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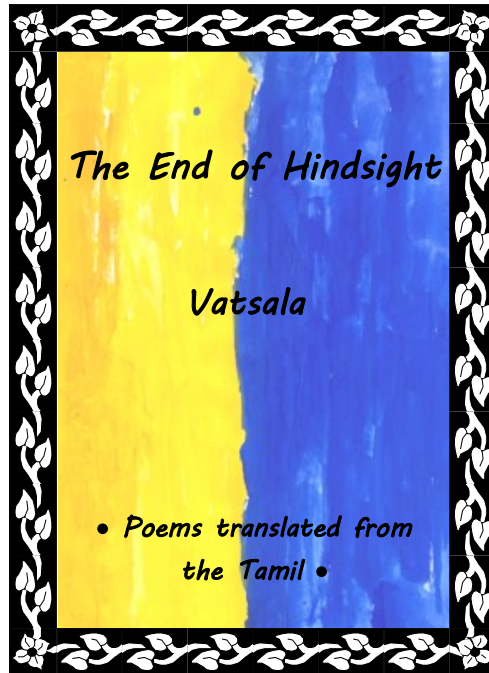
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Cover artwork by K. Ananya

Origami Poetry Project™

*The End of Hindsight*  
by Vatsala © 2012

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



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

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

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

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

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

But wait!  
Let me look further...  
to the day  
you climbed a tree, clad in your sensible trousers,  
and surveyed the world,  
even as I tripped on my long skirt and fell  
and forgot for life the climbing of trees?  
I lost to you  
that day,  
did I not?  
  
Forgive me my confusions.  
I see it clearly now...  
A ball and a toy gun for you.  
For me, a baby doll and a couple of sparklers.  
It was then, was it not,  
that I lost to you?

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

Rope (Kayaru)

I detest ropes.

All of them —

the village wells  
and Chittappa's cot

that ties his cases.

The chain around  
my wife's neck

is of a different kind.

Chitti's too —  
she is scared of me.

So is Appa,  
who wonders about Amma's last words.

All she said was:

"A chitti will arrive.  
Be a good boy

and grow up soon.  
Sorry, kanna,

I have to go."

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

Glossary:

Cott: fiber of the husk of the coconut, used

in making rope, matting, etc.  
Chitti: Maternal aunt,

used here denotes stepmother  
Chittappa: Maternal uncle

Appa: Father  
Amma: Mother

Kanna: darling

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I detest ropes.

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

She kicked the chair,

kicking my ball.

I nodded,

Silences (Mounngall)

The little girl looks on

as her brother and father

eat their fill.

Hers is the silence of wanting.

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

before he can hit her.

Her silence is angry.

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(translated by K. Srilata)

to cause the universe to tremble.  
loud enough

burst into sound

These silences will come together,

Someday