

*In Praise of  
Life and Liberty:*

SONGS OF SORROW  
AND REBIRTH

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## IMPRESSUM

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*Remembering the lives lost to the scourge of COVID-19. Dedicated to the selfless individuals who place themselves in harm's way to care for the ailing. For those who are left to grapple with the grief of losing a loved one.*

*May my musings serve as a token of gratitude to my family, friends and kindred spirits for suffusing my work with the light of love and wisdom.*

*In praise of the peerless beauty and resilience of mighty Mother Nature.*



# *A Mission of Love Against the Odds*

It takes a feat of spiritual stamina to fend off the blows of fate. If challenged by the darkness of adversity, simply let your soul fathom the meaning of sorrow and despair. In other words, do not hesitate to embrace your sullen moods and perceptions of reality. When time is ripe, these ominous clouds will dissipate like heavenly chariots stirred by the wailing wind.

If shipwrecked, wouldn't you wish to see the land? Trust the tide: you can only let go of fear and anguish if you stare them in the eye. Granted: it takes courage to brave rough seas. Yet it is your unflinching determination to swim and take control that will steer life back to safe shores.

Never fall prey to apathy, for life is a seasonal cycle of miracles. Pursue positive action, letting contemplative endeavors illuminate your choices along the way. Dare to brave your forebodings about the future. Proceed to pierce the darkness of despair with unfaltering determination. Resilience thrives on the inner light of hope, a force enamored with the essence of life.

*Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune without the words,  
And never stops at all,*

EMILY DICKINSON

Fate may pose obstacles you can hardly surmount, like the demise of someone you dearly love or the onset of debilitating disease. Collective misery can be wrought by deliberate human actions. Wars, any form of persecution and environmental degradation shatter single lives and tear communities asunder. Past and present bear witness to the heinous level of cruelty human beings are capable of inflicting on any living creature.

As a clear source of emotional distress, hatred and intolerance can literally drive their human targets over the edge. Humiliation and harassment constitute premeditated strategies wielded and deployed as weapons of exclusion against individuals considered undesirable for racial, religious, ethnic, gender and political reasons among many.

These days it is easy to become the target of hatred if you are a tireless advocate of the universal freedoms enshrined in the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and actively uphold the freedom of speech and expression. Being a human rights defender can make you vulnerable to harassment for a lifetime. Countering contempt and any form

of intolerance in kind is vain and barren, a perilous path which leads to a never-ending cycle of doom and devastation. Conversely, embracing love and kindness will enable you to carry on with life under trying circumstances. Even from a broader angle, doesn't love safeguard survival? Should you feel beaten and broken, bear in mind that withered lives find uncanny ways to heal and regenerate. Being conceived to love other sentient beings, you can deflect the arrows of hatred by enfolding the pristine innocence and goodness of the babe within.

Whatever the sources of your pain and sorrow, simply dare to explore your boundless gifts and capabilities. Dare to create castles from the ashes of a burning temple. Dare to face and defy the forces dragging you down to the depths of despair, letting love and kindness guide you along the road of resilience and rebirth. Dare to use the power of the pen to transform your pain into a cosmic path facilitating access and offering comfort to those in the throes of worse predicaments. Dare to improve life on Earth through the vessels of speech and action, navigating the personal and universal realms in pursuit of purpose. Every individual life is a mission of love against the odds. May this medley of song, poetry, prose and pictures once prey to my fancy illuminate your journey.





# *Traversing Blurring Borders in Search of Hope*

Intricate time unravels like a magical thread, informing the colossal trajectory of the universe. As human time travelers and agents of change, we are called upon to heed the lessons of experience so that our choices and cherished dreams help us thrive both as individuals and as members of a larger family. No progress can be accomplished without cultivating virtue and spreading kindness within our communities and beyond the realm of the merely human. Being endowed with the light of reason and benevolence, we are conceived to pursue the perpetuation of life on Earth. Simply said, we cannot possibly dis sever our singular selves from the path, the woes and fragile fate of our sheltering planet.

It is virtually impossible to overlook how the curse of ever-rising temperatures impacts life on Earth. Misguided human actions have disturbed vital ecosystems, accelerating the pace of environmental degradation which leads to climate change. Ensuing natural disasters are compounded by a spate of tragedies: endangered and extinct plant and animal species; shattered livelihoods often resulting in forced and painful migration.

Exacerbated by ruthless deforestation, indiscriminate depletion of non-renewable resources and unchecked emissions of planet-warming gases released in the atmosphere by human activity, global warming has become the centerpiece of widespread public outrage. Young voices have risen and resolutely made a stand against a world in disarray, unleashing a tide of reckoning on a global scale and urging the highest echelons of power to regard climate change both as a threat and a compelling global issue. Within this context, Cop 26 represented a feeble attempt by a number of powerful global players to avert further climate crises and irreversible damage to the planet.

The ravages of zoonoses like AIDS, anthrax, mad cow disease, Lyme, Ebola, SARS, West Nile, Zika and COVID-19 belie abhorrent acts of cruelty perpetrated against the planet and its innocent living dwellers. Destruction of natural habitats, loss of biodiversity, depletion of resources, wildlife trade and urban sprawl create breeding grounds for animal-to-human transmissions and zoonotic outbreaks. In other words, both phenomena are intertwined with the unfolding environmental devastation brought about by human recklessness. The scope of COVID-19 clearly transcends individual targets, overwhelming the global community in its efforts to rein in the ruthless monster.

Against such a bleak backdrop it is natural to lose heart and experience profound sadness. Yet, from a pragmatic perspective, confronting sobering facts and seeking solutions