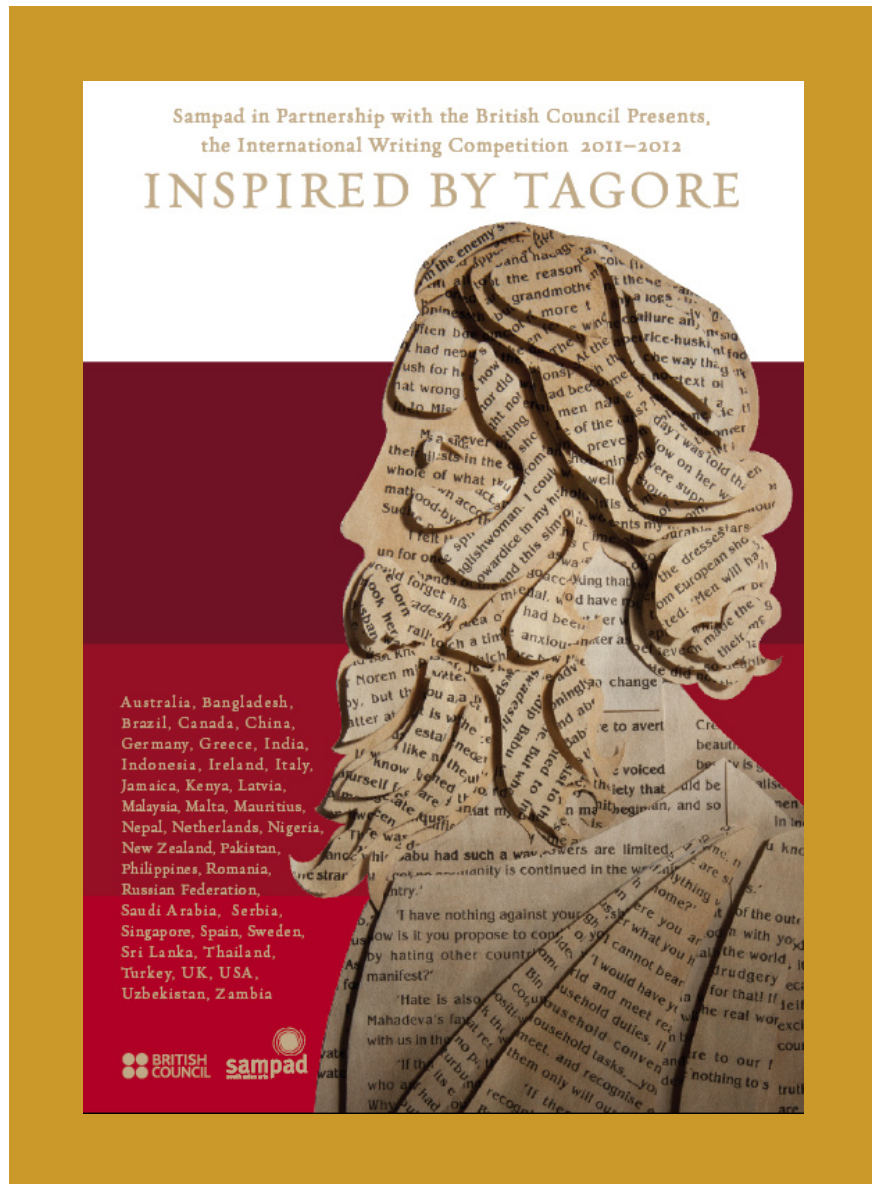


Inspired by Tagore anthology *abridged*



Extracts from the book
INSPIRED BY TAGORE

Published by Sampad South Asian Arts and British Council in 2012

Inspired by Tagore

This abridged E version of the Inspired by Tagore anthology includes the entries of the two overall competition winners, plus entries that received Mention of Honour or Highly Commended. Extra pieces by four of these writers have also been included as they were highly regarded by the competition judges, but we were not able to include them in the published book due to lack of space.

If you wish to purchase the complete anthology, in paperback format, it is available at <http://www.sampad.org.uk/learning/education-programme/resources/cds-and-publications>: price £3.25 plus postage and packing

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Inspired by Tagore

Sampad is a dynamic south Asian arts organisation based in Birmingham, playing a significant role regionally and nationally in promoting the appreciation and practice of the arts originating from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. The word sampad means wealth in Sanskrit and organisation translates this as cultural wealth to be shared as widely as possible.

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We work in over 100 countries worldwide to build engagement and trust for the UK through the exchange of knowledge and ideas between people. We work in the arts, education, science, sport and governance and last year we reached over 128 million people.



Foreword

This project has been one of great personal joy and fulfilment. Like many Indians, and more so as a Bengali, Tagore has been intrinsically a part of my DNA and my life continues to be tied to him in innumerable ways through his songs, philosophy and immense wisdom. That he was an inspiration to so many across the globe to take part in this writing competition acknowledges the power and reach of Tagore's words and the emotional response he can attract. It has amazed me to see how diverse the range has been from so many countries with such distinctive and varied styles of writing providing us with a rich palette of passion, value and creativity.

Our partnership with the esteemed British Council, and in particular their Kolkata office, continues strongly with this project. We have joined hands to develop a project that we both believed was a fitting way to celebrate Tagore in the 21st century when his powerful words continue to resonate through the production of new writings. I am grateful for the legacy we have inherited from Tagore and immensely proud of all the writers who has been a part of '*Inspired by Tagore*'.

Piali Ray OBE, Director, sampad

Inspired by Tagore was one of the key elements of British Council's Tagore Transition projects. The British Council celebrated 150 years of Rabindranath Tagore's birth anniversary with a range of collaborations, performances and publications through 2011-12. Beginning with a quiz in collaboration with Penguin, the Annual Inter-School Drama festival in association with Central School of Speech and Drama, UK, and Prabha Khaitan Foundation, was based on themes from Tagore's works attracting huge school participation from across India. Finally, this publication is the culmination of this project which reached nearly millions and engaged strongly with more than 5000 people. When we started this project, we had no idea how Tagore would be perceived beyond the borders of West Bengal itself. The huge participation in all the elements of Tagore Transitions reassures our faith that Tagore's philosophy and modernity lies very much in current thinking agenda of the youth evidenced by their written words and enactments in all these projects.

Samarjit Guha, Head Programmes

East India British Council

Acknowledgements

This competition was run in partnership with the British Council.

Sampad receives support from Arts Council England and
Birmingham City Council



Supported by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

A cash prize was awarded to the overall winner in each category.

These winners are:

~ Writers aged 8 – 15 ~

Viraf Patrawala, *The Fortress*
India (page 14)

~ Writers aged 16 and over ~

Cathy Bryant, *Song Necklace*
UK (page 48)

Mention of Honour

India

Arashitaa Sehrawat, *The Sea of Memories* (page 15)
Counting a Man (page 16)
Priya Narayanan, *The Divine Dilemma* (page 27)
Anuradha Rao, *Homesick* (page 31)
Shreya Sudesh, *Stolen by Your Love* (page 33)
FestivityGetting Us Closer (page 34)
Tirthankar Ghosh, *The Tumultuous Journey* (page 12)
Batul Pipewala, *Hide and Seek* (page 29)

Highly Commended

Writers aged 8 – 15

India

Alowikaa Bhala, *The Sparkle of Flowers* (page 8)
Anuja Chaudhury, *A Tribute To 'She' Who Is Everything* (page 10)
Hasita Durgavajhula, *When the Darkness Nearly Took Over* (page 11)
Shreeya Ameet Kotnis, *Faith* (page 13)
Jahnvi Verma, *Why Will I Die?* (page 18)

UK

Hugo Bennison, *Old Age and Death* (page 19)

Kim Littler, *Tomboy* (page 21)

Eamon Macdonald, *No Indian Knows English* (page 22)

Daisy Streatfield, *On the Beach* (page 23)

Highly Commended**Writers aged 16 and over****Bangladesh**

Shazia Omar, *Grassroots Emancipation* (page 24)

India

Akrita Das, *Cider from the Old City* (page 26)

Saumya Choudhury, *Early Monsoon* (page 25)

Saumya Rajan, *Scum-Bags* (page 30)

Nayanathara S., *The Balloonwallah* (page 32)

Richa Wahni, *Crossings* (page 35)

Wrong Plan (page 36)

Pakistan

Nayyara Rahman, *Clamour of Debt* (page 39)

Singapore

Yu Ching Tan, *Thunder* (page 42)

Huiwen Zhou, *The Last Tree* (page 43)

In Batakau Temple, Bali (page 44)

UK

Andrew Brush, *The Beautiful Now* (page 46)

Zainul Nasser, *The Champa Tree* (page 50)

Sue Newton, *Freedom* (page 51)

USA

Charles Kasler, *Cross River, Climb Mountain, Return to Ocean* (page 53)

Writers aged 8 – 15

INDIA

Alowkikaa Bhala

Bharuch, Gujarat Age 12

I was inspired by the quote: By plucking her petals; you do not gather the beauty of the flower. Though written in simple words, it has a big meaning. Like his pieces of writing, it contains a lesson for life which we can apply in various walks of life.

The Sparkle of Flowers

I heard the chirping of the birds,

'A perfect way to start a day', I thought.

I got up, and tip toed towards the window;

and the wind hugged me.

As I inhaled the sweet fragrance of the flowers in my garden,

I saw the dew drops sparkling on the delicate flower petals.

After taking a refreshing bath

And slipping into my favourite robe,

I went down the stairs

And into the garden

And looked at the dancing flowers.

They looked so beautiful and elegant

I couldn't take my eyes off them,

I stood there, admiring their beauty.

The flowers seemed to be enticing the birds, the insects
to admire their beauty.

I touched a petal,

And found the sentiment endlessly soothing.

The soft and velvety petal

Seemed to be smiling at me.

One thing was for sure: the morning couldn't have been any better

I plucked some petals

To gift them to my mom.

I plucked the red one and the yellow, and gathered some more

Until I had a handful of them.

I then arranged them into a bouquet
 I stepped back to take a final look,
At my creation.
But instead of jumping with joy,
I became
Disappointed.
A tear rolled down my cheek.
I shouldn't have done this, I thought
 The flowers and the petals,
Looked lively no more.
They had lost their charm,
And their beauty.
The dull looking petals
Did not seem to lift up my spirits,
As the flowers in my garden did.
I did not expect this.
What have I done? I thought.

Anuja Chaudhury

Vadodara, Gujarat Age 14

The writings of Tagore are a role-model to me: he inspired me to follow in his footsteps and express my emotions through my words.

A Tribute To 'She' Who Is Everything

She who ever has remained in the depth of my being,
In the twilight of gleams and of glimpses.
She, who never opened her veils in the morning light,
Now comes alive in my heart and gives it a shove.
She, who caressed my head in the sleepless nights,
She, who would stay awake to watch me sleep.
Under the wide witnessing full-moon night.
And the thousands of twinkling stars.
She who cried when pierced me.
She who carried my sight into the heart of things.
She who was like a pair of wings,
The first step, the first person.
To the dreams which I saw in sleeps,
She, who sang me the songs of success and achievements,
The songs which touched my forehead,
Like a kiss of blessing.
Its music around like fond arms of love.
She who stood bravely besides me when I was low,
She who whispered me the secrets of sharing life.
She whose hands which I held,
To walk towards the goals which I set in my childhood.
The eyes which cried at my first success in race.
The hands which happily clapped at my first position in the debate competition.
The lips which smiled at my first love story.
The ears which listened to my first broken heart.
The shoulders which bore my first failure.
The leg which walked with me when my legs were broken.
The heart which she selflessly gifted to me as my own.
The being that the world calls a "MOTHER".
The liveliness which now I can never rejoice.
She..... Whom I can never see again.
Let us salute to the eyes which can never dream again,
The ears which can never listen,
The lips which can never sing or hum again,
The hands which can never ever bless again,
To the life who can never breath again.....
To the mother who is no more alive.

Hasita Durgavajhula

Noida, Uttar Pradesh Age 13

This is based on a true life story, after which I have completely and totally accepted the fact that Rabindranath Tagore is a true hero, and that I would not have ever gotten a better inspiration.

When the Darkness Nearly Took Over

"Clouds come into my life, no longer to carry rain or to usher storms, but to add colour to my sunset."

Her voice carried through the house, drifting to my ears, even through the tightly shut door.

Somehow-- I didn't even know why-- we had wound up in a fight. As always, she was not angry-- speaking a few of her "inspirational" Tagore lines always calmed her down.

As usual, I lay on my bed, fighting back livid tears, hating to admit the fact that there was nothing to be angry about.

"Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark."

I really wished she'd stop it. I didn't want to be calmed down. I lived by one principle- "kick the tears, keep the smiles".

The deeper the wound, the longer it takes to reach the heart. I told myself, as I always did, whenever I was sad.

And in the end, I had bottled up my dark feelings, creating a vast collection of painful memories, which caused me grief, in one way or the other. And in that one instant when I couldn't bear to hold any more sorrow, it would all come out in the form of bitter tears, and detestable words of resentment.

"I have become my own version of an optimist. If I can't make it through one door, I'll go through another door, or I'll make a door. Something terrific will come, no matter how dark the present."

What would she say if I went in front of her right then? She was probably waiting cheerfully for me as I pondered over the circumstances, ready to forgive me if I apologized; or apologize if I didn't.

"The burden of self is lightened when I laugh at myself."

Should I say it? I asked myself. Should I, really?

I reached for the truth deep within my heart. And I found it-- the answer I'd been looking for.

I wiped my tears and got onto my shaking feet. I walked slowly to the door, and then felt a newfound hurry. I just about flew down the stairs and stopped, panting, in front of her.

"When I stand before thee at the day's end, thou shalt see my scars and know that I had my wounds and also my healing."

'Sorry.' I said to her, genuinely regretful.

Her sweet smile and the resulting silence said it all- Rabindranath Tagore had saved the day.

Tirthankar Ghosh

Kolkata Age 12

Day by day I float my paper boats in the running stream

The Tumultuous Journey

“Day by day I float my paper boats in the running stream”, sang the boy. These two-legged beings make so much noise, I thought bitterly. My queen had given me leave, so I worked my tired six legs and crawled out of the hill.

I crawled out and lay on the soft mud cooling down my legs. I looked up and was horrified to see the boy reaching out for me with his massive hand. I tried to flee but he easily caught me and before even he settled me into the boat, I knew I was being made a cargo.

I tried to crawl out of the boat before he put the boat to the water but, the giant was too fast. The boat shot like an arrow the moment it touched the water. I was clutching at the pointed sail with all my might as the blowing wind threatened to blow me off into the surging water.

Huge waves sometimes threatened to overturn the boat but thankfully it rode in the crest and kept it safe. I prayed to Huanka, our God of creation from whom we descended to save me. The frothy waters swirled around me and made me giddy. Just then, a gush of water from somewhere pushed me near to the shore. The distance was just enough for me to leap onto the dry land. I used all my might and made a good jump landing on the land.

I crawled out of the murky waters into dry land. I worked my six legs and wormed into the dark reaches of the forest. Slowly the sky changed colours. Still I wormed through the tangled roots and came to the edge of the forest. The sky slowly changed into a velvety black colour and I was exhausted. Then I smelled our hill and ran towards the source with all my might.

I just entered the entrance of our hill and collapsed. I woke up the next morning and saw that I was lain on a soft bed and the youngsters were staring at with their inquisitive ant faces.

Shreeya Ameet Kotnis

Vadodara, Gujarat Age 11

While I was searching for a good poem for my home work, my sight went on a poem about faith. It touched me a lot so I decided to express my feelings through this.

Faith

It was 8:00 at night at Rawat's place in Mumbai. The traffic was making a lot of noise and the 2 year old little boy Sameer was not able to sleep. He got very irritated and started crying. Mrs. Rawat, a very loving mother, hears the noise and rushes into the room leaving all her important work.

Please don't cry my little boy. C'mon now listen carefully, I will tell you a story and Mrs. Rawat began:

Once, there was a little boy named Arya. He had a lion for his best friend. Once some thieves were chasing him. He ran very fast in the forest to his friend lion. All the lions are kind hearted and good. They help everyone. That is why they are the king of the jungle. Then the lion made a loud roar and all the thieves ran away. Arya thanked the lion and went home happily. If you are kind to animals, they will not harm you.

Next day Mrs. Rawat took Sameer to a national park. There all the animals were in the single cage. It fascinated Sameer, he looked at the door of the cage, it was not locked.

Mother asked a person to take her photo. Suddenly she heard a noise. It was the noise of the creaking of the gate. To her horror, Sameer was entering inside. She ran to stop him but to no avail. He locked the door from inside.

He was very kind to the animals & the animals didn't harm him too. He rode a tiger, was carried by an elephant & had the best time of his life with the monkeys. All the while Mrs. Rawat was calling heaven & earth to save her child.

After sometime, she saw that he was climbing giraffe's neck & closed her eyes, so, she was not able to see what happened. Suddenly, she was aware of someone pulling her sleeve to get her attention. She looked down & was astonished to see Sameer who climbed out of the cage after seeing his mother's tears. Mrs. Rawat couldn't find words to speak. So, she just held his hand & took him home.

Viraf Patrawala

Mumbai Age 15

This poem is inspired by Tagore's poem 'Dungeon'. His poem depicts the false image man creates around himself for the society. He becomes fiercely obsessed with this image and in the process loses his true self.

The Fortress

His majesty looked into the eyes of the enemy,
He saw no trepidation or mercy; only himself.
If only he had paid heed to my advice,
If only.....

He commanded us to make his fort,
To strengthen its walls and increase its height.
He ordered us to safeguard it with our hearts,
And if foemen appear, fight with all our might.
He was so obsessed by this fort,
Soon it boasted of aureate walls,
Constellated with diamonds.
And even a single abrasion,
Would burn his being on earth.
He showed his allies this fort,
Its might and splendour.
He showed his adversaries this fort,
Its brutality and ruthlessness.
But finally he met his match-
His majesty found himself at his feet,
Trapped inside his own fort- his dungeon,
He could not flee.

I'd told him not to make
The fort so masterful,
Well, but who listens to me, the inner voice...
Now the soul is trapped,
Trapped in the image it created for itself.
Lost in the deep labyrinths,
Lost to us, nature, mankind,
But most importantly-
To itself.

Arashitaa Sehrawat

Ahmedabad, Gujarat Age 15

Rabindranath Tagore, the greatest writer in modern Indian literature, was an explicit poet and an exceptional writer. His poetic style is simple and easy to understand. His pen followed the words coming straight out of his heart and entranced thousands. His poetry influenced me and inspired me to write poems covering the aspects of human emotions and prayers. I also started writing poems using various rhyme schemes after reading his poems.

I have taken the first two lines from Rabindranath Tagore's poem – I cast my net into the sea - and have written a completely different poem, on another topic starting with the lines

The Sea of Memories

In the morning I cast my net into the sea
To collect as many memories I could
To keep with me

In the morning all was sweet and warm
The air was pure and innocent
And had its own charm
It felt like the heaven above
The feeling was somewhat holy
There was care and there was love

As the light was increasing
The air acquired a mystique fragrance
It was all very pleasing
There was a feeling of naughtiness
In the faint yellow sky
It was a different kind of happiness

After that the afternoon came
There was innocence but foolishness too
The weather was different, yet the same
The scorching sun gave too much heat
And the air lost its purity

The daylight began to fade
As evening approached
And cheerful cries were made
By the nightingale
The air had a feeling of tiredness
And it would soon be time to set sail

Twilight was different no more

The air was tired as before
Though, a bit more sore

And as night began to swallow the day
I cast my net out, taking care
None of the memories slipped away

Then came the calm, soothing night
Filled with bright stars
Never seen in daylight.

Counting a Man

Count a man
Not by the number of acres his house covers
But by the number of relations it houses

Count a man
Not by the number of cars
But by the number of people
He dropped home

Count a man
Not by the number of degrees
But by the number of people
He helped succeed

Count a man
Not by the number of coins
But by the number of people
He gave them to

Count a man
Not by the number of bank accounts
But by the number of times, he opened them
To help those in need

Count a man
Not by his property
But by the number of people
He sheltered

Count a man
Not by the number of feasts he attends
But by the number of hungry he fed

Count a man
Not by the number of designer clothes
But by the number of people
He clothed

Count a man
Not by the number of servants he keeps
But by the number of people he served
When they were ill

Count a man
Not by the number of people he commands
But by the number of people
Who respect him

Count a man
Not by the number of celebrities he meets
But by the number of people

Who count on him

Count a man
Not by his richness
But by his goodness

And then, my friend
You will never-ever make a mistake
In counting a man again

Jahnvi Verma

Vadodara, Gujarat Age 11

While I was searching a good poem for my homework, my sight went on a poem about death. It touched me a lot so I decided to express my feelings through this.

Why Will I Die?

I know that the day will come
When my sight of this earth shall be lost.
And that will be the day,
When I'll know the life's cost.

The last curtain will be drawn,
In front of my eyes someday.
And then from that day
For my life there will be no way.

Why? Why? And Why?
Why will I die?
I'm too scared thinking all this
This moment I won't lie.

Why? Why? And Why?
Why can't I live for ever?
If I had the world in my hand,
I would die never.

But it's a nature law
That can't be changed by me
And from the day I will die
To the day I wouldn't be seen

UK

Hugo Bennison

Manton, Rutland Age 11

A response to Tagore's 'The Gardener 85' among others

Old Age and Death

All those years of gaining age,
Have left me wise like a sage,
Wisdom won't help when in death,
As you take your last dying breath.

Joyful memories flood back to me,
Capturing the blue and golden shimmering sea,
Playful times with family and friend,
In old age those times come to an end.

Although you know that I'm away,
You still hear me to this day,
You may wonder what my motives are,
You won't find them near or far.

Except when in your old age,
But now you look down on this page,
All I see is dark and shadow,
But light was with me in an everlasting glow...

The call of culture
brings untutored crowds
to swarm the Tate
and feast their eyes on art,
but often spend more time
in drinking tea
and buying prints
than in the halls of fame.
They know the cost of
coffee, buns and cakes
but make no sense
of prices put on paint
imposed by experts at public auctions...

Museum guides talk of
theories and movements,

of Pre-Raphaelites
and Impressionists,
of Cubists and Surrealists
but the *Lumpenproletariat*
is ruled by time, not taste;
five minutes for a masterpiece,
that's fine, that's cool, that's okay...

And that same night,
in fact, (let's be honest),
night after night,
will sit for hours,
sometimes until it hurts,
in front of multi-coloured TV sets,
with their curry take-away and cans of coke,
enthralled by visual images,
a subtle fusion of light, shape and colour.

Five minutes for a masterpiece, alas
but five hours a night for celluloid soaps,
panel games, quizzes, chat shows and films!
That's the reality; that's how we live!
Art is the lie that tells the truth;
now that's the message museum guides
should be telling their public guests
and then we could all chant in unison,
'that's fine, that's cool, that's okay'!

Kim Littler

Ormskirk, Lancashire Age 10

I enjoy the imaginative but simple way that Tagore often writes about common experiences in his poetry. This really struck me in his poem 'Dungeon'. The idea of how a name and identity can define us seemed very true to me and I wanted to work with this in my own poem.

Tomboy

When I speak, the shackles rub.

An unspoken vow to my name lingers
in my long hair, baggy trousers, books and blue.

I could take a file to one of these links

and work away at its steely cold, but
too much space would erase me

like a fish swept away from the reef
and tumbling into anonymity.

Eamon MacDonald

Stretton-On-Dunsmore, Warwickshire Age 14

Inspired by Tagore's letter to Lord Chelmsford viceroy about his knighthood in which he describes perfectly the pain felt by Indians all over the world after the Amritsar Massacre.

No Indian Knows English

No Indian knows English.

No Indian can grapple with complexities of the English language.

Not REAL English.

Not the English of Shakespeare, Dickens, Austen and the great English poets and writers.

If music be the food of love, play on,

Give me excess of it; that surfeiting,

The appetite may sicken, and so die.

No Indian can understand that!

No Indian can understand the English way,

No Indian can taste the difference between each tea blend,

Black teas with oxidation and green without, no Indian can understand that,

No Indian can see the Queen and understand what she means,

Her history and Christmas speech 'It is through this lens of history that we should view the conflicts of today, and so give us hope for tomorrow.'

No Indian can understand that!

No Indian can eat a roast dinner with appreciation of the flavours combined,

The potatoes crispy on the outside soft on the inside

Yorkshire puddings cupped to provide a home for thick gravy,

No Indian can know that cooking doesn't get tougher than this

Or that that carrots help you see in the dark

No Indian knows that.

No Indian knows English.

A strong chord sounds loudly; Freddie Mercury's tuneful voice is heard,

Change the channel, the red ball spins towards the wickets, Monty Panesar has skilfully bowled out another player out!

Change Channel, Salman Rushdie is reading an extract from his new book words fall out of his mouth and through the transmitter into the living room entralling all into his world.

No Indian knows English?

Daisy Streatfield

Oakham, Rutland Age 11

Inspired by Tagore's poem On the Seashore

On the Beach

The sea is rustling
Each wave collapsing over itself,
Leaving white froth to sink slowly into the sand,

Every so often a faint kaa kaa,
From a hovering seagull above,

A little scream from a child,
His sand castle just collapsed,
A big wave came to gobble it up into the sea,

Always on the beach

Writers aged 16 and over

BANGLADESH

Shazia Omar

Dhaka

I was inspired by this Tagore quote –

"Emancipation from the bondage of the soil is no freedom for the tree." *Tagore was enlightened when he pointed out rightly that economic emancipation does not mean social freedom.*

Grassroots Emancipation

"Emancipation from the bondage of the soil is no freedom for the tree." Rabindranath Tagore

Morjina was scrubbing her cow when she caught sight of her husband walking along the embankment.

"Oy!" she yelled. "Wash your own clothes! Shona should be in school!"

"It's ok, ma," said Shona, plunging the soapy evidence of her father's ineptitude into the water.

"Washing isn't a man's job," Rofik scowled. He stormed to the tea stall but Morjina's glare was a fish hook in his backside; he returned and frowned at the cow.

"Isn't earning money a man's job?" Morjina said sharply. She knew he couldn't work with his lung condition and besides, she liked her new role as bread-earner of the family. Since last week, when she finally rebelled against Rofik's orders and joined a microcredit organisation for a loan, her status in the village had changed. Now even the haughty butcher's wife looked at her with awe.

"Be content with what Allah has given you," Rofik grumbled.

"You can't be hungry and content!" Morjina stormed away, tugging the dripping cow behind her.

Shona chased her. "It's ok, ma," she said. "I don't have to go to school."

"Shush, moyna birdie. You'll go to school, even if we have to sell your father. Not that he would fetch much."

"But I have no bag," pouted Shona.

"We'll buy a bag, chiroi birdie," said Morjina, tethering the cow and entering her shack.

Rofik followed them in. He picked up the rosary beads and began frantically pushing the beads down thread, irritating Morjina. How could he communicate with God at that breakneck speed?

Morjina closed her eyes and prayed the quickest prayer she could muster. "God, thanks for the cow. Please help us put Shona on the ladder so she may climb out of the injustice of poverty and make her dreams reality." That took a good twenty seconds. Dim-witted Rokib couldn't even pray right.

At that moment, between praying and cursing, a resolve bloomed in Morjina's heart. She would do it herself. She would sell malai and pay Shona's tuition. No need to waste her desserts on Rokib's lousy taste buds.

Later that night, Morjina returned home, skin glowing in the moonlight with fresh courage. She was no longer a shy violet lost under a dark borkha. She was master of her own fate.

As she lay in bed, facing Rofik's cold back, her pride leaked out and a new feeling crept in: morose loneliness. There she lay; emancipated and loveless, listening to her husband snore.

INDIA

Saumya Choudhury

New Delhi

The diversity and the amalgamation of Tagore's writings emphasize on the ordinary rural life in Bengal and the synchronization of nature with the lives of individuals, whether artistically or for the very sake of livelihood. This deep feeling of respect and belonging with nature has been reiterated in my poem 'Early Monsoon'.

Early Monsoon

Once again I wake up when the night has waned,
when the world opens all its petals once more,
and this is an endless wonder.

Beneath the table, the half-opened book has soaked
the dripping warm oil of the diminishing night lantern,
burnt, yet moist with the arrival of the first monsoon storm
in this most dreaded night of July.

Yet and then, the village farmers are heard whistling
at the apex of their pitches, just as the musical morning birds
that flutter their wings across the old banyan when the rain—
is gone.

While I, uncover beneath racks of dust-stricken paintings,
an old brush and a canvas that embody this sail of my own
unbound monsoon fantasy.

This long awaited season of sowing and blossoms is here,
the rainbow-coloured umbrellas drying in the noon sun,
the return of mosquitoes and their noisy unmelodious hums!

O once again, the rain is at my doorstep and
the world—an exposed panorama
of a fleeting young spring.

Adrita Das

Bangalore

I come from a Bengali family that has travelled all over India and I have been writing for a good few years. Having been brought up with snippets of Tagore's poetry, stories and of course, music, I have unconsciously imbibed in my writing the essence that I feel Tagore stood for. In all his works I have always found this nostalgia that is very personal and great attention to detail. I find a maturity in his works despite his simple words. My writing is greatly inspired by Tagore as I strive for the mundane, simplicity that many overlook and hopefully turn it into something moving so as to appreciate the little things. Many years back I had written a short story about a young migrant from Bangladesh and asked my mother to read it (being one of my favourite writers) and she told me that it reminded her of Tagore's work due to its maturity and imagination. I feel that even so many years later, that is still the best compliment I have ever got for my writing.

Cider from the Old City

Summers in India were full of apples.

Washed, peeled, and sliced.

Apple pulps, apple pies, apple juice, apples with cinnamon.

Apples with Kala Namak*.

Moon-shaped apple pieces, turning yellow inside a round tiffin box made of steel.

Those summer nights, humid and crimson, reeked only of the trees that grew beside the city pipes;

Growing rarer by the day and the granite floors, cooler with the looming monsoon.

Summers in India were full of apples.

Washed, peeled, and sliced.

Several years of dust have lathered on, the salt in the air grinding between my canines, grudgingly rubbing-in irritation with my nostalgia.

The old Fiat lies wasted, its beauty lost on the men that drove her in the 90s.

Those men are fast asleep now, their wives fondly reminiscing old errands.

And I wonder where the apples now grow and the itchy charpoy* now resides;

Home is not home, home is not here.

Without those apples washed, peeled and sliced.

Turning back I see you, examining the vast city from your spot on the terrace, old and savaged and dusty.

The cane chair creaks as you collapse into it, your eyebrows still crinkled from the summer heat.

I tell you that summers are different now, without the apples.

I forget;

you taste of rum.

You are the summer now.

*Kala Namak: Black Salt, Charpoy: Small cot made of coir

Priya Narayanan

Ahmedabad

To me, Tagore inspires in many ways. For one, his works inspire me to keenly observe the common man and his surroundings, dilemmas and aspirations. I always look to question existing norms/practices, which I then explore in my works more for the sake of self realization than being rebellious or confrontational. He has addressed diverse topics, ranging from religion, god, polity, nature, emotions, and relationships in his works, cutting across various forms of literature – plays, essays, stories, poetry – which in itself encourages me to expand my limits as an aspiring writer. I have also been inspired by the how he manages to convey strong ideas through simple language.

The Divine Dilemma

I was but a piece of stone
lying motionless by the river,
when one day a tender hand picked me up
and changed my life forever.

I was ecstatic, I remember
my body shivered with hope,
like an abandoned orphan
who'd found a new home.

Soon I drowned in my newfound bliss
and marvelled at their avid ways,
as a fine hand carved me a handsome face,
a pious hand smeared me with sandalwood paste,
a prosperous hand built me a becoming abode,
and the world came on its knees to name me...God.

Yes, they still come:
they come in full strength,
flowers in hand
prayers on lips
hope in their hearts
faith in their minds...

They light lamps for me
to drive out the darkness from *their* lives;
Offer fruits, milk and honey
to free *themselves* of starvation;
They fill my arms with annas* and diamond rings
to ensure a prosperous life ahead;
And sing praises through endless nights
to strengthen their faith in me...

And when at long last they shut the door,
leaving me trapped in the darkness
with but a golden glow,
I sit and wonder:

What a quirk of fate it was that made me
an object of their misplaced faith...
And as memories of a hundred years
cloud my mind, I ask myself -
No doubt they've made me their God,
but...do I want to be God?

*anna - was a currency unit formerly used in India

Batul Pipewala

Kolkata

I love his poems, philosophical thoughts and songs I feel touched by his stories and like the intensity of his novels, his deep characterization. My heart sings crazily is inspired by his song Wild wind on a rainy day a popular song here in Bengal where I have come post marriage

Hide and Seek

If I could, I would.

Not play hide and seek,

But allow myself to be caught in his arms

And held tightly across his chest.

If I could, I would

Let my eyes fondly embrace

The dew on his lashes,

And dare him to pinch,

Warm plump cheeks, blooming with his love.

Familiar to the cage,

The bird yet thrashes its wings to soar,

To fly to lands the free birds live,

But the 'purdah' unremitting,

Will only let me see, not be

Whereto my inside pines,

And my mind unafraid treads.

If I could, I would

Let my body and mind breathe equally.

Instead I let my desires burn to ashes,

And pretend it to be a game,

Choose flowers of passionate hues

And send them to him unnamed.

Saumya Rajan

Noida, Uttar Pradesh

I'm inspired by the way Tagore relates his imaginative world with the real world alterations. His poems are inspired by his times with a great mystical feel. My compositions try to catch the goal he had already caught.

Scum-Bags

Rubbing each other we haste
to surpass,
Life here means nothing
but a pack of fallen cards.

One trapped or slaughtered,
or any monument blasted,
We haste on to surpass,
In no moment forgetting the cause.

Media shouts, politicians politicize
People sit in their own well.
In drawing rooms, they criticize:
"The death toll swelled...what the hell!"

Here, value of life is itself a lie,
The more we shout, the more these fly.
Someone dead, it takes ages to judge
Here we lie neutral, hence- no point to grudge.

Munching news with mouth-watering eatables,
Anywhere we go the populace is so.
Treated like rags,
Here in this land, we are nothing but- Scum-bags!

Anuradha Rao

Chennai

Tagore is known for invoking rich imagery in his works. This aspect of his poems has always influenced my writings.

Homesick

I catch
in this humid salty breeze
a whiff of my country.
Thousands of miles away.

My stomach rumbles like the sea
for warm peanuts
as brown as my skin;
peppered with cries of vendors
and the laughter of family.

I see a trail of footprints
on the golden sand.
My brother's?
As he runs with his kite,
while I collect seashells.

My toes tingle at the familiar touch
of cold waves that beckon me
to an ocean of memories...

I lick the salt off my cheeks
alone, alone, alone
on an alien shore.

Nayanathara S

Trivandrum, Kerala

Rabindranath Tagore is, undoubtedly, one of the greatest poets of all times. As a multi-faceted creative genius, he has been a tremendous source of inspiration to poets & writers around the world. I have always been deeply fascinated by the works of Tagore. Most of his works reflect his passionate love for nature, a comprehensive understanding of human emotions & a deep sense of respect for mankind. Moreover, I believe that it is his imaginative sensibilities & the lyrical quality of his work that takes the readers by awe. His simple yet thought-provoking verses, indeed, open up a new world for us!

The Balloonwallah

Streaks of flamboyance flits across the sun-lit heavens
As the balloonwallah happily displays his casket of colourful treasures.
The 'Pied Piper' of our town, he merrily entices the children in the neighbourhood
With the mischievous glint in his eyes and his exquisite palette of shades –
Purple, Red, Violet, Orange, Pink, Orange with red spots,
Purple with pink spots, Violet with Orange stripes and what not!

My one-year old son, wonderstruck and perplexed,
Gazes curiously at the innumerable beauty spots on the sky's blue visage.
A stupendous outburst of colours, like a meteoric shower,
A supernova explosion, adorns the pretty face of the galaxy.
And...like a groom who falls in love
With his beautiful bride again and again on the wedding day,
He holds out his soft arms towards the smiling balloonwallah;
A solo adventurer, a grand magician, a superb mystic, his ultimate 'role model' -
In a gesture of warmth and innocence, seeking all the while
the best, the most perfect of all his treasures.
Sensing his eager anticipation, the balloonwallah places in his little hands
A beautiful, pink giant with golden-yellow spots.
In a few seconds, his cute face brightens up,
His eyes begin to twinkle
Like the star that peeps out from the far end of the universe.
Indeed, the balloonwallah has made the child's day,
Promising him a most colourful getaway-
A handful of freedom, peace and inexplicable joy.

Shreya Sudesh

Chennai

Rabindranath Tagore's fine poems and verses have inspired generations of poets and authors. What distinguishes his poems is the Simplicity and the delicate touch of his personal experiences entwined with different cultural and natural flecks. These attributes make his poems delightful and pleasant to read. They leave an impact on their readers that they savour.

Stolen by Your Love

I wonder why
I keep searching
For your face
Amongst those in the crowd.

I ponder why
I catch a hint
Of your fragrance
Amidst the throng of people

Maybe it's because of the
Times we spent
Together... separated from the
Hustle and bustle of life.

Or maybe it's just
The love I still safeguard
Within the deepest chamber
Of my heart... for you.

Your essence still
Enfolds me within
It's warm and invigorating aura
Never to let go...

I only wish
I could steal you away
From God's Isle, Heaven.
And keep you with me forever.

Festivity... Getting Us Closer

The festive season brightens our lives and promises prosperity and good fortune to every soul it touches upon. When we think of 'celebration'... the one image that pops into our mind is that of a bright and vibrantly coloured room filled with merry people... congregated together to share their love and warmth with each other. The occasion is just an excuse to be surrounded by our kith and kin.

But as time has passed...things have taken a rather awry twist and this togetherness has sort of dissolved into a strange nothingness as people find themselves so exhausted by the end of the day ... so much so that they'd rather take rest at home than mixing with the family.

The ugly truth is that we have been blind-folded by the materialistic cares of the world...screened enough to ignore the innocence and beauty... and appreciate the other or tell them how truly they matter to us.

Where are we heading towards? Clearly not the doom they picture in Nostradamus' prophecies or the much anticipated Mayans' 'End in 2012'. We are actually going towards the Apocalypse of 'humanity' and not live beings.

Human bonds...sensitivity...love...benevolence...honesty...nobility...fraternity are one-by-one being blown away by the hunger for Power and the unquenchable thirst for fame and undue recognition. And the ever-diabolic Ego in our heart grows stronger with every passing hour...guffawing at our insanity.

Is this what we really want?

Do not wait for the opportunity to make amends, to come knocking to your doorstep, because it never will...unless you decide to take things in your hand, immediately. Once gone, it shall remain so. So get back to where you belong...as a Human. Lessen the distance between you and those who care for you.

We are not dying with every second, my dear reader, we are Growing. Make sure you grow to be someone who is more content than established...more loved than envied and despised.

When you leave behind your carcass and depart this planet, the world should feel the loss and hope that your soul rests in peace.

Spread the inner joy and the colour of Creativity and Life force! Life is so beautiful when you really want to Live it.

That is all. Know that you are loved... you are free to dream and to be what you want to be... but with the ulterior motive that you change others' lives in a positive way. God bless you.

Richa Wahi

Kolkata

Using the first lines of Tagore's 3 unconnected poems – Fairyland, Lost Time and In The Dusky Path Of A Dream – as my inspiration, I have weaved together a flash fiction piece tracing togetherness and separation with words "crossed over" tying the theme and the characters together.

Crossings

I

If people came to know where my king's palace is, it would vanish into the air, he laughed. His voice echoed in the mirthless valley where the snow was once white. Where guns gurgled as they gutted the innards of chosen ones. Where limbs grew from the soil that swallowed one whole. The unsaid shattered her eardrums. Frostbitten words. Fragile promises. He tried to forget, she struggled not to remember. The line was out of control. It looped around them, twisting itself around their legs, gnawing at their ankles.

Till

...hope lay shredded.
...she pleaded for release.
...they succumbed.
...he crossed over.

II

On many an idle day have I grieved over lost time! The dead clock chimed as my thoughts tick-tocked in my mind. Questions collided –

If only...
Could I have...
What if...
Why didn't I...
Did I...

And then an avalanche of possibilities tumbled in to my head. Wiser now! Or was I?

Green venom flooded my thoughts, blurring my vision. I became toxic, putrid. It wasn't him hurting me anymore. I'd learnt how to myself. Draped in guilt I walked the streets searching for the invisible. The shards of broken promises lay scattered before me. I saw reflections of a myth called happiness. And then, one day, I stumbled upon a stranger called courage, and leaning on him, I leapt. I crossed over.

III

In the dusky path of a dream I went to seek the love who was mine in a former life. I gazed at her while she glanced at the mirror, blushing at her own reflection. The red of her saree matched the flush of her cheeks. The golden glow of her skin outshone the jewels that adorned her. I watched as she traced her necklace with her forefinger, lingering at the heaving plunge of her neckline. Teasing, she laughed. I heard the sound of the first Monsoon showers, and like the parched earth I gratefully let it caress me. I took a step forward. She turned. The terror in her eyes, her wan skin, her widening mouth, her silent gasp.

I stopped.
I ached.
I realized...
that while I walked the dusky paths of my dreams seeking my former love, she had crossed over.

It is inspired by Tagore's song Jodi tor đak shune keu na ashe tôle êkla chôlo re but it shows not one's desire/ convictions to move ahead alone, but one's compulsion.

Wrong Plan

Jodi tor đak shune keu na ashe tôle êkla chôlo re.

I was born with the wrong plan
And everyone knew it
But me.
The demons guffawed,
The angels squirmed,
As I wailed
To the world
And announced
"I have arrived,"
But with the wrong plan.

I didn't want to be
Just a lump of flesh and flab,
With a time bomb
Ticking in my head,
And my answers running out of questions.
A simple piece strewn, forgotten
On a dusty shelf,
Just because
I was born with the wrong plan.

I'm not sure if I fear
Evil that grins
Or good that gasps
As it struggles away from my grasp.
I've learnt about fire and ice
Of men and mice
Yet all I've craved
Is a fistful of rice.
But that's already been taken,
Shared and eaten
Simply because
I was born with the wrong plan.

Jodi tor ďak shune keu na ashe t be  kla ch lo re.

Pretend, I don a masque
But instantly
I grow weary
Of wearing
And then pairing
It with your mood!
You want a smiling face?
Here's mine!
See the teeth?
Count them all.
Oops, one's missing
Must've lost it in a fall
When your dagger plunged into my back
And I fell with a thud.
My warm blood
Oozing on to the soft mud
It must've fallen then
Into the earth.
Go and see
My tooth tree
And hug the tooth fairy
Whose watering it for me!
I'd go if I could
But you see I can't 'coz
I was born with the wrong plan.

I knock again at your door
You still hide and say
"I don't live here anymore."
The no entry sign
Stands tall,
Acting like a wall.
Why? Just because
I was born with the wrong plan?

Hope hangs itself
From a noose!
What is my excuse?
Simple!
Is there any use
To continue, since
I was born with the wrong plan?

The roads I've taken
Have now forsaken
Me. They want no hint
Of my footprints.
The trail has vanished
And I've been banished
To nowhere land.
A place where ghosts walk

And talk
Of could have beens
And what was not,
Of shattered dreams
And their painful screams
Remind me that
I was born with the wrong plan.

Jodi tor ďak shune keu na ashe t be  kla ch lo re.

PAKISTAN

Nayyara Rahman

Karachi

I believe Tagore was a poet who believed in more than just "Art for Art's Sake." Together with great aesthetic value, his poetry was introspective, honest and was unafraid of acknowledging some unpleasant truths. The guilty honesty in Tagore's poetry is what has inspired me to write "The Clamour of Debt." I believe people enter and leave this world in a circle of debt, of which there is no escape.

The Clamour of Debt

A symbiotic friend, Debt makes for some noisy company

Debt—always parasitic, always there

Only the sympathy in its smile changes form

At birth, it is the Debt of Life

Placed on infant shoulders,

On a huddled, angry red mask

Mistaken for a face

Debt's rude whispers of life

The Responsibility of A Life

That this mass of flesh and skin must bear

With every cry, with every coo,

Debt whispers:

"Remember what I have granted you."

You would think

Debt would recede

In the face of

Tall, striding Time

Debt pauses, Debt hesitates

But then starts

Its sonorous chime again

Now that Life has been deposited
With interest
It is apt
To raise decibels with
Care:

The desperate devotion in your mother's voice
Your father's brave (unshed) tears

You never saw them

But in Debt's sadistic tune
They rattle
Like the first drop of oil
On a ripe pan

In nursery rhymes and lullabies
Debt will sing to you
So that childhood is nothing
But a fond ledger
Of all that your parents have done for you

Raising the pitch of Debt's cries
Is sly, slimy history
It gropes in
Idealistic
Impassioned
Hearts
Until it finds the cavities burrowed by its friend, Debt

Together they weep songs
Of tragedy and injustice
An artful, tuneless hum
Until
Half-baked minds
And uncertainties, posing as thoughts
Congealed with youth and zeal
Are determined to leave
Their own Debt to posterity

Time will wear the first flame of youth
But Debt cannot repress itself for too long
It will come

As a soft hum
As if it were
A floating melody of Love

Many years later
In the reflection of
Wasted passion
Wasted hope
Wasted loyalty
And so much more of
Wasted bitterness

Debt will softly clear its throat again
Tired and beaten, you will ask:

What do I owe now?
What more can I give now?
What have I taken, and not cared to return?

And when Debt answers
It is imploring

“What of the faceless kindness you took as if your own?”
“The ready forgiveness of those you mauled:
With your words,
Your hands,
Your anger
And your love?”
How will you repay those?

“This Clamour will never end.
But if you are lucky
It will be drowned by the din of your passing
As one who gave much of good
And asked for nothing in return.”

SINGAPORE

Yu Ching Tan

“Let us not pray to be sheltered from dangers but to be fearless when facing them.”

— Rabindranath Tagore

This quote got me thinking, what if the things we are most afraid of, aren't one bit scary at all? Maybe fearless isn't about bravery or all that gung-ho stuff, maybe being fearless is just about loving every unanticipated moment life brings us – because after crossing that threshold, you don't see a point in being afraid anymore. So I chose the thunder, because I remember school days where we would run under the tables to hide when the harbinger of thunder (or also known as lightning) would flash outside the windows. But really, there's nothing to be afraid of.

Thunder

I met Thunder. We went for a road trip together. Her eyes were a shade of concrete grey and her stare would wobble the stones on the roadside every time she glanced at them.

When we played 'I spy' her lips would crinkle themselves up, like edges of an old book, or the crease lines of an elderly woman. She searched for the greatest of all things, perhaps because she thought simplicity too mediocre. She spied on the land far away and beyond, the land where people miss because they are too busy looking behind them than ahead. She loved picking up on the smallest clues; once she spied the eyeball of a snail, and indignantly I mentioned that no one can see the eye of the snail, but she laughed her sonorous chuckle that resonated beyond the fields of maize and she breathed, softly and said, “Just because you can't see it doesn't mean it isn't there”.

She brought the atmosphere and she taught me how to hold the sky in my hands so that we could play it like putty; and she said, the clouds are nothing but pockets of air stuck in cookie dough. She taught me how to form shapes out of clouds, and once, when I was feeling saddest, she told me that every dark cloud has a silver lining, that I was the lining searching the shadowy Stygian sky for a dark cloud to accompany. I never told her this, but she was my silver lining.

Then, before she left, she spun me her life story, her love story embroidered with love that was never meant to be. How she was always one step ahead of Lightning, and how despite being so fast, he never caught up with her. I held her small wrinkled hand and told her that love catches you by the wind and by surprise. She held my glance while her lips curled up in the tiniest smile, and the skies were clear that day.

Huiwen Zhou

Tagore had expressed great respect for nature, especially for trees, in his poetry writings. In one poem "In Praise of Trees", Tagore depicted the trees as if they were people with souls and personality. Tagore's great empathy with nature made him treat natural objects in his writings as if they were sentient and human beings. The theme my poem conveys was inspired by Tagore's attitude towards the humble, sturdy trees, while the poem's context was taken from my personal experience.

The Last Tree

The last tree
Outside my bedroom window
Was cut down.

Before the lynching began,
The men had come with
Huge hair clippers
And shaved his head bare.

I watched —
As the hefty tree stood
Naked and humiliated,
Shackled onto the
Burning platform
Like a stranded slave

They sawed his torso first,
Breaking off his top
His blood rained like dust
And gathered at his toes;

Then they sawed his ankles
Heaving him off his planted feet
Like a trophy onto a
Grinning truck.

They had butchered him.

I wondered what
They would do with their fleshy harvest
And what they would do with
The glaring space now at my window.

But that wasn't the last of the
Last tree.

His feet are still there, see?
Supporting the ghost of
A body.

This poem, first of all, includes a bit of Hindu culture (the three Hindu gods). It was also inspired by Tagore's reverence and respect for nature, and the way he saw liveliness present in the tropical environment. The poem reflects Tagore's regard of nature as being animated and filled with spirited personality.

In Batakau Temple, Bali

This is a temple whose utterances
Have been sipped away by
Pores in the soil and
Carefully concealed.

I am a clumsy visitor,
Unwittingly burping a cough or two
Or an out-of-rhythm breath
From between the damp grass blades
As I tread on patches of them
Meditating in the shade.

The strung-up cobwebs
Finger the curves of my face
As if reading my sins,
And the air is transparent as
Purified crystals, as if
Needing clarity to
Scrutinise the visages of
Ambling strangers.

I am walking in the backyard
Of the residence of

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva,
And the temple is watching me,
Listening to my human
Movements;
As if curious—
Quietly listening.

UK

Andrew Brush

Cheltenham

My wife has a degenerative illness – reading Tagore inspired me to write this poem as his words teach me to cherish the here and now and not the future.

The Beautiful Now

From lime-wold Cleeve suspended in even-shine
No wind to hasten time,
Chronos grounded at ease,
Earth's axle spinning through space
At a kinder pace.

Golden Gorse on fire at my back
Lungs gorged with the coconut essence of her petalled hair.
The earth gently breathes,
Appreciating its own rareness.

Rock and Sun and me on Cleeve.

And then from the most unexpected place,
The rutted quarry parking space
A message to be taken down.
Not a windscreen flyer or
Commandments.

Set in a stone stage
Scarlett Lightning,
Cradling light alive,
Soul of Universe
Tagore's heart.
Your song singing to me
Singing to me.

No future thought,
No sad seeping of time,
Stillness,
Nowness.

Starlet of Starlight
Resurrecting to life
Your true complexion
By the remembrance of light.

Reminding me
To hurry home
To the beautiful you
In the beautiful now.

* Scarlett Lightning is also known as Red Valerian.

Cathy Bryant

Manchester

I first heard of Tagore when I had a relationship with a Bengali man several years ago. Like many Westerners, the only poet from the Indian Continent with whom I was familiar was Rumi. When I first read Tagore, I felt something hard be broken and remade softly inside me - as if these words held some key and had unlocked part of my soul. The facing of both the personal and the cosmological and the linking of them seemed poetically very brave and yet so natural. I'm not putting this well, but Tagore can touch anything and make it wondrous. My favourite of his poems is 'Unending Love', as you might guess from certain parts of my poem. I particularly love the image of the necklace of songs, which I think is what Tagore's work and love itself give us, and that is what I have tried to show in my poem below.

Song Necklace

I pick up my necklace of songs
and place it round my neck;
a neck imperfect, caught in time
and lined with it, unlike the songs
and the poems, which live on,
as unending and perfect as love.
And kissing each song like a tear
or a crystal, a precious stone or moment,
I remember and feel again
the love that has never, can never
leave nor fade nor numb.

The tears of farewell fill
my old cracked cup; tears pouring
an ocean of love at my feet, cupped
tears that reflect stars and the endless
stream of the universe, the cup
freshened eternally at the ever-giving
fount; and to all who wept and wrote
and sang, who made their gitanjali,
the loved one drinks in life divine
and whispers a soft, unasked-for
"thank you".

You gave all things, from ancient tales
to new and future memories, my love
who adds new songs to my necklace;
never accepting for me the tawdry
or finite jewellery. You teach me
the yes of clouds that colour sunsets,
of open smiles. For the gifts and teaching,
your gora says, "thank you",
communing in ceaseless renewal.
The necklace is shared out, and grows
now and for all time and beyond time.

Notes: Gitanjali: song offerings. Gora: fair-faced

Zainul Nasser

Sutton Coldfield

I was moved by Tagore's depiction of nature in all its variety, our relationship with nature and how it nurtures and nourishes us physically and spiritually.

The Champa Tree

The champa stands shyly by the path
Spread with a blush of deep pink flowers,
It takes me back to childhood
And the row of champa trees
That stood between the sea and the fort.

We played among the trees;
The purity of the white flowers,
Tinged with the faintest flush of pink,
Reflected our innocence.

But there was a falling off from grace
With thoughtless pleasure we plucked the flowers,
Pierced the five petals
And folded them back onto the stem,
Reducing the delicate flower
To a squat and sturdy parody.

Now, on holiday in warmer places
I see the champa and feel a rush of joy,
I want to gather the flowers
And bury my face in their fragrant petals.

But I will not pick a single flower,
Remembering the distant lapse in reverence
For nature's simple perfection.

Sue Newton

Coventry

The poems of Tagore embody themes which are poignant today: desire for freedom, the celebration of individuality, the rejection of materialism and social division and the emphasis on what different cultures and countries have in common. Inspired by 'Freedom-bound' by Rabindranath Tagore.

Freedom

Turn and bar the door and stare,
 Condemning eyes glance down.
She comes, my wild, reviled love,
 Free-wheeling through the town.
To be where others choose to be
 Is not her way at all -
Maybe I shall place her by
 A shabby bric-brac stall.
The decent shopping crowds, who love
 To buy and sell all day,
Cannot see the girl whose clothes
 Are dust-begrimed and grey.
Intent on fashion's trash, her worth
 Is hidden from their eyes -
Come my wild and winsome girl,
 No-one knows but I.
When you ran out and left your house
 To find love on the way
You gathered up these golden flowers
 Dew-drenched from dawn of day.
You came because you know I like
 Love simple, plain and true -
Spring blooms, the dark earth's bounty,
 Placed in my arms by you.
No make-up on your face and so
 No planning to entrance -
Your heart has all the rhythms
 I need for my life's dance.
You cast off claims to be cast off
 By frayed and faded clothes -
No clouds of dust and dirt can mar
 The dignity you show.
Shoppers jostle round you, mongrels
 Yapping by your side -

Gypsy on a bicycle
Easily you ride.
You cross the stream with sodden jeans
Turned up on bare, brown knees -
Absorption in my daily tasks
Breaks at sights like these.
You take your cycle to the woods
Mushrooms for market day -
Your pockets stuffed with dusty seeds
For sparrows on the way.
Downpours do not deter you -
With mud-bespattered toes
A newspaper upon your head
On your journey goes.
I find you when and where I choose
Whenever it pleases me -
No rendez-vous, no public show,
Who knows of it but we?
Launching caution skywards,
Cast out by all around,
Come, my wild, reviled love, we
Travel, freedom-bound.

USA

Charles Kasler

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I am a yoga teacher & lived in an ashram. Tagore is perfection – both of form and spiritual realization.

Cross River, Climb Mountain, Return to Ocean

lions guard the bridge
dragons dance and pagodas
reach to the heavens
painted tiles pave the way for pilgrims
bare feet cross
into the unknown
and disappear into nowhere
like Jacob's ladder
or the Indian rope trick
like climbing the 7000 steps
of Tai Shan - the Stairway to Heaven

step... step...step
each step a lifetime
that vanishes in a moment

the light is soft and the music sweet
crossing the River of Dreams
one lifetime after another flowing by
from a source high in the mountains
into the Ocean of Consciousness

looking down at reflections
in the river below
faces change continually
but the eyes remain the same

old souls line the way
with paper lanterns
wishing them well
children fly kites and smile
crowds cheer as they pass by
and reach out to touch their hands
confetti falls and a paper moon
hangs in the sky

step... step...step
each step an instant
that lasts for eternity

just place one foot after the other
that's all you have to do
don't think there is something better
not for a moment
stop wishing it was so
and you will find contentment
hiding under the bridge
and flying under the wings
of birds above
saying come with me
I will keep you company
just look above you and below
and into the eyes of everyone you see
they are all the same

as tiger climbs the mountain
as the crane soars high
as the stork spreads his wings
and foretells prosperity
and happiness in the New Year
so also only good can come of this
it is the natural course of things
it is the way of nature