beautiful to be behind veils.
We are too good to be put to private pleasures,
In Kashmir heaven meets the earth in us,
All beauty here bears our dream-lit images,
We entertain thousands, yet we are apart from the unnecessary curious world, mere feet that
 come and go.
We are four Immaculate Virgin Princesses,
In open do we live in infinite confidence beyond our forms and actions,
His one kiss is a new youth for us.
It is not the leaf of the *chinar* nor the waving stature of the proud poplar,
It is not the rose that springs in the garden,
It is our soul, the fair Kashmir is our virgin glow scattered on the snows.

II THE NASIM

I AM the Nasim, the breeze that caught in a thousand embraces wins new freedom from every
 fresh bondage.
A thousand kings roam in my love.
These *chinars* that gather in the gardens in Kashmir, still toss their suns, their hands are but leaves
 sighing for me.
The poor kings!
I dance so elusively, I still pass touching their hands with mine,
And they close their eyes in rapture of the rhythm of my steps that come and go,
They love me I know, but they must wait for me ever.
What else is love but the joy waiting for me?
The very grass glows with the scent of my youth,
The moon but paints a scene of my bejewelled forehead in the sky,
The old blue sky borne on the shoulders of the poplars comes down with my laughter in a merry
 twinkle of my eye.

III THE SHALIMAR

I AM the Shalimar,
My face is my music.
I blaze up passions of both man and tree, a fire burns in every leaf,
My bosom heaves with wistful languor,
My presence is full of the wine of flowing pleasures;
When the veils of the day are lifted, the moon steals to my side from Heaven,
And all the leaves tell me and I have heard the stones singing in my ears:
“Beauty such as thine kindles the life-lamps.
“Behind the doors are a thousand springs in flower,
“Thou art the woman that burns with love.”
In my loneliness, I look up and say if He be kind, all goes well,

And my beauty is freedom in the bondage of His Love.

IV THE NISHAT

I AM the Nishat.

I am bound in unrestrained joys of my rising youth,

My bosom trembles with the love of man,

But no one loves me.

A man comes from Heaven at night, unlike all other men;

His eyes blaze orbs, though all his clothes are hair, hair,

His knees are bare. But have you seen him? He carries all the wind of Heavens on his shoulder.

In his breath burn the stars.

I fancy I have become a garden for a whole idle world for a stray glimpse of him whom I love.

V CHASHMA-SHAHI (THE KING'S FOUNTAIN)

THEY call me The King's Fountain.

I am the wounded Heart of Life.

Have you seen my beautiful maiden curls?

The blue ribbon of the stream of my soul that binds them?

Have you seen my lovely youth scattered in sad confusion, the autumn leaves of the *chinar* and
the poplar that rain in dry showers of tears for me.

The apple and the almond groves that blossom in spring shed a rain of flowers,

The clouds of flying petals sigh for me!

The valley of Kashmir is filled with the sorrow of my youth.

My liquid tresses oft have the *yogis* stolen, but they cannot arrange them well.

My joy is out of the pool of my sadness hidden in the heart of my friends, and the closed caves
of these curious men do ill befit the ever-gushing streams of my tresses.

I am the maiden who spills her youth, for the charm of wasting away my worth is endless.

THE BEAUTY OF KASHMIR

*"It is raining
And lam full of tears."*

—Bhai Vir Singh

I THE BEAUTY OF KASHMLR

IN the dark pools of her eyes,

A gleam of passion glides soft

As the *shikara* on the black

Waters of a lovely lake,
It seems a whole heaven in the *shikara* flies.
O Death, those two dark pools of her eyes.

II COME, O RIPE RED APPLE OF YOUTH

“COME, O ripe red apple of youth,
“The marble-soft woman of Kashmir,
“You and I fill the rocks with the liquid joy of one passing dream caught in a fair embrace.”
No one of the beaming ones who looked at me replied.
Only a distant voice came faintly from behind the veil of a grove,
“Are you a man the voice of the image carved in the rocks? From where doth your voice come
to us?”
Agitated, I did shut my eyes and spread my arms, as if by being blind I would reach the soul of
the Kashmir woman better than with eyes...
“Where are you who have heard so far away the voice of my soul so near?
“What strange impediments shut your steps away from here?
“Shall we meet only in a voice crying and replying?”
And the jealous gods sculptured my quivering image of passion on the slope of mountains, on
the very spot.
Those two long bare arms of the *rockies* of the Jhelum,...
The sublimely enlarged image of me is my one unfulfilled embrace of the woman I love, spread
over the mountains.

III A WOMAN UNDER THE MULBERRY

AS she stood under the mulberry, husking rice,
I gazed at her lovingly; she was husking rice.
All my fibres trembled like the liquid silver strings,
My flesh sang the new symphonies of old love,
But as I spread my arms and closed my eyes in acute pain of what never could be,
I saw but a graveyard beside the tree,
And a group of roses bloomed where I had imagined a nymph, a woman, a companion of the
man in me.

IV A DIALOGUE IN THE ENCHANTED VALE

WHAT price, O sweet, young, slender poplar of Kashmir for thy graceful stature?
What price for thy maiden blush? O rose of the valley!
For thy painful look? O narcissus!
What price for thy pretty veil-cloth?
O maiden hyacinth of Kashmir.
For the lotus on thy green shawl? O weed-choked pond of life!
What price for thy youth? O moon, sitting under the shade of the *chinar*!
What price for the blue mantles of flame you wear? O lakes of Kashmir!

Those God-like hearts of yours ? And those wind-blown tresses of the streams bound with the moonbeams?

Voices from behind

They have paid for us ever
We have been bought and sold,
Both our lovers and we died
Long ago, long ago;
Kashmir is charmed, love is death;
On our graves the little irises are our price.

And a Reply

For the dawn of thy face, O Beauty.
For the plaited streams of thy flowing braids
A life or ten or more were nothing,
Death, sweet death in those curls but a holy recompense.
If my voice could wake thee out of that living grave,
If only it could be..... that soothing spiritual companionship, pure and free, of woman as live, as
luxurious, as languorous as Nature here, as rich, as lofty, as great as soul and as intimate.
If only it could be....the simple sight of two poplars across the newly ploughed grave would open
a new earth and heaven for holy comradeship in Kashmir.

Voices from behind

They have paid for us for ever,
We have been bought and sold,
Both our lovers and we died,
Long ago, long ago.
Kashmir is charmed, love is death;
On our graves the little roses are our price.

V

THE SLEEPING LOTUSES ON THE LAKE

LIKE a closed bud of rose, enwrapped in folds of night the dawn was yet unflowered in the sky
And on the bosom of the soul-coloured lake the lotuses slept in their own fragrance.
A foolish stray black bee flew across the sky and arrived before the dawn the lotuses were taken
aback when with its restless wings it struck the all-closed door of the flowers on the lake.
They from within their soul replied, "Not your quivering passion, O bee, but the distant Ray of
Heaven alone opens the doors of our life, our doors are closed within ourselves to all the
world outside."
The black bee of the night buzzed round about the closed doors of the lotuses and fell a tear
shed by the parting night on the lake.

VI

INSPIRATION OF JOY

THE lotuses floated on the lake, as white bowls of love
And the bowls were full of liquid gold of the sun;
The feast of beauty was sparkling on the blue waters,

Men and goats passed by on the dusty paths inlaid with many coloured stones,
Only the winds on the waters seemed delirious.
The solitary golden bee came swimming through the sky,
And the passion of earth and love of heaven and beauty and life gathered on the lake in one song
of faith,
When the Lord of compassion came and inspired the sighs.

VII ON HER PATHS

THE sky is stretched a long sapphire canopy and like a shower of fine silver threads strung with
large beads of emerald fall from above the poplars on either side.
And Kashmir paves the paths with her eyes for the light-veiled Bride of Heaven that comes in
the palanquin of the night.
In every hamlet on the mountain-side the same welcome is for her in the shower of garlands of
the poplars hanging down from the mid-heavens.
The poplars fall all over the plains everywhere like strings of jewels scattered here and there
As fall the fickle-minded summer showers shading the white bright day with screens of pearls.

VIII THE KASHMIR GIRL OF PAMPUR (PLUCKING SAFFRON BLOSSOMS)

SITTING in the golden dust,
She was bending low, picking *kesar* flowers,
Her ears were full with bunches of silver rings that stained her temples with their furtive kisses.
A veil fluttered like a grey cloud over her head,
And her dust-and-oil besmeared garment folded her as if a mud stream out of a glacier was cut
into clothes for her,
Her face was fair as fresh-fallen snow on the bill,
Her fingers were restless, it seemed many red beaks of peasants were picking the purple
blossoms of saffron;
Her hand was on the blossoms that she gathered, her eyes in my eyes dragging them out of me,
her head she tossed in air with lofty bird-like vanity, her form, I saw, filled the sky,
And she smiled in supreme felicity of her own flower of youth, both her hands were full of *kesar*
blossoms both her eyes full of me, her soul grown a whole Heaven.
I gazed at her, begging flowers of her, she looked at me and smiled,
And she looked again and laughed at me, saying with her eyes,
What a foolish stranger to truth was I.

IX ON SEEING AN OIL PAINTING OF A KASHMIRI WOMAN

I AM more beautiful when I am a shining shadow of my self,
A lie of colours is more truthful a study of me than the truth of hard human bones.
Unburdened of my body I am a note of music thrilling the earth;
My soul is truly seen in a lower world of flowers, or in a higher world of gods: in my own world I
am a lie besmeared with the dirt of human life;

My breath flowers in the beauty of my babes, and I feel I am a soul when a mother.
The painter traces with his brush the red and blue colours of my clothes and, methought, too, it
is a much more living image of me;
The lie of a painter is truth, the dream of a poet surely a soul,
But I am a woman baring my breast to the tiny just-born lips of my babe under a *chinar* tree while
gathering dry leaves for the evening fire;
I am the pain of human joys, that smiles on itself.

ILLUSIONS OF LIFE IN KASHMIR

"The fountain here is like a little child"

—*Bhai Vir Singh*

I

THE BASKET BEARERS

The Chinars of Kashmir

WHAT huge baskets the gaunt old men of Kashmir, the *chinars*, carry on their heads,
They drag the clouds at night out of the Dali lake thinking them to be wool dyed green by the
waves.
But, at day break, only the clouds are in their baskets, the clouds all turned into leaves, leaves,
and their baskets into hands of the dyers, dappling the sky.
The sun shines like a huge diamond in the baskets, cut into a thousand edges by the *chinar* leaves.

II

THE POPLAR ON THE RIVER BANK

THE poplar on the river bank at midnight forgot itself, and went all over the bank, saying:
Am I the image lying on the bosom of the river or a shadow in the vapours of the moonlight?
O what sin I?
I go catching my shadow everywhere in the running waters.

III

A CHINAR MIDST THE POPLARS IN AUTUMN

AM I the stray sunset cloud caught by the village poplars by the side of the mountain in the
autumn of Kashmir?
Or a lonely *chinar* burning in my own blood?

IV

THE SHADOWS OF THE SKY

THE high mountains round the Dali in broad daylight suspected themselves:
"Are we but the folded shadows in purple and gold thrown across the sky out of the heart of this
soul-like lake?"
"Oh, we can never touch ourselves though day and night our arms are spread."

V
THE FISHERMAN

THE black shadow of a fisherman with a long spear, standing on the prow of his little boat falls
on the deep, blue lake.
Is he piercing fishes with his spear?
Or trying to pierce the heart of the lake perchance to pierce himself?

VI
THE SUNRISE

MY lover has put aside his blue mountain-garments and bared his dazzling bosom to me.
It is the jewel of love that shines in his breast.

VII
THE MYSTIC LOTUS OF THE SNOWPEAKS

THE great mystic Lotus blossoms in the snow-peaks of Kashmir,
And the whole flower seems to be submerged in the blue bowl shaped lake of the sky;
Its petals are seen half-afloat above those sparkling blue waters of the evening,
And over the flower, the stars, as golden bees, hover, half-sinking, half-flying, afraid of being
drowned, in a perpetual thirst for the drink of these lotus lips.

VIII
A STRANGE ILLUSION

I SAW a beautiful woman of Kashmir washing clothes on the river bank at Srinagar,
Her own clothes were soiled with toil and pain and woe, and the dirt and filth of life,
But she was beautiful, sparkling like a gem in mud,
The river did fondly clasp her purified image to his breast and sighed.
Her bead-like black eyes were transparent like those of a saint who toils for years for that sweet
innocence,
But the roses planted by God at the gates of Heaven had faded and died,
The labour of life had blown a hot blast up to those heights, that had scorched her youth;
Her braids were full of dust while the loving river rolled down his immense wealth over her
image.
Only the real one was so profane while the full-tressed image caught in the love-dream of the
river-lover was made all holy, Godlike.
The rich divine lover was unable to kiss her braids free of that human anguish which was not
within his breast, such were the fates.
I suddenly thought of building for her a palace of marble and gold and pearl on the river bank, of
enrobing her with the purple silks of sky and the blue velvet of the lakes of Kashmir,
bejewelling her with the diamonds of yonder divine snows,
I almost wished I could conquer worlds to make her free and to be idly busy in transmuting little
pearls of dew into stars by just stringing them into her flower-washed tresses, and in
worship of her form divine to lavish on her the paradise of pleasures of art and life and
religion, to gain a soul by merest trifles.

Only to see her smile like the sun with joy of her beauty of which she herself knew nothing,
though she had hands and feet and a face.
I closed my eyes and saw the palace built for her by the water-gods and they would fain squander
all gems and jewels to adorn her perfected woman form.
The marble statues, her exquisite images, were carved on the stairs, were set in the galleries, in
the large thousand pillared halls, in delicate feminine trellised balconies;
Carved or ivory, the whole while palace was full of her images in marble,
And she stood on the door a princess, blazing like the moon at night and making the marble
alive with her splendour,
I rushed forward to wash her feet with the flowers of the garden of my soul; she looked back at
me and stopped on the marble stairs.
As I touched her bare white feet with eyes closed, I woke up with a sudden shock; I saw my lips
were wounded by the touch of the hooves of a back, long-haired hill-goat, her antlers
stood in great animal majesty against the marble walls, her back shadow swept the stairs,
And the marble statues of the woman of Kashmir dreaming in the galleries laughed as if they
were alive, and the echo rang through the halls,
And opposite me a beautiful woman of Kashmir was washing clothes on the river bank at
Sringar!

IX THE SAFFRON IN BLOSSOM AT PAMPUR

A PRETTY maiden of Kashmir mistaken for a blossom in the field was teased by a numerous
swarm of butterflies,
They covered her entire.
She was vexed by the flutter of their purple wings;
I saw her running for life, flapping her veil and shaking her skirt; the butterflies falling on the
ground.
The fields of Pampur were littered with the purple butterflies breathless with excitement!

X THE AUTUMN WINDS

THE beautiful women have cast their spring garments in fire and have made garbs of leave,
And they go roaming everywhere almost insane with passion wearing the brown stoles of dried
twigs.

XI THE LAKES OF KASHMIR

WHOSE diamond garland set with turquoises and sapphires and emeralds is lying on the rocks?
The Rich Bather in the infinite has kept it there and forgot about it all.

XII THE KASHMIR AUTUMN

THE mountain tops flame like torches,

A woman's passion blazes the sky, the fire is falling everywhere.
Every *chinar* of Kashmir is burning down,
Everywhere is kindled a sacrificial fire and the poplars are but back columns of smoke rising out
of a separation-scorched heart,
The almond groves and the cherry and the plum are burnt,
Someone is separated from her lover, her very soul is lost, the leaves of life are all dried and
falling as tears of her great passion whose fires nothing can quench;
The snows fall but nothing revives, the very bones have been charred by separation, a great
woman is in distress.

THE SPIRIT OF THE KASHMIR MOUNTAINS

"Talking to the shepherd, and near about Ganeshpur, meseems, I heard Him. I saw Him."
—*Bhai Vir Singh*

I THE JHELUM RIVER

I ESPIED yonder on the divine snows the weavers of beauty spinning threads of the azure and
weaving braids of life,
One magic thread of molten jade and emerald and sapphire out of those with which they were
knitting mountain with mountain, broke in the midsky and fell.
There was a sudden splash of waters, of gems falling in a stream from high.
Ah! the thread of the weavers broke with the sublime weight of those images of the snow-clad
mountains that they tried to hang by one unspun thread of the blue in the mid-sky.
Ah! the thread of the weavers broke by its awful gentle spring-swim of life, a thousand heart-
bells broke, a thousand images were shattered on the rocks.
It is the Jhelum river now, pulsating in the bones of rocks with the infinite passion of the Great.
The mysterious song of the weavers of Heaven still flames up in its restless waves that break
themselves in perpetual pain to be holy.

II AT DOMEL

WHITHER, O mountains! with such lofty confused haste?
As tired travellers reaching just their last stage, who have come walking through the night, and
still go in the day treading at each other's shoulders, whither, O mountains, with such
lofty confused haste?
When here at Domel the very soul of the universe comes down melting and goes for ever
bowing at the door of the Beautiful.
A thousand songsters sit here on the river banks will all the silver strings in their hands shaking
with song of praise as the moonbeams shiver self-same tunes on the running waters,
All is case at Domel, the hearts are still, the inner throbs are filled with love, and one enquires,
"Is there anywhere else a more beautiful destination, and a love more flowing, and a life
more glorious?"
Whither, O mountains, with such lofty confused haste?

III CHINARI

CHINARI is the cradle of gods swung by the moulded arms of rocks that bind it dreamily to the high mountain-tops, and the Jhelum river rocks the Chinari gently and softly.
I saw the cradle swing like a delicate emotion as the waving arms of the river touched the flesh-arms of the rocks,
A little baby was sleeping there, faintly smiling and talking with the gods,
And the winds of Heaven had gone wild here with love unknown to earth, they went embracing and kissing everything as they passed; both the pine of the peak and the low-lying grass bent their heads to their primitive sweet caress.
A stream of liquid gold flowed from the pitcher of the sun turned down by the Maiden of the Dawn standing on the mountains, and it came and swung the cradle and rippled through the ripe fields of rice and went and locked itself into the arms of the singing Jhelum, the sweet nurse of the child of gods.

IV THE DELICATE CHAINS

THE old pilgrims, the pines, are in camp on the river bank near Mahowra, Bunyar.
From under their green tents their voice comes—
For a day we rest here, and for one night more
The song of the Thelum has tempted us,
We are filling our soul with the divine breath for a fresh start to the snows on the awful endless journey to God our ancestors had begun long ago on those fateful steepes.
And a huge weather-beaten boulder shook its head and spoke like a wise old man as if sitting wrapped in a white woollen blanket, his face was still in cover:
No. Not the pines but the old Mughuls are in camp, the temptress of Kashmir fetters these kings of old with the delicate chains of her flowing siren-sounds.

V THE CHARMED BOWLS LYING ON THE WAY TO KASHMIR

THE vale is studded with jewels of the charmed bowls of blended jade, amethyst, emerald, diamond, sapphire and silver and gold,—Chakoti, Uri, Pampur, Mohora, Baramula, Srinagar, Dall, and Kashmir further up, everywhere, the bowls are as flowers cut out of jewels,
Their living sparkle darts shafts of light, a soul is in glory.
The seven skies, as many old men, each greedily holding on to his bowl of wine, hold the charmed bowls in their long blue hands
And the blue-coloured gods drink with their blue mouths the ambrosia and their eyes are red with light.
The seven blue birds fly upon their shoulders,
And unafraid they dip their long blue beaks into the golden liquid of life and with their mouths full of joy fly over those far-off snows.

VI THE SNOW-CLAD HEIGHTS

THE shaggy crags seem to rise higher and higher meaninglessly in air,
 High, hard, sharp edges of mountains tear the soft blue sky,
 The dry bony bare intellectual peaks satisfied with sheer height, in supreme sublime indifference,
 unconcerned with life and love on earth, with an upward tendency rise higher and higher
 seemingly to nowhere,
 But the Heaven so loves the naked sword-like edges of these high-soaring precipices, that in one
 night like a miracle they are crowned with all the glory of the Spirit, and God's grace
 flows in charming showers of light.
 By one touch of the divine snow the yester-dead heights shine with splendours of soul that one
 finds nowhere except on the rare prophet's brow, the rugged bleak mountains become
 prophets, persons, souls, guardian-gods of life and love on earth.

VII THE SPIRIT OF THE KASHMIR MOUNTAINS

A LARGE woman-spirit lives in the valley of Kashmir
 In a hundred stream she bathes, the sun and moon both sparkle as jewels tied on her half-
 opened silver buds of virgin breasts;
 One tress she has thrown across the purple shadow of the mountains of Tibet, the other in
 conscious pride on her bosom, both the Indus and the Jhelum are the maidenly river-like
 braids of that great soul;
 The whole sky ribboned up in fine blue threads waves over and covers her bosom, uncoveringly,
 that contains creation's secret; her face is ever seen though covered with snows.
 Kashmir is beautiful by her presence felt, unfelt.
 All low plains of earth have risen here to touch her holy feet, of faith,
 Every particle of dust is enchanted by the feminine grace of her beauty still unrealised, a
 thousand shepherdesses that roam with sheep on the blue hazy heights are but her unreal
 images, her many transient names.
 It is her side glance that flowers in the transparent lakes, in the hard granite rocks, and weaves a
 hundred illusions on the dust-floors, shadows of men and women walk on waters, a
 hundred colours tremble on the meadows;
 A thousand faces appear in the cloud-mountains and a myriad eyes in the sky make a silent
 sculptured cry— "Where is she? Where is she? The woman of Kashmir?"
 What are the *kesar* blossoms of Kashmir but red-shot black eyes of lovers waiting on the
 roadside?
 Many an emperor of the earth lies buried in this dust, and the Narcissus lives on their graves
 waiting for her love, the spiritual woman that allays all thirst of hearts, of eyes, of limbs,
 of arms, of bosoms, of entire flesh, of souls.
 For this all paths to God are banked with human eyes waiting, waiting now for ages all gone by.
 When will the woman arrive?

VIII THE DAWN AT SRINAGAR

*(Dedicated to my lovely host, Alipta, the daughter of my wife's sister,
 at Srinagar, written on 3rd November 1926).*

THE dawn on the Himalayan snows came soft and stood under her humble low roof at Srinagar,
 she came into my very room through the side-door half-ajar,

A rose veil-cloth so-gracefully covered her night-black tresses, her dream like form of womanly grace was wrapped all over in deep blue, she came wearing the whole Heavens so charmingly in a careless fold that gathered in its curves all flowers of life.

Her feet were bare,

Her radiant smile lighted my grey hair, my room was filled with the light of love,
I looked up to her, the dawn was on her brow, it was my daughter Aipta.

WITH THE DWELLERS OF KASHMIR

*"We do not part,
A sweetness clings to me,
A vision soothes me for ever
When I say farewell to Thee, O Kashmir !"*

—Bhai Vir Singh

I

WITH A SHEPHERD

WHAT is Kashmir?

Tell me, O shephred of the heights!

A shawl that hangs from the sky inset with diamonds, turquoises, sapphires, emeralds and pearls,
And before it, a woman that toils day and night,

A weaver of beauty that starves and dies,

A charm whose prisoners shall no more find their freedom,

An illusion that lasts.

What is Kashmir? you ask.

A few sheep, Sir, whose wool makes from of us blind and others omniscient, kind.

II

WITH A ROAMING FAKIR

I ASKED a roaming Fakir,

"You have been long in Kashmir,

"How? Impressed? Is it divine or is it all earth?"

"Kaslunir, Sir, Kashmir," in quaint speech he replied,

"Giving away one's all is the only solace here,

"And begging is what hurts,

"Ask for no bread here, instead a sweet death.

"Beauty lives in the looks of the Narcissus,

"And looking from afar at those high snows is enough.

"Have you heard the bell that rings above the cave of Amarnath?

"Kashmir, Sir, Kashmir!

"The golden bell of Amarnath rings in the mid sky,

"The sacred sound pervades the thousand-stringed rivers that fly."

III

WITH AN IDOL-WORSHIPPER

“WHAT is Kashmir?” I asked a sweet young idol-worshipper, whose large black eyes blazed with untold thought she could not articulate, her face was sadly pale as the virgin face of the early morn, her lips trembled as those of a hungry child, altogether an illusive form of beauty surely not of earth, that had wandered out of the vault of Heaven where the gods worship the eternal shapes of the soul.

She, like holy Grace, lifted her eyes and in a glance made reply:

“There is no Kashmir, it is the *Temple of the Virgin* my father made for me; a thousand roofs cover my faith, a thousand domes echo the voice of my soul, steeple above steeple rises here, temple over temple stands, under every *chinar* is the sacred shade, every pine on the hill is the image of my father’s shrine, the stars at night to us are the camp-fires of our God, and the whole universe is the image of my God that hangs by a little thread of life in my neck and rests on my bosom.

I am an heathen, an idol-worshipper; for me the marble limbs of my idol burn with peace, and the radiant colours of these great temples of snow tremble over that face of ecstasy that glows in the rocks; life is a little lamp we burn at eve, love with us is but folded hands, closed eyes and a down dumb bowing to our God on the grass; our God is kind and we die every night in rapturous thought of Him. How good the blue river that flows at our doors; and the crescent moon peeps at us from behind the poplars.”

“O sweet heathen! more than all the believers in gods of *yore*,

“Is this marble image, a shadow, then, enough for you?”

“Is there no God then, as they say, in Heaven, but that little pebble that hangs from your neck?”

“Your eyes bring a new faith to me, your blasphemy pours more truth into men than what my mother poured into the hollows of my bones. True religion is in your eyes, pretty heathen. You make me an idol-worshipper.”

The Idol Worshipper:

“O image of my God.

The sky is the cloth of which I make garments for my idol,

Of the ages that roll I make the little pearls to hang in the ears of my god,

There is no god above, below, it is perhaps in your speech or else why do you accost me thus?

In your moving limbs, the hands and feet of my idol show their miracle to deepen my faith.

There is no union of earth or heaven, no union of soul and soul but in the rapture that kills me in the sight of my idol that soothes me to eternal rest.

I touch the soft marble of my idol with my eyes and I die with love in myself, I need no more.

My God meets me in meeting me nowhere,

There is no separation in joy of Him, I touch His feet with my forehead in every blade of grass,

“O pilgrim of love,

You fancy you have met me, but we are ages apart, the gulf of skies between us; going hand in hand for centuries we shall be eternally separated yet; only in a little frail feeling are the distances lost, all ages of separation are destroyed in a simple thought of Him; let me tell you what is our heathenism?

I bite my lips when alone and next morning I find the marble lips of my idol hurt by teeth, I embrace the idol beyond the night of separation and there is the bliss of union in me; the next morning the idol is warm with me and

I cold with his marble limbs touching me within my bones; men and women are too stone-idols, only there is no one left to worship them.

Those who worship God break all idols with their hammer and the pieces of real God are scattered everywhere and they only murder who think they love.

There is no Kashmir. It is the Temple of the virgin my father made for me, a thousand roofs
cover my faith, a thousand domes echo the voice of my soul, steeple above steeple rises
here, temple over temple stands.

I am afraid of those God-worshippers, I am she who provokes their wrath.

Idol-worship is the living truth that our earth breathes.

It is gentle kindness that sweetens our beasts.

“O Pilgrim, I know no God that is so sweet as the marble idol in the temple of my heart.”

And saying this, the idol-worshipper fell as dead,

Her arms thrown across,

She lay as the white marble-cross,

Her breath came softly, her heart beat low,

Her teeth blanched her pale wan lips, her eyes were closed,

Her tresses fell about, running in dust like the little brooks of Kashmir.

Her forehead sparkled like the moon at midnight;

She lay senseless, dead alive in ecstasy,

Herself an exquisite idol in marble.

Me thought she was Kashmir herself.

IV

THE LAMENT OF PANDIT NUR DIN OF KASHMIR²

WHAT was it to the Muslim ruler of Kashmir long ago, how my ancestors worshipped God?

O why did he take boats full of them on the Dali?

O why did he drown them there so cruelly, cruelly?

For merely burning innocent tapers at the altar of their thought?

For worshipping rock and river and sun and moon?

For merely saying *Ram, Ram*, so ignorantly?

For merely singing as they listed, for merely being more clean and beautiful and fair?

O why did he take boats full of them on the Dali?

O why did he drown them there so cruelly, cruelly?

What was it to the Muslim ruler of Kashmir long ago, how my ancestors worshipped God?

O why did he think his Allah was any better than our *thought*?

O why did he make our holy Sankaracharya where Asoka sat as a monk into the Takht-i-Sulaiman?

O why did he throw our idols out and made of it a graveyard to offend the memory of the pure?

And we worship the river nor the rock any more, we light no lamp of heart in the evening,
nothing in nature is beautiful, we worship no idols but our bodies, no kinder, nobler,
sweeter, driver, persons than we were,

And we groan as we bow down in *namaṣ* to no one.

Life is a burden, our neighbours have an enemy's face now for us, old love has been destroyed,
old names remain and Kashmir is a grave-yard, tyranny can preach no faith, nor found an
empire of human fellowship;

Our girls still sing of Krishna.

*“As pearl-drops in our ears shake,
Shake, O Krishna, in our soul”*

*“Gur Gur Karye.
Kan Ke dure*

*Sham rang dudh-chure
Gur Gur Karye"*

Though they have taught us under the keen edges of swords on our necks to say, *Allah ho'Allah*,
They have destroyed our temples, extinguished our lamps,
But over the dark ruins still rise majestic the lofty domes of eternal snows of the Great Temples
and the stars shine.
The heart of nature beats softly still.

O why did the Muslim ruler long go call me Nur Din?
O why did he spare me my wretched life?
O why did he not drown me in the waters there?
O the edge of the sword was too much for me?
O why did he take boats full of my ancestors on the Dali?
O why did he drown them there
So cruelly, cruelly?

**V
WITH THE BRIDE OF THE VALLEY³**

What is Kashmir?
I asked the bride of the valley, who had just alighted on earth out of her sapphire-palanquin of
the sky, round her gathered in light pride of the joy of her, like little children, in crowds,
the curious tulips and fond lilies of the village meadows of Kashmir.
Who could see the bride when those foolish flower-crowds like wandering God-faced pleasures
of life veiled her entire by their singing smiles and senseless colours, the tulips, roses,
geraniums, irises, poppies, frail hyacinths, and others, beautiful fools of the valley,
She lifted her veil to me so charmingly, her silver hand was on the lifted bridal veil, the sky and
the earth were filled with the beauty of her face and all the space was not enough, her
splendour could not be contained,
I saw the sun drop out of her veil aside behind those snow-tops,
As if it was a broken stray petal of the red tulip of Kashmir that floated down the sky, as she
shook her veil cloth.

**VI
WITH AN ARTIST**

WHAT is Kashmir?
I asked an artist bewildered with the beauty of his unseen soul.
He was roaming aimlessly, gazing as intently on the flowing stream as on the braided tresses of a
Kashiniri girl, as if enquiring from both, Whither? O charming tresses, Whither?
Looking as anxiously on a pure white Brahman girl lifting her skirt up to the knees and
dipping her marble feet and calves in the blue river as if a slender poplar was laying its
calves in the sacred dust of the road to gods,
In his eyes the golden harvest of beauty waved as a vision diffused in all earths and skies, he went
gathering, gathered.
No answer came back to me as no reply can return from Heaven to earth, but I saw his eyes
turned deep-red and that very instant a rose-blush suffused the distant high snows of
Kashmir.

VII
THE NAMAZ OF A MUSALMAN MAIDEN OF KASHMIR

MY father tells me, pray,
Five times a day,
And many times I wonder how?
As the tulip of the Kashmir prays, when it tosses its crimson-turbaned head in the air and feels
so lofty on a little twig?
Or as these old Musalmans, the snow-turbaned mountains, pray, who rise to render *namaḥ*, and
having seen Him, have forgotten to bow.
Many times I wonder to whom?
To the morning fire that the sun kindles on the snows, or to that shepherd boy who comes to
our village, from the high summits down, playing on his flute a wild song that ravishes
my soul?
“Father, to whom does the Musalman bow?
“Does he know?”
“My soul bows down in spite of me to the shepherd boy whose face, like the music of the sky,
rings in me day and night
“I melt away and am lost.
“Is this *namaḥ*?
“Blessed, blessed is thy command, O father.”
“I knew not.
“As a young girl I learnt from the tulip to be beautiful is all.
“Now I know *namaḥ* is greater than beauty, truth more than youth, loving the shepherd boy to
self-extinction is more than life.

O Daughter, Allah is great, no one else,
“Pray five times a day, this is for the Musalman.”
“Father, His hands are full of gifts for me, His eyes kiss my soul,
“The shepherd boy plays on the flute, and looks always for me,
“O why? O why? He puts me in a trance.
“Allah is great, but ah, that face of the shepherd boy! my soul melts away, the joy of the meadow
is only then great, when he just comes and crushes me like the earth, under his passion
that has both hands and feet.
“I have tried, father, to pray,
“But I forget it all when he becomes and crushes my soul in his embrace in the elfin woods of
Kashmir.
“Father! I forget to pray when he puts a garland of flowers in my tresses and says I am the
Spring.
“And I call to him, ‘Art thou the evening star that glows like the blossom of fire on the wings of
night, or the moon that can be caught in one’s hands by lifting the veils of the spring-
blossoms of Kashmir in these almond groves?’
“And he replies:
“The flowers cry to flowers,
“And flowers become birds fly on their pink and white winglets.
“The inspiration of the white-haired sage, the sun, becomes dumb colour of the night, the
roaring passion of the winds, the cry of the bird and the soaring death of the flowers.”

VIII WITH THE OUTGOING RIVER

ALL things seek the heights where the sun becomes a private gem shines like a diamond on the
lake like the bosom of a shepherd girl,
And the moon like a flower reposes in the lovely tresses of the slender poplar of Kashmir,
In absolute joy of nothing where the snow peaks like a startled swarm of swans soar for ever
upward,
And the white paths like living virtues wind round the black mountains, the tiny tendrils of a
spreading creeper of love seeking its flowery crest,
Where the poor iris in the graveyard flames with beauty,
The red tulip bathes the meadow with its blood,
Where the *chinars* crown the Man King of the woods with green leaves,
And the passionate rhododendron loves to loaf about, half-asleep in the dream of its flowers,
Where the lakes are as transparent human bosoms, agitated by the fluttering wings of swans that
have just flown away.
Why art thou, O River, departing?
'I am the tear of His Ecstasy, said the river,
That falls in the dust to set it on fire,
I am the child of the deepest peace, I cannot be contained in the finite,
I am the wave of His Love that rises as it falls,
More in Him while gone away, I am by being not,
I am His tear. He the All-container,
All-encompasser has no place for me.'

IX THE LOVE ROMANCE OF THE ROSE OF KASHMIR

FOR once we had met,
I have no memory of it left;
My romance of love is scattered in the air,
My eyes kiss the dust,
I do not know someone gathers me in my soul,
And then, perhaps, he is ever going away.

Oh, life is a distress,
Put me in the flaming fire,
I feel at rest,
Someone perhaps embraces me in the flames.

Palaces: velvet beds: O curse!
A garland of thorns is his love,
And a lonely mud-hut like a lantern on the hills of this Kashmir,
I starve to death,
Perchance to be soothed,
But the whole hut flames up, The very mud smells of my blood.
Ah! My passion blooms up like a bud of fire in the streaming pools of my eyes,
Have you seen my unborn child in tears?

The loneliness of my heart is vast,

The infinite sky drops in,
And out of the sky my pang rises like the blue incense smoke in which fly the golden sparks of
my burning prayers. What are the stars?

Love fulfils itself before it is known or seen,
And what is life but perfuming away to death, to nothing?
The blush on my cheeks is older than my birth,
And I have not seen him who made me so beautiful by his caress.
My romance of love is scattered in light and air,
My eyes kiss the dust,
I do not know someone gathers me in my soul,
And then perhaps he is ever going away!

You know when I am nearest perfection, a woman about to bloom,
When, like a little lamp, I burn at night waiting for him,
He perhaps never comes.
My love refuses to become a tale of this world,
My arms keep forever quivering like the white wings of a wounded dove that falls down from the
branch of the pine,
Her little drop of blood trickles into my heart,
But I say God is,
Or why that quiet stir in the groves of the *chinars* there yonder by the lake?
Why the rustling of these silks of the moonlit night?
It is he passing stealthily through my soul.

When I say soul, you know it is my body ablaze,
I do not cry in vain,
My prayer assembles the snow clouds.
And my lover sends me rosaries of pearls.
I wear them all and I touch his delight with my hands.
I laugh and weep.
And I do not cry in vain.
For what is all this
If he come not and meet me everywhere?

I once said to the *shikara*,
I feel jealous of thee.
When in the empty soul gather the beauties of the snow and the sky, like the Kashmiri
brides wrapped in crimson bridal veils, who are about to lift the corner of their veils and
smile, those faces like many moons in clouds, while I wait for ever for him in crowds of
virgin blushes, I see thee moving like the spirit of God on the waters and there is light in
thee that floods the heart that waits for love.

And the *shikara* gave a strange tale in reply:

‘In penance of ages for holiness I am only bones left, my eye is dried of tears, my heart of
blood, I am empty of soul, for no lover came and blessed me; I am the dry despair of all
human ends.’

And I cried to her;

Thou dost know thy worth,
Without thee the stars fall into the lakes,
The moon loses its balance and is drowned,
Men and women have not yet learnt to walk on the waters,

Nothing in this great liquid eternity avails but thy *shikara*, O woman! to keep the souls of saints afloat.

I wish I were a boat like thee, To carry my lover to nowhere in aimless cruisings in my soul.

Ah, when I think of him, strange, not he,

Only the moon comes up in the sky.

I shut myself in the dark night to dream of him.

And the stars fill my eyes.

The meditation of my blinded soul is all in vain,

All see their God, but not I.

O why doth that singular man with black long tresses appear under the golden tree of my forgotten dreams?

As I run after him, I find my arms are tightly round my own agitated soul.

Such bereavements are many in the year.

I bite myself; it becomes, alas, so sweet by this frenzied embrace in an all-lost reverie!

There is ineffable ecstasy in burning away.

Why think of making the rose immortal?

The rose is alive that passes ever beyond herself.

The self-wasting away of her perfume is immortality,

It is love.

O Love!

I can no more praise Thee,

Thou hast wounded me too deep for song,

I would rather be sad, in tears,

For Thou art more beautiful than joy.

How darest Thou own me?

Even me, O Love, O Love!

A blind girl mistaking everything as Thou, as Thou,

I stumble over every new sensation,

I fall and Thou comest and liftest me up, givest the staff again in my hand.

And Thou sayest, "Go, O Girl, your way,"

But a step more

And I fall again.

How darest Thou own me?

Even me, O Love! O Love.

I saw the light of thy footsteps trembling in the sky,

But I found thee when the lips of the celestial man met mine in a strange dream,

When the lips piped in that garden of closed eyes, "How sweet is death in love!"

Seeing Thee, O Love.

The pale sky glows up,

A river of roses flows.

How can I be any more what I am,

After having seen Thee?

Footnotes:

1. The disciple-lady Bhagbhari lived in Kashmir in the time of Guru Har Govind who drawn by her intense devotion came to Kashmir from Amritsar and accepted her offerings to her God-in-flesh. Her house is a sacred temple now.
2. The Kashmir Brahmans were most brutally “made” Mussalmans during the latter part of the Mughal rule of Kashmir. Their caste names, customs and manners still are of the Brahmans.
3. There is a particular spot in the Dali lake which is till today called, ‘Bhat Mazar’—where boats full of Kashmiri Pandits were drowned, who refused to accept Islam, the religion of the rulers.

	chapter	Book page, line	Doc page, line
kine	Part 2	43,29	17,29
flowess	part 5	98,29	4,37
fron's	„	99,6	4,42
yough	part 6	126,6	2,44
skrit	„	141,32	12,28
thr	„	141,33	12,28

THE TEMPLE TULIPS
2001, Second Edition

1. The whole book is typed in Garamond font (English UK), with a consistent font format [i.e., size, bold (for titles), Italics, Underlines ect.]
2. Typographical errors such as shown in the example are corrected wherever noticed.
Example: Page 37, line 26 of book and page 56, line 8 of the soft copy of **Spirit of the Sikh (Part I)**:
known as “Sikh” or Disciple”. IN the given phrase the inverted comas before disciple are missing which have been fixed.
Besides this corrections like making spaces before and after certain marks (like ; : , . ! ?), consistent with the standard space conventions. The Standards are No space before any of the above shown marks, one space after ; & , and two spaces after every ! : . ? mark.
3. All the Grammatical errors have been left as they are and spelling mistakes corrected according to British English which has been used by the author. At certain places to convey the essence the author has changed the form of words which are not permissible and hence account for grammatical errors. Example: Word “slightingly” appearing on page number 43 of the book and 29 of the soft copy of the **Spirit of the Sikh (Part I)**. All other spelling mistakes, which do not account for the above given explanation have been changed. All the mistakes noticed, but not changed for the lack of surety are listed in the file named mistakes sent along. We can correct them as per your instructions.
4. The present text is typed on A4 page (Size 11.69/ 8.27 inches) with one-inch margin on all the four sides.