

millennium poems Two Poems by Rabindranath Tagore

Translated by Fakrul Alam

A Hundred Years from Now,

A hundred years from now
Who could you be
Reading my poem curiously
A hundred years from now!
How can I transmit to you who are so far away
A bit of the joy I feel this day.
At this new spring dawn,
The beauty of flowers this day
Of songs birds that keep chirping away
Of the crimson glow of the setting sun.
How can I have them all with my love,
And hope you will make them your own
A hundred years from now?

Nevertheless, if you keep your southern door ajar,
Sit by your window and look afar
View the horizon stretch endlessly
And imagine this possibility—
That one day a hundred years from now,
Excitement from some heaven above could flow
Could strike your inmost heart and make it glow,
That on a bright spring day
When you were feeling restless and carefree—
Suddenly,
There could blow with the southern breeze,
Impatient and eager to please,
Flying on restless wings,
Full of pollen and the scent of flowers,
And of what youth desires,
An impulse from me that could make your soul sway,
At a time a hundred years away!

A soul carried away by the tunes
Overwhelmed by the flowers on display,
Had then burst into poetry,
Lovingly,
A hundred years from now!

A hundred years from now
Who will that new poet be
Singing in your festivals merrily?
I send him my spring greetings—
Hoping he will make them his own
Let my spring song resound in your spring day
For a while let my tune stay—
In the fluttering of your soul, the humming of bees,
And murmuring in leaves,
A hundred years from now!

Melodious playful sweet sounding notes keep ringing out.
Over dense green forests the wind wanders about.
By riverbanks reed thickets rustling sounds arise.
Countless notes, innumerable voices, ever-flowing melodies, everywhere!

During monsoons ever-new joys, ever-new festive notes.
Profound, very profound drum rolls rumbling through blue skies
The goddess Durga in her destructive mood dancing,
Behold clouds over rivers ceaselessly pouring,
Behold their furious frightful notes reverberating
Over secluded *pital* and *tomal* groves.
The streaming breeze singing stirring notes in darkness,
Frenzied lightning putting on a dazzling show under the sky.
Countless notes, innumerable voices, ever-flowing melodies, everywhere!

In the month of *Ashwin*, new-joys, ever-new festive notes,
On clear, very clear, very cloudless, bright days,
Earth dressing itself up in autumn's graceful guises.
The new moon glowing and sparkling, smiling brightly,
Very clearly displaying itself in the midst of the azure sky.
In its white embrace the white *veena* strumming on—
The overture sounding soft and sweet in the *behag* mode,
Moonbeams seducing flower gardens to tunes of crickets chirping.
Countless notes, innumerable voices, ever-flowing melodies, everywhere!

1. The poem was written heralding the first day of spring and is dated 2 Falgun 1302 (1895 AD) in Sanchoyita. In Bengali, the poem is titled "The Year 1400" (1993 AD)
2. This song-lyric is the first entry in the section on "nature" in Tagore's *Geetabetan* (Collected Song-Lyrics). As such, it can be seen as the prelude to his song-lyrics on the six seasons of Bengal.

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essay

King Lear: The Story of a King Becoming a Man

by Obaidul Hamid

MAN must suffer to be wise. Shakespeare's King Lear, set in pagan universe, attests to the authenticity of this Aeschylean philosophy. Of course, by the word 'wise' I do not refer to mere scholarship or intellectual upliftment; what I want to mean is man's better understanding of himself, his relations with others, and the worth of living on earth in general. No doubt, many other literary pieces are based on this universal theme; a notable example is Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. In both these works the treatment of the theme is explicit; man's suffering leads to an understanding of the essential qualities that make him human.

Now, what are the qualities that make a man? One could prepare a long list; however, even the shortest one would include self-knowledge, humility, ability to rise beyond self, showing love and sympathy for others, desire to live for others and so on. One could also consider what Coleridge has said in this regard —

He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.
(The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, lines 612-3)

In *King Lear* Shakespeare shows how Lear, who is 'every inch a king' but devoid of these essential human qualities at the start of the play, attains them through terrible suffering and establishes himself as a man. The play deals with what might be called 'creative suffering' — the wrong-doing Lear journeys through the purgatory before the possibility of his redemption could be signalled.

The idea of purgatory has a deliberate presentation in *King Lear*. Wilson Knight in his essay 'The Lear Universe' aptly observes that

In *Macbeth* we experience hell; in *Antony and Cleopatra*, Paradise; but in this play is purgatory. Its philosophy is continually purgatorial (The Wheel of Fire, page 179).

The opening scene of *King Lear* presents the protagonist not only as a man without humanity, but also as a foolish, rash and insane person committing

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sins one after another, which leads him to punishment. The insensible act of dividing the kingdom among his daughters is not only a folly, it is also sinning against Nature and God's law, which will never go unpunished. Ludicrously enough, the division is made on the basis of false show of love and flattery — the King is used to being flattered and knows no reason or judgement. He is an intolerant and autocratic ruler who wants everyone to surrender unquestioningly to his rashness and whims. He has a volcanic wrath, which can go to any limit when what he demands is contradicted or at once not carried out. Through all these he commits sins. He sins more gravely when he disowns the 'fairest' Cordelia because of her 'plainness' and logical argument during the show of flattery. He also sins by banishing the 'good' Kent irrationally when the latter tries to defend the wronged Cordelia. Before Kent leaves the Court accepting the royal punishment, he sums up almost all the follies and flaws of Lear in the following manner:

Be Kent unmannerly,
When Lear is mad...
When power to flattery bows...
When majesty stoops to folly. Reserve thy state
And in thy best consideration, check
This hideous rashness... (Act I, scene 1)

But Lear, at this point, is not the one that pays heed to reason and good advice. He is not human either in the truest sense. In the first scene of the play, therefore, he becomes isolated from humanity because of his extreme self-concern, his 'hideous rashness' and the 'evils' he does to others. However, as they play progresses, Lear faces a number of ordeals, which take him away from his inhuman stand, and ultimately,

he is united with mankind before his physical demise.

The first phase of Lear's transformation begins with his search for identity. In fact, the play might be regarded as Lear's journey into self, who, as Regan summarises, 'hath ever but slenderly known himself'. Unusually, Lear wants to know who he is when he comes to realise the true nature of Goneril:

Does anyone here know me? This is not Lear...
Who is it that can tell me who I am?
(Act I, scene iv).

As he experiences the cruelty of Goneril, the veils of illusion by which he was blinded, begin to disappear and he realises that he was deceived by flattery. The 'all-licensed' Fool constantly serves as an instrument for bringing about this realisation. In the same scene Lear perceives, for the first time, that he has done wrong to Cordelia:

O most small fault,
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!
Which...drew from my heart all love,
And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear,
Lear!
Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in,
(Act I, scene iv).

The process of his transformation has already begun. Now we find him walking along the purgatory. Humiliation and cruelty received from the ones for whom he sacrificed all, hasten his journey. In Regan's Court he finds his servant put in the stocks and he sympathises with the suffering man. He is still autocratic, no doubt, and demands to see the Duke at once. All of a sudden, however, his rationality begins to operate; for the first time his rashness gives way to sympathetic consideration. He can now wait to see the Duke:

No, but not yet: may be he is not well:
Infirmity doth still neglect all office
Whereto our health is bound...
... I'll forbear. (Act II, scene iv).

For the first time he rises above his self; he assumes stoic attitude and exercises patience. When Regan, like Goneril, forsakes him and advises him to go back to her elder sister, he prefers suffering however extreme that might be to giving up his dignity:

No, rather I abjure all roofs and
choose
To wage against the enmity o' th' air;
To be a comrade with the wolf and
owl...
(Act II, scene iv).

He refuses even to weep, and goes out in the wild stormy night saying that he will be 'the pattern of all patience'. This attitude is just the opposite to his initial one.

The storm constitutes the climax of the purgatory where Lear undergoes severe torture, both physical and mental. The King who never knew the slightest pain in his life, now fights with the unprecedented storm with his frail, naked body. There is also the storm within him, which is so terrible that it makes him ignore the external one.

The storm drives Lear to Nature, closer to the suffering humanity. That is why he can now experience others' sorrows and sufferings to learn the unlearned lesson of humanity. When, in the storm, Kent welcomes him to the hovel, he does not forget the suffering Fool; rather he shows parental care for him:

My wits begin to turn.
Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy?
Art cold?
I am cold myself...
Poor Fool and knave, I have one part
in my heart

That's sorry yet for thee.
(Act III, scene ii).

This the awakening of Lear — he is rising above self-concern. Now he is very much concerned about the Fool who is no more a servant but a fellow sufferer. His sense of humanity comes out more explicitly in the following speech:

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er
you are,
That bide, the pelting of this pitiless
storm,
How shall your houseless heads and
unfed sides,
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness,
defend you
From seasons such as these? O! I
have ta'en
Too little care of this
(Act III, scene iv).

Edgar, disguised as Poor Tom, plays an important role in Lear's transformation. His beggarly appearance gives him a new idea about the reality of human beings — how poor and miserable they can be, which he never noticed before — 'Is man no more than this? Consider him well'. The sight of Tom humbles him; taking away all his kingly pride, anger and impetuosity. As Wilson Knight observes in 'The Lear Universe':

... what Edgar suffers in mimicry, Lear suffers in fact: his return to nature is antiphonal to Lear's, points the progress of Lear's purgatory, illustrates it.

However, even though Lear has emerged here with his love and sympathy for the suffering humanity, he is not yet out of the purgatory. It is only when Cordelia wakes him up from the deep, purifying sleep that he is redeemed — he wakes up a different man. It marks the

end of his suffering:

You do me wrong to take me out o' th' grave;
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead.
(Act IV, scene vii)

Now that he has known himself ('I am a very foolish fond old man', he does not say king), has learnt to love, he can recognise his loving daughter and is reconciled with her. The love of angelic Cordelia fills up his heart and brings him redemption. Symbolically, he is united with mankind.

Unfortunately, however, Cordelia, the support of his new life and existence, is hanged in the prison. His life becomes meaningless without her. Therefore, he gives way to despair and resignation:

Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never.
(Act V, scene iii).

In the midst of all this he probably realises that Cordelia is not dead — 'Look on her, look, her lips! Look there, look there!' He might have felt an ecstasy of joy thinking that they are destined to be together forever — Cordelia will accompany him to the journey of eternity. With his faith in this optimism, he at once falls down head. However, he has already undergone the process of regeneration and ennoblement. Like gold in fire, he has become purified and ennobled through his suffering in the 'wheel of fire' — the fire has consumed his inhumanity and infused him with love, sympathy and wisdom. As Bradley opines —

There is nothing more noble and beautiful in literature than Shakespeare's exposition of the effect of suffering in reviving the greatness and eliciting the sweetness of Lear's nature. (Lectures, page 228).

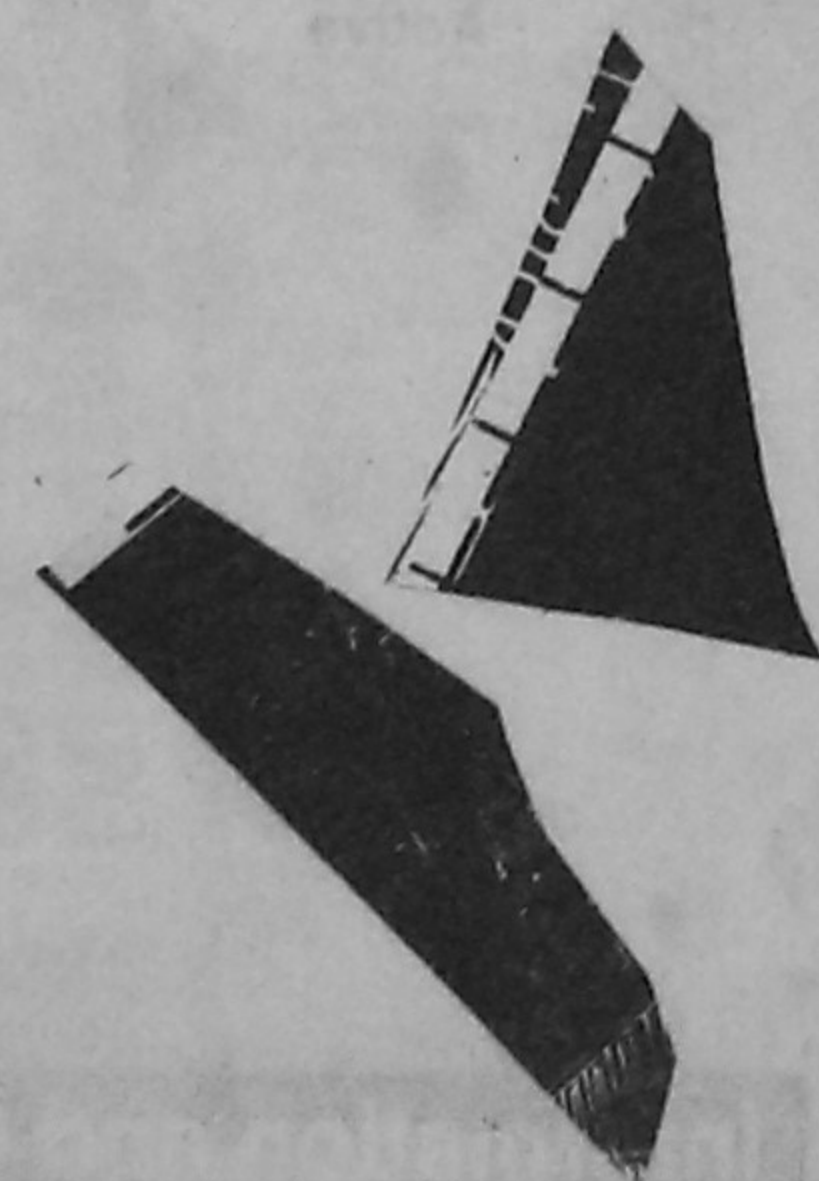
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poems

RACE

by Akhtar Ahmad

There's a race
There's a race
Always
There's a race.
Place
That it matters
Position
That it matters
There's a race
There's a race
Always
There's a race.
Rows
That it matters
Over-takes
That it matters



There's a race
There's a race
Always
There's a race.
Jockey
That it matters
pony
That it matters
There's a race
There's a race
Always
There's a race.
Participation
That it matters
Qualifying
That it matters
There's a race
There's a race
Always



There's a race.
Time
Does not matter
hells
Do not matter
There's a race
There's a race
Always
There's a race.

Cross-Road Of Time

One fine morning
We wake with the day's work,
For living is nothing
But a habit;
And we feel nice
To say Hi to each other
Like the ants moving respectively.

Cease Fire

Good bye, Devil
But I shall remember
That once you gave me
A white rose.

Clumsy Nihilist

Clenches teeth at sorrow
And again at joy,
Cries while laughing
And laughs while crying...