

# Suspended



# Animation



*poetry by*

VASANTHI  
VASUDEV





*...a word, a smile, a bond, a wound; maybe a grief or a joy;  
a memory, a hope, a wish, a dream; why, even a fear or a  
doubt.....the spark is lit.*

In my eventful journey, on many a day, this spark kindles and grows. My insides glow for hours; compelling, urgent and I can take it no more. I douse the flames in verse and then, empty as vacuum, I drench in the effervescence of expression! I bask in its comfort even while a new fire is being stoked and passion yields to poem.

Today is a golden day in my life. I am immensely thankful for the supreme cosmic blessing that has made this book happen. And that too, today, the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2020, on the eleventh death anniversary of my beloved mother. Today is also the birthday of my precious gift, my son, Lalith.

I dedicate this book of poems to the memory of my parents, Padma and Lakshmanan, who gave me unending, unconditional love. In their love, I grew confident to express myself and daring to dream far, wide and high!

My dear son, even as a child, encouraged me to 'be myself' to take up my cause and supported me whenever I wished to 'choose' my life. And, from his wife, Rupa, I learnt how to love and accept myself with all my foibles and failings!

Much of my writing stems from all these traits which are now so much 'me', and so, this book is for them all.

Walking hand in hand with me in selecting the poems was my dear friend Saraswathi Srinivasan who has always stood by me in my endeavours. Thank you, Saras.

I feel very privileged that a few of my distinguished friends and well-wishers: Shreekumar Varma, the much celebrated poet and writer; S Ram Mohan, reputed bureaucrat, philosopher& writer;



T.T. Srinath, well known personal growth and organization consultant, writer and stage actor, Vijay K. Iyer, eminent public health expert; A.V. Rajagopalan, management expert and indologist; all of them, much feted for their talent, erudition and excellence have shared their insights and views on this anthology. I am deeply beholden to them for their interest and effort in journeying with me through my poems.

The 'fragrance' of my verse comes from Meena's beautiful flowers and art work. I feel so fortunate that she gave so much of herself in the design of this book. God bless you, Meena.

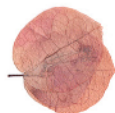
Poetry, they say, is for pleasure.

I leave you with this sincere wish.....

Vasanthi Vasudev  
Chennai 14.7.2020



# Words from friends



The first poem *Will You Let Me?* sets the tone. A reaching out with compassion and understanding that is almost like the poet reaching out to her reader, reiterating, “*I’m there*”

The very next poem turns that compassion into righteous anger, an almost unconscious reaching out to help that surprises the poet herself.

Vasanthi Vasudev’s poems are reflections, mostly on her own relationship with the world, with those who are close, as well as with strangers. The poems seem to be a slow, thoughtful coming to terms with the “*silvery webs*” of these “*fragile relationships*”. The poems in the collection are of varying lengths, some of them short and telling. Others are long, with short lines. And yet others with a burgeoning thought expanding the poem to its (often open-ended) conclusion. The free verse works better than the efforts to rhyme, as though her words are wary of being manipulated.

Relationships cover so much else as well. “*The mighty oak*” and its “*tendrils*”, the “*tinkling anklet and the silky foot*” in one instance, and the “*undue haste*” of death in “*laying hands on unloved life*” in another.

The collection is titled *Suspended Animation*. There is a breathlessness that pervades the book, encompassing waiting components of a relationship, ritual in a Kerala temple, random everyday rituals and the poet’s overseeing eyes that watch and let things be, commenting, often yearning, knowing that things will still be. This is a sensitive collection of poems that looks around and sees depth and variety.

Shreekumar Varma

Shreekumar Varma is a well known and much feted author, playwright, newspaper columnist and poet.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shreekumar\\_Varma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shreekumar_Varma)

Going through a beautiful anthology of poems by Dr Vasanthi Vasudev has been an exhilarating experience. As Mary Siegrist has mentioned in one of her writings, it is *'something that has been sung- that I have long wanted sung'*. This is as it should be. A more sincere tribute I know not. Dr Vasanthi, in her poems, has expressed the divine flutters which were wanting to blossom from her heart.

The collection presents a veritable plethora of emotions and ideas, the peaks and abyss, in the journey of her soul. In her journey, the whole world is a companion; nothing is alien. The verse seems to carry the 'Promethean spark' inside, with depth, creativity, elevation and aspiration. The uniqueness of expression, the power and clarity speak volumes on her expressive abilities. Like a sculptor of words, she is fully aware of the 'God in man'. As Poet Blake has said, *"she turned her face to where her whole soul seeks"*. It is this that endows the poems with such dignity, force, clarity, and profundity; that invests them with power; like the flight of the eagle to its chosen goal.

I savoured in my days of splendid solitude, each and every word of this unique work of creation. If I really want to write a preface it would need several pages to do full justice to this beautiful piece of creativity. I have just attempted to epitomize my inner response to a few samples of this lovable anthology.

The poem, *A Touch of Flower*, presents a beautiful mystic idea. On reading this, I am reminded of the transcendental sense of wonder in the 'Nasadiya Sukta' of the Rigveda, where the Rishi looks with a great sense of wonder at the entire creation. These lines reflect this:

*"who has made  
these gorgeous carpets  
in such divine shapes  
with such divine hues?"*



While reading this poem, I was transported truly to a surreal world.



While a sorrow-ridden poem like *Wicked Haste* validates the statement that 'our sweetest poems are those which talk about our saddest thoughts,' the beautiful word- sculpting in the poem *You and I* virtually transports us to a blissful world of mysterious love, like the bridal mysticism of the Alvars or of infinite love like Emily Dickinson.

The collection starts on a loving and positive note, *Will you Let Me?*. Each couplet ends with an assurance, "I'm there"; the poem ending with a confident declaration: "After all, I am there!" Dr Vasanthi's exemplary ability to metamorphose herself into totally different roles is amazing. In the *The Ode to Thavil Kalikaaran* she effortlessly slips into different and mutually exclusive roles like that of a dancer with Tulsi- packed plaits, the house keeper, the flower girl and then, finally becoming the Thavil itself! It is a fascinating poem-a model for poetic creativity.

Another beautiful piece is *Matchless Moments*, where waves of scintillating imageries flow in quick succession.

In contrast to the soft- breeze of lovely poems which takes the reader to the summit of joy, she also succeeds, in a great measure, in presenting sorrowfully pulsations as in *The Wound*; but that too, ends in an optimistic note, promising "flying into a woundless morrow"! Her beautiful, realistic pen-portraits present, in a different genre, poems like ' *Examinations*, where the successive mental modifications of a candidate in an examination hall are captured.

Of totally different variety is the poem, *The Quest*, whose profound content reminds me of the great book, "Milind Panna" which presents the dialogue between the Parthian king Menander and Bhikshu Nagasena.

Another beautiful pen-portrait is presented in *The Cold Nest*, where the poet enters into the skin of the mother-bird and describes the innermost feelings of motherliness, when the child, on coming of age, has flown away to a distant land. The poem,

with powerful emotional content, reflects the feelings of almost all our mothers whose children have flown away in search of greener pastures.

The poet bids temporary farewell to the reader the poem appropriately titled *Suspended Animation* and we eagerly await the end of the suspense for the next beautiful volume to come.

Dr S Ram Mohan IRAS (Rtd)

Editor- Mountain Path and Ramanodhayam  
Co-director- Sarasvati Research Centre- Chennai  
<https://www.thepeninsula.org.in/s-rammohan/>



Like a painting that makes you stop before it, a painting left by the artist for me to look at, to enter into and build from there; like the first prompting of tale yet untold waiting for me to write along with her, Vasanthi's poems draws me to her. She asks if 'I will let her,' and again before I can answer I find she sits beside me and holds my hand. My hand aches because there is pain I have not attended to and she soothes it. Such is the effect.

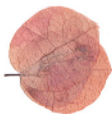
The animation is alive and my emotions are no more suspended but palpable and throbbing. If you are alone and need a friend to listen to you please pick up a copy of *Suspended Animation* and you will know you are not alone.

T.T. Srinath PhD

Personal growth and organizational consultant; author, stage actor; a close friend of Vasanthi Vasudev.  
<http://www.ttsrinath.com/>  
<http://www.amazon.in/author/T.T.Srinath>







It is an unbridled delight to write a foreword to this anthology of poems by Vasanthi Vasudev. The richness of the material and the beautifully adorned pages render this an effortless task.

Vasanthi writes in so many styles that it could be carelessly oversimplifying to assign her poetry to a particular genre. However, it would be safe to observe, that her work teems with bounteous and evocative imagery at every step, that the force of passion is invariably rumbling under the surface where it is not overtly in explosion and that Nature is omnipresent in myriad forms and metaphors, be it as the sea, sand, moon, flowers, birds or other, throughout her poetry.

There are some themes that she visits more often, such as mysticism, romantic love and parenthood (the latter particularly given the dedication of this book), but the range of emotions she uses to explore them is wide, from utterly devoted love in *Ode to the Thavil kalikaaran*, to restless disquiet in *Integration*, to bleak despair in *The Cold Nest*, to biting anger in *Wicked Haste* and to dispassionate abstraction in *The Quest*. There is often an undercurrent of emotions transforming, from grimness to gaiety and from joy to despair. And she does not shrink from the grisly, portraying the past as ugly sores that might inscribe her epitaph “upon the tomb with lethal claws”, nor is she afraid of the highbrow – her *What are You To Me?* is served up like a string of koans that could find their way into a philosophy book.

Vasanthi writes predominantly in free verse (except for *Knowing Rupa*, which is written in rhyming stanzas), a style that allows her free scope for rich and complex images. This means that although her poems may be short, they cannot be rushed through. They have to be sipped slowly – and over and over – so that the varied imagery and meaning can take root in the reader’s soul.

I could go on, but the impatient reader will not be served well if I do. I will end with one last tip – watch out for a surprise ending in quite a few of the poems!

Vijay K. Iyer

Poetry is considered as the song of the soul. There is no room for pretensions or dialectical arguments. It is an honest unburdening of the soul. Period. It is more a communication between two souls rather than between two thinking individuals.

Doctor Vasanthi should be complimented for bringing out certain profound emotions in human relations for the readers to react and relate. She captures a variety of human interactions under familiar circumstances. The interesting feature is the very familiar backdrop of the events and characters that are portrayed. As the famous poet Keats rightly sums up, poetry 'should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance'. In her work, one is often trapped into the autobiographical mode and that is exactly where she scores.

In her poem Integration, we realise how often we fall away from humanity and are not even very sure of our reasons for the emotional distancing. As the author wonders

*"But it was fear? Maybe arrogance? Or was it, ego? 'I' was separate From 'WE' and 'ALL'."*

Surely this needs to be explored. Life looks hopelessly poised amidst a hostile mob, reminding us of Homer's lament in *The Odyssey*.

*'Of all creatures that breathe and move upon the earth,  
nothing is bred that is weaker than man.'*

But a helping hand manifests from nowhere, and soon the entire picture changes. Hopes revive and humanity is saved. The force of this healing act has a phenomenal effect. They are now. "Connected; intimate; Inseparable from the cosmic sea of collective consciousness!" The reader heaves a sigh of relief. Particularly in this hour of the Pandemic, this is a soothing sensation.



The philosophical touch in *What Are You To Me?* explains the seriousness of the poet in reviewing relationships. This has been the strong point of Indian poetry. One could see this thought process in the works of Kalidasa, Bhasa and, in the poetry of

Kamban in Tamil. Truly one has to reserve the nobler side of what we perceive to be penned down as poetry.

The gentle and ubiquitous Thavilkaran walks into the poems and takes us through a journey of a romantic relationship with which I, with my rustic background, could relate with ease. This character is generally forgotten in the reckless speed of modern life. It is pleasing to see a deeper than normal reaction to this artist. I feel for him; and I applaud the poet.

A poet cannot separate herself from sorrow. This has been the main focus of poems all over the world. While the emotion is familiar, each poet has a unique way of unburdening his or her thoughts in their own and special style. We can enjoy these lines in *Last Love*.

*'She beheld the face at hand And then, a long, hot tear  
Suddenly jumped and rolled ... Hugged and kissed  
The 'dead' face! Just a trifle too late!'*



*I see you* is an uncomplicated poem on the relationship between the mother and the daughter. A nice way to remember mothers at different stages of life is captured poetically with subtle emotions. Chronologically it takes us through the different stages of the daughter from a kid to a middle ager but it has tremendous relevance at each point of time. It is a sweet poem that is thoroughly enjoyable.

Well, we could pen several more thoughts on these lines. To sum it up I can say that the success of the poet is in her ability to convey both the common and the complicated shades of human relationships in a free-flowing straight forward manner, that takes away some of the myths of poetry writing. The poet had apparently followed her mother's advice "*Don't go over People's heads. There's always a beauty in simplicity.... When the brain's not going all dizzy!*" (*I see you*)

Yes, that is the strength of these poems. Simple yet powerful; not going over people's heads, yet stuffing them with enough thought

to chew.

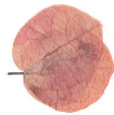
I wish her well and look forward to the next volume of poems from her.

**Dr A.V. Rajagopalan**

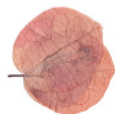
Formerly, Dean T.A.Pai Institute of Management  
Indologist and Sanskrit Scholar



# Contents



1. Will You Let Me?	1
2. Integration	3
3. Webs	6
4. The Arrival	8
5. Knowing Rupa	9
6. The Morning Smile	12
7. Winged Out	13
8. What Are You To Me	15
9. Wicked Haste	18
10. The Distant Walk	20
11. You and I	21
12. A Touch of Flower	23
13. The Wait	25
14. Dear Mum	28
15. Ode to the Thavil kalikaaran	31
16. Pearled Pain	33
17. Matchless Moments	36
18. I See You	37
19. The Jigsaw Puzzle	41
20. The Wound	43
21. Examinations	45



22. The Reversal	47
23. Harmony	50
24. The Quest	51
25. Summer Dawns	54
26. Bethrotal	57
27. The Cold Nest	59
28. The Singer	61
29. The Night is Long	64
30. About Turn	67
31. Last Love	70
32. On That Day	72
33. Rebirth	74
34. The Players	76
35. Suspended Animation	78
36. Refuge	80
37. Altar Flowers	82
38. Of Walking on Plains	84
39. There Were Times	86
40. A Plea	89







## 1. Will You Let Me?

O' Friend,

When your burdened shoulders stoop,  
Let me gently pat them saying:  
"I'm there".

When your strained hands ache,  
Let me firmly clasp them saying:  
"I'm there".

When your weary eyelids droop,  
Let me slowly awaken them saying:  
"I'm there".

When your parched lips pout in pain,  
Let me caress and moist them saying:  
"I'm there".

When your tired feet stop,  
Let me walk along in step, saying:  
"I'm there".

When your aching bosom mutely cries,  
Let me wipe the unshed tear saying:  
"I'm there".





When your bruised body burns in fatigue,  
Let me embalm it with an embrace, saying:  
“After all, I’m there!”.





## 2. Integration

I sat alone  
On the platform.  
Trains came  
And they left...  
I saw faces many  
Knew not I, any.

I felt strange  
Even a little fearful...  
Why?  
Was it their unfamiliar nature?  
The people? Or the place?  
Who were they?  
Were they different from me?  
Yes and No.  
Not really, yet, very.

They were humans like me,  
Yet I did not feel a part of them.  
Social conditioning had taught me  
The dictum...  
'Familiarity is safe  
Known faces are friends.'  
'Stay away', they warned,  
'From the dangers of the unknown!'



I was lost and rootless;  
Caught in the traps of my clichéd past.  
I struggled to break free,  
To smile in friendship  
To the faces by my side.

But it was fear?  
Maybe arrogance?  
Or was it, ego?  
'I' was separate  
From 'WE' and 'ALL'.  
I held back  
Conscious of  
Black and white!

Suddenly,  
All hell broke loose.  
In twinkling time  
I was in the thick 'RED'  
Of mayhem  
Amidst a crowd of 'COOLIES'

Drunken calves  
Swung in action.  
Shoulders knocked,  
Arms locked.  
Necks craned,  
Shrieking fear,  
Screaming pain.

And then,  
My voice barked  
Loud and bold  
Soaked in empathy  
For the victim  
Spewing anger at the victor.



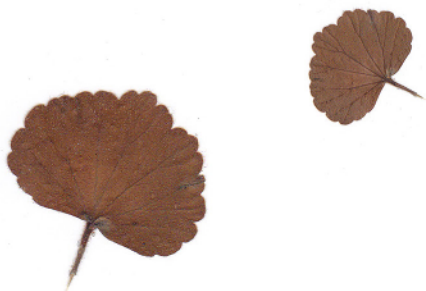
“Oh stop- Do stop!”  
As my ‘unfamiliar voice ‘  
Rent the air,  
Dead silence was born.

A dozen eyes challenged...  
“Who are you ?!”  
Angry stares  
Firmly riveted on  
My two hands-  
Firm and strong  
That tugged the victim  
On to his feet.

The old man  
Dragged himself to a stand,  
Leaning frail  
On my Will and bone.  
At once!  
All friction ceased.  
Voices were lost, and  
Heads bowed in shame.

At that split second,  
I became  
A floating particle  
Riding the wave of humanity.  
Connected; intimate;  
Inseparable  
From the cosmic sea  
Of  
Collective consciousness!

The dazed, bent figure  
Stayed frozen  
Holding tight, my arm;  
Eyes, singing  
A prayer  
Of gratitude.





### 3. Webs

Like spiders that ooze themselves  
To weave waxy webs and crawl carefully  
To be secure in their insecure creations,  
I too, am caught  
In mazy webs of hazy relationships

Webs and webs....  
Woven maybe  
With threads of unexplained empathy  
Soaked in emotion  
Made taut with compassion and tinted with pain.

The webs are woven  
In magical haste  
By strange spiders that encircle me  
Before I can fly past them.  
And lo! I'm dragged into their critical cores.

For these spiders,  
The web's a solace, a comfort, a joy even!  
But I drown in  
Currents of endemic conflict  
Infinite confusion, hopeless uncertainty!



And yet... an irony!  
I wish to be a spider  
That panics in the web for beyond....  
Looms large.... a vacuum ..a purposeless monotony.

Day breaks dry and bitter  
On empty horizons into numb darkness  
And I like the spiders,  
Shiver and scuttle, rise and fall...  
In the silvery webs of fragile relationships.



The page is decorated with several dried, pressed pink leaves of various shapes and sizes, scattered across the white background. Some leaves are whole, while others are partially cut or overlapping. The leaves have a delicate, veined texture and a soft, muted pink color.

## 4. The Arrival

You came  
Into my life  
Like the first raindrop  
That awakens the rose-bud.

You tip-toed  
Into my heart  
Like the gentle music  
That wafts into the soul.

You appeared  
In my eye  
Like the steadfast pole star  
That directs the blues.

You embraced me  
Like the rainbow  
With a bouquet  
Of colourful moods.

And as in a dream, you  
Suddenly drowned me  
In the sparkling cascades  
Of unending love!



## 5. Knowing Rupa

Clad in dusky hues  
Or in Indigo blues  
Perched on glassy stiletto heel  
She maintains such even keel!



Poised with much élan  
Cheery; so far from forlorn  
A perky, chiselled face  
Diffidence without a trace!

For clothes she has a flair  
Stylish in every wear  
Choosy and so full of care  
To be clumsy, don't you dare!!



Razor sharp wit  
Spewing vehement grit  
She's bound to her view  
Can't say it's never true!

Her interests are plenty  
Fill her ten to twenty  
Her fingers are so green  
Plants bloom without a preen!



Amazing's her home décor  
Home care's never a chore  
Sincere to the core  
Quests 'Quality' and more!

Colourful salads to toss  
She needs never a boss  
And Lo! If she's not miffy  
She'll bake muffins in a jiffy!

Styling for a shoot  
Easy as gray in a coot  
She makes it picture perfect  
Well! What can be her secret?

Talents, she has so many  
It's confusing to pick any  
She twirls as she is about to bake  
And wonders, "What am I doing with a cake?"

*"Don't I love to fly a plane?  
But now it's too late to train!  
I love to draw and to paint  
And to remake the old without a taint!"*

*"What shall I do? Which shall I drop?  
Should I jump, skip or hop?  
Why do have to make up my mind?  
You forget that I am one of a kind!"*

Indeed! She is quite rare  
Under her cross is a care  
She loves values ancient  
With what's trending, she's proficient!



Passions run fast and deep  
Cares for loved ones even in sleep  
Friendships are for ever to keep  
So just trust and watch her leap!

This is Rupa, as loving as a daughter  
Real; and not someone foster  
I've gotten to know her without a falter  
And feel so good that I have got her!





## 6. The Morning Smile

The list is long  
The goal is many steps away.  
The light is dim and way forward, inscrutable.  
When lo! As though from the heavens  
A new road appears  
And two strong hands walk along.  
In the warmth of the clasp  
My steps become sure.  
And I look beyond the mist  
Into the morning smile.





## 7. Winged Out

When you  
Were born from me  
You became a reality.  
Yes. You became One  
We became Two...  
Yet....  
You burst and bloomed  
And engulfed  
My reality  
And I, THEN,  
Was the center  
Of yours.  
Our realities  
Merged...  
Like day  
That fades into night  
Like night  
That floats into day.

Yours whispers  
Were my dreams.  
Your hope  
My future.  
Your words  
My prayer.  
Your tunes  
My goals.



Since then  
Winged time  
Has flown afar  
Beyond spaces visible.  
And your realities  
Have shifted ground.  
Your time,  
Your thoughts,  
Efforts, energies,  
Directions, destinations,  
Your affiliations, priorities  
Are unbelievably changed.

I choke in gloomy strangeness  
Gape at growing distance  
Breathe into swollen airs  
That weather unknown faces  
In strange landscapes.

Yet, Oh yet!  
I do linger....  
Yes, Oh yes!  
I wish to remain....  
Like the undying shadow  
Persisting.... Resisting...  
Hanging nervously,  
Clinging ...holding on  
Desperately to nostalgias trail  
Of blurred realities...  
Realities of  
Yours & Mine  
Refusing  
To be brushed away  
To be winged out  
From the now fragmented realities  
Of You  
Of and Me...!





## 8. What Are You To Me?

The tender tendril asked the mighty oak

“Are you my strength?”

The dazzling sunflower asked the burning sun

“Are you my guide?”

The rising wave asked the milky moon

“Are you my inspiration?”

The gleaming raindrop asked the dusty earth

“Are you my destination?”

The floating feather asked the flowing wind

“Are you my cradle?”

The hanging fruit asked the bending bough

“Are you my protector?”

The flaming flower asked the springing fragrance

“Are you my identity?”

The uncaged bird asked the limitless sky

“Are you my freedom?”

The sonorous song asked the lilting tune

“Are you my melody?”

The golden harp asked the taut string

“Are you my symphony?”

The dreamy eye asked the clinging memory

“Are you my consciousness?”

The lighting lip asked the sparkling smile

“Are you my beauty?”

The tinkling anklet asked the silky foot

“Are you my anchor?”

The youthful mother asked the newborn life

“Are you my pride?”

The excited child asked the ephemeral bubble

“Are you my joy?”

The drunken painter asked the visage on the canvas

“Are you my soul?”



The nervous gambler asked the unknown future

“Are you my prayer?”

The devout pilgrim asked the anointed idol

“Are you my creator?”

The questing philosopher asked the fleeting moment

“Are you eternity?”

The doubting ‘self’ asked itself

“Are you an illusion?”

And, the candle asked the flame

“Are you my hope?”

And night asked day

“Are you my life?”

And then, she asked him

“Are you my beloved?”



Hearing no reply, they all hummed

In choral refrain...

“Whatever you are to me, let me forever give you  
‘MY ALL’”







## 9. Wicked Haste

Like the morning star  
Burnt by the tropical sun

Like the wet sand castle  
Scattered by the bullying kick

Like the late leaf  
Yellowed in autumnal dryness

Like the throbbing rose-bud  
Throttled on the oily plait

Your cruel embrace  
Has crushed youthful hope

Severed the rising kite  
Even before it flew into life

Burst the bubble  
Ere it could gleam with rainbow

O dastardly death!  
Have you tired



Of feeding on bony torsos?

Do you now hunger  
For supple flesh?

Greedy for virgin mate  
Wanting to stretch on velvet thighs?

Rest your head  
On silken ringlets?

Look into mirrors  
Of dreamy eyes?

Anoint your coarseness  
With juicy youth?

Can no force  
Chide your covetousness?  
Refine your perversion  
Lull your lurid lust?

Can no power  
Curse your cowardice?

Can no one  
Stop your undue haste  
Or  
Halt you...  
From laying hands  
On unlived life?





## 10. The Distant Walk

It was the same mud track  
The evening quite like any other..  
Cacophonous birds coming home to rest  
He was on the track on the other side  
We stood apart  
Distanced by green lawns and destiny!

My heart skipped a beat when I glanced at him.  
In age old habit? Perhaps.  
I recalled how I had romped across the green  
To greet him  
To share a happening  
Else, coordinate an evening.  
Or had walked backwards to meet him  
Halfway on the circular track  
To restore fragile harmony.

But now, I stood like a lump  
And he was just another figure  
On the track; best not tracked.  
Lest memories of togetherness  
Locked forever in forgotten time  
Fly open and hang hopelessly  
Unable to live life  
Backwards, or to move on  
To distancing futures!



## 11. You and I

You will stride  
Along azure shores  
And I will tip-toe into your steps  
On time less sands.

You will gather and hold  
Handfuls of foam  
And I will pick them bubble by bubble  
To hang down my chest

You will write  
About endless dark waves  
And I will print accolades in red and gold  
Upon the lighting horizons.

You will quiver gently  
In the cool breeze  
And I will quickly wrap the shawl of my warmth  
From some distant shore.

You will sit on wet sands  
In pensive solitude  
And I will rush in hope to speak to you  
In the song of the waves.

You will count your moments  
Shell after shell  
And I will lock your memory  
In every grain of sand

You will search for me  
Beyond infinite waves  
And I will wait for you  
Before every silver swirl  
At sea till infinity.





## 12. A Touch of Flower

Do Heavens  
Descend upon Earth  
Do they else,  
Grow from it?

Who has made  
These gorgeous carpets  
In divine shapes  
With such silken hues?

Why do we  
Delight in their gaze;  
Grow saintly  
In their touch?

Has the red Sylvia  
Run away  
With all  
Our rage?

Has every fear  
Been lost  
To the sun bright  
Calendula?

Why does not  
The ravishing Rose  
Make me green  
With deadly envy?

Are these flowers  
Magical lights  
That show how  
To live in harmony?  
Lead strife - torn minds  
Down milky ways  
Of  
Peace?  
Make angels  
Of demons  
Humans  
Of savages?  
Melt all wickedness  
With tender touch?  
Mould material maniacs  
Into sublime souls?  
Poised on perfumed petals,  
Cradle childlike man  
With care?  
Bathe him  
In compassion?  
Feed bestial hunger  
With endless love?  
Plant verdant boughs  
On Life's sand-dunes?  
Trade nightmares  
For Dreams?  
Weave amity  
From hatred?  
Give joy  
For grief  
And  
Let hope flower  
On  
Barren doom?!



## 13. The Wait

The unborn life  
In its creator's womb,  
For a ray of light  
Unknowingly waits.

The pigtailed child  
Castles in radiant eyes,  
For her birthday gift  
Impatiently waits.

The bespectacled youngster  
Questions in mind,  
For his progress report  
Hopefully waits.

The doe-eyed beauty  
With fluttering breath,  
For her beloved's kiss  
Longingly waits.

The unemployed youth  
With craving interiors,  
For his interview call  
Apprehensively waits.





The rejected bride  
Her fallen face in prayer,  
For her groom's love  
Nervously waits.

The expectant mother  
A song on her rosy lips,  
For her bonny child  
Proudly waits.

The aging maiden  
Vain hope winged on fantasy,  
For her long-lost love  
Fervently waits.

The weary woman  
Burdens weighing her heart,  
For her drunken husband  
Fearfully waits.

The vanquished man  
Aching with brutal memories,  
For a change of luck  
Desperately waits.

The wasted body  
Sored all over  
For sweet death  
Painfully waits.

The enlightened soul  
In tranquil strength,  
For union with the Creator  
Peacefully waits.



They all lie in wait  
Some with hope; some with none.  
And all silently wait  
The long, long wait!





## 14. Dear Mum

In Maths  
I have not seen  
A hundred  
But good traits  
I do have  
A hundred !

Theorems & riders  
Valencies & formulae  
I do not  
Always remember  
But be it your birthday  
Or your medicine  
I seldom fail  
To remember.

I ache to see  
The unshed tear  
In your eye  
And long to see  
Your gentle face  
Light in a smile!

To give a rupee  
To the old lady  
By the road  
I never forget

Or my seat  
To the 'special' child  
I never  
Have to be told !

I remember  
All my friends  
And all my teachers  
The ones  
Who taught me  
And those  
Who never.

I also remember  
The days  
I waited in vain  
To be patted  
For a good deed  
I did to another

Oh Mum  
Why does no one care  
For me  
Who cannot score,  
A centum  
In Maths, Physics or  
Chemistry?

Why does no one  
Count  
The centuries  
I do score



In love, compassion  
Or willing sacrifice?  
Why does everyone count  
The faculties of my mind  
Forgetting verily,  
To value  
The richness of  
My heart and soul?

Oh Mum !  
Why don't  
At least you  
Be different  
From the rest  
And lift up your face  
In pride  
When you behold me  
In your eye?





## 15. Ode to the Thavil kalikaaran

Oh! that you were that Thavil kalikkaran  
Beating temple drums to trebled chants in trembling frenzy  
And I, that ardent devotee  
Who claps in awe at gods who perambulate  
To the throb of your beat.

Oh! that you were that Thavil kalikkaran  
Rushing down slopes  
The marriage procession dancing at your heels  
And I, that water girl with handfuls of coconut water  
To gulp between your gasps.

Oh! that you were that Thavil kalikkaran  
Fingers parched and bruised at day long beat  
And I, that flower girl  
To bandage your palm with champaka petals touched in  
sandal oil.

Oh! that you were that Thavil kalikkaran  
Returning home with Neipayasam  
The offering to the gods  
And I, your home keeper  
Who spreads rose watered leaves for a love fed meal.

Oh! that you were that Thavil kalikkaran  
Rehearsing Talas at moonlight  
And I, that nubile dancer who tip toes to your beat  
My tusli packed plait dancing into the night.

Oh! that you were that Thavil kalikkaran  
And I the Thavil  
That hangs down your chest  
Like a medallion proud  
And waits for your touch.



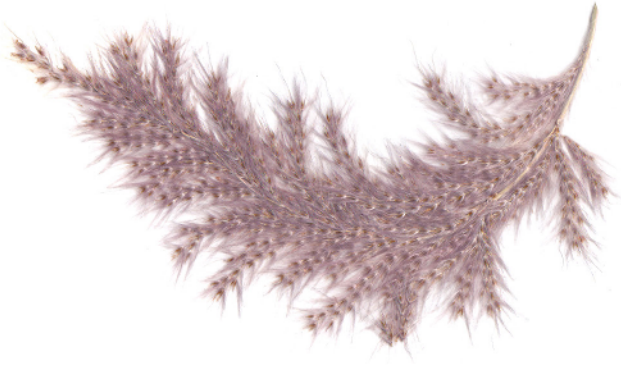
\*Thavil is a percussion instrument and \*thavil kalikaaran is one who plays the thavil

\*champakam is a fragrant deep yellow flower

\*Neipayasam is a kerala sweet famous kerala dessert that is offered to the Gods

\*Talas is beats

\*tusli is Indian holy basil



## 16. Pearled Pain

I dreamt .....  
Of being in love  
Of holding hands  
Toeing footsteps  
Of sweet whispers  
Smiling eyes  
Of fluttering breath  
Surging togetherness.

I collected  
My dreams  
With connoisseurial zeal  
Pearl by pearl  
Through myriad moods  
Moment by moment  
And sealed them safe  
In the treasures  
Of my heart.

My dream chest  
Brimmed and burst  
And prayed  
For a single touch  
To fly open and decorate.



And then.....  
It was touched.  
Not by the  
Gentle kisses  
Of swaying spring  
Not by the  
Timely beats  
Of rhythmic winds.  
But lo !  
By gusty gales  
Screeching heady destruction

The seasoned chest  
Vulnerable in wait  
Surged open  
And emptied itself  
While the  
Storm, ofcourse  
Storm like.....  
Struck hard  
In age old habit.  
And in  
A fleeting second  
An avalanche of pearls  
Tossed and flew  
Into the mad air.



The storm knew not  
How to hold  
Precious pearls  
With dignified grace;  
Thought not of  
Saving them  
With courageous sacrifice.  
In ravaging greed  
Instead,  
The storm  
Laid them waste  
At the altar of destiny

The storm went  
As quickly as it came  
Leaving the empty chest  
Bleeding in pain,  
And the pearls,  
Like crushed petals  
Hung limp  
Everywhere.

Oh! how will  
I gather them  
Once again?  
Fill my chest  
Now battered & holed?  
Pine for those  
Glossy pearls  
That hide  
Painful needles?  
Dare I ever  
Wait for betrayal?  
Long to  
Be in love?  
Why, even  
Care to care  
Any more ?



## 17. Matchless Moments

Tell me, what happens  
What does happen  
When the seeking sun  
Meets the crescent moon.  
When Jasmine pearls  
Soak themselves in dewy night.  
When ceaseless waves  
Gently kiss waiting shores.  
When magical rainbows  
Pierce fluffy clouds.  
When the mountain air  
Intoxicates sober woodlands  
When gusty torrents  
Create torrents  
In serene seas  
When all ice melts  
When new waters  
Rush over  
Old banks.  
When flames fly off candles...  
When castles soar into skies...  
When eyes sparkle in unknown light...  
When lips curl in obtuse smiles...  
When aching hands reach out...  
When hurricanes storm the heart...  
When You  
Meet Me?





## 18. I See You

A child,  
I see you  
Tugging my right plait tight  
As you comb my curly locks  
On the left  
Warning stern reprimand  
Were I to shuffle the least!

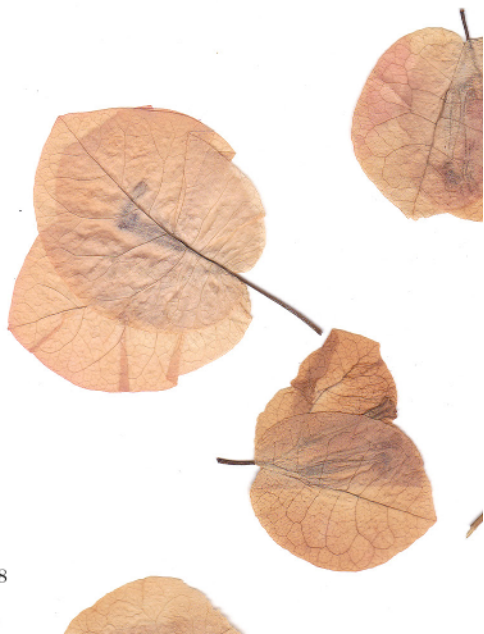
A teenager,  
I see you  
Standing at my desk  
Hot milk in hand  
Eyes on the clock  
Mumbling' ....  
"It's time to sleep  
Too much is too bad  
Be it for head or heart."

A young bride,  
I see you strong, stoic,  
Even when choking sad  
To see me go far away.  
Bidding me farewell  
Holding back welling tears  
With wise words,  
Caution and care.

A young mother,  
I see you beam  
In pride and mirth  
Playing 'pretend' games.  
My son riding his tricycle  
And you, on the swing...  
Making up stories  
And conversations  
That ring into the night!

A young professional,  
I see you  
Reading my writings...  
Chirping valuable insights:  
"Don't go over  
People's heads.  
There's always a beauty  
In simplicity..  
When the brain's not going  
All dizzy!"

Well into my prime,  
I see you  
Victorious in my triumphs  
Insoluble in my trials  
Anxious about my future  
In prayer for my peace.  
Waiting for my return  
By late-night flights  
Eyes drooping,  
Stomach rumbling,  
Yet, hands outstretched  
Sporting a cheery smile



At fifty, in midlife,  
I see you  
'In and out '  
Of hospitals and surgery  
Never a rave' not ever a rant  
Like 'patience on a monument'  
You bore it all.  
Perhaps you wanted  
More time with me  
Just to ensure  
Your little girl  
Has 'grown up'  
And not in trouble be!



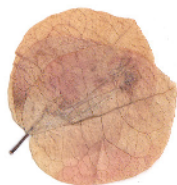
Each growing day  
Now at sixty -five,  
I see you,  
A wonderful gracious  
Guardian angel  
Who bore me in her womb  
For days, two hundred and eighty.  
You raised me every single day  
For twenty thousand and more!



To keep me safe  
You craved and pined;  
Prayed and hoped  
For me to be  
Calm and composed;  
Polite and poised  
Kind and gentle  
Soft spoken and forgiving;  
In every bit,  
Like You!



A decade has passed.  
Yet! For ever do I see you  
In my mental eye,  
Sense you in my veins  
Soak you in my being!  
I Live you  
In my wake  
And in my sleep  
O' Mother, mine,  
Every second, every hour!  
While I wait  
For a pat, a hug  
At least a  
A smile to say:  
"You, I do see!  
And by Lord!  
Do I see ME?"





## 19. The Jigsaw Puzzle

Pieces of life.....  
Squares and triangles  
Rhomboid and circular  
Some shapeless too,  
Holed in meaninglessness  
Lie strewn on paths  
Of unexplored tomorrows.

The picture is hazy  
Like an embryo,  
In the womb of time.  
Years have gone by.....  
Age old quests  
Linger, lone and tired.  
Withered moments,  
Wasted effort,  
Sagging hope!

Herculean it seems...  
To bend and pick  
The lost ones  
One by one  
And, them to fit  
Into new frames!





A picture, once etched  
In the yearning heart  
And woven in dreams  
Of rainbow hues  
To many a lilt  
Of the unsung song!

Will lush paintings  
Decorate anew,  
Whitewashed memories  
Drenched in hope?  
Will time waltz to new gait?  
Will the season of life  
Rejoice in verdant springs?

Would the pieces  
Of broken pasts  
Fix and fit?  
Form new  
Kaleidoscopes?  
And at last,  
Piece together,  
The Jigsaw,  
Of destiny?





## 20. The Wound

Long; very long ago  
I felt a wound.  
The wound  
Has never really healed.

It gapes open its gory eyes  
And I writhe  
In its piercing stare.

Each time the wound's fresh  
The hurt's new found  
The pain's unknown.

You do try  
To seal them with waxy words  
To wash them with gentle tears.

But soon enough  
The ugly sores  
Lift putrefied memories  
From red pages  
Of turbulent history  
And the pain  
Crushes and lingers.

I want to pluck  
Those deep scars  
From my flesh and feed them  
To dead yesterday.

I want to grow new wings  
And fly into  
A woundless morrow.

Before its too late  
Before the wounds  
Inscribe my epitaph  
Upon the tomb  
With lethal claws.





## 21. Examinations

I see a sea of faces  
Seated in immaculate rows  
Numbered in eight digits  
And caged into rooms.

An eerie silence  
Clasps the air  
Even when I can hear  
A thud of weak hearts.

Hands sweep across brows  
They stare into the far away  
They peer across desks  
They close in recollection.

Some bodies are frozen  
Others shuffle and stretch  
Some drop sweat  
Even as rickety fans swirl.

Brave minds ransack brains  
Coward ones curse themselves  
Fleeing memory has to be caught  
And nailed to the cross of victory!

The clock ticks furiously  
Racing hands penning paper  
The invigilator moves away  
And someone nudges frantically.

It's a test of time  
It's a time of test  
Is it a test of life ?  
Has life put them to test?

The bell suddenly rings  
Is it too soon or too late?  
The dead room bursts into life  
And liberated feet walk away.





## 22. The Reversal

He did not stretch them.  
But she bent backwards to hold.  
For solace  
For strength  
His hands for help  
When dithering or in a quandary.

He did not say much.  
But each word penned pages in her mind;  
Read a million in every pause  
Filling every blank  
She figured out his mood and more.

He did not call every hour;  
But his one call,  
Filled the day.  
His chirpy morning voice,  
Dispelled every gloom  
And some new found purpose  
Made her day!

He was not always patient.  
His short-clipped words  
Rent and drenched the heart  
Left her staring in the dark  
At silence.

Yet, nothing changed.  
She still sat in wait  
For the next chat.  
Maybe this would be different?  
After all, it's another day!

Images of the little child  
Running to hold her hand;  
Steps, unsteady...  
Her hands always  
Outstretched and eager!

Sounds of babbling words  
Incoherent, muddled;  
She endeavours to decipher;  
His every wish to fulfil!

A million times,  
He would call;  
And she, dropping everything  
Was instantly  
By his side!

No time was hers;  
He commanded and captured  
Her every minute  
Night or day!

Hot afternoons wearing aprons,  
Baking his favourite cakes;  
Struggling through hours  
For tomorrow's tests  
Teaching the difference  
Between the  $x$  and the  $y$  !



Packing lunch boxes  
With favourite tucks.  
Empathy in the ear,  
Seeing his point of view.  
Supporting his every choice,  
Backing his every decision!

Oh! how!  
Have times changed!  
Circumstances, inverted!  
So different her need  
And his!  
Such reversal!  
O' Damn!  
Blame it not  
As nature's norm,  
For the flesh is weak  
It twinges and chokes!

His growing-up years  
Race vividly in her mind.  
Bringing a glow anew.  
Her silvery hair shines  
As she smiles  
And wonders with a sigh,  
Were I, his child,  
Rather than mother !!"







## 23. Harmony

Two silhouettes in candlelight  
Weave rainbows of togetherness.  
Two pairs of eyes, upon seeing only themselves  
Stare on ... in search of more.  
Two pairs of expectant lips slowly seal  
To talk the tongueless tales of the bosoms.  
Sweet music wafts into the silence  
Sounding accompaniment to the thud of two hearts.  
Two pairs of hands, clasped in gentle strength  
Gain succour in the others soothing warmth.  
Two forms pulsate in enchanted embrace  
While two entranced souls slip into peaceful reunion.  
Two minds soar unfettered into joyful morrows  
But the moment lingers, lingers and hangs  
Frozen in Eternity!



## 24. The Quest

The disciple as the Guru:  
“What is the difference between?  
Love and Wisdom?”

The Guru replied:  
“None. God is all Love and all Wisdom.”

The disciple then asked:  
“Then, can there be  
Wise love and Loving wisdom?”

The Guru replied:  
“Perhaps.... But  
Love is not always wise  
And wisdom is seldom born of love”

The disciple exclaimed:  
“Of course...  
Love surges like unwise waters  
Through turbulent currents  
Traacherous whirlpools...  
Cutting borders  
Crossing barriers  
Breaking bonds  
Drowning banks

With  
Unbridled youth  
Untapped strength  
Indomitable resilience  
Undaunted courage  
Unchartered  
Unchaste  
Unending..."

The Guru nodded in acquiescence.

The delighted disciple proclaimed his discovery:

"Then, Love is blind  
And, Wisdom has sight!  
Love is born of the feeling heart  
While  
Wisdom has the gene of the reasoning mind!  
Love is passionate  
But  
Wisdom is dispassionate!  
Love is Earthy  
But wisdom is divine!  
Therefore:  
Love is the devil  
And  
Wisdom is God!"

The Guru interrupted with firm serenity

"No. God is both wisdom and love!"

God is dispassionately loving

And

Passionately wise!"

The disciple hurriedly queried"

"Then, what is Man... wise of loving?"



The Guru clarified:  
"Man, like God is both wisdom and love  
But...  
Man is passionately loving  
Only  
Dispassionately wise!"

The disciple, baffled at the seeming paradox  
Pondered in inward quest, asking:  
"Am I man or God?  
Can I become God?"

While, the Godly Guru  
Knowingly smiled on.





## 25. Summer Dawns

Blood chilling cold!  
Bones break in ache.  
Brittle nights  
Cut cores  
Numbed in  
Freezing loneliness!  
And the bleak soul, weeps.

In sudden spurt  
The song of Spring  
Wakes open  
Eyes drowned  
In wintry tears.  
And the dawn breaks  
In warmth anew.

The cuckoo sparks  
Rainbows in the heart  
And million dew drops  
Embalm wounds of yore.

New life sprouts forth  
Breaking free at last  
From morasses, many...  
So ugly and clogged.



The air is light....  
Hopes race past  
Hideous shadows of pain.  
New waters  
Rush over  
Gaping chasms,  
Building bridges  
Strong and steadfast!

Days of spring  
Happy and feisty,  
Warm into crisp Summer.  
The mango, green,  
Glowing ripe, and yellow.  
The sun of friendship  
Now shines bright and certain  
Over banyan swings  
That rock to tinkling feet!  
And lo!  
Ruckus laughter's everywhere,  
Heralding trumpets  
Of processions, galore!

Oh! How the season of life has changed!  
From wretched solitude  
And dreary nights  
To dreamy mornings  
Awaiting celebration!  
Ringing in new life,  
For you and me!  
O! Can't you see?  
How unending winter,  
In a twinkle, has yielded,  
To summer, so full of joy!  
And all of spring  
Just breezed past  
In a scurry,



While we stood  
Lost to all!  
Ever so still,  
Locked in  
Love's  
Magical pill!





## 26. Betrothal

Betel leaves, luscious fruits, candy sugar  
Sandal paste seeping into ornate silver...

Jasmine scent, rose garlands, rustling silks  
Bursting cacophony, gauging looks, sneering nudges...

Somber old men all wise and prim  
Spread out fine in ghost white lines...

Deep throated pundits  
Chanting to moneyed time...

In comes "He" like a splash in ruckus gait  
And hijacks all lime light...

In twinkling time I am herded  
Into the thick of strange faces...

Two strong hands nail me firmly  
Besides my `future`.

I smell into his manliness  
And tingle in mystery.  
My head, in bridal bow  
Remains fixed at his hairy feet...



A slap of moist sandal  
On nervous cheeks regains my consciousness.

I'm draped in new fabric  
And at firm signals  
I demurely drop at unknown feet....  
And rise up to a new found life.

All at once I metamorphose  
And float helplessly...  
Between my past and my future....

I am transfixed  
Juxtaposing dreams and nightmares  
I swing behind illusion and reality  
I tremble in hopeful despair  
And heave on to the roller coaster called Marriage!





## 27. The Cold Nest

The bird has flown; the nest looks ghostly bare  
Even when the twigs are wet, the hay is not tawny yet.

The morning dew is glistening new  
But the warm shell lies scattered in haste.

The mother bird comes flying home in golden light  
With gatherings packed for her 'life'.

She peers into the crib... she twists and circles  
Flaps and flutters, coos and cries in inconsolable grief;  
But, her calls to the wild do not fill the nest.

In frantic frenzy she swoops into the home  
She built not long ago  
And darts out to perch among friendly leaves.

On her beak she now holds one lone feather  
Left carelessly behind when her new born  
Zoomed high, to freedom's skies

She nurses the feathery memory  
Close to her chest,

And rocks to nostalgia's lullaby.  
Until...When the gleeful moon dances into the gloom  
To glance at her dismay?

Then...in stoic calm  
She suddenly brings the feather to rest in the nest  
And flies fast away into the west

But why? But where?

To build another nest?  
Or to warm one more egg?  
And to drop yet another feather?  
To fondly mark all those  
Who grew feathers,  
Only to fly far, far away...?





## 28. The Singer

He calls out  
To the Gods  
He vibrates  
He pulsates  
He pours forth  
His throbbing core  
In mellifluous tones  
In rhythmic refrain.

He rocks  
The rocks  
Challenges  
The rains  
He hushes  
The waves  
Silences  
The forests  
He lulls  
The fires  
Stills  
The winds.

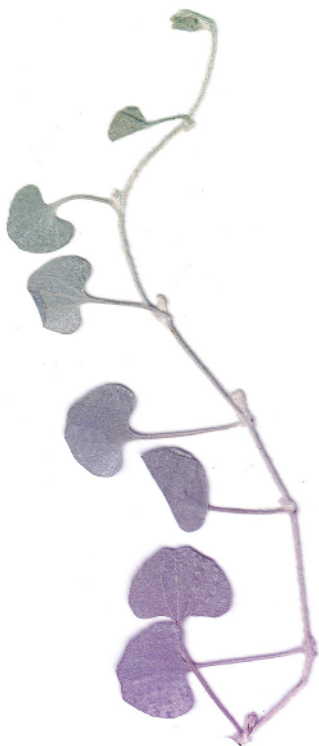
He speaks  
The song  
Of souls

The voice  
Of mute tongues  
The cries  
Of mangled minds.

He sings  
The warmth  
Of love  
The rage  
Of passion  
The might  
Of defeat  
The pain  
Of fear  
The peace  
Of death.

His octaves  
Echo past  
Distant hills  
Soar above  
Lighting horizons  
And kiss  
Lonely stars.

They besiege  
The fortress  
Of the Gods  
And beseech  
The Master  
To hear  
To see  
To feel  
To know  
The saga  
Of life  
The travails



Of existence  
The hoplessness  
Of his  
Own creation!  
Somewhere on earth  
Down below.



## 29. The Night is Long

The night is long, my love  
And the night  
Is almost lost....  
Far above, I watch  
The amorous moon  
Frolic and flirt  
With virgin clouds.

A hundred leaves  
Pin themselves  
To brittle barks  
Too afraid  
To rustle away  
The hushing silence.

The night queen,  
In perfumed radiance  
Gleams and glows away  
The growing gloom.  
She opens herself  
For gusty winds  
To kiss  
Her bewitching wildness...



Somewhere....  
Lonely dogs  
Bark into  
Deaf darkness  
And, the drunken husband  
Forces himself  
Onto her unwelcome bed  
And creaks  
Into serene stillness.

With tearful sighs  
I continue to watch.  
Watch while  
The sentinel slumbers  
Hugging exotic dreams.  
I walk in dutiful beat  
And watch at  
The long winding road.

My ears....  
Piece thick dumbness  
With sharpened wings  
To hear your footsteps  
Sing hurrah in my heart.

My eyes  
Search into  
Mounting blackness  
For your  
Manly gait  
To appear  
On my dying stare.





I wait, my love  
As the clock inches  
Through desperate seconds  
For your voice  
To ring  
Into my life  
With a hope  
Of tomorrow  
When every night  
Will live with us  
As we sing along  
To the sparkle  
Of eternal love.





## 30. About Turn

I had had enough.  
The fire had  
Been put out.  
There was no more  
Wood to burn.  
The hearth was cleared  
Of all ashes and debris.  
All vessels upturned  
Leftovers binned.



The stony silence  
Sounded a new calm.  
The clang of the ladle,  
The bang of the cudgel,  
Restless chatter of discord,  
Noise of empty vessels,  
Waters spewing emotions,  
Knives and forks  
Renting the air,  
Tearing sheaths of bonds... asunder!  
Everything was done with.



I dumped my past,  
Picked my future,  
Opened the shut door  
And turned my back.  
My gait waltzed, light and free.

No more fires to light,  
No more wait for love fed meals.  
It's time to be careless,  
To be carefree  
And Free!

Vast horizons all around,  
Virgin waters gushing forth,  
New paths, rainbow like-  
Spanned and beckoned.

Just then,  
Freedom juxtaposing bonding,  
Be it synchronicity or 'karma',  
It happened!

Just as I crossed the threshold,  
A gentle knock on the front door!  
I stood still and silent  
Clinging on to the little door  
At the back.  
Another knock,  
A gentle but rich voice sounded:  
"Are you there?"  
I still stood still.  
The voice grew louder..  
New yet familiar,  
Like the age old hills!



The subconscious stirred,  
My heart missed a beat.  
Was this the voice?  
I had always waited to hear,  
“Are you still there?”  
It asked.



I closed my eyes to the rainbows  
And looked back.  
I peered into my Self,  
Into labyrinths of Time,  
Into dreams and songs,  
Locked and buried  
Under dusty hope.

The voice-  
Persistent at the front door posed:  
“Are your there or are you gone?”



Something pulled; many things fluttered.  
Everything held me back.  
I leapt into the present  
Swung my heels  
And turned around,  
Letting the back door  
Swing to a close.

I sped to open  
The front door  
To a welcome!  
To light a flame,  
To warm the hearth,  
And bring back Life!





## 31. Last love

His heart had long missed the beat  
But the face on' Her wrist beat on...and on!

'Princess!' "I love you!" He chirped.  
"What?!" she screamed, aghast.  
"Why?" Am I not good enough?  
"Razor like brains and ocean like love..."He cajoled.  
She smiled wryly and looked the other way.

"Will you marry me, one day?" He insisted.  
"Are you mad?" "I'll marry none!" She stomped.  
"Can I hear your perky voice every day?" He begged.  
"Well, if you must...but I wish you didn't!" She said wearily.

"Here is a jewel for your wrist!" He held out in pride.  
"It's too expensive ...why did you?" She began.  
"Hush! It must be worthy of a Princess; besides...  
You'll remember me time and again". He quipped.

She was his everlasting inspiration. He confirmed  
He will be a suitor to the last. She was assured.

But time did not last.  
And before long last,  
He was alas, lost!

Oh! Why did I walk away?" She mused.  
"If I had held out my hand,  
Would He have lasted?  
His last, longing love,  
To live a new -found life?

She beheld the face at hand  
And then, a long, hot tear  
Suddenly jumped and rolled ...  
Hugged and kissed  
The 'dead' face!  
Just a trifle too late!



## 32. On that day

On that day  
The sun woke up  
As usual....  
But  
I could not see  
Its radiant, friendly warmth.

The morning glory  
Hid its purple trumpet  
And looked up  
Sleepy eyed.

The lofty sun flower  
Craned its long neck  
And searched,  
Searched from west to east  
Frantic for the sun.

I saw a lone petal  
Twitching on the green  
Looking lost and angry  
Being banished from its kin.



The sparrow and its mate  
Busily built their home  
They twittered and danced  
But there was no joy  
In their chirp.

The air was heavy  
The morning faces  
On the road were  
Laden with dull anxiety  
At what  
The day would bring.

I went about  
My morning chores  
In automatized control  
To make  
A 'Perfect' day!

But my face  
Was wooden  
My eyes were lost  
My heart often  
Skipped a beat.  
My insides  
Tingled and plunged.

Everything was normal  
As everything ought to be  
But I knew  
Something was missing.

I pushed the drudging second  
Longing for "tomorrow"  
When you would be there  
Once more.....  
As usual!





### 33. Rebirth

I'm the springing blossom  
Gently tied to your arm  
You are the sturdy tree  
Searching high into the sky.

I'm your beautiful jewel  
Adding colour to your life  
You are the gleaming tinsel  
That gives life to my light.

I'm the fruit  
Of your earthly ties  
You are the source  
Of my soul's search.

I bend downwards  
Oozing sweet passion  
You tower upwards  
In sublime thought.

I wave and flutter  
To the beat of the wind  
You stand calm and assured  
Hugging me in your leafy palm.



Suddenly we stand apart  
I'm plucked by a stealing hand  
Woven into a solemn wreath  
And placed at your feet  
In fond remembrance  
Of a new lost life.

I too breathe my last  
And fade into the earth  
You stand and stand  
Tall & erect as ever before  
I remain a flower no more  
Only my remains remain.

You then grow into me  
And I give you succour.  
I, your beloved flower  
Am now, your caring mother.



## 34. The Players

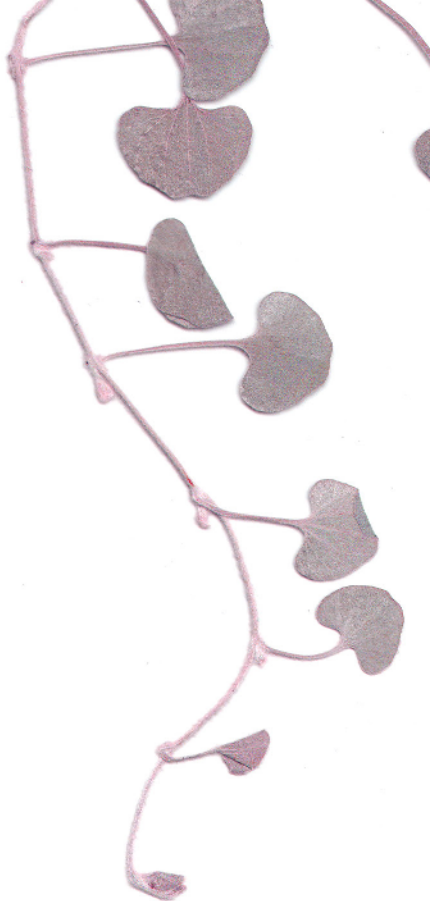
Little stubby hands  
Sift gritty shells  
They pile loose sands  
Upon the calm shore.

Up leaps a wave .  
Caught in magnetic web  
It rushes to the castle  
And the castle's no more!

Uneven mounds, broken ridges  
Drowned in moist effervescence  
Lie scattered on the path  
Of the trespassing wave.

Alone stands the child  
In puzzled disappointment  
He asks the messy ruin  
"Where did my castle go?"

The clever ambitious man  
Plans every move, every minute  
He lives the game of chess  
In every single breath.



The game's well played  
Every player's in his place  
The world is at his feet  
The game's almost won.

The powerful 'Self' soars  
The proud mind commands  
The drunken hand obeys  
Careless vision creates chaos.

The rooks and the pawns  
Stand in wrong squares  
The bishops and the knights  
Have fallen in ambush.

The lone, loyal Queen  
Has fled in disgrace  
Unarmed stands the king  
In check and mate!

The beaten, shame-faced man  
In anger and in grief  
Asks unfaithful lady Luck  
"How did my future go?"

The innocent, sportive child  
In the dawn of his life  
Gathers the fallen castle  
To build once more.

The spoilt, vain man  
In the twilight of his life  
Tears up the chess-board  
For he can play no more.



## 35. Suspended Animation

I ensconced you  
With tender care  
On velvet pupils  
And shut firmly  
Their satin walls  
To harsh reality.

And presto!  
In twinkling time  
You slipped into my rhythm  
Floated on rippling thoughts...  
Rushed into every breath  
Sang into every second  
Filled in my every vein  
And surged into  
Quickening pulse...

All at once  
You were everywhere  
Yet...  
Nowhere...  
You engulfed  
My entire existence  
Yet were beyond  
My simple reach!



And now  
Like a lonely tear  
I tremble and hang  
On the fluttering eyelash  
Unable to re-enter my origins  
Yet too frail  
To drop all by myself  
On to the rosy cheeks  
Of tomorrow...



## 36. Refuge

A little Bird  
Visited every day, a Tree  
Dense...  
Full of leaves and branches  
That had grown with Time.  
The Tree was all alone  
Single in a treeless landscape  
And none lived in the Tree ...  
Not a bird; not one.  
Squirrels ran up and down  
But none lived there.  
The Tree never asked why.

In Time,  
The Bird brought  
Water for the Tree  
In small beak fulls;  
Shoved away ants and termite  
That gnawed at the Tree.  
It flapped its wings  
When rats dug at roots  
And shoed them far away.



The Tree bore fruit  
Once in a blue moon  
And the bird  
Guarded it with tender care.  
When the storm raged  
And the tree shook,  
The Bird twitched  
In helpless fear  
Shedding a tear  
It cried ,  
“Oh! How do I protect you,  
My dear Tree?”?

One summer day,  
The Tree asked,  
“Why do you care for me, so?”  
Visit me again and again  
I do nothing for you...  
Go find another place.

The Bird smiled sadly  
And said:  
“What more do you have to do?  
You shield me  
From heat of lust  
From gusts of greed  
From sky of loneliness  
From rains of fear  
You give me Peace  
And strength to live  
What else is there to do?  
I want  
Nowhere to go !





## 37. Altar Flowers

I bloomed in innocence  
Scented and bright;  
And looked up in radiance,  
To be ushered....  
Into a shining altar  
To be sanctified and worshipped  
By life.

Someone plucked my beauty  
And captured it in a vase.  
To adorn, to possess,  
To boast and to celebrate.  
My insides wilted  
Bereft of warmth  
Bereft of protection  
That is known  
To Altars alone

Sometimes knowingly, oftentimes unknowingly  
I transformed  
To intoxicating flower garlands  
That catapult senses to dizzy heights  
But when the euphoria wears off  
The garlands lie  
Tearfully crushed under cold feet.



Looking back.... I realise;  
The altar I never found  
The vase I long outgrew  
The garland I refuse to be  
Yet, my only desire, nascent, hangs on....

O' that I were free  
Like that wild waving flower  
Known only to winds  
Open only to skies  
Kissed only by rains  
Unseen, untouched,  
Unknown....





## 38. Of Walking on Plains

I tired  
Of walking on plains.  
Feet dragging on stability  
Inert in equipoise....  
I gazed  
At listless landscapes  
Pressed flat and flawless  
Etched with ago old patterns  
And sighed  
In the monotony of solitude.

I looked up  
And floated a plea  
To quixotic skies ....

“Send me please  
A thunderbolt at least!  
Or better still.  
A storm to kill ....?  
That I  
Be blown over  
Rugged cliffs of pain  
And thrown into  
Whirlpools of pleasure  
Be stung by bees of desire

To bleed with despair of loss !  
O' to be  
Poised on  
Blazing butterflies  
To be crowned  
By dewdrops  
And wrapped  
In rainbow gloss  
To explode  
With volcanoes  
Of red- hot passion.  
O' to be saved  
From platitude of the plains!"

I prayed and cried  
Searched in seek  
Until you came  
And halted!  
Silenced the drone  
Of the plains  
With the throb  
Of a million beats  
And the tinkle  
Of tumbling falls!!





## 39. There Were Times

There were times  
When you found me  
Rummaging fast into your bags  
To flick a pen or two  
And you did chide me loud  
Just for the sake of others all!

There were times  
When I sat in your chair  
And played  
'General Manager the great'  
And to rebuke me  
You did pose,  
For your boss  
May storm in, just suppose....!

There were times  
When you repeated  
What your secretary had said  
"She's a beautiful girl,  
You daughter – is she truly yours?"  
You then curled your lip  
And in purring joy  
A naughty smile did you flash!



There were times  
We did things together  
Made up songs and sang them  
Full- throated.  
We counted money  
We worked on accounts  
That wouldn't tally,  
By any count!



There were times  
When you held my pulse  
In panic and in haste  
When I only had  
A slight headache!



There was a time  
When I was to go far away  
And you dropped to the floor;  
"Oh! how will I ever live  
With you so far away?"  
You cried in deafening dismay.

There were times  
When you held my son  
For hours in your arms  
And rocked him  
To gentle sleep  
A lullaby on your lips.

There were times  
You were proud of me  
There were times  
You were afraid for me



There were times  
When you tired of me  
And did preach in vain  
Time and again.

But my father dear, I knew;  
Always knew;  
No matter what others may say;  
You simply loved me in every way.  
You truly loved being your daughter's father;  
And I always,  
Always was my Father's  
Dear, dear Daughter!





## 40. A Plea

I want to tell you  
How the rose-bud opens its eyes  
To welcome the infant sun  
And, calls for me to open  
The windows of my heart.

I want to ask you  
Why the honey bee draws  
Musical zeroes in drunken dance  
And breaths gay abandon  
Even when the flowers are nectar soaked.



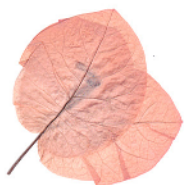
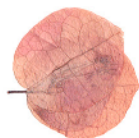
I want to show you  
How the bubbling effervescence  
Of the playful little waves  
Decorate my waiting feet  
With pearls glossy enough for a king.

I want to take you high  
To the breathtaking rainbows  
That bend so lovingly low  
To kiss the snow capped peaks  
That melt at their gentle touch.



I want to make you build  
Towering sandcastles on life's shores  
With moist silver sands  
And treasure them zealously  
From the stealthy stealing winds.

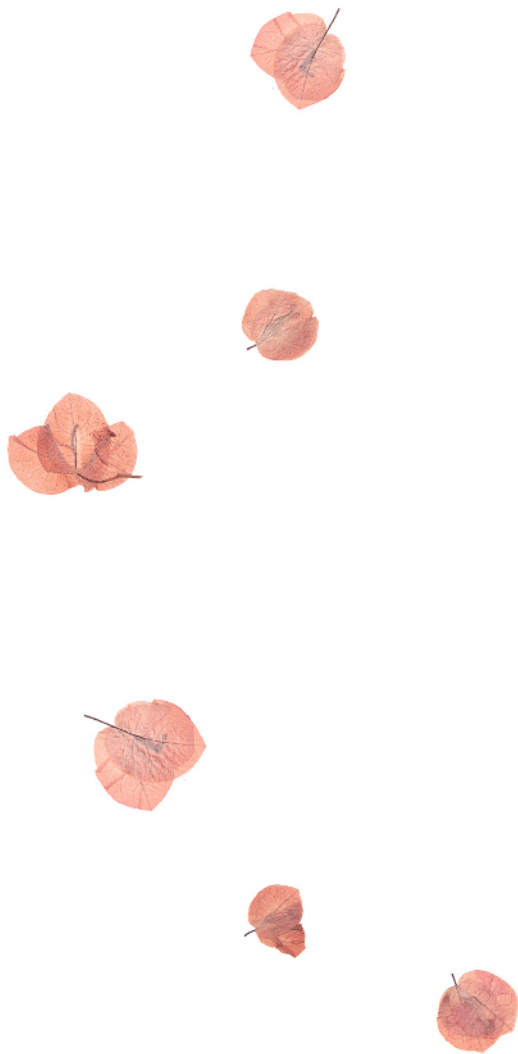
I want you to be  
The mirror that sees me as I am  
Capturing my smiles and my frowns  
And discovers the child in me  
Even when wrinkles, on my fading face hang!





A Humanities doctorate by qualification, an educationist by training, Vasanthi has had a vibrant professional career where she donned many hats: teacher, principal, pedagogue, teacher educator, edupreneur, author of English language text books and children's stories. For four decades Vasanthi has been deeply involved with matters of the head but it is matters of the heart that have appealed to her since childhood; be they music, art or poetry! Creative pursuits quintessentially define her and she now aspires to devote her time and energies to her twin passions, painting and writing; of which, writing poetry gives her the greatest solace and joy. Vasanthi has published her poems in literary journals and magazines and broadcast them on radio programmes.

She can be contacted on:  
Email: [vasanthivasudev@gmail.com](mailto:vasanthivasudev@gmail.com)  
Mobile: +91 9840088853



Cover and layout design by Meena Rajasekaran  
[meena.rajasekaran@gmail.com](mailto:meena.rajasekaran@gmail.com)