

Anupama's Homecoming

Welcome after your long journey on high oceans,
Storms and lost directions, confusions and calamities,
The world is a cyclone without a rest,
It defies meaning and feeling.

While you were there you made it look easy,
You were ever adorned with smile and grace,
Little did people know you travelled light,
Dropping riches and recognition on the way.

Tomorrows were waiting for you in serene joy,
The burdens of yesterdays were discarded,
Todays were smooth happenings,
Unrehearsed and goalless.

The world around was moving by a success design,
But you were fixed on serendipitous experience,
What was their severe defeat was your placid victory,
They possessed but you absorbed.

Now you are a denizen of eternity,

Where time has frozen and materials vanished,
There is a time to sing and a time to pray,
A time to dance and a time to laugh.

Suffern, New York, July 7, 2020

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I Look Back Neither in Pain or Despair - Babu's Soliloquy from Heaven

I have been in the pastures of heaven now for about five weeks:
Quiet and unhurried, swimming in a painless existence,
Everyday is grand, every event here is magical,
Life lifts in blissful ecstasy, serenading the colossal majesty of the cosmos.

Every since I arrived here I have had no time to think on my earlier existence,
But now I am slowly drifting in that direction:
I see a lot of affectation and wishful thinking by people on earth,
Lot of foolish customs and rituals, foolish hopes.

Good people struggle for existence while bad people have it made so easy,
Relationships are often sweet lies, selfishness often holds the sway,
Love is often a wrong word used by people when they should have been saying
my- interest,
Modern lifestyles have reduced life to mere self-interest and physical enjoyment.

I do not recall the scooter-truck accident,
That shattered my life beyond any repair,
I have stitched a timeline out of others' recalls,
A futile effort to give semblance of order in my tragedy.

When life's center-of-gravity shatters any efforts to fix it is a waste,
One must accept one's defeat and live for small kicks,
Have you seen flowers blossoming after a storm blows them off,
To accept life without a personal reward is the greatest sacrifice one can make.

For forty-seven years I labored to exist,
Without a job, wife, or children,
There was no ambition for which I would have willingly bled,
There was no dream for which I would have broken my right arm.

I was on a road without a destination,
Travelling without a purpose or reward,
Life was a garment stitched in days,
Weeks rolled into months; months melted in years.

My relatives treated me with tenderness, love, and friendship,
They would never ask me if I was bored, lonely, or depressed,

Their pleasant inquiries were keenly edited,
To make a false impression that I was having a great life.

I had nowhere to go but forward,
Past was my death-knell, future did not exist,
Present was my life,
I was a prisoner within its walls.

While parents were alive there was someone to ask me,
Whether I had eaten anything, whether I was tired,
There was someone to give a loving look,
A warm voice saying goodbye or welcome.

With their exit I lost the greatest human touch in my life,
After that my life was a long stretch of vast loneliness,
But I did not fold or bend,
Kept my life on the fast-track.

I went to several libraries every day to catch up the news,
Eat at Mac three times,
Retired home by 9, slept by 11,
Looking to another day.

Many years passed thus,
And started showing a mark,
I began losing interest in the libraries,
I thought I must work.

I sent several hundred applications but none was acknowledged,

I started becoming depressed,
What to do, where to go,
End seemed to raise its head.

As my curtain started to draw down
I reflected on my life,
How I spent forty-seven years in
Silent struggle, unshed tears, permanently jailed in loneliness.

People pitied my existence
But never speaking a word about it to me,
I pulled my own iron curtain,
Never telling them my true feelings.

At times I wondered why I was being punished so severely,
As I had committed no sin in my life,
But then the thought came that it may have been from the past life,
I was sentenced to life imprisonment without a judge or jury.

Coming here I feel I could not have done better on earth,
All I had was a strong will to live,
I did not believe in chest-thumping,
Life has only one purpose: stand up and walk ahead.

The big drama about human life is that people believe
There is a moral code attached to it,
It is a dream flying by the wind of chance,
It is thrilling as long as it is in the air.

I did my prison-time on earth as best I could,
I shed as few tears as I could,
I complained about my pain as little as I could,
Do not make me a hero, I was only doing my duty.

Suffern, New York, September 11, 2019

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Babu's Tryst with Destiny

Destiny is not what we make it to be ordained by some super powers,
It descends from the center of universe and shoots down digitally to its object,
Its mystery is awesome, its mystique transcending,
Its message is final.

When Babu was young he was considered by some to be a light-weight,
He had this playful winsome smile playing on his lips,
His thinness was only matched by pencils,
His long nose was innocent compared to many Kaul noses.

Babu grew from a lightweight to the carrier of an intense ambition to win,

He dreamt of many journalistic writings,
In this he was his father's son,
While still in teens he got an article published in Illustrated Weekly.

He did not put Kaka's hours, nor was he as humble,
He dreamt of big things, which he thought should come effortlessly to him,
Foreign affairs was his passion, so he took the exam,
Stars seemed not bright enough for him.

He marched on and on, all wheels revving up in a crescendo,
Here was his moment,
He had to make it big,
He cannot lose the chance.

The scooter-riksha wheels went berserk,
Babu in the customer chair yelling at the driver to watch the truck,
Driver annoyed ignores him and drives even faster,
The truck in the opposite direction was coming down the middle of the road.

Destiny is never clear until the last moment,
Then it thumps and whistles and knows its Shiva-moment has come,
Babu felt blessed by destiny's lips,

The only thing he didn't know was that truck had its own destiny.

When the two vehicles came to a crash drivers knew they had no choice,

Destiny gives no choices, its command is final,

Babu was in a daze not knowing what happened,

He remained unconscious for three days,

Till the hospital found some bags of flesh behind a door,

Sub-dural pressure was relieved and Babu swathe light.

IFS was a distant dream broken rudely,

All the universe seemed a mad dance,

Destiny is the only thing that seemed to matter,

Forty-seven years later he was yet in front of another destiny,

A fire started by his fellow-humans.

Suffern, New York, August 6, 2019

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Clara's Fourth Birthday

Clara seemed self-conscious on her birthday,
Sitting on a child-chair just outside her garage,
Balloons fluttered dreamily as her mother greeted
The guests and helped with the drinks.
It was a daytime party set outside her house
To ease the terrible trauma of social-distancing,
Neighbors came selectively falling in line with
The group Dad Yashar supports in Boardgate scandal.
They stood in small circles talking nonchalantly about the
Most splendid weather in the last six months,
There were long pauses in conversations,
As two months of lockdown had vacuumed out their excitement.
No one complained about the lack of cake and candles,
Appetizers, champagne, lunch, and dessert,
There were no gifts for Clara,
No hugs and kisses either.
Still Clara seemed enthusiastic and frolicking,
Busy with her friends, coolly ignoring the grown-ups,
Who seemed were just managing to pass time,
Under the siege of Satan corona but never mentioning it.
Suffern, New York, May 3, 2020

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The Cruel Emptiness of D-5

Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the nights

And wonder how things are at D-5,

When I open its door its neat emptiness hits me,

A deep poignancy grabs me and I feel God was not fair

In treating its denizens the way He did.

Dad got it built after numerous postings abroad,

To find a refuge in motherland after a long care-worn life,

To savor a modicum of rest,

In preparation for the journey to his eternity.

Mother pined for a bunch of grandchildren

Running wild around her,

A bevy of daughters-in-law deferring to her every word,

But in the end her God was the only companion that gave her solace and grace.

Babu's life was that of a man who was attempted to be killed but survived,

He lived a half-alive life, wounded and vacuumed of all ambition,

He felt a hurt when he laughed,

He saw his life as a tale told by an idiot.

After a nightmarish struggle I lock the door at D-5,

I drive back to my home thinking of how life

Copiously flowed there once in spite of its haunted tragedy,

How all the laughter there vacuumed into a graveyard headstone.

Suffern, New York, October 10, 2019

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When you go again to Lakes Placid and George

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Years from now, do not trouble to think of me,

Your visit should be your own,

Your joys pouring out of your pores.

Lake George is a symphony of joy

But Lake Placid comes from the delicate fibers of one's being,

Aren't they the two sides of the same phenomenon,

How can one exist without the other?

When you visit them again do not think of the past,

Think that you have discovered them by yourself,

The pain of memory is avoidable,

If you think your life is unique.

There is beauty out there:

A reflection of your being,

Do not think of me,

As I will have become a leaf on a tree at Mirror Lake,
Waiting to serenade you.

Suffern, New York, October 3, 2019

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Time Cannot Read

All man's works are transient,
As time cannot read,
All man's hopes evaporate,
As world does not remember.

Man's efforts are pure,
His achievements noble,
But time does not write,
Humanity pours into a sieve.

Faith gives strength

And love inspires,
Failures do not daunt man,
But heartbreaks are real.

Man's story is still a mystery,
Who is he, why is he here,
But move on he must,
As time does not help.

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Ode to Existence

We fret and fume to no avail,
Life is awake-dreaming without a goal.

World puts many a cap on human face,
But the one that matters most is one's soul.

Our doings are often protests against the world,

Our best moments when we are left alone.

Desires are small escapes from the coarseness of the world,

Dreams their blueprint.

Make me not a villain if I knocked out some wisdom,

I was only trying to touch the eternity.

Brotherhood the glue that holds us together,

Uniqueness of the individual our jewel.

Give me a moment you take the history,

Dissolution in an ocean is better than life at a beach.

What is happiness but a mood,

Liberation a permanent state.

Suffern, New York, May 9, 2019; Rev. 1.10.2023

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You Ask Me Who Am I

I do not know when I was born, my mother never told me,
Time the ceaseless weaver does not know its beginnings.

My sanguinity a creation of my ardor, my blues due to inconstancy,
Mornings delicate hesitancies, evenings surf-peaked.

I am the voice of epic defeats, unreconcilable compromises,
Vestige of a fallen colosseum, debris of unrealized plans.

Where are my dreams, what happened to my desires,
The insane mower levels the field, bleaching the colors.

World does not hear our songs, nature stands by mute,
The great cries of soul have no echoes to woo us back.

Long time back I had a tryst with destiny,
Life as lived enforces an agenda of its own.

My defeats are behind me, eternity the only refuge,

Biography of me a cruel joke, as time cannot read.

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In the Beginning was the Song

In the beginning was the song,

Later world changed it to strife.

We must go to work

To quell stomach's rebellion.

Life is an awakened-dream,

But the world turns it into a program.

Why this rape of the inner poetry,
Why this squelching of God's voice?

Conversion of soul for false designs,
Progress the ultimate illusion.

Is mind the antithesis of spirit,
World an evil invention?

World corrupts but soul demurs,
The struggle is human existence.

Between birth and death of a human is this interlude:
The slow mutilation of the cosmic dance.

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