THE FLUTE OF A BROKEN REED

A Journey in Vulnerability

(A Series of Psychological Themes)

By

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Dedicated

To all those who told me verbally and non-verbally

that they loved me,

all those who could not reveal and

all those who did not want to reveal their love

through no fault of theirs!

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FOREWORD

Vulnerability denotes the capacity of the individual to expose his wounds and weaknesses to others, and also to be affected by the wounds and weaknesses of others. Thus, vulnerability is a two-way road. It manifests itself in the form of brokenness, crippledness, weakness, inadequacies and failures. It is the capacity to be affected by a variety of human experiences at different levels. It refers more to the emotional wounds and pains of our human existence than anything else. Thus, vulnerability is the capacity or susceptibility or willingness to be exposed or open enough to possibly being hurt.

Obviously negative things can affect us: anger, hatred, indifference, malice, selfishness, betrayal and the like. It is also equally true that things positive like love, compassion, sexual attraction and sympathy can affect us. Love for example can make you totally vulnerable. Thus, vulnerability is quite neutral. If you say that negative things like hatred can affect you but not the positive ones like love, then your vulnerability is questionable.

It is not only the positive and negative feelings of others that can make us vulnerable but also the positive and negative feelings of ourselves too. When someone loves you, you are vulnerable as much as when someone hates you. In the same way your love for someone will affect you terribly and your hatred for someone also can affect you.

Thus, vulnerability is both when you have positive and negative feelings towards others and also when others have positive and negative feelings towards you. Though you may have the choice to stand above all these, I only want to underline the fact that the positive and negative feelings of yours and others can affect you and make you vulnerable.

Your character shines through your vulnerability which corresponds to the degree of your innocence, trustworthiness and compassion for others. Vulnerability denotes openness and exposure. When we are exposed, we are psychologically naked and the risk of being taken advantage of by others is certainly there.

There is no richer form of human living than the willingness to suffer, experience depression and despair, fear and anxiety, grief and sadness, anger and the agony of forgiving, confusion and doubt, criticism, rejection and betrayal. A life devoid of these wounds and hurts is not resourceful and rich. For, if you do not know what it is to be wounded or hurt, how are you going to understand those who come to you with such wounds and hurts? No healing worthy of the name is possible without your willingness to risk being hurt.

Without revealing one's vulnerability, one appears to be a fortress — well defended and guarded, and automatically all those who come into contact with you will pretend to be strong themselves and will be reluctant to reveal their hurts and wounds. Consequently one needs to ask oneself the basic question whether one is ready to reveal one’s imperfections, difficulties, problems, neuroses, sins and failures.

When you express your love or attraction to others, you are highly vulnerable and exposed. In those moments you are attempting a deep and intimate level of relating. It is precisely here you suffer but it is equally true that it is here that you grow. Vulnerability is a

terrible risk but there is no growth without risks. Remember that to the level you are vulnerable to that extent you have grown. At times unscrupulous people and psychopathic personalities would have taken advantage of your vulnerability. You did suffer a lot but you did grow up by those assaults.

In loving someone you will become extremely vulnerable as you expose your sensitivity — giving power to the other to wound, reject or betray you with his thoughtlessness, insensitivity or selfishness. In betrayal you are more vulnerable than in rejection. That is the reason why people hide their love for others. When you expose yourself you enter the space of vulnerability. Your defences are broken, you are stripped naked to the core. You become a laughing stock at times and you may remain lonely. Now you are susceptible to being hurt immensely. This is the shadow side of vulnerability.

Psychological vulnerability is a gentle yet mighty strength. It is the most mature individuals who dare to enter the space of vulnerability. Invulnerability is a pseudo-strength and a terrible weakness. It is weakness disguised. Without vulnerability everything becomes calculated, even love and sex for that matter do not become moments of sharing. Only those who are strong psychologically can say to another "I love you." Because of the possibility of rejection and betrayal one usually refrains from speaking about his love for another. Therefore, when you say to someone that you love that person you have exposed yourself for possible rejection and betrayal. It is easier to say to someone and even shout from the housetop that you hate the person. It is no strength but weakness. Just recollect how many times you could say to someone that you loved that person. Perhaps you showed all sings of love but dared not attempt to tell that person that you loved; because telling will make you vulnerable.

Vulnerability is the mighty weapon of the strong; and invulnerability is the greatest weakness of the weak.

Your vulnerability is a measure of your empathy: you are able to gauge the depth of the wound in another human being who is in a similar situation like yours.

In the pages that follow, you will read poems that speak of vulnerability. They picture vulnerable situations in the ordinary life of an individual. My close observation of people and situations in an empathic way helps me to a certain extent to picture the hidden and often overlooked feelings which in fact are more forceful than what is apparently seen. The narration in the poems is mostly in the first and the second person in order to make the themes more personal so that the message may go home.

You may draw your own conclusion from every poem as I have done mine. Every poem is open to many interpretations. By giving my conclusions I am intending to stimulate you to make your own. Hope some of these experiences will resonate with yours!

Poems can convey a message more effectively and with less words than a discourse. That is why poetry is employed. I have opted for run-on lines which flow from my heart and person.

My fascination for the imageries of Rabindranath Tagore makes me overjoyed with wonder and amazement of the ordinary, simple, and plain events of life that go unheeded. I wonder at the subtleties of meaning that ordinary strokes of feelings carry in their bosom unnoticed. Here I attempt to highlight the by-passed meanings in a humble attempt. The imageries of Rabindranath Tagore are handy tools for this purpose.

A number of themes are taken from the science of body language and they form part of the backbone of this book. Besides, knowledge of emotions facilitates me to identify the type of feelings or emotions in particular contexts. With this introductory note I invite you to muse on the poems and draw your own conclusions. Hope these verses touch your hearts and resonate with the message they carry.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2. Wealth of a waste
3. Temple dedication
4. Your eyes fell on mine
5. Dissonant note
6. Heaven
7. Punishment
8. God-experience
9. The begging bowl
10. Blind beauty
11. Light up my lamp
12. Falling in love
13. The broken heart
14. Pretension
15. The touch
16. In vain
17. Roses in leaves
18. Keepsake
19. Springtime
20. Promise on the palms
21. The bangle seller
22. Refusal
23. Unsung love
24. An angel in my arms
25. Passed by
26. You came in silence
27. Anxiety
28. Who are you?
29. Love turned into anger
30. Vulnerability
31. Betrayal
32. Taken advantage of

33. Speechless
34. True or false
35. Non-judgemental awareness
36. From afar
37. Your thought
38. The weary eyes
39. At the wayside
40. Not yet
41. Waiting
42. Prayer book
43. When will you look for me?
44. Held my hand
45. Longing for your look
46. Fragrance of your presence
47. Enticing and eluding
48. Like a dream
49. Tell me once
50. Cruel unkindness
51. Unworthiness
52. Same kiss
53. Seal my love
54. The secret touch
55. Little lamp
56. Resting not mine
57. You went your way
58. A chain of stainless steel
59. The last embrace
60. The hem of your garment
61. A stroke of your finger
62. Your glance
63. When you touched me

64. Thinking of you
65. Shame and pride
66. Cutting off
67. Unread page
68. Never told you
69. Sangamam
70. The broken fortress
71. You have become immortal
72. The sigh
73. Prayer on wings
74. The old diary
75. Victory
76. Union
77. Statue
78. Irony
79. Archives
80. Spirituality
81. Not come true
82. Dew drops fell on my fingers
83. Guilt
84. The walls of Jerico
85. The photographer
86. Visitation
87. Footprints on the seashore
88. Thus enough
89. My life stands blessed
90. Triangle
91. Whose fault?
92. Touch your heart
93. Safe at His feet
94. Shadow of infinite love

95. Evening of life
96. Brink of my voyage
97. Poverty to riches
98. Wake me up
99. The last utterance
100. The last glance
101. Allow me to weep
102. Breast of the beloved
103. Eternal embrace
104. You are there

1. Vocation

I took a broken reed and
sat under the bounteous banyan tree
near the lonely lane of the village.

The girls of the hamlet came with
empty earthen pitchers to the nearby pond
clattering on the way along;
on seeing me they drew the veil
on their pretty faces;
giggled through their fluttering veil:
“What is the stranger doing with a broken reed?”
But for shame I did not speak.

When the weary sun climbed the mid sky
the tired travelers halted
under the same tree and inquired:
“What are you doing with a broken reed?”

I broke my deep silence and
with downcast eyes I only said
in feeble voice timid with shame:
“I am making a flute of
a broken reed for the Master.”

The neighbours came in the evening,
mocked at me saying:
“Why do you make a flute of a reed
while there are so many golden flutes in his palace?”
I had no convincing answer but only said:
“It is meant for his idle and lazy days
and not for great concerts.”

“What folly,” they all laughed in a chorus,
“to make a flute of a broken reed?”
“How would the sound come clear from this flute?”

With choked voice and tears streaming
down my cheeks I only said:
“It is the Master that is going to play
the flute of a broken reed!”

*****

If you are a flute of a broken reed, what does your brokenness matter when the Master has desired to play you? He might play eternal tunes through you — the broken reed. And when you have the temptation to appropriate the tunes to yourself, remember, you are only a flute of a broken reed played by the Master.

2. The Wealth Of A Waste

I went a-field gathering flowers for the offering;
as I did I became forgetful of my noble intent
enchanted by the colours of the field woven
with the beauty of the meadows and the blossoms.

When the day wearied into evening and
the tired sun sank into the bosom
of the silent dark sea
I looked around in dismay;
the empty basket mockingly reminded me

of my divine errand.

Fumbled for some flowers
in the darkness of the grave gloomy night
and withdrew my anxious hands
to find only lonely leaves cloaked with grief.

I took the empty gaping basket
in the crook of my tired arm;
on reaching your spacious palace
I placed it at the gate and
stood speechless overcome
with shame and disgrace.

I did not join the joyous throng
that went to offer garlands
but stood humbly with downcast eyes at the gate
with those ragged wayfarers who longed
only for the touch of thy divine feet.

If I had gathered flowers
I would gloriously stand before you
with eyes proud and chest erect
to garland you but now
that I wasted my life on wrong priorities
I ask only for the touch of your feet
that my void life may be filled.

****

If your life had been in vain and a waste with no spectacular achievements, yet it would make sense when you surrender and sum up your emptiness at His feet with a humble heart!

3. Temple Dedication

A temple I built with costly metals;
pearls set in gold adorn the sanctuary;
precious stones of Persia were ornaments of glamour;
festoons between the columns were a great spectacle.

Invitations were sent out all through the land;
high ranking officials were the invitees;
a sumptuous table was set to feed them aplenty.

Having checked the preparations
I awaited the auspicious hour
for which an old venerable ascetic was invited
to dedicate the temple to the Lord.

Finally came the moment
when the temple was to be dedicated;
but the man of God did not turn up;
worried, I sent soldiers to scan the crowd
and make way for the holy man to enter in.

Since the common folk
crowded the temple precincts uninvited
I gave strict orders to push them
beyond the temple gate
keeping only the august invitees within.

The hour has passed but
the holy man did not appear;
and the invitees became restless and annoyed
and by evening left the temple one by one.

Yet the curious crowd outside
clamouring for a glimpse like a turbulent sea
was not allowed to peep into the temple
lest they should defile the sanctuary of the Lord
before the dedication.

And when darkness fell
upon the earth with its mantle of gloom
I took a lantern and went out of the gate;
and there I found the holy ascetic
in shabby attire asleep among the lowliest
having been denied admittance into the temple!

*****

People are holy; our mind can desecrate a sanctuary and not people. God has no partiality. Nor does He favour one group against the other. All are his children and are equal in his sight as much as the children in a family are to their parents.

4. Your Eyes Fell On Mine

One of the speechless spectators I was
in a crowd of awful audience as you spoke
waiting and watching the movements of your dreamy eyes
longing, if by chance, yours should fall on mine.

My yearning knew no limit as the programme went on;
when at last your speech was over, I had to say
mine is not the lot to meet your evading eyes today
and got ready to retire in sullen silence.

You descended the platform of exalted honour
and made haste to depart with a trail of dignitaries
while I stood obscure in a forlorn little corner
towered by tall and boisterous personalities.

You seemed to look for someone important
as your eyes combed through the curious crowd;
I remember, I could not believe my own eyes
when your steps turned in my deserted direction.

Oh no, it was not me that you searched for;
may be there is someone near me you desire to see;
and even then to have come near me
was more than I could desire in my piteous penury.

Your steps silently took their march onward
with your eyes dazed with the dream of last night;
you came to a halt where I stood
at which I stood transfixed overcome with amazement
trembling all over with excitement.

Your hands extended in a gesture of welcome;

gathered my eager shivering fingers into your bosom
as they snuggled for joy under the pressure of your palms
smeared with the warmth of my palpitating sweat.

Perhaps you forgot your right to honour
when you decided to meet me in public
while I pressed my burning frame against your beating breast
my dream came true as your eyes fell on mine!

*****

The Lord cares for you as much as He cares for the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. You are significant. You are precious in my eyes, says the Lord.

5. Dissonant Note

Who has taken my flute away?
I search for it in vain and find no trace;
like a remnant cloud that passed and vanished
it disappeared when I slept.

I have many songs to sing to you
about my fall and rise but
none of them can I sing without my flute
for my voice is feeble and timid.

At last I overjoyed to find
my flute idly sleeping
in the corner of my hut but
I have no intention of entering your palace
to entertain you with my flute;
but I am content to stand
at the wayside and play my flute
to those who pass by to reach your palace.

When the maestros from foreign lands will play
their flutes in the presence of your majesty

I shall listen from afar and
mingle the sound of my flute
with the sweetness of the flute sound
emanating from your palace.

My flute music will float
with its murmur and sighs
in its dissonant note and
mingle with the symphony
of the flutes of your palace
that ruffle the sleeping birds at night
and will echo from age to age.

*****

Whatever role you play here is mingled with the fabulous profiles of all the admired ones of humanity. And it will echo from eternity to eternity even though it is dissonant with the rest of the roles of others. The role you play here is unique and important. Play your role joyfully however dissonant it is! What is dissonance in earthly terms or values may be real harmony!

6. Heaven

One day the ascetic disciple had a strange vision;
the heavens were opened and he beheld a multitude
of people around the throne of God
and to his great surprise all of them were Epicureans;
and the alarming vision was immediately withdrawn.

The disturbed disciple brought his puzzle
to the audience when the Master was present;
he remarked sadly, “I saw only Epicureans in heaven
and what about ascetics like us?” — he wondered.

Each disciple tried his best to give an explanation

but none proved satisfactory;
finally it was the Master who spoke up:
"May be, because," he said
"The Epicureans admitted that they were gluttons
whereas the ascetics never admitted
that they were proud."

From then onwards it was written on the entrance
to the dining hall of the monastery:
"Blessed are the Epicureans, for
they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven."

*****

Humility is one of the hallmarks of sanctity. There had never been a saint in any religion who was not humble! Humble ways are pleasing not only to God but to humans as well. Remember that humility is compatible with self-esteem and dignity.

7. Punishment

My only sin for which I was caught
by the temple guards and
brought to you for punishment is:

With a languid heart I stood watching
the offering of the flowers
the maidens of the mountainous hamlet made to you
in your temple at dawn before the sun rose
with their clothes and hair
dripping with water after a hurried bath.

Some of the flowers secretly escaped
their dainty hands and
in an act of suicide fell like the autumn leaves
on the cold marble of the pavement covered with dust.

The pressing clamouring crowd
trampled them under foot
not knowing the worth
of the wealth that lay uncared for.

In the thick of the delirious crowd
I secretly snatched with my greedy hands
a jasmine flower from the floor and
pressed it to my breast with a deep sigh.

Oh, the sigh invited the unwanted attention of the guards
who were ready to tear me to pieces for my offence.

Standing in front of your throne trembling all over
and looking through the beads of tears
welling up in my fearful eyes
with my hands still pressing the precious flower
to my bosom I begged you:
"Allow me to depart with this flower though stolen."

I saw a quiver of quick smile on your moistened lips;
then your gracious hands unlocked the clinging garland
of jasmine from around your adorable neck
and putting it on mine you said:
"This is your punishment and now you can depart!"

*****

When you least expect and are fearful will come a blessing as a punishment beyond your imagining. Wait for the Lord to do His part at His will! And He will do it for sure. Look back and see the many blessings of your life that came as punishments. Remember that your punishments have become your blessings. Therefore, none of them are punishments indeed!

8. God-Experience

One of the disciples organized
an inter-religious dialogue in the monastery.

Many representatives from different religions
had come to participate in the august gathering.

There had been an animated discussion
among the highly enlightened representatives;
and the disciple was always clever enough to uphold
the centrality of his religion with great alacrity.

At the end, the Master gave the presidential address
in which he appreciated the goodness of every religion
quoting profusely from every other scripture.

The disciple was indignant
at the obvious disrespect of the Master
for the religion being practiced
in the monastery and asked him angrily:
"What religion do you believe in?"

The Master benignly looked at him and
with a great compassion replied:
"I do not believe in any religion;
I believe in a personal God."

Being furious at the scandalous words
of the Master the disciple retorted:
"Then what use is your insistence on
practicing our religion in the monastery?"

"So that," said the Master,
"You may transcend one day the religion you practice

and realize the Godhead above all else."

*****

It is a disrespect to God to say that my way of following God is the right one. God is not experienced less in other religions than in your own religion. All are our brothers and sisters born of the same Godhead. Religions are means to attain God and are not gods in themselves. In every religion the true disciple is consumed as if by fire by the God-experience.

9. The Begging Bowl

A mendicant am I, clean shaven,
walking barefoot, holding a staff firmly
in my trembling hand,
with a torn towel around my loins
and a scanty shawl about my shoulders
and delighting in singing His eternal praises.

A rosary of beads adorns my neck
gone thin with fasting while my bony fingers
cling to a broken begging bowl.

My possessions are few and
on them I have no claim whatsoever;
for I desired to be detached
from everything else on earth.

Willingly I gave away my shawl to a needy beggar
shivering in the cold and I was delighted
with my achievement of detachment.

Some shepherd boys snatched away my staff
for which I did not regret;
and a young eager ascetic begged
for my beads of rosary to pray with and
with joy I parted with them.

Then only the begging bowl left with me
I reposed at night under a *neem* tree
with the bowl pressed between my arms.

On waking up I find not my precious bowl;
searched for it in vain and
with tears welling up in my eyes and
rolling down my checks I bemoan:
"How can I ever beg without my begging bowl?"

Oh, would that I had the grace
to forget my begging bowl and beg my food
with my palms extended!

******

The moment you think that you are detached from a thing, your desire lurks subtly and rests on some other thing very insignificant. When will the wisdom dawn on us to leave behind these trifles and cling to Him alone! A Zen master said: "I learned from the dog that I can drink from the river without a cup."

10. Blind Beauty

There was a rich man whose son was struck blind;
to look after him was employed an uncomely girl;
the blind son would not perceive her ugliness
and mere service was enough — thought the father.

Days passed by, and slowly love dawned on his son;
by chance he would feel her hand or face
and exclaim with a mighty sigh: "Oh what a beauty!"

Against the father's advice the wedding took place;
the blind son and the uncomely girl got married;

they lived happily ever after until one day —

A doctor came in who said he would cure the blindness
by a simple operation that will cost nothing;
the operation was successful and the bandage was removed;
the first person he saw was his wife by the bedside.

Taking her for the servant girl
he called to her and commanded: “Call your Mistress”
at which she burst into uncontrollable tears.

Realizing the grave mistake he had made
he drew her close to his breast
and closing his eyes, he felt her face
as he would do when he was still blind and exclaimed:
“Oh what a beauty and marvel you are!”[1]

*****

At times, revelation of the defects and sins of those who live with us makes us lose our faith and appreciation of them. In those moments it is better to close our eyes on their defects and feel their original beauty.

11. Light Up My Lamp

As the sun sets in hushed silence with timid steps
and the evening breeze gently seeps through
I search for my lamp to light;
it stands in a corner covered with dirt;
having lit it I sit with longing for you
with a languid and weary heart.

[1] This theme was taken from a short story of an unknown author.

Come, before the oil abruptly runs out
for my poverty could not afford enough oil
to last through the dreary dark night
that puts to sleep every bird in the nest.

Through the tattered roof rush gusts of wind
against which I shade my lamp strenuously
as I wait for you with ever increased intense longing.

Alas, the oil has run out to my great dismay;
in the darkness of the night clocked with loneliness
I wait only for your arrival.

Come and march with your silent steps
before darkness ravages my wasted life
and light up my extinguished lamp
with your eternal oil.

*****

It is the Lord who can make your extinguished lamp burn bright. He can do wonders in your life however miserable and hopeless it has been. Ask for His grace with humble supplications.

12. Falling In Love

Falling in love is ecstasy, it does not take any effort;
if reciprocated, then it is heaven
otherwise it is misery beyond imagination.

Nobody can force you to fall in love;
nor can anyone force you to fall out of love;
if by chance you fall in love, you have it
otherwise it simply is not there.

Do not look for reasons to fall in love;
the heart has reasons that Reason does not know;
you cannot force a flower to blossom
nor can you break the shell to liberate
a struggling chick to be hatched healthy.

The flower has to blossom by itself;
likewise the struggling chick has to break the shell;
the sun will rise in the east without your willing
and will set without your knowing.

Many things may happen in your life without your will;
many things will persist in your life in spite of your dislike;
there are many effortless results in your life that bring happiness;
likewise many effortless results that bring unhappiness.

Sure you had fallen in love with someone
who did not respond to you;
then you prayed that you should never fall in love
but the next time too you did fall in love.

You thought that this misery is your lot
and wept bitterly that it should never happen again;
but human nature will make your heart fall in love
and feel low when rejected,
for it is the nature of human persons.

It is wisdom to sit back and relax
and accept whatever comes on your way;
because they came in without knocking at your door
and likewise they may leave you without a bye.

*****

You can neither fall in love nor out by love of your will. It is without your deliberation and ever knowing it. Falling in love does not take any effort. It is beyond one's control. Accept it as part of your human heritage. Be grateful that you can fall in love and out of love at times and they make your life more worth living and give you a purpose to live.

13. Broken Heart

More hearts are broken
than those that remain whole;
because we want to be loved
in the way we want;
but love comes in different forms
than the way we like
and that makes our hearts broken.

Endurance is the medicine
for healing a broken heart
for nothing can put it back again
for it is beyond redemption;
feel the ruin and wait for the time to heal;
one day a gentle breeze
casually passing by unaware
can give you the remedy.

Some find the joy of a broken heart
because it gives them a reason to be in sorrow;
some struggle to liberate themselves
but it never leaves them alone.

Is there not a way to be feeling good again?
Sure there will be only when you decide
to accept the experience as part of you
than pretend that it never did exist in your life.

****

Patience and endurance are excellent ways to deal with your broken heart. Fretting about it is going to harm you more than letting it that way. Let go. Let be. Acceptance of what happens in you is healthy and any denial of it is unhealthy.

14. Pretension

The shadows chase the trees pretending
to be not part of the trees;
puppies run away from the bitch for a while
as though mother does not matter;
the buyer pretends to walk away
only to be called by the seller;
looks like pretension is part of
the game of life specially of love.

I pretended that I did not fall in love with you;
my pretension was in vain
for I could not cheat myself
though I thought I could cheat you
by my pretension.

You saw through more than I did know
I tried to hide but everything was evident in my body;
I checked my eyes and averted my gaze from you
but secretly kept my glance on you and your movements.

I realize that I cannot cheat you nor me;
for my love seeps through my body movements
for everyone to see except me perhaps,
though I know it intuitively.

*****

You may pretend to be different to others and that may not harm you much. But to pretend to yourself is harmful because you just cannot pretend to yourself in which case you waste a lot of time and energy with limited success.

15. The Touch

Could there be so much to your touch?
What magic is there
that I was unaware of until today?
Where did you learn
to touch the way you do?
What gods have packed
so much feelings into the fingers
that linger interlocked.

Rose twigs bent low
with the burden of a bunch of blooming flowers
to touch the carelessly sleeping unclad meadows;
vagabond winds pretending to be passing
casually touch the idly roaming remnant clouds
tickling them to weep rain out of sheer joy;
the virgin waters of the running stream,
as though by mistake,
touch the roots of the trees on the banks
that keep bathing joyously in the cool stream;
the shepherd boys chase
the merrily playing girls of the hamlet
that challenge them to touch them if they can;
and I wonder why such a thirst to touch!

As though by chance, I snatch at your hands;
as though intending to hand over a book
I feel the pulse of your palm;
the heart seems to be lodged not in your breast
but in your palm, otherwise
why should your palm beat so fast with warmth?

*****

A touch can communicate tremendous warmth and love more than any other medium of contact. It is touch that can make you grow. Remember that children need a lot of touch for their survival and growth. And adults are not surely exempt from this!

16. In Vain

I pretend that I am not intent on you
like a hazy cloud that roams idly without a purpose
and go about as though indifferent but calculated
like a dog that circles a bitch at a distance;
subliminally I keep a watch of you in every direction
taking care that I do not betray my search for you.

I know you too pretend as I do and
test my steadfastness;
the more you test me the more I fear
that your pretension may come true
like a thunderbolt in my forlorn life.

I know that pretension is not an honest way
but I know nothing other than this way
for to be honest with myself
will make me feel wounded
while I am not prepared to accept it.

The more I try to be honest
the more I am pushed to mask
and pretend all the more
as though you never matter
meanwhile cherishing you dearly
as the most precious blessing of my whole life.

*****

There is always a struggle not to betray one's longing and search for someone. The more you pretend the more is your longing. It looks as though you are caught up without a way out! It is an experience of love indeed.

17. Roses In Leaves

I have kept all those roses you have given me
as a sign of your deep impetuous love;
I thought that those roses will fade away
and be forgotten forever
in the dust of the time that speeds fast.

So I decided to press those roses
between the leaves of my books
to protect them in their bosom like the mother hen
keeping her tiny chicks under her wings;
they are already dried up and became crystal
as monuments of your immortal love.

We parted but the pressed roses never left me;
they are constantly seen and
ever and again remembered in my dreams;
every time when I open my precious book of treasure
it is only to be assured of
how much you loved me dearly.

There was a mighty storm wind from the north
that penetrated my poor thatched hut
and taken on wings the roof and my precious books
along with my most cherished treasures.

I do not moan for my erased hut
nor for the little possessions I had
in my humble desolate idle corners;
only I miss the roses given by you

for I shall never be able to get them back!

The memory of the roses will cling to my heart
and unfold in sweetness of dreams;
it will touch the stillness of my slumber
as the gentle fragrance of the petals and
the breath of the breeze of the dusk.

*****

Keepsakes in relationship are important. They not only signify love but also contain a lot of memories of our relationship. When they are brutally destroyed or are lost by chance, you may moan for them for the rest of your life because they are engraved in your memory.

18. Keepsake

I have a great collection of all your letters
written over the past passionate years
drunk with the wine of youth
and life throbbing with
the unquenchable thirst for intimacy.

You will never know in what corner of my hut
I preserve them and what the number is;
for they are secretly secured and
ceremoniously cherished and
worshipped with ardent desire in private.

Not that I read them quite often
but only I am satisfied with
the collection of them as a jealous treasure
vigilantly guarded like the mother bird keeping
a watch over her nest with the fledglings.

The scribbling you have made on most of them

with lazy and hazy dreams
without much intent are fortunes that
cannot be exchanged for the whole world.

My shyness will not let you know
that I preserve your letters though
I would very much want to tell you someday
but I am afraid that I will not have the courage.

I will only speak to the stars at night and
to the birds in the afternoon
under the thick of the green groves
and to the blades of grass
on the meadow in the evening and
never to you for shame,
that I have a collection of all your letters.

*****

Keepsakes are personal treasures that entomb a relationship in them. They have a great significance for you and for your relationship. They are not just sentiments.

19. Springtime

Spring came with her generosity
scattering the flowers carelessly on the way;
the stingy sun chided her for her lavishness
but she remained perverse in her prodigality;
the south wind greedy for the strewn flowers followed her
tiptoe picking up all that is thrown at random.

Spring comes and goes in nature
but in some individual's life
perhaps it is a rarity;
now I believe that after a severe winter
and many near-springs has come

a spring in my life;
my life with you here will ever be remembered
as the springtime of my life;
and I do not look forward to
another springtime to grace my life.

Like the old covenant that prepared the ground
for the culmination of the new covenant
so my previous encounters
all prepared me for this peak experience
of spring with you.

There is a saying that there is springtime
in everyone's life but only once;
and my life with you is my springtime
and this springtime is only once in my life.

One's springtime is remembered
in old age with a great nostalgia;
old aged, grey-haired I shall remember
my springtime with you and
narrate to my grandchildren my life
with you with an aching heart;
when I see others in springtime I shall
recall our old days filled with passion.

Perhaps, this springtime like any other season
will pass off
but the memory of it will remain and
haunt my mind, for
you are the only springtime of my life.

*****

Certain relationships can be like the springtime never experienced before or after. The springtime is like friendship which is the most ennobling of all relationships. Love is a necessity but friendship is a luxury. If you have a friendship that is springtime to you, then you are blessed with a great luxury.

20. Promise On The Palm

You promised on my empty palm
that you will love me till the end and
I doubted not that you were true.
Days, months and years have elapsed
as I recall your ardent promise.

Our village is not the same now;
all our love spots are ruthlessly destroyed;
there is a desolate waste covering the deserted village;
there are some known drooping old people
and some unknown naked children.

We have parted with each another;
for years I have not seen you
yet my memory has not faded
instead became haunting at moments.

I remembered your promise on my palm;
I turn my palm and scrutinize the lines
nothing of you is ever seen but
my palm has the memory
of the promise you made on it.

In empty dreams I look at my palm
only to be mocked by isolated memories;
I may not meet you as distance separates us
but the promise made on my palm is
engraved for ever in my immortal memory!

*****

You may be separated from someone through time and distance but the memory will never fade away! The ravages of time and distance may not destroy the memory. And thus your memory becomes immortal! Distance and time do not exist for love and friendship.

21. The Bangle Seller

During your village festival I have stepped
into your gorgeous courtyard with my bangles;
you used to willingly extend
your slender pretty hands
for me to bangle you to the full forearms
as you laughed with mirth uncontrollably.

Every year I used to visit your house
and put bangles on your glittering forearms
while you turned and twisted with pain
at times with tears in your eyes.

Times have passed and you are now
an adorable young girl of charming style;
today as I press your fingers around to lock the bangles
you look into my eyes and
rest them there without a blink.

I wonder what has come upon you today
to stare at me intently and
what is there in my eyes
unknown to me that you search;
I reluctantly let your hand gently drop
after adorning you with bangles and
take leave of you with my wares
while your eyes still linger on mine.

I may not come next year to adorn your hand with bangles
but the memory of having held your warm tender hands
will hang on me like a shadow that will never depart
and I have the courage neither to pluck the imprint
of your penetrating eyes from mine
nor the warmth of your forearms from my calloused hands!

*****

To touch and to be touched are part of the longing you have for the one you love. And the eyes do not play less a role! To touch and to be touched is not only a love necessity, but a common skin hunger each human being has.

22. Refusal

I know not what made me turn down your love
though I longed for it intensely;
I did refuse your offer unknowingly
a contradiction in my life that caused my entire life.

I attempted many times to woo you back to my side
you would not turn your face having been refused
like the star that passed by the moon
and will never return to see her
because she refused to pay heed to him;
I look for ways to meet you and let you know
how much I long for you
but I have no courage.

I shall never be able to let you know my folly
and suffer all my life for the lost opportunity;
I shall bemoan and lament within myself
for the blunder of having rejected your love.

If I have another life
I shall certainly come to you
to offer my love unasked for
as an atonement for your rejected love
without letting you know that
it was I who refused your love in a bygone life!

*****

You may have longed for the love of another and when offered you are so overwhelmed and did not know how to respond and so you rejected it. You moan for this loss the rest of your life with the thought that the lost opportunity shall never come back!

23. Unsung Love

I shall take my departure
before I will have let you know
how much my tremulous heart aches for you
like a harp that sobs out wailing notes.

I used to tune and tune to let the harp
sing a resonant song of love;
but it wept sorrowful dirges
with throbbing pain in the heart.

Hoping to fine-tune I turned the knob
and snapped the string at last;
this is the last string I carried in my basket
and my harp will remain unstrung.

I have many songs to sing to you,
songs of love and dedication
but I am voiceless and stammering;
I sit before you with my harp
in my lap with its broken string
and my love song for you will go unsung forever.

*****

Many a time your love for someone may remain untold. You may not have the courage or there is no opportunity or circumstances to pronounce your love. Thus your love for the other remains unsung.

24. An Angel In My Arms

Casually I saw you in a wedding feast
wearing a half *saree* of rose colour;
you ran about with your little brother chasing him
like the clouds playfully chasing the sun
slightly lifting your skirt lest it hamper your run.

Biting your lower lip you chased your brother
and at the bend where I stood
you stumbled over me all of a sudden but
before you could fall down I held you in my arms.

You trembled with fear and shame
you did not want to look into my eyes
even though mine pierced yours
at close quarters with my lips almost on yours;
realizing your embarrassment and fear
I refrained from impressing my lips on yours.

You ran and vanished as I released you
like a bird that is set free from its snare.
From then on I look for you in every wedding feast
but I never saw you in my life again;
but the feast my eyes had that day will not fade;
looks like I have read a fairy tale.

The angel I met on that day comes everyday
to haunt my heart unbidden in my dream
and runs about chasing my ceaseless breath.
My only desire is this:
When I will have another chance to see
the angel if not hold her as close as on that day!

*****

At times by chance you see or meet somebody and you fall for that person. You may never meet that person again in your life and the haunting memory may not desert you and you may look for that person in every circumstance.

25. Passed By

I sat on the wayside and extended my tired limbs
on the green meadows with exhausted breath
and sorrowful heart.

Many charming passers-by enticingly entreated
and called me to give them at least a brief company
but I resolutely refused their call
without looking into their faces.

Everyone left me lonely with anger
and departed in haste without looking back;
whom are you waiting for asked the pilgrim travelers
in their ragged attire, worn out dusty feet
and near empty bags of provision but
for sheer shame I did not reveal your name.

When at last everyone had left me on the lonely path
where the birds have stopped singing,
the breeze forgot to breathe,
and the buds refused to blossom,
I continued to wait for you;
many footsteps I heard from far
marching in my direction
like a gliding chariot on a royal visit
but none of them were yours.

Being tired of waiting in vain
I drowsed and dreamt for a while
through mere exhaustion;

when at last I awoke up I noticed your footprints
that have passed by me.

*****

As you wait intensely for someone, that person would have passed by you when you were least aware. And so you regret.

26. You Came In Silence

When I heard footsteps I wished it were you
walking down the street to reach my abode
but I only found later that a lazy beggar
had passed that way noisily.

When there was a gentle whispering knock at my door
I wished it were you and roused from my lonesome seat
I flew the doors apart to welcome you with open arms
and only then I learned that a sudden south wind had
snatched at my idle lock hanging unlocked.

When I heard the clapping of hands
I thought it were you and
on opening the window I realized that
the young fledglings from the nest nearby
had been learning to fly flapping their pinions.

At midnight I heard a hurried knock and
I said half asleep out of weariness at waiting for you:
"It must be the sudden burst of clouds raining at my door."

But next morning when I came out
with mixed feelings of anger and sadness
at the disappointment I suffered
the previous day, I found to my great surprise

an earthen pot filled with water left by you
at my entrance intending not to disturb my sleep.

*****

The Lord may visit you in manners least expected by you. His ways are different and marvelous beyond your expectation. When you had felt that the Lord had been absent and away from you He had been very close to you without your awareness. And you realize this later!

27. Anxiety

Copious spittle I did swallow
with loud noise that I could not suppress;
knuckled my fingers in an uneasy air;
held the buttons and twisted them to get support.

My gentle breathing became a storm of sigh
with a release of an unabated breath
of mixed joy at intervals;
what the feelings were like
I could hardly say
simultaneously joyous and sinking.

I stand still and look away at a distance,
where I focus my glance I do not know;
if someone calls me I do not hear
some kind of foreboding keeps me busy.

What is this that I am occupied with
it seems like the fear that I will lose you
even though I feel secure right now;
as I embrace you I am afraid

that I am losing you.

*****

Even in the most secure relationships you might feel that you are losing the person and the relationship. There can always be certain uncertainty in every relationship however beautiful it is. Our relationships are filled with ambivalent feelings and one among them is feeling both "secure and fearful."

28. Who Are You?

I heard of your exalted high position
conferred on you for your glorious merits
with that my desire was enkindled
to meet you at least once in my life.

My thoughts went back to many years
when I carried you in my arms
and dandled you on my knees
to keep you tickled when you cried.

It was I who taught you how to walk
holding your tender hands lest you should fall;
you opened your mouth to pronounce
words after me and learned to talk.

I reached your palace in anticipated expectation
of meeting you and telling the story
of your cute childhood with many events
as I was joyous at the thought of meeting you.

On reaching your gate I was asked to name
who I was and on what purpose was I there.

When I pronounced my name, I hoped,
you would recognize me without delay.

You did come out with your ambitious attendants
and stood at the platform while I climbed the steps
with faltering stride and trembling legs out of joy
to reach you and enfold you in my outstretched arms
but you held your hand and stopped my march;
there was a sign of quick recognition on your face
but with annoyance you asked me “who are you?”

*****

There is the possibility of denying the relationship with you due to social distance created or out of shame to own you due to your inferior position. At that time your past memories may flood you all the more and make you feel stunned and frustrated ever more.

29. Love Turned Into Anger

Like the night that keeps vigil for the dawn
I would wait for you and stalk you wherever you go;
like the flowers that entice the butterflies
I would draw your attention exclusively for myself.

When you asked me all of a sudden if I love you
overcome by shame and empty pride I said no
and I saw you leaving me in defeated silence
like a lonely lane in a deserted waste.

I wondered and regretted why I did say no
but I did not have the courage to reverse my no
and felt crushed to the ground with profound sorrow

from where nobody could lift me up.

I became furious with me and turned it on you
and abused you with all kinds of words;
accused you of every malice towards me
and swore that I would not like to see you any more.

I knew within my heart
I cherished your person and your memory
like the nest that holds the fledglings;
I go about finding ways to woo you back
but do not have the grace to come back to you.

I curse myself for the folly I have done;
I shall regret it all my life like the clouds that
never rained down and wasted the vapour for nothing;
tears come to my eyes and anger at the heart at once
I fight within myself not knowing how to go about
and say you are the cause of my misery.

*****

It may happen that you love someone and when asked to own it you may deny and thus forfeit the love of that person. Then you curse yourself and are angry with yourself and turn that anger towards the other as though the other is at fault and abuse and malign the other. Deep down you long for the other and your pride will not let you go back to the other. Here you will find the ambivalent attitude of "approach and avoidance" in your relationship.

30. Vulnerability

There were times when I felt that I was strong
but it did not last long before I realized
I am more vulnerable than strong
and this plunged me into deep emotional crisis.

I feel defeated and down with no defence

crushed to the ground with no wholeness
I gather my strength but feel like ashes
scattered on the hollow wind.

Is there not more strength in me than weakness
but what makes me feel so down and defeated?
Nothing made me more vulnerable than to love
and that love being rejected.

It feels like that there is no way out
except to feel the ruin fully and mourn
like a dove on the house top;
could it be the nature of love?
Perhaps, I think, it is so.

*****

Vulnerability is not a weakness but a great strength. To tell someone that you love is vulnerability and it is a great strength. To tell someone that you hate is pseudo-strength but a terrible weakness. If you have the wisdom to understand the difference between these two, then your life is blessed.

31. Betrayal

I have endured enough shame and dismay
in my life of love;
there are moments when I had been betrayed
just because I pronounced my love.

Your ways were crafty and cunning,
how would you react I know not
yet to keep silent is not my way
and so I shall pronounce my love for you.

I know I take a risk like entering a thick forest
that has no trodden track to guide a traveler;
that does not deter me from being open
even if you do rebuff and reject me.

I made bold and pronounced my love for you,
you did laugh and brush aside my innocence
and made a joke of it in front of others
with that I felt that the world collapsed on me.

I made a resolution that I will not
hereafter tell anyone that I love
but something in me keeps me telling
that it may not be true in my case.

*****

There may be experiences of your love being betrayed by unscrupulous people who may take advantage of your vulnerability. If yours is a character of vulnerability, your vulnerability shall remain with you and that has made you grow.

32. Taken Advantage of

It was you that I trusted most and
nothing mattered to me except you;
even I could not imagine to compete with you;
for me love is more important than victory.

Many an idle tale I have told you and

poured out to you my anguish
in my moments of loneliness;
how secure I felt to have opened my mind
and even my heart to you as a friend;
it was a god-given blessing, I thought, you were to me
but what I heard lately uproots me altogether.

If it were an inadvertent talk I could forget
but to be in the good books of the authority
you made use of my secrets and
with cold deliberation carried out your designs.

And now what hurts me deeper is your smile;
if you frown at me that is sincerity
but to behold you smile spells betrayal.

Now I stand by your side with downcast eyes;
you pretend to be ignorant of what had taken place
and coax me to reveal to you
if I have anything to share.

Only streams of tears roll down my cheeks
and I reply with a nod: “Nothing” and
who will ever know my heart only wants to say:
“You betrayed me!”

*****

Having been betrayed itself is traumatic enough and added to that if the one who betrayed you pretends to be innocent then it is an added insult.

33. Speechless

When you decided to betray me
I was speechless and dumbfound,
I had no words nor any defence
on my side before the judge;
it is better that I bear the sorrow of betrayal
than to make a futile attempt to defend me
for when the one whom I trusted decided
to betray me no word will save me.

Looks like you wanted to become
a celebrity all of a sudden
by betraying me and I shall bear it
for the honour of the love I bore for you;
but I am sure your heart will not forgive you
for the lies you told
and the exposure you made of me.

With this trauma of betrayal
I swore that I shall not trust anyone;
everyone looks hostile and
I do not know whom to trust;
you did become famous and acted innocent
but I do not have the heart to betray you.

If I betray you in return
I may not have the courage to look at myself
for I shall become an enemy to myself;
I believe that love is sacred and
to have betrayed it is a sacrilege.

I shall bear the betrayal and love
in my painful heart
and whenever someone asks
what bothers me I shall be silent
for I can never think of betraying you and live
and therefore I shall remain speechless forever.

*****

Betrayal is one of the most traumatic experiences in life. Its scars may remain with you for long because it is a crisis of faith in humanity. The one who betrays may not have the courage to look at himself, for the betrayal wounds the betrayer more than the one who is betrayed. The betrayer will be eaten up by remorse.

34. True Or False

You accused me in front of a judge
who I felt did not understand me;
I stood humiliated and silent with downcast eyes;
I dared not look at you or the judge
for shame, for you both looked judgmental
and before I could have my say
your eyes judged me guilty.

Many of the accusations were false, I know
yet I did not struggle to defend myself
and when asked whether they are true
by the judge, I said “Yes”
but mumbled within my heart “No.”

There is none to defend my cause,
everybody seems to be inimical
I am like being in the midst of
tall trees in a thick forest.

I look around for someone
who might offer a word of sympathy;
your haughty eyes were sharper than your words
and you went on with your untrue accusations.

I left to my innocence to defend me
and stood mocked and mangled
with no way to prove my innocence
lest I should betray you.

Now what consoles me is this to think
if these accusations are true or false;
if true I shall change else I ignore.

*****

When you are accused, you need not ask the question who accused you but rather ask the question whether the accusations are true or false. If true, ask for the grace to change but if not

true those accusations do not concern you. You can survive unjust criticism, persecution or being misunderstood and in those moments you are not fragile.

35. Non-Judgmental Awareness

My sins are many and shameful and
my regrets are numberless;
most of them drench me like a torrential rain
and I feel myself diminishing within.

All this burden of sins haunts me night and day
I wake up at midnight and remain awake
till the first gleam of the dawn
idly lying down on my dreamy bed
ruminating on all my regrets.

I accuse myself and cover myself with shame
and stand in a shadow hiding
from the gaze of onlookers and
I am afraid of looking at myself
in a pool of water,
for my image seems to point a finger at me.

I dare not come out of my shell
lest I should be exposed to the jeerers
and I wish I do not exist but
vanish with the wind that sweeps over.

*****

Your greatest enemy could be you. Whatever be your failures, become aware of them without passing a judgment whether they are good or bad. Maintain a non-judgmental awareness of what is happening to you in a dissociated way. In non-judgmental awareness you do not take sides with any one aspect. You are just aware of some aspects that you were not aware of earlier. You neither praise nor blame yourself for what you have become aware of. That way you remain healthy.

36. From Afar

It is you who are always on my mind
the memories grow stronger every day;
sitting far away I recollect those moments
when I enfolded you in my arms and
now I enshrine you in the arms of my memory.

Perhaps it will take years before I meet you;
every moment of waiting looks like ages,
how and when we shall meet I do not know;
by that time you might have got other lovers.

Yet when I come back
I shall stand knocking at your door humbly;
on seeing me if you would recognize me
like the nests that recognize and welcome the birds
that return after the day's journey and
the stall that enfolds the cattle
that come home after grazing in the field
I do not know;
I fear if your eyes might come to my rescue;
but now from far I can only wish
that your memory will not betray me!

*****

In separation and crisis what maintains the relationship is hope. Hope is the last emotion that may die. Even the one who is going to be executed will think till the last moment that something will turn up and he will be spared. You need not destroy in anybody a false hope if you are not able to substitute it with a real hope!

37. Your Thought

I thought this is all over
no more will I be obsessed with you;
I immersed myself in myriad activities
in the vain hope that I will finally forget you.

Alarmingly all my memories come back,
all the old feelings of obsession
and longing keep surging
like the mighty waves of the ocean
and make me feel sinking and shamed
finally ending up with the thought of you.

What would make me free from this slavery?
None has ever found a medicine to cure love;
it pains me to the bottom burning with anxiety
not finding a way out of this malady.

I have abandoned fighting
and let your thoughts flood my mind
and thus I find relief;
perhaps, one day your thoughts may depart from me.

*****

When you are obsessed with someone you need not fight it. Do accept it and one day it might disappear silently. If only you fight it, then it will persist staying with you obsessing you all the more. Do not give attention to your obsessions and compulsions, they will starve themselves.

38. Weary Eyes

I hear the hushed giggling of the girls in the dark
the loud laughter of the children at the back,
and the lullabies of the mothers at a distance
to put their babies to sleep.

The vagabond tomcats keep running up and down
chasing the cunning mice but stunned by stray dogs;
all these things do not distract me
as I am intent on your arrival.

The children have gone to sleep,
the street is calm with no dog barking,
the old people are dozing
in the places where they are placed,
the leaves of the creepers hang low in repose
and the moon has hidden behind the clouds
but my eyes are alert with awakening.

I hear the first cocks crowing;
the farmers are marching to the field
with oxen and ploughshares;
the maidens are sweeping the courtyard
and my eyes did not have a wink of sleep
for you did not come yet!

*****

When you are longing for someone everything passes except your longing. It keeps lingering ever stronger as though without an end. Could it not be an experience of love?

39. At The Wayside

I rose with the first beam of the dawn
and hurriedly passed through the street;
I did not look at the maidens
making flour designs on the courtyard
lest they should inquire where I am speeding.

I sat at the wayside
under the shade of a tree
with my eyes fixed far away
at a distance on the way.

The pretty girls passed by
to go to the temple
to offer daily prayers and
they called to me
to join them in their worship;
I smiled and said that I shall go
to the temple in the evening.

Before noon the half-clad children ran rushing
to the playground and called me
to join them in their play;
I said sheepishly that I would like
to watch rather than play.

My little sister came to me and said
that mother called me home;
I told her that I am collecting firewood
and would return shortly.

The shepherd boys sought
shade under the same tree
where I sat and they rested till
the noon wearied into evening but
my eyes were all alert for what I only knew.

It is evening and flocks of birds
with their tired wings return to their nests
after the day's work;
I still sit at the wayside
with expectant heart looking for you.

*****

When you are looking for someone, then thousand years are like one day!

40. Not Yet

Where are the lamps that are forlorn?
I need to make them ready and trim
for your arrival, if by chance you choose
to visit my humble home.

At last I found them in the corner with dust,
cleansed them and made them bright,
poured oil to the brim and wicks protruding
to light them when the weary sun sets.

At last the sun has set with its golden beams
disappearing in the mountain ranges of the west;
the night envelops the neighbourhood
with darkness thick like a forest;
I light the lamps covering them
with my fluttering, ragged veil
to be ready to receive you
when you shall come.

It is already late at night
my eyes are weary with looking up in vain

the oil is run out and
the wicks are burnt down to ashes
but still you did not arrive.

*****

Waiting and finding that the one you love did not yet arrive is a common experience. In spite of your weariness you keep waiting. That is love.

41. Waiting

Why my aching heart throbs violently today
and my empty life is all astir
in a turbulent vibration of my breathing?

Only I have seen you pass through my door
with hurried steps and long strides;
the rustling of your dress made me
quiver with anticipation that
one day you will enter my lonely dwelling.

Day after day I wait in vain hope that
one day you will surely step into my home;
I prepared myself with eager longing
spreading my tattered mat on the dusty ground,
lighting the lamps on the doorsteps
and sprinkling flowers on the courtyard
but yet your stepping in had never been.

Still I have not given up my hope

I await your steps passing by my door
like the earth waits for the rare summer rain.
Though I have wasted all these days
in utter near despair of your coming
but something tells me still that
you will one day step into my dwelling.

*****

Hoping against hope is part of love experience. Even if you know that there is no love from the other person you still hope that there is — which perhaps keeps you moving on.

42. Prayer Book

It was six years ago, you had sent me your photo;
there were some endearing words underneath
perhaps you meant what you wrote
but they were mere words until the other day.

There were so many keepsakes in my possession
most of them I destroyed as I shifted my abode
from one place to another
but somehow I could not bring myself
to destroy your photo.

Let me confess — I found your photo convenient
to serve me as a book mark in my prayer book;
my casual glance used to fall on your photo
as I was accustomed to muse on the verses.

On the day I felt you have become part of my life
I came and opened my prayer book to pray with
then it was your photo that became my prayer;
that day not a single verse was read from my prayer book
but I found the casual book mark has become
my open prayer book.

I will not know how many times
I open my prayer book to read
not the verses but your photo
for truly, your photo has become
my personal prayer book.

*****

There is no one particular way of praying. The Lord may lead you in the way your heart is disposed. Anything that fills your mind and keeps it occupied can become a prayer.

43. When Will You Look For Me

I stood hiding in the shade of a lonely tree
and searched for you to know
if you look for me;
but you with your head held high
hurried your way and filled me with shame.

When you bathed in the river merrily
I grazed my cattle nearby and looked at you;
but unmindful of my presence
you swam to the other shore
and made my heart ache with dismay.

When you stood at the temple entrance
to offer your worship I was by your side
with folded hands and bowed head;
you spoke to your God and
not glanced at me and thus pained my heart.

When at last I passed through your home
I looked for you
you just went in and never appeared again;
meanwhile with faltering steps and
forlorn thoughts I wonder
when you will look for me!

*****

To check if the loved one searches for you is a great longing you may have as a love experience.
If the one you love searches for you, it is a great reassurance and reciprocity to your love.

44. Held My Hand

There was a secret longing in my heart
that we should walk proudly hand in hand
with the fingers interlocked during the
village festival when others look on
but I dared not ask you to hold my hand in public.

You patted on my back and beckoned to me
to accompany you to the village feast;
willingly I went along with you
secretly hoping to hold your hand.

You did gesticulate with your
hands eloquently while I longed
that you would hold my hand
at least by mistake.

In the thick of the crowd
like clouds heaping upon clouds
I touched your hand

as though by chance
with fear, trembling and sighs.

Oh, what a surprise it was for me
when you grabbed my hand immediately,
squeezed it tightly,
took it close to your bosom,
pressed it to your heart warmly
and kissed it passionately
while I sobbed in silence as tears
flowed down my eyes profusely out of joy.

*****

At times lovers wait for who will take the initiative! Each longs for the other to take the initiative and waits patiently.

45. Longing For The Look

On your birthday you made
a great display of your generosity
and distributed many gifts to the poor;
I was one among the poor waiting for my turn.

There was a moon-lit smile on your lips
and a glow of a sun beam on your eyes;
my heart throbbed violently
as I waited for my turn
with impatient hands and unsteady steps.

My heart almost broke the limit of its joy
when I was the next to extend my arms

and open my palms;
I looked at your eyes with ever eager glance
and longed for your look in close proximity.

As I stood overcome with anticipation
you placed the gift in my extended palms
with downcast eyes and hurried
to meet the one next in line.

*****

Eye contact is a sign of recognition and affirmation of a person. You will long for such an affirmation in your relationships. When there is no eye contact, the relationship becomes impersonal.

46. Fragrance Of Your Presence

No perfume of Arabia will ever equal
the fragrance of your presence;
the sweetness of your mere presence
is a balm to my ailing heart;
away from your presence
everything is dreary
like the lake that dried up
in late summer midday.

Pour out the perfume
of your gracious presence
into the bottom of my heart and
awaken in me the sweet smelling
memory of your enveloping love.

It is a privilege to be blessed
by your fragrance;
my heart will ache for ages
and long for your presence;
apart from you my soul will wither

and flutter and fall down
like the leaves in the autumn evening.

*****

The presence of your beloved is like the fragrance of a perfume. To be assured of the presence of the beloved nearby is a great satisfaction. You look for ways to maintain the presence of your beloved nearby.

47. Enticing And Eluding

Looks like I will pass this world
without ever being intimate with you;
if that be my portion I shall keep silent
and remember you as a distant horizon
that beacons to me day and night
and eludes my eager grasp.

I shall keep vigil like the early birds
for the dawn with hushed silence
and expectant eyes to behold the light;
there are mighty ripples in my heart
as when a stone is violently thrown
in a still pond.

Let this be known that I ever kept vigil
and you ever eluded me all the time
still keeping me ever enticed
wasting all my wearied hours.

Finally like the song of the birds
my desire will float in the vanishing clouds
and my longing will ever remain for you
like the eternal covenant
of the sea with the shore!

*****

It is He who is ever enticing and forever eluding! You may apply this to any other relationship. Anything enticing and eluding will ever keep your interest afresh.

48. Like A Dream

It might have been past midnight, I remember,
stillness covered my thatched roof;
I lay on my cot musing on
some unknown memory;
my eyelids were lazily half asleep
and my lousy lips quivered with
the anticipation of something I knew not
for they never told me what.

There were silent footsteps pounding my heart
and hurried knocks at my door gentle as a whisper;
before I could rouse up to respond
you already entered my hut and
stood as a vague fog nearby;
I stumbled to stand up to welcome you
but you calmed me to lie down in peace
and took your seat on the cot in a corner.

With excitement aflame all over I rose up
shaking my dusty rugs
that covered me like shame;
as I stood up and extended my arms to collect you,

I withdrew only my arms empty and weeping and
I realize that you have passed by me like a dream.

*****

It is not uncommon that you dream of your beloved quite often seen as a reality. Your dreams are wish fulfillment. Your dreams betray what keeps you preoccupied.

49. Tell Me Once

Tell me once that you love me
before I close my failing eyes and
entrust myself to the One who fashioned me;
it is already time and my heart
will not depart without your speaking.

You have kept silent all my life;
I believed that one day you will let me know
but until the last you restrained your tongue
and kept silent like the overcast clouds
that never did rain.

If I hear you speak my soul will rest;
otherwise I go away like a wind that
knocked at the door but found no response
as my heart will keep pining for you
all along my last wearisome journey.

I do not force you to tell a lie
if there is love let me know it;
otherwise let me hurry up on my way
as I have an urgent summons from above
and vanish like the flickering flame
of a lamp without a shade
left on the stream by the village girl
at dusk of night,
with the regret that you did
never tell me once that you loved me

*****

The longing that the one whom you love, should tell you in some way or other that he/she loves you is a great longing that is constant and relentless.

50. Cruel Unkindness

When you asked me my name
I laughed and ran away;
hiding behind a pillar I peeped and
glanced you through the corner of my eyes;
as you looked at me straight and
my timid eyes met yours
I was filled with shame and
I pulled my skirt and covered my face.

When you came close to me
and touched my hand
I snatched it away abruptly
and my eyes were filled with tears;
I feared my heart would break
with shame and pride
and I dared not look at you lest
I break down and collapse.

You left me seeing my embarrassment
at which my heart was filled with remorse
for not having let you hold me;
then I ran to the kitchen and
in the darkness I looked at my hand
where you touched me;
it was throbbing with the pain of longing.

I may easily forget you but
how would I ever console my hand
that weeps for your touch
for my hand shall never forgive me

for this cruel unkindness to it.

*****

“Approach and avoidance,” and “love and hate” are part of any intimate relationship. Where there is love, there is hatred as well and hatred is the disguised form of love. Fear only when indifference sets in your relationship in which case there is neither love nor hate. Remember that the opposite of love is not hatred, but indifference.