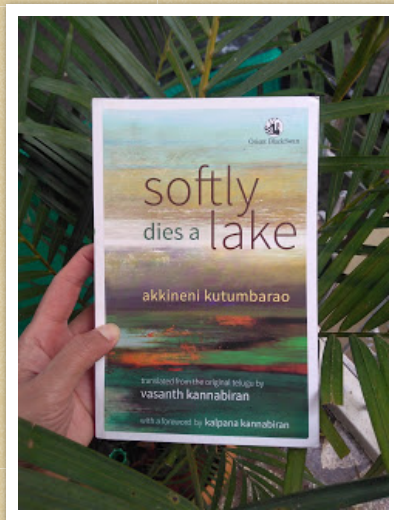


# Softly Dies a Lake



Softly Dies a Lake by Akkineni Kutumbarao, translated from the Telugu by Vasanth Kannabiran is described as an ecological memoir in its introduction. The author writes - *The novel is about my childhood. All the people in it are real. The village is real. Kolleru is real.*

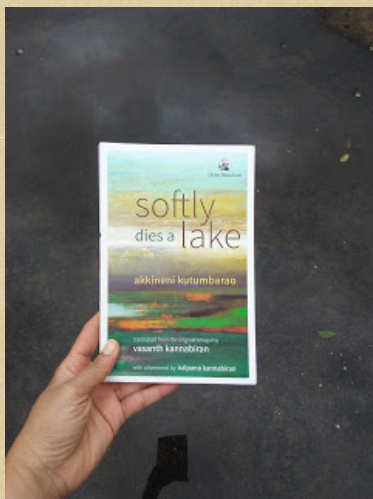
The book begins with Srinivas Rao, a man in his 60s, standing on the banks of the Kolleru wondering how the once bountiful lake that swallowed villages mercilessly during floods stood diminished to a 'nothingness' now. He takes a trip down the memory lane, to the times when as a 7 yr old kid (fondly called Seenu by all) Kolleru and his village Pulaparru on its banks made his beautiful little world.

It was here he learnt to swim holding onto a buffalo's tail, to endure pain while pulling out leeches clinging onto skin, that not all people are fair and just, that 'united we stand and divided we fall'. Kolleru and his village were his teachers after his doting parents.

Pulaparru, the home to farmers (Kammadoras caste) and fishermen (Vaddis), with zero caste violence, where the young and old discussed and decided upon matters of importance also boasts of practicing collective farming for the first time in all of India, an ingenious mechanism it devised to save paddy harvests from the wrath of Kolleru during floods.

With a huge array of characters, who's who in families, the book is little slow paced to start with. But Seenu, the little boy, mostly dressed in loin cloth, free-spirited and joyful makes the read interesting with his naive questions and naughty shenanigans.

The book reminded me of Perumal Murugan's Amma for describing a way of life, bygone and simple, of Na D Souza's Dweepa for showing how nature overturns man's efforts to control it in a blink of the eye, of Anita Agnihotri's The Sickie for highlighting the plight of farmers.



In a translation that offers great reading experience, *Softly Dies a Lake* is not just an elegy to Kolleru, but to many lakes that once cradled life but are dying a slow death now.

Posted by [Divya Shankar](#) at 12:09 PM

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