

YASHODA

and other

MARCH 8, POEMS

Mysore Diwa Swapna

YASHODA and other MARCH 8, POEMS
A collection of poems on women
by M.D swapna
poems W1 to W50
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PREFACE

March 8, every year is observed as International Women's Day. This author had just written a few pieces per year –and kept- never published nor sent privately to persons. Now those poems from the old diaries were compiled under the general title of ' MARCH 8 POEMS' They can come under any other category such as 'mother's day', ' victim's or domestic violence etc.

Readers please ignore lapses in punctuation including upper and lower cases

Wherever local [Indian] words, ideas, proverbs are used , brief notes are given.

Readers' feedback will be highly appreciated . Email ids and whatsup number are given on the copyright page.

Mysore.D. Swapna [penname] February. 2023

I suggest to those readers who would like to compare, to go to the best poems on the subject and come back to read ours.

One is a poem titled '**I Am Not That Woman,**' by Kishwar Naheed. Another titled '**Still I Rise**' by Maya Angelou I give a few lines from each of the above.

*I am the commodity you traded in,
My chastity, my motherhood, my loyalty.
Now it is time for me to flower free.
The woman on that poster, half-naked, selling socks and shoes-
No, no, I am not that woman!*

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*

*You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.*

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W 1 Relevance of this day for rural / urban Indian women indicated

WOMEN'S DAY (8, MARCH)

It is wonderful
to have a women's day.

It was wonderful
in **olden days**
women calling one another

for wash and bath before dawn
together in the river or pond.

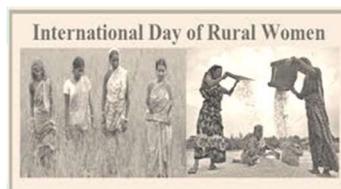
to celebrate and spread the message
of a new girl, coming of age.

for giving support in multitude
to an impending new motherhood.
to make preserves, pickles and papad
collectively for the full year ahead.

to decorate the street with rangoli
for anyone's function, social or holy.

It was wonderful
That their days were full
With umpteen acts of this kind
Without a day for womankind,
not for money,
but for company
and camaraderie.

Pray tell me,
What else they would have done
On a special day of their own?



It is wonderful
to have a women's day.

It is wonderful
in modern times
women calling one another

for sharing a cup of tea,
and office gossip, if any.

to have a pizza, pudding or pie;
and to know what and where to buy.

for knowing the latest tally
of the number of sons in silicon valley.

for domestic help that is reliable;
for gadget brands that are viable.
for the summary of a missed TV soap;
or compare an occasional horoscope.

It is wonderful
That the days are full
With activity of this kind
Without a day for womankind
not for money,
but for company
and camaraderie.
Pray tell me
What else would all of us do
On a special women's day or two?

It would have been nice
in the day's gone.
Even now it is nice to have
a day of your own.



**Thoughts on March 8, 1999 [or]
Isn't it everyday a women's day?**

Be it now
Or five years before
Or fifty years ago
Or 500 years past.
Isn't it everyday a women's day?

Who makes a house a home?
Whose are the chores ?
Who makes intakes wholesome?
Who removes the eyesores?

For the woman from a village
Duty begins from young age

Who makes the water reach the pot
Walking miles, rain or drought
Who makes shining cowdung floor
Who stores grain, grinds flour

Who waters the vegetable patch
Who mends the ripped thatch
Who cares for the food and feeds?
For both animal and human needs

Who looks after siblings of one , two or four
Even if she herself is only ten years old
Who, having seen it all before
Has learnt , no need to be told.

[notes: cowdung floor – instead of cement or tiles. Thatch – usually made from coconut fronds, in place of roof]

Who labours for those around her
 Who plans for her own day of labour
 Even knowing more work will surround her
 Looks forward , her motherhood to savour

Who never drinks other than milk from her cattle
 But is a victim of boorish slave of the bottle
 Who has inherited thrift as maternal gift
 But a victim of gambling spendthrift.

For the rural woman, unlettered or not,
 Chores to do, day after day, is her lot.

For the urban woman, poor or affluent
 I don't see the scene any different

Who makes the purchase lists
 And pleases even the uninvited guests
 Who takes subtle hints, messages
 And minor family feuds, assuages

Who keeps the supply steady
 for the family and the guests
 Who keeps the hot tea-pot ready
 for the unquenchable thirsts

Who has to run double quick
 when anyone suddenly falls sick
 Who is a nurse, though without training,
 for the aged and the chronic ailing?

Who brings up the children
 who is on the static run
 until to school they're packed and gone
 and see before their return all work is done

Who starts the bed-tea's fire
and who is the last to retire
who answers the phone or the door
who's on the move until she can move no more

Isn't it everyday a woman's working day
whether she is living
in the ancient or modern days
in the rural or urban ways?

Whether she is a rural or urban woman
constant toil seems to be common
Week days or week- ends
woman's work never ends.

Does the sun stop shining on a Sunday?
Can a woman waive working on women's day?
So
Isn't it everyday a women's day?

W 3 *The author imagines a ‘social bonsai’ – true agri, horticulture for fashionable women and fancy gardening to rustic workers*

BONSAI

“ Society ladies!
Learn to use
Mud and manure,”
Said the gardening guide. So,



Society ladies have learnt to become inure
To the sight and smell of mud and manure.

Muddy feet and hands
Give help to green fingers,
The herbal heritage of our lands
Nurtured, lasts and lingers.

Beautiful trees , bonsai in miniature,
Though pygmies, they are giants in stature.

Soil is a leveller; Toil is a tamer;
Grower is a giver ; User is a customer.

Sons of the soil, including women
Being honoured is a good omen.
Hail our direct dealing days
Bring back our barter bargain ways.

If our high class ladies have the will
To learn to transplant and till
And teach Gangamma the ‘art’ of gardening
I will call that awesome awakening.

Gardeners to the field,
Peasant to the orchard;
It is pleasant to feel
Even if mentally pictured.

Am I being naive or coy
Dreaming of **social bonsai**?

Soil, water and air to a living plant
To us and the rest of the biomass
Seen only on this unique planet.
Abuse this, it will be mankind's loss.

*[note; Gangamma- common given name –
here it represents peasant class woman]*



W 4 Poorer sections of the society's major worry is: marrying off the girl

WOMEN'S DAY IN JANATHANAGARA

Eighth of March , 2004
 Is only one day in a year.
 Women of Janathanagara today
 Are waiting for that one day
 Which they hope, will be near.

Muthamma is waiting for the day
 her convent going grand-daughter to 'major'
 since she has the money to engage her
 to the village boy coming asking for her.

Saakamma is waiting for the day
 to stop her daughter unnecessarily going to college
 even many months after her coming of age
 And to initiate steps for her marriage .

Sevamma is waiting for the day
 to send away , from her lord's leering eyes
 her sister of sixteen but looking bigger in size,
 and to a match with one of their own guys.

Obbamma is waiting for the day
 when her late husband's pension will start coming ,
 so that she can persuade her old mother, if she can,
 to split away from her chronic alcoholic man,
 and to plan for her permanent 'home-coming'.

Eighth of March is only one day in a year
With nothing to remember., see or hear,
Except high-sounding empty words.

Women's day in Janathanagara
Will be that day when
Child marriages will stop , voluntarily.

[notes: *janatha - common people*
Names of women here are usually given in lower class
society]



W 5 *The grandeur given to festivals just by the presence of women is indicated with an example*

UGADI POEM

All women appear, nay, are beautiful
In the early morning of Ugadi festival.

Never can one see

Except on a festival or Ugadi
All the neighbourhood women
In their natural nascent shine.

Irrespective of age, colour or size
All the girls and women are neat and nice.

Today is the head-bath day
With or without
Simple turmeric powder
Or home made sandal paste
Or commercial shampoo.
The hair washed and spread today.

In its own natural colour
The clear faces
Rimmed by black or white (grey) hair
Topped up by a knotted towel
(Mostly white Turkish type)

All of them as if ordered
By an autocratic leader
Or a charismatic amma
Or a bald or bearded guru
Or any backstreet baba

Uniformly similar but sensible
[voice in the background:
Why do we need any person to order us?
We are bound and also honoured
By custom, tradition , rituals
And practices learnt from grandmas]
Our festival spirit



Begins with a leisurely head bath;
 Towel-tied or free drying
 As long as we like
 Unplaited, free for us to feel
 And free for all to see
 Oiling, combing come later
 Adorning with flowers soon after.

On Ugadi day all women are seen
 As they are, in their nascent sheen chic and clean.
 O man! Those of you
 Who have none of our
 Kind, women at home, poor
 You! What will you do
 On an auspicious day like Ugadi?

[Notes :

Ugadi -New year-lunar - many parts of India.

*Line 9. Head-bath – women once a week or more often
 wet and clean their hair during bath.*

Line 35. Hair plaited is the traditional way

Line 37. Coconut oil used on hair

Line39 . Flower is a must in any Festival]

W 6 Human affections and relationships are the greatest gifts given to us or we can give

GIFT [1]

You say you brought me a gift.
Thanks if I had sought and wished for it.

I don't recall if I even did ask
But my memory is erratic and eroded
A gift, I think, is a gilded cover to mask
Any ill-wills with which the mind is loaded

So leave your gift outside
Come, my dear, sit by my side;
Let me your nearness and words feel
Let hidden, past wounds heal.

You have come all the way;
Don't cry, listen to what I say
I am sorry, if had said or done
Anything to hurt my loved one.
Knowingly or unknowingly in the past

Whether I am to you or not
You.. you are the gift from above
I am glad even to this day, I got
From you and the world, pure love.

GIFT [2]

Our own, other's visiting girls or boys
Any child is a gift from above
Give them gifts, eats, wares, toys
Above all show them that you love

“Don't talk to strangers;
Do not accept anything”
Mothers are aware of the dangers
Urban antisocial elements bring.

A poor begging child is branded as urchin.
I don't; I am aware of dangers to them lurching
Those children who call you uncle or aunt
They too will love your gift
Given out of your affection, not for their want.

GIFT [3]

One who, on his own, gladly gives
Does not expect any gratitude
His life, an ideal way he lives
With affection, action and attitude.

Does the receiver respect
The sacrifice made by the donor?
Even though the giver does not expect
Any returns, does the taker revere or honour?

Bestowing to one's one family is not charity
But the donation, not for the name or fame, is a rarity
Can the fortunate and the forlorn be like a family,
Giving and taking, sharing quite happily ?



W 7 Women are the anchors of culture – both rituals and richness of content

CULTURE CARRIERS

She seems to be the only one
 In this neighbourhood
 Who is the symbol of own
 Old classical motherhood

No one could have seen
 Her even in the house
 Except in a saree and tight half sleeve blouse
 Combed oil-washed hair in a bundle or bun
 And on the forehead Kumkum,
 Size of a rupee coin

She is known as Ajji, a general word
 For an aged lady in this region
 Not just by children but also referred
 By all admirers who are legion.

Each house with its festival signs
 Drawing on the floor, flour designs
 Mango leaf strings over the door to be hung
 Appropriate songs on the occasion to be sung

For each of these and many more
 Like nuances in each daily chore
 What and how to cook and offer
 To deities and guests in the proper order.

Ajji's of all ages in each household
 In this (perhaps all) Indian neighbourhood
 Are the anchors of continuance of culture
 Here and wherever any Indian may go in future.



Each one of the rites was in the aiji's domain
Of excellent age-old customs which still remain
As part of culture, religion and tradition of the land
Thank God our own Aiji is available at hand.

The symbols and rituals are solid and visual.
For women it is one more chore as usual.
Yet the spirit, intent and the mind behind
Can be continued and carried on only by womankind.

[Note : Aiji = Grandmother (Kannada); also any senior lady]



W 8 *An example of the rich diversity of Indian cooking is attributed to traditional transfer by women – as anywhere in the world*

WOMEN CHAIN

Eating out is no sweat.
If you can pay, you try out.
Men or women, eaters are equal



Gender and culture matter
When it comes to making food
You see the women-chain

In the art of gourmetdom. It is always
Mother to daughter, mother-in-law to daughter-in-law
Aunt to niece, eldest sister to the rest of the girls
Grandmother to neighbourhood women

It is this transmitted info and skill by women-chain
Which works in making and liking gourmet food.

Otherwise how do you account for
“It is beautiful shrikhand today ” in flat 1A
‘ ‘chee,chee, who will add sugar to dahi? “ in flat 1B
of HIG colony in Oshivara, Mumbai?

[note: *shrikhand – a sweet dish made by adding sugar to dahi, which is curd*
Gourmetdom – author’s word for culinary ability
HIG etc – High income group housing in a suburb of
Bombay city
Chee- derogatory expression]

WEAR

If Sultan wears a burqua , will he become Sultana?

If Robert wears a dress, will he become Roberta?

If Raam wears a sareee, will he become Rama?

No,NO,no. What is the ans? Perhaps a trans .

[note: ans= answer; trans= transdresser]



If Smith wears a simple gown

With or without a bra, will he be called Smitha?

He will get a double-word expresser

He will be called a cross-dresser.

If Smitha is weary, of wearing a saree,

Or dislikes today's , salwar and kameez,

A denim in place of skirt, wear on top a T-shirt.

Yet, she will be called a decent Smitha.



Yet the women swear they have no freedom.

While flaunting menswear, in front of men mute and dumb.

Men have the 'freedom' to adhere

To their code of decent wear.

[notes: burqua- covers almost the whole body , usually worn by Muslim women

Saree, salwar, kameez- women's traditional wear in India]

JOKER, NO, NO

Dressed as a funny clown
He travelled all over the town.
Raj Kapoor in his movie went
Clumsily but boldly out of the circus tent
And sang and danced
And even romanced.



If my boy, also on his own
Wants to go all over the town
If he wants to go free and move
Out of the home and family groove,
I would gladly give him a chance
Even if he may get into a romance

Instead , if my girl, on her own
Wants to go, even to a place known;
If she wants to move and be free
From the rut and groove of the family
Why do I detest, protest? Perhaps
I am afraid of romantic traps.

For a mother, it does exist
The gender bias in her mind
I am neither archaic nor sexist
But I know; girls can never, a true mate, find.

All the male world is full of deception
Though my son is a sole exception .
Machos are waiting to maul the pray
All men are rapists, unless one is gay.
Even if she could evoke laughter
Joker or comedy is not for my daughter.

[Note: Reference to Raj Kapoor- his movie
“Mera naam joker”]

W 11 *The author says: Anyone
who cares for a child, is a mother*
YASHODA

All the young ones all over the world,
It appears, can be covered by one word:
“CHILD”. Say it in any language you know
Dependence and innocence it will show.

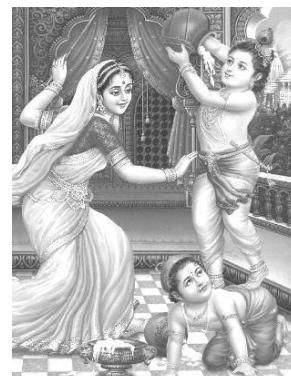
A child is no more called one
If it can manage all its needs on its own.
Personal hygiene, daily needs and care
Thank goodness, to give them all, I am there.

Even among women, Yashoda was the one
Chosen to be the foster mother
To nurture the naughtiest infant born
But any woman can be Yashoda to her son

Parents have to learn at first
That the issue could be Krishna or Christ
From the day the infant came to this home
I knew how melodious is the word ‘mom’
Even if I live in a hell hole
If there is a sincere soul
Anywhere on the earth to call
Me the ‘mother’, that is all
I may want and be happy with
Than a fortune anyone can bequeath.

Women’s day in the month of March
Or a mother’s day sometime in the year
I can join the bearers of the torch
Of freedom and choice for us without fear.

Free to earn, free to spend
Free to think, free to love
Looks like demands without end;
But is there any other way to live?



W 12 *The author acknowledges the sanctity of a family – warns against external interference, wanton or well-meant
KEEP OFF[1]*

I would be irritated at him or her
But no one else can butt in;
We have our own spring or summer
But do not bring winter within.

We have our own troubles and tiffs
But outsiders are not welcome;
to get in and question: “What if”
We will face the final outcome.

It is a dull house, not a home,
Which runs like clockwork, ‘tic-toc’
In case some disorder does come
It has to be patched quick.

Ego clashes, dominance issues, between spouses
may go wild, fostering tension, in all houses
Occasionally occur, or frequently in some
Showing, it is not a lodge, but a home.

Where there is affection, there is tension
Of some kind embarrassing but not evil
Like a mother showing too much attention
We ourselves can manage, we will.

Activists, agitators, advocates, judges
Or any pal or kin who prejudges
Are not welcome, you can’t solve
A case demanding lots of love, not resolve.

**W 13 Devices can be made to cater to curiosity
while containing the 'modesty'**

SEE, NOT BE SEEN



Hawamahal in Jaipur

Is a heritage structure
On any day tourists galore
Inspecting every fixture.

Up and down the visitors go
Some fast, some steady and slow
Men move, the monument stands
Reminding us of the richness of our lands

Hawamahal is grand, not a marvel
It is a show- piece as of now
No doubt it is great and done well
It is a symbol of artiste's know- how.

It was a structure of intent
Compatible with our cultural content

To get breeze and light
To have sound and sight
By the women from private windows
to witness public events and shows

‘See Not Be Seen’
Yet be part of the scene.

W 14 *The elderly author empathises with
a girl of this century*

W 14 SEEMA'S DILEMMA

For an average middle class girl, ‘dates’
Are seen in diaries, calendars and a tall tree
An average decent boy also hesitates
To ask, “Will you marry me?”

*[Note: for an ‘average’ Indian: ‘date’
is a new word for an artificial
'boy meets girl']*

On the flipside of dating:
Bold girls get into problem
News reports are full of them

Another word, ‘live-in relation’
Is flaunted as a new fashion.



But in India today, it is extremely rare
To find a decent girl dare
And agree to a ‘live-in’ life
Before actually becoming the wife.

Millennial women! I truly empathise with you
The only questions to ask you and we knew
About your BF were just about income
And nothing about habits, education. How come?

[Note: BF-boyfriend]

Now that dating is becoming a norm,
Listen to me, listless little one!
Learn to elicit more data, truth
About the multi-faced middle-aged ‘youth’.

“What about the heart
that beats?” you may ask
My answer is neat:
‘Taming it is your task’.

You, the girl of the dating dilemma!
I have given you the name, Seema.
For casual fun or flirting you may date.
Beware! Any date may not offer a mate.

Live up to your name Seema dear!
Deception and disgrace any girl must fear.

[Note: Seema – border, limit(Hindi)]



DOTE – ANTIDOTE

I have a child as my daughter
Who has a child who is full of laughter
My daughter since she was a child
Never knew how to be gentle and mild.

I was perhaps harsh and stern
Which had made her stubborn
Daughter she is to a disciplinarian
I, who is not even a veterinarian.

Even vets, are sometimes soft
In between their stick and command;
My daughter, I have never taught
How to hold love's magic wand.

I knew, my daughter one day
Will become a self-made woman
She knew that every word I say
was not just advice but an order to obey.

I knew I was the one always right
Principles for which I stood made me proud
Bringing up child to be always upright
Greatly motivated me and I felt good.

Was there affection?
Was there love?
I do make a confession;
I did not know how

to show the affection hidden
In my interior, my heart
My ego and pride had forbidden
Overt expression of any sort.



One day, reflected in the mirror , I saw
Both of us together; what a replica?
Her way with her child, strict and stern
Is nothing new; it is what I made her learn.

There was no one, then, to save
My child from me, a single mother
But her child surely must have
Other people who would gather together.

But why? Why make a search
for kind people from other than the kindred?
My arthritic knee, though weak, can be a perch
For the little one, unless her mother hindered.

If she did, I can give an order
And compel my daughter to keep off !
O, my helpless grandchild! To guard her
I will wilfully scold, with an inward laugh

I was a mother all alone
With the only daughter, a burden;
But her daughter has her own
Parents, mothers and others to dote on.

Lucky little one! You may jump on my knee.
My heart will jump with glee, guilt-free.
A few hours' massage will lessen the knee-pain;
But the happiness of the heart will forever remain.

W 16

Matrimonial ads is old story.

Websites have modern glory.

In this field I have no role to play

But I am a spectator, by hearsay.

I have heard of missed catches

And lost matches and hence

ADVICE TO BRIDES

Delete the dross, Gather the gross

data from the file, also person's profile

Cut out the clutter, make out data that matter

Just focus on the job on hand

Ignore and delete all the grand
claims of the applicant

Who thinks he is Cary Grant

Find some of his friends
who can tell about his trends.

Is his black hair dyed?

His fancy neck-tie, who tied?

Where did he get a B.Litt. degree

In chemistry and a post in military

Engineering corps?

A cheat or chor

Or a man of multi-talent?

All these are quite irrelevant.

When in doubt

Kick him out

Because, the victim is

the weaker sex always

BEWARE OF ONLINE FRAUDSTERS

(Till *May 31)	2019	2020	2021*
Fake social media profile	65	30	19
Others	2,453	1,515	882
Total	2,518	1,545	901

(Others include fraud through FB & other social media; credit/debit card fraud; obscene email, SMS, MMS; phishing/hacking/Nigerian fraud; spoofing mail, tampering of source code)

Advisory

- Don't accept friend request if you do not know the person personally or professionally

- Be careful while posting private matters, keep profile access private
- Don't post information that could be used to find you offline



[note: chor- thief, Hindi]

W 17 *Women must adjust, attempt to cope,
Only if no use, quit*

ADVICE TO A GIRL

One in three men is a sot
The second is used to pot.
Be glad with what you've got.
No girl ever got what she sought.

[note: no statistics available]

If you think you have got a gem
Hang on, never lose him.
If you can cut and polish, it is fine.
You can add glitter and some shine.

You and I, can ask why
Why should they produce and sell
Products like liquor and drugs?
Drugs as medicines make a patient well
The other type makes men into thugs.

When the symptoms show
That the evil shadow
Starts to fall on the children
No advice, that is when
It is time to act
If I want to be exact
I would say pack up and leave

W 18 *The author stresses the importance of being a strict parent- warns against pampering*

GOING , GONE, or RETURN?

What has happened
has already taken place.
Let go, do not spend
Any more energy and grace.



Right at the moment the event took place
Dead on the spot and the time of your disgrace
You could have acted on your strong reflex
You cried, argued, allowed to become complex

When the drunken disorderly son
Asked for an audacious amount for drugs
You tried to advice, give a sermon.
One slap, one curt word, would have helped.

Or one last one thousand bucks
would have helped; lady luck
might be nice to both of you
Parents can't be harsh, it is true.



Next time the fellow flounders in
Give him food and shelter, let him sleep
If he is embarrassed about his sin
Be strict, say no repeat, do not weep.

Finally fast action you must take
Even at the risk of a permanent break
Past events be forgotten, gone
Don't let even a bit to return.

I don't need a thesaurus
My best friend of 15 years will do

She neglected to tell me
Ignored telling me
Chose not to tell me
 Purposely did not tell me
 Avoided telling me
 Told everyone except me
Tried not to let me know
 When asked, was beating around the bush
Evaded the enquiry
 Avoided my asking
 Stalled any communication
 Got up to go when I entered
 Distracted with a different topic
 Just didn't say rudely "shut up"
 "Let us not talk about it" is her refrain
 Belittled the topic
Pretended that the elephant was not in the room.

If I were a male
I would ask for sympathy.
 Assuming I were a jilted victim.
For being ignored, gender is no factor.

Sixteen year old girl is a teen
Ready to enter adult world unseen
Do not probe, nor encourage, I learnt
 From her indifference; for me to be sane.

W 20 A female learns to lie low and be docile

- or she is shown how to be so

HUMBLING TIMES

She ate the humble pie
 at age eight when her mother
 made her iron the shirt and tie
 of her office- going brother.

She was eating the humble pie
 Every day of her married life
 Doing all the duties she can't shirk
 And went every day late to work.

She is eating the humble pie now
 In her old age, stricken and slow
 When she hears her daughter-in-law and son
 Whisper: "She can hold on until we return"

She will eat the humble pie again
 When the relatives will seek her sign
 To let off the single property of hers
 Even before her last day in the house.

Being humbled is the brief tale
 of anyone who was born a female
 daughter, sister, wife, mother
 she is a born slave, none other.



W 21 *A care-giver bemoans the social and educational system which is loaded against free thinkers*

OFF-LOADED- WHEN?

I took his load
He happily ran ahead.
I couldn't keep up .
Or didn't I want to ?

So, I gave him half his load.
Even that was enough to make him stoop.
Now,
Equal we are in load and stride and in slow 'progress!'
Gone is his gambol. Gone is his childhood.

Alas! If only I could get
The load off both of us,
We may even try a little
Hopping and jumping together.
But even if I could, I dare not to
get the load off both of us.

Free of the load
We may hop and jump
We may stand and stare
Walk free, think free, live free
But that will not be called
academic or any kind of achievement.

Some day, even if I did dare
To get the load off both of us
Who knows?
Both of us may be **off-loaded** by the system
which is heavily loaded against non-achievers.



PRE-SCHOOLERS NEED PEOPLE

Mas, grandmas! Come
Let us all become
Children again, forget
Your age and get set.

Pas, grandpas come
Sit down and become
Children again
Sit down on the floor
We are adults no more

In speech they copy you;
In agility you imitate them.
Without being told, they run.
You too run; it will be fun.

Hands and knees touching ground
The towel from head, hanging snout
Uncle is an elephant
On his back is the infant.

A child sitting on brother's back
Using an imaginary whip, "Whack!"
Hearing the sound "hi, hi"
The teen horse should neigh.

Tiny toddler climbing, see!
Tall uncle is the coconut tree.
If grandma is able
Her lap will be the cradle.

Make ten member mixed chain
Koo, kook, chuck, chuck goes the train.
Sitting astride on an elder's head
This kid is for sale as Goat's kid.



Starting a race, toddlers know
Get, set, ..., ready,... , and go.
Running on one leg is hop, hop
Uncles “you may fall” “stop, stop”

33

Walk on all four
On the ground or floor.
For toddlers it is easy.
The thought makes us queasy.
Frog jump is fun
Only for children

What is this?
A rolled bed sheet
Pull one end and leave
See a child roll on the floor.

What is this?
A fat-looking sack.
Set it upright and kick
See the sack hop and move.

Mom’s feet turn and turn
Child holding goes around
What a merry-go-round!
Rope goes round, swish, swish
Alert feet go up skip, skip
Skipping rope is fun
Even if one falls down.

Children’s games are plenty
If only adults give company.
Play with or without a toy or tool
Until the child gets out or sent to school
Pre-schoolers need people
who could come down
to their level in action and sound.

SINGLE, BUT NOT SAD

I am single, but sure to mingle
 I do consider, myself singular.

Mingle with the married
 And 'happy' family crowd
 pretend not to have heard
 the whispers that are loud,
 enough reach me.
 Was it to teach me?
 Why should I care
 For any comments, unfair.



I chose to live alone
 For reasons of my own.

I didn't have to deny myself comfort
 So as to leave wealth to hereditary heirs.
 Married men had no other purport
 In life than to beget sons
 And through them enjoy heavenly fairs.

I don't owe to the human kind
 Any of my genes to be left behind
 I have given enough of my wit and mind
 Which, those who seek will certainly find.



W 24 A single woman considers herself 'singular'
and fortunate – in a south Indian setting

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS.

I am luckier than many other women

I am luckier than X, Y or Z

I am luckier than surely Saakamma

Who in her 10 years with Maarappa, has felt
In each and every part of her body

Almost each and every day

Touched by the drunken belt

Of the daily wager's dirty hands.



I am a luckier than Saakamma

Who never said, "Saakappa, Stop"

Who never said, "Bidappa, let me go"

Who never said, "Hogappa, get out"

Instead she made Akki roti

With her swollen hand

And served hot

To the sot.



I never told a bull

"come gore me"

I am a singular, I am luckier.



[Note: Kannada words used

Stanza 3: Hindi proverb.

"singular" Is correct]

Saaku + Amma = enough

Bidu +Appa = leave

Hogu + Appa = go

Akki roti = rice dosa – a dish

"aa byle , mujhe maar" – inviting trouble.]



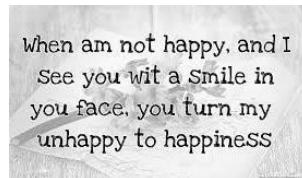
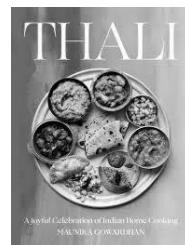
If you are happy and you know that
 Whether your hands clap
 Or not, send me a social app
 Or say it in a web-clip or book
 For you, I will open and look.

If you felt good
 Cooking festival food
 And ate it all alone
 There's nothing to moan
 about. Just send me a pic
 I will do a virtual lick.

If, one day you wore
 The zari sari of days yore
 And none came to view;
 I am there a fan of you.

Gas was delivered the day you booked
 Try giving the man what you cooked
 If you see him accept
 with thanks and respect

It is not silly, It is info ... tell me
 Those who scolded more than teach
 Never showed you the figure of speech
 In well-known nursery rhymes
 at those severe school times,
 Send me your discovery
 I will spread the story.
 Each one has to learn
 to manage herself alone
 In order to study or earn
 Stand on your feet, your own.



SPINSTER

I tried to woo a f f e c t i o n and love
Assuming the two go as twins on the move.
I thought love I got
From a flattering polyglot
What a fool I am! I forgot
His language changes a lot.

Soon I savoured the attention
Of a six-foot, six-pack athlete
It was not long, to see the pretension
Of muscle in place of a mind incomplete

A filthy rich fellow, I made bold,
To ask what is planned for me
I found he would put me in a cage of gold
While he searched for sex, paid or free .

I met a proverbial absent-minded prof
I wouldn't have minded being a home-maker
A candid discussion could call his bluff
He had a sec, for sex and needed at home a house keeper.
[Note : Prof. -Professor, sec – Secretary]

The ticking of the 'biological clock'
is heard by the elders of the land
Also by felons and rowdies of the flock
uncouth hooligans dared to ask for my hand.
Wait I must for the right mixture
of love, affection and respect
Even young monkeys have a texture
But finer qualities how can I expect?

It is too late to be worried
Being called a spinster, unmarried
Yet this is better than the evil
Of being tied up with a donkey, monkey or devil.

W 27 *The dilemma and anguish of an affectionate and duty-bound daughter is highlighted*

CAGED BIRDS

The ticking of the biological clock
is heard by the aunties of the block
And also, shall I say, O My God!
By all the kith and kin abroad.

Except my parents, everyone hears
Which confirms my often-felt fears;
Does my family foster my spinsterhood
So that, assured will be THEIR livelihood?

Is the ticking of the clock
too faint for those who are near?
Or , are they wearing ear plugs to block
Any embarrassing noise from reaching the ear.

A working woman, that is me,
Toils to be independent and free.
How come I got, in this homily?
Caught, supporting my birth family?

Am I a hen that lays the golden egg?
Without me, will my family beg?
Or just leave luxury, habits, things
Like silk sarees, trips and diamond rings?

When will I learn
that what I earn
goes to vain vanity?
Will I ever save my sanity?

Will I elope with the first macho
who sees me as a woman?
Or just wake up and go
Feast with fairies or dare my demon?

My elder brother doesn't help; it's fine
since he has wife, child and a canine.

Another boarded a train, without ticket, to Bombay
My parents may not know, his address or may.

Daughters of a modern family are caged
birds, born with the fear of the outdoors
Middle class women have mortgaged
Their salaries as well as life to a home called yours.

Homes, shelters, ashrams and institutes
are there for victims of violence and destitutes
Don't we need a home of safety
for us, the victims of affection and duty?

[Note: Bombay: Boys who ran away from family usually ended up in Bombay (Mumbai)]

- The biological clock of the human body is responsible for governing and regulating a variety of systems in the body. This includes the sleep-wake cycle, hormone secretion, metabolism, certain behaviors, blood pressure and even our immune system.
- Some of our occupations are increasingly impacting our lifestyles in a variety of different ways. These changes get reflected in our biological clocks, especially when it comes to the times we wake up, sleep, rest or/and eat. If the timings aren't right, it could result in a greater risk of various health problems.

Here it refers to anxiety to get married before the woman is considered 'old'

W 28 *The author forcefully feels that the atrocities on women are due to bad upbringing of male issues by the parents*

JUVENILE CRIME

Baby or child of either gender
 Is safe and secure with women
 Every male is a potential offender
 Even boys cannot be left with men.

What news! What a shame!
 Five year old was misused
 It is a crime; not a game;
 It was not verbal abuse.

How can I tell a five-year old
 The danger of sitting on the lap of anyone?
 Will she understand even if I told
 Not to do a natural act of frolic and fun?

Always a few anti socials
 are the bane of our beautiful nation,
 Adding to all other local ills
 Is it due to urban culture's creation?

What happened to peer pressure
 To toe the line of the righteous?
 What erased the family's fear
 Of being outcast, if not virtuous?

You brought up a demon
 You haughty shameless mother!
 Now that he is a fugitive felon
 What face will you show to others?

Yet it is not too late
 You, parents of the criminal juvenile!
 Let him feel and face his fate
 If you hand him over to law and justice.

Make your heart a proverbial rock
O, mother of the wayward child!
Think of the poor victims, and their flock.
Hard justice is the only way, nothing mild.

If the police could not catch, parents can
Please do not attempt to patch, do not be a criminal clan.

You never pardoned a petty thief
Yet, you condone a killer, your son.
Think of the victim's loss and grief
The mother of the demon, you are the reason.

You bribe the police and criminal lawyers you knew
So that you can continue to shield your rapist son
If murderous sons like yours in the society grew
Raped and murdered will be your daughters, later or soon.



W 29 *A hopeless association, be it marriage or other bondages , are not worth continuing, says the author*

BAD EGG [1]

If you had broken the eggs
and if found rotten
you need not make omelette.

If boa is around your legs
and even if it is a pet
you fight it with whatever you get.



Even if you had a raw deal
you need not carry a broken egg.

Do not worry about what anyone will feel
Try to hit at the bad boa's head.



If you have dived at the deep end
and sure to sink
shout for help; don't pretend.

If in the lifebuoy you perceive a puncture
and the coach is missing
hold tight to anything at that juncture.



If the married life is at an end
Don't say, "it's ok", don't pretend.

A lifesaver, if not seen in your mother
Get off, go to friends, or any other.

[note lifebuoy here is the spouse]

A Tamil proverb:

If omens and signs, you believe in
you can't keep, in your lap, a feline.

If you face, in front of you, a jackal
Why guess what it might do,
Let it just go after all.

Sayings and proverbs are old
Many a time, by many told
Meaning is forever loud and clear
Humpty Dumpty cannot be put together.

Yet my sisters, until their old age
Continue to adjust, adapt, yield
to this charade called marriage
whereas long ago,
They could have quit the field.



If you are a victim
of violence, of domestic violence
No use for any fancy, any whim
No silence, never suffer in silence



Decide soon, discard any dilemma,
You're welcome, of course, come to mama.

Enough news of murder or suicide
Result of feminine weaker mind
Strong will and reason will help to decide
Amidst mayhem, proper solution to find.



Come home, my child
Come back home.
I beg your pardon
If I had considered you a burden.

Come home, my child, learn to be bold
Come back, my hand is there to hold



But not before
Contacting in front of the cruel tormentors
Women's cell police
And sympathetic neighbours and mentors.
Pack your valuables, come away
Bundle up children, get out.

Bring mobiles laptops
Do not leave any apps
Beware, wily men can always manipulate
Come away after complaint, and then we contemplate.

W 31 *A mother always adjusts to her adult daughter's wishes or choices, even when the man and relatives are stern*

MUNNI [1]

My only daughter
Full of laughter
Even as a child
Always calm, occasionally wild



Latch on to anybody's finger;
Was an untrained singer
Jump into anyone's lap
Sit or lie supine and clap



In fancy dress she was always cute
Pretending to pose as Krishna with a flute



Wanted to be lifted up and held well
So that she can ring the temple bell
No problem chanting 'Jai Sri Ram'
louder than her pious pop and mom

Are you asking for her name?
We used to call her Munni.
Or any fond name even if funny
Even at twenty she'll be Munni for me.



Her father has forbidden anyone to utter
Her name in this house anymore
Please do not look at my teary eyes.
Don't try to be diplomatic and say anything nice.

Her father tells all, he has issues
Meaning we are childless but he has
Really only I have no issues
Wishing her to be as happy as she was.



MUNNI [2]

Her new name I did not enquire
'My child' is all does a mother require.



My arms are wide open
To embrace her if she chooses to visit
I can't vouch for what will happen
Many from kith and kin may resist.

Her son will be another Munna for me
Even if she had named him Gazni or Gori



Girls have to be taught
What is fancy, what is not
Teens may feel love's first flush
It may just be a hormonal rush.

Life's mistakes are tough to correct
Soon she may regret her haste or taste
Rest of the days may remain to reflect
And regret her life, laid to waste.



I fear it may happen, but I hope not
My daughter must have better luck
than those wayward girls a whole lot
Ever happy I wish her to be, never grief-struck

Her mother waits with open hands
Oh! My daughter! You are welcome.
Your mother's hearth and heart
Are always open for you to walk in.

W 33 *The mother while approving individual choice of the girl, expresses her concern regarding any organized efforts*

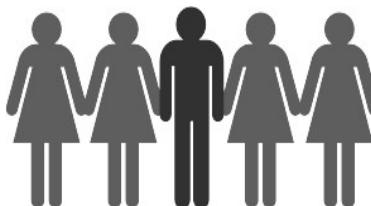
MUNNI [3]

It may turn out to be a revolution
 First step to a final solution
 To society divided by distrust and hate
 And share the benefits from the same plate.

The numbers named as even or odd
 Are equal in a large sample
 If seven ate nine it is a fraud
 Or a simple act of aggression by the odd.

One's life cannot be a number game
 Munni thought she chose as she willed
 What she caught was a bait, or her own find
 She doesn't care, she is out of her own mind

Thank Almighty she is not leading a movement
 To abandon austere home and be a second wife.
 and illusions of ideals or social improvement
 Thank God, she is only one odd, only one life.



If he is cruel, kill the man
You will hang or go to jail;
Kill the system, if you can.
Let us wait and see what will
Happen to you or the rest
of worried, wearied women at the behest
of brainless brute called your spouse;
deserves no more respect than a louse

Kill or simply quit
Don't waver or wait
The bottle or machete in his hand
On your body, never let land.

Even before his evil act
Be ready with your own tact
Never hesitate a bit
To parry and strongly hit
And if needed, just quit.
If the devil dead or gone
Out of your life that remains,
Assume that a bright dawn was born
If not you, womankind gains.

All ye sisters!
Keep a dress, saree or a set
Of clothes, black or any hue
If any woman beyond tolerance is upset
Let him know that
The colours will beat him black and blue.



The obnoxious system of dowry has ruined the lives of many families. The female foeticide is directly linked to this 'cultural practice' along with the 'big Indian wedding' that renders the bride's family bankrupt. The woman's life is valued based on the weight of the gold she brings, literally. Recently, a spate of dowry-related deaths have been reported in Kerala, mostly from the upper echelons of the society. The perpetrators are from highly qualified and affluent families and the victims are well qualified.

The dowry prohibition act alone is not going to stop this menace. The women alone can stop this. If a man can value you only by the car, cash, house or gold your father can gift him, that man is not looking for a partner but a cash cow. And he will treat you like a cow — another of female gender that is elevated to the status of Goddess. There is nothing wrong with remaining single if you can't find a man who values you, or being divorced, than being a slave to such a greedy swine. It is time to tell the 'Sanskari' uncles and aunts to stop worshipping women as Goddesses. It would be a great step forward if our rotten society starts treating women as humans. — Anand Neelakantan in *The New Indian Express*



**W 35 A woman's job is never done- hers is a 24/7 job
SUNDAY, FREE?**

49

If only you think deep each day,
You will not sink into deep dismay.

Today is Sunday, a holiday
Thank the Christian God for this day
Far into the future, He did see.

Of course, for me
and my fellow females
All days are the same
Freedom is only what one feels.
One-time house was made by the mason
Daily home is made by me and you
Building / owning a house was the reason
Female fettered herself, nothing new.

Sunday can be slow
As all of us know
Females cannot fly away
From the chores of the day.



FREEDOM : MISUSED, MISSED.

When I was born
I knew I was hated
By my own dear 'daadi'
Who herself was hated
For being born as a 'she'



[Note : daadi-grandmother, Hindi]

When I was one year old
It seems I cried and cried
Long and loud; stop without being told
Nor fed nor in any way pacified.



No sofa, no mattress when two year old
I could jump and play on river sand
Like boys I was also quite bold
To dive into water avoiding land.



When I was three years old
Like other girls I was not allowed
To touch scooters and other toys
Yet I was better than the boys
I had my own riding bid
I could run holding on to a kid
[goat's kid, stupid readers!]



When I was four years old
It seems I was quite bold
To hide behind a cud-chewing cow
The other players were afraid or slow
In the juvenile game of hide and seek
Considered fit for those who were weak.

When I was older and going to school
Social class was seen; I was no fool
Not to see; our songs were childish
In front of imposing rhymes in English.
Even before the age of ten
Gender difference showed up often

51

After primary school,

 No more uniform
 No more books or pens
 No more reading and writing
But, plenty of daily chores of washing, drying and ironing
 of clothes big, small, mini
scrubbing, rinsing and wiping
 of vessels big, small, mini
sweeping, mopping and drying
 of rooms big, small, mini
making, taking and serving
 buttermilk, snacks or tea
 to foul mouthed males
 big, small or meany.



“Independent India” came to be
Indians, it seems, became free .

Free to sweat and toil for a pittance
Free to leave if you don’t like the wages
Free to work as bonded labour to loan-sharks
Free to flee from your forefather’s home
fearing frenzied mob’s rioting and arson.

Women too were free to go to a job
Bringing bread to spouse and a mob
of drunks, and gamblers and betters.

DUTY

Days progress, Senses regress
Even as my body and mind
are steadily on the downward trend.
I have myopia with which to battle
In spite of donning a soda bottle.



Sitting across my window
I see a cuckoo. Or is it Myna or Crow?
It may even be a Bulbul with a Crown
I have to consult; I don't know on my own.

When I had my senses sharp
I just read required reading
Pass the tests, pass the mark
Life was just biriyani and breeding.
I did not have any hobbies
Except caring for babies
Outside world was only office and wage
Bound to home, till I reached this age.



Kitchen was my shelter
Guests were happy
Woman is the toiling 'sweat-er'
No male will change a nappy.
[sweat-er - author's word
— one who sweats]



Care for the sick
Made me miss all music
Care for the oldies until their end of life
is the duty and responsibility of me, the wife.

Oldies are gone one by one
Then came the turn of the son
Gone due to overdose of the bottle and glass
No one, including me, ever felt the loss.
Life spent for the lowly swine
Depresses and eats you from within
No hobbies, no aims, nothing to call mine
Even now dreary days; old age is sin.

53

Sitting across my window I see
Bickering birds as a blur;
I never consulted Audebon or Ali
In my abler days of yore.

Coming generations of girls! Beware
of overbearing affection and home care
Clever clergies have given a different name
Duty and bonded labour are one and the same.



[Notes:
Stanza 1 = 'soda bottle' – thick spectacle for correcting short sight.
Stanza 9 = Audebon – An association of bird watchers
Ali – Salim Ali – Indian Ornithologist]

PESTS

Intelligent, do you say?
Yes, it is the fly
Crafty and sly.
It knows by the spread
That the paper is being read
And on the nose or brow, sit
It knows, I won't myself hit.



When I am ready and set
With a newspaper rolled
It is nowhere near, I bet,
It is hiding in my saree fold



The wily fly is not the only one
To surround and tease a woman;
The mosquito a mob or alone
Whistle, whisper and do antics, wanton.



The group of insects is not the only one
To surround, touch and tease a woman
The treacherous male as a mob or alone
Seduce, cheat, woo a woman who is prone

Animals, pets in human form outside
Pests ad irksome insects indoor
Islam is the best for me to hide
Inside a hijab and fret no more.

I have to confine myself all day in
To escape the human pest and vermin
Hijaab may prevent pests that fly.
Will it work against pests that pry?
[Note : Hijaab – A garment for woman]

BOYS WILL BE BOYS

Boys will be boys Whatever be their age
Or religion, caste or nationality
Or social or political status
Only outer appearance will vary
Girls? Where are the girls? There are no girls.

A female person
She is either a child
Or suddenly a woman

Or she is referred to as,
'maal' like an item on display in a Mall
'sarakku' like a commodity sold in a shop
Among foul-mouthed ill-clad lowly males

Any female of any age
Called as 'girl' or 'my girl'
By bosses or colleagues
Among well-dressed but low-class males

There are no real girls
Except in the registers
Of schools and colleges.

Elsewhere boys will remain as boys
For, as long as they are eligible
'suitable' and sought after
in the marriage market.

In Bihar though 'boys' will be boys
Can rape, misbehave and escape
Since they are only boys.

[Notes: *maal=commmodity (Hindi-slang-impolite*
Sarakku = item (Tamil-slang-impolite)]



GHOSTS.

Raised machete, cruel eyes, victim's call
Splattered blood, patches on the wall
Cans, bottles, fiery liquid being thrown
The victim could not dare to see the face, her own.

Simple saree, silent ceiling fan, as aids
to raped, seduced, suicidal minds
Any day, anywhere in India, same story
of silently suffering female throughout history.

Painful memories of penury and hunger
Merciless killings in the days when younger
For the family 'honour' which does not exist.
Even if she is the victim, patriarchy persists.

Ghosts do not go away
They hang around to haunt
The females of the family
Whether or not, they want.



PREGNANT WOMAN-1

As they say politely, I am ‘expecting’,

Yes, I do and soon it will show.

Yet I did not expect the details of directing the
potential mother about what to do or no.

Months before the usual rituals began

my mother-in-law was anxious

To take me stealthily to make a scan

For she wanted to test the foetus.

Like my mother wonders

I will also like to know

Whether ultra scan would show

Right info without blunders.

Will the birth be right?

Will it be bonnie and bright?

Will the child have a broad brow?

Physically alert, mentally not slow?

Questions so many

Will it have big black or brown eyes

Will it have the correct weight or size

Will it have India-black hair

And skin, not jet-black, but fair.

My mother-in-law has brought me

To this alley den of a clinic, to see

If her first grand-child’s gender

right? A female will be an offender

to her hope and ambition of kith and kin

for whom, abortion of female foetus is not a sin.



**W 42 A woman goes to a doctor for
'Family planning' purpose**

PREGNANT WOMAN-2

This college-educated friend of mine
Is married to an engineer in town planning
The couple have followed family planning,
They are liberal, boy or girl is fine.

Her pregnancy also was well planned
After his promotion; after their vacation;
Now astrology and almanac they have scanned
For selecting a superior time and location.

They know, the time and place of birth
Have bearing on the whole life
Of the child, as per religion and faith
Astrologers can predict any event or strife.

She wants to know and plan the delivery date
She knows it need not be God's will or fate
Modern medicine can guess, though not accurate.
My friend does not want to gamble or speculate.

She has seen panchangas and planet positions
Astrologers have already made horoscopic compositions
Based on the date and time of delivery
Most auspicious for her and the baby.

Now she is here for a deal
With gynecologist's skill and zeal
Money, if needed, can be arranged
If delivery time can be suitably changed.

Someone asks:
Who can meddle with God's will?
Answer comes:
Yes, gynecs and modern medical skill



The couple wants the doctor to suggest
The place for the operation the best;
As for the date, will he consult the astrologer
And both can put their heads together.

So, it was C-section
As easy as an injection
No anxious waiting
For start of labour pain.

Astrologer is rich
The clinic is richer
Gone to the ditch
All laws of nature.



[Notes :

Panchanga – Indian almanac- gives day, date, phases of the moon, Zodiac and stars data.

Horoscope – a chart exclusively made for an individual- based on the accurate time and date of birth.

Gynec- short form of gynaecologist

C-section - Caesarean operation]



SCANNING

Haai Raam! Raama Raamaa!
Is it my fate? Is it my karma?
I brought an urban beauty for getting a grandson
There is no hope for one; she turned out to be barren

Is it the fate written on my forehead?
I wanted a grandson before I am dead.
I brought a rustic teen for my second son.
She is now carrying, my worries have begun.



My mother and others, with bated breath
Used to wait at home for the child's birth
If it was a female, it was quietly under the earth
Buried and no celebration, joy or mirth.

Hai Raam! Raama..Raamaa!
You know, I know, I am observing *kuldharma*.
If the scanning shows female foetus
It has to go, O God! Pardon us.

Why did I live and said my prayers,
O my god Raama! For these many years?
To long for the male hair, is it a sin,
to carry forward the blood line of kith and kin?

[Note: many Sanskrit based Indian words are used
kuldharma.- tradition
Raama- god's name – here it is *Oh My God*]

GURU ALOE VERA

When I woke up after the sun beam gave me a few kicks

I saw, a girl was silently sitting on a pile of bricks
For her it may be considered equal to a garden chair.
She was neither young nor old; neither black nor fair.

She was neither smiling nor tearful

But certainly she was far from cheerful
She was out neither for rest nor for a morning walk
She was alone with none to listen to or talk.

Me too, I am neither old nor mod;

To be here it would have been odd,
I, a plant, neither for show nor for God
Yet I am cared for by this landlord.

“Hey, look! What is here in this pot?”

I looked up, elated by the attention I got.
Voices said “Aloe Vira! Aloe Vira! See”
I said, “Thanks a lot, all of ye”.



A thought came to me like a spark

Perhaps this teen needs someone to talk
So, I said to myself, I'll break the ice
A chance to be somewhat useful and nice

“Hey, Bangaramma!, I like your anklet

May not be pure gold but it shines yet”
She sure was baffled by a babbling bush
She neither froze, nor got up to rush.
[Note: Bangaramma-(Telugu) Golden girl-pet name]

As she watched me well and came near
To assure who it was she happened to hear
I said, “It is me, bushy cactus;
I won't prick, can we be friends? Let us”

“Your anklet is fine,
It exhibits a shine,
Your shiny skin that is brown
Both not borrowed; your own”

She said in a level tone
Showed that she was forlorn;
“My anklet is brass
My complexion is gross;
Neither is worth
Being on this earth”
I said in a voice equally calm
“Listen to me; I can be your mom”



Hearing me, the little one shouted.
“You Ignorant, you thorny goon !”
I froze, to the pot, grouted
Waited for more to come, soon.

The girl said, “My mother,
Much worse than any other;
Always commenting on my skin
She’s the one, my enemy from within.

I said: I think your mood is due
To the human prejudice around you
Branding persons by the colour of their skin
Even by your mother and other kin.

I too belong to the oppressed class
While jasmine and rose were top brass;
Until men discovered qualities of mine
Safe, sure, innate in the sap within.

My sap is medical and it is innate, natural
So is my thorn and no fragrance, it’s factual
Your skin colour is neither good nor bad
People have prejudices, a fact, it’s so sad.

If People care to see the qualities within
 They would realise it is a sin
 To prejudge persons by any random yardstick
 Even to think of it makes good persons sick.

Yet, between humans and the rest
 Of the species, there is a gap
 Between an individual and the rest
 Qualities, unlike a plant and its sap.

Your inner qualities you have to develop
 Everyone of this earth you have to envelope
 In your circle of the admired and loved
 Like the sages who taught or just lived.

Once people find your mind
 They sure would be more kind
 But, by that time you won't care
 For such people whether unkind or fair.

I 've said much; I'll stop
 My sap talk is not just sop.
 Remember ! Resolute you can rise
 above all men's mean prejudice.
 The teen got up and almost kissed
 me, but due to thorns, her kiss I missed.
 She said: "In me you are able to see
 Yourself though you are plant family"
 My mother should inspect in a mirror
 To see the colour I got only from her

Thanks, my friend cactus
 You are wiser than us
 'Coloured' humans full of lies
 Tongue talking of equality mind full of bias.

Hay, Aloe vera! Your words are soothing
 To me and every ugly duckling!
 You have thorns around you
 But inside you have the wisdom of a guru

From supine, lying on the back on the mat
To jump to prone position belly flat
Doing this in one swift move. Is it an *aasan*?
I don't know. The doer is my young son.

How old is he? Perhaps five
I don't remember, though together we live
He was doing it even when he was less than four.
Do you find it strange? Let me tell more

Monkeys of the nursery rhyme
Broke their heads one at a time.
The good doctor said
"No more jumping on the bed"



My son of four years, along with a pal
Does tricks on the sofa in the hall.
Jumping on the spring loaded long sofa
Was not a taboo in this house so far.

Treading as in a trampoline
Was not enough for the monkey twin
Letting them do flip and somersault
Was the elder's and more basically my fault.

Standing, bring one's head to supine
Slow or fast could have been fine.

But standing firmly on two feet
Suddenly fall to the position prone
Only my son could dare and do it neat
In yoga or acrobatics it is unknown.'

Except him and me, no one knows
The role of two thick but soft pillows.

These, once a visiting aunt had silently taken.
My son's neck, thank god, was not broken
Aunt was not vicious. She did not put stones there
where the impact-absorbing pillows were

One good effect of the aunt, not so vicious
is that my son, now bigger, is quite conscious
of what he does and sees whether
the safety gear are in the place and put together.

Before I too jump ahead in the story
Let me confess; this is no true history.
Call it confession; call it reflection;
Story-telling is not my profession.

Before my son would
Break his head on the bed
I took him to the pool
Since I have once read
It could do more than just cool.

Now, putting my back on my easy chair,
I steadily into vacant space stare.
Oh! Do you see my son in neat uniform
Doing police duty in calm or storm.

Next, do you see him on a ship
In all-white attire and a stiff cap
I did not find the police able
After horses flee, they lock the stable

So I made him join the naval force
Swimming pool lessons helped of course.
My blessings, my son! Yet you keep
Safe since pressure is high in the deep.

Next time I woke up from my reverie
I was not alone, I had company.
Someone asked, do you really know
Where your son can be, just now

I said, I am just a mother
Who from the time the umbilical cord
was cut, worries. But the other
has its own life. No more the ward.

He might have left
The sea, navy, water
Since he would have felt
He was due for something better.

When he was a bonny boy
He was my jumping joy
I let him jump and feel free
To do, become- what he wants to be.

Will he next go up in the air?
To do any flying manoeuvre?
He and I both have to wait
Until he trains to become a pilot.

Commercial flights do not permit
Any tricky turn from the cock-pit.
So I think he voluntarily chose
And they let him join the Air force.

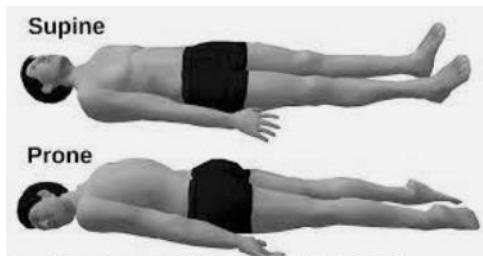
The daring dives done by my son's jet
On the last Republic day fly-past
For many days will linger and last
In my mind; never to forget.

The best adventure will be
 To jump where there is no Gravity
 So my restless son had thought
 To try and become an astronaut

In a moment of Out-of-Guard
 Did he let go the umbilical cord?
 But the bond which connected me
 To my son will ever be in my memory.

See the cursed sofa near the fence
 from which he did his last bounce
 Overgrown with grass and weeds
 Such a killer furniture who needs?

It all started with a spring
 an absolutely a harmless thing
 Yet I hate anything that bounced
 from the day I heard
 'Brought to hospital, dead'.



W 46 *The silent revolution of
the older generation is acknowledged
ODE TO AJJI or WHO IS AJJI?*

Who is Ajji? You (arrogantly) ask me,
You, young chit of a teen!

Ajji was a teen like you, and a free
Soul then on the south Indian scene.

She was a star then in Sangeetha kala;
You will never know. You are deaf
What with the din and noise you call gala
massive noise passed off as art stuff.



Have you ever heard a single pure note
From the singer's belly, lungs and the throat
Reaching the octave and above and suddenly
come down to the cadence evenly?

Ajji was a performer
Singer, actor; vocal and mime
She was also a transformer
Of archaic norms of that time.

Ajji allowed Amma to fly free
And high as much as she could
The results of which we now see
In your generation's motto and mood.

'Modern' does not mean the old
was no good and so to be shunned
You teens have to be told
And your closed eyes to be opened.

Ajji was those days' AI
Before you say 'artificial' may I
explain? It is Ancient Intermediate between
Pure patriarchy and the aspiring female teen.

‘Who is Ajji?’ you dared to ask
The freedom in which today you bask
Is the fruit of the silent effort and protest
She and her genre, made just with jest.

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Does anyone any more try to guess
When is your days of monthly curse?
Do your elders try to eavesdrop, overhear
When you answer a call from anyone dear?

‘NO’ to both you should say
Since that is the truth of today.

If it were otherwise it would be
Ajji who would be on your side

Now you approach ajji and say
“Thanks for your affection and advice”
She sure will understand and may
Even give tips to camouflage
white lies

[*Notes : Ajji – Grandmother – Kannada*
Sangeeta kala – art of music
Amma – mother, all South Indian languages
‘days of curse’ – In south India, women were
kept out of the kitchen, during.]

1. Looking around in my village
At my sisters, and aunts of any age
The impression, it was, at my tender age
Any female person with a certain image.
2. As I viewed from my full four feet
of height, upon the grown-ups
I wondered how men were trim and neat
When they go to catch a bus to work.
3. The same uncle when at home
Lounging in a lungi and vest
Much worse some others who roam
Unsteady, dirty, smelling worst.

LATER IN LIFE

4. Boys in all white on the ground
Playing cricket in the school team
Girls, if at all they are around,
Were there for watching it'd seem.
5. Mathematics teacher with a coat and turban
Sanskrit teacher in Dhoti and pigtail
Both of them were objects of fun
Among boys, with secretly told jokes or tales.
6. The head master was the ultimate idol
For all of us, wide-eyed boys
Boot, coat, tie and in every detail
His attire was the dream in their eyes.

[*I was yesterday's child.*]

7. Let me come to the topic
before I digress too far away .
Men had use, style, attire to pick
And choose for their work or play.
Except for nurses who tend to the sick
All women were in sarees
whether work, sleep or pray.

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ATTIRE [2]

[Today's child]

1. My uncle was mad with anger
He had kept his T-shirt on a hanger
Hanger is there ; shirt is missing;
Uncle shouting, searching, cursing.
2. Comes in clumsily the athletic aunty
her T-shirt, wet, dirty, sweaty.
Her T-shirt? Uncle's search is in vain
The sweaty shirt is his, it is plain.
3. Aunty's clothes are hers;
Uncle's clothes too
Perhaps helps their purse
One set for users two.

GENERAL:

4. Times have changed,
The society is different.
Women vie with men;
They dare in every front.
5. The good side is this :
Two uses for one
Both can have fun.
6. The flip side is this :
If you want a good thing for you.
Dear uncle! Better buy and keep two.

**W 48 A son and his wife apologize to
the elderly father/father-in-law**
TO A STUBBORN FATHER

Son:

I came back to fall at your feet,
 To ask for forgiveness, pardon;
 Your ego never moved from its high seat
 You said “You shameless! Pardon? Never done”

I knew I got everything from you
 I wanted to acknowledge, revere;
 I see only the sole of your shoe
 You are full of grudge, as ever severe.

At the turning point of my life
 You could have said “wait stay”
 You even gagged my mother, your wife
 You shouted, “Get out! Go away”

No way beyond you, to my mother,
 I had go into the wilderness
 Or seek a safe shelter in another
 leaving decades of togetherness.

The words you use most
 often were : “Get out! Get lost!”
 I came and see only the same very
 words from your vocabulary.

Son and Daughter-in-law :

At least after you are declared unwell
 We thought your manners will mellow
 Instead , we see your ego swell
 so big, it will yourself eventually swallow.



Daughter-in-law :

I will prostrate, bow, even hug
 If only you will let me near
 He is just your son, not a thing
 How much more loneliness you would bear?

Son: I knew you want everyone
 Near you at your last hour;
 Give me the right as your son
 to sweeten the relation that had gone sour.

Both : Let your eyes, head or hand
 Give a hint that you've pardoned
 us and those whom you disdained
 A place in the haven of
 our hearts you would have gained.

You have never learnt to forgive
 As long as you were lucky to live
 Regret and reconcile are some of the ways
 by which WE can ease your last days.
 If you too adopt the same path
 It will sure be heaven for us, both

Son: You never knew you too
 suffered when you made us suffer
 Open your eyes and see who
 are near you in your last hour.

Both: We do say "we are sorry"
 Do you say, " I too am sorry"
 No papa, no! you just nod your head
 We'll assume you have said

GENERAL:

May the man's soul rest
 in peace; but let's not forget
 'In all of us, ego causes worry'
 It can be quelled by saying "I AM SORRY".

W 49 *How can we hear the true victim's woes?***PEASANT**

Dangling and undulating
 like her ear rings
 in her newly pierced ears;
 Like the hand made threads of leather
 hanging from the bosom of her outer coat
 Her views are visible and well shown and seen.



Dense and complicated
 like his beard and dishevelled hair
 Like his lexicon neither lucid nor logical
 His views are visible and well shown and seen.



What are the thoughts of
 the classical mother
 bringing up her four children
 and caring for unemployed drunkard husband?

How to hear real people?
 We are told what their views are by.....



By denim wearing denizens from street corners
 or from those high pedestals
 of the church / or the senate/ or the courts/
 Political niches and clichés
 or civil and governmental agencies.



The poor peasant in me
 likes to know and hear first hand
 other poor peasants like me.

W 50 *The unqualified author dares to think he can guess what Darwin failed to state- about gender behaviour in mammals*

THE PLOY IS IN THE GENES

Someone asked , why is the sky blue?
 Prof. Guide said, physics long back knew.
 Let us ask: Why leaves are green?
 Prof. Guide will say, chemists have already seen.

Why does the moon wax and wane?
 Even geography teacher can explain.
 Why does an apple fall to the earth?
 Your question tickles me to death.

Why is the setting sun red?
 The chapter on scattering is to be read.
 How, why and when does a volcano erupt?
 For geology it is an introductory subject.
 Why is the sea water salty?
 Knowing the answer you ask, naughty!

Here is a topic I suggest for research;
 To a big thesis it may not mean much;
 But it may be a challenge to a team
 of biologists who think and dream .

Why is the female weak
 only in the mammalian order?
 Can the answer once for all break
 the ego of the male overlord?
 [Note: overlorder- author's word -for rhyme]

Look into some ‘somes and more
 Cellular reasons you can explore.
 See if nature has shown ‘some bias .
 Is DNA the reason for all the chaos?

*[note: ‘some- chromosome;
 DNA- genetic molecule not known in Darwin’s time]*

Or, has ‘nurture’ or social norm
 made the female underperform?

Or,

for the prolongation of the species she
 accepts the position as it is?

[note: nature and nurture were Darwin’s concepts]

‘The homemaker we know also makes
 the future generation. Also it takes
 much more than macho and muscle
 to cope with the ‘survival’ tussle.



A feline mother will fight with a strength
 you never knew she had in her length;
 To save her cubs she would fight
 a mammoth villain with all her might.

Or else, the mother may just sneak away
 carrying her cubs out of harm’s way.
 You may say it is weakness; I’ll call it tact;
 Ask a cat-lover. She will accept it as fact.

If a female mammal could read my piece
 She would read it to her species :
 “ Valour lies not in winning , but live,
 Smile, survive, serve with tender love.”

Darwin knew what I just said

But did not elaborate or theorise;
Basic and novel concepts having laid
He thought why give room for doubt to rise?

A poet need not be afraid
to imagine and speculate .
Any way his theory will lie unread
since no one reads anything , of late.

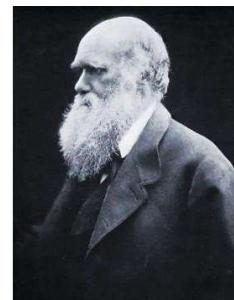
My theory will get support only when
Another Alli Rani's empire had done
well for itself and the [wo]mankind
Leaving patriarchal pride far behind.

*[note; Alli Rani- a queen in oral history –folklore- of
Tamilnadu whose army had only females]*

Pretend to be powerless
Pretend to accept defeat
When time comes nevertheless
See her rising with mood upbeat.

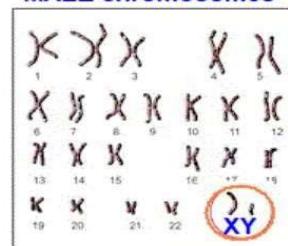
Concerns of commerce and cash
Efforts ending in ego-clash
Are all matters left for men
As long as the family is run.

Female's faces are many
Since she does multi-tasking
Activists who call it her destiny
Are also adepts in masking.

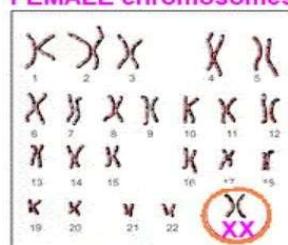


1809 –1882

MALE chromosomes



FEMALE chromosomes



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