

Threshold of **Horizon**

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I am setting these words free...

For you dear Shivang

“You can never understand one language until you understand at least two.”

Geoffrey Willans.

There were always the words

As a girl growing up in a traditional Indian family, but exposed to the modern ways through the education in an English medium convent school, I lived in contradictions ever so often. What was learnt at home and what was taught at school often had different tangents. One taught me to be intellectually curious and socially accepting the norm while the other left little scope for intellectual probing, while socially it was often not aligned with the norms. The former was home and the latter was the school. This taught me to let the mix-ups resolve eventually while I explored the alternatives in my mind. So, being a dreamer of sorts, and tending to look at the life around me from the margins, there was a natural inclination to pause and muse. Words would cloud the mind and shower into poetry, bringing a release from a creative frenzy for a while, till they built up again. That is how this journey began.

With a sheltered life where not much was demanded of me, and not much to contribute except as a student. I had absorbed the experiences and stories from around me and released them into words. My years as a teacher, several of which were in a girls' college, gave me a lot more experience about life and people. I learnt to be thankful for my own life being what it was, though also at times bewildered at the myriad shades of human nature that were revealed in flesh and blood, which had only existed as words between pages of books. These were the years of moving towards an emotional and social maturity, learning the business of life, besides going on uncharted trips to various places, mostly in the mountains. These, then, became the years in which the mind would escape from the humdrum life into a world of thoughts, to meander in the mountains and its narrow paths, and to muse about

pain and death. Most of these moments were in long, often lonely evenings, or in the quiet peaceful early mornings, interrupted by the chirp of unseen birds in the winters and long high notes of the koel in approaching summers. Then came motherhood and life changed. A child who needed extra care brought the immense joys of being a mother. There were now more questions than answers, at times questions that I could ask, but expect no answers to, for there were none.

For these and so many other questions without answers, poetry was always there. These expressions, gathered over the years, for many unanswerable questions from myriad experiences – I open the jar, release them, and set them free.

Prayagraj

19 May 2025

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1. The first prayer

The clouds descended upon the verdant vale
Stacked with an unending array of peaks beyond peaks,
Dense lush green submerged in dense deep grey.
The trees nestled them in their arms
They tucked in the crooks and dozed
Till the sun lifted the sheet.
Mist silently rose from the bed
To embrace the first warm sunrays.
Flowers hid in the blanket of leaves
Too lazy to even raise their heads,
The morning had tiptoed from the chambers of the night.
The river leapt over the rocks
Spilling echoes of joyous ditties into the valley.
The tiny human form stood still
A quiet witness to the grand act unfolding
And the first prayers were sent in search of words.

2. Dusky notes of faith

As the day closes,
The long call of faith
Beckons the prodigal into the realm of faith,
But melts into the hurried motor horns
Which shave the air
To cut a quick passage back home.
Birds fill the branches
With their shrill hurried bustling
Find cocoons of sleepy hollows
In the trees
Whose shadows melt into the streets.
Criss-crossed by frenzied last *dens*
Of the huddle of children,
Before mother tears away from chores
To sound the knell of the playful hour.
Doors are shut and homes glow
Like embers hidden in tiny shells.
The stars, nudged out of the veil,
Fill the smoky sky with a slow hum of the night.
The long cry of faith melts
Into these dusky notes
As the day closes its eyes in meditation.

3. Tender

Tender
Just born
The moment
And the touch
And the lips,
Tender.
The air was even more tender
And the trees stood
Strong, yet tender.
The night sky lay bared
The stars, raining down
On the dark brooding hills,
Were held tender.
Somewhere the lightning struck
In the valley
And the mountains
Gathered the clouds in their arms
Melting into each other,
Tender.
The breath was tender
The fingers locked
The embrace held on
Quiet and tender.

Hearts bared
Lives bared,
No promises made
Were more strong
Though tender.

4. Decked in red

Decked in red,
She came
With stars in her eyes
Looking for love.
Love, that we cannot ask for,
That in this life
She was never to find.
When she came decked in red
She thought joyously,
The celebrations were for her,
She realized only too late
It had been the feast
For the son coming of age.
She was an extra baggage,
An appendage,
An annexure,
A necessary evil.
She could have a utility
But certainly, cannot be allowed an identity.
And mind you
Undoubtedly,
No mind to decide right from wrong.
Coming from those wild, vulgar tribes, uncouth

She needs to be tutored what culture is
What traditions and etiquettes mean.
Why!
She needs to be trained and instructed
From the scratch
O!!! She's a despair and a disappointment
And always such a shame.
And beware!
Not only is nothing remotely worthy,
She might have tricks up her sleeve too!
Dangerous intentions,
Hideous manipulations,
Who knows?
Look at her
She is prowling around the house
Hovering in the corners
Looking for a prey?
Are there magic potions served?
Or chants woven?
Or is it a sinister black magic?
Stalking and snaring she stares at us
Looking for an opportune moment.

Always the alien, always the enemy
She was brought decked in red.

5. The setting sun melted on the sky

The setting sun melted on the sky
In a dull chrome,
And then the inky blue spread around.
We gazed into the plot of the colours
Unveiling before us
Where you stood by my side,
Silent.
The valley hummed the songs
With the birds and the crickets,
The stars thought, like them
We were to be forever now,
As they peeked out of the sheer silver night.
Did we talk?
Our bodies whispered
As our shadows dissolved into the darkness
Into each other.
The moment was an eternity
That fused into the passions
Of our throbbing embrace.
The valley opened its dark woods
To the streams of silver light
As we lay under the play of shadows
Silent

Waiting of the breath to ease,
And the fog slowly wrapped us
In its cool embrace.

6. Cancerous heart

Again and again,
You rub your insecurity into my soft heart
Till it bleeds out all the love
To the last drop that remains.
I cover it with silence
Sit quietly and try to heal it.
Love flows again.
For this you call me indifferent and insensitive,
And rub in more bitterness.
Now the heart is a festering wound
Love is the cancer eating it away.

7. Tears

The heart is sapped
The senses drained
Of the sense of the magnificent.
Your vulnerable openness
Your very being is beautiful.
My nights do not have stars
Anymore,
My days do not have
The music of rustling leaves.
My heart does not throb
With passion.
My eyes have no dreams,
Waves do not rock my being,
Gusts do not blow through my hair
And tears do not come anymore.
Can your breath hold your life
A hostage?
And slowly sap the life away?
The ransom of emotions paid
I wait for release.
Your freedom is tempting
For the blocked breeze
To blow through my hair

For the frozen waves to rock me
For the air to fill with haunting music
Of rustling leaves.

You return, time and again.
Turned back,
Guilt-ridden and embittered
you return.
Humbled and nursing the hurt,
Wait to embrace me
To hold me, to comfort me, to heal me.

I wait for your freedom,
To live with you again.
I wait for tears
I wait for release.

8. We have our own deserts

We have our own deserts
And our own mirages.
Probably, the same moment
We see a different oasis.
Thirst is very deceptive.
It bogs the mind
We reach out to illusions
And it's one more step
Just round the corner -
The perfect world,
But illusions have only the reality
Of the desert.
Dry burning sand,
Constantly shifting,
Gives no ground to stand
Nor hold to grow roots.
It is all an illusion,
A shifting momentary world,
A kaleidoscope of mirage,
This desert of mine
Where I saw your oasis.

7. Covid I-*Surreal!!!*

They were self-assured
In their absolute knowledge,
In their absolute powers,
In their absolute ability,
In their absolute control.
They were THE GODS
They were the rulers of the three realms
They had tamed water, fire, earth, air and sky,
They had highly evolved minds
They had studied THE BOOKS
They had given lectures
They had conducted complex experiments.
THEY had finally concluded that
THEY will bring the end of the world.
THEY will act to dreadful consequences
THEY must act before it was too late.
The temperatures will rise
The water will vanish
The trees will shrivel
The sky will rain acids
The birds will be no more
The animals will all be gone
After the bomb THEY make

After the asteroid THEY blow up
After the deluge
THEY trigger from the melting poles.

He was just a sly predator
The Usurper of the three realms
He worshipped Mirages of his own likeness
Called them the True Gods
Fought ugly blood thirsty battles
For the sway of these Mirages
That he called the True Gods,
Over that which belonged to The Mother.
He had defiled the body of The Mother
The one true Living God.

In a winter that reached out
With chilling unrelenting embrace
To engulf the summer
Not a leaf was harmed
Not a bird was hurt
Not a creature victimized.
The Mother just claimed
What was its own
For those its own
From the One who was also once her own.
Water fire, air, earth, and sky were released
Life was beyond the realm of The Usurper again,
The usurper has no refuge

From what is neither living nor dead
The Mother has created just
THE VIRUS.

After The Asteroid,
After The Deluge,
After The Bomb,
After The Holes in The Sky,
In a winter that reached out
Embraced the summer
Refusing to let go,
Not a leaf was harmed,
Not a bird was hurt,
Not a creature victimized,
The Mother claimed its own
For its own
From the sly selfish predator
Who was also once her own
With just
The Virus.

10. Covid II - Home-coming: three voices

Voice 1 : *Migrant*

We had dragged our tired feet
With hurried hearts
On roads that led back home
Dreams locked away in dingy rooms
We carried our world along
In tiny bundles on our heads

Voice 2: *Locked in*

We had drawn our feet
With trepidatious hearts
Out of the busy everyday labyrinths
Into the cobwebbed lanes of ourselves
We had not entered since a lifetime
We found that little was still enough

Voice 3 : *Bagged up*

We finally put up our feet
With a now silent heart
We did not need to breathe
Releasing from the confines of existence
On to its final journey back home
We unburdened the soul.

11. Covid III- *Dew drops* *on the rose petals*

The dew drops nestle on the rose petals
It is not yet time to take leave.
The lush green of the grass wakes
Crowned with the sunshine bejewelled drops,
The snail starts its ritual walk
Down the red cobbled pathway,
The butterfly flutters tantalizingly
Around yellow hibiscus,
The cuckoo's song breaks
From the veil of the mango foliage,
And the monkey on the terrace
Grunts over a brooding, leisurely scratch,
The roots of the giant banyan
Play the eternal intent audience
To the sunshine dances
In the fresh joyous breeze,
To the tunes from all nooks and corners
Playing the symphony of hope.
My garden invites me
To this concert every morning.

12. How does it feel?

How does it feel

To know you are privileged to be a man,

To be privileged with freedom when young?

To be the apple of mother's eye

To be perfect beyond all doubt

To be the natural heir to the family name

To be wrapped in warm affection when you come home

To be making every decision?

How does it feel?

Having to be burdened always to 'be a man'

Having to be unafraid when shadows scare you

Having to be always blot free for the mother

Having to be nothing but successful

Having to be shadowed by the family name,

Having to be always on the razor's edge

Of contesting affections

Having to be burdened with every decision?

How does it feel?

Does the fear never ever lead to doubt?

Does the heart never want to well up in tears?

Does the luxury of unfiltered admission of faults not attract?

Does failure and chance to restart not feel right?

Does your own untagged name not sound so right for once?

Does it not feel a relief unweighted by affections?

Does it not?

How does it feel?

13. Woman, you are beautiful

Woman, you are beautiful,
With moods like sitting on a swing,
When each time when you sit
Gently rocking,
The toe hinged to ground
Ripples run into the innermost
With deep empathic thoughtfulness.
Each time
When you delve within your depths
A new life is infused with being,
Entrenched forever in you being,
When you hold their turmoiled bodies close
Each knotted thread in them unravels.
When you touch the life around you
Their roots find harbour and comfort.
When you whisper soothing words of love
They nourish the soul forever.
Each time
Woman you are beautiful.
Woman you are beautiful.
With moods like sitting on a swing
Making the last push into dizzy heights.
With the desire to touch the sky

To stretch out for the stars,
Each time
When you weave in your hair
The dreams you cherish
In careless loops of the early morning bun.
Or the tales of accomplishments
In the careful whirls tucked by invisible pins.
Or the freedom of an opinion
In the waves let loose just like that
Or the desires untold
In the intricate mesh of the plaits.
Each time
Woman you are beautiful.
Delve into your depths
Infuse life, soothe, unravel
Reach for the stars
Dream, express, come alive
For, woman, you are beautiful.

14. Waltzes

Love remains still
But,
Desire?
I had felt your heart throbbing
And your body ready
To burst into ecstasy of passion,
Now I see you turn your back
I know
It moves not to our waltzes.
It is not just futile,
It is a humiliation.
A red hot iron
That singses the soul...
And leaves soot
Stuck on the walls of memory.
Love remains still
But
Desire?
How can I come back to you
How can I embrace you,
And seek you
To fill me with your love?
To realize that I am not me

Behind those glazed eyes?
Love remains still
But
Desire?
It was a gamble
I knew
Stakes were high and real.
You turned away
Indifferent.
I lost it all.
No regret
No complaint.
Love remains still.
But,
Desire?
When you turn your back,
I lose the courage to ask for your hand
For the last dance
Ever again.
I take away my dignity
My sooted memory
Of uncorrupted waltzes.
Love remains still.
But
Desire?

15. Pain and release from pain

Pain and release from pain is an interminable cycle
One tries to get out, and
In one moment, it comes back like a flood.
There are stories told and retold
And told yet again
And still it seems nothing has been said.
That the essence is yet to be conveyed.
Pain courses through blood
It seeps through dreams.
We do live and we do breathe,
Still it seems, there is no life,
In the recesses of the being
It's dark, cold and numb
Like being alive in your own grave
In your own tomb.
Then, in one moment,
Release comes
From the memory and the moment,
And all moments
And all memories.
We pay the debt of pain
With the counters of memories,
With a life not lived.
I am waiting for the release
And afraid of the moment it will come.

16. There is a joy in you

There is a joy in you
In your very being
Filling up all the spaces
That lay empty
Unoccupied and deserted in me.
I had been a wanderer,
It seemed,
For ages,
Had lost the ability to flow
Unhindered
Uninhibited
In any bond.
It had been a long, long journey
Before you gave me memories
Where you were never too far away.
These are cherished
These are obstinate
Having lost it all,
These are all that remain.
Empty spaces around me
Suddenly cracked open
Your joys begun to occupy me
Fill me with joys.

Your memories linger
Blending with the pleasures
That were cherished.
Your joys
That filled me
Up to the brim.
Even now the body lives in them
And the memories play
With all the joys you found in me.

17. Is it a dream

Is it a dream
That we lived
Is it a mirage
That you were here.
When I know you are out there
Living a life I cannot see.
Is it a thought
That you whispered words of love?
You are nameless in my life.
But your memories still throb
With the passion I felt,
Your laughter
Deep and joyous, still echoes
The unfathomed, lilting notes
I hear even now
Crackling behind your voice.
Your smell often embraces my senses
Softly...
I walk beside you often
Into the untrodden deep woods,
And lie by your side
Under the clear blue sky
where water gently touches our toes

As we sit by the shores
Of the vast, vast sea.
Then we trod down the splattered muddy lanes
Into the world where only we live.
You are nameless in my life
But the heart often hums your name.

18. Bird

I could have followed you
Followed into the wilderness
Where I could have grown
Into my own self.
I could have held you
I could have grown wings,
Leapt into the valley
Riding into the air streams
Flown into the sky.
I could have heard my voice
Echo in the valley,
The forests would have grown in me
I could have walked the muddy hills
Till they spread
On my mind
I could have just held your hand
That moment
And stepped over the brink.

A part of me walked with you
And wanted to walk on
Yearned to ride the air streams
Yearned to grow wings

Yearned to fly
Yearned to echo in the valley
Yearned to absorb in the hills,
But a part of me
Is only now taking first faltering steps.

19. There is more...

There is more ...
The river flows yet...
You can never look at the you in me
I am not your mirror
I am a river
And you flow as my swell and my crest...
You live in me
Deep, deep down
You will never know where.
No floods define you
No droughts are to your credit
You will never find you
In me,
A stream that flows in me.
Words will never tell you
What I said to you
Do not fear the silence
It speaks in the language
Of the river to the banks
You will never find me in you.

20. *The hour of exit*

Call not the twilight the hour of exit
I am waiting with bated breath
For the day to burst
Into more colours
Than a palette can hold.
Call it not the end of the day
I see with awe
The hour of completeness
When the light embraces the dark
And it is hard to tell them apart.
The approach of the night
Will bring more stars than the eye can behold
And more dreams than they can hold
I wait for life to embrace me
Uninhibited
As we move together into uncharted,
The unseen pathways of the soul
That the daylight had glazed away.

21. Gentle child

Gentle child,
Kind and thoughtful.
The love that warms every open heart.
The wonderful mind that remembers
People and their pets.
The laughter that tugs the heart strings,
The naughty jokes that know
To tease but never hurt.

You flow free,
Innocent and pure
There is no race for you
Where there are winners
Who walk into the limelight,
Just people who walk with you.

22. 'Why'

You cock your head
And through the glasses
That rest on the brink of the nose
You smile,
Radiant and mischievous
The eyes twinkle and hope shines through
Stories hover and wicked jokes spill
Life brims with your ceaseless chat.
But around the corners
Hovering on the edges of the smile
And in the twitching fingers
Is the desperate question
“Why???”
I have no answer, Child.
I ask the same question each time I hold you
Tense and delicate
Caught
In the stiff confines of a body
That refuses to abide,
And you push the limits
For just a step more
And it is a moment of victory
Then I look up and ask

“Why???”

When you have run a mile why is it just an inch?

And

If the measures are different

Why should parameters of achievement be the same?

Why should there be a condition – “Special”

Why should these timeframes,

These plots and structures be so binding?

And silence echoes in response.

I can see the transformation

Like every mother,

In the gawky growing limbs

And the mind that opens

Like a bud with first sunrays

Holding the promise of a spring.

I also see what few others do.

You talk of my childhood

The hands that held me

Till my body listened

And I walked on –

I know what you never say

I can hear the unsaid

“Why?”

I can feel the anxiety

To live in this world

That will test you every time

You will run a mile to go an inch

And push the limits to take the next step.
I can take you as far as I go
And then it is your journey
Be fearless, for you are bold
You do what few can think
You run a mile to go an inch
And push the limits to go take the next step.
Hold my hand
And walk the path as far as we can go,
We may not go the distance
We may not arrive,
But we will walk on
It's a beautiful journey.
That which we call a life
Is just a string of moments.
It's the answer
To all my prayers
The miracle I witnessed
The blessing I received.
Your spirit is fearless and joyful
You are beautiful,
And you are perfect
You are the answer
You are the blessing
And the miracle.

23. Goa

“We will go to Goa together,”

I promised

And assisted him on to the therapist’s table

“Really!?”

His eyes lit up

Like they always did

When I promised the trip.

“Yes, and have fun, lots of fun.”

“And dance?”

The smile broadened

“Yes, right on the sea shore,”

I gently removed the shoes

Fragile dreams floated in those guileless eyes.

“What is there?”

How does one define experience?

“A huge huge sea”

“There is water?”

“Yes, so much that the sun dips in it and the moon comes out of it.”

The giggle broke out and the toes curled.

I knew the next question.

“When?” he said

I could see in his eyes

The waves hitting the shore
And the sand moving between his firmly planted feet
“As soon as you start walking,”
I had said a prayer.
And held his leg straight for the therapy to begin.

24. *Stories*

At the school gate
Blank, half-awake feet walk in
Reluctant to let go of the dream,
Trudging along drowsily
Led firmly by the bigger feet.
Some wait to be joined by other feet
Move together, in slow companionship.
Some pause, contemplate turning back,
Many outright reluctant to cross the gates,
Find it inevitable now
As the bell rings and gates begin to close.
A pair of wheels gently carry a pair of feet
Through the still open gates
Into this world of hopes and freedom.
The gates close again to the world outside.
Hours slowly pass by
Weaving the warp and weft
Pushed forward in the period bells.
The gates open to give over the feet.
Voices rush out
Releasing stories flying into the world outside.
Pouring sheer excited experiences into each other
Heady mixes of narratives

Stories heaped upon stories.
A pair of wheels carry a story
Thrilled and joyous
Weaving into other stories around
As far as the threads of voice could carry them.

25. *Back from vacation*

Were we in a stupor then,
Or are we now tipsy
With shots of flimsy concerns
That carry us away from the silent glow
Of the innermost recesses.
The glow that we trod upon
When butterfly thoughts flickered
As if they wandered at will
On the rising and falling trails of breath
Into lanes and lands
Whispering tales of heart, to heart.
As if by the shores always,
Watching the waves crash into a spray
That catches and draws them
To spheres beyond horizons.
Was that the stupor
Or are we now tipsy with workaday life.

26. *The wanderer thought*

Day-in and day-out mundane
Herald life into the fast lane
Sucked into the work-a-day world,
Draws up a complex design.

Grappling with the urgent drudge,
The kaleidoscopic continuity of patterns,
The itinerant thought escapes with a breath
Into the by lanes of the heathen unknown.

Wandering for days at a time,
In narrow treks of backwoods hills
Camps by the bend of anonymous stream
Soaking the moist music of the gurgle.

Lost in the mist of the wilder
Happy to be the footloose wanderer.

27. चंद खाली सफेद कागज

चंद खाली सफेद कागज रह गए बाकी
धनक के सारे बिखरे रंग घुल गए रोशनी में ।
सिमट गये अपने खामोश दामन में
चंद लफ्ज, दहकते, जलते दर्द-सर-बसर।
लौट आए हैं परिंदे अपनी डाली पर,
आँधियों में उन बेबाक उड़ानों से,
अपने बिखरे घरौंदे की फिफ्रों में
समेटने चंद बेतरतीब तिनके,
कहीं बिखर न जाए, घोंसला नाजुक है

28. शब्दों से बने हम

शब्दों से बने हम शब्दों से बंधे हम
शब्दों में ढल गये शब्दों में जी गये ।
शब्द का आकाश था शब्द पंख बन गये
शब्दों की नदी में शब्द नाव बह चले ।
शब्द भावना थे जो शब्द कामना थे जो
शब्द उनपे वार् के शब्द वार ले चले ।
शब्द रक्त में रुंधे शब्द घाव बन गये
शब्दों में टूटे फिर शब्दों से जुड़ गये ।
शब्द जाल बन गये शब्द भंवर बन गए
शब्द उठे आंधी से शब्द बाढ़ बन गए ।
शब्दों ने तोड़ दिए शब्दों के सारे बंध
शब्दों ने सारे रंग एक रंग कर दिये ।
शब्द बने जीवन के मानी की खोज और
शब्द उसी खोज के मानी भी बन चले ।
शब्द बने शब्द के विस्तार की कल्पना
शब्द कल्पना परे का सार भी बन चले ।

29. हिल्स 2009

आसमां के राज़ सीने में छुपा कर,
झील को बादलों से ढकते देखा ।
लहरों पे थिरकती नाव के गिर्द
पानी पे नाचती रोशनी को देखा ।
ज़मीं आसमां का हाथ थामे चली,
इस भूले मंज़र को फिर से देखा ।
पहाड़ी पर बिखरी तन्हाई में
तारों से भरा आसमान देखा ।
दूर तक गूँजती खामोशी में
पत्तों की ढेरों बातें सुनी ।
वादी के खोए रास्तों पर
अपना पता पाया खुद में ।
बातें भी कीं, शिकवे भी किए
यादों में डूबे हंसी में भीगे
आँसू भी बहाए मिल के गले
यूं जब बाद अर्सा खुद से मिले ।

30. हसरतें

हसरतें

यूं ही बेसाख्ता

ज़बान से फिसले बोल सी या

ज़मीन चीर कर फूटते

किसी सोते सी ।

हसरतें ,

रात में खुलती रजनीगंधा में

सारे टांके खोल

अपनी खुशबू में लिपटा कर

उड़ा देती ।

हसरतें,

मेरी तेरी

हमेशा की

हर लम्हा नयी सी

यूं ही बेसाख्ता

लिपटी हुई रजनीगंधा में।

31. श्याम मन

एक मन
श्याम रंग रंगा
उड चला पंख लगा
उन होंठों से निकली मिश्री सी तानों में
बहका सा भटका सा
रतजगी आंखों में
शर्मीली याद लिए
श्याम रंग सराबोर
भोर तले आंचल में
श्याम रंग ख्वाब लिए
ना पायल ना कंगन
मन फिर भी झनक झन झन
पा प्रियतम का संग
रंगा श्याम रंग
उड चला एक मन ।

32. तेरा प्यार

रुकता नहीं है एक भी लम्हा मेरे दिल में
तेरा प्यार है जो दरिया सा बहता ही जाए है।
हर रात का है साया
हर सुबह का सुहाग
तू, देख किस तरह से, मुझमें समाए है।
ये इश्क तो अब किसी तौर लगता ही नहीं है
तू खुदा बेशक नहीं पर
मेरी इबादत सा बनता ही जाए है।

33. फिर ये होश खोते रहें

इस शाम के सारे रंग
जब रात में घुलते रहें
ये हाथ थाम लेना
फिर ये होश खोते रहें ।
चलते चलते साथ में
जब रात की धडकन जाग उठे
खुशबू में लिपटे हों तेरी
और शाने पर तेरे सिर रहे ।
जिस को ढूँढा किये बरसों
दुनिया की भीड़ में
हर शाम तेरे साथ में
उस खुद से हम मिलते रहें।
एक घर सपना था तेरा
एक घर था मेरा ख्वाब
फिर क्यों कर सारी जिंदगी
बंजारों से हम फिरते रहें।
ये ओस से ऊदा चांद
हमारे चेहरों पर उतर आए
इस खामोश से रिश्ते में
कुछ दूर तो हमकदम रहें।
ये हाथ थाम लेना
फिर ये होश खोते रहें।

34. तलाश

पलकों में थमा एक सपना
क्या हुआ जो टूट गया
हम फिर से नई दुनिया
सपनों की बसा लेंगे ।
सूरज जो ओझल हो गया
पीछे अंधेरे छोड़ कर,
हम रातों को फिर
चांद तारों से सजा लेंगे ।
रास्ते भटक गए और
मंजिलें जो खो गई,
नए रास्तों को तलाश
नयी मंजिलें बना लेंगे ।
पर खो गये हैं हम
तेरी तलाश में हमसफर ।

35. अंतर

मैं हाशिए पर रहती हूँ
तुम्हारी जिन्दगी के
हूँ, पर अंतर से इतर
कहीं ज़िद में पैर जमा कर
घर बसाने में मशगूल
और तुम इस अंतर में
हाशिये पर चले गए
हम हैं, घर है, अंतर है
हाशियों का अंतर
हाशियों के अंतर में।
मेरी इबारत तुम्हें छोड़कर
बनती है मुकम्मल
पर तुम्हारे बिना नहीं।
मैं भी जरूरत हूँ तुम्हारी
एक पूरी दिखती तस्वीर की।
हम रेलगाड़ी की पटरी से नहीं
नदी के किनारों से भी नहीं
हम साथ साथ नहीं चलते
हम साथ रहते हैं।

36. “आओ चलें”

चांदनी से नहाई रात में
मैं भीग गई
जैसे मन के आंगन में
बारिश नाच उठी हो,
हवाएँ थाम कर उस बारिश का दामन
बोली हों “आओ चलें”
वो लम्हा ज़ब्र कर लिया
जैसे सांस लहू में
जब तुम्हारे होंठो से तप कर
मैं इतनी हसीन हो गई
जैसे शबनम के मोती
धूप ने चूमे हों,
और मुझे बहा ले गया
तुम्हारा अनकहा “आओ चलें”।

37. मैं और तुम

मैं और तुम हम बने
हम किनारा बन गये
हमारे बीच का बहाव
हमको मिलाता है
पर पास नहीं आने देता
हमको दूर करता है
पर अलग नहीं होने देता
चलो, चलें यूँ ही
किनारों की तरह,
किनारे किनारे
पास फिर भी दूर
मगर जुदा नहीं ।
ये नाव मेरी चिड़ी है
वो लहर तुम्हारा गीत
इसे भेजा है मैंने
वो उठी तुम्हारे सीने से ।
चलो चलें यूँ ही।
कभी मैं मचलूँ
तुमसे मिलने को
कभी तुम तडप कर

मेरी ओर मुड़ चलो
साथ नहीं हो फिर भी
एहसास हो साथ का ।
चलो चलें यूँही
दूर दूर फिर भी पास।

38. यक-लख्त

तेरा हाथ किसी और ने थामा
तेरे जिस्म की तपिश मिली
किसी और जिस्म से
तेरी खुशबू बिखर गई
किसी और जिस्म में,
चाहत भरी सांसे उलझी
होश यक-लख्त खो गए ,
एक खामोशी बोल उठी
शर्म से झुकी आंखों की बात,
और, कुछ ख्वाबों की किर्चियाँ
निस्तब्ध
मेरी आंखों में जम गई।

39. ख़ता

नींद से डर लगता है

होश में ख़यालों का
हाथ थामे चलते रहें ,
पर सपनों में तेरा आना
बे इख़्तियार है ।

थक गए ख़यालों के समंदर
लहर लहर किनारे जाने से ।
रखना था दो घड़ी को सर
आंखें मूंद किनारे के कांधे पर ,
पर डूब जाते है हर बार
जज़्बातों के भंवर में ।

खुली आंखों ने समझ ली है
हकीकत की दुनिया
बंद पलकों के तले तो
बस तमन्नाओं की बस्तियां बसती हैं।

तुम्हारा प्यार घुला है
अब भी धडकनों में
मेरे ख़्वाब अब भी तुम्हारे हैं ।

ख्वाबों में भी तुम्हारी चाहत ,
लोग कहते है कि ख़ता है ,
और ख़ता है मेरी मुहब्बत ।
तभी ,
नींद से डर लगता है ।

40. नक्शे

कभी अपना साया भी कहीं छूट जाए
और अपना अक्स अजनबी हो जाये
राहें सिमट कर पैरों तले आ जायें
सोच के धागे आपस में उलझ जायें
दिल तनी पतंग सा डोल जाये
कैसे संभाले जीवन के उड़ते हर्फ़।
सोग नही, दर्द नहीं, बस धड़कन हो
जीवन तालाब की लहरों जैसा हो जाये
जो उठती हैं तालाब के सीने से
फिर सीने में ही सिमट जायें।
गुमराह नहीं, हों बस गुम हो राहें
तो आसमान की लौ जला कर क्या करें
क्यों लड़ें अंधेरों और तूफानों से
कैसे ढूंढ़ें माज़ी में रास्तों के नक्शे ।

41. एक शाम मांगी थी तुमने

एक शाम मांगी थी तुमने
बोला था
“कुछ दिन खाली पड़े हैं यूँ ही
सोचता हूँ रंग लूं”
रंग तो क्या ही भरे होंगे
भला रात की स्याही
कैसे भरेगी
दिन के कैनवस पर चमकीले रंग?
खैर
वो रात लौट आयी है
कुछ घिसी है कोनों से,
जाने क्यों उजड़ी सी है
कुछ उधड़ी सी भी है,
अक्सर सिरहाने बैठ जाती है
हाथ थाम कर -
कभी तकती है चेहरा
कभी सिसकियाँ लेती है ।
तुमने ठीक ही भेजी होगी,
वादा किया था
एहतियात से वापसी का ।

तो डाकिया होगा मुजरिम ।
डाकियों के ईमान
अक्सर डोल जाते हैं
ऐसी यूँ ही सी दिखती रात पर।
रात भी चुप है
तुमने भी खामोशी ओढ़ ली है।
बस ये डाकिया
गली के चक्कर लगाता है अक्सर
यूँ ही ।

42. कहानी

कागज़ को कलम मिले
कलम को लफ़्ज़
और लफ़्ज़ों को मानी
सफ़र फिर भी अधूरा है,
जज़्बातों के रंग में
जब तक न कही कहानी ।
कोई धुंधला से ख़्वाब तेरा
कोई अधूरी अनकही बात मेरी
सुनी, अनसुनी, बिखरी ज़बानी।
फिर रंगों में पिरो कर
सफ़ेद पर स्याह के
लिखी तो बनी कहानी ।
ज़िन्दगी लम्हों में पानी सी बहती है
हवा सी आस पास महसूस रहती है,
यादों में उतार कर
शब्दों में बांटी
क्रतरा क्रतरा बुनी कहानी।

43. आज़ाद

ज़ब्त की दहलीज़ से आगे आकर
अब किसी हिज़्र का खौफ नहीं है हमको ।

अब कोई सिरहन नहीं
कोई भी दहशत का साया नहीं दिल में
अब सांस सांस डर की बर्फ पिघल जाती है ।
अब किसी हिज़्र का खौफ नहीं
ज़ब्त की दहलीज़ से आगे आकर ।

मत तक़ो मेरी ओर तेज़ नज़र खंजर से
तेरी हर शमशीर नज़र
मेरे इख़्तिलाफ़ के धागे बुन जाती है।
अब किसी हिज़्र का खौफ नहीं
ज़ब्त की दहलीज़ से आगे आकर ।

लफ़ज़ जो काँटों सी चुभन रखते हैं
जो कभी ख़्वाब भी ख़रोच दिया करते थे
उनमें तेरे डर की अब पहचान भी मिल जाती है।
अब किसी हिज़्र का खौफ नहीं
ज़ब्त की दहलीज़ से आगे आकर ।

कभी चाहत थी तेरे नज़र-ऐ- करम की हमको
तुझे चाहा था कभी साया, कभी मरहम सा
हर उस चोट की याद अब मरहम सी छू जाती है।
अब किसी हिन्न का खौफ नहीं
ज़ब्त की दहलीज़ से आगे आकर ।
अब किसी हिन्न का खौफ नहीं ।

44. ज़िन्दगी में माना कुछ रंग और भी हैं

ज़िन्दगी में माना कुछ रंग और भी हैं
तेरी यादों जैसे कोई रंगी नहीं है ,
अभी ज़िन्दगी में मक़ाम और भी हैं
तेरे साथ के कोई मुक़ाबिल नहीं हैं ।
ज़रा चल के देख उस फ़लक के किनारे
ज़मीं आसमां में कोई दूरी नहीं है।
जब हम साथ हैं बन गयी एक दुनिया
कोई और शय इसमें शामिल नहीं है।
मुकम्मल हुए तुझमें हम मुझमें तुम हो
ये वादे इन सांसों से फ़ानी नहीं हैं।

45. Covid IV - ज़िन्दगी दमकेगी

ज़िन्दगी दमकेगी ।

साथ चलना

बाहर निकलना

गैरों से मिलकर दोस्त बन जाना,

वादियों में भटकना

खुले आसमान तले

क्षितिज तक जाती पगडंडियों पर

साथ-साथ चलना

फिर होगा।

ज़िन्दगी फिर दमकेगी।

हमसफर के साथ बैठना

गले लग कर मोहब्बत,

गले मिलकर दोस्ती,

हाथों में हाथ लिए

ज़िन्दगी की बातें

फिर करेंगे ।

ज़िन्दगी फिर यूँ ही दमकेगी।

ज़िन्दगी जमकर बरसेगी

ये दिन गुज़र जाएगा

वक़्त की गर्दिश है ये दिन

क्रयामत का एक मोड़ है
सफर में आया है
चला जायेगा
ज़िन्दगी वैसे ही फिर दमकेगी।
छोटी छोटी खुशियों को भी
त्योहारों से समझना
न समझना कि कम है
किसी भी ज़िन्दगी की कीमत
ज़िन्दगी के भूले मानी
हमको सिखा जाएगा।
फिर चला जायेगा।
ज़िन्दगी फिर दमकेगी।
ज़िन्दगी दमकेगी।

46. ज़िन्दगी तेरे फ़साने में कहीं

ज़िन्दगी तेरे फ़साने में कहीं
मेरे नाम के दो हर्फ़ भी जुड़ जाते हैं
मेरे लफ़्ज़ों में, मेरी हर तहरीर में
तेरे बस तेरे ही तो अफ़साने हैं।
एक तिलिस्म जैसा है तेरे साथ सफ़र
पीछे देखो या आगे, कहीं कुछ भी नहीं,
चलते रहते हैं बस सांसों की डोर को थामे
वरना तेरे रास्ते हर शख्स को अनजाने हैं।
किसी साथ से रोशन हुई डगर अपनी
किसी की राह के हम भी कभी चिराग हुए
इन्हीं उजालों के शुआओं में तेरे मानी हैं
इन्हीं गोशों में छिपे तेरे सरमाये हैं।

47. चिड़िया, तुम भी बंधी हो

चिड़िया, तुम भी बंधी हो
आकाश के विस्तार को
पंखों तले नापने की
तुम्हारी भी सीमा है।
खुला अनन्त उड़ान को
नहीं मिलता तुम्हें भी।
कोई नीड़
किसी शाखा पर
तकता है तुम्हारी राह
टकटकी लगाये द्वार पर
पाने को स्वाद ममता के रस का।
चिड़िया, तुम उड़ो कभी जो
स्वच्छंद निस्सार निर्बाध
क्या उसमें सुख पाओगी?
जाओगी तो कहाँ जाओगी,
क्या पंखों की सीमा नाप पाओगी
या वापस किसी बंधन में
बंधने को लौट आओगी,
मन के किसी कोने में
उस पल की आस लिए

जब हौले से द्वार खोल
निकलो असीम विस्तार,
अपने परों में बांधने
थिरकने हवा की लहरों पर?
जब किसी शाखा पर
किसी नीड़ में कोई नयन
नहीं तकते हों राह ।
जब ममता उडेल चुकी हो
खुली चोंच में सारी ताकत,
नाज़ुक परों की उड़ान को ।
चिड़िया, तुम भी तब तक बंधी हो ।

48. बेटियां रंगों वाली होली हैं

बेटियां रंगों वाली होली हैं,
दिए की मद्धम रोशनी वाली दिवाली हैं ।
उनका होना घर में गुलाल सा रंग भरता है
और हर कोना रोशन करता है ।
कभी गुझिया सी मिठास और ठंडाई सा सुकून देती हैं
कभी फुलझड़ी सी चारों तरफ बिखर जाती हैं ।
अंदर से बाहर तक दमकती चहकती हैं
हर रोज़ नए सपने की ताबीर होती हैं ।
नाज़ुक और नाज़ों भरी फगवा ठिठोली सी
और कभी रंगों और फूलों भरी रंगोली सी ।
संगीत के तार से झनकते स्वर
भीनी सी खुशबू से महकते घर ।
बेटियों में आत्मा बसती है घर की
जो हर दम जीवन दे , वो डोर सांसों की ।
बेटियां उत्सव का तत्व और सार हैं
स्वयं भी जीवन उत्सव का आधार हैं ।

49. गुज़रा दिन

कोरे सफ़हों के साथ गुज़रा दिन
खामोश ।
किताबों को टाल दिया
किसी और दिन के वादे पर ।
वो बोलती हैं,
बातें करती हैं, लगातार,
बंद भी कर दो
तो आवाज़ लगती हैं ,
उठा लो अगर
तो बातों का सिलसिला शुरू ।
बात, जरूरी नहीं
अपने ही मुताल्लिक़ हो
जिससे दोस्ती है उनकी
जानते हैं वो
किताबों की बेलौस बेलाग़ बतकही,
यहां की, वहां की
अपने बहाने जहां की,
उठ के जाना मुश्किल है
किताबों की महफ़िल से ।
पर

आज मन किया
कोरे सफ़हों के साथ खामोश बैठने का
इस पुराने दोस्त के साथ
वक्त के गुजरते कदम गिनने का।

दिन गुजार दिया
कोरे सफ़ों के साथ ,
खामोश।

50. एक तस्वीर

कुछ जाने पहचाने पुराने चेहरे
कुछ यादों की दस्तक,
एक खामोश झील का पानी
एक झोंके ने जैसे लहरा दिया ।
एक अप्रसन्न कुछ किस्से
एक दौर कुछ रिश्ते ,
किसी भटकी हुई डगर पर
एक तस्वीर ने पहुंचा दिया ।
कभी खुलकर हंस दिए थे
कभी छुप के रो दिए,
कुछ बातों ने तड़पा दिया
कुछ लफ्जों ने बहला दिया ।
कुछ अपने कुछ अपने जैसे
कुछ पराए ही बन कर रह गए ,
इन्हीं लोगों के साथ-साथ
क्या वक्त था जो गुज़ार दिया ।
एक अप्रसन्न कुछ किस्से
एक दौर कुछ रिश्ते,
किसी भटकी हुई डगर पर
एक तस्वीर में पहुंचा दिया।

51. तूने दिल्लगी में की थीं

तूने दिल्लगी में की थीं, हमने दिल से लगा ली थीं
तेरी बात बात हमने एक शमा बना ली थीं,
सारी रात जलते थे दोनों क्रतरा क्रतरा
तेरी परछाइयों से हमने महफ़िल सजा ली थी।

52. दर्द ए दिल अब रुसवाई के सिवा कुछ नहीं

दर्द-ए-दिल अब रुसवाई के सिवा कुछ नहीं
तेरी तिश्नगी तनहाई के सिवा कुछ नहीं,
क्यों साथ चलूँ उस राह पर ए दिल
जहां वो याद कसरत-ए-रंज-ओ-अलम के सिवा कुछ नहीं।

53. जब भी मिलोगे ए दोस्त

जब भी मिलोगे ए दोस्त तो देखेंगे
एक मंज़र भी और पस-ए-मंज़र एक फ़साना भी,
बाँटेंगे तेरे हाल भी अपने हालात भी
फिर सुनाएंगे हाल-ए-जहां भी और हाल-ए-दिल भी।

54. दिलकश समां है

दिलकश समां है ये दिलकश नजारे हैं
दिलकश बहारें यहां,
कदमों की तेरे कोई आहट हुई है
या धड़कन ये बहकी बेवजह ।

55. मांझी पार करा दे

मांझी पार करा दे
प्राण पांखरे भटके,
माया के बिखरे दाने को
जीवन भर भरमाते
उड़ते, तैरते, उतरते ,
उपक्रम के मेख में बंधे।
तारण की आस देकर
बंधन संत्रास हटा
सांझ के अंत में बसे
अनहद अनंत में पिरो
काल की चाल से
आगे करा दे ।
मांझी पार करा दे।

56. शिव

अनंत आकाश अपनी जटा बना,
हिम की एक पतली सी डोर से बांध,
इस निरावरण शृंखला से घिरे ,
निरंतर आवागमन से अविचलित,
प्रलय के से विध्वंस से भी अडिग,
समस्त ध्यान को तप में कर केंद्रित,
बैठे हैं प्रकृति पुरुष के सम्पूर्ण रूप,
शक्ति के मूलाधार से आत्मा को परिचित कराते ,
निर्विकार अवयग्र गिरित्रः प्रभुः॥