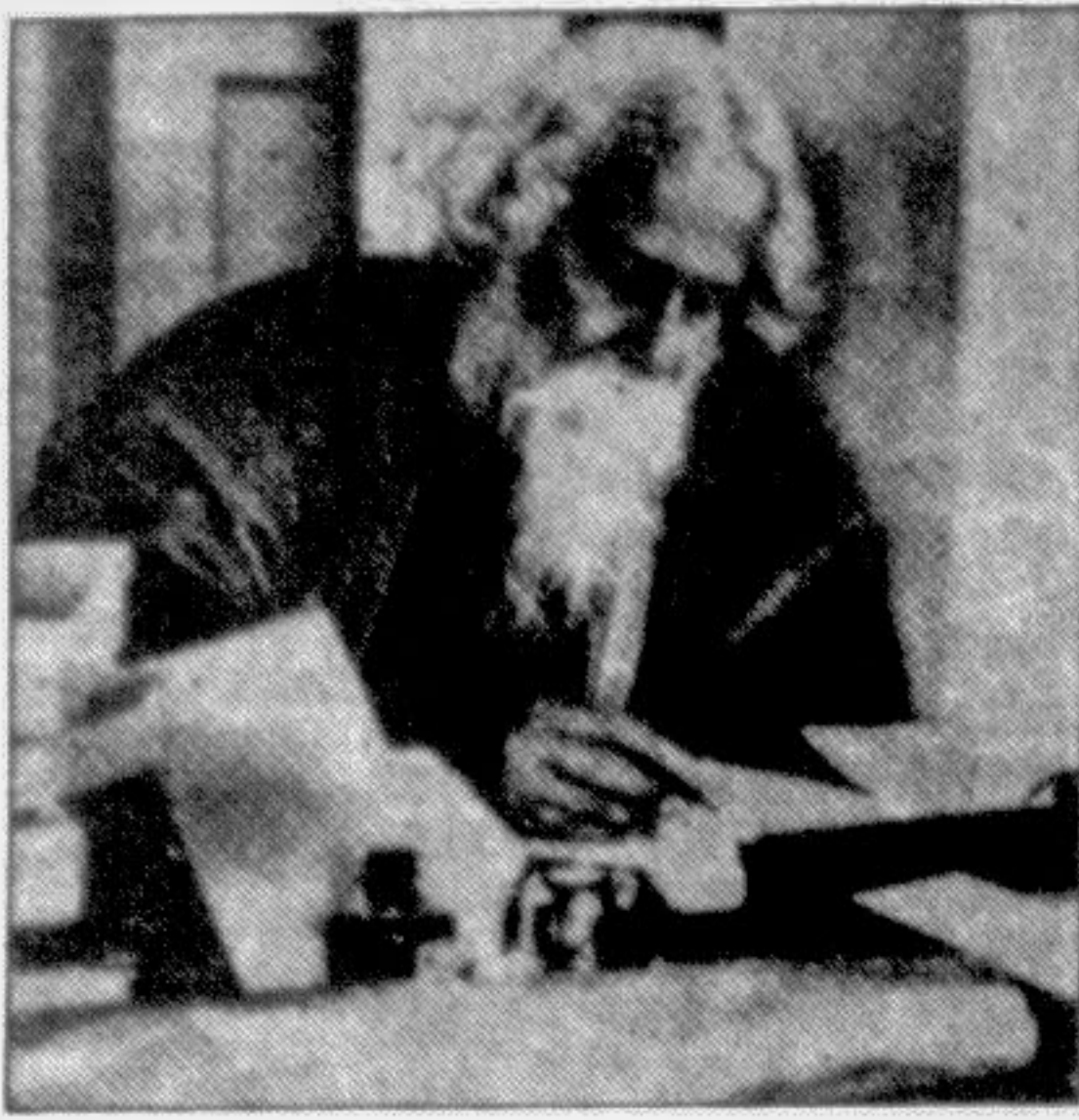


## Rabindra Jayanti Special

## A Bond of Melody



## Ami hethay thaki

I stay there only to sing Your song —  
Give me this little room  
In the assembly of Your world.  
I have not been of any other use  
In Your universe —  
This useless soul, it can only sing out.

In the night, in the quiet temple,  
When they worship You,  
Command me, then, my King,  
To sign to You. When at dawn, filling the sky,  
the lute will play Your song,  
Give me the honour, then,  
That I am there.

## Tomai amai milon hobe

You and I shall unite —  
That's why the sky is full of light.

You and I shall unite —  
That's why the earth is blooming green.

You and I shall unite —  
That's why the night stays awake  
with the world in her arms,  
That's why the sweet-voiced dawn  
comes and opens the eastern door.

The union-longing boat floats on  
along the timeless stream,  
The welcome-basket gets filled  
with flowers from ages of yore.

You and I shall unite —  
That's why, through all ages  
underneath the universe  
My soul, in bridal dress  
Journeys forever to choose its mate.

## Shudhu tomar bani

Not just Your word,  
My friend, my beloved —  
From time to time  
Give my soul Your touch as well.

The (weariness) of the long road,  
The thirst of the long day,  
How shall I quench —  
I do not find a way.  
Tell me, O tell me,  
That this darkness is full of You.

My heart longs to give,  
Not just to take —  
All carries along with it  
All that it has gathered.  
Extend Your hand,  
Give it to mine —  
I will hold it, fill it,  
Keep it with me.

And thus will I make  
My lonely journey a lovely one.

## Amar na bala bani

In the dense night of my unsaid word  
The thought of you shines like a star.

Around the shadow of my desolate mind's forest  
Wanders the secret fragrance of the unseen  
flower.

The pain hides in the unshed tear —  
The unheard flute plays in the depth of my heart.

From time to time, unknowingly,  
I have gifted to you my song;

I dress the basket of my heart  
with play-flowers —  
I know not when you pick,  
choosing yourself.

In the unseen light,  
silently opening the door  
You leave the touch of your life  
on my deeds.

## Jotobar alo jalate chai

Every time I want to light the lamp,  
it goes out.  
The seat for You in my life  
lies in deep darkness.

The creeper that yet lives —  
its root has dried up,  
The bud grows only momentarily on it —  
it does not flower.  
My service to Thee, my Lord,  
is only in the gift of my pain.  
The glory of prayers  
The wealth of merits,  
None have I, none at all —  
This worshipper — he has come to You  
in embarrassed meagre attire.

In his festivity none has joined,  
The band has not played,  
The house has not dressed,  
Weeping, he has called You,  
and brought You  
To the broken door of his temple.

THESE translations of a few of Tagore's originated in weekly singing sessions in Geneva in the late eighties when I lived there. I used to translate the songs that we sang together, for non-Bengali friends (Pakistani, Kenyan) in our group. These were later polished up to share with a wider circle, and some more were added.

The purpose of the translations was to present as faithfully as possible the imageries of the original songs which it is the singer's task to create and communicate through his singing. These are, therefore, essentially a singer's translations. A Bengali reader may enjoy viewing the beauty of Tagore's lyrics through another lens as it were; to the

by Md. Anisur Rahman

Md Anisur Rahman, a renowned economist of the country, reveals yet another quality less known to many but highly prized by himself in that he translates a number of Tagore's songs — and that too from a singer's point of view. He is currently teaching at the Chhayanut Music School and is a vice-president of the Rabindra Sangeet Sammilan Parishad.

non-Bengali reader these are presented with a desire to share some more glimpses of Tagore's dearest gift to us, even if these present only their poetic contents.

In the selection that is presented, first, the poet solicits a little room in the

assembly of his Creator, to sing only. His songs in prayer follow, in which he longs for the Divine touch in his life and deeds, to unite with the Creator, to reach out to Him when struck by pain, and sees all His creations flowing toward Him for ultimate union.

The next theme is love, which in Tagore's songs is ethereal rather than sensual, exquisite in the artistry of its thoughts, complete in its surrender, sweetest when sad in separation and in a failure to communicate. Then two songs on the monsoon, Tagore's most favourite season, when incessant rain takes us to transcendental moods. Finally, the hour ends, and we have, all around, the lingering of infinite music.

Thanks are due to Professor Sanjeeda Khatun for pushing me to publish these translations and to Prof Kabir Choudhury, my sister Husna Jahan and my wife Dora for suggestions toward improvements.



## Megh bolechhe jabo jabo

The cloud says  
"I will go".

The night says  
"I am going".

The sea says  
"I have found my shore —  
I am no more".

Sorrow says  
"I stay, silent,  
as a mark of His feet".

"I" says  
"There is nothing more  
for me to long".

The world says  
"There welcome-bouquet awaits Thee".

The sky says  
"Million stars are shining for Thee".

Love says  
"Age after age  
I stay awake for Thee".

Death says  
"I row Thy Life-boat".



## Kal rater bela gan elo

Last night, the song came to me —  
You were not with me then, my beloved.  
What I had wanted to tell you all my life,  
Spending it in silent tears,  
That word — it lit up in the sacrificial flame  
of that tune.

In a brief moment of darkness —  
(But) you were not with me.

Thought I would leave that word with you  
When it would be morning, today,  
The abstracted fragrance of the flowers  
roamed around,  
The sky got filled with the chirping of the birds

That word did not find its chord in that  
symphony,  
Hard though I tried, and tried,  
When you were with me.

## Amare karo tomar veena

Make me they lyre and lift it up,  
O lift it up!

The strings will play out,  
Resonating in your lovely fingers.

Touch me on my soul  
With your tender lotus hands —  
The body will then rise up,  
Humming in your ears!

Now in joy, now in pain,  
It will weep, looking up at your face.

At your feet it will lie, in silence,  
When you remain oblivious of it.

None will know with what thrill  
its song will rise up to the great void,  
And the word of joy  
Will reach the shore of infinity!

Make me thy lyre and lift it up,  
O lift it up!

## Bani mor nahi

I have no words,  
I know only to lay my dazed heart, and seek.

I am the lightless dark night  
Gazing at the endless pathway  
in hope unfulfilled.

When you play your flute,  
Floating comes its melody  
into the depth of silence,  
Riding the bemused wind  
Traversing the sea of sleep.

I return to you the echo of your song —  
Who knows if it reaches the shore  
of your dream  
Riding the vast darkness!



## Ekada tumi priey

Once you, my love,  
Sat on the roof of my tree,  
Dressed in flowers —  
That, alas, you have forgotten.

The river that flows there, eternally,  
Has not forgotten it —  
In its flow is drawn, winding, your braid,  
On its bank are written your footmarks.  
Is it all a lie today —  
have you forgotten it?

The melody that you wove, alone,  
Day after day,  
Even this day it is spreading out, quivering;  
The skirt on which you used to weave  
The flower-lei, in the shade —  
The spring even this day  
Wanders, searching for its thrilling nectar-  
touch.

It it all a lie today —  
Have you forgotten it?

## Tumi rabe neerabe

Silently will you dwell  
in my heart  
Like the deep, solitary  
full-moon night.

My life, my youth,  
my whole world —  
You will fill, like the night,  
with glory.

Your tender eyes  
will stay awake, alone,  
The shadow of your veil  
will keep me sheltered.

My sorrow, my pain,  
all my dreams —  
You will fill, like the night,  
with fragrance.



## Ami takhan chhilan magan

I was still engrossed  
in the spell of dense sleep  
When rain came  
in the dark, deep night.  
The thick sky was in mad delirium  
on all sides,  
With srabon-flow pouring in a deluge —  
That day, in the dark, deep night.

My dream-self came out,  
Finding company in my dream-mate of afar,  
That day, in the dark, deep night.

It went beyond the bounds of my body,  
Got lost in the rumblings of the distressed  
woods,  
It merged with the scent of the wet jasmines,  
Along the grove alley,  
In the rhythm of the wild wind,  
In the serpent-like flashes of lightning,  
Dashing from cloud to cloud,  
That day, in the dark, deep night.

## Ami shraban akashe oi

There, in the clouds of the srabon sky,  
I have laid my tear-washed eyes.  
Awake are they, blinkless, all night,  
Gazing beyond the horizon of separation,  
Staring for the one gone beyond sight,  
Dreaming of the mass of her hair  
flying with the gust of the east-wind.

In the green Tamal wood,  
On the pathway along which she departed  
At the setting cow-dust hour,  
Pain is entwined in its grass,  
Trembling with the breath of its blades,  
Those backward looks, again and again, of hers  
Cling on to its shadows.

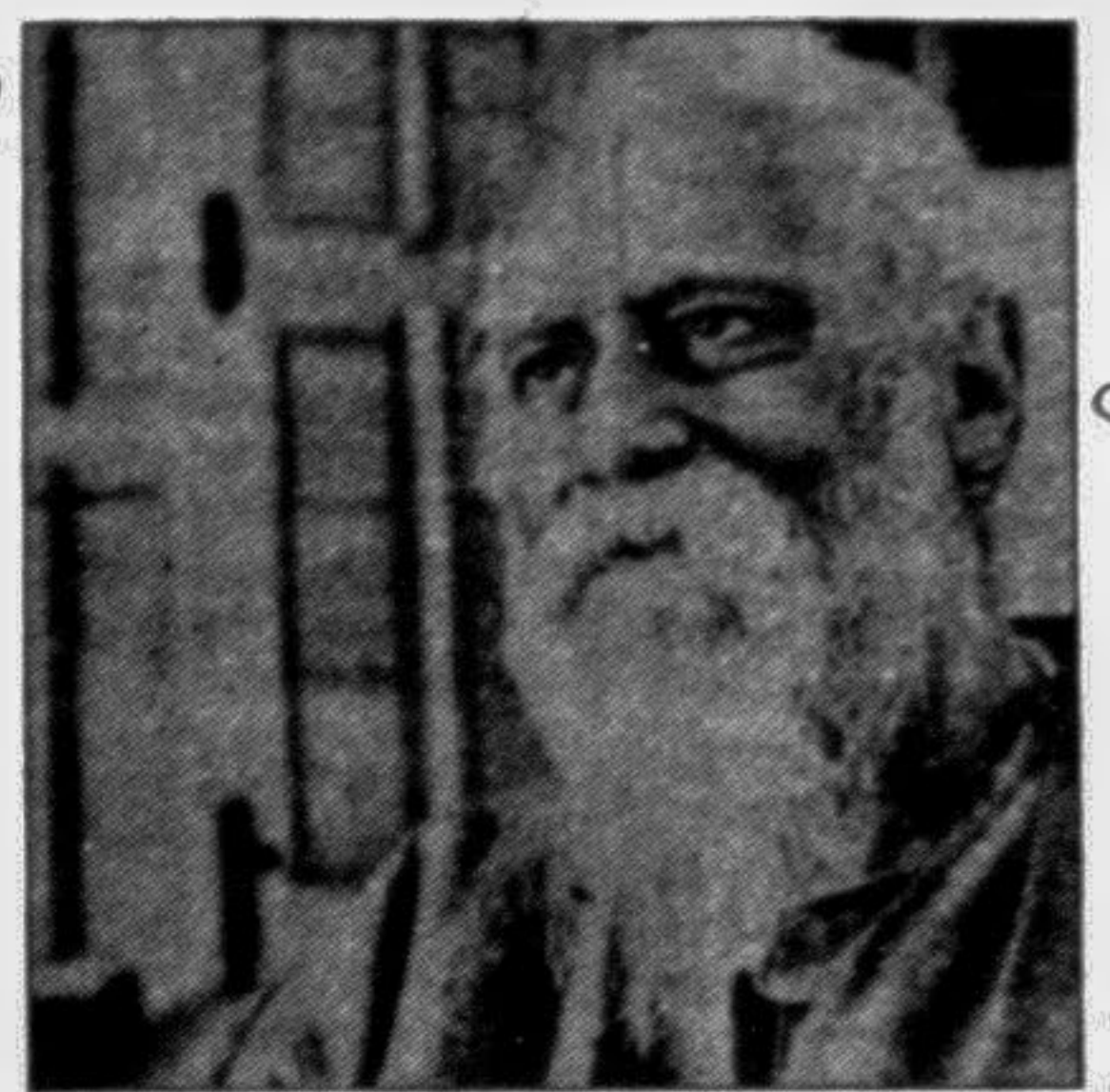
## Saghana gahana ratri

Dense, deep night —  
Srabon is pouring,  
Blind night,  
Without a feel of company.

I keep gazing at the sky, unmindful,  
Where that star has stolen  
The tears of the separated lover.

Pouring on the peepul leaves  
The rain, with crunching noise  
Fills the night's sleeplessness.

From the world of maya  
It floats the shadow-boat  
on the shoreless sea of dreams.



## Bajre tomar baje banshi

There thunders Your flute — it thunders,  
That's no trifle song!  
Grant me that ear  
That will stir me awake at its tune.

That tune ne'er again will I forget!  
My soul, it will spring up enflamed with life,  
That eternal Life that lies covered within Death.

May I bear that turbulence joyfully  
in the string of my heart's lute,  
That frenzied vibration with which  
You make the seven seas and ten horizons  
dance.

Tear me apart from my repose,  
Take me to that depth,  
Where in the heart of unrest  
Lies Rest sublime.

## Ami tomar sange bendhechhi

I have tied my soul with you  
with a bond of melody,  
You have not known it —  
That I have found you in unknown devotion.

In that devotion mingles  
the fragrance of Bakul,  
In that devotion rhymes  
the poet's meter,  
You have not known it —  
That I have kept your name covered  
By the coloured shades of my tunes.

Your exquisite form  
I set in the glow of 'falgun';  
I am playing my flute in Lalita-vasanta  
in the far-away horizon,  
And your scarf trembles in the golden glow  
in that ecstatic frenzy of my song.

## Amar batha jakhan ane

When my pain brings me at Your door,  
You come out, uncalled,  
Open the door, and beckon it.  
It yearns for the folds of Your arms,  
And rushes with all its drive  
Along the path of thorns  
In love-journey for Thee.

When my pain plays me,  
I play out in tune,  
Pulled by that song  
You cannot stay afar.  
That song of mine,  
It swoons on the ground  
Like the bird of the stormy night,  
And You come out, out in the dark,  
(to pick it up).

## Tomai kichhu debo bole

My heart desires to give You something,  
Whether You need it or not.

When I met You,  
Returning through the solitary, thick woods,  
alone  
I had longed — to light a lamp on Your way,  
Whether You needed it or not.

I had seen  
The people in the bazaar cursing You,  
Throwing dust and dirt on You,  
Your lute played on and on  
In the midst of the path of these abuses.  
I had longed — to greet You with a bouquet,  
Whether You needed it or not.

People come, in multitudes  
And weave Your praise  
In many vernaculars,  
With much noise,  
They bang at Your door,  
Cursing and crying for Your mercy.  
I had longed — to give myself at your feet,  
Not asking anything,  
Whether you needed it or not.



## Madhur tomar shes je na pai

O lovely One,  
I do not get the end of Thee.

The hour ends,  
The mist of joy lingers all around.

In this corner of the evening,  
In the last golden glow of the evening clouds,  
My mind muses away,  
Where, O where, without destination.

On the wind rides the fragrance  
of the tired evening flower,  
The body gets filled with a bodyless embrace.

In the dusty glow of twilight,  
On the boundaries of this green earth,  
I hear, all around the woods,  
The lingering of infinite Music.

