

*Navaratri*  
2010



## **Mahalaya Amavasya**

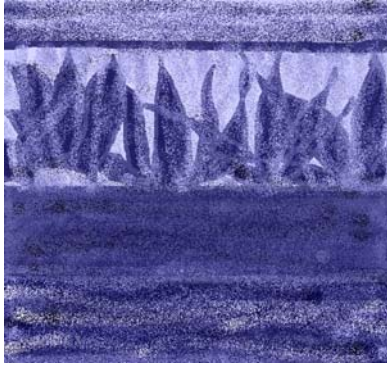
### *Sankalpam*

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.

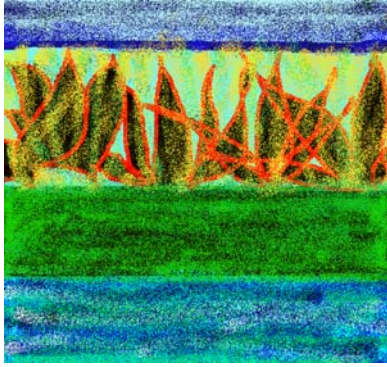
You are immanent.

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.

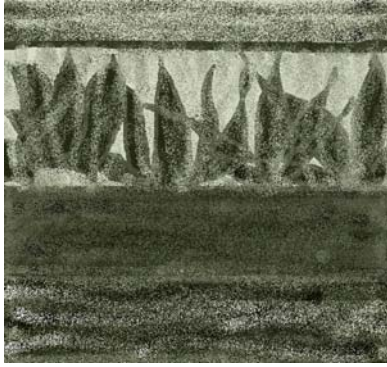
You hold us in your lap,  
haven to our crazy lives.  
No matter where we run,  
we are home.  
Safety net to our adventures in living,  
there is no free-fall in our failures.

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.

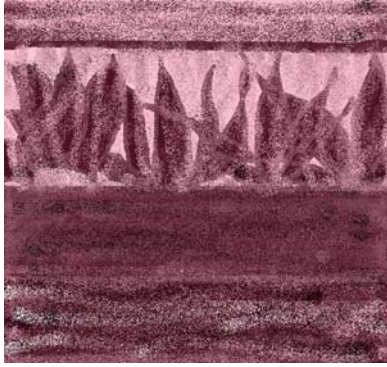
A smoky, herbal havan.  
You are witness.

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.

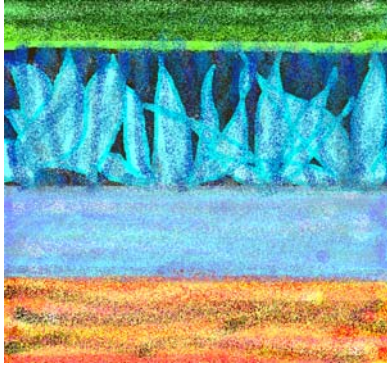
The smell of rain-on-earth,  
moving the heart,  
is you.

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?

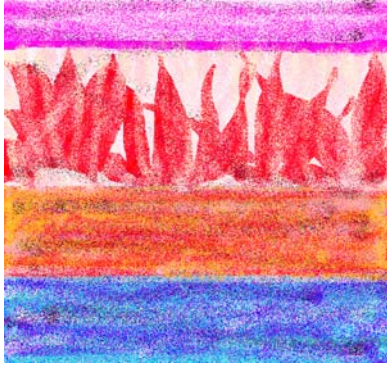
I also don't understand  
why some people's lives are  
an unending saga of suffering  
—not imagined, not perceived—  
but real suffering? Why?  
Why do tragic things keep happening to some people?  
Why do some people have to struggle so much?  
Nothing comes easily to them, it seems.

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

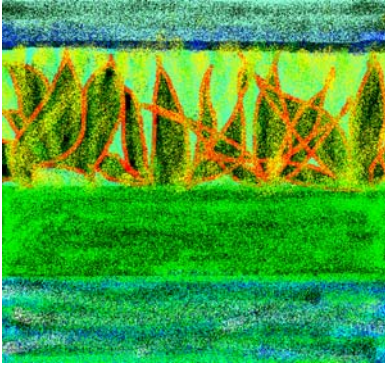
That which is  
not water  
not earth  
not fire  
not air  
beyond the clouds  
beyond the sky  
just going beyond  
far beyond  
and then further,  
that which is ether  
is nothing  
and everything.

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.

