

"AND LET SHYAMA DANCE THERE"

(Rendered from Bengali)

Beaut'ous blossoms ravishing with perfume,
Swarms of maddened bees buzzing all around ;
The silver moon—a shower of sweet smile,
Which all the dwellers of heaven above
Shed lavishly upon the homes of earth ;
The soft Malaya^[1] breeze, whose magic touch
Opens to view distant memory's folds ;
Murmuring rivers and brooks, rippling lakes
With restless Bhramaras^[2] wheeling over
Gently waving lotuses unnumbered ;
Foaming flow cascades—a streaming music—
To which echo mountain caves in return ;
Warblers, full of sweet-flowing melody,
Hidden in leaves, pour hearts out—love discourse ;
The rising orb of day, the painter divine,
With his golden brush but lightly touches
The canvas earth and a wealth of colours
Floods at once o'er the bosom of nature,
—Truly a museum of lovely hues—
Waking up a whole sea of sentiments.

The roll of thunder, the crashing of clouds,
War of elements spreading earth and sky;
Darkness vomiting forth blinding darkness,
The Pralaya^[3] wind angrily roaring;
In quick bursts of dazzling splendour flashes
Blood-red terrific lightning, dealing death;
Monster waves roaring like thunder, foaming,
Rush impetuous to leap mountain peaks;
The earth booms furious, reels and totters,
Sinks down to its ruin, hurled from its place;
Piercing the ground, stream forth tremendous flames.
Mighty ranges blow up into atoms.

A lovely villa, on a lake of blue—
Festooned with dusters of water-lilies;
The heart-blood of ripe grapes capped with white foam
Whispering softly tells tale of passion;
The melody of the harp floods the ears,
And by its air, time, and harmony rich,
Enhances desire in the breast of man ;
What stirring of emotions! How many
Hot sighs of Love! And warm tears coursing down!
The Bimba^[4]-red lips of the youthful fair,
The two blue eyes—two oceans of feelings;
The two hands eager to advance—love's cage—

In which the heart, like a bird, lies captive.
 The martial music bursts, the trumpets blow,
 The ground shakes under the warriors' tread;
 The roar of cannon, the rattle of guns,
 Volumes of smoke, the gruesome battlefield,
 The thundering artillery vomits fire
 In thousand directions; shells burst and strike
 Vital parts of the body; elephants
 And horses mounted are blown up in space;
 The earth trembles under this infernal dance;
 A million heroes mounted on steeds
 Charge and capture the enemy's ordnance,
 Piercing through the smoke and shower of shells
 And rain of bullets; forward goes the flag,
 The emblem of victory, of heroism
 With the blood, yet hot, streaming down the staff,
 Followed by the rifles, drunk with war-spirit;
 Lo! the ensign falls, but the flag proceeds
 Onwards on the shoulder of another;
 Under his feet swell heaps of warriors
 Perished in battle; but he falters not.
 The flesh hankers for contacts of pleasure,
 The senses for enchanting strains of song,
 The mind hungers for peals of laughter sweet,
 The heart pants to reach realms beyond sorrow;
 Say, who cares exchange the soothing moonlight
 For the burning rays of the noontide sun?
 The wretch whose heart is like the scorching sun,
 —Even he fondly loves the balmy moon;
 Indeed, all thirst for joy. Breathes there the wretch
 Who hugs pain and sorrow to his bosom?
 Misery in his cup of happiness,
 Deadly venom in his drink of nectar,
 Poison in his throat—yet he clings to hope!
 Lo! how all are scared by the Terrific,
 None seek Elokeshi ^[5] whose form is Death.
 The deadly frightful sword, reeking with blood,
 They take from Her hand, and put a lute instead!
 Thou dreaded Kâli, the All-destroyer,
 Thou alone art true; Thy shadow's shadow
 Is indeed the pleasant Vanamâli. ^[6]
 O Terrible Mother, cut quick the core,
 Illusion dispel—the dream of happiness,
 Rend asunder the fondness for the flesh.

True, they garland Thee with skulls, but shrink back
 In fright and call Thee, "O All-merciful!"
 At Thy thunder peal of awful laughter,
 At Thy nakedness—for space is thy garment—
 Their hearts sink down with terror, but they say,

"It is the demons that the Mother kills!"
 They only pretend they wish to see Thee,
 But when the time comes, at Thy sight they flee.
 Thou art Death! To each and all in the world
 Thou distributest the plague and disease
 —Vessels of venom filled by Thine own hands.
 O thou insane! Thou but cheatest thyself,
 Thou cost not turn thy head lest thou behold.
 Ay, the form terrible of the Mother.
 Thou courttest hardship hoping happiness,
 Thou wearest cloak of Bhakti and worship,
 With mind full of achieving selfish ends.
 The blood from the severed head of a kid
 Fills thee with fear—thy heart throbs at the sight—
 Verily a coward! Compassionate? ^[7]
 Bless my soul! A strange state of things indeed!
 To whom shall I tell the truth?—Who will see?
 Free thyself from the mighty attraction—
 The maddening wine of love, the charm of sex.
 Break the harp! Forward, with the ocean's cry!
 Drink tears, pledge even life—let the body fall.
 Awake, O hero! Shake off thy vain dreams,
 Death stands at thy head—does fear become thee?
 A load of misery, true though it is—
 This Becoming^[8]—know this to be thy God!
 His temple—the Shmashân^[9] among corpses
 And funeral pyres; unending battle —
 That verily is His sacred worship;
 Constant defeat — let that not unnerve thee;
 Shattered be little self, hope, name, and fame;
 Set up a pyre of them and make thy heart
 A burning-ground.
 And let Shyâmâ^[10] dance there.

Notes

1.

- A fabulous Sandal-wood mountain in the South. Hence, Malaya breeze means a fragrant breeze from the South.
- • A beetle somewhat like a humble-bee, which lives solely on honey.
- • The time of cosmic destruction.
- • A kind of fruit of a rich red colour.
- • She with untied hair, a name of Kâli, the Divine Mother of the Universe.
- • Literally, he who is garlanded with wild flowers. The Shepherd Krishna in His aspect of youthful sport.
- • The idea is that the brave alone can be compassionate, and not the coward.
- • The wheel of constant birth and death, hence the world.

- • The cremation-ground.
- The Dark One, Kali.