

**K Purushotham**



**BLACK  
LILIES**  
TELUGU DALIT POETRY

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An Anthology of Telugu Dalit Poetry

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New Delhi



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## Introduction

Dalit poetry in Telugu, as in the other Indian languages, passed through three phases: written about, writing themselves and writing about the dependent dalit castes. Each phase, generating newer genres and styles, influenced the mainstream writing.

### Written About

In the entire history of Telugu literature, dalits have never been written about positively except by the medieval mystics—Potuluri Veerabrahmam, a sudra social reformer and Yogi Vemana, a non-brahmin—both of whom questioned social evils. However, the nineteenth century social reform and twentieth century nationalist poetry, though both dealt with untouchability, suffer from the limitation of silence on the religious sanctity of caste.

*Mystics* Actively touring dalit and sudra streets, Potuluri Veerabrahmam and Yogi Vemana educated the people on self-respect, social equality and untouchability. They became popular because of their zeal to reform and simplicity of their language. Their writings as well as their lives, subsequently, were subject to obliteration: Veerabrahmam, who became a cult figure, was said to have committed *sajiva Brahmin*, burying oneself alive. Dalit intellectuals in the modern period say that upper caste people, unable to digest his popularity, could have buried him alive or forced him to bury himself. Similarly, Vemana, who questioned Brahmin hegemony, was branded insane. Their works were either made unavailable or misinterpreted. It was an Englishman, C.P. Brown (1798-1884), who edited and recorded the lost verses of Vemana. He had to depend upon local educated Brahmin for tracing and recording Vemana's verses. In the process, the scribes either suppressed or misinterpreted the extant works. What is available of Vemana today can only be what escaped the eye of the Brahmin and what Brown preserved.

The mystics' poetry led to a drastic change in Telugu language and literature. For the first time, untouchables became the subject of literature. Since Hinduism as a religion has been averse to reformation and modernisation, the mystics attempted reform by questioning the basis of social inequality and discrimination. Veerabrahmam, known for his *Kalagnanam*, predicting time visualised:

*When everyone subordinates you  
your chances of reigning the empires would be ripe  
the same people who scolded you*

*will be cured of their stupidity  
and will themselves begin to adore you.*

A tradition thus started was to suffer a break in the subsequent times.

*Reform* After a protracted hiatus for about five hundred years, caste and untouchability came to the fore in the nineteenth century reform by Gurajada Appa Rao (1862–1915) and Kandukuri Veeresalingam (1848–1919), who championed the concerns of upper caste women. The reform movement expanded its scope to educating people against social evils like untouchability, child marriage, bride-money, caste and religious hatred. While the mystics used song and verse, the nineteenth century reformers used the short story didactically. The reform movement however suffered the limitation of not coming to terms with the basic tenets and framework of Hinduism and the caste system. It did not continue the medieval *bhakti* tradition. Reform was also a reaction to dalits' conversion to Islam and Christianity. While historiographers consider both works as benchmarks in mainstream Telugu literature, *Kanyasulkam* (1892), Gurajada Apparao's play and Veeresalingam's novel *Rajasekhara Charitam* (1880), the first Telugu novel, are silent on caste and untouchability.

*Nationalist* Nationalist poetry in the subsequent period too did not question the bases of caste. Dalit struggles and their challenge to subordination were not represented in nationalist poetry. Early leaders of the nationalist movement such as Tanguturi Prakasam, Patabhi Seetharamaiah and Burgula Ramakrishna Rao privileged transliterations/translations of Sanskrit works, undermining original Telugu, since the latter was considered the language of dalits and sudras *a la* English, which used to be considered the language of the poor during the formative years of English language. Nationalist literature did not reflect dalit and sudra life. Unnava Laxminarayana's novel, *Malapalli* (1922) and N. G. Ranga's *Harijana Nayakudu* (1933) represent this dimension. Therefore the Gandhian agenda of 'harijan upliftment' was criticised by dalit writers like Jala Rangaswami:

*You say that you are the descendants of sages  
you call us brothers  
you boast of following the teachings of Gandhi  
nobody follows (him),  
is this not injustice?  
You forget the words of Mahatma Gandhi  
you burn with anger at the untouchables.*

*The Left* Similarly, the progressive literature of the 1940s too sought to

sideline socio-cultural specificities like caste, gender and ethnicity. Marxist poets, themselves mostly upper castes, neglected caste specific exploitation. Andhra Pradesh has a long history of Leftist movements, from moderate to extreme. During the Telangana armed rebellion (1946-48), the Srikakulam peasant uprising (1957-1967) and the Naxalite movement, a large body of poetry was produced. Literary associations—Progressive and Revolutionary—iconized Brahmin writers like Gurajada, Sri Sri and neglected dalit writers. For instance, in *Vaithalikulu*, an anthology of 26 modern Telugu poets of the 1930s edited by a progressive poet Muddukrishna, a noted dalit poet Jashuva was conspicuously absent. Politics was no exception: Kancha Ilaiah notes that the Congress party could nominate a dalit, Damodaram Sanjivayya as its president, but not the Indian left, which advocates the dictatorship of the proletariat. Social reformers, nationalists and leftists did not have liberation of dalits on the agenda. As a result, the poetry of the reform, nationalist and leftist period had limited appeal. Mass appeal lay with cultural troupes like that of the Praja Natya Mandali and Jana Natya Mandali, which reached out to the masses with song and ballet. Gaddar, a dalit balladeer, who works with the left, is a phenomenon because he draws in his songs entirely from dalit language and dalit imagery. Others in this lineage include Suddala Hanmanthu, Nazar, Vangapandu, among others. The contrast between revolutionary poetry and songs has been that the former drew from Sanskrit and the epics and the latter from native Telugu and dalit life.

### Writing the Self

Literary historians neglected dalit poetry written parallel to the mainstream one. Kusuma Dharmanna, for instance, wrote against caste oppression, untouchability and discrimination focusing on the Adi Andhra; Boyi Bheemanna claimed that the dalits were descendants of Arundhati and Vashishta; Jala Rangaswami denounced the Aryan conquest that enslaved the dalits, and wrote about the glory of the pre-Aryan past; and Gurram Jashuva, who declared caste and poverty his enemies, was critical of the complaisant and self-serving poets who were unmindful of socio-economic problems:

*One is a romantic poet, the other a poet with a heart of stone  
one more, a poet who weeps—  
Together, they console each other.  
How will this Indian nation flourish?*

Dalit poetry forced Telugu literature to become realistic. Deviating from the sickeningly subjective romantic poetry and the revivalist

neoclassical poetry, dalit poetry created a new literary space. In the post-Independence period, complaisant mainstream writers were bombarded by six *Digambara Kavulu*, (naked poets) providing the much-needed jolt to Telugu literature by re-linking literature to society. They dedicated their 1968 anthology to a dalit boy Kanchikarla Kotes, who was burnt alive by the upper castes accusing him of theft. This incident can be considered the forerunner of the identity movements—dalit, feminist and *adivasi*, in times to come.

‘Dalit Mahasabha,’ the first organized modern dalit movement, launched by poet-activist Kathi Padma Rao and civil rights champion Bojja Tarakam in 1985, began to fight the atrocities at Karamchedu, Neerukonda, Thimma Samudram, Chundur, Vempenta and Cherlapally. Since then, young dalits began to produce a powerful body of poetry. In 1995, the first anthology of Telugu dalit poetry, *Chikkanavutunna Paata* (thickening song) was edited by G. Laxminarsaiah and Tripuraneni Srinivas, followed by *Padunekkina Paata* (sharpened song, 1996) edited by G. Laxminarsaiah. Both anthologies, though not exclusively dalit, are concerted efforts to foreground dalit ethos, angst, protest, heritage, myth and an alternative vision. Some dalit poets in the anthologies emerged with new voices, giving a direction to young and emerging dalit poets, who later on brought out a number of anthologies and little magazines, which served as platforms for new debates.

### Writing About

The Malas, being relatively more developed because of fertile lands, irrigation facilities, exposure to British rule, missionary education, medical services and the church, are politically, economically and otherwise, stronger. Malas treat Madigas as untouchable, and both of them treat their dependent castes as untouchables. This *inter se* untouchability has become the subject of poetry as a result of the identity movement spearheaded by the Dandora movement, championing the cause of proportionate access to reservation benefits, as a poet questions the notion of supremacy within dalits:

*When the meal is intended for both of us  
how is it that I am prevented from eating it?*

And another poet questions the sanctity accorded to divisiveness by religion:

*the saffron tree that  
separates the eyebrows of  
the dalit mother.*

The movement, launched for equity within dalits, resulted in foregrounding the identity question. It led to the reclamation of identity and self-respect with the suffixing of 'Madiga' to their names. A term, hitherto considered filthy, became a symbol of identity and self-respect. This is a symbolic achievement of the Dandora movement. Influenced by the movement, seasoned poets like Kolakaluri Enoch, Yendluri Sudhakar and young poets like Vemula Yellaiah, Nagappagari Sunderraju, among several others, earned respectability for what was once despised as obscene and trash. They wrote about Madiga identity in dalit language and dialect, hitherto considered unfit for poetry.

Similarly, Madiga women writers like Gogu Shyamala, Jupaka Subhadra, Jajula Gowri and others have been writing about the dual oppression. Besides, they have been writing about the dependent dalit castes like Dekkali, Chindu, Begari, among others. An important feature of dalit feminist writing is that they were not written about by their upper caste counterparts, but themselves are writing about their counterparts among subordinate dalits. This is the unique feature of dalit feminist writers in Telugu.

The dependant castes are yet to write themselves: they still need to grow from being written about to writing themselves. Telugu dalit poetry, in this respect, has a long way to go. When dalit poetry shows the tendency of repeating itself, emergence of writers from below enlivens it with newer genres, styles and force. This happened in the 2000s with the emergence of Madigas, followed by madiga women writers. Similarly a possible emergence of writers from the dependent dalit castes in times to come is likely to enrich dalit poetry in far more innovative ways. The achievement of dalit poetry has thus been reclaiming dalitness in all its forms and influencing and shaping the mainstream poetry, especially in privileging the individual experiences, asserting identity and using a simple language.

This anthology is an attempt at presenting before the readers the oeuvre of the dalit poetry in Telugu. Seventy three selections in all, drawn from thirty nine poets of the first generation to the latest, presents a wide variety of times, themes, ideologies, styles and concerns. Representing a period of above hundred years, the poems reflect the transition and development of dalit poetry as a genre in Telugu. Beginning from protest and assertion, the writings went on to be mature to seek alternatives in the cultural resources of dalits drawn from dalit deities, rituals, rites, dalit theatre, dialect and dalit language. While the translator took every care to overcome the burden of monotony of 'one-man's translations,' it is hoped that the readers will recreate in their reading the dalit ethos—travails, tribulations, challenges and aesthetics. —K. *Purushotham*



## Gurram Jashuva

Jashuva (1895-1971), who worked in an elementary school, was recognized as the voice of the depressed castes, and received public acclaim and literary honour. Born of a *golla*, shepherd father and madiga mother, he was raised in the Christian tradition, which excommunicated him for drawing from Hinduism in his writings. Though graduated with *ubhaya bhasha pravina*, scholar of Telugu and Sanskrit, Jashuva was insulted by the upper castes by excluding him from the social space and the contemporary anthologies. Known for strict metre with progressive thought, he authored 22 creative works, and was a recipient of Padma Vibhushan, honorary doctorate, Sahitya Akademy award and was nominated to the Legislative Council of AP. Modeled after Kalidasa's *Meghasandesham*, his *Gabbilam*, a long poem, describes a message sent by a dalit to the god through a bat.

### The Bat

*It's unfortunate to be born a bat.  
doomed and detested,  
can't I be fed as a cat?  
sought after like a rat?  
hailed like the swan?  
or blessed like a unicorn?  
in the shadow of the night.*

\* \* \*

*Hanging topsy-turvy  
from the branch of the trees,  
I enjoy the company of my folk  
savoring the breeze.*

*Yet  
blamed and named,  
the bereaved in me they see  
blasphemous, me they consider  
disgust they label me  
What am I?  
Whom do I believe?*

Original: *from gabbilam*

### I was one of them

*When Vivekananda, a man from India spoke  
at the world assembly of religions,  
they approved him.*

*When Gandhi, a merchant from my land,  
defied with a spindle  
the authority of the Europeans,  
he was made father of the nation.*

*When Sarvepalli, a scholar from this nation spoke philosophy,  
they sat him on the chair of the highest teacher  
in the land of the whites.*

*When Tagore, a writer of this country penned poetry,  
the world honored him with a Nobel Prize.*

*When Indian scientist J.C. Bose proved that  
trees have feelings,  
they made him a scientist.*

*But I was left out  
though we were all born of the same mother.*

---

### **Kusuma Dharmanna**

A staunch critic of Gandhi and Hinduism, Dharmanna (1898-1948) presided over the *Adi-Andhra* conferences. A farmer, activist-writer and orator, he ran a periodical, *Jayabheri*, to propagate Dr Ambedkar's ideology. He encouraged dalits to convert to Islam. He authored four important works and the present song written in 1921, which aroused the youth, was the dalit reply to "We Decry this European Supremacy" by a nationalist caste-Hindu writer, Garimella Satyanarayana. Dalits widely believe that Dharmanna's song was written prior to Garimella's.

### **We Decry this Brown Supramacy**

*On the pretext of music  
they bring women to the temples  
marrying them off to the deities every year,  
they make love to them.*

*They allow even the white lords.*

*Oh god!*

*if we, the malas, want to enter the temple,  
they fret and fume.*

*They will not stand where we do  
if we use their fire, they shout  
even if it is wind that blows from us  
they term it pollution.*

*they do not touch anything we have.*

*Oh god!*

*They have buried all the dharmas of religion.*

*They will gracefully accept vegetables from us  
they eat happily when we offer them fruit  
when we give them wealth, they preserve it.  
they take services from us.*

*Oh god*

*It is no longer pollution to them if it is their need.*

*They say smugly that  
they will not touch what we malas have touched. But  
they accept medicine from us,  
they gulp down the potions made by us,  
they accept the milk we have milked.*

*Oh god!*

*they forget the medicine we offered them, and  
term us malas.*

*Fighting the English for self-rule,  
they ask for independence.*

*But they will not give us independence,  
they will not allow us into the temples and shrines,  
they will not allow us stay in choultries.  
they will not allow us draw water from public wells.  
they say, malas have no rights.*

*Oh god!*

*if we don't have rights,  
how will they get independence?*

*Oh my people!*

*Listen! Do not get irritated.*

*If you heed me, there will be redemption*

*For you and me.*

*There will be no redemption so long as you are selfish  
so long as you discriminate against us  
so long as caste differences prevail  
so long as pollution is laid out  
so long as Bhagyareddy's proposition is not realised  
so long as you don't pay heed to  
what Dharmanna preaches.*

Original: mAkoddi nalladorathanam

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1. Bhagyareddy Varma (1888-1937) educated and organized dalits in Andhra Pradesh prior to Dr Ambedkar, holding Adi-Andhra conferences and running schools for dalit children.

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**Boyi Bhimanna**

Boyi Bhimanna (1911-2005) was born in East Godavari district. He was a writer, freedom fighter, teacher, journalist and a member of Legislative Council. He was influenced by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr B. R. Ambedkar, and on the latter, he brought out four books in different genres and translated *The Annihilation of Caste* first time into Telugu. He was known for advocating unity between malas and madigas and for propounding the theory of dalits as the early Aryans. A director of the A.P. translation division and winner of 'Padmasri,' 'Padmabhushan,' an honorary doctorate and Akademy award, he authored 70 books, including an English collection, *Seventh Season*. His play *Paleru* inspired many dalits to give up farmhand work and seek education and jobs. The following selections are from his Akademy Award winning anthology, *Gudiselu Kalipotunnayi*.

**The Huts are Afire**

*The huts are afire.*

*O yes, they are burning!*

*Alas! Whose huts could they be!*

*For sure they must be dalits' huts,  
who else can own huts!*

*Anyway several people own huts  
true to the dharma of this country!*

*Yes, then these huts are burnt  
at least once a year!*

*Once burnt,  
how do the huts sprout  
to be burnt again?*

*Yes, it is true,  
where do they come from?*

*That is the secret of our dharma.*

*These huts reincarnate  
again and again,  
to institute dharma.*

*They disappear, and  
sprout again and again!*

*How long will this vicious circle last?*

*Till the secret is known to  
the dwellers of the huts!*

Original: *gudiselu kAlipotunnAyi*

### **My Hereditary Rights**

*Saint Vashista,<sup>2</sup> casteless by himself,  
started off as a great sage, and  
searched for a faithful wife  
to Aryanise the world.*

*If only he couldn't marry  
the low-caste girl, Arundhati!*

*Matsyagandhi gave in herself  
to serve the mankind far and wide,  
in fulfillment of her life.*

*If only she slapped and broke  
the teeth of Parashar,  
who lustfully attempted her!*

*Amba and Ambika,<sup>3</sup> the sisters  
were widowed even before their marriage.*

*If only they displayed their chastity  
rejecting Vyasa,  
defying the dictum  
of their mother-in-law Kunthi!*

*Veda Vyasa wouldn't have been born!  
Mahabharatha would have been  
without a story!*

*Vyasa, the architect of Aryan race  
is anyway a low-caste man.*

*Today,  
he is a caste-Hindu,  
while I, his progeny, a dalit.  
This is the great Indian tradition,  
the progress we made!*

*Do you ask me,  
why I dig this graveyard now?  
Because,*

- 
2. Vashista, a sage married a low-caste girl, Arundhati; Matsyagandhi (Satyawathi) married sage Parashar, who fathered Vyasa; Amba, Ambalaika, sisters of Ambika were taken by force by Bhishma from their swayamvara
  3. Amba and Ambika, the sisters were taken by force by Bheeshma after swayamvara (competition of groom selection)

*my hereditary rights of Vedic greatness  
were stolen and buried over here.  
I've been made an outcaste  
denying hereditary rights fearing that  
one day I may learn the truth and rebel!*

*It's true  
those rights are of no value to me now.  
Yet, I dig them out  
to parade them in the world  
to proclaim that they were mine  
once upon a time.*

*I dig them out  
only to fling them away with pride  
and raise my head stately!*

Original: nAvArasatvapu hakkulu

### **Arrears due to Me**

*I'm not the sun,  
I'm the moon.*

*I haven't any heat,  
but have only heart.*

*I'm not sinless,  
but sinned.*

*I haven't any sword in my hand,  
but have an art.*

*I'm not stable,  
but have harmful ideas.*

*My companion is not wealth,  
but it's the voice of people.*

*I'm not a great leader,  
but an ordinary man.*

*I don't live on people's property,  
but only on my labour.*

*I don't expect alms from you,  
but the arrears due to me.*

*I am not in the building of bricks,  
but on the wheels of honesty and dharma.*

*Oh, you!*

*Throw away my rights to me  
Hey, timid broken people*

*These are your rights  
Now enjoy them with your power*

Original: *nAku rAvalasina bAki*

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## Sivasagar

Sivasagar (Kambhampati Gnana Satyamurthy, 1928-2012) started off his career as a teacher, and was a founder member of the Peoples War (ML). He left the party, accusing it of being casteist. Known for his anthology, *Udyamam Nelabaaludu*, Sivasagar, the activist-writer penned many books, articles and poems, and is considered a trendsetter in both revolutionary and dalit poetry. As a poet, he left an indelible mark both on the revolutionary poetry in the beginning and dalit poetry in the last two decades. His style is cryptic and imagery drawn from rural and dalit life.

### Immortality

*Dying,  
the seed promised a crop.  
    Withering,  
    the tiny smiling flower promised a fruit.  
Blazing,  
the forest promised an inferno.  
    Setting,  
    the sun promised the sunrise.  
Embracing time,  
immortality promised a new world.  
    Immortality is beautiful.*

Original : *amarathvam*

### The Raging Madiga Drum

*For the early song, I play  
a drum on the rising sun,  
which is like a raging drum.  
    I sew sandals  
    with tears of knife and awl for the era,  
    which having lost its cheppulu, crosses  
    the puddle of blood.  
I caress with my finger-tips,  
the tips of the bull's horns.  
I bury in the lande*

*the dark history of cages.  
 Eaten the yield,  
 I dance in the drizzle,  
 play music to the early song  
 on the rising sun,  
 which is like a raging drum.*

Original: *mandutunna mAdigadappu*

### **Come and Rape us, if you can!**

*“Come and rape us, if you can”  
 It became a slogan, and  
 Turned into a weapon!  
 The weapon has turned out  
 To be a crest of fire  
 The crest of the fire has burnt Manipur  
 Oh! There burns Manipur now!  
 “You soldiers, come and rape us, if you can!”  
 The bullet between the thighs of Manorama  
 Seems to be manly*

*What to say?  
 The job of the Assam Rifles  
 Has developed into a beastly pastime.  
 The naked women parade themselves  
 In front of the barracks of Assam Rifles  
 The port of Congo in Imphal  
 Has become the slogan of a war,  
 A volcanic emission, and  
 A poignant song  
 “You, the Indian soldiers,  
 Come and rape us, if you can! ”  
 The slogan has turned into  
 The ashes of the burnt sun in the pyre,  
 The tears of the moon  
 Mutely wailing in the vast skies of midnight, and  
 The fragrance of struggles surging  
 Within the layers of the earth*

*“You, the Indian soldiers,  
 Come and rape us, if you can.”  
 The same way you raped Manorama!*

Original: *randi mammalni rape cheyyandi*



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## Kolakaluri Enoch

Born in Guntur district of coastal Andhra, Kolakaluri Enoch (1939- ) has been a distinguished professor of poetry, critic, administrator and statesman. A seasoned writer credited with writing in all the genres, he has published 4 anthologies of poetry, 7 anthologies of short stories and 14 novels and plays. He is one of the early writers to have asserted dalit identity, and is known for writing on other than dalit theme too. Prof Enoch served as the vice-chancellor of Sri Venkateshwara University, Tirupathi, and received, among several others, the Best Teacher and Akademy awards.

### I Salute the Cheppulu

*My namaskar<sup>4</sup> to cheppulu, which  
under your feet,  
support you when you walk and talk.  
My namaskar to cheppulu  
so that the poor feet sans cheppulu get them  
as karma bears witness to tears  
as the rainbow bears witness too.  
As the wars waged by cheppulu bear witness,  
cheppulu that conquered countries,  
farms that the cheppulu fondled,  
palanquins that the cheppulu bore,  
as the lives, chastity, wealth  
bear witness,  
My namaskar to cheppulu.  
The heart of the man who has no entry to  
temples that have place for stones,  
dogs that sleep on the thrones of power,  
village courts presided over by foxes  
as these bear witness,  
My namaskar to cheppulu.*

Original: selections from *cheppulaku namaskaristhunnAnu*

### Let Me Dream

*Let me dream  
don't forbid the dreams,  
they will be a reality tomorrow*

---

4. Namaskar is Indian way of saluting by joining ones palms at one's bosom. As against shaking hands, this form of greeting could be a part of untouchability avoiding touch.

*don't pluck out the eyes of the dreams,  
the sun risen, will set.*

*Don't hack the dreams,  
the world of aroma will become a stub  
let the dreams grow,  
the winds of desire will give shade  
let me dream.*

*don't plant thorns around the dreaming eyes,  
don't impose restrictions,  
when the dreams flow,  
barren lands will give yield and  
the hearts that parched will sprout.*

*Let me warn in my dreams that  
the ideologies will turn into ashes,  
when the hunger burns  
the rivers turn into desert,  
when people feel thirsty.  
When huts are afire,  
there will not be any mansions.  
When there is a dearth for loin cloth,  
the cotton crop will cease to yield.*

*Let me dream that  
the truth is faced without fear or favor  
the anarchy is questioned.*

*Let me dream  
about fishing out the pearls in the ocean  
to lay ladder to the sky  
to enrich humanity sans religion  
to develop fraternity.*

*Let me ride on the vehicle of butterfly  
let me gather colours of the rainbow  
let me be the white paper which combines all the colours.*

*Let me hug the rivers, Ganga, Kaveri  
let me daub rainbow on the sky  
let the parrots bestow motion to the sky  
let the floor embrace soles' dust  
that will be stars in the sky in future.  
The darkness should ensure sunrise.  
Let me dream true democracy.*

Original: *nannu kala gananivvandi*

### The Boy is Crying Silently

*The boy is crying silently  
at the crossroads of humanity.  
he went astray.*

*Can he move about?  
his feet are planted on the road.  
Can he move about his hands?  
his hands are crucified in the air.*

*Can he look at?  
his eyes are plucked out,  
Can he shout aloud?  
his throat is closed,  
his lips are sewn,  
his voice is stolen.*

*Who is he?  
He could be you, me or someone else.  
When did it take place?  
It could be yesterday, today or tomorrow.*

*He lost his voice in the debris of Harappa  
He lost the five vitals in the five rivers of Punjab  
perhaps he would dig out the bones and skulls of his ancestors.  
Went astray for ages together,  
he is not able to move a bit.*

*Is he a man, god, or ghost?*

Original: aa abbAyi mounanga EdusthunnAdu

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### Boya Jangaiah

Boya Jangaiah (b.1942) was born in a small village in Nalgonda district of the Telangana region. He has published two novels, *Jathara* and *Jagadam*, two anthologies of short stories besides plays and *Boya Kavithalu*, an anthology of his poetry. One of the early Telugu dalit writers, he has been a recipient of several awards including the one by Telugu University.

### For Tomorrow

*The black stone I had chiseled into an idol  
was paraded in the street as a god.*

*With the vote I had cast, he became a leader  
and forgot me.*

*While unasked gifts are showered on them  
bountiful of thrashing and punishment are bequeathed to me.*

*Being a creator of the civilization,  
I witness it all  
thinking about tomorrow.*

Original: *rEpatikOsam*

### **Ambedkar**

*You have stabbed the demon of caste  
with your index finger.*

*You changed our fate  
with the weapon of pen.*

*The slavery is going to end*

*Baba!*

*Had you been alive for a few more years  
the lives of all the Indians would have changed!*

Original: *Ambedkar*

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### **G.R. Kurme**

Born in Adilabad district, Ganga Ram Kurme (b.1947) was one of the founder members of 'Darakame,' (Forum for dalit writers, artists, intellectuals) founded in 1992 which provided platform to the dalit writers for rallying support and generating debates on various issues concerning dalit discourses—social, political and literary. A recipient of important awards, he has published several anthologies and *Dammatham*, a long poem on Lord Buddha, is significant among them. Kurme is known for brevity and apt imagery in his poetry.

### **The Man**

*When you were chiseling the pylons of history,*

*I enlivened rocks to be the cornerstones of bunkers.*

*When you were frozen into an idol*

*in some sanctum sanctorum,*

*I swarmed as groups of queues*

*at the steps of your temple.*

*When you launched schools in temples*

*adorning the goddess of learning,*

*fusing education with religion,*

*I chiseled the Constitution of this country.*

*When you were dividing textbooks into chapters,*

*I enlivened your alphabet as*

*barrels of ink and reams of paper.*

*When you entered into the Vedas to swallow the hymns,  
 I made temporal rotations, wheeling round the seasons  
 as the Dhamma-Chakra in Emperor Asoka's pylon.  
 When you were taking ritual dips in waters  
 wearing four-coloured madi,  
 I became the Buddha inaugurating the Man.*

Original: *manishi*

### Stop Noticing Him

*As long as you install him an aristocrat  
 He would turn you into the wretched  
 As long as you are being inferior  
 He would behave being superior  
 As long as you beg him  
 He would exercise power over you  
 As long as you respect him  
 He would detest you  
 As long as you treat him a master  
 He would continue to turn you into a slave  
 As long as you are submissive to him  
 He would exhibit his knack  
 As long as you worship him  
 He would continue to trample you  
 As and when you contract  
 He would continue to expand*

Original: *vAnni gurthinchadam mAnuko, (slightly abridged)*

### The Cornerstone

*Earlier, I carted on my shoulders, carcass –  
 the carcass of the village-cattle  
 to dump in the outskirts,  
 so as to keep the village hygienic.  
 The Nizam honored me as 'best sentry'  
 for guarding the village.  
 Later on, I was the watch of the graveyard  
 burying and burning bodies.  
 I was Bethala,<sup>5</sup> carrying the corpses of the village.  
 I was burnt as a lamppost at the crossroads.*

---

5. Bethala is a mythical character in children's stories in Telugu.

*And still, I am a village-courier,  
 carrying community-messages,  
 collecting government-revenue,  
 bearing the ledger of births and deaths.  
     I am a bat hung on the aerial roots of  
     the banyan tree of the caste.  
     I am a firefly at the dark lives of pariahs.  
 I am still, an unpaid peon in the village.  
 I am the one watering farmers' fields  
 with the beads of my sweat.  
 I am the last one in the government machine,  
 the untouchable one!  
 I am the spy of the government.  
 I am forever  
 a supporting post of the hut of my village.  
     I am an everlasting  
     cornerstone of the village.*

Original: *punAdi rAyI*

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## **Gaddar**

Gaddar (Gummadi Vittal Rao, b. 1949), a revolutionary balladeer and vocal Naxalite activist, gave up engineering education and a job in a bank, to form a cultural troop, 'Jana Natya Mandali,' a frontal organization of the then Peoples War (ML) in order to disseminate cultural revolution. Living under police repression, Gaddar survived an attempt on his life. He has earned respectability for the folk art forms with several young balladeers imitating him, shirtless, donning a coarse rug, and a dhoti as a shepherd. A staunch supporter of the Telangana movement, Gaddar is known for the stage performances mixed with song and speech arousing the youth to action, his songs on the martyrs are especially moving and thought provoking.

### **Destitutes that We Are**

*Destitutes that we are  
 we are madigas and malas, and  
 good-for-nothing ones  
 we are slaves and the deprived  
 the impoverished of the most impoverished  
     We have mouths unfed  
     we have villages that we don't belong to  
     though born human  
     we are denied recognition as humans*

Our street is outside the village  
 our Ganga is, what else, the drainage  
 our friends are but  
 mosquitoes and houseflies, dogs and pigs  
     The meat of dead animals is our feast  
     our two hands are our assets  
     it is our birthright to work like a bull, head drooped and bent  
     in the fields of the landlords  
 We shouldn't own property  
 if we do, an offense it is  
 we shouldn't hear the Vedas  
 if we do, they pour lead into our ears  
 we shouldn't glimpse the gods  
 if we do, they pluck out our eyes  
 these are the presents  
 gifted by Manu Dharma  
     We have too many rights  
     the right to water, right to scavenging  
     right to cart the carcass  
     right to guard dead bodies  
     right to live with head downcast  
 Our skin is our apparel  
 if we wear a new shirt or a sari  
 the gaze of the devilish landlord falls on us  
 muddy toys are our children with  
 running noses and unkempt hair  
 earthen lumps are their wedges of sweets  
 we are the cheppulu under the feet of the landlords  
     We are fatigued  
     we are vexed with the insults  
     we simmer at adversities  
     we bear the burden that can't be borne  
     we are fraught with abuses, kicks and blows  
     we are hardened by whips and lashes.  
 Every atom of our body scorched again and again,  
 turned into an atom bomb  
 having become one,  
 we detonate to reform the abusive society  
 we will build another world that will  
 treat humans as humans.

Original: mEm bAnchOllam

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## Kathi Padma Rao

Padma Rao (b. 1953) taught Sanskrit and subsequently became a full-time activist. A founder of 'Dalit Mahasabha,' he fought against atrocities in Karamchedu, Tsundur and other places. A prominent dalit activist, thinker, poet and critic, he has forty six publications to his credit, including ten anthologies of poetry. Received Honorary Doctorate from Acharya Nagarjuna University in recognition of his contribution to Dalit literature and social justice for the downtrodden in August 2007. The awards he received include Pratibha Award, Boyi Bhimanna Trust Award, Potti Sri Ramulu Telugu University Award, Sahitya Puraskaram, Avantsa Soma Sunder Sahiti trust Award, Dr. C.Narayana Reddy Sahiti Award and Ambedkar Award. Padma Rao is known for his fierce speeches supported by sound argument.

### I am within you

*I am Manu*

*humanity is my enemy*

*they conspired to outcast me.*

*It was I who taught outcasting,*

*and became its victim!*

*I am not an individual, I am an ism.*

*I am at the clash of malas and madigas.*

*I am the cutting edge of the knife of Karamchedu.*

*All those I divided are now invading me.*

*I am the sentry at the cremation of humanity.*

*I am the lifeline of caste.*

*Dalitism shouts to silence me.*

*I can bear hunger, but not insult.*

*I have now changed my looks.*

*I inhabit not only brahmin streets, but live*

*in madigas' barrels, and malas' horn too*

*my job is to upset the rhyme and rhythm of the two.*

*my country took birth in the very pool of blood*

*of a fakir<sup>6</sup>, who was assassinated.*

*I am so thirsty that I can swallow Buddha himself.*

*I am Dange who masked red skin,*

*to fuse Marx into caste.*

*I am the Great Poet<sup>7</sup>*

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6. Reference to M.K. Gandhi

7. Reference to Sri Sri, a revolutionary poet, whom dalits criticize for using Sanskrit words and Hindu imagery in his poetry



*who sold the opium of poetry.*  
*I am Anjaneya who invaded Lanka.*  
*My incarnations are manifold.*  
*I assimilate myself into, and destroy all the isms to re-live.*  
*I begin garlanding statues with cheppulu*  
*to turn dalitism into dalit veda.*  
*I am Manu.*  
*Humanity is my enemy.*  
*I am within you.*  
*I will disappear if you notice me.*  
*If you hate me as a brahmin,*  
*yours is certainly brahminism.*  
*My root is in Hinduism.*  
*I will die when it is uprooted.*

Original: *nIlo nEnu*

### **The Black Lily**

*I am black*  
*my beloved earth rejoices my tears*  
*the seeds I have sown in the plough lines*  
*sprout under my tender feet.*  
*My fingers, which are like tender leaves*  
*became stones in the foundation of the buildings*  
*I learnt about the gangrene,*  
*hidden in the heart of this country,*  
*when my kids who suckled my breast*  
*attempted to molest me*  
*even the cactus dons a thorny crown*  
*to protect itself*  
*but the circle of my defense is itself gulping me down.*  
*The day when a crow heads a country*  
*the cuckoo claims to be a crow,*  
*'we don't differ in colour, only in tunes'.*  
*When the fifth<sup>8</sup> tune becomes a river of aesthetics*  
*the remaining four tunes amalgamate into the fifth one*  
*but I can identify my own tune.*  
*I am black and the earth bears witness*  
*the earth too is black as my blood bears witness*  
*I am black*

---

8. Reference to fourfold varna to which (Panchamas) dalits were added as the fifth caste

mine is the earliest tune  
 when all of them stream into the black today,  
 I take pride that the motherhood belongs to me  
 I am classical  
 all those classics that detested me,  
 fuse in me today.  
 The red rose on Nehru's coat has wilted  
 The black lily in the madigas' pond  
 is going to be coronated.

Original: *nalla kaluva*

### Motherly

Who is he,  
 the one burning a half-burnt corpse  
 in this hour of midnight  
 at the cemetery?

Why is Mother India  
 smiling amusingly  
 when the elderly four  
 excommunicate and chase the untouchable  
 to the cemetery denying him a hut and clothing?  
 Has she begotten sons or beasts?

Who is that young lady,  
 the one in tattered rags  
 refusing to sell her body  
 in the midnight, scaring that if she goes  
 they would suck her blood completely?  
 Is that young boy her own son?  
 Is that pretty girl her own daughter?  
 What a marvel?  
 Does she beseech her own daughter to trade her flesh?  
 She is the one who kills her own children.  
 Has she begotten daughters or beasts?

Who is he,  
 the one pounding with his hammer  
 in that hour of midnight at the furnace  
 with an empty belly devoid of energy?  
 Is he the stepson of Mother-India?  
 or is he the one who feeds  
 the sixteen thousand crore Hindu gods?  
 Has she begotten kids or beasts?

Original: *kaduputIpi*

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## Damera Ramulu

Damera Ramulu (b. 1954) was born in Shayampet, Warangal district of the Telangana region. He completed MD in general medicine at Kakatiya Medical College, Warangal and runs a nursing home in Nirmal. An activist in the Radical Students Union when he was a medical student, Ramulu pursues his literary interest and has published three anthologies of poetry, *Chorus*, *Nethuti Vennela* and *Jayahe Telangana*.

### Fire-Pot

*Why do you look at me, disparagingly  
as though I am a strange object?  
I am a human being with all the organs functioning.  
You can't understand me  
looking through the eye of your caste.  
I am the gangrene, unhealed  
on the body of this country  
no scientist has ever so far  
invented any medicine to cure it.  
Blood flows sprightly in me too  
I am the slave-refugee bird,  
wings fluttering in the net  
that you cast on me for ages together.  
I don't need your mercy  
of the cemetery-like religion,  
temples, shrines, sacred pillars  
and the divinely invested water  
that you sprinkle on our heads.  
Now I am metamorphosing myself  
into the fire-pot<sup>9</sup>  
to horrendously burn your apartheid mindset.*

Original: *aggi kunda*

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## Shikhamani

Shikhamani (Karri Sanjeeva Rao, 1957- ), born in Yanam, Puducheri, is a voluminous writer having eight collections of poetry and four critical works to his credit. *Muvvala Cheti Karra* and *Silakkoyya* are his important poetry collections, besides which he recently edited *Amma* (Mother), featuring poems on theme of mother. As a critic of Telugu literature, he has written

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9. *Eldest son of the dead leads the death procession with a pot of embers, for lighting pyre*

extensively. Having received several state and national awards, he teaches at P.S. Telugu University, Hyderabad.

### **He is but a Shit-Man**

*Sage Vishvamithra ate dog-meat<sup>10</sup>  
there are those who eat cows and goats,  
horses and donkeys, pigs and bandicoots,  
camels and snakes.*

*But, for the first time in this country,  
a man had eaten the shit of another man!*

*Feeling ashamed?*

*There are in this country  
those who drink human blood  
man eaters too are there,  
but there's no one else in the world  
forcing men to eat men's shit*

*Do you feel ashamed of reading this?*

*Is it difficult to believe it?*

*A man, precisely a man like you had eaten shit*

*I keep asking you again and again*

*let me know, you whoreson,*

*Is your name Man?*

Original: vAdoka ashudha mAnavudu, slightly abridged

### **Apologies**

*Forgive me my dalit, forgive me!*

*I'm a bard, an ancient bard*

*if that were the case, I'm an outstanding bard  
whatever be my name and whichever be my village.*

*Forgive me my dalit!*

*In the entire poetic history of a thousand years*

*I couldn't pen a single line about you*

*but the blindfolded devotion and jaw dropping erotica.*

*Just as my aestheticians pronounce,*

*you are not heroic at all to be written*

*your lady doesn't belong to the lascivious kind.*

*As poet Appa<sup>11</sup> believes*

*poetry by a sudra is like the pudding*

---

10. Vishvamitra ate dog's meat when he did not get food, but caught red-handed

11. A mid 17th century poet and Telugu grammarian known for his Appakaviyam

*offered to the god defiled by a crow.  
 Though I am a sudra,  
 how could I write a poem about you?  
 how could I confer the status of an epic on you?  
     Forgive me my dalit, forgive me  
     I'm a poet, a modern poet  
     if that were the case,  
     I'm the m(p)ost modern poet.  
 I'm the one bowed to  
 a felicitation, a shawl and a citation.  
 I'm beware of my position,  
 which's like a duck laying golden eggs.  
 How could I write poetry about you?  
 Forgive me my dalit, forgive me  
 I need yet another lifetime  
 to comprehend the portrait of this country.*

Original: ksamApana, slightly abridged

### Colourless

*Today I speak of colourlessness  
 in the world of colours.  
 I question now:  
 Why am I given black colour  
 when it doesn't figure in the rainbow?  
 in the chaturvarna?  
 Let me hunt the human animal  
 that made man an animal.  
     I break into pieces the prism of caste  
     that scattered man, the single beam of light  
     into colours.  
     I rub out the colour  
     that licked away my self-respect  
 like a worm that sucks the plants.  
 The colour is an ancient vestige.  
 Not eternal, it's awash just in a downpour.  
 I would tear into pieces  
 the worn-out rag, which is  
 sun-dried on thorny shrubs.  
 We are now at the last act of the play  
 let's wash the colours daubed on our faces*

*keeping aside the heavy ornaments  
gestures, attires.  
Let's live like humans  
ending the acting.  
I am here to split the bow of colour.*

Original: *avarnam*

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### **Tullimalli Wilson Sudhakar**

Tullimalli Wilson Sudhakar (b. 1957), who hails from coastal Andhra, began as a journalist and presently works with India Tourism. A double postgraduate, he published *Dalita Vyakaranam*, an anthology of poetry, and has won several awards. He has travelled about twenty five countries as a part of his profession. Sudhakar, who is planning his second collection of poems, writes exclusively on dalit themes, topical in nature reacting to the contemporary incidents.

#### **Camels in the Needle's eye**

*They paraded you naked  
like missile exhibits in the national celebrations  
they made you march naked  
maimed your genitals, sticks thrust  
they gnawed your flesh and  
scooped your tissues,  
but you didn't deserve a word in the news.  
My dear mother and the daughter,<sup>12</sup>  
when news is reckoned in column centimetres,  
would they give you a column in print,  
would they grieve for you?  
In the race for TRP rating,  
gossip on Brad Pitt Angelina Joli's breakfast,  
Britney Spears' pet dog  
would vie for news.  
The stick-thrust bleeding vaginas  
gaping in horror,  
the eyes those witness it  
closed their mouths in shame.  
If you want to live even in death,*

---

12. Surekha & Priyanka, mother & daughter were paraded naked & murdered in Khairlanji.

*be a Priyadarshini Mattoo,  
a captivating model Jessica Lal.  
Then the educated collective  
would flood the India Gate in protest.*

*Newspapers cry hoarse,  
and the human rights activists and feminists  
beat their breasts reopening the cases.  
The publicity camels, like child's play,  
easily force their way through the needle's eye.*

Original: *sUdi bejjamlo ontelu*

### **We need a Language too**

*Even if considered colonial,  
we salute Lord McCauley, and  
whisper the English alphabet into the ears of our infants.*

*A million compliments to English!  
We aren't anyway in search of Dollars  
nor are we the Evangelical Christians  
Anglicization doesn't make us a Martin Luther either.  
In the destitute country that produced amazing technology,  
in the Anglicizing mela at the seats of brahmins,  
even the pet dogs utter English in the carnival of the Dollar.*

*When the ultra modern youth preach us about patriotism,  
when the khaki clad cultural police<sup>13</sup> sermonize the tradition,  
in which ambrosial language does one spit  
on the beautiful miens of the visa seekers?*

*Except the incredible mythical India  
when was it that we had learnt about real India?*

*The linguistic races didn't recognize  
the intelligence of rajaka, the washer men  
who made detergent from puller's soil and donkey's dung  
the deft skill of the dalits, who peel the hyde of the cattle,  
the patience of the pariahs who cart by hands  
the nauseating shit of the fellow humans  
whose Trojan horses are these languages?*

*Where there's no unity of the races, sans morality  
when the texts don't contain a single word of respect for us  
whose language is it that chases  
the children of the sweepers on the platforms of equality?*

---

13. Khaki clad RSS volunteers, who believe in Hindu revivalism and its protection

*The country is but caste and the languages too  
that dubbed us chandala while the others, pundits!  
You! What kind of language is this?  
the Madarsas that teach cohabitation in unintelligible Arabic,  
are they not better?*

*It's but fate! Hypocrisy became the national agenda reserving  
vernaculars for us, corporate schools for you.*

*The dead languages have to be hounded into museums  
and the official language into granaries.*

*The language that made our children carry shit should be burnt alive  
even if considered wrong and scolded untouchable  
we now need a language to vent the agony of our hearts*

Original: *mAku oka bhAsha kAvAli*

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## **Yendluri Sudhakar**

Yendluri Sudhakar (b. 1959), son of migrants from Maharashtra is a poet and short story writer. He has published four anthologies of poetry of which *Darky: A Bilingual Anthology of Poems 1985-2002* received wide acclaim. Though known as a poet, his prose work, *Malle Moggala Godudu* (1999) is remarkable for employing dalit language and asserting madiga identity. He is the Dean at P.S. Telugu University. Sudhakar's contribution to dalit writing in Telugu lies in re-locating dalit identity in his prose and poems.

### **Footprints**

*I am a devastating volcano,  
no one can stop me.*

*Mine are the feet of fire,  
no chains can fasten my feet.*

*My head is a proud flag,  
no one can half-mast it.*

*The only complaint is,  
I am merit-less, amn't I?*

*When my lands are appropriated,  
when my artistic skill is repressed,  
when forbidding-walls are raised around me,  
how can there be any merit?*

*Soil is my merit  
lightening the fertility of soil is my merit.*

*Tethered to the trees, they burnt me,  
whipped untouchable wounds on me,  
chopped and stuffed me into gunny bags,  
unabashedly stuffed shit into my mouth.*



*Mine is a fire-face today  
 my hands are jewels  
 I am now a walking-dagger  
 no one can dare touch me  
 I am a tiger awakened  
 my moments are dreadful dreams  
 I am now tearing into pieces  
 the untouchable testimonials of my forefathers  
 I am now writing tearful account of perennial anger  
 I am now affixing fingerprints of the dark history of poverty  
 having placed my foot on the throat of the past,  
 I am now signing the hearts of future.  
 One day or the other,  
 my footprints will be the pathways of history.*

Original: pAdamudralu

#### **Khairlanji<sup>14</sup>**

*The sky rained bloody moonlight  
 the soil turned into a lump of flesh  
 the night when the life-sized blue statue screamed  
 the night, when the self-respect wailed.  
 What an easy task it is to brutally kill dalits.  
 In this merciless country,  
 the hands that slaughter the cattle too  
 have a heart;  
 the knife that chops flesh too  
 has sensation.  
 The hands that pluck flowers,  
 the hands that pray,  
 the hands that help the others,  
 what were they doing?  
 My dear women,  
 how could you instigate the beastly men  
 to kill, massacre and beat our women to death?  
 You treat your chastity defiled  
 just at the sliding of the phallu off your bosom.  
 Then, how could you instigate your men  
 to butcher the breasts of fellow-women,  
 to rape the mother and the daughter!*

---

14. Four of a dalit family were murdered and women paraded naked before being murdered in Khairlanji, a village in Maharashtra in 2006.

*How could you witness  
such a great terror?*

\* \* \*

*Hey, Mother India,*

*we are grieving.*

*Oh, Gandhi,*

*we are distressed.*

*Oh, Babasaheb,*

*we are steaming with vengeance.*

*We feel like having a new world*

*to live with self-respect*

*so that our genitals are safe.*

Original: *dukhairAnji*, slightly abridged

### **Shambhuka's Era**

*The weapon that beheaded Shambhuka*

*hacked us all too*

*the colour of the murderers' blood,*

*and their strategies are same too.*

*Shambhuka's bloody head*

*sprouts again.*

*Shambhuka's head in the east*

*shines with a million rays of hope*

*a million red heads with black eyes.*

*Bard, Shambhuka!*

*I swear by your head*

*every drop of your blood*

*turn into lava surging into an ocean.*

*A new era of Shambhuka commences.*

Original: *shambhUka yugamu*

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### **Jajula Gowri**

Born in Secunderabad, Jajula Gowri (1963- ) published *Mannu Buvva* (mud-rice), an anthology of short stories. Gowri, known for her prose, occasionally writes poetry, and her preference to write on the theme of draught, earned the epithet, 'Matti Rachayitri,' mud-writer.

### **I will Avenge**

*A dalit woman, I am set ablaze in the pages of the ages  
victimised by the pride of patriarchy.*

*I stand on the brink of innocence.  
 Reality ablaze in the pages of history,  
 naïve, unfamiliar with divisions,  
 treated as disabled and lonely,  
 I am confined to home, skills being futile.  
 Being a black-topped road in darkness,  
 a flame burning amid silver light,  
 slush in rain and flood in rivulet,  
 I flew in unknown directions without destiny.  
 They ridiculed me denying me literacy  
 I'm a fistful of consciousness raising the head  
 the villagers being washed away and deluged,  
 whatever be the extent of my insult and travails as,  
 I revolt without bowing  
 I'll wash and sun dry the scorn and hypocrisy of the family.*  
 Original: utiki Arestha

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### Satish Chandar

Satish Chandar (1958- ), born in Narsapur, a postgraduate in commerce worked in the print media in different capacities. He has authored fifteen books in different genres of which *Panchama Vedam* is most acclaimed. He has been a recipient of awards in literature and journalism, which he pursues as a profession and continues to write poetry on contemporary issues.

#### An Awareness of an Era

*They said, my land didn't belong to me  
 I became a revolutionary!  
 They said, my body wasn't mine  
 I became a feminist!  
 They said, my village didn't belong to me  
 I became a dalit activist!  
 They said, my country didn't belong to me  
 I became a champion of minorities!  
 They said, my religion didn't belong to me  
 I became a secessionist!  
 Finally,  
 they said, I wasn't a human being at all  
 Beware...  
 I have become a human bomb!*  
 Original: yuga spruha

### A Dalit Love Letter

*I am dying!*

*Forgive me, my fair-skinned dear  
I offered you the heart and the body,  
not in installments, but together  
like the betel leaf and nut.*

*My body is the rain that douses the body  
my heart is the lightening that blazes  
my love is but the warmth of water.*

*I am not aware of the pedestrian love  
that door-delivers a body  
after the nuptial knot with a price tag.*

*I might have become the foetus  
the same night when my father  
sobbed and scolded my mother  
desisting her from attending to farm work  
that darkens and smolders her skin.*

*I was born only when both the bodies turned into hearts  
with sacred love, beyond the nuptial-knot,  
blossoming between the two hearts  
that hugged with hungry stomachs.*

*To die is but an obligation for us.  
We die to proclaim that  
a flower blossoms, a cock crows  
a child cries  
truly as the earth is round.*

*We get on to the Cross to declare  
that we can speak, speak the truth.*

*For instance  
I am now dying to proclaim that  
love is to present the heart in fullness, or  
to offer the body wholeheartedly.  
That the kiss is a strange monism of warmth and moisture  
I die to proclaim that the hug is but a life  
that sprouts by grafting two bodies.*

*I die to announce that  
the real conjugality lies in  
courageously kicking the boat one travels in  
helping each other reach the shore  
drowning, floating and struggling.*