

# HOPSCOTCH

This is no game of chess  
but hopscotch in the narrow lane  
behind the house.

The whole body of two legs  
Throws a flat piece of stone  
from house to house and limps after it

Chasing. Reaching the other shore,  
it rests for a moment on both feet  
and turns suddenly to return to the base

on one foot. A kind of growing up and homecoming  
for girls, boys play it too  
before their manhood hardens.

Surprised to find the same  
alley game in Africa and Germany,  
I know that hopscotch is the game

for all bodies, black, and white and yellow  
unless a bomb or polio  
has maimed them for life.

Africa next door, Germany in the house  
in front and the universe unfolding  
in a handful of earth eaten as a child...

I stand confused.

**A.K. Ramanujan**

Translated from the Kannada  
by Ramachandra Sharma