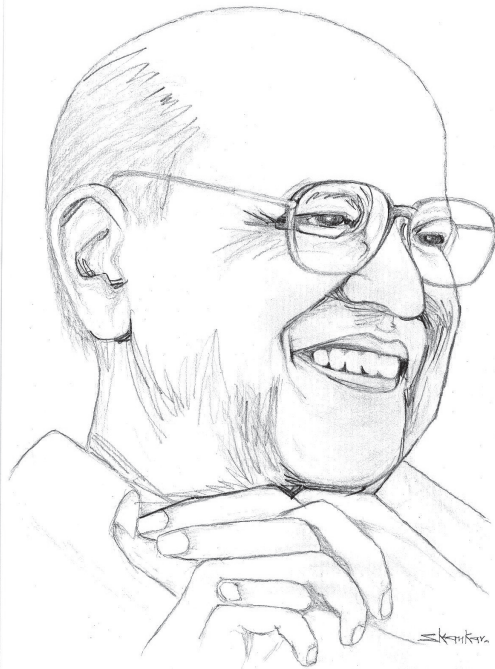


Bapu: a multifaceted artist

Bapu was a rare amalgamation of art and culture, literature and music, mythology and modernity. He was perhaps the only artist in India whose style of writing became a Telugu font known after him. Telugus believe that a beautiful girl should look like “Bapu bomma” (Bapu’s picture) with wide eyes, long hair, thin waist and traditionally dressed. He has been an inspiration to many. There are several Ekalavyas of his in many fields – art, painting, cartoons, writing, and movie direction. For his multifaceted contributions he was bestowed awards like the Lifetime Achievement Award for a Cartoonist, several Filmfare awards, national film awards, the honorary doctorate of Kala Prapoorna from Andhra University, and the Padma Shri in 2013. His

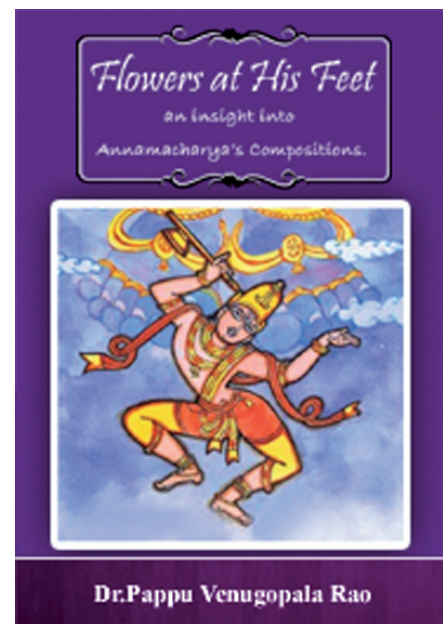
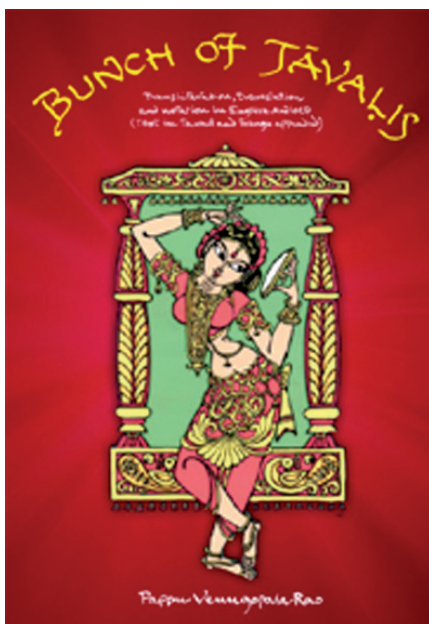


Sketch of Bapu by brother S. Sankaranarayana

passing away on 31 August 2014 in Chennai at the age of 80 has left a void in the field of art and literature.

Sattiraju Lakshmi Narayana was his original name and he was born in December 1933 in Narasapur in west Godavari district. A law graduate from Madras University, Bapu took to art from his childhood. His association with Mullapudi Ramana, an unparalleled writer and humorist, influenced the fields of Telugu literature and cinema for over five decades. They were known as Bapu-Ramana, and their friendship has left an indelible mark on Telugu culture. For over three decades during the 1970s there was no weekly magazine or daily newspaper which did not carry Bapu-Ramana writings and pictures, cartoons and stories. Together they ventured into films with their maiden attempt ‘Sakshi’ (Witness) in 1967 which became an instant international hit. About 60 films in Telugu and Hindi were their unique contribution.

Some cover pages of Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao’s books illustrated by Bapu



The *Ramayana* and Rama were very close to both Bapu and Ramana. Bapu's pictorial story of the *Ramayana* has undergone several editions and been translated into several foreign languages too. It was a precursor to the *Amarchitra Katha* series. Bapu's pictures of the *Tiruppavai*, his illustrations for the *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavata Purana* and many other mythological texts enriched their understanding. Bapu had a distinct style in drawing cover pages for books. To have Bapu draw the cover page was the dream of many writers. In fact some books were sold just for their cover pages! All my twenty books have his cover pages and even the titles were drawn by him.

Bapu created and mastered a unique style of art and painting. It is known for economy of strokes, simple colours and freehand movements.



Bapu and Pappu

His backgrounds are simple. He studied several books and created mythological characters with his deep understanding of their nature as reflected in literature. His Rama and Seeta have become part of the personal collection of many art lovers across the world.

Bapu's paintings depicting the classical dances of India are also a collector's item as they capture the flavour nuances and dynamics of each dance style, (see front cover).

His passion was to listen to the music of Ghulam Ali, Mehdi Hassan, and Mandolin Shrinivas. Once when Bapu was given an award, Ramana wrote of him, "Bapu begins the day with his pipe, draws pictures having his morning coffee, he takes a shower and draws pictures, and listens to music as he draws pictures until lunch. He draws pictures after lunch, until tea time, draws pictures after tea till dinner time, draws pictures after dinner till he sleeps to wake up to draw pictures!"

All his life I never saw him sitting on a chair at home. He used to squat on the floor, with hundred of books, CDs and different sizes of pencils and brushes around him. Bapu lived a very simple life and departed unsung!

PAPPU VENUGOPALA RAO

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