

Poetry Series

**uday balakrishnan**  
**- poems -**

**Publication Date:**  
2010

**Publisher:**  
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

## uday balakrishnan()

So what do I say about myself?  
That I write under my real name?  
Or that I am a semi grounded wanderer  
Who has tripped the world's wilder parts?  
For over fifty years now?  
Do I mention what I do -  
Manage people, crippled inside  
With fears and worries endless sympathy?  
Can that be the bureaucrat I think I am?  
Uday

# Ah! There You Are

Ah! Caught you on the Messenger!  
There you are  
Distant yet close  
In cyberspace....  
Instant messaging to boredom  
Finally its killed the calls and the emails too...  
Mails died a long time ago.

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# And When I Go

And when I go  
I wish it will never be said  
How sad that he went  
Rather it be felt  
What timing indeed  
He went, neither too old  
Nor too young  
Just made right for that voyage....  
Not a moment too soon  
Nor an hour too late  
Never a nuisance  
Always a help.  
Yes indeed I hope it will be said by someone  
That he had loved well too!

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# And When You Get Old

Suits worn untidily  
And that is if you wear suits but it can be any other dress  
Well let me return to the suit  
The trouser held up by a belt askew  
Worn high way too high  
And possibly with the zipper down...  
Move over youth and give way to age  
And on a thin frame  
All of a protruding belly  
Oh yes, yes indeed a chest in retreat  
A slur in your speech and a drool  
And a quizzical expression on your face  
Vain, Vain, Vanity  
Too hard to accept you are now almost deaf  
Better to stare away just look aside and change the subject  
Old age is hard  
Live long enough and others will know.

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# Anjengo

An old fort lies desolate and  
Lost in a village of  
Coconut trees and fisher folk.

Overgrown with weeds,  
Its bellybutton ....  
A dry well in the middle.  
Toothless battlements stare  
Impotently at the vast waters,  
That is Anjengo for you  
Gazing forlornly at the Arabian Sea.

So much for the ravages of time  
And the loss of primacy of a place  
Once ensured by garrisons and guns  
Of Company and Empire.  
So much for the young English couple  
In eternal sleep for centuries now  
In adjoining graves just outside,  
An endless sea nearby  
The rest of India all around.

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# Anthem

Let's do away with the anthem  
Verses of hate  
Songs of domination  
Played out to anesthetize masses  
Thump thump thump  
To the sound of marching boots  
Those vulgar loud bands  
Meaningless salutes  
Uniforms and march-pasts  
My country right or wrong  
Can we get the picture  
So awfully wrong and all the time? ? ?

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## Feeling Old?

Age finally catches up  
It is there with you like your skin  
It is your skin indeed  
And then there is tiredness  
An enervating weariness  
And then troubled sleep  
Wearing off in the silence  
Of a dark three a.m. dawn  
With nothing to do.

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# Fragments

Ruins and what are they?  
A mass of stones  
Shattered battlements  
Crumbling old temples  
Broken pottery in a museum  
Roofless dwellings  
From a very distant past....  
Or a recent attack.

Mortars and bombs  
Short circuit time  
Creating an instant past  
For an un-rememberable future  
And then there will always be the archaeologist  
'Oh they made a fire there and  
War all around'.

'They read books and burnt libraries...'  
Is what she will let you know  
In that matter of fact objective kind of way...  
Bits of memory interpreted for us.

But nothing will ever tell the story  
From a broken home  
Or a family that sizzled away in a rocket attack  
Or just vanished with the grenade....  
Now leave it to the historians  
To mop all that up ....  
They do it all the time.

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# Gossamer Webs Of Memories

A culvert opens on your face  
But what if the face is a desert  
With no stream or river?  
Life merely an expression  
That a voice gives away  
Existence a dream already lived.

Everything desired is happening  
While tomorrow comes  
Cruising on past possibilities  
Present sadness recedes into a vault  
One that has no key  
Opening just enough  
To let memories pile in untidy heaps  
Letting nothing out, nothing out at all  
Now turning off the light is a formality  
A feckless goodbye to Now.

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# Grasmere

They say that he lived there for many years of his life  
Radha painted his world without seeing it at all.  
On a cold autumn morning  
Walking past a field she asked  
'Where are his flowers? '  
'No daffodils in this season'  
She was told.  
But they are there in his words  
Read by her a million times  
Her placid paintings  
Make more sense to me  
Ass, how did I, miss? ? ?  
She has always been  
One of Wordsworth's beautiful flowers  
All her life and to know that..... now!

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# Helpless

And then when it comes to you  
A choke in the throat  
The world swimming around you  
Lucky indeed to lie down and not fall  
Fortunate if they get you to the hospital.

Once there please learn to keep grinning  
Grinning learn to be amused  
You are not in control  
Nor are they who strip you off everything  
That identifies you as a person  
Please metamorphose into the patient  
You never thought you would ever be.  
All over you the wires  
And overhead the monitor.

You learn of what is going on  
Where you are I mean  
For a laugh Is someone getting out alive,  
Nurses' whispers the wardboys hustle  
Hiss of wheels rolling out....  
Another hopeful who came  
Never to hold another's hand  
Ever, ever again.

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# I Want To Be There

I want to be there when the Sun comes  
To set, at the end of the ocean  
Watch the green waters blaze orange  
At the end of a day.

I want to be there when the Sun begins  
Its fiery descent, far out in the horizon  
Knowing only too well that is going on  
To light up another part of our world  
Delighting me in the knowledge  
That we are all of us part a whole  
Yet can only be in one half of earth.  
The Sun I see setting far out there  
Is someone's Sunrise soon.

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# Leaving Bath

It takes a hold on you  
A shackle that will leave only with life itself  
The heartfelt longings of remembered evenings  
Dawn in strange places  
Unmade beds and abandoned dresses  
Looking out of new windows  
Unchanging in every town  
Endless tiled roofs And not a human in sight  
Look down on snow-laden footpaths  
And the car below our carriage  
For a journey that never ends...  
A camera in a corner forlorn,  
Recording through an Alzheimers eye  
Overpowering sadness of happiness lost...  
Forget, forget and forget again  
Roll out forever  
Past cold deserted streets  
See a diminutive figure recede in the mirror  
Out of the town and on the road again.

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# Not Far From Tonle Sap

A young girl in pajamas  
Lost and alone near a cafe  
Anxious Germans and some French and Italians too..  
Rather lecherous old turtles of indeterminable age  
Something disappointingly pornographic  
Made the city wail in silence and ache  
As the expat crowd sipped gin  
On the verandah of the foreign correspondents club...  
Down below the motos  
Waited and not in vain.

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# Our Son Returns

Arrivals are always difficult  
The awkward greeting  
That tentative grimace unfurling into a smile  
A guffaw and then the hug  
Melts formality and time  
He is back home again for a while  
Seems to me he never left  
Ah what fun!

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# Stealing In.

An emotion creeps into the heart  
Like dawn in winter....  
Hesitant hazy light  
Ready to blackout again.

The clock announces  
The hour before everything.  
The street and the teacups are still  
While something has changed?  
.....forever?

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# To Dream In Whispers

To dream in whispers  
You must be afloat  
On a paper boat  
Memories must wind  
Its tiny paper sail  
Pushing old loads gently  
Past ethereal landscapes  
Quietly nudging long- ago  
Ever my present too.

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