

Minutes *of* the Moments

A Collection of Poems



Babru Bahan Samal

Minutes of the Moments

By

Babru Bahan Samal

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ISBN-10:1542907071

ISBN 13:9781542907071

I dedicate this collection of poems to the scientists of the
world.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

“Minutes of the Moments” is my second collection of poems. Thoughts on various existential queries and reflections such as creators and creation, nature and universe, society and individual, life and death are the basis of these poems. A sense of curiosity combined with scientific observation has served as the main inspiration for these poems.

Our lives are nothing but minutes of moments that are transcribed in our memories. One such unforgettable moment is presented on the front cover of this book. I took the photograph of this young Buddhist apprentice in Wat Tmei, Siem Reap, Cambodia. Some of the remnants of the killing field victims of Pol Pot were displayed in a small stupa in the center while the Buddhist monks and apprentices were all around symbolizing the victory of love and compassion over the brutality of human beings. The child monk in saffron robe and an open soft drink can, serves as a link between the modern world and the time-tested teachings of Buddha.

I hope that these poems will find receptive readers with a similar bent of mind.

Babru Samal
Rockville, MD, USA

March 2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Jayashree Samal has put innumerable hours in designing the cover page as well as the template for the book interior. She deserves a lot of thanks because of that.

Dr. Adyasha Das has meticulously read each one of these poems and has suggested many positive changes. I am indebted to her for helping me, in spite of her busy schedule.

I am grateful to Mr. Binod Nayak and Dr. Harold Gainer for going over the manuscript and suggesting revisions.

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Creation and the Creators

A Beholder's World

In the beginning
All you see are pastels
Of different hues and shades
No shape or form
Just lines running ad lib

No attribute or description
Just a presentation of primal units
Not corrupted by a desire
To give a title
To announce its completion

We, the onlookers
Look at the painting
And complete the creation
With our experience
Our emotion
And
Our imagination
Helping the blooming of a flower
To be perceived with awe
In a personal and unique way
Thanks to the beholder's share.

...

A Lullaby and a Prayer

A mother is putting her baby to sleep

“My child!
My beautiful child!
When you grow up
You will be very rich
You will take care of me
And my problems
But in the meantime
Go to sleep.”

A devotee is praying to his Lord

“My Lord
I have no one but you
To take refuge
Only you can relieve all my sufferings

Only you can pardon my sins
Please destroy all my enemies
Just like you do for
All your devotees.”

The baby does not understand a thing
But is charmed by the melody
The mother’s tongue carves the cocoon
To feel secure and sleep

Assuming He understands all human languages
The Lord does not know what to do
Everybody is His child
Why could He kill one for the sake of another?
How can His child commit a sin anyway?
Unless chaos and destruction
Are also parts of His creation

The devotee carves the cocoon from his faith
Creating his own universe
To feel secure and live
That understanding and analysis
May not bring.

...

Beyond His Intention

When the creator endowed us with
Essential organs for feeding, breeding
And locomotion
Could he foresee
What else could these be used for?

In addition to eating
The sets of teeth are the essence of smiling
Talking, singing and love bites

The lips are not only
For closing the mouth shut
But also serve as the epicenter of Eros

The fingers on the hands are used
To eat with and without chopsticks
To hold pipettes and cigarettes
And tell stories in dramas and sign languages
To play piano or sitar
Or give ecstasy to the one we love

The movement of legs dazzles the arena
In classical or modern dances
In Flamenco or in Zumba
Or better in Capoeira and Kung Fu

Lovers make tryst with their eyes
Tears stream in pleasure or pain
And the process of procreation
Could be the source

Of so much pleasure or
Pain beyond imagination

This ephemeral body
Here today and gone tomorrow
It breaks down and rots
In few hours after death
Still
During its existence
It is the temple of pleasure and pain
Making our lives heaven and hell.

...

Creating the Creator

In theory
My God has no birth or death
He is omnipresent
Omniscient and omnipotent
Without a shape or a gender
And above human instincts

In practice
My God
Either looks like one of us
Or has a peculiar shape
Resides in a temple on a diamond throne
Dressed up in expensive attire
With jewelry of gold and pearl
Devotees pay heftily
And line up to get a glimpse of him for a second
Part from thousands of rupees or dollars
To help him or her to be rich, famous
To destroy his enemies and
And
Also, grant him nirvana

In theory
My God
The most merciful
The most compassionate
The most forgiving
Who created all of us in his own image
Making heaven on earth

In practice
My God loves sacrifice
Of animals
And even human beings
Punitive and revengeful

When there is lack of order
And demons and nonbelievers
Overtake the earth
He takes avatars again and again
To kill them and save the noble ones

My God wants me to forget every other God
And take refuge only at his feet
The feet of the omnipresent
Our creator, our sustainer
Our El Salvador (savior),
He commands us to kill
Another human being
Labeled as infidels.

...

The Source Code for Greatness

Encyclopedias
History books
Obituaries in newspapers
Try to give us
The glimpse of the mind of great people
How did they do what they did?
How long it took them to be there?

Strangely
When we remove
The illusory robe of greatness
And look at them as human beings
From their childhood to the pinnacle of fame
Their struggle and tenacity emerge
As the prime reasons for greatness

Success or fame
Never was a piece of cake
They were not the chosen ones
Or born with a silver spoon in their mouth
On the contrary
They struggled and
Did not give up their dreams

A dedication to a field of choice
Let it be music

The game of golf or painting
Science, economics or racing

Life was focused
And the goal well defined
The mind was dedicated
To writing, inventing or discovering
In a narrow spectrum of science
Or technology
Ignoring everything else like
The tip of an arrow speeding towards
The bull's eye.

...

Designer Genes

It is not a big deal
To be born or to grow up
Get married and have kids
Then get old and die
Everyone in the world can do it
Hands down

We do it as a matter of fact
Without understanding
The nuts and bolts
How do we see or feel
How do we recognize someone?
How does the food we eat give us energy?
How we feel pain or pleasure
Or
How a baby is conceived and grows?

Everything works like clockwork
Until we have an accident
Fracture a bone, lose our sight or become deaf
Stay bedridden or paralyzed
Not able to move a finger or lips

Then we realize
How amazing creatures of
Great design we are
More intricate than a smartphone
Or a probe to the Mars or beyond.

...

In His Own Image

They say
God created man in his own image
I totally agree
But I think
Man was not his first creation
And I assume not the last one either

He must have created both
Living and nonliving objects
Viruses, bacteria, yeast and insects
Birds and bees
Planktons to mighty blue whale
Ferocious tiger to shy touch-me-not
Filling the air, earth and great oceans
With living beings
That to
We are talking about the species
On this earth only
Where thousands of species are
Yet to be discovered
Or extinct already

Hats off to the mighty creator
Hats off to his creation
Hats off to the evolving
Appearing and disappearing
The Incarnation of the All Mighty.

...

Intimate Stranger

You don't know me
Actually, you never had a need
To know anything about me

I am
A very insignificant being
Out of billions of people

But I know you really well
You are one of the few
Who set my values
Established the ways
I think, listen to music
Write, read and even sleep
The things I do to enjoy life
The way I talk or work

You became the harbinger of thoughts
Much ahead of your time
By creating images, stories, and tools
To pave the avenue of my life
And others

Born centuries before me
Or decades after me
Your work defines you
Make me worship you
Adore you intimately
And make me feel intimate with you
Even though
You will never know me.

...

Living After Death

We, the mere mortals
Wish for immortality
Even as the death embraces others
Without warning

We pray
We sneak into the secrets of nature
To get the elixir of life
We engage in debates about reincarnation
The causality of Karma
Soul, purgatory, heaven and hell

Beyond these hopes or fear
There are people who are immortal
From the time immemorial
Their names, their homeland
Maybe lost in time
But they live beyond time
Through their work in caves
In the temples, churches, and mosques
In libraries, museums and dance halls
In computers, iPods, and mobile phones
They live in the light bulbs and satellites
In GPS and FaceTime
Long after their death.

...

Painting the Painter

I love to talk to artists
Especially to painters
About their out of this world work

I ask them a very simple pointed question
“When you started painting
Did you know
How your final product will look like?”

Invariably it is a negative answer
He has control over the painting
In the beginning
But with time the creation becomes the boss
And he becomes just a pair of hands
To hold the brush or the mouse
And to follow the direction of the painting
That takes a life of its own

Similar to a scientific research
Where the unexpected results
Define the course
Give new insight
Decide the career of a scientist
And even the course of a field
Overall

In both cases
The creator is following
The wishes of the creation
Like gods do in all cultures.

...

The Army of Thousands

They look like common folks
Sometimes shabbily dressed
With tennis shoes and unkempt hair
That only betrays
Their resolve to solve a huge puzzle
Deciphering the mind of the Creator
By studying His creation
During their own lifetime

Armed with curiosity and perseverance
And a working hypothesis
Thousands of them search and research
With right controls and algorithms
To put pieces of the puzzle
At the right spot

A tiny piece of puzzle
Becomes the passion of
An army of scientists
Scattered all over the world
They shape and refine our views
Of our life and our universe

Failure does not pull them down
Frustration makes them stronger and
More tenacious
The Sapiens march on
On the shoulders of these unsung giants
From the past through the present time
To the unforeseeable future.

...

The World of Imagination

“Energize me, Scottie!”
Mr. Spock said
And in the blink of an eye
He was out of one world to another
To deal with beings
One can only see through imagination

But there is no Scottie
And she is not Mr. Spock
But energized she is by mere passion
To travel into the world of her creation
Where characters appear out of the blue
Coaxing her to make them immortal
By the tip of her pen

The pristine moment comes
After the children are in bed and
The husband is in his dreamland

After the completion of myriads of chores
As the mother, friend and the guardian
Of three growing beings
She settles down to weave the world
With her imagination and dreams
To populate the mind of the mass
That savors and wonders about
Her world for ages to come.

...

Nature and Us

Always Follow the Scripts

In a hot and humid day
I took shelter under the shade
Of your magnificent presence

I looked up and down
There were thousands of flowers on branches
And also strewn without pattern
All over the ground
Some fresh
Others fragmented by shoes and weather
Slowly becoming dirt

I wonder
How much energy do you use to bring
Thousands of these every year
Knowing pretty well that
Most will not bring a new plant
Into existence

Still, year after year
You do it ceremoniously
Generate buds, let them open up
Feed the bees from their breasts
And then litter the ground
Don't you feel sad seeing the outcome?

I wonder
What makes you repeat this process
Throughout your life?
Do you have an agenda or
Is it all in the source code?

...

Blossom Where Planted

You

The emblem of nurture and tolerance
Sacrifice your life or limbs
To sustain life on this earth
To provide rain, food, shelter and air
Even to boost art and architecture

You decorate the earth with flowers
Overwhelming me
With colors in fall and spring
Filling the air with fragrance
Transforming the earth to heaven

Like a yogi in meditation for ages
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 back
Forgiving those who abuse you
Without the thought of retribution
You continue to give
Regenerate
What was taken away from you
In your arbor avatar

...

Echoes of the Interior

I wonder if the sounds of music
The chants of devotion, desperation, and love
Fill up our interior and echo forever
Molding us without our knowledge

How about the echoes of the sounds
Made during our growing up days?
The first palpitation of the heart in the womb
The first cry after birth
The first heartbeat of a lover
And the sob after the first breakup?

In the archive of our lives
In the deep subconscious terrain
We possibly can find
The sound of our first kiss
The first exclamation of achieving
The heavenly pleasure on earth
A mom's wailing
At the loss of her only child
And the silent cry
At the untimely departure of a lover

I wonder
If the dark chamber of our interior
Stocked with the echoes of living
Gets archived in the clouds
After our death.

...

Humble and Magnificent

Passion flowers and orchids
Roses and peonies
Come in so many vibrant colors and shapes
Making me an instant devotee
But I don't think
If a flower knows its own prowess
To feel proud
And even arrogant

The fragrance of the roses and jasmine flowers
The iridescent feather of the peacock
Or the intense sanguine colors of
The maple leaves in autumn
The cascading waterfalls
Transport us to the paradise
But they don't know
Their own elegance

The babies of all colors and shapes
Entice us with their smiles
But they don't know it

Even during sunrise and sunset
Sun does not plan
To use the cloud and the sky
As his canvas to create magic
The snowcapped mountains
And the rainbows
They are all magnificent
Without bragging about it
What about us?

...

In Memory of a Known Stranger

Before I knew you
There was so much anticipation
I wondered a lot
About how exciting will it be
To know more about you
To understand
What makes you so special in every way?

But there were so many hurdles
Things did not work out
As I planned
But finally it did happen
You were no more a complete stranger
I started to know you in fits and starts
Like putting a puzzle together
To realize
How amazing and fascinating
You are

With time
As I tried to know more about you
You became mysterious
Making me work hard
To be familiar with all your moves

You still remain a moving target
Sought by many like me
But least understood
You, the creation
You, the nature of things.

...

Seventeen Years Later

The symphony of amor
Resonates
In the woods around my home

For newly emerged cicadas
Life is so transient but so lively
They fly freely in the open sky
Seek out mates
Transforming the trees
To honeymoon hubs

And then the grand finale
Everywhere
I see them gasping for air
Or dead and scavenged

But during that short time
They pass their genes to the next generation
Like a baton in a relay race
While enjoying the process
Of being the creator
And the creation
Maybe it is the goal of life
For them and us

If I fail
It does not matter
There are millions like me anyway
To pass the message
Before the messenger dies.

...

Decoration of the Earth

I read about spring
How it brings wonder to the world
I read about the winter
That brings life to a standstill
But I never felt their prowess
Until I came here
To Maryland from California

Millions of buds on cherry trees
Dogwood and others
Wait patiently since October
Weather the cold temperature
To bloom in spring in sequence
Daffodils, cherry blossoms, redbuds
Azaleas, tulips and then dogwoods

Flowers decorate each branch
Even the trunks
And on exposed roots

It is the natural Rose Parade
Live floats follow one another
Once the parade is over
Ground gets strewn with fallen petals
The seeds occupy the space for a while
Before falling on the ground in millions

Every year this happens
With no intention
But to decorate the earth

...

The Sleeping Codes in a Seed

The tiny baby is safe and sound
Shielded by the impenetrable cocoon
Meticulously designed
To withstand the ravages of nature and man
For a very long time

The baby is sleeping
Unperturbed by the storm, deluge
Or by the scorching sun's angst
For a month, a year, even a century or more
Not to wake up before its time

The baby is dreaming of its future
About water touching its stored food
To create nourishments for its tiny parts
Then it will rise
To greet the world beyond its bassinet
To look at the sun and also away from it

The baby will grow
For months, years or centuries
Decorating the earth
Feeding its sons and daughters
Replenishing the earth with its thousand babies
They will hibernate inside
The security of the cocoon
Waiting for the right time.

...

Looking Inwards

A Point in Time

I could not see me
And yelled aloud
“Where are you?”
“I am here”
Came the reply
As if I am a point in time

I almost forgot where I started
I forgot who I wanted to be
When path changed
When goals changed
Vision of the life and world changed
As if a new me is
Installed every minute

A few years ago
No way I could guess
Where I am today

Still
Volcano erupts underwater
Snowstorms play havoc in equator
Passion flowers bloom in Antarctica
Friends become strangers
Stranger become the aspiration
Unexpected departures
Pleasant arrivals
Making me a new me
Every day
A new point in time.

...

In the Lap of Solitude

Silence

In the wee hours of the morning
When I am devoid of thoughts
A mind without attributes

Serenity is the wide open sky
Overwhelming me
I feel no presence of any being
Even mine
As if I am the void after all

Renunciation

Of desire and dreams
The rock garden in a Zen temple
Ever expanding ocean of silence
Swallowing up the desires

The void

The moment after death
The void
The moment after the point of no return
Makes us feel so complete

Fulfillment and void

Are they synonyms?

Like

The solution

The resolution

And the dissolution?

...

Morning Reflections

In the wee hour of the morning
Before the day does its cat stretch
I sit down alone
Silently
And wonder
About me and you
And all around us
And ask me
Who am I
What am I doing here
And why?

I walk silently
On the tapestry of my past
Touching the steps I took
The dirt, the decay and the dire times
The time my body changed
My mind changed

But I asked a lot
Wondered a lot
About the life around me
About the icons around me
The things the priest chanted
And farmers did

The more I know
More my ignorance betrays me
I still ask and hope
One day
I will know it all.

...

Selfie Time

I extended my hand
To hold the smartphone as far as I could
And clicked
The picture was kind of bloated
But I liked it
I looked larger than life
And there was no one comparable to me
I was happy and proud of me

I asked a friend
To take a picture of me
From a short distance
While the crowd was way out there
I appeared larger than life
Larger than the people far away
I was still very distinct, elegant and unique
I felt very good about me
I am someone to be reckoned with

I was in a crowd
Someone took a photo from a helicopter
I looked into it and could not find me
I was a pinhead
Not unique
Just like everyone else
Another human being
Roaming the earth for a short while
It won't miss me or feel lighter
When I am gone.

...

Silent Mutations

Every moment
New things sneak into me
And lo and behold
I am becoming someone else
Slowly and surely
Inside and out
Emotionally and physically
From molecules to cells
To the whole body and mind

I live in a home with antique
And also newly acquired furniture
The house has been
Remodeled
Refurbished
Repaired too many times
by silent mutations

At the same time
My past acts as my baby blanket
To make me feel secure
And
To keep my identity
Almost intact
In the face of
All my silent mutations.

...

Story of a Transient

Glacier sprawling across the vast expanse
Mountains with spruce and pines
Oceans bustling with life
Still and serene landscapes
Look at me with primordial indifference

My presence or absence
Makes no difference
After I am gone
Millions of life forms
Will continue to live, feed and breed and die
Water drops will glisten on lotus leaves
Interactions between prey and predator
Between honey bee and the pollens
Between the mom and her babies
Will continue unabated
Geysers will continue to dance
With spectacular convulsion
Exuberant wildflowers
Will continue to decorate the earth
Memories of me will disappear
Like a line in the water.

...

The Story of Success

Your performance was outstanding
The songs brought tears to people's eyes
And they stood up and never stopped clapping
You were bowing again and again

But the audience only saw
The tip of the iceberg
Never interested to know the whole story
From the conception to the delivery
The labor pain, the sleepless nights
The composition of the song
The setting of the music
The coordination with various groups
To create the symphonic music
and then the DVD

So similar to scientific research
The work spans for years
Many technicians, graduate students
And postdocs
So much frustration due to failures
Planning experiments
And redoing endlessly
Learning from failure
And using it to do it right
To find the hidden principles
Of life or universe

Then write and rewrite the manuscript
And send for publication
Crossing fingers
Not to get rejected by the reviewers

In life, we take so many things for granted
From laptops to big Macs
Buying is so easy
Just go to a brick and mortar store
Or order online
Then plug and play
Or
Take a big bite of the Big Mac
Never knowing
How much effort it takes
from innovation to marketing.

...

My Reflection in the Mirror

A Monster Named Desire

My desire
The hunger of a newborn baby
Wants to fill the void in me
The bottomless barrel

I am a puppet
Dancing to its tune
Smiling, crying and cajoling others
Sprouting wings
To cross the seven seas

I bang my head
On the Himalayas
Fall down and bleed
On the Sahara of reality
Yet
Like the ancient monster
Desire multiplies in me in thousands
Trying to fill the barrel
One more time.

...

Birth of Stars in My Mind's Sky

So many questions sneak into my mind
Like a swarm of bees rushing to the freshly
Awakened rose buds

Lots of queries keep me awake
And I wonder
About the grand design of life
About its principles
About its cause and effect

I wonder about
Who are really the haves
And who the have-nots

I wonder
About the definition of right and wrong
About the vanishing horizon
Between the agony of bee stings and
The ecstasy of tasting the honey
About the never met soul mates

I wonder
About why something just happens
About who deserves what and why
When did it all begin?
How will it all ends
Does it have to end anyway?

In life's lottery game
Who wins and why
Does the winner take it all?
Is the winner a winner after all?

Life is a river
Full of mysteries
Full of love and desires
Laughter and sighs
And wounds
Of broken dreams
Full of hypothesis
And nullifications
Giving rise to so many queries
In my mind's sky.

...

Carving a Statue Out of Ice

In the scorching heat of the summer
I carve a statue out of ice
Giving it life with all my love and care
Trying to protect it with my shadow
To reveal my inner self
To the world

Even then
Maybe no one will notice it
And say wow
But for me
It is me
An incarnation of myself
A projection of my psyche
Fragile, ephemeral, transient
Just like me.

...

Castaway by Choice

I was a castaway, to begin with
Brought to an alien world
Without my consent
Labeled with a name
I did not choose
Nurtured by the people
I did not know
But lived on their mercy, love, and fear

Should I be a colored fish in an aquarium?
A caged bird with clipped wings
Fed and trained to sing
With no fear or hassle
Becoming another bird
Just like all around me?

I would rather be a castaway
Welcoming
Whatever
Whomever
Crosses my path

Let me flow like a rivulet
From the faraway place
To an undefined end
And in the process
Compose the lyrics of my life.

...

Constant Confrontation

Every day
I confront my limitations
In what I do
Without knowing much about
Many things

It could be the flight of an insect
Software I am trying to use
The plants that grow around my house
Or the person I live with

The science
That was so familiar to me
Becomes more and more distant
Thanks to the revelation of new facts
As I try to know more and more
I find to have known less and less

Seeking solitude in ignorance
I close my eyes and pretend
I don't need to know
Any of these
Like the ancient time
Where knowledge was sparse
But I guess
The happiness of living was not.

...

Elaboration of Our Minds

We are all human
Homo sapiens Erectus
In spite of little bit sharing of gene pools
From other hominoids
We can breed between races
And create varieties of beautiful
Human beings
Like in India, Brazil and now in Americas

Blessed with the elegance of body and mind
We can use novel tools, script new mantras
To run machines and remote controls
We can create miracles of forms and features
From chairs to shoes
From food to fusion music
From dresses to communication

The breakdown of barriers
Caused by our upbringing and culture
Speeds up the evolution like
Site-directed mutagenesis
Or gene editing
Giving all of us
The opportunity
And
The exposure
For the elaboration of our minds.

...

Future Behind the Curtain

Life is so strange
Often we start an adventure
Seemingly on a crystal clear path
And with no hesitation
We dive in
Without realizing that
There is no water in the swimming pool
Just a reflection of our desire
A mirage

In shock, we close our eyes
And wait for the crash landing
On the dry cement bed
But somehow we end up
In a castle made in the midair
Filled with exuberance
We never imagined

Now the wide open world
Greets us
The strangeness gets replaced by
Vivid and intensity of belonging
That we never thought was possible

We merge into this life
And make it our own
The images we had in our mind
Feels so silly
So outdated
We disclaim it as our own.

...

Hope Against Hope

In the ripples of the ocean
With the full moon
In thousand pieces
I see the super moon

In the trees of the winter's dark days
I see the blossoms filling up space
Like my hope in the midst of vast despair

In the epitaphs on a tombstone
I see the dad coming home
To kiss the baby and hug the mom
The home resonates with
Smile and laughter

In the fallen petals of late spring
In the morning of a gloomy rainy day
I see the cupid's arrow
Studded with kisses

In an old dusty
Airline boarding pass
I revisit my happiest days
Filled with miracles of love
To make my life
Worth living.

...

Judging a Book by the Cover

Either as paperbacks or
Elegantly bound hardcovers
We come in so many shapes and sizes
I could be a cartoon book or an epic
To glance over quickly
Or to read like a Bible

Within the limits of
Time and space
We jot down
Glories and agonies
Characters pop up at each chapter
With or without invitation
To make a book colorful, vivid and dramatic
Not afraid to make an impression on others

Wise people say
We should not judge a book by its cover
An ugly front cover might be filled with
wonderful material
A book with very beautiful front cover
Maybe a facade

But we all do love and judge
A book by its cover
Its elegance appeals to our senses
To make us fall in love at the first sight
Unless we read the book first
And then look at the cover design.
But how many want to do that?

...

Life through a Pinhole

Once I was born
My parents stuck me in a box
My teachers sealed it tight
I was allowed
Only to see the world through a tiny pinhole

I learned about my country and culture
“The best of the best in the world”
I enjoyed the festivals of life and death
Ate curry and rice with spices
I felt at home
And carried it wherever I went,
Never feeling an urge to look outside the box

As I travel across the globe
I see everyone else
Inside a box too
Chanting the mantra
“We are the best”

They look at me with despise
An alien from an underdeveloped country
Just like me looking at them

As I grew and got educated and specialized
The box became smaller in size
From science to biology
To molecular biology
To neuroscience
To a small protein
That controls the gene expression
That fascinated me

Enticed me
Allured me to spend all my life with it
Inside a tiny box within the box

My window became narrower
This tiny part of the box became my world
My source of happiness and pain
My frustration and salvation

Once in a while
I dare to see the mega world
The glories of sunrise and super moon
Bipolar artists giving colors to life
Toddlers dancing to the beat of music
Video and audio clips playing
on iPods and YouTube

I see the creation alive and in continuum
Decorating the world
With wild mustard flowers, lotus buds
Cherry blossoms and ice crystals on red fruits
Cows giving birth without C-section
Old people waiting for the round trip tickets
To be born again

I look at this world with amazement
Its vastness beyond comprehension
Should I go back to my tiny box
To my abode and my paradise
And become world famous
By knowing more and more
About less and less?

...

Looking for the Kernel

Most of the time
Whatever satisfies the rest of the folks
Does not satisfy me
As if something is missing there
Like the kernel of the rice
Like the nectar of the flowers
I am always looking for an essence
A meaning
A purpose
A resolution

A big house
The food, the fame, the possession
The glory of being in limelight
To be an idol of common folks
Looking for drama in real life
Do not allure me

But I wonder
If I puncture
The glory of hologram on a soap bubble
Could I end up with a void after all?

...

March of the Present

Every day
The hours between the dawn and midnight
Get used in ways
Over which we have no control

We take breakfast, lunch and dinner breaks
And retreat onto the lap of the night
Dreaming or having a nightmare

Next day greets us
Even though
Not exactly a replica of yesterday
It also disappears from the sight
After twenty-four hours

Years after year
Today captivates us
Allures us to spread our wings
As if this is it
As if it is here to stay forever
To make us alive

Then it becomes the past
And a subset of our memory
 After a while
Most of it forgotten or hazy
 And the future
Who knows what will happen?
 So who cares?

In the footprints of the present
 Our lives march on
 Composing the lyric
 That we can only read
In photos of yester years
 and wonder.

...

Metamorphosis of a Bookworm

Books

Those black round letters in age-brown pages
Enticed me
I wanted to imbibe the knowledge inside it
Memorizing it
Reading more and more
Until I was done with all the books in the village

Soon the alphabets changed their shapes
Changed their inherent meanings
From one language to the next
Presence of pictures
Made everything really wonderful

Books became my bosom buddies
Those wise authors
Let me dive into their fountain of knowledge
To collect information
Knowledge and maybe even wisdom

With time I discovered libraries
First dark and dusty with few worn out books
Then museums of books
'Noise annoys'
I can sit there for hours
Like a bee in a garden full of flowers.

The digital evolution came
The ease of getting information
Became easier and easier
No need to scout bound journals
Racks after racks

Instead, just click it
To be deluged with big data
To put together an elephant
By meta-analysis

Time has changed my books
From palm leaf manuscripts
To ebooks and audio books
But I remain a bookworm
Forever.

Painted Soul

So many stories
So many unfulfilled feelings
Lay in my heart
Like a bunch of lazy sleeping dogs
Just panting
Once in awhile
They raise their heads
And go on rumination ad lib

Paints from so many brushes
Tunes from so many songs
Resonate in me
The unfulfilled dreams
The joy of finding one
I never thought existed
And losing one who
Promised to be the soul mate for life

The tears don't fall anymore
The sobs cling to the lungs
Like a crying baby on
Mother's breast

Seasons of wishes
Dance in me
Like the images of diffraction
On a soap bubble
Disappear and reappear at will
I become the canvas
Of a painter to create
The painted soul.

...

Spring Cleaning

I dust and vacuum our house once a week
Delete the unwanted emails
Get rid of unwanted files from my laptop
And update the software bundles

Once in spring
We have a garage sale
To get rid of what we don't want
But we did earlier

I always forget to clean
Piled up stuff from my mind
My childhood beliefs
Traumas and nightmares
What my parents said to be true
What my society taught me to be right
What my holy book said
To be the state of the art

With time everything has changed
But I never woke up from the siesta
To question or update
My beliefs and convictions
And
Delete the obsolete and vestigial

My mind
A storehouse of fossils
And relics of my past
Needs an urgent
Spring cleaning.

..

The Fabric of Space and Time

In spite of the cacophony
In spite of all the nerve-wracking noise
That left its footprint all over me
I am bent on weaving my life
In the fabric of time and space
Imprinting
One moment at a time

Hiding in my invincible space
I needle the invisible thread
To compose the motifs and the contrasting
Background patterns to create
Something for time immemorial
Like Escher did

From my swamp land of sorrows
And broken dreams I dare to be airborne
With my newly acquired wings
Of possibilities

This is the story of my life
My revelation to myself
My realization of myself
A mortal print of my labor of love
In the fabric of space and time.

...

The Serenity of Void

Like the circle of zero
The ecstasy of having nothing
Surrounds me
Permeates me
Overwhelms me

I see no need
For all I had
Forced to have against my wishes
To create a façade
Designed by her, him and them
Some even I don't know

As all the possessions vanished
Like the winter breath
I saw no need
In preoccupation
With collection of accolades
Accumulation of prizes
Position or domination
But submersion of myself
In the serenity of nothingness.

...

With A Grain of Salt

My Princeton professor said
Whatever you read or hear
Take it with a grain of salt

This iconoclastic statement
Destroyed my inner assurance
Of the conclusions
Alias “the truth”
Of gods of science
Suddenly
Everything I believed to be true
Was in doubt

For me
Philosophers, scientists, and poets
Living gods
What they said is the truth
To be believed and revered
Not questioned

Now
As I listen to them
As I read the methods they used
And take a careful look at their data
Before reading what they think it means
Now the conclusions are debatable
My professor was right
Every one’s conclusion might be true
But only under certain conditions
Hence
Trust but verify.

...

Life and Living

A Grandmother's Saga

The last time I was in an Indian village

I saw you

Sitting under a big tree
Serene, calm and reflective
I guess you were thinking
What you went through
During your lifetime

Hello dear grandma
As the only daughter
You might have enjoyed
The fun of being a butterfly
Until you left your mom's refuge
To a stranger's place
To build a life for someone else

Husband came
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 the snakes

They sought refuge
In your house
In monsoon time

In front of your eyes
Water came from tube wells
You walked on a paved road
Not on mud

Electricity came
Motorcycles replaced bicycles
Television came
Replacing gossip in the evening

Smartphones came
From no phone
Laptops replaced
Pen and paper

I don't know
If you got what you wished
As a child
But for me
You are a sentinel of time.

...

Breaking the Ice is So Hard

You share the elevator
Or the seat beside me in the seminar
In the metro or in a bus
Every time you a stranger
Young or old, elegant or garden variety
Cozy with a mobile phone
Whispering softly to a friend
As if telling a never ending story

I want to say hello
I want to know more about you
Where did you or your parents come from?
What does your name signify?
What makes you smile?
What makes you shed a tear?
What makes you keep going
In spite of all odds?

What kind of music soothes you
To forget the stark reality?
And for whom do you dress up so elegantly?

The elevator opens and
We go back to our offices or homes
The metro stops and we go on our own ways
The seminar is over and
We are in different paths
Rushing to our chores in our enclaves
My thoughts about you
Incubate like ice
Left outside a refrigerator.

..

Days of Your Life

Let us roll back the days few decades
To the day when a new chapter started
 In your life
When you left a home for another home
 To start a family of your own
 With one, you loved to groom
 The bridegroom

 Things changed
 Dreams got truncated
 Appended and extended
 You accepted
What happened as the destiny.

 You had to obey
 What the families want
 The society wants
 You are not to ask why
 But do and not die

 With the gift of love
(The giver defines it of course)
 The path got paved
 The practice made the travel
 A piece of cake

 Your multitasking life
 Let you experience it all
 From esoteric to painful
 The multiverse of living
 In your own universe.

...

Desert Flower

To laugh
To make others laugh
One has to know sadness first hand
Should have dealt with
A loss, a disaster that is heart wrecking

Then it is like tasting food
After a long starvation
Drinking cold water in summer day
After being thirsty as if forever

This contrast
Reveals the true nature of living
Which is not like
Living in a home
With air conditioning always on
Where one feels
Neither the summer heat
Nor the chilly winter nights.

...

Eventuality

Sometimes things happen
As if there is a season for everything in life
In the heartland of Sahara
Spring appears with all its gifts
As an angel
Who finds you
Connects to you and then
Colonizes your mind
After a magnificent takeover
With only a smile

Sometimes things happen
As if predestined
So it has been honored and followed
Without taking recourse to
Hesitation or doubt
Or resistance salmon style

Sometimes things happen in life
With myriads of blind alleys
Punctuated by turns and twists
Where the future sometimes treats you
Turning a wasteland to a Garden of Eden
Then a moment of pleasure
Wipes out the agonies of ages
Inscribing beautiful memories
In the book of life.

...

Extensions of Me

Too tiny to be noticed
In the midst of millions
I strive hard to look larger than life
Using extensions profusely
MD, Ph.D. or CPA as a suffix
And
Dr. or Professor as a prefix

I also buy things
To make me feel bigger
An SUV, to be a menace to smart cars
Expensive suits and dazzling saris
To instigate jealousy
A Movado watch as an ornament
A mansion on the hill
With Humvee and a Jaguar in the driveway

I feel precious
When my wife or girlfriend
Is studded with gold, diamond, and pearl
Without thinking that
The life in me and in them
Can disappear instantly anytime
Leaving behind all our extensions.

...

Flowering On Its Own Sake

The spring was around the corner
but almost a month away

Suddenly

Thanks to a surprising warm weather

The tiny yellow buds

Programmed to bloom in spring

Bloomed precociously

Then in the following weekend

Heavy snow fell

Covering the ground and the pine needles

And

Also, the shrubs studded with yellow flowers

Dashing their dream of long display

A matured woman

Of short stature

Works in the next lab

Almost 3 feet tall

(About 90 cm)

Congenital defects

Did not stop her becoming a woman

Did not bring down her spirit to live

And to be a scientist

Flowers bloom

As if programmed to decorate the earth

With another wonderful life.

..

Homage in the Morning

Morning is the right time
To pay homage to the past and current contributors
To the core of our civilization

They toiled
Created marvelous palaces, temples and statues
Sometimes carved out of hills and mountains
Created garlands of thoughts and words
In various languages
And set the boat of culture in motion
But mostly remained anonymous
Even though
Their work of
Imagination, sweat, and determination
Gave rise to the heights
Of human achievements like
UNESCO world heritage sites

In spite of cyclones and hurricanes
Political turmoil
The boat of civilization
Inches ahead
Thanks to the labor of these
Unsung boatmen
All over the world

They are the true recipients of
My homage of the morning.

...

In Praise of Redundancy

If you ask
“Who likes to do repetitive tasks?”
No one raises a hand
Novelty is the word of the day

Then I realized
We derive pleasure from so many
Repetitive tasks
Seeing and being with the lover
Enjoying food and drink we like

We eagerly wait for
The ever repeating
TGIF and weekends
Birthdays of our loved ones
Colors of the spring and autumn
Even the white snow days of the winter
That makes everything so magical

Music thrives rhythms
From European concerts
Indian ragas to ethnic tunes

In dances the feet and hands
Follow a repeated pattern
To express deep emotions
To sweep the audience away
To the land of dreams and desires

Let us not sit there but encore
What fills us with pleasure.

..

Noise Annoys

Mum is the word in the library
Where readers are connecting
To authors' minds through strings of words

Silence rules a meditation hall
It is a wonderful inward journey
To be in peace, not in pieces

In the foothills of the Himalayas
Yogis meditate for hours in silence
To connect to their gods within

Hindu temples
Dazzle with beautiful gods or goddesses
With multiple hands
One of the hands has "Have no fear" mudra
While other hands have lethal weapons

There is no place for silence there
The priest is ringing a bell
While reciting mantras aloud
The sound of drums, cymbals, and conchs
Resonate with the devotional songs
Praising the god
And asking for favors

Bliss of silence reigns now in my home
My baby is sleeping after a day's play
My father is sleeping after a life's toil
My lover is resting, after the ecstasy
Shhhhh.

...

Our Mindscapes

Our minds
Spacious and fathomless
Filled with hopes and desires
Thoughts and fantasies
They swim like fluorescent colorful fishes
With no boundaries to honor

Imagination like pearls
Incubate inside the shell of memories
Feeding on the ideas and wisdom
We gain by observing the world
They undergo metamorphosis
To dazzle the outer world
By riding the vehicle of alphabets
And being animated by our voice
To spellbind people

Cactus flowers of splendid
Sweet happy moments bloom
Ignoring the abundance of thorns
Of futile hard time and hard work
Both are treasured
As beacons and pathfinders
For future pursuits

In every glorious day
Future embraces our open mind
Like the soothing autumn breeze
Becoming a nucleus
To build a virtual world of elegance
With our gift of imagination.

...

Pantheons in Us

How many of us reside
In a single body?
Have you ever thought of counting them?
Sometimes they even come out
With a different persona in split seconds

The mom yelling to her teenage daughter
At the top of her lungs
Throwing temper tantrum
Instantly becomes loving
Amiable and adorable
To answer a phone call from a friend
As soon as the phone call ends
So does the avatar of an amiable person
Reemergence of the monster mom

That happens to all of us
Like changing masks on demand
But sometimes it is not the mask
It is the whole personality

We suddenly get drenched with motherly love
Or fatherly demeanor at the sight of our kids
While fighting teeth and nail
In a never ending spousal encounter
Called holy matrimony

A moment of weakness
Overcomes the continental divide
To make us progenitors

A roaring boss loves to
Give hell and ulcer to his workers
But a pussy cat at home

A person can switch the persona
A pleasure demanding
Seemingly compassion lacking partner
Could of great help in the time of need
A psycho to sweetheart
In a split second
The tongue that carved a barrier reef
Becomes the glue to bind us forever

So how many personas reside within us?
The baby in us
The daddy or mommy in us
The lover in us
The beloved in us
The sinner in us
The hypocrite two-timer in us
The compassionate in us
The benevolent dictator in us
The monster mom in us
The six-year-old grandma in us
All coexist
Without many collisions of wills or power
We move on
With all our persona
Like in a family trip.

...

Spider's Web

I am the predator and the prey
In the web of life

This web is mine
My own creation
Spun out of my inner feelings
Perceptions, dreams, and nightmares
This is my world
My thirst
My desire
For me to cherish and flourish
For my ecstasy and tears

I travel on a defined path
Created with my strength
Limited by my fear and paranoia

I put in place
Invisible barriers to guard
My castle and my prison
For me not to escape
From my spider's web.

...

The Carousel Ride

Most of the time
We forget the details
How the whole thing started
We get settled into a lifestyle
Talking, chatting or being together
But with time
We become comfortable
And seriously derive life from it
Even in worst cases

With time
We are in it for the long haul
Let the thunder come
Let the deluge sweep away the world
We don't want to break the cycle
Of being and bound to it
Defining ourselves
As if without it, we have no existence

Then something drastic happens
Loss of a spouse or a dear one
The plight of separation
Tear us apart
Life becoming a living hell

We, the rational beings
Become children again
Rolling on the floor and crying
Wishing someone to come back
Against all eventuality.

...

The Cyclone Within

The milk ocean is churned
My present wrapped around
The mountain of living
Pulled by forces beyond my control
A tug of war between demons and demigods
No idea
Who is who?

A battle between
Despair and desire
Duties and dreams
Right and wrong
Love and life
Hope and fear
Past and future

The battle created
Tears and anger
as well as
Hope against hope

From the heart of this volcano
Runs my river of life
A stream of lava
Untamed
Unheeded
On an unknown path
To meet the goal
Undefined
Unknown.

...

The Dance of Dissolution

The pyre fire initiates
The flare in the widow's eye
And
In the mom's bosom
After the loss of her only child
The female bird flies back home
Only to see the baby bird eaten alive
By a sneaky serpent

The smoldering sorrow
Gives birth to a nascent storm
That eventually brings the deluge

Fire is live now
Unfurling its furor
Inviting tremors and tornado
Cyclone and Tsunami
Destroying everything
On its path

Dance of Shiva
Dispensing the creation
Into the vortex of black hole
To celebrate the dissolution
And resolution
Of my sorrow
And everyone else's
To start creation
All over again.

...

The Dream of Smooth Sailing

Once in my not so distant past
I was dreaming of the smooth sailing
In a boat in a full moon night
In the vast breast of a calm lake
With her, my dream lover and beloved
And wishing this night not to end
This moon never to wane

When I woke up
The spring lasted only for a day or two
Interspersed with ice rain and snow
The summer was hot and humid
Hurricanes, tornados a daily affair
The fall colors were here for a while
But you still have to look for it

So in the bone-chilling winter
With hollering wind and snow drift
I hang onto my fragile aspiration
The dream of smooth sailing.

...

The Path Less Traveled

The path was always there
But I never took it
Not many people go that way
And it is windy
And could be dangerous

I dared not to take that path
For a long time
Until one day, I did
Out of need
And also
To challenge my limitations

Then I liked the path
Even though less traveled
It was the perfect means to arrive
Where I always wanted to be

Stranger
I always wonder
What hidden paths
Lies within you
To enrich my journey
For my self-discovery.

...

The Universe in Symphony

I hear the symphony of the universe
The crashing waves of the ocean
Kid's laughter
Monk's chant
The cow's call for the lost calf
And the baby's colic cries
The serenade of the wannabe debonair
And
The long lost giggles of my lover

The universe is in symphony
With mosaic notes and nodes
Of Beethoven, Kitaro, Yanni, Ravishankar
And the sounds of the Incas

The universe is in symphony
The chanting of the sages of the East
The mullah's prayer and
The Gregorian chants
Mingle with
The clamor of the homebound birds
The crackle of the bridal fall
The sigh of the train engine in drag
The crashing of the drunkard wind
Against a wall of pine needles

I become one
With this universal symphony
The sound of music.

...

The World I Create To Live In

In the heart of Sahara
I was wishing for a rain storm

There was no forecast for it
There has been none for years
But I desired it anyway

With all my believes
I knelt down in front of my icons
My rain gods
Indra, Chaac, Tlaloc and Zeus

With the power they have
They can make it happen
Wherever they want
Whenever they want

With the gentle kiss of the incense
I woke up in a different world
Where the sound of thunder
Welcome the monsoon goddess
In snow white outfit
Descending from the head of Shiva
To the heart of Sahara

My trance was broken
By the sand storm blowing onto my face
But I did not want to open my eyes
And be away from my saviors
My beliefs and my imagination.

...

Voyage Outside the Comfort Zone

Normal is what we see every day
Once we leave that place
Or the society
It appears odd
Strange and even weird

The mother tongue
Food prepared by my mom
The festivals and beliefs
The rice fields and bullock carts
The dusty road and
The water of the polluted pond used for
Bathing, cleaning as well as cooking
All seemed so normal then
Now impossible to relate to

People speaking languages
That we don't understand
Dress up or have a hairstyle
We cannot stand
They are either too dark or white
Too much into science or drugs

They appear so abnormal
Until we dare to be close to them
As intimate friends
Then everything appears fine
Just like a handsome young man
Appears normal and is accepted
By his wife, girlfriend or kids
Even when he is old, overweight and bald.

...

When a Person Becomes a Body

A person filled with life
Loving and living
Hopping and hoping
Singing and sighing
Laughing and lying
In the lap of the lover
Beaming with kisses
In moonlit nights
Suddenly dies
Becoming just a body

Then
A warehouse of ifs and buts
Confetti of confusions
Do's and don'ts
Cease to exist

A multi-cellular factory
Used to be driven by oxygen
Suddenly stops
Along with that
Also end
The desires and malice
The search for the Nirvana

He departs alone
Forfeiting
The position, the promotion
The corner office and the lady love
The SP 500 and the 18 holes too.

...

When Did My Life Begin?

“When were you born?”
For this question
We have a single numerical answer
Seriously
That answer doesn’t tell
The real story of our birthdays

A single person
Or a single incident
Can give new and real meaning to our lives
Giving birth to a real us

A new day greets us every day
With a unique set of news and views
Difficulties and opportunities
It is a new discovery
Fascinating
Tantalizing
Another chance
For a birthday

The dawn of being alive
Gets realized
When a unique person
Strolls into our lives
Rewriting our birth certificate
Life’s goal
Meaning of the life and living
Giving us a new avatar
The real one.

...

Flowers of Paradise

I Wonder About You

Hello my lovely jasmine
I wonder about you
About your beauty
Fragrance and tenderness
What happens to those
Once you wilt?

Do you mind?
When the uninvited butterflies
Come and kiss you
Cuddle up with you
Then leave for another flower
Like an unfaithful lover?

Do you mind?
When a noisy black bumble bee
Comes and smolders you
Like a drunken husband
Don't you cry in pain?
Don't you yell at him?
Don't you complain?
Don't you think enough is enough
When another bumble bee
Is waiting on the wing?

Ants invade your privacy
Those dirty street urchins
Those tasteless, shameless creeps
Looking for a chance to kiss you

Do you slap them?
Do you call the police for harassing you?

Or
Like so many women of the world
You just think
It is all your Karma

You are to bloom and
Dress up for others
Cuddle up with whoever comes
And then bear the fruit
Before you wilt

Don't you feel lonely?
Do you cry silently?
When no one shows up
In your old age?

Are you then resigned to live
Like so many women of the world
With nothing but the tear drops
To comfort you?

I wonder
My lovely jasmine
A lot about you.

...

Mama's Baby at Any Age

Put your lips together
And open it wide as you breathe in
And repeat the process to utter
The primal word "Mama"

This magic word
Erases your age
Your ego and position
And recreates you as a child
At the breast of your mama
The young and the most beautiful one
Does not matter
If she is now in her twenties, forties or in seventies
Or long liberated from her mortal self

But can she be ever detached?
Or can you ever be a grown up?

In the mere thought of her
You become
What you were many years ago
Many decades ago
With her tender touch
You become one with
The newly born deer fawns
The flightless baby birds
The ducklings
The vulnerable but safe kitten with eyes shut
Because
Your mama is with you.

...

Mothers of the World

Tucked between her hand and her bosom
A new life incubates
Like a blotting paper
Imbibing humanity through touch, smell, and sight

The hand that rocks the cradle
Rules the world
Paints fantasies in colors
Reveals the spectra of life and love

The mom could be
Elegant
Awesome, awful
Slim, obese or out of shape
Damsel, dreadful, darling or heartbreaker
Young, old or middle age
Black, brown, yellow or white
But she loves her baby
Even with a face
That only a mother can love

The mom
The incubator of life
The provenience of love
The causation of all prominence
Dominance and defiance
My mom
Your mom
And mom of all old and young folks
She once tucked each of us
Between her hand and her bosom.

...

Ode to Eve

An eternal quest
Mysterious like a flickering flame
Enticing and fascinating
But can initiate a firestorm
At any time

You connect to me as my
Loving mom and sweet sister
Lovely daughter and sensuous lover
And caring grandmother

You bestow bliss
Create, nurture and destroy life
As goddesses of
Creation and destruction
Knowledge and wealth
Sensuality and salvation

Your smile
A Venus fly trap in action
Infatuates and tortures
In your anticipation lotus blooms
In the dry lake bed of the Death Valley
The world stops and gasps

Man tries again and again to capture
Your beauty and glamor through lenses
Tries to recreate you in sculptures
Paintings and lyrics but fails

As the ultimate infatuation
You bring the best and beast in man

Gods cannot live without you
And the hermits fall victim to your seduction
On their way to Nirvana

Dream and fantasy merge to create you
Dress you up in the most exquisite way
Undress you with closed eyes
Still
The mystery remains for the eternity.

...

The Creator and Her Creation

A simple touch
An intense connection
Between the creator and the creation
A bond built instantly at conception
To protect the offspring
Inside and then outside
At any cost

My mom, old and fragile
The body that bore me
The hands that fed me
The fingers that touched me
Are shaky, unyielding
So different from the days of
Feeding me from the nectar of her chest

My baby daughter
A beautiful doll at birth
But still laden with
Half matured eggs to be a mother
A baton passed from mother to daughter
As if forever

I try really hard to imagine
And appreciate
The power of the touch
The power of mother's love
The power to create
And
Her pain and pleasure while doing so
But can I?

...

Growing Up Growing Old

Colors of My Afternoon

Noon is not a good time
To take photographs
But the afternoon is
Especially the late afternoon
When the sun's rays
Give the foliage a celestial makeup
Bestowing
The tenderness of a newborn baby

As the masks of living decay with time
Colors, hidden inside
Become apparent
To beautify the primal life

Sooner or later
The colorful leaves will fall
On the ground
And become part of the earth
Dust to dust we will return
But for the moment
I am the ephemeral treasure
Like the waning moon
Mutable by time.

...

Journey of a Man

The afternoon sun has lost all its sheen
The bravado of the thunders has died down
 With the fragile mind and limbs
 The man descends reluctantly
To accept his place in the universe

 No more looking down
 And pitying the less evolved
 Bacteria, viruses, and insects
The simple amoeba and earthworms

All are made in the image of the creator
 Blessed with everything they need
 To be alive and to procreate
And survive as species for millions of years
 Even in some cases
Equipped with better tools than man
 For seeing, listening and
 Making snap decisions

 In the twinkling of the eyes
Young parents become ancestors
 Newborn babies have babies
 Time stands still
 Watching our
Arrival, sojourn, and departure

 With humility
 He accepts his existence
 As a member of life forms
In the lap of mother earth and beyond.

...

The Cut Diamond

The First Cut

The trip to the preschool
To the kinder garden
Then to the school
Finding
What we told you
To be only one of the truths in life

The Second Cut

When you left home
And went to a distant city for a college degree
The eagle soared in the open sky
To see the world in its own eyes
To be surrounded by new confidants
And a jump into the world of trial and error

The Third Cut

I never thought
Some stranger will take you away from me
And proclaim you to be his
“Til death do us part”
With tears in eyes, you bid farewell
Tears of happiness and sorrow
You leave us to start a new life with
A new mom, new dad, and a soul mate

The Fourth Cut

There I go alone to an unknown place
Leaving behind you and everyone else
You will be OK.
My lovely diamond.

...

A Touch of Spring

Elegant flowers fill up space
To displace the desolate winter landscape
Wherever I look I see flowers
Even on old tree trunks and
Exposed roots

The magic of the spring touches all
From very young to the centenarians
From a debonair
To an ugly dust covered weed

Spring came in our lives too
In the form of youth
The tall princes
The hourglass damsels
The short, the stout
The deaf, blind, deformed
Mentally retarded, paraplegic
The most beautiful girl
The ugliest duckling
The white swan and the black horse
Everyone got the Midas touch

In everyone's heart
An intense urge rose
To possess and to belong
The desire
To love and to make love
Got planted in all of us
Like the flowers on every tree
During spring time.

...

Man and His Society

Cacophony and Symphony

Is there a method to the madness?

We wonder sometimes
How the apparent randomness
Generates a pattern or motif
And even life

We enter this world with a cry
Slowly it gets transformed to
Sweet mesmerizing music

Languages bind and divide us
Create heart touching symphony
Or appear as cacophony to the uninitiated

The first encounter between strangers
A minefield of confusing signals of the bees
For the nectar to butterflies
It can clash and create chaos
But slowly can create bonds
Between strangers to fall in love
For two hearts to beat synchronously
To convert a haven to a heaven

Can the reverse be true too?
When a force beyond control overpowers
The symphony of coexistence
Leading to
The Holocaust and ethnic cleansing
Sacrifice of symphony
At the altar of cacophony.

...

Courting Unfamiliarity

It is so comfortable
To roam in the space we know
The people, places, and restaurants
Even the trees are so familiar
So comforting too

But it is nicer to get lost
Sometimes in strange places
Meeting strangers
Listening to people speaking
A strange language
Written in even stranger script
Eating never imagined food
With sticks or fingers
And seeing how the familiar problems
Get solved in strange but ingenious ways

It is nice to drop our masks
Forget who we are
And dive into something unfamiliar
To get lost but grow
Not staying
Forever 21.

...

Does It Seem Strange To You

We wary about dealing with strangers
Sometimes even paranoid
We arm ourselves with
Alarm system and guns
We warn our kids
Not to speak to them

Strangers are everywhere
We encounter them in airports
Train stations and crosswalks
Inside subways and shopping malls
We mostly ignore them
Unless we need something

But the strangers are just like us
Each of them has or had
A mom or a dad
A son or a daughter or a lover
Everyone carries an ever-expanding
Bouquet of desire and experience

We will rarely admit
Our dependency on strangers
Firemen, policemen
Doctors, engineers, pilots and shopkeepers
Farmers and workers around the globe

Our future
Our economy
Love, anguish or ecstasy
Depend on strangers

Our feelings and instincts
Make a new writer, a heartbreaker
A singer, irresistible
An actress, sweetheart
A politician, a God or Satan
Creating
A prophet or an idol
A Jesus, a Mohamed,
A Gandhi or a mother Teresa
Picasso, Neruda or Einstein
Or even BinLaden.

...

Future Presents Me to the Past

Suddenly the last year
Appears so remote
So much outdated
Even though
It used to be my present
Everything that was state of the art
Now courts the backseat

After being collated and zipped by time
Events and incidents become abstract paintings
The school days in a village
The college life in a big city
The first year in America
The first job
The first year of marriage
The birth of kids
Their growth and leaving home
The brush with intimacy
All appear and disappear
Like movie trailers
Short, sweet and surreal

Today will be gone soon too
Becoming a footnote
To the future, I cannot see
The sedimentary rock of my life
Collects one grain at a time
With the signature of my presence
Etched in each of them.

...

Illusion of Permanence

Today everything looks
So real, routine and permanent

The same breakfast day after day
The same road I take to work
Complete with potholes and traffic jam
The suicide bombings by Boko Haram or ISIS
The mass killing of strangers
by an 'active shooter'

All appear
As if they are here to stay
Along with
The chaos and the catastrophe
Weddings and the baby shower
And New Year Eve Parties

Then suddenly we suffer
An untimely loss
Death of an adult child
The spouse killed in a freak accident
The one we love gone forever
The present gives us
An illusion of permanence.

...

Lion's Tears

In the silence of the moment
I become the onlooker
Of the flow of life

There I feel
The stark reality of a human's
Fallible, but strong existence
That cracks open to let
A chick off the hard egg shell
A soft flow of water
Off a frozen glacier
To become an undercurrent deluge
Exposing me
To my myriad archived longings
Untold prohibited feelings
And tenderness

The lion's mask of invincibility
Yield to the lover in me
So delectable
The child in me
So adorable

As the pro-creator becomes the creation
I get a subtle ice cold touch
Of the things to come
In the evening of my own life
Wondering
Whose baby will I be then?

..

Living In an Oxymoron World

I wonder what makes people do
What they do every day
Again and again

I look at couples
Holding hands
Or walking few steps apart barely speaking
And wonder how they found each other
And how is their life together
Are they really soul mates?
How many times they fight
And make it up by having children?

My world buzzing with
The space probes, smartphones and snapchats
Make no sense to kids and moms
Tending cows in a rural village
Barefoot, hungry and with a sunken belly

Fame and depression
Exuberance and bankruptcy
Intense love and violence
They all exist
Side by side
Making this world
The abode of an oxymoron.

...

Living in Heaven

I wake up to the melodies of the world
To the soft music in the air
To the giggles of small children
To the songs of the cuckoos
To the soft sound of the sitar and violin

I wake up to the magic of the sights
Amazed at the daring display
On the eastern sky
To see me in my lover's eyes
To be intrigued by murals and frescos
To marvel at the colors of petals
To feel the loftiness of each word in a poem

I wake up to the magic of the smell
Of the evening roses, of primroses
Of the hot spicy dishes
To her enticing aroma nearby
To the scented fresh air of the burning incense

I wake up to the magic of her touch
To the warmth of the monsoon raindrops
To the closeness of the melting snowflakes
To the snuggle of my baby girl
To the kiss of the spring breeze

This is the heaven
I want to be now
Not after my death.

...

Each One Is a Piece of Art

Even though
We are made from the same template
Eyes, lips, nose, hairs, hands and legs
Each of us is so unique
Thanks to nature
And nurture
During our growing up days

We get molded by
Genes and
Social practices
Language and religion
Habit, success, and failure
Displayed in clothes, food habits
And rituals

Within us are
Secret chambers, hidden valleys
Filled with unique
Invaluable treasures, untold heartaches
Nightmares
Midsummer night's dream
Multiple personas
Built by our cumulative knowledge
And experience
Making each of us
One of a kind.

...

Play Me, I'm All Yours

In New York City
As well as in other cities of the world
Street pianos are there
For random people to come
And play

To play what appeals to them
To the real novice to the professionals
And even to the closet musicians
To treat the random audience
With the sound of music
And
To claim the ownership
Momentarily

Sometimes a singer joins in
Creating a live opera
All extempore, unpaid
No need for a ticket or a balcony seat
Or evening gown
Just listen and enjoy
Music for music sake

...

Same Planet Different World

We live on the same planet
Sometimes in the same country
Same neighborhood
Even in the same house
And might be sharing a bed
But could be in different worlds
Saying hello to each other through glass walls
How are you?
Fine

Everyone
A house in the neighborhood
Which I have a glimpse from outside
But never ventured in
No idea
About the number of rooms
About the decoration they got
And the dirt below the carpet
We drive by and wave our hands
Remain strangers
Rarely crossing paths

Moments
That define me
Remains oblivious to you
And the same is true for me
We live in the same house
But in different worlds.

...

Thanksgiving

Come to think of it
I have a lot to be thankful
To so many people
Many of whom never heard of me
Or could care less

Inside an unmarked factory
Some of them weave clothes for me
To buy on a Black Friday sale

Some work in remote places
In fields to grow vegetables that I eat
Some unknown artists in foreign countries
Labor to bring the elegance of beauty
In amorphous slabs of stone

Some unknown sage
Composed the hymn of the Vedas
Creating myths and symbolic existence
For me to contemplate

Some scientist, engineer, and mechanic
Designed and produced
My Prius
My mobile phone and my laptop
My SLR camera
My heating and cooling systems
For me to enjoy and feel proud of

Amazing pieces of music
Composed by unknown artists

Take me to a journey
Of relaxation, imagery
Serenity and romance
Soothe my pain and sadness

All these unknown heroes
Create the world
I live in

I am just a consumer
Have nothing to offer them
But thanks
On this Thanksgiving Day.

...

The Truth is Just an Inference

When I was very green
Greener than the green mango
With lot of confidence
I could discriminate
Right from wrong
Truth from hearsay
Moral from immoral
Beauty from ugliness
I also knew for sure
Where I will end up after my death

Now, in my old age
The boundaries between
Good and bad
Moral and immoral
Heaven and hell
Are so nebulous

I am not sure anymore
Who are the God's chosen children?
Who is a terrorist
And who is a freedom fighter?

Sophisticated urbanites
Chant mantras and count beads
Like the hermits did
Thousand years ago

I don't know anymore
Who are the primitives
And who are the ultramodern?

In a strange way
The truth is so much like the gods
Our creation
For our own sustenance
Biased and unreal

We sleepwalk on a moving platform
Cry and laugh
Fight and die
Not knowing that
The truth is
Nothing but a personal inference.

...

Crossing the Border

Appreciation Post Mortem

The Prince died a few weeks ago
The King died a few decades ago
Tributes poured in
in TV, in prints
And on social media

In churches and in gatherings
People eulogized
Remembering them
How great they were as creators
As persons and trailblazers

I wish so much that
Each of them could hear and savor
Tributes even after death
To make them feel larger than life
To inspire others to do likewise

The loss of a genius
Either tragically by self-infliction
Or by the ravage of a disease
Or in an accident
Signals the end of a chapter
But can inspire many individuals
To follow their paths
To make a difference
And get accolades
Even posthumously.

...

Beyond the Twilight Zone

I tried my best to hold onto you
With care, with prayer
Hope against hope
Alas
Like everyone else
I did not succeed
You crossed the border to
An invisible world

Tell me, my dearest
Are you in eternal bliss
In the land of light and love
Without pain and bondage
Or
The pangs of desire
To be with loved ones
Make you
A whirlwind of unfulfilled dreams?

When one door closed
Did another open for you?
Or was it the final dissolution
And return of the elements
To their primal state?

...

Border Crossing

They tell me
What awaits for me after I die
Befitting my deeds in this world
Either to be boiled in oil in inferno
Or to be in paradise

What should I choose?
Possession or renunciation
Meditation or medication
Celibacy or carnal pleasure?

Should I meditate in solitude
Or serve the down trodden
Seek knowledge and introspection
Or just be in love with the Lord?

Scriptures promote
A life of renunciation and penance
To qualify for a place in paradise after death
But without knowing what or where it is

On one hand
Many want to be here at any cost
Even as vegetables
While others are bent on departing
Even by self-immolation
To cross the border and
Travel to the unknown
An imagined arena
Of pleasure and pain

...

Death Is Such a Waste

Not only for those
Who leave this earth too young
But even for the ripe old men
Death brings to an end
To the use of
All the knowledge they have
Through education and learning
And
Deduction and introspection

After the last breath
All our tricks of dealing with people
All our inventive feats
All our power based on
Mathematics and physics
Talent to write to make people
Laugh, cry or think
Are of no more use

Maybe
One day we will have an algorithm
To access our cumulative knowledge
Before our death
To archive it
For the posterity.

...

In Search of Immortality

Death follows us like a pack of hyenas
Sometimes even before we are born
We still want to be immortal

So we search for
The potion of immortality
The elixir to make our body last forever
Like that of gods in Hindu mythology
But alas!
We, the humans
Don't have access to the elixir
But condemned to have a short life

Still, the wish does not die
The body could be mortal
But we can resurrect like Jesus did
Making us live again

But that does not happen
Once inside the casket or in crematorium
It is a one-way trip
From life to death

Maybe this body is mortal
But we all have souls
A part of the Supreme Being
Indestructible
Cannot be cut by a sword
Can't be burnt by the fire
It discards an aged body for a new one
To continue to live
Life after life

That elusive soul
Our wishful imagination
The projection of our mind
Does not guarantee our immortality
In the absence of any tangible proof

On the other hand
What we have is the reality
Nothing was before this life
Nothing will be left after we die

But we could still be immortal
Thanks to our good deeds
Our contributions
To the civilization
As an artist, a scientist, a writer
An altruist or a philosopher

Then in reality
Out of billions of human beings
How many people care to know
Who are we?
What do we do?
In what field and what language
We write or sing?
Even our children and theirs care less

Immortality
Boils down to the moment
We are aware of being alive
The present moment is the present
Everything else
The product of rich imagination.

...

Meeting Place of the Worlds

Tombstones
Large and small
Exquisitely created
Or plain and simple
Serve as the meeting places
Between those who left and the leftovers

A young man's dearest girlfriend
Love of his life for years
Suddenly died of cancer
He visits her grave
Cleans it every day and offers fresh flowers
And with joined palms
Prays for her
Talks to her

A grandmother comes to the grave
To grieve for her grandson
He lived only a few days after birth

A husband who was busy with his career
Had no time for others at home
Comes to talk to his wife
After she left this world

Where does one world end
And the other begins?
And are the prayers and remembrance
The means of communication
Between us and the dear departed?

...

The Dance of the Breeze

On his way back from the party
He was struck by a car and died
 With that
 There was an end to
 The transmission of genes
 The ecstasy of making love
The pleasure and the pain of having kids
 And the meticulously planned
 Future

 Along with the breath
 Also stopped
The search for food and friends
The desire to have and have more
 The battle cry of the enemies
 The hurray of the friends
 And the silence
Once again ruled inside and out.

 What are we then?
 A transient platform for
The dance of the breeze inside a cage?

...

The Decision Tree

Dying
Such an easy process
Cessation of breath somehow
By suffocation
By poison or gun
Even blowing up for a “higher” cause

Done in a minute sometimes
But not too many are eager to die
Even invalid, geriatric or with no limbs

On the other hand
Living is so hard for most of us
Work day and night
To put food in our mouth
Drag the body to move
Drug the body to function
Chronic pain
Due to disease or treatment
Struggle to find shelter
Clothing and transportation
Even eating in old age
Becomes a dependent chore

Then why so much clinging
To the body
To the misery
Only to die one day
In the worst condition?

...

The Killing Field

We cannot think of
Our own death
Of our parents or our kids
At the same time
Death is happening on a daily basis

Every morning announces
Ample news of death
Suicidal bombings in a mosque
Boat disasters in Bangladesh
Mine disasters in China

In USA
Thousands die by gun violence and car crashes
Too many people still die
In Iraq, Syria and elsewhere
By man-made conflicts

We love to kill our own kind
In the name of God
In the name of race, tribe or politics
In Wild West, Europe, India, Japan
Cambodia, Yugoslavia, and Burundi

Nature's fury
In the form of earthquake, cyclone
Tsunami, hurricane, drought and flood
Adds to the constant human effort
To kill more and more
Making this world
The killing field.

...

The Voyage of a Swan

I don't know
When the last chapter ended
And the new one began
As if the whole act was like turning a page
Of a never ending book

This is the story of a swan
That just went back home
In the evening
After the long day's toil
To come back again with the sunrise

Still
With tears frozen on my eyes
I travel alone in the memory lane
Courting its footprints on the sands of time
Reliving the moments that wrote
The sweet and bitter
Stories of my life
With him.

...

...

Minutes of the Moments

Suddenly there was a rainstorm
To drench the desert floor
To make small puddles of water
For the tumble weed seeds to wake up
And smile in the form of green leaves
To dance in the form of tiny, fragrant flowers
To pollinate and bury the void of the past
In the laughter of the moment.
Then as the rain clouds leave
The puddles dry up
The petals fall off
The green leaves curl
To protect the seeds
To invoke the next moment.



Babru Bahan Samal was born in India. He lives in Rockville, Maryland, USA. He is a molecular biologist with avid interest in arts, culture and philosophy. Reading, photography and traveling are his hobbies.

