

Poetry Series

**Raj Arumugam**  
**- poems -**

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## Raj Arumugam(1955)

...been thinking in the language of poetry and scribbling verse from as early as I can recall of my days...FLASHBACK: born naked in India in 1955...was shipped to Singapore in 1961, well-packaged...sent myself over permanently to Australia in early 1998...FINIS: ...just can't get out of the poetry-mind...

hear my poems in my own voice at youtube:

# 10 Ways To Celebrate Halloween

This is Halloween - so I've got license for a little mischief. Read and enjoy.

1.

Offer your children a diet of pumpkin soup for breakfast, lunch and dinner. In the absence of children, offer it to your spouse. Or offer it to yourself.

2.

Color your face and hands Green.  
And hold a placard with the words: MOTHER NATURE.  
Then stand outside on the highway at peak hour traffic.  
Just watch what they do to you.

3.

When the children come knocking tonight and they shout: "Trick or Treat?" tell them:

"I'm doing the Trick and Treat, little darlings" - and say:

"The Trick is, I'm going to recite one of my poems, and the Treat is that too! "  
And just watch them run!

4.

Your son's room is dirty and untidy? He never tidies his room?  
Well, today you can reverse it all: throw frogs and toads and feathers  
and chicken curry and rotting pumpkins about in his room and listen to him  
complain in reverse, when he comes back from school:  
"Mum! My room is so untidy! "

(Trouble is, you may still have to clean up.)

5.

Call your mum and tell her you are pregnant. (Of course your mum might have read this and she might be calling you to scare you with the same Trick.)

6.

Walk over to your neighbour's drive-way with a new \$100 broom and offer to sweep their driveway.

7.

Put up a sign outside your house just for tonight:

Give this Old House the miss.

Old Witch is back.

Old Wizard is brewing Old Lizard Potion to celebrate.

8.

Or try this sign outside your house:

No Halloween here.

Just Bold Miss-fit Blunderteen, (Blackbelt, TKD) lives here.

9.

Trust me, witches flying on a broomstick over trees and the moon is not a myth. Gather all your folks and neighbours on One Tall Tree Hill, climb that tree, sit on a broom, shout: "I believe! " - and jump off the tree. You must also have a crowd of at least 20 for this to work.

10.

For goodness sake, just this once, try being human. Just for today. We've had enough zombie days.

Raj Arumugam

## 2 - Body Talk

1

zzzzz.....zzzzz...shhh.....zzzzz.  
shhh....be quiet! .....zzzzz....  
it's the quiet of night  
and everyone's asleep...  
so be quiet....zzzzzzzzzzzz...

he-body is in bed  
and see, beside is she-body  
and both owners are fast asleep  
but bodies speak even in sleep  
shhh....be quiet! .....zzzzz....  
zzzzz.....zzzzz...shhh.....zzzzz.

2

one turns in sleep  
click! the neck says  
ssssuuu!  
a big toe scratches the mattress

silence

hmmm...mmm...hmmmm...  
that's the in-breath, out-breath  
as the bodies communicate

growl! it's an empty tummy  
and tchk! says the tongue  
as it feels thirsty;  
swwwwwirl!  
says the blanket  
as she-body pulls more of it

3

zzzzz.....zzzzz...shhh.....zzzzz.  
shhh....be quiet! .....zzzzz....  
it's the quiet of night

and everyone's asleep...  
so be quiet....zzzzzzzzzzzz...

rrrr....rrrrr.....rrrrrr...  
that's he-body snoring  
rrrr...rrrr....rrrr...rrrrrrrr...  
yes, he snores like a saw

ttttttttt! yes, she-body kicks

bp! bp! bp! bp!  
he-body sucks his thumb

zap!  
a noise travels  
from lung to gut  
hmmmm....hmmmmmm....hmmmm...  
there is heavy-breathing  
the nose is blocked

4  
zzzzz.....zzzzz...shhh.....zzzzz.  
shhh....be quiet! .....zzzzz....  
it's the quiet of night  
and everyone's asleep...  
and bodies talk....listen

prrrrtttt!  
yes, that's he-body  
everybody knows this rude sound  
Plattt!  
yes, that's she-body  
with an instinctive kick  
Baam!  
that's he-body  
as it hits the floor

rrrrrr.....rrrrrr....rrrrrr.....rrrrrr....  
prrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrttttt!  
that's he-body again, I'm afraid,  
blissfully unaware  
and asleep like a baby on the floor

Hmmmmm.....

that's she-body dreaming of Prince Charming  
who never showed up

zzzzz.....zzzzz...shhh.....zzzzz.

shhh....be quiet! .....zzzzz....

it's the quiet of night

and everyone's asleep...

so be quiet....zzzzzzzzzzzz...

Raj Arumugam

# 28 Eggs Can Kill

in the villages  
in days of yore  
young men proved  
their vigor  
by lifting gigantic rocks

but in 2012 -  
the remarkable year of  
the French Village of Bugarach  
(where many sagacious youths gathered) -  
away in Tunisia,  
the young man  
downs eggs  
egg-citedly  
in a dare  
and he's up to his esophagus in 28 eggs raw  
when something in him cracks  
(O poor wasted youth of 20)  
and just 2 before winning his bet  
he dies;  
it's Armageddon for him in 2012,  
though he also gains an epiphany:  
28 raw eggs can kill

-  
caveat

of course  
O Ye Olde Sensitive Souls  
this is not a yoke -  
I mean, this is not a joke  
For verily, 28 eggs can kill

Raj Arumugam

## 2-Min Iq Test

this popup  
jumps up on me  
most unexpectedly  
with a BOO! and a Hee! Hee! Hee!  
(which is what, I guess,  
popups do best)

you see,  
all I'm doing is minding my own business  
punching keys on my keyboard  
(which is what idiots like me do best)  
and this popup  
shows up and says:  
Hey bald and sexy –  
point that mouse at me and click!  
Come, let me show you how low  
your IQ really is!

Oh, please - popup,  
don't pop up on me  
cos I've got a weak heart  
and I may just go POOOP!  
like a bubble  
just like that;  
besides,  
I'm really quite dumb  
and I can't see  
how a quickie two minutes  
can tell me anything about me

Raj Arumugam

## 2nd Song For The Love Of My Life

dearest, O my new, new love -  
will you grant me but 2 deviations?  
for I will love truly and give everything unto you;  
in all ways I'll be the man you want me to be  
but in two - and grant those my only perversions, let them be:  
First - allow me to drive all my life;  
never take the wheel from me...  
you see, my dad never allowed me to drive  
and he threw me in the back seat  
and never even told me where he'd bring me  
and he'd dump me  
in my nana's or in the shopping center  
sometime for a week or two  
and when I said Could I drive?  
He'd say: You? you scum!  
You're only 22!

So now when we settle down and build our own nest  
you must really let me drive  
like hell  
really let me be the driver  
and let me drive  
never you take the wheel  
you can sit like a Queen in the passenger seat  
and I'll drive you wherever you want to  
but Oh - promise, promise, never take the wheel from me...

And the 2nd deviation, before I forget...  
I do have the habit  
of digging my nose  
whenever I'm happy  
and so when I'm at the wheel  
you can bet your last dollar  
I'll be digging my nose  
(the 2 go together)  
so you must promise  
to let me be  
and let me dig my nose as I drive  
for nothing makes me happier

so never, never  
O please  
never ever rap on my knuckles  
when I dig my nose  
like my mum did with her steel ruler  
whenever I put my fingers in my nose

O if you can promise me these 2  
that you'll allow these 2 perversions  
to be the normal rule in our love -  
Oh, then I'll be the happiest man ever...  
Now excuse me, while I dig my nose...

Raj Arumugam

## 8 Songs For Sansho The Bailiff

The following 8 poems entitled "Songs for Sansho the Bailiff" is a series I wrote based on the film "Sansho the Bailiff" (1954) by Kenji Mizoguchi. Set in medieval Japan, the film tells the tragic tale of a family that lives by the father's ideal that one should be just to others, even if that goodness is inconvenient to oneself. The family is separated and endures all sorts of suffering in living this ideal.

### 1) Zushi and Anju

Zushio  
my son  
where are you now?  
Anju  
most delicate flower  
where do you rest your head?

Zushio  
strident and strong  
are you still alive  
and do you  
think of your mother?  
O son  
do you keep your father's words  
and do you look after your little sister?

Anju my delicate love  
where do you blossom now?  
Your presence always fills my heart  
but you are not where  
I may hold you, my lovely child

O Zushio  
are you with your sister?

do you still care for her  
and does Anju grow to be strong  
and brave?  
O Zushio - is Anju within your shadow  
or has fate parted even the two of you  
as it has parted us all?

Zushio  
my son  
where are you now?  
Anju  
most delicate flower  
where do you rest your head?

## 2) Live brother

Live, brother -  
and go now, for  
you must go seek mother;  
seek her where she is abused  
in Sato;  
and Oh - what they have done  
to our mother, a woman without her man  
one cannot know  
But O brother,  
find mother and give her back her life  
and as for me  
our masters cannot extract any word  
about where you hide and what you intend  
and how you escaped  
for all they will find  
is water in my mouth and in my body  
for I will be in water  
as when I lived in mother's womb  
But live you brother, and flee  
and hide till they think you are gone  
and seek our dear mother  
and free her  
and give her back the life

give her the precious gift of life  
the same precious life  
she gave you and me

3) Come home to mother

Zushio

O Anju

dearest children

where are you?

are you well?

has time been

a gentle foster mum

or a witch that eats

children's hearts?

O Zushio

O Anju

children

of the just -

do you think of mother

and does your father's wise words

still reside in your hearts?

O Zushio

O Anju

dearest children

where do you sleep at nights

and what do you wake up to each day?

Zushio

O Anju

my children

come home to mother

for always I wait for you

4) Way of the just

Yes Sirs,

I know you say  
it is easier  
to live the life of the unjust  
to protect one's own comfort  
and powers and position  
and seek to satisfy one's own appetites  
and be one with the group to secure oneself  
and keep the less fortunate out  
and to increase one's own fortunes and ease  
by increasing the powers of one's group -  
but Sirs,  
I have taught my children  
and I live what I teach:  
Let justice be one's way  
and do good to all  
though it may be inconvenient to oneself...

And now, Sirs,  
you have come to teach me  
for you would do good to none but to your own group  
for the good you do your group will protect you  
though others may crawl the earth in misery;  
but I, Sirs - I find it easier  
to walk what you call  
the difficult way of inconvenience

##### 5) Satisfy my desires

Come woman  
you must satisfy man's desires  
and fill the pockets of your master

You have not learned this  
and you yearn after  
your husband and children  
far removed;  
and ungrateful to your owner  
you run off from the quarters

It takes time  
woman  
it takes energy and resources  
and money to drag you back  
and it stirs rebellion amongst the other girls

It is simple, you see:  
you must satisfy man's desires  
and fill the pockets of your master;  
and it is even simpler:  
you break a rule  
we break your feet;  
we cut your tendons  
so you can never run  
You'll be made useless to yourself  
if you are determined to be useless to the owner  
And you'll be an example  
to the other girls  
an example to inspire fear and obedience

Come woman  
teach by example:  
you must satisfy man's desires  
and fill the pockets of your master

6) Zushio and mother

SON:

O mother  
forgive me your son  
for I could not bring sister  
alive back to you  
for time delivered her  
into the hands of the unjust  
and she chose a lake

as her burial ground;  
father died in his exile  
and all I bring to you now is myself  
with nothing in my hands  
for poverty and misery has been the reward  
of the just and the righteous;  
I lived by father's words  
of compassion and love and justice -  
O dearest mother,  
and the world proved a cruel master

MOTHER:

Though we are left  
with nothing the world can see  
nothing the world can measure by  
there is the love one has...  
O Zushio, my child -  
and may that love sustain me, you  
and may that love sustain all beings;  
O Zuhio, my child  
see your life's journey this way:  
May no harm befall any being  
may all beings live in peace;  
may all beings be happy  
and no harm ever come to one  
through my deeds and actions

7) Sansho's philosophy

one comes to this life  
and one must seek comfort  
and ease and one's status  
and this comes through careful nurture  
and meticulous culture;

wealth and power flows from one to another  
and one's ease comes through the discomfort of the other –  
the fool must fill the coffers of the cunning;  
the weak must prop up the strong  
and so this is the secret of life  
and one must seek a group that can sustain one  
and one must sustain that group too  
and so keep all others in place under thumb, toe and fist  
and so that the ease one comes to in life  
flows constant like the rich living rivers

## 8) The family

There may be journeys we undertake;  
there will be long departures  
and separations  
There will be pain and agony  
and each may be taken  
from the other  
And yet, yet - O gentle heart  
yet the bonds will live and bring back one to one;  
yet the bonds of mother, child, father, brother and sister  
these bonds will surpass all pain;  
and the family, that bond of love  
that will live, that love will radiate  
no matter what the world shall deal and thrust  
into one's hearts and hands  
O hold on to that love  
that love of father, son  
man, woman  
mother and daughter and brother and sister  
for that is all, that love is all that lasts and endures

Raj Arumugam

## 9 Cat Poems

(1) a cat's tale

Grandad Cat  
curls his tail  
and wants to tell a tale  
to his GrandKits Cats  
He claws them before him  
and he meows a catchy tune  
that he shall  
tell them a tale

But little Toby  
he purrs:  
No, Grand – you're such a bad story-teller  
cos you only have  
one tale

(2) cats in a boat

...meow, meow, meow...

nine cats in a boat  
and one jumps off  
and there's none left  
in the boat in the same instant –  
anyone going to ask why?

No, this is no conundrum  
in nuclear physics  
It's basic cat life -  
they were all copycats

...meow, meow, meow...

(3) claw enforcement

Tomcat has his breakfast  
of Mice Krispies

and reads his newspapers  
when Molly comes out with a snarl  
in her purr-ple pajamas

she claws him all over  
there's such a caterwauling  
and Tomcat emerges bewildered:  
What? Why?

She's upset that all night  
her hubby Tomcat  
called out for Cat Woman in his sleep  
And what do I do with Tomcat  
after this Claw Enforcement? thinks Molly  
Oh, just hiss and make up

(4) Cat Faculty  
O have you heard? -  
the standards at the  
Faculty of HISStory and Catssics  
are slipping;  
and its esteem  
in the public eye declining  
Have you heard?

Why?

Well,  
that Faculty's  
got too many cheetahs  
That's why

(5) Cat Mum's Advice

said one cat to the other  
at the playground:  
"My mum always advised me  
never to  
climb trees  
For she did say  
very wisely:  
'What has bark

will bite next”

(6) Cat Fame

said one cat to the other:

“One of these days I’m going  
to the Flea Circus  
and then I’ll be real famous  
cos I’ll steal the whole show! ”

(7) Grammar Kitten

Grammar Kitten has  
learned well its lessons;  
and of all the marks  
it loves the comma best  
for, as Grammar Kitten explains  
to Ignorant Kitten:  
“a comma is like us cats:  
the comma’s got the clause before the pause  
we’ve got the paws before the claws”

(8) vowel cat

the English tutor  
sits with Tommy at the table  
and Sam the cat sits opposite

today they are practicing their vowels

every time the teacher  
says: “Tommy, give me a word  
with a vowel or two”  
Sam the cat interjects:  
“Meow...meow...meow! ”

(9) cat luck

for centuries  
black cats have been  
the subject of blame

Is it bad luck  
if a black cat follows you?

Here's the answer  
to settle this mystery  
once and for all:  
It all depends, if you're human or mouse

---

(poems written by Raj Arumugam, based on jokes from various sources)

Raj Arumugam

# A Bar At The Folies-Bergère

It's a dance of desires, Sir;  
a medley of forms  
A nightly swirl of how  
lives are savoured  
that otherwise are dry  
in the embrace of boredom

It's a parade of skills and value, Sir;  
a show of what one's got  
to see if it convinces  
A way of living that completes  
the relentless chase of the days  
and eases the world in unburdening it here

Raj Arumugam

# A Barber, A Bald Man, And A Philosopher

the barber and the bald man  
and the ubiquitous philosopher  
are travelling in ancient Rome  
Here below the tree at night  
they rest and take turns to keep an eye  
on their luggage  
Now it is the turn of the barber to keep watch  
and he gets bored  
and he takes out his shaving kit  
and he gives the sleeping philosopher  
a free shave, so now you have two bald men

And now it's the philosopher's watch  
and he wakes up  
and he feels his smooth head  
and he muses to himself:  
"That stupid barber!  
He has woken up the bald man  
instead of waking up the philosopher! "

Raj Arumugam

# A Barren Life

(i)

The shops

The fruit's finished, all eaten, dear,  
so let's get to the supermarket for more;  
O let's go then hand in hand,  
you and me, to buy some fruit at Coles.

We've run out of chilies and tomatoes,  
all cooked and eaten, dear,  
so run along to the store for some;  
O go on then as quickly as you can,  
sweet child of mine, to buy these at Chan's.

No more bread and cake in the pantry, dear,  
so let's get to the bakery for more;  
O let's go then my lovely family of four  
you and me, to buy some bread and cake at Jill's.  
And when we're at it, little Sara,  
would you like those pancakes  
that come in the red plastic wrappers?

(ii)

To the Garden

Run along, dear little one,  
to the courtyard and  
pick a chili or two

from the green plant in the corner;  
take a pinch of curry leaves  
and come back to mummy  
immediately.

Darling Bob, dearest Tom  
beside our lemon tree  
is thyme and parsley;  
gather a handful each  
and be back in a jiffy.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# A Bookworm's Tale

I was born reading -  
came out of the womb  
with a book  
(I've got my mom's word for that  
and a medical certificate  
which in length runs up  
to a doctoral dissertation)

so I walked into the local library  
when I was just 3  
and was welcomed at the doors  
like a celebrity

and I went up straight  
to the most difficult thing  
and read Shakespeare;  
and the Hands of Wisdom  
led me quick to the  
Bard's gem:  
Neither a borrower nor a lender be

I've never been to a library since

Raj Arumugam

# A Boy On A Donkey

It's that time  
Sammy  
when Daddy's napping  
and so it's time for us to go  
on a jolly merry ride  
With a  
hew-haw and a hee-haw  
and a hee-haw -  
let's go! let's go!

You can take me round  
Sammy  
the field for a ride  
Slow and steady at the mounds  
and fast and swift after that  
With a  
hew-haw and a hee-haw  
and a hee-haw -  
let's go! let's go!

You can have some water  
at the spring  
Sammy  
but you must hurry after  
and bounce back here home  
before daddy wakes up  
to go again to the fields

And we must look  
Sammy  
like nothing's happened  
So with a  
hew-haw and a hee-haw

and a hee-haw -  
let's go! let's go!

Raj Arumugam

## A Buddhist Puzzle

the would-be monk  
(fervent, eager, so into-it)  
came knocking at the  
Buddhist monastery  
but no one answered

the would-be monk  
saw a sign  
there in the shadows  
that read:  
'inquire within'

so  
the would-be monk  
went away immediately

Raj Arumugam

# A Bull For Me

I think, Sirs, and most inimitable Ladies  
I think I prefer to look at a bull  
The sketch of a bull, the head of a bull perhaps  
even if but a study by an artist  
rather than some fancy prophet in glorious paint  
or in grand chapel or some miracle recounted  
in paint and colors and with consummate skill  
or even God descending  
ah, all these do not take my fancy  
they smack too much of the Elevated;  
there's too much  
of the grandstanding in these  
Grand Divine Themes  
but the face of a bull, ah give me a sketch  
of the face of a bull  
just the bull, all marks of nature in it  
and just itself  
no symbolism, no conceit, no artifice  
no High sounding theology, no Revelation  
but just animal nature in its nudity  
being a bull  
just animal, its eyes and mouth and horns  
just all coming together to form one creature  
a portrait of a bull anytime for me  
Sirs and most inimitable Ladies  
none of the Holy Ones and the Great Prophets  
and the Mighty and the Divine  
and the Grand-Looking:  
no bull for me, please;  
just the plain head of a bull, as it is

Raj Arumugam

# A Calendar Poem

1

in January  
I met Jane  
in February  
it was all love  
flying Cupids  
and St Valentine's

in March  
we marched down the aisle  
I slipped the ring in her finger  
and she let me slip into her that night  
in April  
I came home early and saw her kissing some guy  
and when I coughed  
they both laughed at me and said:  
"Happy April Fool's Day! "  
A belated one, though;  
still - I just laughed,  
always love surprises  
and a good sport I'd always been

I don't remember what we did  
In May -  
but the predominant emotion is one of dismay  
June saw us  
make love  
under the moon  
and at noon  
in July  
she made full use of her vocal cords  
and reached her peak of pitch:  
"Oh God! - you're just like any guy!  
You've turned the house into a sty! "  
August I decided to be a little dignified;  
and in September we were like King and Queen  
with diamond crown and scented scepter each

2

in October she crashed our new  
shiny, costly SUV Rover  
and I just found it difficult to stay sober  
November  
is a month to remember, to remember  
well it's something private between me and Jane  
it's something to do with a member, a member  
November - Oh baby,  
it's something to remember, remember...  
December came and - was it the heat  
or the cold? -  
by the end we were dismembered, dismembered:  
I'm alone again  
and this time maybe  
in scented January  
in fresh January I'll find May

Raj Arumugam

# A Cat's Tale

Grandad Cat  
curls his tail  
and wants to tell a tale  
to his GrandKits Cats  
He claws them before him  
and he meows a catchy tune  
that he shall  
tell them a tale

But little Toby  
he purrs:  
No, Grand – you're such a bad story-teller  
cos you only have  
one tale

Raj Arumugam

# A Child Is Born Free Of Mind

a child is born free of mind  
but is hardened into thought  
and by the time one dies  
most are fixed and screwed into  
worlds of their making,  
heavens of their fantasies:  
so one thinks one's an Indian, one a Chinese  
or an American or British or Swedish  
or French or Russian or German;  
or one thinks one is a Christian or Muslim  
or Jew or Hindu or Sikh or Catholic  
or Doaist or Buddhist or Marxist or Communist  
or even for that matter, an atheist...  
...or whatever you will...  
one finds a badge to pin proudly to one's chest  
and each identity becomes so strong  
it becomes so real  
it all comes into the question of right and wrong  
of evil and good  
and it falls into loud declamations  
and my tribe is good, your tribe is evil  
my brand is holy, your brand unholy...  
and so it goes,  
with all sorts of justifications  
that beat sense out of all loyal adherents...  
...and it squeezes humanity out of the human...  
ah, and, yes,  
the energy goes on into the afterlife  
as Christians go into a Christian Heaven  
and Hindus and Buddhists into various Lokas  
and Muslims in their own Paradise  
and so it goes on,  
this Human Tragi-Comedy,  
yes, yes, certainly – all created by the Almighty  
who was created by your mind's poverty  
so that  
a child is born free of mind  
but is hardened into thought  
and by the time one dies

most are fixed and screwed into  
worlds of their making,  
heavens of their fantasies

Raj Arumugam

# A Comedy Of Errors

ambition and becoming  
and plans and aspirations  
and ideals and holy-book dreams  
and yearning for one after another:  
then the wind blows through our fleshless skulls  
in a Dali-Goya landscape

Raj Arumugam

# A Delicate Beauty Along The Shore

the sky hangs over her  
and the waves come near;  
and the delicate beauty walks alone  
pensive, self-absorbed  
and distant by the shore

what is in your mind  
pale beauty?  
do you sigh over wasted time  
and the pain of distance shores?

what is in your heart  
fragile beauty?  
has your wandering love  
not returned and the days are past  
and have rolled into months  
and yet no news has come?

you walk delicately  
and leave footsteps on the soft sands  
and the waves eat every trace;  
and you disappear  
and we cannot find you again;  
but we know  
just as waves return  
you'll come back the next morning  
to walk silently and alone  
along the shore  
of your quiet pains

Raj Arumugam

# A Divorce Pending Always

"I want a divorce, "  
she said  
"You want one?  
I want one too! "  
he said  
"Agreed then? " she said  
"Well, two can play the game, "  
he said  
"Agreed then? " she said  
"Well, at least there's one thing  
we're agreed on, "  
he said

"But still, " she said  
"there's the property  
and the children and the savings  
and -"  
"Damn right, you are! "  
he said  
"You can have the children and the house  
and I'll have all the money, " he said  
And so they started  
arguing about who was to have what  
and so their marriage continued in disagreement  
for another 50 years  
a divorce pending always

Raj Arumugam

# A Friend Like Iago

There was a man  
who kept his distance  
but edged closer  
to make use  
of my hospitality.  
There was a man  
who kept everything  
that was his  
but took what  
he could of mine.

There was a man  
who kept his lips  
sealed  
and peeped long enough  
into my open heart.  
He peeped long enough  
to make me  
shut its doors to all.  
It is not good  
in the material cities -  
in Roderigo's Venice  
and today's Calcutta  
all over time  
all over the world -  
to be honest and guileless;  
learn to be double  
and to keep tight  
your lips and purses  
or retire to a quiet deserted cave.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# A History Of The Self

you came out  
and you settled in the confines  
and they gave you an identity  
and a context,  
an operating platform  
and you saw the world  
and you wanted to make meaning  
and you wondered  
what the hell is going on here -  
and what did you do?

you took a belief  
a Book, a Leader  
a system  
and you cling to it  
for dear life  
for eternity, you think

or did they do it to you?

Raj Arumugam

# A Holy Poet

a holy poet  
is like a holy man:  
all you need  
are words and texts stubbornly tied to some creed  
and cleverness and weasel-ability  
and one main word in your vocabulary

Raj Arumugam

# A Laugh Song

laugh a day  
laugh it now  
laugh as loud  
as you want;  
it shakes up your body  
lets good things flow  
through your veins;  
don't think about it  
just laugh a minute  
or laugh a day  
laugh long as laugh-time

you and I  
come let's laugh  
ha ha ha ha  
just like that  
as two humans  
alive and meaning well  
ha ha ha ha

not the laugh of envy  
or derision  
or being superior  
oh no, never that sort of laugh  
but simple laugh  
as laugh as laugh

not the laugh of victory  
or of I-know-better  
or see-I-told-you-so  
but just the laugh of being  
the laugh of life  
the laugh of love  
as natural as laugh

you and I  
come let's laugh  
ha ha ha ha  
just like that  
as two humans  
alive and meaning well  
ha ha ha ha

I brought this laugh  
for no rhyme or reason  
I heard it in the oceans  
and in the trees  
and I got it free  
so really there's no fee  
but I'd like you to pass  
it back to me and I'll  
throw it back to you  
like playing ball;  
or you can pass the ball  
to anyone anyway you like  
this laugh as bright  
as sun rays on ocean waves

you and I  
come let's laugh  
ha ha ha ha  
just like that  
as two humans  
alive and meaning well  
ha ha ha ha

Raj Arumugam

# A Life Of Clichés We Lead

a life of clichés  
we lead  
inspired by a mind dependent on authority;  
like children in search of security and playthings and lollies  
we go all the way from birth to death and the afterlives we visualize  
savoring, all the while, the philosophies and consolations  
and Revelations  
that we devise and accumulate;  
can one see this  
and discard everything  
the deceptive mind creates?  
so that one starts with nothing, with no conditioning?  
can one see with clarity, with no preconceptions?  
and see perhaps what is actually before us and within,  
simply observing what actually is?

Raj Arumugam

# A Life's Journey

1

(as one sits, tired and dispirited)

many miles one has come  
quite by accident  
quite unguided and alone;  
many miles one has come  
through over half a century  
innocent, unguided and stumbling

many miles one has come  
often unintended and with no map;  
many miles indeed  
through life's moments,  
in the hands of time  
that deals like a con-artist  
elusive and deceptive

2

(as one observes dispassionately)

one has come through  
many miles in a life  
many journeys in time  
that all converge and clash;  
and one's mind breaks  
and one's will weakens  
and one's tears flow

and then, perhaps, one stands behind and sees them all  
and observes each ebb and tide;  
and one sees one has never moved  
but all was as motion in space  
like the receding stars and universes

3

(as one comes into calm and peace)

one has not come or gone;  
life has not moved or stayed:  
one sees it all now  
as of all life and all moments  
within time and past time;  
one sees it all in  
the spark and glimmer  
in all life and form  
as one steps back and observes  
each move, each call...

Raj Arumugam

# A Little Beat

the day's work is done  
the sun sinks in the east  
and we have showered and eaten  
and the machine slows down;  
still, there's a little beat in there

Raj Arumugam

# A Long Day

I walk into the bar  
Sure I've had a drink or two  
even before I came in here  
but I'll show you I've got my wits about  
always and full and bright

See, I walk up to the bartender  
And he smiles and he says to me:  
"Had a long day?"

I hear him right; do you hear him?  
and I answer that imbecile:  
"All days are 24 hours long, you Bozo!  
No day is longer than another, you dumbo!"

See, what did I tell you?  
Sure I've had a drink or two  
even before I came in here  
but see, I've got my wits about  
always and full and bright

Raj Arumugam

# A Maiden's Broken Heart

a maiden's heart broken  
we bury here in the grave;  
we bless her  
and wish her god speed  
and that she leaves all pain here on earth  
and we pray that all blessings be hers  
as she goes forth  
to meet her one true Lord in Heaven  
a maiden betrayed by her espoused true love  
here on earth;  
and we  
the nuns who attend to this burial  
we in each heart  
we too bury  
a maiden's broken heart  
betrayed by one's true love  
by the world's harshness  
but meet our Maker even now  
even now in confined spaces on earth itself  
to transcend the pain of betrayed trust,  
of betrayed love, of life taken beyond flesh

Raj Arumugam

# A Moment Awake

from deep sleep one wakes  
to a fleeting moment:  
glimpses of the room  
the window at which the darkness hangs  
the gentle wind outside amongst the trees

and one floats back into sleep

and the moment awake fleets through the mind  
at dinner, hours later

Raj Arumugam

# A Mouse Teaches Diogenes

You see Diogenes living in the slums. He lives in a barrel. This is the man even Alexander the Great admires. So it makes you wonder about Diogenes.

So you pretend to be there quite by accident and you ask: "Diogenes...Who was your teacher? "

"A mouse was my teacher, " says Diogenes.

You are quite confused. And you say: 'A mouse is your teacher? And how is that, Diogenes? '

"Well, most exquisite Sir, " says Diogenes to you. "Most cultured Sir, " he says. "I had no home and I was in the streets. I almost killed myself. Then I saw mouse. Mouse ran around and looked for food and it found some and I observed mouse for over two days. And I realized how resourceful mouse was. And then I said to myself: 'Learn of the mouse, Diogenes- and all will be well.' And so I learned of mouse. And every time I have a problem, I simply ask myself: 'How will mouse solve this? ' And so mouse became my teacher. And now, most Exquisite Sir, I have a problem. You. I want to get rid of you and I ask myself: 'How would mouse solve this problem? ' He would bite..."

You listen to this and you are afraid – and you run. And Diogenes has done well; he has learned well from his teacher. And you can hear him shouting to you: "By the way, who was your teacher? "

Raj Arumugam

# A Movement Calls Poetry

a cry calls poetry;  
a movement brings forth poetry;  
an anguish, a pleasure  
a response, a conditioning  
bring forth poetry;  
craving, disgust  
forward movement, and recoil  
a mental formation  
a delight, an irritation call forth poetry:  
and poetry becomes mere froth  
on the coffee-cup of living

Raj Arumugam

# A New Week

a new week begins  
and the end should be Easter;  
instead, it may end bitter  
after five days of hope  
anticipation and deception  
and disappointment

with futile palming of the cold interior  
of the mail box and waiting hopelessly  
for the phone call that will cause a start  
but end in an unrelated whimper

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# A Part In Time's Play, Dali's Wasteland

all those hearts  
that'd like a part  
in a play Time made  
called Dali's Wasteland  
there's good news:  
the part is yours;  
no auditions  
no lines to remember  
cos they'll all come naturally

all you have to do  
is to go about  
your daily chores  
just the way you are  
lie through your teeth  
like you always do  
smile like a fox  
like you learned to do  
and just cut to size  
all the innocent and defenseless  
with your sharp words and mean manners  
like you usually do  
and the good news is  
I'll tell you this  
the part is already yours  
for you are it  
Time's very public masterpiece:  
Dali's Wasteland

Raj Arumugam

# A Picnic, Some Butter, And A Fly

I sat down for a picnic  
and wondered  
what I could spread on my bread  
and soon an idea came by;  
and so with my left hand  
I shooed away the fly  
and with my right  
spread evenly the butter

Raj Arumugam

# A Poem About Nothing

1

caution:

be warned at the outset  
this poem is about nothing;  
that is,  
it is  
about ding-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling  
about bing-bong-bing-bong-bing;  
just terribly about nothing

about nothing this poem is;  
that is, there is No Thing  
no matter or anti-matter  
in this verse that only grows  
better and better  
into zilch and zero  
and so is most logically therefore  
about nothing;  
that is,  
it is  
about ding-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling  
about bing-bong-bing-bong-bing;  
just terribly about nothing

2

and of course  
the apologists and admirers  
may seek some profundity  
even in this Dada absurdity  
but I must leave you  
you ding-dongs  
giving the kiss of life to dead earthworms  
and so I leave you to  
your eternal confound-ity

3

and the critics from the left  
might pounce  
and might utter  
with much solemnity:  
but aren't all your poems  
about nothing?

well, you zombies,  
then this is certainly not the first  
of my no-things  
and neither have you seen the last;  
thank you very much

and the critics from the right  
might pounce  
and might jeer  
with indecent profanity:  
but isn't all poetry  
about sweet nothings?

and my most prosaic answer is:  
well, then you, liverless louts,  
countless in life are rewarded for nothings  
and you vote in leaders for nothing;  
countless nations are run on nothing  
and great businesses earn money on nothing;  
why then, you one-eyed wimps,  
and you weakling hypocrites  
why then do you jeer at  
poet-innocents who are content  
to openly propagate nothing?

4

a reminder

this poem is about nothing;  
that is,  
it is  
about ding-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling  
about bing-bong-bing-bong-bing;  
just terribly about nothing

unnecessary repetition

for maximum irritation:  
this poem is about nothing;  
that is,  
it is  
about ding-a-ling-a-ling-a-ling  
about bing-bong-bing-bong-bing;  
just shockingly about nothing

5

conclusion

still this nothing-poem aspires  
to the pages  
of the Complete Works of Poet Nothing

Raj Arumugam

# A Poem That Happens

if one takes a pose  
and crafts verse  
then what results is  
naïve posturing;  
but if one lets the words  
choose  
and is oneself  
choiceless  
then it may end  
in a poem  
that happens

Raj Arumugam

# A Poem Without Italics

A poem incapable of italics  
is simply pathetic

- Jackrudin

a poem in which  
even when necessary  
you can't  
use italics  
whether through ignorance  
or through plain disabled  
or through a technicality  
is a sad poem

(damn! three words in all so far  
in this poem  
and a fabricated quote  
and a whole line  
that I wanted in italics  
after the parenthesis  
have all been disabled!)  
is italics some form of profanity?

Raj Arumugam

# A Polite Request

will you wait for me?  
well, please wait; but of course  
I may not turn up

Raj Arumugam

# A Queensland Butterfly

butterfly is in an inapt name  
for those in the state of Queensland  
for the they'd melt in the very heat in summer  
and so, really, since the butterfly's wings open up like a book  
I'd rather call it pagefly  
or an e-readerfly  
or flutterby or bye-bye or even by-the-by

Raj Arumugam

# A Quiet Walk

a quiet walk  
did no one harm;  
away from the clamor and the ambitions  
and leaving the clutter and vanities  
a walk in the silence  
and amongst the trees  
and just being with the colors  
and the feel and the texture of the trunks;  
and being with the tender touch of the branches  
that reach out to one  
when solitude is crisp silence;  
all these being simply part of oneself  
and one's calm and peace;  
walk then, now,  
in this and in these ample grounds  
amongst the trees and observing the gentle leaves;  
let us enter the wholeness that is ours

Raj Arumugam

# A Sci-Fi Love Story

Mom - I'm sorry  
Mom and Dad  
and Grands and everybody else  
but I got to run off  
And so by the time you read this  
I'll be gone  
because you know  
you don't let me marry him  
I really love him  
and he really loves me too  
But you, everyone of you  
you don't like his color,  
the way he is  
I know him and I got to be together  
forever  
And you all just sneer:  
Oh, she's just a teenager!  
And you'll all never accept it  
forever  
Neither will his group  
accept me, forever  
So don't look for us;  
we'll literally fly off to  
a corner in this universe  
where no one will find us  
ever  
and we'll live happily forever  
Just the two of us

Just a few words to you all:  
We are all the same, you know  
no matter our color and metal and make  
no matter the configuration  
no matter the model and serial number  
and which Factory we came from  
We robots are all the same  
You got to learn this and to love  
all robots the same

Raj Arumugam

# A Snail Goes To Heaven (A One-Act Tragicomedy)

Bare stage. A square neon sign on extreme right which reads: "This way to Heaven".

Prolonged silence. Enter Snail, moving very slowly throughout the play.

Snail:

I'm a dead snail.

I'm going to Heaven.

I've lived for 15 years.

That's a ripe old age.

I've been blessed.

Had a marvellous sex life, you know.

Well, if you know snails

we attract a mate with our slime.

Oh, slime turns me on, baby.

(Snail moves slowly, and then stops.)

Well, maybe I should focus on holy thoughts.

Purity...refined thoughts...you know...

Snail God does not like sex.

Copulation is not exactly what

Snail God meant when Snail God declared:

'Go forth and slime the world;

be ye together...'

Snail God demands purity

so let me be so...

after all, I'm going to Heaven...

a dead snail and moving on to Heaven...

(Snail moves slowly, and then stops.)

Had a precarious life,

you know,

all these 15 years...

A farmer saw me in the grass.

I heard him curse

and he raised his foot to crush me.

Well, unfortunately for him

he stepped on a snake  
and the last I heard of the man  
was an expletive  
and the last I heard of the snake was a hiss.  
Yes, I've had a long life  
a risky life - but it's all worth it  
for an eternal life in Heaven  
is my reward

(Snail moves slowly, and then stops.)

(Enter Frog, jumping. Snail looks at Frog in amazement. And Frog stops and looks at Snail in amazement.)

Frog: What are you doing?

Snail: That's what I was about to ask of you.

Frog: I'm a dead Frog and I'm jumping on my way to Heaven.

Snail: I'm a dead Snail and I'm moving on to Heaven.

Frog: This is ridiculous.

Snail: Indeed. It is ridiculous.

A Frog going to Heaven?

No, for it is truly declared by Snail God:

'None but Snails shall enter Heaven.'

Frog: And in the words of the Frog God:

'I shall confound all other creatures.

Only Frogs shall enter Heaven.'

And so it has come to pass

Snails think they can go to Heaven.

Unless the Frog God

in Its Infinite Wisdom

has arranged for a Dish of Snails

when all Pure Frogs are at Its side in Paradise.

Well, Snail...you're toast when I see you in Heaven.

(Frog jumps on to near stage right, screaming: "Heaven - here I come! " and then disappears.)

(Long silence.)

Snail (facing audience) : Well, what next? - The snake to Heaven?  
The Farmer to Heaven? His dog to Paradise?  
Donkeys to Heaven?

(Snail moves on, in its slow way, to nothing but Heaven...)

Raj Arumugam

# A Solitary Traveler

I walk alone now  
unlike as in the days of long ago  
when there was company and the crowd  
and there was clamor and noise...  
but smiling time dispersed all things and beings;  
time forked the paths  
as many as veins in a leaf  
and made each man and woman and child  
shake hands or hug and wave goodbyes;  
and so I walk alone now  
in solitary ways

I let all things go  
the past and pain and sorrows  
and the yearnings and mind's hustle and bustle  
And so one is on the path that opens at one's feet  
And the earth and the trees  
and the air and sky and the water and clouds  
keep the still heart company  
in one's long walk to one's own shed

(companion picture: Landscape with a Solitary Traveler by Yosa Buson)

Raj Arumugam

# A Strange Night

it was a half moon  
and the somber sky  
yawned, with no other lights;  
and a hunchback-cloud came close  
and it was a complete picture  
of a half-headed ogre  
with a sick yellow eye

Raj Arumugam

# A Stretch Of Misunderstanding

We misunderstand each other;  
we always have  
That's the trap  
life's set us  
You and I  
always to misunderstand

But we can trick life  
and circumstance  
though we can't break its hold

You can walk that way  
and I'll walk the other

Raj Arumugam

# A Subversive Poem

a subversive poem is nutritious  
a bowl of magic soup  
to throw in the face  
of complacency  
and indolence;  
but watch out  
and its magic can go any way  
like if writing a subversive poem  
one is  
in due course of time  
made to eat one's own words;  
still  
potion for oneself  
or medicine for others  
it's as necessary as the doctor

Raj Arumugam

# A Thought Passes In The Mind

a thought flies by in the mind  
like a cloud past the moon;  
like a bird flying just above  
or like a cyclist past you  
as you stand at the bus-stop:  
did you notice?

Raj Arumugam

# A Thousand Miles

a thousand miles  
to exotic shores  
and sandy beaches and giant waves  
and one is excited;  
but a stone's throw away from the same  
the local is bored by plainness  
and the regularity of roughness  
for one is anxious for a living

Raj Arumugam

# A Useless Poem

a useless poem (or the fun of uselessness)

the sun is useless  
because it shines  
when it's already bright enough;  
and the moon is useless  
because it never shines bright enough;  
and the stars are simply  
as useless as pimples on one's face;  
and wealth is useless  
because I wasted them all;  
my spouse is useless  
because I never get what I want;  
and this poem is useless as it makes no point  
and the writer of this poem is useless  
because like the name of Oedipus  
the writer's name is never accepted in any country  
one comes to or lives in;  
and teeth are useless  
because they rot and dropp  
when you need them most  
and it costs a fortune to fix them all;  
hair is useless because they gray and fall  
and when they are shiny and glossy they  
attract all the wrong sort of partners  
who want to plant wild oats  
and move on to greener pastures;  
and the earth is useless  
because it can't spin fast enough  
to throw out offal and homo sapiens;  
and the oceans are useless,  
because, quite frankly, I can't swim...

and if you can't add an item or two  
or some sensible lines that are useless,  
not unlike all the preceding lines,  
then, quite frankly, you are useless too...

and even if you add two sensibly useless lines  
you'd be useless for wasting double time  
once reading this poem and keying in a response...

Raj Arumugam

# A Walk Down Slaughter Falls

It was the day we had planned for -  
a picnic on Mt Coot-tha and a walk down  
Slaughter Falls to view the reported aboriginal paintings  
and the presumed water fall.

Four p.m. we had agreed to. A quarter to,  
the sky threatened and we consoled ourselves  
the rain would come and go. And we would  
still ascend the mount and view the falls.

The rain only got heavier and we became  
absorbed in its ferocity  
and its bunting and the patterns of falling water.  
A can of cigarette butts  
flew down from the balcony above us  
and the rain lashed at our metal vertical blinds.  
Then fell the hail. Little ice pieces  
falling down the driveway and gathering at the edges.  
Hurry! Over here! This is hail!  
I cried out  
and we all gathered to watch the hail  
pelting the ground below... It was  
the first time my family had seen hail.

The rain ceased and the light  
brightened the trees and the sky  
and in the darker right a rainbow hung  
above Toowong Village;  
my son and I walked out to the slope  
and viewed the rainbow...  
And then  
a Korean woman followed discreetly with her son...

Soon Slaughter Falls and Mt Coot-tha were forgotten  
as the rain, the hail  
and the rainbow  
had been sights enough for the day.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# A Walk In The Forest

the forest takes one  
for a quiet walk in the morning;  
of oneself  
and the solitude and the path and the trees  
and the air and the stillness and the undefined sunlight;  
a moment of lightness, an instant of calm;  
did one come from the walk?

Raj Arumugam

# A Walk Over The Valleys

we walked  
quietly over the hills and fields  
and we stopped awhile  
to catch our breath

or to stop for our lunch  
that we had brought  
wrapped in cloth by our sides

or if we were caught  
by some sudden beauty  
that often arises  
in trees, valleys or in the bush

we came home  
tired, but with memories  
gently humming their tunes

Raj Arumugam

# A Wife For Life

I cannot understand  
for the life of me  
why the wife  
(yes, mine own good wife)  
cannot attend to my every need  
just like the faithful wives  
of yore - such paragons of virtue  
and forerunners of service departments

Why can't she  
when I cough or ahem  
dropp everything she's doing  
(including even if she be  
attending to her toilet duties)  
and do a somersault to the first aid kit  
and present me  
in nanosecond  
a lozenge that might soothe my throat?

At the slightest rumble  
of my stomach  
why can't my wife  
into the kitchen dive  
and before the rumble  
turns into a mumble  
why can't she present on the table  
a fine set of fare fit for an Emperor...  
a wide range of food - I am reasonable -  
the best from Saskatchewan and so on  
a dish of the the best from every  
nation and continent and clime  
Now, is that really too much to ask  
of a wife for life?

And what about my other needs  
and my other multifarious, multitudinous  
innumerable  
variety of desires and wants and appetites

that from time to time burst like fireworks  
that usher in the New Year?  
After all I'm human  
and have all these desires and wants  
through start of day to the moment  
I recline in bed  
at decline of day...  
So why can't she  
ensure the toothpaste is on the toothbrush  
at start of my day  
and use a fresh towel end  
to coax to prominence the shine on my teeth?  
And why can't she have my  
clothes neatly pressed and ready on bed  
and presto! – when I emerge into the dining hall  
should not breakfast be ready on the table  
as Ariel would have done for Prospero in "The Tempest"?  
Look, as you can see, I am not far  
from being reasonable...  
And then certainly the shoes should be ready  
with a new shine nurtured with cat's piss or dog's pooh –  
whatever the concoction that may take  
to bring out the luster in my shoes  
And she can open the door and shut it gently  
(that's the house door)  
and she could open the door and shut it gently  
(that's the car door)  
as I drive off elegantly  
and surely should return  
to smiles and glee  
and a repeat performance  
but varied now to evening needs  
and let us not forget me and the wife in bed

And so on, I think you get the drift;  
intelligent reader as you are,  
I believe you understand  
the daily program  
the moral imperative  
in a wife that's for life

and you can see  
plain and clear as the still sea  
how reasonable and natural  
and unpretentious, easy, manageable  
professional and well-planned and spaced  
my demands and needs are and be:  
after all  
it is my wife  
I claim for these services  
and Not the President's or Vladimir Putin's

And now I'll throw at you  
Sirs and Ladies  
the most dramatic question  
the parting shot  
O the noble Parthian shot -  
irrefutable, irreparable, indisputable  
absolutely undeniable  
and that will make you see the light:  
A wife's for life, is she not -  
and aren't both made for my convenience?

Raj Arumugam

# A Winter Morning At Park Road

early morning  
at Park Road  
the diaspora-clouds hang  
and the cold, thin rain drops on the deserted road  
and some jump off the few raised umbrellas;  
a mynah flits across to a branch  
and finds a comfy spot below  
the dancer-palm leaves;  
and across, on the other side,  
right before the ATM,  
the cloud-abundant leaves held above  
wave, and glisten

□

Raj Arumugam

# A Writer's Curse

for maximum efficacy of charm, utter this in the dead of night lying down on a sheet of camel skin soaked in goat's blood, on top of One Tree Hill

may those who  
cannot praise  
and can only bark dispraise  
of my writings, songs and posts  
may they all  
become loose of mind;  
and may such  
in the middle of a crowd of fanatics  
suddenly lose their pants or tops;  
and inexplicably become illiterate  
when they are to sit for exams;  
and may they who cannot  
say: "You are the best! You are the best! " -  
may these henceforth never be capable  
of saying anything at all!

O, as swineherds  
in days of yore  
became Court Poets  
by Divine Grace –  
may all those who don't  
appreciate my writings and posts  
may they all suffer in reverse  
and become swine  
and go drown in ditches  
by Divine Craze!

Raj Arumugam

# A Yawn Of Subdued Lives

we love words  
and unwilling to exert, to see for ourselves  
we grasp at revelations, at what others can tell us;  
and we suckle at concepts and ideas  
and pronouncements  
and ready-made phrases and formulas:  
'according to so-and-so', and 'according to tradition'  
'according to the Book';  
and we make mountains of our lies  
and as if we know deep inside of our own pretences  
we are intolerant of other people's lies;  
and so we love words  
and unwilling to dive deep below  
(it is too much of a bother, too much trouble)  
we are content to remain shallow  
and die after a yawn of subdued lives

Raj Arumugam

# Abandon Sense, Go Senseless

you know you take  
words and some cement and glue  
and you make them all stick together  
into verse and poetry;  
and you gather love like a rolling stone  
and you blow wild seeds in the air  
and you've got fine diction  
and refined sentiments  
and it's made into a poem  
and it all makes sense  
oh baby,  
it all makes too much sense

you work like Vivaldi  
and make poems about seasons  
or you work like Goethe  
and pour roaring poetry  
to outdo Shakespeare  
and you frighten Edgar Allan Poe;  
and you have great insight  
like the Buddha or some Great Prophet  
or Only One Savior  
and you give us mighty fine inspired poetry  
pure, pure spirituality;  
or you just take Revelation  
like the countless mindless followers  
the Great Being has been plagued with since Inception  
and you make verse  
and oh, it all makes sense  
it all makes too much sense  
and you take my foibles, our foibles  
and your poems  
laugh at them  
or you put fine words together and string beads of harmony  
like a millions-dollar necklace  
Richard Burton might have offered Liz Taylor  
oh you know you make poems  
that come across time and cyberspace  
and they all maketh perfect sense

but  
how about  
baby  
you and me make verse  
that knocks out sense and makes no sense?  
poetry that takes the mickey out of meaning?  
no, not for a change -  
but forever?  
no, not for entertainment  
but for nonsense?  
so that senses is knocked senseless  
and we escape you and me  
to North Caledonia  
to Paradise of rhythm and senseless-beauty  
and we have a beat  
and we have a pulse  
and the street gang says in awe:  
Oh, hey  
see these two babies move  
they've got the style  
they've got the swing  
Yeah, they're a fine couple of babies!  
so we got no sense  
and sense-less is meaningless  
so we got no sense in nonsense either  
or senselessness for that matter  
we got nothing baby  
(well, nothing on as well)  
but plenty of rhythm and sway  
we dropp all fine subjects  
that determine our lives  
so we are all freed of lies maybe  
(we don't know what will happen)  
and we got the spirit of poetry  
beyond sense and line and word and form and intent and purpose  
and that gets all the universe rocking  
(no doubt, there's enough rock already)  
baby  
in one baby-making sway  
how about that, baby?  
you and me  
abandon sense

and dance naked between planets and stars?

Raj Arumugam

# Abandoned

1

You trust in the world;  
you give it your hand

You serve, all your days;  
you think of the wellbeing of others

You allow your needs to be second  
and the comforts of others to be primary

And then the world abandons you;  
the time comes when it turns you out

It shows you the cold open,  
generous space  
that features the hard stone bench

2

You never trust the world:  
There is not one more important than you  
Bitterness teaches you  
what the world concealed

But today, now  
pragmatism must prevail:  
You must seek what can feed you  
for the while at least

Raj Arumugam

# About Nine Crows

a group flies  
of about nine crows  
against the bright sky;  
and each lands on a tall gum tree  
each  
purposeful  
each  
perfect

Raj Arumugam

# About Poetry And All Of Us Running Around

I wonder often  
how much of this is just words  
just play;  
just running after symbols and ideas  
and myths and distractions;  
and plain imagery that is adventure  
but not contact  
and not actual seeing of things

Raj Arumugam

# About The Rabbit And The Hawk (An Anti-Joke)

I ask you  
Most Intelligent Reader,  
expecting an answer:  
What do a rabbit  
and a hawk  
have in common?

I expect an answer  
from you  
Most Intelligent Reader  
But I expect it to be wrong  
so I shall tell you the answer  
to the question:  
What do a rabbit  
and a hawk  
have in common?  
The answer:  
They both live underground,  
except for the hawk

I bet you didn't know the answer,  
dear intelligent reader

Raj Arumugam

# Absolute Nonsense Song

sing a song of nonsense  
of absolute lack of sense  
for people who are  
so, so important and busy  
they have no time to waste

---

he he ha ha  
moo moo  
moo moo  
ma ma  
ma ma  
da di dum dum

the tree spreads out its arms  
and birds come to rest  
on the ground;  
'what do you think I am? '  
sneers the tree  
'your daddy or mummy  
to give you shelter  
on hot days? '  
and flicks the birds off  
with its roots and branches

he he ha ha  
moo moo  
moo moo  
ma ma  
ma ma  
da di dum dum

the fish come to the hooks  
under water  
and they flick it up over  
with their immense tails;  
and the hooks land on the fishermen's  
smooth bald heads  
and the fish sing together:  
'Put those hooks up in your noses  
and go home to your wives  
and tell them  
the fish gave you nose-rings  
to celebrate this Glorious Day of Hooks'

he he ha ha  
moo moo  
moo moo  
ma ma  
ma ma  
da di dum dum

under the oceans  
Shark got married to Giant Octopus  
and on their wedding night  
Giant Octopus said:  
'Come baby,  
come on in to my embrace'

he he ha ha  
moo moo  
moo moo  
ma ma  
ma ma  
da di dum dum

and the earthworms  
peeped out of the earth  
and said:  
'My, how boring the world is up here...'  
and the ostrich buried its head under ground  
and said: 'The darkness is vast;  
It is infinite...'

he he ha ha  
moo moo  
moo moo  
ma ma  
ma ma  
da di dum dum

---

sing a song of nonsense  
of absolute lack of sense  
for people who are  
so, so important and busy  
they have no time to waste

Raj Arumugam

# Acceptance

Perhaps what I am is false to you  
and you have no faith in what seems;  
or perhaps you see what I seem to be  
and wonder if this is what could be;  
and what should be; or even perhaps  
what seems and what is do not meet to be;  
or perhaps on either side simply  
what seems is not what is, and what is  
does not seem to be.  
So you deny me.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Actor Poem

these lines  
acting as a poem

somewhat of a method actor  
born of parents in the theater  
thrown out into the gutter

maybe will grow up  
and crawl back into the theater  
to specialise in Shakespearean roles  
a little of Chekov, some of Eugene O'Neill

Raj Arumugam

# Admin Work

there's a thousand admin work to be done  
paperwork and invoices and filing and reports;  
and yet the mind will not push the will  
but rather engage the finger tips at the keys  
to hammer out a poem  
or turn the eyes to a flower

Oh! Damn!  
What is this all about?  
is this a mediocre mind  
that cannot handle the world of reality and filing?  
or is it Poetry saying:  
That's too deadening and will numb your brain!  
I'd rather keep you for me!  
And you keep away from administration and paperwork!

Well, perhaps my wife's more right:  
You're just too darned lazy  
to complete your paperwork...  
You'd better finish it  
or the only place where we'd get our next cup of tea  
may well be at a Welfare Home...

Raj Arumugam

# Adults Only

hey, you adults -  
you oafs, you ogres, you nincompoops  
big-headed, pigheaded  
you unwieldy, big, overgrown humans

you're too old  
too smart and too much desiring control  
always planning to put the world  
into your cubes and boxes;  
always judging the world  
and seeing what you want to see  
the way you want things to be;  
too set in your ways  
and you're too serious and somber  
and too uptight, important and dignified

you need to grow a little younger  
and lose all those flabby years;  
and be a little more with a big smile  
and every inch of you  
with innocence, charm and grace  
and not just at public functions  
and not just on Saturdays and Sundays

Raj Arumugam

# After The Worst Rains In Decades

after the worst rains  
(the most damaging in over twenty)  
and a threatening day  
this evening, now, the sun  
more emphatically  
sends out its blessings  
over the sky, the trees, the ground,  
the buildings and people's faces;  
there are many who start again,  
creatures, birds and human

Raj Arumugam

# Ah Poor Moon

ah poor moon  
you're just hanging around  
and through no fault of your own  
you attract all these weirdos  
these lunatics  
and the vampires and the blood-sucking bats  
and the sleep-walkers and murderers  
and the flesh-eaters  
(the moon made me do it!)  
and the lunatics  
and the werewolves  
and even stock-pickers  
and wild women who want to kill Orpheus

O poor moon  
you're just about your own radiant business  
and all these freaks put it at your doorstep

Raj Arumugam

# Ah, Happy Crow

ah, happy crow  
(uncaring that humans may  
not find you very pleasant)  
you sit on the branch of that shady tree  
and you peck at a bone you've brought yourself  
and you are busy, busy, busy eating;  
and I, happy too, sit here  
at a table, eating my sandwich  
and sipping a little water

ah, happy crow busy, busy eating  
(uncaring that many humans may  
not find you very pleasant)  
I know your happiness  
and you know mine;  
and thus we sit at our spots  
eating the bits we find

Raj Arumugam

# All Daffodils Have Possibilities

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
when suddenly I came across  
a possibility of daffodils and fields  
some other time a field of irises

Quick with my iPhone I took various shots  
and put them each on Instagram

And I took close shots  
of my face with the daffodils in  
the background  
And I grinned from ear to ear  
with one thumb up  
and put each selfie up on Facebook  
and updated all my internet accounts

Were the daffodils and fields beautiful?  
Who cares? The uploads brought me  
many likes and clicks and licks  
and pushed me up in the analytics -  
that's what really matters

All daffodils and fields  
have possibilities

Raj Arumugam

# All Day It Rains

all day it rains  
and the lilly-pilly  
with her green leaves  
and pink flush on her head  
stands swaying, swaying, swaying  
as gentle or vigorous as the rain and the wind may be;  
and there in the distance  
a lone bird flaps its wings  
moving between giant trees  
against the dreary sky

Raj Arumugam

# All News Poems

'All news poems'  
dear friends and my disgusting enemies  
carry all news, all sorts of news  
but are written as poems  
as in ancient days  
when poetry had its rightful place -  
so, that's 'all news poems';  
but I don't know if I want to read all news poems  
you know  
where our bombs landed on enemy territory  
and how our enemies penetrated our women  
and such news  
in verse  
in all news poems;  
no, it might not be a good idea  
besides we already have the Iliad and the Mahabharata  
and such epics  
which are such news poems  
though they're all old news poems  
and not really all new news poems

but all new poems might interest me a little  
though, while one be certain they are new,  
(or newly plagiarized)  
one cannot be sure all are poems...

but back to 'all news poems' -  
can we not have them  
and have all new poems instead?

Raj Arumugam

# All Who Speak Of God

all who speak of God  
in such loving terms  
are the same  
(I do not say obscene,  
or holy or unholy)  
as those  
who deny God, who revile the name –  
for both use definitions  
and assumptions and descriptions  
and the definition is never the thing

Raj Arumugam

# All Words Are A Burden

all words are a burden  
(please do not agree  
or disagree;  
see for yourself if it's true)

words are raw metal  
that thought fashions  
into chains  
to bind the mind

I hope  
as a passer-by  
I do not add  
to the weight,  
to the shackles

Raj Arumugam

# Always Fools

there were fools  
in times gone and past, always;  
there are fools, always;  
always will be fools,  
there will always be  
these fools baroque, and ornate

Raj Arumugam

# Always Wanted To Write

Always wanted to write -  
but what happened was  
always been too busy talking

Always wanted to write  
be a writer and be famous -  
but always been too busy  
doing good deeds

Always wanted to write -  
but too busy tapping away  
and sliding on my smartphone

Always wanted to write  
but could never find the Lover  
who could fill me with passion enough  
to write poems about

Always wanted to write  
but the world never seems ready  
for a writer of my ilk

It would be lovely to be a writer  
but really another pint of beer  
would be better

Raj Arumugam

# Ambidextrous

You know,  
I've seen those  
ambidextrous people -  
they are cool, aren't they?  
They can write  
with their left hand  
or right hand  
it doesn't matter;  
they can unfix or fix DIY furniture  
with their left hand  
or right hand  
it doesn't matter

Me? I feel like an idiot  
I can only write  
with my right hand;  
I can't even hit a nail  
with my left;  
Oh I really feel like an idiot  
not like those ambidextrous people  
Really makes me feel like an idiot  
You know what -  
I'd give anything to be ambidextrous:  
Yeah, I'd give my right hand even!

Raj Arumugam

# Among The Waves

We have been  
in the mind  
on its surface  
is where we float  
in its depths we sink

one is the mind  
its chaos and calm  
its swell and rage:  
we are victims to its embrace

All we know are distractions, some relief

We do not seem to escape  
its fury and its violence  
and so we plead:  
"But some moments of peace -  
just a few, give us, we pray"

And then you can rage

Raj Arumugam

# Amy's Crayon

it is Little Amy's  
first set of crayons  
and so she grabs one  
and scrawls  
like mad and crazy  
on the sketch pad  
on the floor and on the walls;  
and the crayon discovers  
in a matter of hours  
what humans take years to understand:  
life is short

Raj Arumugam

# An Abc Of Inner Peace

inner peace: a to z (© Raj Arumugam, September 2008)

Inner peace is effortless, as it's always there within.  
One just has to see it.

And once one truly sees this inner peace – not with words or just intellectually, but actually see this inner peace within – it is one's, always; no one takes away that...

Nothing and no evil and no violent force or even the most difficult of circumstances in one's life can remove that inner peace that one sees within; but let one see this not as a word, or as a phrase but as an actuality.

Feel that peace, see that inner peace and let it radiate always – for it is the harmony within each and it is always one's own.

A

Let amity be your constant companion....Be at peace with all beings, equally at peace with those near and those far, and thus walk hand in hand with amity as in a bounteous garden...

B

Be mindful of your blessings always...To be alive, to breathe in fresh air; and to be with the family and the companionship of good fellow-human beings; and the kindness of strangers; and the creatures of this world and the flowers that bloom, and to have a place in this marvelous planet of ours....all these too are blessings....

There is a life of the body in the domain of the physical, and the legitimate needs of the body are just as important as one's inner needs...

C

Think critically....even while we love and are at peace with the world, do not forget to think critically for oneself so that one is not the fool of the cunning...and thus thinking for oneself carefully and critically one keeps one's time and energy and one's own mind....

Do your own thinking; allowing others to do your thinking for you is to systematically lose one's will to live life to its fullest...

Freshness comes when one discards clichés in word, thought and deed – and with freshness comes vigor, steadiness and wisdom....

Though one may mature and grow in intellect, let the child be in you always. For each moment in which one ceases to be a child, one is but walking dead.

## D

Death is only part of a process in our lives....it is but another phase as is one's birth....

Witness the wonder of this process and constant change, and marvel at it as one marvels at sunset and sunrise – and thus is there no agony or ecstasy but quiet and cool contemplation of birth, our day to day living and death....the whole of which is life...

Die to each moment; die to each memory and die to each event and each day - and thus is there constant renewal and the ever new, and so one sees for oneself there is truly no fear in death.

## E

...equanimity is priceless...there is no need for wildness in joy or agony; as the tides come and go so do our mental states, and all that we consider bad or good....like the rise of the moon, or the coming of the stars and the going of the stars are our emotions and our lives and our happiness and sorrows....see them for what they are and equanimity dwells shining within one always....

## F

The free mind is the greatest blessing....Be free of conditioning and be free of propaganda; be free of identity and of the group, and one is truly free; be free of the past in all its forms as it arises in the mind as remembrance of hurts and wrongs, and be free of the future as it arises as constant planning and anticipation and unnecessary tension....

But what is the free mind? One is not free who allows it be defined for one.

Be free of anyone who will teach you: there is no relative freedom – only complete freedom...

During one's meeting or interaction with another being – any being, human or creature - be mindful of the question: Am I fair to this being?

And after one's meeting or interaction with another being – any being, human or creature - be mindful of the question: Have I been fair to this being?

G

There is grace in your heart, in your mind and in your very being...delve deep within and see it - let it glow, and that grace will show in the smoothness of your very movement and speech; and that grace will flow in your manner, and that grace will fill your life and each moment with peace, charm and joy....

God? I have no use for God as I have no use for clichés.

H

Neglect no aspect of your being – for each aspect of your being is necessary and good.

Find for yourself all dimensions of your being...see what happens and what you need in each dimension...be moderate and sufficient in each dimension, and there will be no tension there in any of your dimensions of your being, and thus harmony is yours....

I

Insight is when you can see beyond words and the intellect...as when one feels the presence of love and wisdom...let your insight and your intuition live and flourish – for to suppress it is to deny yourself wisdom and inner light...

Words are useless and mislead in the inner life and therefore it is in the light of insight and intuition that one has direct seeing of what actually is....

J

Rejoice in the joys of others...rejoice in the happiness of others...rejoice in your own joy...find the joy within yourself and the joy in the world...

Be fair and just – not so that one may be loved by others or so one may escape punishment or so one may enter heaven, but be just for its own intrinsic beauty.

K

There is a kingdom within that is not by any other but oneself....there is chaos there if one rules unwisely, and there is joy and harmony if one enters in wisdom....peace and harmony radiate there in that kingdom of your own wisdom, and not by the power or grace or authority or wisdom of others...No being, however mighty and however supernatural, can effect order in there...The kingdom is only of oneself and yet in oneness...

Enter therefore your own kingdom wisely, enter in your own wisdom...

L

All that there is in the world is love....All the many and countless words and revelations and traditions and systems are all but love....

All the world's Holy Books and Revelations and Sermons are useless – there is only love...

The love in which there is conflict or tension, the love in which one seeks to own or possess or to carve out a territory or group or personal identity or salvation or gain or protection – that is not love...

The love that includes all and that excludes none, the love that knows no hate or violence or tension or expectation or punishment or reward – that is love....

We have allowed the idea and myth of God to replace the reality of Love: forget about God for the only reality is Love...

We are liars...we are drugged by lies and addicted to lies...but while it is easy to see the lies told to one or the lies one tells others, it is more difficult to see the lies one tells oneself...

## M

Be mindful of the moment....be mindful of one's breath – of the breath as one exhales, as one inhales...be mindful of the emotion or thought that arises, that lives and that subsides...

....with no censure, no judgment, no labels, no memory-making and cherishing of experiences...be mindful too of walking or of sitting; be mindful of each act and thought...

And so does one live the moment and so thought and time - the past and future - lose their tyrannical hold on the mind...

## N

Be mindful too of the nuances of the words we utter and use; be mindful of the nuances of one's speech and actions and one's silence and one's inaction...

O

Observe with no imprint...observe with no judgment or residue...observe what actually is...

observing a tree

You see the tree....see what is; see it as it is, not with all of one's conditioning...you look...one does not form a judgment and an attachment and a craving for a repetition of this event - but just observe with no labels...no naming...one sees what is there before one without a name, for the name is the past...just observe what is...

observing the mind

One observes what is – one observes one's mind, oneself - not as what authority says one is, but as one actually sees oneself; direct and straight seeing oneself...

One sees oneself without the conditioning and with no prejudice; one sees what actually is...

One observes the activities of the mind...one sees the emotion or thought that arises, as it lives and as it subsides...one does not name the emotion or thought, for to do so is to bring in conditioning which is the tyranny of thought; one does not label it and one does not feel guilt or like or dislike...one merely observes what actually is...

One who observes one's mind knows oneself – not oneself as some abstract and superhuman eternal entity, but as one is....Not second-hand - but directly, for oneself...

Not as what tradition or scriptures or science or reports tell us what we are – but as one actually observes and as one sees what is...

How can one know anything without knowing oneself? Of what use is your knowing of all that you know without self-knowledge as you actually are, and not according to some theory or report or ideology?

P

There are things and events you have control of – and how you pace these that

are within your control determines how much peace and quiet there is in your heart...

Know then the rhythm at which your mind moves and pace the events you have control of at this rhythm...

For things one has no control of, one's wisdom will bring a harmony between one and what faces one...

..inner peace is never lost; it's always there just below the apparent surface of discord. One simply dives deep enough to see this peace that pervades and that never leaves one, though one may be distracted by insistent diversions...

Q

It may seem one's life is a quest and one searches and searches - and yet in that moment of awareness, of full attention, one sees there is no search, there is no arriving - for it is always there, it is always here and now...

There is no such thing as a quest; there is no such thing as a search...

R

Rest well....one forgets in one's hurry that simple rest can revitalize and bring freshness...

## S

Speak gently, speak quietly; speak words that soothe and heal, and with no intent to hurt. Speak words that bring amity, calm and peace and not words that promote division, anarchy and discord.

## T

Thought may be the remembrance of cultures and technology that move societies forward, but thought can be mostly of the past that is a burden...

Be free of the past then and make no memory of it; for the past restricts and narrows and confines, and not making a memory of it is freedom....

## U

The world's systems and hierarchy and Revelations aspire to drag everyone into uniformity and mediocrity...

To lead or to follow is to be mediocre – and the mediocre cannot allow independence...

This world of set formulas and systems despises free inquiry and wants to see each one of us the same in mind and habit and thought: it demands we crawl into its traditions and prescribed or revealed creed, and to fit into what it teaches is the way to be...

The world says this is the way things are and expects one to conform or to break...

Know what you are, know yourself - or the world subtly but swiftly transforms you into itself...

See what actually is rather than going the set ways of what one likes it to be or what should or ought to be or what is described to be ...Discard all authority and see for yourself what actually is...

V

Let there be vigor in all things one does; let there be vigor in thought, in one's inquiry, in one's speech and in one's works and deeds.

The most inspired moment in one's life is when vision unfolds naturally within; dullness comes of conditioning and beliefs that are the companions of complacent inquiry.

W

There is no treasure like the treasure of wisdom for with wisdom one sees the unmediated truth of life and the radiant truth of lasting joy in all circumstances.

Wide is the world and yet we seek to cut it and to confine it  
and to create borders; wide is the mind and yet many seek  
to constrict it and to set up boundaries and to restrict its space.

X

Avoid extremes in all matters – for it is it is the wisdom of moderation that  
universally promotes balance, health, happiness and calm.

Y

In one's intellect let there be maturity and completeness and the wisdom of  
ages; but in one's inquiry into life let there be vigor and newness and perennial  
youth.

Z

There are no confined zones in true love: love knows no boundaries and love  
knows no borders – the wide universe is the very home of love.

That inner peace radiates in the stars and in the trees and in the grass; that inner peace radiates in the creatures of the earth and in all living things and in the very air...That inner peace pervades all beings, all life and all existence.

Raj Arumugam

# An Antimologist's View Of The Word Pharaoh

Ah, you ask  
what the origin is of the word 'pharaoh'  
Let me assure you first  
such questions need to be asked  
and you have come to the right person  
for I am an antimologist  
one specialized in the study of the origin of words

1

Let us consider....pharaoh...pharaoh...pharaoh...  
Ah, I have it...the answer retrieved  
from the safe confines and treasuries  
in the deepest recesses of my mind....

The pharaoh  
was so called  
for these rulers were,  
in spite of the scorching heat and unforgiving sun,  
these rulers were always fair  
and never became dark  
and so that clears the mystery of the first half of 'pharaoh'

2

And moreover, it is revealed in the papyri  
and graffiti in the tombs  
these Pharaohs could row -  
even as Rulers these Pharaohs could row -  
you know  
row, row, row your boat  
and they could row  
the full length and breadth of the Nile

And thus from the 2 Divine attributes  
of FAIR and ROW  
came the title: PHARAOH

3

But....but...but! you say  
Ah, I know, I know - you are about to ask

why then is the word spelt as PHARAOH  
and not as FAIRROW?  
Ah, such questions you have this morning -  
what are you on?  
Too much sugar and candy floss last night?

Well, you are lucky as I'm not only an antimologist  
but also an IsDorian  
and so I shall dispel your doubts at once:  
It's simple - remember they were Ancient Egyptians  
and these Ancient Egyptians did not know their English well  
and so instead of the proper English FAIRROW  
they gave us the mangled PHARAOH -  
and let us not be too hard on them  
as you also recall this was all in the infancy of human civilization  
and we shall be graceful enough in our maturity to accept these errors,  
for after all, these Ancient Egyptians were but as children  
in the History of Human Motion

And I hope I have now dispelled your morning perturbations  
as I rowed you over  
the rivers of knowledge of antimology, IsDory  
and the secret knowledge of FAIRROW and the PHARAOH

Raj Arumugam

# An Authorized Poet

I am an authorized poet  
accepted  
respected and legitimate and legal  
site-approved  
as I do not post poems with words like:  
, , , , , s.n o. a

do I still have my good-child status now?

Raj Arumugam

# An Evening's Music

come, it is a cool evening;  
it is time for the body to rest  
and the mind to withdraw within;  
let us play then  
a raga for this evening:  
notes and a rhythm and a flow  
that shall bring quiet, peace and calm in one's being;  
and perhaps as you play  
the melody and magic  
might induce me into a state  
of inspired words that might come out as song and verse  
that might bring ease and stillness  
to all that might hear us play and sing

Raj Arumugam

# An Exact Copy

an adventure in learning, or not learning...as you like it....

when I was little  
my dad and mom  
they expected me  
to turn out  
just like them;  
exactly  
like dad and mom  
and indeed I turned out to be  
as my dad and mom

Oh when I went to school  
I expected classmates  
to be appropriately like me  
but they turned out  
unexpectedly, unreasonably  
like what they'd be  
Oh I was shocked  
and asked my parents why  
the world was so deviant  
and, in their received wisdom, they said:  
"It's an imperfect world  
out there  
What can you expect  
from impure persons? "

When I went to work  
and met many strangers  
I knew straightaway  
why they were called strangers  
For their ways were indeed strange  
and instead of being like me  
they each turned out  
like they'd be...

Then I got married  
and my wife  
turned out like what  
I'd expected her to be  
exactly like me  
and we brought up our children  
to be like me  
But when they grew up  
I was shocked to find  
they were like strangers  
and I asked my wife  
if indeed they were my children

And so I thought I'd go on a tour  
and I went to England and America  
and I went to Russia and China and India  
and Down Under  
and I crossed from East to West and North to South  
and I went to Mexico and in disguise to many nations  
and everywhere I was shocked to find  
none were like me  
And I was reminded of my dad's words, my mom's words:  
"It's an imperfect world  
out there  
What can you expect  
from impure persons? "

And so I came home  
and found my wife too had changed  
and she was no longer like me  
and I sat down in my lounge  
older, wiser, sadder, well-traveled  
and now all-knowing what I always knew:  
"It's an imperfect world  
everywhere  
What can you expect  
from impure persons? "

Raj Arumugam

# An For U

It's an umbrella,  
though you may think it's  
not just an umbrella  
but a unique umbrella  
since it's been in your family  
since your grandpa  
was a university student

and in the rain it  
becomes a useful umbrella  
or a useless one  
as the case may be

but still it's an umbrella  
(a unique one,  
by your family history)  
though, broken, it may  
no longer be an umbrella

Raj Arumugam

# An Unhurried Evening

an unhurried drive to the library  
in the lazy evening  
an easy find and smooth park  
and a quiet hour between shelves;  
and a slow walk to the shopping centre  
knowing smiles and words and pleasantries exchanged  
and a smooth flow through the deserted aisles;  
and a slow walk back to the car  
and a drive home as the night prevails  
and the cool air returns  
and we celebrate with warm soup

Raj Arumugam

# An Unnecessary Poem

this is an unnecessary poem  
and so is  
any comment  
or reaction in the mind  
or scribble  
totally unnecessary

Raj Arumugam

# Anarchy Of Time

in the nights of our anxieties we make God;  
and in our greed,  
in the light of our desired outcomes,  
we make leaders and saviors and prophets  
and holy books and creeds and theology;  
and unable to observe without fear  
and therefore with clarity  
unable to see quietly, to see simply for oneself  
one believes what one is told;  
one becomes compliant, submissive  
and becomes willing, and a glad slave to declamatory prophets;  
and we dance to the music of deception as truth;  
and we beg for truth: for Words, Words, Words  
and we defecate mountains of lies and myths  
and we lick at revelations and what is Holy and Holy  
and we cannot find ourselves, and we cannot find love,  
and we cannot find the world,  
so breathlessly pinned down by the mountains of rubbish  
and our slavery and our conditioning  
and the anarchy of time

Raj Arumugam

# Ancient Asian Prediction For 2012

Prediction 1X^VVVKOOiii8889

In year 2012,  
Honorable Sage of Peach Land says,  
Man will prosper till end  
but in last day 2012  
Man will become Donkey  
and Donkey will transform into Man  
as happened in Ancient Hoary Past Year 201222334

- from "Ancient Honorable Heavenly Jade  
Manual of Donkey and Man"  
discovered just in time for 2012

Raj Arumugam

# Ancient Eyes

it is a bust, a bust from ancient times,  
chipped but still intact, unknown though perhaps  
a respected member of officialdom  
or a dancer, her graceful hands and legs  
as persuasive as her benevolent eyes that look at you  
but unknown and with no name, no identity or fixed history  
no biography;  
and his eyes  
or her eyes are fixed on you  
and the face is held up to you  
and the expression is contemporary  
though on an ancient bust  
and she looks at you  
and he looks at you;  
and you see the same emotions and feelings  
and hopes and aspirations  
that power your heart  
and you see the same mental formations and the same drives  
that howl in your mind;  
and you see the history of the mind that evolved  
and you see the records of ancient times  
and the desires and wants and ambitions and inclinations  
that have developed and shaped your heart and mind and body  
and every nerve;  
and you see your heart  
you see your mind and you see what is actually in you  
and you see yourself there in ancient times  
and you see yourself as you are;  
and you see you are one  
you are humanity  
you are humanity past and present  
and you see you and are I one

Raj Arumugam

# And

And  
before I forget  
there's one more thing  
Last night And dropped in  
like out of the blue  
Maybe from the night sky  
or just like an unannounced visitor  
And walked in, let itself in  
And jumped onto my lap  
And it said,  
though first it looked at my face like some lover,  
And said:  
And?  
And, I said, there are things to be done...  
And? said And...  
And I'll have to make a list first;  
And then prioritise...  
And?  
And then start...  
And?  
And then finish...  
And was quiet a while  
And then And said: And?  
And then there'll always be  
more things to be done, I said  
Always an And...  
And?  
And, I said, then I'll have make a list again  
And prioritise  
And then start And then finish...  
And it never ends...and it continues...  
And And gave me a smile, smug and so satisfied...

And so it goes...this And...though you think And is gone  
And just then, when you least expect it,  
And is back...And so it goes...this And...

The End...

Oh, no not really The End...it's The And...

Raj Arumugam

# And For You, My Dear, Lilies And Roses

the waves break between  
the giant crags  
and sing their broken lines:  
and for you, my dear,  
lilies and roses,  
for you alone  
sweet angel mine

one comes in here center stage  
and takes applause awhile;  
and each gains one's just and unjust reward  
in the days of one's breath and life;  
one drinks of the cup of infamy  
and one gets love and adoration;  
one gets wealth  
and one is smothered with pain and desolation;  
but as  
you are mine,  
you are mine  
and so for you, my dear,  
for you who sings all your days  
and weaves all night  
there are  
lilies and roses  
lilies and roses  
for you darling mine

O see the helpless world roll by,  
pure lotus mine;  
and see nature unfurl its arms;  
watch with me  
watch silently  
sweetest angel mine -  
watch the green grass grow for sturdy Tom  
and the rivers flow for unfortunate Ming;  
and the hills roll for the flautist shepherd  
and snow falls for Lillian lost and cold;

ah let us watch silently  
let us observe  
the dark earth for the farmer who dies at a stroke  
and the sky for the lonely dead  
and for the various anonymous  
dark wood and fire and ashes  
but for you, my dear,  
for you - O sweetest breath of the forests,  
for you are  
the wild flowers and red red roses...  
for you who sing all your days  
and weave all night  
the beauties of nature  
are always yours  
always yours

and let us listen a while  
now before we go  
let us listen  
as the winds whistle between  
the bamboo  
like broken words  
in gaps between one's teeth:  
and for you, my dear,  
lilies and roses,  
for you sweet angel mine  
for you alone are these  
sweet angel mine

Raj Arumugam

# And In Life And In Death One Sees What One Wants To See...

let us see;  
one is born and eats and grows  
and eats again and enjoys pleasures  
and one gets bored  
and one seeks experience and all sorts of adventures  
and one gets bored  
and one seeks 'truth';  
....'truth'....'truth'...'truth'...  
and one is trapped:  
one is offered answers  
and one's mind is conditioned  
and one loves words and easy answers  
and everything is offered in a system and in one Book  
and one believes –  
and one is tricked, one tricks oneself;  
one is conditioned, one conditions oneself –  
and one believes this is so...that becomes one's 'truth'  
and in life and in death, one sees what one wants to see...  
as one's beliefs, so one is...  
as one's conditioning, so one is...

one is offered answers;  
one rather that happily,  
than to seek oneself

Raj Arumugam

## And It All Disappears, Does It Not?

and it all disappears, does it not?  
age and the times and the memories  
and the friends and the dads  
and moms and siblings;  
and nations and affiliations  
and the lovers and the sweethearts  
and the rose and the berries;  
and the days and nights and the snow  
on the bare branches;  
and the years crawl away  
and words become inaudible in space  
and we wake up to the birds at the windows  
and find it all disappears...slips away  
as silently as falling snow...

Raj Arumugam

# And So The World Operates

a)

if we tell lies, and repeat them  
in systems  
and create pleasant illusions  
and comfy notions;  
and make the lies so real  
we believe in them ourselves  
all that might get me where I want to go;  
it might get me what I secretly desire

b)

and so one half of the world operates

but we must have believers  
for the lie must be believed  
for us to get where we want to go

c)

and believers abound  
for perhaps in believing  
(which is an easier option,  
cozier than search and inquiry)  
life becomes more bearable  
more pleasant  
and one feels one overcomes  
one's loneliness and  
one feels the terrors of the mind die  
in believing, in blindness, in trust

d)

and so the other half operates

and so the world goes  
since our beginnings  
with all our comforts and illusions

Raj Arumugam

# And Then You Are Dead

you are born and you cry  
and people plan your life  
and you grow up and you create;  
and you drive along established roads  
and wander on tried and tested tracks  
and you do all the things people do;  
life's a guided tour for you

what is one  
but colored patterns  
drawn on an empty floor?

and you are tightened and fixed with an identity and a self  
and a brand of beliefs and revelations  
that make you feel oh, so so special  
and marvelously destined for heaven;  
and still you cry and you aspire  
and you have ideals and dreams  
and you have financial planning  
and you steal and you rob and you kill  
and yet you have justifications and euphemisms  
and you chase dreams and myths and lies  
and ideals and visions and systems and theology  
that sweeten all the filth and evil that you are

one has beliefs  
and one is blind  
for one must be led

you accept beliefs  
that will assuage your guilt  
and let you get away with murder;  
and you set up home  
and you court and marry

and you bring forth and you multiply;  
you prosper and you have years of want;  
and you laugh and you cry  
and you write and sing and dance  
and you repeat, repeat and repeat and repeat

to be human  
is to be group-safe  
for originality frightens

and you vary it all with experience  
and chasing adventures and different things to do;  
and you love food and you eat a planet  
and you present yourself well  
and you dress well  
and you have sex and you have desires  
but you conceal, conceal  
and you hide and hide and you hide  
you deny, you deny, you deny;  
and you use fine words and you make yourself feel good  
and you climb up hills and you go downhill  
and you join fraternities and you renounce one and take on another;  
and you have certainties and uncertainties  
and you move from filth to filth  
and you think you've found the way  
and you want to change the world  
but never yourself;  
and all your life you whinge  
and point an accusative finger;  
and you are violent and you are gentle  
and you are full of truth and you full of deceit  
and you are, you are  
oh so, so fragmented;  
and you grow old and you glow with pride and complacency  
or you turn like gnarled roots  
and bitter and sad and cursing like Timon  
and you pontificate with all your carcass morals

the good person  
is one  
who is just

you know nothing, but you just repeat what they put in you;  
you love Holy Books and you repeat the myths;  
and you move in time from where you are to what you want to be  
and find the grounds have changed  
and the goalposts have moved;  
and then you continue the fight and the struggle  
and then you die

you die;  
and then you are dead;  
wake up, you are dead

Raj Arumugam

# Animal Reality

A cat and a mouse  
sit on a tree  
They see a dog pass by  
The Mouse says nothing  
because a mouse doesn't talk

Then the cat eats the mouse  
because that's what cats do...

Raj Arumugam

# Another Day Has Passed, Time Passes

another day has passed, time passes:  
another day, of clouds and sunshine and darkness and shadows;  
a day of cool air, lights and colors and temperatures;  
another day in human hours, another day of routine and surprises  
a day of food and work, and worries and concerns and thoughts  
another sinking into the depths of the mind;  
another day passes  
and a sense of four steps forwards  
and three back;  
time passes, another day passes;  
and one retires to bed, withdrawing like a tired child  
to whom the world fades for a few hours

Raj Arumugam

# Anthem Of The Mundane That Seeks All To Be So

we are the lovers of candy songs  
the creators of toyland verse;  
we love established ideas  
and do not explore unknowns;  
we love what comes  
all packaged  
and easy like  
birthday presents  
wrapped up and shiny  
and colorful;  
we see the world entirely  
in opposites:  
there's always the beautiful and the ugly  
and there's always  
Good and Evil;  
we honor clichés  
and we can throw phrases  
and words that will astound the masses:  
love, honor, truth, God, freedom,  
soul, our great nation,  
the only true religion;  
and  
we love the sweet,  
the cute  
the tasty  
and verse and ideas that  
are the like layers of fat  
on ice-cream and pastry  
and we do not  
want to go beyond these boundaries  
for dad warned us in early days  
to return home before dark  
and mom warned us always  
never to speak to strangers

Raj Arumugam

# Are You Not Done Yet With These People?

Are you not done yet with these people?  
Have your people not hunted them and killed  
them like beasts and not shamed them enough?  
Have you not taken and plundered too much already  
that you must mock them and badger them and pursue them  
even in their fallen state? Did not  
those of the continent who set foot in the New World  
cut natives limb by limb? Did not Jesuits and monks  
witness that even those in the flock  
impregnated pagan slaves for profit? What crime could be worse than enslaving  
another human being  
with corrupt holy men justifying slavery?  
Are you not allied to these  
and yet you will point a finger at the defeated?  
Will you judge them? Will you mock them still?  
Are you not done yet with these people?  
Have your people not hunted them and killed  
them like beasts and not shamed them enough?  
God forgive us all,  
and Christ forgive you;  
O no, you are not done with them;  
you have not done with them yet  
till you set right the wrongs.  
Surely you are not done with them,  
nor Christ with you.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Artist Taking A Rest After Reading Books

this is the life...oh, reading  
daylong and in candlelight  
and perusing scrolls and poems and the Classics  
and the Analects,  
it tires one...but this, sitting in the veranda  
and with fresh air  
and the gentle breeze and one's mind light and easy...  
and contemplating a rose  
or seeing the green of a leaf...  
the mind cleared of ideas and vague abstractions  
and the weight of words and persuasion,  
O this is the life...  
the mind sits still now  
in itself  
the being in  
the quiet of an evening  
the satisfaction of solitude  
in an emptiness, a presence  
beyond books, thoughts and patterns  
this is the life, this is the moment...

Raj Arumugam

# As Life Flows

There's the time one does  
in the halls of this expanse

There are all intentions and desires,  
the struggle  
and effort

and yet - and one only knows too late -  
it all hinged on happenstance;  
and there's the futility one can never know

You can only say with certainty:  
It was thus while it lasted

Raj Arumugam

# As The Sun Sets

those trusted leave you  
and those remaining want their due;  
you look at the shadows in the woods  
and the pale moon,  
as the sun sets

Raj Arumugam

# Ask No Questions

ask no questions:  
you must obey;  
and if you ask questions  
you must accept all answers

there's a teacher  
and authority;  
the student must ask  
no questions;  
just listen and obey

there's the Parent  
and children will do good  
to listen and nod in agreement

you must obey  
it's good for you  
it's good for the Instructor

there's the Great Leader  
who issues edicts and reforms;  
it's nice of you to be informed  
to mark and conform

there's God in Heaven  
and He's (never a She)  
given you Text Books;  
school is in – and you must obey,  
no questions...

there are Organizations  
and Establishments;  
look, it's comfy and easy  
for everybody  
if you just followed  
the rules and regulations

and don't think outside  
the Book of Instructions

ask no questions:  
you must obey;  
and if you ask questions  
you must accept all answers

Raj Arumugam

# At Dusk, With The Gentle Sun

at dusk, with the gentle sun  
and the fisher-folk giants of trees  
casting shadow-nets over the forest clearing,  
just then  
we met;  
just the two of us  
and we stood out in the open in the clearing;  
and she reached out for my hands  
and I held her warm hands  
and we pressed close  
and moved in an awkward animal dance towards a tree;  
and her back against the tree  
we felt each other's breath and we kissed deep  
and we heard, we felt  
the beat of the heart and each other's life and blood  
and one's very existence;  
and we felt each other's skin and life  
and our sexuality and our very being  
and we felt the desires of each  
and the mind and energy of each;  
and the memories and instincts  
and each other's warmth and moisture  
and the firmness and softness and tenderness;  
and we snatched at each other's life  
and felt the veins and nails  
and teeth and clothes;  
and we entered the pressing closeness of life against each:  
and then we knew, we knew, there as we embraced  
in the forest clearing  
at dusk, with the gentle sun and the shadows of the gentle giants  
and with the forest breathing  
we knew there  
we heard the life that was breathing  
time that was still and observing every move  
in the air and on the forest grounds;  
and we knew there was something else too,  
that as we had lost one in each other  
we were losing ourselves in something else  
as it was in us;

there was something else -  
it was not us alone  
in the forest blessed by the dusk and quiet giants

(This poem, 'at dusk, with the gentle sun' is to be read in conjunction with the painting: 'The Forest Clearing' by Ivan Shushkin)

Raj Arumugam

## At The Office Tea Corner

Oh Julie, I came in this morning  
30 past the time I was supposed  
to be in at work –  
OK, I was late, but is that a big thing really? –  
and anyway the Boss is at the main entrance  
and he sees me come in late  
and he says ever so slyly:  
"Mike – do you know you are late? "  
And I says to him: "Yes, Mr Blake"  
And he says to me:  
"And Mike – do you know  
That's the fifth time you've been late to work  
this week? "  
And I says to the Boss:  
"Yes, Mr Blake..."  
And the Boss looks at me and he says:  
"Fifth time in the week, Mike...  
Do you know what that means? "  
And I says:  
"Fifth time in the week?  
So it's Friday, Mr Blake? "

Raj Arumugam

# At The Window

A window offers  
enough of the world  
in one's quiet and solitude

One needs to be away  
from the clamorous world  
and the window provides solace enough

The window allows in  
light and colour  
and the golden embrace of autumn;  
one only has to look  
and the framed world smiles

The door keeps out the loud  
and those capable only of chatter  
while the window opens  
necessary communion

Raj Arumugam

# At Work, And At Dreams

I went to work  
and I worked hard  
and it was humdrum, tedious  
and so I wrote a poem  
but you know, nobody pays for poems  
You can dream  
but you can't put bread on the table  
so I went to work  
and I worked hard  
and it was humdrum, tedious  
and so I wrote a poem  
but you know, nobody pays for poems  
You can dream  
but you can't put bread on the table  
so I went to work...

Raj Arumugam

# Attempting To Cross The Road

Two hundred metres off the Mt Coo-Tha roundabout  
I stood on the kerb to cross the road  
and ended up watching you - watching us -  
as you came on in a merciless  
procession in three lanes.  
There were nice new cars; polished new cars  
in which were engaged tense and  
other-worldly self-absorbed faces.  
Aggressive faces.  
You were not the mates I knew in the streets.  
I waited twenty minutes and crept away  
weakened by your determination.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Autumn Rains

the rains and wetness and coolness  
soothes the world into a calm and slowness  
a slumber and rest  
away from the chaos  
that a hasty world rushes into on sunlit, ambitious days

Raj Arumugam

# Autumn's Here

The heat's down from 34 C to below 30 C  
and my daughter declares:

It's autumn.

A day of dark clouds and cool air  
spoils us and my son declares:

It's autumn.

Are you sure?

I ask and they mock me.

Their friends told them it's autumn  
and we unemployed migrant adults  
should listen to the children  
for their friends have lived here  
all the ten or thirteen years of their lives  
and who are we unemployable migrant adults to question  
the wisdom of the local children?

And, by the way, winter's round the corner.

OK, children of Australia,  
we say,  
it's autumn if you say so.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Avocado Boat

I cut an avocado in half  
and give one half to the visitor;  
and I carefully scoop  
the avocado  
gently, gently  
with a teaspoon  
(the Aztec records show  
this is, ahem! the fertility fruit)  
and I savor each scoop  
and eat like a pig  
(ah well, like a graceful pig):  
and at last  
I have the skin left  
in the palm of my hand  
and it's tough  
and shaped like a boat;  
and it has rained  
and there's a puddle of water  
on the lawn  
and an ant that's been irritating me  
wandering about on my naked foot  
and I put the ant  
in the avocado boat  
and I set the boat in the puddle  
and I give it a gentle push  
and I say:  
"Bon voyage, Monsieur! "  
And then I look at my visitor,  
and that silly guy is still staring at his half  
and I ask, ever gently,  
"Do you need help  
with your fertility fruit there? "  
The visitor replies, "No' –  
and I wonder if I should get him brain food  
or perhaps set him off on another avocado boat...

Raj Arumugam

# Away From Home

I'm away from home  
and now I know  
I've always been;  
always am, always am..

Raj Arumugam

# Bad Boy Nimko And Bad Girl Akako

listen you pretty girls  
and tormented boys  
heed this warning tale  
and avoid bloated tummies  
and crushed balls

## SONG of BAD BOY NIMKO

here below this bridge  
each night  
I met pretty Akako  
And each night I whispered  
sweet nothings  
and poured myself  
into her  
But ah, now this same bridge  
of pleasure is a bridge of pain  
she says she's pregnant  
and makes her claims  
And so I must run away  
turn my back on the village  
and never return  
for here is no gain

## SONG of BAD GIRL AKAKO

here below this bridge  
each night I met Nimko  
and I told him one night  
he's made me pregnant  
and he said  
he didn't know about that  
And never wanted  
to see me again

and he called me a slut  
And so I squeezed him tight  
and he left with balls crushed  
flat as dumplings  
under a carriage wheel

And so  
listen you pretty girls  
and tormented boys  
heed this warning tale  
and avoid bloated tummies  
and crushed balls

Raj Arumugam

# Bad Hate Poem

I hate you  
cos you're not like me  
cos you're not  
the same religion as me  
I hate you. I kill you.  
cos Hey! what color are you?  
What kind of skin color is that!  
I hate you  
I hate you  
cos you have different views  
from the ones I have -  
Hey! don't you know I'm right  
and you're wrong?  
It's so obvious and you can't see  
- oh, I so hate you!  
I hate you. I kill you.

Long ago  
your great great grandpa stole sheep  
from my great great grandpa  
and my grandpa knocked  
your grandpa's teeth out  
and your grandma stole eggs from our farms  
and so my grandma poisoned your well  
and now I'm here and you too  
and so I hate you, I hate you, I just oh so hate you  
I hate you  
cos my leader said so  
cos my Holy Book  
which is the only True Book in the World  
says:  
"God is Love.  
Love your enemy.  
But kill them who don't agree."  
I hate you  
cos you are in the way  
in my way  
I hate you  
cos it's something I've got to do

since you live on the other side of the border  
My dad said so and my Great Wise Leader said so

And anyway you eat rice  
while I eat wheat  
and though we both shit  
I wash my arse  
and you wipe yours -  
Oh we're just so awfully different!

O I hate you  
cos you're not like me  
cos you are not  
the same as me  
I hate you. I kill you.

Raj Arumugam

# Bad Love Poem

O sweet love  
I love you forever  
and forever  
it's true  
and months and days more  
all I think of is you

O sweet love  
I shall always love you  
always and always  
O my baby  
no one else has such deep love  
as the love I have for you  
O my darling  
such love has never been seen  
amongst stars or planets  
as I have for you  
never in all of history  
O sweet love  
if I do not have you  
I shall kill myself  
O sweet love  
you are my only true love  
O true love  
if you do not return my love  
I shall never, never breathe  
it's true

O sweet love  
I love you forever  
and forever  
it's true  
and months and days more  
all I think of is you

Raj Arumugam

# Barriers

we just go on  
in our angers, little prejudices,  
likes and dislikes, whims and fancies  
clichés  
deep-seated fears  
and pile them up into barriers

(a)

the tea is cold in the cup  
and he has not finished talking;  
he nods hurriedly as I blab  
and races into his discourse

(b)

the women look away  
there is a word, some muttering,  
some remarks...

(c)

brothers thank each other  
with incoherent words  
that register nowhere

Raj Arumugam

# Be A Good Child

be an adorable child  
the sort old women  
go ga-ga about;  
and old men say:  
oh, such sweetness!  
the child's cheeks  
are like red apples

be a good girl  
dwell on love  
the sort that's like lollies  
and fluffy as fairy floss

be a good boy  
be starry-eyed  
hold shiny balloons and popcorn  
and write about nice things

be a good citizen  
the sort that does  
not use any word  
not found  
in the school dictionary;  
and who never explores anything  
beyond the prescribed confines  
of the constitution

be an adorable child  
the sort old women  
go ga-ga about;  
and old men say:  
oh, such sweetness!  
the child's cheeks  
are like red apples



# Be You Makers Of Beauty

'maybe a few words, '  
I ask of the butterfly  
that is resting on radiant leaves  
and the butterfly says:  
'Be you makers of beauty...'

Raj Arumugam

# Beautiful Twice

1

the teacher says  
give me a sentence  
anyone, quick  
with the word  
"beautiful" twice...

Angelic Mike

sings his response:

My father always says,  
"Beautiful day, makes one beautiful too"

2

the teacher applauds  
and so does the class  
everyone's heart warms to the core;  
and teacher points to Wild Danny  
"Give us one, Danny, " she says

3

"Oh, " says Danny Wild,  
"last evening at our dining table  
my sis in high school  
she said she's with baby  
and she doesn't know who;  
and my daddy he said:  
'Beautiful...shitty beautiful'"

Raj Arumugam

# Beauty Looking Back

I was at the street shops, seated below the canvas  
and drinking my sake  
innocent to the world  
and lost to my cup  
when she walked past  
smooth, elegant, slow-time  
her eyes straight and her manner modest  
O I only had eyes for her  
that was all there was, that desire  
as she glided through the street  
her kimono red and strewn with flowers in bloom  
her scent lingering in the air  
the gold clips gleaming in her black hair  
O the kimono was like a cloud ablaze  
that wrapped a Being from the Realm of Desires  
and my own being was in chaos and stirring  
and then just at the other end  
just at the bend  
the beauty turned her head  
and she cast her eyes on me,  
just a flitting look  
O the beauty looked back  
and it is on me she cast her binding gaze

And now, for me,  
as for a madman  
there is no looking back  
I must go where she beckons

Raj Arumugam

# Bee Poem

I'm a bee  
my message to humanity:  
just simply be

Raj Arumugam

# Being Here

I was not driven here,  
no...  
not pushed in here

No, it is not bitterness  
and aversion to company  
or disappointment, as you say,  
that have drawn me into seclusion  
and these quiet spaces and corners

I am here for  
it is simply the way  
and what time revealed as one's truth

Raj Arumugam

# Big Shopping Day!

The crowd has waited since 5 am  
there's been much talk  
about the discounts at 8.30  
So there's the long queue and this man  
comes right up to the front  
and the outraged crowd punch him, push him  
and kick him back in line  
but the impertinent man gets up  
and walks again to the front of the queue  
and the justifiably angry crowd  
punch him, push him  
and kick him back in line  
but the determined man gets up  
like Rocky  
and walks again to the front of the queue  
and again the no-nonsense crowd  
punch him, push him  
and kick him back in line  
but the obstinate man gets up yet again  
and he mumbles, like Rocky:  
"If these idiots hit me again, I'll not open the store for 'em! "

Raj Arumugam

# Bird In The Bamboo Grove

the bamboo branch  
sways as it does in the wind;  
the bamboo rustles  
and I sing;  
a happy bird  
in the bamboo grove;  
being with the bamboo  
happy and chirping  
in the rustling grove

Raj Arumugam

# Birds And Fanatics

there is a bird on the branch  
that sings its song and leans to the flowers  
and satisfies its meager wants

and there are fanatics  
in sacred halls and in open spaces  
whose chants are hate  
and whose food is death

Raj Arumugam

# Bite In The Poetry

where is the bite in your poetry?

...hey, all you love-sick juveniles  
and puppylove-dabblers at philosophy...

where is the sting and the zing?  
the ting and the oomph and the zoom?

expose first your forearms  
to the vampire, that poetry bug  
whose fang-bite torments you  
until there is nothing you want  
but a life of verse and death by poetry

Raj Arumugam

# Body Parts, Diogenes

And they asked Diogenes  
how he'd like to be buried  
and he said: 'Just scatter my parts  
well outside the City'

'But Diogenes  
then the wild creatures  
will get to the parts -  
you don't mind being eaten  
up by the creatures? '

'Oh, I hadn't considered that -  
just provide me with a staff then  
with which I might chase away the creatures'

'Oh, but Diogenes -  
how will you do that when you are dead? '

'Oh, I hadn't considered that...  
Well then, but why should I worry  
what eats me after I'm dead? '

Raj Arumugam

# Borders For Beauty

Beauty is not confined  
in one thought or a system  
not in a tradition or nation  
not in one religion or creed

beauty pervades all;  
it is the cause of all

it is not named, never encapsulated  
it escapes language  
and all thought and attempt

so beauty is not in any  
you can point to

Raj Arumugam

# Born A Child-Ghost

so you die  
and you're born a ghost -  
you're a child-ghost;  
and do you know  
where they put you at nights  
when your parents  
are out at work?  
They put you in the local DayScare...  
You'll love it  
at the local DayScare  
cos the Scarers will give you  
lots and lots of IceScream

And how do you greet your parents  
when they pick you up  
from the DayScare?  
You say:  
"G'day, Most Honorable TransParents"  
And be a good child-ghost  
cos every FrightDay  
your TransParents  
will take you to the RollerGhoster  
Enjoy!

---

...above poem is a combination of  
various jokes...

Raj Arumugam

# Boy On Mount Fuji

Fuji-san  
I'm bored and life's hard:  
let me run away  
The master makes me work all day  
while his sons go to school  
and learn writing and numbers;  
and his daughters put on pretty dresses  
and they play with dolls and flowers -  
while all day I wash their clothes  
and sweep the courtyard  
and collect herbs for the Lady of the House  
O Fuji-san -  
you have great power  
and you watch over all  
so let me run away  
And I shall run to Edo  
And I'll work there  
at the tea-houses  
and I'll see fine gentlemen  
and I'll see pretty ladies  
and I'll work and earn and save  
And one day I'll be a gentleman myself  
So O Fuji-san  
let me run away  
Clear my way  
and make it safe  
and I shall go to Edo  
and I'll be rich one day  
and I'll come back here to you Fuji-san  
and I'll bring you offerings of cakes and flowers  
So help me, O mighty Fuji-san  
Let me run away

----

Poem based on art 'Boy on mount Fuji' by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849)

Raj Arumugam

# Boys, You Are Not To Look At Twinkle Girls...

Boys, I warn you, you are not  
to look at Twinkle Girls;  
I, Glum Master of the Universe, command  
that none of you boys  
look at those Shiny Girls who  
are Bright as Stars  
and so are called Twinkle Girls –  
remember, you are not to look at  
or wink at Twinkle Girls.  
You can, O you immature boys  
you can chase butterflies  
and climb trees and fall off them and break your legs  
but chasing Twinkle Girls,  
no – I expressly forbid you from such a pursuit.  
Twinkle Girls always come with a chime and charm  
still, when they pass by and their scent gets into your mind  
you are to poke your noses into your books  
and you will contemplate the secrets of addition and subtraction  
and the intricacies of algebra  
until they pass you by...  
Look, boys – you can have computer games  
and you can play role-play games  
and you can twitter and text  
and you can steal cookies from the pantry when mom's not looking  
and you can spend the whole day  
at websites your parents told you to stay away from –  
but looking at Twinkle Girls,  
that, I, Glum Master of the Universe,  
I expressly forbid  
And what will I, Glum Master of the Universe,  
do about it if you ogle at those Twinkle Girls who giggle?  
I'll amend the Books that Surely Lead to Heaven  
so boys like you will all end up in Hell...  
So, if you want to go to Heaven and eat for free  
without mom nagging at you to be neat  
and you want to play computer games for all eternity –  
boys, I warn you, you are not  
to look at Twinkle Girls...

Raj Arumugam

# Bribing The Teacher

It was the end-of-year exam  
to qualify for the prestigious  
Top Class at school  
and with his paper  
spoiled brat Tommy  
handed in a \$100 note  
to his teacher and winked with a whisper:  
"A dollar for each point, Sir;  
I know all about percentages"

The next day the teacher returned  
the papers to the students  
and marked bold on  
spoiled brat Tommy's paper  
was: 40%  
And the teacher pointed to a \$60 note attached  
and he said with a wink and whisper:  
"That's the change, Tommy -  
a dollar a point, yeah"

Raj Arumugam

# Brilliant At Multi-Tasking

and so the Boss asks Michael  
at the interview:  
So can you  
handle a variety of tasks?

Oh, yes says Michael  
exuberant and proud  
I've had 12 jobs  
in 4 months...

Raj Arumugam

# Bring Ye Forth A Thousand Poems

a thousand poems  
one brought forth;  
a thousand works  
one can put in leather-bound volumes  
endless pourings  
one can scatter in cyberspace;  
one reason each gave  
for one's everyday incessant thousands:  
one said it is the glory of God;  
one said the poem is the reason;  
one said it is in one's nature  
for one cannot be anything else....  
and so on each had a reason  
for  
a thousand poems  
countless verses and numerous poems  
that could put one in the Book of Records...  
that could earn one titles  
and by which one could append history to one's name...  
and yet dust between cornflakes are the poems of anyone;  
and for all our reasons and our wondrous creations  
like skin dust between cracks in one's face are the works of anyone...

Raj Arumugam

# Broom Poem

a history of the broom  
a short one, or long  
will see us down on the floors  
in the streets and the corners;  
a little excursion to the theaters  
of farce and wayward husbands  
beaten by outraged wives;  
and if we included this poem  
in this sweep of history  
I hope a poem with a broom  
does not fire the same ignorance  
as beliefs did  
conjuring women with brooms  
supposed witches who flew in the sky...  
you burned them, remember?

and you would again, given half the chance

Raj Arumugam

# Building Bitter Futures

you cry about someone dead  
and you regret how you should  
have been more caring  
when that person was alive;  
how you should have been fair  
to the living now deceased;  
you cry about the past and you cry about the dead:  
but are you caring now of the living?  
are we two, still living, are we two fair to each other?  
why do you regret the past and kill the present  
and build bitter futures?

Raj Arumugam

# Bungles Company And On-The-Ball Company

Tom of Bungles Company places an order  
and Bond of On-the-Ball Company calls back  
and he tells Tom:

"Hey, listen...You've ordered another two shipments  
of the goods? Look, you haven't paid for the previous 4 orders  
and we can't ship your new order till you pay for the previous four"

"Oh, " says Tom of Bungles Company  
quick and snappy  
"Cancel the order then  
We really can't wait that long"

Raj Arumugam

# But

In the midst of something crucial  
diminutive But  
butts in -  
Oh, don't you hate that? -  
just when evolution is expressing itself  
and here's But to bring in devolution;  
and so I told BUT recently:

But me no Buts

X me no Xs

Just butt off...

'But...

But...

But...'

Oh don't you know when you're not needed?  
Look here - I'm in the midst of watching that  
sexy butt of that damsel across the green field  
and here you come butting in  
It's her swaying butt I'm watching;  
now, you - flick off!

'But...

But...

But...'

And exasperated, I said:

OK - What?

'But that's not a woman's butt you're watching;  
it's a bull across the green field -  
put on your glasses, and you'll see what I mean'

And sure enough  
with my glasses on I could see  
But had a point -  
still, But takes away our illusions  
and so I vent my fury on But:

OK, wise guy - so I can see it's a bull;

Now get your bull off somewhere else

'But...

But...

But...'

Oh, the diminutive, persistent But -  
it follows one like one's own butt!

Raj Arumugam

# Butterfly Poems

1 wing pages of the butterfly

at the nursery  
while people  
are at purchase  
and at transactions  
a blue butterfly  
comes by  
and opens its pages to me  
swift and quick  
and it says to me:  
'Read! Read!  
Read my pages! '

'I can't read, '  
I say,  
amused  
at this brash butterfly

'Read and write!  
Read and write  
about me,  
and all flitting butterflies  
Read  
and write, you silly! '  
it commands

And so I read  
and I copy  
and these are the words  
the words from those  
pages  
the butterfly  
holds up to me

## 2 song of the butterfly

'butterfly  
butterfly  
why do you fly? '

I've got wings  
I've got aerodynamics  
so I flit about  
and I fly:  
for I just got to be

'O I wish  
I really wish  
I too could fly  
flit and fly  
fly and flit  
just like you  
I wish I could fly'

O you can  
O you can  
flit about and fly  
you mortal on the ground  
you can fly  
if you use your mind  
if you try  
if you try

## 3 the boy and the butterfly

'O butterfly  
where do you go  
so busy, so fast  
moving about in a hurry? '

O I move up and down  
and across and sideways  
I have to go and go and go  
little boy  
just like you jump and run  
just like you roll and play  
just as active as you are  
just being in the joy of me

#### 4 the girl and the butterflies

'O butterflies  
of all colors  
butterflies of purple, green  
and maroon and gold  
O I love your colors!  
I love each glow! '

And we so love  
the colors of your dresses too  
little girl;  
we love the colors in each dress  
you wear every time  
you come to see us in the fields  
and O we do  
we so love the glow in your cheeks

#### 5 butterfly time

you live a week  
at most a year  
dear butterfly...  
a week  
a year;  
and so we too,

though we may count in a hundred,  
are subject to quick passing...

### 6 butterfly: a lesson in history

O butterfly  
tell me true  
how did you get  
your name?  
Is it true as some say?  
from your poo?

I'll tell you how  
we got the name 'butterfly'...  
well, in the days of old  
when no one knew  
what to call us  
for we were all nameless then  
there was a poet  
who instead of making money  
just like you  
deliberated on questions  
of what shall I call this thingy that  
flies about?  
and as he sat at his table  
wondering of names  
his indignant wife would throw things at him  
to get him to work and earn some bread  
instead of depending on her father's estate;  
and she would let things fly at him  
things like a spoon, knife, wood,  
clothes – and one day she threw the butter at him  
and it was then that the penniless poet had inspiration  
and he shouted: 'Butterfly! '  
and that's how we were christened  
because the witless poet saw some  
similarity between butter and fly  
and so we have ever to fly about

with this heavy weight of the butter  
on our delicate wings

## 7 the butterfly hunter

O hunter  
butterfly collector  
let us be  
We got a life  
we love to fly  
and we got family

O don't catch us  
don't bottle us  
don't gas us  
let us be

we love to fly  
and we love to bring joy  
to poets in gardens;  
we love to bring laughter  
to children in the fields

O please, Collector  
do not bring death to us

O hunter  
butterfly collector  
let us be  
We got a life  
we love to fly  
and we got family

(above poem based on painting: Der Schmetterlingsjäger (The butterfly hunter)  
by Carl Spitzweg (1840) , a depiction from the era of butterfly collection)

## 8 names of the butterfly

the butterfly has a  
thousand names  
as many as there are languages  
and in each even more names:  
papillon, paruparo, borboleta, mariposa,  
schmetterling, farfalla, fluture, drugelis, sommerfug,  
pattampoochi, farasha, prajapathi,  
thithili, chocho, hu-tieh  
and so on, names a thousand and more  
but the silliest name  
illogical, unimaginative, and most clichéd  
in all the world  
is in Plain Jane English:  
butterfly...

## 9 a picnic, some butter, and a fly

I sat down for a picnic  
and wondered  
what I could spread on my bread  
and soon an idea came by;  
and so with my left hand  
I shoed away the fly  
and with my right  
spread evenly the butter

## 10 nature of the butterfly

people say the butterfly is beautiful  
but if its jerky flight and nervous twitches  
were made into music  
it'd sound more a cacophony than a symphony

#### 11 a queensland butterfly

butterfly is in an inapt name  
for those in the state of Queensland  
for the they'd melt in the very heat in summer  
and so, really, since the butterfly's wings open up like a book  
I'd rather call it pagefly  
or an e-readerfly  
or flutterby or bye-bye or even by-the-by

#### 12 the erotic butterfly

just three butterflies  
cover my love  
better than silk or sari

#### 13 butterfly and wisteria

Ah, butterfly  
you are in your own:  
you flutter gently  
and you see the wisteria;  
and you are in natural rhythm  
and you will eat, now that the time  
and place are right

#### 14 be you makers of beauty

'maybe a few words, '  
I ask of the butterfly  
that is resting on radiant leaves  
and the butterfly says:  
'Be you makers of beauty...'

Raj Arumugam

# Butterfly Split

Says Mr Butterfly  
To Mrs Butterfly:  
'I want a divorce;  
let's split'

And says Mrs Butterfly:  
'OK. You flit your way  
and I flutter my way  
You take  
the North Bank in the garden  
and I'll have the South-East'

Raj Arumugam

# Butterfly Time

you live a week  
at most a year  
dear butterfly...  
a week  
a year;  
and so we too,  
though we may count in a hundred,  
are subject to quick passing...

Raj Arumugam

# Butterfly: A Lesson In History

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and he shouted: Butterfly!  
and that's how we were christened  
cos the witless poet saw some  
similarity between butter and fly  
and so we have ever to fly about  
with this heavy weight of the butter  
on our delicate wings



# By You Dear Sun

by you  
dear Sun  
is life;  
and through you too is death

Raj Arumugam

## C And J: Sillyverse 2

C said to J:

"You look like a fish hook"

"And you look, " said J to C

"like the worm they fix

to the hook"

Raj Arumugam

## Camellia, Branch And Bird

the camellias are held out  
by a branch  
as if to show any passerby  
to see the delicate flowers  
and the beauty of it  
and the silence of it  
and the moment of it;  
but it is a bird that comes by  
that comes to sit on the branch  
to come to no purpose it seems but to sit  
as if to say to the branch  
to show to the camellias and the branch  
to point to the beauty of it  
the silence of it  
and the moment of it  
as the bird sits on the branch

Raj Arumugam

# Cardsharps

Ah, young Sir, most elegant young scion  
of a noble family of our Great City  
how well you play even these games  
as cards and board games  
with such composure, calm and dignity  
that we of the lower classes  
can never muster  
and with what generosity of spirit  
young Sir  
what dignity and skill  
even as you deign to play cards with us,  
such ordinary folks, such untutored people like us...  
but honest we are, young Sir,  
and so in your wisdom and learning you have seen  
and so you have chosen to come in our midst  
and to play with us...  
so you no doubt wish to know the world  
so that you may have such wisdom as when one day  
you move even deeper in court circles  
and in the halls of power  
as no doubt by the signs on your face and in your manner  
young Sir  
you are destined to do so...  
ah Sir, how well you consider your moves...  
...forgive me for talking, it is my admiration for you  
that makes me talk...I shall be quiet the while  
as you pause to make your next move...

...ah, Sir – such gravity and poise you have...  
and such deep meditation you make  
before every card move...  
it is a dignity and insight, most noble young Sir  
you have no doubt acquired  
in the great schools, and from your most learned tutors  
no doubt such wisdom as you have acquired  
in all your studies  
as noble youth like you are privileged to...  
not like us poor street urchins  
and common people of the street

in our ignorance, in our pettiness...  
but still, Sir – we are honest people, you will find  
and perhaps one day, young Sir,  
you shall speak for us in those halls of power  
in which you shall shine –  
perhaps then you will speak for us ordinary folks  
how though common and plain, yet most honest you found us...  
play on, young Sir, play on....consider your moves  
and hold your cards close to your bosom, indeed...  
indeed...indeed...I shall be quiet...so you can  
deliberate and apprehend your every move...  
but honest ordinary friends of yours we are, young Sir...  
always we remain your honest friends  
of the taverns and streets...

Poem based on based on the painting 'The Cardsharps' by Caravaggio

Raj Arumugam

# Cat Faculty

O have you heard? -  
the standards at the  
Faculty of HISStory and Catssics  
are slipping;  
and its esteem  
in the public eye declining  
Have you heard?

Why?

Well,  
that Faculty's  
got too many cheetahs  
That's why

Raj Arumugam

# Cat Fame

Said one cat to the other:

“One of these days I’m going

To the Flea Circus

And then I’ll be real famous

Cos I’ll steal the whole show! ”

Raj Arumugam

# Cat Luck

For centuries  
black cats have been  
the subject of blame

Is it bad luck  
if a black cat follows you?

Here's the answer  
to settle this mystery  
once and for all:  
It all depends, if you're human or mouse

Raj Arumugam

# Cat Mum's Advice

said one cat to the other  
at the playground:  
"My mum always advised me  
never to  
climb trees  
For she did say  
very wisely:  
'What has bark  
will bite next'"

Raj Arumugam

# Cat Peace

What? What's up with you guys?  
can't a cat have peace in one's own home, yeah?  
never seen a cat eat before?  
can't you just mind your own business  
and let a cat do a cat's business of eating, ha?  
HA! - what's that laugh for?  
and for goodness sake put away that camera  
You think I'm cute, ha?  
wait till I get my paws on you  
and a flick of my tail while I'm in mid-air  
will take care of your camera  
What, you some kind of paparazzi or what?  
OK, let a cat eat and you mind own business, yeah?  
Oh, I'm really suspicious about you guys  
Maybe you're hungry, yeah?  
go get your own food guys;  
stop looking at cat food  
or at cat as food – I'm really not sure about you guys  
You'll eat anything!  
OK, jokes aside  
I've worked hard my day entertaining you morons  
and purring so you can squirm with delight  
and curling up in your laps  
so you'll be happy and live longer at my expense  
No, I've done my work so let me eat in peace  
Do your work and go get your own food  
That's better...  
Ah, now for some cat food, a catnap after  
and some cat peace for a while at least  
without adoring humans who think  
they've got a circus just because they've got a cat at home

Raj Arumugam

# Cats In A Boat

...meow, meow, meow...

nine cats in a boat  
and one jumps off  
and there's none left  
in the boat in the same instant –  
anyone going to ask why?

No, this is no conundrum  
in nuclear physics  
It's basic cat life -  
they were all copycats

...meow, meow, meow...

Raj Arumugam

# Cats, Turkeys And Naked Chicken

my office-mate Kate  
she winces at seeing a cat  
run over on the road  
and is sad for days;  
but gentle and kind as she is  
she loves skin-naked turkeys  
and plucked and bare chicken  
she selects at the supermarket;  
and she prepares them  
and stuffs them with tender-loving care  
to conjure decorated dishes  
that will win her praise  
and that will make her days

Raj Arumugam

# Cawing Crows Are Constant Company

Caw, Caw, Caw, Caw,  
they go.

Waking us up to a new dawn:

Caw, Caw, Caw, Caw

- they go

from early morning to late noon.

Sitting on wires over the kerbs

like a gathering of surly beggars,

crowing crows are constant company.

What their caws presage though are a mystery.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Celebrations

we can have a celebration  
a birthday party  
or a wedding feast;  
still there are changes:  
one's body changes, one's mind changes

Raj Arumugam

# Chains Of Words

all words are a burden  
(please do not agree  
or disagree;  
see for yourself if it's true)

words are raw metal  
that thought fashions  
into chains  
to bind the mind

I hope  
as a passer-by  
I do not add  
to the weight,  
to the shackles

Raj Arumugam

# Challenging One's Notion Of God

1

full of faith and belief  
I prayed and prayed;  
and at long last God  
(don't imagine a He or She)  
said to me:  
"I'm moved by your faith.  
Is there something you'd like? "

I shook my head.

And God smiled  
and said:  
"Would you like  
some gold, oil and money? "

"No, " I said  
and prayed and prayed.

"A never-ending supply  
of food, perhaps? "  
asked God.

"No, no, " I said,  
and prayed and prayed.  
"The gift of poetry, perhaps? "  
asked God.

"No, no, never that.  
What, you want to ruin me? "  
I said,  
and prayed and prayed.

"Wealth? Fame?  
A good obedient wife  
who can't speak, perhaps? "  
said good God.

"No, no, "

I said  
and prayed and prayed.

2

"Shall I, " offered God,  
"remove all suffering  
from the world? "

"No, " I said.  
"The world's already used to it."  
And I prayed and prayed.

"Look, you must tell me  
what you want, "  
said God, now appearing a little irritated.

"Oh well, if you insist, "  
I said.  
"I want your job."

And God disappeared  
as fast as speedy Gonzales.

Raj Arumugam

# Change

If this goes on I wonder  
what shall become of me  
I shall become Mr Melancholic, possibly.  
Head down, shoe laces loose, part collar in  
and part out and belly button missing,  
trousers frayed at the bottom and pocket sides  
and my thin lips turned down. Mr Melancholic,  
after all. A melancholy, an unnamed grief shall eat me  
that sit where I will or stand where I will  
it shall have its victim bent double  
and I shall feel it attack from deep in the pits of my stomach  
and incapacitate me. I shall be motionless and helpless  
at this possession and melancholy shall lead to depression,  
not that I shall know its progress at every stage.  
But it shall not be a melancholy  
it shall not be a regression  
without a rage, an anger. And it shall not  
be a fall without vengeance  
I shall become The Malcontent;  
bearded and rapier in hand  
confused between scepticism and cynicism  
hovering between good and evil  
and easily persuaded to darkness.

And the psychologists and the counsellors  
and the sociologists  
will analyze me and dissect me and study me.  
I shall become the subject of discussion.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Cheap People

cheap people laugh  
at others for being cheap;  
they're so cheap  
they think others must be cheap  
just like them

1

case in point:  
see, I've always been misunderstood  
by these cheap people -  
like even when I buy my friends  
a drink  
they call me cheap  
cos they expect one each -  
now, how cheap can they get?

2

and my girlfriend  
comes to my apartment  
with me  
and then talks behind my back:  
'He sticks popcorn to the ceiling  
cos it's cheaper than a smoke alarm' -  
now, how cheap can they get?

3

and I'm at the shop  
looking for this perfume  
for my girlfriend  
and I don't like the \$50 bottle  
and not the \$30 bottle  
the shop girl shows me;  
and not the \$15 one either  
and I say to her:  
'What I'd like to see  
is something cheap' -  
and she holds a mirror to my face...  
Now, how cheap can they get?

yeah, cheap people laugh  
at others for being cheap;  
they're so cheap  
they think others must be cheap  
just like them

Raj Arumugam

# Children Of The Earth

What will you do  
Tiny Tim;  
what will you do  
when you're grown  
and big like your daddy?

I'll be working on the moon  
harvesting moon rice;  
and I'll send you moonbeams back  
in cans  
that you can put in your room  
to glow all night

What will you do  
Little Lin;  
what will you do  
when you're grown  
and big like your mom?

I'll be teaching earth sciences  
at the University of Pluto;  
I'll be teaching aliens  
to learn from the rights and wrongs  
of our human race

What will you do  
tiny Amardeep;  
what will you do  
when you're grown  
and big like your Uncle Jasbir?

I'll be building bridges, Uncle;  
I'll be building bridges  
between Mars and Jupiter  
and space tunnels  
between Earth and Saturn

Raj Arumugam

# Children Of The Open Fields

we wandered over plains and open terrain  
and nature offered us what she would  
and we took what we needed  
and not more,  
and we shared and fed strangers;  
we had feasts and dances  
and we loved the land  
and the land loved us back;  
and the animals  
and the creatures of the earth  
knew us  
and we knew each by name and habit;  
and we saw open skies in the day  
and at nights we saw  
countless unabashed stars  
and the moon presiding  
over all life and all mysteries and terrors;  
and the songs and music sweetened our lives  
and the fields filled our bellies  
and the mountains and the hills  
filled our minds  
for we were children of the open fields

Raj Arumugam

## China 60

this is our world now  
and small as the surface of a table;  
but there is a wide world for all of us  
when we grow up  
for all the children of the world  
for all nations, all peoples  
to come round and share  
in peace, in justice and freedom for all;  
come, let us all learn that now  
so that each is the light  
that the world needs  
in the new enlightenment  
that will be led by the land of the Huang He and Yangtze  
and the lands over the Himalayas

Raj Arumugam

# Chrysanthemum Petals In The Grove

The girl Child has been looking for the bird in the grove.  
But the bird is nowhere to be seen.

There in between stones near the pond are some chrysanthemum petals.  
Girl Child knows where these petals come from.  
They are from the far north-west.  
Someone has been here from the distance. Perhaps that someone has taken the  
bird.

Girl Child will go there. She will go and bring back the bird.  
Girl Child hears someone crying.  
Ha Ha boy is there.

"Why are you crying? " asks girl Child.

"I do not see precious bird. I miss the bird that sings in this grove, " says Ha Ha  
boy.

"I am going to the north-west to look for the bird, " says girl Child.

"Can I come with you? " asks Ha Ha boy.

"Come, " says girl Child. "Let us go."

Raj Arumugam

# Chrysanthemums By A Stream, With Rocks

I remember that place  
that moment  
the beauty of it all  
and the coming together

(It was a long time ago  
and I have to delve deep  
into my mind to recall)

Does it still bloom there?  
Do the birds flit  
about and sing?

Raj Arumugam

# Chuang Tzu's Butterfly

Chuang Tzu has a dream  
and when awake  
he asks himself if, perhaps, this is the dream

is it Chuang Tzu who dreams of the butterfly  
or is it the butterfly dreaming of Chuang Tzu?

not a poetic fancy  
but probing into all our assumptions  
and formations, and mind

Raj Arumugam

# Clarity

i)

like the sky crowded with clouds  
dark, heavy and chaotic;  
and then, perhaps hours later or on another day,  
a bright blue sky,  
immense and expansive  
with not a spot or cloud

ii)

like a spider intent on its visitor  
completely in the event, fully in the moment

Raj Arumugam

# Class Excursion To The Police Station

see  
teacher brings her class  
of primary school kids  
for an excursion  
to the local police station

kids are happy  
you can see  
kids are noisy  
you can hear  
as the Inspector takes the class on a tour

at last they come back to Reception  
and Little Timmy notices pictures  
on the wall of people  
below the words: "WANTED

"Who are these people? "  
asks Little Timmy

"O they are bad people, "  
says the Inspector  
"They have done bad things  
and we want to catch them! "

"O, but why didn't you"  
asks Little Timmy  
"catch those people here  
when you took their pictures? "

Raj Arumugam

# Class Wisdom

the teacher  
expounded on the value of the tree  
&quot;Isaac Newtown  
discovered the law of gravity  
under an apple tree;  
the Buddha gained nirvana  
seated under the Bodhi tree  
Children -  
what can we extrapolate from this? &quot;

&quot;It's obvious, teacher, &quot; said a smarty-pants kid  
&quot;class is useless -  
for if they'd been seated in a class like us  
they'd have remained ignorant&quot;

Raj Arumugam

# Claw Enforcement

Tomcat has his breakfast  
of Mice Krispies  
and reads his newspapers  
when Molly comes out with a snarl  
in her purr-ple pajamas

she claws him all over  
there's such a caterwauling  
and Tomcat emerges bewildered:  
What? Why?

She's upset that all night  
her hubby Tomcat  
called out for Cat Woman in his sleep  
And what do I do with Tomcat  
after this Claw Enforcement? thinks Molly  
Oh, just hiss and make up

Raj Arumugam

# Colbert Report: Australia

Talk-show queen

Oprah Winfrey with her entourage

is going to Australia

and it's timely now for a quick Colbert Report

on the state of the colony of Australia

Colony?

Yes, that's right

Australia is still a British colony -

How else do you explain it?

as the Head of Government in Australia

is still the British Monarchy

and her Majesty, the Queen of Great Britain,

has her representative

a Governor-General in Australia;

and the Aussie national media faithfully reports

that Prince Philip is a God in some remote island

and the TV stations broadcast visions of

which British Prince kissed which of their latest fancy

And so, Oprah, welcome to the Colony

Ah, yes, and the Chinese migrants coming in

are surprised to learn of Australia's status

at citizenship ceremonies

and they say:

"Oh, Foreign Devil still control Australia"

And Indian migrants, much to their disappointment

are heard to remark:

"Oh no - does this mean we still have

to go through another fight for freedom as in 1947? "

But then they are consoled by the fact

that a Gandhi only comes once in 200 years

so we can all still get on with our lives

and the nation will continue

to eat burgers and enjoy barbecues and hop like kangaroos

until such things may happen...

Ah well, dear talk-show Queen Oprah Winfrey

and her entourage

this ends our report on the sovereign nation down under:

Happy Stay in Her British Majesty's Colony

Raj Arumugam

# Come Clean

you know  
if you dropped your clichés  
in your language  
in your writings and speech  
you will have clarity;  
it will sparkle

and so if you dropped  
all the clichés you feed yourself  
all the clichés your religions  
and your Holy Books  
and your Great Religious Leaders train you into  
and if you dropped all your Revelations  
and theology and your philosophies -  
for all these are clichés, ideas put into you  
your second-hand way of seeing things,  
things you are conditioned into -  
then you come in to see what is unconditioned and clear  
then you come clean

Raj Arumugam

# Come, Let Us Sit Below This Tree...

Come, let us sit below this tree.

Calm and at peace, come with me, if you will, and let us sit below this tree.

In the shade of this tree then, you and I, without preconceived notions, with no memory of our ambitions and our plans and the schedule for tomorrow, and with no memory of what I think you are and what you think I am, with no expectations, with no past, and with no future – no distant future, and with no immediate future in our mind - without bias and prejudice, come, let us sit then below this tree.

And watch. Just see.

There is you, there is me and there is this tree. And the earth we sit on. And the grass that spreads out before us.

Come, let us sit below this tree.

And watch. Just see.

There is the tree and all the creatures that rest on it and the two creatures that rest below it; and the creatures that live below in the burrows and in the caverns layers below.

And there is the sky and the creatures that are visible to us, and those too far or too small or too minute for us to see.

Come, let us sit below this tree.

And we sit with these creatures and all this life.

And the bountiful earth, in its massive and outstretched hands, the earth holds its magic before us. The hill slopes down, and the lakes and the trees and the boulders are before us; and the tiny creatures and the villages and the humbled figures live their lives, and they spend out their time; and you and I, you and I sitting below this tree, we are their witnesses.

In the shade of this tree then, you and I, together we sit and thus we watch and see this world before us; thus we watch without preconceived notions, with no

memory of our ambitions and our plans and the schedule for tomorrow; and with no memory of what I think you are and what you think I am, and what we think this world before us is; with no expectations, with no past, and with no future – no distant future, and with no immediate future in our mind - without bias and prejudice, thus we sit and the world, and the earth, and the sky, these watch us back. We love them, and they love us back.

And there are the creatures. And there is life. And there is expansive space. And is there time too? Is there time? Do you see? The creatures and all beings in all space and in all time, all the lives that have come, and that have passed; and all the beings and all the lives that are and that pass; and that will come and that will pass – is there time? – all these are before us. And we before them.

Who watches who? Who is before whom? In this space and time, who and what is where?

Thus we watch.

And all the creatures are there. And all the living things and that which does not live but that supports life, and just about everything before us and behind us, and below us and within us, and without...

Then they cease. At least for a while. Do you cease? Do you see me? In the shade of this tree then, you and I, together we sit and thus we watch and see this world before us; thus we watch without preconceived notions, with no memory of our ambitions and our plans and the schedule for tomorrow; and with no memory of what I think you are and what you think I am; and what we think this world before us is; and with no expectations, with no past, and with no future – no distant future, and with no immediate future in our mind - without bias and prejudice, thus we sit and watch; and the world, and the earth, and the sky, these watch us too. And we love the world, and it loves us back.

Now, yes, you must go. We must all go. It is time to do as you see fit.

Go in peace.

No, you need not make a memory of this.

For one always sits below a tree with one's fellows, and with all life within and without.

Go in peace.

You need not speak of this. For to describe it is to corrupt it.

For to speak of it is to trivialize it.

You need not make a memory of this.

For the one who sees always sits below the tree with one's fellows, and with all life, within and without.

Go in peace.

Raj Arumugam

# Come, Sit With Me At My Table

It is about morning and you see me outside. Say at ten-thirty. You see me at the coffee-shop. An espresso or a flat-white is what I'm having.

I don't eat much; I don't take more than I need.

Say a flat-white and a toast – just one slice will do me.

OK, so you see me sitting at the coffee-shop. Be natural. Just come in; sit with me at my table.

It's usually in the morning when you see me outside. Rarely at night.

No, I don't fear the dark; it's just that my systems start shutting down from 7 pm. They go for quiet and contemplation, and then deep sleep after. That's just the way it is with me. But when you see me at the coffee-shop, and if you have the time, come sit with me at my table.

Everyone's welcome. No one's out. The poor and the rich; the literate and the illiterate; the coherent and incoherent; the loud and the quiet; the uncouth and the refined - you are welcome to my table. Come, sit with me at my table.

So you're black or white; you're Nigerian, Chinese or Jew; you're Indian or Sudanese or Laotian; you're Pakistani or you're Russian or Vietnamese; just come sit with me at my table. So you're fat or thin, or somewhere in between, come and sit at the table.

So you're one hell of an upper class guy and you think you're God's gift to earth, or you're so down you think you're the rubbish that gathers in the city dumps; and poet and plagiarist and some as original as Michelangelo; singer and the lyricist and butcher and painter, and barber and teacher and the student, and the professor and the failed undergraduate; ten years old and a hundred and ten; come all of you; do not be shy, come sit with me at the table. You are all the same to me; everyone equal and I no less or greater than any. You may the Highest Authority in your establishment; you may be the Mightiest in your land. Just the same. All of us.

Or you may define yourself by your religion, it doesn't matter to me. So if you see me sitting there at the coffee-shop, come sit with me. Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Daoist, and Buddhist; Sikh, New Age people, nature worshiper, worshiper of the Goddess, or whatever you call yourself or whatever others may call you; Zoroastrian, Jehovah's Witnesses, Sufi and Amish and Pagans; however you describe yourself or however others describe you, come sit with me at the table. And the atheists too; those who have no faith and those who have lost faith.

It is about morning and you see me outside. Say at ten-thirty. You see me at the coffee-shop. An espresso or a flat-white is what I'm having.

I don't eat much; I don't take more than I need.

Say a flat-white and a toast – just one slice will do me.

So you see me sitting at the coffee-shop. Just come in; sit with me at my table.

Or maybe others define you by your morals and perceived goodness – or lack of morals and lack of perceived goodness. Come. Oh you that have broken the law, and you that observe the law, and you that enforce the law and you that make the law; Oh you that serve a million selflessly and you that seek to eke out your living so your family can live, all are the same to me - so come and sit with me at my table. You that believe in hierarchy and you that have no respect for hierarchy and rank and position and power and seniority; you that are anarchist and you that seek order even in your nails and every hair on your body; all are welcome at my table. Come, prophets and messiahs and visionaries and mystics and harlots and prostitutes. Come, sinner and the pure and the holy; come, those saved and those damned; those going to hell and those going to heaven and those going nowhere; come the honest, the upright and the morally superior and the dishonest, and the morally depraved – and the philanderers and the lechers and the perverts.

Or maybe you define yourself by your power and influence; or lack of power and influence: it is all the same to me. Come and sit with me: you can be God, or you can be the Devil; come sit with me – the love of all humanity that has been there; the love of all life that has been there, yes, that unconditional love can and will bind and quieten both of you at my table. For I bring unto both of you, to all of you, innocent love as the child brings; and for that love is complete, for

that love is all-inclusive, there is no power before that.

Leave aside what others think of you, and come sit with me at my table.

Leave aside what you think of yourself, and come sit with me at my table.

Beggar, king and emperor, come and sit with me; Prime Minister and President and housewife or home-maker and Minister, and those who clean the offices of those in high positions, for once at least, come sit with me at the same table; people who serve and those who are served; the proud and arrogant and the simple and anonymous, and the forgotten and the humble and the meek, come sit with me.

My name?

I go by many.

Some call me Unconditional Love.

Some call me Time. Some call me God.

Some call me Death.

Some call me Profane; some call me Divine.

By the way, my apologies if I left out anyone in my list; you're always in my view, so don't feel neglected or forgotten. Now as I was saying, I'm known by many names.

You want to suggest a name?

It's all the same to me. As if I cared what you call me.

Raj Arumugam

# Comfort

There is comfort in being known, comfort in fame;  
there's comfort in acceptance, in praise  
even while we seem not to hear, seem to be focused,  
and there's comfort in work;  
there's comfort in charity, comfort in doing good,  
there's comfort in our obsessions and perversions  
and there's comfort in what we find ourselves in.  
But the joy in the unsullied state is only  
in the meditation of the true and beautiful.

Om Nama Sivayah.

Now that I am gone

When I was there you did wonder  
what a fool I was; you remarked  
how naive and impractical I showed  
myself in my ways. You looked kindly  
down on me and my unrealistic views  
and unworkable theories.

When you sit back in your chair  
and your probing mind does settle a flickering moment on me  
I wonder what you think of me now.

The stranger's life

As quiet as the growth  
of the creeper over the fence  
goes on my life;  
perhaps as stealthily too;  
and just as unnoticed.

As unobtrusive as a whiff of cloud  
that is blown over, and hides behind a  
defined and heavy cloud  
and then appears again amongst  
a whole host of its kind.

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Coming To The Island (Or The Poet In Exile)

we are here  
rowing in gently near to the shore  
and even now you can see  
the peaks, mountains and the valleys  
and the giant pines and willow  
and the embracing peace, the pervasive quiet...  
you see a lone figure there, enjoying a walk;  
there is a little village there of huts  
whose humble folk will serve you in all ways  
though you will never meet them...  
the guardians in the longhouse  
there past the peaks  
will see to all your needs  
and you shall not want anything in creature comforts...  
you shall be on land shortly and you will be escorted to the longhouse  
and the guardians there will see to your walks  
and to ensure the villagers do not meet you...  
the guardians will speak of these things  
and arrange these things...  
yes, I know of that matter...and I can speak of it...  
they will provide you with paper and ink and brushes...  
but all you produce will be stored in the library there in the longhouse...  
you may peruse, but you may not bring the works away...  
even your works...all you create is no longer yours...  
I hear you are not to leave the longhouse compounds unattended...  
the guardians will speak to you of these matters...  
there will be solitude  
there will be respect  
they will look to your every need  
but as you know  
none of your kind brought here  
ever returns...  
so then I wish you days of gentleness  
and peace and quiet to your last days here...  
we are come very near  
and between the rocks there we shall stop and you shall disembark...

Raj Arumugam

# Communication

There is no feeling, there is no bond  
there is no touch, there is no smoothness  
there is no sincerity, no frankness  
there is no connection in these continual communications.  
Just efficient words and professional politeness.  
(And what did you expect? A hug and a cuddle?  
No one owes you a living.)  
All that void is filled in with dead forms  
and photocopies certified by JPs  
(one seeks out these authorities at the chemist's  
and at real estate agencies)  
and essays meeting or not meeting identified criteria.  
This is unreal the game we play.

The rules are changed this year.  
This other world I meet often  
through various mediums  
but not in real time, real space:  
the urn-box space for in-coming letters,  
its lid at the back hiding spiders;  
the post office and punctilious and efficient postmen  
and phone calls and receptionists and secretaries  
and productive people who say  
I may be able to help;  
and the well-spaced neatly-arranged classifieds  
the black and white origins of all our  
unconsummated affairs

there is a secret code  
something hidden beyond what is offered  
that I cannot break

(from *The Migrant* notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))



# Comparative Living

they were taught comparative living when they were kids  
a kind of comparative studies,  
where their parents sat them on their laps and said:  
See, little Jack studies hard;  
See, little Jonah scores top grades, and goes to the best class...

in speaking these words the parents live  
the nightmares of the inadequacies of their own comparative parents  
who said: See, we don't have the latest gadgetry and posh homes  
of the Joneses...

and so, come - darling children of the world,  
and the youth of nations,  
and so little Mina and little Hussein come learn these comparisons;  
and little Wen-Yang, and Jihyun and Hitomi, and the innocent children of the  
world,  
you come too -  
as the adults, our loving parents, live their own nightmares  
teach comparative values  
and wrestle in the mud of their living by comparing

Raj Arumugam

# Compilation Of Proverbs

foreword to a compilation  
of proverbs:  
do your own thinking

Raj Arumugam

# Complete Text Of The Discovery Of The Kama Sutra

Part 1 At the Saint's Book Store (Singapore,1970)

when I was just 15  
and just after  
a trip to the National Library  
I saw a slim volume  
at the Saint's Book Store  
(named after a TV series  
and true to the borrowed name,  
a second-hand book store)  
and its spine said: Kama Sutra

Now that's a title  
they don't have at the National library,  
I mused  
and I took it down off the shelf  
and stood, agape -  
transported to Ancient India  
by the very seductive picture  
on the cover page;  
didn't make me feel like a saint at all

but my reader's instinct  
got the better of me  
and so I opened the book  
in which the Introduction  
ran boringly longer  
than the main meat of the text  
and so I went on to  
Vatsyayana's  
own enigmatic words

This I must have-  
I said to myself,  
after only five pages of Vatsyayana

and the sticker label on the  
used book replied: \$2.50  
I bought the book  
and walked home  
and had no lunch that day

## Part 2 Dirty Science

What are you reading?  
asked little Somu,  
a year younger than I was

It's a Science book,  
I said, turning away from him

If it's a Science book,  
the little rascal said,  
why are you hiding it behind  
another science book?

Mind your own business,  
I said,  
Hardly taking my eyes  
off Vatsyayana's classic

I'll mind my own  
if you tell me what it is;  
otherwise dad  
will come to know of it-  
and you won't be able to tell  
him to mind his own business

Oh! I said, angry and afraid,  
and I threw down my books

(the cover book and the hidden book) .  
You're too young for such things.

But he looked at me  
as only a dangerous blackmailer can  
and I yielded to his request -  
I would summarize aloud each chapter  
for him as I finished reading each  
(That's the trouble when  
fate throws you in  
with siblings who don't read)

And day in and day out  
over the next few weeks  
I summarized the Kama Sutra –  
no, I don't think I summarized,  
I extemporized,  
I added details, I confess –  
for the benefit of non-reading Somu  
that silly pumpkin of a brother  
who didn't understand a word of what I said!

### Part 3: Weird History

That night as we lay  
on our mats on the floor  
Somu asked me:  
You know...I was thinking....  
ever since you provided  
your summary of the Kama Sutra  
delivered in such melodramatic actor's voice...  
I've been wondering....Do you think Dad knows  
the Kama Sutra?

Oh, I said immediately.  
How would  
dad know  
about the Kama Sutra?  
It's been banned In India  
since the middle ages.  
He only knows  
Hare Rama, Hare Rama...  
Now, maybe it'd do you good  
to repeat the mantra 100 times  
and go to sleep...  
You might end up in Vaikunta.

And then insomniac Somu said:  
What's that book you were reading  
this afternoon  
covered behind your  
school History Text Book?

Oh God! Nothing escapes the eyes  
of this sibling who came a year after me;  
and I had to make an honest reply  
or he'd pursue me to the ends of the earth:  
Oh, it's another book  
I found at the Saint's Book Store;  
it's called The PerfumedGarden;  
it's in Arabic and you won't understand a word;  
you can read it when you're fifty  
because that's how long it'll take me to translate the work

Somu, the silly sibling ever,  
sat up on his mat and looked at me suspiciously:  
When did you learn Arabic?  
You can't even read Tamil properly,  
you monolingual Indian!

And irritated, I said:  
Oh shut up and sleep...  
Don't you go digging into what I do.  
I learn all sorts of things in my own time –  
and you're best, little brother,  
to stick to Hare Rama, Hare Rama  
Or Hara Hara, Siva Siva...

And for that,  
the traitor of a brother told all our school mates  
I was reading dirty Science  
and weird History!

#### Part 4: The Puritans Come Home

What is a young boy  
just turned fifteen,  
said the outraged visitor to my father  
doing with a copy of Kama Sutra?  
And he pointed his bony finger  
at me, sitting with my brother Somu  
and his thirteen-year-old son Kittu;  
we kids sat on the floor  
and the dignified adults  
sat elevated on the sofa

And he continued:  
So, tell me,  
what is a young boy like  
that doing with erotica?  
Is this the time for him?  
This is the time for him to study  
his textbooks and do his homework.  
And the outraged father  
pointed his finger at my sheepish father

and he continued:  
Your son goes to the same school as my son –  
and I'm afraid he'll be a bad influence.  
At History lessons and Literature class,  
my son reports,  
your boy asked the teachers why  
they don't teach Kama Sutra.  
This is outrageous and crazy!

My father looked at me  
but couldn't see my eyes  
thanks to my state-welfare  
horn-rimmed glasses  
and he said to the outraged visitor:  
I don't know...  
He reads all sorts of stuff...  
He discovers all these books  
at the National Library  
and bookshops...  
He's read Gandhi's biography...  
and now it appears  
he's discovered Kama Sutra...  
Should we really stop him?

The uncertain father slumped in the sofa;  
but the outraged father jumped up  
dragged his son Kittu to the door  
and he turned around and said:  
You call these discoveries?  
Get him to stick his nose  
in his school textbooks!  
He will come to no good!  
He will bring you shame!  
You call these discoveries?  
I'm not coming here anymore –  
and turning to his son  
he said:  
Don't ever talk to that boy;

don't you ever be near him!

And off they went,  
Outraged Father and Trembling Son  
into Dusty History.

### Conclusion

My father and I looked at each other;  
not a word was said –  
and he is not here today  
for a translation of what I write here now

As for my little brother  
that traitor who had told Kittu,  
I took both books  
The Kama Sutra and The Perfumed Garden  
and hit him smack on his head:  
and he has remained  
stunted physically and mentally ever since

### Postscript

What's that thick book,  
said Somu two weeks later,  
on the shelf?

That's Origin of Species  
by someone called Charles Darwin,  
I said.

Is it one of those dirty books?  
he asked.

I think so, I said. I heard some religions  
have it blacklisted  
so it must be dirty.

And what's that one beside it?

That's Shakespeare, I said. Complete Works.

Is it another of your dirty books?  
said Somu.

Well, I said to this juvenile sibling  
just a year younger than I.  
There must be many dirty parts in the volume...  
You can never escape dirt...it's all part of life.

Raj Arumugam

# Completion

People might tell you  
I never finish  
things I start  
but I must tell you  
don't ever believe them  
because....

Raj Arumugam

# Concerning My Adventures In Hell

...concerning my adventures in Hell, as others have spoken of theirs in Heaven,  
and of the extrapolations thereof...

1

All right, you guys  
I mean even neurosurgeons  
are telling us now how real is Heaven  
They've been there and back  
so I guess you'd believe me  
(just me an irreverent poet)  
if I told you there's Hell  
for I've been there and catapulted back:  
I mean trust me, guys

2

So in my nights  
I was there in Hell  
and the Red Master said:  
&quot;You've got a choice, buddy  
to determine your eternity&quot;  
Well I knew straight away I was in Big Shit  
Should have read my Big Book  
when I was on Planet Earth

3

Red Master showed me a room  
where the inmates were  
up to their necks in shit  
and I said: &quot;No, I'll give this the miss&quot;

And so Red Master showed me  
the next room where the inmates  
were in shit to their noses

and I said, &quot;Pass...let's move on to the last &quot;;

And sure enough  
the third room was comfy -  
the inmates were up to their knees in shit  
and each enjoying a cup of coffee  
And I told the Red Master I could live with this  
but then the Red Master screamed at the inmates there:  
&quot; All Right, you pigs! Break Time over!  
Back on your heads in your shit! &quot;;

4

And it was then I was shot back to Earth  
and so whether Heaven or Hell  
Neurosurgeon or Poet  
you can be certain now  
Heaven and Hell exist -  
One for the Wise, one for the Fool  
It's your call, buddy -  
Big Book or Big Shit?

Raj Arumugam

# Conditioned Into Fixed Worlds

we see the earth  
and the trees and the oceans  
and the skies  
and we construct a meaning  
through what we were given  
through world traditions  
and dogma  
and Revelations;  
now we see the universe  
and the galaxies and the supernovas  
and the myriad wonders of the universe -  
and what do we do?  
we merely recycle everything  
in the darkness of the old

Raj Arumugam

# Confines

there is a freedom - an infinity, a clarity  
and yet we have settled  
for small confines and distortions  
for what is given, what is prescribed  
and the urine-stench alleys of the mind of time;  
we have abandoned the green hills and white clouds  
of beauty  
for the narrowness of identity  
for ideals and the group and pursuits

Raj Arumugam

# Consolation

we filter a sunset or a sunrise  
and the grass and the trees  
and the oceans  
into a consolation;  
into an experience  
distorted by one's own wants and needs  
and thoughts  
and systems;  
but if one can look at each as it is  
then one sees its beauty,  
its own worth:  
and in that beauty  
there is no need for dependence

Raj Arumugam

# Costume Of Cleopatra For Ida Rubinstain

Tell me anyone  
Caesar or Pharaoh  
Emperor or beggar  
Saint or the Damned -  
tell me anyone,  
if you ever found life  
stable, smooth and fluid

Let's dance then  
with clothes of silk  
and a life of ease  
let's throw our arms about  
our feet like a deer in a run  
a life smooth and refined  
for that's the best we can do

Let life sway as in a dance  
Let there be energy in purpose  
and intent  
And take a leap -  
never a bow -  
Let your hair fly  
and your clothes in the air  
A life light and nimble  
for that's the best we can do

Tell me anyone  
Caesar or Pharaoh  
Emperor or Beggar  
Saint or the Damned-  
tell me anyone  
if you ever found life  
stable, smooth and fluid

---

Poem based on drawing: Costume of Cleopatra  
for Ida Rubinstain, 1909 by Léon Samoilovitch Bakst

(May 10,1866 - December 28,1924)

Raj Arumugam

# Could I Borrow Your Donkey, Nasrudin?

Nasrudin's friend visits him  
and asks to borrow  
his donkey for a day

Oh no, dear friend, says Nasrudin  
moving close to his window  
My brother borrowed my only donkey  
just yesterday...

And just then Nasrudin's donkey  
brays aloud from the garden:  
Hee-haw! Hee-haw! Hee-haw!

But - says Nasrudin's friend,  
with a twinkle in his eye -  
I can hear your donkey in the garden!  
I can hear your donkey!

Ah, says Nasrudin, cool and at ease:  
Who'd you rather believe?  
Me? Or a donkey?

Raj Arumugam

# Countless Generations Of Bards And Preachers

countless generations of bards and preachers  
and poets and sages  
and honorable and revered members  
of our respectable societies  
countless such generations  
have spoken and declaimed  
have sung and serenaded  
on goodness and cruelty and avarice -  
and yet put them in power,  
and scrutinize their lives  
and their words  
become thin  
and their lives shallow  
and their songs are cherubic lies;  
a long line of saints and philosophers  
and prophets  
and mild-mannered selfless carers  
ah such holy stewards  
a long line indeed  
has nurtured humanity, its sick and downtrodden  
and radiates love in all directions  
but oh scrutinize their actions and  
their motives  
their lives are but comic contradictions  
pathetic self-delusion;  
ah, let me not seek to change the world  
but see to myself first  
rather than jump into  
hot-air sermons and vain exhibitions

Raj Arumugam

# Couple Under An Umbrella In The Snow    Couple Under An Umbrella In The Snow

smooth like a breeze  
let us move, let us walk  
in this snow

Crow and Heron  
they might call us;  
those who see  
my clothes in black  
and yours in white  
as light as falling snow

let us go  
gently together  
elegant and ephemeral  
under one umbrella  
close, warm  
my arm on your delicate shoulders  
and those who know  
they will say:  
'See, the eternal couple walk  
Heron and Crow  
Ying and yang  
Never appearing never going  
But always being'

Let us walk  
smooth and precious  
side by side, while fools think  
there are times or moments in our lives;  
while the wise know  
we are always being -  
not within time, not within segments  
but Crow and Heron  
beyond concept and ideation

---

poem based on painting:

'Couple under an umbrella in the snow (crow and heron) '

Color woodcut print by Suzuki Harunobu (1725? -July 17,1770)

Raj Arumugam

# Couples

there are histories of friendships  
relationships  
and long-living together;  
two people join  
and time passes,  
years pass by like the trains we miss  
and how do we learn to live?  
one intelligence is blackholed in the other

Raj Arumugam

# Course Fees, Student: Nasrudin

Maybe, says Nasrudin  
I should learn to play the flute

And so he goes to a master  
and Nasrudin says:  
I'd like to learn to play the flute.  
What are your course fees like?

O, says the Flute Master  
stroking his wide moustache:  
A \$100 each  
for the first 3 lessons;  
and just \$20 for each lesson thereafter

O, says Nasrudin –  
I'll start with the 4th lesson, please

Raj Arumugam

# Critics Have Appeared

critics have appeared  
in these cyber times  
hunting for poems  
and passing wise words  
on poems they swallow in seconds  
and whose comments are like puke;  
and whose own gems of poems when you seek  
it turns out, they have not published any  
at the very poetry portals where they pass such magnificent judgment...

O Ye Critics who hunt for poems  
come back another day  
when you have poems some of your very own...

Raj Arumugam

# Crow In The Mind

At quarter past five  
the crow caws and flies past  
in the morning sky; I do not see it  
as I lie in the couch and it seems  
then it flies past  
in the landscape of my blank mind

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Cupid Offers Help To The Widow

Hey, he's dead -  
just leave him  
and come with me;  
I'll get you another one -  
he'll be warm  
and let you rest your head on his broad chest  
comfy and nice.  
Just dump this one;  
he's been dead long enough  
and will not return to give you a hug  
bring back some bread or meat  
or to annoy you with unwashed dishes.  
Get up and stop this mourning  
and trust me  
for I've got a bow and arrow  
and rarely do I miss my mark;  
and though my name may rhyme with Stupid  
and I may be portrayed in the galleries  
as a mere child  
trust me  
I know more about these matters of the heart  
than generations of men and women  
who have ever lived on this planet earth  
and who have ever loved  
and who are all now buried  
or fired up into ash;  
so come,  
sweetheart -  
and, in the language of the poets,  
I'll show you fresh green pastures  
or an ocean full of fish, if you like;  
or, to pursue folk-imagery if you prefer,  
let sleeping dogs lie, as they might say -  
so let dead men rest in pieces where they are;  
you come with me now and I'll use my arrow  
to pin down for you a suitable one -  
a man alive, whole and who can return kisses  
when you give one;  
come with me,

sweetheart – the living don't call me Cupid for nothing...  
and if you don't come  
then you deserve the name that rhymes with mine.  
Come, we'll go catch what you want;  
and these days, we can even internet you one.

text©Raj Arumugam,2010; painting: The Lure by Byam Shaw

Raj Arumugam

# Cyclists Plenty

i

I just bought a bicycle;  
this will lighten my financial burden  
for I can deliver newspapers in the morning  
and with the money I earn,  
what little it may be,  
I can pay some part of my uni fees  
and that may help lessen the burden on my parents

ii

1975; he was 59;  
and everyday without fail  
before four am,  
he rode his bicycle to the modern immaculate cars  
all lined like soldiers on parade  
at the car parks below the multi-storey homes;  
and he'd wash cars with pail and liquid and cloth  
and water from a tap below each block  
and then finish before the first moving car  
and he'd be on a bus to his own day work

iii

the cyclist has all the modern equipment  
and takes lesson at the local cycle centre  
and looks stylish and professional and enjoys the air of leisure;  
and rides through the public roads  
rides in a group at the roundabout at Toowong  
and makes his way to the top of Mt-cootha with his group:  
there is an air of competition, of the Tour de France spirit  
and such a look as: I'll race you to the top!

iv

friend, I need to get to the next bus-stop;

if you are going that way,  
could you give me a lift on your bicycle?

Raj Arumugam

# Daddy! Daddy! Said Adam...

When Adam  
first saw God  
he said:  
Daddy! Daddy!

And God said:  
Hey! Stop calling me that!  
Don't you get too familiar with me, boy!

Oh, said Adam,  
but you created me  
so why can't I call you Daddy?

NO! thundered Mighty God.  
And that is that!

OK, said Adam.  
How about I call you Dr Frankenstein?

Raj Arumugam

# Daddy, Daddy, I Can't Go To School

daddy, daddy,  
I can't go to school

why darling,  
what's wrong  
with you?

I've got a runny nose,  
daddy -  
can't you see?  
and my cheeks are blue  
I just think  
I've got the flu

but sweetheart,  
you look  
as fresh as the rose  
outside your room;  
and darling  
your eyes glow  
like sparklers in New Year

but daddy, daddy  
hear me carefully:  
my voice is hoarse;  
don't you think  
I sound like granny?

oh, OK darling -  
you don't have to go to school;  
though, today is the day we stop  
for pancakes  
before school  
and we stop for

doughnuts after;  
but that's all fine  
if you're sick  
just stay at home  
and you can't have either

but daddy, daddy  
I CAN go to school;  
see my nose's fixed itself now  
and my voice is again  
as clear as the school bell;  
and just as you say  
my face is as fresh as the rose  
outside my room  
and my eyes glow  
like New Year sparklers:  
so what are you waiting for, daddy? –  
put on your shoes  
get your car keys  
and let's GO!

Raj Arumugam

# Daffy Duck The Philosopher

daffy duck is tired  
daffy duck is quacking tired of being drawn  
and being scripted  
and engineered  
into always being a cartoon character;  
daffy duck no longer wants to be  
daffy duck the cartoon character  
daffy duck wants to be a philosopher  
which is all quite quacking satisfying  
even just to think about

and so daffy duck the philosopher thinks:  
daffy duck thinks, therefore daffy duck is;  
but if I, daffy duck do not think I am daffy duck  
and renounce all the scripts and the words  
and the expectations and the roles,  
if I do not think I am daffy duck  
I am no longer daffy duck  
or, for that matter, any quacking duck

and so (much to the dismay of loyal fans  
who want always to be Daffy Duck Fans)  
daffy duck is no more the cartoon character  
and becomes daffy duck the philosopher;  
and daffy duck the philosopher  
thinks himself out of the quacking role  
of daffy duck as any quacking duck  
or anybody at all  
(much to the dismay of loyal fans  
who want always to be Daffy Duck Fans)

Raj Arumugam

# Damned Loser At Poetry Sites

You know, you just gotta love  
poetry blog sites  
Poetry sites make you comfy  
You post a poem  
and they tell you how  
useless your poem is  
with various comments and statistics

Like how? Like below...

You posted this poem 36 hours ago.  
This poem is public and visible on your profile.  
It has been read by 1 other person.  
Loser!  
(Actually, was that you using another account?)  
Loser!  
It's been 36 days now since  
you posted this poem  
and 360 other poems.  
You've had 1 hit –  
damned loser!  
It's all so consistent...  
You've had no likes...  
You've had no recommendations...  
No one has favorited you...  
Loser! Loser! Loser!  
Damned loser!  
You've no Friends.  
You've had no Invitations.  
You're not on the  
Most Frequented Poet List.  
You're not on the  
Most Commented List.  
You've had 390 poems  
and none has been chosen  
to be featured at our site  
and none of your poems  
ever became Editor's pick.  
Loser! Loser! Loser!

O, What's wrong with you?  
Loser! Loser! Damned Loser!

Raj Arumugam

# Dancing Boy

sa sa sa sa  
sa sa sa la la sa  
la la ma ma da da la la sa sa  
O one foot up  
one foot down  
left hand here  
right hand there  
where goes the body  
and where the mind?  
sa sa sa sa  
sa sa sa la la sa  
la la ma ma da da la sa sa  
dancing in the world  
to drums and flute  
and strings and cymbals  
and wood and metal  
where is one  
where is the other  
which is my shape  
where dance my clothes?  
which is first, which is end?  
sa sa sa sa  
sa sa sa la la sa  
la la ma ma da da la sa sa  
happy face and light heart  
they connect  
in moving limbs and fluid music  
where is the dancer, the music  
where is solid, where is fluid?  
where is earth, where the sky?  
where I put my feet is the ocean  
where my sleeves fly is space  
where I put my fingertips is life  
where I look is delight  
O one foot up  
one foot down  
left hand here  
right hand there  
where goes the body

and where the mind?  
sa sa sa sa  
sa sa sa la la sa  
la la ma ma da da la sa sa

Raj Arumugam

# Darned Tired

I do not know where I went  
I do not know where I am;  
all I know is  
I'm going to bed now...

Raj Arumugam

# Days Of Quiet

here is the forest  
the world withdraws a little;  
quiet, silent and calm  
the trees wait in their own nature

The morning is beautiful, the progress of the day smooth and the evening pleasant and the nights pensive and still. Time moves slowly and thought is as radiant as the sunlight that streams through.

Let us dwell here then a while, where it is peaceful. Let us rest us here awhile where the world drops off, distant from one.

the path leads nowhere  
one is drawn to silence;  
the leaves glisten  
and the breeze speaks  
of things past words

Let us rest then in this, where the clamor ceases, where beauty may keep one company.

Raj Arumugam

# Days Of The Parents

you and I, we bring forth  
good offspring  
a new world  
we bring to the old:  
bright new lives  
we bring forth

we bring forth children  
who laugh and jump  
and bring forth angels  
who are a joy to the world

and our days turn to years  
as a bright energy  
surrounds each hour;  
kids grow into adults  
and we see and live  
what generations have done

you and I, we bring forth  
good offspring  
a new world  
we bring to the old:  
bright new lives  
we bring forth

you and I have brought  
forth things like the Divine makes worlds

and what our own parents gave us  
likewise we have done for our children

you and I, we bring forth  
good offspring  
a new world  
we bring to the old:  
bright new lives  
we bring forth

Raj Arumugam

# Dead Even When Alive

all we have are flowers  
and water and earth and fire  
when we die;  
and all our certainties  
and revelations and beliefs and theories  
are but hopes, wishes, desires  
suppositions repeated and possibilities...

and all our lives we do not see what is before us  
what presents itself  
but choose to color everything  
with our received formulations  
with our conditioning  
our conceptions and systems  
with an approach to life,  
so that we are dead even alive

Raj Arumugam

# Dead Man Domitius

so in ancient Rome  
Caelius bumps into  
his friend in the streets  
and he says:  
"Hey, Domitius  
I thought you were dead"

Domitius laughs and he says:  
"Well, you can see I'm alive"

"Yes, " says Caelius, "but you must be dead  
for I had the information  
from someone more reliable than you"

Raj Arumugam

# Dead Man Talking

it's all so funny  
even as my friends and relatives  
and close ones sit weeping or stand with somber faces;  
if I knew all I know now  
as I am - cold, dead, finis,  
I wouldn't have done the things I did alive:  
and what is it I know, now dead?  
It's for you to find out, mate...  
go on and leave me in dead peace,  
do your own work, your own living and dying...  
I can only tell you just this,  
it's all so funny really...

Raj Arumugam

# Dear Moon

dear moon  
there is you and me and the sky  
and the earth I sit on;  
there is the air and the darkness  
and the light that bounces off you  
and there is the lake  
and there are giants of trees  
and there  
is an owl hooting in one;  
there are bats flying past  
and a creature foraging below the dry leaves  
gathered on the ground;  
there is the vast space  
and the stars and the pauses and the continuations;  
dear moon  
there is love and there is beauty  
and there is stillness and an energy  
and there is that quiet that flows through us all

Raj Arumugam

# Dear Moon, You Will Understand

darling moon  
dear moon  
do not be offended  
we have stripped you  
down to rock and a plain face  
and we show pictures of you  
in black, gray and white;  
and though a writer of verse,  
in this verse,  
I strip you of your romance and aura;  
be not angry  
for after all,  
you will understand,  
we are children who come after  
Galileo  
and Neil Armstrong

Raj Arumugam

## Dear Owl, Forlorn Like King Lear

dear owl,  
where is your home  
after all the day and night of rains  
that you should sit  
forlorn like Lear  
on the pavement  
this cold, sunless morning?

you will make one again,  
dear owl,  
and you will hoot again in nights  
and stay discreet in the day...

Raj Arumugam

# Dearest Gentle World

dearest  
gentle world,  
loving trees  
and generous open fields  
and blue skies

you can sing me  
a song  
if you like;  
and I'd sleep  
sound and quiet  
like a newborn

make up the lyrics  
as you go along;  
keep it easy  
like my village-mum's  
lullaby

knit your song  
with the stars and the moon  
and sprinkle it  
with dew and saffron

sing me about love  
and the birds and the trees;  
O let the words be in praise  
of the sunshine between  
the leaves

so you can sing  
beloved world,  
if you like,  
and I'd sleep

like a newborn  
all day and all night;  
I'll sleep for always,  
dearest world,  
clear and innocent  
in your warm fields  
if you will sing me now  
the sweet songs of the earth

Raj Arumugam

# Death Advice

Do not cry;  
there must be no tears  
as you die

Do not laugh;  
it's not a trivial matter  
your passing

Do not smile  
though you're happy  
as you move on

And most of all -  
don't heed the advice  
of the living or the dead  
as death comes knocking

Raj Arumugam

# Death Of A Creature

you hit a feral creature?  
it's squashed  
and you left it still lying on the road  
in its own blood?  
don't worry; it's just a creature

Raj Arumugam

# Delicate Moments

1

Susan visits May  
and May gasps,  
looking out the window:  
'Hey! Oh no - that's my husband  
walking here with my lover! '

'Oh my God, ' exclaims Susan  
'that's exactly what I'm thinking! '

2

Little Tommy is outside  
crying in the street  
and Old Margie walks by  
and she says to the crying boy:  
'Hey, why the tears? '  
And little Tommy says:  
'My parents are inside the house  
and they are fighting.'

Old Margie scratches her head  
looks close  
and asks: 'Who's your Dad? '

'Oh, ' says Little Tommy,  
'that's what they are fighting about'

Raj Arumugam

# Depression

I called my friend  
and  
after many calls between which we maintained  
long silences,  
after many polite turn-downs and diversions  
he said,  
Come over.  
It was a sad dog and wizened master  
with half a smile each  
who welcomed me.  
The dog was seated on a couch in the verandah;  
the master sat within and called out for me to come in.  
Sit,  
he said, pointing to a chair against the wall.  
And I sat obediently.

He listened to my consonants, or seemed to  
listen and then mouthed words unrelated to one another and mine.  
We both fell silent.  
Then he told me news  
about his home  
that was true thirty years ago  
and still, for him, holds true.

What can I do?  
he sighed.  
He looked at the trees on the other side  
of the road and I looked at the bushes.  
I'm not sure what the lethargic dog  
looked at.

I do not need this,  
I thought.  
Then I said it was time for me to go.

Keep in touch,  
I said.  
He said he would get in touch with me.  
I had put the ball in his court;

and he seemed glad of that  
for he could now keep it there.  
Or puncture it.  
We were both glad.  
I left.  
He never called. We are both glad.  
We understand each other.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Despair Is The Message

Darkness is the end  
and agony takes you in its hand  
Despair is the message -  
you decipher it in the fire of a moment

At the end of the rainbow  
I found loneliness and sorrow

At the end of the days  
was sneering desolation and  
its creepy-crawlies of pain

At the end of the long line  
was the embrace of the cold  
and bitterness

At the end of the long wait  
was the death of promise

At the end of the rainbow  
I found loneliness and sorrow

Darkness is the end  
and agony takes you in its hand  
Despair is the message  
you decipher it in a sudden moment

Raj Arumugam

# Dhukka Of The Ronin

I wander now  
in the wilderness, in the woods  
on deserted paths between villages  
greeted by strangers  
welcomed by humble folk  
but welcomed at no Lord's castle  
rejected by Masters and Authorities  
shunned by those in Position, in Step  
ostracised and kept in the distance by Establishment

the lonely all-embracing tree  
offers me shade  
the narrow cave  
accepts me in the night  
a kind wife and her man  
offer me part of the meal  
they have prepared for their children

the Order harries me on  
I have to keep moving  
And nothing in my past  
condemns me in the present  
nor does it save me

All that I've learned  
is become my burden  
All that I've loved  
I've grown to hate  
Of my own life  
I've made my straitjacket  
and in my footsteps you read  
The Sutra of the Outsider

Raj Arumugam

# Di Da Da Da Da Da Di Dum

di da da  
da da da  
di dum  
what's that?  
I must have a message in my poem?  
di da da  
da da da  
di dum  
O, can't I just be happy?  
and hum:  
di da da  
da da da  
di dum  
what  
I must have a cause  
otherwise it defies reason?  
like I found love  
or got a promotion  
or am going on vacation?  
di da da  
da da da  
di dum  
O, I'm just being me  
as what I am this moment  
di da da  
da da da  
di dum  
dumadumadumadumaduma  
dumadumadumadum  
di di di di di di dum dum  
di da da du da da di dum  
must have a message?  
you learnt long ago  
as part of your craft  
that poetry  
or every piece  
must have a message?  
di da da  
da da da

di dum  
tra la la li li  
la la la da da da da  
di da da  
da da di dum;  
did you like that crescendo there,  
sweetie?

Raj Arumugam

# Did You Die, Ophelia?

did you die,  
Ophelia?  
did you drown yourself?  
I heard you looked  
pretty and glorious  
in your best dress  
and with flowers  
all ready to meet your Maker;  
they tell me it was so beautiful  
one could only cry to see you in the water...  
did you kill yourself  
darling Ophelia  
because I told you to go join a nunnery?  
did you think  
your love's words  
meant a nunnery is the same as death  
and so honored mad Hamlet's words that way?  
you could have chosen a drier type of death,  
you know – though death by drowning,  
dearest Ophelia,  
dying in a stream and being wet  
you save the living the trouble of washing you...  
did you die, did you drown  
darling Ophelia  
thinking  
Poor, poor Hamlet is gone mad...?  
...thinking....  
There is nothing left when a noble soul  
goes insane...  
did you die,  
Ophelia?  
did you drown yourself?  
or is that just some new fashion you've invented  
darling Ophelia  
of taking a beauty bath?

Raj Arumugam

# Did You Want To Go?

did you want to go  
just you and me?  
to the woods where the grass is soft  
and the tall trees give gentle shade

did you want to go,  
precious pearl of the ocean,  
did you want to go  
just you and me?  
to the quiet cabin  
away from the village  
and where the fire will keep us warm  
and the singing crickets guard the door

did you want to go  
just you and me?  
to the fields where the flowers  
bloom like patterns on rich silk  
and the butterflies dally between

shall we go now,  
my sweetheart of gentle ways?  
we shall pitch the tent at the river bank  
and sit by the fire and observe the stars  
while the owl hoots on a tree nearby;  
and you will tell me tales of your childhood  
and I shall sing the praise of the moon

did you want to go  
just you and me?  
to the woods where the grass is soft  
and the tall trees give gentle shade

Raj Arumugam

# Did You Want To Say Goodbye?

did you want  
to say goodbye?  
a hug will do  
did you want  
to say goodbye?  
a gentle wave  
at the window is good  
did you want  
to say goodbye?  
I will remember always  
a tender kiss on the cheek  
did you want  
to say goodbye?  
I shall cherish all my days  
soft, final words  
did you want  
to say goodbye?  
there have been so many  
another goodbye will not hurt

Raj Arumugam

# Did You Want To Say Something?

did you want  
to say  
something  
to me?  
but the words  
were shut out by the windows  
and the walls bounced  
the syllables into the chimney  
and up and out  
to paint the clouds black...

did you want to say all  
what was in your mind?  
and the music came in just then  
and drowned sweet words  
and the weight of the books  
fell on the living...

did you want  
to sing something  
to me?  
but the cacophony of living  
and the agony  
of activity  
sitting in the wings  
drowned the performance...  
and the falling leaves  
in the Gardens of the North  
covered all those standing alive...

did you want to whisper a word  
but the ears you drew near to  
were like the vengeance of birds?

so your words  
were never  
heard

and will never be re-created  
even by  
machines  
yet-to-be races will create  
in times far hence  
in the future  
to bring back all words  
of the human past

Raj Arumugam

# Dignity

You're not going to take mine away  
you're not going to get me down  
with your polite replies and silences  
with your civilized condescension  
legally-closed and properly-handled processing  
and accommodating tolerance

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Dignity Of Labor

During the day  
I punch keyboards and meet deadlines;  
I work in enclosures and hold my face away  
as I answer calls  
(I am practiced in cadence,  
sounding confident and caring  
and yet distant)  
and send off neat replies  
I need not be responsible for; in the evenings  
I stop at Coles and pick what I need:  
bananas, oranges, tomatoes, vegetables, greens,  
bacon, lamb chops and beef steaks and my six-pack and  
cokes and pizzas in boxes and sauces in tubes.  
I work and I eat and the basis of my life  
is the dignity of labor.

We care; we serve;  
We protect the Department  
So what do you make of me?  
What do you make of me  
that you issue me these letters and forms  
and make me wait endlessly and give  
good circumspect chatter if I ask what I  
should do next?  
What secret conclusions  
form the basis of your dealings?  
What do you intend to make of me?  
Perhaps you visualize my future as a  
mute tight-lipped nodding Indian  
in his convenience store,  
neatly put out in the  
quietest lane  
of a distant suburb. Pleasant and agreeable  
you will have me, smiling and ready to serve,  
immobile at the counter, briskly walking  
to the shelves to serve you  
when you deign to come on an odd  
shopping spree  
to get exotic spices and newly-heard of condiments

that you will probably store for long in  
your kitchen and throw away anyway.  
You will not have me out of your  
collection of stereotypes, will you?

No, I shall not allow you to  
insinuate me into worthlessness  
with your cold and bureaucratic silences  
and ready-made answers  
for I know my worth  
as you yours.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Ding! Ding! Ping! Ping!

together now  
let us sing  
the song of inanity  
the song of no meaning  
it is the song of the no-light  
the song of the ludicrous  
the ludicrous become meaning  
meaning become ludicrous  
This become that  
That become this  
ding! ding! ding! ding!  
ping! ping! ping! ping!  
everything has penetrated its opposite  
and the world become beastly  
no beginning, no end  
no origins  
let us sing now  
the world topsy-turvy  
the brain in a soup,  
the mind's one word: baa-baa-baa  
you sing one line  
the other another  
and then all together  
the song of bad breath and yawns  
ding! ding! ding! ding!  
ping! ping! ping! ping!  
we see King Lear walking  
naked in the plains  
and we have the Imposter  
with his heavy butt on the Throne  
which is a Toilet with automated cistern  
let us sing then  
not then, but now  
together now  
let us sing  
the song of inanity  
the song of no meaning  
it is the song of the no-light  
the song of the ludicrous

the ludicrous become meaning  
ding! ding! ding! ding!  
ping! ping! ping! ping!

Raj Arumugam

# Diogenes And The Philosophy Of Motion

And Diogenes is in his corner  
and this young man  
new Philosophy Graduate  
of the Academy comes up to him  
and sits beside him on the steps  
of Raphael's School of Athens  
and the young man says to Diogenes:  
'There is no such thing as motion, Diogenes.  
I shall prove to you through complex philosophy.'

And Diogenes gets up  
and he walks away from  
the School of Athens  
and he goes to his tub  
at the end of the marketplace

Raj Arumugam

# Diogenes Calls For Some Men To Help

See Diogenes is in the market  
It is busy, crowded  
usual Sunday crowd  
busy, busy at the market;  
some come to buy meat  
and some to pick pockets  
and some to ogle

see - suddenly Diogenes  
jumps into the crowd  
and he shouts:  
"Men! Men! Quick - quick!  
We need some help! "

And 6 men jump forward  
to help, 6 sturdy men  
all strong, eager and ready

and Diogenes spits in their faces  
spits as quickly as he can  
and swiftly crouches as low as he can:  
"I asked for men!  
Not scoundrels! "

Raj Arumugam

# Diogenes Ignored

&quot;Do you notice, &quot;  
says a passer-by  
to the begging Diogenes,  
&quot;that people rather offer alms  
to the lame, blind and maimed?  
They do not offer alms  
to a philosopher like you.  
Why is it that you think? &quot;

&quot;That's because, &quot;  
says Diogenes  
&quot;people think one day  
they too might become lame, blind or maimed -  
but they never think they'd  
ever turn to philosophy  
So they ignore me...&quot;

Raj Arumugam

# Diogenes On Fate

Diogenes is walking past  
the crowds and the stalls  
in the market

the butcher has caught a man  
stealing meat

'Oh, ' says the thief

'It's my fate to steal -  
do not punish me! '

'Oh, ' says Diogenes,

'if it's your fate to steal  
then it's your fate to be beaten! '

And Diogenes beats him

Raj Arumugam

# Diogenes On The Looks Of A Wise Man

'Say Diogenes,  
how is a Wise One  
to be known?  
Can you tell me  
how a Wise One  
might look like? '

Diogenes looks skyward,  
strikes a pose  
and strokes his beard

Raj Arumugam

# Diogenes On The Real Thing

A man comes  
from the next city  
seeking Diogenes  
'O Diogenes,  
I have come in search  
Of wisdom...  
Can you write me a Book  
and give that to me  
so that I can cherish wisdom  
all my life? '

'You fool! ' says Diogenes  
'If you were hungry  
you would not eat the painting  
of a meal but the food itself -  
and yet you seek the Book  
but not the wisdom...  
Discard the Book;  
see the truth! '

Raj Arumugam

# Diogenes Searches For Human Beings

(Diogenes (c.412BCE-323BCE) , lantern in hand, walks out in broad daylight looking for a human being...and as in days past, he finds none.)

Do my eyes fail me?  
Is the light of the sun useless?  
for though in daylight I have walked abroad  
from the confined barrel I live in  
away from the rats  
away a while from the stray dogs  
that congregate outside my hovel  
that want a bit of my sack of carrots  
and discarded meat  
that I picked up from the market;  
and though I walked often with firm steps and keen eyes  
I did not see a man, a woman, a human worth their salt;  
and so I walk now  
(for perhaps my eyes do fail me  
and the light of the sun and moon is perhaps an illusion)  
and so I walk now with a lantern even in broad daylight  
and still I do not see a man, a woman, a human worth their salt;  
what I see are swirls of violence and greed and pettiness  
and whorls of self-preoccupation and bigotry and ignorance  
and narrowness  
all encased in flesh and bones:  
leave me Sirs and sweet-dressed and made-up Ladies  
and Children corrupt in the World of Adult Fanfare;  
leave me and let me go on my quest further afield  
as far as the lantern will allow me  
even in this bright day ruled by the sun  
and ruined by you Sneering Living Beings;  
leave me to wander as far to see if I cannot perhaps find a human  
in some corner....a surprise as one might find  
a gold coin in some dark corner....  
And I so hope that today perhaps I shall find  
the human this bright day

by the light of this lantern  
and not like yesterday and all days before  
search in vain till the lantern light dies  
and crawl back to my hovel  
not finding one free of these or at least sincere,  
and so worthy of the name of human...

Raj Arumugam

# Diogenes The Beggar-Teacher

And Diogenes is an outcast  
not wanted by society;  
his mind is way too far  
and he doesn't belong -  
and where does he come from, anyway?  
and they don't want teachers like that;  
and the men and women of Dignity  
have made sure he stands at the periphery,  
as far outside as possible

'O why do you beg,  
Diogenes? '  
asks the butcher

'I'm a teacher,  
Old Butcher, '  
says Diogenes  
'I beg in order  
to teach'

'And what  
do you teach? '  
asks the butcher

'Generosity, '  
answers Diogenes  
'Do you have some bones  
and meat you can spare? '

Raj Arumugam

# Diogenes The Guest

Diogenes is in his tub  
in the street corner  
and a servant of  
The House of Vines  
comes to him

'My Master, ' says the servant  
'bids you, Diogenes, dine with him  
this Saturday night'

'I will not dine with him, '  
says Diogenes  
'Tell your Master so'

'And why is that? '  
asks the servant  
'My Master will want to know'

'Tell him, ' says Diogenes  
crawling back into his tub  
'The last time I dined with him  
in his house  
he did not express proper gratitude'

Raj Arumugam

# Diogenes The Persuasive Beggar

Diogenes has traded  
philosophy for riches  
and poor Diogenes must beg -  
for neither does he want to belong  
to any organisation

and so Diogenes begs

and this man in the street  
says to the begging Diogenes:  
&quot;OK, I'll give you money  
if you can persuade me&quot;

&quot;Persuade you? &quot; says Diogenes  
&quot;If I could persuade you  
I'd persuade you to go  
jump off the nearest cliff&quot;

Raj Arumugam

# Diogenes' World View

So what city do you belong to,  
to what tribe, to what ethos and religion -  
to what state, Diogenes?

I have none  
and so I am free -  
but if you must have a label  
to understand me  
you might say: cosmopolites  
...but beware of labels...

Raj Arumugam

## Dirty Science (Part 2 Of The Discovery Of Kama Sutra)

What are you reading?  
asked little Somu,  
a year younger than I was

It's a Science book,  
I said, turning away from him

If it's a Science book,  
the little rascal said,  
why are you hiding it behind  
another science book?

Mind your own business,  
I said,  
Hardly taking my eyes  
off Vatsyayana's classic

I'll mind my own  
if you tell me what it is;  
otherwise dad  
will come to know of it-  
and you won't be able to tell  
him to mind his own business

Oh! I said, angry and afraid,  
and I threw down my books  
(the cover book and the hidden book) .  
You're too young for such things.

But he looked at me  
as only a dangerous blackmailer can  
and I yielded to his request -

I would summarize aloud each chapter  
for him as I finished reading each  
(That's the trouble when  
fate throws you in  
with siblings who don't read)

And day in and day out  
over the next few weeks  
I summarized the Kama Sutra –  
no, I don't think I summarized,  
I extemporized,  
I added details, I confess –  
for the benefit of non-reading Somu  
that silly pumpkin of a brother  
who didn't understand a word of what I said!

Raj Arumugam

# Discounts

retailers offer discounts  
and cattle-consumers run after bargains  
mumbling like idiots  
'it's cheaper here, it's cheaper there';  
but  
if things are run fair and honest  
where do discounts come from?

Raj Arumugam

# Discourses Of The Lazy

1

oh, let's not gather the fallen leaves  
from off the lawn;  
it may disturb the creatures who  
may need to live underneath;  
let's do our bit for the environment  
through not doing

2

I don't wipe the dust off my table;  
what's the use?  
it may rise in the air  
and pollute the room  
and invade my mind through  
my nostrils;  
so  
dust on the table,  
dust in the air:  
what does it matter? ;  
just leave it be  
and preserve my sanity

3

I had a shower yesterday and the day before  
and I think they washed me on my birth  
and once again when I was christened:  
with the drought  
and looming world water wars  
every BODY should do its part!

4

yes, we'll drive to the shops:  
I mean I could walk there  
but then there's always a hazard  
like space junk might land on one  
and the neighbor's dog  
might just bite me on the butt:  
a car ride's much safer

5

if you wash your clothes  
once too often  
you wash off all the positive energy  
that builds up when you've got them on;  
so to wash them, that's to wash one's clothes,  
one washes away all of one's gathered energy;  
so really it's wiser to leave things be

6

I know the dentist  
said I should brush at least twice a day  
and I should floss too;  
but look, what the dentist doesn't tell you  
is brushing dislodges your teeth  
and flossing just pulls them away...  
so that's why I don't brush or floss;  
I save my teeth  
and I save my money

Raj Arumugam

# Dog Mumbo (A Horror Story)

Dog Mumbo  
lives alone  
since his master disappeared  
in the corner house  
in Suburb Bumbo

Mumbo stands with  
his head at the window  
paws on the sills  
and when Stranger Whoever's  
heart is touched  
&quot;O that poor thing,  
so so sweet&quot;  
and comes in to pat the dog  
Dog Mumbo invites  
Stranger Whoever  
to the master's seat  
and closes the door;  
and when Dog Mumbo turns round  
to Stranger Whoever  
it's no longer that poor thing,  
so so sweet thing  
For it goes straight for the heart

And so it lives alone  
and feeds itself  
same way its Master fed it

And I believe, you discerning reader,  
have a name  
so remember it well  
and do not fancy yourself ever to be  
Stranger Whoever

Raj Arumugam

# Dogma

I'm content in this life  
and with no desire  
for loyalty rewards after

and penalties, if so,  
I leave to Any  
who might honestly think  
it right to judge

Raj Arumugam

# Donkey Or Man?

The evolutionist asks of Nasrudin  
which is the wiser:  
Donkey or man?

The donkey, naturally, says Nasrudin.

How is that? asks the evolutionist  
surprised at Nasrudin's quick reply

And Nasrudin says:  
The donkey never asks for more burden than it can carry;  
but man - ah, they ask for more  
and take on more than they should

Raj Arumugam

# Donkey, Dog And Master – A Very Gentle Fable

Come, listen all -  
listen to a very gentle fable  
Of Donkey, Dog and Man  
and the friendship  
amongst these three

1  
Donkey and Dog are loyal servants;  
they've served the same master  
all their lives

It's night now and  
Donkey and Dog sleep  
in the courtyard  
while Master  
snores in the house

A thief sneaks in  
through the gate  
and donkey whispers  
as gently as he can:  
Hey, dog...There's an intruder;  
Why don't you bark and let master know?

And the old Dog growls as  
quietly as he can:  
Why don't you bray aloud  
and raise the alarm?

Hey, but you're the dog  
and you're man's best friend,  
Donkey whispers in the dark

Man's best friend, eh?

says Dog.  
But is man the dog's best friend?  
I've served the master for ages  
and now that I'm old he neglects me  
and is talking about taking another dog.  
I bet he'll have you skinned alive  
when you're dead!  
To the dogs with him!  
You bray if you like.

2

Oh I've never seen  
a more ungrateful being,  
Donkey says.  
Master is the best  
and though he treats  
us harsh  
it's all for our own good.  
But your ingratitude offends me  
and for the sake of decency and justice  
and for all the values I hold dear  
I shall have to do  
a watchdog's duty instead.

And with that  
the donkey brays aloud  
and the cacophony is heard  
in all the village  
and the thief runs away as quickly as he can;  
and the master comes running out with a huge stick  
and seeing the donkey braying madly  
with no cause but its own stupidity  
the master beats the donkey well and proper  
till all his own hands ache  
and he goes back to bed

And now Dog and Donkey

lie down again together  
in the courtyard  
and Dog says to the quiet Donkey:  
Looks like you just found out  
how it feels to be man's best friend!

Raj Arumugam

# Donkeys Aplenty

donkeys abound  
donkeys thrive;  
there are many:  
plain or disguised aplenty

doesn't mean we laugh  
at them, so they're stupid;  
just be mindful  
the last laugh  
may very well be  
on the human species

as for me, I'm human certainly  
(I don't say: hee-haw! hee-haw! when I laugh –  
I say: shit and hell! when I laugh –  
which is so distinctly human!)

so

as for me, I'm human certainly  
though I may be donkey incognito  
you never know;

as for you, dear friend –  
no, don't go away

I won't be rude

but just look in the mirror  
and pinch yourself

if you don't believe

what you see:

no, I'm not being rude:

but what you got is what you see!

but really, don't tell anyone  
if large Midas ears are there  
covered behind your hair

donkeys abound  
donkeys thrive;  
there are many:  
plain or disguised aplenty

Raj Arumugam

# Donkey's Song For You And Me

hee-haw, hee-haw  
haw haw haw he  
hee-haw, hee-haw  
he, he, he, haw;  
haw, haw, haw, haw  
he he he he haw  
hee-haw, hee-haw,  
he, e, e, `ee-`aw

oh, once in ancient times  
I roamed free  
like all wild creatures  
but you ensnared me;  
and you made a donkey of me  
and made of me a beast of burden  
and the butt of your jokes  
and you thought that's so clever of you  
but I've got news for you,  
you witless humans:  
if you haven't noticed already  
you're just too clever for your own good -  
and that's not very clever, is it?

hee-haw, hee-haw  
haw haw haw he  
hee-haw, hee-haw  
he, he, he, haw;  
haw, haw, haw, haw  
he he he he haw  
hee-haw, hee-haw,  
he, e, e, `ee-`aw

you see what' you've done

to our world;  
me, simple donkey,  
all I need are some grass and weeds  
but you, you've eaten every corner of the earth  
and all you'll leave your progeny  
is a barren, poisoned earth!  
and I see the air's stinking  
and the water's killing the fish  
and you made creatures disappear  
and now you fight each other for food:  
hey, you human donkeys –  
there's irony in that,  
you might have deduced that  
if you had listened to your poetry teachers!

hee-haw, hee-haw  
haw haw haw he  
hee-haw, hee-haw  
he, he, he, haw;  
haw, haw, haw, haw  
he he he he haw  
hee-haw, hee-haw,  
he, e, e, `ee-`aw

and so  
may an asteroid or comet  
hit the planet hard  
and may you all choke in billows of stellar clouds;  
and may you all perish in that  
and that not for your own good  
but for the good of the planet  
that will bounce back long after  
you all choke and dropp dead like  
birds in the air you pollute...

hee-haw, hee-haw

haw haw haw he  
hee-haw, hee-haw  
he, he, he, haw;  
haw, haw, haw, haw  
he he he he haw  
hee-haw, hee-haw,  
he, e, e, `ee-`aw

and I see also  
you still fight and kill one another  
over your silly world religions  
and your juvenile beliefs and blind faiths  
and so may you continue  
and holily fight one another  
until you are all wholly dead  
and so may each kill the other  
and may you all  
in one explosion  
move on to the next world  
and discover  
that your only reality is hell  
and the only True God is Donkey  
and may Donkey God  
show you all your donkey ears  
and kick you all in your butts  
and with infinite teeth  
bite you into insanity  
for the whole of eternity  
forever and ever

hee-haw, hee-haw  
haw haw haw he  
hee-haw, hee-haw  
he, he, he, haw;  
haw, haw, haw, haw  
he he he he haw  
hee-haw, hee-haw,  
he, e, e, `ee-`aw

Raj Arumugam

# Donut Health

Danny drops his broad bottom  
back on the seat  
beside his wife  
at the food court  
with 3 donuts for himself  
each soaked in oil and fat  
and each thick with white sugar coat

"Danny, why do you eat this stuff...?  
That's all fat, three donuts of fat, "  
moans his wife

"Not really, " says Danny to his wife  
who eats lettuce and carrot  
and who looks like a knitting needle  
"Fastfood donuts are healthy;  
look at the air in the middle -  
but no doubt  
one has to get through rest of the donut  
for sure  
but the air in the middle  
is pure life-giving health  
when one gets there"

Raj Arumugam

# Doughnuts For Sale

O come buy doughnuts  
doughnuts  
doughnuts  
doughnuts for sale

sweet ones, ladies  
and yummy ones, gents  
precious doughnuts  
you've never seen in your lands  
I made them with my own hands  
each sugary and yum to the core  
round and hollow in the middle  
each doughnut like Einstein's universe

O come buy doughnuts  
doughnuts  
doughnuts  
doughnuts for sale

colorful doughnuts  
I have for you gathered here  
I climbed the skies  
to steal a color off each rainbow  
that appears and disappears  
so have a blue doughnut  
a red or pink or green or purple  
any color you will  
or a psychedelic one if that please you more

O look at this love doughnut trick:  
it fits your fingers like a huge wedding ring  
and your beloved bites through  
and then gets to your finger  
and has to lick off every dropp of sugar  
and then kisses you on your hands  
and after that  
O, modesty forbids me to say anything beyond  
it's all up to you  
Or would you prefer a doughnut bangle?

O come buy doughnuts  
doughnuts  
doughnuts  
doughnuts for sale  
O beautiful ladies  
and gentle Sirs  
please  
make all my doughnuts  
disappear within the hour

Raj Arumugam

## Doves On Cold Gray Metal

it's wet autumn days  
and the rains sing us asleep  
and nurture many gloomy minds in the day;  
and on the lamppost arms along the highway  
as I drive home  
four and twenty doves sit on cold gray metal  
perhaps conferring on the state of the world

Raj Arumugam

# Dr Bell In His Hell Of A Well

Shall we tell  
dear Dr Bell  
he's actually  
fallen into a well  
that he's not exactly  
in hell  
he's really  
a frog in the well  
but if we do tell  
dear Dr Bell  
he's actually  
in a well  
not in his proclaimed hell  
and if he climbs out of this well  
it'd be swell  
cos he'd be out of the cell  
and he wouldn't smell  
but then I'm afraid  
dear Dr Well  
will come out  
of his imagined hell  
just in order to sell  
his vision of a literal hell  
with proclamation  
and pronouncement:  
"Hear all about it!  
I know all about it;  
I've been to  
and back from hell"

So should we tell him  
or should we not?  
Oh what the hell!  
We'll wish him well  
we'll tell him anyway:  
Earth shall always beget fools  
and many will fall  
each in their own well  
and so make life

a living hell  
So let's get Dr Bell  
out of the well  
for many  
a fool awaits his  
Divine Vision of Hell

Raj Arumugam

# Dr Poet

there is Doctor Poet and there are Distinguished Poets  
and there is Poet Laureate  
and there is the Greatest Poet Ever  
there is Most Published Poet  
and there is Poet Who is Most Renowned Poet  
and there is Poet whose Ancestors are the Great Poets of Ancient Lands;  
and there is Poet with several Chairs and Posts  
and Most Seductive Positions...  
all these creatures parade their titles and claims  
and their poems seem to be mere appendices to their titles...

tchk, tchk – you petty mortals,  
the Kingdom of Poetry knows no class and title;  
a poet is a poet and no other qualification has any weight;  
a poet does not exist apart from the poem

look, even if that Almighty God wrote a poem,  
still should that Most Revered God  
present the poem without claim to Omnipotence  
for the poem must be judged as such -  
for truly in the Kingdom of Poetry is no Power beyond the Poem...

Raj Arumugam

# Dragonfly On Bamboo Tip

the dragonfly is on the tip  
still,  
as is the air and so the bamboo;  
and one observes  
what is before one  
not forming an image or opinion  
or an appreciation  
but one observes  
what is before one  
the dragonfly and the tip of the bamboo  
and the air  
and not even with names  
and there is but that

Raj Arumugam

## E And 3 - Philosophy

E and 3  
taught philosophy  
at the University of Letters and Numbers -  
and they taught together always  
(though there's a rumour  
the students were all always drunk  
and seeing double)

And the sum of the philosophy lectures  
E and 3 delivered was:  
"Everything you see and interpret  
is all dependent on your perspective"

Raj Arumugam

# Each Is Equal

each is equal  
with no exception;  
misguided God included;  
and the reason many propound higher powers  
is they hope this 'superiority', this 'status', this 'magic'  
will rub off on them;  
but if you can see each is equal  
then you'll see  
there is no being  
(poor God)  
more or less than equal

Raj Arumugam

# Eagle Soaring High

we may glorify the eagle  
the bird of prey  
that is in the air  
over Fukagawa Susaki  
at its moment of decision  
as it eyes the birds  
near the wooden bucket  
at the edge of the bay:  
but it too  
for all its magnificence  
is flesh and a bundle of needs  
as are people  
all the ones who have come and gone  
and now in this moment  
there is just us  
flesh and a bundle of needs

Raj Arumugam

# Earthling And Martian At A Space Bar

I'm having a drink this here  
at Space Bar in Pluto  
and Martian Pete comes in  
and sits beside me  
and we talk, and we drink

Full of loyalty  
and pride, as a human  
(and patriotism included)  
I tell the Martian:  
"In 1969  
We humans put a man on the moon"

"Pish! " says the Martian  
"We sent a team  
to the Sun  
Earth Year 1959"

"Oh, " I say to the Martian  
"The Sun would have burned  
your team of Martians! "

"Pish! " retorts the Martian  
"You stupid Earthlings!  
We sent them to the Sun at night"

Raj Arumugam

# Eat, Yawn And Sleep

the novices are comparing notes  
proud of their teachers  
(for if you boast of your Teacher  
you make yourself look good)

'My teacher can go without food  
for days at will, ' says Owl at Lake

'My teacher is so elegant  
he never yawns, ' says Silk Robe

'My teacher is even better, ' says Energy Jump,  
'for he can go days without food, water and sleep'

'My teacher, ' says Lazy Mumble,  
'I reckon has to be the best  
for he eats when he has to,  
drinks when he must  
and yawns as much as he wants to  
and sleeps when it 's time'

Raj Arumugam

# Eating Chocolate As Much As I Can

See, I'm eating all this chocolate  
as much as I can  
and as quickly as I can  
and Mom comes into the kitchen  
and she sees me  
and she says to me:  
Dave - don't eat all that;  
have you forgotten your sister?

O no, Mom, I say as I eat  
I haven't forgotten sister;  
that's why I'm eating fast  
and as much as I can...

Raj Arumugam

# Eating Onions

sitting outside my house  
enjoying the cool air  
and eating a 10-kg sack of onions  
doing what is most natural  
and doing no one any harm  
just eating onions,  
one, two, three  
onions, skin and all  
eating them just like one'd eat apples  
one, two, three  
I'm accosted by so many individuals  
it just surprises me  
people can't leave other people alone  
when others are just doing what's natural and easy  
and doing no one any harm  
in my case  
just eating a sack of onions,10-kg;  
you know, just eating onions,  
one two, three...

1

so here I `m eating onions  
and a jogger comes running up to me  
and he says,  
jumping up and down like a monkey:  
Hey! What u do'ng?

and I say:  
hey! what does it look like I'm doing?  
I'm just eating onions  
doing no one any harm...so  
buzz off, buddy!

and the jogger  
shakes his head

and off he goes  
on his jogger's journey ...

2

so here I `m eating onions  
and a woman with her child  
comes up to me  
and she says:  
excuse me, what are you doing?

oh God! I say,  
I`m eating onions;  
can't a man sit outside his home  
and go bananas about his onions?  
I love my onions, lady, so you could maybe  
pick up that little brat of yours  
that's digging into my sack of onions  
and be off with you two

and she grabs her child  
and off she walks quickly  
shaking her head  
and I hear her tell her child:  
come Sonny;  
that man's crazy!

well, if she wants to give her child  
a mis-education,  
that's her problem....

3

so here I `m eating onions  
and along come a few donkeys  
and they stop by me

and they neigh to me:  
What are you doing, you donkey?

and I say to them:  
look, any donkey can see what I'm doing  
minding my own business  
doing no one any harm  
and eating my onions...

and the donkeys cry in unison:  
what a donkey!  
and they all trot along...

4  
so here I'm eating onions  
and a politician comes out of his limousine  
and he says to me:  
Hey, Citizen Ordinary;  
what in this up-market  
blue ribbon  
suburb  
are you doing?

hey, I say to the polly,  
listen mate:  
you can see I'm eating onions  
so that's quite a senseless question even  
for a politician;  
so go on now,  
go back into your bullet-proof limousine  
and I'm sure you've got a sack full of problems  
like traffic congestion  
and bridges to build  
and the economy  
(I mean of course your personal economy)  
and a host of other problems to fix;  
so maybe you'd like to move on now...

and leave me to grind my onions  
with my teeth...

5

so here I'm eating onions  
and I'm interrupted often  
by so many busybodies  
who just can't pass along  
and leave alone a man who wants to eat  
his 10-kg sack of onions;  
and so I get to be rude to economists  
and lawyers and environmentalists  
and fighters and campaigners  
and activists and technicians  
and dietitians and religious fanatics  
and computer specialists and tradesmen  
and philosophers  
the whole of humanity indeed  
who just can't lighten up  
and must take themselves and things  
with just too much of gravity

hey, move on you jokers;  
I'm just eating onions...

6

so here I'm eating onions  
and you've come along,  
dearest most cultured reader -  
and I hope you won't say  
something like:  
What are you doing? - eating onions like that!  
how the whole site smells of onions;  
be reasonable and eat one  
and leave some for the rest of humanity

look, dearest reader,  
if you'd be polite and good  
and be fair to a man  
minding his own business  
doing no one any harm  
and eating onions  
then you'd just move on  
and not worry about me eating onions  
and perhaps you'd do your own thing  
go to your kitchen and eat garlic or something...  
And leave those onions for me!

Raj Arumugam

# Echoes In The Mind

have you heard  
the echoes  
in your mind?

Raj Arumugam

# Effeminate Poetry

and so it has come to pass  
that the masculine in poetry is suspect  
the feminine distorted into clichés;  
that poetry must be effeminate  
and weak, and mute, flaccid  
and self-pleasingly lyrical, so smoothly soapy  
so glossy, so rainbow bubbly  
candy-coated with syrupy words  
and genteel  
and bleating desperately  
as in the merciless hands of animal-sacrificers  
who offer life to appease a bloodthirsty, angry God

Raj Arumugam

## E-Goyomi, Lady Smoking

O cool baby, Smoking Lady  
woman of elegance, lady of ease and poise  
O Mysterious Lady  
of charm from hair done  
in style right down to concealed feet  
O my wildest dreams are written  
in the curls of the smoke you exhale  
and for such Eastern finesse and dreams  
I'd kiss each of your delicate fingers exposed...  
O cool baby, Smoking Lady....  
the zen of life is in your parted lips;  
O you demonstrate the zen of smoking  
and my desires are in the ocean of your clothes...  
O Elegant Lady  
maybe we could smoke a peace pipe,  
you smoke and I smoke  
you pass it to me and I pass it back to you  
and then peace blowing  
could take us to where we could put mouth to mouth  
and blow each into the other  
all the smoke into each other  
and we tumble over each other  
and your hair will be as my wildest dreams of you  
and your clothes almost meager  
as befitting the heat of summer  
and so discover each  
the state of the lightness of smoke-lovemaking  
O cool baby, Smoking Lady  
woman of elegance, lady of ease and poise  
my acrobatic thoughts float at the sight of you  
like the curls of smoke you send up to the gods

this poem is based on the painting 'E-Goyomi, Lady smoking' by Korinsai(?)  
between 1700 and 1800

Raj Arumugam

# Elizabeth Barrett Browning Dies

It's 1861, Casa Guidi in Florence,  
and Elizabeth Barrett Browning,  
fifty-five, poet,  
dies in her husband's arms;  
and her last word: beautiful...

Raj Arumugam

# Emperor So And So Goes For A Go, Go

Emperor So and So  
with his Ten Thousand Beauties  
in his Blue Pearl Harem  
pulls at the sleeve  
of his Human Resources Manager  
while they are watching a Military Parade  
and he whispers:  
See that beauteous woman  
sitting there in the third row.  
Get her to my chamber tonight  
for I want to have a go, go

and that night  
as part of foreplay  
Emperor So-and-So whispers  
to the girl plucked  
out from the third row:  
Hey, beautiful -  
Where have you been all the while?  
Never seen such a beauty before, you know.

And the girl from third row  
looks with surprise  
and with her mouth wide open, she says:  
But Sire, I am one of your  
Ten Thousand Beauties  
in your Blue Pearl Harem

Raj Arumugam

# Emptiness

We creep into our beds  
cold, lonely and sinking.  
There is an emptiness that pervades all  
as one lies in bed, a wingless pod covered by cloth  
and a mind taken by some inhabitant  
that has sucked all thoughts dry  
and looks for congealed blood in the marrow

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Enchanted

one sees the woman's eyes; one is enchanted

Raj Arumugam

# E's A Fork

E's a fork  
that's missing a handle  
It's tried various hardware stores  
and brick-and-mortar) -  
they just don't have the size,  
not the style either

E tried its own design  
but no one could  
manufacture at an affordable price  
(Everyone's motto is:  
You got the concept - we name the price)

Meanwhile E tries to serve  
as well it can whatever along  
with the other 25 of the Alphabet Tribe -  
but it's left always with the feeling  
some part's missing in life....

Raj Arumugam

# Eternal Bliss

Ah, the saints and the holy men  
and the followers and the Holy Books  
Ah, the wise men and those with deep insight  
and those who are able to penetrate inner wisdom  
(such wisdom as beyond the ken of the masses,  
of the ordinary human)  
they have declared the Eternal Truth  
to the question:  
What is better than Eternal Bliss?  
Nothing

But O most Wise Seers and Prophets:  
Verily, a little pizza is better than nothing -  
therefore Pizza is better than Eternal Bliss.

You want a bite?

Raj Arumugam

# Eternal Love

like so many before us  
we come of love  
that a man and woman make  
and coming of age the two of us look at each other  
and we desire,  
and we are aroused, and we make love  
and bring in turn others to this world;  
and our magical lives are encircled with love:  
and in turn we too turn into grounds  
where rodents revel and worms make love

Raj Arumugam

# Even The Word Beauty

even the word beauty  
and the words truth  
and life and soul are not enough  
(and no matter what word, idea or concept  
no matter how sublime, how elevated):  
and so all poetry may be  
but an illusion,  
an image, a mere consolation,  
a running away from what actually is...  
not wanting or not able to face what is  
we dabble with words and memory and image...  
and the word is not the thing either  
and even the things  
are what we might have wished for,  
what the human mind rather have  
what the mind brings into existence by repetition  
and tradition  
and may not actually exist independently...  
all one has left is what actually goes on in one's mind

Raj Arumugam

# Evening Street

The street is quiet  
The night spreads out into every corner  
The creatures are at rest

The flurry has died down  
Words and shouts have ceased  
The wheels do not roll; life is still

The thoughts slow  
Stillness pervades all space within  
And now one feels the peace always there

Raj Arumugam

# Everything Can Cease

Everything can cease... when confidence peters,  
falls and breaks on granite boulders and scatters,  
everything can cease. Things first slow down,  
sputter and choke like a dirty burnt-out machine  
and then cease. Everything can cease. One's speech, one's  
mannerisms and manners. Oh, peace can cease.  
The world can cease. Religion and Faith can be depleted  
and cease. Art and Music can cease. Poetry can cease.  
All things end and begin in Causation.  
The centre gives way and there is  
no need for meaning.  
Dance can cease. Activity can cease. Curiosity  
can cease. Effort can cease. Beauty and Life cease.  
Meaning can cease. Action can cease. Life can cease.  
Naivety and Trust - all things must cease.  
All things good and bad that arise must come to an end  
all in good time.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Exciting Poem With Exclamation Marks! ! !

Oh noble exclamation mark!  
I expel! I exclaim!  
Oh most excitable exclamation mark!

Oh, to see you  
sends blood racing  
in my veins!  
Oh, I love you  
once!  
twice! !  
and I love you thrice! ! ! !  
- oh, was that four times? ? ? ?  
Oh, be not jealous  
I brought in your  
distant relative  
the crooked and deformed question mark  
for I not only love you  
!  
!!  
!!!  
!!!! –  
but I love you forever, most excitable exclamation mark! ! ! !  
!!!!!!!!!!!! .....and forever!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! .....

Oh noble exclamation mark!  
I expel! I exclaim!  
Oh most excitable exclamation mark!

Raj Arumugam

# Experience Required

Yeah, the boss called me in  
he sat there drumming on the table edge  
with his fingers  
and then asked me how long  
I'd been here  
and I said: '5 minutes'  
'No, no, ' he said. 'I mean  
how long have you worked for me? '  
'Oh, ' I said, '12 months'

'And what did you tell me, ' he said,  
his arms folded  
'at the job interview? Didn't you say  
you have 5 years' experience in this kind of job? '  
'Yeah, 'I said.

'Well, I've just checked and you never  
had experience before  
This is your first job!  
Explain! '  
'Well, I learn fast...' I said  
'See, I've fitted in so well. No one's noticed.'  
'No I don't mean that! ' he said,  
drumming on the table edge again  
'Why didn't you tell me the truth? '

'Oh, ' I said, 'cos the job ad also said  
I should have imagination  
So now, Sir, I've got experience  
and you very well know I've got imagination'

Raj Arumugam

# Extremities And The Range

When we were little  
we laughed at the insane,  
the unreason;  
we laughed at the man  
cutting the branch  
while seated at the end

We mock extremities  
but life catches us too often  
within the range

Raj Arumugam

# Family Matters

some of us  
man or woman  
some people  
are made for family  
and some just  
for the wild  
but running  
now on developed terrain

but knowledge is not enough  
for the scientists  
have yet to work out  
a barometer  
or index to tell  
one from the other;  
till then  
evolutionary instinct in each  
should help  
but that gets short-circuited  
by dissemblance  
one way or other;  
so looks like -  
friends and foes  
like and unlike  
lovers and un-loved -  
like it or not,  
we are stuck with  
one another

Raj Arumugam

# Fear And Pleasures And Rewards

a clean-shaven man  
holding aloft a book  
said to me:  
I chose this way  
so I can go to heaven...  
you should too, he added...

a wild-eyed man  
displaying much of his revelation  
said to me:  
if you don't come this way  
you'll go to hell  
to keep the devil company

I laughed and I said:  
can one really understand these things  
when one has so much  
fear and pleasure and gain in one's head and heart?  
leave your fears and pleasures and rewards schemes  
and observe what you see

Raj Arumugam

# Feathered Heaven

&quot;It is a pity  
my friend, &quot;  
said the fox to the fowl,  
&quot;you do not understand  
the certain path to heaven  
For there you will roam free range -  
and feed on organic grains  
floating in leisure and safety  
for all of eternity&quot;

&quot;How may I, &quot;  
said the naive hen,  
&quot;go forth to Feathered Heaven? &quot;

&quot;You submit and yield  
to the Divine Will, &quot;  
said the fox,  
&quot;upon which I will snap your neck in two -  
and thus effect your quick delivery  
to comforting eternity&quot;

Raj Arumugam

# Female Ghost In The Moonlight

OOOOhhhh.....eeeeee.....ooooeeeyoooo....

O moon, pale and alone

like me

O inhabitant in deserted skies

as I in lonely wilds

with my ghost baby;

let us put a charm together

a curse on men who betray their wives

and who put their seeds in young unwise girls

and run away

and hint the naive could kill themselves and their babies

OOOOhhhh.....eeeeee.....ooooeeeyoooo....

O moon, pale and alone

listen to my tale:

a charmer

dazzled my mind

and put his seeds in my womb;

and he told me he loved me

but he had other duties

and he said I should be ashamed

for being such a loose woman

and I should kill myself

and so take my baby within me

OOOOhhhh.....eeeeee.....ooooeeeyoooo....

O moon, pale and alone

feel the pain and horror in my mind

as I am doomed to deliver this script

night and night in this wilderness

Behold this infant I hold in my hand

this ghost of a baby

that has never seen life

sucking at my milk-less white breast

OOOOhhhh.....eeeeee.....ooooeeeyoooo....

O moon, pale and alone

come, let us put a charm together

a curse on men who betray their wives

and who put their seeds in unwise girls

and run away

and hint the naive kill themselves and their babies

OOOOhhhh.....eeeeee.....ooooeeeyoooo....  
O moon, lend me your strength and power  
let us weave a curse, let us cast it over such he-devils:  
May their genitals rot  
eaten by vermin;  
may their eyes be eaten by giant flies;  
and may their evil turn  
into sharp-teethed ravenous worms  
and stampede inside their bodies  
and eat all their internal organs  
and may these huge-bellied worms  
eat every nerve and eat their brains part by part  
O may such men die in pain, in madness  
before their very wives  
Lend me your power  
lend me strength  
and curse with me  
O moon, pale and alone  
like me  
inhabitant in deserted skies  
as I in lonely wilds  
with my ghostly baby  
that has never seen life  
OOOOhhhh.....eeeeee.....ooooeeeyoooo....

Raj Arumugam

# Figures On A Terrace

Come let us sing  
and let us play the drum  
and make those strings  
soothe the emotions and mind  
let us sing  
to the peace of the world;  
let us sing  
that love and harmony  
will embrace  
all nations and peoples;  
let us sing this evening  
that all nations and peoples  
will have stillness and oneness  
in their hearts  
Come let us sing  
and let us play the drum  
and make those strings  
soothe the emotions and mind

based on artwork of same title from Period: Provincial Mughal, Oudh (Lucknow):

- Dates: ca.1760-1775

Raj Arumugam

# Files And Records

The unemployed, though without a job  
and all the work associated with files and records  
in computers or in rows and rows of dusty shelves in an office,  
the unemployed too have  
files and records to peruse and maintain. I, for example,  
have various files: all the correspondence  
I have with the State Department and its various  
Regional Offices and its terminal points;  
the correspondence with private organizations  
and associations and unions...

See these?

These are notifications of changes and amendments  
to the system; letters from the networks and  
requests for a certified copy of a particular paper  
that they do not have in their files or seem to  
have misplaced.

(Oh, it could very well have been  
misplaced by the previous person in charge...

And could you fill in this form?

Your previous return could  
have been lost in the mail...)

The unemployed too have deadlines  
with their minds employed in making sense  
of a world of opportunities  
and in the mind and in physical space  
making order of the replies  
and responses the inviting and tolerant world  
gladly makes and promptly  
to all enquiries. There are letters from private  
and government establishments all represented by letterheads  
with bold cries of departmental mottos of  
progress, efficiency and equal opportunity and fairness.

(Are you a member of an underprivileged group? -  
and yet, implied in others and presumably without prejudice -  
Are you a member of our religious group?)

And after order, there is, in my case,  
literary textual analysis: What do they mean by

The position drew candidates of a high caliber;  
We urge you to apply to our future advertisements?

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Finding The Love Of My Life

1

past puppy loves  
I found true love early  
and I'd married Susi  
and lived four years  
when I met Lily  
and I said to Susi:  
Darling, when I met you it was  
true love  
but now Lily offers eternal love

and Susi spat me out  
like bad sushi  
and I lived with purple Lily;  
soon our eternal love wilted  
and I lived alone in a charity flat  
eating baked beans  
and hamburgers  
and grew a beard  
that made me  
look like Rip Van Winkle

2

I shaved three years later  
and went out and met  
the only love of my life, Sunshine  
and we lived in her father's home  
two years  
when I met her sister  
who returned broke  
from five years  
as a stockbroker in New York  
and she shared with me a shower  
of bliss and Heavenly Love  
and so I said to Sunshine:  
How about if I moved over to  
your sister's?

and Sunshine said:  
yeah, maybe you could  
also take your old bread  
and army rations and strawberry jam  
and pickles  
you hide under your bed...  
good riddance to bad rubbish, she said

3

look, Sunshine's sister  
Moonbeam no doubt  
brought Heavenly Love  
but Lint whom I met  
at the dog food section  
of the suburb's supermarket  
brought a kind of Doggy Love  
I'd never seen;  
so I said to Lint  
(she had a nametag on) :  
How about I come and live with you?

and she said:  
Yeah, and with my pets, you mean?

Yeah, and with your pets, I grinned

4

and now I live with Lint  
these ten past years  
and yeah, with her pets too...  
I live with her, yes,  
in our shack beyond the suburbs  
down past the woods  
and I get all the food for free  
after she comes back on her shopping spree  
after every Thursday when she gets

weekly Disability Payment  
(for which she puts on a limp  
and mumbles like Marlon Brando  
and moves like she's going in all directions)  
and she offers me cans as much as she can  
just to get me enough energy  
to see me through, you know, our weekly 5-hour romp  
and I live happily  
with no care or worry  
with Lint of the deserted valley  
with her pets and pests  
...ummm...and with her twenty cats,  
and with her five parrots all in cages  
in her kitchen  
and the dogs that roam free and lick the cats;  
and of course the vermin  
and the ticks and the parasites  
and the bugs  
and did I mention the thirty chooks in the backyard?  
and did I mention Lint's mice she keeps in her room  
into which she only lets me in on Thursdays?  
and all other days my place is in that huge kennel  
her old Doberman used to live in  
in the corner beside the gate  
and I've got my own blankets and pillows  
and the dogs keep guard all day and night for me  
and it's pleasant days and a free life now  
though once in a while I still do dream  
of my puppy loves  
and of my four years with Susi  
and all that true love with Lily  
and Sunbeam and Moonbeam  
but now I've got Lint  
and all her pets and pests and vermin

Raj Arumugam

# Finesse

Those of you who would have your children learn  
good manners, politeness and subtlety,  
I tell you  
for what my twenty years of experience  
as a teacher  
and 14-year expertise as a parent of two are worth  
send your children to these writers  
of rejection letters.

Nay, laugh not at me,  
for this ancient race of master craftsmen  
are the originators and true progenitors  
of subtlety and finesse  
and our children can learn  
restraint, control and refinement  
through the words of these wise scribes.  
For these truly are endowed with  
savoir faire.

The migrant and the illiterate  
the migrant who doesn't have a job  
and the adult who can't read  
have one thing in common:  
they need to hide;  
they need to hide themselves  
from those who shouldn't know.  
Both secretive and quiet,  
not wanting to be discovered.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Fire Within

did you think you could stamp out the flame  
in the human heart?  
did you think you could enslave  
and destroy the spirit within?  
did you think  
law-twisting people as serfs and slaves  
and as children ignorant of the world  
but enslaving them in shoe factories and candle factories  
and in the farms and in the sewers and chimneys  
could kill the sparks in their hearts and minds?  
did you think you had reduced their being and very life  
and had numbed them to nothing  
but work-mechanisms that obeyed  
just because you saw them bent  
and narrowed to an animal existence?  
did you think you had them crushed  
and under your thumbs  
because they could not protest  
and they held their heads and shoulders contorted low  
and you had their limbs  
and fingers so distorted  
they could not lift their eyes to the horizon?  
and just so  
as long ago you had had Spartacus  
and his freemen and freewomen  
and free children crucified?  
did you think you could reach out into their guts and intestines  
and their brains and their blood and their minds  
and their very nerves and hearts  
and did you think you had suppressed every thought  
and every star of their dreams  
and that you had them completely distorted  
and had every fiber torn and dehumanized  
and made animal and tamed and then removed?  
you did not expect them to raise their heads, did you?  
you did not expect them to see beyond  
the distance of their shadows, did you?  
you did not think the unfed and the subjugated  
could still hunger in their minds, did you?

and did you think you could sit in your gold-plated  
and diamond-studded walls forever and forever  
and talk for all eternity  
about your dreams for your own blood  
while you robbed innocents and defenseless of their own?  
how could you,  
though yourself human,  
not understand  
you cannot snuff out the human spirit -  
or was it you who had lost your humanity?

(This poem was inspired by the dramatic painting *Burlaks on the Volga* by Ilya Yefimovich Repin; this poem has been expanded to include the human condition beyond the historical context of the painting)

Raj Arumugam

# First Date

Jasper asked me to go out with him  
and so I asked Daddy:  
Should I go out with Jasper?  
And Daddy said:  
Lucy dear,  
ask your Mommy.

And so I asked Mommy:  
Should I go out with Jasper?  
And Mommy said:  
Lucy dear,  
ask your Grandad.

And so I asked Grandad:  
Should I go out with Jasper?  
And Grandad said:  
Lucy dear,  
ask your Granny.

And so I asked Granny:  
Should I go out with Jasper?  
And Granny said:  
Lucy - follow your heart.

And so I went back to Jasper  
and I said:  
Jasper, go jump in the well.

Raj Arumugam

# First Day At School

Tom's moved in to a new suburb  
It's a new term and new school too;  
he sits beside this pretty girl  
in class, trying to impress her  
and Tom says to the girl:  
"Hi...Did you listen to the Principal  
talk in the hall? He's an absolute idiot,  
don't you think? "

"Do you know who I am? "  
replies the girl

"No, " says Tom, wondering  
what this is about  
"Who are you? "

"I'm the Principal's daughter, "  
says the girl

"Oh, " says Tom  
and then he says:  
"Do you know who I am? "

"No, " says the girl  
"I don't know who you are"

"Oh, that's good then, "  
says Tom, quite relieved

Raj Arumugam

# First Love Song For The Sweet Love Of My Life

coming new to love  
still I want to think about things you know  
and so I look deep into my heart  
and we must be candid and frank, you know;  
and of course we'll have all those things  
like love, family, values and kids  
but look - a man needs what he needs and so  
that's essential too, you know:  
so maybe 3 times a day in the first years  
and then depending on work and how often the kids are around  
you know;  
but really we have to manage at least once each day  
and so like that in our twenties and thirties maybe  
and then the kids go away in our forties  
and so maybe we'll revert to 3 or 2 each day again  
for a while  
depending on my ability and yours too  
and then maybe only twice each day past in our sixties  
till our last days certainly  
and maybe just once when I say my final goodbye:  
that's my proposition  
my beer-drinking plan for a whole life together...  
would you find that acceptable, sweet love of my life?

Raj Arumugam

# Fisherman's Hut By The Shore

down by the shore I live  
in a simple shelter by night  
and for when I have need of rest;  
and the waters creep up  
almost to the door

early mornings I set out in my boat  
and come in soon  
with what fish I can catch;  
some I keep, and some I sell  
at the market nearby  
where I can buy what other things  
I may need

and so I have lived  
these many years  
with the songs of the sea  
with the fish for company  
and the few trees leaning over me

so my life goes  
the days like the waves  
and my thoughts along  
with the same flow -  
till in quiet, in peace  
the stars announce my time to cease

Raj Arumugam

# Fitness Program

my brother-in-law's really fit  
I admire him for it

He spends much time  
in exercise, in energetic thrusts  
He's a whole aerobics center;  
gets all the exercise he needs:  
He constantly jumps to conclusions  
runs down friends, back-stabs whenever he can  
side-steps responsibility  
and you could say, is constantly pushing his luck  
And pushing it too far too...  
and goes round and round in circles  
with many false arguments

But one kind thing I can say of him  
he's mindful of my health  
for he must have observed how I hardly exercise  
and he invites me often to his fitness program  
&quot;You scratch my back, I scratch yours, &quot; he says...  
But I'm just too lazy even for such effortless exercise  
and meanwhile, he continues with his fitness program  
namely, as I have said before,  
jumping to conclusions and constantly pushing his luck...  
while the only thing I can manage  
in response to his fitness program  
(darned lazy as I am, as he complains to his sis)  
is to lift my middle finger

but frankly, my brother-in-law's really fit  
I admire him for it

Raj Arumugam

# Five Moons For Earth

sometimes I wish  
dear moon  
sometimes I wish  
the earth had five moons  
and all so positioned  
we can see  
one every night and then in twos and in threes  
never four (just so for mystery's sake)  
and then all five  
all in perfect alignment once a year  
just three nights so  
and then we'll all here on earth  
go ga ga ga  
or moo moo moo looooney  
those nights and go crazy  
and climb up trees and enact our ape ancestry ...

and don't you be jealous  
I asked for four others;  
I just want more of you –  
just never seem to get enough of you

Raj Arumugam

# Floating World

Yes, sweet love,  
it's the days of living  
of lovemaking and flights of fancy;  
it's the life when the moment is all there is  
with no care for the morrow  
and no memory of how we came here

and so sweet woman who is close  
hold me by my arm over your shoulder  
and hold me by my belt  
and you standing nearby, O woman  
just as sweet and just lovely  
carry my outer garment  
(you'll have your turn with me later  
when this woman has had mine)  
I am not drunk  
as you can see  
and I am alive in the moment

and so you see time flows like the waterfall  
and life is smooth and copious  
and our thoughts are like wine in our blood  
pervasive, all-embracing,  
one no different from the other:  
O there is the beauty of the maple leaves  
there is the wonder of the waterfall  
and there is your beauty and there is my desire  
and so happily let's allow life to flow so

nothing comes to this point  
O sweet beauties  
nothing passes from here  
and O sweet loves  
there is but the pleasure  
that we see here now  
what we see with all our bodies and mind

Raj Arumugam

# Flower In The Corner

walking in my simple garden  
I saw a flower, shy in a corner  
small, mild, inconspicuous;  
and I knelt before it  
and it blushed and whimpered  
and it said: I am not worthy

and I said:  
more marvelous, dearest flower,  
you are more marvelous, darling flower,  
than all the celebratory fireworks  
the masses gawk and wow at...

Raj Arumugam

# Folk Song, Allfolks-Nowhere

there's that flower  
the ancient rock by the street  
we come of a village  
a sinuous path  
that leads to the next  
but our village has no name  
it is not of specifics  
there is no history here  
no identity to cling to  
and no exotica to marvel over  
it's all the same to us  
your village or ours  
and we welcome with palms open;  
there's no dogma or Heavy Books  
on our tables  
we start with no musings  
and we shape no theology  
and grand ideas  
all that we have is clarity  
that blooms and withers, only to bloom again  
no affiliations, no special-ness  
and it is the clouds  
and the earth we read  
in our village  
in our homes  
that go by no name or labels  
and no exotica to marvel over  
it's all the same to us  
your village or ours  
and there's that flower

Raj Arumugam

# For Pithukuli Murugadas (1920- 2015)

For Pithukuli Murugadas (1920- 2015)

you sang  
as Sakti and Siva  
danced in you;  
and so the goddess of wisdom  
Saraswati was always in your words

you chanted  
all names of the Divine  
pure, all-embracing  
and radiant with all-inclusive love  
that awaits all hearts  
that are open, that will receive

Raj Arumugam

# For Something Not Done

Mrs Sims, says little Jom  
looking angelic and innocent

Yes? says Mrs Sims  
looking strict and a bit wary

Would you punish me, Mrs Sims  
for something I didn't do?

Oh, of course not  
says Mrs Sims,  
looking kind and reassuring  
That's ridiculous  
Teachers never punish students  
for something students didn't do

Oh, says little Jom  
looking triumphant  
I didn't do my homework, Mrs Sims

Raj Arumugam

# For The Pleasure Of The Academy

I write mostly  
to please myself  
but the Academy  
of Dr Poets  
said:  
That's a gross form  
of showy masturbation

so once in a while  
I write to  
give you  
O most gentle reader  
some form of pleasure  
so that it brings us  
together  
into a sort of  
respectable sex-elebration  
and the esteemed Academy  
some form of orgasm

Raj Arumugam

# Forced Into Haiku

haikus and haiku-ers so ubiquitous  
so I go with Ninja Turtle valor:  
HAAAAAAAAAAAI-KUUUUU!

Raj Arumugam

# Forever

forever is a word  
that should be banned  
that is damned -  
forever

Raj Arumugam

# Formal Language And Little Tommy

1

Tommy's little, sure, but he's  
getting to that age  
when he understands a little more  
picking up things as his parents  
take him shopping;  
and hearing and seeing things  
at home, in the backyard  
and in the streets

2

but today poor Tommy  
is caught in class  
he's about to explode  
and he's controlled it the last hour

"Please, miss, " he has the balls  
to say it after all  
"I need go piss! "

"You're not going, "  
says the pedantic Miss,  
"until you use in a complete sentence  
the proper English word  
for your urge:  
URINATE"

Poor Tommy -  
he's got the balls, but does  
he have the brains?

Tommy thinks hard for a while -  
one hand on his head  
one hand on his pants  
and then he blurts out:  
"YOU ARE AN EIGHT  
and Mrs Smith next door  
who sunbathes naked in her courtyard  
LOOKS LIKE A TEN. Now, can I go? "

Raj Arumugam

# Four Monks Meditating

the four monks are out in the open  
meditating;  
the prayer flags are flapping

'The flags are flapping, '  
hums the first monk

'The wind is there, '  
intones the second

'It is the mind that  
is flapping, '  
observes the third

'Mouths are flapping  
is all what I see and hear, '  
says the last

the frog in the grass  
is silent

Raj Arumugam

# Freak Show - Watch Man

I am one of those  
who do watches  
and people love to watch me -  
they watch, but ironically,  
they call me Watch Man

Well, for a start, I can eat watches  
At a recent show  
I ate 4 watches in 6 slow hours -  
it was time-consuming

My wrists stretch on the touch of  
watch bracelets  
and so they made me wear many to see  
how many I could wear on each wrist  
20 on either wrist is what my stretch could take -  
yeah, you could say,  
I just had too much time on my hands  
Last on show they made me wear a belt of watches  
which was a pretty waist of time,  
if you know what I mean

Look I've applied  
to join DC Comics  
Me as Watch Man  
along with the likes of Iron Man, the Hulk  
and Spider Man and such characters nondescript  
But I've been turned down  
Just not your time yet, I've been told

Well, so I content myself meantime  
as Watch Man at Freak Shows  
Doing the Time  
before my Big Time  
When there are enough time-savvy people  
Who can recognise the genius  
of those who do watches

Raj Arumugam

# Free Meals

I want to have  
lunch  
of all meats and veggies –  
can someone cook  
and put them all  
on the table for me?

I want to eat fine  
at a table of ebony  
with silverware  
in King Louis XIV style –  
can somebody procure them for me?

I want to dine  
in a Hall of Fame  
Queen Cleo style  
with singers and slaves  
and manacled leopards  
at my feet –  
Hey, who's there!  
get them all ready for me

I want them all in a  
Grand Palace like Versailles  
not in some petty lowbrow  
Château de Malmaison -  
so can someone get it ready  
by today eve, precisely 5?

I want to eat in peace  
with no noise  
and braying donkeys  
so - Hey! can someone  
shoot that rabble outside  
unkempt, untidy  
and always wanting free meals off me!  
can't a man have his meals in peace?

Raj Arumugam

# Freedom Of The Birds

Child, free those caged birds;  
free them, though I've kept them as  
my precious collection  
like I collected books or foreign coins.  
I can see, now; so late in my time,  
I can see now they are pained  
by lack of freedom and space  
like I am  
by responsibility and care...  
Free them and let them fly...  
Though precious and worth much  
their freedom must be worth much more to them  
as I know mine is  
all that freedom of my years  
restricted by position, greed, security and rewards...  
Let them fly, child, let them...

Raj Arumugam

# Friends Online

I don't know about you  
but when I sign in  
into facebook  
(or any social site)  
just as I'm in – there are about six or eight friends  
and then within a second of my coming –  
I don't know how it's for you, but within  
a second of my coming in to the social site  
there are only one or two friends left  
and often none...I wonder why...  
I really don't know why...  
I mean  
why do people all in different parts of the world  
decide to go to the toilet at the same time?  
And why do they have to wait  
just after I've come out of mine?  
Yes, how is it there are eight friends one minute  
and then almost none the next?  
and then the only one left does not communicate?  
I wonder why...

But yes, I don't know how it is for you...  
Do they all message each other and more friends appear  
the moment you are on?  
Oh do teach me a little of your charm...

Raj Arumugam

# Frog 1 And Frog 2

Frog 2

Hey, how's that in the water?  
I saw you dive in  
and the water spread out a little;  
you disappeared a while  
and now I see you translucent  
but you seem happy  
as carefree  
as when we were tadpoles;  
tell me how it is...

Frog 1

You silly frog;  
all the description  
and text I can give you  
all words and expositions will not suffice:  
just jump in and see for yourself

Raj Arumugam

# From Out Of The Shadows

we walk in the shadows:  
it is the time of courting;  
we walk admiring the blossoms  
and the unruly branches  
nudge us closer  
and we brush fingers  
and feel the warmth  
of each other's palms  
and we brush lips

is this how love begins?  
in the brushing of skin  
to the disappointment  
of idealists and puritans;  
love born in desire and impulse  
that has its origins in flesh  
and what is here on earth  
and transformed  
into ideals by inventive poets  
and cunning prophets

come,  
let us walk  
in the autumn sun now  
and stop by below the cypress  
when we feel like it;  
and we shall draw close to each other  
and kiss deep  
and we shall feel each other's fullness  
as we close the world out

Raj Arumugam

# From Thought To Thought

from thought to thought  
one's mind goes  
like water filling cups  
of various shapes  
or water forming sinuous rivers  
over a varied landscape:  
and at each turn  
one thinks one is one's thoughts  
one thinks one is one's conditioning  
and one takes on all the creed and ideology;  
so that now one is a member of a group  
or now one is angry, one is sad, one is happy

rarely does one see one's conditioning;  
rarely does one see beyond the word and image

Raj Arumugam

# Garden Path

Sometimes the path led  
to solitude and silence  
to a gentle peace  
that followed one home  
and presided over one's sleep

Today, these many days,  
the path leads one into one's own sorrows  
Into one's own darkness

There is no space  
There is no generosity in the garden  
Its menacing branches and leaves  
close in and suffocate  
and whisper curses of desolation

Raj Arumugam

# Gentle Sleep

In the middle  
of an uneventful week  
with miles of disappointment  
and circled in endless space of red brown terrain  
and even in the middle of unending uncertainty  
may you sleep well tonight  
may you sleep quiet and tight  
undisturbed by your mind  
undisturbed by alarms in the psyche  
undisturbed by haggard sirens within.  
Sleep well and not awake till late in the morning  
and not be wakened for a pee or for a drink  
to keep the dry burning throat wet  
or be wakened by thoughts that have their own  
volition  
that clamour like crabs in a rattan basket.  
May you sleep well and sleep tight,  
and rise rested and ready  
unsuspecting of a better day.

Let loose  
and sleep well;  
do not dwell long too much on things that could be  
on what you could have done  
and must be done;  
let go  
and sometimes trust in things  
to sort themselves out  
for the way does  
what the will cannot

Do what you can,  
let go and sleep well;  
do not dwell again and again on  
how else you can fight  
how else you can control events and  
not let them master you

to make meaning out of things nebulous  
and out of your control  
and why circumstances and events don't  
shape and move like they can or should

Sometimes let things sort  
themselves out;  
for chance works better  
than control and order

Let go, sleep well,  
take yourself deep into your burrow  
so deep nothing can find you  
so you can take the rest that will give you  
the strength to meet again the waiting  
that may leap up again and again  
like the ubiquitous kangaroo

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Gentleness

Go down the path of peace  
take the road down gentleness  
walk the way of meekness  
and one day a tribe will arrive  
and beat you to a pulp  
and beat you so good  
you'll never be able to stand up again.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Girl Asleep

you need a moment, sometimes,  
a moment can be a series  
of seconds that add up to forty winks;  
a moment of quite, time away from  
the clamor and the crowd and the hungry  
away from the brightness, the lights  
and the demanding, and the conversations  
and questions, and queries and routine  
just away from people to think a little perhaps  
to dropp into the quiet of oneself  
a moment in the chair, elbow on the table -  
could have shut the door, you know,  
so the creak will wake, alert you, maybe;  
could have had a fruit (did you?) ,  
or could have moved the spare chair round  
so any intruder would have to move it  
which would have served as ample warning  
and you could've said: 'Oh, how dusty in here,  
just cleaning up, nearly finished...'  
but maybe you've your own devices and stratagems  
whatever, we'd just say now, looking at you  
the way Vermeer's left you for us, dear girl asleep,  
you sleeping, retired into this quiet, into this room  
in your corner, elbow on the table,  
you in the chair, leaning sideways  
we'd say, seeing you:  
you need a moment, sometimes,  
a moment of quiet, time away -  
hey, good on you...

Raj Arumugam

# Girl At The Window

It is pleasurable  
once in a while to be  
at the window sill  
dreamy, looking out at the world  
and yet within  
the verdant growth of one's desires  
and fancies  
away from the mundane and realities  
for we spin better ones from imaginings  
so let me dream a little  
walk hand in hand with a lover-man  
journey in my mind  
to lands and visions  
let me dream awhile at least  
how windows open  
and one breathes in freshness

Raj Arumugam

# Girl Child And Ha Ha Boy Come To The Chrysanthemum Fields

Girl Child and Ha Ha boy walk a long way. At last they come to Chrysanthemum Fields.

"Was it not of these fields", says Ha Ha boy, "that the bird sang once?"

'fullness is radiant  
in the chrysanthemum  
complete with energy its fields;  
O see that fullness  
in one's very being'"

"Dearest Chrysanthemums, "says girl Child, speaking to the Field of Chrysanthemums. "The bird in the bamboo grove is missing. That gentle bird who sings for delight and for joy is missing. I found some petals from your family in the grove. Do you know who took the bird? "

Mother Chrysanthemum speaks:

"Dear Children...we know the bird; we have heard the bird in the bamboo grove even from here. There was the Desirer, a man in dark clothes and covered with a hood and who walked past here. He trampled on my children and some of the petals stuck to his boots. That's how you must have found the petals at the grove."

And Mother Chrysanthemum continues:

"He's taken the bird to the King of Grim Land for a reward that the King offered for the bird.

Go there and see the King and ask for the bird from the bamboo grove whom the King now keeps prisoner."

"We will, " says the girl Child.

"Thank you Mother Chrysanthemum, " says Ha Ha boy.

Raj Arumugam

# Girl Child Cannot Find The Bird In The Grove

The girl Child is in the grove. She does not hear the bird in the bamboo grove. She does not see the bird.

She sings the song the bird sang her once:

I love to see you  
smile and laugh,  
Happy Girl;  
for that is the start  
and continuity  
of my song too

But there is no answer. The girl Child does not hear the bird. She sings, hoping the bird will hear and come to her and dance and sing to her again:

'gentle bird of the grove  
that sings for delight  
and to bring a smile;  
your Happy Girl is here,  
dancing bird –  
won't you come  
and sing and dance for me? '

But there is no reply. The bird is not to be seen anywhere. There is no answer to the girl's song.

Raj Arumugam

# Girls, Do Not Giggle

Girls, do not giggle...  
I know you like to giggle  
but I, Glum Master of the Universe,  
don't like it;  
so don't giggle  
You can have pink  
you can have ice-cream  
you can have gossip  
you can still facebook and laugh  
and drink coke and sugary drinks;  
you can have candy floss  
and eat processed food till your teeth yellow -  
but giggle? No...  
so what am I, Glum Master of the Universe,  
going to do about it if you giggle?  
Oh, I'll send Miss Tornado  
and Cold Moon  
and Violent Thunderstorm  
before and after and over you  
all those girls who giggle  
if you don't listen to me,  
Glum Master of the Universe...  
so, girls, do not giggle...

Raj Arumugam

# Gloomy

Gloomy as I walked  
a sad face floated past me in the street  
and I recalled in  
The Westside News  
of April 16:  
When a man is gloomy, everything seems to  
go wrong; when he is cheerful, everything  
seems right! Proverbs 15: 15

I am not gloomy; everything is right.

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Go Giryeodo, Painted By Kim Myeong-Guk

Go Giryeodo, painted by Kim Myeong-guk  
maybe in 1650  
radiating a story, still today  
riding the donkey  
trees behind  
the mountain track treacherous  
Go Giryeodo  
mind clear and attentive to all that is  
There is no mind here  
that is obsessed by sin  
and sharpened doctrines  
like the ones on the other side of the world  
Detached and collected  
rides Giryeodo  
There is no sense of destiny or ambition to reach Heaven  
There is no Theology, no Thick Books  
that attract Thick Heads  
Giryeodo rides  
Donkey at its own pace  
free, no encumbrance, no demands  
there is no Revelation, there is no need, there is no Text  
there is no Authority or Weight that fills  
the mind of the rider Go Giryeodo,  
painted by Kim Myeong-guk  
no perversions of religion and conversion  
that fills the minds of those on the other side of the world  
fills them like the Devil fills their Books and Speeches  
Gentle, uncaring,  
no sense of timing  
riding since 1650, perhaps before  
riding perhaps into timeless-ness  
Not caring for an end of time  
go Giryeodo, painted by Kim Myeong-guk  
riding the donkey  
riding the donkey  
trees behind  
the mountain track treacherous

Raj Arumugam

# Go Not That Way

you must not go that way, that way  
is the darkness, is the cold  
that fingers your heart  
the end that  
encircles your chest  
like the python round its prey

but we can't point the way  
that you can take, for all ways  
lead to the bottomless pit; all  
ways we find now were but gilded  
and have each has lost its lustre:  
the truth is bitter, there is no truth

so one can only say: go not that way

Raj Arumugam

# God Meets Bugs Bunny

1

God sits on the Heavenly Throne  
regal, resplendent and proud  
and surveys the wide universe  
with infra-red Superman vision

Bugs Bunny burrows by  
and sticks out his head through a nebulae  
and looks up at God  
on the Throne of Precious Stones  
and says: er...what's up, Doc?

and God casts an eye on  
the impertinent Bugs Bunny  
and says:  
Who the Hell are you?

errr...I'm Bugs Bunny, Doc,  
says the rabbit.  
never heard of me?

You're only a bunny,  
roars God, sitting tight  
and secure  
on the Imperial Throne.  
You're a just a figment  
of the human imagination!  
Even if real,  
creatures like you  
never make it to Heaven  
for you don't even have a soul;  
and so,  
what the Hell are you doing here?

2

errrr...calm down, Doc,  
says Bugsy, and continues:  
by the way, who the Hell are you?

I'm God! roars God.  
I'm God the Almighty  
Creator, Judge, Meddler in All Things  
and I can throw Explosions at Will  
and there is Nothing  
that does not happen without Me!

and Bugs Bunny says:  
so, you're God?  
I've heard about you.  
but  
my, my, what a big Ego you've got  
but then you're a Big Fella alright  
with those big toes  
and muscles like those of the Titans;  
and if, as you say,  
I'm a figment of the imagination  
those humans are a figment of your imagination  
as you are too -  
a figment of the human imagination.

and God's eyebrows meet  
and the lines are aplenty on the forehead  
and God screams:  
You Bunny!  
I'm sending you to Hell now  
where you'll be rabbit stew!

and Bugs Bunny says:  
I'll probably end up that way  
one day anyway,  
Big Fella –  
so I don't really need your help,  
no, thank you  
but really, tell me:  
who are you?

I told you, screams God  
and now God is turning red hot with anger –  
I told you, you imbecile,  
I'm God!  
And don't you get too informal with me  
don't you dare call me Big Fella!  
And I'm not a Figment of the Imagination -  
for I'm the Only True God!

but what's that?  
asks Bugs Bunny, taking  
a bite off his red carrot.

What kind of question is that?  
asks God. I am what I am.

Bugs Bunny smiles and says:  
it's a good question I asked, Big Fella;  
you'll know more about yourself  
if you answered these questions  
more honestly

You're going to Hell!  
screams God, jumping up.  
You're rabbit roast, baby!

tchk! tchk! clicks Bugs Bunny,  
all these threats and violence  
and power craze.  
you've got a big  
disorder, Big Fella, with all these  
distorted aggression in your mind  
and lust for power  
and seeking vengeance  
and throwing people and creatures into hell and fire!

3

Oh! screams God in exasperation  
and drops bottom in the Heavenly Seat.  
God calms down  
and says:  
actually,  
I've thought about that  
all eternity  
and you're quite right, Buggy...  
But what about all those believers  
and all my Saints and Preachers?  
They all have been singing  
my praise and inflating my Ego.  
Tell me, you honest Buggy,  
tell me: Are they all mistaken?

errr, Doc...all those people  
have just been projecting  
their own cravings for power  
and their lust for pleasures  
and all their fears and their anger  
and all their violence onto you  
- so you've become what they've made of you...  
which is why, I say,

don't just keep repeating I'm God! I'm God!  
don't just keep saying  
what you've been told to believe in.  
hey Big Fella, empty yourself  
of all you believe in  
and empty yourself of all your thoughts  
and start as one knows nothing.  
and ask yourself, honestly:  
Who am I? What am I?  
then you'll know the truth –  
otherwise all you know is  
what you've always been told  
and what you believe to be true:  
beliefs are not the truth, Doc

and God is astounded  
for such words had never  
fallen on God's ears before  
for all God is used to  
are Praise and Sycophancy  
and Purple Verses of Empty Glory;  
and so God says to Bugs Bunny:  
You know what?  
You are absolutely right  
and this Throne of Majesty I sit on  
is the symbol of my own Big Ego  
and all the lust for power of all my believers.  
Give me a second....  
I'll destroy this very Symbol of Corruption,  
this Symbol of Almighty Power –  
I'll let a thousand lightning of steel  
flash through the space  
between my finger nails and skin  
and strike the Throne mercilessly  
till the Throne is Dust and Powder

tchk...tchk...says Bugs Bunny,  
there you go again  
always violent  
and tending to destruction...

4

and God turns to Bugs Bunny:  
You speak truth, Buggy...  
unlike all these human followers  
and praying peoples  
you speak the truth...  
come....I abandon this Throne  
and I shall follow you:  
be my Teacher  
and teach me the Truth

oh, God! says Bugs Bunny  
that's the trouble with you  
and your followers:  
always wanting to follow;  
always on the lookout  
for Teachers and Messiahs and Prophets  
and Leaders to show you the way,  
to teach you the way.  
can't you see:  
anything taught to you  
is a description  
and the description cannot be the real thing  
so that always you and your followers  
throughout eternity are chasing  
the description rather than the actual?  
can you see that?  
if you truly see that  
you will never ask  
for someone else to show you the way;  
if you will truly see that  
you will know  
the truth is seen by oneself alone  
not given or shown by another..

5

and God sits on the floor,  
astounded,  
and God says to Bugs Bunny:  
My God! My God!  
These are true words!  
Well, Bunny,  
well, at least let me go with you,  
let us go, you and me, and perhaps  
we can inquire into this together –  
not as teacher and follower  
but as equals...

and Bugs Bunny takes another bite at his carrot  
and passing it on to God, says:  
take a bite, Big Fella...  
and come, Big Fella,  
we'll drop all thought and concepts  
and we'll go a burrowing;  
we'll burrow through empty holes  
and we'll go from cold Siberia  
to the Deserts of the Sahara;  
with no system or care  
with no theory or theology  
we'll burrow our way  
from America  
and we'll burrow our way through  
and turn up wherever,  
perhaps China  
or Tibet or Indonesia;  
ah, come  
Big Fella,  
for we'll go merrily, merrily  
with no beliefs and preconceptions  
empty as the holes we create as we burrow through  
and perhaps we'll see then  
what actually is

come, Big Fella, we'll go a burrowing  
and I'll take you to meet this jolly fellow

in Australia,  
I think they call him the Tasmanian Devil.  
and Australia is indeed a big spread-out place  
with most generous wide spaces  
all made and perfect for burrowing....

6

and so God and Bugs Bunny burrow through  
the earth  
and through the universe  
and it is all eternity  
and God's missing in Heaven  
and gone burrowing  
but still the preachers hang on to their illusions  
created by their lusts and cravings for power  
for they always have followers,  
they always have willing followers

Raj Arumugam

# God's Always A He?

how come all you preachers  
always refer to God as HE?  
It's not a She?  
you sure the whole thing was checked by a certified nurse  
and not by some old blind goat  
that can't tell the difference between a stick and a hole?  
how come all you preachers  
always refer to God as HE?  
It's not a She?  
can never be?

and if that Thing  
(yeah, that God)  
is most certainly a He  
then does He  
like every Tom, Dick and Hairy  
have an erection?  
(or is He impotent?)  
and if He does have an erection  
where does He put the Divine It?

O don't get me wrong,  
ye most eloquent preachers -  
I'm just asking;  
for these Divine Mysteries  
are mostly certainly intriguing  
and should be available for public view  
under the Freedom of Information Act...  
for truly, how come all you preachers  
always refer to God as HE?

Raj Arumugam

# Going It Alone

These days I'm going it alone  
I'm seated in the train that roars past  
concrete and earth and dirt and buildings  
and that enters darkness and into light and darkness again.  
It is good to go; it does not matter where.  
I'm seated on the metal bench in the mall  
and there is the Æ  
seated inside looking out  
through my eyes. There is the world  
and the people all around me.  
I see me going and coming;  
it is good to come - it does not matter to what.  
My hands are in my pockets  
and the hat over my head  
and I'm walking on the road that  
plunges down from the station  
and stretches out long and far inviting  
those with time to go on for as much as they can.  
It is good to go wherever you can;  
and it is good to come however you want.  
Untidy and unshaven most days,  
neat and presentable on good days.

I am at the coffee stall  
and the man on the opposite side  
stares back at me.  
It seems to me many such men  
walk the streets.

There are moments  
when it's like being a marsupial in a daze;  
a creature preyed on  
by a poison-spewing predator.  
The feeling is there between the chest and abdomen  
a weight that pulls the mass in  
and sinks beating its wings.

Fear seizes  
and the victim freezes.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Going The Other Way

You know I've gone the other way  
Perhaps you don't;  
perhaps you don't even notice  
and it's only in my mind this memory exists

Perhaps you do  
and you wonder why I'm as such  
going the other way  
when everyone marched in one

You offered the best life, you said  
You offered such bliss without vice  
Why should anyone want to go,  
leave the warmth of the crowd?

I wandered over every lane, alleyway  
and I could not see what I sought  
I entered my loneliness and the deserted ways  
and the distracting crowds disappeared

Perhaps you don't wonder at all  
Perhaps I imagine it all - nonetheless,  
I wish you are happy where you are  
as I'm content in my quiet

Raj Arumugam

# Good Writers

when I was a teacher  
students often asked me:  
Can you recommend me  
a good writer?  
Or parents would ask me:  
Can you recommend  
some good writers?

I'd look at them  
looked into their eyes  
told them what they knew  
told them the brutal truth:  
A dead writer  
is always a good writer

Raj Arumugam

# Goya's Dog

1

in the  
two-story  
Quinta del Sordo  
Goya deaf man himself  
(like unlikable Beethoven)  
73 now  
lives  
painting, painting on the walls

2

there is a  
dog  
just the head looking up  
half-submerged  
what is it?  
is it earth, a hill?  
just a dog head,  
dog looking up  
there is light and shadow  
like light behind a child's lantern  
like light golden, shades of dark

there is the indefinable matter below  
dog head looking up  
the rest is but lantern paper  
with the light struggling to show itself  
the dog looks up, just its head

Raj Arumugam

# Goya's Donkey

Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw

Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw

I can read...donkey as I am,

I can read

Where did I learn to read?

they taught me at home,

they taught me at school

they taught me at the camps and retreats

and at all the Assemblies and Gatherings

and at various Thought Adjustment Programs

Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw

Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw

I can read...donkey as I am,

I can read and I can recite

They trained me well to recite

and to memorize and to regurgitate

and to repeat and repeat and repeat

at the Houses of Prayer

the Holy Ones stood before us

and they trained us, they drilled us

thousands and thousands of us

and millions and millions of us

and through years and years

and centuries and centuries

Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw

Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw

No variation, no change, just -

Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw

Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw

I can read, I can recite, I can repeat

they trained us well at Animal Farm -

word for word, repeat and repeat and repeat

and when in doubt, we have our Great Leaders

Pigs for Pigs, Goats for Goats, Turkeys for Turkeys

and Donkeys for Donkeys

who will speak for us

Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw

Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw

I can read, I can recite, I can repeat

so must you, if you should be pure,  
if you should be saved  
if you should see the Truth  
Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw  
Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw  
I can read, I can recite, I can repeat  
Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw  
Hee-haw, hee-haw, hee-haw

Raj Arumugam

# Goya's Hush

Hush, there are things  
that must not be said  
for the world's not the same  
There are desires  
that burn marks in the flesh  
and age must creep into silence

Hush, for the only utterings  
these days  
must be mutterings with  
a rosary in hand  
There are fantasies  
that stand out  
like boils on the skin

Hush, and keep your eyes  
down, weighed by back humps:  
it is better not to know  
There are monstrosities born  
that come with death in arms  
and babies born without innocence

Raj Arumugam

# Grammar Kitten

Grammar Kitten has  
learned well its lessons;  
and of all the marks  
it loves the comma best  
for, as Grammar Kitten explains  
to Ignorant Kitten:  
"a comma is like us cats:  
the comma's got the clause before the pause  
we've got the paws before the claws"

Raj Arumugam

# Grandpa's Masterpiece

When I was a kid  
I saw my grandpa  
holding a paper frame  
about his face

"What you doing,  
grandpa? " I asked

And he said: "I'm a masterpiece"

He left me the frame  
in his will when he died;  
but now I can't find the frame  
to put in the copy

Raj Arumugam

# Greek Tragedy (A Tale Of Horror)

1

He'd love her  
and then the coldness  
of marriage took love  
away from him  
and the coldness turned into suspicion  
and then into an obsession:  
and she was an inconvenience

he murdered her a Friday  
night  
suffocated her with her pillows  
it was easy;  
and he heard her whisper with her last breath:  
'I'll have your eyes'  
he cut her up in manageable parts,  
and buried her below the floorboards  
in the study

2

It is a year later  
and he is at the computer  
and far below lies parts of his wife  
but now his wife is smiling  
she's on screen  
smiling like a Greek Goddess  
and he sits transfixed  
and she says:  
'You are Oedipus, darling -  
I will have your eyes'  
She is smiling  
He is willing  
Beside the printer are paperclips  
He undoes two  
She beckons; she smiles  
and she whispers  
that same deathbed whisper:  
'I'll have your eyes'  
And he is Oedipus

Just paperclips will do  
He gouges one eye out  
And he gouges the other  
It is easy

She lies deep below  
below the floorboards;  
She need whisper no longer  
And he is become Oedipus,  
eyes gouged,  
blind like the Greek Homer

Raj Arumugam

# Greek-Tragedy Funny

when all things are shed  
like one takes off one's clothes  
and removes the make-up  
or as one discards one's body  
as one kicks the bucket  
in the good old-fashioned way  
all this seriousness  
is quite funny;  
all this wisdom is  
indecently foolish;  
all this respectability  
is unworthy;  
all this meaning  
is without content:  
one's importance is laughable  
as when one laughs  
in the midst of  
too much stage-tragedy;  
it's greek-tragedy funny

Raj Arumugam

## G's Woes

G does not think  
it's cool to be a letter  
It'd rather unfold  
and be a worm  
that goes places  
and gets to eat decomposing meat

unlike letter G  
that stays stationary  
in place, in a row

G does not think  
it's good enough to be gentle  
and gracious -  
being good and gracious  
gets you going nowhere, says G  
not as much as an occasional growl

(so G for growl might be useful after all)

Raj Arumugam

# Gypsy Songs

## 1 THE KIDS

it's a simple toy  
that's all they want  
these gypsy kids  
Plastic discards  
cups and basins  
consumers-people throw away  
change into toys and inventions  
in the hands of the gypsy kids  
Simple inventions  
unique in the change  
a life of the imagination  
free, unencumbered  
just a place on the earth  
the space they play in today  
That's all the kids want this moment  
not confined walls of classrooms

## 2 THE PARENTS

Just like the kids  
Just these dads and moms  
who still revel in the infancy of the earth  
And their women  
who cook a meal  
with what the wild might offer  
who are content with what's in the basket  
And who can see into the sky  
and see what's the weather coming  
this season  
And so when it is time to move, and where

## 3 GYPSY BEAUTY

Gypsy beauty

dance your body for me  
swirl it like water  
spin it like a top  
fly it like a kite  
O gypsy beauty  
with your knowing smile  
and your distant eyes  
O you beauty  
who wears the colors of the earth  
twirl the elements for me  
like the winds show what's  
behind the clouds

#### 4 GYPSY SINGER

O gypsy singer  
your voice in the air  
like the voices that filled  
the first days of the earth  
that still echo down  
the crags and valleys of the mind  
O gypsy singer, sing the earth to peace  
Sing hard hearts to gentleness  
Raise that voice of yours  
that voice pure  
always so unencumbered  
and bring back vision  
to these tired spirits  
that possess and ravage the world  
sing these city-organized minds to calm,  
sing all living beings into clarity

Raj Arumugam

# Ha Ha Boy And Girl Child In Grim Land

Ha Ha boy and girl Child arrive at the gates of Grim Land.

Ha Ha boy and girl Child walk into Grim Land.

The people do not smile.

The people do not laugh.

Suddenly all the people stand still. The King is in his carriage with his entourage.  
The girl Child runs towards the King.

Sir! shouts the girl Child.

Ha Ha boy follows.

Sir! he shouts.

The soldiers circle the children. They point spears at them.

The King, dressed in somber clothes, and looking rather unhappy, glares at the children.

He says: Bring the children here!

The soldiers drag the children to the King. The King looks grim and sad.  
Who are you? the King roars.

Sir, says the girl, we have come for the bird in the grove. Mother  
Chrysanthemum says Desirer might have captured the bird and brought it to you  
for a reward.

The bird is with me, says the King. I paid the Desirer a reward to bring the bird  
to me for the Desirer said that it sings and it dances. I wanted it so I could learn  
to be happy listening to its songs and my people would learn to smile again.  
But it has all been in vain.

I have given the bird a golden home and yet it does not sing. I give it the best  
food and yet it does not dance. And so my people and I continue in our grim and  
angry ways. It is a lie that the bird sings.

Oh no, Sir, says the girl Child. The bird sings for joy and delight and it delights all hearts that are open. Listen, Sir, to a song it sang for me:

The moon is in the sky  
and the fish in the pond;  
the creatures are at rest  
and the water flows;  
love them all  
gentle beings  
feel them all in your very being  
and your love shall be the peace  
your love shall be the calm

And the King cries as he listens to this song. And he learns to love in that instant.

And listen, Sir, says Ha Ha boy. And listen all good people, he says turning to the somber people in the streets. Listen to another song the bird sang us in the grove:

Listen, sweet ones,  
listen to the growth of the earth  
the growth of the creeper  
and the birth of buds  
and the flowers

Listen sweet ones  
to the descent of the dew  
and the quiet push of the roots

Listen sweet ones  
listen to the growth of the earth

And the people cry as they listen to this song. And they learn to love in that

instant.

And the soldiers too cry as they listen to this song.

And from that day Grim City is known as Bright City for the King and the people learned to love this day.

Raj Arumugam

# Ha Ha Ha Happy Family

See see Papa Trench Bottom  
dig in the mines happily, laugh ha ha happily  
and drink at night and hear him  
snore before the day  
happy happy Papa Trench Bottom  
he he he he he ha ha happy happy  
at home and at work  
See see Mama Big Bottom  
she she she he he ha ha happy  
Dance happily Cook with joy  
toss with levity  
and puts dishes aplenty on the table  
for all in the family to eat and be merry  
See see Teenage Tough Dude  
he he he happily walks in the streets  
Cool at school  
Very Pop with the babes  
and eating lots at home, with gravity  
very serious in look, sparse in his words  
but loves his mom, dad and sis  
deep deep within, ha ha happily happily  
Happy Happy Teenage Cool Dude  
And see Sister Barbie Doll Pretty  
Curls and dimples and cute smiles all  
Happy hours in the ha ha bathroom  
many more hours texting and chatting  
and lots and lots of FaceTime  
Happy happy walking sexy  
all the way to work  
and chirping all day like a Paradise Bird  
at work at the Rainbow Fast Food Outlet  
happy happy talking talking all workday  
Ah See Happy happy he he he  
she she she happy happy Family  
Trench Bottom family he he he  
and she she she all day and night  
Happy happy Trench Bottoms  
Happy happy he he ha ha Happy Family always

Raj Arumugam

# Haiku About Japan

there's all that about Japan  
and all I learned  
was sushi and haiku

Raj Arumugam

# Haiku As Poetry

it's easier to write a haiku  
in English  
than to make a poem

Raj Arumugam

# Haiku Capers

## 1 forced into haiku

haikus and haiku-ers so ubiquitous  
so I go with Ninja Turtle valor:  
HAAAAAAAAAAAAAI-KUUUUU!

## 2 you haiku, baby?

you haiku, baby? Yeah, you haiku?  
NO, NO – ME NAME NO HAIKU...  
no, no, baby - I mean you haiku, baby?

## 3 Poet Haiku

dear Poet Haiku  
if me see another copycat haiku  
me surely go cuckoo

## 4 haiku about Japan

there's all that about Japan  
and all I learned  
was sushi and haiku

## 5 haiku thief

Thomas Bruce stole  
the Parthenon Marbles  
and I stole the haiku

## 6 stale haikus

when I have  
nothing original or fresh  
I write haikus

## 7 the best haikus

the best haikus  
the most natural and original  
are likely to be in Japanese

## 8 lifeless haikus

Honorable Poet Haiku:  
your haikus are so sad and lifeless  
we suggest you try hara-kiri

## 9 haikus in English

haikus now in English  
are like poetry  
in bad translation

10 haiku as poetry

it's easier to write a haiku  
in English  
than to make a poem

11 haiku held at ransom

bandits on highway English  
have hijacked  
the haiku

12 persuaded into haiku

all right,  
I'll give it a go:  
I'll hang myself with a haiku

13 lazy thinkers

lazy thinkers  
get away with short cuts:  
they ascribe everything to God

---

Honorable Sir and Lovely Ms

so you haiku, baby?  
or you hara-kiri?

Raj Arumugam

# Haiku Held At Ransom

bandits on highway English  
have hijacked  
the haiku

Raj Arumugam

# Haiku Thief

Thomas Bruce stole  
the Parthenon Marbles  
and I steal the haiku

Raj Arumugam

# Haikus In English

haikus now in English  
are like poetry  
in bad translation

Raj Arumugam

# Half A Book

1

I don't like people  
who come borrowing books  
They sniff the paper and ink on my shelf  
and they ask to borrow  
as if they'd ever read  
anything beyond junkmail  
and cut-out coupons;  
and as if they'd ever return my books  
if I don't bark, hound and remind them,  
and re-remind them...

2

There is my friend Sam  
who recently took a fancy  
to one of my books  
on my shelf:  
"Make a Million, Loser"  
  
"Can I borrow that? "  
Sam asked  
And he looked like a loser  
so I said, "Yeah, you can borrow it"  
And he took the book off the shelf  
and he said, indignant:  
"Hey! The first 100 pages are here  
But pages 101 to 200 are missing! "

And I said, pissed off by this imbecile:  
"Hey, the first 100 is where you read;  
the second half is missing  
cos that's where  
you go make your money, you loser!  
Now go read the book  
and then make your million! "

Raj Arumugam

# Happy Companions

I am tired  
after my day,  
an early start and a late end  
and drivers all tense and impatient;  
I drive into the suburb  
and a bird flies before me a while  
through the cool air round  
and a butterfly hops playfully on my right

Raj Arumugam

# Happy Song Of A Bee At The Bottlebrush Tree

...bzzz....bzzzz...busy and happy being the bee  
at the bottlebrush tree  
I certainly am;  
happy as a friendly ghost  
carefree as a feather in the wind...  
bzzz....bzzzz...happy being the bee busy drinking  
nectar and free and alive I am;  
bzzz....bzzzz....busy and happy like the bee I am..  
...happy and free to fly to any and when  
and light and easy...bzzzz...bbbzzzz...no doubt without the Aussie booze,  
sane just as I am...bzzzz.....bzzzz....  
no doubt my sting may not save me from some silly calamity  
some intelligent being may invent  
(sure, I may die without knowing what hit me!)  
but still each dog has its day, as humans might say,  
and for now and my days  
I'm just content, being the bzzzz...bzzzz...bzzzz bee I am  
drinking at the bottlebrush in this sunny Ozland,  
happy and free as I am...

Raj Arumugam

# Happy Superest-Ever Universal Clown

1

rum dum da da bum  
moom moom  
swish glish  
sa sa sa lum  
hey, hey, hey  
I'm coming there  
where you are  
with a he he he  
and a hu hu hu  
la, la ho! ho! ho!  
Who's me?  
I'm the superest-ever clown  
I'm coming right now  
rum dum da da bum  
moom moom  
swish glish  
sa sa sa lum  
hey, hey, hey  
I'll be there!

2

I'm coming with a lot of noise  
I'll come with laughs  
and cheers  
I'll come unseen and with joy  
hey! hey! hey!  
you can start laughing now  
O you can smile  
come on now  
la la la di di da da  
sum sum sum  
sim sim sim  
I'll be as good as dim sum!

3

rum dum da da bum  
moom moom  
swish glish

sa sa sa lum  
hey, hey, hey  
I'll be like the moon  
when I come  
seen by the first humans  
for the first time  
and everyone looking in wonder and love  
and laughing, laughing  
for what else can one do  
when there's so much radiant lunacy?  
ha, ha ha  
he he he  
rum dum da da bum  
moom moom  
swish glish  
sa sa sa lum  
hey, hey, hey

4  
rum dum da da bum  
moom moom  
swish glish  
sa sa sa lum  
hey, hey, hey  
I'll flower there  
right inside your hearts  
like a smile, a laugh  
a happy feeling you don't even know is there  
and then suddenly it'll all blossom  
in your skin and your face and in your limbs and organs  
and you'll all laugh too  
and your neighbors too  
and strangers too  
for you are me and I you  
and everyone too  
hey, hey, hey  
rum dum dad a bum  
he he he he he he  
Ha ha ha ha ho ho  
we'll be laughing

we'll be all laughing at one another  
and we'll be laughing at ourselves  
for I `m coming  
O I'm ever coming  
superest-ever clown ever  
like delicate music  
like an exotic flower  
and we'll all laugh  
like kookaburras  
rum dum da da bum  
moom moom  
swish glish  
sa sa sa lum  
hey, hey, hey  
for I'm the happy Universal Clown ever  
just like you  
just like me  
hey hey hey  
rum dum da da bum  
moom moom  
swish glish  
sa sa sa lum  
hey, hey, hey

Raj Arumugam

# Happy Unknowing

I'm not sure  
what you wanted today  
There was no smile  
no expression  
rising through your makeup -  
and I did not know  
what it was all about

I had my desires  
I knew what I wanted  
but diffident, and suppressed,  
I did not give you any clue  
(we might have smiled  
out of view)

What did you want?  
What did I want?  
We looked as  
a cat and mouse might regard each other  
before one pounces or the other jumps -  
but on one did either

Today when you looked  
and turned over  
did you know what you wanted?  
I knew, I know my thoughts  
that flounder in my mind  
but what lived in yours  
I could not fathom

We enjoyed a mime, a dumb show:  
lives are not meant to be lived  
The best life I understand is the one in which  
one asks as it ends:  
What was that all about?

Raj Arumugam

# Have You Seen My Love?

'Stranger form the North,  
have you seen my love?  
In the lands that you traversed  
did you see my wild-eyed love?

My love, of the red sensuous lips,  
her eyes wild and her hair in unruly curls,  
gypsy-looking, luscious lady,  
soft and supple, her breasts full and her legs firm.

O Stranger going South  
have you seen my love?  
In the fens and inns you've been  
did you not meet my wild-hearted beauty? "

'O disconsolate lover -  
such a woman I have not seen  
not in the West nor in the East;  
perhaps in the South we'll find her  
if you will come with me.'

'O Traveler, I cannot be going South  
nor North, nor anywhere from this place;  
for she who pierced my heart  
has bound me with my promise  
to wait here till eternity.'

(September 1991)

Raj Arumugam

# Having Rights

like it or not  
the other person has rights  
so you can't really  
screw them up  
as you like;  
and fortunately,  
the other person has rights  
as the other person  
could very well be you  
so they can't really  
screw you up as  
they like

so, respect the other person

Raj Arumugam

# Head Of A Severe Ascetic Speaks To You

restraint, control and moderation  
abstinence and severe renunciation  
of all effort, emotions and wants  
these lead one to knowledge of oneself -  
this is the message I send you, those who come,  
countless of you after when I am gone

It is now, as it will be in all times...  
anxiety, violence and change  
parochialism, pain and disorder  
all these will follow us like  
the wind behind the dust in the air;  
and so offer all you have  
renounce all your wishes and emotions  
offer all abandon and enjoyment  
on the altar of the earth...  
let the dust of the mind settle

let lack of want abide  
and go no more than the vital needs  
and you will know the self with clarity  
and so stand calm  
before the vagaries of the world

-----

above lines based on Head of an Ascetic, ca.2nd-3rd centuries. Terracotta, 5 7/8  
x 5 x 6 in Brooklyn Museum

Raj Arumugam

# Head Of A Smiling Young Woman In Three-Quarter View

1

she's the delicate head of a young woman  
in Agnolo Bronzino's drawing;  
she says, 'Look. You can look;  
look, I don't really mind;  
and if you feel shy,  
I'll have my eyes and face  
down all the while'  
and in her charm she says:  
'we'll leave repressed debaters  
about lust and propriety far behind;  
I want you to look and you want to;  
that's all that matters between us'  
a man can look all the while  
as she has eyes down forever;  
a beauty unreachable  
just a piece of paper maybe  
and mostly bits of dots and pixels  
in cyberspace

2

could we have lived  
darling,  
in the same space and time  
I might have followed  
where you beckoned;  
I might have beaten  
Agnolo Bronzino  
with a Michelangelo skill;  
but now perhaps I'll  
copy and paste  
and post  
my image beside yours somewhere in cyberspace

and perhaps when I'm not watching  
my image will walk over to yours  
and you might look up at my avatar  
and you'd say:  
'Sweetheart, what took you so long? '  
And the two of you might just run away  
like cheeky teenagers  
and run through various sites and  
run across everyone's screen;  
and as the two of you get along  
and chat about times and love  
and the arts of love and such matters;  
I might be asleep or be at a meeting  
and I'll have a strange feeling  
a cool sensation all over my body  
and I'd say to whoever's beside me:  
'You know, something's happened in cyberspace...  
a strange love thing between an image of me  
and the delicate head of a young woman...'

drawing by Agnolo Bronzino (Italian,1503–1572): Head of a Smiling Young  
Woman in Three-Quarter View, ca.1542–43

Raj Arumugam

# Head Of An Old Man

days and years have marched on  
and often bitterness  
and regret  
seem more alluring  
in the contemplation  
of events that have passed

the voice screams there  
at all who have tricked and manipulated  
and curses at memories  
of tricky chance and mishaps

but there is calm at the cycle's end  
flying in and resting  
like a little bird at the window

it is quiet insight:  
all is well as evening descends

Raj Arumugam

# Hearing Things

1

when first I heard the radio  
when I was just about four  
in a tiny village in India  
I thought I was hearing things  
but mom said:  
Don't worry, rasa -  
it's just the radio...

2

when first I heard  
the voice on the other side of the line  
I nearly jumped out of my skin  
but the salesperson said:  
Don't worry;  
that's not the devil  
that's just the marvel of the telephone

3

when now I hear voices  
when I'm in my shower  
and I ask my wife and children:  
Did you guys want to talk to me?  
they answer:  
Why would we?  
You'd better wash your ears;  
You're hearing things...

Raj Arumugam

# Hello Mr Upright

Mr Upright  
Or Ms, as the case might be  
Hello Mr Clean  
Mr Censor  
Ms Watch-it-who-writes-dirty -  
whether you be in the readership  
as a Guardian of Our Divine Society  
or you just be in the Board of Crass Censorship,  
I hope you won't find anything offensive  
in Mr Upright, if you know what I mean  
For after all, what would come of the human race  
if we none had Mr Upright?  
so I hope, as I accept you as Mr Upright for comedy  
you will accept Mr Upright for biology

Raj Arumugam

# Help!

the stranger shouted to me:

Help!

and I said to him

quite politely:

No, my name's not HELP –

and we don't shout round here, please....

Raj Arumugam

# Here And There

(i)

The migrant has many wounds to tend  
and in his heart much healing to be done;  
there is a long distance he has to travel inside  
and triple that to come out.  
He offers his apologies to the new country,  
and to the old, and he must withdraw  
some time now within to understand  
from whence and why those incoherent vibrations own him.

(ii)

It is no fault of the place, here or there  
or of the people anywhere  
for tensions  
and contradictions always  
abound in a heart and mind  
that have lived a long inner life and there  
is much need for resolution and compromise.  
There are multiple voices that lay claim to one spirit  
and there is much need for peace for the soul  
to wage its battle within undisturbed.

Things can all fail and the day  
be filled with disappointments  
and unfulfilled desires and  
not a single step towards one's wants;  
so it shall seem that all things collapse  
and this day is lost and all days gone.  
So it shall seem -  
but hold on, hang on,  
and there shall be respite yet  
for the weary traveller, the tired migrant.

Oh put your hands on your tummy  
and hang on to your guts

feel your  
inner self and be strong  
be self-sufficient  
for that shall see you refreshed and strong  
for another battle yet  
of many battles that must be fought  
before certainty cometh.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# He's Gone, He's Not Here Any More

He's gone, he's not here any more  
He's gone, he's not here any more; no, he doesn't  
live here any more; he's left.  
Yes, you can send him a letter, send him a note  
send him another standard institutional card or mail,  
send him  
Printed Material Only,  
but the mail will not reach him  
because he's gone; he's not here any more.  
No, he didn't leave a forwarding address; no,  
he didn't think anyone would want to contact him  
or that anyone would want to go beyond one attempt.  
I believe he's left the country.  
Yes, they'll send me a note,  
he thought,  
being on  
the database of several mailing lists, his name in  
someone's eyes or finger tips once a year  
someone told to do this, take the list and  
mail a note or a greeting card to everyone on the list  
they'll send me a card, but no one will  
need to follow up, to trace the person to  
present address.  
So he must have thought, so he's packed up and gone;  
silent as the still air,  
silent as soup waiting to be taken.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Hey Birds

Hey birds  
you rosellas and mynas  
and magpies  
it's nice Spring and the flowers  
are in bloom  
in my garden;  
and it's good to see you flying about  
as in a Walt Disney movie  
and see you hover at the flowers  
or on the lawn  
but really, must you sit on the fence  
and shit on my side of the garden?  
why don't you turn your butt around  
and dropp it in my neighbor's colorless yard?

Raj Arumugam

# Hey Lilly-Pilly, Local Aussie

hey lilly-pilly, local Aussie  
leafy tree and luscious and hardy  
(standing in a row in my garden  
with your ancient compatriots  
each radiant and tall on my retaining-wall)  
still proud with a thick green smile  
and happy in sun-bright, rain-free summer heat and drought;  
but for me  
migrant, alien, but about a decade breathing here  
all I can do is to wilt, wilt and wilt  
and drag myself to the least-hot corner I can find in this home  
and lie down like a creepy-crawly,  
so depleted, so depleted, in this Queensland weather,  
in these dry months, beautiful one day, and perfect the next...

Raj Arumugam

# Hey, Did You Want To Feed A Clown?

hey, did you want to feed  
a clown?  
hey mister,  
did you want to buy me lunch?  
yep, lots of people laugh  
when I put on my act;  
kids roll all over on the ground  
and their fluffy puppies  
fly over the moon  
when I stick out my tongue  
and fall on the floor  
and pretend to die  
and the parents make up and kiss and say:  
oh, how this clown  
makes our world light up...

but you can all laugh for all I care  
for all I know is I'm still alive and hungry:  
so - hey Miss, could you spare a dime?  
I have tried clown therapy  
on myself  
and said cute words like:  
what me worry?  
me no worry...  
me clown and  
me no drown...  
mee...mee...me...mee...  
monkey me...  
wee...weee...weee...  
I'm the clown eternal -  
but I've a physical body  
and I need to eat and  
to rest my head at night  
and I too need  
a blanket against the cold...  
hey, sweet friends,  
with a smile when you see me,  
did you want to feed  
a clown?

hey mister,  
did you want to buy me lunch?  
I know people say:  
go get a regular job  
well, mister - I trained as a doctor,  
I know you'll laugh cos I'm a joker  
but when in my second year  
I looked into the throat of a patient  
I knew this was not what I was made for  
to stick thermometers into patients  
and to beg them: Say, ah...  
I knew I'd always been a clown –  
when that Great Harlequin in Outer Space made me  
that Jester made me a Clown  
as part of some Divine Comedy Plan;  
and I was sure  
it was some other disease that  
wanted me a doctor;  
so really it's not a doctor that can cure me  
for I can only be a Clown  
that people laugh at  
and discard when they have no use  
so, let's dropp these cosmic matters  
and talk about hamburgers  
...pssst...did you want to adopt  
a clown?  
hey mister,  
did you want to buy me lunch?

Raj Arumugam

# Hide And Seek (A One-Act Tragicomedy)

(Enter IT, enthusiastic. Faces audience and looks at audience happily, and then speaks directly to audience.)

IT: OK. You want to play?

OK - I'm IT.

I'll be blind a while

and I'll count

and you go hide. OK?

Yippee!

(IT closes eyes and places hands over eyes and counts.)

IT: One..two...

Go hide!

Three...four...five...

I'm IT!

Six...seven..eight...nine...

Oh, this is fun...

Aaandddd - Ten!

I'm IT and I'm coming!

(IT takes hands off eyes, opens eyes and looks about. IT looks with enthusiasm.)

IT: Oh...where are you?

I'm IT and I search

and I find you nowhere...

OK...I'll search again...

I search over hills and in parks

I look behind bush and below benches

but you are nowhere to be found.

OK...I'll search again...

(IT looks about on stage, pretending to climb over a hill, or a tree, and so forth...looking...searching...)

(Enter THAT.

THAT observes IT searching, for some time - and then speaks.)

THAT: What are you doing?

IT: Who, me?

THAT: Yes, you.

There's no one else here.

So what are you doing?

IT (coming close to THAT) : I'm searching. I'm IT

and I'm at play, you see.

You know - hide and seek.

I'm looking.

THAT: I see. And your name?

IT: They call me Life.

(Silence)

IT: And your name?

THAT: They call me Death.

(Silence.)

Life: I suppose we should embrace.

Death: Yes, we should. Come closer.

(Life moves forward, closer to Death, and they embrace.)

Death: That is nice and warm.

Life: That is bloody cold!

Death: Hug me hard  
Till we are one.

Life: Like dissolving into each other?

Death: Yes - like two become one.  
That sort of imagery, that manner of speech.  
Those delightful cliches.

Life: Should we turn off the lights then?

Death: Yes, we should.  
It's no longer child's play, is it?

Life: No. It's no longer child's play;  
There's another 4-letter word for play  
One could use - but play will do.

Death: Yes. So let's turn off the lights.

(Lights fade.)

Life: Maybe we should draw the curtains as well?

Death: Yes, we should. (Shouts) CURTAINS!

(End. Stage is in complete darkness. Curtain.)

Raj Arumugam

# Him Again

Have you heard from him?  
someone asks, as they sit round the table.  
They shake their heads and one of them  
says softly,  
No...  
You were quite close to him,  
some other throws in an accusation.  
Too busy to write; probably the same with him.

Cheerful fellow, wasn't he?  
the other continues.  
He would be here at the canteen and he would always  
offer me some before he took his drink. Always had a smile  
and a kind word or two.  
I wonder what's become of him...  
He must be fine,  
somebody attempts to say.

Probably found a new life;  
he's forgotten us, busy in his new place...

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# History

People are cattle. Animals.  
Herd them. Pack them. Meaningless masses  
waves upon waves mindless faces  
who make no difference  
Fat Round Square Circles Tubes  
Masses like dirty contaminated clothes that you put  
on a large sheet and tie in a bundle  
and burn  
Kill them Gas them Tank them Shoot them  
Wall them Curtain them Iron them Damn them  
People are cattle. Animals  
on an undulating land of dung  
and carcasses; masses spread out in agony  
with heads of horses, pigs, cows, goats  
braying, neighing, mooing, screeching  
their mindless lives. In prayer to a hairy bloody animal-God.  
Herd them Pack them People are cattle.

(from Songs for You, 1990)

Raj Arumugam

# Home Sweet Home

Here too home is not a simple thing.  
You must be mindful of location:  
if your home is at a cul-de-sac,  
and diverse things as where the sun rises,  
if there is foliage and how far it is to the highway  
and what about accessibility to a host of facilities;  
and is the estate near a cement factory?  
Then there are things like negative gearing and  
rising interest rates; body corporate fees and council rates;  
inspectors and valuers you can count on  
and you must be mindful too of resale value.  
O no, the modern home all over the world  
is not a simple thing to live in;  
you could die in it.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Honest Tom, Clever Tom

Isn't Tom a good boy?  
He picks up the handbag  
the careless lady forgets  
at the food court  
and runs after her  
and returns the handbag

The lady is pleased  
and she opens her handbag  
and she says:  
'That's funny...  
I'm positive I had a \$50 note -  
but now I've got ten \$5 notes...'

'Yeah, ' says Tom...'The last time  
I returned a handbag to a lady  
she said she didn't have any small change  
to give me as a reward;  
but you got plenty, Miss...'

Now, isn't Tom a clever boy...

(poem based on an existing joke)

Raj Arumugam

# Honesty And Dishonesty

you asked me for an honest opinion;  
i told you the truth;  
and so you taught me to lie always

Raj Arumugam

# Hope Again

(i)

There is hope yet  
in the darkest of nights  
for the stars still will shine  
if you but care to look

(ii)

Dharma does not forsake  
anyone who lives by it;  
Dharma does not leave  
its loved ones  
to stand in the streets

(iii)

Surely this trial  
is to show me goodness;  
surely this trial  
is but the journey  
to a good end

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# How Are You?

Kelly at Coles draws the items on the belt  
towards her and says,  
How you doing?  
The local man before her nods and the  
transaction is done.  
Why does he not reply?  
Does he see it as a charade?  
Does he see some truth the newcomer cannot see?  
It's my turn.  
Kelly at Coles draws the things on the belt  
towards her and says,  
How you doing?  
The new man - that's me, smiles and says,  
Good. Thanks.  
(But Kelly is already scanning  
and punching her keys.)  
The newcomer feels strange. Perhaps he should  
have nodded, look a little more natural and aloof...  
Perhaps the next time the newcomer will...

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# How C Was Consigned To The Cesspool

Poor C has never liked the fact  
that it's always in third place  
C just never sees any chance  
of advancing in the ranks to be first

And worst - it cannot condone the fact  
it's been ignored whether present or absent  
&quot;I'm not noticed even when I'm there  
as in the word NOTICE -  
people say 'S' instead...&quot;

Poor C, you can understand its chagrin

&quot;And others like K get the credit though I do all the work -  
consider what people do when they say:  
'...carry...chaos...crutch...crane...come...call...'  
And even when I offer some cranberry cake,  
they acknowledge K and disregard me&quot;

You can understand C's consternation  
and frustration  
And in its anger and confusion, C colored  
every man and woman in most vulgar terms  
it could conjure with a c-start -  
and that's when people got angry with C  
and threw it into the cesspool...where it remains,  
most cultured and celebrated readers,  
for daring to call every man and woman  
by a word each  
with an unflattering c-start...

Raj Arumugam

# How Days Go

some days go like  
lightning  
some flow like oil  
some like: where did it go?  
but today is still today

Raj Arumugam

# How Did Poetry Begin?

how did it begin anyway  
this love of sound and words and rhythm  
and word painting?  
did a bunch of perhaps thirteen men and women  
gather one night  
under the star-covered trees  
and eat pizzas and say:  
tonight we'll not drink sake  
or soma  
and we'll not have sex  
or argue about swines and politics and metaphysics;  
we'll not drink wine or breathe in fumes  
that make minds gallop like wild boars  
but, tonight, we'll drink words instead?

Raj Arumugam

# How Do You Catch A Catfish In A Gourd?

Right...

catfish slippery  
gourd slippery  
and I am to catch this catfish

mountains stand behind  
covered by mist  
mountains have grown  
as have my whiskers  
and my clothes tear and wear out with time  
and I am to catch  
slippery catfish  
with slippery gourd -  
O god  
of streams and mountains!  
how do you catch, dear god of bamboo,  
a catfish in a gourd?

and the waters flow  
of many monsoons and storms  
and the river has changed its course  
many times  
while I stand here with my gourd  
and myself twisted and turned and all my virility lost  
not a jot closer to my task  
even with the god of riverbanks;  
but all the while this catfish jumps around in the stream  
mocking  
clapping its fins like a pair of hands  
and beating the water with its tail  
and the message it sends is: "Come on! come on!  
Catch me if you can! "

Right...

catfish in the waters slippery  
gourd in my hand slippery  
and I am to catch this catfish  
O god of mist and rocks  
how do you catch a catfish in a gourd?

Raj Arumugam

# How Far Are You?

how far gone  
gentle breathing partner  
how far gone from me  
are you in your sleep?  
how deep in your dreams  
and away from each other?

how far are you  
gentle living partner  
how far gone within  
far, far, far within  
such unmeasured distance  
are you gone from me  
from you  
even in waking  
and walking and living?  
how far are we gone  
from ourselves?

O gentle breathing partner,  
how far we are gone...

Raj Arumugam

# How I Won And Lost A Million

I won a million dollars  
in the local lottery  
and I returned to the shop  
and said - gratefully -  
to the people who sold  
me the ticket:  
'Thanks a million'

And so they said, courteously:  
'Thank you, Sir' -  
and they took the million  
away from me

Raj Arumugam

# How Many Words Make A Poem?

even one;  
maybe  
none

Raj Arumugam

# How Much It Is Given To Us

How much it is given to us  
the time, the union and the love  
How it is there in the scrolls of events  
that will, must unfold -  
nothing is given to us to know

We do not even know our own minds  
(in spite of our vows)  
the twists and changes  
that might come  
in our own thoughts and arms

Let us walk therefore  
in what is known, this moment  
And this our present love  
let us treasure then and  
that certainty in our hearts  
over which (for now) rolls no clouds

Raj Arumugam

# How Odd It Is

it's funny how  
Mr Bean isn't  
known for eating beans  
and James Bond  
has nothing to do with borrowed money  
and interest payments;  
Stephen Crane didn't really  
have cranes for relatives  
nor was he in the building industry;  
and hey, John Carpenter  
made movies  
and not shelves or kitchen cabinets;  
and my neighbor Carol  
doesn't really sing carols  
and has the name all year round  
and not just during Christmas;  
and me, Raj, it's odd I'm not a king

Raj Arumugam

# How To Make Money

how to make money,  
baby;  
how to make money;  
tell me sweet love  
you tell me  
how to make money  
how to make an easy billion

the world's full of it  
in cyberspace  
and in shopping malls;  
the world's full of money schemes  
in our real world  
and where we buy a drink  
or get more fries

it's full on  
about how to make money,  
baby;  
how to make money

make money, pal  
they say  
doing nothing;  
I've got an auto system  
and all you need is internet  
and all you've got to do  
is sit back and let the dollars roll  
into your bank account

so tell me  
how to make money,  
baby;  
how to make money

come in to this meeting  
another group says  
and we'll show you how  
show you how easy it is  
how easy it is to make money:  
it's auto, auto, auto, fully automated  
and the money keeps coming;  
the money rolls  
rolls in, rolls in, rolls in

tell me  
how to make money,  
baby;  
how to make money

it's all so easy  
because we want  
you to enjoy the life  
we've earned;  
we've made our money  
and we want you to share  
in the happiness;  
it's all so easy, dear friends –  
we'll guide you each step of the way;  
we'll show you how to make the money

so they'll tell us  
how to make money,  
baby;  
how to make money:  
the only thing is  
what they mean is  
how to make money for them, babe,  
how to make money for them  
with a simple transfer of money  
transfer of money, transfer of money  
transfer of money from the foolish  
transfer of money from the foolish to the deceitful;

wealth is, dear darling,  
wealth is the transfer of money  
from the foolish to the cunning

how to make money,  
baby;  
how to make money;  
tell me sweet love  
you tell me  
how to make money  
how to make an easy billion

Raj Arumugam

# How To Write Your Own Obituary

you don't die first  
you just write  
though publishing it may be posthumous;  
and praise yourself cos  
you don't know if the living  
will remember or curse

how to write  
your own obituary?  
Look, you know yourself best -  
no one, if you really think about it  
likes you better than you like yourself  
so you really got a good start there

and then  
all you need also is a bit of imagination  
just pretend you're someone else  
deeply in love with you

so now start writing your own obituary  
and see it flow and glow like gold  
in 2011's financial markets

Happy dying and typing that obituary;  
best no plagiarism in this -  
come on, haven't you done enough already?

And have I written mine?  
Oh sure - I'll share it with you...  
I'm been boringly modest and indistinct all my life  
so I give myself some credit in dying;  
so here it is,  
in all characteristic modesty  
and brevity:

Here lies  
The Greatest



# How We Shall Love

I will not tell you  
nor will I envision how I shall love you;  
for indeed I do not know...  
so how indeed shall we love?  
shall we love like the other-worldly  
who say love is all spirit and so will not touch  
and are afraid of the pleasures of thrusts and friction  
but are all ecstasy in imagined future states  
and have no sensations in present bodies?  
how indeed shall I love?  
I do not think I shall love you  
like no lover has since the beginning of love;  
I shall not declare such love  
in unique ways and how I shall love  
and how we shall dine, and eat and converse and be in bed  
and build ourselves a home and castles in the air  
that shall keep us for eternity  
that shall thus render death incapable of doing us apart  
I do not see how I shall love  
and we do not speak what love will be:  
I shall surprise myself;  
indeed  
we will surprise the moment,  
that time itself will turn back and say: Oh!

Raj Arumugam

# How Z-Ed Got Back Its Glee

Z-ed was  
sad  
being last  
but more  
because of the way  
it was pronounced  
in the green fields of England

Then it was invited to appear  
on Sesame Street  
where it was introduced as Z-ee  
and it shouted with glee:  
"Gee! That's a nice sound - I'm Z-ee! "

And that's how Z-ee  
got back its glee -  
whereas before it was  
sad as Z-ed

Raj Arumugam

# Human Kindness

come animals  
you have no rights;  
what rights can you have?  
when the Almighty Lord has said  
you are but food for man  
for man is given dominion over all things

come animals  
you have no rights;  
so come willingly  
and with a broad smile and grin  
to lay down your lives  
for man's potbellies;  
come animals  
with gratitude  
for you are the Lord's sweet and delicious creatures

come with glad hearts and a happy song  
no: moo, moo, moo  
no: baa, baa, baa...  
no: cock a doodle doo  
no: bow, wow, wow  
no: oink, oink, oink  
no: sss, sss, ssss  
no: meow, meow, meow  
but happily altogether now  
you shall sing:  
Merrily, merrily  
we serve mankind  
with a  
hee, hee, hee  
and a ha, ha, ha  
Merrily, merrily  
we lay our lives  
so that man's potbellies be filled  
and the Lord's will be done

Raj Arumugam

# Human Pain

there is human pain  
a sorrow, a sadness, an incompleteness  
an imperfection  
that comes with us all our lives  
as waves accompany oceans  
or as clouds the sky;  
and this pain comes  
though one may stay focused on the good;  
and this pain abides  
though one may nestle in the arms of pleasures;  
and this pain we ignore or conceal  
or we seek miracles or saviors or excuses  
and this sorrow we ascribe to supernatural causes  
and explore solutions through other-worldly powers  
or attempt to leap over with drugs  
or to blur with intoxicants;  
we wrestle it, we yield to it  
we confront it, we plead  
we do everything  
except to see, to observe, to embrace;  
we learn all tricks and ways and attempt all things  
except to see it oneself for what it is  
with no theory and no intervention

Raj Arumugam

# Hut In The Forest

some of us will abide in silence  
in solitude, in anonymity  
in a withdrawal  
that opens the expanse within

one's nature and life and times lead  
one down narrow paths, choices  
and one is content with the quiet  
and the dismantling of connections,  
the abiding in oneself  
in the vastness  
company of trees  
air and water  
and in the silence

Raj Arumugam

# I Am Content Here

I am content here  
in my open  
with the trees and the birds that sing  
and the clouds above  
and the moon that radiates at night;  
and the feel of the warmth of the sun on my  
arms and chests and legs  
and the feel of the cool water  
on my face;  
not for me all the revelations  
and the vanities  
and the theories  
and the pompositives  
of the life here  
and the life hereafter;  
for I am content here  
in my open  
with the trees and the birds that sing

Raj Arumugam

# I Am E And I Don't Like P

I am e and I don't like p  
p really disgusts me  
and makes me go eeeeeee!  
p is a stalker and purposely tries to get close to me -  
see what I mean?  
I try to keep p at a distance  
but I don't always succeed  
look  
I want to get a fruit  
and I reach for a pear  
and see? - P comes to share!  
He wants to make a pair with me!  
Oh! I just hate p!  
Try and get some peace  
but that p instantaneously  
casts a shadow over my peace,  
as you can see...  
I can't even have fun -  
I just want a peek - and p insists on being there;  
and if I just take a peep - oh p  
infuriates me  
like barriers in front and at the back  
I try an orange  
hoping to get rid of p  
but as soon as I start to peel -  
oh! I hate it! p's there, do you see?  
I don't mind s, or c or dear old d  
but Oh this stalker p  
I hate p  
with all my life and energy

and even a hates p  
for p thinks it's good company in papa  
when a just wants to be alone;  
and worse, p is really crude and smells  
and s and i think so too  
cos p forces them altogether  
and makes them piss...  
Oh I am e and I hate p

and the ABC Police tell me it's not within their purview  
could I speak with the Numbers Department?  
and the Numbers Department says he's too important  
since he's in pi  
O what can me, we do with p?  
I just hate p - he just makes me want to puke!  
one of these days, I'm just going to double pee on p!

Raj Arumugam

# I Am The Earthworm, Lord Of The Underworld

I am the earthworm  
Lord of the Underworld;  
you hardly think of me  
except perhaps as angleworm

I give the earth nitrogen  
phosphates and potash;  
and the soil is rich for  
all my muscular contractions

I create passages for air  
and water;  
and by sheer power of my burrowing  
I bring all these together

and if you think  
I'm just tube  
and mucus that I secrete,  
sweetheart,  
wait till you come  
to the earth  
for I'll break you down  
and convert you  
into humus and casts

O, I am the earthworm  
Lord of the Underworld;  
you hardly think of me  
except perhaps as angleworm

so when are you coming,  
sweetmeat,  
when are you coming

down to earth?

Raj Arumugam

# I Am The Outsider

I am the one outside the group  
outside the circle  
the one who fell through  
the holes in the net  
The stranger  
the outsider  
I came close  
and you said come closer;  
and I made every effort -  
eager, naïve and persistent -  
but you had sophistication;  
you always have sophistication;  
and you played with me;  
you needed bodies and responses  
to fill in forms and information  
and your Bureau of Statistics  
and I was there - guided, directed  
and you knew  
all the while,  
I was the stranger, the outsider  
And you whispered to one another  
while your smooth talk was practiced and distinct  
I was the stranger, am the outsider  
which you knew all the while  
which I only saw late in the hour  
and so I live now at the borders, at the periphery  
and now when we walk past each other  
we gaze at each other with caution  
with careful disregard

Raj Arumugam

# I Am Yun Du-Seo

I am Yun Du-seo,  
dearest fellow-beings;  
I lived in Korea  
and this is my self-portrait  
I send to you as a greeting  
from the past;  
I had my life to art  
and loved my fellow-beings  
and the creatures of the earth;  
and I send this to you  
just a human face  
to a time that will perhaps  
be more enlightened  
or sunk deep in violence...  
I do not know...  
But I send you this face of mine  
as a fellow-human being  
not so much that you might guess  
and confer who I was and what I did  
and what I stood for and what I agonized over  
but I send you this face  
that you might see all of us in  
and perhaps to see in this portrait  
a oneness and sameness  
that we can all celebrate across nations  
and creed and ages;  
celebrate then, friends, if this comes to you  
in radiant times,  
and if not, make amends...  
I, Yun Du-seo,  
send my love to my fellow-beings  
and all life and creatures of the earth...

(this poem is based on a self-portrait by Yun Du-seo, (Korea,1668–1715))

Raj Arumugam

# I And U

I am  
more important  
than U

U r really a lower life-form  
that's why  
I get upper case anywhere  
and you are lower case mostly

Raj Arumugam

# I Bring You Myself As I Am

I bring you myself as I am  
and want to see you  
as you are, original and free -  
but you always want to rely on authority;  
I invite you  
to talk  
about what you think  
but you must  
always lean on the posts  
and slouch on pillars  
as you play the petty game  
of dropping great names  
and displaying the coat of arms  
of tradition and dead ideas;  
I bring you cups of thoughts  
with herbs and dew  
that I gather myself  
that instant  
and hope you will offer  
what you can make -  
but you insist  
I drink wine and mixtures  
that others have concocted and left flowing  
in the muddy rivers of time  
that are marked by floating carcasses;  
I talk to you with an open heart  
but all you do is to repeat  
the words of your manipulators

listen, friend  
and actually listen:  
the first mark of a poet  
is the lack of the cliché  
in thought and expression;  
but marked by cliché  
in thought and expression  
one is but a puppet

or propagandist  
though one may exploit verse

Raj Arumugam

# I Can Spill. Can You Spill?

I can spill  
well and good  
Can you spill?  
Let me advise you  
you should learn  
how to spill -  
and to spill well  
You see a lot of people can't spill  
and so we know they are not educated  
But if you can spill  
like me  
so well and so good  
and when people read what I write  
they know straight away  
I'm educated, very well educated  
So you see I can spill  
and so I'm known all over the world  
as educated and polished  
and let's not forget, refined  
So can you spill?  
If you can't,  
never fear  
we are all friends here  
I can help you -  
I will send you a CD, a DVD and a guide book  
and other educational material  
(Yes, all written and produced by me -  
I told you I'm educated, and polished!)  
so you can learn to spill like me  
Of course nothing's for fee -  
you must pay me a fee  
and once I got your money  
I will send you all the material  
And you can start to spill  
just like me!  
And all the world  
will ask you:  
"Oh how did you learn to spill  
like this? "

And you can tell them:  
"There's a learned man Down Under  
the famous Raj Arumugam  
(Oh, have you never heard?)  
and he taught me how to spill  
But of course he made me pay a free  
for Raj Arumugam as a matter of policy  
never gives anything for fee  
and now you see  
I can spill just like Raj Arumugam  
both us with much pride and glee  
So I can spill. Can you spill?  
No? Shame on you! "

Raj Arumugam

# I Can'T Stand Bad Days

1

Tom sits alone in the bar  
staring at  
his drink before him  
The burly stranger comes in  
stares at Tom and seizes Tom's glass  
and finishes the drink in one gulp  
Tom cries  
and the stranger says:  
'Damn! Don't cry!  
I was joking  
I hate to see a man cry  
Wipe your tears off  
and I'll buy you a drink'

2

'No, it's not that, stranger, '  
says Tim, still crying  
'I've had a damned bad day  
since the start  
I went to work  
and my boss fired me  
And I went home  
and my wife was with another man  
I went to the park  
and I got bitten by a stray dog  
I went back to the car park  
and just then somebody drove off with my car  
And I came here and  
at the exact moment I was going to have the drink  
in one gulp  
and put an end to my life -  
you came in and finished my drink,  
every dropp of the poison  
I had emptied into it'

Raj Arumugam

# I Defy Humility

Having defied gravity  
(not me personally  
but by proxy  
namely through  
a dog, monkey and Soyuz  
and fruit flies and bullfrogs  
and lately through NASA)  
I defy humility  
I brave it, I challenge it  
for there's too much hypocrisy  
in humility  
For humility is such  
that it never speaks its name  
For when it speaks of Humility  
it is Sans Humility  
Take me  
for example -  
you hardly hear me  
mention myself as Saint Humility, do you?  
But that's what I am, my other name: Humility  
But people keep insisting on calling me Saint Humility  
But I defy Humility

## POSTSCRIPT

I also defy repetition  
and over-emphasis  
and contradiction, paradox  
But, it must not be left unsaid -  
in defying humility,  
I think I've also  
quite inadvertently  
defined humility: Saint Me

Raj Arumugam

# I Depress You, Don'T I?

I depress you, don't I?

You are so bubbly, cheerful, smooth with your words,

you make conversation always as easily

as a well-oiled engine hums;

open-mouthed; sparkle-eyed;

exuberant with a pinch of irritation

in your confidence with sing-song words and links.

In person and on the phone,

you roll your head, use your hands expressively; you laugh,

you say things that are right and clever, and you are certain.

You know all the concepts and

the appropriate terms and words:

each word that triggers smiles and each that is the right word and which you

dim with; it's easy; and

you have lay-bys

and fly-buys and I can get cash as I pay;

and

casual

is the antonym of

permanent

while I fumble with

temporary

and my tone.

You know your way; you are comfortable.

But I... I depress you, don't I?

Hesitant, tentative, slow and uncertain....

Apologizing for things I say, for as soon as

I've said them I wonder

because you don't respond

if I've said the wrong thing;

unsure of form and conventions,

asking for clarifications

about what seem to you to be

the most obvious things...and withdrawing

like a would-be lover who dares not commit himself...

Oh ye happy cherubim

of a white and brightly-lit Heaven,

I do depress you don't I?

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# I Don't Understand Mom And Dad

I don't understand Mom and Dad  
how come Dad can do things  
and I'm not allowed

like Dad can drink beer  
but I'm not allowed  
I asked mom "How come Dad can drink  
and I'm not allowed? "  
And Mom said:  
"Cos it doesn't make a difference in his case"

But I don't get it, Mom!

and the other day  
I asked Mom if I could join  
Dad in the deep end of the pool  
and Mom said "No"  
and I said "How come Dad can do it? "  
and Mom says  
"Cos Dad's got insurance"

But I don't get it, Mom!

Raj Arumugam

# I Hate My Girl

I hate my girl  
Why?  
Cos she's a smartass

On every date she just messes me up  
The first one we were on  
I said:  
"Doesn't this date  
just make you long for another? "  
And she answers:  
"Oh, yes – but no one else would come"

And on every date  
I must pay for her drinks and food  
and must take her home in a taxi;  
and so pissed off, I said yesterday:  
"You must think me the perfect fool! "  
And the smartass, she says:  
"I keep telling you -  
you are not perfect..."

Raj Arumugam

# I Have Come To Lie Down On The Grass

I have come to lie down on the grass  
and to feel the earth and the coolness of the dew  
and the warmth of the rising sun;  
I have come in forgetting  
and in oneness;  
and perhaps a couple in their daily walk in these fields  
might stumble over my body  
and punch the numbers to report a corpse  
on the lonely fields

Raj Arumugam

# I Love To Sleep (Adults Only)

I love to sleep  
24-hours a day  
and for the rest  
of the night too

But mum screams:  
Wake up,  
dreamy bones -  
and do something!

And so I wake up  
and promptly  
go back to sleep  
as that way  
I honor mum's words.

Dad breathes  
words of inspiration:  
Get up,  
lazy bones -  
and achieve wonders!

And so I wake up  
and stay awake  
the duration of a long yawn  
and that way  
the dreams of my father  
are fulfilled.

Big Blonde Lulu  
from next door sighs:  
I wish you'll  
get up,  
you useless fella;

O get up  
you sleepy head -  
and get to know me.

But I continue to sleep  
in spite of her pleas  
and I dream of  
Big Blonde Lulu  
and boy, oh boy,  
you can bet your last dollar  
I get to know  
Sexy Lulu  
in my dreams  
in more than one way!

Oh, I just love to sleep  
24-hours a day  
and for the rest  
of the night too

Raj Arumugam

# I Sat By The Lake

I sat by the lake  
and Martha and Helen walked  
in the water till it reached their hips  
then they turned back and walked back  
The boat's prow pointed towards the other side  
and I looked down at the water  
before me  
What was I thinking?  
I do not know;  
even now sometimes  
I wonder  
what was my thought  
and what about Martha and Helen?  
all of us in that moment  
faceless, restrained  
like the two trees behind me  
bare, cut of their branches  
stunted, deprived of their growth  
all of us going nowhere  
like the boat

Raj Arumugam

# I Saw My Love Only Once

the flowers of spring  
are not as lovely as you;  
the mountain air in solitude  
not as pure as you

I saw you only once  
in the Grand House of the Lord of the Lands  
and we exchanged glances as you sang  
And though you sang  
from a printed text for all  
your eyes gave me  
songs of longing and love

O where are you now  
most gentle beloved?  
I hear your owners move you  
at the request of the Grand Lords  
and though I  
come to so many sessions  
in which you might sing  
and hoping each night  
I might see you again  
as I carry cups and meat for the feasting Lords  
and that there as you deliver them the songs in the texts  
I come that  
you might look again at me  
and give me the songs in your eyes

the flowers of spring  
are not as lovely as you;  
the mountain air in solitude  
not as pure as you

Raj Arumugam

# I See You Moon

I see you moon  
this cool autumn morning  
you sing over the river and trees  
and you are supported  
by your dance troupe of stars

Raj Arumugam

# I Shall Go Now Without Much Ado

I shall go now  
quietly walk  
in the shadows  
in the corridors  
that trees make;  
I shall go now  
though not on a journey;  
I shall go where the trees do not speak  
of ideology  
and one can commune  
with no reliance on words  
and symbols and ideas and propositions;  
I shall walk in the cool of the shadows  
in the kindness of the trees  
and there shall be discourse  
with the squirrel stopping in its journey  
between bushes;  
and I shall speak with the leaves and the trunks  
and the sun and the birds and the creatures  
that are on the ground or between  
or that may be hooting  
from inside holes of ancient trees;  
I shall sit in the shade  
where there shall be no hierarchy  
and no objectives and no aspirations  
here on earth or hereafter;  
I shall go now without much ado  
as quietly as one comes  
and I shall return  
soon enough,  
as unobtrusively  
as one goes

Raj Arumugam

# I Submitted A Poem

i submitted a poem  
arranged in lines like prose  
that is experimental  
and verse-prose  
that rides between borders:  
but it did not appear  
for the system supported by the computer  
could not identify one or the other;  
but i put this together  
just for the fun of it  
and the oracle says this is poetry

Raj Arumugam

## I Understand Now

How naive I've been, trusting and misunderstanding  
your cold masculine words of bureaucracy.

I filled in your forms and proffered  
full information

and followed leads and hints  
like an ass led by the nose.

I thought telling you I have a family will  
put me in a good light © thought you would  
appreciate dealing with a family man who would  
be a role model in a school; but no,  
you saw how expensive I could be if you had  
to get me accommodation; how inconvenient and cumbersome  
it would be assuring me of a place for one child  
in a primary and one in a high school. I thought you  
would appreciate twenty years of experience  
coming from an Asian city, a Tiger city, coming  
with faith and dedication; but I didn't know  
you were locked in your parochialism and narrow world

How naive I've been faithfully delivering every  
document  
on request sans promise and reason

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# I Walk Alone Now

I walk alone now  
unlike as in the days of long ago  
when there was company and the crowd  
and there was clamor and noise...  
but smiling time dispersed all things and beings;  
time forked the paths  
as many as veins in a leaf  
and made each man and woman and child  
shake hands or hug and wave goodbyes;  
and so I walk alone now  
in solitary ways

I let all things go  
the past and pain and sorrows  
and the yearnings and mind's hustle and bustle  
And so one is on the path that opens at one's feet  
And the earth and the trees  
and the air and sky and the water and clouds  
keep the still heart company  
in one's long walk to one's own shed

(companion picture: Landscape with a Solitary Traveler by Yosa Buson)

Raj Arumugam

# I, Sarah Malcolm

I am Sarah Malcolm -  
yes, the one they call "the Irish Laundress"  
and the jury found me guilty of the murders  
(the Infamous Murderess)  
of Mrs Lydia Duncomb,  
Mrs Harrison and the servant Ann Price  
in Mrs Lydia's chamber  
at the Inns of Court in the Temple;  
and imagine the jury only needed 15 minutes

and there was disbelief when I admitted to robbery  
but not murder  
and there was disgust  
when I said the blood on my clothing was my own menstrual blood  
and not the blood of Ann Price:  
I had broken a taboo in talking of menstrual blood  
for, as they say,  
only 'loose' and the not so 'virtuous' women speak that way

and of course even after the judgement  
I have been deemed even more guilty  
for I am "of a different Communion"  
of the Catholic faith, not Anglican -  
just as the Ordinary, James Guthrie described me  
in instructing me here at Newgate on the Christian faith;  
and I have earned the name now of many  
as the 'evil, barbaric, and stubborn woman'

And now Mr Hogarth sketches and paints  
that you might have a view of me;  
and the appointed date is 7 March 1733  
when I will be executed...  
and these lines I add to the picture  
that you might remember me

---

Sarah Malcolm (1710-1733)

Raj Arumugam

# I'll Get Healthy Food Today

I'll go to this restaurant  
cos today I'm eating low-fat  
and healthy;  
I want to glow and eat safe  
and be on a diet  
and take some weight off my body  
and so trim some fat off the burden on  
the National Health Plan;  
so I'll go to a healthy restaurant today  
they serve fresh and they spell out fat contents  
for each item  
so I can choose carefully  
and conscientiously;  
and the menu board tells me  
which sandwiches have low fat  
and which burgers offer health  
and which meat burgers are approved  
by the Heart Foundation;  
and so I'll eat healthy today  
and so here I am  
so can  
I have one of your low-fat burgers, please...?  
Yum, that's going to be really healthy...  
Yes.....with double cheese...yes, make it double meat...  
And can I have plenty of sauce  
and add that creamy sauce special too, please....?  
more of that sauce please....more....more...  
...more...continue till I tell you to stop...  
....thanks....and  
is it too late to add bacon and sausage?  
Yes...thanks....yum...that's really healthy  
And yeah, why not? – three cookies  
and a large cup of the post-mix syrup...  
Yum...that's healthy and good...Thanks.  
That's yummy...I feel good...  
Also could you pack a takeaway  
of the same stuff  
for me dinner, please?



# I'm So Proud Of My Murali Boy

I'm so proud of my son Murali  
cos he's always thinking smart  
and efficient

I asked him the other day:  
"Sonny boy  
dear Murali  
What'd you like to be  
when you grow up? "

And he says to me:  
"I'll be a garbage collector, Daddy"

And I say to him:  
"O my dear boy -  
why a garbage collector  
of all the jobs? "

And my little boy Murali  
says, smart as he always is:  
"Oh, Dad,  
look at them:  
they have such big trucks  
and they work only once a week"

Oh yes, I'm so proud  
of my little Murali

Raj Arumugam

# I've Stopped Writing

I've stopped writing  
serious verse  
cos every time I try  
it only gets worse

I've stopped writing  
on dignified subjects  
and such proper themes  
for every time I try  
I roll down laughing  
and the Public Library staff  
lead me out by my ears

I've stopped pontificating  
on divine matters  
and such holy subjects  
as mentioning God  
and Angels, and Heaven and Hell  
cos every time I try  
we have such propagandists  
quoting scriptures  
and holding up revelations,  
all these drugged believers  
abusing reason and religion  
after they've finished  
with the children

and I do not discourse  
on noble subjects  
and themes befitting heroes  
and great nations  
for every time I try  
the language slips to f-starters  
and the idiom of the slums and gutters  
and the curses of the homeless

so I sing about  
what pleases me  
and those who are easy  
read if they will  
cos they know  
it doesn't matter if they do or don't;  
for the sun will still shine  
the next day  
and they'll find better poems  
in each sun ray  
that pierces their skin  
and wakes them up to life

Raj Arumugam

# I'D Not Sing If I Were The King

If I were the king  
I wouldn't be writing this poem  
I `d just summon you to court  
and when you are on your knees proper  
I'd just get you to sing  
a song, a poem  
that goes:  
ding-a-ling-ling  
bling-a-ling-a-ling  
ding-dong-a-ding-ding

and I'd silence you and pronounce aloud  
be telling you then  
none in the land writes well at all  
and I'll take your own horrid song from you  
and I'll be telling you:  
"Listen to my song  
Listen to my poem"  
And I'd recite your very own lines to you  
And I'd ask you: "What do you think? "  
And of course you'd say,  
trembling:  
"No one in the land  
Sire  
in all the wide world -  
no one writes like you, Sire"

But that's if I were King  
which I am not  
And so I'll have to sing  
and write my own poems  
(except when I'm plagiarising)  
And you'll be here nice and honest  
just laughing and rolling  
as I sing:  
ding-a-ling-ling  
bling-a-ling-a-ling  
ding-dong-a-ding-ding



# Ideas - A Short History

first days  
on earth  
man faced nature  
all was in the interaction  
between body and the forces

then we created tools  
and ideas  
and shaped an environment  
to enclose ourselves

somewhere things continued  
simple thoughts became complex  
spirits became God  
and God became organised theology  
tools became technology  
and now some dwell almost in cyberspace

reality  
it's all ideas and tools;  
but one can discard them  
and one sees the nudity of meaning

Raj Arumugam

# Idiot Aliens

1

Commander Alien outlines his strategy  
for when visiting earth:

"We should not celebrate Christmas  
so we don't give away our presence"

2

one alien goes to the cat  
and says to it:

"Take me to your litter! "

The other one turns to the gas pump and grunts:

"It's really rude of you  
to stick your fingers into your ears  
When I'm talking to you! "

3

One alien goes into the shop  
and orders his favorite tea items:  
Gravi-tea and Mars-mallows

4

One alien goes to wash  
in the meteor shower;  
while the other comes to find  
he's had a ticket cos he  
forgot to pay the parking meteor

5

But not all aliens are dumb though,  
as this final tale will show

One alien goes to the pillar box  
and tells the post box:

"Take me to your leader"

And the other alien shouts across:

"Hey, you dumbo –  
can't you see he's only a child! "

Raj Arumugam

# If You Meet Some Form Of Meat

1

if you meet  
a snake with fangs  
as large as sore thumbs  
don't put your hand out and say:  
'How do you do? '  
otherwise  
it'd might take a bite  
and it'd say:  
'How do you do? '

if you meet  
an alien  
in the streets  
don't say:  
'Hey, what you're  
doing in my territory? '  
he'd might just zap  
you with his laser gun and say:  
'Oh. I just dropped in to say:  
Earthling, buzz off! '

if you meet God in the streets  
just don't say:  
'Who do you think you are? '  
for the most certain answer  
would be from that loony:  
'I'm God...'

if you meet the Devil in the streets –  
well, you just shouldn't be  
meeting anyone like that;  
just run!

if you meet a ghost  
in the shadows  
of your garden  
(or any where  
for that matter)  
don't say:  
'How does it feel there? '  
because it may just jump in  
and say:  
'Hey, it feels good to be in you.'

if you find  
your pillow  
on the floor  
when you wake  
in the middle of the night  
just don't say:  
'What you doing on the floor? '  
just grab it  
tuck it under your head and say:  
'Just stay there! '

if you find Old Jenny grandma's dentures  
in a glass beside your bed  
when you wake up in the middle of the night  
don't say:  
'Old Grandma – what are your dentures doing here? '  
It's yours, remember? – you are Old Jenny Grandma!

if you meet a bird in the streets  
resting on a lamp post  
whatever you do  
just don't stand below the light  
for you never know what might land on you

if you meet me  
in the streets  
just don't stretch out your hand  
and don't say:  
'How do you do? '  
because I'll have to give you the boot –  
Cos, hey, I'm Bigfoot!

Raj Arumugam

# Ignorance

all should live the way I live;  
all should subscribe to my beliefs

Raj Arumugam

# I'M A Stamp

I'm a stamp  
no, I didn't say "I'm just a stamp",  
or "I'm but a stamp"  
but I am a stamp  
a postage stamp, that is;  
unique and proud, in my own class,  
for I've carried queens and kings and emperors  
(I still do)  
and I carry Presidents and Poets and Rock Kings  
and Pop Kings  
and Musicians and Legends and Heroes  
and Gods and Nations  
and I carry sexy blondes  
and old dames who've dedicated their lives to others

I've borne with no complaints  
the weight of genius  
and soldiers and founders of nations  
and martyrs; and I do not discriminate  
and with like gusto and color  
I've carried tyrants and murderers and charlatans  
and once-were-legends now the shamed;  
and look, I can encompass the universe  
and within the shapes formed by my perforations  
I've held together flowers and birds  
and all wonders of nature  
I am each a poem, a work of art  
I'm a stamp  
no, I didn't say "I'm just a stamp",  
or "I'm but a stamp"  
(What? You heard me the first time, did you?  
Well, I'll say it again for emphasis!)  
but I am a stamp in my own right, unique and proud  
though, I acknowledge,  
the image of Royalty or Heroism or Greatness has  
not saved me from various knocks and hard presses  
and the rubbish bin!  
But then, so have mighty royal heads rolled!  
but look, hee, heee, heee

I can be absolutely adorable,  
and I just love, love it when you lick me;  
and often too  
I'm a collector's item  
increasing in value, and even with artistic merit -  
though no doubt, there are countless with no idea  
of how so darling precious I am  
which is I why  
I say proudly again:  
I'm a stamp  
no, I didn't say "I'm just a stamp",  
or "I'm but a stamp"  
(And what? Why do I repeat myself?  
Well, there are thousands of copies  
of one issue, aren't there?)  
but I am a stamp in my own right, unique and proud  
and I've created worlds all of my own  
with pen pals and commerce  
and industries and clubs round me;  
and I'm not alone, you know,  
well-supported by relatives  
like prepaid postal envelopes, post cards,  
letter cards, aerogrammes  
all of us served loyally  
by unquestioning Gurkha-style postmen and women;  
and I've brought hearts and minds together  
and I do it in a day or days and or weeks  
and if I feel like it, I even arrive decades later!  
and there's nothing you can do about it!  
And oh yes, I can see, you're prone to neglecting me  
you ungrateful scoundrels!  
first replacing me with cold  
Franking Machines  
and cheap, unimpressive, unimaginative franking marks  
and with postage meters  
imprinting an indicia  
and all of you now  
deriding my world as snail pace  
in your world of instant e mails  
but I persist, and I still am of much use  
for - listen carefully  
and I say proudly again:

I'm a stamp  
no, I didn't say "I'm just a stamp",  
or "I'm but a stamp"  
but I am a stamp in my own right, unique and proud;  
and if you, once in a while,  
want to show me your loyalty  
come to a local post office and lick my royal butt!

Raj Arumugam

# I'm Going To Heaven, You're Not

I'm going to Heaven -  
you're not

How do I know?  
Because my religion tells me so  
and it's the Only Truth

I'm going to be having  
lots of lollies  
and free Wi-Fi and fat jolly wives  
in rotation  
for all eternity in Heaven -  
it's WWII dry military rations  
in Hell for you

How do I know?  
Because my religion tells me so  
and it's the Only Truth

Raj Arumugam

# Immortal Beloved

in all time  
immortal beloved  
I shall love you;  
in all eternity,  
immortal beloved  
(you can feel it deep within)  
my love is endless

surely that is not true  
any fool with some reason can see:  
loves wither within years  
and married couples tire in twenty

in all time  
immortal beloved  
I shall love you;  
in all eternity,  
immortal beloved  
(you can feel it deep within)  
my love is endless

more like nature's put us to these  
programs that are self-activated in time  
and poets and roving bards create myths  
and the truth is  
I'll love you, cherish you,  
we'll form a relationship of likes  
and we'll be together for as long as conditioning has power  
and nature runs its course

in all time  
immortal beloved  
I shall love you;  
in all eternity,  
immortal beloved  
(you can feel it deep within)  
my love is endless

there is sex in this too  
and procreation  
and appreciation  
and one's sense of self-worth  
and self-value  
and comfort and job security;  
the word love was coined to confound  
and the truth is more basic

in all time  
immortal beloved  
I shall love you;  
in all eternity,  
immortal beloved  
(you can feel it deep within)  
my love is endless

and surely even in Heaven  
where Immortality is assured  
(predicated on the certainty of Heaven)  
one must get bored with the other  
for surely,  
dearest Immortal Beloved,  
you too shall find Immortality tiresome  
for you do yawn occasionally even now

here in our loving mortal existence

in all time  
immortal beloved  
I shall love you;  
in all eternity,  
immortal beloved  
(you can feel it deep within)  
my love is endless

and so meantime  
until Heaven and Immortality  
let us love, Immortal Beloved,  
let us have sex and passion and saliva and bites  
let us lie beside each other  
and feel skin and exertion;  
and let us have mutual support, decency and care and loving  
and leave immortality to the invisible sexless powers  
that are content with exercising powers  
to shape the lives of petty mortals

in all time  
immortal beloved  
I shall love you;  
in all eternity,  
immortal beloved  
(you can feel it deep within)  
my love is endless

Raj Arumugam

# Impression, Sunrise

Often it's a hazy view  
a greyness not yet subdued  
impressions of shadows, menace  
surreal memories and a world  
we don't know if it recedes or emerges

Then there is that hope  
the sun coming up, the only god  
who can shed light and warm our hearts -  
and yet is only a prospect,  
just rays of possibilities  
a disconnected god  
who lives its own will

Raj Arumugam

# In A Place Where Little Is Left

in a place where little is left  
where the sandy mind  
does not allow anything to grow  
where non-life rages like  
the weather in a hostile planet

I place a vase  
of flowers, white and clear  
pure and simple

in a place where all the elements  
conspire to kill

perhaps beauty might heal;  
or perhaps if it is death,  
it comes better  
with one's aesthetics as witness

Raj Arumugam

# In Bed

you could get a chill in bed  
if you leave the windows open  
in cold nights  
and push away the quilt or blanket  
all through sleep;  
you can get comfort and peace  
for a while at least  
digging into bed  
and covering yourself in  
like an ostrich with its head in the sand;  
you can get sick in bed  
or you get, over time,  
a bad back  
in a bad bed;  
or you get sex in bed  
or get lots of love;  
you get coffee in bed  
or breakfast;  
but you can also get  
thrown out of bed;  
or if you're convincing enough  
you can pretend to be sick  
and they'll even bring dinner to you in bed;  
and lie there moaning long enough,  
and you'll get even distant relatives  
come to see you and if you have a will;  
and you can have dreams and nightmares  
and so travel even while in bed  
and live every unknown layer in your mind;  
you could, let's face it, die in bed;  
or if still alive  
you can get wet dreams  
and so get wet;  
you can spend time in bed  
you can make plans in bed  
and create empires or just build castles in bed  
though there's no sand or rocks about  
you can dream in bed and work out your  
inhibitions and delusions;

you can get ideas in bed  
inspiration for a poem or the next great novel;  
you can get  
hugs and kisses  
snuggles and pillow talk;  
and pillow fights and sleepovers;  
or perhaps, if you're just born,  
the comfort of lullabies

Raj Arumugam

# In Communion

no, it is not that I have renounced  
the company of humans, or of society;  
it is not that which brings one  
to this constant companionship  
of the open and solitude and nature

it is that there is too much noise  
of design, and demands and needs  
intentions, purpose and benefit  
in human company

and so one feels the embracing comfort  
and quiet of nature that surrounds  
with no asking or giving,  
just breathing, unfolding  
merely open like a palm..

Raj Arumugam

## In More Desert

so from desert to desert one goes.  
You can't say that's exile  
for one place is just like another  
no one knew me there,  
no one knows me here,  
unacknowledged and unknown  
one moves and one gropes and one orientates  
one traverses the vast desert across the globe  
and exile is a false term for the sands  
merely shift from one place to another  
and the one has not moved

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# In My Lodge In The Woods

in my lodge  
in the woods  
in the quiet and away from the clamor  
with the silence that hangs in the mist  
just perhaps an occasional rabbit  
or a creature as curious  
to see a strange making  
like home to the creature, but strange;  
and then an occasional visitor;  
but mostly seclusion, and quiet  
hovering over basic needs  
and simple desires  
and so let the lazy days be  
and the life in the midst of trees  
and regularity, and what nature offers me

Raj Arumugam

# In My Secluded House Near A Valley In Mt Inwangsan

it's ages since I retired  
from the palaces of ambitions and envy  
and the centers of power

unyoked myself of all relations  
and what is praised as love  
but is the self seeking satisfaction  
in the other

and removing myself came here  
in discrete voluntary exile  
built myself  
a little home  
amongst the mountains and solitary woods

and the humble folk offer me food  
and provisions  
for what I might teach their children  
of calligraphy and brush work

the years have gone past in non-action and peace;  
but here too there is the occasional tension:  
a road to be built to the Capital City  
demanded trees and woods and two hills;  
and the soldiers and distant police turn up at the doors  
to inquire who lives here  
and why I am alone

but still, the years pass gentle  
and my silence and solitude  
time offers me  
with a smile

-----

poem based on painting by Jeong Seon or Gyeongjae (1676-1759) (Korean)  
painting title: A secluded house near a valley in Mt. Inwangsan'(?????? ??????)



# In Nature's Hands

Sure it's done  
a way to be gone  
smooth and easy  
Nature delivers  
at her own time

you take it easy  
and go along with her  
whims and fancies -  
and it all passes quick  
Time - Nature's servant -  
will assist as much as he can

some deliberation  
some things unexpected  
a little dreariness  
sudden blinding brightness  
much silence and haste -  
but you just sit still  
and let it happen:  
it'd be so smooth  
you'll wonder  
what the fuss  
it was all about

she wraps you up like a puppy  
allows a time when  
you think you're sovereign  
strokes you again  
like a meek squirrel in her hands:  
you'll love it, if you can find submission

Raj Arumugam

# In Praise Of The Moon

I will not sing you a song of praise  
O gentle moon  
there are too many modern people around  
too many enlightened minds tonight  
they reckon they don't need your light;  
there are too many elect  
and too many going to Heaven  
and if I sang in praise of you  
they will throw their Blessed Books at me  
and they will say  
'You moon-worshiper, you go to hell! '  
(they fancy words like idolator)

O so most divine moon  
O godly moon  
O most sacred moon  
I shall not sing in praise of you;  
there are too many bloodthirsty wolves around

Raj Arumugam

# In Remote Valleys And Hills

in remote valleys and hills  
and in the forests  
where we scavenged  
we knew not what we looked for  
and what we wanted;  
we talked long in open grounds  
and discoursed under the trees  
and in the night skies  
and wondered what the breeze  
and the winds spoke of  
and what was written on the lakes;  
and then we said:  
'we have found nothing in these;  
let us try  
civilization; '  
and so we wander in cities now  
and we look for entertainment  
and we consume and fight  
with boredom  
with fat and restaurants  
and centers to make us well-presented  
and we say  
in the height of our city wisdom:  
'Let us have our revenge on the  
country and the remote valleys  
and hills and the deep forests  
Let us lay them bare  
and eat them from this distance  
while we are safe in our cities'

Raj Arumugam

# In Silence

of all one  
might have hurt  
in deed, word  
or by inaction  
one asks forgiveness

of all one has nurtured  
one asks  
to pass on the embrace

Raj Arumugam

## In That Moment: A Meditation

one comes to the water, to the ocean, and one observes...without a companion, without chatter and with bodily stillness, and with no projection of one's one expectations and conditioning, one observes...one sees what is before one...and in that moment, in that instant, there is no one there with an identity; no one coming from the past to say: this is what I am; this is what I did – and this was done to me; and such a person did this; and in that moment, in that observing, in that seeing of the ocean, of the water, in the seeing of what is before one, there is none that asserts its identity; there is none to speak of its name and its nationality and its pride and associations and its past, and there is none to reach out for a future: there is the moment; the stillness; the silence...

Raj Arumugam

# In The Absence Of Your Rays

in the absence  
of your rays  
dear Sun  
the fearful  
created God

(1 in Sun Poems series)

Raj Arumugam

# In The Fish Market Of Religions

1

in the fish market of religions  
and faiths  
and suppositions and declarations  
and fierce revelations  
much of the commerce is done  
on the principle:  
Who shouts loudest  
and shouts longest  
and shouts often  
gets to empty the most pockets  
of bewildered customers

(You always empty their minds  
first)

2

You never lose in this fish market  
Even the quiet ones  
the ones of mild manners and timid ways  
can trawl a good number  
of faithful customers

3

You can sell fresh fables  
or smelly old tales –  
they are all good commerce

4

Of course some slap you  
right in the face  
with their fish:  
That too seems to gain customers...

I think you stun them with one blow  
and they remain stunted all their lives

Raj Arumugam

# In The Quiet Of The Night

in the quiet of the night  
in the early hours of the morning  
when you hear that gentle breath  
of yours  
in and out  
so close and almost out  
that  
you think it is someone else  
or some nocturnal creature  
breathing beside you  
do not worry,  
it's just you  
just the gentle dance of life  
just your breath  
that sustains you

in the quite of your walk  
as you climb a hill  
or you swim across a river  
or in the quiet of your work  
as you pick and pile  
wood for the fire  
you may hear a beat  
and feel a heavy breath  
and feel almost as if  
the spirits of the air  
you imagined in your youth  
were breathing down on you  
but don't worry about it,  
dearest friend,  
don't worry about it  
it is just you  
it's just your own breath  
and your own heart that beats  
as excited as Ariel in the air  
free at last of the island of Sycorax

value your quiet breath  
and your gentle heart,  
dear friend,  
for they are life-long companions  
they are life-long companions  
you should seek to understand:  
just be with them  
as they are with you,  
one gentle beat and breath  
and all of you  
in one fluid flow in life

Raj Arumugam

# In This Quiet We Shall Live A While

Come, we shall rest here  
a while  
and slip into the quiet and calm  
and peace of the hills  
and the trees and the streams;  
we'll live into stillness and silence  
and see what it is to die to thought  
and to the day and night  
and to each past and intention;  
here we shall abandon left and right or centre  
and all the million causes  
and concerns and justification and structures  
that we always gave attention to;  
we shall have natural pace here  
at least for the while  
and see what it is to be away  
from the roles and formations we are seduced into  
and to be dead to all things that form  
human exchange and all ideas and established creed  
and convention and sanctity;  
and see what it is to be dead  
to all things that kill life;  
we'll be here awhile and possibly  
for some time as it pleases one  
and shall return perhaps not as the regular sun  
but as a cloud unexpected, irregular and in its own time

Raj Arumugam

# In Which Corner Does Darling Mei Hide?

Where is little Mei while we sit here;  
where's the darling child while I sing?  
What mountains does our little Mei climb?  
To what corners does Mei travel?  
Where is the treasure of our home  
and where, O where is the pearl of our love?

Where is little Mei while I sing my song?  
Why does she hide her pretty face while I strum?  
The evening is cool and lovely  
and yet, O why will not bright Mei  
show her full moon face?  
The air is still and pleasant -  
and O why will little Mei not stand before us  
and dance to the music of the lute?

The birds are quiet in the nest;  
the chicks have followed mother hen home:  
O why will not our little Mei break  
the silence of the evening  
with her merry laughter?  
O why will lovely, lovely Mei not  
hug and kiss  
her lonely, lonely mom and dad?

Where is little Mei while we sit here  
where's the darling child while I sing?  
In which corner does lovely Mei hide?  
What oceans does brave Mei cross?  
With which fairies does little Mei play?  
And from which corner over bulky wood  
Will she fly to our arms?

(above poem is inspired by a painting  
by Tang Yin (Tang Baihu) 1470-1523)

Raj Arumugam

# Inclusion

Why don't you talk to me and tell me off  
straight to my face? Tell me I'm not good enough  
for you. Tell me my credentials don't configure  
with your system; you don't know what to do with me.  
But you can't tell me that, can you?  
(You can't tell me anything  
but read me sections and clauses of the manual.)

Who is to say the word?  
For like all ugly systems  
yours too is inclusive  
and so the possibilities are left open  
and so inclusion becomes exclusion  
and the possibility becomes the impossibility.  
You just hold out hope  
and though you do not deceive,  
you effect deception.

And who is to say the word?  
There is certification and registration  
and there is rank and order  
of inclusion and possibility.  
There is the system.  
And there is exclusion.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Indian Villager With Bullock

we are going  
this day in the gentle light  
master and bullock  
down the dusty path  
an anonymous villager  
and his sturdy bullock  
far in a village in India  
for there's work to be done  
like many a villager has done  
and beast and master  
out determined in the days  
when the land must be worked  
to nurture its people  
across China, Egypt and Mesopotamia  
and nameless lands  
they have done this  
and we do  
now this day that is ours  
through the winding ways  
to the fields  
to the end of the day  
I the villager and you the bullock  
Come, we shall work the fields  
as countless have done  
and as many more will come to do

Raj Arumugam

# Inertia

Inertia is a beast that  
seizes you by the stomach  
and keeps you slouched in your couch;  
it twists your stomach and your limbs go wobbly  
and then its hold strangles the brain  
you stand on your toes  
helpless like a child  
with its muscles in an adult's grasp  
and you sink into a stupor  
when time passes slowly,  
but time is gone

and the time is gone  
as surely as milk goes sour

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Infinite Wisdom

And so in days past  
the Zen Master sat with his disciples  
in silent meditation  
and a Divine Being appeared before them all  
and addressing the Master, the Divine Being said:  
'Hey, listen you - yeah, you, the Eminently Bald  
For your patient and sustained meditation  
I offer you a reward  
Choose what you like:  
infinite wisdom, infinite beauty, or infinite money'

'Infinite wisdom, of course, ' said the Master, promptly  
And so it was done, and the Divine Being disappeared  
as Divine Beings usually do

Silence followed and then one disciple dared to speak:  
'Oh Master, tell us something  
now that you have Infinite Wisdom'

There was no pause, and the Master said:  
'I wish I'd chosen Infinite Money'

Raj Arumugam

# Inscriptions (Fragments)

translation of ancient inscriptions on clay square tablets discovered in 1935;  
these inscriptions were discovered when a shepherd noticed the exposed edges  
of mud squares in a pit on the side of a hill after a day of heavy rains ...

1

the sunlight fades behind yonder cliffs  
the trees are aglow  
and the leaves sparkle:  
I must walk there;  
I must go...

2

the birds are singing  
and the trees dance;  
the breeze blows...  
...the ghostly statues stand in the cold...  
....and. why...

3

a word is said  
and five returned;  
words do not always  
bring clarity  
for language  
carries with it  
one's emotions and energies

4

I entertain sometimes

the thoughts one should not,  
the unspeakable thought:  
why should one  
wait?  
why must one wait?  
why can it not  
be brought about by oneself?

5

we kissed today  
below the tree;  
it was my first  
and so it was his;  
and when we had to depart  
we could not really see our way  
though it was still but midday

6

I passed this way  
and I had to say  
what must be said;  
but I ask your forgiveness  
if my words hurt in the message

7

we skipped school today  
and played in the hills  
and ate berries and fruit  
and cooked meat  
the seniors brought from home;  
all day we laughed and we swam  
and returned home as the sun set:  
O why would anyone  
want to go to school?

8

but it was not about you or about me  
it was about  
all of us  
and what we thought not aloud

9

there is always  
a battle for  
your heart and mind;  
you can be free  
if you see  
your conditioning

Raj Arumugam

# Insignificance

I row a boat  
amidst the wide watery world  
land, mountains and sky and trees and bush;  
things near look big and things far small -  
but I, how must I look to them all?  
insignificant and just another creature that moves...  
...me minimized...me disappeared...  
ah, I am comfortable with that,  
if that be so...  
but small, large, insignificant it does not matter  
for the silence of the oneness make all things the same and bound

Raj Arumugam

# Is It You Moon?

cold moon  
I am sad;  
is it you,  
distant moon,  
who makes me so  
tonight?

Raj Arumugam

## Is The Next 100 Do-Able?

if a 100 years from now  
one might read this poem  
and my other posts  
and one says:  
'Wow, how marvelous  
these writings'  
Then I'd say:  
'You never learn, do you? '

If a 100 years from now  
one might read this poem  
and my other posts  
and one says  
'Hmmm...what rubbish  
writing all these silly stuff'  
Then I'd say  
'You never learn, do you? '

But if a 100 years from now  
one reads this poem  
and one says  
'Hmmm...well, that's interesting  
but let me do my own thinking'  
Then I'd say:  
'Humanity has come a long way'

And if indeed you now  
in contemporary time  
if you should read this post  
and you should say:  
'Look, let me do my own thinking'  
Then I'd say:  
'Yes, surely, the next 100 years is do-able'

Raj Arumugam

## Is There Hope In This Letter?

It seems to hold out a ray  
and the vague words  
deny nothing while holding out time.  
There is mention of a flood of applications.  
Your application is now being considered.  
The paper and the words become Holy Writ.  
The message is round and round,  
the words considered  
every way like a living text....  
The recipient sees hope; the recipient sees  
routine procedure...

They want me; they want me not;  
they want me; they want me not...  
Is there hope or not?

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# It Does Not Matter

it does not matter:  
at the end of it all  
all these, and the conflicts and the ambitions and the issues  
and the leadership fights  
and the intensity of the moment;  
it all does not matter

sufficient food, fresh air, clean water  
quiet and solitude -  
a private space  
of peace and calm, that will do...

Raj Arumugam

# It Is About Time

it is about time  
one thinks about time:  
not just before, now and after  
but all time as one whole  
or not whole or part or segments;  
and the timeless beyond time  
or not time or timeless or anything

Raj Arumugam

# It Is All Clear To Me Now

It is clear to me now  
no wonder your people told me that  
(they still tell me that)  
I had to be aggressive and insistent  
I had to pursue matters; no use in  
being co-operative and compliant  
they told me that with a retiring disposition  
such as mine  
we will run all over you.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

## It Is Time...

It is that time  
when one goes  
when one remains silent, collected  
sheds all that was before,  
sees the futility of resistance  
the meaninglessness of volition

It is not forced; it is come -  
this understanding  
and one walks in the peace of the gardens  
unspeaking companions about  
not a will

It is done, it is come with no struggle;  
the coming is of its own, none of the person

Raj Arumugam

# It Was But Just A While Ago

remember just a while ago,  
remember not too long ago  
we were but children at school  
as little Jane with braided hair  
and clumsy Lee with pimples to spare  
Ah, how time grays our heads,  
sweethearts,  
and life blesses our hearts,  
blesses our hearts  
O remember sweethearts,  
it wasn't too long ago  
we were but teenage girls exchanging gossip  
and many ambitious boys exchanging blows;  
O remember it was just a while ago  
as it seems, just some days ago  
and now our children bear children and  
our grandchildren are at play in the fields  
Ah, how time grays our heads,  
sweethearts,  
and life blesses our hearts,  
blesses our hearts

Raj Arumugam

# It's And Its

1

we must talk about this  
though I know it's a strange subject  
for a poem  
and more apt to appear  
in a dictionary  
in its notes;  
or in a book of style  
or discussed in Fowler  
or Usage and Abusage

2

but what's your point?  
I hear you howl;  
and so the point is:  
it's reads  
it is  
and its  
is possessive

It's all right  
means  
It is all right;  
and  
The dog curls it's tail  
means  
The dog curls it is tail.

3

so,  
dear friends,

is it  
it's or its?  
just remember,  
punctuation can be useful  
but when it's a little tricky  
it can lash with its swift tail...

4

I don't know if you agree  
if punctuation has its use  
or if it's ugly and useless  
but  
it's your writing;  
it's up to you now

Raj Arumugam

# It's No Fun Going To The Toilet

it's no fun, dearest friends,  
going to the toilet  
with your entrails full  
and at zero hour  
and rushing to the toilet  
and finding every cubicle shut in your face  
and you run to the next  
and there are grunting pigs  
behind closed doors  
and you are truly full,  
and you know you are in big trouble  
and there is not even a discreet bush corner  
in the god-forsaken damned city;  
and you are walking up and down outside the doors  
like an irate Principal at a school assembly;  
it's really no fun  
putting yourself through such agony  
to put yourself on such public display  
going to public toilets  
when you could have cleared all  
and achieved dignity  
with proper timing  
and good though boring habits

it's no fun, really -  
dearest friends,  
hastening to the toilet  
when your pipe is nearly at bursting point  
and you rush in to the toilet  
and though lucky enough  
to find an enclosure  
it's really no fun, is it? -  
all that hurry and urgency  
at near bursting point  
as you pow-wow before the toilet bowl  
and your buckle is stubborn  
and you plead to your private self:

O no, no...don't burst...not yet...  
and your damned zip gets stuck just then  
and you continue your war dance  
and you plead to your intimate self:  
O no, no...don't burst...not yet...not yet, please;  
please don't do this to me-self –  
and just then the zip comes asunder  
and you pull it down like thunder  
and oh, what a relief, no doubt –  
but it certainly was no fun  
going there to the toilet at near-breaking point;  
and how are you going to face the world  
with your zip burst  
and your buckle broken and hanging over now?

oh, so, dearest friends,  
trust me  
(no wisecracks here, please)  
oh all you children of the earth  
all infants and old  
and the genteel and the virile  
and the incontinent  
and the humble and those with golden toilet bowls –  
it's never fun to rush in to the toilet  
at near breaking or bursting point;  
and though good routine  
and roughage may never be fun either  
it's safer than trusting in City Councils that  
do not plan for citizens at bursting point...

Raj Arumugam

# It's The Time Of The Parochial

it's the time of the parochial  
baby  
tread with care;  
it's the time of fear and violence  
walk with eyes  
before and behind you

the barbarians are everywhere  
tearing down libraries;  
there are demon contortionists  
who can bend Truth and sense;  
and there is violence  
blessed by God  
and justified in anyone's Holy Book

there is a man  
who looks at how you dress  
and look;  
there is a team taking notes

the mindless are everywhere  
and they want to eat your minds;  
there is blackhole-distortion  
and everything you might hold dear  
is taken to be twisted and turned

look to your mind baby  
look to your heart;  
there's the dread of Satan  
who walks in God's clothes;  
they try and take what you got  
and give you salt and sand to eat

it's the time of the parochial  
baby  
tread with care;  
it's the time of fear and violence

walk with eyes  
before and behind you

Raj Arumugam

# It's My Life

They're here on planet earth to live their lives  
to discover their real selves, to give expression  
to their true needs. So mother buys the best perfumes  
and crowns herself with sundry styles at various hairdressers;  
and the daughter learns about mascara and facials  
and she discovers a new restaurant on each voyage.  
They're here to be themselves.

Discover Your Self  
is the buzz phrase.

Or

Discover the Real You.

The son has a sports car and revs his engine  
so he drives down the lane and his head rests  
on his sleek handphone.

A chip off the old block  
which is itself still inchoate and incoherent.

They've got slogans like  
It's my life; Life's for living.

Live your life. Find fulfilment. Satisfaction.  
Enjoy! It's an anthill here on planet earth  
with so many beings running in all directions  
discovering their true selves  
and finding true bliss.

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Jackrudin 1: Walking Backward

Why are you, dear Jackrudin,  
why are you  
walking backward?  
This past hour you've been at it  
and so tell me, darling Jackrudin,  
why you walk backward.

O sweet Suelina,  
is it not obvious, is it not  
blatantly obvious why?  
I want to go back  
in time to the hours before  
and to the days and years past.  
and so I walk backward.

Raj Arumugam

## Jackrudin 2: Below The Apple Tree

Why, O why, darling Jackrudin,  
why do you stand below  
that apple tree?  
This past hour you've been there  
and so tell me  
why you stand below that apple tree.

O sweet Suelina,  
is it not obvious, is it not  
blatantly obvious why?  
A fruit may fall and there  
I may make a discovery;  
or some strange creature  
may approach me with a heavenly deal.  
And O gentle Suelina, be assured -  
if I make a discovery  
you'll have a share in the royalties;  
and be sure too, I'll include you in any deal.

Raj Arumugam

## Jackrudin 3: Light And Darkness

Dear Jackrudin,  
dear, dear Jackrudin  
why do you read in the dark?

Oh sweet Suelin,  
sweet, sweet Suelin  
if one is in the light  
how can the darkness of ignorance be dispelled?  
And so it is that I read in the dark  
that the light of knowledge in my reading  
may dispel the darkness of my ignorance.

Raj Arumugam

## Jackrudin 4: The Natural Way

Jackrudin dear, O lazy Jackrudin...  
you sleep all day  
and are awake only a small portion of each;  
why, dear Jackrudin,  
like everyone else  
you should be awake more and be at work

But Suelina darling,  
sweet Suleina...  
I am only doing the natural thing  
while all the others you praise  
are doing things  
ridiculously in reverse.

And how is that, dear Jackrudin?  
How is that?

Well, as you can see,  
everybody works hard  
and then has rest  
and even a holiday;  
but I'm a body at rest without  
the distortion of work  
and so  
I'm on the natural way, sweet Suelina;  
everyone else you praise  
follows the foolish way:  
a pretty hard way  
for some rest and a holiday, don't you think? .

Raj Arumugam

## Jackrudin 5: Jackrudin Blindfolded

O Jackrudin, darling Jackrudin...  
Our neighbors tell me  
you spent the whole day at the city  
walking about blindfolded.  
We are all dumbfounded, darling Jackrudin,  
we are all dumbfounded.  
Why would you walk around the city blindfolded?

Oh the people's brilliance just so blinded my eyes  
and their goodness too,  
sweet Suelina;  
their brilliance was so blinding  
and their virtue so brilliant  
I could not walk but blindfolded

Raj Arumugam

# Japanese Beauty Admiring Cherry Blossoms

the Japanese beauty of Edo  
she sat delicate in the garden;  
she observed the cheery blossoms:  
the beauty  
the stillness  
the quite  
and  
the blossoms faded almost days after  
and the beauty -  
O she too followed the way  
of the blossoms;  
and here I am ages after  
and I long for the beauty  
impossible to touch  
and who sat in the garden

---

poem based on painting:

'Woman seated under a cherry blossom tree' by Kuniyoshi Utagawa (1797-1861)

Raj Arumugam

# Job Changes - Get Ready

out goes

software developer

web designer

computer whiz

merchandise managers

vacancies now:

virtchandise manager

cloud transformation officers

outcome aggregator

data evangelist

sensemaking analyst

sales ninja

digital dynamo

happiness advocate

community facilitator

web funster

ready?

---

(poem based on article from "The Age"  
25 Feb 2012)

Raj Arumugam

# Job For A Dog

I placed an ad  
outside my office  
offering a job in my small company:  
The applicant  
must be computer literate  
and possess secretarial skills  
and must be bilingual  
(and proudly, I added)  
WE ARE AN  
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

and this dog came in  
and indicated with barks and snout  
he wanted the job;  
and proved with paws and limbs  
and tongue and tail, and with various barks  
he had all the skills

Astounded, I put up all sorts of barriers  
but the dog could not be stopped by any one  
And so I finally said:  
'You have demonstrated your skills, sure;  
you have barked - but you don't seem  
to know any other popular language...  
I can't offer you the job -  
I need someone bilingual! '

And the dog replied: 'Meow! '

Raj Arumugam

# Job Search

Brisbane  
several applications later

Who are these  
who from outside have held me afar?  
(proffered a hand but to push me out)  
who have stood behind wholesome words,  
genial manners and glib postures  
to stand me at the edge?

each  
bold with a name  
not hiding behind a  
nom de plume  
though using designation and position  
but each faceless, or if met, poker-faced

They set out procedures and invite applications  
they hold out forms (and hope) by mail, fax and website  
but who are these?

Who are these  
who have been measured  
and silently cunning? Keeping a semblance  
with distinct communications  
and standard letters...  
Many with cheerful vibrations  
on the phone,  
efficient-sounding;  
so many mysterious and hidden  
in district offices...

How can I get near?  
How can I break through?

(from Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Judy And Punch Go Shopping

## PROLOGUE

see, do you see?  
Judy and Punch  
are shopping  
Like the loving couple they are  
they are at it together

## ACTION!

Punch puts in a carton of beer  
into the trolley  
And Judy hauls it out immediately  
and puts it back on the shelf -  
'It's too expensive, honey, '  
says Judy. '\$50 a carton, that's too much money'

Now Judy is in the 'Beauty' section  
and picks a Beauty Pack for \$100  
and Punch protests immediately:  
'That's what's too much money! '

'Oh, but you do want  
me to look beautiful, darling -  
don't you? ' says Judy, with a smile

'Yeah, sweetheart,  
but half the price  
would have done the trick! '  
says Punch, with a counter-smile

## EPILOGUE

Now, what do you think  
happens after Punch's punch line?  
Do you think Judy makes

the literal and the metaphorical merge?  
Are the stars Punch sees literal  
or figurative, you think?

Raj Arumugam

# Julius Caesar Crossed The Rubicon

Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon  
he said he'd save Rome  
and serve the people

And The Senate  
declared Caesar an Enemy of State  
They'd save Rome  
and serve the people

Was anybody telling  
the truth?

Raj Arumugam

# Just For Laughs

just for laughs said the clown  
I'll have a red nose  
and a plastic flower  
that squirts water

1

just for laughs  
said the bully  
let's push the weak  
down into the gutter

just for laughs said  
the tyrant  
let's kill a million  
and more if we get  
into a fit

2

just for laughs  
said the Visionary  
let's create religion  
and God;  
and let's throw in a Book  
and rules and regulations

just for laughs  
said the Minister  
let's have a plan and goals  
and noble words and principles  
of equality and inclusiveness

3

just for laughs  
said Time  
let's Eat all these above  
and below  
and in the middle;  
and wherever it is  
they think they can hide

---

You can view this poem on my channel at YOUTUBE

Raj Arumugam

# Just Google For Heaven

in their self-centredness, the faithful are obsessed with going to Heaven  
and staying away from Hell

1

all the faithful,  
these holy believers,  
they all fear this address:  
No.1 HELL, OUTSIDE UNIVERSE,  
POSTAL CODE: 0001  
all the faithful  
want to avoid this place like, well, hell...

the non-believers just take it easy;  
they have no such obsessions

all the faithful, the holy believers  
they all aspire to this place:  
ONLY 1, HEAVEN, DIVINE UNIVERSE,  
POSTAL CODE: 0001  
they all try and get there  
and with their narrow True Only One Way  
they think they'd get there anyway  
easy as if you'd googled for Heaven

the non-believers just take it easy;  
they have no such obsessions

2

and well, if the faithful are always imagining what God sanctions  
and says, I don't see why their opposites can't also imagine what  
this Grand Supposition says

and in their aspirations,  
to reach  
ONLY 1, HEAVEN, DIVINE UNIVERSE,  
POSTAL CODE: 0001  
the faithful  
dirty the planet earth  
with all their doctrines  
and their aggression  
and their violence  
and their narrowness and bigotry  
and their holiness and their obsessions  
and creating constant divisions  
and so I can sympathize  
with their supposed God becoming sane  
and thus declaring to the faithful:  
Oh no, I'm not letting you bastards in  
as surely you'll make a Hell of Heaven;  
I'd rather let in the non-believers here anytime  
at least they don't have your hang-ups and perversions

conclusion

well, the poor faithful then, the holy faithful wholly excluded, they'll have to  
content themselves with Googling for Heaven, and viewing the streets of Heaven  
on Google Maps of the Divine World

Raj Arumugam

# Just How Right I Am

I just can't understand  
how it is that  
the world can't understand  
how right I am  
and how wrong it is

OK, we'll excuse the world, for the moment,  
since it is far removed from my person  
and my mind  
so it can't really be expected to understand my  
unfailing rightness:  
just how right I am and how just I am;  
but the family, my family –  
no, not the family of man  
but the damned family of mine, my blood and bones and skin –  
I can't understand for the world of me  
why my own family  
that eats at the table with me  
can't understand  
how right I am  
and wrong they are...  
just how right I am  
and how just I am...  
Look, I can understand about the world  
but I just can't understand  
how the family....

I mean, this is where the family is important  
for if the family can give me  
just a little support –  
just a teeny-weeny bit – I mean how much  
does it take  
for the family to see  
how right I am

and how wrong the family is.  
Is that really asking for too much?  
You see, I'm sure you can see,  
if only the family could agree  
the world itself would see  
how right I am...  
But what is to be done?  
prophets are never accepted  
in their own home  
and so in their own family too...  
and so perhaps the truth lies in this cliché...

still, if one looks at it clearly,  
I just can't understand  
how it is that  
the world, which includes that silly family of mine,  
can't understand  
how right I am  
and how wrong it is

Raj Arumugam

# Just What The Hell Do You Think Love Is?

just what the hell  
do you think love is?  
there are many poems and lines  
written on what goes on between  
man, woman  
and for convenience  
we call it love  
but just what the flesh do you think  
love is?

Raj Arumugam

# Justifying Evil

if we repeat strategically enough  
tales of hate and atrocities of the enemy  
we can justify our own  
evil, seen and unseen

Raj Arumugam

# Kala's Fangs

time reveals its grotesque faces  
Kala opens its foul-stench mouth  
and snaps with its wolf red-fangs, dear friend;  
and yet we sail gently  
on the smooth rivers of our own quiet

Raj Arumugam

# Kangaroo Talks To The Sun

Hey Sun, look Man -  
I can move around and hop  
and I can run around  
even at 70km/h;  
I can kangaroo fight and kick for a mate  
and I can go all across the land -  
and you?  
All you can do is to spin and spin  
and crawl over the sky  
and burn and lose all your hair  
and burn and show your temper in solar flares

Hey you, Sun, look Man -  
I can stand on three using my tail as well  
and jump around like a ping pong  
and you, all you can do is  
to shine and burn and try and look bright.  
Hey you, Sun, look Man -  
what can you do?

And the Sun  
burned hot and showed its temper  
and the continent was parched  
and heat waves came with fire and smoke  
and the creeks and rivers went dry  
and the Kangaroo could find no shade;  
and then the kangaroo said, with a grin:  
Hey God Sun...  
you needn't take my words so seriously, eh?

Raj Arumugam

# Katsushika Hokusai Talks To A Kind Stranger Or 'Gakyo Rojin Manji' (The Old Man Mad About Art)

1

'Who are you? '  
you ask  
I was born Katsushika Hokusai  
but I have changed my name  
many times  
for life comes in waves  
and come a wave anew  
one is not what was before  
and so one changes one's name  
and so now you might call me  
Gakyo Rojin Manji  
(The Old Man Mad About Art)

2

You offer me some sake  
and some meat  
from your own bag  
O fellow-traveler  
I thank you  
and I shall tell you  
more of myself

3

I started sketching  
from when I was six  
and some called me an artist  
but it was time  
only after when I turned 50  
that I made anything that drew some attention  
and truly I drew nothing of worth  
until after I turned 70

At 73  
now I understand  
the make and structure  
the composition of birds, trees  
the cicadas and the crane  
and bamboo and pine

4  
I should continue?  
I will  
And by the time I'm 86  
I should grasp their essence

then by a 100  
I should penetrate the force  
the wave  
in each creature, in life  
and so by the time  
I'm 140 or so  
every dot, every line  
in whatever I shall draw  
will radiate with life, with energy  
and that one might call art

4  
Ah you look at  
Gakyo Rojin Manji  
(The Old Man Mad About Art)  
and you wonder  
if this man is for real;  
if he is but some old mad man who passes by  
and you have given your food  
to some teller of incredible lies  
but as you have been kind  
to give me food  
be kind enough too  
pray you at the shrine  
of the Shinto gods  
that I might live that long

so that what I make may truly be art

5

and now I thank you  
for your kindness with this  
sketch on the sand;  
hold on to nothing  
and aspire towards  
what is perfection  
Have a safe journey  
As I have had thus far  
and as I hope to have  
from here to my next stop

---

In the postscript "One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji", Hokusai writes:

"From around the age of six, I had the habit of sketching from life. I became an artist, and from fifty on began producing works that won some reputation, but nothing I did before the age of seventy was worthy of attention. At seventy-three, I began to grasp the structures of birds and beasts, insects and fish, and of the way plants grow. If I go on trying, I will surely understand them still better by the time I am eighty-six, so that by ninety I will have penetrated to their essential nature. At one hundred, I may well have a positively divine understanding of them, while at one hundred and thirty, forty, or more I will have reached the stage where every dot and every stroke I paint will be alive. May Heaven, that grants long life, give me the chance to prove that this is no lie." - from wikipedia

Raj Arumugam

# Keep Tapping On Your Mobiles, Fagin Loves It

1

Tap, tap, tap  
Pinch and expand  
Pinch and expand  
Tap, tap, tap

I love this dance you do  
my dearies, each one of you  
on your mobiles and devices  
We too play with our fingers  
and keep our eyes fixed  
on your pockets and purses  
and wallets

Tap, tap, tap  
Pinch and expand  
Pinch and expand  
Tap, tap, tap  
Stay diverted -  
we love this what you do,  
me Fagin  
and all me children  
and Jack Dawkins too,  
that Artful Dodger

2

Come on, dear children of Fagin mine  
this here is Paradise  
All these people with eyes  
and fingers on their devices  
and brains in idle mode  
in these crowded malls -  
it's our Paradise, dear babies mine  
Whilst they are so preoccupied  
let's to our devices  
And we can pick, pick, pick  
whilst they tap, tap, tap

3

Ah ha, keep tapping on your mobiles  
each one of you, my dearies  
with your eyes on the mobile  
when at the shops and in crowds  
and at new year celebrations  
Keep your eyes there, indeed  
each one of you, my dearies  
Tap, tap, tap  
pinch and expand with 2 fingers on the screen  
eyes mostly there on your devices  
Tap, tap, tap  
pinch, pinch, pinch  
and let your two fingers  
burst like shooting stars  
All like a dance, as in a dance  
each one of you in public spaces,  
my dearies  
so do the merry dance of your fingers  
and eyes on the devices  
And we?  
We love this, me Fagin  
and all me children  
and Jack Dawkins too  
(that Artful Dodger)  
while You  
tap, tap, tap  
and we  
pick, pick, pick  
at this our harvest at shopping malls

Raj Arumugam

# King Kong Thinks About Things

Says King Kong to Ann Darrow  
the blonde who screams like no other:  
Mmmm we got to talk

What? says Ann Darrow

about practicalities real things  
things that matter says King Kong  
Like a pre-nuptial contract you mean?

No, says King Kong  
I mean like real things  
things we have  
things that make me male,  
things that make you woman

OK, we can have a shared bank account,  
says Ann Darrow

King Kong can feel it in his marrow  
he's got to be clear and narrow:  
Look, Ann  
I can't be too explicit;  
my upbringing at Devil's Island  
is high on modesty; still  
I think things can be too big  
and some too small,  
if you know what I mean

OK, says Ann Darrow  
we'll live in Colorado;  
build me a small shed in the deserts  
and you can have the wide open plains

Oh, Monkey God!  
says King Kong  
Are you a dumb blonde or what?  
I mean, Ann Darrow  
Oh, never mind

Ah, ah says Ann Darrow  
Never hide things, King Kong  
You always must bring them out  
into the open!

Oh, Ann Darrow;  
You speak more truth than you know  
It's I who have things in the open  
and it's you who hide them!

I love you, says Ann Marrow  
with a shrug  
and gives King Kong a hug

I love you too, says King Kong  
wondering how he'll ever get through

Raj Arumugam

# Kingmo Kaput's Hieroglyphic Proclamation Discovered

Here is a translation of a recently-discovered hieroglyphic proclamation of the Pharaoh  
Of The Three Basins

I, Kinmgo Kaput, Lord of the Three Grand Lands  
that Sink Every Time there is a Flood;  
I, Lord of the Queen of The All Basins that Deliver  
Rich Harvests and Rice and Lentils and that rules  
the Nether Rooms in the Mansions;  
I, Pharaoh and Lord of All Kingdoms  
that ever existed before my Time on this Wretched Earth;  
I, Lord of the Rich Lands and Lord of Wood and Metal  
and Lord of a Thousand Such Designations;  
I, King, Emperor, Pharaoh, Son of Heaven  
and Descended of Stars;  
I do solemnly swear and declare  
you a Nincompoop for reading this, wasting your time idly  
looking at lines not worth the space they inhabit;  
You, waster of time reading lines of second-rate verse  
rather than feeding the poor  
or offering your hours at the House of the Wretched;  
You, waster of time reading poems and verse  
not worth the alphabet the language inhabits –  
You, I declare a Nincompoop  
and may you waste your hours in the Underworld  
translating the lives of Ants into clay tablets of verse  
that disappear after each line you carve;  
and may you, nincompoop who wastes such time reading such empty verse,  
may you so waste eternity

And thus have I spoken and thus is it recorded on this wall,  
the Solemn Words (no laughing or sneering there!)  
Of Kinmgo Kaput, Lord of the Three Basins  
That have been left Unwashed by the Queen who lords over Home

Raj Arumugam

# Kintaro, Wonder Boy

Kintaro, wonder-child  
with just a bib of red and gold  
often red-naked;  
Kintaro, child of nature  
of the Ashigara mountain  
friend of rabbit, monkey, squirrel,  
tanuki and fox  
Oh Kintaro! save us from this wild carp  
so gigantic no human can tame  
or catch -  
Oh Kintaro! Super child, child of thunder  
sent by red dragon of Mt Ashigara -  
Oh subdue the Gigantic carp,  
Oh Kintaro – save us!

and see now Kintaro comes  
leaps into the waters  
and Kintaro fights the carp  
Kintaro subdues the monster  
and the waters leap out  
and flow like rivers  
and they fill lakes and ponds  
and Kintaro has subdued the carp  
and we are all safe now again!  
Thanks to Kintaro!

and so may all boys be strong  
may all boys be brave  
like little boy Kintaro  
like mighty, mighty Kintaro

Raj Arumugam

# Know Your Brain

With all these advances  
in neuroscience  
it's time you numbskulls  
learn a little about your brains

1  
First up, you must know  
your brain's made of the  
right hemisphere and the left hemisphere -  
and what do they say to each other  
when they can't agree with each other?  
"Let's split."

2  
You know the neurons  
(no, not morons - neurons, you moron) -  
now, why do they love emails?  
Cos they love sending and receiving  
lots of messages, these neurons do

3  
Now, you 100bn-deficit no-brainers -  
do you know what  
your brain does  
when it sees a friend across the street?  
Yes, it sends a brainwave...

And when does your brain get afraid?  
Yep, when it loses its nerve...

And be alert - never give your brain a bath  
cos you don't want to be brainwashed, do ya?

4  
You get fired, baby,  
you don't work any more;  
but your neurons -  
they get working when fired

5

And for more advances in neuroscience  
you might want to consult your nearest  
neurosurgeon...

with all these advances  
in neuroscience  
it's time you numbskulls  
learn a little about your brains -  
while I get back to slicing these donors' brains fine;  
or making them into soup -  
just part of the trade, you know, of neuroscience

Raj Arumugam

# Knowing The Sunset

There is no sadness in this sunset  
there is no sense of sinking  
or the feeling of another end

They are not gathered here  
looking at beauty in its cliches  
or the miracle of the moment

There is a bare stillness  
there is the quiet of looking  
of seeing, knowing that union

Raj Arumugam

# Koala Philosophy

life?

I'll give you a bit of my  
koala-brain wisdom  
my take on life  
developed these  
twenty million years here in  
Aussie bush before any of you humanity  
came in boats or ships or planes  
or whatever:  
life's a long sleep  
and you wake up  
eat a few eucalypt leaves  
scratch your back  
(ah, what's life if you've no time  
to scratch?  
and oh, the joys of scratching one's bump!)  
and you go back to sleep...  
that's life, you miserable, inconvenient humans...  
and don't you ever disturb me  
in my eighteen-hour stretches  
of stillness and sleep...

Raj Arumugam

# Koala Sleeps, Silent

Koala sleeps, silent  
(lazy as bats, all day)  
sometimes hangs dangling,  
or curls into a ball;  
and comes back active and hungry  
in the dark, when all's quiet and slow

Koala springs up from the ground  
from below the tree  
lands its claws in the bark;  
and Koala eats, enjoys the leaves  
stays awake, then yawns  
and sleeps again twenty or so

Koala sleeps, silent  
all day  
dangling or curled  
which way it prefers

Raj Arumugam

# Lady From The Sea

Lady from the sea  
perplexed, sexy  
she was as surprised to see me  
as I was, to see her in her nudity

Her breasts had the  
warmth of the sea,  
she let me touch;  
and let my palms ride over  
her curves and hips  
her hair was wild  
like the ocean in a rage  
and what she hid  
if she had let me in  
could have drowned me  
like an underwater cave could take  
a drowning man, too drunk to know

Lady from the sea  
perplexed, sexy  
she was as surprised to see me  
as I was to see her in her nudity

What did the lady from the sea  
presided over by the moon  
want from me?  
I wanted her  
She was bounty of the ocean  
but it looked like she did not know her mind  
and she slipped back into her beginnings  
as if life underwater too  
were but a dream  
as it is for us humans on land  
as we stumble from one day to the next;  
and she sits there on the rocks  
occasionally  
looking at me  
and slips back into the waters  
if I turn to receive her breasts in my hands

Lady from the sea  
perplexed, sexy  
she was as surprised to see me  
as I was to see her in her nudity

Raj Arumugam

# Landscape With A Solitary Traveler

It's a lonely world  
one travels in  
from birth to death  
from beginning to end

but one learns  
to be content  
with oneself  
and the expanse

Raj Arumugam

# Landscape With Owl, Grave, And Coffin

there's a  
Landscape with Grave, Coffin, and Owl  
and the Owl says to you:

I don't know;  
do you know?  
everybody pretends to know,  
don't they?  
all they know is what they believe in  
what they have faith in  
and what they've been conditioned into...  
and fixed patterns and prescribed pathways...  
that's all they know;  
and to give it authority  
and credibility  
they flourish Revelations and Thick Books  
and they use smooth emotion-packed words  
like God and Love and Soul;  
and they use these cliches so freely  
like drinking free-flowing wine at a wedding  
so that they swagger like drunks  
and they sway like boxers  
before the knockout blow falls on their faces...  
that's all they know, don't they?  
what they've been told to believe in  
and seeing what they conditioned themselves into...  
so do you know?  
I don't know;  
do you know?  
everybody pretends to know,  
don't they?  
or you don't think so  
because you are one of those elect who knows...

text © Raj Arumugam,2010; Landscape with Owl, Grave, and Coffin (1836–37)  
by Caspar David Friedrich

Raj Arumugam

# Laugh To Cry

I don't love to cry  
(do you?)  
but when I laugh  
it seems I laugh to cry  
because I laugh so much  
and so long  
so unrestrained  
my laugh takes me to cry;  
so though I don't love to cry  
I just laugh that leads to cry  
but it is happy cry, ha-ha cry

Raj Arumugam

# Laugh With The Kids

You know kids laugh  
at simple things, innocent  
and a world before care and  
worry  
and so let's laugh awhile here  
with the kids

1

What color is a burp?

Hey, it's burple!

2

What jam can't you eat?

Hey, you can't eat traffic jam, can you?

3

OK...the bird laid 100 eggs...  
Guess what she said just after?

Hey, she said: Oh boy! - I'm egghausted!

4

Now what do you give  
your neighbor's dog if it keeps barking all night?

Well, give it a Barking Ticket!

5

And a duck goes out to eat  
And what does it get after it eats?

Hey - what else? It gets a bill!

And so did you laugh with the kids?  
good....  
next time on our program  
we'll laugh with  
grandma and grandpa;  
bring your own dentures

Raj Arumugam

# Lazy Bones, Dreamy Bones (Kids Version)

I love to sleep  
24-hours a day  
and for the rest  
of the night too

But mum screams:  
Wake up,  
dreamy bones -  
and do something!

And so I wake up  
and promptly  
go back to sleep  
as that way  
I honor mum's words.

Dad breathes  
words of inspiration:  
Get up,  
lazy bones -  
and achieve wonders!

And so I wake up  
and stay awake  
the duration of a long yawn  
and that way  
the dreams of my father  
are fulfilled.

Raj Arumugam

# Lean On My Wisdom

Let's start your journey into knowledge  
and your destiny;  
I can do it in 3 earthly steps  
that gives you eternity

## Lesson 1

You must all learn your ABCs  
and I will teach you it all so easy  
If I say A is B and W is S, it is so -  
so every letter is the same as I say it

## Lesson 2

And so every letter forms a word  
and when you have learned the words  
it is the same principle: if I say black is blue  
It is so; sweet is bitter and bitter is table  
when I say so  
And flat is circle and salt is sugar  
so that every word is the same as I say it  
and so all are the same in my word

## Lesson 3

You learn one and you learn all  
and all you need to know is wait for me to say it  
and so you see  
you only need to repeat and to know  
everything's all rolled into IT  
And you need to know only I know IT

I take the burden of all the knowledge  
and you simply hee-haw  
IT's all so easy, this life and death  
and living thing:  
Just lean on my wisdom

Raj Arumugam

# Legal Ownership And The Creatures

I point to the birds  
and delight in their play  
between buildings  
and the local ownership-residents say:  
These birds shit on our cars  
and they squat on railings in our balconies  
and squawk into our ears  
We have poisoned some  
but others come in their turn

Ah, damn these creatures  
of the sky and the earth  
they can't understand  
when we build, we own the space  
and they should stay away:  
like imbecile natives of colonized countries they  
these birds and creatures of nature;  
they never understand change  
and legal possession

Raj Arumugam

# Legs Of V

see the legs up  
in V;  
missing is the rest  
of the bawdy

Raj Arumugam

# Lend Me A 1000 Dollars, O Nasrudin

1

Psst! Nasrudin! Pssst!  
says the neighbor  
at the doorway;  
Nasrudin looks down from his roof  
where he's fixing some tiles  
and sees his neighbor in the street

Yes? Nasrudin asks

Come down, Nasrudin;  
I have something to say  
that cannot be said aloud;  
you must stand at the same level  
to hear what I have to say

2

And so Nasrudin comes down  
the ladder  
and asks his neighbor what the matter is;  
and the neighbor whispers:  
Nasrudin - lend me a 1000 dollars;  
I need it straight away...

Come up, says Nasrudin  
with no hesitation,  
and he climbs  
back up to the roof  
and the neighbor follows

3

Now here is something,  
whispers Nasrudin  
(once they are both seated on the roof)  
that I could not say below in the street  
but that can be said  
when we are at the same height:  
No; now you can go

Raj Arumugam

# Less And Greater

always, persistently  
one divides  
between one and less, and one and more  
and so one lives with fancies  
like order and the mighty and the better and the worthless  
and the powerful and powerless  
and the subservient and all-powerful  
and the omnipotent and the slave and the useless;  
so that one lives in hierarchy  
and perceived order and received order  
and in tight organizations and structures  
as between greater and less, nobler and more, and degree  
so that there is always separation and discord  
and fear and loneliness and despair and dependency  
and conflict and tension and the divide between this and that;  
but without hierarchy, without more or less  
and without rank and order  
there is only clarity, absolute freedom

Raj Arumugam

# Let The Children See

let them see  
the way of knowledge themselves  
teach them to read and to aspire;  
male and female, brother and sister  
strangers  
the privileged and the children of the streets -  
teach them to observe, to speak and to dream  
teach them the ways of piercing  
beyond the confines

be it each child's unquestioned right  
be it enshrined in the laws and in your statutes  
be it inscribed on your City Gates  
and in your Hearts and Minds;  
let each sit to the sounds of the words and meaning  
let each decipher, think and interpret  
let each be empowered, guided but not circumscribed  
let each explore and discover and capture the voices  
and dreams in the very air about them  
bring to them the means and the new and the old  
regardless of one's origin and history  
each child, male and female  
let there not be want and lack of means  
let each be fearless  
do not hold back any  
let none be neglected  
and let them be the heirs  
to our world -  
to freedom,  
inquiry and exploration...  
let each child live fully the life of the mind

Raj Arumugam

# Let There Be Peace

let there be peace in each heart  
a peace that is independent of place and circumstance;  
a quiet that is not reliant on ideas or dogma  
or religion or club or leaning on another;  
a peace and calm and serenity  
that comes not of name and achievement and identity  
and sermons and institutions and holy places  
and revelations and scriptures and teachings  
and memory and grand scenic spots  
and acceptance and recognition and esteem  
and praise and goodness achieved, and credentials and history;  
for all these things pass and are themselves leaning on crutches

let there be calm and peace radiant in each  
that comes of itself, non-reliant, non-dependent:  
and how may this be?

to see one's conditioning is to be free  
and this freedom is peace

Raj Arumugam

# Let Us Go With No Care

let us go with no care  
just the basic necessities,  
sweetheart;  
just the proper care  
and due diligence for the times afar  
but not forgetting each other  
for that's all  
that's the only we have  
here and now  
though time's waves  
might roll our boat forwards  
as they please;  
but then time is a fool  
for it does not know  
we have each other  
here and now  
always here and now...

Raj Arumugam

# Let's Be Comfy

don't let's think about things uncomfortable  
things that question existing illusions;  
it's nice, comfy  
let's have feel-good delusions;  
life's watching a movie  
a fantasy  
easy beginning, happy middle, divine end

Raj Arumugam

# Let's Go Mummy

Let's go mummy,  
let's mummy;  
let's to the shops -  
we need to get a few good things

Nothing for me,  
honest not a thing for me:  
just maybe for little Tom;  
he's been crying  
you know, mommy;  
he's been crying  
and we'll get him a few biscuits  
and a toy or two  
for it's been a week  
we got him anything

Let's go mummy,  
let's mummy;  
let's to the shops -  
we need to get a few good things

Nothing for me,  
honest not a thing for me:  
just for busy Daddy;  
he's not shaved in a week  
if you've noticed;  
we need to get him  
those throwaway blades  
and those nice-smelling water in a bottle  
he puts on his face;  
he's too busy  
and he's just not been looking smart  
the past week

Let's go mummy,  
let's mummy;  
let's to the shops -

we need to get a few good things

Nothing for me,  
honest not a thing for me;  
just for you  
I've got three coins saved  
my sweet mummy  
who's always thinking of all of us;  
maybe a coffee and cake for you  
while little Tom and I play  
in the children's corner;  
and maybe some shampoo too  
and lipstick, just for you  
all with the three coins  
I've got in my pink purse

Let's go mummy,  
let's mummy;  
let's to the shops -  
we need to get a few good things

Nothing for me,  
honest not a thing for me;  
but sweet mummy that you are  
you always think of me  
and if you insist  
well, like you might say:  
"But darling, we haven't got anything for you" -  
well, if you insist,  
I've made a list  
I've got it in my pink purse  
along with the three coins  
I've saved just for you

So let's go mummy,  
let's mummy;

let's to the shops -  
we need to get a few good things

Raj Arumugam

# Let's Be Comfy

don't let's think about things uncomfortable  
things that question existing illusions;  
it's nice, comfy  
let's have feel-good delusions;  
life's watching a movie  
a fantasy  
easy beginning, happy middle, divine end

Raj Arumugam

# Letters From Mom - 1 Of 4

Letters from Mom

Letter 1 of 4: News from home

Dear my Dearest Ninny

this letter I wrote real slow  
letter by letter  
in our whole dear English alphabet  
to form each word  
Slow, slow, slow  
like our dripping tap  
I wrote slow  
cos I know you never  
could read fast

Remember Mrs Campbell at school?  
She always said you were a slow reader

We've moved since you left  
cos your clever Dad who reads the papers daily  
(he is a fast reader -  
I'm mighty proud of him -  
he finishes the papers in 3 minutes)  
said he read most accidents happen  
within thirty miles distance of the home  
and so we've moved  
Now dear, we are safe and accidents can't happen  
since we're 40 miles away  
We're desperately safe

I know you'd want our new address, dear  
but really I can't cos

the family we bought this house from  
what they did was to take the number away  
cos they said they don't want to change address  
Fair enough, we said  
So Dad went back to our old house to get our number  
but those new idiots at our old place  
they called your Dad crazy and silly -  
those rude people!  
Those upstarts! These foreigners!  
They are ignorant of our ways!  
I wonder if they know your Dad is erudite  
after all, he reads the Daily everyday

Write to me, or call us, Darl Ninny  
Your loving Mom

Raj Arumugam

# Letters From Mom - 2 Of 4

Letters from Mom - 2 of 4

Letters from Mom - Letter 2 of 4: Our new place

Dear my Dearest Ninny

That was good of you to phone  
Great to hear your voice dear  
but surely  
think about it a little  
you need to shout a little more  
being so far across the mountains  
on the other side  
in the other state  
Even when we got telephone  
you got to shout a little more -  
cos even with the telephone,  
it's a fair distance, remember  
so all we can hear of you is a faint crackle

This new place is not too bad  
dear O dearest Ninny  
It's got one of these wonders, the washing machine  
but I'm not sure if it works really  
cos I put my first load of clothes in for the wash  
and I pulled at the handle  
and there was a rush of water  
and, dear or dear me,  
I saw everything swirling  
but I haven't seen the clothes since  
Dad says that thing there  
is for men to sit on and read the newspaper  
But tell me - why would they have water in there  
if it were not a regular one-of-them washing machine?

Tell you about the weather here in our new place  
dear O dearest Ninny  
Not too bad - it only rains say twice a week  
which is not too bad  
See it rained Monday and continued till Thursday morning  
and then continued from Thursday morning to Sunday night -  
which is not too bad, just twice a week,  
my dear O dearest Ninny

Now Dad wants to sit on that washing machine  
and read the newspaper  
he says, like he claims eminent men do  
But no way, I'm not allowing him to sit on our washing machine -  
have you ever heard of such a thing?  
I'm going to kick him, if I need to  
I think I'll put in another load of washing  
and see if the machine spits out the first one I put in

Write to me, or call us again, Darl Ninny  
Your loving Mom

Raj Arumugam

# Letters From Mom - 3 Of 4

Letters from Mom - 3 of 4

Letters from Mom - Letter 3 of 4: More news from home

Dear my Dearest Ninny

Oh, what a boring new week here;  
nothing happens...

We went to the post office to send  
you the heavy coat you asked for  
with the metal buttons  
And the new clerk at the post office said  
the coat's too heavy with them metal buttons  
so he cut off all the buttons  
and then the weight was right  
and so he put the metal buttons in the pockets  
You'll find them right there in the coat -  
ain't he mighty helpful...

And the cemetery people sent Dad another notice  
said If he don't pay another 100 dollars  
for the grave where they put Grandma down in  
then, they said: "Up she comes!";

and dear, dear old Uncle Woods  
he fell drunk into the local whiskey vat and died  
and he was cremated, as he'd always wanted  
and no one here needed lights three nights  
for Uncle Woods, he burned so bright all three  
days and nights...

Oh and one last thing  
Little Tim and I were trapped  
in the car two hours  
cos Dad locked the keys in the car;

and it took him so long to get me  
and Little Tim out...  
Sometimes I think  
Dad's really going senile before his time

Write to me, or call us again, Darl Ninny  
Your loving Mom

P.S. We wanted to send you some money in  
But this envelope here is already sealed

Raj Arumugam

# Letters From Mom - 4 Of 4

Letters from Mom - 4 of 4

Letters from Mom - Letter 4 of 4: Life, Death, and Life

Dear my Dearest Ninny

Life and Death, dearest Ninny  
that's what news I've got for you here  
in this post; sad and happy, dearie  
ain't that what's it all about  
Cos God gets drunk every other night  
(just like your Dad)  
life's a mixed bag

Three of your school friends  
last week  
were in a pick-up truck  
It was Dom who was driving  
and the truck fell off the bridge  
and into the water  
Dom rolled down his window and got off  
but the other two in the back  
John and Mary, though good swimmers  
they drowned, dearie  
cos they couldn't get the tail-gate opened

And your sister is now pregnant  
and she's all excited  
but we don't know if it's a boy or girl  
so we'll decide later  
if you are aunt or uncle  
And your sis says if it's a girl

she'll name it after me -  
so, she'll be called Mom;  
and if it's a boy  
she'll name it after Dad -  
so, of course, he'll be called Dad

And that was good to hear from you  
on the phone  
you're coming back home  
You can run away from school  
run away from your town  
run away from mummy -  
but you always got to  
come back to mummy  
dear O dearie my Ninny

See you soon, Darl Ninny  
Your loving Mom

Raj Arumugam

# Li Po Drowns

Li Po sits drinking wine;  
he is in his garden  
below the tree  
reciting his poems to the night  
and he sings to the cool air  
and he sings to the moon  
and he drinks more in between

Li Po walks to the lake  
and he sings to the moon:  
I will come to you, beloved  
I will come to you  
for you have waited for me centuries  
for you have glowed nights  
looking for me;  
I will come to you, even now,  
beloved moon,  
I will come to you, even now

and Li Po walks to his boat  
and he rows his boat  
and he rows his boat gleefully  
and he rows singing  
and Li Po is in the middle of the lake  
and he stops there to look at his beloved  
whose radiant wholeness  
shimmers in the water

and Li Po sings always  
his song of love to his moon:  
I will come to you, beloved  
I will come to you  
for you have waited for me centuries  
for you have glowed nights  
looking for me;  
I will come to you, even now,

beloved moon,  
I will come to you, even now

and Li Po jumps into the lake  
and he struggles and he swims  
and he swims and he struggles  
and he sings:  
I come to you, beloved,  
I come to you  
you who have waited centuries for me  
radiant and a-glow in the sky  
I come to you now

and he swims towards the distorted moon in the lake  
and he beats his hands at the moon in the lake  
and Li Po struggles  
and Li Po clutches at the watery moon  
and Li Po is his with his beloved  
after centuries he is come  
and Li Po is with his love  
Li Po is with his beloved moon:  
Li Po flies to the moon; Li Po flies to the moon

Raj Arumugam

# Li Po, The Moon And Me

You know  
lovely moon  
Li Po  
was drunk  
and he paddled out to you  
seeing your reflection  
and he jumped in to the lake  
embracing you in the waters  
and so he drowned;  
but,  
you know  
loving moon,  
I will not come to you thus;  
instead you know my time  
and you will drown  
in the lake shadows of my quiet

Raj Arumugam

# Lies

it's easy to see  
the lies one tells others;  
but it's not so easy  
to see the lies one holds  
so close to one's heart

Raj Arumugam

# Life And Death

there is the freshness of the morning  
the coolness of the evening  
and the quiet of the night:  
there is life, and there is death

can one look at this without an adjective?

Raj Arumugam

# Life And Death Of The Common Fly

poor man  
was made in the image of God  
(especially man, especially the he's!)  
and so he he he must abide  
with rules and propriety  
and commandments and ideals

whereas I,  
I am free to go  
where I choose  
to wing myself

(no doubt I fear the fly-swat  
though I escape that mostly with dexterity)

ah, strange that it is a petty fly  
just a common fly, a housefly  
just me  
that knows unconditioned freedom;  
for I have no ideals to pursue  
and am not judged nor do I judge  
and can fly low and high  
and no one cares if I feed at dung-piles  
and sit cleaning my feet on most sacred altars  
or run up the nostrils of most reverend masters

ah, to be a fly -  
far better a short soul-less life  
(ended perhaps by your fly-swatter)  
of daring and freedom  
than an eternal life of burning Hell  
or eternal, unquestioning drugged obedience

poor man  
was made in the image of God  
(especially man, especially the he's!)  
and so he he he must abide  
an eternity  
of rules and propriety  
and commandments and ideals

Raj Arumugam

# Life Observed

there's the life  
in one's quiet and silence  
without books and texts  
and all the discourses and expositions

there's the life  
unfettered by words, ideas  
and all the systems and preachers;  
there's not a single book  
literal or metaphorical there

there's stillness there -  
and one observes  
and one does not impose on  
what is before one  
all that traditions and revelations  
have imprinted on the mind  
as cattle are branded

There one puts  
all things away

so the waves appear as waves  
and what is outside and within  
are seen, observed as they arise

one makes no demands  
and there are no demands on one

Raj Arumugam

# Life Of Ms Anonymous

sometimes, baby  
you're soft and angelic;  
for some time you're a saint  
and sometimes you're a bitch

sometimes life takes you along  
sometimes you're Athena  
sometimes you're innocent  
and taken for a ride;  
sometimes you're the CEO  
sometimes you're dumped bad, darling O;  
O sometimes you're the Black Goddess  
and sometimes you're Dylan's White Goddess  
who shines the light on God  
and we know He's the Devil in one

sometimes you're happy  
sometimes sad;  
and often enough a glitch  
you don't know what you are

O sometimes you ravage the earth  
sometimes you give birth to solar systems;  
often you're high on drugs  
and you look in the distance  
as if Paradise asked you permission  
to move near where you live;  
and sometimes, darling O  
you stand below the street-lamps  
and you say: Hey Mister, can you spare a dime?

sometimes you are the star  
that the multitudes adore,  
long maybe;  
after, you are just dark space  
we ignore between stars

sometimes you're filthy

sometimes you're purity;  
sometimes you're alive  
O sometimes you're pretty dead;  
O my lovely babe  
find your mind  
and I'll give you a penny for your thought

Raj Arumugam

# Life On The Escalator

slow time on the escalator  
easy baby;  
a life of leisure  
and idle moments  
tra la la li

head held high and proud  
one foot on one step  
and one foot lower:  
it's the picture of grace and ease;  
it's cool baby

stand leaning  
with no care in the world  
chatting with your friend  
and let your new floral skirts  
wipe clean the glass sides;  
life's a breeze  
on the escalator,  
fashion baby

hands on the handrail  
and the other waving at friends  
waiting at the end;  
shake hands when you're down  
and pass the germs on  
to your cheerful buddies;  
O life's a breeze  
on the escalator,  
bouncy baby

it's like a slow-motion movie  
this chic life on the escalator  
as still as when you stand window-shopping  
gazing at new lingerie on display  
like admiring a field of flowers:  
O live the moment  
baby,  
this escalator life's cool and easy

slow time on the escalator  
easy baby;  
a life of leisure  
and idle moments  
tra la la li

Raj Arumugam

## Life Resumed, Brisbane

I looked at myself yesterday  
and found myself deep in mud.  
No, not just in mud but mud myself;  
mud in my head, mud in my mouth,  
mud in my stomach and mud in my lungs  
mud myself  
And not like the lotus growing in the mud  
but mud itself  
propagating itself  
for its own purpose  
mud my head mud my mouth  
mud my stomach and mud my lungs  
mud my mind mud my spirit mud my soul

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Lifeless Haikus

Honorable Poet Haiku:  
your haikus are so sad and lifeless  
we suggest you try harakiri

Raj Arumugam

# Life's Getting Scary

I think you'll see  
life's getting scary  
there's someone out there  
who knows everything about me

See, everywhere in my emails  
there's some tortoise-shell reading  
of my inner desires, needs and personality

Today for example  
I've got several magic readings  
several secret readings  
Let's start with the first:  
Meet sexy women in your neighbourhood -  
Oh my God, how did they know  
I was thinking of my neighbour's wife?  
Make \$4000 per week - work at home!  
Oh my Dear Stars! How did they know?  
Though with this of course I can combine  
my need to meet all the sexy women in my neighbourhood  
while I'm making \$4000  
O it's all so easy, see -  
but scary

And it gets scarier with these mystics reading  
my needs and wants  
Grow an extra inch!  
Oh! Oh! How do they know? How do they know?  
Erectile problems? We've got the pills!  
OK, listen guys - my wife has been talking  
hasn't she?  
Best Buy Viagra Generic - Viagra 100mgX60 Pills \$125  
OK...my wife has certainly been talking! That precision exposes her!  
And comes more:  
Stop Snoring Tonight - Guaranteed!  
Party on all night with our wonder pills...  
Dental plans - Oh God! Defend me from these mind-readers!  
They even know I'm losing my teeth and need dentures!  
Is nothing sacred any more?

And there's another one  
and now it gets even scarier  
cos they tell me things I didn't know about myself:  
Put on this bra and see your man rise to the occasion!  
But Oh ye Aliens who observe all things human -  
I always thought I was the man!  
But maybe I never knew I am a woman actually?  
for they keep coming:  
Bras of all styles, types and sizes just for your body!  
Dear God! Heavens!  
Why have you done this to me?  
Why do you create me as man, run a male program for over 5 decades  
and then bring in these soothsayers  
to break the harsh truth in a gentle way:  
I am a woman - and needing more bras!  
And one more:  
Ladies, look 20 years younger with LifeCell!  
I'm finished! I'm zilch!  
I'm a woman and I'm getting old!  
The magic weavers have found me out  
the truth even I had not known...  
Do you suffer from depression?  
Yes! Yes! Oh - not before, but now yes! Yes!  
The Scientific Breakthrough is here!  
Oh, the devils know me! The devils are out to get me!

and so gentle reader  
be you aware  
the demons are out there  
and lest you laugh at me  
they may already have started work on you  
they know every thought and wish and desire in your heart;  
and if you don't believe me - just check your emails - if you dare...  
for I think you'll agree  
life's getting scary  
there's someone out there  
who knows secrets everything about you and me

Raj Arumugam

# Life's Journey

They might have left you alone  
to drift and move along  
as wind blows with no seeming direction

They might have brought you here with great hope  
and the crowd nurtured all desires  
and you harboured aspirations that beat all reason

The real world holds you in its arms now  
It's a different parent from the ones who soothed and inspired  
It lists everything and propounds only one dismal end

Raj Arumugam

# Life's Like That

the book is strange;  
where is the beginning, middle  
and the end...where are they?

Raj Arumugam

# Listening To Every Tom, Dick And Donkey

Come, we have a story, said the Old Man. Come, sit and I shall tell you all a little tale of a donkey, a boy and his father...and of strangers too...and many a busybody...

And the children sat round the campfire and the Old Man began his tale...

One day  
(and this is many, many  
uncountable days ago)

Father called Son  
and he said:

'Son  
you are grown now  
into a fine young lad  
and you must learn  
how to buy and sell  
and make a profit

'So, come let us go  
you and I  
to the market to see  
what silver coins we can get  
for this old donkey  
in our shed'

2

And so Son and Dad  
set out for the town market  
across the sandy and rocky miles  
and some way off  
Dad grew tired and he said:

'Ah, Son

this walk tires me and so  
I shall ride the donkey  
while you walk by the side;  
so, come let us go  
you and I  
to the market to see  
what silver coins we can get  
for this old donkey  
that I shall ride'

3

'Ho, ho!  
What do we have here? '  
came a voice  
as the Dad sat riding the donkey  
while the Son walked by the side  
'A cruel father you are, '  
said the Family Standards Officer  
'Get down, you grown man  
and let the child ride! '

And the Father was ashamed  
and so he let the Son ride the donkey  
and he walked beside

And the Family Standards Officer  
was extremely pleased  
and he filled up his forms  
and he bade the Father and Son safe journey:  
'Ah, this is another  
success story  
of the Family Welfare Dept  
where conscience has won the day  
and the Son rides the donkey  
and the Father walks beside'

4

And the Father and Son are gone but a mile, a mile - when another interruption came their way, heading straight their way....

'What do we have here? '

came a scream

and the Mandarin of the

State Morals Education

stopped the trio

and the Mandarin glared disapprovingly

at the boy riding the donkey and he said:

'Where is your filial piety?

Know you not the son must do his duty

by the father?

Get off the donkey -

you young donkey!

and allow your father to ride

while you walk with reverence

and duty beside! '

And so now we have the

Father on the donkey

and the Son walking beside

all three slowly on and on

Father and son

to the market to see

what silver coins

they might get

for this old donkey

that they have taken turns to ride

5

Then comes an old woman  
and she mutters to herself as she passes by:  
'Ah, what's come of life  
that a father should ride and  
allow the young to walk.'

And so the Father bids his Son  
be a pillion rider with him on the donkey  
and so they ride  
merrily, merrily  
on to the market  
to see  
what silver coins they can get  
for this old donkey  
that they both ride

5

But no sooner have they covered  
but a mile, just a mile  
with the respectable Father  
and the filial Son  
(both on the hapless donkey)  
when a voice thunders out from the bush  
and the Animal Rights Activist stands out  
and he screams:  
'Oh, you cruel people  
that you should ride a helpless donkey!  
Shame on you!  
Much better that you both  
carried the creature! '

And of course

the Son and Father  
so reasonable and  
always with an open mind  
they jump off the donkey  
and they carry  
the donkey all the way  
all the way  
just four more miles  
just four more miles  
and they soon come into the market  
carrying the donkey  
and shouting:  
'Donkey for sale!  
Donkey for sale! '

6

And the buyers  
at the markets  
they see  
this Father and Son  
carrying the donkey  
and screaming:  
'Donkey for sale!  
Donkey for sale! '

And the buyers they say:  
'But it appears, Sirs,  
there are  
three donkeys for sale  
three donkeys for sale!  
In declaring  
"Donkey for Sale! "  
when there are clearly three  
are you offering three  
for the price of one? '

Raj Arumugam

# Literary Tommy And His Literal Grandma

1

"My grandma, she takes  
me too literally, "  
says Little Literary Tommy  
"At Daylight Saving  
I tell her to put her clock forward  
and she does so, and her clock falls off her table"

"Oh, Little Tommy, ' she says  
'See what you've made me do! '  
and she lands a knock on my head"

2

"Months later  
when Daylight Saving 's over  
I tell her to put her clock backward  
and she does so, and she grumbles:  
'Silly boy - now I can't see the time! '  
and lands a knock on my head"

3

"She takes this literal thing too far  
does my Literal Granny  
that when I had a habit of sleeping late  
and never getting up for school  
she made me sleep out in her garden of herbs  
so that I literally got up on Thyme  
- and still I got a knock on my head  
cos she'd forgotten why I was there in the first place"

4

But one good thing  
(we must observe)  
Literal Granny does for  
poor Literary Tommy:  
she knocks enough sense into his head  
to prepare him for the hard knocks of the Literary Life

Raj Arumugam

# Little Evelyn

Little Evelyn  
she's been standing  
for her portrait  
And little Evelyn is tired  
'Are we done yet? '  
asks little Evelyn  
'Can I look? '  
Little Evelyn slouches  
and then stands up straight;  
little Evelyn can't keep her mind  
clear on the task at hand  
Little Evelyn yawns  
and then she shouts: 'Oh, all right!  
I will be still! '  
Little Evelyn sways left and right  
'Can I look at my purr-trait? '  
'Do I look pretty in it? '  
Little Evelyn lets her mind wander  
on to the pie she had this morning;  
and little Evelyn yawns  
and she says:  
'Are we finished?  
I think I'm as sleepy as the cat  
in its basket...'

Raj Arumugam

# Little Teddy Bear Lost

Little Teddy bear  
pink and cuddly  
lying on the kerb  
with the lights  
of the cafes  
bouncing off you

Oh who's missing you tonight  
crying for her teddy bear?  
maybe it's little Amy asleep  
who dropped you  
while her mum carried her  
into the car?  
and maybe now little Amy  
cries in her room:  
'Where's my teddy bear? '  
And Mom says: 'Oh, sweetheart;  
sleep, maybe it's in the car  
we'll get it in the morning.'

Little Teddy bear  
pink and cuddly  
lying on the kerb  
with the lights  
of the cafes  
bouncing off you

Oh who's missing you tonight  
crying for her teddy bear?  
maybe it's little Lin  
who came visiting from Shanghai  
and exchanged her panda bear  
for an Aussie cuddly toy  
and she's in the airport now  
and cries: 'I lost my Aussie teddy bear'  
and they can't find one at the airport  
and Dad says:  
'Don't worry;  
we'll get you a new one

when we get home'

Little Teddy bear  
pink and cuddly  
lying on the kerb  
with the lights  
of the cafes  
bouncing off you

Raj Arumugam

## Live Barramundi \$21.95 Per Kg

live barramundi \$21.95 per kg

at the fishmonger's  
there is a glass tank  
with barramundi, overcrowded  
unable to move;  
I wonder what,  
since they have no choice,  
one barramundi says to another:  
I wish someone chooses me

Raj Arumugam

## Live Murray Cod \$ 29.95 Per Kg

beside the barramundi tank  
there is another one  
full of water, empty of fish  
with the label:  
live murray cod \$ 29.95 per kg

I suppose the live murray cod  
no longer live:  
the cod are out;  
the \$ are in

Raj Arumugam

# Living In Solitude

I live now alone  
unrecognized, slow in my walks  
Anonymous, unknown, unconnected -  
in part what time showed me,  
part in choice

Strangers nod and utter kind words  
and we exchange smiles  
as we move down the paths  
The hare at the edge  
eyes me cautiously  
before making a dash to the bush;  
a stray dog follows me for a while

The world is shut off  
and it is quiet in my shed and room -  
except for the murmur  
of the thoughts of the ancients  
in the books and volumes on my shelves and table

This is pleasant; solitary and satisfying  
These are quiet days, one hopes, to one's end...

Raj Arumugam

## Lone Man In Space (Sci-Fi)

...in the Dogoton era, there was too much crime...too many wanted to think for themselves...these criminals did not subscribe to the Revealed Doctrine...just too many who wanted to think for themselves...and our prisons and streets and homes were overflowing with these criminals...finally, the Revealed Doctrine Order decided: send these criminals out to space...they want to think for themselves? Let them find out what it is to be on their own, forever...

I'm covered with clear plasma...  
...living in a ball...there are tubes  
into my mouth and tubes out of my posterior...  
I float in this private world;  
I can often feel the wobble...  
I'm never hungry; I never thirst  
or feel the need to attend to any bodily functions...  
I think I've seen  
the 2 suns pass (or is it the other way round?)  
3 times...so it may be 3 days...6 days? ...or years?  
Sometimes I see a planet and its moon...  
Never earth....I do not see it here...it is not here...  
Where are we? We had 1 sun in our system, didn't we?  
There are 2 here...  
Sometimes I see the others...  
Like the other time...a day ago? A year ago?  
My circle floated past a moon,  
and there heading in the opposite direction  
was another circle...and it was a woman...  
...her flesh like paper and white, naked,  
her breasts stretched, another tubed being like me;  
and we passed each other...our circles almost touched...  
I saw her face: her eyes were dead;  
her face was as of sand...I felt for my fingers  
tried to wave, tried to smile...  
there was nothing, and there was nothing in her too...  
she passed; she is the past now...  
and I have seen others too – just once...how was it like?  
Who was it? – Wordsworth? That poet?  
His words come back to me

that I had once found in a neglected tablet  
while on earth

and that I memorized:

"I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

Yes, it was like that:

my bubble passed a planet  
and there, right before me, right before  
was a whole host of them, each in their bubble...

O I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host of golden bubbles  
In each a naked being, man or woman;  
Between the moons, between the planets  
Bobbling, wobbling, shuddering in space  
And that was just a brief while...  
And each bubble headed off in a different direction  
If there is a direction...  
And there is just infinity...  
And bobbling, wobbling, shuddering alone in space...

Raj Arumugam

# Lone Yellow Flower Waves In The Open Fields

lone yellow flower  
waves in the open fields  
bowing according to the tune  
among the sea of green;  
lone yellow flower has no one to blame  
and it seeks none to praise  
for it knows all life comes in  
when the conditions are right;  
lone yellow flower knows  
death comes in like the wind;  
lone yellow flower  
is never alone  
for it is a part of the expression  
of the earth and time and the universe;  
lone yellow flower sees what is before and around  
lone yellow flower observes what is within and about  
and so lone yellow flower lives with no delusions  
no beliefs of heaven and hell  
fears none and does not live or die  
to please or amuse or appease;  
and lone yellow flower  
blossoms and shines  
and shrivels and ceases  
in harmony  
with what actually is;  
lone yellow flower  
waves in the open fields  
bowing according to the tune  
among the sea of green

Raj Arumugam

# Lonely Duck In The Pond Quacks To Itself...

Quack! Quack! Quack!

Ok, where's everybody?

I've been gliding round this pond the last half  
hour singing my Duck-thoven tunes:

Quack! Quack! Quack

Quack! Quack! Quack!

And so why's everyone avoiding me  
like I don't know how to make conversation?

Quack? Quack?

The other day the duckling glided near  
and asked if'd share bits of the bread  
thrown to me by

these pesky humans who can't  
read the Don't-feed-the-ducks signs

and I swallowed the bread bits whole and said:

Quack! Quack! Quack!

And the silly duckling ran away crying! –

Hey how can I answer with food in my mouth?

Quack! Quack! Quack!

Your mum taught you to speak with food in your mouth?

Quack! Quack! Quack!

Have you got any brains in that quacking head of yours, duckling?

Really, no reason to avoid me...

I mean the other day they asked me what

I think about the environment and I said:

Quack! Quack! Quack!

and they all looked astonished  
at the wisdom of my words.

So why avoid me now?

This cute sexy duck glided quite close to me  
and asked me what I thought about pre-marital sex  
and I said: Quack! Quack! Quack!

and I flapped my wings and walked on water  
and held my head high with the sweetest:

Quack! Quack! Quack!

and that silly female duck jumped to the overhanging branches  
and refused to come down for all my quacking:

Quack! Quack! Quack!

Seriously, what's this all about? –  
You excite a virgin duck and then hide in the branches?  
What's this pond coming to!

The other day a silly fish swam close to me and asked  
for directions round the pond and I said:  
Quack! Quack! Quack!  
And the fish said: Hey! I don't understand Duck language.  
Don't you speak Finglish?

What the Duck! I said. Why don't you learn Quacklish!  
Quack! Quack! Quack!

So where's everybody?  
And really I don't understand why  
everyone's avoiding me.  
I mean really I can qua-ttle off the Entire History of the Pond  
and the Holy Texts Revealed by Duck God to the Duck Prophets  
and I can quack about anything and I can quack  
about all the wines and grog  
and I can teach the creatures how to change pond water into wine;  
and I can quack about all the delicacies in the pond  
and I can sing too, listen:  
Quack! Quack! Quack!  
And such a delightful voice and such original tunes too!  
A graduate of Duck-kovsky Underwater Academy.  
And so – hey! – where's everybody?  
Why do they avoid me like I've got the Swine Flu or something?  
Hey, I'm just a pond duck who likes to Quack! Quack! Quack!  
You got a problem with that, you quacks!

Raj Arumugam

# Look Up At The Sky

...look up at the sky – Oh, do look up at the sky...look up at the sky that stretches in all directions and wherever one may turn...look up at the sky all above and that falls beyond the end of the visible earth...look up at the sky that stretches beyond one's vision and look beyond the sky into limitless space...

...see, time and care and the narrowness of one's conditioning confine one and bends one's mind – as one's back is bent, and one's neck is loaded down; and one's eyes are fixed to the spotlight-defined meters as one stands one's ground...Oh, but just look up at the sky...

...look up at the sky in the day and see its deep blue...look up at the sky and see the clouds and the sun, and the brilliance and the lack of limits and confines...look up at the sky in the morning and see the sun rise, and behold its wonder and its colors...look up at the sky at twilight and look at it at night with the moon and the stars and the infinite space that stretches beyond...

...look up at the sky and behold its wonders and splendor and its power... look up at the sky and the space beyond and behold its brilliance and limitlessness...

Oh, look up at the sky and the space beyond – and behold the limitlessness of the mind...behold there the infinite stretch of your mind, of the mind...behold the skies and space, and behold the power and glory and the unconfined, unconditioned freedom and brilliance of your mind and your being, of the unconfined mind and of unconditioned being...

Raj Arumugam

# Lord Quirk (A Horror Story)

Lord Quirk lived alone  
in his castle  
full of stuffed animals  
and dried creatures  
and humans as such too  
And when Salesman New-deals called  
&quot;Just the very thing I need, &quot;  
said Lord Quirk  
and added Salesman New-deals  
to his Dried Goods Collection

And now Lord Quirk's descendant  
has a signboard outside the castle  
that says in characters old but not faded:  
'Won't you come in  
to view our collection  
and be part of the experience? '

Raj Arumugam

# Love Being Kids

love being kids;  
love just growing;  
love all the fun  
and all the lollies

we play in the fields  
and we play at the creek;  
we play computer games  
and watch TV and DVDs

mum sends me to school  
and there's a line  
of 4-wheel drives  
outside school;  
dad reads me stories  
and mum and dad turn  
the lights off for me  
when I'm ready to sleep

O just love being kids;  
love just growing;  
love all the fun  
and all the lollies

we share lunch  
and compare notes:  
and we decide amongst ourselves  
between classes, which is better:  
peanut butter sandwich  
or bread with tomatoes and onions?

we get nana visiting us  
or we visit nana and grandpa;

and we visit our neighbors and  
we often go places  
though the beach is always my favorite

love being kids;  
love just growing;  
love all the fun  
and all the lollies

we got kids from everywhere now:  
we got Tom, and Mingxi and Ravi;  
and we got Pedro and Akito and Lucy;  
and we're all one big bunch of kids  
loving it being kids and growing

oh just love being kids;  
love just growing;  
love all the fun  
and all the lollies

Raj Arumugam

# Love For The Blue Lady In The Blue Pavilion

What have we here?  
Let us read;  
this scroll  
one of a thousand  
sent us in haste  
by the Duke of Dei;  
Oh, a poem of love -  
surprise! - it is  
written in fine ink  
and with the best brush  
one can buy in all of China

And ladies, now I read  
this poem of screaming passion:

“Oh lady of blue!  
who spends her time  
in the blue pavilion!  
my mind is blue!  
all for the love of you!  
and my heart is broken!  
in pieces too!  
for you do not love me!  
though I love you true! ”

Ah, true, true indeed  
I do not love this poet  
with purple verse  
and broken limbs of lines;  
the poor duke's heart is broken  
just like his rhyme and reason;  
come let us pen an answer  
and his delicate ladies  
will bring it back to him

“Oh Duke of Dei

whose heart is broken  
like pots of China;  
blue, blue is your mind  
for the desperate love  
of the lady in blue  
who does not love you:  
but there is some solution  
some solution for your broken heart  
O Duke of Dei –  
some glue, some glue  
can hold together the broken pieces;  
Your True Lady in Blue  
who is almost turning blue –  
for the thousandth time,  
I do not love you”

(poem based on Painting: Paintings of Ladies (Leaf 4) by Jiao Bingzhen)

Raj Arumugam

# Love Growing

it does not seem to be a complete love  
this love that seems to grow on me  
that grows over you;  
for one day like today it is your smile I remember  
as I drive home  
and it is that which hovers in my dream;  
and the other day was each eyebrow  
its shine and the arch and the way each flickered like leaves  
a while on the ground;  
and what was it the other evening?  
they were the gentle hands you placed on the table  
in asking a question;  
and Saturday  
your shoulders followed me home;  
it never seems to be a complete love  
it never seems to complete itself  
and it's so focused on parts;  
O could it not take all of you  
all together  
in one integrated love  
one complete love?  
and still it grows like a seedling or lava or pupa  
or even a tadpole  
this my love for you  
this evolving, this growing  
(I did not know if I wanted it  
but growing, there is no longer one's will)  
and your voice for example,  
the way certain words come off your tongue  
the dialect and regional difference  
and like my name too sounded like no one else can;  
and that accidental brush between us too  
(and each uttered "Sorry"  
and each reached out to steady the other)  
and the sensation  
was transported through my flesh  
and pleasure  
and flesh became part of the love too  
and so it is never complete;

like a jigsaw puzzle this love  
though the parts all fall together I must say  
and the picture is clear at the end  
like a classic murder mystery too, just as tense;  
and there it seems the love is complete –  
and yet it is not complete, for it is still in silence  
and impressions and wishes unspoken and unexpressed  
that is the genesis and growing of this love  
like a soap-opera  
that comes in installments and is never complete

Raj Arumugam

# Love In Reverse

if one can look at this thing we call love  
without all the images we have about love  
and all the poetry and song traditions  
and all the accumulated wisdom about love  
and all that we think is love;  
if we can look at this when we use the word  
in intense poetry and in swaying song  
and in the authoritative pronouncements in our holy books  
and in definitive images and paintings  
if we can still look at this thing called love  
with open eyes  
as when one says: I love you -  
Is it really that  
or is it all just a fine way of saying? :  
I love myself;  
and I'll share that with you  
so long as you are obedient  
so long as you bend your will to mine  
so long as you can attend to my needs  
so long as you are capable of feeding that love -  
So that it's all self-love, a love in reverse  
and love itself - I love you - a shared mutual lie?  
Can one consider all this and still say? :  
There is true love  
and there is only the love of the other  
and no love of oneself in love.  
Love is never reverse;  
love is always pure, always pouring outward.

Raj Arumugam

# Love In The Chemistry Lab

And see, this cold ice  
that lives in the test tube  
is so in love  
with the Bunsen burner  
and coming near  
it exclaims in intense love:  
'O flame - eternal flame mine -  
O my roaring blue flame, my hot love  
Oh see how I melt  
whenever near you! '

'Oh, cool it, ' says the flame  
'It's just a phase  
you're passing through'

Raj Arumugam

# Love Letters From A Beauty

a charming lady  
with the most romantic exotic name  
sends me a letter  
December 2011  
at poemhunter  
once, twice  
a note of love

how magical!  
she's enslaved my heart  
asking for my reply  
via email  
and she'll send me her photo

I quickly resolve  
to pen a reply  
to put loveless 2011 to rest  
and start 2012 with romance  
and so I search her page  
and she has comments  
on other poets too

But Oh, woe is me!  
my love  
has approached these others too  
with the same message of love:  
Osip Mandelstam (1891-1938)  
Katharine Mansfield (1888-1923)  
Hakim Abu al-Qasim Mansur Firdowsi (932 A. D. and 941 A. D)

Oh, my love! my love!  
do not go unto them  
I will email you  
and we will love each other  
till we both rest in one grave  
but you must promise  
never to visit the other men;  
and as for Katharine Mansfield -

I think  
you picked the wrong man

Raj Arumugam

# Love Song Minus All Myths

don't ask me what's it all about  
no platonic ideals about love  
and birth of love in myths and fables;  
or discourses about marriages made in Heaven  
but all I want to say is  
I'm in love with you;  
and yes, it's the sort of love  
(as in the common love, the usual love  
the one everyone has except ascetics and saints and liars)  
so it's the sort of love  
when I'm always thinking of you  
when you're not here  
and I want to be inside each other  
when we're together;  
the love that draws the stallion to its mare in the free fields  
the love of angels with tips of wings touching each other  
and hand in hand;  
yes, there's that in the love that is mine for you

yes, it's the sort of love  
in which one sings and writes poems  
no matter how bad one's voice and weak the verse;  
still it's the impulse-love I know for you  
it's the love that throbs both in my heart and private parts;  
nothing divine, nothing indecent  
a love without labels and categories  
and no judgment  
but realistic love  
that is pain in absence and joy in union;  
really I don't see eternity  
like liars put in their claims to preference in love;  
all I know is that what moves within me  
and creeps in my flesh  
is the love-demand for you;  
it's the love-urge that makes its presence felt in quiet rhythms  
and music and harmony in the mind  
and it's the love-lust that is vigorous as a ravenous beast tearing its prey apart;

Oh, it's love that is subdued and that is yet surging and breaking  
like violent waves over ocean rocks;  
no, there are no theories and revelations about this love;  
yes, no sanctions here by the Divine and the priest  
no intermediaries and no texts like the Kama Sutra  
and it's no love that starts in heavenly spheres  
but it's the earthly love and fleshly desire  
that begins and ends here on planet earth;  
that flowers in the mind at the right cues  
and that ends as at the end of erections and orgasms  
and yet always renewed;  
so don't ask me what's it all about  
no platonic ideals about love  
or discourses about marriages made in Heaven  
but all I want to say is  
I'm in love with you  
and yes, it's the love that will make no promises  
but delivers itself, and its subject;  
hardy, fleshy, earthy and hooked on to meteors  
bound to stars and dreaming about moons;  
Oh, a love that is not concrete, not concrete, not concrete  
and yet a love physical, physical, physical  
with sensations and feeling but no ideals  
a love-spontaneity  
that wants to bite you and tear you apart  
while you in turn devour me as ancient cave-beasts  
fed on the smelly, unwashed, unsuspecting traveler;  
it is messy, it is messy, it's messy;  
it is love, indeed, it is love of the uncategorized sort,  
darling, darling – sweet, sweet, heavenly darling -  
of the unclassified sort, of one in the other;  
it is love found in the instinct of the self and the species  
as natural as what a male frog and a female frog  
may do in good time and in each other's company;  
O, I'm in love with you  
as a firefighter wants to put out a fire;  
and yes, it's the sort of love  
as in the common love, the usual love  
the one everyone has except ascetics and saints and liars

Raj Arumugam

# Lovers Surprised

now, ladies and gentlemen,  
as you can plainly see  
I am quite adroit and learned  
and this lady quite occupied  
I am, let me make it clear,  
extremely preoccupied  
keeping this lady warm and happy  
as she in her turn does ditto for me  
Now whether we please ourselves missionary  
or front to front  
is really no business of yours -  
but it's purely and bodily our business and pleasure  
So, most lovely ladies and resourceful gentlemen  
you must find yourself a different room each  
and leave me to fiddle or thrust as I wish  
O shame on you ladies -  
do you not lure your men  
far enough into your depths?  
O shame on you men -  
do you not come hard enough on your women?  
go you now and find each a body  
and go spiritual, erotic or bawdy  
have no guilt, enjoy abandon  
love as you wish -  
but really, you busybodies,  
it's time for you to relinquish pretense of surprise  
and depart from here, and  
leave one body busy with the other

Raj Arumugam

# Lunch With The Family

eat, drink...enjoy it all...  
it has been a hot day  
and we have worked much  
and we sang songs to see us  
through the demands of it all

oh fields,  
we have come to work  
and to give you our time and effort;  
give us your love in return  
and in coming months give  
us good produce and fruit  
and now it is time for each one of us  
all as in one family to sit in the open  
and eat and drink how you like  
with slurps and loud noises  
and big reverberant burps;  
there's fish before you -  
with your chopsticks  
dig, tear and eat;  
a fan for you respectable Old One  
fan yourself while you eat  
and the young too, let us not forget  
and the baby  
O let us all drink noisily if need be  
eat heartily for we are the deserving  
and let us not forget too the creatures  
that are also part of the family

eat and drink  
slurp and gobble and belch  
empty each bowl whole  
dig into every bit of fish  
eat and drink  
for we are the deserving  
after all our work

---

poem based on painting "Lunch" by Kim Hong-do better known as Denwon  
(1745-1806) , Korea

Raj Arumugam

# Lying Within

have you seen  
the subtle lies  
you tell yourself?

Raj Arumugam

# M Faces A Crisis

1

M has an existential crisis  
a religious point  
of inward movement  
for it's been wondering  
who it is:  
&quot;Who M I? &quot;;

(and I protests often,  
&quot;Don't drag me in! &quot;)

2

Neighbors R and S  
have offered answers:  
R with its religion;  
and S with its spirituality

P has offered Psychology  
and A has offered  
Anthropology  
and Archaeology

3

But M is not satisfied  
for its true nature is in its  
perpetual question:  
&quot;Who M I? &quot;;

(And poor I protests  
often:  
&quot;For goodness sake - don't drag me in! &quot;)

Raj Arumugam

# M For Man, Money And Moon

M for moon

M for Man

M for Money;

and at last Man has seen the moonlight

and now they know

Man can make Money out of the Moon

Raj Arumugam

# Ma, Send Grandma Back Where She Came From

Mummy

I think you should send Grandma back  
to where she came from;  
she comes into my room  
stares about, and she says:  
'Decadent! Decadent! Decadent! '  
And then she mutters:  
'Never had such things in my day! '  
Ma - it's a good idea to send her back  
to where she came from, I think  
And when no one is home  
but me and Grandma  
she puts plastic flowers in her hair  
and dances all round with her song:  
'This eve is my wedding;  
this eve am I the bride  
And I've me the handsomest man  
in all of the land'  
She hid my shoes the other day  
and she grinned when I found them under her bed;  
when you are not looking  
she swipes her hands over a pretend iPad  
and sticks her tongue out, and pops her eyes out  
and whispers to me:  
'That's how you look, dearie dear;  
like the village idiot in days of old'  
She says I dress too short;  
I should wear skirts right down to the toes  
Grandma stood over my bed  
yesterday morning  
and she said I was sleeping late, too long;  
and she copycats me eating, and she says:  
'You are at a sumptuous table  
but you eat like the poor'  
And she pretends to kiss me goodnight  
and she whispers her secret curse:  
'Girls who don't wash their toes,  
they don't go to Heaven  
You might wake up in the morning

and find yourself walking  
on the hot coals of Hell'  
Mummy, please  
I think you should send Grandma back  
to where she came from

Raj Arumugam

# Mad Song Of True Love (Adults Only)

CHORUS:

love, love, love  
true love  
made in paradise...  
ah, true love we've found it  
love, love, love  
pure love  
Oooh...ooooohhhh.....ahhh...  
....love....love...love....

HE:

fair damsel,  
I love you, I do;  
the moment I saw you  
it's true love, I knew;  
so will you be mine? -  
and I will look after you  
like my closed hands  
guard the lines  
on my palms

SHE:

oh, all my life  
these 21 years  
I've waited for true love:  
are you that sunshine knight  
though a little scrawny  
and hugely pimples?  
are you indeed the love  
destined for me?

HE:

ah, our love was made in the stars  
fair lady  
and my soul was fashioned  
in the moon for you;  
and you yourself  
were shaped so lovely  
in the lands of the rainbow  
in all its glory

HE and SHE:

ah, true love we've found it  
love, love, love – pure love  
love of the heavenly soul  
love that is like the spark of the Divine;  
ah, love, love that outlasts the stars  
that outlasts  
the monoliths and the blackholes...  
oooooh....oooooh.....ooooohhhh...  
aaaah...ahhh...aaaah....oooooh....  
love, love, love  
true love  
made in paradise...  
ah, true love we've found it  
love, love, love  
pure love

SHE:

excuse that pause,  
Shiny Pimples Knight –  
but I had to think a moment  
though no doubt after the event:  
dear Upright Knight,  
does sex have anything to do

with this love you propose?

HE:

oh, well,  
once in a while I do  
have an erection  
and will seek some release

CHORUS:

love, love, love  
true love  
made in paradise...  
ah, true love we've found it  
love, love, love  
pure love  
all in one bundle  
oooh...ooooohhhh.....ahhh...  
....love....love...love....

HE:

but excuse that pause,  
dear my Fair Lady with Teeth  
that need to be fixed  
and will probably cause a bomb –  
but I had to think a moment  
though no doubt after your question:  
dear my Fair Lady  
must I accept responsibility  
for any accidental creation  
that may take place  
when I release my sperm load in you?

SHE:

oh, well,  
once in a while I will  
have a pregnancy  
and will expect life support  
for me and the baby

HE:

ah, well then I must go  
dear my Fair Lady;  
kids and a wife are not exactly my cup of tea  
for I could find better sex probably  
for some money  
than I could ever find in you  
which I now realize is not for free;  
and anyway you probably nag and snore  
so let me go rather  
and abandon this mad medley

SHE:

ah, well then  
it is good this way –  
I could probably get an IVF anyway  
and get better social support from  
a government agency than from the likes of you-  
and you probably fart anyway!  
farewell, dear Shiny Scrawny knight -  
you'd probably only have lasted a night

CHORUS:

love, love, love

true love  
made in paradise...  
ah, true love we've found it  
love, love, love  
pure love  
all in a complete package  
Oooh...ooooohhhh.....ahhh...  
....love....love...love....

(This poem was published with the warning: FOR ADULTS ONLY.  
Here is another warning: We'll know if you're under-aged by the comments you  
make.)

Raj Arumugam

# Madness

i'm mad with a new idea

Raj Arumugam

# Making Of The Outsider

first you devalue  
and the person you undervalue  
and the man, the woman  
must struggle like a crab  
at the bottom of the rattan basket  
as in an Asian wet market  
you do it the first year  
and you do it the fifteenth  
and you say, as in an old game of Monopoly:  
Go back to start...  
Efficient discourse and forms and procedures  
and cold smiles and paper  
will be the clay from which  
is fashioned the Being of the Outsider  
and then you might strike at the knee  
as Michelangelo might have done, and say:  
Now, speak!  
And the Being of the Outsider does better than Speak,  
for the Stranger Sings the Song of Years:  
I am the Outsider  
The Stranger in one's Own  
you don't understand, I don't fit  
and we don't see meaning in either  
I am your Outsider  
you can busy about  
first you devalue  
and the person you undervalue  
you do it the first year  
and you do it the fifteenth  
for I am your Outsider,  
the happy, happy Stranger

Raj Arumugam

# Man And Woman, Speaking And Listening

First and Second years  
of marriage:  
Man speaks; woman listens

Third and Fourth years  
of marriage:  
Woman speaks; Man listens

All Years of marriage after:  
Man and Woman shout  
and all the Neighbours listen

- Chapter S<sup>^</sup>.j./<sup>^</sup>g87y  
Ancient Wisdom Text of Man and Woman

Raj Arumugam

# Man And Woman: A History

1

a man is frothing history  
a woman is the coalescing undying past;  
and together rolling as the beast with two backs  
from murky undefined time  
they roll further into the cloudy distance

each brings in memories  
and traditions and nuances  
and each comes with a constitution;  
each comes conditioned  
each manufactured in the same factory, and both struggle  
and there is just whingeing all their lives

a man is labeled  
a woman is branded  
and they are manufactured in sperm factories  
and completed in wombs  
and both men and women are pushed into cold space

each draw on opinions  
and hand-me-down scripts;  
the man driven by dreams  
the woman too;  
and woman shaped by customs and passion  
and the man too;  
both damned in mortality  
and no better in eternity

the woman needs to replicate  
the man to mate and duplicate;  
the woman needs to embrace with iron grip

and the man needs to bite, hurt and penetrate

2

there is the man and woman  
and a geisha, or a lover  
comes in between

3

a woman is history  
a man is the past;  
and together so rolling in from time  
they roll further into the distance

a man is desire  
and a woman is instinct  
and together coming in from thoughts  
they roll down like Jack and Jill  
and there is just no end to their decline

each struggles with ambitions  
and needs and expectations  
the man desires, the woman wants  
and both hide each other's lies in the darkness of life

a woman's mind is passed on  
and the man's ideas inherited;  
and both wake to bitterness  
and each dies in loneliness

and nature sees this struggle  
and Nature laughs; Nature says:  
I send you with blood and organs

and I send you with tools to procreate –  
now, mate and multiply;  
and nurture the new and becoming old, just die -  
for I have no more use for you...

man and woman  
hear nature's laugh  
and invent lies;  
they engender poets  
who deliver sweet untruths:  
love; immortality;  
and immortal love...

and perhaps the time will come  
when this history will have to be re-written  
for with glass and genetic architecture  
man may not need woman but to touch  
woman may not need man but to hug  
and infertile men will copulate with infertile women  
and babies will blossom in ordered vases  
and some androgynous blogger then will write:  
man and woman: a useless pair

meanwhile  
men and women are a driven pair;  
and to console themselves  
to keep their worth, dignity and sanity  
they think they are independent  
and endowed with autonomy

Raj Arumugam

# Man In The Image Of The Job

What would the Ancients say of us  
if they could see us now?  
Circumstances make a man....  
in these times,  
one is what one does; the self  
is moulded in the routine of a paying job;  
the person is the construct of the job...  
For take the man or woman out of a job  
and give him or her no occupation, no means of survival,  
keep one out of the environment and culture  
one got used to and almost thought second nature  
and you will observe how like an addict  
deprived of drugs the unemployed become...  
irritable, meaning-deprived, nervous and  
nothing in the discourse.  
For put one out of a means of survival  
in these times when we pick and pluck everything we need  
not in farms but in supermarkets  
put one out of a way of earning one's bread  
and see how quickly down the hill one goes  
like a rolling stone that gathers no moss... See  
how even their most passionate interests fizzle out  
when the comfort base and the firmament are  
taken and concealed in some suburban garage  
a pity that a man must become dependent  
in order to eat and provide for the family  
and a sense of one's worth, one's value  
a sense of meaning  
must all depend on a job and a pay  
O how this modern workaday material and payday  
world has eaten into us  
and we are but what our means are

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Manet's Spanish Singer

Hey, and hey! - a tune and a song  
a dance and a cheerful mind  
that's all you need for the good life;  
so kick an onion anytime one's around

Hey, and hey! - so up and down  
with your days and lives  
take it as it comes, dear serious lads  
And most eminent ones  
you don't need all that solace  
in your mighty words  
your grave ideas and eloquence  
and your buildings and powers

And hey, and hey! - so erratic and wild  
drop all you got in your heads  
and all your obsessions  
and just lift a leg and let it down  
just click your fingers  
and whistle a tune  
Empty your mind of all gravity  
and you'll come direct to living

Hey, and hey! - a tune and a song  
a dance and a cheerful mind  
that's all you need for the good life;  
so kick an onion anytime one's around

Raj Arumugam

# Many Gifts

There are many gifts  
bestowed on a man  
many blessings  
he is endowed with  
let him use these  
rather than be weighed down  
in the obsession with one misfortune  
For always it is a man's nature  
that will see him through the longest nights

Let him look to the beauty  
all around him  
(though she may seem shrivelled  
in the face of troubles)  
and this will teach  
him to ride his roughest trials

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Many Stories To Tell

I will tell you a story, Most Reverend One  
how 300 fairies transported me  
to the Mountains of Peach Lands  
and how I denied them each my heart -  
but ha, ha - I can see, you laugh;  
you do not believe me...

but I have more reasonable stories -  
for example  
of how the Earth was created;  
it's true, O Most Reverend One  
there's such a Being up there  
eating chicken dumplings  
and poking His nose  
in trivial and very grave human affairs...  
O he, he, he...you see my tales are but fancy  
and do not believe such a Creature can exist...

but am I done, most Reverend One?  
Is my list of tales and myth and stories  
so limited? - No, I have a list of stories  
as long as the tale of the Divine Monkey  
that first whipped all stars into position  
and with its Monkey hands squeezed each planet into solid mass  
O there you are, you laugh and make me happy  
you encourage me, O Most Reverend One

I will study your mood  
and I can tell you a tale  
of how your ancestors  
shaped this land  
and how they brought that chair you sit  
from the Diamond Palaces of faraway India -  
oh, ho, ho, ho - you didn't know that?  
and generations of your clan have sat there on that chair  
and so do you - and you never knew its story...  
I have long lists of stories and tales  
all true and collected from lands far and wide -  
ah you laugh, Most Reverend One -

and you encourage me...

My story itself will interest you  
for I was born of noble family with great wealth  
and pomp and estate and attendants  
but when my mum died,  
she said to me:  
Go you forth  
and collect the world's stories  
and so I gave away all my possessions  
and I travelled all abroad  
and have come to my current itinerant state...  
See, my life itself is a story -  
worthy of our operas and street theaters  
with much comedy and adventures...  
ha, ha, ha - O ho, ho, ho  
you laugh and you are pleased  
which pleases me...

Call then your clan together, O Most Reverend One;  
set up a platform  
and I will shine like a sun on this platform  
and I will tell these tales  
in the gentle light of the moon and torches  
and I shall spin tales of the moment  
for each man and woman  
and each child of your most revered clan, O Most Reverend One...  
you laugh, and you nod  
you are pleased - oh, oh, ha....ha...ha...  
that's good Most Reverend One...

But now, Most Reverend One,  
I never start without terms...  
shall we first talk about my accommodation, food, facilities  
and payment?

---

poem based on painting titled 'Jeon (telling a story) ' by Jang Seungeop

(1843~1897) (Korea)

Raj Arumugam

# Marcel Marceau's Debts

when alive Marcel Marceau  
gave the world  
every dropp of his life  
in his fluid art  
and the world was in his debt;  
when he dies, the world puts Marceau in debt  
and the tax office comes in, the creditors come in  
the banks come in and hold an auction  
and sell off cheap each mask and hat and item  
that should have gone into a Marceau Mime Home:  
but the world is content  
only when its debts are paid

the rest is silence

Raj Arumugam

# Me, As Emperor Of The Universe

if I were  
Emperor of the Universe  
Emperor of the universe;  
if I were  
if I were:  
what would I do?  
what would I do?  
If I were  
Emperor of the Universe  
Supreme Emperor of the Universe -  
what would I do?  
What would I do?

I'd make everyday  
everyday... everyday...  
I'd make everyday a holiday  
a holiday...a holiday...holiday...  
I'd make everyday a holiday  
if I were  
if I were  
Emperor of the Universe  
Emperor of the universe;  
I'd make everyday  
every everyday  
a holiday, holiday... holiday...  
all twenty-four hours of each day  
each of all twenty four  
night and day, night and day  
everyday a holiday  
everyday a holiday, holiday... holiday...  
if I were  
if were  
Holi, Holi, Holi  
Holiday Emperor of the Universe  
on eternal holiday, holiday, holiday...

Raj Arumugam

# Meet My Fingers And Toes

preamble

ten fingers  
and toes I have  
and mostly  
for the sake of body peace  
I keep them limbs apart

introductions

may I introduce my toes, please:  
say 'hi' to hallux  
and blow a kiss to index toe  
and middle toe  
and the fourth toe and  
say 'hi baby' to Pinky Toe

and because I treat  
toe and finger all the same,  
may I introduce my fingers;  
you may shake them all together at once:  
thumb, forefinger, middle finger,  
ring finger and pinky

the conflict

'hey you smelly  
fatty midgets! '  
holler my fingers  
down across to the ground  
(and they all even  
combine  
to prop up the middle finger in  
oh, an unmentionable rude, rude sign)

and so my fingers continue:  
'you ten underlings!  
you ought to be so ashamed of yourselves  
you should cover your heads  
in rough cloth!  
you yellow scoundrels! '

and my toes  
are of course  
offended,  
and though meek and mild -  
provoked, they kick at the chairs  
and find too late it's quite futile  
for the pain that brings  
antagonizes the brain;  
and unable to reach the fists  
the only thing they can do  
is to senselessly kick the butt  
and so they have many enemies  
that prefer to keep them down under

and that's why I keep my proud fingers  
and my low-esteem toes  
limbs apart;  
and so much do my toes suffer  
from insecurity

and rejection and shyness  
I keep them covered  
for as long as I can in the day  
and keep them concealed  
below blanket and quilt  
even at nights

resolution

as for my fingers,  
there is truly no punishment I can mete out  
to these rude and aggressive fellows  
for when I really look at them  
they are absolutely slim and debonair  
and tall and elegant  
and quite skilled  
and so they probably have every right to be proud  
and to occasionally lift the middle finger

now, really, can you blame them?

Raj Arumugam

# Memories That Linger

These are not nightmares, painful thoughts  
not complexes or deprivations or phobias  
but just memories that linger  
in the recesses and folds  
and they weasel in and out  
and hop across the red plains of the mind  
filling a void, recreating what happened  
in another world till something parallel and more passionate  
happens here in this.

They have their own existences and will breathe and live  
and play out their lives in their own time  
and at their own leisure.

They do things in here;  
they wage war  
and they entertain themselves  
and make me  
dream of a few friends still in other quarters  
how we sat down together in the warmth of the sun  
for coffee or tea, and they sit there mouthing  
words and making me in that life utter words I never did;  
they conjure a particular road junction or a  
building that loomed over it pondering over  
the meaning of tarmac and concrete.  
There is a tree that stands in conversation  
with a fruit and children sit in the shade.

The memories linger and play out their own lives.

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Message From The Sun

I lie asleep  
and you send in  
beams of messengers  
each with the same warm words:  
'Hey, lazybones –  
wokie! wokie! '

Raj Arumugam

# Mi No Spit Englis

me no spit English, me no no Englis, OK?  
me barbarrrian, why u one me speak Englis?  
u teach me inglish then u want me slave, ya?  
u teach me englis and mik mee go from nuture,  
from da trees and de lakes and hum of me ancesdors, ya?  
and you teach me englis  
glive me your stinkin additudes  
mik me pollute wold and kill wold like you, yes?  
I del u, me spit no englis but sdill u offer skolarsips  
and mik me shange name, and then tick on Englis name, ya?  
then peepel call me englis name like tom, prick, hairy  
or my wife become susan or margate  
and me become kristian, yeah?  
why I say no englis still u want to tich me englisi  
and give me book and mi say, mi say,  
luk at my nikid bady laik da die I was born  
liiiv me one  
don't tiich me englis  
or wan day I will kurs and swera in inglis  
like who, who, who, like that monster I hard play story  
is he nime Caliban, yeah?  
me barbarrbaian, dun't mike i civilized like u;  
me no no inglis;  
me happi with me lunguge and me hum  
and my trees and likes and annncesdral place...  
I no wants to spit englisi and khanges my name and culturte...  
....un I no wan to go fom hum...  
leave me lone wan, I say...me no spit englis...  
or I put u in pot...if you no go...

Raj Arumugam

# Michelangelo's David, And David's Genitals

can you see the whole  
of Michelangelo's David  
see the creation of it  
see its beauty?

1

how awkward  
David's genitals,  
the authorities decided,  
and so covered it with  
a garland of  
copper leaves  
twenty-eight counted

2

and still today people  
cannot stand David's genitals  
for they look at it open-mouthed  
and look away swiftly  
shy and embarrassed  
with guilt in their hearts  
and dust in their eyes

3

but the holy of course  
those holy ones  
and prim and proper and so moral  
all the holy  
so blessed and destined to go to Heaven

and enter they will  
without genitals surely

and the holy, holy  
they speak of profanity  
and of the unholy nude  
and curse and swear and vow damnation  
and if possible  
they'd happily put explosives  
particularly in David's genitals  
like they dynamited the Buddhas of Bamyán  
for it's all the same holy intolerance

can you see the whole  
of Michelangelo's David  
see the creation of it  
see its beauty?

Raj Arumugam

# Migrant Children

Children will weather it out  
in the sun or rain;  
they will still smile  
in the harsh sun or heavy rain.  
Kids will find some play  
to delight them;  
kids will find some play  
to make you smile;  
they will laugh and love  
helped by their free imaginings.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Millipede Me

millipede me  
with my many, many legs  
and my head rounded above and flattened below  
the universe conspired to make me;  
every move, every big bang  
every wave, every element  
every beginning, every end  
and all forces of nature came together  
just to make me  
and bestow on me  
some engineering ability;  
the forces exist to make me  
and they have no meaning but for me  
millipede me  
and my kind  
with the South African fun name shongololos  
so we can burrow  
and eat decaying leaves  
and so we can curl up  
and feel oh so safe  
maybe comfy for me;  
see  
all of time and creation  
curls up cool in me;  
millipede me  
nature worked so hard to make me  
so I can eat your seedlings  
and show off my sexy legs:  
come see, sometime

Raj Arumugam

# Minding Love

but when we are not there  
in the space circumstances bring us together  
and we are away,  
separate as we came to this earth,  
you are but spirit to me, it appears;  
though the body and the image  
and your mannerisms are there in my mind  
and if I clutch the pillow and repeat your name  
and you, imagined phantom lying in my bed,  
croon back and tease;  
even then you are but a ghost of love  
a possibility, an imagination  
a flicker of a light in a mind of heat and red fire;  
and O, did you know? -  
night and space and distance mock me so;  
and though the day brings us together  
and we may share time and space  
and there you are physical in all your various avatars  
in all the colors and fabrics that our world gives us  
still, still, you are,  
O dearest love,  
you are but a phantom that plays tricks in my mind;  
you are innocent and pure; my mind drags me into the pits

Raj Arumugam

# Minds Talk To One Another

minds talk to one another,  
whisper, holler across canyons, intuit and speak;  
minds talk to one from past, present and from times in the future;  
minds all talk and perceive  
from different dimensions and borders disappear  
and from the past a work of art comes or just a note  
a painting that speaks to the one in the present and the future too  
because the minds are one  
there is talk, there is exchange and flow;  
(but the body too, let it speak,  
let bodies meet too, for that too is life; for that too is  
part and parcel of what we got and otherwise is incomplete;  
let all things coalesce):  
and through parchments and scrolls and books or cyberspace;  
just perhaps a polished tool  
or just by a look  
across tables  
or a vibration from outer space  
be it hate or anger or anxiety or love;  
or a cowry shell, a stone in the odd place -  
and the future too:  
visions and scenarios  
like Isaac Asimov may speak and so may Arthur C. Clarke;  
and the future itself whispers too  
see this is the vision, and one's own intimations too  
this the possibility and one sees then  
and in seeing, time disappears and dimensions disappear, that all minds are as  
one  
stretching in one complete art on canvas without  
distinction and marks and without sections  
but all perfect as one fluid flow;  
minds talk to one another without dimensions, time and borders...  
open minds invite possibilities; closed minds shut out others...  
minds talk to one another,  
whisper, holler across canyons, intuit and speak

Raj Arumugam

# Misdirected Mating

1

Marion Island, 2011 and 2008

The fur seal courts the king penguin  
runs after it,  
as if the penguin were a desirable female seal  
and then fails  
(it's just not possible physically;  
and hey, the girl says NO!)  
and then tears the bird to bits  
and eats it

(if you can't screw it  
you eat it)

maybe that fur seal is a loser  
chased out by other dominant seals  
all female seals taken for the season  
and so tries in desperation  
to gain entry into a penguin

2

like other losers  
many life-forms do it, it seems  
insects, spiders, worms, frogs  
birds and fish - they just do it...  
chaotic with testosterone,  
exiled from female receptacles  
where you pour in sperm

Raj Arumugam

# Modern Times

I bought a sundial  
for my garden

It would be perfect, I mused  
in the sudden spot  
Quaint, archaic - and provide an old-world charm;  
a tribute to times past

and so it is there in the corner  
but the bloody sundial is useless  
for it doesn't tell me  
if it's AM, or PM  
like my digital watch does, like my iPhone does -  
can you beat that?  
No, trust me - they didn't make things before  
better than what come out of our sweatshops now

Raj Arumugam

# Mom, Daughter, Creature And Dad - In That Order

busy, busy are the shops  
and everybody pours in  
into the mall

Mom and daughter are shopping  
and the debonair mom declares:  
This year, this fur coat  
is what I'm getting for Xmas!  
We'll come back tomorrow  
with my credit card

But mom, says the conscientious daughter  
this is not synthetic  
Some poor creature must scream in pain  
so you can wear this coat

Don't worry, sweetie, says mom  
Your dad won't get the statement  
till 30 days from now

Raj Arumugam

# Moment In Eternity

I too have a moment  
in eternity  
and it is simply that moment,  
each moment without measure,  
without flow or break

Raj Arumugam

# Mong Kong, King Kong And The Founding Of Hong Kong

all monkeys  
of all nations!  
stop your chatter  
and listen to me mutter  
my ancient tail

1  
in earlier days  
Mong Kong  
went to Hong Kong  
to look for kang kong  
and there she met  
King Kong

the first second  
they saw each other  
their hearts went  
Bong! Bong!  
the second second:  
Dong! Dong!  
in short they fell in love  
with each other's Zong Zongs  
and night and day it was all Sing Song  
and the earth trembled  
with their rumble of love  
and construction workers thought  
the piling was done  
and straight away  
erect skyscrapers appeared  
and so incidentally was born  
modern-day Hong Kong

2  
within three months  
Mong Kong felt  
in her womb  
a Trong Trong

and an incessant noise:  
Pong! Pong!  
Pong! Pong!  
and on the tenth month  
by the lunar calendar  
out came Pink Kong  
and so consequently was born  
the game of ping pong

and so ends my story of beginnings  
and now that  
my tail is curled  
you can all go home  
you ding dongs!

Raj Arumugam

# Monkey Song

come, sweet love  
I'll live with you  
in the trees;  
we'll make love when we're on heat  
and sometimes we may share  
communal sexual bliss;  
and let's hope  
for we can only hope  
those humans  
will leave us in peace  
and not pick our monkey brains

but let us go, you and me  
up to the trees  
and let's found a chattering tribe  
and let's hope  
for we can only hope  
those humans  
will leave us in peace  
and not pick our monkey brains

we'll pick nuts and such  
and I might gather  
a handful of spiders for you;  
sometimes I might offer you  
a fruit if you'll allow me a peek  
at your hind quarters;  
and I might walk awhile casually  
and attack a rival male  
just as he ejaculates;  
still, with all the fun,  
let's hope  
for we can only hope  
those humans  
will leave us in peace  
and not pick our monkey brains

Raj Arumugam

# Moon Poems

1

sometimes I wish  
dear moon  
sometimes I wish  
the earth had five moons  
and all so positioned  
we can see  
one every night and then in twos and in threes  
never four (just so for mystery's sake)  
and then all five  
all in perfect alignment once a year  
just three nights so  
and then we'll all here on earth  
go ga ga ga  
or moo moo moo looooney  
those nights and go crazy  
and climb up trees and enact our ape ancestry ...

and don't you be jealous  
I asked for four others;  
I just want more of you –  
just never seem to get enough of you

2

I see you moon  
this cool autumn morning  
you sing over the river and trees  
and you are supported  
by your belly-dance troupe of stars

3

ah poor moon  
you're just hanging around  
and through no fault of your own  
you attract all these weirdos

these lunatics  
and the vampires and the blood-sucking bats  
and the sleep-walkers and murderers  
and the flesh-eaters  
(the moon made me do it!)  
and the lunatics  
and the werewolves  
and even stock-pickers  
and wild women who want to kill Orpheus

O poor moon  
you're just about your own radiant business  
and all these freaks put it at your doorstep

4  
darling moon  
dear moon  
do not be offended  
we have stripped you  
down to rock and a plain face  
and we show pictures of you  
in black, gray and white;  
and though a writer of verse,  
in this verse,  
I strip you of your romance and aura;  
be not angry  
for after all,  
you will understand,  
we are children who come after  
Galileo  
and Neil Armstrong

5  
You know  
lovely moon  
Li Po  
was drunk  
and he paddled out to you  
seeing your reflection

and he jumped in to the lake  
embracing you in the waters  
and so he drowned;  
but,  
you know  
loving moon,  
I will not come to you thus;  
instead you know my time  
and you will drown  
in the lake shadows of my quiet

6

I will not sing you a song of praise  
O gentle moon  
there are too many modern people around  
too many enlightened minds tonight  
they reckon they don't need your light;  
there are too many elect  
and too many going to Heaven  
and if I sang in praise of you  
they will throw their Blessed Books at me  
and they will say  
'You moon-worshiper, you go to hell! '  
(they fancy words like idolator)

O so most divine moon  
O godly moon  
O most sacred moon  
I shall not sing in praise of you;  
there are too many bloodthirsty wolves around

7

cold moon  
I am sad;  
is it you,  
distant moon,  
who makes me so  
tonight?

8

you are there moon;  
I thought you were not  
and I went to sleep  
and I sighed: 'She will not come, not tonight;  
she has some other lover';  
and I went to sleep  
and then much later now I wake up  
and you've come, out there  
and your light full within my room  
and your fingers on every cell of my being

9

you witness my dying  
as you see my life, my hopes and desires  
and all my embarrassments  
and my achievements too,  
dear moon;  
O quiet presence,  
O radiant presence all one's life;  
and what do you look at these days  
in my life  
darling moon  
what do you see?  
you who have seen the child grow old  
and you hang out beaming by the window  
patiently  
to see one more death  
to add to the countless you witness  
since the day you came

10

M for moon  
M for Man  
M for Money;  
and at last Man has seen the moonlight  
and now they know

## Man can make Money out of the Moon

11

Moon, I hear you are moving away  
Why moon, are you moving away?  
Don't you like your neighbor  
earth so blue and green  
and earthlings so adorable?  
Did you not come so near  
to get to know your neighbor well?  
why then are you moving, moon?  
maybe you've come to know us well  
I hear you're moving slowly,  
so slowly your neighbor doesn't notice;  
how considerate of you  
Anyway, I'll be gone before you

Raj Arumugam

# Moon Rising Over The Sea

there is silence;  
not a thought or motion  
all activity whispered and soothed into oblivion  
sinking in the moment;  
not the observed or the observer  
or the companions  
or outside and inside;  
all diversity and division none  
but just the moment,  
this instant when the moon rises over the sea  
and all things and names and being  
and all manifest and unmanifest  
unawares rolled in one

Raj Arumugam

# Moon, I Hear You Are Moving Away

Moon, I hear you are moving away  
Why moon, are you moving away?  
Don't you like your neighbors  
earth so blue and green  
and earthlings so adorable?  
Did you not come so near  
to get to know your neighbors?  
why then are you moving, moon?  
I hear you're moving slowly,  
so slowly your neighbors don't notice  
how considerate of you

Raj Arumugam

# Moon, Moon, Crazy Moon

moon, moon, crazy moon  
natural moon  
torn apart and snoozing moon;  
lovely moon, romantic moon  
poor poor moon  
the romance  
plucked out of its drab surface;  
moon moon going wild  
moon moon running away  
from the earth -  
O moon, why do you run away from the earth?  
does earth touch you in the wrong places  
and you've got no Body  
to which one could lodge  
a complaint about sexual harassment? ?  
ah, moon moon, temperamental moon  
dark moon  
glowing moon;  
sexy moon  
and old-woman hag of a moon;  
moon moon with the best views of the earth  
moon moon moon  
puts me to sleep and wakes me up  
in the middle of nights;  
and one day we'll sleep in the moon  
and produce babies there  
and we'll have the first moon-ish boys and girls  
and moon-ly families;  
but meanwhile  
moon moon driving fanatics  
and inspiring love and romance and myths  
moon moon eerie moon  
moon moon that presides over love and horrors  
and evil and good  
and naked witches dancing in moonlit groves;  
poor moon moon the earth moon  
not as interesting and dramatic as other moons;  
don't get too friendly and dropp in -  
oh, never dropp in, no one invited you

silly moonn, no no, you're not invited home to earth  
moon moon cheese moon eaten by mice;  
but still our dear moon darling moon  
moon moon  
our very own earth's moon  
as we moo moo like cows  
moo moo moo moo  
at our own moon moon moon

Raj Arumugam

# Moonlight-Blessed

when I turned round the corner  
walking alone, walking light  
the moonlight spread over the open patch  
and the coiled snake  
twitched a little  
straightened quickly  
looked at me,  
some proportion of surprise  
but mostly in lethargy

'be at peace, snake,  
be at peace;  
I wish you no harm  
I shall go my way in peace  
and so do you too'

and I walked on silently  
moonlight-blessed;  
and the gentle snake glided away  
moonlight-blessed

Raj Arumugam

## More Advice From Bodhisattvas

There's more advice again from kindly souls  
who are out to ensure we go about properly in seeking a job:  
You've got to be pushy in this country;  
otherwise they'll think you're slack.  
You got to go to their doors, go and see  
people and the authorities personally;  
correspondence is not enough.  
And so on goes this homily on being pushy,  
this invitation to aggression and being assertive  
a Saturday evening lecture, the 107th  
Sunday morning sermon  
(in keeping with the dictum:  
The quiet shall be picked on; the gentle shall be pushed)  
the privileged employed mount on the unemployed  
the city-damned insolence-drenched pour on innocents.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# More Of The Unemployed

At the Valley  
in China Town  
stands a man alone  
with half a smile in his lips  
and with a bunch of pens  
in each hand.  
He has a laminated placard  
over his chest  
held by a string round his neck.  
Please help me  
survive.  
I am unemployed  
but I'm not giving up.  
Pens for \$2.Ä  
The passers-by look away  
or ignore the clenched fist of pens  
and I, no less guilty,  
skirt round the pillar to avoid the man  
holding his own in Fortitude Valley.  
I'm sorry,  
I whisper to myself;  
when I find a job I'll be kind.  
I don't look back  
as I flee,  
leaving him to stand alone  
like an aside in a play  
and just as important.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Mountains In Clouds

the clouds hang over the mountains  
the mist over the trees  
and our huts are hidden in the moving fog  
that stretches over our seclusion  
most days;  
on a good day when the sun  
regains its strength  
we see the mountains  
and there is clarity in our hearts...

and so are our days spread  
like the trees and mountain ranges  
over this enduring earth

Raj Arumugam

# Moved By The Beauty Of The World

like all of us  
like many before  
like you, like the next person  
i too am moved  
by the wonders and beauty of the world  
and by the quiet and simplicity  
and the by the world's grace

i was moved by sounds  
and gardens  
and surrounds  
and i asked myself  
how and why

i was moved by speech  
and words and play  
and i asked myself  
how and why

i was moved by books  
by poets and thinkers  
and volumes of world heritage  
and i asked myself  
how and why

i was moved by life  
by moments here  
and faces and animals  
and all creatures and clouds  
and by the trees and the sun;  
and i asked myself  
how and why

i was moved by mountains  
and lakes and oceans;  
i was moved by a blade of grass  
as much as by the depths of forests  
and i asked myself  
how and why

i did not want theories  
to explain this  
and i did not want authority  
to catechize me comforting beliefs  
but to see it for what it is:  
how and why

and the insight  
rolled forth like waves:  
notice, it happens,  
when there is no  
more of you,  
none of those  
contents of the mind

and so now  
though i still am  
moved by the world  
and its beauty  
and simplicity  
one can see more though  
to that  
quiet  
that comes  
in the absence of identity

like all of us  
like many before

like you, like the next person  
i too am moved  
by the wonders and beauty of the world  
and by the quiet and simplicity  
and by the world's grace

Raj Arumugam

# Mr And Mrs Literal

"How are you, husband mine? "  
says Mrs Literal to Mr Literal  
as he comes back home  
"How was your day? "

"Oh, it was raining cats and dogs, "  
says Mr Literal  
"All day long - all these cats and dogs  
just jumping out of the sky  
I've got scratches and bites all over me!  
But how was your day? "

"Oh, what a confusing day, "  
says Mrs Literal  
"I heard mad Mrs Metaphor next door  
crying aloud and when I went to ask  
she said her husband  
had just kicked the bucket  
I walked away as her husband  
seemed to be asleep  
and there was certainly  
no bucket to be seen anywhere about"

Raj Arumugam

# Mr Anonymous, A Life

Oedipus man  
you're not done  
worlds move in and out  
and meaning is undone;  
and the Sphinx says  
it's your mommy and daddy  
and this time  
you can never unravel the riddle

the woman dad sleeps with  
is not his wife  
and his wife is not your mom  
and your mom never carried you  
and the womb you lived in is anonymous;  
what else is new?

times are always the same  
there's nothing strange or novel  
except terms and focus and brands

and the child who calls you daddy  
is not yours  
and the man who calls you 'Son'  
is loose in his morals

O see how man  
how things unwind  
and you have seen  
unknown things  
tease and strip;  
and you have wept in  
the face of the storm  
in a world of King Lear's  
turned upside down, inside out  
and you have cried like the Fool:  
Ah, Hold! Hold!

O man don't die on us  
for we won't die on you;  
you've lived on hallucinations  
and walking alone and wandering the face of the earth  
you've tried all drugs, and ecstasy and Soma  
and now you've adopted God and religion -  
ah, it's always been one drug or other

Oedipus man  
you're not done  
worlds move in and out  
and meaning is undone;  
and the Sphinx says  
it's your mommy and daddy  
and this time  
you can never unravel the riddle

Raj Arumugam

# Mr Unknown

See this Mr Unknown  
he walks hard  
is comfortable in himself  
but in our eyes only a phantom

See him emerge from his unit  
go down the stairs (the ceilings cleaned of cobwebs)  
and he puts his hand in the mail box.  
See this Mr Unknown  
you look at with your elbows on your window sills  
walking down the pavement toward the station.  
See this strange Mr Unknown  
suddenly appear before you in the atrium  
and a faint smile appears on his lips  
and a fainter one in yours as you recognise each other  
looking into each other's opaque worlds through glass.  
See Mr Unknown get into a train  
and disappear into a world of his own  
and see him late at night  
returning in the dim light  
as you peer over your windows  
because you heard the crack of a twig.  
Mr Unknown  
retires into his dark unit.

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Multiple You-Me

you know it's possible  
in some reality-branch of Super Science  
when you've just got out of bed  
and then you are in the kitchen  
there is still a you  
lying in bed  
as is another before  
you went to bed  
and so there is another  
in the kitchen  
while you are in the car  
a you in every  
second split into countless fractions  
as in picture frames  
of the journey you take

you get the drift -  
but which you gets the drift?  
every you drifting in space

but what of it? you ask  
of this possibility  
of multiple realities?

Well, it's when I knew I was screwed  
that's when it got scary  
cos I knew then  
I was caught infinitely  
with a boring you  
in every nano second:  
cos if you're there, I'm caught too...  
every second caught in indivisible slices  
all round the teeniest-weeniest section of an infinite string  
of a boring you  
and poor me - bored and screwed

Raj Arumugam

# Mum's Dead

the call came;  
it was evening  
it was sudden  
but the expected words  
were intoned by my sister:  
mum's dead

I am reading; I live worlds away and I receive the words and put the book down; and I let the words percolate...the words flow in, as the words in a radiant song might spread themselves slowly into one's mind ...

take things in their stride,  
she said when I was child  
I will be gone and one day you too  
and so did many before me  
and countless will after you:  
so take things in their measure;  
there's no need to exaggerate

And I tell my sister I'd book a flight and be out there the next day, as soon as ...  
but she is not listening; she is crying...

do you see sweet child  
the expanse of time  
and stretch of events  
as far as mind can go?

And so I make myself a cup of tea to keep up with the routine...I'm a creature of habit and so I dip some biscuits in my tea....

and the sunlight  
spread out on the green tree  
and the dark crept up and

embraced everything  
so nothing could be seen

The flight is in the next morning and I go to bed at about the same time as I normally do...The mind does not seem to have any dent, any trace of pain...

do you see sweet child  
the radiance of life  
so the death of a bird  
is no less than  
the death of a human?

It is an expected death after years of suffering and conflict...a motion in opposite directions between cancer and human...

I will be gone and one day you too  
and so did many before me  
and countless after you

...and so mum died ...

so take things in their measure;  
there is no need to exaggerate

I have my dinner, prepared for one in the microwave...all in a packet, heated up and self-served on a plate...and I go to bed...I will sleep, wake up at seven and fly three hours later...How can I sleep in peace? It is possible for all to sleep in peace, strengthened by words mothers give their children, and which their children carry with them all their years...

and in bed I cry  
and the tears are surely for me  
for lost worlds of familiarity  
and symbols of security

...for the words had sustained one for years and other deaths and other loss; for the words had sustained one for long in all pain and all sorrow...but now the pain was deep within....

take things in their stride,  
she said when I was child  
I will be gone and one day you too  
and so did many before me  
and countless will after you:  
so take things in their measure;  
there is no need to exaggerate

Raj Arumugam

# Mummy, Mummy Who Invented School?

mummy, mummy,  
who invented school?

oh, sweetheart,  
what a clever girl you are;  
why don't you tell me first  
who you think invented school?

I think, mummy,  
school must have been invented  
it must be by people  
like old grumpy Uncle Grim  
next door;  
and the grouchy Aunty Scowl  
who lives behind our house

oh no, darling,  
oh no, not at all:  
O darling,  
wise men and women  
of the past  
they invented school

oh, mummy,  
they couldn't  
have been wise  
not if you went to school  
and see what happens in class;  
surely those men and women  
of the past  
couldn't have been wise  
if they created places  
where little kids are tested  
every three days;  
and little John thinks he's stupid

and little Sue says she'd rather  
stay at home and sleep;  
and Tua and Helen are always  
tense and nervous  
and Chandra snores while the teacher talks

oh no -  
oh, no darling,  
oh no,  
it's not like that at all:  
O darling,  
they were wise and all-knowing  
those  
sage men and women  
of the past  
who invented school  
so little children like you and your friends  
can go and learn all you need to know

but why mummy,  
why a school?  
is it because daddy and you  
and grandma and grandpa  
you know nothing and  
you can't teach me  
what I need to know?

oh, no darling,  
oh no not at all;  
O darling,  
you must listen to mummy -  
wise men and women  
of the past  
most certainly  
they invented school

Raj Arumugam

# My Doctor's A Sucker

The doctors are silly  
They're naive, and believe everything you tell them -  
Have you noticed?

I said I was sick  
And had a fever  
And he asked me to stick my tongue out  
(See, he'd already believed me)  
And he put some wood, and then some glass on my tongue  
And he said, 'say: 'AAAAH''  
(We obviously got a doctor here  
Who's confused - hey, are you a doctor  
Or are you a Year 1 English Teacher teaching vowels?)

And then he looked at these strange instruments  
Most sagaciously (just to keep up the pretence;  
Just to impress me, you know)  
And declared most solemnly:  
'You are sick.  
You have a fever.'  
(Hey - hello! That's what I told you!  
Tell me something new!)

But the amazing thing is  
This doctor convinced me I was actually sick  
Such was the power of his words  
(See, you know those miracle workers?  
They get you well with their words  
But doctors - they get you sick with their rhetoric -  
Oh man, doctors really make me sick!)

And I felt sick too...I had come in just to humour my doctor  
But now he'd convinced me I was really sick;  
He takes my lie and then convinces me of my own lie  
- Boy, those doctors, you must admit  
They might make you sick  
But they really got the medicine man's trick!

Still, my doctor's a sucker,

Cos, let's not forget, it's I who told him I was sick -  
He's naive, and believes everything I tell him

Raj Arumugam

# My English Teacher Was Woolly-Headed

(1)

There's one thing I must get off my chest  
that's bothered me now  
even 50 years on  
with the passage of time –  
my English teacher then  
she always told me when I grumbled  
homework was too difficult,  
she'd tell me: "That's a piece of cake"  
And I'd go home discombobulated how  
anyone could eat paper  
or homework  
and she said this not once, but every time:  
"It's a piece of cake"

(2)

And my parents and I looked at it  
every which way and from every point of view  
and concluded in our Perfect Ancient Native language:  
"This English teacher is a loony. She is woolly-headed.  
She is the lamb Mary lost, silly and muddle-headed.  
How can homework be a piece of cake?  
Anyway, we don't eat cake – we eat samosas."

(3)

And yet the English teacher would put her nose  
up in the air  
and remonstrate: "It's a piece of cake! "

Oh yeah, would you like tea with it?

Now, my parents, bless their Ancient Souls,  
have gone on into the next world  
And I'm left wondering about the secret madness  
of that English teacher  
who'd ask me to eat cake when I expressed genuine concern...

Well, my parents have passed on, as I said,

and I've moved on  
as is plain and radiant to see  
to master idioms and vocabulary  
Punctuation, the catenative verb and Usage;  
and, as for that wooly-headed English teacher,  
I'm sure she's moved on into  
a comfortable nuthouse  
where the staff makes her eat her cake,  
and make her think she can have it too -  
cos that's what they do to nuts, and such instances

(4)

And now that I have got that off my chest,  
I can comfortably resume memorizing  
Volume 3 of the Oxford Dictionary  
as I perambulate  
and copy 100 entries from Fowler's "Modern English Usage"  
as I victulate  
which is all part of my nightly ritual  
since she told me to do so some 50 years ago  
(cos I happened to look at her Union Jack knickers  
when she sat high on the table, and I stood up erect  
cos that's what they made us do in the cinemas)  
- and that helps to put me into a state of dormancy, to hibernate  
till the sun ushers in a new day for me -  
and a new cake for that wooly-headed English teacher,  
she, I can presume with certainty,  
elegantly reposed and superannuated

Now, I'm glad I've got this off my chest  
and mastered my idioms and phrases  
and I can go eat my samosas

Raj Arumugam

# My Evasive But Versatile Love

my love,  
she's like water:  
she slips through my fingers

my love  
she's like a snake;  
she only comes when there's a draught  
in her own area

my love  
she's like the sun;  
she scorches when I get near

my love  
she's like a dust storm  
she gets into my eyes  
when she chooses  
and for some time  
I don't know where she is

my love  
she's like a computer  
when it's frozen

and if you ask  
why I'm still with her  
that's because she's like one dell of a screen  
with an infinite variety of websites...

Raj Arumugam

# My Grandma Does Her Xmas Shopping

1

I take a day off and  
I drive my grandma to the mall  
You're the best grandson ever, she says  
You make time for me

And so she walks from shop to shop  
armed with her shopping list  
She throws each item into the trolley  
and ticks off against her list  
Two hours, three hours, four pass  
and she smiles to me and says:  
'We're done! Let's go...'

2

And so we go to the car  
and I help her load  
every item in the boot, and in the back  
and just then, she says:  
'Oh, no - we got to go back;  
there's one more thing I've got to get! '

'But grandma, ' I say,  
'You had a list and ticked off each item  
and you've bought everything'

'But you silly boy, ' says Grandma  
'I haven't bought you anything  
Because I forgot to put you on the list! '

Raj Arumugam

# My Greatest Moment Today

my greatest moment today  
was when  
I just stood beside the tree  
and put my hand against it  
and looked at the distant clouds  
and long I looked at the distant clouds  
and then when I looked down  
I saw the inquisitive roots  
of the tree  
that had crept up above the earth  
and also  
I saw a bird close to my feet;  
that was my greatest moment today  
when the tree and the clouds  
and the roots and the person and the bird  
were together in one quiet moment

Raj Arumugam

# My Guide To Investing

everybody shaves  
so Warren Buffet invests in Gillette;  
and every country drinks  
so he also buys Coke shares -  
which leads me to my own investment strategy

Every human sheds forty thousand  
skin cells an hour  
That's forty thousand cells times 7 billion humans  
each hour-  
you listening? -  
now that's a lot of dust;  
and not to forget the many cultures and nations  
that cremate rather than bury  
and that releases from each body in the barbecue  
1.6 trillion cells of dust -  
it's a bloody dusty world, isn't it?  
so...I've got it all worked out...  
I'm investing in vacuum cleaners...

Raj Arumugam

# My Happy Song

I'd like a little rain  
and for it to taste  
like lemonade;  
I'd like a little flower  
outside my window  
and for it to say:  
Hey, gorgeous...

I'd like a million dollars  
and all tax free  
and always self-renewing  
as I spend each billion;  
I'd like to be more famous than Madonna  
and for Madonna to beg me:  
I'd like your children

I'd like work round me automated  
and never going wrong  
and always pleasant in my favor;  
I'd like the Almighty Power  
to say:  
Master,  
could I arrange things  
so they please you?

I'd like the fields and oceans  
and the mountains and hills  
and all creatures and living beings  
to be my loyal servants;  
and as for anyone who says an unkind word about me,  
I'd like them each to go crooked and humped

and thrust in the oven

Ah, as you can see,  
my wants and happiness  
are simple and pure, for  
all I want is a little rain  
and for it to taste  
like lemonade;  
I'd like a little flower  
outside my window  
and for it to say:  
Hey, gorgeous...

Raj Arumugam

# My Home, Like The Universe, Is Expanding

they say,  
these eminent scientists,  
the universe is expanding;  
but what they didn't know  
these most knowledgeable scientists  
so is my home expanding,  
like the universe

see, I started with a house  
in which I could walk within two minutes  
and when I lay down in bed  
it was like being in a box;  
and the trees  
all round the home  
they towered over my roof

but last year when I woke up  
I noticed a delightful thing:  
the house had reached the trees  
and the trees in jealousy  
were scratching the windows

three months later  
my room had taken me  
to heights like I lived in Trump Tower  
and the walls had reached  
the Brisbane River;  
and the trees all round the Sunshine State  
when I looked out my window  
were no more than toothpicks

and yet soon  
in a matter of months  
the Sydney Opera House  
was but a backpacker's motel

and the Uluru but a red pebble

and still my house expanded  
and all the world aspired  
to its dizzying heights  
and swarga dimensions  
and depth;  
and still my house kept growing  
and no one could hold it back  
from its explosive adolescent growth

and now when I look  
out my window  
the clouds  
are far below  
and the moon  
glides past for a peek  
and begs to come in;  
and of course I do see you petty mortals  
like tiny ants there  
looking green at my house  
that is expanding as wide and measureless  
as the expanding universe

and of course  
the scientists  
now have grown wise  
after the event  
and there is great rush  
and hurly-burly  
amongst the scientific fraternity  
and maternity  
to formulate a new theory  
called the home theory  
which goes to the truth of cosmology:  
the universe emulates my house

Raj Arumugam

# My Mother Had No Birthday

my mother had no birthday  
and coming from the village  
she had no cakes or candles;  
my father knew no birthday songs  
and never heard any birthday wishes  
and coming from a nearby town  
it did not matter;  
in my turn  
they made records of my birth  
and back as far as I can remember  
no one made memory of any day  
but each day, not just the day in the records,  
and each moment  
is itself;  
years later,  
until their dying days,  
we lived in a modern city  
and we all wondered what the fuss was about  
when families gathered  
and lighted candles and stuffed themselves  
with cakes and drinks and sang loud songs  
and went back to routine and boredom  
the rest of the year:  
we had no view of history and time;  
each moment is lived in its own radiance

Raj Arumugam

# My Mum, Supermom

We're at the shops  
and Tim runs off of to the escalator  
and Mum shouts to him:

"You stop there! "

And Tim freezes  
like ice got hold of him

And Mum pulls out  
the flap over the pram  
and helps baby Didi  
with the milk bottle  
and I scream to Mum:

"Let me go;

I want to go to Tim! "

But she pulls hard at the rein  
and I can feel it tighten  
round my waist

a little

And I scream

"Mum! I want to go! "

And she says:

"Jill -

be quiet and still  
as my shadow! "

And from the distance

Big Tim screams:

"Mom! Can I go? ! "

And Mom screams loudest:

"You come here  
and stand right beside  
your sis Jill! "

And we're all together again

baby in the pram

Mum standing beside

and me on the rein

And Tim sulking at the side

And nobody else

from the crowd dares

come near

for they all know  
my Mum -  
she's Wonder Woman  
she's Super Hero  
cos my Mum's Supermom

Raj Arumugam

# My Pacemaker, State-Of-The-Art

Yeah guys, just back from the doctor's  
Turns out he's worked at Apple  
and Samsung and such -  
he's really into technology and all that,  
you know  
the latest stuff, really  
"The heart, " he pronounced,  
"is really a technology"

anyway, he's given me  
a pacemaker for me heart  
and the doc, he said also  
it's state-of-the-art technology  
so I can also apps for my liver,  
kidneys and my bowels  
if needs be  
yeah, I really feel good  
inside out and all the way down

Raj Arumugam

# My Parents Were Once Children

my parents were once children  
and their parents  
toddlers in time to others;  
I too was once a child  
(nothing significant)  
and I've been a father  
over two and a half decades  
(just natural days, natural ways):  
and in their turn  
my children and theirs  
will also wear robes  
as they are rolled out into their parts;  
and so beings fulfill their functions  
willy-nilly, helter-skelter  
in the magnetic fields of creative nature:  
really  
there is no need for myth and legend  
for there is no one special  
even then, at the imagined roll of the dice...

Raj Arumugam

# My Share Of The Earth

my share of the earth  
is a vast continent  
my legal share  
is an ample lot  
with a walled home and garden;  
my share of the earth  
though  
at the end  
is just perhaps a rectangular hole  
where earth's quiet creatures  
recycle every bit  
and earth reclaims carbon  
(though my instructions  
are for the ashes to be scattered;  
but does anyone think  
earth gives a damned piss about that?)

my share of the earth  
is only while I have a body  
and that too, the share and the body,  
are never certain...  
but when I do not wish a share  
and cease the fight and struggle;  
when I do not do that  
when there is that quiet  
and do not snatch at this or that  
it seems the very universe  
is my length and breadth and dimension:  
it is all one's expanse

Raj Arumugam

# My Wife Shops Online

You know women  
they go shopping  
and they fill the whole trolley  
overflowing  
they never know when to stop;  
they're such exceptional shoppers

my wife's no exception  
and so I thought  
I'd get her on to shopping  
(you know, using man's intelligence  
to beat women's frivolity)  
Will save me time and save us money,  
I thought  
But just as well, within the hour,  
I had to enlighten her  
about shopping protocol:  
"When the computer asks you if  
you'd like another shopping cart  
it's a subtle message  
you should stop"

Oh, why do I always get beaten?

Raj Arumugam

# Mynah On The Slender Branch

it is cool Brisbane autumn noon  
and the Indian mynah  
stoops on the slender branch  
that ends in a purple burst  
of geisha flowers;  
and we are inside the room  
sharpening  
ambitious plans

Raj Arumugam

# Names Of The Butterfly

the butterfly has a  
thousand names  
as many as there are languages  
and in each even more names:  
papillon, paruparo, borboleta, mariposa,  
schmetterling, farfalla, fluture, drugelis, sommerfug,  
pattampoochi, farasha, prajapathi,  
thithili, chocho, hu-tieh  
and so on, names a thousand and more  
but the silliest name  
illogical, unimaginative, and most clichéd  
in all the world  
is in Plain Jane English:  
butterfly...

Raj Arumugam

# Narrowing The Internet

the internet opens windows  
to the universal mind:  
yet we dig into narrow burrows

Raj Arumugam

# Narrowness

It is clinging to one  
or another  
that makes one feel better  
superior

And once in confines  
one seeks to enslave every other

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin And The Emir's Poems

1

the Emir has it in his head he is a poet  
and the Emir invites Nasrudin  
to an assembly  
and the Emir recites his poem  
with much ado,  
with much loudness and gestures

everyone applauds the Emir  
for his poem  
but Nasrudin is quiet  
and the Emir turns to Nasrudin and says:  
"So, Nasrudin – what do you think  
of my poem? "

"Sir, " says Nasrudin  
"What you recited is not a poem  
and neither does it make you a poet"

"Guards! "  
screams the Emir  
"Take this man Nasrudin  
and put him in jail!  
Three months let him be there! "

2

three months pass  
and Nasrudin is released  
and is invited again by the Emir  
to another of the Emir's recitations  
and again the Emir recites his poem  
with much ado,  
with much loudness and gestures

and again everyone applauds the Emir  
for his poem  
but Nasrudin says nothing and stands up

and walks towards the guards  
and the Emir shouts at Nasrudin:  
"Nasrudin – where do you think  
you are going? "

and says Nasrudin:  
"Sir – I'll save you the trouble;  
I'll send myself to jail..."

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin Eats The Seeds

See, Nasrudin sits eating  
dates...  
Oh, but do you see?  
Nasrudin eats the seeds too...

O Nasrudin, Nasrudin  
why do you eat the seeds as  
you eat the dates?

O, says Nasrudin,  
because the merchant who sold me the dates  
also charged me for the seeds

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin Gets Across

See, Nasrudin is standing  
on the other side of the river  
let's ask him,  
let's ask  
how we can get across

Hey, Nasrudin!  
Tell us how we can get  
to the other side of the river

But – replies Nasrudin –  
you are already on the other side of the river!

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin Hard At Work

Nasrudin is in his early twenties  
and he works at the warehouse

See, each worker  
lifts 3 sacks a time  
and puts them on a pile  
and walks back for more

but see Nasrudin  
how he works -  
he carries just 1 bag  
and puts it on a pile  
and walks back for 1 more

Now, says the foreman  
Why is it you only carry 1 sack  
When others carry 3 at a time?

Sir, says Nasrudin  
I carry 1 bag a time  
and make 3 trips in all  
But the others  
unlike me  
are just  
too lazy to make 3 trips

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin Hides In An Open Grave

It is night  
Nasrudin walks  
in the moonlight  
He hears horses  
Thieves! Murderers!  
thinks Nasrudin  
and jumps over the wall  
and hides in an open, unused grave

The horsemen stop;  
they have seen  
a man jump into the grave  
and they are concerned:  
Are you all right, Sir?  
Why are you in the grave?

And Nasrudin answers as quickly:  
Why am I in the grave?  
That depends on your worldview.  
I am here because of you  
and you are here because of me!

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin In Class

when Nasrudin was little  
his teacher interrupted his lesson  
and shouted at Nasrudin:  
Hey, you - boy  
in the front row!  
Are you nodding off  
into sleep?

No, Sir, said Nasrudin  
I'm trying very hard  
to stay awake!

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin On The Meaning Of Life

Nasrudin rides his donkey  
and is stopped in the streets  
by a neighbor

O Nasrudin, says the neighbor  
I have been wondering long  
and you might offer an answer...  
tell me: What is the meaning of life?

And Nasrudin's donkey brays  
aloud and brave:  
Hee-haw! Hee-haw!  
Hee-haw! Hee-haw!

And Nasrudin says to the neighbor:  
I believe my donkey has answered your question;  
and now, if you will excuse me,  
it's time for me and my donkey to move on...

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin Poems (17) By Raj Arumugam

17 Nasrudin poems by Raj Arumugam

POEM ONE - Nasrudin riding his donkey

1

Come, come all  
O all neighbors and children  
O come and gather in the streets  
or be at your window  
or at your door  
O see Nasrudin on his donkey

2

O...see Nasrudin!  
O...see his donkey!  
O - Nasrudin is seated on his donkey!  
O - see Nasrudin and his donkey:  
donkey faces one way  
and Nasrudin is seated  
facing the opposite way!

3

O Nasrudin, why does donkey  
face one way  
and you are  
seated facing the opposite way?

4

O, donkey and I cannot agree  
which way we want to go -  
and so neither follows the other!

POEM 2 - Could I borrow your donkey, Nasrudin?

Nasrudin's friend visits him  
and asks to borrow  
his donkey for a day

Oh no, dear friend, says Nasrudin  
moving close to his window  
My brother borrowed my only donkey  
just yesterday...

And just then Nasrudin's donkey  
brays aloud from the garden:  
Hee-haw! Hee-haw! Hee-haw!

But - says Nasrudin's friend,  
with a twinkle in his eye -  
I can hear your donkey in the garden!  
I can hear your donkey!

Ah, says Nasrudin, cool and at ease:  
Who'd you rather believe?  
Me? Or a donkey?

### POEM 3 - Nasrudin's followers

1

See, Nasrudin leads his followers  
through the streets and alleys  
through the markets and the houses of prayers;  
and see, Nasrudin shakes his head and bum  
and all his followers shake their heads and bums;  
see, Nasrudin sticks out his tongue and rolls his eyes  
and all his followers stick out theirs and roll their eyes  
and Nasrudin shouts:  
Hee hee ho ho ha!  
And all followers shout:  
Hee hee ho ho ha!

2

And the Visiting Intellectual asks Nasrudin:  
What are you doing  
leading these people like donkeys  
through the streets?

And Nasrudin replies:  
I am leading them, Sir  
to Heaven or Enlightenment as they will

And how, queries the Intellectual  
will you know  
they have reached Enlightenment or Heaven  
as they will?

Each day, Sir, says Nasrudin,  
I look to see who is no longer following  
and such ones have reached Enlightenment  
or have gained Heaven, as each desires...  
and now Sir, if you don't mind,  
I must go lead a few more hundred  
running round the coconut trees  
screaming:  
Hee hee ho ho ha!

POEM 4 - Nasrudin eats the seeds

See, Nasrudin sits eating  
dates...  
Oh, but do you see?  
Nasrudin eats the seeds too...

O Nasrudin, Nasrudin  
why do you eat the seeds as  
you eat the dates?

O, says Nasrudin,  
because the merchant who sold me the dates  
also charged me for the seeds

POEM 5 - Nasrudin gets across

See, Nasrudin is standing  
on the other side of the river  
let's ask him,  
let's ask  
how we can get across

Hey, Nasrudin!  
Tell us how we can get  
to the other side of the river

But – replies Nasrudin –  
you are already on the other side of the river!

POEM 6 - would you lend some money to Nasrudin...?

Nasrudin comes to a new town  
and he goes to a store  
and he asks the owner:  
How's business, Sir?

Business is good, replies the store-owner

Oh, then, can I borrow ten dollars?  
asks Nasrudin

I hardly know you, says the store-owner  
I can't lend you any money

Oh, how strange, says Nasrudin  
In my town they won't lend me any money  
because they say, they know me too well -  
and here you won't lend me any money

because you don't know me!  
It's a strange world we live in.

POEM 7 - Nasrudin on the meaning of life

Nasrudin rides his donkey  
and is stopped in the streets  
by a neighbor

O Nasrudin, says the neighbor  
I have been wondering long  
and you might offer an answer...  
tell me: What is the meaning of life?

And Nasrudin's donkey brays  
aloud and brave:  
Hee-haw! Hee-haw!  
Hee-haw! Hee-haw!

And Nasrudin says to the neighbor:  
I believe my donkey has answered your question;  
and now, if you will excuse me,  
it's time for me and my donkey to move on...

POEM 8 - the rock in Nasrudin's garden

the gathering declares  
with great sagacity  
how one's strength decreases  
with age:  
One is stronger when young;  
Weaker when one is old

I disagree, says Nasrudin  
I'm just as strong old  
as when I was young

How so? asks the gathering  
Explain yourself!

Well, I cannot lift  
the rock in my garden -  
just the same as when I was young!

#### POEM 9 - Nasrudin in class

when Nasrudin was little  
his teacher interrupted his lesson  
and shouted at Nasrudin:  
Hey, you - boy  
in the front row!  
Are you nodding off  
into sleep?

No, Sir, said Nasrudin  
I'm trying very hard  
to stay awake!

#### POEM 10 - Nasrudin's donkeys

1  
it's graduation day  
and the teacher gives awards  
to each:  
a book to one  
a staff to another  
silk or precious stones;  
and to Nasrudin  
the teacher  
gives a donkey

2

It is some years  
and the teacher  
hears of Nasrudin's fame  
and comes to visit  
the House of Prayer Nasrudin oversees  
and to pay homage to the Saint  
buried just beside

3

O Nasrudin,  
says the teacher -  
how great your fame  
and vast your following  
Tell me, which Eminent Saint  
is buried in the mound  
beside the House of Prayer  
you oversee?

O Master,  
says Nasrudin  
It's the donkey  
you gave me  
It died just 4 years after  
and I buried him here  
And everyone wants a Saint  
so I have not disabused people  
of their faith

4

The teacher nods with a smile  
and Nasrudin continues:  
But tell me Master -  
which Eminent Saint is buried in the mound  
beside the House of Prayer  
you oversee?

Ah, Nasrudin, says the teacher  
though people believe it's a Saint  
it's really your dead donkey's mother

POEM 11 - lend me a 1000 dollars, O Nasrudin

1

Psst! Nasrudin! Pssst!  
says the neighbor  
at the doorway;  
Nasrudin looks down from his roof  
where he's fixing some tiles  
and sees his neighbor in the street

Yes? Nasrudin asks

Come down, Nasrudin;  
I have something to say  
that cannot be said aloud;  
you must stand at the same level  
to hear what I have to say

2

And so Nasrudin comes down  
the ladder  
and asks his neighbor what the matter is;  
and the neighbor whispers:  
Nasrudin - lend me a 1000 dollars;  
I need it straight away...

Come up, says Nasrudin  
with no hesitation,  
and he climbs  
back up to the roof  
and the neighbor follows

3

Now here is something,  
whispers Nasrudin  
(once they are both seated on the roof)  
that I could not say below in the street  
but that can be said  
when we are at the same height:

No; now you can go

POEM 12 - Nasrudin's advice on carrying a coffin

O Nasrudin  
asks a man  
tell of us ritual  
and proper procedures:  
Which side should I stand on  
when I carry a coffin:  
on the right, the left,  
in front or at the back?  
O Nasrudin,  
which is proper?

O, dear friend,  
says Nasrudin  
it doesn't matter;  
just make sure you're not  
inside the coffin!

POEM 13 - Nasrudin, Donkey, and wild animals

1  
Bang! Bang!  
Dong-gang! Dong-Dong,  
Ting-a-Dong!

O, all day  
Nasrudin  
is making all this din  
in his home  
beating drums and his pots and pans

Hee-haw! Hee-haw!  
Hee-haw – haw! haw! haw!  
Hee-haw!

And his Donkey too  
all day  
master and Donkey  
making all this noise

2  
O Nasrudin, why  
do you make this din and noise -  
you and your Donkey  
all day long?

3  
O, says Nasrudin,  
Donkey and I are  
trying to frighten away  
all tigers and wild animals  
to keep away from our town  
But Nasrudin – there's isn't a single tiger  
or a wild animal  
a thousand miles  
round our town!

See! says Nasrudin  
Our method works!

Hee-haw! Hee-haw!  
Donkey agrees  
...now, it's time to ride away for a

POEM 14 - Nasrudin's donkey eats poetry

Nasrudin looks in the magic mirror  
that allows him to peep into the future  
and he sees many marvelous poems in cyberspace.

So Nasrudin calls his Donkey and he says to Donkey:  
See, Donkey – there are so many marvelous poems in cyberspace.  
They are beautiful poems.

But Nasrudin's Donkey says:  
Hee-haw! - what's the use? As far as I'm concerned  
the only good poem is the one printed on paper.

And why is that? asks Nasrudin.

Because, at least when I'm desperately hungry, I can eat paper –  
but I can't eat cyberspace can I? replies Donkey.

#### POEM 15 - Nasrudin's mirror

see  
Nasrudin walks  
along in the streets  
and sees a mirror  
lying on the kerb

Oh! what a waste, says Nasrudin  
a good mirror thrown away  
like this...

Nasrudin picks up the mirror  
and looks in it  
and then throws it away:  
No wonder  
they threw this mirror away!  
What a face!  
Who'd want to look  
at a face like that!

POEM 16 - Nasrudin hides in an open grave

It is night  
Nasrudin walks  
in the moonlight  
He hears horses  
Thieves! Murderers!  
thinks Nasrudin  
and jumps over the wall  
and hides in an open, unused grave

The horsemen stop;  
they have seen  
a man jump into the grave  
and they are concerned:  
Are you all right, Sir?  
Why are you in the grave?

And Nasrudin answers as quickly:  
Why am I in the grave?  
That depends on your worldview.  
I am here because of you  
and you are here because of me!

POEM 17 - the crowd laughs at Nasrudin

See  
Nasrudin is in the streets  
he rides his donkey;  
and see,  
the people are in the streets  
and the men and women point to Nasrudin  
and they laugh;  
and the children run behind Nasrudin's donkey  
and they roll in the sand

and they laugh at Donkey;  
and the youth  
throw some old cups  
at Nasrudin's donkey and they laugh

and see  
Nasrudin sees all this  
and he says to them:  
Yes, you may see the humor;  
but I don't think you see the irony

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin Riding His Donkey

1

Come, come all  
O all neighbors and children  
O come and gather in the streets  
or be at your window  
or at your door  
O see Nasrudin on his donkey

2

O...see Nasrudin!  
O...see his donkey!  
O – Nasrudin is seated on his donkey!  
O – see Nasrudin and his donkey:  
donkey faces one way  
and Nasrudin is seated  
facing the opposite way!

3

O Nasrudin, why does donkey  
face one way  
and you are  
seated facing the opposite way?

4

O, donkey and I cannot agree  
which way we want to go -  
and so neither follows the other!

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin, Donkey, And Wild Animals

1

Bang! Bang!  
Dong-gang! Dong-Dong,  
Ting-a-Dong!

O, all day  
Nasrudin  
is making all this din  
in his home  
beating drums and his pots and pans

Hee-haw! Hee-haw!  
Hee-haw – haw! haw! haw!  
Hee-haw!

And his Donkey too  
all day  
master and Donkey  
making all this noise

2

O Nasrudin, why  
do you make this din and noise -  
you and your Donkey  
all day long?

3

O, says Nasrudin,  
Donkey and I are  
trying to frighten away  
all tigers and wild animals  
to keep away from our town

But Nasrudin – there's isn't a single tiger  
or a wild animal  
a thousand miles  
round our town!

See! says Nasrudin  
Our method works!

Hee-haw! Hee-haw!  
Donkey agrees

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin's Followers

1

See, Nasrudin leads his followers  
through the streets and alleys  
through the markets and the houses of prayers;  
and see, Nasrudin shakes his head and bum  
and all his followers shake their heads and bums;  
see, Nasrudin sticks out his tongue and rolls his eyes  
and all his followers stick out theirs and roll their eyes  
and Nasrudin shouts:  
Hee hee ho ho ha!  
And all followers shout:  
Hee hee ho ho ha!

2

And the Visiting Intellectual asks Nasrudin:  
What are you doing  
leading these people like donkeys  
through the streets?

And Nasrudin replies:  
I am leading them, Sir  
to Heaven or Enlightenment as they will

And how, queries the Intellectual  
will you know  
they have reached Enlightenment or Heaven  
as they will?

Each day, Sir, says Nasrudin,  
I look to see who is no longer following  
and such ones have reached Enlightenment  
or have gained Heaven, as each desires...  
and now Sir, if you don't mind,  
I must go lead a few more hundred  
running round the coconut trees  
screaming:  
Hee hee ho ho ha!



# Nasrudin's Advice On Carrying A Coffin

O Nasrudin  
asks a man  
tell of us ritual  
and proper procedures:  
Which side should I stand on  
when I carry a coffin:  
on the right, the left,  
in front or at the back?  
O Nasrudin,  
which is proper?

O, dear friend,  
says Nasrudin  
it doesn't matter;  
just make sure you're not  
inside the coffin!

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin's Donkey Eats Poetry

Nasrudin looks in the magic mirror that allows him to peep into the future and he sees many marvelous poems in cyberspace.

So Nasrudin calls his donkey and he says to the donkey:

See, donkey – there are so many marvelous poems in cyberspace. They are beautiful poems.

But Nasrudin's donkey says:

Ah what's the use? As far as I'm concerned the only good poem is the one printed on paper.

And why is that? asks Nasrudin.

Because at least when I'm desperately hungry I can eat paper – but I can't eat cyberspace can I? replies the donkey.

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin's Donkeys

1

it's graduation day  
and the teacher gives awards  
to each:  
a book to one  
a staff to another  
silk or precious stones;  
and to Nasrudin  
the teacher  
gives a donkey

2

It is some years  
and the teacher  
hears of Nasrudin's fame  
and comes to visit  
the House of Prayer Nasrudin oversees  
and to pay homage to the Saint  
buried just beside

3

O Nasrudin,  
says the teacher -  
how great your fame  
and vast your following  
Tell me, which Eminent Saint  
is buried in the mound  
beside the House of Prayer  
you oversee?

O Master,  
says Nasrudin  
It's the donkey  
you gave me  
It died just 4 years after  
and I buried him here  
And everyone wants a Saint  
so I have not disabused people  
of their faith

4

The teacher nods with a smile

and Nasrudin continues:

But tell me Master –

which Eminent Saint is buried in the mound

beside the House of Prayer

you oversee?

Ah, Nasrudin, says the teacher

though people believe it's a Saint

it's really your dead donkey's mother

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin's Door On His Back

1

See,

Nasrudin is walking in the streets

But see - do you see?

Nasrudin carries a door tied to his back

Yes, see

Nasrudin is walking in the streets

and he carries a door on his back

Oh Nasrudin, why do you carry a door  
tied to your back?

2

Oh, dear friends

there are so many break-ins

in our town

and as there's only one way to my house

I thought I'll carry my door with me

so no one can break into my house!

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin's Mirror

see

Nasrudin walks  
along in the streets  
and sees a mirror  
lying on the kerb

Oh! what a waste, says Nasrudin  
a good mirror thrown away  
like this...

Nasrudin picks up the mirror  
and looks in it  
and then throws it away:  
No wonder  
they threw this mirror away!  
What a face!  
Who'd want to look  
at a face like that!

Raj Arumugam

# Nasrudin's Two Prayers

1

Nasrudin rushes into  
the House of Prayer and  
makes a quick prayer  
and gets up just as quick  
to rush off

Wait! commands the Chief Priest  
in the House of Prayer  
Say your prayers again -  
slowly and with dignity!

And so Nasrudin follows instructions  
and says his prayers slowly and with dignity  
and then he asks the Chief Priest if he can go

2

Yes, says the Chief Priest  
And don't you think  
the Mighty Lord is pleased  
with your prayer slow and dignified  
rather than the hurried  
and quick one you offered first?

Not really, says Nasrudin

And why is that? asks the Chief Priest

Why? asks Nasrudin  
Because my first prayer was for God;  
the second was just to please you

Raj Arumugam

# Nature Is A Geisha: Inspired By Mt Fuji From Umezawa By Hokusai Katsushika

1

lonely, away from the world  
one thought to venture further  
and walked a narrow path...

2

one meets nature a geisha  
who smiles and plays  
and awakens one's senses...

3

nature-geisha's art  
clears one's thoughts,  
and the gathered mind-dust

4

one sees: original self  
not defined, not conditioned  
but corrupt by one's world...

5

without self  
without conditioning

all agitated forces stilled...

6

we have loved freely  
without formalities  
without rigidity of spouses

7

one sees freedom;  
one sees spontaneity:  
how one can love again one's spouse?

Raj Arumugam

# Nature Of The Butterfly

people say the butterfly is beautiful  
but if its jerky flight and nervous twitches  
were made into music  
it'd sound more a cacophony than a symphony

Raj Arumugam

# Nature's Song For The Children

1

stand up, children  
stand up and wipe those tears;  
smile and laugh  
in your love  
of the fields and the stars

smile and laugh  
little darlings;  
smile and laugh  
in your love  
of the birds and trees  
and the streams  
and the creatures  
of the earth

smile and laugh  
in your love of the clouds  
and the sunshine and the berries  
and the flowers  
and the butterflies;  
smile little children  
with that love  
that is radiant in your hearts

stand up, children  
stand up and wipe those tears;  
smile and laugh  
in your love  
of the fields and the stars

2

stand up, children  
stand up and wipe those tears;  
smile and laugh  
in your love  
of the fields and the stars

though all things may pass  
and all things may change  
and iron hands  
and powder powers  
bring chaos and bareness;  
and these things may hurt  
even those light hearts of yours -  
still, delicate angels,  
there is love  
in your darling hearts

so bring them your love  
of the sunshine  
and your love of the trees;  
bring them your love  
of the land  
and your love of life

bring them your love  
of the skies  
and your love of the bees;  
bring them your love  
of the streams, air and earth

for the love that you have  
that is oneness

that love never passes;  
that is the love  
that abides always  
in all change and passing

stand up, children  
stand up and wipe those tears;  
smile and laugh  
in your love  
of nature and the stars

Raj Arumugam

# Nature's Tool

so time's done  
its work on you  
thrown you about  
on the sharp irregularities  
of chance

you struggled  
against powers that be  
forces larger than the perceptible  
you used thought and purposeful action  
to shape destiny -  
but randomness, that school of whales,  
tossed you about

powers fade  
and beauty is a consolation;  
nature strengthened for use  
and drained you when it was done

you can invoke philosophy  
and the pleasantries of prayer  
you can use rhetoric to obscure what you see  
but it's all just a looking-away

you know in your heart  
time and nature conspire  
to create, serve and discard  
with not so much as a thank-you  
while the dying mind thinks myths

Raj Arumugam

# Nero Kicks Vespasian, Time Kicks Nero

Nero kicks Vespasian

1

Nero plays the lyre

He's Emperor

so all must admire

but Vespasian goes to sleep

so Nero exiles Vespasian

and poor Vespasian now minds the bees

I am the Emperor

and all must admire

when I sing

or play the lyre

for I'm also a god...

Time kicks Nero

2

But Nero goes to extremes

Rome burns, Nero kills

and soon events turn against him

and the Senate declares him

Enemy of the State

and Nero kills himself;

and the beekeeper Vespasian

through events played staccato by time

becomes Emperor Vespasian

and begins construction of the Colosseum

And Emperors too die

and I think I'm dying

Hey - help me up

for an Emperor must die on his feet

And hey! you know what?

I think I too am becoming a god!

Raj Arumugam

# Netsuke Depicting 2 Men Drinking

Dancing Man:

My right foot up  
and my left hand on my head  
Oh this sake  
brings me Heavenly fever;  
sake purifies my heart  
and the gods are pleased  
and I dance  
like the Shinto spirits of old

Man with the cup:

Oh, drink and be merry  
be lifted high in the air  
by sake and its spirit;  
the Toji has done well  
a master brewer he;  
and dance you well  
in this ecstasy  
and while your eyes  
are towards the gods  
I'll steal a sip or two  
that shall build into  
more than a cup for me:  
O dance in the spirit of sake -  
another cup I hold ready  
for you, always

-----

(Netsuke, invented in 17th century Japan, are miniature sculptures, that served as fasteners.)

Raj Arumugam

# Neutral Poem

What's this poem about?

not about this  
not about that  
no views  
no judgment  
no aspirations  
no declarations  
no proclamations

Raj Arumugam

# Never Forgive This Rain These Winter Days

it rains all night  
and everyone crawls out  
late and unwilling;  
it rains all day  
confines many  
sends most to shopping malls  
and cinemas  
and Transformers  
and Terminator  
(both sequels,  
I don't know what number) :  
and fast food and popcorn  
and coffee  
and warm soup

I stay in bed mostly  
for this winter rains have made me sick  
and weakened me into a cold  
as if to remind me of my age;  
and the evening creeps in  
no different to this dreary day  
and many across Brisbane  
crawl early in to bed  
the rain still coming  
perhaps endeavoring to change homes into boats;  
and, by the way,  
I'll never forgive you,  
you bitter bitter rain,  
for how you take these days from me

Raj Arumugam

# News Of The World

this is the world news:  
same as yesterday -  
take it as you wish

Raj Arumugam

# Next Door And Indoors

what's going on next door?  
but do you know  
what's going on indoors?

Raj Arumugam

# Night Fun

nights are fun  
such fun -  
it's clear to see

1) ask Jim  
who stayed awake  
all night  
pondering over  
what had happened to the sun  
and in the morning, it finally dawned on him

meanwhile his pa  
was outside driving  
and he drove into the lake  
cos he wanted to dip his headlights

Jim's mother, on the other hand,  
slept on the edge of the bed  
cos her doctor told her  
(cos she complained  
she could not sleep)  
to lie on the edge of the bed  
and soon she'll drop off!

and the sister, Susie,  
she stayed awake  
eight days without sleep  
and yet she remained alert and fresh-  
and you wanna know how she did that?  
Oh, easy - she slept at nights.

nights are fun  
such fun -  
it's clear to see

2  
see even nature's creatures  
in Jim's backyard  
even they had fun

the wolves had a party all night –  
and all homo sapiens in the area agreed  
it must have been a howling success

and the glow-worm  
it bumped into a tree  
and you can bet your own ass –  
the glow-worm was de-lighted!

nights are fun  
such fun  
it's clear to see

Raj Arumugam

# No Ambition For Eternity

you know  
that little bird that's  
on the tree  
and sings when it wants to  
and then just sits  
just looking about?  
you've seen that thin cloud  
in the vast clear blue sky  
that little wisp of cotton  
that seems so aimless  
and so pointless?  
have you seen it?  
and that small leaf  
that appears overnight  
perhaps on a creeper you keep  
in a small vase at your desk?

well, I just breathe and go like that -  
yes, I do what must be done  
like brushing my teeth  
and going to the supermarket  
and withdrawing money  
and making some -  
but mostly I'd float like the cloud or  
grow like the creeper or chirp like the bird  
and I have no more time than the present  
and no awe for anything or anyone  
and I have no ambition for eternity either  
so thank you very much

Raj Arumugam

# Nobody Likes Me

nobody likes me;  
I've known that since long time back  
and used to be that I was wounded and worried  
could not sleep the nights  
could not eat meals complete  
cos I knew always  
nobody likes me, poor me  
and nobody clicks on 'like'  
on my page;  
and Oh - I got thin and gaunt  
and then it was I decided:  
OK - hell - I don't like anybody  
and we're equal - there, we're done!  
Go jump in the well all of you  
cos I know you don't like me  
and I don't like you  
(you like you, I like me)  
and I suppose you'd tell me jump too  
All right - I'll do -  
just don't jump into my well  
so find yourself one for yourself  
since I don't like you  
and you don't like me  
it'll be unbearable  
sharing the same well

Raj Arumugam

# Noisy, Noisy Sparrow

noisy, noisy sparrow  
talkative and darting  
speedily to seeds on the plants  
and grains on the floor;  
noisy, noisy sparrow  
so active I can no longer sit here still  
here on my bench  
I too want to dart hither and thither speedily  
like my little friends  
the noisy, noisy sparrows

Raj Arumugam

# Not A Good Day (A Modern Punch And Judy Scene)

(Punch comes home. Judy, his wife, kisses him and asks about his day.)

Judy:

How was your day at work, darl?

Punch:

Not a good day, sweetie...

Judy:

And why was that, Punch?

Punch:

Oh, the Boss is just overbearing

Judy:

What did he do this time, sweetie?

Punch:

Oh well, he comes in to my table  
this morning, right,  
and he asks me: "Punch, do you believe  
in the after-life? "

An odd question to ask, you'd agree...

Anyway I say: "I do, Mr Blake –  
I do believe in the after-life."

And he says: "Oh, that makes sense..."

And he continues:

"Yesterday you asked to go home at noon

You said your grandpa died

And guess what? – 4 hours after you left

a man claiming to be your grandpa

came here looking for you

Said he was in in the vicinity

and he might walk home back with you

There's sure such a thing as after-life, Punch! "

And all day Mr Blake was having a go at me about ghosts

And all my colleagues too, they were going: "BOO! "  
at every chance they got...  
Oh, what an embarrassing day...

Judy:  
Oh, so you lied to get a half-day off, Punch?  
And where were you?  
You didn't come home early yesterday...  
Doesn't look like your day is over, Punch...  
Certainly not a good day!

Raj Arumugam

# Now That I Am No Longer Present

Now that I am no longer present  
what do they say of me there  
within that small group within which I was known?  
I can see the portly  
happy man  
pointing to his head and saying  
He knew a lot of things.  
Do they speak of me as a nice chap  
easy to talk to, mild and not offensive?  
(Oh, they would I'm sure.)  
Awkward and shy he was,  
says another. And then perhaps it crosses  
their minds that they speak of me  
as if they were speaking of the dead.  
He's still alive,  
perhaps someone mentions  
and there is subdued laughter.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# O Gentle Ones, You Butterflies

O gentle ones  
dear butterflies that have come in my garden  
did you see?

I waited today in my lonely confine  
prescribed to me by time and life  
though I too tried, like you, to fly  
but the years given me are too long  
and not blink-quick just like yours  
and time has chained me to a single place  
and no one comes  
and in unquiet silence I sat in the shadows

and you flitted in

you flew in like a happy crowd of children  
a cheerful procession of revelers  
and you flew straight to the flowers -  
the flowers! ah, dear butterflies  
I had not even noticed them  
and now I do...  
all of it -  
your gentleness  
and your grace  
and the charm of the flowers  
and the beauty of the day;  
and now that you are come  
I too am cheerful  
I am happy too  
since you flew in

Raj Arumugam

# O Thalia, Muse Of Comedy

O Thalia  
O muse of Comedy  
we have much need of you  
these days of anxiety  
of men and women of severe words and intent  
so then Let us Laugh  
instead:  
there's too much sobriety  
too many of grave countenance

tear down the masks  
O Thalia, Muse of Comedy;  
let us hold up the mask of Comedy instead  
for all this seriousness and ambition of the world  
and the words and fire of Great Men of Ambition and Prophecy  
all that is but petty, vain and self-promotion;  
the world and all establishment  
is all laughable, ridiculous, plain comedy  
The Mask of Comedy is the Mirror of Truth;  
hold it up to the World  
O sacred Thalia, Muse of Comedy

Raj Arumugam

# O What Shall We Do With These Drunken Men?

1

Oh what shall we do  
what shall we do  
with these drunken men -  
like my very own darling  
Mike Hammer?

Last night  
I picked him up  
from outside the pub  
where he'd been drinking  
with his mates  
And in the car  
almost near our home  
he says: I love you  
And I say to him:  
Is that you talking  
or the beer?  
And he says  
like lightning:  
It's me talking.  
I'm talking to my beer.

2

Oh what shall we do  
what shall we do  
with these drunken men -  
like my very own darling  
Mike Hammer?  
I locked him in the car  
doused him with effluent water  
let him sleep there  
till he turns sober  
But it's 11am now and hot  
and sober or not,  
he's still asleep  
in the car  
and when I try and wake him up

he's still mumbling about love and beer

Oh what shall we do  
what shall we do  
with these drunken men -  
like my very own darling  
Mike Hammer?  
Maybe I should dunk him over a hill  
car and all  
till he turns mature, till he's sober

Raj Arumugam

# O, You Gentle Souls, Do Not Fear Four-Letter Words

O, do not fear  
four-letter words;  
you need not tremble  
at shallow vocabulary  
of deep penetrative words

do not quiver  
as if there's a blade  
held at your throat  
for someone uttered  
an indecent despised word

do not bring on hell  
because the reverence was broken  
by vowels and consonants  
that shaped into  
an explosive vacuum  
of notorious stench words

O, do not fear  
four-letter words;  
you need not tremble  
at shallow vocabulary  
of deep penetrative words

if you will  
look deep  
into your own mind  
if you see what  
goes on there  
then perhaps  
you'll understand  
why you recoil  
why you quiver  
and why you dump them

in the trash can for  
filthy dirty words

for a word is a word  
and it's only  
one's thoughts  
and common acceptance  
that makes words  
blue or purple

O, do not fear  
four-letter words;  
you need not tremble  
at shallow vocabulary  
of deep penetrative words

no you need not  
display the words  
at your door  
or mansion;  
you need not  
wear them  
like garlands  
or like a diamond ring  
and surely you need not  
fear them  
nor need your pulse beat faster  
(as when you're having sex)  
simply at the utterance  
of outcast four-letter words

O, so my dear gentle  
gentle souls,  
do not fear  
four-letter words;  
you need not tremble  
at shallow vocabulary  
of deep penetrative words

Raj Arumugam

# Observing The Trees

they are there;  
this is what is before one;  
one observes what is:  
one sees the shape and the spread  
or what is presented  
the contours  
the light and the order and the chaos;  
there is no commentary  
no comparison  
but being with what is before one;  
there is no theory or tradition  
or history;  
there is no naming of the species  
there is no categorization or motive;  
this is effortless  
and no memory is made:  
one sees what is

Raj Arumugam

# Occupy Mdp!

Occupy MDP!  
that's  
mom's and dad's place -  
you imbeciles!  
Occupy  
Mom's and Dad's place -  
they've made too much money!  
They've worked since  
they were twenty  
Looking after kids  
and saving money -  
being selfish  
no charity!  
just being plain greedy!  
Occupy MDP!  
Don't you see?  
Mom and Dad got too much money!  
Look at me -  
I'm twenty-eight  
going on twenty-nine -  
ain't got a penny  
ain't got a honey  
and Dad and Mom  
got too much in the kitty  
They put money in the bank!  
Damn! Don't you see?  
Mom and Dad are capitalists!  
Occupy MDP!  
So Dad and Mom  
thirty years  
they worked  
and raised kids  
and they've paid every cent on the house!  
Damn! Mom and Dad are capitalists!  
Damn! - they're bourgeoisie!  
Occupy MDP!  
Open their fridge- eat for free!  
Watch TV, use their internet  
and surf with glee -

Mom and Dad can pay every fee!  
Cos they're capitalists  
and money pigs –  
that's what they are,  
Mom and Dad  
So Occupy MDP!  
Lie in the couch  
and get your friends  
in the garden  
and trample on the beds of flowers -  
Damn! Can't you see?  
She goes to the hairdresser's;  
She goes to the pedicurist -  
Mom's a bourgeoisie!  
Drive Dad's car  
while he snores  
who cares if you burn the tiers  
just drive at speed  
for a good adrenalin police chase -  
Old Dad will pay the fines anyway!  
Damn – the police are capitalists!  
Dad's a capitalist!  
Mum's a bourgeoisie!  
Come on - O youth of the World  
It does not matter if you are past  
twenty or thirty -  
All youth unite at this cry:  
Occupy MDP!  
Occupy Mom's and Dad's!  
O brave Youth of the World -  
Occupy MDP!

Raj Arumugam

# Oedipus-Like

(i)

Yes, I left but I am no further  
away from you and formations and life  
than I was before  
The physical journey and remove make things and events seem real  
but I traveled a great distance really a long time ago.  
I wish you well and, except for the occasional  
(fair comment, as journalists might say) bitter word  
that even you will allow one who lived in your midst  
and is so removed, I speak no ill and  
every time I hear of you or am made reluctantly to speak of you  
I feel my distance. I feel again strongly  
how far I have always been  
to all things close to me.

(ii)

I cannot say how it happened but  
a long time ago, so far away I cannot  
salvage when precisely from the ocean of memory of you,  
I traveled far within; I became isolated and alone and  
could not say a word any more to you.  
You might say, in rejecting home he rejected everything;  
for a man who can't fit at home  
will not - (I know you will not use the word probably) -  
find anywhere a home.

(iii)

You might say  
again  
The man who rejects his home  
rejects all places; the man who felt alone  
in his own home will feel so everywhere.

And so I carry this with me; no, it is not this  
place's fault, nor your fault that I first felt that way  
but it is a curse that perhaps I drew upon myself Oedipus-like  
that I should wander the terrain of the earth  
isolated, alienated, unconnected and feeling alone.

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Of A Distant Place

I was lying down in the sofa  
thinking over things  
when the mind settled in  
on a distant place;  
it thought of how we used to get across  
at a particular junction  
and it produced pictures  
from many angles  
of the road, the lights and the people -  
and in a flash I was there  
in this far away place.  
Then I was suddenly in a dark tube  
and it took me a while  
to slip out of this tricky mind  
and I was right here.  
Right here  
in a specific time  
and specific circumstance.

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Of Loose Mind

Preliminary

"He who curses/him is cursed" - my mum, words on her deathbed and uttered while she was still of sound mind....though now I have my doubts....  
of loose mind

## OF LOOSE MIND

Last night

I shouted curses

at others

that they may be of loose mind;

though my mom, ages ago, had said

in her imperfect English:

"He who curses

him is cursed" -

but O it appears

I've become more blessed since last night I cursed

for this morning

when I put on my pants

I found it over my head;

when I put on my shirt

I realized I'd dressed my chair to work

this afternoon

I kissed my boss

and she sent me home -

no, not to her home and bed

not to mine either

but to a Home for the Crazyed

this night when I went to sleep

I dreamed God sent another great deluge

but my wife -  
she can never face reality -  
she woke me up  
into her dream of my piss in bed  
and though I warned:  
'It's a great flood!  
Let's run! '  
she said: 'No, you wipe this!  
Or I'll make you drink your piss! '

Ah, since last night  
I cursed  
that the world may go loose of mind  
I've never been  
I've found  
more blessed and possessed  
of greater perspicuity of mind  
O, a blessing for a curse  
a blessing for a curse...  
Never mind, you know, what my illiterate mum said

Raj Arumugam

# Oh Dr Poets - You Can Dropp The Doctor, Thanks

I've spoken of this before  
but it must be said again -  
when you come to a poetry site  
you don't need your academic  
or medical titles  
and we can do without a hierarchical mindset  
So you can dropp your Dr, thanks  
It wasn't Dr Shakespeare was it?  
It wasn't Dr Keats was it?  
It wasn't Dr T.S. Eliot was it?  
It wasn't Dr Emily Dickinson was it?  
It wasn't Dr Kalidas was it?  
Your poem can speak  
on its own  
and your name will be more memorable  
naked and humble

and if we ever need a Doctor  
we'll call at the clinic  
or in the narrow corridors of the University  
but poetry knows no rank and title  
so, hey, Mr Dr Poet -  
you can dropp the Doctor, thanks

---

The system here insists on having the word  
spelled as D R O P P  
and not as D R O P

Raj Arumugam

# Oh God! Another Poem On God!

Oh God!  
Not another  
poem on God!

Raj Arumugam

# Oh Please, Let's Get This Right Always

oh, please  
let's get this right always:  
the persona is not the poet;  
the 'I' – yes, the first person -  
is not always  
the writer

you see  
(have you not seen already?)  
the poet is like an actor  
and creeps up into the flesh  
of a character  
and speaks in the voice of the persona  
so that if the poet pretends to be a donkey  
you should not join him in braying at the moon;  
if the poet sings:  
'see I am a fish  
see how I glide  
in water  
like a ballerina on stage' –  
by Jove, you should not ready yourself  
with your fishing rod;  
if the poet pretends to be a convict  
you should not have to alert Interpol;  
if the poet talks about how his wife knocked him over  
and his mother died the next day  
and the poet's brother slept with his wife  
really,  
there's no need for condolences  
or outrage or commiseration;  
if the poet pretends in one verse to be a woman  
and is a man in the next –  
really, you need not suspect  
the poet cross dresses  
or has a problem with sexual identity;  
and if the poet says  
'see I'm a rabbit  
rabbit, rabbit;

hop, hop, hop with me  
I'm a rabbit' –  
really, you needn't take it too seriously  
and ready your bowl and spices for rabbit stew  
or take out your cameras for Playboy pictures;  
though, if I should ever pretend to be Obama  
well, you could pretend to be the President of your country  
and give me a Presidential welcome:  
that way we'll both play the persona game

you see  
(have you not noticed?)  
the first stage  
in a poet's life  
is talking about oneself  
(some  
like damaged mortals  
are stuck in that  
all their lives):  
and then comes often  
when the poet steps into the shoes of other people and other lives...  
the poet may pretend to be someone or something else...  
for if verse does not move the one  
into the many  
what use is poetry?

so - oh, please  
let's get this right always:  
'I' is not always the poet  
and the poet not always the 'I'...

Raj Arumugam

# Ok I Know

OK I know  
I'm not clever  
nor am I pretty  
(or handsome  
as the case may be)  
I'm not rich  
nor am I cool  
I'm neither here  
nor there  
OK I know  
I'm not savvy  
nor am I distinguished  
but hey -  
never mind about me  
wait till  
I tell you  
about you  
it won't be very sexy  
be you John, Dick or Gan  
or Asha, Loo or Mary  
cos that's when we each start  
the descent of our vocabulary

Raj Arumugam

# Old Love; New Love

young love

he's the best thing in my life;  
he's the angel  
the music I've waited for all my life;  
this is the man nature dictates  
I'll open my vulva to

old love

twenty-five years of married life,  
three children and now what have I had from him?  
I keep things together;  
all the years it has been this way,  
and pain;  
and even the children say to him: 'We are with mother'.

There is no love; it is closed

Raj Arumugam

# Old Man Making Shoes

Ah, my feet hurt these days  
walking on these hills and slopes  
and it's been seven days  
since my straw shoes were thinned and with holes  
and become tattered and absolutely useless.  
I remember I was walking in the fields and  
I could feel my feet touch the ground and I said:  
Curse you, you silly straw shoes!  
Is that how long you last?  
Is that how you let me down  
when I need you most?  
Well, like humans I have known,  
and so my straw shoes;  
they too tire of their friends and relatives  
and they too feel the burden  
and inconvenience  
of serving an old parent.  
But I've just thrown old shoes away  
as one throws old memories and the past away.  
Let me make myself new straw shoes  
as I sit below these trees and away from the crowd  
and with a little peace  
for an old man like me  
I can be quiet in this shade  
perhaps talk to myself or sing some far-off song  
and make myself  
straw shoes, new ones  
and I'll walk again with new shoes  
as one may drop, discard  
and put away all old memories  
and walk afresh and anew  
with no shadow of the past over one's head.  
Let me make simple straw shoes;  
that will suffice, just for the purpose;  
nothing fancy, just so to be able to walk comfortably  
as I go about my work  
on the hills and slopes and the fields...  
that is all one needs...  
...an old man like me just making his own straw shoes...

Raj Arumugam

# Old Man Poet

Old Man Poet

you've grown a rich self  
while your body grows weary  
and your vision fades;  
all your friends

Old Man Poet

have hoarded silver and gold  
and all you've done  
is to sing and grow old

you've not accumulated  
and you've not gathered  
though the dust gathers on  
your scroll of poems;  
your songs are stolen and sung even now  
in distant villages

but passed on in new names

Ah, Old Man Poet

you've discovered too late  
and don't care though  
nobody pays for poetry  
and nobody reads such stuff  
unless it's flattery and free;  
and though your songs may live  
after you die

and they might sing it over your grave

and though villagers may sing it

as they sow and reap

it will all go in the wind

anonymous and unknown

all that when you die, when you die

Old Man Poet, Old Man Poet

but now, just days more

when you are frail

who will feed you, who will take care of you

Old Man Poet, Old Man Poet?

ah, Old Man Poet

your neighbors call you useless

your friends ask you if you need handouts  
and your wife mocks you  
and your children pour scorn in your empty bowls  
and still you sing your songs  
and you sit in marketplace corners  
and you sing with your er hu  
and still you sing of sunsets and sunrise  
and the rise of empires and the end of loves  
but who will feed you, Old Man Poet?  
what will you do when  
they put you in a corner when you're too weak  
and there's no one to wipe the piss off your pants?

Old Man Poet

you've grown a rich self  
while your body grows weary  
and your vision fades;  
all your friends  
Old Man Poet  
have hoarded silver and gold  
and all you've done  
is to sing and grow old

Raj Arumugam

# Old Mary Brings In The Mail

Old Mary  
eighty and five  
goes walking  
in the neighbourhood;  
she comes back home  
with the mail  
she's collected from  
every mail box

"I've brought in the mail, "  
says Old Mary  
eighty and five  
"Nobody else in this house  
ever does that!  
Responsibility  
is missing in this house!  
I'm always the one  
to collect the mail! "

"But Grandma! " says little Sue  
"that's mail from  
our neighbourhood! "

"There's another thing  
missing in this house, "  
sneers Old Mary  
"That's gratitude! "

Raj Arumugam

# On Hard Land

we walk now  
across the lands Oedipus crossed  
in his exile;  
the same desolation in which  
Antigone found the corpse of her brother

It is the land of the damned,  
the stretch and vastness in which  
the displaced find their confines

And we lift our hearts and eyes to the skies  
but only the vultures are there  
to pluck out eyes and devour hearts

Raj Arumugam

# On Our Conditioning

there is no seeing, no clear seeing; we do not want to see  
We rather have glasses with rainbow colors on them,  
so what we see is seen through them  
Why see for oneself?  
it's far easier  
far better, much more comfortable  
to get in a group  
and believe in what you are told to believe  
I mean it's too much effort to see for oneself: why bother  
when people give you free rainbow glasses and tell you  
to see through that?  
so we stand at the bottom of the tree  
and we listen to the man who climbs up the tree  
and he shouts his description  
and he tells you what he sees  
and he gives you a complete description  
of the world he sees  
beyond the hills and mountains  
and he comes down  
and you've got his description –  
and we all say:  
"Write his words down  
and this we shall believe  
for this is the Complete Description  
of the Truth seen  
by our Mighty Seer...  
and this we believe in...."  
The description, the word  
becomes the thing;  
nobody climbs trees themselves–  
why should they?  
they've got the Complete Description.  
and it's added on  
and illuminated  
and passed on and on and repeated  
until no one questions  
and anyone who questions  
is blind and does not see  
You must not question authority.

There is no clarity  
because the group  
writes down everything for you  
in a book  
(Oh no, it's not from the group;  
it comes from High Above)  
and you read the book  
and you repeat and repeat  
until the brain's programmed  
and the book talks in you  
and the group shouts in you  
and you do not think  
everything's done for you:  
it's safer this way  
because this way all the promises, one thinks,  
will come true  
So we all book a place through our group's book  
and let the group do the talking and let the group  
do the thinking and we just have faith and beliefs and dogma  
and the promise and our greed  
So we never see what actually is and we see  
but through the tradition, the revelation, the doctrine,  
the rainbow glasses we see what we are told to see  
We'd rather be slaves  
in the mind  
for it's safer that way,  
safer in groups that will lead us on  
than do the thinking, it's too much effort  
Ah, clarity is too frightening;  
it's much easier to believe  
and to be comforted by the Book  
and to hang on to badges  
and to hang on to labels  
than to drop all beliefs and to see what actually is we all  
want to go to Heaven, don't we?  
With all the promised rewards but if one could put aside  
the description, and the rewards, and the rainbow glasses

Raj Arumugam

# On Planet Urrrgh

on Planet Urrrgh  
they don't go: Brrrrp!  
instead it sounds: Sluuurp!

there are no people there  
just plain blue shadows  
that enjoy media discourse on  
when the light will bring back  
the substantial bodies they never knew

and on Planet Urrrgh  
they don't say: I love you!  
they say: I love I!  
they don't wake up  
they crawl and creep  
and never go to sleep;  
they don't say: Good day!  
they just mumble: Oh, no - not me again!

on Planet Urrrgh  
they don't have fancy words  
so they call a spade a spade  
so the females and males don't make love  
they just enjoy sex

on Planet Urrrgh  
their vocabulary consists  
of just five words:  
Sluuurp!  
Iiiithnuu  
Urrrrgh  
Prrrrghhhjjuu  
Dooohnttrrre  
which loosely translated in earthling language are:  
Burp!  
I love I!  
Oh do that again, baby!  
And again!  
O Shit!

and if you ask me  
how I'd know all of this  
about despicable Planet Urrrgh  
that's cos I'm from adorable Planet Trrrrkkkik;  
and if you dispute  
what I say about Planet Urrrgh  
then I say unto you: Trrrrkkkik!

Raj Arumugam

# On Poetry

1

poetry can be  
like a sky filled with wrangling clouds  
or as a sky without a wisp

2

in poetry there are no  
clichés in thought and phrase;  
and what is left there is  
the resplendent and the living

3

poetry leaves one  
rich inside  
and ordinary outside

4

the fool defines poetry  
and poetry defies all definitions

5

poetry entertains, inspires;  
poetry tickles, distracts, and shapes and frees -  
but its true intent, no one knows

6

many lines, and countless lines  
many pages, and thick volumes  
don't make poetry

7

if one had no coins  
one cannot buy bread;  
but not all the world's wealth  
can bring you poetry

8

Oh no!  
Not another love poem!  
Oh no!  
Not another poem about oneself!

9

rhyme, technique and meter  
and tricks of prosody  
don't make poetry: passion does

Raj Arumugam

# On The Edge Of The Seat

you're not going are you  
today to the edge of your seat  
to the corners of insanity?  
to the corners at the cinema  
nearest the exit  
to run off when the demons come  
to sleep in the day  
below your bed  
so the rabbits cannot find you;  
and then go for a walk  
in the cold of the night  
mumbling like Lady Macbeth  
maybe now running a fast-food restaurant  
and asking each tree in your garden:  
Would you like some  
manure with that?  
you're not going to Extremity Town  
today, are you?  
to tell the Mayor  
he's taken extreme measures  
opening an animal sanctuary;  
would he please  
open an abattoir instead?  
Oh you're not going  
are you  
to the bus-stop with a stopwatch  
to time how long it takes for the passengers  
to kill the driver?  
Oh you're not going are you  
in the day or this evening or anytime tonight  
to see if Jimmy the car mechanic  
has diversified on your insistence  
and if he now sells  
in his garage  
lingerie and toothpaste for that special night  
and salads and beer and peanuts  
for first dates only  
O you are going to have a good quiet sleep aren't you  
and you won't offer any surprises to the world?

not today?

Raj Arumugam

# On The Pleasures Of Being Bald

OK, I can no longer say  
I've got a receding hairline  
and sure everyone can see  
the plain fact, the bald fact -  
but there are pleasures, you know

I've saved heaps on hair gel  
and shampoos and conditioners  
and I can actually feel the cool air  
(no one can call me hot-headed)  
and the great thing now  
is everyone says with all honesty  
I'm sexy as Sean Connery  
(what they say behind my back  
is none of my business)

but the best blessing of all  
is I never need to look for my comb  
(I confess I was always misplacing it)  
and so I don't need to reach for my wife's comb  
and so she lies as still as a pussycat  
and she doesn't need to roar  
like a lioness  
first thing in the morning:  
Don't you dare touch my comb!

Ah, the blessings that flow in eminent baldness

Raj Arumugam

# On The Poet

1

Shakespeare and Kalidas and Homer  
had no need to flaunt qualifications  
so don't trumpet so much of yours

2

in this kingdom  
where one writes  
there is no seniority, each is equal

3

it is not important to be a poet;  
the thing is to bring the poetry

4

one may win titles  
and may be crowned Poet Laureate:  
but only time points out  
the poet from the crumpet

5

none of your self  
and none of your importance here:  
just poetry, if you can,  
poetry is all that's needed

6

the writer who repeats  
inaptly

word, phrase and concept read or heard  
comes second-hand into a market for bad verse

7  
one writes;  
one does not fill one's mind with the words:  
I want to achieve

8  
one writes and  
the self disappears  
and what is left is clarity

9  
expand your understanding of the self –  
it includes the world

10  
if one had no coins  
one cannot buy bread;  
but not all the world's wealth  
can bring you poetry

11  
celebrate your locality  
but go beyond the parochial;  
go beyond the region's arrogance  
to reach minds across cyberspace

12

the fool speaks of having  
written the most number of poems in the world;  
and the same fool speaks of quantity

13  
we rarely succeed  
if one does not go  
beyond oneself

14  
you wink, you twinkle  
you want recognition;  
you write and you publish  
and you want to win titles –  
and so poetry eludes you always

15  
a hundred titles, a hundred prizes  
a hundred spots of fame  
and international renown  
all these pale, all pale  
before a single line of luminosity

16  
the ambitious write pathetic verse;  
the lover yields  
and poetry embraces such a one

Raj Arumugam

# On The Poet And Poetry: The Complete Text

1

Shakespeare and Kalidas and Homer  
had no need to flaunt qualifications  
so don't trumpet too much of yours

2

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where one writes  
there is no seniority, each is equal

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and none of your importance here:  
just poetry, if you can,  
poetry is all that's needed

6

poetry can be  
like a sky filled with wrangling clouds

or as a sky without a wisp

7

in poetry one wakes from dreams  
and it may yet be  
that one's wakefulness is itself but a dream

8

in poetry there are no  
clichés in thought and phrase;  
and what is left there is  
the resplendent and the living

9

the writer who repeats  
inaptly  
word, phrase and concept read or heard  
comes second-hand into a market for bad verse

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one does not fill one's mind with the words:  
I want to achieve

11

one writes and  
the self disappears  
and what is left is understanding

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poetry leaves one  
rich inside  
and ordinary outside

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Not another love poem!  
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Not another poem about oneself!

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before a single line of luminosity

25

the ambitious write pathetic verse;  
the lover yields  
and poetry embraces such a one

Raj Arumugam

# On Unpaved Roads

I'm still walking unpaved roads  
where the shadows hide all who walk  
still in a quiet rage and all thoughts subdued  
unknown, unacknowledged, unaccepted  
without space and enclosed  
inhabiting a Kafkaesque inhibiting world  
with a unique identification number  
and chasing paper -  
posed like Rodin's statue  
but in truth an emptied scarecrow

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Once In Alienation

once I wrote poems  
that came from alienation  
as the outsider  
as one in the divide;  
now each writes itself  
with its own smile

Raj Arumugam

# One Comes To This Place: Inspired By Mt Fuji From Umezawa By Hokusai Katsushika

...one comes to this place, to this view, at this scene quite abruptly...a long walk, a leisurely walk, yet almost breathless...one arrives and one gazes at what nature offers, at what nature presents before one...no, just what nature is on its own...

lonely, away from the world

one thought to venture further

and walked an uncommon path...

and breathless one comes to this scene...and just sees what is before one...it is not arranged or planned or ordered – but one just meets the clouds and the cold and the birds, and Mount Fuji...one meets without greetings or formalities; one is ignored and one is nothing here but another creature...

nature a geisha

who smiles and plays

and awakens one's senses...

and one stands before the birds, and the fog and the fields and one's self disappears...one's self is meaningless here...one's self is insignificant here...there is just what is here and one's identity disappears...and one's concerns disappear...perhaps here one sees what one is before one's descent into the everyday world...here you don't talk about your philosophies and you don't bring in your religions and your atheism and your ideas; they are insignificant here; here you don't bring in your quarrels and your victories and your memories: how wrong others are; how right you are...the clouds spit at your thoughts...here you are nothing...at this scene you are just a part of the scene.....

an original self

not defined, not conditioned

but corrupt by one's world...

but here like a stork, like a bird, like the cloud, mind clear and mind empty – unlearning in an instant – unconditioned in an instant – seeing the clarity beyond the concerns and needs and wants and aggressions and self-importance...nothing matters now...one sees...there is no one within...no self housed in this shell...just forces that come and interact in a world that loves the play and the illusion...

without self

without conditioning

all agitated forces stilled...

and one sees it all in this abrupt and unexpected meeting ...and geisha nature says:

we have loved freely

without formalities  
without rigidity of spouses  
and in this illicit love one sees what it is to be free....go; it is time...one must  
return; one turns and one walks back...to corruption...and the conventions of the  
self that is in constant activity....but to this scene, this place, this freedom one  
may return again...the geisha will wait patiently...and here is true  
freedom...beyond all mental formations and beyond one's conditioning...go in  
peace...

Raj Arumugam

# One Day At School, Korea (1801)

I don't like school, Sir  
most venerable teacher;  
and though you are kind, Sir  
and all my classmates too  
and you all help me study and learn  
like you make me know  
the first five characters in the alphabet  
but the moment I am out of school  
all I can remember  
are the rice-cakes and sweets and the dumplings my mother makes

and true, Sir  
most venerable teacher  
you teach me the numbers  
and I can count from 1 to 5  
when I am in class  
but when I'm out  
I love the toys my father brings  
and I play with the wooden toy soldiers  
and I love the ducks and the clay horses;  
and I really can't remember the first five letters  
or the first five characters  
when I lie in bed

and when I am back in class Sir  
dragged in by Old Madam Toothless Bong  
who always knows where I am wherever I try to run  
I can't remember anything anyone taught me, Sir  
most venerable teacher...

I know Sir  
all of you have spoken to me  
and my dad and my mom  
and Old Madam Toothless Bong  
and all my friends in class  
I must study so I can go to the city and find work  
but all I want to do, Sir  
most venerable teacher  
is to play and eat and sleep when it is time

and one day, Sir  
most venerable teacher  
(I know you worry about me)  
when I'm grown and big  
I'll make toys and I'll sell them  
and make money for me and my family;  
and I'll make all those sweets and dumplings  
and feed my family...  
so please, Sir  
most venerable teacher  
because I don't like school  
and I can't remember anything  
do not worry about me and let me go to the fields now  
and I shall grow to be tall as the trees  
and as rich as the rice fields...

---

poem based on painting: "Seodang"  
(private elementary school in town)  
by Kim Hong-do, Danwon (1745-1806)

Raj Arumugam

# One Hot Blonde

I think  
you're one hot blonde,  
Sun babe;  
on this side of the universe  
no one's as hot as you

Raj Arumugam

# One More Poem To Increase The Numbers

one more poem, baby,  
one more poem;  
one more just to  
increase my numbers

just another idea,  
any cliché, any tired conceit  
any damned thing that gets my fancy;  
just a few words  
just a few lines  
or maybe I'll increase it to more  
and more  
and dead words and a few odd ones too  
and arrange those into something  
shapes and sizes  
like what lines  
look like in the old poetry books

one more poem, baby,  
one more poem;  
one more just to  
increase my numbers

and so I've got what I call a poem  
that I can post on a poetry site  
that will make it one more  
and help increase my numbers  
the number of poems I've got posted  
and that appears against my name:  
the more the better; the more the mightier...  
it's like the stock exchange of poetry,  
sweetie -  
good times measured by the number of clicks;  
one more word,  
one more line, one more poem -  
who cares a damn what the poem is about?

so what if I don't have really something worth to say?  
all I want, I'm content  
if I've got one more  
that increases my numbers;  
let it multiply  
like rabbits,  
O my bunny baby;  
it's a sort of entering  
the Guinness Book of World Records,  
darling meat pie:  
oh, for another one  
just to increase my numbers

one more poem, baby,  
one more poem;  
one more just to  
increase my numbers

Raj Arumugam

# One Must Not Regret

one must not regret  
the days gone by  
for though  
all the years past  
may appear  
placed so full in one's open palms  
rolled in a ball  
of hard dirt and carbon  
and all pressures  
yet one may find it  
seeing within  
precious and radiant  
as the earth's diamonds  
in all their uniqueness

Raj Arumugam

# One On The Highway

driving on the highway  
just one alone in the car  
there's just one  
and the earth  
and the trees that lean over  
and the grass that creeps over  
and the blue sky and the warm air;  
just these with the one who drives alone  
but all together

Raj Arumugam

# One Rolls On According To One's Conditioning

conditioning, when alive

see how rarely there's clarity  
but each is conditioned  
each is shaped, branded  
to think one is  
British or Chinese or Aussie or Russian  
or to think one's African or Mexican  
or whatever else transient concoction  
geography and politics and history  
and particularities  
and peculiarities produce  
as one clings to a formula, to a Book, to beliefs or non-beliefs  
and a system  
and so one thinks of oneself as a Christian, or Hindu  
or Muslim or Sufi or Buddhist  
or Daoist or Shinto  
or Atheist or Universalist...  
or whatever else transient concoction  
geography and politics and history  
and particularities  
and peculiarities produce

O sweethearts  
you roll according  
to your conditioning  
and so you lead your lives  
and find yourself in outcomes  
shaped by beliefs,  
reactions  
and the vortex you are sucked into

conditioning, as one rolls on

1  
there's one  
who found himself in True Heaven  
and he congratulated himself:  
I'm in True Heaven  
for I've always worshiped the True God

2  
and some other who had worshiped  
the Eagle God  
landed in Eagle Heaven  
and congratulated oneself:  
I knew I was right  
and everyone else wrong

3  
and even the guys  
who had no form for their God  
but held on to their Book and Verse  
they too ended up in a Heaven  
shaped in their beliefs and conditioning

4  
and so the Christian wakes up  
in a Christian Heaven  
and a Buddhist in a Loka  
and a Hindu in a Swarga  
and each holy person  
in a heaven of one's conditioning –  
and each sees the other  
in the afterlife, and screams:  
Hey! That's not fair!  
How come the other guy  
found Heaven too

when I always believed  
only I and my kind  
would go to Heaven?

O sweethearts  
you roll according  
to your conditioning  
and so you lead your lives  
and find yourself in outcomes  
shaped by beliefs,  
reactions  
and the vortex you are sucked into

Raj Arumugam

# One World Plan From Planet54x>2: +\*8

Earthlings:

We have created a World

One World

One Language

One Way

in All Things

One True God

One Thought

One Government

One Will

We have created this

and we will extend

this benefit

to Planet Earth:

Not necessarily through agreement

but bringing all things to concord

to the One Way

Raj Arumugam

# One Worries About Age

one worries about age  
and how things are different  
and how time changes things in one's mind and life  
(one sees many, hears many  
in the lives of those 'good old days'  
in the lies of 'in those days')  
and seeing change, sudden or gradual  
change even in one eve, in an artificial division of time  
between one year and the next  
how the world seems another world  
previously bitter now sweet  
or now bitter and previously sweet  
or just cold, cold and damned all years  
after reading a book or after a discourse  
a sermon or a revelation  
or simply through experience and time:  
is there a perception though  
(not revealed, not sanctified, not given, not received,  
without established authority)  
holding no memory, no congealing of thoughts and hurts  
and resentments, sweet memories and events  
and without rolled-up thought and the past or the future;  
a mind past conditioning  
a seeing that is timeless and therefore free within;  
an insight that is true and clear  
and so time or an event has no power to alter or color

and time and thought bring bitterness or nostalgia  
and the elusive comforts of altered memories  
and the conclave of selective portions of the past:  
is there a seeing though that is plain clarity?

Raj Arumugam

# One's Solitude And Peace

it is that time  
as the sun sets  
as the chaos of the day recedes  
and the sanctuary of the evening  
is ours;  
it is that time of quiet and peace  
when the insistent world  
withdraws like the sun  
and one's mind is as wide  
as the space the gentle light fills;  
and it is time for solitude and silence

Raj Arumugam

# One's Inheritance

By daybreak  
we'll be awake  
and inherit the space  
all round the bed

After breakfast  
we'll be full  
and inherit the house  
and the neighbourhood

Post-lunch  
will see us inherit the city  
and all its streets  
and all public amenities

Back in the office  
before the computer screens  
we'll inherit all bank accounts,  
all lumped into one big amount

In the evening  
as we travel home  
we'll inherit the world  
and all nations shall be ours

After dinner  
as we drink our wine  
and finish yesterday's dessert  
we'll inherit the cosmos,  
the wide universe

As we lie in bed  
after all that  
we'll inherit the earth  
we'll inherit the earth  
as much in length  
as our bed, as our bed

Raj Arumugam

# One-Word Murder

one word made her turn to murder

Raj Arumugam

# Online Descendants

online  
poetry  
becomes competition  
and tinged with some aggression  
with top of the charts postings;  
and it's all democratic  
vote-bartering included  
and with ratings from 1 to 10;  
poetry begs  
number of clicks  
and poets master  
publicity stunts  
and scratch-back  
love affairs;  
but let us not  
be hasty and  
frown  
on this  
for poets before cyberspace  
be it Homer or Tu Fu  
or Kalidas  
were probably as human  
as their descendents

Raj Arumugam

# Online Iq Tests

my brain's like a chicken  
marinated  
and ready for the roast  
my ideas ancient  
and my thoughts mediocre  
my speech an inaudible mumble  
and still these IQ gods follow me  
through websites and various incarnations  
always with IQ tests on offer;  
but Oh why do you want to test my lack of IQ,  
O ye popup gods  
O ye pursuing gods in cyberspace  
what pleasure do you get in testing IQs  
or, in my case, the lack of it?  
there are many geniuses out there no doubt to play fun games  
and to tick and click and to complete surveys you devise  
but as for me,  
a confirmed idiot,  
I'd rather sit and watch the clouds move past in the sky

Raj Arumugam

# Ooooooops!

oops! I might have said something amiss  
wandered into un-chartered territory  
unknowingly mentioned a subject that's taboo  
unwittingly mentioned things  
better left in the unknown depths of the mind  
ooooops! I might have picked the wrong subject  
not deliberately, but really innocent  
and everybody looks the other way  
and some have their anger suppressed  
and some laugh within  
at how foolish the innocent ones can be;  
and some despise the newcomer  
so awkward and untutored  
ooooops!  
I must have chosen the wrong topic  
one from the secret list of avoid-these-subjects  
and anyone who picks one of these  
is as sore-thumb as one who digs his nose in public;  
really  
otherwise how I do explain this awkward inconvenient feeling?  
just me, maybe?  
feeling strange when everybody else  
didn't notice  
or no one feels feel anything out of the ordinary?  
what's wrong with you?  
ooooops! I'm socially inapt  
and low in EQ and incompetent in social skills  
and everybody round must be laughing  
at this nervousness, this Mr Bean clumsiness, this silliness  
donkey amateur in the context; childish, foolish and downright silly....  
OOOOPs! I think I'd better be quiet  
and sit down unnoticed in a corner with my coffee and pretend to read the  
papers  
till it all blows away or I don't feel out of place  
and feel again normal .....

ooooops! I made so much noise dragging this chair and dropping my drink,  
be a bit more discreet, you silly bug,  
be wise, adult-like;  
be grim and quiet

and make wise pronouncements  
with a definitive  
that's the end-of discussion look  
once in awhile.....  
ooopps! no...who me? no...no...I didn't say anything....  
it's just an old tune from my village  
I'm just humming to myself to keep me awake...

Raj Arumugam

# Origin Of Poetry: The Savage Beginnings

the primitives, the savages, the precursors, the ancestors  
they crossed the savannahs  
and the wild mountains and the fractured earth;  
they hid in caves and shrank in fear in the midst of strange cries  
and in the midst of swift, abrupt monsters that raged in the dark  
and that disappeared with the young;  
and in the day  
they plucked berries and dug into flesh  
and threw rocks on beasts  
and licked the blood off maimed creatures  
and bit into the raw breasts of such victims  
and washed the fetuses in springs  
before feeding their own living young;  
they ate, they secured themselves  
and the male and female of the savages had ferocious sex  
and there was infanticide, and there was incest  
and each slept, each seemingly satisfied:  
on one such night  
she woke alone and she saw the bodies all around her;  
and she heard the gnashing and the groans and  
a man half asleep, afraid and in pain; and she could smell the urine and the  
stench of a dying elder  
and she saw the saliva and the unruly armpits and the exposed groins  
and she was filled with fear  
with the helplessness  
and only disgust stayed awake with her;  
and she walked to the mouth of the cave and she saw the moon  
and in her loneliness  
and in her meaninglessness  
she gazed at the gentle light:  
she knew this; she had felt this many times:  
a song was born in her heart –  
a song without music, a lyric without words...  
thus began poetry

Raj Arumugam

# Origin Of Poetry: Valmiki

Valmiki saw the trees  
and the green hills  
and he heard the birds sing  
while the scents of the flowers pervaded his being:  
Valmiki was there  
in that place, in that event

Within, Valmiki wondered at  
the range of emotions  
and witnessed how the self and the world related  
and within he wondered too what beauty is...  
and Valmiki felt a stirring within...

Walking, Valmiki saw an arrow fly in his paradise  
and a bird fell dead:  
anger arose in Valmiki's heart  
and he uttered impromptu a sloka to the hunter  
who desired the flesh of the bird to appease his hunger

Valmiki wondered within of this force of words  
of this utterance and this rhythm  
that gave form to the rasas and stirrings within  
What is this?  
rolled the words within;  
and within too was the answer:  
this is kavita, poetry that rises within  
as natural as leaves and fruit come to trees

Raj Arumugam

# Our Lives

the drives power one  
and pleasant things are remembered;  
an identity is evolved in pleasures  
and pain makes its mark;  
and the yearnings create the idea of permanence  
and a long tradition of tribe and nation  
engenders all our illusions:  
so we sing, dearest love,  
of purity and the stars;  
and so we sing, dearest love,  
of ideals and creed;  
and so we sing, dearest love,  
of grandeur and passion  
and so our lives are played  
amongst clouds and visions

Raj Arumugam

# Our Obedient, Respectful Daughter

our daughter  
if nothing else  
is so respectful  
of her elders and so,  
consequently,  
she is obedient

why, just the other day  
her teacher asks  
in Nature revision:  
What do you call the outside of a tree?  
and my little girl so honest  
which is something else she is  
confesses her ignorance

Bark, Susan  
says the teacher  
offering the answer;  
and Susan  
ever obedient and respectful  
she goes:  
Bow-wow!  
Bow-wow!

Oh, our Susan  
she's so respectful and obedient  
we're so, so proud of her

Raj Arumugam

# Our Walk Even In Silence

It will be good now  
the two of us to walk  
through the rye fields  
the trees standing above  
as guides  
to the golden promise  
of the end of the walk

come, let us go now  
on our walk in customary silence  
side by side

and though we may not  
have much to say  
the silences and the air  
and the scents that arise in the fields  
these and the clear open skies  
that cover the lands  
when we emerge at the other end  
will give us hope,  
fill us with cheer

when we emerge at the other end

Raj Arumugam

# Out Of Business (Dark Humor)

OK, dearest staff,  
for the last time  
shut the doors  
and turn off the lights  
and for the first time ever  
stick up the sign inside:  
CLOSED:  
OUT of BUSINESS

no, no – not CLOSED,  
or back in seconds  
but  
CLOSED:  
OUT OF BUSINESS  
as in  
not to be opened again  
and thank you very much,  
please don't come back  
we won't be here  
as we're so, so  
OUT OF BUSINESS

the Boss eats  
baked beans  
and the Spouse  
fights with the cat  
over leftovers;  
and the teenage daughter's pregnant  
and the son's on bail –  
and the Bank  
wants the house  
and the staff? -  
they just got stuffed

so stick the sign  
on the inside

of the glass entrance  
so everyone can see:  
CLOSED:  
OUT OF BUSINESS  
the Boss eats  
baked beans  
and the spouse  
fights with the cat  
for leftovers  
and so let's each go on their own  
back to what we got  
in these Dickensian hard times  
when the whole street's  
CLOSED:  
OUT OF BUSINESS

Raj Arumugam

# Owl Hoots And Grasshopper Sings

Owl slept in the tree's hollow  
but the silly Grasshopper  
on the branch outside  
made incessant noise

'Kind Sir, ' said Owl,  
'would you stop singing  
and allow me to sleep?  
I'm nocturnal  
and sleep by day  
and so I need some quiet now.'

Grasshopper  
looked proud  
and rubbed its hind femurs  
against its forewings  
and it said:  
'Ah, Sir Owl -  
Eminent Naturalists have come  
to record me make my most melodious songs  
and they kept away, if you must know,  
from your uncouth hooting!  
So I will continue singing  
and you may live in envy if you like.'

'Oh it is most true, '  
said Owl.  
'You sing most wonderfully  
and I but screech.  
But come in and I have  
a potion  
that the Goddess of Song  
has just given me  
that will soften my hooting  
and bring your song to perfection.  
You already sing like a sensation,  
O Highly Sought-After Grasshopper -  
you'll be even more appreciated after....'

And straight Grasshopper  
with a magnificent leap  
jumped to Owl's home;  
and straight Owl ate the singing insect  
and indeed Grasshopper  
was even more appreciated after....

And it is whispered in the forests  
Owl's hooting improved  
due to a certain potion  
Owl had acquired  
from the Goddess of Song

Raj Arumugam

# Paper And Scissors

1

Snip! Snip!  
says the scissors  
Ouch! Ouch!  
says the paper  
Snip! Snip!  
says the scissors  
Ouch! Ouch!  
says the paper

2

Be quiet and still!  
says the scissors  
It's for your own good

Yeah? says the paper  
Have you ever had  
anyone cut you up like that?

3

Snip! Snip!  
says the scissors  
Ouch! Ouch!  
says the paper  
Snip! Snip!  
says the scissors  
Ouch! Ouch!  
says the paper

4

There, says the scissors  
I'm done  
Cut you up square and neat  
You're a homemade notepad now  
ready to be used many times over  
than when you were one!

And says the paper:  
Oh, you stubborn dumbo!  
I'm not for writing -  
I'm koi paper  
meant for origami!

Raj Arumugam

# Pardon My Ignorance

O how ignorantly  
how innocently  
I have fallen,  
tripped over a wire  
and set off a mine.  
O how could you not have said  
careful there...tread gently...  
Place your foot here...  
Is this how,  
you cold uncaring entrenched bureaucrats,  
is this how  
you treat a stranger?

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Passing The Buck

Whose fault is it that he's still walking  
without a job? You can point to him  
and he can point to you, one can point to another  
and so go on with a charade of Departments  
of Employment and come will-nilly naught.

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Paths Of One's Days

we sat at the table  
and ate what we needed;  
and we spoke of times and life  
and the fall of brown leaves scattered  
on the paths of one's days

Raj Arumugam

# Paying My Bills, Or Not

1)

my wife came out of the shower  
last month  
still unwashed and dry as a bone  
You've forgotten, she snarled, haven't you,  
to pay the water bill?

Ooops! I'd done it again!

2)

last Monday  
she came waving her hairdryer at me  
and she screamed;  
You've forgotten, haven't you -  
to pay the power bill?

Ooops! I'd done it again!

3)

last winter  
she was trembling  
and she said, shivering:  
You've forgotten  
to pay the bill for the gas heating,  
haven't you?

Ooops! I'd done it again!

4)

and yesterday  
when I returned home from work  
I found everything in the house floating -  
the chairs and the sofa  
and the oven and the dog  
and my wife too, upside down  
up there in mid air  
And she hollered:  
You've forgotten, haven't you

to pay the gravity bill?  
And she reached out for my neck  
as I levitated too

Help! Somebody  
Help! Anybody  
Help us get back  
down to earth!

Raj Arumugam

# Peace In The Woods

when I see these woods and these flowers,  
said my companion,  
I feel so at peace

is this peace, dear friend,  
I said,  
is it come of the woods and flowers?  
or is it possible  
that there is peace within one  
with or without the woods?

Raj Arumugam

# Persona In Poetry And Fiction

1

the word 'I'  
in poetry  
or fiction  
is not necessarily  
the poet  
or the writer

this basic distinction  
between writer and persona  
makes a great difference  
in how one understands a piece

it follows  
quite logically  
the views of the persona  
are not necessarily  
those of the writer

2

and if the persona is mean  
or uses such filthy words  
or questions all the assumptions  
you hold true  
and as divinely revealed  
and it infuriates you so much  
that you urgently want to send in  
the Mafia  
or the Taliban  
to deal with this devil

or if the persona  
appears angelic  
and talks about  
such goody and sweet stuff  
that it makes you want

to immediately propose marriage –

just remember,  
in either case,  
it's not necessarily true  
that the poet and the persona are one

3

so if the poet  
in the first person  
shares sad tidings  
there's really no need for condolences;  
and if the persona mentions  
a sexual encounter  
do not make haste  
to alert the poet's partner  
for most poets,  
as you probably know,  
are quite incapable  
of distinguishing between  
fact and fantasy

(actually, if you can,  
and if it's not too much  
against your moral principles  
you might want  
to humor the sex-starved poet  
and join in  
the fantasies)

4

of course there are also  
writers who can never shed their self  
as they vomit words;  
for such constipated innocents

there is no such thing  
as persona

Raj Arumugam

# Persuaded Into Haiku

persuaded into haiku

all right,  
I'll give it a go:  
I'll hang myself with a haiku

lazy thinkers

lazy thinkers  
get away with short cuts:  
they ascribe everything to God

Raj Arumugam

# Phantom Below The Bed

often the solution  
is easy, simple

1  
I went to the local psychiatrist -  
the first consultation was free  
and I said:  
'I got a problem -  
every night  
I fear there's someone  
below my bed  
And when I look underneath  
I fear someone's on my bed'

The psychiatrist nodded  
at the end of the hour  
and said:  
'Easy, now just come and see me  
2 hours each, twice a week;  
will cost you \$100 each hour  
and within 2 months  
I'll have you fixed'

It didn't sound so  
simple  
or easy on my wallet  
so I didn't go back to my shrink

2  
Three weeks later  
the shrink saw me  
at the shops  
and she said:  
'Why didn't you come back  
to see me  
about the phantom below your bed? '

'Oh, ' I said, 'it was all fixed  
easy and simple  
The waiter at my local bar  
he just told me  
to saw off the legs of my bed  
and that fixed the problem  
quick, plain and easy  
and he gave his advice for free'

(poem based on a popular existing joke)

Raj Arumugam

# Pissed Off Cow

What have you come to admire?  
says the cow  
you guys and gals stand around  
new to the farm  
you say  
ah, look at the horses  
(memories of horse races  
in the corners of your mind)  
you look at the lambs  
and you go soft and sweet;  
'Oh, how cute, ' you say  
(Cute my ass!  
Not so cute when you put  
the meat over the barbecue pit, is it?)  
You aliens look at the trees in the distance  
and the sky clear and endless  
and you drool: 'Oh, what freedom! '  
and then you come near me  
and you whisper to your child  
' see, see cow  
milk comes from cow '  
and you come closer  
with your progeny  
and I show  
you imbeciles  
my rear and butt  
and watch out  
if you come too near  
I do fart  
and I have two hind legs  
and it's best you back off:  
my butt is as pretty a picture  
as any of yours;  
have a look at my posterior  
and butt off

Raj Arumugam

# Planet Maverick

free-floating, untethered  
like a chimney-sweep orphan  
it swirls alone in space  
no star nearby, no system to call it home  
free, wandering, swaying to a symphony of  
embracing silence

there are possibly millions  
these drifters, these mavericks, rogues  
sub-stellar, not mainstream  
no pull on each

not your usual planet  
with position, star-bound and mooned  
but a maverick, free, solitary  
untethered, untethered, indie planet  
in no one's sway  
....a maverick, it does it all its own way....

Raj Arumugam

# Pleasant Experience

the toilet roll here  
comes scented  
and with imprint  
of tiny flowers;  
thanks,  
during our stay here on planet earth  
we really need to make  
every experience as pleasant as possible

Raj Arumugam

# Please Leave Me Alone

please leave me alone  
I don't want to think;  
please leave me alone  
I `m happy to be a slave

please leave me alone  
I only want to be led;  
please leave me alone  
for I only want a book  
that tells me what I should do

please leave me alone  
for I've found what I need;  
and it's just so good  
as others have done  
all the thinking for you and me

please leave me alone  
all I want are commandments;  
please leave me alone  
for I have all the instructions

please leave me alone  
I've got all my answers;  
please leave me alone  
my masters  
have expertly fixed my brain

and if you don't leave me  
alone now  
I'll call them in,  
and I assure you,  
they'll gladly fix you  
right and proper

so just leave me alone  
for I'm well and content;  
with the prescribed course  
I'm saved,  
and I've been assured,  
I'm going to Heaven  
where I'll be an angel  
with an unlimited supply  
of ecstasy pills

so, I say,  
please leave me alone  
I don't want to think;  
please leave me alone  
I 'm happy to be a slave

Raj Arumugam

# Please, O God Of Humor

Please, O God of Humor, give me the gift of being funny  
naturally funny  
so I can produce poetry and verse that tickles  
and makes readers laugh so much their coins roll out of their wallets;  
and let the children roll on the floor when my poems are recited;  
for indeed my humor is the worst by any standard  
(or lack of standard)  
for when I publish poems meant to be funny  
my readers never understand me  
and what I thought funny, they think tragic  
and what I thought was tickle-tickle material  
they find pathetic and practically laughable;  
I am lectured to or consoled by readers  
when I attempt humor;  
I am sent e-mails and spam of advice  
and words of caution when I attempt to be witty;  
and my 113th poem  
on the funny side of social networking  
brought sympathy and pity for my lack of friends  
but no appreciation for what I thought was funny;  
and my 213th poem on old ladies at banks  
brought outrage at me for hanging out at banks to ogle at wealthy, old ladies;  
my 3131th poem on religion, the Divine  
and its Power-packed representatives on Planet Earth  
provoked no laughter but the ire and wrath of the other God  
(you know, not you the Laughing God,  
but the Other One, the Only One, the Angry Jealous God)

really neither man nor beast  
nor the Highest Being in heaven  
truly  
nobody laughs at my verse  
and nobody finds my offbeat humor at all funny;  
Oh please,  
God of Humor,  
please make my humor a little like that of  
Mr Bean or Jim Carrey  
so I can have a universal audience

that will laugh at anything I write  
(and perhaps incidentally, I'll make some money)  
and then they'll all say:  
See what the God of Humor and Laughter has done  
for that simpleton Raj who never knew what humor in poetry is...  
Please God of Humor, won't you humor me?

Raj Arumugam

# Po-Dae - Hic! - Your Good God Of Fortune

You can call me Po-dae  
if you're Korean...  
hic! – you got every right to mispronounce it if you aren't;  
and the Japanese might call me – hic! –  
Hotei...hic! hic!  
And of course those ancient Indians  
in their radiant romantic way might call me Laxmi  
(but then they're too reverent, those Indians  
and you can't joke about any these days)  
but me – hic! hic! – hey call me Po-dae  
and yes, the more erudite of you might know  
or the Indians out here would have guessed by association –  
HIC! HIC!  
yep- I'm the good god of fortune, ancient drunkard!  
(That guy who wrote "The Richest Man in Babylon"  
he asks you to court the Goddess of Fortune –  
Silly bugger! He doesn't know Goddesses don't drink, does he?  
Ah, well modern Sex Goddesses might smoke and drink,  
and all that) -  
but hey, I'm Po-dae - HIC! HIC! – fill up that cup and invite me in  
and I'll give five or six tips to fatten your wallets  
better than the ones that American God  
George S. Clason throws at you  
(Pay Yourself First, and all that miserly pedestrian living)  
But fill my cup, dear – and I'll show you how to fill your wallet –  
HIC! HIC! HIC!  
Oh ho, ho, ho yum – where do you get this stuff...?  
These modern drinks really drive me crazy, baby!  
Hey, hey, hey –  
I'm Po-dae  
and for watering me, baby  
I'll tell you the dao of fortune:  
I come drunk  
and I never move straight  
and I walk side and side  
Oh baby, I'm Po-dae  
your miserly elusive fortune!  
HIC! HIC! HIC!  
Prrrrrrttttt.....!

Sorry about that, guys –  
once in a while I also make wind!  
Hic! Hic! Hic!

poem on a painting of Po-dae by Kim-Myong Kuk

Raj Arumugam

# Poem Of Whispers

Pssst! Psst...pssst...pssst...  
hmmm...pssst...pssst...hmmm...  
pssst...pssst....pissed off? ...well, yes...  
but...pssst....pssst...psss...psss....ssst...  
psst...psst...pssst...  
pssst....pssst...pssst....

Raj Arumugam

## Poet A And Poet B: A Funny Poem

poet A stayed in the tried lines  
of safe society and accepted notions  
and sanctity and decorum and respect;  
poet B chose what one could see for oneself  
and had no rules about language  
and where one could go or not go;  
poet A kept away from poet B  
though poet B visited A as one would visit any...  
poet B knew A  
but A never knew B  
and so A was always A  
and B moved like lightning in the night sky...

and so, in a strange sort of way,  
poet A and poet B  
beget this funny poem  
with their marks all over it  
like a little baby  
carries the genes of its parents

Raj Arumugam

# Poet Haiku

dear Poet Haiku  
if me see another copycat haiku  
me surely go cuckoo

Raj Arumugam

# Poet Herodia Of Ancient Pincaeia

one day the poet Herodia  
of ancient Pincaeia  
found in the garden  
a note thrown in over the wall:

dear poet  
do not sing us of unpleasant things;  
do not make us think:  
sing us of love instead  
a poem about a kiss is far easier to read  
(some sex would make it even more memorable)  
and poems on light matters  
are better on one's brains  
rather than a poem  
where one has to ponder over things

and the poet Herodia  
of ancient Pincaeia  
from then on  
was never heard of;  
nor, for that matter,  
was ever Pincaeia

Raj Arumugam

# Poetry Magic

one line too is poetry magic

Raj Arumugam

# Poetry Of The Ego

poetry with the ego  
in order for numbers, rank and name  
smells so much of the corpse-self

Raj Arumugam

## Poor You, Poor Me

poor you, poor me  
the great truths we see  
in our lives  
awake and in deep trances  
and even in death  
are but hallucinations that spring  
from our conditioning;  
poor you, and poor me  
we are children of lies and deception  
of ease and convenience;  
and are never free

Raj Arumugam

# Portrait

Four truculent decades have trundled down the slope  
and the subject life's left me is myself.  
Not a Rembrandt self-portrait or a Picasso  
or even a tortured Vincent;  
merely a portrait to hang in  
the closed-door dusty gallery  
of a man who has no claim on the world

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Portrait Of A Boy In Hat

there was not much  
my mother told me  
but father does not  
come home anymore;  
there is not much  
mother tells me  
but she comes home late often  
and more

some days she wakes up  
in the morning  
and she is happy  
and we go out for breakfast  
at the café  
and then she buys me  
all the books I want;  
just the same number of days  
she's sad -  
says her pocket's empty

all I have is mommy  
and I tell mommy:  
"Please, mom - don't go away  
after sunset;  
I want to see you before I sleep  
not just when I wake up"

Raj Arumugam

# Portrait Of A Girl

Yes, I too have my desires  
my wishes  
though you may despise me  
mock me and trifle  
in my heart live my very own dreams

a good man, a loving man  
who will be my loyal spouse  
as I will be to him  
a rustic shed or house  
simple enough for a quiet life  
is all I will need

children blessed with health  
and who can bring laughter  
and joy  
and who will be loving  
and caring all my life  
is all I will want

a quiet life, peaceful  
with family  
and neighbors  
with food and timely festivities  
is all I will dream of

Yes, I too have my desires  
my wishes  
though you may despise me  
mock me and trifle  
in my heart live my very own dreams

Raj Arumugam

# Portrait Of A Man Reading A Book

Wanted to read  
so I took a book,  
slouched in my sofa

Wanted a drink  
so I got a can  
Wanted to remind myself  
to call Andy at 5  
so I got my smartphone  
to set a reminder, and the alarm

Wanted to get back to my book  
but wanted to answer one email  
Wanted some information  
so did a search  
One led to another and  
landed up on a porn page

Wanted another drink  
so I got to the fridge  
My wife the frigid woman  
had left a reminder  
on the fridge door:  
'Pick up Tommy at 2'  
It was 4 - Oh, damn!  
I'll never get to read my book

The world just expects too much of a man

Raj Arumugam

# Portrait Of The Artist's Wife

Do not look like that, Cora  
I have done my best, and I do  
I paint and that is what I do...  
you know, you know, Cora;  
we have known each other  
since our childhood:  
O for the days of Vermont  
the summers of joy and fun  
when we were but children  
and our hopes were high -  
and my mind breaks and my heart weakens  
when I see you and the children now  
and that I cannot put food on the table  
give you the things you need  
I can paint, Cora - oh for the life of me, I can -  
but I do not know how to haggle,  
how to beat the mind of those who undervalue my work  
how do you make money  
when but art is in the heart?  
I walk in the world an innocent;  
'strange' they call me, Cora  
I try, I try - O I try  
I paint plaques and decorations if necessary -  
but the money, the money eludes me  
it is only paint that sticks;  
and I can paint  
and that is all I know and that I can do  
when the agony blows like cruel storms in my mind  
You know, I try, O you know  
my spirit nearly breaks  
Cora, Cora, Cora  
I have done my best, I do  
to put bread and meat on the table  
for the children and you  
but money eludes me, it eludes me  
I paint and that is what I do -  
you know, you know, Cora  
Do not look like that, Cora

---

poem based on painting "Portrait of Artist's Wife"  
by Ralph Albert Blakelock (American, 1847-1919)

Raj Arumugam

# Portrait Of The Old Actor

you are walking the streets  
you do not walk the boards anymore  
your trousers are frayed, your shoes dusty  
and the hard walkways have worn them out  
you are not presented in the glorious costumes  
and the stage crowns anymore  
the illusion is gone, it's reality  
that's permanent now  
you're the beggar, the recluse, the plain and shadow  
you walk down to the shops  
and your speech raises eyebrows  
where'd he learn to speak like that?  
they ask, in whispers, like conspirators on stage  
your actions are too lofty, your manner too distant  
it threatens them, they must crush you -  
so that's why you've learned to blend in as well as you can  
those were the days  
when they heard your words, and they felt it resonate  
when they noted your pronouncements  
and there was acknowledgement  
but those were the days, a long time back when they  
looked at you, and they knew you, and they looked in awe  
now the children sneer at the old man,  
and when it's too cold, your nose runs  
and you need to piss more often  
and the women notice you hobble,  
you leave the art of significance  
and you learn the art of the indistinct  
and you've learned  
which practice is more difficult:  
acting the prominent, or acting the anonymous

Raj Arumugam

# Positive Strokes

like lovers we offer one positive stroke for another  
one gentle word for another,  
loving touches in exchange;  
we poetry-lovers  
lovers at the heights of Parnassus  
verse-lovers, word-lovers, lovers of the touchable and untouchable stuff alike  
in equal measure  
each hovering in ethereal cyberspace  
and so one positive stroke begets another  
and we vote love with numbers  
and we make love with approving words;  
a gentle run of the hand over one's shoulders  
and a touch returned one one's cheek  
(of course like true lovers  
there are unkind words exchanged  
but quickly made up  
or new lovers found)  
perhaps a kiss, an electronic embrace,  
and so one positive touch for another  
until each poet-lover we word ourselves into ecstasy

Raj Arumugam

# Possibilities

i)

I suppose one's  
accomplishments  
license this pleasure;  
but surely one must think  
of other people's  
accomplishments  
and pleasure

ii)

a human being  
is but a vessel  
and the empty one  
allows plenty of vibrations

iii)

one must have a conviction,  
to talk like that,  
that one is interesting  
(in spite of the evidence  
the pretence of the polite and the meek  
right before one's face)  
and one can be interesting  
continuously

iv)

it comes from an arrogance  
that one's battles are immortal  
and in one's battle -  
in spite of the protestations

and qualifications -  
one must always have been right and wise

Afterthought

But how do you explain  
a torrent of words  
that sweeps other people along  
and drowns them and their words?

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Preachers Turn To Poetry

preachers turn to poetry  
which is a most natural thing to do  
since most revelations are in verse;  
preachers, like the wily snake in Paradise,  
look for cunning new ways: and so they turn to poetry sites  
and take on the roles of poets  
and disguise sermons in verse  
and Stalin-style Revelations of Guilt and Sin  
and Fearful Humility as poems;  
and in P<textarea rows='12' name='body' cols='70' style='font-family: Arial;  
font-size: 12pt'>preachers turn to poetry  
which is a most natural thing to do  
since most revelations are in verse;  
preachers, like the wily snake in Paradise,  
look for cunning new ways: and so they turn to poetry sites  
and take on the roles of poets  
and disguise sermons in verse  
and Stalin-style Revelations of Guilt and Sin  
and Fearful Humility as poems;  
and in Paradise these will sit as Poet Laureates  
winning Eternal Fame  
churning out Infinite Praise in standard and approved stock and phrase;  
and poets who talk about being human  
and the beauty of the morning  
and who so cannot make The Big Wizard smile  
these wretched poets will bark doggerel in Hell...

Raj Arumugam

# Precious Quiet

there are clouds here in the sky  
where the gentle sun sinks;  
and beside the tree on this hill  
the inflorescence sways in the breeze

it is this silence and quiet that is peace  
past one's achievements  
and one's visions and affiliations and loyalties  
and past the words we utter  
and past the identity and comforts and security we crave;  
it is this inward gentleness  
in which the thoughts of the self cease  
this is the precious pearl to which nothing else is equal

Raj Arumugam

# Premise Under Surveillance

my local shopping centre  
has the sign:  
'WARNING: Premises under surveillance'  
which is fine  
as it will keep me  
from breaking or stealing anything

a store in the centre  
has a WARNING:  
'Premise under surveillance' -  
now, that will keep me logical  
when arguing

Raj Arumugam

# Proclaimed Last Days

Last days  
some people tell me  
it's end of days, last days

So they tell me  
I got to confess  
and make my peace

I say I've got nothing  
to confess  
and what was stolen anyway  
was what  
was taken from me  
And I'm at peace anyhow

The troubled have  
hard days  
the heat of the brain  
boils fluids of thoughts

If it were last days  
so let it be  
What will happen  
will surely be  
Last days  
don't usually last,  
anyway

Raj Arumugam

# Punch Plays The Violin (A Modern Punch And Judy Scene)

(Punch is playing the violin. Judy is on the couch, listening patiently. After some time, Punch stops playing and he speaks...)

Punch:

Oh, Judy...life's so divine  
for me  
since I bought this  
my first violin  
two days ago...

Judy:

For me too, Punch...  
Life's not been the same  
since you brought the violin home...

Punch:

But oh, Judy - how's  
my playing?  
Two days I've played  
making music -  
and how good it is  
you've not said!

Judy:

Oh Punch -  
you should play on TV!

Punch:

Oh Judy - why, thank you...  
Am I so good, darling?

Judy:

No, sweetie  
- it's just that  
if you were on TV  
I could turn off the damned thing!

Raj Arumugam

# Punctuation

one must wonder  
if the word "Punctuation"  
is a relative of "Punctured";  
for, as you must have noticed,  
a prose passage  
with no punctuation  
is as good as punctured...  
poetry is cunning;  
she uses punctuation as she wishes  
and still remains pregnant  
with meaning, if you know what I mean

Raj Arumugam

# Punctuation Poems

This is the complete text of the fun and random series on aspects of punctuation and punctuation marks....

1 `

Punctuation

one must wonder  
if the word "Punctuation"  
is a relative of "Punctured";  
for, as you must have noticed,  
a prose passage  
with no punctuation  
is as good as punctured...  
poetry is cunning;  
she uses punctuation as she wishes  
and still remains pregnant  
with meaning, if you know what I mean

2..

the definitive full stop

Say 'Hello'  
to the Full Stop  
before it shuts you down

Say 'Hello'  
to  
the American period  
the definitive full stop that says: 'That's it, folks! '  
in other words  
it says: 'Enough! ' 'That's it! '  
' I'm done! ' ' I'm finished! '  
But some people never get that, do they?  
they just keep going on;  
but now I'll take my cue  
and say no more.

FULL STOP.  
PERIOD.

3! ! !  
exciting poem with exclamation marks! ! !

Oh noble exclamation mark!  
I expel! I exclaim!  
Oh most excitable exclamation mark!

Oh, to see you  
sends blood racing  
in my veins!  
Oh, I love you  
once!  
twice! !  
and I love you thrice! ! ! !  
- oh, was that four times? ? ? ?  
Oh, be not jealous  
I brought in your  
distant relative  
the crooked and deformed question mark  
for I not only love you  
!  
!!  
!!!  
!!!! –  
but I love you forever, most excitable exclamation mark! ! ! !  
!!!!!!!!!!!! .....and forever!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! .....

Oh noble exclamation mark!  
I expel! I exclaim!  
Oh most excitable exclamation mark!

4 \_ \_ \_ \_  
The dash

don't be dashing round  
oh you so young and dashing dash;  
so energetic –  
you just bewilder us all

O dash –  
what a dash you make for it;  
O dash –  
what surprises you have in store

O dash –  
you're not connective tissue  
like the hyphen;  
but dash -  
you are a more dramatic fellow

I did use you once, dash -  
but my sentence tripped and fell;  
so now when I call on you  
I ensure I've got you tied –  
like a dog to the leash

don't be dashing round  
oh you so young and dashing dash;  
so energetic –  
you just bewilder us all

5, , , , ,  
the comma

the comma  
a most prosaic-looking fellow  
never gets into a coma  
though he's useful enough  
to give you a pause or break;  
the comma separates and lists

and where the word-traffic may be in danger of crashing  
into one another, bumper to bumper  
the comma comes in like road markers  
and ensures smooth flow:  
don't kiss bumpers; kiss your commas

6.....

the irritable full stop

the full stop  
was quite irritated  
with the colon  
and he said to the colon:  
"What are you doing? "

And colon said: "What? "

And full-stop said:  
"Can you tell me what you doing  
imitating me like that  
and doing a double at that?  
You look such a poor imitation of me  
floating one above the other! "

"O, " said the colon, and continued:  
"It's plain to see, Sir –  
you're quite drunk;  
you've had one glass too many  
and you're seeing double  
like all drunks do..."

7; ; ; ; ; ; ;

the semi-colon

it would appear the semi-colon  
has an identity crisis;  
it might appear

it can't decide if it's a dot  
or a comma  
and so does an acrobat act;  
but really the semi-colon does more than that  
for it does  
complex listings the comma can't manage  
and can say things quite cleverly, like:  
"All things are expensive; life sucks."  
So really this semi-colon  
is not a semi - but indeed a full-blown device

8, , , , , , , ,  
the apostate, I mean the apostrophe

,

there was a comma  
which was so light  
it started to float;  
the other down-to-earth commas  
ganged up and banished  
that comma that dared to cross the line  
and so that deviant comma stays there in mid-air  
like a feather  
and you can see it if you  
keep your eyes open

, ,

and since its fall, or rise,  
it's been called the apostate -  
I mean, the apostrophe  
Mind you, it's not to be taken lightly  
for it can settle legal cases  
as it indicates who things belong to  
(like if it is John's money  
or Nicole's)

'''

and in matters of communication  
it can abbreviate things  
and make the style more conversational

''''

But I'll tell you when it's not so happy:  
if you say, for instance: "Its Monday"  
or "The dog wags it's tail" -  
ah, then the apostrophe hates you  
and it really wishes it could land on your head  
like a bag of lead

9''''''''''''

Quotation marks

"Americans" prefer two  
and then one within;  
The 'British' think one is splendid  
and two within -  
as for the rest of the world,  
I think,  
we're pretty easy on this

10 - - - - -

the hyphen

the hyphen  
though not as huge as an elephant  
still does gargantuan jobs  
for amongst a host of things it does  
it can bring words together  
to make them one  
as in "face-to-face discussions"  
or "three-point turn"  
or when my wife gives me that  
"don't-spill-that-coffee-or-I'll-kill-you look"

11.....  
the ellipsis...

The ellipsis  
was sulking and  
in a pensive mood....

And so I said: Well?

And Ellipsis said: What?

I said: You're sulking...

And Ellipsis erupted  
like pimples on an adolescent's face:  
You wrote poems on every tribe of my race;  
you wrote of the full stop and the comma and the dash  
and about every other freak that jumps up  
on a printed page...  
And now you ask me, why I sulk!

So, I said cautiously,  
what do you want me to do?

So, write me a freaking poem on me -  
The Ellipsis!



O what would you do  
when you are before the Punctuation Sky  
Vincent van Gogh never thought to draw?

Raj Arumugam



# Python-Coil Life

'Do I sense  
some resistance -  
a sense of injustice? '  
whispers Life  
folding me cold  
in her ample python-coil  
and she sings me her song

'The flowers bloom  
in the fields, sweet love  
to be gathered for your bier  
Time lingers in the wings  
to pull you off stage  
at the moment  
opportune in its Clasped Book

The worms wait patient  
if you choose a burial;  
if cremation's your choice  
the fires wait in quiet potential  
The musicians practise  
to be employed  
by the survivors  
to deliver you a dirge

And so my sweet love -  
Live well  
Night night, sleep tight,  
don't let the bedbugs bite'

Raj Arumugam

## Quick And Nimble

My friend helping me on a shopping trip  
as I set up home requests  
that he use his credit card and could  
I give him a cheque for the amount.  
I've got no problem with that.  
My friend gets his fly-buy points  
(or is it credit card points? Or is it both?)  
and I get a little wisdom:  
how swift the world is, and how it  
calculates its ways and moves. Quick and  
nimble, as they say, to survive in  
a fast-moving society. Be quick and agile.  
Or you'll lose out.  
No. I'm content;  
I'll earn my money  
and I'll pay for what I get.  
I shall live as I came, simple and content.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Quiet And Calm

cheers to all  
who helped me make a good life;  
thanks to all  
who were part of my time,  
joy and smiles

it's quiet and calm now  
easy and smooth  
in these my mature years;  
a time of grace  
and the simple life:  
the days are gentle  
and the nights heal

cheers to all  
who helped me make a good life;  
thanks to all  
who were part of my time,  
joy and smiles

all my deeds and thoughts  
return like the gentle nights  
of the full moon;  
and my family and loves  
surround me  
like the petals of a flower

these are restful days  
full of ease and grace;  
and though my limbs are weary  
and my eyes not as clear,  
still these are days of harmony  
and radiant blessings

cheers to all  
who helped me make a good life;  
thanks to all  
who were part of my time,  
joy and smiles

Raj Arumugam

# Quiet Deaths

a photo album  
is one's pictorial grip on one's life -  
a slippery hold maybe,  
but comforting nonetheless,  
as one holds it close to one's chest:  
my friend declares, and pulls out  
a personal volume of pictures

my friend  
leans forward  
to the carefully-kept open album,  
index finger on a picture  
of a man standing in the open fields;  
and my friend whispers:  
he was my neighbor;  
he was a good man, kind  
and always cheerful;  
devoted to his family and friends and work;  
much liked by all; he's dead...  
he died just last year...

and I look up at my friend  
and I am offered a nervous smile;  
and the unspoken words  
slip into the spaces  
between the pages of the album:  
someday we too shall be gone  
and perhaps someone  
will point with a finger or cursor  
and utter affectionate words in memory  
of these quiet deaths  
that remove each from one's landscape...

Raj Arumugam

# Quiet Man Drained

It is two a.m. and I wake to the cold  
and the silence and the anonymous darkness.

The mind

I am not the thinker

moves from in between states to full awareness

and it grips at my pits so. What is this feeling?

What is this pain and emptiness? It churns the entrails

and takes waves to hit hard against the cave of the head

and the creature living inside has to take all the pain.

Full awareness. Panic.

The street lights invade between the curtain sheets

and stretch their long orange fingers on the wall.

They find nothing. The sliver

in the sky is cold.

Full awareness. Panic.

Man in Panic...

Not Man Asleep... Not Man Dreaming... But Man in Panic...

Oh, for some pebbles in the mouth...some hard thing

in the hands to grip; some straw even, something to clutch at

or perhaps, dare one say? some hope... It is two a.m.

and I wake to the cold.

She is sleeping in bed and the two children in theirs.

I survey the enclosed rooms, the locked-in home,

sit in the dark hall,

harass a stray ant in the kitchen and sit in the hall...

There is little hint of an outside world but

of an invisible pushing away...

What time is it now?

Is it the sun that rises yonder?

Of my philosophy I make no use to quiet the mind;

I lie down again.

No, not man in panic.

Not man asleep. Not man Dreaming. Not Man in Panic.

Not Man Dreaming.

Man Quiet. Man Drained.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Quiet Of The Country (Based On A Painting By Tang Yin (1470-1523))

sick of it all  
driven inward and quiet  
and embittered  
by all the intrigues  
and cross-points  
and civilized words and ruthless daily meanderings;  
sickened by it  
come, perhaps we shall go  
like the Chinese literati of ancient times  
to the quiet country, to the mountains;  
and perhaps there while away the years  
in anonymity  
in contemplation of the moon and the willow and the bamboo;  
and perhaps replace bitterness with the freshness of the air in the valleys  
and perhaps drop all memory of the strife  
and the tumultuous thoughts  
as the quiet and songs of the valley  
permeate the mind;  
come, let us  
like the Chinese literati of years past,  
like the Chinese literati of ancient times

but will the bulldozers let us be;  
will today's gray-suited polished men of the city let us be...

Raj Arumugam

# Quiet Subsidence

1

here one is  
become alone  
for when the time comes  
circumstance and need  
scatter all in various directions  
and each is made separate

one must go forth, move on  
live the days and nights  
with no fear or bitterness  
for this comes to each;  
and how lonely or abandoned  
one's world may seem  
it is the same world  
the other lives in

2

let there be no pain  
or a pointing of directions -  
a resting in one's space  
and in what is before one  
allows quiet subsidence  
of all that has come to pass

Raj Arumugam

## Quotation Marks

"Americans" prefer two  
and then one within;  
The 'British' think one is splendid  
and two within –  
as for the rest of the world,  
I think,  
we're pretty easy on this

Raj Arumugam

# Radiance

when it arises there in the mind  
that thought, or feeling  
or anger or joy or pain  
there in the ocean of the mind  
observe – no judgment, no label, no naming  
aversion or attraction or history  
just observe

may all beings  
find quiet and stillness;  
may all life be radiant and at peace

Raj Arumugam

# Radiance In Your Mind

that moon that hovered above  
that night, even that night  
did it not embrace you with its  
cool, liquid rays?  
that breeze that came gently by  
did it not whisper  
whisper gently into your ears  
while the possum scuttled past?  
did not these slip stealthily into your mind  
so smoothly, so unnoticed  
as quietly as a contemplative child?  
and does it not sit there  
and spread its smile in your being  
like the sun in the sky,  
like the life-giving sun in the sky...?

Raj Arumugam

# Rage Of The Unemployed

The unembittered unemployed  
come into themselves, cut off  
and involved in inner worlds, isolated and taking on  
loneliness, talking in loneliness, inviting others to  
take a view of the unsuccessful  
and unconnected and to keep away, not worth the time of anyone  
about to get on and up in the world, not presentable  
at social functions where people rub shoulders and  
take notes and evaluate who's in and who's out.  
The unemployed without a rage burn themselves out;  
snuff out their own flame and leave for a long time  
a curl of grey smoke  
over a shortened candle  
become grotesque  
with unwieldy lines of wax on its sides.

Rage therefore, ye unemployed;  
let not rage die in your hearts  
for the unemployed without rage and fire  
are blown out like oil lamps  
beside the open window.  
Rage therefore against the world  
that will not let you work  
but will humiliate you with words  
Rage therefore against the world  
that will take away your dignity  
and shuffle you from one office to another  
rage and rage unabashed  
rage and rage uninhibited  
rage and rage unbridled  
rage and rage unrestrained -  
for rage becometh the unemployed;  
for rage giveth  
what the world would take away.

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Rain In An Oak Forest

quiet as subdued children  
we walked carefully in the rain  
through the oak forest;  
we shared an umbrella  
and we were pensive  
and mindful of the muddy path  
and the puddles;  
and we did not chatter like we do usually  
and I reached out to hold her by the elbow  
when she nearly slipped once or twice  
and we reached home  
and we muttered words  
weak words  
as to point to the dreary day;  
and I slipped into the old ample chair  
and she made a pot of tea  
and we sipped,  
and gradually conversed  
our way into a more congenial mood;  
and thus pass ordinary days in our lives

(This poem is inspired by the painting: ' Rain in an Oak Forest' by Ivan Shishkin)

Raj Arumugam

# Rainbow Snake

This story of the Rainbow Serpent is an Australian aboriginal legend and I have re-told it, with the best of intentions, for an international audience. I may have made some changes to the story and I hope my re-telling is true to the spirit of the original versions.

the rainbow snake  
see it tickles  
the frogs  
and water fills the rivers and gullies  
and waterholes;  
and see the rainbow snake  
see it brings forth  
all life sleeping before

it is the beginning  
and the earth is bare and barren  
and the Rainbow Serpent  
dear Ngalyod, powerful Borlung  
the lovely Rainbow Serpent  
she moves across the earth

and where she moves  
see  
how she creates tracks and dry courses  
and huge craters;  
and see how the Rainbow Serpent  
she digs into the earth and emerges crashing into the air  
on the other earth side of the world  
and see how she throws up mountains and crags  
and hills and mounds

and the Uluru and ravines;  
and she calls the frogs  
who come in heavy and bloated  
and she tickles the frogs  
and the frogs laugh  
and the waters flow and the rains have come  
and the dry lands are replete  
with billabongs, rivers, creeks and lagoons  
and the mighty oceans;  
and the Rainbow Serpent is pleased  
and she calls forth all  
sleeping beings  
and they all awake  
and the Rainbow Serpent is pleased  
and she provides them laws  
and she disappears into another waterhole

and you can see her  
you can see the Benevolent Rainbow Serpent  
as she travels from one waterhole to another  
as she emerges from one and she is in the sky  
and you can see her  
the lovely creative Rainbow Serpent in the sky  
and she disappears soon enough  
into another huge waterhole  
somewhere on our earth

the rainbow snake  
see it tickles  
the frogs  
and water fills the rivers and gullies  
and waterholes;  
and see the rainbow snake  
see it brings forth  
all life sleeping before

Raj Arumugam

# Raj Arumugam (A One-Act Tragicomedy)

## SCENE 1

...some time in time... bare stage except for a square neon sign on left that reads: "Aged Care Home"...on right is a rectangular neon message display with full title of the play...Urgo and Burgo bring Raj Arumugam out on wheelchair...&#8232;

&#8232; Urgo: I am attendant 1. Often known as Urgo.&#8232; &#8232;

Burgo: I am attendant 2. Always known as Burgo.&#8232; &#8232;

Urgo: You see this creature seated here  
in the wheelchair? &#8232; Can you believe it? &#8232;  
This creature once wrote poems  
&#8232; and its poems still inhabit cyberspace.&#8232;

Burgo: Oh, this creature did that?

&#8232; Urgo: Yes, this.

&#8232; Burgo: I think I've read some.&#8232;  
Not that I can remember any.  
&#8232; Not a word, not a title.&#8232; But must have been pretty  
good, ha?  
&#8232; To write all those words, in verse...&#8232;

Urgo: I don't know about that.  
&#8232; It's the girls who write. And sissies.  
&#8232; And for all that, you know  
&#8232; there's just one word this creature can say.&#8232;

Burgo: Really? Just one word? &#8232;

Urgo: Yes.&#8232; All right, watch this.  
Come on, Raj-i.&#8232;  
Hey baby...Burgo here wants to hear you.  
&#8232; Just one poem in your one word.  
&#8232; Come on, baby - or no soup for you tonight.&#8232; &#8232;

Raj: Baa, baa, baa  
Baa, baa, baa  
Baa, baa, baa  
Baa, baa, baa

(Burgo and Urgo clap)

Urgo: Baan-derful, Raj... Now Burgo,  
let's wheel the creature back in  
and dump him in  
his corner.

(Urgo and Burgo go out, Urgo pushing wheelchair with Raj in it)

## SCENE 2

...some time in time... bare stage except for a square neon sign on left that reads: "Aged Care Home"...on right is a rectangular neon message display with full title of the play...Urgo and Burgo bring Raj Arumugam out on wheelchair...

Urgo: Today, Burgo, is Exercise Your Vocal Chords Day.

Burgo: No problem - Ahhhhhhhrrrrgggggoooooaaaaa.....

Urgo: Not your vocal cords, Burgo.

It is Exercise Your vocal Cords Day  
for our distinguished guest currently  
on this wheelchair.

Burgo: Ahhh...I see...

Urgo: All right, Raj-i baby... Exercise your vocal chords  
and entertain us with your delightful voice...

&#8232; &#8232; Raj: Baa, baa, baa  
    &#8232; Baa, baa, baa&#8232;  
    Baa, baa, baa  
    &#8232; Baa, baa, baa

&#8232; &#8232; (Burgo claps)

&#8232; &#8232; Urgo: OK - that's enough exercise for the day!  
    Let's go&#8232; &#8232; &#8232; &#8232; &#8232;

(Urgo and Burgo go out, Urgo pushing wheelchair with Raj in it)

### SCENE 3

...some time in time... bare stage except for a square neon sign on left that reads: "Aged Care Home"...on right is a rectangular neon message display with full title of the play...Urgo and Burgo bring Raj Arumugam out on wheelchair...

Urgo: Burgo!

Burgo: Sire!

Urgo: Sire? Where in the world  
    did you get such a word?

Burgo: Sorry - I thought I was in a bawdy  
    Shakespeare play.

Urgo: Have your head examined, Burgo.  
    We'll never make it there.  
    All we have is this 3rd-rate one-act play.

Burgo: I understand. I'm just a little ambitious.

Urgo: Be realistic. Don't be ambitious.

Burgo: That's wise, Sire - I mean, Urgo.

Urgo: Well, this creature in the wheelchair,  
for example...It was ambitious...  
and it had a great fall...  
it never knew how to be realistic...  
But more of that, later - first, what Day is it today?

Burgo: It is We Tickle Your Foot Day, today.

Urgo: You learn fast, Burgo.

Burgo: Thank you, Urgo.

(Silence)

Urgo: Well?

Burgo: I'm very well, thank you.

Urgo: You idiot! I mean if you know it is  
We Tickle Your Foot Day, today -  
then what should you do next, you knave! ?

Burgo: Oh. Ok.

(Burgo kneels before Raj, takes off Raj's shoes and with a feather tickles Raj's feet.)

Raj (laughing) : Baa, baa, baa  
Baa, baa, baa  
Baa, baa, baa  
Baa, baa, baa

(Burgo puts Raj's shoes on again, and his feather back in his pocket and stands up.)

Burgo: You mentioned ambition  
and this creature that sits on the wheelchair.

Urgo: Yes, it is time to exercise my vocal chords.  
This creature forgot, like all creatures,  
we come alone, and we go alone.

Burgo: Ah, at last! - hints of a Shakespearean play  
albeit we'll never make it into one.  
With ambition, loneliness and all the Lear madness.  
Will we have the lewd parts too  
and rich imagery of body parts?

Urgo: Perhaps...perhaps...but let us stick to the ordinary...  
This creature was born in 1derLand  
but was washed ashore to foreign shores.

Burgo: Good, good...like Paris, son of Priam and Hecuba?  
O Paris, washed ashore to Sparta  
O so well-loved and nursed by Helen.

Urgo: Yes, except this creature is more akin to the Wanderer  
like Oedipus, or just the indistinct Mendicant,  
the Samurai with no master, a ronin,  
all cursed to wander the face of the earth...

Burgo: Oh - are we in Shakespeare yet?

Urgo: We are in deep shit! That's where we are!  
We all are.  
Burgo - let us stick to the banal like hamburgers.  
This creature forgot that  
and dreamt of things like poetry, ideals -  
and therein is the moral of the story for you:  
we come alone  
and alone we go  
one at a time we come  
and each we own, and each faculty  
one at a time they go.

Burgo: So let us stick with the banal  
eat our burgers  
and pick our teeth after.

Do they supply toothpicks at takeaways  
in your country, Urgo?

Urgo: No, we recycle them, Burgo.  
We just pick up discarded ones from the ground.  
Like some nations pick up cigarette butts  
from the bins.  
Waste not; want not.

Burgo: Oh, if this scene goes on any longer  
it might become Shakespearean, Urgo.

Urgo: Ergo - we must go.  
But let us allow Raj to have the last word,  
since this play is entitled  
" Raj Arumugam, (a one-act tragicomedy) ".  
Idiot of a son! What kind of fool-writer will have a play  
with his own name as the title of his play? !

Burgo: So, Raj-i, you egocentric weirdo:  
You have the last word in this scene...  
You really put words into my mouth, you shit!

Raj: Baa, baa, ba  
Baa, baa, baa  
Baa, baa, baa  
Baa, baa, baa

Urgo: All right, Let's go, Burgo.  
Bring him in -  
Let's dropp him in bed  
and may he dropp dead!

(Urgo and Burgo go out, Urgo pushing wheelchair with Raj in it)

## SCENE 4

...some time in time... bare stage except for a square neon sign on left that reads: "Aged Care Home"...on right is a rectangular neon message display with full title of the play...Urgo and Burgo bring Raj Arumugam out on wheelchair...&#8232; &#8232; &#8232; &#8232;

Urgo: Burgo! &#8232;

Burgo: Urgo! &#8232;

Urgo: How long has it been since  
you started work here? &#8232;

Burgo: 3 months, Urgo. Why? &#8232;

Urgo: Well, show me a game...I'm bored...a new game...

&#8232; Burgo: Well, have you played wheelie bin?

&#8232; Urgo: No.&#8232; But Oh I love to delve into world culture.&#8232;  
Show me.&#8232;

Burgo: Well, let me show you.&#8232;  
A wheelie bin is a bin with wheels  
and you put rubbish in it  
&#8232; and you leave it outside on the kerb  
&#8232; and the garbage guy in his truck collects your rubbish.  
&#8232; So this is the game.&#8232; &#8232;

(Burgo pushes wheelchair round the stage and sings.) &#8232; &#8232;

This is the way we &#8232; wheel out our wheelie bins  
&#8232; this is the way we &#8232; wheel out our bins  
&#8232; early every Thursday morning&#8232; &#8232;  
This is the way we &#8232; leave our bins,  
our wheelie bins&#8232;  
this is the way we leave our bins  
&#8232; out on the sunny kerb&#8232;  
every Thursday morning

&#8232; &#8232; (leaves wheelchair on kerb) &#8232; &#8232;

This is the way we empty our bins&#8232;  
this is the way we empty our bins  
this is the way empty our bins  
every Thursday morning&#8232; &#8232;

(empties the wheelchair; Raj Arumugam drops onstage) &#8232; &#8232;  
&#8232;

Urgo(joining in) : &#8232; This is the way we &#8232; pick up our  
rubbish&#8232;

pick up our rubbish  
&#8232; this is the way we do it&#8232;  
this is the way &#8232; always we do it&#8232;  
early Thursday morning! &#8232; &#8232;

(Urgo picks up Raj Arumugam and drops him in the wheelchair) &#8232;  
&#8232;

(Urgo and Burgo clap, applauding each other.) &#8232; &#8232;

Burgo: &#8232; And now, Urgo - for the ritual  
of &#8232; Raj Arumugam's final words in the scene...&#8232; Is that  
right?

&#8232; &#8232; (Urgo nods...) &#8232; &#8232;

Burgo: &#8232; Sing, you Sir in the Wheelchair.&#8232; &#8232;

Raj: Baa, baa, baa  
&#8232; Baa, baa, baa&#8232;  
Baa, baa, baa&#8232;  
Baa, baa, baa&#8232; &#8232;

Burgo: Oh, you spoil the fun! Let's go.&#8232; &#8232; &#8232; &#8232;

(Urgo and Burgo go out, Urgo pushing wheelchair with Raj in it)

## SCENE 5

...some time in time... bare stage except for a square neon sign on left that reads: "Aged Care Home"...on right is a rectangular neon message display with full title of the play...Urgo and Burgo bring Raj Arumugam out on wheelchair...

Urgo:

Let's leave him here tonight;  
some fresh air might do him good

(Urgo and Burgo leave, leaving Raj on his wheelchair.)

(Long silence.)

Raj: Baa, baa, baa

Baa, baa, baa

Baa, baa, baa

Baa, baa, baa

(Raj has a thought. His thought is broadcast as a message on the rectangular neon light display: "Hey guys, come back...Another word is coming back to me.")

(Long silence)

Raj:

Damn Damn Damn

Damn Damn Damn

Damn Damn Damn

(Raj has another thought. His thought is broadcast as a message on the rectangular neon light display: "Another one's coming back...maybe my mind is coming back.")

Raj:

Shit Shit Shit

Shit Shit Shit

Shit Shit Shit

(Long silence. Lights fade. Darkness. Curtain...)

Raj Arumugam

# Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 10: Immortals

the easiest nonsense verse  
to write  
is penned in just two words:  
God and Satan

but all through centuries  
we've been penning mountains  
of verse  
on these two  
and because  
mountains of words  
intimidate TV-addicts  
nonsense verse has become Holy Writ

Raj Arumugam

## Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 11: Pot And Stove

the cook puts  
the pot  
on the hot stove  
and the pot screams to the stove:  
kiss my arse, hot baby!  
that's what I call a warm reception!

Raj Arumugam

# Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 12: Toothbrush And Paste

the toothbrush  
says to the paste:  
I don't mind  
you sitting on my bristles  
but really  
you and your kind  
seem to be coming  
with more and more awful chemicals!

Raj Arumugam

## Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 13: Toothpaste

the toothpaste  
was feeling complacent:  
toothbrush likes me  
teeth like me  
and mouth likes me

and just then  
the mouth gulped  
the whole toothpaste in

Raj Arumugam

## Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 14: Toy Animals

the toy animals  
in the cupboard  
stand in a row  
and the pig says to the cow:  
oink! oink! oink!  
and the cow says to the pig:  
moo! moo! moo!  
for an accurate translation  
of what transpired between the two  
during this historic exchange  
you might want to ask  
the next pig you see

Raj Arumugam

# Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 15: Blanket And Body

the blanket says to  
the body in bed:  
You know  
I'm so important -  
I keep you warm

and the body says:  
you'd better keep it that way  
or I'll change you for a new one  
and you'll be a dirty old rag

Raj Arumugam

## Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 16: Water And Wine

the water says to the wine:  
we've got a miraculous relationship

and the wine says to water:  
yeah, but I'm the one  
with the miraculous power

Raj Arumugam

# Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 17: Air, Room And Door

the door says to the air:  
have you ever considered  
I create a room  
just  
shutting you in or out?

and the air says to the door:  
but do open sometime  
for if you keep me out long  
all you have  
is staleness in your room

Raj Arumugam

## Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 18: Cuckoo Clock

what is time?  
cuckoos the clock,  
one midnight...  
what is time?  
is it in my moving arms  
or is it  
in the beholder's mind?

it is clear,  
says the battery,  
time is in my power

Raj Arumugam

# Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 19: From Floor To Roof

the carpet says to the wall:  
stay away from me!  
and the wall says to the ceiling:  
stay away from me!  
and the ceiling says to the roof:  
stay away from me!

and the roof says to the crows:  
can't you find a better place  
to put your droppings on?  
oh, damn you  
and stay away from me!

Raj Arumugam

# Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 2: Satan Says; God Says

Satan says: OK, we'll have a truce  
and God says: Damn you! Go to Hell!

and Satan says:  
OK - and you come with me  
for swearing,  
and for all that ill-will!

Raj Arumugam

## Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 3: Shirt And Pants

the shirt and the long pants  
were each on a hanger  
in the closet  
and the shirt said to the pants:  
Oh brother! You're so boring!  
I hate hanging out  
with you!

Raj Arumugam

## Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 4: Old Phone, New Phone

the mobile phone  
peeped out of the teenager's pocket  
and said to the landline phone  
sitting in the corner:  
Hey, oldie...I'm better than you;  
you're the outdated  
I'm the new;  
you sit in the corner  
and I travel all round the world

and the landline phone said:  
stop that, you silly...  
can't you see?  
I'm actually you...

Raj Arumugam

## Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 5: Paper And Pen

the paper says to the pen:  
stop tickling me!

do you hate me,  
replies the pen,  
when I tickle, tickle, tickle?

well, not always,  
says the paper  
for sometimes  
you do get  
to my secret erogenous spots  
and that always fires me up...

Raj Arumugam

## Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 6: Clock And Painting

the clock chimed to  
the painting on  
the opposite side of the hall:  
I just struck six am,  
you idiot -  
and you're still at sunset!

and the sunset picture said:  
you've been at six am  
these twenty years,  
baby;  
someone ought to wind you up

Raj Arumugam

## Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 7: Key And Lock

says the key  
to the lock:  
what a perfect fit;  
we're made for each other

and the lock  
says to the key:  
easy for you to say;  
the next time  
bring along  
some lubricant

Raj Arumugam

## Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse 9: Tv And Radio

TV says to radio:

I'm better than you

cos I've got pictures and sound

while you've only got the latter

and radio says to TV:

it's only to my advantage

dear cousin

for I can tell lies better

Raj Arumugam

# Raj Arumugam Nonsense Verse1: Jack And Jill

every Jack will have his Jill  
and every Jill will get a jackass;  
the problem is often  
there are too many lumberjacks  
and the Jills are all out of the woods

Raj Arumugam

# Rajku Capers

(the series is an experiment in various forms of short verse or micro-verse; the parts may be read as discreet units or as a sequence with one's own narrative)

1

haiku is, many counsel me unsolicited,  
three lines within a structure;  
says who-ku?

2

many follow rules  
and rules anticipated them;  
but rules crumble before the unexpected

3

well, damn! if my haiku  
is not haiku  
i'll just call it rajku!

4

the book is strange;  
where is the beginning, middle  
and the end...where are they?

5

poetry and all things  
are useful in their space:  
there is an end to poetry

6

one line too is poetry magic

7

i'm mad with a new idea

8

i turn off the lights; there is...

9

one see the woman's eyes; one is enchanted

10

one word made her turn to murder

11

she can still kill  
with one look –  
but then, I've always been willing to die

12

will you wait for me?  
well, please wait; but of course  
I may not turn up

13

you asked me for an honest opinion;  
i told you the truth;  
and so you taught me to lie always

14

what's going on next door?  
but do you know  
what's going on indoors?

15

why did you come to shelter  
in the land of poetry?

16

it's easy to see  
the lies one tells others;  
but it's not so easy  
to see the lies one holds  
so close to one's heart

17

have you heard  
the echoes  
in your mind?

18

have you seen

the subtle lies  
you tell yourself?

19

what we call self is  
just formation of conditioning

20

do we communicate?  
or we distort all  
through our mental formations?

Raj Arumugam

# Rajku To Haiku

well, damn! if my haiku  
is not haiku  
i'll just call it rajku!

Raj Arumugam

# Randomness

There's always a time  
when things fall in place  
when wishes find their destination  
and desires find a resting place

There are always phases  
and parts and natural cycles  
and things move  
in slow unpressured steps

There's chance, randomness  
things happening  
of their own accord  
to relieve the heavy heart

Raj Arumugam

# Reading The Newspaper

The news is not good  
The newspapers don't report them  
as they should  
There's plenty in the obituaries  
but none of them I hate are gone  
All those whom I despise  
and whom I wish were scarce  
are still around

The news is not good  
Editors and writers these days  
have only two things  
on their plates: sex and food  
If it's not who was in bed with whom  
it's at what restaurant  
you can lick to satisfaction

And not that anything is for free:  
sex and food all come with disease  
Damn it all -  
the news is just not good;  
every day it gets worse

Raj Arumugam

# Reading The Rights To Animals

come beasts  
fat and well-bred  
and positively yummy,  
get in line and on the truck;  
and here speedily at the abattoir  
or your head on the chopping block  
we in our infinite human kindness  
we shall read you your animal rights:  
You may stress out  
on the conveyor belt;  
and you may bleat or snort  
according to your nature;  
you may shake and struggle  
and you may do  
a final dance of trembling limbs before the slaughter;  
and most important,  
you have the right to remain silent...

Raj Arumugam

# Red And White Peach Blossoms

I see you  
gentle red and white  
peach blossoms  
delicate like the life  
one holds in one's heart  
like the name and beauty in  
each one we know  
and the transience of oneself  
that we see in the quiet of each passing day;  
gentle red and white  
peach blossoms  
I see you  
quiet ones  
like life in all forms one observes  
that blossoms and takes its place in its day  
and that resurfaces in the energy of species;  
I see you  
gentle red and white  
peach blossoms  
the same radiance runs  
through you and me

Raj Arumugam

# Red Flowers On The Native Tree

the red flowers  
on the native tree  
in my garden  
glowed in the morning sun;  
now the curtains are drawn  
and the darkness embraces  
the red flowers  
on the native tree  
and she blushes in the embrace  
in my garden

Raj Arumugam

# Rejection

One by one  
my friends appeared before me  
in inner space  
as I lay down to sleep  
and each one I denied:  
I know you not, I said to each.  
And each one denied me too.

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Religion Minus All Myths

religion without myths  
that is honest inquiry  
drops all stories and theories and revelations  
and there is no Holy Book and is sans scriptures  
and leaders and prophets and followers;  
and there is no superior and inferior  
and there is no separation;  
religion without myths has no concepts and ideas and teachings  
and there is no tradition and holy place and no fixations and destinies;  
religion without myths  
that is honest inquiry  
drops all structures and systems  
and second-hand insights and labels and cliches  
and religion without myths  
has no authority and no leaders and priestly classes  
and religion without myths has  
no ready-made solutions  
one buys off supermarket shelves;  
and there are no certainties  
and here are  
no followers and votaries and initiates and mindless masses;  
and so it is that the leaders and priests corrupt religion  
and so it is that followers demand revelation and revered leaders -  
but the fearless  
dropp all structures and teachings;  
and the fearless see what actually is  
rather than what is wished for  
and made concrete through systems

Raj Arumugam

# Rembrandt Laughing (Based On The Painting 'Rembrandt Laughing' By Rembrandt)

somebody asks:

how do you get to smile

and how do you get to laugh so often?

how do you get humor?

uhmmm...

you get that

if you

don't take

yourself too seriously;

but if you think

you're so important

(and you've got doctrines that give you importance;

and you've systems that make you important;

and you are a religious leader, perhaps?

or a serious follower who's hell-bent on going to heaven?)

then the goddess of humor and laughter

leaves you

and you're left with greedy gremlins

that eat your heart out

.....uhhhhhmmmm....I think

Raj Arumugam

# Rembrandt, Self Portrait, 1658

I have seen it, O world,  
I have seen it as one sees the clouds  
or as one feels water naked in the cool lake  
at the break of dawn  
I have felt it as one feels the grapes  
seized with savage hands and crushed against one's teeth  
O I have seen the rise and fall of pain  
and greed and name and fame  
and I have lived the grand ways of the world  
of favor and office and recognition  
and reward and loss and desertion and days of merry company  
and years of desolation and years of patronage and commission  
and I have cupped young soft flesh in both my hands;  
and I have seen loss, death and growth and promise  
and stealth and destruction and infamy  
and I have seen genius and I have witnessed mediocrity  
and you know, I have amazed and I have disappointed -  
as you, O world, as you have disappointed and amazed  
I have seen the pageant of emotions  
of the rise and fall and the transition and journeys  
of all thought and ambition and desire and want  
O world, I have seen you and you have much of me  
and we have struggled and we have cursed and approved  
and we have raised our heads and we have looked the other way  
and you have heaped praise and dispraise  
and I have created and I have destroyed  
and I have cut my own canvas into parts -  
but still, O world, still,  
if you look at me, if you look -  
you know, you know  
I, Rembrandt,  
I am always the Monarch

poem written after long and repeated contemplation of the painting: 'Rembrandt,

Self Portrait,1658'

Raj Arumugam

# Remembering Mike Along The Railway Tracks

Mike and I were best of friends  
and we drank together  
and walked home together  
And we'd walk along the railway tracks  
and Mike  
was always the more observant of us two  
Yes, I always looked up to him  
He'd be first to point out any irregularities  
and so he'd say:  
"There sure are a lot of steps  
along the way"  
And I'd concur  
and I'd say:  
"Yes, Mike...  
And the problem is  
the bloody handrails  
are so low down"

And you know what  
Mike is gone  
and I still walk back  
along the railway tracks  
and the bloody idiots in charge of the railway  
after all these years  
they still put a lot of steps all the way  
and worse –  
they still put those damned handrails  
so low down...  
Some people never learn;  
they never change

I shout these things aloud  
And I look up to Mike as I say these things  
as I walk alone

Raj Arumugam

# Report On Humans

they are mostly on drugs:  
they hallucinate constantly  
seeing what is not there  
blind to what is before them

Raj Arumugam

# Respect Your Mum!

Little David loses mum  
in the big shop  
and he runs around  
and between aisles  
shouting for his mum  
"Monica! Monica! Monica! "  
he shouts for his mum  
and finally mum appears  
and she admonishes her son:  
"You know you shouldn't call me Monica,  
son - always call me mum"

"I know mum, " says respectful little David  
"but you can see the shop is full  
of mums and mums! "

Raj Arumugam

# Revenge Of The Ghost Of The Betrayed Husband

Heee! Heee! Hooooooo.....

Well, Hello, lovebirds...making love are we?

One on top of the other

still with flesh and organs all intact

and making all sorts of crude noises

and getting into this messy business –

getting your bed sticky and wet with sweat;

ah, you beings of flesh and blood and ecstasies

unlike me

just bones and a mere ghost me now living

lonely and in airless worlds

sent there by you my wife under that man

and you the man who helped poison me -

now you are over my wife

and you raise your arse to the gods

Hheeee...heeee....heeee... Heee! Heee! Hooooooo.....

Well, Hello, lovebirds...making love are we?

I'll be back every time the two of you fornicators

make love in my bed – shame on you, you murderer;

you took my wife, my home –and can't even afford

to buy a new bed

Heee! Heee! Hooooooo.....

but I'll be back every time the two of you close each other

like two palms raised in prayer;

and I'll pull the mosquito net down a bit and peer in

to see the two of you naked in bed

and I've got a bony tongue

long enough to lick the both of you! -

and to see me with my horrendous eyeballs

your phallus will shrink immediately;

and that woman, my former wife and eternal betrayer,

who mixed poison into my rice and shrimps

- every time she sees me, in her shock and fear

she'll fart you out of bed, every time for sure...

Heee! Heee! Hooooo....

Well, Hello, lovebirds...making love are we?

Heee! Heee! Hooooooo.....



# Reverence

to revere is to be disrespectful;  
it is offensive  
for to revere is to set up divisions  
between the mighty and the inferior  
between the wise and the fool  
between the weak and the strong;  
reverence is a sign  
of one's greed and self-interest  
in the games of power and self-preservation;  
it is insulting to life  
to fear, to revere  
and to set up hierarchies of saints  
and great people and genius  
and the powerful and the weak  
the Omnipotent and the Impotent  
and sinner and the pure, oh so pure,  
and the holy and the unholy  
and an order of high life and low life  
and the Omnipotent, Oh we must not forget the Omnipotent  
ooh, so Importantly Omnipotent –  
but one simply loves;  
and it is not love that has a hierarchy  
and it is not love that differentiates –  
one loves;  
one does not revere  
one does not fear  
one is not in awe  
but one loves –  
no matter how Resplendent  
or you may be God  
or you may be a worm  
or you may be a power  
but one does not revere or fear  
but one loves,  
each the same,  
undifferentiated

Raj Arumugam

# Rice Cakes Or Cheese?

Rice cakes!

Damn!

Rice cakes for dinner, rice cakes for lunch!

Rice cakes for breakfast!

Damn!

Don't they have anything else in this house?

house after we've lived in Nihon\*

and all we get to steal from our honorable

but ignorant human hosts

is rice cake and more rice cake...

I hate living in Nihon!

You know, I hear the Dutch and the British

and the Americans give cheese to their mice

even on their ships -

but rats! - what do we mice get

in our honorable land of the rising sun?

Rice cakes!

Damn!

Rice cakes for dinner, rice cakes for lunch!

Rice cakes for breakfast!

Damn!

Look - I don't know about you - but I've had it!

I'm leaving Nihon forever

and I'll jump onto one of these ships

that now more commonly visit Nihon's shores

and end up in Britain or Holland eating cheese

and live on a Mouse Cheese Pension maybe for the rest of my life,

O cheese! cheese! - rather that, you know

than rice cakes for dinner, rice cakes for lunch!

Rice cakes for breakfast!

And what are you so composed about?

Lying there on the floor, looking so pleased with yourself -

are you coming or no?

OK...you stay here and join some Zen temple

and eat vegetarian rice cakes all your complacent and placid life -

but I'm going this very night

to the West

to feast and dine on cheese,

like an English gentleman perhaps, all my life...

Raj Arumugam

# Rich And Famous

I dreamed last night  
I was rich and famous  
glowing with love  
radiant with money;  
I don't know how I hit jackpot  
but the riches and love sure hit me

and my lackeys  
they gathered round  
and after some reverence  
and obeisance  
(some revived from ancient customs  
as befitting a man they deemed  
heir to the riches of  
China, India and Japan)  
they all said:  
"Honorable Lord,  
what shall we do  
with your boundless fame  
and your untold wealth? "

"Give my wealth, "  
I declared, "to the 1%  
cos Obama plans to tax them more  
And give my fame  
to the anonymous 99%  
cos they obviously crave for attention  
And I myself, " I said,  
"shall retire into Monastery Zen"

sure, wise guys, it was all but a dream;  
and my wife was waking me up  
with a broom  
"Get up! " she screamed  
"Go forth and get a job -  
and stay away from those  
lazy Occupy-This-City-and-that-City people! "

Raj Arumugam

# Riddle Burden

1

The solitary traveller  
on dusty paths was a  
collector of riddles;  
but his curse was  
he could never  
remember any more  
than the last one

so he could never  
make the connections

2

He met a blind traveller  
and asked him for a riddle  
and the eyeless traveller  
gave him one, and remarked as  
they went on their separate journeys:  
I am burdened by endless riddles  
What is your riddle burden?

One had never enough  
the other just too much -  
so neither could ever make the connections

Raj Arumugam

# Rip Van Winkle Asks If It'd Not Been Better To Have Slept Forever

you know I slept  
twenty years  
and woke to find  
all things changed

when I sleep now,  
though only a few hours  
each night,  
I wonder  
if it had not been better  
if I had slept forever

I had not known  
trouble in my long sleep;  
and I was not bewildered  
by a world  
that is strange and distant  
though I move in it all day long

I had not known  
any care or worry;  
nor had I to think where  
my next meal was to come from  
or hang over things like  
what today's contemporaries  
fret about:  
things like retirement funds  
and aged care; and a will  
that will be ample and fair

I had not known  
people of strange ways  
when I slept;

I had not to condone  
the conceited and those whose  
only concern is self-interest;  
and men and women of twisted emotion  
and hell-bent on murder and blood  
and lust;  
and a lawn that must be trimmed

and in my bear-sleep  
I had no encounter  
with the fool, the arrogant, the ambitious  
and the tyrant and the greedy;  
all I knew in my long sleep  
was quiet, oblivion and bliss  
and so I ask myself often  
as I sit in the shade of the tree:  
I wonder  
if it had not been better  
if I had slept forever?

Raj Arumugam

# Rip Van Winkle's Dream

I slept for twenty years  
comfortably below the tree  
up in the quiet mountains  
and all that time  
I lay in a sleep  
as deep as before  
I came to my mother's womb

and yes, I had dreams  
in those two decades of sleep –  
but no, I did not dream of angels and heaven  
or guiding lights and stars  
but simply dreamed  
that I shed all forms of thoughts and ideas  
like one sheds one's clothes  
before one enters a placid lake

and I dreamed often  
there was no thought patterns and creed  
no dogma and beliefs  
and there were no ideas and organized religion;  
and there was no form or shape  
nor a past or future or time;  
no sets of thought to cling to  
and therefore no questions or answers:  
and I entered so the lake of silence

and having dreamed that  
having entered the lake  
you will understand why  
I do not sit in church or group;  
why I do not seek or conform  
and why I have no interest  
in all these books you wave  
and these revelations you espouse;  
and simply no interest

in all these things you preach

I slept for twenty years  
comfortably below the tree  
up in the quiet mountains  
and all that time  
I lay in a sleep  
as deep as before  
I came to my mother's womb

Raj Arumugam

# Room Says To The Door

Shut up!

says the room to the door

you're just a barrier

whereas I am the space

O yeah? says the door to the room

When you become intolerable

I'm the way to freedom

Raj Arumugam

# Room Says To The Windows

Shut up!  
says the room to the windows  
You guys are just like  
toothless mouths of the aged!

O yeah? say the windows  
When you become stale  
we're the ones who let in fresh air

Raj Arumugam

# Routine

This is my bed I creep into  
defeated by this day. The brain ridden  
with many folds turns heavy and wonders:  
And is this the way it shall be, the routine  
set for the rest of my days into an animal decline?  
With a body imprisoned by trips in a car  
and limbs rushed from one manhour to another?  
and myself seized by the throat  
with unyielding and angry alien faces  
pressed into mine and sucking me dry?  
Is this how it shall be with me?  
Returning to a place of rest to stare into vacant air  
till the hour I creep into bed after an evening  
in the lounge, feeling heavy and perfecting the tummy circle.  
Will this go on and on,  
everything of me bound and imprisoned, wearied and numbed  
and creeping into bed yet again...  
This is my bed I creep into,  
defeated by this day...

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Rules For Whom?

many follow rules  
and rules anticipated them;  
but rules crumble before the unexpected

Raj Arumugam

# Run Home, Run Home Butterfly

run home  
run home  
butterfly;  
run run  
fly fly fly

there's rain and hail  
and the wind blows wild;  
what are you doing  
flitting idly by?

run home  
run home  
butterfly;  
run run  
fly fly fly

duck for cover  
excuse the expression;  
hide under a tree  
or go sleep under the leaves;  
have you no sense  
of impeding danger?

Oh run home  
run home  
butterfly;  
run run  
fly fly fly

the wind blows hard  
and you're being blown around;  
what happens if  
a tiny hail stone  
swings a hole in a wing  
or worse -  
oh fragile butterfly -  
I don't want to be here to see  
a hail stone the size of a child's fist

land smack on your gentle head

so run home

run home

you silly

playful butterfly;

run run run

fly fly fly

Raj Arumugam

# Sadness From The Night

last night  
as the clouds spread thin  
breaking like long dry leaves  
long in the open  
there was a loneliness;  
last night  
as the street lights  
cast their glow on the walls  
and their fingertips touched my lips  
there was a sadness;  
last night as the cool wind blew  
and the blinds whispered  
to the stealthy lover  
there was an agony in the heart  
sweetheart  
even though we lay beside each other;  
and this morning  
that bitterness lingers  
like a bad aftertaste on the tongue  
like a bad hangover in the head

Raj Arumugam

# Sam And His Dad

It's Meeting Day  
and Sam and his Dad  
are with the teacher  
at school

and the teacher  
compliments Sam –  
but she has one 'but';  
Sam has a predisposition in class  
to use too often the word: "Shit"

Dad hears this and turns to Sam  
"You little shit! How dare you  
use such words? Stop your  
shit mouth from  
using shit words like that in class,  
you little shit! "

And then Dad turns to the teacher  
and he says with a smile of assurance:  
"Don't worry, Miss – that will fix  
that little shit! "

Raj Arumugam

# Same Dog

The Creative Writing teacher  
has sniffed out a cheat  
and she glares at Tom and barks at him:  
"Tom – each word in this writing  
you submitted  
is exactly the same as the one your  
brother Sim has submitted"

And quick as a leaping dog comes  
little Tom's answer:  
"Yeah – it's the same dog! "

Raj Arumugam

# Sanctuary

why did you come to shelter  
in the land of poetry?

Raj Arumugam

# Satire In Pieces

I wrote a piece of satire  
making fun of grandeur -  
so I wrote:  
&quot;No one is my equal;  
no one is my peer  
My worth outshines all&quot;

But many took it literally  
and castigated me for  
such arrogance and stupidity  
There was so much fuss  
so I went to read my satire again:  
&quot;No one is my equal;  
no one is my peer  
My worth outshines all&quot;

This time indeed, like everyone else,  
I could see no satire

Raj Arumugam

# Says The Apple To The Pear

says the apple  
to the the pear:  
I don't know if you care  
But stop imitating me  
You're a fraud  
Trying to be me

And says the pear:  
Oh, I'm the original  
for I'm as green  
as the good earth  
You're the imitation  
red as the devil

Oh don't give me that  
Saintly spin, says the apple  
I'm just red  
blushing at the audacity  
of frauds like you  
and that nashi over there too!

Raj Arumugam

# Says The Nose To The Glasses

says the nose to the glasses:

Get off my back!

You serve me no purpose -

you're just a burden!

And the glasses say:

Know your place

and stop snorting!

I serve a different master;

you'e just the donkey I ride

Raj Arumugam

## Says Who-Ku?

haiku is, many counsel me unsolicited,  
three lines within a structure;  
says who-ku?

Raj Arumugam

# Schubert And Keats Will Die Younger

if Schubert were alive  
and Keats writing now  
they'd die so much younger;  
so much has the banal  
become the way of life  
in our times  
it will surely kill

Raj Arumugam

# Schubert Drinks The Tears Of The Hapless Woman

Schubert, torch-bearer at Beethoven's funeral,  
pursuer of music and of his own sorrow;  
Franz Schubert drank  
the tears of the hapless woman  
even from the very cup of her white hands  
and his body wasted away;  
alas, his life and years wasted away;  
like the charmed knight  
eaten by Keats' La Belle Dame sans Merci,  
Schubert too was eaten away...  
and so Schubert came to understand his music  
and his sorrow

Raj Arumugam

# Seated Woman With Shamisen

play us a tune

O delightful playful woman;

your pose and your head turned in casual ease

and your shamisen held in theatrical style

all that spontaneity is itself a performance -

but still, play us a tune;

bring down your bachi and pluck at the three strings

and bring us from Japan distant

and Japan past

O bring us the delights of life

that exude radiant on your face and limbs...

Play your shamisen;

begin, O delightful playful woman

Raj Arumugam

# See All That Sham, Yours And Mine

you're a comic  
you pretend to be Socratic  
put on airs of the Platonic  
it's all so obvious  
it's so damned pathetic

part 1

a)

you dress in the brands  
such sophisticated names  
you put on new coats and hats  
and you discard often  
and you're like cattle  
bred for slaughter  
with the tags on their ears  
and branded on their sides

b)

you frown at lies  
politicians ply  
you condemn the greed  
of CEOs and superstars  
but you don't know  
what lies within you  
within murky depths  
you don't know your  
own deceit;  
you condemn delusions  
but you have no idea of  
the lies you tell yourself

c)

you are so full of contradictions  
so overflowing with opposites  
yet you are full of judgment  
and justifications and condemnation;  
you can scan others  
by the rules of the book  
but you don't even notice  
the dirt below your uncut nails

you're a comic  
you pretend to be Socratic  
put on airs of the Platonic  
it's all so obvious  
it's so damned pathetic

part 2

a)

you've got plans  
to conquer the world  
you'll be masters of the Universe  
in centuries, in years  
but you wouldn't fix present wrongs  
and you won't be just  
and so it's like you mean to traverse space  
to spread the gospel of the unjust

b)

you sit together  
and each conspires  
to make the group noble  
but all you have are words  
that you hang on to;  
and you make traditions  
and you fashion theories  
and you weave explanations  
and innovate declarations  
and hallucinate revelations;  
and then the group goes out  
to bomb the world;  
and you've got the justification  
and the group's benediction

you're a comic  
you pretend to be Socratic  
put on airs of the Platonic  
it's all so obvious  
it's so damned pathetic

part 3

a)

the love you speak of  
is just self-preservation  
that brings in others  
into the equation  
of your personal comfort;  
you speak love  
you spread hate  
and like changing water into wine  
you can turn love into hate

and hate into love  
for as in miracles  
and in all transformations  
there are no differences in opposites

b)

you're comfy  
to stand before people  
and to make pronouncements  
but you make no introspection:  
you tolerate no questions from others  
and you have no questions for yourselves

c)

on earth  
you want pleasures  
and you recoil from pain  
and you cannot face your end  
and so you weave continuity  
and you create a Heaven  
and a God to Lord over it  
and so you can have an eternity  
of bliss, happiness and pleasures:  
limited by your imagination  
you just continue  
your earthly garden of pleasures  
and plagued by your selfishness  
you condemn others to Hell

c)

you'd rather climb up there  
to the seats of power  
and you want to change  
the world;  
you want to change everyone

except yourself  
for you are the chosen  
and you want to change  
things  
so they'll be to your convenience;  
and time stops there  
and fear begins in the hearts and minds  
of the peoples  
and you spread comforts  
and you dull their brains  
broaden your bumps  
so you can sit in full seats of power  
that you won by craft of lies

you're a comic  
you pretend to be Socratic  
put on airs of the Platonic  
it's all so obvious  
it's so damned pathetic

part 4

a)

and you say life  
is based on virtues  
and ideals and truth  
and you espouse  
justice, equality  
and fairness and peace and love  
and respect  
and all these noble qualities;  
but you don't know any

for all you have are words  
you memorized from your books  
all you have are words  
you repeat  
your masters put in your heads  
so the only thing you can do  
is deliver rusty nails  
and sewage water  
in the open hands of the masses

you're a comic  
you pretend to be Socratic  
put on airs of the Platonic  
it's all so obvious  
it's so damned pathetic

Raj Arumugam

# See How Life Flows

see how life flows  
how time embraces  
things pass, and the words we use  
to justify things  
to eternalize, to spiritualise  
they trap us, do you observe;  
beings pass, things lose their joints  
bodies relinquish their hold;  
and even space withdraws into itself  
all things it brings forth  
if you observe,  
dear wayfarer, and friend  
what appears before and what stays and what subsides;  
not led in your mind  
manacled by Thick Books and Principles  
and The Book of Words and Light of Truths  
if you put all things aside  
(you need nothing in all worlds)  
and you observe  
you see all things glide  
like the cloud that appears in the sky  
dances with winds, not to please anyone  
and then passes;  
and so do you, so do all things pass;  
and always there is the stillness that embraces  
do you observe

Raj Arumugam

# See No Good (A Horror Story)

## 1 HIS SONG

His song was always:

I see no good

see no kindness

in the world

I see no hope

I see no gentleness

nowhere all round me

## 2 THE SCENE

and now he lies

bowels dismembered

His intestines

making a nice O

on the floor;

his limbs like sticks

stretched out

pointing towards the only door

## 3 POLICE VERDICT

some evil

got him

Raj Arumugam

# Seeing In Darkness

i turn off the lights; there is...

Raj Arumugam

# Seeing Life

you don't know life  
you haven't seen it complete;  
for all you see  
is in part;  
as, say as you come out of the shower,  
you see its bushy tail  
while it lies behind the sofa

Raj Arumugam

# Seeing My Soul

I have not seen a soul,  
not even my own;  
and yet others speak of mine  
with great authority

Raj Arumugam

# Seeing Things

1

when first I saw moving images  
of bugs and insects and butterflies  
on a screen in the classroom  
I screamed that I might need  
to go see the school nurse  
but my teacher said:  
'Don't worry, kid;  
that's television...'

2

when I saw images on my mobile phone  
I burped aloud  
my sense of wonder  
and asked the girl if I was seeing things;  
and the sales girl said:  
'Please sir, it's no wonder;  
that's just mobile technology...'

3

When now I see my end  
at the height of my H1N1 fever  
and I tell my wife:  
'Four and twenty fair virgins  
all blondes  
they beckon me...'

'Darling, ' my wife says,  
with her knuckles smack on my head:  
'that's just your imagination  
in your old age and desperation...  
Now, you're really seeing things! '

Raj Arumugam

# Seeing Things As They Are

when there is anger (or joy, or whatever might be)  
one does not look for the opposite  
one does not seek to control or suppress  
but one sees what is, observes it  
sees it, as it is, with no judgment;  
and one understands that which is there  
and so one has no theories  
and a history and a future and a past;  
and one is not drawn to charming philosophies  
or lofty schemes and grand heaven-ascending plans  
proffered most seductively or threateningly...  
and so one sees as things are

Raj Arumugam

# Seeing What Actually Is

is one capable of observing with no projection of one's mind and thoughts and ideas onto the observed? can one actually observe?

or does one see what one wants to see? does one look and see what is before one, or does one drag what one observes into one's belief systems and one's vision and preconceived notions and philosophy?

one is conditioned

by beliefs and documents

and is shaped by culture and religions

and revelations and dogma

and one sees everything merely

in the shape of what one believes in;

but can one merely observe what stands before one?

is that possible?

is it possible for one to stand before the sky, before the colors, before the setting sun and the trees - and to see what is before one? or must one always interpret everything one sees, so that one never sees

what actually is?

can one see beyond one's beliefs

and one's faith and one's conditioning

and beyond the forms

and beyond the shaping words of revered Holy Books

that the leaders and organization put into one?

can one see with a free mind?

Raj Arumugam

# Seeing What One Wants To See

there is anxiety, pain, and change  
and pursuit and activity and growing and boredom  
and all that each refuses to face  
and so seeks solace and comfort through diversions  
through a hundred thousand mind-creations  
and affirmations;  
and dragging oneself into the mire and obscurity  
insists on dragging others into the pit too:  
there is no clarity; no seeing directly...  
it is all tradition and revelation and what one is told  
and repetition - loud, loud repetition;  
it is all myth, belief and pursuing what should be  
rather than seeing what is there:  
each drags down the other, and all sink together

Raj Arumugam

# Self

what we call self is  
just formation of conditioning

Raj Arumugam

# Self-Portrait - Vincent Can Gogh

A wooden pipe is good  
a simple pleasure  
something for my mouth (a drawing in  
that fills the mouth and indeed the whole head)

and so I need not talk  
just nod or mutter hmmm, hmmm  
if the idle talkative corners me

and a hat, a rough rustic hat  
a generous one, ample  
to bestow on one an air of ease

the beard too, ample  
and contented with itself

and a look - an easy one, almost naïve -  
that too is good

And then we - hat, beard and pipe, and look -  
we can start on our journey of the self-portrait

Raj Arumugam

# Selling Yourself

It's called selling yourself,  
she says  
to me, offering unsolicited advice. She's been here ten years  
and I'm but a new migrant and worse, she thinks,  
a quiet and unassuming one at that.

It's called selling yourself,  
she says.  
You got to be aggressive and assertive;  
You got to be pushy.  
Sell yourself.  
I look at her  
as she turns to her neighbour:  
I see  
she deals with cliches  
and bankrupt phrases  
and she herself stands  
like an overused fourth exclamation mark.

Go to the alley, you bitch,  
and sell yourself.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Separate Ways

you will not know the  
paths one took;  
you will not know  
the journeys  
one made:  
but then,  
nobody knows, baby,  
nobody knows  
the sunlit ways you took  
that led into shady ends

so separate people go  
you do not know  
the stories  
on the neighbor's face;  
so distant the world goes  
you do not know  
the one who sleeps beside you

so enclosed we are  
we walk like programs  
that run their own  
non-interactive course;  
so centered are we  
we do not now  
other than our own concerns

death is news and hunger is pity  
and massacres are distant  
and abuse arouses speeches  
and always one's own sufferings  
more urgent

and so the brain puts measures  
and walls and enclosures  
so we never know the burdens

that will break the camel's back

we live in castles, baby  
and we have internal, private  
home theater systems  
that are on auto upgrades;  
we sit, though we walk,  
the absorbing screen before  
and the crowds behind

you will not know the  
paths one took;  
you will not know  
the journeys  
one made:  
but then,  
nobody knows, baby,  
nobody knows  
the sunlit ways you took  
that led into shady ends

Raj Arumugam

# Shadow Of The Wolf

1

'My, my, '  
said the wolf one day  
seeing its long shadow on the ground.  
'How big I am, how powerful I am.  
Why, I've grown bigger  
than any lion or bear.'

And with that  
the wolf walked about  
with a lot of pride  
and arrogance

2

Soon the Wolf met a lion  
in the shades below the trees  
and the Wolf sauntered very leisurely by

'My, my, '  
said the Lion to the Wolf.  
'You're looking very calm and confident.'

'Oh, yes, ' said the Wolf.  
'The reason is clear to see:  
since the last time you saw me  
I've grown bigger and stronger  
than the bear, the elephant and even you! '

3

'Oh, yes, ' said the Lion,  
'indeed you have grown bigger and meatier  
and possibly tastier than any! '

And with that the Lion pounced  
on the self-confident wolf  
and made a meal of its kill  
and the wolf was cut down to size

in the mighty Lion's tummy

Raj Arumugam

# Shakespeare's Marriage

## SHAKESPEARE'S MARRIAGE

November 1582

William Shagspere,18  
of Stratford  
marries  
Anne Hathwey,26  
Of Shottery

and six months later  
the timer bell  
at the oven rings  
and out pops a fine young baby -  
lovely Susanna

OK, time for village gossips  
to exercise their tongues

-----

varied spellings of Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway in this poem  
are as were spelled in various documents in Shakespeare's time.  
2. There is no judgement in this poem of anyone or any action.

Raj Arumugam

# Shakespeare's Will

## SHAKESPEARE'S WILL

William Shackspeare dies 23 April 1616  
and as a reasonable father and gent.,  
makes his will and his wishes known  
bequeaths items and money  
and property to those he has known  
(as he pleases)  
and to Anne Hathaway,  
says William Shackspeare in his will:  
'I gyve unto my wife  
my second best bed with the furniture...'

## ANNE HATHAWAY DIES

Anne Hathwey dies 1623, aged 67

O bodes it well, Will  
to marry one older?

Many pleasures there be in such a match;  
many are the plays born thereof...

---

varied spellings of Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway in this poem are as were spelled in various documents in Shakespeare's time.

2. There is no judgement in this poem of anyone or any action.

3. suggestion:

for details of events in this poem please search for Anne Hathaway on your search engine

Raj Arumugam

# She Was In The Profession

She stopped her work at her lawn when she saw me  
and leaned over the fence and we talked for over two hours  
with my elbow on her posts and my feet resting  
against the palings.

She had worked forty years in the same profession  
and had seen generations through the doors. She  
had enjoyed her work and people still call her to  
tell her about themselves; they express their gratitude  
and how much of a difference she had made.

She walked down the fence, waved her arms  
and returned to the corner where I stood.

But what was work for?  
she asked.  
Forty years doing what was good for others  
but nothing that was good for myself.  
What was work for? she sighed.  
What were forty years for? It destroyed me.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

## Shelter: Report On Humans 2

there is no shade  
in these drought-persistent  
cracked lands  
so they sit  
under the dead tree

Raj Arumugam

# Shintaro

Shintaro, Shintaro, O Shintaro  
hero, samurai, loner, onmitsu  
maverick, defender, O lover of justice

Shintaro walks with grace  
Shintaro's life is concentration  
and quiet, peace and silence  
Shintaro is skill and perfection

Shintaro is protector of child  
woman and the poor and the orphans  
the weak, the helpless  
and of any who has been wronged

Shintaro, Shintaro, O Shintaro  
hero, samurai, loner, onmitsu  
maverick, defender, lover of justice

the ninjas come  
like speeding stars  
one after another  
secret killers  
with weapons of death  
but none can beat Shintaro -  
Akikusa Shintaro, master of peace and stillness  
Samurai who sees with his being

Shintaro, Shintaro, O Shintaro  
hero, samurai, loner, onmitsu  
maverick, defender, O lover of justice -  
you live in time  
you live in mind

Raj Arumugam

# Shut Up And Trouble

Shut Up and Trouble  
are good friends  
and like to play  
hide-and-seek till late ten

Well, here are Trouble and Shut Up.  
Do you see them?  
Trouble hides  
and Shut Up goes to seek  
and he searches high and low  
and under the grass too  
and behind others people's homes  
and at bus-stops and in street-corner bins  
but nowhere can Shut Up find Trouble  
though he searches high and low  
and late even after ten -  
and see now,  
he is spotted outside the butcher's  
by Policeman Sometimes Vigilant

'Hey, you! ' shouts Policeman Sometimes Vigilant  
'You there outside the butcher's -  
What's your name? '

'Shut Up! '  
answers Shut Up, very honestly

And Policeman Sometimes Vigilant  
who also is sometimes angry  
indeed gets very angry at this  
and he asks another question:  
'And what are you looking for  
around here late this hour? '

'I'm looking for Trouble! ' comes the swift answer  
for Shut Up has always been quick and to the point

And Policeman Sometimes Vigilant

arrests Shut Up and he says:  
'Young Man, you're coming with me  
to the Police Station  
and you're spending the night in a cell'

'Oh, ' says Shut Up, thinking this is all a game  
and looking quite pleased  
'Are you saying Trouble is there waiting for me? '

'Yes! Yes! ' shouts Policeman Sometimes Vigilant  
who sometimes also gets exasperated

And the moral of this story?

As if you can't guess:

Parents should never name their child Trouble  
even if Parents think that's what their children are;  
Parents should never name their child Shut Up  
even if that's what Parents wish their children would do...

Raj Arumugam

# Sick Frog

OK, it's not something I ate  
or my youthful wild days  
catching up with me;  
no – it's not me taking turns to be  
grumpy, and jumpy and mean-looking;  
no, it's not me dissatisfied with  
my place in the food chain  
or my place in the wild scheme of things;  
or just being unhappy about the effects on me  
in the wild accidents of evolution  
or being a victim of Irrational Creation  
or just unhappy in an existential sort of way  
asking questions like:  
What's the meaning of it all?  
Or  
Is there a Heaven for Frogs  
or are we just Dinner for the French?  
and finding it all a Cruel Joke played on us frogs  
by some Celestial Omnipotent Frog Being;  
no, nor is it for want of sexual partners -  
I mean I do croak-sing well enough  
and I mount well enough  
and get partners often enough during the mating season;  
no, it's not that at all...  
I don't know...I'm just a frog and it's the nature of frog existence, I guess...

Raj Arumugam

# Sillyverse

Dear old grand-da -  
why do you sit there  
trembling and rolling  
and scrawling sillyverse?

Because, if I didn't -  
dearest child - I'd be  
writing silly prose...  
So it's better that I write  
sillyverse than  
get it any worse

Raj Arumugam

# Sing You Of The Tongue

sing you, commanded the voice,  
sing you,  
O one of million insipid poets  
lost at websites;  
sing you of the tongue

who's that? I said  
pretty sure  
the effects of an overdose of paracetamol  
could not linger for so long

O you inglorious cyberspace versifier  
tied to praise and strokes  
of fellow-weaklings at poetry sites  
sing you, I command you  
of the tongue

excuse me, I replied,  
living in a democracy  
I don't take directions like that...  
besides I'm vegetarian  
and I couldn't possibly sing  
in good conscience  
about delicacies like cow tongues  
and pig tongues and taco de lengua  
or duck tongues  
or ox tails for that matter...  
besides, I queried,  
who the hell are you?

ah, said the voice  
I am your muse  
that your modern world has banished;  
by me all tongues move in eloquence  
and all tongues are born and prosper

and therefore I command you  
sing you of the tongue

but why me?  
I asked,  
unable to resist a cliché

because you are a weakling,  
came the firm and quick reply

all right, but sing like how? I said,  
unwilling to dispute with this voice  
and quite convinced a lunatic  
ventriloquist was around  
(though talking to myself  
I wondered if I too was not insane)  
like, how should I sing?  
like:  
O I sing of the tongue supple and delicate...  
or  
of the tongue I sing  
and its exploits  
in battlefields and in bedrooms...  
how do you like those beginnings?

you imbecile!  
declared the throaty voice  
your generation of vipers  
imitate the ancients  
and yet you know nothing of the muse that  
moves tongues;  
do not presume to ask me how you should sing  
for I know only how to command  
and therefore I command you,  
you weakling underdog:  
Sing  
you of the tongue!

and so I started  
and composed there  
three poems on the red human tongue  
and I confess I cheated  
for lack of inspiration  
and so I included this as number one.

(1 in 3 of the series: Tongue Poems)

Raj Arumugam

# Sitting Under The Birches

under the birches one may sit  
under the trees  
perhaps on a rock, a stump  
in the quiet  
in the solitude  
in this light  
The Japanese umbrella by one's side  
One in one's best clothes  
here may one sit  
in one's time  
as if all of life has been a journey  
to this single point, to this one place  
One on one's own, having come into the world so  
and all relationships and realities coming to this  
in the midst of this, one may sit  
with the light, and colors and with the earth  
and the sky and the water  
as if finding one's place in this life, on this radiant earth  
amidst the breathing trees and the creeping moss and lichen  
one may come to one's poise and silence  
a moment beyond thought and emotion  
one coming into one's own  
a transcending of pain and disquiet  
a coming into peace, into stillness and seeing it all  
all things, all movement, seeing all as it is

Raj Arumugam

# Six Blind Elephants

six blind elephants  
disagreed over what a human is;  
and they concluded  
they'd have a direct experience  
to resolve the matter

and so the first elephant  
felt a human and declared:  
"A human is flat"

And each other elephant  
through its own direct encounter  
concurred on the lack of human dimensions

And so there was an end to the discord

Raj Arumugam

# Sleep, Moon And A Faint Memory

one is aware  
sleep's gentle hands  
release one awhile  
to turn over, perhaps  
and one is conscious of a gentle light  
and one sees the moon between the trees  
a wisp of cloud ghost-moves past;  
and sleep, the seductress, embraces one again

Raj Arumugam

# Sleep, Tender Heart

sleep, tender heart  
sleep like a fairy between petals;  
sleep like a koala  
safe and sound  
concealed amongst leaves

sleep, gentle mind  
like the innocent newborn  
without a thought or care;  
sleep like the moon  
that crawls to its quiet  
on the advent of the sun

sleep like the waves  
that crawl to a lagoon  
and still themselves for peace and rest

sleep, O gentle souls  
and all you beautiful beings  
sleep like the pervading stillness  
before the world unfolded itself

Raj Arumugam

# Small Wonders

1

I did not go  
to the Niagara  
to see beauty  
I did not go  
see the Taj or Giza, or the Great Wall  
to witness power and strength

2

I went to the anonymous  
green and the flowers  
in my backyard  
I went to see the grass  
grow between roads  
and I saw the weed  
push through concrete

I went to the open fields  
inconsequential, indistinct

and I saw Beauty there  
and I saw Power there

Raj Arumugam

# So Where's My Change?

the Wise Man is followed  
by many, from near and from afar;  
and see, the Wise Man stops now  
at the dumplings store  
and buys some dumplings  
and waits for his change;  
but the vendor simply resumes  
at making more money

'So where's my change,  
my good man? ' says the Wise Man  
who is followed  
by many, from near and from afar

And the vendor he replies:  
'Change, O Wise Leader of Many Followers,  
as you have often said,  
comes from within'

Raj Arumugam

# Social Skills

there's the physicist  
there's the engineer  
there's the lawyer  
The 3 go for a drink  
they sit at the bar:  
a drink before each;  
they stare at their feet

Time to go home

They go home  
each to their own  
The physicist  
The engineer  
The lawyer  
And each in their own bed  
And each stares at their own bare feet

What's going on inside each head?

'Why are my social skills  
so, so, low down -  
far more abysmal than my feet? '

Raj Arumugam

# Socrates Dies

Socrates dies, sleep easy, dear Athens;  
Socrates is found guilty  
of asking questions,  
one too many;  
Socrates is subject to our justice  
fair and just and open;  
O Socrates dies, sleep easy, dear world,  
for Socrates is found guilty  
and condemned to die;  
Socrates drinks hemlock  
and  
the questions die with him  
and all our answers are safe  
and we can blissfully go to bed  
for all our answers are safe...

Raj Arumugam

# Socrates' Years Reduced

Socrates hears  
the gods declare him  
the wisest mortal alive;  
Socrates wants to know if this is true  
(for what is it I know? I know nothing)  
and over the years,  
questions every wisdom celebrity alive;  
and in turn,  
the wise ones reduce his years -  
an abrupt end to his years -  
when it comes to their turn  
to question him at his trial

Raj Arumugam

# Song About Peanut Butter

spread it on thick  
on my bread and biscuit  
lots of peanut butter  
twice as thick  
as grandma's  
makeup cake on her face

peanut butter  
more than tar on the road  
peanut butter  
with my naan and my rice  
lay it on the noodles  
and peanut butter with tofu  
don't forget a dollop  
with the curry too

good pasta and pizzas  
become better  
immersed in peanut butter  
Ye Olde English Sandwich  
flames like a dragon  
fixed with half a bottle  
of the New World Inca paste

spread it on thick  
on my bread and biscuit  
lots of peanut butter  
twice as thick  
as grandma's  
makeup cake on her face

Raj Arumugam

# Song For Girl In Checkered Shawl

gentle girl  
in checkered shawl  
in Safonkovo,  
the artist's village

charming girl  
and of delicate smile  
in your simple rustic clothes  
like any other girl everywhere  
with her dreams, her loves  
flowering in time, coming of age  
with nature's rhythms

girl of desires and wishes  
and warmth and good heart  
anonymous, unknown  
and growing and marrying and begetting  
and loving and nurturing and passing  
in time past, another age  
another clime

and this your lovely smile  
that reaches us from your village  
this the beauty of you  
O girl in checkered shawl  
in Safonkovo  
the artist's village

this look of you, Venetsianov  
sends from the distant past -  
this  
I breathe in like  
I breathe the fresh air  
in an early Spring morning,  
O darling girl of Safonkovo

Raj Arumugam

# Song For She Who Left Us

she brought light  
into the room  
life came in  
as she walked in

hearts were merry  
when she spoke  
everyone's eyes  
glimmered with hope

that was when  
she was about  
those were the days  
when she was with us

people spoke  
of the next day  
in her presence;  
people had bounce and cheer

I too saw  
the radiance about  
I too sensed the  
life that stirred

that was when  
she was about  
those were the days  
when she was with us

Now she is absent  
we wonder where she's gone  
no one dare speak of her  
nor of the good times

memory is oft our tomb  
reminiscence our solace -  
for what can we contemplate,  
those weary

for whom the future is death?

Raj Arumugam

# Song Of Comfort

perhaps the day is thorny  
the world is crushing;  
perhaps the weight is heavy  
and the burden borne alone:  
still be of cheer, sweetheart,  
wherever you might be,  
whatever the darkness that encircles you;  
be of cheer always,  
sweetheart,  
for the caring sun yet shines for you

perhaps there is betrayal  
and there is coldness  
and even the closest  
move a great distance;  
each step seems to bring you three back  
and the air you breathe may  
flow hot like fire:  
still be of cheer, sweetheart  
wherever you might be,  
whatever the pain that encircles you;  
be of cheer, sweetheart  
for the nurturing sun yet shines for you

Raj Arumugam

# Song Of Father Gabriele Amorth

The Daily Mail, UK and Herald Sun (Australia) report on how Father Gabriele Amorth of the Vatican teaches that yoga and Harry Potter and the 'oriental religions' are the works of the Devil...the following poem expresses my outrage at such stupidity and parochialism that still exists amongst some groups of Europeans even today in their relations with the East

O yoga yoga  
baby baby  
sings Father Gabriele Amorth  
in the Italian town of Terni  
O yoga yoga  
no go no go  
to yoga yoga  
baby baby  
all you innocents  
and pure  
all blessed  
and destined for Heaven  
no go to yoga yoga  
yoga yoga  
yogurt is fine  
sugar in your yogurt is fine  
strawberry and apple  
in your yogurt is fine  
so eat eat your  
yogurt yogurt yogurt  
but yoga yoga  
O yoga yoga  
no go no go no go baby  
baby baby  
sings Father Gabriele Amorth  
in the Italian town of Terni

and also no go to Harry Potter  
baby baby baby  
no go no go  
no go to yoga no to yoga  
and no go no go  
to Harry Potter  
baby baby baby  
now say after me:  
"yoga yoga yoga  
baa baa baa  
bad bad bad"  
and say after me:  
"Harry Potter Harry Potter  
moo moo moo  
bad bad bad"  
O baby baby baby  
at our next conference  
I'll teach you  
how the Dragon is bad  
and how the Chinese got it all wrong  
all these centuries  
with their Chinese Dragon, Dragon, Dragon  
but that's for next time  
next time next time  
baby baby baby  
for now just repeat after me  
your most reverend  
Father Gabriele Amorth  
in the Italian town of Terni:  
O yoga yoga  
no go no go  
to yoga yoga  
baby baby  
And say after me  
all ye faithful  
all ye blessed:  
"Harry Potter Harry Potter  
moo moo moo  
bad bad bad"

Raj Arumugam

# Song Of Love That Eludes

## PREAMBLE

it's the dream conceived  
in luminous youth  
of love, mystery  
kisses and hugs;  
a sunshine dream  
that persists  
but that eludes

1

and we are those  
without love

or betrayed by those we adore

we are the cherished once  
but unwanted now  
and so  
who walk down paths  
accompanied by one  
whose winter-ness of heart  
has frozen ours

we are the lonely  
walking down the shady arbors  
with none by our side

2

and we are those  
without love

or betrayed by those we adore

we are the trusting  
whose hearts were taken  
and which we offered with love  
but that were discarded  
like products no longer in fashion

and we are those who sit  
at the veranda  
on the chair made for one;  
and we gaze at the  
distant clouds  
and sip tea that we don't notice  
has too much sugar

#### CONCLUSION

and we are those  
without love

or betrayed by those we adore

it was the dream engendered  
in luminous youth  
of love, mystery  
kisses and hugs  
a dream that persists  
but that eludes

Raj Arumugam

# Song Of Sleep

the owl's on the tree  
and the bats eat their fruit;  
the night surrounds the home  
and the stars glow in the sky:  
sleep you, sweetheart;  
slip you  
into your gentle world this night

the home's quiet  
and the hearts gentle and warm;  
the moonlight blesses the windows  
and the air within  
radiates grace, ease and calm:  
sleep you, sweetheart;  
slip you  
into your gentle world this night

Raj Arumugam

# Song Of The Boatman

Come Sir, I shall  
take you across  
safe and easy  
in my small boat  
across the river

we are all  
crossing all the time  
going places  
and passing stages;  
let me help you  
on this one, Sir

a small fee is all I ask  
and really it'll be a  
pleasant journey across;  
you can put your  
hands in the cool water  
while I paddle us across

I was born here  
in the sheds along the shore;  
I learned my trade  
as soon as I could walk;  
all my life has been here  
and this is where  
I shall be all my days

It's all good, Sir, for me  
if I can do a good turn  
as you pass by;  
and so you might  
also do me a good turn  
at the end  
giving me a deserved fee  
that I can bring to my  
wife and children

Come Sir, I shall  
take you across  
safe and easy  
in my small boat  
across the river

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Collection of Two Hundred and Fifty Coloured Etchings: Descriptive of the  
Manners, Customs and Dresses of the Hindoos. Calcutta,1796,1799.

Raj Arumugam

# Song Of The Boy In The Sailor Suit

I've got my new sailor suit  
my sailor suit  
and I'll get on a ship  
the biggest one on the oceans -  
and I'll sail away, sail away

Far to oceans on  
the other side  
I'll sail in my ship  
And my crew  
they'll steer us all  
to distant lands  
and lovely shores

We'll see strange lands  
and we'll learn new games;  
we'll make new friends  
and we'll exchange gifts -  
and we'll sail away, sail away  
with as many more ships  
as want to follow

And then I'll return  
back home  
and I'll be on the prow  
standing tall in my new sailor suit  
And all those ashore will cry out aloud:  
"Here comes our sailor  
Here comes sailor Oskar  
Clean and bright  
in his sailor suit  
as new as the day it was made"

I've got my new sailor suit  
my sailor suit  
and I'll get on a ship  
the biggest one on the oceans -  
and I'll sail away, sail away

Raj Arumugam

# Song Of The Butterfly

'butterfly  
butterfly  
why do you fly? '

I've got wings  
I've got aerodynamics  
so I flit about  
and I fly:  
for I just got to be

'O I wish  
I really wish  
I too could fly  
flit and fly  
fly and flit  
just like you  
I wish I could fly'

O you can  
O you can  
flit about and fly  
you mortal on the ground  
you can fly  
if you use your mind  
if you try  
if you try

Raj Arumugam

# Song Of The Despondent Lover

all night  
loveliest moon  
all night just past  
and many before  
and all nights  
I stay awake  
and look out  
at the dirt road  
that leads to my door;  
all night I stay hopeful  
and though many nights  
you shine bright  
and the path is lit up  
all night I did not see her come  
nor did I hear any knock at the door;  
all nights  
loveliest moon  
I wait  
but you do not bring her home;  
your gentle rays  
loveliest moon  
your gentle rays extend far  
and surely  
you touch her cheeks too  
and so will you not  
light up the way  
for her to find again  
the dirt track up to my door  
or persuade her  
with the power you have over minds  
over the living and dead  
O light up the way  
loveliest moon  
and do the impossible  
and bring my dead love back home

Raj Arumugam

# Song Of The Forlorn

nothing I could bring  
to your table  
as any offering  
could appease your anger  
so you left  
with no bud of hope  
with no rainbow signs

nothing that I could say  
would change your heart  
nothing that I could do  
would change your mind  
and so you chose to go  
and I had no way  
but to wither and languish  
all days of my life

I wasn't a saint, sweet  
though you filled  
every moment of my life  
with love and grace;  
I didn't value what I had, sweet  
though you brought to  
each second  
love like the sunlight  
that spread across  
the morning sky

and the years have rolled on  
and still I am alone  
miserable in the shadows  
of your memory;  
and I wonder what you do  
who you are with -  
and still I wish you  
though you hear this or not

every happiness and joy  
the same you gave me  
when we were together once

nothing I could bring  
to your table  
as any offering  
could appease your anger  
so you left  
with no bud of hope  
with no rainbow signs

happiness, sweet, you used to say  
in a simple way  
is always like an orange  
glowing, perfect and delicate;  
and love, each day,  
you said, kept misery away;  
and such happiness  
I wish you  
though you hear or not  
though mine is bleakness  
all my life  
to the end of days

nothing I could bring  
to your table  
as any offering  
could appease your anger  
so you left  
with no bud of hope  
with no rainbow signs

Raj Arumugam

# Song Of The Nomad Couple

see the stars tonight  
and the moon,  
my love;  
tonight they do not shine  
for Emperor or General -  
tonight they glow for you,  
for me;  
and the gentle breeze  
that blows  
and the crickets that converse  
tonight they are  
not here for themselves  
tonight they rejoice for you  
for me,  
my love

they are for you  
for me, dearest love;  
tonight they are here  
to bless the night  
for you and for me

for you and me  
are all these  
here in our patch  
of open land  
below the hills  
and the skies;  
so let us go into  
our tent  
of the skin of wild animals and rope  
and filled with all simple things;  
and let us bring out the rice wine  
and let us drink and keep warm  
in each other's love  
for these things of nature  
are come to grace the night

for you, for me,  
dearest love

Raj Arumugam

# Song Of The Wretched But Brave

hang on tight, baby -  
keep your senses wide  
for we're going on a roller-coaster ride;  
scream as much  
but just hang on tight, baby -  
hang on for dear life

times are tough  
more than ever;  
bills come at the speed of bullets  
taxes gather like summer flies  
and debts ricochet against our walls;  
the banks want more and more  
but there's just air in our pockets

hang on tight, baby -  
keep your senses wide  
for we're going on a roller-coaster ride;  
scream as much  
but just hang on tight, baby -  
hang on for dear life

the jobs dry up and  
the dollars dwindle into cents;  
permanent becomes temp  
and temp becomes non-existent;  
full-time goes into part-time  
and part-time into casual  
and casual into zilch

hang on tight, baby -  
keep your senses wide  
for we're going on a roller-coaster ride;  
scream as much  
but just hang on tight, baby -

hang on for dear life  
nature conspires with the economy,  
sweetheart:  
she sends rains and fire and landslides;  
she claws sands off the beaches and  
all we have left are  
government bastards and bitches  
who care a hoot about our fish and chips

hang on tight, baby -  
keep your senses wide  
for we're going on a roller-coaster ride;  
scream as much  
but just hang on tight, baby -  
hang on for dear life

time's not on our side either, sweetheart;  
mind you, with mighty puffed cheeks  
he blows H1N1 flu round the globe  
and so sends people and customers away  
and those who remain turn cheap and nasty  
and all these pigs want are discounts and freebies

hang on tight, baby -  
keep your senses wide  
for we're going on a roller-coaster ride;  
scream as much  
but just hang on tight, baby -  
hang on for dear life

the collection agencies are knocking, dear -  
it sounds much like the knock of death  
in Beethoven's ninth;  
the mortgage barbarians are on their horses  
and they send writs and auction threats  
and re-possession

hang on tight, baby -  
keep your senses wide  
for we're going on a roller-coaster ride;  
scream as much  
but just hang on tight, baby -  
hang on for dear life

O hang on, sweetheart,  
hang on tight:  
many will fall, many will bleed  
but those who hang on tight  
and those who can love  
those who can dream together  
they will ride the nights out into clear day

hang on tight, baby -  
keep your senses wide  
for we're going on a roller-coaster ride;  
scream as much  
but just hang on tight, baby -  
hang on for dear life

Raj Arumugam

# Song Of Universal Cheer

come living beings, all of life  
all forms and creatures  
seen and unseen;  
come and listen and sing  
the song of good universal cheer

ha ha he he ha ho  
tr la la la li li la la  
da da da ha ha he he ho  
sa ri ma pa  
tra la la la  
li la la li li la

a dolphin swims beside me  
in the shallow waters of the coast  
and the dolphin lets me stroke its skin  
and the loving creature sings:

ha ha he he ha ho  
tr la la la li li la la  
da da da ha ha he he ho  
sa ri ma pa  
tra la la la  
li la la li li la

an owl comes out to my window  
in the quiet of the night  
and with a gentle flap of its wings  
the caring owl hoots to me:

ha ha he he ha ho  
tr la la la li li la la  
da da da ha ha he he ho  
sa ri ma pa  
tra la la la  
li la la li li la

I am walking in the woods  
and there is a field  
of a hundred butterflies  
and they all wing it for me:

ha ha he he ha ho  
tr la la la li li la la  
da da da ha ha he he ho  
sa ri ma pa  
tra la la la  
li la la li li la

I am on the hilltop  
in the cool of the evening  
and I am surrounded by the  
rivers and the trees and the hills  
and the moon and the stars above me;  
and we all sing the song  
of love and goodwill,  
the song of good universal cheer:

ha ha he he ha ho  
tr la la la li li la la  
da da da ha ha he he ho  
sa ri ma pa

tra la la la  
li la la li li la

come living beings, all of life  
all beings and creatures  
seen and unseen;  
come and listen and sing  
the song of good universal cheer

ha ha he he ha ho  
tr la la la li li la la  
da da da ha ha he he ho  
sa ri ma pa  
tra la la la  
li la la li li la

Raj Arumugam

# Song Of Wink Star

The Song of Wink Star

a happy story for children of all ages

story and text © Raj Arumugam, June 2008

&#9788; &#9788;

&#9788; Preamble

Come...children all, children of all ages...sit close and listen...

Come and listen to this happy story of the stars and of life...

Come children of the universe, children of all nations and of all races, and of all climates and of all kinds of space and dimensions and universes...

Come, dearest children of all beings of the living universe, come and listen to The Song of Wink Star...

Come and listen to this story, this happy story...listen, as the story itself sings to you...

Sit close then, and listen to the story that was not made by any, or written by a poet, or fashioned by grandfathers and grandmothers warming themselves at the fire of burning stars...

O dearest children all, come and listen to the story that lives of itself, and that glows bright and happy....

Come...children all, children of all ages, come and listen to this happy story, the story so natural and smooth as life, as it sings itself to you....

&#9788; The Song of Wink Star  
a happy story for children of all ages

&#9788; 1

Night Child, always so light and gentle, slept on a flower.  
And every night, before he went to sleep, he would look up at the sky.  
He would look at the eastern corner, five o'clock.

And there he would see all the stars in near and distant galaxies that were only visible to the People of Star Eyes.

Night Child was one of the People of Star Eyes. And so he could see the stars.  
And of all the stars he could see, he loved to watch Wink Star.

Wink Star twinkled and winked and laughed.  
Every night Wink Star did that. Winked and laughed.  
Wink Star laughed like the light that glimmers between the leaves of trees that grew so tall they hid the sky.

And Night Child would be glad to see Wink Star.  
And Night Child would say to himself: Wink Star winks and twinkles for me.  
And being happy, Night Child would sing a song his mother had taught him:

Wink Star  
Always bright;  
Twinkle Star  
Light my nights;  
Wink Star  
A child  
Just like me;  
Love Star  
Deep in my eyes;  
Shining Joy  
Always glow in my heart  
Wink Star  
Always bright;  
Twinkle Star  
Light my nights

And singing, gently and slowly, Night Child would go to sleep... always thinking of Wink Star...

&#9788; 2

One Spring evening, Night Child lay on a white flower.  
It was a cool evening and he lay with his hands folded on his chest.  
Night Child was happy. Night Child was always happy.  
But he was especially happy when he could see Wink Star.

But suddenly there was a very bright light. It was coming from Wink Star.  
That was strange. Wink Star was bright but always steady.  
Why was Wink Star much brighter tonight?

And suddenly, Wink Star moved!  
Night Child sat up immediately.  
Night Child was worried.  
He had never seen Wink Star move.  
No one had ever seen Wink Star move. It was always in the same spot.  
Always soothing, and gently bright.  
Night Child was worried and watched Wink Star as it streaked across the sky.  
The silver star turned red and purple, and then silver, and then it disappeared!  
It fell somewhere in the South.

&#9788; 3

And Night Child flew up from the flower.  
He flew into the sky.  
He will go South. He must find out where Wink Star went.  
Oh dear, what has happened to Wink Star?

Night Child did a somersault and that took him into Mitra Space.  
Night Child took another somersault and that took him into Sangeet Space.  
And from here, Night Child could only walk.  
Space here did not allow somersaults.

He must make it to the South.  
He must find Wink Star.

Space was heavy. Space was thick.

Night Child could walk – but it felt like there were huge weights tied to his feet.  
But that was not going to stop him.  
He will walk South. He will find Wink Star.

&#9788; 4

And for a thousand years Night Child crossed the lonely depths of empty space.  
And within Night Child's heart there was a hoarse whisper.

The voice said: You won't find Wink Star.

And Night Child was sad.

And the voice said again:

You won't find Wink Star. And you will never be happy, never again.  
And all the children of the People of Star Eyes will never again see  
Wink Star - and no child will be happy, ever again.

But a gentle voice within Night Child said:  
Keep Going. Keep Going. Remember Wink Star. You are going to see Wink Star.  
You will find Wink Star.

But the hoarse whisper did not leave Night Child.  
It kept close behind Night Child. And the voice kept whispering: You won't find  
Wink Star.

But the gentle voice within Night Child said: Keep Going. Keep Going.  
Remember Wink Star. You are going to see Wink Star... You will find Wink Star.  
And this made Night Child smile and the harsh voice left him – and Night Child  
continued walking, happily and confident he will find Wink Star.

And so for a thousand years, Night Child trudged across Dense Space and then  
Heavy Space.  
He smiled and kept walking.  
And soon he was in Light Way.

&#9788; 5

Walking in Light Way was like walking on air.  
On bouncy air.  
Springy air.  
For it seemed that every step Night Child took, the air simply bounced him up  
and away.  
A hundred steps forward!

And Night Child laughed: Heeee...hee...yippee!  
And the air in Light Way seemed to laugh too...and the air seemed to pick Night  
Child up with very  
gentle hands and to lightly throw him forward...Like a kind father  
might throw a child up in the air, careful to make sure it was not high, not too far  
– and always near enough to catch when the child falls...And so the air in Light  
Way seemed to pick up and throw Night Child forward, ever so gently....And  
always Night Child would laugh: Heeeee...heee...yippee!

But even then Night Child was careful: he knew he was going South....and he  
would ensure every step was towards the South, towards – as it seemed to him –  
where Wink Star had fallen...

&#9788; 6

Night Child was in Common Space.  
There was darkness and a kind Sun.

Hi Child, said the Sun.  
Hello Mother Sun, said Night Child.

What are you doing here? said the Sun in Common Space.

I'm looking for Wink Star. I think Wink Star fell in the South. I'm going South,  
said Night Child.

Stay here, dear Child, said Sun. There is all this vast space and I shine  
day and night but there is no planet or moon or anyone to talk to me here. Will  
you stay with me?

I must go to the South, Mother Sun, said Night Child. I must see Wink Star.  
But I will stay with you a thousand years and then I will go.

And the Sun in Common Space laughed. And it was beautiful to see Mother Sun  
laugh.

She laughed like sparkles.

She laughed like a thousand stars.

She laughed like Night Child's own mother.

And Mother Sun said:

Night Child. Tell me about your Space. Tell me all about the People of Star Eyes.

And Night Child told Mother Sun all about his people. And Mother Sun listened  
with amazement. And she laughed with joy when she heard about the good  
hearts and happiness of the People of Star Eyes.

And Mother Sun would say:

That is good of the People of Star Eyes! That is good of the People of Star Eyes!

That is happy! That is happy!

And so Night child stayed with Mother Sun for a thousand years and then he took

his leave.

I must go, said Night Child.

Yes, dear Child, said Mother Sun. Thank you for keeping me company these years.

And Mother Sun laughed and she laughed like diamonds.

And she said: Go peacefully and I hope you will find Wink Star...My heart is so full of your stories and about all the goodness of your people that I will not feel lonely any more...And if you and your people should pass this way, don't forget to stop and to say hello to me...

And Mother Sun hugged Night Child and kissed him gently on his forehead and she said: Go, my child...May the Starlife Angels always look after you...

&#9788; 7

And now Night Child was in Flower Space.

And the scent of jasmine and roses and chrysanthemums and the scent of all sorts of fragrant flowers filled the air.

There were Moon Flowers.

Space Flowers.

Universe Flowers.

Child Flowers.

Bird Flowers.

Indeed, every kind of flower in the universe was there – and one simply walked

between them, and the flowers would touch one gently with the tips of their petals....

Hey, where are you going? said someone.

Night Child turned round and he saw Flower Child running after him.

Flower Child was no larger than a thumb and she looked like a bud struggling to blossom.

I'm going South, said Night Child.

Flower Child caught up with Night Child and the two children were now walking side by side.

Why? asked Flower Child. Why are you going South?

And Night Child said, Wink Star fell South. I want to see Wink Star. I want to know what happened to Wink Star.

May I go with you, please? said Flower Child.

Yes. You can come with me, said Night Child.

And Flower Child said: Night Child, sing me a song.

And Night Child sang the song his mother had taught him:

Wink Star

Always bright;

Twinkle Star

Light my nights;

Wink Star

A child

Just like me;

Love Star

Deep in my eyes;

Shining Joy

Always glow in my heart

Wink Star

Always bright;

Twinkle Star

Light my nights

And Flower Child listened and was glad, and then she too started singing the song and the two walked into Water Space, still happily singing the Wink Star song.

&#9788; 8

It felt light and easy in Water Space.  
One did not walk in Water Space. One just flowed.

Water Space was filled with countless water drops. An infinity of water drops.

Each water dropp danced and in each dropp was a smiling face.

Flower Child reached out and held one of the water drops delicately in her hands and the face in the dropp laughed.

Hee..hee...said the face in the water dropp on Flower Child's hand.

Heeee...heeee... That tickles!

And the face turned round and round on Flower Child's palm, laughing and dancing happily.

Hee...heee..

And then the dropp floated away.

And all around them were all these water droplets like dew, dancing and laughing and smiling...

And all around them was water music – the music of brooks and springs....

And the water drops laughed. Each laughed like a rainbow.

Night Child laughed happily.

And Flower Child too laughed happily...

And now, floating and sliding like happy birds through Water Space, Flower Child and Night Child entered Dark Space.

&#9788; 9

Flower Child and Night Child had been walking slowly and carefully through Dark Space, when they suddenly heard a loud booming voice.

Who are you two?

It was a loud voice and frightening too.

Poor Flower Child cried.

Who are you two? came the voice again.

The voice was like thunder. The voice was like raging fire in the forests.

And Flower Child cried even more loudly.

Don't Cry, Flower Child, said Night Child. It's only the dark jealous of your bright face, and envious of your happy heart.

And who are you? came the voice again, screaming into Night Child's ears.

.

I'm Night Child and this is Flower Child – and you're making Flower Child cry.

Stop shouting because you're frightening my friend and you're hurting my ears! said Night Child.

You crazy boy! said the loud booming voice. What are you doing here, leading your friend through Dark Space? Are you out of your mind?

Flower Child seemed a little less afraid now, and did not cry anymore. She leaned

on Night Child's shoulder and listened to Night Child talking to the loud booming voice.

Speak Child! said the loud booming voice. Or I will throw you into the frightening pits of darkness!

You won't frighten me, Sir, said Night Child in a quiet but firm voice. I'm not frightened by loud voices. The People of Star Eyes do not shout at Children. They speak gently and we Children of the People of Star Eyes are not afraid of shouters and screamers.

Oh! screeched the loud voice. Oh! said the booming voice. So where do you think the two of you are going?

Sir, said Flower Child. Sir, my friend saw Wink Star fall in the South. My friend and I go South to see what happened to Wink Star.

That's useless! screamed the loud voice.

What's useless, Sir? asked Night Child.

Everything! Everything is useless! So don't try! Don't try and go South! Don't try and go North! Don't go anywhere! Don't try anything! Just stay in the dark!

We will find Wink Star, said Flower Child.

But the loud booming voice was not listening. The voice screamed as loudly as it could:

Useless! Useless! It's all useless!

And Night Child said: Sir, I'll find Wink Star. Flower Child and I will find Wink Star.

But the voice in the darkness screamed even more loudly:  
Everything is useless! So don't try! Don't try and go South! Don't try and go North! Don't go anywhere! Don't try anything! Just stay in the dark!

You must excuse us, Sir, said Night Child. We must go.

And so Flower Child and Night Child continued on their journey and they sang together as they walked:

Wink Star  
Always bright;  
Twinkle Star  
Light my nights;  
Wink Star  
A child  
Just like me;  
Love Star  
Deep in my eyes;  
Shining Joy  
Always glow in my heart  
Wink Star  
Always bright;  
Twinkle Star  
Light my nights

And all the while, behind them they could hear the loud voice booming and screaming: It's useless! It's all useless! You silly children! It's all useless!

&#9788; 10

And Flower Child and Night Child came into Pearl Space.  
There they found the Colorful Mother sitting on a White Lotus.

The Mother was so radiant.  
And one moment the Mother looked White. The next moment she looked Green.  
Then she looked blue - but mostly she looked white.

And the Colorful Mother looked at the children and she smiled.  
And when she smiled, her radiance filled all of space and in the light,  
the children could see happy faces and blissful creatures that they had not seen before.

Who are you, dear children? asked the Colorful Mother sitting on her white lotus.

This is Flower Child and I'm Night Child, said Night Child.

And Flower Child said: Night Child saw Wink Star fall in the South.  
Night Star is sad because he misses Wink Star.

And Colorful Mother smiled at the two children.

And the children stepped forward to the Mother and the Mother kissed them each on their foreheads.

May you find your true self, said Colorful Mother to Flower Child.  
May you find Wink Star, said Colorful Mother to Night Child.

And the two children continued on their journey happily.

&#9788; 11

And then Flower Child and Night Child came into Chrysanthemum Space.  
Everywhere one looked there were happy and bright chrysanthemums.

There were green chrysanthemums.  
There were red chrysanthemums.  
There were golden chrysanthemums.  
And there were chrysanthemums of every color and hue and size.

And all the chrysanthemums were happy and smiling and bright.

And a group of flowers danced the joyful Dance of the Chrysanthemums to  
welcome Night Child and Flower Child.

And Night Child looked at Flower Child.

Something strange was happening to Flower Child.  
Flower Child was glowing. Flower Child, who was really very tiny,  
seemed to be blossoming.  
What's happening to you? said Night Child.  
I don't know, said Flower Child, giggling.

Flower Child was blossoming. She was no longer a tiny bud.  
She was turning golden. And she was beautiful to look at.  
And all the chrysanthemums turned to look at Golden Chrysanthemum  
and they smiled at her.

Flower Child had blossomed full and she was now a golden Chrysanthemum.

And Golden Chrysanthemum smiled at Night Child.

You are very beautiful, Flower Child, said Night Child. You were  
always beautiful, but now that you've become Golden Chrysanthemum, you're  
even more beautiful.

Thank you, said Golden Chrysanthemum. Thank you. I did not know what I was  
but Chrysanthemum Space has made me blossom into what I truly am.  
Thank you very much, Night Child – for it was because of you that I reached this  
place which made me blossom and come into fullness.

I am happy for you, said Night Child.

And now, said Golden Chrysanthemum, you must keep going South.  
You must find Wink Star. It's just the next Space, dear Night Child.  
And there I am sure you will find Wink Star.

I will go now, said Night Child.

Yes, you must, said Golden Chrysanthemum. But before you go, will you sing for me once again the song that you always sing, the song that your mother taught you?

And Night Child smiled and he sang:

Wink Star  
Always bright;  
Twinkle Star  
Light my nights;  
Wink Star  
A child  
Just like me;  
Love Star  
Deep in my eyes;  
Shining Joy  
Always glow in my heart  
Wink Star  
Always bright;  
Twinkle Star  
Light my nights

And Golden Chrysanthemum kissed Night Child on his cheeks and she watched happily as Night Child walked into the South.

&#9788; 12

The lands of the South were filled with rolling hills and trees and rich green grass.

Night Child climbed to the highest hill and from there he could see Wink Star lying on the grass below a huge tree.

And Night Child ran to where Wink Star lay.

Wink Star! shouted Night Child happily, as he reached the huge tree.

And Wink Star called out gently: Dearest Night Child...Dearest Child...I have been waiting for you...

And Wink Star knelt on the grass before Wink Star.

Wink Star lay on the grass with his head on the soft roots of the giant tree. Night Child, whispered Wink Star again.

And Night Child cried: What's happening to you, Wink Star? You're not glowing bright and steady like before. You are red and your light seems to be fading. What's happening to you?

And Wink star smiled and he said: Do not worry, Night Child. I'm just changing – I'm changing into Bright Star and I will go to another sky where I will shine in the north and the children of the Earth will look at me and will be glad. I'm just changing and going to another universe.

But...but...but...cried Night Child. The children of the People of Star Eyes need you. I need you – we need Wink Star.

And Wink Star smiled and he said: But, Night Child...my dearest Night Child – you are Wink star.

I don't understand, said Night Child.

Wink Star smiled as his color changed to a pure bright blue.

Listen carefully, said Wink Star. As I go into the universe where the Earth is, as I go there to the north to become a bright constant star to bring joy and happiness to the children of the earth – you too will change...You too will change and you will become the Wink Star – and you will go to the universe where your people are – and all the children of the People of Star Eyes will see you, and they will be happy and they will call you Wink Star, and they will love you, and they will be jubilant and all the children will sing the same song you sang when you saw me glowing in the sky...I will go now, Night Child – and you will go to the skies in your universe, for you are Wink Star...And one day, you too will come to the South and another Night Child will come in search of you, and you will become another radiant star and the child will be the Wink Star....and so this will be always...for this has been the way since the beginning of Star Time...

And Night Child leaned forward and he kissed Wink Star on his forehead...  
And Wink Star became a deep amber and the light spread out all round the huge tree and then Wink Star became a golden light and the light disappeared...

And a change came over Night Child too...Night Child became a light of radiant silver...And Night Child ascended the skies and he became the Wink Star...

And up there in that universe, even today, Wink Star glows and Smiles at all the universe where he is...

And there all the children of the People of Star Eyes see him and they are happy, and they wave to Wink Star and they all sleep on little flowers and they, like Night Child used to, they all gaze lovingly at Wink Star, and they sing the song their mothers teach them, the same song that Night Child's mother taught him:

Wink Star  
Always bright;  
Twinkle Star

Light my nights;  
Wink Star  
A child  
Just like me;  
Love Star  
Deep in my eyes;  
Shining Joy  
Always glow in my heart  
Wink Star  
Always bright;  
Twinkle Star  
Light my nights

And you too, gentle ones, you too, lying gently on the flowers in the garden, you too may look up at Wink Star, and you too may happily sing this joyous song of Wink Star....

Raj Arumugam

# Song On Being Careful With One's Hard-Earned Money

Don't break your dollar  
get it home intact, brother  
Be it twenty or thirty  
be clever and thrifty -  
bring it home as it is  
don't spend it like fish  
Never mind if you go home  
with a dirty collar;  
just bring home every dollar  
as proof of work and reward  
Your money's yours to keep -  
don't fritter it on useless critters  
Bring `em dough home, be thrifty  
and make the first twenty grow to plenty

Raj Arumugam

# Songs Of A Happy Life: The Complete Text

songs of a happy life: the complete text

1) Wheiii! Wheeiii! Wheeiii!

..ga..ga..mama...  
and dada...gaga...  
whaare! whei! whei!  
ma and papa, gaga...  
it's me...me...me...your baby..  
..ga..ga..ga..  
whaare! whei! whei!

it's me, your baby  
soft as lily  
cool as dew;  
bright as light  
and tough as nails;  
cuddly as a koala  
and weak as a joey

..ga..ga..mama...  
and dada...gaga...  
whaare! whei! whei!  
ma and papa, gaga...  
it's me...me...me...your baby..  
..ga..ga..ga..  
whaare! whei! whei!

it's me your sweetie  
all you ever wanted:  
your precious, precious, precious  
your meaning  
your darling  
and purpose  
here on earth

..ga..ga..mama...  
and dada...gaga...  
whaare! whei! whei!  
ma and papa, gaga...  
it's me...me...me...your baby..  
..ga..ga..ga..  
whaare! whei! whei!

it's me come to you  
it's me your precious pearl  
your joy and light:  
Hi mum and dad  
it's me,  
your darling bubs

..ga..ga..mama...  
and dada...gaga...  
whaare! whei! whei!  
ma and papa, gaga...  
it's me...me...me...your baby..  
..ga..ga..ga..

whaare! whei! whei!

I promise nothing  
but joy comes  
automatic;  
and you got to promise me –  
mummy and daddy,  
take care and love me;  
remember always:  
you brought me here;  
I didn't ask to come in

....ga..ga..mama...  
and dada...gaga...  
whaare! whei! whei!  
ma and papa, gaga...  
it's me...me...me...your baby..  
..ga..ga..ga..  
whaare! whei! whei!

2) love being kids

love being kids;  
love just growing;  
love all the fun  
and all the lollies

we play in the fields  
and we play at the creek;  
we play computer games  
and watch TV and DVDs

mum sends me to school  
and there's a line  
of 4-wheel drives  
outside school;  
dad reads me stories  
and mum and dad turn  
the lights off for me  
when I'm ready to sleep

O just love being kids;  
love just growing;  
love all the fun  
and all the lollies

we share lunch  
and compare notes:  
and we decide amongst ourselves  
between classes, which is better:  
peanut butter sandwich  
or bread with tomatoes and onions?

we get nana visiting us

or we visit nana and grandpa;  
and we visit our neighbors and  
we often go places  
though the beach is always my favorite

love being kids;  
love just growing;  
love all the fun  
and all the lollies

we got kids from everywhere now:  
we got Tom, and Mingxi and Ravi;  
and we got Pedro and Akito and Lucy;  
and we're all one big bunch of kids  
loving it being kids and growing

oh just love being kids;  
love just growing;  
love all the fun  
and all the lollies

3) young love

I was broken, a little bit out of joint  
but you put me together  
still you keep me whole

I was the face of misery  
and the voice of sorrow  
but you put cheer in my heart  
and light in my eyes:  
and yes, yes, the bounce in my walk...

I was broken, a little bit out of joint  
but you put me together  
still you keep me whole

I was crumbling and I was crying  
but you put your arms round me  
and drew me close;  
you made distance disappear  
and once again I knew the world...

I was broken, a little bit out of joint  
but you put me together  
still you keep me whole

I was far far gone  
but you brought me back;  
there was despair round me  
but you made it go away  
you made it fly away  
with just your touch and smile

I was broken, a little bit out of joint  
but you put me together  
still you keep me whole

4) days of the parents

you and I, we bring forth  
good offspring  
a new world  
we bring to the old:  
bright new lives  
we bring forth

we bring forth children  
who laugh and jump  
and bring forth angels  
who are a joy to the world

and our days turn to years  
as a bright energy  
surrounds each hour;  
kids grow into adults  
and we see and live  
what generations have done

you and I, we bring forth  
good offspring  
a new world  
we bring to the old:  
bright new lives  
we bring forth

you and I have brought  
forth things like the Divine makes worlds  
and what our own parents gave us  
likewise we have done for our children

you and I, we bring forth  
good offspring  
a new world  
we bring to the old:  
bright new lives  
we bring forth

5) the years pass well

the years pass well  
and grace pervades each moment;  
time flies  
and all things take good form

no doubt trying days come  
and hard times too  
but we keep our heads high  
and hold on to each blessing  
till each event coming our way  
is none but radiant

the kids grow fast  
and the expenses too grow in size;  
the tasks are many  
and the invoices always due:  
but each we take it in our stride  
and slowly but surely  
things come easier and smooth

as we've moved  
so do those dear to us grow  
and they too find their way  
in the world, find their loves  
and set up their families

the years pass well  
and grace pervades each moment;  
time flies  
and all things take good form

it is good all these years  
they pass sometimes  
like fighter-jets in the sky:  
still the times are good  
and life comes with many blessings

the years pass well  
and grace pervades each moment;  
time flies  
and all things take good form

6)        quiet and calm

cheers to all  
who helped me make a good life;  
thanks to all  
who were part of my time,  
joy and smiles

it's quiet and calm now  
easy and smooth  
in these my mature years;  
a time of grace  
and the simple life:  
the days are gentle  
and the nights heal

cheers to all  
who helped me make a good life;  
thanks to all  
who were part of my time,  
joy and smiles

all my deeds and thoughts  
return like the gentle nights  
of the full moon;  
and my family and loves  
surround me  
like the petals of a flower

these are restful days  
full of ease and grace;  
and though my limbs are weary  
and my eyes not as clear,  
still these are days of harmony  
and radiant blessings

cheers to all  
who helped me make a good life;  
thanks to all  
who were part of my time,  
joy and smiles

---

epilogue to the series:

I make no memory of things past  
and so all's that left is clarity

Raj Arumugam

# Songs Of Leaving

Stop there, friend  
you who have packed your belongings  
and so quietly, almost with stealth  
and tell me where you are off to.

I'm moving, dear friend,  
as anyone would when the time comes.

But you would leave your friends?

Some leavings, in a way, are like death,  
my dear friend,  
and one has no choice.  
Truly, not all  
goings and comings  
the ins and outs  
meetings and departures  
are within our control;  
some are outside our wills.

(ii)

Dear brother,  
sit a while  
and talk to me.  
Is it right what you do,  
to go away from your brothers and sisters?

There is the rare occasion,  
dear sister,  
when the wrong is right.  
Your brother must go that way now.

And the love, dear brother,  
the love that binds brothers and sisters?  
What of that?  
That love,  
dear sister,  
that love  
will let me go.

(iii)

So is it come to this,  
dear neighbor,  
that you will leave us all and go?  
We are not good enough for you, eh?

Perhaps,  
my good neighbor,  
it is I who's not good enough for you all  
for I've made all our  
communication  
frigid  
because of my reticence  
my unwillingness  
my abruptness  
my awkwardness  
my lack of confidence  
my withdrawals  
my silences

I think of the many occasions  
when what I've said made no sense  
and many turned away  
as people said  
It is so  
because

he does not know  
how to say what he wants to say.  
It's my fault,  
good neighbor,  
and I must go  
somewhere  
where even the inapt will find a place  
because of its immense space.

(iv)

I kiss your feet,  
dearest mother;  
I prostrate before you,  
dearest father;  
forgive me and let me go  
for it is my time  
to cross the Ocean of Pain.

(v)

You are not filled  
with bitterness,  
are you?

Departure  
Of adopted children  
who are grown and learn,  
dear stranger,  
of their natural parents,  
some must stay on;  
and some must return;  
and some must move on  
and so I did.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Songs Of Love: Painting Of A Keralaite Lady In Traditional Dress Playing Veena, By Ravi Varma

this moment, sweet love mine,  
this moment is painful  
each beat is;  
music gives no respite  
no raga any calm  
for absence claws at the heart:  
come then swiftly  
not a second later but now

1

where are you  
at this moment as my heart  
yearns for your presence?  
the promised hour is gone  
words are become faint  
and your touch has become  
a memory  
and the pleasure that suffused the mind  
is now become a pain;  
come swiftly, love, for yearning is anguish  
that music intensifies but not lessen  
O you, who pervades my mind  
like light in a garden -  
where are you  
at this moment, as my heart  
yearns for your presence?

2

when we walked  
I've known the gentleness of  
your palm folded over mine

your thumb sliding under my bangles:  
oh always so gentle,  
always so gentle,  
as a lullaby, a lullaby  
O sweet love,  
love is not just souls merging.  
not just meeting of souls – no, it's not  
for love is touch too,  
for love is fingers, flesh  
and teeth and bones too:  
so come here swiftly,  
swiftly now for I desire that  
your palm folds over mine  
your thumb slides under my bangles

3

liar you are, you who fill  
my heart with desires  
and expectations;  
liar you are who says  
you cannot live even a second without me:  
and where are you now as I live in pain?  
O love of my life, you so full of lies –  
and yet, no – not a liar, but just  
perhaps a bad love poet  
one who exaggerates  
filled with outdated conventions  
and does not speak modern poetry...  
O love of my life, you so full of hyperbole:  
come swiftly love, for each second without you  
each second without you I die...

this moment, sweet love mine,

this moment is painful  
each beat is;  
music gives no respite  
no raga any calm  
for absence claws at the heart:  
come then swiftly  
not a second later but now

Raj Arumugam

# Sorrow Observed

is it like a sore on the elbow  
that itches and one scratches  
and it itches more?  
and so sorrow sits in one's heart  
and one feels its spread in the chest;  
and perhaps one sits looking at the passing clouds  
or perhaps one lies in the shadows  
as one observes one's pain

Raj Arumugam

# Sorry – Login Failed

Sorry - login failed....

OK...easy - of course it's me;

I'm authentic, not me pretending to be me

or someone else pretending to be me

or me pretending to be Swine Poet;

no, it's not

Swim Goggles masquerading as Noodles Mee;

or Pretty Pig pretending to be Ugly Duckling;

so let's try again – it's easy...sure, I know my password....

OK....

Sorry – login failed....

OK...

it's easy....I'll give you my username

and here's password...Enter...here we go...

Sorry – login failed....

Hey! You're joking with me, right?

you know it's me, and you're just kidding, right?

What?

If at first you don't succeed – try, try again...

OK, OK...let's go again....

Sorry – login failed....

Hey, man – or woman, this is serious...

Oh I see – my thick fingers

might have landed on 9 instead of 8

and on g instead of f –

you see? It's me....I'll try and use my most slender fingers

and avoid my thick fingers...

Knock and the door shall be opened...

OK...here we go...username...hmmmmmm....easy now....

slender fingers, remember....OK....password....careful now....

use slender fingers only....Enter! Yipppppeeeee!

Sorry - login failed....

Hey- it appears I'm thick-headed as well!

Come on – give me a chance!

It's almost like being denied at Heaven's doors!

I'm having an identity crisis here, baby!

You wan to see me have a breakdown and

send me to a madhouse, or what?

All right, all right...cool down...easy....easy...calm...

Take a deep breath....

Username...OK....slender fingers, now...eyes on keyboard...

...Password....slender fingers, remember....eyes on keyboard....

Now, all good....I think....Want to say a prayer?

Come on – it's not that serious....Alright....ENTER!

Yes – I'm in! Hey guys – here I am!

Raj Arumugam

# Space Facts

1

it is astonishing  
in spite of so much progress  
in space exploration  
the general population  
(Yea, ye puny earthlings)  
has so little grounding in space facts  
(come on - face facts!)

2

which reminds me of the sun  
which for years refused to get an education  
because it claimed it'd already got  
a million degrees;  
but humbled by my admonition  
the sun now goes to school  
to get brighter;  
and for reading it's got plenty of comet books  
and all day(there's no night)  
it learns all about its children:  
it learns that a tick on the moon  
is called a luna-tick;  
that the moon is heaviest  
when it's full;  
and all these planets exchange songs  
they secretly call Nep-tunes;  
and that Mars tries to get fresh  
with Saturn by saying often:  
"Give me a ring sometime! "

And more,  
the sun learns about the light year  
which is really a year with less calories;  
that the cows have a distinguished  
space history -  
after all, the first animal in space  
was the cow that jumped over the moon;  
but really, its main aim  
was to get all the way to the milky way

3

more of these facts? –  
you lazy ostriches,  
get off your heavy bottoms  
and dig into a wormhole yourself

Raj Arumugam

# Spanish Dancer

I'm the nocturnal  
Spanish Dancer  
(yes, night is the time of  
dance and romance -  
but for me, really, it's feeding time)  
and I dance in water  
near coral, when disturbed

I haven't got music  
or guitar or castanets  
but nevertheless  
you'll see me  
move  
unfold and close

You can see me spread  
my dress red and orange  
outward and  
pull them in again -  
but that's when I'm agitated  
(sure, you might be delighted  
to see what you think is my dance)

Raj Arumugam

# Spare Me A Good Coin

my song  
I sing to myself  
for it demands  
to be sung

my tune I play  
for my loyal companion

whether the stranger  
who walks by  
tarries awhile  
or ignores the sounds  
is none of my concern

just spare me a good coin  
and keep moving on

Raj Arumugam

# Special Offer Today Only

the Manager  
and the Receptionist  
and Susan of Accounts Dept  
all 3 are having coffee at Starbucks

The genie appears  
&quot;Hey guys, &quot;says the genie  
seen only by the 3  
invisible to all eyes else  
&quot; Hey - each of you gets  
1 wish fulfilled today  
Special Offer Today Only -  
so let's start with you, Susan&quot;

And Susan says:  
&quot;Cool!  
I want a holiday now  
Straight in Hawaii! &quot;

And poof! Susan is gone!

&quot;I want, &quot; says the Receptionist  
&quot;to be in the Bahamas  
in a beach-house on holiday  
with a hot sex-slave now&quot;

And poof! the Receptionist is gone!

&quot;And me, &quot; says the Manager  
&quot;I want them back at their desks  
diligently at work  
by the time I walk back to the office! &quot;

And the Manager finishes his coffee  
and walks back to the office  
and the Genie folds his arms  
and disappears -  
All wishes granted

Raj Arumugam

# Spinach Last On The List

spinach  
is last on  
my list -  
a whole morning  
taken to come to this

life is not  
grandeur and vision  
there's all the time spent  
biting and grinding  
ingesting and digesting  
and, inevitably, excreting

Old Age is next  
on Time's list  
and all I have left  
of my lifetime  
is a dime

Raj Arumugam

# Stale Haikus

when I have  
nothing original or fresh  
I write haikus

Raj Arumugam

# Star Alone Star

star  
alone star  
shining, twinkling, moving  
just being what you are;  
star alone star  
though watching minds make of you a meaning  
a wish, or a symbol  
but alone star you are simply what you are;  
star alone star  
unlike men, women  
unlike intelligence that must form and associate  
who must be this or that  
conditioned and grown and nurtured  
and shaped  
and programmed;  
but you star  
alone star  
not like this or that  
but simply natural, what you are

Raj Arumugam

# Star Fantasy

I sleep on a bed of stars  
and intergalactic dust forms my blanket  
to keep my garments radiant  
and my skin always soft and glowing;  
while I rest effortlessly my head on quasars  
and snore into black holes;  
my legs dig deep into wormholes  
as I tickle parallel universes with my toes  
and the flying stellar debris and asteroids and meteors  
sing me a constant lullaby;  
and the solar flares with a thousand fingers  
massage my limbs and back  
and caress my forehead;  
the spheres sing in praise of my name  
and the planets peep through gaseous clouds  
to see how magnificently I sleep...

and when I do awake occasionally  
to receive earthlings  
and all manner of lives  
that come far from worlds I didn't even know exist  
and who have all come  
to look at me with wonder and adoration  
and to convey their respects  
I shoo them away  
irritated  
and turn over on my left resting my chin  
on my palm and my elbow on an infant doughnut galaxy;  
and then they all bow and withdraw in awe and fear  
not wishing to be the subject of my displeasure  
and gladly I go back to stellar sleep

and sometimes at that rare instance  
as I look  
over in the distance  
over there where time and space disappears  
there you are beyond,  
dearest reader, just like me,

there you are  
sitting and smiling  
you too quite regal and simply divine  
sitting royal on a couch of stars and moons  
and a footrest of carbon and helium and hydrogen...

but look, I'm too content  
to roll over and say 'hello'...

Raj Arumugam

# Star Kiss

stand close to your window  
or stand in the open  
for the stars, the benign stars  
they want to kiss your sweet self

the stars want to kiss you  
for they recognize you;  
they want to bounce off your hair  
and sit on your fingernails

for the stars want to kiss you  
so lie down in your bed  
close to your open window  
or run across the fields -  
see, do you see?  
the stars want to embrace you  
for they recognize you,  
they know you

you don't have to adopt  
a seductive pose  
or to have actor lips  
or dancer hips;  
still the stars want to kiss you  
they just want to kiss every inch of you;  
they just want to be caught in the gloss of each hair;  
O, so look up at the stars  
for they want to land softly on your lips;  
the stars want to kiss you on your cheeks  
they want to skate on your eyebrows  
and they want to dance on your chin

so stand close to your window  
or stand in the open  
for the stars, the benign stars

they want to kiss your sweet self

O look up at the stars  
yielding to them your face of love  
for they recognize you  
they want to see your eyes  
for they know you  
and as you look up  
they descend to caress your face gently;  
and the radiant stars  
the living stars  
they kiss you full on your cheeks and lips  
and they whisper in your ears:  
Child, Darling Child  
Sweet Star Child -  
we've found you at last;  
we've found you at last,  
Darling Star Child

so stand close to your window  
or run across the fields in the open  
for the stars, darling, the stars  
they recognize you,  
they know you,  
they want to kiss you

Raj Arumugam

# Stars, Moon And The Possum

last night  
as I went to bed  
I said to the stars  
outside my window:  
'My, how bright  
and radiant  
you are tonight'

and then I  
went to sleep  
and it must be hours later  
when I woke up  
with full gentle light  
on my face  
and the moon now outside  
my window said:  
'Hey, I heard you say goodnight  
to the stars –  
but you left me out, mate'

'OK, good night, '  
I said  
and turned over and  
went back to sleep

so tonight  
I'll be sure to bid  
sweet dreams to both stars  
and the moon  
but I bet  
that silly possum  
from somewhere in the park  
will roll-tumble-rumble  
(just as I've gone deep into sleep)  
all about on my roof  
and wake me up

and peep down  
with its head at my windows  
and it'll say:  
'Hey mate, wake up –  
I came to say good night'

Raj Arumugam

# State Of The Nation

There is just one word  
to describe  
the state of our nation:  
PATHETIC

Come on  
let's face it:  
15% of the population  
can't read;  
20% can't write;  
and 60% can't do  
elementary maths!

It's  
PATHETIC...  
There's really no  
other word for it

Raj Arumugam

# Stay Focused

don't you just love  
people who can stay cool  
and focused on the job?  
That's what the world needs  
People who keep their minds  
steady on the job at hand

See, you call the doctor  
and the receptionist answers  
says she can't fit you in early  
'How about 2 weeks from now,  
say Friday? '  
'That's 16 days from now, ' you say,  
Petrified. 'But I could be dead by then.'  
'Oh, ' says the receptionist  
right on task, cool and focused:  
'Your wife can always calls us  
and cancel the appointment'

don't you just love  
people who can stay cool  
and focused on the job?  
That's what the world needs  
People who keep their minds  
steady on the job at hand

Raj Arumugam

# Stealing From English

will the French  
please stop stealing words  
from Pretty Olde English?  
we can't but fix a secret meeting  
and choose a rendezvous  
and we discover the French have already  
stolen every secret including the word rendezvous!  
Oh, the French, when will  
they stop this pilfering of English vocabulary?  
I buy some trinkets and stuff for my beau  
and they tell me my beau has been taken by the French –  
and to add insult to injury  
(those thieves!)  
they've stolen all the stuff too!  
Oh, there's no stopping the French.  
I can't even sit to dine and say  
"Bon appetit! "  
and they steal my words,  
and they run off with the dessert...  
and would you believe it?  
those cunning French,  
they even steal the restaurant and its décor!  
Oh, the evil French, will they never stop this? -  
stealing from fecund English, so simple and innocent...  
You see, even the Great Poet John Keats  
he starts his poem in English  
La Belle Dame sans Merci  
and no sooner had he written the title,  
the French stole the very words! -  
and so pissed off was our Romantic John Keats,  
he wrote the poem itself  
in what he hoped could never be Frenched!  
Ah, the French...would you please stealing  
words from our Fair Damsel English....

And the Chindians too!  
Chindians?  
you know,

the Chinese and the Indians together!  
(Yes, it's a new word,  
shows how inventive English is.)  
Well, the Chinese have done it with  
a smile and a kowtow! –  
there you go, while you bow or cringe,  
the Chinese steal the kowtow;  
and before our very own eyes  
today even in our modern world  
the Chinese steal words like Dao, Zen, taofu,  
chi, and feng shui;  
and the Indians, not to be beaten,  
and perhaps with a vengeance  
to deal a fatal blow to the Raj,  
they steal words like: nirvana, pundits, yoga,  
juggernaut, pepper and curry

And of course  
there are many more tribes and nations  
in this merry global rape of Gloriana English  
and there's just nothing Britannia can do about it!  
Oh, what's the world coming to  
when our Plain Jane English is molested like this;  
and so I do my part  
the Dark Knight coming to her rescue -  
perhaps this earnest appeal in verse  
will touch the hearts of the beasts and dragons  
and they'll keep their claws away  
from our Fair Helpless Dame English

Raj Arumugam

## Stealthily The Lilly-Pilly Grows

stealthily the lilly-pilly grows  
quietly and gently and discreetly  
in the warmth of the day  
in the gentle embrace of the night;  
the native puts forth its quiet tips  
and dances its gentle growth  
and the day after  
as I turn at the corner in the garden  
I see its new blushing leaves

Raj Arumugam

# Stephan's Quintet

we are locked in enclosures  
rooms and offices and cars  
and planes and shopping centers  
and thought traps and traditions  
and beliefs and systematic delusions;  
and we have over-crowded minds  
confined to  
short distances and immediate needs  
like contortionists each in a barrel;  
and we do not even look at  
the trees and the sky  
and the waving leaves  
on whose velvet tarpaulin  
the sunlight bounces  
and the rivers and the mountains;  
when about our finite bodies is infinite space  
and Stephan's quintet dances in the vastness  
and swirls and glows  
and still we are content  
to die our lives in narrow confines

Raj Arumugam

# Storm In A Teacup

Ikkyu dropped  
his Grand Master's teacup -  
the cup broke into pieces  
And Ikkyu's jaws dropped  
Would the Grand Master now break  
a thing or two of Ikkyu's body parts?

'O Master, ' says Ikkyu  
when the Grand Master arrives  
'I am contemplating Death;  
please enlighten me on Death'

'All things pass, O Ikkyu, '  
answers the Grand Master  
'Death is inevitable  
And only the foolish mourn  
or are swayed by emotion -  
the wise know  
Death is in the nature of all things'

'Indeed, O Wise Master, ' replies Ikkyu  
'It is no wonder then that your teacup  
passed away today, as you can see here -  
and you, O Grand Master,  
have most wisely expounded on this grave matter'

The Grand Master loses his Grand look

Raj Arumugam

# Street Singer

I sing in the streets  
in any shop that has a door  
and where the owner  
will put money in my palm;  
and I walk off in a hurry  
to the next gig or joint

One must live and eat;  
one must have a roof  
over one's head  
and walls to keep out the cold  
and the easy night-wanderers

so I will sing where there is pay  
I will sing what the payer wants  
(which is what their customer wants)

Your song is never yours

There is no question of art  
(that is a luxury,  
a poor singer cannot afford)  
just anything that can entertain  
and more often titillate

Your song is not yours,  
soon you know  
Your performance  
does not stick to you  
You can go home  
and dream of any way you want  
but in the streets you must sing  
the way the passers-by fancy

Your song is never yours

Raj Arumugam

# Such Still Days

the day never starts  
but one wakes at leisure  
with no measure of time but hunger  
and food is eaten as an animal may eat  
simply in the body's need;  
one licks one's fingers at the end  
and pulls up one's pants  
and scratches one's forearms;  
and happenings amuse one  
and one's actions are like the movement of grass;  
and simple pleasures prick one's skin and mind  
and one knows it is night  
only because the shadows lead to darkness

Raj Arumugam

# Summer Dry

unruly plants and bush and trees  
in a row here in the garden  
cry for love  
in this summer dry;  
and some  
raise their roots above the brittle sand that cracks;  
some stoop,  
some back, some lean on others, and some wilt  
like tired dancers collapsed off-stage;  
and each chlorophyll life here searches like snakes: water...

Raj Arumugam

# Sun Crazy Sun

sun crazy sun  
very disobedient and ill-tempered  
unwilling to listen  
to shine not too hot and not scorch the earth  
and bad-tempered with its flares

Raj Arumugam

# Sun Love

see  
the creatures of the earth  
burrow deep  
and go to sleep  
in your absence;  
and they come again  
kicking and hungry  
when you shine

Raj Arumugam

# Sun Poems

## Sun Poems

1

in the absence  
of your rays  
dear Sun  
the fearful  
created God

2

we trembled in our nights  
in the wild  
and you shattered the darkness  
and you said:  
'Behold, Creatures -  
Behold the Earth! '

3

I lie asleep  
and you send in  
beams of messengers  
dear Sun  
each with the same message:  
'Hey, lazybones -  
wakie! wakie! '

4

by you  
dear Sun  
is life;  
and through you  
too is death

5

O setting Sun

do not drag my  
heart down with you;  
for it's known in nations  
where you do not shine as often  
you snatch cheer and smiles away  
till you come again;  
do not let then my heart  
dear Sun  
sink with you

6  
sun crazy sun  
very disobedient and ill-tempered  
unwilling to listen  
to shine not too hot and not scorch the earth;  
and show-off  
and bad-tempered with its flares

7  
see  
the creatures of the earth  
burrow deep  
and go to sleep  
in your absence;  
and they come again  
kicking and hungry  
when you shine

8  
I see you in the flower  
that blooms it seems at random;  
and I see you too  
in the leaves of the lilly-pilly at my window

9

one must see the sun  
or feel it  
oneself

10

I think  
you're one hot blonde,  
O Sun babe;  
on this side of the universe  
no one's as hot as you

11

the clouds try catching you;  
they are little children  
and they think you are a ball  
they can throw to one another

12

sometimes I wonder  
in the loneliness of night  
where you are  
and then I see you  
bouncing off the moon;  
ha!  
she rejects your advances

13

they look at the sun  
but do not know how to see;  
poets interpret it  
as children play with clouds  
and the holy ones attempt to  
squeeze the sun into their texts

(Sun Poems - the complete text)

Raj Arumugam

# Sunlight That Fades

sunlight that fades  
vast over the horizon  
like a spread  
of jam and marmalade;  
sunlight that fades  
gentle on the skin  
and kissing my eyes;  
sunlight that fades  
and goes to another world  
like a traveler boarding a plane -  
you'll return tomorrow,  
and we'll love and struggle again  
another day,  
another life, another fading

Raj Arumugam

# Supposed Soul

The rose grows in  
the soil in your tongueless mouth  
The weeds feed  
on the nutrients in your armpits  
From your navel rise  
the grass whose blades cut the air  
Your sockets house the lichen

You knew that all before your death,  
as you were wise;  
you consoled yourself with a supposed soul

Raj Arumugam

# Sweet Sadness

sweet sadness  
you are not rejected;  
gentle sorrow  
you are not slighted;  
O stealthy pain  
I seek no diversion in your presence;  
but I embrace you as one might embrace a child  
and we look into each other  
and seeing, observing, and attentive in each other's arms  
we are as still as a child and parent  
as trees in a row, on a quiet and calm day

Raj Arumugam

## Sweet Verse

please compose sweet poetry  
verse like pink fairy floss  
and thoughts like tasty, tasty popcorn  
and each word  
like sugary syrup on fluffy pancakes:  
oh, write each poem so  
and so any reading of your poems  
is like a visit to a fancy choc and lolly shop

Raj Arumugam

# Swirl Of Life

sometimes I wonder  
if I haven't really made a blunder  
Really I must have been a radiant Being  
happy, easy, and just with lust to wander  
and float about in space  
and flit between multi-dimensions  
And then I think I saw the distant fair  
and lights  
and rides  
and a swirl of emotions and passions  
and heard the pipes  
and in my naivety  
I must have thought:  
'What's that?  
I must go discover...'  
And so I know next  
there was an explosion  
like thunder  
And I went through a tunnel  
And in order to see this  
world swirl  
of passions and emotions  
I had to fumble out of another  
And then - hey!  
now I know  
there's not so much grandeur  
as before my blunder  
And those people they called my parents  
they've been quite clever  
they've found a way out  
and they've crawled out:  
they've stolen the thunder;  
and leaving me to work out  
how to pull things asunder:  
' goodbye son;  
turn off the lights  
on your way out'  
And where am I going to find another explosion  
and another tunnel

to get me out of this sandy hovel?  
Another mother, another father? -  
for all things in reverse  
Maybe that's what they call  
Time and Death  
to get me back  
away from my earthy warren  
And back to my natural state  
as a radiant Being  
light and easy, happy to wander  
and float about in space  
and flit between multi-dimensions  
And this time  
no matter how much I wander  
I hope not to gape in wonder  
at the lights and swirls  
that I might see yonder

Raj Arumugam

# Systematic Corruption

there is corruption of ideas  
for the very nature of ideas is corruption:  
and so the masses trap the few  
and then one in the few sees through it all;  
one has an insight  
and then corrupts it by forming a group:  
denying one system  
they escape into another,  
and set up the traps  
that will do unto others what was done unto them;  
and so this corruption of humanity goes on  
slipping and falling  
into chaos  
from one leader and followers  
slipping and falling  
from one system to another  
into chaos

Raj Arumugam

## Table-Talk Portrait

This lady talked for three hours,  
she talked to, not with; she listened  
awhile when the others managed to put in a word,  
and nodded and went on speeding on her talk  
going in circles like a toy train  
on the same track in a room

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Taipan

step aside in awe  
most lively mates and friends -  
look, look - this is the taipan;  
step aside and behold  
a true blue Aussie babe!

it's our Dreamtime babe  
designed to put anyone in place;  
loves the coastline  
and oh does it have a sweet tooth -  
for it just loves to hang out  
in sugarcane fields!  
But Ouch! – watch out for its  
venomous tooth too -  
for after all,  
most lively mates and friends,  
it 's got the world's deadliest bite

loves mostly mammals  
don't worry, friends -  
he, he, he –  
you're lucky folks,  
it's small mammals mostly  
like rats and small rodents and  
bandicoots –  
but then you'd be right to be afraid  
cos some of us are rats, aren't we?

step aside in awe  
most lively mates and friends -  
look, look - this is the taipan;  
step aside and behold  
a true blue Aussie babe!

you don't want to meet it

face to fang  
right before you;  
twelve feet it can grow to  
you'd be downright nervous  
to see it before you  
in the fields;  
but the poor darling  
the olive or brown taipan,  
this poor lovely babe  
it's nervous, nervous just like you

so step aside in awe  
most lively mates and friends -  
look, look - this is the taipan;  
step aside and behold  
a true blue Aussie babe!

Raj Arumugam

# Take Mother-Love To All

the Mother takes  
the child  
to the creatures  
and to the beauty of the world  
and she bids the child  
see and listen to each

the moon says to the child:  
be radiant, shine like me  
with love

the flower says:  
laugh, laugh joyously  
like me

the bee says to the child:  
be light, be light and easy  
as bees in a garden

the grass says,  
the grass sings to the child:  
be easy, be supple  
as me and my mates on the yards  
and in the fields

the ocean waves to the child,  
the ocean hums:  
include all, embrace all,  
contain all  
as I do within me

the sky says,  
the clouds dance to the child:

be wide, be limitless  
as the wide, wide blue sky  
on which we clouds sail

and the Mother says  
to the child who listens,  
whose heart is not closed:  
love all creatures  
love all beings;  
take the mother-love  
to every existence,  
with no exception  
to every form of life

Raj Arumugam

# Taking An Iq Test

badgered into taking an IQ test  
by one of these highly intelligent  
inescapable IQ popups  
highly evolved too  
(as indicated by its accompanying  
bright lights  
or a cartoon of Einstein) :  
goaded and mocked by these  
inviting delectable IQ tests  
I finally took one  
and ticked and clicked and moused my way through  
and the results were plain and clear for all to see:  
Program Terminated;  
Don't call us;  
We'll call you...

ah, since then I live in shame  
(keeping this private and hidden  
as much a secret as my inability  
to offer to my bed-companion an erection)  
and will carry this shame to my grave  
that is, I shall carry these shames to my grave

Raj Arumugam

# Taking One Into The Quiet

Come to me  
said the winds  
and the open space

Come to me  
said the grass  
and the cypress

Come, gently wandering,  
said the stars and the skies  
and the chrysanthemums  
And the wild whispers  
and words in the lines  
of the open palm  
of the dry lands

and they took him in  
one day at a time  
hour by hour  
gently and in bursts  
embraced him into the quiet  
that only nature and time  
can offer the living

Raj Arumugam

# Taking Yourself Too Seriously

OK, granted  
you got to take yourself seriously  
or no one will  
but take yourself too seriously  
and you're like a cracking statue about to crumble

there's too much really  
of people running around  
taking themselves too seriously  
pushing themselves forward  
putting their faces to the forefront  
almost pushing it against other people's arses  
academic, analytical, intellectual,  
so so deep  
you'd think they'd have sex in public next:  
one moment it's the 'me' in crisis  
and then next they're an Old Testament Prophet  
with thunder, lightning  
and explosives  
(presumably cos they don't use expletives):  
or they are World Teachers  
oh such Avengers of Justice  
each a Captain Planet or Guardian of the Universe  
(you'd think – hey, I wonder what  
these Heaven Beings will do if they were in power)  
with faces borrowed from theatrical masks  
Tragic Noh and ancient Greek Pathology  
and they bring in such Morals  
you'd think they are the paragons of Virtue

so smile a bit, wiggle your arses a bit  
and dropp that cumbersome gravity, folks:  
you take yourself so seriously  
you're about to go berserk

Raj Arumugam

# Tale Of Another Selfish Giant

you ruffian, Oscar,  
what are you doing  
on the wall  
of my garden?  
do you not see  
the warning signs all over?

Sir, I've done what  
I need to  
and I'm climbing over  
to jump back to open space  
on my side of the earth

you scoundrel, Oscar,  
you surly boy -  
did you pluck the flower  
the red red rose  
so precious and rare?

Sir, I did indeed pluck  
the flower  
the red red rose  
so precious and rare;  
and I slipped  
through your daughter's  
window  
and stole a kiss  
as she lay sleeping  
and put the rose in the vase  
on the side table by her bed;  
and I feel now she awakes  
and glowing with joy at seeing  
the red red rose  
so precious and rare,  
she blows me a kiss  
in this morning's cool air

Raj Arumugam

# Taliban Shoots Widow

sleep gentle mother  
sleep in the public dump  
that is your grave;  
and the child in your womb  
you shall be its grave  
O sleep sinful mother  
the wise Taliban gives you rest  
for we think it's best for you

I was walking in the area  
when the elders made it known:  
"there's a woman here  
a widow of years  
she's enjoyed the body of a man  
and she should answer for adultery"

and so we called for the woman  
and I made things out clear to her:  
Bibi Sanubar  
48 years old  
woman, and guilty of adultery;  
justice gives you  
over 200 lashes  
and bullets in your body

and so we took the accursed  
Bibi Sanubar  
to public view  
and let the whip kiss her over 200 times;  
and as her illicit lover put his seed in her  
we put bullets in her chest and head;  
and this accursed Bibi Sanubar  
we dumped in government land  
rubbish with rubbish  
dirt with dirt

sleep gentle mother  
sleep in the public dump

that is your grave;  
and the child in your womb  
you shall be its grave  
O sleep sinful mother  
the wise Taliban gives you rest  
for we think it's best for you

(Afghan widow given more than 200 lashes before being shot dead by Taliban for adultery was pregnant – Mail 10th August 2010)

Raj Arumugam

# Talking Much

don't talk so much when you die;  
you can do it  
if you don't talk so much  
when alive

Raj Arumugam

# Talking To An Echo

why does your voice sound  
like an echo?

'No, no, no...'

why do you keep repeating  
what others put in your head?

'Who me?

No, no, no – just what my mom and dad told me...'

can you say something  
that comes from your own mind?

'Well, according to the most sacred Book...'

Raj Arumugam

# Tarzan, The Missing Tale

they keep missing this one  
in all the TV and cinema versions  
they make and re-make of Tarzan;  
so it's really my duty to set the record straight

Tarzan was running uninhibited  
(that's before Jane arrived)  
and Jumbo the elephant looked at Tarzan  
and looked him up and down  
and Jumbo the elephant said to Tarzan:  
"That's cute what you got dangling down there -  
but can you pick peanuts with it? "

Raj Arumugam

# Tears In My Soup

1

mummy slices the onions  
and she moans  
and she cries:  
Oh, I hate onions!  
and she cries;  
and she stirs the soup  
and she says:  
Oh, I hate soup!  
and she cries;  
and so by the time I sit down to my soup  
there are tears in my soup  
tears in my soup

2

Sue sits beside me  
with her bowl of soup  
and she cries cos she wants mine;  
and so I give her my bowl  
but then she wants hers back  
and then she wants mine  
and she wants hers back;  
and so she cries and cries  
and by the time I end up with either bowl  
there are tears in my soup  
tears in my soup

3

and mummy screams to Joyce:  
make some soup for Sue and Tommy  
while I'm at work;  
and you stay in and put both to sleep  
and lights out everyone by ten!

and big sis Joyce  
works on the soup  
and chops  
up the ginger and garlic  
and the spices and the meat  
and then bursts into tears  
when she comes to the onions  
and then she cries and cries  
and cries and cries:  
Damn! Damn! Damn!  
I can't go out with the girls  
and the boys;  
and I've got be here making damned soup  
and tucking brats in bed!

and so by the time Joyce  
gives Sue and me our soup  
there are tears in my soup  
tears in my soup

4  
and sometimes mummy  
cries when she stirs the pot  
and she cries:  
Stupid man! Where's that useless man!  
He's been away 3 years  
and not a word!  
and she cries and cries as she stirs  
and she cries over the rusty pot  
so that by the time I drink my soup  
there are tears in my soup  
tears in my soup

5  
and as for me

I hate my soup anyway  
and when I sit down to drink my soup  
and even if mummy  
or Joyce or Sue  
has not cried over my soup  
I hate my soup  
I just hate soup  
so I cry and cry and cry  
over my chipped bowl of soup  
so that by the time I drink the soup  
there are tears in my soup  
tears in my soup

Raj Arumugam

# Terms Of Beauty

1

our idea  
of beauty  
in man, woman  
is after we ignore  
hair in the wrong places

2

women ply it  
for gaining security;  
and men acknowledge it  
for penetration

3

our ideal of beauty  
shifts and changes with time  
and goes from nudity  
to complete concealment

4

our terms of beauty  
ignore change  
(and the dentures)  
and we say:  
"She must have been so beautiful  
when she was young"

5

when one has nothing  
by way of aesthetics  
we appeal to morals and the lofty  
and this is the time  
we speak of inner beauty

Raj Arumugam

# That Hat Seller, That Maverick

That hat seller  
he's a Maverick  
itinerant, wanderer  
no monkey business  
no dependence, his own man  
busy, he has one thing to do:  
to sell his hats

"Hats, hats, hats  
hats for sale  
Blue hats, black hats,  
gray ones -  
will lend you some dignity  
while on your heads"

they'd not want to help him  
they liked to brand him  
so he said: "Damn you,  
I'd rather go on my own"

moving from one place  
to another  
like a masterless samurai, a ronin  
no monkey business for him  
but the monkeys do come to him

he knows the monkeys  
they're everywhere the same -  
pinching, covetous, not giving  
but eager hands for taking;  
and he throws his own hat down  
and the monkeys imitate;  
and he collects what is his  
and he moves on, as he must  
for his work is everywhere  
busy, he has one thing to do:  
to sell his hats

"Hats, hats, hats

hats for sale  
Blue hats, black hats,  
gray ones -  
will lend you some dignity  
while on your heads"

Raj Arumugam

# That Poem

that poem  
has more words  
than meaning

Raj Arumugam

# The Agony Of Visions

on the edge of the universe  
Prince Charming pursued  
many years what visions  
hovered in his dreams  
that one day  
that would manifest all in Snow White

on the consuming verges  
of the dark deserts  
the Beast sought the unknown,  
what fate and impulse drove him to

they are dead now  
the Prince, Snow White  
and the Beast and Beauty -  
but Despair and Time continue to  
mock and punish their chosen few

Raj Arumugam

# The Apostate, I Mean The Apostrophe

,

there was a comma  
which was so light  
it started to float;  
the other down-to-earth commas  
ganged up and banished  
that comma that dared to cross the line  
and so that deviant comma stays there in mid-air  
like a feather  
and you can see it if you  
keep your eyes open

''

and since its fall, or rise,  
it's been called the apostate -  
I mean, the apostrophe  
Mind you, it's not to be taken lightly  
for it can settle legal cases  
as it indicates who things belong to  
(like if it is John's money  
or Nicole's)

'''

and in matters of communication  
it can abbreviate things  
and make the style more conversational

''''

But I'll tell you when it's not so happy:  
if you say, for instance: "Its Monday"  
or "The dog wags it's tail" -  
ah, then the apostrophe hates you  
and it really wishes it could land on your head

like a bag of lead

Raj Arumugam

# The Apotheosis Of War

the scavenger birds  
have found the Truth  
literal and figurative:

every pyramid  
every celebrated edifice  
is built of death and skulls

Raj Arumugam

# The Bat, The Cat

I'm going home,  
says the bat  
at the break of dawn  
Going straight  
to my hangout!

Yawn...says the cat  
...stretch...stretch...stretch...  
Is it morning already?  
Let's see -  
what's to eat at home...?

Raj Arumugam

# The Beauty Of The Flow

It has all appeared to be a journey -  
all the years, the stages and markers

All appeared as if a movement from here to there -  
yet no one knew where, for destinations  
though named  
were always unknown, then always renamed  
One thought one was bound for the place  
but found it was not there and so one named another  
and moved on - as it appeared always -  
on another journey

And now there is clarity  
as we move up this river  
bound nowhere in particular

Not eager for a journey but to simply appreciate  
the lotuses that grow  
They are not going anywhere  
They grow and they thrive and end -  
and that is the beauty of it all  
in all this movement, this flow of time  
on which boats are carried

Raj Arumugam

# The Best Book In The World

the best book  
in the world  
the only true book  
is the world itself  
the Book of Nature

the best book is the silence  
the wordless-ness in  
the clouds and the sky  
and the rivers and the oceans  
and the lands  
and the grass that breaks through the concrete;  
and in the deserts and the volcanoes  
and the stars  
and the moon  
and the creatures of the earth  
and in all fellow beings  
and the vastness beyond  
and the vastness within

the best book  
the only true book  
(every other book is distortion)  
is the world itself  
the Book of Nature:  
read it

Raj Arumugam

# The Best Haikus

the best haikus  
the most natural and original  
are likely to be in Japanese

Raj Arumugam

# The Best Poem

this poem  
took aim  
to be the best poem  
in the world;  
it had no purpose  
but to win the title  
and so only got worse  
and became verse  
and descended into prose  
which in turn became toast  
and today it languishes  
in the pages of cyberspace  
lost, floating like a ghost  
wandering like a goat  
neither here nor there  
neither this nor that;  
and pundits  
who took a while  
their noses off their obsessions  
put on their expertise  
and have now declared this poem  
with very grim looks  
the worst:  
a sort of outcast to live outside of Parnassus,  
an untouchable  
to serve King Midas

Raj Arumugam

# The Bird And The Snail

I'm going home  
says the bird  
flying up in the air

Owww me,  
says the snail  
I'm always at home

Raj Arumugam

# The Bird Does Not Sing In The Grove

There is the grove. The bamboo grove with its open ground and pond.  
The bamboo is rich and luxuriant.  
But the bird is not there.  
The precious bird is not there to sing its songs.

Man and Woman come in to the grove.  
They do not hear the bird.

The Woman sings:

'Gentle child,  
darling solitary angel -  
where are you this day  
when we have come to hear you again?  
We have brought you seeds  
and we have brought you our love  
as we always do.  
Why will you not sing,  
radiant being of the grove? '

And Man and Woman look for the bird. They do not see the bird. They do not hear the bird's merry songs.

They are sad. Woman cries softly. Man comforts her, and they walk out slowly, hand in hand, and looking back to see if perhaps the bird will call them back.

Raj Arumugam

# The Bird In The Grove Sings For The Girl Child

The bird is in the bamboo grove, singing.

The girl Child listens and says, 'I love your songs, bird in the grove. Can you sing me another song before I go? '

The bird hops down a little to another branch of bamboo and sings for the Child:

I love to see you  
smile and laugh,  
Happy Girl;  
for that is the start  
and continuity  
of my song too

The Child laughs and bows and continues on her way to school.

Raj Arumugam

# The Bird In The Grove Sings For The Wanderer

The Wanderer comes in to the grove. The Wanderer hears the bird sing. The Wanderer sits on the ground and listens to the bird as it sings.

'That is beautiful, ' says the Wanderer.

The bird comes down from its branch and sits beside the Wanderer and sways its tail left and right and sings another tune.

'That is beautiful, ' says the Wanderer. 'I must go now, gentle creature of the bamboo grove. And tell me, dear friend – what can I bring you for your lovely songs the next time I pass here?

And the bird sways its green tail of three feathers and it sings to the Wanderer:

the breeze brushes past  
and the pool cools  
me in my days;  
the moon keeps me company  
and the flowers dance with me;  
the clouds linger long  
to listen to my song;  
O dearest wanderer,  
what else could I ask for?

'That is marvelous, ' says the Wanderer. 'That is so. I must continue on my wanderings and so I must leave now. I shall see you again, gentle being of the bamboo grove.'

The bird flies up to its branch and the Wanderer hears the happy bird singing to itself behind in the grove...

Raj Arumugam

# The Bird Is Back In The Bamboo Grove

And the bird is back in its home, in the bamboo grove.

And there in the bamboo grove, the bird sings its songs of joy and delight.

And there even today, Ha Ha boy and girl Child visit the bird and that gentle being entertains them with its songs.

And Man and Woman too come to visit the bird; and so do the Poet and the Wanderer and all other beings and people...and the people and the king of Bright Land which was once Grim Land, and even from farther afar...and the butterflies and the bees and the squirrels too...and they all come to listen to the bird in the grove that sings always its merry songs, that it sings for joy and delight:

the bamboo branch  
sways as it does in the wind;  
the bamboo rustles  
and I sing;  
a happy bird  
in the bamboo grove;  
being with the bamboo  
happy and chirping  
in the rustling grove

Raj Arumugam

# The Bird Sings To The Mendicant

The mendicant hears a bird singing. He comes to the grove.  
The bird is high up on a bamboo branch.  
The bamboo branch sways in the wind and the bird sings.

The mendicant sits on the ground.  
He eats some dry bread and drinks some water from the pond.  
And he sits in the shade listening to the bird in the grove.

'Precious bird in the grove, ' says the mendicant. 'Sing a song for me, if you will.'

The bird comes down to a branch nearer the ground. The bird takes a bow and chirps and shakes its head sideways as if to clear its throat.

And the bird sings for the mendicant:

simple mendicant  
who has bread and water  
who starts his day  
in basic needs and  
goes to bed below the stars;  
you and I live thus  
in carefree ways  
and we will meet again  
in nature's embrace  
when our days are over

The mendicant laughs. And he bows. And he says:  
'Thank you for your song, precious bird. I will go now, and sing these lines in the next town, and perhaps earn myself some more bread.'

Raj Arumugam

# The Bird Sleeps In The Bamboo Grove

It is night.

The moon glows above the grove. There is another moon too in the pond.  
The stars too glow, scattered all over the expansive sky.

It is a cool night.

The bird is asleep.

The bird rests on a bamboo branch with thick leaves.

And the night whispers to the bird:

'sleep gentle soul  
that sings for delight;  
sleep kind heart  
that nature fashioned;  
sleep while sister moon watches over you  
sleep while the stars bless you  
with starlight, starlight;  
O sleep gentle soul  
that sings for delight  
sleep all night  
in bamboo embrace'

Raj Arumugam

# The Body, Spirit, Lofty Heights And Sex

you know  
to lofty heights  
they praise  
the spirit and the other cliché, the soul  
(something they can't see)  
and they deride the body  
(something they can touch, but don't)

But O sweethearts  
you'll never get into other dimensions  
if you don't know your present  
so touch your bodies, sweeties...  
never fear, sweethearts  
of legit joining of body and body  
just enjoy the sex with no guilt  
it's OK to exhaust yourselves  
to moan and sigh and lie tired  
loving body side by body  
and to whisper:  
Oh...that's good, isn't it?  
and to answer:  
Hmmm....We ought to do this again soon, baby...

Raj Arumugam

# The Boy And The Butterfly

'O butterfly  
where do you go  
so busy, so fast  
moving about in a hurry? '

O I move up and down  
and across and sideways  
I have to go and go and go  
little boy  
just like you jump and run  
just like you roll and play  
just as active as you are  
just being in the joy of me

Raj Arumugam

# The Boy Who Was Six, And The Girl Too

the boy who was six  
running over hills and jumping over streams  
now he's nearly sixty;  
and the girl, she too,  
she who picked flowers in the woods  
and who fetched water from the well  
she too has seen time's movement  
with all the joys, the pain  
and the activity and goings on that come with it:  
one strolls over the hill now in the quiet  
and one sees the full moon  
over the giant trees  
the moon distant in the sky  
and yet its gentle rays spread over the tree heads;  
one sees all this calm and peace

Raj Arumugam

# The Business Of Poetry

like businesses run  
with publicity and a business plan  
and with networking  
and a public consultant and market research  
so poets too promote themselves  
(as they have done in all ages) :  
and so what is the uniqueness of poetry?

Raj Arumugam

# The Butterfly Hunter

O hunter  
butterfly collector  
let us be  
We got a life  
we love to fly  
and we got family

O don't catch us  
don't bottle us  
don't gas us  
let us be

we love to fly  
and we love to bring joy  
to poets in gardens;  
we love to bring laughter  
to children in the fields

O please, Collector  
do not bring death to us

O hunter  
butterfly collector  
let us be  
We got a life  
we love to fly  
and we got family

poem based on painting: Der Schmetterlingsjäger (The butterfly hunter) by Carl Spitzweg (1840) , a depiction from the era of butterfly collection

Raj Arumugam

# The Cash And The Handbag

See me, how pretty I am  
just like the lady  
and with me she's ready  
to walk so dainty  
in the mall  
says the handbag  
to the cash inside

I beg to differ  
says the money  
to the handbag  
No one's going anywhere  
without me inside

Raj Arumugam

# The Cause Of Earthquakes According To A Cleric

earthquakes  
and such disasters  
are caused by immodest women;  
if you are wise you will see this truth

women  
indecently dressed  
and accentuating contours  
cause excitement in vigorous young men;  
if you are spiritual you will see this truth

the men who thus get excited  
(and it's all the women's fault, you will agree)  
and so are led astray by such women  
and this causes adultery  
and such immorality which  
results in seismic activity  
and so you have earthquakes;  
if you are pure you will see this truth

it's true  
because adulterers  
do it more vigorously  
hence the earth trembles  
more readily

Raj Arumugam

# The Chair

Put your bubbly bottom on  
my flat outstretched palms  
and your arms on mine  
But it's really your bottom  
I'm purposed to feel

I've felt the bottoms of kings  
and queens  
and Presidents and CEOs  
and all manner of beings

and there's one common truth  
you must all know  
your bottoms hold:  
You're all made of hot air

(And that's saying it politely)

Raj Arumugam

# The Chaos Of One's Fantasy

if you don't make heroes  
if you don't crown kings and queens  
if you don't lick lolly fantasy  
and you don't tell lies  
and pull doves and pigeons  
out of cold thin air  
if you don't, then  
you die of boredom;  
because you can't bear the everyday  
because you can't see the world as it is  
but must seek to hallucinate  
from your windows of crystal glass  
tinted with kaleidoscope colors;  
for you must always  
seek to mold  
the world  
in the image of systems you believe in;  
and that's why you make legends  
and martyrs  
and you make fairies  
and good spirits and bad spirits  
and angels and devils  
and you create God  
and you create Satan  
and you fashion saviors and prophets  
and you fabricate legends  
and you weep for miracles and Heaven  
because you can't bear to witness  
the plain, the simple, the ordinary  
you're unable to face the fact  
of the wrinkle on your face  
and the bad odors in the body  
and so you create eternity  
that gives you license to fantasy  
and imagined powers  
to obliterate and erase;  
but if you can face the ordinary  
without shaping things  
in your concepts

see what is before and within and around  
and that is all  
one needs to see  
to end the chaos of one's fantasy

Raj Arumugam

# The Clown

The orange clown in the city  
his arms akimbo, laughs.  
Who's the fool? Who's the jerk?  
Who's the bumpkin? Who's the dead nail?  
The purple clown in the city  
his legs wide, jeers.  
Who's the pumpkin? Who's the harlequin?  
Who's the Bozo?  
Who's the buffoon?  
The red clown in the city  
his mouth ear to ear, mocks.  
Who's the loser? Who's the misfit?  
Who's not in? Who's inferior?  
The cut-out clown in the city  
his bandanna fluttering, cries.  
Who's the reject? Who's thick wood?  
Who's the nitwit? Who's outside always?

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The Cloning Years

one year of clowning goes  
and the clowns gather for another;  
and so we clowns continue  
breaking the year in manageable parts, in revelry  
trying to kill time  
till time kills the clowns;  
and then, happily, new clowns gather  
and time rubs its hands in glee

Raj Arumugam

# The Comma

the comma  
a most prosaic-looking fellow  
never gets into a coma  
though he's useful enough  
to give you a pause or break;  
the comma separates and lists  
and where the word-traffic may be in danger of crashing  
into one another, bumper to bumper  
the comma comes in like road markers  
and ensures smooth flow:  
don't kiss bumpers; kiss your commas

Raj Arumugam

# The Confessions Of John Tongue

the confessions of John Tongue (2 in 3 of the series: Tongue Poems)

1

I, John Tongue,  
I have a confession to make:  
I have an obsession -  
an obsession with tongues;  
not ox tongues like when you gather to dine  
but tongues, actual human tongues in speech;  
human mouths in their cave homes  
like beasts in their lair

2

you see, when people speak  
I sit before them  
and am fascinated by their tongues;  
I might listen to you, for instance,  
and your words fly over my head  
sometimes your spit in my face  
but my eyes are fixed  
on the tongue  
that lies trapped in your mouth  
and that darts in and out of your mouth  
and that shows between your teeth  
if you have some

3

I am obsessed I confess  
and I sit like a Peeping Tom  
waiting for a sight

of this most private muscle  
that may suddenly burst out of the mouth  
like a solar flare;  
and I wait for a laugh  
and the person throws the head back  
and the jaws are open and the  
sacred tongue is laid bare  
for all the world to see  
and that is a heavenly vision to me  
a revelation, a miracle  
equal to seeing an angel  
or a Great Religious Leader  
in a bullet-proof batmobile

4

and I love watching the news too  
not so much to know what has transpired  
but to observe the tongue of the newsreader  
though some are very miserly with their show of their tongues;  
but many have taken up this profession, it would seem,  
to make a national or international show of their lingua;  
and so you might well understand  
I love TV too where all sorts of people  
with all kinds of tongues  
(that is, fat and thick and thin tongues  
white, pale, gray, and red and pink and sickly tongues  
red-carpet tongues and dusty dirty tongues)  
make it their profession to tease me  
with a display or concealment of their tongues;  
and the cinema I love too  
for similar reasons  
and of course especially for the larger-than-life vision it offers  
of the most glorious human tongue;  
and though you might well imagine  
I would hate the telephone  
for I cannot see the tongue  
you'd be quite wrong  
for this is an opportunity for me to  
exercise my very vivid imagination  
for I can still visualize the tongue

in all its manifestations  
and Oh, I love the telephone  
for it puts the human tongue so Oh, Oh, close to my ear

5  
ah, these then are some of the joys of the tongue  
and this my obsession  
but when we next meet  
don't please be so conscious  
of your tongue as you speak  
for I may not look  
at your tongue  
jumping up like a frog  
from the floor of your mouth  
and venturing into the world through your teeth  
to determine what endangered species  
resides within your mouth;  
but I may have shifted my attention  
to perhaps your diction  
and enunciation  
listening for crispness and clarity  
and poking fun at any peculiarity,  
so just relax, speak-publish, and be damned!

...but then, I may still be stuck in obsession on the tongue...

the confessions of John Tongue (2 in 3 of the series: Tongue Poems)

Raj Arumugam

# The Coolness

after life's pleasures, all the pain and agony  
and after all the heights and falls  
and the achievements and trophies  
and the shame and disquiet and blame;  
after all a lifetime,  
as one breathes, even as one sees,  
after all of it,  
after all the rolling presents we call time  
in all that  
and after, in all  
all that remains abiding with one is the poise;  
that is all that is worth:  
the coolness  
the calm in which one looks fear in the eyes  
and ecstasy with dispassion

Raj Arumugam

# The Couple Next Door, Just Like Us

the couple next door, just like us,  
they desired, they loved;  
they lived, they died

they inherited ways and thoughts  
they grew up and studied, and worked;  
they met, they loved,  
they made lives together  
struggled and celebrated  
and paid for things they needed, or did not  
and worked for home and children;  
they were not saints, though no one came to harm  
they were ordinary, as good or just like any other;  
and they saw their children do the same thing  
and saw the new little ones grow  
and they themselves aged and they died;  
today they are a memory  
in photo albums and at dinner conversations:  
in private circles mystified  
and in family revered...

the couple next door, just like us,  
they desired, they loved;  
they lived, they died

Raj Arumugam

# The Creature

After the taunting  
the creature is beaten deep into the cave where  
it is dark and the stalactites do not shine;  
there are the sounds of water  
hitting the rocks below and there are the echoes  
and the hard breathing of the creature itself  
filled layer upon layer  
upon itself.

Its scaled eyelids are closed;  
the creature is withdrawn into itself.  
It breathes gently now and its chest rises and falls on  
the countless folds of its body and mind.  
It is withdrawn within itself. There is hurt;  
there is resentment; there is heaviness  
that fills all its days and nights.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The Crowd Laughs At Nasrudin

See

Nasrudin is in the streets  
he rides his donkey;  
and see,  
the people are in the streets  
and the men and women point to Nasrudin  
and they laugh;  
and the children run behind Nasrudin's donkey  
and they roll in the sand  
and they laugh at Donkey;  
and the youth  
throw some old cups  
at Nasrudin's donkey and they laugh

and see

Nasrudin sees all this  
and he says to them:  
Yes, you may see the humor;  
but I don't think you see the irony  
I was going to go off after the last poem

Raj Arumugam

# The Dark Alleys Are Deserted

the dark alleys are deserted  
and the fields are dry;  
light reveals bareness  
and the nights conceal  
the blankness  
in faces in posters

the paper litter flap their wings in the gutters  
and the empty cans roll across the streets;  
the cold wind blows steady  
slaps one's face  
and bites one's ears;  
the occasional stranger smiles weakly  
and the cat stares with a witch's glare:  
one walks alone in nights  
and walks long;  
one stays awake nights  
and crawls along

the dark alleys are deserted  
and the fields are dry;  
light reveals bareness  
and the nights conceal  
the blankness  
in faces in posters

Raj Arumugam

# The Dash

don't be dashing round  
oh you so young and dashing dash;  
so energetic –  
you just bewilder us all

O dash –  
what a dash you make for it;  
O dash –  
what surprises you have in store

O dash –  
you're not connective tissue  
like the hyphen;  
but dash -  
you are a more dramatic fellow

I did use you once, dash -  
but my sentence tripped and fell;  
so now when I call on you  
I ensure I've got you tied –  
like a dog to the leash

don't be dashing round  
oh you so young and dashing dash;  
so energetic –  
you just bewilder us all

Raj Arumugam

# The Day Has Carried One

the day has carried one  
and also the tight  
accumulation of nights  
and years gone by  
have rolled one to this end;  
and one faces one's night  
happy, or exhausted, or disillusioned;  
as one's mind-waves in time have  
swept one across the ocean of being...  
may each find rest  
in seeing one's own strength and calm

Raj Arumugam

# The Definitive Full Stop

Say 'Hello'  
to the Full Stop  
before it shuts you down

Say 'Hello'  
to  
the American period  
the definitive full stop that says: 'That's it, folks! '  
in other words  
it says: 'Enough! ' 'That's it! '  
' I'm done! ' ' I'm finished! '  
But some people never get that, do they?  
they just keep going on;  
but now I'll take my cue  
and say no more.  
FULL STOP.  
PERIOD.

Raj Arumugam

# The Desert Of Man (1983)

THE DESERT OF MAN

(1983) by Raj Arumugam

## Introduction to The Desert of Man

The Desert of Man is an ancient story, and its essence can be found in many ancient traditions.

The story begins in a village and centers on Ukresan, a mute, who receives the power of speech and the gift of poetry from the Goddess of Learning, Saraswati. Vidyapati (as Ukresan becomes known after he receives the gift of poetry) arrives at the city of Pataliputra and teaches his way of wisdom. The guardians of Pataliputra, however, are opposed to any teacher not from the elite core of teachers of the Orthodoxy, and they wait for the right moment to have Vidyapati arrested. Their opportunity arrives when Vidyapati breaks social conventions and they have him arrested and thrown into prison.

Vidyapati is subsequently released, and murdered on his return to his village.

Only three of his poems survive and these are included at the end of this volume.

## Saraswati

Saraswati is the Goddess of Knowledge, Learning and Wisdom.

She is Sophia, and the White Goddess of Robert Graves.

She is the Buddhist Manjusri.

Her invisible form is intuition and insight and the elusive creative genius.

She is the feminine aspect of Divinity – the same divinity that has been banished from many patriarchal systems of thought.

And she is much more than that too – for Saraswati is, like the Tao, the Indefinable.

-----

Saraswati is the Mother who includes all and excludes none.

She is the Mother who loves all her children and rejects none.

-----

Saraswati is the Essence (sara) of the knowledge of the Self (swa) .

(Saraswati, like all the other goddesses in Hinduism, may also be referred to as Mata – the Mother. Thus it is common practice to refer to her as Saraswati Mata.)

### Meaning of The Desert of Man

The Desert of Man can be approached at many levels, and each reader will find something of their own in it.

Here are a few aspects of the work worth mentioning:

◦ the legend of seemingly ordinary people receiving sudden inspiration

◦ the importance of intuition

◦ the role of the poet and the artist

◦ the feminine aspect of the Divine.

The Desert of Man is a work of fiction and was written in 1983, and is set in ancient India.

Its immediate inspiration was a scene from the Tamil film Saraswathy Sabatham, and other stories from various cultures that this passage from the work alludes to:

He was as Caedmon of Streanashalch, who found a voice all of a sudden;  
as Nanak who was summoned, employed to sing the glories of God: as many  
thrown desolate into the world...

As Kalidas, the simpleton, before the poet, who started with the menial task of cutting the branch, seated at the branch end.

The work draws on various traditions of the world for its intellectual and spiritual depth.

Readers who enjoy this work may also want to read SEVEN TAOIST MASTERS A

The Desert of Man  
(1983)  
Raj Arumugam

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---

I record vibrations present;  
and for we have a past  
and the future waits sneering at the bend,  
the times must be interpreted.

Come,  
let us seek the center of our beings.

Prologue

(i)

When did you last  
stop

to look at those deep green leaves,  
above which the thin and wary branches  
carry the crimson coral?  
to look at the Andira cone,  
blushing pink after the rain?  
to look at that tree  
with yellow mid-ribs and stripes,  
turned out like a grand coral?

even to listen  
to the boisterous city sounds?

listening to the irritating humdrum  
engine shaking that whole metal bus  
(to listen to the brown tracer  
of three birds in their scampered chirps) ?  
listening to the ceaseless chatter of a dirty aimless crowd turned out along the  
beach  
(to listen to the waves, dirty yes,  
but still gentle waves) ?

to look into the garden of eden  
within (yes, the kingdom too, within)  
    ...the primordial echoes  
        the primeval instincts...  
(back into the hunting days and fearful nights)  
the letters and sounds, the pyramids and temples,  
the churches and minarets, the signs and symbols,  
the glazed skyscrapers and clean chips,  
the little bones and the huge satellites,  
all ingrained in the face of each soul -  
all anarchic in the mind.

to the voices of the nations and ages  
that ring around our shores:  
(our shores, yes, though not as white  
as Dover, or as the stretches of Cape Comrin -  
but our proud shores all the same;  
to the Tao that is mingled with the Om  
the Word and the phoenix, and  
the winds that blow from the deserts?

Well, stop and listen.

(ii)

Well, stop and listen

as  
I praise Vidya the poet,  
maker of myths, master of songs,  
lover of the meek and simple;  
Vidya, who affirmed each man's dignity,  
who affirmed each man's creed.

I praise him who said that all things,  
the trees, the concrete stands,

the tools, the colours and forms, the winches,  
all things that we see  
and all things that we hear,  
the very body itself -  
that all things are but a symbol.

And as he reached forward from  
across the ages, with those fingers  
poised as only he can -  
I gave myself to him  
and I surrendered myself to his charms:  
his mere touch made me break into song.

I praise Vidya, the Silent One.

Stop then and listen,  
for to listen to such things  
is to listen to yourself,  
to know.

(iii)

Who was Vidyapati,  
first known as Ukresan?  
What was his life  
and what did he do?

He was as Caedmon of Streanashalch, who found a voice all of a sudden; as  
Nanak who was summoned,  
employed to sing the glories of God: as many thrown desolate into the world...  
As Kalidas, the simpleton, before the poet, who started with the menial task of  
cutting the branch, seated at the branch end.

His was a simple life, but a medieval tale;  
it is the meaning that is complex.

Ukresan was born mute, the son of a poet, and later received speech and hearing through the grace of Saraswati; he attained wisdom in the hard city of Pataliputra, in its confines and prisons (the Patriarchs there charged him of heresy - for how can God be worshipped in the mother figure? - and the Council found him guilty) .

He returned to his village eighteen years later, eagerly to the temple of his vision of Saraswati, and there was murdered by his country-folks, who were convinced he was a disgrace.

Only these are known for sure;  
the rest is tradition.

---

### Invocation

(i)

I call to play the Great Witness, Pillayar:  
the symbol itself and the meaning himself,  
the Divine Scribe who is the Only Knower; who puts the thoughts in our minds  
and then humbly records our verses  
(and calls it all a lila) .

I call to play the Great Witness, Pillayar. It all being but a scene in Siva's adal.

(ii)

Sweet mother,  
away from the angers and away from the rages,  
my evenings are spent in dulcet ragas, and I listen to the songs of the prophets,  
the psalms of saints and hymns of the holy; O I listen to the poems of the wise,

the plays of the masters, the epics created when poets believed what they saw,  
and the people believed what they heard.

Sweet mother

(who soothes the numb mind with the moods of the vina) -  
then they fall silent.

Then there is a rhythm in the silence:

Om Saraswati.

---

Part One

The Desert of Man (1983) by Raj Arumugam

Chapter 1

The Father

In an age of plenty,  
in an empire founded on might,  
the capital aggrandized with man and power the acropolis -  
with towers scraping the skies, with ziggurats, with pyramids, with vehement  
walls, the city bricked and made concrete, with glass castles overlooking the  
tarmac roads,  
and the metal mess bolted nut after nut shackled into giants,  
where the incessant crowds displayed and quarreled  
over their wares

far in a village of cow-dung houses on the river bank  
(of brick houses for the little richer) all engirded by the passionate kind  
embracing tress of forest  
with the temple as its center the village poet sat before the Goddess.

The evening had tempered his mind and as he thought of time past and present,  
the tears rolled down his cheeks -  
before the Mother.

(a)

Om Saraswati.

Sweet mother of all our lives,  
sweet love that binds us all,  
behold lady of our souls,  
the poverty of our people:

they cannot hear the trees speak,  
they cannot hear the swans sing,  
their minds are closed  
to the gentle curved rocks  
and none can read the words in the running streams.

for their tongues have tasted avarice  
and their heavy stomachs belch all wisdom.

Om Saraswati.

(b)

Om Saraswati.

O sweet mother,  
whose fingers make the vina sing its joys  
and so bind my body and soul in harmony -  
behold lady of our souls,  
the poverty of our people:

and they have lost the guidance of their poets,  
whose verses no longer teach them to delight  
whose poems are no longer as the succulent cherries;  
whose poems speak of discord  
having lost the binary stars  
of Siva and Shakti.

and they have lost the wisdom of their poets  
as their verses no longer descend into their hearts.  
                  for poet and listener no longer unite  
                                  as lovers in the groves,  
                  as the rays descend to the leaves,  
                  as the leaves yield and glow in love.  
whose poems speak of maya.

for they are children of ignorance  
and ignorance breeds pleasure in itself.

Om Saraswati.

(c)

And mother,  
it was for such a time that I asked  
for a poet to lead us all out;  
for a prophet to lead us out of the desert of man.  
I asked of you a son, Mother,  
whom I might teach,  
who may give you all the days of his life  
and yet you gave unto me a mute.

Om Saraswati.

Mother. whose grace opens the hearts of men,  
and sets Truth and Art to dance in them;  
as even a mute dreams  
and is tortured unable to speak,  
so men of truth are struck dumb  
and bound with ropes of fear.

And you have sealed our fates.

How long shall I suffer yet?

Om Saraswati.

(d)

And the world is split into many lands  
and men prey upon one another;  
they have re-surfaced the paths of truth  
for each violent act  
and the peoples are spread out in their midst  
unguided, unthinking,  
and they forgotten the divine Sangha.

and man is agog with his ego  
as loquacious talker revels in his 'I'  
even disguises it all in a modest 'i'

(a)

The mute son lived in segments of simple chores  
bound by his devotion to his mother.

a chubby, pale and fragile face  
of wild-eyed innocence  
that did not fit his scrawny frame.

he sold jasmine in the market,  
and wood from door to door;  
he washed clothes at the lake  
and watched them dry on the branches.

as the children set fire-crackers below his seat  
and every wise man insisted on speaking to him;  
as the beggars taunted him through the alleys of the market.  
and the adults told their children  
to buy jasmine from the Dumb,  
the Mute or the Accursed;  
or to buy paste five feet away  
from the Squeaking Pig,  
the Sniffing Dog or the Ogling Thing.

(b)

but he did not fail to see  
the falling moods of the trees and the sun  
the colors in the soap suds,  
and the forced whirl in the water.  
but he not fail to see  
the varied faces of men and women,  
the movements in their lips  
and their curves, their sways and their angers.

and he lived with his own meaning

in the love of his father  
and in the service of Bharati.

(c)

but he did not fail to see  
feeling the cool rain  
the beauty of the sinuous rivulets  
running amok  
upon the bare yellow slopes.  
the beauty of the rain drops  
trickling down the leaves of the coconut  
to the weeds that grew all along  
the spine.  
the beauty of the moss that grew  
in the armpits of the naked roots  
above the rich soil.

Chapter Three

The river

(a)

The hills descended  
into crags  
into granite rocks,  
softened by green moss  
and away  
grew in a stretch the banyan and the acacia  
crowded, concealing  
the grand river that turned  
the village into itself

(b)

and their waters turned from their flow

to settle in a crescent,  
yellow,  
with a harvest of duckweeds,  
and hundreds of turtles

busy on the sands, sliding into the waters,  
idling in the waters...

he would feed them.

(c)

he would  
plunge into the river,  
make to the bottom  
and wonder at the silent busy fish,  
darting in schools,  
abruptly, suddenly turning;  
leisurely, lazily motionless  
gleaming in the descending sunlight  
run along the granite bank  
as the villagers beat clothes  
on the slabs  
and stretched them to dry along the shore  
in the trees, and between.

(d)

the mangrove swamp  
and Ukresan; between them is a secret

(e)

he built a swing between two trees  
using the hanging roots  
and played;  
swung furiously  
till the roots snapped  
and he fell on the sand,  
and laughed deliriously

(f)

a vast pattern of coarse boulders  
thrown across the valley floor  
with the crabs in a riot  
on the flood plains.

#### Chapter 4

#### The desert

And then there was the desert, farther across the river.  
he would spend his time there walking into the desert  
merely feeling its heat, its textures to see its forms.

(a)

stand there staring at the grains of sands,  
the waves, the patterns, the moods;  
the glistening salt layer,  
the boulders arranged

(b)

staring at the contorted rocks and cliffs  
and the multi-hued serpent  
sliding amongst cracked stones below.

(c)

the splintered dunes  
like his palms and chapped fingers

(d)

the lone acacia standing;  
(as his childhood apart)

(e)

the riot of flowers below the brown rocks  
and the next day,  
the bed of shriveled flowers

(f)

the stretch of cacti shining  
like a contingent halted

(g)

the painting on the rocks  
of an antelope  
of a date palm in bloom

(h)

a vast stretch of brown gravel  
scattered  
with cracking bones  
of donkeys

(i)

There was an oasis some distance off and Vidya loved it;  
he loved to feel the coolness of its spring; to watch the busy insects there and  
the profuse flowers...  
lazing with the birds that did not mind his presence.

Sometimes he would only be there a day;  
sometimes he spent days.

Chapter Five

The miracle

(a)

Through the thatched roof the moonlight slipped and fell below into a pool of  
light, where father and son slept on the ground

three times Ukresan dreamed  
that someone called him -  
and each time he awoke his father

the rustic poet then led the son to the door  
and pointed to the temple  
and they slept again.

in the silence of Ukresan's sleep

in the stillness of his world  
the call was made yet again

He arose and walked out into the night.

(b)

He crossed the vegetable plot and walked across the stony track into the woods,  
amongst the trees between whose sways the winds were whistling gently.  
He passed the lake along which the wild grass grew, into which the reeds  
disappeared. In the horizon were the lean coconut trees nodding their heads in  
the silent air,  
and rising like lazy men alarmed at the landlord's approach.

And there across he stood before the doors  
of the temple  
of the Divine Mother.

He entered the temple and sat at the feet of Saraswati and wondered if it were  
not all in vain...  
why the mother would allow him to suffer thus  
and mock him in his quiet sleep.

(c)

It was then that the miracle happened.  
Speak! said a voice within Ukrsean.

But I cannot - he protested in his thought.

Speak! said the voice within.

How may I? he protested in his mind.

Speak! said the voice yet again.

And Ukresan received the power of speech.

Listen said a voice within Ukrsean,  
and he received the power of hearing.

And it was then that from her feet arose a blue circle of flames, and Ukresan saw  
within it the form of Saraswati  
clad in white with her vina in her arms.  
her fingers flitted across the strings  
like swift butterflies  
as she played that her son might hear  
his first sounds in the world of her form.  
And as he heard, Poetry was set in his heart, that he may serve her till the end  
of her days. and as he heard,  
the arts, the world, and life, and all things visible and invisible were revealed  
unto him that his speech may not be the whimper of a fool and may not lack  
Truth.

(d)

O Lady in White, seated upon the white lotus in the heart of the artist, resident in  
the visions that poets make,  
resplendent in the music the masters call, I salute you  
who was the single voice in all my years of silence:

Om Saraswati.

i)

Sweet mother,  
why did you thus hold me aloof  
these 30 years in quiet torment?

Vidyapati,  
the ecstasy is known  
through the experience of Agony.

ii)

What am I called to do, Mother?

To make poems

What is poetry, sweet lady?

It is the delight in the word  
as it draws one closer to the Truth.  
You shall sing of silence, love and truth;  
You shall sing of man and meaning.

iii

Vidyapati,  
be joyful  
that you can hear and speak.  
Yet be mindful that the day shall be  
when sounds will not delight,  
when you shall know the pain of speech.

The words of the wise shall be fulfilled:

It will be then  
That he that can see  
Will desire to be blind;  
And he that can hear and speak  
Will desire to be mute.

iv

Behold the works of the Divine,  
believe, be silent,  
and be blessed.

v

And what must I do now?

Beloved son,  
leave the village.  
Your destiny is in Pataliputra.

Let me stay here, mother;  
let me pick you flowers,  
make you poems and string them at your feet.  
Let me make you songs,  
sing them daily, chanting your name and praise;  
let me wash your feet  
and attend to the birds that sing here in the temple.  
I must be within the temple  
beside my mother always.

I'd love to give unto you all my days:  
O, let me awake each day in this temple,  
bathe in the lakes and welcome you in the sun;  
I'd love to sing your name then  
and dance to the beat of your nama.

Vidya,  
the temple is your body  
and the mother is within.  
No man shall want a place of Saraswati  
for the divine is in all.

You must to Putra:  
all things shall be revealed in their time;  
you shall not come to an end without knowing.

It was early morning. All night the breeze had played  
along the blades and in the groves, as the moon dipped its fingers into the lake.

The bellyside of the heavy clouds began to show its scales of red and the cock  
crowed across the padi field.

But the village slept.

It was then that Vidyapati was leaving.

Awake! sang the market songsters of later years;  
Awake! Why do you sleep like beasts in the pen?  
A miracle has happened in your village!  
O folks of the village, let Vidya touch your hearts;  
bid him speak and bid him not leave.

But the village slept  
and Vidya left as the cool breeze  
that blew over their saliva-run faces  
also ran over the cold body of the village poet.

## Part Two

Vidya arrived at Pataliputra, capital city of the Guptas, ruled by Chandragupta II,  
the Maharajahiraja, the Vikramaditya.

And Vidyapati held five years of silence in Pataliputra; he immersed himself in the city. He listened to the cries of the city, the debates of the men in power, the noise of the slums and the cadence of the genteel and polished ladies, and men who lingered arm in arm in the market place. He listened to the voices of the cantankerous and the self-righteous; he listened to the demands of the unjust and the vociferous; and he listened to the truths of those who were clean-shaven and immaculate.

And in all five years he neither had a vision of Saraswati nor heard the music of her vina.

In the sixth year, he began to teach and the receptive amongst the citizens gathered unto him and he taught them of the rhythms of the self and the beauty of silence, and he taught them to enquire into the nature of things that may lead them to understand the truth eternal. And thus he taught for two years.

The dvijas, who could not believe that one not of their caste could teach truth, and who could never believe anything not in their holy text and system, tried to use their influence at court to press for Vidya's arrest.

But they needed a specific cause  
and they waited.  
It was in the market place  
that it happened.  
There was a wooden board  
hung between the poles  
that the chandalas had to strike  
as they entered the market  
from the outskirts of the town -

So that the clean and pure  
would know of the presence of the corrupt.

Vidya walked in there that day  
and broke the board:  
This produces a harsh sound, he said,  
handing it over to the guards, who were ready.

The chandalas there were dismayed  
to see the board gone  
and stared at him.

---

## Part Two

### Chapter 1

### The inquisition

(a)

It is known that  
you teach truths - or what some call  
perceptions of the Great Truth.  
Are you man then a prophet?

I am a poet.

And you claim to teach the truth?

It is the business of the poet  
to discover and record truth.

Only God reveals  
and the prophets record! -  
and the state intercedes-

The poet experiences directly  
what the prophet must hear or see;  
and for all discoveries must be made anew,  
all may be poets -  
if they do not refuse.

(b)

So you have seen the mother Vani?

Yes I have seen the Divine Mother:  
the White Goddess  
attended by her white swans  
with her fingers upon the ancient vina  
with her beads that silence the mind  
to receive the Vedas in her other palm;  
with her smile that appeases remorse  
and her eyes like currants in an ocean of milk  
for whose love men have lost their selves;  
for whose love she will net a catch of stars.

But you have no witness?

Why should I want a witness  
when Truth these days goes naked without it?

(c)

I am not a prophet,  
I am not a sage;  
I am merely a man  
who has come to understand himself.

For there is only one sin: ignorance.  
and I've come to gain knowledge.'

(d)

So does God have form?

As long as we talk about form  
we are dealing with men,  
with perceptions  
with symbols and language,  
and so long as we deal with men  
we are dealing with variety.

so long then as we speak of God  
we must deal with variety.

(e)

There is only One  
but there is variety  
when the One pours out.

(f)

Why do you pray to God as a woman?

Fools,  
the essence is neither Male nor Female,  
neither White nor Black,  
neither with Form nor Formless.

But you do pray to God as a woman?

All must see God in their image  
in the form of the rhythms of their souls;  
therefore are the names of God many,  
therefore the forms of God are many -  
but one is right as the other.

(g)

What are your scriptures,  
your texts, your holy books?

There is no need for any -

for Truth is inscribed within.

There is no need for externals,  
no need for tradition, then?

Yes.

All things must be measured  
by the rhythms within.

## Chapter Two

## Exchanges

(a)

I can sing, Vidya,  
and I can dance:  
come and see me dance, Vidya,  
and hear me sing...

But can you sing in poverty,  
damsel,  
and can you dance in the rain?  
but can you sing, damsel?  
when you are mocked?  
and can you dance, damsel,  
even on thorny ground? -

(b)

When the leering crowd, the beggar,

the street urchins, the curious and the vagabonds  
were not outside to peer in  
he would sit there on his bed  
or lean against the pillar,  
standing on the platform below  
gazing through the window

at the imposing facade,  
the pillars, the rounded marble, the steps,  
the turrets,  
the shadows that fell across it  
at the gargoyle,  
at the obelisks running across the street  
and he would just smile to himself.

(c)

Will the world end?  
Will the world crumble  
like a ball of dry sand?

I cannot say.

I am no prophet; but the nature of things is such  
all things must come to an end: it must when it will.  
as our individual endings.

Yet fear not, for out of the chaos order will arise and each unfinished destiny will  
blossom in other worlds - and worlds not yet come. There will always be a place  
of soil  
for us to meet again. I only repeat the ancient wisdom.

(d)

Sir, Grand Poet of Our Lady in White tell us of the events in your life that your  
disciples may cherish and remember.

I have no history.

(e)

And there was come to him a loquacious talker - a peddler of doctrines who reveled in questions and himself could not answer any:

What is painful to hear?

The words of the lewd,  
of the hypocrite and of the self-righteous;  
the speeches of the unjust,  
of the devious and vain -

O it is painful to hear  
the words of the man  
without better cause than himself.

(f)

Sir, is it not painful to lose the quiet pleasures of life  
for some intangible ideals? Let us help you.

Friends, have no doubt: it's not where I am or what I have that matters - what matters is what I am.

### Chapter 3 Conversations with Saraswati

He went even, through the years in prison - but just once, in his loneliness, he felt his soul was exhausted in the parched cracked land - and he prayed.

(a)

I have spent my years in chains  
away from the grasslands and the lakes,  
above which the clouds lie  
like spilled milk on a blue rug;  
I have spent my years away from home.

I am tired  
of the arrogant hard-dealing world,  
by the soul-accusers who mock the quiet  
as the dissecting age beats the gentle on  
to the common ideal of violence

Come then...  
like a moon that arises  
to illumine the dark sky;  
like the red hibiscus that cheers  
the coarse monotony of green

(b)

For I am but a man;  
I cannot reside forever  
only in invisible truths;  
I cannot believe forever  
only in intangible words: let me see you again  
before I break with the skeptical world.

(c)

And Vidyapati saw again the Divine.

Why have you exiled me in the Desert of Man?

Have I not lived long enough, mother, suffered enough in the Prison of Man?  
Give me death now.

And the mother said:  
All men must make across the Desert  
and learn to recognize illusions.

(d)

Mother, o quiet and sweet end, I have lived to glorify your word; grant that I  
shall not die but at your feet.

And it was granted him

And it was from this day onwards that Vidya sealed himself with silence to the end of his days.

#### Chapter Four      Fa Hsien and Vidya

Fa Hsien, the Chinese Buddhist scholar, was in India from A.D.405 to A.D.411. He heard of Vidya and how the king was unwilling to have him in prison but to please the Patriarchs, being himself constantly away at the wars and so being dependent on them; he then sought and gained permission from the king to meet Vidya in prison.

For two days Fa Hsien sat there patiently before the silent Vidya; then he said: Speak, Vidya; I would love to hear you.

I was awaiting your instructions, Fa Hsien.

(a)

Why do you not talk much,  
Vidya?

Why do you not linger?

When Beauty has touched you  
when you have heard the Divine Music,  
the world's prattle  
only irritates you:  
the world is an interruption  
and you want to be back within.

(b)

What do you seek,  
Fa Hsien?

Answers.

Have you found them?

Yes;  
I searched through the lands  
across the mountains and the rivers,  
through the wise, books and records;  
and found they had always been there  
within.

(c)

What is poetry, Vidya?

Truth; Beauty.

What is Truth, Vidya?

The ultimate of our existence.

What is Beauty, Vidya?

The binding of our existence to the Ultimate.

The experience is relative and absolute.

(d)

What do you seek, Vidya?

Has it ever occurred to you  
that this life may be but a play?  
that we take on roles of father, child, king and prisoner,  
of friend, husband, capitalist and worker, and that we exchange roles with new  
names new costumes and new scripts through new births in many productions  
in many theatres and one day this Grand Theatre will close  
and we will all return to Reality?

the reality is obvious in the after-theatre  
but not so in the after life-roles:

I seek to understand that riddle.

(e)

The nature of the world is such  
it shall be in parts that do not fit  
so it is that the world is in fragments.

How shall it be put together?

By the discovery of the centre of the universe.

What is the centre of the universe?

The Self.  
the quiet self mesmerized in silence  
it shall be put together  
when action springs soaked in the Self.

(f)

What do you miss?

I miss my village with the temple at its centre:  
I miss the muddy walkway home  
I miss the tall boosters  
with green coconuts clustered round each  
like full maternal breasts  
the huge cloud  
holding the sun  
in its hip-bone,

releasing the sinking sun  
through his fading fingers  
the sentinel trees that have stood so long  
the creepers cloak them in green

(g)

Why do you reject their teachings,  
Vidya?

They malign the gods of other men.

Aren't they right, Vidya?  
For how can all gods be true?

All gods are the One.  
The Omnipotent  
cannot be understood in its own terms  
by the finite intellect:  
so each mind understands God in part.  
All minds do not grow as one:  
the Great Understanding springs  
therefore  
as each mind expands.

(h)

Have you met Kalidas,  
Vidya?

Kalidas sings in court;

I sing here in prison.

(i)

What is Saraswati,  
Vidya?

When you have experienced  
the matter, the mind, the universe,  
the world in its joys and sufferings,  
She is the sum total.  
She is the Cause, the Infinite, the Abstract:

She is the Tao.

(j)

Vidya, must you go the way of silence  
like the solitary flower  
that blooms and dies unknown?

It has served Nature; though unknown,  
it is not solitary.

But the pity of it all, Vidya -

It is all bliss. All bliss.

It is like if you lost your mother at six, and yearn for her always; growing up  
against the unkind mocking eyes,  
knowing no other love within the Prison of Man.

and you contemplate on the Lady

and you see her within and then come to know of a world to be where you will be  
one with the Mother

where the flesh will not shrivel and rings will not darken the eyes:

That is bliss. All bliss.

(k)

Have you not lost much -  
a quiet life by the lakes  
and a life free of pain -  
in all these years in prison?

Who loses  
who has gained himself?

(l)

I do not suffer  
these chains and prison;  
I do not suffer  
the injustice and violence;  
I stare at them with indifference  
but I suffer  
of the knowledge  
that they shall answer  
in the chain of events.

(m)

Fa Hsien,  
the Tao  
and Om  
are one;  
Kuan Yin  
and Saraswati  
are one:  
so is there one God  
and so are there many:  
there are as many as varied consciousness  
The abstract mind  
needs an idea;  
and the concrete mind needs a God.

---

## PART THREE

### Chapter 1

### Freedom

(a)

Fa Hsien spent five days with Vidya. The patriarchs came to him at court, and mocked him:

How was prison? Found any records there? Heard Vidya treated you the last hour to his songs? Ha!

And Fa Hsien said to them:

I did not know what he meant as he sang - but the bhakti in his voice as he uttered each Siva sped the exultant rolling waves of my soul.

(b)

He met the king later  
and exclaimed,  
Lord,  
what is the meaning of this man's sufferings?

(c)

The dvijas grew wary, and they knew the king's mind: they themselves proposed  
therefore that Vidya be released  
and sent back to his village.

It was done.

But the dvijas had other plans: they arranged for his death.

Chapter 2

Sweet End

It was early morning when Vidyapati returned home after those long years - a  
crumpled silhouette against the overpowering trees.  
O, was it not of this end that the later songsters sang outside the tents where  
the slaughtered deer lay?

O where are the seven hills, my dear,  
who were the play-friends of Vidya?  
Where is the temple, sweetheart,  
which was the home and world of Pati?  
covered below the sands of time, sweet,

below the sands of time.

Come sweetheart, come with me this morning,  
and we shall talk of sad things  
under the pining trees.

It was on such a morning, dear,  
when the sun rose an hour earlier  
when Vidya returned home:  
did not the trees reach down to him  
as I reach down to kiss your lips, my sweet?

He heard the birds and he smiled,  
he saw the lakes and he was glad.  
O he saw the green blades  
shining like gold at his feet:  
but his steps were turned towards his Mother  
for all his thoughts were of Her.

(As mine are all for your lips, sweet)

He was there before the temple  
below the shady arm of the mighty hill:  
but for the oil-lamp before the Mother,  
sweet,  
it was still dark all round  
to hide the local leeches there

O was Vidya's heart not light,  
O was Pati's soul not free  
(as my heart is light and free  
in these kisses we share, sweet)  
to see his Mother, once again?

Then they struck,  
with their blades that shone only now  
in the light that was creeping in just now.  
In the creeping light,  
they struck one after another  
trudging into a frenzy of murder.

But Vidya's heart sweet, Patis' soul,  
was all on his Mother.  
He bore all pain and walked to his Lady  
and into the temple  
where the devils dared not go.

O he was like a man without feeling;  
he was like a man walking in bliss:  
he felt not his bleeding neck  
nor the blood trickling over his lips:  
sweet,  
he did not die till he was at Bharati's feet.

O where are the seven hills, my dear,  
who were the play-friends of Vidya?  
Where is the temple, sweetheart,  
which was the home and world of Pati?  
covered below these sands of time, sweet,  
below the sands of time.

So let us kiss, my sweet,  
under these pining trees  
and let us hide our sorrows  
in our naked bliss...

---

Extent Poems (the following three poems by Vidyapati are the only ones that have survived)

### The Sparrows

(a)

all else are a chore  
when I sit and watch you  
with your flittings and dartings,  
and splattering chatter

(b)

Yours is a common world -  
you low-flying browners - picking into  
the armpits of grass turfs.  
your feathers, beaks, your eyes and tails  
yours is a common world, vastly noble

(c)

Could I learn from you? How you  
pick the grain off the grass  
and lift your head to stare?  
How flitting, how hopping, how descending,  
you plan not the next moment's act?  
How you sing not  
your own praise?  
How are you content?

(d)

Can there be any other urgent act  
that I should render?  
then to watch over your little moves and  
broad sweeps? what more than to get you in flight  
when your wings recover?  
and to watch the ceaseless  
maneuvers of little browns on the green earth?

(e)

What shall I do when in the cells of custom  
and turgid thought-slumbers  
I hear no more the little sounds  
of your wayward songs?

It shall be of comfort to me then  
to know  
you pursued the bird with a biscuit chip  
till it yielded.

(f)

You lift your little head and morsel  
(some ridicule you have a little soul)  
out of clouds of brown grass:  
do you desire?

Desireless, to what do you lift your wings?

(g)

one little fellow  
with a white band round his neck, as he turned,  
sang in flight:  
Who can understand me  
who cannot understand himself?

(h)

I wonder how,  
climbing above the ply tuft, falling,  
you are up again with no regrets.  
How are you content?

(i)

Little sparrow,  
do you know of the wanderings of the mind,  
of the human heart,  
of thoughts and emotions,  
of ambitions and desires,  
of love and hate in the same breath?

Do you not know other than flying,  
resting and picking?

Are you the better for it?

(j)

Like little babies of Nature  
at the tufts of grass on the breasts of earth  
you dally to live, unconcerned.  
Why am I estranged?

(k)

Have you felt ashamed of your dry feathers?  
your dull beaks? Have you longed for  
feathers as the peacocks display?  
Have you thought of painting your face  
to effect what Nature did not give -  
or to sway with music?

(l)

Did you have a soul?  
who lies in my palm  
whose fathers razed, head  
blade-tossed back,  
who flitted across windows of anger,  
who sat beaking your broad breasts...

Which does not have a soul?

(m)

I captured the peace of a sparrow  
tucking its brown body  
into the green armpits of the field

(n)

I wonder if you could teach me

how you take that white-lice seed  
from the boastful grass? How you take  
without destroying.

---

## Impressions

(a)

My tender life was spent as lovely as  
the red flower that perched like a dove  
in his caprice on a drooping branch:  
fearful of the dark, and merry in the day,  
why, that life passed away as the flowers  
on the gravel ground beneath my feet.

(b)

This little flower in her span a pale red  
could have curled in a Gopi's face  
as she quivered and slipped through Krishna's hands.  
Flowers on her hair, on her wrists, her hands,  
on his neck - flowers as sweet as the maid's  
sighs. And in despair must have heard  
love's close-hearted throbs  
of the soul and divinity.

(c)

A stretch of water pictures the sky's strain  
and a single arrogant branch ventures  
above; a simple creeper on ends  
in a blue flower looking askance at  
the pond. This shadow as insubstantial as life  
and humanity in awe.

(d)

That in this law of beauty - to be once in youth,  
in blossom like the morning sun open -  
than as gentle as light descending  
into the water to reach the growing  
reeds below -  
so gently to pass away  
from beauty; that this cherry blossom  
should revolve eyes would not believe.

(e)

In its small orbs, in its little lusty  
call of beauty and a fresh voice;  
or watching the little dew pass his time  
on the petal - it is not evident that  
these should pass hence from beauty:  
the rose tells it not that youth and  
beauty perish.

(f)

Flower and beauty seem to be dew and water:  
yet how flowers blossom on the wet bough,

sparkle in beauty, sigh and pant and oblivion -  
no divinity, no beauty.

It's the exhumed  
lines and curves of an Indian art -  
of a lusty lover yet spreading his fingers  
on his love, without care of fading beauty  
or passing youth, that in this repose,  
immortal stay ever loving.

(g)

A little floret - a violet joy, a shimmering  
fragrance, a silent beauty: silence! it is  
like music in the air, lapping and simmering  
as one floret from violet to shell-pink fades:  
silence! Yet across the confines of the compound  
there seems the mysterious movements of  
flitting fingers over the droning sitar:  
yet how the floret's complexion seems  
silence disturbed, by a flute by blue  
lips and fingers.

---

LOSS

What is it  
that I have forgotten?  
(thought I wanted to get something,  
stood up. Looked at the line  
between the granite slabs.  
and walked round and round)

walking here within the cell

going in circuitous routine  
what is it  
that I have lost?  
that stays there submerged  
that struggles to surface  
but cannot?

(a)

the interminable muddy figures  
creating the grey Bald Mountain -  
leaving the green to decay

(b)

the company of monolithic  
trees  
interlaced with green vine;  
the hands of a kind father;  
the lonely trees ablaze  
with the warmth of the sun

(c)

surely  
there must be some meaning  
streaming forth from the past

Raj Arumugam

# The Desirer Comes To The Grove

It is day. It is a hot day.

The Desirer walks into the grove.

The Desirer is in dark clothes and his head is covered with a hood.

One cannot see the Desirer's face.

Only his eyes glisten in the darkness in his face.

The bird sees the Desirer.

There is greed in the eyes of the Desirer.

The bird sits high on a branch. The Desirer does not call out to the bird.

The bird sings:

'What is in your dark heart,

O desirer?

What reward do you seek

in stifling joy and peace?

What joy do you gain

in snarling at beauty and calm?

Why, dear desirer,

do you seek to cloak yourself

in more darkness

than ever? '

Raj Arumugam

# The Destruction Of Beauty (A Tale Of Horror)

It is the Age of the Fathers...The Men do not go to War against the Warped Aliens of Gtruki Planet...The Fathers know the weakness of the Warped Aliens, and they send the Women, suitably armed, and altered...

Here is the nursery where it begins...

1

Girls - now gather round  
the crystal dome  
look carefully inside  
you see a circle of women  
all in gray, yes, in uniform  
their backs to you  
once in a while you might catch a glimpse  
of their faces  
some of you might be able to see  
what they hold in their hands

and now girls, if you catch a glimpse  
of a face or expression,  
shout out a description for the others;  
and so too if you able to see any action...  
be brief...and shout it...

2

'I see an old woman's face - very old;  
rare...'

'I see - oh - she's holding a knife! '

'I saw a table - a silver table -  
there are all sorts of instruments -

all shiny and silver -  
scalpel, drill, hammer, knives...'

'I see it too - three faces -  
all old women - all faces with lines -  
like gills of fish - Are they really old?  
They move about swiftly -'

'Yes- they are too strong for their age -  
they can't be old! '

'I see blood! I see blood! The floor is wet...  
someone or something tiny is running about,  
mopping the blood off the floor -'

'There's a bed - a metal silver bed in the middle -'

'I see it! I see it! there's a girl on the bed -  
I know! I know! they are cutting her face!  
I know! I know! I can see it - there's a knife over  
the girl's chest -'

3  
And then there is Silence...  
The Chaperone raises her hand -  
and the girls are still, reverent...

And the circle of women in the dome breaks  
The women stand on either side of the silver bed  
Seated on the silver bed is a girl  
All the girls outside move swiftly  
they stand where each can see  
the disfigured girl:  
cuts, blood, implants, disfigurement  
of breasts and face  
and flesh strips carefully sculpted out of arms and legs;  
and a distorted smile

4

'Behold, girls! ' says the chaperone  
'she is Female Soldier UPfield  
Disfigured, Mutilated -  
for you know our enemies  
are undeveloped creatures;  
they defiled our women soldiers  
and since, our Fathers have learned  
to send them  
soldiers Disfigured -  
for that not only puts fear in the enemy  
it repulses them, it eroticises everything -  
it drags them to fight what they hate;  
it confuses them -  
and you girls,  
you are the chosen  
Salutations to Our Fathers! '

Silence

The girls are chosen  
No one winces; no one flinches...  
it is natural, it is love of the Lands of the Fathers  
this destruction of beauty

and they place their fists crossed  
over their chests and they say:  
'Salutations to Our Fathers! '

Raj Arumugam

# The Disappearance Of Language

I had this dream  
and then it became a nightmare  
and there was no line between  
wakefulness and sleep  
and it came to be that  
all the books and print  
and all discourse  
Animal, human, in Nature and Divine  
all discourse floated as sentences  
And all sentences but a universe  
of phrases and clauses  
And each became just a word  
so a universe of words  
separate, individual, discrete  
meaning in itself but unconnected  
And then all words disappeared  
And meaning too  
And there were letters  
And then just one letter  
And none then...that's all there was...  
...or was not...  
and there was no line between  
wakefulness and sleep...

...there is no line between  
wakefulness and sleep...

Raj Arumugam

# The Discovery Of Kama Sutra

Part 1 At the Saint's Book Store (Singapore,1970)

when I was just 15  
and just after  
a trip to the National Library  
I saw a slim volume  
at the Saint's Book Store  
(named after a TV series  
and true to the borrowed name,  
a second-hand book store)  
and its spine said: Kama Sutra

Now that's a title  
they don't have at the National library,  
I mused  
and I took it down off the shelf  
and stood, agape -  
transported to Ancient India  
by the very seductive picture  
on the cover page;  
didn't make me feel like a saint at all

but my reader's instinct  
got the better of me  
and so I opened the book  
in which the Introduction  
ran boringly longer  
than the main meat of the text  
and so I went on to  
Vatsyayana's  
own enigmatic words

This I must have-  
I said to myself,  
after only five pages of Vatsyayana

and the sticker label on the  
used book replied: \$2.50  
I bought the book  
and walked home  
and had no lunch that day

## Part 2 Dirty Science

What are you reading?  
asked little Somu,  
a year younger than I was

It's a Science book,  
I said, turning away from him

If it's a Science book,  
the little rascal said,  
why are you hiding it behind  
another science book?

Mind your own business,  
I said,  
Hardly taking my eyes  
off Vatsyayana's classic

I'll mind my own  
if you tell me what it is;  
otherwise dad  
will come to know of it-  
and you won't be able to tell  
him to mind his own business

Oh! I said, angry and afraid,  
and I threw down my books  
(the cover book and the hidden book) .  
You're too young for such things.

But he looked at me  
as only a dangerous blackmailer can  
and I yielded to his request -  
I would summarize aloud each chapter  
for him as I finished reading each  
(That's the trouble when  
fate throws you in  
with siblings who don't read)

And day in and day out  
over the next few weeks  
I summarized the Kama Sutra –  
no, I don't think I summarized,  
I extemporized,  
I added details, I confess –  
for the benefit of non-reading Somu  
that silly pumpkin of a brother  
who didn't understand a word of what I said!

### Part 3: Weird History

That night as we lay  
on our mats on the floor  
Somu asked me:  
You know...I was thinking....  
ever since you provided  
your summary of the Kama Sutra  
delivered in such melodramatic actor's voice...

I've been wondering....Do you think Dad knows  
the Kama Sutra?

Oh, I said immediately.  
How would  
dad know  
about the Kama Sutra?  
It's been banned In India  
since the middle ages.  
He only knows  
Hare Rama, Hare Rama...  
Now, maybe it'd do you good  
to repeat the mantra 100 times  
and go to sleep...  
You might end up in Vaikunta.

And then insomniac Somu said:  
What's that book you were reading  
this afternoon  
covered behind your  
school History Text Book?

Oh God! Nothing escapes the eyes  
of this sibling who came a year after me;  
and I had to make an honest reply  
or he'd pursue me to the ends of the earth:  
Oh, it's another book  
I found at the Saint's Book Store;  
it's called The Perfumed Garden;  
it's in Arabic and you won't understand a word;  
you can read it when you're fifty  
because that's how long it'll take me to translate the work

Somu, the silly sibling ever,  
sat up on his mat and looked at me suspiciously:  
When did you learn Arabic?  
You can't even read Tamil properly,

you monolingual Indian!

And irritated, I said:  
Oh shut up and sleep...  
Don't you go digging into what I do.  
I learn all sorts of things in my own time –  
and you're best, little brother,  
to stick to Hare Rama, Hare Rama  
Or Hara Hara, Siva Siva...

And for that,  
the traitor of a brother told all our school mates  
I was reading dirty Science  
and weird History!

#### Part 4: The Puritans Come Home

What is a young boy  
just turned fifteen,  
said the outraged visitor to my father  
doing with a copy of Kama Sutra?  
And he pointed his bony finger  
at me, sitting with my brother Somu  
and his thirteen-year-old son Kittu;  
we kids sat on the floor  
and the dignified adults  
sat elevated on the sofa

And he continued:

So, tell me,  
what is a young boy like  
that doing with erotica?  
Is this the time for him?  
This is the time for him to study  
his textbooks and do his homework.  
And the outraged father  
pointed his finger at my sheepish father  
and he continued:  
Your son goes to the same school as my son –  
and I'm afraid he'll be a bad influence.  
At History lessons and Literature class,  
my son reports,  
your boy asked the teachers why  
they don't teach Kama Sutra.  
This is outrageous and crazy!

My father looked at me  
but couldn't see my eyes  
thanks to my state-welfare  
horn-rimmed glasses  
and he said to the outraged visitor:  
I don't know...  
He reads all sorts of stuff...  
He discovers all these books  
at the National Library  
and bookshops...  
He's read Gandhi's biography...  
and now it appears  
he's discovered Kama Sutra...  
Should we really stop him?

The uncertain father slumped in the sofa;  
but the outraged father jumped up  
dragged his son Kittu to the door  
and he turned around and said:  
You call these discoveries?  
Get him to stick his nose

in his school textbooks!  
He will come to no good!  
He will bring you shame!  
You call these discoveries?  
I'm not coming here anymore –  
and turning to his son  
he said:  
Don't ever talk to that boy;  
don't you ever be near him!

And off they went,  
Outraged Father and Trembling Son  
into Dusty History.

#### Conclusion

My father and I looked at each other;  
not a word was said –  
and he is not here today  
for a translation of what I write here now

As for my little brother  
that traitor who had told Kittu,  
I took both books  
The Kama Sutra and The Perfumed Garden  
and hit him smack on his head:  
and he has remained  
stunted physically and mentally ever since

#### Postscript

What's that thick book,  
said Somu two weeks later,  
on the shelf?

That's Origin of Species  
by someone called Charles Darwin,  
I said.

Is it one of those dirty books?  
he asked.

I think so, I said. I heard some religions  
have it blacklisted  
so it must be dirty.

And what's that one beside it?

That's Shakespeare, I said. Complete Works.

Is it another of your dirty books?  
said Somu.

Well, I said to this juvenile sibling  
just a year younger than I.  
There must be many dirty parts in the volume...  
You can never escape dirt...it's all part of life.

Raj Arumugam

# The Discovery Of Kama Sutra - Part 1 At The Saint's Book Store

when I was just 15  
and just after  
a trip to the National Library  
I saw a slim volume  
at the Saint's Book Store  
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and its spine said: Kama Sutra

Now that's a title  
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on the cover page;  
didn't make me feel like a saint at all

but my reader's instinct  
got the better of me  
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in which the Introduction  
ran boringly longer  
than the main meat of the text  
and so I went on to  
Vatsyayana's  
own enigmatic words

This I must have-  
I said to myself,  
after only five pages of Vatsyayana  
and the sticker label on the

used book replied: \$2.50  
I bought the book  
and walked home  
and had no lunch that day

Raj Arumugam

# The Drama Unfolds

the drama unfolds  
and the young grow old  
while the old go with a curse  
I myself am grown into my fifties  
and the people I've known  
who called me Little Boy  
have been called to dust and urn and to river over the decades;  
and the kids I would kneel before to speak with them  
now they say: 'Do I see you with hunched shoulders? '  
the earthly hours pass  
and generations come and go  
with little knowing though of their own flow  
the drama unfolds  
and the young grow old  
while the old go  
with a last bite of a fried chicken  
places have changed  
and villages and forests lain bare  
and once where I stood admiring angsanas  
and mango trees and peacocks  
now I admire lilly-pillies  
and hold the koala and the kangaroo as mascots;  
people I have called mother, father  
and uncle and aunty and grandmother  
they now have gone, some without even a good-bye  
some smiling and some with unintelligible mutterings  
and ah, some in unendurable suffering  
while I walk now as time unfurls like a flag in the square;  
and the witnesses  
of uncountable generations  
of immeasurable life  
those stars and the sun and the moon  
keep me quiet company  
and the sunlight uses the leaves in the garden  
to whisper to me the secrets of things;  
and in my leisure  
these words I speak to you  
and when I'm gone  
through these you may speak with me;

and the ones I have told stories to  
now re-tell the stories to their young  
and time, interrupting its slumber,  
lifts its head like a garden in the snake  
awhile  
sees all is right, all flowing as it would expect,  
and looks around and gives me a look too  
and goes back to sleep;  
ah, the drama unfolds  
and the young grow old  
while the old go with a wink

Raj Arumugam

# The Easiest Words

there are people who use two words;  
they use them often and loudly  
and gently and with ferocity  
they use the two words with belief and conviction  
and they use them freely,  
generously or sparingly  
but

there are always people who use these words  
because these two words are so easy  
to use, to abuse  
and why are these two fluid words so easy to use?  
because other people are easily fooled;  
the words make it so easy to use, to abuse  
and what are these two words?

one is God;

Love is the other...

so observe it clearly

when next these two words are used:

perhaps the other is trying to fool you;

or perhaps you are the one guilty of the guile...

Raj Arumugam

# The Ellipsis

The ellipsis  
was sulking and  
in a pensive mood....

And so I said: Well?

And Ellipsis said: What?

I said: You're sulking...

And Ellipsis erupted  
like pimples on an adolescent's face:  
You wrote poems on every tribe of my race;  
you wrote of the full stop and the comma and the dash  
and about every other freak that jumps up  
on a printed page...  
And now you ask me, why I sulk!

So, I said cautiously,  
what do you want me to do?

So, write me a freaking poem on me -  
The Ellipsis!

And I scratched my head, and I said:  
A poem about the Ellipsis?  
Hmmm...

Raj Arumugam

# The Emperor, The Clothes, And The Child

1

The child that said what he saw  
at the end of the street:  
"But mommy,  
the Emperor 's bare as  
Little Tommy the day he was born! " -  
that child,  
I've always wondered,  
always what happened  
to that child

Just recently  
in my journeys  
I saw  
The Annals of the State (check Wikileaks)  
show what happened to the boy and all

2

Straight on from the streets  
the boy was sent  
to the Truth Ideology School  
where he spent years polishing  
the Fat Butts of the Royal Horses -  
but still saying what he saw  
(for it seems this is a Disease of the Brain,  
a condition known plain as:  
Speaking the Truth):  
and so he was delivered then the State Cure:  
and now, it seems, he lives in Cell131313  
(serves him right for catching the disease;  
sure, the sins of the fathers are visited on the kids)  
teeth rotten and knees falling  
the little boy who spoke the Truth -  
now unknown, hidden and obscure

And his Ma was sent to  
Patriot Mother's Re-Education Program Institute  
where even centuries after  
she's yet to complete her first year;  
And his Dad to Desert-You-Never-Come-Back-From  
and little Tommy was sent to  
Grab-Them-Young School

And every school child  
in The Emperor's Domains is taught  
The Upright Moral of the Story:  
Don't tell Lies –  
For the Truth is the Lie

3

Remember then, for your own good,  
O ye children  
of all nations and clime:  
It was the weavers  
the smooth-talkers  
the unjust, the wrong-doers  
the charlatans -  
It's them that got away

Raj Arumugam

# The End Of Poetry

poetry and all things  
are useful in their space:  
there is an end to poetry

Raj Arumugam

# The Enlightened Manager

1

Sarah and Tim are talking  
at the warehouse where they work  
"Our new manager's good –  
don't you think? Bet he'd give me a day off"

"Bet your bottom, " says Sarah

2

And Tim hangs  
upside down on the beam  
across the ceiling  
and the Manager asks:  
"Tim, what are you doing? "

"I'm a light bulb, " says Tim  
"and I light up  
the warehouse"

"You need a break, I think"  
says the Manager  
"Have the rest of the day off paid;  
come back tomorrow"

3

Tim smiles and he goes  
and Sarah follows out  
And the Manger, puzzled, asks:  
"Sarah – where are you going? "

"Oh, " says Sarah,  
"It's so darned dark in here  
since the light is off;  
I can't work  
till the light comes back tomorrow"

Raj Arumugam

# The Erotic Butterfly

just three butterflies  
cover my love  
better than silk or sari

Raj Arumugam

# The Fact Of The Drowned

it is a grim fact of life,  
most reverend sirs  
and most elegant ladies  
and you most delicate children -  
it is an indisputable fact of life  
that people drown;  
some may have slipped or dropped into a river  
unaware  
and lost themselves to the anarchy of the waters;  
some may have sought to swim across cold waters in winter  
as a sort of perverse form of recreation;  
some may have drowned comically  
but most in great anguish  
and with perhaps a week's intake of water  
or perhaps a month's supply of  
one's share of the earth's water;  
all the same, it is a grim fact of life -  
tragic and somber -  
but as a matter of fact  
people drown;  
and then of course  
it is the authorities who have to look after  
the plain fact  
as to recover, investigate and annotate and find causes  
and to build the statistics  
and conduct post-mortems if necessary;  
the body of the drowned is a simple fact -  
one has to see to all these grim facts of the matter  
but the fact of life is  
even in all its serenity and domestic bliss  
people actually drown;  
and to loved or unloved ones  
still on dry land and alive  
the corpse is all one has, if retrieved  
and it is a cold fact of life  
to which curious onlookers  
can respond with silence  
for it is a reminder one is but delicate  
and mostly made of water;

and a fact of which the bereaved must face up to  
and which is the immediate legacy of the drowned  
before one may claim any ring  
or jewelry on the body of the dearest departed  
that is, if no one else has got there before;  
that too, unfortunately, and like it or not, is a fact of life;  
and so learn to look at these facts of life  
with cool and calm  
and quiet and respect for the fact  
for it is,  
to repeat oneself,  
a grim fact of life;  
most reverend sirs  
and most elegant ladies  
and you most delicate children -  
it is an indisputable fact of life  
that people drown

(poem based on the painting *The Drowned* (1867) by Vasily Perov)

Raj Arumugam

# The Fast Food Generation

kids nowadays are noisy  
and boisterous  
and sure it's tough  
keeping order and quiet in the classroom  
like Mr Tough-Rules found out recently  
when he screamed at the noisy class:  
"Let's have some order, children!  
Order! Order! "

And Lil Susie turned round fast  
and placed her order in rapid-fire time:  
"A burger and some chips, Sir! "

Raj Arumugam

# The Fifer

It's a slice of life  
this childhood and music and play;  
the melody may envelope life  
but everything that is come  
must have a growth and going

listen to the play, the tune  
the delightful music that  
fills the mind, your being  
and what you might call your soul

listen to the gentle start  
and the rise and the fall  
and the sound-somersault in the air

but alas, they all fade,  
they all have their time  
and everything that comes  
has a duration and a death

Raj Arumugam

# The Fight

The migrant's son fights with his sis,  
shouts at his mum and defies his dad.  
The migrant's son rolls on the carpet  
and somersaults over the sofa...

I know why you do this,  
son, I know why you do this;  
but be patient awhile, be patient,  
for it takes time  
to have each one's space and life...

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The First Twitter-Ers Were Poets

the first twitter-ers were poets;  
except Homer and Valmiki  
used  
more than hundred and forty characters each

Raj Arumugam

# The Flower Girl

I bring you flowers  
dear Sirs and Ladies;  
flowers of softness  
for most gentle souls  
and flowers in full bloom  
for most radiant beings

here I bring flowers  
that I plucked just now  
and that, exquisite ones,  
dignified Sirs and gentle Ladies –  
most delicate flowers I have  
that are red and blue and green  
and of many hues and all colors  
that the hills and the air and the clouds  
have coaxed and brought to our earth

I have flowers  
and that most beautiful  
that I have brought from  
the fields and valleys  
with the scents of the angels  
and aroma that come  
from the rolling hills

O most  
dignified Sirs and gentle Ladies –  
I have brought you these flowers  
that grow in abundance in our hills  
O will you not pick what  
delights your hearts  
from my ample baskets  
and happily fill my purse in return?

I bring you flowers

dear Sirs and Ladies;  
flowers of softness  
for most gentle souls  
and flowers in full bloom  
for most radiant beings

Raj Arumugam

# The Fool

How would you like to meet  
the Fool you only dealt  
with in paper and print?

How would you like to see Feste in the skin,  
blood and bones? How would you like to watch  
in person the clown whom you disbelieved  
and collected papers from  
to laugh at  
in your shared cubicles and private rooms?  
Care to hear the oaths and curses  
you've taught the Department Jester  
whom you turned into Caliban?

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The Foot Operation

I am at your mercy, Sir -  
all my life and being is there  
at that one point in the foot, Sir  
My foot - nay, my old life -  
is in your hands, Sir

Here I have known pain  
and what it is to be but a worm  
and from here I shall renounce  
all arrogance, Sir -  
and will be all humility  
from head down to the feet

Raj Arumugam

# The Fortune Teller, Caravaggio

'Ah, young Sir,  
indeed it is in your lines on your smooth palm  
as I indeed felt the moment  
when I saw your noble face  
and your inimitable manner...'

'What is it? What is it?  
O speak your mind, young gypsy;  
speak the truth, speak with no fear'

'Ah, young Sir  
this curved line that runs  
across your gentle palm tells  
you must certainly have  
some of the blood of the Caesars  
running through those bold veins of yours'

'Ah, true, true indeed  
sometimes I have felt it too'

'And, young Sir  
this straight line that cuts that curve  
on your most delicate palm  
ah – it indicates even some lineage of prophets  
and a history of past holy men  
which line now culminates in you'

'Oh, indeed, indeed  
I have such intimations indeed  
at the House of God when I kneel  
in holy prayer  
and I have had such whispers  
and stirrings within my bosom...  
indeed...indeed...'

And when the gypsy is gone  
it is then that the young man  
of such esteemed rank and high nobility  
and of such holiness

he feels his golden ring also gone...

Poem based on Caravaggio's 'The Fortune Teller'

Raj Arumugam

# The Fox And The Grapes It Desired

the wandering fox  
spotted the grapes  
hanging above its reach  
'This will quench my thirst, '  
it told itself  
and tried various stratagems  
to reach the distant fruit

the fox jumped up;  
the fox rolled rocks to below the grapes  
and stood on them  
and jumped again;  
the fox sang songs to the grapes;  
the fox threatened the grapes  
and even tried positive thinking  
and with eyes closed  
a good measure of visualization  
in which the grapes fell into its open mouth...

But all to no avail...

And at last  
the wise fox said:  
'Ah, who needs these grapes?  
They must be sour and turning bad anyway...'

And off the fox trotted away

Raj Arumugam

# The Gentle Winds Blow

the gentle winds blow  
and the dead sleep  
and though the remains undergo changes,  
as it is when one is alive,  
the dead lie  
unawares, uncaring if it rains or shines

Raj Arumugam

# The Gentleness That Follows Into Dreams

today's theme

dearest love, O unknowing love

is the gentleness that is you;

it is the quiet

like the yin in the Dao

unformed, not fixed and forming

in constant flow;

and gentle and open and soft

and its softness its strength;

and so today I saw that, I felt that in you

in your word, in your gesture

in your walk across the aisle;

and your softness follows me home to my quiet dreams

like the shadows below the trees

Raj Arumugam

# The Gentleness That Pervades

though the harshness surrounds  
and it seems even love is scorned  
and though anarchy pervades  
of individuals in self-pleasure pursuits

there is still the sun that shines  
and whispering rain in the evenings  
and blossoms and birds at the window  
that greet one in the gentle mornings

Raj Arumugam

# The Ghost's Boo!

the ghost said to me:

Boo!

and I didn't know what to do

and so I said: Who?

Raj Arumugam

# The Girl And The Butterflies

'O butterflies  
of all colors  
butterflies of purple, green  
and maroon and gold  
O I love your colors!  
I love each glow! '

And we so love  
the colors of your dresses too  
little girl;  
we love the colors in each dress  
you wear every time  
you come to see us in the fields  
and O we do  
we so love the glow in your cheeks

Raj Arumugam

# The Girl In A Picture Frame

Esteemed Sirs, all Honorable Ladies -  
the artist asked me to pose  
and he chose all the clothes  
and the hat  
and he made me stand there behind a frame  
And he was serious  
but he asked me to smile  
and then asked me to have a smaller smile  
not too broad, just a smile between not smiling and smiling  
and he said these things with such seriousness  
And he said not to stand like an animal in a cage  
but to come forward in the frame  
and to put my hands ever so casually on the frame

And he said, keep glowing and he said this with all seriousness  
and when he did smile  
it was like between not smiling and smiling  
as if he were posing for me  
And he was drawing and drawing  
and then he had a break  
and I had something to eat and drink in the kitchen  
and then I was back behind the frame  
and he took several days

And I thought what a serious man this was, this artist  
And when he had finished, he asked me to look  
and I thought it was a lovely picture of me  
And then I realized how playful this artist was, how clever -  
putting me in a frame, as if we lived our lives in a frame  
And then he had the canvas put in frame  
so there's frame within frame -  
and I laughed then to see how  
much humor the artist had, though he had worked with  
such earnestness, such grave countenance -  
I've been framed! Ha, ha...now I wonder often,  
if we do not actually live our lives within a frame,  
each one of us confined in frames...

Raj Arumugam

# The Goatherd's Song

In these rocky hills  
and hard mountains  
a goatherd is happiest  
with his goats, the dog  
and his timely lunch

It may start cool  
and reach peaks of heat  
but there's always shade  
under the rocks where  
each can rest or sleep

Here one sings  
as badly as one can,  
as profanely as one wants -  
with a choir of goats  
and a disgruntled dog  
barking disapproval  
(and one can still feel good  
about one's rough vocals)

Here one need not worry:  
one has all the time;  
there's no human tongue  
that complains or commands  
And as the sun descends  
one ambles home  
where dinner's on the table

In these rocky hills  
and hard mountains  
a goatherd is happiest  
with his goats, the dog  
and his timely lunch

Raj Arumugam

# The Golden Rule

we keep the golden rule  
and love much with open hands  
withholding nothing, offering all one has:  
and yet they turn on one  
with snarls and anger, and the clouds of dark emotions;  
and yet shall we walk with calm  
on the path of one's own equanimity

Raj Arumugam

# The Good Parrot And The Carefree Turtle

the parrot said to the turtle:

I fight the evil in me and I praise the good  
and I live my days in this conflict;  
and I'm mindful of the words of the Great Good  
and when I die  
I shall surely be rewarded for this inner fight

and the turtle said to the parrot:

I eat what I can get  
and sleep when it's time;  
I am empty of mind for  
I accept no revelations  
and I have no affiliations;  
I don't dwell on this or that  
and just move on:  
I see things as they are  
and I do not lean on beliefs;  
so I eat and swim and sleep as I please  
and live each moment to its full...

Raj Arumugam

# The Great Recession

they say there  
is a great recession,  
and poets still sing  
of how to keep your girl  
and how not to lose love;  
they say there  
is a great recession,  
and poets still sing  
about the cool rains in autumn

Raj Arumugam

# The Guitar Player

There is the song  
the music and the chords  
There is the beauty  
and the flow and rhythm

But one must eat  
and one must live -  
and so one must sing  
and one must play  
as the wind blows

There is feeling  
and there is  
the genuine touch  
and the artist is intense

But one must have coins  
and one must anticipate  
rainy days -  
and so one must sing  
and one must play  
as the fashion goes

Raj Arumugam

# The Ha Ha Boy Listens To The Bird In The Grove

There is a boy and he walks to the grove. He has heard the bird.  
He does not smile. He's used to long hours of criticism and harshness.  
But he has heard the bird and he is enchanted by the chirping and the warbling.

As he comes in to the grove, the bamboo leaves rustle in the wind  
and the bamboo makes a gentle creaking noise.  
The bird is singing.  
The boy listens.

And the bird sings:

'Ha ha boy  
la la heart  
wipe that grim look  
and have a smile;  
ha ha boy  
laugh as much as you can  
and your cheeks will glow  
and your eyes sparkle;  
O ha ha boy  
la la heart  
sing a song  
and smile and laugh all day  
dear ha ha boy '

And the boy laughs and he sings. And he dances and he bows  
and he walks home singing to himself the merry song the bird in the grove  
taught him.

Raj Arumugam

# The Happy Dance

All feet to the left  
and hands to the right -  
impossible it may sound  
but do it nonetheless  
Everyone now on the floor

It's all about the pose  
and there beauty flowers  
It's all about the smile  
and your heart glows

Life's a joy, it's a song  
It's a vibrant dance  
a radiant magical robe  
that itself sways left and right

Step out of the dark  
and jump into the light  
Laugh and be merry  
and move nimble and carefree

All feet to the left  
and hands to the right -  
impossible it may sound  
but do it nonetheless  
Everyone now on the floor

Raj Arumugam

# The Head And The Pillow

Oh, says the Head to the Pillow  
How soft and nice you are...  
So inviting and comfy

OK, says the Pillow  
Is that why you drool  
over me all night?

Raj Arumugam

# The Hungry Frog

if I were a frog  
first I'd dart my tongue out  
and catch a fly

then with the same sticky tongue  
I'd catch a human  
actually as many as I can  
and all the cars and streetlights  
and some mud and puddles of water  
to sauce the whole thing  
and eat them all whole  
in one roll

And then I'd do the same thing  
always with my sticky tongue  
deracinate the trees, the rocks and mountains  
and all living things  
(all humans first I'd dispose of)  
and all objects and planets and stars and space  
and quasars and matter and anti-matter and zero  
all stuck on my tongue and all rolled in one  
and all these I'll just swallow  
if I were a frog  
and I won't stop till there's nothing  
except me  
one gargantuan frog  
and then I'll burp  
and then I'll croak

and then maybe I'll burst

Raj Arumugam

# The Hyphen

the hyphen  
though not as huge as an elephant  
still does gargantuan jobs  
for amongst a host of things it does  
it can bring words together  
to make them one  
as in "face-to-face discussions"  
or "three-point turn"  
or when my wife gives me that  
"don't-spill-that-coffee-or-I'll-kill-you look"

Raj Arumugam

# The Irritable Full Stop

the full stop  
was quite irritated  
with the colon  
and he said to the colon:  
"What are you doing? "

And colon said: "What? "

And full-stop said:  
"Can you tell me what you doing  
imitating me like that  
and doing a double at that?  
You look such a poor imitation of me  
floating one above the other! "

"O, " said the colon, and continued:  
"It's plain to see, Sir –  
you're quite drunk;  
you've had one glass too many  
and you're seeing double  
like all drunks do..."

Raj Arumugam

# The Journey To Grim Land

And Ha Ha boy and girl Child walk to Grim Land.  
And they walk through dust and rain and sun.  
But they do not tire, for they sing to themselves the songs of the bird at the grove.

Ha Ha boy sings:

Ha ha boy  
la la heart  
wipe that grim look  
and have a smile;  
ha ha boy  
laugh as much as you can  
and your cheeks will glow  
and your eyes sparkle;  
O ha ha boy  
la la heart  
sing a song  
and smile and laugh all day  
dear ha ha boy

And child Girl sings:

We will find the gentle bird  
of the bamboo grove;  
we will find  
beauty and grace and calm;  
we will bring  
the singing bird back  
to its home in the grove

Raj Arumugam

# The King Frees The Bird

And the King orders the soldiers to immediately release the bird from its golden cage. And the bird flies over the kingdom and it sings its song:

Love you  
gentle beings all  
love all that exist;  
love yourself too.

The universe  
loves you,  
sweet friends –  
love back  
and love yourself too.

And the merry bird flies back to its home in the bamboo grove.

Raj Arumugam

# The Lion And The Gazelle

I'm going home  
to my lair,  
says the lion  
with a sly smile  
Would you,  
dear gazelle  
come home with me  
for a bite?

Raj Arumugam

# The Little Flautist

The little flautist makes  
his music, a tune enchanting  
the sounds flitting  
like a bird between branches

It's a merry march  
a happy tune  
simple and rhythmic  
insistent and infectious

it's the song of life  
in its lighter moments  
as we roll in our fancies

The little flautist makes  
his music, a tune enchanting  
the sounds flitting  
like a bird between branches

Raj Arumugam

# The Little Fruit-Seller

how many coins do we have? you count  
and I'll see; call out as you count, tell me  
how much exactly; and then how many days  
it will take us to...Little Boy with his crutches  
can buy a new one, maybe  
and a new shawl for mama...  
throw it, one coin against the other as you count;  
I love to hear the clink of coins...ha, ha –  
you know, sometimes  
I even lick a coin to see if it's pure...mama says I'd get sick  
if I did that...yeah, certainly not as sweet on the tongue  
as the grapes and fruit we sell, but certainly tastes well  
to me in my mind  
have you another coin in the other palm?  
this day a Lord's servant bought  
some grapes in the street corner;  
she said it was for her master's table,  
and our grapes were glowing and fresh  
much as what her master loves...and she was kind to me...  
did you count the other coin? sometimes I wonder, you know,  
how many coins we will need till the end of our lives,  
like to the time, say, when Old Boko died last autumn –  
how many coins will it take to see us to that moment?  
Yes, and of course, how many grapes  
would we need to sell to collect that amount?

Raj Arumugam

# The Mad Philosopher

fiddle the broom  
tumddeli the ocean;  
claw the sky  
hurkling the meadows:  
water in the deserts  
and sands in the oceans:  
the mad philosopher  
has seen all contradictions  
and lives his eternity  
in sanitary conditions

what is the point of it? asks the child and I say, it is all pointless, that is the point  
– and the child points to me and says: This is the mad philosopher... the mad  
philosopher spins little stories out of his past and his mind - and he, the mad  
philosopher, makes words stand upside down...

little spider  
little spider  
what are you weaving?  
I'm weaving a trap for the world  
a mousetrap for the world  
but it's I who keeps falling

Ophelia, Ophelia - darling Ophelia, did I not love you enough? Did I not deceive  
and make false promises enough? You drowned deliberately, sweetheart – did  
you not worry, sweet darling, the water and sand will spoil your clothes?

and I am walking through the garden  
and I say:  
little round earth  
blue globe  
clasp everyone safe in your  
clenched fist;  
for some you throw mad  
in your gravity thrust;

you've failed, earth:  
and the mad philosopher will  
fix you in the constellation of stars

you, you lazy fat bat on the fruit tree, hanging with your robes folded like  
Caesar's toga, what are you smirking about? wipe that smirk off your face –  
remember fool, it's easier to see the mad philosopher certified – but the madness  
within oneself, that one does not easily see...

and simple flowers  
make complex poisons:  
ask Caliban's Mother,  
she should know

4 men in a room; only 3 left.  
what happened to the fourth?  
Hamlet killed one justly and legally  
and most spiritually  
for that man kissed a brother's wife  
while Hamlet was studying grammar  
and the verb 'to be'...  
and he could not see what Hamlet saw –  
and so Hamlet made pudding of him  
and put it  
with the vinegar in the wine cellar...

ah, spider – live the life of a saint though nobody does, and saints kill reality for  
the illusions they are burdened with...

the mad philosopher will sleep now, and when the philosopher sleeps, when I the  
lunatic sleeps  
the world sleeps  
for it exists only in my waking hours  
and so when I sleep and snore  
the stars sleep  
and the sun sleeps  
and the moon snores aloud

and all manner of creatures sleep  
but they stay awake in my dreams  
and when I rise again  
I bring them forth out again  
and they exist as long as I am awake

what is the point of it? asks the child and I say, it is all pointless, that is the point  
– and the child points to me and says: This is the mad philosopher... the mad  
philosopher spins little stories out of his past and his mind - and he, the mad  
philosopher, makes words stand upside down...

...and I tell you true, I tell you tales of mystical Albion:

King Lear had  
countless knights  
but his daughters  
gave him  
a thousand nights  
of horror and insanity

Raj Arumugam

# The Making Of The Stranger

1

I was the child  
eager at your table  
My fingers on the edge  
and my face on the back of my hands  
And I was curious  
to see what you were doing  
And I said:  
"I think I could do that;  
I'd like to do that"

And you smiled  
And you said:  
"Maybe, one day;  
You got to learn  
You go to become  
Meanwhile go and read  
Go and become  
and come back when you're done"

2

Do you remember? -  
I did what you said  
and I walked many a mile  
I spent days and nights  
I kept the candle workers alive  
And I came back  
and you smiled

And I said  
"I could do that;  
I'd like to do that"  
And you smiled  
I think it was a quizzical smile  
a sphinx smile, a riddle smile  
And you said:  
"Go and become

And come back when you're done&quot;

&quot;But I'm done, &quot;

I said

&quot;I'm become&quot;

But you smiled

and you spoke words

That flew like jets

that stood like marble columns

like the Palace of Whitehall

And you smiled

&quot;You never become, &quot;

you whispered to one another

3

Do you remember

the day you made me the stranger?

Do you remember you made me trade

an Eager face for one Tired and Wornout?

Do you remember

the days I tried

the days I returned? -

and you said:

&quot;Go and become

And come back when you're done&quot;

And you smiled

&quot;You never become, &quot;

you whispered to one another

Raj Arumugam

# The Mendicant

Our fortunes are fickle  
worthy Sirs and Ladies  
changeable and moving

years we may live wealthy  
and well to do  
in the warmth of a home  
and perhaps overnight  
fortune moves or falls  
and time drags us to the cold streets

Our fortunes are fickle  
worthy Sirs and Ladies  
changeable and moving

and the religious may come  
with consolation  
that God is radiant in the poor;  
and the philanthropist might come  
with offerings and schemes and smiles  
all ways we become fodder  
for other people's motives

Our fortunes are fickle  
worthy Sirs and Ladies  
changeable and moving

but poor or rich  
worthy Sirs and Ladies  
desolate or constant  
in a warm home or in the cold  
let us be resolute -  
and let's live with dignity within  
for that does not change  
and time cannot take that away

Our fortunes are fickle  
worthy Sirs and Ladies  
changeable and moving

Raj Arumugam

# The Migrant As The Weatherman

The weatherman on TV is an isolated figure;  
he walks alone and deals monologues.  
Though he smiles and is pleasant and is informative  
he is delivering a lecture and talks one way.  
The pair of hosts in the chat show everyday  
engage in dialogue; they laugh, talk and chat  
and they are in conversation, in an interaction  
that is realistic and reminiscent of reality and the mainstream.  
The weatherman is alone; he's in an artificial engagement  
in spite of all gimmicks and smiles,  
exhibitions and casual asides and pointers.

The migrant is like the unconnected weatherman...

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The Milkmaid Of Bordeaux,1825-27

one must pause to think  
in between one's rounds and routine  
the promise of delight, the reality of pain;  
how far one has walked, one has wandered  
how life has led one to where one rests  
and what must lie ahead

one must pause to think  
if there is hope,  
if there is a light in the sky's distance  
that hints of quiet;  
to see again all that has passed  
all that transpired  
of one's will, and many unwanted

one hopes it will be better  
as one has always dreamt  
though time has weakened one's will  
and the vision is indistinct

Raj Arumugam

# The Millionth Visitor

this popup banner  
colorful and evocative  
of Goddess Good Luck  
and Dame Good Fortune  
this bold and dapper popup  
with dollar signs everywhere  
(\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$)  
and so subliminally impregnating my mind  
with the desire for money  
((\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$)  
so in-your-face,  
pokes me in my eyes  
grabs me by my balls  
and says:  
YOU ARE OUR 1,000,000th VISITOR!  
CONTACT the AWARDS DEPARTMENT  
FOR YOUR REWARD!

the problem is  
what I don't understand  
even days later, nay, a month later  
the popup still says:  
YOU ARE OUR 1,000,000th VISITOR!  
CONTACT the AWARDS DEPARTMENT  
FOR YOUR REWARD!  
(\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$)  
I mean how come I'm still the millionth visitor  
a month later?

What, use my IQ?

Oh, you mean the popup world has been frozen  
because I have not claimed the money  
and because I haven't contacted  
the honorable AWARDS DEPARTMENT?  
And all the money is waiting for me?  
(\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$)  
(\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$)

Oh what an honest popup world  
that will freeze all banners  
and all funds  
until I, the valued millionth visitor  
have claimed my due and my reward...  
(\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$)  
(\$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$)  
Honesty is alive and well,  
frozen so it cannot escape  
in the flashing popup world...

Raj Arumugam

# The Mind Confronts The World

lovers of words  
we build dungeons;  
lovers of words  
we forge our own chains;  
lovers of ideas  
we inhale illusions:  
the mind confronts the world  
(rarely does it meet the world)  
and the mind confronts the world  
like a careless driver who hits a tree  
and then considers what is to be done;  
like how a group might control  
a river that runs through the village;  
and the mind creates ideas  
to overcome, to control, to transcend  
and the mind is  
trapped in words  
(loves words for its gentle touch)  
and so it builds wordy cages  
builds for itself escapes  
builds for itself diversions  
and is manacled by words it plucks out of thin air  
and that it develops into theories and ideas and revelation  
(loves these for the relief)  
and that becomes truth and immutable by time and repetition  
and so the mind lies chained in its own prisons:  
lovers of words  
we build dungeons;  
lovers of words  
we forge our own chains;  
lovers of ideas  
we inhale illusions

Raj Arumugam

# The Moment Beautiful

You hear it grow  
and live and breathe;  
and it flows and it moves  
And you stand there  
and it is your presence too,  
your attention to it -  
without those words and labels -  
that makes it all so beautiful,  
makes that moment a slice of radiance

It's not the place  
that is the thing  
It's not a time  
in the calendar  
It's not you

Raj Arumugam

# The Moment Of The Clouds

the moment  
of the still clouds  
scattered in the blue sky  
is a moment observed  
with no meaning attached  
with no interpretation, no discourse  
but attentive to what presents itself to one  
as it is, in its own right;  
and in that  
there is the moment, what is,  
silence

Raj Arumugam

# The Momentary Breeze

what do the leaves  
the green, green leaves  
the native lilly-pilly leaves  
swaying in the breeze,  
what do they say  
to the gentle breeze?

ah, that's lovely,  
that's nice;  
a teeny-weeny cheeky  
just a little cheeky  
but comfy, that's lovely

what do the ripples  
the many ripples on the lake  
what do the ripples  
say to the visiting breeze?

ah, that's lovely,  
that's nice;  
a teeny-weeny cheeky  
just a little cheeky  
but comfy, that's lovely

and the grass?  
the lush and shiny grass  
what does the grass  
dancing in the breeze  
left and right  
right and left  
and about -  
what does the ballerina grass  
say to the

breeze in its midst?

ah, that's lovely,  
that's nice;  
a teeny-weeny cheeky  
just a little cheeky  
but comfy, that's lovely

and the spider  
the spindly mean-looking spider  
waiting for its prey  
in its corner  
with its glossy web -  
what does the horrid spider say  
what does it say to the  
passing breeze?

ah, that's lovely,  
that's nice;  
a teeny-weeny cheeky  
just a little cheeky  
but comfy, that's lovely

and if the breeze  
if this adventurous breeze  
if this benign breeze  
kisses you on your cheeks  
and if the gentle breeze  
fingers your hair  
and holds it all long into the air;  
and the breeze whispers in your ears  
and blows at your neck -  
what do you say  
what do you say

to that wandering breeze?  
to that momentary breeze?

ah, that's lovely  
that's nice;  
just so cool and sweet  
though a little naughty  
just a touch naughty  
but comfy, that's lovely  
lovely, lovely and nice

Raj Arumugam

# The Moralists, Propagandists And Preachers

when I was a child  
the grim moralists  
stood in corners  
dispensing dry words;  
the preachers with their smooth discourses  
stood on library steps  
in my teenage years  
hoping to ensnare  
young inquisitive minds;  
the propagandists blared out on stage  
or got on to the stations  
and delivered persuasive tones on the radio;  
but nowadays  
it seems  
these dry moralists  
these changeling preachers  
these weasel propagandists  
they have all changed tact  
they have turned to verse  
to complete unfinished business

Raj Arumugam

# The Myna And The Bottlebrush

the bottlebrush, green  
shows off  
its many crimson flower-spikes  
brilliant in the sunshine;  
and a myna lands on a branch  
and reaches out for its share;  
and the two dance  
in a flexible bending  
as the myna follows  
each slender branch

Raj Arumugam

# The Nightmare Of Innocents

the innocents stumble into  
the paths of the vicious;  
the naïve ones smile  
and the villains  
offer cheap syrup words

they take your lives  
give you lies;  
they take your minds  
give you trials

you fall into a spider web  
trapped and suspended  
and you think it's all a good thing  
this suspension, this floating feeling;  
and you don't know the design  
until the day  
the spider comes near

they take you into bed  
and they have nice lips and breasts  
and they have flashy sex toys;  
and they offer nice erections  
and deep penetration  
and then they bite off your head

they give you dreams  
and then they turn mean;  
trample on your sandcastles  
confiscate mortgaged homes  
and all you have left  
are sandcastles on public beaches  
and a bench in the park

the innocents stumble into  
the paths of the vicious;  
the naïve ones smile  
and the villains  
offer cheap syrup words

they put you in a daze  
you wake up late  
and you realize the sun's come and gone;  
mother's brought you in  
and dad's done you in;  
and the police devise ways  
to bring you in

love's gone bitter  
and all things are blame;  
life's grown stale  
and dead ends  
take you for a ride;  
you want to take your life  
but hell stares you down

the innocents stumble into  
the paths of the vicious;  
the naïve ones smile  
and the villains  
offer cheap syrup words

Raj Arumugam

# The Nose That Begs For A Poem

overture on the nose

the nose is the  
middle member  
of the Face Quartet  
or Sestet, if you like;  
a trumpet perhaps  
or a bass horn

1

'Have you ever considered, '  
says my nose  
while in the shower,  
'how crucial I am  
in your life? '

I do not answer  
and ignore my nose  
and let some shampoo  
trickle down over it

'And yet you ignore  
me and you write poems  
of the tongue  
that has got you into trouble  
too often'

I continue to ignore  
my nose  
who is now beginning

to sound like a spouse  
jealous of a rival lover

and my nose flares its wings  
looking as wild as the nose of a mad bull:  
'Why don't you write  
a poem about me  
and let the world  
know my role  
in your body and life? '

and then it calms down  
and sounds most seductive:  
'For who will blow your trumpet  
if you will not blow your own? '

'...and I even, ' it continues,  
'like Atlas holds up the world,  
I hold up the frame and glasses  
so that your eyes can see better'

I continue to ignore  
my nose  
and its attempts to guilt me into gratitude  
and into a poetic mood;  
and I finish my shower  
and give it a good hard rub  
with the towel  
and I can hear it grunt:  
'Ouch! That hurts!  
I'll get you back one day  
when I'm in a runny mood! '

but I'll tell you, my gentle friend,  
 though I've never met you  
 except at these websites  
 I'll confide in you  
 what I may not tell my nose

all my life  
 though endowed -  
 as you looking at  
 my outdated website picture  
 will most surely agree -  
 though endowed  
 all my life I've been with  
 a most alluring visage  
 it's been marred  
 by - by -  
 need I say it, dearest friend-  
 need I say it?  
 by my horrendous, outrageous nose!

my nose looks like a bell in the middle  
 and makes as much loud noise;  
 its sides flare out like wings  
 and oh, it looks like it'd take off any time;  
 some days it collapses  
 and most days it is broad and wide  
 and quite blatantly dominates the face;  
 tell me then, how could one love  
 such a nose?  
 and with such a protuberance  
 how could one ever walk in public  
 with one's nose in the air?

ah, my nose breaks my spirit  
 and I walk, like some jilted lover,

with eyes to the ground  
ashamed of my nose

3

Oh, the first girl I had ever  
fallen in love with  
who was eighteen and I was ten  
when I confessed my eternal love  
for her;  
and she looked at me  
pointed at my nose  
and she laughed  
like a witch  
and she cackled:  
'Look at your nose!  
It is broad and flares  
like a bull's  
and it's brown  
and you've got a pimple on either side  
like you've got nose rings!  
and it's so big on your face  
one could say:  
your nose is your face  
and your face is the nose! '

Ah, how could I be angry with that angel?  
- for she only spoke the truth  
and she only said what I had always suspected;  
and since then  
I have lived with the infamy  
and shame and agony and tension  
as Cyrano de Bergerac must have felt  
belittled by his large nose  
and ridiculed and shamed;  
and I for a broad nose

and so all through life  
this nose of mine has brought me  
shame and loss of opportunity;  
Bollywood Directors  
have rejected me for an unsightly nose:  
'Oh, every part of you perfect;  
but your nose too broad  
and when heroine dances  
audience will only look at your nose! '  
and the Hollywood Directors  
took one good look at my countenance  
and they said:  
'Don't call us; we'll call you...  
Meanwhile, go blow your nose! '

4

Oh, how then can one sing of such a nose,  
dearest friend?  
I mean,  
I'm not endowed with such  
an elegant or aquiline  
or most sculpted nose as you are,  
am I?  
I mean, many have Greek noses  
or Alexandrian or a noble hawk nose  
or exotic Nubian  
or spiritual Indian  
but I, I – poor me, pity me -  
I must keep company with those with a snout or snub...

I mean

it's as if my nose was an afterthought  
when Nature sneezed and so closed her eyes  
as she pinched the clay on my face  
to form a nose  
and so ruined the work;  
whereas you, Oh you most elegant friend  
at this website,  
whereas your nose  
is the very first act in God's  
creation of the world...

and that is why  
I do not sing of my undeserving nose  
though a necessary nose;  
but I'm sure as I key in this  
verse of complaint and lament  
my broad cunning nose  
though unable to see the text  
must surely smell,  
being quite a nosey-parker,  
what I do  
and suspect  
something fishy being published in cyberspace....

conclusion on the nose

the nose is sexy  
in one's youth;  
but is as a dried tree stump  
as the years go by

Raj Arumugam

# The Old Man Reading A Letter

1

It is good  
that the news has come  
It is good to hear  
how everyone fares

It is good to know  
they are finding their way in the world  
a place for each  
and engaged in the varieties  
of the challenges and offerings  
society throws

It is good to hear  
how the young ones are faring too;  
how they have friends  
and everything new excites them  
in the exploration of their world

2

I have my place too  
and it is a quiet one, and much  
steeped in solitude  
and with no distractions  
nothing engages or worries me  
and I seek nothing new in my days or nights

It is all as things should be;  
each finding their way in the world  
and each, at least the while,  
happy in one's space in the world

Raj Arumugam

# The Old Miser And His 3rd Wife

1

The Old Miser  
my husband is dying  
and he makes me promise  
I must put all his money in his coffin  
when he dies

"O my legal third wife  
the only one surviving -  
you must put all my money  
secretly in my coffin"

Sure thing, sure thing  
you Old Miser!  
You made me suffer all my life  
and now in your death  
you want to bring away all the money  
Sure thing, sure thing  
you Old Miser!

2

Now, he's dead  
and I've arranged for his funeral  
and while everyone's busy  
with all these preparations  
I dutifully take all his money  
from the hiding place  
which he whispered to me  
with his last breath  
and he bit my ear and he snarled:  
"Put all my money  
in my coffin"

Sure thing, sure thing  
you Old Miser!  
You made me suffer all my life  
and now in your death

you want to bring all the money away  
Sure thing, sure thing  
you Old Miser!

3

So I take all his money  
and bring it to the bank  
and deposit it in my name  
and make a cheque out for 10 million  
and put the cheque below his head

Sure thing, sure thing  
you Old Miser!  
You made me suffer all my life  
and now in your death  
you can take all the money away  
Sure thing, sure thing  
you Old Miser!

Raj Arumugam

# The Old Musician

It is time to play  
the music of the open  
It is time to celebrate  
the life of wandering

Confines and buildings  
breed meanness in the spirit  
Generous space and the sun  
offer freedom and life

Oh, who but a fool  
would trade a body of energy  
for stiffness?  
Who but the unfeeling  
would give up movement  
for the narrowness of rooms?

So listen then to the music  
of living beings and the winds  
Listen then to the sounds  
of the free creatures in the trees

It is time to play  
the music of the open  
It is time to celebrate  
the life of wandering

Raj Arumugam

# The Owl Wants To Marry The Rainbow Lorikeet

will you marry me,  
O rainbow lorikeet;  
you sweet colorful beauty  
who turns every place  
you rest at  
into a Disney fantasy...  
will you marry me,  
just an owl,  
dull but wise  
and nocturnal?  
ah, will you marry me  
my sweetheart, my beauty?

Oh, yes, yes, yes,  
dearest owl  
wise but dull  
wise but dull;  
I, rainbow lorikeet,  
do take thee  
for spouse:  
for I will fly in the garden  
with no care or worry  
as you keep an eye  
for me  
on all the terrain  
on all the terrain  
that will be the playground  
of our very own children  
our own very children

Raj Arumugam

# The Pear Fights Back

says the apple to the pear:  
so will you stop  
aping me?

And says the pear:  
Oh, shut up  
You rotten apple  
You're just jealous  
Of my sexy curves

Raj Arumugam

# The People's Red Book

see what's in mind  
bundled in the thoughts  
and far and deep within;  
see, one says one is of a particular group  
or particular region;  
hear one say "I am this; "  
or "I am that; "  
and some cling to a religion or philosophy  
and so make a Self;  
they identify themselves:  
"I am of this religion; "  
Or  
"I am of this persuasion; "  
Or  
"I am of this faith; "  
see and hear the cacophony of human discord:  
"I am of this country; "  
"I am of this ancient lineage; "  
"This is my religion; "  
"This is my faith; "  
"I am this...I am that..."

O we love our badges, our titles  
and decorations the Great Leader  
pins on us, don't we?  
And we love all the fancy ribbons and rewards  
the Politburo promises, don't we?  
We just live by our Red Book;  
each group with its own Divine Red Book

"Come on, little children  
gather round Daddy and Mommy;  
we have sweets  
and candy for all of thee"

But can one plunge deep and see  
and drop one's conditioning?  
And what happens when one does that?  
And can one drop one's history

and beliefs and mental formations and faith  
and dependence and identity?  
What happens?

Perhaps only then one sees with clarity

Raj Arumugam

# The Perfection Of Anonymity

Even in the place where some knew my name  
I walked unknown though, occasionally, some would mutter,  
some would mouth a whisper:  
That's him  
and point in the direction.  
Here, however, is the perfection of anonymity  
for I  
not only go without an identity,  
I go too without a name.  
Here, however, as  
I slip through department stores and streets  
and get off trains and walk into stations  
like a shadow  
as one more in the crowd  
is the perfection of my anonymity for I not only  
go without an identity, I go too without a name.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The Perils Of Summer

The newspapers and our  
ubiquitous and ever-ready  
self-appointed well-meaning  
advisors warn us.

Summer is the time when spiders are most active;  
snakes are about their smooth crawls  
and bees on their monotonous drone  
but the worst, I think, are the magpies  
for magpies can attack, do be careful.

One may be roosting on a tree and if you walk below  
it thinks you are a threat  
and so provoked (though you do not intend it)  
it swoops down on you and attacks.

It happened to me once,  
my friend advises and warns me,  
as I was walking down St Lucia; something  
just descended on me and was off -

it all happened within the time one can say  
Jack Robinson

leaving with me with a split bleeding lip.  
Wearing a hat or headgear of some sort  
seems to keep them away.

Much safer, I suppose, not to walk  
below a tree in summer.

Stay indoors in summer.

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The Piglet Squid

have you seen a piglet squid?  
neither have I;  
it's so rare  
I couldn't even get you a picture  
but, to state the obvious,  
it's a squid  
and it's round like a fat pig  
and if you see it there  
100 meters below in the ocean  
you'd think its tentacles look like hair  
and its skin patterns like a smile –  
and some of you might even think it's  
the Pig God

now, don't you laugh  
at the naïve who think God is a pig  
and think the piglet squid  
is a sign from their Pig God  
no, no – you, dearest very intelligent specimen of creation,  
don't you laugh at your naïve compatriots;  
for maybe the next time you think  
a stump of tree is Mother Mary with Baby  
or you think the clouds form the face of Jesus  
or you think the bricks on the wall  
form the pattern of Ganesha  
or the snow forms Siva  
or the ice forms Kuan Yin or the Buddha  
just you remember  
the Pig God  
and the grinning piglet squid

Raj Arumugam

# The Pinch Of Poverty

In Adelaide, July 1998

I saw

The Pinch of Poverty

(no, not a film;

it's a painting, oil on canvas, 1889;

the painter: ngton.

You might have seen it on TV, yes.)

Well, after my minstrel's wandering of the medieval section  
of the Art Museum of South Australia

I moved up the steps

and on the left the family, it seemed, was waiting for me.

A woman, as I remember it now, her head

lowered and slanted to the left and a baby in her lap.

She sat on a low wall in the street

and her son, his face pale and afraid of the world,

his eyes uncommunicative,

stood leaning against her side. The daughter stood

on the pavement, as boldly as she could in the cold,

holding flowers for sale. And I stood before them.

I stood before

The Pinch of Poverty

and could not go.

Well, I went round the museum and came back;

three times I went and three times I came back

and stood before them.

I had to look at the sadness of this beautiful woman;

I had to look at the pained withdrawal of the boy,

I had to look for the baby's face and I had to look at

the girl's brave demeanor and

the delicate fingers that

held the flowers.

I stood there and denied them:

I am not the father; I am not the husband.

I could not go but I had to; I had to go

and I always wonder now when I am alone

what happened later to that beautiful mother. Whatever happened to her  
timorous son and her covered baby?

Whatever happened to that brave girl?

And as for me, what happened is that I have to live

with my guilt as I could not help.  
I did not help.  
I stood there and denied them:  
I am not the father; I am not the husband.

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The Plants And Trees

These plants and trees I know;  
these creatures I love

(i)

Outside the insect screen of the laced  
kitchen  
there stands the green billow of leaves  
peppered with crimson of flowers.  
Anytime you wash your hands at the sink  
and if you happen to lift your head a little  
there at the junction of Holland and Cove streets  
stands the comforting rich flame of the forest.

Now it is April  
and its flowers are gone;  
and huge dry pods hang  
like black tongues of witches;  
but still, to add some cheer,  
its rich green  
swells like the cheeks of an impish child  
blowing at heaven

(ii)

Each shut in and enclosed within,  
we walked in the heat  
that clawed at our arms  
and nibbled at our faces like hungry rats.  
At the pavement at the junction  
where Holland Street disputes with Sherwood  
there stood this serene and accomplished tree  
and we halted below it  
as if an order had been issued,  
each remarking spontaneously on the

comforts of Sherwood's flame of the forest

iii)

A tangle of sunflowers shouts at us  
as we walk down the street;  
unobserved these many days  
not remarked on these many weeks,  
it has grown angry and full  
and swells and pouts like Van Gogh in a rage

iv)

The overgrown overfriendly bottlebrush tree  
unabashedly and tirelessly pummels the mesh screen  
at the kitchen window  
Hello! Hello!  
he seems to say,  
brushing, pounding at the screen with his gentle fists.

Hello! Hello! Hello! Hello!  
I'm used to this brush fellow  
for he used to surprise me  
at the oddest corners in my previous place.  
A guide book I carried to trace his ancestry with  
Said:  
The bottlebrush is a native of Australia.  
Here I am now and it's good to have known  
a native even before I arrived.

Oh, I've had more than a brush with this fellow.

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The Polite

The polite are efficient;  
the polite are cruel  
with their cold and distant manner  
smooth non-committal words  
and safe generalizations  
and ambiguous as the words of Delphos,  
and Janus-faced,  
they keep their clients ignorant  
with a restrained smile and fine words  
in measured tones  
they hold the listener at arm's length desperation.  
A fine strategy this politeness  
to deprive, to isolate, to put away and marginalize.

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The Pretend-Mendicant

Death is the pretend-mendicant -  
stays outdoors, outside the house  
outside the body-bones

Death is the patient beggar  
playing a violin-song a lifetime  
that one does not hear till the moment

Death is the figure in the shadows  
not seen but by the beloved  
in that instant

Patience and a sense of timing  
mark Death, coming  
one step at a time, or in one leap

Till the end when an empty skull  
is thrust forward to one  
Till one deposits the alm in the bowl

one does not see Death's hollows

Raj Arumugam

# The Prettiest For The Strongest

When I was a little boy, say when I was six, my dad calls to me and he says:  
Come, boy – let's sit in our courtyard; let's sit below the stars and I'll tell you a  
story. It's been told long in our village, and passed on from wise fathers to  
growing sons.

Long ago, goes the story  
Farmer Somu wanted  
his daughter Meena to marry  
the Strongest in the world  
and so he set out on a journey  
with his daughter  
to seek the World's Strongest One

And what were they going to do, little boy? says my father to me. They are going  
to look for the Strongest One, I say; and my father says: Ah, you clever son of a  
clever man.

And when they walked  
past the rice fields  
they saw farmers  
wiping their brows  
and they said:  
'My, how strong the sun shines! '

'Aha, ' said Somu, 'I think  
I've found the Strongest One.  
Come, Meena, ' he said,  
'let's talk to the Sun.'

And what do you think, my little boy, what do you think Somu asked the Sun?  
And I say to my father: Oh Sun, Will you marry my daughter? And my father  
says, excitedly: Exactly! Exactly! Oh, you brilliant son of a brilliant man.

'Oh Sun,  
will you marry  
my daughter  
for she is the Prettiest  
and you are the Strongest? '

'But, ' said the Sun,  
'the cloud is stronger than I  
for have you not noticed  
how often the cloud  
blocks me out  
and I can't do a thing  
until he decides to move? '

And what do you think, my little boy, what do you think Somu replied to the Sun?

Oh, you weakling Sun – I'm not even talking to you! comes my quick reply. And my father says: Oh how right you are – you clever son of a clever man!

'Weakling Sun  
stand out of my way  
and Oh you most powerful cloud –  
will you marry my daughter  
for she is Prettiest  
and you the Strongest? '

And the Cloud replied:

'But ah, I am not the Strongest  
for the wind just blows me away! '

And what do you think, my clever boy, what do you think Somu did next? And I answer my dad: Well, dad - Farmer Somu drags his daughter Meena to the Wind. And my father says: Oh how right you are – you brilliant son of a brilliant man!

'O Wind  
you should marry  
Meena who is Prettiest  
in the world  
as you are the Strongest.'

But the Wind replied:

'Ah, you don't know how Strong  
the mountain is  
for he blocks my way  
and he breaks me down.'

And what do you think, my little boy, what do you think was Somu's reply to the Wind?

Oh, you useless Wind – I'm ashamed I even considered you! I reply. And my father says: Oh how right you are – you clever son of a clever man!

'Oh, you useless Wind  
– I'm ashamed  
I even considered you! '  
said Farmer Somu  
and he dragged his daughter along  
to meet the mountain  
and he said to the mountain:  
'Most Honored Mountain  
I have heard of your strength  
and so I have brought you Meena  
who is the Prettiest.'

But the Mountain replied:  
'Oh Sir, I am not deserving  
of such a rare beauty  
for the rat gnaws holes in my sides  
and so is Stronger than I.'

And what do you think, dear son, says my father to me – what do you think Somu does next? And I reply quite impatiently: Somu takes his daughter to the rat? Exactly! Exactly! shouts my dad. Exactly, you brainy son of a brainy man!

And the Rat told Somu:  
'Alas, Sir  
though your daughter  
is most desirable  
I cannot marry her  
for the hyena is  
far stronger than me  
for he has eaten many of my family! '

And so they walk to the hyena, says my father to me. And what do you think Somu tells the hyena? And I reply: Oh hyena – marry my daughter for she is Prettiest and you are Strongest! And my father says: Oh you are right, boy! You are right – Oh you brilliant son of a brilliant man!

'Sir Hyena  
Most Revered Sir Hyena  
do marry Meena

for she is Prettiest  
and you the Strongest! ’

And Sir hyena replied:  
‘Ok. I ask for no dowry  
just leave her with me  
with no ceremony.’

And what do you think, asks my father, Somu did? And I reply: He left Meena with the hyena. And my father shouts excitedly: Oh, how right you are! How right you are! You clever child of a clever man.

And no sooner had Somu left  
the hyena took Meena  
to his cave  
and he ate her all  
skin and bone...  
Ah what a tragic end;  
what a horrid end...

And dear son, says my father to me, what is the moral of this story? Many, I say. But two are: Use your wits and stay alive. Never allow yourself to be dragged around. And my father jumps up and he is excited: Oh how right! How right! You brilliant son of a brilliant father!  
And he turns to my mother who has joined us at the courtyard and he says: See how clever our son is – he knows all the answers! Such a brilliant son of a brilliant father!

And my mother’s retort is swift: It’s not that he’s brilliant or you either. You’ve told him this story a hundred times, you silly man! And it’s always the same words! And I would have kicked my father if I were Meena!

Raj Arumugam

# The Proud Creature Breathes And Lives

the proud creature breathes and lives  
and all it does is copy, copy, copy, copy;  
there is so much thinking  
done before and after  
there is so much that points to  
its original mind;  
yet the creature wants to be a copycat  
wants a servile life  
wants a copy of pronouncements  
and revelations  
it can believe in  
and merely repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat;  
so it can wobble its head in complacency  
and eye-scan the world in judgment

Raj Arumugam

# The Puritans Come Home Part 4 Of The Discovery Of Kama Sutra

The Puritans Come Home

Part 4 of the Discovery of Kama Sutra (Singapore,1970)

What is a young boy  
just turned fifteen,  
said the outraged visitor to my father  
doing with a copy of Kama Sutra?  
And he pointed his bony finger  
at me, sitting with my brother Somu  
and his thirteen-year-old son Kittu;  
we kids sat on the floor  
and the dignified adults  
sat elevated on the sofa

And he continued:  
So, tell me,  
what is a young boy like  
that doing with erotica?  
Is this the time for him?  
This is the time for him to study  
his textbooks and do his homework.  
And the outraged father  
pointed his finger at my sheepish father  
and he continued:  
Your son goes to the same school as my son –  
and I'm afraid he'll be a bad influence.  
At History lessons and Literature class,  
my son reports,  
your boy asked the teachers why  
they don't teach Kama Sutra.  
This is outrageous and crazy!

My father looked at me  
but couldn't see my eyes  
thanks to my state-welfare

horn-rimmed glasses  
and he said to the outraged visitor:  
I don't know...  
He reads all sorts of stuff...  
He discovers all these books  
at the National Library  
and bookshops...  
He's read Gandhi's biography...  
and now it appears  
he's discovered Kama Sutra...  
Should we really stop him?

The uncertain father slumped in the sofa;  
but the outraged father jumped up  
dragged his son Kittu to the door  
and he turned around and said:  
You call these discoveries?  
Get him to stick his nose  
in his school textbooks!  
He will come to no good!  
He will bring you shame!  
You call these discoveries?  
I'm not coming here anymore –  
and turning to his son  
he said:  
Don't ever talk to that boy;  
don't you ever be near him!

And off they went,  
Outraged Father and Trembling Son  
into Dusty History.

## Conclusion

My father and I looked at each other;  
not a word was said –  
and he is not here today

for a translation of what I write here now

As for my little brother  
that traitor who had told Kittu,  
I took both books  
The Kama Sutra and The Perfumed Garden  
and hit him smack on his head:  
and he has remained  
stunted physically and mentally ever since

Postscript

What's that thick book,  
said Somu two weeks later,  
on the shelf?

That's Origin of Species  
by someone called Charles Darwin,  
I said.

Is it one of those dirty books?  
he asked.

I think so, I said. I heard some religions  
have it blacklisted  
so it must be dirty.

And what's that one beside it?

That's Shakespeare, I said. Complete Works.

Is it another of your dirty books?  
said Somu.

Well, I said to this juvenile sibling  
just a year younger than I.  
There must be many dirty parts in the volume...  
You can never escape dirt....it's all part of life.

Raj Arumugam

# The Quiet Truth

it seems  
we have always  
been shouting out  
screaming our lungs out  
declaring Truth  
with mega-speakers  
and trumpets  
and bellowing it out  
amplified and thundered  
from turrets and spires and great heights  
and we punctuate Truth with bullets  
and knives and bombs  
and it seems Truth needs  
groups and masses to be witnesses  
and it seems  
we must offer blood and bodies to Truth

but that is not Truth  
for Truth needs no witness  
it needs no utterance  
Truth is gentle and present  
and in its quiet  
all untruths erode in time

Raj Arumugam

# The Ragpicker

There's a walk, I walk from place to place  
dark alleys or bright public streets  
though I keep indistinct, and am invisible anyway  
for people rather look at pretty things,  
sweet nothings, shiny things

But rags or discarded things, or worn out  
and unwanted things, loved and now thrown out  
(or maybe never needed, even at the start)  
these things catch my eye  
and I might scavenge and pick at them  
like rats might attack a food pile

You with your sweet lives, your enchanted lives  
might want to turn away,  
pretend I don't exist -  
that suits me though  
for nothing catches my eye  
but throwaways

If I can have my pick  
unquestioned, unnoticed, ignored  
and I can have a thing or two,  
a few maybe,  
I have had my day

Thank you  
and I'll be on my way

Raj Arumugam

# The Railway

sometimes we are between  
the known and the unknown  
between the familiar and the unfamiliar

then there's nothing that's known;  
all we have are suppositions  
masquerading as certainties

we must go  
where time takes us  
and we survive by not holding on;  
the train does not stop for us  
and we are not to a plan,  
there's no schedule

things fall in place again  
and the book of life writes itself

Raj Arumugam

# The Reading

Read me the story  
Read to me slowly,  
at an elegant pace  
befitting my elegant pose  
(notice how magnificently  
my hands are placed)

I've always wanted  
to be wealthy  
to have someone learned  
read to me

It's like going to the concert  
or the opera:  
others perform,  
one just watches or listens;  
It is too much effort to master  
and besides, there's the question of talent

and so let the learned read aloud  
while the wealthy incline and  
allow words to be background:  
it's worth the fee, when you have the money

Raj Arumugam

# The Recluse

The quiet here  
and the solitude  
are as one has wished

One has few desires here,  
not many needs or demands;  
almost no plans -  
and the only company mostly  
the creatures and the elements

Sure, the life external  
is prosaic

Raj Arumugam

# The Rock In Nasrudin's Garden

the gathering declares  
with great sagacity  
how one's strength decreases  
with age:

One is stronger when young;  
Weaker when one is old

I disagree, says Nasrudin  
I'm just as strong old  
as when I was young

How so? asks the gathering  
Explain yourself!

Well, I cannot lift  
the rock in my garden -  
just the same as when I was young!

Raj Arumugam

# The Rower

you row, row, your wooden boat,  
rough, sturdy, hardy, made for wear and strain  
you yourself  
gathered, determined, as tough as nails  
as uncouth as your boat  
how long have you rowed?  
How much is time, what is space and distance  
as the ship behind you is never reached  
for it forever recedes, as you row, row  
and perennially speed the prow  
towards  
Towards what?  
Towards that  
Which forever recedes, as you row, row  
You row, row, the wooden boat  
And all time and effort, all will and motion  
is but oil and canvas  
A picture, an impression, an illusion  
A verisimilitude  
of what?  
Capturing what?  
To embrace what?  
That which eludes  
Past time, past space, past mind and body  
you row, row, your wooden boat  
rough, sturdy, hardy, made for wear and strain  
you yourself  
gathered, determined, as tough as nails  
as uncouth as your boat  
how long have you rowed?

Raj Arumugam

# The Semi-Colon

it would appear the semi-colon  
has an identity crisis;  
it might appear  
it can't decide if it's a dot  
or a comma  
and so does an acrobat act;  
but really the semi-colon does more than that  
for it does  
complex listings the comma can't manage  
and can say things quite cleverly, like:  
"All things are expensive; life sucks."  
So really this semi-colon  
is not a semi - but indeed a full-blown device

Raj Arumugam

# The Severe Grim World That Has Everything In Its Hands

Old Mr Godd -

He `s lost his sense of humor

O what's the matter?

Is he afraid his dentures

might fall off

if he laughs even a little?

Old Mrs Boobs

she too does not laugh;

she does not even smile

maybe she's worried

if she laughed

she'll piss standing up

Old Establishments Revered and Wise

they hide all the Reverends Gray and Bent

and tall bearded men in black clothes

who display eloquent words and frightening convictions

cold, severe and holding cards

close to their chests

Why, what's the matter?

Are the Establishments afraid

they will all fart together

and all the hot air disappear

and then they'll all be left like spent balloons...?

Old Mr Must

he sits faceless and his eyes with no light

What's the matter with Mr Must?

What's he afraid of? Is he afraid

whatever he's got between his legs will fall off?

Raj Arumugam

# The Shortest Poem In The Uni-Verse

this  
poem  
started off  
intending to be the shortest poem in the world  
nay,  
more aptly  
in the whole wide, wide open uni-verse  
but ambition overtook it  
and it aimed to stretch far and wide  
an Aristotelian hubris, you know  
like the ambition of Macbeth  
going beyond what Mrs Macbeth intended  
and so this ambitious little poem of ours expanded  
starting meek as grass  
growing zealous  
and went beyond itself and its kind  
this  
poem  
that  
had such humble beginnings  
that dared to want to be the shortest poem in the world  
but turned out loquacious  
and it could go on, it said,  
beating all length, breadth and dimension  
and would have -  
but it got into convulsions and fits  
and shock  
when it had gone beyond its shortness  
and it couldn't even spell  
couldn't even get words right  
floating in a soup of red lines in Word or in Mac's Pages  
and so it took its own life  
or someone stabbed it like they did to o'erweening Macbeth  
or to our poor, poor misunderstood Rasputin who being a Saint was thought a  
Devil  
but was all humble  
as the shortest poem in the uni-verse



# The Show Is Over

by all accounts  
it was a big hit;  
the children laughed  
as the adults observed  
where it went  
I jumped, I tripped, I fell  
I came on stage thin and frail  
and grew visibly like a balloon  
and I cackled aloud like a bell  
I rolled about, I tumbled:  
The elephant offered me a banana  
And the cat scratched my back  
And the toothless old man  
in the last row laughed  
and all the audience were showered in his spit  
And the kid in the third row  
shouted:  
'Look, mum! There's the clown! The clown!  
Ha, ha, ha, ha  
clown, clown, clown'  
Blown here into the tent  
Rolling like uprooted dry sedge in the wind  
Knock about, roll, roll, roll  
Laugh, laugh, laugh  
Clown, clown, clown  
And the man in coat and tie he announced:  
'We don't know how to laugh, to laugh  
So we need a clown, a clown, a clown'

Ha, ha, ha  
The world does not know how to laugh  
And so I am its clown  
Ha, ha, ha,

And so it is done  
I am done  
And the admiring kids have been dragged back home  
And the adults have their guilt fixed for the while  
And the owner counts his notes and coins

And I've had my performance high -  
And now in my cell I'm left alone  
To see what it is to be a clown  
And I see me in my mirror  
And I point with my bony finger  
At the strange figure  
And I laugh, I laugh and I cry aloud:  
'Look mum - clown, clown, clown  
Clown in the mirror, clown in the mirror  
Look mum - clown in the mirror, clown in the mirror  
The same one you brought out into the world'

Ha, ha, ha  
I too do not know how to laugh  
and so I am my own clown  
clown, clown, clown  
Ha, ha, ha

Raj Arumugam

# The Sick Lion And The Nimble Fox

'Ah, come in  
oh gentle fox, '  
said the Lion,  
pretending to be sick  
and lying visible  
and coughing  
inside its sunny cave

'How nice of you, '  
continued the lion  
'to come and see me.  
You have probably heard  
I've been quite sick  
and what gentle words of healing  
you must have come to offer me...  
Indeed, oh most kind fox  
it's very nice of you...  
But why stand in the sun?  
Come in and sit down  
with me in my cave  
and we shall speak of  
most spiritual matters  
like Heaven and the afterlife...'

2

'Ah, but thank you Mr Lion, '  
said the fox  
keeping a distance.  
'I did indeed hear it said  
you were sick and came to visit you  
and now that I've seen you  
and now that you feel my goodwill  
I shall go...'

'But why not come in  
just for a while? '  
asked the Lion,  
with a regal grin

'Because, ' said the quick fox,  
'I smell a rat and other creatures too.  
I see many footprints towards  
your cave  
but none tracing their steps out...  
And it'll be just the while perhaps  
that you'll need  
to ensure what comes in the cave  
never goes out.'

And away  
the nimble fox ran  
to live many years more  
and to tell a tale  
that has passed on from  
the ruthless animal kingdom  
to our most blessed humankind

Raj Arumugam

# The Singer Below The Tree

I sat before the man below the tree  
and he was singing;  
and he broke his song to listen  
when a bird sang unseen  
on the branches above

would you come and sing  
at gatherings? I asked him  
they pay well  
praise profusely  
and their applause is heard  
in every corner of the universe...

listen and move along, he said;  
I just sing when I want to

Raj Arumugam

# The Stranger, She's Gone

she is not here  
she's gone  
stranger in our midst  
uncomfortable in our ways  
she walked in the quiet below the trees  
while we wrangled and plotted  
in crowded alleyways  
and streets

you do not see her  
she's not here  
you won't find her  
at the edge of the lake  
where she walked often  
she's not at the park  
where she sat in meditation  
while we clamored and fought  
to bring to reality our dreams and ambitions  
and vast unimagined desires, unacknowledged

she is not here  
you do not hear her song  
you do not see  
her gentle face  
all you have is your violence  
and the harshness of your faces  
she saw she was the stranger  
and she walked past to move into her own

Raj Arumugam

# The Sunlight Falls On The Lily-Pilly

the evening sunlight falls on the lily-pilly  
and the green leaves come ablaze  
and the birds fly over in the sky  
and the clouds spend their short lives  
forming shapes and playing games:  
it is all here before me  
and I observe  
and I am here too;  
and there is no dogma or belief  
one is free of all conditioning  
and one observes the world as it is

Raj Arumugam

# The Sun's Advances

sometimes I wonder  
in the loneliness of night  
where you are  
and then I see you  
bouncing off the moon;  
ha!  
she rejects your advances

Raj Arumugam

# The Table

Beware, the rectangular slab  
squares you.

The table is a prison

to take you through  
interminable years  
hew at rocks, polish the chains,  
stare at white walls till  
you see black lines;  
a peculiar number-juggling  
word-mumbling  
enclosure...

for great talkers to corner you  
to prove their wit  
(and your lack of it)

the touchstone that shows  
you're not working if you're missing  
and they've got long tubes of eyes  
that follow you home

to take you through  
circuitous years  
same forms, same deadlines, same surveys  
same complaints, same compliments -  
and same old story again, and again

simply a wonderful spot for all of them  
to put you in your place  
where William Tell makes you keep still  
to improve his aim.

Beware, the rectangular slab  
squares you.

Raj Arumugam

# The Tale Of How C Got Its Curve

1

C, as you know  
and any child can very well see,  
has a curved back  
like all humans  
trapped night and day  
at the computers  
and various e-devices

But C was not always so deformed  
Once C, on all sides of the sea,  
was as straight as an arrow  
so that it looked exactly  
as the lower case l

Then C slowly got the habit  
of slouching, and over the years  
inevitably  
it developed a bow-back  
and became curved like an old rag -  
and that's the C we see today,  
yes, on all sides of the sea

2

When this calamity happened to C  
lower case l was asked:  
"Have you heard  
C has developed  
an un-straightainable back? "

"Serves C right, " said lower case l  
swiftly and quite gleefully

&quot;And about time too -  
for now everyone can clearly  
see me for I  
and the crooked back for C&quot;

3

The moral then  
we can extrapolate  
from this tale of letters  
is you got to sit up straight  
and take care of that spine  
or you'll end up like C  
or, worse, you'll get a D -  
depending which way your back bends

Raj Arumugam

# The Talent Scout And The Violinists

scouting for talent in the streets  
(for the next Michael Jackson or Pavarotti  
or anyone who can make me money)  
I spotted there in the streets of Melbourne  
a bloodhound and a puppy, each with a violin  
and each playing -  
the puppy a natural, the bloodhound indistinct

I spread out on the floor  
the talent contract for a team  
and the bloodhound signed with a grin;  
but just as the puppy lifted its paw  
another dog came running, picked up the puppy  
and ran off with the speed of lightning

"Damn! What's that about? "  
I asked the bloodhound

"Oh, " said the bloodhound sheepishly  
"That's his mum, my wife - she doesn't want  
him to be a musician like me...  
she'd rather he grows up to be a doctor! "

Raj Arumugam

# The Taming Of Sun Wukong (Monkey King)

We speak often of the popular Indian and Asian imagery of the Mind as a Monkey... This poem illustrates how this idea is embodied in a Chinese legend of the Monkey King...

Sun Wukong, or the Taming of the Monkey Mind

## PART 1

The arrogance of Sun Wukong

Monkey you may think of me  
but ordinary I am by no means:  
timeless and  
of primal forces  
from a rock I was born  
at the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit  
I, pure energy, unrestrained  
in perpetual motion

Powers? Ha! you mortals are easily impressed  
by miracles and powers  
aren't you, you puny lot?

In one turn I can travel a 108 000 li  
I can do numerous transformations  
I can cloud travel  
and my magic staff that I keep  
in the size of a sewing needle when not in use  
has similar powers;  
and with each hair of mine  
I can be an infinity of myself -  
though I'll confess  
I can't make a complete change into human  
as my tail just won't go away

So in all, great deeds I'm capable of;  
and I wiped my name off the Book of Life and Death

so I am immutable -  
so why am I even talking to you weaklings?  
Go climb a tree, you imbeciles!  
And stay up there! Don't descend!

## PART 2

### The taming of Sun Wukong

And Sun Wukong flies up to the Heavenly Kingdom, styles himself "Great Sage, Equal of Heaven" and there creates tremendous Havoc and Chaos...and even the Jade Emperor, the Heavenly Emperor, has his butt kicked...

...and then it is that Sun Wukong comes face to face with the Buddha...

And Sun Wukong screams at the Buddha:  
"I'll kick and I'll blow  
And you won't know where you'll go"

And the Buddha says:  
"And who are you? "

And Sun Wukong says:  
"You probably haven't heard of evolution  
but I'm the one who went straight to the top -  
I can travel anywhere quick and swift  
to any part of the immense void or universe"

And the Buddha says:  
"Try then and show me  
you travel the universe  
and back here before me"

And Sun Wukong jumps into thin air  
and off he goes into deep space  
and emptiness and void  
but no matter how far he goes  
it seems endless  
and it tires Sun Wukong  
and then seeing what  
he thinks are the 5 pillars  
at the end of the universe  
he scrawls on the surface:  
&quot;Sun Wukong was here! &quot;  
And in an instant Sun Wukong is there again  
right before the Buddha

And says Sun Wukong:  
&quot;See I have travelled to the  
end and saw the 5 pillars  
and scrawled there my name&quot;

And the Buddha says,  
holding up his right palm:  
&quot;See, all you have done  
is to travel across my palm&quot;

And Sun Wukong sees the words  
he had written just before but now miniscule  
And the Buddha puts a coronet round  
Sun Wukong's temple  
that helps calm the Monkey Mind  
that helps still the Restless Mind

NOTE: 180 000 li = 54 000 km or 33 554 ml

I have not offered this as a religious text, but as part of our shared  
world inheritance of traditions, legends and lore...you can read the  
poem as &quot;Monkey Mind&quot;and &quot;Monkey Mind tamed&quot;...I  
don't think my  
perceptive readers will take it as an insult if I say the Monkey refers to  
oneself and one's mind...

Raj Arumugam

# The Tasmanian Devil Wants To Marry The Koala

O koala, koala  
cuddly and so fragile;  
O sweetheart of all tourists -  
will you marry me?

I will, I will  
tender Tasmanian devil;  
I will, I will  
if you will bring the sky  
skewered at a branch end  
and your heart on a tray of gumtree leaves  
then shall I marry you

Raj Arumugam

# The Tongue Poems

tongue poems (the complete text of 3 poems in the tongue poems series)  
text © 2009, Raj Arumugam

sing you, I command you  
of the tongue

sing you of the tongue

sing you, commanded the voice,  
sing you,  
O one of million insipid poets  
lost at websites;  
sing you of the tongue

who's that? I said  
pretty sure  
the effects of an overdose of paracetamol  
could not linger for so long

O you inglorious cyberspace versifier  
tied to praise and strokes  
of fellow-weaklings at poetry sites  
sing you, I command you  
of the tongue

excuse me, I replied,  
living in a democracy  
I don't take directions like that...  
besides I'm vegetarian  
and I couldn't possibly sing  
in good conscience  
about delicacies like cow tongues  
and pig tongues and taco de lengua  
or duck tongues  
or ox tails for that matter...  
besides, I queried,  
who the hell are you?

ah, said the voice  
I am your muse  
that your modern world has banished;  
by me all tongues move in eloquence  
and all tongues are born and prosper  
and therefore I command you  
sing you of the tongue

but why me?  
I asked,  
unable to resist a cliché

because you are a weakling,  
came the firm and quick reply

all right, but sing like how? I said,  
unwilling to dispute with this voice  
and quite convinced a lunatic  
ventriloquist was around  
(though talking to myself  
I wondered if I too was not insane)  
like, how should I sing?  
like:

O I sing of the tongue supple and delicate...  
or  
of the tongue I sing  
and its exploits  
in battlefields and in boardrooms  
and in bedrooms...  
how do you like those beginnings?

you imbecile!  
declared the throaty voice;  
your generation of vipers  
imitate the ancients  
and yet you know nothing of the muse that  
moves tongues;  
do not presume to ask me how you should sing  
for I know only how to command  
and therefore I command you,  
you weakling underdog:  
Sing  
you of the tongue!

and so I started  
and composed there  
three poems on the red human tongue  
and I confess I cheated  
for lack of inspiration  
and so I included this as number one.

the confessions of John Tongue

1

I, John Tongue,  
I have a confession to make:  
I have an obsession -  
an obsession with tongues;  
not ox tongues like when you gather to dine  
but tongues, actual human tongues in speech;  
human mouths in their cave homes  
like beasts in their lair

2

you see, when people speak  
I sit before them  
and am fascinated by their tongues;  
I might listen to you, for instance,  
and your words fly over my head  
sometimes your spit in my face  
but my eyes are fixed  
on the tongue  
that lies trapped in your mouth  
and that darts in and out of your mouth  
and that shows between your teeth  
if you have some

3

I am obsessed I confess  
and I sit like a Peeping Tom  
waiting for a sight  
of this most private muscle  
that may suddenly burst out of the mouth  
like a solar flare;  
and I wait for a laugh  
and the person throws the head back  
and the jaws are open and the  
sacred tongue is laid bare  
for all the world to see  
and that is a heavenly vision to me

a revelation, a miracle  
equal to seeing an angel  
or a Great Religious Leader  
in a bullet-proof batmobile

4

and I love watching the news too  
not so much to know what has transpired  
but to observe the tongue of the newsreader  
though some are very miserly with their show of their tongues;  
but many have taken up this profession, it would seem,  
to make a national or international show of their lingua;  
and so you might well understand  
I love TV too where all sorts of people  
with all kinds of tongues  
(that is, fat and thick and thin tongues  
white, pale, gray, and red and pink and sickly tongues  
red-carpet tongues and dusty dirty tongues)  
make it their profession to tease me  
with a display or concealment of their tongues;  
and the cinema I love too  
for similar reasons  
and of course especially for the larger-than-life vision it offers  
of the most glorious human tongue;  
and though you might well imagine  
I would hate the telephone  
for I cannot see the tongue  
you'd be quite wrong  
for this is an opportunity for me to  
exercise my very vivid imagination  
for I can still visualize the tongue  
in all its manifestations  
and Oh, I love the telephone  
for it puts the human tongue so Oh, Oh, close to my ear

5

ah, these then are some of the joys of the tongue  
and this my obsession

but when we next meet  
don't please be so conscious  
of your tongue  
jumping up like a frog  
from the floor of your mouth  
and venturing into the world through your teeth  
as you speak  
for I may not look  
to determine what endangered species  
resides within your mouth;  
but I might have shifted my attention  
to perhaps your diction  
and enunciation  
listening for crispness and clarity  
and poking fun at any peculiarity,  
so just relax, speak-publish, and be damned!

...but then, I may still be stuck in obsession on the tongue...

tongue tale

1  
when I was six  
just before I left my village in India  
for the last time  
my five-year-old girlfriend  
and I huddled together in the cow-shed  
and she whispered gently into my ears:  
I shall miss your tongue  
in my mouth;  
keep it fresh with a tongue-cleaner  
till you return  
for we must have again  
our tongues in each other's mouth

2

now I wonder  
where she is  
for though I've never been back to my village or to India  
and have retained our village tradition  
of a tongue kept clean, sharp and supple  
with the use of a tongue-wiper,  
my informants tell me  
she's not in the village  
nor does anyone know what happened to her family;  
perhaps, I wonder, if she is lost amongst the millions  
in Mumbai or in Delhi  
or perhaps she too was set adrift  
in the Indian diaspora  
and is perhaps now in the UK, or the US  
or even in some remote European country  
or perhaps as close to me as the next state Down Under

3

and sometimes too as I recall her tongue in my mouth  
I wonder with jealousy what foreign tongue she explores now  
or what foreign tongue now resides in her mouth  
or perhaps she is tongue-tied now  
for she might have lost all her teeth;  
but still I desire one day  
to meet my tongue-friend from my childhood  
and perhaps when we meet  
we will greet each other with our tongues in each other's mouth  
and if our spouses rage or try and pull us apart;  
I'll explain  
(after they have pulled tongues apart, if they can)  
that this is an old and sacred village custom  
this putting of tongues in one another's mouth  
and could they please excuse us  
as we put our tongues in each other's mouth as often as we like  
for this way we do our part  
to preserve a very ancient village culture  
and tradition that is firmly within

and only meant for those of the remote village I was born in;  
and could they just stand and watch -  
no wagging tongues, please -  
and thank you very much...

tongue poems (the complete text of 3 poems in the tongue poems series)  
text © 2009, Raj Arumugam

Raj Arumugam

# The Tree That Stands Outside My Study

the tree that stands outside my study  
is like my third child;  
the lilly-pilly was but a sapling two years ago  
and now it stands over the palings and dances in the wind  
and waves its gentle arms in the breeze;  
the tree that stands outside my study  
it smiles in the morning and it smiles in the evening  
and it seems folded in itself as the dark creeps  
over the fence and all round my home;  
the tree stands outside my window, my dearest lilly-pilly,  
it grows and heals and nurtures and glows  
all days and all year round;  
the tree that stands outside my study  
is like my third child  
and is yet become my nurse and support

Raj Arumugam

# The True Owners

Who owns this vast surprising space?  
Who is the owner of this land?  
Is it me? Or is it you?  
Or is it them?  
Who owns this continent?  
Who owns whom here  
and who drives whom?  
Who determined what happened before?  
Who determines what happens next?  
Who owns whom? Who owns what?  
Who owns the Ross Sea and the Bellingshausen Sea?  
and the seas and oceans between the lands and atolls?  
Whose are the fishes and the air and the creatures in the  
air, the oceans and on the trees and on the ground and  
under the ground? Who owns the spirits of the desert  
and the trees and the lakes and the mountains  
and the burning bushes?  
Who owns the children and the poor and the defenseless  
and the workers and the helpers?  
Who owns the Taj Mahal and the Buddha and Christ  
and the Kaaba and the Sphinx and the island statues looking out to the sea?

Who owns decency and justice and honor?  
(Who has decency and justice and honor?)  
And who the works and the poems and the ideas?  
Who owns this world? Who owns all this space?  
Is it me? Is it you?  
Or is it them?

Really?  
Or are the ants or the rats  
(or perhaps other yet uncategorized patient creatures)  
the true owners and inheritors  
and we but the False Pretenders  
as Smiling Time sees us out?

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The Unconnected

To whom shall the unconnected man  
turn in a world disconnected and each turned in?  
To whom shall the meek, the humble,  
the quiet and unaccusing turn?

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The Unemployed

At the entrance to  
Toowong Village  
four young men  
stand in a cluster  
and talk to  
people who  
look approachable

Excuse me, sir,  
says one to me,  
with a pack of envelopes  
in his hand.  
We are unemployed  
and rather than go on the dole  
we are trying to earn some money  
selling these cards.  
Would you care  
to buy a pack, please?  
I'm well-dressed today  
and he must have thought  
I was one of the class  
of the employed;  
I can't bear to tell him  
the bad news  
in case he thinks  
I mock the unemployed  
and so I mutter an apology

I move away  
pained by my inability  
to help  
and I see in his face  
the pain of another rejection.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The Unemployed And The Wise Ones

The wise ones tell the unemployed:

There is hope. Keep trying.

There is yet hope - the unemployed lives on such a thin line, for though there have been continual rejections, there are yet three applications to which replies have not come - and when they do, there will yet be hope for the three rejections will be superseded by three or four more applications pending.

There is hope yet - the unemployed lives on, censured by the wise for being negative if he thinks of the rejections and otherwise being censured too for being a hopeless optimist.

There is yet hope for the unemployed who keep trying, their heads buried, and in deference to the wise ones who will offer advice and comment in spite of everything.

The unembittered unemployed, the hopeful unemployed is fair game to the wise ones.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The Unintended Rendezvous

we have walked this path before  
we know these days;  
this harshness is not unknown to us  
and we ended often with a smile  
as one came in at a moment  
to peace and quiet

the walk can be lonely  
the journey on across stony paths  
and the destination uncertain and intent unsure -  
and yet it is not hopeless,  
for the air embraces you  
and the sun though harsh  
still lets you through;  
and the hardy grass and trees  
encourage  
even in their brooding stillness

we have seen this before  
though not through intent  
not perhaps by design  
but through life's haphazardness;  
and we trudged on in silence  
perhaps the mind numb  
and the will like a bent back;  
but still we have made it before  
many times perhaps  
and then at the bend,  
just where the trees meet the rocks,  
just there at the bend  
the cool waters  
and the kind shade waited;  
the unintended rendezvous  
the random moment  
in which one comes  
to peace and quiet

Raj Arumugam

# The Universal Condition

There is always an art practiced  
in all countries, all cultures,  
when one speaks well  
by not speaking the truth  
yet it consists not of lies;  
the transactions are done easily  
with smiles  
and things are understood and misunderstood  
by the one who hears and  
the one who speaks.  
The visible are unseen  
and the unseen are seen.  
Everywhere it matters not if you  
are a stranger or one of the locals,  
but those who never mastered this  
are left out of the herd.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# The Vampire

it is just a woman  
it is just a man  
Like any woman  
can take her man  
you think  
Like any man  
can put his head  
in the warmth of his woman  
And the woman can take her man  
and embrace him  
and they can be the eternal couple

But it is the woman who takes his life  
she drinks his blood  
she ravenous  
he willing, conditioned  
And her hair turns red with the blood  
she must have  
and the blood runs even to her fingertips  
But it is just a woman  
it is just a man  
That is what Edvard Munch meant, you think

Raj Arumugam

# The Violent Faithful

a)

I've got a book  
which is the Book  
and it tells me everything I need to know;  
every word in it is true  
and all I have to do  
is to follow it to the letter:  
I will not question;  
I will bow in obedience

and when things are not clear to me  
I've got my teachers  
who are inspired within  
and they can never go wrong  
and they can tell me the truth  
behind each chapter, verse  
and the Word;  
and all I have to do  
is to follow it to the letter:  
I will not question;  
I will bow in obedience

b)

and the Book tells me  
it is OK to kill;  
and the Book tells me  
nothing is more important  
than this system  
and so I can maim and hurt  
and destroy and terminate:  
and if you do not agree with me  
I have precise instructions as to  
what I should do to you



# The Walk

The walk leisurely  
in the cool evening  
after a summer's vengeful day  
measures time  
and demarcates life leading to night

the walk is space and expanse  
of the skies  
and the setting sun  
and trees and life;  
all of one's body and land  
possible in a walk

one expands energy  
and returns renewed;  
the walk touches you on the heart and head  
and takes you back to where you began

"Good night, " the end of the walk says  
The good life may be but a walk

Raj Arumugam

# The Wind's Whoosh!

the wind said to me:

Whoosh!

and I didn't like its impudence

and so I said:

Go shooosh yourself!

Raj Arumugam

# The Worst Job

All's hush and quiet  
in the bathroom  
and things start  
to talk to one another

drip, drip, says the tap  
brr, brr, says the window  
hum, hum, says the pipe  
tchk, tchk, says the shower

I've got the worst job round here,  
whines the eloquent toothbrush

Oh, yeah? comes the reply  
from the unassuming toilet roll

Raj Arumugam

# The Years Pass Well

the years pass well  
and grace pervades each moment;  
time flies  
and all things take good form

no doubt trying days come  
and hard times too  
but we keep our heads high  
and hold on to each blessing  
till each event coming our way  
is none but radiant

the kids grow fast  
and the expenses too grow in size;  
the tasks are many  
and the invoices always due:  
but each we take it in our stride  
and slowly but surely  
things come easier and smooth

as we've moved  
so do those dear to us grow  
and they too find their way  
in the world, find their loves  
and set up their families

the years pass well  
and grace pervades each moment;  
time flies  
and all things take good form

it is good all these years  
they pass sometimes  
like fighter-jets in the sky:  
still the times are good  
and life comes with many blessings

the years pass well  
and grace pervades each moment;  
time flies  
and all things take good form

Raj Arumugam

# There Are Flowers And Birds

there are flowers and birds  
and the observer  
the one who passes by and stops to see  
to observe  
the flowers and the birds  
and in that seeing  
there is just the moment  
that observation  
just the seeing  
one moment in stillness  
of flowers, birds and observer  
though all the while there is life and change

Raj Arumugam

# There Is All The Clamor

there is all the clamor  
and the noise  
of ownership, and of events  
and of the group and identity and ideas;  
and of change and adventure  
and of novelty and of the opposites

but seeing the beauty of a flower  
and the stillness of the clouds and the ocean  
these things do not matter any more

Raj Arumugam

# There Is Movement Within

there are desires there  
and there is violence and envy;  
there is movement within  
and there is competition;  
there is jealousy  
all there in one's mind:  
and yet,  
one  
points outwards all the while...

Raj Arumugam

# There Is Nothing That Is Not Within

one thinks one comes to truth  
to understanding and wisdom  
through revelations and Holy Texts  
and attendance at great congregations;  
and all are victims of pleasure-pain  
and one seeks Heaven and seeks to avoid Hell  
and all are possessed by the selfish desire  
to Paradise;  
and to come to the infinite, to the silence,  
to the beautiful  
one thinks  
all one needs to do  
is to repeat dictums and study theology  
and to study and quote scriptures  
and to kneel and to confess  
and to seek blessings and grace  
and seek miracles;  
and to rely on chants and mystery  
and complete surrender:  
but there is nothing without one's own insight;  
there is nothing that is higher or lower;  
there is nothing that is not within;  
there is nothing in the things we hold true and sacred;  
there is nothing in words, images,  
and ideology and theology and tenets of faith  
and all we may hold sacred:  
there is nothing that is not within  
and that may not be seen by oneself

Raj Arumugam

# There Is The Spirit As They Might Say

there is the spirit as they might say  
and love is Divine as they might decree  
in those Heavy Books -  
yet there is the manifest body,  
sweetheart  
there is one that is you  
and one that's me;  
and as ancient poets and seers have said  
all the earth's topography  
its mountains and grass and lakes  
and water and fire and air  
all of the earth is here in the body  
so it is only proper  
we explore the body  
wide and deep within  
perhaps to see if we can catch the spirit

Raj Arumugam

# There Is The Wide Expense

there is the wide expense  
the majesty, the mystery -  
and what do you do?  
You attempt to  
confine it in buildings  
You attempt to  
confine it  
in books  
You think it is captured  
in your theology, your dogma  
your revelations, your miracles  
in your institutions

It is boundless  
It is unconfined  
It is not pointed this way  
It is not pointed that way  
It is not named This or That  
No one has any monopoly  
Yet O fools, you will speak as if...

Ah, fools in the beginning  
Fools to the very end

Raj Arumugam

# They Could Put My Face On The World Currencies

they could you know  
put my face on currencies of the world.  
I mean it's so simple an idea and ingenious  
and so original, I'd think -  
though you may beg to differ  
or disagree most violently  
depending on your humor  
but still  
I wonder no one or nation has thought of it  
this simple act of having my visage  
on the national currency

It'd lighten up things you know  
and people all over the world  
might have a lively conversation point  
as when they see my Alfred E. Neuman image  
and they'd say to one another:  
Who's this bloody idiot?  
Or someone else might say:  
Anybody knows this clown?  
And then they'll really have lots to talk about  
as they wait for their planes to fly again  
anytime after nature decides  
to send smoke signals in the skies

So really  
I don't understand what these nations  
of the world are waiting for,  
do you?  
OK, I mean they might have inhibitions  
like copyright and privacy issues  
(like how'd you put a living man's  
face on a national currency?  
but really, if they want to put  
my face up on world currencies  
that are legal tender and linked to real sovereign  
states recognized by the United Nations  
(banana republics need not apply)  
maybe this poem will resolve the issue

Look, my face could go  
on the American dollar  
and they could say:  
Honorary Citizen  
Or, OK:  
Alien – not the movie, but the person  
The British could  
put my face on the pound  
and have the words below:  
Raj for King of the UK  
And my own fair and beloved land down under  
could put me on a hundred dollar note  
with the words:  
Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!  
Yeah, my destiny in life is to provide mirth;  
as long as others are happy, that's good enough.  
Or Australia  
could dump British Royalty  
from the five-dollar note  
and put my face on it instead –  
I don't mind going cheap, you know...

And imagine what good might happen  
if they decided to put my face on the Renminbi:  
Hey, the Chinese yuan may just appreciate  
and what luck that'd be for America –  
which brings me to another reason  
why the Americans should put me on their notes:  
surely it'll have a downside effect  
and their currency value will go down naturally  
and give them a competitive edge over the nation behind the Great Wall;  
and the Indians, yes, they could ask dear old Gandhi to take a rest  
and use my face instead, with the words:  
return of the prodigal son  
after being a swineherd...

Look, the Euro Currency could have my face  
on a Michelangelo David (naked)  
(and they could change Euro to Eros?)  
and it'd draw a lot of attention away from  
the financial woes of Greece and Italy and Spain;  
and surely the United Nations could do well  
to teach humanity a lesson by negative example  
by minting UN money and having my face in its first issue  
with words of gold clearly below my visage:  
Not the way we want to go...

But look, whatever the countries  
of the world may decide  
they'd better decide fast  
for I might just change my mind  
overnight  
or even change my face  
(you know plastic surgery and the lot)  
and quite frankly  
they'll have greater copyright issues after I'm dead  
with a garrulous widow whom I'll leave behind  
and my poor desperate progeny  
who are still trying to save some money for a deposit  
for their first home in the lucky country...  
So government leaders and Presidents  
and Prime Ministers take note  
you don't need to queue  
there's no bureaucracy  
and no forms to fill up  
even though you are world governments  
I know I'm dealing with –  
just do it  
but do the have the decency to send me a note....  
just so I know...  
and you might, if the notes are legal tender  
and completely revolting to the citizenry  
on seeing my visage and countenance  
on their national currencies  
(which wouldn't surprise me  
cos I'd just be quiet disgusted  
to see their faces on my currency)

you might send me all the money  
so long as they are all legal tender...

Raj Arumugam

# They Only Want Love

lots of people  
and lots and lots  
of travelers, wayfarers  
and activists and visionaries  
and canvassers  
and vendors  
and realists and romantics  
They have all asked for my love  
but my constant answer is:  
"No, you can't have my love;  
but you can have my money  
if I can find any"

it's the same with family and friends  
strangers, neighbors, children  
and relatives and enemies  
eccentrics and couples  
They all ask for my love  
but my unwavering answer is:  
"No, you can't have my love;  
but you can have my money  
if I can find any"

it's the same with strangers  
and politicians and organizations  
and great leaders and haloed monks  
and Heavenly Saviors  
and sports personalities  
and charity organizers  
They only want my love  
but my immutable answer is:  
"No, you can't have my love;  
but you can have my money  
if I can find any"

The point here is  
it is my task to help you see  
the world is full of such  
good people  
They only want love  
It's never money they're after  
They only ask for my love  
Never, never for my money  
But still, cruel as I am,  
my non-negotiable answer is:  
"No, you can't have my love;  
but you can have my money  
if I can find any"

Raj Arumugam

# They Say Love, Love

They say love, love  
And how magnificent they sound  
when they say that

But you must not be taken in  
by that word  
(by their manner  
by their declaration  
in spite of their proclamations)  
for what they mean  
is a love that is restricted  
confined and narrow  
to those in the group  
with the same beliefs  
adorning their chests  
with the same badges

There is no universal love;  
there is only universal prejudice

Though they say love, love  
it is not love  
It is a narrowness -  
it is a way of asking:  
Are you of our kind?

They cannot see  
anything beyond their own noses  
and that they call love

There is no universal love;  
there is only universal prejudice

Raj Arumugam

# They Stopped At The Stream

they stopped at the stream;  
one sat down  
and one stood close by  
and they both cried,  
the little children

Why do you cry,  
little ones?  
asked the rabbit

Why do you cry,  
pretty angels?  
asked the birds

Why do you cry,  
dearest loves?  
asked the stream

A world is lost,  
oh birds in the trees,  
said the little boy.  
I saw beauty taken away.

A time is gone,  
oh rabbit and stream,  
said the little girl  
We saw beings wiped away.

Raj Arumugam

# They Talk About Him

Far away, beyond the continent  
and the archipelago,  
in a tiny island  
someone asks, perhaps,  
Does anyone know what's happened to him?  
Perhaps this is asked at a coffee-shop;  
at a hawker's centre or in a meeting room;  
perhaps over the phone or during a chance meeting:  
Does anyone know what's happened to him?  
Perhaps someone whispers this question  
at a temple gathering  
or during a moment of silence  
at some point during a lecture

The soft replies come:

He's gone.

Gone.

They say he's gone overseas.

Oh,  
comes the slow response.  
I see.  
Yes, it's been some time now  
since I last saw him...but...  
There is a nod; perhaps, several nods;  
there is no emotion; no pursuit of the subject,  
no query for details  
for people come and go,  
as they say; and, moreover, he was exactly like that.  
Emotionless; and not asking for details.  
Unknown. Unknowing.

What's happened to him?  
Gone; he's gone.  
It's mouthed in a  
low voice;  
like talking about the dead.

Far away here, I,  
the him, sit writing this.  
The him they might sometimes talk about.  
Before it is all gone without a trace.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# They The Forces, The Furies We Rage Against

They are the forces, the furies we rage against  
and whom we make glad if we go quietly into oblivion  
they, the forces, have enclosed us in little bodies  
and left us exiled on a vast continent.  
Soiled and muddied and with wax in our ears, dirt of sin  
between the toes and in the cracks of the skin in our heels  
soft dirt in the foreskin;  
and our function, dear souls, dear soul,  
is to rage and to rage unabated.  
It shall put strain on our bodies  
yet we shall rage  
and it will pull the skin in  
and muscles and tissues and testicles  
and yet we shall rage;  
it will tire the mind and sink the eyes and cheeks  
and pinch the veins and crack our bones  
and yet, dear souls, dear souls,  
we shall rage, we shall rage and rage.  
For we are not done with them.

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Things Like The Arts And Poetry

be careful there with  
things like the arts and poetry  
for they rarely are  
like what they seem to be

when you make them most sublime  
then they may be most banal;  
and making them banal  
then they may be most sublime

Raj Arumugam

# Thinking For Sale

Positive thinking  
or negative thinking?  
Or think real?  
Then clear thinking and  
straight thinking  
divergent thinking  
and radiant thinking  
convergent thinking and  
dynamic thinking  
rational thinking  
scientific thinking  
or no-thought thinking  
God-mind thinking  
or free-thinking  
Oh for goodness' sake! -  
just think!

Raj Arumugam

# This Evening, Dearest Moon

this evening, O gentle moon,  
this evening you  
preside over calm, dearest moon;  
you bring quiet  
and sweetness in the cool air;  
and the trees rise to kiss you  
and the sun sets like a dying soldier  
in the arms of his love;  
this evening you bring stillness  
and contentment  
and end of thought and conflict  
and you bring  
seeing of things as they are

Raj Arumugam

# This Is An Educated, Cultured Poem

this is an educated  
refined, cultured, poem  
fit to clothe a queen's body  
radiant enough to sit on a king's head  
no doubt,  
the king'd head on a silver plate

this is elegant, truthful,  
and most dignified as robes  
and gold threads on a priest's mitre  
and ermine round the waists

this is immaculate,  
probing, penetrative and sedate  
so well-constructed, traditional  
so cast into meter and scanned  
so organised and adept  
as a gynaecologists's fingers

and last but not least  
it is reverend, respectful and silent  
as full of respect as are holy poems and sonnets  
and poems all fit into good form and shape  
and thus it refrains from 4-letter words  
though - shit! - sometimes it slips and falls  
like a drunkard, into the gutters

but it is the fault of the terrain

Raj Arumugam

# This Is The In-Between

it is now the in-between  
a transition, a lull  
no action, the will  
at rest  
it seems

a moment -  
no sense of measure, actually -  
like the evening  
that embraces  
the trees and the skies;  
like the dancer before a move

it is now the mind's quiet  
one at peace, as if one meets oneself  
a cessation the while  
a pervading silence  
that does not seem as an other;  
this is the in-between

Raj Arumugam

# Though The Road Itself Is Ordinary

...the road itself is ordinary  
black, tarmac, blazing in the hot sun  
common as any other road,  
smooth here, a sudden roughness there  
but the journey itself is beautiful:  
the trees that line the road are sunny green  
and the top of the hills kissed by the rays  
and the clouds in the sky scattered wide  
and the clear luminous blue shining through...  
the beautiful accompanies one  
though the road itself is ordinary...

Raj Arumugam

# Three Eminents

three specialists travel in their car  
down Victoria, Australia  
through rural Mildura  
and they see fields  
and a black cow standing in one

'Cows in Mildura, '  
announces the astronomer  
'are black'

'Tchk! Tchk! ' says the logician  
(Eminent Professor Emeritus)  
'Some cows in Mildura are black'

'Let's express it with precision, '  
says the Mathematician  
'It is exact to say  
there is at least one field  
in Mildura  
with at least one cow  
of which at least one side is black'

Raj Arumugam

# Three Principles For Success

In the old days  
when I was a nobody  
I needed a mentor  
in order to groom me into success  
into self-actualisation and to bring  
all my dreams into reality  
and so I found a mentor  
and I learned of him the 3 principles  
to success and complete achievement  
And yes, since you ask,  
I shall pass on to you the 3 principles  
that my mentor had learned from someone before:

PRINCIPLE 1

Know what you want

PRINCIPLE 2

Never tell them all that you know

Raj Arumugam

# Time Does Not Permit Eternity

you know  
it's not like anything is forever  
nothing lasts till the end of days  
so you must go  
one day or night in hill or in bed  
while fighting the enemy  
or having sex in bed;  
conditioned beings all of us  
coming of stars and space and dimensions  
particular to our space-time continuum  
and set of conditions that vomit us into being;  
you must go and I must go  
and the saint must go and the powerful must go  
and the holy and the unholy  
and the clever and the stupid-  
everyone, they must in their turn go;  
and it doesn't matter how weak or strong or power-packed you are  
we must all each have a go;  
but really think about it before you nod in agreement  
for callous as it may sound  
child and young and old  
and wife and beloved and mom and dad;  
think about that before you readily nod heads;  
and so you're God, and You think You are Forever?  
Sorry brother,  
Time'll knock the d out of you  
sooner or later...  
for really -  
no matter who you are -  
everyone must go...  
But I'm God, you may protest -  
but really, you've had your centuries  
and Time will not permit eternity  
(you may choose to go with thunder and lightning)  
but you too, Dear God,  
sorry brother,  
conditioned beings all of us  
coming of stars and space and dimensions  
particular to our space-time continuum

and set of conditions that bring us into being;  
the time comes when each, creator and created, weak  
and Omnipotent (Ouch! So Powerful!) -  
each must go...  
Time, you see, does not permit eternity...

Raj Arumugam

# Time Does Not Wither You

time does not wither you  
sweetheart  
time crawls away before you;  
for though the weather's  
adulterous touches may show  
and cares may draw lines on the brows  
and you might touch your hands and back  
and sigh: "I think my skin is getting rough with time"  
- there is a glow in your heart  
and nothing diminishes that ever;  
there is always that radiance,  
that radiance of you that is light  
the radiance that was there when we first met  
is ever there  
and life is always still and quiet  
in admiration in your presence  
and time is pale with shame  
for thinking it can diminish you;  
but seeing that the admirers of your shine  
and those beings who sit in the embrace of your warmth  
have only increased over the years  
and that what you give glows ever  
like the sun rays over the hills and valleys  
time is humbled before you -  
yes, how can  
time wither you?  
sweetheart  
time crawls away before you

Raj Arumugam

# Time Kisses Us On Our Cheeks

time kisses us on our cheeks  
and fingers our nipples;  
time grins at us and we see  
we have all come at the wrong time  
and at the wrong places;  
and when everything is arranged again  
like a child moves the toys and dolls and figures at play  
we look at one another  
and think this is the right place and time  
and then  
time kisses us on our cheeks  
and fingers our nipples;  
time grins at us and we see  
we have all come at the wrong time  
and at the wrong places

Raj Arumugam

# Time Now For The Donkey Dance

it's time now  
let's all do the donkey dance  
it's time now  
for intelligence to carry the donkey  
that's the way  
each one of you carry a donkey  
for the donkey is tired of its burden  
and now it's your turn  
a throne for the donkeys  
each intelligence must be  
so now  
carry the donkey  
each one of you  
and me - of course, me too  
and let's do the donkey dance  
left right  
left right  
hee haw haw hee  
and side and round  
and turn  
hee haw haw hee  
come dance all intelligent beings  
this is the dance ever since earth's first been  
the dance of the donkeys  
borne on our backs  
by you, me and every other human being  
the ancient dance of the donkeys  
left right  
left right  
hee haw haw hee  
and side and round  
and turn  
hee haw haw hee

Raj Arumugam

# Time Passes, Does It Not

time passes, does it not,  
trickling away in drops, from a leaking tap unnoticed  
imperceptible, drops of our days and months that  
tsunami into years

we might grow more cynical or wise  
we might allow the animals to howl or to transform  
or we might eliminate hierarchy and symbolism  
and see plain and clear past the allegory  
what is left of the experiment  
(an unintended one, an unknowing participant even)  
the residue, the remains of the years -  
what chemical composition do we have?  
What has transpired here? -  
as clueless as we are of the first expansions  
the time when the universes arrive in another cycle;  
or perhaps we could see everything in the cocksureness of faith  
and drag on, in suspension, leave in doubt or in certainty -  
each but a conditioning, a myth,  
the truth shrouded in symbol and plainness  
O sweet loves,  
Time wraps us in its mysterious archaic cyberspace  
an inner space that draws a roar, a bark, a howl  
and we have justifications, visionary words, systems  
to put everything into perspective  
like a Titian framed so elegantly in an esteemed museum

Raj Arumugam

# Time Smoking Art

Do I care,  
says Time  
if it's Mona Lisa  
or David?  
To use a polite  
term, and a novel one at that,  
I smoke on art

You say  
in your naivety  
or pride of accomplishment  
your art is forever,  
for all time -  
well, tell me about it...  
I lay out dust on your works  
and I have agents to eat your stuff

You may use varnish  
and restoration  
and conservation  
may come in handy  
but hey - I've got plenty of time  
to do my work

Ah, you proud beauties  
and you arrogant, virile males:  
I'll do the smoking;  
you enjoy the smoke in your faces

Raj Arumugam

# Time, And The Year In Segments

see how many events  
we celebrated  
and commemorated...  
we divide our lives in spaces  
like those between markings on a ruler  
in mm, cm, and m...  
and time so divided  
and the year is the most meaningful in our lives  
one is nearly gone  
and another looms  
stares at us with a fireworks yawn  
what is time then? -  
that we make do with days, weeks, months and years  
and that we manage  
with birthdays, markers  
and observances and events and Special Days  
work and holidays  
what is this time? ...  
that offers us some breathing space  
and then eats us whole....  
I know, I know  
we all have our answers  
that we find in our Books, our traditions, our symbols...  
ready-made answers Authority teaches us to repeat  
and come time  
we'll all die like stray cats run over on the roads  
and we won't even know what hit us...  
don't ask, don't ask...we won't ask what time is...  
we'll just mark it  
and go wow at fireworks

Raj Arumugam

# Tiptoe, Tiptoe, Gently Now

tiptoe, tiptoe  
gently now;  
tiptoe, tiptoe  
quiet and still  
within and around

like walking barefoot  
across a cool stream  
its waters embracing  
feet and ankle

tiptoe, tiptoe  
gently now;  
tiptoe, tiptoe  
quiet and still  
within and around

like an easy bird  
swirling at leisure  
high up in the sky;  
the whole wide world in its view,  
swirling and swirling  
fluid and smooth

tiptoe, tiptoe  
gently now;  
tiptoe, tiptoe  
quiet and still  
within and around

like a baby asleep  
in its cot  
with not a care or worry  
safe and sound

in mummy's world

tiptoe, tiptoe  
gently now;  
tiptoe, tiptoe  
quiet and still  
within and around

like a leaf that grows  
all night, and all day  
and is seen where  
it was never before

tiptoe, tiptoe  
gently now;  
tiptoe, tiptoe  
quiet and still  
within and around

like the still ocean  
profound and deep  
with not a noise  
not a wave

tiptoe, tiptoe  
gently now;  
tiptoe, tiptoe  
quiet and still  
within and around

like the moon  
that watches over all  
in the cool of the night  
happy and observing  
in its own place,  
silent and alone

tiptoe, tiptoe  
gently now;  
tiptoe, tiptoe  
quiet and still  
within and around

Raj Arumugam

# Tiramisu, Anyone?

we take a likeable thing  
a pleasurable state  
and go to its end  
and then we start again anew  
or with something else  
or with someone else;  
we can observe that;  
another place,  
another thing, another person;  
we can observe that;  
we take a cake  
(tiramisu, anyone?)  
eat it and savor it and enjoy it  
as much as we can, till sated,  
or perhaps sicken of it  
and come back anew some other time  
or we come into some other need or pleasure;  
we can observe that;  
and so we can write a life  
of infatuation and taking on  
of likable things and pleasurable states  
(oh, it appeals to the deepest parts of our psyche  
we say; this goes to the deepest recesses of the soul,  
one says):  
we can observe that;  
and so we live a life of pursuits;  
we can observe that  
(tiramisu, anyone?)

Raj Arumugam

# Titles And Respect

I am told often  
(all that,  
presumably, to nurture some sophistication in me)  
that one must address people with an apt title  
or salutation:  
Sir, Miss, Mr, Mrs, Lady, Guru,  
Your Majesty, Most Revered Sir;  
Most Holy Representative of God;  
Mr President I Kiss Your Feet;  
God Almighty,  
Dr, Professor, Most Reverend, Your Highness ...  
and the likes;  
this, I am advised (or warned as the case may be) ,  
shows one's respect  
but what I cannot fathom in my simplicity is  
if it is the case that I have no respect for a kangaroo  
if I simply call it joey  
which simply anyway crawls back to its mum's teats;  
and if a child laughs and speaks to me with no titles  
but simply with a: Hi, my ball is in your yard;  
could you throw it over the fence, please? -  
and likewise I do not throw a title at the child,  
are the two of us - child and neighbor - guilty of disrespect?  
and what if my wife and I do not greet each other:  
Good morning, Sir or Good morning, Madam;  
or Good Night, Sir or Good Night, Madam...  
are we two guilty of a lack of finesse and not having respect?  
in all these  
I truly and simply, and respectfully, cannot see  
if we have, or do not have any respect for one another...  
But still I am chided by the respect-obsessed world;  
ah, the ways of the clever world are indeed mysterious  
and beyond a common man's understanding...

Raj Arumugam

# To Be Honest With You

1

just watched the news  
my morning ritual

2

today's news, as I saw it  
(today and this week)  
as I heard them all interviewees  
them politicians, men of God,  
holy ones and pure ones  
organizers and statesmen and entertainers  
and various personalities,  
they all used sincerity terms:  
'...to be honest, ' one said...'to be frank...', ' said another  
And yet another: 'I'll be frank with you....'  
'Well, frankly speaking, ' declared one eminent person...

You wish the interviewer  
would interrupt and say:  
'You mean you haven't been honest till now? '

3

and yet, frankly speaking,  
that's not news;  
that's old wearied news  
for I've heard that from 1960's  
since I started watching interviewees,  
to be honest

Raj Arumugam

# To My Holy Friend Who Is In Heaven, With 2 Extracts Of Conversations We Had When He Was Still Alive...

&#9679; a portrait of my Heavenly friend while he was earthly

well, he died....before his time, one could say  
but I'm not given to sentiment (neither was he) so I'm cool  
about this one  
and after all, he wanted to go for he always said his Holy Book  
promised him a place in Heaven and  
instead of living his time on earth  
kept his mind full of Heaven  
and talked about nothing but Heaven  
(that is,  
when he was not talking of the Devil and the Devil's opposite)  
and he wanted me to go too -  
but I said: NO, thank you...Where I am is heaven...  
and he said: By what authority do you say such things?  
and I said: I piss on all authority - human or Divine or the Devil...  
well, good on that friend of mine,  
and now you know why I'm quite happy he's gone,  
for surely he's gone to Heaven....

&#9679; talking to my Heavenly friend

1

hey, did you get what you want?  
that's the way it is, mate....  
you get what you visualize and all reality is imagined....  
happy eternity, mate - without all the wine and women  
you missed on earth, so focused you were on avoiding Satan -

and which you will not get in your mind's Heaven, for you only visualized  
an angry God and drugged angels floating white -  
though you'll get lots of ecstasy there  
which also you deplored and denied yourself on earth  
and which and whom you banished from your constructed Heaven...  
your wife still goes to your grave but I think  
worms have eaten your eyeballs and scrotum

2

speaking of parts,  
so what have they done to your brain there?  
over here you attended the Home of the Holy of Holies everyday  
and they brainwashed you thoroughly  
and there - in Heaven – they must surely remove your brain  
for how else can it be so that you can look down on your friends in Hell  
and your mum in Hell and your dad in Hell  
(for they chose not to follow your religion  
and you said your Book said your priests and authorities said they will all go to  
Hell  
if they do not believe)  
burning and tortured  
(and surely rape must be one of the measures  
in the Hell you painted to scare those not of your mind)  
so brainless you must go in Heaven  
for how else can you look down to see the tortures of condemned beings in Hell  
and not see something is wrong,  
and look at the Grand Old Man  
and not ask: What the hell are you doing?  
Can I take some water to my parents?  
how else can you can not ask these questions but  
only if they remove your brains through your ears  
like they would have done to Egyptian pharaohs....  
happy Heavenly eternity, mate....it is good to die and to live in Paradise....

3

fly and fly and fly  
and glide about in the air;  
heavenly music fills your soul  
and ice brings you visions

fly and fly and fly  
transcend space and domains  
and to keep you occupied and happy  
for you and the other zombies  
God in Heaven conspires with  
the colonial powers  
and they bring in opium to Heaven  
as they did to China  
only now opium is distributed free in the streets of Heaven

4

Holy, holy, holy  
wholly holy  
my dear friend  
wholly holy  
for you would not  
donate an organ here on earth  
even after your death  
but rather let worms eat them  
for you needed your organs  
for your Heavenly appointment  
so you can present yourself whole to your Maker  
O so wholly holy are you, my friend  
gone wholly to heaven  
while on earth here you were sure all your friends  
(and your mum and dad  
and brothers and sisters)  
not of like mind  
will burn wholly, wholly in Hell...

I'm glad for you friend  
 if you found yourself your Heaven  
 for you know I wouldn't wish harm to any  
 even if the God you created  
 will condone a world of suffering  
 just because they would not follow Him...  
 (By the way, you never answered my question:  
 why is it always a HE and not a SHE?)  
 such a God, as I told you my friend,  
 is a creation of feverish minds –  
 not that I care if there's a Creature living that calls itself God  
 and is of itself born eternal...  
 that Divine Creature just got to learn  
 that creating, and having created, it has no right over what it creates

&#9679; epilogue

but before I go, dear friend, .  
 I can't end this conversation  
 leaving your parents - your mum and dad - in Hell,  
 so listen again then to what I've always told you:  
 You get what you visualize and what you believe in  
 for the duration of the power of one's visualization;  
 and so your parents are in Heaven  
 looking at their misguided son in Hell  
 while you their son are in Heaven,  
 with his grace-denied parents in Hell...  
 and if you ask me again: By what authority do you say these things?  
 you very well know my answer, as always:  
 I piss on authority, Human or Divine...

So be you happy in Heaven while your parents burn in hell...

&#9679; extracts of conversations we had when he was still alive...

No one who sits at my table is more or less; each is the same, equal by love.  
If any should come and claim supremacy or to being better, we laugh  
in his or her face, and say:  
Take your egotistical needs and perversions elsewhere. Here we sit equal.

And this applies to everyone and to any power – human or divine, with no  
exception. Do I need to be more specific than that?

– extract 1 of conversations we had when he was still alive...

Let me say this by comparison. Perhaps the meaning will be clearer, this way.

If I met Michelangelo or Leonardo or Kalidas or Lao Tzu, I will not be in awe.  
I will simply observe them at work, admire their work, and give praise  
where due and I will move on.

There is no better or good in this – Leonardo is damned good at what he does,  
and I am damned good at what I do. That is the end of the matter.

It is the same for anyone else, whatever traits he or she may be marked with: be  
it omnipotence, omniscience and complete beauty...or whatever...

That person is damned good at being what he or she is, and I am damned good  
at being what I am...That is the end of the matter...

Seeing this one sees what freedom is; everything else is restricted freedom, like guided democracy autocratic governments run for the masses...

- extract 2 of conversations we had when he was still alive...

Raj Arumugam

# Today I Bought A Book Of Goya's Works

Today I bought a book of Goya's works  
and we debated at home if an unemployed man  
should have \$30 for Goya. Goya is priceless,  
there was no dispute, but what's the price  
on an unemployed man's head? What's an  
unemployed man worth? Can he spend  
thirty when there are other pressing needs at hand?

Was it

The Nude Maya

on the jacket the

man not working wanted? (Such a thing in a  
yuppie's head is art; such a thing in an  
unemployed man's hands is lust.)

I thought Goya should have the last word  
and I opened to a page at random:  
Bloodstained Saturn ate his children.

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Today I See You

today I see you  
in the couch and at the table  
it's a picture there in the mind  
even when I'm away;  
the picture of ease and comfort  
sweetheart  
the moment of peace and quiet  
and radiant energy  
that is you  
that brings in one's heart all delight and stillness  
and that washes the dirt and dust of the world  
that settles on one;  
this is the image that resides, that abides  
sweetheart  
by sight and memory  
embracing all of one's consciousness  
in the benign light of your being

Raj Arumugam

# Today's Winter In June In Brisbane

it is a sunny bright day  
cold in the rooms  
but the warmth  
wraps tight round one's body  
outside in the grass;  
it is a gentle whimsical day  
of a Queensland winter  
that delivers biting air indoors  
and in the shade,  
but is cheery and warm out in the open

Raj Arumugam

# Tongue Tale

1

when I was six  
just before I left my village in India  
for the last time  
my five-year-old girlfriend  
and I huddled together in the cow-shed  
and she whispered gently into my ears:  
I shall miss your tongue  
in my mouth;  
keep it fresh with a tongue-cleaner  
till you return  
for we must have again  
our tongues in each other's mouth

2

now I wonder  
where she is  
for though I've never been back to my village or to India  
and have retained our village tradition  
of a tongue kept clean, sharp and supple  
with the use of a tongue-wiper,  
my informants tell me  
she's not in the village  
nor does anyone know what happened to her family;  
perhaps, I wonder, if she is lost amongst the millions  
in Mumbai or in Delhi  
or perhaps she too was set adrift  
in the Indian diaspora  
and is perhaps now in the UK, or the US  
or even in some remote European country  
or perhaps as close to me as the next state Down Under

3

and sometimes too as I recall her tongue in my mouth  
I wonder with jealousy what foreign tongue she explores now  
or what foreign tongue now resides in her mouth  
or perhaps she is tongue-tied now  
for she might have lost all her teeth;  
but still I desire one day  
to meet my tongue-friend from my childhood  
and perhaps when we meet  
we will greet each other with our tongues in each other's mouth  
and if our spouses rage or try and pull us apart;  
I'll explain  
(after they have pulled tongues apart, if they can)  
that this is an old and sacred village custom  
this putting of tongues in one another's mouth  
and could they please excuse us  
as we put our tongues in each other's mouth as often as we like  
for this way we do our part  
to preserve a very ancient village culture  
and tradition that is firmly within  
and only meant for those of the remote village I was born in;  
and could they just stand and watch -  
no wagging tongues, please -  
and thank you very much...

(this is poem 3 of 3 in the tongue poems series; the other two are: 1) sing you  
of the tongue 2) the confessions of John Tongue))

Raj Arumugam

# Too Long A Way

we have come a long way  
we have come a long way  
over many years  
over circuitous paths and decades;  
we have come through complicated ways  
and convoluted logic  
we have come to complex days and nights  
when all I had desired was a simple life;  
all I had wanted was a little open space  
a space to play out  
the common spatial needs of a simple being  
my share of the earth;  
a little shed  
a little shed below the trees  
a little space of one's own  
and no complexities;  
all I had desired was a quiet path  
that led to a cottage  
with the simple creatures of the earth  
for companions  
and perhaps the wandering bear that might walk past  
looking for its own mouthful of the earth's offerings;  
all I had desired were simple days and quiet ways  
at a secluded turn,  
at the end of a serene palm-line of nature's ways;  
but look, look, look...  
we have come a long way  
we have come a long way  
over many years  
over circuitous paths and years  
we have come through complicated ways  
and convoluted logic  
we have come to complex days and nights  
when all I had desired was a natural life, a life of ease...

Raj Arumugam

# Toy Master

ah, sweet little children  
and their loving parents  
all rolling merrily  
into the fair  
from happy homes  
near and far

come, see my toys  
my colorful toys  
and dolls made  
in various countries  
for all good little children  
of our bright world

there are toy soldiers  
and there are ballerinas;  
there are ducks  
and pigeons  
and this little pig goes:  
Oink! Oink! Oink!  
and this donkey replies:  
Hee-haw! Hee-haw!

see this train  
with its green lights;  
and you'll all  
love this dancing girl  
who comes alive  
with just three turns  
of the silver key

and with a flick of the switch  
this joyous fat grandpa  
laughs and raises his hands in glee;  
and you can -  
dearest children  
and most generous parents -

make me joyous too  
if you just buy a toy  
and dropp the coins  
in my toy bank  
just before you

ah, sweet little children  
and their loving parents  
all rolling merrily  
into the fair  
from happy homes  
near and far

come, see my toys  
my colorful toys  
and dolls made  
in various countries  
for all good little children  
of our bright world

Raj Arumugam

# Toyohiro's Boat

row this boat, let us;  
in this boat we are  
given a respite, calm waters  
and smooth passage, at least the while

and so let us row the boat past the fingers of land  
past the trees and receding assurances  
and the enveloping air like an imperceptible menace  
and Mt Fuji like a blessing, but the inscrutable skies all round -  
who knows how long a friend, a comfort?  
row this boat then, only our skills are certain  
only our intended destination  
(for even the benign presence we know is fickle)  
and who is to know if we may even reach land?  
all destiny is in the hands of the waves;  
we are but driftwood, we are...enjoy the rhythm  
and when it's wild, enjoy the thrill of the ride

Raj Arumugam

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Raj Arumugam

# Trading Comments

you tell me  
unsolicited  
I should read and comment on your poems  
and then you'll do likewise  
for mine;  
dear friend,  
poetry  
is no trade  
and fixable-negotiable in the market-place;  
though one may exchange postage stamps  
and vouchers  
and trade in shares  
trading in poetry I have never known...

Raj Arumugam

# Tree And Human

there is a tree, and it stands indistinct in the line  
and its soft red flowers it holds up  
to anyone who approaches;  
and like a girl may hold up her face to the rain  
its branches holds up their leaves  
and thick and close that birds may hide within

it invites no praise, just communion  
to observe and to see;  
a simple meeting between tree and human

Raj Arumugam

# Trees, And Plants And Such

trees, trees and plants  
we see them with trunks round  
Love them, laugh with them  
cos you may not see them  
all years, always a -round

Trees, trees  
they have no fingers  
Oh, but they've got many rings;  
and they still get on the internet  
by logging in

Tulips grow on your face  
and if you plant kisses  
you get another two lips;  
the cucumber goes mad  
cos it's in a pickle;  
the mushroom is always invited to parties  
cos he's a fungi

and the dog loves the tree  
cos they both have bark;  
while the frog's favorite flower  
is the croak-us;  
the elephant, on the other hand,  
I mean on the other trunk,  
loves squash;  
and while the fruit  
comes from a fruit tree  
the chicken comes  
from a poul-tree

trees, trees and plants  
we see them with trunks round  
Love them, laugh with them  
cos you may not see them  
all years, always a-round

the nut sneezes: 'Cashew! '

And the lemon is sick  
and the kind neighbors  
give it lemon-aid;  
the tomato turns red  
cos it sees the salad dressing;  
and baby corn says to mama corn:  
'Where's pop? '

and you humans  
if you reach out with your hands  
you can fit a palm tree in;  
and knock! knock!  
who's there?  
'Leaf – yeah, just leaf me alone;  
enough of your silly jokes'

Trees, trees and plants  
we see them with trunks round  
Love them, laugh with them  
Cos you may not see them  
All years, always a -round

Raj Arumugam

# True Love Song

you ask if I will not write  
a love song for you  
if I will not sing of true love  
and your beauty and tenderness;  
you ask if I will not  
hold out the stars to you  
and sing of fictions like the soul  
and the moon's sway over our eternal beings;  
no, sweetheart,  
I will not gather roses from the verse of centuries  
and I will not hold out to you the songs of yore  
and thoughts and conceits repeated  
until the very lies have become the truth -  
but of true love always I shall sing for you  
O sweetheart mine who in my company endures  
ordinary words and no stardust rhetoric;  
O sweet and innocent love  
a true love song I sing always for you;  
inherited verses and worn-out conventions  
I renounce before you;  
and in my song  
there are no  
hand-me-down ways in love and passed-on ideas  
no hyperbole and no sweet lies and fantasies  
but I sing a true song of love  
a true song of love I sing for you,  
O beloved mine who has to do  
without the routine verses

there is desire  
and there is the flesh  
there is nature  
and there are the compulsive drives  
and there are you and I  
and the life given us these years  
and so I sing my true love song for you  
you sweetest beloved,  
dearest beloved

who endures my ordinary words  
for you I sing,  
O you so cherished and much beloved,  
my true love song  
always for you  
who have to do  
without the routine verses

Raj Arumugam

# Truth

we have said one thing  
but meant another;  
we have shown what is approved  
what will create an image,  
and we hide what might offend...  
and so we live out lives  
of scratch-back lies  
and liars praise us over our dead bodies

Raj Arumugam

# Turkey On The Tree

1

well, there's this turkey  
in the bush and it sees a tree  
and there is seized with a great desire  
to reach the topmost of the branches;  
but no matter how it tries  
it can only land on the first branch

"Try a little of my droppings, "  
says the bull below the tree  
"My droppings are packed  
with vitamins and lots of energy"

2

"Thank you, Mr Bull, "  
says the turkey  
and eats some of the droppings  
and straight feels the energy  
and flies up to the first branch  
and it goes to the next  
and higher on to the next branch  
And on and on  
with so much zest and power  
till at last the turkey reaches  
its desired goal - right to the top

3

And from afar in the field  
the farmer sees the turkey  
and he shoots it down with his gun  
"Will be good for dinner this day! "  
he says

And the moral of the story in Aesop style:  
Bullshit might get you far and high  
but someone will smell it sooner or later

Raj Arumugam

# Twitter Haiku

twitter is  
electronic haiku  
but includes all the soap-opera

Raj Arumugam

# Twitter Poem

raj is eating...  
tweet!  
I'm sleeping!  
tweet!  
all that glitters is not gold –  
I just paid \$A1000  
to find that out!  
tweet! tweet! tweet!  
I'm in the toilet...flush! flush!  
hear that?  
tweet! tweet! tweet!  
I'm angry and I'm pissed off...  
Why? – just for fun!  
tweet!  
could you lend me a grand?  
tweet  
the former US President  
you-know-who is a twit!  
tweet!  
raj rules, OK? raj is king...  
tweet! tweet! tweet!  
go jump off the Golden Gate Bridge!  
tweet!  
raj is eating tiramisu!  
tweet!  
reports say Obama is in Australia;  
no appointments with Kevin Rudd  
but will cuddle koalas...  
tweet! tweet! tweet!

Raj Arumugam

# Twitter Warning

don't mess around with me  
or - I warn you - I'll cry!

Raj Arumugam

# Twittering Is Fun

twittering is fun:  
you're not going  
to tweak me at it

Raj Arumugam

# Two Children

A child thumbed  
a spider dead  
and said:  
No problem;  
and a child beside him  
sat moved.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

## Two Children In The Fields

Sir, we did not know this is your garden...  
No...Sir, my brother wanted some flowers  
and I said I would love them too

You see we were walking from the cottage  
and my little brother ran across the fields  
and I followed, Sir; and no, we were not able  
to tell anyone; and my brother ran,  
and he raised his hands across the fields  
like the birds do, their wings across the skies  
and I ran, and I forgot the distance  
and the places  
and then we sat down, tired and there was a brook  
and we drank some water  
and then my brother saw the flowers across  
on the other side  
and he ran again and he wanted the flowers  
He said he'd pick some for Mamma,  
some for our aunt  
and that is how we came here;  
and we love the flowers and the scent  
and so I helped him, Sir...  
no, we did not tell anyone we were coming  
We don't know where we are  
Please Sir, do not look so angry  
my brother is about to cry -  
he cries when people are angry, and he is afraid  
We will put the flowers back on the ground here  
where it belongs, in your park, back on your land, Sir  
Let us go now, Sir...we will go and  
we promise not to come back ever again...  
I will not let my brother come, nor will I

Raj Arumugam

# Two Crows On A Tree

CROW 1

Hey - you've got the vantage point  
higher up on the tree  
Tell me if you see  
any signs of food -  
a dead roach, some rats or carcass  
with its guts open,  
something like that...  
or even an open bin or scattered bits,  
leftovers...you get the idea...  
Just give me a caw  
when you see some...

CROW 2

Oh - don't you ever think  
about anything but food?  
The higher vantage point here  
really has put me into a philosophical mood -  
and now I'm meditating over  
life and death and meaning  
and all you think of is food...

Raj Arumugam

# Two Self-Portraits And Several Details

We see the times  
and one's many faces  
We see the moment  
the emotions and mind changes;  
the details puzzle oneself  
and one's eyes dazzle  
even one's own mind

It's a long way we've come  
through earliest memory to this age;  
we've caught our own images  
in mirrors and glasses we pass by

The face one knows,  
and one's own thoughts fair and foul  
though, even at the end,  
one does not know what  
one's feet will gather  
where one will lie at dusk

Raj Arumugam

# Two Worlds

See me in my confines;  
see me in my space

(i)

See this little beige-walled  
and white-ceilinged  
world of this unit  
in Holland Street, Toowong. See me here in bed,  
confined like a patient drugged and sedated.  
This little unit with its  
dirty orange carpet and the unseen mites teeming  
and green-curtained sliding doors  
to a balcony closed in with metal vertical blinds.  
See me here sitting in my rented gray sofa, before  
the walls lined with brown cabinet doors and  
behind a narrow room that is the toilet  
with cistern, brush, pipe and green-fern papered walls,  
that close the space on either sides  
of the constipated man seated atop his bowl.  
Outside this is a world. A wide world.

(ii)

There is a busy road out there  
connecting to busier roads  
and the postman cometh on weekdays and  
the ice-cream man rideth on Saturdays.  
The garbage man on Friday mornings, so forget not  
to push your garbage bin  
on to the pavement on Thursday evenings.

(What the postman bringeth the garbage man taketh;  
the receiver therefore collecteth and transferreth) .  
There are traffic lights, a petrol station,  
countless units on hills and slopes  
and in legacy environment  
and then a coffee club, and the news vendor  
and the rail and the cashiers with a happy look  
and a quick and efficient  
How are you today?  
dispensing pleasantries as quickly as they rid  
the queue of one more customer.  
And then officers and co-ordinators  
far and wide from whose invisible and  
sanctified confines  
emerge papers and notifications  
offering a feast of nomenclature  
and whose silences coerce you to join in the game  
of correspondence with bureaucracy.

(iii)

There are two worlds,  
the world of the unit and the wide outside world,  
and between the two a tenuous connection.  
An anti-transactional link  
that maintains a language and distribution system  
that ensures the two worlds don't meet.  
A discourse that excludes the other.

(from *The Migrant* notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Tyrant's Dream, Hermit's Dream

## The Tyrant's Dream

there is so much discourse  
an explosion of pronouncements  
such onslaught of opinions  
unbearable words and utterances  
it all begs to be silenced

## The Hermit's Dream

there is so much discourse  
an explosion of pronouncements  
such onslaught of opinions  
unbearable words and utterances

it all begs for silence

Raj Arumugam

# Uncertainty

...uncertainty, my friend, I see uncertainty...  
there are dark times,  
though light comes first...  
let me see: there are happy moments  
and all things seem to fall in place  
and desires gain momentum  
and all things seem to come to fruition...  
one reaches out, and grasps at what is before  
and all round  
and yet things that seemed so corporeal, so physical,  
they melt and unravel like phantoms,  
like images in the fog...  
and I see uncertainty...a darkness moves over the screen,  
as say shadows over a stage...  
as shadows behind a puppet-show screen...  
and there are smiles, friend...there is laughter  
and joy and happiness...  
and days of merry-making,  
and love-making and fortune....  
and uncertainty...there is an image of growth  
and then death...  
like growth in the fields and  
then night and completeness  
and brownness in the lands  
which were green the day before ...uncertainty, I see....  
...there is uncertainty... do you see it too?  
or is it brightness and radiance  
always and always that you see?  
it is like wading into a lake  
to reach those edible plants that grow  
a little towards the center  
still close enough to reach without a swim  
and one walks on firm land  
and one is nearly there;  
and then the mud and soil are soft  
and break below one  
and one falls and struggles in the water....a sudden fall...  
...a sudden uncertainty...  
I see uncertainty, dear friend...

but what do you see, dear friend...?  
...there is uncertainty... do you see it too?  
or is it brightness and radiance  
always and always that you see?

Companion painting: Fortunetelling by Alexey Venetsianov

Raj Arumugam

# Under The Birches

Under the birches  
seated on a tree stump  
pensive and withdrawn  
Her eyes below the brim of her hat  
her gaze inward, her thoughts afar

What do you think of  
young Finnish woman?  
You with your fragile beauty  
and the Japanese umbrella  
open and on its edge on the ground  
What sadness embraces  
that gentle mind of yours?

The world is inconstant  
there is the uncertainty  
The world is fragile  
always in delicate balance

Raj Arumugam

# Undergrowth With Two Figures

there are rows  
like signposts  
but they lead nowhere  
for the undergrowth leaves no paths  
no choices, not one path  
and we parade like nursery dolls  
Man and Woman Well Turned Out  
ghosts caught in perpetual time

there are rows  
like the memories that order themselves  
in our souls, what we call our souls  
but there is chaos, too much, too rich  
a profusion  
like our desires, cravings and wants  
that lead to perpetuity  
and no cessation, no hope bloom in these grounds

we must turn away from each other;  
one can't even bear to look at oneself

Raj Arumugam

# United World Federation Of Snorers

Snorers all  
scattered world-wide  
in offices and homes  
in boardrooms  
and bedrooms;  
O Snorers all  
loud and clear  
low and shrill –  
listen ye  
to the loud wake-up call  
as from Rip Van Winkle's Snore:

stand up united  
and drown the howl of protests  
against snoring that is surely no less divine  
than the Chorus of Angels in Heaven -  
for the great God who made the Aurora  
no doubt also conceived of the Divine Snore!

and so, stand up, ye sonorous Snorers!  
unite! I call unto ye!  
unite against the detractors  
and the critics  
and the complainants  
and those of low culture  
who cannot  
lie still and listen to Snoring  
as one rightly would at a concert hall  
listening to the delightful play  
of a quartet of violins

O how long will you take it lying down,  
ye blessed Snorers of the World?  
let the world know  
the first divine music was indeed the Snore;

and the very height of human communication  
is the unabashed snore  
for all other modes of communication  
lead to mis-communication  
but the language of the snore is always exact and crisp!  
the message of the Snore always precise!  
the meaning always loud and clear!  
and the very height of the snore  
(let us declare to the world)  
is the couple in bed  
snoring away together  
beside each other  
making such divine music  
making love with the rolling thunder of snores  
so that one might say:  
do we have a couple of wild boars  
copulating in the next room?

stand up, O Snorers of the World -  
and defy the mockers  
and those who seek divorce  
on grounds of insufferable Snoring;  
stand up against those who sue  
for loss of sleep from  
friendly, neighborly Snorers;  
stand up now  
against these losers, these whingeing nags  
uncouth and untutored  
in the mysteries of the art of the Snore!  
stand up and with one loud blast of  
a universal Snore,  
with one melodious Snore  
let us  
drown their dissenting voices,  
their unprovoked cacophonous complaints!  
stand up, Snorers young and old!  
unite, Snorers black, white and gold!  
defy the world - o ye Snorers  
of quiet nights and of lazy days:  
let us overwhelm the world

with the pleasing symphony of Snores;  
let us bless the ears of the world  
with the dulcet streams of varied notes and arias!  
stand up! unite! - O much-maligned Snorers of the World!  
with one voice raised  
in a triumphant Snore  
let us declare:  
No longer will we be silent –  
Our voices will be heard!

Raj Arumugam

# Uttering Words

one has spoken so much  
uttered, carved countless words  
all one's life;  
one's life short compared to humanity's time on earth  
and all one's words so infinite  
the words have lost their meaning  
and life its luster;  
and we are words, words, words

and humanity has been here  
much longer, much longer  
than any one has been

Raj Arumugam

# Vacancy: Reviewer Of Dishonest Paintings

Where Purity is the Covering of All Flesh  
and no private part of the human body  
may be shown  
and thus where the lack of Purity is Dishonesty  
and therefore are Dishonest Paintings  
wherein are depicted female breasts and such buttocks and navel  
and where genitalia female or male  
asleep or awake  
and such are shown  
and crotches and such flesh and curvatures may arouse  
such being Dishonest Paintings  
the Eminent Guardians of Purity  
announce multiple positions vacant  
of Reviewer of Dishonest Paintings  
and so to cover up with black paint any signs of breasts  
and so of any other part of images in such paintings  
as buttocks cover up with black paint  
and so on each Dishonest part of human anatomy  
to be covered with black paint  
and in this task one always to use a firm, long brush -  
the longer and firmer the better for the Soul -  
so that  
one may not come too close to such obscenities  
as coming close one may be aroused to erect desires in male  
(Females need not apply for said position  
for such lascivious creatures are always in a state of wet desires)  
and so in covering with black paint  
the Sanctity and the Will of Heaven prevails  
and human souls transported to Divine Ecstasy  
at the sight of paintings with black holes  
corrected by expert Reviewer of Dishonest Paintings  
and such positions to be filled  
by honest men firm in their resolve  
and long in stamina and determination  
they should arrange their own transport  
for various locations in the Holy Empire  
for indeed Various Positions are available  
and while the remuneration is handsome  
derived from confiscation of properties and means

of the Perpetrators of those Works of Perfidy and Damnation  
those Artists who produce and who engender  
Dishonest Paintings and such Works  
and far more too included in Renumeration  
is the Seat of Purity in Heaven -  
O the pay shall be Eternal Heaven  
Apply directly and in person  
at the South Wall of the Grand House of Divinity -  
put your scrolls in the holes

Raj Arumugam

# Vicissitudes

of things beyond one's control  
one day it may be sunshine  
as light as a child's laugh  
and some other time darkness  
and threat hanging over the earth

still, before the observing mind the heart comes to rest  
and thus one walks through with calm  
through travail, pleasure and pain

Raj Arumugam

# Visit To The Fishmonger's

the fishmonger is  
as expressionless  
as the fish he serves

Raj Arumugam

# Vow Of Silence

Kron joins the monastery;  
he must stay in isolation  
and is allowed to say 2 words  
every three years

3 years pass  
and Kron is brought before  
the Elders  
and he is allowed his 2 words  
"Cold room, " he says

3 years later  
again Kron is brought before  
the Elders  
and he is allowed his 2 words  
"Bad food, " he says

3 years later  
again Kron is brought before  
the Elders  
and he is allowed his 2 words  
"I quit, " he says

"Not surprising, " say the Elders  
"All you have done since you came here is to complain"

Raj Arumugam

# Vowel Cat

the English tutor  
sits with Tommy at the table  
and Sam the cat sits opposite

today they are practicing their vowels

every time the teacher  
says: "Tommy, give me a word  
with a vowel or two"  
Sam the cat interjects:  
"Meow...meow...meow! "

Raj Arumugam

## W: Double V Or Double U?

"You're more a double V -  
I think -  
than a double U"  
said C to W  
"So which one are you? "

"It all depends  
who's writing"  
answered W  
"All things are  
in the hands of the Writer"

Raj Arumugam

# Wagtail In Its Spot

wagtail sits  
on sparse branch  
ample space and clear all round  
wonders outward  
feels within  
content in its place  
satisfied with its lot;  
a worm today  
and some seeds in the evening;  
a quite and safe spot at dusk  
and rest and sleep when it is time

(based on painting Wagtail by Seitei (Shotai) Watanabe 1851-1918)

Raj Arumugam

# Wake To Life, Say The Gumtree Leaves

early morning and one is already at  
the computer screen against the wall  
with one's back to the garden;  
and then there's a play of light on the wall  
just above the Dell screen  
and there is the waving of the gumtree's leaves  
so like a woman's hair  
on the wall  
captured in an oblong frame of silvery sunlight

Raj Arumugam

# Waking Up

How do we awake  
to the death of each moment  
and the night, and the day?

How do we live  
after the past  
and what is not here?

We are brought  
on a wave of time  
from one moment  
to the next;  
on a drive of events  
from one act to another

How do we awake  
after that sleep  
the nurse throttled us into?  
Perhaps it's best to keep down one's head, dead

Raj Arumugam

# Waking Up In Heaven

Holy John wakes up in Heaven  
and looks around;  
he sees the floating angels  
and hears the symphonies of Brahms;  
then suddenly he sees his mortal enemy Rajki  
and shouts:  
Holy shit! You Godless Shit!  
What in God's name are you doing here in Heaven?

Don't ask me buddy,  
says the Unholy Rajki. I'm as surprised to find myself here  
as much as you are surprised to see me here.  
I don't know, Rajki says, and shrugs his shoulders.  
I died and found myself here in Heaven;  
but I'm not complaining  
as I've still got all these infidel music  
and rap and the blues and belly-dancing too...  
Anyway, welcome to Heaven, buddy,  
you got me for eternity;  
and when I'm bored with things unholy allowed here  
I'll poke my nose into your cubicle  
to laugh at your niceties and pomposity

Raj Arumugam

# Walk Into Peace

...a walk brings peace; a walk brings quiet and bliss...a walk brings energy and silence and hope, brightness and balance....

...walk in silence amongst the trees and the woods...there are no objectives in this walk...let it be a walk of love...of that love between oneself and life...of that love in oneself, in nature – of love in the world...

...if you walk alone, it is good to walk without all that chatter in one's mind; if you walk with a friend or partner, it is good to walk in silence..... let there be silence as one walks – silence within one, and between oneself and one's companions...rather, see for yourself how one is but part of the world as you walk...be part of the nature that surrounds you as you walk...

...observe the trees and the plants and the very path one walks on...observe the very flowers that greet one in one's walk....there is no need to remark on the beauty or quiet or the special-ness of the place one walks in...one just walks, being part of the world one is in...

...just observe, and meet the trees and the woods and the flowers and the fields that greet one in one's walk...

...a walk brings peace; a walk brings quiet and bliss...a walk brings energy and silence and hope, brightness and balance....

Raj Arumugam

# Walk Like A Crab

I was walking along  
leisurely  
in our cities  
(small and mega alike)  
on my own in the streets  
when I saw a 10 000  
each walking like a crab  
(well, not in parade formation  
but each mindlessly on their own  
everyone's gait like a crab's)

And The 10 000 turned to me  
in one Wagnerian chorus:  
"You should walk  
like a crab  
You fit in best  
if you walk  
like rest of us crabs"

And so today  
you might find me walking  
in our cities  
(small and mega alike)  
on my own in the streets  
the 1 added to the 10 000  
each walking like a crab

singing our Wagnerian chorus:  
"Walk, walk like a crab  
All who desire to live and prosper  
walk like a crab"

Raj Arumugam

# Walking With Vincent: An Imaginary Dialogue With Van Gogh

prelude

it is the time, the natural occasion  
of an orchard with the flowers on apricot trees  
uninhibited, and flowing and easy coming  
smooth as water and quiet as deep sleep;  
the dance of children in free, untutored movement  
a blossoming of trees in disinterested fullness

the stranger speaks

like an aimless wanderer, an un-liked gypsy  
like a vagrant, shunned, moving and unkempt  
like the pale knight of Keats's ballad -  
O Vincent,  
you walk alone in these orchards;  
and with only canvas and brushes and paint  
and what little food you can carry  
you stop in the embracing shade  
or below a peach tree  
as if to answer to a blade of grass  
and then you continue, your eyes in the distance:  
O how did it come thus to be alone, Vincent;  
how did things bring you to isolation  
to lonely journeys?

the painter replies

I walk alone, dear friend,  
sometimes by choice  
perhaps mostly being avoided  
but it is never lonely in the fields  
or in the orchards

for there is such gaiety in the grass and the blossoms  
for there is such power in the lone tree that bursts into life;  
it is with many I walk here  
but never crowded;  
it is never lonely, dear friend,  
for the trees and the grass  
and the light and the clouds and the birds and shapes and forms  
keep me company always;  
and so I wander seemingly aimless  
and the creative spirit lets me happily live on its palms

Raj Arumugam

# Wanderer On The Dirt Track

no, I did not come that way,  
no, not through all those images you mention  
or past all those signposts you just detailed;  
I came through the other perhaps the same  
and not a way, as one might say,  
for I just followed the dirt road  
and let the tracks lead  
and not in set ways  
but simply walking,  
observing,  
breathing...  
no, I did not see things the way you describe it  
nor do I yearn now for those things I saw or that passed;  
but you,  
now you must let me pass,  
and perhaps let me pass out of your mind too  
for all the words and the language and terms  
you use  
that you use to converse and interpret  
are your own,  
right down to each nail and screw  
for those things you have seen I have not  
and all you do is to see in me what you have  
while all I did was to breathe and walk and observe;  
and so I shall pass, if you will,  
wandering now  
on dirt tracks that lead nowhere  
but that keeps one moving on

Raj Arumugam

# Wandering Ronin

once I had a master  
whose name lent some dignity and glamour  
now I wander  
free of institution  
free of protocol and guidelines  
I am the wandering ronin  
nowhere to belong, related to none  
and so coming in to freedom

when I was within Order and File And Rank  
when I was within Identity and Badge and the Group  
I had recognition and complacency  
Now I am the ronin with no labels  
wandering as I desire  
unfettered as the birds of the sky  
and as the ocean waves  
Now I have no rules to follow, no obligations  
just the rhythm of love and justice  
Now I see all that I thought was necessary was but a burden;  
the price for my place had been my freedom  
And now I am the wandering ronin  
uninhibited, unconditioned, free  
as a sparrow might choose to rest where it pleases

Raj Arumugam

# Warning: Irony And Others Ahead

1

dearest readers  
be forewarned  
when you read a poem  
there may be irony ahead  
and if you don't look out  
yes, it can be like you've  
run against an iron pole  
smack bang against the forehead  
(which may not matter if you're Ironhead &quot;  
but if you're anything like me  
flesh and blood and heart &quot;  
Ouch! It can more than hurt!)

2

be forewarned also  
when you read a poem  
it can be like  
driving in a school zone  
when the kids are going home &quot;  
so watch out:  
irony may be walking with persona  
and the literal with metaphor  
and maybe a figurative pig round the corner  
and sarcasm hand in hand  
with opposite-of-what's-being-said

3

so do drive alert  
eyes open, mind open  
when in Poetry Land  
O most intelligent reader  
for you never know  
in the thoroughfare of poetry  
who you might

just bump into:  
Mr Alternative;  
Mr So-in-your-face;  
Ms I-Want-to-Talk-About-God-Yet-Again;  
Vicar Thereâ€™s-No-Bloody-God;  
Mr and Mrs Moralist;  
Mr Hey-Letâ€™s-Have-Sex-While-at-Poetry;  
and so on, you know â€”  
It can be like being Alice in Wonderland  
with the Mad Hatter  
but you got to keep your sanity  
for company

yep, stay alert  
or you might just crash your Reading

4  
An Afterthought

and I know  
wise reader  
all the above might make me sound  
like Mr-know-all  
but hey â€” modestyâ€™s never been  
the poetâ€™s professional trait  
(you must think about that â€”  
cos even the poet devoted entirely  
to Subjects Divine and Holy  
and of Such Lofty Things  
and exuding sweet humility  
is bloody arrogant -  
cos they do implicitly or explicitly claim  
they know what really matters  
while you or I donâ€™t)

Raj Arumugam

# Was It You, Moon?

cold moon  
I am sad;  
was it you,  
distant moon,  
who made me so  
tonight?

Raj Arumugam

# Was That You That Cried?

was that you who cried?  
I heard that grief  
as one hears the growing grass

was that you who cried?  
I heard that sigh  
as one hears the whisper  
of one leaf to another;  
I heard that pain  
as one hears a wave creep up to one's feet

you can hug your pain  
embrace it, bring it close to your heart  
and look into its eyes  
and it will gaze back at you;  
simply look at it with all the love you can give  
and it will love back;  
and one understands suffering

Raj Arumugam

# Wash Me Of This Filth

Wash me of this filth  
and keep me clean;  
living and desire are heavy burdens  
and they wear down the mind  
so that a tired mind craves the unpleasant  
and drags being into the mires and  
unclean grounds.

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Washerwomen

Today, you know, after we've washed  
these clothes, that bundle - but my mind is on  
what we'll do after...yes, washing  
these clothes we must apply ourselves,  
you know - as we always do...but she said  
before we left, return soon  
and we can have chicken broth  
Now that is something to look out for - what?  
You don't like chicken? (Goat eaters like  
you, you people are always unappreciative)  
But after we've washed and dried these bundles,  
we'll stop there - What? Who cares if you're  
not coming! All the more of the chicken broth  
I'll have myself then  
and the bread they bake out in their own kitchen  
(I'll save crumbs for you, if you want)  
But we've been washing these now -  
What, thirty years? - and we've put on more flesh,  
and our backs `ve gone crooked  
but a treat, that's what chicken broth and bread is  
after a day's hard work, coming as it does  
from her home and warm  
What? You want to come now?  
Well, what's to stop you?  
...no one's disinvited you...yet...ha, ha, hey...  
chicken for a goat eater!

Raj Arumugam

# Watch Battery Replaced

The sign at the kiosk  
at my local mall said:  
'WATCH  
BATTERY REPLACED  
2-Year Guarantee'

So I stood by  
watching the watch guy  
replacing batteries  
and then he looked at me with his sharp eye  
and he said:  
'What you looking at? '

'Oh, ' said I  
'as invited,  
I'm watching  
you replace batteries  
But though you perform for two years  
I can't guarantee I'll hang around for even one'

Raj Arumugam

# Wayfarer

passing through  
I am grateful  
one can find some water  
that the town can offer  
gratis, with good intention

thank you for the kindness  
you offer the wayfarer  
for this is the length  
and depth of all our lives:  
one but wanders  
whether it be between  
fixed stations in life  
or an aimless journey  
one takes to various places

till one wanders no more, can no longer wander  
and one struggles to find the words in the end  
and so it is that I say now  
(now that my thirst is sated)

Thank you and I shall be on my way;  
and may you good people who offered this kindness  
find peace in your own manner of wanderings

Raj Arumugam

# We Are Such Persuaders

we gasp at beauty and lofty words  
and wear badges of holiness and purity  
and we have such transformational ideals  
and most sacred truths, and unquestionable Revelations -  
but walk everyday on mud and slime  
and sit down on earth that cuts and maims  
and lie down in beds of flowery poppy  
and live each minute within in petty ways:  
we are such talkers, man and woman  
we are such persuaders  
we deceive ourselves most

Raj Arumugam

# We Have Missed This

This is what we have missed, ignored:  
the quiet and silence;  
the embrace that light, time, the earth  
and the water and the sky offer

We have allowed the mind to agitate;  
we have been victims to its fury  
The anger and the palpitations within  
have flowed into every vein of the being

This is what we have not met with silence;  
we have not come to this free, with no will

This quiet and these gentle arms and seeing -  
to these we have not yielded before

Raj Arumugam

# We Have Said So Much

we have written so much  
we have said so much  
we have discoursed so much;  
most fervently, most convincingly  
most fanatically  
and with art and subtlety  
and with gravity and with crudity  
we have screamed and shouted our truths  
from towers and in cities and in deserts  
and in inns and in prisons  
and in the privacy of our confines;  
and we have talked so much,  
chattered so profusely and so continuously  
so helplessly,  
it's time to dropp everything...

it's time for some silence...

perhaps we'll see then how each did not believe in these  
and so each screamed often;  
perhaps we'll see the futility and meaninglessness of it all  
in that silence...

Raj Arumugam

# We Have Walked Now Long On The Road

We have walked now long  
on the road  
after the demands of the dark day  
so that we might  
reach some comfort and rest

We know  
where it ends but not what it will bring  
and all its connections, what it links  
and what else and where it might lead  
We are but little forms  
in a world that rolls and changes, disinterested

We have walked when we needed to  
and have ridden too -  
but all the same, the interminable journey  
ends only to start again  
as day follows night  
and leads to night again

We shall walk this way now,  
that is the shorter way;  
it might be less of a strain

Raj Arumugam

# We Must Go

I must go, sweetheart;  
and so must you  
as dews and leaves do

Raj Arumugam

# We Rolled Over In Our Beds

what did we do?  
we made love and rolled over in our beds;  
and whispered sweet words as afterplay  
and whispered words of genuine love

and now we each lie in different beds  
in different homes  
with lovers who too had other histories  
and their fair share of naïve decades;  
and Raphael's invisible Cupids  
who preside over love and love-making  
and marriages made in Heaven  
wonder:  
What is this thing we prescribe called love?

Raj Arumugam

# We Seek Pleasant Fields

we seek pleasant fields  
easy ways, unbelievable solutions  
low-risk, high-yield investments;  
pleasant fields  
where we can chew cud  
and lie with our sexy partners  
and drink soma and sip bacardi rum;  
we seek get-rich-quick schemes  
and we desire get-to-Heaven plans;  
O, we seek pleasant fields  
that will bring comfy tomorrows  
and Heavens that will  
answer all our prayers;  
and so the Financial Gurus appear  
and do so Preachers and Saviors  
and we make markets of our  
Houses of Prayer;  
we seek pleasant fields  
and so come too Prophets, a long line of them  
and Teachers and Chosen Ones  
and we create God  
that we force to create us;  
we seek pleasant fields  
so we can have earthly pleasures  
and move on  
to have eternal comforts;  
here we will have financial security  
and plenty that the pleasant fields yield,  
and through our religion and our faith and our beliefs  
and oh, through the grace of Almighty God,  
through the One True God  
we will have eternal insurance  
(including travel insurance)  
and we will have pleasant fields  
all day long  
and all eternity long;  
and forever we shall live  
in Paradise  
where everyone's reward

are harm-free drugs  
and one can ride  
in the Heavens of one's imaginations

we seek pleasant fields  
because we cannot face  
the mines in the fields of our own ugliness

Raj Arumugam

# We Trembled In Our Nights

we trembled in our nights  
in the wild  
and you shattered the darkness  
and you said:  
Behold, Creatures -  
Behold the Earth!

(2 in Sun Poems series)

Raj Arumugam

# Weakness Of Poetry

a little moment captured  
many memories made;  
limitless thoughts recorded  
and diversions and escapes, and theories justified;  
and still poetry offers no rest

Raj Arumugam

# Weaving Illusion

are you actually wise  
or a skilled twister of words?  
one  
sinking in self-deception  
and expert in weaving illusion;  
trapped in the description  
and not seeing the thing itself

Raj Arumugam

# Weird History Part 3 Of The Discovery Of Kama Sutra

Weird History

Part 3 of the discovery of Kama Sutra (Singapore,1970)

That night as we lay  
on our mats on the floor  
Somu asked me:  
You know...I was thinking....  
ever since you provided  
your summary of the Kama Sutra  
delivered in such melodramatic actor's voice...  
I've been wondering....Do you think Dad knows  
the Kama Sutra?

Oh, I said immediately.  
How would  
dad know  
about the Kama Sutra?  
It's been banned In India  
since the middle ages.  
He only knows  
Hare Rama, Hare Rama...  
Now, maybe it'd do you good  
to repeat the mantra 100 times  
and go to sleep...  
You might end up in Vaikunta.

And then sonambulist Somu said:  
What's that book you were reading  
this afternoon  
covered behind your  
school History Text Book?

Oh God! Nothing escapes the eyes

of this sibling who came a year after me;  
and I had to make an honest reply  
or he'd pursue me to the ends of the earth:  
Oh, it's another book  
I found at the Saint's Book Store;  
it's called The Perfumed Garden;  
it's in Arabic and you won't understand a word;  
you can read it when you're fifty  
because that's how long it'll take me to translate the work

Somu, the silly sibling ever,  
sat up on his mat and looked at me suspiciously:  
When did you learn Arabic?  
You can't even read Tamil properly!

And irritated, I said:  
Oh shut up and sleep...  
Don't you go digging into what I do.  
I learn all sorts of things in my own time –  
and you're best, little brother,  
to stick to Hare Rama, Hare Rama  
Or Hara Hara, Siva Siva...

And for that,  
the traitor of a brother told all our school mates  
I was reading dirty Science  
and weird History!

Raj Arumugam

# What A Poet Must Do And Be

a poet, it is said,  
must be pure and holy;  
a poet, it is decreed,  
must bring truth and clarity;  
a poet, it is declared,  
must use words good and sublime;  
a poet, it is said  
must choose subjects  
that are sanctioned and chaste  
like the moon and stars  
and butterflies and innocent creatures of the fields;  
and fill pages with  
I-love-you-you-love-me oratory  
and volumes of  
today I feel this way  
yesterday I had five coffees;  
further, it is inscribed in  
the tombs and mausoleums and  
encrypted in arcane ancient texts  
and revealed scriptures,  
that the poet shall speak  
wholly of holy matters and things  
and choose for his imagery  
clouds, angels and music  
and such radiant things

well, you can say what you like  
you can believe what you fancy –  
if I write, I'll do and speak  
just damned well  
as I please...  
thank you very much...

Raj Arumugam

# What Did You Do With Time?

what did you do with all the pain  
and the agony and remorse  
and the guilt?

I did away with time  
and each mirage disappeared

Raj Arumugam

# What Did You Learn At School Today?

1

What do kids learn  
say on the first day at school?  
...just some light-hearted verse follows...

2

See it's Tim's first day  
at high school;  
see dad's come to pick up Tim  
See all the kids are coming out of school  
And you can see Tim too  
Do you see Tim?  
He is walking  
and Dad waves to him  
and Tim gets in the car

and Dad says:  
"Hi Tim...Did you enjoy school? "

"Yes, " says Tim, looking serious

"And what did you learn, Tim  
on your first day at high school? "

"I learned, " says little Tim  
"that all my friends get more pocket money  
than I do! "

Raj Arumugam

# What Do You Want To See?

what do you want to see?  
you see what you want to see...  
and then you impose it on others...  
why?  
because you want to feel right...  
and why do you want to feel right?  
you don't know why  
and you bring in justifications  
to see what you see;  
you get recruited  
you join a group  
to feel special  
and create plenty of fury  
and flurry  
to get others to see what you see;  
and you have revelations and indisputable sanctity  
and you want to make the world see what you see:  
nothing else but what you see  
and why do you want to do that?  
because someone did that to you?  
but you see what you want to see  
and then you set up structures to impose it on others...  
and so you distort the world, and we all distort our minds  
and so it goes...  
it all started with what you wanted to see...

Raj Arumugam

# What Holds Things Together?

What holds things together?

He thought

his passions and his interests held things together.

He thought he was resourceful and strong

and that did the trick for him. He thought

his resilience and his training held things for him.

What holds things together?

Something he never reckoned

had such importance;

losing reality over time in comfort

something he had taken for granted.

Because if you're in a city

and survive dependent in an economy,

there's only one thing

that holds things together. A job. He didn't know this till he had given it up in one place

hoping to get it in another.

Because if you're in a city you either create a job as entrepreneurs do, or get a job as a survivor.

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# What I Want To Know

what I want to know  
what I'd really like to know  
before I dropp down dead  
or crawl into amnesia or alzheimer's  
or whatever;  
what I really want to know  
(if I can remember it;  
let me see if I can recall it,  
refresh please....  
try and retrieve it from the backwaters of my mind)  
yes, what I really want to know  
about all this talk about  
bad people and all the bad things all the bad guys do  
and all this talk about all these selfishness and greed  
and all these 'Look at them! ' 'Look at these! '  
And all this: 'I don't know what the world's coming to! '  
and all this talk about the vices and bad habits  
all the bad things other people do;  
what I really want to know is  
if everybody's so good  
(O you angels on earth;  
O you goody-good brothers and sisters)  
pointing to everyone else –  
hey, you earthlings,  
if everyone of you is so good  
as you all appear in each conversation and post –  
where are the evil guys  
and all the bad guys  
and all the bad things you point out?  
where are they all coming from  
if each one of you is so good?  
that's what I want to know  
before I kick the bucket  
that is  
if I can remember or hear  
what I'd wanted to know when the answer comes

Raj Arumugam

# What Is Pleasant And What Is Painful

what is pleasant  
what gives pleasure  
the mind records memory of;  
what is painful  
what gives discomfort  
that too  
the mind records memory of;  
and the mind learns to crave for one  
and to recoil from the other  
and so our lives are formed  
from every pleasure, from every comfort  
and every choice we make;  
there is nothing there in our lives  
but craving and recoiling  
and the mind that sees this conditioning  
that mind is free of traps  
that mind is free of memory  
it recognizes the way it is made to operate

Raj Arumugam

# What The Creatures Say

the donkey jumps  
in the fields and says:  
Hee-haw! Hee-haw! Hee-haw!

the cat curls  
on my sofa  
and purrs:  
Meow! Meow! Meow!

the cow lies on the grass  
chews its cud  
and mumbles:  
Moo! Moo! Moo!

the lion bites into the flesh  
of its prey,  
eats heartily  
and lies in the shade,  
and growls:  
Roar! Roar! Roar!

the dog is in the yard  
it is night  
and it declares:  
Bow-wow! Bow-wow! Bow-wow!

the pig is in the mud  
rolls back and forth  
and goes:  
Oink! Oink! Oink!

and man and woman  
and the child too  
and even the old and infirm

and the dying too,  
wherever they all may be,  
all these humans say:  
Me! Me! Me!

Raj Arumugam

# What Will The Morning Bring?

What will the morning bring? Will it bring  
any hope at all? Or will it still have  
me lingering round the phone  
like an unemployed worker standing at the dock  
eager, waiting to be called,  
and sighing after many a false alarm?

What will the next morning bring?  
Will it be at ten  
a letter of offer  
or just me with my open palm  
in the cold letter box  
pulling out a brown envelope  
that proves  
no news is good news

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# What's The Difference, If Any?

what's the difference between a poet and  
the talkative loquacious one  
who must find any issue to babble about  
and this puts into verse?

what's the difference  
between one who is hopelessly in love  
and so writes of this in verse  
and a poet?

if any

what's the difference between  
one who exchanges goss and hot news about others  
and one who writes verse that generalizes these  
and a poet?

if any

what's the difference between the philosopher  
who writes much verse  
on one's various ruminations  
and a poet?

if any?

what's the difference between  
one who complains about the world  
and wants to reform the world  
and is full of the faults of the world  
and so generates this into verse?  
and a poet?

what about between the poet on the one hand  
and on the other

the preacher and the evangelist  
so given to revelations and clichés  
and is so moved by the spirit to fashion much verse?  
if any?

what's the difference between a moralist  
so given to aphorisms and pronouncements and judgment  
all so well-shaped in verse  
and a poet?

is there any amongst all these at all  
or they all poets in some way?

what is the difference between the self-centered  
who've got so many issues and problems

and wishes the world would be kinder and gentler  
and gives them their just due  
and would have all this simply  
by punching a keyboard to make verse  
and a poet?  
if any?

Raj Arumugam

# What's The Moral Of This Tale?

The Wise Owl  
in the woods  
spoke mostly  
by way of tales  
and stories

and at the end  
of one these tales  
Rabbit asked:  
'What's the moral of this tale? '

And the Wise Owl hooted briefly:  
'I have to tell you the tale  
and must I do the thinking  
for you as well? '

And if you,  
gentle reader,  
should ask me too  
what the moral of this tale is  
then I must refer you  
to the Owl  
that is wiser than I

Raj Arumugam

# What's This About?

the morning sun  
raging through  
the leaves of the jacaranda  
or the eucalyptus;  
or clouds gathered in mutiny  
against the moon they perceive is weak:  
often it is ignored  
or taken for granted  
but it does happen, does it not? -  
when one is stopped and  
one wonders sometimes what is this all about?  
You know, you go about life  
with all its demands and its gentle persuasions  
and then perhaps at an unexpected moment -  
perhaps briefly, a fleeting instant  
so minute sometimes it does not even register on the face  
but a faint turn or twist in the brain:  
and you see then the sun or the moon or the cloud,  
in that instant  
as the thought what is this about?  
flashes like lightning  
and dies like fish...  
you wonder then, perhaps knowing or unknowing -  
you wonder, what's all this about...  
a seed perhaps that's planted in the furrowed grounds of the mind  
that will grow into a green thorn  
or blossom like roses on fertile ground

Raj Arumugam

# Wheiii! Wheeiii! Wheeiii!

..ga..ga..mama...  
and dada...gaga...  
whaare! whei! whei!  
ma and papa, gaga...  
it's me...me...me...your baby..  
..ga..ga..ga..  
whaare! whei! whei!

it's me, your baby  
soft as lily  
cool as dew;  
bright as light  
and tough as nails;  
cuddly as a koala  
and weak as a joey

..ga..ga..mama...  
and dada...gaga...  
whaare! whei! whei!  
ma and papa, gaga...  
it's me...me...me...your baby..  
..ga..ga..ga..  
whaare! whei! whei!

it's me your sweetie  
all you ever wanted:  
your precious, precious, precious  
your meaning  
your darling  
and purpose  
here on earth

..ga..ga..mama...  
and dada...gaga...  
whaare! whei! whei!  
ma and papa, gaga...  
it's me...me...me...your baby..  
..ga..ga..ga..  
whaare! whei! whei!

it's me come to you  
it's me your precious pearl  
your joy and light:  
Hi mum and dad  
it's me,  
your darling bubs

..ga..ga..mama...  
and dada...gaga...  
whaare! whei! whei!  
ma and papa, gaga...  
it's me...me...me...your baby..  
..ga..ga..ga..  
whaare! whei! whei!

I promise nothing  
but joy comes  
automatic;  
and you got to promise me –  
mummy and daddy,  
take care and love me;  
remember always:  
you brought me here;  
I didn't ask to come in

....ga..ga..mama...  
and dada...gaga...  
whaare! whei! whei!

ma and papa, gaga...  
it's me...me...me...your baby..  
..ga..ga..ga..  
whaare! whei! whei!

Raj Arumugam

# When I Am Gainfully Unemployed

When I am gainfully unemployed  
When I am the king  
and thus gainfully unemployed  
I shall declare a day off from work  
for every employed man and woman;  
it shall not be a holiday  
or a day of celebration;  
but they shall be gathered in the public square  
and half the day  
these shall spend the time  
on their knees  
in gratitude for being employed;  
and the other half,  
they shall spend in the dungeons  
for the year's thoughtlessness

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# When I Come Back From Walks

when I come back from walks  
or if people see me by the river  
or if a couple I know walk past me  
they hand in hand,  
me with eyes closed and still  
listening to some invisible bird  
chirping in branches above,  
sometimes some say:  
see that sad man;  
the lonely man in his walk...

ah friends, I say (and only if asked) ,  
aloneness is not sadness  
aloneness is not lonely  
for the quiet is deeper  
than the chatter  
and the noise  
and deeper still  
than the bonds and memories

Raj Arumugam

# When I Saw Bani Thani, When I Heard Her Sing

O Bani Thani

I grow thin, wanting you;

O you of the drooping eyes and long neck

O Bani Thani, O sublime poetess and singer

who walks gracefully through the halls of Kishangarh

I hear

you are in my stepmother's service;

and the songs you sing

though they are most sublime

they lure me into unholy thoughts, O Bani Thani

as do your drooping eyes, your lips curved into a smile

You walk head high always, they say

and you look directly ahead even when I am nigh

and yet that too invites me to wander over the landscape of your face

your drooping eyes, your drooping eyes

the eyebrow like a bow, the bow of Rajput warriors

whose arrows pierce with vigour

the elongated face, O Bani Thani

your elongated face and nose and curls of hair

that flow to your waist

and that visage and seduction all graced in muslin odhni

O Bani Thani

I hear your voice, I hear your songs

and your poems are recited here by the men even in the streets -

O but do you hear mine, do you hear my poems of  
love, lust and thoughts unholy?

O do you hear my poems of pain and longing? -

all arising, all arising, O Bani Thani

everything in my manhood aroused

as I see you walk by, as I hear you sing

as I hear you play on your instruments

O Bani Thani, Bani Thani -

sing to me, sing to me:

What is my end, what is my fate

in this my love and longing for you?

Raj Arumugam

# When I Was Little

when I was little,  
I was told who I was:  
I was given a name and told of my inheritance;  
and in multicultural settings was shown my identity...  
this is you, and this is yours, I was told;  
and in my turn, I told others who came after me...  
but now when I am grown and since free  
and when I see within me, I see fear, pleasure, joy and pain  
all the feelings and contents and  
when I was little,  
I was told who I was:  
I was given a name and told of my inheritance;  
and in multicultural settings was shown my identity...  
this is you, and this is yours, I was told;  
and in my turn, I told others who came after me...  
but now when I am grown and since free  
and when I see within me, I see fear, pleasure, joy and pain  
all the feelings and contents and lies and truths  
the same as you and another...  
I see the conditioning and I see the clarity that comes with the seeing...  
Now, though I call my body a name, and refer to myself as I,  
There is not an I that I can find...

Raj Arumugam

# When I'M Retired

1

if and when I'm retired?  
I'd expect the world to be kind  
and reverential:  
so I'd expect when I drive?  
all people get off the road ?  
when they see me approach; ?  
and at the bank ?for all to step aside?  
for a man whose daily 3-time meals?  
is nothing but baked beans?

2

I'd expect the world to be in awe, and to admire  
so the women would say: "My, look at this retiree  
in his psychedelic shirt and rainbow hat  
and his bell-bottoms - real cool, baby"  
and the men would concur, dazzled:  
"Owww - this guy, what planet is he from? "

3

and "of course I'd expect" the govt  
to send me my cheque? weekly -  
no, wait - EFT  
will be the way to go; ?  
and the Minister for the Retired  
should call me every 30th?  
to ask if I'd like a raise

4

Also I'd expect  
to wake up each morning  
to find a cup of coffee ready on my table  
and I'd turn to my wife and say:  
"All our lives, you always put the damned salt  
in the coffee"  
And I'd expect her to say  
(cos that's always been the way) :  
"If you want sugar in your coffee

fix your damned coffee yourself! &quot;

5

And all these things I expect  
of the world (except of my wife)  
to be kind ?and reverential  
if and when I'm retired -  
but then again, I might just die  
at my table at work  
after a coffee I fixed myself

Raj Arumugam

# When My Love Calls

my sweet, sweet love  
he has called many times and yet,  
for fear and family restraint, I have not gone;  
my sweet lover,  
he sends me whispers and notes that  
he will meet me by the lake  
where the lonely paths of fine sand meet;  
and there by the green lake  
is the cool mango grove  
and he shall wait, leaning against the tallest tree;  
ah, when he calls again and again,  
as his life depends on seeing me,  
as my own on seeing him,  
how can I say No?

though maid or sister will not come to accompany me  
still I shall go, trusting in love and the doves and the deer  
that shall bring me to my sweet, sweet love  
who waits patiently...

Raj Arumugam

# When The Sun Kissed Your Face

when the sun kissed your face  
what did you feel?  
do you remember  
how was it when the sun  
peeped through the trees?

that is yours to keep  
that is yours to keep  
always yours

and what song arose in your heart  
when the moon stood  
before you in the sky  
as you turned the bend?

that is yours to keep  
that is yours to keep  
always yours

when the breeze  
fingered your hair  
and blew whispers in your ears  
what did you hear?  
what did you hear?

that is yours to keep  
that is yours to keep  
always yours

and what rhythms arose in your veins  
what sensations in your flesh  
when the stars shone over you  
and the birds called out to you  
called out to you?

that is yours to keep  
that is yours to keep  
always yours

to keep  
always yours

Raj Arumugam

# When You Become Irreplaceable

1

Peter's been in the job  
nine months  
He's got the hang of it  
He's really good;  
Customers ask for him  
Colleagues rely on him  
The boss assigns him tough jobs

Peter's wife says at home:  
"My, you've become irreplaceable  
Time for a promotion;  
and time for my makeover";

2

And so Peter speaks to his Boss  
about a promotion  
and runs through what he's done  
in nine months:  
"I've got the hang of it  
I'm really good;  
Customers ask for me  
Colleagues rely on me  
You trust me with the tough jobs  
I'm irreplaceable";

"Agreed, " says the Boss  
"But you are irreplaceable";  
...pause...pause...pause...  
So no one can take your  
current position; so  
you'll have to stay there,  
I'm afraid";

Raj Arumugam

# Where Did I Park My Car?

1

where did I park my car?  
I'm sure I left it here  
on this level  
just hours before

had a coffee at the center  
caught up with some friends  
watched a movie  
and bought some stuff for home  
and now I can't find my car  
though I've searched past 10 minutes

where did I park my car?  
I'm sure I left it here  
on this level  
just hours before

no, that's not mine  
that's a Mercedes;  
that one's too shiny;  
and maybe it's this one  
- no, mate,  
we won't go any nearer  
this car is too clean  
mine will look like  
it's not been washed since Noah

where did I park my car?  
I'm sure I left it here  
on this level  
just hours before

2

well, yes, help me look out...  
it's an old Nissan  
blue faded into white;  
no, nobody 'll steal that  
and the only people  
who'd give it a second look  
will be the traffic police  
who'd wave as if to say:  
Pull over, Sir;  
let's have a look at  
your rego and front tyres

now, where did I park my car?  
I'm sure I left it here  
on this level  
just hours before

well, damn,  
I'm sure it hasn't moved  
it's not that sort with smart technology  
self-park, self-drive or with sensors;  
it's like an old useless dog  
completely lost without its master

where did I park my car?  
I'm sure I left it here  
on this level  
just hours before

now that we've looked  
about 30 minutes or more  
I'm not sure if this is the right level;  
Oh, did I stop at Yellow Level  
or Blue or Green or Pink?  
was it level 1 or 2 or 3 or 9?  
it's completely out of my mind

where did I park my car?  
I'm sure I left it here  
on this level  
just hours before

ah, there it is  
that old boneshaker;  
thanks mate, for helping me look  
You were saying you want a lift –  
yes, come - I'll dropp you...no trouble...  
yes, it's just on the way...  
Hey...Where you going?  
What? Don't want a lift?  
You'd rather walk home?  
Hey, what's wrong with my car?  
OK, suit yourself...  
at least I found my faithful car...

where did I park my car?  
it was Level 5, Yellow Sector  
Lot 125  
all the while  
and that beauty was here each second  
an old helpless dog, waiting for its master

Raj Arumugam

# Where's The Dignity In All This?

There is no dignity in how you have treated me  
for your language has always been discreet and evasive  
mute in honesty  
and eloquent in bureaucracy

You need to rely on this  
for obviously  
you do not know truth and simplicity

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Which Clown Is It Now?

Which clown is it now?  
each clown takes turn  
to lead  
to bring the masses under his  
thumb  
and the fools crawl under

Which clown is it now -  
and what ideology  
does he scream?  
What book does he quote  
and what authority does he cite?  
And always the fools follow

Which clown is it now revered  
and takes the pulpit and the pedestal  
and spits out his words?  
And each word is taken to be  
Unquestionable Truth

Oh, through the centuries they come  
these clowns from the oceans,  
the forests, towns and cities and the deserts -  
and there are always fools  
who know no other way but to be led  
by the tips of their noses

Raj Arumugam

# Which Is The Dreamer?

Chuang Tzu dreams he's a butterfly  
and when awake  
he asks:  
Which is the dreamer?

Raj Arumugam

# Which Way It Went

We do not know  
which way it went;  
lost, or still with us  
which way it goes

We do not know  
how it transpired;  
memory tells one story  
it offers reassurance

but delusion sneers outside -  
its face pressed against  
the window

Raj Arumugam

# While We Wait

There's that moment  
that slides away  
The seconds that escape

Often whole years glide past  
while we look down a while

There's time that we think  
will never flow, not move  
but it all eats the wall and floor

The best you can do  
is to be occupied  
The best I can do is look  
at what the tip of an umbrella might show

Raj Arumugam

# Whinger

I agreed in my youth  
to spend  
my time  
in a monastery  
speaking only once  
each ten years

Ten years, and my Master  
summoned me  
and I said: 'My bed is hard'

I had spoken  
and I was back on my next ten  
at the end of which I intoned:  
'The food here is horrid'

I was on my next cycle  
of ten years  
and at the end of the third decade  
I declared: 'I quit! '

And my revered Master proclaimed:  
'Go, you loser.  
All you have done is to whinge.'

Raj Arumugam

# Who Are You Seeing?

1

modern Romance can be strange  
with each seeing others at the same time  
even while in a relationship;  
but it's always been the same:  
the guys never get it

2

like yesterday my love, strong Tom,  
he told me:  
'Sweet Ann, I've kept something from you;  
I must tell you the truth now:  
I'm seeing a psychiatrist'

And I thought, as he was being honest  
I should be honest too  
and so, I said:  
'Oh my Tom – I'll tell you the truth:  
I'm seeing a plumber, a doctor and a mechanic'

And I don't understand these men  
and their double standards;  
Tom just stormed out

Raj Arumugam

# Who Shall Comfort You

who shall comfort you  
lonely, desolate soul  
they tie up and palm-and-sole-nailed  
to lonely asteroids  
in cold space  
to be liver-eaten  
daily by Space Eagle  
naked Prometheus of eternal times  
this star-age Robinson Crusoe  
that time throws out to emptiness  
to be guardian of waves of loneliness  
no kin or alien shall visit you,  
you shall not remember  
any names of months or days too  
most certainly no Fridays in the sunlit emptiness  
and the food you shall have is  
concentrated marrow juice that you  
shall suck out of plastic bone-sachets  
to last you a lifetime of self-liness  
and toothaches and abscess and plaque and bad breath;  
and who shall wipe any tear, if at all  
for your humanity shall still not leave you  
and hardness of heart though it comes  
yields to madness of tears and pleasures of anguish  
you shall have no one  
all philosophy shall elude you  
and faith be meaningless  
for at last you must confront  
the pain and the agony  
and the futility, the meaninglessness  
and you know  
in emptiness there's just you -  
and you know, what do you do with you?

Raj Arumugam

# Who's This Dead?

who's this dead  
run over by cars  
and maybe trucks  
found at five am  
as I drive up Milton Road?  
who's this dead?  
head pressed flat  
and close to the road  
tummy split open  
and never too early for crows;  
and fur still clear on the tar  
and limbs outstretched  
who is this dead?  
poor misfit creature  
who can't negotiate our roads  
who are you,  
you gentle creature?  
some gentle being who came down  
from the trees at night  
perhaps taking a walk  
or looking for food  
and knocked down dead  
by tyres and such power

Raj Arumugam

# Why God Is Not The Answer

too many readily answer me:  
God is the answer...

the problem is,  
starting with something undefined  
and using cliches: 'Oh, just three letters, one word'  
they invite you into seeming simplicity and clarity  
and then lead one  
into the ravenous and Khmer Rouge corridors of organized religion  
that preach revelation that is past  
revelation distorted in language:  
how can you trust the deceitful?  
the word is never the thing  
and is therefore deception  
therefore honest ones cannot use three letters, one word: God

poor deceivers, undeceive yourself first;  
dearest lazy deceivers,  
words ensnare the mind;  
surely your Three-letters-One-word Being  
must know this  
and therefore will not and cannot leave any revelation

Raj Arumugam

# Why People Do Not Write Haikus

they don't know  
what it is;  
there is no penetration

Raj Arumugam

# Why People Write Haikus

lazy writers  
increase numbers;  
few come with insight

Raj Arumugam

# Why Poetry

some of us come to poetry for amusement  
some for fun and some for pride  
and some for play and some because one must belong to a group;  
and some for mischief and some for sex, for fantasy  
and some for a little bit of money  
and importance and attention;  
and yet some have come to poetry for consolation  
like going to religion for comfort and grand truth  
and affirmation  
and then we take on an ideology and all its ugliness;  
but can one come to poetry  
for its sheer beauty?  
as naturally as one may turn a bend  
on a path  
and come with no expectation  
on an expanse of joyous plants and flowers;  
just as if one's religion is nothing but beauty  
and so religion ends and beauty is;  
and so coming, poetry ceases and beauty is:  
is that possible?

Raj Arumugam

# Why The Sunset Comes

the sunset does not come,  
do you think,  
to be appreciated  
and to be told how beautiful it is,  
don't you think?  
the stars come in at night  
and the moon too  
not really for appreciation  
and to be glorified and to be the subject  
of paintings and songs and nursery rhymes;  
they simply are in the general scheme-dance of things;  
the bird may sing to attract a mate  
and perhaps to warn the group  
but it does not sing, it appears,  
for audience approval and applause  
and ratings and number of visits;  
it is just its nature, I think:  
so that the sunset comes  
and the stars and the moon too  
according to conditions  
and the bird sings because it must;  
there are no complications...

Raj Arumugam

# Why We Kill Socrates

Socrates asks too many questions  
and so in Athens they give him hemlock  
"Cheers! " they say  
and Socrates drinks to health  
and he drops down dead

"Could I have one? "  
asks Citizen  
"No, " says the State  
"cos if that's the only kind of question  
you can ask  
we want you to stay alive  
eat, drink and fornicate  
and prop up the State"

Raj Arumugam

# Wild Cat, Domesticated Cat And Sparrows

Hey, elegant cat,  
you think you can  
rest there sitting so prim and well-brought up  
and think I'll bring you some sparrows I catch  
on from the tree-top?  
You got to move your butt, brother;  
Sparrows don't fall off trees like ripe fruit  
for you to pick from the ground, you know.  
Or maybe you don't know.  
And I'm not going to be doing the work  
for you, wild cat and friendless as I am.  
I live on my own, catch my own sparrows  
and eat my own dinner  
and lick my lips and I sleep under the shade of the tree  
when my tummy's full  
and sure, that's all I care about  
getting my daily meals.  
And not even in your wildest dreams, hey well-washed cat,  
not even in your wildest dreams  
do I have desire to share bird meat and bones with anyone  
and especially not with an elegant rich-home cat like you...  
Well, you can have the feathers, if you like.  
Now really, how did a nice cat like you get lost?  
Is this your day out or what?  
Some kind of an expedition day?  
You want a sparrow to eat?  
Get your fat arse here up the tree  
with as much stealth as you can  
and catch yourself one!  
And you stupid cat from comfy rooms  
having sat your butt on soft cushions all your life –  
stop meow-meowing with hunger! – you'll scare the birds away,  
you unnatural, unnatural domesticated cat!  
You know, you'd be better off using your powers of sight  
and finding your way back  
from wherever you came from and get back  
to mummy's home asap.  
Go stand under some lamp post where they might have a  
Cuddly Cat Lost sign

and someone might bring you to your owner for a reward.  
No way you going to survive in the open, brother!

Raj Arumugam

# Will This Love Be Pastoral

will this love be pastoral  
or gypsy  
with abandon and fields and flowers?  
dear heart  
O dearest love  
will it be Parisian  
with wine and sophistication?  
Will Hamlet and Juliet hold hands here  
and Ophelia and Sybil and Cassandra sit in dark corners  
watching and casting spells?  
will this be Orpheus losing Eurydice  
or the love of shepherds unheard of and unnoted in history  
and loving with great lust and dying in old age and quiet...  
I do not know, I do not know  
for I have no power of prophecy.  
Do you, sweetest love?  
Perhaps you use the Book of I-Ching?

Raj Arumugam

# Will You Go Out With Me, Fido?

Will you go out with me,  
faithful Fido?  
A little sunshine  
never hurt anyone

Will you venture out  
into wide open space, Fido?  
You can prance about  
while I walk in the park

Will you come listen  
to the birds on the branches, Fido?  
You can wonder at butterflies  
while I attempt meaning in the birds

Will you come for the air,  
loving Fido?  
And we'll return home - you more alive,  
and I for only a time refreshed

But what we come back to, Fido,  
what we come back to -  
O Fido, do you sense  
what we come back to always?

Raj Arumugam

# Willing To Die

she can still kill  
with one look –  
but then, I've always been willing to die

Raj Arumugam

# Willow, Radiant Willow

sing willow, slender willow  
leaning willow  
that brings a feel of smooth flow  
that sways with songs of sweet sadness;  
sing willow so gentle in the morning air  
so graceful in the wind's route;  
sing willow, dance gentle now  
with such ease  
for us who have come by to see you  
and to feel you breathing

Raj Arumugam

# Window Of Opportunity

since the first pop use of the phrase  
"window of opportunity"  
(was it Bush or Stargate SG-1?)  
politicians big and small  
corrupt and incorruptible  
fallible and infallible  
have all bombarded  
the media – on radio, in their blogs  
and personal sites  
newspapers and journals and broadcasts  
and through any speech  
they get a chance to make  
with that ready phrase:  
"window of opportunity"

Oh, turn on the radio  
as you drive maybe  
and some glum Finance Minister whispers:  
" ...grab the window of opportunity..."  
read the papers and some plum Minister of Health says:  
"...we must grab this window of opportunity..."

Oh, whole speeches in the English Language now are  
are bullet-ridden with that phrase  
and of course the financial planners  
and educators  
and doctors and even lovers  
they have all jumped in  
into this "window of opportunity"  
till I'm so irritated and angry now  
that if I hear one more eminent personality say:  
"window of opportunity"  
Oh, the next time – just one more time –  
if I hear anyone use that phrase  
"window of opportunity"  
I'm going to send in contract window cleaners  
and they'll grab the window-of-opportunity-user by the collar  
and throw them out of the window  
and clean the window after –

and I'll assure you,  
those contract window cleaners  
will not miss that "window of opportunity"!

Raj Arumugam

# Wing Pages Of The Butterfly

at the nursery  
while people  
are at purchase  
and at transactions  
a blue butterfly  
comes by  
and opens its pages to me  
swift and quick  
and it says to me:  
'Read! Read!  
Read my pages! '

'I can't read, '  
I say,  
amused  
at this brash butterfly

'Read and write!  
Read and write  
about me,  
and all flitting butterflies  
Read  
and write, you silly! '  
it commands

And so I read  
and I copy  
and these are the words  
the words from those  
pages  
the butterfly  
holds up to me

Raj Arumugam

# Winter Moon, Misty Moon

winter moon, misty moon  
playful behind the trees  
over the hidden Brisbane river  
that makes the air thick with mist;  
winter moon, full-moon  
luminous and rolling  
behind brooding giant trees;  
winter moon, misty moon  
that makes its area luminous and clean  
and cares not if everything else is indistinct

Raj Arumugam

# Winter Sunset

the morning started with fog  
and now late, a dark sky hangs over Brisbane;  
in the West a child has scrawled  
untidy clouds  
over the sun  
and the remaining pieces of silver  
are eaten like potato chips  
by the night

the winter night  
takes the sun in her ample breasts

the moon looks helpless on the opposite side

Raj Arumugam

# Witness To What Presents Itself

an ease, a quiet,  
a stillness  
as one sits  
on a bench  
under the tree;  
the clouds running quickly across the sky  
the water in the lake reflecting what's above;  
and the birds chirping on the branches;  
a moment not chained to the past or future  
free of thought and wanting  
simply in the moment  
no judgment  
and witness to what presents itself

Raj Arumugam

# Women Can'T Drive

It's NOT against the law  
BUT women can't drive –  
DON't ask why

Women must be driven  
by husband  
or adult male member in their family  
or by male chauffer  
or by male chauvinist

STOP! Woman driver protester  
It's not against the law  
BUT police looking for you  
Why?  
Women can't drive

Raj Arumugam

# Women In Art Corrupt Men

now, I was just minding  
my own business  
brought up by very virtuous parents  
steeped in a culture ancient and proper  
and graced with divine revelations;  
the lotus forever growing pure  
even in muddied waters;  
and so minding my own business  
and vowed to matrimonial chastity in mind  
never looking at another woman  
and never thinking of another ever

I mean no one thought  
looking at Mona Lisa  
even in my younger days  
was ever bad; they simply said:  
Oh, Mona Lisa what a painting!  
so I went about years  
chaste, pure and I think, angelic,  
until these women come into art books  
and now more readily in cyber-life  
like Rembrandt's Bathing Woman -  
oh, how could I not look?  
She, Hendrickje, more natural and  
more come-here-you than  
today's airbrushed digitally enhanced beauties  
O Hendrickje, Hendrickje,  
entering the water  
and lifting up her dress  
so it won't get wet  
but O – was that really her intention?  
Or perhaps to entice Rembrandt further?  
Or to look at her own reflection?  
and then what about us, full-blooded men of latter-days  
O Rembrandt, what have you done?  
how can I not look, and look?  
and come back to look again?  
and under pretence of aesthetics I trace every  
limb and curve of Hendrickje, O Hendrickje

I become a Rembrandt of sorts,  
just tracing lines on her image

O these cyberspace beauties  
they corrupt my high ideals  
And Rembrandt says across the ages:  
"Remember you your traditions and virtue"  
And the morally upright say:  
"Hey! She was Rembrandt's woman! "  
And I can only quip: "Yeah - she was! "

and leaving it at that  
with O Hendrickje, Hendrickje,  
gazing at her own reflection  
and I wondering what she sees  
well, after Hendrickje, O Hendrickje  
am I safe? you think?  
Then come the women of Japan  
for instance  
A woman Applying Powder  
while Hashiguchi Goyōskō sketched and mixed his paints  
and why? Oh why, Hashiguchi Goyōskō ?  
why do you release these sirens, these women  
this Woman after her Bath  
this Woman combing her hair  
O these mistresses of the arts  
O why release them  
on my sensitive and pure  
and morally upright mind?  
O why you do corrupt  
such a one  
such a noble mind  
that centuries of spiritual values jousted one another  
to produce? Such a delicate specimen as I am.  
Or may be  
all these women should be deleted from cyberspace  
and only decent women with quizzical smiles like  
Mona Lisa should prevail  
Sure, we don't know what she's smiling about  
but at least Old Lisa's not as dangerous  
as youthful Hendrickje, O Hendrickje  
or

as the Woman Applying Powder  
baring her shoulders and her Japanese bosom  
I mean, how can I not look?  
and come back again to look?  
O my adulterous heart!  
but delet them all  
or black them out  
or cover them all up from head to foot  
(technology can do wonders nowadays)  
so  
I can just be minding  
my own business  
brought to you by very virtuous parents  
steeped in a culture ancient and proper  
and divine revelations  
the lotus forever growing pure  
even in muddied waters;  
and I'll end up in Heaven after all my Holy Days  
and for my Eternal Holidays there  
I'll be given all the virgins I'll ever want

Raj Arumugam

# Women Picking Edible Plants

a little more haste, neighbor,  
as we pick edible plants  
on these slopes of the mountains;  
the air is fresh and the delicate plants  
abundant enough  
though one has to humble oneself  
by leaning down to these rare ones;  
we will bring them home  
and some we can eat fresh and raw  
and most we can stir in our pots  
and serve it as a treat with rice and garlic -  
but my dearest friend,  
what are you doing?  
You are looking up at the sky  
instead of keeping your eyes  
down to the ground....

Ah, I just happened to look up  
and I saw the bird fly;  
I wondered what freedom that bird has in the air  
unlike us who have to keep our heads down  
and the strain pulls and tortures the back

Ah, ha...dear friend, you've  
always been the dreamer;  
keep your eyes on the ground  
and get what you can  
before sunset  
for we must hurry;  
as you know  
bodies must eat;  
and you still have to reach  
out and bend your back,  
I'm afraid;  
for the plants that nurture blood, bones and muscle  
they take us from one day to the next

women picking edible plants

text©Raj Arumugam,2010; painting: Yun Du-seo (1668–1715, Korea)

Raj Arumugam

# Wonder About This Stranger

Sometimes, though, some wonder  
about the quiet stranger  
as I walk past the cold aisles  
unimpressed by the superstore wares  
or as I walk on the sandy track  
below the tall white gums.  
Perhaps they wonder a moment  
at this stranger come from his own distant place  
and walking quietly in their midst.

(from *The Migrant - notes of a newcomer* (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Word Of God

I never speak of God  
but people keep telling me about God  
and they keep telling me:  
This is the Word of God!  
Or they brandish a Book before me  
and they say:  
This is the Final Word of God!

But I say:  
Look, I've just had a Revelation;  
God has just spoken to me;  
it's the First and Final Message in One Word:  
Love...  
You see, there's only one Word of God:  
Love...  
and Love is unconditional  
and you do not hate  
and you do not kill, never...  
That is the word of God, Love...  
So take the Word of God: Love  
and drop everything else...  
So, there's just Love  
and the word God is superfluous;  
there's just one word, one reality:  
Love

Raj Arumugam

# Words On Dusty Surfaces

we've seen words  
various, common and different  
fingered on dust;  
words you can wipe away

I've seen often enough,  
for example,  
on a teacher's dusty car at the school car park:  
Wash me!

or cheeky words written  
on a dusty street window:  
Peep in!

and this morning, I saw one  
on the back of a van before me:  
I'm happy. Are you happy?

Raj Arumugam

# Working Again

What has all this done to me?  
Who's left here a dried cadaver now  
till next morning  
to rise again  
a smiling fool only to travel  
and live the working day  
and a day of various affiliations  
to end a dried cadaver again?

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Worth Of Our Words

what are all our words worth?  
is any worth anything?  
we have built multiple universes of words  
cast in profundity and reverence  
and tinged with authority  
and sparkling with Divine Inspiration  
and yet the words leave but messy cadavers  
and bloody bodies on the roads of time

Raj Arumugam

# Would You Lend Some Money To Nasrudin...?

Nasrudin comes to a new town  
and he goes to a store  
and he asks the owner:  
How's business, Sir?

Business is good, replies the store-owner

Oh, then, can I borrow ten dollars?  
asks Nasrudin

I hardly know you, says the store-owner  
I can't lend you any money

Oh, how strange, says Nasrudin  
In my town they won't lend me any money  
because they say, they know me too well -  
and here you won't lend me any money  
because you don't know me!  
It's a strange world we live in.

Raj Arumugam

# Writing About Nothing

you know people like  
to write about their lives  
in terms of likes and dislikes  
about their their loves and hates  
another poem about  
how they feel today  
which is the same as they did yesterday  
and no prizes for guessing  
how they'd feel the next day -  
and as you know  
how people like to write  
about truth, justice, and love  
and about the dark corners in the mind  
about their religion, their nations and eternity?  
their culture, their identity, their sanctity? -  
but me, I like to write  
about nothing  
cos I'm just the same  
as them other poets  
(we're all human)  
for all that is nothing too  
so in natural conclusion  
Socratic fashion  
or Aristotelian school  
so when I write about nothing  
I write about what them other poets write about  
and when they write,  
like me,  
they too write about nothing

We all do, vainly speaking

Raj Arumugam

# Writing Comments: A Tragi-Comic History

since childhood  
and since I first knew  
that such unglamorous places as libraries exist  
(well, obviously the masses think  
places of worship and amusement parks  
and cinemas and mosh pits are much more attractive  
as these draw crowds like scavengers to carcasses)  
ah, but I digress  
like a man past fifty  
which is what I am -  
but, as I was saying,  
since I first discovered public libraries  
(I couldn't afford to buy books once  
and the books I can afford to buy now  
are not worth the dollars  
the booksellers say I should part with)  
ah, but again I digress...

and as I was saying,  
all my reading since innocent childhood  
has been of borrowed books  
from public libraries  
which I read and appreciate  
but in which I dare not write comments;  
I dare not scribble  
in the books  
for I am worried about fines  
and being labeled 'delinquent borrower'  
and losing my reputation  
as being an eminent citizen;  
and so I do not write comments  
but I have to say something  
as you can well understand  
to express my disagreement or approbation;  
but I cannot write my comments beside the text  
or at the end of the short story  
or at the end of the poem  
or in the margins of utterly un-understandable Einstein  
and so with no other way

and my frustrations building  
and determining through reason  
I should not allow my pent-up emotions  
to explode into expletives and ravings  
and such implosions and explosions  
to screw up my precious emotional and aesthetic life  
I decided  
since childhood  
when I first started reading -  
I decided, and  
what else could I do?  
to explode into expletives and ravings  
and such implosions and explosions  
and so  
unable to write comments  
on borrowed material  
on public property  
I shouted at books  
(and still do)  
and uttered expletives  
(and continue to do so)  
or went down on my knees before books  
and made sweet moans, something akin  
to sexual ecstasy  
before, say, a poem of Keats  
or shouted and hollered with joy  
at a volume of Leaves of Grass  
or screamed with disapproval at stories  
turned out with worn out plots  
and predictable turn of events  
where every man had his maiden  
and lived happily for ever  
well-fed and well-sexed and fatter and happily ever after;  
and I made faces at writing  
that were just clichés  
and poems that waxed lyrical  
and I scowled before un-creative pieces  
that waffled with thin sentiments  
and moans and sighs of love  
or of poetic philosophical bombast  
and so my reading career,  
since childhood -

O most cultured gentlemen and most elegant ladies,  
my reading career has been  
dogged with explosions of expletives before books I read  
or books I refused to read  
and also of course with ecstatic cries before  
well-written and well-thought out prose or poetry  
but, tragically, unable to write on spines or margins  
or between lines on borrowed books  
this became  
a habit so deeply ingrained  
I cannot tear myself off from it  
and so  
you understand why  
even in this age of the internet and cyberspace  
I find it excruciating to punch in comments  
because this borrowed-books mindset  
is fixed and screwed so firm in me;  
but you can imagine I have  
knelt before your poems and blogs  
in near sexual-ecstasy  
or more unkindly  
I have uttered expletives  
and shouted obscenities at your blogs and posts  
and my family have run in to my study  
happily thinking I was going insane  
and they could finally confine  
me in a Hospital for the Insane  
but I am ready  
and I just grin with a stolen book of Shakespeare  
which I keep near for such occasions  
and I say to my precious wife:  
Oh, I'm just practicing to direct  
a modern production of Shakespeare's plays  
sometime in the future, soon  
and disappointed,  
the family curses and utters profanities

but I digress -  
so back to the subject at hand;  
and gentle reader,  
perhaps we are both one of a kind  
and you too suffer from this

borrowed-books mindset  
and you give my poems and blogs  
and my posts  
the same treatment I give yours...  
well, we understand each other  
and we naturally utter obscenities  
or kneel with pleasure  
but leave no comments or scribble  
because the shame of public library censure  
has too strong a hold on us...  
but what is important is,  
we understand each other

Raj Arumugam

# Writing Liberally

I wrote comments  
liberally  
over poems  
(like a careless provider  
throws excess salt and pepper  
over a sandwich)  
just so  
to increase those on my own

and I wrote yet another poem  
(forced it out, like squeezing  
hardened mustard paste out of a tube)  
just so  
to increase my own numbers

Raj Arumugam

# Writing Under The Pine Trees, Wang Meng

whether it be day or night  
when I am awake  
I listen to the silence  
and the whispers of the surrounds  
to the snarls, the roars and the rage  
to the creatures that are about, that may venture  
I am attentive to the flowing streams  
that laugh with the rocks  
and to the mountains in their pensive mood  
and the sounds of the house and its wood  
and the growing elm, that are rich and green always  
and I am witness to the sun,  
and the moon and its companion stars  
and the day and night  
and all shades and transitions  
and all presence in the air  
and I am witness to the creatures that come close, curious  
and so to all quiet, to all activity and all life and movement  
to all color and all seasons and all urgings and motion  
and when it bids me sing of these  
then in that consent, in that concord  
I write down these words  
I write these books of the surrounds  
of these moments  
that shall come into your hands  
that you too may see, for yourself

Raj Arumugam

# Xanthippe Gives Socrates A Piece Of Her Mind

You useless man, , Socrates -  
I think you need a shower...  
I don't know what the Athenians  
find in you but as far as I can see you're just wasting time  
hanging out in the market places  
and at dinners and symposiums  
where all you do is stay late drinking nights  
and talk about philosophy, and ideas  
and of origin of things and justice  
and nature of human beings  
and such useless, impractical things;  
and you bring not a cent home  
and I can't count on you for regular support  
as all women and good wives might expect of a husband;  
and you can't even hold a good argument with me  
for all you do when I use my Xanthippe's questioning method  
against your so-called Socratic method  
all you do is mumble and tumble  
and use words like shrew and nag  
when all I'm asking of you is for you  
to keep your part of the implied bargain in marriage  
to put some food on the table  
and bring some silver coins for the future of our three children:  
Lamprocles, Sophroniscus and Menexenus -  
have you forgotten them? Do you even remember their names?  
And so you bring no money  
but instead all you give me are empty words  
and lofty words and airy words  
and words coined in your head  
and you put silly ideas that's just confusing our children  
and if not for me taking the children under my wings  
they'll just turn out to be mere  
talkers and market-place prattlers  
and hangers-on and leeches at other men's feasts.  
They may have a place in misguided history  
if they follow your way  
but they will bring weak bodies to their wives  
when it is their time.  
I don't want them to be talkers,

and idealists and philosophers, Socrates –  
I want them to be responsible  
and I want bring them to bring meat and coins home  
regularly and steadily, Socrates.  
Socrates, you old man, I don't care what they say of you  
in the Greek world –  
I haven't had proof of your worth and value  
here at home, especially in the kitchen.  
You useless man, I think you need a shower;  
maybe this water from the chamber-pot will wake you up.

Xanthippe was the wife of Socrates, perhaps about 40 years younger than him. While there is no historical evidence of Xanthippe as being unhappy with Socrates as portrayed in this poem, she is portrayed traditionally as a woman unhappy with her husband's lack of interest in practical matters. My poem is a fictional account.

Raj Arumugam

## Y: Sillyverse 3

&quot;I wonder why&quot;  
says Y  
in a perpetual state of inquiry

Raj Arumugam

# Yasala Bird

1

poor Rachael  
married for love  
Now twenty years through  
and ignored by the hubby  
who's given up work  
and sits at home drinking all day  
No more kind words to Rachael  
never a gentle look,  
but just sarcasm and imbecilities all day  
Will not even come out for a walk  
with Rachael;  
no desire for fresh air  
just sits there drinking and farting -  
Poor Rachael, she never comes back  
to fresh air or a kind look

2

Rachael is out today  
with a mission to make her life pleasant  
&quot;A pet is what I'll have, &quot;  
she says to herself  
and she's in a pet shop now  
looking at an exotic bird

3

&quot;That there, &quot; says the shop owner  
&quot;is a bird rare and unique;  
let me demonstrate&quot;  
And straight he says to the bird:  
&quot;Zasala, the table! &quot;  
And Zasala flies straight and swift  
to the table - and appecks\* and demolishes  
the table as swift as you can say &quot;OMG! &quot;  
&quot;Zasala, the broom! &quot;  
And Zasala flies straight and swift  
to the broom - and appecks\* and demolishes

the broom as swift as you can say &quot;LMAO! &quot;

&quot;I'll take it, ' says Rachael, with a smile  
Poor Rachael, she hasn't smiled in years

4

&quot;Darling, &quot; says Rachael  
the moment she gets home  
&quot;Look what I've got -  
an exotic bird, Zasala! &quot;

And straight Rachael's clueless husband says:  
&quot;Zasala, my foot! &quot;

Raj Arumugam

# Yeah! - We Win!

Yeah! - we win!  
We Aussies win  
the CoreData 2011 award:  
each household will spend  
an average of more than \$1000  
on gifts, food and deco for Xmas  
Yeah! - we win!  
China? \$400 only  
The French? \$600 only  
The Kiwis? \$631 only  
America? \$644 only  
The British? \$815 only  
Britain beats France - but  
Yeah! - we Aussies beat 'em all!  
Yeah! - we win!

We Aussies also win  
the IBISWorld 2011 award:  
Australia will spend \$1.2 billion  
on booze just in December  
Yeah, we win! And throughout 2011!  
the UK? they drink only 10.58 litres  
average year round  
the USA? a paltry 8.42 liters average  
And Down Under? - 10.61 litres this year  
Yeah! - we win! we win! we win!

Raj Arumugam

# Yeah, I've Got Friends Now

Part 1: pre-cyberspace

1

I love this age  
of the internet

but ages ago  
(pre-cyberspace)  
I was lonely  
I had no friends  
and my neighbors  
gave me dirty looks;  
and my classmates  
when I gave them scone  
they gave me scorn

2

I wrote to prospective penpals  
but they never replied -  
those bastards!  
Nothing ever in my mail  
in exchange for the thousands I sent!  
It was just a dirty scheme  
to collect my stamps!  
And maybe they're Buffet-style investors -  
thought one day I'll be famous  
so they've collected my letters  
in my elegant handwriting...

3

by the way  
any of you of my age here at this site -  
any of you got my unloved, collected penpal letters?  
Well you know what?  
I never became famous;  
I became a poet

and poets never make money -  
so what have you got?  
My letters you collected  
are as worthless as banana peel!  
Losers!  
You should have bought Coca-Cola shares  
like Warren Buffet!  
Losers!

Part 2: and then came cyberspace

4

Ah, so woe was me then  
with no friends -  
then came the internet  
And wow! Did I get mail!  
Now I've got countless mail and mail again -  
You've got mail!  
You've got mail!  
chirp my computers!  
(Yeah - I got so much mail  
I need a herd of computers!)  
And what did you say?  
Spam? Junk mail?  
I mean, OK, there's junk mail and spam, yeah -  
Hey! What's wrong with you guys?  
You people have too many questions!  
You jelalous?  
One thing's sure never changed in the world -  
All you wise guys and spoilsports!

5

Well  
and as the tornado of my e-mails implies  
the internet has brought me countless friends:  
Hey, all those penpals who never replied -  
Eat your hearts out, baby! -  
Cos yours truly now has  
countless numbers of friends  
at various sites like Faceless

Friendless, Lonely Hearts Full of Holes -  
to mention just a few

6

And you know what?

I get so many just writing to me - to me,  
with requests -

Requests! - see how polite and civilised my friends be?

Well, there're just so many

I've had to turn down quite a few

who're not, shall we say,

not good-looking enough, unlike me...

You know, it's important, to be seen in good company

What?

Sure...you want proof? Just a few names

from the infinite list of my friends will suffice, you say?

Yeah, here are some of my friends with such distinguished names:

Gummy bear...Porcupine...Desperado...Mexican Jumping Beans...

Kosovo Sweetheart...Reindeer Pie...China Doll...Ninja Turtles...

And hey - don't you try steal any of my friends!

Sure some people turn me down -

like that guy what's-his-name in Syria?

Yeah - him...he said he doesn't want to be friends;

says he's too busy fixing his people...

Then I asked

yeah, I asked President Obama - but he said

he has got enough Aussie friends,

in high places, might I add, he said

Oh, but he's no idea about

the value of my Friends Database!

I asked Vladamir Putin

(since he's so many friends in Russia)

but he says he's busy at the moment

caring for the people of his nation...

(No wonder he's so many friends in his nation

who all turn out in the streets to show him their love.)

But hey? Who needs them anyway -

when I've got friends like Rasputin?

Yeah, see - I've not only friends in cyberspace

but from otherspace too,

but that's another story...

Point being: thanks to cyberspace

at last

I've got all the friends I want!

By the way,

did I mention my friend Chubby Pinch My Bottom?

---

Ok...today I'm talking about my friends...in the pre-cyberspace era and now in 2012...feel free to interrupt and ask questions as they pop up in your heads...

Raj Arumugam

# Yes, I Know I'm A Bad Boy

yes, I know I'm a bad boy  
mothers told their kids:  
don't talk to that boy  
he thinks too much and  
is thin and lean and smiles too often  
and such boys are dangerous;  
and later, dads told their daughters:  
don't even talk to that boy  
he says there's no one more equal  
or anyone less  
and he says except for the law of the land  
he knows no other authority

yes, I know I'm a bad boy  
and wives told their husbands:  
stay away from that man  
he asks too many questions;  
he's got a complex;  
he thinks he's Socrates  
and writes verse that just gets worse each day;  
and anyway  
what sort of men write verse but  
the lazy, the irresponsible the losers  
and those who can't make money in any way?  
those who just hang around in the marketplace  
like that old man from Athens  
who did nothing  
but question and inquire

and of course I expect there might  
be a little voice  
in many a heart and head  
that says  
as I pass by:  
stay away from this guy  
for he's such a bad boy;  
he relinquishes clichés

and revels in strange phrases;  
he recognizes no authority  
and throws all text out  
and says words do not make clear  
they only distort;  
and even though he writes verse  
there's also an end to song and poetry, he says;  
stay away from him,  
he's such a bad, bad boy

Raj Arumugam

# You Are Gone

you are gone  
you are not here anymore  
and though there are signs,  
like mollusk shells on mountaintops  
that hint of life once upon an archeological time  
they are but remains;  
and so you are not here anymore

the reality of everyday happenings  
and the urgency of living  
will push memory to the suppressed folds  
and perhaps there will be more forgetting than remembrance;  
but the depths and layers do not allow deletion  
and where the tentacles dance in the darkest depths  
the cruel distorted disconnected head of history will whisper:  
she is gone  
she is not here anymore;  
and there is nothing you can do about it...

Raj Arumugam

# You Are There Moon

you are there moon;  
I thought you were not  
and I went to sleep  
and I sighed: 'She will not come, not tonight;  
she has some other lover';  
and I went to sleep  
and then much later now I wake up  
and you've come, out there  
and your light full within my room  
and your fingers on every cell of my being

Raj Arumugam

# You Can Get Hurt In A Bar

you can get hurt  
walking into a bar  
but my friend, he always  
gets hurt just after walking  
out of the bar -  
cos he walks straight into another bar  
You know, the other type of bar on the pavements;  
Yeah, he walks straight into a metal bar...

Raj Arumugam

# You Do Not Know Me, No You Don't

You do not know me, no you don't  
No, you don't know me;  
no, we have not met before

Move on, please...  
I am not who you think I am, or I was...  
No, I don't mean that philosophically  
(as one can't be the same as an hour before;  
or the river one bathes in today is not the same  
you swam in yesterday)  
but I mean it literally

I'm not the man you mistake me for...  
and I'm not amused  
or filled with wonder  
there may be someone I resemble  
(“uncanny” is your word)

Never heard of the name;  
yes, it may be, I remind you of him  
but that's between you and him  
I have nothing to do with your obsessions or your past  
How can I, when I have nothing to do with mine?  
There is no such thing as the past, so move on  
and spare me your questions and attempts at familiarity  
I am not him;  
leave me to my shadows  
One has a right to one's shadows

Raj Arumugam

## You Haiku, Baby?

you haiku, baby? Yeah, you haiku?

NO, NO – ME NAME NO HAIKU...

no, no, baby - I mean you haiku, baby?

Raj Arumugam

# You See It All As It Is

you sit on a hill  
perhaps in the shade below  
a kind tree  
(or perhaps on your chair  
near your window)  
or in the open  
on a gentle summer day

and you view what is before you  
and all around  
the full expanse of it  
what nature spreads out  
within and all about;  
as your own mother  
might have set the family table  
for dinner

and you come to simply see  
you do not come with a theory  
or all your conditioning and your beliefs  
(can you do it?)  
and you come without  
all your presumptions and assumptions  
(can you do it?)  
and you come simply to see  
all that is

and you see the beetle before you  
and the grass  
and perhaps the bee flying past;  
and you view those thoughts, if any,  
that arise  
(there is no suppression here,  
no control,  
but simply observe):  
and you see

the hills that roll forth before you  
and the trees and the clouds  
and perhaps the birds  
trace patterns in the sky  
and perhaps a plane zooms past

but you simply see  
you are a witness  
and you observe only  
with no words  
no labels, no names  
with no ideology  
or thought patterns;  
with no judgment  
and no drawing  
on all your traditions  
and your beliefs and your conditioning  
and you see  
what is before and around  
and you feel the air stroke your cheeks  
the feeling simply as it is;  
and you see the world before you  
and all your thoughts and you within it  
and you make no memory  
and you make no comment  
and you make no links  
and you make no judgment:

you observe;  
you see it all  
as it is  
for you come simply to see  
all that is

Raj Arumugam

# You Sent Me Away

I did not go away on my own;  
not of my own accord was this done.  
You sent me away  
(or perhaps, I should say,  
circumstances did;  
you taught me to be vague,  
not to seize the bull by its horns  
for there is only one man in your annals  
who can ride the beast)  
because I could not do things the right way  
unlike yourselves who know right and wrong  
who know the moment and supply and demand  
and propriety and the right views and the truth always

I knew nothing of that sort  
for I had merely stumbled upon your community  
and stayed long and always felt estranged.

Then you pushed me away  
(or perhaps, I should say,  
circumstances did)

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# You Talk Fast

There is another way of talking and chatting;  
there are other ways.

One could be slow  
and could wait; one could listen  
to the other and not butt in as quickly as possible;  
one could listen till the other finishes  
and only speak when the other is ready to listen and to  
understand.

One could be slow and meaningful  
utter only words that capture your feelings.

But you only seem to understand  
the rapid gunfire way.  
There are other ways.

(from *The Migrant* - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# You Witness My Dying

you witness my dying  
as you see my life, my hopes and desires  
and all my embarrassments  
and my achievements too,  
dear moon  
O quiet presence,  
O radiant presence all one's life;  
and what do you look at these days  
in my life  
darling moon  
what do you see?  
you who have seen the child grow old  
and you hang out beaming by the window  
patiently  
to see one more death  
to add to the countless you witness  
since the day you came

Raj Arumugam

# Young Beauty Crossing A Bridge After Snow

the snow is in your path and  
the bridge is wet with slush  
O young beauty  
crossing the bridge

take care to cover your head  
and walk  
with eyes on the ground  
with mind on your destination  
for I am waiting  
and when we are together, closed  
I need to feel your warmth  
and my palms and fingers shall journey  
across the terrain of your white skin

take care and come in safe  
to my room, fair beauty  
for I have I need of your love  
and your delicate frame in my hands

-

poem based on woodblock color print by Suzuki Harunob  
(Japanese,1724-1770) : Young Girl Crossing a Bridge after Snow:  
Calendar Year of the Second Year of Meiwa

Raj Arumugam

# Young Love

I was broken, a little bit out of joint  
but you put me together  
still you keep me whole

I was the face of misery  
and the voice of sorrow  
but you put cheer in my heart  
and light in my eyes:  
and yes, yes, the bounce in my walk...

I was broken, a little bit out of joint  
but you put me together  
still you keep me whole

I was crumbling and I was crying  
but you put your arms round me  
and drew me close;  
you made distance disappear  
and once again I knew the world...

I was broken, a little bit out of joint  
but you put me together  
still you keep me whole

I was far far gone  
but you brought me back;  
there was despair round me  
but you made it go away  
you made it fly away  
with just your touch and smile

I was broken, a little bit out of joint  
but you put me together  
still you keep me whole

Raj Arumugam

# Your Local Silly Ghost

I'm the ghost  
who lives below your bed;  
the ghost  
who appears on the other side  
of the window;  
who stands between the trees in your garden  
and loiters in the dark streets  
looking longingly at your window;  
the silly ghost  
who sits in your car  
all night  
when you're in bed

and though I may  
once in a  
silly moon season  
jump on you  
when you eat alone  
and I may screech  
Boo!  
and it might look like  
I'd stick to you  
like stubborn glue  
you might just say:  
Boo yourself! -  
and stick out your tongue,  
and I'll have a good laugh  
and fly about like  
a purple balloon  
losing all its air

and then you might pick me up  
and shed a tear  
and bury me  
between the trees

in your garden  
and shed a tear or two  
for your local silly ghost  
who died like a balloon  
just to amuse you

Raj Arumugam

# You've Got The Wrong Man

You've got the wrong man,  
can't you see?  
Don't stop me,  
you unemployed at the mall,  
wanting to sell me cards and envelopes  
and appealing for coins  
as you lean against the railing  
your legs spread out and placards declaring your intents

Don't call out to me  
and offer me the deference  
you might give  
an employed man  
for you make me uncomfortable  
and I don't want to disappoint you

You've got the wrong man,  
can't you see?  
And do you not see  
I have denied you not thrice  
but more?  
So don't look at me.  
Don't look at me  
for I've nothing to give you  
(though I've given when I could)  
as you and I are the same  
except perhaps it'll be some time yet  
before I too declare myself  
with cards, envelopes and placards.

(from The Migrant - notes of a newcomer (February 1997- July 1998))

Raj Arumugam

# Z Poem

Z is useless  
Like an appendix  
It's not like English'd collapse  
if you threw Z to the dogs  
(you couldn't call it a sacrifice):  
we'd still communicate  
we'd still fornicate

it's like if your doctor cut  
your appendix and threw it out  
you'd still eat and shit

so, useless Z -  
like many parts in the human enterprise  
like your religion, your ideology, your prejudices:  
it's there,  
in the human system  
but each a Z;  
part of a strange assembly

Raj Arumugam

# Z's Ready

Though Z does not  
do much  
it has understood much:  
'Life's but a zoo  
(each one filled  
with animal instincts  
and each an impotent exhibit)  
It's all but a zilch, a zero'

So through its Daoist inactivity  
it has grasped calm and peace  
and the importance of being last

Z is always ready to go -  
after all, it has had plenty of practice  
in daily deaths  
...ZZZZZZZZZZ....ZZZZ.....ZZZ...

Raj Arumugam