

# Excavating Self

collection of inquisitions

Pawan Chamling 'Kiran'

Translated by  
Daan Khaling & Bikram Khaling

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Original Nepali Poems by Pawan Chamling 'Kiran'

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## Foreword

It is always awkward for a writer to introduce his own work, but since I am impelled to it, required to script an introduction to my third collections of poems, I do so by writing this foreword.

The poems in this volume were composed after 1986, the year that my second volume, *Perennial Dream : My Reality* was published. The current set of poems has resulted as and when my poetic urge could steal moments from my hectic schedules. Now that the anthology is complete, I hope that it receives the same welcome from my patrons and well-wishers as my earlier two efforts.

Poetry in terms of a literary pursuit is vast in scope and truly universal in appeal. As such, I am humbled by the enormity of its scope and admit that as a faithful votary of poetry, I am merely picking pebbles from the vastness of this limitless ocean. What is poetry in essence, I cannot admit to know. I can only feel it in my bones and find release in my words. The poems are before you and it is up to the readers and my peers to assess their merit or failings. My work is a simple gesture to adorn an already lavish garden with a few saplings of my own, to place a few bricks to help build the temple dome. This is a helping hand, however ineffectual, to lend support to a force that is already hard at work. My poems have been categorized by critics as 'Pragativadi' - progressive in content and scope. I do not disagree with this contention. Not only am I conscious that my work is influenced by own past, but at times I consciously draw upon it to reflect the agonies and disappointments that I felt personally while watching the bleak public life in the desolate past. Admittedly, despite the decades that have passed since, not much has changed. It is this unchanged face of human suffering that keeps invading my poetry and remains the haunting theme on which I compose my verses.

Can my poetry bring about a change?

Maybe not, but I believe that in "well-being in favour of all" lies the key to well-being of the 'self' and hence my conviction that instead of "art being for its own sake," should, by all means, to enrich life itself.

And so I write.

But this does not imply that art in any form should be reduced to the level of photo-reproduction. That art is sans emotion, sans feeling, sans anything a human is endowed with. Neither do I believe in reducing the sublime art of poetry to sermonizing or rhetoric speech-making. Not in the least do I consider flowery embellishments of self-expression as the sole-prerequisite to the art of crafting a poem, nor do I consider such poems as part of literary work. Poetry, I believe, is the expression of the poet strung in appropriate and suitable verses to sing the joy of re-discovery of things true to this world. A poet does so in expressions peculiar to him and by imparting to the subject a familiarity of everyday happenings.

Let me assure the readers here that the poems in this volume have germinated from situations and circumstances that are true to this world. It is now the critic's job to validate how far the 'self' in me has succeeded in its selflessness; as also to ascertain to what extent my 'sukh' has succeeded in bestowing happiness and joy of shared realizations in its true universal sense.

Then there are critics galore who see a revolutionary theme in my works walking with me on the path of revolt. To this, I daresay, if a child, otherwise hale and hearty is given to constant rebellious whining without rhyme or reason, he is prompted by an instinct that is decidedly unruly and wild. This is undesirable. To be rebellious just for the sake of rebelling is unhealthy. And yet a rebellious streak is a necessary means to an end to work together a full scale revolution, or even a mutiny, to mould a positive history. But then again, revolution for its own sake is anathema to progress. Here, in keeping with the teachings of the Bhagwad Geeta and having set my eyes upon creative good and not just creation alone in terms of “Rachna” or plans and blue-prints, I welcome even war. Just because one dislikes conflict, one cannot disown the grim reality behind that conflict.

What I have offered above, constitute in my view [as also my admission and acceptance] the only plausible explanation to the two elements critics find resonating in my work in varying degrees. I have chosen poetry as a medium of expression for the simple reason that it is so dear to me and so close to my heart; and it is so dear to me because poetry has an uncanny way of imparting beauty to everything... even things that are not so pleasant to behold at first glance.

Lastly, I owe a debt of gratitude to Shri Ram Prasad Mainali, the learned literary luminary, who has been extremely generous with his time, words and expertise in writing an exhaustive preface to this book; as also to Tika, my wife, the fountainhead of all my inspirations, for having understood and appreciated my need to grapple with the day-to-day battles for existence by finding suitable vent to my poetic propensity... even at the most ungainly hours.

**Pawan Chamling ‘Kiran’**

Varanasi  
9<sup>th</sup> January, 1993

## PREFACE

The present volume, published originally in Nepali as *Mo Ko Hun*, consists of 41 poems by Pawan Chamling, composed and written by him between 1986-92. His previous compositions, published in two separate volumes are *Early Poems (Praumbhik Kavita-haru)* and *Perennial Dream: My Reality*.

The poems in the first volume, characterized as they are by simplicity and lucidity of expression, are steeped in emotions deftly romanticised by a deep sense of longing and desire to catalyze a revolutionary change in a social order riddled with injustice, repression and ever-widening disparities through poetry so close to his heart. Thus, a poet's journey into the world begins. A world he realizes is harsh in reality and unforgiving in its ruthlessness. And yet, the journey is embarked upon with an eagerness that is amply dabbled in the keenness of a poetic heart that, though in its infancy, is fiercely alive and in step with the rhythm of life that is fiercely upbeat. This is the Pawan we were introduced in his first collection of poems *Early Poems*.

By the time he arrives at the threshold of the first milestone in *Perennial Dreams...*, one finds that his poems have acquired an aura of quiet dignity born of sure-footedness in the maturely unique style of composing, as apart from a conviction that finds its full expression in the theme that dominates his work powerfully in this volume. The poetic heart so eager and keen when it began its journey is still vibrantly young and yet mature, throbbing with emotions that explode in cascades of fiery rhymes that dictate the poet's fertile imagination and flow from the docile pen in his hand on the path of progressive goals by means even of revolt!

The same poet in Chamling, proves here that he has come a long way – his creativity has acquired an altogether new dimension as a stylish master endowed with scope and richness of expression in a class that is unique and all his own. In the realm of self-expression, Chamling, at this juncture, is almost without peers. These poems, particularly those in the second half, are undoubtedly modern in both content and scope. Needless to add, in retrospect, the sting and potential of his earlier works which established his credentials as a genius become apparent. A fact one finds amply vindicated by his second collection through which 'Kiran' became recognized in the realm of Nepali literature as the leading poet of immense potential to come out of Sikkim. This, his third effort, will elevate Chamling, the poet, to a new pedestal. This work sets him apart in the realm of not only Sikkim but the whole of Indian Nepali literature as a consummate poet who stands head over shoulders above the rest in the domain of poetry. In other words, Pawan, the poet, in his second milestone, has succeeded beyond doubt in carving a niche for himself as a poet of distinction.

A poem in fiery verses contributed by a then unknown poet had somehow found its way into the columns of a local weekly *Kanchendzonga* in 1968. This poem, *Vir Ko Parichay* (Hallmark of the Brave), is still considered a rare conception for its time, specially when coming from the pen of a barely 18 year old Chamling. This was Chamling's first published work. He was born in the remote South Sikkim village of Yangang in 1950. In the preface to his second collection, *Perennial Dream* Chamling writes:

"Beneath the shadow of the awe-inspiring edifice of nature, Bhaley Dhunga, a tiny village has been in existence since time immemorial. This is Rangang. I was born in this

village, brought up in the intimate proximity of its colourful surroundings that embraced in their folds, lush undulating hills that rose to considerable heights but none surpassed the awesome Bhaley Dunga overlooking my dwelling from the north. Thus my childhood and adolescent years were spent happily running up and down this landscape as much for fun as was necessitated by the very topography of my village. I found boundless joy adapting myself to the raw virginity of the hills and dales amidst which I grew to manhood. Therefore, in ways more than one, my poems draw from those childhood days and are set firmly against the backdrop of those enduring landscapes that remain indelibly etched in my memory. There is no denying that these poems are the living images of my childhood and adolescent years rolled in one, so symbolic of the past without whose lingering influence, this volume *Perennial Dream...* could not have been conceived in its present form which is so defining of a past that is beyond retrieve unless personally experienced.”

Not that the visual scenes of childhood have changed in perspective in today’s Yangang, nor merely because Yangang happens to be the place of his birth; but then, its simple, uncomplicated atmosphere steeped in nature and yet existing in isolation so heightened by the indelible imprint of the awesome Bhaley Dunga in ‘Kiran’s’ psyche exact an enduring influence that shape and hone Chamling’s life as a poet in subtle, yet deeply profound ways. The mute, granite-like rock projection that derives its name from its uncanny resemblance to the head of Rooster, crows in Chamling’s verses and gets transformed into a living and kicking Red Rooster which would keep crowing across ages speaking of the endless struggle against tyranny and injustice that it has witnessed.

There are two distinctly different sides to Pawan Chamling’s personality, that of a distinguished poet on side and a successful politician on the other and the two compliment each other. As a politician, Chamling is firmly in place to run the affairs of a democracy, articulating a strongly reformist agenda that finds resonance in his poetic exercises. “A reformist who is basically theorist in content resorts to poetry composing,” says our top literary luminary of the past, Bal Krishna Sum. Even going by this strong view expressed without reservation, one cannot find in Chamling’s poems the kind of theorist’s dilemma vitiating his work as a poet to mar his reformist agenda by even so much as a hint of escapism. On the contrary, Pawan treads the path of a reformist by articulating a strong agenda for progressive change even through revolt if need be, because he remains convinced that change is the most powerful force of time that cannot be denied forever. Chamling plunged into the thick of things in 1973 when Sikkim was beginning on its historic transition from feudalism to parliamentary democracy, was determinedly shedding the Old Order, by participating in the movement that culminated in Sikkim’s merger in 1975. By 1985, he was a Member of the Legislative Assembly from where he went on to become a Minister (holding the portfolio of Industry and Commerce, in addition to Information and Public Relations and Press). All these made it imperative that the politician in him influence his poetic disposition even as being a poet of considerable consequence would necessarily impinge upon his political image and philosophy. Time, however, is not yet ripe to speculate on how these unique traits play off against each other in the man who embodies a ‘dual personality’ of diametrically juxtaposed facets. In this context, one point needs to be clearly understood – he has not used his poems and his poetic capabilities as a genius to articulate his political agenda for cheap gains and one-upmanship; nor has he used the basic theme of his poetic sense of

revolt – a classic ingredient that peppers his poems – as a means of sloganeering for cheap political gains. Herein lies Chamling’s superbly healthy trait that characterizes his literary pursuits as a poet par excellence.

In his two decades long journey as a poet [this volume in its original Nepali version was published in 1993], Chamling’s work in the domain of poetry has been deeply reflective of the concern he always for the downtrodden who comprise a bulk of Sikkim’s population. He thus articulates through the rhymes and verses he is adept at crafting, a strong agenda for justice and fair-play that, he feels, have been denied for too long. He voices his concern in no uncertain terms against social injustice meted out to the majority in terms of inequality of opportunity, thereby creating disparities that are rampant now in the social, economic and financial spheres; not to mention ruthless repression and exploitation of the masses through the hegemony of the political class in the form of denial of social rights and through subversion of democratically elected and constituted institutions. This is one facet of ‘Kiran’s’ leitmotif that characterizes his urge to write on the one hand, while on the other, his poems reveal a man deeply pledged to the cause of literature vis-à-vis the language in which he excels himself as a poet par excellence. His work amply demonstrates that he is a “Rashtravadi,” a nationalist, in which capacity he seeks to find a place in the national mainstream as a worthy representative of the community he hails from, while, at the same time, he is a poet, who from the images he conjures from the inner recesses of his heart, transcends the man-made frontiers to reach for the ultimate that is enshrined in the dictum of “Vashdhaiva-Kutumbakam” – the mantra that punctuates his poetic urge and finds release in his fiery rhymes and verses. His work as a poet stands out as the crusade he had launched with his pen to uphold his faith and the profundity of it in the freedom of man through democracy as the model for a stable and successful society. For this reason in particular, the basic theme that links all his poetic expressions are truly progressive in scope and content – a recurring theme that has seldom escaped the attention of critics who have commented liberally on this aspect that underlines all his works to date.

To cite an example:

*With a fistful of earth,  
The measure of my throbbing heart  
An army of radiance  
Flashes fists-full of dazzling light  
Advances with me  
To challenge  
Darkness, the evil suffocating  
In a final fight.  
(Encountering Conflicts)*

Or here’s another, just as apt:

*Even today  
In the hearts of men  
Festers a hurt  
Inflicted sometime in history  
Painful  
To this day*

*And capable  
Of sending out ripples and tremors  
Marking its epicenter  
Deep inside his heaving heart  
Where history resides...*

*Hence-  
A generation continues to remain  
Infected with maladies  
Passed down by time  
Fallouts of history  
From an ancient past  
Tainted by history's inadequacies.*

*History is made  
Never undone  
It marks us*

*With indelible ink  
Scripting constant reminders.  
Leaving ghost pains  
For the awake  
And nightmares that haunt  
The sleep.  
And man frets through life  
Suffers without respite.*

*(I Survive)*

Or yet another:

*Can we,  
In the year yet to unfold  
This newborn New Year  
Script a new history  
Start on a clean slate?  
See whether a chapter  
That records  
Our success at effecting change  
Can be written in ink  
And not blood that soaks through  
And infects  
Even the coming years.  
Can the stories be linked  
With bridges that ford  
The strife that lurks beneath?  
Can we,  
Are we  
Deserving of a second chance,  
A new beginning?  
(On This, The First Day of a New Year)*

Basically, Pawan Chamling 'Kiran' is a poet of the masses, his work as a poet, dedicated as it is to the majority who traverse the landscape, both urban and rural, on foot. From the bulk of his work, it is clearly understood that for Chamling, art is not merely for art's sake. To him art in all its forms should be for the enrichment of life itself. Qualifying this further, he maintains that this does not imply that art should become in itself a mere means with which to fulfill the needs of livelihood. To make such assumptions would be a mistake, a conclusion far-fetched to malign Chamling's contention. Hence, for a better understanding of what he means to imply by his contention, one should delve deep into the well of human endeavours in the sphere of the arts and its manifold pursuits; or for that matter, one should make it a point to acquaint oneself thoroughly with the work of A.C. Bradley wherein may be found detailed analysis the learned author has made of the subject in this regard. However, being a poet of the masses, his treading on the revolutionary path with his poems is but natural. A rebel to the core, there is yet a happy departure so apparent in his revolutionary theme that sets him apart as a unique rebel who, through his work, sings the glory of revolt for the cause and causes of creative good. His poetic urge for revolt and rebellion is not to create disorder and chaos from which to usher order, but for the sake of change that is all too powerful a force of time, the 'Grim Reaper' that cannot be denied for ever. His revolt as implied in his poems aims to do away with the status quo that has existed for too long to do any good - one that is lost in its antiquity, outdated and obsolete - so that a semblance of a new order may be ushered in that is truly compatible with the quivering reality of time, place and circumstances of the present in the here and now. For example:

*Let our son forge for himself  
A world fresh and new;  
A Yugpurush  
With attributes  
Now forgotten  
Shall have to be  
Begotten  
Betwixt the two of us  
So that the age  
That follows  
Understands from birth  
That real achievements  
Demand  
Supreme Sacrifice*

*I, therefore, beseech you, my darling  
To accept me as only you can  
For the virja daan  
That's in my fate to offer you  
As it is,  
Your destiny to nurture  
To groom a life  
For the task so imposing  
Between you*

*And me, the two of us,  
We share  
A destiny intimately intertwined  
Common, yet so divine.  
(Virja-Daan)*

At this juncture, the creator and composer of this volume, in his poetic dispensation steps further and brings down the bulwark of social taboos that segregate “sex” from literature in Nepali writing, for instance:

*Young girls stare blank  
At sleazy ceilings of hotel rooms  
Stripped, exposed  
Arranged  
For a lusty spree  
The unsatiated night lasts three hours  
An empty embrace  
On an empty dawn  
This Gangtok town.  
(Gangtok, 1989: A Portrait)*

Yet another...

*On power purchased  
Playing an apology of a game  
Of Cupid  
Of youthful virility  
Eluded by passion long doused  
Incapacitated  
Rendered impotent  
By habits debilitating  
Of addicted masturbation.  
Even such an excuse  
In the presence of a whore  
All willing, all solicitous  
Finds reason  
To act and masquerade  
As a man, virile and potent  
Who ejaculates prematurely though  
Semen thin and watery.*

*What can I expect  
Of a son nurtured inside the womb  
Of a whore who bedded with many  
Of semen thin and watery  
Sprung from a man  
Desperate in his impotency;  
For resurrection and redemption  
In the unborn tomorrow?  
(Virja-Daan)*

*This impotent age  
 Like the flaccid limpness  
 Of a feeble, shrunken  
 Dick,  
 Infects as it withers  
 Unleashing  
 A wake  
 Of mad cravings  
 Akin  
 To the unsated lust  
 Of the Nympho  
 Who straddles the bed of age  
 (An Impotent Age)*

‘Sex’ as a theme in Nepali literary works, be it prose or poetry, is almost nonexistent. It is a taboo. There have been literary luminaries like the late Gopal Prasad Rimal, Pushkar Lohani and Sita Pandey who have dared to trespass, each in his or her unique style, into the forbidden zone from time to time. Pawan Chamling ‘Kiran’ appears to make up the latest addition to this exclusive clique. He does so with splendid poetic grace giving his work a touch of genius. The boldness of purpose, heightened by its free and frank wholesomeness characterizing his style makes the treatment of the theme a unique work of art, the seemingly sleazier aspects of the theme so treated acquire a kind of dignity that seems highly salutary. It becomes a solemn narrative with a sound moral. Ground realities are brought under sharp focus with a sense of purpose that is almost ruthless.

The Shakespearian tragedy stands out perfectly defined in Hamlet’s dilemma, the tragic prince who in a moment of utter indecision blurts out the immortal lines: “To be or not to be, that is the question.” These are words which loom large before the present world caught in perpetual turmoil.

Such a sense of tragedy, mingled with obscure yearnings for something intangible and undefinable become, in truth, fertile grounds for poets, writers and artists, to cultivate their artistic pursuits and with some luck and plenty of hardwork, make their individual mark. ‘Kiran’ is no exception to this almost universal rule. We find in his poems, a tragic sense that makes its presence felt in ways more than just melancholy. It touches deep and strikes one’s innermost chords that at once ‘tell of saddest thought’ – so uch like P.B. Shelley’s lines that rouse in us a kindred ‘devotion to something afar, from the realm of our sorrow.’

For example:

*I exist  
 Merely and purely  
 For the sake of  
 Existence  
 An existence that has  
 A semblance  
 Of identity vague,  
 I’m indeed  
 A complete nonentity  
 (A Crucified Query)*

Or this one:

*I was living an existence  
Scripted by someone else  
The life of a pariah, alienated from my own  
My life rendered meaningless  
My aspiration lay barren  
As we all had collectively lost  
Our Mother  
(Common Plots, Different Stories )*

In our quest for modernism's mores in contemporary poetry, we often make the mistake of giving more weightage to the poet's style of expression and presentation and ignoring the 'theme' and its treatment consistent with the poet's way of thinking, feeling and approach as also the context in which the theme has been applied. Style alone cannot be the sole criterion on which a poem can be adjudged as being modern. It's the poet's way of thinking and sensitivity as also the quality, class and style of approach he can muster and command, consistent with his own standing projected against the social, cultural, financial and economic backdrops, each of which must impinge on his work and again the scope of his theme vis-à-vis his own acquired ability to draw from the knowledge and expertise on the current and even past happenings in his own immediate environs together with those on the regional, national and international scene.

Generally speaking, the life we lead nowadays is full of unforeseen hazards. It is riddled with the problems, each more complex than the other and where disparities, dissensions and disagreements abound in every sphere. There are, therefore, intangibles thrown in on the path to contend with. In such circumstances, a modern poem, in the true sense of the term, is bound to be a living portrait as it were of rhymes and verses, in the expression of which the reflection of the ground realities, all grim and grimy, is focused on in no uncertain terms. This particular aspect of the reflection, consistent with the grim ground realities can be clearly seen and experienced in all poems of modern vintage, and the same aspect is fast becoming a unique stamp characterizing poet 'Kiran's' latest effort. Let us take a few examples to illustrate this point:

*Despite nonstop plodding  
On this road  
It's spreading out  
In directions many  
Tentacle-like  
To stretch endlessly on  
This road  
Cleaving through the bosom  
Of this universe  
Is crowded today  
To overflowing  
\*  
But the road itself  
Is fidgeting now  
The road is consciously awake  
The road is thus roused*

*And lo! Rising”*  
*(Bodh: Early Poems, pg. 17)*

Here is another:

*But life has now to be sought*  
*And rediscovered,*  
*Life has to be resurrected*  
*With the spirit of consciousness and humanity,*  
*Life has to be re-kindled*  
*With the flaming torch of revolution.*  
*(Life’s Harvest: Perennial Dream My Reality, pg 31)*

Here, mention may be made of a poem, which is exceptional in its own right by Bom Dewan, captioned ‘Harvest of Fire’ which comes very close to ‘Kiran’s’ poem cited below. A comparative assessment of the two works is something I deeply cherish in my heart but have decided to so at a later date. Nevertheless, let us see what, in the present collection, Kiran has to say in the passage below:

*Time, the grim reaper, is on the prowl*  
*Haunting paths rocky and coarse*  
*Of this yuga, Age of Progress*  
*The present*  
*The march has kept pace*  
*Since time itself*  
*It has seen through ages*  
*Traversed the roads*  
*Of yugas many*  
*Time*  
*Its pace consistent*  
*Never tires*  
*Even under the weight*  
*Of histories tucked*  
*Firmly under his armpits*  
*It, as they say, waits for none.*  
*Even today*  
*In the hearts of men*  
*Festers a hurt*  
*Inflicted sometime in history*  
*(I Survive)*

Even the short poems in the present collection, despite their brevity, are highly readable. ‘Gangtok 1989- A Portrait’ and ‘Bahadur Kancha’ have both come alive in their rendition scoring over ‘This Country of Yours and Mine’ lie a portrait in oil depicting a way of life unique to our society. As for the lengthier poems, they stave away boredom with the interplay of flow and rhythm in perfect tandem with the theme riding the crest paddled by simple yet powerful expressions. And they do not in the least give the impression of speech-making or sermonizing. Many of the poems are at par with those by poet Bhupi Sherchen in their almost vitriolic overtone. Short poems by him have a class all their own and yet in his longer poems, Kavi Kiran establishes that he has come a long way and worked out a style that is characteristically all his own.

'Kiran's' poems are wholesome and free from complexities despite the modern vintage that sets the tone, amply reflecting the contemporary realities on the ground. And yet the rendering has been done in a simple, down-to-earth language of the common masses that he artfully deploys in his verses. The poems are untouched by any artificiality and none is unrealistic or far-fetched. The grim realities that abound the external world, and have, to a great extent, influenced 'Kiran's' work as a poet; it is, therefore, only natural that some of the grimness finds its way into his rhymes and verses, not to speak of the theme, which in some cases is almost gruesome. For instance, the poem 'Every Morning' depicting the worldwide cycle of killings and revenge killings evokes the brutality that has made human life so cheap and death commonplace.

There is no hard and fast rule that in the selection of a set of creative work in literary pursuits, each and every shortlisted piece should command excellence of a high order and even if such were the case, it is just fine. However, the yardstick of excellence in the selection rests solely on the choice of the creator himself. But in the case of the creative work being edited by a publishing house, the selection, excellence wise, rests exclusively in the discretion of the editor concerned. But, according to I.A. Richards, preferential treatment thus accorded to any set of selected works cannot be the standard test for excellence. Taking cue from these facts, it may be said without a shadow of doubt that the selected poems in this volume are not limited merely by his pleasure of having created them; but in this new volume, consistent with his previous published works, is once again before us and before the esteemed premise of the Bharatiya Nepali literary pursuits in the domain of poetry, to occupy a unique place in its annals of truly long standing.

In conclusion, it may be said that poet Pawan Chamling 'Kiran' is a songster who sings the glory of this material, yet vibrant world, as he persistently glorifies with his songs, the ever pulsating lives that inhabit this earth seeking shelter and solace – a natural songster fully attuned to the well-being of the teeming humanity and the common masses who throng every nook and corner of their shared homeland.

In this wide, wide world; and more commonly in our society, there are a few smart alecs who made it their business to flagrantly distort the inherent divinity which manifests itself in 'Sat' in their utterly selfish bid to rob and deprive life of its brightly illumined side in order to cast deep and desolate darkness by attempting to prove the same 'Sat' as 'Chit' ('chit' denotes the tail-side of the coin, a symbol of defeat in a bet, while 'head' denotes victory). And thus, they are having the time of their life gloating over their doctored success to partake of the 'Ananda' (in the paraphrase: Sat, Chit, Ananda). In such a scenario, poet 'Kiran's' rhymes and verses have made a timely appearance before these 'masqueraders of duplicity' as a 'beacon of light'. In the journey towards the beckoning light, the poet in Chamling is busily engaged in battles he has waged against the all-pervading darkness. If, indeed, we repose our abiding faith in the truth as advocated by our national motto "Satyamev Jayate," let us, in all earnestness, make a common prayer collectively beseeching the Almighty to lead us from darkness to light as in ... 'Tamaso Ma Jyotir-gamaya.'

***Ram Prasad Mainali***

Varanasi  
15-1-1993

## Publisher's Note

In your hands is the English translation of a collection of poems by Shri Pawan Chamling 'Kiran', originally published in Nepali as *Ma Ko Hun*. Apart from being a poet par excellence – this being firmly established by his earlier volumes of work – he is a successful politician who has carved a niche for himself as being distinctly and daringly different from the rest of the brood, some of whom are famous rather notoriously for all the wrong reasons.

A dedicated social worker since his younger days, his policies and programs incorporated into the government he runs now, amply reflect the same stamp of dedication with which he has set his goals to make Sikkim self sufficient. A keen lover of Nature, a trait that often adorns his poems, he has proven time and again that he is an environmentalist first and last. The policies and programs that he has launched in Sikkim speak for themselves in this regard.

Hailing as he does from a rural background of erstwhile feudal Sikkim, Pawan has seen it all, both as a poet and a politician with a strong reformist agenda. If his childhood and adolescent years had been full of struggle inside the old Sikkim, to his chagrin, he discovered that life in a democratic Sikkim with an elected government at the helm could be just as, or even more, undesirable when democracy stood flagrantly abused.

The poet in him was shocked at the way democracy stood vandalized in the hands of those in power and unleashed a torrent of rhymes and rhythms of a bizarre order to produce a superb poetic work – *Ma Ko Hun*. Similarly, the politician in him, rose to the occasion and restored democracy when Sikkim needed it most; and who at present is busy in his third consecutive term in office, transforming Sikkim on a scale and with a drive never seen or attempted before in the entire history of this tiny Himalayan state.

In the present volume, Pawan Chamling 'Kiran' brings out in vivid detail, the frailties of man to denounce him not only for his wickedness born of arrogance but goes further to castigate man for his utter failure to recognize his own true self. The spark of divinity present in every man, but shrouded under layers of ignorance accumulated over myriad cycles of birth and death is one riddle that the poet has sought to solve through the milieu of a number of exotic verses that form part of this collection.

Hence the poser so relevant in the context of the present work becomes what Americans refer to as 'the million dollar question.' A universal question that is both relevant and highly applicable to the erring humanity if, at all, peace, a rare commodity indeed, is to be brought back on this much-beleaguered earth.

As indicated under the contents, a total of nine poems of the usual length, hitherto unpublished have been added to this volume together with five short ones, also unpublished thus far, make up the present volume in English of *Ma Ko Hun, Excavating Self, a collection of inquisitions*.

## ***Dedication***

*I dedicate this anthology to my parents, Aash Bahadur and Aash Rani, to whom I owe everything that I am today. My parents renounced all personal happiness and comfort, laboured hard just so that we could have our own futures. I have seen their struggles from close quarters and can appreciate the sacrifices they made; and through them I can feel the pain and grief of millions of other parents like them who have confronted exploitation, suffered oppressions and lived grief... For them I have written these poems.*

*In these poems I narrate their tales and anguishes which make me, move me, inspire me...*

***Son, Pawan***

## **Acknowledgment**

I express my deep appreciation to Mr. Bikram Khaling and Mr. Daan Khaling for having done such a fine job of translating into English, selected poems from my earlier work “Mo Ko Hun” rendered originally in Nepali. I am deeply indebted also to Shri R.P. Mainali for having penned an exhaustive preface to the original edition, which was done in Nepali in keeping with the language of the original work.

**Pawan Chamling ‘Kiran’**

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## **Faith**

Suspended high in the supernal expanse  
A rock  
Simulates beauty fragile  
And I  
Through time, since time  
Have seated her in  
My believing heart  
As Shakti, primordial and supreme,  
In her  
The essence of my soul I seek.

Eons have passed  
The wait continues  
Silent and devout  
As I meditate  
Absorb the visage, make it  
A part of me.

To this day  
I long  
To pick a note of divine choice  
Steal a glimpse of the fair image  
Unslaked I remain  
Patient still  
And waiting.

## **Bounden Duty**

A crow in flight  
Cuts the azure void  
Restless  
As it flits  
Between one tree-top  
And the next  
It maps a route  
But a destination, it does not chart.

On and on it flies  
All over and across  
Set upon an eternal quest  
To circumscribe  
The globe  
A pretentious exercise  
Hopeless and futile  
Because  
This mission in flight  
A lifetime of toil  
For reasons plain and true  
Is doomed to naught

The poor resolute crow  
It is bound,  
By failings that limit  
All and every flying crow.

And yet  
It flies  
Attempts  
In a lifetime  
To circumscribe  
Survey  
And encompass  
The globe

## **Encountering Conflicts**

On centre-stage,  
Even at the wings  
Visible at times, at others hidden  
I engage war  
My birth announced  
My relationship with strife.

The field of war undefined,  
The battlefield ambiguous  
Makes me a soldier of battles many.

A grasp of light to engage  
Darkness at its height  
A handful of brilliance  
To explore  
Release from primeval oppression  
My hands reinforced  
With human links  
To fell  
A devilish tree, a remorseless fiend  
With crimes unforgivable that ring its age

The monolith branches out  
And descends, to snare  
With plans and blueprints and ideas bizarre  
Of overlapping roads and Quixotic bylanes  
To infect even the brilliance of the Sun  
To perpetuate and sneak  
A reign of gloom  
Dank, desolate.

With a fistful of earth,  
The measure of my throbbing heart  
An army of radiance  
Flashes fists-full of dazzling light  
Advances with me  
To challenge  
Darkness, the evil suffocating  
In a final fight.

## Shanti

I am lost within my own self  
Searching peace  
The yearning remains enmeshed  
And entangled, in a failed  
Futile and befuddled quest.  
If only peace were an entity  
A form to hold  
Were you identifiable  
In the expanse above  
Or even in the bowels low  
I would have tracked you down  
Made you my own;  
Even lands unmapped  
If they be your reside  
I would go after you

But you have chosen instead  
To become a part of me  
To merge  
To pervade  
My being,  
To lose yourself within me.  
And I know not where you dwell –  
Entangled in the rhythm of my heart  
Or enmeshed in the rise and ebb

Of my tumultuous mind  
Or sought refuge in the darker recesses  
Of unfulfilled desires, aspirations on hold?  
Or are you barricaded behind  
The befuddled cadence  
Of the off and on dazzle  
Of my successes and near misses?

I have sought you long  
But you, O Peace  
Are so much a part of me  
That you elude me still?

## **The Discovery of Man**

The mind  
With eyes more perceiving,  
I have detached and placed  
In front of me.  
Offering  
A vantage point fresh,  
To observe, to scrutinize  
The physicality, the shell  
And seek the soul within.

Through lifetimes  
I have sought to exhume thee  
Longing deep, for a flash to see.

In this tumult,  
Of the millions who teem and throng;  
Through the cycle of births and deaths  
I fail miserably again.  
You hold your enigma dear  
You are close and intricately intimate  
Yet distant and more remote.

Of late though, I concede  
An apparition  
Shimmers of you  
Could be anything, everything  
But conceit  
It is not.  
Or how else can I perceive  
You  
In the deep melody  
That haunts the Pipal tree,  
Where the Koyal  
In the peak of spring  
Strikes a discordant note  
With a melancholy song.

The formlessness now hints a shape  
In eyes obsessed.  
It becomes clear  
That I persevere with a lost endeavour  
A hopeless impossibility

Of seeking you  
In man-made constructs.  
Your formlessness  
I know  
Will resist  
Convergence  
And never shall entwine  
In wordly eyes like mine.

## **Beneath the Veneer**

The man as I see  
Is  
A pleasing approximation  
Of crafted perfection  
Acquired charms perfectly  
Personified.

But a deeper look  
And  
The same man  
Unlayers a different visage;

The truth  
Behind the face  
I discerned  
Through fervent kisses of discovery  
Only to learn beyond doubt  
That the man the façade hides  
Hides himself well  
Beyond the gaze of the naked eye.  
The shape and contours  
That make the face  
Convey not  
The essence they hide.  
We see the gestures  
Like talking, laughing  
Anger  
And shameless greed,  
Envy  
That makes him scheme  
Also leave him obscure.

Then who really  
Is man?  
What, in essence  
Is he??  
The true self  
Stands  
Hidden, almost lost,  
Deep within  
The dark retreats  
Of the idea that is he.

### **An Impotent Age**

This impotent age  
Like the flaccid limpness  
Of a feeble, shrunken  
Dick,  
Infects as it withers  
Unleashing  
A wake  
Of mad cravings  
Akin  
To the unsated lust  
Of the Nympho  
Who straddles the bed of age.

## **A Song**

Why my life always flees  
Fearing its own shadow  
Why does it shed tears  
Of hurts, from cares?  
A proliferation of people  
Surround my isolation,  
And I learn, I am not  
The only isolated one.

Why a gust needs to fathom  
What a furious storm can wreak?  
Why does season suffer  
Mood swings  
Smiles in Spring,  
And scattering melancholy  
In the autumn shed?

The sun rules the day,  
The moon lords over night,  
Why then does only  
The night pervade  
The longing for a new morrow?

## **Animal Instincts**

Man domesticates animals  
His purpose specific  
He provides and feeds  
He fattens them well  
To serve him, the selfish beast

This is obvious  
All will agree

Look within, and even you and I  
Have become livestock  
Pampered  
And indulged with profound care  
To fatten the prospects  
Of someone  
At the other end.  
But we ignore the import  
Of the truth that cloaks  
The obvious that could embarrass.

We live it daily  
We ride the bubble  
And bear the brunt  
Of the final fall;  
And yet  
We pick ourselves up  
Only to stand in line again.

## **Sound**

The sound drifting across  
Of bells that ring inside  
The temple  
The sound drifting across  
Of the Maulvi's call;  
They both sound  
Identical to me.

The timbre of Church bells  
Reverberates  
And proceeds  
Checks with the temple  
And then reaches  
To touch me.  
The sound of prayer  
The incantations, the calls  
The bells  
Merge  
In one sweet integrated melody.

This celestial symphony  
Touches tender and real  
Lifting my soul on a heavenwards soar  
To touch the very hem of heaven grasped.

### **This shared country**

Not yet sixteen  
Her sip of youthfulness denied  
She has laboured children  
Forced to become a woman.

Or  
Much like the youth  
Already bent  
Burdened under loads  
Much beyond his age  
Sagging  
A piteous sight

So much like this shared country  
Of yours and mine!

An age for juvenile frolic  
Force-marched into life  
Its struggles, its disappointments  
Blighted with penury and snuffed dreams  
Nightmares we thought were vanquished  
In this shared country  
Of yours and mine.

**You**

The pain you claim as yours  
Is as much a part of me  
On my cheek mark streaks  
Tears  
Which you thought  
Only your eyes could feel.

In indulging you  
I sustain  
My life  
Which I seek to appease  
Even as I seek to gratify.

## **Man, My Brother**

Someone tell me why  
Does man belittle man?  
For me all are related  
An extended family

Of fifty billion, if you want a number  
My family grows still  
Bound by blood, linked by thought  
Making us all brothers.

## **You Hardly Know Me**

Whoever you think I am,  
That's not me  
Whatever you regard me to be,  
I am not  
The person you thought you knew  
And even saw yesterday  
That, too, is not me today.

Believe me  
You will never know and recognize me  
The form you think to be me  
Does not make me  
The words are not mine  
Either  
They never were from me.

I'm lost in the many forms that make me  
Confused in my own babels  
I join you in the search for my 'self'  
Sustaining life  
On breaths drawn from a solace  
Of an attachment forged  
With generations yet to arrive.

### **The master and his dog**

The master carries his pet  
Lovingly in his arms

An expression of pure affection?  
Or a move to serve some ulterior end?

The pet, meanwhile  
In its elevated sojourn  
Deludes itself  
Into believing  
An inverted situation  
Of being the master  
And  
At the momentary twist of fate  
It barks, snarls and bares its fangs  
At other mongrels much the same  
Who slink away  
In fear of the master who holds the pet.

But no pet  
Can expect continuous pamper  
And this one too  
In the kennel is left  
The pet now bereft  
Of its empowering indulgence  
Hides its tail and avoids  
Other dogs  
Out to settle scores.  
At this crucial moment  
The master has retreated for the day  
Leaving his pet  
Exposed  
To the snipes, chases  
And bites  
Of marauders, contenders.

## **With Future for Company**

For aeons now  
I have absorbed  
Shocks and jolts  
On the rocky ride of life  
Over obstacles  
Each more difficult  
Each more imposing  
With more in tow  
Caught in the current  
Of the river called time;  
My life decided  
Born to paddle and to plod  
Through the vortex of human struggle  
Eat up miles on weary feet  
Pushing on  
Knowing there are still eons to go.  
The present  
A quiver full of realities  
Bogs me down  
A light banter  
With infinite truth  
Liberates  
As I trudge along  
Into a future understood  
A future that keeps me  
Company;  
Dreams still alive, walk alongside  
Into a future grasped  
I am walking in the future  
Keeping conversation going  
Is future itself.

**Because we too are human...**

We sustain  
On pity, sympathy, support  
And dole  
And yet, we fear  
Are suspicious  
Of others.  
That, some should still  
Beg to be considered men  
Puts a question mark  
On our claims  
Of being men.

All powerful  
We are  
Creator all  
Of the world as it stands

By Nature's plan  
All stand at par  
Equal partners  
To the bounties  
Lavished on our common earth.

But, inhabiting alongside  
Also human  
Similarly born  
Are some  
Who have gone ahead  
And dehumanized  
People, so much like ourselves  
They strive  
With conceit and with contempt  
To prey upon  
Those exposed  
To weakness and ignorance.

Fawning from the seats of power and pelf  
They rule  
Subjugate  
And still  
We remain mute, exploited and in plight  
Speechless in our subjugation...

## **Morning ritual**

Every morning the newspaper arrives  
Ink splashed on a funeral shroud  
Awaits my interest  
Columns and inches filled  
With corpses by the thousands  
Peering out in hope  
Raising a ghoulisn dirge  
Demanding justice of me  
A heart-rending wail  
Mourning their own  
Premature demise  
Souls and spirits  
Multitudes of them  
Swarm in droves  
Trigger an eerie static  
On a non-existent channel  
On TV on radio...

And then,  
They pray  
For resurrection

This  
I perceive, decipher  
From their voices.  
The morning  
Joins me  
With silent sobs  
Dew that shimmers the grass.  
The day joins me too  
Mourning along  
In pensive confinement,  
The night  
Sits by me  
Dissolving into a bottomless void  
Inking blackness into the sky.

Meanwhile  
Through this dark core  
Hidden by the night  
Rises twisted orthodoxy  
Bedecked  
In bigotry

It spreads its shroud  
Demands alms  
In bloodstains, casteist bigots

The altar of sin  
Demands blood  
To ink its spreadsheet  
Marking details of its pillage.

Drunk on the blood-bath  
Deluded by misplaced faith  
Deceived by the idea of boundaries  
An undertow of hate churns  
A cadaverous laughter  
Gurgles forth  
Making the universe quake  
The horror continues  
Until there is  
A brief respite  
Over the cinders  
Of a Hiroshima  
Nagasaki  
And then –  
It draws strength again  
Over Iraq and Uganda  
In mosques, temples  
And churches

After scripting the murder of man  
It enters slyly  
Into the coveted  
Pages of the record  
The history of man.

## **Separated by birth**

No one should be alienated  
None pushed to isolation;  
We inhabit, we subsist and survive  
As parts of a universal whole  
Sharing the elements  
Each complementing the other  
Entwined cogs of a grand design.

Our kind proliferates this earth  
Striking relations, making bonds  
The highest creation  
In His own image  
Crafted with love  
From the same mould;  
Moving to the consistent beat  
Of the cycle of living and dying  
Our survival dependent on others;  
This shared existence  
Underlines the connection between  
Man and his brethren.

How then  
Does  
A chasm separate  
Outreached hands  
Separating man from man  
Separated by birth.

We know what we are  
And yet pretend not to;  
Man discards man  
Brothers disown  
And I begin to wonder why  
It was so good to be born  
A man.

I've see you  
I recognize you  
Your features  
The colour of your skin  
I'll remember,  
But I've done little to understand  
The experience that makes you,  
Your grief and sorrow  
I fail to notice

Sorry, I'm hardly aware of you;  
This is perhaps why  
You, by nature, are suspicious of me  
And I, of you.

We have marked our territories  
Etched boundaries that demarcate.  
The common frontier,  
Incisive and deep  
Marks the point of alienation  
And burrows deep into our thought.  
Suspicion peaks  
Stands firm guard  
Like the ominous former Wall  
Isolating one Germany from the other.

Being born is not enough.  
Looking the part is no use either.  
When  
Man's pain, grief and suffering  
Even his joys and radiance  
Remain vague, obscure  
To brethren born on the other side.

We now witness excursions  
Men drawn to either side  
Rushing frenzies  
Profane overtures  
The attraction  
Is not that common bond  
Not love, not affection either  
But a passion to subjugate  
A lust to homogenize  
To dominate.  
By self-seeking cleavers,  
Hack away  
Self-gratifying battering rams  
Smash  
Compassion  
Is now replaced  
By Ambition, naked and vile.

Us denigrates  
Poor imitations  
Of a people we were born as.

## **A Crucified Query**

You have remained constant  
With me  
Over lifetimes  
Already there  
Even as Eve and Adam  
Discovered life;  
Even as Sumnima and Paruma  
Took their first breath.  
In those timeless  
Days of then  
You were  
Already there.

In those times  
Your form  
Permeated familiarity  
Even to Mortal eyes.  
You remain  
The same  
And yet,  
In the quivering  
Reality of the present  
You have become  
Perennially unseen  
To our  
Unseeing eyes.

Unseeing because  
They do not seek  
The truth  
That you are.  
Our vision limited  
To a narrow furrow,  
Confined to the domain  
Of things strictly material.

You certainly are  
Hence I exist  
Yet I am confused  
Unable to comprehend  
You in me  
To accept  
You in all entirety.

And so  
I exist  
Merely and purely  
For the sake of  
Existence  
An existence that has  
A semblance  
Of identity vague,  
I'm indeed  
A complete nonentity

## **This World and I**

Tell me,  
Who on earth am I?  
To have suffered  
Its madness and frenzy  
And yet  
Pledged to protect  
This world.  
Tell me,  
Who am I?  
On this suicide mission bizarre.

I walk alone  
To falter and rise  
On my own  
As I forge along  
Pick my way through the dark  
Convinced  
I am made of sterner stuff

Standing up  
Fighting back  
Forces cold and brute  
Committed to sacrifice  
Worshiping at the altar  
Of Justice and Truth  
Pledged to uphold  
The rights of all  
Committed to usher in  
Sunshine  
Light smiles.

Not being a hero  
I am just being man enough  
To stand my ground

I belong to mankind,  
That's my only caste  
Humanity my faith  
And equality  
My war cry.  
This is all I preach.

I abhor

Concepts that discriminate  
Segregate and divide.  
These are vile tenets  
I willingly fight against  
And gladly will I sacrifice  
This life, my present journey  
If it even just dents the façade  
Of such false credos.

## Common Plots, Different Stories

Dear friend,  
Sorry, I could not be present  
To stand besides you  
On the passing away  
Of your mother.  
I was not there  
When grief poured through your tears  
I could not console  
The loss that wrenched your heart.  
I did not wipe your tears  
I could not offer solace  
I failed to ease  
The distress caused by the loss.  
Don't, however, for a moment believe  
That I was detached from your sorrow  
That I was oblivious to your pain.  
Believe me  
I too had withdrawn  
And in private  
Cried my heart out  
Mourning your anguish  
Lamenting your loss  
Feeling your pain, seeking your hurt.  
You were surrounded by  
Friends, well-wishers and relatives  
Many shoulders willing to offer comfort  
But I grieved alone  
Only my own sobs  
Punctuating my wails of sorrow  
Because  
I was grieving my own loss  
Lost in my own isolation  
Overwhelmed  
And alone and bereft  
Clutching at straws as I sunk in hopeless defeat  
Living a life of humiliation and shame  
Pain and sorrow  
My only succour and solace  
A life fraught with insecurity and doubt  
Surrounded by treachery and conceit  
I was resigned  
To a life steeped and pain  
Deep and bitter

A life painfully denied.

I was living an existence  
Scripted by someone else  
The life of a pariah, alienated from my own  
My life rendered meaningless  
My aspiration lay barren  
As we all had collectively lost  
Our Mother.

And hence, my friend  
Even though physically absent  
I was still very much there  
At the funeral, even though  
Incapable of offering formal  
Condolences  
I did shed tears of grief  
Shared your sorrow  
Understood your loss  
Unseen and unaccounted for  
I did offer  
My heartfelt condolences  
On the sad demise  
Of your Mother.

## **The Red Rooster Will Crow**

The dark night rejoices  
The slaying of the red rooster  
In the hands of a wily fox,  
The dark night declares -  
With no lavish plume,  
And proud strut  
To welcome in the dawn  
Night will no longer be denied.

Darkness rejoices  
Convinced that daybreak  
Will no longer  
Be able to dismiss  
The gloomy void with a Sun glow  
The red rooster  
Has after all  
Fallen prey  
Torn asunder by the  
Marauding fox.  
That the realm of darkness  
Shall now hold  
For ever.

But how mistaken is the night  
As naïve as it is dreary  
As foolish as it is scheming  
To think  
That  
With the red rooster dead  
Darkness will be able to spread  
To aid and abet  
The fox in its project.

To think  
That  
The death  
Of a lone red rooster  
Could spell the end of light  
Or even silence  
The call that ends the night.

A red rooster is not a solitary life  
It is a force that multiplies  
That survives,  
A call that remains loud and vocal  
Screams against

The inky night  
Its dementia  
Its ignorance.

Therefore  
The red rooster's call  
Will unleash again  
Even multiply  
And destroy darkness  
Its forces and allies  
Awaken the slumbering humanity  
Reawaken life and commitments  
And it will be dawn again.

## **Death at Night**

The empire of the obscure  
Deep at night, in absolute control  
Pitch black, and unmoved  
It embodies the pervading gloom  
Cold, ghastly and dank  
Darkness creeps  
Sucking life into a void;  
It slithers on  
On a covert assignment  
A morbid mission  
To instill fear  
Its tentacles entwine  
In a suffocating  
Coffin grip  
Fear runs high.  
But even in this eerie  
Pitch  
A lone puppy engages  
The dark march  
Fighting it back  
With its yelps  
Its tiny battle cry  
This critter has declared war  
A solitary battle  
Against its tormentor.  
Hearing the puppy's whimpers  
Its whines and its yowls  
The roost becomes a cackle  
Cocks in turmoil  
The coop turns disorderly  
And a babble of human voices  
Rises soon  
Moving from one house to the other  
Agitated with the encroachment  
Of their peace and privacy.  
The pup is in torment  
But at least  
Its whimpers, its fight back  
Have proven that life survives  
Even in the grips  
Of the inky black night.  
  
Even the dogs and the jackals  
Have joined the crescendo

Lending indiscriminate howls.  
The owl too  
Gives a hoot  
And soon a cascade of  
Monotones in fright  
Pierce the thick night

The alarm travels far  
Over precarious precipices  
Along shadow valleys  
Exciting nervous monkeys  
Into a gaggle of cacophony.

The grip of obscuration  
That thick, opaque  
Frozen desolation  
Which crept unannounced  
And paralysed all  
With its sudden grip  
Is now finding its authority challenged.

The tempo rises  
Still a discordant babble  
A noise still  
Against a monopoly  
Absolute  
The night has reigned long  
Unopposed and unmoved  
But now there is a longing  
For the approaching dawn  
An anticipation  
A pregnant expectation  
A pining  
For the light of morn.  
Optimism rises  
And threads  
The disjointed wails  
Into a marching beat  
A rhyme of protest.

All triggered  
By a threatened whelp  
Which cowered not and barked back;  
A lonesome puppy in distress  
Has whipped up a crescendo,  
Inveighed against domination.

Listen, do you hear the rising tumult...

## **Gangtok, 1989: A Portrait**

Trapped flat she remains  
Within the greasy, profiteering folds  
Of corrupt officials by day

Her nights imprisoned  
Deep inside the black marketer's vaults;  
Gasping for release  
To snatch a mouthful of air  
Its dignity stripped  
Grace shorn  
This Gangtok town.

Carrying a body  
Strained and exploited  
One more day lost  
Reality suspended  
In the powerful corridors;  
From one Minister's extravagant chamber  
To a Secretary's domain  
Just as dazzling, much more posh;  
Sent away with assurances  
Balmed with sweet-talk  
The unemployed entity  
Trudges home on unsure feet  
The shoes that falter often  
Have seen better days  
A capital of Broken Hearts  
Its grace shorn  
This is Gangtok town.

They'd rather die today  
Submit,  
Disappear in limbo  
But choose to dream on  
There may yet be a tomorrow,  
Like the salvation promised  
To Nimthit,  
Nima and Ninamma  
Hopes renewed  
Promises resurrected  
To make another attempt  
To try and un-pry  
What lies up the sleeve

Of the unborn tomorrow  
This Gangtok town.

Scarred and wounded  
Abounding in disparity,  
Deception  
Dividing and divisive  
Compromises taken for granted  
In the unlucky eagerness of a widow  
Dialing in a cardiac seizure  
This Gangtok town.

Young girls stare blank  
At sleazy ceilings of hotel rooms  
Stripped, exposed  
Arranged  
For a lusty spree  
The unsatiated night lasts three hours  
An empty embrace  
On an empty dawn  
This Gangtok town.

This town  
Where the gift of a Buddha image  
Presented as witness  
Is used instead  
By lords who pull the strings  
From the seclusion of Tashiling  
To render the people blind,  
Mute  
Baffling Buddha himself  
Who is compassionate, not blind  
This is Gangtok town.

Obsessed with a rat race  
A society in crisis  
Feeds on its own carcass  
Every rung, everyday  
Slips a notch  
Intoxicated lechers prowl  
Scarecrows that appropriate concubines  
Houses of kept  
Mistresses dot  
This Gangtok town.

Obsessive fashions

Consume  
The land itself  
The rapacious assault devours  
Mothers drawn into adultery  
A future exchanged for a moment of lust  
Such sons make up  
This Gangtok town.

### **It's Come to This**

Comfortably ensconced  
In the sanctum sanctorum  
Of the temple  
My deity,  
My lord  
His idol  
Observes with trepidation  
The Tandav performed  
By his priest  
Before the idol  
He installed.

His performance, a vocation  
To worship at the Lord's feet  
Counting beads to an audience  
Just so can earn his keep  
And soon he wants more  
Emboldened for living behind  
The rampart of the Lord;  
He runs his fiefdom  
Powered by a voracious greed  
Feeding, infringing  
Encroaching  
He extends his rights of proceeds  
Uses rites to gain more  
Stamp more with his mark.

He forgets alas  
That with each incursion  
More of his soul departs.

Despite this  
The idol  
Remain seated, silent  
Inert and quiescent  
Wafted in fragrant smoke  
Witness to flagrant abuse

My deity, My Lord, his idol  
Is growing torpid, turning to the stone  
From which is carved His likeness

In Your total passivity

You allow  
Your own incarceration  
Walled in a prison  
Crafted by your priest  
Who holds my Lord, my Deity, his idol  
A prisoner to his rites  
Rituals of his own making.  
The devout express piety  
Make offerings  
In cash, in kind  
Prostrating before your presence  
Depositing prayers and gold  
They have done so  
Since always  
Did You receive any?  
Did You partake ever?  
Smug and befuddled  
Confused by the swelling tide  
Of faith blinded  
You,  
Stand denigrated again  
And humiliated.

Finally now,  
From this canonical bondage  
This servitude to liturgy  
My Lord is bent upon  
Unshackling free  
Touching liberty  
Celebrating freedom...

My Lord reincarnates  
In form and substance anew  
No more the inert unfeeling stone  
His Avataar  
Is passionate in its quest  
To redeem all  
Make all efforts worthwhile  
To liberate himself  
Even as he frees all  
My Lord is bent upon  
Unshackling free.

## **Bahadur Kancha**

Kancha, our Bahadur  
A terrific guy he must be  
Wherever he goes, wherever he is  
He is  
At once, one with his surroundings  
Eking out a harmonious survival  
Amiable, never confronting.

He comes cheap  
Is easily exchanged  
For items cheap as salt  
Easily won over  
A mere pat on the back  
Or a simple 'thanks'  
Will do the trick  
What a wonderful creature this  
Our Kancha  
This Bahadur.

He remains a creature of habit  
He has gone and done it again  
Over and over again  
From climbing a tree  
To summiting  
Their Everest, Our Sagarmatha

Until nothing remains anymore  
To be trod.  
He has beheaded in a single swoop  
Not just goats  
Also enemies and foes  
Has established his valour  
In two World Wars in a row  
And still he remains active  
Fighting battles that others ignore  
A mercenary  
That tires not.  
What a creature this  
Not scared of death  
Nor even of killing  
This man,  
This Bahadur Kancha.

Ironically for a slayer prolific

He remains a complete non-entity  
Almost in ignominy  
Tagged a Kancha  
Branded a Bahadur  
For eternity  
That haunts as a derogatory identity.  
The Kancha does not hesitate  
Bahadur, the valiant, does not shrug  
The chore that demands to  
Wash and to wring  
Saris and pants and more  
Dishes he washes  
As a kitchen boy on an errand  
He even pulls the rickshaw  
And has also captained  
A jumbo across the Atlantic  
This Kancha, Our Bahadur  
He has done it all

Guarding frontiers for countries alien  
He stands unrelenting and firm  
Defending a country  
That's not even his adopted home  
And yet he bares his granite chest  
Taking bullets, defending borders  
All for a commodity  
As cheap and common  
As salt;  
In service of countries not his own  
He has fought brave  
Died valiant  
Often  
And in numbers  
Mostly in anonymity  
Never in recognized martyrdom  
That remains a phrase elusive  
To mark the falling of this Kancha  
Our Bahadur;  
Wherever he falls  
Whichever country he saves  
The frontiers that his blood maintain  
Span the globe and profit much  
But Bahadur Kancha  
Makes no demands  
Expects no compensation  
Or even recognition  
Of his valour

He does not even ask  
For an identity...  
The story remains so  
To this day, and shall stay unchanged  
For even more  
Because  
This Kancha, Our Bahadur  
For all the wars he has waged  
Fights not and never has  
Pushed for his rights and privileges  
This consummate veteran  
Is reduced to a moniker unfunny  
The *fightingest Gorkha Johnny*  
As the British called him in  
Mock praise.  
To his masters however  
He remains merely a Kancha  
And remains so satisfied  
Kancha fights  
For common salt so scarce  
He proves again his valour  
For that sliver of a bacon  
He can bring home  
To his family.

His self respect  
His pride, he hides  
These unwelcome  
Stumbling blocks  
In his escape from a way of life  
Steeped and wallowing in  
Hardship, hunger and penury  
Where pride and nationalism  
Have held him in no stead  
Neither feeding him  
Nor the hungry mouths at home  
And this is precisely why  
This Kancha  
Our Bahadur  
Remains where he started off  
Stuck in circumstances  
Tied to a way of life  
Shorn of an identity  
Denied pride.

Of course he belongs  
He has a homeland too

His own country, his own nation  
But these turn vacant  
Forcing him out  
To survive as a drifter  
A vagabond.  
Wherever he arrives  
He makes his home  
Taking whatever is offered  
To craft himself a house  
Accepting morsels to stir up a meal  
He sustains.

And yet, behold  
How easily he smiles  
Lets out peels of laughter  
Infects all with a hearty laugh  
Without a care in the world.

### **The man within**

There is another  
Alive a kicking  
Who lives  
Deep inside me.  
Extremely pitiable  
He is timid, blushingly shy.  
How he survives,  
He himself knows not  
What happens around  
What's going on  
With whom and where  
He remains ignorant of.

He is complete  
At least physically  
And yet  
Like Mahabharata's Sanjay  
He remains a mere  
Onlooker, an eye witness  
Even in death  
He remains incapable  
And unable  
To speak his mind.  
Incapable of laughing  
Or weeping  
Or even dying  
On his own.

And yet he is a complete man  
At least he appears so  
His limbs are in place  
In fact, perfectly so  
But he refuses to use them  
Or maybe, he knows not how.

His yesterday was wretched  
Today remains incomplete  
Tomorrow is an enigma for all  
But with him, we know  
Even if it holds promise  
He will be unable to see it so.

He has no past

The present is a delusion too  
A future of doubt  
And he continues to use  
Me as an abode.

Will he ever come out?  
Maybe after the smog has lifted?  
After the night sky is washed  
In the Sun's warm glow?  
Will he come alive,  
Awaken finally?

There, there  
I can hear  
Yonder  
A crowing cock  
The chirping pairs of magpie  
Atop the Burr and Pipal trees  
I sense even a stir  
In the man within  
Straining to catch the joyous bleats  
Of kids flocking to the mother goat  
The man within is restive now  
Rousing  
Finally.

### **This nightmare of a question**

Who am I? Where?  
What is it I do? What do I speak for?  
What is it that I ought to do?  
For myself, for us  
For dignity  
Which remains denied.

What is my name? My duty?  
Where do I come from?  
What is it that  
Establishes my identity,  
Project it?  
What will it take to create one?

If I know not these,  
Then what is it that I do?  
Drifting without history  
Cast away and rootless  
Unmoored  
And yet I manage to stagnate  
Easily deluded  
Never concerned  
Nothing provokes.

And so it has been  
My essence reduced  
Insensate, unmoved  
Dumb and unthinking  
A complete nincompoop.

Yes, that's it  
The story of my life  
A lavish dose of comedy  
A generous helping of tragedy  
Churned in my isolation  
Whipped in the dimming light  
Of my detachment  
Complete.

This is how  
It has been  
In the past, even now  
This isolation

That segregates  
Me from my identity.

This instant  
The past  
This country  
The others  
That I have lived in  
And live  
In this form  
And others  
The sojourn has remained  
Same  
An existence  
Dictated  
From one breath  
To the next  
Making ends meet  
Surviving  
Sustenance  
Dry, dreary  
Hollow  
Empty and shallow  
Mute  
One more.

Marked for subservience  
I am the Kancha to the memsahib  
The sentinel at the gate  
The designated Bahadur  
To this ignominy  
Is lavished condescension  
And I am made  
The Kancha  
Who is  
A  
Bahadur Gurkha.

But who am I?  
To myself  
To this country  
To these people?

The identity  
Remains undefined  
As I gasp for precious breath

Strung as I was  
Hung by the neck  
For having joined forces  
For this country to make its tryst.  
But even at the new dawn  
I find myself  
Struggling still  
At the scaffold.  
I have died for this country  
I will do so again  
And yet I remain denied  
Refused, even rejected  
Of a definition  
An introduction  
To tell me  
And others  
Who I am.

Perhaps,  
I have masters too many  
Who control me  
Dictate terms  
And become a babel of confusion  
When ask for my name.

And yet  
I get pushed  
From one skirmish  
To the other  
Even two major wars  
On the frontline  
I am shield  
That absorbs and still stands  
The first angry fusillade  
The strafing barrage  
This chest absorbs  
Turning to granite  
Impregnable  
But also cold, numb  
And insensate  
To anything sublime  
Unable to laugh  
At the irony  
Of how a nightmarish  
Query  
Has disintegrated

From the sublime  
To the ridiculous.

## **Cock fights and Raging Bulls**

We have been at it  
In cock fights  
Like raging bulls  
Trained for battle  
Groomed for death  
Thrown in the pit  
To batter each other  
To reinforce mortality  
To dance a bloody frenzy  
To sing a dirge of blood  
For an audience  
That claps at first blood  
Then orgasms  
With the crimson gore  
That marks the end.

One rooster down  
A bull survives  
To meet its end  
Some other day  
Its rendezvous  
With dismemberment  
Pushed to another date.

And through this morbidity  
Business continues as usual  
Records are maintained  
Data refreshed  
The loot shared  
The bets cashed  
The victorious rooster would not cluck  
If it knew  
It is after all just chicken meat  
When not deputed as chicken feed.

It is not the rooster's skills  
Nor the bulls strength  
The determine how each fight will end  
The strings are controlled  
By the Master of the Ceremony  
The man who decides  
That the rooster is meant for more  
Than to rule over its roost

And crow in dawn;  
That the bull should not be satisfied  
Impregnating cattle  
And should thus be fed rum  
Given sharper horns  
And ordered to gore everything  
That moves  
In its bloodshot field  
Of vision.

And so the stage is set  
The blood games inaugurated.  
After the madness of mortal combats  
There is no one left  
To welcome dawn  
Announce daybreak.

The MC does not mind  
Neither does the producer  
Nor the financier  
Nor the sponsor;  
They have made their profits,  
The 'calculated risks' paid off  
And at the end of the day  
They do after all  
Answer  
To the same master.

Species pushed to extinction  
Ideas lost  
So what if the dawn  
Does get crowded in  
There is the sirens wail  
To announce nightfall  
The curfew call  
To keep all indoors and  
Safe from the brooding violence  
That lurks around, they say  
But it is really  
Fraternizing that they fear.  
With this people  
Become islands  
Living as though in the middle  
Of nowhere  
The violence of a siren wail  
Announcing its time

Not just to move in  
But also give in  
And realize  
Somewhere deep down  
That the dark night, will break  
Into a darker day still.

The Master  
The guardian  
Who decides which cock will  
Take on which rooster  
Which bull will silence the other  
Continues to masquerade  
Play the role of the savior  
Promising to liberate  
But releasing only the wail  
Of the siren  
That soughs on...

## **Illusion**

How do I begin  
To describe  
Your form  
Your radiance  
Fill in where you live  
Or how?

You are here, as everywhere  
With me now and also there  
I sense you, but cannot touch  
Put a finger on what it is  
That can be written down in words.

So, okay  
In essence  
You are Maya  
Elusive, tempting  
You have a story  
They call it Leela  
But even that plays on  
A narrative  
That defies a scripting  
In the words we have been taught.

But you remain  
Constant  
Always there  
And here  
Now more than ever  
Driving mad endeavours  
To attain you  
But you remain unmatched  
You belong to none.  
You never did.

And still  
Nothing sustains without you  
You set the tune  
To which everything matches step  
You fire ambitions  
Passions  
And paint that grand design  
Sharing slivers of your essence  
With all you kiss life with  
And still you deny  
The words

That would introduce you.  
You manifest the present  
Have permeated the past  
Will influence the future  
Intimately touch  
Everything that decides  
Who we are  
What we feel  
The maternal instincts  
A child's innocence  
Sibling rivalry transcended by caring  
The passions that drive  
A man to remain with his spouse  
All these underline  
Your glorious manifestation sublime.

You craft compassion  
Giving humanity sustenance  
You breathe attributes  
That keep us humane  
Each time we share  
Sacrifice  
Forgive  
And understand  
We celebrate  
All these underline  
Your glorious manifestation sublime.

Remain elusive if you wish  
But promise never to abandon  
Us to ourselves  
The void that you will leave behind  
Scares even this ignorant heart  
And so I pray  
With folded hands  
With my inadequate words  
I beseech you  
To reside in our stony hearts  
Our shallow minds  
To hold our hands firmer  
To save us from our follies  
To herd us together.  
Remain elusive if you want  
But, please  
Don't abandon.

## **Frontiers of the Mind**

Since the beginning  
To the present  
Definitely since man arrived  
This earth  
Has been cleaved  
With man's obsession with boundaries  
Nations created  
Frontiers defined  
And redefined  
Territories marked  
Lost, won  
And alienated  
Identities obliterated  
New one's appropriated  
All through wars  
Powered by conflict.

The obsession continues  
And nation making remains  
An ongoing process.  
'A necessary evil'  
Offers itself  
As a fig leaf of a pretence  
To cover the lewdness  
Of legalized carnage  
To slate enormous egos  
That riddle man  
And his form  
With exit wounds  
That define divide.

Convenient slogans are drafted  
We are quarantined, for example  
As 'Char Jaat, Chattis Barna'  
To translate:  
'A tribe of four  
But decided by colour  
To number  
Nine times four!'  
A convenient conceit  
Brilliant in its simplicity  
Disintegrates man  
Dwarfs the idea of his being

Wears him thin  
Leaves him emaciated  
Triggers suspicion  
Whispers paranoia  
And another incendiary experiment begins  
To intoxicate and confuse  
A people, with another idea  
Of a nation, another fence  
That needs erecting.

The frontiers get narrowed  
The mind shrivels  
Limited to the extremities set  
By a self-drawn  
Line Of Control  
Our very own LOC  
That holds back more  
Than it keeps out  
A selfish fiefdom  
That limits  
What a man can be.

This remains the story  
Of 5 billion people  
That plays over and again  
Of 5 billion people  
Each behind a door  
Slammed shut  
And padlocked  
Alone in his morbid pursuit  
Of  
Selfdom.  
Why?  
Because man no longer comprehends  
His own language  
And will not allow his heart  
To communicate and share  
Neither sorrows, nor joys.

He emerges now  
Capable of drafting  
A constitution  
And scheming enough  
To guarantee its passage  
Empowering himself  
With a manufactured righteousness

To order annihilation  
When politically expedient  
To appropriate monopoly  
The fat of the land  
Just for himself.

Wars are being waged  
Conventional and  
By proxy  
Between nations, ideas and beliefs  
A persistent conflict sponsored  
To justify W.M.D.'s  
Because a world on tenterhooks  
Will clutch even at straws  
And 5 billion people live  
Watching their emaciated fingers fail  
To even hold on to these.

And yet each  
Continues to place individual bets  
For a gamble that is rigged  
Winner takes all, they believe  
But who can win  
When they are lost within?

And hence,  
In desperate resentment of defeat  
They wage wars anew  
Open new fronts  
Suffering defeat sometimes  
Also winning  
Alas,  
No one has yet  
Won over his own heart.  
In frustration and in fear  
He continues to rend,  
Tear and slash  
Decimating frontiers  
Obliterating nations  
Erecting new barriers.  
The horizon recedes  
With each march  
The ground he stands on  
Stands decimated and ravaged  
Drunk and inebriated  
Man fails to realize

It's the frontiers of his mind  
That limit his reach  
And condemn his for history.

## **In the Domain of Man**

Man must make it a point  
To interrogate himself  
His essence  
And whether he should belong  
To a particular caste or mould.

But how should he direct his inquisition?  
What language will serve him best?  
He may be good with words  
But will he understand his heart  
Anymore?

How should I frame my questions?  
In what language?  
Which tone should I deploy?  
How do I go about  
Establishing  
My relationship with man?  
There are, I know  
Few takers for the bond  
I want impressed.

Out of fashion,  
A dinosaur in the present context  
The tongue I use  
Is branded  
Unintelligible, archaic.  
But I know  
My concern is genuine  
My language genuinely man's  
It rises from the very core  
Of inborn traits  
We prefer to forget with birth.

But will speak still  
Ask my questions  
Make observations.

In your ignorance  
In your heedlessness  
You have condemned  
The womb that bore you  
To turn barren, go defunct  
Incapacitated the source that makes you man.

In your cowardice  
You have become  
The impotent bystander  
Who allows the mindless violation  
Of your own mother.  
You stand cursed  
Forever to be hounded  
For your inaction,  
Ignorance and conceit.

The rapes you have committed, allowed  
The murders you have ordered  
The sins you perpetrated  
The abortions forced by your depraved lust  
Are beyond redemption  
And have been written down  
Recorded in history  
Etched in minds  
Suffered in hearts  
Guaranteed to outlive you  
That will be your curse.

There is no escaping what you wreaked  
Not here, not in foreign shores  
Your karma follows you  
You carry the mark  
Your deeds appended to your name  
That is to be your curse  
And even in cowardly death  
Like Hitler's by his own hand  
There will be no escape.  
At the time of reckoning  
The one memory that will survive  
Will be of Mussolini strung upside down  
With his wife for company  
A lynching is sad  
But what is worse  
Is that it is by your own people.

Or take Idi Amin for example  
An oppressor who fled in terror  
But even he could not escape  
The fate that conjoins  
Him with his clique  
Who stand on the dock

As history spits on them  
And appends their deeds to their name.

This domain of man's  
This little hamlet  
Seems to have fallen silent  
I wonder why.  
Perhaps its people  
Have no more use for conversation  
Perhaps they do not wish to speak  
After all  
Even small-talk can at times  
Trigger guilt pangs  
They would rather avoid.  
The only sound around  
Is of barking mongrels  
Dogs who punctuate  
Their barks with an occasional growl.  
Maybe the hamlet is abandoned  
Its people having joined an exodus.  
Or is it that they have  
Acquired the art  
Of barks and snarls and growls  
To get their point across.  
That is possible  
What is obvious though  
Is that this domain of man  
This little hamlet  
Has gone to the dogs.

Its nights are now filled  
With barking matches  
And then morning comes  
Bringing along chill and hunger  
And the barks turn to desperate howls  
As the sun warms up the day  
The mongrels feel cozy and fall quiet  
And then they remember  
Their hunger  
And the shouting matches begin again  
A rabble of snaps, growls and snipes  
A squabble over bones, refuse  
And handouts  
Marks the crescendo that plays through the day.

It is time to take stock

The situation appears reversed  
Dogs are becoming the only ones  
With need to communicate  
While the arrogant man  
Is being fast metamorphosed  
Into a dog, always exposed  
To rabidity.

## **I Survive**

Time, the grim reaper, is on the prowl  
Haunting paths rocky and coarse  
Of this yuga, Age of Progress  
The present  
The march has kept pace  
Since time itself  
It has seen through ages  
Traversed the roads  
Of yugas many  
Time  
Its pace consistent  
Never tires  
Even under the weight  
Of histories tucked  
Firmly under his armpits  
It, as they say, waits for none.  
Even today  
In the hearts of men  
Festers a hurt  
Inflicted sometime in history  
Painful  
To this day  
And capable  
Of sending out ripples and tremors  
Marking its epicenter  
Deep inside his heaving heart  
Where history resides...  
Hence-  
A generation continues to remain  
Infected with maladies  
Passed down by time  
Fallouts of history  
From an ancient past  
Tainted by history's inadequacies.  
History is made  
Never undone  
It marks us  
With indelible ink  
Scripting constant reminders.  
Leaving ghost pains  
For the awake  
And nightmares that haunt  
The sleep.  
And man frets through life

Suffers without respite.

This world and the sky,  
Man's heaven and earth  
Are blotted out  
Desolate, dreary and forlorn  
Because faith itself  
Has become a dead letter  
And a wounded humanity wails  
Holding a battered heart.  
Alone.

Humanity tries to speak  
Communicate its grief  
But this faculty remains  
Denied  
Burdened by the baggage of the Ages  
Made mute by the sorrows of time.

I am living as I always have  
To suffer the truth  
Of a history made of  
Yesterday's events  
Stale news.  
Like Sanjay of Mahabrata  
A silent bystander, far removed  
In penance  
I suffer my history.

But a dilemma emerges  
Why should I be Sanjay  
Or like him  
When I am not he  
A foot soldier maybe  
But a man of my own right  
My own making  
Both complex and clear  
I uphold dharma  
And creator am I  
Capable of transforming  
What I will.

No,  
I will not take dole  
Nor will I survive  
On blessings bestowed by  
Saints or sages  
Not one of lesser Gods  
Am I  
Reduced to stone

At the whim of Rishis  
I am man  
The creator of this world.  
In the face of this  
With this realization  
Don't expect me to accept  
As fate  
The sufferings of the fairer sex  
Ignore the mutilation  
That cost them their nose and earlobes,  
Their womanhood  
At the hands of Shri Ram's invading army  
Pushing through Ravana's Lanka  
There is no honour,  
No, not for me,  
In this carnage that History offers  
As a righteous war, a Dharmayudh.

The same history  
Will have me believe  
That Arjuna was a warrior matchless  
Even as it records, his slaying  
Of a defenceless Karna.  
How am I  
To accept Drona  
As a teacher true  
When he asked of his disciple  
His thumb, and thus his training  
As Guru Dakshina.

I would want to question  
Acceptance of faith blind  
The motive behind  
The ink on history's pages  
And I survive  
As Karna,  
A victim of matchless treachery  
I am Ek-Lavya personified  
In my existence reverberates  
The belly laugh of history  
As it scripts another mockery,  
I do after all live  
Just the latest edition  
Of history  
From another time, another place  
The past deciding  
My present

Masquerading with a new face  
To mask  
A leftover from  
Yesterday.  
I, today  
Survive  
A living rhythm  
Of Tandav  
The dance of deluge  
The legacy of Idi Amin  
And  
I survive  
Living the pain  
That Hitler inflicted  
Suffering  
Hunger, despair and grief  
Of dark Africa  
Living  
The violence of Romania  
Staring at  
The cult of madness  
That burns its brides  
Rapes its daughters  
And pillages the weak  
Forces martyrdom  
And  
I survive  
Understanding now  
How it must have felt  
To be crucified.  
I breathe, yes  
But I doubt  
Whether I am still  
Alive  
I am hemorrhaging faith  
Losing conviction  
In my being  
And hence  
I feel  
Something stirs through  
The numbness  
Deep within  
A suffocated appeal grips my throat  
I want to reach out  
But pull back

Seeing man as I do  
My fears win today.

Doubt slithers and hisses  
I cannot take things  
At face value  
Is this a man I look at  
Or an apparition that deceives?  
Wracked,  
Restless  
But is this the sign  
That I am alive.

I float with the tide  
Borne through the ages  
A momentum decided  
A motion fixed  
Am I to assume  
That this is what  
I am  
Or do I have a choice  
To sip or not  
Of the waters that  
Bear me away  
Intoxicating me to believe  
That this is my story  
The history I bear?

## **Virja-Daan**

These violators  
Rapists all  
Who assault our mothers  
Ravage our sisters  
Murder our fathers  
Annihilate our brothers  
Wear but a mask  
Of a Hitler, an Idi Amin  
Sometimes Ceausescu  
And  
Sometimes of a Marcos  
Of this kind  
There are still  
A many.

Around us  
And at large  
Free to pillage  
To dishonour  
They mark their swath  
Through this world  
Right across  
Surfacing everywhere  
Sometimes  
All at once  
In different guises  
Under different names  
Hawking different doctrines  
All to serve one end  
Of creating a system  
They control  
With an iron hand absolute  
Dizzy in their towers  
A construct  
Of their wealth  
Illegal, untold.

They masquerade as one of us  
Preying on distress,  
Drafted for eventual  
Infamy.  
Here, among us  
Rise demons from the pit of hell  
Crucifying Christ

A Buddha denied  
At every home  
A Lincoln shot  
Mandela incarcerated, for speaking out  
Desperate dejection,  
Fathomless gloom  
Weigh down our downcast heads.

And that explains  
Why  
The word has been lost  
Made unintelligible,  
Defunct  
No one speaks  
Fewer still listen  
Cobwebbed intellect  
Makes space for  
Abandoned righteousness  
Wisdom lost  
In a construct of awkward  
Ignorance  
Everything cashed in  
Exchanged for  
Trinkets  
Sold cheap, given away  
Abandoned  
Faith put on hold  
Simple beliefs dropped  
For esoteric theologies  
Harmony in disarray  
Old values  
Have become  
Counterfeit duds.

The world  
Smoulders as a result  
Simmers on controversy  
Feeds on vicious strife  
Tightens its net around  
Triggers the self-destruct mode  
Runs trials in laboratories of hate  
Sharpens its skills at cleaving  
Chasms that run through  
Castes, faiths and concepts  
Bigotry reigns  
The Devil must be pleased

With the cult of the individual  
This vacuous promotion  
Of  
Self-seeking hegemonism.

There is no escape  
No rocking of the established order  
And any such attempt  
Will has to first  
Find its bearing in the pall  
That sits thick, dense  
And dank  
Obliterating all light  
And one is denied  
Even a peep within  
The gloom hangs heavy  
Denying even a bearing.

The stench has a purpose  
The nauseating reek  
Is not without intent  
There is a reason  
Why the darkness is complete  
They disorient  
They confuse  
They make indolence  
Easy  
Secure pessimism  
Leaving man a weak  
Caricature  
Of his real being.

Things become easy  
Once you have sold yourself  
Cheap.  
Slothful dependence, after all  
Makes no demands  
There is no need anymore  
To be taken at par  
To prove you are still man  
Spinelessness comes easy,  
When one is kept.  
There is no shame anymore  
In cowardice  
But there is no  
Realisation

Either

There is no need either  
To join forces  
To organize  
When there is a hand  
That feeds  
So what if they are crumbs  
Sought by supplication,  
Not earned

Of course  
It is baffling  
To find everyone so drunk  
Nursing hangovers  
From last night  
Begging already  
For more  
Seeking that slippery pleasure  
Mistaking peace for plenty  
Security for subservience

On power purchased  
Playing an apology of a game  
Of Cupid  
Of youthful virility  
Eluded by passion long doused  
Incapacitated  
Rendered impotent  
By habits debilitating  
Of addicted masturbation.  
Even such an excuse  
In the presence of a whore  
All willing, all solicitous  
Finds reason  
To act and masquerade  
As a man, virile and potent  
Who ejaculates prematurely though  
Semen thin and watery.

What can I expect  
Of a son nurtured inside the womb  
Of a whore who bedded with many  
Of semen thin and watery  
Sprung from a man  
Desperate in his impotency;

For resurrection and redemption  
In the unborn tomorrow?

Don't expect me  
To believe  
That  
A woman intoxicated  
By the pleasure of the flesh  
With thighs that no longer  
Care  
And a pusillanimous man  
Of suspect virility  
Can come in communion  
And seed a womb  
With the man  
For tomorrow  
The Yug-Purush.  
Feeble thrusts  
For a perverted womb  
If they script our future  
Write one  
That is in tatters and ruin  
Even at conception

And therefore  
My love  
It becomes imperative  
For us to come together  
And beget a son  
To give to this world  
To give our tomorrow  
A chance  
To reclaim the paradise  
Squandered.  
Let our son forge for himself  
A world fresh and new;  
A Yugpurush  
With attributes  
Now forgotten  
Shall have to be  
Begotten  
Betwixt the two of us  
So that the age  
That follows  
Understands from birth  
That real achievements

Demand  
Supreme Sacrifice

I, therefore, beseech you, my darling  
To accept me as only you can  
For the virja daan  
That's in my fate to offer you  
As it is,  
Your destiny to nurture  
To groom a life  
For the task so imposing  
Between you  
And me, the two of us,  
We share  
A destiny intimately intertwined  
Common, yet so divine.

## **On This, The First Day of a New Year**

This, the first day of a New Year  
Demands a resolution  
Of fresh thoughts  
For a fresh world  
New achievements  
A new history  
For the world to record  
A new horizon  
To be pursued  
To mark  
A new year that has dawned.

On this special  
Day  
I found myself  
Confined  
Alone in a room  
Vibrantly awake  
With a heart in rapture  
As only a new year  
Can infect  
In its wake.  
I laughed at my  
Own jokes  
Pondered over the past  
Events and people  
Who helped me see  
Gain an insight,  
Learn.  
I was engrossed  
In thoughts of  
Years now lost  
Those that fled by,  
Some that dragged on  
Over landscapes bare and now averse  
That I had, with my  
Life traversed;  
So many years  
Unmarked  
Uncharted  
Unworthy  
Of events worthy  
Of a mention  
In the yellowed dog-eared pages  
That mark history

That record.

Will this year too  
Which has now begun  
Also be an endless march  
Of calendar year hollow,  
Fallow  
Join all those others  
That are now lost in limbo?

I was soon at my wit's end  
Fearing ghosts  
Which could rend, the veil  
That shrouds  
The inconsequential past  
And haunt  
My present  
No end.

As I browse over the years  
Lost to efforts that drew a naught  
All the moments lost  
All the wasted years that  
clutter around  
So many years  
Exhausted  
In vain  
With nothing substantial  
No memories  
I could claim, as achievements  
Attained.  
Wasted years  
In retrospect  
Devour my time on a new year  
Offer me no justifications  
Allow no regrets.  
The pages of history run long  
Recording expensive human errors  
That cost dear  
Unforgivable crimes  
Too late for redress  
Or reprieve  
In this  
Unrepenting age.

The postures man has adopted  
Mark the divides that define  
Division  
By caste, creed and customs to abide

And then the cleaver of history strikes  
Driving the divide deeper still  
Leaving him confused  
Reading a chequered story  
Fighting a riotous sea  
In throes of a struggle  
That demands blood  
And toil, through  
Tears that blind and sting.  
Survival is not easy  
When routinely obstructed  
By poverty and starvation  
Denial and deprivation  
That underline his story  
Consume his time  
Eat up his years.

And then he gets drawn  
Into false causes,  
Imperfect identities  
There is no defence for hatred  
And yet history records  
Such slaughters  
It cannot be a culture  
When it demands  
That a  
Young bride be torched  
On a pyre with  
A husband  
Four score and older.  
No psycho-babble  
Can explain  
How a young mind  
Was led to believe  
That by setting himself alight  
He would further a cause  
With his suicide.  
Only man's arrogance and  
Ignorance combined  
Can match his  
Gluttony for punishment  
That conscript  
History to be written in blood  
Soaked in tears, in grime.  
And the saga continues  
The discord seems to know  
No end.

Can we,  
In the year yet to unfold  
This newborn New Year  
Script a new history  
Start on a clean slate?  
See whether a chapter  
That records  
Our success at effecting change  
Can be written in ink  
And not blood that soaks through  
And infects  
Even the coming years.  
Can the stories be linked  
With bridges that ford  
The strife that lurks beneath?  
Can we,  
Are we  
Deserving of a second chance,  
A new beginning?

## **The Horse Does Not Speak**

An ageing horse, in years declined  
Finds himself consigned  
To the recesses of a dilapidated shade,  
A stable resigned to decay.

The horse, this ageing horse  
Was strong once, and robust  
It served well  
While it still had the strength  
But now advanced in age,  
It stands neglected  
Matching the stable's crumble  
As it disintegrates.

The roof does not offer much  
It lets the blazing sun through  
Thankfully also the glimmer of the stars  
Rain is offered no protest  
And everything is offered a  
Free attack, on the old Horse's  
Bare back.  
The insult continues  
As the hooves sink deep  
In dung that no one cleans.

The old horse accepts his suffering  
As his fate, and can no longer  
Recollect  
How he was pampered  
When he could still serve well.  
His present is decided  
By the elements and the stench  
As he awaits  
His feed, that is inadequate  
No more the grams, its dry hay  
The ration decided  
For the bag-o-bones that is left  
By the grooms he has been assigned  
Who seem to believe  
They have hired, to starve  
The old horse to death.

Somehow the horse survives

Despite the conspiracy that has played long  
But the old horse does not complain  
It is not in his nature  
After all  
To speak.

And so the caretakers grow lazier  
In his prime, he had better grooms  
Everything in the past was better  
Than this despicable pair.  
Once, sometime back  
The one responsible for the fodder  
Had been kicked square  
By the old horse's mare  
She, perhaps was protesting  
A perverted abuse  
By an unholy groom, attempting bestiality.  
The two grooms were enraged  
And so they conspired  
To have the mare put to sleep  
On trumped up charges of  
Having gone  
Rabid.  
The thoughtless master did not enquire  
Further  
And had the mare shot.  
The old horse watched the plan unfold  
A murder he witnessed  
Without protest  
Because,  
The old horse  
By birth  
And by nature  
Cannot speak.

Crackers burst loud  
The town has come alive  
Magnificent lights streak the sky  
Loud music plays on  
In the capital  
Cannons boom forth  
In honour of visiting dignitaries  
The national anthem is being sung.  
The old horse listens intently  
But cannot deduce  
What the discordant sounds hark.

The day of course marks  
Independence Day of the like  
But even if the old horse knew  
It would not understand  
What liberation means.  
For him, it's just another day  
To offer its ageing back  
To carry the decadence of his master  
Accept the harness and the blinkers  
And return to the stench  
That is now his home.

Await the same feed again  
No grams, just bone-dry hay  
In doses that reduce  
With each passing day  
As the appetite for pilferage  
Grows  
In the grooms.  
The ill-fed horse is drawn out  
Again  
To carry his master, transfer decadence  
Even if it understood  
That the country is liberated, the powers  
Have changed  
It knows at least  
That things cannot change  
Enough for the master  
To carry the horse instead.  
The load has increased in fact  
The master now carries with him  
The files that empower, deliver development  
As also  
The memories and plans  
The master carries  
Of 5-star orgies which feed on progress  
The old horse's back sags some more  
But the old bones, show no sign of protest  
Simply because  
The horse, by birth  
And by nature  
Cannot speak.

Even as the horse starves  
In the stench  
That is now his home

The master's appetite grows  
And his girth keeps pace  
But he also now joined  
By the caretakers carefully assigned  
To keep the old horse alive  
But they feed only their greed  
Steal even from their keep  
More and more of  
The old horse's quota  
Is appropriated away by them  
And the old horse continues  
To remain at the receiving end.  
He is after all  
Just an old horse  
Who knows little and will not comprehend  
If told it could have been another Chetak  
A stallion famed.

As his stable disintegrates more  
The master's palace grows grander  
The caretakers move to better addresses  
And the old horse labours more  
To pull each breath on tired lungs  
A task made tougher by the stench  
The squalor he has been assigned  
But the old horse  
Will not protest  
Simply because  
The horse, this old horse  
By nature  
Will not speak.

## **Realization**

The calendar showed 16 July 1992  
The clock had just struck 9 P.M.  
At a close friend's house  
We were among friends,  
Family, supporters  
With sympathizers  
All fellow travelers  
To a common destination.  
We sat there  
Deliberating – Human affairs.

And then  
Two messengers arrived  
Harking my release  
Freedom, finally.  
My entire being  
Breathed light  
The sudden release  
Triggered  
A surge of desire  
To seek anew  
Explore  
A soothing wave held me tight  
Powerful  
Almost overwhelming  
I was speechless  
Exhilarated.  
Free at last to abandon  
The comfortable coop  
To stretch my reach  
Understand  
And learn  
The Sun, after all  
Is not, as thought  
Bound  
To the sky  
From which  
It shone down.

No more the need  
To parrot a conceit  
Applaud  
Empty slogans  
Just to earn my keep

Now I am  
Whatever I can be  
My own master  
No longer caged  
A bird on the wire instead  
Free to stretch my wings  
As I will  
To soar  
When I feel

I can now sing my songs  
No borrowed tunes  
For me  
Anymore  
My decisions  
Now mine  
Up the hill, I am free to ascend  
And return at my own leisure  
Speak my mind  
The way I want  
Agree that Teesta  
Runs murky  
Or disagree  
Claim even  
That Rangit  
Has reversed its run  
And flows instead  
Upstream

Free to share  
An unfortunate  
But urgent  
News  
That a forest fire  
Rages  
Through Mainam and Tendong.

No prescribed scripts for me  
No more  
Opinions no longer  
Dictated  
Truth matters now  
As do the people  
Who can now be told  
Of how they were  
Conspired against

Made dependent  
When  
They should have been  
Masters  
Stakeholders in the least.

But,  
Still others  
Allow their minds usurped  
Seek servitude  
Sign up,  
Stand in line  
To unlearn words  
Pick a new diction  
Who convince themselves  
That the bird enjoys  
The cage  
And  
Does not aspire  
To range free  
Express its will  
Seek its own words.

This willful denial  
This voluntary bondage  
Embarrasses  
Even gods  
Who believed  
They had gifted man  
His freedom  
When they gave  
Him  
The faculty to think.

I am now committed  
Conscripted into the ranks  
Of free men  
A veteran, I have become  
Of everyday battles  
On new frontlines  
Opened for a cause  
Free now  
For martyrdom  
Free also to pick  
My own cause  
My own contribution

At the altar of our motherland.

### **Teesta Flows Murky**

There has been no rain, the sun is ablaze  
A winter day kicks up dust, the sky it blots  
A grey draught grips the earth  
The fields crack  
With failing crops.

For the peasants and the labourers  
Even the people in general  
Only a possible famine overcasts  
The horizon  
Their needs  
Their starvation  
Strings them on the rack  
Even the sky floats dry  
Without a spiff, not a hint  
Of vapour that could take  
A wet descent  
The earth is parched  
No springs, rivulets dry  
Yet, I don't know how  
Even today  
Teesta is a murky roil.

Doused no more by watery tributes  
The source too  
It seems  
Has turned Teesta away  
The earth starts to crumble  
Landslides begin their roll  
Mud, earth, plants  
Fertile soil and stones  
Green Firs  
On a downward spiral  
Feed Teesta's hunger  
And so  
Teesta becomes a murky roil.

Over eroded valleys  
Through broken ridges  
Our ancestors  
Through generations  
Had lived and moved on by  
But still  
Teesta remains a murky roil.

Past sacrifices  
Wishes made  
By my ancestors  
Their open display  
Of devotion and of  
Gratitude  
Appear to have escaped  
Notice  
Of the deities of the land  
Installed for the task  
To whom propitiations  
Were made  
Their expectations and hopes  
Are now being stirred  
In Teesta's murky roil  
This water  
No longer reflects  
My face and I withdraw  
In a nervous recoil.

The dreams of my forefathers  
Churn somewhere deep  
In this water  
Lost, confused  
Fallen into the jaws of lurking crocs?  
It's possible  
But I can say  
The shattered dreams of my forefathers  
Roil Teesta  
Make it murkier still.

Is it the carried forward history  
The story of our misfortune  
That sets Teesta in such  
Turmoil  
With claims of cleansing Teesta  
Making its flow clear again  
Many a boatmen did arrive  
Their oars raked up more turmoil  
And they  
Collected their wages  
And left.  
Now there is more filth  
More dross  
No filtration works

Many more things were tried  
But Teesta remains  
A murky roil.

Confusion runs thick  
Fish confused for crocodiles  
No one knows anymore  
The kind and type  
Of aquatic varieties  
The Teesta hides.  
The murky roil  
Offers good cover  
For lurking crocs which hunt the water  
And now  
Crocodiles  
From clearer Rangit, wider Brahmapura  
Distant Koshi and the Indian Ocean  
Have begun to seek out  
Teesta instead  
These days.

The murky roil  
Is good advertisement  
For predators  
Who can now reign  
Over feeding orgies  
And soon  
Fish in Teesta  
Will be another fairy tale.

I fear  
Soon  
Only crocs on Teesta  
Will be found  
The snap of its jaws  
The only sound heard  
Along Teesta's roil  
The fish,  
Even on extinction's brink  
See not the crocodile  
Because  
Teesta is such a murky roil.

And now I look up  
I see an overcast sky  
Lightning streaks can be seen now

Thunder's whip has been cracked  
At any moment now  
A torrent shall descend  
Whispering life into springs  
Rivulets and waterfalls  
The earth will blush green  
Teesta will once again  
Cleave a bountiful land  
Slaked birds will sing again  
As the rain pours  
Washing Teesta fast  
Watching the pollution  
Borne away.

The empire of the crocs  
Founded on Teesta's roil  
Will get churned asunder  
The crocodiles will be displaced  
Teesta will run clear again.

For that  
The torrent I await  
Till then,  
O sorrow  
Teesta  
Shall remain  
A murky roil

## **Dream - A Many**

Since ages and aeons many  
In the drive and momentum  
Of time  
I have been seeking and searching  
In quest of life  
Lived by man,  
The path, the track  
Trudging upon which to return home  
Is, perhaps, mingled and lots  
In the maze, vague and unclear,  
Of contours numerous on the landscape  
Of the earth;  
Despite which-  
A dream, sweet and fulfilling  
Much like a bunch of orchids enlivening  
Of hope and promise  
Have burst full bloom  
Inside the fullness of my heart.

A song dedicated to time  
On the march,  
The time it is here in earnest  
For us to sing.  
Time, the grim reaper, on the march constant  
Is hardly charitable in disposition  
Towards life in struggle ceaseless  
To acquire definition  
Of purpose;  
Towards life of man  
In his constant endeavour  
To sense the meaning  
Of life is on  
For glow-worm a many  
In flight aglow itself  
In search ceaseless,  
Like stars in motion restless  
To seek and find the source delight  
Of the light itself  
Wicks so many in gallons of oil  
Have gone up in smoke  
For the lamp with light aglow  
To come alive  
Many a life has gone up, too,  
In sizzling flame

To make our lives aglow and sublime!

A song that rouses spirit high  
A song to the saga of struggle  
A song to the saga of life itself  
We thus can't but sing in great gusto.  
Sunk deep and lost  
In the cesspool of darkness deep  
A speck tiny of light dazzling to my delight  
I need now the arms strong and steady  
Of yours;  
To nurture the speck of light  
For safety and safeguard  
I need now your voice sweet  
And melodious  
With which to sing the song  
Full of great delight!

True, history never quote nor record  
The time and sojourn contemporary  
Yet, history in its deathlessness,  
Survives purely and truly  
On the ceaseless march of time  
I wish so much to write poems  
True to my time  
Contemporary to my sojourn  
Within my time-capsule  
Earmarked by time  
Things that I've written in my poem  
For you and you alone,  
Perhaps, you may not find them  
Anywhere else.  
Come, therefore, you also  
In shape that of my pen  
On these pages blank and unwritten many  
For the sake of man  
And his happiness  
For the safety and safeguard  
And prestige and honour as well  
Of man's.  
Upon the earth of thought  
And contemplation  
On the highway superb  
Of human civilization  
I'm deftly casting away  
Words all gun-powder fresh and dry

In the hands lowly of esteem denied  
I shall fill them up, these hands  
Slaves all of slavery salaam  
With the gift brooding  
Of sizzling revolt.

In the homes of those  
That  
Live the life led  
By slaves  
Of slave-mentality  
Much like a jacket faded with age,  
All worn and torn  
In the conscious mind and intelligence  
That speaks of brain power  
Here I am, working overtime  
To generate, replenish  
And to resurrect all this  
And more  
By infusing in them  
The sense supreme of joy, courage  
And jest afresh of living  
All resurrected and redeemed  
By rekindling the inner flame  
Residing deep within  
Of each man  
Into blinding flash of light sublime.

Here I'm voicing my concern  
To be heard and heeded  
By those  
Who stake their claim  
To own the sky above  
And the earth below.  
This, then, is my dream confined  
To this:  
In the wild, wild wilderness  
Inside the mild, wild, wilderness  
Inside the mind dark  
A mind fast overtaken  
By the overgrowth of weeds  
All of selfish agenda  
Let futurity in its passage  
Stumble upon ashes  
Even of ruins that abound  
To discover the last remnant in tatters

Of this, my dream  
That  
There were, indeed, a few people  
Who were people endowed with dreams  
And whose dreams had wings, indeed  
On which to soar high  
That  
There, too, were a few people  
On this earth  
Who wanted this world established  
For man and man alone  
Who dreamt of a world  
Meant exclusively for man alone!

### **The man of Tomorrow's**

All dreams must come alive  
To fructify  
And to swim and frolick  
In the river of time  
Personified,  
As though without a care  
In the world,  
Images born of imagination supreme  
Must make provisions  
All superior and sustained  
For the lotus to blossom forth  
On the simmering waters  
Of the lake  
Of father time personified-  
In the centuries many  
Of futurity unseeable  
Thoughts all sublime  
Must tread the path  
Of progress unhindered  
Like footsoldiers;  
And wisdom-  
In all its magnanimity  
Must blossom forth in glory,  
And science, like it has always  
Done with sagacity  
Must come to fruition  
In all its avowed splendiddness.

Hence-  
On the soft bossom of the earth  
Personified  
As thought and contemplation sublime  
In its bloom of youth,  
Must muster efforts supreme  
To make heaven of this earth.  
Aakaash Ganga\* must be made  
To flow  
Across the vast expanse  
Of the man's mind  
Forging in its wake  
Forces gathered of momentum  
All too powerful  
To bring down to be  
Swept off and away

Frontiers and self-made boundaries,  
All narrowing fast  
And crowding in  
To stifle the mind in bondage.  
Many a many  
Living on the common roof  
The infinitely limitless sky above  
Must henceforth sing with voices  
In complete unison,  
Must dance in joyous abandon  
Attuned to the same melody  
To the same identical tune  
On the same front yard  
Common to all  
So that-  
Man must write his history  
All fresh and anew  
Man must coin a new definition  
Of the man thus reborn!

- *The 'milky way' clearly visible on a clear starry night, believed in Hindu mythology to be the reflected image of the sacred river Ganges, they call it 'Aakaash Ganga'*

## **The Birth**

All in a sudden  
In utterly excited frame  
Of mind with agitation untold  
Of tantrum and turmoil  
All at once, at one go  
In one instantly single process  
Of instant thought synchronized  
By a instant wakefulness  
As though a passage briefly  
Of happy tidings  
Thus invade the realm  
Of remembrance and  
Recollection  
And awakening  
In the consciousness deep  
And subtle  
Of the mind  
Many a dream  
In kaleidoscopic sequences  
Materialize into forms many  
Thus-  
The mind becomes overwhelmed  
By hordes of wishful wishes  
And deep longings  
That take birth  
In endless sequence.

### **The Mind of Man's**

With the river of time  
In its incessant  
Timeless flow  
Myriads many  
Of nights and days  
Have slipped by  
Unnoticed  
And unsung  
Have already flowed  
Into limbo  
But the man in all respect  
Remains the same  
Ever unchanged  
Since yesteryears' myriads  
Till this date  
Of today  
Except of his mind  
The limitless kingdom  
Of his throbbing heart  
Has alas, become over-crowded  
With its own frontiers and boundaries  
That are crowding in  
And menacingly closing in.

## **The Death**

Depart one does  
With relationship cut a asunder  
Right down the middle  
From his own mortal remains  
Most beloved while and whence  
In his sojourn worldly  
Thus-  
To forge relationship all anew  
With sleep eternal  
And utterly final  
To leave just as suddenly  
A leave unintended, unwarranted  
A leave callous and heartless  
And yet-  
A peace is bartered thereby – in the process,  
To rest in peace eternal  
Freed at long last, as it were,  
From the lifelong  
Worldly cares!

### **A life in a lifetime**

The man  
Incapable of making  
Two ends meet  
For his own day-to-day  
Survival,  
Becomes supremely capable  
And confident  
In his own make believe world  
Over which he is the master  
Of hopes and dreams endless  
As vast and infinite  
As the azure sky above.  
With harvest of dreams  
For his pre-occupation  
The likes of him take birth  
Endlessly, again and again  
On this earth.

### **Otherwise this World...**

Surely that day  
Will be here  
The winter of discontent  
Brought on by years  
In passage declined  
Like the bland, naked  
Tree old and antiquated,  
By age and wintry disdain  
Shorn of leaves  
And foliage tattered  
With branches brittle  
And lifeless  
Brought down  
By  
The wintry gails;  
Thus-  
As and when  
My dreams  
Nurtured over the years  
Both become dimmed and without  
Meaning and substance  
Shattered to bits  
Like the wintry sky  
Grey and saddened  
By the overcast of smog  
And deepening smoke  
Or these dreams  
Already frozen in  
Death premature  
To have merged with the snow  
That abound  
To become  
One with the elements  
That dictate and define  
The surrounding  
Then at that instance-  
I beseech you to hold your breath  
To maintain complete silence  
For silence is always golden  
In so far as my poems are concerned.  
And again,  
It may so happen  
That  
I, on my self-delusion,

May find myself in  
A queer street  
Having lost my perspective  
Of direction  
Of even discretion  
Or else  
I may even become  
By some strange twist  
Of accident  
The glass pane of an old  
And antiquated window frame  
To suffer the ignominy  
Of wrinkle up  
With the tell-tale signs  
Of a crack up  
In the mid-day heat  
Of the blazing sun  
Then, in that case, too.  
Please do me the favour  
Of handing the remnants  
Of all my poems over to the  
Goddess of sizzling  
Revolt;  
And convey this message-  
That  
I, the author of these,  
My poems  
Ever was and  
Ever had been  
One  
With these poems-  
And tell Her,  
That  
I'm still very much  
Deeply involved with these,  
My poems;  
But then, Now!  
The God Earth  
Has done much to depute  
Me and me alone  
With the mission at hand  
To  
Re-activate the land  
The land personified  
Of man's mind in incessant turmoil  
Hence barren and unyielding

By regenerating the soil  
To make it fertile,  
Full of life-giving loams,  
With the combined ingredients  
Of positive thoughts channeled  
Into the groove of positive action  
Consecrated further  
By principles and values  
Of a high order  
A being the manure excellent  
With which to trigger  
The process of fertilization  
And to prepare the ground  
For harvesting a sizzling  
Revolt.  
I've always sought for my poems  
The basic sense of revolt  
In the discordant notes  
Inharmonious  
Of sobs and heart-rending  
Cries  
Emanating in waves staggered  
And turbulent  
From deep within the folds many  
Of agony and  
Of anguish  
Of the dirt poor  
Wallowing in mindless  
Oppression and tyranny  
In support of their rights and privileges  
I sought my rhymes and verses  
In tune with truth universal  
Symbolic of unity  
In truthfulness sublime  
Since good is true  
And true is the eternal one  
In order that-  
The voiceless in their timidity  
To mouth their protest  
May have the voice of courage  
To speak out and assert  
Their rights,  
The dumb may find their voice again  
The deaf may regain their sense  
Of hearing  
In poetry itself, for that matter,

I sought to infuse  
The tune and intonation  
Purely of revolt.  
Like bad dreams  
Pregnant with portends  
Ominous  
Our days, one after another,  
Have been lost  
In limbo  
All our life consisting  
In lifetime innumerable  
Have gone waste  
In words all jumbled  
Of meaningless promises  
Across ages a many  
In order that the past  
May be preserved,  
I consigned all my poems  
To deep freeze  
I did everything I could  
To give shape, contour  
And precious life  
To a lifetime of invaluable  
Experiences and  
Expertise  
With which I built and edifice  
Tall, erect and magnificent  
Like the mighty Himalayas  
Upon the summit of which  
Is installed your blessed world  
To ever stand erect and proudly tall  
In all its supreme magnificence  
I made effort ceaseless  
To transmit the rhythms  
Of my songs in terms  
Of poems  
To scale the proximity  
Of your world perched  
Atop the edifice  
Of my creation  
I sang every single song  
Of your victory  
But, right now, I'm taking leave  
Of my poems  
For the duration I may need  
To wage a war of my day

Contemporary to my time  
A war I've waged with which  
To usher in peace that would follow  
To trigger masses of positive development  
That would be necessary  
For this war I'm engaged in  
Is purely of the happiness genuine  
Of man  
And for the dignity of man  
I've always upheld  
And for the preservation  
Of beauty  
Man by birth  
Is pristinely endowed with,  
Thus-  
To attain all this  
I'm at war  
Victory and defeat  
As they came  
Are and were part of the game  
There being no dearth of warriors  
As they came and went  
Dead or maimed  
I've looked back  
Over the history past  
Of the war.  
I've perceived it with the  
Eyes both  
Of head and heart  
I've with me story many  
Of bravery and  
Endless valour  
But I'm a poor man  
In matters of praise  
And accolades  
Heaped on me  
Of my wishes and cravings  
I nurture as strictly my own.  
Nevertheless-  
Revolt as an instrument  
Of change  
Became absolutely imperative  
In a world  
Choked with overgrowth  
Of weeds, dense and  
Thickly matted

Of corruption mindless  
Otherwise-  
In the absence of a timely  
Revolt that, indeed, served  
Its purpose  
This world so pristinely beautiful  
Of man's  
Would be held at ransom  
By an invasion masterminded  
By poets and their masses  
Of poems of descriptions untold!  
Give this world a second look  
And behold!  
By turning around  
The form and contour  
That we project  
Is lost in the droplets  
Of water to merge and disappear  
In the lake personified  
Of time  
The song  
Of the leaping waterfall  
Cascading down from way up  
Amongst the enfolding hills  
Becomes lost in its merger  
With the deep silent river  
Way down below  
In the struggle on my part  
To seek and  
Re-discover the wholeness  
The completeness, if there's one,  
Of man's  
In man  
I happen to plod my weary steps  
Ahead  
Towards destination uncharted, indeterminable  
From this vantage point  
Like the open sky infinitely vast  
In its timelessness  
From this vantage point  
Like the open sky infinitely vast  
In its timelessness  
Like the earth  
Spreading out  
In her hugeness  
Steady and accommodating.

To attain peace in its sublimest form  
Here I'm singing the song  
Dedicated to the cause essentially  
Of constructive revolt.  
Oh, no!  
I refuse point blank  
To recognize a poet  
As being omnisciently benign  
Creator  
Of the creative good  
If the poetry he has so produced  
Fails in its scope to project  
The high noon  
Of man's life  
To be the harbinger  
Of solace and succour  
That man needs  
In the twilight of his life  
And again-  
If a sizzling revolt in progress  
Were it to be productive  
And constructive  
Did not rein in well ahead  
At the break of dawn  
To sing the glory  
That would be  
Of man's  
At the end of the day,  
Then ...  
Let poetry be gun powder  
Dry and explosive!  
Let poetry be an inferno  
Of raging fire!!  
Let poetry pulverize  
Rocks and granite  
To dust!!!  
Let it burn to ashes  
And cinders all darkness  
Pervading!!!!  
Of corruption mindless  
Of tyranny boundless  
Of orgies clueless.  
Let poetry be the beacon light  
To keep the struggle  
Alive  
And

Meaningful  
Even after we are gone!

## **Paradox**

The modern Narcissus  
Goaded on by their own  
Selfish agenda  
Come to me in droves  
Thread they do  
On the highway  
Of their own thoughts and ideas many  
And declare war  
Against my thoughts  
And  
My way of thinking  
As against theirs'  
And comprehending  
They often enough  
Take liberty  
Upon the corpse  
Dead by now of freedom  
To demarcate territories  
Out of the empty voids  
By creating and imposing  
Boundaries and new frontiers  
As though  
This world at large  
Of man's  
Is their  
Stamp of ultimate  
Authority!

## **Intervening chasm**

I'm not king Sinorence  
For whom  
Every Tom, Dick and Harry  
He came across and met  
Had been his relatives  
And Kiths and Kins  
But-  
I'm one  
Who wants to live and survive  
In the solace and succour  
Out of the pleasure, simple  
And down to earth  
Which I derive  
From having met all those  
I had the good fortune  
Of meeting  
In my personal capacity  
As yours faithfully,  
Pawan Chamling's.  
It's the same world  
It has been  
Since ages many  
It's the same man  
He has been  
Since aeons many  
It's the soil, the good earth  
In man of thoughts and principles  
That have gone barren  
Beyond retrieve  
In the midst of countless  
Intangibles  
The breast personified  
Mauled and devastated  
By talons sharp and full of poisons  
Personified  
Of difficult  
And cruel time!!

## **The Age**

The mortally wounded  
And dismembered Yuga,  
The age  
The time, sickly  
Painfully, emaciated,  
Emerging from the deep end  
Of the pervading void, endless  
And bottomless  
Are both crawling along  
On all fours  
On the road, extending  
From here to eternity.  
Thus...  
How on earth may I hope  
To lead a wholesome  
Healthy life in perfect health  
When  
The time  
That  
Made my birth possible  
Is the epitome of sickness  
And disease  
And the Yuga,  
The age contemporary  
To my life  
And sojourn  
In the here and now  
Is the victim of mind and thought  
Deeply aggrieved  
By saddened time  
The age itself  
Living at the edge  
Of starvation!?