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K.K. Venugopal

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*FIREFLIES*



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TORONTO

# *FIREFLIES*

*By*

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

*Decorations by*

BORIS ARTZYBASHEFF

*New York*

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

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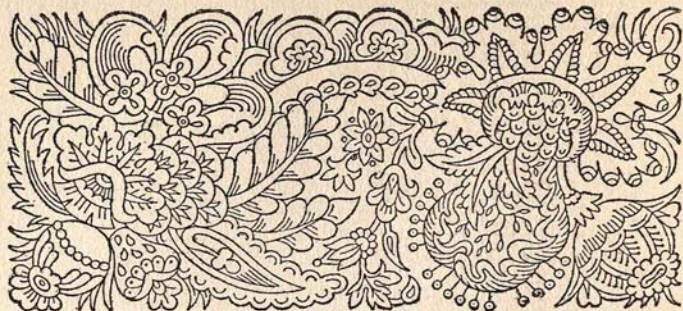
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Set up and printed.  
Published February, 1928.  
Reprinted June, 1928.

SET UP BY BROWN BROTHERS LINOTYPERS  
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
BY THE CORNWALL PRESS, INC.

*FIREFLIES had their origin in China and Japan where thoughts were very often claimed from me in my handwriting on fans and pieces of silk.*

*FIREFLIES*



My fancies are fireflies,—  
Specks of living light  
twinkling in the dark.







The voice of wayside pansies,  
that do not attract the careless glance,  
murmurs in these desultory lines.





In the drowsy dark caves of the mind  
dreams build their nest with fragments  
dropped from day's caravan.





Spring scatters the petals of flowers  
that are not for the fruits of the future,  
but for the moment's whim.





Joy freed from the bond of earth's slumber  
rushes into numberless leaves,  
and dances in the air for a day.





My words that are slight  
may lightly dance upon time's waves  
when my works heavy with import have  
gone down.





Mind's underground moths  
grow filmy wings  
and take a farewell flight  
in the sunset sky.





The butterfly counts not months but moments,  
and has time enough.





My thoughts, like sparks, ride on winged  
surprises,  
carrying a single laughter.

The tree gazes in love at its own beautiful  
shadow  
which yet it never can grasp.







Let my love, like sunlight, surround you  
and yet give you illumined freedom.





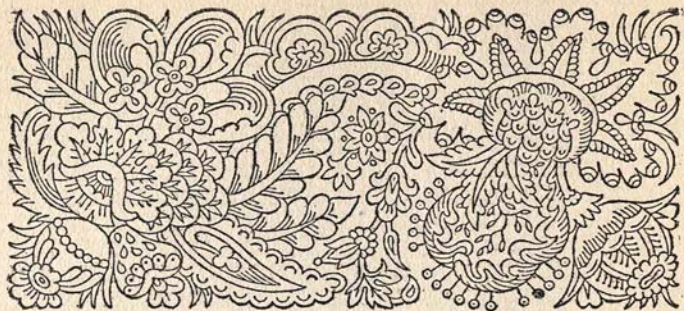
Days are coloured bubbles  
that float upon the surface of fathomless  
night.





My offerings are too timid to claim your  
remembrance,  
and therefore you may remember them.





Leave out my name from the gift  
if it be a burden,  
but keep my song.





April, like a child,  
writes hieroglyphs on dust with flowers,  
wipes them away and forgets.





Memory, the priestess,  
kills the present  
and offers its heart to the shrine of the dead  
past.





From the solemn gloom of the temple  
children run out to sit in the dust,  
God watches them play  
and forgets the priest.





My mind starts up at some flash  
on the flow of its thoughts  
like a brook at a sudden liquid note of its  
own  
that is never repeated.







In the mountain, stillness surges up  
to explore its own height;  
in the lake, movement stands still  
to contemplate its own depth.





The departing night's one kiss  
on the closed eyes of morning  
glows in the star of dawn.





Maiden, thy beauty is like a fruit  
which is yet to mature,  
tense with an unyielding secret.





Sorrow that has lost its memory  
is like the dumb dark hours  
that have no bird songs  
but only the cricket's chirp.





Bigotry tries to keep truth safe in its hand  
with a grip that kills it.  
Wishing to hearten a timid lamp  
great night lights all her stars.





Though he holds in his arms the earth-bride,  
the sky is ever immensely away.





God seeks comrades and claims love,  
the Devil seeks slaves and claims obedi-  
ence.





The soil in return for her service  
keeps the tree tied to her,  
the sky asks nothing and leaves it free.







Jewel-like the immortal  
does not boast of its length of years  
but of the scintillating point of its  
moment.





The child ever dwells in the mystery  
of ageless time,  
unobscured by the dust of history.





A light laughter in the steps of creation  
carries it swiftly across time.





One who was distant came near to me in the  
morning,  
and still nearer when taken away by night.





White and pink oleanders meet  
and make merry in different dialects.





When peace is active sweeping its dirt,  
it is storm.



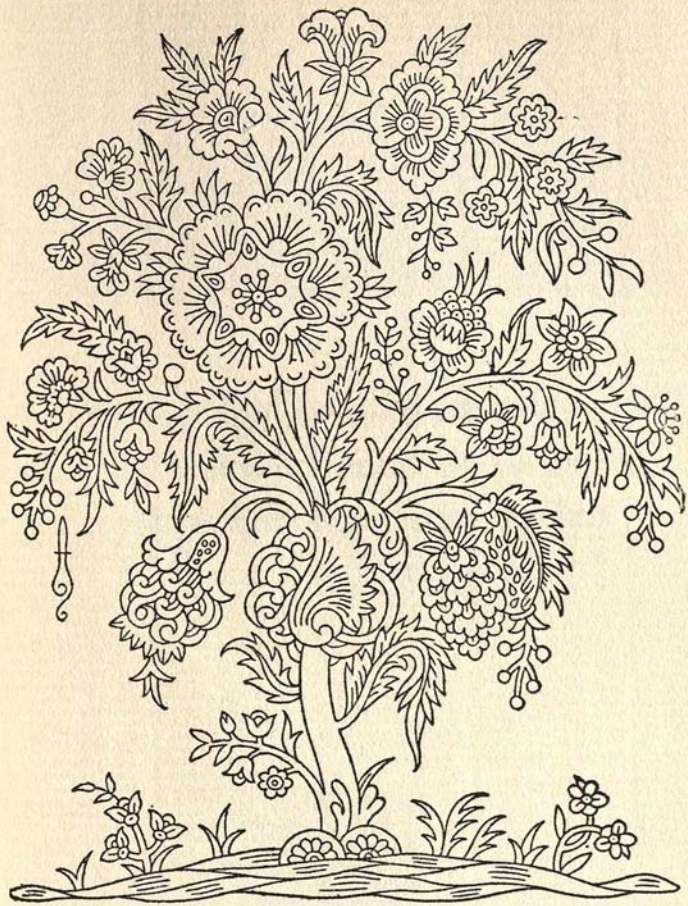


The lake lies low by the hill,  
a tearful entreaty of love  
at the foot of the inflexible.











There smiles the Divine Child  
among his playthings of unmeaning clouds  
and ephemeral lights and shadows.





The breeze whispers to the lotus,

“What is thy secret?”

“It is myself,” says the lotus,

“Steal it and I disappear!”





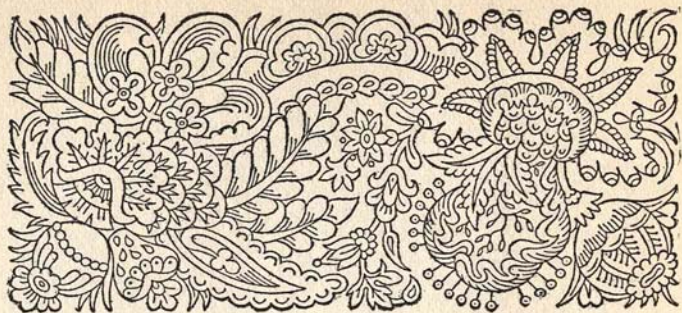
The freedom of the storm and the bondage  
of the stem  
join hands in the dance of swaying  
branches.





The jasmine's lisp of love to the sun  
is her flowers.





The tyrant claims freedom to kill freedom  
and yet to keep it for himself.





Gods, tired of their paradise, envy man.





Clouds are hills in vapour,  
hills are clouds in stone,—  
a phantasy in time's dream.







While God waits for His temple to be built  
of love,  
men bring stones.





I touch God in my song  
as the hill touches the far-away sea  
with its waterfall.





Light finds her treasure of colours  
through the antagonism of clouds.





My heart to-day smiles at its past night of tears  
like a wet tree glistening in the sun  
after the rain is over.





I have thanked the trees that have made my  
life fruitful,  
but have failed to remember the grass  
that has ever kept it green.





The one without second is emptiness,  
the other one makes it true.





Life's errors cry for the merciful beauty  
that can modulate their isolation  
into a harmony with the whole.





They expect thanks for the banished nest  
because their cage is shapely and secure.







In love I pay my endless debt to thee  
for what thou art.





The pond sends up its lyrics from its dark  
in lilies,  
and the sun says, they are good.





Your calumny against the great is impious,  
it hurts yourself;  
against the small it is mean,  
for it hurts the victim.





The first flower that blossomed on this earth  
was an invitation to the unborn song.





Dawn—the many-coloured flower—fades,  
and then the simple light-fruit,  
the sun appears.





The muscle that has a doubt of its wisdom  
throttles the voice that would cry.





The wind tries to take the flame by storm  
only to blow it out.





Life's play is swift,  
Life's playthings fall behind one by one  
and are forgotten.







My flower, seek not thy paradise  
in a fool's buttonhole.





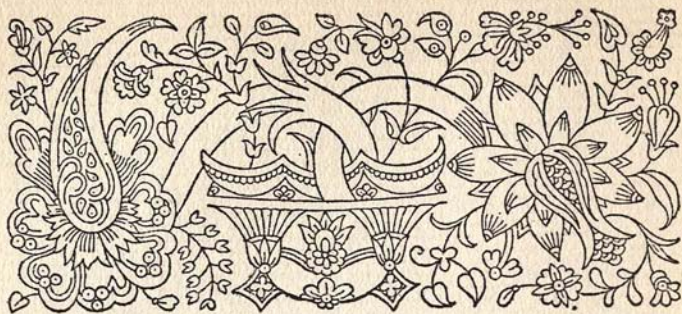
Thou hast risen late, my crescent moon,  
but my night bird is still awake to greet  
thee.





Darkness is the veiled bride  
silently waiting for the errant light  
to return to her bosom.





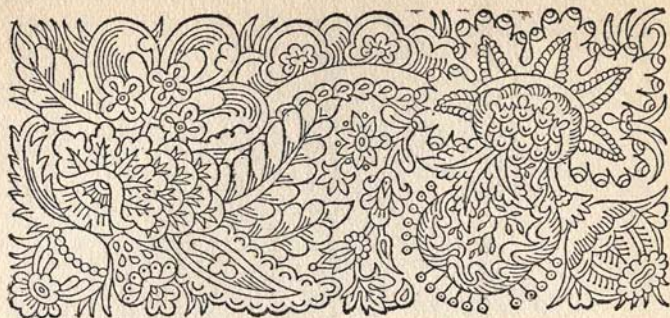
Trees are the earth's endless effort to speak  
to the listening heaven.





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





The weak can be terrible  
because they try furiously to appear strong.





The wind of heaven blows,  
The anchor desperately clutches the mud,  
and my boat is beating its breast against  
the chain.





The spirit of death is one,  
the spirit of life is many.  
When God is dead religion becomes one.







The blue of the sky longs for the earth's green,  
the wind between them sighs, "Alas."  
Day's pain muffled by its own glare,  
burns among stars in the night.





The stars crowd round the virgin night  
in silent awe at her loneliness  
that can never be touched.

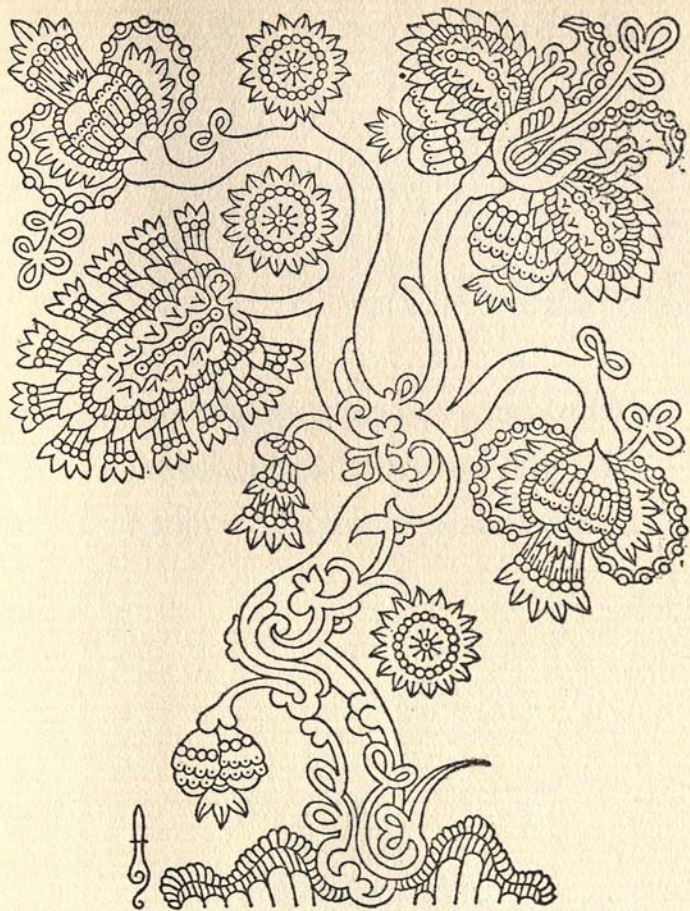




The cloud gives all its gold  
to the departing sun  
and greets the rising moon  
with only a pale smile.









He who does good comes to the temple gate,  
he who loves reaches the shrine.





Flower, have pity for the worm,  
it is not a bee,  
its love is a blunder and a burden.





With the ruins of terror's triumph  
children build their doll's house.







The lamp waits through the long day of  
neglect  
for the flame's kiss in the night.





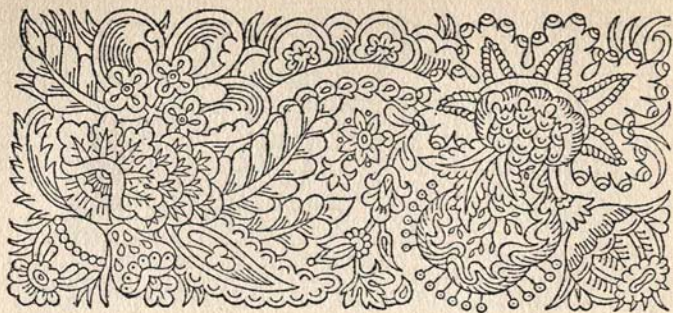
Feathers in the dust lying lazily content  
have forgotten their sky.





The flower which is single  
need not envy the thorns  
that are numerous.





The world suffers most from the disinterested  
tyranny  
of its well-wisher.





We gain freedom when we have paid the full  
price  
for our right to live.





Your careless gifts of a moment,  
like the meteors of an autumn night,  
catch fire in the depth of my being.





The faith waiting in the heart of a seed  
promises a miracle of life  
which it cannot prove at once.





Spring hesitates at winter's door,  
but the mango blossom rashly runs out to  
him  
before her time and meets her doom.







The world is the ever-changing foam  
that floats on the surface of a sea of silence.





The two separated shores mingle their voices  
in a song of unfathomed tears.





As a river in the sea,  
work finds its fulfilment  
in the depth of leisure.





I lingered on my way till thy cherry tree lost  
its blossom,  
but the azalea brings to me, my love, thy  
forgiveness.





Thy shy little pomegranate bud,  
blushing to-day behind her veil,  
will burst into a passionate flower  
to-morrow when I am away.





The clumsiness of power spoils the key,  
and uses the pickaxe.





Birth is from the mystery of night  
into the greater mystery of day.





These paper boats of mine are meant to dance  
on the ripples of hours,  
and not to reach any destination.







Migratory songs wing from my heart  
and seek their nests in your voice of love.





The sea of danger, doubt and denial  
around man's little island of certainty  
challenges him to dare the unknown.





Love punishes when it forgives,  
and injured beauty by its awful silence.





You live alone and unrecompensed  
because they are afraid of your great worth.





The same sun is newly born in new lands  
in a ring of endless dawns.





God's world is ever renewed by death,  
a Titan's ever crushed by its own existence.





The glow-worm while exploring the dust  
never knows that stars are in the sky.





The tree is of to-day, the flower is old,  
it brings with it the message  
of the immemorial seed.

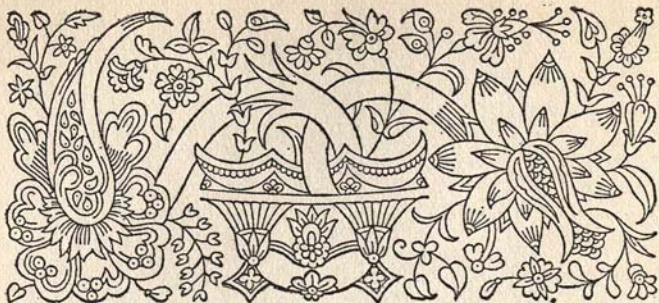






Each rose that comes brings me greetings  
from the Rose of an eternal spring.  
God honours me when I work,  
He loves me when I sing.





My love of to-day finds no home  
in the nest deserted by yesterday's love.





The fire of pain traces for my soul  
a luminous path across her sorrow.





The grass survives the hill  
through its resurrections from countless  
deaths.





Thou hast vanished from my reach  
leaving an impalpable touch in the blue of  
the sky,  
an invisible image in the wind moving  
among the shadows.





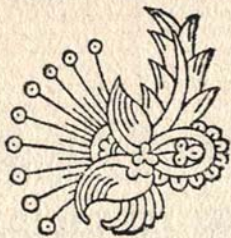
In pity for the desolate branch  
spring leaves to it a kiss that fluttered in a  
lonely leaf.



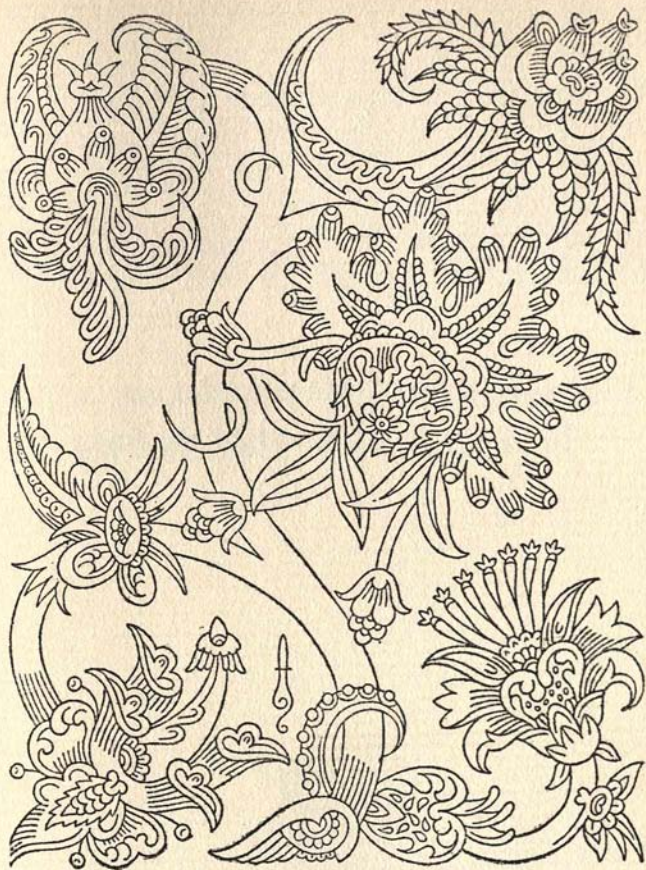


The shy shadow in the garden  
loves the sun in silence,  
Flowers guess the secret, and smile,  
while the leaves whisper.











I leave no trace of wings in the air,  
but I am glad I have had my flight.





The fireflies, twinkling among leaves,  
make the stars wonder.





The mountain remains unmoved  
at its seeming defeat by the mist.





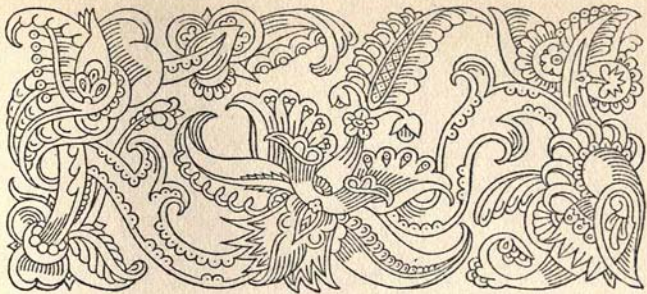
While the rose said to the sun,  
"I shall ever remember thee,"  
her petals fell to the dust.





Hills are the earth's gesture of despair  
for the unreachable.





Though the thorn in thy flower pricked me,  
O Beauty,  
I am grateful.





The world knows that the few  
are more than the many.

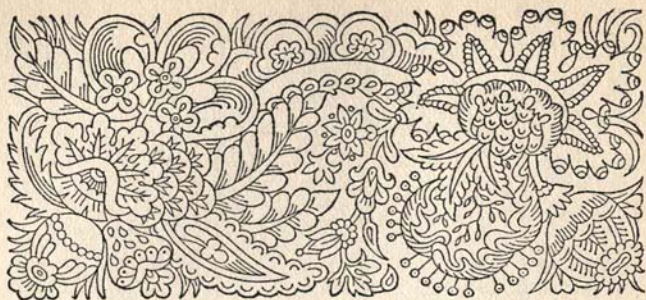






Let not my love be a burden on you, my  
friend,  
know that it pays itself.





Dawn plays her lute before the gate of darkness,  
and is content to vanish when the sun  
comes out.





Beauty is truth's smile  
when she beholds her own face  
in a perfect mirror.





The dew-drop knows the sun  
only within its own tiny orb.





Forlorn thoughts from the forsaken hives of  
all ages,  
swarming in the air, hum round my heart  
and seek my voice.





The desert is imprisoned in the wall  
of its unbounded barrenness.





In the thrill of little leaves  
I see the air's invisible dance,  
and in their glimmering  
the secret heart-beats of the sky.





You are like a flowering tree,  
amazed when I praise you for your gifts.







The earth's sacrificial fire  
flames up in her trees,  
scattering sparks in flowers.





Forests, the clouds of earth,  
hold up to the sky their silence,  
and clouds from above come down  
in resonant showers.





The world speaks to me in pictures,  
my soul answers in music.





The sky tells its beads all night  
on the countless stars  
in memory of the sun.





The darkness of night, like pain, is dumb,  
the darkness of dawn, like peace, is silent.





Pride engraves his frowns in stones,  
love offers her surrender in flowers.





The obsequious brush curtails truth  
in deference to the canvas which is narrow.





The hill in its longing for the far-away sky  
wishes to be like the cloud  
with its endless urge of seeking.







To justify their own spilling of ink  
they spell the day as night.





Profit smiles on goodness  
when the good is profitable.





In its swelling pride  
the bubble doubts the truth of the sea,  
and laughs and bursts into emptiness.





Love is an endless mystery,  
for it has nothing else to explain it.





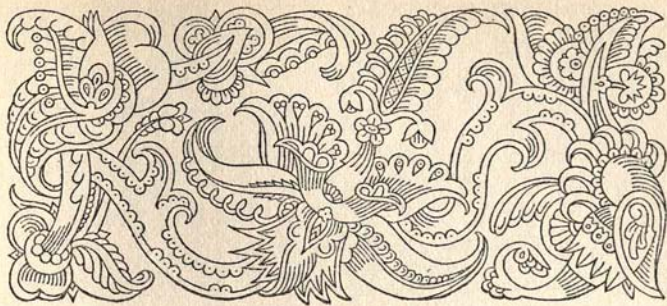
My clouds, sorrowing in the dark,  
forget that they themselves  
have hidden the sun.





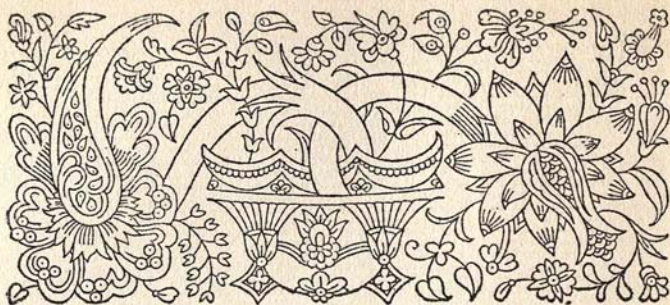
Man discovers his own wealth  
when God comes to ask gifts of him.





You leave your memory as a flame  
to my lonely lamp of separation.





I came to offer thee a flower,  
but thou must have all my garden,—  
It is thine.

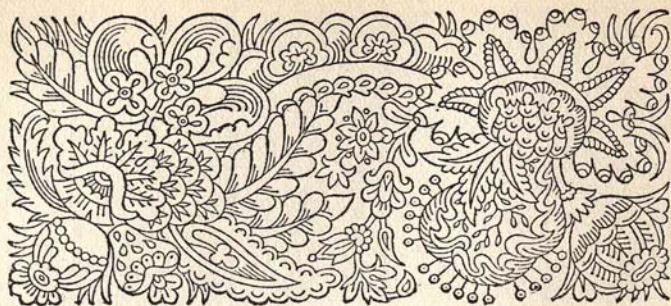






The picture—a memory of light  
treasured by the shadow.





It is easy to make faces at the sun,  
He is exposed by his own light in all  
directions.





Love remains a secret even when spoken,  
for only a lover truly knows that he is loved.









History slowly smothers its truth,  
but hastily struggles to revive it  
in the terrible penance of pain.





My work is rewarded in daily wages,  
I wait for my final value in love.





Beauty knows to say, "Enough,"  
barbarism clamours for still more.







God loves to see in me, not his servant,  
but himself who serves all.





The darkness of night is in harmony with day,  
the morning of mist is discordant.





In the bounteous time of roses love is wine,—  
it is food in the famished hour  
when their petals are shed.





An unknown flower in a strange land  
speaks to the poet:

“Are we not of the same soil, my lover?”





I am able to love my God  
because He gives me freedom to deny Him.





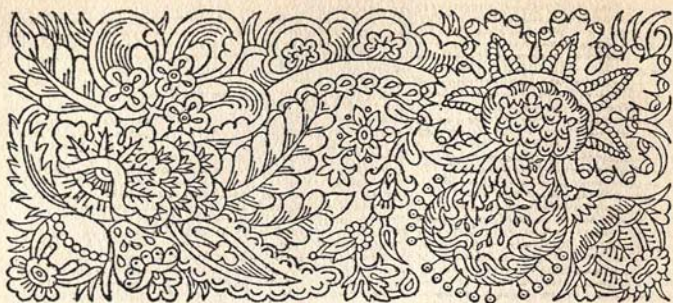
My untuned strings beg for music  
in their anguished cry of shame.





The worm thinks it strange and foolish  
that man does not eat his books.





The clouded sky to-day bears the vision  
of the shadow of a divine sadness  
on the forehead of brooding eternity.







The shade of my tree is for passers-by,  
its fruit for the one for whom I wait.





Flushed with the glow of sunset  
earth seems like a ripe fruit  
ready to be harvested by night.





Light accepts darkness for his spouse  
for the sake of creation.





The reed waits for his master's breath,  
the Master goes seeking for his reed.





To the blind pen the hand that writes is  
unreal,  
its writing unmeaning.





The sea smites his own barren breast  
because he has no flowers to offer to the  
moon.





The greed for fruit misses the flower.





God in His temple of stars  
waits for man to bring him his lamp.

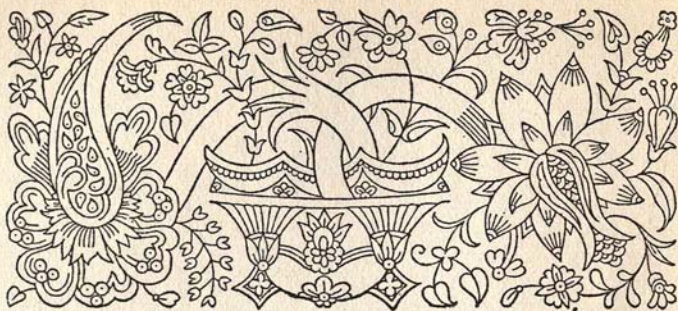






The fire restrained in the tree fashions flowers.  
Released from bonds, the shameless flame  
dies in barren ashes.





The sky sets no snare to capture the moon,  
it is her own freedom which binds her.  
The light that fills the sky  
seeks its limit in a dew-drop on the grass.





Wealth is the burden of bigness,  
Welfare the fulness of being.





The razor-blade is proud of its keenness  
when it sneers at the sun.





The butterfly has leisure to love the lotus,  
not the bee busily storing honey.





Child, thou bringest to my heart  
the babble of the wind and the water,  
the flowers' speechless secrets, the clouds'  
dreams,  
the mute gaze of wonder of the morn-  
ing sky.





The rainbow among the clouds may be great  
but the little butterfly among the bushes is  
greater.





The mist weaves her net round the morning,  
captivates him, and makes him blind.







The Morning Star whispers to Dawn,  
"Tell me that you are only for me."  
"Yes," she answers,  
"And also only for that nameless  
flower."





The sky remains infinitely vacant  
for earth there to build its heaven  
with dreams.





Perhaps the crescent moon smiles in doubt  
at being told that it is a fragment  
awaiting perfection.





Let the evening forgive the mistakes of the  
day  
and thus win peace for herself.





Beauty smiles in the confinement of the bud,  
in the heart of a sweet incompleteness.





Your flitting love lightly brushed with its  
wings  
my sun-flower  
and never asked if it was ready to surrender  
its honey.





Leaves are silences  
around flowers which are their words.





The tree bears its thousand years  
as one large majestic moment.







My offerings are not for the temple at the end  
of the road,  
but for the wayside shrines  
that surprise me at every bend.





Your smile, my love, like the smell of a  
strange flower,  
is simple and inexplicable.





Death laughs when the merit of the dead is  
exaggerated  
for it swells his store with more than he can  
claim.





The sigh of the shore follows in vain  
the breeze that hastens the ship  
across the sea.





Truth loves its limits,  
for there it meets the beautiful.





Between the shores of Me and Thee  
there is the loud ocean, my own surging  
self,  
which I long to cross.





The right to possess boasts foolishly  
of its right to enjoy.

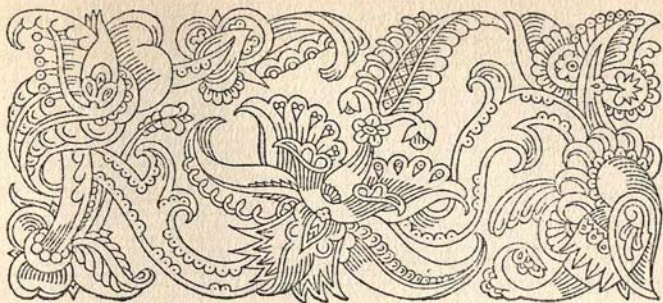




The rose is a great deal more  
than a blushing apology for the thorn.

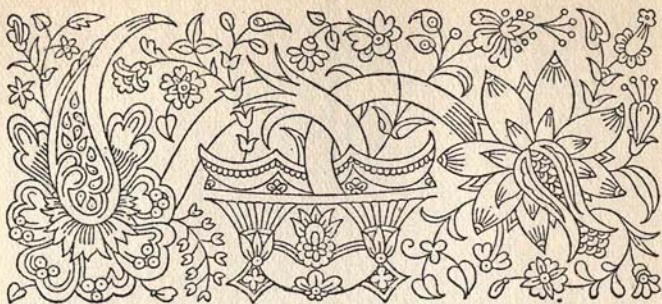






Day offers to the silence of stars  
his golden lute to be tuned  
for the endless life.





The wise know how to teach,  
the fool how to smite.





The centre is still and silent in the heart  
of an eternal dance of circles.









The judge thinks that he is just when he  
compares  
the oil of another's lamp  
with the light of his own.





The captive flower in the King's wreath  
smiles bitterly when the meadow-flower  
envies her.





Its store of snow is the hill's own burden,  
its outpouring of streams is borne by all the  
world.







Listen to the prayer of the forest  
for its freedom in flowers.





Let your love see me  
even through the barrier of nearness.





The spirit of work in creation is there  
to carry and help the spirit of play.





To carry the burden of the instrument,  
count the cost of its material,  
and never to know that it is for music,  
is the tragedy of deaf life.





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





I bring to thee, night, my day's empty cup,  
to be cleansed with thy cool darkness  
for a new morning's festival.





The mountain fir, in its rustling,  
modulates the memory of its fights with the  
storm  
into a hymn of peace.





God honoured me with his fight  
when I was rebellious,  
He ignored me when I was languid.

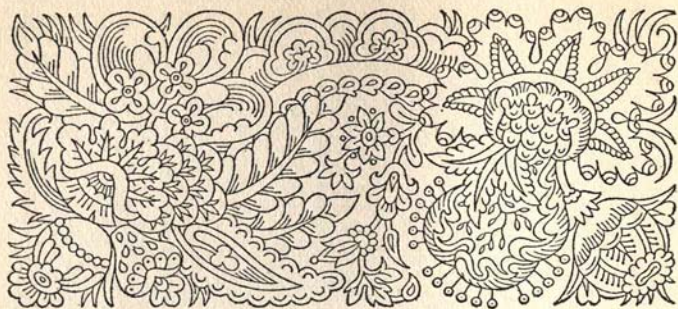






The sectarian thinks  
that he has the sea  
ladled into his private pond.





In the shady depth of life  
are the lonely nests of memories  
that shrink from words.





Let my love find its strength  
in the service of day,  
its peace in the union of night.





Life sends up in blades of grass  
its silent hymn of praise  
to the unnamed Light.





The stars of night are to me  
the memorials of my day's faded flowers.





Open thy door to that which must go,  
for the loss becomes unseemly when  
obstructed.





True end is not in the reaching of the limit,  
but in a completion which is limitless.





The shore whispers to the sea:

“Write to me what thy waves struggle to  
say.”

The sea writes in foam again and again  
and wipes off the lines in a boisterous  
despair.







Let the touch of thy finger thrill my life's  
strings  
and make the music thine and mine.





The inner world rounded in my life like a  
fruit,  
matured in joy and sorrow,  
will drop into the darkness of the orig-  
inal soil  
for some further course of creation.





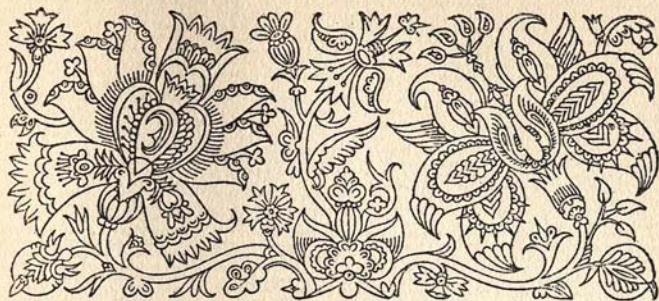
Form is in Matter, rhythm in Force,  
meaning in the Person.





There are seekers of wisdom and seekers of  
wealth,  
I seek thy company so that I may sing.



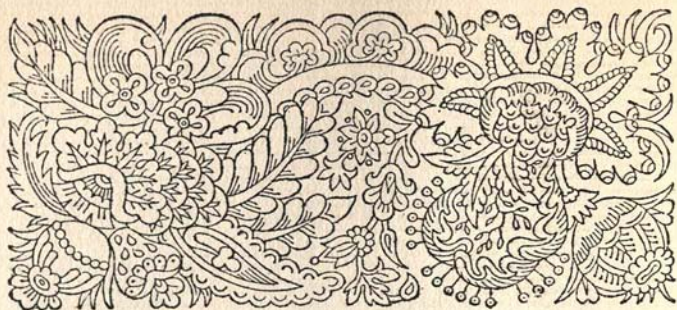


As the tree its leaves, I shed my words on the  
earth,  
let my thoughts unuttered flower in thy  
silence.









My faith in truth, my vision of the perfect,  
help thee, Master, in thy creation.







All the delights that I have felt  
in life's fruits and flowers  
let me offer to thee at the end of the feast,  
in a perfect union of love.





Some have thought deeply and explored the  
    meaning of thy truth,  
and they are great;  
I have listened to catch the music of thy  
    play,  
and I am glad.





The tree is a winged spirit  
released from the bondage of seed,  
pursuing its adventure of life  
across the unknown.





The lotus offers its beauty to the heaven,  
the grass its service to the earth.





The sun's kiss mellows into abandonment  
the miserliness of the green fruit clinging  
to its stem.





The flame met the earthen lamp in me,  
and what a great marvel of light!





Mistakes live in the neighbourhood of truth  
and therefore delude us.





The cloud laughed at the rainbow  
saying that it was an upstart  
gaudy in its emptiness.

The rainbow calmly answered,  
"I am as inevitably real as the sun himself."







Let me not grope in vain in the dark  
but keep my mind still in the faith  
that the day will break  
and truth will appear  
in its simplicity.





Through the silent night  
I hear the returning vagrant hopes of the  
morning  
knock at my heart.





My new love comes  
bringing to me the eternal wealth of the  
old.





The earth gazes at the moon and wonders  
that she should have all her music in her  
smile.





Day with its glare of curiosity  
puts the stars to flight.





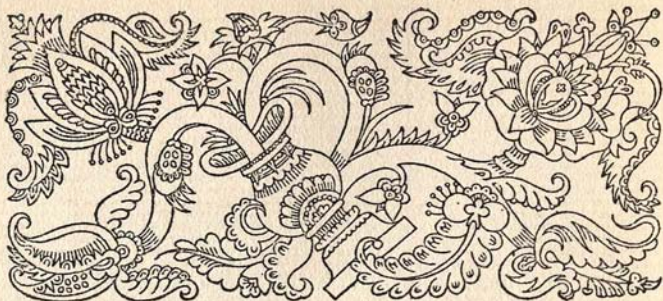
My mind has its true union with thee, O sky,  
at the window which is mine own,  
and not in the open  
where thou hast thy sole kingdom.





Man claims God's flowers as his own  
when he weaves them in a garland.





The buried city, laid bare to the sun of a new  
age,  
is ashamed that it has lost all its songs.







Like my heart's pain that has long missed its  
    meaning,  
the sun's rays robed in dark  
hide themselves under the ground.

Like my heart's pain at love's sudden touch,  
they change their veil at the spring's call  
and come out in the carnival of colours,  
    in flowers and leaves.





My life's empty flute  
waits for its final music  
like the primal darkness  
before the stars came out.





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





The tapestry of life's story is woven  
with the threads of life's ties  
ever joining and breaking.





Those thoughts of mine that are never cap-  
tured by words  
perch upon my songs and dance.





My soul to-night loses itself  
in the silent heart of a tree  
standing alone among the whispers of  
immensity.



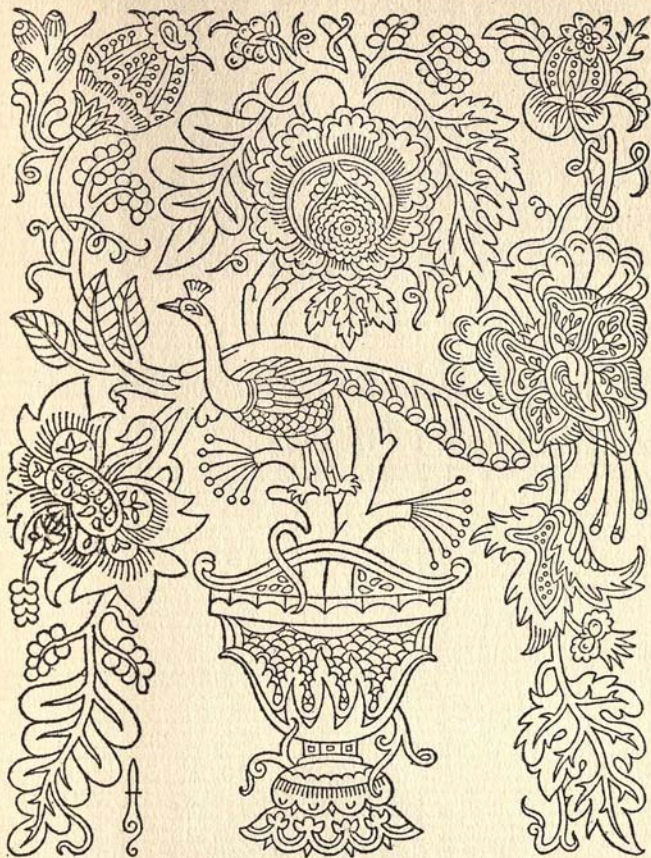


Pearl shells cast up by the sea  
on death's barren beach,—  
a magnificent wastefulness of creative life.





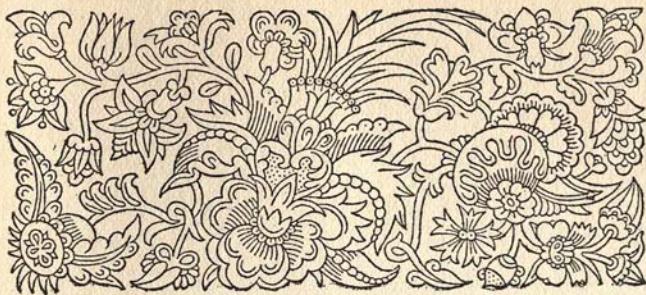






The sunlight opens for me the world's gate,  
love's light its treasure.





My life like the reed with its stops,  
has its play of colours  
through the gaps in its hopes and gains.





Let not my thanks to thee  
rob my silence of its fuller homage.





Life's aspirations come  
in the guise of children.





The faded flower sighs  
that the spring has vanished for ever.





In my life's garden  
my wealth has been of the shadows and  
lights  
that are never gathered and stored.





The fruit that I have gained for ever  
is that which thou hast accepted.







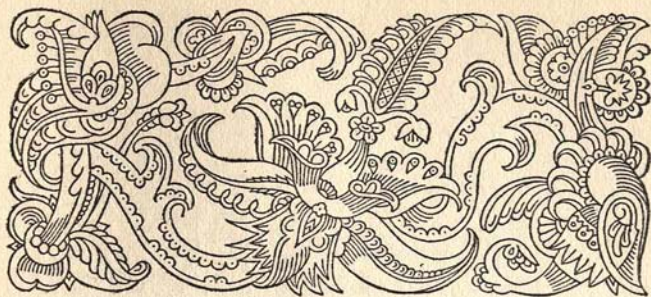
The jasmine knows the sun to be her brother  
in the heaven.





Light is young, the ancient light;  
shadows are of the moment, they are born  
old.





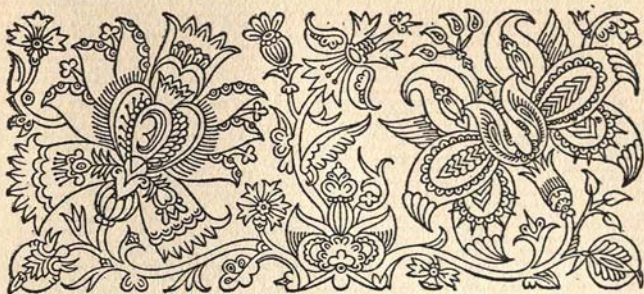
I feel that the ferry of my songs at the day's  
end  
will bring me across to the other shore  
from where I shall see.





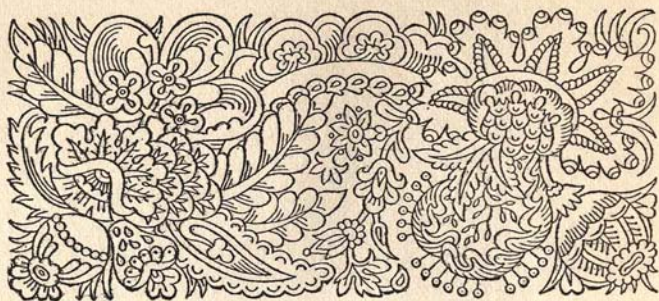
The butterfly flitting from flower to flower  
ever remains mine,  
I lose the one that is netted by me.





Your voice, free bird, reaches my sleeping  
nest,  
and my drowsy wings dream  
of a voyage to the light  
above the clouds.





I miss the meaning of my own part  
in the play of life  
because I know not of the parts  
that others play.





The flower sheds all its petals  
and finds the fruit.





I leave my songs behind me  
to the bloom of the ever-returning honey-  
suckles  
and the joy of the wind from the south.







Dead leaves when they lose themselves in soil  
take part in the life of the forest.





The mind ever seeks its words  
from its sounds and silence  
as the sky from its darkness and light.





The unseen dark plays on his flute  
and the rhythm of light  
eddy into stars and suns,  
into thoughts and dreams.





My songs are to sing  
that I have loved Thy singing.





When the voice of the Silent touches my  
words  
I know him and therefore I know myself.





My last salutations are to them  
who knew me imperfect and loved me.





Love's gift cannot be given,  
it waits to be accepted.

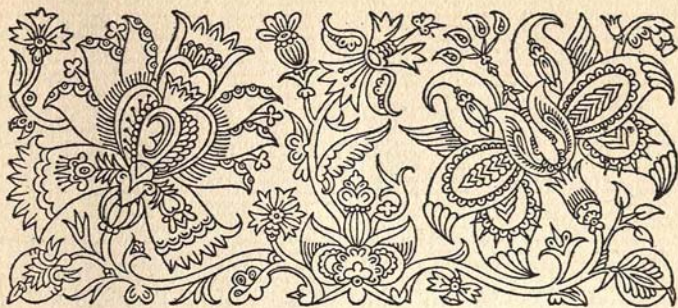




When death comes and whispers to me,  
    "Thy days are ended,"  
let me say to him, "I have lived in love  
    and not in mere time."  
He will ask, "Will thy songs remain?"  
I shall say, "I know not, but this I know  
that often when I sang I found my eternity."

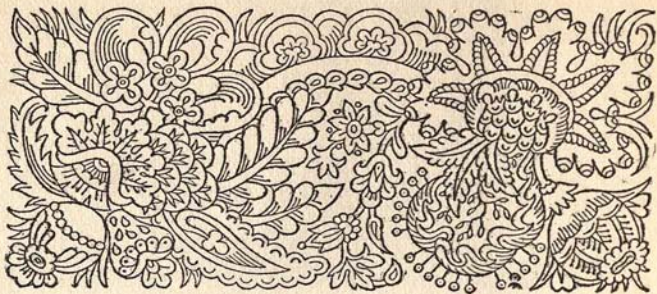






“Let me light my lamp,”  
says the star,  
“And never debate  
if it will help to remove the darkness.”





Before the end of my journey  
may I reach within myself  
the one which is the all,  
leaving the outer shell  
to float away with the drifting multitude  
upon the current of chance and change.

