

## Memories

### My sister

*Bashir Sakhawarz*

Through the thickness of distance,  
Through the walls of mountains,  
Through the depth of oceans,  
Last night I touched you  
I touched your pain  
They became mine.

There is no meaning in children smile  
Flowers grow, but are they flowers?  
Children smile, but are they smiling?  
Without your children  
Without your garden  
Flowers and smile do not grow  
Without your hand,  
Life delivers emptiness

When I departed  
You whispered "take care"  
Have you taken care?  
Have you built a dream?  
Have you not seen crashed hopes?  
Have you avoided disasters?  
Disasters are in the air  
They grow in your garden  
They fall off the trees.

## **The murder of a writer**

*Basil Fernando*

(A tribute to Lasantha Wickramatunga, a well known Sri Lankan journalist and editor who was assassinated on January 8, 2009.)

I do not cry  
for Lasantha  
my tears are for you  
Lanka, Lanka  
Of the real ugliness  
he wrote  
his death  
told it all  
Surrounding a car  
gunmen and guards  
hunted a man  
and revealed the nation  
speech connects citizens  
silence kills the nation  
Lanka, Lanka  
death now is your game.  
Mahawweli, Kelani, Walawe  
polluted rivers  
carries to the seas  
your shame  
Shed not Lanka  
crocodile tears  
have remorse  
for letting your children die.

You held the gun  
you killed the pen  
Lanka, Lanka you made  
the land go barren

I do not cry  
for Lasantha  
my tears are for you  
Lanka, Lanka

### **Tearful poems of a mother**

*W M Gayathri Priyakari Gunasekara*

The day you were conceived in my womb as my first  
A thousand flowers bloomed in my mind, my son  
The first day your milk-mixed eyes saw the world  
In my mind the Poson full moon appeared  
When with childish smiles you were walking in front of the house  
And in my warmth you cuddled and dived into the dream world,  
There was no one so fortunate as myself on the earth  
Hundreds and thousands of times my mind murmured in joy  
My son grew in intelligence and good habits  
Who did not see my golden son's value?  
Though not rough and hard, you, my son, appeared a hero  
Who then didn't see my son's value?  
As the Asela moon was rising, murderers entered my home  
Despite thousands of pleas to the heart, away they took my son  
Hearing the fire of the gun's barrel, my mind went far away  
To which world was my golden son taken away?

Translated by Basil Fernando

## **A Son's Tale**

*Basil Fernando*

It was a crowd of twenty or so  
Many not so young and some old  
One among the not so young rose  
This tale he told

Blame not for what I say  
I am worried and this I thought  
I should loud say  
For years now it bothers me

My father had father  
Him my father dearly loved  
Humble gentle a man was he  
I was told

To a landlord's family  
A tenant farmer was he  
Working hard earned but little  
With respect he served the masters

Hurt in his heart he hid  
To his son he said  
Never a tenet father be  
Get away from here and study

To a distant place my father fled  
With someone's help books he read  
To make my story short  
After study some fortune he amassed

During that long time  
Of his father he did hear  
That the master revenging son's departure  
Had beaten his father dear

Some revenge my father had in mind  
Brought lands next to the masters  
Furious was this landed lot  
Seeing servant's son their equal

This way some years had fled  
A day when we all were gone  
He was left alone  
In the big house now he owned

Some from the old master house  
Like wolf had enter and pounced  
Beating him hard shouting words so foul  
Thinking him dead had happily left

Returning home I saw my father dear  
Thinking him dead was full of tears  
With neighbours help to hospital went  
Found him unconscious but not dead

Doctors did him well treat  
His heart did better beat  
All the story he did with names repeat  
Police and lawyers were upbeat

Here my friends my worries start  
My father in fact breathed his last  
In court three were sentenced to death  
I must say, I had my revenge

Now do not blame when you this hear  
Give me your forgiving ear  
When my father was still not dead  
Here is something that doctor said

It is possible to prolong father's life a little  
But a serious surgery he need  
Risk there is that his memory  
He may fully lose

I loved my father and his father too  
Wanted him alive with memory or not  
But with honesty let me say  
A lawyer I did consult

Briefly this is what he said  
Your father had told what happened  
If he dies or live to tell his tale  
To death or jail those villains will go

If he lives but cannot tell his tale  
I asked this lawyer and this he said  
Then these villains will free go  
A profound problem in me arose

Whole night sleepless I thought  
Justice to him, his father, I did want  
But to let him go  
That I did not want

Tell what you wish or forgive if you can  
The risk of loss of his memory  
I did not take  
Soon peacefully he was gone

Now my secret I have said  
Not so old man said and sat  
There was silence all around  
No word any one uttered.

### **Is my son also sleeping under the mara tree?**

*W P Ruwani Wanniarhchi*

My little son,  
I can wait  
Till I am tired, seated at the doorstep of the house  
Inside the lonely mind,  
Kiri kokku (white storks) are crying  
Come back home again,  
My little son  
It is to erase the tears of the leaking roof  
Of the wattle and daub home from which my son flew  
To the field of letters  
Who there, aney (Oh, my goodness), told my son  
To break mahamera (heaven's) walls?

In the midst of fires,  
The irony I do not feel in the world  
Of the milk pot that moved in the river  
Is my son also sleeping  
Under the mara tree?

Warm tears fill both my eyes  
Now, son, who am I to feed  
The warm rice cooked on the three cooking stones?  
Come, even in a dream,  
And wave your hand  
I still have more tears in my eyes  
To shed

Translated by Basil Fernando