

# Translations

M. SRIDHAR<sup>\*</sup> & ALLADI UMA<sup>\*</sup>

## Voice-box

Devipriya

My palm  
is a voice-box.  
How else from this pen  
Outpour onto these pages  
these images  
these dream-words  
in sonorous sounds?

(Translation of Devipriya's Telugu poem 'Swaram' by M. Sridhar and Alladi Uma)

## Realization

Devipriya

Walking on the road  
I feel I'm the road itself—  
Lying down the light of the lamp  
I feel like the lamp itself—  
When I look at the sky  
I feel I'm the sky itself—  
When I browse through the paper  
I feel like the paper itself—  
Only when I ignite my thoughts into words  
do I realize  
that I'm still  
the moving fiery bard.

(Translation of Devipriya's Telugu poem 'Gnanam' by M. Sridhar and Alladi Uma)

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(Devipriya is a journalist and poet who has published extensively. He is a writer with leftist leanings.)

## Secrecy

Pemmaraju Gopalakrishna

Never do the waters toying with you and your boat  
remind you of the whirlpools.

Never do the sea waves playing at your feet  
warn you of the impending upsurge.

Never do those claiming to be friends, guarding you  
whisper of your turn in the ensuing encounter.

Never do the landlords professing to protect you  
yet, with your blood, build palaces  
let it slip that  
you were born, grew and perished at the very foundation.

(Translation of Pemmaraju Gopalakrishna's 'Rahasyam' by  
M. Sridhar and Alladi Uma)

(Pemmaraju Gopalakrishna is a poet who writes with a clear social consciousness.)

## Feminist Manifesto

Ghantasala Nirmala

Before you are excited and cry hoarse  
that women are exceedingly pure, they are goddesses and  
Mother  
Sitas  
before you get angry and abuse us for denying it  
grasp the real truth  
Don't go on  
attributing exceptionally virtuous nature to us  
rubbing on us all great qualities of goodness  
don't douse us in garlands of praise  
in the sultry heat of wifely duties that doesn't emit wisdom

Freedom is a human being's right—equality a hymn we  
recite

We have a vision  
Because it had not become a collective vision  
because our sight and voice had been curbed in the name of  
preserving family secrets

we had not spoken out all these days  
we had not strayed away from the codes the male world had  
imposed

Now a question is tormenting us  
an existential predicament is bothering us day and night

We are half the workforce

The burden imposed on us to increase the wealth of the  
universe

is half too heavy to bear

Still

we get a raw deal when it comes to wages of labour or  
official rules or  
appointments

in the mirror of equality ours is always a belittled figure

It's we who sow the seeds in the fields

It's we who rear the human seeds into fruit-bearing trees

It's we who till now have gathered the gleanings of your  
sympathy

It's we who have stood up now with only our abilities as  
weapons

to oppose your callousness in ignoring

our sweat which streamed out for all of us

our tears of patience we stifled for ages

Yes, it's we who have cast off our shyness to confront you  
for our share of love and respect

Our path is clear to us

Our feet are ready to run on stony and thorny paths

Before we beat the drum

before we blow the conch to proclaim the struggle  
 here is the forewarning for you—  
 As father, as brother, as husband, as son  
 love us equally  
 criticize us rationally and give us only due respect  
 When this does not happen  
 our social outlook will turn toxic  
 the welfare of the world will turn venomous for us  
 Don't drive us towards destruction and annihilation of all  
 After all if the struggle must begin we are not responsible for  
 any damage

(Translation of Ghantasala Nirmala's Telugu poem, 'Feminist  
 Manifesto' by M. Sridhar and Alladi Uma)  
 (Ghantasala Nirmala is a free-lancer and a poet with a feminist  
 consciousness.)

M. Sridhar & Alladi Uma

## War-child

Kondepudi Nirmala

I am not worried any longer  
 as to why it is impossible to demean myself any further  
 Except for one on the topmost step  
 there is no danger of tumbling down  
 If your science which does not solve any problems  
 if your maths which cannot calculate tear drops  
 if all your wonderful experiments put together  
 only serve to attack with knives and daggers  
 my being which adds up to no more than an inch  
 and which only helps to increasingly simplify  
 your uncultured infanticides  
 that only reveal your dwarf-like nature  
 that also show what a powerful enemy I am  
 For any mother  
 who is born in a country where she cannot love her own  
 reflection  
 who steps into the world of ghostly spirits  
 thoughts take shape not in the mind but in the guts

Looking at the plot against our multiplying thoughts  
Looking at the conspiracy against the foetus in the womb  
Looking at the modern-day Devaki  
who has come to sacrifice her children succumbing to  
Kamsa's evil  
designs  
Looking at the dual attitude injected into her blood stream  
I feel nothing matters any more  
the fangs of ignorance had pierced so deep in society  
the backbones of wisdom had been broken so long ago  
the snake bite or scorpion sting cannot hurt anew  
I feel like crying  
I feel like laughing even as I am scared  
An unformed shape that cannot call out to its mother  
When you poke the needle into the vein  
with your microscope eyes which help you count the  
minutest germs  
and insects  
to determine the life and death question of whether the foetus  
is  
female or male  
the effect of anesthesia does not let me be conscious  
There is not much distance between the state of being  
unconscious  
and death  
No matter how many bodies are piled up  
No matter it amounting to utter helplessness  
I feel like clenching my teeth and waging a battle  
Translations

with the support of the dead bodies  
like Abhimanyu shielding himself with a chariot wheel  
to make sure the life-light is not blown off  
Victory or defeat I feel like clasping the wounds  
I feel I must be born a girl  
amidst you who are regressing with atomic speed  
saying that one should tie pestle around one's head if  
madness is

cured or that sati should be committed if rains were to come  
 at the right time  
 into your unwelcome lifeless hearts  
 into a tribe which is going astray blind and without enderness  
 into the ultra modern human slaughter house  
 even as I turn out to be a mother feeding a deformed child  
 out of pity more than love with shame and even with  
 unbearable sorrow  
 It will be like disjointed incomplete pictures  
 taking fine shape at one go—

(Translation of Kondepudi Nirmala's Telugu poem  
 'Yuddhasishuvu' by M. Sridhar and Alladi Uma)

(Kondepudi Nirmala writes poetry and fiction with a feminist  
 consciousness and has published extensively.)

## Line of Sorrow

**Kalpana Rentala**

Yes, it's now a heroic tale  
 A play that hasn't still ended  
 Though more than fifty years have passed  
 my history is an eternally bleeding injury  
 of a body split right in the middle  
 No matter how many times the divider is divided  
 I will remain the remainder

Dangling deaths all over  
 Chastity floating around in wells  
 Pativratyams buried under the earth

Black, white or red  
 whatever colour they may be  
 the religious veils over the faces are just the same

Bodies full of cracks



are but nail gores of male beasts  
 They are yonis scattered far and wide  
 after he has squashed and thrown them away  
 History is full of my flags of victory  
 of my body branded with blood!

This is a never-ending conversation  
 An un-severed memory

(From the experience of having read *Borders and Boundaries*)

(Translation of Kalpana Rentala's Telugu poem 'Vishada Rekha'  
 by M. Sridhar and Alladi Uma)

### **Arithmetic of Handcuffs**

**Kalpana Rentala**

I have been counting  
 The bars around me  
 It's an old sum

I am coming back  
 to the same place I started  
 but I can't solve the sum  
 Ammamma told this to amma  
 Amma to me  
 But this old sum remains an eternal question!  
 Would at least my little daughter escape  
 the problem of this sum tomorrow?

(Translation of Kalpana Rentala's Telugu poem 'Sankella Ganitam'  
 by M. Sridhar and Alladi Uma)

(Kalpana Rentala works for Andhra Bhoomi and is a poet who  
 writes about women's place in the changing world.)

### **Divergence**

**S. V. Satyanarayana**

I savour sweet bottled memories  
 Colourful scenes

How exotic  
layers of experience  
circling my eyes!

True....

As long as one is lost in thoughts  
this world would look a beautiful orchard  
but when one steps into the real  
one perceives  
thorny bushes,  
poisonous insects.

(Translation of S. V. Satyanarayana's Telugu poem 'Vairudhyam'  
by M. Sridhar and Alladi Uma)

(S.V. Satyanarayana teaches in Osmania University and is a poet  
and critic who writes progressive poetry.)

## **From Stone Age To Stone Age...**

**Banala Srinivasa Rao**

Mechanised hearts that show disgust for human fragrances  
from the  
folds of the earth.

Ears that cannot take in the notes of the koel. Lungs that  
happily  
inhale only carbon monoxide.

Black smoke-snakes that have devoured the stars.  
Glass mansions that have robbed the rainbows.

The moon that has smeared soot on its smooth cheeks.  
Nostrils that distastefully "sip" pollution at least little by little  
with  
against the siren.  
Raindrops whose signatures disappear seconds after falling  
on the



earth's frying pan.

The air that twirls around itself feeling suffocated.

The morning bird that chops its own wings at night in its nest.

Clouds that lie inebriated having drunk from the ocean.

The sun that never wakes up in the eastern hearts.

Picking up tearful memories that are dropping

Shaking hands each moment with death

Melting, while waiting, sighing

as moments turn into centuries

Loathing the natural

Embracing the unnatural

Carving sorrowful letters

on the walls of experience

Applying new colours to the face

without removing the stains on history

Reading lessons of the future

in the dark light of the present

Silently as human trees on either side of the roads...

Memory of long lost existence all sensations having dried up,  
all feelings and experiences lingering nervously somewhere  
in the layers of the heart.

Shapes sprouting artificially having lost all human qualities.

Vaguely remembering having hidden all 'isms' carefully in  
the pockets,

but having lost humanism somewhere.

Many centuries have passed since our death as human beings.

Hence, a new life now.

From Stone age once again to Stone age...

(Translation of Banala Srinivasa Rao's 'Raati yugam lonchi  
raati yugam loki...' by M. Sridhar and Alladi Uma)

(Banala Srinivasa Rao teaches English and writes postmodern  
poetry.)

## Never-ending Illusions

M. Sridhar

The hands of the clock  
that imagine they are crossing  
time boundaries  
as they go ticking  
the traffic light  
that thinks it's bringing time to a halt  
even for a very short while  
as it changes its colours  
and mere ideals

that seek to bring about changes  
in social structure  
keep moving round and round—  
one unable to go beyond the clock's frame  
another unable to cross the road boundaries  
and the other unable to go beyond the confines  
of their narrow thinking—  
in never-ending  
circles of illusion

(Translation of M. Sridhar's Telugu poem  
'Paribhramistunnayellappudu' by the author)

(M. Sridhar teaches English, writes poetry and is a translator.)