

Cataracts of Compassion

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Poems by

K. V. Dominic



AUTHOR'S PRESS

Worldwide Circulation through Authorspress Global Network
First Published in 2017

by

Authorspress

Q-2A Hauz Khas Enclave, New Delhi-110 016 (India)

Phone: (0) 9818049852

e-mails: authorspress@rediffmail.com; authorspress@hotmail.com

Website: www.authorspressbooks.com

Cataracts of Compassion

(Poems)

ISBN 978-93-5207-*-***

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Printed in India at Krishna Offset, Shahdara

Preface

Cataracts of Compassion is my sixth collection of poems after *Winged Reason* (2010), *Write Son, Write* (2011), *Multicultural Symphony* (2014), *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond* (2016), and *K V Dominic: Essential Readings and Study Guide* (2016). This is a collection of thirty four poems composed during the past fifteen months.

I have been trying my maximum to avoid repetition of themes and topics in my poetry. But however hard I attempt, there are some burning issues which resurge or ruminate into my mind again and again and I am compelled to write on them. Poverty, religious exploitations, environmental issues, corruptions in the society, terrorism, cruelty to women, children, old, and animals, gender discriminations, ageism, etc. are those issues which prick me very often to write more and more.

The title *Cataracts of Compassion* was suggested to me by the renowned philosopher-critic-poet Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya. Dr. Ramesh is so intimate to me like an elder brother and he has already explicated my entire poetry philosophically through two critical books published by Modern History Press, Ann Arbor, USA in 2016. Again, the concept of the first poem of this collection, “Enlighten Us Lord Buddha” was instilled into my mind by him. His PhD is in the Buddhist Philosophy. He was also kind enough to write an excellent foreword for this book. I am always grateful and indebted to him for his incessant love and concern to me and my poetry.

Before winding up this preface let me express my deep gratitude to my bosom friend and publisher, Shri Sudarshan Kcherry. He has been so magnanimous and loving to me that more than two dozens of my books have been published from his world

renowned publishing house, Authorspress. Unlike any other publisher in the world he is so unique that he is a philosopher, poet, editor and also a motivator and mentor to hundreds of writers in their compositions. He has a major role in my moulding as a poet. Pranaam to his great soul! I wish all esteemed readers an enlightening voyage through this book.

Thodupuzha
1 October 2017

K. V. Dominic

Foreword

In 1983 an alarm bell rang stating that the US had sent an intercontinental ballistic missile. The officer in charge Mr. Petrov who had only few seconds to decide, dismissed the warning as a false alarm. Or else the world would have plunged into third nuclear war. And if there were another nuclear war, man should have to again fight with sticks. Very few people know this incident and very few people have heard about Stanislav Petrov, the hero of those few seconds that saved the world from impending destruction. He lived in obscurity and of late he has passed away to the realm of the immortals unknown and unsung. But angels, if any, have recorded his name in the book bound with gold. And may be Dominic espied such an angel noting down his name too.

Yes, Dominic has not composed hymns in praise of God or in praise of love or wine. He has not ventured in hymeneal rapture or triumphal chant. And yet his "Victory for the Fight for Water" is a heroic poem never attempted in prose or rhyme earlier. The Perumatty Grama Panchayat fought against the multinational titan Coca Cola. And Dominic's name might be atop the list of poets whom God loves most although the modern reading elite might not know about him in greater details. No, Dominic is not unknown altogether. He is a luminary among the Indian English poets. Perspectives differ. In the light of the present reader he is the most important poet of our time. Besides atmosphere, troposphere, mesosphere, stratosphere, thermosphere, a sphere of love and compassion surrounds our earthly existence where motherly love rules supreme. The motherly love is but a hazy brightness where the light of Buddha and Christ and their tribe mingle. And from the source of that ineffable light of compassion Dominic's *Cataracts*

of Compassion rains that outshines drops if any from rainbow clouds.

Poetry is the outburst of spontaneous emotions recollected in tranquility. True. But one is apt to question what objects are the fountains of the outburst of emotions. Debapriya is a housemaid of twenty three. Her masters appear as ideal couple. Debapriya spends the whole day in idle dreams asking herself whether she can have an ideal husband as her master is to her lady. Will she ever have a child like theirs? Surely they are only her wishes doomed to wait upon tedious shores of Lethe for ages and eons. Will ever they incarnate as real? The reverie of Charles Lamb on his bachelor armchair has reincarnated in the day dream of the maid Debapriya.

The romantic poets were engrossed with metaphysics and abstract idealism. Their souls fell upon the thorns of life and bled. Hence they were more like beautiful and ineffectual angels beating their luminous wings in void. But Dominic is like Buddha who discarded all metaphysics to pay attention to here and now.

This is an age of information revolution. But Dominic's heart is an Aeolian harp where groans of man wherever it takes place under the sun resonate. Even he informs us that Rosy Dog is waiting for his masters to turn up although they have gone to the nowhere from where no man returns.

Blake seems to echo in the wailing predicament of the innocent children of South Sudan, bleeding black angels of earth. Countries in Africa are starving. But the world produces 17 percent more food than what man requires. Dominic asks whether the developed countries can distribute their surplus among the so called underdeveloped instead of wasting it. What is becoming of a rich family distributing their surplus to the poor is the ideal rule for the protagonists of international politics to pursue. Like Lord Buddha Dominic does not revel in

any high strung political thought or economic thought. And yet his homemade economic and political ideas could wipe the tear off the face of the world. He is like our mother who never revels in abstract idealism like men. But the mother knows what ails a particular child. Yes, Dominic has heard the groans of our mother – the Mother Earth or Gaia. Dominic does not only feel for the groaning humanity, he also feels for the tigers and animals and mosquitoes. The tigers and the elephants are being driven away from their habitats. Keats heard the songs of gnats in his “Ode to Autumn.” Dominic hears the laments of the mosquitoes.

Dominic is a communist always fighting on behalf of the down trodden among men. But unlike the communist poets he cannot give a call for class struggle. If he had given such a call his red army would consist of Indian widows, maid servants, dogs, cats, tigers, elephants and so on. Dominic does not believe in discrimination. If a dog is violent why you should kill all the street dogs, asks Dominic in the role of a dog. The dog asks man to kill all the violent and unruly men in the human society first. If he fails in doing that why should he kill every dog that could bite? Buddha in his *Jataka Tales* tells us how he was born as different animals and other so-called subhuman species like crows, monkeys and snakes. And Buddha often defended his species against the onslaughts of man. A king was supposed to kill a doe. But the doe was childing. And Buddha, a deer then argued with the king that the king might kill the doe. But he must not kill two – the doe and the child in the womb. And surely, just as the birds and animals taught men in *Jataka Tales*, so Dominic thinks that men should learn from the birds and animals. The birds need no passports and visas to move from one country to another? Why cannot men move at their will? These states are artificial. Their borders are artificial. Why should we not abolish them? Dominic is thus an anarchist and more than a communist.

Dominic has given us the activities of an ideal communist in the portrait of Krishnan wearing a saffron dhoti stretching down to the knees only. Gandhi is his role model. In the outlook of Krishnan and Gandhi there is no room for violence.

Dominic is a powerful narrator. A child was born in a village. It spread great joy throughout the village just as the birth of Jesus or the birth of Buddha spread joy in the surroundings. The child grew old to become a brilliant scholar of IIT. And he left home to obey God just as Buddha left home. By the by, the Son of Man had no shelter as well. The boy unlike Buddha preferred to serve God and not man. The boy soon was killed in the battlefield. Nietzsche thundered that God is dead. Indeed there is no point in obeying God. Foucault observed that when Nietzsche observed that God is dead, humanism showed up. But whatever is born is destined to die. So Foucault observed that the days of humanism are also numbered. Hence get rid of isms if any, and act in the contingent with compassion. Buddha did not leave home to seek God or obey his decrees. He left home in search of the road to freedom from the groans of the world. He did not have any personal sorrow or hardship during his life in palace. But the sorrows of all things and all beings of the world goaded him to leave his royal home to find a way out for the world from the sphere of sorrow. Similarly the personal grief, unlike those of a few romantic poets, has not goaded Dominic to write poems. In the face of the information revolution Dominic's person is such an instrument that responds to the wails of men and animals and birds and insects. And Bapooty's Onam feast to stray animals shows the way to spiritualism in the right sense of the term. Whether heaven is there in the skies needs not bother us. Lord Buddha exhorts that mind goes ahead of everything in the existence—Manopubbangamaa dhammaa. And in the Gospel of Saint Thomas Jesus says: "If those who lead you say to you ... you are the children of the living Father."

Thus in fine, all the finest literature, be it the life of Buddha or the gospel of Jesus or the romantic poetry of England or the Upanishads or Shakespeare, the lives of the social activists like Krishnan have worked together to weave the matrix of the cataracts of compassion. To bathe here is to get fresh. With a new zest for life, the readers might be goaded to the path of Bodhisattvas who are hell bent to liberate every particle of existence. Om Tat Sat.

Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya
Philosopher, Critic & poet, West Bengal

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Enlighten Us Lord Buddha

1

Enlighten us Lord Buddha
radiating rays of wisdom
to our minds groping in darkness
You are the sun among
all stars of seers who
lived on this planet
Lord Buddha, you are
most purified man
born on earth
Lived long back
in 6th century BC
Named you Siddhartha
meaning 'Wish fulfilled'
A noble prince
becoming greatest
religious teacher
A miracle to others
you practised samadhi
and developed jnana
even in infancy

2

At the age of sixteen
Gotama married beautiful
cousin Yasodhara
Lived luxurious life
for thirteen years

ignorant of miseries
of life outside palace
Inborn contemplative
nature and boundless
compassion awoke him
Though he knew no
personal grief
felt deep pity for
sufferings of humanity
Then one day
went out to palace park
and witnessed realities
he had already conceived
Sights of a weak old man,
a diseased person, a corpse
and dignified hermit
taught him universal
infirmity of humanity
and means to attain
calm, peace and happiness
Realised worthlessness
of sensual pleasures
Prompted him to renounce world
Decided to leave world
in search of truth and peace
More important role
he has to play than
dutiful husband or father
or king of kings in palace
Great was his compassion
for dear wife and infant son
But greater was his love
for suffering human race

Bade goodbye to beloved
wife and son fast asleep
and rode into dark at midnight
attended by his loyal charioteer
Thus alone and penniless
set out in search of
truth and happiness
A renunciation of world
unique in history
He was not old
fully drunk of worldly life
but youth of twenty nine
vigorous and sensuous
He wasn't a poor man
nothing to leave behind
but a prince who owned
immense wealth and riches
Having travelled far
shaved off hair and beard
Clad in simple yellow garb
of an ascetic chose a life
of voluntary poverty

3

Enlighten us Lord Buddha
You have proved through life
divinity of human beings
How ennobled
can human birth be
How can man
feel human suffering
even without

personal experience
None follows your
exemplary model
Not even your disciples
Children who know
very well how they
were loved and reared
desert their parents
when old and weak
Leave them in
old age homes,
hospitals, jungles
buses and trains
Compassion is alien
in families among siblings
Affluent ones are
apathetic to miserable ones
Even ungrateful to
those who brought them up
Servants are treated
worse than animals
Rulers and civil servants
exploit people who feed them
Clergies thrive as parasites
on gullible slavish laity
The rich give deaf ear
to hunger cries of neighbours
and throw away
remnants of their plates
Developed countries
are indifferent to
millions dying of hunger
in other states

Hence enlighten us Lord Buddha
and fill all human minds
with love and compassion

4

Bare-footed and bare-headed
ascetic Gotama walked on and on
Neither scorching sun
nor piercing cold could
detract him from the search for truth
Shady trees and lonely caves
sheltered him day and night
He tried to seek the truth
from various mystics in vain
Learnt that highest truth
is to be found in oneself
Practiced severest austerity
for long six years and his
tender body became a skeleton
Having learnt futility of
self-mortification adopted
middle path called Golden Mean
and developed all four dhyanas
He could recollect evolution
and dissolution of various cycles
of all his former lives
As a deer-king he offered
his life to save a pregnant doe
in his previous birth
In another birth as an ascetic
he sacrificed his life
to feed a starving tiger and its

two cubs trapped in snow
In his thirty fifth year ascetic
Gotama became a Buddha
an enlightened one
Thus he was not a born Buddha
but a Buddha moulded by his efforts

5

Enlighten us Lord Buddha
and save us from abyss of ignorance
You never claimed an incarnation
but taught us that God never
incarnates and controls
the destinies of human beings
You never called yourself a saviour
saving others by your salvation
but taught us to deliver ourselves
Since defilement and purity
depend on oneself none can
directly defile or purify another
There are man-made religions
and man-made gods here
falsely claiming salvation of people
and looting their hard earned income
Instead of unifying people spiritually
religions create divisions and
make the laity biased and narrow minded
Claiming superiority over others
religions blind people and lead
to communal riots and massacres

6

Enlighten us Lord Buddha
vibrant most missionary in world
For long forty five years you
preached your doctrine to masses
You served humanity both by your
exemplary life and exalted doctrines
“Strive on with diligence”
was your commandment to people
Emancipation is impossible
without personal striving
In place of prayers you exhorted us
to meditate which leads to self-control,
purification and enlightenment
Meditation and service
are core of your doctrines
You showed us the middle path
between nihilism and eternalism
That goal of our life can be achieved
in this earthly life itself
You taught us also the eight-fold path
right view, right aspiration, right speech,
right action, right livelihood, right effort,
right mindfulness, and right concentration.
Very few follow your salvation paths
Hence enlighten us Lord Buddha
before we are drowned and doomed

7

Living a mortal life you could attain
the state of enlightened being
Demonstrated through your life
invincible power of human mind

Taught us truth that man
can gain supreme knowledge and
enlightenment through his own efforts
That he can save himself from ills of life
and realise eternal bliss
without help of external God
or mediating priests
Enlighten us Lord Buddha
and save us from our ignorance
How much we are exploited by clergy
frightening us with God's role
in attaining our ultimate goal!

8

You protested against caste system
that prevented progress of mankind
Taught us that gates of deliverance are
open to all who can strive for salvation
You never forced your disciples to be
slaves to you or to your teachings
They had full freedom of thought
You raised status of oppressed women
Tried to abolish slavery and banned
sacrifice of unfortunate animals

9

Enlighten us Lord Buddha
and make us feel non humans as siblings
You treated animals as sentient beings
who have potential for enlightenment
You reminded us that any animal could

be reborn as human and human as animal
Thus living animals could be our relatives,
mothers, brothers, sisters, fathers,
children, friends in past rebirths
Torturing, killing, eating animals is
like doing that to our children and mother
You have taught us that humans have no
special privilege or position on earth
All beings love their lives like humans
and do not wish to be killed
Since we wish to live we shouldn't kill any being
Karma of killing is root of all suffering
and cause of all sickness and war

10

Enlighten us Lord Buddha
Your outlook is broader than
other schools of religious thoughts
Every religion advises us
to love fellow humans
some even teach to love
their own followers more
But you taught us to show
equal care and compassion
to all creatures of this world
destruction of any creature
is disturbance of universal order
Hence enlighten the world Lord Buddha
and fill this planet with peace and happiness



A Poetic Tribute to Mahasweta Devi

Mahasweta Devi literally means Goddess Saraswati
Her mother's name Dharithri meaning Earth
Yes, Mahasweta Devi who departed us on 28th July 2016
was Saraswati to millions of tribals, dalits and marginalized
who were lifted from doom and darkness to resurgent light
She was indeed proud daughter of Mother Earth
committed to protect Earth and her inhabitants
from all kinds of exploitations and maternal assaults
Didi, you were the loving compassionate sister as well as
mother of the millions of helpless miserable fellow beings
Even at ninety you were eager to fly to wipe out tears
You could hear the scream of tortured people and
neither health nor distance could stop your incessant flights
Didi, you were the crusader of the downtrodden,
tribals, dalits, women, landless, migrants, prostitutes
You were savior of denotified tribes Lodha and Shabar
You were their mouthpiece – spoke for them, raised funds for them
legally fought for them, and organized them to fight for their rights
Didi, you are role model to all writers in the world
Unlike others writing from mansions full of luxury
and shedding crocodile tears at the plight of the poor
you lived among them, ate from their plates and
braved all dangers supporting their noble survival cause
Gandhi and Mother Teresa influenced you a lot
Practised in your life what you wrote and preached
And your social life and literary life merged into one
Your writings created an Everest in literary world
More than hundred novels and over twenty books
of short fiction all dealing with human sufferings
And your priority was for content than to form

Didi, you wanted to work for ever for your people
And hence told “I don’t want to die. I want to live forever.”
Only your body has departed and your spirit remains immortal
And like the mahuva tree which grows on your grave
the values and messages you have sown in the minds
will germinate and spread all over the world and
bower aching minds from terrible burning issues



Note: *Didi* is a respectful form of address to any older woman

African Poverty

Use of modern science in agriculture
made revolution in production of food
World now produces food materials
suffice to feed entire human race
And seventeen percent surplus than needs
Yet four African nations – South Sudan,
Somalia, Yemen and Nigeria die of poverty
Another fifteen countries face food crisis
Millions of starving people – children, women
old stretch their hands with begging bowls
for remnants of other peoples' food
Adding oil to their hellish life civil war
and terrorism extinguish their ray of hope
How can the rich and rich countries
waste their excess food
when their wretched siblings
cry for just a meal a day?
When will the rich have prick of conscience
for hoarding poor's share and wealth
and starving them to die?



Angles as Refugees

Innocent children from South Sudan
Bleeding black angels on earth
Destined to die without food and water
Not hundreds or thousands
but millions and millions
Civil war waged for silly reasons
already devoured thousands of innocents
women and children are forced
to leave their houses and country
They throng in hackneyed boats
overloaded and hazardous
Where is there haven or
who would shelter them,
poor little ones have no idea
Sea has saved thousands already
from their poverty and miseries
pulling down as toppled from boats
How heart-rending is their wail from boats:
Merciful God, kindly save us!
What have we done to bear so
bitter in our tender age?
Why should we suffer for
irrational vicious acts of our elders?
Omniscient God, aren't we also
your good children as birds in the sky?
How happy are the birds!
Need not bother much for food
You provide them what they need
They have no restraints or territory
The whole planet is theirs

Isn't the same your providence
for humans and other beings?
Why don't you punish criminals
and save innocents like us?
Should we wait for your justice
after our death and in next birth?



Bapooty's Onam Feast to Stray Animals*

Onam Kerala's harvest festival
Also reminder of legendary
king Mahabali's golden rule
Feasting with numerous curries
makes day delicious and memorable
Bapooty celebrates Onam
feasting with cats and dogs
Pets he picked up from roads
Thirty cats and ten dogs
brought up in a house
Not in his own house for he has none
Supplied by a humane lawyer
As cats and dogs are fond of meat
he adds chicken too to Onam dish
After feeding them he serves
Onam meals to stray dogs
in different parts of the town
Feeding these wretched ones
for past long four years
Taxi driver for thirty two years
Bapooty lives alone wedded
to these abominable animals
Bapooty serves a model
how to deal with manmade issues
caused by stray dogs and cats



* Based on The Mathrubhumi report on 16 September 2016

Circus Rani, Queen of Woes

Circus Rani aged twenty eight
The real queen of Rainbow Circus Company
Born to poor Christian parents
of North-Eastern State of Meghalaya
Abject poverty compelled mother
to sell her to Circus company
at the tender age of only ten
Her father died of AIDS
when she was only eight
Mother too showed positive
Younger siblings three more
Mother left the world fifteen years back
Whereabouts of siblings now unknown
Rani has now none in the world
When she performs flying trapeze
she takes it as her life's dangling
Her tight rope walking, Aerial hoop acrobatics
Equilibristics and Acrobalance
Wheel of death and Globe of death
give her no joy though spectators are delighted
Long thirteen years spent in tents
Tent is her world and their inmates her fellow beings
Each one has a tragic tale to tell
But who to listen to than one's own tent mates?
World likes only their smiling face
So too boss of the circus company
Rani's beauty has been waning
Age can't be controlled

She knows she will have to say goodbye
when the body can't be agile and supple
Where will she go and who will take her as bride?
Such burning answerless questions
wound her as she performs each her skill



Dogs' Curse on Human Beings

Curse upon you human beings
You are the most selfish
ungrateful and cruelest
of all creations on this planet
Irrespective of your ruthless
cold-blooded callous nature
we love you and serve you
better than your family inmates
As reward for our service
you dispose our dear puppies
road sides. They run starving
across dashing vehicles
Some are dead while others
live on littered wastes
you throw after use
Cruelty thy name is man!
You have made your pets
stray dogs struggling for life
Your throw out culture
throwing kitchen wastes of
meat and fish on road sides
turned some carnivores who
are violent than the herbivores
Famished, a few become violent
and prey upon pedestrians
And you start massacre
killing all stray dogs labeling
violent or man-eaters
Compared to our violators
multitudinous are your

criminals and murderers
Do you kill them all
as you mercilessly butcher
roads after roads?
Mind you, this world is
not your grandpas'
We too have a right
as all other animals have
to live and share
its sustaining wealth.



Endosulfan Tragedy

Endosulfan highly controversial agrichemical
Notorious for acute toxicity and bioaccumulation
Highly potential endocrine disruptor
The State-owned Plantation Corporation of Kerala
sprayed thousands of litres of toxin
through helicopters and small planes
in cashew plantations in Cheemeni Estate
Done to contain menace of tea mosquito bugs
Went on spraying in 856 hectares thrice a year
For long twenty three years from 1978 to 2001
Similar to American forces' spray of 'Agent Orange'
to smoke out Viet Congs from dense forests
Human beings, flora and fauna of eleven
panchayats of Kasargod District worst affected
Children are still born with cleft palates
neurobehavioral disorders, congenital
malformations and other abnormalities
Around four thousand people died
Health of more than 9000 persons impaired

More than eighty countries including India
banned this venomous chemical
Still victims of Kasargod denied justice
What harm have they done to bear this torture?
Government couldn't give sufficient compensations
Failed to recover from inhumane
profit motive pesticide companies
Victims' plea for multispecialty hospital
still remains unheard by government
A government of the people, by the people
and for the people proved against the people!



Equality in India

Liberty, Equality, Fraternity
Watchwords of Democracy
India my country
Largest democracy in the world!

Seventy percent of Indians live in villages
Seventy five percent of rural India
lives on thirty three rupees per day
India's richest one percent holds
fifty eight percent of country's total wealth
Fifty seven billionaires in India
keep equal wealth of the entire villagers
Wherein lies the so called equality?
Yet India is largest democracy in the world!

Eight percent of Indians live in slums
numbering double the population of Britain
More than three million people are homeless in Delhi
Thirty seven percent of Indians
has only one-room household as shelter
Only five percent of Indians owns four wheeler vehicles
When less than three percent Indians pay income tax
where is there equality of wealth and distribution?
Yet India is largest democracy in the world!



From Lamb to Wolf

How happy and jolly was the house when he was born!
Waves of merriment flowed to roofs and echoed
Birds and animals welcomed him
with hilarious twitters, bleats and moos
Stars and planets showered him all blessings
He was as charming as the rising sun
His first birthday was festivity for the entire village
Just as a lamb he played with domestic animals
Eyeing him was an experience of bliss
He was extra smart and intelligent at school and college
He was darling of all – Hindus, Muslims, Christians,
low caste, high caste, rich and poor
Was a wonder to teachers who foresaw him as scientist
Won M Tech with first rank from IIT
Offers of high pay jobs came from different firms
Alas, immersing all in seas of tears
he absconded one night with little trace to follow
Phoned his mother a week after, announcing that
he prefers to serve God than human beings
And he would never come back home
Learnt that he was enchanted by terrorists
Two months later came the saddest news
He was bombed and killed at the battlefield
His house became hell of wails and mourns
Birds and animals made doleful cries
Isn't service to man service to God?
Isn't service to animals and plants service unto Him?

Doesn't God the Father love all His children –
humans, non humans, plants and
universe with discrimination to none?
How can God, epitome of love, be pleased
by violence and bloodshed in His name?



Housemaid's Dreams

Debopriya housemaid of twenty five
Babysitter of a cute baby in Kerala
Poverty drove her from native State Bengal
Her meagre salary sustains her sick parents
Her masters, husband and wife bank employees
Gentle, loving, compassionate
They leave pretty Vishnu to her at 8 am
and return exhausted at seven in evening
Debopriya spends all day in dreams
Her masters appear as ideal couple
Debopriya daily asks her inner self:
Will I get a good husband like him?
Will I have a married life at all?
Will I bear a cute son as Vishnu?
Can I have a good house as this?
She knows her present life is a dream
She can only dream of happiness
and luxuries dancing around her
She knows very well her future lot
Poor people are destined to dream and dream
while rich fulfill what they dream and desire



I am an Indian Young Widow

I am an Indian widow
Cruel destiny made me so
at my prime age of twenty nine
With neither notice
nor any prior hint
he left me and our little ones
Not even bidding goodbye
plunged to eternal sleep
with little noise in early morning
I can't even bear thinking
of those heartbreaking moments
I still wonder how I could survive
Why didn't my heart stop as his?
Had I not swooned I am sure
I would have gone with him

How happy was our married life!
Truly made for each other
Like a pigeon couple
lived for only six years
Almighty gave us two cherubs
aged five and three
With scanty earnings of his and mine
struggled hard to run our family
How costly is one's life in Mumbai!
Rent of ten thousand rupees
for our hut-like apartment
Six thousand rupees for maid's service
We both were rowing hard
since sea was always stormy

Still we could view our terminus then
Alas I have to row all alone now
And sea has become more violent
No glimpse of any terminus now
With none to help from both our families
how will I survive with my little ones?
I who opposed practice of suttee
can now find sense behind its concept
Hellish is the life of an Indian widow
Tragic and nightmarish if she is young
Patriarchy doesn't allow her to survive
Eagles fly over her wherever she goes
When she craves for love and sympathy
society rends her bleeding heart
shooting arrows of repulsive words
Curses hurl on her from in-law's house
Burden for her parents and brothers
Looking at her husband's photo
whines often for deserting them
Pleads him to take with him
In fact she rows not for saving her life
but to save her children from being drowned



I can Hear the Groan of Mother Earth

I can hear the groan of mother earth
being raped by her own beloved human sons
Having sucked all milk from her mountain breasts
quarry deep out of construction mania

I can hear her shriek for help
when they cut each her vein
and drain all brooks and rivers

Can't you hear your mother's wail
when they pluck her hair after hair
felling trees and plants which protect them?

I can hear the scream of elephants, tigers,
Boars, snakes and all wild animals
when they drive them from their homes
and starve to death by burning forests

I can hear the death cry of bird after bird
when they cut their feeding trees
to make their selfish life more luxurious

Man, can't you hear those tremors of curses
hurled on you by endangered animals, birds and plants?
Man, I can hear mother earth cursing you
As Gandhari did long back to Lord Krishna



In Search of Impartial Reports

Impartial reports only delusion
Searching in vain
channels after channels
papers after papers
Degenerated fourth estate
slaves to political mafia
religious mafia or corporates
Journalists ignore their pledges
and deviate from ethics
Instead of calling a spade a spade
they make a goat a dog
a saint a sinner or sinner a saint
As immorality prevails every field
fair is foul and foul is fair.



Irrational Discriminations

I can't live with low caste Sudras, Brahmin says
No matter bedding with her furtively
How can I a class one officer mingle with a last grade?
No shame in seeking bribes through his smart deal
Clergy takes laity as just animals
and loots his money in the name of God
Whites take their colour as God's
and treat Blacks as subhuman savages
"Fools, have you lost your common sense?"
A sound from above echoes the world
"How can you human beings differentiate in one species?
You are just one of my millions of species
You find no differences in other species
How can you distinguish a sheep among herds of sheep?
Same is case with a crow among hundreds of crows
How then can you discriminate each and every one?
Aren't your bodies same once skin is removed?
Isn't same red coloured blood passing through
Whites, Blacks, Brahmins and Shudras?
Aren't your organs and functions same in all human beings?
You boast of your face and lips' beauties
Who boasts of beauty of other end exit hole?
Luxurious feast Rich takes and mean food Poor eats
passes as dirty shits through your inglorious exit hole
When you need urgent blood for your ailing body
your irrational discrimination disappears
Kindly learn basics of your universe
Variety and multicultural unity
beauty of your sustaining universe



Jesus' Views on Heaven

Jesus says in Gospel of Thomas:

“If those who lead you say to you:

‘Look, the kingdom is in the sky!’

then the birds of the sky will precede you.

If they say to you: ‘It is in the sea,’

then the fishes will precede you.

Rather, the kingdom is inside of you and outside of you.

When you come to know yourselves,

then you will be known, and you will realize

that you are the children of the living Father.”

How far the Christian leaders are

from their leader Jesus Christ!

Jesus ascertains that heaven is neither

above nor below but in our minds

and the physical world around us

We ought to find God in our minds

and in our neighbourhoods—

in humans, non humans, plants and nature

This realization makes us enlightened

like the Buddha in the sixth century BC



Krishnan, the Ideal Communist*

Krishnan aged fifty six
Grandson of great comrades
Pallath Krishnan and Arya Pallath
who fought against casteism
and untouchability among Brahmins
When communists were hunted
by police, Pallath house
became haven for AKG, EMS
Nayanar and many other leaders
During post graduation course came
Krishnan's turning point in life
Canara bank adopted villages
for social welfare schemes
Krishnan was given charge
of such a project in a village
Got its training in Bangalore
After training he started
Social Association for Development
with the help of his friends
Used his bank salary for its function
Started Abhayam Charitable Society
on his ancestral property of three acres
and one acre donated by his friend
It has now spread to thirty acres
protecting more than hundred lives
old and deserted, mentally deranged
handicapped and sick people
Krishnan took voluntary
retirement at the age of forty one
Used pension benefits of eight lakh rupees
for Abhayam's management

Gandhi is his role model
whom he calls Indian Marxist
Leads very simple life
He has never worn pants
Wears a saffron coloured dhoti
that reaches up to knee
And a half sleeve shirt
Thick gray hair and beard
resembling his icon Marx
One can never say
he is manager of Abhayam
Being brought up as communist
beyond all religious chains
Married Kumari of another caste
Son's name Appu Basheer Cherian
Daughter's name Ammu Arya Rubiya
Blend of Hindu-Muslim-Christian
Gandhi's self-dependency
Motto and mission of Abhayam
Cultivate unpolluted food
for inmates in their land
Even sells rice outside
Each one does one work or other
Mats, candles, incense sticks
Abhayam was honoured with
Genome Savior National Award
Krishnan tells the world:
Satvik karma has a happiness
and it is the best happiness



* Based on *The Mathrubhumi* report of 18 September 2016

Lessons from Fruit Plants

Nature is the best teacher
Modest and humble man
learns eternal truths from it
Plants and trees exhilarated
when flowers are born
Beautiful colours and
sweet smelling petals
make plants most pretty
and attract variety of flies
and even human beings
But after a few days
with no reluctance but joy
they shed these beauties
to give birth to fruits:
the ultimate fulfilment
of their simple lives
Same is the case of human life
a voyage to its terminus



Medha Patkar and Narmada Bachavo Andolan

Medha Patkar, contemporary India's
greatest and venerable social activist
Fighting for more than three decades
for the economic, political rights of tribals,
dalits, farmers, labourers and women
Founder member of people's movement
Narmada Bachavo Andolan (NBA)
Fights against Sardar Sarovar Dam Projects
spread over Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat
immersing forty thousand poor families in water
The Narmada Tribunal in 1979 gave permission for
30 major, 135 medium, and 3000 small dams
and also to raise the height of Sardar Sarovar dam
to provide water and electricity for forty million people
Promise for rehabilitation of affected families
wasn't fulfilled and construction of dams started
Water rose up in Sardar Sarovar dam frequently
drowning houses of poor with none to question
Dropping her PhD work, Patkar led protest marches,
hunger strikes and satyagrahas in dam's rising water
Her fast for twenty two days forced World Bank
to study the issues and found clear violations
World Bank cancelled its financial participation
But still State governments pressed for projects
and World Bank aids flow to them with conditions
Work Bank and governments argue benefits outweigh
immediate loss to human beings and environment
Whereas NBA pleads for just and sustainable development
Fights against undemocratic planning
and unjust distribution of benefits

Medha Patkar flies to every nook and corner of India
where peoples' fundamental rights are violated
and governments deny citizens' basic needs



Murder of Freedom of Expression

Article 19 of Indian Constitution
guarantees freedom of speech and expression
One has right to express one's opinion
freely without any fear through
oral / written / electronic / broadcasting / press
But recently we read shocking news
of writers and journalists shot dead
by extremist fanatic militant groups
They didn't even spare a woman
Gauri Lankesh, journalist aged 55
shot down yesterday while
entering into her house at Bangalore*
Renowned writers and activists
Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare,
M. M. Kalburgi were dispatched
similarly in 2013, 15 and 16
They were all silenced for speaking
against superstition and communalism
Years have gone but culprits aren't punished
Isn't duty of writers and journalists
pointing out evil practices in society?
Isn't it needed for victory of democracy?
How can democracy survive
when intolerance charges like monster?
Isn't duty of democratic governments
to protect the lives of their guardian angels?



*The tragic incident occurred on 5 September 2017

Musings on the Killing of a Tiger

Why was the tiger so brutally killed?
Famished in forest what else could it do?
Has it any division like forest or village?
Hasn't it right to live as human beings have?
What right has human beings to destroy its habitat?
Isn't it divine instinct that ran him to village?
Being a carnivore it sought its prey
and killed a few cattle for just its survival
How devilishly man netted and stoned it to death?

Pricking news of such cruelty to wild animals
ignite my mind sometimes to extreme thoughts:
Why not go to forest and serve as meal to wild animals
as the Buddha did in one of his previous births?
Such sublime thoughts come like flashes
but selfish mind drives them the moment they enter



No Balm can Cure Nature's Wounds

Monsoon season God's manna
Drenched in incessant rain
stroked by gentle breeze
plants and trees dance in ecstasy
Flight of various birds tweet in joy
Butterflies, dragonflies soar in glee

Where has gone that monsoon now?
Days of continuous rains are
driven away by hot summer days
Millennium old regular monsoon
that never betrayed farmers' dreams
force them for suicides day after day
Greedy money minded mafias—
land, forest, sand, quarry
supported by government officials
topple age-old climatic seasons
Natural dense forests are swept away
to create concrete buildings and townships
How can there be any repair?
No balm can cure Nature's wounds



Nostalgia for Childhood

I long to go backward to my childhood
Run hither and thither on the vast
grassy playground of Nature
I could toddle with hen and chicks
and babble to them in their own language
I could play football with dogs and puppies
and eat and sleep with cats and kittens
I could give handful of grass to cows and calves
and stroke them when they smile at me
Birds of various types cheered me with
melodious tweets and I greeted them
with similar tweets that delighted them
Hundreds of butterflies and dragonflies
flew over my head inviting me to fly with them
And how I chased them in joy longing to catch them!
How much I bathed in joy both in rain and sunlight!
Alas! Gone are those golden days of my life
Only innocent childhood savours Nature's happiness
Children find all beings their equals and companions
They feel excited when drenched and sweated
Compared to my childhood happiness
my children could enjoy only ten percent
and my grandson is denied total happiness
His enjoyment is chained to TV and toys
Haven't we made extinct innumerable
species of birds, butterflies and dragonflies?
How many houses rear cattle, dogs, cats and fowls?
Instead we grow mosquitoes who hunt us everywhere
Haven't we destroyed nature and environment
and made uncongenial for our children to survive?



Palam Kalyanasundaram – Role Model for Humanity

Man of the Millennium Palam Kalyanasundaram
75 year old social worker from Tamil Nadu, India
Twinkles like a unique star among entire human race
Not even in a millennium human race gives birth to such a gem
Government of India honoured him as county's best librarian
One of the top ten librarians in the world
UNO lauded him one of the outstanding people of 20th Century
Lives as bachelor for the service of poor
Donated his entire salary of 35 years for welfare of poor
Sold his ancestral property and donated its money to the needy
Donated pension amount of ten lakhs rupees to poor
Worked as a server in hotel and laundry to meet his own needs
After retirement established charitable society named 'Palam'
Palam helps children in education, organizes medical camps
Rehabilitation for unemployed, elderly, sick and handicapped
He had slept on pavements and railway platforms
as to experience life of the poor and houseless
Man of the Millennium award of 30 crore rupees
he received from America donated to poor and needy
He shoots a pricking question to everyone's mind:
"What do we take with us when we leave planet earth?"



Pricking Questions from the Grandson

My little grandson toddling
on front yard of my house
seems to prick me with
questions one after another
Grandpa, what have you left
for me or my siblings to be born?
Polluted is air I breathe
and toxic is food you serve me
Your parents bequeathed you
pure sky and virgin soil
They weren't selfish
and were thoughtful
of their descendants
How can I survive here?
Too hot is the sun
Electricity fails very often
Swarm of mosquitoes
disturb my quiet slumber
Instead how happy
was your childhood!
If temperature thus
soars year after year
how much more I have to
bear till I reach my youth
middle age and old age?
I have only begun my voyage
And miles to go to reach
my unknown terminus
I even doubt how long
I can row my boat

against huge tsunamis
rushing to gulp me
How fortunate you are
as your parents were!
Unlike your humane parents
your generation proved inhuman
and mercilessly exploited
the bounties of this planet
and drank to the lees
not leaving anything
for our generation's survival.



Rosy Dog is Waiting*

Black beauty Rosy Dog is waiting
Waiting for her masters Pappachan and Thankamma
Poor grateful pet can't know
her masters have left her forever
Landslide caused by heavy downpour
at chilly night of fourth August
wiped out house and its dwellers
Son and daughter survived death
Seriously injured admitted in ICU
Rosy had been away
when doom descended
Hearing crowd's panic cry she returned
She is still waiting there
even after twelve days
Wearied she lies on her master's broken cot
Heavy rain or chilly wind
never detracts her
Goes on crying throughout night
She can't eat food
served by kind neighbours
Only eats a little once in three days
Benevolent neighbours pray for her survival
till her master's son is discharged from hospital
Rosy's love to her masters
a role model to all sons and daughters
How ungrateful are present offspring's!
Parents become burden when they are old!
Long and pray for their earliest death
or discard them to streets or old age homes!



* Based on the report of the Malayalam daily *Malayala Manorama* 18 Aug. 2013.
The tragedy occurred in the village of Kunchithanni in Kerala, India.

Serfdom is Happier than Freedom

If knowledge is cause of sorrow
freedom of thought leads one to sadness
and hence serfdom is happier than freedom
It's better to live in ignorance like slaves
than live a hellish life of feebly witnessing
others' sorrows, tortures, evils, corruptions
and injustices dancing around us
and unable to respond or react
shutting our eyes and ears to realities



Silence! Silence!! Grave Silence!!!

Mansion like house
Doors and windows closed
Past midnight, still lights inside
Sleep fears to enter
Three generations reside
Grandpa reads Bible
Grandma reads Bhagavatam
Grandchildren aged eight and twelve
write never ending homework
Their dad is drowned in Facebook
Mom buried in WhatsApp
No sound from anywhere
Seems like haunted house
Silence, silence, grave silence!
None speaks to none
No common prayers
No common dining
No sharing of ideas
If anyone breaks silence
Comes rebuke at once
“Don’t disturb me”
Goes to bed on one’s own time
What happens in one house
never known to neighbours
both comedy and tragedy
Isn’t it part of evolution
from social being to antisocial?



Triplets of Wisdom

God will not be pleased
By applause and noisy prayers
But by nishkam karma

Moon whispers to earth:
Beware of human children
Plotting to shoot you

Passion gives birth to creation
Reason creates joys and sorrows
And sorrows give birth to art

Baby runs out in ecstasy
Sees rain calling
Front door blocks its exit

Baby starts crying
Wants to dance with rain
Mama pulls it back

Pet dog barks to me
Pleads to unchain him
And play with him for a while

Crows goes on cawing:
Serve us remnants of
your plates and pots

Pussy cat goes on crying
Her only kitten found missing
Killed by neighbour's dish

Mourning Moon to man:
How could you shoot down
Your mother Earth!

Starlit night
Flower studded Gulmohar
Kisses its counterpart

Man, why so sad?
Look at the sun
Smiling at you

When grief enters
Talk to a tree
You will be solaced

Anger will disappear
When you stroke
Your pet dog or cat

When you feel lonely
Go to your garden
And speak to flowers

Waves of worries
Can be conquered
By waves of seas

Depression finds
Its suppression
At starlit sky

Why do you seek God
When a child
Stands before you?

Drench in rain
And extinguish
Fire in your mind



Victory of Fight for Water

Multinational giant Coca Cola Company
allures entire world and sinks in pernicious
cauldron of caffeine, sugar and aspartame
But had to surrender to strong resistance
displayed by determined tribal villagers
of Plachimada in Kerala, India

With an eagle's eyes of pecking profit
Company built a plant in forty acres in 2000
Sank six bore wells and drew more than
five lakh litres of water every day
From 3.8 litre life sustaining water
produced one litre cola and thus dumped
tons of toxic sludge on fields and banks of canals
Company beguiled illiterate innocent people
heralding it as offer of free fertilizer
It not only emitted stinking smell but
made old and children sick
Got rashes and infections on contact
Dried crops when used as manure
Company looted villagers' precious water
breaching their fundamental rights
Eighty five trucks of cola rolled out every day
and made profit of billions of rupees
Thirty six trucks of sludge supplied to people
as reward for their innocent sacrifice!
Company's bore wells went down to 750 to 1000 feet
resulting disappearance of water
from villagers' wells of 150 to 200 feet
Toxic matters rose up when soil dried out

Women in the village are forced to
walk four kilometres round trip
to bring drinkable water in big vessels
Paddy fields turned waste lands

Necessity for survival urged victims
to fight against the giant
Under dynamic leader Mayilamma
the villagers clamoured for
closure of man killing plant
Perumatty Grama Panchayat
refused renewal of plant's licence
Series of legal fights continued
High Court, Supreme Court,
State government interfered
Panchayat President Krishnan
was offered crores by Company
But he wasn't mean to betray his people
Finally courts and government
stood for rights of the villagers
Company stopped its production in 2004
and relinquished its licence in 2017
after marathon legal fights with Panchayat
The villagers' victory reminds
the triumph of David over Goliath

The villagers' problems still continue
Groundwater remains polluted
They get drinking water through pipes and trucks
supplied only a few hours once in two days
Their legal fight still goes on
demanding compensation for damage
caused to health and environment



Wails of Mosquitoes and Elephants

Why do you curse us
and try to kill?
Mosquitoes seem to ask
The Creator has sent
to live on your blood
And you have created
premises conducive
for our breeding

Why do you drive us back
to forest? Elephants wail
How can we survive
without food and water?
Pastures and thickets are burnt
Neither is there any water
Our habitats are destroyed
Roads are made through them
Vehicles hit us and kill
Their horns pierce our ears
Hunger's call leads us to your farms
that were once our pastures



What is Spirituality?

What is spirituality?
Worshipping God
in abstract terms
and spending time
in temples, mosques
churches, synagogues
gurudwaras etc. or
doing real services
through words and actions
to your fellow beings
including non-human
and plant world?
Methinks God likes
the latter and
loathes former



What's Wrong with Me?

What's wrong with me?
Can't take my dinner
unless my dog and cats
start dining their share
Spouse Ann repeats everyday:
they shall be served
after we finish our meals
But I can't eat when
their stomachs are empty
Is it fault treating animals
on a par with humans?



When Religion Plays Upper Hand

Mother Earth rejoices when
she gives birth to a new child
be it a plant, animal or human
A newborn child is a joy forever
for parents, relatives and humanity
All wish it grow gentle and loving
Family, society and nation
expect its service when it matures
Early education by schools and religions
moulds its basic character and nature
It's a pity when religion plays
upper hand on children and youth
secularism and patriotism is
devoured by religious fanaticism
Instead of finding God in all humans
and all His creations
some discern God only in the people
who belong to their community
How irrationally they hunt others
as their enemies and butcher them
to please their God who is infinite love.

