

Classic Poetry Series

**U. R. Ananthamurthy**  
**- poems -**

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## U. R. Ananthamurthy(21 December 1932 -)

Udupi Rajagopalacharya Ananthamurthy is a contemporary writer and critic in the Kannada language and is considered as one of the pioneers of the Navya movement. He is well known among Indian authors. He is the sixth person among eight recipients of the Jnanpith Award for the Kannada language, the highest literary honor conferred in India. In 1998, he received the Padma Bhushan award from the Government of India. He was the Vice-Chancellor of Mahatma Gandhi University in Kerala during the late 1980s.

### <b>Early Life</b>

Ananthamurthy was born in Melige, in Tirthahalli taluk in the Shimoga District. His education started in a traditional Sanskrit school in Doorvasapura and continued in Tirthahalli and Mysore. After receiving a Master of Arts degree from the University of Mysore Ananthamurthy went to England for further studies on a Commonwealth Scholarship. He earned his doctorate from the University of Birmingham in 1966 for his dissertation thesis entitled "Politics and Fiction in the 1930s".

### <b>Career</b>

Ananthamurthy's career started as a professor and instructor in 1970 in English department of University of Mysore. He was the Vice-Chancellor in Mahatma Gandhi University in Kottayam, Kerala in 1987. Ananthamurthy served as the Chairman of National Book Trust India for the year 1992. In 1993 he was elected as the president of Sahitya Academy. Ananthamurthy served as a visiting professor in many renowned Indian and foreign universities including Jawaharlal Nehru University, Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, University of Iowa, Tufts University and Shivaji University. At present Ananthamurthy is serving as the second time chairman of the Film and Television Institute of India.

Ananthamurthy has participated and delivered lectures in numerous seminars as writer and orator both in and outside the country. He was the member of the committee of Indian writers and visited countries like the Soviet Union, Hungary, France and West Germany in 1990. He visited Moscow in 1989 as board member for a Soviet newspaper. Ananthamurthy was the leader for the committee of writers who visited China in 1993.

Ananthamurthy is well known for his famous interviews of notable Kannada writers for Mysore radio. He has interviewed personalities like K. Shivaram

Karant, Gopalakrishna Adiga, R.K. Narayan, R. K. Laxman and K. M. Cariappa.

## <b>Literary Works</b>

Ananthamurthy's works have been translated into several Indian and European languages and have been awarded with important literary prizes. His main works include Samskara, Bhava, Bharathi Pura, and Avasthe. He has written numerous short stories as well. Several of his novels and short fictions have been made into movies.

Most of Ananthamurthy's literary works deal with psychological aspects of people in different situations, times and circumstances. His writings supposedly analyze aspects ranging from challenges and changes faced by Brahmin families of Karnataka to bureaucrats dealing with politics influencing their work.

Most of his novels are on reaction of individuals to situations that are unusual and artificial. Results of influences of socio-political and economic changes on traditional Hindu societies of India and clashes due to such influences - between a father and a son, husband and wife, father and daughter and finally, the fine love that flows beneath all such clashes are portrayed by Ananthamurthy in his works. This is evident in his stories like Sooryana Kudure (The Grasshopper), Mowni (Silent Man), Karthika' etc. It does not mean that Ananthamurthy is just clinging to portraying only such somewhat standard subjects of Indian literature of his period. His novelette "Bara" (Drought) portrays the dynamics of a drought-stricken district of Karnataka and the challenges and dilemmas a bureaucrat may face in such situations.

The central figure of the novel Sooryana Kudure - Venkata is shunned by his son and wife for his easy-going attitude that does not take him anywhere. Venkata is a non-achiever who could not achieve any material or monetary success in his life. However, he is a simpleton that does not take life's suffering to his heart too much. He likes to see life as living in the love of Amma (or mother-goddess). In all sufferings of life, he has the child-like curiosity about the smallest things in life - like a grasshopper (Sooryana Kudure). The evening after his son revolts and leaves the house, he would be engrossed in a sight in his yard - a grasshopper shining in the sun's light.

## <b>Personal Life</b>

U. R. Ananthamurthy is married to Esther and has two children, Sharat and Anuradha. He currently resides in Bangalore.

## <b>Political Life</b>

U. R. Ananthamurthy made an unsuccessful run for the Lok Sabha in which he stated that his

“prime ideological objective in opting to contest the elections was to fight the BJP.”

A Janata Dal (Secular) leader and former Prime Minister of India H. D. Deve Gowda had made an offer for Murthy to contest for his party. However, after the Janata Dal (Secular) worked a power sharing agreement with the Bharatiya Janata Party Murthy said

“I will never forgive my friends in the Janata Dal (Secular) for joining hands with the BJP.”

Ananthamurthy also contested for the Rajya Sabha elections from state assembly in 2006.

In June 2007 Ananthamurthy declared that he will not take part in literary functions in future in the wake of strong criticism for his reaction on S.L. Bhyrappa’s controversial novel Aavarana.

The idea proposed by Ananthamurthy to rename ten cities in Karnataka including Bengaluru from their colonial forms to actual native forms was accepted by Government of Karnataka and the cities were renamed on the occasion of golden jubilee celebrations of formation of Karnataka.

## <b>Awards</b>

1984: Rajyothsava Award

1994: Jnanpith Award

1995: Maasti

1998: Padma Bhushan

2008: Nadoja Award by Kannada University

2011: The Hindu Literary Prize, shortlist, Bharathipura

2012: DSC Prize for South Asian Literature, shortlist, Bharathipura

# It Is Raining Again

Do you remember? Can you guess coquette  
My tall girl, I listen with muffled ears  
In secret shall I make you wise, turn this side  
After revealing all why close your ears?

My dark eyed lass, who clapped to laugh,  
Innocent one who hid behind the door to startle!  
It is raining again - do you remember it all?  
Not one or two moments - but the pleasure, the pain, the desire and the fear.

You half opened your eyes when I tweaked the navel  
Saying, 'You twin-petal bud shall I blossom you?'  
My minx, in that moment of want and satiety  
So coy you grew, biting your lips and swaying.

While washing away the shame of a loving yet unyielding man,  
Half animal-half bird doubling over at the waist  
Like a bat beating ineffectual wing,  
I had teased, strumming your lap, yet consoled.

It is raining again - do you remember it all?  
Not one or two moments - but the pleasure, the pain, the desire and the fear.  
The female parrot cajoled the sequestered male  
Caught from the woods, 'won't you come in?'  
As I turned away loosening the chains of her arms  
She had ridiculed, 'enough of your pretence!'  
So charming darling, the warmth of your being!

Come, my flower, who blossomed in my summer heat,  
For all my ferreting beauty yet undiscovered,  
I will preserve you in my navel.

The rains will return.  
Memories too will return,  
Pleasure and pain 'desire and fear'.  
Not one ..nor two

(1956)





# The Wrinkles On Grandpa's Shoulder

The wrinkles on grandpa's shoulder  
Are the contoured hills and valleys seen from above.

Riding royal on the elephant,  
Clutching grandpa's tuft- the king.

His too rode thus upon his grandpa's shoulder,  
Like me,

A few secrets hidden in the pocket of the shorts  
Clutching grandpa's tuft- riding  
The howdah on the elephant

My great grandfather's ride upon his grandpa's shoulder  
Too was similar, in the woods, like mine  
Clutching grandpa's tuft- riding  
Elephant back

2.

It is the same forest seen every day,  
The favorite path,  
Won thanks to the forest's benevolence,  
Becomes the daily route, the track of truth  
As the matted tuft of a sage here,  
As the unruly parting on the crown of flora there,  
The smooth vermillion path,  
The spoor of sloughed snake skin,  
The track of tiger's pug mark,  
The route of birds' warble.

The feet learns by itself all the turns and twists  
As light here, and shadow there  
Carrying over hills, endearing,  
It too getting worn with the treading feet

In solitude roaming everywhere,  
Sure of turning home, though at first  
Confused, yet becoming the haven, amidst

A stunted and obscure bush is the easing path,  
The wood's secret of the womb where fear hides

The trodden path of the affable eternity.

3.

There is a mango tree there,  
Of esoteric taste, of distinct essence  
From which drops a fruit, fragrant,  
After the squirrel, the bird and the monkey eat their fill,  
Whatever is left by fortune has been mine.

The sweet fruit with a sour seed,  
A fruit fragrant like camphor,  
A fruit that slips entirely from fist to mouth,  
A fruit that even now brings water to a fervid mouth  
A fruit that had been sucked much.

4.

These are the memories-  
The wrinkles on  
My shoulder that wish to carry.

(1989)

U. R. Ananthamurthy