

From *Whispers from Eternity* by Paramhansa Yogananda

My India

Not where the musk of happiness blows,

Not in lands where darkness and fears never tread,

Not in homes where unceasing smiles reign,

Nor in Heaven nor prosperous lands

Would I be born.

If once more I must assume a mortal garb,

A thousand famines may wrack my body,

Waste my flesh, and leave me prostrate,

Yet would I be born again in Hindustan.

A million thieves of disease

May steal my flesh,

And clouds of fate

Send scalding showers of searing sorrow'

Yet would I prefer in India to reappear!

Is this love of mine a blind sentiment

Spurning reason's guidance?

Far from it! I love India

Because it was there I first learned

To love God, and all things beautiful.

Some people counsel all to seize the fickle dewdrop of Life

As it slips down the lotus leaf of time;
They cry, 'Live well today: tomorrow we die!'
Some others base their stubborn hopes
On keeping their bodies always well.
India, however, taught me to love above all
The soul of deathless beauty within man's fragile form.
That serves a high purpose, India taught me,
Which lasts after everything dies.
Her sages taught that one should seek the Self
Beyond the ash heaps of discarded bodies,
Beyond the brief, ephemeral incarnations we live
Decked out in panoplies of ignorance!
Through many a land,
Secure in power and plenty, efficiently sustained by science,
My soul, whether garbed in Oriental or Occidental body,
Traveled far and wide o'er the earth.
Ever stumblingly it sought itself.
At last in India was its quest fulfilled.
If mortal fires razed all Indian homes,
And desiccated her paddy fields,
Yet would I rather sleep on that dust, dreaming eternity,
Than sit on a proud throne amid royal pomp.

O, India! I would starve in your poor villages
In preference to entertaining kings in marble mansions!
Invasions have swept over India's wasted lands,
Proud conquerors have strutted their proud victories:
Scoffing at all they saw,
They commanded abject homage.
Yet has the soul of India been unconquered by any tyrant.
Her independent soul has stood firm:
Never will she lose her inner freedom!
Her defending soldiers are her saints and rishis
Who routed ignorance with calm wisdom,
Universal understanding,
And ever-clear perception of the truth.
The posturing puppets sent by foreign governments
To impose new ways of action, thought, belief'
Marauders bearing hatred, prejudice, and country's pride'
Could never weaken the inspiration God implanted in her soil,
Inspiring ever a vision of oneness, universality, and brotherhood
Among all children of our One Father equally.
My Western brothers, with material might, have overwhelmed my
land:
Now loudly blow your conches, all!
India soon will launch a new, return invasion;

Its weapons will consist of kindness, truth, and love!

Its ancient wisdom will amaze the West 'the whole world.

Better I love thee, O my India,

Than Heaven or Acadia,

And thy love I will share

With every brother-nation that accepts my offering.

God made the earth, but man made its confining countries

With their fancy-frozen boundaries.

Love, however, imported from Infinity,

Will inspire equally all true souls, everywhere.

My India's borderland embraces the whole world!

Hail, Thou mother of religions, lotus, scenic beauties, and great sages!

Thy doors are open wide to welcome

God's true sons from every corner of the earth,

Where Ganges, woods, Himalayan caves, and men dream God.

I am hallowed; my body touched that sod!