

poem on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of Tagore

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from the thickets of history
i peeked over the fences
and the sullied momentary space
that is still drunk with life and death.

outside the enclosure i see
an old man, lanky, grey-bearded,
with quiet eyes,
looking to
the clouds of suffering and distance:
a gardener
tending to a little strip of time,
part-distressed, part-anxious,
but uneasy with expectation.

on the little trail
to the river
you could hear a chatter of women
at their bath or washing,
forgotten by time and the judging eyes of men,
but for the moment
intoxicatingly free.

on the bank of the river
there are no castes or hierarchies.

to the right is a footpath,
that runs through the forest
and is lost in the distance.
but many roads do not end
with destinations or expectations.

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in your garden, flowers
bloom and wilt
autumn leaves fly away
and the years shrivel in desiccation.

in your garden of sashtera
the winds rise and comb the earth
and the forest begins to bloom.
ideas fall as in an afternoon shower,
after the long drought,
seeping into the subconscious.

but not for all:
the mob does not read
or meditate,
politicians
only recite opportunities
of power and survival.
the merchant's back is bent
under his accounts.
in your old age too
you read of discontent,
for man may never solve all his problems.

your voice touches
their conscience
and they return to be spoken
and become significant
at the end of your tongue.

your songs
caress, embrace
the destitute,
those who have been robbed of their rights,
those without hope.

you meditate over the fate of many.