

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 than 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 shooed 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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clothes – and one day she threw the butter at him
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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,

cawing 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
"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? "

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

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

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:
"You've got a choice, buddy
to determine your eternity"
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: "No, I'll give this the miss"

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

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

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:
" All Right, you pigs! Break Time over!
Back on your heads in your shit! ";

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

"Do you notice, "
says a passer-by
to the begging Diogenes,
"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? "

"That's because, "
says Diogenes
"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..."

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:
"OK, I'll give you money
if you can persuade me"

"Persuade you? " says Diogenes
"If I could persuade you
I'd persuade you to go
jump off the nearest cliff"

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
"O that poor thing,
so so sweet"
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

"It is a pity
my friend, "
said the fox to the fowl,
"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"

"How may I, "
said the naive hen,
"go forth to Feathered Heaven? "

"You submit and yield
to the Divine Will, "
said the fox,
"upon which I will snap your neck in two -
and thus effect your quick delivery
to comforting eternity"

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
"You scratch my back, I scratch yours, " 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
"I'm not noticed even when I'm there
as in the word NOTICE -
people say 'S' instead..."

Poor C, you can understand its chagrin

"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"

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

Raj Arumugam

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 free
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)

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?

Raj Arumugam

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

Raj Arumugam

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 you 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 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
"Just the very thing I need, "
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:
"Who M I? "

(and I protests often,
"Don't drag me in! ")

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:
"Who M I? "

(And poor I protests
often:
"For goodness sake - don't drag me in! ")

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 pimpled?
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...
ooooh....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[^].j./[^]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 –
wakie! wakie! '

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
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and the teacher
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It died just 4 years after
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And everyone wants a Saint
so I have not disabused people
of their faith

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The teacher nods with a smile

and Nasrudin continues:

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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 Crazy

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
Dooohnttrre
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

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Shakespeare and Kalidas and Homer
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so don't trumpet too much of yours

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like a sky filled with wrangling clouds

or as a sky without a wisp

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in poetry one wakes from dreams
and it may yet be
that one's wakefulness is itself but a dream

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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.....
oooppss! 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....sst...
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)

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... 

  Urgo: I am attendant 1. Often known as Urgo.   

Burgo: I am attendant 2. Always known as Burgo.   

Urgo: You see this creature seated here
in the wheelchair?   Can you believe it?  
This creature once wrote poems
  and its poems still inhabit cyberspace. 

Burgo: Oh, this creature did that?

  Urgo: Yes, this.

  Burgo: I think I've read some. 
Not that I can remember any.
  Not a word, not a title.  But must have been pretty
good, ha?
  To write all those words, in verse... 

Urgo: I don't know about that.
  It's the girls who write. And sissies.
  And for all that, you know
  there's just one word this creature can say. 

Burgo: Really? Just one word?  

Urgo: Yes.  All right, watch this.
Come on, Raj-i. 
Hey baby...Burgo here wants to hear you.
  Just one poem in your one word.
  Come on, baby - or no soup for you tonight.   

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...

    Raj: Baa, baa, baa
   Baa, baa, baa 
 Baa, baa, baa
   Baa, baa, baa

    (Burgo claps)

    Urgo: OK - that's enough exercise for the day!
 Let's go         

(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...       

Urgo: Burgo!  

Burgo: Urgo!  

Urgo: How long has it been since
you started work here?  

Burgo: 3 months, Urgo. Why?  

Urgo: Well, show me a game...I'm bored...a new game...

  Burgo: Well, have you played wheelie bin?

  Urgo: No.  But Oh I love to delve into world culture. 
Show me. 

Burgo: Well, let me show you. 
A wheelie bin is a bin with wheels
and you put rubbish in it
  and you leave it outside on the kerb
  and the garbage guy in his truck collects your rubbish.
  So this is the game.   

(Burgo pushes wheelchair round the stage and sings.)    

This is the way we   wheel out our wheelie bins
  this is the way we   wheel out our bins
  early every Thursday morning   
This is the way we   leave our bins,
our wheelie bins 
this is the way we leave our bins
  out on the sunny kerb 
every Thursday morning

    (leaves wheelchair on kerb)    

This is the way we empty our bins 
this is the way we empty our bins
this is the way empty our bins
every Thursday morning   

(empties the wheelchair; Raj Arumugam drops onstage)    
 

Urgo(joining in) :   This is the way we   pick up our
rubbish 

pick up our rubbish
  this is the way we do it 
this is the way   always we do it 
early Thursday morning!    

(Urgo picks up Raj Arumugam and drops him in the wheelchair)  
 

(Urgo and Burgo clap, applauding each other.)    

Burgo:   And now, Urgo - for the ritual
of   Raj Arumugam's final words in the scene...  Is that
right?

    (Urgo nods...)    

Burgo:   Sing, you Sir in the Wheelchair.   

Raj: Baa, baa, baa
  Baa, baa, baa 
Baa, baa, baa 
Baa, baa, baa   

Burgo: Oh, you spoil the fun! Let's go.       

(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! "

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:
"No one is my equal;
no one is my peer
My worth outshines all"

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:
"No one is my equal;
no one is my peer
My worth outshines all"

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

☼ ☼

☼ 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....

☼ The Song of Wink Star
a happy story for children of all ages

☼ 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...

☼ 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.

☼ 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.

☼ 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.

☼ 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...

☼ 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...

☼ 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.

☼ 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...heeee..

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.

☼ 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!

☼ 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.

☼ 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.

☼ 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! Wheiii! Wheiii!

..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! Yippppppeeeee!

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
"Hey guys, "says the genie
seen only by the 3
invisible to all eyes else
" Hey - each of you gets
1 wish fulfilled today
Special Offer Today Only -
so let's start with you, Susan"

And Susan says:
"Cool!
I want a holiday now
Straight in Hawaii! "

And poof! Susan is gone!

"I want, " says the Receptionist
"to be in the Bahamas
in a beach-house on holiday
with a hot sex-slave now"

And poof! the Receptionist is gone!

"And me, " says the Manager
"I want them back at their desks
diligently at work
by the time I walk back to the office! "

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

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 Viday?
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

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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"

"But I'm done, "
I said
"I'm become"

But you smiled
and you spoke words
That flew like jets
that stood like marble columns
like the Palace of Whitehall
And you smiled
"You never become, "
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:
"Go and become
And come back when you're done"
And you smiled
"You never become, "
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

"And about time too -
for now everyone can clearly
see me for I
and the crooked back for C"

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:
"Sun Wukong was here! "
And in an instant Sun Wukong is there again
right before the Buddha

And says Sun Wukong:
"See I have travelled to the
end and saw the 5 pillars
and scrawled there my name"

And the Buddha says,
holding up his right palm:
"See, all you have done
is to travel across my palm"

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 "Monkey Mind"and "Monkey Mind tamed"...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

Raj Arumugam

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...

● 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....

● 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

● 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...

● 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

Toyohiro's Boat

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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 renumeration 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 (Shottei) 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 "
but if you're anything like me
flesh and blood and heart "
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 "
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! "

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

"I wonder why"
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
"A pet is what I'll have, "
she says to herself
and she's in a pet shop now
looking at an exotic bird

3

"That there, " says the shop owner
"is a bird rare and unique;
let me demonstrate"
And straight he says to the bird:
"Zasala, the table! "
And Zasala flies straight and swift
to the table - and appecks* and demolishes
the table as swift as you can say "OMG! "
"Zasala, the broom! "
And Zasala flies straight and swift
to the broom - and appecks* and demolishes

the broom as swift as you can say "LMAO! "

"I'll take it, ' says Rachael, with a smile
Poor Rachael, she hasn't smiled in years

4

"Darling, " says Rachael
the moment she gets home
"Look what I've got -
an exotic bird, Zasala! "

And straight Rachael's clueless husband says:
"Zasala, my foot! "

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