

THE LOTUS

Love came to Flora asking for a flower
That would of flowers be undisputed queen,
The lily and the rose, long, long had been
Rivals for that high honour. Bards of power,
Had sung their claims. 'The rose can never tower
Like the pale lily with her Juno mien'—
'But is the lily lovl' ier?' Thus between
Flower-factions rang the strife in Psyche's bower.
'Give me a flower delicious as the rose
And stately as the lily in her pride'—
'But of what colour?'—'Rose-red', Love first chose,
Then prayed,—'No, lily-white,— or, both provide';
And Flora gave the lotus, 'rose-red' dyed,
And 'lily-white',—the queenliest flower that blows.

A MON PERE

The flowers look loveliest in their native soil
And their kindred branches; plucked, they fade
And lose the colours Nature on them laid,
Though bound in garlands with assiduous toil.
Pleasant it was, afar from all turmoil
To wander through the valley, now in shade
And now in sunshine, where these blossoms made
A Paradise, and gather in my spoil.
But better than myself no man can know
How tarnished have become their tender hues
E'en in the gathering, and how dimmed their glow!

TORU DUTT

(1856-1877)

TORU DUTT was born on 4 March 1856 in a Hindu family of Calcutta. She inherited a rich and respectable ancestry. Her father, Govind Chunder Dutt, was a linguist and a cultured man with literary leanings. Her mother, Kshetramonie, was steeped in the Hindu myths. When Toru was six years old, her family embraced Christianity and later they went to France and then to England. In England, the nameless pressure of the ancestral place was withdrawn and the gifts quickly matured in that atmosphere. The family returned home in November 1873 and Toru plunged into imaginative productions. She translated the French lyrics—one hundred and sixty in all, by seventy different poets—into English, which were published under the title, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*.

At the age of nineteen Toru started learning Sanskrit and read classical works including *The Ramayana*, *The Mahabharata*, *Shakuntala*, *The Vishnu Puran*, and *The Bhagwat Puran*. Her next collection of poems, *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*, show her rooted into the soil of Hindu thought and tradition. In this collection, the East and the West meet. This unique phenomenon combining three traditions—French, Indian and English—has left the legacy of ballads and legends in the collection of poetry which is both a cultural and philosophical anthropology and a religious and moral instrument. Toru Dutt articulates a moral vision through these Indian myths which give beauty to human life. The poems are essentially romantic in treatment of themes and the profusion of lyricism links her to Wordsworth and Coleridge. Her Nature poetry is sensuous and, like Keats, she combines beauty and truth.