



SRI AUROBINDO

# LOVE AND DEATH

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BY  
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## LOVE AND DEATH

IN woodlands of the bright and early world,  
When love was to himself yet new and warm  
And stainless, played like morning with a flower  
Ruru with his young bride Priyumvada.  
Fresh-cheeked and dew-eyed white Priyumvada  
Opened her budded heart of crimson bloom  
To love, to Ruru; Ruru, a happy flood  
Of passion round a lotus dancing thrilled,  
Blinded with his soul's waves Priyumvada.  
To him the earth was a bed for this sole flower,  
To her all the world was filled with his embrace.  
Wet with new rains the morning earth, released  
From her fierce centuries and burning suns,  
Lavished her breath in greenness; poignant flowers  
Thronged all her eager breast, and her young arms  
Cradled a childlike bounding life that played  
And would not cease, nor ever weary grew  
Of her bright promise; for all was joy and breeze  
And perfume, colour and bloom and ardent rays  
Of living, and delight desired the world.  
Then Earth was quick and pregnant tamelessly;  
A free and unwall'd race possessed her plains  
Whose hearts uncramped by bonds, whose unspoiled thoughts  
At once replied to light. Foisoned (sic) the fields;  
Lonely and rich the forests and the swaying  
Of those unnumbered tops affected men  
With thoughts to their vast music kin. Undammed  
The virgin rivers moved towards the sea,  
And mountains yet unseen and peoples vague  
Winged young imagination like an eagle  
To strange beauty remote. And Ruru felt  
The sweetness of the early earth as sap  
All through him, and short life an aeon made p. 2  
By boundless possibility, and love,  
Sweetest of all unfathomable love,  
A glory untired. As a bright bird comes flying  
From airy extravagance to his own home,  
And breasts his mate, and feels her all his goal,  
So from boon sunlight and the fresh chill wave  
Which swirled and lapped between the slumbering fields,

From forest pools and wanderings mid leaves  
Through emerald ever-new discoveries,  
Mysterious hillsides ranged and buoyant-swift  
Races with our wild brothers in the meads,  
Came Ruru back to the white-bosomed girl,  
Strong-winged to pleasure. She all fresh and new  
Rose to him, and he plunged into her charm.  
For neither to her honey and poignancy  
Artlessly interchanged, nor any limit  
To the sweet physical delight of her  
He found. Her eyes like deep and infinite wells  
Lured his attracted soul, and her touch thrilled  
Not lightly, though so light; the joy prolonged  
And sweetness of the lingering of her lips  
Was every time a nectar of surprise  
To her lover; her smooth-gleaming shoulder bared  
In darkness of her hair showed jasmine-bright,  
While her kissed bosom by rich tumults stirred  
Was a moved sea that rocked beneath his heart,  
Then when her lips had made him blind, soft siege  
Of all her unseen body to his rule  
Betrayed the ravishing realm of her white limbs,  
An empire for the glory of a God.  
He knew not whether he loved most her smile,  
Her causeless tears or little angers swift,  
Whether held wet against him from the bath  
Among her kindred lotuses, her cheeks  
Soft to his lips and dangerous happy breasts  
That vanquished all his strength with their desire,  
Meeting his absence with her sudden face,  
Or when the leaf-hid bird at night complained  
Near their wreathed arbour on the moonlit lake,  
Sobbing delight out from her heart of bliss, p. 3  
Or in his clasp of rapture laughing low  
Of his close bosom bridal-glad and pleased  
With passion and this fiery play of love,  
Or breaking off like one who thinks of grief,  
Wonderful melancholy in her eyes  
Grown liquid and with wayward sorrow large,  
Thus he in her found a warm world of sweets,  
And lived of ecstasy secure, nor deemed  
Any new hour could match that early bliss.

But Love has joys for spirits born divine  
More bleeding-lovely than his thornless rose.  
That day he had left, while yet the east was dark,  
Rising, her bosom and into the river  
Swam out, exulting in the sting and swift  
Sharp-edged desire around his limbs, and sprang  
Wet to the bank, and streamed into the wood.  
As a young horse upon the pastures glad  
Feels greensward and the wind along his mane  
And arches as he goes his neck, so went  
In an immense delight of youth the boy  
And shook his locks, joy-crested. Boundlessly  
He revelled in swift air of life, a creature  
Of wide and vigorous morning. Far he strayed  
Tempting for flower and fruit branches in heaven,  
And plucked, and flung away, and brighter chose,  
Seeking comparisons for her bloom; and followed  
New streams, and touched new trees, and felt slow beauty  
And leafy secret change; for the damp leaves,  
Grey-green at first, grew pallid with the light  
And warmed with consciousness of sunshine near;  
Then the whole daylight wandered in, and made  
Hard tracts of splendour, and enriched all hues.  
But when a happy sheltered heat he felt  
And heard contented voice of living things  
Harmonious with the noon, he turned and swiftly  
Went homeward yearning to Priyumvada,  
And near his home emerging from green leaves  
He laughed towards the sun: "O father Sun,"  
He cried, "how good it is to live, to love!  
Surely our joy shall never end, nor we p. 4  
Grow old, but like bright rivers or pure winds  
Sweetly continue, or revive with flowers,  
Or live at least as long as senseless trees."  
He dreamed, and said with a soft smile: "Lo, she!  
And she will turn from me with angry tears  
Her delicate face more beautiful than storm  
Or rainy moonlight. I will follow her,  
And soothe her heart with sovereign flatteries;  
Or rather all tyranny exhaust and taste  
The beauty of her anger like a fruit,  
Vexing her soul with helplessness; then soften

Easily with quiet undenied demand  
Of heart insisting upon heart; or else  
Will reinvest her beauty bright with flowers,  
Or with my hands her little feet persuade.  
Then will her face be like a sudden dawn,  
And flower compelled into reluctant smiles."  
He had not ceased when he beheld her. She,  
Tearing a jasmine bloom with waiting hands,  
Stood drooping, petulant, but heard at once  
His footsteps and before she was aware,  
A sudden smile of exquisite delight  
Leaped to her mouth, and a great blush of joy  
Surprised her cheeks. She for a moment stood  
Beautiful with her love before she died;  
And he laughed towards her. With a pitiful cry  
She paled; moaning, her stricken limbs collapsed.  
But petrified, in awful dumb surprise,  
He gazed; then waking with a bound was by her,  
All panic expectation. As he came,  
He saw a brilliant flash of coils evade  
The sunlight, and with hateful gorgeous hood  
Darted into green safety, hissing, death.  
Voiceless he sank beside her and stretched out  
His arms and desperately touched her face,  
As if to attract her soul to live, and sought  
Beseeching with his hands her bosom. O, she  
Was warm, and cruel hope pierced him; but pale  
As jasmines fading on a girl's sweet breast  
Her cheek was, and forgot its perfect rose. p. 5  
Her eyes that clung to sunlight yet, with pain  
Were large and feebly round his neck her arms  
She lifted and, desiring his pale cheek  
Against her bosom, sobbed out piteously,  
"Ah, love!" and stopped heart-broken; then, "O Love!  
Alas the green dear home that I must leave  
So early! I was so glad of love and kisses,  
And thought that centuries would not exhaust  
The deep embrace. And I have had so little  
Of joy and the wild day and throbbing night,  
Laughter, and tenderness, and strife and tears.  
I have not numbered half the brilliant birds  
In one green forest, nor am familiar grown

With sunrise and the progress of the eves,  
Nor have with plaintive cries of birds made friends,  
Cuckoo and rainlark and love-speak-to-me.  
I have not learned the names of half the flowers  
Around me; so few trees know me by my name;  
Nor have I seen the stars so very often  
That I should die. I feel a dreadful hand  
Drawing me from the touch of thy warm limbs  
Into some cold vague mist, and all black night  
Descends towards me. I no more am thine,  
But go I know not where, and see pale shapes  
And gloomy countries and that terrible stream.  
O Love, O Love, they take me from thee far,  
And whether we shall find each other ever  
In the wide dreadful territory of death,  
I know not. Or thou wilt forget me quite,  
And life compel thee into other arms.  
Ah, come with me! I cannot bear to wander  
In that cold cruel country all alone,  
Helpless and terrified, or sob by streams  
Denied sweet sunlight and by thee unloved."  
Slower her voice came now, and over her cheek  
Death paused; then, sobbing like a little child  
Too early from her bounding pleasures called,  
The lovely discontented spirit stole  
From her warm body white. Over her leaned  
Ruru, and waited for dead lips to move. p. 6  
Still in the greenwood lay Priyumvada,  
And Ruru rose not from her, but with eyes  
Emptied of glory hung above his dead,  
Only, without a word, without a tear.  
Then the crowned wives of the great forest came,  
They who had fed her from maternal breasts,  
And grieved over the lovely body cold,  
And bore it from him; nor did he entreat  
One last look nor one kiss, nor yet denied  
What he had loved so well. They the dead girl  
Into some distant greenness bore away.

But Ruru, while the stillness of the place  
Remembered her, sat without voice. He heard  
Through the great silence that was now his soul,



The forest sounds, a squirrel's leap through leaves,  
The cheeping of a bird just overhead,  
A peacock with his melancholy cry  
Complaining far away, and tossings dim  
And slight unnoticeable stir of trees.  
But all these were to him like distant things  
And he alone in his heart's void. And yet  
No thought he had of her so lately lost,  
Rather far pictures, trivial incidents  
Of that old life before her delicate face  
Had lived for him, dumbly distinct like thoughts  
Of men that die, kept with long pomps his mind  
Excluding the dead girl. So still he was,  
The birds flashed by him with their swift small wings,  
Fanning him. Then he moved, then rigorous  
Memory through all his body shuddering  
Awoke, and he looked up and knew the place,  
And recognised greenness immutable,  
And saw old trees and the same flowers still bloom.  
He felt the bright indifference of earth  
And all the lonely uselessness of pain.  
Then lifting up the beauty of his brow  
He spoke, with sorrow pale: "O grim cold Death!  
But I will not like ordinary men  
Sate thee with cries, and falsely woo thee, p. 7  
And make my grief thy theatre, who lie  
Prostrate beneath thy thunderbolts and make  
Night witness of their moans, shuddering and crying  
When sudden memories pierce them like swords,  
And often starting up as at a thought  
Intolerable, pace a little, then  
Sink down exhausted by brief agony.  
O secrecy terrific, darkness vast,  
At which we shudder! Somewhere, I know not where,  
Somehow, I know not how, I shall confront  
Thy gloom, tremendous spirit, and seize with hands  
And prove what thou art and what man." He said,  
And slowly to the forests wandered. There  
Long months he travelled between grief and grief,  
Reliving thoughts of her with every pace,  
Measuring vast pain in his immortal mind.  
And his heart cried in him as when a fire

Roars through wide forests and the branches cry  
Burning towards heaven in torture glorious.  
So burned, immense, his grief within him; he raised  
His young pure face all solemnised with pain,  
Voiceless. Then Fate was shaken, and the Gods  
Grieved for him, of his silence grown afraid.  
Therefore from peaks divine came flashing down  
Immortal Agni and to the Uswuttha-tree  
Cried in the Voice that slays the world: "O tree  
That liftest thy enormous branches able  
To shelter armies, more than armies now  
Shelter, be famous, house a brilliant God.  
For the grief grows in Ruru's breast up-piled,  
As wrestles with its anguished barricades  
In silence an impending flood, and Gods  
Immortal grow afraid. For earth alarmed  
Shudders to bear the curse lest her young life  
Pale with eclipse and all-creating love  
Be to mere pain condemned. Divert the wrath  
Into thy boughs, Uswuttha—thou shalt be  
My throne—glorious, though in eternal pain,  
Yet worth much pain to harbour divine fire."  
So ended the young pure destroyer's voice, p. 8  
And the dumb god consented silently.  
In the same noon came Ruru; his mind had paused,  
Lured for a moment by soft wandering gleams  
Into forgetfulness of pain; for thoughts  
Gentle and near-eyed whispering memories  
So sweetly came, his blind heart dreamed she lived.  
Slow the Uswuttha-tree bent down its leaves,  
And smote his cheek, and touched his heavy hair.  
And Ruru turned illumined. For a moment,  
One blissful moment he had felt 'twas she.  
So had she often stolen up and touched  
His curls with her enamoured fingers small,  
Lingering, while the wind smote him with her hair  
And her quick breath came to him like spring. Then he,  
Turning, as one surprised with heaven, saw  
Ready to his swift passionate grasp her bosom  
And body sweet expecting his embrace.  
Oh, now saw her not, but the guilty tree  
Shrinking; then grief back with a double crown

Arose and stained his face with agony.  
Nor silence he endured, but the dumb force  
Ascetic and inherited, by sires  
Fierce-musing earned, from the boy's bosom blazed.  
"O Uswuttha-tree, wantonly who hast mocked  
My anguish with the wind, but thou no more  
Have joy of the cool wind nor green delight,  
But live thy guilty leaves in fire, so long  
As Aryan wheels by thy doomed shadow vast  
Thunder to war, nor bless with cool wide waves  
Lyric Saruswathi nations impure."  
He spoke, and the vast tree groaned through its leaves,  
Recognising its fate; then smouldered; lines  
Of living fire rushed up the girth and hissed  
Serpentine in the unconsuming leaves;  
Last, all Hutashan in his chariot armed  
Sprang on the boughs and blazed into the sky,  
And wailing all the great tormented creature  
Stood wide in agony; one half was green  
And earthly, the other a weird brilliance  
Filled with the speed and cry of endless flame. p. 9  
But he, with the fierce rushing-out of power  
Shaken and that strong grasp of anguish, flung  
His hands out to the sun; "Priyumvada!"  
He cried, and at that well-loved sound there dawned  
With overwhelming sweetness miserable  
Upon his mind the old delightful times  
When he had called her by her liquid name,  
Where the voice loved to linger. He remembered  
The chompuc bushes where she turned away  
Half-angered, and his speaking of her name  
Masterfully as to a lovely slave  
Rebellious who has erred; at that the slow  
Yielding of her small head, and after a little  
Her sliding towards him and beautiful  
Propitiating body as she sank down  
With timid graspings deprecatingly  
In prostrate warm surrender, her flushed cheeks  
Upon his feet and little touches soft;  
Or her long name uttered beseechingly,  
And the swift leap of all her body to him,  
And eyes of large repentance, and the weight

Of her wild bosom and lips unsatisfied;  
Or hourly call for little trivial needs,  
Or sweet unneeded wanton summoning,  
Daily appeal that never staled nor lost  
Its sudden music, and her lovely speed,  
Sedulous occupation left, quick-breathing,  
With great glad eyes and eager parted lips;  
Or in deep quiet moments murmuring  
That name like a religion in her ear,  
And her calm look compelled to ecstasy;  
Or to the river luring her, or breathed  
Over her dainty slumber, or secret sweet  
Bridal outpourings of her broken name.  
All these as rush unintermitting waves  
Upon a swimmer overborne, broke on him  
Relentless, things too happy to be endured,  
Till faint with the recalled felicity  
Low he moaned out: "O pale Priyuvada!  
O dead fair flower! yet living to my grief! p. 10  
But I could only slay the innocent tree,  
Powerless when power should have been. Not such  
Was Bhrigu from whose sacred strength I spring,  
Nor Bhrigu's son, my father, when he blazed  
Out from Puloma's side, and burning, blind,  
Fell like a tree the ravisher unjust.  
But I degenerate from such sires. O Death  
That showest not thy face beneath the stars,  
But comest masked, and on our dear ones seizing  
Fearest to wrestle equally with love!  
Nor from thy gloomy house any come back  
To tell thy way. But O, if any strength  
In lover's constancy to torture dwell  
Earthward to force a helping god and such  
Ascetic force be born of lover's pain,  
Let my dumb pangs be heard. Whoe'er thou art,  
O thou bright enemy of Death descend  
And lead me to that portal dim. For I  
Have burned in fires cruel as the fire  
And lain upon a sharper couch than swords."  
He ceased, and heaven thrilled, and the far blue  
Quivered as with invisible downward wings.

But Ruru passioned on, and came with eve  
To secret grass and a green opening moist  
In a cool lustre. Leaned upon a tree  
That bathed in faery air and saw the sky  
Through branches, and a single parrot loud  
Screamed from its top, there stood a golden boy,  
Half-naked, with bright limbs all beautiful—  
Delicate they were, in sweetness absolute:  
For every gleam and every soft strong curve  
Magically compelled the eye, and smote  
The heart to weakness. In his hands he swung  
A bow—not such as human archers use:  
For the string moved and murmured like many bees,  
And nameless fragrance made the casual air  
A peril. He on Ruru that fair face  
Turned, and his steps with lovely gesture chained.  
"Who art thou here, in forests wandering,p. 11  
And thy young exquisite face is solemnised  
With pain? Luxuriously the Gods have tortured  
Thy heart to see such dreadful glorious beauty  
Agonize in thy lips and brilliant eyes:  
As tyrants in the fierceness of others' pangs  
Joy and feel strong, clothing with brilliant fire,  
Tyrants in Titan lands. Needs must her mouth  
Have been pure honey and her bosom a charm,  
Whom thou desirest seeing not the green  
And common lovely sounds hast quite forgot."  
And Ruru, mastered by the God, replied:  
"I know thee by thy cruel beauty bright,  
Kama, who makest many worlds one fire.  
Ah, wherefore wilt thou ask of her to increase  
The passion and regret? Thou knowest, great love!  
Thy nymph her mother, if thou truly art he  
And not a dream of my disastrous soul."  
But with the thrilled eternal smile that makes  
The spring, the lover of Rathi golden-limbed  
Replied to Ruru, "Mortal, I am he;  
I am that Madan who inform the stars  
With lustre and on life's wide canvas fill  
Pictures of light and shade, of joy and tears,  
Make ordinary moments wonderful  
And common speech a charm: knit life to life

With interfusions of opposing souls  
And sudden meetings and slow sorceries:  
Wing the boy bridegroom to that panting breast,  
Smite Gods with mortal faces, dreadfully  
Among great beautiful kings and watched by eyes  
That burn, force on the virgin's fainting limbs  
And drive her to the one face never seen,  
The one breast meant eternally for her.  
By me come wedded sweets, by me the wife's  
Busy delight and passionate obedience,  
And loving eager service never sated,  
And happy lips, and worshipping soft eyes:  
And mine the husband's hungry arms and use  
Unwearying of old tender words and ways,  
Joy of her hair, and silent pleasure felt p. 12  
Of nearness to one dear familiar shape.  
Nor only these, but many affections bright  
And soft glad things cluster around my name.  
I plant fraternal tender yearnings, make  
The sister's sweet attractiveness and leap  
Of heart towards imperious kindred blood,  
And the young mother's passionate deep look,  
Earth's high similitude of One not earth,  
Teach filial heart-beats strong. These are my gifts  
For which men praise me, these my glories calm:  
But fiercer shafts I can, wild storms blown down  
Shaking fixed minds and melting marble natures,  
Tears and dumb bitterness and pain unpitied,  
Racked thirsting jealousy and kind hearts made stone:  
And in undisciplined huge souls I sow  
Dire vengeance and impossible cruelties,  
Cold lusts that linger and fierce fickleness,  
The loves close kin to hate, brute violence  
And mad insatiable longings pale,  
And passion blind as death and deaf as swords.  
O mortal, all deep-souled desires and all  
Yearnings immense are mine, so much I can."  
So as he spoke, his face grew wonderful  
With vast suggestion, his human-seeming limbs  
Brightened with a soft splendour: luminous hints  
Of the concealed divinity transpired.  
But soon with a slight discontented frown:

"So much I can, as even the great Gods learn.  
Only with death I wrestle in vain, until  
My passionate godhead all becomes a doubt.  
Mortal, I am the light in stars, of flowers  
The bloom, the nameless fragrance that pervades  
Creation: but behind me, older than me,  
He comes with night and cold tremendous shade.  
Hard is the way to him, most hard to find,  
Harder to tread, for perishable feet  
Almost impossible. Yet, O fair youth,  
If thou must needs go down, and thou art strong  
In passion and in constancy, nor easy  
The soul to slay that has survived such grief p. 13  
Steel then thyself to venture, armed by Love.  
Yet listen first what heavy trade they drive  
Who would win back their dead to human arms."  
So much the God; but swift, with eager eyes  
And panting bosom and glorious flushed face,  
The lover: "O great Love! O beautiful Love!  
But if by strength is possible, of body  
Or mind, battle or spirit or moving speech,  
Sweet speech that makes even cruelty grow kind,  
Or yearning melody—for I have heard  
That when Saruswathi in heaven her harp  
Has smitten, the cruel sweetness terrible  
Coils taking no denial through the soul,  
And tears burst from the hearts of Gods—then I,  
Making great music, or with perfect words,  
Will strive, or staying him with desperate hands  
Match human strength 'gainst formidable Death.  
But if with price, ah God! what easier! Tears  
Dreadful, innumerable I will absolve,  
Or pay with anguish through the centuries,  
Soul's agony and torture physical,  
So her small hands about my face at last  
I feel, close real hair sting me with life,  
And palpable breathing bosom on me press."  
Then with a lenient smile the mighty God:  
"O ignorant fond lover, not with tears  
Shalt thou persuade immitigable Death.  
He will not pity all thy pangs: nor know  
His stony eyes with music to grow kind,

Nor lovely words accepts. And how wilt thou  
Wrestle with that grim shadow, who canst not save  
One bloom from fading? A sole thing the Gods  
Demand from all men living, sacrifice:  
Nor without this shall any crown be grasped.  
Yet many sacrifices are there, oxen,  
And prayers, and Soma wine, and pious flowers,  
Blood and the fierce expense of mind, and pure  
Incense of perfect actions, perfect thoughts,  
Or liberality wide as the sun's,  
Or ruthless labour or disastrous tears,p. 14  
Exile or death or pain more hard than death,  
Absence, a desert, from the faces loved;  
Even sin may be a sumptuous sacrifice  
Acceptable for unholy fruits. But none  
Of these the inexorable shadow asks:  
Alone of gods Death loves not gifts: he visits  
The pure heart as the stained. Lo, the just man  
Bowed helpless over his dead, nor all his virtues  
Shall quicken that cold bosom: near him the wild  
Marred face and passionate and will not leave  
Kissing dead lips that shall not chide him more.  
Life the pale ghost requires: with half thy life  
Thou mayst protract the thread too early cut  
Of that delightful spirit—half sweet life.  
O Ruru, lo, thy frail precarious days,  
And yet how sweet they are! simply to breathe  
How warm and sweet! And ordinary things  
How exquisite, thou then shalt learn when lost,  
How luminous the daylight was, mere sleep  
How soft and friendly clasping tired limbs,  
And the deliciousness of common food.  
And things indifferent thou then shalt want,  
Regret rejected beauty, brightnesses  
Bestowed in vain. Wilt thou yield up, O lover,  
Half thy sweet portion of this light and gladness,  
Thy little insufficient share, and vainly  
Give to another? She is not thyself:  
Thou dost not feel the gladness in her bosom,  
Nor with the torture of thy body will she  
Throb and cry out: at most with tender looks  
And pitiful attempt to feel move near thee,



And weep how far she is from what she loves.  
Men live like stars that see each other in heaven,  
But one knows not the pleasure and the grief  
The others feel: he lonely rapture has,  
Or bears his incommunicable pain.  
O Ruru, there are many beautiful faces,  
But one thyself. Think then how thou shalt mourn  
When thou hast shortened joy and feelst at last  
The shadow that thou hadst for such sweet store." p. 15  
He ceased with a strange doubtful look. But swift  
Came back the lover's voice, like passionate rain.  
"O idle words! For what is mere sunlight?  
Who would live on into extreme old age,  
Burden the impatient world, a weary old man,  
And look back on a selfish time ill-spent  
Exacting out of prodigal great life  
Small separate pleasures like an usurer,  
And no rich sacrifice and no large act  
Finding oneself in others, nor the sweet  
Expense of Nature in her passionate gusts  
Of love and giving, first of the soul's needs?  
Who is so coldly wise, and does not feel  
How wasted were our grandiose human days  
In prudent personal unshared delights?  
Why dost thou mock me, friend of all the stars?  
How canst thou be love's god and know not this,  
That love burns down the body's barriers cold  
And laughs at difference—playing with it merely  
To make joy sweeter? O too deeply I know,  
The lover is not different from the loved,  
Nor is their silence dumb to each other. He  
Contains her heart and feels her body in his,  
He flushes with her heat, chills with her cold.  
And when she dies, oh! when she dies, oh me,  
The emptiness, the maim! the life no life,  
The sweet and passionate oneness lost! And if  
By shortening of great grief won back, O price  
Easy! O glad briefness, aeons may envy!  
For we shall live not fearing death, nor feel  
As others yearning over the loved at night  
When the lamp flickers, sudden chills of dread  
Terrible; nor at short absence agonise,

Wrestling with mad imagination. Us  
Serenely when the darkening shadow comes,  
One common sob shall end and soul clasp soul,  
Leaving the body in a long dim kiss.  
Then in the joys of heaven we shall consort,  
Amid the gladness often touching hands  
To make bliss sure; or in the ghastly stream p. 16  
If we must anguish, yet it shall not part  
Our passionate limbs inextricably locked  
By one strong agony, but we shall feel  
Hell's pain half joy through sweet companionship.  
God Love, I weary of words. O wing me rather  
To her, my eloquent princess of the spring,  
In whatsoever wintry shores she roam."  
He ceased with eager forward eyes; once more  
A light of beauty immortal through the limbs  
Gleaming of the boy-god and soft sweet face,  
Glorifying him, flushed, and he replied:  
"Go then, O thou dear youth, and bear this flower  
In thy hand warily. For thou shalt come  
To that high meeting of the Ganges pure  
With vague and violent Ocean. There arise  
And loudly appeal my brother, the wild sea."  
He spoke and stretched out his immortal hand,  
And Ruru's met it. All his young limbs yearned  
With dreadful rapture shuddering through them. He  
Felt in his fingers subtle uncertain bloom,  
A quivering magnificence, half fire,  
Whose petals changed like flame, and from them breathed  
Dangerous attraction and alarmed delight,  
As at a peril near. He raised his eyes,  
But the green place was empty of the God.  
Only the faery tree looked up at heaven  
Through branches, and with recent pleasure shook.  
Then over fading earth the night was lord.

But from Shatudru and Bipasha, streams  
Once holy, and loved Iravathi and swift  
Clear Chandrabhaga and Bitosta's toil  
For man, went Ruru to bright sumptuous lands  
By Aryan fathers not yet paced, but wild,  
But virgin to our fruitful human toil,

Where nature lay reclined in dumb delight  
Alone with woodlands and the voiceless hills.  
He with the widening yellow Ganges came,  
Amazed, to trackless countries where few tribes,  
Kirath and Poundrian, warred, worshipping trees p. 17  
And the great serpent. But robust wild earth,  
But forests with their splendid life of beasts  
Savage mastered those strong inhabitants.  
Thither came Ruru. In a thin soft eve  
Ganges spread far her multitudinous waves,  
A glimmering restlessness with voices large,  
And from the forests of that half-seen bank  
A boat came heaving over it, white-winged,  
With a sole silent helmsman marble-pale.  
Then Ruru by his side stepped in; they went  
Down the mysterious river and beheld  
The great banks widen out of sight. The world  
Was water and the skies to water plunged.  
All night with a dim motion gliding down  
He felt the dark against his eyelids; felt,  
As in a dream more real than daylight,  
The helmsman with his dumb and marble face  
Near him and moving wideness all around,  
And that continual gliding dimly on,  
As one who on a shoreless water sails  
For ever to a port he shall not win.  
But when the darkness paled, he heard a moan  
Of mightier waves and had the wide great sense  
Of ocean and the depths below our feet.  
But the boat stopped; the pilot lifted on him  
His marble gaze cheval with the stars.  
Then in the white-winged boat the boy arose  
And saw around him the vast sea all grey  
And heaving in the pallid dawning light.  
Loud Ruru cried across the murmur: "Hear me,  
O inarticulate grey Ocean, hear.  
If any cadence in thy infinite  
Rumour was caught from lover's moan, O Sea,  
Open thy abysses to my mortal tread.  
For I would travel to the despairing shades,  
The spheres of suffering where entangled dwell  
Souls unreleased and the untimely dead

Who weep remembering. Thither, O guide me,  
No despicable wayfarer, but Ruru,  
But son of a great Rishi, from all men p. 18  
On earth selected for peculiar pangs,  
Special disaster. Lo, this petalled fire,  
How freshly it blooms and lasts with my great pain!"  
He held the flower out subtly glimmering.  
And like a living thing the huge sea trembled,  
Then rose, calling, and filled the sight with eaves,  
Converging all its giant crests; towards him  
Innumerable waters loomed and heaven  
Threatened. Horizon on horizon moved  
Dreadfully swift; then with a prone wide sound  
All Ocean hollowing drew him swiftly in,  
Curving with monstrous menace over him.  
He down the gulf where the loud waves collapsed  
Descending, saw with floating hair arise  
The daughters of the sea in pale green light,  
A million mystic breasts suddenly bare,  
And came beneath the flood and stunned beheld  
A mute stupendous march of waters race  
To reach some viewless pit beneath the world.  
Ganges he saw, as men predestined rush  
Upon a fearful doom foreseen, so ran,  
Alarmed, with anguished speed, the river vast.  
Veiled to his eyes the triple goddess rose.  
She with a sound of water cried to him,  
A thousand voices moaning with one pain:  
"Lover, who fearedst not sunlight to leave,  
With me thou mayst behold that helpless spirit  
Lost in the gloom, if still thy burning bosom  
Have courage to endure great Nature's night  
In the dire lands where I, a goddess, mourn  
Hurting my heart with my own cruelty."  
She darkened to the ominous descent,  
Unwilling, and her once so human waves  
Sent forth a cry not meant for living ears.  
And Ruru chilled; but terrible strong love  
Was like a fiery finger in his breast  
Pointing him on; so he through horror went  
Conducted by inexorable sound.  
For monstrous voices to his ear were close,

And bodiless terrors with their dimness seized him p. 19  
In an obscurity phantasmal. Thus  
With agony of soul to the grey waste  
He came, glad of the pain of passage over,  
As men who through the storms of anguish strive  
Into abiding tranquil dreariness  
And draw sad breath assured; to the grey waste,  
Hopeless Patal, the immutable  
Country, where neither sun nor rain arrives,  
Nor happy labour of the human plough  
Fruitfully turns the soil, but in vague sands  
And indeterminable strange rocks and caverns  
That into silent blackness huge recede,  
Dwell the great serpent and his hosts, writhed forms,  
Sinuous, abhorred, through many horrible leagues  
Coiling in a half darkness. Shapes he saw,  
And heard the hiss and knew the lambent light  
Loathsome, but passed compelling his strong soul.  
At last through those six tired hopeless worlds,  
Too hopeless far for grief, pale he arrived  
Into a nether air by anguish moved,  
And heard before him cries that pierced the heart,  
Human, not to be borne, and issued shaken  
By the great river accursed. Maddened it ran,  
Anguished, importunate, and in its waves  
The drifting ghosts their agony endured.  
There Ruru saw pale faces float of kings  
And grandiose victors and revered high priests  
And famous women. Now rose from the wave  
A golden shuddering arm and now a face.  
Torn piteous sides were seen and breasts that quailed.  
Over them moaned the penal waters on,  
And had no joy of their fierce cruelty.  
Then Ruru, his young cheeks with pity wan,  
Half moaned: "O miserable race of men,  
With violent and passionate souls you come  
Foredoomed upon the earth and live brief days  
In fear and anguish, catching at stray beams  
Of sunlight, little fragrances of flowers,  
Then from your spacious earth in a great horror  
Descend into this night, and here too soon p. 20  
Must expiate your few inadequate joys.

O bargain hard! Death helps us not. He leads  
Alarmed, all shivering from his chill embrace,  
The naked spirit here. Oh my sweet flower,  
Art thou too whelmed in this fierce wailing flood?  
Ah me! But I will haste and deeply plunge  
Into its hopeless pools and either bring  
Thy old warm beauty back beneath the stars,  
Or find thee out and clasp thy tortured bosom  
And kiss thy sweet wrung lips and hush thy cries.  
Love shall draw half thy pain into my limbs;  
Then we shall triumph glad of agony."  
He ceased and one replied close by his ear:  
"O thou who troublest with thy living eyes  
Established death, pass on. She whom thou seekest  
Rolls not in the accursèd tide. For late  
I saw her mid those pale inhabitants  
Whom bodily anguish visits not, but thoughts  
Sorrowful and dumb memories absolve,  
And martyrdom of scourged hearts quivering."  
He turned and saw astride the dolorous flood  
A mighty bridge paved with mosaic fire,  
All restless, and a woman clothed in flame,  
With hands calamitous that held a sword,  
Stood of the quaking passage sentinel.  
Magnificent and dire her burning face.  
"Pass on," she said once more, "O Bhrigu's son;  
The flower protects thee from my hands." She stretched  
One arm towards him and with violence  
Majestic over the horrid arch compelled.  
Unhurt, though shaking from her touch, alone  
He stood upon an inner bank with strange  
Black dreary mosses covered and perceived  
A dim and level plain without one flower.  
Over it paced a multitude immense  
With gentle faces occupied by pain;  
Strong men were there and grieving mothers, girls  
With early beauty in their limbs and young  
Sad children of their childlike faces robbed.  
Naked they paced with falling hair and gaze p. 21  
Drooping upon their bosoms, weak as flowers  
That die for want of rain un murmuring.  
Always a silence was upon the place.

But Ruru came among them. Suddenly  
One felt him there and looked, then as a wind  
Moves over a still field of patient corn,  
And the ears stir and shudder and look up  
And bend innumerably flowing, so  
All those dumb spirits stirred and through them passed  
One shuddering motion of raised faces; then  
They streamed towards him without sound and caught  
With desperate hands his robe or touched his hair  
Or strove to feel upon them living breath.  
Pale girls and quiet children came and knelt  
And with large sorrowful eyes into his looked.  
Yet with their silent passion the cold hush  
Moved not; but Ruru's human heart half burst  
With burden of so many sorrows; tears  
Welled from him; he with anguish understood  
That terrible and wordless sympathy  
Of dead souls for the living. Then he turned  
His eyes and scanned their lovely faces strange  
For that one face and found it not. He paled,  
And spoke vain words into the listless air:  
"O spirits once joyous, miserable race,  
Happier if the old gladness were forgot!  
My soul yearns with your sorrow. Yet ah! reveal  
If dwell my love in your sad nation lost.  
Well may you know her, O wan beautiful spirits!  
But she most beautiful of all that died,  
By sweetness recognisable. Her name  
The sunshine knew." Speaking his tears made way:  
But they with dumb lips only looked at him,  
A vague and empty mourning in their eyes.  
He murmured low: "Ah, folly! were she here,  
Would she not first have felt me, first have raised  
Her lids and run to me, leaned back her face  
Of silent sorrow on my breast and looked  
With the old altered eyes into my own  
And striven to make my anguish understand? p. 22  
Oh joy, had she been here! for though her lips  
Of their old excellent music quite were robbed,  
Yet her dumb passion would have spoken to me;  
We should have understood each other and walked  
Silently hand in hand, almost content."

He said and passed through those untimely dead.  
Speechless they followed him with clinging eyes.  
Then to a solemn building weird he came  
With grave colossal pillars round. One dome  
Roofed the whole brooding edifice, like cloud,  
And at the door strange shapes were pacing, armed.  
Then from their fear the sweet and mournful dead  
Drew back, returning to their wordless grief.  
But Ruru to the perilous doorway strode,  
And those disastrous shapes upon him raised  
Their bows and aimed; but he held out Love's flower,  
And with stern faces checked they let him pass.  
He entered and beheld a silent hall  
Dim and unbounded; moving then like one  
Who up a dismal stair seeks ever light,  
Attained a dais brilliant doubtfully  
With flaming pediment and round it coiled  
Python and Naga monstrous, Joruthcaru,  
Tuxuc and Vasuki himself, immense,  
Magic Carcotaca all flecked with fire;  
And many other prone destroying shapes  
Coiled. On the wondrous dais rose a throne,  
And he its pedestal whose lotus hood  
With ominous beauty crowns his horrible  
Sleek folds, great Mahapudma; high displayed  
He bears the throne of Death. There sat supreme  
With those compassionate and lethal eyes,  
Who many names, who many natures holds;  
Yama, the strong pure Hades sad and subtle,  
Dharma, who keeps the laws of old untouched,  
Critanta, who ends all things and at last  
Himself shall end. On either side of him  
The four-eyed dogs mysterious rested prone,  
Watchful, with huge heads on their paws advanced;  
And emanations of the godhead dim p. 23  
Moved near him, shadowy or serpentine,  
Vast Time and cold irreparable Death.  
Then Ruru came and bowed before the throne;  
And swaying all those figures stirred as shapes  
Upon a tapestry moved by the wind,  
And the sad voice was heard: "What breathing man  
Bows at the throne of Hades? By what force,



Spiritual or communicated, troubles  
His living beauty the dead grace of Hell?"  
And one replied who seemed a neighbouring voice:  
"He has the blood of Gods and Titans old.  
An Apsara his mother liquid-orbed  
Bore to the youthful Chyavan's strong embrace  
This passionate face of earth with Eden touched.  
Chyavan was Bhrigu's child, Puloma bore,  
The Titaness,—Bhrigu, great Brahma's son.  
Love gave the flower that helps by anguish; therefore  
He chilled not with the breath of Hades, nor  
The cry of the infernal stream made stone."  
But at the name of Love all hell was moved.  
Death's throne half faded into twilight; hissed  
The phantoms serpentine as if in pain,  
And the dogs raised their dreadful heads. Then spoke  
Yama: "And what needs Love in this pale realm,  
The warm great Love? All worlds his breath confounds,  
Mars solemn order and old steadfastness.  
But not in hell his legates come and go;  
His vernal jurisdiction to bare Hell  
Extends not. This last world resists his power  
Youthful, anarchic. Here will he enlarge  
Tumult and wanton joys?" The voice replied:  
"Menaca momentary on the earth,  
Heaven's Apsara by the fleeting hours beguiled  
Played in the happy hidden glens; there bowed  
To yoke of swift terrestrial joys she bore,  
Immortal, to that fair Gundhurva king  
A mortal blossom of delight. That bloom  
Young Ruru found and plucked, but her too soon  
Thy fatal hooded snake on earth surprised,  
And he through gloom now travels armed by Love." p. 24  
But then all Hades swaying towards him cried:  
"O mortal, O misled! But sacrifice  
Is stronger, nor may law of Hell or Heaven  
Its fierce effectual action supersede.  
Thy dead I yield. Yet thou bethink thee, mortal,  
Not as a tedious evil nor to be  
Lightly rejected gave the gods old age,  
But tranquil, but august, but making easy  
The steep ascent to God. Therefore must Time

Still batter down the glory and form of youth  
And animal magnificent strong ease,  
To warn the earthward man that he is spirit  
Dallying with transience, nor by death he ends,  
Nor to the dumb warm mother's arms is bound,  
But called unborn into the unborn skies.  
For body fades with the increasing soul  
And wideness of its limit grown intolerant  
Replaces life's impetuous joys by peace.  
Youth, manhood, ripeness, age, four seasons  
Twixt its return and pale departing life  
Describes, O mortal,—youth that forward bends  
Midst hopes, delights and dreamings; manhood deepens  
To passions, toils and thoughts profound; but ripeness  
For large reflective gathering-up of these,  
As on a lonely slope whence men look back  
Down towards the cities and the human fields  
Where they too worked and laughed and loved; next age,  
Wonderful age with those approaching skies.  
That boon wilt thou renounce? Wherefore? To bring  
For a few years—how miserably few!—  
Her sunward who must after all return.  
Ah, son of Rishis, cease, Lo, I remit  
Hell's grasp, not oft-relinquished, and send back  
Thy beautiful life unborrowed to the stars.  
Or thou must render to the immutable  
Total all thy fruit-bearing years; then she  
Reblossoms." But the Shadow antagonist:  
"Let him be shown the glory he would renounce."  
And over the flaming pediment there moved,  
As on a frieze a march of sculptures, carved p. 25  
By Phidias for the Virgin strong and pure,  
Most perfect once of all things seen in earth  
Or Heaven, in Athens on the Acropolis,  
But now dismembered, now disrupt! or as  
In Buddhist cavern or Orissan temple,  
Large aspirations architectural,  
Warrior and dancing-girl, adept and king,  
And conquering poms and daily peaceful groups  
Dream delicately on, softening with beauty  
Great Bhuvanayshwar, the Almighty's house,  
With sculptural suggestion so were limned

Scenes future on a pediment of fire.  
There Ruru saw himself divine with age,  
A Rishi to whom infinity is close,  
Rejoicing in some green song-haunted glade  
Or boundless mountain-top where most we feel  
Wideness, not by small happy things disturbed.  
Around him, as around an ancient tree  
Its seedlings, forms august or flame-like rose;  
They grew beneath his hands and were his work;  
Great kings were there whom time remembers, fertile  
Deep minds and poets with their chanting lips  
Whose words were seed of vast philosophies  
These worshipped; above this earth's half-day he saw  
Amazed the dawn of that mysterious Face  
And all the universe in beauty merge.  
Mad the boy thrilled upwards, then spent ebbed back.  
Over his mind, as birds across the sky  
Sweep and are gone, the vision of those fields  
And drooping faces came; almost he heard  
The burdened river with human anguish wail.  
Then with a sudden fury gathering  
His soul he hurled out of it half its life,  
And fell, like lightning, prone. Triumphant rose  
The Shadow chill and deepened giant night.  
Only the dais flickered in the gloom,  
And those snake-eyes of cruel fire subdued.  
But suddenly a bloom, a fragrance. Hell  
Shuddered with bliss: resentful, overborne,  
The world-besetting Terror faded back p. 26  
Like one grown weak by desperate victory,  
And a voice cried in Ruru's tired soul:  
"Arise! the strife is over, easy now  
The horror that thou hast to face, the burden  
Now shared." And with a sudden burst like spring  
Life woke in the strong lover over-tired.  
He rose and left dim Death. Twelve times he crossed  
Boithorini, the river dolorous,  
Twelve times resisted Hell and hurried down  
Into the ominous pit where plunges black  
The vast stream thundering, saw, led puissantly  
From night to unimaginable night,  
As men oppressed in dreams, who cannot wake,

But measure penal visions,—punishments  
Whose sight pollutes, unheard-of tortures, pangs  
Monstrous, intolerable mute agonies,  
Twisted unmoving attitudes of pain,  
Like thoughts inhuman in statuary. A fierce  
And iron voicelessness had grasped those worlds.  
No horror of cries expressed their endless pain,  
No saving struggle, no breathings of the soul.  
And in the last hell irremediable  
Where Ganges clots into that fatal pool,  
Appalled he saw her; pallid, listless, bare—  
O other than that earthly warmth and grace  
In which the happy roses deepened and dimmed  
With come-and-go of swift enamoured blood!  
Dumb drooped she; round her shapes of anger armed  
Stood dark like thunder-clouds. But Ruru sprang  
Upon them, burning with the admitted God.  
They from his touch like ineffectual fears  
Vanished; then sole with her, trembling he cried  
The old glad name and crying bent to her  
And touched, and at the touch the silent knots  
Of Hell were broken and its sombre dream  
Of dreadful stately pains at once dispersed.  
Then as from one whom a surpassing joy  
Has conquered, all the bright surrounding world  
Streams swiftly into distance, and he feels  
His daily senses slipping from his grasp, p. 27  
So that unbearable enormous world  
Went rolling mighty shades, like the wet mist  
From men on mountain-tops; and sleep outstretched  
Rising its soft arms towards him and his thoughts,  
As on a bed, sank to ascending void.

But when he woke, he heard the koil insist  
On sweetness and the voice of happy things  
Content with sunlight. The warm sense was round him  
Of old essential earth, known hues and custom  
Familiar tranquillising body and mind,  
As in its natural wave a lotus feels.  
He looked and saw all grass and dense green trees,  
And sunshine and a single grasshopper  
Near him repeated fiercely its note.

Thrilling he felt beneath his bosom her;  
Oh, warm and breathing were those rescued limbs  
Against the greenness, vivid, palpable, white,  
With great black hair and real and her cheek's  
Old softness and her mouth a dewy rose.  
For many moments comforting his soul  
With all her jasmine body sun-ensnared  
He fed his longing eyes and, half in doubt,  
With touches satisfied himself of her.  
Hesitating he kissed her eyelids. Sighing  
With a slight sob she woke and earthly large  
Her eyes looked upward into his. She stretched  
Her arms up, yearning, and their souls embraced;  
Then twixt brief sobbing laughter and blissful tears,  
Clinging with all her limbs to him, "O love,  
The green green world! the warm sunlight!" and ceased,  
Finding no words; but the earth breathed round them,  
Glad of her children and the koil's voice  
Persisted in the morning of the world.

