

Srinivasa Bala Bharati - 118
(*Children Series*)

KUCHELA

- Gannamaraju Saibaba

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Telugu Version
Ekkirala Krishnamacharya

English Translation
Gannamaraju Saibaba



Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams
Tirupati

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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 needs 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 have brought out these booklets in Telugu for children under Srinivasa Bala Bharathi 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 way. We hope that more and more children will read them and profit by them.

I congratulate Dr. R. Sri Hari, Editor-in-Chief, TTD for his efforts in bringing out the English translations of SRINIVASA BALA BHARATI 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 the Lord


Executive Officer
Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams
Tirupati

FOREWORD

To-day's children are to-morrow'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 tenants 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. B. Raghunathacharyulu under "Balabharati 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 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.

R. Sri Hari
Editor-in-Chief
T.T.D.

KUCHELA

God showers his divine grace on living beings in many ways. Whenever he comes down on earth in human form, he mingles with his kith and kin. He spends his time as a boy amongst boys, as an adult amongst adults. While spending so, with his blissful touch, he uplifts them according to their deserts depending upon their faith in him. There will be some significance to the incarnations of God. With whom so ever he moves, he is not influenced and their personality blossoms. Just as the influence of a magnet falls upon the pieces of iron, the influence of such a great person falls upon them. Of all the avatars (incarnations) Sri Krishnavatara is a wholesome one. Sudama is one of his friends. He is called Kuchela.

Boyhood friendship

Kuchela was the boyhood friend of Krishna. When they were young, they studied together. Their teacher was Sandipani Maharshi. Of all the disciples, Kuchela was a good boy. He had all the good qualities of being a friend of Krishna. His heart was pure like a mirror. He had neither desires nor passions for anything. Being good natured he received education with discipline. He had no strong likes and dislikes. He had no qualities of quarrelling and arguing with other students. Being



peaceful in mind he spent his time without hurting anybody. He loved righteous behaviour. He kept his mind and senses under his control by perfect celibacy. Brahmajnana was inherent in him. His was of noble birth.

Sudama became Kuchela

Despite all these, he suffered from acute poverty. He had so much of self-respect that he did not ask anybody for any kind of help. He never disclosed his privations. Sri Krishna observed his plight. The acts of his earlier birth were so strong that Krishna waited for a chance to help him. Kuchela completed his education at Gurukula, left it, grew old and married. He begot children, that too a number of children. There

is a proverb that “offspring are many to the poor”. As the members of the family increased, his poverty became more acute. He never felt sorry for his poverty. He did not mind though he was called ‘Kuchela’ by all. Kuchela means the wearer of old and torn clothes. But his original name was Sudama.

Always wore a smile

He earned his living by his ancestral occupation. Even the pittance he earned, he thought it as precious as gold and led a contented life utilising it fruitfully. Happiness and gentle smile never disappeared from his face. The person who knows the value of all things knows the value of money and happiness.

How to bear poverty

Let us observe the life of his wife. Her name was Vamakshi. She was a chaste woman born in a noble family. She was a deserving wife for him with all her good qualities. She cheerfully shared the pangs of poverty. Any privation if exceeds limits becomes unbearable. While experiencing the unbearable poverty, she worried a lot about her husband and children who suffered from starvation for days together. Whenever they suffered from tormenting hunger, they appeased their hunger with water. Unable to bear hunger at times they even fainted. Not knowing what to do they came

round their mother with a platter in their hands and cried, “Mother, give us a few morsels of food please”. She felt worried about their plight. One day she could not bear the suffering of her children. Their words like pins pierced her ears. She came slowly in reverence to her husband and said, “All our lives are under your control. I need not say anything. We are tormented by poverty in the house. But you have not thought of any remedy.”

Advice of Vamakshi

Hearing her words Kuchela fell into a reverie. No solution struck his mind. Again she intervened and said, “Sri Krishna is your boyhood friend, isn’t he? He is the incarnation of Srimannarayana. Once you go to him and have his sacred darsan. With that you can lift us from the darkness of poverty. The grace of Sri Krishna is like the ray of the Sun. Unless it falls upon us, there is no other way out. He is indeed Lord Almighty. Sri Krishna grants boons to the desirous. He loves his pure and kindly devotees. He pities them because they won’t aspire for anything. He is the sole refuge for the sufferers of any kind. As per the riches he is the husband of Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth. If he showers kindness, his kindness is an ocean. He lives at Kusasthali Nagar and receives the worship of Yadavas. (The place where Brahmins live is called

Kusasthali in Dwaraka). It’s enough if you go and visit him. You need not ask him. He showers riches upon us.

Sri Krishna the protector of the distressed

I need not say separately about him. He won’t neglect the faint-hearted who never think of him even in their dreams. He is not angry with the ill-mannered also. Whoever is in danger and difficulties and thinks of His feet, he will be relieved of his sufferings and would be granted what he wants. No wonder, he grants great riches to those who worship with steadfast devotion”.

How to approach him with empty hands?

He felt happy with her words and understood her good heart. He decided to pay a visit to redeem himself from this and the other world. Then he said to his wife, “It is good to seek shelter at the divine lotus feet of Sri Krishna. How shall I visit him with empty hands? Is there anything with us to take him as a gift?” Hearing his words she thought they would submit what they had. She brought the puffed



rice from the house, put it in the torn cloth worn by her husband and tied it. At once Kuchela started for Dwaraka.

What a gulf between Sri Krishna and me?

While going Kuchela had so many doubts. Courage weakens and doubts predominate in the mind of a poverty-stricken person. "How can it be possible to enter Dwaraka? Sri Krishna lives somewhere in the palatial buildings. He is God for all, oh! How many millions of people wait and stand in a queue for his darsan? Would it be possible for me to visit him? On the way the gate – keepers may obstruct me from entering his palace. How shall I go by crossing them? 'O Brahmin, stop here. Why are you going into the palace? What shall I give them if objected? Should I give a tip and go inside? What do I have in order to give them? With these disturbing thoughts he started thinking, "Who knows what happens? If I am lucky, Krishna may show mercy on me. If he knows of my arrival, will he ignore me? Oh; what an untoward word! I should not think like that". With these conflicting thoughts he entered Dwaraka.

Ah! What a bliss!

He walked along the royal road for long and crossed many gates of compounds. As he proceeded,

he found a beautiful palatial building in front of him. All were ladies moving here and there. There were ten thousand ladies in that building. The towers and walls were decorated with gold. He understood that it was Krishna's dwelling palace. His heart leapt in ecstatic delight. Tears of joy trickled down from his eyes. It might be the residence of one of his eight wives. Kuchela went straight into the building. Just in front of him Sri Krishna appeared. He was engaged in lively conversation with his beloved wife on a soft swinging cot. How handsome he was? He looked like a Cupid for the eye of Cupid himself. His body was black like black lily, eyes filled with milk of human kindness. He wore around His neck the flashing Koustubha diamond. He had a slender waist like that of a lion. He wore shining yellow silken garments. His ears were bright with Makarakundalas. His personality was unique. He was Srimannarayana with his weapon the wheel. His majesty seemed to bestow blissful blessings upon the gods. He had his vehicle garuda and his bed Adishesha. To make Yadavas happy he was shining like a moon amidst them.

What fortune!

Looking at Krishna, Kuchela forgot himself as he approached him. He experienced horripilation all over his body. Krishna glanced at him from a distance. A



resplendent Brahmin in rags, lean and lanky owing to poverty, was coming near him. His dress as well as personality was amusing. Only the evil-minded laugh at the miserable. The kind – hearted Sri Krishna did not think like that. He recognised his boyhood friend in a trice. In haste

he descended from his bed, went to him with all affection and embraced him. What a bond of affection and love! He conducted him to his cot and made him seated. He washed the feet of the Brahmin with due intimacy and honour and sprinkled the holy water on his head. He honoured him smearing his body with the mixture of Kasturi and green mint and stood fanning him. With sandal dhoop and lamps of gems he offered ‘Harati’. Sprinkling the rose water he decorated him with flowers. Giving him a sweet scented pan, he offered a cow along with a calf in charity.

Aha! How lucky I’m!

“Welcome dear friend!” uttered Krishna with all affection. Kuchela forgot himself. On his body sprang



the sprouts of shyness. Tears of joy flowed incessantly. Rukmini Devi who won the love and affection of Sri Krishna began to fan Kuchela. He heard the sweet tingling sound of her bangles. With her fanning the drops of sweat on his body soothened and he felt comforted. The palace maidens were shocked at this. They said to themselves, “What kind of Penance did this Brahmin do in his previous birth? He sat on the cot of Krishna who is beyond the reach of yogis. No saint is equal to him”. That too without feeling any disturbance to his romance with his wife, Sri Krishna went to receive Kuchela, embraced him and duly worshipped him. He stood before him in obedience. How lucky was this Brahmin!



Do you remember boyhood days?

To the great surprise of all the ladies in the palace, Sri Krishna took the hand of Kuchela and spoke to him with all affection. "Do you remember our boyhood days and events at the house of our guru? I heard that you married a girl from the family of Vedic pandits. I think her character and conduct suit your taste. We are the same as we were. You are not affected by house, landed property and wealth or young wife and sons. It seems you are discharging your duties for the welfare of the world as I am. Desires and lust won't affect great people like you. You discharge your duties as preached in Varnasramas and live a life of detachment from nature and mundane world. Some people always live on earth leading strict austere lives. The discipline and training imparted by our guru helped us a lot.

Do you remember our Guru?

During our stay at Gurukalam our teacher taught us befitting lessons. We too grasped it all in good faith and knowledge. Guru means the lamp that dispels the darkness of ignorance. He teaches us how to attain the eternal bliss of God Parabrahma. He inculcates Satvaguna in his disciples. He practises what the others have to learn. Such a person alone is real Brahmin. Sandipani, our guru is praised by great people.

Why did I serve my Guru?

I was born to teach the duties to the people of all castes. I came down to earth to show the way for the people of all asramas. I had to teach to the world everything. I should teach how to serve Guru. Shouldn't I? Hence I served Sandipani Maharshi along with you. I am worshipped by all Brahmins because I practised this great Dharma. I taught the way for righteousness to the people of all castes. I showed Jnanamarg to the people of all asramas and so I am called 'Guru' by all people. There are people who know the ultimate meaning of Varnasrama Dharmas. Through my teachings they are crossing the ocean of Samsara. The devotees worshipping my feet are in the state of salvation. They recognise me as 'Jagadguru'. Do you know how they get this idea? I proved it by practising the way I worshipped Guru.



I owe you

I am called 'I' in all the living beings. What should I do to get the happiness of inner consciousness? I am not happy with those who practise penance, vratas, yagnas and charities. I am happy with those who practise peace, control of senses and mind. I

am happy with those who serve the elders with devotion and those who strain themselves in the service of Guru. Do you remember the occasion? One day our Guru's wife sent us to the forest to bring fuel. While we were roaming in the forest, the sun was blazing. It suddenly started showering. Soon dark clouds covered the entire sky. It was pitch dark. The clouds thundered pitter patter. The stormy wind raged. We felt that all the animals would fly away. Meanwhile there was a heavy downpour. The rain suffocated us. It rained cats and dogs incessantly. Each drop of rain water was as big as the trunk of an elephant. Every

lightning flashed defying thousands of beams of sunlight. The lightning flashed across our eyes. While it was raining the sun set. Darkness descended everywhere. It was pitch dark. No object was visible. There was no difference between the two states - the eyes closed or opened. We were fully drenched in the rain. When the wind was pushing us ahead, we walked along. We could not make out whether it was plain ground, lane, sub-lane, mound or ant-hill. The ups and downs were like. The place appeared like a sheet of sea-water.

We were walking slowly hand in hand. The winter wind battered us. Our bodies were shivering. Our strength was not useful for us. At a distance appeared something shaking that was the aura of twilight before sunrise. We understood that it was the approaching dawn. Meanwhile the birds chirped. We found the four quarters of the earth in the early daylight.

The whole night our Guru was searching for us in the forest. He tracked the way we went and came near us. He was worried about our plight in the rain and water. With so much of pity he said, "Oh, celibates! You suffered greatly coming to the forest for our sake. You paid the debt of Guru profusely. I myself owe you". He blessed us with all the riches, love for relatives,

good progeny in our lives. Do you remember how our Guru Sandeepani took us home after thus blessing us? In those days we moved about very amiably and affectionately.

All a sport for You

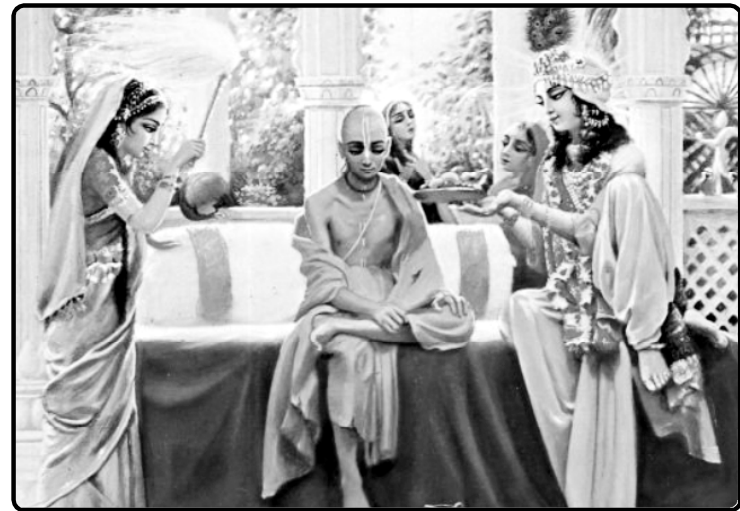
Hearing the sweet words of Krishna about their boyhood life Kuchela said, “Krishna! When we were living in the house of our Guru, you performed in ecstatic delight so many wonders. This’s all a sport for you. You are the Guru for the three worlds. Is there anybody who can be called ‘Your Guru?’ I hope you practised all these only to keep the world in delusion”.

I take whatever you offer with devotion

Hearing the words of Kuchela, Krishna smiled gently. He reads the thoughts of others’ minds easily. With a smile he said, “You have so much of devotion for me. If so, while coming here what have you brought for me as a gift? I feel happy with whatever you bring for me, no matter how small it is. I cannot accept even valuable gifts offered without devotion. I don’t want even a gold hill brought by an evil fellow. Whatever devotees like you bring, be it fruit, flower, or even a basil leaf, is enough for me. If they don’t have anything, I feel happy to receive water even from their hands as though it were wholesome food.

I test him

The Brahmin felt happy at the words spoken by Krishna with all obedience and truth. He thought of offering the puffed rice he brought but he felt shy for it was a very small gift. Remembering his poverty with a bent head and sense of shame he stood in silence.



With his divine vision Krishna understood the purpose of the Brahmin’s visit. “Kuchela in his previous birth loved and aspired for riches but not me, for he forgot the truth that, I pervade all the riches. Even now he has not come with the thought of visiting me. He came all the way to please his wife. Whatever might be the reason for his coming, it won’t go waste. His desire was not fulfilled in his previous birth. I will fulfil his

desire now. He approached me for his wife's satisfaction. I will test him by giving abundant riches. If he forgets me lost in these riches. I will test him?" with this thought he looked at the knot of puffed rice.

Only for a handful of rice!

'What's that?' Krishna himself took that small bundle of puffed rice. He opened it with his hands and ate one handful. While eating he thought, 'The first fist of rice is enough to please me and the other worlds'. While taking another fist, he thought, 'what is left behind me and the other worlds? There is nothing'. Who is there to be pleased? Lakshmi had to leave Vishnu and stay permanently with Kuchela, the poor Brahmin. While Krishna was taking this fistful of rice, Rukmini caught the hand of her husband and said, "The puffed rice you ate is enough to grant all the riches. Don't eat more", Krishna stopped eating.

Aha! How virtuous!

Kuchela spent that night in Krishna's palace. He enjoyed all the riches to his heart's content. He slept on the cosy cushion. He imagined as if he had experienced all heavenly joys. With the sunrise he got up from sleep, completed ablutions and started for his house. Krishna followed him and saw him off. On his way home he remembered that he had forgotten the

purpose of his visit. 'Ha! I did not remember at all. Forgetting is divine dispensation. My mind did not work when I was deeply involved in talking about the boyhood days and in rendering services. I forgot why I had come. Sri Krishna showered all obedience and love just to make me forget. What magic is there in his conduct? It is not magic. Nobody knows what it is. Is it not great to have a darsan of such a sacred person? He is omnipresent. He is known only to the people who realise Brahma. His darsan is possible only for those whose good deed of the past reached perfection. What a great difference between me and the mother of the world, Rukmini! What about Vasudeva who always spends with her? Like his own brother he embraced me without any hesitation. Treating me as an incarnation of god he made me rest on his cot. He respected me in many ways. He comforted me by letting his wife fan with her tender hands. He pressed my feet with his hands which applied sandal to the chest of Lakshmi. Thus he honoured me in many ways. He did not give me money but made me forget my purpose. This might be his method. Probably he might have thought that if he poor are endowed with riches, they will forget him. Otherwise he would enrich me with all wealth. Is wealth a great thing if he showers his benediction.

Have I deviated my path?

Thinking like this he reached his village. He came near the house. He could not believe his own eyes. There appeared buildings smeared with gold like the rays of the sun. They were the buildings made of marble. Around the buildings there were gardens laden with fruits. There were parrots and cuckoos in the gardens. Peacocks were gracefully dancing about the gardens. There were beautiful water ponds with sweet smelling water lilies and the lotuses. The Maidens were moving hither and thither in the palace. The anklets and bracelets worn by them were made of gold studded with gems. He was stunned to see the palaces shining with all splendour. He felt as if he had deviated the path and come to a different place. These were the buildings meant for pious men to live in. He never saw such buildings. He never saw such manifestations of Lakshmi. So thinking he stood there.

The Unsurpassing Wealth!

The angelic beauties came and welcomed him with all the pomp and glory, music and dance. Inside the palace was his wife. She noticed her husband with utmost ecstasy. She was like Lakshmi descended to earth. With tears of joy she saluted and embraced him. The maids wearing divine ornaments and clothes were

like the arrows of Cupid. His wife was a beauty personified in their midst. He was not Kuchela now but Sudama. Everything surprised him. While walking through, pillars were studded with padmaragas, walls with chrystals, doors with green emeralds, cornices with blues. There were stages all made of marble. Sudama understood while walking. The unsurpassing riches were under his control. But his mind was pure without involving in anything. Wisdom dawned upon him without delusion of wealth. That was the magic of Sri Krishna.

Submit with devotion

Kuchela reasoned like this : Hitherto I deeply immersed in unbearable poverty. The riches that came at once looked new. What do these indicate? They indicate the influence of his gracious looks. Only once I went to visit him, that too for the sake of my wife. Yet Krishna bestowed his grace upon me. With one look he observed me and my life. He knew that I was experiencing poverty because of my avarice. He decided what I wanted. He did not say even a word about them. He bade me good bye as if he knew nothing. He sent after me the riches and made me Lord. The person who has worldly desires and affections must suffer from poverty. To get rid of this, God's

grace is a must. To obtain God's grace total surrender is a must. Whatever is offered to him with devotion, is received thousand fold and returned double fold to the devotee.

Devotion must be like this

With a soiled body, torn clothes I stood in front of him. Without hating my dress, he welcomed my devotion. He took the puffed rice by himself and ate without any hesitation. There is no cause for his kindness. He is the ocean of mercy. This kind of devotion should continue firmly in all my future births. With this kind of thoughts he spent all his life with his wife discharging his duties. Even for a day he did not show interest in riches. He remembered the abundant grace of God who offered these riches. Even for a day the dual ties did not bother him. No worries disturbed him. He did not stop doing good deeds. He worshipped Krishna in all his actions. The bondage of Karma disappeared and he got himself liberated. Thus the story where Kuchela is gracefully uplifted by Krishna is a good and auspicious one. Those who read it and listen to it will cultivate devotion to Vishnu there by the mundane world and the other world are obtained.