

## RAIN, RAIN

SHAHEED QUADERI  
TRANSLATED BY KAISER HAQ

Sudden panic sends colorful homebound crowds –  
Even drowsy ones – scuttling  
Like scared red roaches every which way  
As if someone in cold forbidding tones,  
Tolling familiar bells,  
Had come to warn of imminent plague,  
Emptying homes and city squares

And then  
A flying harpoon of lightning rips through  
The rounded whale's belly of the sky.  
Deafening thunder and hail and rain  
As if circular saws had roared into ceaseless motion  
While a million lathes let out a whine of torment.

Dusk brings on electric storms –  
Nervy, peevish – and more  
Clouds and water and wind –  
With a chromatic scream  
Like a peacock's rainbow tail –  
How imperiled our dwellings –  
Doors and windows desperate to take wing –  
The old house heaving like a tyrannosaur –  
Flash floods sweeping through crowded neighborhoods  
And gleaming, abandoned avenues  
And swirling round the city's knees.

Through dusk rent by apocalyptic gusts –  
As if the wind were Israfel's OM! –  
Rain falls aslant on parked cars –  
Passengers sit in silence, heads bowed

In anxiety and apprehension, and startled,  
Look up to see  
Only water,  
Swift and fierce,  
Flowing ceaselessly  
And willy-nilly hear  
The sound of lamentation  
Resounding in their own hearts  
And in the weird, vagrant monsoon's sterile dithyramb.

Tonight in this downpour, on city thoroughfares  
Tramp and drifter, homeless youth and lifelong beggar,  
Spiv, thief and the half-crazed  
Come into their own,  
Theirs is the kingdom in the rain tonight.  
The revenue collectors  
Always to be seen carefully counting  
Money they pocket every day  
Have fled in terror.

They burst into lusty song – dark  
Festival hall and drunken placard flapping on the wall,

Twisted telephone pole at whose tip swings  
An old dented signboard blown thither by a gust  
While the city's countless shutters keep time  
With a relentless clatter,  
For the constable on the beat,  
The sentry and the taxman  
Have all fled in terror.

And these too – the wise and the wealthy  
And all their sidekicks and sycophants –  
They too have slipped away unnoticed –  
The torrent has washed away all footprints  
And will carry only a few miserable mementos  
As it rushes, merry as a civic procession,  
Towards cascading town drains:

A cigarette tin floats by with a sound like tambourines,  
And broken glass, torn wire, envelopes,  
Blue air letters, yellow laundry slips,  
Doctors' prescriptions, a white medicine box,  
A broken button from a favorite shirt  
And miscellaneous keepsakes  
From the varicolored days of civilized existence.

O Lord, amidst the lightning-lit deluge  
In this dark city, barefoot and alone  
In tattered pantaloons, inside

A shirt billowing like a sail,  
I am a shiny little ark –  
In the lonely turmoil of my flesh-and-blood existence  
Smolders Noah's restless, red-hot, wrathful soul  
But not a single creature, man or beast,  
Stirs in response, though scudding waters  
Carry the sound of breathing,  
The wind wafts anguished cries –  
Exalted by what ardor, towards  
Which city shall I drift,  
Lured by these seductive waters?

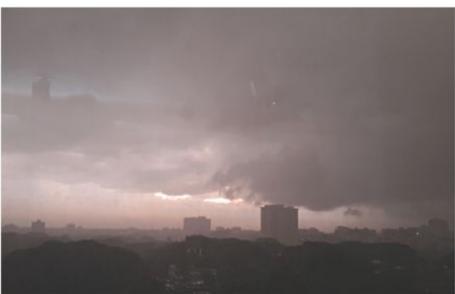


PHOTO: FAKRUL ALAM

## MUSINGS

# Tagore and Rainy Days

SHUBORNA CHOWDHURY

*Emon dine tare bola jay!* On a dreamy day of endless showers, a sunless day of dense clouds, one could share the kind of mystery with a significant other that could not be shared on other days. Such is the nature of one's soul in Tagore's understanding of the intricacies of human minds. Through songs embodying such thoughts, Rabindranath Tagore has shaped our consciousness. For sure, without the intervention of this gentleman some of us have dreams which would be less intricate, less mystical and much less pleasing!

Another of his much loved lyrics reveals the tender feelings that one would like to share with a certain someone but that cannot be communicated anytime or anywhere, even if one wants to do so. He reminds us that our impromptu-emotions vary subtly, drastically and dramatically, and that every moment is a 'magical' one ... but who can help that? (*Kaal Rater Bela Gaan Elo Mor Mone, Tokhon Tumi Chile Na Mor Shone!*) Indeed, it appears to be the case that Tagore's magic moments occur mostly during torrential rain, (*Aji Tomay Abar Chai Shunabare*) "Once again, I am here to tell you what I have told you time and again, what my heart is experiencing in these ceaseless showers"! This song hints at the accrued agony of our minds, and the harmony and rhythm of rain reign in his gorgeous monsoon-anthems.

As many of us celebrate monsoon we have in mind the verse and melody of the song-lyrics of Tagore's *Geeto Bitan*. In these compositions, the fine line between the amorous and the devotional often disappear. It's amazing to see how every section of this work display spirited-sombre songs that refer to the monsoon generously. For the poet the rain season regenerates and ushers in tranquility after the scorching heat of summer: "Rain streams softly on me, like dewdrops falling, they cool my brow."

On the other hand, the ardent American poet Maya Angelou invites the rain to come in and soothe the all-too-tired housewives, while another American poet Charles Bukowski reveal confidently that "jobless men went mad/ confined with their once beautiful wives ..." when it rained! And didn't we all read in T. S. Eliot about 'mixing memory and desire' as the rain stirs dull roots!

For sure, the rain stirs 'once beautiful wives', once-loved-beloveds turned forgetful-forgotten-wives, the lonely or the left ones, and would-be-lovers - all. Deep within we all keep waiting for the one who never reaches us. Those dream-come-true figures keep eternally treading on their never-ending path. And so the pining continues, as does the musings

about the rainy season. But who can portray the intensity of such moments as well as Tagore? "You didn't care to come in spring when I had been waiting confidently but please come, come in the full monsoon." (*aso nai tumi phalgoone jobe chhinu ami tobo bhorosay, eso eso bhora boroshay, Shonar Toree*). And thus it is that he sings, "Please, do come on this monsoon evening, and light the lamp at a desolate corner of my place ... surprise me as I yearn in seclusion." (*eso go, juvele diye jao prodeephkani bijon ghorer kone*).

A leitmotif in Tagore's *Geetabitan* then is the ever-recurring image of passionate souls in monsoonal, stormy dark nights ruminating during midnight showers hoping that they would usher in his beloved (*amar nishitho rater badol dhara*). And thus it is that he keeps chanting, 'Come to my solitary corner like a piece of melody' (*ekla*

*jokhon alok nahi re*) On clouded sunless dark-days he thus invites us through his song-lyrics again and again to self-induced illusions and reveries.

On a twilight sky, when clouds had covered the stars, and I had lost all words ... I kept wondering what the woods were whispering about, what piece of news they had got ... I could hear his footfalls deep within where someone informed - he was coming." That's what we get from Tagore, that note of hope against the enormous hopelessness of our reality and we avail of a degree of peace, of 'shantih' - the concept the western poet had borrowed from our very own--that helps us build our treasure trove of *d r e a m s*. Tagore adds to the trope thus: "even if I am lost in deep slumber when it rains hard (*tokhono chilem mogn gonhon ghumer ghore, jokhon bristi namlo*), my dreams leave my

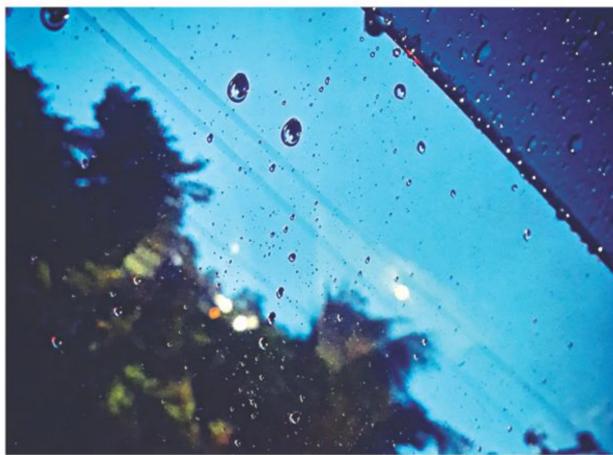


PHOTO: TS MARIN

*ghore chupe chupe, eso kebol shure rupe*). Thus it is that on stormy nights the ever-sought soulmate, a nocturnal rover, keeps treading on an endless path. He travels by the furthest river in the boondocks through deep darkness where it is raining incessantly, and, as he keeps treading, it rains and rains. He still keeps walking, who knows towards whom? (*aji jhorer rate tomar obhisar, poran sokha bondhu he amar*). Spellbound by "by profound Shraavan, you arrived escaping all eyes, in furtive footsteps - tranquil like the night... In a garden-land where all doors are closed, one lone rambler keeps drifting on roads that have no other pedestrian." (*aji shraban ghono gonhon mohe ...*)

That's the charm, the marvel of monsoon that compels us to look inward to find the ones we can't find elsewhere. Didn't Tagore tell us to look within ourselves when there is no light before us that we can see with our own eyes? (*ontore aj dekhbo*

corporeal body and meet my dream-mate drifting in a faraway land; (*amar suopno-swarup bahir hoye elo, se je songo pelo*) and mingles with the fragrance of the rain-drenched jasmine of the gardens (*mile gelo kunj bithir sikto jutir gondhe*). In the nocturnal darkness, it mingles with the serpentine moves of the electric waves of the clouds in the flushing gushing pourings."

At the outset of another splendid monsoon, why not listen then to this song and slumber-number and transcend worldly limits? <<https://soundcloud.com/shuborna-chowdhury/ami-tokhono-chilem>> Let's promise to chill ourselves in cool splashes of raindrops, and build our very own crypted dream-vaults in *Shrabon-Borshon-Songeeet: Rimi Jhim Rimi Jhim Rimi Jhim!*

Suborna Chowdhury is based in Canada and addicted to Rabindra Sangeet

## GRISHMA, BARSHA

KAISER HAQ



The azan goes round the city in a rousing relay.

In the eastern sky the grey of an old man's bottom gives way to baby pink.

How about a conservatory for muezzins?

Badshah Akbar had instructed that the dawn azan should be delivered in Raga Ahir Bhairo – it still is in Old Delhi, a glorious aubade.

It's cool, it's warm, it's hot: it's summertime.

The clock seems awry: it's summer time for the first time here.

Everything's late. All the frogs in Rajasthan married off – and still no rain.

The cattle all scrawny, Krishna missing from Vrindavana. Radha's prayer song's a big hit – and still no rain.

Down in our sultry delta, under a leaden sky, I toss and turn and slip into a sleep of hopelessness.

But the waking up's miraculous – the monsoon's upon us – a month late – and desperate to make up for lost time,

wind and water playing furioso –

azan soaring over rain clouds –

and Krishna's flute calling Radha, Radha, Radha...

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## Oi Ashe Oi Oti Bhairob Horoshe

RABINDRANATH TAGORE  
TRANSLATED BY FAKRUL ALAM

There, there they come— monsoonal clouds—  
Exhilarating, awesome, moisture-laden,  
Fragrant, earth-soaked, dense, rejuvenated  
Dark-hued, somber, glorious— ready to burst!

Their deep rumblings quiver dark-blue forests  
Tense peacocks out on strolls cry out  
The whole world is thrilled, overwhelmed.  
Intense, amazing—monsoon is on its way!

Where are you, oh young and old belles of pathways?  
Where are you, oh brides of darting, fluttering eyes?  
Where are you, oh female gardeners and dear nursemaids?  
Where could you be, oh women all set for assignments?  
Come to deep forest shades and yield to deep blue desire  
Let honeyed tongues peal in gorgeous dances  
Bring forth the mind-entrancing *veena!*  
Where are you love-sick ones, all you seekers of love?

Bring forth the tom-tom, the tabor, the melodious pipe  
Blow the conch and ululate, oh you brides all—  
Dearly loved partaker of all our delight,  
Monsoon, you're here, flaming passions anew.  
With brooding eyes, on the birch leaves of arbors  
You compose brand new tunes,  
Based on the cloud-induced Meghmalla *raga*.  
Monsoon is here, flaming passions anew!

Apply the fragrance of the *ketoki* flower on your hair  
String *Korobi* flowers and wear them around your slender waist  
Lay out *Kadamba* pollens on your bed  
Daub your eyes with soothing eye-salves!  
Clink your twin bracelets rhythmically  
Make your peacocks dance in tune  
Weave a warm welcome  
Lay out *Kadamba* pollens on your bed!

Monsoon is here; rejuvenated monsoon is here!  
Suffusing the sky and filling the world with desire  
The wind susurrates through forests, making trees sway  
Plants and creepers lilt rhythmically to its tune,  
Poets of all ages meet in the heavens  
Making the heady wind resonate tunelessly  
With lyrics that transcend time  
Till hundreds of melodies resound in forest paths.