



IN QUEST OF BLISS

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Date

TIRUPATI.

We have but faith : we cannot know ;
For knowledge is of things we see ;
And yet we trust it comes from Thee,
A beam in darkness : let it grow.

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell ;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight ;
We mock Thee when we do not fear :
But help Thy foolish ones to bear ;
Help Thy vain worlds to bear Thy light.

Tennyson

PLACED ON THE SHELF
Date..... 11-2-94

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Tennyson

IN QUEST OF BLISS

BY

WANDERER

A TRANSLATION OF A BUNCH OF POEMS

BY

THE LATE SHISHIR KUMAR GHOSH

FOUNDER-EDITOR

OF

THE AMRITA BAZAR PATRIKA OF CALCUTTA

WITH

A FOREWORD

BY

SIR SARVAPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN, M.A., D.LITT.

Spalding Professor of Eastern religions and ethics, Oxford University ;
Haskel Lecturer, University of Chicago ; Vice-Chancellor,
Hindu University, Benares

Published by RAI BAHADUR N. DEY ; Morning Side ;
NAMKUM P. O. (Dist. Ranchi).

AN APPRECIATION

*The translator is indebted to Rev. H. Jacquemotte
Rev. R. Vermassen S. J., Directors of the Catholic Press, Ram
kind assistance given by them in the printing and publication o
The latter graciously went through the entire text making m
suggestions to improve the diction, while Rev. H. Jacquemotte
pains to make the printing and get up worthy of the reputation o*

To

*The Great Unhidden, yet Unseen,
In quest of Whom we soar on high,
On reason's wings not poised by love,
And soaring, wandering, farther fly ;
While e'er so near and close at hand,
Deep in the sanctum of our heart,
He dwelleth, watching,—a guard alert,—
A life-long friend who doth not part :*

*This translation
of the
Songs of a saint
is
Dedicated*

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FOREWORD

This is an English translation of a Bengalee poem called *Kalachand-Gita* written by the late Shishir Kumar Ghosh, the well-known journalist, patriot and devotee. The incidents mentioned in the book relate to the author's personal experience. During the early years of his life he was a sceptic ; he inclined later to the Brahma faith and in the end became an ardent Vaihsnava.

God is not the perfect spirit, pure and luminous, free from all taint of relation and multiplicity, the transcendent silence of the Advaita Vedanta but a living God sustaining the world and active in it. From the manifestations in the world which constitute the play or the *lila* of God, we get an idea of the supreme artist who is at work in the world. Like a true Hindu, the writer is convinced of the inconclusiveness of 'rational theology' as a theoretical justification for religion apart from a specifically religious experience. The way of *bhakti* or devotion revealed to him the Great Presence in every aspect of the world.

FOREWORD

*“Lubdhá dhanamayam viśvam
Kâ mukâh Kâminimayam
Nârâyanamayam dhîrâh
Paśyanti Jnânacakṣuṣah.”*

The Upanisad says: “*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*”: all this verily is Brahman. Every Indian carries somewhere inside his nature a feeling that his outer life is a kind of pageant, a play performed by actors who are none of them what they seem. While on earth, it is necessary that we should play the game with the rest, eat and drink, love and fight, but underneath all this the real life pursues its secret way. To become aware of this purpose, to strive to act on it consciously, gives dignity to man. He who succeeds in this enterprise is the authentic religious soul, with serenity in his mind and overflowing love for his fellowmen. “*Peace shall dwell in my heart and with love I will sweeten the lives of others*” says the Sadhu (page 7).

As I am not acquainted with the original, I cannot speak about the merits of the English translation. It is done, I know, with great care and earnestness. I have no doubt that the readers of this book will be impressed by the central truth that nothing great can be achieved without the dynamic of religion.

16th February
1941

S. RADHAKRISHNAN

INTRODUCTION

•

AS indicated in the title page, this little book purports to be merely the translation of a poetical production in Bengalee, entitled *Kalachand-Gita*. The author of the original, Shishir Kumar Ghosh, was a journalist, a patriot and politician, and a devout Vaishnav. The following account of the origin of the book is culled from its preface written by the author's younger brother, Moti Lal Ghosh, for long the Editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, who was ever by the side of Shishir Kumar like his shadow and who imbibed all the fervour of Vaishnavism and patriotism from the latter. Says Moti Lal: "The background of *Kalachand-Gita* is this: The material world is the manifestation of God. By closely viewing the same, the author draws a picture of the Creator. He finds Him endowed with infinite love, and love alone. He does not resort to abstruse philosophical reasonings to prove his conception of God and His attributes, but derives his inferences straight from what is manifested to him in creation and goes on to depict God's love and anxious care for man, and

man's relations with Him and with his fellow men. Thus, when a simple flower, tiny in size but dipped in Nature's loveliest hue, caught the author's eye on the summit of a lonely hill, he thought of the Great Artist whose incomparable, inimitable production it was and he thought of man who, in the hurry and bustle of the world, went treading upon it, not even caring to cast a glance at it. It was then and there that the author composed the following lines in his mind, the first germ of a charming production :

This pretty wild flower,
 Lovely beyond compare ;
 HE hid it in the grass.
 Alas for men who come and go,
 In world's strife busy so,
 They never do care to glance.

(Translated)

“Not long after, the author witnessed an incident between a male and a female owl which evoked the feeling in him that the Great Author of the universe must be a superb humorist, an aesthete and an arch-artist, the kindest and loveliest. These two incidents inspired the production of the story of ‘Rasha-Rangini’, the first of the five ‘Sakhis’ who narrate the different stories of their lives. And from time to time he wrote the other portions, hardly conscious that there was a pervading spirit which bound them together as one whole.”

I shall be divulging no secret if I add to the foregoing, years after the death of the author, that the various phases through which doubting man struggles

INTRODUCTION

until faith conquers him and takes him aloft, as depicted in this book, are but the pictures of the author's own personal experiences in life. As a youth a rationalist and nearly an atheist, then inclined to the Brahmo faith, and with advancing years a devout follower of Vaishnavism, he died with the image of his Lord in his heart and His name on his lips, his last words uttered being, "Lord! I am coming", as this frail creature of His thumped with both his hands the pillow on which he was leaning forward, and pointed them to the skies. He had imbibed a firm faith in a God who was waiting to clasp him in His arms, a loving God, a God who was ever sorrowing for unrequited love. Such a picture of God is to be found at more than one place in this book and in many of his songs, in one of which He is presented thus as sorrowing over man's forgetfulness of Him :

Fonder than my life is my love for him,
Yet, too well I know that he loves me not ;
I shall wait and see,
At what distant date,
He remembereth me.

As the thirsty rain-bird towards the clouds doth look
For a drop to fall,
So do I for him expectant wait,
Viewing the long road that stretches before me.
Ages have come and gone,
Times unborn and eternal
Have come and rolled
Into the abyss of the past ;
Yet, forgotten, unknown to him,
I have lived, still waiting for him,

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Like one whose sap of life was dried,
And life itself was withered.

He wanders here and there,
I am ever at his back,
Never forgetful of him,
And ever keeping him
Before my watchful eyes.
Yet he turns not once
To cast a glance at me,—

His life-long friend.

Such was the faith, inspired by which the author wrote this book. May be, he was blinded ; may be, he was a seer. Who shall say ?

The book opens with a Sadhu in the forest, whither he had repaired in remorse to spend his life in meditation, so as to reach the Divinity. What befell him there is given in the text.

I owe an explanation for venturing on this task of translation of the original, which teems with words and expressions of the Vaishnav cult and literature for which English equivalents are difficult to find. It is this. During the author's life time, I had in my leisure moments amused myself by attempts to translate a part of the first chapter and placed the same before the author. He said that the spirit of the original was not absent in the English version and wished that I should proceed. Disturbing factors however prevented my carrying out his wishes, except spasmodically, until some portions were completed and published in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*. Some kind friends appreciated them and asked

INTRODUCTION

me to translate the rest. Srijut Mrinal Kanti Ghosh, especially, a nephew of the author and the oldest living member of the family, now aged over 80, himself a devout Vaishnav, and Srijut Tushar Kanti Ghosh, the only living son of the author (out of nine brothers and sisters!), at present the Editor of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, have both expressed the wish from time to time that this beautiful production of their saintly ancestor may be presented in an English garb for the benefit of non-Bengalee readers. So this translation with all its imperfections goes into the world for those who may feel interested to peruse it. I have pursued it as a hobby in my retirement and if these pages help to draw even one sorrowing soul nearer His Great Love for man, it will give me added pleasure. With the simple logic of the Sadhu or the Sakhis to prove God's existence and His love, many of the present-day thinkers will be inclined to quarrel; but perhaps it will appeal to such souls as have subscribed to the dictum: "By faith He is nearer, by reasonings very far."

MORNING SIDE.

RANCHI.

WANDERER

January, 1941.

I laugh when I hear that the fish
in the water is thirsty :
You do not see that the Real is in
your home, and you wander from
forest to forest listlessly !
Here is the truth ! Go where you will,
to Benares or to Mathura ; if you
do not find your soul, the world
is unreal to you.

Kabir

first blossom, ten and two months he had hardly seen ;— bright and glorious, like the new born light of heaven, in his mother's arms he shone. " Ba-a, ba-a " lisped he, just then, and in sudden tremor the Yogi shook. His arms stretched out, he knew not how, and the babe was there ;—with a parent's kisses his lips were sealed. And the Yogi spake : " Who taught thee that name, O dear ? For on this parched heart thou didst pour forth nectar. Who taught thee so sweetly to lisp and why does thy voice move my soul ? "

Truly his heart was tossed ; for a while the infant triumphed and quickly to his mother's arms was restored. To her he then spoke : " Enchantress as thou art, what hast thou done ? The dam I had built between me and ye all thou hast broken. Be not cruel, cause me not pain, but return thou home and come here no more. With folded hands I beseech thee,—if ever a good turn I have done to thee, repay that debt now ;—and forgetting me, pray, to thy home be gone. "

And to this, the woman : " Me thou didst take as part of thy self and let love grow from more to more. This babe was born as bond of that love, the loveliest that eye ever saw, human or divine ; like it a second was never born in this wide universe, all incomparably alone. Thou castest me away now, to drift all by my lone self on an endless sea ; and it is me thou callest cruel ! In lap of luxury reared, lord, thou now rollest in the dust. Clad in costume gay thou that used to be, now wearest a sackcloth coarse ;—the cloth that now round thy loins winds, thy nakedness doth hardly hide. When hunger will oppress thee, who will bring thee

food ? And when fierce beasts assail thee, O lord, who will keep thee off from harm ? Forsaking me, facest thou these perils all, and cruel indeed must be my heart that yet can bear these thoughts !”

Spoke the Yogi then in timorous tone : “ Sweet as the moon thy face when I see, on a sea of bliss I float. But O the dread that each moment steals my peace,— that I may lose thee any minute of the day ! ‘ She’s gone,’ ‘ She’s taken ’ are thoughts that haunt me ever along my way. A while together, but the parting comes, and where wilt thou and where shall I be ? In the deepest recesses of my heart I might keep thee hidden, embraced in my arms I might keep thee tied ; but Death will come and snatch thee away. Die I must and die must thou ; at that fatal hour where shall each be ? Tiny beings in this world of woes, how sadly we erred in falling into this bond of love ! Thou, being of this earth, tell me, if thou beest mine, why should a stranger come and tear thee away ? The Magician who thus plies His magic art, making us His tools, Himself unseen, Him I shall ask the secret of His heart to unfold, why thus He makes and again unmakes. To Him it is a pastime, to us it is death : to let us in love unite, that severed we might be. If after death comes a meeting, then all who part here shall again unite. If this be not true, then the more thou lovest, the deeper shalt thou be in woes of parting drowned. So, hie thou home and me from thy memory efface ; and I too, with tender care, thee from my mind shall divorce.”

The Sadhu closed his eyes ; the loving consort stood benumbed and her lord’s loveliest mien with

rapturous eyes beheld, her heart breaking in twain, and mute and motionless, with her mind she thus communed: "My lord hath taken the holy path; for selfish ends his vow I seek to break. 'Tis not a cruel heart that thus forsakes, but 'tis the deepest love for me that keeps me farthest. If meditation brings him bliss, his path I should not cross."

"Ba-a, ba-a", the babe lisped out; the mother with her cloth closed its mouth. "Hush, prattling babe," she cries; "vex him not; utter thou that word no more, lest from devotion deep he should distracted be."

Then in suppliant mood, round her neck the flowing end of her cloth she threw and deep obeisance made, and with the babe in her arms homeward her steps she turned.

The Sadhu then questions himself: "Who is the Being that ushered me into this world, and why? What ends of His to serve, and how do I stand to Him? Is He good or is He bad, and what are the mutual relations of the beings He has created?"

He saw that His was a large household and all the members of it, the sun, the moon, the clouds and stars, the rivers and trees and all living creatures obeyed His imperious will without doubt or murmur.

"He who could create such a household", thought he, "is beyond the reach of human vision or conception. Boundless is this great household and boundless too must be its great Creator. I am like the meanest of insects, smaller than a fly, the tiniest of the tiny. To commune with Him or to be related to Him is impossible.

No love can subsist between a mere fly and an elephant. How can the elephant be enchanted by the fly? To my call why should He respond? If I am in sorrow and pain, what is it to Him?"

Seized by despair, the Sadhu wept and heaped on Him no end of reproaches: "Where art Thou, O my Creator, cruel and remorseless, Thou that didst create us and then leavest us to ourselves, happy in Thine oblivion, and never opening thy eyes to see if we are living, or dying in our woes? At each step I tremble through fear. I shout forth Thy name and see Thee not. If Thou didst wish to play with dolls, why didst Thou give us consciousness or the power to feel and why didst Thou make us, only to end our days in sorrows and tears?"

Restless he grew and in despair sank; yet, hope forsook him not and once more he invoked the Deity: "Father dear! It is Thy son who thus shouts for Thee. Take pity on him and vouchsafe an answer. Remove my doubts, throw off the mask and make Thyself known. If Thou beest not kind unto me, hurl down Thy thunder on my head and let my struggles cease. Surely would I have brought death unto me; 't is hope alone that makes me live. Or tell me how I may attain to Thy lotus feet, and Thy biddings I shall follow. Diverse are the ways pointed by diverse people. Thou must tell me which way to go."

And as the sincerity of his prayers brought forth tears, hope kindled within him and seemed to whisper, "He is, He exists", and this feeling of "He is, He exists" got a firm hold on his heart and he could not shake it

off. Tears rolled down his cheeks while the wife, who had now returned to him, mutely watched him with a cup of milk in one hand and the lovely babe on her other arm. Her heart broke as she held her peace. At last she softly spoke: "Open thy lips, O Sadhu, take this milk and sustain thy life."

The Sadhu woke up, drained the cup she held to his lips but did not open his eyes or utter a word. The wife with folded hands consoled him: "Surely He will reveal Himself to thee. We two are thy wards; so in thy bliss forget us not, and share the same with us. I have but one wish, one desire: may my heart ever cling to thy feet." And she bowed down to those feet and reverentially stood up and gazed into his face.

The Sadhu was musing again: "What gift shall I pray for? What boon is there which, exclusively possessed, could make me happy, my dear ones being deprived of it? Ill can I conceive that, possessed of it, I could be happy if my wife and child were not. Pelf and power if I seek, why, there are perils at every step. And what are pelf and power, but what I alone may get or myself in a larger measure than others? And how can I pray to One who is the Father of all to give them to me and deny them to others? The pleasure of power consists in lording it over others; in other words, in giving pain to them. If I was the lord of all and others were my slaves and worshipped at my feet, it would be a pleasure destined to wane before long, while vanity, pride and greed would grow from more to more. That I should be the lord by trampling upon other people's breasts, O shame to such a pleasure,

shame to the enjoyment of it! For envy, jealousy, greed and vanity would sway over me and slowly I should be reduced to a beast.

“The tenderest feelings in the human heart are killed by the enjoyment of power.

“Fools are they who long for such power, for increase of power does not increase their pleasure. The king of kings is at one time or another satiated with the mere pleasure of sovereignty, and the thirst of the millionaire seeking to treble his treasure is hardly quenched when he has got his piles.

“There is indeed some pleasure at first in the enjoyment of power, but no sooner has it been tasted than it gives place to greed.

“He who can satisfy all his desires at his sweet will is soon left without a desire in his heart, and power cannot make a man happy who has no desire left to satisfy.

“Well, what then remains for me? Why, I should be the beloved of all, loving others and loved by them in return. With kind words I shall please them and kind words I will have from them. The whole of my happy state I will impart unto them and their sorrows I shall take unto myself.

“The pleasures of power, my partner fears I shall seek, and in their enjoyment forget her. Ah no, power I shall seek not but sweetnesses I will have. Peace shall dwell in my heart and with love I will sweeten the lives of others. The beauties and sweetnesses spread out in creation I will enjoy and with others’

possessions I will meddle not. For it is in the enjoyment of beauties and 'sweetnesses' alone that a pleasure is found which takes not away from others. That happiness then shall I seek which, far from abating, grows by sharing it with others."

Again a thought of his wife's acts melted his heart and made him muse: "Alas! how sweet is the bond of love He has made. Without food I lie here feeling no pangs of hunger, yet the woman is disconsolate and cannot rest at home. He who could create this lovely kinship, alas, how can He be cruel Himself?"

"Milk in the mother's breasts He gives before the babe is born and, lest she suckle it not, He provides for a pleasure in suckling it; and lo! the cow runs lowing affectionately after her calf. He, whose skill it all is, forsooth, can never be cruel.

"Not that there is naught that is cruel. He seems to be kind and cruel as well. He that has created the lovely full moon of the Spring has also made the dark new moon nights of the Rains. Possessed of 'intelligence' Himself, 'intelligence' He has given us all; whatever is found in man is to be found in Him. How could we come to possess what He Himself did not own? Has He not made man after Himself?"

"Thus it follows that the Lord of the universe must be akin to man. Further, He who could create superhuman things must also have some qualities beyond what man has got. He therefore who is the Lord should be human—and something more. But that 'something more' I cannot conceive; man's conception

can ill grasp virtues not akin to man's. That portion out of Him therefore I shall choose and make mine own, which my human mind and heart can hold. To try to have Him in His entirety would be beyond the powers of human conception and what is beyond such conception, I want not.

“ Thus He who is the object of our worship must surely be like ourselves. To attempt to worship a big God, as big as the universe or bigger still, would be labour lost.

“ The sun we see is big enough. He moves round another which we do not see but which is said to exist and to be a bigger one. To try to approach that bigger sun, belittling the one we see, would be a fruitless task and no light would come. If you could reach the region of the sun that we see, then only could you hope to reach the bigger sun.

“ It is clear again that every being in this world exists in couples. The male and the female are to be found in every species of created being. Surely then the same two aspects must be in the Creator.

“ If there be really any Being who can be worshipped by man, He must also be like man. We are but His shadows and we move about in couples. Then He, whose shadows we are, must exist as a couple.

“ O Father, O Mother dear! Thy son pines to see Thy face. Manifest Thyself unto him. Endless are the desires in his heart and some of them doubtless are satisfied. Thirst and water I have seen placed side by

side, and love in human hearts and objects on which to pour forth that love.

“But hundreds of other desires also rage in the heart which seem not to be satisfied and which only cause constant agonies. Couldst Thou be such a mean-hearted Being, that Thou shouldst have given us desires which Thou hadst never meant to fulfil? Thou hast created in us a desire to live and yet death is Thine own creation. Ill can I conceive that the Lord of the three worlds is mean-hearted,—meaner than the objects of His creation.

“Then surely the desires Thou hast given shall come to be fulfilled, in the world to come, if not here below. Deep rooted in the human heart is the desire to live; which proves to me that there is a world beyond. My heart yearns for Thee; which proves that Thou dost exist.

“Some say Thou art but rays of light. But such rays I do not thirst after. If my heart seek them, why, I will look up to the sun, one of Thy created things, even whose rays my eyes cannot hold.

“Some say Thou hast no shape or form. But how can I hold a shapeless being in my heart? He who worships Thee as shapeless, wants Thee not and is incapable of loving. He loves Thee not, or could Thy light alone satisfy him? With all the five senses Thou hast given, I must be enabled to enjoy Thy being, and then shall I call Thee kind of heart. Thy sweet face I will see; Thy sweet words I shall hear; the fragrance of Thy body I shall inhale; I shall touch and be touched

by Thee. My happiness and miseries I will whisper into Thine ears; my love I will give Thee and Thy love I will win. Close by Thy side I will sit and the mysteries of creation hear; a thousand questions I shall ask, the incomprehensible to clear. Problems which I cannot work out Thou shalt unfold to me; in poetry too I shall indulge and to correct it implore Thee. Or sweet music I shall discourse or Thy sweeter strains I will hear. That indeed would be to live, and worthless is the thirst for power."

But here the Sadhu burst into loud laughter and spoke unto himself: "Now indeed I am taking leave of my senses. But didst Thou hear, O Father and Mother, the desires of my heart? If I, Thy created being, have got the faculty of hearing, surely Thou canst not be without it. Nay, Thou hearest all; but why givest Thou no answer?"

Now the sound of "Ba-a, ba-a" fell upon his ears again, the lisping of his own dear child. Perforce he opened his eyes. The babe was playing there in its mother's arms!

A cup of milk in her hand, tears rolling down her cheeks, the woman stood there before her lord. The Sadhu's eyes were wet and he was speechless. The lovely face of the child provoked fresh thoughts in him: "Here is an infant that attracts my heart and my life I can spare for him. Yet from him I seek nothing in return. He who has created such an unselfish tie must be like me at least. And if I accost him as my Father, He must open His eyes and seek to console me. Here I was, with my eyes closed, fully resolved not to

open them, but the cries of the child broke that vow and through my heart ran a thrill of pleasure. By what devotions then may I be His child, so that by my cries of 'Father' I can rouse Him?"

Now again he looked at the woman, — a golden statue she stood, bathed in tears. "Cruelly", thought he, "have I treated her and wafted her to an endless sea. Forsaking her, I came into the forest. She ran after me and here she is, with a babe in her arms, fastened to the place. She runs about in the wood to bring me food and feeds me with milk to sustain my life. With that tie indeed shall I bind the Deity with which I have bound her. I will call Him 'Father' and awaken Him as I was awakened by my child. With a heart pure and simple I shall look into His face and cry out 'Father'."

Then addressing the woman; "Pray, sit down". And the woman sat herself and handed him the cup of milk. With thirsty eyes he beheld the face of his child. Thought he: "If, O Lord, Thou wouldst but come in the guise of my son, then indeed should I be able to adore Thee fully. Nothing shall I ask of Thee, naught shall annoy me, and day and night shall I keep Thee in my arms. Thy sweet prattlings I will hear, and day and night in a sea of bliss I shall float. O if only God were my son, to my heart's full measure would I love Him and never say 'done'."

The woman again caught his eyes, in whose face, beautiful as the moon, there was a play of charms that bewitched him and made him muse: "My heart's beloved! Art thou He, whose worship I am seeking?"

Hear my counsel : be thou the God and see with what love I will adore thee. Come, O God, come in the guise of my wife and I will worship Thee with my life and soul, as no man has worshipped Thee before."

For a while he paused but soon resumed the current of his thoughts : "No, the guise of a wife will inspire no reverence. Man is the active agent and woman's passive and only subservient."

Then turning to his wife : "Hear thou, my darling ; I am thy lord and thou art my wife. There can be nothing wrong therefore in thy worshipping me. Then teach thou by thy worship, how I am to worship Him. Forget my failings and all thy love for me awaken. Take me for God and worship me with a holy fervour. Bring thou the sweetest-scented flowers from the wood and worship me awhile, that I may behold and learn how to worship Him whom-I seek. As thou hast tied me, so will I tie Him down."

* * *

Full of joy the woman went and all things for worship she brought. Filled to the brim with love, her heart did thrill and in her *pūja* she nearly drooped. Quivering, she bathed his feet, like trembling leaves in the wind. Aloud she wept as at her husband's mien she looked. The relentless man, his heart did fail and melt. Full of love he kissed her eyes, and full of joy he saw the world and thus exclaimed :

"This is the love, the potent love, with which mightily I'll bind the God I seek. None so potent I find here below ; with this I'll bind Him or with none. Then

REMORSE

harken Thou, the Source of all. With ties of love I'll bind Thee. But Thy help I need to love Thee thus, and human must Thou be for man to court. Be Thou a lord or be Thou a father, or brother, sister, husband, mother, or a friend or daughter dear, but in a man's guise must Thou appear. By Thy beauty and Thy merits draw me to Thy lotus feet, and there I'll weep as a woman weeps seeing her husband's mien. Then my tears shall lave Thy feet, Thy words shall charm my life. Shapeless or a globe of light if Thou shouldst be, little would it avail me. I long to reach Thee and Thee alone, and clasp Thee warmly to my heart; but how can I clasp a shapeless thing? Those that claim, a shapeless thing they love, by that word 'love' they but deceive their heart; the shape and substance they always miss. Some there be that beat and break their heads, bowing before an inconceivable orb of light, and please themselves that thus they have worshipped God. But such is not love but fear of Him. An evil spirit must he be, whom to please one must beat and break his head, and one that must be very cruel indeed. An evil spirit one could but fear; an evil spirit one could never love. You call it love, but 't is fear you have and such love indeed I care not for."

And the Sadhu, by this time nearly unconscious, beheld in a dream a vision of five fair maidens, grouped in a charming wood.

THE FAIR OF THE FIVE MAIDENS

○ IN a bed of the sweetest flowers, under the canopy of the fragrant Madhavi, lay a maiden fair, her youth and beauty beyond compare, radiating all that was charming and all that was sweet in the universe. Prostrate she lay in a trance ; and by her a damsel sat, the fairest of faces, watching with wistful eyes the emotions that rippled on her face. And three more of their kind came, one after another, from whence none could say, ethereal beings ushered into the earth that took their shapes—and many a curious glance went forth from each and all, in mute surprise and joy. Each to the rest unknown, by chance at one place thrown, all eyes on the unconscious girl unknown, and all concerned to bring her back to life. And she, her senses slowly gained, scans them all, her lips parted as if to speak ; but anon they closed, as if in maidenly coyness in strangers' midst her speech she lost. Rolling in the wealth of youth and beauty, askance they looked

THE FAIR OF THE FIVE MAIDENS

and many a loving glance exchanged and felt like tied by eternal bonds of love.

And one of them the erstwhile unconscious maiden thus addressed: "Who art thou, darling fair, and how didst thou thy senses lose? How camest thou in this forest deep and whose heart dost thou illumine? And thy lord, where does he live? On thy face plays a glee which, methinks, speaks for thee—that thy lord thou hast found."

The maiden blushed and softly she asked them, whom with bewildered love she scanned: "Maidens fair, enchantresses of the world, pray, who are you all? In mercy tell me." And once again many a curious glance was exchanged; and one of them, Rasha-Rangini her name, her story did unfold, while the rest with rapt attention lent their ears.

RASHA-RANGINI

(रसरङ्गिणी)

Rasha-Rangini— Literally, one who revels in *Rashas* or the Æsthetics and Humour, and *Ranga* or fun. She worships God, the Artist and Humorist, and realises in creation the highest arts and supremest sports and fun which busy men of the world fail to see. In her narrative are given answers to the many questions which confront sorrowing man and an explanation of the opposites met in the world and of the apparent inconsistencies in His attributes. To her, He is the Arch-Artist of the Universe, ever busy creating all that is beautiful and blissful.

Says Rasha-Rangini :—

A little cottage I had, a lovely garden stretching round it carpet-like. The tiny frolicking birds flitted about and the balsams bloomed; and one of them by chance I plucked and saw an inimitable hue on it, each petal painted in a different style and how beautifully too! Methought I would catch hold of Him who thus paints in the lonely wood and all I met I asked where

this Painter lived. One smiles and says: "Silly girl, all that comes of itself."

"Thou hast not scanned the painting on flowers", said I. "Dost thou not see, there is but one plant with one only root; and if it came all of itself, why should there be different hues in the flowers? If the art displayed on each petal is closely scanned by one, he lives not in any such delusion."

Another says: "Damsel fair, who can say who paints these, and what if we do not know?" I thought that if I could but once catch hold of him, I would live all my days with him. I shall ask him where he gets the hues and how he puts them on the petals.

One girl, oh how sweet she was, poured into my ears: "In the lone wood, unseen by all, he paints and Rashik Shekhar (Arch-Artist) is his name." Rashik Shekhar! How sweet is the name! It seemed to pour sweetness into my ears. Silly girl as I was, I did not know why the name Rashik Shekhar gave me a thrill. What beauties he must have, what a fountain of sweetness he must be — why, he must be sweet from head to foot, every inch of him. And as I thought of him, what visions of him I conjured up and on what billows of bliss I was wafted! In this wood, I thought, unseen by him I shall seek him out, wherever he might be and I shall see how he paints the flowers. Heaps and heaps of flowers were there, wet with the morning dew, some half open, others in full bloom; and methought some one had just put his brush to them and vanished. I ran after him, feeling that far away he could not be, and into many a lonely bush and grove I peeped to

see if he was concealed in them. Daily and nightly I thought of him and pursued my quest and yet found him not and was well-nigh wearied. At what hour he comes and where he seats himself and which way he returns, I could not make out. Into all the beautiful groves I looked, but his foot-prints I could not detect. He paints unseen and what he paints he tries to keep unseen. To see such a being my heart yearned all the more. From the terrace on high and from the window aloft, I cast my longing looks on the gardens below, my eyes never blinking, and thus I wait for hours and hours longing and hoping to catch a glimpse of him. Wearied of the search, I thought it was all a dream and that my search was in vain. And as I pondered like this, my heart melted in sheer pain and despair, tears burst and rolled from my eyes, and through the tears I saw like a shadow Rashik Shekhar sitting in the garden.

Nimbly I ran after him and as my anklets rang and he heard them, he disappeared in the twinkling of an eye. I searched him again and again but never saw him since and I returned home in despair. Was I awake or was I dreaming when I thought I saw him in the wood, or did I see anything at all or did *Maya* (delusion) beguile me and had I become mad? But hope forsook me not. My search I pursued and on my window I would again perch myself and in tears would cry out—"Rashik Shekhar, O thou the ocean of all virtues! Where art thou?" And somehow fatigue ceased to overcome me now and the pursuit of him gave me infinite peace and comfort. Long afterwards, one day I caught a glimpse of him in a

sequestered part of the wood, deeply engaged on something in his own quiet and concealed way and a voice within whispered to me : "No more noise as thou goest after him, and then only shalt thou catch him."

My anklets discarded, with a beating heart, on tiptoe I walked. Lest on the road I should be caught, lest my friends should see my quest and drag me home, I took the unseen pathways through the wood hidden by the hanging branches of trees and at last I came and stood under the Kamini tree. I felt that Rashik Shekhar was on the other side of the grove, and my heart thumped as I knew not what I should do or what I should say or how I should speak, if I really came face to face with him. So with stealthy footsteps I walked and saw reclining against a tree some one terrible to behold.

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My breath was nearly gone as I beheld that figure. Huge of form and terrible to look at, my limbs trembled as I saw him. There and then I knew that whoever he might be, he was surely not one of our kin. A communion with him was impossible, such a different being was he. Terrible eyes and fearful teeth and an axe too beside him. I fled back in fear and fell flat on the earth in despair. "Is this my Rashik Shekhar" cried I, "seeing whom fear seized me and my life was nearly gone ? No need for such a Rashik Shekhar for me and no need of my life too. Rather shall I drown myself than take to him as Rashik Shekhar." A butterfly came at this moment and rested on my arm. It seemed to have been just painted and set free. How beautifully painted and what hues displayed on its wings, thought I, and again

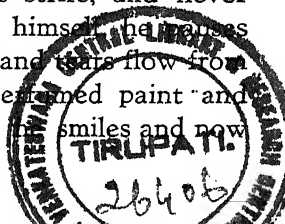
ried out for Rashik Shekhar. That giant figure, I argued, with his giant fingers could not have held so fine a brush as would impart such finest touches.

Is it a dream or has some one deceived me, I asked myself. I must first find this out. And what cared I for him now? I would go quite close to him and put him some questions straight; and quarrel with him if need be. If he should turn on me—that terrible figure—I would tell him that he would fill the world with his name and ill-fame if he killed a lonely girl in the wood and that I had come prepared to die as there was no sense in living if my Rashik Shekhar was only a demon.

Thus resolved, I walked on quietly and stood behind the bush, unseen by him while my vision of him and his doings was clear. At this very moment he looked on all sides and, as he perceived no one to be near, slowly he cast aside his outer garments one by one. The mask on his face was gone too, and therewith vanished his demoniacal limbs and teeth; he became a man like one of us and took up his fine brush and intently he began his painting work again. And I stepped nearer and stood just behind him.

* * *

It was a wild flower, beyond compare in beauty. Having painted it, he hid it in the grass. Men came and passed by it, busy in world's strife, and never cared to look at it. Painting all by himself, he pauses now and again to prize its beauty and tears flow from his eyes. He dips his brush in perfumed paint and catters it on the flowers; and now he smiles and now



he trembles in ecstatic joy as he views his art perfect. Taking up a snail he began to apply his brush to it. Suddenly he saw me and threw it into the sea, and dropped his head. Caught in the plying of his secret arts he looked abashed, and I too felt embarrassed and stood motionless with head bent down, feeling like my soul gone out of me and utterly blank in mind.

* * *

Methinks in pity he looked at me and beckoned me on to him. Slowly my footsteps moved and before him I stood, my face lowered and lips motionless. He paused awhile. Then in gentlest tone he asks: "What brings thee here?" Was it some mortal voice I heard, or was it the sound of nectar flowing? My head dropped, my lips were sealed and a mute statue I stood. But the sweetness of his words like music soft brought courage into my heart, and casting off all coyness I answered: "Disguised in a mask thou satest and for very fear I dared not approach thee. What anxious days I have known, what tears I have shed, and how often, O lord, I have come near thee and again gone back!" His lips moved as if about to speak but anon he paused. A minute in silence gone, he asked again; "What brings thee here?"

"Charmed by thy paintings everywhere" said I, "my senses nearly gone, I came to ask thee why thou thus pliest thy art and hidest the same. What pleasure dost thou draw if no one should see thy beautiful works of art? It seems to be all labour lost when he, for whom thou dost thus ceaselessly toil, sees them not." He bent his head, paused a minute and sweetly smiling

said : "I paint in the hope that men shall see and find some glee and give the praise to me."

"If so", said I, "why, having painted a beautiful thing, hidest thou it in the bosom of the sea ?"

Once more with head bent down and a smile on his lips said he :

" He shall seek it out,
 He, whom it pleases ;
 Or, may be,
 'Tis bad work indeed,
 And hiding it,
 Its value I enhance .
 A painter true knows
 What pleasure in painting lies,
 And so, ever and on I paint,
 And my eternal time beguile.
 Some pleasure thou, damsel fair,
 Hast got from it ;
 'Tis ample meed for me."

* * *

Hardly had he finished, when like a shadow he was gone. I failed to know how and why or what kind of a man he was, so entranced was I. Or was it in a dream the vision came ?

* * *

My quest I resumed and once more I found him squatting in a deep and lonely bush, and on his left I took my seat, unseen by him. Deeply engrossed as he was in painting, I looked at him sideways and neither stirred nor blinked, lest his hand should shake. That piece

of work done, he placed it before himself as if to scan it. So fine were the lines and tints that I had to use glasses and with their aid saw the beauties borne on the head of a tiny fly. The fineness of the art brought tears to my eyes and I shook in ecstasy from head to foot.

Just then he had also finished the painting of a caladium leaf. Liquid sandal, it seemed, had been sprinkled over it. Taking it up, I went to the nearest tank and washed it over and over again; but the tints I could not wash off. Bewildered I looked at him for a while and then softly I spoke "As I look at thee, tears come to my eyes; I want to cry, I know not why."

It seemed he felt ashamed; his eyes were heavy with tears; what played in his mind I know not. But as our eyes met, he turned his own away and some words dropped from him which I failed to catch.

* * *

Anon before our eyes came a pair of peacocks spreading their resplendent feathers and began to dance, which Rashik Shekhar beheld enraptured.

"People tell me", said I to him, "that all these are nobody's creation but that they come by themselves." He cast a mocking glance at me but no word crossed his lips.

Just then a little bird warbled on yonder bough, and he lost himself in listening to the music.

Then the ass brayed and the bird flew away. "In this world" said he, "nothing is beautiful except by contrast. The moonlight none would enjoy if there were

no new moon. The inky new moon night was created to make men appreciate the moonlight. If they saw a full moon every night, the moon would cease to be beautiful. They fail to know the mysteries of creation and see many an evil in the world."

"In the braying of the ass" I asked, "what special art or beauty is there?"

"Silly girl" said he, "is not the same art needed in depicting what is ugly as in painting the beautiful?"

A pair of pigeons came and stood cooing at each other and flirting, with many a movement of their head and necks. Intensely amused, he laughed and hid his face in his hands and then cast a meaning glance at me.

Two cats then appeared, in martial fury, bent to tear each other down, the head of each turned away from the other and growling all the while.

Losing all control on himself, he laughed aloud and rolled on the ground. And I too, tears of joy in my eyes, laughed with him. Seeing all the fun of his creation and laughing and laughing, a lighter mood came upon him and he seemed to draw me closer unto him lifting up the bar of unfamiliarity which had till then kept us apart. "Wishest thou" says he, "to taste the sweets of creation? Come then with me into this wood." And up he rose and wended into the wood, myself following.

And on that path some one else also was journeying. Rashik Shekhar with stealthy steps was suddenly at his back and loudly yelled. The passer-by in sheer fright cursed the Creator with all his might and ran away.

Rashik Shekhar looked meaningly at me and laughed.

Another man on that road he met and him too he tried to frighten, but far from running away, this man turned round and looked at him with a smiling face.

Foiled thus, he came on to me. "Supremely clever as you are" said I, "you have been rightly served."

"Yes" said he. "There are some who abuse me on being frightened by me, and I laugh at their silliness. There are others who turn round and laugh at me. Most men on getting a fright never look behind but fly for their lives. Those who turn round and see the Artist's hand are never frightened; and to such I own myself vanquished and feel ashamed. Thus frolicking day and night, I beguile my time."

* * *

"Lo! There in the dust lies some one bewailing his lot. Come, let us see what his sorrows are", said I to Rashik Shekhar, and approaching that man, I asked: "In this blissful Brindaban, every one seems to be happy and cheery. What is it that grieves you?"

Piteously he looked at me and murmured: "Where is comfort to be found here? Can there be any in a place where there is no flesh to eat nor wine to drink?"

"The breeze here" I argued, "is laden with the perfume of flowers and the birds are sweetly singing and enjoying the peace and sanctity of the place." He laughèd and said that these were fit for poets only but

he did not believe that there could really be any happiness without flesh and wine. "If you really wish to do a good turn to me", he appealed, "take me to a place where there is plenty of flesh and wine and where I may eat and drink to satiety."

Said Rashik Shekhar: "As one's tastes are, so are his needs here. Some come here never wishing to go back. Others dislike the place and pine to return and they get back where they had come from. And thus by repeated journeys to and fro, the soul is at last purified, when the desire to return vanishes and they enjoy this region in perpetual blissfulness."

* * *

"Rest awhile here and I shall presently return." Saying this he vanished as into thin air.

And then I saw playing before me what appeared to be numerous wooden dolls, some embracing one another, while others quarrelled; some gathered dust and treasured it up, while others picking up pearls, threw them away.

Some wept for nothing, while others found joy in fruitless pursuits. Some took poison by their own hands and accused others of poisoning them, while a great number were busy in the market buying and selling, too much engrossed, and oblivious of the fact that night was coming and the way was long to return home.

And over there, a Sadhu sat, a basketful of words in his lap, which he seemed to munch and munch and live upon and to look down disdainfully on the man who lived on corn.

Some made clay models of their own selves and prostrated themselves before them with reverence and lighting a sacrificial fire for their own advancement, threw everything into that flame.

Some, after serving themselves and securing their own ends, asked others for payment. Some, even when carried on others' shoulders, fell down on the ground while one blind man leading another both fell into a ditch.

A lame man, leaning on his crutches, took another on his shoulders when crossing a mountain. One man with a load on his head, plunged into the river to cross it and got drowned in mid-stream, while another availed himself of a boat and crossed it in safety.

One thinned himself by starvation to reduce his weight so as to become able to fly, while another with a load on his back rode a flying chariot and flew across.

These and similar were the sports going on amongst the dolls. Intensely amusing as they were, I missed Rashik Shekhar who would have very much enjoyed the humour of it all. After some search, I found him sitting in a lovely grove, concealed from view, pulling the strings which made the dolls dance and apparently very much enjoying it. It provoked a loud laugh from me and he sighted me. Being thus caught, he looked abashed and came to me with a smile on his lips.

“This is hardly fair” said I. “Is it thus, concealed from view, from some unseen spot and unknown, thou playest this game and deceivest all men?”

“ All the fun of it would be lost ” said he, again smiling, “ if I showed my hand.”

Said I: “ With sleepless eyes and tireless body thou art moving round and round, the *charkha* (spinning wheel) owning itself beaten by thee. Now on the green, again on the river or in the skies or on the earth, thou seemest to be everywhere and at one and the same time. After my night’s repose, rising in the morn, I find thou hast passed a sleepless night, sweeping over hills and dales, through woods and vales, no place on earth or in heaven untrodden by thee. Ever on the move, ever amidst all, here, there, everywhere; and the wonder is, no one sees thee. Thou restless spirit, ever busy, ever present, come now and rest awhile.”

Said he smiling: “ A large household I have to run and much as I wish to rest, I can ill afford it.” And the next moment he had vanished, leaving me wondering if really I had seen him or was it my fancy or my dream! To be with him for ever, and to know the mystery had been my resolve. So, through this forest I ran, in quest of him, till out of breath, in sad despair, panting I stood. And lo! yonder I saw a group of men with long flowing beards holding a conclave, turbans on their heads and long smoking pipes before them. In their midst sat one who seemed to be their chief, his face clothed in a hoary beard. In Arabic too he was discoursing, grave and serene. The homage of all he claimed and got. A familiar face his seemed to be but for the beard. One glance, one only glance at me, and our eyes met and spoke. Why, he was no other than my Rashik Shekhar himself, With the flowing end of

my *saree* I hid my face unable to hold my laughter. A warning glance shot at me seemed to say : " Divulge it not." Anon he left the place, unseen by all, and taking me by the hand went along, myself laughing and laughing till I nearly burst, while he in shameful discomfiture moved.

"Disguising myself", said he, " I had gone out and yet you discovered me. Thus in all ages I am caught by those who seek me. Under a veil I move about and they that intently gaze through it and with a little patience follow me, never fail to find me out. In their love and devotion they gave me a garb which I put on to please them. For you I shall change my attire and to you I shall always be the joy of your eyes in the guise of Rashik Shekhar."

Yet another day I came and sat by him and looked at his face. Very cool, grave and pensive he seemed, as if all the eternal problems of the vast universe were puzzling him. Gravely he asked : " Will you promise me that whatever you may behold now, you shall remain unmoved as if your heart was made of stone ? " The old demeanour was gone. He looked firm and stern like the eternal rocks. Why my gay and frolicksome Rashik Shekhar came to be thus transformed I could hardly guess. His erstwhile lighter vein had indeed made me feel too familiar with him. The face and demeanour I saw that day made me dread him.

Then behold ! there sat a young damsel crying, her husband's corpse on her lap. Her youth had hardly bloomed and Cupid himself seemed to rest on her lap. And she, poor girl, her best toilet she had made, intent

to please her lord at night, when a serpent had stung him and he lay now lifeless. And she thus bewailed her lot: "We were twain but now alone and desolate I stand. What joy, O Lord, hast Thou got from this? The most virtuous he, whom with trembling fingers I anointed lest he feel hurt, is now lying in the dust." And she clasps the departed beloved and many a tender kiss on his lips bestows. Her loud lament stunned the gods above.

Indignantly I then charged him thus: "Tell me what thy conduct is. In blissful oblivion thou pliest the painter's art, utterly blind to the sorrows of thine own creatures. 'Artist' thou hast named thyself and the cruellest stabs come from thy hands.

"The hand that paints the lily wields the spear and hurls it headlong into the heart of a helpless lass. Judging truly, men through sheer fear dare not tell thee what they think of thee. Rather would I bow to the skies and worship them than a friend and companion make of thee."

His face grew dark, a cloud of sorrow spread over it. Abashed, I did not know what pained his heart. Dumb-like I stared at him, my heart smitten on seeing his face.

Awhile he spoke not. Then slowly he raised his face and in measured words he spoke: "Unmoved you had promised to be. And you seem to be losing your balance before you have seen anything. Child as you are, you could know little; and you aspire to know my purposes! If you will know all as soon as you are born, what will remain to know in all the rest of your life?"

If my mysteries a child should unravel, what then shall be the difference between you and me ? For ever and for ever knowledge shall come. Old doubts shall go and new doubts arise. All hopes of man shall be fulfilled. And with new sprung hopes again shall come their fulfilment. If I gave hunger, I provided food for it. If I gave cravings in human heart, I pre-arranged for their satisfaction. Man's craving is to live for ever ; that craving itself is proof of life being everlasting. In cords of love man is bound to man ; that love is proof of men's re-union. Man's cravings, if you but study, man's destiny you will realise."

Said I : " My heart to thee I shall unburden now. Calumnies about thee paining me, I sought to know thee. Baulked at every step, at long last I caught thee. Pondering over the mysteries of thy game, I nearly lost my senses while my hairs stood on end in ecstasy. Thy praises I sing, but it gives me pleasure mixed with pain. Then only will unmixed pleasure be mine and my fondest wishes fulfilled when all thy children shall sing thy glories. Some do not own thee. Some do not know thee ; while others knowing thee seek thee not. Unconcerned they live and move, and while we, who are thine own, feel outraged, thou sittest smiling on high.

" Some deck thee with wreaths of human skulls and snatching the brush from thine hand, give thee a spear instead. In their fear, they dare not openly call thee names but thus indirectly they do.

" We who are thine own, how can we bear it all ? Manifest thyself to the world, or in thy very presence I shall give up my life.

“Thou art the source of life. From thee comes all knowledge. If it be thy wish to strangle us, who shall save us? If thou dost not choose to enlighten, who else will do it? How long, O how long indeed, wilt thou keep thyself unrevealed?”

Said Rashik Shekhar: “For ever it is my firm resolve to vouchsafe all that is sought with one’s heart. A man seeks not when he seeks not from his heart and he gets not what he only fancies he had sought. My mysteries you wish to know, and I shall tell you just as much as you can comprehend.

“There is no ill in this world. A thing is good or bad according as it is placed. Put slaked lime into your mouth; it will burn your tongue, but not when used with *pan* (betel leaf). Salt put on the tongue is not agreeable but that does not make it bad. *Atar* pleases the nose, but dropped into the eye it hurts. The heat that soothes and comforts, burns and consumes when used beyond measure. Seeds of sorrow are sown in this world when a thing misses its place or its measure. Instead of putting man into a cage, I gave him as much liberty as he was fitted for. This liberty he misuses and turns into licence and brings endless woes unto himself. He would not have suffered thus if he had been caged but he would not have grown. And if he did not grow, to live or not to live would be the same to man.

“This liberty the lower animals have not, and they have also not the joys and sorrows of man nor his final evolution. Man abuses his freedom; yet at the end comes his salvation. Deliberately he brings sorrows on himself; yet from them spring new hopes and joys.

Fever comes when the human frame is neglected at the end of the fever, the body is left. Death comes from repeated onslaughts made on the body, but man goes to a higher world in a fraction of time. Tears follow smiles and smiles follow tears. Grief rolls on my world. That which brings tears to the world also brings joy thereafter. Weep for a while and you shall smile as long. Man mourns seeing the suffering in the world. Man forgets that grief is but the shadow of joys. From seeds of sorrows rises the rich crop of life. And in pleasure mixed with pain lies hidden the mystery of man's growth. The wails of the widow who has wrecked your heart and to loud lamentations she goes her way. Know this for certain that her sorrow shall have its requite in measure full. The stricken are my friends and my debts I have to pay with interest. My sorrows in repayments and through the grace of you all my resources are limitless. You sorrow over present and I sorrow for the future. My thoughts go into the remotest future."

His words made me ponder. Tears filled my eyes as I spoke to him: "In my heart of hearts I know that thou art kind and the heart's promptings cannot be wrong. Yet doubts and fears seize me. I fail to see why my own kin shall suffer so much. If thou art omniscient why dost thou make man suffer pain and sorrow? If thou dost thou not give him joy only and end all our doubts?"

Said he: "The power to know right from wrong has been given to man and that power is the step to his salvation. Through that power of discernment man strives to be good. Man, obsessed by his little knowledge, finds fault with me and defects in my service."

creation. I alone am perfect and the rest I have ordained to be imperfect. That is why there are defects in my creation and man finds them as such. If only the power of discernment had not been given by me, these defects he could not have seen. Through this power he knows right from wrong; and through it again he criticises me. Only step by step shall man advance; only gradually shall his wants be met and he will be perfect like myself. Gradual evolution is my law; only gradually will the ultimate good come. It is his destiny to be imperfect at the start and to gradually advance. That is why there are glaring ills in the world and why all is not perfect that is seen. Give me both your ears and all your patience, and take it from me that there cannot be union without previous separation; there cannot be recoument without loss. Separation is the bridge between joy and sorrow, and separation brings grief only to take you across to bliss. Separation and reunion are the laws of the world. As there is supreme bliss in reunion, separation must precede it. Without wants, there would be no growth and without growth man would not be happy. Whatever his sources of pleasure, through enjoyment he fails to relish it. The beggar covets a lac. When he acquires it, his pleasure is boundless. Through possession of it, that pleasure dies. The loving wife who always lives with her husband cannot know the pleasure which comes to the wife whose lord and husband returns to her after a long separation. For every parting, there is reunion; for every grief there is reserved an equal amount of bliss. For every distress there is a favour found. The moment

man is afflicted with a sorrow, know for certain that out of it shall spring up some joy. He cannot know joy whom sorrow has not struck, and to live or to die is the same to him. Without want there is no growth and he that grows not, knows no bliss. If in a human heart a vale of sorrows is dug, nectar sweet to fill up that vale is kept in full measure for him. Many an ill the babe suffers from is forgotten as he grows in years. Many a dream that frightens in sleep is forgotten with the break of day, which brings relief from pain and unexpected pleasure instead. Thus I ordain that pleasure shall follow pain and grow from more to more. Be convinced that partings in this world are only to promote the growth of that greatest gift made to man, the gift of love. What you call death, dear child, is only the opening into a new and fresh life."

As he spoke, he beckoned me, gently smiling. "See for yourself, over there" said he. And a wondrous vision I saw. There stood the lost lord and husband, the erstwhile widowed wife facing him, and each scanning the other in mute surprise and joy. "Art thou he, my lord and lover, come back to me?" says she; "or is it but a dream that deludes me? Having been bereft of all hopes of thee, a thousand times happier I feel in possessing thee again." Words failed her then and down her eyes ran tears of joy and each the other's face in ecstasy beheld. Anon they stood, one beside the other, their arms round each other's neck encircled. Supreme delight beamed then on Rashik Shekhar's face, as in sweetest satisfaction he viewed the loving couple, showering love on each other. Ill could I stand the

scene. Said I to him: "Dost thou notice how, immersed in their joy, they have utterly forgotten thee to whom they owe all their present bliss? How ungrateful!" And the sweet lord soothed me thus: "Tarry a while. They are drunk now, drunk with nectar. Leave me alone to feast my eyes with what I behold, and let me come last in their mind."

Then hand in hand they came and bowing before him, they said: "If thou hast given us pain and we have wept, a thousand times greater pleasure hast thou given us now. We have sinned before thy feet by crying. Bless us now with thy lotus hands."

Smiling said he unto them: "Eternal perdition shall be your lot if you lose yourselves thus in love's bondage. They only go to higher planes whom love has failed to fetter."

The man then in piteous accents said: "My heart breaks to think of breaking the bonds of love. Let us in pair worship thee. Be thou like the sun and let us like the earth and the moon go round and round. I shall sing thy praises and my partner shall dance in joy and we shall both make garlands for thee and deck thee with flowers from the wood. Thou thief, who hast stolen our hearts, thou shalt be worshipped by us both. If we fall, let both of us fall joined hand in hand, rather than go to the highest heaven alone and companionless."

Rashik's face grew dark. Turning to me said he: "It was man's luck that love in human hearts I gave which binds man to man. With this love one heart embraces another and both get drowned in a sea of bliss. Each the other's face beholds and both in sweet

enchantment pass their days. Each his life for the other's joy surrenders and for himself or herself earns the greater joy and thus does love grow from more to more. For man's purest happiness did I create the binding of two hearts with love's cement, each to be the solace of the other in distress, each to be the other's support and shelter and to fulfil all wants. Each from the other shall learn lessons of love and my heart shall suck the nectar that drops from them. Drunk with that nectar (*rasha*) I live. Yet foolish people cry, on being parted from their dear ones, and call me names. They will not realise that partings I created to make unions possible, and that all unions presuppose separation. How would love's gifts have been relished if the sorrows of parting had not been? Would there be half the pleasure of a reunion if man had not doubted it? From reunion never anticipated comes the supreme pleasure of it and in that pleasure I revel. Do you take me to be such a heartless demon that by cords of love I shall bind man to man and then snap them for the mere fun of it? There is not such a cruel fool in the universe who for the mere pleasure of it would snatch away the babe from the mother's arms or part a woman from her lord and protector. How can you accuse me of what the most foolish of my created beings are incapable of doing? If every parting brings not union, then trust me not, for I must be very cruel indeed. If kinder than I you all shall be, then it will be for me to bow to you and not for you to worship me. It is a godless world if every parting brings no joy at the end and all is dark as hell."

My heart softened and words failed me. At last I spoke : “ A mate for each thou findest and thy eyes feast on the sight of couples. Why then dost thou pain thy own beings by living all by thyself ? Who shall wipe thy tears when from love or pity they flow ? If thou hadst a loving partner to wipe them, it would touch thee to the core and tears of love would flow for ever. With whom canst thou share thy joys when a partner thou hast not ? Whom wilt thou seat on thy left and deck with flowers from the wood as we do our dear ones ? Made as we are, our heart breaks when we see one lonesome like thyself. He is indeed a sorrowing being who in this wide world walks companionless. Thou art our dearest one and can we, who are thine own, bear the sight of thy being all by thyself, with not one to share thy joys and sorrows, while thou thyself knowest full well why thou hast given each his mate and what supreme comfort it gives to thee ? If thou dost wish to make us happy, enthrone thy partner beside thee on thy left and let us make obeisance to thee and thy partner, and dance and sing round you both, in everlasting glee.”

Said Rashik Shekhar : “ Ye that love me cry for my companion, seeing me all alone. But tell, me where to find one like myself to whom my heart, my all, I can give. Those who are my beings are dependent on me, and seek my help for their own gain and pleasure. Some seek jewels or wealth or clothes or food or other things to satisfy their pleasures and, having got them from my limitless stores, forget him that gives them and live senseless in their enjoyment. To whom then shall I

offer myself and my heart, when in this wide world there is not one who will love me for myself and shall be one with me ?”

His eyes moistened. Fervently I appealed to him : “ Not one in this wide universe shall be found who can enchant and capture thee. If man could have done it, thou wouldst not have divided thyself into two (*Purush* and *Prakriti*) and thus blessed thy beings.”

In this wood, sisters dear, I roam about espying at every step the arts of that Arch-Artist and singing his praises with tears of joy.

KANGALINI

(काङ्गालिनी)

Kangalini—Literally, the humble mendicant maid. She is humility personified and her highest aspiration is to find a place at the feet of her lord and to be taken as his vassal. Painfully conscious that she is too unclean to be near him, she sets to cleansing herself. When she had made herself stainless, she had communion with him.

Says Kangalini :—

The beautiful lord with endless love, close to me he lived. His fame from far and near I heard and longed to be his maid.

Weak and helpless I drifted, tempest-tossed from shore to shore, and none in this wide world had I whom to call my own.

Night and day I brooded, a leaden weight upon my heart, as to how for serving him I could make me fit and unto my bosom hold his crimson feet and all remorse and fear for ever shed.

Proudly before the glass I stood on toilet bent. But to look into the glass was to shake with fear,— such a dreadful face it looked. So ugly, alas, I never knew I was,— my heart was almost withered ! Or was it the glass had stains which made me look so loathsome ?

I cleaned the glass, and again I looked, and now darker still I seemed. The more I cleaned the glass, the more it showed me up and the more in grief I sank.

Methought some pox or sores I had of which the scars were left. The sores were gone, the marks remained,— proof for ever of the sores I had had. And beneath the scars, it seemed, the sores did live and made me smart and gave no peace to my riotous heart.

Grimacing at others to give them pain, distorted my face remained. Picking holes in them and scenting their faults, my nose was flattened to my face. Thus through my own follies I fell ;— whom shall I tell my woes ?

An unclean body with countless sores in which maggots bred. Drawn by their putrid smell the flies did swarm ; and such was I,— untouchable and sinful !

Biting my fellows, my teeth were long and protruded. Ever in anger, my eyes were red and fiery. Gluttony uncurbed, my tongue hung out and from it saliva dropped profuse. And such was the face I had and saw in the glass.

“Oh what is it I see ?” cried I in grief and fear, my voice sharp as a razor’s edge. “An ass’s voice thou hast”, my mates abused.

All pride was crushed ! The beautiful lord, his home, his shelter soft, all hopes to own them lost !

Supremely beautiful was he ; no match for him was I. How could he take me as his own,—me so ugly, untouchable and sinful ?

If perchance I meet him, with what cheek could I tell him : “Grant unto me thy feet, O lord, and my unholy person in thy service keep” ?

O how could I be fit to be his slave, to hold his lotus-feet upon my head, while his kindest words into my ears shall softly fall ! O what devotion would fit me for this good luck !

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Thus I pondered and many a means I took to make me lovely to behold. With turmeric my body I stain and to the sun expose ; a darker hue the skin doth take. Unguents many I try, but cleansing there was none. My crooked limbs by force I straightened. Back to their shapes they went, as soon as I let go of them, distorted as before. My hideous spots with my cloth I sought to hide and neighbours giggled as they remained revealed.

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A lovely girl was she that chanced to pass by me, her face beautiful as the moon, her gait measured and swanlike, proud and highborn. Laden with the weight of her brimful youth, she could hardly walk, while the anklets on her feet sweetly tinkled. Her I caught and thus at her feet I prayed : “This beauty and this grace of thy person, tell me, dear, how they came or by what devotion thou hast them obtained.”

Sweetly smiling says she :

“Why dost thou grieve thus, sister
 Dip thyself in Jamuna water,
 Daily, gently, rub thou long ;
 And the marks on thee
 Shall soon be gone.
 Soon shalt of the fairest be,
 And the lord thy lover
 Shall come to thee.”

* * *

High on my head the saintly words I
 daily, as my day's toil was done, to the Jamuna
 and dipped in its water, my body rubbed. And
 daily rubbing, slowly it came to be clean a
 hue like that of molten gold.

From behind a cover he espied me. And
 came and stood upon the bank, supremely
 to behold. His lotus-eyes wet with tears,
 at me and in a voice choked, thus accosted
 much longer wilt thou remain forgetful of
 I for thee am dying ?” “Touch me not,” im-
 “me, so unclean with these my sores.” And
 made and beckoned. And as behind him
 some way apart lest I, so unholy, should touch
 of a sudden turned and with his arms round
 clasped me unto him.

* * *

What more shall I say, sisters ? My men
 senseless on the ground I fell. With the
 magic touch, my lifelong woes were gone, a

out through my eyes. Far and near I looked lest I be caught like this, and to my hearth and home my feet were loath to wend. Ever since, for him and his love out of home I roam, ever in his wake, and now in quest of him in this forest deep. Many a time, O sister, my parents came to take me home, whom with weeping eyes I begged: "Where shall I go forsaking him here, at whose feet my body and soul, my life, my caste and all I've laid?"

* * *

Three names he has, "Hari", "Krishna" and "Ram", lisping which through this wood I walk and his presence in words like these I seek: "O kindest of hearts, the protector of the weak, show thyself unto this poor girl."

Nothing but his names I knew, names more precious than priceless gems, names which my every atom claimed, and by which alone I invoked him: "O Sri-Hari, O Sri-Krishna, give unto me thy lotus-leet."

And indeed "Hari-bole" is all that counts. *Jag* and *Jagma*, *Tantras* and *Mantras* are all futile; the only password is "Hari-bole."

* * *

Again, his idol I build, and with water and incense sweet, and devotion deep, worship his lotus-feet. And oft to my senses lost and laved in tears, his beauteous face I see.

Mute and motionless was he,
No word his lips did part;

My homage no answer had ;
 It nearly broke my heart.
 Then with a piteous wail I cry :
 "Speak, O lord, or at thy feet I die."
 My suppliant prayers touched his heart,
 He cast his glance on me and smiled ;
 My doubts were gone,
 My fears were past,
 And, by his mien emboldened,—
 On a throne of lotuses I placed him,
 And at his crimson feet I sat ;
 Bowing with folded hands I sing ;
 And the lord is pleased at last.
 The five-wick'd lamp I lit,
 And waved it with fervour meet
 Before his face and feet.
 My armlets jingled,
 The bell-sounds mingled,
 And the lord was visibly pleased.
 A bed of flowers made,
 The lord is thereon laid,
 And I at his feet :
 My eyes fixed on his face,
 His feet on my bosom pressed,
 My heart did leap and beat.
 Anon the lord is on the throne
 And I at his feet ;
 My dishevelled hair
 Their dust doth kiss ;—
 Dust of lotus powdered sweet ;
 And with it I my toilet make.

KANGALINI

Thus speaking, the maiden bowed and to the other girls she said: "Forgive me, the meanest of the mean as I am. The dust of your feet I seek in which to bathe and wash; and for my deliverance your grace is my only chance." And as though by sore contrition moved, she hung down her head and wept, her face sad as the shrouded moon. "Krishna, Krishna," lisps she, "vouchsafe my prayer: O lord, make me the slave of thy slaves."

Now heavenward her face she lifts and anon on the dust she rolls and in agony mourns: "Oh! Whereto did he fly, he who I thought in my heart did lie? He for whom through this wide wood I sped?"

"But why deceive thy *sakhis*, sweet maiden," some one whispers; "is he not hid under thy mantle, next to thy heart?"

* * *

Rangini smiles and says:

Shame on thy lord who wants his praises sung,
who seeks our servile bows and complaisant looks
when prostrate at his feet we lie. Why, 'tis a mockery
indeed, it makes us laugh and sigh.

Lord of the living and the dead,
The highest, holiest and best;
From his vassals' nods
He pleasure gets!
He must be to all senses lost.
On a throne he is placed,
A sword is in his hand;
The universe he rules,
And the meanest man bows

With folded hands, trembling,
 And all the while crying :
 'How kind art thou, O lord.'
 And he is mighty pleased,
 While our faults he seeks,
 And finding them, gives
 Unrelenting blows.

If this of thy lord the picture be,
 Into his mouth some fire put,
 And him, at the nearest spot,
 His cremation give,
 And weep thou not.

I wonder how this lord of thine,
 Full of fury and fire,
 Thy reverence could ever inspire.

Says Kangalini :

Sweeter than his bosom are his feet,
 His bosom he had given me ;
 His feet I sought of him,
 And my lord sorrowed o'er it.

At his feet I sit and live ;
 To his bosom if I went,
 A fall from it might give
 The shock of life and grief ;
 There's no such fear at his feet.

In his heart doth burn a flame,
 My heart hath no such claim.
 His heart seeking to climb,
 I was seared by its heat.
 And so I've sought his tranquil feet

KANGALINI

In suppliant mood I find
Soothing salve for self.

'Thou art kindness' when I say,
My languished limbs feel ecstasy,
And the world is a blissful sea.

With my mood he feels abashed,
But being kind he stops me not,
Lest me of pleasure he should rob.

With my hair I wipe his feet,
He stays me by the hand.
'This hair of mine', I ask him,
'How hath it offended thee?'

Do but wipe and feel ;—
You have not wiped like me ;—
Tell me then if you or I
Am happier of the two.

Does it please my friend for nothing ?
Could I please him if he chose not ?
It pleaseth, because of me.
I know not, dears, if he or I
Is or am the higher.

He puts me on high,
I say with a sigh
'It cannot be';
And thus a tussle
'Tween him and me.

Why a turbann'd head has he ?
Weakling man and powerless
Oft doth challenge his prowess ;

And lest he break his pate,
He hath a turbann'd head.

Sinners as we are,
What makes you so proud ?
Gifts you have got,
But whence were they found ?
Forget not, dears,
They came from the touch
Of the lotus-feet of him
You revile so much.

To his bosom all do seek to go,
If I too went there, none is left here,
To worship his feet divine.

Sree Gouranga of Nadia
Do you not know ?
The highest bliss he found
In worshipping as I do.
Drowned in it, he drank
Nectar sweet of heaven ;
Forgot the past, and forsook
The *leelas* of Brindaban.

Supremest he and joyful,
Whatever he does for ye
Withal no return seeking,
Is rewarded by calumny.

If the five senses had not been,
Tell me, wherewith ye had known
To taste the sweets
Of Rashes born,
Or of the Rupas' thousand forms ?

Kangalini went on :

Hear me, sisters, what came next.

Blinded by pride I charged Him thus :

“ I shout for Thee, no answer comes,

It puzzles my perplexed mind ;

Forever ‘the Kindest ’ called,

Thy acts are so unkind !

While I do cry for Thee,

From Thee no response comes,

As Thou wert deaf indeed

Or blind of both Thine eyes.

Unceasing I call,

Thou dost not hear ;

I cease to call,

When Thou dost appear.

Forsooth Thou art fickle and queer.”

Both my hands He seized and in sweet affection held ; and His face on mine fixed, quoth He :—“Oft indeed you have called me. And finding me not at your behest, your heart you have rent in twain, crying and crying for me. Guilty I plead and your forgiveness seek, and promise that again it shall not be. Henceforth whenever your heart will yearn for me, at your door I shall be.”

Mad with joy at the gladsome gift, I felt my sorrows gone and my lifelong wishes fulfilled. Drunk with that joy, at His feet I fell and a thousand obeisances made. And He with a darkened visage looked at me and vanished, leaving me full of glee.

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“ Where art Thou, my Lord ! ” — On a morning fine, and out from His hiding came He and stood

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serene. Bounding with joy, to Him I bowed and said : " Not that I had need of Thee, my Lord, but I called to put Thee to the test. " And on the morrow I call Him again. Anon He appears and with folded hands I bow at His feet.

Thus from day to day the game goes on, as Him in slothful mood I call ; and the Supremest comes and stands before me like servant, slave or guilty soul. Time rolls by and hard to have He ceased to be, and desire, once so keen, His vision to behold, lost its edge, and it seemed the same to me whether He was or was not seen.

Whatever I seek would come to me, thought I, and the sense of seeking dulled ; while, ere now, on a sea of bliss I used to float as His coming in my mind I pictured.

And so with eyes closed I call Him in languid voice, and true to His word He comes but fails to open my eyes.

The desire to call Him died as in my mind I thought, " the Lord would come when I sought. " The desire gone, sloth had come, and I slept by night and day. But who could sleep all hours ? And so with eye-lids closed on the floor I lay. Ere this He was called from day to day, but now the very wish for it had died away.

With Him to guard me and protect, fears I had none, nor grief nor tears. Thus in time it came to be that neither could I laugh nor weep, unfit for either, pleasure or pain, and to live or to die was the same to me.

Once upon a day it flashed on me that for long I had not sent for Him. So, lazily yawning, I took His name, and behold! He stood with folded hands, that Heavenly Frame. Surprised I asked Him:—"Why comest Thou with suppliant hands before me, the meanest of Thy slaves, Thou Who art my saviour and my Lord? 'Tis not for Thee to honor me." He bent His head and in softest accents said:—

“ I come, I always come
 At your call,
 Ever obeying, ever hearing
 When you call;
 I come, I come, ever grateful
 For your call,
 Ever answering with folded hands
 Your call;
 Ever conscious of my debts to you,
 Ever wishing to repay somehow. ”

Thus addresssd and much ashamed, with folded hands I prayed;—"Not thus my Lord, not thus! Dying as I am, torment me not."

* * *

He was gone. To live or to die, thought I, was the same to me. Death rather I would court, as a life like this was full of woes. The supremest bliss which man could wish, my kind Lord had on me bestowed. But a life such as this I could not bear; I would ask Him to appear, and death at His feet and Nirvana I should seek, a release from self to merge in Him. "Give me, O Lord," cried I, "this release, this rest eternal, freed from weal and woes." And as from the deepest recess

the prayer went forth, its fervour melted a frozen heart and after many a long day my eyes found tears. Fast bolted as the flood-gates were, the torrents rushed when once they oped. "My Lord!"—I shouted and dropped on the floor, my senses dead and lost.

* * *

'Twas long before my eyes were open. And I knew not why my heart did leap with a kind of joy. And lo! Whom would I see but my Lord sitting at my head, with kindly eyes watching my face. Rising, I fell at His feet. "My Lord", I implored, "forgive the lowly. In bliss Thou hadst kept me, which I failed to see; and in my fancied wisdom went I out to advise Thee. What was good and what was ill for me I knew not; and yet I chose a boon, and a boon of my seeking Thou didst give. Now I pray at Thy crimson feet that what Thou pleasest Thou mayest give."

"So shall it be" He said and in an instant vanished. What boon He gave me I failed to grasp and pondered long over it and guessed. At last I thought I would call Him again and ask Him what boon to me He gave.

Musing thus, I shouted for Him :—"Vouchsafe Thy presence, O Lord." But He came not and fear seized my heart. And again and again I shouted: "Where art Thou, my Sri Krishna, my Sri Rama, my Sri Hari? For once let me behold Thee." Softly I call Him, and loudly I shout for Him; in all manner of forms I invoke His presence,—by night and by day, and from the depths of a weeping heart yearning for Him.

KANGALINI

But no more for me His vision comes, and bereft of
Him the world is dark.

Now in ceaseless quest of Him, I drift through this
world in grief and tears.

“Hear thee, maiden” a voice says; “For man’s
final weal, thus He makes Himself scarce; and for ever
plays a game of hide and seek.”

KULA-KAMINI

(कुलकामिनी)

Kula-Kamini is the Hearth-bound Maid, tied to her home and to her kith and kin with all the obligations of such a one. But even from her very childhood she was God-conscious in some vague way and, as she grew in years, this consciousness came to have a strong sway on her until she was seized by a passion to have a sight of Him. She takes to prayers and reads the scriptures and other holy books. Her faith in His existence is strengthened and she receives a message in course of her meditations to beautify herself so as to be acceptable to her Lord, This set her doing it and after many sore trials, during which she hovered between faith on one hand and fear and distrust on the other, she at last had a clear vision of Him,

In childhood wed, my lord unseen,
Oft I had heard of him
But never seen.
In course of time
When youth was budding,

KULA-KAMINI

His thoughts would come
Stealing into my mind,
Till, obsessed, my mind was mad
For a touch with him,—my lord.
In other lands he dwelt,
Far or near, I little knew ;
Helpless I drift from shore to shore,
With none to feed or clothe,
And far less the right road to show.
Now engaged in sports of youth,
He would be off my mind ;
And now again for naught but him
My heart a place would find.

Despair-seized and bereft of shame,
I ask of all I met,
Which way to go, which road to take,
And many an answer get.
Such diverse ways and devious roads
Were shown to me or said,
Enough they were to drive me mad,
A helpless hearth-bound maid.
By drugs and charms, would whisper some
My lord might yet be found,
And the secret ways to it they taught,
Which painfully I pursued.
By fasts my frame I wither,
My lips with Mantras quiver,
Then like a Yogin I sit,
Performing many a feat.
Even so, my mind would wander
On endless roads and waver.

“My lord a snake ?”— the question came,
 Could he be charmed by Mantras’ spell ?
 And could he, the stronger of us two,
 By a paste of sandal on the nose,
 Or vermilion mark on th’ brow
 Be conquered like a foolish foe ?”

“Never”, thought I, and laughed.
 One averred that I must shout
 ‘Haribole’ ‘Haribole’ day and night,
 And he would come within my sight,
 All-helpless at my call.

So his name I take
 And the beads I count,
 But impatient of the number left.

And, as the beads go round
 And his name I mutter,
 My lips feel parched
 By this forced method.

Again in mundane matters merged,
 Machine-like the beads go round,
 From habit formed by practised hands,
 Like parrots taught to talk.

And while his name I take,
 Others come to make

A claim upon my mind,—
 And faithless and fall’n I feel.

If with his name my heart would melt
 Then could I truly be called his maid.

In arid spirit, with parched lips
 His name to take, I thought, was sin ;
 ’Twas crime forsooth to make pretence,

And make a show of calling him.
 But so it was. With rules relaxed
 I called for him when whim would seize.
 In lonely corners, lonely hours,
 Unheard of all I shout for him ;
 No answer comes, no sign or sound,
 No respond aught I ever found.
 Yet there was bliss and rapture sweet
 In thoughts of him that ruled my heart.
 'Twas sweet to think, to dream of him,
 And cry at times in fits of whim—
 "O Darling mine, dost thou not see
 How I do drift from beach to beach ?"

At times again I thus commune :—
 "To know my woes my friends presume ;
 They come to soothe a bruised heart,
 With best intent they play their part ;
 But they themselves have endless woes,
 How could they hope to heal my sores ?"

Then unto him anon I cry :—
 "Tell me, art thou or art thou not ?
 Vouchsafe thine answer, 'Yes' or 'No' ;
 And if thou dost choose to vanish then,
 With thine answer treasured in my heart
 I'll walk the world in weal or woe.
 If only some sign of thee I find,
 I'll mutely bear any sorrow.
 A thousand years I'll wait for thee
 To come my way some day.
 For once a word vouchsafe.
 A tendril of hope fasten'd to the skies,

And to its end I cling,
 Ever swinging to and fro,
 And ever fearing lest it snap.
 O how long shall I thus endure
 Battered by blasts of doubts and fears

* * *

One came, a companion true and dear
 With smiling eyes she asked :
 " What thoughts absorb thy mind ?
 Any news from thy lord ?
 Any stealthy call he made ? "

Another came, and boring said :
 " Nor Lord nor Master have we.
 With knowledge and wisdom gained
 Thou shalt soon come to see,
 Delusions of a dream are they "

To her I answering said : " If a Lord
 And Master I seek and own,
 Thy path I do not cross,
 Nor wrong to thee I do.
 What use will knowledge be to me
 If such knowledge find him not ?
 He is or he is not ; mine own
 He may or may not come to be.
 Yet in quest of him from wood to wood
 I shall not cease to run,—
 With sea-shell rings my ears adorned,
 A Yogini,—forsaking all.
 Finding him, perchance,
 My burning heart will cool ;

And failing, if I must,
 No harm can come to me.
 For I shall stay what I am.

* * *

A lonely corner, again, I seek,
 And cry aloud in anguish deep :
 " My lord, my lover, come to me ;
 Canst thou not see a lonesome maid
 That's wearied in pursuit of thee ?
 Canst thou not feel or pity take,
 And once to her thyself reveal ?"

* * *

Again, deck'd in my raiments best,
 Vermilion put upon my head,
 Wistfully watching the long road,
 A vigil lone I keep and wait !
 And ever watching, ever weeping,
 My sight gets dimm'd and all grows dark ;
 Then to my desolate rooms I wend,
 And on the floor my scarf I spread ;
 And while thereon I lie to weep,
 Outwearied, I am seized by sleep.
 In sleep a vision fair I see :
 Warm with love he is clasping me.

* * *

(*The Dream*)

Like a flash he came,
 His arms outspread ;
 My face he kissed,
 And then he fled.

To his bosom he held me
 A moment, and 'twas done ;
 Before I opened my eyes,
 The vision dear was gone.

As drowsy sleep had blurr'd my eyes,
 His face I could not see ;
 He had but touched and palsied me,
 And stolen something from within.

* * *

Delirious-like I felt for days,
 Now thinking 'twas all true ;
 Then, No ! A dream I thought was i
 My frenzied mind's issue.
 Now floating on a blissful sea,
 Anon in tears I rue.

* * *

(*A Message from her Lord*)

It seemed some thought to me he gav
 (Who indeed could explore His mind
 Or had someone, on kindness bent,
 All my woes to him confided ?
 For soon he sent me clothes, to deck
 My limbs, and lovely powder red,—
 The seal and sign of a wedded wife,—
 And jew'ls and pearls of diverse kind
 And books to read, and pen and ink,
 Broad hints,—for me to learn to writ
 And read, to illumine my mind
 And thus, with him a contact find.
 Again I doubt and ask,—'What proo
 Is there 'twas he that sent ?

Was it some imp had played a trick,
 To cheat and fool me in his name ?'
 Besieged I was by friends and mates,
 To know the message I had got.
 Some were well pleased, but others said
 It was not real, 'twas all fraud.
 While a few rejoiced, others mocked :
 "Spurious treasures these" they held,
 "Thou hast no one to send thee clothes,
 "Nor jew'ls nor pearls : thou hast them forged !"
 Their gossip often pained me much ;
 But soon I ceased to care for it,
 When to a lonesome place I slide,
 And to a friend my griefs confide.

* * *

Eager and expectant, the parcel of books I open.
 And lo ! What do I find but scriptures of kinds, holy
 texts of saints and sages of old. And as over them I
 pored, between the lines I found a letter from a lover
 to his beloved which none could decipher but those
 who sought.

* * *

Sweet was the sister who about my person my new
 raiments draped. "Look thee in the glass" sayeth she :
 "What a lovely change over thy whole mien has come."
 On my head the vermilion spot with smiling lips and
 trembling hands she puts. "From this day forth" quoth
 she, "thou shalt be His ; I have marked thee as His
 own ; worship Him now and through ages unborn."
 And as a veil over my face and head she drew, "no
 harm from now, on thee shall fall," she said ; "from evil
 looks and lustful eyes thou art now safely screened."

To think that he had sent the letter
 In secret leaped my heart with joy.
 Was it quite true that he had written?—
 Or was it someone in his name
 Had sent it as a mere decoy?
 As thus some doubts arise in me,
 Fast flow the tears from both my eyes;
 They raise the veil of clouding mists,
 And soon all doubts and fears are gone.
 My lord, I mused, had thought of me,
 In secret he had sent his note,
 How kind of him, how sweet to read!
 I kissed it oft, I kept it hid.
 Oh, what a fervour in that letter,—
 As though for long had he and I
 Been friends and quite familiar.
 In every line that he had wrote,
 In every word of the books he sent,
 He had so glaringly proclaimed
 That stranger none he was to me
 But that ever he was my own.

* * *

(*The Love-letter from the Lord*)

"As I cannot in person come,
 These lines to thee I send
 To guide thee through the world.
 If jew'ls to wear does please thy heart,
 These I can soon transmit;—
 If me thou seekest, nothing aught,
 Soon by thy side I myself shall be.
 As thou wilt be, the same to thee,

Shall I in shape or merits be.
 When for my vision thou shalt pine,
 Thou shalt for sure have presence mine.
 In the long dim past when the world was born,
 Thou and I were two in one ;
 The same to be my heart doth yearn,
 To make thee friend or kin again.
 Not more to thee can I now say,
 In course of time thou wilt know me."

Sweeter than honey was the letter.
 Light on me dawned : he seemed so near.
 "Is it then he my lord, my lover,
 Whom language failed his love to say ?"
 As thus I mused, my heart in joy
 Did leap and bound. With arms upraised
 I dance, and cry by day and night
 'Hari-bol Hari' with all my might.

I dance and cry,
 And dance and cry,
 With tears of joy,
 I knew not why.

* * *

To my companions, when they came, my lord's letter I gave. "Why," they say, "thy lord is at the door. If only thou seekest him now, he can leave no more."

To them I answer :—"Sisters dear, have I in earnest sought ? If only a little deep you think, the mysterious meaning of his words shall to you appear. 'As I shall be, so will he be also', he says. And see you not all how unclean I am ? If I call him now, perhaps with dust and ashes smeared he will to me appear. Qualities

as I have none, if I do seek him now, a lord I shall have with no quality to call his own. So, rather than seek him now, to devotion first I should attend, striving to make myself and him beautiful to behold. Devotion will make me sweet, and a sweet and loving lord I shall have. A beauteous bride a beauteous lord obtains.

* * *

Now in a lonely place I sit, and his face I draw. Intently I look at it; then with reverence meet I draw his feet, and fall at them and roll. Hideous if the picture is, I wipe it off in grief. Thus I draw and wipe, and again I draw, and night and day beguile.

My lord and lover! To my heart's content I draw his picture, and adorning it, I adore.

Before me I place it, my eyes feasting on it, my eyelids never dropping.

Intently looking, I am full of feelings, and the world I clean forget.

And the picture, as if with life endowed, me with loving eyes beholds.

Methinks with piteous eyes he looks at me, and for some words from his lips to fall, my eyes fixed on him I gaze.

But no words from them do fall, and my heart doth ache. Why, I thought, should he deign to speak, senseless as that I am?

With folded hands I pray to him: "Speak, O lord, a word or two, not more. Thou art my lord and I am thy ward, thy life-long vassal, I."

On tip-toe then my companions come and mockingly ask me thus : " The picture of thy lord thou paintest. Let us also see his beauty. Confide unto us his qualities and say how old or young is he."

To them I answer : "Do you not know that he hath said : 'As you depict so shall you see ?' Now prithee, sisters, see this picture and tell me if your heart it wins. Let me in whispers tell you this that my lord is young and sweet, his face is like the full moon, a joyous smile ever playing on it. Slender his waist, a wreath of wild flowers round his neck, his lotus eyes casting a loving glance, nose and forehead with sandal painted,—forsooth he doth steal my heart. And grace and sweetness from his holy person like honey trickle sweet.

"Of my lover what shall I say ? My eyes have seen him not. 'Tis but a picture I draw of him, as in my solitude it is caught. 'Tis but a mental portrait of his, earnestly in solitude wrought.

"Said to be supremely beautiful by people far and near,—if he should ever deign, remembering me lucklessborn, to come to me, then you shall know what his beauty and what his virtues be."

* * *

The Bakul was in bloom and in its shade I sit, a lotus stem for a pen between my fingers caught. And from the eyeblack which my eye-lids decked, with dew-drops mixed, an ink I make wherewith to him I write my chit :—

"With my companions walking from wood to wood, gathering flowers with hope and joy, for whom and how long can I my garlands make ? Thy advent expecting,

KULA-KAMINI

ever I keep making them, and ever failing to find thee, in the Jamuna I fling them. And daily and nightly goes on the game.

“ I spread a bed of flowers for thee ; and lighting my lamps, with incense burning, pass restless nights awake. But all in vain ! For thou camest not.

“ Come my lord, thy wiles forsake, I pray. My life, my all to thee I shall unstintedly surrender as thou and I shall sport all night and day.

“ Wouldst thou be pleased to see me dance ? My face from view partly veiled, my steadfast eyes on thine orbs fixed, nor shame nor fear shall hinder me from dancing to thy pleasure. If sleep thy drooping eye-lids close, with my mantle ‘ breezing ’ thee, many a yarn I shall spin for thee, while thy head on my thigh shall rest. Pillows filled with Rashes sweet on thy bed shall be spread. And to my heart I shall keep thee pressed, while thy languid limbs shall have their rest.”

(*A Stranger's Advent.*)

Then came one*, unknown to me, some kinsman of his he seemed to be : father, brother or vassal true. If I ask him,— “ But who art thou ? ” he only says “ I am his own ”. And more than this does not betray. Close by me he always moved, of my lord he ever spoke ; but though so close he always lived, his face I could not behold.

“ Harken, love-lorn maiden mine,”

He tells me once, “ this lord of thine

* Some Apostle of God.

Is hard to those he calls 'his own',
 Various pains he gives them oft."
 As from the blue the bolt doth come,
 So did his words on me descend :
 My lifelong hopes and dreams were gone.
 Was it to suffer I was born ?
 To suffer pain and pain alone ?
 Is it that I have none my own ?
 Do I drift thus destiny-borne ?
 Struck down by grief in pain I rose,
 Hands folded to the skies I look'd,
 And the unseen Providence thus reproved :

"I was by Thee to cruel hands consigned. For what dire offence or failings grave I know not, Thou didst bring me into this world. Born a helpless maid, to vile hands bequeathed, what if he broke her head, with none to raise an arm for her and none to save but her lord alone ! And if her lord proved cruel, where on earth could she repair ? What meanest thou, O Lord, by this creation Thine ?" Crying thus, my senses soon I lost, and these returning, by my side a sister and at my head the stranger in surprise I saw. And 'twas he that spoke in sweetest words consoling :—

" 'Tis not a cruel lord thou hast, but kind.
 Cruel he looks, a loving heart hath he.
 Forget thou not what he once wrote to thee,
 ' Like shalt thou find him as thyself shalt be '."

My heart was lightened, my mind relieved ;
 My way to win, I thought, was this :—
 Sorrow to none I was to give,
 If I were kind, so would he be.

And only then my claim, to be
 A partner true, a part of him,
 Could on an honest basis rest.

Into my ears he whispered then :
 " Listen to me, thou lord-devoted,
 Supreme of beauty is thy lord,
 While thou art ugly and deformed ;
 How can he then accept thy hands,
 When some, his own, are fairer far ? "

The while these words fell from his lips,
 With bitter tears my face I laved.
 If me so ugly he won't lift,
 Who else would have me, shelter give ?
 He smiled and said, " Love him thou well,
 Then und'r his roof he'll keep thee safe,
 And in his heart give a lasting place."
 Such place to have ! It made me vain ;
 He pricks me then and gives me pain.
 And thus it was that, when I loved
 A being* that was near my heart,
 A hand unseen him rudely snatched
 And caused a void which made me mad.
 For long I dwelt in sorrow drowned,
 And tears flow'd forth like streams undammed :
 My mind impure, my limbs unclean,
 My sins so many,—seen, unseen !
 But these with sorrow's tears were washed,—
 The heart was cleansed, my vision cleared.
 But oft the sorrow came to sway,
 When he would take it half away.

* Some near and dear one of this world.

Thus I passed through many a day,
 'Tween faith and doubts and sore dismay.

At last by steps some solace came,
 I felt like purged and freed from shame.
 'Twas then he came and held my hand,
 "Come" said he "I'll show thee thy lord."
 In doubts and hopes, in fear and joy,
 Through dense dark wood, by meandering paths,
 I followed as he led along ;
 Till at long last he sudden turns
 And throws me in a thorny copse,
 While he in hiding sought retreat ;
 And I in anguish wept and shrieked.
 But soon methought I heard his cry,—
 "Come and show me thy bruised feet
 I'll pluck the thorns and give relief."
 Whereon I made him quick retort :
 "No more by thee shall I be dodged ;
 Leave me alone for good or ill,
 Thy ways are such as don't appeal."

He left me not, but off and on
 He played his pranks and had his fun.
 He would, for instance, 'long my road
 Dig a deep pit and hide with dust ;
 And, as from Jamna's bank I come
 With pitcher full of water home,
 Therein I trip, my pitcher breaks,
 He giggles unseen seeing my fate,
 And claps his hands in cruel mirth,
 While prone I lay upon the earth.
 He lures me to a lonely well,
 Loathsome and deep ;—in it I fell.

Then kindly he would pull me out,
 And smiling give a soothing draught.
 When, again, from afflictions sore,
 I'd cry and fear I'd live no more,
 He would laugh it away in scorn,
 And make me fret and fume and burn.

But oft again his honest face,
 And oftener too his honest mood,
 His charms, his grace and all that's good,
 Would draw me on to him apace.

Embolden'd thus, he seized my hand,
 And smiling coaxed—"Give me thy love".
 But sore repugnant, from his clutch
 I got my hand by force released.

* * *

He fled from me and left me lone ;
 And yet I felt he was not gone
 Much far from me, but somewhere near,
 For evermore he seemed to hover.

A luckless maiden, lord untraced,
 With none to guide and none to guard
 It seemed as though some danger lurked
 Not far from me, some phantom dread.

And oft when thus I felt oppressed
 With fears like these of vaguest kind,
 The stranger queer I was to find
 Standing before, to banish dread.
 My heart was soften'd. No more it nursed
 An anger 'gainst his conduct odd.
 Rather, as light attracts the moth,
 He drew me on to him,—from sloth.

Or as the lotus draws the bee,
So did his fragrance conquer me.

Till, one day, in a spot apart
I saw he sat ; his face downcast,—
Woeful and sad. His forehead on his hand reclined ;
And tears of sorrow trickled silent down his face ;—
Unseen by man. It broke my heart.
He seemed to speak unto himself
Words that I could not comprehend,
But once, methought, I heard my name
Half muttered from his lips did come.
Puzzled, I wished to probe his mind,
But ere I knew what means to find,
Lo ! facing me erect he stood ;
Grave, pensive and distressed he looked.

A minute I pondered and, resolved to know who
forsooth he was, I thus besought :—" Wouldst thou not
take me where my lord is hid ? For thou art a friend in-
deed. Tell me how and where my lord I may meet."

" Wherever he may be in hiding, there I shall lead
thee"—said he in compassionate tone ; and hope was
born again. His lead I followed, thinking or dreaming
I knew not, till before a concourse I came, of diverse
people, diverse forms. My heart beat in expectancy.
My lord I was to find in that motley group. " There is
thy lord " he says, pointing his finger at one of them.
O shame ! In fear, my hairs stood on end. Round his
neck a wreath of bones, and on his body ashes grey !
Despair clutched at my heart which burnt unseen,
when with a smile he says :—" 'Tis a grievous fault of
thine, an error grave, that thou dost close thine eyes at

mere sight of thy lord." "He" I answered, "in me doth reverence inspire, but to hold him to my bosom I truly fear. He that shall rule my life and shall be its lord supreme, must be such as in my heart I can enshrine, and then float in a sea of bliss or therein be drowned. This one, for aught I know, is some elder to revere; but tell me where is the lord of my heart, where?"

"Love-seized as thou art," he says, "fail not to see thy lord yonder where he sits: elephant-like his face, lovely to look at, his limbs so fleshy and strong. Come now, behold him face to face."

Grief-struck I answered;—"Hear me, Sir, no love subsists 'tween a man and a tusker. A tusker's charms have enthralled no woman. Their worth a female of his own species may rightly appreciate. To me, he alone is the beloved, seeing whose face my heart would leap with joy."

A sharp rebuke he gave me, mocking:—"Where can thy lord I find, who answers to the picture wove in thy life-long dreams? But there, look up, yonder there."

I obeyed. And saw women gathered there in diverse garbs, young and old, a motley crowd;—one with a flute and nude, another with sword drawn and hideous teeth, and ugly of form. Yet another was there with ten long arms. My breath was gone. "Can a woman's partner," in disgust I said, "a woman be? These be my mothers or sisters or some granny dear, while it is my lover and my lord I seek. Beguiled by hopes by thee begotten, often I forget my woes. Trampling the hopes, my heart thou dost burn and into ashes

reduce. Forgotten by my lord I am the most sorrowing on earth, while thou dost tempt me by promises sweet to take me on to him, and by ever deceiving dost hurt a helpless maid. Hard is thy heart."

Saying this and wildly weeping, there and then I sat. I sobbed and cried,—“I am dying, dying,” and ashamed, my face in my cloth I hide.

He ceased to laugh or speak, an aspect grave his face assumed. Awhile he seemed to reflect; then he spoke:—“Hear me, simple maid, thou Srikrishna-Seeker, thou beautiful as the moon, hear—whate'er I can to thee divulge. Truth to say, I feel some fear to tell thee that thy lord and I are both as one in form and face; 'tween both thou shalt find the semblance same. Raise thine eyes and behold me. See if this black face of mine wins thy heart and pleases thee.”

With a maiden's coyness my eager eyes to his face I lifted. O What a face was it of supremest beauty and those lotus eyes,—it seemed as though nectar celestial oozed from them. In vain to smile he sought;—tears like pearls from his eyes were dropping.

“Simple-hearted,” says he, “be not ungracious unto me; for, I AM THY LORD.”

With my mantle my face I covered. The life-long sorrows that in my heart were stored, all of a sudden surged. Restless I wept till before me He sat and caught me by the hands and thus implored:—“I am thy Lord, I beg of thee thy love. Hard though my heart, to see thy tears makes it truly ache. Wipe

away those tears, on me thy glance bestow and
 thy full-moon face behold. If in a thousand
 have erred with thee and caused thee pain, yet
 devoted as thou art, thy forgiveness to me, that
 thou canst not deny."

A dumb-struck witness to His acts, I gaped
 bear" I broke forth, while His hands I seized and
 bosom placed. "Thou art the Supremest, thou
 all. If Thou dost of me forgiveness seek, can
 slave in bondage, near Thee ever approach?
 as I am, lifelong years in my own sins I burn
 crown all, Thou seekest forgiveness of me, and
 Thou wert the sinner, not I. O how could
 torture bear! Such humbleness and lowliness
 else but Thou could show. With folded hands
 to Thee, for once leave this humility which
 my heart in twain. Born a weakling, evil prop-
 over me strongly hold their sway. Ever in error
 through my own misdeeds I drifted, till the shore
 now reached. Let me my heart unburthen;
 to my Lord was a sham, for in the heart's temple
 was none. 'Full of kindness O Lord Thou art
 oft like this I've said but it came from the lips
 heart, and ever in fear of Thee, my life was
 lost. 'Thou art or art not', 'life is unreal', 'sh
 or cease to be',—by doubts and fears like this
 life was swayed and failing to know and worship
 life's brief span is spent. If I had but known
 that Thou wert my Lord to adore, of supremest
 born, would I then have lost my anchor and
 from shore to shore? Or would I have s

Thee when life was young and at Thy crimson feet offered my life and all ?

“ Alas for the youth of life now gone, for the virgin vigour that’s in me no more ! In vain wanderings have both been spent, while Thou, my Lord, hast waited at my door.

“ This is the sorrow which bubbles in my heart, (whom shall I tell my woes ?) that whilst Thou didst in my bosom quietly rest, years unnumbered I spent in Thy quest, never suspecting, far less knowing, that there in sweet repose Thou didst dwell, till I had reached my journey’s end, too old and infirm to hold Thee firmly on my breast. In pain and anguish now, ‘Forgive me Lord’ is all that’s left in me to say.”

Gently He placed me on His lap. My tears with His crimson hands He wiped. “ Darling mine ” He said, “ to thee I shall a mystery unfold. If surest knowledge we did have, that whate’er we sought was bound to come, would it be ours to taste that joy which came when the sought for was our own ? Doubts are seeds which sprout into love and doubts are priceless jewels for man. If doubts and partings had not been, would the world have tasted half so sweet ? Here on my lap thou sittest now ; yet doubts perplexing will seize thee soon, and doubting thou shalt weep again.” And hardly had these words been said, than He had suddenly disappeared.

Little I know where He’s gone, leaving me thus to weep forlorn. Was it all real or born of dream ? Will He to me ne’er come again ?

PREM-TARANGINI

(प्रेम-तरङ्गिणी)

Prem-Tarangini is the love-smitten maid who had been seized by love for the Divinity early in life and she sought her Lord and Lover with all the fervour of her passion, ready to embrace Him and she had Him easily enough. Her only possession in the world, love, she offers to her Lord unstintedly.

In ambrosial bowers the bees did hum,
Drunk with the wine from flowers they sucked.

A simple maid was I,
No pangs of love I knew ;
To those bowers I stole,
To gather flowers alone.

Freely in gleeful mood,
In flowery woods I walk ;
I bend a branch of flowers
And hold it in my hand ;
Their perfume sweet and dense
My sense intoxicates.

With Malatis gathered
 A wreath I make ;
 I place it round my neck ;
 And in the nearby crystal lake
 My face I behold ; —
 Alone in the lonely wood !

My hair I braid,
 In it a flower fix,
 And please myself.
 Anon I uncoil the hair
 And let it fly in air.

* * *

Drunk with my joy and senses lost,
 While merrily I sing,
 My cloth would oft fall off my limbs
 Without my knowing this.

I knew not why, quite now and then,
 At myself I would laugh ;
 At times again
 From some unknown pain
 I would weep,
 Sitting beneath a tree.

* * *

Nor man nor beast had trod the wood,
 I walked alone in silent mood.
 But sudden I heard a stir somewhere,
 I felt the throb of some one near,
 As though in stealth, concealed from view,
 Some one watched me and my mood.
 'No harm' methought 'if I am seen,
 So long I do not look at him.'

Now I thought he was close behind,
 Again he seem'd as by my side ;
 But ever hiding from the light,
 He dogged but gave me no great fright.
 In absent mood I cast a glance,
 I saw a shadow near at hand ;
 Some one appear'd to walk unseen,
 For, close by me his anklets ring ;
 And as I turned my face behind,
 I sensed the scent of human kind.
 It seem'd as though from somewhere far
 The melody of a flute was borne,
 Such melody I'd never known.
 I turned to listen, strained my ears, —
 Soon to desist from it in fear,
 Lest I should meet some stranger there.
 Again I felt,—in spite of me
 My heart would beat to somehow see
 Him, who was thus following me.
 Askance I look'd but caught no glimpse,
 His nearness though I well could sense.
 A lonesome girl, no mate I knew
 Nor friend, but walked the world alone ;
 On me the puzzle painful grew :
 I knew not why some tinkling feet
 Were ever jingling in my wake.

* * *

The smell of Malati made me mad.
 'With whom to share the smell ?'— I asked.
 To sense *alone* can hardly please !
 I thought of him of the tinkling feet,

Of it I made a garland sweet ;
 But who was there to prize and seek ?
 If perchance I had met with one,
 Of loving face and pure of heart,
 For him should be this love-knit strand,
 He was to wear it from my hand.

If only someone I could find
 With whom to talk from heart to heart,
 With him would I then roam along,
 This garland he could rightly own.

* * *

In plaintive tune the flute was blown
 From far and near, by one unknown ;
 The forest rang in symphony,
 But he that play'd it, lay unseen.
 It struck the tend'rest chords of heart
 Which melted at its piteous notes.
 Beneath a tree I heard its sound,
 My ears were drunk, my eyes were drown'd.
 But, weakling woman, I knew naught,
 It seemed as though I something sought.
 The finest garland did I make,
 For him to wear and please to take ;
 On the nearest bough of Bakul tree,
 I hung it high to make him see,
 And — if he chose — to take the gift,
 Or,—crush it quick beneath his feet !

I left the spot and wandered far ;
 Returning, found my garland gone !
 But in its place there hung aloft,
 Another such but not mine own.

So fine it was so sweet of scent,
 The bees were buzzing, drunk they seem'd.
 Had he for me this garland made ?
 And was he pleased my wreath to take ?
 Boldly shall I his garland wear ?
 Or spurn it now to have it ne'er ?
 So, doubts and fears oppressed my mind,
 Lone, guileless girl, I felt like blind.

Anon I mustered courage high,
 I plucked the wreath from where it hung ;
 I placed it round my neck in glee,
 I knew not why it madden'd me.
 So frail it was, so strong withal,
 The noose I drew, it did not snap.
 And as I raised my head in pride,
 Behold ! he stood to claim his bride, —
 A youthful figure in gold and blue,
 Hair tufted, in his hand a flute !

Leaning against a tree he stood,
 He looked composed, in thoughtful mood.
 I felt so dazed at sight of him,
 His aspect made my vision dim.
 But when my eyes had slowly cleared,
 His crimson feet had then appeared.

Next his face and his lotus eyes,
 A lotus not yet fully oped,
 Golden anklets bedecked his feet,
 Ready as if a dance to give ;
 Slightly arched, a bough he held,
 And tightly girdled slender waist ;

PREM-TARANGINI

Around his neck a wild-flow'r wreath,
So full of youth, so loving, sweet ;
Dalliance seemed to play on him,
His dark-hued person full of gleam.*
I felt abashed to raise my eyes,
Lest they should meet those orbs of his ;
But escape from it was not to be,
My eyes met his before I knew :
His loving eyes of darkest hue,
Had held my orbs as fowler's glue.
His blissful look bespoke of love,
Which shot an arrow through mine heart.
In that moon-like visage of his
Some maid perhaps of sporting mood,
Had sandal marks frolicking put,
Which made his face like moon-light beam,—
Such beam as eye could hardly hold,
Like flaming arrow my heart it smote.
My senses left, my eyes rebelled,
No counsel would they care to hear,
Straight at his wondrous face I gazed,
Unchecked by woman's shame or fear.
His rosy lips had trembling oped,
As if he mumbling something spoke ;
What fell from them I failed to catch,
The Tamal's bough I helpless caught.
The ripples on his lotus-face
His many moods of mind displayed.

* Thus in the precincts of the human heart He gradually reveals Himself in form or qualities.

His tearful eyes bespoke of grief,
 His anklets tinkled at his feet.
 Then slowly, gently, on he moved
 Towards the place whereon I stood ;
 My heart beat fast, 'twas something queer,
 Pinn'd to the spot I could not stir,
 Though fain I would have fled afar ;
 His eyes had trapped me in a snare.
 My limbs inert, my heart did beat
 Like surging waves upon the beach.
 I trembled fast as there I stood,
 While he approached without a word ;
 My chin he held 'tween fingers his,
 On it he placed a loving kiss.
 The smell and touch which thus I got,
 Made me dizzy and down I dropped ;
 But in his arms my fall was broke,
 And in his lap I found repose.

* * *

I hied me home when senses came,
 A lonely corner sought alone,
 And there I sat and wept aloud,
 No solace could my heart uphold.
 My manners and my mien were changed,
 My nearest mates to know me failed.
 So fickle once and now so grave,
 With none I would a converse have.
 Somehow, it seemed, my heart was cleaned,—
 Through night and day in joy I cried.
 'Twas then myself I learned to know,
 Whom I had never known before.

'Twas then I knew that I had one
 To love me, and was not alone.
 A real home there was for me,
 It was not that where I had been.
 The sense then dawned that I was not
 Mine own, but had to him belonged.
 Each, it seemed, in this world had some
 Kinsman dear, to call his own.
 Each with him was somehow tagged,
 But I alone a kinsman lacked.
 And lo ! I now had him for mine
 To call my own, and cling to him,
 That I alone had none my own
 Like others, in the world below,
 Gave me more cause for raptures sweet,
 And drew me nearer to his feet.
 The topics of his name and home,
 They were so sweet, like them was none.
 Wherever he was talked about,
 Thither my feet had somehow moved.
 I close my eyes and look within,
 I see him seated on a throne
 Of lotus planted in my heart,
 The only kinsman that I had.
 To see my face the glass I hold,
 His moon-like face I there behold ;
 Ashamed, my face aside I turn,
 I look again to find him gone !
 Many a dream at night I have,
 With morning they are all forgot ;

In th' anguish of my heart I sigh,
 For him the heart doth ever cry.
 Unconscious I would often start,
 My mates then ask me much concerne
 "How very unlike what thou wert !
 What sorrow deep doth pain thy hear

To them I answer :—

"In the deep wood, O Sakhis dear,
 I've seen a youth with grace so rare ;
 I doubt if I may trust my eyes,
 It was a dream I think at times."
 "Why, Nanda's lad", my Sakhis said,
 "Hath met thee there in yonder wood
 We warn thee, dear, beware of him,
 To love him is to weep and grieve."
 Their warnings fail. The forest paths
 Again I seek, in quest of him.
 Like th' hunted stag, trembling and sh
 To right and left and back I look,
 And all the time 'tis him I seek ;—
 But sign of him nor trace I see.
 Seized by despair and sad of heart
 My lonesome home again I seek.
 To me no more the flute doth blow,
 The anklets' tinkle I hear no more.
 The flowers blossom as of yore,
 But me they give their scent no more.
 Dejected, at my window seated,
 Tears rolling fast adown my face,
 I watch the road with steadfast gaze,
 If perchance he should come that way

But seldom now his anklets' sound
 'Rum-jhum-rum' in my ears will come,
 I would then start and strain my eyes,
 Now I would see him, now he's gone !
 "In th'forest",—I was full resolved,—
 "My dear one must be found at last.
 If I should fail to find him there,
 My hearth and home I quit for e'er ;
 I'll leave my mates, my kin and all,
 In the forest I'll live or fall. "

What though this thought would cause some pain ?
 'Farewell' 'Farewell' said I to them.

* * *

It was the vernal month of May,
 The sun had shed his setting ray,
 A wreath of jasmine round my neck,
 And in my knotted hair a spray
 Of flowers white, perfumed and gay ;
 Upon my nose a flowery pin,
 My eyes painted black and sheen ;
 A maniac maiden, out I come
 Into the courtyard of my home.
 There, prostrate, first I bade adieu
 To hearth and home and memories old ;
 Then weeping entered on the road
 Which led into the forest-fold,
 Slowly through shrubs and groves I roam,
 Until I take my stand below
 A maddening Tagar full in bloom,
 That scattered wide its sweet perfume.

A weakling woman, void of shame,
 Reckless I had walked alone,
 In search of Nanda's playful son,
 Who had by stealth my heart forewon.

But ill I knew the ways and paths,
 So tortuous and so diverse,
 That were to take me where he sat
 Beneath some tree, behind some bush.

At times I thought I caught a glimpse,
 But ere I knew it, he was hid ;
 At times his presence sounded near,
 When th' anklets jingled at his feet.

Was it I saw him in a dream
 Which in my waking hours was born,
 And will he never really come
 In human and substantial form ?

Did that youth who seemed intent
 On killing maidens young in age,
 Lie concealed, to pounce on them,
 Somewhere in that forest glen ?

Around, no human form was seen,
 All was so still and so serene ;
 Within my heart a chord was strung,
 It poured a sad, dolorous song.
 The peacocks that were perched on high,
 And the wild bees, in chorus sang.

(The Song)

It was that dark-blue moon,
 Who arch-eyed smiled at me,

And anon a shaft was shot,
 That pierced through my heart.
 A hearth-bound maiden I,
 Love's pangs I never knew ;
 Alas for me whose honour dear,
 Whose life and soul,
 Body and all,
 Were stolen by that fine black boy.
 How beautiful he looked
 As before me he stood,
 And my life he took,—
 " Oh do not kill me thus !"
 My heart he stole,
 Then left me all alone !
 I tremble now from fear ;
 —While my elders reprove !
 Now with thine arms outspread
 Hold me unto thy breast ;
 Take me along in stealth,
 Make me thy sylvan maid.

As thus I sang, the air, it seemed,
 Was heavy with the lotus' smell ;
 My sense was drunk, I looked around ;
 And " Tinkle-Tinkle " came the sound.
 Behind the thick Madhavi tree
 He seemed to hide and hear unseen.
 For shame ! In hiding he had heard
 The outbursts of a smitten heart !
 Perplexed, I knew not where to fly
 Or what to do, I felt so shy.

The Jam'na seemed to beckon me
 In her watery lap to take,
 When lo! I heard the notes of flute
 Floating from off the distant wood.
 So longing were the notes, so sad,
 No woman's heart their call could thwart.
 'Come thou to me' those notes besought,
 As clear as words had e'er expressed.

The spot from where the flute was played
 Seemed so far and withal so near,
 Its echoes rang from wood to wood,
 It seemed to call from everywhere.
 The trees bloomed forth in ecstasy,
 The paths were wet with honey-drip.
 The peacocks wild and Suka-Sari
 Woke up to sing in symphony.
 The flute notes brought to Kingdoms three,—
 Peace, Good-will and Tranquillity.
 To me alone they brought no rest,
 So sweetly poignant was their quest.

Yet no sensuous notes had flown,
 As oft from lover's horn is blown.
 It was like sorrow's deep lament,
 Which through the flute had found its vent.
 'Twas the wail of a wounded heart,
 Some deep-seated grief to impart.

Whose love was it that made him mad?
 No loveless heart could cry so sad.
 A cruel maid she was indeed
 Who had thus made him cry in grief,—

PREM-TARANGINI

A cry that would the thunder melt,
Or on the flint would make a dent.
Perplexed, with folded hands I move,
Face lifted to the skies above.

* * *

Nearby was the Mother Divine,
To whose lone altar people flock'd
To crave of her the boons they sought,
Thither I went to make me heard.

With flow'rs and sandal at her feet,
I did my worship and besought :—

“Give unto me my lord.

Thou who dwellest in mother's heart
In guise of love, to play her part,

Give unto me my lord.

Thou who dost the famished feed,
With grains of which thou hast the stock,

Give unto me my lord.

Thou who hast fain to those in dread,
Ever counselled ' Fear ye not ',

Give unto me my lord.

Thou who art the world's saviour,
Thou who givest reverence meet,
My griefs assuage, and be pleased

To give unto me my lord.

Thou art to all a mother kind,
Hear thou a daughter's plaintive tale,

Give unto me my lord.

Dost thou not see this daughter thine
Has come of age and wants a mate,

For whom her heart doth pine away ?
 Save her ! She'll go astray.

For she was drawn by one unknown,
 Who stole her heart which was so lone,
 Whose form and face of liquid blue
 Had rent her youthful heart in two ;
 Whose girdled waist and lotus eyes
 And charms divine may cost her life.
 Distress untold will be her lot,
 If now perchance she find him not.

O Mother ! Give unto me my lord."

* * *

Finding me alone in that wood,
 Behind me softly he had stood ;
 Perhaps to ope his painful heart,
 Or hear what grief I might impart.

I turned my face,—to find him gone !
 He had hidden in the wood again.
 But again his anklets rang as yore,
 "Tinkle, tinkle," near my door.

To Mother then I baffled turned,
 And bathed in tears thus harangued :
 "What plight is mine, O Mother dear !
 He dogs me ev'r, and somewhere near ;
 But as I turn to say a word,
 He's gone and hidden in the wood !
 Ever eluding, ever near,
 A maiden's heart he's pleased to tear.
 Mother dear ! Me thy counsel give,
 And all my boldness pray forgive."

A smile beamed on the mother's face ;
 From her coronet dropped her grace,—
 Rare flow'rs, which with my hands outspread
 I seized and therewith made a wreath.

Then with that wreath I braid my hair,
 And into the forest repair.

Therein I wend my weary way,
 Encount'ring scare by night and day.

But when my heart is seized by fears
 His anklets' tinkles reach my ears.

And as I feel him somewhere near,
 Hope returneth displacing fear.

Wearied in limbs, my frame fragile,
 Beneath a tree I rest awhile.

The world seemed dark ; with head down-cast,
 I cry from the depth of a broken heart :—

“Alas for me that soared so high,
 To pluck a flower from the sky ;
 Who loved a lad to her unknown,
 And at his feet her all had thrown.

What though my love for him was true,
 He might spurn me wholly unmoved.
 High though his love's price I would pay,
 He may not love and come my way.

So handsome he, withal so sweet,
 While I so ugly and diseased ;
 'Twas vain indeed to long for him,
 Who was again so full of whim.

If slightest love for me he had,
 He could have never shunned me thus.

Ever so close by me he lives,
But never sight of him he gives."

As thus I wept and wailed my lot,
My ears his anklets' tinkle caught.
I raised my eyes, and full in view
Behold he stood, the Jewel in Blue !

* * *

'Twas clear as day that he had heard
The wailings of a bruised heart.
Ashamed, I turned and bent my head,
I drew the veil across my face.

Then vicious thoughts of vengeance vain
Suddenly filled my frenzied brain :
Methought he had not played the game ;
I'd turn from him, put him to shame !

I walked away and hoped he would
Walk in my wake as oft before,
Repentant beg of me my love,
And coaxing seek to win me o'er.
As thus in tempèr far I go,
The anklets' tinkle's heard no more.
No more I find him at my back,
Through tortuous ways and forest dark.

Despair-seized, within me I mused :—
"My loving heart he hath refused.
My life I shall now at his feet
Give up and take a vengeance meet.
The world will rightly him arraign,
For murdering a helpless maid'n."
Hardly these thoughts in me had been,
When in yon wood my mates were seen ;

Out they had come in quest of me,
 Fearing that I had lost my way ;
 Which true I'd, when the distant flute
 Had sent its echoes through the wood,
 Which I'd followed as one spell-bound ;
 And for my pains a phantom found !

My Sakhis came and whispering said ;
 " This plight of thine we know was wrought
 By th' mad pursuit of Nanda's lad,
 Of which a warning we had brought ;
 But all in vain,—for thou wert mad !
 Now tears thy meed and life is sad.
 Not yet too late for thee to take
 The road that lies so broad and straight.
 The tortuous ways do yet forsake,
 And to thine hearth and home betake ! "

Then in my mind I counsel take :
 " That day my heart began to ache,
 When I surrendered at his feet
 My life, my all ; he was so sweet !
 And loitered far for substance' sake,
 And yet at last he proved a fake !
 How happy in their hearth and home,
 The maidens young of Brindaban !
 They live, and go their daily round
 Of homely toil, by routine bound ;
 While crazy me, by fate was lured
 To love the lad who blew the flute.
 What gain for all my pains I got,
 Save that my home and caste I lost ?

Lo ! lifelong tears are now my gain
 A meet reward for love insane."

My Sakhis then this answer got,
 So anxiously which they had sought :
 " No more shall I be love-beguiled,
 Nor worship him, so hard, so wild ;
 Round hearth and home I shall now move
 The common life which all approve."

No sooner had I thus exclaimed,
 Than on my heart I saw engraved
 The moonlike face of gold and blue,
 Of him whose love had shot me through.
 The face was sad, the eyes in tears,
 He was, it seem'd, in mortal fears,
 Lest I in grief should him forsake,
 A sad appeal his eyes bespake.
 That drooping face, so sweet and meek,
 Spoke a lot and cut to the quick.
 Right there I dropp'd, my senses lost,
 Muttering,—' No, No, I will not.'

My mates, perplexed, had held me fast ;
 For long, methought, the trance did last.
 I sensed the smell of lotus sweet,
 And heard the tinkle of his feet.
 My Sakhis whisper'd : " Here's thy chance,
 Deign but to cast a side-long glance ;
 Behold who sittest at thy head. "

Why, it was mine own beloved !

* * *

Ill clad I was, by heat oppressed,
 I saw him askance at my head ;

To hide my shame I lay prostrate,
And drew my veil over my face.

But then the thought occurred to me,
That if I failed to speak to him,
Or took no notice there and then,
He might elude my grasp again.

Too shy myself to speak to him
I signed to Sakhis bid him sit.

“But wilt thou sleep,” they mocking said,
“With thy beloved at thy head?”

“I cannot rise” I whispered low,
“My limbs are aching, head to toe.”

My mates to him then turning said:

“Prithee, our Sakhi's plight behold.

Her fault forgive, if welcome meet
She cannot now extend to thee.”

'Twas then that, sitting near my head,
In accents soft some words he said;—
The first in time my ears were drunk
With words, like honey lotus-sucked.

“Her grief” he whispered “pains my heart”;
I hid my face much embarrassed.

Again he spoke and wished to know
What caused me pain and such sorrow.

“If in my pow'r it lies” he says,

“Her grief to heal or make it less,

I shall not fail to do my best

For one who seems so sore distressed.”

It cut me quick such words to hear;
He seemed disposed to shower favour!

“ To hearth and home !—and here no more,”
 I uttered loud in despair sore ;
 “ ’Tis useless tarrying longer here,
 When none is found my grief to share.
 My folly’s price I am to pay,
 I seek no grace from him that way.”

My Sakhis to him pleading said :
 “ Ah ! probe her sorrows, thou sweet-faced,
 Make out from her what grieves her heart ;
 Thyself and she must talk apart.”

“ Your Sakhi ” quoth the youthful swain,
 “ Seems to endure some mortal pain.
 But tell me, pray, what pains her heart,
 The cause thereof to me impart.”

To this, my Sakhis answered thus: “ To dedicate her unto Thee, O Lord, this youthful maiden we have brought. The finest garland she hath strung, around Thy neck to place it. This simple, unsophisticated maid we place in Thine hands, for thee tenderly to rear and protect. Innocent she is of love and its ways ; do patiently initiate her. Master-Lover as Thou art, many a rude shock Thou shalt have, when with Thine own great music to harmonise she fails. Oh then forgive her failings and sweetly bring her in accord with Thy tune.

“ The seeds of love in her have sprouted and she hath to Thee surrendered. Give her Thy embrace now with open arms and make her Thine own beloved, with wild flowers of the wood bedecked. And when Ye two, by love entwined, shall walk through this wood hand in hand, our eyes shall feast on that sight, our lips Thy glories sing.”

Turning to me they said:—"Rest thou here now, while we retire to let you two in secret talk and each ope the other's heart."

And as they were about to move off, I know not how I felt, half unconscious as I was. Perplexed, I clung to the mantle of one and cried: "Where, O where, are you going, deserting me thus, and to whom consecrating? Ill could I grasp the meaning of all that you said and my heart trembles in fear. With a stranger, his credentials unknown, you leave me alone. If he deserts me, what to me shall be the end, my hearth and home closed for ever, for the eternal stain I shall bear? Tell me who is he for whom I am to leave my lineage pure and my kinsmen; for have I not almost known the kind of heart he has,—the one with whom you leave me now? No, to my home I should return."

With this I rose and clung to my Sakhi's neck and wept. "Why, what ails thee?"—she asks and seeks in words like these to bring solace:

"Thou simple maid! Be thou consoled;
 In proper hands art thou bestowed.
 He who is thine, whose own thou art,
 When thou hast Him, what ails thy heart?
 Wash fast His feet with flowing tears,
 And with thy tresses wipe them dry;
 Let Him obtain deep in thy heart
 A feather'd nest, a corner soft.
 Live to find out what pleases Him,
 Then churn it well to raise the cream;

And on that nectar let Him feed.
 Life will then be withal so sweet ;
 And He will ever strike for thee
 New notes of love, new tunes of glee ;
 In seas of love you both will dive,
 And e'er in bliss and peace abide.
 When langour comes inducing sleep,
 On pillows filled with Rashes deep,
 Ye shall recline and keep awake,
 Or, held in each other's embrace,
 Thy lips on His shall kisses take,
 Thy eyes on Him shall feed and gaze ;
 While surging tears shall flood your cheek,
 And both will yearn to something speak ;
 But lips will fail to move apart,
 While tears alone will speak the heart ;
 His face thine apron end will wipe,
 And He will wipe when thou dost weep."

* * *

With words like these my Sakhis left,
 I sat confused with fear oppressed ;
 Feeling ashamed I bent my head,
 And o'er it threw my sari's end ;
 Then as I pondered all alone,
 If now I should not hie me home,
 In sweetest accents he addressed,
 Their music soft my ears regaled :—
 "List, youthful maiden passing fair,
 Give unto me a patient ear.
 Thou dost lay claim to 've read my heart,
 And thou hast judged it flint-like hard !

What then hath made thee tarry here ?
 Why didst not to thy home repair ?
 Who was it bade thee walk alone
 through forests deep of Brindaban ?
 Hast thou not know that danger stalks
 in these dense woods and lonely walks ?
 For whom didst thou this garland make ?
 Whose neck, I pray, with it to deck ?
 Would this love-threaded wreath of thine
 offered to him, he e'er decline ?
 Methinks drawn by his love and grace,
 His garland of thine thou didst place
 round the neck of him that dwelt
 ever in thy heart's temple in secret.
 When why this wreath of love, self-worn,
 ticks thee now as a wreath of thorn ?
 In vacant shrine, withal so clean,
 Hast thou the sylvan god had seen ;
 He found in thee a temple meet,
 Wherein he entered not to quit.
 Didst thou not from yonder goddess
 beseech a boon in dire distress :
 To give thy famish'd heart its food,
 To bring to thee thy mate and lord ?
 How hast thou sought love, its fruit is borne,
 How cause hast thou to weep and mourn.
 What thou'rt a maid of simple heart ;
 I shall to thee frankly impart ;—
 Thou shalt, for this thy love of me
 For ever weep, for ever grieve.

A thousand heartaches thou shalt have,
Thou shalt then much regret thy love.

I wander in the wood alone,
With none to love, no ties I own ;
Ever I hold my will supreme,
Alone I frame and shape my scheme.
Too oft shall I take leave of thee,
When vain will be thy search for me.
Alone in dark shalt thou then tread,
At every step shalt feel some dread.
Thou shalt then hoarsely cry for me,
But do not trust I'll come to thee.
As when ghee is on ashes poured,
No heat ensues, no flame has soared :—
So shall thy love's libation fare,
Thou shalt be singed, naught else ;—beware !

No boon can I to thee vouchsafe
Of loving ties or power or pelf,
For none of these myself I own,
I live a life so poor, forlorn !
If jew'ls and clothes do please thy heart,
From me so poor expect them not.
Quite the reverse shall be thy part,
For, if fell thirst or hunger tart
Me overcome, I'll turn to thee :
Thou must find food or drink for me !
As thus his heart he had revealed,
My fate unknowingly he sealed.
With lowered eyes, and halting breath,
I mutely took in all he said.

From veil-hid face I shot my eye,
 His face to see all on the sly :
 Like nectar sweet, that radiant face,—
 It seemed the moon had left her place.
 It took no time for me to know,
 His OWN I was, He was my OWN ;
 In life, on death's eternal shore,
 He was my OWN :—I knew no more !
 To Him were pledged my life and soul,
 For weal or woe, He was my goal.

* * *

Again He spoke, now kind in tone :—
 “ There's something more thou yet must know ”
 His voice broke down as if in pain,
 But soon He gently spoke again :
 “ Whatever thou art pleased to place
 In these my hands with love and grace,
 With pleasure I will take the same
 And gratefully recall thy name.
 But, this to thee let me confide,
 If frankness rude thou wilt not mind :
 I suffer from this fell disease,—
 No feeling does disturb my peace ;
 No flame, no anger, wile or art
 Ever affects my stoic heart.
 Tempest-tossed or drowned in grief,
 Thou wilt not fail to slander me ;
 But take my word, my heart will not
 Harbour of anger or rancour aught,
 And thou wilt sure my fault condone,
 When at thy feet I throw me prone.”

Askant I looked, His eyes were wet ;
 Who would have gauged how deep He felt ?
 His tear-filled eyes a question held :
 Howdid I take what He had said ?

By problems hard my mind obsessed,
 And now again by shame oppressed,
 My lips lay sealed, my throat was choked,
 My face was down and my tears rolled.

When at long last composure came,
 Shyly I spoke, my tongue was lame :
 " Enchanter Thou of all the worlds,
 Supreme of beauty, sweet of words,
 Whose countless merits steal one's heart,
 By nature gracious as Thou art,
 I seek Thy grace and ask of thee :
 Dost Thou not own love or pity ? "

I feared my thought too boldly said,
 And for His answer raised my head.
 Lost to all sense of shame or grace,
 His eyes I sought and lotus face.
 But ere I'd known my folly's height,
 Straight at me He looked and smiled !

" Dost thou not know," He questioned me,
 " The Shastras say I've no pity ?
 Quality, pity, tie or love,
 All such I am placed far above ! "

I felt such pain these words to hear,—
 I bade adieu to shame and fear.
 With joined palms, I gave the vent
 To feelings which were so long pent :

“Thou Sylvan God, I crave of Thee,
 Wouldst Thou vouchsafe a boon to me ?
 Thy Rupas' and Thy Gunas' charms
 I've tasted in all shapes and forms ;
 They all have drawn me near to Thee,
 But sense of touch was denied me.

Like light'ning give me once Thy touch,
 Like light'ning let it kill or scorch ;
 A moment let me feel the thrill,
 Let Death come then its lap to fill.”

With both my hands I sought the alm,
 In them He placed His open palm ;
 A shiver ran through all my frame,
 'Twas sweet to feel the soothing flame.
 That magic touch of His had sent
 A thrill I had not ere now felt.

Upon my head His hand I lay,
 Sufferings end, peace hath its sway ;
 His purple hand, so soft, so fair,
 My nostrils sense its fragrance rare ; ---
 Fragrance to which the bees will dart,
 Fragrance that melts a hardened heart.
 Maddened by it and reckless made,
 In petulant mood I thus upbraid :
 “I say farewell and beg Thy leave ;
 Two roads are open now to me ;
 One is to wend my weary way
 Back to my home to end my day ;
 Or forthwith court the cold embrace
 Of Death ; *his* heart will give me place.

Tarrying here is idle job,
 When life-long worship, fervent love,
 Have failed to make me fit for Thee,
 Thy love to win, Thy feet to reach.
 When budding youth had softly said,
 ' I had my lord in childhood wed ',
 I left my home and wander'd far
 In quest of Thee, with vague despair ;
 And when at last Thy face I greet,
 I seem to slip from off Thy feet !
 'Tis shameful I must worship Thee,
 Yet never close, but far, must be ;
 And,—as attachment Thou hast none,—
 Ne'er to possess Thee as my own.
 Through years unborn and ages long,
 Thee I may serve and sing Thy song,
 Yet kinsman mine Thou'lt never be,
 No tie subsist 'tween Thee and me.
 My love Thy heart will fail to touch,
 For Thou'rt above affection's clutch.
 My stock-in-trade is love alone,—
 Meek weapon for a heart of stone.
 Thou who art so supremely fair,
 Whose merits are beyond compare,
 If but a loving heart Thou hadst,
 Right at Thy feet I would have cast
 My life and all, and worshipped Thee
 Through times unborn,—eternity."

I knew no more. For, speaking thus,
 With orbs upraised, my sense I lost ;

And hopes begone, my limbs inert,
There and then like a corpse I dropped.

* * *

'Twas long before I sense regained,
And found me laid on a downy bed,
While music sweet my ears regaled,
I felt again like drunk or dazed.
Half unconscious, with eyes half closed,
I drank that song divinely poured ;
A ripple ran through all my frame,
On waves of bliss I seemed to swim.

(*The Song*)

Could He the great Actor hard or heartless be ?
Why in the universe reign at all the charm and beauty
we see ?

Why is a sweetness over it spread, like a lake of nectar
in the wilderness of a desert ?

He that conceived kisses and embraces,
And ties of love and tears in the eye,
Could He,—Kanhya,—be cruel indeed ?

He that gave man his smiles
And woman her coyness and sense of chastity,
Could He ever be cruel and heartless ?

And how couldst thou fathom His ways
Who hast in thee of love but a drop ?

The song went round ; it seemed to come
From far and near, from distant fields
And nearest woods ; the whole creation
Seemed to dance round in tune with it.

As sense revived, on a flow'ry bed
I found I had been softly laid ;

PREM-TARANGINI

And lo ! on my right I found He sat,
His tender glances on me cast :
HE, whom I had for long pursued
Through crowded world and lonely wood ;
And ever foiled, had caught at last
Whom I had dubbed "a stony heart".

His kindly look, His loving gaze
Spoke of much that remained unsaid ;
They gave my heart a softening tone,
My doubts and fears were soon begone.
Then He in soft and kindly words
Spoke,—and touched my tenderest chords :

"For long,—too long, I've stayed with thee
'Tis time I should take leave and flee.
But ere I leave I pray to thee,
In thy kindness, remember me.
A thousand heartaches thou hast felt,
Since youth had bloomed, in love-sick quest ;
But take from me this truth in trust,
That cheaply got is cheaply lost ;
That pleasure born of painful quest
Is sweeter far, than if thou hadst
All fulfilled, for the merest wish,
—From idle cravings, painless search."

He spoke no more, but touched my head,
And on it He a kiss impressed,
While tears of joy and grief untold,
Adown His cheek in silence rolled.

Then off He strode with hasten'd steps,
Tumbling, reeling, like one possessed.

PREM-TARANGINI

With arms upraised I shouted thus :
"My Lord, forgive Forsake me not.
No more shall I in speech or thought
Dispute the love which Thou hast got
For all who seek Thee not in jest,
For those as well who shun Thy quest,
—Thy love which we, so weak and blind
In life's frustations fail to find
And think, a cruel heart Thou hast ;
Forgive our failings, O MY LORD !
Await, My Lord, and leave me not,
With Thee I go, Thou Great Escort.
Thou art my life, my soul, my all,
Bereft of Thee, I die or fall !
A foolish maiden's fancies weak
Forgive, forget ; Thy pardon give ;
No wrath can find in Thee a home,
For Thou art Love and love alone".

* * *

Thus spake she, the love-smitten maid,
When all her doubts were laid at rest,
And fervent faith and love endowed
Her long sought Lord at last had found.
With shattered sails and rudder lost,
She'd drifted far, by tempest tossed ;
Till Hope and Faith, the twins, were born
And hand-in-hand had walk'd and grown,
And led her through the winding wood,—
Where her LOVER had waiting stood !

SAJAL-NAYANA

(सजल-नयना)

Sajal-Nayana :—Literally, the Tear-Eyed Maiden. She has by her devotions reached her Lord and in the bliss she enjoys in His companionship is ever in tears. Herself tearful, she pictures a sorrowing Lord, shedding tears for man's sins and sufferings.

What a fatal hour it was for me when Sri-Nanda's son I met, and ever in tears my days I spent !

Speechless, beneath the blossoming Kadamba he sat in solitude, on his left hand his chin reclined, face tear-flooded, eyes inflamed.

Seeing his grief, mine own I forgot,—such sorrows were his, it seemed,—deep and poignant.

Lest I should on his mood trespass, with silent steps I walked, and before him I stood. And powerless that picture to endure, with my scarf his tears I wiped.

My darling thus surprised cast a glance at me and lowered his face, ashamed. For the face was dark and the tears silent. My heart was broken.

Perturbed, I touched his head. "Darling mine," I said,—“My lord and lover! How impossible that thou shouldst have any sorrows to grieve thy heart. A bruised heart finds in thy name a balm; and one drowning in a sea of sorrows, when truly he seeks thy hand, on the very crest of blissful waves is borne. For one like thee to have an aching heart is strange indeed.”

No word escaped his lips; like a mute he sat. His eyes were wet; who could say what grieved his heart?

The gathering clouds on his face burst. Down his moon-like mien the tears rolled, large and pearly, on which reflected were the woes that surged within. Grief's very picture was my lord and ill could I guess the cause or bear the sight. Was it his heart was sore to hear my sorrows ever dinned into his ears? "No more" unto myself I said "shall I of him ask for bliss or boon, nor speak of sorrows mine, nor cry in grief."

With folded hands I asked of him:—

“I beseech, my lord, say what grief is thine.

Dark is thy moon-like face,

Thy flute is on the earth prostrate;

What grief is thine my lord?

Tears are in thine eyes,

There's tremor on thy lips;

What pain is in thy heart, my lord?

Thine eyes are tear-inflamed;

For whom dost thou weep, my lord?

Have I unconscious wounded thee,

That by tears thou reproachest me?

Say, lord, what grievous pain

Hath hurt thy heart
To make thee weep."

His lips parted ; he strove to speak ;
With heaving breast, he seemed to burst
And yet no words from off his lips
Did fall, to take the load away.
The eye-balls in his lotus face
Were drowned in tears that streaming came.

" Pray, speak, my lord, O speak " I said,
" Whatever thou hadst wished to speak,
I bow to thy lotus feet, my lord,
And pray that thou may'st freely speak.
If thy heart has a load of grief,
Let part of it be shared by me.
And if need be I'll weep with thee,
And with my tears shall wash thy feet.
In the sea of pathos hand in hand,
We both shall swim or get us drowned,
Thus keeping sorrows far from us,
And enjoy life's eternal bliss."

He raised his head and gently spoke :
" What is it, darling, thou tell'st me ?
My sorrows find no vent from me,
Nor them in other ears I din.
Tales of sorrow or anguish deep
I give to none,—only receive.
If I did my sorrows unfold,
Thou wouldst feel hurt like being burnt.
'Twill then be all the worse for me
To see thee sorrowing,—thou so sweet ! "

"No, No," I said, "I'm made of stone,
 Which feels not, burns not, does not melt.
 What shame! Thine own I claim to be,
 Yet wand'r oblivious of Thee,
 Seeking meanly my own kingdom
 Of bliss that comes from Thee alone.
 'Tis idle vaunt of love I make
 When my own grief I can't forget."

To this my Lord appealing said :
 "My darling sweet, my face doth sweat,
 Fan me please with thy apron's end
 While thy sweet face I may behold."

* * *

Sweet were His words,
 Sweeter His face ;
 And sweetest most
 His infinite grace.
 Tell me, my mates,
 If ever His debts,
 This life or next,
 I can repay.

* * *

Prostrated at His feet I pray :
 "My Lord of lords, be frank and say
 Why, why indeed this love of Thine,
 This tender care for one like me ?
 Unceasing why by night and day
 Thou thinkest how to keep us safe,
 Forgetful of our failings grave,
 Bearing our load of daily woes ?

We thought Thou hadst no woe or want ;
 What sorrow then doth ache Thy heart ?
 'Tis this which grieves me to my core,—
 Thy sorrow I can't gauge nor cure.
 How to love Thee, and how to please,
 By night and day I ask of me. ”

“ Oh darling sweet ! ” He's pleased to say,—
 A smile lit up His clouded face
 Like the moon hid by mist or haze,—
 “ Why does the mother love her babe
 Which might be deaf or dumb or blind ?
 Why is she yet to him so kind ?

Her heart has but a drop of love ;
 But who was it that gave that drop ?
 That love I have, you must concede ;
 Could I have given what wasn't in me ?

There are men in this world below,
 For others who their lives forego.
 The love by which they are subdued,
 From me they got, by me imbued.
 Can it be that my creatures own
 Merits which are in me unknown ?

My votaries in their blind love,
 With virtues many find me clothed.
 How would they feel if I were not
 Quite as good as their love had wrought ? ”

“ Do not by words like these ” I said,
 “ Avoid the question I had asked,

Tell me the grief that pains Thy heart,
 And makes Thy moon-like face so dark.
 What sorrow brings these tears to Thee
 Which break my heart and give no peace ?”

* * *

As I was fanning Him, His eye-lids drooped, heavy with sleep. My mantle spread out, I gently laid Him down on it, His head resting on my thigh as on a pillow. Tired out by weeping, soon He was fast asleep. His knotted hair I uncoiled. With the fan in one hand, with the other I smoothed His tresses, while my eyes feasted on His sweet smiling face on which played many a ripple which spoke of the joys or sorrows that surged within. He starts as in a dream and anon opens His eyes and smiling gazes at me. His lips quiver as though He wished to speak. Closer to His face and lips (what a fragrance there !) I bend my head and ears and hear Him say : “ I cannot sleep, I find no rest. Sing me a song, such as would soothe my heart and lull me to sleep. ”

Ashamed I lowered my face, for never before had I sung to Him alone but in chorus with my mates, my voice drowned in theirs. My face veiled, my heart beating within, my limbs trembling, I sang from out my heart, while tears rolled from my Lord's half-closed eyes, flooding His face :

(*The Song*)

“How shall I please Thee, my Lord,
 Thou sweetest of all, Thou of the loveliest face ?

What shall I offer Thee to please ?
 My only offerings are my songs,
 Songs of Thy merits numberless,
 Songs I have sung all through my life.
 A poor hearth-bound maiden am I,
 To Thee what can I offer, my Lord ?
 A love-threaded wreath of Malatis sweet
 Is all the treasure I've, my Lord."

With loving eyes, His orbs drowned in tears, tenderly He looked at me. A tremor ran through my frame, and there I dropped, my senses gone. These returning, I found myself resting on His lap, His kindly eyes scanning me,—and His velvety hands in nursing engaged. I sought to rise, but no, I felt so restful on that lap, so sweet !

"Rest thou here," quoth He. "Why, this is thy very own place. Ever at thy service, ever I am thine own. Take me not for a stranger unknown. Thou livest in constant fear lest I be displeased. How foolish of thee in thy humility to tremble in fear of me ! Could I have brought thee into being and nurtured with care,—to find fault with thee and cause thee sorrow ? Thou hast wept and wept for nothing and made thyself thin and pale, all in fear of me. When wilt thou know me, thou simple, silly girl ? I feel truly helpless with such as thee."

Quick as lightning I rose and bowed at His feet. "My Lord," said I, "give me a boon ; impregnate me with Bhakti. On Thy very lap I lay but it gave me no

peace, no comfort; it seemed I lacked something to make me happy,—the blissfulness that cometh from Bhakti. Supreme gladness Thou hast given me. But the beatitude coming from Bhakti has been denied. What sport of Thine is it, my Lord? For me, I have nothing to offer to Thee. A woman has no possessions of her own. All she has, all she calls her own, is her lord's. Whatsoever little I had, my life and my youth, I have to Thee consecrated, seeking no price for them. Yet I know not why I feel ever so uneasy and, lamenting my lot, spend my days in tears."

Once more He sought to elude me and smiling asked me to bring Him some food.

I went into the wood to gather fruits. Every tree was laden with them. Wherever I spread my cloth beneath the boughs, they dropped, sweet and luscious. For water, I went to the Jamuna, from where in a lotus leaf made into a cup, I brought it. These I placed before my Lord.

"So kind of thee," He said. "Come now, let us together partake of these." I sought to be excused, feeling shy to eat with Him. "Then taste each fruit", He said, "and give me such only as are sweet." I peeled each fruit and, tasting the skin, placed the fruit before Him. Partaking of a part He passed the rest to me, His *prasad*, which I took behind a tree, concealed from His view.

"Grateful thanks to thee," said He, "for all the pains thou hast taken to give me this sweet repast."

“My Lord,” said I in grief, “what have I had to offer Thee as my own? I am but a woman who has no belongings, save what her lord is pleased to give her. The fruits I brought and the water,—whose were they? Have I not sought to please Thee with Thine own gifts and how canst Thou be grateful to me? My one grief is that even Thine own gifts I have not known how best to use, with thine own bounties I have not known how to please Thee, and in shame and remorse I spend my days in tears.”

His lotus-hand placed over my mouth sealed my lips. “Darling mine,” says He, “dost thou know how ashamed I feel to hear such entreaties? We two by a strand of love are tied and 'tween us no entreaties find a place.” Saying this, He held me by the arm and led me into the wood, while the anklets rang melodious at His feet and the peacocks sang on high.

The bees, maddened by His fragrance, swarmed and hummed.

I lent my ears and thought they sang His name.

Under a tree He stands. The tree blossoms and flowers drop on His head. Lovingly He looks at the trees, whereon He sees the peacock and the Suka and Saree who sing His praises; and He beholds them with tearful eyes.

The peacock and the deer in pairs flock round Him, and dance in joy,—as though they had found a long lost friend.

Tears of love and joy are in His eyes. The proud possessor of all He had sought in the universe He seemed to be.

And as He proceeds, He holds to His nose a creeper's end where bloomed a fragrant flower. "Its fragrance", says He, "maddens one and draws one out of one's hearth and home." He gives it a kiss and passes on, embracing what next He meets, a plant or a flower, or greets a bird or a deer, loving them all and loved in return.

On His tufted head is a bunch of flowers waving with the gentle breeze, as He walks along, tumbling, exulting.

On yonder bough He espies a flower. He bends it low to my nose and says : "Smell it, dear, how sweet it is," while I simply looked at His own blue face, forgetful of the flower and fragrance.

"Love-blinded thou lookest at me," He said with a smile ; "or a beauty such as thou, deigns not to look at a face like mine. Come now, let us sit in yonder bower." And He made me sit on His left and poured forth the music of His soul :

"Thou art the golden lotus, darling,
 Full blown on a lake filled to the brim with love.
 Let me gaze on thee and fill my eyes with thy beauty.
 The lake is full of ripples,
 And lo ! there are now waves,—
 The ripples and waves which thy love hath raised ;

And now in this storm I feel like lost ;
 For on its waters I have ne'er swam,
 And untaught to swim, herein I drown.
 But ere I go, know that I am thine,
 And nowise less than thou art mine."

My apron's end thrown round my neck, with folded hands before Him I stood and implored :

"A shy and reserve maiden was I ere I saw Thee. Now my coyness gone, my sanity lost, a resistless current carries me, whither I know not. I feel like one drunk and reeling.

"Is it a dream or is it real that such infinite and abounding love Thou hast for me ? And wilt Thou not say, why ?

"And what can I offer in return ? And what the penalty if I cannot ? Will Thy love endure ?

"Thy tears I have seen. But, Lord of the universe as Thou art, all powerful, the supremest, wanting nothing,— Thy tears as of the poorest and lowly, and Thy sorrows and Thy heartache, these I cannot comprehend, a simple maiden of the hearth and home as I am."

Deeply moved, He thus burst forth :

"Hear me, darling, hear my woes,
 For once my heart shall ope.
 But how ashamed I feel
 My own weakness to reveal !
 And to tell thee why I weep :

I have no qualities
 As the wise men say.
 Yet thou weapest for me ;
 Yet for me thy hearth and home,
 Thy kindred all and lineage long
 Behind thee thou hast left,
 And trudged along with me.

That's why I weep with thee.

My mere name doth bring thee tears,
 Tears of love from both thine eyes,
 Could I forsooth be full of cheers ?

That's why I weep with thee.

In this world of weal and woes
 When sorrows seize thee for their prey,
 Thou dost not blame me for the same,
 On thine own head thou takest all.

That's why I weep for thee.

What pains do I not cause to thee !
 And yet thou wouldst fain follow me.
 A push from me thou receivest,
 And closer still thou comest,
 Thou, blind to others' faults !
 Daily and nightly thou weapest for me ;
 Restless I feel thy tears to see ;
 By weeping I share thy grief.
 So, in some corner hidden,
 By the busy and wise forgotten,
 I think of thee,
 Of thy charms and merits many,
 And, failing thy debts to pay,
 I soothe my burning limbs with tears."

He went on after a pause :

“True love and tears go together.

The sprouts of love are watered by tears,
Wherefrom groweth the tree of love.

When like me thou shalt be
Immerged in love's deep sea,
Thou too shalt weep like me ;
Unceasing tears shall flow from thee.

The streams of tears
Are like the Jamuna and the Ganga,
Wherein if thou bathest,
Thy sins are washed,
Thy sorrows end.

My dear ones weep,
So, I cry in grief,
All by myself in my retreat,
And get some relief.”

With these words He vanished, and I swooned until
you all came and revived me.

AN ASCETIC'S APPEARANCE

THUS each of the five maidens by chance at one place brought, narrated her own experiences of a quest after her lord. Hardly had the last of them finished, when that way came an ascetic austere, his head clean shaven, a loin cloth on his person, and the words "Hari-Krishna" imprinted all over his body. Struck by the vision of the maidens and the love and beauty they radiated, the ascetic stopped. The maidens bowed low and in chorus cried: "Sri-Krishna-bereft,—we are seeking Him in this wood. Canst thou, O Ascetic, tell us how and where to get a sight of Him?"

He scanned their looks and said with tears in his eyes: "Ye silly girls! He whom a thousand years of penance and prayers would not reveal even to the mind's eye, could He be found by threading garlands, pleasantly seated in a bower?"

AN ASCETIC'S APPEARANCE

Says Kula-Kamini: "Too well we know that the jewel we seek is not to be had for nothing. Gladly shall we learn the ways from you, and our very lives we shall offer as the price for Him."

The Ascetic: "By fasts and privations you shall emaciate yourselves; and then will His grace be on you. The more your bodies thin, the more will be His grace."

The maidens at each other looked. "Not so, not so," they exclaimed; "Ill can we conceive that if we give ourselves pains, He, with His love for us, can ever feel any pleasure. Tales of sorrows break His heart and bring tears to His eyes. Will it be really loving Him to cause Him pain?"

The Ascetic with an arch smile: "Forgo your fondness for your hair and shave your heads bare. Before the sacred Tulshi bow and beat your heads till they bleed; and then will Krishna, our Father, be pleased."

The maidens once more looked surprised, while Rasha-Rangini burst forth: "What?", said she, "what is it thou sayest? We must be shorn of our hair and there shall be no tress to plait, no knot to tie? Where shall I fix the Malati garland, pray? And where the sweet Champak? Too well we know the heart of Rashik Shekhar, the Arch-artist. He could never be half as pleased to see us wither away by fasts and privations as to see our black tresses rolling down our backs."

Says Kangalini: "With tears His crimson feet we

wash and with our hair we wipe them dry. What shall we wipe them with, if our heads we shave ?”

Kula-Kamini : “ Shall I by yogic asceticisms seek to capture Him who is not a stranger, but one of mine own ? I would win Him by service born of love, for He is no other than my Lover and my Lord.”

The Love-Smitten maid : “When pangs of His separation seize me, I uncoil my hair and its sable hue speaks of Him and soothes my heart. My hair shall not go.”

The Tear-Eyed maiden : “Too well we know His heart. If our heads we shave and loin cloths wear and look like sorrowing beggars, sure enough He will cry in grief. The tenderest heart hath He.”

Says Rasha-Rangini again : “Now harken thou, O Ascetic austere ! Grave doubts perplex my mind as to whom thou meanest by thy Krishna and what be thy relations with him.”

The Ascetic : “Ignorant as you all are, know that there is but one Krishna and not two. King of kings is He, supremest, all powerful, a ruler stern, pleasing whom you have countless wealth, and displeasing art distressed. What pains have I not taken to please Him ! And yet I feel He is not pleased, and live in constant fear of transgression of rules and rituals.”

Their faces brightened. “What thou didst say before”, they answered, “nearly took our breath away.

What thou sayest now brings us back to life. The one thou dost depict, whosoever he might be, sure enough is not our Lord. The One whom we own as such, our Lord Sri Krishna, is not a deliverer of boons nor punishments. His nearest and dearest kinsfolk are we, and whatever He owns is completely ours too. We hold the key to all His possessions. Why need we seek anything from Him? As for punishments, One whose parts and parcels we are cannot inflict any pain on us. If we are ill, not unoften are we given bitter draughts to cure us but not with a view to punish us or inflict pain. A surgeon opens an abscess with a knife. Who calls it punishment? Our Lord is all love, all affection. If ever He strikes, it is a favour done for our good. Such is He, our Lord, and He hides Himself in this wood. Pray, tell us, have you in your wanderings come across Him?"

The Ascetic shook as in doubts and fears and his eyes were in tears. "Whoever you girls may be," said he, "tell me more clearly what you all mean and describe your lord's features and give me a true picture of him."

The damsels' faces beamed with joy.

"My Lord", said Rasha-Rangini, "is the lord of this wood. Like the full blown lotus are His eyes and like the moon His face."

And all in chorus cried clapping their hands: "'Tis He, 'tis He indeed who has enticed us away."

"His merits are unnumbered. How shall I recount them?" said another. And Kangalini fell at her feet

AN ASCETIC'S APPEARANCE

and exclaimed: "Thou, sister, hast spoken for us all. How grateful to thee we are!"

The Tear-Eyed (Sajal-Nayana) strove to speak, but ever in tears, her voice was choked. The Love-Smitten Maid (Prem-Tarangini), in her love intense, clasped her to her bosom and kissed her.

The Hearth-bound Maid (Kula-Kamini), to give vent to her feelings cried: "For once let us all dance and clap our hands and in chorus shout—'Hari! Hari!'" And so they danced, their feet hardly ever on the earth, lost to themselves and looking like wafted to regions high with the music of "Hari! Hari!" echoing in the wood. And lo! the ascetic had sprung to his feet and he too danced, crying "Hari! Hari!", lost to himself.

THE DREAM ENDS

THE dream had dissolved. The Sadhu, now awake, pondered over all he had seen and heard. "I have known all" he communed; "Knowledge is mine now; but of what avail is knowledge if His presence is denied to me?" With eyes closed, he prayed in silence. Anon his eyes open, and then aloud, as from a heart cleft in twain, the prayer went forth: "Show Thyself, Thou Saviour of *Bhaktas*! Here I seat myself in yoga, invoking Thy presence, and here I remain fixed, until either Thou dost manifest Thyself or I perish. Behind a cover, unseen by us, Thou dost wait and see our plight, yet Thou wilt not step out to soothe. Its meaning beyond my understanding, fain would I ask, what the harm was in Thy revealing Thyself."

As with a mind one-pointed the prayers went forth from his heart, his vision caught a subtle beam lighting upon a pair of radiant feet; and then a flame of splendour as from a million moons which no mortal eyes could hold. Dazed by the vision splendid, he cried in grief:

“My eyes are feasted ; but arid as before is my heart, which Thy love alone could sweeten. Like a magician with his wand, Thou comest with Thy bewildering show which beguiles the eye but brings no love. Take Thou a form corporeal and appear ; then alone can I form kinship with Thee.”

Hardly had these words been said, when the flaming light resolved into myriads of arms and eyes and faces, all in radiance, all endless, infinite, beginningless. “Father dear,” cried the Sadhu, “forbear ! That form of Thine, supremest in its effulgence, sense-drowning, infinite, so unlike ours, would only make us fly from Thee in awe and fear. Cease from deceptions now and come Thou in a form to be loved and adored.”

The shapes and forms dissolved into a mass of glorious light. “Come Thou,” the Sadhu in tears exclaimed, “come Thou in a form to be loved. If mere worship Thou dost seek, take whatever form pleases Thee ; but if Thou seekest love, come in the form THYSELF hast given me.” The Sadhu’s tears dissolved the shapeless mass of light, the rays of splendour turned into water, replete with radiance !

“Come my Lord ! Awake ! Arise !” invoked the Sadhu, the earth and the skies resounding. The radiant waters in tumult surged. The waves rose high, resplendent in blazing hues, the skies above wearing cloths of gold. And out of the surging waters, multi-hued and glorious in their blazes, slowly arose a figure of molten gold and sapphire blue, glowing in His own splendour ! The waters calmed, the air a solemn stillness held. And there,—on the sheet of placid waters,—stood the Figure,

motionless and eyes closed, luminous, radiating!

The Sadhu, bewildered, with tears streaming down his face, viewed the glorious vision. Composure returning, with folded hands and trembling lips he spoke :
 "My Darling! My own Supremest! For once open Thine eyes, where, I am told, love hath its abode and let mine own be illumined by meeting Thine." A gentle tremor seized the Figure. It seemed to breathe and come into life. Then slowly the eyes opened as in a trance. Anon they were life-like, and straight they met the Sadhu's. Dazzled by the glamour, ill could he hold the picture divine. Resolutely he clung to his senses lest they forsook him. Then, as with an effort supreme, he addressed the Deity :

"Is it Thou, my life-long Friend ?
 Art Thou He, the Fount of kindness ?
 Is it Thou who madest me ?
 Art Thou He who from His fountain deep
 A drop of affection took and into my heart instilled ?
 What a glorious day for me it is
 When Thou and I have known anew !
 Have my austerities brought their fruit ?
 Speak, my Friend, I feel like mad. "
 HIS lips moved as if to speak ;
 With loving eyes He viewed the saint.
 He paused as if to think awhile,
 And then He spoke with smiling lips :
 "Ask of me the boon you wish,"—
 Words which dropped like music sweet ;
 The Sadhu's ears were nectar-steeped.

Said the Sadhu : "What boon is there left to me to

ask, when Thou hast to me bodily appeared? No desire is left in me for power or pelf. Grant unto me this boon that Thou and I may never part. That is the boon I seek."

With tender eyes the Enchanter of the world viewed the saint, His eyes filled to the brim with tears that spoke of love. And as each faced the other, unceasing tears down His face in silence rolled. He wiped those tears and His silence broke: "At last, at long last have I in your remembrance found a place. Not for a day did I forget you and for many a long day have I wistfully waited on the road, for you to come my way.* In vain have I ransacked the world to find even one who sought me out of love alone. Great luck for me, that you should choose to be my constant mate. You little know how lonely I myself feel, after having given unto you and others kith and kin in abundance. When you are with me, we shall be two and our days will glide away in bliss and converse sweet. Tell me now, how related you should be to me; for I shall be unto you as you shall choose."

Lost in joy, the Sadhu muttered: "What can I say? My faculties fail. 'Tis better that Thou shouldst say how we shall stand."

And to this the Deity: "Ye are all mine own, my own kith and kin, nearest and dearest, whether a father or a child, a brother or a sister, a husband or a wife, or a friend in the long walk of life, just as it pleases any of ye to be, and as each shall please to make me, so shall I be."

The Sadhu: "Say, my Lord, say Thy say. Too blind am I to see my way. Whatever Thou art pleased

* Please turn to the Introduction for His lamenting song.

THE DREAM ENDS

to be unto us, so shall it be. But I would rather I had not to call Thee a father or a mother, as the love that is of a son to them is not the love which my heart needs to quench its thirst."

The Deity : " 'Twas I who brought thee into being, myself lying somewhere hidden and obscure, shapeless, inert, forgotten. By incessant crying thou didst wake me up and drag me unto thee and gavest a form like thine own. Thus was I thy own creation ; and so, thou shalt be unto me as a father to his son. Didst thou not say that the supremest pleasure would be thine if thou couldst take me in thy arms and tenderly nurse me ? So, I shall be a child to thee, and like a child, on thy breast shall ever have sweet repose ;—and gaze on thy face and follow in thy wake, never letting thee out of sight."—With these words, He took the Sadhu up in His arms where he became unconscious. Regaining his senses after a while, he found himself flat on the ground, with a Lovely Boy fanning him.

* * *

His features were like his own. The loveliest of miens had He and a wreath of wild flowers crowned His head.

"O my darling, my own beloved son !" cried the Sadhu, taking him up in his arms and hugging him on his breast, not knowing, whom he had got and embraced. And thus keeping him on his bosom, he hied back home,
*THE SWEETEST OF HOMES WHERE ALL
WAS BLISS AND PEACE.*

A REPERTORY
TO
IN QUEST OF BLISS

by
WANDERER

(To be had of the publisher of the book, Rai Bahadur N. Dey,
2-A Convent Road, Dehra Dun, for one anna postage only)

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Books by WANDERER : *In Quest of Bliss*, Rs. 2/- ; *The Quest and the Find*, 2/12/- ; *A Tune with Mira Bai & A Sheaf of Songs*, Re. 1/8/-.
 Sole agent of the publisher, Rai Bahadur N. Dey, 2-A Convent Road, Dehra Dun, and of the Catholic Press, Ranchi.