

## **Jasmine Blooms In The Backyard-The Need To Translate Kannada Poet**

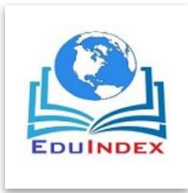
### **K.S. Narasimhaswamy's Poetry**

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**ABSTRACT-** In the present context of globalization, with people dispersed in different parts of the world, many may not always enjoy the facility of the acquaintance with regional Indian language Kannada to appreciate such a versatile poet as K.S. Narasimhaswamy. Some though nurture genuine interest in poetry both in their familiar original and translated forms. These passionate lovers of poetry are inquisitive to be acquainted with the poets in other Indian and foreign languages. Given the bilingual facility if not blemishless expertise that some enjoy, translating these poems into English or any other language becomes an irrepressible urge. It is a literary challenge facing which is ever inviting and tantalizing though one is simultaneously aware of the possible imperfections in translations. Popularly known as the 'Jasmine Poet' of Kannada literature for his acclaimed first collection 'Mysura Mallige' (The Jasmine of Mysore), K.S. Narasimhaswamy's later poems predominantly woven around the theme of love, life and death have jasmine as its motif.

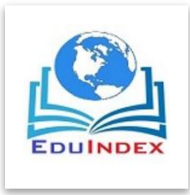
**KEYWORDS-** Translation, bilingualism, *Navodaya* (Romantic/New Kannada Literary Movement), *Navya* (Modern Kannada Literary Movement), *Navyottara* (Post Modern Kannada Literary Movement)

**INTRODUCTION-** In the summer of 1928, a high school boy studying in Mysore was given a collection of the Scottish poet Robert Burns' poems. Neither the giver, nor the receiver, then perceived how this ordinary gesture would have extraordinary consequences on the young boy, his life and Kannada poetry. Going through them, he felt a strong urge to write in the same vein, and wrote the first of his five hundred and odd poems. His untitled and untraceable first poem was written in English.



Thus began the poetic journey of *Kikkeri Subbarao Narasimhaswamy (1915-2003)*, acclaimed as K.S.N (K.S.Na in colloquial Kannada) and adored as the *Jasmine Poet* of Kannada literature. K.S.Na was born to *Subbarao* and *Hosaholalu Nagamma*, in a remote village at *Kikkeri, Mandya district, Karnataka*. For some years the couple lived in their ancestral house with their two sons. Early in his childhood, K.S.Na's parents migrated to *Mysore*, where his father started work as a clerk at a shop. He wanted his son to learn violin like him, a passion which brought acclaimed musicians like *Bidaram Krishnappa* and *Vasudevacharya* to their humble house at Halladakeri area. How could he notice that the young boy's mind was playing poetic tunes? Folk songs sung by villagers, the staccato sounds of the weaver's loom, the rhythmic beats at the nearby goldsmith's shop, melodies of nature, the sights and sounds of simple folks brimming with extraordinary zest for life engulfed the budding poet's exuberant mind. K.S.Na's entry into the world of poetry was like the proverbial right man at the right place at the right time, a fact acknowledged by the poet himself, '*My initial poems were an outburst of emotions which I felt like sharing and expressing in the language understood by everyone. I began writing poetry at the spectacular dawn of New Kannada Literary Movement. Many gifted writers had at once filled the different genres of literature with their spirited works. Then, somewhere on some branch even my voice was heard. That era, with its novelty, has subconsciously influenced my poetry.*' (Narahalli Balasubramanya, Ihada Parimalada Haadi, p.14)

Belonging to the literary phase in Kannada called '*Navodaya*' (*New Kannada Literary Movement*), he is one of the major poets of this phase. His contemporaries of the time had drawn inspiration from the romantic poetry in English, but his poetry is not akin to English romantic poetry. In its myriad range of imagery, it is rich in the local flavour of culture and ethnicity, and strongly rooted in the local language. K.S.Na has equally established his distinctness from his contemporary poets though they are together called the *Navodaya* poets. A prolific writer, he has more than five hundred poems on a wide array of subjects written during a long span of life. His poems do not belong to any cult or do not curtail themselves by loyalty to any one form of poetry. He is unique among poets in Kannada because he has a creditable number of poems in each of these literary phases and has evolved as a poet through each of his poems which have grown from one literary phase to another feeling free to change their subject, style and response to the various facets of life. K.S.Na is also an experimenter with his handling of language and the



subjects chosen for his poems. Though he began with love poems and his early popularity was both an advantage and a disadvantage in making him the most popular of Kannada love poets on the one hand and dissuading the readers unless they were very cautious and sensitive, from giving his other poems their due appreciation. Calling him a love poet and engrossed in his extraordinarily elegant early love poems, readers, except a few conscious critics, turned a blind eye to his maturity, evolution and use of language:

*All over Naviluru you're the prettiest  
Hence our wedding the very day next.  
Fair you are, slim and sprightly,  
Fit as the hunter's bow.  
Your dark eye brow grown thickly  
Shelters the eyes of dove.*

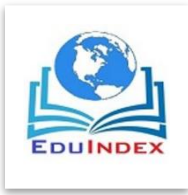
*All over Naviluru ... (To a Village Belle, Bride Comes Home, p.29)*

Appreciating the beauty of life in his early poems he moves on to delve deeper into the more profound meanings of life. Thus his concerns change. The venue of the events in his poems transfers from the simple and straightforward country to the complex urban life. With this essential difference his words change, the imagery he uses turn complex and multifaceted and the poems gain rich potential for interpretation. This is a characteristic feature not commonly seen among the other poets of Kannada. Thus his poems become more profound drawing a sensitive reader into their inexhaustible and fascinating depths:

*The blue sky doesn't discriminate,  
Everyone is born of the same earth,  
Everyone heads towards the same,  
Joy or sorrow, let whatever befall*

*May the poem wish well for all. (May the Poem Wish Well for All, Bride Comes Home, p.177)*

His evolution as a poet does not cease there. Instead it moves on to explore still more profound meaning of life with a sense of equilibrium and quietude possible only for a mature poet who retains his sensibility and alertness to the changing shades of life in new perspectives. In this



phase K.S.Na can be seen speaking about life with a philosophical calmness. An attractive aspect here is that all this happens without losing his essential 'sensitivity for love' but with it becoming 'love of life'. His love of life is augmented by his awareness of death:

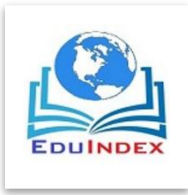
*Life is a path of light and shadows;  
Like a stealthy cat, death  
Is waiting in ambush; who knows  
Whose path ends where! It can't be said  
Tomorrow will be like today,  
Here wealth is transient,  
One cannot attain all again;-  
So, I invite you this moment-  
Call you mine  
Adorn you with flower and smile,  
Embrace and kiss. –*

*Come dear Sharade,*

*Come, without looking here and there!* (Come, Dear Sharade, Bride Comes Home, p.31)

K.S.Na uses colloquial *Kannada*, leaving one to wonder at the profoundness achieved in such simplicity without rendering it light or shallow. An interesting fact is that the roots of his poetry branching out, blossoming and bearing fruit are evident even in his early poems which are only apparently naïve. This could be achieved because of his quintessential concentration on creation of poetry but for very occasional prose pieces.

This was the context I along with renowned multi-lingual scholar Dr. M.C. Prakash translated fifty select marital poems of K.S.Na which was released as a collection titled *Bride Comes Home* in 2015. They included some of his most popular poems, popular for their lucidity, tender-delicate sentiments and familiarity of the circumstances in any common man's life. The poems were so popular for about five to six decades that they were sung in cultural functions and they were on the tip of the tongues of thousands. Their lay the difficulty of translating them- the anxiety whether all the elegance and subtle beauty could be brought into the translations. The temptation, nevertheless, was too hard to resist. Choosing a variety of representative poems of



K.S.Na, *Bride Comes Home* included fifty love poems. It was received with much appreciation and constructive suggestions one of which was to translate some other complex poems of K.S.Na at a later phase. This was realised in the next translation *Song Of Life*- focusing on his poems written predominantly on the theme of death. Most of these were lengthy comprising complex imagery, they were equally challenging. Hoping, that these translations will inspire others to unearth their local literature and introduce them to the global world through translation.

**CONCLUSION-** Every translator is unique and different from others depending on individual translator's understanding and presentation in other language. A semi-literary and liberty oriented translation have been followed so that these poems could be presented in a way as closest as possible to the original. Readers would be those who know English and are interested in poetry specially of other languages which may include even foreign readers. It may also include those who read, write and speak Kannada and have academic interest. Kannada speaking people who are settled abroad and may not read Kannada in original may be curious to read. It may also be a useful source material for Kannada language and translation departments. Love, life and death being major concerns of K.S.Na's poetry, poems on these themes have been mainly chosen realizing their universal relevance. There is a famous proverb in Kannada- the backyard plant may not be your medicine; indicating the common negligence towards what is found within one's proximity. The effort of this translator is an attempt to dispel that age old proverb by proving that translations of this 'Kannada Jasmine Poet' blooming in one's regional milieu may indeed be a source of solace to those who read it in translation as it continues to be when read in original.

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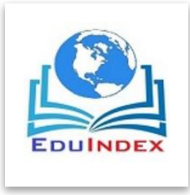
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