

MOTHER

AND OTHER POEMS OF
DR G. RAMACHANDRAN



M O T H E R

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DR G. RAMACHANDRAN

MADHAVIMANDIRAM LOKA SEVA TRUST
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Sister Mythili

Madhavimandiram
Teyyatinkara, Kerala

Introduction

Dr G. Ramachandran, the patriarchal figure of the glorious Gandhian Revolution has been acclaimed as a versatile genius. There is hardly any field of creative endeavour where the indelible impression of this venerable personality has not been left. As a student of Gurudev Tagore, young Ramachandran acquired great insights into music, painting and other arts while Mahatma Gandhi bestowed on this young disciple not only affectionate guidance but trained him in rural development, Khadi, village industries and instructed him to continue the Gandhian Revolution of rural reconstruction through education and service of the villages which Ramachandran did with astonishing success when he and his distinguished wife, Dr Soundram started the Gandhigram Complex of institutions in Tamilnadu in 1947. The Gandhigram Rural Institute has grown itself into a great centre of educational experiments and to Dr Ramachandran goes the credit for having guided its early period as the founder Vice-Chancellor.

It was in recognition of his outstanding work in rural India for the cause of village uplift, removal of untouchability, housing, sanitation, spread of literacy and village industries that he was nominated to the Upper House of Indian Parliament (Rajya Sabha) and it is history now how Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Smt. Indira Gandhi with whom Ramachandran worked closely admired his intellectual prowess. As a Professor of Philosophy at the Jamia Millia Islamia along with Dr Zakir Husain, who later became the President of India, Dr Ramachandran led an uncompromising campaign on secularist ideals in independent India.

Dr Ramachandran's effort to infuse realism and creativity in the functioning of the various premier Gandhian Institutions and organisations in India won him all round admiration. As author and editor of several authentic books on Gandhi and Gandhian movement he rendered signal service and he is remembered in many circles as a silver-tongued orator.

That Dr G. Ramachandran had interest in poetry and music has been known to all his friends and admirers but that he could compose poems of exquisite quality and beauty was perhaps known only to those who were very close to him, for he never gave any of his poems for publication. It goes to the credit of Sister Mythili, a dedicated soul of great virtues and talents, who found a large number of occasional poems in the diaries of Dr G. R. What the reader will see in this collection is a selection of a few of them and we should be grateful to Dr G. R. who kindly permitted the printing of these poems.

There cannot be any doubt that the lovers of poetry will get from these poems a glimpse of the tremendous creative powers of a genius whose vision of life was permeated with an unusual element of understanding, sympathy and compassion—qualities we see only in great souls.

Professor N. Radhakrishnan
Director

Gandhi Smriti, New Delhi

12 September 1993

Preface

Dr G. Ramachandran, the flower of Indian Renaissance, the living example of Gandhian ideals and the patriarch of freedom fighters in Kerala, greets the reader of the following pages in a different vein. He is seen, in the golden dusk of his heroic life, turning over the colourful leaves of his poetical album. Here are some of the deep impressions on his inner soul preserved in words and images for posterity; and they strike us with their own richness and variety, while, to the discerning reader, they open up vistas of philosophical pursuits and spiritual charm.

The book reads like the private journal of a master mind turning to occasional poetic composition. And those are, of course, heaven-sent occasions. For, not merely the passing joys and sorrows, not merely the shade of doubt and the spell of fear, but the agony of a mighty Spirit conquering Evil and Untruth which envelop the world, as well as a firm assurance of the final triumph of values in life, have found immortal expression in these pages. As poet, G.R. employs a personal tone to make his experience intimate to his audience; and he depicts life at the essential level without losing the charm of its dramatic complexity on the surface.

Vishnu Narayanan Nambudiri
Professor of English

Government Sanskrit College
Trivandrum, Kerala

12 February 1992

Lead Kindly Light

Something has to happen for certain,
For this is a stalemate of pain;
It is no ordinary pain of life
But the agony of two innocent souls

Caught in the cruel net of dark malice
Distilled by vile and culling minds
They strike from the darkness of night
And hidden among the long shadows.

There is a terrible criss-cross
Of mean and shameful thinking
And planning of much evil
And the hidden whisperings of the wicked

And so something must happen,
What can happen or how
Or where the hand of God will fall
Nor I or anyone else can know

This "stand-still" is explosive,
For deep within are the stirrings
Of elemental spiritual forces
That simmer and upward surge.

These struggle and turn and twist
For the thunder of an on-coming fate
No power of evil or hate
Can withstand God's onslaught.

Let us hold our souls in peace
For the sure coming of Divine grace
Let us pray and be silent
In firm faith God will act.

Something has to happen soon
For this cruel stalemate of pain
Will break our souls in twain
For no evil we have ever done.

Innocence is a mighty force
Like the atom it holds a power
Which can form a chain
Leading on to redemption undreamt.

Mother

Suddenly a silence overtakes the house
The lamps no longer shed a light anywhere
The voices of sorrow are no longer heard
Nor the chanting of the hymns.

The flowers have started falling
And many a garden lies withered
Yesterday the house was a temple
And today its doors are shut

What then has happened my mind
Why had this sudden change overtaken you
Outwardly many things remain as they are
The pictures on the wall continue to look down

And the furniture that has not moved
The shelves hold the same vessels as before
The trees around the house are looking on
And wondering what has caused the change

The answer is simple and sublime
A sacred life has departed on its onward journey
The central lamp lies broken
And a noble voice is no longer heard

The mother of the house has gone for ever
And left us all heart broken orphans
And yet something remains firm in the soil of our
 saddened heart
And what remains so firm is the memory of my saintly
 mother

The memory of love-filled eyes
The memory of the conquering smile
The memory of words like benediction
And the memory of above all of mother's warming love

For all of us without distraction
She was like the full moon shedding gentle light
In every corner of our various lives
And so when the big lamp is shattered

And words and songs are hushed
What can there be at all
Except the silence which deepens ever more?

We Met At Last

We met at last in a dull drab room,
We met alone after so long a time,
We met quietly, we had to,
We did not fret it was thus
We met in just a dull drab room.
I took her hand and she took my eyes
Our hands and eyes touched the chords
That gave forth that gift of ancient song
The song in the heart of man and maid
That God put there long, long ago,
From our hearts rose that song
Liquid fire, the sweetness unutterable,
And suddenly into that dull drab room
Poured the myriad fluted voices of birds
In spring, the honied lisplings of children
In mothers' hands, all voices I love.
But as we talked our voices were low,
And we somehow did not know
Time slipped like ripened blossoms from a stem.
Words rose clear or confused like gleams
On moonlit waters in a gentle wind.
The voice from one lips did not seem to speak
What our eyes could say in wordless language.
I never knew Love, your eyes could hold
These yet uncaught gleams and shades
I had prided I knew your eyes and face.
How much of you is yet undiscovered country.
It is not you are some fantastic mystery;
No, rather some treasured, deep, mine;
And I know I must quarry with all my soul
To reach the wealth enshrined in you.
What did we to each other say?
I little remember nor perhaps will you.

Sweet, that is no slight on you
Who said so much how our life
In the coming times must journey
Onward ever, over steep, new, adventurous paths.
All the while your nimble mind unravelled
The tendrils of your thoughts for the coming years,
And I listened quiet, and so absorbed,
Through the sunlit halls of my mind
There swept but one secret, joyous thought.
Make any plans of which the core is you
All else is secondary and will inevitably follow
"I only must live, work and die by your side".
I know life is hard and sometimes cruel,
And the red rose of love must fade in
Frost, wind and sometimes a burning sun.
But our red rose must ever only redder grow
Till at last we are at our journey's end.
That lies beyond we do not fully know;
But if in some beyond we shall sojourn
We shall there replant our rose.
And if ever to this sunshine of earth
We return, we shall hide our rose
There beats your heart and mine
That none may dare touch its beauty
Till it blows again in glory here on earth.
I somehow love this earth and this life;
I do not pine for a heaven beyond.
If you and I do not make a heaven here
We shall miss it in that unknown
Which today like a dream stands
Whose meaning is yet beyond our ken.
I never will this resplendent life consider
A sin, a fall, more pain than joy
More night or darkness than day or light.
I will not my God insult that wise.

And it was in no dull drab room,
That my little stream of wayward life
Met you my sparkling mountain torrent;
Our waters met under star-lit skies
And joyously mingling made mighty music
Over vast wind-swept spaces open
Like a great big book to God's scrutiny.
Let us flow bravely, sweetly on and on
Let us fill our world with our songs
Let us nourish a thousand blossoms on the way,
Let us create beauty, truth everywhere
Let us ever undefeated aspire to reach
The farthest beyond where is light eternal.

Ah now do we rise to part awhile?
Part ! let our soul-full laughter answer.
How can we part, we who have linked
Ourselves closer in holier ties than ever?
Did your heart my tenderest prayer hear
As looking back once again, you left?
"God let thine mercy enwrap her
Closer, closer than that sweet saree she wears"

To Comrade

Comrade, have we not made our resolve
And won for it high concurrence?
Do you not know how I waited
Not simply waited but watched and prayed?
For the true moment to come
The moment to take a step forward unhesitant
No one knows the pain of that waiting
The riddles were unsolvable once,
Time alone could show a way out
And time alone did show a way out.
The moment I saw that way
I took my onward stride
And the riddle sorted itself out
Quietly and firmly with everyone's consent
What was far thus became near
And the impossible suddenly assumed possibility
It is thus only that the grace of God
Works in and through the lives of men
Nothing worthwhile and excellent
Comes without the pangs of birth
Let us chant with Browning's Pipa
"God is in heaven and all is well with world."

Let Us Not Wait Idly

It was then just a plot of dryland
And lay adjacent to my own home
Between us there was just a mountain stream
With no water at all except in heavy rains.
I saw a man and woman come and go on the land
And scratching the earth almost with their fingers
And then for weeks I forgot about it all
Then I looked at the land once again
Several weeks had by then run their course
But what a change did I not see then
The land was already green with millet and beans
And wonder of wonders a small cottage of mud
and thatched
Stood in the view towards the foothills.
My mind was roused by what I saw
And so I watched the goings on the land
Steadily (and) steadily the cottage of mud and
thatched grew
A couple of children played around the hut
And some lambs bleated and cocks crew
As this little colony of a man and woman slowly grew
Every day more mud went to the making of the walls
And more coconut leaves to complete the roof
The cold season arrived with its chill winds
The man and the woman went about their tasks
With no protection against the winds
The man wore his loin cloth and the woman just a
thin sari
The children played in the sun naked and free.
Slowly and steadily the cottage became completed

What was going on inside the hut I had no way of
finding out

I only knew that bare human hands
Had made a home on the brown earth
And around the home the land was green with things
to reap

The lambs kept on their bleating
And the cocks and the hens cackled and strutted around.

Mythili and I kept on wondering

And we talked about what we saw

We made a sudden and high resolve

To go and meet the farmer and his family

And give them our greetings of love.

Our land is full of such people

Who scratch the earth with their nails and primitive tools.

They are the self supporters

In a land full of exploiters and parasites

They are the blood and the bone of our land

Some day they will know their lot

And the causes making their lot

And when they know, an explosion will come

That day they and their like will no longer

Accept their poverty as their law of life.

If Gandhi wins the explosion will be written in peace.

If Lenin wins it will be written in blood.

The land waits for its destiny

But let us not wait idly

Let us try to make Gandhi win

Can we do so? Will we do so?

On that answer hinges future.

Dawning Year

The sun has set for the old year
And the last night of the year has come
We shall sleep on the lap of the old
And awake in the arms of the new.

What tragedies have we not witnessed
In the last twelve tragic months
Floods have taken uncounted lives
And drought devastated half the land.

The anger of Nature was duly matched
By the anger of man throughout the land
Not only the poor but even the affluent
Have risen and shaken the country from end to end.

The floods washed away the lives of man and beast
And the drought has wrought destruction,
But our greatest loss in the old year
Was of values cherished through the ages.

All codes of conduct and honour
All values of culture and compassion
Even the love of mother and children
Have largely died with the dying year.

Alas for the millions of lives lost
Alas for the loss of character and morals
Alas for the vile destruction of all that
Were built and cherished through the ages.

We have felt the shocks in our own lives,
Evil did spread its net far and wide
Even over our little lives
As slander went dancing around.

Like ship-wrecked sailors
On a desolate island
We have lived our lives apart
And dreamt our dreams of times to come.

In this vast ocean of change and strife
We two have held together
Our hands and our hearts did not shrink
And our voices never died down.

Strong and steadfast we have stood
Weathering every storm that blew
Hand in hand and heart by heart undeterred
By the all-frantic forces of evil all around

Our armour was our selfless love
And our weapons only those of truth
And our refuge God's grace alone
As so we stood erect and inviolate.

We looked towards the dawning year
With no fear nor hate nor doubts any
We have filled our hearts with the nectar
That knows no defeat nor retreat.

Kaliakkavilai

Your Express Bus suddenly sped away
After you and I waved our hands,
And both had spoken some unuttered words.
And the early evening was cool and gay.

You went on your way as prearranged,
I knew there was no help for it,
And yet as I drove back on the very same road
Something—I knew not what—plucked at my heart.

Ours is a hard and long way ahead
Bound by self-chosen disciplines hard
There will be many partings and returns
And patches of sunshine and passing shades.

Some great wisdom behind us stands
Waving often its tantalising magic wand,
Let us be sure in our own minds however
That Gods grace will guide us for ever.

The limits set, the boundaries drawn
Will only open the golden gates wider
For a richer happiness without a blur
As we move from one dawn to another fuller dawn.

So, as your Express Bus in the distance disappeared
Thoughts such as these in my mind arose
To quicken and enliven the flood of life
That for a moment looked as if shattered.

The Call of Gopalaswamy Malai

We saw the scraggy leaning rock,
As from far away we approached,
The car went speeding onward,
And then slowed on the rutted road.

Very high and rugged it looked,
As nearer we came jolting,
And then stopped, gazing in wonder
At the two hundred and odd climbing steps.

We wondered if the climbing lay
Within our muscular capacity.
I had my one semibroken leg
And Mythili her polio limb.

The grand old German woman
Throwing doubts to the wind
Bravely strode forward
And of course we too kept pace.

We reached the middle temple
And rested for a time
And looked up wistfully
At the many steps leading up still.

Gopalaswamy was at the very top,
And to reach and worship Him
Was the longing in our minds
From which we saw no escape at all.

And so up we started again climbing,
We three, a man and two women;
The German lady was eighty-one
And I close behind with seventyone.

Step by step laboriously we climbed,
Resting at little under the scorching sun,
The sweat broke out on our brows,
And our limbs wilted and became unsteady.

Breathing hard and sweating from every pore
We reached the glorious top at last,
And stood before a small closed door
Behind which we know Gopalaswamy stood.

The friendly priest took out his key.
With a look of deep mystery,
And the door opened at his touch
Before our eager and straining eyes.

There is a small alcove,
Tall, straight and beautiful
Gopalaswamy stood and looked at us
With Gracious benediction on His face.

We bowed low and offered worship
Our tired bodies felt a deepening joy,
Our mind throbbed with a piety
We never had known before.

We begged the priest for an archana
Which he willingly performed
For the petty sum of rupees two
For the soul of gentle Mythili

With closed eyes she stood
As the archana was performed,
Her praying lips were-a-tremble
With the fervour of her deep devotion

We all shared in the holiness,
Inside the tiny lighted shrine,
With bowed heads and murmuring lips,
With our eyes focussed on the sacred feet.

And then slowly we came down
The dreary and scorching steps,
We felt vicariously the burning heat
Was shielding us from hell's own fires.

We then entered a long and low tunnel
Cut wonderously into the belly of the rock,
And at the far end suddenly saw
Vishnu himself reclining on Adishesan,

Once more the fervour of the spirit
Smote us on our eager minds,
And we bowed again and prayed again
Before the glorious image of Maha Vishnu.

It was with reluctant foot
That at last we withdrew
And descended many more steps
Landing down to the open courtyard.

At parting, we scanned the lanscape,
And wondered who chose this beauty spot
To build a temple so high,
On leaning and perilous rock

We saw as in a vision the truth.
All true temples are always built
On high and perilous rocks of the spirit
Calling out to man to climb ever upward.

This certainly is the truth,
That every man must climb
Step by step onward and upward,
To reach the feet of the divine.

Some climb a little and falter
Some climb more and still fall,
Some nearly reach the shining end
And perhaps none ever quite reach the goal.

Awaiting Your Coming

I know you are coming soon,
Beloved Comrade of my spirit,
The fragrance of your mind
And the music of your voice have come.

The air is already full of you
The sunshine is full of you
And the wind is singing of you
And my flowers are calling to you.

All these are but external signals
Your nimble feet are coming running
Nearer and nearer every moment
Dancing and skipping through Space.

Time too is running up with jingling anklets,
With laughter on her rose-red lips,
Happy hearted as a full-blown rose
And vibrant as a lotus in the lake.

I remain calm and cool outside
So that none will know or see
How my spirit is fluttering within
And my heart is leaping forward

To meet you as you come smiling
Radiant as a star in the sky
With such love in your deep eyes
As can drown me in their depths.

To meet you as you come quickly
With that sweet bird's cry
And the words of true joy
Trembling through your golden throat.

To meet you as you come bravely
Frank and open-hearted as ever
Pledged to a high discipleship
And equally to a noble comradeship

I shall run to meet you
With open arms and an open mind
Like the gleam of a lamp
Leaping to a glow inside a shrine.

We shall meet in a moment
What will shine like a gleam
Through the long days and nights
Of our lives dedicated to God.

My mind has seen you already
My ears have heard your music,
The dear music of your honeyed voice
Even if your person is yet far away.

Do not tarry any more my comrade,
Come like the dawn running down,
The blue sky with its white clouds
And all the birds singing among them.

My eyes are looking for your face
My ears are listening for your voice
My mind is waiting to catch
The echoes of your child-like laughter

There was never a comrade
So worth waiting for as you
And never was there a disciple
So worth all my teaching as you.

And so, as I wait for you
Let me thank God for you
And promise that I shall lift you
To the Everest of the Spirit some day.

Oh! For My Comrade-Disciple

At my age of seventy and three
And looking backward into my life
I see fifty and five years of striving
To know life and to live life vitally

I have never chosen the easy ways,
Nor ever cared to walk on beaten tracks
Thorns and thistles never kept my back
As I went ever onward on my track.

From books and life I learnt hard
Lessons that gave me strength of mind
And knowledge of the onward road
Running through avenues broad.

Avenues were dark sometimes like hell,
And alit sometimes like a temple
Fire and flood often barred the way
But God's light always showed the way.

I fought every inch of my path
And never once fell back in fear
But with faith in God and myself
Battled with life with all my strength

Did I say with all my strength?
Forgive me my God this arrogance
Not my strength oh ! Lord, but Thine
For Thine is the grace which cometh

Silent and certain like sunshine,
But sometimes swift like a river in flood
Sometimes gentle like the rays of the moon
But always constant and never failing

But life is moving on to its end
Without a single moment wasted
Onward, onward to silence eternal
To the goal predestined for every man.

And as the journey consummates itself,
There intervene many slow years
When our strength surely ebbs away
And the body and mind weaken every day.

No one escapes this challenge of the end
Not the strongest nor the wisest
Neither the most heroic and valiant
Nor the saint or even the Yogi accomplished.

The eyes will grow dim
The ears will not hear
The aging body will totter
And the very mind slow down

While God alone can then sustain
Each one of us as we move on
A true and devout comrade can.
Add to our strength and to our hope again

Next only to God and His mercy
Such a comrade can hold
Amid the encircling gloom
Our hand as we stumble on

Come then my compassionate comrade
Selfless and pure as the white lotus
Come and take my hand in yours
And let your firm feet keep pace with mine.

Only remember I am old and feeble
And you are young and nimble
Do not run fast or far ahead
But in pity keep pace with me.

Let no gap come between us
As we march on together
No gap of limbs nor of minds
We either climb together or not at all.

And step by step the idea grew
And took shape slowly, steadily,
Till at last like a trumpet blow
Came the glad news of victory.

I bowed my head before God
Before the mercy of my father
A man of truth and of faith
I touched the feet of my aged mother.

Humbled in spirit I took the blow
Of this victory with hardly a parallel
Inspired in spirit I poured my soul
Before the great Divine Grace.

Thwarting The Divine

Why do we so deliberately and so often
Cultivate within us the poison weed of misery
When life comes and goes in a flash
After which is eternal darkness and silence?

But life is long enough for us to make it worthy
Of the Architect who creates and moulds
The wonders of our bodies and our souls
Linked together ever in a great symphony.

The lord has placed us in love and in pity.
In the midst of nature and life
Teeming with the wonders of beauty
And avenues of joy, no words may describe.

If too there are the shadows of evil
And the cruel fingers of hate
So tragically interspersed everywhere
They are meant only to accentuate the
glowing wonders:

How can the good win without the evil?
The mystery of life will remain closed
Without the interplay of these two
Thrown against each other all the time.

Let us then strive with all our might
To grasp the good and march onward,
But reckoning clearly with shadows
Playing hide and seek incessantly.

Within the meshes of our daily life:
The shadows will fight the light
And we shall never fail to uphold the radiance
Streaming from the heart of Divine Grace.

We shall not mourn our fate,
Nor cry out, life is not worth
All our thoughts and words and deeds
Directed to attain the peaks of the spirit.

Let It Be So Then (I)

Yes, then let it be so, my comrade,
Our lives are not always our own
We belong to our world without a doubt
And this world often binds us down.

The chains are sometimes strong and hard
And sometimes cruel beyond words
The weak perish in their coils
The strong break them at their peril.

Let us harden the muscles of our minds
And strengthen the nerves of our souls
To yield is to court death and defeat
Let us therefore stand unafraid and erect.

We dare not discard all wisdom,
Wise we must be all the time,
But let not wisdom turn to cowardice
Nor may it disown the claim of compromise.

We have to walk on the middle path,
With our eyes firmly fixed on our goal
And let us not sway to one side or the other
Let us guard the inescapable balance in Truth.

There is nothing harder in life
Nor more perilous in our pathway
Than the temptation to spring into folly
Mistaking it for daring or courage.

All moral courage has wisdom at its core
As all true wisdom holds courage within it
Let us mate wisdom with courage
And derive the progeny of fulfilment.

And so let it be so my comrade,
My beloved companion of the Spirit
That we in body live alone and apart
But united firmly in our Spiritual Quest.

Let It Be So Then (II)

Life has confirmed the reality,
What ever the mind may affirm.
Everything may waver or vanish
But never the strands of facts.

And our facts stand out firmly
Without a doubt or an amendment
Must we not face them with courage
And never quibble over might have been?

They are the will-o-the-wisps of minds
They will lead us nowhere at all,
To turn away from reality now
Will be like running against a closed door.

And that a door with pikes of iron,
That can wound and make us bleed
Let us be wise then dear comrade
And constantly hold reality by the hand.

And so the refrain is as ever
"Let it be so then" once more
Let our hearts firmly hold
This message as we march on.

We shall live apart in the body
But very close together in spirit
And closer together in our striving
To reach the height of God's Grace.

When our aspiring souls are linked
Whatever can we lose if we live apart
Let us cast the chaff away
And to the kernel hold fast.

I shall keep on singing ever
"Let it be so then," with no regret
Yes, without a doubt "Let it be so then".
It is good and proper it is so.

Hard Journey of Life

Thorns and thistles obstruct the path,
Hard stones sharper than knives
Sometimes mud and slush come in the way
And pariah dogs show their teeth.

The onward march is slowed down
The goal ahead shines right and clear
The call comes from after like silver bells
And we must press on as best as we can.

Let our feet bleed and sting,
Let our clothes become torn,
And the sweat pour from every pore,
And our breath come hard and quick

We will not falter or halt,
We shall wipe the blood from our feet,
And wash the sweat from our skins
With the waters of God's mercy.

We will not look at the beasts
Which bare their teeth of malice
Nor stop to answer voices of evil
The echoes of which fill the air.

We will keep our minds pure
Our devotion to each other and God
Will be interlinked at the highest level
For we two grow together in grace Divine.

And so, what matters if the road is hard,
And thorns and thistles and cutting stones
And barking and snarling beasts
Seek to block our onward way?

We shall laugh them to scorn,
And challenge them to do all they can,
And show them we march on unafraid
With resolute will and clear minds.

Pain And Sorrow

One thing is certain beyond any doubt
Our souls locked up in our bodies
Are not free utterly but are subject
To the laws of Nature and earthly life.

Embodied Souls have limitations
From which none can escape,
When souls become disembodied
The body will not any more live.

Life thus means soul and body together
And when they part both cease altogether
The body perishes and becomes dust
The soul disappears we know not where.

A Yogi's meditation in Supreme concentration
On the ultimate reality within us
Can be disturbed by the bite of an ant
Or the prick of a tiny mosquito

There is thus no escape from the body
For the Spirit dwelling within it.
They are bound together inextricably
By the will of God that reigns supreme.

And so steadfast and unafraid as I am
Pain can cast its dark shadow
And sorrow wring my waiting Heart
And the whole of life becomes truly shaken.

Ashamed I become and self-reproaching
When some pain makes me cry out
When some sorrow pierces me within
When I cannot stand erect and unmoved.

Oh God is it then Thy final decree
That body and soul live ever together
And when time is ripe they die together,
Or is this simply our own illusion?

Why does pain cut at me
And sorrow so cruelly hurts me
Why cannot I rise above both
And look at life without flinching

Oh comrade ! Why do you have the power
To hurt a mature mind like mine?
To tear my heart with your absence
And make me sit encased in silence.

I must not in future give you power
Over the life I must somehow live
Alone and uncured for in silent darkness
When the sun outside is shining bright.

You are careless and unaware
While I am watchful and awake
You sleep peacefully in the grace of God
I toss unsleeping in the grip of thought.

And thought is a dangerous thing
It cuts through the wall of unreality
It opens up hidden corridors
It exposes the raw substance of truth.

And truth itself is a more dangerous thing
It burns to ashes all chaff
It scalds the muscles of pretensions
It tears down the veil of Maya.

Most thought lead to pain
And behind pain comes sorrow
As I toss sleepless in the lonely night
These two become my constant companions.

Let Us Be Unique

Are we just a man and a woman
Drawn to each other like any man or woman?
Are we the common dust of world
Caught up like all in the rat race?

I hope not my comrade disciple
I want it clearly otherwise
And trust with all my faith in you,
You too without a doubt want the same.

We shall not the common role play
Like so many made of common clay
We shall arise, awake and march
Like pilgrims on the eternal way.

We shall not this life despise
Nor worship it beyond measure,
We shall love life with all our hearts
But love far more our life in God.

Shall we not help each other,
In this uprising of our souls.
Shall we not challenge each other
To climb ever higher together?

Let us never pull each other down,
In the common ways of common men
Let our eyes seek the distant goal
Let our feet ever onward move.

And as we so move and rise upward
Let us unfold the white banner
Of our search for the Truth
That alone can us redeem.

This, Basi I will never be easy,
We shall have to be vigilant
Beyond the power of my words
To say or even to reveal

And you have so often let down
The challenges I have thrown,
From the depths of my own sadhana
Toward yours, ever an uncertain enigma.

Your spirituality has yet no foundation
On that rock of selfless courage:
You are some times bound and chained
With the manacles of your own coinage.

Your promises are often written
On the waters of your mind's waverings,
And your intelligence is keen and ready
With weak excuses born of fear.

What astonished me so often
In the nimbleness of your mind
Which helps you to so well avoid
The inevitable confrontation with truth.

Let our thoughts and deeds be
High and unique beyond all avail
Let slander die on evil lips
And malice dry up in evil hearts.

We must scale heights few ever did,
Let our minds soar into the sky,
Let our bodiless love purify,
Every heart of friend and fe.

Thus in the sweet grace of Ambika
There shall be written a chapter
Of light in the great book of life
That will inspire many struggling souls.

How Lightly You Departed!

Is it nothing to you to go away,
To leave me here alone so long,
Just because your sister called
Or some one else you cared for called?

Is your devotion, of which you boast,
To the man you call your Guru and Comrade
Much less to you, as the days grow long
And the shadows of the night deepen

Than your kith and kin at home?
That when you hold the balance
They far more outweigh your kinship
For him to whom you are his all?

What a mighty difference my child
Between your restless mind
And mine holding so firm and sure
To your image and your spirit?

You have so many to love and serve
Among whom you count me just one.
Is this the way of our spiritual comradeship
On which you went to tread in days to come.

It may suit you well perhaps
It suits me none at all my child.
You may play hide and seek with me
But in that game what part can I have?

I go on thinking in my long days
Of loneliness of my waiting spirit
And some time I wonder in sorrow
If what I hold as real is only Maya?

I shall wait in silent patience,
And watch the tantalising sport
Which you seem so much to love,
With no murmur from me of my suffering spirit.

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

No, no it was not a little star
That suddenly twinkled in my sky
It was a big and lovely star shining bright
With the face of a rose and the voice of a guitar.

How did you come and from where
Through the thick mists of yesterday
That choked the truth from our sight,
And stifled the light in our souls.

I did not know you winged in the sky
Nor could defy the wrath of kith and kin
I only knew you once hid your face.
In fear and trembling before them all.

But do you not know the secret
That when you fell and surrendered
My soul's strength rose high above
The frailties of your shaken mind.

I held firm to the pledge given
I never one deserted your side
Even without your knowing, all the time
I lifted you in the arms of my faith.

You lamented I did not rush to your side
As you lost your strength of mind:
You waited for me to come in the body
To uphold you in your weakness.

Instead I came to you in the spirit
And whispered a mantram in your ear,
"Wait, watch and pray in patience,
The wheel will turn and bring you peace".

I too waited, strong and unyielding
Before every challenge of evil
Knowing the darkness could not last
Beyond a few suns and moons.

Where Are You Now?

The festival of light is there
There is joy in every heart
Lamps are lit and the sound
Of crackers everywhere resound.

Children in their new dresses
Parade and sing and dance.
Women decked in new sarees
Walk in pride down the road.

The Deepavali sun shines bright
The foliage on the trees
The loveliness in the lawns
Are velvet green and billowing

The parrots are gathered
In the branches and the squirrels
Chase each other on the trees
And everything in Nature vibrates.

But where are you now,
And why are you far away?
Why must I only imagine
Your presence and not feel it?

Feel it near and close.
Feel it rich and vibrant
Feel it throbbing and radiant
Feel it pulsing with my own pulse.

But I will not quarrel with you,
You are with your mother
And father and sisters now,
Let them have you for the day.

And then all the coming days
Will be mine with you
I will look into your eyes
And hear your voice again.

Have The Mists Lifted?

Have the mists lifted at last?
Alas, I cannot tell for certain.
They all came smiling and cordial
They touched my feet and took my blessings.

I roused no issue with them at all
They had come of their own free will
In happy humility of spirit
And I took them in the same way.

I had made the issue clear as crystal
Before they came with their smiles
There was hardly any need then
To reopen the wounds that cried for healing.

To the father I had written unequivocally
Not to come, unless his mind he cleared
Of every trace of evil and slander
He had thrown at me so thoughtlessly.

He had my letter and he knew
On what conditions he could come
He certainly did grasp my meaning
Before he started to come to me.

He was your father after all,
Humiliate him I would not
Nor would I make his mission
Harder than he could bear.

So we said no word accusation
To each other as we met,
For your sake, my mind I softened
Knowing for your dear sake they came.

The Sudden Gleam

Returning home tonight, weary and hapless,
I received your dear little epistle,
And felt such a sudden shock of joy
I nearly went off my head.
You had come when I was away
And left before I returned home
You left behind not only a note
But the fragrance I always knew.

I read your note with a thrill
I took in every word like drops of nectar
I read your lines over and over again
And knew at last God's grace had come.

God's grace has indeed come
Like a gleam in the darkness.
It came like rain to the parched mind
Like manna for the starved soul.

God's grace has descended on me
Then hope was nearly dead
Hope in the courage of the woman
I thought did hold that courage within her.

When faith itself had broken
The pledge that was once given,
When words had lost their meaning,
And promises were cruelly shaken,

God's grace did not fail,
And wonderful are your words
"I am now a free bird"
Which means you now can fly upwards.

Into the sky of high learning,
Into the search for Truth,
For the accomplishment of Love
Pure as the blossoms of the Soul.

Come on my noble comrade
Hold hands again as before
Let our eyes look ever upward
Let our feet ever march onward.

A sudden gleam of light
Has shattered the thick darkness
Of our night of seeming despair
It is the gleam of our future life.

Let that life ever rise upward
In the sadhana of our lives
Let us stretch our hands
To win the golden fleece of Truth.

Let no cloud hide ever again
What today is revealed so clear,
That the grace of God now
Calls us to live close to His feet.

Let us bend our heads low
And touch those Lotus Feet,
And become the humble dust
As they press in mercy on our souls.

Away with Doubts

For shame, for shame, my mind.
Are you yourself subdued by fear
You who preach fearlessness
To your beloved comrade-disciple?

Is it not enough she herself lies
In the gutter of fear and shame
With truth torn out of her soul
By these uttering words of love

Let them have their own day
Untruth too has its victory sometimes,
Till the tempest of Truth arrives
And shatters it and scatters it.

You at least must not surrender
To the shadows of creeping fear,
Shut the door in its dark face
And throw it out from your heart.

I will keep my courage alive,
I will never let the lamp of hope
In you and your inner mind
Be blown out by any passing wind.

You are nobler than you know
Courageous far more than you feel.
There is in you undiscovered strength
Which will come leaping yet to life.

Let some cruel time pass
Let us hold our souls in peace
And take God's name on our lips
As we wait for the inevitable dawn.

I will not cast away my comrade,
Who has faltered and weakened,
But hold her dear hand
And charge her with courage again.

She will stand up once more
And face slander and malice
Till they take to their heels
With their tails between their feet.

For shame, for shame my mind,
Let no fear touch you hereafter
Nor any doubt assail you
For BASI in her soul remains unconquered.

She will keep her word unsullied
She will keep her faith inviolate,
With every chain they bind her,
She will inner strength rediscover.

So let the Guru sleep in peace
With undiminished trust in God
That Truth will win at last
And the vile and wicked will meet their doom.

June Has Come

First of June has come.
You wrote the firm promise,
You would come to me in June,
To help me and care for me.

The month of May passed cruelly
Harder to bear than summer's fires
Than all other tensions of the time
Than all other miseries put together.

How I had looked forward
To the quick coming of June
To the return of the rose of all roses
To hear the honeyed voice of my comrade.

And now you have come Oh June,
Without the bells of joy ringing
With not a trace of the fragrance
Of the lotus and the lillies of the heart.

Go away, go away June
And come not back so again;
Come only with my comrade
Any my dedicated disciple of the soul.

Come holding her gentle hand
Come guiding her dear feet
Come shouting her sweet name
Come together singing the name of God.

We are afresh with the garland of our dreams.
The golden basket of our hopes,
The silver casket of our faith,
The shining necklace of our promises.

Oh, June, Oh June, go back
And recover what appears lost
Bring back the laughter and the sweet tears
Which so oft filled our days then.

You are the month of our destiny,
What happens in this fateful month
Will shape our days to come
With either take us onward or rearward.

The days of June are replete
With what will yet be,
Each day will strike a note
That will go ringing into future time.

In June will lie the tests
For us both without a doubt,
If I am a man worth the name
And you a woman worth the name.

If the truth and faith in us both
Will face the truth and grip the faith
Without which this ship of life
Will shatter and sink beyond redemption.

Oh God let thy grace lead us on
As hand in hand before the throne
We stand humble and unafraid
Holding firm Thy lotus feet.

Out of Dust

Only when we become dust
Under your lotus feet
Only when we reduce ourselves
To nothing in your hands.

Only when we seek blindly
In utter darkness of despair,
Beating our broken wings
On the gates of your mercy.

Only when our souls cry out
Like the cry of a child in terror
Like the young calf's plaint
To the mother-cow, full of love.

Only then oh Lord dost thou
Stoop to lift us up in pity
And this is how very suddenly
A quick flash of light has come.

A gleam of Thy grace oh, Lord!
Has touched me into new life.
The betrayer is now repentant
And promised to make atonement.

The coward has become brave.
A message of hope has come.
It is Thy mercy which has wrought
This change, this gladsome miracle.

May the change be real
May the change stand the test
For the future is not one of roses,
But beset with many a thorn.

Guide us with your wisdom.
Uphold us with your mercy
Help us sustain each other
And together march on without fear.

Not Cruelty

No, I will not be cruel
How can I be cruel
To one I cherished and taught
All that was best in my Soul.

The long days and the long nights,
The running weeks and months
Did open the golden treasury
Of all my high dreams and thoughts.

I tore open the throbbing chest
Of all my challenging philosophies
And placed them in your hands,
Never knowing you would betray them.

My thoughts for you lie dead
My dreams for you lie crushed
My hopes for your lie ruined
Under your cowardly tread.

Long ago when I was but a child
I struck a little girl
Who plucked a rose bud,
And laughingly squeezed it dry.

I just could not bear to see
A flower so pitilessly destroyed
And now can I endure the deed
By which my heart you have broken.

I know you have your repentance
Without the courage to repent truly,
Even your pious regrets therefore
Lie buried in your piteous cowardice.

Who can help a coward
Who betrays trust in fear?
Miserably have I failed;
Only God can succour me.

And yet I have given you
One more final chance,
Yourself in atonement to redeem.
Your lost honour and also mine.

I cherish but little hope
You will stand up brave and true.
Like the woman I once thought,
In my own illusion, you were.

And yet truth might still,
Against all odds prevail,
And the flame of courage flicker
Out of the dead embers once more.

For all things are possible
With God the compassionate
Out of dust He can shape
A star still may shine.

You Want Poems

Are poems so very cheap?
Is poetry drawn from the gutter?
There is such a thing as being shattered
In a battle of sacrifice and courage.

There is also such a thing
As being dragged in shame,
The shame of cowardly betrayal
The infamy of a stab in the back.

Poems are blossoms that can grow
In sorrow, in defeat, in rejection,
Even in the agony of a fatal wound,
Even in the furnace of a torture.

But it never can grow
In the filthy pool of betrayal
In the gutter of dead souls,
And every soul dies when it betrays.

No, fear not my soul.
That another's betrayal,
Can ever taint your nature
It will shine forth again.

In that shining forth, in my soul
Will come poems like July rains
But alas, the winds of shame
Will scatter them every time.

You, my betrayer, want my poems
You think poems are cheap
And made to your fancy's order?
How little you know of the soul of a poem.

But I want to stretch my hand
And pull you out of the gutter,
I have named you comrade and disciple
And that stands, whatever happens.

My faith and my oath stand
Inviolable before your perfidy
Rooted in cowardice beyond repair
You and your yoga are less than dust.

And yet here is my hand
Stretched out to you in pity
In a faith that does not die
In a hope that does not fade.

I know even this rescue
Is in vain, is in vain
Because you are a coward
And will betray again under duress.

Your spirituality is spurious,
A matter of deep breaths and loud chants.
The first flicker of danger
Will topple it like a house of cards.

And yet I shall strive
As long as this life lasts
To mould you in courage
To shape you in wisdom.

"Vigilant Ever"

Suddenly our eyes met one morning
And there was a flash of wonder
That shook us and filled us
With a swift and high tremour.

We both knew this had happened
But no word was spoken
Nor was there any other token
Of the holy fire so strangely lighted

Shaken but vigilant were we,
We were not common clay
To become mud in the common way
We were made of purer metal.

Within the furnace of the mind
The tempering of the metal
Was achieved surely and steadily
We were unafraid but alert.

We searched for a new life
Not trapped in bodily desires.
We set about lighting a fire
Fed with the Soul's own aspirations.

We were not immature minds
Seeking for cheap satisfactions
We were minds filled with dreams.
Soaring upward to Divine ends.

We met and talked and meditated
We searched together earnest minded
For a new and shining onward way
And found it was within our sky.

One of us drew a strength unhesitant
From a long life of sadhana,
Filled with the sorrows and sufferings
Filled with every vicissitude of the spirit.

And one of us drew inspiration
From a life of self realisation
Founded on humble discipleship
To one of our great masters of the Spirit

We striking out on a new path,
Of the high Comradeship of the mind,
And of the deeper spirit of faith
And the onward search of the grace of God.

That grace deeper than the ocean
Within which we all live
And grow and ever upward move
Never ceasing, never pausing even once.

Ours is a companionship of the spirit
Sweeter than any other commonly known
Richer in joys and higher yearning,
Which constantly challenges us onward.

We shall uphold each other
Whatever happens now or after
As we tread firmly and joyously
The hard and long path leading Godward.

Come Back Soon My Comrade

I saw you go only yestemight,
And this morning I know you are away
And there was no "drive" to meet
Or watch the sun rise far away.

Beyond the blue hills to the east,
The sun of course will rise in glory
But neither you or I will be there
On the beauty road to see the blaze.

Of the colours spreading in the sky;
Or to hear the whispers of the morning
From the little throats of birds
Or the whimpering of a dog by the wayside.

How often Bhasi have we not
Driven out in the infant dawn,
To fill our eyes with nature's beauty,
And our hearts with pulsing thoughts?

The dawn today is just the same,
The sun has in no way changed
The winds bring the same message
And so do all the tender voices of the dawn.

The outlines of the blue hills
Etched against the tender skies
Remind me as often before
Of the face and voice now far away.

There is little joy in the morning today
I have not stirred to see the sun
Or watch the painting on the skies
By the great artist hiding in the clouds

For without our sharing mind in mind
The sights and sounds of the dawn
Become empty and outward drawn
With hardly any inner throb.

Come back soon my comrade,
My companion of the Spirit
Let the days be short
And the hours swiftly fly.

Why Did You Make the Impossible, Possible?

Lord God I why did you
Make the impossible, possible
I never had a hope
Not even a shadow of hope
I had left life slip
And my tears had frozen
And my heart benumbed long ago,
And now and now
That the impossible is possible,
My soul burns,
My body burns.
But not, that is not
The word—the word.
Alas ! I have no word
I thought I knew the word.
But not I knew it not
But now I have no word.
It is not a burning that hurts
It is a burning that uplifts
The soul is sweetened
The soul is awakened
The soul is fulfilled.
It is a flame indescribable.
The body is full of reverence.
It's own desires become holy.
The soul and body unite
They become one utterly.
Lord God ! I have no word
Give me the word, dear God.

A Phantasy!

She is no mere woman,
I am no more a mere man,
More than any woman, more than any man.
She and I are one.

To know her is joy,
To love her is paradise.
To be loved by her is holy.
To hold her tight, is to dip into Ganga
Of life everlasting.

Prophecy

Spread wide your noble wings
Comrade of my own Questing spirit,
And wing your way ever upward
Into the external firmament of the soul.

You are an eagle none should confine
In the nest however golden of daily life
The life of joys and sorrow that pass
Like shadows over our minds.

The nest of life does enshrine
Some priceless values of our throbbing hearts
But the infinite sky above, around,
Holds greater challenges to our innermost souls.

We shall together nest sometimes
But never our wings shall we unfold
From the little joys of our nest
Into the great open sky shall we leap.

Together into the search for the eternal
Into the infinite sky of self-realisation
We shall fly ever upward
Never resting, never drooping to the earth.

But you are the eagle that must
Your wings spread wide
And plunge into the infinite sky
For you to lead and to all follow.

Let none hold you down
Let no thought weaken you
Let no attachment fetter you
Let your wings find their way.

Some great destiny awaits you
Swing towards it and not away from it,
Trust thyself with courage
And trust God with faith unailing.

Loneliness

I look around and listen to voices,
Books and papers are in place,
The pretty cat is in the chair,
And the cook as always near the fire.

The clock ticks away the hours
The squirrels twitter on the trees
The gardener as before goes on
Doing this and that and something.

Why do I feel so lonely in this house
Where nothing is changed at all?
I have not opened the radio
Nor listened to songs and news.

I want no news, I want no songs,
I see and feel the solitude
I know what is wrong,
But to whom shall I tell?

To whom shall I tell
The emptiness in my soul?
Who will understand or care
And much less share my sorrow?

I know what is wrong,
You, my companion, are away,
Physically away and unreachable,
Though very close spiritually all the time.

I long for you, my companion,
I want to see your face
With its Monalisa smile,
I want to hear the music of your voice

The snappy little sounds of
Your bird-like voice,
Calling over and over again,
Mama, Mama and yet again Maman.

I know you are away on duty,
I know you here in spirit,
I know I am with you in spirit
And yet I feel a void.

How strange is the human mind,
It longs for you ever more,
When you are farther away and
The need becomes more insistant

Come soon, my companion,
Fill this void without delay,
Let me see you again soon,
And hear your voice once more.

Not In Conflict

Awake my slumbering mind,
Time passes on unreturning feet,
The dogs may bark aloud,
But the caravan moves on.

You swear by reason,
And believe in its piercing flame,
Faith has not held you too close,
It was for you one of reason's props

Where reason sometimes comes to halt,
Faith steps in without a thought,
And pulling reasons up and on
Marches straight to the goal.

Your reason sees the Law
With no Law-giver in sight
You are puzzled as was the Buddha,
And hold the balance in your quest.

And then comes into your mind
The mighty mind of Gandhi
Who hold without a doubt
That the Law and Lawgiver were one.

One and indivisible now and ever,
Transcending the duality which baffles
Smaller minds, shallower intellects;
Seeing Truth as both the Law and Lawgiver.

Spirit and form ultimately one,
Wander long separate and parallel,
Till our minds become big enough
To swallow both in one gulp.

You must not let the caravan
Pass along the endless road.
Step into line and join the pilgrim-band,
To seek and attain the final truth.

Mould life on the foundation of reason
Let reason decide every issue
Let reason open every door
And also every window on the world.

And yet reject not faith,
Make faith reason's partner,
Reason out the challenge of faith;
Thus only will reason stand the test.

Let human laws mould our minds
But let them mould its higher laws
The moment we do this unafraid
The law and the lawgiver will merge into one.

And God will be formless
And yet hold every form
That will be my God
Immanent and vibrant in every soul.

Be Not Afraid

Courage heart, do not falter,
Keep the heart pure and unsullied,
And the mind clear like the sky
And the will strong as steel.

Look the world in the face,
Throw no blame on those
Who oft trade in malice;
Leave them to a just God.

Shrink not from the world's gaze,
Let them look their fill,
Retreat not before ugly minds,
Lift your own mind sky high.

There is no freedom without courage
No happiness without risks
No growth minus constant striving
No salvation sans climbing hard and high.

Be good without pretensions,
Be calm against slander;
Surrender no right to any
Person or force however strong.

Draw your own strength
From within your self.
Put your faith in God.
And keep your mind untrammelled.

Firm and pure, fear not any shadows
Clear in mind look ahead,
There is much good in the world
Build on it your inner mansion.

Keep alive the noble comradeship,
Do not let your companion fall behind.
Let your moral strength sustain
The sweet comrade of your spirit.

The Peak and the Pool

I stood on the mountain peak
And saw below the deep clear pool;
I saw myself mirrored in it
And wondered at the loveliness of its lilies.

A big green parrot flew
And perched on a nearby tree;
It made strange noises
That gave me a thrill

I did not of course know
A parrot's language at all
And yet somehow guessed
What the bird was chirping.

"Are you afraid to take a leap
Into that cool deep spring of water?
It is waiting for you now,
Shame on you", the parrot was saying.

I wondered and was hesitant,
And then suddenly picked up courage
And took a quick leap
Head down into the pool.

Deep and deeper I sank,
I struck no bottom at all,
It was a bottomless pool;
But there was no fear in my heart.

And then I thought two hands
Held me gently and tenderly
Within the deep blue depths
And lifted me up skyward

I woke as from a dream,
I was on firm earth again,
The peak and the pool had vanished,
Only the sweet touch of the hands remained.

And then suddenly the parrot
Gave its cries loud and clear
From a nearby tree,
It sounded like glad laughter.

The parrot on the tree was real
And its cries sounding like laughter
Ran truly in my ears.
Were all else only a dream?

Before the sun set in a blaze of colour
Flooding the vast evening sky
I searched for the parrot on the tree
As it rose on full wings to fly.

It flew straight westward
Drowned in the sunset colours,
And I saw it wing its way
Into Ambika's lighted shrine.

Light suddenly dawned on me;
It was Ambika's sacred parrot
Known to every worshipper at the shrine
And it spoke Ambika's benedictions.

You Went Off In A Flash

The Bus came in a moment to meet you,
And you sprang in and vanished at once,
A cloud of dust struck me in the face
As the driver gathered speed and sped on.

One minute you were with me
In another you were not with me
Your seat in the car by me
Was empty as sometimes before.

I drove home into the empty rooms
Everything was in place, books and flowers
Cups and saucers shone on the shelves
And the play was the same of the cat and kittens

The sun streamed in through the windows
And the mountain air came in through the doors
The big lemons hung low on the branches
And in the garden there was the same green grass.

I wanted to be brave and unconcerned
I took a book and turned the pages
It was a false drama played
For my mind towards you continually turned.

As your bus raced forward to your home
Did such thoughts assail your mind too?
Sure I am your mind fluttered like mine
And you were caught in similar thoughts also.

It was good I heard your voice
On the phone some minutes before.
It came like the cooling wind
From the green slopes of Sirumalai mound.

And just now my cat came to me
Purred for a moment and climbed
On my lap and looked into my face
And the kittens sprang on the bed.

My dog started barking
For a share in this family gathering
I had to go to it and pat its head
Before it lay down again on its own bed.

I took another book to read
Its contents caught my mind
A passage said "I and You" are one
It was the identity of life with God.

What can bind life and God together
Except the bond of purest love?
If it can bind me to the Divine
Our own pure love too can bind us ever.

So you can go in a bus in a flash
And the bus can throw up a cloud of dust
But the same bus can bring you back
And I shall not mind the dust then.

Life is full of comings and goings
Let us welcome every coming
And know all goings lead to comings
And no coming is or can be everlasting.

Cheer you then my going Comrade
Your next will be "Coming" soon
I will not anticipate your going
Let it come when it must.

I Am Troubled

I am troubled now in my mind,
I see no remedy as I look around
The will-o-the-wisps of hopes and dreams
Flutter and beckon but vanish.

Time does not stop for a moment,
It moves unhurried and relentless
Its dead leaves are scattered behind
And those of the new spring do not show yet.

The senses and limbs grow old,
The mind alone remains young
And far beneath, the soul stands guard,
And yet we move onward to the inevitable end.

We play with life when with time
We play our ducks and drakes
Time never uncoils backwards
Nor does it for a moment pause.

Hold on with all your strength
To the morning chariot of life
And as long as you ever can
And yet you will only move to your end.

Lose no day nor one moment,
Once gone, it is gone for ever,
And is added to the eternal store
of all that has been in the past.

That store never opens to give,
It opens only to receive
What all you dream and hope
Are caught and preserved everlastingly.

Let us play not with cruel time,
For time is the final ocean
Into which our lives flow
Like the rivers into the ocean.

Nature has no heart within
It has just its inherent direction
We are not consulted as it moves
Unceasingly to its own pre-ordained goals.

We must therefore take our lives
Into our own hands firm and free,
We must not flutter or hesitate.

Have we the vision splendid
The charted paths through times ahead,
The will to trek firmly onward
And the faith we shall succeed.

The Days Pass

The days come and go unconcerned
They ask no questions nor answer any
The days pass one after the other
And before we know we grow older:

The days are without any substance
For nothing happens worth the name
No smiles light the lamp of daily life
No voice rings the bells of joy or love.

The days now move on feet of mud and clay
And I keep on remembering how once
They ran like the nimble deer within the fence
Filling my heart with throbbing joy.

I wake in the early cold of morning
With no anticipation of happiness,
No hope of seeing your sweet smiles
Or hearing your voice singing a song.

I return to my loneliness at sunset
After a day's strenuous work
With only my dear dog and pretty cat
To gambol and greet me in the falling dusk.

I am not sore with you my comrade,
I know where you are and why
You are toiling too in your own way
To clear the thorny path to my open gate.

I shall wait for your coming
As long as you need me wait;
My longing for you I know
Is just the same as yours for me.

And yet and yet, it is so hard
To wait so long as the days pass,
The days that move on feet of clay
On the long road from you to me.

But long or short, this road will end
This waiting and watching will no more be,
And our twin souls shall leap to meet
In a divine glow that never shall fade.

Doubts Creep In

I woke up from the deep sleep.
It certainly was past midnight,
My pretty cat lay curled at my feet
And silence stood heavy beside my cot.

I did not know why I awoke,
No dream had startled me
Nor as I found did any sharp noise,
On my sleeping ears suddenly smite.

I just awoke quietly and lay
Wondering whose voice called me
The sound of a voice lingered
In the depths of my listening mind.

I did not move and lay quiet
Seeking to find what voice had called
I heard no voice nor any sound
The night was still and dark without

I closed my eyes once again,
And slipped gently back into sleep
I thought something soft as a feather
Touched my eye-lids and brow.

I slept on unknowing and unawaken
And then I heard a distant voice
Come close and whisper in my ear
The name by which you call me ever.

In my slumber I saw a face
I knew and loved so well
It came so very near my face
And then vanished like a gleam.

A warmth enfolded my heart
A peace spread through my mind
A faint light shone above my head
This came I thought from too lovely eyes.

All these in a dream as I slept
And I clung to it with all my might
Lest I sh'd forget when I awoke again
As I knew I would very soon

Just then my cat gave a cry
And sprang from my side
I awoke with a quick move
And my senses opened like a lily.

Memory fought back the waves
Of oblivion lashing on my mind
I held on to every bit of the visions
My spirit in my dream did behold

I could not salvage all the beauty
That had blossomed in my dream
Nor all the sweetness it brought
Into the deep caverns of my mind.

But enough I still retain
Of all I held and lost
To nourish my hopes and my faith
That we live not in vain.

I Am Here And You Are Not

I am here and you are not,
Nothing new or strange I know,
And yet today I am hurt somehow
We are not here together here tonight.

There is green grass and fragrant flowers
And many a fine tree with foliage thick
And the chain of glittering lights
On sheets of water cast their silver glow.

I stand on the terrace alone
And watch the young night
Throb with shifting shadows
And whisper its silent secrets.

Boys and girls pass below
Filling the air with their laughter
And birds come twittering to rest
Among the waving branches around.

Far away rise the temple towers,
And there comes the sound of bells
From the holy shrine of Nataraja
As worshippers raise their holy chants.

But I am lonely in the midst
Of all this pulsing life tonight;
Neither nature nor man is company
With my Comrade-disciple far away.

When will such loneliness end
This hunger for a face and a hand
This longing to hear a voice
More music than any music in the world.

Nothing is joy unshared
Nothing is happiness alone endured
No beauty nor truth is real
Except in the ruby cup of our twin souls.

And yet what folly is this my heart?
Why weep for what cannot be yet,
For this is not, so easily caught and kept
In our many threaded lives lived apart?

Nothing really priceless is realised
Without some tearful price to pay
It matters little who it is what must pay
Nor who must receive in the end.

Two Miracles

Miracles ! I had all along rejected them,
Nay, scoffed at that very idea
Had always laughed them to scorn
And turned deaf years to their claim.

But stranger still, I did accept
The whole of Nature and life
As miracles without a doubt,
Every blade of grass and speck of dust.

The morning sun, the evening moon
And every star in the firmament
Every flower that in beauty blow
Every bird winging in the sky above.

The restless waves of the sea,
The curling woods of hills;
The shifting colours of the clouds
Were all miracles to my mind.

What then did I reject?
The miracles of saints and gods
And of goddesses in nooks and shrines
And of saints with long hair on their heads.

Firmly rooted in the philosophic concept
Of cause and effect governing life
I was firmly of the view
Miracles were just figments of faith.

I hardly knew in my own mind
What then I was bargaining for,
Something was waiting round the corner,
To pluck the feathers of my arrogance.

In a little shrine of my own making
Behind silken veils of green
There sit the radiant portrait
Of Ambika, my goddess of compassion.

How Ambika stepped into my soul
And was enshrined within it
Is itself a miracle in my life
Wrought by a love, pure and holy.

The more I kept Ambika in my soul
The wider opened the eyes of my spirit
And without even my knowing it
A faith was born and it grew.

I was disturbed in spirit
That faith was pushing back
Reason which for long had held
Such undisputed sway over my mind.

And then sprang a situation
Pleasant and dangerous in the extreme
Sweet and poisonous to my life
If my eyes I closed and went in.

I had earlier prayed to Ambika
To guide my life onward and upward
To take my soul in Her sacred hands
And press on it the signet of her mercy.

As the danger steadily drew near
Ambika turned her swift and angry look
At the approaching face of evil
And lo, it melted away in a flash.

The situation broke visibly down,
Light filled my shaken mind
The darkness dissolved like mist
And once more I breathed free again.

My usual sceptic mind awoke in wonder
At what was so certain and clear
That some hand had struck away
The sharp thrust of fateful dagger.

Yes, but some unseen hand it was,
That intervened just in time
To save me from a peril as vital
As any my life had ever known.

I closed my eyes in prayer
And knew deep within my mind,
That no other hands but Ambika's
Could have struck the redemptive blow.

But this was not all that befell
Something far more startling
Struck the second blow at my conceit
That reason cancelled every miracle.

Sitting in Yogic peace before Ambika
And seeking with all my soul her mercy
I besought in all true humility
Your cherished presence reach me once more.

To sit by my side in my worship
To bend our heads together in prayer
To take Ambika's name with united hearts
And be drowned in Her holy compassion.

I sought this gift from thee, oh mother
I called out for this gift of grace
And knew without any doubt
That all things are possible with Her.

And then the gleam of another miracle
Lit up my life with a joy so strange
That the lamp of faith shone
Beyond the frontiers of all my reason.

For before the sun set that day
You came with a smile so radiant
And when I took you by the hand
I knew it was not just a dream

You came in flesh and blood
In utter loveliness of spirit.
I heard your spoken word
And knew again it was no dream.

You and I sat together in prayer
You and I bent our heads together
And our souls soared upward
To where rested the lotus feet of Ambika.

This double miracle has shown
Beyond every shadow of doubt
That all things are possible with God.
As we seek His grace in Truth and in Spirit.

God's Grace Be Yours

I saw you as a statue frozen with sorrows
Sitting with head bowed over his,
In your eyes were all your unshed tears
And in your heart your unuttered sighs.

I had known you strong and erect
Your face aglow with high hopes
As you moved quickly on nimble feet
Tending the sick in their earthly pains.

What high love bound you together,
What dreams and noble aims,
To do God's work for as long ever
As His grace led your onwards?

And then death entered suddenly,
And cut asunder the golden bond,
And all your dreams lay shattered
As from your heart arose a broken cry

He lay in your lap as though asleep,
Calm and beautiful with eyes closed,
And all his dear limbs were stilled
As for a moment your mind took a leap.

Alas, alas for your fateful loneliness
For all your own time yet to compass,
Alas for the vacant seat in your home,
And even more in your heart's inner throne.

Weep all your tears noble lady,
They will ease your gripping pains,
Breathe all your tragic sighs,
But hold on to faith unbrokenly.

The sun will once again shine
The flowers will open once more
The birds will return to their home
And friends will never cease to come.

No sorrow lasts for ever,
And sighs and sobs cannot endure
In our lives too long for sure,
God has for all our ills some cure.

Trust in God, dear noble lady,
Keep your faith unshaken in His mercy,
The beloved departed would need
You to continue the work you together did.

He left everything in good order
For you to work and prosper
To bring up your children with all your
Love as though he was still there.

For in Heaven God sitteth,
Keeping watch over us all,
You know within your soul
It is he who giveth and he who taketh.

Sumitra's Anniversary Night

Are you here with us tonight?
This is the room you loved.
And this the house where once you lived.
We are many here tonight but not you.
And yet, I know you are here tonight.
How do I know and how can I know?
My heart alone holds the certitude
But how can this be, and how?
You left us for the journey to the Eternal.
There never was a word nor a single sign.
You somehow broke your heart.
And then you broke all our hearts and vanished.
And yet I know you are here tonight.
How do I know and how can I know?
And yet and yet I somehow know.

The night is dark outside my window.
The lamp is unlit inside my room.
I see the distant stars close at my window.
These stars are near and yet far away.
Can I stretch a hand and pluck a star at my window?
I know I cannot, I cannot.
How like one of these stars you are.
You are here in the room with me now and
Yet you shine far away in the distant sky.
Life is light and darkness entwined close.
When the light will fade is never certain.
When darkness will vanish is uncertain, too.
Life alone is real beyond a doubt.
And death is the myth we must not fear.
This is the truth without a doubt.

I know you are here with me tonight.
No touch nor sight nor sound is the proof.
The proof is deep inside my heart.
I feel you ever so close and ever so living,
And yet I know how far away you are.
The near and the far change places in a moment.
This we seldom understand or remember, that
Beyond this duality is Truth's unity.
May you dwell for ever in the Eternal.
May the Everlasting hold you always.
May you shine within the Light that never fades.
You were too tender a bud on the funeral pyre,
So God's grace will enfold you ever.

But be with me sometimes as close as now.
I ask because you are here tonight.

To Buddha The Most Truthful of Prophets

You paid the price uttermost,
You walked through the long valley
Of fire and flood and Self-suffering;
You stood at the gates of death.

You mortified the flesh
More than any other seeker;
You meditated in silence so long
The birds nested in your hair.

Most flesh had disappeared,
Every ounce of fat dissipated,
The bones jutted under the skin
And the eyes had become deep hollows.

But your questing spirit lived
Like the lava inside a volcano,
It stirred, soared into a sky
Beyond our ken and our reach.

Your soul battered at the eternal door
It recoiled unconquered into your "self"
The *atman* and the Brahman came in confrontation
And neither yielded nor retreated.

You went to the limits of knowing,
And yet the beyond stretched unending,
It was the final challenge of the cry
Neti, neti and yet again *neti, neti*.

From the infinite at last,
You returned to the finite
And found both were the same
The beginning and end of the one eternal.

In your mighty enlightenment
You saw the glimpses of a "Law"
The law that creates, sustains and destroys
And creates again, the great wheel of the Law.

You saw the truth of the law
But nowhere any lawgiver
You saw the Law and the Lawgiver were one,
And ended then your great quest for ever.

Twenty five centuries have rolled
Down the pathways of Time
And yet you remain the greatest
Discoverer of the truth of all times

Let me bend my head humbly
Before you Master and Guide,
Along your footprints we see
The path which alone can save man.

Subramanya Bharathi

Oh Bharathi, Oh Bharathi,
Heroic and exquisite sarathi
Of the quivering soul and mind
Of the radiant renaissance of my land.

You lived but a few tortured years
In this soil of sweat and tears,
And yet garnered in resonant rhymes
All the shades and tones of our souls.

You plucked with bleeding hands
Every thorn out of our storied past,
And then plunged with all your might
Onward towards tomorrow's beckoning lights.

You drank deep from the ancient streams
But never lingered on their slippery shores,
You took the old in both your hands
And bent it like steel for the coming times.

Not a mood or tone of the human mind,
Nor a whisper or sigh inside Nature's heart,
Failed to evoke the swift response
in the throbs and thrills of your glorious art.

To you Nature became an open book,
And the many-coloured petals of the soul
Opened to your quick and searing gaze
Like the flower at dawn before the sun.

Tamil was resonant on your tongue,
But truth and beauty were in your soul,
And so your tongue became the flute
For the songs you sang and made universal.

You proved beyond all our doubts
That while the roots in you did count,
It was the wide sweep of the myriad branches
That made the tree that was you.

You passed away too young,
You lived and died in pain,
Your youth was our age,
And your pain our shame.

But what pain or shame can now touch
The widening frontiers of your fame,
As a million souls bend to touch
The fringes of the rays around your name?

The Brook and the Ocean

Rain fell on the mountain,
And clear water collected
Inside a pellucid rock-basin,
Then overflowed and ran down.

Down, down more rocks
Through hard boulders shining brown,
Through tough creepers and thorns,
Through mud and sand and stones.

It spread here into a big pool
And broke into streams later
Curved and twisted and rose
But always flowed on and on.

The brook directed itself,
Gathered speed as it flowed,
Was held up at a dam—suddenly,
And rose in depth and width alike

It swelled and swelled
Into a mighty rising tide
And swept down the mountain side
And flooding a low basin sped on.

It gathered leaves and blossoms
It sang and danced onward
Never stopping, never ceasing
Onward, onward seeking something.

The Ocean was waiting
With its deep blue waters,
With its waves lashing in joy
And opened its arms wide,

In joyous and gleeful welcome
The depths of the ocean
Trembled and heaved in ecstasy
As the river came rushing into it.

They caught each other in their arms
They kissed ten thousand times
They danced together to a rhythm
That resounded across the skies.

The Brook's journey was ended
In the bosom of the ocean;
The brook and ocean became one
Under the great watching eyes of God.

Two Autumn Leaves

The tree was heavily loaded
With autumn leaves, yellow and ripe
And the wind was strong and keen
As it plucked the leaves constantly.

I watched two golden leaves
Thick and lushy parting from a branch,
The wind caught them quick
And floated them high in the air.

They whirled and flew fast,
Strangely together, round and up
Close they flew and closer,
And neither dropped to the dust.

Whither, oh whither are you drifting
Torn leaves from the ancient tree,
To which never again will you two
Return to your place in the foliage.

The wind has caught you
And launched you into Space,
You must float and fly onward
Or you will drop and be trodden upon

You have no choice now
Save to soar onward
And soaring together cling
Like two eagles in the sky.

Yes, eagles in the sky
Brave and calm and steady
In your endless sweep
Of the white space everlasting.

This is the price of love
This token of faith
This the lamp of hope
And this the throb of fulfilment.

The Centre and the Circumference

The centre is firm and fixed
Deep inside the luminous soul,
But far away stretches the horizon
Where the eye cannot reach.

In the centre are you beloved
And to you am I chained
With the gold chain of love
And the string of our aspirations.

These chains are no fetters
That downward pull our souls,
They are pinions of ascent
Upward to the throne of God.

But my eyes wish to measure
The vast spaces within the circumference,
But now can I measure it,
When the circumference has no bounds.

I know and I hold the finite
In the firm grip of my mind,
But as I stretch out my hands
The circumference ever eludes.

Is the finite untied to the finite,
Are they so apart and unlinked,
Are they not both within the *leela* of God
The ever beginning and the ever ending?

One eternity, one divine continuity,
In appearance alone are they two,

In reality just one everlasting
Radiance without a start of an end.

It is an unending cycle
With no beginning and no end.
In which you and I are particles
Of the Celstial light.

And so the finite centre
And the infinite circumference
Are linked and are one;
There never is a break in between.

And so are you beloved
My nest as well as my sky,
And I the fluttering bird
Nesting sometimes and flying sometimes.

And so my lord of beauty
And lord of truth are one
May we do drowned in Thee
For now and for ever.

"Same But Not The Same"

I drove along the same roads,
The sky above was just the same,
The same trees stood sentinel by the wayside,
And cars and trucks and carts passed as before.

I stopped by the way side at spots
So well remembered and cherished,
Curious eyes of cycle riders,
And lorry drivers peered as before.

I know everything was the same,
Not a single thing had changed,
Not even the barking of the dogs,
Nor the cries of birds flying home.

And yet and yet nothing was the same,
Some one was missing from the scene,
A spirit was gone, only some outer shell remained;
No light of eyes, no smile of lips.

No holy touch of the soft hands,
No whisper of the gentle voice,
No glimmer of the sacred vision,
Of the saint and child in one.

My heart pulsed in silence,
And deep was my loneliness of spirit,
My mind fluttered like a bird
Inside a dim and windowless cage.

The sun set in colours of beauty,
The stars came out one by one,
The wind went sighing by,
The world became lightless.

And I drove back along the same roads,
The sky and all the rest were the same,
And yet and yet nothing really was the same,
Except my sorrowing heart and wondering mind.

The Heights and Depths

Oh ! Thou Divine Love,
That creates and sustains
Our uncertain earthly lives
Through the tunnels of time.

Now, we so oft defeat Thy purpose,
Throwing aside our duty
To keep burning Thy lamp of love
Mistaking our self-made chains for thine.

We have come from thy *Ananda-Leela*
Which has filled all life
From the least to the highest
With beauties and hopes infinite.

There are many sins we commit
But no sin is greater than this
That we intently run against
Thy laws of love and compassion.

Love Divine, compassion holy and true
Brought me to the gates of paradise
And even took me by the hand
And led me into the inner Shrine.

I adored and worshipped in the shrine.
Thy shrine—Oh ! Lord of love
But all at once cruel hands
Put the lights out and closed the gates.

The hand and mind behind
Which this fell deed accomplished,
Claims to take Thy name Oh, Lord
And to do your sacred will.

Alas, alas, my lord of compassion
May Thy throne remain inviolate
However hard such hands smite
Seeking its founts to destroy.

Lord, Thy enemies are They
Who deny you are love,
You are compassion without end,
They make your image hard and cruel.

In thy name they attack and torture
In thy name they denounce and burn
In thy name they betray and destroy
Even the simple laws of our human hearts.

Save us from their clutches,
They have no pity whatsoever,
They pretend they are thy devotees
While to themselves only are they devoted.

Their joy is in denials of life
Their happiness is in self-torture
And even more in the torture of
Those who love and seek to serve them.

Save us oh ! Lord from these saints,
From those self-appointed guardians
Of thy kingdom of love and light
Whose hearts not even pity can move.

Let us live our lives simple
In the unending flow of thy Grace.
The Grace that compasses
Our limbs, hearts and souls.

At First Sight

A pure face, clean cut, statuesque,
As in some ancient Greek Sculpture,
Chiselled chaste lines of intellect,
Lit up by the halo of the Spirit.

Eyes, deep and dark and sweet;
The gentle and the firm together in one,
A sad saint, as it seems, in the making,
But alas too young for the role.

Will the pellucid streams of her life
Rich, clear, vibrant and flowing,
Dry up in some dreary desert sands
Of premature and tragic negations?

May the Lord God of Truth and Beauty
Protect and her tender footsteps guide;
May He, who moulds every blossom,
Guard in mercy the flower of her growth.

Lord, I bring this prayer out of
My deep searching and throbbing mind
That every talent of her priceless being
Find uttermost fulfilment within Thy grace.

The Moon Over The Sea

I went to look at the meeting,
A crowd of a million waited on the sands
Of the Marina, washed by the waves
Of the Bengal ocean, deep blue and ever lashing.

I gaped at the vast and seething crowd,
A veritable sea of human heads,
It kept on heaving and swelling
Like a tidal wave onward rolling.

Just a frail woman was speaking,
Her words rang out clear and challenging,
She was no common woman there by some chance
But the symbol of our destiny and the leader of our land.

My heart beat its rythm in tune
With the throb and surge of the mighty crowd,
In the words she spoke I heard the echoes
Of the revolution remaking my country and my people.

But suddenly the entire panorama vanished,
Even the stirring voice faded away
My mind turned and took a sudden flight
To a full moon coming in glory over the sea.

It really was the full moon of the month,
Gentle and big and glowing over the sea,
It stood for a moment like silent music
Like the wordless beauty of a radiant face.

I felt so moved by what I saw,
I swiftly walked away from the crowd,
To a point where no voices reached me
And I remained alone and unobserved.

Now my mind was my own once again,
It lifted and flew to a distant scene
When I had looked at this very moon,
Only a short month ago that now was gone.

I was not alone then,
I was in the sweet and holy company
Of a child and saint in one,
Who too had then looked at the rising moon.

This was the same full moon now
We together saw a full month ago,
Under the shadow of trees far away
And yet why did my heart whisper a difference?

The external world has its rigid laws,
And so are there the eternal laws
Of the inner mind of man;
We know much of one and little of the other.

But both tend towards the Divine,
The outer and the inner are reconciled
Without a strain in the vast horizon
Of God's compassionate and constant grace.

Step by Step, Oh God !

Step by step, step by step, step by step, Oh God !
With no material resources but only faith in ourselves
and in God.

But God has appeared in unexpected expressions of grace.
These days here were like a voyage of discovery.
Discovery of young people willing to work in earnest.
I have discovered more of them here in three months than in
forty years in Tamilnad.

And to one has come for salaries or material returns.
Fine young people inspired by vision and faith.
Young men and young women willing to take the
plunge with me.

A courageous plunge into the unknown and the future.
And what a fine captain of this team is working by my side !
Mythii keeps the team together happy and hard at work.
An old man, I am apt to snap at people
But mythili smiles and young people are glad to work
with her.

I remember how Gandhigram started its career
A rich and noble woman stood by me and I by her.
Money had come and the first few buildings had gone up.
The Prime Minister of Bombay arrived to inaugurate
Gandhigram.

The whole of Chinnalapatti was awake and ready to help.
There too was a fine group of young people.
But they knew they had a future on which to rely.
Here no grant has come from anywhere
No one has been offered a job.
The inaugural function here was of faith and hope
It was a wonderful function from beginning to end.
Swathi Tirunal Music Academy furnished a singer.
His opening prayer song thrilled the big audience.
Ambar Charka spinners added their beautiful voices.
There was on the platform a galaxy of the devotees
of the Master.

There was a sprinkling of friends from Tamilnad headed
by Bhupathi Bikshu.

Nagercoil sent a good quota

The speech at the highest level came from Parivrajika
Rajammal.

Our old but young Rajammal shaped into a Parivrajika by
by Vinobaji.

She was the last speaker.

The audience was by then somewhat tired and a little
impatient.

But as the Parivrajika spoke, gently and firmly the crowd
woke up.

It was she who led in taking the pledge of the Shanti Sena
Beautifully worded and pin-pointed, it sounded like a
Mantram,

The pledge was drawn up by no less a person than
Kainikkara.

There was an original English version as in the case of the
Gandhigram song.

Parivrajika read slowly and deliberately, word by word.

It was like the opening of a gate into future.

This was the first step, the first step, the first step only, in the
Journey of the many steps ahead in the coming time.

The room in the Madhavi Mandiram in which Gandhi lived for
a day was remembered.

The Education Minister unveiled a Brass plaque in
remembrance.

And so, step by step, step by step, Oh God !

With no material resources but only our faith and courage.

A seed has been planted in rich soil.

It will never die, can never die, must never die.

Men and women may pass away but this seed never.

It will sprout, put forth fresh leaves and flowers ever.

The Shanti Sena is the symbol of tomorrow.

Armies and armaments will fade away as the symbols of
yesterday

Onward then soldiers of peace, of the Shanti Sena !

Onward Comrades dedicated to Gandhian nonviolence !
The world shall not perish because of our inaction.
The world shall live because we shall act fearlessly.
The courage of nonviolence alone is courage worth
the name.
And so, step by step onward and onward Oh God !

Stand Erect

Stand erect, Gandhi's torch bearer !
Hold your head high before men
You have walked along on his road
With nothing but his love to guide you.

Some there were who lay in shadows
To trap you as you marched on,
They twisted your words and your deeds
To betray you with their Judas kisses.

If in God's grace I was less
One wit than that grace shaped me,
They would have crushed me
Without mercy under their feet.

No one knows, no one utterly
How, awake or asleep all the time
I hold on to that Grace
As the only anchor of my life.

After many years of toil
For the poorest, the lowliest and the lost
I returned home to find my place
Among those I trusted most in life.

And found no welcome nor a smile,
I found every door shut in my face.
There was just tolerance enough
Not to show me the door to quit.

I swallowed my poor pride
I tried to argue and failed
My words become dust to them
And my humiliation they did not even notice.

I turned my mind to a new purpose
Which was truly an old one,
My hope and dream to build
The first Village University of my land.

No one knew how I toiled again,
Hard at work in the hours of day
Wakeful in thought through many nights,
Solving problems with patience and foresight.

And God gave me a companion
Who understood the entire situation
And gave me comfort and strength
Not to bend before the storm.

The days passed and the months.
I had the trust of many good companions,
And secret derision of the few
Who were always on their prowl.

Heart breaking delays intervened,
Doubts were raised again to delay,
Enemies in the Education Ministry and
Enemies near home taunted and waited.

Also big minds came to the rescue,
The Prime Minister making India today
The Minister building the Education of the Nation
And the University Commission guarding our credit.

Soul's Drought

The drought descends on land
And everything is scorched,
Dead leaves cover the earth,
The grass itself faces death.

Streams show nothing but stones
Running water exists only in dreams,
Wells are just gaping holes,
Mocking the women with their buckets.

Birds do not flutter in the sky,
Lifeless they sit on the leafless branches;
Children cry for potted water
Stored preciously under thatched roofs.

Farmers sit listlessly waiting
For the rains that do not fall.
The priests call for animal blood
The cruel gods to propitiate.

Hearts are bitter and sad
That life is empty and hard
Prayers die out on the lips
Hopes lie shattered in the dust.

Another drought descends on a soul,
And all the tender roots of life
Are burnt and charred like coal
And every thought is strangled.

Flowers Are Fading

The blossoms that sprang to life
Under the winds of hope are fading
As words dry on the parched lips
And tears well up again in the eyes.

Courage still waits at the door
And the will to act is asleep yet
There is a choice one must make
Whatever the cost or we shall perish.

If we bend our knee all the time
Before malice insolent and vile
We have no right to win this battle
Between the evil and the good.

To yield to insensate authority
Of age and relationship of blood
Will mean we become abettors
In this crime of shame and slander.

It was Gandhi who taught us
Truth should be gentle as a flower
And even so, harder than steel
Gentle in compassion, unbreakable in faith.

Truth is nothing flabby nor obese,
Its muscles bend but never break
There is a brand of spirituality,
Born and bred in the mire of compromise.

There is a philosophy of morals
Shaped out of the wax of surrender
Both are blights killing the soul
Making a show of courage and fortitude.

These are the worms on blossoms
Making them wilt and fade away
As brave words dry on the lips
And spread the scourge deep within.

Dear God Stand sentinel ever
At the great white gateway of our souls;
Do not let us falter nor faint
Under the scorching fire of evil and hate.

The Deep Smile of Compassion

I opened the green silken curtains
Of my little shrine of Ambika
And as usual touched Her lotus feet
And looked into Her eyes reverently.

A tremour shook my body and mind
As I saw emanating from Her divine eyes
A golden gleam of benediction
Penetrating the inner recess of my mind.

What a gleam it really was,
The purest alloy of compassion and love
For the devotee whose head touched
The two blossoms of her pearly feet.

I do not know—how do I know
Why today of all these days
Her smile swept through me
Like the magic ray of a golden hope !

Ambika, my beloved Goddess gracious,
How did I become your devotee,
Humble as the dust before thee
My adoring lips on thy lotus feet?

Your portrait is inside my shrine
But you are inside my soul
I see your image in all things
In every blade of grass and hills.

In every grain of sand
In everything that fills the earth
You are in the stars above
And in every throb of my mind.

Thou art my joy and my hope,
Thou art my deep longings,
And every pulsing aspiration
That beckons me ever onward.

All beauty and truth are in Thee.
You are my ocean of compassion
You are the highest peak
The spirit wishes to climb

Gracious Queen of my soul
Grant me from time to time
The same golden flash of a smile
Which today gave me the holy thrill

One smile on Thy Divine lips
And every sorrow will vanish
Like mist before the sun;
Your smile will my life renew.

It Is A Dull Day

There are bright days and dull days,
Bright sunshine and the sky a deep blue,
Birds twittering and flowers aflame,
And lambs leaping among their mothers

Suddenly a day can come with nothing
To cheer our minds and bring
Sullen clouds and chill winds
And sad thoughts filling our minds

Let us not react in ordinary ways
To these lights and shadows of our days
Let us cheer up when the sky is dark
And not be swept away by any the glitter of the track

Nature and life are intertwined
Nature is not always wise
Nor life without slipper sand
Let us face both with unflinching courage.

Today is a dull day nevertheless
The senses are not vibrant
And the chilled mind mirthless
All life remains dark and silent

I search all around me
And seek also deep within
But nowhere do I find a reason
Nor does any wisdom raise a voice

Away then every weakness of mind
Every shadowy thought or doubt
Give a kick with all your might
To dismal forebodings of every kind.

Pull up the dull day by the hair
Splash a jug of water on its face
And land a blow on its nose
And sing a song in its ear.

And then the dull day will vanish
And the sun will shine again
The birds will twitter away
And our minds will fill with joy.

An Old Man On His Way

Courage, old man, falter not yet,
There are more milestones to cover still
Keep firm and steady on your feet
As with effort you climb your last hill.

Do not look behind for a moment,
Your past was bright and vibrant
With many a vital thought and deed
And you need entertain no regrets indeed.

This last venture on your hands,
With time swiftly in flight
And with undiscovered resources
Can challenge your every effort.

But courage old man, falter not
Even if it is a leap into the dark,
Let faith sustain you and hope fail not
As slowly and step by step your way you trek.

The light beckoning you onward,
Is a mighty light that never will fail,
Cling to it with all your will
And put in it all your trust as you go forward

Your master's steps you will see
As you march on the way he himself trod
And this voice will call you onward
Giving every moment his unfailing guidance

He did produce many beckoning lights
Even in the darkness of seeming defects,
He did light the lamps of hope
Even when around him every hope had gone.

Let me light my little lamp
From that beacon light of his spirit,
And snatch the echo of hope undying
From the voice the world has so oft heard.

I shall to spread his message strive
As long as my life does last,
And bear witness to his mighty spirit
Whatever be the unpredictable sequence.

For success I do not ask nor pray,
I seek only to walk on the thorny way
He trod with bleeding feet on his own way,
Till cruel bullets for ever put his life away.

On the death of a Kitten

You were so small and pretty
And playful the live long day
You sat or slept on my lap
Even when off I threw you in a lump.

We took you from the road
But you rode into our hearts
As though you had all the time lived
On the warmth of our kitchen fires

We learnt to love you
And your purring pranks
Though oft we found you
Irksome in your ways.

We warned you many a time
Our big brown dog was no play mate,
And you would or could not understand
He was determined to see you dead;

Dead with his big cruel bites.
He waited for his chance
To get you alone and away,
And thus achieve his fell purpose

You were a fool my pet
To run to the big watching dog,
Thinking to play with the beast,
You did not know how vile was he.

He caught and chewed your head
Before you knew his intent,
And when I saw you at last
You were silent and dead.

We almost wept for you
Even as we kicked hard
The big and murderous dog,
But it was all too late.

We took your little body
And buried you in the pit
Of the growing banana plant
And covered you with good earth.

And so my little kitten
You came to us from "nowhere":
And has now gone for ever
To the same strange "nowhere".



That Dr G. Ramachandran had interest in poetry and music has been known to all his friends and admirers but that he could compose poems of exquisite quality and beauty was perhaps known only to those who were very close to him, for he never gave any of his poems for publication. It goes to the credit of Sister Mythili, a dedicated soul of great virtues and talents, who found a large number of occasional poems in the diaries of Dr G. R. What the reader will see in this collection is a selection of a few of them and we should be grateful to Dr G. R. who kindly permitted the printing of these poems.

There cannot be any doubt that the lovers of poetry will get from these poems a glimpse of the tremendous creative powers of a genius whose vision of life was permeated with an unusual element of understanding, sympathy and compassion—qualities we see only in great souls.