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## Amba

A.P.Govindankutty

*An arrow overturned  
The earthen lamp set afloat on the Ganga.*

The full moon had spread its light  
Keeping darkness at bay  
In the forest around her Ashram,  
When Lord Shiva appeared  
And asked her what boon she wanted.  
She told him her story:  
Lord, we were three daughters  
To the King of Kasi, myself Amba,  
Ambika and Ambalika,  
Like three roses on a single stem,  
We lived in the palace  
On the bank of Ganga,  
Swaying in her breeze,  
Breathing freedom  
And doting love of our father.

\*\*\*

“On the assembly of Kings and princes  
For us to choose our consorts from, Descended the mighty Kaurava, Bhishma,  
Forcing the assembled to look aghast,  
For he was under a vow not to wed in his life.  
Bhishma seized all the three of us  
And rode away with us in his chariot.

\*\*\*

In his capital, Hastinapura,  
When learnt we were to wed his half brother,  
The reigning pince Vichithravirya,  
To Bhishma I disclosed I couldn't do it  
For I had wedded in my mind  
Salwa, the prince of Saubha.

Let off by Bhishma, I went to Salwa,  
He refused to take me  
Having himself seen Bhishma  
Holding my hand to lift me to the chariot.

With no tears to shed,  
It is then I began the penance,  
All I want is to kill Bhishma  
Not for trampling upon just my life,  
But of my sisters too,  
Wedded to an impotent prince,  
Forced to accept seed from a dark, unsightly sage.”

The Lord thought for a while, and said:  
In your next birth  
As progeny to King Drupada,  
You will kill Bhishma in war.  
\*\*\*

Amba then immolated herself  
And was born as Shikhandin,  
A transgender, brought up as man,  
Trained in arms, stood in the forefront  
To fight Bhishma,  
On the tenth day of the great war.

Bhishma laid down his arms  
Refusing to fight a transgender,  
And fell to the arrows of Shkhandin.

**About the author:**

A.P.Govindankutty, b.1942, in Palakad Dist of Kerala State,writes both in Malayalam and English. He has brought out two collectios of his poems in English, **When it rained nectar**(2016) and **Estuary**(2018).Acollection of his poems in Malayalam **Aathmadhwanikal** and a collection of poems translated from English **Sookshmadhwanikal** are in the press.