# 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***!