

# **Musings on Covid Pandemic and Beyond**



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Poems by  
**K. V. Dominic**



**AUTHORS P R E S S**

Worldwide Circulation through Authorspress Global Network

**First Published in 2021**

**by**

**Authorspress**

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

Phone: (0) 9818049852

E-mail: [authorspressgroup@gmail.com](mailto:authorspressgroup@gmail.com)

Website: [www.authorspressbooks.com](http://www.authorspressbooks.com)

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(Poems)

ISBN

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Printed in India at Thomson Press (India) Limited

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## Foreword

In the very first poem of this collection “Corona Virus, Mightiest Wizard of All Times” K V Dominic opens with an instance of apostrophe. Human being is sublime. The poet addresses man as the mightiest of all creations and most intelligent. And then there is the bathos. Despite man’s excellence he is so impotent before too negligible and invincible corona virus.

The second section states that the viruses were born long before the emergence of cellular organisms. Needless to say that the viruses are strange phenomena that behave like the living and multiply when they reside in living organisms. But they are inert in an inert body. So the habitats of virus are indeterminate. And it is a pity that the human beings goaded by science and technology have been in quest of hidden treasures simply destroying the ecosystem. The poet asks – who asked you to kick hornet’s nests in jungles? Alas! Alas! The Corona virus has been thereby spread all over the human world. The poet thinks that the so called science and technology were originally kept in the Pandora’s Box. And man’s greed has opened the box to spread the corona virus. Just as the thrust for knowledge led Faustus to death, similarly man is being dragged to death due to his thoughtless scientific enquiry. In fact, disinterested curiosity accompanied with a reverence for Nature might lead us to light instead of darkness and fear of death. That is the legitimization.

In the third section, the poet observes that man should have realized the laws of Nature before his adventures into Nature. If Darwin’s survival of the fittest, at all holds good, the mass massacre of man being attacked by the hoards of corona viruses only proves that man is not fit for living on earth. The great wars were prelude to this writing on this wall. Dominic is the Daniel to decode this implication of Nature. Dominic observes that H1N1 virus, cousin of corona virus took away fifty million

human lives hundred years back. And a day might come when man might be wiped off from the face of the globe just as dinosaurs have been a thing of the past. They vanished in the Mesozoic era.

The fourth section points out that man had better correct his attitude. Much of modern technology could be deleted or revised. The poet addresses man and says that lockdown of your nations shower blessings on you abundantly. The lockdown has purified the air that man defiled earlier. Water is now clean, the animals are now happy and the birds are merry. The fishes are gleeful, the plants and trees dance gaily. In other words, is it Eden revisited?

The fifth section ironically states that corona virus is on the surface a blessing and not a curse because human life has once again been in close touch with Nature. Towards the second half of the twentieth century the first mushrooming of cities and spread of urban values and so called science and technology simply robbed man of the wealth of Nature. Nature does not mean simply material wealth hoarded in her womb. Nature is also our Mother. Overwhelmed with grief we rush to Nature for some solace. Think of Bathsheba in *Far from the Madding Crowd*. Presently after a bone breaking labour below the copper sun when the farmer takes rest for a while, the Mother fans him with gentle breeze and restores his spirits. Economics does not understand what wealth the countless daffodils or the myriads of stars in the encircling gloom bring to man. However we economic men have put Nature out of joints. But corona virus stands in the way of ceaseless flow of transport. Factories have been shut down. And once again the sky is clear, the air is pollution free, the fishes are playful. And Dominic says: "Corona virus regained / rights of all animals / animals now travel anywhere they like". These lines are quite significant. The word 'regained' might remind the reader of *Paradise Regained*, which overflows with love and mercy. And of course, Dominic speaks of an emergent jurisprudence where animals have the right to life as much as men do have. This is a futurist



jurisprudence that might overturn the human civilization. The latter must come closer to their Mother Nature, where books are writ on brooks and sermons are writ on stones. Dominic's vision of the earth as the playground of cubs and calves is time and again.

In the sixth section the poet shares the apprehension of separating man from Nature. It is like separating the child from the mother. We must not blame our stars for that. Man has been the architect of his fate, however dismal it might have been. It is the scientific brain of man goaded by greed for wealth and luxury that welded the nations together as it were into a global village. And Dominic points out that a home with little love is sure to shatter. And corona virus as the agent of our erstwhile activities and greed shattered all the so called worldly dreams. Now brisk movement from one country to another, from one continent to another seems to have collapsed at the instance of traffic signal the name of which is corona virus. Me the reader can imagine the poet grinning and saying with a chuckle: "Empires of all corporate / crumbled liked US twin towers". The crumbling of twin towers is significant. It is not enough to say that the terrorists down razed the towers. It was but the preamble of what turned out presently after. American democracy is now in jeopardy. America has masterminded the empires of all corporate. But Dominic tells us that this kind of capitalism which ignores the poor and the majority cannot sustain long. And Nature retorts through the spread of corona virus.

The seventh section states that with the advent of corona virus the hollowness of religion has been exposed. The self-styled priests and godmen are now pent up in their locked houses. They do not take shelter in God and work for the ailing humanity. Thus science, wealth and religion are helpless before the hordes of corona virus. Some religious people might attribute the pandemic to the wrath of God. Pope Francis II has attributed the pandemic to man's ill treatment of Nature. The poet himself also asked in section two of this poem: "Who asked you to kick

hornets' nest in jungles? Why did you trespass corona viruses' habitats?" What Dominic points out hereby is that God is not arbitrary. If angry, God has reason for that. Our activities goaded by our Faustian ignorance and arrogance have brought us on the brink of our doom. Hence Dominic seems to be a revolutionary who seeks to do away with the whole gamut of rituals that the human civilization has innovated. We need not go to the church or mosque or temple. God lives in our huts and hearts. If every human heart and every hut is deemed as a temple, the ailing humanity will be transformed. It will be a world where love and joy will be there on security. This is a piece of Dominic's social and political thought. But may we ask Dominic in our all humility – Is a human world possible at all sans rituals? When Dominic chants this poem to resist corona virus is it not re-enacting the shamans and the rishis of yore to drive away evil? When we could realize that every human heart is the seat of God all of us will be turned into shamans. Consequently the whole machinery of churches and temples and states and governments will wither away. Dominic is an anarchist as Kropotkin and Tolstoy and Gandhi were.

To resist the spread of corona virus there have been lockdown all over the globe suspending the so called human activities impelled by technology and greed. Consequently Time seems to have been retrograde. The state of Nature as conceived by Rousseau is the paradise upon earth which reincarnates. Now children get love and care of father and mother. Wives care the need of their husbands. There is no threat of thieves. Stray dogs and animals and birds are loved and fed. The stanzas eight and nine posit that it is the environment that pollutes man. Remove the machines and the modern machinery of administration, the parents need not rush to the office and they can remain in the nest taking care of the kids. This suggests a whole range of thoughts and dreams. Once the urban civilization is suspended, people must live on simple diet of grains, vegetables and fruits. This reminds of Gonsalo in *The Tempest*. Once the complicated life of too much getting and spending vanishes, people will be in

their elements, honest and truthful and loving. If people were loving, Nature would respond to their love and load their granaries with fruits and vines and paddy on her own. If there were no surplus how would they feed the stray animals? Or else the poet invokes the physiocrats. And surely once these dreams come true, we will not find any more the whining boy plodding his weary way to school. Rather he goes to Nature called by impulse to Lucy and Shankuntala. And there are books in running brooks and sermons in stones. Dominic is a kin of the romantic poets, Shelley and Keats, Shakespeare and Kalidasa.

Section nine states that measures taken to stem the spread of corona virus have revolutionized human culture. What characterized the human culture before the sudden or revolutionary advent of the virus? Well, there was the unimpeded flow of artificial food that flooded the dinner tables and kitchens. Consequently the ailing crowded at five star hospitals, operation theatres and medical stores. But measures to maim corona virus have controlled the flow of artificial food and consumption of medicines and so on. This evidence of absence of ailments only proves that modern civilisation that glories in artificial way of life is phony

In section ten the poet eulogises the deadly corona virus because it has reined well the attitudes of extravaganza during its reign. Even churches and mosques and temples are closed and millions are thereby saved of festival expenses. Dominic hereby points out how capitalism has appropriated religious practices and they have turned into hollow sham. And may be the introduction of an artificial disease corona might destroy a chronic disease and then vanish. Thus on one level corona virus is not a bane but blessing. This might remind the reader the principle of Hahnemann – *similia similibus curentur*. Thus Dominic like a physician seems to remind that both the diseases of modern times and corona virus which have been administered by God are destined to be done away with. Dominic thus charges us with fresh hopes when humanity is on the brink of death.

What is Corona Virus like? In the parole of the poet Dominic “Lifeless becomes live entering into live cells and multiplies.” This is a unique feature. That which is inert all of a sudden becomes living and multiplies once it enters into a living body. Is it not a marvel that our science and philosophy cannot explain? And virus enters human body irrespective of gender, age, race, religion and nation. Virus does not distinguish the rich from the poor. In other words such concepts as race, religion and nation, even age and gender are rather human constructs. They might have some functional value in our day to day mundane life. But they do not have any intrinsic value. The body is what counts. True, because anybody which is living, be it of man or animal or of some worm, is the temple of God. The body must be preserved as long as it is alive. The human constructs such as rich and poor are hollow sham. So the virus makes no distinction between such differences. Since virus might overwhelm the body of the rich as well as of the poor such differences such as rich and poor make no sense. But it is a pity that we are more busy to sustain the differences. One nation fights with another. One gender is preferred to another. Dominic exhorts us to forget such differences and focus on the general health. Artificial food spawns obesity among those who are swelled with money and pride. Hunger emaciates the poor. And it is the virus that becomes the agent of their death. Dominic observes that body should be the chief value for humanity to take care. Other considerations are of little use.

It is customary to blame poverty for widespread diseases like epidemic. The rich and the elite attribute poverty to underdevelopment. But the corona virus affected the so called developed countries first. There has been mass massacre in the USA, Italy, France, UK and China. There has been no place to bury bodies. The churches have been turned into mortuaries to keep dead bodies. This shows how the notion of development has dragged the developed countries to dungeons of death. What engendered development in the aforesaid countries? Dominic posits, “When governments give priority to economy / and

neglect the lives of the citizens / coronavirus spreads like wild fire.” Economics is not an end in itself. Economics is a discipline that studies man in his everyday longings and their satisfaction. This creed laid down by Adam Smith has been totally forgotten. The developed countries have their own poor people. Besides, their development has cashed on impoverishing and looting the other countries. Science and technology have been their minions. Thus by way of showing how development fares, the poet also debunks the misuse of science and technology in the world today.

Billions of dollars are being spent by the different countries of the world for the purpose of the defence while countless men groan in hunger and pain. True that Nero was a great king bent upon spiritual quest. Our notion of Nero is distorted. It is said that Nero was playing on a violin while Rome was burning. And in the present context, the world is a horrid spectre of the state of nature as Hobbes saw in his nightmare where every man or rather every nation is against every nation and life is a nasty brutish and dull. Sorely affected by the attack of the aggression of corona virus in the face of impending doom our statesmen are no better than our mythical Nero who fiddled when Rome burned. Dominic observes that if the scientists were employed to resist misfortunes, if any thrust upon man by Nature, our mother Gaia would be an Eden for human habitation. The children of the earth would live in that case in perfect harmony charged with fellow feeling and brotherhood.

True that corona virus made its best harvests in the so-called developed nations. Mark you, corona viruses have been likened to the farmers. But unlike the latter corona virus grows disease and death. But death in life is always being cultivated by the capitalist system whose faithful attendant is stark poverty. Thanks to lockdown, industrial, agricultural labourers, fisherman and poor farmers, traders and taxi drivers are being starved. They do not have the bare income to keep the wolf away from their door. Thousands of migrant labourers – “Some have lost their lives / Many lost their jobs /..... / They all want

to be back home". Their hearts are filled with anxieties for their families that are far off. They take refuge in the ill-treated government camps. And think of their habitats living in single room huts using dirty common toilets without enough water where social distancing is impossible. Dominic's poetry speaks of hard facts with data culled from real life and evokes pity in the reader like another Buddha and thereby asks in suggestion whether the world could not be made in a different way, happy and healthy with a little love and mercy. Dominic teaches us that true poetry should exhort to read our everyday news from a different perspective whence love and sympathy are engendered. There is no sense in building castles in the air made of words culled from ether and the sky. Thus his poetry strikes a fresh note in the realm of literature.

The poem "Coronavirus, the Mightiest Wizard of All Times" precisely personifies the virus. The virus likens a man who conjures magic. The corona virus is as it were the mightiest magician of all times. Whatever we experience in his activities unites the opposites – the sharps and the flats. The poem progresses as it were with the aid of opposites. In one part we hear bass. In another part we hear trebles. The poet is, as it were, now weeping, now smiling. He speaks of churches stuffed with dead bodies. And trucks are loaded with dead bodies knowing not where the dead bodies should be disposed of. Fear of death has impelled the governments to decree lockdown. Lockdown is ordained in prison houses. One wonders whether corona virus, the prince of the wizards has converted the earth into a prison house or not. True, a Hamlet could find the boundless skies in a peanut if he were not the Prince of Denmark. On one level, Dominic finds himself imprisoned, thanks to the gifts of technology. Dominic, the Prince of Denmark found this busy world during BC or before corona virus in a state of war. But as soon as he doffs his princely robe he finds that lockdown has reduced a lot of deadly air pollutants in cities. Reduction of Seoul 54% and Wuhan 44%, Los Angeles 31%... But Dominic is no climatologist. He is a poet. And he knows that stars are

visible in city skies to ease uneasy minds for quite slumber. There has been a steep fall in the noise that benumbs the cities. And the poet observes thousands of birds who have come back to balm aching minds. When Keats exclaimed, “My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains my senses” was he engrossed with a nightmare with a life in city two hundred years hence? The future was present with him. The part seventeen clearly describes the horrors of city life full of noise and no skies but apparelled in smoke. We get the bass juxtaposed with the trebles of the thousand birds. And does it mean that the apparent life in confinement could be likened to a paradise provided if we were less materialist and back to Nature? With Dominic Nature offers us the best code of life. And now we readers smile. Dominic makes us weep and makes us smile.

In the Part 18, Dominic posits that corona virus teaches us the necessity of self-reliance. Self-reliance with him does not mean a life in isolation. Self-reliance is engendered by the reliance in non self. Dominic points out that globalisation created nation dependent of each other. May be Ricardo thought in the self-same line. But the economic thoughts and policies are never meant for the well-being of the masses. Development economics, in other words, is hollow sham. With Dominic, unless a society finds solutions to its necessities and demands, it will suffer, starve and perish.

Dominic is very apt in his delineation of the impact of corona virus. He calls it a revolution or a forced change of social structure. Just as the advent of Jesus in the West brought about a total change in all the spheres of life and thought, and just as the Industrial Revolution effected a radical change in every sphere of life and action, so does corona virus mutated our time honoured beliefs and way of life. While this life and mission of Jesus, God the Son in human flesh, completely changed the world, technology and science did the same thing during the eighteenth century. And curiously enough certain tiny viruses have overwhelmed the civilisation today. In Part nineteen Dominic has dwelled on this sudden change with great insight,

power and force. During Covid the tiny entities have toppled the human civilisation and made it upside down. They have clamped down upon man physical distancing and social distancing. Thanks to the feebleness of science, henceforth the mother cannot caress her child. Face to face contacts are getting impossible by degrees. Science comes to man's aid. You cannot hug your mother. Your speech must be substitute for it. The student will not learn anything from the way of life of his/her teacher. He/she must learn from the teacher through the computer. True the governments can save a lot as salaries spent for teachers. Corona virus has saved a lot of time and money. People are freed from use of cosmetic powder, lipstick, bleaching, dyeing etc. In fact everybody is being transformed into a phantom. We are at the lion gate of a world crowded with phantoms. While Dominic assures us the long queues at the counters and shops are swayed away by virtual queues, Plato would not be happy at all in such state of affairs. Plato in his *Republic* bans poetry and poets because with him the world of senses is actually an illusion. Poets rebuild the world with words. Thus with the aid of poetry we are doubly removed from reality. And with corona virus and the advent of computer age, man now journeys from the world of senses to the eerie world of shadows where zombies will gambol. And any such changes require lot of martyrs. Where are the martyrs in the so called revolution? Many have died of want, of personal protective equipments risking their own lives and families depending on them – they worked and died for millions of their fellow men. The Part nineteen loves at the other side of its face dwelling on what a revolution is like. There have been some men who are drugged with the notion of revolution. The poet tells us that any conscious attempt at revolution is perhaps hollow sham. While Nature compels the civilisation to reorganise itself, man's efforts to bring about a revolution seems to be quixotic. Dominic's legitimation is that nothing is in man's hand. If we don't want to live as zombies in the life to come, we had better drowned our



science and technology and knowledge into the ocean of corona virus and resurrect.

In part twenty, the last section of the poem, Prof. Dominic writes that the Covid has divided history of human civilization into two ages – Before Covid Era and After Covid Era. This has replaced B.C. (Before Christ) and A.D. or Anno Domini. In other words Christ the life of our life or the spirit of resurrection has been erased and Covid which is a dirge to death has taken its place. While after Christ meant redemption for humanity, After Corona (A.C.) might mean life after death for humans. One wonders whether Jesus has been obliterated from the collective mind of man. Or will he resurrect under the aegis of Life after Death? Does it suggest the Second Coming? Yeats saw the lion slowly moving its thighs. And Dominic pursuing the esoteric strain explains:

A new world is going to be born  
A new civilization and way of life  
Change for a better world or worse  
Time will prove within a few years. (Part 20)

In short the future of man is indeterminate.

K. V. Dominic, shut up in Kerala, sings hymns unbidden hiding in the privacy of the glorious light of compassion till the world is wrought to sympathy with hopes and fears it hidden not. And it appears to the present reader that the main theme of poetry in this volume is nostalgia or homesickness. The very first poem Coronavirus – Mightiest Wizard of All Times” complains why man has kicked a hornet's nest in jungles. He asks: Why did you trespass Coronavirus' habitats?” Think of the flood victims. Women wait for night to discharge body waste. They have lost all their domestic possessions, important documents and even their huts. Where will they go when the floods recede? (“Flood Victims”) Ordinarily the poets are used to look at the sky where one might wing and sing charged with blithe spirit in ecstasy. But with Dominic there is nothing but dreamless sky above and monstrous drowning water below. We are used to the deep

chasm between life here and life hereafter or between earth and heaven. With Dominic the chasm as at now are the sea of coronavirus. Coronavirus functions as the chasm between Nature and the comfortable life in cities.

John lives by banana farming  
 Worked hard on leased lands  
 Lockdown blocked sale of fruits  
 He hasn't swam across Nature  
 Still he is drowned by the pandemic  
 ("Covid Victims and Villains")

The message is very clear. The more there is urbanisation, the more humans become hapless and helpless. Perhaps developed nations are to be blamed. And Dominic points out that the so called developed nations have become the greatest casualty of the corona pandemic. He is up with arms against what we call the triumphs of modern civilization. Just think of the boons and banes of atomic energy. It occasioned Chernobyl Tragedy. The atomic reactor there, the largest in the world, burst out like a volcano four hundred times destructive than Hiroshima atom bomb. Life is impossible there for another twenty thousand years. Lakhs live with cancer now. ("Chernobyl Tragedy") True that there have been countless poems debunking the explosion at Chernobyl, but no one has directly pointed out how horrible the aftermath of Chernobyl tragedy has come to pass. This directness of statement is what distinguishes Dominic's poetry from the rest of the world. And he cries:

"Amazon forest is burning... burning  
 Nothing but our own house on fire"  
 ("Amazon forest is Burning... Burning")

This reminds us of Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Christian in a vision did see that the mundane world getting and spending is a burning and his nightmare seems to have come true. Are dreams ever true? But Chernobyl, Hiroshima and the aburning Amazon woodland only proves that dreams come true. Doesn't the reader find here a touch of Coleridge? The tribe of Coleridge has created eerie verses collecting material from the real life. But

Dominic seems to tell us that the real life itself could be more eerie than what the poets could ever imagine of. Just as at the sight of countless daffodils a poet could not but be gay, at the sight of Chernobyl and Amazon now being swept by the waves of coronavirus, our poet cannot but be sorrowing. And he finds Thodupuzha river bleeding. What is a river but the fountainhead of sublime thoughts? It's melodious gurgling ripples and mellifluous eternal flow feast for both eyes and mind. But mark you how long can the bard be locked up in his world of loving thought, the source of sublime thoughts? The bard can't remain in the nest and continue his song when the very river gurgling nearby carries the freight instead of the ambrosia of water. ("Bleeding Thodupuzha River") True that Dominic wistfully registers the countless deaths that have taken place in Italy or the USA. Coronavirus the leveller treats the rich and the poor with the same cruelty. But not only the bard who is feeling homeless observing blood in Thodupuzha river, knows what ails the denizens of the Dharavi slum where one million people live in five hundred and twenty acres. 1.6 billion people live in various slums of the world – one fourth of earth's urban population. ("Dharavi Slum") The world has been rushing towards urbanisation. Many panegyrics have been uttered in favour of urbanisation such as those of Mumford. And if anyone were in search of Dante's *Inferno*, the reader could hold the hand of Dominic and experience the real hell upon earth with Dominic which outdoes the dungeon as described by Dante in ugliness and horror. One wonders whether forced out from Florence the modern Dante/Dominic, the Christian leads us across the *Inferno* in quest of *Paradiso* which is alive with the light coming from our God the Father who is our home.

Let us have a bird's eye view of the *Inferno*. The river Thodupuzha is bleeding. The poet hears her sobs in ripples. Thick mangroves on either side protected her from sun's heat. Habitats of innumerable birds and fishes gave way to stone walls erected on her chopped limbs.

Crushed from both sides she flows  
 Tears streaming with a moaning warning music  
 ("Bleeding Thodupuzha River")

Does the river Thodupuzha remind us of Lethe and Styx? Once you cross it you find average thirty three farmers in India commit suicide everyday. Here rain water is diverted to low lands where poor people struggle for survival. Their huts are swept away with flood but ironically enough they cry hoarse for drinking water.

They have nothing but dreamless sky above  
 and monstrous drowning water below ("Flood Victims")

The traditional motto – reward for the pious and retribution for the offender is upside down in this blunderland (Alice is said to have visited wonderland) Krishnan shared his land with the poor, built houses for the homeless, fed them with food and gave them money. But see he is hit by the pandemic. Thus while good Samaritans are being tortured, the kins of Barabbas flourish.

Kurian runs a huge quarry on hill  
 Trucks of rubbles flee here and there  
 Poor neighbours protest in vain  
 Kurian got support of court ("Covid Victims and Villains")

Lo! An atomic reactor bursts at Chernobyl burning ten lakh children and forty lakh lives where life is impossible for another twenty thousand years. ("Chernobyl Tragedy") A small river in red and brown colour carries the wastes of leather industry to the western sea that hastens the nascent Serbonion bog heavy with pollution and putrefaction. ("Dharavi Slum") Nauseating smoke mounts up the sky from Amazon forest aburning. The smell and smoke of shrubs, trees, small and big animals, birds, flies, fishes, insects reptiles dying everyday afire make the sky murky. ("Amazon forest is Burning... Burning")

And hark the mother of eight children is boiling stones to pacify her starving little ones. Thieves killed her husband. ("Mother Boiling Stones for Children") The poet can hear mother earth groan. ("Mother Earth Goes on Weeping") Wordsworth is spying the world too much with us getting and spending wishes

if we had been pagans. And Dominic is as it were a pagan listening to the groan of Gaia. Dominic's heart overflowing with the milk of human kindness is as it were a mother quarantined, full of tears, torn away from his suffering fellowmen and Nature whom he cannot help serve and caress. The world transformed into Inferno is as it were on the verge of the drowning heaving for breath under the heavy weight of plastic. ("Beat Plastic Pollution") The fault does not lie on our stars; we humans are responsible for our state of affairs. Dominic posits,

Born to poor parents  
fifteen thousand starve  
and die everyday  
Result of whose karma? ("Result of Whose Karma")

In the face of dismal and eerie sheen Dominic chants hymns to Lord Buddha. ("Enlighten Them Lord Buddha") When priests turn into traders of religion F. R. Leavis prophesies that the poets should replace the priests and Dominic is a priest leading us on through the encircling gloom. No. Unlike Dante's Inferno, the Inferno perceived by Dominic is not a sandscape sans any source of zest for life. Dominic's wonderful poems on "Covid-19 Exodus" reminds us of the God's chosen seed. Fleeing from Egypt -

Arbind is walking with his  
family to his parent's house  
two hundred kilometres afar  
Arbind carries son aged three  
on his shoulders and his wife  
Asha carries daughter aged two  
on her weak shoulders ("Covid-19 Exodus 1")

Mother pulling her heavy trolley bag  
with ten year old son sleeping upon it  
Walking in bright sunlight  
through National Highway 44  
Having lost her job and livelihood  
("Covid-19 Exodus 2")

These are wonderful vignettes photogenic in essence with the aid of which the Exodus of the Bible is brought home to the readers in vivid contours. And surely it interprets the Exodus in a new light. The concentration camps under direct control of the despotic Pharaoh are but the cities where they had crowded under the illusion of getting job and procuring livelihood. But the love of parents and mother's magnetism, though both dim and dull, burns eternal in the human breast. And they respond to the call of the heart to return to their native villages. This is a peerless imagery of millions marching home representing Eros against the bleak background of widespread death and Thanatos. Thus unlike the hell of Milton, the Inferno of Dominic is not one monotonous, dreary desert dappled with the winds of despair and despondency blowing through the realm of visible darkness. Every matrix of the existence is woven with the two threads of weal and woe. Tony Morrison and the Aeolian harp of T. V. Reddy ("Tribute to Toni Morrison", "Elegy on Prof. T. V. Reddy") have chanted paeans of love and life triumphing over the eerie spirit of death and annihilation. Charged with their voice and the voice of their predecessors, they are on a long march to their homes where love and Nature do wait for their homecoming. With Dominic, Nature is God. Think of the Thodupuzha River, the source of sublime thoughts laden with melodious gurgling ripples and mellifluous eternal flow. Think of the Amazon Rain Forest - pillars of life, fountains of one fifth oxygen of earth. Thus Nature is a fountainhead of life. The dismal state of man grovelling in the dungeon of Inferno has not been affected by any accident or any *deus ex machina*. Man is responsible for his life in slums where none dares to enter.

Situated in marshy boggy lowlands  
 Narrow lanes are full of mud  
 mixed with people's urine, faeces  
 and stinky blood and water  
 oozing from boiled skin of goats.

("Dharavi Slum")

The highest voice of humanity posits: as you sow so you reap. Precisely it alludes to *karmaphala* of Indian philosophy. Rather one might find the explication in the Hindu scriptures of much of whatever the Holy Bible says. When a few dogs are driven away Dominic reminds us of the Hindu fact that someone of the dogs might have been one of our forefathers in some earlier births. (“Man and Dog”) Consequently every so called sub human species is our kin. This legitimatises that *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. The whole multiverse in some way or other is a relative of ours. And we should treat what Said names as ‘the other’ as our kin. Thus explicates Coleridge: “He prayeth best who loveth best all things great and small”. When Wordsworth exclaims: “To me the meanest flower that blows can give thoughts too deep for tears”, the self is not pent up in the flesh and blood of a particular body. It is everywhere. It is in everything. Every particular atom has the omnipotent, omnipresent, omnibenevolent God the Father in it. We should treat the other or the Nature in this context with love and reverence. Once we learn to love and respect Nature, the Inferno is transformed into the Purgatorio. Dominic is our Virgil who leads us to the lion gates of Paradiso where Beatrice has been waiting for us. With thanks to the lockdown, the birds and the animals are free to chirp, twitter and gambol, the mellifluous breeze from heaven seems to blow. With Dominic every man is a potential poet. (“Every Human Being is a Poet”). When the Inferno is transformed, the poet in every human being will be manifest and the paradise will be here and anon.

Om Tat Sat.

**Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya**





## Preface

Glad to present before you my 7<sup>th</sup> poetry collection in English entitled *Covid Pandemic and Beyond*. Starting with *Winged Reason* in 2010 the second collection *Write Son, Write* appeared in 2011. They were followed by *Multicultural Symphony* (2014), *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond* (2016), *K. V. Dominic Essential Readings and Study Guide* (2016), and *Cataracts of Compassion* (2017). My poems were translated into various languages by renowned poets and critics and thus five books were published. They are: *Abheepsa* (Hindi – Trans. Dr. Santhosh Alex in 2016), *Aapni Abheepsa* (Gujarati – Trans. Fr. Varghese Paul, SJ in 2016), *Poèmes Philosophiques de K V Dominic: Poèmes sur la justice sociale, les droits des femmes et de l'environnement* (French – Trans. Dominique Demiscault in 2019), *Winged Reason – A Bilingual Translated Anthology of Poems* (English and Tamil – Trans. Dr. Barathi Srinivasan in 2019), *Write My Son, Write* (English and Bengali – Trans. Dr. Sabita Chakraborty in 2019). Compared to the earlier poetry collections, this book has taken a longer time for composition. The reason for the delay was the dearth of themes and topics. Unlike the majority of the contemporary poets, I have been focussing more on values and messages in my poems. Through my poems published so far, I have touched upon almost all themes, topics and issues of the present world. I have great satisfaction in my style and the poems were accepted wholeheartedly by the readers, critics and scholars across the world. Already researches leading to PhD degrees have been begun on my poetry and one Assistant Professor as well as reputed scholar in West Bengal has been awarded the doctorate on the topic of social realism in my poems. A few other scholars are pursuing their researches.

As we have been passing through the agonies of the Covid pandemic since the end of 2019, the writers all over the world

have been affected directly or indirectly by this vicious phenomenon. As a result, hundreds of books have come out during this pandemic times dealing the banes and boons of Covid-19. This book of mine starts with poems on Covid pandemic. Out of the 43 poems nine are on Covid and the first poem “Coronavirus, Mightiest Wizard of All Times” runs to twenty sections. The themes and topics of the rest of the poems are as various as Nature, environment, animals, plight of farmers, sex workers, slum dwellers, karma, religion, tributes, elegies, social criticism, etc.

I am immensely grateful to Prof. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya, the renowned philosopher, poet, critic and scholar who has taken much pain and found time to write a long and excellent foreword to this book. He has been like a mentor to me, boosted me in my poetic ventures and has already written and published two critical books on my poetry titled *Write My Son, Write – Text and Interpretation: An Exercise in Reading* (2016), and *K V Dominic Criticism and Commentary* (2017), and then edited a critical anthology of 37 papers entitled *Poetical Sensibility of K V Dominic’s Creative Muse* (2019).

Before winding up this preface let me express my deepest gratitude to Shri Sudarshan Kcherry ji, the CEO of Authorspress, New Delhi who has agreed to publish this book. He has been so loving and considerate to me that out of my 40 books 29 have come out his world renowned publishing house. Wishing all a very happy future life freed of coronavirus,

**K. V. Dominic**

## **Coronavirus, Mightiest Wizard of All Times**

### **Part One**

Oh human being,  
mightiest of all creations!  
Most intelligent!  
Emperor of all beings!  
How impotent you are!  
How imprisoned you are!  
How swept away you are  
by too negligible  
and invisible coronavirus!

### **Part Two**

Viruses were evolved  
even before you were born  
Who asked you to kick  
hornets' nests in jungles?  
Why did you trespass  
coronaviruses' habitats?  
Isn't your greed  
that opened the Pandora's box?

### **Part Three**

Balancing is law of Nature  
Survival of all species  
based on survival of the fittest  
Homo sapience is no exception  
Nature limits human numbers  
through its powerful weapons:  
invisible, invincible deadly viruses  
H1N1 virus, cousin of corona virus  
took away fifty million human lives

hundred years back  
Curtain of Covid-19 tragedy has just risen  
and none can predict its length and depth  
How many will survive is yet to be seen  
There might even come an age  
when human species disappears  
as Mesozoic era of dinosaurs

#### **Part Four**

Oh human beings,  
time has come  
to correct yourself  
Lockdown of your nations  
showers blessings  
on you abundantly  
You are doing now reparations  
Started playing concordant notes  
Began flowing with the eternal flow  
Your lockdown has purified  
air you have defiled  
water you have polluted  
Man, look at Nature around you  
How happy are animals now!  
How merry are birds!  
How gleeful are fishes!  
How gaily dance plants and trees!

#### **Part Five**

You wake up by chirps and tweets  
of variety of birds in morning  
Flies and flowers  
greet you with smiles  
Coronavirus regained  
rights of all animals  
Animals now travel  
anywhere they like

Roads and streets  
you made through their habitats  
they use for rest and  
playgrounds of cubs and calves

### **Part Six**

Oh human beings,  
You used your scientific brain  
and brought world  
under one home and market  
Your greed for wealth and luxury  
linked all nations together  
through trade and globalization  
A home with little love  
is sure to shatter  
And coronavirus shattered  
all your worldly dreams  
Empires of all corporates  
crumbled like US twin towers  
Growth of a country  
neglecting poor and majority  
can't sustain long  
and Nature retorts

### **Part Seven**

O coronavirus,  
You could easily do  
such an inconceivable miracle  
which sages tried  
and failed from ages to ages  
Churches, mosques, temples,  
synagogues, gurdwaras and  
all such worshipping places closed  
Preachers, priests, shamans, godmen  
have sought shelter  
in their locked houses

Those who looted  
wealth of the masses  
are never to be seen  
offering their hands  
when millions drown  
in the ocean of coronavirus  
Coronavirus has opened  
blinded laity's minds  
Worshippers now understand  
God lives in their houses and hearts  
They now know well  
hollowness of rituals  
God can never be  
pleased by rituals  
Instead He demands  
love and compassion  
Be compassionate to  
all humans, non-humans,  
Nature and universe  
Coronavirus has proved  
deficiencies of religions  
Religions fail to  
cure physical ailments  
Medicines, treatments  
dieting, cleanliness, exercise  
keep one healthy  
and save from illness  
Irrational priests propagate  
pandemic as God's wrath  
But Pope Francis II  
asserts Covid-19  
aftermath of man's  
ill-treatment of environment

**Part Eight**

Lockdown brought happiness and peace in houses  
Children get love and care of father and mother  
Husbands shower love on their wives  
Wives care needs of their husbands  
Old parents get proper attention and love  
Pets and domestic animals are happier than before  
There is no threat of thieves  
since police patrol everywhere  
Governments function well day and night  
Beggars and homeless are sheltered in camps  
Patients are treated well in hospitals  
Man has become humane and compassionate  
Stray dogs, animals and birds are loved and fed

**Part Nine**

Coronavirus is a blessing in disguise  
Except of those millions inflicted  
majority became hale and healthy  
Lockdown checked  
flow of unhealthy artificial food  
Scarcity of income  
changed people's eating habit  
People turned to simple diet  
of grains, vegetables and fruits  
that protected body  
from attack of diseases  
Five Star hospitals are being closed  
Operation theatres are seldom used  
Pharmaceutical corporates  
which killed millions of people  
are sinking in the ocean of loss  
Medical labs are frequented less

**Part Ten**

Oh coronavirus,  
you could rein well  
people's attitudes of extravaganza  
Made them rational and frugal  
Marriage ceremonies and feasts  
for hundreds and thousands  
limited now to a dozen or two  
Burials and all other ceremonies  
conducted with handful of attendants  
Since churches, mosques  
and temples are closed  
millions are saved of festival expenses

**Part Eleven**

Coronavirus has established  
vulnerable nature of human beings  
Virus enters human body  
irrespective of gender, age,  
race, religion or nation  
No discrimination to poor or rich  
A billionaire or a beggar  
proves helpless before its attack  
Lifeless virus becomes live  
entering into live cells and multiplies  
Healthy body resists their attack  
while weak bodies  
succumb to their conquest

**Part Twelve**

Coronavirus made its best harvest  
in most developed nations –  
USA, Italy, Spain, France, UK, China  
Prosperity and luxury made one undisciplined  
Never cared for social distancing



and locked down life in houses  
When governments give priority to economy  
and neglect lives of the citizens  
coronaviruses spread like forest fire  
Hundreds die in New York City everyday  
mounting to eighteen thousand as on First May  
No place to bury bodies, graveyards are all full  
Churches turned to mortuaries  
Even trucks full of decayed bodies  
waiting for their burial somewhere

### **Part Thirteen**

World spent 1917 billion dollars in 2019  
for defence unnecessary  
US 732 billion, China 261 billion  
India 71, Russia 65, Saudi Arabia 61  
France 50, Germany 49, UK 48  
Coronavirus' destructive power  
was known to developed nations  
even at its very first outbreak in China  
Had these nations started research  
months back and spent several billions  
for its antivirus, the world could now  
swim across this pandemic ocean

### **Part Fourteen**

Poor are easy preys of pandemics  
Half of the world population –  
more than three billion people live in poverty  
Industrial, agricultural labourers, fishermen  
poor farmers, traders, taxi drivers  
worst affected by lockdown  
Incomeless they live at governments' mercy  
Millions of migrant labourers  
reside idle in government camps  
Their burning minds are with their families

thousands of kilometers away  
struggling for survival  
and fighting against many diseases  
It is harvest time and  
they ought to be back home  
lest crops aren't lost  
Lives of millions in slums most pathetic  
With no income they  
plead for governments' help  
Living in single room huts  
using dirty common toilets  
not sufficient water for cleanliness  
social distancing is impossible  
And coronavirus has its easiest job

### **Part Fifteen**

Millions of diasporas all over the world  
Some have lost their lives  
Not even shown to the dearest ones  
they are buried in alien lands  
Many have lost their jobs  
They all want to be back home  
Lockdown has cancelled their flights  
Losing their jobs their future is bleak

### **Part Sixteen**

Coronavirus created  
hundreds of martyrs  
Doctors, nurses, health workers  
sacrificed their lives  
for their people and nations  
Many have died of want  
of personal protective equipments  
Risking their own lives and  
families depending on them  
they worked and died for

millions of their fellowmen  
Services rendered by police and fire force  
equally laudable and dangerous  
Scorching sunlight, heavy rain  
lightening, thunder, wind, snowfall  
never dissuade them  
from their selfless, humane duty

### **Part Seventeen**

Lockdown has reduced a lot  
deadly air pollutants in cities  
New Delhi, most polluted capital city  
recorded 60% fall of PM2.5  
Reduction of Seoul 54% and Wuhan 44%  
Los Angeles 31%, Sao Paulo 32%  
Mumbai 34%, New York 29%  
Paris 20-30%, Madrid 11%, London 9%  
Stars are visible in cities' skies  
to ease uneasy minds for quiet slumber  
Since noise has come down considerably  
thousands of birds have come back  
to balm aching human minds  
with spectacular views and melodious music

### **Part Eighteen**

Coronavirus has cautioned people  
necessity of self reliance  
Globalization created nations  
dependent of each other  
Since the economic principle  
evolved for selfish financial gains  
it lost its soul of humaneness  
Majority of nations suffered  
while a few mighty like US gained  
And these wealthy developed nations  
are the worst preys of coronavirus!

The pandemic warns all societies  
to be self-sufficient and independent  
From smallest unit of homes  
to villages, cities, districts, States,  
nations, self-reliance is required  
World economy is bound  
to sink to the bottom  
Unless a society finds solutions to  
its necessities and demands  
it will suffer, starve and perish

### **Part Nineteen**

Oh coronavirus,  
you have made revolution  
in all spheres of life  
Academic bodies have started  
online classes, video conferences  
webinars, online exams and interviews  
Buildings of schools and colleges  
can be used for many other purposes  
Governments can save a lot  
as salaries spent for teachers  
Mask has become part of apparel  
It has saved a lot of time and money  
People are freed from use of cosmetic powder,  
lipstick, bleaching, dyeing, and such  
unnecessary chemical applications  
Since civil law forbids people from spitting  
Roads are clean and rid of infectious germs  
Long queues at counters and shops  
are swept away by virtual queues  
Competitions of sports and games  
are done in closed stadiums with  
virtual spectators and applause  
People enjoy them free of cost at their houses

**Part Twenty**

Oh mighty coronavirus,  
tiniest in size  
you made history on earth  
History of human race  
divided into two  
Before Covid-19 (BC)  
and after Covid-19 (AC)  
Unlike AD/BC or CE/BCE  
BC/AC is universal and phenomenal  
A new world is going to be born  
A new civilization and way of life  
Change for a better world or worse  
Time will prove within a few years



## **Covid Victims and Villains**

John lives by banana farming  
Worked hard on leased lands  
Lockdown blocked sale of fruits  
He hasn't swum across Nature  
Still he is drowned by this pandemic!

Krishnan shared his land with the poor  
Built ten houses for the homeless  
Fed them with food and money  
He hasn't swum across Nature  
Still he too is hit by this pandemic!

Kurian runs a huge quarry on hill  
Trucks of rubbles flee here and there  
Poor neighbours protest in vain  
Kurian got support of court  
He has obstructed flow of Nature  
But he is least hit by this pandemic!

Lolan leads a pure veggie life  
Treats domestic animals as his family  
Feeds stray dogs, birds and insects  
He hasn't swum across Nature  
Still he too is hit by this pandemic!

Many politicians live on people's donations  
Their service is less but earnings more  
Lockdown never made them bankrupt  
They have obstructed flow of Nature  
But are never hit by this pandemic!

Salim lives by his little teashop  
Charges less for tea and snacks  
Serves poor free of cost  
Lockdown tumbled his life and service  
He hasn't swum across Nature  
Still he is drowned by this pandemic!

Shamans exploited people's ignorance  
Looted wealth for future generations  
They are least affected by lockdown  
Sure, they have blocked flow of Nature  
But are never lashed by this pandemic!



## Covid-19 Exodus 1

Lockdown has drowned lives of  
millions of labourers in the world  
Several millions are already unemployed

Covid-19 lockdown in India tumbled  
happy life of Arbind and his family  
Lost his job in plastic factory in Delhi  
No income now for daily life  
Since house rent has been due  
building owner drove them out  
Arbind's parents and brothers  
live at Moradabad in UP  
Though he has nothing left  
as ancestral property, he is sure  
his loving parents and brothers  
will give them a shelter  
Since vehicle traffic is blocked  
Arbind is walking with his  
family to his parents' house  
two hundred kilometers afar  
Arbind carries son aged three  
on his shoulders and his wife  
Asha carries daughter aged two  
on her weak shoulders  
And they have a huge heavy bag  
carrying together with their hands  
After journey of few minutes  
tired they put bag on road and rest  
a minute and resume their walk  
Being not so literate they have no idea  
when they will reach their destination



Arbind represents thousands  
of migrant labourers on exodus  
Some are caught by police and sent to camps  
Nearly fifty have died run over by vehicles  
Of late sixteen were killed by goods train  
while sleeping tired early morning on rails  
Absence of trains compelled them to walk  
Alas, the train itself took away their lives!



## Covid-19 Exodus 2

Another distressing scene on TV  
A victim of Covid-19 lockdown exodus  
Mother pulling her heavy trolley bag  
with ten year old son sleeping upon it  
Walking in burning sunlight  
through National Highway 44  
Having lost her job and livelihood  
going from Punjab to her house in Jhansi, UP  
Eight hundred kilometers on foot  
Already passed more than 500kms  
Tired of walking, her little son  
has bent upon bag and slept  
And wearied she pulls on hopefully  
She is one of millions on streets now  
Why is fate so cruel to the poor?  
Haven't the governments  
any prick of conscience?  
How can they ignore such piercing sights?



## Haiku on Covid-19

Congregation prays:  
God save us from the pandemic  
God: I am helpless

Man: Aren't we your dearest?  
God: It's your ego tells you so  
All my creations darling to me

Man complains to God:  
Are we fated to live with mask?  
God: Enough you polluted air

Dawn now echoes birds' chirps:  
Thank you, thank you, thank you God  
For restoring our rights

Coronavirus to man:  
A lesson for your conceit  
Be humble and kind

Man to coronavirus:  
What harm have we done to you?  
Virus: you called us

Earth to human beings:  
Except you all are happy now  
Reward for your crimes

God to human beings:  
Mask you wear is punishment  
For masking in your lives

Little boy to mom:  
You punished for using cell phone  
Now force for online classes

Earth to human beings:  
You wash your hands for survival  
Crimes' blood still remains

Infants wail to guilty adults:  
Pandemic is your own product  
We are drowned in it

Animals warn humans:  
Exploit more you perish more  
Creator protects us

Mother Earth to quarryman:  
How ruthless you dynamite  
Mother's breasts that fed you!

River to her mother sea:  
Man raped and stabbed head to foot  
Threw his waste on me

Plight of human being:  
Social being now antisocial  
Result of his karma

Members of same group  
Bound to keep distance each other:  
Reward of leagued crimes

Animals to humans:  
You are caged and we are free  
Tit for tat, mind you!



## **Mask can't Suppress One's Hunger**

Jafer, 70, led dignified life  
Worked hard as head load labourer  
Covid lockdown tore his dignity  
No bank balance and none to help  
Hunger drove him shamelessly  
Goes with dirty mask from door to door  
fearing police and rebuke of residents  
Alas, Mask can save from disease  
but can't suppress one's hunger!



## Nithin's Sublime Sacrifice

Couple Nithin and Athira engineers at Dubai  
Covid-19 spread and lockdown started  
Both volunteered services for covid patients  
Athira is now eight months pregnant  
Longed to reach home Kerala earliest  
Pleaded in Supreme Court for chartered flights  
Flights granted with half capacity  
priority for pregnant women, children and old  
somehow they got tickets for both  
Nithin preferred to stay there and  
send Athira alone to Calicut airport  
Sublime sacrifice of his ticket  
for sending another pregnant lady  
He paid for tickets of two persons  
who needed urgent return  
Athira returned and admitted for delivery  
several days before due date  
Meanwhile Nithin died of cardiac arrest  
He has been a heart patient for more than a year  
Athira gave birth to a daughter and  
she is not revealed of Nithin's death



## Subaida's Donation to Covid-19 Relief Fund

Subaida's donation to Covid-19 Relief Fund  
Viral news in channels and newspapers  
Subaida Umma aged sixty lives at Kollam  
with her husband and brother, both heart patients  
She runs a teashop for livelihood  
Lockdown has closed the shop for more than a month  
Kerala Chief Minister's daily press meets on TV  
detailed donations, small and big, flowed to CMDRF  
Even children donated money they received  
as gift for the Vishu festival  
News of such sublime donations  
Motivation for Subaida for her donation  
She sold her two goats and received Rs. 12000  
5000 was set apart for rent and 2000 for electricity bill  
She walked far away to the District Collector's office  
Donated Rs. 5000 to CMDRF  
The CM expressed deep gratitude  
Praised Subaida as a model in his press meet



## Magnetism of Mother

Most touching scene on TV  
Two year old daughter  
crying violently to go to her mother's arms  
Her mother serving as nurse  
in nearby Covid-19 hospital  
Being quarantined she has been  
in hospital for more than a month  
Child had never experienced  
her absence even for a day  
Her incessant cries to meet her mother  
compelled her father to bring her to mother  
Seeing her darling crying to come to her  
tears ran from mother's eyes like brooks  
She was forbidden to receive the child  
Mother could only see her crying child  
from entrance gate of hospital building  
She couldn't bear it for long  
waving ta-ta to her sweet daughter and husband  
she went inside crying  
Father tried hard to detract child  
from mother's magnetic pull  
Forcefully took her back home  
with tears brimming in his eyes





## Amazon Forest is Burning ... Burning

Amazon forest is burning ... burning  
Nothing but our own house on fire  
Fire set by irrational cattle ranchers, loggers  
Permitted by selfish short-sighted government  
to clear and utilize land for business  
Fumed high to an international crisis  
More than 150 acres lost every minute now  
Millions die every day – shrubs, trees,  
small and big animals, birds, flies,  
fishes, insects, reptiles, snakes, worms ...

Amazon Rain Forest, pillars of life  
Fountain of one fifth oxygen on earth  
Largest rainforest spreading  
5.5 million square kilometers  
Covering territories of nine nations  
Major portion sixty percent in Brazil  
Shelter to 390 billion trees,  
40000 species of plants,  
2200 species of fish, 1294 species of birds  
International beef and leather industries  
responsible for eighty percent deforestation  
Since 1970 eight lakh square kilometers forest lost  
One third of Amazon inhabited by indigenous people  
They love their dwellings and surroundings  
and forest loss only eight percent!  
Loggers have killed natives and encroached their land  
Tribes are decimated fast resulting in genocides

Green Parties have taken up issue worldwide  
But Biocentrists are muffled by selfish  
Anthropocentrists who have least love for Nature



## **Beat Plastic Pollution**

Let's go back to Nature  
Go back to natural containers  
we left for ease and fashion  
Beat plastic pollution  
before plastic drowns  
man and entire universe



## Bleeding Thodupuzha River

Alluring Thodupuzha River  
Source of my sublime thoughts  
Her melodious gurgling ripples  
and mellifluous eternal flow  
feast for both eyes and mind  
Gazing her intent every evening  
I could hear her sobs in ripples  
Complaints after complaints  
against human beings who torture her  
Father Sahya feeds her every day with pure water  
Mission of her life is feeding all –  
animals, plants, fishes, birds, flies, insects...  
Human beings pollute her daily  
disposing garbage of all kinds –  
plastic, kitchen wastes, human discharge, toxins of  
factories, pesticides, insecticides, herbicides  
Thick mangroves on either side  
protected her from sun's heat  
Habitats of innumerable birds and fishes  
Gave way to stone walls  
erected on her chopped limbs  
Crushed from both sides she flows  
Tears streaming with a moaning warning music



## Chernobyl Tragedy

World witnessed in 1986  
another manmade tragedy  
Chernobyl atomic reactor  
the largest in world  
burst out like a volcano  
with annihilating radiation  
four hundred times destructive  
than Hiroshima atom bomb  
The entire city was burnt  
Fifty lakh lives lost including  
ten lakh children and those in womb  
Four crore people were radiated  
Radiation spread to four lakh kilometres  
Life is impossible there for  
another twenty thousand years  
Lakhs live with cancer now  
Babies are born with deformities  
Energy is abundant in Nature  
But be vigilant in tapping it



## Dharavi Slum

Dharavi slum in Mumbai  
One million people in 520 acres!  
World's third largest slum after  
Orangi Town, Karachi with 2.4 million  
and Ciudad Neza, Mexico City with 1.2 million  
1.6 billion people live in various slums of the world  
One fourth of earth's urban population!

One of the filthiest slums in the world  
none dares to enter its interior  
Situating in marshy boggy lowlands  
Narrow lanes are full of mud  
mixed with people's urine, feces  
and stinky blood and water  
oozing from boiled skin of goats  
Leather, textiles, pottery products  
main industry of people with  
annual turnover of one billion dollars  
A small river in red and brown colour  
carries the nauseous filth to western sea  
Those multi-millionaires of world  
using finest leather products  
never care for those wretched  
artisans living in this hellish world

More than fifteen thousand  
single room factories function  
making turnover of several millions  
While Muslim community  
engages in leather industry  
Hindus live on pottery and textiles

Tamil migrants are vendors of food  
They cook and supply idlies, vadas  
fry-ups to the entire slum

Horrible impassable lanes of Dharavi  
make it a fort of underworld crimes  
Police fail to check or even support  
illicit breweries and large scale liquor sale  
Innumerable brothels with prostitutes  
of all grades attract city men of Mumbai  
Rich customers coming in cars are  
brought on palanquins to five star brothels  
Transgender sex workers are favourites  
of rich Muslim men in fifties and sixties

Unity is the strength of Dharavi  
No labour problems or conflict  
between workers and owners  
People resist government's move  
to demolish huts and build new  
flats for their accommodation

Monsoon doubles agony of Dharavi  
Water flows through lanes and huts  
Dark colour of water has changed to orange  
Muddy water with feces has drifted away  
Incessant rain has purified stinky air  
To save children from floating  
they are seated on desks tied together  
Cooking too done on tall desks  
in the light of kerosene lamps  
Children sleep in clothes cradles  
tied to the main beam of the hut  
Parents sleep on the upper berth  
of the three tier bed while  
feces float on water below

Aren't they our brothers and sisters?  
Can't the rich save the poor  
with what they throw out after consumption?  
Is it one's fault one is born poor  
or merit one is born rich?



## Enlighten Them Lord Buddha

Those traders of religion  
living in pomp and luxury  
Palace like houses and  
expensive luxurious cars  
Claim to be representative  
of Christ born in stable  
Lived a humble simple life  
with poor disciples and fishermen  
Eating just bread and fish  
Sacrificed life for saving the masses  
Jesus, isn't it high time you  
descended and drove them out  
as you did in Jerusalem temple?

Enlighten them Lord Buddha  
the purest soul that lived on Earth  
Born and brought up as prince  
renounced all such luxuries  
Chose life of ascetic poverty  
Taught the world ways of salvation  
Salvation from sufferings of life  
Salvation through nishkam karma





## Every Human Being is a Poet

Every human being is a poet  
both literate and illiterate  
Poetry is born in our minds  
and grows into a tree  
and serves entire universe  
through nishkama karma  
Poetry needs no words or language  
Illuminating the world  
Serving humans and non-humans  
through selfless action is poetry  
One who writes something  
and does just its opposite  
can never be called a poet  
Poets have no walls of  
religion, race, caste or nation  
Love of entire universe  
is their religion and creed



## Farmers' Suicides

Average thirty three farmers  
in India commit suicide everyday  
Reasons are innumerable  
Governments are main culprits  
Drowned in debt no other option  
If instigation is a crime  
governments should be punished  
Rulers and politicians turn parasites  
thrive at the sweat of feeding farmers  
Nay drink their blood and lead to suicides



## Flood Victims

What right have high land, mid land dwellers  
to drown low land people in flood?  
Why have you filled your paddy fields, ponds,  
streams, canals, wells and wet lands with soil  
and diverted rain water to low lands  
where poor people struggle for survival?  
Flood victims of low lands in Kerala  
Houses drowned in flood for more than a week  
Thousands struggle in government camps  
Plead for water, food, dress, medicine  
'Water, water everywhere, but...'  
Collect rain water to quench their thirst  
Men, women, old and young  
live together with no toilets  
Women wait for night to discharge body waste  
They have lost all their domestic possessions  
Important documents and even their huts  
Where will they go when floods recede?  
Their dreams of future are bleak and doomed  
They have nothing but dreamless sky above  
and monstrous drowning water below



## Function of Religion

Where does religion lead us to?  
Happiness, bliss, shanti, nirvana?  
Or superstition, illusion, communalism,  
intolerance, prejudice, hate, exploitation,  
violence, bloodshed, massacre and war?  
Its ideal function is former  
but History proves latter more



## **Had I been Born as a Dove**

Patriotism has injected in me  
greatness of my country  
Land which bore great sages and Buddha!  
I boasted of my country to foreign friends

Most inhuman diabolic crimes and  
rapes and murders of angelic children  
seldom heard in other parts of the world  
drown me in ocean of grief and dejection

How can humans become so mean?  
Had I been born as a dove  
I shouldn't have felt so much of pangs



## How Can We Relish Our Dish...?

How happy we are  
when prices of cereals  
vegetables and fruits  
shoot down like manna!  
Happier we are  
if it comes down to  
Rupees thirty, twenty  
ten or even less  
But we don't listen to  
wails and sobs of  
farmers and their families  
echoing from those  
weeping goods we purchase  
Silently and unaware we support  
those cut-throat middlemen  
who exploit those miserable  
Poverty stricken, debt-drowned  
farmers suicide everyday  
How can we relish our dish  
when we savour their tears?



## **I can't Count my Country Free**

I can't count my country free  
when majority struggles for survival  
when farmers starve and end their lives  
while governments support billionaires  
in looting earnings of common men

I can't count my country free  
when servants (govt.) kick their masters  
and elected rulers turn corrupt  
and drink the blood of masses who feed

I can't count my country free  
when religions brainwash peoples' minds  
uproot common sense and secular thoughts  
and drown them in superstitions

I can't count my country free  
when a woman fears to travel alone  
tread alone a road day or night  
or fears to work with men  
and live with them in their residences

I can't count my country free  
when caste system still exists  
and Dalits are treated underdogs  
overworked, tortured and murdered

I can't count my country free  
when others dictate what to eat  
what to wear, where to pray  
and what to speak



## Man and Dog

Man and dog equal victims of covid pandemic  
When millions of people are affected  
and thousands die everyday  
thousands of dogs starve and die  
Though not affected by corona virus  
lockdown made stray dogs' lives miserable  
They are seldom fed on roadsides or doorsteps

Man, when you deny food to them  
you may deny that to your own body  
Mightn't they be your previous births or your parents'?  
When you drive them away or throw stones at them  
you may do that to your own self or to your parents

Man, why do you treat dogs as inferior?  
What makes you different is your developed brain  
language craft and manual skills  
Man, you have used your brain  
more for destruction than construction  
What good your brain has done for this planet or other beings?  
Rather you attempt most for devastation and extinction  
Root cause of all pandemics and even natural calamities is your  
brain  
Man, you use your tongue more for pollution than for telling  
truths  
Use your hands more for exploitation of nature and  
environment  
Now compare your skills with your inferior dog  
Dogs run faster than you; able to see both in light and darkness  
Its hearing, smelling senses are far far superior  
It loves you deeper than your dear and near ones



Tragic report of a dog's love for its little mistress  
sunk millions eyes in tears recently  
6<sup>th</sup> August landslide at Pettimudy tea estate near Munnar  
swept away four labour camps with eighty poor labourers  
Dead bodies sunk with mud more than twenty feet thick  
Bodies were dug out with much labour day after day  
Kuvi was searching for his little mistress Dhanushka aged two  
He was crying and running here and there not eating anything  
Sniffing deep and stretching ears longing for her call of kuvi kuvi  
Rescue team continued digging mud and search in valley river  
On 14<sup>th</sup> august their eyes were drawn to Kuvi staring and crying  
at  
something floating down the river five kilometres away  
Dhanushka's decayed body was stuck on a tree  
across the river and rescue team brought it to the bank  
Kuvi ran to the body crying and crying and making others  
weep  
Dhanushka's father's body was found  
but mother's and brother's still missing  
Rescue team has not lost their hope even after seventeen days  
They are determined to find out the missing bodies five  
and Kuvi is now member of the police dog squad!



## Mother Boiling Stones for Children<sup>\*</sup>

Heart rending news from Mombasa in Kenya  
Penina Bahati Kitaso, mother of eight children  
boiling stones to pacify her starving children  
Tired of waiting and waiting they sleep with hunger  
Widow and illiterate Penina fed her family  
washing clothes of the neighbourhood  
But social distancing of Covid-19 stole her income  
Her husband died last year  
on an encounter with the armed thieves  
Her neighbor Priska Moman shared the tragic  
news with the media and opened an account for her  
Benefactors have started helping the family



\* Based on BBC report

## Mother Earth Goes on Weeping

Happiness brims mother's eyes  
when children relish their dish full  
She would appease her own hunger  
with what is left after children fed

Mother earth goes on weeping helplessly  
when her mighty one percent sons  
squander food and resource stored for all  
and starve and exploit ninety nine percent



## **Murder of Nature**

Beware Man!  
Mountains, Earth  
Rivers, Seas ...  
Living, vibrant  
energetic like you  
Compared to their  
size and power  
how insignificant you are!  
More you murder  
destroy, exploit  
heavier your burden  
of Prarabda Karma  
and Sanchita Karma



## Nature is God

God is in Nature and Nature is God  
Crime against Nature is sin against God  
Forest, quarry, sand mafias raped her  
Stabbed her body deep from head to foot  
She started bleeding immersing most of her children  
Perpetrators are below one percent  
Whereas victims are innocent cent percent  
Lying helpless and wriggling with intolerable pain  
she taught her human children  
necessity of harmonious life  
Poor and rich, literate and illiterate  
all are equal in basic biological needs  
And religion and caste are just superficial robes



## Ode to Sun

Pranam to you Sun, emperor of skies  
Sustaining us and all living bodies  
for billions of years  
With your multicoloured  
scintillating beauty  
wakes us to karma at dawn  
strokes us to rest at dusk  
Burning out day after day  
sacrifices your life for  
all lives on earth and  
innumerable heavenly bodies  
Kindly enlighten us mortals  
to serve and sacrifice for others



## **On Visiting Achyuta Samanta and KISS University\***

“Generations to come, it may well be, will scarce believe  
that such a man as this one ever in flesh and blood  
walked upon this Earth.” – How Einstein glorified Gandhi  
sixty years back is attributed by thousands on another  
Mahatma, and Gandhi’s true disciple, Achyuta Samanta  
What can be nobler and humane than giving shelter, education  
and self-reliance to 30000 poorest and neglected children of God?  
Provided employment to two hundred and fifteen thousand!  
The smiles and cheers from those 30000 pupils made me feel  
that we have descended on the real heaven on earth  
There is no doubt that Bharat Ratna and the Noble Prize  
will seek Achyuta Samanta one day or other to honour him  
and inspire millions to follow his humane sublime path



\* Achyuta Samanta (born 20 January 1965) is the founder of Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT); Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS), Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India which provides free accommodation, food, healthcare, and education from class 1 to post-graduation with vocational training.

## Result of Whose Karma?

God, our Father  
why don't you  
reveal us  
your plans?  
Why can't we find  
sense in your  
actions tragic  
and comic?  
Babies with purest souls  
born blind, deaf  
dumb, handicapped  
mentally deranged  
Born with fatal,  
chronic disease  
Result of whose karma?  
Kidnapped by beggars  
Tortured, starved  
blinded, maimed  
Used for begging  
Result of whose karma?  
Raped by father  
brother, relative  
friend, neighbour  
teacher, priest  
Mass raped and  
even murdered  
Result of whose karma?  
Born to poor parents  
fifteen thousand starve  
and die everyday  
Result of whose karma?





## Smiling Face

Human faces appearing  
serious, cruel, unpleasant  
Faces with ferocious eyes,  
moustaches and beards  
Faces we try to avoid  
meeting on our walks  
But when they smile  
look like lotus bloomed  
Teeth like lotus petals  
Their smiles radiate  
like the peeping sun  
held by dark clouds  
As lotus makes us happy  
God wants us smile and  
radiate others with happiness

## Sublime Nature Love

What a refreshing report showering on  
when mind and body writhe in summer heat!  
An instance of purest love shared by media  
A male hornbill is found dead on road  
hit by some vehicle sped on the way  
Picked up some compassionate nature lovers  
Found many fig fruits inside long curved bills  
Reported case to forest watchers  
It's a tragedy of a father hornbill  
feeding mother hornbill and chicks  
They decided to save mother and chicks  
Found a tall tree in the midst of forest  
A crevice on trunk twenty five feet high  
Inside it a layer of mud wall  
to save the chicks from predators  
The bills of mother bird were visible  
through a small hole on mud surface  
They fixed a bamboo ladder on the tree  
Started feeding her various fruits  
with a pair of tongs eight times a day  
Eternal bliss they get as reward for pains  
They reveal to world Buddha's preaching:  
"He who is kind to animals, heaven will protect"  
When father hornbill sacrificed life for family  
millions of human fathers ignore their duties  
some even torture and kill wives and children



## Tribute to Toni Morrison

A baby black star was born in Western sky  
on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1931, but remained  
unnoticed by glitter of innumerable white stars  
The black star then grew to emit sparkling unique rays  
and dimmed all other stars reigning as queen  
Though physically dead on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2019  
her radiance remains immortal for ages and ages  
The first black woman honoured by the Nobel  
The most adored novelist in the world  
Toni Morison is mouthpiece of the Black and oppressed  
Her *Beloved* remains beloved of millions East and West  
She is a black pearl and her novels serve as black pepper  
adding flavour to readers' mental feast.



## **Wastage for the Dead**

What happens to human being when s/he dies?

What happens to animal when it dies?

What happens to plant when it dies?

What happens to a flame when it is extinguished?

Aren't all creations of God?

Why then man waste thousands for the dead  
when thousands die of hunger every day?



## Sex Workers and Society

Wine and women  
weakness of men  
from time immemorial  
Destiny makes one a call girl  
Never enjoys the profession  
Society dragged her to the business  
Seduced and abused by men  
spat away like curry leaves  
Patriarchy rules the world  
Man controls society  
Sinner is extolled  
and sinned is punished  
Seduced and cheated by men  
some are sold to red streets  
Some are kidnapped at childhood  
and used for begging and sex work  
Made pregnant, give birth to  
children of unknown fathers  
Expelled by merciless society  
they go out with their children  
Either beg or do some work for survival  
Branded as prostitutes  
they are abhorred by society  
And they continue their life of filth  
Transgenders too are outcasts  
Beguiled by men many become sex workers

Society has double standards  
Adulterer is protected  
while adulteress is crucified  
When will the day come  
when call girls and transgenders  
are deemed members of our family?



## Snake and Man

Is snake enemy of man?  
To some it seems so  
Is man enemy of snake?  
Never it finds so  
Snake is cursed by God in Bible  
It is worshipped in Hindu philosophy  
Maha Vishnu used it as his sacred bed  
Lord Shiva used it as his ornament  
Sacred groves of Hindu temples  
protect snakes and other creatures  
Every being on earth  
has right to live on the planet  
Why should man kill snake  
when it never attacks him?  
When will he learn  
the necessity of cohabitation?



## Lifespan of Humans and Birds

O Supreme Being the Almighty,  
Creator of all beings on earth!  
How beautiful are your birds!  
Feasting to our eyes and ears  
Their tweets and chirps  
no doubt make you happy  
But their lifespan is very short  
compared to us, human beings  
Couldn't you grant them longer life?

Our religions teach us to sing  
hymns in praise of you  
But each religion tries  
to please its own gods  
rather than you Supreme Being  
To please their god  
some turn terrorists  
and kill the heathens

Of all your creations  
man is the only one  
who sins against you  
His heinous crimes in varieties  
multiplies and find new terms  
in dictionaries everyday  
Such a man is claimed  
by some religions  
as created in your image!  
O Supreme Being,  
what is your image?  
Why have you granted  
long lifespan to humans  
who stab you day after day?



## Children Deserted

Shocking news on TV  
Boys aged seven and nine  
wailing helplessly on roadside  
Their mother dropped them there  
telling lie of return soon  
and drove away with her lover  
How can a mother desert  
her children – part of her body?

Elsewhere a newborn baby  
found crying in roadside trash  
An unwanted child fated to be born  
Its mother got rid of burden  
to live happily with her lover  
Isn't maternal love deepest  
and purest of all other loves?

Man throws away hundreds  
of puppies and kittens everyday  
No guilt of conscience and  
they aren't news at all  
Days' long incessant wails of  
mother dogs and cats  
fall deaf to merciless ears





## Gopalakrishnan, the Noblest

“When a man has pity on all living creatures  
then only he is noble”, the Buddha teaches  
And Gopalakrishnan is one of the noblest  
A retired computer operator of State Bank of India  
bought one acre land near Mannamangalam\* forest  
with his retirement benefits of Rs. 1.5 million  
Felled all rubber trees and planted  
fruit trees, medicinal plants, rare trees  
Now more than 1000 plants and trees including  
200 fruit trees, 80 medicinal trees 40 wild trees  
All for birds, wild boars, rats, squirrels, snakes  
mongooses, reptiles, ants, and all other insects  
“For human beings, help is there from friends,  
neighbours and governments, but for non-humans,  
the heirs apparent to the entire earth, there is none”  
tells Gopalakrishnan of his divine inspiration  
This heaven of beings is 500 metres from traffic road  
A narrow pedestrian lane links to the road  
Not even bicycles can enter there  
to disturb joys of birds and animals  
Gopalakrishnan and his wife Chinnamma  
have named this animals’ paradise “Praana”  
and live in a house a little far away  
The happiness they feel, very few can attain



\* Near Thrissur in Kerala, India

## Lessons from my Rocky Dog

Dogs and cats are seldom friends  
My cute Rocky chases my cats  
whenever and wherever he finds  
He will be more aggressive in chase  
if he finds us noticing him  
He is fed chicken mixed rice in evening  
Once his hunger is over  
he will rest near the plate  
Our own cats and even stray cats  
then dine from his plate and  
he never drives them away.  
He will finish the balance food  
later before dawn

Now compare man with dog  
Is man willing to share his excess food  
with millions of hungry mouths?  
Neither he shares but throws as garbage  
tons and tons of food everyday  
When millions have no houses  
and are compelled to live in rented buildings  
thousands of rich own excess lands  
that remain waste as wilderness  
Man is the only being who is greedy  
and he is the black sheep of this planet earth



## Shadows

In my morning  
I was thrilled to  
follow my shadow  
allured by butterflies  
tweets of birds  
and beauties of Nature

At my noon  
I could conquer  
my shadow  
stamping on it  
facing extreme heat

In my evening  
I fear  
I will be chased by  
my shadow  
and push me  
to pitch darkness



## Elegy on Professor T V Reddy

Lord Venkateswara,  
why have you called back  
your dear bard so soon?  
The spiritual epic, his masterpiece  
turned out to be his swan song  
It came out of the press just a few months back  
Couldn't you grant him some more time  
to get feedback of this sublime book?  
Gentle breeze would have brought to your feet  
more rhapsodies from his lips

Renowned poet Professor T V Reddy,  
you were our dearest President  
Elder brother and mentor  
Your departure without any notice  
drowned us in the ocean of grief  
Time can't fill the chasm  
Irreplaceable is your absence

Started your career as Lecturer of English  
Proved eminent Professor, Principal, Emeritus Fellow  
Author of 21 books – poet, novelist,  
short story writer, critic, grammarian  
Your distinct poetic style  
meeting point of past and present  
Combination of beautiful structured rhymed  
poetry and well-crafted unrhymed free verse  
Rhythm as musical as ripples of brook  
A rural muse of Tirupati, portrayed  
beauties of landscapes, flora, fauna,  
poor people, animals and birds  
Sorrows and tragedies of people around

brimmed your eyes and flowed to paper  
Exploitation and corruption of politicians  
hurt your mind and composed  
excellent lampoons and satires  
Spiritual and pious to the core  
superb philosophical, metaphysical  
poems flowed from your pen

Professor Reddy, how humble and simple you were  
Never showy, preferred to be mute in assemblies  
Gentle and loving to anyone who meets  
Inspired and guided younger poets and critics  
Your talk on English poetry enlightened the audience

Lord Venkateswara,  
don't you see your bard  
shooting rays on you like a star?  
Still your bard is yet to be  
prescribed in universities' syllabuses  
Don't you want to spread your message  
every nook and corner of the world?  
Professor Reddy glitters like a gem  
among sparkling poets of the world  
As sun can't be hidden by moon  
we are sure, Professor Reddy  
can't be ignored by universities for long



## **Jai Javan! Jai Kisan!**

How can we sleep at night  
not letting our minds  
to fly to borders  
where thousands of soldiers  
patrol in minus degrees  
to protect us from enemies?  
Thousands have sacrificed their lives  
fighting against enemies  
and inclement climate

How can we take our meals  
forgetting farmers who feed us?  
Rice, wheat food in dishes  
take us to thousands of striking farmers  
shedding tears for months on highways  
How can we eat happily  
when their tears flow  
like lava to our minds?  
Thousands of farmers  
suicide every year  
drowned in debt caused by  
draught and flood  
Pranam to you soldiers and farmers!  
Jai Javan! Jai Kisan!

