

Srinivasa Bala Bharati - 153

(Children Series)

# KSHETRAYYA

*English Version*

**Prof. Visveswara Rao**

*Telugu Original*

**Ayinampudi Gurunadha Rao**



*Published by*

**Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, Tirupati.**

**2017**

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## **FOREWORD**

If a beautiful garden is to be raised, one needs to take proper care of tender flower plants. In the same way in order to create a good society, great care is needed to be taken of young children who are going to be future citizens of India. All their intellectual attainments will be futile if they fail to learn of their culture and its greatness. They need to be told of great men and women of this country so that they are inspired by their ideals. The essentials of our culture should be given to them in the form of simple and charming stories. They will cherish these ideals and be guided by them. They will promote good and they will love the society they live in. They make their families proud and bring great prestige to their country when they grow up into good citizens.

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams has brought out these booklets for children in Telugu under 'Srinivasa Bala Bharati Series'. Although meant for children, they are useful to the elderly too. They have found place in the book shelves of every family. The stories of legendary men and women are narrated in a simple manner. We hope that more and more children will read them and get benefitted by them.

I congratulate the Special Officer, Publications Division, TTD for his efforts in bringing out the English translations of SRINIVASA BALABHARATI SERIES so well. We have received co-operation of many learned men and women in our efforts to popularize this series. I am thankful to them.

In the Service of Lord Venkateswara



**Executive Officer,**

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams,  
Tirupati.

## **PREAMBLE**

Today's children are tomorrow's citizens. They need at tender age apt acquaintance with the life-histories of celebrated persons so that they get opportunity to lead their lives in an exemplary way. They will come to know that great things such as Indian culture, basic tenets of life and moral teachings are abundantly available in the life-experiences of great men. It is observed that there is no scope to teach such subjects in school curriculum.

Observing such circumstances the Publication Division of Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams has published about hundred booklets in Telugu about the lives of famous sages and great men written by various authors under the editorship of Dr. S. B. Raghunathacharya under "Bala Bharati Series". The response over these books is tremendous and it has given impetus to publish them in other languages also. To begin with some of the books are now brought out with English and Hindi rendering by T.T.D., for the benefit of boys and girls and the interested public.

These booklets are primarily intended to the growing children and also generally intended to the elders to study and narrate the stories to their children, will go a long way to sublimate the aspirations of the children to greater heights.

**Special Officer**  
Publications Division

## **Welcome To Srinivasa Bala Bharati Series**

The series is the outcome of abundant grace of Lord Sri Venkateswara.

This will be an unfailing source of inspiration to the young.

It enshrines the best of Bharatiya tradition. May this noble endeavour be successful.

India has been known for its culture and civilization, its ethical and dharmic way of life from time immemorial. India has marched ahead with its commitment to dharma, its resistance to adharma, its espousal of life-affirming values and its humane attitude to life as a journey towards God realization. Those who embodied these values in their life have been a beacon of light to us. Their impact is deep on the life we lead. Young boys and girls will find them exemplary and feel proud to their invaluable heritage. They will love their motherland and dedicate themselves to its service.

It is therefore necessary that the young learn about these great men and women so that they will realize their indebtedness to them for their selfless contribution to the enrichment of life. This should indeed be a chief component of true education which ensures the perennial continuity of Indian Culture and Civilization. SRINIVASA BALA BHARATI SERIES has come into existence to acquaint the young boys and girls with right perspective of Indian life and values through a series of booklets written exclusively for this purpose describing in brief the lives of great men and women.

We welcome you to share our joy in launching these booklets.

**S.B. Raghunathacharya**

Chief Editor  
Srinivasa Bala Bharati

## INTRODUCTION

There was a great soul who wanted a place at the feet of Gopala. He crowned his love for Gopala in simple words and savoured life's sweetness with his devotion in the grace of his God. Do you know who he is? He is the great poet named Kshetrappa. That is the name by which he is known. But originally he was named Varadappa. 'Muvva' which was at the lotus feet of the deity 'Muvva Gopala' was his birth place.

The Nawab of Golconda ordered Kshetrappa to 'compose fifteen hundred songs in forty days'. Thirty nine days passed by. Varadappa was not bothered about writing them. He did not write even one. Mohanangi was aghast at the delay. In one single night the incomparable composer Kshetrappa - as though he was 'Muvva Gopala' incarnate - wrote fifteen hundred songs leaving everyone in the court to astonishment.

The priests did not notice Varadappa who sat in deep meditation in the temple of Varadaraja in Kanchinagaram. The deity's service at night being completed, they locked the doors and all of them left the temple. When Varadappa came out of his meditation and opened his eyes early next morning, the lotus faced consort of the deity, with a flower garland half strung in her braided hair, going from the deity's chamber to her own appeared before him. Such was Kshetrappa a great devotee and a great poet who made himself eligible for the favour of the goddess -- the man whose wealth was his devotional love for Gopala.

His devotion should be our ideal. The eagerness in his heart for the worship of the lotus feet of Gopala should show us our way. Now read on!



- Chief Editor

## **KSHETRAYYA**

### **A rare blessing**

It was a small village.

There was a temple at the village centre.

One night an young man sat in the temple premises deep in meditation. The temple priests, having completed the deity's services, closed the temple doors and left. They did not wish to disturb his meditation.

As it was approaching dawn, when the cool breeze touched his body he gained consciousness. The temple doors were open. Gopala, the God stood before him in his enchanting form. That wonderful sight lasted but for a fraction of a time. But he heard the God's blessing clearly.

“Oh man! You shall earn fame as a singer. Your songs shall be widespread in the world generation after generation. Go Visit king's courts and holy places. Let all quarters of the land hear about love divine and the message of my love”.

Enveloped by that radiance he gazed all around with wide open eyes. The temple doors were closed. There was none near him, nor anywhere nearby in the surroundings. He realized that he had a vision of the divine. Atonce he hurried from the temple to his house which was close by.

It was a village called Movva which was well known as a seat of culture in the region of river Krishna.

That temple was the splendid abode of Muvva Gopala.

That young devotee was a famous composer, singer Kshetrappa, who paid a glowing tribute to the goddess of art in the Andhra region. His actual name was Movva Varadappa.

### **The Mother's heart - trembled**

As soon as he reached home he prostrated at his mother's feet and said, "Mother! The God appeared to me in his visible form. I must sing in the praise of Movva Gopala in my compositions and propagate his glory going around the land. Bless me."

She was aghast. The motherhood in her struggled convulsively. But Varadappa's wise father shedding tears of happiness came to him and held him close in a warm embrace. He came to know that his son was divinely inspired. He thought that it was not proper for him to stand in the way of his divinely inspired son. On receiving the blessings of his parents Varadappa left home and set out on his mission.

### **It was a blissful universe**

Then he went to the house of Mohanangi. She was a temple dancer. Mohanangi and Varadappa were co-learners. They were almost of the same age. They both were born in Movva and grew up there. Both used to go to the same school of arts to learn dance and music in the nearby Kuchipudi village. They would go frolicking on their way to the place and be very

happy. Though they belonged to different castes they were very close together.

Varadappa gained mastery over music and poetry. Right from his childhood he used to compose and sing fine songs of devotional love based on romance. Mohanangi coming from the community of temple dancers was adept at dancing. She was specially trained to be a temple dancer. She was also known for her expertise in music and poetry.

Both were votaries of the fine arts and worshipped the aesthetic. Moreover they were unparalleled in their devotion to Muvva Gopala, the deity of Movva. Whenever they found time they went together to Gopala's temple. Varadappa composed songs on Gopala. As he sang his compositions melodiously, Mohana danced immersed in expressing the sentiment of the song. At such times there appeared a distinctly divine glow on her countenance. Varadappa used to get involved in her dance. At such times both of them appeared to become oblivious of this world and inhabit a realm which was otherworldly. That was a beautiful world of art. They could see none except the deity Gopaladeva in that world.

### **Enamoured of Mohana**

Thus they went about together closely from their childhood. They studied in the same place. They worshipped the deity Gopala. They grew up into adulthood in course of time. Lotus buds of love

sprouted in their hearts. They studied Bharata's Natyasatra and Bhanu Datta's Rasamanjari thoroughly and took in the essence. Their thoughts being refined, the way for mutual love was paved as a result of this understanding.

Being happy, they did not know how time passed. For some time they enjoyed physical life to their heart's content. Varadayya used to spend all his nights at Mohanangi's house.

### **We should love him**

Varadayya did not go to Mohanangi's house on the day when he was blessed with the vision of Muvva Gopala. Mohanangi became restless pining for his company. She did not have a wink of sleep even that night. Her heart was elated with joy as she saw Varadayya arrive. She took him into the house. Her eye lids were heavy with sleep as she spent a sleepless night.

"What happened Varada? Why did you not come last night? I was so afraid. Please don't go leaving me alone like this," she said pitifully.

With his head bent down Varadayya said, "Mohana, I came here only to tell you that I have to go away leaving you."

Mohana was taken aback. She was distressed. Varadayya held her close to him, told her about all that had happened and said, "Mohana, it is time that I distance myself from physical life. Henceforth, Muvva

Gopala is everything to me. I must love only him, and sing in praise of him. I must proclaim his glory in erotic songs filled with the sweet love of devotion in all the four corners of the land."

### **I shall not stand in your way**

Mohanangi was a wise woman. She was happy to see the visible maturity in Varadayya that night. There was a glint of joy in her eyes. But it soon disappeared. She said in despair.

"Varada! How can I ever live being away from you? For me life is being with you only. I shall also come with you. I will lead the same kind of life as you intend to live. I shall not stand in your way. Let me serve you and along with you spread the glory of God Gopala in this land through my dance."

"Alright, come along but not now. I want to have a darshan of God Varadaraja in Kanchi. My parents named me after him. I will send you a message after reaching Kanchi. You shall meet there. By then I would have gained some confidence in my mission," said Varadayya.

### **She never expected it**

Mohana listened calmly to Varadayya. She could not but say 'yes'. With great difficulty Varadayya bade good bye to her in a voice choked with emotion and got out quickly. It seemed that Mohana was struck by a thunderbolt. She was aghast. She never thought even for a while that Varadayya could go away leaving her

alone. She trembled under a strong emotion. She knew that Varadappa could no longer be her companion. She understood that he had surrendered himself body and soul to Muvva Gopala.

### **Great honour in Golconda**

Varadappa set out on his lyrical poetic mission.

His first camp was at Golconda.

It was the seventeenth century. It was the regime of Abdulla Kutub Shah. The Nawab was a great connoisseur of art. Many Brahmins of high intellectual caliber occupied important positions in his court. Some of them were even related to Varadappa. So, because of their valuable help he was able to gain admission to the Nawab's presence in no time. Varadappa was surprised on seeing the affluence of the Nawab's court. He sang some songs in praise of him. The Nawab was very much pleased and he treated Varadappa very well.

### **Unruffled by Kamala's tricks**

Kamala was the dancer in the Nawab's court. Varadappa was a handsome man. Moreover, he was in the prime of his youth. Kamala became enamoured of him at first glance. She tried to ensnare him in many ways. But Varadappa was not distracted. His mind was fixed elsewhere. He set on this journey with the noble goal of spreading the glory of Muvva Gopala all over the land with his songs for the rest of his life. If only he had opted for a worldly life there would be no

better partner for him than Mohana who was a woman of blemishless beauty. But his only aim was to invest his goals with nobility and divinity and finally become one with Muvva Gopala. That was why he was not ruffled in the least by Kamala's overtures.

### **Kuchipudi under Kutubshah's patronage**

Varadappa intended to visit some more royal courts and holy places. So he decided to leave Golconda. He also found it difficult to leave the court of the Nawab who showed great regard for him in many ways. The Nawab was a man who was very good at heart. Kuchipudi the abode of Bharatanatya was also a place under the Nawab's rule. On the request of Siddhendra Yogi who shaped Kuchipudi as the centre of Bharatanatya, the Nawab gifted the village to the Bhagavatas of that place and leased a long life to his love of art. This was the very place where Varadappa learnt music and dance. It was for this reason that Varadappa first went to Golconda.

### **On his return**

Varadappa requested the Nawabs to grant him permission to leave Golconda. The Nawab was surprised. He hoped that Varadappa would remain in his court forever and bring greater glory to it. However, Varadappa explained his mission to Nawab and said that he would try to visit the court for some time again on his way back. The court dancer Kamala was deeply depressed on hearing about this.



### **Good reception at Madurai**

Varadappa's next halt was at Madurai.

The ruler of Madurai was Tirumala Nayaka at that time. He was a Telugu man. During the days of the Vijayanagara Empire many courageous Telugu warriors migrated to the south, established their kingdoms and ruled over them. Varadappa visited all those kingdoms where Telugu was the court language. Madurai was one of the kingdoms where Telugu flourished greatly.

Hence Varadappa received a hearty welcome there. Tirumala Nayaka was a connoisseur of art. He was a man of great culture. The court of Madurai was not one given to luxuries like that of Golconda. It was devoted to spiritual pursuits, religious observances and austerities. Varadappa composed some songs in praise of Tirumala Nayaka.

### **Romantic touch to divine love**

It was a time when the erotic sentiment dominated court poetry. No other sentiment received as much attention and support as did romance. So Varadappa too composed his songs based on this sentiment in a manner delightful and delectable to all.

Varadappa's songs received wide acclaim as a confluence of dance, poetry and music. The theme of his songs was pure universal love. But it was devotion disguised as romance. Devotees and scholars were inspired by the deep love of divine that ran as an undercurrent in his songs. And the common people

were captivated by the fine erotic love and the great sweetness of the Telugu idiom in his songs. Such was the splendour of Varadappa's songs.

### **What an accomplishment !**

Tirumala Nayaka was at once taken in by the expansiveness of Varadappa's thought. He perceived that Varadappa was a mature intellect. A feeling of devotion for Varadappa developed among the court poets. They were astonished as to how, basing on the sentiment of love, he was able to write about divine essence so effortlessly and freely in such a naturally delicate style.

### **That temple - an exquisite creation**

Varadappa did not remain in Madurai for very long. He won fame and honour in a short time that he was at the court of Tirumala Nayaka. He composed some songs in praise of Tirumala Nayaka. The temple of Goddess Meenakshi in Madurai was a marvel. It was a great monument of art. It did not appear to be built by mere mortals. The temple seemed to be the creation of some divinely blessed souls who were perfected in their worship of art. Such was the splendour of the temple structure. Varadappa visited the temple everyday during his stay there. He used to go there to worship the Goddess.

### **Siva Kanchi : Vishnu Kanchi**

From Madurai, Varadappa went to Kanchi, an ancient city. It was the cradle of many religions which

complemented each other. It was the place where not only Shaivism and Vaishnavism were approached but also Buddhism and Jainism were sheltered. The temple spires there touched the sky. The city of Kanchi comprised two divisions called the Siva Kanchi and Vishnu Kanchi.

The temples of Ekambareswara and Kamakshi Devi in Siva Kanchi were excellent. There was a very old mango tree in the premises of Ekambareswara temple. As per local history Kamakshi Devi meditated on Siva sitting under that tree. The four branches of the tree bore mango fruits of four different varieties and tastes. That was the speciality of that tree. Moreover, the four branches of the tree were also considered to stand for the four Vedas.

The temple of God Varadarajaswami in Vishnu Kanchi was a splendid and a marvelous one. Varadappa was astonished on seeing the temple spire which consisted of seven storeys. Varadarajaswami was seated in the first storey. The temple of his consort Goddess Lakshmi was nearby.

### **My life is blessed**

No sooner he saw the God, then Varadappa composed songs and began to sing in praise of Varadarajaswami in devotional fervour. In that moment he felt that his life was blessed. He was greatly elated on worshipping the God Varadaraja whom he loved more than his life. He felt enriched by the worship.

Next to Muvva Gopala it was only the God Varadaraja who attracted him most. The God was his paramour. He, Varadappa was the God's beloved. Enveloped by that divine feeling he felt a lasting joy.

Varadappa's devotion to Varadarajaswami reached its height in Kanchi. He used to sit motionless in meditation leaning against a pillar in some corner of the temple.

### **An unforgettable sweet experience**

On completion of the God's services one night, the temple priest closed the temple doors and went away. Varadappa, absorbed in meditation, was sitting there motionless. The priest did not notice Varadappa who was there in the temple.

Varadappa gained consciousness as the day was breaking. He opened his eyes. He felt that he saw the Goddess returning quickly to her own Sanctorum from the Lord's pavilion of repose. This marvelous sight inspired Varadappa. He saw that the plaited hair of the Lord's consort bedecked with *gojjangi* flowers was loose. The ornament around her neck was knotted. Her large eyes were clouded with sleep. Her gait was unsteady. She took slow steps as two of her companions held her by the arms on either side.

That marvelous scene left an indelible impression on his blemishless mind. Having seen it with his eyes he could not but give that beautiful scene a poetic

form. At once the sweetest of sweet songs broke out from his lips.

**Maguva tana kelikamandiramumu vedalen  
Vagakada, maa kanchivarada! tellavare  
nanuchu || Ma ||**

**Vidajaru gojjangi viridanda jadatonu  
Kadu chikkuvadi penagu kantasaritonu  
niduda kannuladeru nidura mabbutonu  
todari padayugamuna tadabadu nada tonu  
|| Ma ||**

**Sogasi sogayani valapuchupulatonu  
.....  
irugadala kydandalichu tarunulatonu  
paramatma muvvagopala tellavare nanuchu  
|| Ma ||**

The lady went to her chambers

O' pleasure seeker, our lord Varada of Kanchi,  
that it is day // The lady //

With the *gojjangi* flowers slipping from her plait

With her much knotted necklace jostling

Her large eyes clouded with sleep

As her feet faltered in her step // The lady //

With beautiful untiring looks of love

.... ....

As young companions held her by arms

O', supreme soul, Muvva Gopala, that it is day

// The lady //

This was a beautiful, memorable scene in  
Varadayya's life.

### **Journey to Tanjore**

On the following day the priests were surprised to find Varadayya in the temple. They considered him to be a person of virtuous deeds. They thought that he was a great man who had spiritual affinity with the God himself. Varadayya stayed in Kanchi only for a month. While he was still there in Kanchi, Vijayaraghavanayaka -- king of the city invited him. Varadayya went immediately to Tanjavur.

### **Do lotuses need to invite honeybees ?**

Before his visit to Madurai earlier, Varadayya went to the court of Raghunatha Nayaka, the ruler of Tanja city. For some reason, not only did the king not receive Varadayya well, but also questioned him as to the purpose of his visit. Varadayya could have been annoyed at this. Instead, he answered as follows:

**Tamudamevattu rarthulu  
kramamerigina datakadaku, rammannara  
kamalambulunna chotiki  
bhramarambula nachyutendra  
Raghunathanrupa!**

Those who are seekers come on their own  
To the patron who knows about the worthy

Have they been asked to come to the pond of lotuses

Those honey bees, O' Achutendra King Raghunatha!"

Varadayya did not stay there. He left the city immediately. But later on, hearing about Varadayya's love for the divine and the greatness of his compositions, when Raghunatha Nayaka - a connoisseur of art invited him, Varadayya went back to Tanjavur.

### **Fine Arts were crowned**

It was during the days of Vijayanagara Empire that many Telugu warriors established kingdoms in the south and ruled them. The Nayaka kings were among them. Raghunatha Vijayaraghava was a man of aesthetic temper, a great scholar and a patron of fine arts. His court was the abode of Goddess Saraswathi. Such patronage that the king gave to the arts was not extended in any age and in any court.

After the fall of Krishnadevaraya's Empire, poets, scholars and artists migrated to the south for want of patronage. Raghunatha Nayaka donated a township called Achutapuram to the Kuchipudi Bhagavatas. It was also called as "Melattur." Some of the Kuchipudi Bhagavatas settled there.

### **Saraswathi Bhavanam**

Raghunatha Nayaka was a great poet. He composed fine *prabandhas* and dramas. He can be

called as the father of drama and theatre in Telugu. He had a theatre built in his palace. He devoted his whole life for shaping Tanjavur into a centre of art. The Saraswathi Mahal in Tanjavur is the fruit of the prayers of this connoisseur of art.

### **Lakshmi Bhavanam**

It was quite a novel palace of knowledge. No wonder that literature of the whole world could be found in it. Under the patronage of that great king, women also were equally skilled in all the fine arts along with men. Lakshmi Bhavanam which was especially the cradle of women's literary pursuits stood witness to it.

### **The lovely court of Raghunatha**

There were many famous poets like Madhuravani, Ramabhadramba, Krishnaji and Rangajamma in Raghunatha's court. The king honoured Madhuravani with a shower of gold coins. She composed the *Ramayana* up to Sundarakanda in Sanskrit. She was adept at composing a hundred *slokas* in half of a *ghadiya* i.e, in twelve minutes. She was a scholar who could compose poetry in six languages extempore. Ramabhadramba was another poet who was held in high esteem by Raghunatha Nayaka. She wrote a *kavya* in twelve cantos on the king. When a poetress named Krishnaji gave her a tricky line to be developed into a full poem in a specific meter, Ramabhadramba did not only meet the challenge but also rendered it into

Telugu. Rangajamma was also a great poet. But for some reason she did not become as famous as the others during Raghunatha's time.

### **The son who excelled his father**

Vijayaraghava, who came to the throne after his father Raghunatha Nayaka, was more renowned than his father in the field of letters. He sheltered many poets and poetesses and he used to spend all his time in their company enjoying the pursuit of music, literature and dance. In fact no other king did as much service to the field of literature as Vijayaraghava had done. His own compositions outnumbered those written by others during his reign. It was said that his words - *yakshaganas*, *prabandhas* and other poetic compositions - were about forty in number.

### **The victorious court of Vijayaraghava**

There were great scholars and poets such as Kalayya, Satakratu and many others in the court of Vijayaraghava. The court poet Kamarasa Venkatapathi Somayaji was a man of unequalled erudition. He wrote a play called "Vijayaraghavachandrika Vilasam". He was a great composer and a musician. Rangajamma was very famous among the poets of her days. She was a great scholar and a famous dancer. She was the unwedded wife of Vijayaraghava. Although Vijayaraghava was sensuous in his pleasures, he was also a great devotee. He was known as 'Mannarudasu'. Rangajamma wrote a *prabandha* named

"Mannarudasa Vilasam" describing the exploits of Vijayaraghava. As desired by the king she also wrote the story "Usha Parinayam" in meter.

### **This man should be defamed**

Rangajamma had not seen a composer and singer like Varadayya earlier. Hence, she developed a deep affection for him. She used to adore his songs very much and she adopted them for her dance. For a new composer to have gained such high respect was like a thorn in the flesh to the rest of the poets in the court. So, they decided to make the king unfavourable towards Varadayya.

### **The allegations against Varadayya**

Varadayya used the inferior markers 'hey' and 'thou' in addressing Vijayaraghava in his songs. By bringing this to the king's notice the court poets thought that they could prejudice him and make him hate Varadayya. They did not also like the colloquial language which Varadayya used in his songs. They were of the opinion that poetry should be elevated and it should be solemn in style. They were also of the view that his songs were full of objectionable eroticism and as such were also incapable of inducing elevated thoughts into the minds of people.

One day during their conversation when they found the king in a pleasant mood, they made a personal attack on Varadayya. They expressed severe displeasure at his colloquial style and the way he

addressed the king. Varadappa answered them in the following way.

### **A fitting reply**

“My love for the king is greater than my regard for him... As a person he deserves my love. As a king he is worthy of my honour. When I address him in my songs I think of him as a human being. I invoke my deity also in the same way. The way I address the God or the king bespeaks of my pure love for them.”

“And coming to my poetic style! My poetry is lyrical poetry. In contrast to the ordinary spoken style of everyday speech, there ought to be a specific style in the poetry intended only for scholars. But the style of lyrical poetry of dance and song should be within the grasp of all. It should be related to the spoken language and it should be close to it. This does not mean that lyrical poetry does not deserve literary status. It certainly has a special place of its own. My intention is to make the verbal structure natural, beautiful and easy to understand, instead of making it artificial and ornamental. Now about the erotic aspect - the erotic is only a supporting device in my poetry. All my songs are inspired by devotional love. My aim is to attribute divinity to desires of the flesh.”

### **Fill in this verse**

Varadappa’s reply pleased the king very much. The court poets were not satisfied with Varadappa’s explanation but they dared not justify their accusations

nor pass any more comments; hence they remained silent.

After this, Varadappa composed a song and left the last two lines incomplete. He requested the king to make the court poets complete the lines and went on his setuyatra -- pilgrimage to the sea.

### **Mohanangi reached Kanchi**

As promised to Mohanangi earlier, Varadappa sent a message her to about his arrival in Kanchi. Mohanangi who kept herself alive pining for Varadappa was waiting for that moment with eager eyes. She was overwhelmed by that news. She thought that her life was fulfilled. Escorted by her younger brother, she started for Kanchi. On reaching the place she went straight to the temple of Varadaraja swami.

But she was depressed on hearing that Varadappa had already left for Tanja city. The temple priests consoled her very much. They reassured her that Varadappa would come back to the temple for the deity’s darshan. They asked her to remain in the service of the deity there and arranged for her stay in Kanchi.

### **She breathed life into the songs with her performance**

Steadying her mind, Mohanangi waited for Varadappa’s arrival spending each moment as though it were an era. One day, on the repeated requests of

the temple authorities, she began to perform the songs composed by Varadappa one after another. Devotional love radiated in her performance. The people at the temple heard Varadappa sing the songs earlier but as Mohanangi gave the songs a dance form and performed them, they were absorbed in an aesthetic delight. Her dance postures and movements of the foot and hand seemed marvelous to them. They experienced a divine pleasure. The scholars became ecstatic at the expression she gave to the spiritual aspect in the song. They were unanimous in their appreciation on her performance. Varadappa being away, they began to show towards Mohanangi all the affection that they had for him.

Mohanangi was overjoyed to hear how when once, as the night dissolved at day break, Varadappa was inspired to sing a wonderful song describing the Goddess as she came out from the God's Sanctorum in beautiful terms and how everybody became ecstatic on hearing the song break out from his lips.

### **Where should one be ?**

"Varadappa now was not merely the Varada of Muvva Gopala. He had matured into a Varada of the wide world. The city of Kanchi had claimed him as her own," she thought. Her eyes grew weary waiting endlessly for him. There was no trace of Varadappa. Her life was centred on him. His absence became unbearable for her. Turning a deaf ear to the temple

priests who tried to reason with her to remain in Kanchi, she left with her brother for Tanjavur.

But ill luck followed her. She came to know that Varadappa had left for Rameswaram a few days before their arrival in Tanjavur. The news struck her like a thunderbolt. She wiggled. Tanjavur was a big city. She knew not where to go or what else to do. The sight of Varadappa alone could gladden her heart which was full of despair. She was depressed as she could meet Varadappa neither in Kanchi nor in Tanjavur. However.. she felt at home in Kanchi because of the regard and affection that the temple priests bestowed on her.

### **One should be cautious in conduct**

She did not feel like going to the king's court. The atmosphere of the court was strange to her. Her body bristled with fear on the pomp and show at the court. After much inquiry she came to know that Rangajamma -- a great scholar, a famous dancer and a person who held Varadappa in high esteem was the right person she should meet. Mohanangi also heard about the difference of opinion between Varadappa and the court poets. So she thought that she should be very careful in her conduct.

One evening she visited Rangajamma. It was for the first time that she would be seeing a lady of the court. This was a new experience for her. Rangajamma was a dignified person of impressive looks. Her countenance showed her generosity and kindness

clearly. At the very first sight Mohanangi developed a good impression about Rangajamma. Mohanangi's beauty and soft nature appealed at once to Rangajamma. For a minute both of them cast a long, affectionate glance at each other.

### **The test of love is estrangement**

Mohanangi narrated her sad story in detail to Rangajamma. Rangajamma consoled her in this way:

"I am really moved by your state; your state is really pitiable. There is none like Varadappa among contemporary poets and singers. His songs have won the admiration of all people. It is your good fortune that such a man has won your love. Don't be saddened by this separation. It is like a touchstone for your true love. Your love for Varadappa is facing the test of time. He will certainly come back here. He gave a song to the court poets the last two lines of which should be filled in by them. They should complete it by the time he returns or they will have to accept their defeat. Until he comes back you can remain under my care and watch the entertainments at the court. These are new to you. And you will gain much experience here."

Mohanangi was happy at the kindness shown by Rangajamma. She stayed there comfortably along with her brother under the care of Rangajamma.

### **The splendour of Srirangam**

After leaving Tanjavur Varadappa went to Srirangam. He was amazed on seeing the splendour

of the temple in Srirangam. With seven pavilions built around, it looked like a big city. The sight of the thousand pillared pavilion, the golden tinted tower of the temple and its twenty one pinnacles gave inexplicable joy to Varadappa. Scholars chanted the Vedas all the time in the temple. This made the hair on his body bristle with joy. The temple atmosphere was pleasant and sacred. It had a vast courtyard adorned by excellent sculptures which was a feast for the eye. It looked very much like Mahavishnu's abode on earth.

Varadappa entered the temple and saw the God Sriranganadha reclining on the great serpent. That beautiful sight engulfed Varadappa in a divine ecstasy. He became oblivious of this physical world for a while. The splendour of that place, the beauty of the temple inspired his heart. He remained in Srirangam worshipping the God Sriranganadha. He also composed some songs on the deity.

### **The beauty of Rameswaram**

Varadappa went to Rameswaram from Kanchi. He had been eager to visit that great place for a very long time. Varanasi in the north and Rameswaram in the south are pilgrim centres of great renown. It is believed that the Sivalingam in Rameswaram was installed by SriRama himself. Varadappa bathed in the sea and went into the temple.

The Sivalingam there was splendid. The temple art was marvellous. The lanes within the temple



premises lined by innumerable pillars captivated him. He was extremely happy as he was able to visit such a wonderful place.

### **Movva came to his mind**

It was a long time since he had left Movva. His mind went back to Movva Gopala. An intense desire to go back to Movva and see his deity filled his heart. At once he composed some songs in the fervour of devotion. He spent a month in Rameswaram. It was about six months since Varadappa had left Tanjavur. He wondered if the court poets completed the lines of the song he had given them to fill in. So on his way to Movva from Rameswaram he decided to go to Tanjavur while visiting other holy places and Golconda.

### **Mohanangi's pining**

Mohanangi remained in Tanjavur for six months. She, who was under the care of Rangamma, felt that time had stopped passing. Her heart pined for Varadappa day and night. She prayed all the time for the grace of God Muvva Gopala. She was away from the simple, beautiful life of the common folk. Her heart longed for her joyous former life. She craved to go back to Movva along with Varadappa and spend her life peacefully and happily in the worship of Muvva Gopala. She waited for his arrival with bated breath. Each minute seemed to pass like an era for her.

### **Humbling of pride was inevitable**

One evening Rangamma told Mohanangi: "Recently some pilgrims came back from

Rameswaram. They said that Varadappa would be returning to Tanjavur in a week. So, stop being sad and rejoice. Accompany me to the court and perform the songs of Varadappa. The court poets have racked their brains to complete the riddle in Varadappa's song. But it was beyond their ability. They did not know how to solve it. It all seemed to be very puzzling to them. They did not have any idea of the feelings in the heart of a romantic heroine. They pleaded for my help too to complete the song."

Varadappa understood the essence of aesthetics very well. He gained a lot of experience of the world. The heroines in his songs are not unreal and imaginary but they are real and abound in love. Mere scholarship will not help in understanding the feelings of these women. The court poets invited needless trouble for themselves because of their hatred for Varadappa. They are racking their brains puzzled as to how to complete the song. Pitted against Varadappa it is certain that they will be utterly humbled at his hands."

### **Mohanangi's beautiful aesthetic performance**

Mohanangi was elated on hearing Rangamma speak thus. She agreed to go with her to the king's court and perform to the songs of Varadappa. Rangamma was happy. She attired Mohanangi in such apparel and ornaments that suited for the dance performance. Mohanangi was endowed with natural beauty. With a little make up she looked like a divine

damsel. Both of them went to the royal court. King Vijayaraghava was happy to hear that Mohanangi would be performing the songs of Varadappa on that day. He had already heard about her life story from Rangajamma. He was also interested in seeing the performance of Varadappa's songs on the stage.

Mohanangi began her dance. She had been out of practice for three years and hence she faltered at first. She felt inhibited about performing in the presence of the king, before the learned men, the poets and dancers. But gathering courage she began to dance to Varadappa's song in a most unusually beautiful manner. She was deeply involved in performing Varadappa's song. A divine joy glistened in her eyes. Her apt hand and foot movements which were suited to the song and her expression which reflected the divine feeling made her dance excellent and special. King Vijayaraghava was very happy on seeing Mohanangi's performance of the song. The audience forgot about themselves and were transported to a world of aesthetic delight.

### **Unforgettable moment of sweetness**

Then there was a flutter in the court as Varadappa entered the place. King Vijayaraghava was overjoyed on seeing Varadappa.

Varadappa was elated when he saw Mohanangi's dance. Mohanangi was stunned on seeing Varadappa. Her long wait showed itself up in her eyes. Tears of

joy rolled down like a stream. She was overwhelmed with joy. Varadappa touched her hand gently in an expression of his love. It was a memorable sweet moment for both of them.

### **The song can be completed by Varadappa alone**

Then Varadappa was eager to know if the song which he had given was completed or not. The king cast an enquiring look at the court poets. The court poets were startled. They were at a loss to give an answer. None could utter a word. The chief poet Somayaji stood up and said:

"We tried our best to find out to which class the heroine of Varadappa's song belongs and what her feelings would be. But that has eluded our imagination. We also approached Rangajamma with the hope that a lady would be more aware of what is there in another lady's heart. But she was also of the opinion that it is not that easy to know what was there in the mind of Varadappa - a man of an exceptionally brilliant mind. Hence, we request Varadappa himself to complete the song."

### **Varadappa's song for completion :**

This was the song that Varadappa gave them to fill in and complete.

### **Pallavi:**

Vadaraka po po ve - vadela vacheenee - vaddu  
ravaddanave

**Anu pallavi:**

Adiyoka yugamu vere janmamipudu  
 Atadevaro nenevaro O cheliyaro  
 ||Vadaraka||

Nicha nichalu nede vacheeni - repina  
 vachenanuchu madilo

Nicha gabalu vedi nitturpulacheta nintiro  
 pedavulendi

hechina vennela ratrulu ennenno gadapitinika  
 netimatale || vada||

valapu kadidekada vachunanuchu teruvulujuchi  
 vesariti

nelalenchu yalasiti - niluparani prema - nemmadi  
 nadachukonti

kalakantha pikanadamulu minchu madhumasa  
 mulu gadapi teevathi muchatalikanele  
 ||vada||

Bhamaro! sakunamu ladigiti muvvagopaludu  
 vachunanuchu  
 kaminchi nathula galayu chelulajuchi - karagi  
 chintanonditi

**Pallavi:** Do not prattle - away, away - if he  
 comes at all, no, o' tell him not to,

**Anupallavi:** That was another era, this is a  
 different birth

Who is it now and what am I to him, my friends  
 //II Do not//

Always, always waiting for him to come or thinking  
 that he would

Come at least tomorrow

Really, due to my warm sighs o', my pal,  
 As my lips become dry

Very many a moonlight night have I spent  
 And why merely talk //II Do not//

I am tired of waiting for him, for my beloved to  
 come

Telling the months tired am I - of love I could not  
 hold

I languished

The songs of birds filled the sweet months

Past is our sweeter cooing //Do not II //

O, women! I prayed for the signs of his coming,  
 For Muvva Gopala to arrive

Seeing the sweet hearts in union with their beloveds  
 Overwhelmed, I became sad

.... ....  
 .... ....

The last two lines were to be filled in . The heroine in this song was a wedded lady. The great delay in her husband's arrival left her exhausted because of her long wait. She asked for several signs of his coming. She saw many other damsels enjoying conjugal love. But for some reason her heart changed and she became thoughtful.

What could have changed her mind? What would she sing next? The last two lines of the song which would speak her mind were to be filled in.

### **Perhaps we would be put to shame !**

Generally anyone in such a situation as the heroine was in the song would get very angry. Or she would be overwhelmed by a desire for her lover. Or, being helpless she would endure her plight silently. One of these three emotional responses was possible from the lady in the song. The court poets intended to complete the song thus. Yet, soon it occurred to them that there was nothing special about it. Anybody could do it. Varadayya would never give them such a simple puzzle to solve. They suspected that it had some special meaning which was beyond the range of their perception. They could not think any further. They thought that instead of filling the last part of the song with an inane something, it would be dignified to accept defeat. Hence, on behalf of all the poets Somayaji the court poet expressed inability and requested Varadayya to complete the song.

### **Varadayya completed it :**

Varadayya at once rose to complete the song thus:

**‘Rama! Rama! ee menitho nika vani  
momuchudavalena modati pondechalu’.**

"Rama, Rama! How can I ever look at Him with these eyes?

The first union is enough."

The poets were stunned and they looked at each other in surprise. It seemed that they could not understand the purport of the lines. Varadayya noticed their gestures and said:

"The heroine's love here is not physical but it is devotional. Her love is quite different from the love of those other women whom she was seeing. There was no propriety in seeking physical love from Gopala as they did from their mates. She was disappointed at first but later becoming wiser she repented and soothed her mind. She felt that her first union with Muvva Gopala was itself a treasure for her which she would cherish. That was enough for her."

### **Varadayya's usage**

The poets of Vijayaraghava's court were astonished at Varadayya's fine insight . They paid tributes to his unusual ability to express the nature of women from different perspectives and their feeling for the divine in a noble way. The king and the poets praised the excellence of his songs immensely. They also began

to follow the path laid by Varadayya and began to give place for lyrical poetry in their works. Somayaji in his play called "Vijayaraghavachandrika Viharam" composed many songs in the manner of Varadayya's songs. These even gave the impression of being written by Varadayya himself. King Vijayaraghava also wrote many songs after the manner of Varadayya.

### **The dream comes true**

After a while, having decided to return to Movva, Varadayya sought King Vijayaraghava's permission to leave Tanjavur. The king granted him his wish very reluctantly. On the king's request Mohanangi danced to the song "Do not prattle, go, go away" on the last day in the court which delighted everybody. Varadayya felt very happy because his dream of singing the glory of Muvva Gopala through his compositions was fulfilled to a large extent. Appreciating all of them wholeheartedly he left the kingdom of Tanjavur with Mohanangi.

### **A true companion - pupil**

From Tanjavur Varadayya started for Golconda. He wanted to worship Varadarajaswami in Kanchi once again. So instead of going directly to Golconda, he went to Kanchi. Both Varadayya and Mohanangi spent time in the service of the God there to their heart's content.

On the request of the temple priests Mohanangi danced excellently to the song which Varadayya wrote

describing the scene in which the Goddess was seen leaving the chamber of the God -- "the Goddess went out of the chamber of repose."

That song was the prime jewel in the golden chain of Varadayya's lyrical compositions. Mohanangi excelled in capturing the Goddess's expression and demeanour as she came out of the chamber. The song written by a greatly inspired Varadayya which assumed life in Mohanangi's performance was aesthetically very appealing. She forgot for a while that she was only dancing to the song. She felt that she was the divine consort herself. Varadayya went into rapture on seeing Mohanangi give life and a visual form through her performance to the song that he wrote.

He was convinced that it was none but only Mohanangi who had the maturity and ability to grasp the deep feeling of divinity embedded in his songs and perform them. She was the true companion of his life and his pupil. Mohana's exquisite beauty, her otherworldly performance and the sweetness of Varadayya's song moved their hearts and plunged the audience into aesthetic delight. They felt that they were somewhere in the land of celestial song - gandharva loka - a float on joy.

In a single voice they expressed their thanks to Varadayya and Mohanangi. Varadayya was deeply impressed by their regard and affection; he conveyed his appreciation in many ways and started for Golconda.

### **I must attain oneness with Muvva Gopala**

The glory of Varadayya as a composer and news of the "Kshetragna" title with which he was honoured reached Golconda by then. Varadayya promised to return to Golconda for a short while in his earlier visit to the place. So, the Nawab Kutubshah waited eagerly for his arrival. Kutubshah was a lover of fine arts. He was a man of aesthetic temperament. There were many composer singers in his court. Yet he developed an unbound affection and regard for Varadayya.

Varadayya reached Golconda as promised. The Nawab was very happy. He felicitated him in a very impressive manner. He invited Varadayya to remain in his court permanently. But Kshetrayya was unwilling to do so. He told the Nawab about his desire to visit some more places singing in the praise of Muvva Gopala, and return to Movva where he wishes to become one with the divine. The Nawab could not turn down his plea.

### **One should have such self confidence**

There was a composer musician named Tulasi Murty in the court of the Nawab. He was a good scholar but he had no confidence in his own abilities. He could not write a poem or a lyric with assurance. So, one day the Nawab, just to tease him, said:

"Tulasi Murty! See how effortlessly and fluently and with such swiftness Kshetrayya makes his compositions. It is my wish that you should also accomplish similarly."

Murty was flustered by the Nawab's words.

He replied weakly, "Kshetrayya is endowed with the wealth of divine power. Muvva Gopala is there behind Kshetrayya to inspire him. It is not possible for all to compose songs like him." Being evasive Murty was in the habit of expressing his inability again and again. In addition, he would not even try to defend his poetic style. So the Nawab wanted to tease him a little. He did not like Murty to be so inactive in that manner, without a spirit of challenge. He wanted the man to be creative and pro active.

Looking in the direction where Kshetrayya was, the Nawab said:

"Kshetrayya! We are aware of your potentialities and abilities. There is none equal to you among the composer musicians. We are neither qualified nor suitable to test you. Yet, it is with a special intention that the idea of subjecting you to a very difficult test occurred to me. You must write fifteen hundred songs in a span of forty days. In truth, it is not my intention either to test you or subject you to irrational distress. But my attempt is to see this kindle a new zeal in the poets of my court and inspire them. It is for this reason that I am heaving this great burden on to you. You should pardon me."

Kshetrayya was unruffled. He accepted the challenge gladly thrown at him by the Nawab and said, "By the immense grace of Muvva Gopala, I shall

compose fifteen hundred songs within the stipulated time."

Addressing Murty, casting a significant look in his direction, the Nawab said, "Composer musicians should have self confidence and emotional drive, man!"

### **I must somehow put him to shame**

Murty could not sleep that night. He was very much upset because the Nawab humiliated him amidst all in the court. He was not jealous of Varadayya. Yet, it was because of Varadayya that he fell into a strait and faced this humiliation. He used to write a few poems praising the Nawab and spend his time in peace. But he was humbled because of Kshetrayya's arrival. Murty thought that the Nawab would insult him further unless he planned to create some hurdle in the way of Kshetrayya thus preventing him from completion of the songs.

### **See that he does not write those songs**

Murty was on the lookout for a suitable plan. Finally he thought of the court dancer Kamala. He thought that she could be of help to him. He recalled that during his stay earlier in Golconda, Kamala became enamoured of Varadayya but Varadayya insulted her by rejecting her advances. So, at once he went to Kamala's house and schemed with her. He pleaded with her to draw Varadayya somehow into her fold, and distract his mind so that he would not complete the task set by the Nawab.

### **Reckon with my pleading**

Kamala's infatuation for Varadayya had not diminished. She was waiting for a chance to draw him into her arms. Following what Murty said now was the time for her to fulfil her desire or to take revenge on Varadayya. She started to think about a plan to make Kshetrayya come to her without a trace of suspicion.

One day, Varadayya was returning to his quarters after a closeted meeting with the Nawab. Kamala encountered him on the way. She saluted him and said, "Sir, I have heard of your excellence. Forgive me for causing you unhappiness due to my ignorance by my act of physical infatuation earlier. Please visit my house briefly today and grant me my wish."

### **The world is full of love**

When Varadayya first set foot in Golconda, his mindset was different. His view had altered now. There was no room for any doubt or suspicion in his mind. To him the whole world seemed to be filled with love. He was convinced about his belief in the philosophy of purity of love which he gained from his visits to holy places and kings' courts, singing the greatness of Muvva Gopala. Now it was his intention to extend the philosophy of love to all living creatures. This noble idea was strong in his mind at that time. Hence, when Kamala requested him to visit her house he could not refuse.

**He could be played with like a toy**

He stepped into her house. She displayed a lot of devotion towards him. She attended on him in many ways. And finally she dropped a love potion secretly into the fruit drink which she handed to him. The unsuspecting Varadayya drank it without any hesitation. The potion started its work. Varadayya noticed some change coming over him. He wanted to go away from the place. But his mind was not under his control. He sat back in the place.

Kamala cast enchanting glances at him. She tried to bring him under her control with all her charm. She got almost very close to him. At that moment she looked like a divine damsel to him. Yet, struggling to control himself he tried to move from the place. But he could not get up and go away. He dillydallied.

Kamala could see the change in him. But she decided not to yield to him immediately. She felt that under the influence of the love potion he could not but surrender totally to her charms. She decided to keep him at arm's length to enhance his interest in her. She was convinced that he would come back searching for her. So she thanked him and took the initiative to send him away.

**There was neither peril nor praise**

Varadayya somehow found the way back to his dwelling. Mohanangi was aghast on seeing him in that state. She understood that his mind was disturbed. It

seemed to her that he was perhaps distressed over the compositions which were to be completed within the set time. So she said:

"Varada! You are not yourself. Your mind is distracted. The major part of the period set by the Nawab is over. Only a few days are left. You have not commenced your writing yet. You are perhaps worried about keeping your word of meeting the challenge. Do not worry. Let us go back to Muvva. You do not have a desire to become the court poet, do you? So, there is no praise if you do not compose the songs nor will any harm befall you if you do not complete the songs."

But Varadayya did not agree with her. He said that having agreed to make the compositions it would be unbecoming of him to leave it unfinished. Mohanangi did not reply. Then, all of a sudden he began to leave the place.

**Kamala was stunned**

Mohanangi shuddered in fear. She followed him without being noticed. She became suspicious on seeing his condition. She also suspected that he had perhaps fallen for the charms of some courtesan. She observed him from a distance. She saw him enter the house of Kamala. Her suspicion grew strong. But she hesitated to enter Kamala's house. She waited for a long while for him to come out. But there was no sign of his exit. She caught her breath and entered Kamala's house.



In there, Kamala was dancing. Varadayya was looking at her as though bound by a spell. Mohanangi grew dizzy with anger. Her eyes became bloodshot. Her brow knit in disgust, casting fierce looks at Kamala. Mohanangi pulled Varadayya away from the place. Kamala was taken aback by this unexpected event. Yet she was sure thought that Varadayya could not stay without coming back again.

### **This really is a conspiracy**

Mohanangi wept aloud on coming back to their house. She pleaded with him to tell her all about it. Varadayya told her completely about how, unable to refuse Kamala's request he went to her house, how she served him a drink, and how after that he could not resist the desire to see her and going back to her and all the rest.

Mohanangi suspected that Kamala administered some potion in the drink that she gave to Varadayya for enchanting him. Immediately she called a doctor and made him give an antidote to it. With that Varadayya regained his composure. On enquiry it was found that all this was the conspiracy hatched by Kamala and Murty for the undoing of Varadayya.

Murty and Kamala came to know about it all. They were afraid that Varadayya would speak about it to the Nawab. They held their hearts in their palms anticipating danger. But Varadayya was a man of generous temperament. He did not let any of it break out. As usual, every day he continued to go to the court. The

Nawab continued to remind him about the compositions. But Varadayya was unperturbed and detached.

Only one day was left for the accomplishment.

### **Writing of the songs was complete**

Kshetravyya had not commenced his writing. Mohanangi was getting agitated. She started praying to Muvva Gopala with an unwavering steadiness. That whole day Kshetravyya also sat fixed in deep meditation. Suddenly there was a divine glow in him. He felt that Muvva Gopala had entered his being. Joy and enthusiasm bubbled up in him. By daybreak all the fifteen hundred songs were completed.

The morning air blew gently. Kshetravyya's body bristled. He opened his eyes and looked in front of him where the composition of songs lay. He could not even recollect whether it was himself who wrote these songs or it was the job of Muvva Gopala. Mohana was asleep by his side, unaware of all that took place. He touched her gently. She woke up and saw the collection. She was beside herself with joy. Her eyes filled with tears of happiness because Muvva Gopala had blessed Varadayya.

All were stunned on hearing the news. They experienced an unprecedented emotion in their hearts. The Nawab's joy knew no bounds. Tulasi Murty was ashamed of the plot he hatched with Kamala in order to break the vow of Kshetravyya. He praised

Kshetrayya and the splendour of his lyrical compositions.

Kshetrayya took leave of the Nawab and left Golconda. He wanted to visit some more holy places. He did not want to go to kings court anymore. First they sent Mohanangi's brother to Movva before starting on their journey to the place.

### **Kshetrayya in Bhadradi**

From Golconda, Mohana and Kshetrayya went straight to Bhadradi. Those were the days when the temple of Rama was being built on the banks of Godavari. It was coming up beautifully. The site of temple was captivating. The river Godavari flowed gaily by the side of the temple which was under construction. The view of the river flowing from the hillock where the temple was being built was very enchanting. That whole place was part of a forest area. Kshetrayya worshipped and sang in praise of Rama. The ideal life of Sri Ramachandra left a profound impression on his mind.

### **The *darshan* of Mallikarjuna**

From Bhadradi, Kshetrayya and Mohanangi proceeded to Srigiri. It was a difficult sojourn through the forest area for them. It took them many days to reach the place. The Srisailam temple was a huge one. It looked like a big fortress. The river Krishna flowed by the side of the temple.

It was widely believed that the Sivalinga there rose from the bowels of the earth and that it had a very high place among the Shaiva sites. Kshetrayya was spell bound by the calm that pervaded the place, the great height of the temple and the splendour of the surroundings. He composed a few songs on the deity Sri Mallikarjuna.

### **Kshetrayya in Tirumala**

From there, they went to Tirumala. The God Sri Venkateswara was somewhere up in the Hills. Climbing up the Seven Hills was a task which involved much labour. But it was a place which was more beautiful than the abode of Gods. The beauty of nature there was a joy to look at. Yet climbing up the hills one after another was a spine chilling experience. It was like an ordeal by fire for the devotees. But all the toil did not matter when one reached the summit and set eyes on the peaceful atmosphere there and on the idol of the God.

Kshetrayya had been very eager to visit that place for a long time. At last his dream was fulfilled. He became ecstatic on seeing the great divine figure of the God. As he looked at the idol of the deity he felt like remaining there gazing on the glorious divine form more and more.

There was some magnificent attraction in the idol. It was so inspiring an image that a mere glance would induce joy and righteousness of thought in the devotees.

In no other place, Kshetrayya saw such an image as that of Sri Venkateswara which intoxicated people and made them forgetful of themselves. The God's form was very kingly and verily dignity itself. Every particle there seemed very sacred to Kshetrayya.

At the entrance to the temple there was a bronze statue of Srikrishnadevaraya. By its sides stood the figures of his queens. He endowed many gifts and lands to the temple. Srikrishnadevaraya had immense faith and devotion in SriVenkateswara. The God was the deity of his clan. It is said that the God borrowed a huge amount for his marriage from Kubera. Kaliyuga was the period given to clear that debt. It is for this reason that devotees continue to offer such gifts as they could to the God to repay the debt to Kubera.

There are many mythological stories relating to the God Sri Venkateswara. Kshetrayya was curious to know them all. He was surprised when he learnt about them. Mohana and Kshetrayya remained in that place for a month in the worship of the lord of the Seven Hills. He thought of Annamayya a great composer who worshipped the God with his delightful devotional songs. Just as Kshetrayya wrote in praise of Muvva Gopala, Annanacharya offered his prayers in the form of sweetest of songs.

### **Gopala permeated the world**

Kshetrayya visited many places in the south. He went to about twenty holy places. He had spent a few

years in the courts of the kings of Golconda, Madurai and Tanjavur. Wherever he went, he sang in the praise of Gopala. In his view Gopala existed everywhere. Whatever may be the place which he visited, the divine auspicious form of Muvva Gopala appeared to him in the deity there. Hence he had no difference of any kind with any people. He gleaned the affection of persons of all religions.

It was almost a decade since he left Movva. Being away from Muvva Gopala, it became intolerable for him then. He felt that the God was asking him to come back. Mohana was able to recognize the mental maturity in Varadayya. He was not very advanced in his years. Yet he seemed to have aged to her gaze. They decided to go back to Movva without any further delay.

### **That was divine love :**

Mohana and Varadayya started from Tirumala and came back straight to Movva. That was the birth day of Sri Krishna, the eighth day of the month of Sravana. By then Mohana's brother who had returned to Movva some time ago, told them all about the great fame and honour that Kshetrayya won as a poet, composer and singer in the southern region.

The whole village was very very eager to see their man Varadayya who became famous as Kshetrayya and Kshetragna. Mohana and Varadayya went straight to the temple of Gopaladeva. It was ten years since

they had a glance of their God. Shedding tears of joy, their hands folded in prayer, they sang the God's praise to their heart's content.

A vast crowd gathered there from nearby places to have a look at Kshetrayya and Mohanangi. Kshetrayya was singing without a second thought and with only the God in his mind while Mohana danced to the song. At that moment she seemed to shine like a bright star. There was a divine glow on Varadayya's countenance. All those songs that he sang were crowned with the God's name - Gopala. Although these songs seemed to be erotic in nature, the otherworldliness of love that was the undercurrent which was exquisitely expressed in Mohana's performance swayed the deeply impressed audience. At that moment Varadayya and Mohana seemed to them to be like the divine duo Radha and Krishna aloft on love.

### **Oneness with Gopala :**

Suddenly there appeared around Varadayya's face a halo of light. He appeared to be in a mood of divine ecstasy. He was immersed in singing the songs of Gopala. In a moment the glow in him left his body and entered into Movva Gopala. The God took him into his being.

Mohana continued to dance totally involved. Soon she realized that Varadayya attained the divine, that he was one with God. Tear drops filled the corners of

her eyes. She trembled experiencing the divine. Her eyes closing, she gently dropped on to Varadayya. The relation of the artistic duo Mohana and Varadayya was inseparable.

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