

TRANSPLANTING A TREE AND OTHER POEMS

By U Atreya Sarma

A sapling or a small plant
Can be transplanted elsewhere
And there it grows in health.

Try to uproot a tree from its place
And replant it elsewhere, and see.
Many of its roots snap in the process
And it would be hard for the rest
To strike into the earth
And as strongly as earlier.

Parents with many children dream:
“Our progeny would be our security
In our advanced old age.
They would certainly look after us
Collectively or in turns.”

Imagine a modern couple
With a hundred sons
A la Dhritarashtra and Gandhari.
Ten sons settle down overseas;
So they can't take physical care of their parents;
They may, of course, be sending money.

The rest of the ninety are kind:
They agree to host the parents

For four days each in a year.
Every fourth day, the old parents
Have to pack off their fragile belongings
And transplant themselves to another place.

If it's only a couple of sons;
The parents can stay for half a year with either.
Or for the full year if one of the sons is reluctant.
If both are reluctant
The hapless parents can go to an old age home
Or do anything else to fill their meagre belly.

If it's beyond them,
They learn to be content
To live in the huge earthy mansion
With its maze of invisible walls
And with its vast open ceiling lit
By the shifting lights
Of the sun, moon, and stars.

CALL IT QUILTS, HEARSAY AND SLANDER

Hearsay and Gossip join and raise their hands
Against the Sun, only to burn themselves.

Pull the Mask of Backbiting over your face
And you will choke and turn pale
Shorn of the life-giving sunlight.

The Roof of Jealousy you erect over you
Will only harry you with skin afflictions
Hidden away as you are from the sunny warmth.

Try not to screen the Sun, you Clouds of Slander
For you will only be
Distancing your heart from its natural spring
And keeping it prisoned for ever in its dreary winter.

May it dawn on you sooner than later
That you're but nebulous and short-lived
Whereas the sun keeps beaming forever
To the hearty welcome of the vast world.

Bio

U Atreya Sarma is into writing poetry, freelance editing, book-reviewing and translating. His output – about 250 poems and 450 writings (articles, editorials, reviews, forewords, translations) mostly in English and a sprinkling in Telugu – has appeared in various print/online media and anthologies. A freelance editor with 18 years of experience, he is presently the Editor (Fiction, Reviews, News & Events, and Telugu Literature) of the *Muse India* e-journal (www.museindia.com). Earlier he was the editor of *Bharatiya Pragna* (a socio-political monthly) and *Cyberhood* (a neighbourhood weekly). He has also brought out four Telugu literary features in *Muse India*.

His maiden collection of poetry is *Sunny Rain-n-Snow* (May 2016).

He has edited five books: *Lung Care and Long Life* (2012, by Dr Shyam Sunder Raj); *Memoirs & Musings of an IAS Officer* (2013, by KV Natarajan); *Turquoise Tulips* (2015, Collection of short stories the USA-based Dr Ashok Patwari); *Prolegomena and Transformative Articles on*

Literary Translation (2015, by Dr VVB Rama Rao); and *Gian Singh Shatir* (a revised eponymous fictional autobiography by Gian Singh Shatir, Sahitya Akademi Awardee, Urdu, awaiting publication).

He has translated two books from Telugu into English: *Salt of the Earth* (2013) (16 Telugu short stories by Dr Mallemala Venugopala Reddy); and *Thousand Hoods* (2015) (Chapters 9 to 14) (Jnan Pith laureate Viswanatha Satyanarayana's Telugu mega novel *Veyipadagalu*).

The bilingual book he collaborated on is *Marapuraani Maanikyaalu* (2010) (for which he provided profiles in English of 132 'Unforgettable Gems' – modern Telugu stalwarts – with wordy & pictorial sketches in Telugu by BNIM, a noted writer & artist).

Atreya Sarma has been featuring and encouraging poets from across the country through his weekly column 'Wordsmith' in *The Hans India*, a Hyderabad based English daily since 2013. He is also an official critic with *Metverse Muse*, an international print journal of metrical poetry published from Visakhapatnam.

Atreya Sarma holds an MA (English Litt) and a PG Dip (Mass Communications & Telugu Translation Techniques), backed by a basic degree each in sciences and arts, and a banking qualification with mid-level managerial experience in SBI. He lives between Hyderabad and Pune.

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