

# The Criterion

**December 2012**

ISSN 0976-8165

**Vol. III. Issue IV**

**An International Journal in English**

Quarterly Refereed and Indexed Open Access Journal

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**FROM Book IV of *The Parliament of Poets: An Epic Poem.*****Frederick Glaysher.**

Tagore then spoke. "You have heard Krishna, now  
Lord Vishnu's eighth incarnation, Shiva.  
He will come down to us from Mt Kailash,  
from talking with squabbling ascetics.  
Lord Shiva will speak a different language."  
Pointing, he said, "He will come over  
that rise. You shall be granted a vision  
few souls have ever seen. Learn from it.  
Prepare for the dance of the universe,"  
looking deeply into my eyes, with a  
seriousness that made me wonder what  
new experience I was about to have,  
so far from home, my suburban town,  
so typical of modernity, Rochester.  
While I looked, I saw a beautiful female  
glide down through the pines, along with,  
and alighting next to, Narada, leader  
of heavenly musicians. Leaning toward  
Tagore, I asked, "Master, who is this being  
of surpassing beauty?" "Saraswati,"  
he replied, "Consort of Brahma, patroness  
of the arts." Standing on a lotus blossom,  
floating above the forest clearing,  
she began to play the vina, lifting  
all into another region of reality.  
Suddenly I saw Shiva Nataraja, a vision,  
an effulgence of light, in sacred grove,  
a whirl of dance, poised within a circle  
of fire, on the edge between two worlds,  
his swirling locks revolving with his movements,  
long coils of hair flying about,  
the divine music of the universe,  
soaring, as of the heavenly spheres,  
whirling, in serenity supreme, beyond  
this world, right foot planted firmly on a dwarf  
of ignorance, dread symbol of our worldly  
nature, sunk so low from the lofty heaven  
of our goal. In one hand, he held aloft  
a flame of fire, burning away illusions,  
our maya; with another, he beat the drum  
of creation, marking time, upon a lotus,

his third arm signaling peace, assurance,  
dispelling fear, his palm open toward us.  
Lord Shiva looked upon us, calm, benevolent,  
enjoying his creation, OM the syllable  
he intoned through movement, divine energy  
flowing, destruction returning chaos  
to order. Into and out of samsara,  
flowed creation, rhythm of life, joy,  
his footsteps relieving the suffering  
of his followers, perpetual conflict,  
good and evil, knowledge and illusion,  
nourishing the universe, Creator  
and Destroyer, lover and ascetic,  
husband and hermit, his third eye gazed out  
on all, so he danced upon the crossing  
point of two times, holding us spellbound,  
as he whirled upon the flower of wisdom  
and enlightenment, enlightening us,  
ending one Age to begin another,  
enumerable kalpas passing as we watched,  
his raised leg a sign of liberation,  
moksha of the soul, release, from the  
burning flames that arched around him,  
sat, chit, ananda, truth, consciousness, bliss,  
his forth arm crosswise, compassionately  
granting his favor to humanity,  
releasing all from the round of samsara.  
Before his glorious image we all  
instinctively bowed down in awe and joy,  
submission and surrender, humbling  
ourselves before his visionary dance,  
Shiva Nataraja, medicine wheel  
of Bharat. As he had come to us,  
he suddenly began to fade, disappeared,  
taking with him the forest circle of  
gandharavas and apsaras. Oh, how I wished  
I could have followed them, Saraswati, too,  
leaving Tagore and I standing together  
under the pines, a fresh breeze coming down  
the mountainside, as from Mt Kailash.  
Tagore looked at me for a while,  
held his head up slightly, saying nothing,  
and then walked a few steps away, peering out  
towards the valley below, mountains far away.  
While he stood there silently, I said nothing,  
still too overcome to know what to say,

waiting for him to find the words  
that might be right after what we had seen,  
experience beyond what words can capture.  
With his long hair slightly blown by the wind,  
still looking across the valley, through the pines,  
his back to me, he said, robe flapping,  
“When young, I used to come up here alone.  
Slipping away from my father, long ago.  
Here, take this bloom of red oleander,  
a token of our journey,” holding it out.  
Nodding, I slipped it into my breast pocket,  
still dazed, failing to thank him for his gift,  
while he continued, breeze furling his robe....

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