

**TRANSLATING LIFE AND ADMINISTRATION INTO POETRY:  
ENUGU NARSIMHA REDDY'S *A BEND IN THE CORNER***

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**ABSTRACT**

Enugu Narsimha Reddy, a Telugu poet has a passion for poetry. *A Bend in the Corner* is the English translation of his *Moola Malupu*. His poems have a variety of themes which cover from contemporary scenario to relationship with land and people via realistic and philosophical reflections. While translating life and administration into poetry, he becomes conscious not only of varied thematic threads of life but also of the poetic colours of craftsmanship. His poetic craftsmanship is seen when he makes a good use of irony and sarcasm not to hurt but to make the reader feel the situation. Certainly he has become a sharing and caring poet by virtue of his sense of imaginative sensibility and the capacity of minute observation of happenings in life.

**Keywords:** Translation, Lived experiences, Administration, Sarcasm, Irony

Though language is  
beyond one's grasp  
transmission of import  
is rendered by radiant world  
through Jargon!  
Globally  
Verse is a Universe,  
as it brushed against borderlines  
I too joined it happily! (*A Bend in the Corner* 46)

These lines are from *A Bend in the Corner*, translated by T. S. Chandra Mouli from the Telugu poetry collection *Moola Malupu* of Enugu Narsimha Reddy, who joins happily the universe of verse to share the lived experiences of life and administration.

Poetry is difficult to translate because its stylistic and linguistic patterns are replete with the spirit of culture. Before tracing life and its various dimensions in Enugu Narsimha Reddy's *A Bend in the Corner*, it is mandatory to have a cursory glance over the aspect of translation, particularly of poetry.

Translation is the mantra for uniting the people who differ in languages, religions and communities. Indian Poetry in translation has initiated a fresh avenue by providing the text in translation to the reader who is unknown to the source language. Translation from regional language into English not only makes a literary text available to the reader, but also puts it on the global pedestal. English translation of the text creates larger audience around the world transcending the walls of language and land. Dora Sales writes: “Translation can open up ways for us to get to know literary productions written in languages that unfortunately do not have wide opportunities for dissemination in this global world” (7).

While entering the text of the source language, a translator feels the very spirit and then comes out for sharing the felt experiences in the target language. He has to feel the spirit of the original author and listen to, in the words of Dilip Chitre, “the voice of another human, identifying it, empathizing with it and making it one’s own” (174). Sreedevi K. Nair discusses the difference between a poem and its translation. She writes:

A poet writes about a particular thing or experience because his deep perception of it has strongly moved him to give it a verbal expression. This, it is his own emotional, imaginative, or intellectual apprehension of facts and experiences that a poet tries to express. In the case of a translation, the cause for its genesis is the existing poem. This original work stimulates the translator so much that he experiences a deep affinity for the work which in turn prompts him to create a version of that experience in his own language. But he is not a person who merely collects the meaning contained in the original poem’s linguistic and textual structure or who merely interprets the text’s surface signs. Yet, the most frequent criticism against translation is that it lacks the spontaneity and power of the original work as the translator is trying to render the original poet’s views faithfully. It is true, that no man can think another man’s thoughts or feel another man’s feelings exactly and in totality, but this is not what is expected of a translator either. The basic qualification that a good translator should meet is that he should be able to peruse a literary work in such a way that he can make a sensible reading of it. (48).

If a translator himself is a poet, he gains upperhand as there is minimal loss in transaction. T.S. Chandra Mouli who is himself an Indian English poet has translated Enugu Narsimha Reddy’s Telugu poetry collection *Moola Malupu* into English as *A Bend in the Corner*. The poet Reddy appreciates Mouli saying: “I feel happy because my poetry inspired him to translate my book *Moola Malupu* into English. When I have gone through the English version of my poetry I am astonished to note that the translation carried the original fragrance intact” (5). Chitranjan Das in “Preface” writes: “When a poet undertakes the responsibility of translation the loss that poetry undergoes through translation is minimal” (9). The translator Mouli retains cultural specifics which make his translation authentic. He makes a good use of end notes to communicate the “the tone and context of the original” to the non-Telugu reader. He knows that translating images is the most difficult part, so he leaves some images and terms untranslated or unexplained for the reader in target language for making out from context or idea of the Telugu text. In “Translator’s Note”, he writes: “The translation of a poem should essentially constitute a poem in its own right” (14). He attempts his best to keep fidelity to the original expression and so he never tampers with the poetic structure. English translation is taken with a view to

translating “a foreign audience into a native one” (15) and this has resulted in ‘Hybridity.’ By translating *Moola Malupu* into English as *A Bend in the Corner*, he has showcased the poetry of Enugu Narsimha Reddy within the reach of every poetry lover across the globe.

Enugu Narsimha Reddy, a Telugu poet has a passion for poetry which, being “a safety valve” and “a great motivating force” in his life offers him “relief and recharges his batteries” (*A Bend in the Corner* 5). As he is a poet, he knows that “poetry favours ever / the poet only” and it is only the poet who “who stands for the people (*A Bend in the Corner* 36). For him “composing poetry is a tough job” and to compose on poesy is “tougher than versification” (*A Bend in the Corner* 35). While composing a poem, a poet puts life in every word so that they may turn into music.

there is an exercise in  
infusing life in  
arranging sentences into words  
words into syllables  
syllables into a symphony (*A Bend in the Corner* 44)

The poet suffers and experiences pain in life. When his grief reaches the height and becomes unbearable, his soul releases it on the sheet of paper. No one is interested in others’ sufferings until or unless it seems to be his own. Hence, he searches for the fresh symbols that reveal his heart’s cries so profusely that the reader makes an association with him.

With new symbols one kneels down  
before the world that humiliates unabashedly!  
One cultivates the tumult of grief  
that echoes all around, as poetry. (*A Bend in the Corner* 37)

Poetry is an art like sculpting and painting. It needs to be sculpted with the fusion of feelings and thoughts so that it may become memorable. The poet reveals it when he writes:

poetry has to be sculpted  
that lasts through ages  
word orders have to be cast  
that are memorable lifelong! (*A Bend in the Corner* 44)

The poet learns “ethics of double speech” (*A Bend in the Corner* 82) through sarcasm and irony, which though are not knives, become “sharp knives” and “land menacingly on people” (*A Bend in the Corner* 82) for awakening their conscience. He explores the world and its mysteries to bring them before the world. What he learns from pain and suffering in the society is shared through poems. He writes and shows the image of the world in his poetic mirror but himself remains unknown like a wet peacock. What he writes is good or not is decided by time in future.

exploring mysteries of creation  
wet with a dip in societal sea  
stands there like a young peacock

that knows not how to dry itself.  
Showing the world  
in its own mirror  
turns it into a puppet on sheets  
allowing time to dry it. (*A Bend in the Corner* 35-36)

Enugu Narsimha Reddy who is an administrator knows well how to administer poetry. He administers life and reflects it in his poems. His poems have a variety of themes which cover from contemporary scenario to relationship with land and people via realistic and philosophical reflections.

The poet loves village life so profusely that even when he talks of the city life, he uses such words as emanate the fragrance of village life. While celebrating June 2 because of the official formation of the state Telangana, he feels that “rural life sings elegantly” and “City salutes Nature / bowing with modesty” (*A Bend in the Corner* 75). He compares the old bygone days with the present days and wishes to be lost in the golden old days. He recalls the days of sailing the paper boats, remembers “the times of frolic, fun” (*A Bend in the Corner* 87), and visualizes all men who “look alike” as “rural scenario is identical” (*A Bend in the Corner* 87). He makes a satire on the city life which has tagged even water with stickers. The city life values everything in terms of money while in the village life, the yardstick to value a thing is affection. Coins make city life move while affection binds the people in the village. How beautifully the poet satirizes the city life which gives value to coins and recommends the village life for affection!

Like affection of people then  
in lakes and wells with steps to descend  
water was available to all forms of life.  
Water carried no stickers then.  
Village is tap-root  
it sustains not on a few coins  
but on affection that binds. (*A Bend in the Corner* 87)

The poet talks of “gentle breeze of friendship” and “fluttering ripples of leaves” (*A Bend in the Corner* 72) and observes moon “who clicked selfie in canal” (*A Bend in the Corner* 88). He feels that “Just as flowers carry fragrance / soil too carries certain memories” (*A Bend in the Corner* 94). The poet experiences life in villages and the cities and comes to the conclusion that he cannot remain disconnected to his roots. His love for village life can be observed when he frankly admits: “I would have anchored / ship of life on the shore of village” (*A Bend in the Corner* 88).

Relationship is the brick that strengthens the foundation of the poetry of Enugu Narsimha Reddy who talks of family. For him, it is father who not only “spreads shade of affection on us / like a massive Banyan tree” (*A Bend in the Corner* 45) but also “stands by us / to march ahead” (*A Bend in the Corner* 45) in times of adverse circumstances. When he sees a child sleeping, he calls his sleep as “unpractised yoga” (*A Bend in the Corner* 30). He observes the child, calls him

Ekalavya who has “mastered at birth itself” and presents his case of unusual smile saying: “He smiles / unable to tell he is smiling / he smiles again” (*A Bend in the Corner* 30).

Administration which has been the poet’s profession is now translated into passion in his poems which speak of his lived experiences as administrator. The path of administration does not run smooth as it is full of thorns. Here one finds the huge boulders which crush the man and his spirit to the point of frustration. Very honestly the poet shares his experiences of this path thus:

I walk along the path  
there are thorns  
not flowers,  
pelting stones too,  
huge boulders as well  
that crush under their weight. (*A Bend in the Corner* 98)

To be in administration seems to be very lucrative task but it is very difficult to administer. The path looks to be attractive but the bend is present in the corner from where everyone is ready to discourage and pull the leg to make one fall flat on the ground. Here people speak honeyed words to mock and not to make relations. Nothing is clear because of the bend in the corner. How meaningfully and candidly, the poet states:

honeyed words are scattered nicely.  
hoping to jeer  
when one tumbles  
search for mistakes  
in tasks not taken up.  
This is a bend in the corner— (*A Bend in the Corner* 118)

An administrator remains helpless as “no close relative advises” when he passes through the dilemma “whether to sign or not” (*A Bend in the Corner* 78). He makes up his mind “to face an inevitable battle” but someone “pulls the bridle” (*A Bend in the Corner* 78) before mounting the horse. Hence his advice is to be very cautious of the people who pull the leg while speaking sweet words. As an administrator, he asks to go through each and every word of the scripts carefully. Then he will be able to wipe out the treacheries.

beware dear!  
Smartly one should  
scan all scripts.  
With maturity  
terminate treacheries! (*A Bend in the Corner* 118)

The stamp of administration is on the very spirit of the poet in Reddy who expresses the lived experiences in the poetic manner. An administrator needs a talent, touched with patience and smart work culture. His office zone is an area where “a cyclone without warning / always keeps crossing the coast” (*A Bend in the Corner* 78). Some of the activities like following

collector's order, listening to what minster says and facing the pressure groups create administrative scene. Mark the excerpt for the poet's use of words related to administration:

Minster's authority veiled in smile  
dictates job to be done with apt voice,  
collector's order that needs no gentleness  
upsets with SMS message,  
pressure groups release notices  
through self-declared power of thunders,  
like a stone of hail joining heavy rain. (*A Bend in the Corner* 78)

Being an administrator, the poet in Reddy is well aware of the present scenario which is dotted with corruption, injustice, court cases, quarrels, domestic violence etc.

The poet's heart weeps when he sees the present day condition. None offers the solution of the queries that spring in hearts. "Swelling in eyes" due to injustice never moves anyone. He becomes so emotional that he asks: "Is there a day when soil is not bruised?" (*A Bend in the Corner* 92). Black tar has swallowed the greenery and vegetation. It is surprising that a battle which begins somewhere spreads in the country in no time. Corruption is so deeply rooted everywhere that even educational institutions are in its grip. All branches are mixed with the weeds of corruption.

All branches blended  
with weeds well  
offices  
educational institutions  
are mixed well  
like water in milk. (*A Bend in the Corner* 118)

The poet feels sad when he sees that weeds have surrounded every walk of life. He makes a sketch of the contemporary landscape with his poetic brush thus:

Present day weeds  
appear in diverse forms,  
surround as print media,  
while praising movement here  
create invisible obstacles,  
to decimate sons of soil  
lurk like jackals,  
to lead astray pester as monkeys,  
turning roguish winds  
damage fence of the field  
attempt to hurl sparks of fire (*A Bend in the Corner* 117)

Despite all these things in life, every man should have to sustain his journey in life. Life is in facing the adverse circumstances. The path seems to be straight and smooth but this is

deceptive. As soon as a man begins his journey, he sees a “bend in corner” and “path invisible” (*A Bend in the Corner* 114). Victory lies in spanning of this bend without considering “status of path.” It matters little if he fails to study the *Gita*. What he needs is “self-analysis” which can lead his “life towards mellowness / fairly as a fruit (*A Bend in the Corner* 28). The poet does not believe in finding faults and holding others responsible for the darkness. He believes in placing “lamp in the niche in wall” before “dusk gets denser” (*A Bend in the Corner* 50). He religiously follows time punctuality. He believes that “one needs to be punctual” (*A Bend in the Corner* 57) whether “one arrives by bus / or on a bicycle / or hiding in a car (*A Bend in the Corner* 57). For him, “a bookless dwelling is a desert” (*A Bend in the Corner* 60), “a day without reading book / is nothing but a stunted day” (*A Bend in the Corner* 60) and “a day bereft of scripting a word / colossal catastrophe” (*A Bend in the Corner* 60). He asks to be cautious and not to trust those people who are too clever. “Practice what one preaches” (*A Bend in the Corner* 58) is the mantra that he follows. He himself follows what he shares in his poems.

More or less, every poet is a philosopher. He observes the things minutely and reflects over them to come to any conclusion. He wonders “how a work is assessed / how labour is rewarded” (*A Bend in the Corner* 100) in this material world. He believes in the *prarabdhi* and the theory of karma. A man gets the results of his karmas which he has performed in his previous life. Future depends on man’s past karmas, the result of which he will have to realize. Mark the excerpt which clearly reflects the poet’s belief in *prarabdhi* which remain unknown to man:

Your entire future is  
scripted earlier  
its film is already kept ready  
now undergoing buffer,  
so it remains invisible to you! (*A Bend in the Corner* 82)

The voice of Shakespeare’s Hamlet: “death / The undiscover’d country, from whose bourn / No traveller returns” (*Hamlet* 1145) echoes in Reddy when he muses over life after death thus:

Whoever has seen  
what lies beyond the wall  
never comes here—  
to teach  
facts of life after death! (*A Bend in the Corner* 72)

The tragedy of life, to use P. B. Shelley’s famous lines, is: “We look before and after / And pine for what is not” (117). No one knows what he wants to realize. His want remains unknown to him. He never cares to the things which he has acquired. The poet reflects over such a miserable state of life and wonders like a philosopher saying:

What one wants is unknown truly  
illusion impacts all to the extent  
what is acquired is not known  
whether desired one or not –  
is it the settled issue we all craved for (*A Bend in the Corner* 82)



The poet Enugu Narsimha Reddy believes that “life follows poetry” (*A Bend in the Corner* 88). While translating life and administration into poetry, he becomes conscious not only of varied thematic threads of life but also of the poetic colours of craftsmanship. Phrases like “water’s womb” (*A Bend in the Corner* 39), “realms of memories” (*A Bend in the Corner* 47), “a bullet of allegation” (*A Bend in the Corner* 50), “imprint of silence” (*A Bend in the Corner* 64), “curtains of illusion” (*A Bend in the Corner* 72) and “springs of tears” (*A Bend in the Corner* 112) strike the reader’s mind with their suggestive use. Remarkable lines like “what one knows / remains unknown to the other” (*A Bend in the Corner* 25), “Staying where we are / fail to place one another” (*A Bend in the Corner* 25) and “Here except human beings / everything appears crystal clear (*A Bend in the Corner* 25) directly appeal the head and the heart. The poet knows how to employ figures of speech to get the maximum result in the minimum words. For instance:

#### Simile

No time to recollect  
strewn wrecks of memories  
that slipped like axle of cartwheel (*A Bend in the Corner* 28)

#### Metaphor

Fear is a consummate conjuror  
it has no form at all (*A Bend in the Corner* 52)

#### Personification

City salutes Nature  
bowing with modesty (*A Bend in the Corner* 75),

Moon who clicked selfie in canal  
still downloads tantalising mementos. (*A Bend in the Corner* 88)

#### Alliteration

soft sheets of sentence (*A Bend in the Corner* 28)  
Roads all shed snake skin (*A Bend in the Corner* 25)  
he slides into stream of sleep (*A Bend in the Corner* 30)  
cubs camped currying favour. (*A Bend in the Corner* 115)

#### Fusion of Simile with Alliteration

like a shimmering stone  
I shine in scorching sun. (*A Bend in the Corner* 23)

#### Fusion of Metaphor with Alliteration

Weeds are chameleons  
expertly camouflage with crop’s colour. (*A Bend in the Corner* 117)

#### Fusion of Metaphor with Personification

Memento is a tinkling bell  
time lovingly jingles while looking back (*A Bend in the Corner* 43)



Reddy's poetic craftsmanship is seen when he makes a good use of irony and sarcasm not to hurt but to make the reader feel the situation. He uses administrative words and language like "revenue department" (54), "meeting in Collector's Office" (70) and "Tahsildar office / of uncertainties (78) in his poems. Some Telugu words like Putti, Gunugu, Jamabandi, Kudumu, Mangalabharathi, Nooru Varhaala Chettu, Mysamma are not translated for giving the Telugu cultural touches. Allusions (Lanka, Eklavya, Ganges, Godavari, Bhagirathas, Kakatiya, Viswakarma, Bhasmasura, Hanuman, Bhetal) and Telangana personalities (Joshua (Telegu poet), Mangalampalli (Telegu musician), Rajayya (Telegu artiste) and Sidhareddy (Chairman of Telangana Sahitya Akademi) appear here and there. Mouli, the translator of Enugu Narsimha Reddy's *Moola Malupu* as *A Bend in the Corner* in English has given notes on translated Telugu words like Putti (A large round basket used as a vessel to cross a stream or river) etc., to make the global reader understand about Telugu culture.

Enugu Narsimha Reddy succeeds in translating life and administration into his poems which speak of his lived experiences, gained with the passage of time. Certainly Reddy has become a sharing and caring poet by virtue of his sense of imaginative sensibility and the capacity of minute observation of happenings in life. His poetry is the poetry of life and administration. The question that often strikes the mind while making a tour of his poems is: Is Reddy's poetry the poetry of administration or the administration of poetry? His career as an administrator echoes in his poems which reflect the idiom of administration. But, as he is a human being who has lived life, his experiences of human life are expressed in all his poems which are pregnant with human relations, basic needs, human nature, adverse circumstances, human predicaments, rural versus city life, philosophical touches and, above all, suggestive pieces of advice for a meaningful life. Thus, Reddy succeeds in maintaining a balance between administrator and poet within him. T. S. Chandra Mouli in "Translator Note" calls Enugu Narsimha Reddy "a humanist" who "respects people, their culture, experiences and longs to forge lasting bonds with them... His simple, yet, effective expression lends a rare aura to his craftsmanship. Images he chooses are beautiful and multilayered. He employs local Telangana dialect occasionally to serve the purpose. Remarkable self-effacement makes him an adorable poet of eminence" (16).

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