Telugu Poetry – A 100 Poem Project

With a bit of familiarity with Telugu, this, A Maple’s sap - I hope for you - A sampling of long-ago-written Telugu lines.

* Failing that, consider this a breezy lesson in Telugu -

*To Mom and Dad*

Beauty! Never a Prescription, only Display!

Status

12/26/2024 – Early Working Draft, 40-50/100

Full draft list at:

<https://github.com/SatyaKomatineni/articles-repo/tree/master/teluugu-poetry-100-poems>

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# Imperative of the Four Kings

..from Sringaara Naishadham, Srinatha, 15CE.

***Indra***, if he were to appeal

To the wish-granting Kalpa Vriksha,

To bring you to his seat, the Heaven,

What recourse would there be?

In the all-granting Fire ritual, The Wishing Yagna,

The Fire lord ***Agni*** himself takes you,

What then can be said?

One in his very own domain, Sage Agastya,

Were to be asked, you as a gift,

by the scion of Sun, and ***Lord Yama,***

Then?

Desiring you deeply, when asked for,

The all-granting Kaamadhenu,

Will it refuse to give you up

To his host, The Lord of the Seas ***Varuna***!

Heed my councel, for its method is good;

Child, to one among these, wed;

If devotion to Gods, not kept,

Obstacles, every labor begets!

సీ.హరి కల్పవృక్షంబుఁ బ్రార్థించి నినుఁ గోరి

దివికి రావించిన, దిక్కు గలదె?

సర్వకామద మైన సప్తతంతువున ని,

న్నగ్ని గైకొనిన, నే మనఁగఁ గలదు?

తనయొద్ద నున్న వాతాపితాపనునిచే

నిను నార్కి వరముగాఁ గొనిన, నెట్లు?

కాంక్షించి యడిగినఁ, గామధేనువు నిన్నుఁ

ద్యాగంబుగా నీదె యంబుపతికిఁ?

తే. గాన విను మేను జెప్పిన క్రమము లెస్స;

యతివ, వరియింపు వేల్పులయందు నొకని;

భక్తి దివిజుల చిత్తంబుఁ బట్ట కున్న,

నంతరాయంబు వుట్టు గార్యముల కెల్ల

## Background and context

This poem has a lot of references to mythological creatures. Especially to a particular story of “Ksheera Saagara Madhanam”, the churning of the cosmic Milky sea by Gods (Suras) and their Cousins (Asuras – kind of, the demon branch of the Gods). Several mythological beings are born out of that churning. Read the story as that might be helpful.

As to the background, this is where the Earth King Nala is begging Damayanti to choose one of the four Gods as her suitor, (when she is in love with him), for the Gods are too powerful and invain to refute.

## What is pretty about i?

A dialogue between two lovers is always interesting!

## Meanings

హరి: Indra, (here). Although that word usualy refers to Vishnu

కల్పవృక్షంబుఁ : The mythical tree what was born during the churning of the Milky sea by Gods and their Cousins. It is in heaven and Indra its King.

బ్రార్థించి: (If Indra were to seek its intervention) Ask for (pray for)

నినుఁ గోరి: (in his ask) Ask for you

దివికి రావించిన: To bring you to the Heaven

దిక్కు గలదె?: What recourse one would have?

సర్వకామద మైన: One that bestows (satisfies) all desires and wishes,

సప్తతంతువున: (In) the Fire ritual that is done for bestowing what ever one wishes for, [also called “Yagna”]

నిన్నగ్ని గైకొనిన: If the Fire God were to simply take you,

నే మనఁగఁ గలదు?: What could be said then?

తనయొద్ద నున్న: One that resides with him in the South

వాతాపితాపనునిచే: By that sage Agastya (One that is known to do impossible things for very Gods when asked)

నినున్ : You

ఆర్కి: Born of the Sun, the very Lord of Death, Yama

వరముగాఁ గొనిన: Were to ask for you as a favor

నెట్లు?: Then What? (How can that be avoided!)

కాంక్షించి: Wanting you

యడిగినఁ, : If you were to be asked for

గామధేనువు: (from) the mythical Cow – known as Kaamadhenu - (that resides with the Lord of the Seas and the underworld Varuna)

నిన్నుఁ : (will) you (not be)

ద్యాగంబుగా: As a gift

నీదె: give you (be given)

యంబుపతికిఁ?: To Her eternal host, Lord Varuna!

In summary,

తే. గాన: So

వినుము: listen,

నేను జెప్పిన: to what was told by me

క్రమము: and its reason, shape, method

లెస్స; : well

యతివ, వరియింపు వేల్పులయందు నొకని;   
Helpless one, Take the hand of One Mythical Monarch

భక్తి దివిజుల చిత్తంబుఁ బట్ట కున్న,

If devotion to the Gods be not pursued,

నంతరాయంబు వుట్టు గార్యముల కెల్ల

Obstacles, every work begets.

# Utterances ill-laced

..from Sringaara Naishadham, Srinatha, 15CE.

## Context

This is Damayanti’s sorrow as she addresses her Love, who lengthily brings and narrates a proposal that, she wed one of the distinguished suitors from the Heaven.

What you said so far is acutely harsh made;

Overlords, Heavenly potentates - they may be,

Their ill-laced wants, you infuse in my ears

Like raining quilt needles!

Fair would you say?

Agree, I gave word to abide!

Ha! “inflicting pain” - Nature of the end-time ambassador!

నీచరితంబు చూడనతి నిష్ఠుర మయ్యెడు; లోకపాల దు

ర్వాచిక సూచి కాంకుర పరంపరఁ దూర్చెదు మాటిమాటికిన్

నాచెవులందు; నీకుఁ దగునా యిటు సేయఁగఁ? దప్ప నంటి; బా

ధాచరణంబు నైజమ గదా తలపోయఁ గృతాంత దూతకున్.

## Meanings

నీచరితంబు: What you said (or poetically what the story, or history, you have written so far…)

చూడనతి నిష్ఠుర మయ్యెడు: To consider, is acutely harsh

లోకపాల దుర్వాచిక: The ill-laced words of the Overlords

సూచి కాంకుర పరంపరఁ: By the tips of a hundred quilting needles

దూర్చెదు మాటిమాటికిన్ నాచెవులందు: You infuse in to my ears

నీకుఁ దగునా యిటు సేయఁగఁ? : Fair for you to do so?

దప్ప నంటి: Gave my word I would abide!

బాధాచరణంబు: Ha! To inflict pain,

నైజమ గదా: is that not the nature,

తలపోయఁ : To think,

గృతాంత దూతకున్: of the angels that come down to take one away!

## Pretty words

నీచరితంబు: What you said (or poetically what the story, or history, you have written so far…)

కృతాంత దూతకున్: It means the ambassadors of the God of Death, Lord Yama. However the phrase is soft and not harsh.

కృతి: One that is written, a book, or one’s fate, or one’s life and its stretch as it is writing

కృత: An age

కృత + అంత: కృతాంత  
One that ends an age, Yama.

దూతకున్: The ambassadors, or the underlings of Yama

# Bammera Potana: Where poetry comes from, the 18,000 verses of it!

The Great Telugh Poet and his views on where poetry comes from.

## Background

Among hundreds of texts that undergird the culture and religion of the people of the Indian contient, the following three are considered the primary texts setting up the Hindu scripture, culture, and literature. They are also often called the three sacred texts of Hinduism. Up until recently one cannot separate art and literature from religion in the Indian context. Both are rich.

Note: These days, however, everyone is an expert, and every expert seems to differ on everything! Be that as it may, growing up, this is what I knew.

These three significant and texts are:

1. Mahabharat
2. Ramayan
3. Srimad Bhagavatam

Depending on the language, the word endings change how these books are referred to.

Among these three, the third book is the focus here. Depending on who you ask, it could have been written anywhere from ancient times to a few centuries on either side of BC or AD. The text is in Sanskrit.

During the late 15th, the Telugu uber poet Bammera Potana translated this work into Telugu. I was largely told to believe that these translations are both localized and original, despite being adaptations of the original work.

These translations have elevated the standard of the Telugu language and its scholarship, especially during the centuries surrounding the 15th. They have also added significant beauty to Telugu literature, making these works household names..

Among a hundred names in this lineage of poets, Bammera Potana is considered the finest.

## Where poetry comes from, 18,000 verses of it?

I hear often, in every age, including today, when artists talk about where art comes from, they often say they are merely the medium, and their art flows through them, and not from them.

That takes me to the often quoted poem from Bammera Potana, how the “Srimad Bhagavatam” (The episodic story of Krishna composed in **18,000 verses**) had come to be, not from him, but through him.

Here is that text in its original:

పలికెడిది భాగవతమట

పలికించెడివాడు రామభద్రుండట నే

పలికిన భవహరమగునట

పలికెద వేరొండు గాథ పలుకగనేలా!

What gets narrated is Bhagavatam-ata (\*),

One that narrates is Rama-bhadrud-ata (\*\*),

To write - is my salvation (\*\*\*),

So I shall write, why would I write a saga another?

\* The 18,000 verse book, Bhagavatam, “-ata” means “in fact”, seems, appears etc.

\*\* Another name of Potana’s God ( Rama-The-Proetective). Indicating that the words themselves flow not from Potana but from Him. My ground in belief is shaky at best! But I understand Potana why he would say this. This, I also believe, is the nature of all art.

\*\*\* The act of writing, even though being the medium, at its best flow, is a state of mind that elevates and impersonifies oneself. The specific Telugu word used here, భవహరమగునట, in my poor translation: “salvation”. The literal meaning of this word is “One gets freed from many births”, Nirvaana. ***The disappearance of self***!

# In the shade of the wings of the Parakeets of Saka

..from Sringaara Naishadham, Srinatha, 15CE.

This has been a tough one, dare I admit a frustrating one, to translate.

Yet I tried, knowing well, I could be wrong in portions.

## Context

A plea to Damayanti to choose (to wed) the King of Saaka Dweepa (One of 7 islands in the ancient world)

## Poem

Exceeding Indra’s, In this Kingdom of Great unending wealth,

Indulge as its Reina!

Fluttering colors of the Parakeets’ wings as its shade,

Make the Saka Tree your haven for play,

Resting Krishna on his cosmic bed in the Milky Sea,

His Golden hand, near for your adoration,

On the mountain of the Moon rise, On full moon nights,

In the Moon glow be your carnivals,

With great armies that handed defeats

To the Asura Sena (army), To this Earthly King,

With your allure, elegance, beauty, art, and wit

Bring disquiet, Colluding with the Cupid.

అతి నిర్జరేశ్వరం బై యనశ్వర మైన

యైశ్వర్యమున రాజ్య మనుభవింపు,

చంచ చ్ఛుక చ్ఛద చ్ఛా యాశ్రయం బగు

శాకవృక్షము నీడఁ జలుపు క్రీడ,

పాల మున్నీటిలో ఫణి రాజ శయ్యపైఁ

బవ్వళించిన శారఙ్గ పాణిఁ గొలువు,

పొడుపు గుబ్బలి మీఁదఁ బూర్ణిమా రాత్రులం

దొనరింపు చంద్రాత పోత్సవంబు

తే. లలఘు సైనిక సంఖ్య సం ఖ్యాగ్ర విజిత

దాన వానీ కుఁ డైన యీ ధరణివిభుని

లలిత సౌభాగ్య రేఖా కళా విలాస

శక్తి భర్త్సిత మత్స్య లాంఛనునిఁ గూడి

## Key Meanings: నిర్జర

జర: Old age

నిర్జర: Amrit, one that prevents aging, or one that does not have old age, like a denizen of the Heavens, or a God

అతి నిర్జరేశ్వరం బై: Never seeing decline

## Key Meanings: శుకము

శుకము: Parrot or a Parakeet

చంచత్: Moving about, one that is moving, frisky, flutter

చ్ఛద: From the context, it could only mean, the wings (for I could not find in the dictionaries I have access to)

చ్ఛా యా: shade, color

Key Meanings: శారఙ్గ

This poem has too many unfamiar words that I haven’t run into even for this complex work. Few of those words here, before I list the word by word for the entire poem.

శారఙ్గ: A deeply Sanskrit word meaning “like gold”. The dictionary says: కర్బురవర్ణవిశిష్టే (The adjective for the color of కర్బుర). Interestingly the word కర్బుర sounds so much similar to another color కర్పూర, whose shade is white.

Key Meanings: తపము

తపము: Many meanings for this word. Hear it refers to “heat”, “hot season or summer”, “or any season that one suffers, or emotional”

చంద్రాతపము: Its meaning is “Moon light”, but you can see the core derivation from the previous as in “The heat or warmth of the Moon”

Key Meanings: అలఘు

అలఘు: Heavy, large, big

విజిత: One who was bested, conquered

అనీకము: Army, group, battle

భర్త్సితము: బెదరింపఁబడినది: One that had been scared

## All Meanings Word by word

అతి నిర్జరేశ్వరం బై యనశ్వర మైన

యైశ్వర్యమున రాజ్య మనుభవింపు,

Possibly 2 meanings:

1. In the riches and wealth, greatly eternal, and never to be lessened, revel in such Reign

2. Exceeding the wealth of Indra (for he is the King of Gods deriving from – నిర్జర taking its meaning as God and not Amrit), revel in the never ending riches of the reign

అనశ్వర: One that doesn’t diminish

చంచ చ్ఛుక చ్ఛద చ్ఛా యాశ్రయం బగు

శాకవృక్షము నీడఁ జలుపు క్రీడ,

This will be broken down as

చంచత్ + శుక + చ్చద + చ్చాయా + ఆశ్రయంబగు

శాకవృక్షము నీడఁ జలుపు క్రీడ,

చంచత్ + శుక + చ్చద + చ్చాయా : Afluttering + parakeets’ + wings + colors

ఆశ్రయంబగు : To whom the sancturay

శాకవృక్షము :the Saaka Tree,

నీడఁ : In its shade

జలుపు క్రీడ: let be your sport

పాల మున్నీటిలో ఫణి రాజ శయ్యపైఁ

బవ్వళించిన శారఙ్గ పాణిఁ గొలువు,

పాల మున్నీటిలో: In the Milky sea

ఫణి రాజ: Adi Seshu, The first Snake (as the bed)

శయ్యపైఁ : On such

బవ్వళించిన: reclining

శారఙ్గ పాణిఁ: One with the bestowing Golden Hand, Vishnu

గొలువు: Worship and adore.

పొడుపు గుబ్బలి మీఁదఁ బూర్ణిమా రాత్రులం

దొనరింపు చంద్రాత పోత్సవంబు

పొడుపు: Morning

గుబ్బలి: Mound, or Mountain

మీఁదఁ: On

బూర్ణిమా రాత్రులం : (the) Nights of the Full moon

దొనరింపు: Make

చంద్రాత పోత్సవంబు: Frolics in the Moon Glow

This whole section below is confusing. It is referring to the mythological history of the “Saaka Dweepa” one of the 7 Dweepas (islands) as depicted in the ancient India mythology, particularly to one of its Rulers, who is the Character of interest in this poem.

It seems to praise a King that seemed to have been lost, and also by aligning with the Cupid, and her charms, disquiet his heart.

లలఘు సైనిక సంఖ్య సం ఖ్యాగ్ర విజిత

లలఘు: Big, Large, Great

సైనిక సంఖ్య: count of the armed forces

సం ఖ్యాగ్ర: even exceeding in such counts

విజిత: (with those) Having been defeated

దాన వానీ కుఁ డైన యీ ధరణివిభుని

దానవ: Asura’s, or the cousins of the Devas

అనీకము: Army

కుఁ డైన యీ ధరణివిభుని: The Lord of this land, that has this Asura army

లలిత సౌభాగ్య రేఖా కళా విలాస శక్తి

With the force of the charm and playful art

భర్త్సిత మత్స్య లాంఛనునిఁ గూడి

భర్త్సిత: Scare (him, the enamored King)

మత్స్య లాంఛనునిఁ గూడి: By invoking and aligning with the Cupid