



Weave Lifelines

Weave Lifelines

Anandi Zhang

First edition 2023

Painting for cover: Lisa Suchanek

It inspired the poem on page 10.

To grandma

To Grand MA

To the sacred thread

that connects us

Why rush
To meet deadlines?

Take the flight of time
Weave Lifelines.

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

I felt poetic in childhood but lost the sense somewhere along the way. Then it returned. Lost and found? Not exactly, finding and re-fining.

One day, an idea visited me: How about writing a poem for each and every being that I encounter and embrace? Then life will grow like a Poetree and we can savour the Poetea.

As always, a project needs to start somewhere, especially a lifelong, longer than life endeavour.

Here is a starter of the multicourse banquet that we enjoy –

The poems in this collection are inspired by interactions and connections with fellow human beings in our interwoven tapestry of life. Each describes a specific person or a life situation and reflection; and yet each seems to carry something universal as well.

Isn't it, dear mirrors?

G r a t i t u d e

To Sri Aurobindo and The Mother

To Achla, Ben, Natasha and other “weavers”
for editing and feedback

Feedback

You are welcome to give feedback to
Anandi Zhang: ourhome@auroville.org.in

Here I stand
Gazing at the field of play.

Am I a witness
Or am I already in?

Grandma's stories

Ever repeat

Never tire

O those fond memories!

I read the life story of Grandma
In the folded lines of her wrinkles.

Grandma says

*“Cold tea cools me down in summer
Cold words bring me winter chills.”*

Grandma says

*“Grow flowers
Not thorns.”*

He says
*“I get angry
When I visit Grandma
And find no food there.”*

What a Grand child
Hungry for food to full-fill
Angry for lack of love!

She shared laddus
Made by her grandma.

A generation gap
Filled with sweetness.

A man-made distance
Disappeared.

I decided to celebrate today.
Then a friend brought chocolate.

What synchronicity!
What sweetness!

Lantern lights
Swirling fans
A plate of food
A chat with friends
A laugh over
Something
Or nothing

A moment to enjoy
A moment in joy

A walk in the moonlight
Stops friends on a bike
Hugs and kisses
Exchange of sparks
In the eyes
Then goodbye
And good night

Moonlit starry sky
Makes me reminiscent
Of the night we looked up
Talked, laughed and wondered
And refused to fall into slumber.

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.

An Art Exhibition

O hunter
Of the insurmountable height
How with scant strokes and sprays
Of dark ink, in a moment's blink
The snow-white peaks
Of a faraway land
Come near to dwell
In our heart and sight!

My eyes turn
From the exhibits
To you
A living art.

Distance

You sit afar
But your eyes and heart
Have come near and dear

Behold!
There is a Beauty.

She looks lovely
In the back.
More so
In the front.

Isn't she most beautiful
Seen from a distance?

She looks plain.
She dresses plain.
Her life seems plain.

How can I explain
Her inner Beauty
To strained eyes
That don't see?

To see her
In original light
Dive inside
To catch the sight.

We took a walk
Together.

She paused
To take note of
Her silhouette
In the light.

*“I’m in love with
My own shadow.”*
She said and sighed
Content with confession.

I turned back
And smiled.
“Finally!”

She caught up
And we walked on
Together.

She passed by
Then turned
And smiled
So luminously
That the sun shines
Shadowless
No longer shying away
Behind the clouds.

Your silky smooth hair
Perfectly perched up there
Like a bird in a dense dark forest
Soaring high above into the Light

What a sight –
Serene and bright!

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

He had his hair cut
And left some beard
As he figured out
How to comb it
With his fingers.

He shaved his hair.
Claims 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.”*

You raised your eyebrows.
Their dancing beats
Enlivened a face
O so solemn!

Both of us were happy
Just for a change.

Your bright smile
Blows the clouds away.
The sunlit blues of sea and sky
Re-appear in my bruised heart.

A light-hearted smile
Weighs more than
A solemn speech.

Care enough
To be carefree.

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.

I look into your eyes
In a photo.

Finally, here is something
Unblinkingly ever-lasting.

I fall into a spiral whirlpool
Of your dimples.
There I dive
From shallow ripples
Into deep recesses.

Thy hand holds me
In a soft strength
That sustains
In a warmth
That melts
In a touch
That stays

I took a walk
In drizzling rain.

She took an umbrella
And leaned it
Over my head.

A walk together
In rain and shelter.

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
Brims with a borderless smile.

Flowers bloom and wither.

Now I see you withering
And I wonder

“Have you bloomed?”

Life is a full colour recipe book.
Why keep it on the shelf?

The rented bike stopped
Right in the middle
Of a lane stranger to me.

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 quietly swelled 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.

I pass by a cyclist
One hand on handle
One holding two rows of eggs
Perfectly peaceful
Not likely to go astray or fall
Or break the eggs or his heart
For the moment.

“Am I jealous?”

*“Oh, no, of course not
That much
Just a little.”*

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

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

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

Your honesty
Haunts
Hurts

Like a stray dog
Chased by whips
I run
Fast, fast, faster
Away from you
Only to end up
In a circle
Around you.

Bubbles burst.
Space emptied
For Reality show.

The moment
I comment on you
In loud silence
I feel joy and pain
In my body.

This is the moment I realise
That you truly reside in me.

Allow me
To drop the hat
Of a commentator
And embrace you fully.

You are indeed in me.
I confess it.
I know it.
I feel it.

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.

Surfing

Ride on the waves
Soar high
Dip low
Breathe
Look forward
Be one with the rhythm
Of La Mer
Master of movements
A child at play
In Her vast embrace

Thou art a rider of tides
Unbound by rules and rites
 Making strides
Braving heights
 Ever forward
 Ever upward
With a vision
Vast and wise

O deathless Faith
Thy fragrances flow
From form to formless
Thy voice, clear and mellow
Replies to our quest
Replays in our hearts
Relays the eternal Love.

Thy voice secures.
Thy vision ensures.
Thy work continues.

Eyelids part
Only to meet again.

For the eyes that see
We are never apart.

He changed outfit
Not to fit in
But to honour
The occasion.

What robes do you wear?

What roles do you play?

What makes your eyes roll?

What makes them shine?

What make you roar with anguish?

What makes you roll with laughter?

When will you shed robes and roles?

Playful God
Makes a friend of mine
Out of the policeman
Who stops my bike
For a fine.

Fine!
Thy Will prevails.
No grudges.
It's actually
Fun.

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.

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

We each wrote a key word

Rapped

Rhymed

Relayed stories

Chatted

Chuckled

Changed the world

With a word game.

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.

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.

You are etched in me.
A living sculpture.

Nectar is brewing
In my bosom.

You are the catalyst.

You left my place.
I didn't say goodbye
For I found you
In my heart space.

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

A promise long overdue.

Partner

Not to satisfy
Passing passion

But to sustain
Patient practice

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.

A New Birth

I touched a round belly
Caressed it with warm hands.
I sensed a kick inside
Perhaps as a reply.
Then a new baby was born
Before it was due.

Welcome to this world!
You must have felt
The warm welcome
And the invitation
To explore
To create
A new world.

You know, dear little one,
I am also a new-born.
And this world is
Our playground.

A perfect creation
Makes me reminiscent of
When I was that adorable.

Why not resume my Self
And be ever more so?
Consciously
In the role
In the flow.

A baby nestles
On my chest
It stops crying
And sleeps in silence.

My body sways
My heart swims
In La Mer

A Rain

A child stood
Beneath a tall bush
Full of white blossoms.

Then lifting a hand
To shake the branch above
He received a rain
Of scented petals.

Eyes closed
He spread arms
And swayed in the rain.

Then he left quietly
Contented
Ready to start
A new day.

All stayed indoors
Sheltered from the rain
Except for a little girl
Who played and played in it.

Contrast

A calm and candid child
An anxious and abrupt adult

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

A child
Senses everything
He laughs and cries
And plays mischief.

To him
I say,

*“You know everything
And you are dearly loved.
Shall we play
In another way?”*

A small smiling girl
Wearing a cute skirt
With curls in the hair
Plays with cushions
For meditation
Busily putting them
In rows and circles
Or random forms
Walking on and around
Caring not to sit on

When carried away
By the arms of an adult
In the middle of the play
She still smiles on
She still plays on
In the arms
Of the adult

The adult
And those around

Children at heart
Chuckle at the child
Walk on with the child
Who still smiles on
Who still plays on

The game is still on

The children
Dressed differently
In skins and skirts
Walk across fields of play
Hand in hand.

A seamless view.

We bent down
Over grass
And discovered
Velvet bugs
Together

Joy

I made a kite
For a child to fly

Who is in joy?
The maker
The player
Or the kite
That is born
And flies high?

O Joy
How contagious!

She gave me
A pair of socks
To stay warm.

I'm warmed up
Before wearing it.

Our Connection

You know, we both love lollipops
And we are not ashamed of it.

What makes you blush?
What paints you with a brush?

What colours dye you?
What do you die for?

Whisper it into my ears.
Let's keep it a secret
Between you and me.

I thought I was sick
With stagnant monotony.

Then the next moment
I decided to open up
To talk with someone
To bring in full presence.

There she came
Inviting herself to my table.
Conversation and laughter flowed.
We infused so much liveliness
That no one could stop.

One change of thought
Made all the difference
For a day.

*“You look so pretty in this dress.
It really suits you so well.”*

*“Thanks.
This dress has been receiving
More compliments than myself.”*

“Well, I meant YOU are pretty.”

*“I know pretty well –
A suitable dress really matters
As if our whole Beauty and Being
Hangs on it.”*

“Yeah, I know what you mean.”

“You are so sweet.”

*“Oh, thank you.
Actually I am
All Spices.
Or it is not me.
It’s the dye
From flavours of life.
What about you?”*

*“Hmmm...
What about me?”*

While she was praising me
I chinned up so much
That the sunglasses
On top of the head
Fell to the ground.

“You see?!
When the head
Rises too high
Something falls.”

We both laughed
At the scene
And the actors.

Alone or Lonely?

*“How do you feel
When you are alone?”*

“You mean, do I feel lonely?”

*“Yes.
Don’t you...
Sometimes?”*

*“I need to be alone, sometimes.
That’s when I am fully myself,
Knowing that the whole wide universe
Is our playground with infinite playmates.
In fact, I feel lonely in a crowd, sometimes.
A fleeting feeling, but it can happen.”*

*“Yeah, it happens
To me, too,
Sometimes.”*

I tried to be funny
And told a joke.
Nobody laughed.

I had to laugh
At myself
Alone
In a crowd.

Then
Everyone laughed
Including myself.

*“Who really understands you
in the whole universe?”*

“I guess the universe itself.”

*“Is it important for you
that I understand you
more and more?”*

*“It’s not important.
It’s inevitable.”*

I was chewing
A hard-to-digest incident.

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

In an instant
The unvoiced lone suffering
All vanished.

She knew it and cared
Across miles' distance.

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

They play music so loud
To excite nerves and e-motions
To ignore the little quiet voice inside

*“I’m a treasure-hunter
For what’s precious
In everyone, everywhere.”*

*“My treasure, if any
Lies deep down
In the hard core.
To discover it
You’ll have to
Dig real hard.”*

*“The treasures I hunt
Are not fixed fossils.
They form and flow.
Even if I lift a corner
Of the covering veil
They may still spring out
And steal the show
Ancient and renewed.”*

“Sorry to keep you waiting.”

“Why sorry?”

I’m not waiting for you.

I’m growing into my Self.”

*“Lemon grass
Organic sprays
Or Sheer Purity
Keep off
Mosquitoes,”*

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

Declutter

A home-maker friend
Comes to help declutter.
Corners and counters
Cleared of dust and extras.
A breathing space emerged.

Jokingly, I said to her,
*“Declutter me, my dear.
I’m in your hands.”*

*“You already know how.
Declutter yourself
And each other.
It takes time.
Be patient.
Persevere.
You will learn
What you truly need
And what nurtures.”*

“You have Light in your eyes.”

*“I’ve been in the sun for quite a while.
So I guess I’m giving it out now.”*

“Why are you always smiling?”

*“I once fell down in my childhood
And got up laughing.
I’ve been smiling ever since.”*

*“Oh...Isn’t it the longest marathon?
No wonder your skin wrinkles.”*

His eyes winked and twinkled.
His wrinkles deepened.

Something in me
Smoothened.

With a heavy dose of light humour
We managed to make our friend
Change course in the dire mire
Of heavily soaked sullen seriousness
And emerge with muddy mischief.

*“Where is the book on Shams,
The Friend of Rumi?”*

“I forgot it.”

*“O Friend, I forgot it –
You are here with me.”*

When the Friend has come into my life, do I still need the book on Shams, the Friend of Rumi?

*“I’m not an artist
I can’t paint.”*

*“There is a painter in everyone.
So says Rumi beautifully.”*

*“This makes life difficult –
For now I have no excuse.”*

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.

“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 will derive
A cosmic dance
That ties us all together.”*

All laughter
In the end.

Nothing
No one
Is
Dead
Serious.

“Once bitten, twice shy.”

“I know.”

“Once bitten, beaten and broken?”

“Well, ...”

“Again and again?”

“Well, ...I don’t know.

Oh, I need some water

To knead it into a play dough

Once again.”

I brought berries
To share with friends.

Savouring the sour sweetness,
They said,

“Let’s plant the seeds.”

“Take me to the tree.”

“Don’t forget me.”

I had an unexpected guest.
Oblivious, we chatted aloud.

My neighbour, usually quiet,
 Made sharp sounds
 As a loud mirror.

That was to be expected.
That was too obvious.

After a cheerful chat
 The guest left.

With a silent “*Sorry*”
All fell back into silence.

You subtly hide judgments
Giving passing hints in a casual talk
As if it slipped out of
A well-guarded tongue.

A crude and clever art
Serves to sabotage
Yourself and all
Still.

He probed into my personal life
As if out of pure curiosity.

*“What makes you interested?
Would you please ask yourself
This question?”*

I proposed.

“Sorry, sorry...”

Everything fell silent.
Then focus shifted.

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

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 the act
Carefree in what comes
In the dance of Two in One

You open your mouth wide
Not to speak
But to yawn.

I see you draw
A full stop
To our conversation.

I look at you
You look down
Fingers dance on the screen
You send a message to someone

I get your message
*“Sorry, busy now
Can’t talk to you.”*

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

I just know it.

The one who hurt you
Is gone.

Why is your wound
Still festering?

Who is hurting you
Now?

She came to explain
Why she couldn't come.

Her voice
Soft
Sweet

Melts all
Rashness
Roughness

He made a speech
That left us speechless.
Some left the space.
He continued the speech.

He talks about
Being an introvert.

Words flow
Cannot stop.

Goodwill

“Bless you!”

Say it, mean it always
Not just when I sneeze.

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

I come to the grass
And remember
We once sat here
And relayed stories
After stories.

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

Night falls.
Birds come back home
To the nest, to rest.

O dear friend,
Why are you
Still on the road?

Book of Life
No copyright
Infinite copies left