

FOREWORD BY YEHUDI MENUHIN

Above all what marks a great man is the spiritual climate he creates in his own soul; it is that repeated, almost uninterrupted, exercise which conditions his instincts and attitudes, his feelings, thoughts and actions, and finally his *aura*, that personal emanation which reaches out in ever-widening circles to inspire and to move his fellow men, even after his death.

The celestial orbits, the fiery sun, the gyrations of earth and moon are not more inexorable than the dedication of a great human being, man, woman and child, to his chosen way. For, indeed, as the compelling direction or purpose stretches into the future, so by the same token is it continuous with the past — an initial propulsion which already at birth gives the infant a life-direction.

The most revealing characteristic is the way in which the overriding compulsion, this self-made climate, sets its seal on the very smallest details of a life. In the animal world we do not wonder at that determined implacable thoroughness which makes an ant or a bird, an elephant or a snake, so uncompromisingly and so unceasingly ant-like and bird-like — in every manifestation of feature, organ or habit. Nor do we wonder at such obvious and visible conditioning by a lifetime's daily habits as the clerk's stoop, the monk's meditative gait, the farmer's patience, or the schoolmaster's compulsory restraint.

But we do stand in awe of the poet's and the composer's daily ritual. We revere that human being's personal church — the invisible, interior altar and chapel — wherein, in timeless order, first humility is practised and secondly inspiration is received.

Daily Rabindranath Tagore made room for the feelings and the thoughts of infinity — whether in love or prayer, daily he sought the reflection of the boundless and the sacred in the menial and the repetitive, transforming his measured words into a devotional exercise of symbolic grandeur.

Thus does inspired habit, practised over a period of time, purify and create; as does its antithesis — fire — consume and destroy. Truth is the quintessence of such contrasting phenomena as Shakespeare,

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Bach, Beethoven and Michelangelo. These people speak the truth and we can trust them with all our hearts.

So it is with Rabindranath Tagore. As we read his poems we learn how infinitely good and comforting it is to trust in a human being. It is this very quality of trust in Truth, that is so terribly rare in the living person, which the young need and cry out for most.

As it happens, we may not only trust in the poems of Rabindranath Tagore, but fortunately for us, in the authenticity of their translations. Aurobindo Bose was a close friend and disciple of Rabindranath Tagore and is himself a person of integrity and distinction of mind and heart.

I am honoured to have been allowed to join this company and I pray that this book will gather into our ranks the anonymous reader, who will find the same inspiration, beauty and comfort that I have found in these verses.

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Yehudi Menuhin