

**BEYOND MANY BENDS
SELECTED POEMS
OF**

P. K. JOY

POETRY WORLD PUBLICATIONS

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AUTHOR

P.K. Joy is a multi-disciplinary consultant living in Chennai. He did formal studies and research on Industrial Engineering (Institute of Industrial Engineers, USA), Business Management (Chartered Management Institute, UK), Accountancy (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, UK), Project Management (PMI, USA), Political Science & Public Administration (Madurai Kamaraj University, India), and Law (Annamalai University, India).

He is the author of Macmillan Publishing Company's best-selling professional guidebooks and higher education textbooks '*Total Project Management, the Indian Context*' and '*Handbook of Construction Management*', both of which have gone into 12 to 13 reprints between 1993 and 2008. He writes articles and book reviews for *The Hindu*, *The Hindu Business Line*, *The Business Standard*, *The Economic Times*, *The Financial Express* and *Gulf News* (UAE). Several Indian and foreign literary magazines in English often carry his poems. He has won several awards, one of which is a crown displayed since 1994 in the anthropology section of the Government Museum at Egmore in Chennai city.

As a visiting professor Joy lectures at a few technical universities and management institutes.



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PREFACE

These are my thoughts of diverse moods,
Expressed in simple English verse,
Wishing to share with you my readers
Who usually keep off books of verse,
Thinking that verse is beyond your grasp
And is meant for people with brains more sharp.

I wish you to see your own reflections

In these, as though are your own experiences:

Of joys and sorrows, of moods and impressions;
Of hunger, passions and their satiations;
Of possessions, attachments and renunciations;
Of sincerity, loyalty, honesty and deceptions;
Of jealousy, envy, calumny and delusions;
Of lust, aspirations, hopes and frustrations;
Of avarice, selfishness, aggressiveness and generosity;
Of greed, niggardliness, meanness and magnanimity;
Of anger, pride, egotism and humility;
Of savagery, barbarity, sensitivity and dignity;
Of hatred, love, compassion, and charity;
Of patience, perseverance, forgiveness and purity;
Of conviction, courage and will to face with equanimity
All the gains and losses, prosperity and adversity;
Of ignorance, knowledge, wisdom and felicity;
Of patriotism, terrorism, hostility, and fraternity;
Of vices and virtues, spirituality and nobility;
And good and bad traits of all other variety.

Blessed are you my readers who got from God
The good taste to enjoy the writings of the bard.
If such of you would like my poems, I'll be glad.
If not, my dear readers, I'll indeed be sad!

P. K. Joy.



1. MY LAST REWARD

I'm writing this letter from my grave
On the day you put me to rest,
To thank you world for the reward you gave
For my sixty years' work without rest.

A bath you gave, really quick and cold.
Wrapped my body in garments, torn and old.
Whiffed a cheap perfume that has offset body stench.
And bought for me a coffin that is short by almost an inch.
Laid a wreath on which your name has richly shone.
It appeared it was meant to make your big deed known!

On the path to the graveyard you've strewn white flower petals.
Engaged undertaker's van, a bundle of rusted metals.
A funeral service read out from a book's pre-printed pages.
And paid the gravediggers their prescribed minimum wages.

The sigh of relief you let out while leaving the graveyard,
To search for my keys, wasn't the last part of the reward!
You observed in my office a three minutes' standing silence
And sent to my bereaved wife a letter of (feigned) condolence!

Oh men! You are thinking that you've fooled me with these doles
And that I had expected more from you mean souls.
No, no, surely I didn't expect; what I say is true.
For, real reward for my services doesn't come from you.

True reward is contentment that I served you to my best
And to you fellowmen I'd ever been sincere and honest.

The Lord gave me mercifully the strength and will to work.
Faithfully I employed them to serve Him through you folk.
When He calls me to submit to Him my book of account to check
You don't know, but I know well how good my book will look!

.....

Published in ***Triveni*** Quarterly, Oct-Dec 2005

2. MY STORY - A TESTIMONY

In an old Kolkatta slum,
 in a cold night I was born.
Not really born, but there I was thrown.
In a stinking garbage bin,
 I was found in a dawn
Of a bad winter day,
 and was picked up by a nun.
No humans saw.
 But a dog saw the merciless act
Of a baby being thrown
 in the cold deadly night.
As soon as my mother
 and the man with her had left
The bitch rushed to my rescue
 with sympathy in its heart.
The dog soon lay close, and
 gave me its body's warmth.
May have even suckled me.
 She only knew the truth.
Street dog had compassion
 which the woman who gave me birth
Did not have for me.
 The dog saved me from death.

In the dawn I became news.
 A kind nun picked me up.
The dog followed me closely,
 as if I was its pup.

Till the convent's gate
the dog marked the route with its sniff.
And later visited me daily
to see me growing up.

Years passed. On a sad morning
the dog lay dead at the gate
I knelt, kissed her, wept and said:
'you're my mother! You're great'.
With honour I buried the carcass
in the compound of the convent.
With grateful heart I visited
the grave with lamp every night.

The nun, like a heavenly angel,
fostered me with mercy
And later on, being a male,
I was transferred to a friary.
In the care of the priest at the friary
I grew up sans any worry.
Learned, trained, employed,
and later he forced me to marry.

The priest had found in me
some talents given by God
And taught me how to use them
to serve the poor in the world.
"Son, you needn't be a priest
to serve the poor," he told
"Use all your spare time
to serve the sick and the old"

My wife and I started
a home for the hapless humans
It grew and became a chain
of love dispensing fountains.
Help and support poured in
from far and near, aplenty
So, always with open arms
we take in numerous needy.

God! You made me one of your
gates to your comforting shelter
For abandoned human beings.
You couldn't have used me better.
Thousands say amazed:
"to what height this orphan has grown
The forsaken child has become
the proverbial cornerstone".

This story is a testimony,
Oh God! to your unfailing love
Which worked through strange media
set up by you from above!
It acted through the garbage dog,
the nun and the old priest.
And it's working through the many
who are giving me charity and support.
Your love is faithful and steadfast.
I thankfully bow my head
To you for your unfailing love.
Even in mothers its like is not found.

3. HEAVEN SANS YOUR NAGGING!

Hello, my darling widowed and bereaved!
I'm sorry indeed that this letter is delayed.
God's judgment's over. I am admitted in heaven.
You can tell your friends that my virtues have been proven!

Here in heaven I have just settled down
With the help noble angels have kindly given.
However, life for me here is really boring.
Even heaven is hell sans your daily nagging.

My darling, I feel your absence everywhere.
Loneliness haunts me like a dreadful specter.
The whole of this place is a big silent hollow.
For, you aren't there like a shadow to follow,
Watching me always like a vigilant sleuth,
Charging me with wrongs with no trace of truth,
Day and night finding fault with one and all of in-laws,
Blaming me constantly for all your actions' flaws,
Raising of demands which my cajoling can't reduce,
And nagging me for silly things with short-lived truce.
Absence of these 'amusements' which add spice to life
Is making me realize now the worth of a good wife.

-2-

Dear, I have appealed to God to get you also here
But He turned my appeal down and showed His ire.

You're condemned to widowhood for five and a half years
For nagging me continually to the point of my tears.
I told Him that I have always enjoyed your nagging
And nagging has indeed made our family life charming.
This He doesn't understand. For He's an old bachelor!
And He tells me with anger that I am a big fat liar!

Dear, if I persist and rouse His wrath,
To hell He might send me. That will be bad for us both.
So let's resolve to wait till your five and a half years end.
Then you'll attain heaven and our life here we can spend
Till then darling daily write a long nagging letter
And mail to: <joy@heaven.com> More doses I will have later!

.....
Published in "Triveni" Oct-Dec 2006

4. THE FINAL GOAL

I stand before you and chant your praise.
Accept my remorse with your abounding grace.
You are great. For none you harbor malice,
Even to a wretch like me with malevolent practice.

Filled with shame and shrunk to tiny size,
With hanging head and tear-filled eyes
I confess, I committed a heinous crime.
Blinded by politics I couldn't realize at that time.

While shadowing you on the hill with a lethal knife
To kill and throw you into the gorge from the cliff
Ill-luck struck me and threatened to take my life
You heard, rushed with concern, and saved my life.

Bleeding and groaning I lay on the forest roadside
Wounded while I was on a motor cycle ride.
I was on my mission to kill you in the highland estate
Where you and my senior fought election for the state.

My party's boss ordered me to banish you, our rival
By ambushing in the forest, for our party's survival.
While engaged in carrying out that order only the ill-fate
Struck me down to avail of your mercy truly great.

You rushed me fast to hospital when I had hardly any breath
You gave your blood, surgery done and freed me from death.
Gave me care, paid the bill and restored me to my folk,
About my plan to take your life, to none you did any talk.

Your reply to my 'thank you' note I've stuck on my mirror
To read and practice everyday. I'll do it daily forever:

*"Let all ideologies' final goal be **man and his welfare**
Despicable means shouldn't be used to capture political power".*

Your little note and noble deed have changed my life, great friend.
The beast in me has vanished, and the man entered instead.
Indulgence in foul methods to win, I'll never do.

Righteousness and truth will guide me, I do promise to you.

.....

Published in "**Triveni**" of October-December 2008.

5. CHECK IF YOU ARE BLIND

You claim that you have beautiful eyes
Eyes that display charming smiles
Eyes that read fine prints many reams
Eyes setting the other sex in dreams
Eyes of which all poets will praise
Eyes for which all gods will craze.

Despite these you seem to be blind
For, you don't see the life of fellowmen around.

While seeing the rich's maddening glitters
Are you seeing the plight of the people in the gutters?
Do you see the hungry, the sick and the unclad
Living in misery in the shacks in your backyard
And the roofless thousands living on the footpath,
Deprived of food, water and bare supply of cloth,
With no access to many a basic human need,
Whose bodies are grounds for lice and germs to breed?

Do you see children picking food crumbs from garbage,
And the elders picking rags and junk for a living in their old age,
The unlettered, uninformed and half-fed in the village
Who, for feeding you, day and night doing hard tillage,
Isolated, weak and those in many ways deprived,
The uncared for, old and those physically disabled,
And unenlightened poor living always under fear
For, to stand up and get their rights they don't dare?

Are you able to see the meek whose backs the musclemen use
To ride on, bear load, revel and amuse,

The helpless weep watching their daughters being abused
With no support to raise hand, resist and defend,
Unfortunate women selling their chastity for food
And contracting AIDS and other diseases you dread,
And the like fellow beings who are suffering without revolt
In your own neighborhood, for none of their fault?

Are you able to see the tears gushing from their eyes
And perceive their pain with your own inner eyes?
If not, my dear great friend, you are, no doubt, blind.
Check at once and ensure that your vision is made splendid.

.....
Published in "**Triveni**" of Oct-Dec 2007

6. THE LEADER'S GREATNESS

I bow to your soul with deep-seated reverence
For, you showed me what is a leader's greatness.
With natural grace you opted for death for you
While saving all others, proving your captaincy true!

When it became clear that the ship will sink
And the passengers and crew were at death's brink,
You rescued all the passengers and the rest of the crew,
And your own life's safety, to the wind you threw.

The last piece of lifebelt by force you gave me
And with contentment you with the ship sank into the sea.
You showed sincere concern for my young child and wife
And insisted it's too early for me to end the life

With aching heart I heard your this last voice
"Thank you God for your grace to make this noble choice.
I commit my wife and children into thy care.
Faithful Lord! you wouldn't forsake them, I'm pretty sure".

The last sight was your waving hand, downing in the water.
Unwaveringly you walked into the death's belly with valour.
The creator must be proud of you. His blessings He'll shower
On your children, wife, and others, in abundant measure
for ever.

Your rapid acts to send the people out from the ship,
Your concern like a shepherd to rescue his frightened sheep,
Your valiant look, and waving hand sinking in the sea
These visions keep rolling back. Nothing else I see.

I wish I had sunk instead and you continued to live
Thousands would have surely got the benefit of your love.
In this part of the world where the corrupt and selfish thrive
To find a leader of your greatness, truly one has to strive.

May God send you in all rebirths as a leader back here
Vested with the power to dispense God's love and care
To all those in your charge, for the like of you are rare.
The Lord will grant my prayer and lessen His burden
I'm sure.

.....
Published in "**Triveni**" of April – June 2008

8. MY MEMORIAL

My memorial is being built
With public fund from the Budget.
Our cultural minister's thought
Is noble, no? If not, what?

My contributions have been listed
And on the minister's notice board pasted.
It justifies why my name be perpetuated,
And with Socrates I have been bracketed!

Such eulogy was perhaps needed
For getting the project fund sanctioned
Great writer's memorial is surely wanted
For culture's sake. So it needs be funded!

When I was dying in hunger
Writhing in pain without care
In the leaking hut with no one to share
I didn't see any guardian of culture!

Minister's cronies want some project
Linked with the provision of funds in Budget
From which everyone can make profit.
For that I've been projected as a prophet!

The smile on their faces when they get
 their oozing sores washed and dressed,
Their mute expression of gratitude
 when they get their daily bread
The sense of relief they express by a
 mumble and a nod of the head.
These do give me immense joy
 for which I thank you, loving God.

For your gift of eyes to see their plight,
 the ears to hear their cries,
The heart to feel their pains as mine,
 the mind and skill to plan their care,
The hands to wash and dress their sores,
 and the willingness to give them share
In all that you've given me in trust,
 I thank you God. Give more to share.

.....
First published in "***Diocesan Messenger***",
Chennai-Bangalore Diocese of The Mar Thoma Syrian
Church, March-May 2008

10. MY EPITAPH

“My father who owned a half of this world
Is resting here, on his way to the realm of God”.
On my tombstone my son wrote in large bold
Fond and inlaid it with fourteen-carat gold.

This wasn't an attribute which depicts merit or grace.
So, I appeared in dream and advised that it be erased.
Standing far from me, badly quivering with fright
My son said he would delete, and asked me what else to write.

“My attribute wasn't wealth” I said “Don't you remember my boy?
Smiles on the face of the poor have always given me joy.
So, take your pen and paper and write down what I say
To inscribe on my tomb, and without gold inlay:
***'Here lies a man who lived for the welfare of the poor.
Heaven he doesn't want, instead he wants fast rebirth here,
To be with the weak and needy, and try to wipe their tear.
Working for man's succour he prefers to heavenly pleasure'.***”

My son did as I dictated. His action gladdens me.
I look forward to my rebirth with the least delay, to be
Among the weak and deprived, to lend them strength and support
And raise their level of life with dignity and respect.

11. DISCONTENT

Ever since I met you years back,
You've been lamenting over all that you lack.
Never have you expressed contentment
For what you have in large measurement.
Precious possessions you have aplenty,
While what you lack are really scanty.
You haven't seen the plight of the needy
To compare and say why you shouldn't be happy.
Look through the window into the street,
Stand awhile and see how people sweat
And toil for earning just enough to exist.
Male, female, young, and old are all at it.
Just see the kinds of people's suffering.
Resigning to fate they're badly struggling.
Hardship, rains, floods, or scorching heat,
They brave all these to earn and eat.
As the shoeless compares himself with the legless,
Compare yourself with the mass of luckless
Living below your high level, to realize
The privilege you enjoy my dear, and relax.
While searching for a missing little fruit
Don't let luscious basketful to rot.
'Wants' know no ends. Their limits you must set
So that you don't lose what you have in the net.

Published in *"Poetry World"* of February 2009

12. A THOUGHT ON FATHER'S DAY

I am writing this from heaven
To you my beloved children
On this World Father's Day
The things I long wished to say.

This disclosure is not to give you pain
But wisdom I wish you to gain
From the way I lived my life
For you, hiding all my grief.

I stood like a banyan tree.
Under me you lived carefree
While my trunk was rotting in the core
With the strains of the burdens I bore
With a large family to feed
And many a financial need
With the rest and nourishment I lacked
For I starved much, behind your back.

I fed you and dressed you well
Sent you to 'A' class school
Raised you always stretching my reach
So that it appeared I was rich.

To earn more to meet obligations
To God I made supplications
He showed me ways of extra earning.
They kept the candle's both ends burning.

Famished body I veiled in darned dress.
Anguished mind burdened with the stress
And strains of struggles to cope with demand
In feigned joy I concealed. You didn't understand.

With strong will I endured.
My wife's appeals I didn't concede.
But my body thinned and failed.
Unwillingly and untimely I died.

But soon you honoured me indeed
By the positions you have struggled and reached.
So, for my sacrifices I am not sad.
You've rewarded me multifold.

.....
Published in "**Triveni**" of April-June 2006

13. DIGGING FOR WEALTH

Ever since your birth on this earth
You've been always digging for wealth
Not really knowing its use and its worth.
Maybe you'll continue to do this till death.

Many years back I saw your father,
Prior to that I had seen his father,
And still earlier your great grandfather
Digging to gather, hide and disappear.

Your father ruthlessly committed murder
Of an encroacher of land — your next-door neighbour
To get back his land of one foot square.
Through a murder his one foot of land he did recover!

I saw your grandfather, in public, insulting
A borrower who helplessly failed in refunding
A small amount of loan he had taken for the wedding
Of his daughter. Hot tears, I saw, the man was shedding.

Your great grandpa cheated men unlettered
Wrongfully bought their homesteads and gathered
Vast extents of land and became big landlord
And sent the farmers away, all empty-handed.

Where is all the wealth they in those ways gathered
And the one square foot your father had recovered

Whose value your father, ruthlessly, considered
As higher than the life of the neighbour he murdered?

Have any of that wealth your fathers carried?
Have you inherited? Or have they been buried
Somewhere to prevent their coming into your hand?
Are you digging only to find what they left behind?

Not getting the treasure, if, tired you drop dead,
Will it make any difference to you or others of this world?
Why elbow co-diggers? Is it for gaining speed,
Or for enlarging the prospects of your find?

What will you do with the excess of your find?
Bury in the earth? Or give to those in need?
Is this sheepish smile an answer to what I asked?
Don't you have a reply to give in simple spoken word?

Here come roaring replies, from the murdered neighbour,
All the cheated farmers and the insulted father:
"He must dig harder to cleanse the sins of his father
And to pay up huge fines for the crimes of his forefathers."

.....
Published in "**World Poetry**" March 2009

14. THE GOAL AND THE ROUTE

My goal is not anywhere in sight.
None in flesh has ever seen it.
And I'm not sure which is the right route.
It's almost a blind pursuit.

This race is at my forefathers' instance.
They said 'heaven' is my coveted price.
I'll get eternal life with peace
And with angels I can live at ease.

This road is rough. It's full of gutters.
Muddy and dark, its looks give jitters.
Thoughts of further race are raising shudders
Can't think of it without violent shivers.

I saw my father's corpse decomposed on the way,
Grandfather's a few hundred kilometres away,
And at intervals, forefathers' dead bodies in decay.
None of them appears to have run the full way.

Hope impels with vigour. It wears out in rigour.
Will I also fail? Indeed constantly I fear.
Hope and fear are locked in fierce encounter
Will I too perish? Or get ecstasy forever?

Some co-runners, took to a different route,
Which, they were told, are good and short.

No means to check on what they say.
I wouldn't follow yet another hearsay.

Co-runners had been falling one by one.
None looks at the fallen. They're forever gone.
All minds are set on attainment of heaven
What happens to others is no one's concern.

To stop this blind race by many a tedious route
Some heaven-returnee must appear in flesh and meet
The men, and describe the goal and the route,
With a view to ending this otherwise endless plight.

Or, men should make this world the longed-for heaven,
By taking the smooth route of love for all the men,
And steadfast practice of sincerity and nobility,
Starting from today, without waiting till infinity.

.....
Published in "**Poetry World**" of October 2008

15. THE JUDGE -VERSUS - A JUDGE

THE JUDGE of the Universe called me
to dock and asked on the judgment day
“Justice Joy, to defend yourself
do you have anything to say?
You’re charged with the
crime of denying justice at your hand
To many an innocent accused
when you dispensed justice in the world.
Heart-rending cries of innocent convicts I’ve heard
Acquitted criminals’
trumpeting boasts also I’ve heard.
Despite knowing the truth yourself,
you’ve relied on (false) witnesses,
And sent to gallows many faultless.
Your acts were indeed heinous.
I’ve heard your judgments many
that you pronounced in open court.
Often you treated life and freedom
with no justice of any sort.
Widows’ wails and orphans’ cries
have never ever touched your heart.
Innocence written on victims’ faces,
you always failed to look at.
Succumbed to pressure you
wrote out judgments as ‘bosses’ wanted
To gain ‘their’ pleasure and favours,
several evidences you twisted.

Judge, your traits were bad.

 You harboured prejudice and hatred
Your opponents couldn't ever escape.

 Traps you had manipulated.
You never used your knowledge to give
 men their life-saving justice.

These are 'A' grade crimes,
 according to *Heaven's Law of Justice*.

Prescribed punishment for these
 is 'Long-term Roasting in Fire'.

State your defense as to why
 you shouldn't be condemned to that fire".

The dormant lawyer in me woke up
 when those 'allegations' I heard.

I posed the following questions:

 "Who are the complainants? Tell me Lord?
What is the evidence? Who are the witnesses?
 Who is the advocate on record?

I want to cross-examine the witnesses.

 The allegations are absurd.

Which judgments did fail the test of
 Evidence Act of my country?

Stoutly I deny the charges.

 Let the prosecution prove to the contrary
Grant me time to file my counter

 and examine my witness

I'll disprove the allegations,
 and I'm sure the case you'll dismiss."

16. OFFERINGS TO GOD

God appeared in person
and stopped me on my way to the church.
He asked me to show Him
the offerings I'd carried in my pouch.
Two tenner notes I took out,
bowed, and humbly showed to the Lord.
Then signaling me to follow Him
He walked across the road.

He asked "why two of equal value?
Could it not be a single note?"
"One's for you my loving Lord, and the other
is for the church and the priest."
He nodded. Ahead He stopped
beside a famished beggar on the footpath.
And ordered "give my share to this man;
I'll reckon that you have given me tithe."

I did as ordered. He blessed me and said
"do always as you did today.
Go to the church for discipline's sake.
But look for me amongst the poor and needy.
My share always you give to them.
I don't need your gold and cash.
Give as much as you can do,
to the poor and needy. This I wish."

I kissed His feet and said “I will”.

He lifted me and kissed my head.

“I’m pleased with you, my noble child.”

He said and pressed me against His chest.

.....
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17. EVEN THIS FOR YOUR SAKE

Again and again I've read your letter
That says you are ashamed to call me 'mother'.
It curses my womb for bearing you
And wonders if all that you've heard is true.

I expected this letter; but not so soon,
I thought you'd need me till you're fully on your own.
Schooling just over, and got a low-paid post.
Your merits for the job are yet to be proved.

After your father died of sudden heart disease
Life for us with none's care was far away from ease.
A tiny piece of land and a one-roomed house
Were all that your father had left for us.

I brought you up by doing many a menial work
Hoping to get relief when you are big enough to work.
Day and night I slogged to meet our frugal needs
Your food, clothes and schooling were priority indeed

Wrapped in rags my body, frail, weak and starved,
I went from house to house and worked as ladies' maid.
My misery and sorrows, I tried always to hide.
I wished you not to know that I was hungry and sad.

I used to sit awake and shed tears in the night
And pray that God should grant an early end to my plight.
It was a long journey. Every day was filled with fear.
My fierce will only has carried us this far.

When my work couldn't fetch enough to buy our needs,
To meet the deficit source, I sold many household things.
When nothing else remained, with bleeding heart I sold
My most precious chastity. For your sake, this I did.

If that's what you've heard now, yes, it's fully true.
Even that wretched thing with pain I did for you.
I realize, it's shameful to have an unchaste mother.
You wouldn't command respect. Disgrace you'd suffer.

I shall vanish to the realm that's far from human sight
None will see me or hear of. And public memory's short.
None will bother to remember a late petty whore.
But, my soul will keep enquiring if you need my care
any more.

.....
Published in "**Triveni**" April - June 2009

18. THE IMPENDING WAR

You tried all means to silence me.
You set many traps to banish me,
To ensure that I don't remain a threat
To you when you fleece the public chest.

When clandestine schemes to kill me failed
You planned to keep me shut up and nailed
With criminal cases cleverly framed
For I exposed many a fraudulent deed.

You tied me with the rope of false allegation,
Dragged me to court with 'bought' prosecution
Got me convicted with judicial corruption
And imprisoned me with malicious intention.

Keeping me in the prison, you had raped my wife.
Demoralized, the lady ended her young life.
You made my children run away from my home,
And take shelter in a destitute home.

You managed to set my house on fire,
The only saving I made from life-long labour.
You launched litigation and grabbed my little land
So that outside the prison, there'd be no roof over my head.

I've come out from the prison with raging fire
Of fierce determination for waging a major war
The war of intellectuals to banish you scoundrels
And liberate the country from political criminals.

Beware you blood-suckers and parasites on the honest
Soon you'll face the intellectuals' conquest,
The war against the corrupt and criminalized politicians
The war to usher in peace for people and nations.

19. MY HUSBAND'S LAST LETTER

“My funeral is over. All have left
 — the whole multitude
Of mourners and kith and kin.
 Ah! I love this solitude.
Good place to sit, think and write.
 I wish I'd died long back.
By now my deathless thoughts would've
 become a huge poetry book.

“The crow on the bough above
 has agreed to carry this to you
He knows you. He used to eat
 the left over food you threw.
He will drop it through the window
 and caw aloud thrice
And wait at the window to ensure
 that the letter you don't miss.

“Here I write my darling.
 Follow my advice fully.
Don't waste the rest of your life
 mourning. It'll indeed be folly.
Forgetting the dead me, try
 to make your life jolly.
Don't bother about what others say.
 Ignore critics wholly.

“Sorrows you have endured much.

Needn't suffer any more of it.

We've passed through many ups and downs,
and battles several we fought.

We crossed mountains of miseries.

Suffered and rejoiced together.

Our joys were few and short

while pains were more and longer.

“Often you hid your pains, but

your face bespoke your heart

Many a time I couldn't help you

when our days were bad and hard.

At last we reached a state

where we could live with comfort.

Then the jealous death struck

his axe and put us far apart.

“Don't worry that you are alone.

Take heartful of courage to your bed.

Dismiss all sorrowful thoughts.

Let realism rule your head.

Life is precious and purposeful.

Its giver will demand your account

Of how you spent every day.

So, waste not even a minute.

“I wouldn't write you again

as my letters will stir up your sentiments

Which will dampen your spirit and push you

down to life's worthless sediments.

Don't set aside your life for the dead.

God will take care of the dead.

Live for yourself. **Stop the search for sorrows.**

Search for joys instead!"

20. MY DAD FROM HEAVEN

“Son! My concern for you hasn’t
ended with my death.
Without fail, every day and night
I watch your career path.
All your progress reports
I’m reading at your back.
I do rejoice at your success
and grieve at your setback.

“Dear! You must rise in life
through sheer hard work.
Never become complacent
based on father’s wealth.
Take parental support only for
cultured rearing and learning.
And once you are equipped to earn,
you must stop every leaning.

“Initiative, ability and all good traits
are there in you
Summon them with strong will,
they will rise and work for you.
Shun the company of lazy men
and easygoing friends
Lest these men should lead your
life to unpleasant end.

“ *Hard work coupled with
wisdom, shrewdness, dedication,
Discipline, and determination*’

be your incantation.

Practice of this *mantra*

will earn you success everywhere.

My soul will rejoice to see your

success for ever and ever.

“You wouldn’t really feel

attached to an inherited empire

As much as you’d to

a self-made hut, though austere.

Big feast from father’s kitchen

wouldn’t have as much savor

As a frugal food you’ve

earned through your own labour.

“It is easy to rise in life

if only you are industrious.

Set your goal high and strive.

You’ll become illustrious.

Mountains you can move with ease,

rivers you can divert

And convert all *‘the impossibles’*

to *‘possibles’*, or revert.

“To create a niche for yourself,

in today’s competitive world,

Where people are in aggressive race,

you must ever be a step ahead.

Change yourself in tune with time
for you to be found competent
Bask not in the glory of the past.
Let your drive be accelerant!"

22. I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU BEHIND

You look weary, my fellow-traveller.
If you go on like this any longer,
You will collapse by the way side.
So, come and rest for a while in the shade.

Quench your thirst. Here, take my flask.
I'll stroke your feet. That's not an unpleasant task.
Your body is craving for a human touch.
Your weariness will vanish at a stroke of friendship.

The burden you are carrying is enormously heavy.
Divide into two parts. One part I shall carry.
And I can share even your unseen burden.
By the act of sharing, your load will lighten.

When we resume our voyage
Your journey's rigours I shall assuage.
I'll help you brave all the winds and waves,
Sharks and deadly creatures, with stronger nerves.

As we go on, I shall guide you through jungles,
Holding your hand in dark fields and tunnels.
If sand storms catch us, threatening to lash
And blow us off, I will take you in my clasp.

If night overtakes us before we reach some habitat
My lamp will ensure that your feet are not hurt.
When you feel hunger, I'll give you the bread in my bag
And I'll retard my speed so that you don't lag.

In the past, if ever, my strides made you feel defeated,
Forgive me. Consciously with aggressiveness I haven't acted.
My aim is only success, not victory over you.
My gains and pleasures, from your pains I wouldn't brew.

24. I BEG YOUR PARDON

The deep old wound in your heart
Which you are unable to heal despite
Therapies known as the best,
Was caused by the arrows I shot.

My words – rude, thankless and unkind,
Rusted arrows of the worst kind,
Were fired straight into your chest
By tongue's bow my mighty anger bent.

I wish I had control over my anger.
I blame bad upbringing of the younger
Days. In childhood man shapes his character
And imbibes the surrounding's culture.

Years passed. In later life of mine
I made friends with noble-minded men
Who made me become a good human.
My faults I've realized. Now I beg your pardon.

You're good and kind to me in the past.
In my mind these I should have always kept.
For petty lapses I shouldn't have hurt
You. I wish my remorse to heal your heart.

Till the time I hear "I forgive you" from your mouth
I will not have peace. Believe me it is truth.
How easy it was to fire those wounding words!
To call them back man is yet to invent a science!

25. THE MAN BEHIND THE MASK

To be able to live among you elite
I strive to hide my real self behind the mask
And frills of modernity's urban etiquette
Which this village-bourn often finds a hard task.
The mantle of urban culture I'm forced to wear
Is a burden for this unpretentious man to bear.
One who grew up carefree amongst simple folk
Feels impeded by the city's behaviour and talk.
The frugal living my parents gave me as a rural lad
And the social layer in which I am reckoned in the city
Are far apart. Here money and power determine identity
And cultural values are subservient to wealth. How sad!
Behind the mantle and mask of the urban bureaucrat
This carelessly reared villager does suffocate.

27. FOR A MORE BEAUTIFUL WORLD

God sent me suddenly my death warrant
*Yama** himself came as the executant.
He's well known for his unfailing punctuality
And God trusts him for his steadfast loyalty.

In a flash he showed me the black death warrant
And signaled to the demons to carry out the errand.
They tied my hands and legs to a long heavy log
Not uttering a word while for an hour's time I did beg.

After my repeated crying and begging, *Yama* yelled "No!
Your time's ended. God's command you must know!"
His roar quietened me. Soon dashing through the air
We reached God's court. He granted me one hour!

I thanked God for the time, placed my proposal
Before Him and prayed for His kind disposal.
I said: "instead of ending my life my Lord
Use me to build a more beautiful world.

"The world you created so wonderfully
Is now corrupted and polluted irredeemably.
It's beyond repair. It'd better end in annihilation.
Its end will give you relief and the time for a new creation.

"Lord! You are in love with your alluring creation.
But please realize, it has become a horrendous vexation.
It doesn't deserve your mercy any longer.
End it. Let's start work to make a world surely lovelier.

“The new world be built with only honest human beings
Who’d honour you by living with sincere fellow-feelings,
Sharing deep sympathy and love untouched by: creed,
Politics, hatred, wickedness, selfishness and greed.

“In the schedule of new creations let’s not include:
The criminal-politicians, ministers who practice fraud,
Terrorists and extremists who are enemies of peace
And officials who work only when their palms get grease.

“And to make the new world truly a beautiful place
We’ll eliminate jealousy and rivalry, and replace
Them with noble traits. Corruption wouldn’t have a place
And a system to banish wretched rogues should be there
in place

“There shall be a huge furnace to roast the so-called ‘god-men’
Who do cheat the simple folk through diverse tricks and sermon.
Misusing your name, my Lord, they gather wealth and power,
As each unlettered minister has an advisor of this genre.

“In the world that we’ll make anew, none shall die of starvation
There shall not be people suffering social deprivation
Everyone shall enjoy mutual respect and dignity
None shall ill-treat others in the name of inferiority.

“Every man shall do some work that suits his age and health
None shall idle or keep in dark or hoard enlargeable wealth.
Untruth shall have no place there. So, all will reveal the truth.
And each will like to use his wealth for the good of all his kith.”

God heard me fully, thought and said "I accept it.
Return fast. Call all the men and announce that I'm at it.
When the new world's ready, the old shall perish with every evil.
I'll absorb the truthful men to the new world at my will."

God signaled and *Yama* vanished. Two angels appeared
in white,
And brought me down in flower-decked chariot meant
for the nobles' flight.
Here I'm to herald the making of a much more beautiful
world
Where men shall live with joy, peace and unstinted
brotherhood!

* *Yama is the god of death in Hindu mythology*

28. MY CONCERN FOR YOU WILL NOT END WITH MY DEATH

Oh! My fellow-men living in constant fear on this earth
Before you're freed if they bury my corpse,
Believe me, for sure, my corpse shall not decompose,
For, my concern for you will not end with my death.
You are victims of: terrorists, fanatics, cruel money lenders,
Human rights' adversaries, racial discriminators,
And those in arms race — the scoundrels who exploit
The weakness of the less-privileged. Do have explicit
Faith in me that I'll be with you till those rogues are banished,
Till I fiercely hunt them down and have you released.
If I'm given a place in heaven, I'll decline and stay back
Suffering all the miseries, I will accomplish my task.
Before its compliance, my soul can't rest in peace.
When you fellow-men are in sorrow, I'll not enjoy bliss.

29. IF YOU REDUCE ME IN SIZE

Lord, if you reduce me in size,
In revolt I wouldn't ever rise.
But, then, make me a grain of wheat
Which the hungry man can eat;
Not a thorn that will hurt
The poor man's naked foot.
The tiniest of things doing even
The smallest of good to the man
Is no doubt greater than
The costliest of things that's a bane.

30. PREPARATION TO RETURN HOME

Whenever he leaves his office late,
Or takes home urgent office files,
On the way he'll prepare to face her bawls,
And thus will reach home still more late!
He'll drink at the native bar on the way
It'll help him ignore what she would say.
The wine's smiles expressed in silent bubbles
He'd compare with his darling's noisy squabbles
And speak to the sky "Honey, learn from this wine.
Possessiveness it expresses in silent smiles
The same you would express in repellant cries.
I love this silence. It makes me feel fine.
Dear, I'm torn between you and my job.
Realize and sympathize. Then drinking I'll stop."

After your death your admirers
are feeding me in your name.
They say, that your great soul
will be pleased with the same.
I wish I had given you
a fraction of others' regard.
Then you wouldn't have died
as a man destined to be sad.
They say that on the judgment day
you will be in God's jury.
There, will you give me a chance to say
'forgive me, I'm sorry'.

32. THE INCORRIGIBLES

Among my pets there's a little pig.
I strain everyday to keep him spick.
After morning bath with water and soap
I powder his body by keeping in my lap.
I feed him bread with honey and milk
And clothe him with a jacket of silk.
I'd stock his lunch and provide him with a cot
And tell him that he shouldn't stealthily go out.
The pig would obediently nod his little head.
I'd then go away to earn my daily bread.
On my return, I'll find him wallow in sewage
Or feeding on stench-emitting community garbage.
Some days I see him being chased by stray dog
Or urchins tie him with a rope and speedily drag.
If I punish him, he'd whine and kiss my feet
Seeming to say that his joys are there only in the filth.
However, not giving up, I keep daily trying
To mend him. But the pig does keep on straying!
My mother says "your efforts are surely foolish.
You can't change the incorrigibles destined to live in rubbish.
Instinct and pedigree of the pig impel his urge
To shun the bed of roses and live in stinking discharge".
I wish I could prove that my mother is wrong.
Writing off all incorrigibles will be a big wrong.

34. ERRORS IN MY BALANCE SHEET

I died after a rich, joyful, life in the world.
Soon with my accounts I was called by God,
To settle my debts and dues. I appeared
And proudly read out, my many a big deed
All of which I thought would certainly please God.
But God looked displeased, which shook me indeed.
“I did all these to pleased you, my Lord
Kindly give me credit” I implored.
“My programmes included mass feeding, clothing,
housing and teaching”, I went on beseeching,
“Big accolade I expected, at least a good pat
From you my Lord for the time and cost input.
A place for me in heaven, I had taken for granted.
Great Lord! Grant me that. Otherwise I’ll be shattered.
My wife is eagerly looking upwards to hear from me my score.
My balance sheet’s schedules were prepared by her.”
God didn’t speak. With open eyes he just remained silent
His face clearly showed that His decision was different.
I sweated, shivered, broke down and loudly wailed,
Wailed like the women who saw Jesus being nailed.
God turned and ordered me to read out from my book,
The names of all the programmes which I reckoned as big.
I read, “Joy’s Food Program”, “Joy’s Cloth Charity”,
“Joy’s Homes for Homeless” and “Joy’s Free Varsity”
God heard, sighed and said “all hype for Joy!
None *per se* is charity for men in need, my boy!
Schemes of this genre do not earn any heavenly credit
For quietly done charities, I grant enormous merit.

I don't see any items of that type in your account.
So, wait at the lower floor and receive the devil's judgment."

Satan saw my account and told me with a grin:
"To get a place in hell, you must commit bigger sin!"

Thus, getting neither heaven nor the devils' nether hell,
I went again to God and asked His Lordship to tell
As to what more I should do, to get a berth in heaven.
He said: "you go to the world and prove your merit again".
Thus, I'm back in the world for earning tangible merit,
To load my balance sheet with recognizable credit.

35. MOTHER-IN-LAW

She turned me out in the cold dark night
From our home and screamed “you bitch get lost!”
My daughter-in-law can roar like a lion.
When she shouts, I cringe like a frightened kitten.
She is young and strong, and cruel to the core
While old and weak I’m, and morals I adore.

This time, she didn’t stop with the usual loud roar.
She pushed me out of the house through the rear exit door.
Helpless, aimless, I walk now in the dark towards the street,
With tear-filled eyes, broken heart and sob-choking throat.

Half way through I turn, look back
For the last sight. I can not see in the dark
The house I bought two decades back
And moved in from a nearby shack.
My husband had ambitiously saved up some fund.
I added my savings from the wages I earned.
We could not buy the house before he died
But soon I faithfully carried out what he’d desired.
I bought it in our boy’s name, he being the only heir.
Making it a home for him was my life’s desire.

Living very frugally I’ve reared my son.
Making up and equipping the house also I’ve done.
We two lived contented despite occasional strife
Till the time she came in as my son’s well-off wife.
With prejudices the young lady entered our home.
Preconceived, she reckoned me as her big foe.

She imagined me in a black frightful gown
Of the proverbial 'mother-in-law', a dreadful demon.
In all her talks and dealings with me there was
A very clear reflection of this negative bias.
Always I consciously tried to prove otherwise.
But, she wouldn't believe that I wasn't animus.
She reacted offensively to anything I said
And found my fault with everything I did.
Ill of me she spoke to all people in the town
And involved me in tales which she carried to my son.
The boy got fed-up with her incessant complaints.
I asked him not to shield me, for his life's later benefits.

Overcooked meat was this evening's cause
Of her brutal fury that led to my ouster from the house.
My hypertension caused me a reeling and a faint.
During that time the meat on stove got a little burnt.
Any amount of humble pleadings wouldn't calm her down.
With rage she roared "you unchaste woman!
Which man were you ogling while the meat was on flame?"
To this I did retort. My retortion set her aflame.
She opened the kitchen's back door and pushed me out
And yelled "how dare to scold me! You bitch, get lost!"

I'm getting lost. I can't live with her. I'm so terribly hurt.
And I don't wish my son to involve himself in this fight.

Here I go aimless. It's now dark and cold midnight.
I'll grope my way to the lake in the outskirt
My life will end before the morning arrives in twilight
When the day breaks, in the lake my body will float.

36. RETALIATION

The raging fire with sky-licking flames
That threatens to engulf your entire race
Rose from my father's blood that you'd shed
By whipping him hard in the village road.
You rode on his shoulders. To speed up the trek
You urged him on by whipping his back.
When he tumbled and fell down with you on his back,
With rage a hundred times you struck
And left him there with bleeding wounds,
His life blood soaking a large patch of sand.
That blood had turned into a smoldering ingot.
Your heinous cruelty it refused to forget.
It bided its time and has ferociously burst
Into leaping flames and launched the combat
To banish your cruel and oppressing lot
Who sowed the seeds of terrorism first.
Your progeny comprised dreadful demons
Whom you reared as savage anti-humans.
All of you are getting now roasted in the fire,
Your bodies going up in stinking smoke pillar.
It's horrendous to see many a charring body
And agonizing life parting company in hurry.
Your cries, life's terminal cries, I hear
With nobody to help you anywhere near.
You deserve it, yet I don't cherish your anguish.
I wish you to live, not in this way perish,
But live in the world as a sensitive man
Perceiving and alleviating other men's pain.
Jumping into the fire I'll rescue you from death

Bring you back to life and help you live on earth.
Once you're back on feet, do learn to be sensitive
Don't lead your life as a terrorizing primitive.
Other men's bodies and lives are precious
As much as yours. Of this be always conscious.
Stay yourself away from the wrath of the poor
Their curse will chase you, catch you and devour.
For your own gains never cause others' pain
To contain sympathy, your heart you must train.

37. GRATITUDE

I'm now a sad street dog,
Subsisting on faeces and garbage.
I had been a pampered pet.
My master's love I've enjoyed a lot.
Before long, my master died,
And soon thereafter his widow remarried.
The house and compound have been sold,
Things moved, and I'm left behind.
All day long I lie at this gate
In the night I search for something to eat.
The house is not inhabited.
It looks dreadfully haunted.
The beautiful garden has dried.
All the good plants have died.
Thirsty trees with drooping leaves
Mourn their fate through irregular heaves.
Gloom embracing frightful silence
Shades the house and stands in stillness,
As if to usher in the impending doom.
Is my master watching from his tomb?
Dartling bats and scampering rats
Are reigning the house and breeding their brats.
Huge bandicoots do roam in the compound
deep burrows they've made all around.
Snakes, wasps, spiders, thorny bushes
And scorpions prevent human access.
These adversaries I can't now encounter
I'm weak. What to do, I ponder.
At nights I visit my master's grave

And begs for strength which my body craves.
Once from the tomb he spoke. I heard
“Don’t you worry, the house has been sold
The buyer will guard it. You’d better
Shed your body and join me here.”
Yes, I will join him after my death.
Till then I want to live here and breathe
His body’s odour which lingers over here
And gives me the feeling that he’s somewhere near.
His soul’s company I can have later for ever
But his body’s odour may not last much longer!

39. TERRORISTS, BEWARE!

Terrorists, communalists and divisive forces,
 beware! You can never, never subdue me.
If you slit my throat to silence me,
 my ferocious soul will not let you free.
I'll continue my war to vanquish you
 and set free the world from your deadly claws
The terrorized world will sigh with relief
 when you're banished or brought under laws.
With devil's ideology you've launched your onslaught
 to subdue the world for your own gains,
With various kinds of terrorizing acts,
 with no feelings for others' pains.
Murder, gang rape, burn alive humans
 and all other kinds of horrendous deeds,
As you wish you are committing daily.
 To victims' cries you're paying no heed.
Across the world you have built your hideouts.
 They serve as your workstations,
To threaten, terrorize and terminate targets
 for the civilized world's devastation.
You have planned your reign of terror
 and to turn the world into a savagedom.
Founded on hatred and barbarity
 You're fast building your devil's kingdom.

Beware rascals, dreaded rogues,
to annihilate you I've launched my fight.
The total world's all noble forces
will join me to wipe you out.
Conviction will give us strength
to overpower your wicked force.
Nevertheless, I give you a last (last) chance
to give up terrorism and live in peace!

40. THE IDEAL WORSHIP PLACE

Here it stands, my cherished brainchild.
It took me more than a decade to build.
A single house for worshipping God
By people of all the faiths in the world.
Call it by any name you please.
I do call it “the worship place”.
For entry, every religion has a door
For exit, use the door that isn't far.
Inside it there is only one common religion.
Seating is mixed. The worship book is common!
The worshiped deity is the supreme God.
All His known names I've displayed on a board.
He's self-born, infinite, omniscient, creator,
Sustainer, merciful, provider and destroyer.
His attributes and praises are chanted in the worship.
The worship book doesn't have scholastic showmanship.
Worshippers vow to God to lead a noble life
True to God's purpose, causing others no strife.
At the altar people slough their evil character
Like: cruelty, bitterness, violence and anger,
Diverse kinds of hatred, treachery, terrorism,
Disloyalty, brigandage, adultery, rowdyism,
Vilification, jealousy and oppression of the poor;
And promise that these traits they are shedding for ever.
Worshippers do carry home humility, patience,
And a firm resolve to live in peace with neighbours.
They swear that other people's rights they'll respect
And their tongues and hands they'll use in discreet.
Towards the end the worshippers thank and praise God
For the great gift of life in this beautiful world.

42. OUTBURST OF YEARNINGS

How much have I longed to merge in you!
Day and night I'd been dreaming of you.
I lacked the courage to disclose to you
But prayed that someone should act between the two.
Your actions showed that you too had yearned
For me, but a disclosure your doubts had blocked.
Timidity and doubt kept our yearnings corked
To the point of blowing up. Our souls squirmed.

At long last I nervously held your hand and said that
My suppressed yearnings would burst my heart.
Pat then you said you'd been long dying to hear it
And any longer delay would have exploded your heart.
As we revealed, lightning flashed, embraces followed,
Souls merged, kisses fused, passion traversed,
Love murmured, thunder and rain drummed and danced,
Shackles broke and handcuffs loosened and dropped.

43. MIGRATORY BIRDS

Hi, winged missionaries of peace and brotherhood
You're making us men feel small and ashamed.
Peaceful co-existence we preach, don't practice,
While you with ease live in oneness and peace.
The whole world is your home, a single undivided home
And everywhere you're welcome, peaceful and at home.
From one continent to another you're moving at your will.
You carry no visa, nor permits, only goodwill.
Climate and harvest are determining your residence
And at once fly in flock to the country of your choice.
No line of control, no boundaries, no check posts,
No baggage, no cash, everywhere you have hosts,
To welcome you with esteem, for meeting all your needs,
And give you care and comfort. Brotherhood it's indeed.
Your language, culture and life style are the same everywhere
Everything you refer to as "our", nothing for you is "their".
You don't have any race, no religion, and no caste.
Treating all alike, for none you harbor hate.
You don't need any fire arms, no skills in warfare
Nor do stealthily foster terrorists of your neighbour.
As you over-fly countries, you send down greetings of peace
And brotherhood to fellow beings living at every place.

Noble birds, dear angels, I bow in reverence to you
And sing aloud your praises. A favour could you do?
I beseech you to carry this tag around your neck
Dangling beneath the neck so that men can take a look.
Carry many pieces to all countries of the world
And ensure that men everywhere get a chance to read.

“Men! Dismantle barriers and erase classes,” it reads,
“And build an undivided world to achieve lasting peace”.

.....
*Siberian Cranes migrating to other parts of the world at the onset
of winter and flying back to their homeland towards the end of
winter have inspired this poem*

44. MY CLAIM TO HONOUR!

I'd been thinking
to be a very great man,
my attribute being poetry,
and my poems highly rated.

I had genuinely believed
that poetry is great gift,
poet is a superman
and he was venerated.

I had discontentment
that I didn't get the credit
which I truly deserved
for my superior poetry.

Poets much junior
and close to political bosses
got awards and honours,
For, they wrote base flattery.

So, when I died I wrote
an elegy on myself,
a long narrative poem,
superb in its contents.

Carrying my dead body
I went around the city
reciting my elegy
to my heart's full content.

From gate to gate I moved.
From street to street I went.

At road junctions I stopped,
to drum up support in my favour.
I was firm in my resolve
to get my rightful honour
which the state had for long
overlooked to confer.

Sans any modesty
my elegy compared me
with many other poets
and stated my claim.

The elegy eulogized
and compared my talents,
exalted my skills,
and extolled me to the brim.

“
International poet
..... Multilingual Poet
..... Mystic, epic poet
..... People’s eternal poet...
.....

“In the untimely demise
of this truly great genius,
an irreplaceable asset
the country has lost ...”

I strongly recommended
to embalm my body
and preserve it well
in a befitting memorial!

And stoutly stated that
my body deserves to become
a global exhibit.
so, it's foolish to do burial.

I told the spectators
that future generation
will not brook the failure
to preserve this poet's body.

This will indeed become
a tourist attraction
and a topic of research
for those in higher study.

People mostly ignored.
None had time to listen,
with their own weight to carry
and wail of woes to recite.

Some mistook me as ghost.
They raised alarm and fled.
Ladies slammed their doors.
Urchins followed with delight.

A few said "schizophrenia".
The kind said "poor man's corpse
with no money for burial"
and offered alms in cash!

One let loose his dogs.
I ran with the load on head.
The urchins came to my rescue.
Stopped the dogs with lash.

A scientist followed saying
 "it's an unusual phenomenon
 to carry one's own corpse.
 A big case for research!"
"Poor scientist!", I said,
 "a poet's ingenuity
 is beyond the scope of research.
 My realm you can't reach".

Jeering crowd couldn't stop
 my mission to assert myself
 I went afar with the corpse,
 singing and speaking aloud.

Determination impelled.
 Ridicules couldn't deter.
 I talked to many a man,
 while most tried to elude.

My wife and children came
 running to me and said:
 "your act is ridiculous
 money alone makes man great."

I didn't listen to them.
 I said I deserve honour
 for my fight against the unjust
 and the great poetry I wrote.

At last came a trader.
 Evinced interest. Asked:
 "what is it all about?
 Is it new ad for a trade?"

“What’s this new product?
Is this a sample piece?
What’s your selling price?
Is it locally made?”

“It’s a poet’s body.
One and the only piece.
Very special creation.
Invaluable indeed.

Spend a million dollars
Embalm it and display.
Viewing fees yearly
could exceed tenfold”

“Poet? What’s that thing?
Is it human or beast?
In shape it looks human.
I buy human corpse.

That’s one of my trades.
I harvest and sell organs.
Act fast if it is human
Time you shouldn’t lose.”

I couldn’t control rage.
“Unlearned man”, I said
“Dogs prefer stool to diamonds.
You flesh merchant, get lost!”

The trader retorted
“foolish dreamer, you
Don’t know the worth of money!”
He spat in my face and left.

An old religious leader
heard my talk and stopped.
He understood my claim
and then, gently said:

“Vyasa and Valmiki
wrote enough of poems,
which, for many millennia
all of us can read.

“Till now I haven’t read
even a half of their works.
The same is the case
with every learned priest.

Hardly has any laity
ever opened those books.
Then where is really the need
for more poems or poet?

“Embalming? We didn’t do
even of great Vyasa’s body.
How will then we embalm
a minor poet’s corpse?

It makes good sense to bury
both, the body and your poems.”
Saying much to my dislike
the priest slid back to his course.

Inwardly I rebuked
the fat religious leader
and went ahead undeterred
to realize what I wanted.

The next to look at me
was an English language scholar.
Hopefully I called him
and my case I recounted.

He heard and sympathized,
looked at me with pity,
took my hand in his,
heaved a sigh and said:

“Your claim is reasonable.
My good wishes to you.
Owing to lack of time
I can’t help dear bard.

“I’m a Shakespearian
I did research on him,
the self-styled litterateur
and arrogant versifier.

He’s been keeping me
burdened all the time
as I do reviews of
writings on this rhymester.

“Honestly I haven’t
read any of your works.
Unless there’s pressure
anything I don’t read.

Romantic young girls
do read poetry books.
Approach some of them”,
while leaving, the scholar said.

The next to intercept me
was a local politician.
I beseeched him to help
as a noble social cause.

Shaking his pot-belly
he scornfully laughed at me.
For settling old scores
he talked in filthy words.

“Oh, you dirty pig!
The so-called radical
who incited a tirade
on senior political leaders!

Good, you stinker died
prior to being killed.
You acted very smart.
I remember your lectures.

“Fool! You get buried,
body and soul together.
How could you ever expect
this state to give you honour!”

As he started his car
he spat on my body
in the shape of a wreath.
It evidenced his culture.

Next I met a poet.
He lamented my death.
He praised my poems
and hugged and kissed my chin.

“Why only you?”, he asked.

“All poets have to be embalmed.

Go ahead and fight.

I’m sure you’ll win!

“I can’t join you now.

My wife’s alone at home.

If I return late

in high pitch she will yell.

She is one person

whom I really fear”

the poet said while leaving,

“we’ll meet in heaven or hell”.

All these couldn’t change

my firm determination.

I went ahead with vigor

and steadfast conviction.

Amused police said:

“for a frugal funeral

a good and simple style.

We OK this procession!”

I met the Minister

for education and culture,

forced him to hear my elegy

and asked for honour by the state.

“Sorry, my dear poet,

the state has no provision

for what you have in mind”

he said and left in haste.

People of all walks of
life and vocations
stopped, watched and heard.
None showed any concern.
“This is a dementia
that afflicts the weak victims
even after death”
was the general conclusion.

My walk went deep
into the dark lonely night
till I became weary
and the body heavier.

Refusing to admit
failure of my mission
I went to the beach nearby,
to stretch out for an hour.

While in deep slumber
an unseen hand awoke me.
I saw none around.
But heard these soothing words:
“God is pleased with your
conviction my boy.
You’re selected for
the highest of heaven’s awards.

“Not being a stooge,
it’s not easy to get honour
in this world mostly
Ruled by selfish men.

God had a purpose in you.

 You lived true to that.

 You have honoured Him.

 So His honour for you is certain”.

The unseen hand raised me.

 A grave opened in front.

 My dead body fell into it.

 Soon the grave got closed.

The unseen made me sit

 saddled firm on his back.

 Then he rose to the sky

 and flew fast through the clouds.

Grasping the unseen body

 I fell asleep again.

 I woke up to find myself

 in a scintillating hall.

I was bathed and dressed

 in glittering suit and gown.

 Noble men and angels

 filled the ceremony hall.

In a resonant voice

 I heard this announcement:

 “God is honouring Joy

 For good work done in the world.

His tirade against wickedness,

 and growing inequities, and

 pursuit to ennoble men

 have greatly pleased the Lord.”

Angels came to me
and escorted me to God.
He rose, embraced me,
and seated by His side.

A citation was read out
that praised me for my work.
The way it was written
gave me much delight:

“

The creator had a purpose.
You lived up to it very well.
You obeyed God’s command
and honoured Him everywhere.

For obeying God’s command
men don’t give you reward.
Noble Man’s Award
for you by God is here!”

God rose from His throne
and placed a crown on me.
Shook my hand and said:
“Reward for honouring me”.

Fragrant flowers rained,
Drums and music rose,
angels danced and sang:
“The lord is honouring thee!”.

45. FORGIVE THEM

When you wash my sore
 and wipe my tears,
Some on-lookers are calling you
 'foolish ass'.
Forgive them my friend,
 these unlearned haven't read
The contents of your holy
 Covenant with God!

46. GOD KICKED ME!

I wanted to enjoy wealth and pleasures.

So, for shortcut I became a communal leader.
The richer adjunct, I realized, was religion.

So, self-styled I became also a spiritual father.
Followers and devotees emerged soon.

They did assure me of money and men.
Unread villagers, rich as well as poor,
acted like chickens and made me their mother-hen.

I built my 'temple' and installed myself as 'guru'.

Villagers then saw me with reverence and fear.
In disputes and quarrels my verdicts were final.

To go against my decisions the people didn't dare.
My fire-emitting angry looks made the people shiver.

In general my decisions were fast and fair.
Gainers from my verdicts gave offerings to the temple.
A good part of every gain came as the temple's share.

Gradually the people shunned the local deity
and came to me for blessings and sins' expiation.

Confessions and repentance I accepted with grace.

So, people queued up daily for trespasses' absolution.
Touch-healing, prayer therapy and animal sacrifice
were some of my practices for distress mitigation.

People came from far and near to avail of these treats.

My temple became famous for barren's conception.

A section of the villagers I trained in martial art,
and used their muscle power to settle and retaliate,
And in the guise of divine teaching,
I taught them communal hate.
Dividing the people on communal lines,
cleverly I derived massive might.
And to keep one section close to me,
I often aroused a communal fight.

I masterminded terror strikes.
Also ignited communal passion.
I made the people believe
these as parts of godly devotion.
“Our deity hated people who
did not pay him veneration.
The only way to please him was
his rival men’s annihilation”.

Sacrifices, festivals, weddings,
and events of merriment
Were often conducted, and all were
under my financial management.
These events had continually
gone to enlarge my cash savings.
The people gave me lavishly
for fulfilling hearts’ cravings.

All the good things of the village,
I had the privilege to enjoy first.
Anything I desired was readily given.
No one dared to question or resist.

I was the uncrowned king of the place
with the deity's sacred mantle and rod.
I strained to show to the people that
my love for them wasn't feigned but good.
Thus when things were going well,
on one night I was suddenly caught.
A gigantic figure in human form
wearing dazzling, long, outfit
Woke me up from sleep and said
"follow me, don't make noise"
Doors opened themselves for him.
I simply followed like a mouse.
When we reached a vast deserted field,
the huge figure slowed down and stopped.
He grabbed me, furiously shook me and
on both my cheeks heavily slapped.
Several teeth gave way. I howled.
But soon his rebuke enforced silence.
"I'm the God", he said, "in whose name
you're cheating the citizens."
He hit me and kicked me again and again,
one hit or kick for every accusation:
"For your fraudulent setup.
For preaching hatred and passion.
For rampantly misusing my name.
For embezzlement and extortion.
For terrorist acts. For atrocities.
For sexual abuse. For chastity destruction.
For the blessing you have granted.
For the judgments you have passed.
For persecuting men. And for every other
ruthless act and criminal deed."

He threw me down with a jerk
and kept me pressed hard under his foot.
After a while he raised me and
sternly warned thus, before he left:
“Earn your living by honest work,
not by all these fraudulent means.
If you go back again to the wicked ways,
I’ll tear you up and mince
And feed my vultures and wolves. I wouldn’t
tolerate your god-man nonsense.
I’m giving you just one chance to mend
and will watch your performance.”

When I became conscious, I found myself
writhing in terrible pain.
I was ramshackle and felt that I was
terribly milled and almost slain.
I wasn’t able to get off-ground.
So, lay there helpless, sweat-awash.
At dusk to my luck a rain poured down.
It gave me a drink and a wash.
Twilight helped me to flee from the place
without the label of instant disgrace.
My golden neck chain financed me
to escape into a far off place.

When I resolved to live with honesty,
I received helps from unseen hands.
I got a job there before long.
For a good living it gave me the means.

47. I BLAME YOU GOD

You have made me

head of a rich big state.

However, I don't consider

that Your act is really great.

For, You haven't given me

the amount of wisdom and wit

Needed to be a ruler.

So, for the post I'm not fit.

Truthfully, my state's subjects

have no faith in me.

Any day they might revolt

and overthrow my regime.

Day is not very far when

I'll suffer that disgrace and flee,

Or get hanged, like many other rulers

who could not go scot-free.

I wish I were a commoner with

wisdom and sense of fairness

That would have bestowed on me

some attributes of greatness.

48. TAINTED CROWN

You gave me a crown.

But I find it tainted.

All the precious gems and diamonds
studded on it are looted.

The previous owners' blood stains
can still be seen on them.

Their blood was shed in torrents
to extort these charms.

The slain owners' souls are
wailing and straining to reclaim

These. So, this crown on me
is indeed a massive shame.

Take it back and instead, God,
give me a country mat

Spread on the black mud floor of a
thatched little hut,

Wherein I can rest and sleep
with undisturbed scruples,

Without being haunted by
deprived owners' souls.

49. WEALTHY MAN'S WOES

You gave me countless wealth,
so much so that its management
has cast a huge burden on me
and I'm weighing down.

My wealth is widely spread,
variously held,
differently accounted
and diversely risk-laden.

Tracking each of them closely,
ensuring their upkeep and safety,
and checking their inventory
continually, is indeed a huge work.

Half my life I spent
for gathering this wealth.
The other half I'm spending
to protect its worth!

Restless days and
long sleepless nights,
litigations and quarrels
added together is my life!

I envy the daily labourer
living across the road.
Content with the day's life,
every night he sings with his wife!

51. MY DARLING'S COMPLIMENTS

You are pouring hollow praises into my ears.
You have been doing this for so many years.
I knew not they're pushing me to destruction.
Alas! They've ruined me beyond redemption.

Overestimation of myself, based on every praise,
Gave me complacency to be smug and to laze.
On exhaustion of my inherited wealth and glory
Now I look around. I've nothing. I feel sorry.

To face the competitive world, I find I'm deficient.
My contemporaries have become clever and efficient.
By timely removal of defects they became proficient,
While I basked in the belief that I was self-sufficient.

Darling! I regret that I swam in your compliments
Whole-time, forgetful of the changing environments,
Never exposing myself to a wise man's reprimand
That would have made me fit to face today's demand.

52. PULL OUT MY TONGUE

By giving me a long and healthy tongue,
Think not You have given me a mighty thing.
For, always my tongue speaks utter nonsense
And continuously gathers bitterness.
Before my mind analyses thoughts, it acts.
Wisdom's discernment it always flouts.

A stammering tongue making constant efforts
And strugglingly succeeding to speak some words
To generate goodwill, peace and concord
Would have been surely a blessing, my Lord!
If it's too late to change, I entreat
To pull out this tongue and make me great.

53. IN MY DAYS OF DESPAIR

Many friends I had
in my good old days.
Drinks, eats, games and songs
to heart's content they enjoyed.

Visits were frequent,
evenings were long,
hospitality lavish
and my esteem avowed.

Only one friend I've today
and that's my dog Tony.
He's always beside me,
concerned with my welfare.

The poor beast now and then
looks at me and whines.
His whining carries several questions.
I stroke him with unspoken answer.

His first question to me is:
'where are all those friends
who used to frequent this house
to enjoy when your days were good?'

Unspoken I answer while stroking the beast:
'innocent animal!
man's friendship is proportionate to
what he gets from the friend'

If I give a spoken answer,
my eyes will let out rivulets,
and my sobs will indeed
make the dog more sad.

Yet, when he isn't near, I cry.
I cry to vent, lest I should burst.
How ingrate and insincere
is this human world?

When my business failed
and all my money I lost
lavish entertainments stopped.
And friends stopped their visits.

No enquiries, not even phone calls.
Tony being close to me has
comprehended the changes.
Insincerity he detests.

When my days were good,
Tony acted grandly
to impress the visitors that
in all my matters he had a say!
He loved good food.
I fed him aplenty.
He enjoyed comforts
and my nightly hugs, to complete his day.

Now I'm a pauper.

I can't even feed my dog.

Tony knows my situation.

So he's finding his own feed.

When he comes back home

I look at him with grief.

He would console me

by softly licking my feet.

Tony's love hasn't changed.

He would sit with me now

for longer than before

to ensure I'm not left alone.

In return he expects nothing more

than my permission

to rest his head on my foot

and to look at me and moan.

54. FORCED SMILES

The smiles on my face
aren't real. They are forced.
They veil my anguish
and try to hide ill repute.

When I succeed to impress
visitors and neighbours
that my smiles were real,
I get a big respite.

But this veil fails to veil
the many deep scars
of old wounds and the
new cuts still bleeding.

Truthfully I'm ashamed
to face our neighbours.
For, in the nights I scream
loudly while they are sleeping.

Not to let the neighbours hear
my yells, when my drunken husband
shouts and cruelly beats me,
I struggle really hard.

But womanly weakness often
fails my efforts, I know.
Are the good neighbours not
pretending to have not heard?

He comes home daily late,
 invariably drunk,
 after visiting his concubine
 who gets all his good part.

He brings home for me
 and his two children
 his most loathsome mouth
 that spews out stinking dirt.

My silence will enrage him.
 My answer will infuriate him.
 My staying away will annoy him.
 If I'm near he will brutally hit.

While beating me cruelly
 he will roar like a beast.
 If I caution him of neighbours
 he'd say "you eat neighbours' shit".

If I say "for children's sake
 check your talks and acts",
 he'd say "you and your children
 must hang yourselves and die."

My children lie awake
 the night long, sobbing.
 They're humiliated by friends.
 So to face others they're shy.

The real cause is that
 his concubine's young and voluptuous.
 I, with all my burdens,
 don't look young or allure

A good part of his income
he happily spends on her.
He neglects me and the children.
How long shall we endure?

Most nights I do starve.
Children are undernourished.
We lack all essentials for living.
We hide our misery and suffer

Much more than misery
it's the shameful humiliation
and growing ill repute
that we are unable to bear.

Many times I planned
to end this torment by suicide.
Thoughts of the children
held me back all the while.

Should the children also
not end with me I wonder.
What life will they have
by growing up like snail?

Second thoughts also
often creep into my mind.
My suicide might land my husband in jail.
It can ruin children's future.

It will beset the family with
lasting disrespect
and the rest of the community
will isolate it and abjure.

These thoughts weigh heavily
and agonize my mind.

This façade of forced smiles
is to hide my agony.

Will not the light of sanity
enter my husband's head
and banish the darkness one day
so that the right path he may see.

While being Budha, you told nasty story
About my association with Sujatha and Amrapali.
You commented that I deserted my wife
And later admitted many women in my life.

During my stint at Eden as Adam the first man,
You say, I disobeyed God by gluing fast to the woman.
With her caresses she made me weak and I sinned,
Enticed by voluptuous Eve, God's advice I shunned.

Long will be the list if I mention all your tales
Involving me with women, both harlots and angels.
In all my living forms in the world, as god or as man,
From genesis to this day, you linked me with women.

And you always ascribed a sensual involvement
In every association. You couldn't perhaps rise to the
firmament
Of high thinking and visualize a sublime bond
Of man and woman that is nonsexual, mutual and devout

56. BEWARE! WE ARE UNITING

We are the well-meaning citizens of this world.
This land is so beautifully made for us by God.
We want to live with peace in this good abode.
So, we want you terrorists to vanish from this world.

Long back we lived under the threat of savagery.
We got together and banished it. Then came barbarity.
We fought it and ended it, with learning and bravery.
Later came invaders. We expelled them with chivalry.

Imperialists at different times had seized and repressed us.
To force them out, with oneness we fought in different ways.
With determination and unity we'll fight out all our foes
And live our life with dignity, equity, and peace.

You terrorists are perhaps the last lot of our foes.
Rascals! We shall not (repeat, not) allow you to grow,
Anywhere in this world, thwart our peaceful life,
Throw the world out of gear and leave us in bloody strife.

We swear by our life that we'll not allow you to flourish
For whatever ideology you embrace or theology you profess.
Fools! If you think that terrorism pleases God,
Correct yourself. To destroy us, your hands God doesn't need.

57. LEAVE ME ALONE

Sirs!

You've spoken enough

And have let me down.

Now, Leave me alone

And give me a little relief.

I heard your derisive comments.

I've numerous shortcomings.

Your evaluation I admit.

So, happily you can stop it.

Luckily, my vast deficiency

Doesn't affect your efficiency!

I've never ever asked

Or in any other manner forced

You to bear my load.

So, for discussing me, there's no need.

My burden I myself carry

With my deficient mind and body.

All the wakeful hours I labor

And in work I strive to be sincere.

In return, my needs are supplied.

So, I don't need your support.

My needs are simple and basic,

And indeed my wants are zilch.

Carry on with your might.

I admit that you're great.

Do not waste your time

On marginal men like me.

Now and then do introspect
And ensure that you are perfect.
To laugh at others' defect,
You have to be just right.
For what I lack when you openly mock
If the same thing you too lack,
You will lose your respect,
And men will call you hypocrite.

58. MY SAD DEMISE

By the time you reached, my funeral had ended
And the cemetery's gate was about to be bolted.
Good that you're late. I could talk with comfort,
And tell you the latest experience of pains, and depart.

Ever since I became laid up, you had been absent
From the place, and so, my woes I couldn't narrate.
I have been suffocating, not being able to pour out
My sadness to you, as you're close to me, and patient.

For over six decades we have been close to each other,
Revealing to each other our hearts' feelings, sans cover.
As friends with the same background and wavelength
We built between us an understanding of great depth.

I knew well all of my so-called 'close relations'.
None had any interest in my sentimental revelations.
In the past few months my heirs had been busy bickering
Over my wealth as they knew my end was nearing.

With claims and disputes they often woke me up.
But, to give me a little care, none has ever looked me up!
Nobody bothered about my thirst, hunger, medicine or toilet.
My wails scarcely answered; day and night I lay as a hermit.

I learned through painful experience that my property
Had kept relations good to me only as long as my faculty

To give as I liked, was in tact. After I was laid up,
With the assured legal inheritance right, they gave me up!

My relations looked forward to an early end of their 'wait'
So that they could grab their shares and quit.
When with massive hard work and sacrifices I saved money
I had never envisaged that this will be my destiny.

Although I wanted to be with you and talk much more,
The bell rang signaling me to stop. My time's over.
Your visit enabled me to release the pressure in my chest
And see the face of a man who cared for friends, before I left.

Adieu my friend! You never wanted any of my possessions.
The only thing you expected was my sincere association.
If only you were present in the place when I confined to bed,
My last days and demise, I'm sure, wouldn't have been so sad.

59. DOOM

On the same side of a city road
Four establishments side by side
Exist, housed in large buildings,
All engaged in different callings,
A Bar which serves foreign liquor,
A Pornography Show Parlour,
A popular Cinema-cum-Eatery,
And a huge Rare Books Library.
To control the entry into the first three
Of customers with a spending spree,
Policemen are struggling hard.
So large is the size of the crowd.
Programs run for twelve hours
Sales account in thousands of dollars.

Of the fourth, I am the sinecure chief.
All day long I sit and sleep.
Nothing there happens to disturb my sleep
Except the scampering rats' screech.
On the unswept thick layer of dust
In the walkway starting from the gate
Leading to the portico and sit-out,
One can see only one person's footprint.
That is mine. My attendance is frequent
While my dejected staff remain absent.

Listen to the scampering rats' yell.
To the human world they seem to foretell:
"If you neglect the printed word,
Towards doom you will push fast the world".

60. ALAS! THEY WERE BUBBLES!

Alas! All my riches were flashing bubbles.
All powers and positions were fleeting bubbles.
All the worldly pleasures were flimsy bubbles.
And all big connections were feeble bubbles.

A single misfortune wiped out my massive wealth
And destroyed the possessions that had any worth.
A single accident crushed my robust health.
And obliterated my beauty that exuded mirth.

I now live in a mercy-home's dormitory.
My life is aided by kind people's generosity.
I get twice-a-day free supply of gruel for food
And for sleeping I'm given a makeshift bed.

In those days when I lived like a rutting elephant,
Wallowing in riches, making life increasingly pleasant,
None could have imagined that this would be my end.
If I had any hint, my life style would have been different.

Rowdiness,
Cheating,
Cruelty,
Inequity,
Adultery,
Insensitivity,
Insobriety
Corruption,
Oppression,
Misappropriation,
Exploitation,

Rat races,
Elbowing, and
The like,
I wouldn't have ever practiced.

Remorsefully I cry and beseech, Oh, God!
Give me a chance to undo every misdeed.

61. SUBLIME LOVE

With all my faults

you love me still!

What a sublime love!

I realized it late.

I saw you standing

with tear-shedding eyes

and feebly waving,

at the airport's gate.

Obviously, you came

for a final glimpse.

That I hated to see you,

you didn't seem to care.

I was leaving India,

with my newly wedded wife

to migrate to Australia,

to start a life there.

You had been my wife

for half a dozen years.

For suspected infidelity

I obtained legal divorce.

You had humbly implored

in all earnestness,

to believe your innocence.

But my belief I didn't reverse.

I'd seen you in a man's arms.

The man was your cousin.

Such intimacy and caresses,
as innocent I couldn't take.

I took your picture together,

turned you out and yelled:

'adulterous harlot! Out.

Never, never to be back'

I heaped your clothes, etcetera,

near the road side

and set fire to them

with uncontrolled anger.

Onlookers laughed,

urchins sang and danced,

neighbours whispered and jeered,

as I let the fire leap higher.

Badly I humiliated you,

and brought disgrace on you,

totally disregarding

the ensuing mental anguish.

My fury kept steaming.

I refused a reunion.

Soon I filed a court case

for getting legal divorce.

Relatives and well-wishers

intervened for compromise.

All I rejected outright.

I said I wouldn't budge.

Fiercely I fought the case.

You didn't counter at all!

You didn't like to reunite
through court. You took a pledge.

Court granted divorce.

I felt really relieved.

Still I fumed with rage.
So, your face I hated to see.

I took another wife.

You resigned to your fate.

They said you're in misery.
That didn't bother me.

Later on, several times

you had sent me word
praying only to believe
that, faithless you were not.

Nothing else you wanted

except exoneration.
Without it, you said,
in peace your soul wouldn't rest.

I didn't respond to you

for my anger persisted.
Your visit to the airport today
for a one-sided *adieu*,

Gave me a jolt and forced
me to do rethinking.

You still seemed to believe
that I am valuable to you.

How to believe this!

 Didn't I disgrace you
 by calling you publicly
 harlot and prostitute?

Averred in the open court

 that you're an *adulterer?*
 divorced and remarried.

 Still I've a place in your heart!

This forced me to rethink

 even about the cousin's caress.

 Maybe it was platonic,
 and the love truly innocent.

I became inclined to believe

 it was nonsexual. If so,
 my hasty and heinous acts
 deserve punishment.

The more and more I thought

 the clearer became my feeling
 that you must have been innocent,
 you couldn't have been unchaste.

My head started reeling,

 guilt filling my chest.

 Questions hit my ears:
 'why did you act in haste?'

Wasps buzzed in my head.

 My vision increasingly blurred.

 Body became weary,
 with tongue and legs failing.

The ground beneath me
has suddenly cracked.
A deep dark hole opened
into which I felt falling.

A question echoed in the hole:
'why were you inconsiderate?'
Hissed and coiled over me
many a long serpent.

The serpents perhaps had
the divine sense of justice.
Instead of stinging in haste,
they wrung me hard to repent.

In agony I cried aloud:
'Reena! Forgive me. I'm sorry!
Ask the snakes to release me.
And pull me out from this burrow'.

Waking up from the delirium,
I saw people splashing
water on me, and my wife
wailing with sorrow.

'Where's Reena'? I asked.
Then from the crowd you emerged
wiping your eyes and saying
"I'm here, shall leave now."
"About me you mustn't bother.
Your flight is on time.
Immigration is announced.
Proceed. Start life anew".

And in a flash you left.

I called out “No Reena, don’t go.

I’m convinced. You’re innocent.

And I acted in haste.

“My mean mind couldn’t think

of a platonic sublime love

between a man and a woman.

Cultural gap, low taste.”

While bewildered people

stood all around watching,

I strained and saw you Reena

disappearing into horizon.

There my avowal resounded:

“Reena! you’re innocent!

You’re not faithless.

I beg for your pardon”.

62. FOR THE COMMON GOOD

My country,

My friends,

My fellow-men,

Let not any evil

Ever befall you.

If a human sacrifice can avert ills,

Sacrifice me for the good of all.

If one man's death can save all the rest,

Here is my neck, take the sword and cut.

64. HUMAN SAFETY

The railway minister flagged off the train,
Ceremoniously, on the new rail line.
Spectators cheered. Flower petals rained.
The minister harangued. His cronies bragged.

The new line fulfilled a long-felt need.
It'll speed up the region's progress indeed.
It had long been a contentious demand.
On its fulfillment, people sang and danced.

The project's team members boasted, rejoiced,
Were greatly anxious to be noticed,
To meet the minister and get introduced.
In general the place wore a festive mood.

Standing at a distance a boy of ten
Was watching the entire goings on.
He sobbed with anguish. His eyes were wet.
When all others rejoiced, this boy alone wept.

Sun-tanned and famished, in dirty rags
He lives on footpath. For food he begs.
His parents died in a tunnel roof fall down
While laying this line. Thus he became orphan

Standing there he recalled the day
When his parents' both dead bodies lay
Near the tunnel, after a doctors' avowal
That they're beyond the hope of revival.

His cries and insistence to jump into their grave,
The men who stopped him and asked not to grieve,
And all the misery of the past two years,
He recalled and grieved with flowing tears.

None took any care of the orphaned boy.
He got abandoned as cruelty's toy.
Some nights he'd stand at the tunnel's entrance
And call out his parents and narrate his grievance.

People have heard his parents' yell
In silent nights from inside the tunnel.
"For the project's completion we gave our lives.
With dogs and pigs our child now lives".

Legally assured benefits, the pursuers only get.
How could this child have pursued his right?
Minister! Your system should take care of it.
Protect human safety and welfare in each project.

Today before you proudly commissioned the line,
You ought to have spoken about the couple, who're slain
By the lapses of the bosses of the project execution,
And enquired about how their child is living.

65. I AM DEATHLESS

I remember vividly all of my previous births.
You may call it myth. But it's entirely a truth.
First, in the court of God I lived as a versifier.
Later, I'd several births as ordained by the creator.

When this part of the universe, the world,
Was being made, praising the brilliance of God
In design and construction, I composed a new song
Every night, and to Him in the morning I sang.

My songs didn't carry hollow flattery. They're genuine
Paeans on God's enormous creative genius.
He dislikes flattery, but acknowledges sincere praises.
So He kept off many poets, but listened to my verses.

Often, when over-worked, He listened to my hymns
And relaxed under their spell, twanging His harp strings.
Even today He recalls my verses from the outer-space,
And listens in tranquility to my verses of truthful praise.

Pleased with my humbleness, God gave me a boon.
When the world was ready, he made me a servant of man,
To serve and train the human race in many ways,
Like: tilling their land, building their huts and milking
their cows.

In the nights I sang my verses to soothe their hearts.
They loved me and the enlivening touch of my verse.
Men were honest and simple in the beginning.
As the time passed they became crooked and cunning.

I remember my days with the first generation men.
I recollect each of them by his face and name.
I can recognize the trees I planted, the lands I tilled,
The rivers I bathed in and my cows' grazing field.

I used to sing aloud my songs in the open wide field
And enjoy the thrill of their echo from the horizon's end.
Even today in solitude I hear them reverberate.
A once-peaceful world's life they solemnly narrate.

I've experienced the joys and sorrows of many generations,
Through repeated rebirths and heading many vocations,
Going through different civilizations and cultural variations.
I've seen closely all facets of the world's transformations.

I was never contented with mere professing from the dais.
I've always involved in the programmes of the mass.
Never did I entirely detach from the main-stream.
I haven't settled matters through methods that were extreme.

Sensitivity and concern for others were visible in my conduct.
These impressed my fellow-men and they tried to emulate.
Peace and brotherhood I included in the topics of their learning
I won their hearts, and led them well to develop noble leanings.

In the *birth and death rotation* with memory not fading,
I'm deathless, and as time passes my wisdom keeps unfolding
New insights into God's purpose of sending me to the world.
To do all the remaining good, many more life spans I would need!

66. INTENSE YEARNINGS

The rose is full-blown and fragrant.
It longs, and is ready, to be handled
With caresses, smelt and fondled,
And wants to be praised and flaunted.

The gardener knows only to raise it,
He knows not to caress or praise it.
He'd proudly watch it from a distance
And might pluck it at the owner's instance.

Desire surges in the flower's heart
To shine in public on a hero's breast.
The fragrant life, it knows, will be short.
So it wants to enjoy the life the most.

A poet who knows the cravings of the flower
Attempted to pluck it to smell and wear.
The gardener chased him out of the gate.
Now outside the fence he stands in wait.

With smiles and nods the flower invites.
With overwhelming joy the poet responds:
"Oh! Total beauty! To possess you I yearn.
You will give me raptures to the point of swoon.

"Loosen yourself from the stalk and free.
Then the friendly breeze will waft you to me.
I'll grab you and run. We'll exchange ecstasy.
I'll show you off and stir up others' jealousy.

“Fullness of life you’ll get indeed.

Let’s wish that this scheme to unite will succeed.

Let not the gardener lead your life to futility.

Let the yearning hearts meet and enjoy felicity.

“By bad luck, if you stay on in the garden and fade,

The keeper will prune you and throw outside.

With undiminished love I’ll gather you in parts,

Put together and cherish in my golden chest”.

67. HAND FOR HAND

You've chopped off my right hand
With your reaping hook,
Rendered me one-handed
And thus vengeance you took.

I didn't complain against your act
For my hand deserved to be cut.
You ought to have done it much before.
You gave me ten years' parole.

This was the hand I used
To gag and tie your father
And rape your helpless mother
When, as fear-struck boy you hid.

I had been watching you growing,
Flexing your muscle and showing
Your irreversible determination
To inflict on me bloody retaliation.

If it were in earlier years
I would have perhaps resisted.
But in ten years I have realized
That what I did was heinous.

My left hand why have you spared?
There's good reason for both to be sheared.
Here, I offer, fearlessly take it.
Either cut off, or make use of it uncut!

68. IN GOD'S NAME

My father was sacrificed to propitiate
the local 'powerful' deity
Whose appeasement, he was told,
would surely merit eternity.
The god-man of the village had
lead us into the belief
That it will reserve heaven for us
and all-pervading relief.
After a massive ceremony,
a priest slaughtered my father.
He volunteered for his own bliss
and for descendants' welfare.
His total blood was used for
making the red cement-mortar
That, in turn, was used
for fixing a new stone altar?
Seven descending generations are
assured of heaven, they told us.
So, the family looked forward to
meeting in heaven in bliss.
The unread simple folk around,
saw us with significant awe.
They believed that divine reverence
to our family they do owe.
After the slaughter of my father,
I was the first man to die.
Then for 'after life' order, I was
placed before God's dais.

God looked at me and said

“you have no merits to get heaven.

To help you write poems in hell,

I’ve allotted you paper and pen.”

It was a horrible shock to me.

Thunder-struck I stood agape.

God assuaged and asked me to say,

which deed gave me the hope.

With ghastly stun followed by cries,

I told God the total story.

He heard and said “these devilish acts

I don’t sanction. I’m sorry.

“In my name, men do lots of nonsense.

Gullible people fall prey.

Ignorance is the basic cause.

For god-men’s trickery they pay.

God-men are a scourge on the men.

Their adjutants are wicked priests.

I don’t sanction any sacrifice.

Slaughtering the men I’ve made, never pleases me.”

On my way to hell, in a buffalo-cart,

I shouted aloud to my kin to tell:

“No reservation in heaven for us.

Come prepared to live in hell.

The god-man and priests have cheated us.

You bring those rascals to laws,

And warn the people to keep away

the barbarous outlaws, the social foes.

70. BEYOND MANY BENDS

I've passed many a bend, but I'm nowhere near the end
Although my opponents predicted every bend as my end!
If at all there's an end, it will be beyond many more bends
And after every bend the road will be good for long extent.

At my every fall, my adversaries rejoiced and shouted
That I was down and out and my good days have ended.
Disproving them, I have proved every fall as a bend,
One of the many usually found far before the real end.

With robust optimism and balanced mental posture
I strove hard not to accept any bend as my closure.
When I admit an end and meekly surrender to it
I'll cease to be a man possessing manly grit to resist.

After every fall, I sprang on my feet, persisted in
my pursuit,
And found beyond the bend the road was smooth
and straight.

The race after a bend was always faster and safer,
As the memory of past pitfalls has acted as a fender.

At my death-bed, they might say "this is surely his end."
No! No! For me, even death will be a bend, not the end.
Death will only force me to take an interval.

The workload here will compel God not to keep me in
heaven or hell.

I'll return soon. Then the men who were under my care
Will rush to me with joy like lambs to homecoming mother.
My opponents will see the sight and become dumb and
stunned,
And mumble sadly "Oh! Even death was not his end!"

