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>

[5th: Tracking: 12/26/24 – …]

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[3rd: Tracking: 11/1/23 – 7/21/23 (3/1/24 working date)]

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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

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? Gave my 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

## Background

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.

# Bammera Potana: Where poetry comes from

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

## Background

Among hundreds of texts that underguird 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 very recently one cannot separate art and literature from religion in the Indian context. Both are quite rich.

Note: These days however every one is an expert, and every expert seem to differ about 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.

Among these three the third book is the topic here. Depending on who you ask, this could have been written in the very anicient to a few centuries on either side of BC or AD. The text is in Sanskrit.

During the late 15th century, the Telugu uber poet Bammera Potana translated this to Telugu. Largely I was told to believe these translations are quite original making the work localized and fairly original despite a translation.

These translations have come to raise the standard for the Telugu language and its scholarship especially for a few centuries before and after the 15th. They have also added significant beauty to the Telugu texts making them household names.

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

## Where poetry comes from?

I hear often, in every age, including now, when artists talk about where art comes from, they often say they are only the medium, and 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) has 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 the words them seleves flow (from Him). My ground in belief is shaky at best! But I understand Potana completely. It, I also believe, is the nature of art.

\*\*\* The act of writing, even though being the medium, is a state of mind that elevates and impersonifies oneself in that elevation. The specific Telugh word used here poorly translated by me to “salvation”, but the actual literal meaning is “One gets freed from many rebirths”, in other words the state of one with the divine where there is neither birth nor death, the state of Nirvaana.