

In Search of Magnificence

Babru Samal

Prologue

In life, encounter with novelty is like entering an uncharted territory. That can be exciting or frustrating yet rewarding. There, sometimes with inadequate and limited subjective information we try our best to make sense out of our experiences to perceive either pleasure or pain. The collection of these poems is like the minutes of my perceptions over the years.

These poems have been written 1992 onwards as transcripts of my realization of moments. Still this is only my truth, not universal, limited by my immaturity and state of my mind at that instance. As human beings we all experience similar emotions irrespective of cultural influence. I hope these poems will resonate with the readers' own experiences and views of life and living.

My wife, Jayashree Samal has designed the cover page putting together the beauty of design in the core of sunflower and correlating that with the search for magnificence in mundane life. I am very much thankful for her invaluable contribution.

I am indebted to Dr. Pratibha Ray for her kindness and encouragement towards the publication of these poems. Dr. Adyasha Das and Mr. Binod Nayak, have edited the poems and given valuable advice towards making them more effective messengers.

The photographs included in this book were taken by me at various locations.

Dedication

I dedicate this collection of poems to my mom, Sitamani, to my daughter, Manisha, to my son, Nihar and to my wife, Jayashree.

Babru

Table of Contents

Prologue	2
Dedication	3
From Mundane to Magnificence	8
Blossom Where Planted.....	9
Complexity within Elegance	10
Creations and Creators	11
Fire	12
My creator, sustainer and liberator.....	12
How Do They Do It?	13
I Wonder What We Are.....	14
In Search of Divinity	15
It is all in the Packaging.....	16
Manasarovar*	17
Metamorphosis of a Bookworm	18
Micro-mini-megamorphosis	21
Multidimensional Living.....	22
Mystical Mesmerizing Music.....	23
Seeing More by Closing Eyes	24
The Barrier Reef	25
The Show Goes On.....	26
Window to all Hearts and Minds	27
Uncommon within Commonality.....	28
Wild Mushrooms.....	29
About God	30
An Intimate Encounter.....	31
God with a Hearing Problem.....	32
Listening to God	34
Many of Me.....	35
Many of You	37
My Long Lost Lover	38
Vision of the All Mighty.....	39

About the Universe	40
An Evening with Her.....	41
Beyond Space and Time.....	42
Contemplation	43
It is About Time.....	44
Sacred Music of the Light.....	45
Slave of the Moment	46
The Emerald Lake.....	47
The Great Equalizer.....	48
Time Undefined	49
About life.....	50
A Sojourn in the Wonderland	51
Arrival and Departure	52
Ascent of a Man	53
Becoming a Being.....	55
Cluster Bombing.....	56
Creature of Rhythm.....	57
Dream of a Sexagenarian	58
Fingerprints of the Force	59
Follow the Script	60
Listening to the Silence	61
The Meaning of Life	62
Midlife Crisis	63
Picture Imperfect.....	64
Pollen Count.....	65
Query in the Twilight Zone.....	66
The Absolute Gifts	67
The Fantastic Web	68
The Four-Letter Word.....	69
The Other Path.....	70
The Right Way to Live	71
The River of Life	72

Thriving with Poison.....	74
When Does the Life Begin?	75
Alien Chronicle	76
America, the Beautiful	77
An Autobiography of a River Stone.....	79
In the Land of Possibilities	81
The Moments of Our Lives.....	82
My Yellow Daffodil of the Winter	83
New Wine in the Old Bottle	84
Our Children Our Future	85
Sisyphus's Dream	86
Stranger in Paradise	88
Temporay Phase.....	90
Virtual Paradise	92
We and Our children	94
We Create the World to Live in	95
Bemusing About the Other Half.....	97
Bemusing About the Other Half.....	98
Dawn to Dream About the Dearest	100
Falling Rain Drops	101
Pancha Kanyaa	102
Resident of my Mind.....	103
Seasons of Your Heart.....	104
Those Delicate Flowers.....	106
Wild Flowers of the Paradise	107
My World as I See It.....	108
A Moment in Time	109
An Ever Changing Stream.....	110
Bare Expression.....	111
Can you Imagine one Without the Other?.....	112
Chatter Box	113
Eat and be Merry	115

Echelon.....	116
I Am Walking On a One-way Street	117
In Search of my Present	118
Invocation of Zeus.....	119
Kanyaa* Avatar	120
Kanya Sahasranama*	122
Looking for the Past	123
Man with a Bottle	124
Mothers of the World	125
My Loving Distraction	126
Painful Pleasure	127
Pandemic Infection	128
Parallel Universes.....	129
Purba Purusha*	130
Salmon Run	131
Samsar Mahasagar*	132
Sunrise after the Snowstorm	133
The Force.....	134
The Fragrance of the Sweet Jasmine	135
The World We Live in.....	136
The Year of the Life	137

From Mundane to Magnificence



Blossom Where Planted

Omnipresent
Emblem of nurture and tolerance
You sacrifice your life or limbs
To sustain life on this earth
To give rain, food, shelter and air to breathe
To enhance art and architecture

You decorate the earth with flowers
Green meadows,
Overwhelming me
With colors in fall and spring
Filling the air with fragrance
To convert the earth to heaven

You are still and serene
Like a yogi in meditation
You are an ascetic
With no need for fancy food or clothing
You lead a simple life
Like Shiva, you absorb poison and give oxygen in turn
Forgiving those who abuse you
Without expecting any retribution
You move on
Regenerate what was taken away from you
In your arbor avatar

xxx

Complexity within Elegance

Have you noticed?
When things get simpler
More beautiful, slick and handy
User friendly and multitasking
Inside they become much more complex
Many more intricate designs
More complex software and hardware
Reduced in size but increased in complexity.

Now look at you
Look at every living being
Mobile or stationary
The same rule is also at play.
An amoeba, a single cell, very simple inside
Enough power to feed and divide
But not much else

Compare that with flowers or
Us, the human beings
Where beauty is in so many varieties
In so many ways our brain works
To see, feel, kiss and make love
Write poetry or put probes on Mars.

Outer elegant simple design
Only betrays the millions of interactions
Taking place inside every second
To make us hit a mosquito
Even in our sleep.

xxx

Creations and Creators

Theories and speculations abound
About the creation of the universe
Billions of years ago
About the origin of life
Millions of years ago
Or
Even thousands of years ago
When God created Adam and Eve
And gave them the power over three worlds

I wonder more about
The creations people do every day
Poets, musicians, painters
Scientists, engineers and cooks
The force that drives them to create
The pain of giving birth
The patience for nurturing it
And the determination to protect it
From an early demise

Creation
An incessant current
Flowing from odd places
From the mind of nuts,
Ugly, sick, bipolar or depressed human beings
Or just weird mad artists or scientists
A flow that they cannot control
But produce
And produce
Until they are summoned by the Creator
To come back home.

xxx

Fire

My creator, sustainer and liberator

You fire
As the underwater Vesuvius
Drew two beings together
To become one to create me
I grew inside clinging to the wall
Fed by the food that my mother ate
Made with your help

You fire
You help me
To prepare food
To stave off chilly winter
To study and play games
You witness my marriage
And farewell to my father

You fire
Burning bright inside me
Make me learn more and more
Burning in my eyes
Drives me to decide whether to kill or to be killed
Burning in my heart
Make me search souls to reach out and connect
To feel for the have-nots

At the end, you will consume my body
To liberate the primary elements
To be used in creation again

xxx

How Do They Do It?

A cookie inside a plastic wrap
Music in a DVD or as a wav file
A mango in a supermarket
Flowers ready to be offered to some one
Or to gods
A washing machine working tirelessly for years
A movie so enjoyable in an air conditioned theater
Computer monitors
Or flat screen TV
We are used to see beautiful images
By flipping a switch

But we never know
The stories behind these
Stories of toil and frustration
Ups and downs
Conflicts
Tears and hugs
Like the iPod story of Steve Jobs

Each success rises like a phoenix
In the graveyard of failures
Finally given to us
In nice sleek packages
Just like our bodies.

xxx

I Wonder What We Are

It sounds so strange to me
Human beings
Are not humane beings
Billions are spent to make
The killing more efficient
More lethal, more massive
Shock and awe
Wow!
As if it is another action movie
Or a video game

We forget what Jesus said
About loving our neighbors
In the name of God, the magnificent
The compassionate One,
Who resides in both living and non-living beings
We demonize our own kind
Scared by the color of the skin
By the turban on the head
Or just by the perceptions of -isms
We carpet bomb
We pulverize the kids, women and old folks
As if the destiny of mankind is self-immolation.

We are in a world of strangers
Imprisoned by paranoia and fear
A strange sense of aloofness
Pervades us
We become the killer of our own kind
What drives a man to do that?
I never know
Except what I read long time ago
"Man goes to war
Because he secretly wishes to die."
xxx

In Search of Divinity

I usually visit the shrines
To marvel at the art and devotees
Not to seek the stairways to heaven
As it exists all around
As well as inside me
But
Often hidden, buried
In the mountains of debris
Like the full moon under the dark clouds

I love to discover
All the beautiful things
Those solemnly exquisite heavenly icons
Wherever I go
Whoever I meet
Whatever I do
Whatever I see

Like a mother tending her sick child
Her only child
I love to touch and preserve each moment
The delicate but transient fractal
With all the love in my heart
To live in heaven
In my mortal life.

xxx

It is all in the Packaging

You are so beautiful to me
In all your avatars
In all your forms
From the tiniest to the largest
From flowers to Miss Universe
So wonderfully packaged
To attract my admiration and awe

Inside in all your avatars
Like the inside of my computer or TV
Myriads of tubes, connectors and adaptors
To make the entity survive
To make the signal flow smoothly
The complexity covered with
The very elegant packaging
Who thinks of neurotransmitters
While making love?

This packaging
Makes hearts throb
In excitement or fear
Makes thousands crabs and snakes
And others including us
Participate in the ritual of romance.

xxx

Manasarovar*

Your mind
Deep, fathomless
Built with Intricate inter-twinning layers
Of colorful palaces
For thoughts and fantasies
Swimming like fluorescent colorful fishes
With no boundaries to honor

Imagination like pearls
Incubate inside the shell of memories
Feeding on the ideas and wisdom
You gain by observing the world
They undergo metamorphosis
To dazzle the outer world
By riding the vehicle of alphabets
And being animated by your voice
To make people become spell-bound.

Desires and wishes
Fill in the cascades of past events
Either as trophies
Or in caskets of sheer frustration for
Not getting what you wanted.
Both are treasured
As beacons and pathfinders
For future pursuits

Like cactus flowers
Succulent and splendid
Sweet spots of past happy moments
Lie surrounded by abundance of thorns
Of hard time and hard work.

In every glorious day
Future embraces your open and receptive mind
Like the soothing autumn breeze
Becoming a nucleus
To build a virtual world of elegance
With your gift of imagination
That you later share with me.

xxx

Manasarovar*: Lake Manasarovar is a large freshwater lake on Tibetan Plateau. As per Hindu theology, Lake Manasa Sarovar is a personification of purity, and one who drinks water from the lake will go to the Abode of Lord Shiva after death.

Metamorphosis of a Bookworm

Books hiding
Those black round letters in their white or brown chests
Enticed me
I wanted to sip the nectar from them
Reading more and more
Until all the books in the village got exhausted

Soon the alphabets changed their shapes
Changed their inherent meanings
And became colored
And picturesque
First black and white
And then really colorful.

Books
Became my bosom buddies
I read when I walked
When I ate
Read them before I slept and after I woke up

Those wise people who wrote the books
Let me drink from the fountain of knowledge
To fill me with information
Knowledge and may be even wisdom.

Then I discovered libraries
First dark and dusty with wrinkled pages
Later museums of books in shelves
'Noise annoys'
I could sit there for hours
Like a bee in a garden full of flowers.

Soon
Books became only part time friends
As I delved into hands on experiments
Finding myself instead of consuming others findings.
Experiments, analyses, publications
The interpretation of God's ingenuity
According to me

Then I saw the world outside
Beyond books
Beyond micropipettes and PCR machines
And also inside me
The real flowers are more wonderful

Than the article on mechanism of flowering
Real people are more intriguing
Than their descriptions in psychology books
The real singers are more mesmerizing
Than the presentations in meetings

The digital invasion
The ease of getting information
Without spending hours in a library
No more going from shelf to shelf, article to article
Now my mouse does the clicking
Bringing me not wisdom
But data and inferences
From seven million busy people
For me to put together their findings
By meta-analysis
To perceive a system,
Creating a Lego elephant

Beyond the allurement of lab and laptop
Lies the vast book of nature
People included
Primitives, ultra-moderns
Different shapes, sizes, dresses
Brains, languages, voices
Their lives on the ground
In the deep sea
On the tree tops and under microscopes
So fascinating!

Their messages
And expressions
In form of movements,
Symbols, dances and melodies
Their pace of feeding and breeding
And bringing up babies
As sleep walkers.

There lies the vast span of plants
Decorated with flowers of myriad varieties
Drugging bees with pollens
Giving food
Asking nothing in return
Never angry but forgiving us, the exploiters.

And then inside all of those
Shapes, sizes, positions and races

The ever working genes and proteins
That make up what I can see
And can't
And may be, should not.

My book is so big now
So astounding
Each shape, each word has a spell on me
Each move triggers me to read it more
More and more
To experience in full
The meaning of my existence

xxx

Micro-mini-megamorphosis

I, a point in time
In a tiny body
Reside in a tiny room
In a tiny house in a tiny city
In a tiny country in a tiny planet
That orbits around a tiny solar system
That is a part of the galaxy called Milky Way
That becomes a tiny part of the universe
A cluster of the universes
Hanging from each of His/Her hair follicles
That is the creator, alias God.

I, a point in time
Exist somewhere in the cluster of cells in my brain
I perceive and think who I am
The organs talk to each other
The cells talk to each other
The molecules talk to each other
Seamlessly to make me emerge as myself
As the outcome of myriads of actions
Interactions, signal transductions
To let me exist in microcosm
In the super-universe called cosmos.

xxx

Multidimensional Living

A single body
Hosts apparently a single mind
That lives in multiple dimensions
Switching residences as needed.

From the same mind
Hunger arises
For food and drink
Myriad kinds of things we consume
Based on needs but mostly on desire
We are so particular about those
Even though everything that we intake
Gets reduced to basic units
And eventually gets recycled.

From the same mind love rises
With different forms and features
Fitting the circumstance
For children,
For parents
Divine love for the unseen,
Erotic or sensual love for the lover
Love as compassion
For needy human beings
And even animals and plants

From the same mind
Urge arises to procreate
As a byproduct of an enjoyable encounter
And also to create
Where the body becomes the instrument of the mind
Leading to singing, dancing, painting or designing
And formatting the reality in a way
That was not meant to be.

Hidden in the crevices of mind
Anger arises to destroy
Everything that crosses its path
Including the serenity, sanctity and divinity in man
We sleepwalk in these dimensions
As instructed by our emotions
Groomed by our parents and grandparents
Barely questioning the validity
Barely crossing the boundaries
To find if there are other dimensions of living

xxx

Mystical Mesmerizing Music

Once becoming a being
Man extends the creative world of God
Into unknown dimensions
Where expression needs no alphabets
Where emotion is conveyed to hearts and minds
By sound emanating from vibration of strings
Or the path of breath through minute crevices

Music
A rhythm
A perpetual wish for things to be in harmony
Rising from soprano to alto
And down to soprano again
Just like my emotions
My fate and my arrival into unknown arenas in life

When I listen to music with closed eyes
I visualize a swan's lazy gait
Or the dancing of a peacock to entice his mate
Or a deer's jump in a green meadow
Or the surfing of a flock of birds in wide open sky
Or the waves' desperately trying to touch the full moon

The music becomes one
With the rise or fall of my desire
A connection to myself in meditation
An explosion of the inner turbulence
The silent wailing of one who lost some one near and dear
Or a desperate eternal quest for a mate
That may not be there.

Music
A lament without words
A wish to loose and to get it back again
A celebration of nature
A projection of the mind
That yearns for harmony and beauty
It liberates me from this fragile body
To fly for the eternity in serenity

(According to Hindus the creation started from a sound (naad)).

xxx

Seeing More by Closing Eyes

The bright light that blinds me
After I close the eyes
To read the books without alphabets
The books
That Buddha read under the Bodhi tree
The book
That Mohamed read inside the cave
The book
Jesus read in his solitude in the desert
And Rumi read to be filled with love
To infuse them
To infuse us
With knowledge and wisdom

In the remote corner of the Himalayas
The ascetics sit closing their eyes
Day after day
To drink the elixir of knowledge

What do they derive?
From books without words
Without light and without prerequisites
What do I get by deciphering?
The mind and the culture
What is the goal of knowledge after all?

xxx

The Barrier Reef

Before I learnt a language
May be German, Japanese, Chinese or Spanish
It was all noise to me
Made no sense
Something to laugh about
By lampooning it
I am sure
Other people do the same
When I speak my language
Odia

Languages bridge gaps
Also divide people
One human from another on language lines

I wonder about those birds
Bees and crickets
Or the monkeys
And ants
Communicating with each other but within species
About food and mates
Those languages are beyond my comprehension
Nothing to laugh at except my ignorance.

xxx

The Show Goes On

The crumpled petals
Take their last breath
In the evening of demise

The old deceased woman
A collection of bones
Awaits for the cremation

The deer's remnant stinks
After the satiated tiger sleeps

Death and decadence rule
The dark and terminal corridor of living

In the crack of a concrete highway
Two leaves of a tiny plant smile
The passionate rose buds
Wait patiently to spray their aroma
On unsuspecting bees and butterflies
The tiny baby girl blossoms
Becomes the dancing peacock at the sight of the rain clouds
The gait of the newly born deer erases the trauma of an untimely death.

Even though
We
The plants
The animals
The flowers
The jewelries
Paintings and sculptures are transient
The soap bubbles in dazzling colors and shapes
We make the shows go on
While beautifying the earth.

xxx

Window to all Hearts and Minds

From time immemorial till today
My illustrious ancestors speak to me vividly
About their thoughts on
Love, lust, life and death
Gods, goddesses and ghosts
The world I see is what they showed me to be

From time immemorial till today
They let me travel
In the garden of their imagination
Dancing, crying, sobbing, living or dying
Like their characters
From my caged cell I can feel the pain
Pleasure and hunger
And strike at injustice

From time immemorial till today
Their fantasies live
And propagate
Like the old banyan tree with prop roots
The imagination sowed in us
Can never be killed
But gives rise to
Many new possibilities

From time immemorial till today
Through word of mouth
Or via the vehicle called alphabets
Let the web of thoughts
Live and survive
Unadulterated or permutated
Becoming the Vedas, Bible, Koran, Torah or sci-fi
Red book or the Dream of the Red Mansion
For me to read and marvel

From time immemorial till today
Minds think alike
Hearts feel alike
Across time and space
Across languages, race and culture
Wondering and cherishing
Achieving immortality
Through the media called books.

xxx

Uncommon within Commonality

Everything is so common
It is not worth paying attention any more
Kids growing up
Accidents, shootings, even funerals
Breakfasts, lunches and dinners
Sunrises and sunsets
It appears as if everything repeats itself like clockwork

Hidden in this mundane life
Other things happen
Seeds germinate and become plants
Grandsons become grandfathers
Mustache and bosoms prop up as landmarks
In the crack in parking lots
Weeds display flowers and seeds
The geography of my face changes
Still time seems nirvikar (unattached)
Like the surface of the ocean
Unperturbed by the activities in worlds inside

xxx

Wild Mushrooms

Wild mushrooms bask in morning sun
In a circle
Like Bedouins in a dinner party
Or like a galaxy of Geishas
Each one with a nicely decorated umbrella

Or are they
A group of Native Americans
During spirit worship
All quietly waiting, anticipating something amazing to happen?

Or are they a bunch of Vietnamese women
Decorated with oversized round bamboo umbrellas
Busy in a rice field?

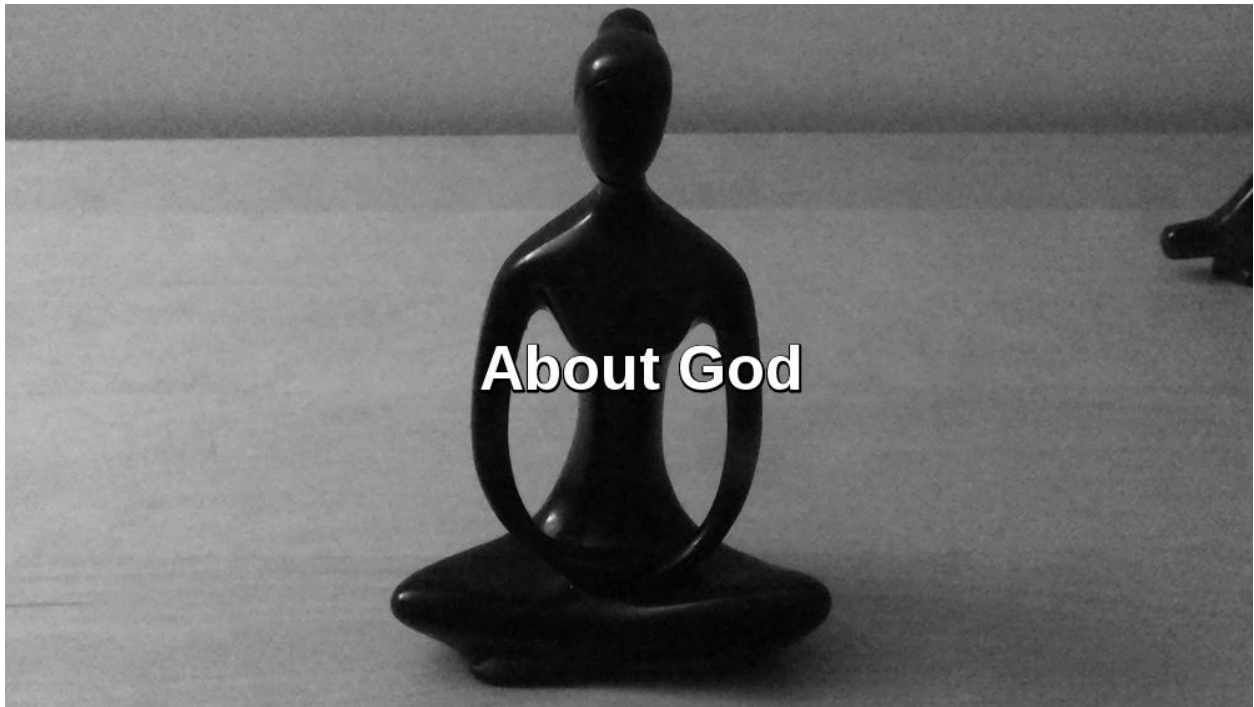
These wild mushrooms
Appear as individuals
But deep down they are all connected
By the unseen common bond, the mycelia
Like all of us, with the intent to live, love
And propagate the earth with our off-springs
With our spores

These wild mushrooms
Calm, elegant and simple
Silent sentinels of creation
Betray thousands of seamless automated reactions
Making it easy to bask in morning sun

xxx

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

About God



An Intimate Encounter

Choked in stress and despair
I knelt in front of you
And begged you to listen to me

Rolling on the floor
In desperation
I stared at you
Made love to you
Cajoled you
Called you my mom, a saint, a savior
Called you my beloved
The only thing I had to hang on to
And yelled at you

Then I fell asleep
In front of you in exhaustion
And in my dream
You came smiling
Touching me
Caressing me
Loving me

Like my mom
Like my sister
Like my baby daughter
Like my beloved
As I embraced you
You became a part of me
My reality
My life
xxx

God with a Hearing Problem

“Looks like
A sudden sunset at noon.
All the orchids I planted wilted
I am in dark
I am in pain,
I am lonely
I miss the ones who disappeared just like that.
How could you do that to me?”

Every day I pray
I need you to help me
To decide for me,
To give me a shoulder
And guide me
But you have failed me again and again.
God!
You got a hearing problem?”

“But who am I any way?
Nothing but
Sum total of your own consciousness
The voice within you
Your own creation for your sustenance
You create me in your own image
And connect with me in silence.”

“How could I do that?
I am even unable to canoe in the rushing rapids
And you want me to look for the direction too?”

I am on a run
From myself
From the world I am in
To the world of my dreams
Can't you see that?
Are you blind too??”

Hey omniscient,
Come on!
You could see better
Me
My emotions
My pain
My desires

My future
And guide me away from my pain.
Can't you?"

"Your eyes are my eyes
Your inner feelings are my words of wisdom
When stripped of wishes against wishes.

So,

Sit back and relax, my baby
And look at you from a distance

With affection

But no emotion

And read yourself like a book

All of its pages

And miss nothing

And then you will

See me

Hear me

And

Be me."

xxx

Listening to God

In the shore of the ever flowing stream
In the rain forests of Bahia,
Darwin sat and listened to the words of God
That spun out myriads of forms
Of all imaginable colors and shapes
Butterflies
Palmyra palms
And human beings

I try to listen to those words
In the wee hours of the morning
When the sun is still too lazy to wake up
But the sky becomes glorious
With colors that smear everything on their way
From stinking places to National cathedral
As if it is the festival of colors
Every day.

In the lab of thousand of scientists
Genes and proteins
Clamor to tell us
What they do and why they do it
And how they play their roles
Deep inside the cells
To keep all of us alive
To feed and breed

These actions speak the words of God
Louder than the holy books.

xxx

Many of Me

In me resides the power to create, to sustain and destroy
The world as I perceive.

Therefore,
I am the creator, sustainer and the destroyer.

I am the *meena* (fish) in a bowl
That becomes my world of pleasure and pain.
I am defined by forces
I do not understand.

I am the *kachhapa* (turtle),
I carry a heavy exterior,
To withstand the ambiguities of life.
In the face of trouble,
I retreat and hide in my microcosm.

I am the *varaha* (wild boar)
Arrogant with my animal instincts
I feel as if I am the rescuer of the world
Which I can change
By my brute force.

I am the *Narasingha* (half man, half lion),
The blend of man, the consciousness
And the lion, the king of animal power
I can be swayed by my emotions,
Hurt people emotionally or physically
Before my conscience takes hold of the reins

I am the *Vamana* (midget)
Dwarfed with the burden of sheer living
I am going from door to door,
Begging for alms of happiness and fulfillment

I am the *Parshurama*
The saint, the priest,
I think my way is the way
Impatient to other notions and paths
I want to have my world by destroying the worlds
As it exists according to others.

I am the *Rama*
Confused,
Bound by principles
That I do not understand

Wandering from path to path
And running after the golden deer
Of worldly happiness and recognition.

I am the Valarama
The mighty Lord with the power to culture,
To enrich myself by cultures of mankind
And to produce food for thought for me
And others.

I am the *Buddha*
I look at my ageing parents
I miss my beloved deceased grandmother
I worry about my sick children
And question the purpose of my existence.
In the quiet solitude,
I brood over my past
The fleeting present
And ever encroaching future
I see me through my mistakes,
Barely grasping the way out to my future
For my own salvation.

Finally,
I am the *Kalki*, the destroyer
In my rage, I see nothing,
I feel nothing,
I want to destroy everything including my own identity
Void defines the serenity of my life.

Above all, I am the *Krishna*,
The embodiment of attraction,
I am the ecstasy
I merge with myself as Radha in the final bliss.
There is no end or beginning
There is no male or female
But the union,
Celebrated by the sound of the flute.

XXX

According to Hindu mythology, God took ten avatars from tiny fish to Krishna to preserve the sanctity of
His creation

Many of You

Thank you for letting me have the eyes
And the mind to sense your presence
Your universal presence

The dance of your breath
In every living being I can see
Children undergoing perpetual metamorphosis
To beautiful men and women
Stepping slowly but surely to the serenity of old age

The dance of your breath
In everything I see
Butterflies, birds, flowers and maple trees
In every being I can't see
Like your avatars in the arctic
In subterranean hot springs
On the rocks on the ocean floor
In the sweltering heat of the Sahara Desert
Or deep inside the Amazon rain forest

Your omnipresence prevails
As preys and predators
In forms and shapes beyond imagination
All able to sustain and to pass on the breath of you
As the essence of the universe

Your avatars
Fly high in the open sky
Move effortlessly in the dark abyss of the sea
Or become life giver as planktons or fruits
To feed your other avatars

I, a tiny icon of yours,
The seeker of you inside me and outside
Worshipping you
In your multi-million avatars.

xxx

My Long Lost Lover

Once upon a time
Before logic over ruled my emotions
Before knowledge stripped off my feelings
There you were,
Far but very near
Omnipotent but tender like a mom
Invisible but omnipresent
You were in my home
Looking at me
Smiling at me.

You were my mother,
My child
My beautiful lover
I wrapped you in best clothes
Put gold jewelries on your neck
Woke you up in the morning
Gave you bath and breakfast
Lunch and dinner
Put you to sleep
And woke you up by lullaby
I never ate anything
Before feeding you first.

In my own language
I yelled at you
Cajoled you
Fought with you
Did not talk to you like an upset lover

Then as I became wiser
Sophisticated, intellectual
Analytical and advanced,
You left the earth to reside in heaven
And me in this distant world
Scared of the hell
I prayed and asked for your blessings
For my salvation
No more a lover,
Or a son, or daughter
But someone down trodden
Doing penance for my sins
I am not aware of.

xxx

Vision of the All Mighty

I saw God
With a pony tail
And earrings,
Nose stud, bindi and in sari
Sipping coffee in Dunkin Donut.
Could not believe it
Closed my eyes
Opened again and saw Him
With the pony tail and earring
But also with a beard and a pot belly
Leaning on his motorcycle
And smoking pot.

Look
He changed again
To a cute baby
Drooling all over his mom
There He goes again
Now He is a bald guy with glasses
With a head phone
Rainbow T shirt
Listening to born again
Christian music.

Then he was a slim tall girl
In tight jeans and red tennis shoes
Hot lips defining
Her everlasting smile
Kissing her boy friend amorously
Looked at me
And said,
"Believe me kid,
They are all of me."

xxx

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

About the Universe



An Evening with Her

Last evening
As I waited there
without a notebook or a book
A pipette or a steering wheel
I was hugged warmly by her,
the chilly air of December

I looked around and saw
A tree without leaves
Standing there like a yogi on one leg
The streak of sunshine
Trying very intensely
To warm up its desolate branches

I looked at it again and again
As if I had never seen a branch before
Dark, scaly and dry
Like my grandmother's last days
Cannot move
Cannot express what she wants
Cannot do anything on her own
Just waiting for the passage
To the spring of eternity.

These seemingly lifeless
But pregnant branches hibernate
To rejoice again the warm air of the spring
to be studded with flowers again
Like my grandmother did.

xxx

Beyond Space and Time

Suddenly every thing
Appears so strange to me
So mysterious
The world around me
The world within me
The pattern of leaves
Flowers and clouds
From transient to
So confidently permanent
From the snow flakes
To the fossilized tree trunks
I wonder looking at them
I wonder looking at me
These tokens of creation
A constantly changing
Constantly perpetuating machine

xxx

Contemplation

Sometimes
A moment captures me
Like the calmness on the horizon
Before a thunder storm
When the dark cloud
Chases its own tail

I take out my mask of living
And gaze and get absorbed by it
As if it is the reflection of my inner world
In a vortex of desire
Like a black hole
Wherein all my actions in life
Slowly succumb to.

There I temporarily touch
The frailty of a leaf in a tornado
But is it a scary nightmare
Or the salvation
A prelude to becoming one with the eternity?

xxx

It is About Time

Time
The greatest joker
The conqueror of my ego, pride and prejudice
It moulds
Marvelous heart breakers
From tiny zygotes
And again reduces them
To helpless infants
At will.

Time
Only with its chisel
Creates white sand beach from conchs
Pebbles from mountains
Diamonds from dirty coals
And
Monuments from
Ugly red hills

Time
Temporarily
Creates the false sense of permanence
In spring flowers and autumn leaves
In great emperors and empires
Monuments
Castles
But
Only time stands the test of time.

xxx

Sacred Music of the Light

My life dawns anew every day
With the streak of light from the distant sun
Giving the mundane a tint of mysticism
Elevating it to a higher plane
In composition of color and texture
The shapes come alive
Like music oozing from the mind of a composer

On the vast heart of the lake
Evening light becomes
Spectacles of gold
And swirls to the melody of the breeze
As if responding to
An unheard symphony,
A performance of eternal rhythm

With the touch of light everything becomes marvelous
The colors of the flowers,
Of new leaves,
Of snow and ice
Even bare mountains of California

I am greeted in the morning
By the crimson morning sky
As if *dios* (gods) played Holi whole night

From the splendor of aurora borealis
To the golden rays of
Rising and setting sun
To the soothing white jasmines of
The full moon night
Light decorates the creation
Making it sacrosanct, mystical and musical

xxx

Slave of the Moment

Moment makes
Lovers out of strangers
Moment transforms a hello to intimacy

Moment
Instigates me and you
To jump over the barriers
Seemed so impassable a moment ago.

Moment is a pirate
It plunders my dreams
Shakes my life boat
Leaves me marooned
With no shore in sight

Moment caresses my heart.
Coaxes me to follow
The scent of an unseen unreachable fantasy.

Moment inebriates me
With all the essence
Of future wildflowers
Brings tears to my eyes
With the pungent smell
Of lost dreams

Like a swollen river
It overwhelms me
And induces me
Coerces me
To be its slave
Time after time.

xxx

The Emerald Lake

I don't believe that
A king, a sultan or a maharaja
Commissioned some engineers to
Design this paradise
But it appears that way
As if meticulously planned
And executed
Even though
It is just a random presence
Of living and nonliving beings
In the lap of time.

So you may ask
Why is it so amazing?
So serene
Why is it
Such a powerful force
To put ourselves into meditation?
Into getting absorbed in infinity
In the sheer presence of trees, water and mountains
The common things we see everywhere
And barely pay attention to.

Is it a mirror?
That reflects our inner desire
Or a hibernating wish
To be one with the eternity
Or a revelation of
Our inner calmness and serenity
That we desperately search for
Wherever we go?

xxx

The Great Equalizer

I heard about you every day
Here, over there
All over the world
I still dare to believe
That it will not happen to me.

The Death
The great equalizer
The great dissolver of
Pride, position and faith
Fanaticism and infatuation
Glories, gruesome past
All suddenly gone
Wiped out by you instantly

How you come
When you come
And why you come
Remain as mysteries forever.

xxx

Time Undefined

Time,
I tried to fathom you
In the number of teeth
Sprouting in my baby girl
Number of hairs left
In my receding hair line
Tried to fathom you
In the size of the expanding hole on my head
And in ever invading wrinkles
Around my eyes and cheeks

I try to measure you
By looking at the sunrise and sunset
Rise and fall of tides
And in the changing color of the leaves

But I never succeeded.

Time
Only you can change
A toddler to a heart breaker
A heartbreaker to a grand mother
A grandmother to a baby again
While you remain
A drop of water on a lotus leaf.
A flow of eternity
With no end or beginning.

xxx

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

About life



A Sojourn in the Wonderland

I seek silence
In the eye of the storm
To realize the meaning of my life
As I know more and more
The bin of my understanding
Of me and my world
Gets emptied with time

Now I look at me, at flowers
At my ever changing kids
With amazement
And feel no different
From other living beings of myriad forms.

I am too tiny
To think about deciphering
The meaning of my existence
But just to wonder and wander
As long as I can

xxx

Arrival and Departure

Flights arrive
Every day
With the passenger without luggage
Eagerly waiting folks
Weep and smile in joy
Even though the passenger
Never speaks a word but cries.

Flights depart
Every day
The passenger leaves
Sometimes suddenly
Without logging off
Without last hugs and kisses

The loved ones look on
With tears in their eyes
They come back home
And never hear from the passenger again.

xxx

Ascent of a Man

We celebrated his life
After his death
He was such a nice person
Very artistic, humble and friendly
Accolades came more and more
Like rain drops in monsoon time
I wonder if he was listening
And was contrasting with his past encounters

May his soul rest in peace
We prayed with closed eyes
I had no idea
How did it leave his body?
Where did it go?
And how can it rest?

Any way
He is free at last
From the gaze of the prying eyes
From the pangs of hunger for someone sweet
Free from thirst for being loved
Impressive and important

Now
His life exists
Beyond body
Beyond charms of allurements
Beyond the agonies of failures
Beyond quarrels, dramas
And mundane chores

His life celebrates
With no need for information
For knowledge or wisdom
Degrees and positions

Krishna said to Arjuna
"Once you are born,
Death is assured."

So, we do not worry
Just celebrate the interval
And beyond.

So we did.
After celebrating his departure
With good food, drink and chit chat
We moved on
Went for grocery, gasoline
Garage sales
And waited
For others to celebrate ours.

xxx

Becoming a Being

I wonder where the essence of life lies
I guess it is not in making a living
But in living
In being

But when do I do that?

I make a living,
As an illegal foreign worker
Mowing lawns
As a maid washing dirty dishes
As a toll collector in highway
As a worker in a sweat shop
As a child hooker
As a garbage collector
As a secretary

I
As a man or woman
Work, eat and sleep
And go to work again
While the days roll into nights
And nights into days
When do I start living before I die?

xxx

Cluster Bombing

You are wrong
If you think that
Only mighty world powers
Use cluster bombs

They have been used
For thousands of years
And used every day all over the world
But for creating things
Making sure that the future survives
The uncertainty of randomness

Every year
Pine trees lash out clouds of spores
Sunflowers smear the bees with millions of pollens
Fish and turtles lay thousands of eggs
Males flood the love passage with millions of sperms
And mushrooms go ballistic

Out of these millions
With the chance of less than once in a blue moon
The progeny strolls
To bear the burden of the selfish genes

After work
I open my mailbox to find
Lots of mails I did not ask for
I get bombarded with solicitation and coupons
Chanting the mantra
"The more you buy
The more you save"

And I am not alone
Every one's mail box is filled with them too
Lately
My email inbox with lots of space
Has become
The favorite arena for cluster bombing

xxx

Creature of Rhythm

Even when she was too small to talk
My daughter was dancing to the rhythm of music
And danced away in a party
With no hesitation
But she cannot do it now
Too much aware of herself and her environment

She danced when she was really young
As if it is natural to dance
Natural in response to the rhythm of music
I wonder how that got into us any way
Rhythm of beats in all languages
Soft, hard, noisy or heart wrecking
All in repetition
All in rhythm
xxx

Dream of a Sexagenarian

The dawn of a decade
In the dry drowsy dewless morning
A conglomeration of a farewell and an invocation
A moment to let you think about
Your dreams again

After all the worldly deeds
Showered you with accolades
After the babies grew up
And flew to build own nests
After the father became a memory
You stand there and think
What should I be dreaming now?

As you become the sexagenarian
The trials and tribulations
The triumphs and tears
Of the past decades
Appear like tempest over a tea cup
All the goals of life
Seem like a lot of hot air
And you stand there wondering
What should I be dreaming now?

My dreams
Your dreams
Percolate with these questions
What is the essence of my living?
Who am I?
Where am I?
What am I doing here?

xxx

Fingerprints of the Force

You, the immortal
Not deterred by the calamities
That fall on earth again and again
The strike of a meteorite
The ashes of Vesuvius
The land slides of Mount St. Helen
The mudslides and devastating floods
That strike again and again

Slowly and surely
Your finger prints appear
In the molten lava of volcanoes
In the ever spreading Sahara desert
In the tsunami touched outer banks
Between the stone slabs of Angkor Watt
In the tiny cracks in the middle of the high ways
In the crevices of high rise parking structures

From the deep down frozen landscapes of the arctic
To the hot springs deep on the ocean floor
To the decaying flesh and oil spills
Your finger print declares
I am omnipotent
I can be omnipresent
I am here forever
Alive

I am LIFE.

xxx

Follow the Script

Oblivious to me
Life goes on around me.
The oak tree in front of my house
Donates its leaves to the fall goddess
And offers a bouquet of flowers
And new leaves
To the spring queen

Acorns from the oak tree
Crowd my drive way
Each a harbinger of a new life,
Two tiny cotyledons inside serve as the baby formula
A tiny stem and a tiny root,
Wait to wake up and start running
By the kiss of a drop of water
Each could
Instead
They mostly perish under the car
Or become food for animals.

Without our knowledge or intervention
Life goes on
Babies grow up inside and outside
And have babies
We slowly become senescent
In body and in mind
Ultimately
To succumb to the programmed cell death
Following the script of life
With reverence

xxx

Listening to the Silence

I put the tired day to sleep
On the lap of the night
Cleansed it of all the worries
The dust of displeasure of life
Turned off all the lights of anticipation
Switched off the voices
Telling me what is right or wrong
And listened to the silence
Inside me
Just for a while.

The silence
Crawled through the canyons of my mind
And told me stories
Things of the past
The awesome things
The awful things
The dreams that bloomed
The dreams that bombed
And asked me
Did you learn anything?
Am I supposed to?

The silence
Told me to appreciate and enjoy
My pleasure and my pain
Not to be scared to dream
To dare and to dive
Without always asking
What are you up to, kid?
Does it matter?

The voice
Resonating with every pulsation in me
Told me
To inscribe the moments
The fleeting moments
The heavenly moments
The hellish moments
These variegated beads to create the necklace of my life.

xxx

The Meaning of Life

I sat under an oak tree
And looked up
To find the meaning of life
Over there, in every branch
The core of life in inflorescences
Each with thousands of pollens
Just like the spores in pine cones
With the potential
To give rise to thousands of new lives

In every spring
Year after year
The same thing happens
But not a single oak seedling in sight

Over there
A small girl
Oblivious to the wars
Oblivious to the crime and punishment
Oblivious to the hardship of making a living
Jumps over a tiny square and giggles.

xxx

Midlife Crisis

One day
I woke up
From my daily living
Looked at my garden and found
Tulip bulbs I had planted did not sprout

The spring lasted only for a while
And in the midst of hot summer
And bone chill winter
I suddenly realized
Who I am
Why I am where I am
And I didn't want to accept it.

The dreams of Gilligan becoming a superman
Got replaced by the world trip on a trade mill
The stark reality of living
Glowed bright on my ever receding hair line

The child in me cried,
"It can't be true!"
The youth in me cried,
"I can beat it!"
The man in me stood there
As the prisoner of time, space and biology
And solemnly accepted the reality

xxx

Picture Imperfect

So quickly
The present became the past
The days got hidden by the dusts of living
Memory got modified, edited or deleted
To adapt to what we want it to be

Some things we swear
Didn't happen
Wish they didn't
But they did.
The photos are the minutes of the past
The moments of pleasure
And
The moments that did not pan out
The way we wanted them to be

There I see
The babies born, crawl, cry and kiss
The girl can't wait to be a woman
The boy in the sand hole in the beach
The birth, the death,
The growing up and growing old
And going to grave so suddenly

I want so much to hug that small girl
And run after the tiny toddler
But they are only in pictures now
Even though they are here
In a different form
At the telophase of growing up

What about me?
In the late afternoon
I am still a wonderer
A wanderer
Combing for the essence of life
In books, in people's smiles and tears

As we suffer to love
And love to suffer
We become butterflies
Daring the thorns for the nectar in roses.

xxx

Pollen Count

Pollen count was very high today
It must be
Because my daughter was sneezing a lot
Her eyes were swollen.
I was really worried about her.

I was more worried about
The poor pollens
Millions of them
Like desperate lovers
With half of the information
Seeking desperately the other half
To make a genome complete again
To enjoy life once again
The sunshine, wind and all

Alas,
On their destined paths
Millions of fish eggs don't give rise to new life
But end up as caviars
Millions of sperms
Millions of watermelon seeds
Pine pollens
Perish without being the source of life

I worry about the poor DNA strands
Weathering dehydration
And decay
Like my cells in my old age

Minutes of my life
Like the pollens and eggs

Get recycled
I stand here embracing
The composition
Of life orchestra
And
The decomposition
Endlessly
Aimlessly
Making me ponder
About the pollen counts.

xxx

Query in the Twilight Zone

Tell me
The priest
In the twilight zone of my life
What lies ahead of me?
There
Somewhere, I am going to go
After I sleep for the last time

On the multitude wrinkles on my face
Is written the epitaph of
My dreams and despair
My success and failure
My trip through life
Like a leaf in the rapids

My stories are buried in the sands of time
Where you see all of me
A crying baby,
A rebellious child
A sensuous lover
A demanding father
A loving grand father
And the toils I did for my kids and family
To shape my world as I thought it should be.

Still I don't know what lies ahead of me?
What happens to me when I die?
Where do I travel and how?
Do I meet my friends?
Do I meet my forefathers?

Now
I am powerless
Toothless
Hairless
Still inside me
The desire swells like an everlasting spring.

At the end of my road
I am waiting for you to tell me
Where to go and what to do

xxx

The Absolute Gifts

They come as absolute
With no possession
Wrathless
Sinless
Ageless
Toothless
Priceless
To conquer our hearts
And change our lives forever.

With their first cry
They ignite smiles on our faces
And wipe out all our sorrows
Joining hearts
Bridging families
And gluing relations
We look at them
And wonder
How did we live without them
So long?
xxx

The Fantastic Web

I am the predator and the prey
Caught in the web of life

This web is mine
My own creation
Out of my inner feelings
Perceptions, dreams and nightmares
This is my world,
My thirst (*trushna*)
My desire (*kamana*)
For me to cherish and flourish
For my ecstasy and tears

With my strength
I create my castle and my prison
Guarded by my apprehensions
To block my escape from myself

xxx

The Four-Letter Word

Wherever I go
I am enticed by your charm
I watch you flourish in the crevices of stonewalls
As well as in hot springs

You dazzle me with your beauty
Your perseverance
To be there where you are
Against all odds

Like a chameleon
Like a magician of the highest order
You vibrate
Oscillate
And dance with colors and shapes of all kinds
You make the old feel young
Blind sings and paints
Believing in the inner vision
The deaf creates music
Life
You are so beautiful.
xxx

The Other Path

The path was always there
Just within my reach
But I never dared to walk on it
Always worried about
The unknown

I was at ease with my known path
So cozy, even though
Lots of thorns, stones and potholes
Populate the landscape
It is my path after all.

Then one day
I had to take the other path
As it opened in front of me
Like in movies
Lined with evergreens
Flowering plants
Streams and happy people
Full moon and starry nights
I felt as if I have walked here
All my life.

xxx

The Right Way to Live

From the jaws of death
I emerge, the frail old man
To become the playhouse
Of diseases and discomfort
To retire into a life of
Endless leisure and solitude
To enter the hectic days in the rat race
Office politics, spousal conflicts
And the insanity of
Dealing with teenage kids
To fall prey
To the magic of love
Wet kisses and warm bear hugs
To bear the days of home works
Tests, parties and making it out
To enter the pre-teenage days
Of roller skates, baggy pants
Cartoons and plays and more plays
To enjoy the birth days, red balloons
To experience
The first ride on bicycle
Learning to talk for the first time
To the faltering steps of
Learning to walk
To enjoy the first smile
And the maiden look at the world
To greet the world with the first cry
To return from the sojourn to the womb
With no worries, no tests
No problem but sheer solitude
To experience the glories of union
Of a man and woman
To reach the nirvana
In la petite mort.

xxx

The River of Life

I began as a small stream
In a paddy field
In palm and banana groves

I grew up
Fed by the monsoon storms
Mangoes
Pineapple
Jackfruit
Rice and curry

I moved
Made my way through
Dust
Noise
Ditches
Snakes
Temples
Mosquitoes
Beggars and politicians
Corruption
Coexisting with
Yoga and meditation

I moved to State with the golden gate
To the land of opportunity
To the land of mosaics of cultures
To the land of science and technology
To be somebody
(I do not know what)

Now I am a grand gemische
Of Ganges
Mississippi
Yangtze
Amazon
And Danube

Inside me
Emotions swim like salmon
While
My shore is landmarked by
High speed computers
Genes
Molecules

Hollywood gimmicks
Guns and commercials

Every moment
I renew myself
With fresh ideas
Sometimes a downpour
Other times a trickle

My exterior
Dry and barren
Like summer hills in California
Withering the storm of aging
While the interior
Is as innocent as a new born baby
Looking forward to life
With wide open eyes

I am a silent spring
A fountain of life
I know where I came from
But have no idea
Where I am going
And why.

xxx

Thriving with Poison

Poison of life
Is real and potent
I swallow it to live
Like Shiva
The *Nilakantha* (blue throat),
To be alive
To be *Mrutunjaya*
(The conqueror of death)
During our life time

I resurrect
Like a snake
On Shiva's neck
Shedding the old skin of hurt
Pain and resentments
To reacquaint me with my new self
The original self
Untainted
Unspoiled
Pure
Innocent

I emerge like a butterfly
From the cocoon of the past
Welcoming every day
As an opportunity
To be alive again
All over again
To flow
Like the Ganges from Shiva's head.

.
xxx

When Does the Life Begin?

When does the life begin?
This big debate
Forgets to take into account
The unbroken continuity of the stream
From parents to off-springs
Through sperms and eggs
Or other ways

Like small rivulets created by the rain
Either merges with the ocean
Or dies in the desert
Life propagates
Often in the process
Becoming the food to sustain other lives
Like cauliflowers and carrots
Crabs and even cows

Sometimes
It passes into oblivion
Like millions of sperms
Millions of pollens
Millions of pine or mushroom spores

Out of those millions
A few make it
Like the acorn
That does fall in the forest
But not on a drive way
And joins the relay race of life
To pass the gene to its progeny.

xxx

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Alien Chronicle



America, the Beautiful

From sea to shining sea
America looks amazingly neat and clean
Especially California
Lawns manicured
Every house is a model home
With no dust in sight
Hedges are cut to perfection
And gardens full of flowers
But no trace of dead leaves
Roads decorated with flowers on both sides
as well as on the median.

To a person from a third world country
From a village not even with a dirt road
it is crazy not to see filth
and dust decorating every nook and corner

I wondered
How America is kept so neat and clean
So well manicured like a show room
Like a picture book

Then I found them
I saw them working
Toiling any where I went
In gardens and new houses
At rich men's mansions
At elementary schools
At hospitals in Houston
At universities in California

They work and work
Haul trash
Plant flowers
Mow lawns
Put tiles in new houses

These men and women of color
with different food habits
with different accents

Toil under hot sun
and

in freezing winter
To send money home
So that their families have food to eat.

These aliens
Sometimes despised
Often exploited people
Keep the America beautiful
Manicured day after day
From sea to shining sea.

xxx

An Autobiography of a River Stone

I am a stone from the Himalayas
One among millions on the bed of the Ganges
But unique at the same time

Monsoon rain
Hurricane
Drought
Shaped me
As I glided from the mountain
Like a leaf in a stream
I got molded
My rough edges got smoothened
Slowly but surely

I emerged from the amorphous stone
Elegant,
Presentable
Worthwhile
I was the best of the class
And I felt proud
I am the only genuine river stone.

As the Ganges
Merged into ocean
I found myself with
So many river stones
From all over the world
Of different shapes
And textures
So different from me
So hard to accept
So hard to appreciate
That they are precious river stones too
But I did

Slowly
And slowly
I realized
That river stones are all beautiful
Even if of different shapes
Differently molded by
Amazon, Yangtze, Danube
Mekong and Nile
As well as Mississippi

Some are mahogany black
Some are in dazzling olive tone
Some are white as the mother pearl
Some are beautiful yellow sapphire
Some are like diamond
But all are priceless
Genuine
River stones

Thousands are much more beautiful than me
And thousands less
But all of us are
Precious
River stones.

xxx

In the Land of Possibilities

Long time ago
When Vietnam in America meant Vietnam
I landed in the cradle of possibilities

I came from a land
Where everything was defined
Which hand to be used for writing
Which hand is for eating
Who is senior
Who can have a future and who will be servant forever.
Every thing decided by birth and Karma.

The pencil was brown
The chalk was white
The car was Ambassador
Dinner and lunch were rice and curry
The newspaper was Samaj
And dance was Odishi.

There
Everything in life followed a century old protocol
People went to school, then to college
Then got a safe government job,
Got married to a stranger
And had kids immediately
Raised the kids and then retired

I landed in the land where anything is possible
I can have kids before marriage
No kid after marriage
I can go to school after retiring
And I can dive into myriads of possibilities
To actualize my life

Here the only limit is my imagination
What to do in life
Where to shop and what camera to buy
What to eat for lunch and dinner.
Whom I can court as friends.

Myriad opportunities allow me to explore
to be some one great in life
In science, arts or otherwise
Or lose it all and be a homeless pauper
In the land of possibilities.

xxx

The Moments of Our Lives

My mom
Never thought of molecules or mitochondria
Mostly stuck with her kids, cows and cats
While I look into the mouse brain with a computer
To find the genes that mess up our moods

Then in the evening I see
The lonely moon behind a dead tree branch
As a child I saw the same one
Using a tiny pond in the village as a mirror
There
The amorous frogs croaked
Pleading for love
Just like they do here

The sweet, soft evening breeze
Caresses my face
To remind me of my mom's and grandma's touch
The conch's sound in the evening
Welcoming the night life alive with fireflies

The common thread of life flows underground
Using myriads of crosstalk, pathways, signals
Synthesis and apoptosis
These make us breath, smile and weep in silence
And crave for someone who may not be there to start with

There I see the mighty mitochondria
The miserable maniac mouse
My long gone loving grandma
My far away mom,
Me
And my lovely daughter Manisha
As tiny pallbearers of time
As the components of the conveyor belt for the selfish genes
Living, loving and losing
And searching again
The moments of our lives.

xxx

My Yellow Daffodil of the Winter

My yellow daffodil of the winter
Such a relief to see you inside the store
Cozy and replenished
Not succumbing to the terror of snow and ice
Unlike the naked trees outside

I wonder about your journey
Across continents for days
Crossing the border
Leaving the familiar landscape and people
That nurtured you.

Lucky you
You crossed the border
Without the regular welcome protocols
Without the fingerprints, photographs
And visa papers.
You did not have to sneak in to El Norte
Like so many despised
But exploited colored people
Barely making a living
Even though giving best of them
Toiling in snow blizzard
While their folks at home
Nurture you and send you here
My beautiful daffodil of the winter.

xxx

New Wine in the Old Bottle

As a new day dawns
So many new things surround me
A day before, they all used to be old
Known, familiar and mundane
Like a spider building a web
Or a bee flying hastily to a flower hub

A feeling sinks into me
As if I am looking at these for the first time
I try hard to connect to what I read
In science magazines
And to what I do in the lab or in computer
I get lost in the puzzle of designs
Engineering, networking
All automated but with a beautiful
Simple shape hiding all of it

A sense of humility
And ignorance drowns me
I sit and look around
Becoming again a drop
In the ocean of creation
Knowing very little about anything.

xxx

Our Children Our Future

Once upon a time
I was a tiny toy in my moms' hands
The apple of her eye
With her love and tears
I am what I am

With time
I moved away from home
Away from the festivals
Away from the palm and mango groves

Here in the midst of fast cars
Fast food and FTP
High tech research and managed accounts
My childhood still resonates within me
I am still my mom's tiny toy
Like all of us
With an intense desire
To pass on my culture and language
(Along with our genes)
To my kids
The pupils of my eyes

Through our children
The essence of our culture
And our convictions
Clash and coalesce with the cultures of the changing world
Our children get transformed
And they transform our vision
About
Us
Our culture
Our children
And
Our future.
xxx

Sisyphus's Dream

Every one chided me
Don't sit there
Do something
And I did
Read all the books I found in the village
Played soccer and volley ball
Ran on the tracks
And wrote poems and dramas
Even acted a little as a child.

As a student
I was busy
As a worker
I am really busy
Exhausted when I come home
To eat and do more work
And then sleep
With the thought
Tomorrow I have so much to do.

In my dream
I am working too
Stumbling on my ways
Due to mishaps and limitations

I wake up exhausted
And start my day again

I am on a treadmill
Twenty four, seven

Then I read
"Don't just do it
Sit there"

That was so strange to me
But something different
So I did
I sat there closing my eyes
Watching my breath
Calming my nerves
But my mind was on autopilot

On a whirl wind world trip
Ruminating my past
Inspecting my fears and desires
Entangled in the web of confusion
I was lost in myself
I never knew
'Not to do anything
And just sit there '
Could be so hard to do.

xxx

Stranger in Paradise

The ocean in the form of raindrops
Wanted to kiss my forehead
And trickle down on my cheeks
But I was inside a car
Driving
Everything away
To be safe, secure and healthy
Otherwise,
My insurance will
Go through the roof.

The pine pollens
Did not smear my face
I am susceptible to allergy, you know.
The grass flowers on the meadow
Did not touch my feet
The stinky bugs there
Carry parasites.
The wild mustard plants
The dandelions
Become
A constant nuisance
Even though
I "rounded up" them
Along with the ants
Bees and butterflies

The singing stream of water
The cows grazing in the meadows
The autumn leaves
Floating casually on the streams
The shameless, sensual spring flowers
Baring their bosoms in bright day light
The tiny lazy green buds waking up from sleep
And yawning for a long time
They all remain strangers to me
Because I am too busy in making a living

In the morning
I got annoyed at the birds
Those damn little birds
Early in the morning
They start gossiping
Giggling
Like a bunch of

Teenage girls in an all night slumber party
Roller-skating from trees to trees
Like a bunch of teenage boys on drugs.
Don't they know any manners?

They wake me up every morning
But I prefer the alarm clock radio
To tell me what went wrong
While I was sleeping

The creation
All around me
Sun, moon and stars
The icons of life
The cycles of life
Icons of wonder
Remain alien to me
Making me
A stranger in paradise.

xxx

Temporay Phase

Like a Tibetan prayer wheel
Everything goes around
Twenty four seven

From my heart beat
To the musical overtures
Moon's wean and wax
The glorious sunset follows
The picturesque sunrise
The winter rolls into spring
That jumps quickly into the lap of summer
That hibernates in the den of winter again.

Everything repeats
From cell cycle to earth's serenade around the sun
As if the world is running on a spot in a tread mill.

On the other hand
Only change is the signature of permanence
Gone are the days of the manual type writers
The slide rules
The black and white TVs
And fountain pens
Everybody is looking at the LCD screen
And typing away incessantly

Instead of tuning the monstrous radio
I listen to the music online
Calling India does not consume a day
Or cost an arm and a leg
I don't even need a phone
To call someone overseas

My tiny tender baby daughter
My ever sleepy baby boy
All grown up and on their own now
The thunderous voice of my father
Is silenced for ever
My baby sisters' kids have babies
Youth of my mom and even mine
Can only be seen in photos

The eternal rhythm
Of birth and death

Of heartbreaks and ecstasy
Of gaining and losing it all
Of soprano and silence continues
In a temporary phase
Ignoring the job that time does on all of us.
xxx

Virtual Paradise

I don't have to cry cutting onions
Because I go for onion rings
In McDonald and Burger King
Feel neither the cold of the winter
Nor the heat of the summer
Thanks to the immaculate heating and cooling system

When I feel like eating a lot
I secure the help of few pills
To take care of my indigestion
I can eat a lot and still lose weight
I should believe the advertisements
You know.

The pain of parting with the money
Rarely hits me
As I never pay by cash
But swipe my credit card to buy
What I desire, not need

My million dollar condo
My red Mercedes with sunroof
And my yacht
Everything is secured
By financial help
From Chase, Citibank and Bank of America

The doctor runs myriad procedures
To find why my leg is sore
And I walk home without paying a cent
As my insurance takes care of it, just like that
They also pay for my seven medicines
I must take
To have a relaxed mind and an ever fit body
Without any exercise

I love the television
As it brings me information
About so many drugs I should take
You name it and I can buy it without a copay
To fall asleep
To breathe better
To control my urine flow
To straighten my spine
To help me to control my kids' ADD

My wife's mood swings
And my ultimate pleasure
But have to call the doctor if it lasts
More than four hours.

There is nothing I should be worried about
The soap bubble with rainbows
Pops only for other people
Not for me
As I am in virtual paradise
And I am worth it.

xxx

We and Our children

I

A small water balloon
Made of billions of cells
An insignificant one among billions of people
In a tiny piece out of the billions of universes
Still look wistfully
To preserve my self
My culture
My cocktail of genes
Through our children
Our future
For the eternity

Alas

So rapidly the future becomes the past
Swallowing the temporal presence
My new born girl
Already a beautiful woman
My new born boy
A forward looking man
Self confident, self sustained, self sufficient
Self assured by the storm they weather on their own
In them, my culture, my essence, my convictions
Gets amalgamated with others
They transform me, my culture
My apprehension diminished
As I visualize and comprehend
Our children
Our future.

xxx

We Create the World to Live in

Christmas day is so wonderful
The wishes, the gifts and the decorations
Helping us to create the world we want to live in

Often
That might sound impossible
So many forces drag us in so many ways
We become puppets
We surrender to survive

At the same time
We try our best
To make the world as we want it to be
And live in it
Like immigrant homes
An oasis
A tiny effigy of the home away from home

We think of festivals
Twinkling lights, dragons and saints
We create gods in our own image
Out of clay, marble
Stone or plastics
We make them beautiful, serene

We create Ganesh
Bestowing it with power to protect us
From the horror we could face
in our daily lives

We create myths
Helena, Leda, Vishnu and Siva,
We dream of the garden of Eden
The spirits to guide us
The force to protect us
As superman
Bionic woman
Spiderman
And
Durga

We burn incense to appease the unknown
We become born again
We discover Satan or saviors

In the same person
And we pray and fall prey
And live
In the world we create for ourselves.
xxx

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Bemusing About the Other Half



Bemusing About the Other Half

You,
An eternal quest
Mysterious and fascinating like fire
Giving warmth
But I can also get burnt beyond repair.

At the same time
You are too far, yet too close.
A mixture of my sweet sister
My lovely daughter
My loving mom
My sensuous lover
And my caring grandmother

You
The goddess of power
The womb for creation
With your multiple hands
You are bestowing bliss, love and passion
Creating and destroying life
Again and again

You
The desire
Your smile
Like Venus fly trap
Attracts and capture.
In your anticipation
Lotus blooms
In the dry lake bed of Death Valley
The world stops and gasps
At your sight

You
Man's ultimate infatuation
Gods cannot live without you
And the hermits fall victim to your seduction
On their way to Nirvana

In your eyes
Lust gathers like the monsoon clouds
Your gaze
Deep like the ocean

Intense like the Malibu firestorm
Resurrects the pang of lust in an infatuated lover

You
The pinnacle of imagination
Of beauty and glamour
You bring out the best and beast in man.
Man looks at you blatantly or surreptitiously
With love or lust in his eyes
Imbibing your enchanting smile
Inebriated by the dark cloud or crimson hair
Infatuated by your supple tender bosom

There is no beginning or end
To this amazing mysterious shape
That is ageless, spotless
And travels from one body to another
As one body falls apart.

Man has tried from time immemorial
To recreate you in sculptures
And to adore you in paintings and poems
Dress you up in the most exquisite way
Undress you with closed eyes.
The mystery still remains for the eternity
To bemuse about you,
The other half.

xxx

Dawn to Dream About the Dearest

Today morning opens the door
To a quiet and quite mysterious winter day
Outside so surrealist
Thanks to snow and winter mix
A perfect time to close eyes
And think about you

Or
Rather
Think about us
Where we started
How we fumbled
Into the vortex of ecstasy
Jumped over hoops
To live and let live

Our paths
Cross and crisscross
Merge and diverge
After a snow storm in June
We walk again
Hand in hand inside soap bubbles

We stroll on rose petals
Spiked with cactus thorns
We drink nectar from the flowers of deadly plants
Eat fugu sushi in golden plates
To be together
To enjoy again
Today
The Valentine's Day.
xxx

Falling Rain Drops

In a hot humid summer noon
An errant amorous raindrop out of nowhere
Fell on her forehead
Migrated between her black velvet eye brows
Encircled the nostrils
Then moistened her lips
Falling precipitously on her succulent bosoms
Scattered and flowed at a trembling speed
Over the luxurious unchartered territory
To get clearance at the naval station
To continue its downward journey
To the vermilion lips
So soft that its fall
Almost bruised them.

xxx

Pancha Kanyaa

(Five women)

She was there for me
Like a candle in a stormy dark night
Giving a tiny boy the warmth of her tiny body
Waking me up early morning to read
And become a wise man
One day
Shaking off all her earthly burden
She left for a world unknown

Earthly burden of
Child bearing and rearing
Cooking and cleaning
And looking after cows
Her world limited to
Dishes to cook
Cows and kids to feed
Now a distant evening candle
Burning there with some oil to spare
Time has transformed her
To a new baby

Almost twin flowers
We drifted away from the start
She drowned in
The ocean of living
Bearing the life
Like a turtle in dense forest

A tiny baby
Cannot imagine a life without her
In spite of the harsh winter night
A delicate bud blooms to become a flower
And finally a butterfly
Tasting nectar of life in distant lands

She
A manifestation of my desire
Hopes and cravings
With her smile
Mundane clouds in me become
Portrait of the sunset
Smell of jasmine fills up the midnights
Life after life

xxx

Resident of my Mind

As the sun rests down there
Below the horizon
The night queen strolls in
In blue velvet attire
Glossing over all the ugliness
Pain, frustration and disappointment

I can see nothing but the twinkling stars
Can't even see the palm of my own hand
Darkness steals my sight
Allowing only the inner vision
To guide me to the coziness of the night

Emerging from my mind
She becomes real
My love
To touch and be touched
Emotions and desires
Spring in me sparing no time

There the distance disappears
The mountains and the oceans
Sky and clouds
All become the playground
The Brundaban
For us to be closer and closer
To share everything
Until I open my eyes
xxx

Seasons of Your Heart

I saw the raindrops forming in your eyes
The clouds swarming in fury
On your throbbing cheeks
The lightning sparks glowing in your eyes
And the dead silence
Before the storm broke loose
Tears fell like gushing stream
As the dam broke
After the monsoon rain
That swelled from the heart
Wanted to swallow the shore in deep throbs
And it did.

I did not run away
Wanted to get drenched in the rain
Held your hands
Put your head to my heart
And listened to your riptides of emotion
The thunder became the soft wailing
And the raindrops trickled slowly
On your shining cheeks
Before it dried
I wanted to wipe it softly
And I did.

I talked to you
Kissed you softly
Telling the rainy days will be over
Have faith and
Have patience
And you did.

The sun shone
The rainbows danced in your brown eyes
And on your sleek long hair
The colors serenaded.
Jasmine flowers sparkled in your teeth
Between your deep red rosy lips
The spring came
And you danced like a wild butterfly
Running after the May flowers
Before they wither away
I wanted to save the moment in my heart
And I did.

Suddenly
There was deep silence
Deep frost of the winter fell on your face
All the flowers perished
All sunshine surrendered to the snowstorms
As you remembered the bad days
The days when your wishes were just wishes
Your prayer went unanswered
Everybody betrayed you
I felt your chill in my bones
So cold, so aloof
Like the houses separated in a snowstorm
I was there
To give you warmth
By pulling to my chest and consoling
To forget those by gone days
And you did.

Like the geyser in Yellowstone
Desires sprang from your bosom
Sizzled like the hot desert sun in summer
Like the lava from Mount Vesuvius
From your crimson hairs
From your red lips
From the corner of your beautiful blue eyes
From your red shoes and red skirts
From your red hot nail polish
It danced
And taunted me
Come on
Come on
I wanted to get burnt like the fireflies
Attracted to the open flame
I wanted to jump in it
And I did.

xxx

Those Delicate Flowers

I thought of those flowers
They look so delicate
Vulnerable
Left in the rain, cold and scorching sun
They will not last long.

But I was wrong
They, the orchids, the petunias
And even the grass flowers
Weather and smile
Some times better than me

I looked at those beautiful flowers
They look so innocent
Like a sculpture made to perfection
I thought
They may not be interested in passion
Desires and dreams and touch
But lie there like a canvas
For the bees, butterflies to paint

But I was wrong again
They, the jasmines, the lotuses
And evening prime roses
Clasp the bees, butterflies
Tightly to their bosoms
Drugging them with pollens
And making them zombies
To visit them again and again

xxx

Wild Flowers of the Paradise

You come
In so many different colors
In so many shapes
In so many places of the earth
As buds on thorn bushes
Or on stunted tree trunks

You blossom
In so many places
In the middle of the desert
On the neon lights
In dark alleys of Mumbai
Or in front of the temples
On noisy street corners
Where people spit

Your petals wilt
Darkened with soot
From the passing cars
You struggle to get away
From the ants and flies
Not inviting many monarch butterflies

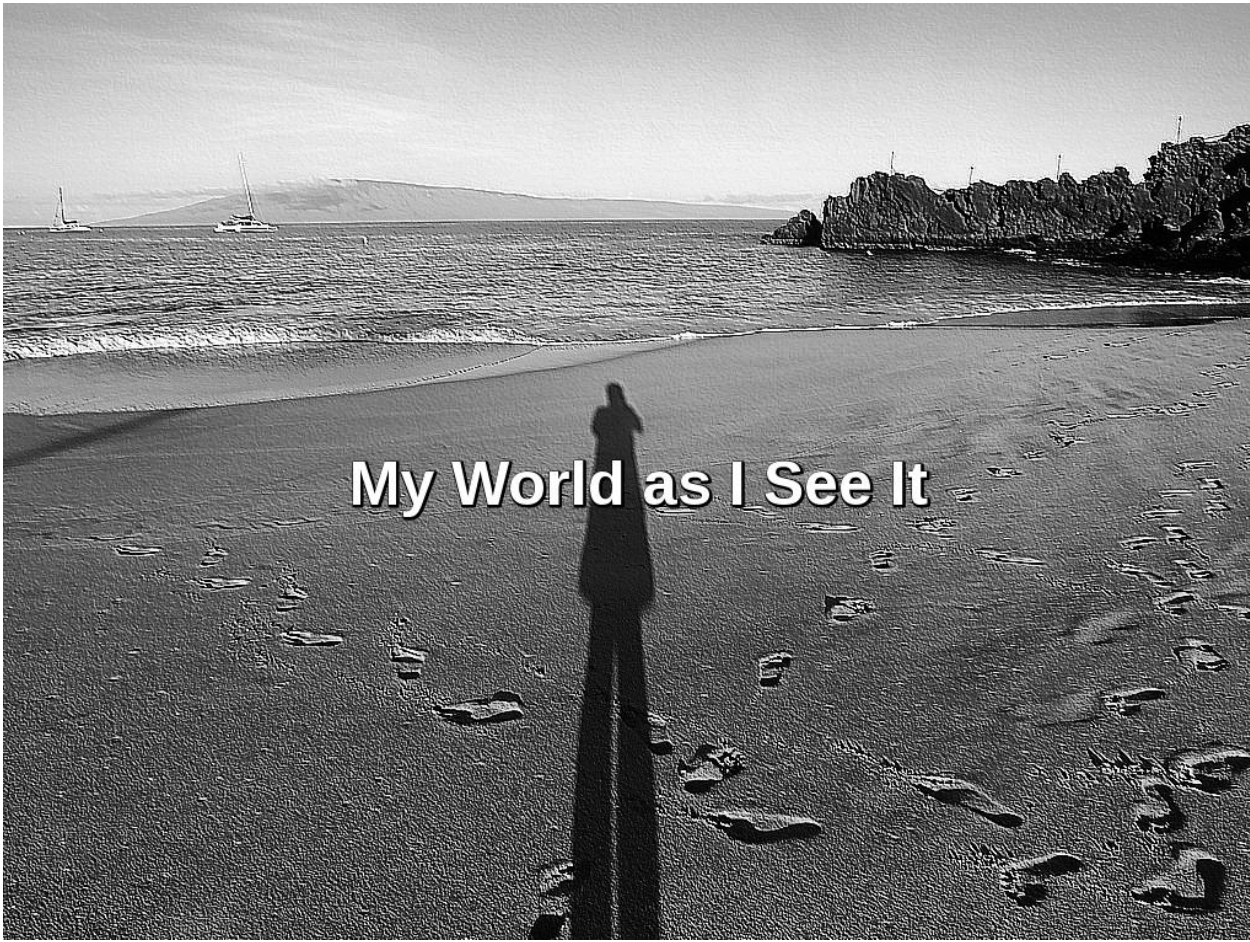
Sometimes
I see you on TV
Before and after effects
Of some one's effort
To dust up your petals
Sprinkle the plant with little water
From the plenty they get
By showing your miseries again and again

Wild little flowers
You have no say
Where you rise
Where you blossom
When you disappear
After bearing the seeds
To perpetuate
The wild flowers of the paradise.

xxx

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

My World as I See It



A Moment in Time

This apparition
A fleeting moment in time
Delicate, beautiful, innocent
Gazing at the world with wonder
And with undefined expectations

This apparition
Like a moment
In the blooming of a flower
In the life of a butterfly
Saying good bye
To the cocoon

This apparition
As permanent as a water molecule
In a flowing stream
Ever changing
Ever growing inside and out
Undergoing myriad avatars
In the same body

This apparition
A moment to savor
And keep in memory
It is not going to last
Like peacock feathers
Dried flowers
Nor a marble statue
Or Mona Lisa
But
Something to remember forever.

xxx

An Ever Changing Stream

I did not tell you
How this stream started
From a house surrounded by paddy fields
Mango and palm trees
With the injection of tiny streams of water
From all directions
Knowingly and unknowingly
The shape was taking place
Inside and outside

Who am I?
What I am supposed to do?
Where did I come from?
Questions like jasmine flowers
Blossomed in me
Sometimes got a lead
Sometimes hit a brick wall
But the curiosity never died
The stream continued
In its twisting and turning journey

Incubated in hot summer
Rainy monsoon nights
And chilly winters
I manifest
From the seeds planted by books
Rituals and suffering
Learning and unlearning
Doubting what is right or wrong
Whom to follow and worship
Whom to love

A twisted zigzag journey
Festooned with the gift of others
Who smoothed my path and then parted
To other places or heaven bound

Visions poured into me,
Analyzed, accepted or rejected
Updating my power to see
Me, the world and wisdom
And life differently
In this ever changing stream

xxx

Bare Expression

The little naked girl
Barefoot and full of dust
Was running around in the village
Without raising too much hue and cry

As she grew older
As she differentiated
She got to cover herself
For dignity,
To conform and become a decent girl

A decent girl does not accept
Primitive trends
Natural outfits
Of the women in Amazon rain forest
Or of the Polynesian girls
Prior to the arrival of missionaries

God's pinnacle of creation
Now can be seen only surreptitiously
In adults only magazines
Or in xxx videos or movies
Or as an anthropologic curiosity
In old National Geographic magazines
Or in the form of artistic expression
On stones, marbles and lithographs
To adore expensive homes and museums
As pristine reproduction of God's art
Nude but not naked

If she chooses the birthday suite
She is in big trouble
Unless
She is very much in front of the pack
Like the women on Greek island beaches or in Riviera
Lying on Nice pebbles doing sun worship
Or she is the voluptuous sumptuous model
Getting paid heftily to bare herself
For others to shoot her
To paint her
To transform her
From indecency to ageless beauty
From immoral to ultimate expression of
Human creativity

xxx

Can you Imagine one Without the Other?

Can you imagine existence of a mom without a kid
or a teacher without students?
It makes no sense to have
Flowers without bees or butterflies
nor the poet without readers
Nor love without a lover

The audience makes a speaker real
Night makes a day special
Tears give meaning to smiles
And death adds value to living.

A pen becomes worthy because there is a writer
A camera due to the photographer
A photographer due to someone or something
Amazing to shoot.
Piano has no meaning without a piano player.
Mom does not feel like cooking
When no one is there to eat

Creations continue as a duet
Between a giver and a receiver.

xxx

Chatter Box

I talk to myself a lot
Many things
Lots of grievances
Against her and him
The way she treated me
The way he looked at me
And laughed
Do I deserve this?
After what I have done for them?

Day and night
In my waking and sleeping moments
The tsunami brews inside me
In my stomach
The ocean churns
My head hurts
My lips flutter
As if I am there
Talking to him or her
In absentia

She is not there
She can't be there
She may not be aware of
What is consuming me inch by inch.

Then why should I
Have this dialog with myself?
This catabolic dialog

May be that is why
There are mantras to chant
The beads to roll
The images to pray
The breath to follow
To rescue me from this
Chatter of nothingness.

May be that is why
There is TV
Radio, newspaper
Gossip, games
To rescue me from myself
Not to leave me alone
Not to know

And confront myself
To be somewhere else
More pleasant
More romantic
More to my liking
I wish I knew what these are.

xxx

Eat and be Merry

A big feast followed my father's death
It was the largest, I had ever seen
Hundreds of people from the village came to feast
Many I did not know.

We also had a feast after my marriage
But much smaller in scale
Only family members and relatives
from both sides of the aisle came.

Still smaller was the feast
When my daughter was born in US
Only close friends came with small gifts

Birth and death
The land marks of our existence are celebrated
Along with the ceremony of
Legalizing the process of procreation

Each time It is a feast
As if the road to the heart is through our mouth
No wonder
My wife toils for hours, even days
to prepare delicious dishes
For guests

Then the guests come
They eat snacks, main dishes and desserts
And praise her profusely
"You are such a good cook"
All her efforts disappear in few minutes
To be purged on the other side of the tube next day.

And I ask her like a fool
"Why are we so food centric?"
She thinks I am a real nut
"What kind of question is this?"

All over the world
We eat to celebrate
Until we cannot eat any more.
Then others celebrate our departure by eating.

xxx

Echelon

Stairs I climb
To see life at the next level
Experience the agonies of taking decisions
In the lap of luxury and affluence
Trying to decide which shoes and
Which dress to wear?
Which car to drive
And which wine to drink tonight.

At the bottom of the stair
The boy with a single garment
No shoe, little food to eat
In a place with no road
And no place to sleep
No need for confusion.

We are all human
But we don't live in the same world
A vertical existence
Sometimes separated by impenetrable walls
Keeps us in different echelons

xxx

I Am Walking On a One-way Street

Long time ago,
I started crawling
And then walking
On a one way street
With no name or landmarks
I could barely see a thing ahead of me
While my footprints disappear behind me

I meet
Emotionally scintillating scientists
Articulating artists
Youths in meditation
Rejoicing paupers
Miserable millionaires
Smiling small girls in cute dresses
Nagging mother-in-laws of all ages
Grandmas with Hawaiian shirts
Pastors with blemishes

On the way
The strangers become friends
Friends become lovers
Lovers become strangers
Barbie dolls become heartthrobs
And pinups become grandmas
Fighters become geriatric patients

Stooping with all the baggage of my past
I am running after the golden deer
To be happy and fulfilled some day
To become someone some day

I wonder
Is this one-way street
The way to my destiny
Or destiny itself?

xxx

In Search of my Present

Where are you?
My present
My gift
So apparent
But so transient
From one side, the roaring past
With the tidings
The things that happened
The things that did not
But should have
The anger
The frustration
The resentment
Overwhelm me.

On the other side
The ever-encroaching future
The dreams bootstrapped with fear
Apprehension and what ifs

So fragile you are
My present
Squeezed between the past and the future
You the sacrificial lamb
To feed the assumptions
The convictions
To annotate my life

As my future
Slowly and surely becomes the past
My present becomes an ever-moving horizon
Like a line in water
A transient platform
To present myself with a life.

xxx

Invocation of Zeus

More than thousand years ago
You were banished
From the hearts of people
No one could worship you,
No more invocation of the gods
The rulers of the harvest, wind,
sea, love and romance

Instead
People became worshippers
Of the son of God
No idols but icons
No deity
No divinity
No mystic connection
To the power of the nature
That gives us life
That sustains us

Nature becomes an object
To study and use its power
But with no reverence
The magic of mythology is swept
Under the carpet of technology
And innovations overwhelm us
But no more invocations.

In the midst of all my stock options
In the midst of all my databases
Emptiness pinches me like a stomach ache
I want to connect to something, to someone
beyond the walls of my limitations.

xxx

Kanyaa* Avatar

Once you came
I wondered if I had a life before you
As it seems so impossible.

With your first cry
You took over my life
Moments enslaved by your thoughts
To look at you
To take care of you
When you went away
It was so hard
As if someone took away a part of me

Like the opening of a flower bud
You grew and became more and more beautiful
Your giggles got replaced by words
You danced to the rhythms
Your tiny fingers that used to pull my hair to fight
Became bigger and got colored
Multiple ear rings appeared on your ears.

I could not put you any more on my legs and read
Clean you or bathe you
Or put you to sleep by driving around
But listen to you
Talking about the world
You were building around you.

The days rolled into years
The baby girl became a teenager
Womanhood sneaking in scrumptiously
Before I knew you were a woman
A woman who saw the world
By travelling and talking to people
By reading and experiencing
The mind's magic wand
And
By seeing through
The constructions of the society

Now you are on your own
Mostly far away but not too far
Still connected in mind
In heart
Also by magic of technology

When we meet
No more pulling my hair to fight
But we talk about happenings and ideas
Beyond roti** and chawl***
Beyond home work
Beyond being Indians
Beyond being American
Beyond living day to day life
But as friends
Sharing ideas and caring for each other
Connected
By love and respect
And connecting the dots
Between parenthood, humanity
And beyond.

xxx

Kanyaa* = daughter
Roti** = bread
Chawl*** = rice

Kanya Sahasranama*

She came
To be adored, to smile, to cry
To dance and play
But what should I name her?
I want her to be the abode of my wishes
Aasha, Mamata, Maya, Nirmala, Priya,

I want her to be symbol of tenderness
Kabita, Lata, Hemalata, Kusumalata
And represent the depth of creativity
Alpana, Kalpana, Geetanjali,

She should symbolize Gaia's avatars
Aruna, Atasi, Banani, Barsa, Deepti,
Jharana, Kakali, Maushami, Nishita, Rashmi,
Sabita, Usha,

All the glories of my culture
Aarati, Archana, Aradhana, Bandana, Gayatri, Minati, Puja
And the mythical devis
Ahalya, Annapurna, Ambika, Apsara, Bharati
Devajani, Gopa, Janaki, Shakuntala,
Should find abode in her.

I wish her to be the best of the best,
Ananya, Anisha, Anupama, Aparajita, Aseema
Nirupama

I want her to flower and become
Charulata, Hemangini, Hiranmayi
Kamini, Lalita, Manasi, Manaswini, Manini, Manorama,
Meenakshi, Nayonika, Priyanka, Sukanti and Sulochana

But I wish she will be also one
Who will wonder and look
Will find pleasure in what others overlook
And love to learn, teach and connect,

OK

I will name her
Manisha

xxx

Kanya Sahasranama* a collection of different names daughters are named and the inherent meanings of these names

Looking for the Past

They grew up
They grew up so quickly
Like the brown algae in the ocean
In no time they shed the coat of infancy
The childhood days
The teenage angst
And became adult in no time.

However they still come alive
Like a time lapse photography
In the archived photos of their growth and differentiation
They crawl, run, giggle and throw temper tantrum
Just for a minute
Just enough to soak me
With the flavors of the past.

xxx

Man with a Bottle

Man with a bottle
Slouched on the corner of a sofa
Gazing at the TV with an exhausted body
Seeking respite from the relentless
Chore of making a living

Man with a bottle
Of coke and a big bag of chips
Walking away from the lab of medical research
To have his lunch
With fellow workers

Man with a bottle
Of vodka and some salty fish
Sitting on his throne at his home
With a big grin
After reining on the workers
Bringing a worker's strike to an end

Man with a bottle
Empty and smelly
Inside a crumpled paper bag
Dozing off
On a park bench
With all his belongings
On a grocery cart

Man with a bottle
Sitting close to the wall
Unaware of the noise of the party
Feeding his grandson milk
Making the connection across time

Man with an upside bottle
imbibing life saving fluid
As he lies there helpless
Savoring the last breath
The last sight of this world
The paradise

xxx

Mothers of the World

Today,
I saw you inside a car
You look just like
The last time I saw you
In India, in a small village
Sitting under a big tree
Tending the goats
Serene, calm and reflective
What you have seen
What you went through
Did it make any sense to you?
Tell me
My dear unknown grandma

Like the tree
You cherished the growth
The fun of being a butterfly
Running wild
Until you left your mom
To a stranger's place
To build a life of your own.

Then
The babies came
Grandkids came
Monsoon came
Drought came
Festivals came
Cholera came.

In the tear of your eyes
With your nimble fingers
You carved the life
You carved the love
For the babies
For the cats,
For the cows
Even for snakes
That sought refuge in your home in rainy season.

What you see
What you wanted to see
I don't know
But as a sentinel of time
I wonder about you

xxx

My Loving Distraction

Thoughts of you
Tempt me like treasure coves
So much pleasure hides there
To sneak away to be with you
Even for a while

In the midst of piled up chores
Your allurement
Your anticipation
Sips into the crevices of the walls
Of the San Quentin* of my duty and discipline
And cracks it open to release the red balloon
Of let go
I slip away without permission
To be with you
Even for a second
And to sip
The sunshine of happiness
Before any one notices
And reports
The story
About the forbidden fruit

In the midst of
My slavery to mindful living
In the midst of my thoughtful
Obedience to my presence
I am captive to you
My loving distraction.

xxx

Painful Pleasure

Being an Indian
I love spices and hot chili peppers
As I eat, my mouth is on fire
The more it burns
The more I savor the taste of my curries
And wait in anticipation
For the next meal
Like a mom waiting to give birth to her baby
To undergo
Moaning, yelling, swearing and hurt
Only to hear the first cry of the baby
To put him or her to her breasts
And to enjoy the sweetness of hurt

The penance
The saints, the hermits
The nuns and the priests undergo
By controlling desires,
The bodily needs
Meditating in summer in a circle of flames
Or sitting on ice slabs in winter time
Fasting, torturing the body
Giving up the carnal desires
To live beyond corporeal
The pain of seeking becomes
The pleasure of finding
Something, some one
That he or she is after

The temporal space
Where the pleasure and pain manifest as ardhnarishwar*
Where stars are seen with closed eyes
By sweating bodies floating in ether
Sipping the red wine of satisfaction
But letting it all go
To experience a slice of paradise
Twitches, screams and tears
Become the signature
Of painful pleasure.

xxx

ardhanarishwar* = a being half of which is man and the other half woman

Pandemic Infection

She is thin
Thinner than the legs of a heron
He is fat
Fatter than the Happy Buddha,
Her eyes hidden under coke bottle spectacles
The hair on his head could be counted
With fingers on one hand.
Her hair is hidden from the view in public
Tucked under the black head cover
For private viewing only

He has a beard
A garden, not attended for ages
She has a limp
A twisted foot due to birth defect
He is on a wheel chair
After loss of both legs
In a mission ill defined.

She can barely speak
Thanks to a stroke on one side
He can barely put food in his mouth
Thanks to Parkinson's.

She was in penitentiary
Thanks to a crack habit
He is on a watch list
For terrorism
Thanks to a mix up in names

Both are infected
By the same bug
That honors no barriers
Of ocean, mountains, language, customs, cult
Creed, carrier even age
The symptoms are generic
Lots of smile, tears,
Heart ache, trembling voices
Waiting and cuddling and waiting again
The incurable disease
That makes life worth living.

xxx

Parallel Universes

This morning, on my way to work
I thought of the parallel universe
Existing side by side in this world
Cars on autobahn zipped by at a speed of 150 km per hour
While chickens strolled on the dirt road besides the cow pasture
People in a 747 jumbo jet cruising at an altitude of 40 000 feet
Waved at the teenager bride in a bullock cart

With closed eyes
The bare breasted women in the pebble beach in Nice
And the widows in Varanasi in knee deep water
Did sun worship

As the naked kids played
On the dirt and muddy field
With the soccer ball made out of newspaper
The space probe to the Jupiter and beyond
Sent photos to JPL lab with dazzling colors

From the safe height beyond the radar's eyes
The B2 bomber dropped the cluster bombs
As the bare feet naked kids collected cassava roots.

While the automated machine for fMRI
Read the brain waves as we thought
And as the expression of thousands of genes got
Computed in milliseconds
The time sat for eternity in the shade of a mango tree
Giving company to the boy tending his goats

At nightfall
The crickets took over the world around my home
Pining for love
Never caring for the traffic jam
On nearby highway.

xxx

Purba Purusha*

When I was a small boy
I used to touch the feet of my grandma
Before going to take a test
She used to give me her blessings
'ajamar hoi thaa'
Don't die and don't be born

I am not sure
She understood what she was asking for
The eternity of the body
Which she did not have
Neither you nor I
Nor the tiny bacterium

Still we wish
And never hesitate to act
As if we live for the eternity

I don't know why
After you were gone
I feel like my packing time has come
But whatever I see
I can't pack it any way
My possessions, my fame and recognition
All dissolve like a shadow in a dark night
Only I will have the memories
Of you, my grandma and
My kids I leave behind
And become one of you
The purba purushas

xxx

Purba Purusha*:bygone ancestors

Salmon Run

I put on my rose colored glasses
And swim away
From the winter of discontent
From the snow storms inside my home
From the traffic jam in my career
From the cold rainy evening of existence
To the autumn of self discovery
To enjoy the colors hidden inside me for ages

I swim away
From steamy summer days
To the full moon and evening breezes
From the pounding waves of anger
To the spring of my life

When the emotion buds
And starts smiling at me
Inside and outside

I swim against the rapids of time
To realize all of me.

xxx

Samsar Mahasagar*

Before you came
You were not there in mind

Now
There are no moments
Without thinking about you
The further you go
The worrier I get

All my efforts
All my sadhana*
All my actualization
Are to love you
(Even if I never say so loudly)
To care for you
To make your life little better than mine
And when I hear you smile
When I see you for a while
I feel I am in heaven
Even while faring in the turbulent sea

With time you changed
I changed
The relationship changed
But we are yoked together forever
In this samsar mahasagar .

xxx

Samsar Mahasagar* = the bondage of living in a society with a family
sadhana** = penance

Sunrise after the Snowstorm

Sometimes
Snow storm is welcome
After the hollering of the wind makes our gait impossible
After the endless snow shower blinds us
After the shiver from walking in knee deep snow
Freezes out toes
The aftermath is something
Straight from the Garden of Eden
When the sun's golden ray
Reflects on the now surrendered snow drifts
And we sit with our cups of coffee
Very close to each other
And sip the beauty through our eyes
Without words
Reminding us
The awesome power of
Kissing and making it up
After an unpleasant encounter.

xxx

The Force

Inside me
There exists a driving force
To transform noise to melodies
To see godhood in demons
With my inner eyes
The feet and hands create epics
Sounds, ultrasounds, remote sensing
Information highways
Voice and remote control of robots in distant planets
Luxuries of imagination
Looking into the space far away or deep within
In molecules, ocean or nebulas
Then the insanity takes over
Raping, killing millions in the name of race, tribe or religion
Bombing, maiming thousands for a fanatical whim
To sacrifice others and offer their hearts to please the deities

xxx

The Fragrance of the Sweet Jasmine

Desires
Resentments
Expectations
Grievances
Fell like colored autumn leaves
Making me lighter like a feather
The defoliation
Lets the sunshine, breeze and raindrops touch me
Penetrate me
Dissociating me from my cloak of fame, family, fortune and fantasies
Of being someone grandiose
I become the fragrance of the sweet jasmine.
xxx

The World We Live in

Let us create
The world to live in
Let us
Fill in the gaps
With dreams and flowers
And kisses

Like the night
Let our wishes
And dreams
Hide the rawness of life
The tears and the dirt

Let the dried up flowers in the banquet
Become alive again
Let the burnt out candles
Light up again
To fill the heart
With romance
And love.

Let us live few more times
Before we die.

xxx

The Year of the Life

The world I am
Suddenly bloomed
In front of my eyes
Like a butterfly

For the first time
I laughed at my rat race
I laughed at the traffic jam
And did not blow my top

Like a ray of sunshine
Breaking though the clouds
And swallowing the fog
Like a huge vacuum cleaner
The life and its meaning
Dawned on me

Bracketed by the events
Of birth and death
Perforated by sorrows and mishaps
Highlighted by the news reports of death and decay
This life
As a celebration of being goes on,
Smeared with the fantasies of a child
We all dance, dream
And dare to dive into danger
To drink honey from cactus flowers

xxx