

# THE UNGRAMMATICAL POEM

## 1

**R**amanathan dabbled in poetry.

He was a typist earning one hundred and fifty rupees in a small company that boasted no connection whatsoever to literary matters. The fact that poetry was his hobby and that his poems were serially published in a literary magazine was enough to endear him to his friends at work and other tenants in his lodge. Other than their admiration, his hobby brought him no reward or privilege. But Ramanathan never did anything for reward or privilege. His friends recognized that he was well read, that he read even more to broaden his horizons and that he wrote poetry; but they also nursed jealousy and some resentment because of his youthful indiscretions.

Ramanathan is thirty-five years old. His parents living out of the town often visited him and begged

him to get married and settle down in life. But Ramanathan has stubbornly refused to accede to their request.

As far as his parents were concerned they were sad their son has chosen a life of celibacy. However, among his friends, Ramanathan was a target of rumor and wild gossip – that he was always busy chasing women!

Recently, he was reckless enough to bring a woman to the lodge – after a late-night encounter with her in a movie house. Early in the morning, around five, Krishna Iyer, one of the tenants practicing yoga on the roof terrace, noticed a woman leaving Ramanathan's room. He immediately stopped his workout, sought other tenants awake at the time and explained what was going on. Like a perfume laced with alcohol, the news spread all over the lodge.

That evening when Ramanathan returned to his lodge from work a few tenants followed him into his room. He was the only tenant who happened to be the single occupant of his room, had a radio and a good

collection of books. Other tenants often came to his room to listen to his radio or borrow books. But when Ramanathan saw five tenants enter his room – all at once - he turned around to see what was going on and noticed several other tenants gathering on the veranda. As the visitors began to make inquiries about ‘that woman’, each one took Ramanathan to task in his own fashion, and what followed was close to a riot. However, Ramanathan remained calm and unperturbed. After changing – silently - he sat on a chair and - with the woman still fresh in his memory he went on talking about her: that she hailed from north India and was visiting the city with her family members and staying in the nearby visitors’ bungalow. He added he met her in the local movie theatre and described how he had to work really very hard to convince her to accompany him to the lodge. He revealed he gave the woman fifty rupees and finally concluded with a brief description of her beauty and looks.

His attitude stunned the tenants who had hoped Ramanathan, once caught red handed, would admit