

IN SEARCH OF MAGNIFICENCE

By
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PROLOGUE

In life, encounter with novelty is a passage to an uncharted territory. That can be exciting or frustrating. There, sometimes with inadequate and limited subjective information we try our best to make sense out of our realization. The collection of these poems is the minutes of my realization over the years.

These poems have been written 1992 onwards. They reflect only my experience and inference, limited by my understanding of the world at that instance. 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 Nature with the search for magnificence in mundane life. I am very much thankful to her 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 suggestions towards making them more effective messengers. I deeply appreciate their contributions.

This is the second edition of the book where some of the poems have been edited as well as a few have been removed.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this collection of poems to my mom, Sitamani.
Pagala

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From Mundane to Magnificence

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
With many more intricate designs
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 capability 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.

Our elegant simple forms
Only betray millions of processes
Taking place inside each of us
To let us enjoy our days
As living beings.

...

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 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
To endure the pain of giving birth
To gather 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 channelize
 As wonderful pieces of work
Until they are summoned by the Creator
 To return home.

...

Fire

My creator, sustainer and liberator

Fire

As the underwater Vesuvius
You 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

Fire

Burning bright inside me
You make me learn more and more.
Burning in my eyes
Drive me to decide whether to kill or to be killed
Burning in my heart
Make me search souls to reach out and connect

Fire

You were the witness of my marriage
The farewell to my father
At the end, you will consume my body
To liberate the primary elements
To be used in creation again

...

How Do They Do It?

A cookie inside a plastic wrap
Music in a DVD or as an mp3 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 3D movie with surrounding sound in a theater
Computer monitors
Or flat screen TV
Where we are used to see beautiful images
By flipping a switch

But we never know
The stories behind their inception and creation
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
Things we use and enjoy
In nice sleek packages
Just like our bodies.

...

I Wonder What We Are

It sounds so strange to me.
Human beings
Are not always humane beings
Billions are spent to make
The killing more lethal, more massive
Shock and awe
As if war 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
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.

In a world of strangers
We are imprisoned by paranoia and fear.
A strange sense of aloofness
Turn us into the killers of our own kind.

What drives a man to do that?
I never know
Except what I read long ago
“Man goes to war
Because he secretly wishes to die.”

...

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 us
Even though often hidden
Under mountains of debris
Like the full moon under the dark clouds.

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

Like a mother tending to 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.

...

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 all your avatars
Like the inside of my computer or mobile phone
Complexity reigns
To make the entity survive
To make the signal flow smoothly
The complexity covered with
A very elegant packaging

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

...

The Universe Within

Our mind
Deep, fathomless
Filled with intricate inter-twinning cascades
Of thoughts and fantasies
To swim with no boundary

Imagination like pearls
Incubates inside the shells of memories
Feeding on the ideas and wisdom
They undergo metamorphosis
By riding the vehicle of alphabets
And animated by our voice
To live for ever

Desires and wishes
Fill in the caravan of past events
Either as trophies
Or in caskets of sheer frustration
Both are treasured
As beacons and pathfinders
For future pursuits

Like cactus flowers
Succulent and splendid
Sweet memories of long lost moments
Lie surrounded by abundance of thorns
Of hard times and hard work

In every glorious day
Future touches us
Like the soothing autumn breeze
Becoming a nucleus
To build a virtual world of elegance
Our palace and castle to live
And nurture our unknown dreams.

...

Micro-mini-megamorphosis

I, a point in time
Inside 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 the Creator's hair follicles

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 manifest me as myself
To let me exist in a microcosm
In the super-universe called cosmos.

...

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 not on needs but mostly on desire
We are so particular about those
Even though everything that we put in our mouth
Gets reduced to basic units
And eventually gets recycled.

From the same mind love rises
With numerous forms and features
Befitting the circumstance
For children
For parents
Divine love for the unseen
Sensual love for the lover
Love as compassion
For needy human beings
Even for 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 teachers
Barely questioning the validity
Barely crossing the boundaries
To find if there are other dimensions of living

...

Mystical Mesmerizing Music

From time immemorial
Man extends the creation 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 misadventure into unknown arenas in life
Listening to music with closed eyes
Leads to an inner world
Where I can visualize a swan's lazy gait
The dance of a peacock to entice his mate
A deer's frolicking in a green meadow
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 emotion
A connection to myself in meditation
An exposition of my forced isolation
The silent wailing of one who lost some one
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.

...

Seeing More by Closing Eyes

The bright light that blinds me
After I close the eyes
Lets me read 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 the desert solitude
And Rumi read to be filled with love
To infuse us
With knowledge and wisdom

In the remote corner of the Himalayas
The ascetics sit closing their eyes
Day after day
In search of the elixir of knowledge
What do they derive?
From books without words
Without teacher and prerequisites
Does it really propagate
To the mass beyond the individual?

...

The Barrier Reef

Before I learn a language
Be it Sanskrit, German, Chinese or Spanish
It is all noise to me
Makes 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 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 but my ignorance.

...

The Show Goes On

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

The old deceased woman
Now a pile of bones
Awaits the cremation
Remnant of an elegant and graceful deer stinks
After the satiated tiger yawns
And goes to sleep
It appears as if
Death and decadence rule
The dark and terminal corridor of living

At the same time
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.

We are transient like soap bubbles
We dazzle in colors and shapes
To let the shows go on
To beautify the earth.

...

Window to All Hearts and Minds

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

From time immemorial
They let me travel
In the garden of their imagination
Dancing, crying, sobbing, living and loving
Like their characters
From my caged cell I can feel the pain
Pleasure and hunger
And want to strike out at injustice
From time immemorial
Their fantasies live
And propagate
Like the old banyan tree with prop roots
The imagination sowed in us never dies
But gives rise to
Many new possibilities

From time immemorial
Through word of mouth
Or via the vehicle called alphabets
Let the web of thoughts live
Unadulterated or permutated
Becoming the Vedas, Bible, Koran, Torah or sci-fi
Red book or the Dream of the Red Mansion
For us 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.

...

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
Come and go as clockwork

Hidden in this mundane life
Other things happen.
Seeds germinate and become plants.
Grandsons become grandfathers
Mustaches and bosoms prop up as landmarks.

In the crack in parking lots
Weeds display flowers and seeds.
The geography of my face gets filled with hallmarks of time.

Still time remains detached
Like the surface of the ocean
Unperturbed by the activities inside.

...

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

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

Are they a group of Vietnamese women
Bedecked with oversized round bamboo umbrellas
Busy in a rice field?

These wild mushrooms
Apparently individuals
But deep down connected
By the unseen common bond, the mycelium
Like all of us, with the intent to live, love
And populate the earth with their off-springs

These wild mushrooms
Calm, elegant and simple
Silent sentinels of creation
Bask in morning sun

...

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
Even yelled at you
As if you are my mom.
Or my spouse
The only one I had to hang on to

Then I fell asleep
In front of you in exhaustion
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.

...

God with a Hearing Problem

“Looks like
A sudden solar eclipse at noon
All the orchids I planted wilted
I am in darkness
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 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 not even able 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!
Can't you sense
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."
...

Listening to God

On the shore of the ever flowing streams
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
From diatoms to butterflies
From Palmyra palms to
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 is filled with glorious colors
That transforms everything on their way
From stinking places to National cathedral
As if it is the Holi time (festival of colors)

Every day
In the lab of thousand of scientists
Genes and proteins
Clamor to tell us
What they do and how they do it
And how they keep all of us alive
To feed and breed

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

...

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 is there
In everything I see
Butterflies, birds, flowers and maple trees
And also 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 continue
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 and outside me
Worshipping you
In your multi-million avatars.

...

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 I fed you.

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, educated
Analytical and advanced
You left the earth to reside in heaven
Forsaking me in this distant world.

Scared of hell
I pray and ask for your blessings
For my salvation
No more your lover,
A son or daughter
But someone down trodden
Doing penance for the sin
I am not aware of.

...

Vision of the All Mighty

I saw God
With a pony tail
Earrings, nose stud and a bindi
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 pot belly
Leaning on his motorcycle
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 became 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.”

...

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 of different domains
Harvest, wind, sea, love and romance

Instead
People became worshippers
Of the son of God
No idols but icons
No deity but 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 got swept
Under the carpet of technology
And innovations overwhelmed us
Instead of 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.

...

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 tree before
Dark, scaly and dry
Like my grandmother in her last days
She could not move
Could not express what she wanted
Could not do anything on her own
Just waited for the passage
To the spring of eternity.

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

...

Beyond Space and Time

Suddenly everything
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 snow flakes
To fossilized tree trunks
I wonder looking at them
I wonder looking at me
These tokens of creation
Constantly changing
But seemingly forever
Occupiers of space in time.

...

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
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 nothingness.

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?

...

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 beaches 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.

...

Sacred Music of the Light

My life renews every day
Watching the crimson colored morning sky
As if gods played Holi all night

The touch of morning light
Makes everything so magnificent
Flowers, nascent leaves
Freshly fallen snow and icicles
Even bare mountains of California
Giving the mundane a tint of mysticism
Elevating me to a higher plane

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 display of eternal rhythm

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

...

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 to be together
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 fantasy
That I will never meet.

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 coerces me
To be its slave
Time after time.

...

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 juxtaposition
Of living and nonliving beings
In the lap of time.

So you may ask
Why the sheer presence of trees
water and mountains
Is so amazing
And why does it connect us to infinity?

Is it a mirror
To reflect our inner desire?
Or is it an incubator of our wishes
To be one with the eternity?
Is it a revelation of
Our inner calmness and serenity
That we desperately search for
Wherever we go?

...

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.

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

Still
How you come
When you come
And why you come
Remain mysterious forever.

...

Time Undefined

Time

You are a flow of eternity

I try to fathom you
In the number of teeth
Sprouting in my baby girl's mouth
Number of hairs left
In my receding hair line
I try to fathom you
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 succeed.

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 unperturbed
Like a drop of water on a lotus leaf.

...

About life

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
Never to hear from the passenger again.

...

Ascent of a Man

We celebrated his life after he was gone
He was such a nice person
Very artistic, compassionate, humble and friendly

Accolades came pouring
Like rain drops in monsoon time
I wonder if he was listening
And was contrasting his past encounters
With the same people.

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 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 has no need for information
For knowledge or wisdom
Degrees and positions.

Krishna said to Arjuna
“Once you are born
Death is assured.”

So, we did not worry
After celebrating his departure
With good food, drink and chit chat
We moved on with our lives
Went for grocery, gasoline
Garage sales
And waited
For others to celebrate our departures.

...

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 can I do that?

I make a living
As an illegal alien
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 can I start living before I die?

...

Cluster Bombing

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

They have been used
For thousands of years
Used every day all over the world
But for creative purpose
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 canal with millions of sperms
And mushrooms go ballistic

Out of these millions
With the chance of one in a million
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”

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

...

Creature of Rhythm

Even when she was too small to talk
My daughter was dancing to the rhythm of music
 She danced away in parties
 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
To respond 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.

...

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 us think about
Our dreams again

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

As we 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 we stand there wondering
What should I be dreaming now?

...

Fingerprints of the Force

You, the immortal
Not deterred by 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 high ways
in the crevices of high rise parking structures.

From the deep down frozen landscapes of the arctic
To the hot springs down 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
because
I am LIFE.

...

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
Offers a bouquet of flowers
And new leaves
To the spring queen

Acorns from the oak tree
Crowd my driveway
Each a harbinger of a new life
Two tiny cotyledons 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
Succumb to the programmed cell death
Following the script of life
With reverence.

...

Listening to the Silence

I put the tired day to sleep
On the lap of the night
Cleansed it of all worries
The dust of life's displeasure
Turned off 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
That create the necklace of my life.

...

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
To the crime and punishment
To the hardship of making a living
Jumps over a tiny square and giggles.

...

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
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 just stood there
As the prisoner of time, space and biology
And solemnly accepted the reality.

...

Picture Imperfect

So quickly
The present became the past
Days got hidden by the dust 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 hides 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 final phase of growing up.

As we suffer to love
And love to suffer
We become butterflies
Daring the thorns for the nectar in cactus flowers
Seeking to frame the picture imperfect.

...

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 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
Like all of us.

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 creation.

I stand here listen to the orchestra of life
Its composition and decomposition
Making me ponder
About the story of pollens and me.

...

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 ingrained 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.

...

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 so long
Without them?

...

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
My desire
For me to cherish and flourish
For my ecstasy and tears
And to perish

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

...

The Other Path

The path was always there
Just within my reach
But I never dared to step on it
Always worried about
Leaving my comfort zone

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

...

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, plays and more plays
To enjoy the birth days, red balloons
To smile
To learn to talk and walk
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 ecstasy of union
Of a man and woman
To reach the nirvana
In la petite mort.

...

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
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 opportunities
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
Like innocent as a new born baby
Looks 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.

...

When Does Life Begin?

When does 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 via other means.

Like small rivulets created by the rain
Either merging with the ocean
Or dying 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.

...

Alien Chronicle

America, the Beautiful

From sea to shining sea
America is amazingly neat and clean
Especially California
Lawns manicured
Hedges cut to perfection
Gardens full of flowers
with 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 anywhere.

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 wherever I went
In gardens, old and new houses
At rich men's mansions
Schools and hospitals
And universities

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 and often exploited
Keep America beautiful
Manicured day after day
From sea to shining sea.

...

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
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
Many other 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 also
Precious River stones
But I did

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

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

...

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 is 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 Odissi.

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 to fall in love
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 my life
Where to shop and what camera to buy
What to eat for lunch and dinner.
Whom I can count as a friend.

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.

...

My Yellow Daffodil of the Winter

Hello, 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 do.
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.

...

New Wine in 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.

...

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
Under 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 diasporas
I have the intense desire
To pass on my culture and language
To my kids
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.

...

Sisyphus's Dream

Every one chided me
Don't sit there
Do something and I did
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
as if
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.

...

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 premium 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 and the dandelions
Became 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 making a living

In the morning those annoying damn little birds
Start gossiping and giggling
Like a bunch of teenage girls in an all night party
Roller-skating from trees to trees
Like a bunch of teenage boys on drugs.
Don't they know any manners?
The creation all around me
Sun, moon and stars
The icons of life
The cycles of life
The icons of wonder
Remain alien to me
Making me
A stranger in paradise.

...

Temporarily in 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 to sunrise and sunset
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 and fountain pens
Everybody now is looking at the LCD screen
And typing away incessantly

Instead of carrying a monstrous radio
I listen to music online
Calling India does not 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 silent 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.

...

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 in 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 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.

...

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 present instantly
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.

...

We Create the World to Live in

Wherever we go
We create the world we want to live in
the way we used to
creating an oasis
A tiny replica 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 and powerful

We create Ganesha
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 and 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
We pray, fall prey and live
In the world we create for ourselves.

...

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 attracts and confines
Like Venus fly trap
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
The hermits fall victim to your seduction

On their way to Nirvana
In your eyes lust gathers like the monsoon clouds
Your gaze is deep like the ocean
Intense like the Malibu firestorm
Great in resurrecting the pang of lust in an unsuspecting 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.

...

Dawn to Dream about the Dearest

Today morning opens the door
To a quiet mysterious winter day
Outside so surrealist
Wonderful snow and wintery 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 sip nectar from the flowers of deadly plants
Eat fugu sushi in golden plates
To be together
To enjoy again and again

...

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 vermillion lips
So soft that its fall
Almost bruised them.

...

Five Avatars

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 earthly burden
She left for a world unknown

Earthly burden of
Child bearing and rearing
Cooking and cleaning
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 girl

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 life without her
In spite of the harsh winter night
A delicate bud bloomed 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
Canvas for the sunset kaleidoscope
Smell of jasmine fills up the midnights
Life after life

...

Resident of my Mind

As the sun takes respite
Below the horizon
The night queen strolls in
In blue velvet attire
Glossing over all 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 a real being
My love
To touch and be touched
Emotions and desires
Spring in me in no time

There the distance between
The mountains and the oceans
Sky and clouds disappear
All becoming the playground
For us to be closer than ever
To share everything
Until I open my eyes

...

Seasons of Her Heart

I saw the raindrops forming in her eyes
The clouds swarming in fury
On her throbbing cheeks
The lightning sparks glowing in her 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 her hands
Put her head to my heart
And listened to her riptides of emotion
The thunder became the soft wailing
And the raindrops trickled slowly
On her shining cheeks
Before it dried
I wanted to wipe it softly
And I did.

I talked to her
Kissed her softly
Telling the rainy days will be over
To have faith and patience
And she did.

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

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

Like the geyser in Yellowstone
Desire sprang from her bosom
Sizzled like the hot desert sun in summer
Like the lava from Mount Vesuvius

From her crimson hair
From her red lips
From the corner of her beautiful blue eyes
From her red shoes and red skirts
From her red hot nail polish
It danced
And taunted me
Come on
Come on
I became an amorous moth
Attracted to the open flame
I wanted to dive in
And I did.

...

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 dolls made to perfection
I thought
They may not be interested in passion
Desires and dreams
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

...

Wild Flowers of the Paradise

You come
In so many different colors
In so many different 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
But cannot invite 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.

...

My World as I See It

A Moment in Time

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

This moment
A transition in time
In the blooming of a flower
In the life of a butterfly
Saying good bye
To the cocoon

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

This moment is to be savored
And kept 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.

...

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 of me

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 sufferings
 Learning and unlearning
Doubting what is right or wrong
 Whom to follow and worship
 Whom to love

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

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

...

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 follow
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
In X rated videos or movies
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
For others to photograph her
To paint her
To transform her
From indecency to ageless beauty
From immoral to ultimate expression of
Human creativity

...

Can You Imagine One Without The Other?

Can you imagine a mom without a kid
or a teacher without students?
It makes no sense to have
Flowers without bees or butterflies
nor a poet without readers
Can't imagine love without a lover.

An audience makes a speaker real
Night makes a day special
Tears give meaning to a smile
and death adds value to life.

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

Is the creation a duet
Between a giver and a receiver?

...

Chatter Box

I talk to myself a lot
About 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.

But she is not there
She can't be there
She may not know
What is consuming me inch by inch?
Then why should I
Have this catabolic dialog with myself?

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
Gossips and games
To rescue me from myself
Not to leave me alone with myself
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.

...

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 had never met before.

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

Every time it is followed by a feast
As if the road to the heart is through taste buds

No wonder
My wife toils for hours, even days
to prepare delicious dishes and desserts
For the 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

And I ask her like a fool
“Why are we so food centric?”
She thinks I am a real nut and questions my sanity

“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 sumptuously.

...

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

...

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 can barely see a thing ahead of me
While my footprints disappear behind me

I meet
Emotionally scintillating scientists
Articulating artists
Youth 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 imagined golden deer
To be happy and fulfilled some day
To become someone
I wonder
Is this one-way street
The way to my destiny or destiny itself?
...

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 if's
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.

...

Kanyaa* Avatar

Once you were there
I wondered if I had a life before you
As it seemed so impossible.

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

Like the opening of a flower bud
You grew and became more beautiful
Your giggles got replaced by words
You danced to the musical beats
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 lap and read
Clean or bathe you
Or put you to sleep by driving around
But listen to your stories about the world
You are 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 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 mundane things
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.

...

Kanyaa* = daughter

Looking for the Past

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

...

Man with a Bottle

Man with a bottle of beer
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 an empty bottle
Inside a crumpled paper bag
Dozing off on a park bench
With all his belongings in a grocery cart

Man with a bottle
Sitting close to the wall
Unaware of the noise of the party
Feeding his grandson bottle 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

...

My Loving Distraction

Thoughts of you
Tempt me like treasure coves
So much pleasure hides there
I want 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 captivated by you
My loving distraction.

...

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 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 coexist as one
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.

...

Pandemic Infection

She is thin
Thinner than the leg of a heron
He is fat
Fatter than the Happy Buddha,
Her eyes hidden under coke bottle glasses
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 the 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.

...

Parallel Universe

This morning, on my way to work
I saw parallel universes in this world.

Cars on autobahn zipped by at high speed
While chickens strolled on the dirt road
People in a 747 jumbo jet
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 soccer ball of newspaper
On the dirt and muddy field
The space probe to Jupiter and beyond
Sent photos to JPL lab with dazzling colors.

While the automated machine for fMRI
Recorded our thoughts as brain waves
And as the expression of thousands of genes got
Computed in seconds
The time sat for eternity in the shade of a mango tree
Giving company to the boy tending his herd of goats

At nightfall
The sound of the crickets unified them all
With their primal call
Neither worried of the traffic jam in Los Angeles
Nor for the sound of the frogs in a dirty swamp
In a remote village in Africa.

...

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.

...

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.
Then the sun's golden ray
Reflects on the pacified meadow of snows
And we sit with cups of coffee
Very close to each other
And sip the beauty through our eyes
Realizing the awesome power of
Kissing and making it up
After an unpleasant encounter.

...

The Force

Inside us
There exists a force
To transform noise to melodies
To see godhood in demons.

With this force
We create epics
Lasers, ultrasounds, dreamliners
Information highways
Manipulating robots in distant planets.

This power of imagination
Lets us look into the space far away or deep within
The molecules, ocean or nebulae.

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
How do we define us as human beings?

...

The Fragrance of the Sweet Jasmine

Desires

Resentments

Expectations

Grievances

Fell like colored autumn leaves

Making me lighter like a feather

The defoliation

Let the sunshine, breeze and raindrops touch me

Penetrating me

Dissociating me from my cloak of fame

Family, fortune and fantasies

Of assuming someone grandiose

I become the fragrance of the sweet jasmine.

...

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 darkness of 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.

...

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

As a ray of sunshine
Broke through the clouds
And swallowed 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.

...

