Appendix

My Translations
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Son of the Soil

Telugu Original : mannutinna maniSi
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Son of the Soil

-C. Deva Putra

“Come and eat sankati,” Obulamma called her husband impatiently.

Lost in thought, Ramachandra sat on the pial outside the hut staring into space inattentive to her call. By then their neighbours had eaten sankati or something and sat under the streetlights gossiping. The children were playing a game of run-and- touch, yelling at one another.

“Sankati gets cold. Come and eat it,” Obulamma was impatient. She came out and shook her husband by the shoulder.

Ramachandra was startled. "Have you finished cooking?" Getting up he said, “You have just begun it!”

Without replying to him, Obulamma went into the hut.

Ramachandra stood up but did not move. Obulamma bought water in a big brass container and gave it to him.

Ramachandra washed his hands, feet and face and drying himself with the checkered towel on his shoulder, moved into the hut.

"Ramesh! Suresh! Where are those rascals? Call them," he told her as he sat down for food.

“They have already eaten and gone out to play.”

In the glimmer of the lamp, he looked at the plate. A big morsel of sankati of millets occupied much of the plate, and a substance like chutney nestled in one corner. He touched a little of it with his fore finger and applied it to his tongue. It tasted sour.

“It's tamarind chutney again,” he said with a distasteful expression on his face.
"Yes. You have been earning a lot. Saving everything greedily for myself, I am preparing only tamarind chutney for you," Obulamma shouted at him.

"Why do you shout? I just said that you have been serving tamarind chutney everyday."

"Is it wrong to say so?" Swallowing hurriedly handfuls of *ragi sankati*, Ramachandra said. "It's difficult to talk with you. I don't know what irritates you."

"Yes. It is difficult to live with me," Obulamma looking angrily at him replied without lowering her voice, "You know how to silence me. Others think that I am a nagging woman. You speak softly but do everything silently looking innocent." She frowned at him.

"What have I done, you wretched woman?" he mumbled with a smiling face, a morsel of *sankati* in his mouth.

"Yes, I have come here all the way because I am a wretched woman. It's six months since we have come and settled here in Bellary. And you never heed me," Obulamma continued. "I told you many times to sell away the ten acres of land in the village so that we can buy a piece of land here and build a small hut. But it never gets into your head. You feel happy paying a hundred rupees from your wages as rent for this hut every month." Tears filled her eyes.

Will he allow me to sell the land as long as he is alive?" He questioned.

"Don't utter those useless words. Tell him outright that you would sell the land. Why your father? Even your grand-father would accept it," Obulamma replied. "You become so meek when you face your father that you won't say anything to him. What have you grown like a tall tree for? Can't you convince him that nothing will grow in that land.
where only the chameleons lay their eggs? For the past five years have we ever got a yield of more than ten bags of groundnuts? We dump bags of grains into it and look at sky for rains. Had it been fertile, why should we have come here all the way to earn livelihood? But won't you ever think about it?"

"Keep quiet. Without regard for my father's age you speak against him," Ramachandra said.

Obulamma could sense the harshness in his voice.

"Aged! Yes, its only due to that I have been silent all these days," Obulamma said. "What's great about age? Even a stone in the street will be old enough." As she continued Ramachandra stopped eating, got up angrily and struck Obulamma on her back with the fist a couple of times.

With this unexpected turn, Obulamma with sorrow welling up started crying in a screeching voice.

"Do you speak in this way without any regard for your father-in-law? All the time I tolerated it somehow. But you go on without any restraints." Ramachandra kicked the plate he was eating in with his left leg, as if to make his anger effective. The plate flew in circles hit the wall with a thud and fell on the floor.

Ramachandra washed his hands and sat on the pial outside. He could faintly hear Obulamma's weeping from the hut.

"Ramachandra!" As he heard the call, he turned in that direction.

A person who was around forty came to him smiling. He was lean, and was wearing a white panca and a shirt. His partially grayed bushy mustache appeared to have been fixed on his face.
"How are you? Narayanappa! Are you all right?" He dusted the place next to him.

"Come and sit here,"

"You have to come tomorrow. We are laying foundation for a house in Kaul Bazaar," Narayanappa said as he sat on the pial.

Obulamma's wail was not heard from the hut. "She saved me from embarrassment," Ramachandra thought.

Narayanappa was the head of house-construction workers. Ten years earlier he migrated from a village, Kaluvapalli in Anantapur district to Bellary in search of livelihood. He began his life there as a coolie carrying stones. Soon he became the head of a gang of construction workers, well known in Bellary. Nearly half a dozen labourers worked under him now. Seven years ago, he had a small hut in the site given by the government. Which now had turned into a big building. He had two Godrej almirahs, a sofa set, a colour T.V and other valuable things in that building. He bought a house-site of twenty cents on the Sangankallu road in Bellary. It cost around three lakhs now.

"Tomorrow I have the work at home. If you want ,I can come the day after tomorrow," Ramachandra said.

"It's all right. Ramachandra! I will send for some other worker," Narayanappa said.

While inspecting the hut he asked," How much rent do you pay for this hut?"

"A Hundred rupees."

"Hundred! For this small hut, " Narayanappa said. " You said you had some land in the village. You can sell it and buy some place here and build a small house. You don't know how good it is to have a house instead of land these days? In Guntur or
Vijayawada one will be considered rich if he has ten acres of land. They are such fertile lands and they work hard to raise crops too. But in our area even if a farmer has twenty-five acres of land, he has to face problems throughout the year and it is difficult even to lead a normal life. Our lands are barren? In our village, Kaluvapalli my uncle has twenty acres of land but it is difficult for him even to feed his family. Consider my case. I don't have even an acre of land. But are they equal to me? Nowadays cultivation has become a gamble or betting in a cock-fight," he said. “Expecting rains in time, the farmers would somehow buy the seeds and sow them. Then, if there are normal rains, the farmer would survive. Otherwise he would be at the mercy of moneylenders. The fate of agriculture depending on rains is always so.” Narayanappa told Ramachandra and went away saying, “Take my advice. You sell away your land. Don’t mistake me, Ramachandra. I’ll come again.”

The whole street was deserted.
The streetlights were glowing brightly.
Ramachandra lay on a mat on the pial rolling this way and that. He was unable to sleep. He felt remorseful for beating his wife. He had never beaten her. Yet he hit a woman who had so much of love for him. If she talked the way she had, it was due to circumstances. It was difficult enough to live though both of them worked and earned wages. How difficult it was to send money to his father in the village for his expenses and also pay a rent of a hundred rupees for the hut! The children, Ramesh and Suresh were in ragged shorts, as they had no money to buy new ones for them. Of the three saris Obulamma had all of them were tatters.
Suddenly anger against his father engulfed Ramachandra. Only because of his father he had to face all these difficulties. He would not live with them there. It was true that the old man was very fond of the land. There was reason to be so, if it was a fertile one. He did not understand why he had so much of attachment to that arid land. He wished his father dead so that weeping for a while, he could dump him once and for all in a pit. As he thought about his father he felt like killing him.

He would no more remain passive. He would certainly sell away the land, at any cost, without caring for the wails of his father.

The moment he came to that conclusion, he got up involuntarily. Thinking that his wife would be happy to know this, he went into the hut pushing the door. In the glimmer of the lamp he looked all around. The children were fast asleep. At a slight distance from them Obulamma was lying on the floor curling herself up. He silently went to her and knelt near her.

"Obulamma," he called her.

She rolled to the other side. Then it became clear to him that she was awake.

"Ei! It's you I'm calling," he said and placed his hand on her shoulder.

She pushed it away angrily.

"Abba! How can a woman be so angry? Please listen to me," he pleaded.

"So have you come again to beat me? Come on hit me. I am the only one who will tolerate everything," she said weeping, her eyes looking into his.

"I haven't come to beat you. When you talked badly about my father I was unable to control my anger and hit you." Ramachandra forcibly took her hand in his and said, "I promise I would not beat you again."
He observed that her grief had subsided.

“ I will heed your advice. I will sell away the land. Let the old man wail as he wishes. Are we happy though we have that property?” he lay down beside her and tenderly hugged her. Enwreapped snugly in his embrace she said, “Then why put off the matter? Shall we go tomorrow?”

“All right,” Ramachandra kissed her on her forehead and said, “Let’s go tomorrow.”

It was noon.

The hot Sun was shining brightly.

“Oh, Ramachandra. Have you come just now? You have set out in the hot sun!” Chennappa welcomed his son, daughter-in-law and grandsons looking at them with great affection. “How big they have grown! Come to me! Ramesh... Suresh!” he said holding them in his arms and happily showering kisses on them.

Ramachandra took away the old metal box from his shoulders and placed it in front of the hut. “How are you, father? Is your health all right?” Ramachandra asked. “You have grown thin.”

“I am all right,” Chennappa said. “Look at yourself. You have become skinny. Even she and her boys have become lean.”

“As you see us after a long gap, you feel so... Mama,” Obulamma said.

“Papa... Narasakka!” he called the girl from the adjoining hut. Despite his torn vest soiled *panca* he was wearing and his unshaven grey beard, his face was glowing with joy.
“Yes, tata!” A thirteen-year-old girl with tasselled hair, and in green dirty dress, came out from the next hut. She was related to Chennappa: a grand daughter. Moreover due to his good nature, she helped him in his household chores.

“Your uncle, aunt and their children have come. We don’t know when they had food last. They must be hungry,” Chennappa said to the girl, “Cook some rice for them and give some water first for washing their feet, my dear.” He instructed her.

Smiling shyly, she went into the hut to cook food.

After an hour, they had food. The day was declining.

It was always cool there even when it was hot summer, as there was a densely grown neem tree next to the pial in front of the hut.

He felt it risky now to ask him to sell away the land. How should he put it? Moreover how to begin the conversation?

Chennappa was still smoking a beedi.

Lying on the end of sari spread on the floor, Obulamma was staring at her husband.

Suddenly Ramachandra looked at her. “Come on. You begin it,” she gestured to him.

“Wait a while,” he suggested her with his looks.

“How much of groundnut will we get this year?” Clearing his throat, he began hesitantly unable to know how to initiate the conversation.

“Yield... Had it rained at least twice by this time, it would have been different. With the attack of pest almost all the crop has withered. Even if it rains today or tomorrow the yield would be just enough for seeding. It is not only here. This is so everywhere. A gentleman told me this today...he had been to Hindupur, Kadiri to look for a match for
his son. "Chennappa continued. "But how is life in Bellary, Ramudu... have you learnt any brick laying work?"

"Yes. I am still learning," Ramachandra replied in a low voice.

"I always worry about you. But for the failure of crops you would not have left the village to live in a far off place as a labourer," Chennappa said in a choked voice.

Unable to raise the topic of selling the land when he was so concerned about their welfare Ramachandra suddenly got up and said, "I will go down the street to talk to Mallesu and Thippanna mama, father." He went away.

Obulamma who had been looking at them intently to know what would happen became furious. "Thu... What a man is he! Just when he was to speak out he went away. He has no guts to talk to his father, but he is ready to argue with me," she mumbled to herself.

Night. It was time for food.

The rays from the street lamp next to the hut spread light over the pial like moonlight.

While eating, Ramachandra thought out many times how to talk about the selling of the land with his father.

On the pial outside Chennappa was gossiping with his grandchildren laughing loudly at times.

"Ramudu! These rascals are very clever. You have to be careful," Chennappa said to Ramachandra as he came out after finishing food. "Otherwise they will sell you both in
the Bellary Market for three bottlu. How intelligent these fellows are!" he said looking affectionately at them.

Ramachandra smiled awkwardly. His mind was on the matter he wanted to raise.

"I heard the Reddys have sold away their lands," Ramachandra said to his father as a prelude to the issue.

"Reddys?" Chennappa was still engrossed in the delightful company of his grand children.

"I heard that Thimma Reddy has sold his thirty acres of land to the people of Uravakonda at twenty thousand rupees an acre."

"Yes. After selling away all his land here Thimma Reddy is doing some business in Anantapur. They are all very big people. They do not care for their village or mother. They can live anywhere. Anatapur or Hyderabad... they are ready to settle anywhere and live happily," Chennappa said as he took out a bundle of beedies and a box of matches from the pocket of his vest.

"But we stay on here whether it's famine or crop-failure. Which god told us to be here, father? Why should we find fault with them? Our fate is so."

"You fool! " Chennappa said picking out a beedi from the beedi bundle and squeezing its end between his fingers. "Let them leave the village." Chennappa lighted his beedi and continued, "Why should we leave like them? How can one leave the land that is more than our mother"

"Because of these feelings our lives are so miserable. It is not late now. We will sell the land and buy some place and build a hut in Bellary and all of us can live happily together," Ramachandra spoke out all that he wanted to say.
“You son of a —. How many times have I told you not to raise this question,”
Chennappa said.

Ramachandra sensed that his father was more furious from his words but he did not
want to retreat. “You are mad. About the land. Because of it we have come to this
ruined stage.” Ramachandra continued, “You raised a loan of fifteen thousand rupees to
dig a well and only a boulder appeared at the bottom. For a bore pump you spent ten
thousand rupees and it ended in vain too. No water but only debts to repay. By the
grace of Rain God we reaped groundnut crop for two years and repaid the loans.
Otherwise, could I and my children have repaid such heavy loan?”

“Why do you talk so strangely now?” Chennappa questioned him angrily. “Have you
come all the way from Bellary to sell this land?” He became furious. His grandsons
frightened, got off his lap then and ran to their mother sitting at the door.

“Why do you become so angry whenever I suggest you to sell the land?” Ramachandra
shouted back at his father.

“Yes, I do, because it is my life. Selling it is like selling my mother... You always talk
about the amount spent on it. Think a while. Without it my father, grandfather, you and
me...All of us would not have lived a respectable life in the village,” Chennappa went
on,” It is all due to that land. I wish you weren’t born to me. You are a person without
any gratitude. Had your mother been still alive you would have sold her too when she
could not do any work. You...wretched fellow," Chennappa spoke with a strange
expression on his face.

“I don’t care for all that. You have to sell the land and come to live with us, that’s all.”
Chennappa sensed recklessness in his son’s words.
"I won't come with you and I won't sell the land. Do whatever you want to. You are so rude because you send me amount for my expenses every month. From now on you need not send me anything," Chennappa said in an agitated voice, lit another beedi and began puffing it hurriedly.

"If you speak so I lose my temper," Ramachandra said irritated.

"Why should be angry? Have you lost any of your father's earnings? What are you furious for?" Chennappa shot back. "I won't sell the land, whatever you say."

As their quarrel reached its culminating point the neighbours gathered.

"Ore... Ramachandra. Why do you raise the issue of selling of the land now?" An old man in the gathering said in his shivering voice.

"Since all of you support him he has become so adamant and refuses to sell it," Ramachandra said loudly.

"See... He talks without any regard to me... his father," Chennappa was shivering in fury.

"Mama, why do you get so irritated when we ask you to sell the land?" Obulamma said.

"So, you are behind all this. It's because of you he is talking so. My son had never talked so harshly with me. It's enough to have a daughter-in-law like you to break a family," Chennappa said vengefully, though he had never uttered a word against his daughter-in-law since she came to live with them.

"Your son has no courage and so you hold the land fast, ruining us in the process," Obulamma said spitefully.

"Being a woman you should not talk so against your father-in-law," an old married woman said.
“Atta... You know nothing about our family. We want to sell it only to look after his welfare. See how he behaves,” Obulamma said.

“If you don't care for his wishes, why should you worry about his welfare?” Another married woman questioned.

Obulamma became furious and retorted sharply, “Why do you worry about our family problems? It's no concern of yours. We have not asked you to deal out justice for us.”

“All right... We have nothing to do with you. You can do as you wish,” the old married woman left the place feeling unhappy.

“I will see how you can stop me from selling the land. Or else you give me my share,” Ramachandra spoke as if he was parting with his father forever.

Chennappa turned to his son as he felt it unpleasant to hear those words. Tears filled his eyes. Was it his only son who said all this? Was he the one whom he brought up affectionately?

“Ore... Ramudu! Why speak of your share and mine? All is yours. Do I have four sons to divide the land? You are not even my brother to share it with me,” Chennappa continued in mournful tone. “Take all of it. I can fill my stomach by begging in this village. Do as you wish.” He moved away as tears rolled down from his eyes.

Ramachandra and Obulamma did not expect this and they remained stupefied.

For some time silence filled the air.

“Amma. Tata is going away,” Suresh shrieked.

Obulamma did not say anything.

“Where will he go? An old man... He will come back after he cools down,” a middle aged person from the crowd commented.
"He will come back. Where can he go?" Others echoed.

The day was just dawning.

Ramachandra did not sleep the whole night. He was worried about his father. Many times he thought and repented that he should not have been so harsh with him.

Obulamma also was remorseful. She sent Ramachandra to search for her father-in-law in the houses of their friends in the village. She enquired about him in the street. She was distressed that she was rude with her father-in-law who used to call her ‘Papa’ affectionately.

Ramachandra’s eyes were swollen and red, as he was sleepless.

Thoughts swarmed in his mind like bees from a disturbed hive.

The thought that his father might have ended his life frightened him most. That was why he had been looking for him in the gardens and wells since morning. Some of the villagers accompanied him in the search.

It was morning.

"Ore... Ramachandra!" he felt as if his father had called him affectionately from a distance and he looked around vaguely. No one was there. He decided that he would never say anything against his father’s wishes. He felt like falling and weeping at his feet if he found him. He would never ask him to sell the land again.

"O... Ramachandra anna," Rangaiah came gasping to him and said,

"Anna...your father dead. There in your land." He pointed to his land. A body in white clothes was lying in his land a few tracts away.

As if he had heard a thunderbolt striking, he rushed to the land, shivering all over.
Amidst the withered groundnut crop Chennappa's body lay serene and free from sorrow, like a child sleeping in the lap of the mother.

Dazed, Ramachandra fell on the dead body.

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-Translated from Telugu by T.SREENIVASA REDDY
The River Inside

Telugu Original: loopali nadi

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Someone is burying my tree of bones in a desert.

I howled. "No, Don't bury me!"

I woke up. I felt as if I was still running. My tongue parched and my heart throbbed fast.

Slowly I turned on the switch. And the room filled with light.

Some strange infirmity...

With great difficulty I went to the refrigerator and tried to hold the water bottle but could not. With trembling hands I held the bottle to my mouth and drank the water in one gulp.

I was thirsty even after emptying all the bottles in the fridge.

Casually I looked at myself in the mirror. It was horrible, the figure I saw in the life size mirror. My face was cracked like the arid land in famine. Two sunken pits in the place of my eyes...Deserts in my eyes... My hands, fingers and legs were paralyzed. With my emaciated hands I stroked my face... surprisingly I could not feel anything. What was to be done now?

After brooding over it for a long time I went to the phone. With great difficulty I pressed the buttons on the telephone and requested Dr. Rishi to come at once.

He was really a Rishi. That's why he came here even at mid night.

After examining me carefully he said, "There is no problem. You have lost the river. Get hold of it again. Only that will cure you."

"Oh...doctor garu! How can I search for the river with this terrible figure?" I questioned in misery.
Dr. Rishi smiled calmly. Stroking his beard thoughtfully he said, "I will prepare a balm for you from eighteen herbs. Apply it daily to your face and body. You may get some relief and get control of your limbs." Awestruck I listened to him. Pausing for a minute to think he went on, "Wear black glasses to hide the deserts in your eyes... a cap on your head, a long coat, a suit, gloves and shoes. This is what you should wear from tomorrow. Come on... roll up your affairs like a mat and keep it in a corner. Plead with the river you have lost, beg and ask it to come into you again... only that will give you a rebirth."

Dr. Rishi sent me four big jars the next day. They were full of the balm he had prepared. Eagerly I scooped out two lumps of balm and applied it all over my body. How should I put it? The balm was a miracle! Rishi gave me back my life.

Dressing up as he suggested I stood in front of the mirror.

I was not what I had been.

I was altogether new!

Keeping aside all my affairs I set on like a pilgrim. Thanks to Dr. Rishi I was able to recall what had happened to me. The river had suddenly disappeared. Till then it was flowing inside. Talking in the language of murmurs we were one and happy. The river used to gush forth through the trenches of blood vessels spreading to the heart.

My words were like heaps of grain threshed from the golden ears of corn.

A life musical note used to spurt out in streams throwing open the floodgates of my tongue. The life stream flowed dancing to everyone who wanted it. It might sound strange but it was true.
Drying me up from inside, the river had fled.
How terrible the life without a river-Only those who experience it know.
The onlookers would know how horrible the dry sand dunes were.
True life in fact was the waves lapping on the shore of the heart.
When such sound of the water was missing where was my existence?
The secret was that one should identify one's own river. Love should guide the search for the river. With a yearning for moisture one should search everywhere. Could I alone find out the river? Should I take someone's help?
Yes...there were so many newspapers...
Hundreds of TV channels...
Great communication media ...
Technology...Planets... Satellites ...
Wouldn't these institutions be able to search for a single river for me?
With that aim I sought their help.
I prepared a note.

"MISSING
The river is missing. Those who give information about it will be rewarded with my living moments."

I also wrote an open letter ...

"‘Dear’ river,
Why have you left me? Reveal the secret to me and you can
freely go away. Come to me once?
With longing for you,
Yours..."
They thought me crazy. The people of the media advertising section were confused and avoided me in fear.

Hearing this Dr. Rishi laughed.

"Live like an explorer...don't die like a crazy non-entity," he said.

I was ashamed.

In addition to my ugliness...this insanity too!

"Finding out the river is my dire need.

Yes it's a fact...one has to find out one's own river."

I was determined.

But --where would be the river? From which secret trenches or layers of the earth was the river flowing?

Questions...even Bageeratha wouldn't have known the solutions. But as long as the river was in my heart these doubts never cropped up.

By then the stream had left me...now I was in search of it. But would I be able to recognize the river?

After the flowing remembrances of moisture had dried up, after the face had become a wasteland, after the stones were left in the heart, how could a river appear? I had lost the river deliberately and what remained was an endless search.

Wasn't it foolish to expect that one would get everything one searched for?
That too a river, a current that carried remembrances of golden ears of corn as it flowed.

A river that cleansed. A subterranean river.

Where had it gone? Where?

I entered the railway station.

A long curved platform with sheets of asbestos-cement for roof.

Coloured worlds in the small screens hanging to the iron rods.

Noises arising from the void.

Images spiralling in the air.

I was walking through the jostling crowds on the platform finding a way for myself. I was searching everywhere.

From the deserts of my eyes two parched tongues were forking out in quest.

"Ting... Tong... Ting ... Your attention please..."

"yatrikan kripya dhyan de"

"The river you are searching for would flow on to the platform number three shortly," it was announced.

I jumped excitedly.

"Will the river really flow onto number three?" stopping a coolie, I asked in anxiety.

He smiled coolly and said, "Go and find out."

In that bustle some one brought a river in a wheel chair. I ran onto number three.

I did not know then that I had set aside a great river and lost myself!

I reached number three anxiously.
'Gouthami' arrived tugging thirty desert compartments. Many drought faces jumped in heaps onto the platform. Some climbed in. Getting into the compartment I slumped in the seat reserved for me. All around me were dry faces. Not a jot of moisture. Not a fleck of black cloud on any face. An epic of dryness. Would Dr. Rishi be able to supply balm to all of them! I moved restlessly. To pass time I took out a magazine from my suitcase. In fact my suitcase was full of balm bottles. I didn't have any clothes for myself. And the long woollen coat and the suit I was wearing needn't be washed.

Even the magazine was dry. Everywhere this wilting disease. There were no rivers in the world. They were vanishing. Fleeing away in groups. We had to search for them. Was it easy to find them? I threw away the magazine in anger. Again there was an announcement. "Your attention please... The river you are travelling in will flow away from the platform number three shortly." Could this be true? Would a river really move? I moved restlessly. All of a sudden a miracle appeared before me. Someone brought and placed a river on the berth opposite. A huge wave brushed against my desert face. Some inexpressible thrill in me. What? Was it the river that flowed in a wheel chair a while ago.
Didn't I ask it to move aside?
How terrible!
This river had no limbs.
Trunk...only torso...
A severed river!
If someone had chopped off the river's limbs with a sword, this sort of a crippled river...a truncated river... a dismembered river with only a trunk would remain. Would there be anyone so strong as to slice water?
It was wonderful!
How did this river take birth in the first instance?
How did it live? And how did it flow?
Yes, this was that.
No, this was no river at all.
This was a river of sorrow. An orphan.
Someone had chopped off its waves. Its flowing life elements.
An attempt of murder might have been made on this river.
I was myself a desert and this crippled river before me!
The words of wasting disease crackled inside.
Then a slap on my face. A whip of water whacked my desert face. I shivered... There was some river secret. I was unable to grasp the principle. Else, how could my desert face be drenched?
As I was groping inside someone carried the river away.
Had I lost the river again?
The mere concern about the river was not enough. One should have the vision to trace the life giving under current. I should recognize myself as a riparian area. What would remain when the river had fled, except stones, bushes and sandy mounds?

Where was the moisture? Where was the river?

I trudged along.

The balm did not hide the signs of dryness.

Anyone who had a bit of moisture in him could easily declare, "He is a fool... He has lost the river."

I trod ahead involuntarily and aimlessly.

Then- a miracle!

Suddenly a whiplash of water.

The tides of the river touched my ears.

Surprisingly the musical doors were flung open.

The great river roared!

Sparks of life on my face! Movement in my fingers... unbounded strength in my legs.

This was the sound of the river.

I ran and ran. A kalakshetra before me.

Rubbing my eyes I saw the river Krishna!

I rushed into the auditorium.

From the dais a great tide of musical note rose into the air. It was the crippled river.

The river that had been truncated.

Mere torso of the river...
Even then... a great flow of riverine music. Not crippled...unique!

From its tongue *amritam* flowed out. I shivered and trembled all over.

Was it this river I mocked at as a cripple?

Was it this river’s birth I questioned?

Was it this river that I murdered out of mercy?

Mine was the strength to butcher the water.

Under my very eyes, the river became *Thyagaraja*. It became *gandharva* and turned into a flood. I tried to move but couldn’t. My hands and legs were washed away in the river. My trunk was caught in the flood.

My long coat, suit, hat and suitcase with balm were swept away like dry floating sticks and disappeared in the flood.

I immersed myself in the river inside me.

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-Translated from Telugu by T.Sreenivasa Reddy
Lady Karunakaram

Telugu Original: leedii karunaakaram
Writer: Chaso
Translator: T. Sreenivasa Reddy
Lady Karunakaram

-Chaso

Karunakaram went to his mother-in-law's town for the festival. Keeping his suitcase on the head of a coolie, he entered the street where his mother-in-law lived. The mischievous teenagers walking before him, started speaking disparagingly looking at his mother-in-law's house.

"Look! This landlord is getting the pials plastered with cement!"

"What does he lack. He has a daughter like an ace of trump card. By the time she goes to live with her husband, he would construct the walls in gold."

"These days one who has four daughters is fortunate."

"Catering to the people..."

Karunakaram's face flushed with anger. Probably they started this foul language against his father-in-law and his wife after seeing him. There was no point arguing with them. He doubted whether there was a grain of truth in what they had said.

The coolie was about to put down the suitcase on the pial.

"No. Don't put it there. The cement hasn't yet dried up," looking through the window, his mother-in-law opened the door and said.

"Come dear. We heard a crow crowing this day and we thought you'd come. Sit in the veranda. Its time your father-in-law arrived."

She enquired after her son-in-law's welfare and went in to the house.

"Look boys!" she cried at the boys playing in the backyard," your brother-in-law has come."

His wife's brothers and sisters came out saying hesitantly, "How are you?"
The arrival of their brother-in-law was a festival for them. His visit was an occasion for fun, frolic and different type of love.

His mother-in-law shot a volley of questions at him and went in saying, "I'll be back again, the rice will be overcooked."

Again she came back to chat with him. She related to him at a stretch about the sore eyes of the children, her backache, the hail they had recently, the collapse of the calf-shed, his wife's reluctance to do even common chores. At the same time she finished cooking food.

Karunakaram didn't have the glimpse of his wife. But he was excited when he heard her bangles jingling from the veranda in the backyard.

Just then someone shouted from the backyard, "Sundari!" That was his wife's voice. His wife's sister, Sundari went in, brought coffee in a cup and offered it to him.

His father-in-law arrived and spoke to him affectionately. Karunakaram was studying FA in Chennapatnam. His father-in-law sent him thirty rupees a month.

The affection, his wife's sisters and brothers shown towards him, his father-in-law's generosity, his mother-in-law's plight, the coffee prepared and sent by his wife—all these didn't give him any scope to entertain any doubts over his wife's faithfulness.

He lay down soon after dinner being tired. But he could not sleep well. The clock in the neighbour's house struck a half-hour---it might be eleven thirty or twelve thirty. Then a knock on the main door was heard.

"Haven't you sent word not to come today?" His father-in-law asked his wife in a hushed tone.
"There was no one to go," his mother-in-law replied.

They spoke in hushed voices but Karunakaram heard them clearly in the noises of crickets. His father-in-law opened the main door. Karunakaram peeped through a hole in the door.

His mother-in-law was sitting on the cot. Rubbing her eyes his wife was seen going in to the next room. A paramour followed her. He looked like a debauchee to the core. Besides he was not unfamiliar to him, Naidu of the next street.

Karunakaram tried to open the door in fury but it was bolted from inside. He wildly kicked it. At last his father-in-law opened it. His wife was lying in the bed pretending to sleep.

"Your elder sister-in-law has bolted it from inside — playing silly pranks," his mother-in-law said.

"Yes. I know. Where is that rogue?" Karunakaram asked.

"Who?"

"That bastard... Naidu."

Both his mother-in-law and father-in-law were astonished.

"No body is here. Perhaps it's only a dream," said his mother-in-law.

"He might have gone very far. It's alright," he said.

He knocked on the door with a thought of killing them all. But when he came out, he lost his heart. Unable to decide what to do, he took his suitcase and started out.

"Where are you leaving for? His mother-in-law asked.
"You gave your daughter in marriage to me and made her sleep with Naidu. Now you can send her to Choudhary to be his wife," he said while moving out.

His father-in-law stopped him.

"First you listen to us. Yes we have done a wrong thing. Though we deceived you, we did it keeping your welfare in our view. I have been sending you money for your studies. Where could I, a family man with children get so much amount? Hoping that you would study well and come up in life and become a support to all of us, we did so. She is innocent. Don’t spoil her life. You say anything against us. We’ll bear it," he held him back.

"You shabby rascals. This year you have plastered the floor with cement. Next year you build a two storeyed mansion for your self. Leave me," he abused his father-in-law.

"They have ruined my life... they said they are helping me..." Sarada came sobbing.

They have made me cut my throat with my own hands." She fell on Karunakaram’s feet, weeping, and she appeared innocent. Her eyes were like bees, filled with tears, as she sobbed- he could not bear it.

"Follow me. I’ll take you away from here," he said.

"Let’s go," she said.

He dragged her by shoulder in to the street.

"The next day is the festival. People talk ill of us. Stay till tomorrow and then leave as you wish," said his mother in law.

"I don’t care whether four or forty people talk about you," he took away his wife.

His father-in-law remained silent. Sarada went along with her husband as she was.
Karunakaram gave up his studies and settled as a clerk in Chennapatnam. He spent his domestic life happily without any trouble. Six or seven months passed by. One day Karunakaram saw Naidu passing by in the street. He had a suspicion. He could not avoid going to the office the next day. But he managed to finish off everything by 3'O clock and waited outside in the street. Naidu was going away from his house by 4'O clock. His heart throbbed. He went into his house. His wife was lying on the bed, eyes closed, with a cover of fragrance. Her plait of hair --enough to hang any man to death--hung loosely over her breast.

Hearing his footsteps, she opened her eyes. She looked at him with her large eyes and suddenly leaned on him.

"You are a bitch. You can play any sort of trick. Go away. You dirty whore!" he pushed her away.

"Why do you flare up in anger?" she asked.

"When did you renew this affair again?"

"Which affair?"

"You whore! Hasn't Naidu been visiting you?"

"Have you seen it?"

"Yes. That's why all this."

"It's your fault to see that."

"Isn't it your fault to have relation with him? It's my fault to see that...O my god."
“Speak properly! He comes daily. He’s come all the way to Madras following me. So your doubt is cleared. Any way what wrong have I done to you?”

“Whom did you wrong then?”

“You have studied on Naidu’s money. Only because of it you are at least doing this filthy job. Your food and clothes are his charity. I havenot deceived you. I am robbing him and feeding you, as you are the man who tied the sacred knots of my tali. If I wanted to be unfaithful, I would have eloped with him. He would lavish wealth on me,” she continued.

“You are doing that mean job which has no fame or name. I thought of revealing it to you. Meanwhile you have found it yourself.”

She sermonized, went in, took out a box, opened it with the key fastened to her tali chain and showed it to him.

There were ten-rupee notes bundle upon bundle countless in the box. Reflected in the mirror of the lid of the box, they appeared twice as many.

“Every time he visits me, he gives me two or three notes. Though I have demeaned myself, I am able to feed ourselves. I was defiled long back,” she continued. “When I was useful then, I would be so now.”

“One should not see your face...go away,” he said.

“O... you seem to be very clever, ‘you go away’. What do you think of yourself? You have reached this position because of me. You get out of this house. You don’t need to feed me,” she said.

Hearing these words he shivered like one in fever. What should he do: Yield to her or leave the readily served food and his beautiful wife.

“It’s all over. Will you behave at least from now onwards.”
"You silly... " She tweaked his cheek.

"Enough of these dallying acts. I have been deceived only by them."

"What disaster has happened? Don't be old-fashioned. How could a person offering so much of money be turned away. You give up this wretched job you have been doing. You can continue your studies as you wish. Then there would be no paucity for any thing," she advised him, took out a handful of currency notes from the box, and said," Take these."

He was at a loss what to do.

He hadn't touched even four ten rupee notes at a time in all his life. There were bundles of currency notes full of the box delighting his eyes.

He wept involuntarily.

"Don't get so emotional. Those who have no money are of no use. Here it is! All this is yours. I am yours too. Has your anger subsided? Join a college. Give up your job," she comforted and convinced him.

Karunakaram was clever. He started studying studiously without interfering in unnecessary affairs. He passed MA and stood first among the meritorious students. He specialized in economics. He got a top-ranking job in a bank immediately after passing the examination.

Despite being mother of children, Sarada went wild in Chennapatnam. Hers was the victory march of Sri Krishnadevaraya.

She could experience the luxuries of diamond ornaments, silk clothes, fruit juices, intoxicants and silk mattresses.
Lavishing wealth on her, adoring her slender beauty, many debauchees approached her like foreign dogs.

Karunakaram was sharp. With in short a period he further advanced in his career and became a top-ranking officer in a foreign bank. There was no limit for her joy. She took him out and bought him a ford car as a gift. What else did Karunakaram require?

Sarada now presided over the competition among the school children and distributed books to them. Her photograph now was published in the papers as Mrs. Karunakaram. What else did she require?

The children crawled up to him saying, “father...father!” Was he father to all of them? The eldest was Naidu’s son, the second daughter resembled the lawyer and next... Jayanthudu was a replica of Sarada.

Kunthidevi, who gave birth to six children for different gods, was considered chaste and virtuous wife. The elders who knew Dharma said that there was nothing wrong if the husband himself gave permission. Without anyone’s permission, Kunthi, the virgin gave birth to Karna to try the efficacy of the boon given to her. And she was about to commit infanticide. If Kunthi was a virtuous and chaste wife, so was Sarada.

Dharmaraju and others were called Pandavas. If they were called the children of the king, Pandu, here they would be certainly the children of Karunakaram.

Those who had no children would adopt others children, Karunakaram reconciled. Life would be smooth for all only when they compromise in many matters. Karunakaram brought up the children borne by his wife and made them his own.
On his reaching home in a ford car from the office, the children ran up to him, Karunakaram went straight to his wife.

"Because of you I have achieved all this. You are Sarada, the goddess of learning, as you have bestowed education on me. Sarada can choose many. There is no harm in it. Even if it is objected to by Lord Brahma, it won't be valid," he started eulogizing his wife.

"What's the matter?" said Sarada.

"Are you free now?"

"Why?"

"A small matter... after all your activities, I am the last..." he handed her a cover.

He received some information privately. Any way it would appear in the papers by evening. The next day it would be spread throughout the country. Sarada was unable to control her excitement after reading it.

"Sir title! Knighthood! After so many years, I feel accomplished. I am the wife of the knight. From tomorrow onwards, I would attend dinner along with the Governor's wife. I am Lady Karunakaram. What do you say?" She asked him.

"Yes, my darling," he said.

Sarada was a great woman of chastity!

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-Translated from Telugu by T. Sreenivasa Reddy
The Living Robot

Telugu Original : *mara maniSi*

Writer : Dr. Kommuri Venugopala Rao

Translator : T. Sreenivasa Reddy

The autopsy was going on in the mortuary of the General Hospital. Dissecting a dead body quickly, Sridhar, Professor of Pathology was explaining different aspects of anatomy enthusiastically to the medical students. Performing the role of an assistant that day, a student was jotting down the points rapidly.

“Look here! This is a rare case in the age of antibiotics: An advanced case of syphilis,” the Professor began explaining to the students, “Observe the kidneys— with patches on them... feel them... how firm they are! Here’s the liver... uterus... you feel the lymph glands here... typical short appearance. Rarely we find such an advanced case.”

After an hour, the autopsy was over. Washing his hands, Sridhar instructed his assistants to preserve the parts of the body collected carefully from the corpse for the museum. Outside the mortuary a few people, probably related to the dead woman, were seen sitting under the tree.

“It seems they are waiting for the body. They believe that the soul rests in peace only after the burial of the body... strange creatures,” Sridhar thought. “I have taken out all the vital organs for preservation. Now only the hollow one is for funeral.”

He did not believe in God. He was beyond emotions and attachments.

He came back to his room. After washing his hands he was about to open the lunch box. Then the phone rang.

“Congratulations,” It was Dr. Rama.

“What’s the matter?” The Professor asked.
"I have examined your wife, Sridevi," Dr. Rama continued, "she is going to have a baby...third month. She appears weak. Take care of her diet. She had suspected some illness and came to me for examination."

His ears stopped hearing. Fear engulfed him at once. His hand holding the receiver trembled slightly, "My God." Sridhar was startled.

Sridhar parked his car in the portico and straightaway went silently into the hall without even looking at Sridevi who was coming to meet him.

She might have guessed that he would behave that way. For a while she remained silent, later walked slowly and stood behind him. She asked, "Are you worried?"

He turned to his wife and stared at her with a blank expression. His looks were always expressionless. Rarely they light up with feelings.

"Sit down. I will make it clear," he said to pacify her.

She sat in the sofa opposite and looked questioningly at him.

"Look, Sridevi!" Sridhar started in a soothing voice. "Don't get excited after hearing what I tell you. It's five years since we got married. I spent two years of them abroad. Again I have to go to the States in two years. Then you have to go with me...Sridevi. So far, I have not had any desire to have children. In fact I am not under the delusion that paternity would bring me any great pleasure." He continued, "These ties hinder me and restrain my aspirations. We haven't yet grown old enough to worry about children." He paused and said, "Well! Do you want my happiness ruined?"
Sridevi suppressed a sigh with some difficulty. After hearing him two questions troubled in her mind: First, “What is happiness?” Second, “What is his purpose in telling me all this now...that too when everything is out of hand?”

He said, “Tell me your opinion.”

She somehow managed to smile. “I have nothing to say,” she replied.

“I did not expect this mishap would occur so early,” rubbing his hands together he said in a steady voice.

Even in that bad situation, she felt like laughing, got up slowly, went to him, sat next to him placing her hand on his shoulder and began, “Look, dear...”

He turned to her. Staring blankly, he said, “These bonds and attachments do not fit my temper. Sridevi!” Sridhar continued in a steady voice, “What I want is a balanced life. I hate unplanned life. These sentiments hinder our development. This is a mechanical age, with knowledge exploding beyond imagination and intellect stretching to the extreme limits.”

She could not control her tears.

“I wonder why people weep,” he said looking at her.

“You are heartless,” Sridevi said angrily in a trembling voice.

“Perhaps it is true,” he got up. He had not even changed his dress after coming home.

He slowly moved into the corridor, lighted a cigarette and looking outside continued, “Heartless... Yes, but for that I wouldn't have become a Professor at this age. I would have just remained an ordinary graduate if I had not overcome these afflictions. You know the facts.”

She did not give a reply. The undulating sound of her sobs floated in the silence.
It was winter. A gentle breeze was blowing from the west. Darkness was slowly spreading all over. The flowers in the Professor's garden perfumed the evening air.

After some time, he tossed away the cigarette butt. Without even looking back he said, "I have my own aspirations in my profession." He continued, "Anyway I wonder whether your health permits you to give birth to a baby. It's foolish to risk your life for the sake of a baby," he paused, "Try to understand me," he continued, "I don't like it to happen at this juncture. Still there is time. I am a doctor. It is not impossible to stop it."

For a minute, there was silence. Then a loud thud. He shook and immediately turned back looking for his wife. She had tumbled down and was lying on the floor unconscious.

Soft light spread over the cots and tapered off dully on the bedroom walls. The clock ticked away the midnight hours. Sridevi lay on the cot, her eyes closed and her mind going over the events of the evening. Her husband appeared to her like a living robot, a mechanical man with no heart and feelings. She wept silently.

He was young with good physique. It was not an easy task to become a Professor at his age. Sridevi turned her face and looked at his cot casually. He was lying on his side, sleeping as usual, she thought.

However, Sridhar was not asleep. After a lot of brooding which kept him awake, he concluded, "Well, if she wants it so..."
After seven months...

"I am sorry, Professor! This is a case of Hydrocephalus," Dr. Rama said completing all the investigations.

Sridhar was baffled.

"The findings are still favourable and the foetus is healthy. Of course, it's a rare case. Trial labours otherwise we'll proceed with craniotomy. Professor! What's your opinion?" Dr. Rama asked.

Sridhar nodded his approval. Then he thought for a minute and said, "Why the risk of trial labour, Doctor. Can't we straight away proceed with craniotomy?"

"I have some hope that delivery would be possible. Nothing will happen to Sridevi. Don't worry about her," Dr. Rama sounded confident.

Sridhar thought of insisting on the craniotomy but gave up the attempts, as she would not listen to him. He said good-bye to her and walked out.

Sridhar began smoking cigarette after cigarette. Time was mercilessly running out. For the first time in his life he felt that waiting was painful. He realized how valuable his wife was and why a man could not be a machine.

The phone rang. He sprang up and rushed to it.

"Normal delivery...Male child. Both the mother and the child are all right," Dr. Rama said in a firm voice. She did not congratulate him and there wasn't any happiness in her voice. As a doctor, Sridhar had known the reason.

"Thank you, Doctor," he replaced the receiver slowly.
The boy looked fair. His limbs were weak, hanging like sticks, disproportionate to his big head. The body looked limp like a deflated balloon.

Whenever he looked at him, it struck him that there was no such specimen in his Pathology museum. It was a wonder for him that the boy survived. Such children usually die in the womb itself and the head of the foetus is to be destroyed in order to bring the foetus out. This boy, as his head was not that big, was born without any problem. He was growing up... smiling... Sridhar knew- 'Such children cannot survive for a long time, even if they do, they become retarded.'

Sridhar examined the boy once or twice, as he did any object in his lab. Sridevi named the boy Karuna. She knew a little about him from Dr. Rama. It was a kind of congenital anomaly caused due to the accumulation of fluid in the brain. She had faith in God and the theory of Karma. Moreover, she could bear the suffering as she thought it was the result of her sins.

She never left Karuna alone. She bought many toys for him and played with him. There wasn’t any change in her relationship with her husband. Whenever the guests visited them, she kept him out of their sight, as she could not bear their sympathizing words and looks.

Once Karuna had a fever and started moaning. Sridevi was confused and immediately ran to her husband.

"Our babu has a temperature," She said.

"Let me see," he went with her.
After examining the boy he said, "No need to worry, Sridevi. It is only a mild bronchitis. I will send for medicines."

The whole day he was with him. That was the only day he was close to his son; yet, without any emotions—just as a doctor treating his patients. Throughout that night, she was awake.

Soon the fever disappeared.

One day while she was entering the hall she found Sridhar looking keenly at Karuna who was sleeping in his bed. At first, she didn’t know why he was doing so. Perhaps he was looking at him as a specimen. That thought she could not bear. She immediately covered his body with a blanket saying it was cold.

Now Karuna grew further and he was able to fall on his face.

When he did so with his large head, Sridhar stood there as if he was watching an educational film.

On one occasion looking at Karuna who was playing, Sridhar called Sridevi as if he had some urgent work with her and said, "Look Sridevi! Have you observed his head...isn't it growing bigger day by day?"

Sridevi lifted her face and looked at him. There was a red streak in her eyes. Then she shot back, "I wish to ask you a question..." Her voice was never so harsh, "Have you ever felt that you are the father of this boy?"

Without waiting for his response, she went into the house taking Karuna in her arms.

The question caught him by surprise and he was stupefied.
At last, the inevitable happened. Fate mocked Sridevi again. Karuna grew weak day by day. The innocent smile disappeared on his face. There were many complications... in stomach... throat... brain. At one fateful moment, Karuna left his deformed figure as if searching for a new body.

She laid his corpse in her lap and silently shed tears. She did not utter a word against anyone and blamed none.

After some time, Sridhar approached her, "How long do you grieve for the lost boy? I'll take the body for the funeral."

She lifted her head once, looked into his face and handed over the body. He went to his car with the body in his arms. The car left the bungalow.

Grief stricken Sridevi did not eat and sleep for three days. Contrary to his nature, Sridhar sat next to her for many hours and tried to comfort her. He advised her to treat grief as their bitter enemy.

As she moved about in the house, she felt her son's presence everywhere. She could not erase the memories of her son from her mind.

She felt that her son was calling out to her, "Amma... Amma!"

The voice echoed in her ears. Her heart sank, "I am not fortunate," she cried out bewailing her son's death.

Then the voice seemed to say, "Is it my sin? Then why this punishment to me?"

"Babu! I will face the punishment... not you."

"Better I have passed away than to face the looks of sympathy."
"I will curse those who cast such looks on you."

She fainted with grief. Sridhar was depressed and smoked cigarettes one after another.

"Congenital Hydrocephalus... This would usually die in the intro-uterine life. This is a rare condition, he lived for five months," Sridhar said displaying the specimen to the students. He did not have any sentiments and superstitions. However, he liked this particular specimen. He used to spend at least one hour in the museum. While moving around, his legs involuntarily stopped at the specimen. For five minutes he stood staring at the specimen examining the body and the disproportionately bulky head. Slowly the specimen gained a special place in his heart. He was moved whenever he stood before it. His heart raced and he sweated. The mass of flesh held for exhibition as a specimen was from his own body, the very thought stirred his feelings. Initially he was not aware of these feelings. But gradually he realized that he was coming under the influence of some strange forces. He decided not to stop at the specimen. Once or twice, he tried to ignore it. But his legs did not obey him. The moment he reached it, his legs stopped. Then his looks involuntarily fell on it. If he was able to overcome the temptation to stop near it, on some trivial excuse, he longed to go again to the specimen later. He could not bear this agony. He decided to be away from the museum but could not succeed even for a day. It dragged him by invisible reins.

He never had such experience in his life. His mind was turbulent. He was fighting against himself. First, scientific curiosity cast a net over him and pulled him to the specimen. Then, a struggle, an attachment, an affection, a possessive instinct
inexorably dragged him to it. Some times the figure appeared in his dreams. He raved in
his sleep.

'A cataclysm. The Earth is cracking...lava is gushing out from the volcanoes.'

Once, he screamed in his sleep. It was all a dream. Sridevi rushed to him. Bending over
him she anxiously asked," Are you all right?" He was sweating profusely and forcefully
opened his eyes after hearing the voice of Sridevi.

"Yes," he said in a feeble voice, " It's a dreadful dream... Total destruction."

"Don't exert yourself. You have been sick for a week," Sridevi tried to comfort him,

Relax, in the next two days you'll be normal."

"Normal," a cynical smile appeared on his face, "Will I be ever normal?"

"Please don't utter such words," she pleaded him in choked voice.

For a while there was silence.

With her head bent Sridevi hesitantly asked, "Today is Saturday. Shall I visit the
temple?"

" Certainly. But why do you hesitate?"

" Because you will have to stay alone at home..."

"Nothing to worry, Sridevi. I am all right now."

"You are still weak. Don't get out of your bed. I will be back in one hour," Sridevi left him.

Minutes kept ticking away. Sridhar felt restless and could not remain in bed any longer.

He slowly got up, walked into the corridor, and stood leaning against the wall. The Sun
was shrouded in the dark clouds gathered in the sky. Exactly at the same spot in the
corridor, he thought, a few months earlier he resisted the birth of his son. However, he was born... had grown... and perished. “No, he has not perished,” he felt that a harsh voice cried out. He was startled.

A voice seemed to cry out, “I have not perished. Nanna! I have been imprisoned in a lotion. Everyone looks at me through the glass. Their looks pierce my large head.”

“One week I was in bed. How did I bear this imprisonment?”

“You are heartless... like a stone.”

His mind forced him to go along.

“I don’t have enough energy.”

“You don’t die. A stone has no death.”

His mind succeeded.

“I will go.”

He strode out in the cold. His car left the bungalow.

Sridhar entered the museum and switched on the light illuminating the hall.

“There he is...” he moved two steps towards it. Suddenly the power went off.

Darkness... Nothing was visible.

“My son! Where are you?” His heart groaned.

“I am here Nanna... in fetters... imprisoned. I can’t breath. It’s suffocating,” the voice seemed to answer.

“One minute, I will be there,” Sridhar thought, striding out for his son groping in the dark.

The signs of several diseases surround him—of infants and the aged, of heart ailments, cancer, TB, Syphilis and so on. All of them were his collections—his mental property.
“Nanna! Here I am,” the voice seemed to come from all sides.

He did not know the way but was moving ahead.

“Who’s there?” he cried at the sound of his own footsteps. There was silence all around.

Again he moved.

“Nanna,” the call was pathetic.

He had reached him. Stretching his hands, he stroked the jar.

“Is it you babu?”

“Yes... Nanna”

Without second thoughts, his hands lifted the jar and he yearned to press it to his heart.

It was heavy. His hands trembled. It was growing heavier.

Suddenly there was a loud crash.

“Babu,” he cried.

The lights glowed again.

Shivering, Sridhar saw ...the formaline spread on the floor... the broken pieces of glass jar...a lump of flesh lying amidst them.

Sridhar bent and took his son into his arms and stared at the body for a while.

“I will do justice to you, my son.”

He took the boy on his shoulders and walked out of the museum.

The guard of the museum stood puzzled to see the Professor placing a specimen in his car at that hour.

The car raced towards the burial ground.

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Translated from Telugu by T. Sreenivasa Reddy