

Multicultural Symphony
A Collection of Poems

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K. V. Dominic



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

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Multicultural Symphony: A Collection of Poems

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Dedicated to
My Bosom Friend and Chief Motivator
Sudarshan Kcherry

Preface

Multicultural Symphony is my third collection of poems after *Winged Reason*, published in 2010 and *Write Son, Write*, published in 2011. The only specialty of this collection is that the poems were composed after my retirement as Associate Professor of English. There is not much change in my themes or the poetic style.

Poetry is the best and easiest medium of imparting messages and values to the people. In this busy cyber age which is fast deteriorating in eternal human values, poetry has a great role in moulding cultured and civilized society, but the tragic irony is that none listens to the poets nowadays. Very few people cultivate reading habits and even if one reads something outside newspapers and periodicals they are fictions which entertain their minds. I don't think if any reader searches for a novel which conveys great messages or values. Poetry is the earliest form of literature and poets were considered seers everywhere. The tastes of the people have changed and they don't want to indulge in grave, philosophical or metaphysical thoughts. The evil influence of visual media and internet dissuades people from serious thinking. The tragic fate of poetry is universal and the poets are ignored worldwide. Literary awards most often go to fiction writers and there is no encouragement for the poets from any quarter. Publishers are unwilling to take poetry as readers are few. Governments, academies, universities and other literary bodies do not promote poets by giving grants or incentives. I must specially congratulate my publisher

Mr. Sudarshan Kcherry who has published maximum number of poetry books in India. It is because of his high ethical sense that he takes poetry collections one after another in spite of the huge loss of money from his pocket. He is indeed the poet of the poets and the critic of the critics. I can't find a comparison to him in the publishing world, at least in India. He is so unique that he inspires the writers with his intuition and the poetry flows from their pen unawares. My association with him is so deep that I am dedicating this book to him, who is my bosom friend and chief motivator.

Now coming to my themes in this book. Basically I am a follower of Advaita philosophy. Though I am a Christian by birth I believe in Advaita. My commonsense doesn't allow me to see God as a separate entity. I believe that there is a Supreme Power or Energy which is controlling this universe. We call it God or the Creator. That power is the spirit or soul of the universe and its element is present in all its creations including atoms. Thus divinity is there in all bodies, both living and non living. Based on this reason I cannot find human beings better than other beings or dearest to the Creator as some religion teaches. Since the Creator has given reasoning power to human beings, they boast that the Creator is their own, having their own shape, and they only have souls which other beings lack, and other beings are inferior and are created for human beings' welfare and food etc. To me this universe is a big concert or symphony, a harmony of diverse notes. All creations play their role in concordance, but man tries to play discordant notes – stands against the rhythmic flow of the system. The inter-

relationship between Man, God and Universe is the main theme of my poems. To me science and religion are two sides of the same coin. As man is the latest evolutionary being, he should respect other beings and plants which have greater legacy to claim in this universe. The intellectual capacity of man is used more for destruction than construction, more for vices than virtues. It is an irony that the more one is intellectual and educated the more he is vicious and crooked. Illiterate, rural people are more innocent and graceful than educated urban people. The leaders of the society – political, religious and intellectual – who should be models to the society, are very often worse than the rank and file or laity. They tend to act like mafia. This exploitation of the leaders, looting and torturing of the innocent masses, itch me almost every day and it gives birth to poems one after another. The huge devastation done to the nature and environment by sand mafia, forest mafia and quarry mafia goads me to react through my only medium, poetry. The fast widening gap between the poor and the rich – the vast majority deprived of food and shelter, indirectly caused by the greed of the two or three percent rich, bleeds my heart and results in several poems. Sexism or discrimination shown to woman as part of patriarchy is another wounding thorn which forces me to react through poetry.

Multicultural beauty of the universe, developed and developing nations' irrational craze for war and defence, sacrifice of soldiers for the nation, the need for peace relations between nations, superstitions created by religions and the exploitation of the laity by clergymen, global warming, need for conservation of nature, torture to

elephants, child labour, casteism, unemployment, exploitation at the labour sector, dignity of labour, need of value based education, Swami Vivekananda's contributions, celebration of man's intelligence, skills and selfless service for society are other themes I have dealt in my poems. Sources for my themes are very often newspaper reports. I love to write more on concrete ideas than abstract ones.

I have only one motive behind my compositions – imparting some messages and values to the young minds which are groping in darkness and ignorance. Today's youth are disillusioned and they lead a futile life. They have no role models or messiahs to lead them in the right track. The clergy who are supposed to guide them are misleading them very often to fanaticism and religious fundamentalism. The same is the case with political leaders who never impart democratic, secular and patriotic values but partisan and parochial values to the young minds. Since the content of the poem is most important to me I don't mind if the lines lack the luster of style. There are forty seven poems in this collection. I am presenting them before my esteemed readers who are the best judges to assess their quality. Once again thanking my dearest publisher, Mr. Sudarshan Kcherry for taking my humble work, I wind up my words.

K. V. Dominic

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1. Multicultural Harmony

Part One

My dear fellow beings
when will you learn
the need for
multicultural existence?

The entire system
is a grand concert
composed by the Solespirit
As matter and spirit
animate and inanimate
visible and invisible
tangible and intangible
audible and inaudible
movable and immovable
are instruments multitudinous
of His perfect symphony.

Multiplicity and diversity
essence of universe
From atom to the heavens
multiculturalism reigns
This unity in diversity
makes beauty of universe.

What thrill is there in Sahara?
How dull is life in Atlantic?
Enchanting beauties of
gardens, groves, meadows,

fields, forests, woods,
brooks, rivers, cataracts
embodiments of multiplicity.

Multicultural instincts
exist in all creations
Inanimate beings know
how to flow with the system
Plant world too is
well aware of the system
Look at the woods
Look at the wild
Look at the birds
Look at the fish
Multicultural beauty everywhere.

It's we human beings who
distinguish and disintegrate
integrated animal world
Indian cow, American cow
African elephant, Sri Lankan elephant
European crow, Asian crow
Chinese goat, English goat.

We do use our reasoning power
not to find harmony
We take thrill in discordant notes
Love to split atoms
and destroy others
Human world is a rose flower
Each petal adds to its beauty
But when petals are nipped off
vanishes its splendour.

Part Two

Dear my fellow beings
why are we crazy of labels?
Western people, eastern people
white men, black men
Europeans, Asians
American, Africans
Indians, Chinese, Japanese
Germans, French, English
Australians, Canadians, Egyptians
Christians, Muslims
Hindus, Buddhists
Bengalese, Punjabis
Malayalees, Tamilans
Brahmins, Kshatriyas
Vaisyas, Sudras.

The Creator made no divisions
except man and woman
He made the division
to continue creation
In truth they are one
two sides of the flow

Part Three

Dear my fellow beings
there's no discrimination
of male or female in animal world
But look at the plight of female

in human world
Her birth is ill omen
Millions are butchered
before they are born
Parents receive her
as burden to family
She is destined to live
under her brother's shadows
Has to live on his leftover
She is denied good food
denied good dress
denied schooling
denied entertainments
Always jailed in kitchen
compelled to work
from dawn to midnight
None listens to her complaints
but tortures
if she opens her mouth
She has no choice
for her spouse
Often raped by her husband
He never cares
for her desires
Feeding of children
falls on her shoulders
Sacrifices her health
for entire family
Her struggle starts
from early morning
fights with utensils

in the kitchen
and then goes for
hazardous labour
till the dusk
She is born with a cry
goes on crying and crying
till she reaches
her destination death.

Woman is most venerable
for she is your mother
she is nurse and teacher
and above all
she is the lamp of house
Sexism is contemptible
A product of patriarchy
Patriarchy reigns supreme
in families, institutions
societies, nations
politics and religion
Woman is exploited everywhere
Religion aimed at ethics
discriminates her
Why can't women be priests
in churches, mosques and temples?
Can't she enter and pray
in her Heavenly Father's abode?

Man, woman is your counterpart
Why can't she be taken
as your own body?

Why is she viewed
as a consumer product?
Why do you look at her
with lascivious eyes?
Hasn't she right over her body?
Why do you dictate her apparel?
Why do you forget
that she is your mother
she is your wife
she is your sister
or she is your daughter?

Part Four

Dear my fellow human beings
be humble as all other beings
This planet is a home
to all objects living and non living
Kindly learn your position
You were born
as the youngest ones
All objects have
the right to exist here
You may live here
Let other things also live
Since you are selfish and greedy
you take more than
what is due to you
Other beings struggle for necessities
whereas you are after
comforts and luxuries

You become rich
pushing hundreds of your neighbours
to the abyss of starvation.

Part Five

Dear my fellow beings
though you are created a vegetarian
your greed for delicacies
extinguish other beings
Your greed for luxurious shelters
exterminate trees and forests
Your construction mania
defiles the sky and
topples the climate
You turn your villages to towns
and become more and more civilized
but less and less cultured
There was a time
when you loved
cohabitation with other beings
Cats, dogs, cows, goats,
fowls were your companions
Your civilization now
keeps them away
Your butcher culture
teaches you to kill them
and eat if edible
Your indiscriminate felling of trees
chased away all birds
Many have become extinct now

In place of cuckoos and nightingale
which lulled you to sleep
mosquitoes disturb your slumber
through injections and drone.

Part Six

Dear my fellow beings
you boast of your culture
you boast of your language
Is there any culture
which is not hybrid?
Is there any language
which is not mixed?
How many millions have been killed
in the name of culture?
Look into the pages of history
Most of the wars have been waged
for the supremacy of culture
Conquest of cultures over cultures
amalgamated to multicultural world
How much Indian is an Indian?
None can give any answer
Same who boasts of any nationality.
Part Seven

Dear my fellow beings
break away all fences and walls
Fences of your petty minds
Compound walls of your houses
Walls of your religions and castes

Boundaries of your native States
And ultimately borders of your nations
Let there be no India, Pakistan or China
America, Africa, Europe or Australia
But only one nation THE WORLD
where every being lives in perfect harmony
as one entity in multicultural world

2. Siachen Tragedy*

Siachen glacier,
milky white grey hair of Himalaya.
Seventy kilometers long
and height ranging from
four thousand to six thousand metres
Twinkling by sun, moon and stars
Rarest beauty on earth for the heavens
Winter, winter, winter, forever and ever
Snowfall is thirty five feet
temperature minus fifty Celsius
Not a blade of grass grows
yet world's highest battlefield!
Thousands of soldiers of India and Pakistan
fight with Nature to secure their frontiers
Billions are spent for their outposts
Siachen glacier feeding several rivers
irrationally axed and dug
inviting vagaries of harmless Nature
Avalanche lodged on seventh April
buried hundred and twenty four soldiers
and eleven civilians under eighty feet snow
Isn't it high time the governments
stopped challenging benevolent Nature?

* The tragedy took place on 7 April 2012

3. Horoscope

Horoscope, bread earner of astrologers
Arch-villain of Hindu marriages
Monster who pricked the rosy dreams
and sucked the blood of thousands of spinsters
An offspring of pseudoscience astrology
Man-made by-pass for 'happy' life
Christians and Muslims never follow
Are their lives worse than Hindus?
Do horoscopic matches bring happiness and peace?
Why then cases of thousands of divorces?
Peace and happiness are fruits of Karma
Horoscope is the product of religious mafia
A means to exploit laity's ignorance
Millions are trapped in this vicious circle
No sign of redemption in near future

4. Global Warming's Real Culprits

America and other developed countries
stamp poverty stricken third world
and developing countries as
main culprits of global warming!
To them firewood and fossil-fuel gas
the arch villain of greenhouse gases
But thousands die every day
since smokes don't
emit from their kitchens
Billions survive each day
since such noxious gases
come out from their fireplace
Carbon dioxide produced by
home appliances of the rich
room heaters, air conditioners,
refrigerators, washing machines,
and the toxic emissions
from their cars and planes
plays the major share
in polluting air and
resultant global warming.

5. Cohabitation on the Planet

Souls of the seven cats
Ammini, Manikutty, Preethi,
Kinganam, Kitty, Rowdy, Kittu
long for my lap and stroke
My neighbor dispatched
them in two years
Who says angels are in heaven?
They were all angels on earth
manifesting His beauty
exhibiting His Grace
to humans who
grope for Him in heaven
My neighbour believes
and millions believe
that He is in heaven
and He created the universe
for human welfare
that man is centre of creation
that he can dictate the planet
My neighbour believes
his wife is his own
his sons are his own
the mansion and compounds
are his own
all birds and animals on compounds
are his own
the earth and the air
are his own

He fails to learn
and millions fail to learn
that God is the sole owner
Empty handed we come
empty handed we go
We inhale what plants exhale
My neighbour disregards
and millions disregard
cohabitation with other beings
Souls of the seven cats
Haunt me and wound me
Unanimously they ask
why they were poisoned
Haven't they right to this planet?
Aren't they children of God?
Is it offence to run along the compound?
Is it sin to play hide and seek with birds?
Is it crime to defecate in pits
and bury it neatly?
Sweet memories of those pet cats
how they brought heaven to our house
torment us like thorns on our hearts
How can I avenge their deaths?
What law is there to punish my neighbour?
God, don't you hear their cries?
Don't you hear our cries?
I can only vision
my neighbour will be reborn
as a mouse to be chased
by half a dozen cats

6. Multicultural Kerala

My native State Kerala
blessed with equable climate
and alluring landscape
crowned by the Sahyas
she lies on the lap of Arabian Sea
Multitudes of brooks and rivers
flow through her veins
Thousands of species of flora and fauna
Six months long rainy season
followed by summer bearable
Autumn and winter fear to enter
Tourists call it God's own country

Education makes one cultured and civilized
teaches one noble values and principles
Alas high rate of literacy
doesn't yield fruit to my fellowmen
They are puppets in the hands of
religious and political mafias
Become preys to superstitions,
offshoots of religious blind faith
Millions are spent for
senseless rituals and ceremonies

Education makes them crazy of
white-collared cozy jobs
Fertile arable lands and fields
lie like deserted wastelands

The State depends on neighbouring States
for food of all kinds,
Rice, wheat and other grains
vegetables, fruits, milk, egg, meat
Construction mania devours
paddy fields and arable lands
and defecate multistoreyed structures
on mother-earth's lovely bosom
Educated youth of the State
not getting white-collared jobs
seek employment abroad
spending loans of lakhs from banks
What an irony! They are ready to do
hazardous laborious tasks
and even menial scavenger jobs

Kerala has become a haven
for North Indian labourers
Thousands flood to this heaven
and serve the indolent Keralites
Construction, agricultural, plantation
commercial, domestic and
such daily wage labours
go through their rocky hands
My State has thus become
cent percent dependent and multicultural!

7. On Conservation

Hey poet, kindly heed to my plea
before you thrust your pen
into my bleeding heart
Though I am a passive sheet of paper
I have a soul as vibrant as yours
Please don't vomit your trash
through your volcanic missile
The less you write the more we live
the more our plant family lives
Kindly write on the need of the day
the necessity of conservation
of plants and animals on earth

8. Charles Darwin, Patron Saint of Animals

Charles Darwin the great scientist
unravelled history of Creation
linked human beings with other beings
challenged pseudo religious claims
Religious fanatics injected
irrational theories and philosophies
to establish man's supremacy
and similarity to the Creator
"God created man in His own image!"
Isn't man more prone to vice than virtue?
How then has he God's image?
Do animals commit sins or crimes?
Hats off to Charles Darwin
the patron saint of other beings
Rational man will deem his
relation to the animal world,
respect their claims for coexistence

9. Elephant Mania

Elephant the largest animal on earth
Famous for its memory and intelligence
But seldom knows its size or power
Hence cunning man enslaves it
Makes it dance to all his whims and fancies
Highly sensitive to heat
It's goaded along burning tar road
Speared often if it disobeys mahout
Forced to drag huge timber
Bear people on its back in tourist centres
An exhibit for temple festivals
Torture it with heavy sounds
of fireworks and drums
Unbearable it charges
on mahouts and crowd
How many have been killed thus?
Are gods crazy of elephants
or devotees elephant-maniacs?
Isn't it high time
we send them back to jungles
and thus save their lives and ours?

10. India, Number One!

Sixty percent of my countrymen
defecate in open place
Six hundred and twenty six million!
My country is number one in the world!
Dear my brothers and sisters abroad,
don't you see my country's growth?
Ninety seven percent of my country men
have no access to clean drinking water.
Yet the government claims
the country is fast growing!
True, growth is there
in number of multi-millionaires
who are even less than two percent.

11. Child Labour*

Dhanalakshmi, lass of eleven
Parents dreamt of making wealth
and named her thus
after the goddess of wealth
Her parents sick and poor
fail to feed their children
Crying hungry mouths
forced the wretched parents
to sell the eldest lass
With burning heart
and tears rolling down
the ma gave her parting kiss
Her trembling hands received
five thousand rupees
the price of her darling child
Reluctant and crying
Dhanalakshmi followed her master
Young and healthy Advocate
lived with his wife and children
Luxurious double-storied house
Dhanalakshmi cook-cum-maid
Her hellish life from dawn to midnight
Her tender soft palms
smooth as petals of lilies
burnt, bruised, bled
Sadist husband and wife
drunk and voluptuous
inflicted wounds on her body
Woke her up very early morning

burning her hand with cigarette ends
Starved her for sluggishness in work
Poor lass helpless and crying
None in the world
to share her sorrows
Longed for her parents call
to take her back home
Dreamt of a day
lying on her ma's lap
caressed by the loving hands
When children of her age
strolled gaily to their schools
tears ran like brooks
Tired of overnight's late labour
couldn't fall in for duty at dawn
The monster mistress poured
hot water on her sleeping head
Poor lass shrieked with deadly pain
The neighbours swarmed to the house
hearing this piercing scream
Took the child to the nearby hospital
showering abusive words
on her master and mistress
Phoned to the police
and got them arrested
The channels flashed the news
Millions prayed mute
for Dhanalakshmi's precious life
And alas she left the world
immersing the whole state
in an ocean of grief and wrath

* The tragedy took place in February 2011

12. Caste Lunatics

Prakash Jaatav, aged thirty one
riding on his motorcycle
attacked by a group of twelve
beat him and slashed his nose
The reason for this diabolic act?
“The Dalits have no right to ride motorbikes
in presence of high caste men.”
My country, the greatest democracy,
when will it be freed from
lunatics of caste and religion?

* The incident took place in Madhya Pradesh, India in the month of June 2012.

13. Bulbuls' Nest

My jasmine plant
with myriads of hands
embraced the slender pole
Entangled like a
lass's disheveled hair
Sprinkled with flowers
sparkling like stars
Allured a pair of
red whiskered bulbuls
Intoxicated by fragrance
started building a nest
Their sweet high note music
echoed our house and compounds
God has sent them
recompense for our
murdered seven cats
Delightedly we watched
every step of their architecture
We tried our best
not to frighten
our divine guests
Neither were they
scared of the hosts
Ten days of incessant work
magnificent nest was ready
Two purple eggs then
Hatching for twelve days
Started feeding the nestlings

Guests of four in our outhouse
We were extra vigilant
to scare off covetous crows
The guests may leave us
after a fortnight
Still that heavenly bliss
happiness for ever

Alarmed by their shrieking wail
we dashed towards the jasmine
A rat snake close to the nest
Frightened, climbed down
and sped its way
Alas, the chicks were swallowed!
Wretched bulbuls
wailed for two days
and disappeared for ever
My wife still disagrees
for letting the snake go elated
I have never seen it
before or after
Isn't He who sent it
as the bulbuls were?
How can a host
ill-treat a guest?
He who creates
destroys as well.

14. Beena's Shattered Dreams*

Unbearable to look at
their darling daughter's still body
parents fell unconscious
Beena's corpse was brought from Mumbai
accompanied by her roommates.

Her parents made her nursing graduate
taking loans of lakhs from bank
and spending from their meager daily wages
What all dreams were there for her,
her parents and her younger sister!

The Mumbai Hospital had offered her
monthly salary of thirteen thousand,
free food, boarding and travel
She had to live in cell in hostel
with three other colleagues
Had to cook her meals
Had to spend fifty rupees daily
for rickshaws taking her to the hospital
She was paid only nine thousand
and had to work more than twelve hours a day
and that too with an irregular schedule

She wanted to escape from that hellish world
longed to return home
and seek a job in a better hospital
But authorities won't let her go

unless fifty thousand paid
for breach of contract
They can violate all agreements
and none is there to question them
No law is there to punish them
Alas, dreams and hopes being shattered,
losing strength to face all challenges,
Beena bade adieu ending her life

The three estates of my great country
and the fourth estate too,
the largest democracy in the world!
Don't you listen to the wails and sobs
stormed from Beena's writhing parents?
Have you lost your conscience
witnessing thousands of Beenas every day?

* The tragedy occurred in October 2011

15. Mullaperiyar Dam *

A dam aged hundred and sixteen,
built without cement but surkhi and lime,
blocking innocent frisky Periyar,
immersing millions of plants and trees,
fleeing thousands of animals and birds.
It postures now Janus-faced;
its old age worsened by frequent tremors,
head to foot bleeding in several parts,
makes millions tense and sleepless on one side.
Catastrophic fear culminated to
behavioural problems in children nearby;
daren't go to school, neither parents dare to send;
anxiety, phobia, depression, insomnia!
If broken, forty millions in five districts affected.
People in unison clamour for new dam:
"Give them water and save our lives."
Millions on other side object to new dam;
Disbelieve promise of water from other side.
Arid five districts made fertile using the water.
Political mafia beguiles innocent masses
People on both sides lived as one family
Alas! Anti-social forces injected
regional, racial venom in masses;
destroy farms, attack shops and buses.
Multitudes flee to their native villages
leaving whatever they have earned with sweat.
Borders are closed, police patrol,
Inter-state buses and trucks stop run;

fruits, vegetables and eggs are rotten;
thousands of farmers, labours and merchants
struggle for their daily lives.
Rulers of State and central governments
living in midst of pomp and luxury
heed not to the wails and moans of the masses.
Avarice for power obstructs their duties;
tests the patience of benevolent Nature
and leaves the masses preys to calamities.

* The poem is composed based on newspaper reports during monsoon in 2011.

16. I Wish I could Fly Back

I wish I could sit on Time's shoulder
and fly back to my youth
I could then be jolly
with my friends and colleagues
who bathed me with pure love
which flowed from their surging hearts
I do have friends today
who are selfish, fake and fraud

I could then sit my daughter and son
on my lap to shower them with warm kisses
Carry them on my shoulder
and listen to their jingling babble
I could watch their nimble feet
moving like musical notes
They both are grown up now
making my lips dry and droughty

I could then love my ma more
help her in her domestic works
make her happy with sweet loving words
caress her hands and feet when lying tired
buy her new dress on carnival days
How little I could return her
when compared to her tsunami of love!
Alas I can only long for
as she has flown to her Father's abode

17. Pearl's Harbour*

Parents who christened her 'Pearl'
never dreamt her becoming real pearl
A real gem to hundreds of desolates
Pearl aged thirty one
and her only daughter Kalinga
living with seven other kids
and mothers two – all forlorn
Living with a mission in life
No mother shall sell her child
complying to Hunger's call
No mother shall kill her child
for being born of illegal father
Her rented house at Alappuzha**
a bower of love and benevolence
Born to wealthy parents
postgraduate in Social Work
married to Prasanth an industrialist
Truly made for each other
both were humane and philanthropists
Helped orphans and wretched
from profits of their business
Alas Creator called him back
through a car accident
Pearl fulfilled Prasanth's dream
'Pink' was formed for charity
Returns from his business partnerships
flow as milk and food
to hundreds of forlorn mouths

Unlike Rossetti's Blessed Damozel
he never yearns for Pearl's reunion
Pearl is a role model
to thousands of wealthy parents
who luxuriate in their mansions
with a child or two and servants plenty

* Based on the newspaper report in *The Mathrubhumi* on 20 April 2011

** A coastal town in Kerala, India

18. Dignity of Labour

Imitating the Whites
fashionable to the Blacks
particularly to my countrymen
Mimic dress, hairstyle
food, drinks and all
such sensory pleasures
My countrymen fail to imitate
noble qualities:
industry, perseverance,
enterprise, adventure,
equality, fraternity,
cleanliness, health
love of nature
and environment
Laziness is their chief trait
Agricultural labourers,
sweepers, scavengers,
fishermen, tailors,
barbers, drivers
and all such workers
who serve the mankind
often underdogs
and seldom deemed
Parasite politicians
bogus sanyasis and clergies
white-collar bureaucrats,
corrupt and inefficient,
models and heroes
and honoured by my society!

19. Drowned Dreams*

Shijin Das and Jibin
friends aged eighteen
students who passed intermediate
wanted to serve the country
and earn their livelihood
Preparation for naval recruitment
wanted to learn swimming
tried in flooded paddy field
Their bubbles of dreams pricked off
sinking their parents and dear ones
in tears they were drowned
Bharat Matha,
why didn't you hold them from sinking
who were willing to guard you from enemies?

* Based on a tragedy that took place at Enavoor, Kerala, India on 12 June 2012.

20. Hungry Mouths

"My sweet son,
finish your rice;
why so slow?"
"Ma, enough for me;
can't eat any more."
"Ouch! Why took so much
and made such waste?
Dear, you don't realize
the price of your leavings;
it can save
a child like you
from his death today.
Thousands of children
are famished
in our country
and other countries
day after day.
Leftovers of the
ten percent Haves
can sustain
ninety percent Havenots
and make this hellish world
a blissful heaven.
My dear child
whenever you
sit before food
lend your ears
to the hungry cries
of millions of kids

and the moans
of their helpless mummies.”
“Very very sorry ma
I will never waste
any food in future.
Ma, we shall keep
a portion of our food
and send it to
those hungry mouths.”
“Right my child,
we will do
what we can do
to silence those wails.”

21. Ananthu and the Wretched Kite*

Ananthukrishna, God's innocent child
confronts with a kite, God's own dear creation
No reason for spite or revenge
Little lad is chased by the kite
pecks him on head and back
on his journey to school and home
Compelled to go with parent and umbrella

A fortnight ago some elder naughty boys
pelted stones at the wretched kite
Even wounded by a stone on its back
Boys fled away leaving Ananthu alone
Poor kite mistook him as assailant

Accipitrine birds like kites, hawks, eagles,
God created them carnivores
Prey on birds, insects, animals for survival
Whereas we human beings
butcher animal world
not for existence but for taste
Nocturnal birds like bats and owls
ominous for us human beings

When will we begin to love
kites, eagles, bats, owls
as we long for parrots, cuckoos,
skylarks and nightingales?
When will we stop the massacre
of animals, birds and fish
and learn to respect
other beings and their right to live?

* Based on newspaper report

22. A Spider in My Bathroom

A spider in my bathroom
To smite or spare?
Lives on mosquitoes
who inject me
The creator has sent
it along with mosquitoes
Being a poet vowed
to love all creations
what shall I do?

23. Fruit of Labour

Mr. Mony, my painter,
deserted by money itself
Tightened his belt
to sustain his family
Had to live in a rented hut
with his unemployed wife
and two little lads

Mony led a team of dozen
frisked with colours and brushes
Bathed houses, schools,
colleges, churches, hospitals,
offices, monasteries
and sky scrapers
with dazzling, delightful colours,
and filled eyes and minds
of his employers
with immense joy and happiness

Mony started his career
with a meager wage of fifty
A humble breakfast at ten
was his lone diet during duty
When he painted my house once,
his teammates went to dine
during lunch break
But he was sitting on the verandah
with a beedi burning on his lips

“Mony, why don't you go for lunch?”
“Sir, I am not used to lunch.
How can I spend more
from the fifty rupees I get?”
Right, Mony went on painting
from little rooms to steeples,
nurturing colourful dreams
of a house of his own one day
and government jobs to his children
Sons were sent for professional education,
taking burdensome loans from banks

Mony's days have come at last!
Goddess of wealth has descended
to his humble house
Both his sons are employed with high salary
Are married to brides with fine income
Have bought a house and cars two
Mony, my painter, is really happy now
He goes on painting with his colleagues
gets reasonable wage of five hundred
He dances with his brush and colours!
But never goes to take his lunch
his only luxury a drink in the evening

24. Sail of Life

My morning walk takes me
to a tea stall
The lone opened shop
at the still Gandhi Square

I am astonished
by the din and bustle
that comes out
from all opened stalls
in the evenings

My boisterous sail will reach
its harbour one day
I will be astonished
by its stillness and darkness

25. Valueless Education

Shocking news shrieked newspaper readers
Fourteen year old tenth class Legin*
fiendishly murdered by his classmate
A year old grudge of the culprit
Revenge for a blow from the victim
Invited friendly to the school urinal
Stabbed several times on chest and neck
Hacked off head with a knife
Then cracked it with a large rock
Torn whole body with a piece of glass
Left the corpse with little grief or remorse

Where does our education
lead teenage minds to?
The young culprit leads a discontent life
Lives with his mother,
Deserted by his father
who lives with his fourth wife
Gets no value from his home or school
Visual media leads him astray
Becomes fan of Rambo films
Worships fictitious hero
who can kill all enemies
He too keeps a knife in his socks
and a glass piece wrapped in kerchief

Media, print and visual
forget ethics they are bound to follow

Instead of being a correcting force
to all subjects and other estates
filling minds with eternal noble values
they inject venoms of violence
communalism and superstitions
They focus terrorists and anti heroes
Arch corrupters and human deities
And no wonder, tender minds
are bewitched by their illusion

* The heinous crime took place in St. George's Higher Secondary School,
Muttar, Kerala, India on 7th May 2012

26. Musings on My Shoes

Dear my black leather shoes,
I should prostrate over you
for carrying seventy kilos
for more than two years
You are relieved only
a few hours at nights
Yet how little did I
deem your service!
You lifted me from
dust, mud and all such filth
Seldom did I heed to your
terrible tearful travail:
the way man slaughtered you
to extract your hide
Off my feet I threw you
out of my vicinity,
displeased with the stench
excreted from my feet
How can one be crueller than this?
How ungrateful I have been!

Same is the plight of proletariat
They are shoes worn by the rich
Service being complete
they are spat out like curry leaves
Women too are often treated like shoes
Mothers and wives when old and weak
Become burden to sons and husbands

27. Multilingual Black Drongo

Black Drongo the black beauty
Proud of its diverse sounds and tails
Homo sapiens feel proud
of its speech and language
Other beings can't follow it
Same is the case
with non-human sounds
Which scientist can read
cries of animals and birds?
Black Drongo speaks
in more than seven sounds
Even imitates cat's sound
And its species reads them well
and responds sweetly.
How sweet and musical
are the sounds of animal world
when compared to the toxic sounds
vomited by the human species
defiling air chaste and pure!

28. Mukesh's Destiny*

Poor parents named him Mukesh
Perhaps longed their son
to be great like legendary singer
or multi-billionaire Ambani
Born to impoverished Dalit parents
studies in fifth standard
Fate defies him at this tender age
Mother bed-ridden with mouth cancer
Compelled to forgo all treatment
Father, the bread earner
fell victim to acute asthma
Little Mukesh is their lone support
Works in nearby estates
on all holidays and even working days
When his classmates enjoy holidays
his nimble feet and soft hands
clash with rough tools and hard earth
How can government turn face to
Mukesh and his wretched parents?

* Based on the news report in the Malayalam daily *The Mathrubhumi* on 30 June 2012.

29. Lottery Tickets Sellers

Blind old man
weak and bony
leaning on staff
holding lottery tickets
in tremulous left hand
His lone dependent
and supporter as well
spouse old and weak
through whom
he knows the world
leads him by hand
to the queue of men
waiting at the liquor shop
Another blind youth
pocketed with tickets
stationed at entrance of
chief government office
Similar sight of a ticket seller
a youth who has lost
both his hands
pleads for commuters' mercy
in buses after buses
with tickets and money
hanging in two pockets
They all try to bring
fortune to their customers
Alas, goddess of fortune
never cares for them

30. Mahi's Fourth Birthday*

Mahi's fourth birthday
clad in new gaudy dress
celebrating with her friends
playing near the house at 11 pm
fell into that hellish trap,
a deserted uncapped borewell
seventy feet deep
Poor kid's faint wails added by
shrieking cries of her parents,
friends and relatives
Rescue operation led by army,
supported by fire force,
police, tunneling experts,
officials of health, revenue, security,
a team of more than hundred
worked hard for long eighty six hours,
digging parallel well nearby,
while two thousand million minds
bled with deep anguish
and their prayers soared high
for the little angel's life
Alas, the army personnel brought out
decomposed body of Mahi
She died of asphyxia
within three or four hours,
the postmortem revealed

Envious of the poor child's happiness
gods in heaven dragged her there
to entertain them with her mirth
Innocent children fall victims
to careless adults' negligence
and the culprits go acquitted

* The tragic incident occurred at Manesar Village in Haryana, India on 20th June 2012.

31. Who am I?

"Who are you?" my superego asked
"I am Prof. K. V. Dominic, MA, M.Phil, PhD,"
my id replied
"Alright, what else?"
"English poet, short story writer, critic, editor."
"Keep that long tail under your armpit,"
superego exploded.
"An illiterate farmer is greater than you;
His service is greater than your scribbling;
Labourers' sweat is dearer than your ink;
If they strike, your writings will cease,
and ultimately you yourself will disappear.
Hence support them and write on them;
Proclaim to the world the noble
service they render to the humanity."

32. Bathroom Monologues

Bathroom
A cell one loves deep
One which gives most relief
Both physical and mental
A place of countless monologues
Muses descend there
Orpheus opens your lips
Music flows from you
to the accompaniment of
rhythmic sounds of shower
There you are the monarch
No complexes rein you
You sing to your content
The birth of ideal creativity!

33. Martyrs at the Borders

Chilly freezing Line of Control
Two Indian soldiers shot dead
by Pakistan counterparts
A body even beheaded and mutilated
Similar accusations from Pakistan soldiers
Precious human lives little value there
Values frozen with passionless life at high altitude
When billions of compatriots
live peacefully with their families
on either sides of LoC
thousands of soldiers patrol day and night
deprived of warmth of love
from their spouses and children
How their families long to meet them
counting down months and days!
How these guardian angels
thirst for communion with their families!
How much of a country's revenue
allotted for its defence every year!
Total money spent on defence
can wipe out poverty from the planet for ever
Is human species so belligerent and destructive?
Aren't the masses peace lovers,
benevolent and compassionate?
Why then such a huge waste
for defence unnecessary?
Why create tension at the borders?
A means to divert subjects' attention
and muffle mass' protest against corruption?

34. Mother's Love

Maternal love, love sublime
Inexplicable, unfathomable
Noblest of all emotions
Visible both on human beings
and other beings
Both on domestic animals
and wild animals
Mother feeding babies
seeking food for them
with much labour
She eats only after
they are fed or
leaving portions for them

Maternal love is transcendent emotion
Both human species
and other species possess
I am perplexed
by some sporadic disasters
A mother offering her
affectionate daughter
to please her lover's sexual urge
How could she throw her dear child
to the hungry wolf?
How could she suppress
the divine emotion of maternal love?

35. Tears of a World Champion*

Kudos to Indian Blind Cricket team
2012 World Champion
Hats off to Mr. A. Manish
Middle order batsman and fine fielder
A role model to people with eyes
Resurrected like a phoenix bird

Lost eyesight at the infant age of three
Thatched hut of the family
burnt very close to him
Helpless baby went on crying
till the hut turned to ashes
Instead of tears puss flowed
from eyes next morning
Lost one eye's function cent percent

Father died after six months
Mother sent him to Blinds' School
Studied till higher secondary
The school could find his cricket talents
Got selected into Kerala State team
And later into Indian team
And now world champion at 24

But his jubilations can't last long
Has to regain mason work
at the mixing company nearby
Has been doing so for several years
to earn bread for him
and his depending family
Has got three sisters
and one has to be married off

Manish yearns for government's mercy
A permanent job
as reward for his service to nation

* Based on newspaper report

36. Thodupuzha Municipal Park

Municipal park at Thodupuzha
beckons me my evenings
A haven for the townsmen
fleeing from their burning houses
Afternoon heat of thirty eight degrees
Sweating throughout due to humidity
Why to blame sun or gods?
Man has dug his grave
Not only his but other beings
and the planet itself

Though not vast, an ideal park
Full of trees and river adjacent
Symphony of the chirpings from above
Rustling of gentle breeze on leaves
Mixed sounds of flowing vehicles

Seated on a concrete bench
my senses feast beauties one by one
Little kids on swings and merry-go-rounds
captivate my eyes and mind
Little ones of all creations
eternal beauties that haunt our minds
Those little kids' merry pendulum swings
pull me back to childhood days
How much I longed for a swing
made of ropes and coconut leaf!

How I fell once rope broken
How ma beat me for swinging and falling

Those parents pushing kids on next swing
nostalgically draws my mind
to our occasional visit here a score year back
myself, Anne and our little two kids
How much we enjoyed from their happy swings!

Gone are those happy days with little kids
They have grown up and flown away from us
Anxiety of their future welfare has replaced
peace and happiness that haunted in our house

37. Why is Fate So Cruel to the Poor?*

Latehar District in Jharkhand
One of the poorest in 'fast growing' India
Landlessness and graft in public schemes
compel the villagers every year
to migrate to neighbouring Bihar
for a few months
to work on landowners' vast farms
in exchange for paddy grains
No wages but one by twelfth of the harvest
That too deducting the food they ate
The rate remains the same
even after long eight years
Exploitations questioned by none
None to protect the wretched
Not even the One who created them
Eighth January 2013
The blackest day for the unfortunates
The hired truck carrying sacks of grains they earned
Workers sitting on the top of the sacks
tried to protect them and the children
from the bitter chill of the night
Alas! The truck swerved and overturned
Twenty five labourers and ten children
died suffocated under heavy sacks
They struggled hard for the grain
and the grain led them to their graves
Why is fate so cruel to the poor?

* Based on newspaper report

38. Women's Cricket World Cup 2013

I.C.C. Women's Cricket World Cup 2013
Played in cricket crazy land of India
Opening match at Brabourne ground, Mumbai
Indian lasses meeting West Indian lasses
Live telecast from Star Cricket
What a shame! Empty galleries!
Had it been men's world cup
galleries full and thousands ticketless outside
Why such discrimination to women's sports?
Why such double standards to women's feats?
Had it been women's beauty contest
or fashion show with minimum dress
the stadium would be full
even if tickets are very high
Dear my brothers in India and abroad
let's appreciate and promote
our sisters' talents and skills
rather than looking at them
with vicious hungry eyes.

39. ACTS – Saviors on the Roads*

ACTS: Accident Care and Transport Service
Founded at Thrissur, Kerala in 1999
More than thirty thousand voluntary helpers now
Doctors, engineers, teachers, daily wage labourers
Fourteen branches, fourteen ambulances
Free service in the entire district
Flown to more than fifty thousand accident spots
Taken more than a lakh bleeding lives to hospitals
Thousands of bruised dead bodies
to police stations and mortuaries
ACTS has become the culture of the land
Ethos of a humane enlightened people
Sensing others agony as one's own
Finding time for others
even in one's busy hectic life

* Based on newspaper report

40. Beach Beauticians*

Kozhikode beach in Kerala
Beautified by four beauticians
Salih and his three mates
Free voluntary service
from six to eight all morning
When others enjoy morning walk
they get greater happiness
in serving them and
thousands who frequent in evenings
Bought brooms, baskets, spades, pickaxes
Start cleaning from one end
removing garbage, plastic,
grass and mud on road sides
setting loosened tiles in position
Ten days to reach the other end
and then another ten on return
Role models to the human race
Treat public place as our own compounds

* Based on newspaper report

41. A Tribute to Sakuntala Devi*

$7,686,369,774,870 \times 2,465,099,745,779$

The answer in just twenty eight seconds!

= 18,947,668,177,995,426,462,773,730

Guinness Book Record in 1982

Kudos to Sakuntala Devi, the "Human Computer"

Born to a trapeze, tightrope performer

having no formal education

surprised all as mental calculator

from the tender age of three

University scientists bowed their heads

amazed at her skill at age of six

23rd root of 201-digit number

she could answer in fifty seconds!

Cube root of 188138517

she could do it faster than a computer

Marvel to the East and the West

her loss is literally irreplaceable

Praise to the Almighty

for His revelation through a human brain!

* Shakuntala Devi was an Indian writer and mental calculator from Bangalore popularly known as "human computer." She died on 21 April 2013.

42. Celebration of Girl-Child's Birth*

The greatest celebration of girl-child's birth
the highest model to the entire world
The slaughterhouse world where thousands
of female fetus are killed everyday
Piplantri villagers in Indian State Rajasthan
angels on earth creating a paradise
A girl-child's birth celebration to the entire village
Earth, sky, trees, flowers, rivers, birds, flies
welcome the newcomer dancing
Hundred and eleven saplings
brought by women to newborn's house
They are to be planted in the village
and nurtured throughout their lives
The villagers collect twenty one thousand rupees
donate to newborn's father
Adding his own ten thousand
deposits in child's account
a fixed deposit for twenty years
The child shall get maximum education
Not married before maturity
The noble practice started in 2007
The village head Shyam Sundar Palival
started this exemplary project
A memorial of his departed girl child
The village is now blessed with
two lakh fifty thousand robust trees
Fruit trees and herbal trees
Their leaves and fruits yield
great income to the villagers

* Based on *The Mathrubhumi* report on 5 June 2013 – The World Environment Day.

43. Where shall I Flee from this Fretful Land?

Once God's own country with equable climate
Rainy season for six months
and mild summer for the rest of the year
Blessed with brooks, rivers, lakes and greeneries
Now people crazy for material pleasures and luxuries
tumbled nature's balance and bounties
resulting scanty rain and intolerable heat
So where shall I flee from this fretful land?

Once fertile land for free and secular thoughts
People lived in multicultural harmony
Hindus, Muslims, Christians lived as brothers and sisters
respected each other and their religious views
Now hell of intolerance and religious fundamentalism
So where shall I flee from this fretful land?

Once politicians were apostles
Their selfless service to the nation
lauded gratefully by the people
Now people look at them with dubious eyes
for corruption is stamped on their brow
National income created of sweated labour
looted by these ignoble lazy cheats
So where shall I flee from this fretful land?

44. Homage to Swami Vivekananda*

Swami Vivekananda,
the morning star of the East
The magnetic seer with his
reasonable rendition of religion
Religion as scientific as science
Religion is science of consciousness
Religion is universal experience
of transcendent Reality
Science and religion complementary
He freed religion
from the hold of superstitions
Freed it from dogmatism
priestcraft and intolerance
Religion is pursuit of supreme Freedom
Supreme Knowledge and supreme Happiness
He laid foundation for spiritual humanism
which makes life meaningful and worth living
He taught world man should be pure
for purity is our real nature and soul
We should love and serve our neighbours
for we are all one in the Supreme Spirit.

India's greatest cultural ambassador to the West
taught his countrymen
how to master Western science
based on Indian spirituality
How to adapt Western humanism
to Indian life and culture

* World Celebrated Swami Vivekananda's 150th Birthday on 12 January 2014

45. Agitation through Farming*

Arippa land agitation

Thousand two hundred landless families

agitating for land past one year

Converted eight acre wasteland to rich farm land

Yielded rich harvest of vegetables

and more than forty quintals paddy

Sold in open market as 'Arippa Fresh' rice

Tapioca grown in seven acres

Agitation under Adivasi Dalit Munnetta Samithi

Encroached fifty six acres of surplus rubber estate

acquired by the State government

Protesters ranging from ninety year old

to two-week infant live in shanties

more than thousand erected on the estate

They don't misappropriate estate assets

but demand land as means of livelihood

and for roof over their heads

They have spread a strong message

Unassessed government lands lying idle

could be used for feeding hungry mouths

* Based on the report in The Hindu on 8 January 2014. Arippa is a place in Kollam District, Kerala, India

46. An Ideal Festival*

Annual festival of Chittanjoor St. Mary's Orthodox Church
A role model to festivals of all religions
Originally planned for grand festivity
Though church of Christians, Christians few in number
It's church of Christians, Hindus and Muslims

Atul Krishan a youth of eighteen
Son of house opposite to church
Died of bike accident a week ago
Fr. Pathrose summoned festival committee
Committee comprising mainly non Christians
Made his suggestion to cancel festivities
When a family of mother and sister mourning
how can there be happiness and merriment?
The committee agreed unanimously
Cancelled booking of elephants and bands
Celebrated festival with just a Holy Rasa
Erected a tall stone lamp with the money collected
The community prayed for the soul's eternal rest

* Chittanjoor St. Mary's Orthodox Church is in Thrissur District, Kerala, India. Based on Malayala Manorama report on 2 January 2014

47. Protest against Sand Mafia*

New Delhi's Jantar Mantar
Haven of Satyagraha strikers
Thirty-one-year-old Jazeera
with her three little kids
The youngest boy only two
Tented on the footpath
Staying on a cot under plastic sheet
Neither torrid heat of summer
nor freezing cold of winter
can defeat her will power
Protest against sand mafia
looting thousands of tones
from northern beaches of Kerala
Huts of poor labourers
swallowed by sea one by one
Police and government helpless
Jazeera's protest goes on for six months

Does she miss the warmth of home?
Is she guilty about her children?
What about their schooling?
Will her protest go unnoticed?
Her honest answer is
"I am doing this for my children
If we don't stop them now
there'll be nothing left on the beaches
Our houses will submerge in the sea."
For whom is the government?
Law-breakers and criminals or their victims?

* Based on the report in *The Hindu* on 9 January 2014