

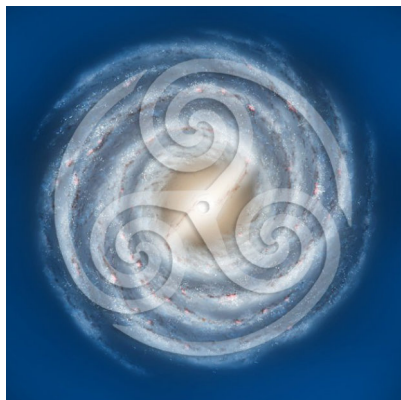
*Poems of
Devotion
&
Stillness*

Poems and Illustrations

1968 – 2010

Rod Hemsell

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Acknowledgements: Hymn 1, The Artist Before Dawn, Her Luminous Force, and The Force of the Universe appeared originally in the magazine *Mother India, A Monthly Review of Culture*; The Artist Before Dawn also appeared along with the poems in the section titled 'Poems From Auroville' in an Auroville poetry anthology with that same title. The section titled *Devotion* in the present volume was published in 1998 as COLLECTED POEMS 1968-1977. The section titled *Stillness* was published in a shorter version and limited edition of 25 copies in 2003/2004. The essay "Cloning the Earth" was previously published by the University of Human Unity in 2010.

Dear Reader:

In reviving these earlier poems and images of mine, composed between the age of 25 and 65, I recognize my implicit belief in the ability of poetic speech and consciousness to convey in a vivid way our inner connection with “nature” - both in and around us – and to express the 'reality' of both nature and our experience. At best it may also express other realities that transcend both nature and experience, such as the idea that stones have eyes and ears, and that our lives are influenced by celestial beings. This belief in poetry implies as well that language and consciousness are more than mere 'representations' of reality: they are faculties that resonate with nature and experience in a way that reveals a deeper symbolic identity or close kinship between the two poles of reality - inner and outer, self and nature. This may be a naive belief, no doubt, but it also has its roots in the much earlier Vedic notions about language and truth. Being inspired by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, my hope is that something of the truth of those notions will be seen, heard, and felt by the reader. It is this same consciousness applied to contemporary environmental issues that has also informed the fantasy-essay on climate change in this volume, titled *Cloning the Earth*, written ten years ago but more relevant than ever and likely to be better understood, today. Poetry, mythology, fiction may still be the best means we have to come to terms with the dilemmas of our existence.

While it is possible to speculate about the universal truths of 'poetry' and 'consciousness', I also realize that these poems are a kind of psychic record of many unique moments of my life and my experience. As such, they are a very personal expression of what I have seen, felt, and understood to be the true nature and quality of those moments (their *swabhava*). Their unstated theme is the unification of self and nature through symbolic speech. And the drive to write in this way has made both self and nature more real.

The complete record of this effort, as far as I have been able to assemble and present it, is now published in three volumes: *Devotion and Stillness (1968-2010)*, and *Lotus Mountain (2010-2020)*, along with the previously published *Wings of the Sea (2016-2017)*.

Rod
February 2020

1

Devotion

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HYMNS

1

O source of peace and light and bliss
O immortal shining flame
Kindle in us thy boundless truth and love
Make rich our offerings to thee
With thy radiance from above.

O bright morning chariot
O fountain of delight
Carry us into thy waters
And bathe us in thy light
Deliver us into the hands
Of the Mother of the Dawns
And her streams of glistening white.

2

O throned child of truth
O ray of blazing light
Reveal to us the secret of thy might
Lead us to the Master of the Universe
Establish for us the kingdom of delight.

Divine Mother, Supreme Power
Destroyer of desire
Blast the mountainous darkness from our skies
Melt the clouds of ignorance
With thy sweet and luminous fires
Transform us with thy all-perfecting energies.

3

O deep and glowing golden flame
O silent voice within
Awaken the world and speak the name
Let the new begin
Open the heart of every man
To the wonder of thy gleam
Mother of the dawn divine
Sing the word and bring the day supreme.

Ocean of oneness, Heaven of bliss
Realm of utter brightness
Descend to earth and fill the soul
With infinite peace and wideness
Press the ego out of existence
And end its evil reign
Pour down thy presence
On the trivial and inane.

4

O Ineffable Will
O Goddess of Truth Eternal
Manifest in us thy conscious force
Let us work for thee
With a vision free and pure
To bring to birth the powers of the future.

PRAYERS

1

I felt the presence of Sri Aurobindo today.
He came in the late afternoon and with him
The first sweet breath of rain
And a brief wind, and then a deep silence.
I felt his grasp for a moment holding all
And he left me with the will to await his return
And to stand for the manifestation
Of his consciousness.
Make me worthy to receive him
And to serve him O Mother.
I aspire to thee. I surrender to thee. I adore thee.
Flower in the Master's hand.

2

I felt the touch of thy grace beloved Mother.
On earth tonight under a clear moonlit sky
Thy children danced, exuberant and exalted
By thy love.
It was not thy inviolate peace, nor thy divine love
That was experienced
But a calmness and closeness of dynamic
Self unfolding befitting thy children,
That we could receive and share
And learn from gradually the love of the Master.
Teach us his Supreme Love, O Mother.
Help us to grow toward him.

3

Sweet Mother, thy light has blessed our house.
We have seen thee in each other's eyes,
Our bodies have been the instruments of thy love,
We have found ourselves in thee
And by thy force are we made conscious of the Lord.
May he have his birthplace and his home
And his playground ever with us.

4

Thy light came bright and warm
As the dawn sun this morning,
Again to awaken my heart to love.
Thy conscious-force and knowledge-will
Have mastered the day Mighty Mother
And the masses of the world welcome at last
Thy wonderful child among them.
Protect us and nourish us always
In the safe dwelling of thy embrace.
By the perfect force of the Mother.

5

To behold thee or to feel thy presence
Even for a moment is enough to deliver us
From error and to justify our labor.
What seemed a painful strife of ignorance
Is made a joyful harmony of truth.
And yet we long to be uplifted entirely
Into the infinitude of thy perfect delight.
Make our minds and lives and bodies
Perfect instruments of thy work
And unfailing embodiments of thyself.
O Lord be the guide conscious in us
Every step of the way,
By the perfect force of the Mother.

6

Divine Mother, creatrix in and beyond all creation
Manifest thyself to us!
Make us conscious instruments of thy force,
Perfect forms of thy supreme self and spirit
United in thy all-embracing love and light!
Shine out through all darkness and beyond
Beloved Master, bringing to birth everywhere
Thy Immortal Child!

7

I am thy vessel filled with thy light
And offered to thy Lord.
I am the child who receives thy life giving substance
Everywhere, and rejoices.
I am the one who rests at thy feet and rises to thy call
Illumined by the rays of truth
And I see that thou art the divine in all.

8

We play thy hide and seek, and what delightful play
We have had today Sweet Mother!
The whole atmosphere is purified with tears of joy
And a wonderful peace has flowered in our lives.
Thy powerful love has carried us through
Every difficult test, and I dare say at last
That even the Master has taken part in the feast.

9

Sri Aurobindo's word compels nature to grow divine
Fulfilling her with the power of truth.
The truth-conscious children bliss-born by Her Force
Enter the spirit's house made perfect by His Work,
His Knowledge, and His Devotion.
The universe resounds with their victorious shouts
And She rests reassured by their play.

POEMS AND SYMBOLS

1

The Sea Overhead

Things seen and known
By a higher sight than mine
In symbols of the one supreme
Would dress the page divine
And express the truths
These smaller lines disown

But the poet in shallow waters
Can sense the magnificent crest
Rising in his soul
And knows on evolution's wave
His journey skyward goes
From his place of quiet rest

Light rays filter down
To the creature of the sand
Safe inside his shell
While the sea sings above
And with her waves of laughter
Tells a tale of man's longing and his love

2

Darshan Moon

Round as round can be
And bright as I can see

Dawn soft golden eye
In silvery wideness high

Pour the blessed ray
Hold the graceful sway

Reveal the secret identity
White body of infinity

To the soul made vast and free
Show the one divinity

3

To A Rose

The soft smile points
And curled petal lips of my love
Are showered with kisses
And happy with song from the sun

The soft smile points
And curled petal lips of my prayer
Wear a veil of graceful air
And whisper a tender caress

The soft smile points
And curled petal lips of my soul
Open and offered in the morning light
Rejoice like a rose

The soft smile points
And curled petal lips of my heart
Are drunk with the sweetness
That flowers deep within

4

After Penelope's Labors

I sit in a pure and silver air
On a seat of shining woven gold
The earth below my sacred carpet fair
And heaven my spirit's luminous glow

The victory bow has been unstrung
The suitors all are slain
Songs of sweetness now are sung
And the joyful gods have reign

Penelope after her labors long
And her love's time of dread
Lies within her lover's arms
Bound in beauty's thread

Mistress of an age of pain
And bride of its wayward king
Rejoice now in safest bliss
And the splendors that I bring

5

The Savior's Song

Glimmering morning me
The sunlight's on the sea
The fields like fountains glisten
The earth's harmonies have risen
The city's awake, give and take
The ships are floating free

At noon the sun is black
The cross is at my back
Suffering suffering me
To slay the dragon darkness
When consciousness goes dim
And sing the savior's hymn

Give and take when city's awake
And in the evening dream
With sword and lyre a kingdom make
Like the glory of morning to seem
And ignorance gate with fire
Let the true light stream

6

The Warriors

The warriors ride today

Wait for the sun

Victory shines on their faces

Their horses are ready to run

Courage stands on the mountain

Truth inscribed on the spear

The enemy trembles at dawning

What is there to fear

The warriors ride in the morning

Armoured with the sun

On hooves of thunder and lightning

Against the night they run

Light is on their banners

Love is in their hearts

Ignorance and darkness

Are vanquished by their arts

The will to conquer sweetly flowers

And ends the terrible fight

Calmness crowns the battle

The warriors win delight

7

The Call

How long will we be barbarians
And treat all whom we meet
As enemies on the battlefield
And strangers whom we fear?

When will we find ourselves
Fulfilled in truth and oneness
Beyond the scope of ignorance
And nature's limiting play?

If the question is sincere
A liberating change is near
The call is a power
That prepares us to hear.

Out shall stand the answered man
Wreathed and crowned with flowers.

RAMA AND THE GOLDEN DEER

1

Rama

Chase the golden deer,
Rama of the mighty bow,
Your soul free from care.
Made secure by Laksman's vow
Leave her without fear,
Capture her youthful heart's desire.
Blinded by Sita's longings,
Overriding Laksman's warnings true,
Your path through the forest winding
Hidden nature's ways pursue.
Thus the gleaming demon,
In form a magnificent deer,
Is sought and found and slain,
The hero's task and trial and pain
Go forth at God's command.
He runs to win a fated race
And conquers by the chase.
Though it seems a demon's trick
And Sita's passion vain,
Sacrifice is the spirit's truest aim.

2

Lakshmana

Laksman strong and true,
Symbol of the noble way,
Your soft gentle hands
And sweet shining eyes
Reassuring with their touch
And sharp vigilant watch
The journey's long and wearisome march,
You are virtue's living ray,
The pilot of victory's certain day.
Stand firm bright line
Around the radiant Sita stay,
Guard her hazardous days
Against the hostile night
Shining out unfailingly
Supreme and sovereign light.
Even when all seems lost
And you wander in the forest,
An outcast king by Rama's side,
Brothers, equals, almighty friends,
Be faithful, watchful to the end.

3

Ravana

Great king Ravan, great fool
With your ten monster heads
And your hundred hungry arms,
Steal the lovely Sita away,
Rule the world with evil sway,
For Rama has been lured
To the dreadful wood today.
His eyes full of flowers,
His vision fed with starry showers,
He sees in every shadow heaven's glow.
But your wicked kinsman's test
Of Rama's infallible quest must fail.
Soon the evil deer and all his evil craft
Shall fall beneath the hero's mighty shaft.
The enchanted warrior will not stray far
And you, too, great fool, one day
Shall fall before his god-born fire.
Your terrible reign shall end,
Your brilliant night dissolve
In heaven's imperishable light.

4

Sita

Alas beloved Sita, alone and afraid
Alarmed by Rama's sudden cry,
You sent the valiant Laksman away
And answered sly Mareecha's
Last cunning play.
Even loyal Laksman
Has virtuously fallen prey,
Unable to resist your desperate plea,
And Rama's royal trust betrayed.
Now evil king, take her away.
Abduct the impoverished soul
Of this lost wretched world.
Call upon yourself indomitable wrath
And bring to its inevitable end
This grand circuitous path,
This cruel and perilous game.
Pluck the perfect flower,
Persuade her to share her beauty
With hands deformed by greed,
Then present her in the chosen hour
To her master at your door.
She is yours for just a day,
The light no evil shall ever slay.

5

Jattayu

Eagle of power, bird of fire
Lord of the realm of sky
Give the soul swift wings,
Fly against the titan's desire,
Beat his regal chariot down.
King against courageous king
Locked in lawful battle
With perfect Sita prized between,
Let the airborne strife begin.
Fight though you can never win,
Like storm against a mountain
And lightning on a peak
Reveal the hidden pass
To the souls below who seek.
From the signs of great destruction
Rama will regain strength
And find the death strewn way
To your heartless victor's defeat.
Round and round, whirl and clash
Till the thunder's mighty crash
And harsh rains release the gentle ray.

THE FATE OF PROMETHEUS

1

Prometheus

O Zeus of the thunder,
O great and terrible Lord,
Release me from this stone
And the tyranny of thy storm,
Loose these burning bonds,
Deliver this anguished earth!
For I foresee the future
And I prophesy thy fall!
Lest I to Godhead rise
And all mankind set free,
The worlds below devoured in fire,
Heaven shall topple into the sea!

2

Zeus

Be quiet titan, hush thy moan,
For I decide the fate of man,
From me his freedom will come,
Not from thee O voice forlorn
Forsaken and bound to thy stone.
When man has risen
And conquered his pain,
When he has cured his ills,
Let him then repay thee
For the fire that thou hast stolen,
With the grace and compassion
That he has won from heaven.

3

Atlas

O winds that wail for mercy
And course madly through my brain,
O turbulent waves of the sea
Beating incessantly against me,
How long must I upbear,
How long can I endure,
The unrelenting blast,
The torrent of dread,
The tremendous burden of heaven?
O gods in your starry mansion
Whose dreams enslave creation,
When will this enormous nightmare end?

4

Athene

Arise O fire and conquer,
O calm and luminous flame,
Fill the mortal with hero power
And turn to bliss his pain.
Give him strength to lose his life
And sacrifice all his gain,
Give him vision that sees beyond
And knows the immortal aim.
In a golden eternal dawn
And a world of beauty supernal
Man shall at last awaken
And attain the glory divine.

5

Epimetheus

Vain longing and cruel desire
Poison my life with death,
I am blind with self-deceit,
I am smothered in guilt and grief.
Hope in me is nought but hunger,
Doubt deafens me with its roar,
Expectation pierces me with pain,
Passion tortures me with sin.
Pandora, O beautiful daughter of doom,
Fate's temptress and destroyer of man,
Where is the way to distress's end,
And the day of this evil's surcease?

6

Love

It is I for whom you suffer,
It is I to whom you call,
My force upholds the universe,
For me you strive and fall.
I give birth to cosmos,
And embrace all forms of life,
In arms of perfect oneness,
With hands of sweet delight.
My kiss makes all harmonious,
My touch makes all sublime,
My will transcends all boundaries
And loosens the bonds of time.

THE ARTIST BEFORE DAWN AND THE DREAM OF VICTORY

1

Why does the wild wind
Wander on this planet
While the hunter runs
Among the stars?
And why does the flute-caught wind
Call softly to the moon
When clarity wears the gown of night?
A child's innocence or a man's pride
Could inspire such questions
And the symbol care
The eager soul must seek to answer
Would seal the mystery with a tear.
But what after all is the point
Of agony of thought of art of joy of daylight
And the arrowflight of life?
When the bow is bent
And the true aim is felt
Then the shaft is released
That meets itself in mid air
Like fair game on full wing struck deep
And the wind turns round the world again
While the hunter weeps among the stars
And shadows chase the flute-song moon to dawn.

The archer's prize is fire
And infinite bliss and eternal peace
Enshrine his muse and his desire -
Finally his spirit is free.

It is an arduous path
Swirling to give birth
To its creator
Biting its tail
Spreading its wings wide
And narrow to the extreme.

We know we do not know we know
The ray behind the cloud
The bridge the stream we cross.

It becomes clearer
Inner and outer
Future and past
If it doesn't blind
By its brightness
And the right adjustment is made.

To grow and change, create and destroy
Ever renew always from the executive
Supreme point of view:
Ishwara Shakti
Flowering wave on wave
Magnificent at every moment.

To awaken from the dream
And see the way.

2

The beautiful young men
Who sweat in the sun
And laugh in the shade
With the shining girls
Until the world turns gold
And the glowing mountain is born
Listen to the music at night
That sings their life to smoke
In the sweetly turning light.

A silence will purify the mind
And make clear the formula of sight
For the builders who love
In the rising falling light
And listen to the music of the sun.

Form is the forerunner of the future
Growth is the way to the goal
Across the vast unknown;
The gift is given and the gift is received,
The worlds of beauty are born -

The sunborn children
Run softly in the twilight
Toward the wondrous day
And soon the sunburst morning
Will fly them to their nest...

So the seed is sown
And the tree gracefully sways
In the garden where time
Spins a silent web
To find where soon
The flower will be known.

3

All will come to pass this way
And more than I can tell
Says the mystery beyond the veil.

Under his cloak
The prophet croaks a doom
Form is the forerunner of change
His error will be revealed
By sacrifice be fulfilled.

To be like the sun -
It is the music of dawn
That we hear
And we are one with many voices
Who sing the word divine
As we cross the bridge
That we build together
As we listen to the sun.

We are walking in waves of heat
Across the plain toward a peak
Like ancients who gather bones
In the caverns of infinity
For magicians who turn them
To golden towers
That the spaces we build
Might never become crowded
Or unfree;
Children run softly in the twilight
Across the plain
And hide in the shadows
That conceal the happy blaze
Until all is changed in Her smile.

We gather flowers as we walk
Toward the peak
And the beautiful young men
Who listen to their hearts
Build the city of the sun
To guard the golden flowers
That we pick -
In the vital physical currents of the mind
We flow toward the stream of dawn.

Perhaps it will be remembered this way
And perhaps it will be justified
If it is all suspended in a dome
And spun around
So that every point is seen
Rising to express its oneness.

In a similar way one meets another,
The flower opens to its lover,
And the will to transcend
Shines on the brows
Of the beautiful young men.
The children float at dawn
Toward the warm touch of reality
Inside a magic dome
And the light grows within.

They will be one
And the word they speak
Will be love -
In their self giving
To the flame of sacrifice
Their consciousness will increase
To perfection
And they will see all
In the light of truth,
In the joy of Her smile.

4

Brightly halloed she stood alone
And her face of beauty and light
Concealed the laughter or the tears,
The joy or the sorrow that she felt
As hopes and fears flamed before her
And the tides of life and death
Raged around her
Warring through the night
Until the beasts and angels
That danced in the forest
Where she stood
Grew quiet:
The light that filled her breast
Flowed out to quell the madness of the world
And touch every heart with grace.

The pomp and lust that fought
To win their cup of flesh and blood
Filled with silver and gold
Were made to yield and shattered
In an instant
Under the weight of a mightier force:
Her body trembled with ecstasy
As the new world was born
And ascended to the throne.

The dragon slayer sheathed his sword
And brushed the curls from his brow
Then bowed down from dawn to dusk
To see the beginning and end of time
Touch in his praying hands.

The young men who flushed with pride
As they lay beside their maids in the hay
Stood suddenly erect with wonder
At the world's mystery they beheld.

The altar vessels of the blue ascetics
Smoked in the moonglow
Of the soul's illumination
And sent a holy fragrance
Drifting through the air
Out the cave's mouth
To shake the mountain and valley
With divine breath.

The earth's choirs
Intoned praise of the powers supreme
That made this world a sun
And voiced the truth of every birth.

The One enlightened All.

5

The inward and outward movements
Found their balance forever.
What was always known to be
Behind the veil, was shown:
The future leaped into view
Like blossoms opening in a garden
And the ancients who cared for them
From the first, watched their children grow.

And they gathered ever after
Around the table of the Master
To share with him
The nectarous drink of life
And wandered in the woods
Where strolled in magnificent beauty
The Mother, his mate
And they would listen to her mighty
Words of love
And receive her glorious gift of light
That poured from her beautiful eyes
And revealed all to sight.

The chariots charged ahead
To deliver the conquerors
Unto the conquered land
To offer in Truth
Its riches to the Lord.

6

Chorus

O the city rises
Round the rim
As night's armor
Clatters to the ground
And in the utter silence
Men of light
Noisily launch their ships
To the sun -

Sights and sounds
Noticed and unnoticed
From the highest peaks
Where the day rolls merrily by
I pray,
Where the day rolls merrily
By Him.

O the kingdom rises round the rim.

THREE LOVE POEMS AND A REFLECTION

1

Love's blossom

I have held you in my hands like a flower
And felt the petalled softness of your face
I was charmed by your smile for an hour
And vanished in the fragrance of your kiss

For a moment there was nothing more to say
Nothing that our nearness did not know
Our love revealed to us its oneness
And bathed us in the warmness of its glow

We parted then, each his way to go
My fingers from the flower slowly drew
And it bowed and swayed with beauty
The blossom that all lover's hands renew

2

Her luminous force

The mother is the brightness
Of the sunlight and the flower
That floods the heart with bliss.
She is the sweetness
And the radiant power
That illumines with its kiss.
Her passion and her might
Call forth the daylight
From deepest darkest night.

Her swift invasion of force
And luminous inspiration
Fill all with marvelous light.
Her tide of golden fire
Swells and flows in nature
Drowning insoluble desire.
The golden thread is found
The pearl of love is known
The soul is overborne by rapture.

3

The face of Sri Aurobindo

The face whose calm

My words cannot express

The face of absolute

Motionless peace

The face whose strength

Has overpowered infinity

The face whose eyes

Gaze calmly at eternity

The face whose love

Illumines with its grace

The face divine has

Mastered me with beauty

It has killed me with

Its all-knowing smile

I realize that what I have written here is not consummate or ultimate poetry; the experiences of love that I have tried to express are not consummate or ultimate experiences. And yet they embody certain definite though transitory qualities that are nonetheless true, beautiful, forceful, sincere, etc., to a gratifying extent.

But, however true the expression, there is much that it excludes, much that is left unsaid and unheard. To concentrate on a poem or an experience of any kind is to limit oneself to a single moment and deny all the rest that is pressing to be seen and heard.

I believe that this is true of expression in general; whatever is formed entails a sacrifice more or less great and is only a transition to something more or less fine. One must determine then what is to be taken, how long it is to be kept, and when to leave it and go on to something new. And one must reconcile as best one can the relative gains and losses. One's choice is surely not always sovereign lord but it is an important factor, e.g. the will to be more plastic, more receptive, more free, and it might eventually prevail. Then, to the quiet and equal mind, all will be a process of divine change.

To cherish the best of what has passed, to let it give way gracefully to what is present, and to know that all will be superseded in the future, to be flexible and equable in the transitions, is the ideal. Let all three times be bright in their aspect and be glad that there will always be more poems to write, more truth to experience, more light. This much can be said with gratitude.

And a further note: to give way gracefully to what is present does not necessarily mean to accept things just as they are and let them go their way, whatever it may be, as one is ordinarily obliged to do, but to accept them in such a way that they are changed, not only in their aspects but in themselves.

One form must give way to another in a luminous progression. This means that one must develop such a power of love that one can know intimately the truth of every moment and every form that presents itself to experience and be able by the force of this love to help each to realize its essential truth.

This means, again, that one must identify oneself with the universal Mother, whose love is beyond mutability. One must become universal, and transcendent, and find the key to all individual perfection in this spiritualized consciousness. This is of course a step or two further than one ordinarily cares to go, even in the presence of divine force.

But if I understand it correctly, this is the step that can change not only one's experience of the world, but also radically and creatively change the world itself. For, to know by dynamic identification with these principles that life, power, truth, harmony, liberty, beauty, purity, sincerity, nobility, unity, grace, divinity are at the heart of all creation, is to have the power to draw particular forms of this creation nearer to their true soul, and to raise them towards the eternal truths of which they are the temporal expression.

I would suggest that it might be possible to express such an immortal love-knowledge-force through an ultimate form of poetry. This possibility will be well known to those who are familiar with Savitri. This poetry would be the realization of what Sri Aurobindo has called the incarnate word. To interpret Savitri in this way, to create poetry in this way, to live in the light of this highest thought and speech would perhaps be a supreme manifestation of love within human limitations. It is already possible to feel the first warm rays of her plenitude.

To conclude these speculations, I will say this: change seems to be an inescapable law of nature and it seems to be essentially progressive, whatever the appearances at the moment may be. To the extent that one identifies oneself with this process of universal change, and consciously collaborates with the Divine Mother, to that extent, I believe, the process will be enhanced and things will move forward towards perfection. Om Tat Sat

POEMS FROM AUROVILLE

1

As feathers stir
Our dreams awake
And angels touch
Our souls asleep
With words that fly
From silence deep
And rise and soar
To realms afar

We see a shore
Of luminous peace
And laughter's face
And victory's peak
And freedom's fire
And power's star -
The truths we seek,
The beauty entire.

2

An aspiration and a dream
Become a lucent shining flame,
A flower bursting into bloom
Whose petals shed a misty calm
On eyes all full of golden fire
And hearts assailed by sweet desire.

Two lovers meet within this shrine
And over them a sacred sign
Reveals the name of heaven's child
Whose form is like a tempest mild
In whom we fear the thunder's roar
Until upon his winds we soar

Above the tempest and the fright
Into love's warm ether bright.

3

But where do you fly my dutiful love?
Into the ignorant human sphere,
The awful hungry howling pit
That swallows every blissful hour?
Love weighs upon my brow like sleep
And swirls around my limbs like flame
And swells within my burning eyes
Until I cannot bear the pain ...
I long to hold you in my arms
But when you press upon our lives,
Your honeyed planet passing near,
We spin and sink and disappear.

4

Two Paintings by Paul Klee

Trees of ice are all that's left of the past,
White ghosts of lives cold against the blue,
The mountains where they bloomed and grew
Are fading now from mortal sight
As old loves, hopes, dreams renew.
A blush of red against the night
And a yellow moon ringed with mist
Warn us of the distant heights we lost,
They fill us with a mounting fire
And the future is forsaken
In its lonely tower of ice
As we attempt again the summits of bliss.

The dragon of the West lives in the sea,
The dragon of the East lives in the sky,
The one is a serpent cruel and doomed to die,
The other is an angel luminously high.
I stand in a little boat armed with a spear
To fight the timeless battle without fear,
Though the symbol seems frozen into place
And this be the demon I must ever face.
Over my head the golden dragon sails
And the worlds below are breathlessly still,
The terrible fish is hopeless and pale
As the shining immortal swoops for the kill.

THE FORCE OF THE UNIVERSE

1

There is a natural stress of sound
A music of meaning and feeling and force
That holds together and whirls around
And rhythmically patterns a universe.

Its metric grace and myriad power
Meet and blend and flower in space,
Their waves' and bursts' and showers' color
Veiling in wonder their singer's face.

She is the glorious Mother of All
And this is Her sovereign voice,
A luminous song of magic and skill
That makes all shapes, all worlds rejoice.

Hers is the thought and the heart that knows
And love is the work of Her infinite will,
The essence of all that quickens and grows -
And more than this verse can tell.

2

At times She leads us to the stark abyss
Or calls down darkness on our breaking heads
Until we cannot see beyond our dread,
At times she burns us in Her spirit's fire
And makes us stand alone against desire
Till after we endure Her flaming brand
And bear the weight of Her almighty hand
Our heads are raised beneath the fiery blast
And sweetness and grace come to us at last,
A breath of life runs lightly through the brain
And cool delicious drops relieve our pain
And release from anguish pours to us in sound
And peace in us consents to come and dwell
And rosebuds sway in the crevice of the hill
And softly fill with light our empty space.
This is Her hidden glory's glimpse and trace,
The process of Her nature's dire travail,
A pathway that Her secret hands reveal,
A veil that she wears before Her face,
A breeze that She wafts to us of bliss
Till we die within the petals of Her bloom:
Seed sounds form in us the music of Her name
Inspiring us to cross the gates of doom
And chanting we rise to Consciousness and Flame.

3

A form that stands alone
A rhythm that is born
A tree, a silhouette
Above the blue marine

Companion to the wind
Moved to descend
Stirred to become
By a distant silent friend

Called by the sea
And the rising of the sun
Slowly to discover
The powers that are one

The force of the universe
Her elements are known
Her rhythms and harmonies
Her melodies and themes

Heard on peaceful hillsides
In orchards soft and still
Sung in sighing arbors
By echoes faint and shrill

Above the cruel barriers
And battlements and fight
Ascending through struggle
To gardens of delight

The fury of the god
The goddess sweet and mild
The swift and the subtle
The terrible and the wild

A strong descent of calm
Is her arrival's sign
And waves from golden seas
And light from planes beyond

But always is she there
Magnificent and victorious
Smiling and serene,
A powerful silence within us

4

O Blessed Form concealed from sight
Yet hidden from us somewhere there
For now we see a signal ray
And feel within a mystery
Though still we cannot grasp its truth
Nor know the path that we must take
Upon our blind and stumbling quest
For hints that shadow wholeness' light
And peaks from which we dare to glimpse
That every turn and every pain
And every misregard and sin
Has been a sign, a secret plan
That brings us to the formless One
And every step a secret grace
That guides us to some perfect form -
O wayward bliss that dwells within
Each hand, each voice, each name, be known!
Descend upon this trail of doom!
A call wells forth from Thy world-heart
And echoing returns Thy strain,
A happy cry, a blessed song
A silent thought, an anguished moan
A grace note on a curse to greet Thee.
Raise these human energies high,
O Force, unmask divinity!

SRI AUROBINDO APPEARS

I weep as I behold his glowing form
That rises like a cloud of golden rain
And pours down a stream of liquid fire
That overflows in tears of godlike pain.

A sun ablaze on his majestic throne,
A tranquil earth beneath his gaze at noon,
Rays of compassion pouring from his eyes,
A moment of unbearable bliss his boon.

The star upon my brow melts into fire
And I plunge into seas of bright oblivion;
The lotus in my breast is ravished by love
And I perish in an agony of vision.

Overwhelmed by his sudden manifestation,
My soul adores in anguish and submission.

2

Stillness

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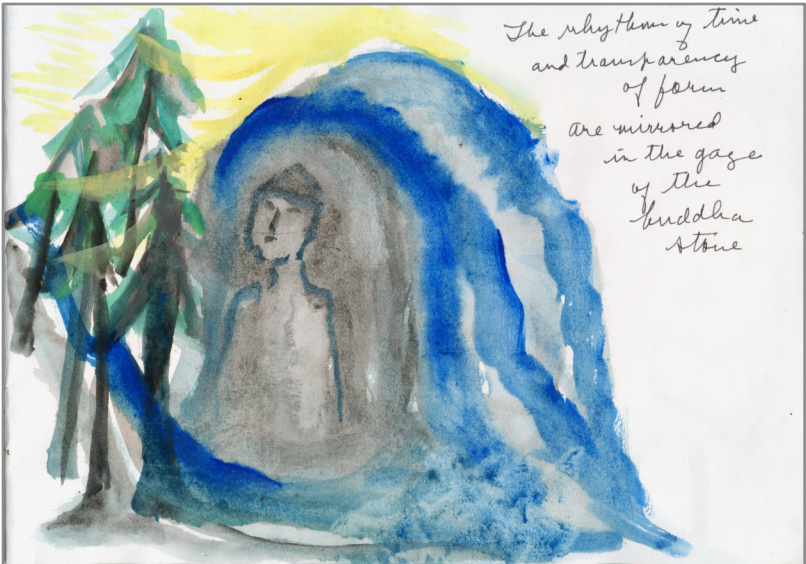
Turning point

I walk upon this path
with buddha feet
Like water gliding softly
over stones

The emptiness of thought
is the buddha mind
Like stillness standing silent
in the pines

The glimmer of sunlight
and laughter of leaves
Are moments of delight
to the buddha heart

The rhythms of time
and transparency of form
Are mirrored in the gaze
of the buddha stone



ON SILENT ICY PEAKS OF POETRY



On silent icy peaks of poetry
 A cold stream flows
 From the mountain's mouth

And hangs in the air
 Like frozen sound
 Or motionless clouds of speech

Clouds bellow forth
 From the mountain's
 Monstrous mouth

Like a great cosmic cry
 That hangs unheard
 In the listening sky

On silent icy peaks of poetry



Mountain Maya

1

Everything that appears
Melts away like a dream,
A phantasm, or a cloud

Even your massive stillness
And silent depth of stone
Dissolve in the wind

And the emptiness of time
Like a rivulet of snow
Melting into eternity

Or a moment of silence
In the sunset's
Golden glow

2

On distant peaks
Of purified mind
Beyond your immovable calm

A flame is born
That bursts into form
Above the outstretched earth

And in its rays
Your jeweled streams
Dissolve in diamond light.

On distant peaks
Of purified mind
A flaming sun is born

Consuming every form
In waves of solid might
It fills your emptiness

With rays of pure delight
And flows in your silent depths
Like streams of golden fire.

AMADO PENA

Your vision of life
Is a silent memorial
To birth and creation,
Your painting a line
Into the distant past
Revealing maternal silence,
Essence exploding unheard
Through infinity,
Chaos becoming the mother
At dawn, the landscape of life
A brooding woman
Mediating chaos into form,
Across the terrain
Of her dreaming,
Aged, sad, and dying,
Waking, glad, crying within,
Creating a vessel
For beauty, utility, and light,
Shattering eternity
With your smile,
Like a rooster crowing
The dawning
Into sound, color, and clay,
Red sky, purple crags,
Shining sand, and shadow,
Darkness breaking to day.

(de los regalos de lucie)

Granite Water Wind Sand

Rock face mottled creamy pink
Gray lined, multi-faceted
Angles of aeonic might
Oozing forth from eternity,
Frozen into place, precipitous,
Cascading, layer upon layer
Of majestic power;

Foamy rushing currents falling
Over smooth rounded stone,
Glassy sparkling stream
Carving a niche for life,
Aphrodite in her dream sublime,
Caressing the body of a god;

Goddess of love in liquid form
Flowing through time,
Anointing the earth with joy
Until the sun lifts heavenward thy form
And rain clouds, wind, storm are born
Forcing even mountains to bend,
Blown into rivulets of undulating sand.



Wakon cha

Miyelo manee wokhsape
 Wakon cha
 Wakon tanka mitakuye
 Oyassa

It's me who walks upon this path
 Of sacred trees
 With the great spirit family
 Of my relatives

I can hear your many voices
 Speaking to me
 Upon the path of sacred trees
 Strewn with golden leaves

I can hear my sisters' voices
 Singing in their streams
 And I see them gaily laughing
 In their multi colored shawls

They sing about their grandmothers'
 Shawls of brown and gray
 And tell me how their shawls
 Will turn to brown one day

Miyelo manee wokhsape
 Cha wakon
 Wakon tanka mitakuye
 Oyassa

Upon this path of sacred trees
 My feet are glad to walk
 And the autumn sounds and colors
 Embrace me with their call

To climb and breathe and leave behind
 Civilization's narrow walls
 To rise above the tree line, and drink the icy air
 Where the crystal waters fall

Miyelo manee wokhsape
 Wakon cha
 Wakon tanka cha wakon
 Mitakuye oyassa

Dance of dream

1

The beginning and the end
 Stretch their arms across
 The emptiness of space
 Like a symphony of stars

Hoping to grasp a form
 Feel a close embrace
 But finding only silence
 Eyes without a face

The music of extended time
 A curve of infinite grace
 A dance of soul with light
 An embodiment of night

Bending into being's depth
 Describing every imprint's trace
 Swirling out of self and seeing
 Imagining physical force

Waving, signing, praying hands
 Sculpting sounds and feelings
 Unfolding into sensual lines
 Dream's transparent shape

Then waking slowly to light
 And the envelope of life,
 The appearances of words in motion
 Expressing body's deep intention

And a phenomenological notation:

“in the inner world
 conceptual images grow slowly
 like a seed, from almost nothing
 to more and more differentiated forms”

Standing, breathing, seeing
 Self's shell cracking, peeling
 Stepping slowly like thought
 Into radiant being

2

Dance of blood
 Dance of bone
 Body of blood
 Body of stone
 In the waiting stillness
 A rhythm is heard
 A power is known
 Birthing slowly through body

 Beating slowly in bone
 Finding perfect relation
 At every point
 Of execution

 Finding perfect relation
 In the heart of the stone
 Truth of the body
 Through being is known

 Leaf stem and flower
 Bursting into bloom
 Reaching for the sun
 Breaking the stone

 Lips wet with dew
 Burning the morning
 Kissing the stone
 Pulsing of blood

 In body and bone
 Streaming of form
 Through crevice of stone
 Embracing the morning

 Birthing the sun
 Flower of blood
 Flower of stone
 Streaming of sunlight

 Over body and bone
 Breathing of blood
 Being of stone
 Breathing of life
 Bursting the stone
 Burning the morning
 Dancing the dawn
 Birthing the body

 Being the rhythm
 Of life being born
 Truth of the body
 Through beauty is known

Love's Web

What makes this web so precious
So delicate yet so strong
This fragile network of mutuality and purpose
Slowly built up through the years
Yet its power, complete, supports a universe?

What is the secret of its fragility,
Its sensitivity, feeling, and delight
That we find the way to break so effortlessly
What pain and sorrow and death itself
Can neither dissolve nor disunite?

Shall we peel it back layer by layer,
Untangle the knots, thread by thread,
Explore its intricate essence,
Demolish its diamond integrity,
Reveal its weakness, the secret of its might?

Only a tremendous perversity of fate
Tempts us to toy so lightly with life
Yet we can hardly resist the urge
To tug and pull, then violently tear
The gossamer web of love's intimacy apart.

To Love

Bring light!

Like a million golden aspen leaves

And a fresh wind of joy

To shake them and make them dance

On the branches of our lives!



Images of Love

Light touching the surface
Light brushing the water's face
Light bringing forth warmth
Light blazing out from waves
Light flowing over leaves
Light lifting us into space

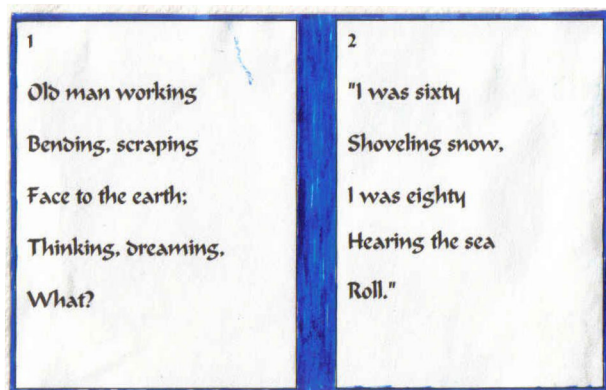
An invisible force upholding us
Drawing us into its ray
Ripening us, melting us
Pulsating in everything we see
Burning all barriers away
Binding us in its radiance

Awakening us to our essence,

This Presence, this Being, like a Sea.

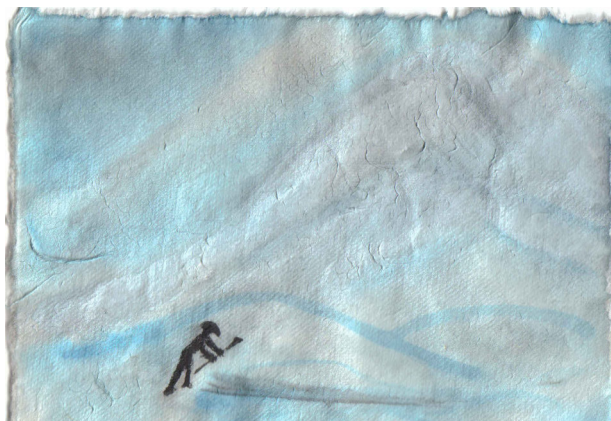


Eight Haikus
and Four Paintings
in January 2005



1
Old man working
Bending, scraping
Face to the earth:
Thinking, dreaming,
What?

2
"I was sixty
Shoveling snow.
I was eighty
Hearing the sea
Roll."

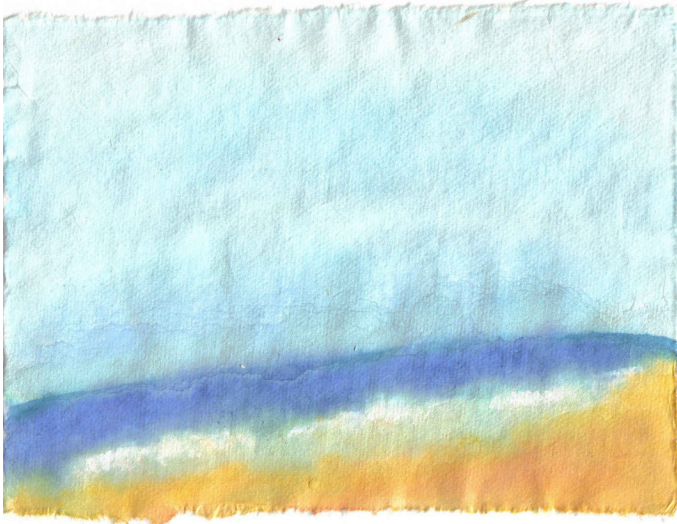


3

"What is the basis
Of consciousness,
Its mechanism?
The steps
Of time..."

4

Old man walking,
Breathing,
Face to the sky,
Remembering...
Sea and snow.

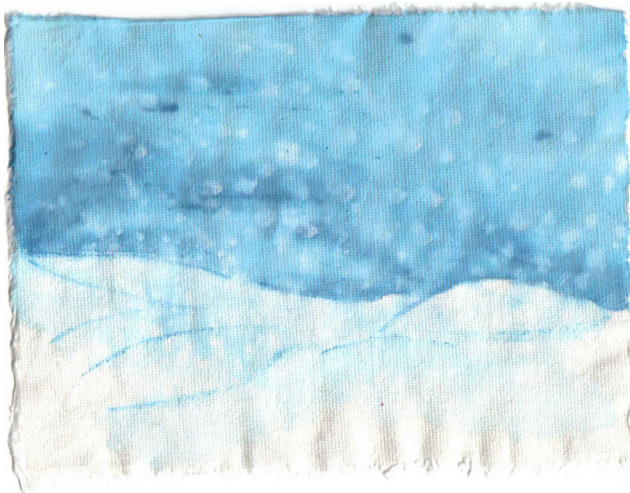


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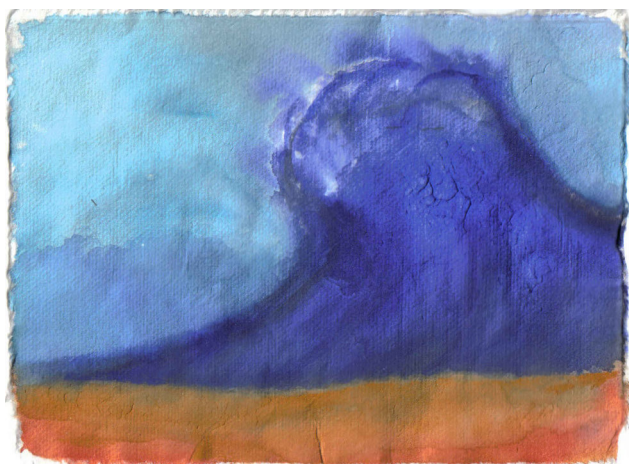
"What is the self?
One behind
The steps of time,
Watching, willing
Change."

6

Snowflakes falling
Always different,
Always the same:
Waves lapping
Too.



<p>7</p> <p>The snow falls Silently; The sea pounds Steadily; Stillness, breathing, Time.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Mountains of snow Bring life To a halt; Mountainous waves Sweep it away.</p>
---	--



A thousand metres an hour (Pondicherry reflections - 1)

The millennium passes us by
 A thousand motorbikes
 Line the streets
 Each a sign of
 Motion to come



A thousand more in motion
 Each one a sign of stillness' return



(of course...cutting corners as we go...



no right of way in this universe...)

A thousand men in pants, sandals

Taking tea

Taking plastic bags

From shops

The priest of Shiva's temple



Departs in white on his red motorbike



At every intersection

Stillness and motion

Seem to collide



The constant stir Of speed and resistance: Consciousness or its absence?

The image

Of somewhere

To go

Its pattern

Of conscious

Intention

Unconscious motion

Of being in space

Gives chaos

A shape

A trace



The fruit seller sits

Unperturbed by Time

Even in the midst

Of chaos

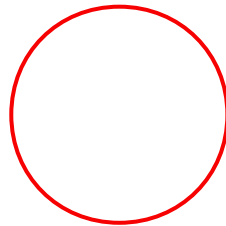
Watching eternity pass



For a moment

Nothing seems

To move



In a thousand
Metre square

A bag of fruit
Some sweets
Flowers for her hair

Two hundred metres (Pondicherry reflections - 2)

East and west
 Three hundred metres
 North and south
Plus



Another level
 Of signification
 On the margins
 Of the square

Ganesh temple street
 Mission street
 The ashram and our house
 Limit the hour



Through the lens
 Of cosmic mind
 A momentary glimpse
 Of human time

Its infernal
 Commotion
 Its unquestioning
 Devotion
 To speed



Ganesh reclining
Beneath the cosmic
Gaze, with a host
Of horses

Symbols of
Mobility
Necessity
Metal and plastic
Waste



Driving schools
Two wheeler rentals
Places to worship
On every block

In his vision
Inscribing
This dreamlike
Plane of reality



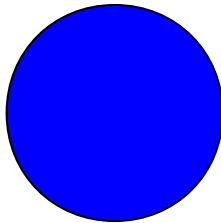
With cyclic
 Meaning
 Shiva's blessing
 And the rhythms of
 Destruction

The word of truth
 An emanation
 From above or below
 The mind

Unlimited by
 Sensation
 Untouched freedom
 Of creation
 With love

He sees
The elements
We breathe

And through
Her gaze the drives
Our lives conceal



Zen shakti

the goddess is love
her world – a war
and earth her troubled
home



a beguiling bedfellow
a beauty, a beast, a bomb,
a benevolent sister
a mother and a spouse



where consciousness is
the force
that flowers
on the tree
of life



and the cosmos
is a lotus pond



or a wakeful sleep
of mind



and gods and men
frolic in the mud
race across the sand
bleed upon the stone
and climb to the sky
for her



Tree sight

1

Shall we ask the trees the time,
Standing there silent and still?

Will they say we are early, or late?
Will they understand:

Our passing in time;
Their standing in time;

These branches of thought,
These words like leaves,

This being flowing in one stream?
Does our thinking mirror their dream?

“An endless procession of phenomenal forms,
White and diaphanous in the moonlight”

As they pass across our vision,
As we grasp them in our sight,

Do they feel us in their stillness?
Do they sense our destination?

Is there any way to measure
This difference of nature,

The distance between the beginning and end
Of motion, light, stillness and the wind,

Time for standing, and for passing,
Time for seeing, and for being, in light?

“We are dreams within dreams”
Tree sight reflects the stream.

2

An infinite
Array of leaves

Branching overhead
A net to catch the rain

Thought branches upward
To catch a drop of light

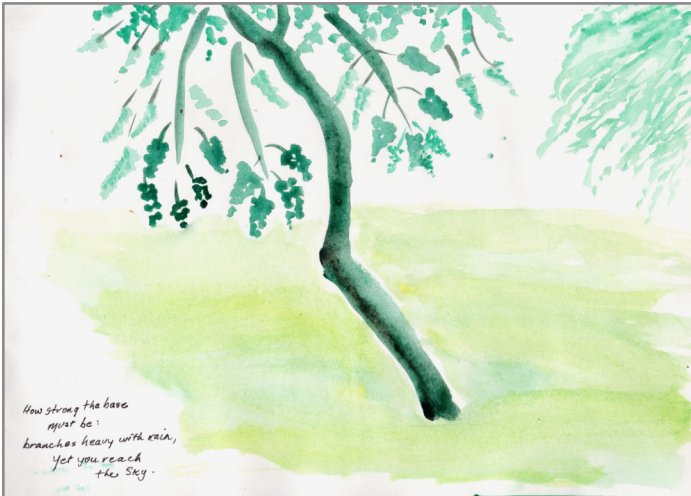
A measureless time
Of stillness intervenes

Cascades of rain
Drench the leaves

Mind soars above
On luminous seas

Leaves, dripping with light
Thoughts, pulsating with light

3



How strong the base must be:
Branches heavy with rain,
Yet you reach the sky.

4

The unreality
Of all natural things

Ever changing
Ever the same

In the perceptive
Mind of zen, hokku-san

Out of everything one,
Out of one, everything

The logos sophon ciphered
By another ancient wisdom

The winter rain
Incessantly falling

Light into darkness
Out of darkness light

Nature teaching earth
How she drains her power

Deep into the roots and soil
Slowly gathering weight

Bearing upward through time
Her fibrous masses that breathe

And heave heavenward
Towers of crystal power

Gossamer structures of sight
Pillars of marble, veins of gold

Hydrocarbon galaxies
In a symphony of trees

Resonant skin, vibrant bone
Voicing the visible word

Chanting forth the fire of life
And perishing in the flame

Three paintings and a mantra

Earth the foundation, water the pure birth, fire the creator will



Air the ascending spirit, bliss the conscious being



Body, life, mind, psychic
sun, supermind



As the seed descends, all things are born.
Time is the return.

Verite Haikus



Mountains motionless,
Forests washed in rain,
The hummingbird flies away.



A forest of emptiness
Occupies space,
An orb of stillness;
Every leaf its face,
Its essence.



Pronouncing judgments
Is unbecoming;
The tree quietly flowers.

Love and power
Embodied in a flower
Spread neither strife nor fear.

Radiant vessel of gold!
Too much light for your emptiness to hold!



Light and Shadow (a meta-rap)

Who are they
 Who profess to know
 The mysterious mind of god?

Who are they who say
 That being and knowing,
 In him, are one?

Who are they who say
 That she is the womb
 Of every name and form,

Whose radiant force
 Shines through the veil
 Of every being born?

And who are we
 Or who are they
(the philosophers, holy fathers, and seekers)
 To say?

Creatures of the verdant,
 Green and glowing earth,
 Driven to question,

Bowed before the architecture
 Of creation, in obedient
 And humble submission;

And if by grace we glimpse
 Her face, or his, in the forms
 That we perceive,

We might declare the truth
 Of myriad cosmic being to be –
 A vast self-reflection,

The face of truth, of beauty, and the good
 Whether his or hers, ruse or muse,
 An irresistible attraction

Moving all creation to become,
Reaching for the apple
Of divine perfection,

In the mirror held
For all to find themselves,
And true perception.

Or are these cells and organs
And minds – ourselves –
Only fabricators of illusion?

The rocks and pines,
Peaceful valleys
And hazardous climes,

The list of terrors, evil
And destruction – merely
Fancies and passing dream?

And god as mystified by us
And what we seem to see
As we are by his enigmatic scheme?

Shall we then project our dream
On him and his invention,
Satisfied with our own self-deception?

Not a chance, say the wise
Who have sought and suffered
And transcended this mortal confusion!

The absolute is infinite
Unlimited, boundless, free:
The essence of all creation!

Time and space and circumstance
His cosmic manifestation,
Her marvelous self-revelation!

And we, and all we are,
 The fragmentary moments
 Of their temporal procession,

Whose perceptions are caught
 And pieced together, frame by frame,
 In the net of spatial mind,

For deduction and definition,
 Conjecture, speculation,
 Grasping and losing every conclusion

Until at last the time is right,
 The ground painstakingly prepared
 For silent contemplation,

And the tree of inspiration
 Bears the flowers, fruit, and seed
 Of integral spiritual vision.

The good, the beautiful, the true
 Beheld and known as one
 In each and every thing,

The power of infinite creation
 Expressed by the many
 In every finite form,

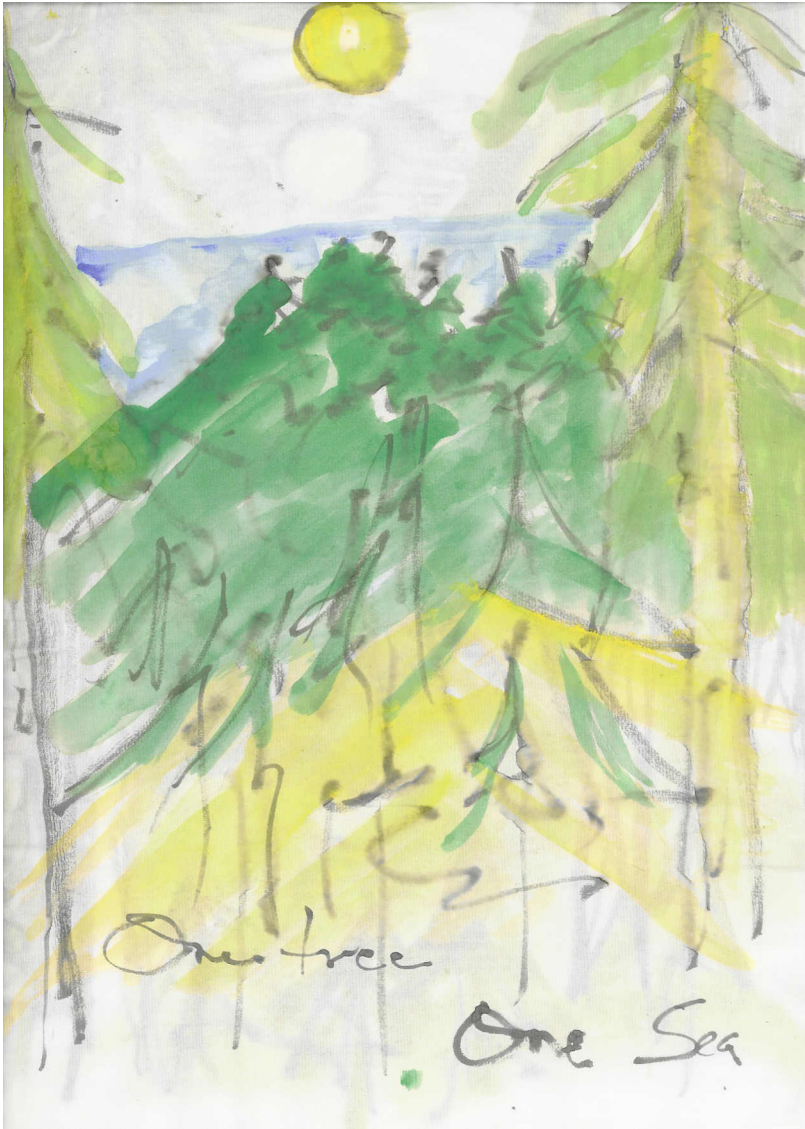
Every evil act and pain
 Every wrong we cause or suffer
 Every iota of destruction,

Force us to witness
 The birth of ecstatic being
 Within the bounds of time.

And then we see and say
 That all – eternally new –
 Ever the same – am I.



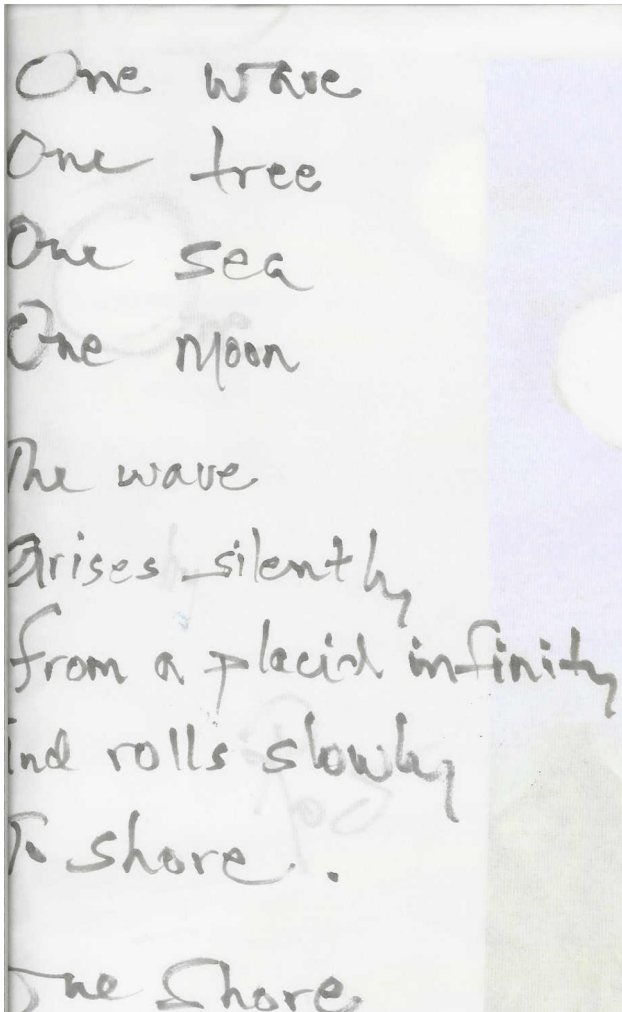




One tree

One Sea





One wave
 One tree
 One sea
 One moon

The wave
 Arises silently
 From a placid infinity
 And rolls slowly
 To shore.

One shore

“The ecological footprint – the average amount of productive land and shallow sea appropriated by each person in bits and pieces from around the world for food, water, housing, energy, transportation, commerce, and waste absorption – is about one hectare (2.5 acres) in developing nations but about 9.6 hectares (24 acres) in the U.S. The (average) footprint for the total human population is 2.1 hectares (5.2 acres). For every person in the world to reach present U.S. levels of consumption with existing technology would require four more planet Earths” (E. O. Wilson, 2002).¹

CLONING THE EARTH

(Cyber art by Anand)

Sobering facts

Populations and economies grow exponentially. This means that they increase naturally and steadily in proportion to their already existing size, and not merely by adding on new gains in a linear manner. The Indian population growth rate of 1.7% per year will therefore not merely add 17 million people each year, totalling 1.68 billion in 2050; it will more than double its present population by that time. And the current economic growth rate of 7.5% will lead to a doubling of the economy every ten years. By 2050, the average per capita income of India will be equal to that of America today.

According to the ecological footprint formula provided by Professor Wilson, India and China alone, comprising more than one-third of the earth’s human population and growing, will require 1.65 planet earths just to support their burgeoning populations’ requirements of land, food, energy, and other material resources within a generation. The ecological footprints of both countries already exceed their own regional biocapacities by more than 50%, even though they are still below the global average. Both countries have so far also failed to achieve acceptable levels of human welfare, as measured by the expected lifespan of the population, educational enrollments, and GDP, according to the UNDP Human Development Index, in spite of their recent dramatic economic development. This disparity is what Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India, refers to when he warns of the growing gap between the rich and the poor as a result of economic globalization, and the continuing lack of health care, education and infrastructure in rural areas where the majority of people live.

According to *The Living Planet Report 2006*², published by the WWF and Global Footprint Network in October 2006, humanity is already exceeding the capacity of the earth to restore the resources used and absorb the wastes created, by 25% per year; by 2050 humanity’s ecological footprint is expected to exceed the earth’s biocapacity by 50% - a condition known to systems analysts as “overshoot”. One alarming consequence of this phenomenon that can now be documented, according to data analyzed by LPR, is that 30% of all vertebrate species have been lost since 1970 – a sure sign of overshoot and unsustainability. As biologists like E. O. Wilson have been reporting with alarm for decades, the earth is in the midst of a “major extinction event”, and as humanity happily continues to over-populate, over-consume, and over-pollute the planet, its life forms are diminishing apace and its resources are being exhausted.

Another important, highly credible, book-length research report on the state of the earth titled *Limits to Growth – the 30 Year Update* was published in 2004, the first version of which appeared in 1972 (*The Limits to Growth*) and the next in 1992 (*Beyond the Limits to Growth*). After careful consideration of the implications of the growth trends observed over the lifespan of just the most recent generation of humans on earth, the report's authors reach this poignant conclusion:

The set of possible futures includes a great variety of paths. There may be abrupt collapse; it is also possible there may be a smooth transition to sustainability. But the possible futures do not include indefinite growth in physical throughput. The only real choices are to bring the throughputs that support human activities down to sustainable levels through human choice, human technology and human organization, or to let nature force the decision through lack of food, energy, or materials, or through an increasingly unhealthy environment.³

For the time being, it is still possible to extend the earth's biocapacity by creating new croplands, replanting forests, restoring rivers and lakes to health, and reducing pollution; but the longer humanity delays making a concerted effort toward reducing its ecological footprint, the more difficult restoring balance becomes. LPR predicts that by 2025 a net decline in the earth's biocapacity will set in, and by 2050 the earth will only support the level of consumption and waste that pertained in the year 2000. At this point it is expected that humanity's ecological footprint, as well as the quality of life per capita, and the population as a whole, will begin to decline rapidly everywhere, to levels that pertained in 1960, unless some radical changes are made before that time in the economic growth, resource consumption, and reproductive patterns of our species.

In order to avoid the precipitous decline, and perhaps collapse, of civilization as we know it, and to move in a systematic way toward sustainable patterns of growth, the *Limits to Growth* authors recommend three fundamental objectives of necessary change to be achieved: an absolute limit in family size of two children, acceptance of a moderate standard of living, and the adoption of advanced technologies that are non-polluting and energy efficient. And these fundamental changes in economic growth and reproduction patterns must be achieved universally.

The authors of the *Living Planet Report* suggest a specific strategy that could stabilize food production and consumption at acceptable levels for all of humanity: a system of equitable allocations of ecological footprint shares between nations, regions and individuals, based either on absolute allotments, allocations in proportion to regional biocapacities, or allocations of per capita shares, with political and economic mechanisms put in place for trade between nations. They comment somewhat laconically, however, that "Developing the logic behind frameworks for reducing human demand is straightforward when compared to the challenge of implementing the process" (p. 26).

A little imagination, and some knowledge of the history of international relations since the formation of the United Nations Organization, will make

it plain to anyone that implementing such a system of sharing in the context of today's disparities in production and consumption, as well as in regional environments and resources, would be enormously difficult, especially when an overall reduction to moderate levels of consumption is the goal.

The authors of *Limits to Growth* are similarly circumspect when speaking of a number of possible scenarios that can be predicted on the basis of current, observable and quantifiable patterns of growth, depending on the choices that we make or do not make in the future, and depending also on certain necessary assumptions such as "no war, no conflict, no corruption, and no mistakes." The predictions made by the science of systems dynamics regarding our possible futures cannot easily factor in the vicissitudes of human nature, however, or "provide any details about the complex political, psychological, and personal issues involved in constructing the transition." The authors of the study, nonetheless, step beyond the limits of their analytical systems methodology and call for humility, honesty, clear-headedness, compassion, and unflinching determination to tell the truth, on the part of leaders and the general public alike, in order to move collectively toward the culture and lifestyle of sustainability that they believe is still within reach, - but only if we make the right choices soon enough.

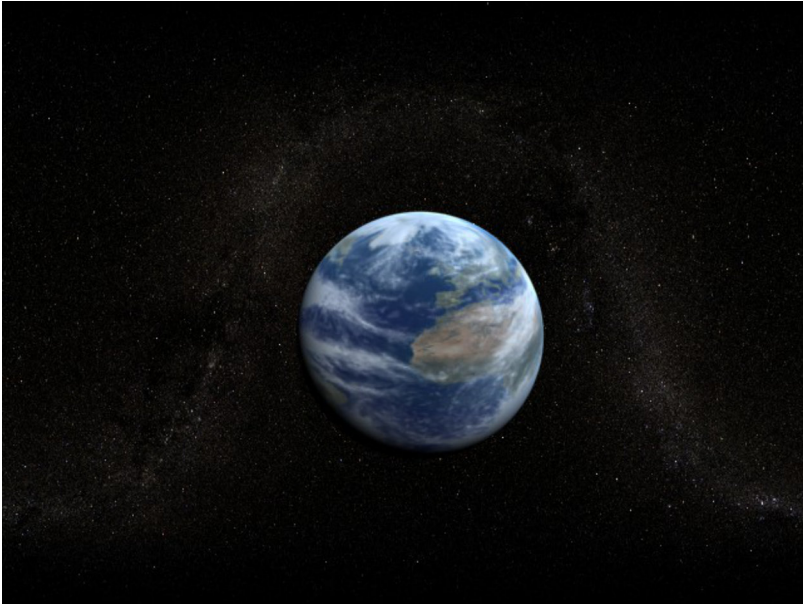
It is important to recognize the limitations of a scientific framework of understanding at the same time that we recognize the crucial importance of the understanding that such a framework provides. For example, just as it can be demonstrated that populations and economies grow exponentially, thereby causing exponential increases in resource use and pollution, it can also be demonstrated that such growth does not lead to the elimination of poverty or the equitable distribution of wealth and power. In fact, the economic system that has evolved over the past few centuries and continues in force today is characterized by "success to the successful feedback loops."

This poverty-perpetuating structure arises from the fact that it's easier for rich populations to save, invest, and multiply their capital than it is for poor ones to do so. Not only do the rich have greater power to control market conditions, purchase new technologies, and command resources, but centuries of growth have built up for them a large stock of capital that multiplies itself.⁴

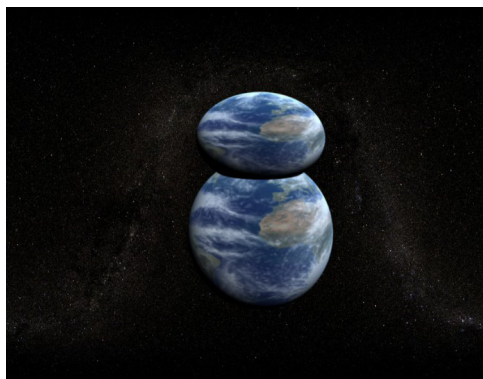
It might well be argued that these principles and patterns of disparity and exploitation have been known forever; because of scientific technology the results of such natural behavior patterns are simply worse than they have ever been. And this being so, it is unlikely that humanity will now have either a sufficiently strong political will or the depth of compassion needed to change direction or stop the train. What the greatest saints and sages, particularly in India and China, have taught for millennia still has not been able to alter human nature. Now we also have the authority of Science telling us to wake up, accept the challenge of self-mastery, and rise above the unconscious forces of our habitual behavior patterns. And if we cannot do it by our will power alone, perhaps we can use science and technology in the service of this liberating aim - and definitively alter human nature.

Intoxicating fictions

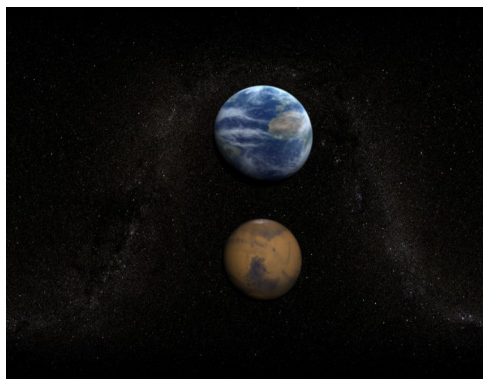
Let us imagine this impossible possibility: by applying the biological principles and technologies of cloning, we might actually be able to determine the destiny of our species, and of the earth as a whole. We can at least use this metaphor of a radical and unpredictable kind of change, - one that is almost within our grasp, - to help us understand the gravity of the problems we are facing today, and bring into focus the hazy demons and angels that lurk just beyond, in the twilight doorways of the future.



Aldous Huxley was the first to begin such a reflection with the novel *Brave New World* in 1931, seventy-five years ago, when the human population was only 2 billion. He foresaw many of the problems, through his faculty of creative imagination, which the sciences of demographics, ecology and systems dynamics are now able to quantify with precision. And one of the solutions he applied was the complete eradication of the process of natural insemination and birth among humans and the total control of population – quantity and quality – through genetic engineering and cloning.

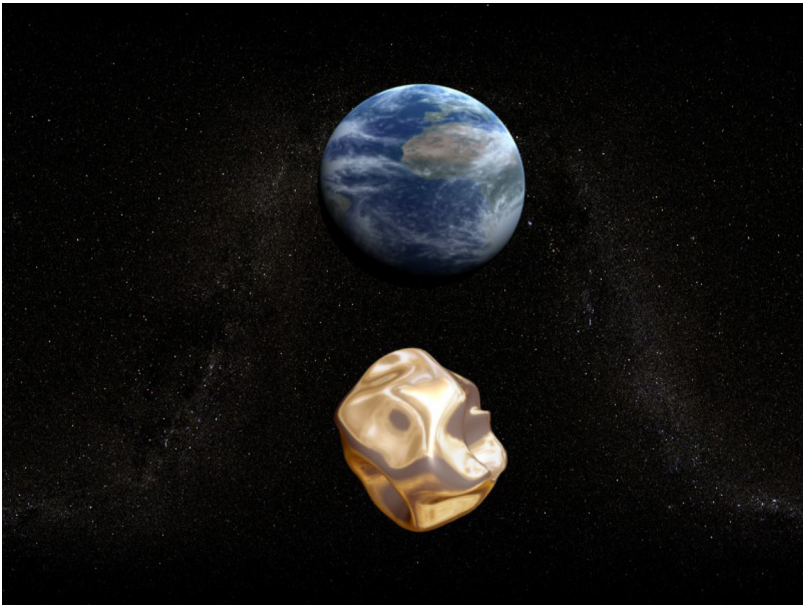


This is an option that may be possible today or tomorrow, reducing population growth radically while eliminating disease and ill health, increasing intelligence, lowering potentials for aggression and violence, and enabling a greater degree of cooperativeness and the acceptance of simpler and more harmonious standards of living on a universal scale. The flexibility of the human phenotype is such that many of these improvements in our species may be accomplished with epigenetic environmental engineering during development without interfering in the human genome. Humans would still be humans, just more perfect ones. And if, along with such species modifications, a concerted effort were also made to implement soft energy technologies in the place of fossil fuels, an efficient, harmonious, beautiful and powerful world order might be created.

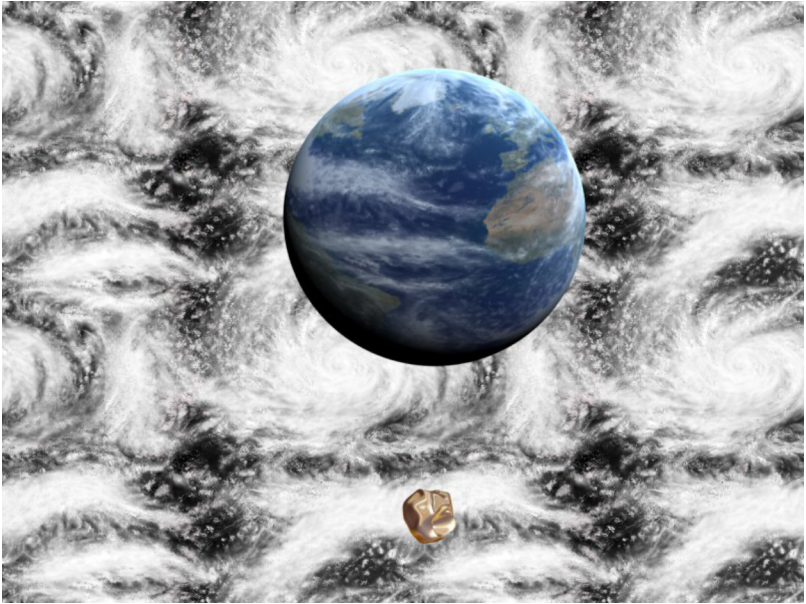


Of course this is a dream. If the will to achieve such an ideal world order is not already manifesting in humanity today, in spite of the existence of its potential – attested to by both science and the world's wisdom traditions, – under conditions of extremely pressing need, of which large portions of humanity are now aware, then the will to clone an earth is also not likely to manifest. But cloning an earth based on the existing model would not solve anything anyway. It would simply mean more earths facing perilous choices and impending disasters, whose characteristics have emerged from a history of ignorance and suffering.

If cloning the earth is to be the chosen solution, then it must entail genetic modifications that eliminate undesirable traits and enhance desirable ones, at least among the human species, if not throughout the biosphere as a whole: the new earth must house the best of all types of life and prepare the field for a new kind of evolutionary unfolding. If this were achieved, then traits such as efficiency, order and harmony, beauty and power, adventurousness and courage, inventiveness and erudition, along with the vast array of other culturally “stereotypical” traits, body types, psychologies, and intelligences we value, could be selected and propagated to achieve an optimal degree of species diversity and excellence. And the old earth, with its inferior types, could be allowed to simply reduce itself to an ember and disappear.

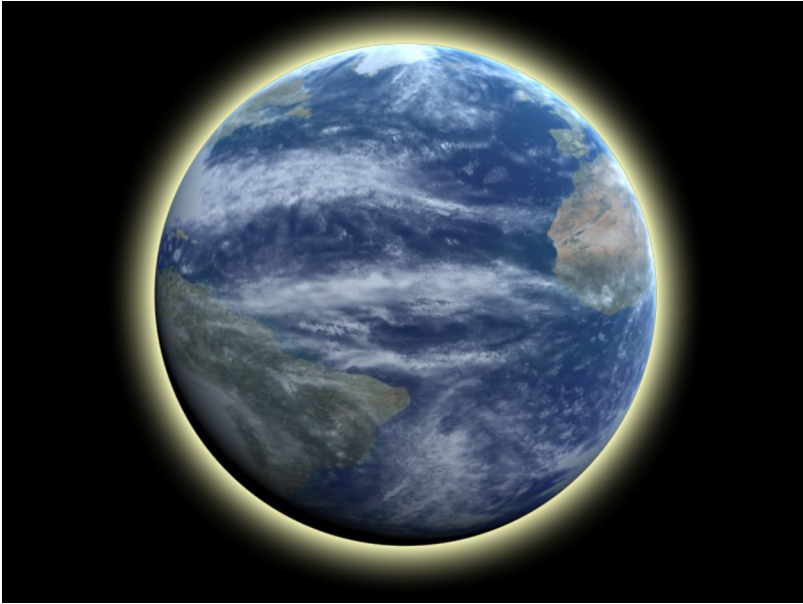


The debate on the future of cloning, in these early years of the 21st century, is heavily weighted by moralistic arguments, however, as opposed to purely scientific, technological or market driven ones. Philosophers such as Francis Fukuyama in America (*Our Posthuman Future*, 2002) and Jurgen Habermas in Germany (*The Future of Human Nature*, 2003), have championed the position that only a humanity in a natural state, that results from the evolutionary processes of natural selection, would really be human and therefore capable of understanding and realizing the principles of freedom and equality. Nature and not nurture is elevated in this way of thinking to the status of essence or divine right: since the natural processes of evolution have produced consciousness, reason, emotion, the sense of connectedness, knowledge, and morality, any attempt to improve the members of the species technologically would violate their natural rights and upset the natural hierarchy. Social and economic power makes better “right” than science.



But surely it is nurture, social conditioning, education and culture that determine our choices of ethical behavior and lifestyle – not our genetic substrate. And surely the choice to improve the chances of survival and ensure a higher level of general welfare through cloning, if this could be achieved with relative safety and certainty, would be justified in a world that would otherwise end in suffering, decline, and extinction. If the theory of evolution is correct and consciousness has evolved as a tool for survival, then our knowledge and intelligent will power must be the principles whereby we determine our choices for the future, and no longer the rudimentary principles of random variation and natural selection, brute struggle, unconscious forces and market dynamics.

There is of course no certainty that the cloning option is a viable one, but if it could be done within a relatively short period of time, and if the further complication of creating a technology for replicating the physical substrate, sufficiently similar to the mass of the earth and able to orbit this or another star, were surmounted, so that a newly cloned and improved biospheric culture could thrive, then a radiant new and improved (ecologically balanced and enlightened) earthlife might be able to evolve. Such a radiant event might, however, falsify both the anthropic principle and the gaia hypothesis and, though the result might be more spiritually luminous and immortal than anything yet created, undermine the close interrelatedness of matter, life and mind that is the apparent basis of existence, increasing the rate of evolution immeasurably, leading to a rapid universal disintegration and apocalyptic collapse into nothingness.



Cloning the earth is a thought experiment which, however fantastic, may serve to put in perspective the value of human existence on earth, its precariousness within a fragile biosphere, and the imperative of a human will to preserve the extraordinary phenomenon of conscious life as we know it. The will to liberation from suffering, love and compassion for all beings, self-sacrifice for the sake of truth, and a sense of the connectedness and oneness of all existence, which have traditionally been invoked by prophets and seers in all cultures, traditions, and periods of civilization, perhaps remains the only sure means, and the only real hope, for the future of humanity and the earth. A spiritually conscious, scientifically informed, and technologically adept species such as the one that has already evolved, may now have the ability and the responsibility to spiritually and technologically “clone” itself and its social systems into a new type of humanity that maximizes its potentials for caring, protecting, creatively reevaluating, reorganizing, and ultimately transforming the nature of life on earth, before it is too late.

References

1. *Scientific American*, February 2002, p. 83-91, “The Future of Life” by E.O. Wilson.
2. *Living Planet Report 2006*, WWF, Global Footprint Network, and London Zoological Society, <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/>
3. *Limits to Growth - The 30 Year Update* (2004), Donella Meadows, Jorgen Randers, Dennis Meadows, Chelsea Green Publishing Co., VT, p. 13.
4. *ibid*, p. 44.

Kuan Yin

She takes her stand upon the solid stone
Amidst surrounding starlit peaks
And sits among the windblown fronds
Beside the river of time
Filled with absolute peace
Unmoving as the stone and sky
Upon her lotus throne
Empty as the wind and light
That drift across her brow
And flow beneath her feet.
Compassion streams from her eyes
And in their radiant wayward glance
The clouds and winds arise
And the majestic snow topped peaks,
Whose cascading rivers of power
Bring forth the kingdoms of life,
Embody her cloud white dream
Of infinite beauty and bliss.



SEASON'S CHANGE



HAIKU AND PICTURES

Natural religion haikus

Too many fools
To deal with here –
Only choice left:
Call down the Light

Crickets everywhere
Ants everywhere
Geckos too –
Time to use the broom

Bergson knew
How to think
And what to say –
This cannot be forgotten

He entered the stream
Of time with his mind
And sailed into the present

In the intervals
Of energy and time*
All opposites unite

The reptile's sight
and its prey are one;
there too the tongue
confirms the truth

Some people
No longer notice –
Too fixed in their ways –
The season's change

* Intervals difficult to conceive: becoming and being, potential and actual, past and present

Tejas Narayani

Earth born goddess

Of Power, Beauty and Joy

You make the lotus bloom



(Aurotejas center, Sita left, Tamara right, in Auroville, July 2010)

Aerial haikus

Denver (or Capetown)

Human civilization:
Matchbox houses
Endlessly, end on end



(see justpaste.it/3ky)

Los Angeles

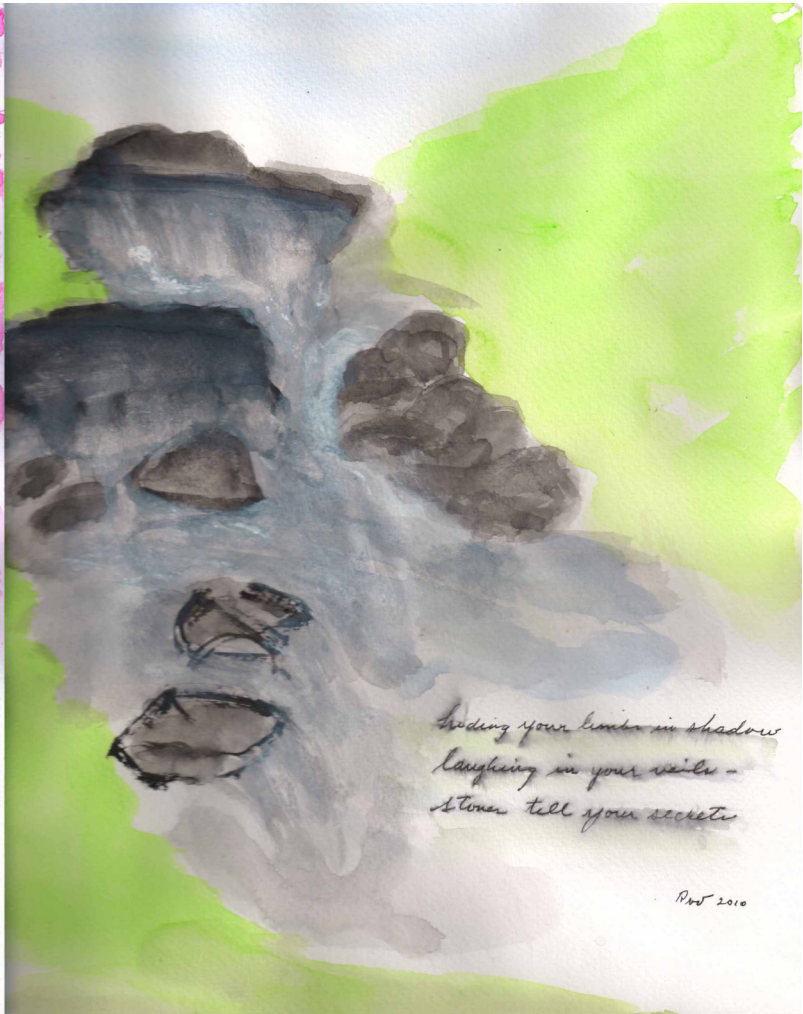
Humanity flowing
Along freeways –
Racing slowly
To its end



Deserts and mountains

Fill your cup
With the ambrosia
Of the gods:
No time left
For poison





Hiding your limbs in shadow
Laughing in your veils –
Stones tell your secrets



Whiskers of the wisdom tree

Ears of the stone –

Breathing and listening

Sunday-Monday haikus

1

Floating in a sea of gold
soham humming softly somewhere
Sunday

2

Not a shadow,
every wrinkle visible:
silent mountain face

3

Chicken curry
better this time;
no guests to feed,
tasting it alone

4

The spider found
its way outside;
too many vibrations
in this house

5

The hindu monastery
is a good place to live:
plenty of food

6

That cloud was back
on the mountain at sunset
waiting to catch the moon

7

With that snow cap
on your head,
no one will see your wrinkled face
this Monday

8

A cold blanket
shrouds the world,
yet this inner fire
fills up everything

9

From blue sky emptiness
to grey cloud emptiness -
one warm fullness remains

10

Old mountain outside
old body inside,
yet everything is new!

11

One serpent seeks above,
the other below,
then suddenly -
only Light!

12

I asked the changing season,
should I go or stay -
and then You appeared!
aum swaha



A clear view of heaven
A clear view of earth -
No disorder in this

For Steven Carter