



Translations

Advent

[A translation of Rabindranath Tagore's 'Abirvab' (আবিরবাব), originally published in the anthology *Kshanika* (ক্ষণিকা) in 1900.]

Ramyani Gayen

For days past in many a spring
 Long I awaited you alone;
 Today you have come with monsoon's song.
Today with a storm's rhythm
With dark clouds in voices deep
The song that my heart must sing
 Make that melody your own
 Today with this monsoon song.

From afar I once saw you bright
 Clad in veils of richest gold,
 Adorned with budding blooms bold.
Yet when near, stunned me your sight
Darkest blue was your light,
Lightning steps, fleeting and swift
 Here and there, did they fall.
 Where, oh, that garment gold!

That day I watched you, perhaps in a dream
 Your feet gracing the groves and meadows,
 And low before you were the flowering boughs.
Heard as though I, soft bells ringing,
The chimes around your waist, did they sing?
Felt as though I, from galaxy above
 Your breathes, gentle and low,
 As you graced the groves and meadows.

Today the world is shadowed with your presence
 The heavens carrying your tresses long,
 And around your feet, a flower song.
In you vastness, I drown
In unseen depths, with dreams unknown,
With darkness great, magnificent you come
 The shallows of my heart's ocean do yearn
 As you step, with anklets of flower song.

At spring in groves of blossoms rave
 I wreathed so many flower rings
 Yet, for you this gift is unfitting.
Where you traverse, at every step
Your hymns echo with the world itself,
That infinite melody can never be sung
 By this little lyre's thin strings.
 For you, my gift – unworthy, unfitting.

Who knew that sudden glance
 Will take away the monsoon song?
 Will return to me a shy love's morn?
Who knew of this shame, me with which you shall bless?
For I am have awaited you unclad, unworthy of your grace,
In this hall of flowering love, you asked for my bent knees
 And with this prayer's hymn, I am undone –
 With what grace have you come!

Forgive me then, forgive this folly of mine
 For the penury of my offering,
 Forgive me then of all my sins.
In this fleeting leaf-made home, on this night
Beneath the lantern, come to me in this shadow-light,
Upon this bamboo flute, allow your eyes
 To rest a moment with gaze divine –
 Forgive me, of my sins.

You did not come in the blooming spring
 When long I awaited you alone,
 Come, then, with this monsoon song.
Come, with the sky's eternal light,

Come, in flights of dreams infinite,
The song that my heart yearns to sing
 Make that melody your own
 Today, with this monsoon song.