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**LYRICAL SANSKRIT IN THE RELIGIOUS LITERATURE  
OF SRI NARAYANA TEERTHA**

**V. V. B. Rama Rao, Ph.D.**

# LYRICAL SANSKRIT IN THE RELIGIOUS LITERATURE OF SRI NARAYANA TEERTHA

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## Lyrical Sanskrit

Saints and sages are born on this earth in an age and a clime but they are for all and for all time.

Lyrical Sanskrit has been the most potent inspiring and unifying force in this hoary country, the glory that has been India and she continues to be so even today in spirituality. Song and lyric have always been the favourites of the lay and the learned anywhere in the world. Sanskrit the most scholarly language also is the sweetest of tongues and the lay and the poorest of the poor are not afraid of it when it comes to a spiritually oriented composition, lyric, song or poem and the villagers in the remote corners offer the proof.

## Sage, Saint, and Ascetic

Sage, saint, ascetic, renunciate are all names given to the great aspirants and *saadhakas* of diverse distinctions. *Yati* and *avadhoota* are similar names that great *saadhkaas* got. *Teertha* is unique in that it is a suffix to the name of a saintly person. This is the suffix the Guru adds to the ascetic's new name he gives. This is done only after the Guru is convinced that his disciple has successfully subjected all his passions and become a *jitendriya*, one who subdues all his sense organs and keeps them under strict control and becomes a devotee in the highest sense.

## Narayana Teertha

Narayana Teertha of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century goes down in the history of divine composers of extremely poetic musical compositions singing the praise of Sree Krishna, the Great Lover. The name of this saintly person prior to his being ordained *Teertha* was Govinda Sastry, born into the family of great Sanskrit scholar Neelakantha Sastry of the village Kaaja, in Guntur District of the present Andhra Pradesh.

Temperamentally traditional, devout and scholarship loving, Narayana took to Sanskrit as a duck takes to water. After becoming an ascetic, he composed joyously devout and sweetly poetic songs in the traditional *bhajana sampradaya* in Sanskrit.

## Sanskrit in the Life of the Elite and the Common People

It is a point worth noting that all the devout poetic composers were themselves singers of great repute and their knowledge of Sanskrit was part of their devotion to God.

Sanskrit is called *geervaaNa bhaasha* and *dEva bhaasha*. The kings in that era knew and appreciated Sanskrit, which was part of their own education.

Though now considered only as the language of the 'exclusivist' elite, the use of Sanskrit in rituals and devotional discourses and scriptures was always common. Faith led to devotion and devotion-intensified faith. The epics went deep into the psyche of even the lay. In fact the scriptures are more venerated by the rural folk in their innate simplicity. Set to delectable music and sung melodiously with devotional fervour, *keertans* were favorites of the lay as much as they are of the learned.

### **Popular Religiosity and Keertan**

*Keertan* is a song of praise in devotion. They spread from mouth to mouth and went deep into the devout people irrespective of social level or 'educational' accomplishment. They were easy to remember with their lilting rhythm and sweetness of imagination. Even today women sing the *keertans* not only in their devotional daily chores but also for their innate devotional spirit.

### **A Distinct Characteristic Devotional Lyrics in South Indian Languages**

Lyrics composed on devotional themes in South India are more than mere lyrics. For, invariably they are set to music and sung either in a single voice or as *bhajans* in a chorus to the accompaniment of various musical instruments. In some cases as in *yakshagaanas* they are performed all along a night in temple compounds and such public places. The lilt, the tune, the rhythm and the intricate meandering of *swaraas* is not only enchanting but also inspiring devotion in the devout in a memorable way.

Even to this day the lyrics and their rendition by talented exemplars are preserved with religious zeal and cultural verve. All these lyrics are great tributes to the supreme being with intense yearning to reach the sublime and be in harmony with 'OM' the *praNava naaada*, one of the attributes of the divine.

### **Exponents of Lyrics**

The language component in a rendition is something like an easy, accessible springboard to many, prosaically you may call it a stepping stone to inspired, transcendental consciousness, the intense awareness of the Absolute reality. These lyrics are called variously as *padams*, *keertans*, *ahsthapadis*, *tarangams* and *kritis* by their various exponents.

Kshetranya's compositions are *padams*: Jayadeva's are *Ashthapadis* and Saint Tyagaraja's are *kritis* and Annamacharya's are *keertans*. There are subtle special shades of difference in the attitude of the composer and the dominant mood of the composition. The categories are very important in musicology. *Keeratan* is a song of praise.

*Tarangam* is the name Sree Narayana Teertha gave to his compositions in *Sree Krishna Leela Tarangini* which contains gadya (Prose) and slokas too. The whole composition is envisioned as waves flowing from Sree Krishna's glory in the different periods of his life described in the tenth canto of *Sradbhagavatham*.

### **Magnum Opus of Sree Narayana Teertha**

*Sreekrishnaleelatarangini* is Sree Narayana Teertha's magnum opus. This is in Sanskrit, exquisite poetry, set to music and cast in the form of an *Yakshagana* (literally singing of the demi-gods, dance-drama). It is about Lord Krishna's divine pranks based on the tale from his birth to his wedding with Rukmini in the *Dasama skandha* of the *Srimadbhagavata*, This work is considered the most sublime in many ways.

In the twelve *Tarangams* or 'waves' making up the ocean of the sport of Sree Krishna, besides prose encomiums and slokas, there are 159 lyrics. The saint's mastery over music, philosophy and Sanskrit are brought into play to invest the *Tarangini* with its distinctive devotional fervour. It reflects with transporting felicity in *bhajana/sankirtana* tradition – repetition of the Lord's name in many ways and offering adoration in song and dance -- of which the Teertha is a distinguished exponent.

Supreme ascetic, Narayana Teertha elevated the song to mystic joy, to heights approximating to *brahmananda*. The Upanishad speaks of *manushynanda*, *gandharvaananda* and *brahmananda*. The devotee reaches this ultimate in the state of bliss, say, as Meerabai or many a blissful devotee. This work is in sharp contrast with Jayadeva's *Geetgovindam*, another composition in Sanskrit, describing the erotic love of the divine lord.

### **Some Samples of Sree Narayana Teertha's Lyrics**

Here are a few samples of the saint's fine poetic, imaginative sensibility and the mastery of language besides his inspiring and inspired devotion to Sree Krishna. My rough and ready renderings may not be 'translations' even in a loose strict sense.

1. *sharanam bhava karuNaa mayi kuru deena dayaLO*  
*karuNaarasa varuNaalaya kariraajakrupaaLO*  
*athunaa khalu vidhinaamayi sudiyaasura bharitam*  
*madusoodana madhusoodana hara maamaka duritam*

Surrender (I),  
To You full of mercy,  
O! The one who showed infinite compassion to the elephant king  
The killer of the demon Madhu!  
Pray, destroy right now my sins!

*paranoopuradhara sundara kara shobhita valayaa*  
*surabhoosura bhaya vaaraka dharaneedhara krupayaa*

*warayaa hara bharameshwara suravarya madeeyam  
madusoodana madhusoodana hara maamaka duritam  
. sharanam bhava karuNaa mayi kuru deena dayaLO*

O! The Absolute Supreme! Anklet and bracelet wearing,  
Destroyer of fear in angels and the good,  
The compassionate one bearing the earth!  
Quickly absolve my sins! O, My Lord of Deities!  
Surrender I to You!  
The killer of the demon Madhu!  
Pray, destroy right now my sins!  
Surrender (I),  
To You full of mercy,  
O! The one who showed infinite compassion to the elephant king  
The killer of the demon Madhu!

*ghriNimanDala maNikunDala phani manDala shayanaa  
aNimaadi suguNabhooshaNa maNimantapa sadanaa  
vinataasuta ghanavaahana munimaanasa bhavanaa  
madhusoodana madhusoodana hara maamaka duritam  
. sharanam bhava karuNaa mayi kuru deena dayaLO*

O! Supreme Being!  
with the great circle of sunshine,  
Wearing diamond ear studs, lying under the snake canopy!  
The one having great Garuda as mount!  
The one living in the heart-mind-intellect of saints and sages!  
Surrender I to You!  
The killer of the demon Madhu!  
Pray, destroy right now my sins!  
Surrender (I),  
To You full of mercy,  
O! The one who showed infinite compassion to the elephant king  
The killer of the demon Madhu!

*aribheekara halisodara paripoorNa sukhaabdhE  
narakaantaka narapaalaka paripaalita jaladhE  
hari sevaka shivanaaraayaNateertha paraatman  
madusoodana madhusoodana hara maamaka duritam.  
sharanam bhava karuNaa mayi kuru deena dayaLO*

Terror of the Demons!  
Brother of the wielder of the plough (Balarama)  
Ocean of joy and comfort!  
Killer of the demon Naraka! Ruler of all oceans!

Surrender I to You!  
The killer of the demon Madhu!  
Pray, destroy right now my sins!  
Surrender (I),  
To You full of mercy,  
O! The one who showed infinite compassion to the elephant king  
The killer of the demon Madhu!

*(prathama tarangam sreekrishna praadurbhaavam)*  
*First Tarangam, the Birth of Sreekrishna*

*2.MangaLaalyaa maamava deva – pankajaasanaa bhaavita bhaava*  
*MangaLaalayaa ...*

Home of the all-auspicious!  
Theme of contemplation of the Lotus-seated divine!

*devakee vasudeva tanooja*  
*divya kireeta dalita bhava beeja*  
*sarvayogi vichintya paadaabja*  
*sangataakhila saadhu samaajaa ..*  
*Mangalaalaya ...*

Offspring of Devaki and Vasudeva,  
divine crown and the crusher of the seeds of the mundane,  
whose feet are the object of the contemplation of sages,  
companion of the gentle and devout,  
home of the all-auspicious!

*aparimitaananda bOdhaswaroopa*  
*ati karuNaakara karadhruta chaapaa*  
*kapaTa daityahara – khandita paapaa*  
*kanakaambaradhara kalita kalaapa.*  
*MangaLaalayaa*

Form of the realization of limitless joy,  
The most compassionate bow-wielder  
Killer of the guileful demon and the breaker of sin!  
Wearer of fabulous gold-raiment, Home of the all-auspicious!

*makara kunDala kEyoora vibhooshaa*  
*manasija shatakOTi manjula vesha*  
*vikacha kamalasannibha vipulaaksha*  
*vimalahridaya gOpaalaka rakshaa*  
*MangaLaalayaa ...*

Adorned with ear studs and armlets  
Wearer of infinite forms of Love God  
The blossomed-lotus-petal eyed  
Pristine-hearted, Protector of cowherds  
Home of the all-auspicious

*kalita shree kaustubha kamaneeya kanTha  
karuNa rasabhara milita vaikunThaa  
parapaalaya bhuvibhaagya vitarana  
guru bhakta narayana teertha sharaNa  
MangaLaalaya ...*

Wearer of the kaustubha jewel on the neck  
Heavenly-one filled with compassion and grace  
ruler of the distribution of earth's fortunes  
The refuge of the guru-devoted Narayana Teertha  
Home of the all-auspicious!

*(prathama tarangam sreekrishna praadurbhaavam)*  
First Tarangam, the Birth of Sreekrishna

**3.** *krishNam kalaya sakhi sundaram baala krishNam  
krishNam kalaya sakhi sundaram baala krishNam  
krishNam gata vishaya trishNam jagatprabhu vishNum  
suraarigaNa jishNum sadaabaala krishNam*

Sakhi! Look at the most charming Krishna  
Krishna, who won the thirst of the senses, the lord of the universe  
Slayer and victor over demons,  
ever the little boy Krishna!

*nrityanta miha muhuratyanta maparimita  
bhrutyaaanukoola makihila satyam sadaa baalakrishNam  
baala krishNam kalaya sakhi sundaram*

He dances here with exceeding and limitless joy  
ever merciful and in favour of devotees,  
ever He the little boy Krishna!

*dheeram bhava jaladhi saaram sakalavEda saaram  
samasta yogi taaram sadaa baala krishNam*  
Bold, essence of this universe  
substance of all Vedas  
help of all the Yogis to cross the ocean of life  
ever the little boy Krishna!

*sringaara rasabhara sangeeta saahitya  
gangaalahari khela sangam  
sadaa baala krishNam kalaya sakhi sundaram*

Sakhi! Look at the most charming Krishna  
Replete with love erotic, music and letters  
Playing in the waves of that flowing Ganges

*raamENa jagadadhi raamENa balabhadra raamENa  
savaapta kaamENa sadaya krishnam kalaya sakhi sundaram*

The most endearing, the most loveable lord! He is with Balarama  
Wishing the best for all,  
Sakhi! Look at the most charming Krishna

*raadhaaarunaadhara sudhaapam  
satchtiaananda roopam jagatriya bhoopam sadaa balakrishNam  
krishNam kalaya sakhi sundaram*

The redness of delectable lips surpassing all  
The form of the Supreme Being, true, calm and blissful,  
ever the little boy Krishna!  
Sakhi! Look at the most charming Krishna!

*damOdaramakhila kaamam param  
ghanasyaamakriti masura bheemam  
sadaa baala krishNam kalaya sakhi sundaram*

Bears He the universe entire in His belly  
The form of thick black, the killer of demons,  
ever the little boy Krishna!  
Sakhi! Look at the most charming Krishna!

*ardham sidhileekritaanardham sree naarayaNa teertham  
parama purushardham  
sadaa baala krishNam kalaya sakhi sundaram*

The essence that destroys all evil and inauspicious  
Sung by Sree Narayana teertha  
ever the little boy Krishna!  
Sakhi! Look at the most charming Krishna!

*(dwiteeya tarangam, )*

**4.kalaya yashOdE tava baalam vraja baalaka khelana lOlam**



*apahruta bahutara navaneetam  
anupama leelaa naTanakritam  
kapaTa maamusha baalaka charitam  
kanaka kanduka khelana niratam  
kalaya yashOdE tavabaalam*

Look! Yahoda! Your boy!  
engrossed in play with the Gopikas!  
stealing the thick cream,  
dancing in a great prank  
guileful is the tale of this little human  
Engaged in playing the golden ball  
Look! Yahoda! Your boy!

*pathi pathi lunthita dadhi bhaanDam  
paapa timira shata maarthaanDam  
adhika balOdhruta jagadanDam  
ananda bodharasa makhanDam  
kalaya yashOdE tavabaalam*

Pots of curds stolen on the way from house to house  
the sun that drives away darkness of a hundred sins  
the strongest stick of power over the universe  
limitless stream of teaching *rasa* of bliss, is He  
Look! Yahoda! Your boy!

*mallabaalaka khElana chaturam  
mansijakOti laavanya dharam  
kalyaaNa guNa nava maNi nikaram  
kama neeya kausthubha mani shEkharam  
kalaya yashOdE tavabaalam*

Skilled in playing with wrestler boys  
wearer of the exquisite delicacy of a million Manmadhas  
effulgence of diamonds of auspiciousness  
wearing the crown of the most lovely kausthubha diamond  
Look! Yahoda! Your boy!

*navaneeta chOrabaalaka charitam  
nandaadi vraja puNyataru phalitam  
dhruvapada phala mEtadati lalitam  
bhuvi naarayaNa teetha yati phanitam  
kalaya yashOdE tavabaalam*

Tale of the stealer of cream  
fruit of the meritorious trees like Nanda and other cowherds

sure salvation exceedingly delicate  
on the earth sung by Narayana Teertha Yati  
Look! Yahoda! Your boy! (dwiteeya tarangam, )

*5.parama purusha manuyaama vayam sakhi parama purusha manuyaama  
suruchirahaasam sundara naasam tarunaaruNa kiraNaadhara sarasam  
parama purusha manuyaama*

Sakhi! (Dear friend) Let us all follow the Supreme Being (Krishna)  
One with brilliant smile, lovely nose,  
lips juicy, the red of the young sun,  
Let us all follow the Supreme Being

*nanda kumaaram nagavara dheeram bridaavana bhuvi vividha vihaaram  
brindaaraka gaNa vandita charanaaravinda miLita maNi madhukara nikaram,  
parama purusha manuyaama*

Son of Nanda, bold as the mighty mountain,  
promenader in the regions of Vrindavan  
light from the hair jewels lighting,  
feet worshipped by all in Vrindavan,  
Let us all follow the Supreme Being

*bhaavuka charanam bhava santaraNam bhavya sEvakajana  
bhagya vitaraNam avyaya vimala vibhooti  
vijrumbhita divya maNi rachita vividhaabharaNam  
parama purusha manuyaama*

Feet of the great imaginative one  
capable of making devotees cross the ocean of the world  
giving away affluence and prosperity  
with limitless pure radiance  
adorned with divine diamond-studded ornaments,  
Let us all follow the Supreme Being

*paramOdaaram paapa vidooram smara saayaka samaanamudaaram  
virachita muraLee geetarasaamruta bharita ghaNamghaNa kausthubha haaram  
parama purusha manuyaama*

The most generous, sin absolving,  
making with grace a mere thought a millionfold  
making nectarine music of divine flute  
Necklace dangling musically the kausthuba diamond  
Let us all follow the Supreme Being

*yuvatee geeta suyOgi sulalitam kavijana maanasa kamala vilasitam  
sivanaaraayaNa teertha virachitam sree goOpaala dayaa rasa miLitam  
parama purusha manuyaama.*

The songs of the Gopikas extremely sweet and exquisitely delicate  
glory of innate imaginative poetic lyrics  
written by Sivanarayana Teertha  
compounded with the compassion of Sree Gopala  
Let us all follow the Supreme Being. (*shashtha tarangam*)

**6.** *pooraya mama kaamam gopaalaa pooraya mama kaamam  
vaaram vaaram vandanamastutE vaarija daLa nayanaa  
pooraya mama kaamam gopaalaa pooraya mama kaamam*

Fulfil my yearning, Gopala, fulfil my yearning!  
Lotus-eyed one!  
I pay obeisance to you every day  
Fulfil my yearning, Gopala, fulfil my yearning!

*manyetwaamiha maadhava daivam maayaasweekruta maanushabhaavam  
dhanyeiraadhruta tatwa swabhaavam daataaram jagataamati vibhavam  
pooraya mama kaamam gopaalaa pooraya mama kaamam*

Here I worship You, God, You have assumed the illusory form of a human  
You are of the nature of the Absolute Supreme, You are the maker of the worldly illusion  
Fulfil my yearning, Gopala, fulfil my yearning!

*brindaavanachara barhaavatansa baddha gunjaavana bahuLa vilaasa  
saandraananda samudgeerNa haasa sangata kEyoora sara madana gOpaala  
matsya koormaadi dasa mahitaavataara madanugraha tava madana gOpaala  
vaatsalya paalita varayOgi brundaa vara naraayaNa teertha vardhitamOda  
pooraya mama kaamam gopaalaa pooraya mama kaamam*

Inhabitant of Vrindavan wearing a peacock feather crest,  
showing all glory staying in the flower bowers  
Smile glowing in concentrated bliss!  
wearing the effulgent armlet, Madanagopala  
One who manifested as Matsya, Koorma among the ten divine forms  
Show me Your grace, the one ruling with a father's affection, Madanagopala!  
Fulfil my yearning Gopala, fulfil my yearning!  
Fulfil my yearning Gopala, fulfil my yearning!

(*shashtha tarangam*)

**7.** *rE rE maanasa gOpaalam bhaja doorE parihara bhoopaalam  
aaraadantara tara makhilaatmaka bOdhaananda ghanam baalam*

*rE rE maanasa gOpaalam bhaja doorE parihara bhoopaalam*

O Gopala in my mind-heart and intellect, *manas*!  
The one permeating the entire! The little boy adept at teaching bliss  
My prayer and worship to You, destroy my sins, oh, lord!  
O Gopala in my mind-heart-intellect, *manas*!

*vimala hridaya kamalOdaaram vEda shamita vividha vishayaakaaram  
kamaneeyatara karuNaasaaram sarva samabhaava bhaavamahOdaaram  
rE rE maanasa gOpaalam bhaja doorE parihara bhoopaalam*

O! The pristine large-hearted lotus!  
The form of Vedas, wisdom incarnate!  
The daintiest essence of compassion,  
Heart replete with the idea of absolute equality of all!  
O my mind, worship Gopala and abandon all rulers of the land!  
*saamaadi nigamaanta sancharadheera madanushruta suguNaakaaram  
samarasamEka mananta mananvaya mamita nirantara sukha saagaram  
rE rE maanasa gOpaalam bhaja doorE parihara bhoopaalam*

Valiant one moving in the Vedas from the Saaman to Upanishads  
the beatific vision I followed  
Ocean of bliss of equanimity limitless, everlasting,  
O my mind, worship Gopala and abandon all rulers of the land!

*jagadanDa koTi paraakaasham sarva nigamaanta mita swaprakaasham  
agaNita gunamaNi vaageesham dEvamaagama roopa nijaavesham  
rE rE maanasa gOpaalam bhaja doorE parihara bhoopaalam*

Prop and base of the universe! The supremely effulgent!  
Self-radiant like the Vedas  
The innumerable-virtued lord of all speech and sound  
Wearer of the true form of the essence of the Vedas  
O my mind, worship Gopala and abandon all rulers of the land!

*vigaLita mOhaja bhava paasham viswamangaLakrita tanumakhilEsham  
bhagavantamaadi gurum shiva madwaya chidgaganam nava nitasham  
rE rE maanasa gOpaalam bhaja doorE parihara bhoopaalam*

Oh, the one liberated from the bonds of every thing mundane sprung from desire  
Your entire body blessing the entire universe with auspiciousness  
The preceptor of all the devout exponents  
The Supreme Being pervading the ever fresh firmament of bliss  
O my mind, worship Gopala and abandon all rulers of the land!

*sundaratara muraleenaadam munibrinda vichintya sundara paadam*

*nanda tanaya makhilaanandam sharadindu vadana miha gOvindam  
rE rE maanasa gOpaalam bhaja doorE parihara bhoopaalam*

The holy musi of the most enchanting flute,  
Feet ever being contemplated of groups of sages and seers  
Son on Nanda, the joy supreme, the spring moon- faced!  
O my mind, worship Gopala and abandon all rulers of the land!

*brindaavanahita gObrindam dhruta mandara makhila nigamakandam  
nanda sunandaadi vandyā mananyaga naarayaNa teertha yati vardam  
rE rE maanasa gOpaalam bhaja doorE parihara bhoopaalam*

The well-wisher of Vrindavan herds of cows,  
Undoubtedly the mountain of all Vedas  
One worshipped right from Nanda, Sunanda to the renunciate Narayana Teertha  
O my mind, worship Gopala and abandon all rulers of the land!

*(dwaadasha tarangam)*

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