

Please recycle to a friend.

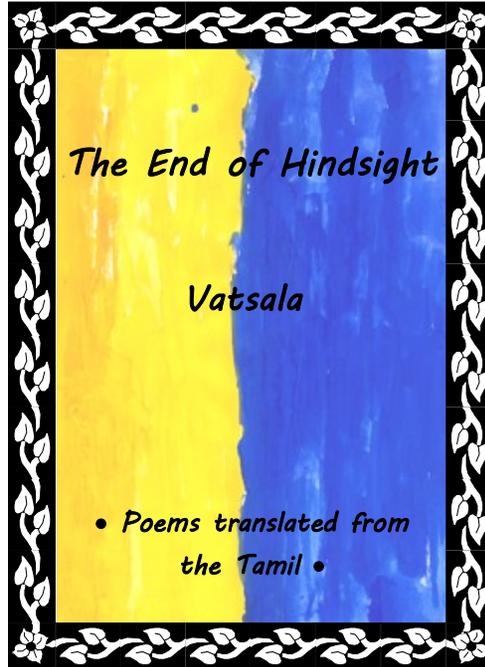
ORIGAMIPOEMS.COM
origamipoems@gmail.com

Cover artwork by K. Ananya

Origami Poetry Project™

The End of Hindsight
by Vatsala © 2012

—
All poems are from the collection
Suyam, Chennai: Sneha, 2000.
Wherever translations have appeared
in print, details are given.



When? (Enndru?) (translated by K. Srilata)

Today I lost to you.
Much to the pride of your sick mother,
to the great joy of your wife and your children,
you won the national award for best scientist.
As for me...

I remain
a good nurse to my invalid father-in-law,
a good mother to the little ones,
an ideal wife of a man
who turns to me for all his needs.
No, I didn't win the school prize
for the best primary teacher.
Today I lost to you.

I am wrong about this.
I lost to you a while ago –
The day they decreed that you would study Science
and I, History.

Wrong again!
Do you remember the days you took the bus
to the best school in town
and I, a rickshaw to the small school a street away?
I lost to you then, back in those days.

But wait!
Let me look further...
to the day
you climbed a tree, clad in your sensible trousers,
and surveyed the world,
even as I tripped on my long skirt and fell
and forgot for life the climbing of trees?
I lost to you
that day,
did I not?

Forgive me my confusions.
I see it clearly now...
A ball and a toy gun for you.
For me, a baby doll and a couple of sparklers.
It was then, was it not,
that I lost to you?

You are not to worry.
This is it!
I have arrived at the very end
of hindsight.
For who remembers
the doors that were shut
as one lay sleeping in the cradle?
Who remembers
the darkness that shrouds the womb?

Rope (*Kayaru*)

I detest ropes.

All of them —

the village wells
and Chittappa's cot

that ties his cases.

The chain around
my wife's neck

is of a different kind.
Chitti's too —

she is scared of me.
So is Appa,

who wonders about Amma's last words.

All she said was:

"A chitti will arrive.
Be a good boy

and grow up soon.
Sorry, kanna,

I have to go."

Translated by K. Srilata and Subashree Krishnaswamy — featured in *The Rapids of a Great River: The Penguin Book of Tamil Poetry* (co-edited with Lakshmi Holmstrom and Subashree Krishnaswamy), Penguin/Viking, New Delhi, 2009.

Glossary:

Coir: fiber of the husk of the coconut, used

in making rope, matting, etc.
Chitti: Maternal aunt,
used here denotes stepmother

Chittappa: Maternal uncle

Appa: Father
Amma: Mother

Kanna: darling

• • •

I detest ropes.

tightening the rope round her neck.
shaking my baby sister in the womb,
She kicked the chair,

kicking my ball.

I nodded,

Silences (*Mounangall*)

The little girl looks on

as her brother and father

eat their fill.

Hers is the silence of wanting.

The woman surrenders her day's wages to
her drunkard husband

before he can hit her.

Her silence is angry.

• • •

(translated by K. Srilata)

Someday
These silences will come together,
burst into sound
loud enough
to cause the universe to tremble.

The old woman
shrivels before her son's harsh words.
the watery gruel he provides
only half-fills her belly.
Her silence is tired.