

Navaratri
2010



Mahalaya Amavasya

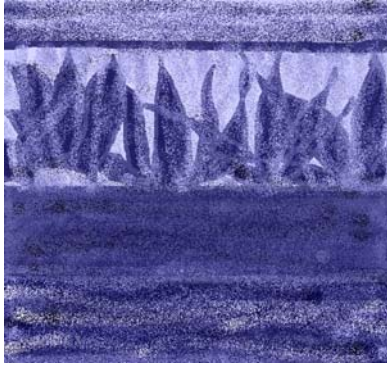
Sankalpam

You pervade everything.
Wherever I look, there you
are.
Whatever is, is you in
essence.
The one essence.
The one element.
The one reality.
The one truth.
Refracted through time,
space, experience, feeling.
Reflected in thought, word,
ded.perception.
All you.

In the darkness of this night,
I begin my journey,
an exploration of you
as the essence of the
elements.

This year, I will train my eyes
to see you everywhere
no matter what your
camouflage.

Because I know
you pervade everything.



Prathamam

Daughter of water,
born to the king of the milky way,
giving life
and sustaining it.

I see you in puddles.
You can appear anywhere,
at any time.
You can slip us up
and you can deceive us—
you are there, but we can't always see you.

You seep into our lives,
the comfort of moisture,
the discomfort of humidity,
the destructive touch of damp—
the blessings of well-being, learning and regeneration
are truly yours,
inherent in your nature.

You are lake—
pristine, untouched,
alone and singular.
Unto yourself a source.
Home to those who seek,
but chasing after none.
Freshness and stagnation
are the extremes you embody,
visible and tangible,
as you are elusive.

You are fluid, flowing dynamic
—the river of our lives.
You are nowhere
longer than a fraction of a second.
Life is motion, and you reveal
its most important rule—
move on.
Do not linger over event,
feeling, experience, memory,
praise or blame.
Move on
like a river enriching its banks,
carrying what it has to,
without stocklists, itineraries,
freight charges or discussion.
Take the world in your stride.

And then give it all away
to the ocean.
Repository of countless stories,
dreams, fears, longings, histories,
you are past, present and future
because you are this moment.
Your apparent stillness holds innumerable tsunamis.
You hold my life
as your treasure.
I find its threads
in your heart,
held together in love,
receiving my new deposits with affection.
I carry you with me,
with equal love and reverence.
I hold on to the idea of you,
hoping to absorb your essence.
I ask for my heart to be as large as yours,
as accepting, as compassionate,
as discreet in the secrets it keeps,
as generous in its giving.
And I make a poornaahuti
of my fears, avarice, anger,
envy and delusions
to you.

My poornahuti too, you return to me,
as rain.
You have processed my imperfections
and returned life.
Rain touches my parched life.
Rain fills my soul and restores it.
Rain seeps through my carefully built walls
of distrust and delusions,
forcing me to face up to myself.
Rain churns the false foundations of my existence,
turning them up as
flotsam and jetsam
of ego and greed.
Rain makes it hard to step out
and forces me to seek my solutions within.
Rain is your cleverest strategy
—tough love in a gentle format.

Life-giver, life-taker.
You are water,
in all forms,
in all sizes,
within me, without me,
origin and end.



Dvitiyai

Blood.

Sweat.

Tears.

Bile.

And a million other forms of water,
sloshing about inside me.

That's how I know
you dwell within me.

That you make me
that which I am.

That you are me.

Each of these cries out to say I am alive.

Each of these holds the truth about how I live.

The quality of my life

is reflected in

the quality of my blood

the effort that makes me sweat

the tears that cleanse my heart

the spleen and anger that emerge as bile.

And because this is true of us all

I know you reside in everyone.

And that not only are you

within me and everyone else

but also that we are in fact

droplets of the same waters.

And seeing fluid flesh out form

in each of our bodies,

I know you are mutable.

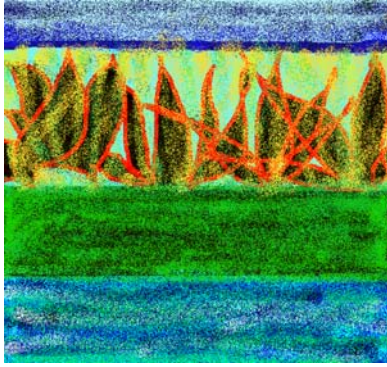
You are immanent.

You are all-pervading.

And that I should seek you,

I should seek you,

everywhere, o daughter of water.



Tritiyai

You are the cement that
keeps it all together.
Our innumerable parts.
Our scattered thoughts.
Our contrary emotions.
The relationships we build.

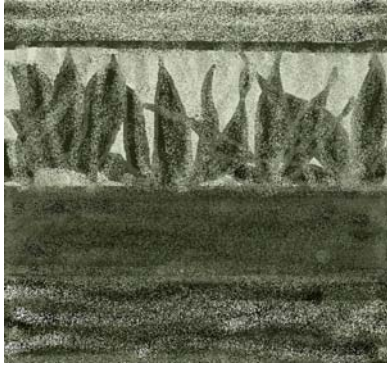
You hold us in your lap,
haven to our crazy lives.
No matter where we run,
we are home.
Safety net to our adventures in living,
there is no free-fall in our failures.

There are no failures
because our lives play out
in the palm of your hand.
Your gaze is the sun.
Your breath is the air.
Your voice is the sound of rain.
We are safe because you shelter us.

You provide for us
and there is nothing but bounty.
We live in abundance
and feel your grace
in the sweetness of fruit
in the freshness of vegetables
in the majesty of mountains
in the clarity of water
in the silence of the night
in the drama of the day
in colour, texture, taste
in all the good things of life.

When we forget the reality of abundance,
the bounty is diminished.
When we fritter away your gifts,
we starve and thirst.
When we are reckless and inconsiderate of you,
the ground shifts beneath our feet.

My grace is infinite, you remind us,
but not my indulgence.
We squirm, we suffer, we struggle,
but are grateful for your compassion.
We survive because it is your way.



Chaturti

Let the earth part
and take me home
if I am innocent.
Let the earth part,
unwilling to bear the burden
of iniquity and injustice.
Let the earth part
and leave the unkind,
the cruel, the callous
without a place to stand.

But let the earth support
the courageous and the compassionate.
Let the earth hold close
the good and the gentle.
Let the earth give life
to those who cherish her.

Let the cry for justice
come from depths
as profound as the earth.
Let determination undergird dream
as the earth steadies
our world.
Let compassion match abundance
and forgiveness match compassion
as the earth is to her children
of myriad forms.

Mother earth, my refuge,
let me endure
as I would in your heart
the challenges I face without.

When I seek refuge, give me courage.
When I seek shelter, give me wings.
When I ask for sympathy, give me compassion.
When I come to you crying, remind me of laughter.
When I want freedom, strengthen my commitment.
When I seek to take, guide me to give.

When I grow up, Mother earth,
I want to be like you.



Panchami

A small fleck of light.
You are hope.

A flickering flame coming to life.
You are being.

A brush-stroke of a wick burning in a diya.
You are faith.

A greeting-card teardrop of light in the sanctum.
You are the way.

A luminous moment in a festival of lights.
You are awakening.

A flash of lightning.
You are brilliance.

A stinging current and scattering sparks.
You are reality.

A crackling sparkler, a fountain of light.
You are laughter and exuberance.

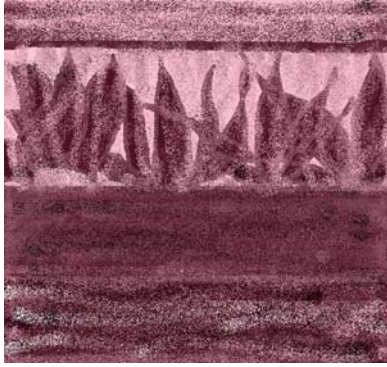
A hearth and a haven.
You are home.

A smoky, herbal havan.
You are witness.

A wild dance of light and heat.
You are abandon.

A strong, steady torch in the darkness.
You are courage.

And fire, all-consuming.
You are rebirth.



Shashti

Primeval heat,
giving me life
and the fight to survive.

Fire in my belly,
stoking ambition and appetite,
kindling desire and daring.

Warmth in my heart,
sustaining love and life,
keeping alive hope and happiness.

Glow in my expression chakra,
finding the right way and the right words,
speaking creativity to caring.

Spark of my intuition.
illuminating truth,
anchoring wisdom.

Cool white light of infinity
connecting me to myself
welding me to you.



Saptami

The fragrance of roses,
heavy in the still, moist air,
is you.

The lightness of lavender,
lifting away pain and tension,
is you.

The freshness of lemon,
awakening to action,
is you.

The headiness of jasmine,
effacing all thoughts,
is you.

The warmth of cinnamon,
promising sweetness and spice,
is you.

The bold knock of coffee,
stirring a tired brain to thought,
is you.

The huskiness of musk,
ominous and potent,
is you.

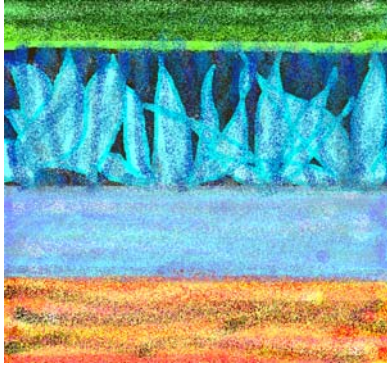
The smell of rain-on-earth,
moving the heart,
is you.

The saltiness of sea-air,
call to adventure,
is you.

The comfort of wheat on heat,
filling the spirit,
is you.

The things I smell are you.
The floating, flying particles are you.
The many kinds of aromas are you.

You are not form.
You are not formless.
Just fragrance, that
wafts, settles,
lingers
and is absorbed.



Ashtami

I believe that you are ether.
The problem is I don't know
exactly what ether is.

So I assume that it is
all those things about you
that I just don't understand.

I don't understand
why you allow horrible things to happen.
Why are children abused?
Why is there violence?
Why do you let people believe
being violent is cool,
that experiencing violence is okay?
Why is there hunger in your world?
Why don't you protect nature
from our exploitative ways?
Why do you let us have such destructive ways?
Why do we fight?
Why do we hurt?

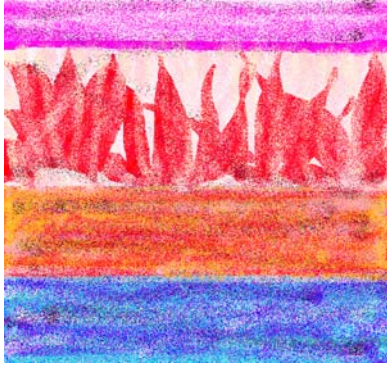
I also don't understand
why some people's lives are
an unending saga of suffering
—not imagined, not perceived—
but real suffering? Why?
Why do tragic things keep happening to some people?
Why do some people have to struggle so much?
Nothing comes easily to them, it seems.

I don't understand
why every life is not perfect?
What would be the problem with that?
Why do people suffer ill-health?
Why does living traumatise some people particularly?
Why do people have disabilities?

Equally, I don't understand
why there are a few people
who can suffer anything and keep moving?
Nothing stops them.
Nothing breaks them.
Nothing moves them to fear, tears,
anger, bitterness, envy or hatred.
Nothing makes them ecstatic either,
or particularly self-satisfied.
They do not seek happiness.
They simply are happy.
Their smile is a constant.
I want to be one of them.
Why aren't all of us like that?

I don't understand
the laws of causation
the cycle of karma
the need for suffering
the purpose of life.

I don't understand
what ether is,
nor why I must still write about it
if I don't.
All I know is that I must write.
That must be ether, too!



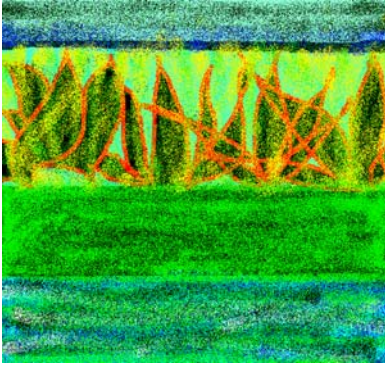
Navami

That which is
not water
not earth
not fire
not air
beyond the clouds
beyond the sky
just going beyond
far beyond
and then further,
that which is ether
is nothing
and everything.

She who is
without name
but may be named
in at least one thousand and eight ways.
She who is
withuot form
but may be found
in every form you can see and imagine
and every form you can't.
She who is
not identified with a particular quality
but whose qualities
give life and texture and taste
and identity to every experience.
She who is
beyond time
but without whom time
has no meaning.
She who is
nowhere
but pervades every
being, feeling, quality, moment
and space.
She who is
none
but whose will gives life to everyone
and whose grace
gives every life meaning.

Ether must be like her.
Just nothing and everything.
Just nowhere and everywhere.
Just being.
Ether must be like her.

Dashami



You are the song in my head.
The medley of life
running across genres,
ragas, talas, languages,
ceaseless, absorbing
and often, annoying.

You are the distant prayer I hear
over the loudspeaker
from the temple around the corner,
from the muezzin's call
several times a day
from the Sai Baba vandi
that now comes by a few times every week.

You are the Omkara
of yoga sessions
of mass meditations
of weekly satsangs.

You are the sound of the Prairie wind
howling all the way from the Rockies
until it hits the glass window
of my sixth floor corner apartment.

You are the roar of the Indian Ocean tide
that crashes against the rocks outside my room
and thrashes around wildly
waking me up and then lulling me to sleep once more.

You are the softly-hummed lullaby
to which every child
in my family and our extended universe
has nodded off.

You are the rustling of the leaves
on the tree outside this flat,
always alerting us to wind and rain.

I hear you everywhere.
You are like air.
The sound of life.

Samapti

I can see you in everything.
I can hear you in everything.
I can touch you anytime.
I can reach you in a million ways.
I inhale you with every breath.

Water. Earth. Fire. Air. Ether.
It's really elementary.
The constitute you
and you create them.

Somewhere in that mysterious creative cycle
are my being,
my life and its little and grand dramas.

As the elements challenge my life,
I stand firm, if not steady,
because I also constitute you
and you fill me.

In our oneness, we are.
It's just that elementary.

