

THE LAST VOYAGE

(My translation of Tagore from the original Bengali)

Kaviguru Rabindranath Tagore died on 7th August, 1941. The last 5 years of his life was marked by chronic pain and two long periods of illness. He wrote a collection of poems titled “AROGYA” six months before his death when there was a brief recovery from his prolonged physical suffering.

Kaviguru did not give a title to this poem but it was addressed to his close friend Surendranath Kar. While translating it I have given it the title “The Last Voyage.” The recovery from the illness was brief and Tagore seemed to be intuitively aware of his imminent death which finds expression in these lines.

Many had come in the morning of my Life.
Some were playmates, some merely curious;
Some to lend a helping hand, some to oppose.
Yet, you who are near today in this lonely hour,
In the darkening twilight of this weary evening,
Bringing with you your light
And the farewell touch of the shore of Life
Before my boat sets sail,
You are my friend;
As the stars are to the lost traveller in the dark
In the final moments of his exhausted life.

