

# Sapling

Swetha was pretty  
Judging by whatever  
standards.  
Sylph-like and tender  
as the first rose of spring  
Love and affection was  
lavished  
Upon her by the parents  
Having become an object of  
adoration.  
Came her fifth birthday.  
Though a formal  
celebration was not held,  
The assemblage of a  
few relations  
And well-wishers in the  
neighbourhood was  
inevitable.  
Among the modest  
presents offered,  
Was a mango sapling  
By the maternal uncle

Who belonged essentially to  
the agrarian community  
Young Swetha was pleased  
and elated  
For such an act of rarity.  
She caused the sapling to be  
planted  
Adjacent to the window of  
her bedroom  
And tended it with care  
The plant grew with Swetha  
Gradually and  
progressively.  
The day she blossomed into  
womanhood  
The sapling, then a young  
tree,  
Bore blossoms in profusion.  
The scent wafted in the air  
Reaching the portals of  
homesteads  
Of the village for their  
wonderment.

Off times Swetha spent long  
hours  
Beneath the cool shade of  
the canopy  
Of the boughs of the tree.  
The strange amity between  
the animate  
And the inanimate  
Grew large and intense,  
By the passage and the  
fullness of the time.  
Sporadically she would burst  
into song  
With a voice akin the breath  
In a seven holed reed  
With mellifluous virtuosity.  
The birds would then stop  
the chirping fearing the  
Rendering of their notes dull.  
The day Swetha entered  
conjugal alliance  
The boughs of the tree were  
earthward inclined

By the weight of the burden  
of the fruits succulent.  
Which invaded the tree in  
enormous numbers  
sufficient to feed the villages  
in the entirety  
They were tangled in a web  
of enigma  
consequent to the episodic  
marvel.  
For no conceivable reason  
The leaves of the tree began  
to wither progressively.  
Avoiding the casting of cool  
shade  
It once did.  
The profuse green gradually  
became brown.  
A noticeable change began  
to appear  
In the girl's demeanour.  
She seemingly began to lose  
energy And sprightliness.

On seeking the doctor's  
advice,  
It was pronounced that  
Swetha  
Was afflicted with terminal  
cancer.  
The concerted efforts and  
attempts of the parents  
To save Swetha's life ended  
in futility.  
The girls and the tree started  
Withering together,  
Until she was reduced to a  
skeleton  
And the tree became a  
skeletal frame.  
The last wish of Swetha was  
that the skeletal remains of  
the tree  
Be used for her cremation  
pyre.

- Kamal Premadasa

# Anywhere it's the same

A lively world under the sea  
With shoals of fishes  
Gliding, swimming, twisting and turning.  
Over big rocks, through colourful corals  
That shine with the waters that eternally wash them.  
Sea weeds floating,  
Sea creatures searching or waving their fangs  
For possible prey as the waters flow.  
Tiny sprats, huge whales  
Oysters with precious pearls hidden in their bosoms.  
Creatures big, creatures small  
That live in peace and harmony.....?  
Oh, no. Not in peace and harmony  
As the smaller one is a prey to the bigger.  
Just like the world outside the waters  
Where the poor and powerless are  
A prey to the rich and the powerful.  
Away from the waters,  
Even on land, or in the air  
May be even on space  
It's the same everywhere.

- Lalitha Somathilaka

Montage  
Poetry

