50 POEMS FROM AUROVILLE
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PREFACE

This is an anthology of 50 poems written in the last 50 years, as a gift and tribute to Auroville on the 50th anniversary of its founding on 28th February 1968.

The poems are by Aurovilians, former Aurovilians and those involved with or who have been in some way touched by Auroville or The Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The selection includes poems previously published in various Auroville and private collections together with poems recently submitted in response to a request in Auroville News and Notes.

In his book, *Sri Aurobindo or The Adventure of Consciousness*’ Satprem, describing the Illumined Mind, remarks that it is interesting to note the number of poets of all languages – Chinese, Indian, English, etc. amongst Sri Aurobindo’s disciples, as if poetry and art were the first practical results of his yoga. “I have seen both in myself and others a sudden flowering of capacities in every kind of activity come by the opening of consciousness …. It is a question of the right silence in the mind and the right openness to the Word that is trying to express itself – for the Word is there ready formed in those inner planes where all artistic forms take birth, but it is the transmitting mind that must change and become a perfect channel and not an obstacle.”

Not all the poems in this anthology are the product of openness to higher planes of consciousness, or are even necessarily ‘spiritual’. Some express a deep yearning for a life to be lived in oneness with the consciousness of the truth of things and the spirit. Some have been included because they convey vividly a sense of truth or honesty or strongly evoke a sense of connection with the place or scene we may have experienced, or tell us something about the Auroville experience. Or they simply have an appealing poetic quality.

My good friend and mentor Sonia Dyne has pointed out that so-called ‘spiritual poetry’ does not have to deal specifically with ‘spiritual’ themes: it can be a celebration of nature, an expression of religious belief, or simply a deeply felt outpouring of emotional response without any intellectual quality as in purely devotional poetry. The essential thing is recognition, overt or implied, of a hidden oneness uniting all human life with the life around us in Nature and the poet’s response of wonder and awe or delight or gratitude.

I have made the selection on the basis of my own personal taste or sense of poetic quality and in doing so, in order to have just 50 of the best poems, I have unfortunately had to eliminate quite a few poems submitted to me for consideration, which were really very good. To those whose work has not been selected, I say sorry and thanks. To those whose work has been included, I also say thanks and express my deep gratitude to the light that is dawning in and for Auroville.

Vikas Vickers for AVI UK, with editorial assistance from Sonia Dyne.  9th March 2017

*Cover Photo: Fred Cebron for Auroville International  http://www.auroville-international.org  Aurovilians, AVI and guests form the Auroville symbol in the International Zone, February 2017*
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Navoditte (Norman Thomas)</td>
<td>Early One Morning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With Stump of Candle</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Experiential Ploy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marta Gruha</td>
<td>The Indian Shawl</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For Anita</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady Jean</td>
<td>To Philipa</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Myers</td>
<td>In Darkness</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>By the Samadhi</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where is the Straight and Narrow Path?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggi Lidchi</td>
<td>That Tender Pulsing</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narad (Richard Eggenberger)</td>
<td>Homage to Sri Aurobindo</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger Harris</td>
<td>In the Silence of a Moontide</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Autumn Twilight</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon Korstange</td>
<td>Graveyard</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dry Season Shower</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The News</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Village Wedding</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Banyan Tree Amma</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivek</td>
<td>City of Lost</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bindu</td>
<td>And Think Only of This</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dick Batstone</td>
<td>Observations in Auroville</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Meeting Place</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Yogi</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heraclitus and Matrimandir</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Near Tiberius</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John O’Neill</td>
<td>Will you take this Little Bit I have?</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savitra</td>
<td>Gravity</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shraddhavan</td>
<td>Deep Places</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remembering</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearl Fishing</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How to go through?</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evening Illumination</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lloyd Hoffman</td>
<td>With the Weight of Decades</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandresh</td>
<td>Summer Rain (Grace)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vikas (Alan Vickers)</td>
<td>Aurodam 1981 (drawing)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Samadhi</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Dying</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Haikus</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Tree</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anuraddha Legrand</td>
<td>Transfer 2</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celestine</td>
<td>I am an Active, Living Dynamo</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meenakshi</td>
<td>Thousands of Kingdoms</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Herbert</td>
<td>Return</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hinge</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beyond</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who Cares?</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It’s the Body, Stupid</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Early One Morning

The sun got up; so did I, slow and cosy, half in sleep. Stumbling out, I sat upon the step: receiving nothing from the night I expected nothing from the day. There was a tree in flower, A scratching dog, the sun was shining on the sea. But then, at half-past by the clock, the world turned over…flip!... and changed all that. And when it all had settled down, resplendently I saw: a tree in flower, a scratching dog, and the sun O shining on the sea.
With Stump of Candle

What do I leave
Behind me on this pilgrimage?
Frail towers pitted as if by shot,
pale faces at the windows
Too drained by all the frightfulness
For pleasure at the sudden quiet.
For have I not ravished them?
In more ways than one
diminished them,
and acquired their name?

What do I leave
behind me on this pilgrimage?
I leave no one still loving me.
Neither do I take with me
on this pilgrimage
someone who loves me still.

It is the dark world
I leave behind me on this pilgrimage…

Yet…He who meets me
greets me not with scorn
as I deserve, but with his grace.
It is almost too much for me to bear.
The Experiential Ploy

I in my apprentice-wisdom draped, 
have things to say about things, 
things that belie the conspiracy that goes on in search of the Reasonable Other.

I have things to say about the thingness of things 
and about the nothingness of nothing, 
and about the termination of things seen at the many-splendoured tumult of the lone.

For at the moment when blessed things 
take on all that has become so clearly cursed 
and profane things become at last redeemed the very nature of belief is gathered

with all things in, dispersed with all things wide. 
All in this new and holy stance 
old things lose the very thingness of old things, 
become things new, things clear,

things newly uttered; all things, 
otherwise opaque, brighten, are lifted up into being; all things turn innocent, experiential. 
Times change and thingness changes with it.

Even when nothing moves 
and no thing changes place 
the parts stay incommensurate with the whole… 
O the air is pungent with my foolishness

as I strive to speak of what I only know. 
My knowledge is all empty, lost in words; only my foolishness recognizes what makes things things and nothing nothing.

1987
The Indian Shawl

How blue! And deepening
You flow, o dusk, seeping
Through interstices
Filling empty spaces.
The rich scent of flowers
Beginning to bloom
At night, is still light
The essence of mildness.
You blur harsh outlines
And blot out ugliness.
O merciful, how soft
Your touch when you meet pain.
Now darkness falls like rain
And the hands of shadow
Throw over the shoulders
Of even the poorest
A shawl studded with stars.

For Anita

The river of life
Was flowing between us,
From the other bank
I saw him, half in light
And half in shadow.
An invisible bird
Sang out, our reflections
Met in the water,
I loved the light in him
And hated the shadow.

The river of time
Is flowing at our feet,
A sorrowful face
Smiles out of the water.
The sun and the moon
Look on in wonder,
The people and the earth
Ask me - don’t you know, Only God is all love,
We are half in light
And half in shadow.
Lady Jean

To Philippa
(who died on 3rd. July, 1975)

My heart goes out in flame and dream
To linger by your childbright soul,
You were sunlight on a shimmering stream,
The laughter of light on a crystal bowl;

You did not dance but flow and sweep
Through windy shining wildfire days;
Touching your truth I cease to weep,
For your golden smile within me says,

“Behind each sorrow soars a silent joy,
Each blind despair a secret splendour brings,
Why do you mourn that crazy broken toy?
I fly to God on singing, strong fresh wings.”
**In Darkness**

When we search
so many locks appear
to which the keys seem lost.
O mountain with no path
The trails of footsteps, lost
so far apart
are yet all yearning
for thy one translucent peak
that soars invisibly
above the night.
We peer like blind men at the sky,
waiting for the dawn
holding the Sun
prisoner in our hearts.

**By the Samadhi**

Petals opening inside my head.
all left behind, the desert
where dew falls barren
on the pastures of the dead.
Corpuscles jostle in the veins like wine
and I am confounded that
this harmony should burst
out of such muddy earth as mine.

**Where is the Straight and Narrow Path?**

Passion is my master.
The trees will not admit me
To their silent company.
The sun has sunk a ray
Inside my flesh
And trapped by bone and skin
It roars in deep frustration
Like some impotent volcano
Yearning underneath its tons
Of rock to turn again
Into a living star and throw
Its arms around the Sun.
To Mick

Mick, some day you may read this and know what you did when you let the levers and clocks go to hell, when you chucked aside all the walls and spat in their hair and hated. You threw away all the skins around your blood and fire and looked with utter honesty out of the lies that made me know the madness of myself reflected in your eyes. I knew no one but me and for a moment’s hurt I saw your beauty and your agony belonged to all of us, and none was showing it so truthfully.

And yet afraid to join your show because it threw too much of strain and battered at the real that we know we hid behind the concepts we had gathered from the shelves, because we saw before us stood a truth to which we had no key, and so we tried to understand and do what was good and right while you stood in the darkness howling for matches, but no one dared to go so far to find the light.
That Tender Pulsing

There is a tender pulsing in the heart of life
A hidden meaning that escapes our mind,
That hums and glows in great and littlest things but for which
The tongue no words can find;
Within us is an ageless spring
That sends it forth in myriad ways.
Behind it lies a power
That emanates a thousand rays.
All hidden mystic from our sight
Which make our hearts take flight,

It chimes at root of rock and sea
Of earth and sky, it sings in flower, fern and fire,
Is working to transmute us all,
And thus fulfil the world’s desire.

No brain has wrought it that has sought.
No hand takes it apart.
No instrument avails
For it is whole or it is naught.
It winks at you a moment
Only to depart.
It is both bold and very shy,
As indeterminate as the sky.
Nothing can bind it.
Not even life itself
But the thing behind it.
And were it not
We would all fall to pieces.
The world would rot
For it is this
The secret bliss
That upholds the universes.

1973
Homage to Sri Aurobindo

Perhaps my thought was a deeper seeing
When the mind fell still and the inner being
Seemed to hear his voice from the silent page
Speak softly of the coming age.

My heart attuned, my body heard
From the Lord of Life the mantric Word
Of life transformed, earth by His kiss
Re-wed to beauty, man to bliss.

A sweetness descending from realms above
Borne earthward on the wings of love
Envelopes our lives and, immortal, brings
The Godhead’s touch to mortal things.

Slowly the golden light draws near
And the children of the dawn appear.

2003
In the Silence of a Moontide

In the silence of a moon tide
    That streaks the midnight sea
There dwells a deep fulfilment
    That calls alluringly;
With whispers lent unspoken
    To touch the witness Soul,
A fullness deep unbroken
    That hints a Mystic whole.
And the waves they break in rhythm
    Upon the sandy shore,
Each one at last effacing
    The one that went before.
And the heart it knows one answer
    To all that is no more.
In the silence of that moontide
    The waves break to adore.

1985

Autumn Twilight

A season now draws to its end
The unforeseen approaches,
A guardian goddess comes to lend
What body to our voices?
The autumn now across the sky
Is stained a blood-deep red,
The wind it whispers in the trees
The leaves fall to earth’s bed.
The twilight whispers in the wind
A mood that seems to say,
That all our loves have come to weep,
But none have come to stay.
And all our lives at last have come
And gathered to her breast,
All lives at last have come
At last have come to rest.

2000
Graveyard

The District Educational Officer’s office is shut for the night. His watchman hunkers outside in a piece of twilight, contemplating the intensity of the cool of the day, while the country of papers inside slowly disappears into the dark walls.

Amid the worn valleys of those stacks, faded scratchings of hot afternoons beneath the keening hum of fans, move tentatively the rats, the roaches, shrews, scorpions, spiders, lizards, and who knows what other creatures that prey upon the crumbling world of names who lie buried there, forgotten by all except those of the night who gnaw at their hidden bones.

1984
Dry Season Shower

As usual the street was full
of shrouded bodies this morning
as I stepped from the early bus
into the steaming streets
and steered my way
between the mounds of white cloth.

They came to life slowly,
struggling from under their damp sheets,
dazed by the puddles, staring
as if they had wakened in another land.

One of them lay still
glaring up at the gray clouds
with swollen fixed eyes.
He was unshaved, his clenched body
rigid on the damp cement
as from a fit.

I stopped
and waited with others turned then
from the lip of sleep,
waited for him to wake and rise
with us to a new world of rain
and shake off the gathering flies.

He will lie next on a wooden bench,
swathed in fresh flowers
to stifle the inevitable stench,
with coins to cover those eyes.
The drumbeats will begin to drain
the women of their wails,
soon dry this morning’s brief rain.
And when his oldest son said that new brother had died,
Rajagopal's hand strayed automatically
to his forehead
to unwrap his white cloth,
and it fell limply
into his hand
like two months' worth of life
he hardly knew was there.

Village wedding

Tonight again the shrill assault
of crackling speakers above a village hut:
film music shrieks across the fields
routing the soft whisper of the night.

Beneath a new-built pandal,
A bridal arch of banana trees,
the men patiently await tomorrow’s feast,
adjusting crisp white clothes
in the harsh glare of imported city lights,

while the women gather inside
to prepare the anxious bride
for an end to her quiet nights,

and outside the electric sexual howl
slams into the trembling darkness.

We lie tense with open eyes
and share their ancient dread
of the demons that lie in wait
just beyond the marriage bed.
Banyan tree *Amma* at the open door
fixes me with scaly eye
demanding her weekly due.
What use are you old village lady
but to call down a curse?
Why do we give you food?

What is it anyway, *Amma*,
that brings us together?
You squatting on the doorstep,
nailed there never to rise,
and I in my wicker chair
trapped by your baleful eyes.

Was it like this in the early days
when you lived alone by the banyan tree?
You had a power, they said, and strange sons;
you were the owl-eyed guardian
of the temple of the city of dawn.
Then your eldest boy committed suicide.

Now you carry those memories
with a body bent in pain
groaning outside my door for rupees.
I listen to your creaky dirge,
staring at your old boniness,
wondering at this bizarre siege.

But then my own grandmother
was worse than you, *Amma*.
She held us so fiercely
in her matriarchal debt,
harping, wrangling, complaining all day—
we silenced her with a TV set.

We are the Auroville neo-colonials,
the latest wistful white folks
to sip tea under the tropical sun
and think that we are different
from the chaps who ruled Rangoon,
until you, old *Amma* come along.
Then from the club veranda
I seem to faintly hear
the sly boasts of British ghosts
sniggering over their gin and beer
about the way to handle the natives
when they come a bit too near,

when like a sudden squall
comes the carrier of skulls,
comes Kali the glutton of worlds
calling out of old Amma
for some kind of fit response
before her terrible, sacred face.

I stare stupidly at the fiery eyes,
for I do not know the words
to speak to that fatal presence
smouldering under her wrinkled skin.
I close my book, lose the place,
And rise up to fetch her rice.

*Amma means mother in Tamil and is also a form of address for any woman.
In the City of Lost…

City of Lost, streets of bodies
Rain of acids, wind of hopes,
Look at me, give me a glance!
I'm child of narrow filthy lane,
Don't see my torn cloths, cracked skin and barefoot
Don't measure with class, I'm just soul.
Your small touch can shape me – ignore and destroy me.
I'm future of lost.
Stop and give me a glance, chasers of light!

Look at me … I'm old lady, whom you see daily
In corner of street, selling tea.
This wrinkle not sign of age, condition not poverty
It's blindness and greed.
I used to be past hoping good future.
Your touch still can shape me - ignore and destroy me,
O chasers of light!
Every small drop of rain brought dancing inside me,
I followed a breeze and became like her,
Now plastic around me, I’m dying daily.
Look at me - your touch still can shape me,
Ignore and destroy me, O chasers of light!

Give me a glance in the streets of bodies
In the City of Lost, O chasers of Light….
And Think Only of This

Someday, someday
I will take my eldest son,
before he has begun to
lisp worn-out nursery rhymes
or think his way through numbers,
by his pudgy little hand,

And together, we will walk back
to the farthest corner
of the vegetable-garden patch,

And there, as we kneel
amongst rows of rooted potatoes,
I will scoop out
and pour a moist handful of soil
into his tiny cupped palms,

Rejoicing
in the clutched dampness of freshly-broken earth

and the truth of things that cannot be told.

1994
Observations in Auroville

Seven babblers move through the scrub
Pecking the dead leaves with modest attention,
Butterflies like brilliant abstract miniatures
Float through the silent tree-space,
The lizard, the drongo, the mongoose
And the small chipmunk
That runs with intermittent
But graceful sure-footedness
Among all these innumerable perfections
Of foliage and flower, fruit and seed-pod -
All, all are your bodies of temporal delight.
And I? Perhaps the eighth babbler,
Watching you, turning over some words.
The Meeting Place

This what time has led to -
A courtyard of sunflowers, zinnias,
And a queue of silent people
Moving past a petal-covered tomb.
Dawns, noons, sunsets,
Days, months, lives.

This is what time has led to -
A path that goes to a staircase
And men and women of different countries
Leaving their sandals at its foot.
Dawns, noons, sunsets,
Days, months, lives.

This is what time has led to -
A gallery behind mahogany shutters,
A picture of a man’s head, life size.
They pass it and mark its gaze.
Dawns, noons, sunsets,
Days, months, lives.

This is what time has led to -
A chair set before a gold-patterned cloth
And a still, frail woman
Who smiles and has the eyes of God.
Dawns, noons, sunsets,
Days, months, lives.

This is what time has led to -
See each figure before her
Is not what he thought, felt or looked like
But an inner immortal come through
Dawns, noons, sunsets,
Days, months, lives.
The Yogi

Speleologists and mountaineers
Overcome their secret fears,
Match their muscles against the rocks
Test their nerves and risk their necks.
Some aspire and some descend;
Up or down they seek their end
Adventuring with all their will.
How brave a man, though, who sits still
Wholly intent on sounding, for his part,
The cavernous deep system of the human heart.

Heraclitus and Matrimandir

The silence is not the same silence twice
The one who enters is not the same person twice
Nor the one who leaves.
Perhaps there will be no miracle
Perhaps no discovery or awakening,
Only the biggest crystal ball
In a sun-illumined chamber
With twelve tall pillars
And the pressure of a white stillness.
Near Tiberias

Dust of this land, so thin a skin
Eroded and blown by water and air
I revere you.
Residue of life, residue of death,
Fragments of fibre, stalk and fruit.
Grit of rock, glint of mineral.
I tumble you in my hand,
So rich a sediment,
Product of millennia
How I would terrace and hold you
With root and crop and moisture,
Ploughing you in contours of the hill.
Binding you to the rich valley floor;
I would convert you to the fig
And the little grey olive
And encourage you to bear corn.
But now I trickle you through my fingers

And find fragments of flint,
Slivers of bone, squared tesserae
And pieces of pot
That open dimensions of history
(how thin a layer of dirt
Is left by one century!)
And I remember that one of the meanings
Of the name Adam
Is dust.
Will You Take This Little Bit I Have….  

Will you take this little bit I have  
It's not much…. but it's mine.  
What is more precious than what we are  
The gift of our selves is better by far  
Than rings and things that money can buy.  

I sigh, when I see, the agony  
Of those who reach for a star.  
Give what you are, what you are.  
What you are is better by far.  
Than rings and things that money can buy.  

Will you take this little bit I have  
It's not much….but it's mine….It's yours.
Gravity

Wind-blown seeds
circle
in soft cushioned currents
to earth
while hammer blows
pound
this crude
and heavy
human ore
to birth.
Our first breath is a cry
as we breach this world
ripped through sheaths that coat and shield us
as we plunge
through atmospheres of fire
gripped by
gravity and
grave.
We land upon a lost shore
gasping,
thrust through waves of darkness burning bright,
beached by breakers in seaworthy bodies
that now must find their footing and their breath—
brine-slick bodies that do not yet belong to us
as we reach back in anguish for that truer gravity
which held us
and which we now must find again
here in our birth and forgetting
where all things
fall.
Doomed we are by a destiny
whose downward pull
draws us through the dense and unbearable weight
of our lives to that unyielding door
where life unburdens
and enters its chrysalis of death.
Ma, we moan with that last thread of breath
sealing the cocoon;

Ma, we cry with that first as we begin again,
unraveling the tomb,
one gravity defying another.
Doomed we are by a destiny we call upon ourselves.
Hidden in each muttered mantric cry
we weave our way blindly back to Her,
hurtling through space like lead-grained pearls
strung on gossamer threads of an unseen Grace,
free-falling in fear despite Her sure embrace
toward some future body's
secret serpent base.
At speeds of absolute stillness we strike
that utter Ground,
irresistibly drawn by the coiled note of a flute
whose magnetic Sound
silences our terror,
luring this raw resistant human ore,
fusing it into its fiery Being's core,
melting the ego's shadow-mold,
filling all bodies
with a deathless gold
that wells up
from some conscious
centerpoint of Soul.
A Gravity of Grace springing
from a Mother's fathomless heart,
each fall now bringing us closer
as it once pulled us apart.
We are seized by the sweetness
of some inmost psychic pole
where all gravities resolve
in the passionate clasp of the Whole.
Ma, we sing now as we rise,
our earth a joyous transparent sun
surrounded from within by Her Gravity of One
in which there is no longer below or above
but only the all-compelling light
and all-attracting force of Love.

March 12, 1995
I’m in no mood for mountains ...
Too near down-pressing sky,
Too barren, bright, unmysteried they lie!
So, climbing to a bald white peak
I stopped – knee-deep in grass and flowers.
Better by far the lower forests,
Where water gurgles out of sight,
And calling, chuckling, birds unseen
Flit from green to deeper green;
There suddenly a single bloom
Strikes to the heart’s enchanted depths
With its clear bell-note of deep blue.
Or let me swim, far from all shallows,
In the still waters where the kraken sleeps,
Where whales slide singing through the shadowy deeps;
There let me dive and drown
All littleness and all fatigue.
But best of all, in deep embracing interstellar spaces
Beyond the sky-lid, free of every limit,
To float forever marveling
Through endless symphonies of stars!

1984
Remembering

Smoothly contoured,
Cool and heavy in my hand,
Its glassy skin pocked and pitted,
This stone speaks
Of rolling and grinding in distant torrents.
One scarred and bumpy surface tells
That once it was torn rough and raw away
From the side of its mother-mountain;
And these encircling veins
Remind how long before
This substance seethed and folded over,
Was kneaded like dough,
Baked in the earth’s furnace,
Pressed out to cool and petrify.
Long before that perhaps
Atoms now packed dense inside this lump
Flared out – a cloud in the solar wind.
Long it lay, oblivious;
But now another force,
More resistless than all these
Has carried it far
From that river-carved mountain
To lie here:
Cool and heavy to a human hand,
Questioned by a human gaze,
Remembering ....
Pearl Fishing

Useless all day ...
A head full of poems
Doesn’t make for practicality.
The pull of the dark tide
Calling me under
To coral gardens and pearl-beds
Loosens my grip
My fingers flutter and lose hold.
Plans and duties fade
And the forms that anchor us to the surface...
Leaving beds unmade
Dishes unwashed
Important messages unanswered and
Urgent letters unwritten,
I dip again and again
In the dark flood
And come up dripping
Disoriented
Clutching some bright or curious fragment
Some morsel of frozen music.
Turning it over and over,
Tasting its strange saltiness,
I end up
Sprinkling stars in the soup.
How to go Through?

Sucking the sky
gulping in earth, devouring trees,
soaking up the play of sunlight and shadow
I drink back life, nourished by this beauty.
But how to go through?
This eye-defying blue
that is our sky,
This sun we cannot look upon,
nor bear too long his rays
Are only shadows of That Light...
These perfect trees
who dance for joy
in rhythms delicate and grave
Are only sketches, faint indications,
of the Beauty His creative vision gave;
And all these forms, though beautiful,
Do not reveal, but hide, His face.
Draw back, my soul,
From thought, from sense,
And know thyself entire
In His embrace.

August 2, 1975

Evening Illumination

Grey upon grey the troubled cloud-race
Racked through with flickers of impending storm
Breaks open to reveal a sudden space
Intensely blue ... and one calm star.

Steady behind these veils of shifting form,
Smiling, insistent, serene and far,
Unwavering it calls me to behold
All Heaven opening beyond that speck of gold!

September 10, 1984
With the Weight of Decades

With the weight of decades today has come down in the clarity of moonlight over common gardens and neighbors who dream; whose curtains move shadow blots of windblown leaves swaying in the late night.

Infinite appearances flood awareness; now dyed as moonlit visions but felt as reassurance: the lawn, a chair, night birds, laundry in the cool breeze and the muted whisper of a sleepless neighbor.

Waxing full I make do with only thoughts that count, were tested over time and honed into precision for this lucid lapse in living; this lunar truth to things with familiar undertones of human destiny.

A wandering awareness fueled by a willful heart and common words; mind is traveling the timeless path of lips that learned to phrase the harmless teenage lie, to later hold with women in their silent fashions.

But in this night, this life of light reduced to shades, my coinciding thoughts flow without emotion. Feelings and their bargains merge in the silver gloss over the countless things at one in the present.

2010
Summer Rain (Grace)

With the wind and the summer rain
Withering away my greying thoughts,
Let the fresh buds of aspiration
Blossom forth on these knurly knots

Let hands tired from kneading the earth
Not rest content to count the wealth
Squirrelled away in building dearth,
In this city that blankets itself in stealth.

The birds chirp madly the morning ritual,
Fragrance permeates the open skies.
Bees & butterflies paint the summer visual,
Scene that is hidden to traveling eyes.

Ebb & flow is but nature of life,
Devoid of Grace, there’s little but strife.

in Auroville, June 1, 2016
Drawing of Aurodam May 1981

Vikas (Alan Vickers)

**Home**

O longed-for home, O distant, dazzling height,  
So far-off, dreamed-of, deeply sought;  
A crowning citadel atop the glaciated valleys of the Night.  
The twisted tracks that lead to aspiration’s peaks  
Beset the traveller with slip and fall  
And labour long, unending, as of Time,  
Or drop their dire and shadow-dense disguise  
Revealing straight and sunlit ways to tread.  
But where is home when all is plod and plod?  
When can the climber rest, his labour done?  
Where is the summit-home, the promised throne?  
Where is the bliss-brimmed rock that heaven made of clay,  
The light-hewn city, sanctuary at end of weary day?  
Where is the breeze whose shining air I breathed in sleep?  
The coursing sun-winds shooting through my tissue’s deep?

Each summit was a golden prison for my soul.  
There is no final pause; to climb – the only goal.
Heart

Sad heart, there is no sanctuary on Earth,
No earthly arms to comfort you
If once you choose to tread the path
And seek the crown of being.
What lover can with constancy be there
When all must rise and fall upon the tearful stage
And man must live the drama of his joy and pain?
And all the sweetness, all the hope, the trust
From one kind heart will vanish like a dream
That fades and throws you into life’s unpitying fire.
Your prayer, sad heart, was uttered in a space of light.
So now, sad heart, the work begins, along the roads of Night,
Inside the caves of loneliness, where sorrow lurks
To press sweet pain upon your chest.
No turning back, sad heart, nor running, nor respite;
Into the fire leap, with tears and all
Rush onwards to the light.

And now, calm heart, be still and see;
I was the road, the Night; I came to you as sorrow.
Mine were the arms that vanished; I was the stage, the flame.
Who failed you? Crushed you? Me!
Rejoice, my heart, my fire sets you free.
The Samadhi

Stone-solid, eternity seems to slumber
Bearing on its stage the mutable seasons
Arrayed in ever-changing moods of form
Filling the spirit-packed air with transient fragrances
And bursts of dew-fresh colour, soon to fade.
Souls, like flowers, come and go,
Begging the silent Presence to part the sacred curtain.
Deep communion, pleadings, burdens of tears and bliss,
Solemn dialogues; The White Force offers solace, strength,
Shatters the illusion of its dumbness,
Urges, gently, sleeping matter to become.

Prayers rise like incense borne by breezes.
Pink roses flood the mind and heart
With moments,
Still rememberings, frozen moments.
Time dies.
Deep whiteness plunges into red dancing dust;
Orange visions, golden flickerings, pale blue oceans
Float like music from a flute.

Blackbird caws and brings some other here and now,
Conscious walking into streets of old familiar faces.
Hold me still, Oh sweet soft whiteness…
Not Dying

Grey men in grey suits
Postured and polite, discussing the efficiency
Of chemicals that deal death to moss.

Masks. I have one too, sitting at my desk
In the smoke-filled office, pretending to estimate
The quantities of asbestos and plasterboard
For your cheap ugly factories
That gobble up the green land
Where children laughed and played,
Trying to find words that can tell
Something about tears I dare not show,
Knowing that there has to be another way
Yet helpless to know how or what,
Whilst you worry about your profit and productivity
And I about not dying.

1981

2 Haikus

30 Apr 2014 / 03:53 pm

Golden lid. I slid
below to where I me mine
screams, now separate.

30 Apr 2014 / 04:04 pm

She dreamed. Her dream touched
our hearts so hard it hurt. Now
there are just nightmares.
Always, when I looked at a tree
There was an I who saw and the tree which was seen.
As a child, the tree was for climbing, to swing from,
A place to shoot crows or pick peaches.
God was in Heaven
Or He didn’t exist at all
And yet when I cried from my very depths
He was always there to hear and answer me.

In spring sometimes there was an effervescence
Flowers bursting from the tree like champagne bubbles from my heart.
The urge to be and the desperate need for light
After all the barren cold of winter’s gloom.

And now sometimes the tree, the ground, the brick walls and tarmac streets
And I
Are one single coagulation of fluid stardust
Moving through these momentary forms in a dance of time
To be unravelled and re-formed
In the relentless onward thrust
Of matter’s search for a being that can know itself
In every tiny atom, all at once,
For no particular reason than the bliss of being.

20/03/2010
Transfer 2

Here is the deep ground
the level land
where the heart burns
like a crater at dawn
through the quiet ache of the hours.

Here our visions change
in fire and sweetness
and the digital deeds
that fidget with our dreams
are sieved to clear flame.

We awake to the young oriole
among the gold spring leaves and purple orchids
where the fine boundaries of light
fray open at the edges
as our hearts lift slowly to transparence.

1993

Fire

Cast these dreams
Into the fire
Watch them burn –
Then rise, not toward resurrection
But such perfection death cannot touch.
I am an Active, Living Dynamo

If you truly make One step towards me,
I will leap Nine steps to grab you,
Stir you up,
Churn you thoroughly,
Spin you around,
Swirl you upside down,
Draw you to yourself,
Strip you from all past,
And leave you NAKED.

24th February 2017
Thousands of Kingdoms

Thousands of kingdoms
Within my body,
Thousands of ages
Within my living cells —
Am I a tiny bubble
Captured in a TAMIL casket?
Return

Perfection of stone is not for us,
nor the parabolic sigh
of swallows.
We are smudgier, awkward-limbed,
stumbling homewards
through the long, long grass.

Hinge

The green smiling trap of the known.
At midday it casts no shadow.
But at night...

... the hinge lies broken:
Eternity pours through.

Beyond

To step beyond
is to leave all behind:
lovers, friends,
the understanding of a world
which, after all, offers its rewards.

This is a different path.
Quickly traversing the public square
it plunges into anonymity,
the trackless approach
to the lost kingdom of the Self.
Who Cares?

Perhaps, after all, they’re the wise ones,
perfectly-shaped to surf
the random waves,
knowing nothing so well as the inside of their bowl,
or the quick touch on a bullock’s flank.

As for those who, somehow, believe that,
pixel by pixel,
a new world is arriving
there’s the long, slow search of the horizon

as the wind swings round to winter.

It’s the Body, Stupid

It’s the body, stupid,
that keeps stumbling against us.
All that heavy blood
hammering at the heart,
numbing nerves,
flooding out the distant cry of morning.

No wonder the artists air-brushed it
or took it for the all-in-all.

Yet what if blood, bone,
aren’t brutish anchors
but doorways to a distant dance?

The one that trembles atoms into flesh
and fronts the great, grey surge of night.