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Translated by Tejaswini Niranjana

MIRUGUVA GORIGALU

(Glittering Tombs)

Who waits until they're born?
Sacks of dreams atop a fetus
Fetuses atop the sacks of dreams---
do you raise an eyebrow?

They waited
for the infant to emerge.
The baby, not seeing the tomb,
breathed deeply
for those who had faith.
Then shrieked and cried
to shatter their faith.

The mother-in-law put
into her lap this woman
born for her son.
Unable to make her cry
the infant gurgles
blinks its eyes.

As warm dumplings
slid down the throat
Mother's promises
stuck
and began to pound.
The mouth opened
but said nothing.

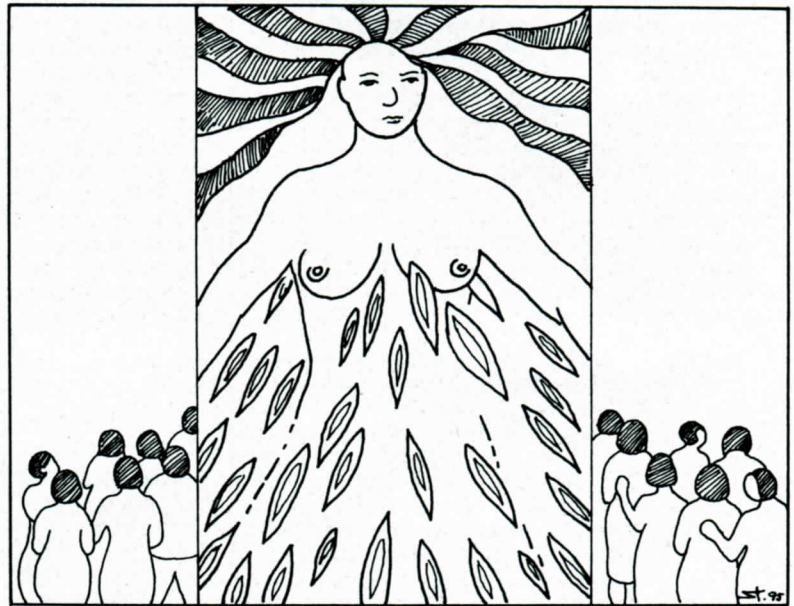
Year after year
a new dress for the New Year
a purse for the arm
a rose for the hair
so it ran ... without stopping.
Around ten in the morning
people began to throng the streets.

Father in the easy chair
passing his hand over his head
made a vow about family honor
tried to believe.
It wept
two days
in a darkened room.

A thread that cuts
through the friends'
bunch of dreams.
Their life buried in this one
simmering in the woes they embraced
the word-corpse slept.

In front of this nearly-old
woman
who sits splitting
the eyelashes of those
forty bygone springs,
the glittering tomb winks.

SANDRA TORRIJOS



Farida Begum

(Mrs. Farida)

*People have not seen Farida
without her purdah.*

*Day, night, college, factory
the street, elsewhere, nowhere
have people seen Farida
without her purdah.*

*Farida's mother
roams the streets in a cotton sari.
The mother's mother wore
an unwearable piece of cloth---
this everybody knows.*

*Perhaps you can get
a glimpse of Farida's eyes
through the lace in front.*

*If it flaps a little in the breeze
she sweats and feels faint
as though it had fallen.*

*The little groups outside hotels and shops
simper as they dream of the fair beauty
behind the black curtain.*

*Laughing inside the veil
she turns
into another alley.*