

Collections of Poems- Swami Vivekananda

To An Early Violet

What though thy bed be frozen earth,
Thy cloak the chilling blast;
What though no mate to clear thy path,
Thy sky with gloom o'ercast --
What though of love itself doth fail,
Thy fragrance strewed in vain;
What though if bad o'er good prevail,
And vice o'er virtue reign --
Change not thy nature, gentle bloom,
Thou violet, sweet and pure,
But ever pour thy sweet perfume
Unmasked, unstinted, sure !

Note: Written to Sister Christine. Violet is the spring flower of the West. But when it blooms in late winter, ie before the advent of spring, it has to fight against the cold blast. The poem is meant to give encouragement to the disciple to stand up to adverse circumstances.

A Blessing

The Mother's heart, the hero's will,
The softest flowers' sweetest feel;
The charm and force that ever sway
The altar-fire's flaming play;
The strength that leads, in love obeys;
Far-reaching dreams, and patient ways,
Eternal faith in Self, in all,
The light Divine in great, in small;
All these and more than I could see,
Today may "Mother" grant to thee!

Peace

Behold, it comes in might,
The power that is not power,
The light that is in darkness,
The shade in dazzling light.
It is joy that never spoke,
And grief unfelt, profound,
Immortal life unlived,
Eternal death unmourned.

It is not joy nor sorrow,
But that which is between,
It is not night nor morrow,
But that which joins them in.

My Play Is Done

Ever rising, ever falling with the waves of time, still rolling on I go
From fleeting scene to scene ephemeral, with life's currents' ebb and flow.
Oh! I am sick of this unending force; these shows they please no more,
This ever running, never reaching, nor e'en a distant glimpse of shore!
From life to life I'm waiting at the gates, alas, they open not.
Dim are my eyes with vain attempt to catch one ray long sought.
On little life's high, narrow bridge I stand and see below
The struggling, crying, laughing throng. For what? No one can know.
In front yon gates stand frowning dark, and say: 'No farther away,
This is the limit; tempt not Fate, bear it as best you may;
Go, mix with them and drink this cup and be as mad as they.
Who dares to know but comes to grief; stop then, and with them stay.'
Alas for me, I cannot rest. This floating bubble, earth--
Its hollow form, its hollow name, its hollow death and birth--
For me is nothing. How i long to get beyond the crust
Of name and form! Ah, open the gates; to me they open must.
Open the gates of light, O Mother, to me Thy tired son.
I long, oh, long to return home! Mother, my play is done.
You sent me out in the dark to play and wore a frightful mask;
Then hope departed, terror came, and play became a task.
Tossed to and fro, from wave to wave in this seething, surging sea
Of passions strong and sorrows deep, grief is, and joy to be.
Where life is living death, alas! and death-- who knows but 'tis
Another start, another round of this old wheel of grief and bliss?
Where children dream bright, golden dreams, too soon to find them dust,
And aye look back to hope long lost and life a mass of rust!
Too late, the knowledge age doth gain; scare from the wheel we're gone.
When fresh, young lives put their strength to the wheel, which thus goes on
From day to day and year to year. 'Tis but delusion's toy,
False hope its motor; desire, nave; its spokes are grief and joy.
I go adrift and know not whither. Save from this fire!
Rescue me, merciful Mother, from floating with desire!
Turn not to me Thy awful face, 'tis more than I can bear,
Be merciful and kind to me, to chide my faults forbear.
Take me, O Mother, to those shores where strifes for ever cease;
Beyond all sorrows, beyond tears, beyond e'en earthly bliss;
Whose glory neither sun, nor moon, nor stars that twinkle bright,
Nor flash of lightning can express. They but reflect its light.
Let never more delusive dreams veil off Thy face from me.
My play is done; O Mother, break my chains and make me free!

Thou Blessed Dream

If things go ill or well-
If joy rebounding spreads the face,
Or sea of sorrows swells-
It is a dream, a play.
A play- we each have a part
Each one to weep or laugh as may;
Each one his dress to don-
Alternate shine or rain.
Thou dream, O blessed dream!
Spread far and near thy veil of haze,
Tone down the lines so sharp,
Make smooth what roughness seems.
No magic but in thee!
Thy touch makes desert bloom to life,
Harsh thunder, sweetest song,
Fell death, the sweet release.

The song of the sannyasin(monk)

Wake up the note! the song that had its birth
Far off, where worldly taint could never reach,
In mountain caves and glades of forest deep,
Whose calm no sigh for lust or wealth or fame
Could ever dare to break; where rolled the stream
Of knowledge, truth, and bliss that follows both.
Sing high that note, Sannyasin bold! Say --
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"
Strike off thy fetters! Bonds that bind thee down,
Of shining gold, or darker, baser ore;
Love, hate -- good, bad -- and all the dual throng,
Know, slave is slave, caressed or whipped, not free;
For fetters, though of gold, are not less strong to bind;
Then off with them, Sannyasin bold! Say --
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"
Let darkness go; the will - o' - the - wisp that leads
With blinking light to pile more gloom on gloom.
This thirst for life, for ever quench; it drags
From birth to death, and death to birth, the soul.
He conquers all who conquers self. Know this
And never yield, Sannyasin bold! Say --
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"
"Who sows must reap," they say, "and cause must bring
The sure effect; good, good; bad, bad; and none
Escape the law. But whoso wears a form
Must wear the chain." Too true; but far beyond

Both name and form is Atman, ever free.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say --
"Om Tat Sat, Om! "

They know not truth who dream such vacant dreams
As father, mother, children, wife, and friend.
The sexless Self! whose father He? whose child?
Whose friend, whose foe is He who is but One?
The Self is all in all, none else exists;
And thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say --
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

There is but One -- the Free -- the Knower -- self!
Without a name, without a form or stain.
In Him is Maya dreaming all this dream.
The witness, He appears as nature, soul.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say --
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Where seekest thou? That freedom, friend, this world
Nor that can give. In books and temples vain
Thy search. Thine only is the hand that holds
The rope that drags thee on. Then cease lament,
Let go thy hold, Sannyasin bold! Say --
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Say, "Peace to all: From me no danger be
To aught that lives. In those that dwell on high.
In those that lowly creep, I am the Self in all!
All life both here and there, do I renounce,
All heavens and earths and hells, all hopes and fears."
Thus cut thy bonds, Sannyasin bold! Say --
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Heed then no more how body lives or goes,
Its task is done. Let Karma float it down;
Let one put garlands on, another kick
This frame; say naught. No praise or blame can be
Where praiser praised, and blamer blamed are one.
Thus be thou calm, Sannyasin bold! Say --
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Truth never comes where lust and fame and greed
Of gain reside. No man who thinks of woman
As his wife can ever perfect be;
Nor he who owns the least of things, nor he
Whom anger chains, can ever pass thro' Maya's gates.
So, give these up, Sannyasin bold! Say --
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Have thou no home. What home can hold thee, friend?
The sky thy roof, the grass thy bed; and food
What chance may bring, well cooked or ill, judge not.
No food or drink can taint that noble Self
Which knows Itself. Like rolling river free

Thou ever be, Sannyasin bold! Say --

"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Few only know the truth. The rest will hate
And laugh at thee, great one; but pay no heed.
Go thou, the free, from place to place, and help
Them out of darkness, Maya's veil. Without
The fear of pain or search for pleasure, go
Beyond them both, Sannyasin bold! Say --
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Thus, day by day, till Karma's powers spent
Release the soul for ever. No more is birth,
Nor I, nor thou, nor God, nor man. The "I"
Has All become, the All is "I" and Bliss.
Know thou art That, Sannyasin bold! Say --
"Om Tat Sat, Om!"

Note: Tat Sat means that only real existence. [Swamiji's note].

No one to blame

The sun goes down, its crimson rays
Light up the dying day;
A startled glance I throw behind
And count my triumph shame;
No one but me to blame.
Each day my life I make or mar,
Each deed begets its kind,
Good good, bad bad, the tide once set
No one can stop or stem;
No one but me to blame.
I am my own embodied past;
Therein the plan was made;
The will, the thought, to that conform,
To that the outer frame;
No one but me to blame.
Love comes reflected back as love,
Hate breeds more fierce hate,
They mete their measures, lay on me
Through life and death their claim;
No one but me to blame.
I cast off fear and vain remorse,
I feel my Karma's(deeds) sway
I face the ghosts my deeds have raised --
Joy, sorrow, censure, fame;
No one but me to blame.
Good, bad, love, hate, and pleasure, pain
Forever linked go,
I dream of pleasure without pain,

It never, never came;
No one but me to blame.
I give up hate, I give up love,
My thirst for life is gone;
Eternal death is what I want,
Nirvanam (enlightenment) goes life's flame;
No one is left to blame.
One only man, one only God, one ever perfect soul,
One only sage who ever scorned the dark and dubious ways,
One only man who dared think and dared show the goal --
That death is curse, and so is life, and best when stops to be.
Om Nama(salute) Bhagavate(lord) Sambuddhaya(one who is enlightened)
Om, I salute the Lord, the awakened.

Quest For God

O'ver hill and dale and mountain range,
In temple, church, and mosque,
In Vedas, Bible, Al Koran
I had searched for Thee in vain.
Like a child in the wildest forest lost
I have cried and cried alone,
"Where art Thou gone, my God, my love?
The echo answered, "gone."
And days and nights and years then passed
A fire was in the brain,
I knew not when day changed in night
The heart seemed rent in twain.
I laid me down on Ganges's shore,
Exposed to sun and rain;
With burning tears I laid the dust
And wailed with waters' roar.
I called on all the holy names
Of every clime and creed.
"Show me the way, in mercy, ye
Great ones who have reached the goal."
Years then passed in bitter cry,
Each moment seemed an age,
Till one day midst my cries and groans
Some one seemed calling me.
A gentle soft and soothing voice
That said 'my son' 'my son',
That seemed to thrill in unison
With all the chords of my soul.
I stood on my feet and tried to find
The place the voice came from;
I searched and searched and turned to see
Round me, before, behind,

Again, again it seemed to speak
The voice divine to me.
In rapture all my soul was hushed,
Entranced, enthralled in bliss.
A flash illumined all my soul;
The heart of my heart opened wide.
O joy, O bliss, what do I find!
My love, my love you are here
And you are here, my love, my all!
And I was searching thee -
From all eternity you were there
Enthroned in majesty!
From that day forth, wherever I roam,
I feel Him standing by
O'er hill and dale, high mount and vale,
Far far away and high.
The moon's soft light, the stars so bright,
The glorious orb of day,
He shines in them; His beauty - might -
Reflected lights are they.
The majestic morn, the melting eve,
The boundless billowing sea,
In nature's beauty, songs of birds,
I see through them - it is He.
When dire calamity seizes me,
The heart seems weak and faint,
All nature seems to crush me down,
With laws that never bend.
Meseems I hear Thee whispering sweet
My love, "I am near", "I am near".
My heart gets strong. With thee, my love,
A thousand deaths no fear.
Thou speakest in the mother's lay
Thou shuts the baby's eye,
When innocent children laugh and play,
I see Thee standing by.
When holy friendship shakes the hand,
He stands between them too;
He pours the nectar in mother's kiss
And the baby's sweet "mama".
Thou wert my God with prophets old,
All creeds do come from Thee,
The Vedas, Bible, and Koran bold
Sing Thee in Harmony.
"Thou art, Thou art" the Soul of souls
In the rushing stream of life.
"Om tat sat om." Thou art my God,
My love, I am thine, I am thine.

Note: This was part of the letter written by Swamiji on Sep. 4, 1893 to Prof. J.H. Wright of Boston who introduced Swami Vivekananda in the Parliament of Religions. As said earlier- Tat Sat means that only real existence.

Kali The Mother

The stars are blotted out,
The clouds are covering clouds.
It is darkness vibrant, sonant.
In the roaring, whirling wind
Are the souls of a million lunatics
Just loosed from the prison-house,
Wrenching trees by the roots,
Sweeping all from the path.
The sea has joined the fray,
And swirled up mountain-waves,
To reach the pitchy sky.
The flash of lurid light
Reveals on every side
A thousand, thousand shades
Of Death begrimed and black-
Scattering plagues and sorrows,
Dancing mad with joy,
Come, Mother, come!
For terror is Thy name,
Death is in thy breath,
And every shaking step
Destroys a world for e'er.
Thou Time, the All-destroyer!
Come, O Mother, come!
Who dares misery love,
And hug the form of Death,
Dance in destruction's dance
To him the Mother comes.

Note: A poem by Swamiji, written in Kashmir, on a houseboat on Dal Lake. After visiting the Kshir Bhavani Temple, he returned, in ecstasy, to the boat and wrote this.

Who Knows How Mother Plays

Perchance a prophet thou-
Who knows? Who dares touch
The depths where Mother hides
Her silent failless bolts!
Perchance the child had glimpse
Of shades, behind the scenes,

With eager eyes and strained,
Quivering forms-ready
To jump in front and be
Events, resistless, strong.
Who knows but Mother, how,
And where, and when, they come?
Perchance the shining sage
Saw more than he could tell;
Who knows, what soul, and when,
The Mother makes Her throne?
What law would freedom bind?
What merit guide Her will,
Whose freak is greatest order,
Whose will resistless law?
To child may glories ope
Which father never dreamt;
May thousandfold in daughter
Her powers Mother store.

To My Own Soul

Hold yet a while, Strong Heart,
Not part a lifelong yoke
Though blighted looks the present, future gloom.
And age it seems since you and I began our
March up hill or down. Sailing smooth o'er
Seas that are so rare-
Thou nearer unto me, than oft-times I myself-
Proclaiming mental moves before they were !
Reflector true-Thy pulse so timed to mine,
Thou perfect note of thoughts, however fine-
Shall we now part, Recorder, say ?
In thee is friendship, faith,
For thou didst warn when evil thoughts were brewing-
And though, alas, thy warning thrown away,
Went on the same as ever-good and true.

To The Fourth Of July

Behold, the dark clouds melt away,
That gathered thick at night, and hung
So like a gloomy pall above the earth!
Before thy magic touch, the world
Awakes. The birds in chorus sing.
The flowers raise their star-like crowns-
Dew-set, and wave thee welcome fair.
The lakes are opening wide in love
Their hundred thousand lotus-eyes

To welcome thee, with all their depth.
All hail to thee, thou Lord of Light!
A welcome new to thee, today,
O sun! today thou sheddest LIBERTY!
Bethink thee how the world did wait,
And search for thee, through time and clime.
Some gave up home and love of friends,
And went in quest of thee, self banished,
Through dreary oceans, through primeval forests,
Each step a struggle for their life or death;
Then came the day when work bore fruit,
And worship, love, and sacrifice,
Fulfilled, accepted, and complete.
Then thou, propitious, rose to shed
The light of FREEDOM on mankind.
Move on, O Lord, on thy resistless path!
Till thy high noon o'erspreads the world.
Till every land reflects thy light,
Till men and women, with uplifted head,
Behold their shackles broken, and
Know, in springing joy, their life renewed!

Note: The 4th of July is the day of American Independence and also the day Swamiji chose for his Mahasamadhi. He passed away on 04/July/1902.

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