

## WHAT IS PLATONIC LOVE?

If you have ever struggled to understand what is meant by "Platonic Love", you will get your answer in this heart-rending poem titled ABHISAR by TAGORE translated by me from the original Bengali

### THE LOVERS MEET AT LAST

*By the walls of Mathura,  
Lay the monk Upagupta.  
The lights of the town had gone out,  
The doors were barred;  
The stars in the monsoon sky  
Were enshrouded in dark clouds.*

*Whose anklet bells suddenly resounded  
In the cavern of his heart?  
The dreamy eyes opened in an instant  
As a rude light struck his compassionate eyelids.*

*The courtesan of the town walks the streets  
In the drunken pride of her youthful beauty;  
Sapphire blue is her attire,  
Accompanied by the tinkling sound of her adornments ...  
Unwittingly as her feet struck the monk's body,  
Vasavadatta stood still.*

*Holding up her earthen lamp  
She beheld the fair youth.....  
A placid glowing face  
And eyes radiating compassion,  
A moonlike serenity dwelt on that fair brow.*

*With bashful eyes,  
The maiden uttered in a melodious timbre:  
"Pardon me, O youthful one;  
Pray be kind enough to come to my home.  
This hard bed of earth cannot be your rightful place"*

*In a pitiful voice the monk replied:  
“The time is not yet, O radiant one;  
Go now where you ought to go.  
When the time is ripe,  
I myself shall appear at your door.”*

*Suddenly a lightning pierced  
The dark gloomy sky;  
The pretty maiden shivered  
As the storm wind lashed the earth,  
As if in a mocking laughter.*

.....

*The year was not yet over,  
The spring breeze had become robust;  
Flowers bloomed on the wayside trees  
And in the King’s garden.*

*The intoxicating sound of a flute from afar  
Came floating through the air.  
The streets were desolate;  
The townspeople had all gone to the Spring Fair  
As the full moon smiled gently on the deserted town.*

*On the moon bathed streets  
Walks alone the monk.  
From the green canopy above,  
The cuckoos cry out off and on;  
Has the night of his rendezvous finally arrived?*

*Leaving the town behind,  
The monk goes outside the walls;  
He stands by the moat in the darkness  
Of the shadows of the grove of mango trees.  
Who is that woman lying at his feet?*

*Ravaged with the attack of the black pestilence,  
The townspeople had carried her diseased body  
And cast it outside the city walls by the moat,*

*Banishing her toxic presence from their midst.*

*Sitting down, the monk took up the stiff head  
And placed it on his lap with tenderness;  
Poured water into the parched lips  
And uttered soothing words to comfort.  
And with his hands rubbed  
A cool sandalwood paste all over her body.*

*The flowers were falling, the cuckoos calling,  
The night was entranced in moonlight.  
“Who are you that has come, O merciful one?”  
Asked the maiden. The monk replies:  
“Tonight, the time has arrived;  
I have come, Vasavadatta.”*