

The background is a textured, painterly landscape. At the top, there are three stylized mountain peaks in shades of purple, pink, and light green. Below the mountains is a wide, flat expanse of land in various shades of green and yellow. In the foreground, there are several large, circular fossil shells, likely ammonites, with intricate spiral patterns. The colors of the shells range from orange and red to green and blue. The overall style is reminiscent of a watercolor or mixed-media painting with a focus on natural elements.

The Rocks Sang Om

Poems giving voice
to pebbles and pilgrims

F. Nelson Stover

The Rocks Sang Om

**Poems giving voice
to pebbles and pilgrims**

F. Nelson Stover

Price:

US \$ 8.00

The income from the sell of this book goes to support various community development projects undertaken by ICA Nepal.

Publisher:

The Institute of cultural Affairs Nepal

Subidha Nagar, Tinkune, Kathmandu

Tel/Fax: 977-1-481 280

E-mail: ica@icanep.wlink.com.np

Copyright:

F. & E. K. Stover, 2000

Institute of Cultural Affairs

Greensboro

Copies:

1000 (First Print; April 2000)

Design:

Kala Computer Service

Balram D.C.

Putalisadak, Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: 244896

Printed by:

Kala Printing Press

Kathmandu, Nepal

Phone: 244896

Cover Art:

Toshihiro Niwa

Japan

Artist:

Ramesh Mehar Shrestha

Preface

The Rocks Sang Om collection of poems focuses on seeing what really is in the midst of daily experiences. The poems have been written over a span of several decades in towns and villages from Phulbari, Nepal to Perth, Australia and from Mumbai, India to Taipei, Taiwan to Greensboro, NC, USA.

Many people, some self-consciously and others un-wittingly, have helped me see beneath the surface of things, to experience the profound in the midst of the mundane and to listen to the wind, sea and rocks as they tell their own personal stories. In particular, I want to thank Shankar and Shakuntala Jadhav and the staff of the Institute of Cultural Affairs: India for hosting me in the villages, temples and towns of India. In the United States, Thomas Berry has encouraged me to keep writing and provided an intellectual framework which helps make sense of my experiences.

A special thanks goes to Tatwa Timsina and the staff of the Institute of Cultural Affairs: Nepal for their diligent work in getting this collection of poems into its final form. All the proceeds from the sale of this collection of poetry will go to benefit the village development efforts of the ICA: Nepal. In the spirit of these poems, I hope that in the process of moving into the 21st Century, the mountain villagers will not lose their ability to hear the rocks sing Om. Likewise, I hope that as all the planet's citizens stride into the future they, too, may see the really real; may heed the wisdom of the wind; and may find the peace and oneness which awaits each one who chooses to accept the gift.

To each reader of this book comes my personal hope that wherever you go you might hear the rocks sing Om.

F. Nelson Stover
Greensboro, NC
March, 2000

Publisher's Note

We have a great pleasure in publishing this book which includes more than four dozens of poems composed by F. Nelson Stover. Mr. Stover composed these poems during the last four decades.

Mr. Stover's poems are full of comittment and determination with cultural and natural beauty and blended with human emotions and compassions. During his visit to Nepal, he proved his poetic creativity by depicting the beauty of natural and social creation through his beautiful pieces of poetry. This book also includes his poems with full of scientific and technological imagination. The strength of Nelson Stover's poems is brilliant blending of philosophical and intellectual imagination on various themes of life and society.

This is the first attempt of the Institute of Cultural Affairs Nepal of publishing any book on poems. The idea of publishing this book emerged during the visit of Mr. Stover with his wife Elaine in Nepal in 1999. During that visit, Mr. Stover composed about half a dozen of poems and shared with ICA Nepal. His unfathomable interest has led him to compose beautiful poems which are of some relevancy to Nepal as well. Realising the importance of popularising his poems among Nepalese and global readers we showed our interest for publication. I hope, this book will be able to capture the mind of the readers of the globe.

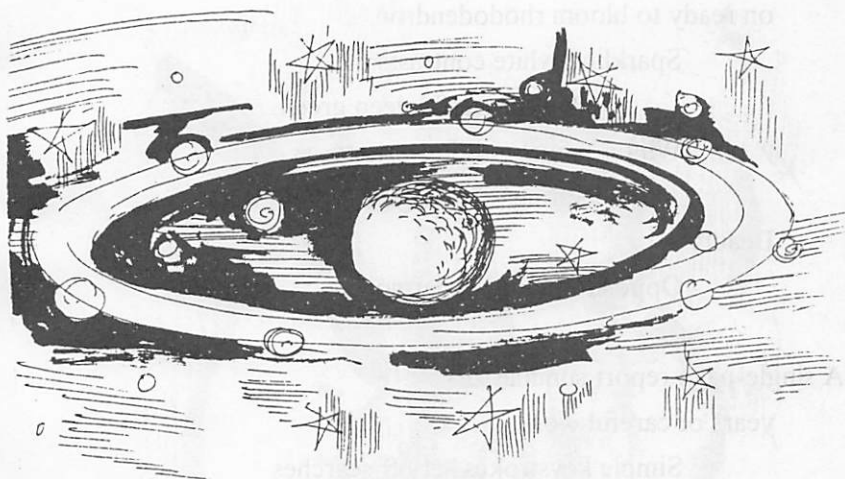
We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the Poet F. Nelson Stover for offering us this opportunity to publish this book from Nepal. We would also like to acknowledge artist Toshihiro Niwa of Japan for allowing us to print his art as the cover of this book.

Tatwa P. Timsina
Executive Chairman
ICA Nepal

Contents

1. Seeing the Smiling Face of the Wonder-filled Universe.	7
2. Beauty	8
3. The Engine of the Universe	9
4. In Winter	11
5. Gum Tree Enhances Universal Consciousness, Patiently	12
6. High-perched Cardinal Releases Universe's Song	13
7. Each Body Participates In The Universe's Dance Of Becoming	14
8. Daily Patterns Traverse Universe's Corner-posts	15
9. Annual Cycles Balance Universal Aspects	16
10. What's The Sun Really Up To, Anyway?	17
11. The Sun Journeys Into Life	18
12. Three Sibling	19
13. Slowly {An Ammonite's Story}	22
14. I Could Have Been Oil	24
15. The Sea Plus Two	25
16. The Celestial Clock	26
17. Three Timepieces	27
18. One Reality, Eternally	28
19. Opening Doorways	29
20. Alone	30
21. Faith	31
22. Four Pilgrims In a Temple	32
23. Five Men Went to the Temple	34
24. When the Heart Roars	35
25. When the Rocks Sang Om, Again	36
26. Just Beyond Laxmi	38
27. Sounds of Silence And Other Morning Noises	39
28. To Decide	40
29. It's Great to be Alive Today	41
30. Moon Shadow	42

31. Spinning	43
32. Roving	44
33. What I <u>Really</u> Want	45
34. Redical Nothingness	46
35. Recovering Profound Relationships Within the Social Fabric	47
36. Mentor and Motivator	48
37. Called to be Human	50
38. Psalm of a Transparent Priest	52
39. Psalm of a Passionate Revolutionary	53
40. Psalm of the Internal Voices	54
41. Psalm of A Miracle Worker	55
42. Second Psalm of A Passionate Revolutionary	56
43. Psalm to the Whirlwind	57
44. Three Roads	58
45. If You Say	59
46. Phulbari Highway	60
47. Pimpri's Drums	61
48. Preparing for the Dark Days	62
49. The Darkness Befriends	63
50. Pink. Plant, Pluck To Celebrate Emerging Effulgence	64
51. Probably A Bit of Both	65
52. In Support of Cuddling	66
53. I'll Sing a Song	67
54. Repair of the Cypress Wood Compund	68
55. Wednesday's Wild Winds	69
56. Peace	71
57. Sages' Wisdom	72
58. A Simple Request	73
59. On A Sultry Night	74
60. Four Postulates	75



Seeing the Smiling Face of the Wonder-filled Universe

Poems which allow a momentary experience to illumine the larger perspective of the way the entire universe functions. Seeing a pattern of the whole emerge through a personal experience.

Beauty

Glistening snowflakes rest

on ready to bloom rhododendron.

Sparkling white contrasts

With powerful deep green.

Winter's final goodbye meets

Spring's first signs.

Beauty —

Opposites living in harmony.

A single-page report summarizes

years of careful work.

Simple keystrokes set off searches

through massive data tables.

Technicians, users and administrators

understand each other's needs.

Beauty —

Chaos transforming into order.

Passwords, printers and privileges

changed from yesterday's conventions.

Unforeseen incompatibilities require

patches and tricky work-arounds.

Delays, frustrations and insights

move toward enhancing performance.

Beauty —

Calm cooperation benefitting all.

The Engine of the Universe

Some people say that the Universe is ruled by a Magistrate,
Who decides its operational policies and procedures.
The wise and the powerful
Communicate directly with the Magistrate
And disseminate the proper actions,
behaviors and understandings.

Some people say that the Universe is pulled by a Magnet,
In a specified and preordained direction.
Those things, beings and creatures who respond to this pull
Represent the Good, and woe unto those
heading in the wrong way.

Some people say that the Universe is like a Mother,
Birthing, caring, sustaining and disciplining her children.
While all the children are loved,
Those who return their mother's gifts occupy positions
of favor.

Some say that the Universe is creating itself
Through unpatterned Mystery.
Sometimes linearly, others cyclically,
or radically discontinuously.

Every element, particle, and group — each in its own unique way —
Participates in deciding
the next face of the Mystery of the Universe.

And so....

Talk sometime — in the quiet of the night —
to those who say they talk to the Magistrate.
Ask about their fears, doubts and uncertainties.
You'll find that each of them knows that the Magistrate isn't, and
That with awe and trembling
they meet the Unknown and create its face.

Observe carefully, sometime, those who say that they have aligned
themselves with the Magnet of the Universe.

Ask about the data they omit
and the perspectives they ignore.

You'll find that each of them knows that the Magnet isn't, and
That in confusion and amazement
they help create history's direction.

Listen sometime to those who claim to be their Mother's child.

Ask about their ambiguities, longings and learnings.

You'll find that each of them knows that their Mother isn't,
and that each dawn they decide for themselves
to create their own lives.

Thus everyone knows the face of the Mystery of the Universe
Which pervades all space, time and emptiness.

No rules, no direction, no womb;
Only awe, amazement and decisions
fill the creativity of the Universe.

Home, Sweet Home

In Winter

Matted brown leaves cover wilted fern.

Gifted to valley floor creatures
by stately towering hardwoods,
These ready-to-decay surfaces
shield tender greenness
From Winter's arctic cold.

Stiff green holly gather winter sunlight.

Three slow-growing hardy holly
thrive through winter's harshness,
When steep angled sun rays
reach their food producing photo-cells
Through hardwood's barren branches.

Brittle branches clatter in sharp winter winds.

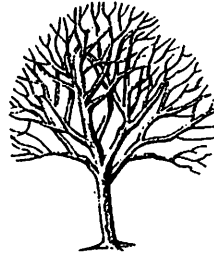
After their October color spectacular
long-living hardwoods willingly
Gave up that which gives them life
and though temporarily weakened
Survive Winter's weighty ice and snow.

Life and death touch as years change.

Once green leaves which fed tall trees
will themselves soon disappear
Having fed bugs and grubs
whom the birds will eat
as the Life-Death dance continues here in our valley.

Still air and blowing wind
Bring essential building blocks,
Remove unwanted by-products.
Interchanging
Life forces among species.

Carefree water falls
From billowing clouds
Bouncing off outstretched branches,
Joining
Matter and energy flowing onward.



Flung from solar fires,
Photons carry vital energy
Across frigid blackness, until
Entrapped
By graceful green leaves.

Gum Tree Enhances Universal Consciousness, Patiently

Deep in hard, red earth
Roots seek precious molecules.
Remnants of previous creativity
Recovered,
Called to new possibility.

Delicate shell
 Covers a vital nutrient pool.
 Well guarded nest, finally
Hatching
 Another generation of beauty.

Finely feathered wings
 Rest on invisible currents.
 Gliding from treetop to pine bough
Flying
 Beyond harm's reach.



**High-perched
 Cardinal Releases
 Universe's Song**

Distinctive colors
 Camouflage motion in underbrush.
 Light refraction patterns focused.
Painting
 Landscape with accents of splendor.

Rhythms and tone patterns
 From countless ancestors
 Carry joy, caution and advice.
Singing
 Breaks morning's silence.

Tree-food emerges through
Twisting sinus and constricting nose.
Rising diaphragm & expanding lungs,

Breathing

Life forces into cells.

Melting ice trickles
Down a parched throat.
Water becomes blood, then

Peeing

Washes away waste.



Energy blazes
Across synaptic emptiness;
Empowering thoughts and actions,

Awakening

Perpetual transformation

Each Body Participates In The Universe's Dance Of Becoming

Culinary feasts from world's bounty
Provide resources for daily action.
Worn-out cells and unuseable intakes

Pooping

Out, fertilize unpredictable newness.

Flurried activity --
Like gale-force winds
Through forest tree-tops.

Facilitating

Transformation in society's networks.

Animated sitting,
Noting, filing, documenting --
Gleaning wisdom and perspective.

Reflecting,

Affirming is-ness as profoundly
good.



Daily Patterns Traverse Universe's Corner-posts

Quiet breath
Ebbs and flows, rhythmically.
Relaxed body lies
Sleeping,
Rebuilding strength for tomorrow.

Untainted thoughts
Bubble to realizable consciousness.

Fresh morning clarity

Illuminating

Destiny, reality and selfhood.

Furious winds
Down might oaks.
Nature's powers unleashed.
Humiliating
Creatures wishing to control destiny.

Torrential rains
Wash away loosened rocks.
Showers replenish deep reserves,
Refreshing
Life forms eager to grow.



Dazzling sunshine,
Warmth returns to air and soil.
Energy from solar fires
Invigorating
Dormant plants and sleeping animals.

Annual Cycles Balance Universal Aspects

Bountiful gardens,
Decades of decomposed debris
Recombined in flowers & vegetables,
Complexifying
Reality's permanent foundation.

What's The Sun Really Up To, Anyway?

The golden sun always seems so cheery and bright.
The sun seems filled with warmth enough to share among plants,
planets and people.

The sun seems full of energy — eternally.
Everyone wants to become like the sun;
few consider what the sun wants.

The sun which we see crossing our sky
was born of plasma and pressure.
When its parents exploded, they spread a hundred elements
through the space of the solar system.
The swirling hydrogen mass in the center, their son,
Continues to burn, our sun.

In the solar furnace hydrogens become helium
And helium becomes iron
and other elements, too, get birthed.
Over the eons of eons
The sun cools, coalesces and creates.

Like all of the Universe,
the sun is deciding its future one day at a time.
Within itself, and on its cooler siblings,
new realities are emerging.
As the pressure and plasma of its parents unite with
the surrounding darkness of the universe.

The unknown becomes known
and the sun decides
what it wants to become.



The Sun Journeys Into Life

In the furnace of the Sun atoms are formed.

Isolated shimmering parts become distinctive elements

It's center grows ever denser.

The lighter gases and ions fly away.

Some of its matter will turn into a black hole

So dense neither light or time will escape.

The rest will be forged into life-giving

Elements and scattered across solar systems.

Thus, the Sun, which gives Life,

Is itself becoming Life.

Slowly.

Three Sibling

The Universe watched in awe
as a hydrogen star exploded
in a remote appendage of the Milky Way.

Myriads of new forms congealed
out of this fiery furnace.
Three — a sun, a comet and a planet —
would see each other every now and then.

The fused hydrogen atoms
which had become helium
drew each other closer
until
They ignited like billions of other
helium stars throughout the cosmos.
Their massive gravitational fields
served as a pillar
around which the rest
of the system of siblings revolved.

Some hydrogen pairs,
which found oxygen atoms
wandering in the stew
of the celestial inferno,
congealed into a ball of ice
launched out on a trajectory
high above the galactic plane.
Aeons passed before the sun's pull drew the comet back.

Nearly 100 million miles beyond
the sun's searing heat
the heavier stuffs from
the hydrogen fire began to convene.
The irons, carbons, golds and gases

spun a ball which brought
fresh creativity to the Universe.

Two hundred thousand times the comet
returned to the solar plane —
It saw the third node out from
its flaming sister
turning blue
and its water molecules reverberated
with joy
as their peers prospered
on planet Earth.

Another two hundred thousand times
the comet returned to its family —
The blue node had taken on
a greenish tint,
and its carbon molecules
reverberated with joy
as their peers
tapped solar power to photosynthesize.

On its six hundred thousandth trip
the comet knew it was being watched
and heard observers call its name,
From its ice core to the tip of its gaseous tail
Hyakutake trembled,
knowing it brought awe
to the on-lookers from afar.

A rock watched this rendezvous
from its valley home.
Knowing it was forged in the same fire
and having seen these sibling
pass countless times before.

The rock had felt the hands of humans
and hoped the ones who give names
would survive to join future
convergences of these celestial sibling.

I watched the siblings pass,
Rejoiced at their diverse creativity,
Stood in awe of their longevity,
and realized my consciousness flickered as
the tip of a solar flame.

The Universe, too, saw their passing
Rejoiced that is-ness persisted
Stood in awe of the multiplicity of forms of the cosmos,
and wondered what shapes it would see
after another one, two, or six hundred thousand
convergences of the three Milky Way siblings.

Slowly

{ An Ammonite's Story }

Warm waters of a tropical sea

Surround my calcium-rich body
As I slowly swim among wispy fern
Life finally gone, I lie down in sandy mud

Hundreds of millions of years pass

Sands washed from distant hills cover my delicate shell
Pressure mounts, fusing shifting sand to rigid rock
Slowly, solid form replaces ebbing tides

Deep, deep below sun and wind

I feel the jolts of colliding land masses
As slowly moving India presses firmly
Against my now rock home under Tibet's southern shore

Slowly I realize, I'm rising

Snow covered Himalayas replace sunny swamps
Bending, folding, and breaking shatters my long, quiet home
As new rivers flow to ever-changing seas

Torrential monsoon rains and slowly melting mountain snows

Feed growing hungry rivers
Whose rushing torrents eat away rugged rock
Cutting a channel beneath my now lofty home

With surprising swiftness, my comfortable home

Gets pushed again into once familiar water
Nudged away from secure surroundings
By water slowly expanding from freezing cold winds.

Time, and the river's waters, flow by relentlessly
Slowly smoothing rough edges
From the pitch black fragment of the ancient seabed
Leaving my fossilized form in its own private cocoon.
Nearly a billion years after life left my Ammonite shell,
I once again feel living energy
As the hands of a mountain boy gently crack my rock
Slowly exposing my carefully crafted form.

Days pass as I lie on a merchant's stall
Watching tourists and pilgrims
Hurriedly, not slowly, flocking past
Temples and shrines carefully crafted by contemplative
ancestors.

And I now ask, from my ancient lifeless form,
For two-legged creatures to slow down,
To heed the lessons of the wonder-filled Universe,
And to give their interiors time to grow, slowly.

Thanks for slowing down to listen.

Kathmandu, Nepal

I Could Have Been Oil

My ancestors flourished in the warm humid swamps
Where the midday sun never quite shone directly overhead.
I, too, joined in the tropical scenery
And longed for the time when the next generation would come.

But I was the last.
For the salt-sea rose,
And layers of mud covered our tropical homeland
Some 400 million years ago.

In the excruciating pressure, my neighbors and
I became one with the rock.
Though we felt the pull of the sun far above,
We saw not its light
From our new home now under the sea.

Our rock home was shaken as the land masses collided.
We rose far above the waters around us
And felt once again the warmth of the glorious sun
While the wind and the rain eroded our surroundings away.

Not so long ago, Moses passed by on his way to meet God.
Then came the blows of thousands of hammers
As robed monks chipped a stairway to the sanctified summit.
And generations of footsteps from the tourist bands on their personal
pilgrimages.

I was carried by one far away to the north,
And now sit quietly on a secluded shelf:
People see only a carbon imprint of my ferny shape
But I remember my past and ponder tomorrow.

When cars pass by, I wonder
If they're powered by my relatives from just to the west
Who, unlike me pressed under the tons of sandstone,
Were dissolved in brown liquid beneath a shale dome.

I consider, where I'll be in
Another 400 million years.
And I wonder, too, where the people will be
When they get to be my age.

The Sea Plus Two

The pelican rested on the crest of a wave
Which soon became a trough.

Not far away,

I, too, bobbed in the surf.

The pelican watched nonchalantly

As I drifted closer.

Together we shared a bit of the sea.

Both of us paused

From our daily toils

To join with the ocean

As it pulsed with the wind

And followed the pull of the moon.

Just after a huge wave passed,

As we two sank into the ensuing trough,

All visible contact with the world beyond disappeared.

The universe, it seemed to us, contained only

Sky, water, a pelican and a man.

Then, the pelican headed west into the sky

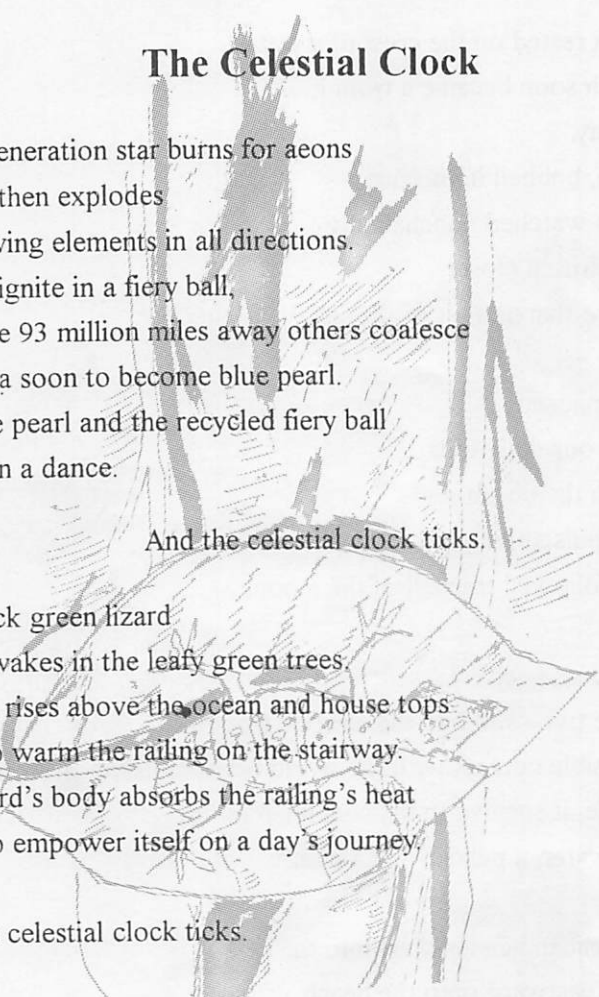
And I eastward onto the beach.

Each to continue our journeys into tomorrow.

And the ocean continued to roll.

For a brief moment, the peaceful oneness of the universe
became manifest.

The Celestial Clock



A first generation star burns for aeons
And then explodes
Spewing elements in all directions.
Some reignite in a fiery ball,
While 93 million miles away others coalesce
Into a soon to become blue pearl.
The blue pearl and the recycled fiery ball
Begin a dance.

And the celestial clock ticks.

The quick green lizard
Awakes in the leafy green trees.
The sun rises above the ocean and house tops
To warm the railing on the stairway.
The lizard's body absorbs the railing's heat
To empower itself on a day's journey.

And the celestial clock ticks.

Three Timepieces

My black Casio chronometer,
Purchased in Singapore airport in 1989,
Stays waterproof to 20 meter depths (except after I cracked its crystal).
Times laps to .01 second (faster than I can blink),
Maintains accurate time for two time zones (though I can only be in one),
Wakes me up after 15 minutes naps (thankfully),
Or at any time I choose (if I hear its low volume whistle),
And digitally displays the current date & time (as long as its battery lasts).

But at morning meditation
In dawn's dim twilight it can't peacefully pace quarter-hour sitting
periods.

My father's trusty Timex,
Which he inexpensively acquired in 1970
Has shiny golden hands which sweep across a well marked face —
Simple features, well suited to timing daily routines
And easily seen in minimal light.

But when its battery dies,
Time seems to stop
And a nearby landfills get another dose
Of concentrated mercury and lead
From a discarded power cell.

Three generations of Stovers have carried
Grandpa's 1935 vintage Hamilton pocket watch.
Crafted from durable silver, gold and steel.
It ticks off minutes as its hands sweep 'round a silver numerated face.
Finger fulfilling twists on a rib-lobed stem
Tighten its mechanism-driving spring
And rejuvenate its faithful functioning.
Below an ear's threshold,
Tiny watch ticks record meditation's passage
Thru universal time/space.

Then one wonders about technological progress's conventional measuring
sticks. 1997



One Reality, Eternally

A wave strikes the sand — again,
The sun, as it has a trillion and a half times before,
 Begins its trek from horizon to horizon;
In the cedar tree, the mockingbird relates
 A very lengthy tale;
The green lizard scurries down the railing;
And across the street a family hangs out a banner
 Announcing their arrival.

Sitting in the rocking chair on the deck, I know

- » In the long sweep of things — today, tomorrow and yesterday,
they're all pretty much the same.
- » At each particular point — ingenuity, creativity and
individuality abound.
- » Taken as a whole, everything is interrelated, forever.

I, the wave, the sand, the sun, the mockingbird, the cedar tree, the
lizard, the deck and the family across the street

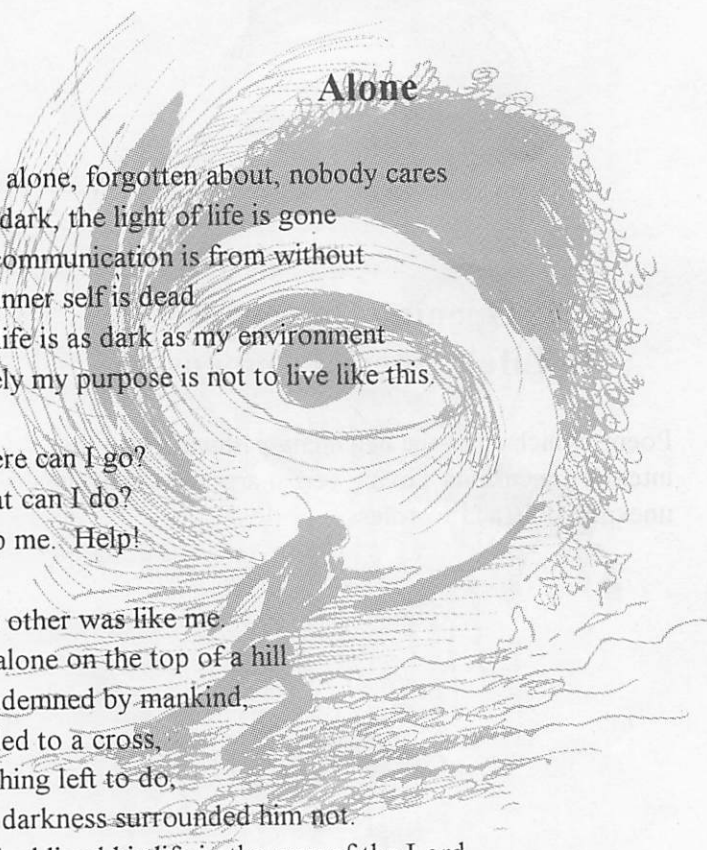
— one reality, eternally.



**Opening Doorways
to Life's Interior Dimension**

Poems which chart the beginning pathways into the interior dimensions. Giving verbal articulation to the unexpressible and wordless.

Alone



I am alone, forgotten about, nobody cares
It is dark, the light of life is gone
All communication is from without
My inner self is dead
My life is as dark as my environment
Surely my purpose is not to live like this.

Where can I go?
What can I do?
Help me. Help!

One other was like me.
All alone on the top of a hill
Condemned by mankind,
Nailed to a cross,
Nothing left to do,
Yet darkness surrounded him not.
He had lived his life in the way of the Lord,
Light was with him always.
From whence cometh the light?

Faith

But Faith means nothing.

Ah, no.

Faith is the guiding power in all life.

Through Faith,

As the man on the hill showed us,

One is able to say as he,

“Father, forgive them.”

He had faith in mankind

Faith they could, and would accept his forgiveness.

He had faith in God

Faith He would forgive them.

Without this faith he would have died

in darkness,

Died in vain.

Oh, that I might have Faith,

Faith in God

— to lead me

Faith in myself

— to follow His guidance

— to lead others along His path

Faith in mankind

— that they might know God.

I have Faith,

I am with God and man,

they are concerned about me.

Light surrounds me.

My inner self is awake and alive.

This is how I should live!

East Lansing, Michigan

1962

Four Pilgrims In a Temple

The self-appointed photographer had documented
the elder pilgrim's ritual bath
in the holy Godavari's waters.

All the necessary candles had been
set afloat
and the words pronounced.

The flowing waters had washed away
a varied past and ushered in
an open and exciting future.

For the same camera,
the other two pilgrims stood smiling
before the temple where
Profound Consciousness and Mundane Experience
had touched.

Their twilight conversation over tasty chay
had preceded the morning's journey
with their traveling companions,
and a youthful guide,
across the flowing river on a bridge
shared by pilgrims, saints and a pensive cow.

A hillside temple beckoned the four
who climbed crowded stairs
past shrines to a host of manifestations of awe
and wonder.

Before the temple,
all respectfully bared their feet
to walk on holy ground
and ring the bell
whose peal transcends earthly dimensions.

Along the temple wall,
the four self-organized in silence
forming a row in cross-legged meditation
as others came and went.

And then for me,
time and space came apart.
The Universe and I became existentially simultaneous.
The temple bell honed my consciousness
like a chisel removing rock
from an emerging statue.
The excruciating pains and heart-felt joys of
a morning and a fortnight merged;
and a salty tear moistened
my widening smile
while I sat at the Center of Being.

As the other pilgrims began to talk
I bowed from my seated position
and clapped my hands sharply
to expel the remaining awe.

We four left that place
to descend to the plain of reality.
At shops below, we each bought
some small treasure
(like my brass bell and copper plate)
to remind us of our journey.

And then I met my wife,
who had also bought a bell
while on her own pilgrimage
to another holy space.

And Life,
like the river,
flowed on.

Five Men Went to the Temple

The first one announced his presence
by ringing the bell
then walked around the sacred well,
stopping at each corner's pillar
to say aloud his daily prayer
and went on his way.

The second man entered in silence,
touched the deity's guardian animal
as though drawing on its strength and wisdom,
stood silent for a moment
and left as quietly as he had come
to continue his daily work.

Like the first, the third man rang the bell,
as though announcing his presence to the Mystery,
then stepped back a bit
and with finger-tip-touched hands
stood in elongated silence
before returning to the day's agenda.

A fourth man heralded his arrival with a ringing gong,
walked around the temple perimeter
then touched with delicacy
the rock carved images
which stood at the entryway.
Picking up his shoes at the doorway,
he, too, began another day.

And I,
I sat quietly in the corner
listened to the chirping birds
in the rafters,
and, like each of the others,
stood silent at the Center of Being.

Simultaneously,
at the mosque across town,
four men studied
while two prayed
before the Ramadan sun
pinked the eastern sky.

And Panvel woke up on a Sunday morning.

When the Heart Roars

The Mind speaks

In words, phrases and sentences.
Its communications make rational sense
And produce an unconditional finality.

The Emotions speak

In tones, gestures and touches.
Their communications emit passion and feeling
And open the doors of personhood.

But the Heart speaks

With a roar which cuts to the Center of Being.
Its message comes from the Unknown depths
And carries neither content nor feeling, only Power.

Usually —

In the intervening silences of everyday living
The Heart communes with the Mind and the Emotions
Which translates its perspectives into words and undertones.

But !! When the Heart roars —

Sounds replace words,
Grimaces replace gestures
Tears soothe the face and blur the seeing
And rhythms of everyday living stop.

In the Silence which follows the Roar

The Mind will find some words
With which to interpret the sounds to others
But really, only the Power lingers.

Only fools fail to heed the Heart's roar.

[A report from a Mind who has yielded to the roar of the Heart.]

When the Rocks Sang Om, Again

From the depths of planet earth's fiery molten core
flowed layer after layer
of gray basaltic lava.
As the Indian rock plate
severed its ties to Africa
and set out east across the sea bed floor
the lava hardened into an impenetrable shield
of immense depth.

The hot Tibetan Plateau lifted masses of air
which drove the annual monsoon rains.
Over eons, solitary droplets of ocean water
borne inland on the winds
fell to the Deccan Plateau and,
slowly, slowly,
ate away vast parts of the hardened rock.

The water's handiwork left sheer cliffs
of uncracked rock
and filled fertile valleys with fine soil
for plants, trees and animals
Fanning out from seed bed civilizations in the west,
came bands of conscious humans
to till the soil
and reflect on emerging majesty
of rock mountains.

Farmers, merchants and hunters,
while creating their social fabrics,
began to understand their profound and creative
relationship to the awesome Universe they inhabited.
Some devoted their whole lives
to embodying the oneness,
saying the eternal Om
and teaching others to walk the path
to the Center of Being

Filled with the power from the inspirational Center of Being,
generations of monks and masons
carved immense caverns into the Deccan rock face.

For centuries, their successors
intensified rough-cut images,
deepened spiritual prowess
and joined rocks celebrating
the Universe's perpetual creativity
by chanting Om.

A millennium after all carvers laid down their chisels,
another small band of spiritual wanderers
from the western side of the big waters
encountered that same awe.

Around the rim of the vault-ceilinged cave
housing the seated Buddha
a solitary chanter repeated "Om mani pani Om"
and rocks took up the chant
amplifying it throughout the hall.

In a cubicle designed to house a solitary monk,
three wanderers convened to sing the rocks' song
Om
and when the chanters quit,
the rocks sang Om again.

To hear the rocks sing Om
infuses conscious beings with
the connection to the Universe's center;
and challenges those
ignorant of where the Center lies
to look deep within
and find their own center of being
and simultaneously, the Universe's.

Just Beyond Laxmi

God flows with rolling waves
Caressing ancient rock piles,
Releasing vapor into parched dry air.

God rests in irregular round boulders
Providing footholds for dogs and children
Becoming a becoming which resembles sameness.

God rides in golden sari hems
Swirled by buoyant strides over rocky steps
Spiritizing surroundings through smiling faces.

God settles calmly over a darkening sea
Reddening cloud tops from a now-hidden sun
Calling twinkling stars from their day's sleep.

God's faces festoon statuary
Guarded by holy men
And honored by pilgrims.

Waves, rocks, sari, and sunset
Call pilgrim, wanderer and passer-by
To heed their within, to know deeply.

Mahalaxmi Temple, Mumbai

Sounds of Silence and Other Morning Noises

One cargo plane sits at runway 32N's end
Filled with cloth for ten thousand blue jeans.
Against clenched brakes, its three mighty engines roar
Rattling windows in far off houses.

Cars and trucks whiz by on a sunken boulevard
Carrying occupants to very important places.
Tires hum across rain wet pavement
Accompanying engines' persistent whines.

Birds in spring-leafed trees and blossoming bushes sing and chatter.

A pair of cardinals banter their familiar songs,

One towhee bird speaks its name repetitively to no one in particular

And a veritable committee of sparrows discuss matters in incessant chirps

Morning's long-awaited rain pings windows and overflows gutters.

Roof runoff pounds rock-hard ground below,

Bending trees rustle their moisture covered leaves

While a friendly wind chime plays a random five-note tune.

Between a wood stick clap and three gong peals,

Silence fills a meditator's world.

Noiseless voices from distant pasts inform present situations

While possibilities and perspectives pop from nothingness.

Being and oneness have no sound.

Yet, perceiving Universal at-one-ness drowns out

Noises of coming and going, growing and blowing,

And evokes a tingling quietude of deep-seated joy.

1997

To Decide

Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow
The Universe itself,
And each particle and creature within,
Wonders
About the face of yet unborn tomorrow.

A seemingly dead chestnut tree
Stands above a winding forest path
Trying to decide just when to fall.

The outwardly contented woman
Too long abused, too little affirmed
Ponders practical processes for finding significance.

Computer trainer with traditional skills
Delicately designs undocumented intricate patterns
Uniquely fashioned for foreign fingers.

When deep deep Knowing
Taps deep deep Being
Then deep deep Doing
Manifests itself in decisional action.

And the Universe takes another step
Into a materialized tomorrow.

Delhi

It's Great to be Alive Today

It's great to be alive today.
To laugh and live,
to romp and play,
and say,
"It's great to be alive today!"

It's great to be happy today
To smile and grin,
shake hands
and say,
"It's great to be happy today!"

It's great to be in love today.
To care and share,
to be a friend
and say,
"It's great to be in love today!"

West Lafayette, Indiana
1964



Moon Shadow

The Death Angel moves
Like the moon shadow,
Slowly and inexorably
Over
The landscape of life.

The Death Angel sits
On its new friend's
Eyelids
With each passing day
Shut eyes
Become ever more comfortable.

Befriending the Death Angel
Involves affirming
Life's joys and sorrows.
When the "Yes" has been said
The Past becomes history.

The Death Angel seeks help
From those with strong eyelids
To care for details,
To keep options open,
And to describe reality.

Rochester, Michigan

1994



Spinning

The Death Angel
Spins a veil
Between Life and Death.

Often the process
Goes slowly,
Beginning with only a gossamer curtain.

Conversation and contact
Between the living and the dying
Passes easily through the veil.
As threads are added
To the Death Angel's tapestry,
Ever less passes out from the dying side.

Silence reigns
On both sides
When the Death Veil is finally spun.

Rochester, Michigan
1994

Roving

It's important to watch out
For the roving
Death Angel.

Often it is busy
At other places and times;
So one only need acknowledge
Its real role in Life.

The Death Angel watches
All aspects of
Society's beautifully diverse fabric.

And communicates with those who will
About the time, place and circumstances
For their passage through the veil.

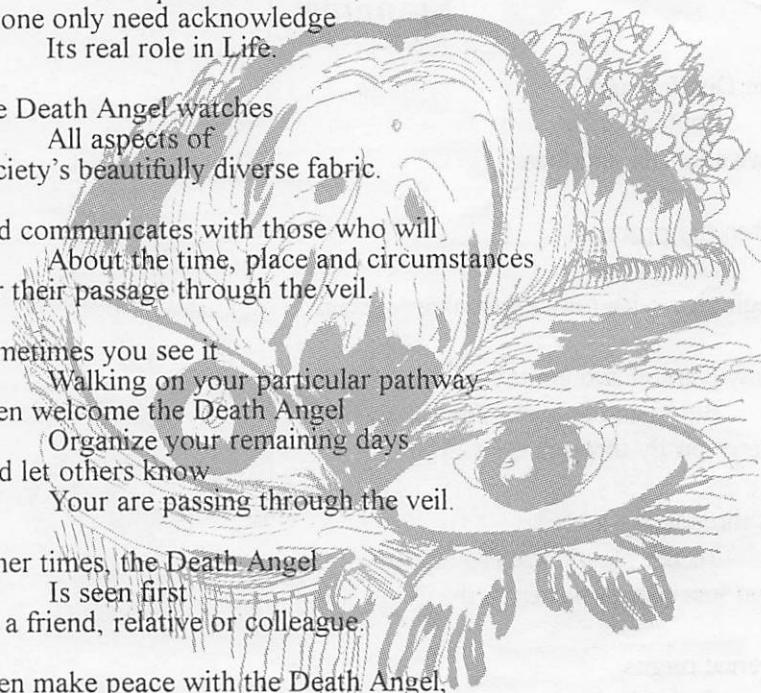
Sometimes you see it
Walking on your particular pathway.
Then welcome the Death Angel
Organize your remaining days
And let others know
Your are passing through the veil.

Other times, the Death Angel
Is seen first
By a friend, relative or colleague.

Then make peace with the Death Angel,
Negotiate if you will;
But use wisely your last energy
And prepare to be on the other side of the veil.

Those overly preoccupied
With the business of living
Often fail to notice
The Death Angel roving.

Their life ends, nonetheless,
In a bang, crash or sigh;
A great opportunity for consciousness
Is forever lost.



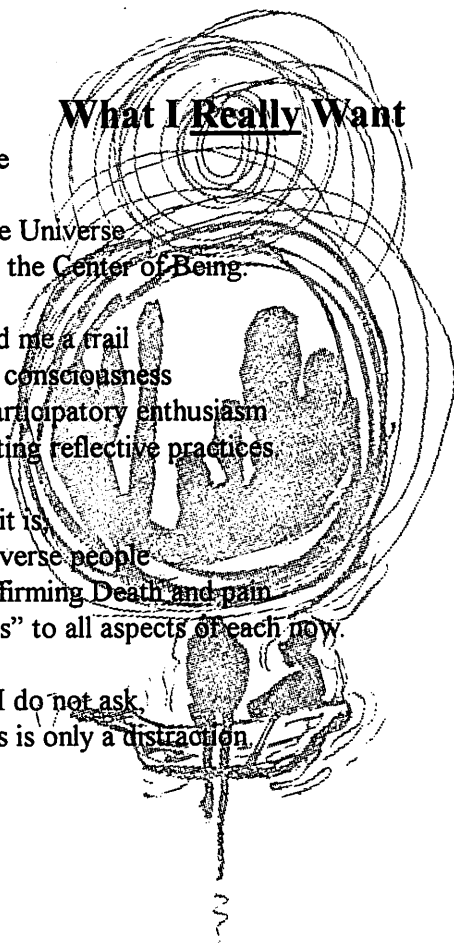
What I Really Want

To *Live* at peace
with myself
and the Universe
by standing at the Center of Being.

To *Leave* behind me a trail
of heightened consciousness
and participatory enthusiasm
by demonstrating reflective practices.

To *Love* life as it is,
befriending diverse people
and affirming Death and pain
by saying "Yes" to all aspects of each now.

More than this I do not ask,
other than this is only a distraction.



Radical Nothingness

Orion guards the winter night,
Upraised arms above quiet leafless forests.
Betelgeuse and Rigel, distant stars in our galaxy's outskirts,
Light Orion's hands and feet.
Midway between Orion's beacons
Lies a dark spot,
Symbol of *Radical Nothingness*.

Each day I walk through time and space
Transforming tomorrow's shape.
Typing fingers create scripts, policies, and procedures,
for guiding groups and machines.
Midway between creative hands and active feet
Lies a deep interior core,
Symbol of *Radical Nothingness*.

Morning sunlight obscures Orion's treasure,
but does not obliterate it.
Contemplation's silence calms and ennobles
my interior mansion.
Breath comes in silently,
Illuminating a mansion corner with Orion's light.
Breath passes gently out,
Enlivening Orion's center with embodied consciousness.
Halfway between mansion and treasure
warm damp vapor turns to mist in the cool morning air.

Matter and Spirit entwined in
Radical Nothingness.

Greensboro, NC — October 25th, 1998



Recovering Profound Relationships Within the Social Fabric

Poems which beckon center-to-center relationships within the social fabric. Options for new patterns of social interaction which emerge from having a deepened interior life and an invigorated perspective on the Universe.

Mentor and Motivator

I stand as in the middle of a long bridge.
Sometimes I look back to the East,
 from whence I came,
And recall the beautiful views,
 the dangerous encounters,
 the insight-giving dilemmas,
 the invigorating collegiality,
 and the calming solitude.

I have seen to the western terminus,
 through my father's eyes,
And realize the changing perspectives,
 the awesome challenges,
 the demanding decisions,
 the stimulating partnerships,
 and the pervasive silence.

My heart is filled with Joy
As I resolutely stand
In the center of the bridge
Between the Darkness of the Unknown
And the Abyss of Expended Being

From the East come travellers of all sizes and skills.
I hear their laughter and tears
 and share my own experiences.
I notice their blindness and reductions
 and call their attention to the larger realities.
I sense their frustrations and concerns
 and encourage them to find creative solutions.
I know the route by which they've come
 but let them make it their own.

As part of my daily doing,
I Mentor those travellers coming from the East.

Likewise, I see travellers along the bridge
as far as the western terminus.
I hear their tears and laughter
and encourage them to experience their experiences.
I notice their reductions and blindness
and enquire about other possible perspectives.
I sense their concerns and frustrations and
help in the choice between patience and passion.
I imagine the route they are travelling
and watch as they create its details.
As part of my daily doing,
I Motivate the westward travellers.

My soul gains Courage
As I resolutely stand
In the center of the bridge
Between the Darkness of the Unknown
And the Abyss of Expended Being.

And my body moves a little to the West
Each time the sun passes overhead.

Called to be Human

God made man
And 'tis a curious thing,
The maker of the creature called — "man" —
Forgot to tell it what it's for.

Man lives — and apparently rules —
Upon a planet — Earth —
That quite well suits his needs.

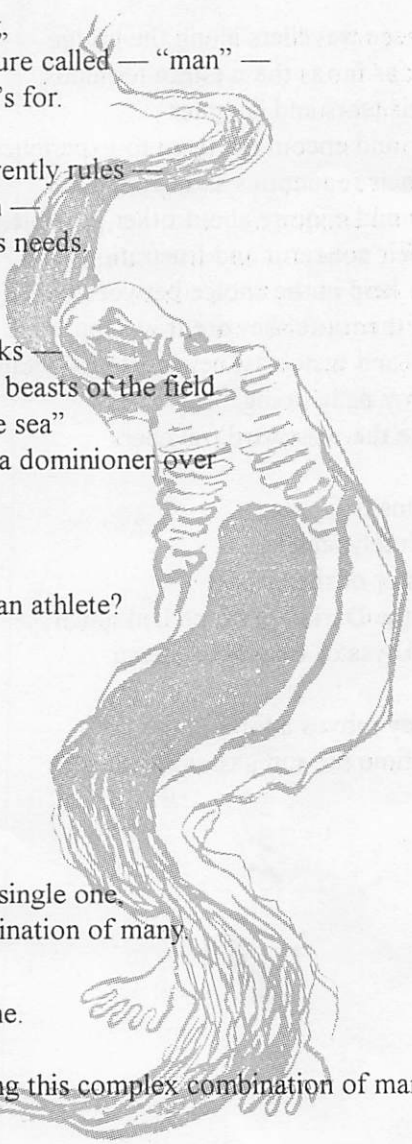
God gave man —
at least so man thinks —
Dominion over "all the beasts of the field
and the fishes of the sea"
Is man then to be only a dominioner over
beasts and fishes?

Man has a body,
But shall he be an athlete?
He has eyes,
Shall he be a seer?
Ears,
A hearer?

Now, man knows
He is complex,
His purpose is not a single one,
But a complex combination of many.

God also gave man time.
Man, having time,
has spent it in defining this complex combination of many
purposes.

While man ponders and exists,
God guides the world



— Guides but not runs —

Nothing is forced on man.

God gives him freedom

— A disturbing freedom.

Oh, MAN!

When will you accept your freedom?

Not only are you not made for any previously conceived single purpose,

You are not made for a complex combination of them.

Your purpose is so simple you overlook it,

So complex it is unfathomable.

Live fully for others

— Your life will be fullest.

Feed your mind

— Your body will be taken care of.

Trust your enemy

— The Lord is with them.

Be humble

— The Lord is with you and will give you stature.

Lord, forgive us for being so blind to our true worth and purpose.

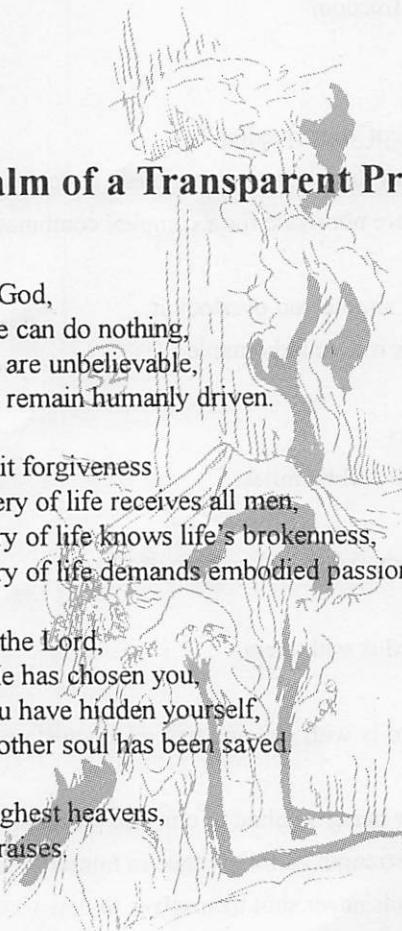
Give us the strength to follow thee in humility. Lord we are so blind.

May our minds never shut themselves to new views of reality but may

they, also, act as if the present view is the truth.

Amen.

1963



Psalm of a Transparent Priest

Oh my soul praise God,
for thou alone can do nothing,
thou alone are unbelievable,
thou alone remain humanly driven.

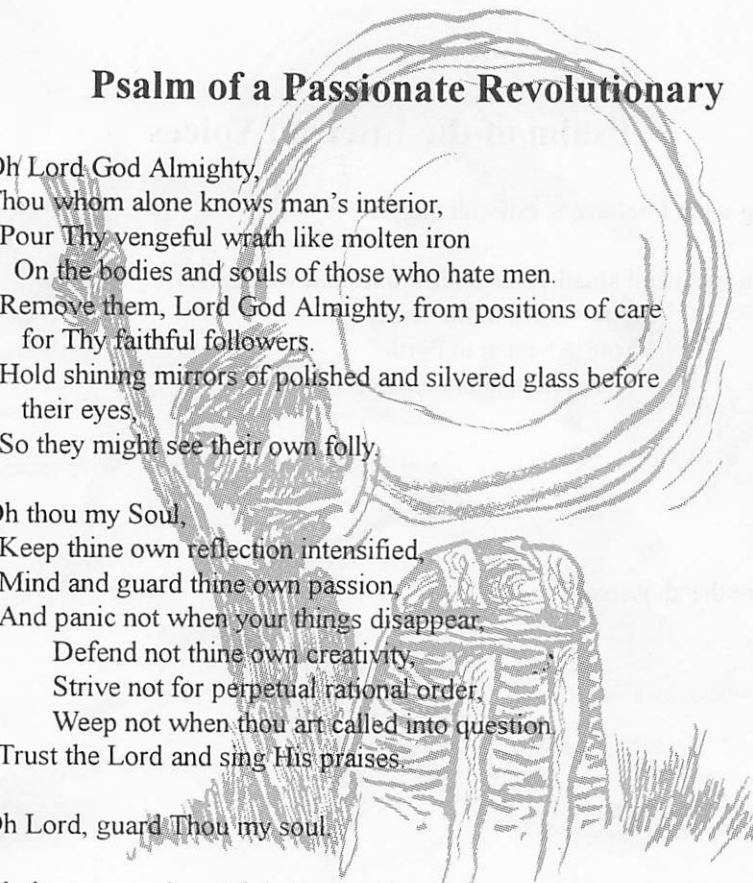
Oh my soul transmit forgiveness
for the Mystery of life receives all men,
the Mystery of life knows life's brokenness,
the Mystery of life demands embodied passion.

Oh my soul praise the Lord,
for tonight He has chosen you,
tonight you have hidden yourself,
tonight another soul has been saved.

Sing with all the highest heavens,
Sing His loudest praises.

Perth, Australia
May, 1972

Psalm of a Passionate Revolutionary



Oh Lord God Almighty,
Thou whom alone knows man's interior,
Pour Thy vengeful wrath like molten iron
On the bodies and souls of those who hate men.
Remove them, Lord God Almighty, from positions of care
for Thy faithful followers.
Hold shining mirrors of polished and silvered glass before
their eyes,
So they might see their own folly.

Oh thou my Soul,
Keep thine own reflection intensified,
Mind and guard thine own passion,
And panic not when your things disappear,
Defend not thine own creativity,
Strive not for perpetual rational order,
Weep not when thou art called into question,
Trust the Lord and sing His praises.

Oh Lord, guard Thou my soul.

Oh thou my soul, watch in the Lord's mirror.

Perth, Australia
June, 1972



Psalm of the Internal Voices

Living what I believe is difficult indeed.

Within me a still small voice both shouts and whispers:

"Quit, chuck in the towel."

"You're beaten in Perth."

"The system is unbeatable."

NO !!!

We are the chosen ones —

Praise be to God !!!

Perth, Australia

June, 1973

Psalm of A Miracle Worker

Oh Lord,
my soul soars
like a mighty eagle.

Thou hast indeed blessed us with a miracle.

What Thou hast killed,

Thou hast indeed
resurrected.

What Thou hast worn down,

Thou hast renewed.

Oh my soul, praise constantly the Lord.
For his hand is indeed mightier than a
nation with legions of giants.
Good works, oh my heart, thou doest.
Miracles, oh my soul, are of God alone.

Seek always the Lord's wind and push there.

Adelaide, Australia
October, 1974

Second Psalm of A Passionate Revolutionary

Oh Mighty One, who led Thy chosen
people out of bondage,
And then led them again into servitude,
Once again the battle begins.

Now I fight only Thee,
and Thy holy henchman, Satan.

I have seen Thy face in the desert,
Known Thee on the other side of the flowing water,
Heard Thy cry from the hearts of the suffering peoples,
And felt Thy tranquillity in the dark of the night.

Mark my words, oh my Lord,
I WILL FIGHT
Until we are one.

Oh merciful Father, have mercy on me,
What right have I to stand up before Thee,
for Thou could's't squash me as though elephant
sits on a spider.

Allow me, oh Lord, to fight under the protection
of Thy great mercy.

United States of America

June, 1975

Psalm to the Whirlwind

Oh my soul, indeed thou art privileged
For thou hast seen the whirlwind.
To thee the wind hast whispered its secrets,
Before thy face hast the sun shone its new day,
And yet from thee hath the clouds hidden the pathways.

Oh Thou who dost send the whirlwind, the sun and the clouds,
Blessed art Thou in Thy great mercies.
Favors beyond our deserve have befallen us,
Successes which were not of our own doing
Have appeared before us.

Oh my Soul, rest thee quiet in the night's stillness.
For indeed thou art the son of the Father.
His love is as unending as is his dominion,
and His power is unsurpassed even by the multitudes
of the suns above.
Indeed, thou art marked — commissioned by the Maker —
to be: Commander of the Now, and
Care taker of the Here.
Look — but ask no questions,
Act — but seek no response,
Yearn — but find no one home.

Oh Thou who dost send the whirlwind, sun, and clouds,
Blessed indeed art Thou in Thy great mercies.

Rochester, New York
September, 1975

Three Roads

Toward every temple
three roads converge.

The tourists come to see
a holy place.
From their particular perspective
they come to view sacred art
to hear peaceful sounds
and join in the ritual acts.
They take with them
new understandings
and memories
to share with friends
and digest in future ruminations.

The pilgrims come to continue
their soul-work on life's journey.
From the fabric of their own being
they see being peek through surroundings
hear unchanging silence
and act out in their own body
the Universe's dance.
They take with them
an unstealable calm and
a memento
to show their friends
and to remind them of
Fire which does not consume.

The warriors come to capture
the sage's power
for their own special cause.
They come to fill themselves with another's power
to contemplate their forthcoming ventures.
or to eliminate intolerable practices.
They leave with
a venter of spirituality for their own project
and venture forth to
master a power-filled foe.

Throughout the ages
pilgrims, like tourists, have
manifested similar demeanor.
In the Twentieth Century
warriors exchanged their
steeds and swords
for laptops, modems and faxes;
but they continue to look for ways
to capture spiritual power.

And the temples live vitality
at their holy places.

If You Say ...

If you say,

"Power in my universe flows from top to bottom",
Then some will try to climb the power ladder,
And some will boss those below,
And some will try to control and to dominate,
And many will suffer at the bottom of the heap.

If you say,

"Power in my universe flows from All to all,"
Then each will find their powers within,
And all will feel creativity flow,
And all will have opportunity for participation,
And all will rejoice universal harmony.

What you say is a decision for you to make.

Watch one's actions
To know what they say.

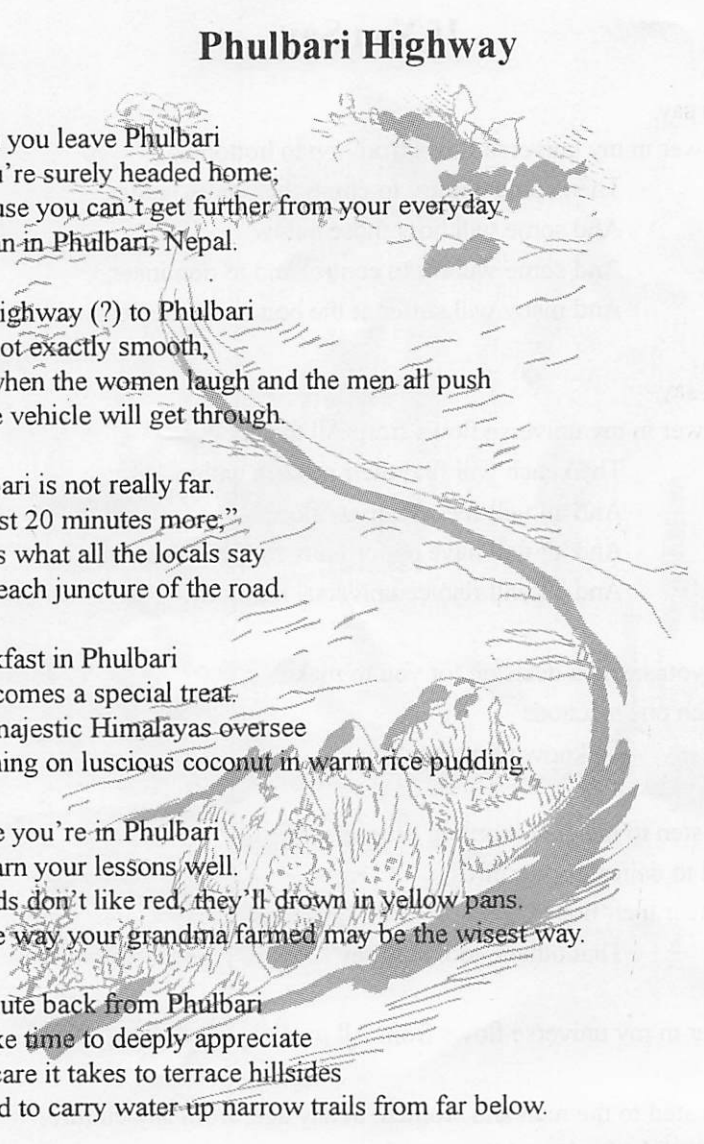
And listen to the cool morning breeze

And to delicate song birds
To hear their hope
That others, too, may say ...

"Power in my universe flows from All to all."

[Dedicated to the men and women, in any age, from any culture,
who heed the birds and the wind.]

Phulbari Highway



When you leave Phulbari
You're surely headed home;
Because you can't get further from your everyday
Than in Phulbari, Nepal.

The highway (?) to Phulbari
Is not exactly smooth,
But when the women laugh and the men all push
The vehicle will get through.

Phulbari is not really far.
"Just 20 minutes more."
That's what all the locals say
At each juncture of the road.

Breakfast in Phulbari
Becomes a special treat.
The majestic Himalayas oversee
Dining on luscious coconut in warm rice pudding.

While you're in Phulbari
Learn your lessons well.
Aphids don't like red, they'll drown in yellow pans.
The way your grandma farmed may be the wisest way.

En route back from Phulbari
Take time to deeply appreciate
The care it takes to terrace hillsides
And to carry water up narrow trails from far below.

Kathmandu, Nepal

Pimpri's Drums

Pimpri's drums lie quiet again,
Carefully stacked on Ghade's porch
After a night of community celebration
To dedicate a water scheme.

Main Street, Pimpri, stands vacant now
Awaiting cattle en route to fodder.
The parade from dedication to dance arena
That turned mundane into magic has now passed on.

Morning sunlight illumines the commemorative plaque
Once lit by a single bulb, hot-wired to a power substation.
Now permanently affixed to a marker near a tap-stand
The once orange shrouded stone reminds all of resolve.

Cymbal playing dancing gymnasts
Have become boys again.
Flute-playing Krishna arising from five-petaled lotus
Returns to school and cricket pitch.

Danny and Dyaneshwar,
Saints from opposite ends of the second millennia,
Watch over funding and completion
Of the life-giving water scheme's final stages.

Pimpri

Preparing for the Dark Days

Awaking in darkness,
Retiring in darkness —
Such is the rhythm for the
Next 70 days.

An end is coming
To the Year that has been.
Eternity is receiving
The glory of this passing.

The new will be birthed
In fear, chaos and unknowing;
And each creature will decide
How to emerge from the darkness.

Life's attention now turns to the Nothingness,
To whole-heartedly enjoying the blackness.
Glorious brightness promotes a deception,
Deep truth awaits, patiently, in darkness.

The Darkness Befriends

Darkness covers the land,
Trees stand stark and barren,
Animals sleep, and
A calm hush fills time and space.

Darkness has a reality of its own.
The future lies obscured and hidden.
The next minute, the next step forward,
Often seem uncertain, unimaginable and impossible.

Fools run and play in darkness.
Cowards try to escape darkness.
Machos eliminate quiet darkness with
quadraphonic speakers and halogen flood lights.
The deluded say a light shines in the darkness,
just as wanderers see oasis mirages in the desert.

But darkness has a reality of its own.
The owl, cougar and bat with no eyes
have made their peace with darkness.
Embrace the chaos, uncertainty and awe.

Darkness befriends.

Pink, Plant, Pluck To Celebrate Emerging Effulgence

Morning sun creeps noticeably northward
while twilight lingers longer in western skies.
Daring daffodils brave blustery breezes
and now beckon tulips, hyacinth, redbud and dogwood.
Rabbits breed in carefully concealed caverns
skillfully sought out by scent-tracking dogs.
A world awakes from winter's weariness.

Hands in moist soil mold homes for summer plants
shaping contours and stimulating consciousness.
Early blossoms built between warmth and frost
beautify tables, windows and desktops.
Friends gather in sunshine sporting colorful clothing
shaping visions, honoring accomplishments, planning
transformation.
Society celebrates – creativity encompasses creation.

Sunlight entices leaves and flowers from protective buds;
and awakens energetic compassion from cautious selves.
Unfolding beauty renews hope and promise,
intensifying differentiation between living and dying.
Choices challenge contextual frameworks
as possibilities overwhelm rationally achievable objectives.
Energetic enthusiasm emerges evoking elated election.



Probably A Bit of Both

As I set out on another journey to a foreign land,
My wife awoke in pain this morning.
I could only ask if she were "OK"
And she assured me it was but "just temporary."

For women, the cycles of Life are life's ever-present reality.
For men, Life seems much more like a long, one-way journey.
My pain tells me the End draws nearer;
Hers says that Life goes on.

In the long-run, there's
Probably a bit
Of truth
In both perspectives.

In Support of Cuddling

All six fish in our pond
Have plenty of room.
Why don't they divide up the space
and each take a share.
Instead they're usually together,
all here or all there.

Four giant pythons living in the zoo
Are 100% safe in their adequate cage.
But they lie all together in a living knot
Four in one corner, in the rest they're not.

Nearby two bears share an outdoor pen
With room to run, climb and swim.
But they lie close together
One's head on the other's shoulder.

I know, too, in my own daily life
That there's something quite special
About being close to another.
Cuddling, it seems, is important to living.

I'll Sing a Song

Some day I'll sing a song,
and this song will be
a song of love.

The skies above will ring,
the birds will join in
a song of love.

Some people's hearts won't hear,
but still I'll sing
a song of love.

My heart will open wide
and some one will hear
my song of love.

My song is sung for all,
but just one will hear
my song of love.

The words I often sing
but now no one hears
my song of love.

I'll always know this song,
but how can one sing
a song of love?

My song is a glad song,
and happily I'll sing
my song of love!

It is a joyous song,
we shall dance and sing
this song of love.

The skies above will ring,
the world will join us in
our song of love!

Port Huron, Michigan — 1963

Repair of the Cypress Wood Compound

Four empty trash cans leaned streetward,
Their cypress wood slat compound
Tilted by the winds and battered by rough usage.

Two swimmers returned from the ocean
Unself-consciously looking for outlets
For their creativity on a sunny autumn afternoon.

Closer evaluation of the compound
Revealed the absence of cross-braces in the sides
And problem became solution.

A foray into the workshop and garage produced
Two piles of nails, miscellaneous boards
And two hammers, a saw and a crowbar.

Out came the trash cans, apart came the compound.
Old nails were removed and
Two new cross-braces were fabricated.

The reassembled compound
Stood proudly by the roadside
Ready for many more years of service.

And a wee bit of chaos and decay
Yielded to form and structure.
And another memory of
Collegial creativity lingers.

Wednesday's Wild Winds

In the two hours between 10:00 and 12:00 on a Wednesday morning:

- Joe left my office having accepted only a few of my suggestions for further computerization of his company.
- Fred left the office to install some printers.
- Sam left the office to deliver some parts for a project on which he'd been working the day before; thus, I was alone with the phone preparing for a 2:00 appointment.
- Susan called reporting that 1 printer was not functioning at all and another was misbehaving, for no obvious reason.
- Mark called to say that his second tape wouldn't read and thus his entire company was without computer information.
- Martha, we knew, was expecting us though no real plan had been built.
- Dale called reporting that his accounting system had crashed and all his employees were expecting their paychecks at 2:00.
- Sabrina called to enquire what had happened to the fax of the price for the new equipment her husband wanted to order.

Darwin, who hardly ever calls, wanted to know the meaning of a particular error message while installing Lotus on a Novell network.

So I:

- Quit worrying about Joe; he had never asked to see the part of the demonstration that didn't work anyway; he got most of his questions answered and there was no need to rehash how the conversation had gone or to try to patch up possible missed opportunities.
- Made arrangements with Sam and Fred as they walked out the door as to where we'd meet and how we'd recontact each other.
- Called Susan back, checked as many things as possible over the phone, suggested some temporary work-arounds and agreed to be in their office first thing in the morning.
- Traded Darwin — my answer to his Novell question (at a later time to be agreed upon) for his effort in solving Mark's dilemma.
- Found the original for the fax to Sabrina, checked the fax number, corrected it and resent the paperwork.
- Collected all possible materials for solving Martha's problems.
- Assured Dale that I'd be at his office by 12:15 to invent some way to get his payroll done yet that day.

- o Took my sack lunch from the refrigerator, forwarded the phones and headed out the door.

In the process, I reaffirmed the importance of:

- * Affirming the assault —
 Answer the phone,
 Listen to all of people's problems
- * Paying attention to details —
 Check every digit of fax numbers,
 Clarify complaints
- * Being honest with people —
 Say "I'm in the office alone.",
 Phone back,
 Call difficult problems difficult
- * Seeing the other people's perspective
 Determine the real and perceived urgencies
- * Taking care of yourself
 Walk around,
 Have tea,
 Laugh out loud
- * Tying elements together —
 2 problems may = 1 solution
 Find trade-offs and interrelationships
- * Letting the past be past
- * Taking on the tough issues
 Go to see people even when you don't know exactly what to do

And for now I'd say that real living involves —

Being Calm like the center of a hurricane,
Allowing Creativity to emerge at every juncture, and
Acknowledging the inter-Connectedness of events
and situations.

Peace

"Peace" is a word,
like any word,
And it stands for many things.

It stands for a man who brought Peace to the world.
Who called man to be really man
to live a new kind of life.
Who showed man how to love his enemy,
about the hardest thing to do.
Who taught that life was really worth living,
although we sometimes wonder
Who reminded us that other people were important,
that we could not live alone.

It stands for a nation dedicated to Peace.
Which stood for its own rights
when they were denied.
Which helps others stand for theirs
and tries not to cause more problems.
Which recognizes the strife within itself,
making an attempt to harmonize it.
Which, seeing need in the world,
can send people out to help.

And it stands for a state of the soul of man.
When, while with his closest friend,
a fountain turns their favorite color.
When a test is over
and it looks like the future can be handled.
When he's found a friend
with whom all problems can be discussed.
When someone acknowledges his worth,
giving him strength to go on.

"Peace" is a word,
like any word,
And it stands for many things.

It's a hope,
a challenge, and
a prayer.

West Lafayette, Indiana — 1965

Sages' Wisdom

The sages know that:

Spiritual powers surround and inhabit
each particle, creature and moment,

Relating to these powers requires
attention, discipline and patience,

And real life comes when one becomes a bridge
between matter and spirit.

To allow everyone to experience bridging the worlds
Of matter and spirit.

Societies' sages have created:

Stories and dramas which rehearse significant moments,

Rituals and practices which dramatize profound living,

and Holidays and rhythms which mirror the spiritual journey.

Two great temptations arise in times of social change —

Fundamentalists confuse

Spiritual practices with spiritual reality;

Materialists confuse

Fruits of a spiritual life with dynamic spiritual living.

Fundamentalists —

Fight with each other over ownership of holy places,

Coerce people into following proscribed procedures,

and Hold on to practices built for one era long after
situations change.

Materialists —

Fight to protect goods and places they presume to own,

Coerce people into buying more and more stuff,

and Consume resources which have taken generations
to accrue.

Fundamentalists are overtly dangerous to each other,

Materialists are insidious dangerous to future generations.

Beware those who fail to heed sages' wisdom.



A Simple Request

On the day I die,
Explain to all
That my Lord
Required my All.

Rochester, New York
December, 1975

On A Sultry Night

Cheerful cherry-red cardinal
Sings from his treetop perch.
Sending his favorite melody
To no one in particular.

Along the thoroughfare below
I repeat his chosen tune.
Bridging the chasm between disparate species
As I head to nowhere in particular.

Cardinal laughs (and yet sorta cries)
At those who miss his oft-sung song:

- Motorists speeding by with windows closed.
- Couch potatoes watching blaring televisions.
- And over-anxious folk trapped in self-made cells.

Maybe the cherry-red cardinal knew
I'd spent the day transforming terminals
For a philanthropic foundation,
Computer systems to streamline their tasks.

Foundation personnel pursued their routines
Sobered by their much-loved founder's death.
They held within, or subtly expressed, a host
Of ideas, dreams, concerns and suggestions.

Cardinal warned (in his own gentle way)
That I not miss their much-needed wisdom:

- Slow down and listen to each person's perspectives.
- Turn off outside distractions, and
- Don't worry about personal success, focus on serving.

F. Nelson Stover
& Cardinal

July 1999



Four Postulates

The Oneness Postulate

The entire Universe is One. In all dimensions, the Universe is pervaded by oneness and unity. This wholeness is primordial and unchanging.

The Bifurcation Postulate

When the Universe in its totality (or at any particular point) assumes any manifestation, a set of polar opposites emerges. Each member of this pair takes on a reality of its own but remains inescapably linked to the other.

The Creativity Postulate

Within the unchanging wholeness of reality, each separate member possesses self-generating creativity. Each unique element of the whole utilizes particular devices for self-transformation. The effects of these transformations reverberate throughout the whole.

The Reflectivity Postulate

Sometimes by seeming chance, other times through self-conscious resolve, individuals participate in the oneness of the universe. In this way, their actual situation is reflected to them. Human beings can experience this oneness directly and this phenomenon may also occur with other species.

About the author

F. Nelson Stover currently serves as a Senior Application Specialist for Intelligent Technologies, Inc. in Greensboro, NC. He consults with associations, foundations and companies from Connecticut to Texas regarding the design and implementation of their information management systems. Mr. Stover



received his B.Sc. in Computer Science from Purdue University and his Bachelor of Divinity Degree from Chicago Theological Seminary where he focused on the church's role in social change. For twenty years, Mr. Stover worked with the Institute of Cultural Affairs, an international non-profit organization concerned with the human factor in development. He assisted in the development of a wide spectrum of Technologies of Participation for use by communities and organizations interested in involving peoples of diverse perspectives in their planning processes. Nelson has consulted with rural villages, non-profit organizations, small businesses and multi-national corporations in Australia, Belgium, Egypt, India and the United States regarding many aspects of organizational change, information systems and strategic planning. Since moving to Greensboro, NC in 1991, Mr. Stover has served on the board of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greensboro and the Community Resource Council of the Sandy Ridge Correctional Center.

Together, Elaine and Nelson Stover serve as co-directors of the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) at Greensboro. The ICA conducts programs which focus on Ensuring sustainable development, utilizing participatory methods and fostering cultural understanding. Major effort has been given to developing a series of programs which deal with Life Style Simplification. These programs allow individuals and families to take charge of their future by redirecting their resources - time, energy and money - in directions that better meet their changing values. Life Style Simplification programs have been offered in Belgium, Guam, India and across the United States. Feedback from more than 500 participants has provided insights into the personal and global significance of simple living, both in the practical and the spiritual dimensions.