Life Journey

Volume one

Spiritual

Dr. J K Luthra

Several persons and experiences have played a vital role in the journey of compiling this book. Their encouragement—recognizing my rhyming words as poetry—became a powerful catalyst, motivating me to gather these poems into a collection. Without their support, this collection would not have been possible. The poems are presented into five volumes: Spiritual, Family, Life, Laughter, and Old Age, Disease, and Death.

My wife, Dolly, patiently listened, read the poems, and enriched them with her presence and subtle edits. Our children—Namita, Anil, Rohini, Shiv, Rashmi, and Oliver—motivated me to complete this book. My brother, Prem Luthra, was one of the first to recognize my gift for poetry.

Our grandson, Arjan Bir Singh, captured the photograph of sunflowers and lovingly designed the cover page. Namita Luthra contributed many thoughtful suggestions, while Anil Shrivastava helped weave the poems together into a cohesive book.

I am deeply grateful to the many others who shared their experiences, stories, and suggestions. They planted the seeds from which many poems grew. You live on within these pages.

I dedicate this book to our Guru Ji, our beloved family, our parents, and our cherished grandchildren: Amartya, Jaya, Amaya, Ilan, Arjan, and Shyam.

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            Atheist

Atheist sees a fluttering leaf

Does't see what moves it

Scientist says it’s

Invisible air

And his mind believes it

He asks what moves the air

Who made it, why everywhere

Who figured its elements

Why silent at times

Why it roars in currents

“It is nature” says the scientist

Atheist believes but still wonders

Asks his inquisitive mind

What made nature and its powers

Scientist hesitates, deeply ponders

A bright light flashes, thunder roars

A voice declares “It is God”

“Prove to me, show to me,” says the atheist

He questions, doesn't believe the unseen voice

He trusts knowledge of the visible scientist

Voice whispers,"Isn't it a wonder

You believe the scientist

But not the One who

Made water, fire, earth and sky

Who made you, the scientist and air

Have faith in the Word of God

You will experience it yourself.”

Light vanishes, thunder recedes

Atheist joins the scientist in prayer

Focused on breath, minds ceased

Tears roll, heart flutters

Like leaf fluttered by the air

They can then perceive

Who makes and moves the air

God

Guests don’t enter a home without invitation

I am forever ready; only you refuse invocation

Welcome me with heart that’s sincere and true

The veiled God will appear and unveil to you

I wait for silent prayer and your call

Through spring, summer, winter, and fall

When will you awaken from ignorant sleep

You wasted many a life in slumber so deep

I need no money or jewels to adorn

I seek your true perseverance alone

I bestow through your karmic tower

Your status, fame, money and power

A leaf can’t move without my consent

Resist greed, pride, anger and lament

Be not jealous of others who have more

Your actions decide what’s in your store

Feed me with love—I’ll feast on your stale bread

Bow at my fee— I will raise, embrace you instead

You are my spark; how can I drift away from you

Shed your ego, I’ll gladly reveal what’s true

Shed your ego, I’ll gladly reveal what’s true

Source

Seek the source from where all flows

Why hope from mere dust and clay

The Seed Word dwells in you

Which runs the universe in right way

Some are called great by wealth and gold

Some called mighty by strength they hold

Beautiful body is called lifeless frame

Without God, it even loses its name

God is wealth, God is strength

God will carry you across the mirage

Seek the source from where all flows

Why hope from mere dust and clay?

Life is a fleeting gust of wind

Rises today, vanishes tomorrow

“This is mine, that is mine,” you say

They will remain— you fade away

God was always here

God will forever stay

Eternities will pass

Seek the source from

Where all flows today

Why hope from dust and clay?

Go where the treasure chest

Is always full and free

Sun, air, fire, water and tree

Abundance was here

Abundance will remain

Unless you create your own pain

Seek the source from where all flows

Why hope from mere dust and clay?

Seed Word is embedded in you

Which runs the universe in right way

Omnipresent

Everywhere I gaze, I see you

Whenever I meditate upon you

Witnessing your divine play

With folded hands, I sing your name

I bow and prostrate to your flame

Some call you Ram

Some Hari, or Waheguru

Jesus, Allah—you are in all

By any name when I call

In a moment I see you

Everywhere I gaze, I see you

Whenever I meditate upon you

Witness your divine play

With folded hands, I sing your name

I bow and prostrate to your flame

Whoever receives your grace

Receives your divine embrace

Allow me to rest at your feet

I left behind the worldly race

Everywhere I gaze I see you

Whenever I meditate upon you

Witness your divine play

With folded hands, I sing your name

I bow and prostrate to your flame

I have carried a bundle of my sins

Brought only what I had earned

Give me support, O my God

Let me return with my slate cleaned

Everywhere I gaze, I see you

Whenever I meditate upon you

After witnessing your divine play

With folded hands I sing your name

I bow and prostrate to your flame

Self Realization

Deep darkness fills the heart

Light the lamp to awaken dawn

Close eyes, meditate and realize

Your body is a temple of Ram

Deep darkness fills the heart

Temple, mosque, and gurdwara

All reside within the heart

Why wander from door to door

When divine dwells in every part

Flow in the river of breath—observe

Every cell, every particle

Is sacred home of Shri Ram

Deep darkness fills the heart

Light the lamp to awaken dawn

Open Sushmana, awaken Kundlini

Mind and body—fragile, fleeting threads

Breathe through Pranayam, be still

Unite with the One, your true self

Deep darkness fills the heart

Light the lamp, awaken dawn

Close eyes, meditate and realize

Your body is a temple of Ram

Your body is a temple of Ram

Salvation

Life ends in the blink of an eye

The bird of soul will soon fly

Your family and strangers

Will soon bid final goodbye

It’s a stay of a couple of days

Life ends…

Childhood fades as youth arrives

Intoxicating season, blooms thrive

Yet death stands silent along the way

Life is fleeting—it cannot stay

Unite the mind with Ram, the divine

Body will have to stay behind

Life ends…

Those you cling to were never yours

The One who is yours, birth after birth

Why forget the God so near?

Call Him with a mind pure and sincere

Life ends…

Body is a myth, wealth a fleeting mirage

Ram-shaped golden bird

Can’t be seen by mortal eye

Search not in the dust outside

But in the mind—treasures reside

Life ends…

Lust, anger, pride, and greed

Will become shackles indeed

Parents, children, spouse and friends

Won’t go with you as your journey ends

Only truthful acts and holy name of Ram

Will walk the final path through flame

Life ends…

Know the glory of Guru and the Word

They are direct reflections of God

Guru’s grace ignites the inner flame

Revealing path through the holy Name

Pray with the body and make mind still

Merge with the eternal soul and His Will

Life end…

Guru has led you to meet Shri Ram

Meditate on His name night and day

Board the boat of Ram’s name and pray

Sail across the sea from illusion to truth

Break the cycle of birth and death

Life ends…

Life ends in blink of an eye

The soul, like a bird, will soon fly

Your family and strangers

Will gather to say final goodbye

It’s a stay of a couple of days

Life ends…

Ego

Let the ego die before you do

Only then you’ll feel the joy of living

See the image of God everywhere

Why wander from here to there

Same God dwells in you and me

Why give the One so many names

Beliefs and creeds are human-made

The Real needs no titles or name

Wherever you look, it is His creation

Unveil the hidden truth in meditation

He creates, sustains, erases, and recreates

Surrender the thread of your life to the One

He governs the entire universe

Let ego have no place in human heart

Surrender your life to the Holy One

And walk in the light of His Grace

Let the ego die before you do

Only then you’ll feel the joy of living

Guest

You are a guest for mere two days

Recognize your true self

You arrived yesterday, departing tomorrow

Why carry the burden of arrogance?

You are a guest…

You are a guest in the house

It’s a temporary rest refuge

No one stays here forever

One checks in; one checks out

Seek refuge in God supreme

Meditate when awake or in dream

You are a guest…

Penny by penny, millions are amassed

Yet still poor—greed knows no bounds

Money’s poison starts to divide

Breaks relations held with pride

We all leave earth empty-handed

Why hoard the wealth not needed?

You are a guest…

Earth which created you

You’ll merge into that dust

As long as you live in this world

Doing selfless works is a must

Share grief of sufferers, their strife;

This will improve your own life

You are a guest for mere two days

Recognize your true self

You arrived yesterday, departing tomorrow

Why carry the burden of pride?

You are a guest…

Thankless

My counting skills end

When I count Your blessings

Eyes look down in shame

When I beg for even more

Selfishly chanting Your name

Forgetful, lost, thankless, greedy

Again become a beggar, needy

Forgot your gifts, health and toys

Seek novel ways to seek more joy

What I gained was through my toil

What I lost, You were the one to spoil

Feel jealous, gazing at those above me

Forgot all that you bestowed upon me

I believed that sufferings, disease, death

Were things God made only for others

I thought I would live forever

Hospital, crematoriums were meant for others

Then one day it strikes—

Cancer or a heart attack

I am like a bubble in the ocean

Fragile and fleeting — clearly visualize

Then I realize how much

You gave me, which I overlooked

Ignored spouse, children, siblings

Forgot health, and even You

Drank poison of money and fame

With closed eyes at life’s end,

Such clear thoughts descend

Fortunate ones, through your grace

Get wisdom early as they transcend

What?

My counting skills end

When I count your blessings

Eyes look down in shame

When I beg for even more

By chanting your name

Y Junction

At the Y-junction in life, two paths await

Why did you ignore the righteous gate?

Why did you ignore the righteous gate?

Forgot even your Creator’s face

While roaming in His creation

World is a mirage, o innocent heart

Why chase which’s sure to hurt

Why ignore the righteous gate?

He who bestows light to the sun

One who runs the whole universe

From that lamp, from that power

Why did you turn your face away

Why ignore the righteous way?

At the Y-junction in life, two paths await

Why did you ignore the righteous gate?

Why did you ignore the righteous gate?

Loneliness Aloneness

Know the difference between

*Loneliness* *and* *aloneness:*

In one, worries and anxieties reside;

In the other, presence of God is realized

Alone we arrive, alone we depart

Drifting in the river of life from its start

We grasp at the straws in currents deep

Mistaking them for anchor we keep

In glittering life, all walk along

Dusk sets in and they are gone

Those I assumed were truly mine

Vanish as shadows leave in dark time

What we see in crowd is merely coal

Within us dwells shining diamond soul

Showing the right path for us to live

Lessons Bible, Quran, Gita freely give

The evolved ones seek no pleasure outside

Nor joy in festivals or glittering rides

Silently they merge deep with the self

Find colorful world of eternal wealth

Live in life like lotus in muddy water

Overcome surroundings with your power

Live like the sun, steady and bright

Sustaining the world with its inner light

Know the difference between

*Loneliness* *and* *aloneness:*

In one, worries and anxieties reside;

In the other, presence of God is realized



One God Many Names

I wonder— by whom or why was it done?

God was broken to pieces by everyone

Each gave a name, rituals and frame

Each one claiming Its spiritual flame

Some call Him Krishna, Khuda, or Ram

Others recite Allah, Jesus and Satnam

Purpose of Life

For centuries the question remains:

Why did nature create humans?

In Gita, Arjun asked Krishna the same

Today, devotees turn to Gurus by name

God made you treasure full of love

Release your sorrows to the sky above

Spread smiles to hearts in need

All are our own—no stranger indeed

For centuries the question remains:

Why did nature create humans?

Write your destiny with your own hands

Reap fruit of seeds sown in life’s land

Still your mind, let the wisdom rise

God is always with you—ever wise

With Him beside you, you’re never alone

In the journey of life—

God is your eternal companion

For centuries the question remains:

Why did nature create humans?

How Do You Know?

How do you know

If one has achieved Nirvana or touched God?

When you see the whole world as one

When you stay hungry, feed someone

How do you know?

When others are selfish, angry, rude—you forgive

When wealth and status don’t define how you live

When you see others not as body, but soul

Service to God is seen as your only goal

When you transcend the religion’s name

The Real One behind them is adored the same

How do you know?

You don’t display anger, anguish or complain

Accept health/disease, poverty/wealth as same

When you give up your time, food and home

When your smiling heart beats for others alone

That’s how you know

You know you are witnessing

Someone who has achieved Nirvana and touched God

Now you know

⸻

**The Rainbow Within**

Only God is perfect—we’re made uneven

Not every blessing or gift to each is given

Some have sight but lack inner vision

While others, though blind, live with precision

Eyes may fail to see the day

Yet souls can shine in their own way

Ears may miss the world’s loud sound

But within lies the truth where it is found

One small flaw does not fully define

God fills the rest with grace divine

A cloud may hide the golden sun

Yet gives cool shade to everyone

Be patient, hopeful—calmly wait

A prayer unlocks the Heaven’ gate

Smile in thanks for what you hold

Clouds will break, and rainbows unfold

Family

House Number 2

Come together

Let’s sing ballad of

House number 2

Risking his life in 1950

He bid for the house

Hail to Mata Pita Ji\*

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

Lala Ji got prize—ten acres of land

Son Kundan would be doctor, a healing hand

Son, Karam would care for the land

Alas, the colors of nature and luck flipped—

Young Karam merged with God

Dream of becoming doctor faded

Kundan a farmer, gave his nod

No complaints or sorrow, only grace

Always with a smile on his face

Come together

Let’s sing ballad of

House Number 2

Risking his life in 50

He bid for the house

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

The couple started from Sargodha

Arrived in the farmland of Khanewal

Pita Ji was twenty-two

Mata Ji was just sixteen

Pita Ji hit a sixer on the first ball

Suraj, Captain of cricket team

Arrived in within the first year

Destined to be a Railway officer

A true pride of Hindustan

Come together

Let’s sing ballad of

House Number 2

Risking his life in 50

He bid for the house

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

Sudesh Mahinder failed to

Cross the wall of childhood

Prem Kanta Kanchan Virinder

Made the world more beautiful

Krishan Gindi and Shoki

Completed the long blooming line

Mata Pita tended the flower bed

By giving all their love

Stream of life was flowing gently

There was no news yet of Pakistan

Come together

Let’s sing ballad of

House number 2

Risking his life in 50

He bid for the house

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

Khanewal burned under hot sun

And raging fires of hatred

Far-sighted Hindus and Sikhs fled

Leaving behind homes of centuries

Pitaji, the Narangs and the Thakkars

Hid the buds and flowers of their hearts

Found refuge in cool shade of Sabathu

They saved their lives in May 47

And found a safe place to rest

Come together

Let’s sing ballad of

House number 2

Risking his life in 50

He bid for the house

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

Everywhere— dead bodies in sight

Holi played with blood and fights

Full of chaos, fire and smoke

Saw shouting groups of killer mobs

Brothers sisters for centuries

Now blurted language of hate

We seized an abandoned house

Hurriedly left by terrified Musalmans

Come together

Let’s sing ballad of

House number 2

Risking his life in 50

He bid for the house

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

Wherever the eyes could gaze

Tents after tents, then still more

Frightened refugees seeking a home

Across rail lines was a golden sight

A house under open skies, bathed in light

Pita Ji’s eyes noticed number 2

Here, wife, children will bloom anew

Beneath the bright sun in field of green

Mata ji pleaded, “No, for God’s sake!”

No money in pocket but heart full of grit

Fearless, he made his stride

A bold bid with hope his guide

Come together

Let’s sing ballad of

House number 2

Risking his life in 50

He bid for the house

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

On bullock carts, foot, and rickshaw

Switched occupied house to our own

Three generations limped, walked, ran

Pale yellow palace welcomed caravan

Family orchards of all kinds bloomed

Diwali of 50 saw kids, trees groomed

Love, laughter, study, play, non-stop life

All safe, happy father, kids and wife

One man’s courage altered generations

Pitaji’s bid created many celebrations

Come together

Let’s sing ballad of

House number 2

Risking his life in 50

He bid for the house

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

Hail to Mata Pita Ji

* Mata Ji—Mother

Pita Ji—Father

Lala Ji—Grandfather

First Meeting

Remember when we met first time ?

I held your soft moist trembling hand

I brushed your hair from your face with gentle fingers

Your eyes lowered as I said, “You speak so well”

A spark ignited, spread through us both

Lips trembled, heart fluttered, words lingered in the air

We sulked over trivial issues

Lost night’s sleep, peace of day

Imagined palaces, colorful schemes

Planned vibrant dreams during day

Many times wrote your name on my hand

Merged us as one, making designs grand

No burden of kin to carry

No actions of the past to worry

Happy between us, no complaint

Yet, heart anxious, fear of unknown

Remember when we met first time?

Remember when we met first time?

Love

Love defies the limits of speech

Truth beyond the tongue’s reach

Fragrance of flowers flows into air

A subtle smile captures the heart

Heart’s feelings stay bound

Lowered eyes, quivering lips

Moist pale hands, pacing heart

Spill secrets without a sound

It seeks no wealth or famous name

It’s a grace bestowed by God

Love can’t be earned by treasure

Heart reads language of heart

No need to say, no point to hear

Love defies the limits of speech

Truth beyond tongue’s reach

Fragrance of flowers flows into air

A subtle smile captures the heart

Dance with Glee

Night and day I dance with glee

I have found my true love

My dear friend, my soul-mate

Night and day I dance with glee

Ever since I saw youth’s first light

My heart desired you with all its might

When I stumbled in life or not ready

You held my arm, made me steady

Whatever I sought from God

I received more than that

Night and day I dance with glee

Excitement stirs within my heart

Songs on my lips, a fresh start

Dreams awaken clear and bright

Flowers bloom, fragrance delight

Spring has erupted all around

Days of opening buds arrived

How can I blame the weather

Night and day I dance with glee

Night and day I dance with glee

I have found my true love

My friend and my soul-mate

Night and day I dance with glee

Feels Like I’ve Come Home

(I dedicate this poem to India, my motherland. Those who have left the motherland, let’s go home.)

Here’s a refined version of your lines:

Chasing dreams, seeking prosperity, I left my land,For

Bonds once cherished slipped from my hand.

Parents, siblings, ties I broke,

In selfish pursuits, no words we spoke.

Now golden memories flood my mind,

Of love and roots I left behind.

Stepping off the plane, my heart takes flight,

Home embraces me, a long-lost light.

Let me know if this resonates or needs further refinement!Selfish seeking prosperity I left my country

For selfish gain, in search of prosperity

I abandoned my home, my family tree

Severed ties with friends, parents and kin

The golden memories are still fresh within

I relive those moments with everyone

When I step out of the plane

Feels like I’ve come home

I see my father’s shadow in immigration clerk

My mother re-emerges In covered head, a spark

I look for myself in children playing carefree

Seek lost my noisy childhood under the tree

Coming out of the airport I see such scenes

Feels like I’ve come home

Neighbor sends no invitation

“You are here, please stay for tea

We’ll make two more *rotis*

Share *the* dinner with us too”

I hear such loving words

Feels like I’ve come home

I see my father’s shadow in immigration clerk

In covered head, re-emerges mother, a spark

I look for myself in children playing carefree

Seek lost noisy childhood under the tree

Coming out of airport I see such scenes

Feels like I’ve come home

Neighbor sends no invitation

“You are here, please stay for tea

We’ll make two more *rotis*

Share the dinner with us too.”

When I hear such loving words

Feels like I’ve come home

Where elders are still respected with care

Not left alone near end of time, in despair

Where children support them with grace

Bow head, receive blessings and embrace

When I see such old traditions

Feels like I’ve come home

Neighbor may knock on the door anytime

No need for appointment, reason or rhyme

The distances between houses fade

When boundaries of walls get erased

Feels like I’ve come home

Elder men, lovingly called uncles

Women are aunts, reassuring circles

Every child is a son or daughter

Where definition of relationships blur

See everyone living as one large family

Feels like I’ve come home

Sharp cries of “hot tea” echo through the train

From a pouch appear warm *pranthe,*mango pickle

Mouth waters; “Should I ask?” the thought persists

“Have couple of bites,” stranger co-traveler insists

I eat two rotis, sharing a meal in the train

Feels like I’ve come home

Early morning, God’s songs fill the air

Loud speakers echo praises everywhere

Hymns of Allah, Wahe Guru and Ram resound

Koyal wakes me with melodious sound

Half asleep, immersed in sweet dreams and sounds

I receive caressing hugs from parents, siblings

Feels like I’ve come home

Country glows brilliant at Diwali

Bursting with seven colors at Holi

Sundar mundriye songs fill the air at Lohri

Sisters tie threads to brothers at Rakhi

Navratre, Kanjaken, Eid, Dussehra’s delight

I see tapestry of festivals, a joyous sight

Feels like I’ve come home

The flying kites, tangled strings in the sky

Earthen lamps on walls, roofs catch the eye

*Gulli danda, piththu*, sounds of marbles

Cawing of crows is welcoming marvel

Drawing cold water by hand pumps near

Bathing, shivering, yet jumping with cheer

Walking outside, these scenes I embrace

A treasure of memories, mind can’t erase

Feels like I’ve come home

Mother’s stories, father’s tales

Grandparents’ lives are retold

Struggles of brothers and sisters unfold

Life’s ups and downs, a treasure to hold

As I turn pages, an open book I see

From childhood to today, it all lives in me

Feels like I’ve come home

And then

At the separation time, spurt imprisoned tears

Thoughts of never meeting again, unspoken fears

That holding hands tight, unwilling to let go

Gently rubbing shoulders, emotions overflow

Long love-filled hugs silently console

I ponder through dripping red tears of soul

Feels like I am leaving home

I promise myself, will soon repeat

Feels like I’ve come home

Desolate streets, no human voices remain

Strange faces, tools I can’t explain

Don’t know neighbors as they drift apart

Some shun immigrants, have stone-made hearts

I have lived with them for decades alone

They still seem strangers barely known

Each day,, without reason, bullets fly

Innocent children and grown-ups die

From such place when I return every year

A place so far, yet so near

It feels like I’ve come home

Back to my Motherland where roots are deep

Merge with my Fatherland, memories to keep

I have come back to my own home

Feels like I’ve come home

Feels like I’ve come home

Wonder Where Did I Get Stuck

(When I shared the above poem, my brother Prem said “Brother, I love your poem and feel happy for you. But you must have seen things, faced difficulties which made you suffer and sad. Keeping those in mind, write another poem.”

I wrote this poem over 20 years ago. Many things are still the same, but India has improved so much that I couldn’t write this poem in the same way today. Watching these improvements fills me with joy and pride— yet I feel sad about many issues that still remain unresolved.)

Dengue Typhoid and Malaria reign—

A kingdom of flies, mosquitoes’ domain

More water in milk than the faucet’s yield

Trash piles high in the streets

Like king’s crown in the field

Open sewers, the heavy air stinks

Old streets remain same, as memory’s links

When I see ugly signs of the past

Wonder where did I get stuck?

On the roads, the same unruly crowd

Where trucks rule, their horns too loud

Their backs still offer familiar advice—

“Evil-eyed, may your face turn black

Mother Devi blesses,” they proclaim

“Dipper at night, OK Tata”—the signs remain

Children follow trucks, pull sugar cane

It feels like childhood has born again

While riding the metro, I protect my pockets

When I see food, do I eat or drop it?

Raw food promises stomach ache for sure

I hope I don’t end up at doctor’s door

Hospitals feel like money-making schemes

They empty bank balance, give scary dreams

Wonder where did I get stuck?

Body shivers in the freezing cold

Lungs choke on dust and smoke

Theft, robbery, rapes and rising crime

Heart trembles in such corrupt time

Friends, to whom do I complain?

The fear of khaki uniform still remains

When I see such sad conditions

Wonder where did I get stuck?

For chair’s sake, the game goes on

‘Aaya Ram Gaya Ram’—same old song

Names have changed, yet deeds persist

Corruption lingers, impossible to resist

Darkness engulfs nation’s plight

Politicians’ houses are lit bright

Law applies to common man

Politicians loot what they can

When I see new faces but old politics

Wonder where did I get stuck?

To get a job, bring connections or bribe

Eat and feed others, it’s custom of the tribe

From clerk to minister, money is the key

Yet they shout slogans of ‘honesty’

‘Remove corruption’ they loudly proclaim

Decades-old schemes, play same game

Wonder where did I get stuck?

While walking, if I look ahead

I slip on spit or dog’s gift instead

If I look down, a car comes too near

Each step gets wrapped in fear

When I leave home, I begin to think

Do I save myself from front or below

Wonder where did I get stuck?

It is written “Donkey is peeing”

But a man is standing, not seeing

Pack of dogs starts marches, no reason in sight

A scooter drives wrong way, forgets what’s right

At red light, driver zips fearlessly through

Watching strange scenes, what am I to do?

Wonder where did I get stuck?

Had a confirmed ticket for train and flight

But they cancelled it, dismissed my plight

A minister demanded my seat with disdain

Leaving me suffer, endure insult and pain

A cherished journey becomes suffering

Stay in India becomes distressing

Wonder where did I get stuck?

Travel to India seems endlessly long

TSA, ICE,, thrombosis, fears strong

Jet lag for seven going and coming

Two weeks trip turns to four of suffering

When I curse every misery-filled day

Wonder where did I get stuck?

Now I count the days to return home

Eat fresh salad outside or quietly alone

Have grandchildren gathered in my nest

East or west, home is always the best

To seek new pastures, birds made new home

Every place has flowers, thorns of its own

Let’s beautify the path that we had chosen

Where dreams are realized, and life is woven

Engrossed in such thoughts, I sit on the plane

I am leaving one home, reaching the other again

This is mine, that is mine too

No matter wherever I go

Feels like I have come home

Feels like I have come home

My Soil

Fifty years have passed since I left my land

Yet its soil feels mine, just as lmy own hand

Once the people called me son or brother

Now they it is Uncle, like any other

Whatever the word, it brings me delight

Their sweet voice makes everything right

The air, the scenes, the customs, the people—

All feel like mine, as if we never parted

The sweet melody of koyal’s song

Or dog’s barks feels like they belong

Hidden memories awaken my eyes

Tree shade cooled the hot summer skies

Not a *paisa* was in the pocket

Still never felt deprived or poor

A love-filled life made us need no more

Fifty years have passed since I left my land

Yet its soil feels mine, just as my own hand

Our Childhood

We were eight, with just one old bike

Our joy overflowed with every ride

One knicker, a shirt, pair of slippers

They were my entire cherished treasure

Festivals celebrated with pomp and song

A home filled with love, pure and strong

Mother father always gave a reassuring smile

Silently drank poison, fed us honey all the while

Stayed hungry from lack of money

Fed us pranthe with butter and *ghee*

From the life of king and queen

They had become gypsies

Yet, put us on royal throne of dreams

From trees, it wasn’t mangoes we plucked

But the sweetness of pure nectar

The clay oven didn’t erupt hot fire

It was soft nurturing, loving warmth

Not a spare paisa did we hold

Our home felt like a palace of gold

Fountains of laughter burst and soared

Filled lives with carefree joy we adored

The name was Panipat

Often, faucets were dry from lack of water

Two hand— pumps were our exercise

There were no complaints or cries

Electricity appeared occasionally, mostly weak

It played game of hide and seek

Hand fans, candles were our life-savers

If we lacked anything, we were not aware

Sometimes gulli danda, or piththu’s fun

Then came cricket, under the sun

We played marbles, hide n seek

Fired stones with a slingshot

Didn’t care much about studies

Hardly gave it a serious thought

Childhood was to play and enjoy

A lifetime ahead to reading and be taught

Kites painted colors across the sky

Flowers fruits adorned the earth

We cared little for what others had

Our pot of joy was always full

The yard was our playground by day

In mosquito nets, beneath the stars and moonlight

It turned to our safe bedroom at night

When I open the album of my heart

Pictures of priceless childhood erupt

No heavy sorrows, no lofty dreams

The present was enough within our means

Blessings of Swami Ji, Shakuntla Ma

Darshi Behan Ji’s love showered

Lucky ones get such beautiful childhood

Like fragrance drifting through the air

And lotus flowers blooming in the mud

Only the lucky ones get such beautiful

childhood

Only the lucky ones get such beautiful

childhood

Heart Desires

My heart longs to soar and fly

To spend few moments with you nearby

Ganga of love flows night and day

I wish to come to quench my thirst away

Heart desires…

Those who have departed

I wish they were still here

I would string flowers of love

Engraved in heart, how can I forget?

Mother, father, brothers, sisters

Heart desires…

Let’s recall the memories of childhood

Sing old forgotten songs

Clinging tight to those cherished memories

I journey through life all along

Heart desires…

Beneath the veil of happiness, sorrows hide

Everyone carries their burden deep inside

Alone, one will stumble, get tired

I long to come, give a helping hand

Heart desires…

We are together from birth to death

Life is but a dream of four days

Come, let’s fill dreams with vibrant hues

Scatter flowers of joy over morning dews

Heart desires…

My heart longs to soar and fly

To spend few moments with you nearby

Ganga of love flows night and day

I wish to come to quench my thirst away

Heart desires…

Mother

A message has come from my home

Mother’s eyes eagerly long to see me

Last spring, she whispered soft and low

“A bier will leave from the home you know.”

Message…

Fed me milk from her own body

Stayed hungry to nourish mine

Hid her desires, fulfilled my dreams

Never uttered a word of complaints

Love kept flowing from her eyes

Message…

In her heart, a quiet fear kept growing

Old age would arrive all too soon

Her doctor son, she thought, would be a boon

Would take care of them when in need

Moist eyes watched her dreams shattered,

The day I stepped out of the home

Message…

I cast my net for wealth and fame

Lost myself, trapped in my own game

I ignored, deserted my mother and father

Time’s shadow pushed their memories farther

The palace of memories is now empty, silence deep

It’s owners have departed, their dreams asleep

A message has come from my home

Mother’s eyes eagerly long to see me

Last spring, she whispered soft and low

“A bier will leave from the home you know.”

Message…

Our Deck

On our deck— no Brussels, no Paris, no politics, Hillary or Trump

Even wind seeks consent from hills, trees, and a rare rotting stump

No one allowed on our deck but cool moon, bright warm sun

Hungry birds of varied hues and songs get invited to fly, play and run

Just you and me exist—the rest live unseen on imaginary map

Floating clouds, blue sky, hills and trees wrap us gently in their lap

Seasons bring bright flowers, floating brown leaves, and swirling snow

Nature’s graceful cycle goes on—welcomes one, lets others go

Seven billions and their problems, no where for us to be seen

On our deck— lively children and grandchildren create many a scene

House gets shaken—calling all cousins, booby traps, Bee Movie, pillow fights

Soon deck is alive with bicycles, badminton, pool and Christmas lights

They wander through the yard, woods, creek—squealing within earshot

Heavenly hours they spend with nature, then leave us sad and distraught

Now just you and me on our deck, bathed in glow of westerly sun

A labor of love with many mistakes, glitches—but hopefully well done

Urmil’s Story

Hear the long tale of a little girl

A unique sweet Nani in the whole world

Hear the long tale of a little girl

Ram was her father, Sarla her mother

A young Nandi Bhapa, her dear brother

Showered with endless love from Nani and Nana

She opened her eyes, didn’t see shadow of her father

Just seven days after her birth

He merged with the Ganga’s holy waters

Hear…

Played with dolls, learnt to play violin

Escaped from Pakistan, settled in Ludhiana

Faced sugar shortage, learned to share

In youth, got engaged with Suraj

Nine years later, drank Panipat’s water

Hear…

Face was like moon, eyes like stars

She glowed with light of her dear Suraj

First came Nishi, then Arati arrived

As she pursued B.Ed. with a drive

No crown she wore, yet Suraj called her Rani

Hear…

A heart like wax, a head like stone

Washed hair clean, dripping oil shone

Savored mangoes, loved lime pickle bite

In house number thirty

Guests arrived day and night

Amid this chatter, noise, and play

Quietly, her youth slipped away

Hear…

After leaving Jodhpur, she made Delhi her home

First Railway Colony, then Anand Vihar to roam

Bridge was her rival, second wife in jest

Badminton was the game she loved best

To help her daughters achieve their goal

She taught at Modern School— her new role

Hear…

First in the Railway Colony, then Anand Vihar to roam.

The bridge was her rival, a second wife in jest,After leaving Jodhpur, she made Delhi her home,.

Yet badminton was the game she loved best.

To ensure her daughters achieved their goals,

She became a teacher in Model School, fulfilling her role.Hear…

Then what happened Arati?

Parkinson fell in love with her

Surmil’s strength rose to fight

Her body faltered, but her spirit stayed

An inner resolve that never swayed

Love and family stood by her side

A strength no medicine could provide

At last, her suffering was undone

The battle ended, disease finally won

Hear the long tale of a little girl

A unique sweet Nani in the whole world

Hear the long tale of a little girl

(This tribute to Urmil Bhabi was written with help from Arati)

Tribute To Prem Luthra

Old bones now brittle, frail and worn

Joints which served me well, now torn

My heart kept me alive, though tired now

Breath once a roar, is soft whisper now

Old bones, brittle and frail,

Joints stiffen, start to fail.

The heart, after its endless beat,

Grows weary, skips its steady feat.

Breath now pauses, short and thin,

Life’s fire fading from within.

Scorched beneath life’s blazing sun,

Soft flesh burned, strength undone.

Limbs weaken, struggle to rise,

Purpose lost beneath dim skies.

From deep within, exhaustion seeps,

A tired soul that barely sleeps.Struggled in sun of life Soft body is scorched

Body is weak, too tired to stand

I search for purpose, see none at hand

No strength left to help or give

Inside and out I struggle to live

Cancer has made me its home

Sneaked in like a thief unknown

I tried all medicines and prayers

Yet victory I could not declare

Two swords can’t fit in a single sheath

Enemies can’t cohabit in peace

I fought fiercely on the battle ground

Yet the killer foe remained unbound

Now the heart longs for eternal sleep

Never wake up from one so deep

I don’t fear my own demise

Hope I don’t burden others’ lives

I don't grieve for my own goodbye

But fear watching you hide and cry

Cruel world may call you bad omen

Helpless, carrying burden all alone

At times I wish to live a bit longer

Never content being with my own

Wish I could stay with you a bit more

Hug you close, express my love more

“Will meet tomorrow—what’s the rush”

Wish such thoughts had been hushed

Wish I had courage to embrace life more

Had not caused grief to those I cared

Not panicked in problems or despair

My name, my identity, my soul is love

I wish I’d shown more to ones I loved

Had embraced the world with more care

Had kept less and spread more to share

We are relatives, friends for a few days

Like guests who come and go their ways

Today I lie on a bed of flowers

Tomorrow my identity—a photo on the wall

Seen by loved ones silently for hours

Days are long, but life is brief

Each moment long, especially in grief

Yet, this all in a few moments slips away

A few short breaths—then no more day

Only yesterday, I was child, then youth

Today I say goodbye to the world

They’ll speak of me for a few days

Live on a paper or in some heart’s place

I stay drowned in thoughts so deep

I can’t express with my face, nor speak

Let my thoughts vanish with me

No one will fathom, nor try to see

Those who do, I tell them with eyes

I must have done something right

When I see love all around, shining bright

What I gave to others, see it coming back

So many come to just convey thanks

Some come to say last goodbye

I their gaze, I see some dying with me

Knead flour with tears—then the roti burns

Make for two—eat alone as silence returns

My eyes well up when I imagine your life

To shield you, I hold shut death’s door to life

What can I do as I draw my last breath

No soul has ever triumphed over death

We shared fifty-five joyous years

With that thought, I hold back my tears

Eat my share of food, spread my love too

Till yesterday we were co-travelers

Now, though apart, I live in you

Not in body, but in soul I’m always with you

Stay happy, come what may

In any moment, every day

May you always sing happy song

This is my prayer, plea to Ram all along

I’ve completed my innings of life

Scored as many runs as nature assigned

If shared joy was the measure of my score

Then I scored many centuries, may be more

Some got clean bowled or caught out

I am glad I was happy when I got run out

I am grateful for my mother and father

For Ram and Ram Sharnam’s guiding light

Shashi, Ashit, Jyoti, Disha, Tanuj, and all

My companions in this journey of life

And now, with love, I bid farewell to all

This is the last letter from your Prem

Fondly,

Prem

Business Person’s Honor

I am selling goods, not my pride

I bow in respect, not from shame inside

Though poor in wealth, I’m rich in honesty

I earn through hard work, not dishonesty

It’s my duty to nurture children and home

But not to endure abuse or harsh tone

Speak to me with respect and dignity

Don’t measure my worth with your money

A smile won’t diminish your wealth

A loud voice won’t enhance your self-worth

Coll breeze gives comfort, not the violent storm

Don’t look at me with suspicion

Don’t toss your money—place it gently in my hand

I work with dignity; I am not a beggar

I am selling goods, not my pride

I bow in respect, not from shame inside

\*F G T Died

No news, no mention or trace anywhere

Perhaps she died; she’s no longer here

For a few days her tales will ring

In noisy chants, “Zindabad” they’ll sing

 In the history of the Luthra name

FGT will find its rightful fame

Read by a generations or perhaps two—with grace

Yet a quiet belief, time can’t erase

Its sweetness, with time, may fade

Clouds cover memories, colors jade

Now meetings happen on screens and apps

Hard to leave home, endure travel’s traps

What’s app now echoes muted laughters

Gone are loud voices, raised hands

Collective shouts of Zindabad

 Forgotten— joy of hugs and warm caress

The thrill of playing on our native land

In-Between, Teen Patti, Bridge, and Cricket

Once-cherished moments, now disband

Laugh, and make others laugh too

Meet one another with a smile so true

Share the joys, the sorrows, the tears

Bridge the gaps of loving lost years

Time never stops—world keeps changing

Some good remains, but most keeps fading

All are busy in their own lives so robust

Hill of family slowly crumbles to dust

FGT drowned in the darkness of time

Forgot songs—

Heart desires to fly, come home

Spend moments with you on the swing arm in arm

Share stories of 2 Number, sweets from Bosa Ram

*Hum bekhudi mein tum* playing softly

Days and nights of togetherness—eating freely

Chilled beer beneath the shade of mango tree

Fountains of laughter erupting endlessly.

As I dig through the mines of memory

A golden stage unfolds its cast to me

Some made us weep when they left the stage

Some now struggle in heat of advancing age

Those who received the gift of the stage

Four generation are still here

Young ones can write their own page

Revive FGT for whoever can attend

Have them taste the nectar lost with age

Death—especially of one of our own

Makes heart weep for all now gone

When I think of our glorious FGT

Scenes unfold like a movie or a slide

From my lashes a few pearls glide

From my lashes a few pearls glide

\*Family Get Together

Life

Time or Money

What is lacking in life

Is it time or is it money?

Money lost can be earned again

But time, a precious pearl, never regain

Pillars of kin, friends and support stand tall

Built on foundation of time, and love for all

Money is a hollow display of pride

Kinships empty without shared time

Sit together—share joy and grief

It only happens by investing time

Money is a need we all understand

Time is a treasure of diamond band

Its value’s not linked to bank balance

Love blooms by spending precious time

Money can buy things we crave

Not love, laughter, health or joy

A loving glance, warm embrace

They blossom when nourished with time

Time is a rapid gushing stream

Unstoppable, forever on the move

Money sustains living, but is not life

Gold, wealth swallowed by river of time

We spend a lifetime hoarding money

Ignoring the transient fleeting time

Now we give money an impossible chore

To prolong the time we have no more

Even in death, money can break bonds

Shattering sturdy wall of kin and friends

Echoes of sweet memories and fragrant time

Lovingly woven by generations yet to come

Pause and ponder—

Money may give grand cars, palatial homes

Yet, it surrenders when facing time

Happy Life

Bury yesterday’s sorrows and pain

Cherish sweet memories that still remain

Embrace the new colors that life spreads

Let go of yesterday’s broken threads

Some remain drowned in the past

Some learn from its mistakes at last

Steps move forward with steady stride

Eyes look only ahead—open wide

The setting sun brings the night

Swallows one day of life and light

Morning rays unveil the dawn

Awaken us with a gentle yawn

Nature, in its mysterious ways

Grants us a set number of days

Fill them with peace and joy today

Or lose them in miseries of yesterday

Wipe a child’s tears, hug and hold

Lend your strength to the frail and old

Joy in giving is more than receiving

Watch the sorrows gently leaving

Desires and cravings never end

Kill one and many others ascend

It’s best to keep them all at bay

Let wisdom’s flame light the way

Life

Life has brought me to a crossroad

No desire, grievance, no regret’s load

Hate for none or grudge of any kind

Just a peaceful smile in my mind

The ones I carried for months with delight

Lost peace of day, restful sleep of night

Didn’t complain, gave my body and mind

In their love, support and strength I find

They ease the burden of old age plight

They are with me every day and night

I aspired to seek one flower’s grace

Received blooming garden in it’s place

The time we have, let’s spend in cheer

With gratitude, peace and joy, far and near

Yesterday’s sorrows, mistakes now past

Shackles are finally broken—free at last

Life has brought me to a crossroad

No desire, grievance, no regret’s load

Hate for none or grudge of any kind

Just a peaceful smile in my mind

﻿

Happiness is Within

Joy, peace, luck not found outside

Lotus flowers need no clean tide

With inner strength, in mud they bloom

Their vibrant hues dispel all gloom

I often shared my miseries with others

Some judged me guilty, some faked sympathy

Don’t lean on fragile outer walls for support

Joy, peace, strength are in the inner fort

If you share sorrows with others—you’ll see

Some won’t listen, other will soon flee

The rest say, “ Keep these to yourself

My house is full with grief of my own

It’s not empty to store your debris.”

If you want life to be joyous, hide your pain

Drink your tears; dry others’—expect no gain

Listen to others’ stories of woe

Help solve them, make their life grow

Light their homes with joy and delight

God will sparkle your house with light

Celebrate Diwali with God every night

Celebrate Diwali with God every night

Talk

True talk isn’t spoken—it’s heart to heart

The heart speaks without a doubt

The tongue masters lies and deceit

Heart reveals truth, no one can beat

I’ve seen gentle hands plunge swords

And warm hugs turn to choking cords

The heart whispers prayers from afar

True talk isn’t spoken—its heart to heart

Eyes deceive with false tears they shed

Smile conceals selfishness, honey-fed

Truth resides and seen only in heart

True talk isn’t spoken—its heart to heart

Bodies may be seven oceans apart

Yet heart connects instantly with heart

Thousands of miles can’t keep’m apart

Maps fade when heart talks to heart

True talk isn’t spoken—its heart to heart

Heart talks to heart in silent clips

Through trembling, unspoken lips

A book of feelings is written in silence

True talk is unsaid—it’s heart’s incense

Close your eyes—watch with heart’s vision

True dialogue requires no vocal expression

True talk isn’t spoken—it’s felt from the start

A silent exchange—heart to heart

New Birds

New birds, to create a new nest

They have arrived at your door

Leaving behind home of years

Anxious, nervous, are full of fear

They left behind companions and friends

Jobs, memories etched in bricks and bends

Each tree, plant, flower planted by hand

Now all wilt and cry, unable to withstand

Shedding their and children’s memories

They have arrived at a new crossing

To create new friendships

New desires, beginning of new life

New birds to weave new nest

Have arrived at your shelter

They’ll take colors from your rainbow

And bring new hues of their own

In their fourth innings of cricket

Plan century with joy and laughter

Accept them just as they are

With hopes and dreams from afar

They have come, seeking rest

New birds to create new nest

Anxious, nervous, are at your door

Respect of Light

Respect for light truly comes

After starving for it in the dark

Absence of companion pierces deep

After the loved ones depart

Children’s childhood— a passing cloud

Once the nest’s empty, silence grows loud

Heartache and tears veil the eye

Drown in memories of days flown by

The euphoria of youthful days

Only for a short while it sways

It melts like wax in the flame

When old age stakes its final claim

Be not proud of the destructible form

Crumbles when hit by sickness storm

Mother, father, mere guests for a while

Soon they’ll check out with a smile

Yet, their blessings and love will stay

Flowing from the photos day after day

Yesterday got burnt in life’s path

Left sweet and bitter aftermath

Fill today with joy and cheer

It’ll vanish when tomorrow’s here

Respect for light truly comes

After starving for it in the dark

Absence of companion pierces deep

After the loved ones depart

Respect of Person

People are respected

Mostly when needed

In that moment they are

Lifted higher than God

With power and wealth, friends align

Suddenly they stand in endless line

When hard times arrive, you’ll understand

Only a few stay to hold your hand

In tough times, they often say

Even a donkey is called ‘father’

Yet, when adversity fades away

Same ‘father’ is donkey again today

A mother nurtures for nine months

Gives her all to help her child grow

Yet, in old age, she becomes a burden

Endures sarcastic bitter blows:

“They all do—what’s so special about you.”

People are respected

Mostly when needed

In that moment they are

Lifted higher than God

Old Friends

Old friends are like dried flowers

Saved in the precious book of heart

New friends arrive in life

We play, laugh and cry—play our part

But old friends never depart

Old memories are fragrance in the air

Unseen, yet deeply felt—always there

New friends bloom, colorful bright

Turn life to a garden full of delight

Everyone brings their unique hue

Together, we make a garland true

Necklace of friendship is our heartbeat

Strung with love, where all threads meet

They give sunshine during the day

Brighten with moon when sky is grey

In life’s play of shade and light

We hold each other close and tight

Old friends are like dried flowers

Saved in the precious book of heart

New friends arrive in life

We play, laugh and cry—play our part

But old friends never depart.

Fake Friends

Do a hundred things just right

Listen, obey, agree, be polite

You’ll be called a friend

But one mistake, or be misunderstood

They will crush you, forget you for good

Seeing your pockets full

They flock to you as friends

Butterflies hovering over blooming buds

They break your trust, drain you dry

Then fly over to a new prey

Leave you as stranger in a day

Those who judge you

Can never be your friends

They disturb your peace, never mend

And even curse you at the end

Pick a hundred flowers with care

Yet one sharp thorn will be there

Speak the truth, fulfill your roll

Someone will wince—it takes its toll

How can I ever please them all?

In their eyes, I often fall

My thoughts, my deeds, all I do

Gets measured on their scale

When I need a helping hand

Fake friends smile from shore’s land

They watch me struggle and drown

They turn their faces with a yawn

Brittle threads of fake friends

Snap at the slightest jolt

They drop you like a severed kite

Drifting off, leaving you all alone

They cut you off like flowers dry

Shirk meeting you, no reason why

Change their path, avert their gaze

If they see you coming their way

Now, even the mention of

Friendship evokes fear

A storm gentler than breeze so near

A whirlpool safer than a calm river

Now I find solace in solitude

Even shadows of people intrude

Everyone lost in their own sphere

Unmoved if others live or disappear

I’m tired of wearing a fake smile

It’s time to leave, at least for a while

I’ll pray for your happiness everyday

As I turn quietly and walk away

I’m thankful to you, my friend

Whom I trusted to the very end

You opened my eyes, made truth appear

Before it was too late in my final years

Otherwise I might have gone on

Misjudging you till my life was done

Backbiter

Backbiting is their duty, gossip their creed

Whispers about others, they scatter like seed

In your presence, they sing your praise

With words as sweets as honey’s glaze

But when you turn, take your leave

Their tongues turn knives— hard to believe

A backbiter has just two sharp ears

But four mouths to spread the jeers

Twisting, adding to all they hear

Then blurt it out year after year

A serpent’s strike may spare a life

Backbiter’s victim has no chance

We are but mere mortals

Even gods concede to their trance

Everyday they commit sinful deed

Spice-coated words they freely feed

Spread gossip about others to you

Fill others’ ears with gossip about you

Some friends conceal their true face

Wolves in sheep skin, move gracefully

They’re not what they claim to be

Guard yourself and wallet—tread carefully

They carry negative vibes; it’s best to keep distance

Venom flows from the depth of their existence

Stay away from backbiter’s torrents

Ironically, don’t even spare their own parents

Backbiting is their duty, gossip their creed

Whispers about others, they scatter like seed

Ghosts of Past

Ghosts of the past walk along

Dimming joy, misery they prolong

Hundreds of days of joy and song

Overshadowed, silenced by one wrong

Forgiveness is a word alien to the blamer

Perceive whole world as enemy, defamer

Forget many good deeds done by others

They weep, make others weep for one blunder

They forget their flaws, their own mistakes

Blame others for all their heartaches

The past has faded, its moments gone

Yet the unlucky drown, still holding on

Knowingly or not people caused you pain

Forgive them—free yourself from that chain

Learn from the past, live in the now

Where golden seeds of tomorrow grow

Ghosts of the past walk along

Dimming joy, misery they prolong

Hundreds of days of joy and song

Overshadowed, silenced by one wrong

Morning

Some get grief by hand of cruel fate

Some invite sorrow, open their gate

With treasures scattered at their feet

They overlook them, or choose to delete

The sun shares light for all to gain

Some summon clouds, untimely rain

Now drenched in sorrow, they cry in vain

Wishing for the sun to shine again

Children born with smiles and cheer

Fill the home with joy sincere

But anger, pride, greed and lust

Turns that joy to tears and dust

Some lose wealth, and some lose health

Others grieve a child loss felt

Forgetting that dark days will fade

And better days can still be made

Forgetting their own faults and flaws

They point at others, use their own laws

In proving themselves to always be right

They snuff their own and children’s light

The fire of time will burn all too fast

Will turn nest to ashes, dreams won’t last

The vibrant body comes to final rest

The proud forget truth, fail the test

The present devours some

While others destroy the present

They open wounds of distant past

The new growing skin cannot last

Same pain will happen once more

Same wound reopens, causes new sore

Haunted by the lingering memories

Swirling like shadows of the past

New seeds of hope can’t grow or last

Why drown in past’s endless whirlpool

Wake up, live fully, don’t act like a fool

Live, laugh, love—you have one life to try

Open your eyes, enjoy the bounty nearby

The fortunate awaken just in time

By grace, they get blessings divine

They forgive, let the past be gone

Not for others—but to carry on

After long sleep if you wake up late

It is never too late to shape your fate

Morning begins when you open the eyes

Each new dawn brings clear blue skies

Simmering in fire

Simmering on woods of regrets

Singeing in fire, lost in thoughts

Scorched by memories’ endless flame

Burn alone till the end of the game

Time once gone never returns

What is done, can’t be undone

Mother and father will live forever and remain

“Will sit with them tomorrow,” I would explain

But alas, that tomorrow never came

Now they’re only memories—just a name

One by one they all departed— a signal to awake

Yet I remained oblivious to nature’s silent quake

While alive, I held grudges, as if time would wait

Silent and distant I stayed, till it was too late

Colorful youth won’t forever last

This harsh truth struck me at last

As age, diseases and death got near

Unveiled scene, scary and clear

In the remaining time, if you can

Acknowledge your mistakes with folded hands

Embrace those who love you

Quench their thirst with open arms

Hold them close, the ones you hurt

Seek forgiveness with sincere heart

Forgive those who hurt you, with mind and heart

They may not change, you have done your part

Forgiveness sets you free, brings you inner peace

Let them not spoil your days and joys to release

Raw Clay Pots

Shape raw clay pots with gentle hands

Handprints forever stay where they land

Innocent children are soft like clay

Are molded by touch, look, words we say

Marks shape the body, intellect and mind

Gentle ones nurture joy, makes them kind

Cruel ones carve deep scars, leave a trace

A lifetime of pain and torment, hard to erase

Imprints of young age shape a world-view

Become the scale to assess events new

They use these tools to judge and believe

So, watch the lens and scale the youth receive

A love-filled hand converts clump to elegant pot

Creates a world—loving, giving—like a well

Harsh hand leaves behind a crooked ugly form

Unfolds anger, addictions— foundation of hell

Shape raw clay pots with gentle care

Handprints forever stay etched there

Innocent children are like soft clay

Molded by touch, look, words we say

Children

In children's laughter, light of life I see

Shrieks like thunder, lightening set free

Laughing erupts from heart and soul

Spill pearls from lips—nature’s goal

No regrets of past, no worry of the future

In every moment, blessings of God I see

Their smiles make flowers blush and fade

Birds learn to sing, butterflies learn to fly

Small fingers grasp, tender hands reach the heart

Calloused hearts melt like wax—I see roughness depart

They find joy in little things, sway and smile

Discover treasures of joy in Lego and lolly pops

Relish the sweet joy of ice creams

Simple acts of hopping as in dreams

They give smiles to all, hugging lovingly tight

Very fragile are these delicate dolls

Color of their face fades by harsh tone, I see

No conniving schemes, no lies or double talk

No discrimination of color, creed or caste

Entire creation painted unicolor in their eyes

No thievery, no stealing, no selfish fake trickery

Nature's true treasure in every innocent child, I see

In children's laughter, light of life I see

Shrieks like thunder, lightening set free

Laughing erupts from heart and soul

Spill pearls from lips—nature’s goal

Grown Children

We have lived long enough,

Now it is your turn.

I ask forgiveness for any faults,

For man is a creature of mistakes.

We have lived long enough…

Unknowingly, some words

Were spoken or left unsaid

A veil of circumstance lay upon my mind.

What you said—whether I heard or not—

Life’s race was running in this home.

You plant flowers with patience

For this garden bed is yours now

We have lived long enough…

Seeing you soar high in the sky

My heart is overflows with joy

Hearing your name spoken in the world

My soul swells with pride

I pray for your happiness

May your Ram be your savior

We have lived long enough

Now it is your turn

I ask forgiveness for any faults

For man is a creature of mistakes

Now it is your turn

Lessons From Garden

Middle Path

Too much water rots the roots

Too little water stunts the shoots

Too much sun scorches the plants

Too little sun deprives their wants

Too much food can steal its breath

Too little food starves plants to death

A rope too tight will choke the stem

Too loose lets the branches stray from them

From plants we learn the balanced way

Take what nature grants them each day

Take the middle path to bloom in peace

Wild desires cause worries and never cease

Unnecessary Baggage Remove withered flowers, dead leaves from plants Why carry unneeded baggage yesterday grants Past clouds shadow today’s sun

Six Feet Distance

No one embraces, no one shakes hand

No hugs, touching feet or blessing hand

Humans get nervous facing own brand

Distance of six feet changed everything

Clothes in the closet hang abandoned

Jewelry, neck ties wonder what happened

What we lacked, now we can’t spend

Time in four walls seems to never end

Distance of six feet changed everything

Humans imprisoned within their homes

Afraid to take deep breath when not alone

Wild birds, animals roam carefree

Chirping, grazing the earth with glee

Distance of six feet changed everything

Air is clean, sky blue, moon shines bright

Dustless leaves breathe freely, feel light

Distance of six feet changed everything.

Didn’t have time to meet our own

Now plenty, but can’t meet at home

Now connect by phone, Google or Zoom

Talk across street, wave and walks resume

Distance of six feet changed everything

Joy comes from within, not from without

Finally we realized, without a doubt

We don’t need outer glitter to be happy

Life may end any moment, we realized

Distance of six feet changed everything.

Nature, to protect itself in self defense

Launched its assaults, crossing every fence

It preyed on the greedy, haughty and flawed

A strong reminder for all, how weak we are

Distance of six feet changed everything

When the pot of sins overflows

God reincarnates, as history shows

Not always in human form it appears

Sometimes veiled as a virus it comes near

It lays down its stakes, vast power it shows

The humble human prostrates and bows

Distance of six feet changed everything

Distance of six feet changed everything.

Companion

You are— therefore I am

Without you, I am alone, lonely

Enclosed within four silent walls

No laughter, no wonder

No joy in watching the setting sun

Or in the first ray of new dawn

Holding hands, loving, embracing

Smiling without reason

Life is with a companion—

Without one—it’s only rise and fall of breath

A companion at times may bring tears

Making up is better than lonely years

Sharing life's pains and sorrows together

Is sweeter than sipping nectar alone

When companion is sick or frail

It becomes a purpose for life

Their faintest smile is better than

Boundless laughter when alone

With a companion, the world glitters

Alone, even in a crowd, come the jitters

Blessed are those who by God’s grace

Walk with friends of childhood days

Everything seeks a companion:

Plants, trees, birds, animals and humans alike

Alone, a lush forest feels like barren desert

But with a companion, the life blossoms

It becomes a festivals of joy

Robbed House

If your house must be robbed

It better be done by your near and dear

Wretched enemies will rob it anyway

I knew the tricks of my enemies

But now I see the truth of my own

I always avoided embracing the enemies

Yet breathed my last on shoulders I had known

A peaceful death—the only gift of kin

But Wound is deeper if brother’s stabs brother

It’s still better to end life by hands I’ve known

Than live a sugar coated life, fakery of my own

The bandage on my eyes slipped by chance

Saw the hollow wall I once leaned upon

It suddenly came crumbling down

Its bricks became material for my tomb

I am glad;

Even this wish of enemies was not fulfilled

Woman

The cruel world’s eyes pierce like arrows

Each time I step out of the door

This body that gave them birth

Whose milk they drank at first

I cover from their shameless gaze

Forever afraid of actions of men

I keep my eyes glued to the ground

I shrink into my shawl, quicken pace

Shielding my body from whistling lips

From head to toe, every part gets scanned

Through the lust in their dark, evil eyes

They undrape me, see me bare in their mind

I hear remarks about my body

My walk, clothes, and my face

The fault lies in wicked men’s lust

Yet, I am the one who becomes Draupadi

“To get something, you have to

lose something,” I am told

A rule that applies to women alone

A path I am forced to follow

The world belongs to men

Its rules and laws made by them

I lose my image, my identity

Yet, I go out and try my luck

Silently, I walk, shrinking within

Careful to avoid their gaze

The world distorts my meaning

They label me haughty, proud

Some brush me with their filthy hands

Others touch, squeeze—front and back

Vultures consider it their right

Reducing me to a toy for their delight

The cruel world’s eyes pierce like arrows

Each time I step out of the door

This body that gave them birth

Whose milk they drank at first

I veil from their shameless gaze

Wish We Had Not Met

I wish we had never met

Never planted those poisonous seeds

Now, thorn-filled flowers have bloomed

Where a beautiful life was to be groomed

Darkness by day, tears through the night

Grievances and complaints always in sight

Such a harsh penalty for a single mistake

A foundation was built, destined to break

Decisions of others dried the roots—

Tree’s strong stem, otherwise, wouldn’t sway

The hungry past turned to termite infestation

Walls of the house crumbled and decayed

Money, youth, children—everything was ours

If only we had forgiven other’s mistake

No one can fight the hand of fate

Wish both had learnt to give and take

Now we are near the end of life

As I look back, my heart aches and cries

We and children need not have suffered

Tears wouldn’t have spilled from the eyes

I wish we had never met

Never planted those poisonous seeds

Now, thorn-filled flowers have bloomed

Where a beautiful life was to be groomed

Wish We Had Not Parted

I wish we had never said goodbye

I wouldn’t have to suffer alone and cry

Had you not given me infinite love

Your passing wouldn’t hurt so deep

That magic of your first sight

Eyes looked down in sheer delight

When they looked up, I forgot to blink

Hard to peel gaze from face so bright

Shadow of age has altered my body

Sunshine of memories is still fresh

Dark clouds now envelop my heart

Midday sun for me is gloomy dark

Had I not seen your loving face

I wouldn’t remember nor suffer

Each recollection brings silent tear

My heart can’t forget you, my dear

Life’s nature is to move on

Time doesn’t stop for anyone

In these remaining days, I laugh on outside

But my heart silently weeps for you inside

My open laughter feels hollow and muted

Because you are not with me

In crowded gatherings, I feel alone

Because you are not with me

All try to offer their emotional support

Some share a few encouraging words

But they’re inaudible, falling on deaf ears

Others can’t know what filled glorious years

Your absence left a wound so deep

Happy memories in my every cell to keep

Wherever my gaze goes, I see you there

Your image etched in space everywhere

Your glance casts a gentle, cooling shadow

Reassures I am not alone, you’re with me

One hand rests on shoulder, other in my hand

Unseen, yet always, you walk beside me

If this is the cost I must bear

For all the golden memories we shared

I’ll gladly drink the poison without delay

For the joy that filled our everyday

Now tell me—what should I do?

I know you are gone; it’s painfully true

Yet my restless heart weeps through the night

Whispering softly its sorrow and plight

“I wish we had never said goodbye

I wouldn’t have to suffer alone

Had you not given me infinite love

Your passing wouldn’t hurt so deep.”

Path of Life

If you halt at every obstacle

Your goal will remain out of reach

Fearful of thorns in the path of life

You won’t gather the flowers you seek

To spread its wings and soar up high

Colorful butterfly suffers a painful path

To give birth to a new life

Mother at times goes through knife

A river refuses to halt at an obstacle

With roaring force, it carves a new path

When its faithful base slips away

It transforms into a beautiful waterfall

If you stop, afraid of a barking dog

You wont even reach your own home

If you fear rejection or bruised self esteem

You will never your realize cherished dream

A child may stumble, yet rises up tall

Stands, walks—will soon begin to run

But one who fears even a single fall

Traps oneself in a self-made cage

If you halt at every obstacle

Your goal will remain beyond your reach

Fearful of thorns in the path of life

You will not gather flowers you seek

Fire and Tears

Fire ignites, its bright light dazzles

Smoke swirls and rises, flame crackles

A broken heart veils silent cries

While tears fall like rain from eyes

Fire’s inner nature is to burn

Be it for pyre or prayer in turn

A shattered heart bleeds to death

Silently becoming its own urn

A dry thirsty leaf catches fire

Lit by flames of nearby leaves

It crackles, curls, then turns to ash

A heart scorched by own kin’s deeds

It hides its pain from every eye

It’s broken but can’t openly cry

Water douses the rising flame

Yet smoke and ashes still remain

Tears flow, try to wash away the pain

But heartache lingers all the same

Fire ignites, its bright light dazzles

Smoke swirls and rises, flame crackles

A broken heart veils silent cries

While tears fall like rain from eyes

Anger

A person becomes an erupting volcano

Consumed by anger’s blinding glow

Sizzling red lava pours from the lips

Destroying all that crosses its flow

Anger is the enemy of intellect,

A veil that shrouds clear thinking.

In a single moment, a lifelong bond

Can crumble like a fragile wall.

Anger—the enemy of intellect

Clouds the mind and wrecks clear thought

Lifelong bonds shatter in a breath

Like crumbling wall on the verge of death

Fueled by pride of status or wealth

Revenge, booze or mental health

Lava scorches all in flame

Leaving ashes as victim’s frame

Sharp arrows of cruel, harsh words

Cut deeper than sharpest swords

Tender saplings whither, afraid to grow

Stay rootless in the barren earth below

Mighty blaze fades, now tranquil

Its thunderous roar is now still

Charred branches, crumbled leaves remain

Ashes weep soaked by tear’s rain

The lava now pleads for forgiveness

But its remorse has come too late

The victim charred by relentless fire

Has resigned to a doomed fate

Eyes silently drink their own tears

Fading heartbeats slowly disappear no

Volcano sinks into its own gash

Flame, name and, fame, reduced to ash

One Hand Clap

They say one hand can’t make a clap

I say—Wrong

One hand can create clap

But this time it’s called slap

One rejoices joy of festivities

Whole community joins activities

Another, in a bout of anger

Strikes unlucky cheek in danger

The meek receivers, hurt humiliated

Sob alone, fall in own eyes, degraded

A single-handed clap

Leaves wounds that last lifetime

Unopened bud gets crushed

Unable to bloom in its prime

Two-hands clap echo stays

For few moments, then fades away

Memories linger in heart for a few days

Before it vanishes in mind’s haze

One-handed clap creates a shriek

Imprints red marks on the cheek

Sound—stays unseen as pain in heart

It lingers forever, tears one apart

They say one hand can’t make a clap

I say—Wrong

One hand can create a clap

But this time it’s called a slap

Cob Web

Trapped in cobweb of my own

Spun by me with joy and fleeting glee

Planned to gather unlimited possessions

Enough to become financially free

I spun endless amount of threads

Too much to keep, manage and let go

Spent lifetime saving nickel and.dime

Now I realize it was never mine

Neglected health, family, and friends

Even forgot the gift of sleep

Never paused to thank or think of God

Lost, wandering in my ways too deep

Mother, father who gave me my life

Raised me with love, nurtured me to grow

Lost within myself, I failed to see their tears

Each neglect deepening their silent fears

I never paused to ask my family if we needed

A lonely palace or a lively, happy home

I woke up from my dream when they all had left

And wept staring at my own shadow alone

Time flows, never stopping for anyone

Shattering all I earned—or even stolen

I regret now what and why I chose to ignore

The wisdom my elders had shared before

Only my web felt indestructible

Neither storms nor rain could tear it apart

I persisted to live in this false hope

Until I fell into earth’s lap, repenting

Trapped forever in my own cobweb

Politicians

Politicians plunder the country

Blatant, brazen and without any shame

Before election, they bow as our servants

After victory, all promises are forgotten

Now they reign as kings and we as slaves

Now plunder country they promised to save

Adorned in spotless white attires

They hide a heart of dark desires

A dagger concealed behind their back

While a moving rosary covers their track

They’re two mouthed snakes

Biting, with every breath they take

Politicians plunder the country…

Win or lose, it’s same old game

All parties plunder in public’s name

Who can we truly blame

Our broken dreams burn in their flame

Politicians plunder the country…

Diamonds, pearls fill leaders’ hall

While the poor crave for crumbs that fall

They cry as much as they can bear

There is no dearth of the tears

Politicians plunder the country…

Politicians plunder the country

Blatant, brazen and without any shame

Reunion

Yesterday’s children are now seniors

No one feels— or is called— old

Oh, what a strident walk it was

Once overflowing hair, the air blew

Now have to search for remaining few

Makkarh

Makkarh—Makar, Madan—Dan

Juginder has now become Jay

The outer appearance has aged

Even the real names are taken away

The glitter of dreams once lit my eyes

Now cataracts dim the open skies

We grew up in majestic, towering halls

Now they’re ruins of crumbling walls

Yesterday, we were blank pages

Only education, no material possessions

What will the pen of life write?

Clueless, will future be dark or bright

We wrote some lines, and others wrote too

Most penned by destiny, we never knew

In the book of life, we found some joys

Some pages spilled tears from our eyes

We left home with an empty clay pot

Hoping to fill it with water, sweet and cool

Dreamed of service, name and fame

Money and high status in society’s frame

On path of life, some met bride or groom

Where fragrant, multi-color flowers bloom

The lucky ones filled their bag with care

While some, too soon, met their Maker there

Some, thoughtful, planners, wise and strong

Chiseled their own path under the open skies

Others floated like leaves upon a stream

Drifting with current to an unknown dream

Some lost a little, discovered much more

Blessings they’d never dreamt of before

Some, mindless of cost of their actions

In wrong company, later faced reactions

Some, by luck, and hard work

Kept a healthy lifestyle, never got sick

Diseases, by many names and symptoms

Invaded and occupied others’ homes

After fifty years, we have met once more

A reunion we never dreamt before

Through Jasbir and Madan’s hard work

Revived many memories, once forgotten

More memories lie dormant, fewer dreams remain

But we will revive them, and relive once again

We are still alive, with a zest to enjoy

We’ve met again, will sing songs of joy

We’ve met again, will sing songs of joy

**(Happy Reunion— Class of 1966)**

Attitude

If our attitude is firm and right

Even the darkest life becomes bright

The life which began, will surely end—

Some go early, some later, my friend

The moments granted between two ends

Get joy or sorrow, on attitude it’ll depend

Dawn arrives—eyes open, body is whole

Blessed are those who wake for a worthy goal

Welcome the day with gratitude and grace

Let a positive attitude light your face

What we receive is often a chance

Each moment offers free will—to sulk or dance

We are instruments of a higher power

To raise a paradise, or crush a blooming flower

Hoarding is inner poverty—a sense of lack

Sharing brings your own abundance back

Relieve other’s pain, suffering and sorrow

Watch your own heal, for a better tomorrow

What all you’ve received in life

People long to get a fraction of that

Don’t weigh yourself by others’ scales

Glittering lives may hide many sad tales

If our attitude is firm and right

Even the darkest life becomes bright

Shared Things

What’s shared becomes even sweeter

Yet, it loses nothing, grows no weaker

It’s value doubles, then multiply more

Creates respect and memories to adore

We decorate our homes with delight

With plants and flowers, ever so bright

Those who adorn neighbors’ space

Find joy and bonds time can’t erase

It’s easy to spend on oneself alone

While the same wealth

Can lift thousands of children out of poverty

Dry their tears, they never go to sleep hungry

Fruit ripens, makes itself sweet

Others enjoy, spread its seeds

Even in serving self-interest

Good can be done to others in need

I received more than ever needed

Was considered capable and succeeded

While thousands drowned in life’s sorrow

Sharing brings grace, brighten tomorrow

What’s shared becomes even sweeter

Yet, it loses nothing, grows no weaker

It’s value doubles, then multiply more

Creates respect and memories to adore

Jigsaw Puzzle

A thousand-piece jigsaw puzzle—

Assembled, it’s colorful and complete

It looks unfinished and improper

If even one piece we delete

Nine hundred ninety-nine remain incomplete

Until the final piece they meet

Each one as vital as all the rest

Equally important—none worst, onone best

The picture remains incomplete

Until all pieces join hand in hand

A single player can’t alone create

A symphony or a melodious band

When someone cares and calls

They are thinking of you and recall

Their piece of puzzle is being missed

They’re concerned, are you safe and well?

You are in their thoughts, they want to tell

Each piece is precious, important and needed

Only when they all unite— puzzle completed

Don’t become haughty, proud or loud

Existence is fleeting—a fragile, floating cloud

Lucky Wealthy

By God’s grace, the fortunate and wealthy

Can perceive pain and sufferings of the world

What they have received, freely give away

With humility and open heart, in selfless way

Such rare diamonds are born in this world

I often ask them for their secret

They smile and say, “What we’ve received by grace

One lifetime is not enough to give back.

He considered me worthy

To fulfill His work through my hands”

No desire for fame, no longing for a prize

Quietly serving to improve downtrodden’s lives

Thanking God endlessly all their days.

By God’s grace, the fortunate and wealthy

Can perceive pain and sufferings of the world

What they have received, freely give away

With humility and open heart, in selfless way

Summary of Ramayan

Father conceded to his wife

Son conceded to his father

Mareech turned into a golden deer

Ravan abducted Sita, held so near

Filled his sack of sins, with no fear

Shabri fed love-filled *ber* to Ram

Monkey scorched Lanka with tail

The family traitor crumbled Lanka

Ram Lakhan brought Sita home

Bharat removed clogs from throne

People adorned homes, lit oil lamps with joy

A washerman’s word caused her disgrace

Sita walked through fire to save her face

To reclaim honor and her honorable place

Luv Kush born in Valmiki’s retreat

Sita lived there twelve years, discreet

Sita suffered—till earth took her in

Janaki vanished, bearing no sin

Ram upheld honor, stood by his name

Since then the world proclaims:

“Victory to Sita Ram

Victory to Sita Ram”

Summary of Mahabharat

Kaurav Pandav—paternal cousins

Fought for land, both wanted to win

One picked Krishna for guidance and wisdom

Other chose his fierce army to win the kingdom

When Arjun saw his own kin as foes

His mind got weak, his body froze

After listening to Gita in Krishna’s voice

He learnt the truth and made his choice

Fought with his teachers, family and friends

Sanjay, blessed with divine sight

Told Dhritrashtra of the fight

Learning that his hundred sons had died

Blind king’s eyes filled with tears, as he cried

Eighteen days on Kurukhyetra’s plains

Thousands of soldiers were stained

Pandavs won and Kauravs lost

Predestined play ended at heavy cost

Come, gather around and let’s all chant

Victory to Bal Gopal!

Victory to Kanahiya Lal!

Victory to Lord Krishan!

Hope of Loyalty

How can I speak of hope

For loyalty from others

When I myself never looked back

To truly see them

I missed the overflowing tears and sobbing

The drooped and sagging sad shoulders

Flying birds never bothered to turn

To witness that last, waving goodbye

Hurricane

Mistakes are made not only by human hands

Even God does it repeatedly across the lands

Otherwise why the flood without a warning

The lightening, wind and the killer storming?

The ocean rose and claimed the land,

Roaring clouds above gave way and burst

Children and the frail old were swept away,

The young and strong fought, but could not stay

To bring the sea onto the land

Why such a mistake O God?

Clock

The tick tock of the clock

Announces every second:

“Wake up, you sleepy, semi-comatose

Love God and His creation

Only a few moments remain

To show your love and be loved.”

Poets

Poets are a different breed

They live beyond color, race and creed

Mind shut, words spill from beyond brain

From silent void, gems appear, they claim

Every moment pregnant with unborn poetry

Nature’s limitless bounty stored in its pantry

Shut the mind, deeply feel the moment

Thoughts numb, mind still, words pour in torrent

They see creation in a novel way

In their own sphere, aloof they stay

Fingers move by a higher crown

They’re not ruled by their mind

They accept no praise or accolades

Didn’t do anything of special kind

Just a conduit to transport here from beyond

Whose treasures anyone could have found

Goodbye Welcome

Perched on the wall of childhood, pondering

Time has come to stay, goodbye or welcome

Separation from one’s own is painful, full of sorrow

How to leave ones who are mine, my own shadow

Only yesterday I came to this home

Learnt to cry, laugh, talk and walk alone

A blip of time in holding and slipping finger

In a blink of eye, courtyard will become alien

Sweet childhood, carefree night and day

Rising youth devoured them in full display

Aspirations, dreams, thinking have changed

New life, new goals and a world of my own

My future, wide open with choices says “welcome”

Bird learnt to fly, spreads its wings

Then pauses, wobbles and wonders

Move forward or cling to safe childhood

In such thoughts, anxious mind is drowned

Perched on the wall of childhood, pondering

Time has come to say goodbye or welcome

Time has come to say goodbye or welcome

(Dedicated to Amartya, Jaya, Amaya and others as they turn 18, ready to go to college.)

Whisper

Leaves quivered, a whisper told

Deer looked up, they ignored

A hidden lion leaped in a flash

An easy dinner without a clash

Drank much, began to drive

Friends pleaded and objected

Youth oblivious of final breath

Father lit pyre for untimely death

While playing a game

Friend called a clear “in” ball as “out”

Whisper ignored, joined business

Neither have money now nor the friend

I don’t smoke, I firmly refused

“Have one for me,” pushed my friend

Didn’t recognize the faint whisper

Died young, made my family cry

God imbeds right voice in every soul

Dust of anger, pride, lust and greed settles

Voice of childhood swallowed by youth

Now the voice becomes a faint whisper

If you want to choose right path

Focus on breath, uncover your real self

Shake off the dust, awaken your mind

Be aware, change whisper back to voice

Be aware, change whisper back to voice

Spring

Summer grants abundant leaves and fruits

Buds unfurl, colorful flowers blossom

Pearly dew-diamonds cling to fresh shoots

What life gives us

Time reclaims and snatches

Autumn hits us all

Bad times, like winter chill

Inevitably hit us all

Bare branches suffer deadly ice

Burdened by heavy snow

Earth spins around the sun

It reclaims the life it bestows

Ice and snow accept defeat

Meekly melt, and silently drip away

Have faith in God’s grace

When life’s ups downs come your way

Have no doubt, bad times will vanish

Spring will arrive for sure

Buds will bloom again

What was taken away mercilessly

Will soon return again

Bad times, like winter, challenge us all

Stay sturdy, like bare brown branches

Spring will return—again and again

A Flower's Story By the Flower

In open air, proudly I frolicked and swayed

From colorful lips, sweet fragrance sprayed

Multi-hued relatives, friends around me

Butterflies sipped nectar, joined by a rare bumblebee

After kissing one flower

They hopped to the next

To delight me, they played

Seven notes, sang happy songs

I used new ways to look prettier than the rest

Seeing reflection in water, felt proud, shy and happy

In my eyes, I was truly the best

Excessive beauty is good and bad too

Colorful fragrant youth is good and bad too

I relished passionate kissing, loving caress

Alas, my pretty face admired by flower vendor too

Seeking young, color-laden flowers

His eyes singled me out, but I was oblivious

Vibrant bloom will look stunning in the flower vase

His greedy eye saw fame and money in my face

In his mind, slayer had greedy thoughts and schemes

Unaware, innocent, I saw a lover in my future assassin

Wretched man pulled bright scissors from his bag

He seized my throat, split me from my mom and dad

A single swoop inflicted pain, shattering thousands dreams

For a fleeting pleasure, he bundled us tight and put away

With cold hands, he tied us with band

Made us weep inside a glass palace

For a marriage celebration

He put my friends and me on display

For the couple’s joy, we spilled blood, lost lives

Entwined lovers swayed on the dance floor

Not once they glanced at me or my sacrifice

Evening gave way to night

My ears stirred when someone mentioned me

"This grand flower is gorgeous.

Must be very expensive!”

I wept hearing my life, my dreams measured in money

No one heard my sobs or felt pain of my sacrifice

They savored food and dessert

Yet no one thanked me even once

Fortunate few went with guests, adorned their homes

Unlucky ones, like me, met our end in a trash can

I had stored many dreams in my heart

Will have colorful life, will bloom for weeks

Will have my own world, seeds and lovely kids

No one can fight the hand of destiny

What is pre-destined, can’t be prevented

I had dreamt of open sky, gentle cool breeze

Now I am gasping for last breath in rotted trash

Even as my tears mingle with water

I send blessings to the newly wedded lovers

I wish them health and endless happiness

The very ones for whom I bled, got slain

May they have a long life

May no one cut them down

Before a full productive life

With half closed eyes, in near coma

I send blessings their way

May no one cut them before a full life

May no one cut them before a full life

Color Blind

A man of color, neat and trim

Sat in the doctor's waiting room

A family chose to stand

Refusing to sit next to him

A shadow fell on their heart, a bad omen seen

Nurse gently called "Doctor will see you to discuss plan”

Then joy erupted "Successful transplant!

Your daughter will live normal life."

The end of their grief—

Relief-filled, they hugged each other and their daughter

All let out a collective sigh of relief

Doctor called in the neat trim man—

The donor of bone marrow

“Because of him your daughter is alive

She will see many tomorrows

Color of skin is different

Color of the blood and the marrow is same.”

Full of guilt, they bowed before him

Their tears-filled eyes unable to meet his

Overcome, they hugged him tightly—

Humbled by shame

A Moment

Agony of hours-long labor finally ends

A welcome cry in the air, laughter it sends

It's a girl!, a boy!, count fingers, toes—set of fives

In that moment, the miracle changes many lives

Non-stop actions, endless laughter

Children convert house to a home

Days seem long, childhood flies fast

In a moment, they’re off to college dorm

At the right time, with right person

A momentary smile

Can change their lives forever

Shaping generations yet to come

A moment of anger is scar for ever

Arrow once shot, returns to bow never

A single moment of greed, or lust

Can crush many lives to a pile of dust

In a moment, vibrant world gets dark forever

In the eye, protective cells clumped together

No sunrise, moon, family to be seen forever

With vision lost, eyes shed tears of despair

A blind eye, a paralyzed limb, slurred speech

Immobile heap of mass, a helpless stare

Stroke paralyzed voice of the constant talker

In a moment, arrive wheelchair and walker

A plane soaring safely, touching the sky

In a moment, it plummets, everywhere its ashes lie

A cabin filled with voices, faces bright

In a moment, silent—gone from sight

A hurried wrong cut nicks a bleeder

Turns successful surgery to fatal disaster

Wrong sequence of four elements, in a moment

Transforms perfect gene to a recipe of cancer

Eye turned down for text or phone chime

Switch radio station or check the time

One extra drink, a pill or drug—in a moment

Innocent lives get crippled or turn to ash

Momentary flash of insight leads to discovery

In a flash, Hiroshima Nagasaki were history

Earth moves, shakes for a few moments

Houses tumble, bridges break down

Crushes all, whether poor or wear a crown

A moment of yes or a moment of no

To a drug offered by a friend or a foe

A “yes” assures a path of misery, strife

A “no ” predicts a healthy fruitful life

Give a moment of your time to ones you love

Share a moment with friend or someone new

A hug to loved ones, caring glance to child or grandchild

Change world forever by giving a moment of your life

Think for a moment before throwing a stone

An insult, a harsh glance or degrading tone

In a moment, you can break a lively heart

Can't mend broken thread without a knot

A moment is transient, never to be seized again

A moment is a priceless, free treasure chest

Once it is gone, it’s forever spent

Use it wisely, with careful intent

Be A Sun

💥

Illuminate all that you touch

Be the giver—receivers seek much

Shine free for all, expect nothing back

Recipients circle, spin, follow your track

Give light to others, untouched by their ways

They use or misuse it, not for you to appraise

Some may ignore you, take you for granted

Keep glowing even if ignored or unwanted

You were born to shine, stay detached

Spend days giving, no strings attached

Let not pride show through your bright rays

The Creator who made you, gave limited days

So my daughter and my son

Stay bright, giving like the sun

Be a sun

Moon

🌕

Facing the red-hot glow of the sun

Moon's face paled and waned

Stars deserted away, abandoned the sky

Moonlight got dim, then vanished

The moon hung lonely in the sky

Feeling nervous, alone and shy

Everyone prays to the rising sun

In dark times, friends often run

They had sworn to stand forever near

Now alone, no one comes here

Where they glimpse glitter of gold

Make new friends, let go the old

Brothers, sisters, friends forgotten

They toss me aside as if I’m rotten

Yesterday, kith and kin were dear

Today they shun me, nor come near

"Mind your status before you appear"

Such piercing taunts now fill my ear

I too once had my share of good days

Now life has torn me from within

I have to carry my burden alone

My friends departed, so did my kin

Complain not O gentle moon

It’s only a matter of hours

The sun’s fierce blaze will dim

Its red hot fury will fade

You will rule the sky again

Your night will shine again

Fresh moonlight will return

Departed stars will come home

Sheets of joy will softly billow

Will engulf you in their dome

After dark moments, comes the light

After sad days, peace and joy alight

With faith, strength within the heart

Clouds vanish, moonlight, stars are bright

Moon once again shines bright

Happy moon glows again at night

The River

From the mountains she’s blessed with birth

She grows, flows and blossoms in mirth

Eagerly, she moves the earth, carves its path

Overcomes many obstacles, takes painful falls

She shares its abundance with flowers and fields

Swaying in joy, yet to one dream it yields—

To meet its lover, who’s waiting for her to arrive

She quivers with excitement, takes the final dive

Her love-filled goal at last achieved

Her heart flutters but she still believes

Within inviting arms she’s received

The lovers become one with deep devotion

And assume a common name: the ocean

Book Ends

One comes home in an open crib basket

One leaves home stored in a closed casket

One cries on arrival while others are glad

One quietens, making others weep and sad

One comes speechless, now a chatterbox

One talked non-stop, now vocal cords locked

One looks forward to actions and dreams

One’s dreams drowned by others’ screams

One is a seed ready to grow tall

One seed had overgrown, ready to fall

One sprouts to grow vibrant and flourish

One merges in earth, becomes food to nourish

Cycle of life goes on and on

One feeds on the prior one

One ready to become food for next one

One innings is over and next one is on

Both are book-ends of the Real One

Never born, never dies, ever present

Both are visible creations of The One

Word Power

Thousands of words fill the market

Come, let’s select what we want

Some are attached to briers unkind

Fragrant colorful flowers, hard to find

Some spread laughter, joy and hope

Others hurt deeper than thorns can poke

Some double the sorrow’s heavy load

Few halve the grief they offer to hold

Gentle words can dry the tears of poor and sad

Cruel one make happy persons weep or mad

Two words of hope make the fallen walk again

Discouraging ones kill the will to move again

Burning lava from lips turns a friend into a foe

Sweet words make stranger kind, let love grow

Unwise words in anger erect everlasting wall

While kind ones sooth us like a gentle waterfall

When words whispered behind back reach the prey

Relationship of years, in a moment fall apart and fray

Some words better said by eyes with lips kept closed

While others when uttered, eyes look down in shame

Some words I long to say, but listeners are no more here

They become prisoners in the heart, then flow out in tears

Untimely harsh words tear the people apart

Speaker unaware, listener crumbles in heart

“Sunken cheeks, lost weight, grown weak”

Depressing words make healing patient sick again

A word of encouragement to someone down and out

Awakens a shelled talent in a seed, makes it sprout

Words are mighty powerful beyond measure

Even a single one can change the world forever

Weigh the words before they leave the lips and go

They don’t return, like an arrow leaving the bow

They don’t return like an arrow leaving the bow

Taken For Granted

From our balcony, Pittsburgh unfolds

Awesome, breathtaking, a sight to behold

Tall buildings textured and lit bright

Some days soaked in golden light

At nights embraced by fog or moonlight

As at birth, a newborn draws our gasps

Same feelings evoked, our jaw drops.

What man did to enhance miracle of nature

How blessed we are to living in such treasure

People throng the round Viewpoints

Fill benches, run and walk on the trail

Lip-locked lovers, bikers and walkers

Zippy kids, occasional old and frail

Hear oos and aahs, the cameras click

They come hooded, bundled in winter’s grip

In rain— ponchos, cover head to toe

In summer, half-dressed bask and glow

Limos on Grandview Avenue for special occasion

Birthdays, colorful weddings, or just view and fun

Sunrise shimmers on the windy river

Sunset dance on glass towers glitters

Best view of the vibrant city of bridges

Magical scenes of the valleys and ridges

Two beautiful rivers, like two lovers greet

Point’s end is where they are eager to meet

They merge to create the mighty new one flow

Fountain sees new life spring, ready to grow

With every passing day

Thrill of the view got dim and jaded

Starry lights not as bright

Nights same old but dull and faded

Some wish for a higher floor

For broader views of the open sky

Some who have dreaded acrophobia

Nervously wish it was not so high

I dislike PPG building of towering height

It steals the sky, where fireworks light

It’s shining glass no longer a mirror clear

Cuts off the view of the Allegheny River

Monongahela is no longer shiny blue

Its water now has murky brown hue

Train's whistle is ear-piercing noise

Drowns every conversations’ voice

Roaring cars and bikes assault my ears

Black soot coats windows, tables and chairs

The Point is just a sticking finger of land

Jutted between two rivers, where third expands

Days and nights keep rolling by

We never pull the drapes for a peek

Nothing special stirs this sleepy town

Monongahela now a creek, trickles down

Similarly—life is often taken for granted

Our breath, vision in eyes, the beating heart

Many trillions cells working, playing their part

Even makers of our body—parents— are forgotten

Often cursed, for wrong gene or actions

Despite giving us thousands perfect ones

Nature or God, neither thanked nor acknowledged

Everything, with time, gets taken for granted

Only pitfalls highlighted to grumble and whine

Complaints take front stage, get polished to shine

Views of the Burgh and miracles of life

They all, with time, get taken for granted

They all, with time, get taken for granted

Mountain Cries

Many have shed tears of love and joy on my shoulders

Snow, rain, tears soak me, trees roll down as boulders

My cries and tears display my deep sorrow

I go to sleep, wondering if I'll see tomorrow

I seem healthy outside, but inside I suffer in pain

Mighty in appearance, but bleeding, hollow, drained

I support mansions, tolerate deep cuts, tunnels in me

Pieces of flesh detach from my body, helpless I see

Millions get across—over, through cuts in my body

Thousands live on me, I happily carry everybody

I give golden views of the Burgh, best in the nation

Where millions pledge to chase their imagination

Nothing stays young forever, I get old as we all

Land slides, bit by bit making me feeble and small

Many a mama tell children "Don't cry, you are a big boy"

I am mighty and big, but I must seek help as a little boy

My tears erupting rolling down my cheek

Watch landslides, open gashes you can peak

Not for long I will carry people, buildings and roads

Stop my bleeding mudslides, the ground it erodes

Give me grass, creepers and strong-rooted trees

Let them hold me together, for both you and me

Don't litter me with plastic, paper, glass or tin

They choke my roots and kill my life within

Help me, hold and support me as I have done for you

Or I will vanish for the future generations’ view

Come see my tears as desperately, in public I cry

With your love, you will heal me, make my eyes dry

With your love, you will heal me, make my eyes dry

If Not Now, When?

Pace of life is the same for all

Neither fast nor slow for anyone

King or pauper, big or small,

Destination is same, known to all

Life is short, many dreams in the heart

Paint them, breathe life into every part

Tomorrow's sun may or may not rise

Dreams of the night may go unfulfilled

Whatever you want to achieve, do it now

If not now, when?

Greed, name and wealth eclipsed children, wife

Precious moments were lost chasing fame in life

Shadow of death waiting at the next crossing

Children swiftly leave home on to their path

Play, laugh, make them laugh and think

If not now, when?

Before disease claims you as its home

Joints freeze, breath shortens,

Mouth emits haunting wails

Preserve the body before it shrivels

Water the flowers before they wither

Save the iron before it rusts and ruins

Time, once gone, never returns

If not now, when?

Fulfill heart’s every desire

Open sky showers gifts, fill your tote

With good luck, some time still remains

Harm no one, then do what needs done

In not now, when ?

Friends and family are advising

Brother—stop, listen, awaken

If not now, when?

If not now, when?

**Where Did Our Old USA GOWhere Did Our Old USA GO**

Had dreams of a country where rivers flowing milk, roads were glittery gold

Where Homeless

Homeless

I am jobless, moneyless, homeless

Can’t raise eyes, I am not shameless

Don’t pity my torn clothes, the sign

Look at my eyes, I am not faceless

Like you, I had family, friends and home

Sunshine of my parents, stars of my own

Don’t know when, how all got eclipsed

Life’s colors faded, I became dreamless

I ask, plead, beg but never steal

Famished, looking for next meal

Hunger pain rarely felt by most

Wish my condition they can feel

Jobless, moneyless, homeless, hopeless

Traffic lights, intersections— hope or mirage?

Painful steps I take when pacing the floor

A look, smile, a dollar make me briefly painless

But then again—

Jobless, moneyless, homeless, hopeless

Cant raise my eyes, I am not shameless

Cant raise my eyes, I am not shameless

Where a raised thumb stopped a car to carry weary needy traveler on the road

Where Did Our America GO

I had dreams of a country

Where milk flowed in the rivers

Roads were painted with gold

American dreams had no bounds

With ambition, goals and grit bold

Where a raised thumb, story untold

Stopped a car to kindly transport

A weary, safe traveler on the road

Where neighbors brought welcome baskets

For new arrivals from home and abroad

Where people, properties were respected

Young ones honored and cared for the old

Forever, a country of legal immigrants

Anxious, eager to become new residents

New faces were wrapped in residents’ fold

They happily helped the needy and the bold

Where police were respected, esteemed

They were parents, brothers to those in need

Who cared for white, black, brown and all

Whether people were at home or on the road

Where children walked alone to school

Within ear shot, at night, laughter echoed

Where teachers of all grades were respected

Schools stood as sanctuary for students

A safe place to learn, to grow, and play

Where door was open, with no lock

Neighbors were one family on the block

Alarm systems and security cameras

Were not part of schools or homes

Where guns were used to hunt

Machine guns only in war zones

Children needed no gun drills

In the schools or at their homes

Where drugs were medicines

People could afford

Now people skip meals for medicine

While drugs kill teens in hoards

Where word of mouth over a coffee

Was same as a notarized paper

A handshake enough to seal the deal

Where different ideas and opinions

Didn't make others enemy of the land

Whether agreeing or not, we could stand

One Nation as one family, a united band

Solving issues calmly with hand in hand

A melting pot where all strived together

Unity in diversity, all living in peace

United as a rainbow, colorful bright

Together they created one common light

It was not too long ago

Where proud Americans

Lived, laughed, played ball

With trust and equality

There was justice for all

*That was not too long ago*

Where did *that* old America go?

Where did our old America go?

Few Colors of America

(Wherever you live, there will be flowers as well as thorns. America has countless flowers—but it comes with share of thorns. After arriving in the USA, a dialogue unfolds between husband and wife.)

Wife—Where are you taking me, fellow traveler?

What is this place beyond the stars?

Husband—

Dreams of stars we never got to know

We reached America, fortune whispered no

Some of the weird ones reached Weirton

Those are not dark monsoon clouds in the sky

It’s a ball of smoke from the mills nearby

Here you are— helper, servant, gardener

Washerman, chauffeur, parent all in one

Not possible to sit down, even for two minutes

Why weep or drown in regret

We receive only what fate has set

Palaces rise here, wide and tall

But hearts stay narrow in all

Money comes first, love comes late

Wealth and power decide your fate

They bow to those who bring the dough

Call it friendship, but deep down you know

Friendship and love are bought and sold

Dollar is mightier than bonds of old

I’d heard that dollars grow on trees

Pockets are full, but hearts are empty

Life is trapped in a golden cage

Buy diamonds, stocks or bonds with pride

Yet peace and joy stay locked outside

Day and night, the same old play

Chasing wealth in endless way

In this country, night and day

Bullets rain in deadly spray

Curses of faith and racial divide prevail

Children are prisoners, schools their jails

Neighbors pass like unfamiliar faces

Loneliness haunts once- friendly places

The mind grows numb, no one to save

Even home seems like a silent grave

Dreams of stars we never got to know

We reached America, fortune whispered no

from home and abroad

People,

Let There Be No Next Time

Let there be no next time

Children victims of gun crime

Youth slain before their prime

Buds crushed in springtime

Prayers come from the clergy

Politicians vow hollow energy

Vigil flames flicker transient unity

Blame insane mind no one can see

Let love displace angry hate

Let peace replace inner rage

Let’s all live in one image

Free from recurring rampage

Let there be no next time

Children victims of gun crime

Yet *again*, wailing sirens chime

It’s that old familiar dreaded time

Parents rush to the scene of crime

Broken hearts cry out, *Why* *mine*?

In lifeless children, I sadly see

Blood-stained daughters, sons

They may not be my own

But they are fellow Americans

*In place of wreaths and flowers*

*Lay down once and forever*

*AR-15 rifles*

*AK-47 rifles*

Let there be no next time

Please, please

Let there be no next time

properties respected; young ones respected, cared for the old

Country of immigrants didn’t see criminals in news faces but took them in their fold

Where Americans reached out to needy at home or abroad

Where police were respected and police cared for white black or brown on the road

Where kids walked alone to school, played outside till dark, giggles in air roared

Where teachers were respected, schools a sanctuary for students, safe places to learn

Where doors were not locked, alarm systems, security cameras not part of homes

Where guns were used to hunt, machine guns only in war zones

Kids needed no gun drills in schools or homes

Where drugs were medicines people could afford

Now people skip meals for medicine

Drugs killing teens in hoards

Where a word of mouth was good as a notarized paper, a shake of hand

Where we had problems, issues and opinions not making others enemy of the land

Agree or not we were one Nation together solving problems at hand

Unity in diversity, white light emitting colors of rainbow in full free display

Where lived proud Americans

with dreams of equality, justice for all

Not too long ago

Where did that old USA go

Where did our old USA go

Had dreams of a country where rivers flowing milk, roads were glittery gold

Where American dreams had no bounds with ambition, grit, hard work, goals bold

Where a raised thumb stopped a car to carry weary needy traveler on the road

Where neighbors sent welcome baskets to new arrivals from home and abroad

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Where did our old USA gLaughterLaughter

Laughter

Poker

If you plan to convert

Truth into lies and lies to winning

Plan to bring other’s wealth

To your home

Brother, learn Poker

If luck deals you winning cards

And you play your assigned part

You start believing you are smart

Brother, learn Poker

In life, not everyone wins

With only one card missing

House comes tumbling down

Brother, learn Poker

If your success is based on

Someone else’s loss

If you feel happy

By making others weep

Brother, learn Poker

Cards may be weak or strong

Luck deals the hand we play

Learn to be find happiness

In whatever life displays

Brother, learn Poker

Being happy in victory

Shedding tears in loss

It’s a matter of two days

Have deep faith

A new card arrives, brings new hope

Brother, learn Poker

By Grace of God

You got a chance to play

In the game of poker

Or game of life

If you want to win in both

Choose ways to stay happy

Don’t blame luck

Brother, learn Poker

Brother, learn Poker

Wife

I wish to have such a wife

Who stays as my slave

Whether it’s night or day

Height is five foot three, just right

In snug blue jeans, a charming sight

Hair are like dark clouds in the sky

Fair colored, smiley face, twinkle in her eye

With me she never has a fight

I wish to have such a wife…

She works at a job away from home

At home she serves my parents all alone

Keeps house shining like a mirror

Cooks food daily with love and cheer

After I return from golf to rest

She soothes me with a refreshing massage

I wish to have such a wife…

A dozen kids she gives us

Our own cricket team at home

Our house turns into noisy carnival

She commands the whole army

Lovingly hands me a chilled beer

I wish to have such a wife…

I wish to have such a wife

Who stays as my slave

Whether it is night or day

Husband

Oh God, grant me a such a husband

Who wakes up at dawn, touches my feet

Brings me biscuits and tea

Wakes me with tender love and whispers

“Open your eyes my beloved”

Oh God, grant me a such a husband

Before waking me up from my bed

Gets children ready, school bags packed

Serves healthy breakfast with love

To keep up with my shopping spree

Works sixteen hours outside tirelessly

Oh God, grant me a such a husband…

All the money he earns

Puts every penny into my hand

Gives me five best Visa cards

Takes me shopping in the mall

Gifts me shoes, clothes, gold, and jewels

Oh God, give me a such a husband

He irons my clothes

Polishes my nails with a smile

Shines my shoes until they gleam

Dresses me for parties and

Opens door of my Bentleys

Oh God, give me a such a husband…

His has a smile like Aamir Khan’s

Hair-style has Dev Anand’s flair

His cheeks glow rosy red

He stands tall like Amitabh

Walks with Salman’s confident air

Oh God, give me a such a husband

Oh God, grant me a such a husband

Who wakes up at dawn, touches my feet

Brings me biscuits and tea

Wakes me with tender love and whispers

“Open your eyes my beloved”

Oh God, grant me a such a husband

Playful Quarrel of Husband Wife

A musical skit

Curtain rises.

A man wearing white doctor’s coat is sitting on a sofa.

On a side table close to him, there is a stethoscope and picture of Goddess Lakshmi. He is reading Wall Street Journal with bold words of Wall Street facing the audience.

He puts down the paper.

He addresses Goddess Lakshami—Om, Om, Om Lakshmi Mata, please give us your blessings today. Stocks have been sinking for so many days. Our portfolio is shrinking. Intel, Boeing, Cisco, they all keep dropping like dominos. They are all in deep sleep. Pleasewake them up. Please! For two days I have been fasting. Please shower us with prosperity.

Om, Om, Om

He picks up the paper and starts scanning the paper.

Wife enters the stage from the right side. She has a glittering, diamond studded red Sari on her outstretched left forearm. She looks at it from different angles.

She says—Oh, you have arrived! Why so late?

Again falling into traps of stocks and bonds! Put the paper down.

(Husband folds the paper, puts it on the table.)

Playfully says—OK, Done. As ordered.

Now what can I do for you?

Wife’s eyes are still on the sari—Do you remember what day it is today?

Husband thinks and says—Today…today is Saturday.

I work six days every week. I am so tired. So it must…

Wife—No, today is our 25th anniversary!

(Husband nervously gets up.

Puts his hand on her shoulder.)—

Oh, I forgot! Forgive me.

I didn’t even bring a gift for you.

It is already so late. First thing in the

morning…

Wife interrupts—Before the wedding, you brought roses everyday day, took me to movies. Sometimes brought gifts beyond your means. Ever since we got married and all is forgotten!

Husband—I am really sorry

Wife—I knew that you are busy. That’s why I brought a sari from your side

Look, isn’t it gorgeous?

It has diamonds and pearls stitched into it.

Husband touches it —This is beautiful. It will look perfect on you. Hope it’s not too expensive.

Wife—I am a doctor’s wife. If I wear a cheap sari, people will think that you are not a good doctor!

That’s why I spent only twenty five thousands.

Husband—Twenty five thousand rupees?

Wife—You are such a simpleton.

You live in America and spend in rupees!

It is *only* twenty five thousand.

(Husband acts like he might faint. Holds edge of a chair.)

Husband—What?

Wife—Mrs. Verma doesn’t even look at

saris less than fifty thousand.

I spent only twenty five thousand.

That also when it was on sale. I saved you ten thousand dollar!

(Husband plops down on the sofa.

Holds his head between his hands.

Wife slowly moves toward him.

Husband stands up. In anger he sings—)

Husband—you keep spending, I keep earning

As if the money comes for free x 2

Wife—you buy stocks, thousands of bonds

Don’t like if I buy a sari

Don’t like if I buy only one sari

You buy thousands of stocks

Husband—Managed care has tortured me

HMO snubs me

Lawyers have stolen my sleep

Medicare parted their ways

Before sunrise, after moon rise

Your husband finally comes home

You keep spending

Wife—You are always mistaken

You work all day and I keep sleeping

It’s not easy to run a household

I scrub your dishes, wash your clothes

Make food for all

Raise your children

Whole day is non-stop and tiring

You keep buying stocks…

(They look at each other lovingly, embrace, hold hands.)

Husband—Had no idea you are in this shape

Wife—Now I know why you are so distressed

Both—Hold my hand my love

You hold me and I support you

Whether we pass our days crying or laughing

Time of life zips by either way

Wife teases him—You keep earning I keep spending

Life is much more fun

Husband pointing finder—You keep spending

Wife—You buy stocks

Both leave stage pointing finger of one hand while holding the other, and laugh

Two Aspects of Money

Cursed money, Cursed money

What a disease did I get

Made my parents cry

Made me forget my country

Cursed money, cursed money

Wow money, wow money

Never saw anything like you

You make high palaces

You get me diamonds and pearls

Wow money, wow money

Money blinds the eyes

Makes the ears deaf

Puts lock on the mind

Makes us do works of illegal kind

Cursed money, cursed money

People bow before me, offer their salutation

Leaders do my bidding

Gets me a big name in society

It fixes all my failed tasks

Wow Money, wow money

Creates animosity in brothers and sisters

Converts our kin, become strangers

Shatters relationship of friends

Scale of money becomes heavier

Cursed money, cursed money

I buy the most expensive cars

Diamond-studded saris

I can buy whatever I want

I even buy my friends

Wow money, wow money

Didn’t see kid’s childhood

Saw only the path of money

Worked sixteen hours a day

Sacrificed home for money

Cursed money, cursed money

Helps me travel the whole world

Brings the stars and moon to earth

Money—a true gold mine of joy

Wow money, wow money

Money is a transient mirage

It may come and depart

It is not going to go with us

Why forgot wealth of God’s name?

Why forgot your real self?

Cursed money, cursed money

You can’t buy God with money

You cant buy Divine

Wherever money is king

There is no love, no peaceful living

Recognize this truth today

Recognize this truth today

Cursed money, cursed money

(The person who loves the money wrings his hands. He cannot come up with an answer. He bows down to touch Swami Ji’s feet and says) “You are blessed and have blessed me with the truth of life. You have shown me the path of joy and peace

For that I thank you thousandfold.”

(This can be a skit. One actor tapes or pins fake currency notes on the shirt or jacket. A colorful handkerchief shows in upper pocket. He wears fancy sunglasses which he takes off after singing couple of lines. Other character wears orange clothes, wooden sandals and has a peaceful smile.

Drunkard

Drunkard’s mouth is made for alcohol

Drunkard’s mouth is made for alcohol

India’s Johnny Walker lives in Bombay

His Johnny calls Scotland his home

Evening falls and the gulps start

Friends render full support

Drunkard’s mouth is made for alcohol

Single malt, but he pours a double peg

He is having fun but his wife has trouble

He got beaten with a shoe

And beaten black and blue

Even then his mouth glued to the bottle

Drunkard’s mouth is made for alcohol

First peg makes him a lion

Second converts to monkey

His face resembles one of a pig

When the third one goes in

Become relative of Kumbhkaran

Snoring lets no one else sleep

Drunkard’ mouth is made for alcohol

Drunkard’ mouth is made for alcohol

Modern Diwali

No flowers, no plate for prayer remain

No voice calls out God’s name

Movie songs are now new hymns

Whiskey replaces the Holy stream

No bell rings in the temple

No sound of holy conch

Clinking glasses now echo

Beat of an item song

Offerings are not on the idol

They are placed on poker game

Don’t ask God for peace and joy

Mind is fixed on a full house

No incense stick or black cone

See swirling rings of smoke

A cigarette lit, a sniff of coke

And the air began to choke

Didn’t read Sundarkand

No one reads Hanuman Chalisa

A naughty group tells dirty jokes

Leaning in like the tower of Pisa

Feet stagger, lips tremble

Alcohol reveals it’s real form

Prostrating—not from deep devotion

Whiskey knocked him flat down

In loud noise, everyone screams

No one listens to other’s talk

All greet with “Happy Diwali”

No one hears other’s cry of heart

Arriving guests walked in upright

For Diwali, friends gather with delight

After dinner— most lost their sense

Yet, some left driving their car—no defense

Earthen lamps have vanished

Replaced by strings made in China

They light up the house

How will children ever know

The Diwali of our childhood?

Oh my brothers and sisters

What have we all done

We have bankrupted our tDiwali

Have made it faded and distressed

Stop the outer glitter and glow

Let’s light our inner lamp

Shed the modern Diwali

Revive the Diwali of childhood

Shed the modern Diwali

Revive the Diwali of childhood

Johnny’s Headache

Curtain rises.

There is a sofa on the stage, side tables on both sides.

A telephone is placed on left one.

A table lamp sits on each table.

Johnny’s wife, Mary is dusting the

right lamp.

Johnny enters from the same side.

He has his hand on the head and

expression showing intense

headache.

He starts to sing—Mary O Mary

Irritated Mary says—What now!

Johnny—My head is splitting with pain

And heart is sinking again

Before my soul departs

Call a doctor right away

Call a doctor right away

( He sits on the sofa, head between his hands).)

(Mary picks up the phone and dials

family doctor’s number)

Mary—Doctor, hurry, don’t delay

My husband is sick, come right away

Who else will help, who else will mend?

Without your help, this might be the end

(Doctor enters from right side.

He is wearing a white doctor’s coat

and has a stethoscope hanging around his neck.)

Doctor—Who is the patient in need?

Who do I need to save with speed?

Who do I need to save

Keep away from the grave

Johnny-—My headache is getting much worse

Feels like my head will blow

It may a big stoke

(He slides down from the sofa and sits on floor)

Johnny—I am leaving the party

Soon I’ll be gone

If you…

(Lies down on the floor, stops breathing with eyes closed)

Mary—On no! I wish you had completed the song!

(Johnny gets up and sings.)

—If you remember me, don’t cry too long

( Again lies down, eyes close and there is no breathing. Doctor checks his pulse. Puts stethoscope on the chest, then smiles.)

Doctor—Johnny’s number was called

God pulled his spring

Mary—*String*, not *spring*

Doctor—God pulled his spring

Mary—Not *spring. It is string, string*!!

Doctor—God pulled his string

Mary—Yes! Doctor

Let’s dance like it is spring

Doctor—Mary, let’s dance like it is spring

Mary—Yes Doctor!,

Now let’s dance like it’s spring

Both sing together —Let’s dance like it is spring

(They hold hands, look and smile at each other.

They walk off the stage as they keep repeating the duet)

Lights dim and curtain falls.

Circle of Life

They get married with pomp and show

Children arrived before they’d know

Cheers to the children who give fun-filled moments

They are Mom and Dad’s real ornaments

Excited, they left for their honeymoon

But got into accident too soon

Two had gone, three returned

Hard times arrived, a lesson they learned

Mother endured nine months’ pain

Papa nervous night and day

House too small, money is tight

Hair will get grey or shed outright

They cry through the night

And sleep non-stop all day

Asleep—their face looks like God

When awake change to ghostly grey

Parents forgot struggles of day and night

In the blink of an eye children go to school

Learn two words of English, then they proclaim

“Mom Dad are ignorant, so plain”

In two moments they become teenagers

We become soldiers, they become majors

Now they wield all the intelligence

Complain about everything relentless

They enter our home like birds in flight

When season changes, they fly into sky

They are guests for fleeting two days

Truth is they always stay part of our lives

Even when they follow their ways

Whatever they do

Wherever they stay

They are pieces of our hearts

In our hearts they always stay

And then—

They get married with pomp and show

Children arrive before they’d know

Cheers to the children who give fun-filled moments

They are Mom and Dad’s real ornaments

(Circle of life starts again and goes on)

Covid

A man sits alone in a rocking chair, gloved hands are resting on the arms of the chair. A mask is covering his face. On the center table lie a few books and a plastic-wrapped TV remote. The side table has scattered with a box of Lysol wipes, disposable gloves, a bottle of alcohol, hand sanitizer, and a pulse oximeter. Above the front door, a large sign reads in bold letters “JAIL.”

The man sings a song—

Where, oh where can I hide

No matter where I look

I see Corona by my side

I cover my mouth, wash my hands

My heart thumps, then slowly sinks,

Worrying, wondering where it is hiding

Someone coughs ahead

Another sneezes behind

A hidden virus lurks, hard to flee

I keep a distance of six feet

Where, oh where can I hide.

House has become a jail

Freedom feels distant and over

Shops are closed, doomsday here

Leaders are clashing, public shattered

Where, oh where can I hide

Where, oh where can I hide

No matter where I look

I see Corona by my side

Expensive Onions

Tired from the office, I entered through the door

Found my wife unconscious on the kitchen floor

At the sound of my voice

She opened her eyes

Pointed to the empty bag by her side

“I went to the market to buy onions

Hearing its price, my body went cold

He asked hundred rupees for just half a half

My legs shook violently, pulse nearly froze

Sweat on the face, my breath became tight

It all got dark, like a moonless night

Wobbling, stunningly, I reached my door

Too weak to sit, I lay down on the floor

Now you know reason of my fainting

Onions are pricier than gold

Those humble onions cost much more

Than the gleaming, glittering gold.”

Stocks

Stock buyer, what clouded your mind

You chased a dream, left reasoning behind

Lost all your money

Your quarter is not worth even a dime

Money that once blistered your feet

Gave ulcers in stomach, endangered your life

It blocked arteries of your heart

Yet, you squander it all

Why gamble away hard—earned money

Stock buyer, what clouded your mind

You chased a dream, left reasoning behind

Lost all your money

Your quarter is not worth even a dime

The day you learnt how to spell “stock”

You crown yourself as Peter Lynch

If by chance, your stock goes high

You sing happy songs at parties

What you claim to be your money

Soon it’ll spill into it a another’s hand

Lost all your money

Stock buyer, what clouded your mind

You chased a dream, left reasoning behind

Lost all your money

Your quarter is not worth even a dime

Throughout the night, sleep slips away

Haunted by stock you held one day

The dead don’t return

Why shed tears for them

Buy municipal bonds, safe and sound

Dolly’s advice was well thought, profound

Lost all your money

Buyer of stocks

Wonder what clouded your mind

Lost all your money

You lost even the last dime

Seventeenth Birthday

Yesterday’s boy is now old

Still thinks he is young and bold

He runs two yards, then starts to slow

Panting hard, with hands like snow

More on the face, less on the head

It’s the season for hair being shed

Eyes grow dim, ears hardly hear

Every touch feels soft and queer

Yet, he flirts with girls around

Old body can’t hold him down

Runs two yards, then starts to slow

Looking at the lines on the face

Hand got depressed with disgrace

Dyed his hair to hide the grey

How to hide chest on full display

Now he gets face lift

Chest get a nice shave

So, none can tell he is past his brave

Runs two yards, then starts to slow

Those who know Piki, Madan

Consider yourself lucky

They always have songs on their lips

Yet, the slaps of life, no one knows

Silently, they hide it all in their hearts

Concealing sorrows, make people laugh

Yesterday’s boy is now old

Still thinks he is young and bold

He runs two yards, then starts to slow

Panting hard, with hands like snow

( This light-hearted parody was written for our good friends. By simply changing names, it can be sung at any senior’s birthday.)

Phone

Help! A thief has entered our home

Help! Please save us

Forgotten the world, ignored my sleep

I fell in love with the shining screen

Friends and family now seem strangers

I only see shadow of phone so bright

It has taken over my day and night

This is the rival, the co-lover for life

A barrier between husband and wife

It has stolen away our peace of mind

A family once laughed and played as one

Now drown in tears which always run

Cancer may find its cure some day

But this thief has conquered all everyday

Eyes stay glued as fingers slide

No one speaks, no hearts confide

It follows us on our mountain trails

A chatty friend that never fails

The tongue grows quiet, only fingers talk

A strange new era has arrived in life’s walk

It sleeps beside us through the night

Clings to us constantly in daylight

If it’s lost or out of sight

Heart skips a beat in fright

How do we break free, keep it away

It rules our lives—it’s the master today

Old tools have vanished one by one

It swallowed all—now they’re gone

Camera,GPS, calculator, watch too

Now this device tells us what to do

We follow its ways, obey every command

Even lovers holding hand in hand

Eyes no longer locked in tender gaze

But glued to the screens even in embrace

Heads bowed low and eyes are facing down

As if Mughals have reclaimed their crown

Help! A thief has entered our home

Help! Please save us

Old age, Disease and Death

Get Older but Not Old

Be thankful—you are healthy and alive

Millions are not so lucky to survive

Not every night is blessed with sunrise

Cherish the light, be grateful, be wise

Be happy and bold, come what may

Times could’ve turned the harder way

Count your blessings, let peace begin

It’s easy to count what’s missing within

I asked an astrologer one day

“How many days are left for me to live?”

He predicted, “As many people as you serve

God will add to what was destined and give,”

Be fully alive and stay strong

As long as breath flows along

If you are useful to someone in need

Flowers will bloom from desert’s seed

With life, number of years will increase

Spirit of youthful days need not decrease

All of us will meet death some day

But need not decay along the way

It’s natural with age to get older;

Not necessary with age to grow old

My Age

My children have grown old

Grandchildren are now full-grown

Yet I remain curious and young

It seems my mind forgot to age

I don’t recognize the face in the mirror

Where did this old man come from?

I get senior discount—without a card

What kind of world have I entered?

People call me “uncle” these days

I question their sanity in many ways

My siblings, now frail or long gone

But I am still the young kid going on

Such feelings stir in my mind

Run fingers through hair I can’t find

When did it become barren land

Once it was a lush forest so grand

Saving ink and may be some money

Newspapers print so small—it’s not funny

To spare their throats from sprain

People whisper, words not so plain

Children read news on TV— teach me!

What a strange world now I see

My doctor looks fresh out of school

Surely, we are now in Kali Yuga’s rule

Wrinkles, arthritis, shortness of breath

They belong to someone else’s mess

How did they sneak into my frame

The sender must’ve entered wrong name

Sibling’s faces show marks of time

A faint thought crosses my mind

Tomorrow it may be *my* turn

My body on the pyre, I will burn

Now friends, family start to fall

Make trips to crematorium for all

I picture myself in a white sheet

Hear people speak softly about me

I don’t know where the days have flown

Now I scheme to stretch each one long

My list of medicines keeps on growing

They speak of sickness, surgery and dying

I was given countless days to live

Enough to get what life would give

Dreams and wishes were clear and bright

Why rush, tomorrow was always in sight

Dusk arrived but tomorrow failed

Tell me, my friends, is this fair?

My sun is sinking below the line

It will be dark—no longer shine

Teach the new crop to dream of tomorrow

Let go bitterness, anger and sorrow

Treasure the sweetness life has shown

Live fully—bring joy to others and your own

The age appears far too long

Alas, it is fleeting, short, then gone

Let go of complaints, regrets and strife

Illuminate this moment, live vibrant life

Illuminate this moment, live vibrant life

New Photos of Old Friends

When I see new photos of old friends

I search for bright palaces in the ruins

Half-bloomed goals, desires once high

Lifeless littered pieces of dreams now lie

Behind the wrinkles and fading skin

Sagging shoulders, helpless within

I search signs of youth, cheeks with glow

Find only remnants of stumbles and blows

I don’t know when the clouds rolled in

Dimming their once-bright glittering skin

Thick hair blew away in storms of time

Few survivors lost color in their prime

Kicks of life deformed once-straight waists

Helpless expression, sitting in rocking chairs

Tube in the nose, walkers, wheel chairs

Brown leaves fall, their tree branches bare

A flicker of hope— a faint smile hides sorrow

More regrets of past, less dreams of tomorrow

Loneliness wrapped old memories in a cocoon

Moist eyes now dry, wait under a fading moon

I see weak, tired, defeated frames

Some now serve as home to diseases

Time has, untimely, swallowed some faces

In my own receding, fading memories

When I see new photos of kold friends

I search for bright palaces in the ruins

Shade of Old Age

Children have not felt the touch of old age

As if it were some stranger’s disease

Death, or even its faint shadow, unknown

They drift, intoxicated in youth of their own

Oh God, grant them

A taste of old age for a few days

Then return their youth, fresh and bright

Perhaps then they’ll understand

Difficult roads of coming days

What do they know about

Griefs and sufferings of old age?

The suffocation in four closed walls

Deserted loneliness, no one calls

Circling of death all around kk

Burial of partner in the ground

Hard to stand with one crutch

I miss my spouse, that tender touch

Hard of hearing, fear of blindness

Wake up at night, chase elusive sleep

Half-dozed, gripped by fear of not waking

Damp pillow haunts, soaked by memories deep

Every birthday brings a new grim gift

Wrapped are frozen joints or cancer

Lungs that wheeze, gasping for breath

A failing heart culminating in death

Rising youth took a sudden turn

Now I hear whispers through thin walls

“Why don’t they leave, go across?

They’re sitting here as burden on all

Serving no purpose at all

They are at the border, why don’t they cross?

They have become obstacle

In the path of life as we grow

Like boulders in a river’s flow

Perhaps their last breath,” they mutter low

Children forgot, drunk on youth’s pride

These hands taught them to walk beside

This voice shaped their very first word

On these shoulders they saw the world

Crossed line of dependence to be free

Now they forget the roots of their tree

In a blink of eye, they grew

From children to adults, they flew

I can’t recall that fleeting moment

When I crossed from youth to old

A bent back, wrinkled face is my guise

Unaware, my glowing youth bid goodbyes

Then I think—I did the same

When they needed me, I stayed away

Turned my face and walked away

Told myself “I’ll care of them another day.”

Believed they’d have always be here to stay

Neither wrote letters nor cared to call

Lost in my journey, chasing it all

In the field of life, you reap what you sow

In the dry sand, flowers don’t grow

Now I realize children’s plight

They tend their own patch ever so bright

They too received just one garden

They sing with joy, as it blooms bright

Should they relish children’s bubbling dreams

Or tend the fading stars in night’s gloom?

We get one innings in grand play of life

A one-way journey is the walk of life

Time and people, once gone, never return

Balance yourself, children and parents

In this brief and beautiful play of life

Whatever God granted me

Was far beyond what I deserved or dreamed

A full childhood, vibrant youth, a loving family

Now in old age, my sorrows of are truly small

Now in old age, my sorrows are truly small

Time Vanished

Don’t know where the time vanished

Had just learnt how to live

Conquered anger, pride, ego, and greed

Tasted love’s nectar—tender and sweet

Don’t know where the time vanished

Busy today—will do it tomorrow

Will reach out to loved ones when I’m free

At last I had begun to share joys and sorrows

Had just learned to hug them all with glee

Don’t know…

Planted flowers—fruits began to bloom

Learned to cherish their sweet perfume

Learned to think and walk the righteous way

Live happy, laugh with open heart every day

Don’t know…

The river, drunk with pride, broke its banks away

Crushing, drowning whatever came in its way

It never feared its swift flow would cease

Yet, vanished, nameless—its water lost in the sea

Don’t know…

Minor issues irked, fought for no reason

Brought nothing, will take nothing

Filled my home with stuff for many seasons

I had just emptied my house, also my mind

Learned to fly free like a coasting bird

Don’t know …

Forgave myself, forgave others too

Asked forgiveness where it was due

Like a bubble on the water, life can burst

The thorn of time is sharp and swift

Don’t know…

Game began just yesterday, it’s already done

Won’t see tomorrow’s sky, moon or sun

A floating cloud, setting sun—my life

I never dreamed it would end so soon

Don’t know…

A drop of rain merges in earth

No name, fame or sign will exist

By watching others and nature

Had learned a selfless way to live

My place on earth, I had to give

Don’t know where the time vanished

Had just learned how to live

Young Person Inside Old Body

Inside every old man there is

A young person

Wondering, what happened?

Etched in mind, sees floating loving Mom and Dad

Love, laughter, siblings fill home; not a single soul sad

He still remembers memorable childhood, cute little face

On demand—School, college, friends, teachers resurface

He vividly remembers, feels electric current run through

When he touched love of life, yesterday he barely knew

Remembers every vow, and rings

The kiss witnessed by family and friends

Young person sees, relishes their little ones.

Life richer, joyous, knowing no ends

Kids grew fast, got married, left his hold

Yet, the young person would never grow old

Then one day, suddenly out of the blue

Without warning, hint or a single clue

Hospital bed, wheel chair, nursing home

Appeared for him to receive

They were for *him,* the young person

Inside the old body did not believe

But a look in the mirror

Dim eyes, cheeks sans hue

Paralysis, immobility, helplessness

Proved it to be true

Now alone, teary and sad

Love of life had vanished

Children, friends abandoned

Inside every old man there is

A young person

Wondering what happened?

Wondering what happened?

(This poem was inspired by the first 12 words written by the 88 years old Doctor Ray Greco at Weirton Medical Center, Weirton, West Virginia, USA.

It can be adopted to a woman by changing words.)

Lost Youth

I search for my lost youth

After it slipped from my hand

Preoccupied, didn’t notice its absence

Until one day—I couldn’t stand

Life is a flowing waterfall

Once plunged, waters never return

The body’s strength, once lost

Follows disease’s rule of no return

Drugs and laziness, junk food in sight

Workaholic days, parties all night

False hope of youth, a dream to adore

Gone when old age knocked at the door

Exercise body, mind and spirit each day

Get active, eat right, let wisdom show the way

These habits add years of independent life

Enriching your own—and your children’s— life

Wisdom arrived late, but did come and stay

Invoked God, exercised each day

With steady resolve, set positive goals

To grow in healthy, keep illness away

Joined gym, slept early every night

Ate oil-free veggies, butter-free bite

Read labels, broke up with fat

Egg yolk, candy eating now a crime

Once it was beer, whiskey and wine

Now swallow Metamucil at bedtime

Effortless as breathing, baby finds milk

Without effort breathing slowly fades

Cast aside laziness, embrace liveliness

Come, let's lead a healthy life again

Find long-lost glorious youth again

Alzheimer's

(Old person talking to a young adult)

I remember keeping a cold cloth

On your forehead burning with fever

With your head resting in my lap all night

Running fingers through your silky hair

I wished to take your illness, give you my years

I held my breath, just to hear yours

When you got hurt, I felt the pain

My heart wept through countless nights

Pearls of your joyous moments

I strung together, saved as treasures

Hiding my pains, I searched ways

To create a happy life for you

World's poisonous news and it’s sorrows

I kept far from your innocent ears

I swept sharp briers from your path

Spread soft, smooth, and silky petals

No one dared to give you sorrow

I fought with the whole world

When someone broke your tender heart

Mine bled, wept and withered too

Seeing your lover, life partner

My heart smiled in silence with you

Watching your garden of family flourish

My heart bloomed with joy

Each moment, held by your memories

I lived through countless days and nights

I don’t know how, when or why

Dark clouds started eclipsing my memories

Who am I, where am I?

My friends and family started fading

What happened many years ago

Feels as if it was only yesterday

What happened yesterday

Feels like moonless, dark night

Whatever shape I am in, I am happy

Perhaps you don't know

My beautiful past is my whole world

Perhaps you don't know

Neither I know you nor recognize you

Yet your memories are alive in my heart

Hold this thought and stay happy my child

You—and only you—live in my heart

You— and only you— live in my heart

Time

Time is a bird—chirping, singing, soaring, swaying

Until it folds its wings and drops—powerless

Time is a restless river—flowing, rising, boasting, devouring

Only to lose even its identity, namelss as it ends in the ocean

Time is wind—breezing, shaking, roaring, shattering

Until it looses strength and fades into quiet silence

Time is a voice—whispering, calming, speaking, thundering

Until its moment ends, dims into silent stillness

Time is a flower—vibrant, fragrant, colorful, blooming

Softly wilts into dusk of life, then falling

Time is breath, I claim it, call it mine today

Only for it to belong to another tomorrow

Time is bird, river, voice, flower, breath—

Merely a gust of wind

Claiming the kingdom of this moment

In my ignorance, I call it mine today

Its ownership will change hands tomorrow

Time was here, and will remain

My existence fades into sunset’s wane

A new sun rises—fierce, hot and proud—

Acts as if it were the very dawn of time

Candle

A bright lit candle dances proud

Watches jealous glances around

Forgets it will extinguish one day

By wind or wax running out

Or an accident on the way

Flame glows bright, swirl around

Thinks, “I will shine forever loud

Others will fade, go dim and dark

It’ll never touch my shiny spark

Wind will blow out other flames

Or their wax will reach its end

Mine is immune from slaps of time,

Mighty hurricane or vicious storm

New candles sprout around me

I see new faces rise and grow

I fear my innings may be ending

Wax pools beneath, candle shrinking

The flame dims, is tired and slow

Suddenly I flicker and sway more

Shining brighter than ever before

In my last fluttering fight

My wax ends, the wind blows

Flickering bright light is no more.”

Became Is to Was

Don’t know when I changed from

*Is* to *Was*

Sunny days now veiled by clouds

My body is now wrapped in shrouds

Yesterday, I was young and strong

I was living in a new world of my own

Spring brought trees and bright flowers

Birds flying free in light blue open sky

Cruel fall faded the bright colors

Stripped the leaves from the trees

Left bare branches where life used to be

Ice gleamed, proud of its dazzling light

Unaware of the eternal time’s might

The harsh, hot sun—so cruel and bright

Melted mighty ice to water, vapors in flight

Waves rose high upon the sea

Eager to kiss the distant sky

But within few moments, crashed silently

Powerless, withered, then left to die

Name, fame, body, and wealth

Mere labels that last few days

Time, the mighty force, takes away

Swallows all as they decay

Live in the moment before it turns to past

Embrace it fully, make it last

Don’t burn the unique today

With worries of future or regrets of past

Millions like me walked this path

They came, they lived, then slipped into past

Now, sadly my turn came at last

Don’t know when I changed from

*Is* to *was*

Play of Life

Players change, yet the play goes on

One exits the field, their purpose gone

Another enters, embraces the role

Same ambition, similar zeal and goal

Players, teams, faces and names

Games, rules, and regulations change

All try hard to halt time’s chime

No one escapes the firm clasp of time

Argued, fought, just to win the game

Won a few, stole some— felt no shame

Chased success with worry and greed

Forgot to enjoy the game, indeed

Told some lies, devised shady schemes

Turned selfish, crushed others’s dreams

Remember, this is just a game, my friend

No one truly wins in the end

Every player believes they are the first

That the play was created just for them

They enter the field, play and fight

Shrieking and soaring to untold height

Then a waterfall of tears begins to flow

They collapse in silence, with regrets in the heart

Pulled from the field, with unfinished part

Seeing empty spot, the next player stands

Leaps, runs, steps ahead with eager hands

No thanks to the ones who came before

Who cleared the field, made a smooth floor

Slowly fatigue begins to creep

Hard to lift feet, feels so steep

Thoughts enter of the end being near

Struggles for balance, fighting fear

With no mercy, the next player

Shoves him aside, steps over him

Resumes the same old game once more

Unaware his fate has been lived before

Players change, yet the play goes on

One exits the field, their purpose gone

Another enters, embraces the role

Same ambition, similar zeal and goal

Too Late

He came to my funeral, shed a few tears

Placed two flowers, then disappeared

Spoke of my countless virtues

Forgave my every fault

The ones he had not let go

While I was still breathing

For years he had not met me or given embrace

Now he is here—just to show his face

Wish we had spent some time together

Wish he sent me gifts while I was well

But he never dried my tears when I fell

I kept watching the path

He never chose to take

My eyes longed for him, grew moist

Till the tears dried to crust

They got tired and ached

He finally came— but far too late

When I was no more

His name was on my lips

But sealed when he entered the gate

Puppets of Wax

I wonder when this wax will melt and fade

Burn into air, it’s elements degrade

Frame consumed by fire’s embrace

We’re all guests here for mere few days

He stepped out for a few moments

Told me, he’d return home again

The door opened—but no one came

He left memories, I never saw him again

A fistful of ash merged with water, none can see

Flowed down the river to become the sea

Yesterday walked, talked beside me

Today, not even a shadow remains to see

We recited his songs as the days turned

Placed fresh flowers by his photo everyday

Vowed to remember him—come what may

Then we walked our separate way

Lost in the swamp of our busy day

Names and memories slowly faded

Forgot the ones who passed away

No one has time, the will or desire

To ease weeping widow’s lonely plight

Each one rushes by, too entangled

In their own web wound tight

I have come to mourn at this funeral today

For the one who wept at another’s yesterday

I came today to bid him final goodbye

Tomorrow, for me, someone else will cry

I wonder when this wax will melt and fade

Burn into air, it’s elements degrade

Frame consumed by fire’s embrace

We’re all guests here for mere few days

Birth Death

When butterflies of snow melt

Leaves bid farewell to their tree

Particles from stars leave home

Shine for few moments

Then turn to dust— merge with dust

The river’s rapid, noisy waters rise

Then silently merge into the sea

Restless heart finally finds peace

In the final embrace of eternity

Spouse, kin, and friends slip away

Leaving this world—bid final goodbyes

Ones we grew and laughed together

Died in front of our tear-filled eyes

The thought of my own death

Erupts quietly in my heart

I gaze into the casket

It is another’s body, but I see my face

Is this all that life was meant to be?

For its sake, we struggle and fight

Chasing possessions that fade away

Worked endless hours of day and night

For a few days person stands steady

Then slips on the false path again

Slowly becomes a prisoner

Of greed, anger, lust and pride

I wish I had rested under a tree

Spent time with those dear to me

In the company of parents, siblings

Of spouse, children and true friends

A gift only the lucky ones receive

The wise recognizes this simple truth

Walk the right path early in life

And live it full purpose and youth

Neither arrival nor departure

Time is in our hand

It’s only the time in between

Where free will helps make life grand

Nature’s play of birth and death

Unfolds, abiding by its own laws

Unfolds, abiding by its own laws

Death

I have seen death from close

Now it feels familiar, like a friend

I glimpse its shadow in the mirror

Every beginning’s natural end

Since it is familiar and known

It creates no worry, it’s my own

The first word in the book of life

Begins writing of the final page

Body’s perishable—I had seen and read

But it hit hard when loved ones lay dead

Some had become my integral part

I partly died with them, they live in my heart

The same fate awaits me

Will the game be over tomorrow?

In the casket, draped in white

I see my family cry in sorrow

Struggles and worries will fade

Line between life and death will erase

For me, the sun will lose its flame

The world will go on, just the same

Fame, money, body, and ego

Once consumed my life

They will depart in blink of an eye

As birds’ wings open, then they fly

Let go of pride, worries, and greed

They burn with the body in a blink

Shared wealth survives, uplifting lives

Hoarded riches spark fights and strife

Learn from yesterday—let go, move on

Relish the cool moon, bask in the warm sun

Laugh often, help another's heart smile

Live joyfully in this brief transient life

The breath is a precious gift, a blessing

Who knows when flow will pause, then end

Who knows when flow will pause, then end

Ruins of Memories

House is full of people

But, for me it is empty

Everything has your name engraved

Every plant tenderly cared by your hand

I see your features in children, image in grandkids

See your hand in their thoughts and deeds

Nana, Dad, Pa, Uncle, or a friend

Each remembers you by a different name

One by one, they all go their way

Only your memories stay

Wherever I look, I feel you near

No one replies when I call you here

None can escape death’s final grip

While helpless eyes let tears drip

Now that I know, I wish to bring you back

Hundreds of thoughts cross my mind

I want to hear your voice, fulfill your dreams

Learn the meaning of your silent screams

Who will interfere, who will stop me tomorrow

Who will care for me when I’m in need

I stay drowned in such mixed thoughts

Sitting alone lifelong, bound in sorrow

A sound—I think you are here

Think you have returned, you are near

But I am now alone forever

Bear you absence forever and ever

Time is cruel, flies away like a bird

Hands of clock never reversed

Look at my helplessness

My sorrow, my tears in his death

If you want to learn from me

Live life for them before they leave

This is *the* moment life will give

Drop your ego, spread joy to who still live

Let go of your ego for their sake

It happens to others, you hear many times

Loss will be this hard, you can’t imagine

You will hold your head and cry

Alone, you’ll thread rosary of each memory

A prisoner in ruins of memories

Days and nights are dark for me

House is full of people

But, for me it is empty

Prayer

(Written after witnessing a dear friend in an open casket, surrounded by his grieving family)

My breath has stopped, as hasmy heart

Even then I can see the scene

Can’t bear to see you weep

But I can’t rise to wipe your tears

I see the children—tormented, sob bitterly

They hold my hands, sprinkle flowers gently

Through heavy rain or under burning sun

I can’t be their umbrella forever

I found salvation, my journey complete

Saw all there was, did all I could do

Got your companionship, a precious gift

And drank much from nectar of life

Neither imagined nor asked

Yet luck overfilled my bag

From earth, I touched the sky

God blessed us more than plenty

All the breaths you are allotted

Spend them laughing and playing

Live fully my partner

Live my share too

Always spread twice the joy

Wipe away twice the tears

Drawing strength from memories

Become a support for others

One day, it will be your turn

You will be lying here—silent and still

Ones you nurtured and raised

Our daughters will hold you with love

I pray that day is far in future

Until then, I’ll wait for you

In our next birth

We will happily meet again

Reincarnation

Relations are like seasons

Changing with each passing day

Once we spent days and nights together

Now we go our separate way

Buds yesterday, then flowers in bloom

Scorching sun wilted the well-groomed

Burning heat scared both big and small

They meekly surrendered, welcomed the fall

Greens, in fear, turned pale and jaded

The carefree colors of youth had faded

Leaves now tremble—wrinkled, helpless

Afraid, they folded, stayed clung to the mother

A cold, howling gust swept through

Bonds once strong, broke the glue

Some sooner, some later lost their hold

Got shaken, detached, drifted, pain untold

Body of garden got adorned

With swirling faded colored leaves

Branches from above weep and grieve

Their tears borrowed from morning dew

At dawn, with the first ray of sun

Trees shed blessings drip by drip

How sweet is was, a joy we did feel

When all of you were still with me

I pray to God for your lasting joy

Cycle of birth and death none can defy

May you remember—the Self never dies

Change is a natural, eternal rhythm of life

This beautiful, healthy body, so bright

Burns in a fire which age will ignite

Slowly, quietly, its colors will change

After each day, there must follow night

One day garden’s keeper will arrive

When you are all dry, no longer alive

He will gather you, stack so high

And set you ablaze before my eyes

Whom I concealed and protected

Now piles of ashes when fire is done

As clouds cool the parched earth with rain

My tears descend to soothe your remains

Don’t despair my children, don’t weep

My roots will guide the paths you keep

Blended with rain water, you will thrive

I will hide you in my heart when you arrive

After severe winter

Surely, we will meet again

In new spring, in new shape

Together, we'll bloom again

For centuries, this amazing

Play of nature will go on

Those who came before, have gone

They’ll return after changing their form

Don’t be too happy in spring

Nor weep in the season of fall

Never forget from your heart

You are my integral part

Whether you are close or apart

You will always live in my heart

Life and Death

Gust of wind, a fleeting bubble

The shadow of a floating cloud

Life’s but a a dream that fades fast

A golden mirage that doesn’t last

In drunken youth, they failed to see

The body’s perishable, universal destiny

For which they stole, lied and schemed

Harming loved ones—no one dreamed

The book covers—Birth and Death— contain

A tale of joys, sprinkled with pain

I wrote my life story myself with care

Yet, chance and others added their share

Unsure of even my next breath

Yet, I gathered things for many lives

Anger, lust, pride and greed—mere illusion

A misguided mind wandering in confusion

When I was alive, people stayed away

Behind my back, they had much to say

When my eyes closed, they formed a line

Building bridges of praise, made me shine

Sheepishly, even those stayed near

Who had not seen me for many years

Once, I had no place in their space

Now they stay all day to save face

After death, so many flowers and fruits arrive

Never saw such treasures when I was alive

Now praise is showered by many a friend

Words I never heard until after my end

When I was living, they saw mistakes

Criticized each path I chose to take

But after my silence and final breath

Kind words are spoken after my death

Except for my spouse or a cherished few

Life moves on, as if nothing happened to you

Some hide tears of blood— felt deep inside

While others fake sorrow as they weep and cry

A life can change in a moment so small

From sky to earth, we swiftly fall

In times of need, some had let go my hand

Now they shoulder my casket, mourn and stand

Alive one moment, then breath departs

Final silence as the heart beat halts

One may struggle with all their might

But death is victorious—the final rite

Seeing a corpse, we ponder our end

It won’t happen to me, we pretend

The truth of life is forgotten so fast

Once again, we let the false story start

Gust of wind, a fleeting bubble

The shadow of a floating cloud

Life’s but a a dream that fades fast

A golden mirage that doesn’t last

End of Life

Life moves in a strange way

In a few years, I will fade away

My name will vanish in thin air

Perhaps two generations will care

Our dreams and stories, rise and fall

Joys and struggles—forgotten by all

The home we built with love and pride

Will be a heap of rubble, cast aside

My struggles, hard work will quietly fade

No one will have desire or time to know

Who was I, why and what I did

Like me, they won’t even ask as they grow

Life moves in a strange way

In a few years, I will fade away

My name will vanish in thin air

Perhaps two generations will care

Dust of Time

Ocean waves rise, crash and spread

Dragging high castles to ocean bed

Dust of time silent, thick, without a gap

Blankets many centuries in its lap

Walking, talking life—aging fast

Turns to silent body as breaths halt

Memories, photos, names and fame

Merge into thirsty dust as drops of rain

Emperors crowned with many a name

Become nameless at end of the game

Heirs hurt siblings, rush to the stage

Chasing selfish life, forget their heritage

The proud high cast turned to dust

A bag of ash carried by untouchables

Hands they once strongly shunned

Signs stay for a generation, may be two

Then vanish in the lap of time like dew

Green, shiny leaves of spring grow old

Turn weak and brittle, lose their hold

Blown away by fierce winds of fall

Kings, emperors, paupers—all

Swept by the mighty river of time

Covered forever by the dust of time