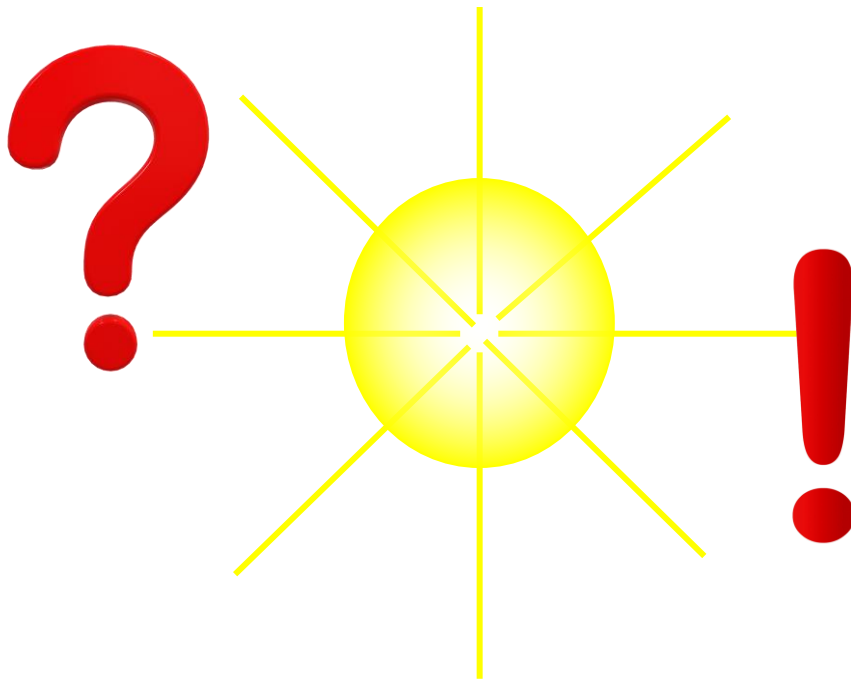


Mother Churns the Curds

and other poems



Sudha RamaPrasad

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Preface

Freedom! What liberties are taken in thy name!

How many times I have thought of this line since my school days, never failing to thank the author whose name or face is unknown to me! Most of us are grateful to be born in a country and at a time when freedom of expression is a fundamental right for us to enjoy. We make the most of it, though not always judiciously. Willy nilly, a few sentiments are sacrificed in the process. The world of print showcases the good with the bad, the beautiful with the ugly, the divine with the mundane. The mediocre, average stuff is the daily fare from which here is no easy escape. This is true of all walks of life, living and art. Yet it doesn't stop us from expressing ourselves in a style very much unique and individual hoping to be understood, appreciated and recognised. Most of us settle for the first, accepting the others as well-deserved bonus.

One such offering is in your hands, for you to accept or reject, appreciate or deride, acknowledge or ignore. But this would be in the future, immediate or otherwise. For now, I must say this: I enjoyed every aspect of this exercise - from the hesitant creation of the first line of the first poem, learning new structures, discovering new dimensions, drawing fresh inspiration, getting interesting insights, editing, revising, drafting to the final stages of printing and publishing. What you hold in your hands is a product of labour as well as of love. This is not said in defence of my own work but in appreciation of the work involved so that it may be shared and reciprocated by a few more of the same ilk. Seeking your blessings and best wishes for continued inspiration.

Sincerely,

Sudha RamaPrasad

Dedication

*An offering at the lotus feet of
Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.*

A piece taken from
An idol of jaggery
To itself offered.

To A Sparrow

A rare sight today I did see
on my own windowsill.
Whirring feathers landing from tree
a sparrow alive still!

Know not if it was fellow same
who would come every day
for grain set out before he came,
then came no more my way.

Houses came up fast and plenty.
Heart of hearts, I then knew,
in months ahead, less than twenty,
there would be none or very few.

Worst fears very soon realised.
My visitor, cheery chirping,
by death dealing builders surprised,
came no more hop-stepping.

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Haibun - 1

Delightful visions
of toothless smiles, merry eyes.
Mere illusions.

Hopes acquiring wings.
Tender hands, pattering feet;
plucking my heartstrings.

Dream fulfilled at last.
The flower blooms not in vain.
Am increasing fast.

Asked not this sickness.
Impending motherhood sure
should bring happiness?!

Knackered by distress
Advice, contradictions;
prostrated by stress.

This state cannot last.
I pray for deliverance.
Of dread am now past.

Pain, trauma of girth
forgotten by the wonder
of a baby's birth.

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Haibun - 2

(Sculptor)

Nine months of voyage!
Well received with lots of love;
enough till old age.

Happy with fingers
and toes to play with. Divine
memory lingers.

Slips back into gloom
disillusioned by world, when
into youth does bloom.

Who shall chisel away
to reveal inner beauty
and to soul's air sway?

Those eyes that perceive
beauty in a block of stone
shall a way conceive.

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Haibun - 3

Trees swishing past;
candy clouds flitting about-
a race with the birds.

The clouds pause awhile
in pursuit of changing shapes.
Stopping short in awe,

of the glowing sun,
magnificently rising
in gold, orange, red.

In vain do they try
to reflect the glorious,
colourful pageant.

Unassuming now,
content with silver lining,
continue their moves.

Pastures of paddy,
rippling, swaying merrily
like a Mexican wave.

Farmer on the watch,
lazy to shoo away birds
feasting on the grain.

Thatched huts all huddled
for security, comfort,
in this lonely land.

Long abandoned graves
leading lonely existence.
Covered with thorns, weeds,

none to care or grieve
except the lizards, insects
playing hide and seek.

Rain water puddles
doubling as waterholes, for
cattle and children.

Bright-eyed lanky lads
lining the long railway tracks,
waving grubby hands.

Flashing happiness,
Fleeting impressions of truth.
Alas! This is life.

In just a twinkle,
or so it seems, we have come
to the journey's end.

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Haibun - 4

Travel far I do
In search of Truth Eternal
Ask all I do too –

Passing plants and trees,
glistening new tender shoots,
rejoicing new lease.

A blossoming girl;
a search in her dreamy eyes;
her thoughts in a whirl.

Corn in the field,
ripe and ready for harvesting;
willingness to yield;

Paddy all threshed out;
hay bundled and put away.
Almost end of bout.

Compelling sunset.
Unable to withdraw gaze.
One's destiny met.

If life is maya,
is the Truth beyond shrushti,
sthithi and laya?

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Haibun - 5
(Baby Girl)

"It's a baby girl."

A hush followed announcement
awaiting silence.

Her heart skipped a beat.
Mother many times over.
heart not hardened yet.

Could God save her child
from cruel fate similar
that struck her three girls?

Fortunate sweet ones
were sent back to lap of God
within just a day.

Selfish, mindless beasts.
Will there be compassion in
world without females?

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A variation

Silence ripped apart
by infant's demanding cry
piercing her heart.

"Baby girl," she's told.
Lies back with contented sigh;
trauma worth in gold.

Dreams she, in rapture.
Feelings to share, a being
if yet in future.

Only her gender
can feel, share and empathise
born of soul's sunder.

Protect from worst fate
and society's evil eye,
she must, her soul mate.

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Couplets

She extends not her palm surely for food,
but for relief and balm from life, no good.

If epics to you cause much tedium,
couplets then are just the right medium.

If her face could launch thousand ships, a wink
from limpid eyes would make you in them sink.

The insect's visit has not been in vain.
The blossom fruitions for the plant's gain.

That there is no food, it bothers him not.
Enough music comes from the empty pot.

If duality be the way of life;
love releases one from a life of strife.

Vital air

Thought I that love was my life's garnishing;
main meal it seems, for more I'm languishing.
To be consumed, yet it's all consuming;
mind and body spirit is assuming.
Not my own, even thoughts that I'm thinking,
or emotions - body and mind linking;
Your thoughts my entire being pervading.
my senses, my very soul invading.
Dark clouds in my blameless life gathering,
strange sensations my own mind fathering.
I'm dazed, mind in a whirl, most confusing;
seen any which way, it's not amusing.
My very identity not knowing,
Your presence alone keeps life's breath flowing.
With every breath Your name keep I chanting,
or for vital air will I be panting.
God! You give to life beautiful meaning.
Away from You, cannot think of weaning.

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Villanelle - 1

Awaiting Thy call in my heart
hope immortal keeps me alive.
Death's wrench cannot keep us apart.

Flattery! I know not this art.
On Thy Grace alone I thrive.
Awaiting Thy call in my heart

My goal divine, nothing should thwart;
most, my treacherous senses five.
Death's wrench cannot keep us apart.

Body's destiny Thou may chart;
for union my soul will strive.
Awaiting Thy call in my heart.

Test me not for faith from the start.
Anxious, to death I might dive.
Death's wrench cannot keep us apart.

At times Thy neglect like a dart
into my heart painful does drive.
Awaiting Thy call in my heart.
Death's wrench cannot keep us apart.

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Villanelle - 2

Marching towards death, soldiers brave
for unknown leader waging war,
safe within fortress is the knave.

Those that stay behind, who shall save?
Destroy arms and throw away far.
Marching towards death soldiers brave.

Cries of orphaned children who crave
for lost love are heard from afar.
Safe within fortress is the knave.

Precious resources the earth gave -
looted, set aflame, left to char.
Marching towards death soldiers brave.

Economists might rant and rave;
vultures have field day, none to bar.
Safe within fortress is the knave.

Arise one and all, in a wave.
Fill with love, leave heart doors ajar.
Marching towards death soldiers brave.
Safe within fortress is the knave.

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Sonnets

Sonnet - 1

For absolute freedom I do so yearn.
What that would be I truly know not.
I know only that I have much to learn,
And that Time has schemed against me a plot.
Not just freedom from ties familial;
nor relief from problems utterly mundane,
by fleeing to the Hills celestial,
will I get, or the hope to remain sane.
The smile short-lived as a camera flash.
Multiple roles, concealed identities.
Juggling with masks, anger like a whiplash.
Why body harbours many entities.
Ruthlessly do I peel away the masks.
Glimpse freedom in light my real self basks.

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Sonnet - 2

When confusion will reign supreme
and there's no one I can turn to;
no books bring enlightenment do,
nor vivid clarifying dream.
O lord! I beseech and implore.
And then would dawn on me the light,
purging mind of all darkness blight.
Gratefully would my spirits soar.
Why don't I just ask for wisdom
to approach You at the outset,
preserve the peace in my life yet,
and from some heartaches gain freedom?
Ah! Would that my ego take flight
and let my self revel in Light.

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Sonnet - 3

Nascent leaves in Spring with new zeal bubbling;
bright and gay with innocent pride shining;
dancing, unaware of doom impending,
with villains in auto exhausts lurking.
Very life endangered, suffocating
on swirling dust and smoke, choking.
Dignity besmeared by fumes blackening.
Would our saviour be the one axe wielding
or do we rest faith on those tree-hugging?
Oh Mother! You who are still creating!
Why this sad game of waiting and watching?
To live life with gay abandon, rustling,
this right is mine no more. I'm left puzzling.

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Sonnet - 4

We say we've surrendered to You, proudly,
O Lord, body, mind and soul, totally.
We deceive ourselves with dishonest streak.
You know, pleasure, health and riches we seek.
Indulge our pleasure seeking senses five;
foresee we do not, the pains we derive.
We pray for relief from this suffering,
with the belief lessons we are learning.
We ask not for strength to withstand the pain
but for tranquillisers that work in vain.
And then fools that we are, we ask for sleep
or for that eternal rest very deep.
Should we rather ask for life trial-prone,
that we may think of You and You alone?

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Sonnet - 5

For peace he forsook all. He'd had enough.
Relinquished all that he was possessed of -
Crown and kingdom - mere words. Meaningless,
When he saw streets filled with blood of faultless.
Yet was forced to wage war relentlessly,
Deep within to root out mercilessly,
Weeds of greed, of jealousy and desire,
Lust, pride, many a prejudice and ire.
Thus then he created his paradise;
From love birds amidst blooms did music rise,
Bliss and utmost harmony did prevail;
Unlimited joy and peace he did hail.
Wars internal one must wage, there's no doubt,
For peace and love to reign within and out.

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Sonnet - 6

How I do envy you, good sunflower!
Face turned towards Creator's light forever,
giving no thought to your appearance.
Heat, wind or rain of no significance.
Your preset short life adds to your yearning,
a sense of urgency worth learning.
It's of little, nay, no concern to you,
that you are beautiful and of bright hue.
You worry not of your short-lived glory
or untimely end of your life story,
for you die a silent death every night
and revive by the caress of sun's light.
Having surrendered to the Divine Will
you let yourself be plucked, remaining still.

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Sitigyoto

"Most fortunate is the grain," envied much the chaff,
to have won the Lord's favour, itself discarded,
thinking of itself in pain, one of the riff-raff.
God said, "Second to none you're. Grain you've well guarded."

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Soul reflected in her eyes, dappled by anguish.
Power of the sages wise, is all she could wish,
to look into the future and reassured be
that the Divine shall nurture her precious child wee.

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Summer

Rabbits, wolves, tigers and deer, run helter-skelter
panic struck, in mortal fear, seeking cool shelter.
Vast white- hot canopied sky, leaf shorn withered trees;
extreme exhaustion lets fly all enmities.
My good Sun, praise be to you! Orders of Divine
follow most certainly do; continue to shine.
Seeing well our wretched plight, won't you plead our cause?
Dry stream beds, distressing sight - please a moment pause!
Worthless and dry hearted yet, however we be,
Our Lord most compassionate, can You bear to see
this suffering in disgrace? Let mercy rain down.
Withhold not from us Your Grace. Set sun on Your crown.
Let the summer of our life be overset soon
and fill our parched lives of strife with rains of monsoon.

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Quatrains

Beyond the Sum of Parts

Creator Divine, the One Immortal,
Felt the need to create elements five
And embodied them as beings mortal,
Instilling in them the will to survive.

Yet He transcends all and untouched remains,
proud to be called the Unmanifest One.

The sincere aspirant His Grace gains
Though to merge in Him is easy for none.

This be my goal too, Mother most Divine.
I offer You the four-petalled flower.
Help me root myself well and to align
With Your earth element please empower.

Divine Mother Ganga, the holiest!
I offer You the six-petalled blossom.
Your element makes me the liveliest.
Your majesty and power is awesome.

Bright being Divine, the glorious Sun!
I offer You the ten-petalled flower.
With warmth and light fill me within reason,
that my vitality goes no lower.

Oh mighty Vayu! You are everywhere.
I offer You the twelve-petalled blossom.
Gently blow into me life-giving air -
pure and clean that life I may live wholesome.

The matchless One, the Omnipresent Ether!
I offer You the sixteen-petalled bloom.
Fill me with the sound of silence, no other,
replacing the noise of despair and gloom.

I shall then rise above and all transcend
Offering yet the two-petalled flower.
By His Grace, I need not again descend.
I shall tune into His sound however.

And rise up to merge in Him forever
In bright thousand-petalled inflorescence;
Divine nectar and bliss bubbling over;
Being dead, immortalised in brilliance.

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An Appendage

A true devotee he was, faithfully
Prayed every day and most nights sincerely,
To his supreme God most high, the Saviour,
To answer his one and only prayer.

Pleaded sadly, his limbs were only four.
Weak they were too and could help him no more.
He wanted just another appendage
That would work for him even in old age.

To his joy, his prayer was soon answered.
A lively woman before him appeared,
Soon to be his cook, mistress and housemaid;
As also his nurse and slave ready made.

A clever one with wits enough for two,
And brains to put together two and two.
To arrive at decisions through logic
Yet with tact to say, 'it was by magic.'

She was sensitive, tender, loveable.
To face hardships smiling she was able.
She much needed and had the strength of ten
To complete tasks most difficult for men.

Confined to exist within the four walls
She enjoyed all the freedom of clay dolls.
Expected she was to bustle about
Doing everything except going out.

She was given food, shelter and clothing
So long as she worked without complaining
And she must provide a son if not more
Or she would be provided for no more.

An unpaid, incessant worker - no choice;
Can claim no recognition, rights or voice.
Able to feel everything - sensitive,
But wishing she were most insensitive.

Cannot afford the luxury of tears
For fear of inviting his taunts and sneers.
She has no claim over her own offspring
E'en though into the world did him she bring.

Not for a machine, she prays too, each night
But for her very freedom, her births right.
She prays for personal identity,
And acceptance as human entity.

η↔↔↔η

The Chair that Benny wouldn't sit on

Said a chair to a large rear, "Don't you dare
Do 'it' on my surface so clean and bare."
Many a heavy bottom I do bear,
till I am ready to split, rip and tear.

If you wish, show me some sympathy please,
but do not annoy me, vex, taunt or tease.
Don't sit on me after a meal of cheese,
or replete with alu, channa and peas.

Some good soul with sympathy in his heart
has covered me up now with cloth in part,
bought for a discount in a seedy mart.
So please I do beg, do not on me fart.

Many a warm tale to you I could tell
(if you will but treat me kindly and well)
of things most gaseous that do men propel
and take them by surprise and make them smell.

I am a jolly good and friendly chair
telling you such tales as would raise your hair.
Come to me one by one and do take care,
I'll certainly treat you well, fair and square.

η↔↔↔η

The Harbour

What evils, harbours human mind;
hides behind façade of goodness,
drips words of nectar and its kind,
reluctantly held in harness!

Nature works on it constantly.
Cast aside fears and pin hopes.
Sight of those mountains instantly
makes the mind soar above the slopes.

Intellect tries to take over,
navigates most confidently;
and sails flap at birds that hover
hoping to guide too, yet diffidently.

Ray from the lighthouse deep within,
a soft glow at first, quite bedazzles;
pierces through mist thick and thin,
guides to the harbour sans hassles.

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The Call

I resolved one day to build a temple.
A glorious one to set an example.

I would be the high priestess, caretaker
and ardent devotee of my Maker.

Searched for and found the ideal spot.
Raised a beautiful structure in a shot.
Inside and out decorated it well,
with many a multi-hued shining jewel.

In the sanctum sanctorum, I placed
the best and most finely carved throne, and traced
the carvings with flowers fragrant and fresh,
lining with soft velvet cushions most plush.

My Lord God, my all, I then invited.
I waited and prayed, I prayed and waited.
Lo! When the Lord did knock at my heart's door,
I was fast asleep and conscious no more!

η↔↔↔η

In Defence of Mother Earth

Creeps in a sudden wariness,
then descends a hush uneasy.
The sky darkens in heaviness,
so the mood with fear queasy.

Stage set and ready for entrance
of the dramatis personae.
Deluge shakes one awake from the trance;
sheets of rain make night of day.

Wind matches the fury of rain,
everything in way whip-lashing
in defence of the earth in pain
and agony - writhing, thrashing.

Molten silver stars on impact.
Water flows as if to cool her.
Wanton acts of humans, a fact;
nature unites in earth's favour.

η↔↔↔η

The CrossWord Buff

Shaggy hair, his clothes most crumpled,
general appearance rumped;
hollow cheeks, eyes set very deep,
surely from strain and lack of sleep.

Easily would you recognise,
from the bloodshot bleary eyes,
the crossword buff in blood and flesh,
at break of every dawn afresh.

Impatient for the boy to bring,
(cycle bell going ting-a-ling),
the day's newspaper well rolled up,
to unfold with the morning cup.

His glance must first on crossword fall
even before the morning call.
Then with relief and heave of sigh,
he shall hide it ever so high.

After all hustle and bustle
he will sit to solve the puzzle.
Eyes with a look far away
hand at his hair tearing away.

Complete the grid he has to first
or he will most certainly burst
with utter frustration and rage
at sight of the incomplete page.

Runners, anagrams or jumbles,
never once our addict fumbles,
for words most apt – nouns or adverbs,
adjectives, conjunctions or verbs.

Antonyms, obscure synonyms,
cliches, proverbs or prayer hymns,
he has them at his finger tips;
(before you see them on his lips.)

Beware! At your very own risk
you shall the addict frisk
and take away the day's crossword.
He will leap at you with drawn sword.

Crazy, barmy, dotty, batty,
loony, wacky, daffy, nutty.
And if you had called him potty,
you would have described him aptly.

η↔↔↔η

Something Profound I Wished To Write

Something profound I wished to write.
Soar high, my thoughts did, like a kite.
Notions to bring cheery light,
to make one's life happy and bright.

Ideas some, I put across
and made quite a few people cross;
who deemed life very serious,
and wanted nothing frivolous.

Spurred me on well, did the others;
in spirit be they my brothers.
Life to them was fun, no bothers;
seriousness indeed smothers.

Sneers and comments, a nightmare-
much more than I could ever bear;
which to me, neither just nor fair.
Was left alone to tear my hair.

My thoughts, keep I must, to myself;
Dive deep and find my inner self;
Free from grips of power and pelf,
Desires popping like an elf.

Spark am I, of Supreme divine.
For enlightenment do I pine.
Joy and bliss, wish I, to make mine;
body, mind and spirit to shine.

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I

I am the greatest, so say I,
Unique, supreme, ever so high.
More important I, me and mine,
to me so, than, thee, thou and thine.

Empowered I am by the sight
of my hapless fellows' sad plight.
Feed I do on their weaknesses;
count on them for my successes.

On my strength do they so depend.
Not an inch do I have to bend.
For have not I secured their souls
who live on emotional doles?

Swollen much like well-fed leech,
benignly I gaze on them each.
Who have to me service rendered
and their very souls surrendered.

“Puffed up much by his senseless pride,
soulless people still by his side
this bizarre state cannot long last.
The bubble shall burst soon and fast.”

η↔↔↔η

The Palm And The Banyan

Stand tall I do and very gaunt.
In my height having so much vaunt.
Estranged from my ilk, eccentric;
risking the lightning electric,

to touch the sky, so high.
In pursuit of knowledge am I
seeking a glimpse of heaven's portals;
looking down on lesser mortals.

Entangled in matters mundane
they be, losing values humane.
Ignorant, unaware, caught fast.
They're of redemption truly past.

Happy was I, away from all.
Seeking light, standing very tall.
until I saw the banyan tree.
And then I felt not very free.

The first few thoughts of loneliness
crept in to mar my happiness.
Shafts of guilt pierced my ego,
to expose my selfishness so!

In these years the banyan too grew.
Its growth never once did it rue;
in width and generosity,
encompassing humanity.

Providing safe haven to all.
Any season, summer or fall.
Gaining wisdom day after day,
from what the all-knowing ones say.

Those who are in its shade sitting;
matters under the sun debating,
knowledge with everyone sharing.
Compassionate, concerned, caring.

The banyan, kind, hospitable'
Karmayogi true, most able.
Accepting all in its embrace;
Flora, fauna and human race.

A lesson did I today learn.
The banyan's blessings shall I earn.
I shall to show true repentance
fall at its feet in reverence.

η↔↔↔η

On Listening To Good Music

Why are there in this world, so very few
fortunate to have won Your Grace true?
Oh Muse of Music! Oh Revered One!
Won't you tell me how Your Grace is won?

Tell me of even just a single ruse
that I too may touch you, my dear Muse;
by which, I might get to you close
and create divine music from dull prose.

May not I seek Your divine blessing
to relieve my sombre thoughts depressing?
My wish, that I too may take off soaring,
fulfilled, with each lilting note quivering,

On a long adventure, never ending;
thrilling, soul satisfying, exciting.
Letting myself be enchanted enticed;
wandering up and down dazed, mesmerised;

On each li'l beguiling deviation,
pausing to savour each variation
that evokes and finds its own resonance.
Each tiny quaver, each little nuance,

to touch a chord deep within capable;
to evoke feelings indescribable.
The mysterious depths let me soon plumb;
rising upward in awe, gasping, struck dumb.

And soar up again to deeply explore
the vastness of the boundless sky, some more.
Like a joyful child, freedom enjoying,
beauty and exquisiteness revelling.

Mother! You who provide sanctuary
to all those in the throes of misery,
of passion, of joy, of melancholy.
I implore you, by all that is holy,

Your ample lap can accommodate
this humble being who does supplicate.
Will you not this ardent devotee bless
with a voice most sweet and melodious?

That could soon lull to sleep a little child
and to the wayward, flighty and the wild
that could lead and show the path angelic;
and that could to good health bring back the sick?

This my dear Muse is not beyond you.
Nor are such invocations to you new.
Your Divine Grace, let me acknowledge
Has helped me to discriminate, to judge.

Lest You think me wretched and ungrateful,
ungracious, selfish or unmindful,
ear for music that Grace has given,
my whole being does enliven.

To appreciate your loveliness,
Your nourishing nectarine sweetness.
All I ask of You, accept me, let me
of receiving Your Grace worthy be.

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Good Morning World

Birds one another messaging,
Chirping glory of the morning.
Cool air in agreement breezing;
trees in response gently nodding.

Begins for all another day
to redeem ourselves before late;
a chance given and hope we may
to keep with Creator our date.

η↔↔↔η

In reply to ' What if chocolate ran through your veins?'

What if through my veins ran chocolate?
What! Ah! What would then be my fate?
Rats and roaches would vie for nips
with mosquitoes, forsaking chips.

What if through my veins ran chocolate?
Nipped I'd be by my soul mate
painfully for a midnight snack,
not having the mosquito's knack.

What if through my veins chocolate ran?
Chocolates and syrups by the can
I'd buy. No cereal, nothing more;
no more cooking, no mundane chore.

Through my veins chocolate ran, what if?
For every big or little tiff,
I'd be fed chocolate milky sweet.
To my heart's content then I'd eat!

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A Virus

Said a virus to another,
staying in one place is bother.
It's simply ages since we met,
or even chatted on the net.

We meet then at your place or mine?
No matter if it's rain or shine.
Wherever you say would be fine.
I cannot to one place confine.

Evade the Doctor, must find way.
Till then in your place you do stay.
Hidden, alert, I do most pray.
We shall meet by end of the day.

Your idea received by mail.
It is fool proof and cannot fail.
Computer does shudder and quail,
before it's dead as a doornail.

Easily gave Doctor the slip.
On the program I have firm grip.
Let us go on a world-wide trip.
For this we do not need a ship.

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Ode to life

It seems to me a long, long time ago....
The bright flower lured the bee with nectar sweet
and slyly brushed pollen dust on its feet.
Ploy worked. Flower swelled without much ado.
Quickened to fruition. Merrily flew time.
It seemed then that childhood was forever.
Days filled with fun, frolic and games clever;
endless hours spent collecting dust and grime;
nightly gathering, listening to folk lore;
legends told of mighty heroes of yore;
sleep filled with dreams, nightmares of blood and gore.

Unbeknown to himself, maturing fast
to awkward youth, neither adult nor child;
conscious of stirrings within, at first, mild.
Strange longings into confusion do cast.
Flights of fantasy transport him away
flitt'ring after the butterfly, now gone.
With the herd quite secure, yet all alone;
by words and feelings shaken, almost fey.
Enamoured of colours and bright plumage,
fears though, imprison him in self-made cage.
Flexing lean muscles, the calf comes of age,

Now charges out madly, chomping his bits -
quite drunk with heady air of youth and Spring -
his flanks heaving, on his hooves thundering.
Ruby eyes disconnect one from one's wits.
Yet with the gentle ones prances around
as the primitive call sounds deep inside,
volcano of seething harmones, sole guide.
Quite content, stops to take stock of his ground.
Niggling worm of disquiet gains no access.
Brute strength grants him his wishes to possess.
Life it seemed to him was one long recess.

Seemingly settled with his kith and kin,
realised life was more than friends and fun,
goals to reach and roads to take, more than one.
Pressures relentless to succeed and win.
Times at sea, weathering the rough with the smooth,
roller-coasting on snowy peaks many;
drifting far, with seagulls for company;
no stars, his sensibilities to soothe.
Never had serious thoughts of growing old!
Age crept in stealthily like winter's cold;
dark fears gripping him in vice-like hold.

If sunny days of youth, a mirage be,
and palpable pleasures gross deception,
are fears of old age mere illusion?
What woes are yet in store, who can foresee?
Then to the One and Only, turn he must,
if nothing else, for peace and perception.
(Death equalises, makes no exception)
Poised must be to meet his Creator just,
Who alone does stand by him, shall not forsake.
Shift paradigm consciously he should make
If into 'nother world wishes to wake.

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Free Verse

The Word

The Word, say knowing ones, came first,
But came not equipped with 'undo',
The unravelling icon vital.
A mere click, so it seems to us,
Yet so powerful, you would wish
It could undo the damage done
By hasty, careless, spiteful words
And senseless acts of thoughtlessness.

But no. I wouldn't be wiser'
No more so now, than I then was,
Living and thinking without change.
Seasoned and mellowed I would be
Better off with battered ego
Awaiting funeral rites;
On my way to enlightenment
Aglow in anticipation.

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Pessimistic Hope

Stillness portending arrival of dawn,
unending darkness, darkest before dawn,
are these read as signs of hope and cheer
or the ill omens of gloom and despair,
fate that is to befall the human race?

Are we conscious, wide-awake and alert
with equanimity to accept all -
the joys and the sorrows the new day brings,
or prefer we really to sleep through them
ignorant, inert and apathetic?

A birth brings with it a glimmer of hope –
the reason for living we hope to know.
It dies at the first cry of the newborn.
We believe and hope to know when we die;
isn't it said that birth and death are real?!

Why enjoy then the pretence of living
Knowing very well hope lies at death's door?
How we love hypocrisy, the routine,
put up with humdrum, goalless existence!
Why subsist till the very end of life?

Exist we do without thought, by default.
The very path of conditioned instinct,
trodden by millions of new, young hopefuls;
the path to nowhere, and to nothingness.
This then is the path blind folded we take.

Programmed from birth we are, to feel, to live
to accept life with its joys and sorrows.
with its seeming miseries, seeming pleasures.
'Is death the answer? ' - a vague niggling doubt,
or do we get the right answer at death?

Death could lie lurking in each breath exhaled
New lease of life by Grace in each inhaled.
Ah! Now I live, free from the fear of death!
New life I live with every given breath
In freedom, in wisdom, liberated!

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Coffee

Sparkling rain percolating through
the voluminous container,
at first in trickles, then pouring
in dark, rich, cascading torrents.

Very greedily the parched earth
guzzles at once as it pours down
sweetened by the cool monsoon winds,
letting excess dribble in haste.

The world is wide-awake at last;
the plants refreshed after the meal,
ready to face the challenges
standing tall and with head held high.

That an iota of water
could restore and pull one away
from the brink of death and instill
zest of life is a miracle.

An oft repeated miracle
taken for granted, expected;
and with the guaranteed power
of restoring smile back on one's face,

with all hopes and renewed vigour
to pursue one's dreams and targets.
Ah! Where would we all be but for
rejuvenating power of coffee!

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Solitude

The long, long hours of travel;
the timeless wait for buses;
the idle hours after work;
the lonely walks towards home;
the uncommon sleepless nights;
these are my travel agents.

I sojourn to the future-
Dark, deep and mysterious,
hoping to get a preview.
Oft I stray into the past,
to pick up souvenirs some.
Return to renew visas.

The peace and the commotion,
the gaiety and the tears;
they are forever present,
undisturbed and eternal.
Need only to reach out, to
experience them again.

Arcane flights of fantasy,
to lands of all prospects, where,
ideas get embodied,

thoughts instantly manifest.
Where every wish be fulfilled,
As fast as I could e'er wish.

The strolls down memory lane;
landmarks known and recognised;
milestones crossed and sighed over.
Stray thoughts that wander away,
racing down the winding paths,
till I am lost in timeless past.

Escapes to dreamy future
full of light, colour and cheer.
Tensions eased and swept away;
lull me to state of pleasure.
From all worries do me steer,
and from fears fancied and real.

Time has left me far behind.
Catch up with it need to race.
Then I come to with a start
Shocked by awareness, sober.
Wide awake, aghast, I am
NOT LIVING IN THE PRESENT!

Search Within and Without

Mutely by the seashore I stand,
Waves playing touch-you-last with feet;
breeze cheering them delightedly
and gulls wailing to join them.
Faster, higher - engulfed I am.
Impossible to swim in sand.
I ask, " Am I one with nature?"

I trudge wearily across
searing sands reaching horizon,
my tongue swollen, parched throat voiceless.
Eternal thirst beyond knowing.
Strangely, a lump in my dry throat;
can neither spit out, nor swallow.
Mountains be they, getting larger!
High and steep, ever so many.
I ask, " Am I one with nature?"

Mountains, one behind the other.
Climb I must to the very top
and slide down on the other side.
Would this be the very last one?
It's green, cool, peaceful, down below.
I slide down faster. Peace at last.
Deluding illusion. Naught else.
People everywhere making noise.
I ask, " Am I one with nature?"

Have reached point of no return.
Voila! Blue dot on horizon.
People talk. "Beyond that ocean
Stretches a sea of golden sand
And then mighty mountains loom large.
And far below, valley of peace....
....in that valley are our people."
Cannot this disappointment bear.
I ask, " Am I one with nature?"

Fast forward I must to that place -
a haven on earth; my heaven.
Compulsion to verify this fact.
I'll keep moving while there is hope.
Know I shall find myself one day
and a Paradise of my own
And live in peace and total bliss.
I live, I move in hope always.
For am I not one with nature?

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Different strokes

Run fast I cannot like you do;
much as I'd like, can't speak like you.
Of the three R's I know nothing;
and I drool when I try to sing.

Yet it does hurt when you beat me.
I'm sure you are able to see
hurt I am when scolded and starved
or when, by all I am ignored.

A puppy dog's licks I can feel,
lots of love, know I need, to heal.
In a warm embrace I feel peace,
will you not give me a hug please.

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Mother Churns the Curds

Mother churns the curds.
Cream rises to the top, she says.
"Never see, hear or speak evil.
That one looked so lost and lonely.
How was I to know that I was
nursing a snake in my bosom?"

Mother churns the curds.
Cream rises to the top she says.
"Never ever talk to strangers."
That one was so charming and kind.
How was I to know that I was
being conned by the smartest one?

Mother churns the curds.
Cream rises to the top she says.
"Do be always modest."
Not for me the competitions.
How was I to know that I was
killing my talents and interests.

Mother churns the curds.
Cream rises to the top she says.
"Girls should be seen and never heard."
They doused the bride with kerosene.
How was I to keep quiet knowing
so well, their evil intentions.

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NAVARASAS
(The nine sentiments)

Adbutha

(Sentiment of Wonder)

What wouldn't I give to regain
a child's innocence and remain
to look at all things in surprise,
wonder reflected in my eyes.

Enjoying every sight perceived,
ever grateful for gifts received
from the universe and nature,
merged with the Divine in rapture.

The splendour of the sun rising,
the cock in the yard responding,
early bird on its wings chirping,
snapping up worms that are wriggling.

The ripples on lake quivering,
the dew on the leaves glistening,
the air over the lawn misting,
the wind on my face caressing.

Calf at the udder ravenous,
vision of motherhood wondrous;
God's most wonderful creation.
We are lost in admiration.

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Sringara
(Sentiment of Love)

Spring has come to his heart at last.
Seemed He knew not but snow and ice
Thought I was of redemption past
Kind glance from Him will just suffice.

Long years I've waited, dry and cold,
yearning only for one warm glance
to blossom before much too old,
to full glory, and with joy dance.

At last He's mine, joys promising.
my own to feel and savour.
In world of dream fantasizing,
live vicarious life no longer.

Mine to be with, to belong to.
Each moment with him enjoying.
So much to share, so much to do;
joy and sweetness never cloying.

Utmost misery His absence
causes from time of departure,
when a minute from His presence
seems much like aeons of torture.

It is unbelievably true.
All consuming bliss of oneness
with never a moment to rue,
is worth pain of long loneliness!

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Veera

(Sentiment of Heroism)

Goads him to chivalrous action,
A noble instinct protective,
pride and righteous indignation.

The weak requiring protection,
desire to help positive,
goads him to chivalrous action.

From his goal, there's no distraction
arousing – tyrants abusive –
pride and righteous indignation.

To earn fame and recognition,
egoistic wish addictive,
goads him to chivalrous action.

Courage-filled, an apparition
he appears, by, most attractive,
pride and righteous indignation.

His chest swells with adulation.
Basking in glory affirmative.
Goads him to chivalrous action
pride and righteous indignation.

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Hasya

(Sentiment of Humour)

Gurgling infant in mother's arms;
the chortling child sneaking cookies;
giggling girl exchanging gossip;
chuckling teenager snatching a kiss.

Essence of humour if I could
capture, and store it forever;
if I could use it at my will
to take me to the land of bliss;

where I could let my body go
and still feel so fresh and alive;
body becoming light with joy
momentary yet, but what bliss!

Humour tickling the wayward mind,
And rejuvenating the body.
The aches and pains all forgotten;
past and future non-existent.

Oh! Glory be to God most high,
That we can take many a break
from the miseries of hard life
hoping to laugh them all away.

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Beebhatsa
(Sentiment of Disgust)

In its efforts to soothe goose flesh;
to sedate the churning stomach,
and to swallow the rising bile,
the face contorts and turns sick green.

Oh! Why ever did I listen
to depraved people's perversions?
Of cruel inhuman tortures?
Of innocent babes victimised?

If this be civilisation,
where deviant men prowl unhindered
to prey on women and children
I wish not to belong to it.

One's sense of justice outraged by
nauseating reality.
The whole body heaves in revolt
disgorging total repugnance.

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Bhayanaka

(Sentiment of Terror)

An uneasiness in the mind,
at first slowly percolating
then pervading the entire body.
An instinct, ominous feeling
that sets off an instant alarm
Attaining deafening volume.
An anxiety, growing distress
that overwhelms, devastating,
reaching panicky proportions.
An expectation, an anguish
making one forget one's self,
one's place, social obligations.
A strong obstinate suspicion,
foreboding reaching the heart
pulsating messages through veins.

FEAR that is smelt, tasted and sensed.
(Object of terror forgotten.)
Nostrils flare, adrenaline flows.
The stomach churns, warmth permeates.
Trembles meet with stiff resistance.
Cold sweat and acute agony.
Pressure builds up, the mind succumbs.
Consciousness withdraws – oblivion,
absolute peace, tranquility.

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Roudra

(Sentiment of Anger)

The conflict eternal with the ego
Hankering for control most supreme;
Juggling identities like in a dream
Proud of its varied masks, wanting to show.

A tiny flaw in plan laid carefully,
A misrepresented identity,
Shows up a very different entity.
Shatters the ego almost totally.

With a vengeance the ego takes over
Enraged, accusing and passing on blame,
Muscles tensed, chest heaving, both eyes aflame,
Radiant inner self, anxious to cover.

Wanting at all cost to save its own face,
Raging and burning up with frustration,
Moving towards its annihilation.
Awesome sight, ego running its own race!

Leading on to its own self sentenced doom,
Resounding anger proclaiming death knell;
Too far gone to perceive or even quell
Fury and speed towards death that does loom.

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Karuna

(Sentiment of Compassion)

The lost lambkin for its mother bleating;
the diseased and the terminally ill,
dispirited leper, fate berating.
Has not the Divine Mother seen them still?
Does not the earthly mother feel as much-
and more compassion for her wayward child
as for her good, ideal one as such?
Are they beyond redemption, men of wild?
The heart goes out to the many orphans
who have never known the warmth and the bliss
of a mother's embrace – not even once
but do, its supreme healing power miss.
Mother – judges not, sways not in passion;
Embodiment of divine compassion.

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Shanta

(sentiment of peace)

When a most violent storm rages
When there is abysmal darkness
When my life is wholly shattered
If I can remain most tranquil.

When all fingers do point to me
When there is nowhere I can go
When I have nothing to live for
If I can remain very calm.

When the world around collapses
When I am then left all alone
When death's messengers soon arrive
If I can still remain at peace.

It will be triumph of my life.
I will have attained Nirvana
I would then be most enlightened
Wonder would I be God Divine?!

This then be the unchanging truth
Boundless love for all not mere ruth
An empathy all inclusive
Bringing peace that was elusive.

Sat Chit Ananda!
Aum Shanti: Shanti: Shanti:

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