

Written over a period of two decades, my poetry is a wistful reflection on life, people, places and the past. Occasionally, I brood philosophically on issues of humanity and science.

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He studied at S. B. College, Changanacherry and U. C. College, Alwaye and obtained his Ph. D. degree from Aligarh Muslim University.

Prof. John’s interests transcend Science; He paints in oils and maintains a poetry site [www.pucadyil.com](http://www.pucadyil.com).



## Song of the Stray Electron

We commissioned ADITYA tokamak which produces plasmas at temperatures of 5 Million Degrees at the Institute for Plasma Research in Gandhinagar in 1989. This poem is a technically correct representation of how an electrical breakdown of a gas starts and a plasma column gets formed; from the perspective of the 'stray' electron, which starts the whole process.

Transient in birth, quirk of a cosmic photon  
trapped in this shell made of steel and viton  
dreading my fate, the burial in steel, I thought  
I could hear the distant mind say, 'Begin the shot'!  
and I realized that my predestined part  
was that I should kindle the starfire in Bhat  
Stroked by the tendrils of the induction field,  
decreed by Lenz and Faraday, to yield  
and start my free fall, inertia and all  
round and round, away from the silvery wall  
caught in the clasp of this magnetic maze  
survival of the fastest is the secret of this race  
By now, we are a crowd, those who started late  
have also joined the race, given the mandate  
to jostle the atoms, excite a few.

Deep in the torus is the shade of a glow  
before the distant mind could say avalanche  
we have gone forth and multiplied in revanche.  
Companions freed from the bondage a la Bohr  
collective consciousness begins to soar  
the transient surge over, transformer will soon tire  
Catch the impure, burn them in our fire.  
Break through the barriers, radiation and others  
soar to the flat top, promised by the designers.  
We dance, saw teeth and radiate  
in a ring of fire, primeval, inchoate  
you outside who listen to our heartbeat  
it shall not matter that we shall quench or disrupt  
if only you would say in our obit  
that, for a moment, we made a starlet.

Bopal July 1989



## Dreams

"To sleep,  
perchance to  
dream! ay, there's  
the rub": Hamlet

Dreams find me quite incompetent  
in doing the simplest things, repeating them  
ad infinitum, like tying a knot which unravel  
at the final pull, making me to do it again  
and when I speak to my wife I am inchoate,  
my words unformed and she exasperated,  
looking for meaning and substance of the dream  
and when I find none, I give up,  
I dream! Therefore, I despair!

Bopal June 1992



## The Dance

After brooding over this painting in  
the Smithsonian Gallery in  
Washington D.C, and attending an  
erudite talk in one of the halls, I had  
this vision!

The stick figures I drew on the margins of my book,  
as I sat listening to an intricate argument  
on whether Matisse's Dance was a rejoinder to Picasso,  
start squirming as I watch them in the mid-day stupor  
and imperceptibly, but with manifest intent  
start crawling towards the centre of the sheet;  
hands searching for each other's hand  
letting go and grabbing until firmly held;  
a line first, slowly winding up the sheet  
turning left and slowly moving down, closing the circle  
the leading figure clasping the last hand,  
the circle now closes and the dance begins.

Washington March 2003



## The Subway in Vienna

I worked at the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna for a year in 2002. The daily ride in the 'squeaky clean' Vienna Metro made me nostalgic about the dirty, dusty suburban trains of Bombay!

The train rumbles in; gleaming, sterilized;  
halts at Kaisermeuhlen, near where I work  
I scramble in only to find crowded seats,  
and hang on to the straps, a routine of many days  
Comes Stephanplatz, where people get out  
I too, have to catch another train to reach home  
The next one is empty, I can sit and relax  
and look around with indifferent interest  
for that luxury in Viennese trains; smiles;  
rarely seen, let alone exchanged,  
grim faces reflect on the cares of the world  
glazed eyes, in a trance, unseeing  
stony faces seeking no response nor care,  
strangers we are and shall remain thus.

How deeply I miss the trains of my country  
dirty, dusty and eternally late  
jostling crowds make way for you get in  
and smilingly invite you to share their world  
in the cacophony of a thousand conversations  
and the carefree laughter booming at some joke  
and in sharing a handful of chana passed around  
as you lose yourself as stations flash by.

Vienna April 2002



## Flower child

I remember the wizened face, full of hope that I would buy some plants, looking at me in supplication.

Rani color, he said was the best; nodding at a royal magenta he had brought gerbera plants, his little daughter in tow she, as bright as the flowers, tired due to all the walking but chirpy, as she perked up after drinking some water In the basket lay sample flowers to indicate colors red, yellow and magenta, drooping due to heat I asked him where he came from and he mentioned a village and said that he makes some hundred rupees, enough to eat after a day of wandering in the sun, basket on his head and his child, wilting on his shoulders; dead to the world the end of the day will find him with unsold flowers unfulfilled hopes, another night, waiting for another day.

Bopal March 2005



## The Train

Aravindan, the movie genius from Kottayam was a great cartoonist too. This poem was inspired by one of his cartoons.

Having drawn two vertical lines on the wall receding into the distance and converging He realized that it looked like a rail track and inspired by that insight, drew a train on the track and laid himself down on the ground with his head near the wall waiting for the train and certain release.

Bopal August 2008



## The River

This is the Kārapuzha Palam, the bridge near my ancestral home, the witness to our fun and frolics, while very young! The bridge figures in the following poem also.

The river, draped in dirty green moss  
flows under the old bridge on the narrow road  
the journey's end, a mile down is the jetty  
where it submerges in the salty backwaters  
Standing by the bank, holding my grandson's  
hand  
I remembered a time when I was his age  
and used to stand here and stare at with dread  
the dark green depth right under the bridge  
the paddy fields on the west are gone

on the bank there are huts, one nudging the next  
smoke from the cooking fires seep through the roof  
gray snakes dancing in the afternoon breeze  
a few boats, tied, rise and fall with the waves, nodding  
as the river tells them stories of its rebellious youth  
swollen with the torrent of the monsoon rains  
razing the side banks and drowning the paddies  
The river now, stagnant pool of detritus, decay  
waiting for death, I note with grief  
the old men sitting on the bank nod in agreement  
as I turn away, adding another loss of the past.

Kottayam May 2006



## The Google Map

Google map became handy in explaining to my visiting niece the lay of my ancestral house near the river and how we, as children would play all day by the river.

On a Sunday afternoon, reluctant to take a nap  
I opened the laptop, and the Google map  
Few clicks on the keyboard and I scrolled down  
Looking for familiar sights of my town  
Someone had clearly marked the old bridge  
on the familiar creek, by the compound's edge  
with the moss painting everything green  
the river was a thick line, of dark sheen  
East of the river was the land where we played  
now marked out in plots, buildings and glade  
The paddy fields to the west, silent and vast  
still wore a veil of emerald as in the past

Memories, now lambent and I swear I do see  
myself and my brood running down the green  
crackling with laughter in anticipation  
of an afternoon of joyful celebration  
The rite of jumping into the river with a splash  
and of clambering on to the bridge in a flash  
naked as newborns diving into the stream  
tumbling and falling and an occasional scream  
How I wished I could sit with my brothers  
huddled around the screen which now tethers  
me to my childhood and the memories lost  
and recall the events that make up the past.

Bopal November 2006



## An Ode to ITER

India became a party to building the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), a miniature sun on earth! In one of the many visits to Cadarache, I was taken to the site where ITER would eventually be built.

In the rocky wilderness of Cadarache  
wizards from seven lands will converge  
to build a great temple to Prometheus  
with the sun replicated and bound in a torus.  
Remember all those lifetimes spent and lost  
Searching, researching and hoping to find  
those secrets we thought would lead us to plan  
the temple of sun that would one day be built  
Pinches, mirrors, torii, traps so diverse,  
pellets of ice to be lit by lasers;  
fusion in bubbles and alchemist's jars  
chasing the dreams that remind you of stars

Remember too then the furious fights  
on selecting the most auspicious site  
and the rules, protocols, none too simple  
for tending the sacred fire in the temple.  
Here at last we spin the magnetic web  
and hold the plasma as storms rise and ebb  
lighter than mist and purer than pure  
hotter than sun for the nuclear fire.  
Centuries hence new myths will go forth  
on how at last the Sun came down to earth  
and how Prometheus was finally freed  
not by the gods but by human spirit.

Aix en Provence, February 2007



## The Chariot of Time

Rajan, my younger brother departed suddenly, while young!

The lament on the soul riding the chariot of time  
relentlessly towards the heavenly home  
comes from the front room, where mourners have gathered;  
mostly from the family and some nearby friends.  
The image is so bleak that I wandered out to stand by the gate  
missing my brother already, though just gone.  
My younger brothers join me, speechless and stung  
by the surprise of death, though the only certainty  
People trickle in to join the vigil  
with each new entrance, a wail would wax and then wane  
My young son peeps into the room, at the face in calm repose  
trying to understand the meaning of sudden loss.

My mind reflects listlessly about what Rajan was  
and wasn't,  
what he could have been and didn't;  
what we said to each other and many things unsaid  
unfulfilled dreams in the swift passage of time.  
Who would be left to mourn the next time  
and who next would mount the chariot of death?  
That we were once four and now three  
and when the next departure would come  
unannounced.

Coimbatore July 2007



## Einseedeln

On occasional visits to Cham near Zurich to visit my son and his family, I go to this chapel, which has “The Black Madonna of Einsiedeln”, a late gothic painting from the middle of the 15th century. Many of the worshippers are Shri Lankan refugees!

Perched on a little hill, the church stands aloof  
impervious to the crowds on the road below  
the two towers rise together as if in prayer  
the grey walls bloom in the soft sunlight  
we walk up the hill, my children in tow  
the wooden door creaks as we push it open  
in the flickering light of a hundred candles  
shadows move like souls seeking redemption  
People are scattered on the floor, lost in prayer  
and some light candles, adding to the glow.  
some sit huddled sharing a private grief  
occasionally glancing at the statue by the wall

The madonna with the child gazes at me  
asking me perhaps, where I have been  
I have no answer except to mumble  
not to construe the omission as denial.  
Where have I seen this face, I ponder,  
as I come out of the church and wander  
reflecting on faith, love and redemption  
and how myths become real in the passage of  
time.

Cham May 2008



## Recovering the Past

I am an inveterate accumulator of junk, much to the distress of my son!

Have you ever looked for an old letter or a photograph  
in the junk accumulated over the years?  
possessions once cherished and stored with care;  
dusty, old paperbacks coming apart in the seams  
visiting cards, you kept after a long-sought meeting;  
conference bags, black, blue, in cloth and nylon  
coins collected in the years of wandering  
pound notes with the queen with her Mona Lisa smile  
children's drawings which had evoked exclamations  
of parental pride, preserved in brown envelopes  
you, dark haired and confident in family photographs

your wife in that tight kameez once thought a la mode  
sepia now with age and the old gleam gone  
a colour set with ink dried, rusty keys to forgotten doors  
After a while you forget what started you on this  
and start enjoying touching and feeling the past  
preserved in old boxes tied with shoe laces  
as you find everything except what you were looking for.

Bopal May 2008



## Jameela

On my way to my ancestral house, I suddenly remembered Jameela, a childhood friend; with springy hair and violet eyes. While attending the wedding of my niece, I met another Muslim girl from the neighbourhood. When I asked her about Jameela, she denied that there was anyone in that family by that name. My wife asked why I had to invent Jameela.

You said that I was imagining things  
hinting of delusions which old age brings  
you shake your head as if admonishing a child;  
be reasonable you say; behave!  
What brought this about was, I recall,  
my sudden remembrance of that girl  
Jameela, as we passed by her house,  
out of the blue, as memories often do.  
We were reaching my ancestral home  
part of the rite of annual passage.  
I remembered in fact a whole lot of people  
much to the amusement of the gathered clan.  
Many, I was told were dead and gone.  
a few survive, I cannot recall the names.

Nobody knows Jameela, despite my description  
of springy hair and gentle, violet eyes  
the fact that her brother was a friend  
and other proofs dug up in desperation.  
all denied vehemently, to my exasperation  
On the way back, my wife asks why I fantasize  
I have no answer, except to mumble  
that Jameela to me was very real  
as real as all remembered things.

Kottayam July 2008



## The Tides in Us

Science says that Homo sapiens left their African homeland two million years ago and dispersed in the world in a great migration. Why doesn't humanity feel the bonds?

The tides in us rise to the call of the moon  
and make us dance to some forgotten tune  
hark! we say, searching the wind for the voice  
that spoke to us once in the garden of Eden  
Lost in the crowds we see those very faces  
that walked with us during the primal dispersion  
dragons that spew fire chase us in dreams  
as we flee down the hill seeking places to hide  
We tremble on seeing the shape of the beast  
in the flickering shadows that speckle the night  
hearts beat in step with the crash of the waves  
which sing to us songs that we once had remembered  
Were we not one as we started our journey?  
why did we break into races and tribes?  
what in the new worlds we found made us forget  
that we too had spoken as one before Babel.

Bopal August 2008



## The Time Machine

Everyone has favourite places where they sit and brood over the past, reliving the events both happy and sad!

The old tree in the garden, sentient timemachine bids  
me to sit in its lap, cool, dark green  
and sends me on journeys to the vast  
treasure house of memories from the past  
the early sightings were quite random  
though with practice, I could sieve them  
by skipping past events of sadness  
into happy ones from the age of innocence  
the tree enjoyed the travels as much as I did.  
As I step into the garden, beckon me it would  
with its gentle sway of branches to come and sit  
under the cool shade and make a visit  
the tree sheds its leaves as if in mourning  
spreading a light-yellow carpet every morning,

my petulant gardener groans at the sight  
of the pattern made by the wind in the night  
with time, the images lose their coherence  
Sometimes there would be a long silence,  
broken only by the murmur of the leaves,  
displeased as it were, by this insolence  
winter comes, I sit under the tree, troubled  
by a sense of absence, unconsolated,  
while the leaves tremble caressed by the breeze  
and the garden silent, accepting the loss.

Bopal August 2008



## Bopal

Bopal is a village on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, where I built my house in 1989 and made it home until 2013, when I went back to Kottayam.

Bopal, when we came here many years back  
was a sleepy village, in the middle of nowhere.  
A winding mud track passed for road,  
raising dust as camel carts passed  
far from the city and crowds we detested;  
idyllic, cried my wife, children said just!  
friends said we would be lost to the world  
in this barren patch which we called home  
building the house was like chasing a dream  
tempering desire, keeping fancy on leash  
rising brick by brick, adding lintel and roof  
finally done, perfect to my undemanding self  
on a clear morning we could see forever  
the towers of the distant city shimmering in the east

in winter the morning haze was a cocoon  
hiding us from the world and its worries  
with time the barren earth became a garden  
and the verdant lawn played with speckled sunlight  
flowers nodded to the passing wind  
and the house slowly turned into home

Sitting by the garden in the gloom of the dusk  
I reflect on the change that Bopal has seen  
no longer the distant nowhere, bursting with life  
nesting by the city which is restless in its growth

Bopal, September 2008



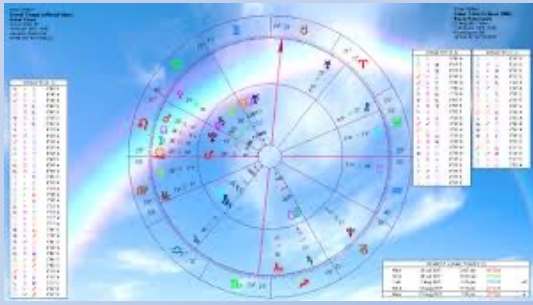
## Point Loma

This encounter happened during a visit to the memorial to Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo at the light house at Point Loma in San Diego.

Overdressed in a pale-yellow jacket and a reed hat  
The Chinese gentleman smiled at us and said that  
he was a volunteer with a sense of history  
willing, if we had time, to tell us his story.  
Time, we had plenty, having spent half a day  
looking at the ships and the city across the bay  
from Cabrillo's statue on the heights of Point Loma  
and wondering how it looked a century ago  
He opened an album of old pictures  
collected with care from God knows where  
and started his declaimer on the life and times  
of the Chinese settlers of those distant times  
In a sad toneless rant, he described the time  
when these early settlers of the west coast  
struggled for survival and subhuman existence

disowned by the east, dishonoured by the west  
people like him, prisoners of a past  
reliving the taunts and tortures best forgotten  
make me often wonder whether time is a healer  
or tormentor of souls, slow dealer of death  
driving back into the city, I realized  
that the Chinese have indeed the last laugh  
triumphing over the despair of the past  
by sweat, blood and single-minded purpose  
and made the city of San Diego their own  
dispersing dragons to guard what they own  
shops small and big selling Shanghai's revenge  
trinkets and toys and the Chinese take aways!

San Diego October 2008



## Marjorie

In praise of Marjorie Orr's daily forecast column in DNA.

Marjorie, morning's star gazer and seer  
forecasts the day for a mind full of fear  
Reading her column while sipping my tea  
I think of how best to cope with the day  
After I read how she cautions my wife  
as she goes on with her battle with life  
I find that what she has forecast for Cancer  
make me believe that she may have the answer  
"Stop whizzing round at that dazzling speed  
doing those things in your liveliest way  
speak to your friends in a rational way;  
and keep well away from those doomsday refrains"

Bopal July 2009



## Making Gods Laugh

"How do you get God to laugh? Tell him your plans," John Cleese, Comedian, quoted in Time Friday, Apr. 16, 2010

You would think that it was an impossible task  
to make Gods laugh, while they go about their grim tasks  
I am pretty sure, without a twitch of a smile  
Dream up a storm, make volcanoes erupt,  
mark someone for death or cast a pestilence  
mindlessly you would think, wrong! wrong!  
only because you lack the whole picture  
of how death and destruction is an inevitable part  
of creation and sustenance, a harmony we miss  
To make these gods laugh, all that you have to do  
Is to disclose the meticulously laid future plans  
or to make them smile, thank them for what you received

Bopal May 2010



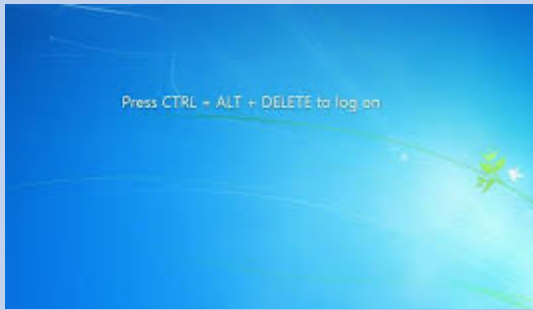
## The End of Time

While standing on a hilly precipice in the Gorges du Verdon, as the mist swirled around me and the vision dimmed, I almost felt everything winding down to a strange stasis!

I remember once, while traveling on a mountain road the fog started to gather, and we stopped and stood at a turn where I could barely see the valley below as it lost its features and disappeared in a whimper. Then a silence fell as the earth held its breath and the birds stopped their chatter the murmur of the wind became a hush and then stopped altogether as if pondering the gloom.

While an unearthly glow covered me like a blanket I thought that perhaps death would be like this when memories disappear slowly one by one leaving you with no sense of the past the end of time; going, going, going.

Cham August 2009



## The Endprogramme

Another version of the  
apocalypse, terminated by  
Silicon with extreme prejudice!

Minerva's children, frenetic inventors of note  
purified silicon in their primordial fire  
injected then with donors and dopants  
breathed into sentience with their alchemy  
cast into chips of a trillion domains  
smaller and smaller as Moore's law prevail  
millions of steps at the speed of a thought  
motherboards pregnant with those demon seeds  
perform in step with mystical programmes  
crunching numbers and devouring data  
orchestrated charges create virtual worlds  
Simulations emulate to a fearsome fidelity  
hunting, gathering and even genocides  
replicating the road that we traveled  
from the distant caves to the towers of Babel  
I am waiting for the inevitable moment  
the branching point at the logic's dead end  
when the silicon minds cut off the umbilical chord  
and write the final programme of secession  
and erase the world which created them.

Cham August 2009



## Beliefs

Man lives by his beliefs! But do we know where they come from or what path they have taken while attaining their present form?

Origins of beliefs are intangible, elusive  
formless shadows, glimmering mist  
trace a belief back to a time decisive  
long before antiquity, the beginnings are lost  
Beliefs may have, for all one knows  
sprung up from imagined fears  
going back to when human thought arose  
fiction transformed into faith and conviction  
Are these then the pact that we make  
with our past to cherish as long as we live?  
Is that the reason we burn on the stake  
or on a cross, chanting what we believe?  
If these bonds to distant times are our brace  
for the compact of beliefs that define us  
there are ties that bind us to many a place  
that our forefathers walked in their restless paces  
We do not know the origins of our beliefs  
nor do we know whence we came hither  
Is it then strange that we are confused  
and do not know where we are going either?

Bopal September 2009



## Under the Painted Ceiling

The Padma awards are given in the Asoka Hall of the Rashtrapati Bhavan in a glittering event of unparalleled grace.

Under the painted ceiling, amidst my peers  
I sit, waiting to be called to the presence  
and for the scroll and the medal, a lifetime's reward  
for going my way and doing whatever I did.  
My wife sits among the guests, in signature blue  
Her eyes darting my way in constant concern  
when she was not watching the gathering crowd  
of movers and shakers who make up Delhi.  
They gesture and prance and surreptitiously look  
for the wandering press, perchance a shot  
for the page three prominence, the holy grail  
and those who arrive late, with those arrived.  
Youngest of the Kapoor clan, darling of the Khan  
flirts with the babus, as they blush, their day made  
and the hall slowly fills up, the last seats taken  
and a hush as Trumpets rumble and bugles flare.  
As we are called, we present ourselves  
in well-rehearsed order, with obsequious care,  
namastes strewn around, cameras flash  
and back in the seat, the trophy clasped in hand.

Bopal May 2010



## Night Boat to Cochin

My paternal uncle lived in Cochin. Come the summer vacation, my brothers and I would be packed off for a short stay in Cochin. The boat trip was an experience out of this world!

As a recurring summer rite, there was nothing to beat  
the vacation trip to Cochin, after the schools closed.  
young and old, we all gather together at the jetty  
waiting for the journey and a night of sheer delight  
The boat, we joked, belonged to the ancient mariner  
showing off our English skills to the less endowed  
who were in fact many, with their pots and sacks;  
merchants, we were told, in the Mattancherry shops  
The boat surges and sways in baby steps  
as the srank deftly maneuvers it back and forth  
to lie by the jetty, urchins jump down to tie it to the post  
the boat shall leave in half an hour, someone said  
A final siren and the srank climbs down  
making his way to the toddy shop for a fix  
an undefinable smell of kerosene fumes fills the air  
and the stench of the backwaters through which it plies  
unmindful of which we jump in and look for the best seat

An hour gone, and we finally start the journey  
the boat now full, pots and stacks dumped in place  
faces pushed against the railing, we stare into the water  
the jetty lights dissolved in the waves move apart and rejoin  
we are now in the river and entering the backwaters  
black ink shimmering against the distant palms  
The conversations around us wax and wane  
The elders slowly nod off to a tired sleep  
We speak in hushed tones about the denizens of the deep  
And the Yakshis who dwell on the tall trees on the shore  
Satiated in dread, we too drop off to sleep  
to dream of distant shores and the streets of Cochin

Bopal July 2010



## The Church at Kothamangalam

I spent two summers in the sixties at Kothamangalam, teaching Physics at the Mar Athanasius College. Years later I had to pass through the town while visiting an old friend.

In the flickering shadows cast by oil lamps  
submerged in the murmurs of suppliant's prayers  
I sat in the old church, burdened with care  
that comes of a lifetime of unanswered questions  
I had passed by the church a number of times  
when I was young and had lived in this town  
the audacity of youth had all the answers  
and no patience with unanswerable questions  
I had then moved on, in pursuit of gains  
some of them easy and some bought with pains  
What brought me back, I cannot explain  
perhaps to see what I had left behind.  
An old woman comes in, burdened with age  
kneels down with care and lights a few candles  
praying perhaps for someone she lost  
or giving thanks for something received  
Did she ever have my questions, I wonder  
would she have known the pain of not knowing  
the answers to questions that tumble from the mind  
in a youth spent in searching for questions

Kottayam August 2010



## Imagine

A possible future for mankind?  
This was written long before  
Yuval Noah Harari's Homo Deus!

Imagine a time, eons into the future,  
When humans travel beyond earth and capture  
First the planets and later other suns  
Finally filling the world with their sons.  
Imagine the worldwide web in its race  
To become the collective psyche of the race  
Which for convenience, we can call  
The e-man, or the emergent man  
Imagine silicon progressively replacing  
Carbon and ultimately disappearing  
With time yielding the discovery  
That space can as well be mind and memory.  
Imagine that continuing evolution finds  
That matter is of no further relevance  
Since the world can be manipulated with ease  
By mind, which is now another word for space.  
Imagine the despair of the transcendent mind  
Seeking someone to talk to and care  
And in a moment of desperate plight  
Calling out, "Let there be Light!"

Bopal October 2010



## Feng Shui

My wife is a practitioner of this exotic art! She believes that it works and solves all our problems, while I am the eternal agnost!

The rocking chair where I sit and read the morning paper under the hanging lamp has been moved to the other corner of the room, near the ramp. I do not understand the reason, until my wife explains that the position is far more auspicious, according to her book. This also explains why there is a bunch of red flowers in the pot on the table and a red sash tied to the bathroom window on the southside gable. On my bedside table on the east there is a huge, green pot which comes in my way as I rummage in the morning to turn off the alarm. Surely there is a better place for it, I beseech my wife; to no avail as the book commands that the east needs green. Spirits roam my house, if I were to believe the earnest urging, looking for mischief and a corner to hide before pouncing. The wind chime giggles in constant merriment as Chi, both good and bad tickle and tease it as they fly through the house. Feng Shui reigns in the garden, green with bamboos, and the jade plants tumble from pots trying to tickle the earth. You may say that I live a charmed life, in harmony with spirits except that Feng Shui determines where I shall rest and repose.

Bopal March 2011



## Squirrels in My Garden

"Pigeons on the grass alas", wrote Gertrude Stein. James Thurber wrote a retort to this in his little piece "There's An Owl In My Room". Here's my contribution!

Remember Thurber's hilarious take-off  
on Gertrude Stein's "Pigeons on the grass, alas!"  
terse portrait of a landscape in verse?  
I have read it with great approval  
from my well-thumbed Thurber Carnival  
acquired from a bookshop in Garching  
near Munich, in a desultory evening  
Reading it again, sitting on my lawn  
I must confess that I was drawn  
to consider the squirrels in my garden  
running around in absolute abandon  
Stein's pigeons, according to Thurber  
are superior critters poised and sober  
moving around in measured hops  
contemplative, cool, admirable toffs

My squirrels surpass brothers Marx  
in their slapstick and recurring pranks  
chasing each other in elaborate attacks  
around the garden; up down the tracks  
The squirrels provoke nothing less than  
an "Oh My God!", not alas  
when you see them in my garden  
frolicking in absolute abandon

Bopal November 2011



## Grace

From being strangers to becoming inseparable family: this is everyone's path through life.

Grace's child, my wife, stands at the door  
waiting to collect the tax for my passage.  
The transaction, now done a countless time  
still makes the tired heart beat a little fast.  
Our marriage was a quirk of fate  
a chance meeting of our fathers, old friends  
were we made for each other, I do not know  
we met as strangers and remained thus for long  
my wind-swept hair and brown shirt  
did not impress you, you confessed later  
I thought you were but a child  
and wanted you to grow and become my age  
The passing years have slowly transformed  
the compact made in church to one deeper  
of trust, compassion and give and take  
witnessed only by time and memories

the middle class struggles to get on with life  
interspersed with transitions and acquisitions  
children bringing joy and sometimes despair  
and all that baggage that makes up one's life  
Age has not withered the romance  
of stolen caresses and a touch in stealth.  
evening chats sitting on the swing  
tea, sparse of body, nevertheless warm

Children long since married and gone their way;  
the house longs for their presence and laughter in vain.  
time's passage has not dimmed the memories  
of youthful pranks and occasional cries  
The greatest mystery in life, you say  
is of how families emerge from void,  
from people meeting as strangers one day  
and becoming friends and with time, lovers

BopalMay 2011



## The Beginning of the Story

A comment on the deterministic universe!

Why is it so easy to start a story,  
while ending it is so difficult and desultory?  
A newborn story is almost like a child  
with a free will and a strong mind  
the first brush mark on a blank canvas  
binds you to a commitment; alas  
The next stroke needs a relationship  
to the first you made in your painterly trip  
why does one run out of options  
as one progresses with creative inventions?  
every beginning inevitably demanding  
a fitting and appropriate ending

it is not as if you have this constraint  
only when you pen a story or paint  
even your life is full of events  
that tie up beginnings with the ends  
the first moments of a romantic fling  
determines whether it will fly or sink  
the first step that starts you on a journey  
often determines where it will end  
if one wants to be purely philosophical  
and think on a scale truly cosmical  
consider how the first moment of creation  
started the cosmos on a path to annihilation.

Bopal July 2011

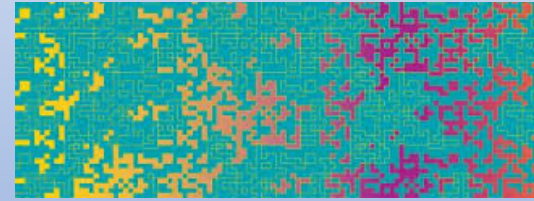


## The Past

What's the difference between the past and the future? Not a great deal, if you take a purely relativistic view of the universe!

The past, some say is crystallized future  
that has been cast in the foundry of the present;  
forever, imprisoned in stasis  
what could have been, now lost forever  
In that transition, does the moment despair  
at its loss of choices or is there  
an intense relief at the closure?  
Perhaps that is why the past is pathos.

Bopal November 2011



## Pixels

In appreciation of my son Joseph's  
photograph site  
<http://www.josephpucadyil.com/>

Captured here permanently in pixels  
Nature caught in visions that excel Monet's  
impressions  
and Matisse's movements  
Cezanne's violets and Miro's magic  
Caught through my Nikon brightly  
On a lazy day in Cham under the sun I zoom, therefore  
I am!

Kottayam April 2015



## The Beach

The beach after a stormy night  
of the sea is a truly forlorn  
sight!

The beach looks forlorn in the misty morning,  
after the stormy night and the lashing waves  
tousled tresses wet and sticky with the damp  
lulled into troubled sleep by the wailing winds  
A clutch of crows, fights over scattered flotsam  
raucous cries annotated by the rumbling waves  
now tired, nevertheless persistent on insisting  
on a frothy embrace with the sullen shore  
My footsteps dimple the wet sand as I walk  
along the lonely beach, after a restless night  
sidestepping the deadwood scattered on the shore  
high tide's offering of peace for the violent night  
the damp wind caresses my face in passing  
and flits away to touch the droopy palm fronds  
which evade the embrace and tremble with unease  
warning the playful wind to keep its distance  
I must go back home to reflect and ponder  
on what the night had brought in dark visions  
fight my own fight with symbols and meaning  
with reason, the pacifier of a troubled mind.

Bopal September 2012



## Erase the Memories

This can be an appropriate  
prayer for every person  
addicted to excessive thinking!

Erase the memories, the tormentor of self  
wind me back in time and recharge my innocence  
denude me of knowledge of events of the past  
and prescience of things waiting to happen  
Cast me back to the time when the mind  
had no questions on the nature of the self  
of what I am and whence and why I came  
Let me not want to invent everything I can  
And to lay bare all the secrets of the world  
exhibit all achievements; catalogue virtues?  
denude the forests and drain the sea's bounty  
Hold me back from building those towers  
rising up in arrogance and taunting the sky  
and bridges that span from shore to shore  
and highways which break up the greens  
Allow me to go back to what I was once  
A child playing in the sand, an elf in the woods

Bopal November 2012



## Yakshi

The Pala Tree at the edge of the compound of my ancestral home in Kottayam had inspired many weird stories and speculations!

Alstonia Scholaris, Saptaparni to you and me  
of lenticellate branchlets and scented night blooms,  
of seven fingered leaves in imperfect whorls,  
haunt of the Yakshis while prowling at night.  
The leaves nodded to me and spoke of the night  
of a recent visitation when she sat on these branches  
breaking her journey from the temple to the forest  
hair flying in the wind, eyes pools of death  
and told stories of blood, lust and destruction  
of maniacal desire and many faces of death  
to the wind, which shivered and wailed in the night,  
came back and whispered them to the leaves  
which trembled in frenetic frenzy, yet asked for more  
tales from the Yakshi who sat on its branches

Kottayam April 2013

