

## Quiet Strength And Cyclical Identities: Rural Womanhood In Dr. Tera Ramesh Babu's "The Farm-Wife"

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### Abstract:

*The Farm-wife is an introspective poem which examines the changing process of the journey of a rural woman as a child to an adult with references to her changes in different life stages and roles. Being born in a village, the first aspirations of the main character to become a high-life person turn into a sober life of a farm-wife. The poem explores the dimension of the identity of the protagonist as a wife, mother, and midwife and indicates the complexity of rural womanhood. By incorporating complex words such as wife hood-life, farm-wife, and mid-wife, the poem points out the inter-relationship of these positions and how life is cyclical. Although the protagonist does not achieve her dreams of freedom that are symbolized by the "bird-life," she can be meaningful and empowered in her duties and responsibilities. The poem underlines the ideas of change, obligation and community and makes the farm-wife out to be a source of life and her guardian, whose role as a mother to her family and the society is the centre of herself. In its rhythm, symbolism, and touching remarks about the role of a woman in the farm, The farm-wife exalts the power and ability of a rural woman, and it provides a sensitive view of fulfillment and of purpose.*

**Keywords:** Rural life, farm-wife, gender roles, transformation, wifehood, midwife, domesticity, empowerment, identity, community, Feminism, Poetic Symbolism, life stages.

Date of Submission: 11-07-2026

Date of Acceptance: 21-07-2026

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### I. Introduction:

The farm-wife is a reflective poem that describes the woman as she passes through different stages of life, where the theme of rural life is deeply en-grained in the poem and the roles that the woman plays in the family and society. The main character was born in a lowly hamlet with some early dreams of having a high-life but shifting towards being a wife and a mother. The poem explores her identity as a farm-wife, in all the ways in which the country life gives her a sense of duty, responsibility and fulfillment. The poem shows how the roles of the protagonist changed through a chain of poetic words, including wife hood-life, farm-wife, and mid-wife where the cyclic quality of life becomes prominent and her empowerment in home life can be seen. The poem opposes the ideal ideas of liberty and the real life of rural womanhood praising the power, the strength and the purpose of the main character.

Through a symbolic and rhythmic style, The farm-wife emphasizes the themes of change, responsibility, and relationship between personal development and the community, to expose the ambiguous nature of country life and the unrecognized strength of a farm-wife.

### The Poem:

#### 'The Farm-wife'

Born and brought up in a hamlet  
As a lass in early-life  
So fond of folk-life  
To have a high- life  
In her wife hood- life  
But, became a farm-wife  
And started a new-life  
As a huswife having a good-life  
Showing bond of wife hood  
Always being as a good-wife

But, never had a bird-life  
In midlife, her lifeway as mid-wife  
As midwifery into life- saver  
Led the lifestyle as life-liner  
As a countrywoman never seen low-life  
But, never had an anti-life  
In her lifetime had many night-lives  
From pre-life to old-life  
From folk-life to super-wife  
That's why she is a farm-wife.

***The style and technique applied to the poem The farm-wife are rather experimental and repetitive. The main features of the style and the type of the poem are the following:***

***Style:***

**Repetitive:** The poem also stresses the use of repetition by using phrases like life, wife, and wifehood as it gives it a rhythm. This repetitive and cyclic quality of life of the farm-wife is also reflected here.

**Wordplay:** The poem includes widespread use of compound words such as wifehood-life, farm-wife, midwife, and good-life. This pun also adds to the stylistic peculiarity of the poem and gives it a rather playful mood, in addition, emphasizing the many roles and identities of the woman in the poem.

**Narrative/Reflective:** The poem tells the story of the life of a woman since her youth to old age, her different roles and experiences, i.e. a farm-wife, midwife, countrywoman. This is a reflective and a biographical narrative structure that exposes the rural life.

**Wordplay:** The poem is overall rich in using compound words such as wifehood-life, farm-wife, midwife, and good-life. This plays on words helps to make this poem stylistically distinct as well as the tone rather playful, and allows us to see the multiple roles and identities of the woman in the poem.

**Narrative/Reflective:** The poem is a story of a woman who grows since her youth to her old age, her different roles and experiences, including the life of a farm-wife, midwife, and countrywoman. It is a descriptive and reflective-biographical narrative, unveiling the life of the countryside.

**Symbolic:** The poem is a representation of the different life phases and roles that the woman would play, as shown in the metaphor of the wife and the life in different forms ( e.g. bird-life, nightlife, lifestyle). This metaphorical method highlights the intricacies and details of her life.

***Themes and Interpretations:***

**Life Cycle and Change:** The poem highlights a transformation of the farm-wife in various phases of her life. Since she grew up in a hamlet as a young girl, she becomes a wife, and further she becomes a midwife and a life-saver. All these roles are attributes of her different identities implying dynamism of her life.

**Folk and Country Life:** The poet concentrates on the ordinary life of the country and farm-wife; the poet brings out the traditional and folk aspects of the background. The reference to the folk-life and countrywoman makes the poem rooted in the cultural customs of the rural world and glorifies the hard work, service, and devotion one can find there. The farm-wife has a purpose and pride in her life in spite of the hardships she is enduring.

**Duality of Roles:** The poem is an example of how the early dreams of the farm-wife of having a high-life and a good-life of a farm-wife contradicted each other. Although her dreams may not be as materialized and the way she imagined them to be, she is content and fulfilled in her new roles and tackles them with strength and resilience.

**The "Night-Life" and "Lifetime":** The fact that she is talking about many night-lives may represent the hours of hard work and sacrifice that farm-wives tend to experience, as they work round the clock taking care of their families. This term may also be interpreted as a metaphor of the unknown, but important, things in her life, which are not frequently noticed or valued by people.

**The Role of a "Super-Wife:** The term super-wife may mean the fact that the farm-wife has many responsibilities-she is not a wife, but a caring wife, a midwife, and a community pillar. She has lived a life of service to others and has never wanted to be recognized or rewarded.

### **Theme Analysis: The Gender Roles and the Journey of Life.**

The poem the farm-wife is about how the life of a woman is going to change as she passes through the diverse phases of her life frozen in childhood, growing up, and falling in love, and facing the world of the countryside. The poem is basic in its nature, talking about the repetitive quality of life, adjusting to various roles, and the intricate identity of rural women.

The theme of transformation is the most dominant one in the poem. The heroine is transformed into a "lass" during her early years, when she dreams of a high-life, and turns out to be a farm-wife, and finally a mid-wife each with her new responsibilities but with her new fulfillment. Her experience has been presented in a sequence of compounded words, including, but not limited to: wifehood-life, farm-wife, and midwife, which represent not only the varying identities of the woman but also the pressure placed on her by the culture regarding her roles in each phase.

In the introduction itself, the poem determines the mood of the life of a woman, who is mixed up with the countryside tasks and household chores. The hamlet and the folk-life symbolize her low birth, and the need to acquire a high-life symbolizes her young dreams or fantasies of something glamorous or free. But at the end, she leads a life that is based on being a wife and a mother. The poem reveals how the protagonist has adjusted to the necessary roles of caregiver, family and community as she shifts to being a wife to becoming a farm-wife and then a mid-wife.

The sentence "But, never had a bird-life" is an opposition between the life of the farm-wife and the freedom that is usually connected with the imaginary bird-life. This points at the disjuncture between the dreams and the reality the protagonist is rooted in. The allusion to the bird-life gives the picture of freedom which is further implied in her acceptance of these roles, not the way of escaping. Even with the seemingly limited life, the life of the farm-wife is purposeful and meaningful as evidenced by the fact that she is a midwife- a life-saver who actively creates and leads life.

The concept of life-liner and life-saver is also used in the later stages of the poem, and this brings more focus on the most important role of the farm-wife within her community. This metaphor does not only mean that she is a caregiver but a person who leads and maintains life. The poem raises the importance of the work of rural women respectfully, who were perceived as invisible, or underrated, with undertones, by making the life of the farm-wife anything but ordinary. She is brought out as a community pillar, even though she has not had the freedom and ambition of a bird in life as most of the contemporary culture would always have us believe.

### **Devices and Poetic Structure Linguistic.**

The poem consists of a number of linguistic devices that contribute to the theme and rhythmic nature of the poem. The repetition of compound words is one of the most apparent ones: such words as wifehood-life, farm-wife, mid-wife and life-saver are used. These words not only provide the poem with the musical quality but also highlight the inter-relationship of the different personas of the main character. These compounds also focus on the core of the word life, and how that identity of the character is fluid through the repetition of the word.

The cyclical quality of life can be seen in the very form of the poem. Every period in the life of the main character, such as the early-life, the life of a wife, and the middle-life, follows the next period, which makes the events seem to be in continuation and as inevitable as possible. The poetic movement resembles the course of time and unavoidable changes, which accompany old age and experience. The poet finds this flowing building to reflect the acceptance by the protagonist about her changing statuses, the continuation of her duties.

The other stylistic decision that is significant is the rhyming and rhythm of the poem, as it makes the work sound lyrical. This adds to its musicality as well as strengthening the continuity and repetition of the life stages being narrated. The rhythm creates the impression of the daily routine and gradual movement of the life of the farm-wife, when one day is an extension of the other.

### **Social Commentary Rural life and gender.**

The poem offers a modified criticism of the old gender roles especially in the countryside situation. Even though it recognizes the apparent shortcomings of the life of the farm-wife, it also gives her a status of a vital member of the society. Rural woman is traditionally considered to be trapped by the traditional roles but The farm-wife demonstrates that the traditional roles may be empowering and rather significant.

The women in rural settings such as the farm-wife are supposed to take care of the house, bring up children, and act as caretakers in the society. The poem emphasis these functions but puts them in the perspective as meaningful and purpose full. The metaphors of the life of the farm-wife are described as a good-life, which connotes that the fulfillment could be achieved by taking care of others and dedicating life to the family; at the expense of personal ambitions. Her identity is focused on the sense of duty and belonging to the family and community of the farm-wife.

The poem questions contemporary ideas of success, where freedom and personal success are usually perceived as ultimate goals. Rather, it is a life devoted to others, one that is characterized by responsibility,

continuity, and strong emotional attachments, which is equally important. The farm-wife is an image of the determination and power that can be discovered in rural women that can be neglected by the community. Her role as a life-saver (midwife) does not place her in a passive position, but rather an active agent of life and change in her community.

### **The Experimental Form Of "The Farm-Wife" And Its Placement In The Setting Of Modernist/Free Verse Tradition In Indian English Poetry.**

The poem, *The farm-wife*, by Dr. Tera Ramesh Babu, is a free verse poem with no fixed meter, rhyme scheme or stanzaic regularity, and it has a very inventive use of language, a language which reflects some of the innovations found in modernist poetry and adapted to the traditions of Indian English poetry.

#### **Key Formal Features**

**Free Verse Structure:** The poem follows the flow and lacks prosodic structure. These are short, enjambed lines, with a rhythm and a sense of chanting, rather than by meter. This is a rejection of Victorian formalism for modern (and here, rural Indian) expression, as was the case in modernism.

**Word play and Neo-logistic Compounds:** What is most interesting about this experimental element is the abundance of compounds, such as "wifehood-life," "farm-wife," "mid-wife," "bird-life," "night-lives," "life-saver," "life-liner," "super-wife. These acts as a sort of linguistic collage, emphasizing multiple and circularity of the protagonist's identity. This creative use of diction highlights language as a space for negotiation, a space that combines the commonplace experience of rural life with poetics.

**Repetition and Cyclical Rhythm:** The word "life" is repeated with great frequency in the poem, and "wife" is repeated cyclically, both of which contribute to the incantatory quality and to reinforcing the theme of the cycles of life in the structure. Here the modernist fragmentation and the oral/folk traditions are used together.

Representing contextual placement in Indian English Poetry. Representing contextual placement in Indian English Poetry.

Post-independence Indian poets like Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, Kamala Das, Jayanta Mahapatra and Arun Kolatkar often used free verse and experimental forms in their poetry to convey the complexities of post-colonial identity, cultural hybridity and tradition and modernity. These modernists, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, influenced Indian poets to apply the same resources to their own concerns – rural life, gender roles, and the search for authenticity in a borrowed language – in free verse, fragmentation, and language renewal.

Babu's poem belongs to this tradition, since it employs an experimental style not to accentuate the estranged urbanity of the poem's subject (the common means of the high modernists), but to evoke and question the dignified stillness of rural womanhood. The neologisms blend English, with its tradition of compounding, and suggest the compounding tradition of the Indian languages and Sanskrit, but they also challenge the regular use of the language, as earlier poets indigenized English to convey speech rhythms and worldviews.

The form is sometimes awkwardly used and overbearing, but it does provide a framework that represents the conception of identity the poem aims to convey: identity is a process of building up through roles and duty, as are the meanings in the poem, built up through the accumulation of linguistic compounds. It is part of the general trend that Indian English poets are continuing to develop personal, regional, and formally creative expressions of the English language.

This experimental technique further enhances the thematic aspect of the poem, making it more in line with the principles of modernism with the urge of innovation, while also connecting it with the literary sensibilities of the modern Indian audience.

## **II. Conclusion:**

The poem is a free verse poem, as it is not ruled by any fixed meter, rhyme scheme or stanza structure. It is natural, with the repetition and wordplay being used to establish structure and rhythm. Also, it is possible to call the poem narrative, as it narrates the life journey of a woman, but in a non-traditional, poetic manner. 'The farm-wife' is experimental free verse poem that employs repetition, wordplay and symbolism in observing the phases and roles of a female life especially looking at rural and domestic life.

'The farm-wife' is a deep reflection of what the rural woman is and what many roles she performs. The poem provides the life of the farm-wife with a sense of profound meaning, even though it seems simple, because of the linguistic devices, rhythmic structure, and symbolic words. The issues of change, responsibility, and the repetitive quality of life are the key points of the poem, which criticizes the traditional concepts of fulfillment and the achievement. The poem, by describing the farm-wife as a strong individual who defines who she is with the help of the wife, mother, and midwife, makes a subtle comment about the worth of the lives and work of rural women.

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