



Mamta Sagar

MAMTA SAGAR was born in 1966 in Bangalore, India. She studied Journalism and Literature and taught Kannada language/literature to graduate students and Indian Literature, Women Writing in India, Gender Studies, Dalit Literature, Literature of the Marginal and Comparative Literature Theory for the postgraduate students and the foreign students attending Study India Programmes at the University of Hyderabad. Sagar has a doctorate in Comparative Literature also from the University of Hyderabad. Her doctoral thesis is titled *Gender, Patriarchy and Resistance: Contemporary Women's Poetry in Kannada and Hindi* (1980-2000). Her book *Nationalism, the Notion of Freedom and Contemporary Women's Poetry*, based on her lectures delivered in a special lecture series at Bangalore University, will be published shortly.

She writes her poetry in the Kannada language and her publications include *Kaada Navilina Hejje (Foot Steps of the Wild Peacock)*, 1992, and *Nadiya Neerina Teva (Dampness of the River)*, 1999. Her poems have also been published in numerous international anthologies, such as *Moving Worlds, A Journal of Transcultural Writings*, published by the University of Leeds. Mamta Sagar's poetry is delicate and rhythmic, captivating much of her own struggle with meaning and the essence of being. Her references are profoundly personal, sometimes poignant, yet demonstrate an astute questioning of much of what is taken for granted.

She has worked for voluntary organisations involved with women-oriented issues and the eradication of child labour. As a journalist she has worked with some of the important national newspapers including *The Hindu*, *Business Line* and *Indian Express*. Sagar has also worked as an Art and Theatre critic and has written catalogues for artists' exhibitions and articles on contemporary Indian art and theatre. She is also an accomplished playwright with a number of productions to her credit. Her play *The Swing of Desire* was included in the anthology *Staging Resistance: Plays by Women in Translation*, published by Oxford University Press in 2004.

Claustrophobic

A Square –

the kitchen, the hall, the bed-room
—a neat square.

The mattress, the cot, the bed-sheet
—a perfect square.

The book, the table, the chair
...the thought-stream;
everything is within
this square-barrier.

The door, the roof, the wall,
white tiles laid on the floor,
finally,
the fragment of sky
the ventilator admits in
—have all corners four.

The roundness of the Earth stands suspect.

If the words jump out,
if they cross the page, if
they escape the meaning-barrier,
then, varying limits
for the soundless forms.

Here, sense of space
changes to its converse
—space spreads endlessly...

(so much of space
lies within S P A C E)