

Poetry Series

Mpho Petrus Manwedi
- poems -

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Mpho Petrus Manwedi(February 03.1952)

Who am I? You know I have been searching for an answer to this question for the past 54 years, February 03 1952, and still I don't know.

Mpho Manwedi you say? Actually it should be Manoeli, but someone during the apartheid years saw fit to write it as he/she saw fit and there was nothing I could do so I just left it at that and this adds to, "Who is Mpho Manwedi? "

The name Mpho means a gift and I would really like to live up to it. But then, who is he?

Is he, that stubborn man who wants to do away with the injustices of this world? A man who would rather set aside his own problems and find fulfillment in helping others?

Or is he, that little man-boy who cries when he hears a sad song? The man-boy who laughs when he watches comics on television? The one, who gets frustrated by the sadness in this world?

The man-boy, who will rather forgive and forget?

The one, who will give his last penny just to make somebody happy or, the man-boy who will pick up a pen and just write about what he feels?

Or, is he that detached individual who gets bored even in a happy crowd? The individual, who would rather sit inside and look out through the window of his soul and watch the world go by?

The individual who calms the stubborn man and brings comfort to the man-boy?

Who is Mpho?

Well maybe you can help me find out so go on you are welcome to try.

Alone And Desolate

Oh gosh! It is that time of the day again.
I am sitting here all alone
Yeah all alone and desolate
I am watching the sun go down
The evening is slowly creeping in
Gently covering the world around me
With its blanket of darkness.

I hear the sound of the birds
Chirping the daylight away
The call of the homecoming cows
Mooing to their loved ones to reassure
The frantic cry of the goats
Searching for their lively kids
But in my world I am all alone
Yeah! all alone and desolate.

The sky city is preparing for the night.
Here and there I can see the street lights
Shimmering and twinkling in the night breeze
Peeping shyly at the earth below
As if afraid to see my suffering
Yes! Afraid to see the shadows that fills my world
No light is shining through this darkness
Oh! I feel so alone,
Yeah! So alone and desolate

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Be A Man

I was yanked from my mother's womb
Pushed into this world
Without a choice
Slapped on my behind
Without dignity and told,
Go out there and be a man

I was given toy cars and guns to play with
Thrown into this rough and tumble playground
Nobody cared for the boy inside
Nobody ever took note of him
When I came home crying to Mama,
Mama would say, son, men do not cry
Go out there and be a man

I went to school to learn
Not to give but to take
Not to love but to hate
The schoolyard was a jungle
Survival of the fittest was the order
The teacher would always say
When you came complaining
This is a man's world
Go out there and be a man.

Today I have a woman
Wants to be hugged and loved
Showered with tender words and kisses
But I don't know about that
I never had me a doll to coo and cuddle
All I ever had were toys of destruction
And the tender words of guidance
Go out there and be a man.

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Carols In The Candlelight (Ulco 2010)

The tone was set
To the artistic beauty of the candle lit splashpool
With the firefly and Chinese lighting in the backdrop
The night was accommodating
And the stars were jealously peeping down on the stage below
The music was finely tuned and in sync with the heart warming scene
Whilst the orator was in enthusiasm with the event
And this was in embracing the spirit of Christmas.

But alas! The mood did not capture the intend
A body could feel the restless flight of the spirit of antipathy
Hovering above the applauding groups
The cheerful clapping belying the aversive vibe in the milieu.
And you could hear the low whispers heavy with resentment
And the underlying question
Why did the messenger angels proclaim the Christmas message
Written on a whiteboard with a white pen?
Well that is for you to think about.

By Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Do I Go For It?

I sat there my head bowed in dejection
It had been a long search
But now that it was ended
I did not know what to do with what I had in my hand

I was afraid to say, "Lord help me"
I was afraid to lift my eyes up to Him
Yes, I was afraid to come into his presence
Because what I had thought through in my search,
Was most outrageous and horrific.

How it had started I know
Looking back I allow I am to blame
Even though they say it takes two to tango.
However I can only say, 'mea culpa'.
But I just do not know how I came to this end-situation
That I am sitting here with this rope in my hand.
Do I go for it?

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Farewell

I look at you and I can see sadness on your face
I can feel the weight of the goodbye upon your shoulders
Your eyes brim with tears of farewell
And I ask myself, Why?
I turn to my God and ask, Why?
Why should people meet and cultivate the land of relationship,
And then leave before they can enjoy the fruits of their toil?
But I get no answer.

You have walked this road
Calculated the distances and set your destinations
This here place was your dream and your sweetheart
What has happened to that dream?
Has it turned into a nightmare?
Has your sweetheart turned her back on you?
I am sitting here writing this missive
And trying to answer the question, Why?
But still there is no answer.

Where you are going,
Will you there find peace you so much deserve?
Will you there find the Love of a family you are leaving behind?
There are so many questions
And one would like to know the reason, Why?
But only you have the answers
All I can do and say to you is
Fare thee well and God's speed
May He take good care of you
For years of your health and happiness
And blessing forever after
Farewell.

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

God, Where Are You?

God, who are you?
Or rather where are you?
Many people are talking about you
Saying you are the one who is always there
But I have searched and never found
The one who is claimed to be always there.

People in time of sorrow
I always hear say,
God will help
The lord will never abandon
But here I am abandoned and lost
And I say to myself
Where is that God always there?

Many claim you are a friend
But yet I fear, like many of my friends
You are going to desert me
Leaving me alone and desolate
Some people try to reassure
That you will always be there
But if you are to be my friend I implore,
I do not want you to be there for me
I want you to be always with me.

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Here

It is long since I have been here
Yes you may ask, where is here?
I say you may ask, why here?
So listen to what I've got to say about this here

Here where the generosity of life gives without strife
Where love, not in arrogance
Gives freely and in abundance
Where the spirit of light shines in sheer delight
Here where there is no pain and sorrow
Where there is no thinking of tomorrow
Here where I am free and in joy I can feel life's cares shed away
Where in bliss I can while my days away.
Here where the soul of nature
In blind trust mature
Where all creation in its magnificence
Acknowledges the good Lord in all essence
Where seasons like the ebb of the tide
Break away from the shores of time

I have been long gone, I have long traveled with sorrow
Yes, I have long bedded with hatred
And now I am weary and done and I want to be here
Where in song and praise I can hear
The deification of a God who cares
Here where like a caress, feels the touch of a fiend
And so welcome is the embrace of a friend
Yeah, I have been long gone
And I have come back to stay
Here! Here! Here!

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

How She Must Have Felt?

She grabbed me roughly from my child sleep
And threw me on her back like a sack of mealies
She used to carry from the fields.
Her back was knotted with the hump in her heart
And I cried out when she tightened her cradle
She went out that early morning in the cold air of the Maluti Mountains
To that rock in the middle of the mealie patch
Where my father used to sit and play his tin guitar
And there she sobbed her heart out.
After a long while she noticed my wails and cries
She gently took me from her hunched back
And hugged me to her milky breasts.
Still with tears running from her pain-filled eyes she said to me,
"Son, your father is not coming back home anymore.
He has been eaten by the golden beast in the Deep Levels of Gauteng."

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

I Wish

I wish I were the song
That comes to your mind when you are happy
I wish I were the comforting words
Of the song you sing when you are sad
Oh! Yes, I wish I were the sun that brightens your day
Chasing the nightmares away.

I wish I was that breeze,
Gently touching your face
Bringing coolness to your day
But then I wish I was that darkness
Protectively wrapped around you
While you are asleep and uncared for.
Yeah! I wish I was the breath that passeth your lips
Unnoticed, yet so life giving.
I wish I was the heart that beats within you
Strong, loving and caring but yet so fragile.

I wish I was the spirit, which though battered,
Carries you through the storms
Flying you high above the mountains of deceit.
Bringing out the God in you and making you the person you are.
Baby I wish I was your everything.

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Imagination

My friend you say that
I cannot know the pain you are feeling
That I will never comprehend the situation you are in
But let me tell you this
I understand more than I can tell.

What do you think it does to me?
To see you suffer like this
To imagine myself in your situation
It pains me more to find myself helpless to help you
Trying to comfort you
But hurting you more in the process?

My spirit is dying in me
Wearied by the battle of trying to find words of solace
Trying to find means of carrying you through this terrain
And my friend you say I cannot understand
What you are going through
That I cannot comprehend the situation you are in
But let me tell you this
I understand more than I can tell

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Listen O' Mothers

Listen O' mothers listen O' sisters
Listen the spirit of reason is in me
And I tell of the hurt that should never be.

Violence, you cry out violence
Oppression you today name it
Abuse, that is your parade word
Yet you forget whence this all came
Yes, you ignore the mold whence this was cast.

Look at that young old man,
Sitting there like a cornered rat
Eyes darting hither and thither flashing with fear
Confusion and humiliation written all over his face
The little boy inside him begging for understanding
Yes, the little boy that was never allowed to be.

From the womb he was already called a man
From the day he was born, word got around
'A man has come into the family'
He was nurtured with the word man from his mother's breasts
He was saddled with manly jobs from his childhood
Through winter, spring, summer and fall
He was sent out there to be a man.

He grew up in a world of violence
Where oppression is the rule and abuse is the policy
And all that was said to be a man's world
No mother ever taught him how men should act
No woman ever cared for the boy inside
He was always told, men don't cry
Go out there and be a man.
When his father died he was told, 'You are now man of the family'
And the poor boy was gone.
O' mothers, O' sisters, What is a man's world?

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Man-Child

Little man child grow up
Stop moaning and feeling sorry for yourself
Remember the world doesn't owe you anything
You owe it to the world because
You took something from it by your birth

You sit there with dark clouds above your head
Grumbling and thundering
With flashes of anger on your face
And you dare say you have no friends
Little man-child grow up

You wallow in self-pity
Demanding sympathy from folks
Not knowing and never caring
About their woes and sorrows
Thinking only of your little self
Little man-child grow up.

Go out there and be happy
You have got it in yourself to make it happen
Let the God in you come out
And He will be your unwavering guidance
Man, it is up to you to make it
Little man-child grow up

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Mother

Oh! Carry me back
To the womb that was my home
Where I used to lie in blissful contentment
With nary a worry to my soul.

Oh! Put me back
To those breasts that fed me
Where I never had to worry
Where my next meal would come from
But with tenderness and care
My pangs of hunger were satisfied.

Oh get me back
Into those arms that used to hug and hold,
With such gentleness and warmth
With a love so divine and true, a love so heavenly and free
I can still remember, that back that used to carry me,
Comfortably rocking me into a dreamless slumber
Resting my young heart, whilst the world went by.

Those were the days, when at my cry and call
My woman used to come a-running
Cooing words of comfort, singing sweet songs a-lullaby.
Those were the days of freedom
The days of a spirit nourished, natured for destinies to come
From a woman of strength and steel
A woman with love unsurpassed
Oh! How I miss you woman
Yes I miss you mother

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Old Man And The Sky

The old man was at it again
splashing paint all over the western sky
and like a pre-school child
He was gleefully mixing different colours on the sky board
And the sun was indulging the old man in different light settings
As it waved au revoir to the approaching night.

All around me I could hear the birds
Punching all sorts of melodies into their songs,
as they gave cheer to the Master.
The other animals too lend voice to that applause.
The night creatures came out in hushed whispers
And claimed that moment of truce at sunset,
so that they also could be part of that heavenly exhibition.

I sat on that mountain, and heard myself say,
"Lord, let it not pass me, let me be part of this moment forever"
The old man paused in his final stroke
And as He turned to look at me, the sun softly sighed out its lighting.
But even before it could totally give in to darkness,
The Master brushed in a small dot on that horizon
And if you look carefully, that is me etched on that tapestry.

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Precious

Precious, how precious?

Like a diamond you are so beautiful

Yet like that precious stone you are so cold.

From afar you look so vulnerable

Giving a feeling you'd like to be hugged and cuddled

But getting nearer, you put up your shield

Precious, how precious?

Like a diamond you have got inner beauty

It shines in your eyes

It radiates from your face when you smile

But is it, like that precious gem

Only going to come out when touched by light

Yes, a body can feel your depth of strength

That gives confidence and loyalty the true meaning

That gives friendship value and a desire to long for and appreciate

So let the God in you come out

To those shy and lonely hearts out there

Who would like to be warmed by the fire of your friendship.

And like a woman's best friend

Be precious to them forever.

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

The Climb

I hesitated as I touched her legs
And she coaxed me on as if she could sense
The inexperience of a fifteen year old boy
I ran my hand along her smooth body and I became afraid
But she held on to my hand and guided me to her cleft
And as my hand touched that split, I felt my emotions rising.
She took me in her arms and I held on tight
I hugged her to me with all my strength my body as tight a spring trap
But I soon relaxed as she led me on that climb
She anticipated my every move
And as I grappled with her rocky breasts I felt a joy I had never had before
I heaved and humped as I got my rhythm
And my boyish fears were cast aside as we became one.
I gave her my spirit, I gave her my soul, and I gave her my whole being
And as my climb reached its climax, I felt that roaring sensation of ecstasy that I
shouted out.
And the joy that I felt can only be imagined.
Yes, that was the first of my many climbs
On that mountain that overshadowed my village back home in Lesotho

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

The Moon

Suddenly I was awake
Wide-awake like I had never gone to sleep
And the face of the clock at my bedside
Showed me the twelfth night watchman
Had gone by

I looked outside through the window
And the silence of the moonlight called to me
I went out into the stillness of the night
And oh! Oh! Oh! What a beaut,
Oh! What a beaut

In the clear night sky
The moon in sheer brilliance
Was sitting on her throne
And like a virgin bride,
she was fully clothed in white
and all but the lordly stars
were bowing to her in reverence

I stood there, caught in that moment
Lost in the wonder to one of God's creations
I felt so humbled that,
I too bowed to that heavenly presence.

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

What Should I Do?

'Mpho... come out and enjoy the shine
It is a beautiful day out here; ' said Dee
I stood up and started towards the door,
For a moment I felt the thrill and the excitement
Of going out into that night rained, sunshine filled world
With the birds punching all sorts of beautiful melodies into their songs
But then I hesitated; something made me hold up.
And that moment passed.
What was it, fear?
Was it the fear of that unknown world out there?
Was it uncertainty?
Uncertain of what that world held for me?
I have seen its ugliness as I sat here at the small window of my soul.
Or was it laziness?
I have stayed inside for so long and maybe I do not want to lose my comfort
zone
What shall I do?
What should I do?

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Who Are You?

You came into my life
When I was down and low
You accepted me
Even though I was a stranger
You held my hand
And showed you cared
But still I don't know you
Can you tell please, Who you are?

We spent the day together
And I can tell you
It was one of the brightest
You listened to my laments
And accommodated my fears
But still I don't know you
Can you tell me please, Who you are?

You took me in your arms
And hugged me
You wiped away my tears
And told me it was okay
You found a quiet corner in your heart
And placed me there for solace
Yet still I don't know you
Can you tell me please, Who you are?

That day has passed and gone
I am alone again in my sorrows
Yet somehow I can feel your presence
You are here in my thoughts
And I can feel the comfort
I want to know you friend, but still I don't
Can you tell me please, Who you are?

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Why Not?

I have been on this road
I know the signs
I can show you all the landmarks
And it had not been an easy road.

I was taken for a ride on this road
And that had been a really rough ride.
My fellow travelers had all used me on this here road
Some to show them the signs
Some to ride on my back
And they were all doing to get my help over this terrain,
As you are doing now.

How do I help you?
A voice inside me says, "Don't"
But another says, " Why not? "
The don't voice is getting louder
But my being says I should listen to the why not voice.
I am a crossroads whether to walk this way with you,
Because I have really been hurt by people like you.

I can only ask the guy above to give me guidance through all this.
He walked on that torturous road for me
He took my sins upon his back and died for me on that cross
He did that even though he knew I would still hurt him in return
But He nevertheless took it upon himself
To walk this terrain so that my soul should be saved
You want me to be your guide on this road
Well, "Why not? "

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

Why, But Why?

You wake up to a glorious morn
To a cheerful song of the birds
The clear skies sighing in the acknowledgement
Of a magnificent day to be
But in your soul all is dark
Your body reflects the defects of your spirit
Then a question filters through the sieve of your empty mind
Why, but why?

You try to fill the fragmented slots of your mind
Ticking answers from your reluctant little fingers of your brain
Your tardy automated physique
Groanly moving hither and thither
Refusing the beckoning of the refreshing sphere outside
Because in your heart the happy door is closed
And the question is slowly filling your unresponsive mind
Why, but why?

The dictates of the day comes through
Unwanted, but oh! So necessary they take over
Tugging you unwillingly into their tormenting routine
Pulling you hesitantly into the shine of the blessed night rained world
Where with a cheer and a smile the passing faces greet you by
But grumpily and with a cloudy howdy you shuffle by
Then you guiltily ask your pitying self
Why, but why?

The day takes its short but seemingly long hours
You say a little prayer to the God you don't know
For carrying you through what was
Unarguably a bad tempestuous day for you
But your mind is still dark to the, Why
You take off your jacket, kick off your shoe
Lay back on the settee and try to contemplate
The source of your negation to the pleasant of the creator's days
Yet you can only come up with that painful question
Why, but why?

Words, How Can I Say Thank You

Words, Words, Words,
Why is it when I need you,
You deny me of your presence?
Why is it when I want to touch you
for that better expression,
You elude my embrace?

But hark! I say
even as I futilely labor for bits and pieces
from your banquet of eloquence,
all I can sate myself with
are these two little words

Thank you

Mpho Petrus Manwedi

You Beast

What kind of a person are you, or may I say animal?
Anyway, will it help even if I knew?
Will it take away this hatred I feel for you?
Will it bring back those loved ones?
You cruelly removed from this world?

You sit there with a face full of scorn
Sorrowful pretence written all over you
Asking amnesty for your grievous deeds
Demanding that I should forgive and forget
As you proudly tell me you did it for your country
While you denied me freedom in my own land

You beast! You ask me to forgive and forget
Let bygones be bygones
Yes, let the past be
Yet you seem to ignore
That even today you live in a mansion built by your past
While I live in a shack molded by your past
And you dare me to forgive and forget

My brothers and sisters are gone today
Some buried in unmarked graves
Some mangled and disabled
With twisted bodies that can no more a day's work
Still you deny those able bodied people of black color
A chance to earn a decent living
Retrenching them left and right
Telling them to go to Mandela for a job

Forgive and forget, damn you! I hate you
I wish you would suffer the way I did
I wish you would go to the hell I have been through
You must go down on your knees
And thank Mandela for asking for reconciliation
Through respect to that old man I will bow out gracefully
Otherwise? ? ?
Forgive and forget Madoda!

