



Living India

Poems and reflections

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Through Anandi Zhang

Painting for cover: Roots from the Sky ✨

Participatory art by Cedric Bregnard / racinesduciel.com

Sri Aurobindo:

Your life on this earth is a divine poem that you are translating into earthly language or a strain of music which you are rendering into words.

The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo (CWSA), Vol. 12, p. 100

Living India comes from a 24/7 experience of being pickled in the Indian culture, in the context of Auroville – the City of Dawn aspiring to live an actual human unity in diversity.

Living India, loving India – the essence of it and its countless eyes, names, faces, facets and flavours. Living it. Carrying it. Always.

Gratitude

To Sri Aurobindo and The Mother

To the living gems who garden their Heartland

To life experiences that inspire poetic expressions,
personal and universal

OM...

Do you come from
Mother's womb?

Do you reside in
The womb of Creation
Inside me?

Let me know
By your vibration.

The first time we met
We felt no strangers
And knew we had met
Countless times.

Our friendship started
Instantly,
Effortlessly,
And continues
Whether we meet
Or not.

Your eyes
Shining,
Knowing,
Warm and clear,
Caring and carefree

Land their gazes
On the world,
On me

What happens?
What effects?
An open secret,
A soma brewing.

You looked into my eyes
I into yours
Not a word was spoken
Not a word was needed

A look
A smile
An invitation
Into each other's world

Eyelids part
Only to meet again.

For the eyes that see
We are never apart.

Kolam

A winding pathway
To Beauty

Saree

Covers up
To reveal

Thali or potluck
Diversity in one plate

She puts jasmine in her hair.
I put it into a teacup.
Each has its own flavours.

He shaved his hair
Claiming no ownership
To what's gone,
While he proudly strokes
What's left curled up
Above his lips.

*“No, I will not shave it
Or share it with anyone.
Definitely not
With a bowl of soup.”*

Bala Krishna
Lips over flute
Lures
Nears
Dwells

He refuses to go
I refuse to let go

A mutual attachment

i build obstacles
And pray to Ganesha
To remove them.

I build bridges
From stumbling blocks
And enshrine Ganesha within.

Churning
Brings out
Deepest yearning.

Guru is a water tap.

Turn it on
To clean or drink.

Men make façades.

God makes faces
Laughs and laughs.

God, the Gatekeeper
Leaves keys and cues
Everywhere.

Why are we still wandering
Like clueless strangers
In our native home?

No longer posing
As familiar strangers
God grins at me
From every face.

The rented bike stopped
Right in the middle
Of a strange lane.

Try as I might
It just wouldn't start.

Before desperation hit me
A rickshaw driver stopped
To help, trying all he could
Still it refused to start again.

Finally he led me
To a bike repair shop
And left quietly.

Gratitude slowly welled up,
Tears flowed, sweetness spread
Along with a faint regret –
I didn't even know his name.

Then inspiration hit me –
God has millions of
Names and faces.

Tears stopped
Smiles started.
And I rode on quietly
Seeing God, feeling good.

God must be a homeopath
Diluting divinity
And know for sure
Each will follow a path
And arrive home.

God is the Master Chef.

Order the Dish of the Day,
Or whatever best suits.

You have enough to pay.
Pay yourself.

Finally I arrived
At God's one-donor store.

Like a savvy customer
I picked, picked and picked
What I thought I wanted to have
Disregarding and discarding
What dismayed and disarrayed.

God burst out
Into golden laughter
And reminded me

*“Here I AM the Boss.
And I sell in packs only.*

*Why do you still pick
Yuuu picky?*

*You don't have to
Buy into My Story
Or buy in My Store.”*

Now I have to
Either surrender
Or walk away
Empty-handed.

Surrender

Ultimate revolt
Against self
So that we vote
For Self

I have been missing Thee
For as long as time lasts
Even though you reside
Right here inside of me

For search and storage

Google drives
As a company limited

God drives
As the Creator Infinite

www.DivineConsciousness.com

Divine Consciousness
Not a Drive in the Cloud
Thou art webmaster in Thy domain
Assuming countless names
Residing in myriad forms

How many have visited you
And stayed faithful?

Password

Dear Lord,

Thou hast created the worlds
as Thy fields of play;
The countless forms, hues,
scents and sounds
Are Thy robes, paints
and playful rhythms.

Our will is
Thy will direct or distorted.

Our dreams are
Thy dream perceived and embodied.

Our actions are
Thy learning by trial and error.

Our achievements are
Thy steps on the Way.

Our failings are
Thy use of rebound from the abyss.

Our speech, thoughts and feelings
Are Thy meandering explorations.

Thou hast given us the right to play
For Thee,
Against Thee,
As Thee.

Thou dost ever renew
Thy game
And reset the password;
So that we get lost time and again,
Yet still feel our way back to Thee
In whatever way.

O God,
Play in all roles
To Thy heart's content.

Remove Thy mask,
Come out
From behind the screen
In the grand finale.

You promised, remember?

Questioning drives me on wild
Quest drives me onward

I strayed off the main road
And stumbled upon
A path back home.

O Lord,
Where else will you lead me?
I am already at home.

Preparing to talk with family
Ended in hours of dialogue
With myself.

She shared laddus
Made by her grandma.

A generation gap
Filled with sweetness.

A man-made distance
Disappeared.

You walk into the garden
And become part of
The landscape.

You gaze at fishes in the pond
I gaze at you through the window
Lord gazes at us and
Brimms with a borderless smile.

A Tree's Asana

Arms, hands and fingers
High up in the sky

Legs, feet and toes
Deep down in the soil

What a stretch!

Hide and Seek

A nest inside a Banyan root
Hiding from danger
And curious eyes
Seeking a secure base –
A home for its new births.

The flower show is over.

Petals dry
Colours fade
Crowd's gone

Fragrance lingers on
Till another round.

A fallen leaf
Completing its cycle
Incomplete in shape
Complete in spirit

Peacocks pass by
Leaving feathers
For the enchanted
Or accidental seeker
To pick them up
Adore and adorn

Beauty transports me
To a subtler realm.

There I roam
Here I rove
Endlessly.

Where is
The intersection?

*“Lemon grass,
Organic sprays
Or sheer purity
Keep off
Mosquitoes,”*

He says
While waving arms
To ward off
Their relentless kisses.

She fed and tended
A stray dog
As if it were herself.

The dog was lost.
She was lost.
Cried so hard
That she found
Her Self.

Cows never hurry
Walk or milk.

Two pairs of eyes
Lock gazes.

*“Will you come in?
Or shall I get out?”*

I ask the cow
Across the gate and fence.

Cows sneaked in
Through the fence
Feasted on garden grass
Leaving piles of cow dung
As a gift in return.

Piles of cow dung –
Excretions of the past,
Abundant compost
For a new dawn.

Chasing Cows

Nobody invited me
Nobody urged me
Nobody taught me
Nobody paid me
 To chase cows
When they come
Inside the fence.

When they come
 Inside the fence
It is an invitation for me
 To put aside everything
Important or not so much
 To follow the inner urge
 To chase cows.

You know, you need to use
The right tone and pitch
Accompanied by
Clapping hands and
Stamping feet.
And yes, the pace...
The pace matters.

You see, nobody taught me.
It comes with intuitive practice.
And I get paid
From the sheer satisfaction
Of chasing cows
Out of the fence
Loving them as they are
Even if they've eaten my veggies,
Never minding the fact
That these clever cows
Might sneak in, again,
Soon enough.

Well, when they come
Inside the fence, again
I might chase cows
Or just let them be.

And I consider this
An indispensable service
To our growing community
Even if you might disagree.

Never mind!
We can still live together
Whether we agree or not
On chasing cows.

On a Cycle Path

A white cow stepped aside
Quietly, gracefully
When it felt my presence.

I passed
Quietly, gratefully
Without ringing the bell
Or falling into a yell.

Summer heats up.
Neem cools down.

Nature's art of balance.

Self-centered
Pendulum
Swings

Yet
Never
Self lost

Riding on an avenue
Taking in the sunlit sight
I saw a friend racing towards me
On the opposite side

He saw me –
Opened his arms straight and wide
With an intense, immense smile
Brighter than the light
Revealing teeth stark white
“*Hello!*” and passed by
On his motorbike

I saw a giggling child behind him
And saw the movements inside –
What a shadowless smile!
What a carefree ride!
What a careless father
Risking the safety of himself
And his child on the bike!

How alarming and amusing
To see the mixed movements inside!

Will I see the moment and movements
Pure and bright?

I rode on laughing
As the moment and movements
Passed by.

The mind races
Faster than
The light.

It gains in speed
Loses trace of
The Light.

Peel the onion skin
Of existence!

Opinions fall off
Revealing a tearful union
At the core.

Loving you
Is a solemn promise
To learn to love
Another version
of my Self.

A promise long overdue.

Marry Thy Self
Before marrying me
For then the marriage
Will not be a bondage
But a merry voyage
Of a life together
That does not age.

Diamond

A stone unearthed, polished
Reveals the diamond within
Worth a thousand, a million
Wins the lover's hand.

Layers of masks lifted up
Unveils the Diamond within
Worth unnumbered lifetimes
Winks a spark divine.

Humans fall in love
And out of it.

The Spirit rises in Love.
It never falls
Nor does it ever fail.

Rise, O Spirit!
Raise us
To Thy soaring heights.
Sculpt us
In Thy infinite forms.

I look into your eyes
In a photo.

Finally, here is something
Unblinkingly ever-lasting.

I took framed images
To Free Store
For their free flow.

Now my storage space is free
For all divine images
To come alive.

A rainbow bridge emerges
After rain and shine
In the vast space
Over the ocean.

Behold the glory
Luminous and transient.
Soon it will dissolve
And merge into
The eternal expanse.

Variables change constantly.

What remains constant

In and in spite of changes?

What constantly creates changes?

That alone is constant.

That alone is the invariable Creator.

Temple Music and Musings

Temple music woke me up.
Yet another day starts.

Pausing for a moment,
I wonder:

What music plays
in my heart temple?

Is it well-lit, or dim and dark?

Have I swept it clean
of dirt and dust?

Is it sweet and subtle,
or riotous and rough?

What food, fruits and flowers
Do I offer daily
to the indwelling god?

Is the door closed, open, or ajar?

What visitors do I welcome in?

What messages do I
Resonate and relay
In silence and in speech?

...

She sang
Her voice soaring
To the sky
Luring our souls
To ascend that high.

Then she ended
With a mellow sound
Bringing us back
To the ground.

There we found
Peacocks had come.
These silent listeners
Inadvertently
Added their charm
To the scene and song.

I cried, again.

Not because of
Injury or separation,
A broken heart or dream,
A chilli or an onion.

But because
My heartstrings
Are gently plucked
By your Song.

Function

Another function
On the road

Traffic flows
To another lane

Life always manages
To function
One way or another

Thy Grace
Lights
All ways
Always

Run a business
Work like bees
To realise
The value of the being
The futility of busyness

ICICI

Wherever I am
Whomever I am with
I see I see I

O infinite wealth!
O countless accounts!

A group of three-year-olds
Clap hands and declare:
“We are the monsters...”

Kids grow and group up,
Point fingers and denounce:
“They are the monsters...”

We play child-like games
And disguise as adults
Feigning innocence and maturity.

The child's eyes
Pure and bright
Pull my sight
From the adult world
Steeped in right or might.

Not for or against
Not static neutral
Not roles at play
Not forces applied

No sure and secure ground
To stand on
The soul and spirit
Lure and urge us on
Till we recognise and realise
What smiles on
Behind the veils

When you say
“I hate you!”
I know you will
Come to know Love
Of yourself and me.

I just know it.

When We are lost
There is a hole.

When We are found
The hole is fulfilled
It becomes a whole.

Dancing shadows
On the wall

Only those
Moving in Light
Can do
The trick.

Division is a delusion divinely designed
Not to deceive or disillusion
But to derive a clear vision of
A dance and dialogue with one Self.

Heaven and Earth
High and low
When set apart
Man cannot but accept
The eagle's sneer

“Let’s Honour All...”

Lime-light
Shining for some
Sour for others

With all in Thy domain
O deathless sun-light
So sweet, sweaty and bright!

Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

Humans race
To paint and erase
Racial disparity.

Does it undo the traces?
Can we slacken the pace?

Not until
The spirit rises
To the call of
One race –
Humanity.

O Man,
Cast away country,
Class or caste,
Join the cast of the Lila!

Feedback

Not to avoid, allude or auto-play
In muted mutual dissatisfaction

Not to flatter, flatten or feed
The ego, subtle or overt

Not to pry, pick or prick
Loopholes in “others”

Not to demonstrate
Right or wrong
Better or worse

But to give and receive
In growing goodwill
A trusting incubation
Full of candid calm
And comprehending compassion
Of crescent co-travelers
Careful in the art and act
Carefree in what comes
In the dance of Two in One

She says,
*“When my child gets naughty,
It’s my motherly duty to whip her.”*

“How can you do it?”

I asked.

“Yes. How can you do it, Mom?”

Her daughter asked.

*“How can you do it?
Now I am with your daughter.”*

*“If you are with her,
I might whip you as well.”*

*“I will place ribbons
Into your hands
To replace the whip.
So that you derive
A cosmic dance
That ties us all together.”*

It's all laughter
In the end.

Nothing
No One
Is
Dead
Serious.

When sky speaks of
its myriad moods
There is no language barrier.

My mood is
A monsoon.

Rain or shine —
It will pass.

Pass

I walk past the Beach Road.
Wind blows past me,
Breaths pass through my nostrils.
I am alive, living, breathing.

When shall I pass
Life and death
And land on the other shore?

I was chewing on
A hard-to-digest incident.

She called and told me
Where she felt I was in pain.

In an instant
The unvoiced lone suffering
Vanished.

She knew it and cared
Across miles' distance.

I knew it and am convinced
That we are truly connected.

Her voice
Soft
Sweet

Melts all
Rashness
Roughness

We speak little.
Even that much seems an excess
For we know and commune
In sacred, subtle, sweet ways.

Gratitude is a stream
That knows its source
And goes on its course
All the way to the sea.

Stairs of Knowledge

It takes a while
To ascend the stairs of
Knowledge

But once up there
All is bright vastness
Sea and sky meet and mingle
In a single storyline of Infinity

You stay immobile and move
Mountains and seas
Hearts, minds and souls

Move me
Like a breeze
Caressing the face of a child
Creating dimples and rippling smiles

Lead me
Like a tour guide
Treading a treasure-hunt path
Through misty and mystic landscapes

Take me
The totality of me
Into your swirling cosmic dance

Don't let me fall or faint
For we have a promise
To dance on and on
Each movement
Each moment
In eternity

This moment
Fresh and familiar,
As if I have lived it before
In another lifetime,
As if I am living it
Simultaneously
In a parallel universe,
As if all future unfolds
Now
In this moment.

True freedom
Never bound
Seldom found
Ever around

In rehearsal
For the greater dawn
To come
In a brief moment
In came a movement
“Oh, I like every one.”

My heart was moved
To tears
In recognition of the fact
That nothing or no one
Tears us apart.

Time will tell
How the scroll of life
Paints and unfolds itself.

Time will tell
Whether we have drifted apart
Or come together
In the flow of the Eternal.

Time will tell
That all secrets
Await a cover removal.

“Sorry to keep you waiting.”

“Why sorry?”

I’m not waiting for you.

I’m growing into my Self.”

Something gets ignited
In me.

It burns
And lasts.

It scorches
And soothes.

It steals
And swallows
Me.

No, I can't resist it.
And you don't have to
Save me.

Rest well.
It will rise
In you
As in me.

A tadpole mistakes many
For its mother
In its formative years.

When it grows into
Her shape and spirit
It finds her at last.

Its seeking ends.
It becomes a mother.

Rise, O Spirit,
Master and Dweller of the house,
You are not locked outside,
You have the key –
Open the door from inside!

All the mud
That is smeared
Onto us
Only goes to nurture
The lotus bud
Rooted in mud
Rising above
Revealing the god in us
That steers the course
That still blooms
No matter what

When noise riots
Quiet silences its steps
And walks in unnoticed

Can't you see
How occupied I am?

I attend to things
A thousand and one

Then, in one moment
You sneak in

You hold me
In Thy gaze eternal

I slip into the Sound of Silence
With a smile and a sigh

Spirit rises.
Tears fall.

A solemn silence
Resounds.

Silence
Is a womb
Pregnant with
A New Creation