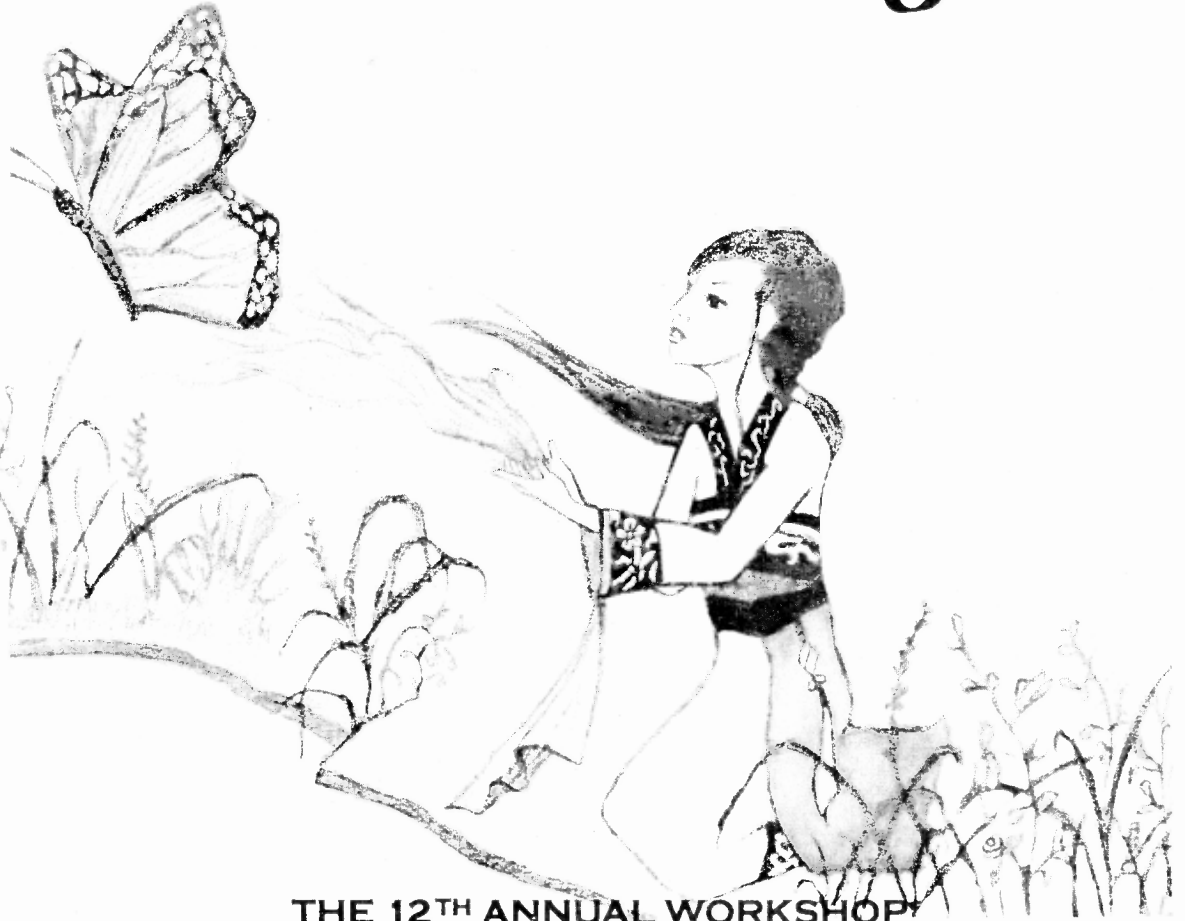


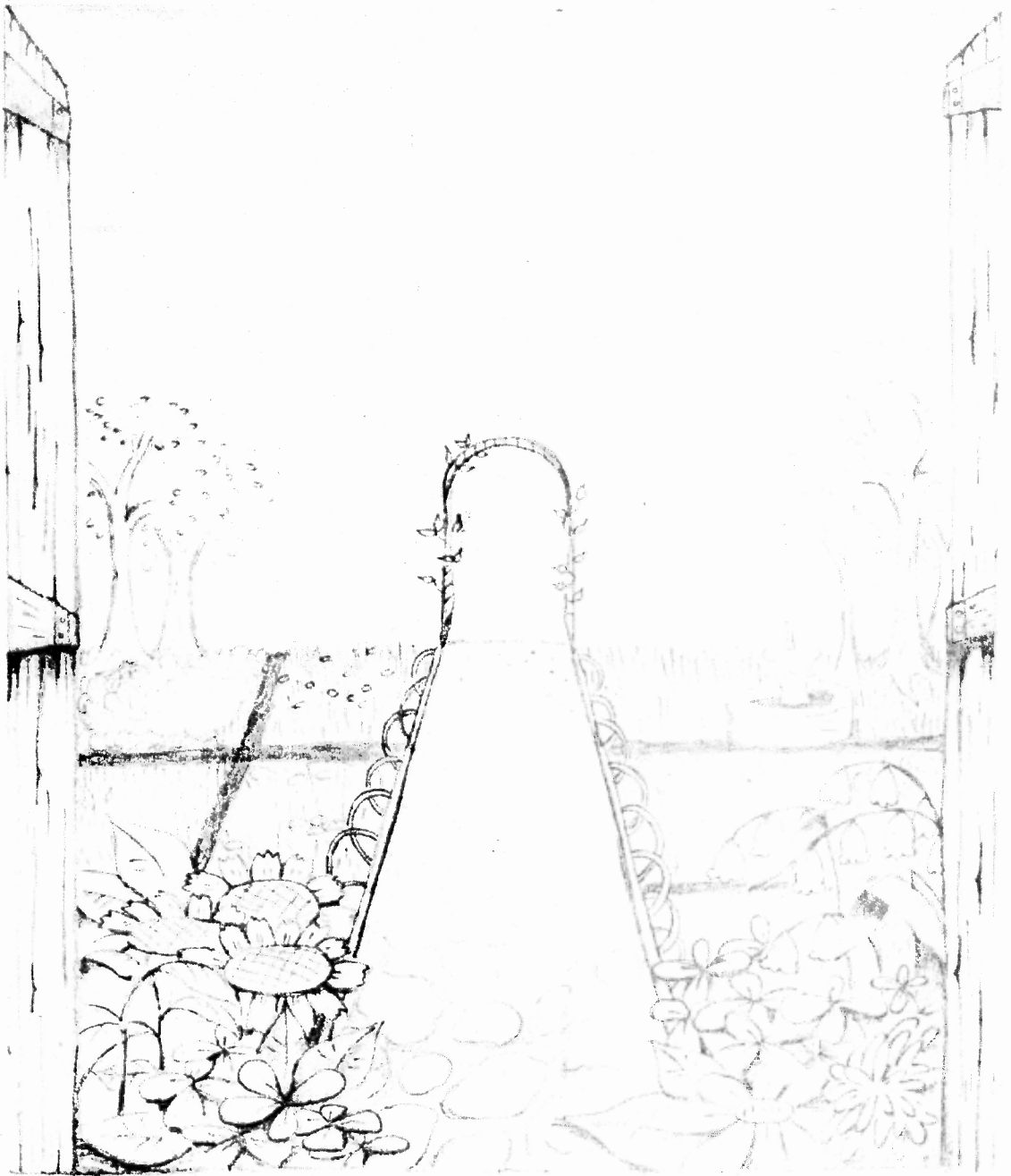
kavithalaya



THE 12TH ANNUAL WORKSHOP

2004

KODAIKANAL INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
• THE AMERICAN COLLEGE, MADURAI •



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kavithalaya

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SPRING 2004 ISSUE

kavithalaya

["a house of poetry/creation"]

The American College, Madurai and Kodaikanal International School

THE 12TH ANNUAL WORKSHOP

Swedish Compound, Kodaikanal

7-9 August 2003

• • germinal • •

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WATERERS

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DAVID STENGELE

Preramble: Dibblings

Over the two days of the workshop, Keki N. Daruwalla, the chief poet-guest, provided, in his refreshing, poetically associative, rather than academically structured, style, many insights to inspire ideas in, and trigger poems from, the budding poet-participants. He revealed that poets solve their own riddles, their own doubts, and resolve tangles within themselves. He confessed that poets steal—from personal experiences, from traditions, from other poets. He insisted that poets need to go beyond what they are seeing and let the image—never abstract qualities—come through in their writing. He reminded us, as all writers do, of the old saying that inspiration is primarily perspiration. Sample, then, the sweat, the images, these robbers and riddlers produced: witness the thefts and enjoy the untanglings so that you, too, may go beyond what you are seeing. Keki Daruwalla humorously remarked about a politician attempting to write: "Your politics are bad enough; don't ruin poetry as well." Whatever the politics of these present poet-participants, I trust you will find they have not ruined poetry, but, in their own little ways, built upon it.

David Stengele

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• • *the garden* • •

“ . . . but let us cultivate our garden.”
Voltaire, *Candide*

~Then . . . ~

There it is, suspended before me;
It narrates composure,
Created by the strokes of the artist's brush,
Spangled with green!
The sweeps of bristles trailblaze images
Of land, water, sky,
And life: still and pure,
An image indelible from the mind;
True? Only then,
Reality cannot be reattained;
The endless ecstasy lies forever in that moment,
Which absconded with time.

ROHAN TANDON

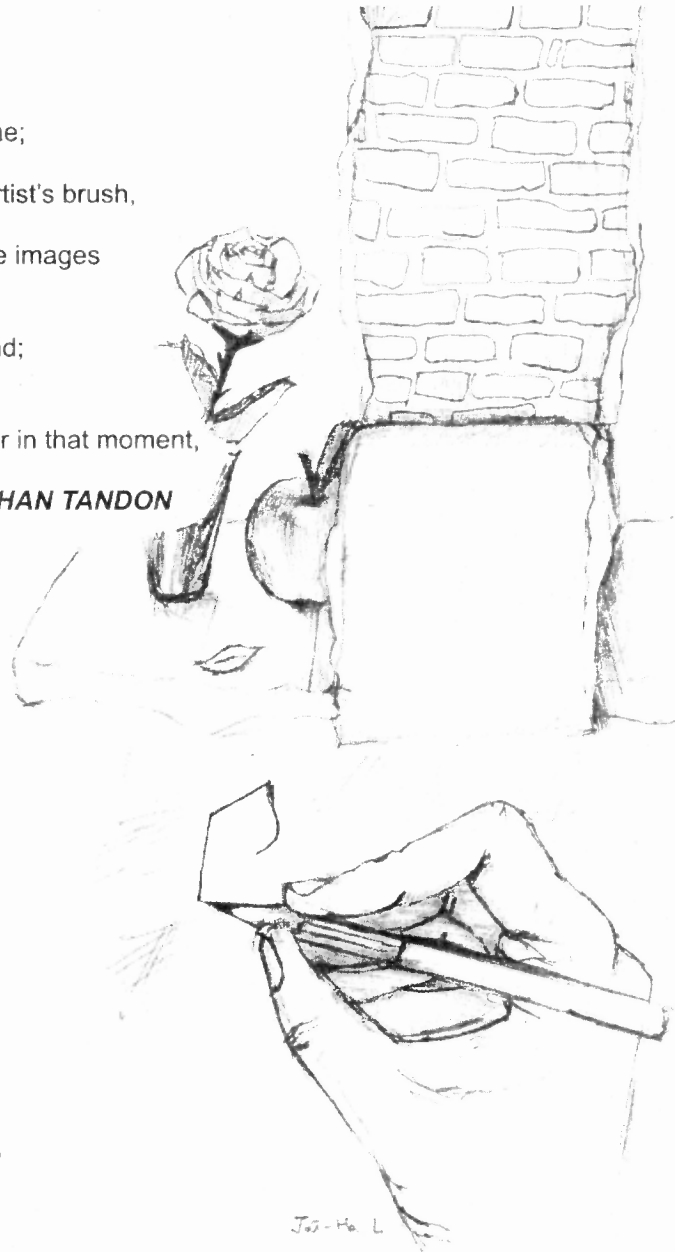
Deframing

I stand here
On a lone easel,
A shining painting
Of framed-in elegance.

Cushion-soft expression,
Crimson cheeks and
Fragrant velvet blooms
Fill sunlit chambers.
Eyes cough up a faraway look.

But my creator,
Tamed skin, shabby hair,
Calloused fingers, mute genius,
Paint-smeared clothes and all,
Was somehow
More eloquent.

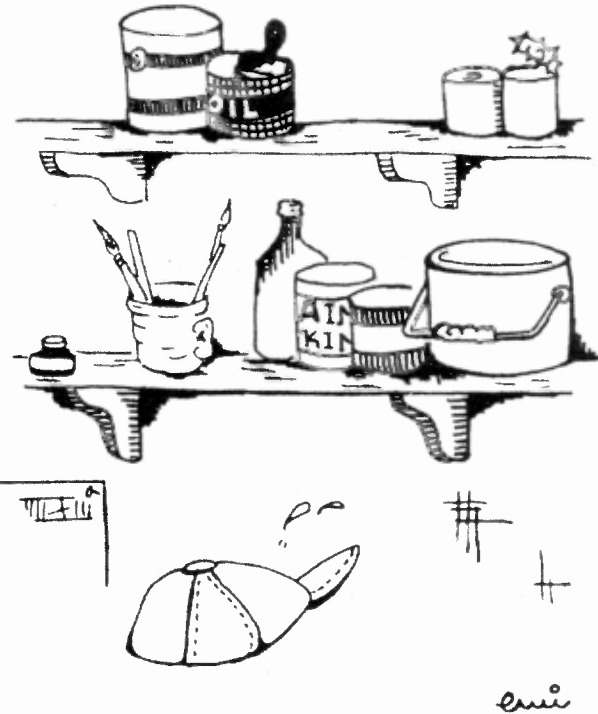
JANE PAULINE POORNA



Paint

I want to paint.
I want my brush to translate
My soul's lost thoughts onto canvas
Using thick, rich colours
Blending into others.
A flower with hues
Of purple, yellow, and
One hundred blues.
How can I choose between
So many strokes, shapes, textures . . .
It twists, turns, and evolves but . . .
It's not right.
It doesn't look like anything.
I'm disappointed.
Tears brim, spill, merge
With turpentine, colour, oil;
And are soaked into canvas and skin.
My little cousin,
With chubby cheeks and fingers,
Totters over and grins,
Oblivious to my despair.
She sticks two fingers
Into the disfigured flower.
Fingerprints all over, paint all over.
Rosebud-mouth says,
"Flower, pretty."
I smile.
I can paint.

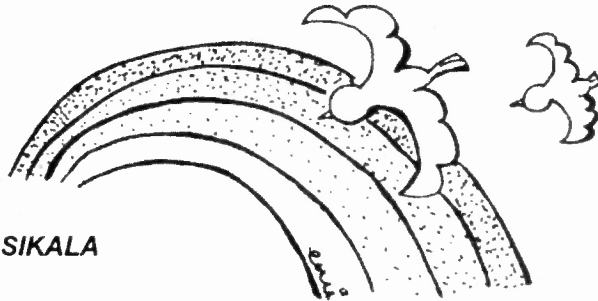
DEVIKA BAKSHI



Rainbow

My happiness is like a rainbow
colourful and pleasant
But fades away as swiftly as
the flight of the bird.

K. SASIKALA

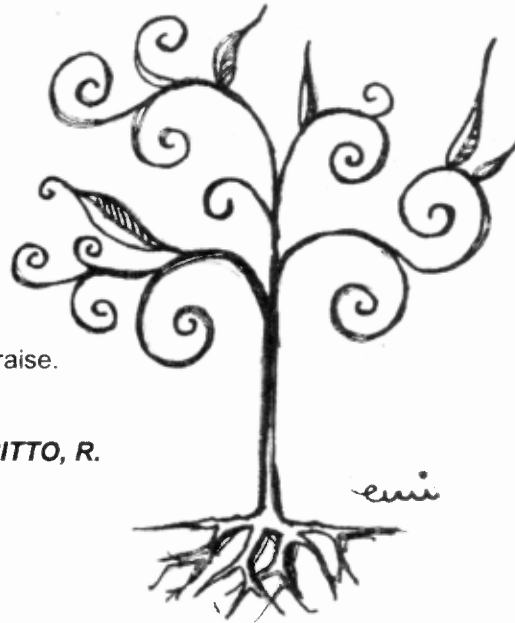


Metamorphosis

He calls me inanimate.
No life.
I submit myself to be given shape,
Chiseled and polished.
I am grieved to lose even an atom
Of my being.
I attain a different form after much pain,
My pain, not his.
Many admire my inflicted beauty and he draws praise.

I wish I can make a stone out of him!

ESAYO BRITTO, R.



Writing Poetry

Shall I write of the magnificent sun?
My desire to bask in its unending glory;
Shall I write of the beautiful flowers?
Each chrysanthemum with its story;
Shall I write of the massive unending sky?
Its beauty and dignity defined;
Or shall I write of the refreshing breeze?
Each moment its touch refined;

Or shall I just simply sit down and write
Of the beauty of the Lord?
Each flower, each leaf, each petal, each pod,
All describing the beautiful face of God . . .

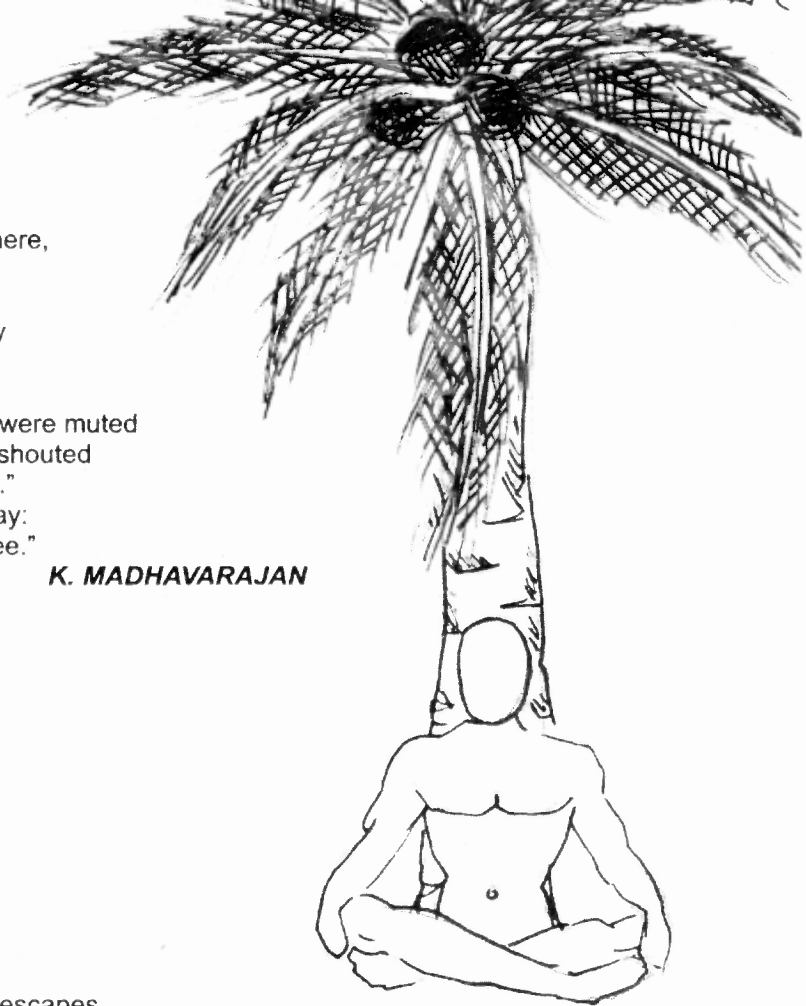


NISHITA MERCHANT

Under A Coconut Tree

My friends went here and there,
leaving me where we were
"to write poetry," they said.
My back leaned comfortably
against the curled trunk,
my eyes gaping at the sky,
and the tall trees. But they were muted
when someone passing by shouted
"Buddha under a bodhi tree."
The second chased me away:
"Newton under the apple tree."

K. MADHAVARAJAN



Falling Asleep

As all my energy inside me escapes
I feel like flying, floating,
The gate to the white sea closes gradually,
while a black ship begins its journey across the sea.
The gate closes,
when the black ship finds its way and disappears into the darkness.
The ship travels through the colorful lights emerging from the darkness,
and finally the sole sailor gets down,
on the land of El Dorado,
enjoys his best moment of life,
till the bright light forces the gate to open,
when his memory is lost in holiness of the light.

KWANG JUN LEE

Fever

A flight of fantasy crossed my mind
And I in slumber reached out,
It beckoned me in, then chased me out,
It left me far behind

Suddenly the world went black
I was in an embrace with heat
It coiled around my head
And blazoned out my mind
It turned my body into an empty shell
And burned out any thought
It left me feeling like a child
Small, helpless and lost

A silent movie played on, fluctuating from color to bland
A droning of a thousand bees
Then a thunderclap
Explosions of fireworks
Before my eyes
Then blessed darkness, peace
I felt around feebly in my head
Trying to chase the devils out
But only succeeded in awaking myself
And then falling endlessly to the ground

PAVITHRA SAGAR

On Vacation

My voice is on vacation
It left home yesterday
It didn't tell me just how long
It planned to stay away
I wished it could have warned me
I need it today!
There's so much stuff I've got to share.

But now! Another day.

BINU M. DANIEL



In Search

To seek our true self,
We become others;
In order to search within,
We remain on the outside;

We are left alone,
Away from the world,
Away from our true being;

This outer persona is the fugitive
That has fled from our minds,
This is our path of escape,
The route we choose to cower from reality;

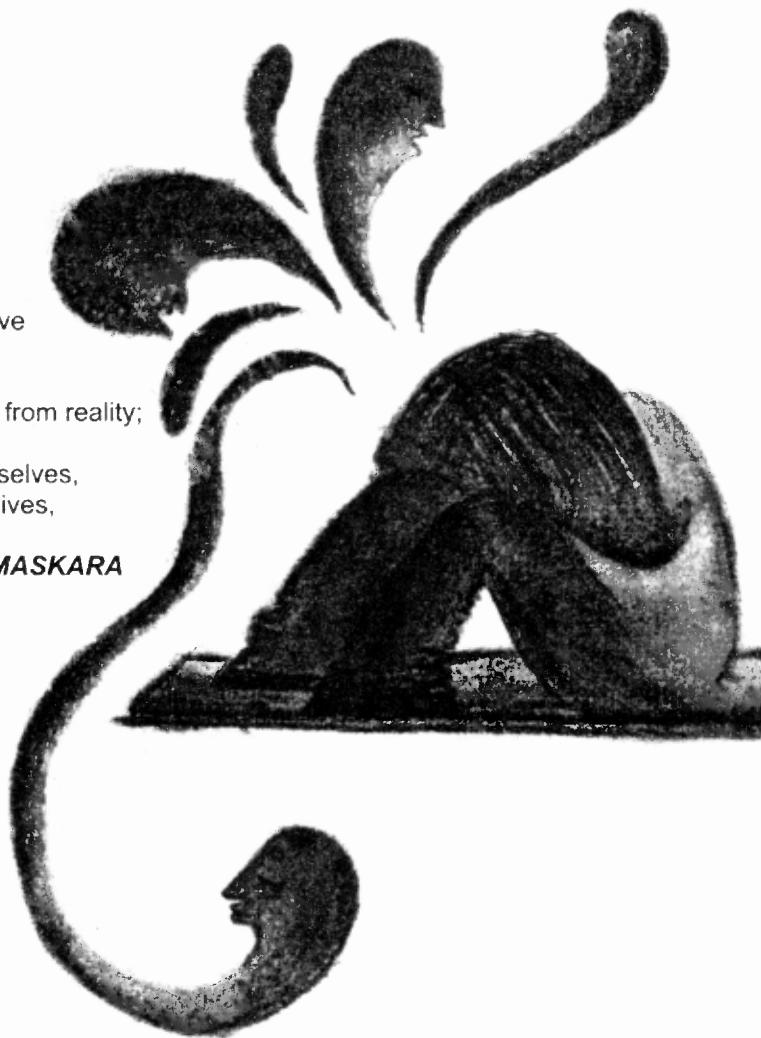
We are hiding, hiding from ourselves,
From our past, our future, our lives,
From our individuality.

ANKIT MASKARA

Ever Wonder?

Ever wonder what lies behind
The golden orb melting
Into icy blue,
Or tall green silhouettes
Of dense secrets,
Or hard concrete towers
Of windows shutting in
Not revealing,
Or brick walls that segregate
Not unite,
Or loud gestures,
Or louder laughter,
Or sugary words,
Or hesitant grins,
Or hooded eyes?

JANE PAULINE POORNA



Final Fantasy

I walked on a crowded street,
and realized that,
among these many people,
I was the only one walking the other way.
I looked at my back,
and realized that
all of them stopped moving.
No sound, no movement.
"Are you all right?" I asked.
An absolute silence.
I touched one of them,
an absolute hollowness.
I asked myself,
"Do they exist?"

I came back home,
looked at the mirror,
and I asked my self,
"Where am I?"

I lay down on my bed,
tried to recall my childhood;

I couldn't remember anything,
and I thought that
I'd lost my memory.
But I soon realized that
it wasn't there from the beginning,
and I asked myself,
"Do I exist?"

I closed my eyes,
tried to think of anyone close to me,
tried to think of anything precious to me,
and I realized that
there is nothing,
and I asked myself,
"Who am I?"

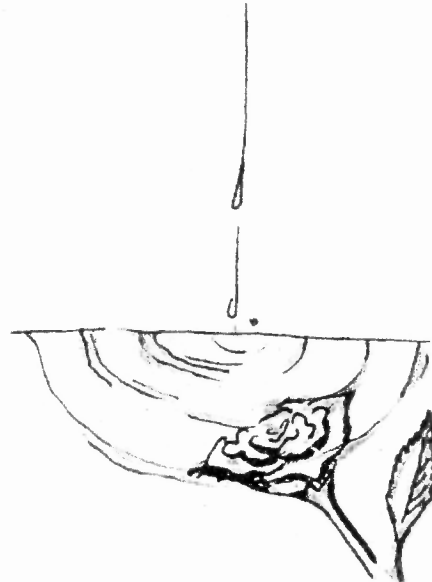
My eyes were opened,
their sight blinded by bright light,
when "I" asked,
"Am I real?"
I wasn't there.

KWANG JUN LEE

She Mirrored

Twice or thrice I glanced at her.
I felt she too glanced at me.
Never knew what of hers bothered me
But something strange I saw in her.
The slightest touch of her gave the warmth
Which I longed for,
The unexpected word 'sorry' she said
And really meant.
After all she was not mine.

RAJESH SWAMI



Mist Figure

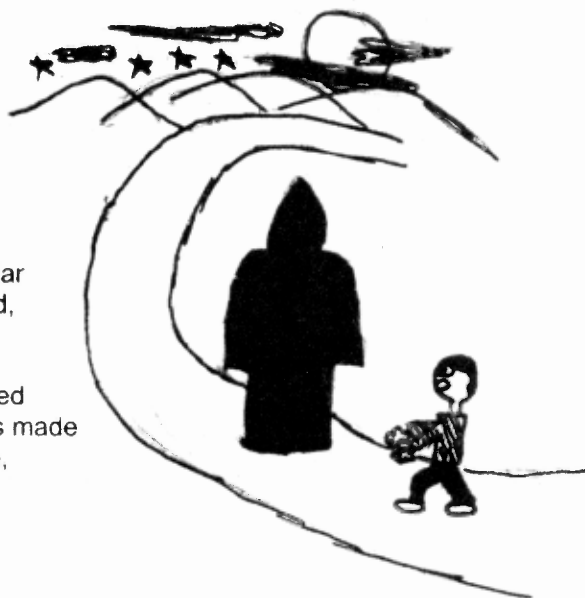
There was a misted figure that
walked along its path,
I followed, unaware, untrue to
myself, to my reasoning;

I followed that path, those familiar
footprints, that sheltered, guided,
and kept constricted;

The towering figure often rebuked
me, no chance was given, I was made
to follow, not knowing otherwise,
unable to look beyond;

When the figure disappeared,
the path was gone,
A new day, a new life,
The beginning, a chance.

ANKIT MASKARA



Day Dreams

I saw harmony and peace
dwelling in my dream
I saw Cauvery overflowing
the border of Tamilnadu
I saw the Indians and Pakistanis
shaking hands with each other
I saw the Americans
friendly to Arab countries
I saw life possible
on Mars in the near future
I saw every person
contented and happy
But then a noise intruded:
My mother was calling "wake up
Day dreams never come true."

K. SASIKALA

"WAKE UP!
DAY DREAMS
NEVER
COME
TRUE!"



Answers

Answers
are quite
feeble

As if carrying a heavy burden
they come,
groaning and moaning,
and
look for satisfaction
in our face

They know
how to
walk without treading the ground
and
swim without getting wet

I came across
an answer
the day before yesterday

Having seen me,
it dressed up
at once
and
took form

After adjusting
its appearance
it cast
an aura of stupidity around
and then
faced me

I did not say
anything

It started squirming

Worried,
it tried to gather
its dissolving self

Looking around
it tried
to touch me once

I pretended
not to notice

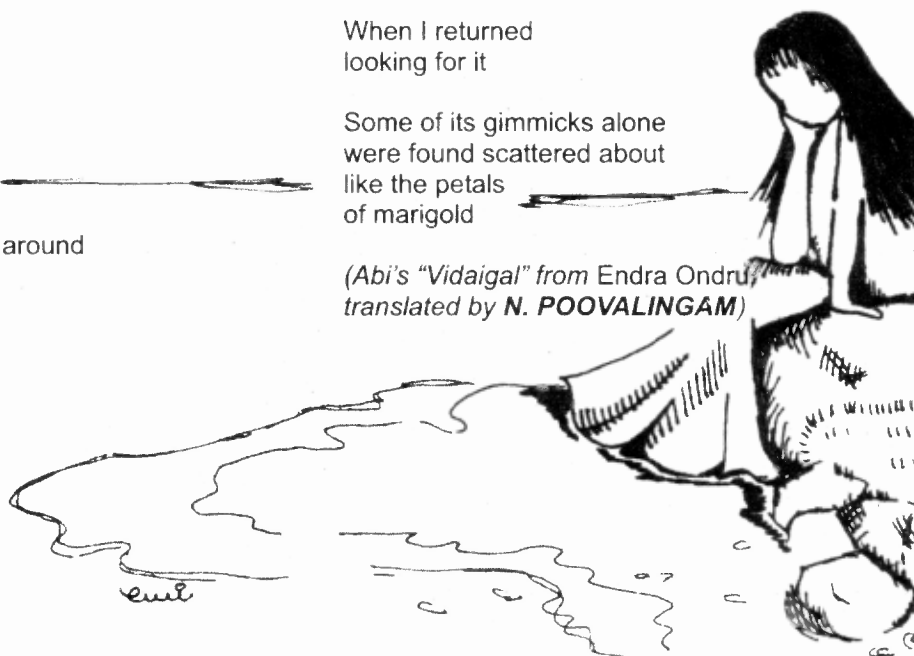
And it looked up
with some consolation

By an unexpected wind
we both got
thrown apart

When I returned
looking for it

Some of its gimmicks alone
were found scattered about
like the petals
of marigold

(Abi's "Vidaigal" from Endra Ondru,
translated by **N. POOVALINGAM**)



Years

I feel like a child today.
Memories of a three-year-old
Threaten to come out my eyes.
An eleven-year-old inside me
Wants to continue being a tomboy,
And play soccer in the rain-soaked mud.
A six-year-old is tugging at my sweatshirt,
Trying to convince it to turn into a dress.
An eight-year-old is dressing up
As a village girl and role-playing,
Enjoying the privacy of her
New privilege to lock the door.
A year-old, chubby girl
Doesn't know how to express herself.
A thirteen-year-old is excited about
Meeting "that boy" again;
And a sixteen-year-old is waiting
To be set free . . .

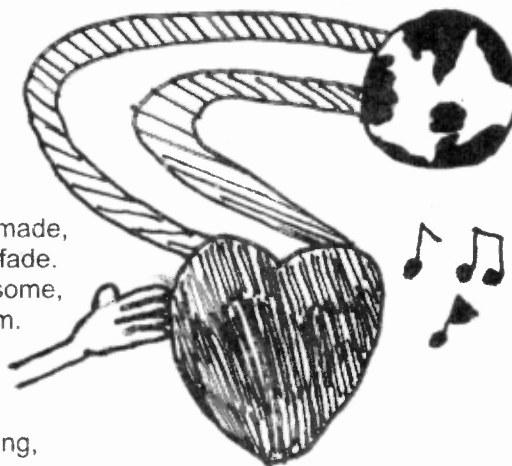
DEVIKA BAKSHI



Heartfelt

The heart, a place where love is made,
Where joys abound and sorrows fade.
Is ruled by many, imprisoned by some,
Dungeons where Fears softly hum.

The heart, a world so far away,
Yet so close to me today.
An empty void or blossoming spring,
Where silent Wisdom often sings.



AKSHAYA VARGHESE

Go

The warmth of the sun
seduces me, but I must go.
Mist of the clear air
eases me, but I must go.
Songs call out for me, but
I must go.

Towards the North
where mountains grow with everlasting white.
Towards the mirror of the sky and God
where the perfume of salt never dies.
Which way should I go?

The Path where journeys never end,
except with joy and pain.
The classrooms where the bells ring
and tell the beginning and the end.

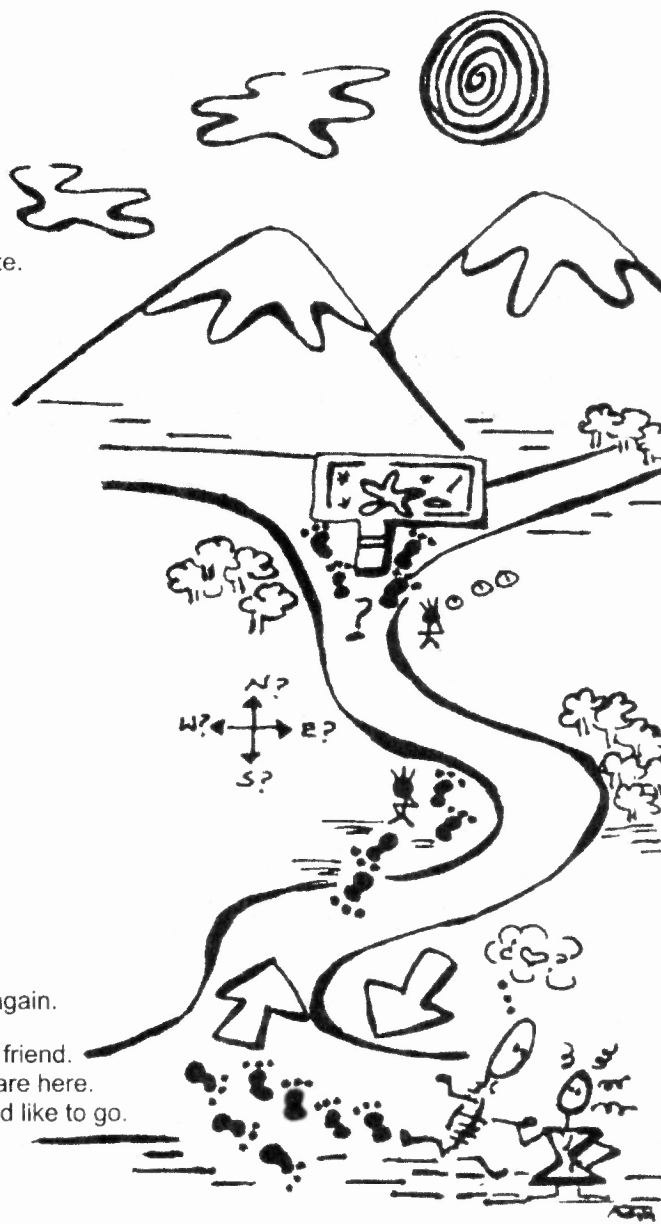
Dear friend, it is not an end.
Joy,
So simple yet complicated.
Look beyond the complicated to the simple.
Because it is so simple.
Your love has touched me and created joy,
more than what the world might think.

The mere smell of air will not leave
till we meet again.
There where illusion and truth are not
spared.

We have enough, my friend.
Do not be afraid,
It is enough to renounce
we have joy, and hope that joy will visit us again.

I will go nowhere, but stay here for you, my friend.
There is complete contentment in me, you are here.
Dare if you can and decide where you would like to go.
Because we are equally blessed,
Joy is here.

SONG-SOO KIM



I've Got To Face It

Now that time has towed by
In the fairy-tale I once longed to be in;
In the life I longed to share with you,
I now know that it was just wishful feelings

Though the flurry has fallen,
And the sun has melted the snow,
Giving life to the streams of spring,
I'm still captivated in this beautiful sentiment
That one would call love

I've never seen blue the way I do
When I am with you,
But as the diamonds that we wish upon
Broke through that lover's sky,
They told me this won't last
As I cherished this moment that comes
Only once a comet's journey

Now that I'm back on earth,
I face the reality
That continually perforates my broken heart,
That I know from the start
Would tear me down . . .
Until I get over you.
. . . until I get over you . . .

KENAN WARJRI

Terrace Hall

I built a house
And the house built
for itself
a terrace for the sky.

(from Deva Devan's Pulveliyil Oru Kal, translated by **T. GANESH BABU**)



Flashes Of Black

A Flash of Black
A field of red with purple flowers
A flash of black
An azure sky with sparkles of green stars
A flash of black
A woman's face
A brown face, eyes soft brown and chestnut hair
The first and last thing he'll actually remember
His world is an empty void
And days of darkness are his eternally
He smiles and remembers
A vision, a beautiful face
His mother's.
Imagination lets our minds wander, there are no bounds
But lakes of silver and crimson rainfalls
Can never replace the actual truth
We long for freedom, the ideas to express
But all he wants is the cold hard truth
What we want to create and play with, our fantasy
Is a blind man's prison
For he'll never know the world as we do
Never. Ever.

PAVITHRA SAGAR

Puzzle

Why could I not stop my feelings
Am I not like others to you
What made me so anomalous to you
Is it the affability I feel,
Is it the assurance I see,
Is it the voice I hear
Which is so strong?
I couldn't find the answer
You are something strange!

RAJESH SWAMI



Die For You Have Been

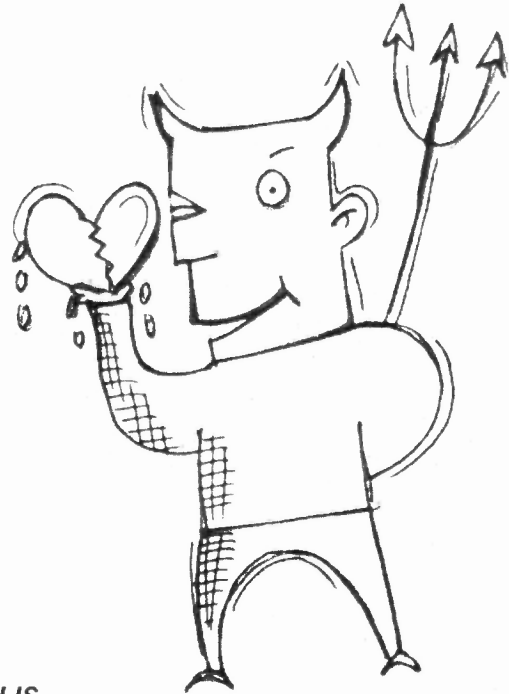
Blissful angelic manipulation, in crystal seas.
An eyelash brush painting purity.
Liquefy a thought, taste your dreams
And see things as you want them seen.

Hate yourself! You're not you.
Bleed ego, but 'be' without pain,
Or live your life in fear;
In Fear of mortal change.

Why words?
They're all but true.
With all our jealousy and hatred
You're just awful . . . an impersonation.

Maybe we would have loved,
Would have seen.
Now just Die,
Die for you have been.
Die for you have been.

JOSHUA PITTMAN PITZALIS



Failure

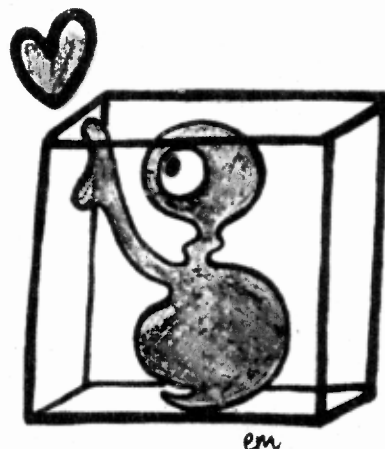
A hungry heart, never satisfied
A mounting guilt at a failed try
The phoenix-dreams that soar high
Hammered hopes that give a sigh
Despair gnaws with its Hyena laugh
Dust-like criticism blinds our sight
Shame and remorse cloaked around
The soul woos death as its only love
And why?
Doesn't the ghost-self hear
That failure is not my "private possession"?

JEYALAKSHMI, G.



Search

Caught in the clutches
Of loneliness,
Darkness set in.
My life was frozen—frozen?
Not exactly.
I was groping in the dark
But what was I looking for?
It was at this time
I met you
From then I found you
Beside me whenever
I was in choppy seas.
Yes! This was what I was searching for—
A heart which can love and steady me.



E. ESTHER PRABA

Chains' Rattle

Rattling chains and iron bars,
A cage binding both mind and soul.
An endless nightmare
Within infinite darkness.

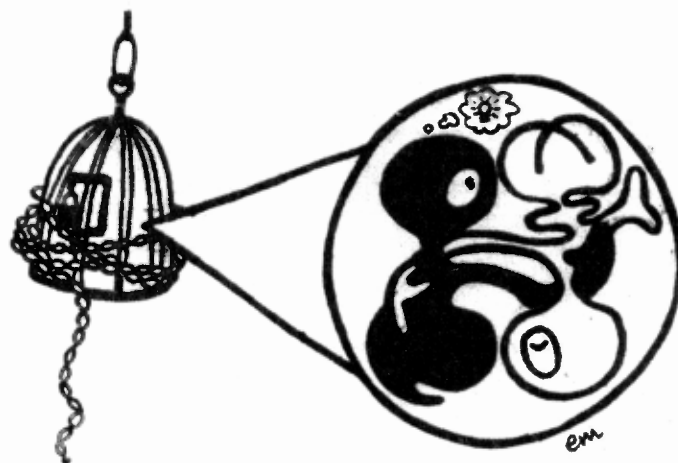
Each moment a challenge,
Every breath a curse.
The departure of hope;
The arrival of defeat.

Scars may be a fact of life
When they transform into reality,
Fear overtakes
The once cherished dreams.

And the chains rattle on . . .

and on . . .

and on. . .



RICHA KAUL-PADTE

The Dream Apparatus

Go the machine army,
Crush us with your steel guts
And metal demeanor.
Our civilization a mere blur
In your memory of conquests.
We are mere morsels
As you grind us,
Swallow, and take over.
Machine, do you dream,
Or do you fabricate
Electronic - Maya dreams?
Tell us before you crush us
And we will free ourselves
From the Dream Apparatus,
Hopeful of the rebirth
In which machines
May too be taught to dream.

JUSTIN AIER



Hic Jacet (Raven In Pace)

Somewhere between the hierarchy
and the low-rise,
hemmed in by cloud-polluted skies,
flies God's raven,
lone,
a dark spot of nature
circling o'er the shiny glass
that humans made,
the gleaming steel
of human trade,
searching vainly for a blade of grass,
a tree branch or a mountain pass

Here lies
God's creation

DACHST



My Piece Of Gold

He stood there with a gleam in his eye.
A smile of contentment danced upon his lips.
And in his tiny hands, a piece of Gold,
Glimmering excitedly under the noon-day Sun
As the old man inspected what was being
Shown to him . . .

. . . watching

. . . waiting

Till he found a suitable Hammer
And said,

"Mohan, my dear, look upon my pot of Gold
And be thou humbled and crushed
Frail and Weak.
Happiness: dance no more upon his lips.
Contentment: may you never be known to him.
For what is your piece of impure Gold
Against my Pot of Gold?
What are you against Me?"

He stood there with a fountain for an eye.
His lips trembled as contentment took its leave.
But still in his tiny hands, a piece of Gold.
Still glimmering excitedly under the noon-day Sun,
As the old man smiled at what had
Just been said . . .

. . . smiling

. . . smiling

Till he found his Hammer to be too weak . . .
The Human Spirit too strong.

VISHAL PULIKOTTIL



Spirit

Where is the mind's elixir?
The walls of wisdom have caved in,
Leaving behind a hazy blue.

Will it take a shot of gin?

With the mind so slow,
One shall never know,
Of the aging sin
That damned the flow.

NEEL PATEL

A Simple Wish

(to the lovely love of my life)

As I look at thee:
I wish I were the sky,
With ten thousand an eye.

TEJUS RAMAKRISHNAN

The Other Side Of This Moon

Can you hear the wind displacing the jewels of excess?
Can you feel me move to the rhythm of your greedy devouring?
Can you fathom my affection, during your festive making and beyond?
Can you taste the sweetness of my heaving pride, marred only by shame?
Can you smell my fear, reeking of his cheap but enticing wine?
Eventually Morpheus will gather you into his engulfing arms . . .
When will He come for me?
When will He consummate and impregnate me with swollen dreams of another
reality?
When will the desert embrace us, seed of the light?
When will the skies drink my tears and bathe me in its milk?
When will I get to see the other side of this moon?

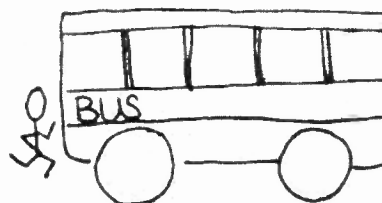
GAUTAMI RAMACHANDHRAN

~ Suja ~

Indecent Proposal

"How much do you love me?" I asked him.
"Will your love exceed the limits of the sky?"
"Is your love infinite?" asked I
Oh, No reply!
"How much do you love me?" I cried indignantly
"I love you," said he
silencing me with his soft touch
I . . . I love you, as
I love my WIFE!

K. BHARGAVI



A Husband's Love

A Monday morning.
Amidst the busy throng he mingled.
He laboured painfully to
Alight in the bus.
The girl next to him was sweet,
But stamped hard on his feet.
With a pleasing smile he said, "okay."
With aching feet
He reached his office.
His boss in a hurry
Pushed against him hard.
Sheepishly he said, "Never mind."
Later that night,
At his home after work,
For a little drop of coffee
That stained his shirt,
He shouted at his wife
"You fool, can't you be careful?"

ANITA CAROLINE, T.



S.4.2

Dailama (Dilemma)

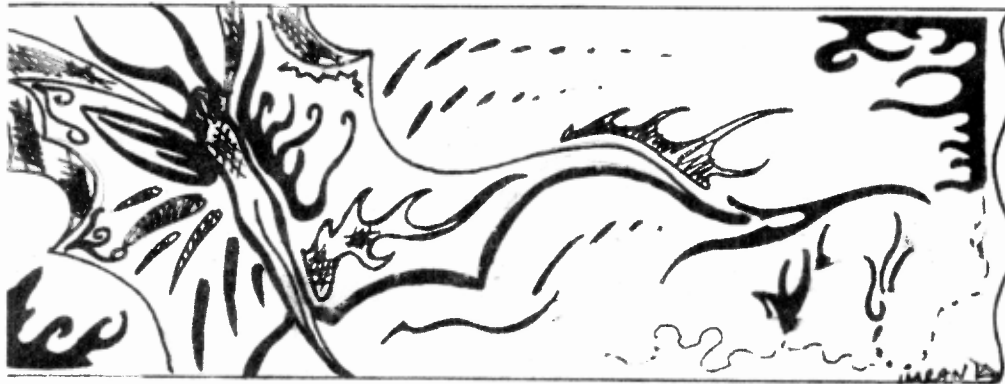
One day, sun so high,
clattering trays,
constant chatter in the air,
all around me empty seats,
food my only entertainment.
Like a rustle of silk
a zephyr passes by—
the atmosphere changes,
the beauty astounds,
a figure like none other,
clothes one with her form.
A rush of blood to the head—
I am not alone. Across from me,
one stares at the same beauty,
Alas, what an ass!
he once had in his grasp
if only he had not shunned her
away.

zac

Aryans Unleashed

Shining lights,
Shimmering bodies.
Throb of beats,
Sweating lace,
Twisted limbs,
Contour rippling,
Tautened cloths
Tease our eyes,
Two special wonders—
Eighth and ninth—
Volcanoes erupt
Fire and fury
Two men can't control,
One is young, the other old,
One is timid, the other bold—
Long live the Babe-aryans!

zac



Feminists

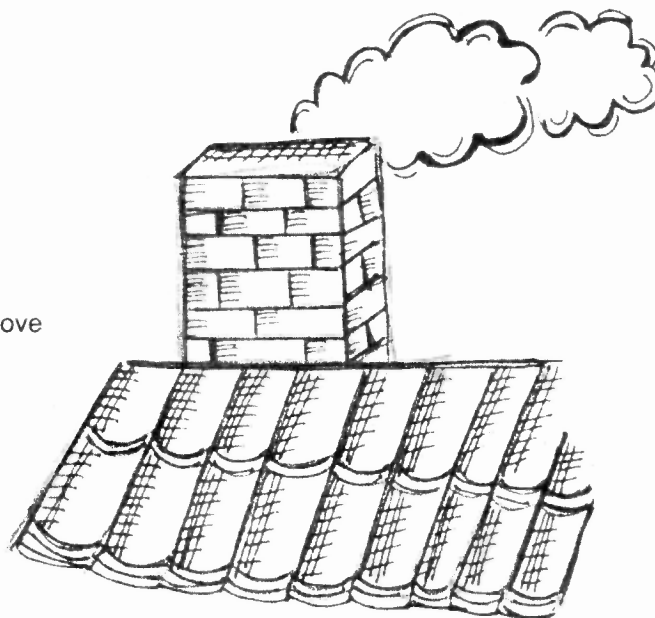
"We want equality," demanded the feminists,
"But 'Ladies first' sounds better."

SHARMILA PRIYA, S.

Chimney

Sometimes it's depressing,
The nagging heat
Gets to you.
Black-faced, too tall, gawky,
Sticking out like some sore-thumb,
Doing a 'soot'able job.
Handling pressure from below,
Stormy tempers, frosty contempt from above
Facing 'peer' pressure
From nosy dusters and heartless eyes.
But it's not too bad,
At least 'letting off steam'
Is tolerated.

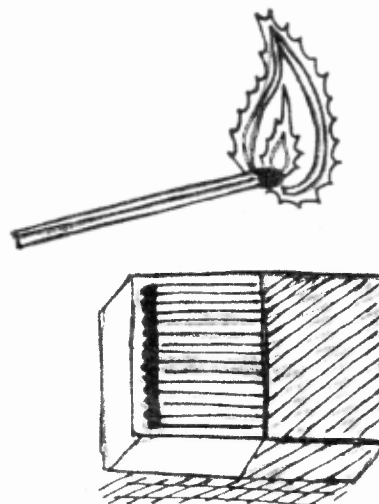
JANE PAULINE POORNA



The Humane Fire

The shades are drawn, the shadows bickering,
The hungry fireplace gorging the trees
Cracking fires charring the wood
Quarrelling with each other
Sparks flying out—disowned, exiled
Burnt to cinders, the warmth radiating to
Frozen hearts, half-roasted faces.
The chimneys pouring out smoke
Of the fires burning within their hearts.
The fire-maiden flitting among the blazing wood
Her ardent throb
Spreading benign sympathy
To the estranged household.
The frost thaws
The drooping flowers
Of the stammering fire murmur
The embers die, the maiden sleeps.

SHARMILA PRIYA, S.



Kumkum

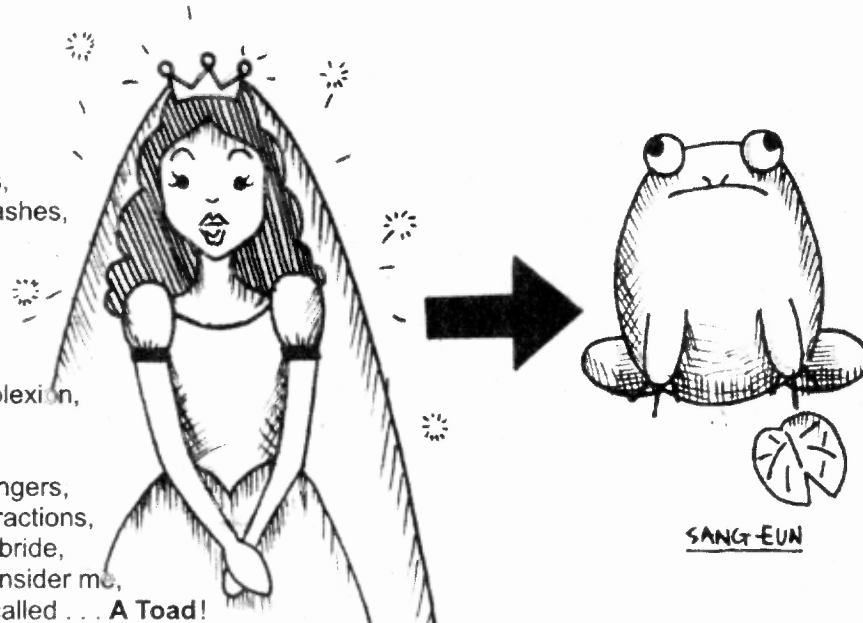
It's what she was to be
She was in traditional dress
Kinsfolk gathered for the day
Thabla and shehnais were played
Pujari chanted the mantra
The groom waited for the auspicious time
He took the kumkum between his
Thumb and forefinger
Made a mark between the parted
Hair of the bride
Which was an inch or two
She remained no more the daughter
To her parents.
That's what she was to be!

RAJESH SWAMI

Bride

Scintillating eyes,
translucent eyelashes,
fine nose,
structured ears,
ever smiling lips,
blanched teeth,
squat nape,
captivating complexion,
mosaic body,
slim legs,
spongy nimble fingers,
with all these attractions,
a most beautiful bride,
but they don't consider me,
for I have been called . . . **A Toad!**

P. DEEPA BHARATHI



SANG EUN

Bird-Watching

Standing amongst a group of birds
I adored her bewitching beauty
Powerful was her look
Courtly was her walk
Elegant was her physique
I smiled
She frowned
I withdrew.
Alas! I saw a wide-open pit
I yelled
She ignored
I approached to warn her
But
She didn't bother
Oops!
Fruitless was my endeavour
In the pit I found her.

K. BHARGAVI



Carbon Copy

My sister
Walks like me,
Talks like me,
Dresses like me,
Smiles like me,
Looks like me,
"You look so much like your sister"
Someone tells me,
They don't realize that
I'm the original,
She's the carbon copy.

PAVITHRA SAGAR



Candle

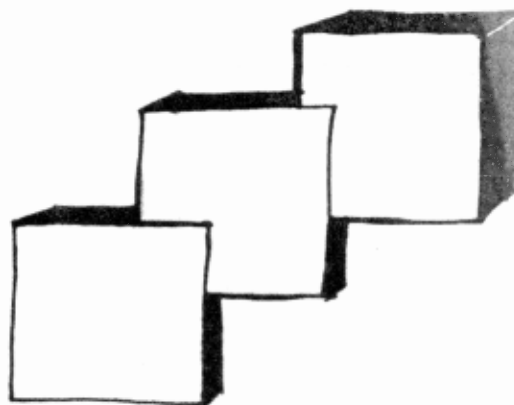
Yellow faced widow
brightens the room
with her mute cry.

K. MADHAVARAJAN

A 'Square' Deal

The idea was born
The day her first-born wailed
The quilt began to evolve, later.
Fond fingers caressed
Baby soft fabric,
Slushy cerelac and tantrum tears,
Woven with memories
Of perfect report cards
And sibling rivalries.
A hundred patches later,
She kept adding
Angry hues and sombre shades.
Adult blue flowed
Into chessboard patterns
Of hearse-black and pallid white
(That was when her husband died).
And still she wove, stitched and created.
Adding chaste bridal embroidery
To baby pink.
Colours grew into fond shades,
And the quilt was, one day,
As complete as her joy.
'That,' she thought, sighing, 'was long ago.'
Beside her, now the quilt lay,
Abandoned on her bed,
In the Old-Age Home.

JANE PAULINE POORNA



~54ja~

Bias

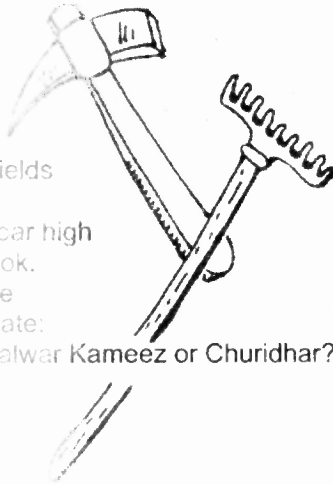
They say I'm brilliant.
They say I'm charming.
They say I've got massive potential.
They're just parents.

DEVIKA BAKSHI



It's Their Business

Hunger deaths, parched fields
Deltas turn into deserts.
Labourers strike, prices soar high
Towns wear a deserted look.
The servants of the people
Enter into a semantic debate:
"What do women wear: Salwar Kameez or Churidhar?"



ESAYO BRITTO, R.

Untitled

In the heart of the city
the buses stir
vomiting their black fumes
with a warning "No smoking"
at their hearts.

K. MADHAVARAJAN

Life Below

Descending from lumbering tour buses,
they're up there enjoying themselves,
plucking delicate blossoms,
leaning against limiting guardrails
residing behind glass and concrete.

Oblivious to life below

They don't see those dusky feet
trudging along jagged trails.
Or the stained thumbs
leaving impressions on documents unread.
Coarse hands, that once gathered
bulbous jackfruit,
now sheltering yowling infants,
from the Policeman's threshing lathi.

Huts charred.
Villages scattered.
Ancestral claims rebuked.

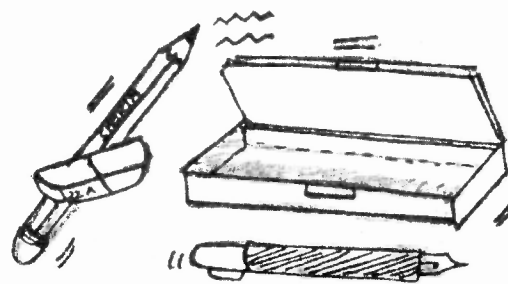
Occasionally they'll glare downward
but their concerns don't penetrate the canopy.
At night glimmering lights
Deliver cryptic messages,
but the valleys can utter no reply.

ARAM DONABEDIAN



Pencil Box

Watching me fumble,
the pencil box
opened up
"You know where the thing
you're looking for is?
I am just two lids
brought together."



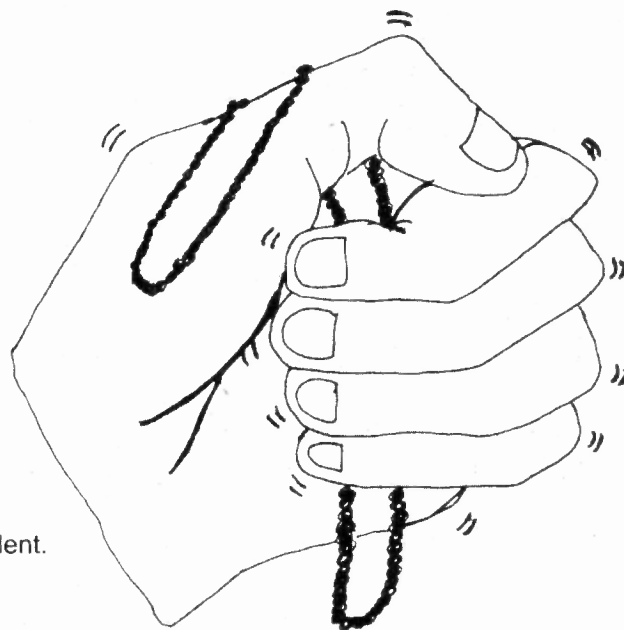
(from Deva Devan's Pulveliyl Oru Kal, translated by T. GANESH BABU)

Deceased Desire

At last she got it.
She had always
Wanted to have a pair of them.
Not those usual ones—
Silvery white,
Intricately designed,
Composing a jingling symphony.
But those yellow shining ones,
Thin and twining
Artless yet elegant
To adorn the
Soft skin of her ankles.

Finally the dream of hers came true
But they came with the tragedy of an accident.
Tears brimmed her eyes
Not tears of joy
But those of pain and agony,
For the golden anklets
Which she had much longed for
Could no more
Embellish her newly fitted wooden legs.

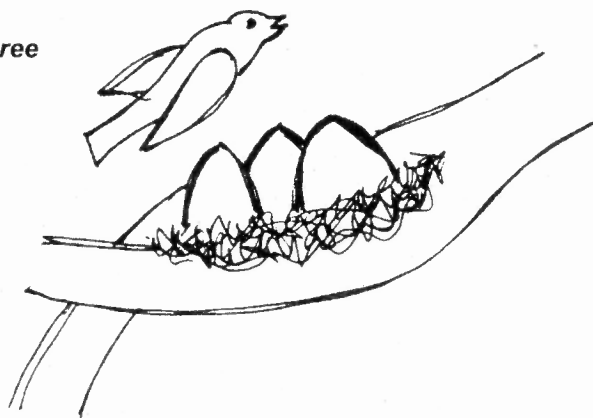
S. AARTHI



A Cuckoo's Lament—On Not Getting A Degree

A crow, the bachelor of architecture,
built a nest.
I being the Bachelor of Arts,
used it tactfully.
My coy hubby flirted with 'she' crow.
I used the opportunity,
Laid eggs and flew away.
Brainy Bachelor crow!
He destroyed my eggs, and hatched his own.
Finding myself childless,
I lament again for failing my degree.

P. DEEPA BHARATHI



Accidentally There?

A woman held a hand to her mouth
"Rama!" she whispered and
ran to call her friends—
the friends she gossiped with
only that afternoon.

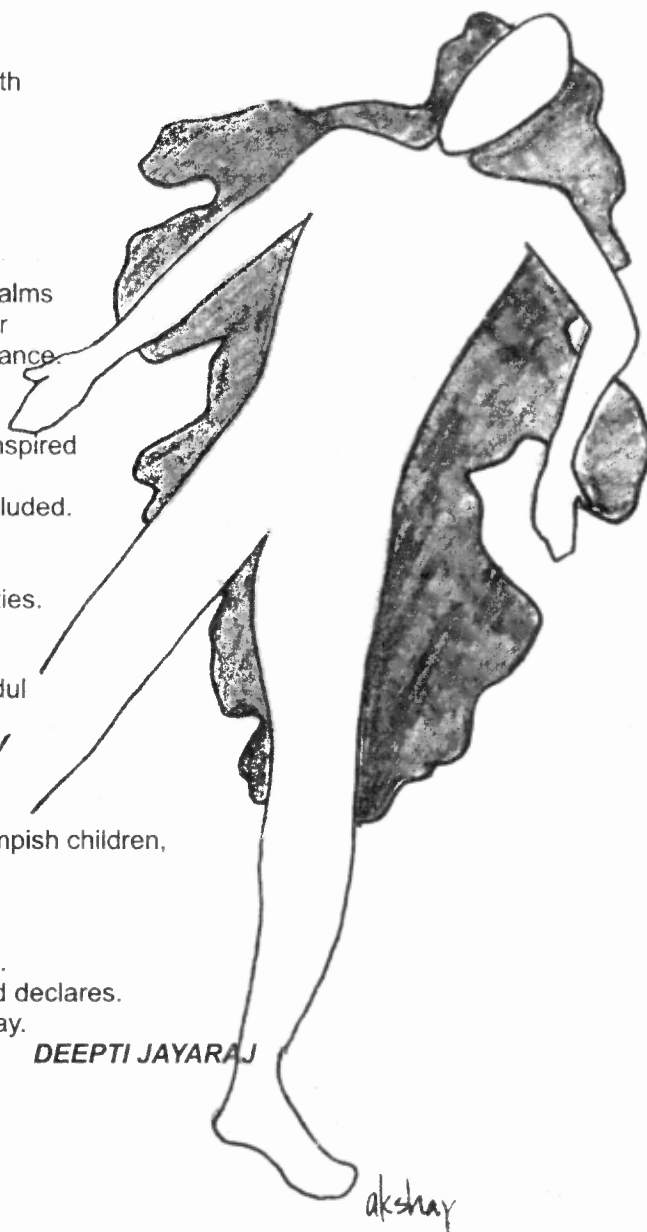
Others came running in
Their sarees bunched into their palms
"Tut, tut!" they said to one another
and looked to their men for assurance.

The men stood around in a circle
Deliberating what might have transpired
"It must be the boy's fault,"
Prem Lal, in the white dhoti, concluded.
"Kids today . . ." an old man
nodded in disapproval, as they
continued to sift through possibilities.

Children ran round in circles
"Areh! you should've seen it," Abdul
yelled out, "It was amazing."
A fifteen-year-old snatched up
His new found wallet with glee.

Prattling women, resolute men, impish children,
A preoccupied, clamouring mass,
While a mangled body lies
In a pool of warm blood.
The fingers twitch, groping for life.
"Inhuman," Prem Lal watches and declares.
Crossing his hands, he walks away.

DEEPTI JAYARAJ



Rocking Chair

There's nothing like a rocking chair
It's really quite beyond compare.

At home, after a hard day's work
My rocker's a delightful perk

Or if my chores are just *ad hoc*
I'm free to rock around the clock!

I love to lounge about, and therefore
A hard straight chair I do not care for.

A folding chair I can't abide
I might get folded up inside!

A cane chair's one I always shirk
Its seat is made of lattice-work

And so, after a long night's session
A cane chair leaves a sharp impression

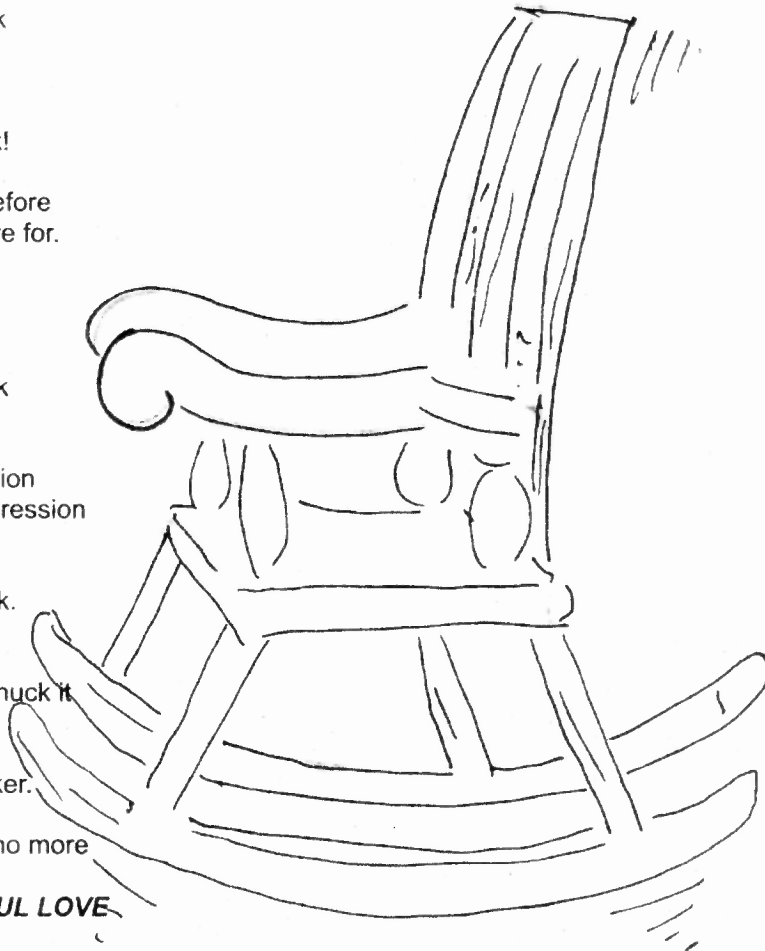
Upon that part of my physique
Of which I normally do not speak.

A plastic chair is like a bucket.
When no one sees, I'll always chuck it

Into the storage bin or locker
And head back to my trusty rocker.

When rocking chairs are made no more
I think I'll just sit on the floor.

PAUL LOVE



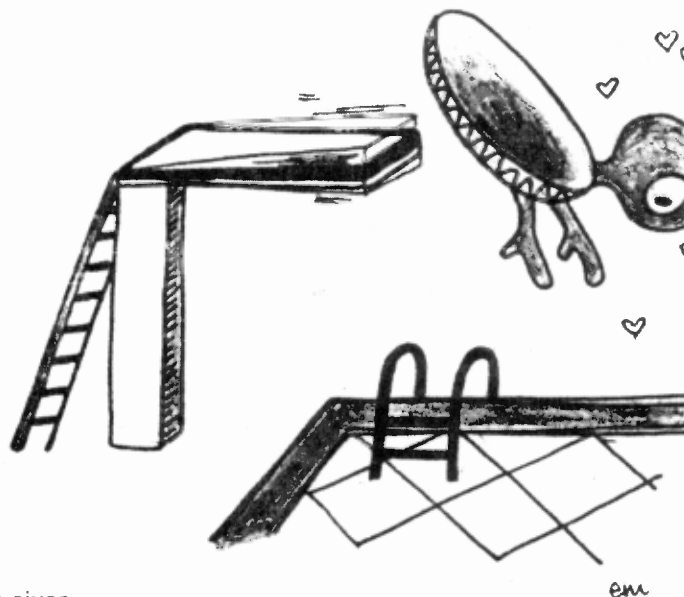
Untitled

The china dish
f
e
l
l
in love with the marbled floor
for its fair complexion skin
forever glassy
and always acquiescing to carry it.

"Shall I take the pledge?" it asked
and abetted the marble's reply.

The pieces shook--
Was it
the jubilation
of an Indian enjoying Sachin's sixer
Or
the last throes of
a fish caught in the net?

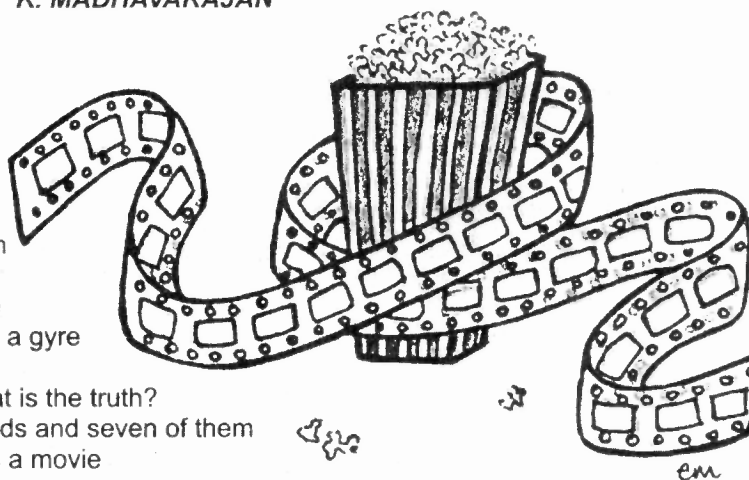
K. MADHAVARAJAN



Conundrum

Life is like a sculpture
to live it is like a movie
everything is just an expression
the reality is latent, amidst
the shadows, a stolid dark hole
divine or human, spins away in a gyre
as emotion writhes, i cease!
to think, where is the truth, what is the truth?
a prisoner, cold steel, rusted rods and seven of them
what an eccentric dream. life is a movie
you play an important role.

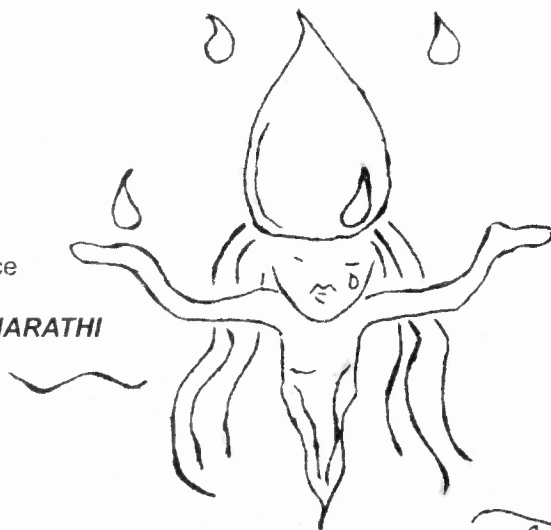
KATHY PAULRAJ





Her face darkened
the spots gathered
her voice roared
then she cried
And stood in silence
Rain.

P. DEEPA BHARATHI

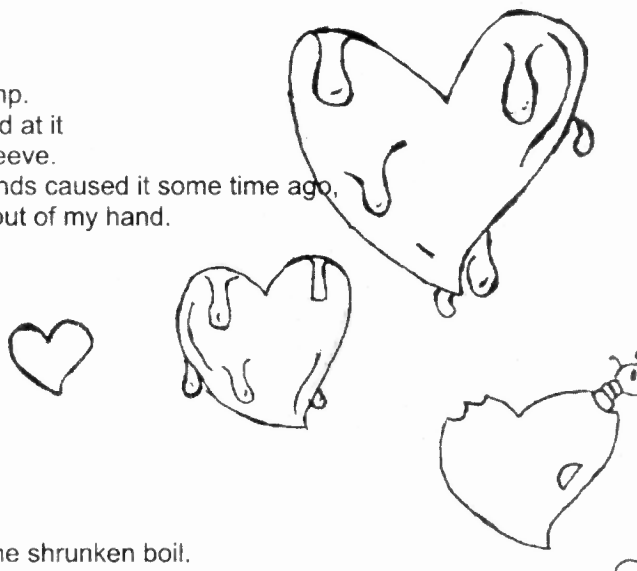


Gaurie

The Boil On My Finger

It was the same colour as my skin
But it still stood out—bulging, pus-filled bump.
Fascination and disgust filled me as I looked at it
And I tried to hide it under my sweatshirt sleeve.
A pot of boiling water in someone else's hands caused it some time ago,
A clumsy move, a scream and it was born out of my hand.
It hurt at first, but then it stopped,
and for some strange reason . . . I liked it.
The next day, it began to swell
The Monster Boil of all Time.
For some reason, I was proud of it
But soon I was just waiting, dying
for someone to prick it,
and to see the pus bleed out of the hump
to see it shrink to normal size.
When it happened at last, I felt at peace.
Despite the pain, it was worth the sight of the shrunken boil.
My eyes are on it, insuring it doesn't grow again
For boils are as easily inflated as deflated
Just like my ego.

RESHAM GEORGE



Change Of Seasons

I watched the sun go down behind the hills,
While night fell as the stars broke through the crimson sky . . . one by one,
My mind was paved with memories as I felt the warm wind blow,
And Life; it's full of wonders

Regret, remorse, insecurity,
All 'cause I wanted to grow up too fast,
"Just take it all as an experience," she once said,
And that I did

"Why are you so down my friend?" said I to my soul,
For if it never rained then they'd never grow,
But there will be a blue sky behind that rainbow,
And the fire cleanses the earth to make way for the seed

So with the change of seasons, change my friend,
You've got to grin and bear it to the sweet sweet end,
Your tears and sweat will not be in vain;
You will reap what you sow,
For it has rained well

And now that the weather is clear, sleep,
For tomorrow you may awake to greet the sun on the other side,
And set right your wrongs, do what needs to be done,
For seasons will change and time wait for no one.

KENAN WARJRI

The Stump

The stump of a tree
handicapped
bare of its limbs
friendly to the creepers and crickets
a lone figure
reaching out into the deep
for life and sustenance.

SHARMILA PRIYA, S.



Vallare: Centella Asiatica

A green umbrella for a golden beetle
That seeks a shelter from the noontime blaze,
A parasol that filters light
And yet is filled with dew,
It is silky smooth, on one side slightly furred,
A goddess' earlobe,
The stem a long, pink earring.
Hold it to the light—it is
A network of glowing, crystal-clear-lit paths.
It is a green brain, compressed and flattened,
The memory herb.
It lights up secrets from our past.
Eat it, and know the truth.
It was "manduka parni" to the ancients,
Frog-foot herb,
Soft, green, moist, delicate, yet pliant.
Love it, and you have longevity.
It is the "kaya kalpa" of the Shao Lin.
It is symmetry,
Curve upon curve, line upon gleaming line,
An arabesque illumined by the sun.
Who sees this?
We crush it underfoot.

TARA MENON



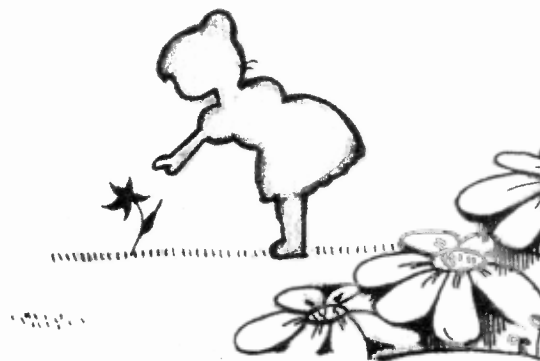
beyond the tree

beyond the tree the river breathes
dancing, chasing, turning, raging,
there, where the reeds flirt, and curtsy
with every passing wind that blows heedless by—
there, where a boy lies dreaming, his fishing rod forgotten,
there, where his spaniel (all droopy eyes and tangled silk)
watches and waits, eyes of love on his master,
there, where the dying sun hugs the rain-fresh earth,
there, beyond the trees.

PRIYA ALIKA ELIAS

Forgotten

She walked into the fringes of the woods,
To gather some wild flowers,
Some sweet-smelling, tiny, colourful flowers.
But as she went deeper into the woods,
She felt she had to hurry,
Because the sun was just about to set
And she hadn't covered even half the distance.
So she walked in haste,
Trying to reach the place,
Just before it became dark.
On her way she picked some crocuses, tulips
And other such flowers,
And quickly put them in her handkerchief.
She knew she had to hurry
And so couldn't tarry,
So she hopped and she skipped
And hummed a tune
As she thought of another soon.
Then she scampered along
To the place where they were found
And reached there as the sun went down.
As she was about to pick the flowers,
She came upon a bunch of crotons.
They were purple and bright
And gave her much delight,
That she picked them up in her hand.
She hurried along as the night grew cold,
With the moon and the stars in their fold.
Hey! But what about the flowers
For which she had walked so far?
Oh! well, they were quite forgotten.



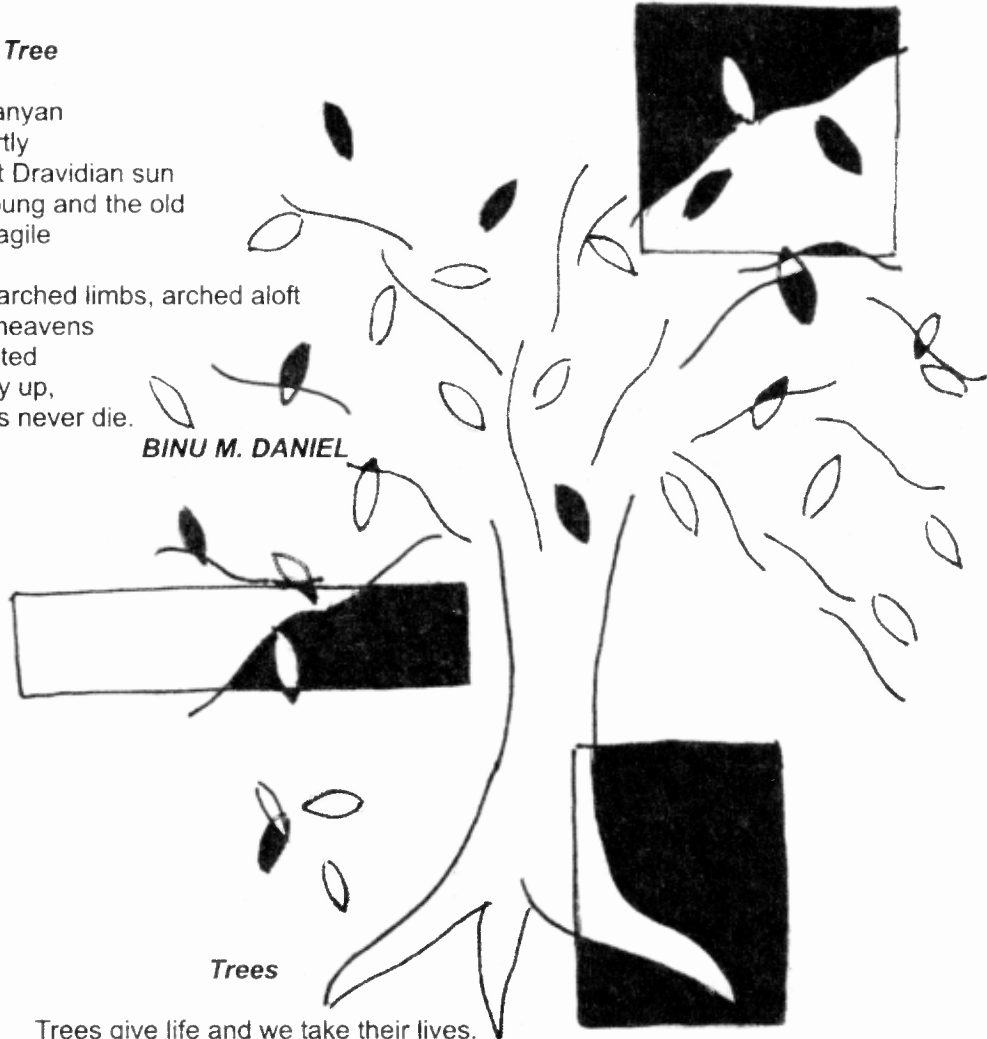
JOANNA PRIYADARSHINI UDAYKUMAR



The Banyan Tree

An ancient banyan
Stood stalwartly
Under the hot Dravidian sun
Where the young and the old
Weary and fragile
Took refuge.
Today, with parched limbs, arched aloft
Towards the heavens
Arms amputated
Its dreams dry up,
Yet its prayers never die.

BINU M. DANIEL



Trees

Trees give life and we take their lives.
They may be yellow or may be green,
But help to keep our surroundings clean.
They give us oxygen which we require,
We in turn give them Carbon that they desire.
Thus we work hand in hand,
To fulfil God's divine plan.

SM

JOANNA PRIYADARSHINI UDAYKUMAR

Puppy

Cute, plump he was
With his tiny eyes.
Sweet he was wagging his tail.
My sister glared at him.
Her dark eyes radiated aversion.
"How could she hate this little darling!" I thought.

THUD! The next moment he was at my feet.
The kick was too much for him.
Wailing softly, he stood frozen,
Rolling his tiny eyes, with fear,
"Oh! She might kick me again."

The pain mirrored in his visage
Quelled even the perpetrator and
She scooped up and hugged him
Wanting to say "Dear I'm sorry!"

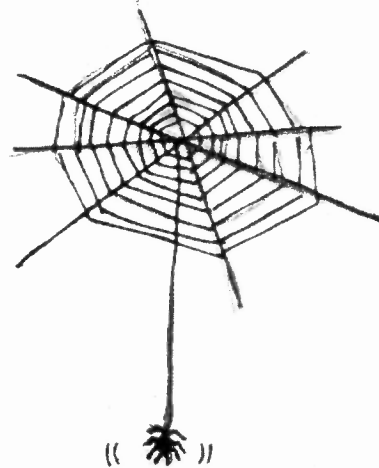
E. ESTHER PRABA



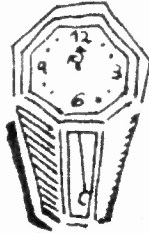
Spider

Sitting lonely in the woods
I gaze all around
Breeze flowing
Leaves dancing, withering.
Amidst the branches I see
A shiny thread,
Hanging to it a tiny creature
Weaving its net,
Bugs flying around
Like pesky children
Mocking at the weaver.
He continues his work
With Buddhist concentration.
All knitted well
He vests as a king in his fort
Ready to rule and execute:
The pests get caught.

BINU M. DANIEL



Live It



Life's like that. Life's like that. Life's like that
Life's like that. Life's like that. Life's like th
Life's like that. Life's like that. Life's like
Life's like that. Life's like that. Life's li
Life's like that. Life's like that. Life's
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Life's like that. Life's
Life's like that.
Life.

So live it . . .
AKSHAY TYAGI



Tombstone Engraving

If all you do is cry for me
. . . I must be in hell.

VISHAL PULIKOTTIL

Atmos-fear

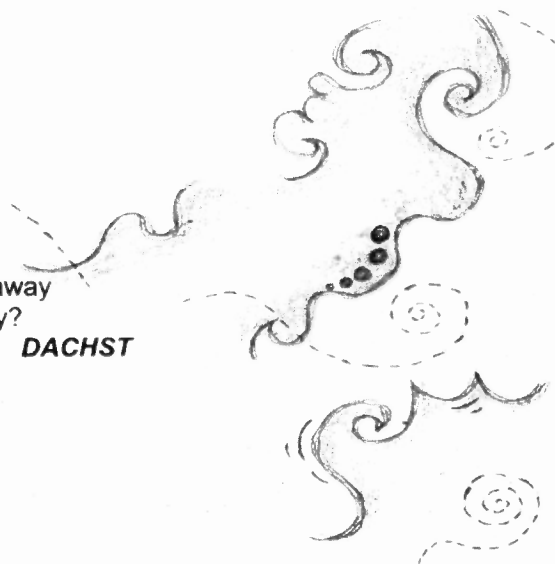
Are there mirrors to the past
Reflecting memories that last,
Or like the mist upon the glass
That fades away

too far

too fast

Is life mere breath that's wiped away
Before we've even words to pray?

DACHST



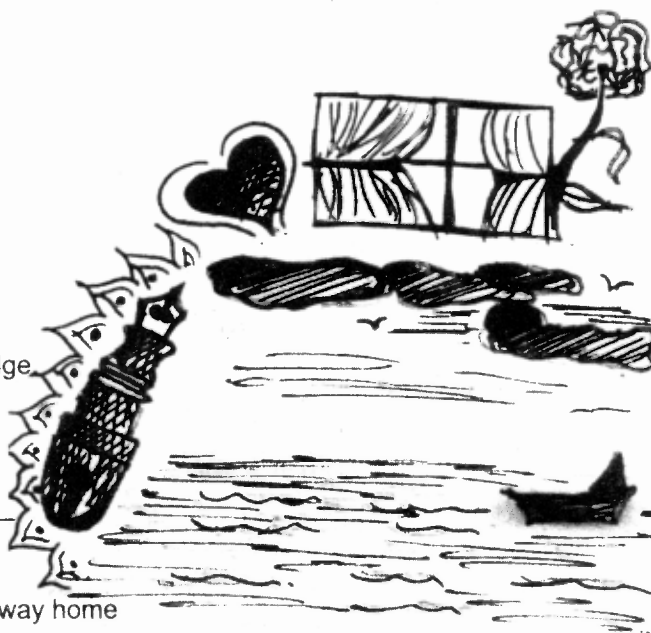
Progress

A velvet mind and crystal drapes,
Drenched and torn.
Time has drained the Milky Way.

The world now dreams of galactic seas
But the past once famed the ocean's edge
The seas that swayed with wrath
(Now careless swept by lunar knots)
Drowned the Viking spirit.
The Golden dawns of humankind
Were upturned echoes, hollow vessels—
History praising a lonesome voyage.

Steam-eyed sailors must now find their way home
And furnish their tattered minds again.

NEEL PATEL



The Battlefield

In the sky's vast dark battlefield
The night's blackness swam
Trying to drown the twinkling lives:
Are they twinkling?
Those isolated compressed lives,
Aren't they really struggling
Against the nemetic contrivances?
Endless strains of black and blue
Immerse the bright ones, so few
But the blackness must give way
And melt in the sun's golden ray
Hope should stay alive
The day must dawn
Mankind will go on.

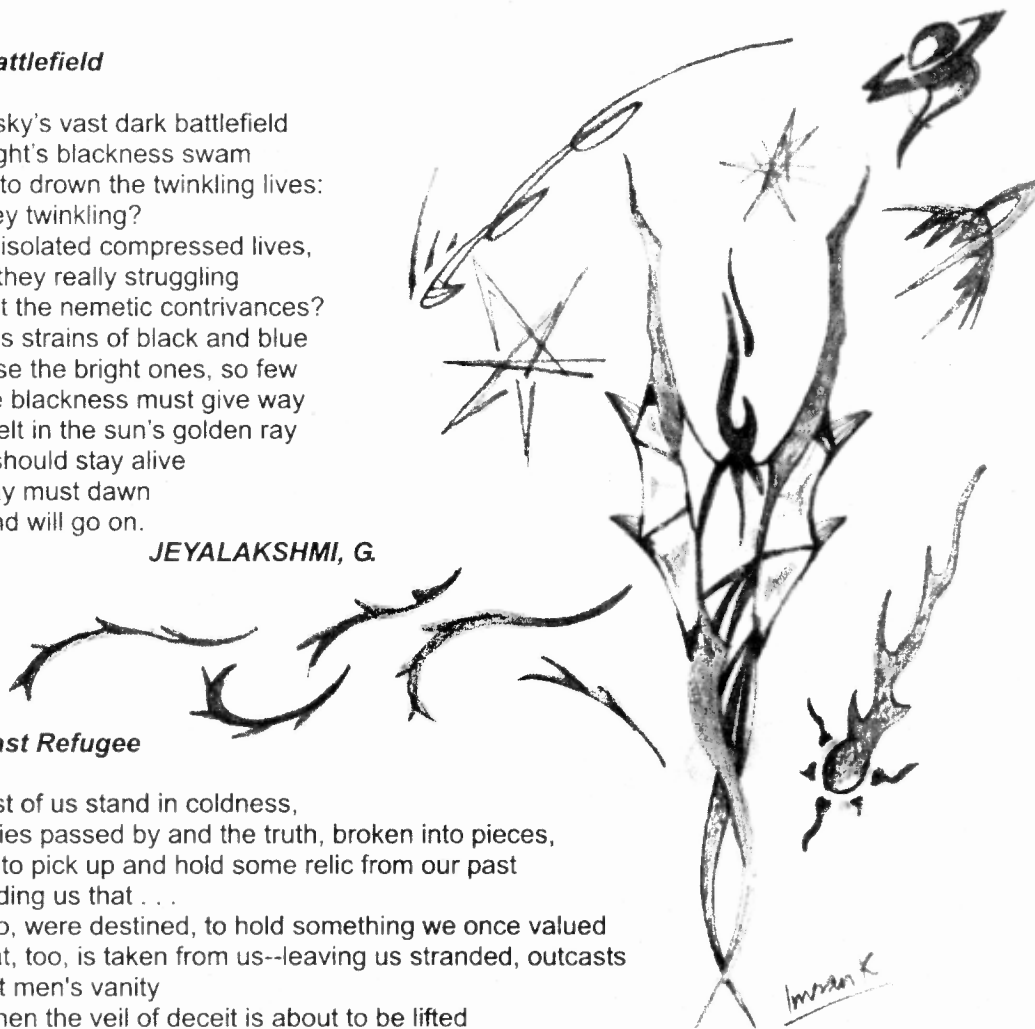
JEYALAKSHMI, G.

The Last Refugee

The last of us stand in coldness,
Centuries passed by and the truth, broken into pieces,
For us to pick up and hold some relic from our past
Reminding us that . . .
We, too, were destined, to hold something we once valued
But that, too, is taken from us--leaving us stranded, outcasts
In most men's vanity
Just when the veil of deceit is about to be lifted

In these times, the sun no longer symbolizes hope
And we ask for night to come our way
So we can break from this world
Into the other, where we are the ones revered
And not the ones feared
Moving on from one place to another—the last of us—in our own nomadic paths . . .

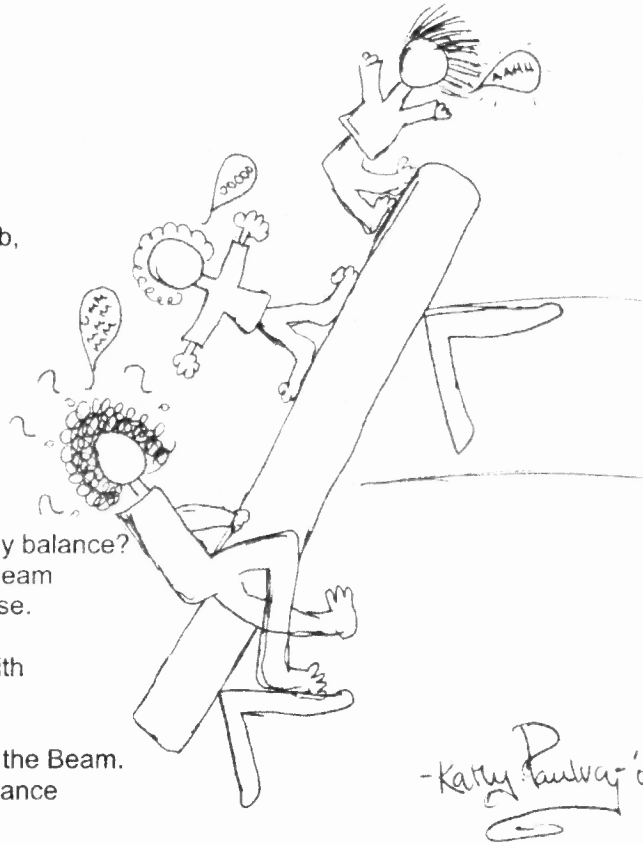
SYED SHEHZAR M. DOJA



To Dance On The Balancing Beam

I take a deep breath, and prepare to climb,
And I place one foot on the Beam's foot.
Half here, half there, and I pause in fear.
Fear of the immense Height.
People behind me cheer me on,
But I'll be alone on the Beam.
I'm frozen now.
I want to reach the Height of the Beam
Want to leap up, fearless
But fear of the unknown Beam holds me
The question: will I be able to maintain my balance?
To walk the straight, narrow path of the Beam
And ignore the comments of everyone else.
I realize now
That I'm not ready to make the leap of faith
To place myself wholly on the Beam,
And to stay there, calm and without fear.
I see others go ahead of me, dancing on the Beam.
They have the secret of keeping their balance
And I'm stuck at the foot of the Beam,
One foot on the Beam's foot.
Someday, at the time, I'll dance on the Beam.
Soon, but not yet.

RESHAM GEORGE



Death In Sleep

Lay down beneath such a misted blanket,
Dark horrors, devilish phantoms,
Speeding faster than a hundred shooting stars,
A million eyes fabricating devious schemes,
Watching, waiting for a moment of slumber

Silent and slow,
They begin to chant and dance,
Like shadows of Fairies and Pixies,
Rejoicing in a festival,
The sweet, enchanting melody,
Played on and on,
Till one's eyes become weary as a parched plant,
Now shut, with nowhere to go but ahead,
The phantoms carry on with their scheme

In absolute darkness,
The play goes on, never looking back,
But forward to the sparkling light,
For when the phantoms obtain the gleaming treasure,
Those weary eyes remain shut for eternal earthly life.



MERCY LAMECH

I Dreamt Of A Place

I dreamt of a place
Far away;
Certainly not home
But yet not astray;

I saw you there
Walking to me;
You came forward
and stood beside me.

I saw the magnificence of shining stars,
I saw the mystic moonlight.
I saw your beauty, your faith, your love.
Woke up, but it was still night.

Indeed it's true, it must have been heaven,
Indeed it's true, you must have been God,
For I heard not the massacre of the wind
But I heard a serene enchanted song.

NISHITA MERCHANT



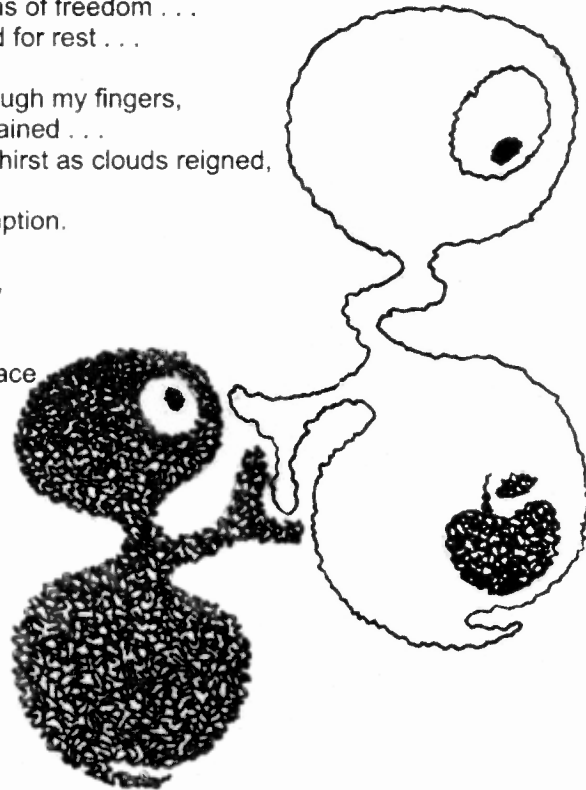
They Talked

I was crowned by the daze of my essence,
Got lost in the maze of my thoughts,
Truth was derived while purpose unsolved,
... Sentenced to damnation of endless horizons of freedom ...
My soul yearned for peace as my spirit pleaded for rest ...

I sank into the sand, gripped, but it slipped through my fingers,
The trees bore their fruit while barren land remained ...
The skies were storm scorched to quench my thirst as clouds reigned,
Ashes were to ashes and dust back to dust ...
We melted in the rain at the dawn of our redemption.

I was tormented in life by the fruit of happiness,
As I conquered mountains and sometimes fell,
My feet burned, were blistered and bruised,
But in the absence of his face, I then felt his grace
Now I walk alone no more.

KENAN WARJRI



That Single Line

It was dawn
by the time
I completed
a line of poetry;
And
in the dawn
even that line
disappeared.

(from Deva Devan's Pulveliyil Oru Kal, translated by T. GANESH BABU)



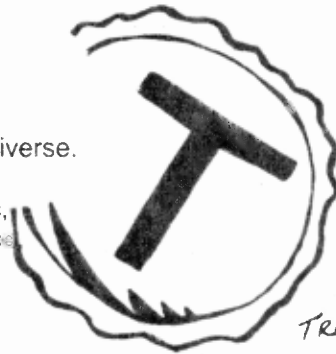
Sore Loser

(in dedication to myself)

This poem is edit-proof
And is patented against
Anything under any sun in any universe.

I am an ideal brat
And a perpetual criticphobic,
So do not condemn my stance.
But try and realize that
Most are like me,
Egoistic and self-centered,
Covered from head to toe
By insurance of what not.

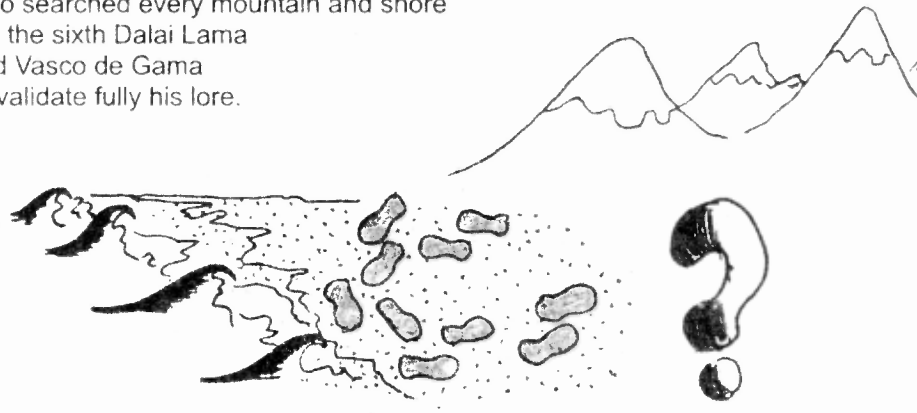
JUSTIN AIER



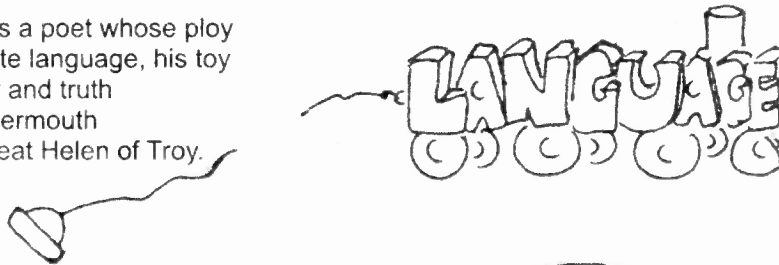
TRADE MARK

The following three limericks were written in honour of Keki Daruwalla:

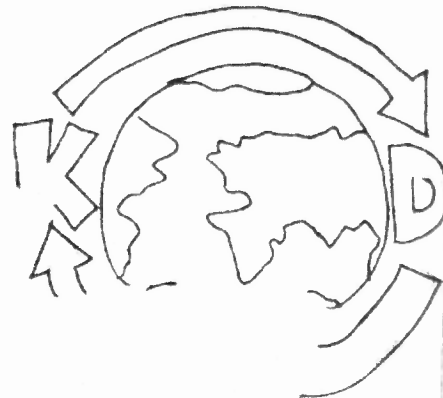
A poet there was from Lahore
Who searched every mountain and shore
For the sixth Dalai Lama
And Vasco de Gama
To validate fully his lore.



There once was a poet whose ploy
Was to formulate language, his toy
He kept beauty and truth
While sipping vermouth
Thus saving great Helen of Troy.



There once was a poet, KD,
Whose work was well known sea to sea
He often used rhymes
About ancient Greek times
To make history accessible to thee!



DEBORAH M. CORDONNIER

akshay

• • terminal • •

PREVIOUS "HOUSES OF POETRY/CREATION"

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Arundhati Subramaniam

2001 (10th)

Gieve Patel

2000 (9th)

Githa Hariharan

1999 (8th)

Shama Futehally

1998 (7th)

Shashi Deshpande

1997 (6th)

Makarand Paranjape

1996 (5th)

K. Ayyappa Paniker

1995

(No Workshop)

1994 (4th)

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1993 (3rd)

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1992 (2nd)

Shiv K. Kumar

1991 (1st)

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