

dhaara

Selections from Telugu classical verse

Translated into English

(With notes and commentary)

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FOREWARD

From the beginnings in the first half of 11th Century AD to till the middle of 19th Century AD, poets in Telugu language had done their works scrupulously adhering to the principles of prosody laid down for writing poems in Telugu language by the greatest of poets like *Nannaya*, *Nanni ChoDa*, *Tikkana* etc. This has, undoubtedly, one of the strongest points for poetic works in Telugu language, but it has also made understanding the meaning of the poem at times difficult because of the strict literary language used, occasionally the form of words changed or modified to suit the requirements of principles of prosody pertaining to that particular meter or type of poem.

As a result, a general impression has been generated and created in the minds of even the moderately learned persons that it is not easy to understand the meaning of poems in Classical works. A sweeping change in the education system, with less stress on learning good Telugu language, also contributed to the already diminishing scenario.

This dismal situation has given rise to the necessity of translation of good Telugu poems, which are no less than thousands in number, with the scope in this area of work increasing day by day, as more number of people of Telugu origin adding to the lot of people who cannot understand the Classical Telugu poetry without the assistance of some notes and a translation as well, adding day by day.

This small book containing about 35 translations of poems from popular Telugu Classical works, *chaatu* poems, poems from popular *Satakams* such as *sumatii Satakam*, *bhaaskara Satakam* etc., is a small endeavor in that direction. Sufficiently elaborate notes have been added to each poem in addition to the best possible translation to make the meaning of the poem more understandable for the reader who has a liking towards the Telugu language and culture but not presently having sufficient understanding of all the aspects linked to it. To make things easier for persons who cannot read the Telugu poems in Telugu fonts, RTS format has been used and added at the beginning of each poem in Telugu fonts.

I hope these translations and notes serve the intended purpose and are useful. I must confess here that I am no expert in matters concerning Telugu prosody and other things connected with it. My knowledge in these matters is general and the one important aspect that gave me the necessary impetus to do this exercise was and has been the boundless desire to make good Telugu poetry read by as many as possible. So, though necessary care has been taken to incorporate the details correctly to the best of my knowledge, there still might have occurred inadvertent errors, which, if any, pointed out, will be corrected in future editions.

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July, 2014.

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'Satakamu' - a short introduction:

'*Sata*' is a 'Sanskrit' word which means 'a hundred'. '*Satakamu*' is a Telugu word derived from the Sanskrit word '*Sata*' and means 'a collection of 100 poems'. The poems in a Telugu '*Satakamu*' shall always be in the same *metrical composition*, the underlying theme shall also be generally the same. One more characteristic of a '*Sataka padyam*' is that it ends with a refrain like word or group of words, a chorus, which in Telugu language is called '*makutamu*'. This '*makutamu*' identifies the '*Satakamu*'; that means the collection of poems that ends with the '*makutamu*' '*bhaaskaraa!*' is known as '*bhaaskara Satakamu*', the collection of poems that ends with the '*makutamu*' '*sumatii!*' is known as '*sumatii Satakamu*' and likewise others such as '*daaSarathii Satakamu*, *veamana Satakamu*' etc.

Though the underlying theme is the same, each poem in a '*Satakamu*' can be independently read and the meaning enjoyed. The name given for this type of poem in *Telugu classical poetry* is '*muktakamu*'. *Nannaya Bhattaarakā*, a poet who lived in the first half of 11th C (AD), known as '*aadi kavi*' (the first poet as far as the Telugu classical metered poetry is concerned), while translating the '*Sanskrit Mahabhaarata*' into Telugu, had interspersed the narration with these kind of poems (i.e., '*muktakam*') that teach certain good and notable aspects of human nature and life as well. Taking cue from the methodology adopted by *Nannaya* in composing such poems in *Andhra Mahabharatam*, poets in the latter years had invented the method of composing such poems in hundreds and placing them in a separate collection, theme wise, and had given the name '*Satakamu*'.

It is popularly believed and generally agreed by one and all that the first '*Satakamu*' that appeared in Telugu poetic world is '*sumatii Satakamu*'. It is said that '*sumatii Satakamu*' was written by a poet named '*baddena*' who lived around the year 1260 AD. Some, however, believe that a poet named '*bhiimana*', who lived around 11th C (AD) wrote it. Whoever might have written this '*sumatii Satakamu*', it may be confidently said that it is a very popular '*satakamu*' and poems from this are well known.

All the poems in '*sumati Satakamu*' were written in '*kaMda*' meter. Poems from '*sumatii Satakamu*' are very popular and it is not an exaggeration to say that until very recently it was very hard to find a Telugu speaking person, though not sufficiently educated, who could not recite at least one or two poems from '*sumatii Satakamu*'.

Poems from 'sumatii Satakamu' - 1

aDigina jiitaMbiyyani
miDimealapu doranu golchi miDukuTa kaMTen
vaDi gala yeddula gaTTuka
maDi dunnuka bratuka vachchu mahiloe sumatii!

అడిగిన జీతంబియ్యని
మిడిమేలపు దొరను గొల్చి మిడుకుట కంటెన్
వడిగల యెద్దుల గట్టుక
మడి దున్నుక బ్రతుక వచ్చు మహిలో సుమతీ!

Instead of not getting the much needed wages when asked
For from a hot headed master and grieving time and again,
Better it is always to find two well-bodied fast moving oxen
And live by farming a piece of land, oh fair minded of brethren!

It would not be an exaggeration if one says that it was the '*sumatii Satakam*' which first made the Telugu poem near to the commonest of the common man by touching and poetically recording the real and day to day aspects of human existence. People, therefore, instantaneously connected themselves to the poems in '*sumatii satakam*' and saw themselves in those poems as one sees himself or herself in a mirror. They remembered them and recited them as and when a suitable occasion cropped up in their daily lives.

The helplessness and the exasperation a serving person undergoes when not given by his master his rightfully due wages when needed the most has been aptly portrayed in this poem with simplest of words possible, at the same time binding them in one of the most beautiful of metered compositions in Telugu language, i.e., '*kanda*' meter.

Poems from 'sumatii Satakamu' - 2

'Who is a prudent person?' - This question may appear very simple. But, once you try to answer this question, in all probability, you may feel that it is not that easy to find words suitable to express the answer correctly and in the most agreeable manner to one and all.

This question was, however, answered by '*baddena*' - the poet who authored '*sumatii Satakamu*' - in the simplest way possible. Words used in this poem are the most common amongst the Telugu words. One reading of the poem is enough; the meaning of the poem goes straight into the mind. The person who can manage his talk amicably well to suit every situation, not giving in to emotions in the process, is the blessed and prudent of all the men - is the answer '*baddena*' had given thorough this poem to the above question. Fair enough, this answer is agreeable to most of the common populace; the popularity of this poem amongst the lot of poems in '*sumatii Satakamu*' is ample proof for this.

eppaTi keyyedi prastuta

mappaTikaa maaTalaadi yanyula manamul

noppiMchaka taanovvaka

tappiMchuka tiruguvaaDu dhanyuDu sumatii!

ఎప్పటి కెయ్యెది ప్రస్తుత

మప్పటికా మాటలాడి యన్యుల మనముల్

నొప్పించక తానొవ్వక

తప్పించుక తిరుగువాడు ధన్యుడు సుమతీ!

He is the blessed one that who can leave the scene,

Managing his talk amicably well to suit the situation,

Carefully weighing the words so not to hurt anyone,

Nor he be hurt by anyone; oh fair-minded of brethren!

Poems from 'sumatii Satakamu' - 3

Disposition is a genetic thing. Habits connected with the natural disposition would not die that easily. Some persons appear more deserving to do certain things. It is a natural phenomenon that certain individuals are very often found predisposed to perform certain deeds with a naturally gifted élan, which a person of different disposition, even when placed under the most amicable circumstances, would find himself wanting in all respects and he makes a fuss of the whole affair.

This common fact that comes into understanding during day-to-day life experiences has been told in this poem of '*sumatii Satakamu*' very aptly by '*baddena*'. This poem is also very popular amongst the lot and very often is the first one to be recited to point out instances of undeserving authority.

kanakapu siMhaasanamuna

Sunakamu kuurchuMDabeTTi SubhalagnamunaM

donaraga baTTamu gaTTina

venakaTi guNamealamaanu vinaraa sumatii!

కనకపు సింహాసనమున

శునకము కూర్చుండబెట్టి శుభలగ్నమునం

దొనరగ బట్టము గట్టిన

వెనకటి గుణమేలమాను వినరా సుమతీ!

Even when it is customarily coroneted under

The finest of auspicious moments and made to be

Seated on a golden thrown, how does a dog

Lose its own disposition, oh fair-minded of brethren!

Poems from 'sumatii Satakamu' - 4

A person should know his limits and behave - this is the advice elders give to persons of younger generation. This means, one has first understand his own limitations and behave within his own limits to protect and keep his respect in society with others. With a view to imbue this advice to children, it was poetized in '*sumatii Satakamu*' by '*baddena*' in the most apt and heartening way in the following poem.

kamalamulu niiTa baasina

kamalaaptuni raSmi soeki kamalina bhaMgin

tamatama nelavulu dappina

tama mitrulu SatrulouTa tadyamu sumatii!

కమలములు నీట బాసిన

కమలాప్తుని రశ్మి సోకి కమలిన భంగిన్

తమతమ నెలవులు దప్పిన

తమ మిత్రులు శత్రులౌట తద్యము సుమతీ!

As the lotuses as and when placed out of pond waters

Wilt under heat of the Sun, the dearest one to lotuses

Certain so for a man that his own friend will turn out a foe

When behaved out of context, oh fair-minded of brethren!

It is a known fact that lotuses bloom during the day and lose their luster as the sunshine disappears with sunset. The Sun is, therefore, considered in poetic sense as the dearest one to lotuses. However, even he cannot control the harm that is done to the lotuses when placed out of the pond waters - the place the lotuses should naturally be. This phenomenon was used in a heartening manner by '*baddena*' in his '*sumatii Satakamu*' to convey the advice that a person should never try to be out of his own demeanor and behave out of context which naturally will result in things going adverse to him, wherein his own friends may not be in a position to save him.

'bhaaskara Satakamu'

'bhaskara Satakamu' has a special place in Telugu **'Sataka saahityamu'** (**Sataka** type literature). The specialty of the poems in **'bhaskara Satakamu'** is each poem divides itself into two parts; the first part being a statement and the second part is the establishment of what the statement says proving it by taking support from real life instances or established facts.

There is an interesting story relating to this type of writing poetry. The story is this -

Long ago, there lived a Brahmin. He had two sons. The elder son was a disciplined one and the younger was opposite to this, he was irresponsible, knotty, was averse to schooling and thus wayward. One day, unable to bear the nuisance being created by his brother, the elder one or his wife scolds this man to such a point that he feels humiliated and in a fit of rage, he leaves the home and the village. He goes to **Kasi (Varanasi)**. There by the providence of God, he attains wisdom and after some years returns home. He stands in front of his house and calls out his brother stating that he has come back with proper wisdom to tell even poetry. The elder one could not believe this, he stays put in the house and starts testing his brother. The test was that he would give a statement in poetic form, which his brother standing outside the house as he was should fill it with equally competent poetic lines. The test started and one by one, the poems in **'bhaskara Satakamu'** emanated from the mouths of both the brothers and came into existence.

End of Preview.

**Rest of the book can be read @
<http://kinige.com/book/dhaara>**

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