

MY FARM LASS

(Telugu title: Kaapu Pilla)

Original by: Kondreddy Venkateswara Reddy

Translated by: U Atreya Sarma

(Kondreddy Venkateswara Reddy recited this poem at Sahitya Akademi meet 'Abhivyakti' at Dibrugarh on Sep 5, 2015)

Her hair is shaggy
Like a deserted kite's nest...
Her ripped coarse sari
Is like a leaf chewed by a grasshopper
She is dark like a black lily
And tall like a palm tree.
Yet, with beautiful body parts
And slender like the tender stem of a corn plant
Sparkle does this bonny lass!

Turning her sweat drops into grains of rice
And the whispers of her heart into an otto of roses
She ripens not only my crops but also my life.
Tuning and singing the lyrics of labouring life
And shining like a halo in the welkin of my future dreams,
A blessed garland is this lass!

Rising with the dawn
And dabbing the morning star on her forehead

She wakes me up with the music of her churning rod
And completes the chores and cooking in no time.
Be it the sowing of the seeds
Or the harvesting of the crop,
Readily standing in the forefront, like a lioness
That hunts with focus undivided, is this handy lass!

The drought may afflict the village like a sore
The runnel may burst into a flood and swamp
The crop may be ruined with no morsel to fill the belly
Or the debts may turn into hot coals and burn.
Come what may...
She grins and bears the hard knocks, holding back the tears
And stuffing down the distress within, like a withered potherb,
Without coming into the open and crying out,
Without watering down her composure.
How cool and confident is this lass!

Though a farmer's life is a strainer of sweat
Though the current modernity by rearing its ugly head
Has twisted the villages into puppets, and pulls strings;
This girl, as if she has learnt generations of peasant-struggles,
Shoulders day and night a burden that wouldn't lighten a bit.
Grinding away at her muscles along with the oxen in yoke
And like a fingerling in the sea of that sweat,
Swim does this nimble lass!

Unmindful of the taunts by the easy-moneyed looters

That the farmers are a bunch of clumsy louts;
She takes a long hot bath, head to toe,
Dresses up in a sari with a border of castles,
And a blouse with a selvage thin and printed,
Dabs a beauty dot on the forehead,
And lines the eyes with collyrium –
All decked out for a feast, fair or festival
Gambolling about in fun and frolic.
Into a fit of jealousy 'Beauty' herself shrinks
Seeing the lively smile and unrivalled grace of this lass!

Believing that every child of the soil is her own
Regardless of caste and creed,
She calls endearingly and treats with warmth
The toiling peasants and the sharecroppers
Like her intimate kith and kin.
Like a fruit from a previous birth,
She has descended as a farmer's mate
To hand down a legacy of blessings to the generation next
As an heir to the spirit of 'One world, one family'!
Simply my angel! A rare angel of the farming clan is this lass!

Bio

Kondreddy Venkateswara Reddy

Kondreddy Venkateswara Reddy from Kanigiri (Prakasam Dist, AP) is a prominent Telugu poet & critic with 13 books to his credit – six collections of poetry, two collections of *Naanees* (a modern short poetic genre invented by Prof N Gopi), two long poetic compositions, one work of literary reviews, and two books of Literary criticism (Essays). While an M Phil in University of Madras was done on his *Dukki Choopu* (a long poetic composition); an MPhil on his *Vilakshana Netram* (a long poetic work in Ataveladi meter) and a PhD on his overall oeuvre were done in Nagarjuna University. He has received 11 awards from different organisations. They include the ATA award (2008) and the PS Telugu University Keerti Puraskaram (2013) for literary criticism. He is also a columnist with *Neti Nijam* daily for introducing poets, and *Visalakshi* monthly from Nellore for literary discourse. He read his poetry at Sahitya Akademi meet ‘Abhivyakti’ at Dibrugarh on Sep 5, 2015.

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U Atreya Sarma (Translator)

Interested in literature, U Atreya Sarma is into writing poetry, freelance editing, book-reviewing and translating. His output – about 250 poems and 400 writings (articles, editorials, reviews, forewords, translations) mostly in English and a sprinkling in Telugu – has appeared in various print/online media and anthologies. A freelance editor with 18 years of experience, he is presently the Editor (Fiction, Reviews, News & Events, and Telugu Literature) of the e-journal *Muse India* (www.museindia.com). Earlier he was the editor of *Bharatiya Pragna* (a socio-political monthly) and *Cyberhood* (a neighbourhood weekly). He has also brought out Telugu literary features in three issues of *Muse India*.

He composed in English the profiles of 132 modern Telugu Stalwarts for the bilingual book *Marapuraani Maanikyaalu* (2010) (with wordy & pictorial sketches in Telugu by BNIM, a noted writer & artist).

Atreya Sarma's first collection of poems *Sunny Rain-n-Snow* is in the final stages with the publisher. He has edited three books: *Lung Care and Long Life* (2012) by Dr Shyam Sunder Raj, and *Memoirs & Musings of an IAS Officer* (2013) by KV Natarajan, IAS (Retd); *Turquoise Tulips* (A collection of short stories) by the USA-based Dr Ashok Patwari (2015); the fourth one – a revised fictional autobiography by Gian Singh Shatir (a Sahitya Akademi Awardee, Urdu) is almost complete.

Sarma's translation of 16 Telugu short stories by a senior and prominent writer Dr Mallemala Venugopala Reddy under the title *Salt of the Earth* (2013) has been acclaimed by reviewers. As a panellist, he has also translated into English 161 (out of 999) pages of Jnan Pith awardee Viswanatha Satyanarayana's Telugu mega novel *Veyipadagalu*, whose ceremonial copies were released in 2015 and are now awaiting final print.

Atreya Sarma features and encourages poets from across the country through his weekly column 'Wordsmith' in *The Hans India*, a Hyderabad based English daily circulated in AP & Telangana states. He is also an official critic with Metverse Muse, an international print journal of metrical poetry published from Visakhapatnam.

Atreya Sarma holds an MA (English Litt) and a PG Dip (Mass Communications & Translation Techniques), backed by a basic degree each in sciences and arts, and a banking qualification with mid-level managerial experience in SBI. He Lives between Hyderabad and Pune.

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