

KANTHAABHARANAM

BY

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Episode – 1

Somavadhanlu, his wife Bangaramma and her sister Subbalaxmi while visiting sacred traces come to a town and temporarily stay at Venkata Sastry's house.

Bangaramma and Subbalaxmi want to see the circus that is going on in the town. Somavadhanlu gives a number of reasons as to why both men and women of orthodox Brahmin families do not visit such entertainments. Subbalaxmi says she even wants to see it and so asks her sister to wait until her husband sleeps and then they can go together.

Episode – 2

On their way to the circus both Bangaramma and Subbalaxmi want to enquire where the circus is going on. They want to enquire.

Mean while they come across Ramasastry, a mad fellow, singing a song. They realize this and run away. In their anxiety to escape from the mad man, Bangaramma and Subbalaxmi run to two opposite sides.

Bangaramma sees a bullock cart coming. She enquires whether his sister, a widow with a shaven head, is on the other side. The cast man nods. She gets into the cart.

Episode – 3

Subbalaxmi is searching for her sister. She wants to go back to Venkata Sastry's house but not remember his family name. She is really afraid of her sister and also of her hot-tempered brother-in-law.

Ramasastri comes again.

Krishna Rao, a Vyapari Pantulu and Sundari, a nautch woman are going that way talking intimately. Krishna Rao expresses how deeply he loves Sundari. Sundari brushes it aside saying that all lovers say the same thing to nautch woman. They are on their way to attend Subbiseti's sixtieth birth day celebrations. Sundari will perform dance on the occasion. Krishna Rao suggests that they should not go together.

Ramasastri is there all the time talking and singing to himself.

Episode – 4

Subbiseti's Shastipoorthi celebrations. A man who is known for his miserliness, Subbiseti behaves in a queer way. Sundari is introduced to him.

The meeting started with prayer and then Krishna Rao speaks in praise of Subbiseti.

The nautch girl's dance (Mejuvani) starts.

Sundari starts dancing to a love song. When she comes close to him during the dance, Subbiseti asks Sundari to come to his house after the performance. Krishna Rao observes this and looks innocent.

Then follows the Kavi Sammelan – two extempore poets sing poems in praise of Subbiseti. Subbiseti is in a hurry and gets rid of them by paying them more.

Episode – 5

Subbiseti asks his assistant to be near the rear gate for Sundari comes that way. He asks him to go away once she is admitted into the house.

Krishna Rao taunts Sundari that she is going to the house of such a boor as Subbiseti. She replies that if she doesn't go, Subbiseti will send his Muslim servant to take her by force.

Meanwhile Srinivasa Rao, in a Muslim guise, comes in and beats Krishna Rao and takes away Sundari by closing her mouth.

Krishna Rao is sure that the Muslim servant has come and taken away Sundari by force to Subbiseti's house. Krishna Rao wants to go attack him but is not able to walk.

Subbalaxmi comes that way. She has wandered all over the town, but could not find her sister. Her feet are acting. She is tired. She wants to take rest. She finds that the door is open.

Venkatappaiah, Subbiseti's assistant mistakes her to be Sundari. He shows the way inside the house of Subbiseti and leaves.

Episode – 6

Subbalaxmi talks about their foolishness of leaving the house and wonders how she can reach home. She wants to lie down for a while.

Subbiseti comes there and is happy that Sundari has fulfilled her promise. But finds her stiff, sitting on a bench in one corner.

Subbalaxmi says to him that due to certain reasons she has left her house and has to stay here. She also says that she heard he is a gentleman. Subbiseti says that unless she comes to him close he will not talk to her.

Ramasastry calls for Setti and says that Panthulu has asked for the receipt for the money. Subbiseti thinks that Krishna Rao must have sent his debt amount of Six hundred. If he doesn't go now, he can never realize the money. He opens the door and comes out. Ramasastry puts a piece of paper containing Panthulu's name. He asks for the money. Ramasastry beats him, goes into the house and bolts it inside.

Subbiseti starts crying from outside.

Episode – 7

When Subbiseti is crying, Krishna Rao comes there and finds fault with Setti for keeping Sundari inside. He is very angry and is about to strike him. Setti lures him with some delicacies. Krishna Rao demands to know where his Sundari is and accuses Setti for having got him beaten by a Muslim. Krishna Rao starts beating Setti, for Setti is not answering him.

Subbisetti says that he knows no Muslim. He requested Sundari to come and Venkatappaiah got her in. he also says a mad man has pushed him out and is locked inside with Sundari. The servant has gone to his Village and will not return for another two days. Krishna Rao suspects same foul play. He says Sundari has four thousand rupees worth of ornaments on her body. So he demands that Setti must keep his necklace (Kanthabharanam) with him. As soon as Sundari with her ornaments is found, he will give back his necklace.

Episode – 8

Inside the room, Ramasastry goes on speaking to himself. Subbalaxmi realizes that she is in the company of the mad man. She cannot escape. She does not know what happened to Setti. She finally decides to behave like a mad woman and escape from here.

For some time Ramasastry and Subbalaxmi speak as they like. Ramasastry says that he seems to have seen her in the hospital. He starts singing a keertan and dancing to it. Subbalaxmi sings a grinding song. Both of them sing also a duet, each depicting the other as a demon.

Krishna Rao breaks open the door and asks Subbalaxmi, now completely covered, whether he was the same Muslim who beat him and covered away his Sundari. Subbalaxmi says she will again strike beats him and escapes. Krishna Rao runs after her.

Subbisetti feels sorry that his Shasthipoorthi function has ended in this fashion.

Episode – 9

Subbalaxmi, now attired as a Muslim, comes into a house running. She meets Rukmini, the house owner there. Rukmini enquires whether the person that came in is a Muslim. Subbalaxmi says no and requests Rukmini to protect her from one Krishna Rao. She knew the name because he himself uttered that word when said, “How dare you beat Vyapari Pantulu Krishna Rao.” Rukmini assures that she will deal with the situation and asks her to go in.

Krishna Rao comes and enquires whether a Muslim has come into her house. She asks him why he is going after a Muslim. Krishna Rao narrates the story.

When this open stays awake in such later hours and if a Muslim has entered this house, he feels she is a nautch girl. If it is so, he says to himself that he is the most fortunate man. He is also sure he can detect who is a nautch woman and who is a housewife.

During their chat, Krishna Rao tells his story to her. Rukmini chides him for not seeing his wife after the marriage. She finally says that she will become his, if he brings his wife home.

Episode – 10

Krishna Rao gives the necklace to Rukmini. She asks him to give to his wife. He says there are many other ornaments he can give her. Rukmini says she will keep the necklace until he gives it to his wife. Krishna Rao says that for her sake he will bring his wife. She asks him to go to sleep in the outer room.

Rukmini calls Subbalaxmi who narrates her entire story to Rukmini. Rukmini advises Subbalaxmi that all people who are in the 'missed' list will be put into jail, if they are found. So she wants Subbalaxmi's name to be changed as Parvatamma.

Episode – 11

Rukmini's father, Srinivasa Rao is a Muslim garb and Sundari are chained together by soldiers and bring them to this street, because he knows a man in the street. One soldier asks him to keep quiet. Srinivasa Rao becomes angry and hits the soldier. There is a scuffle. Krishna Rao comes out of Rukmini's house, sees the Muslim who beat him earlier and had taken his nautch girl and encourages the Sundari that she is no more loyal to him and demands the two thousand rupees that he gave her.

Sundari says he is that Krishna Rao for whom some soldiers are searching and asks the soldiers to arrest him. They do so. He is chained for stealing the Setti's necklace. They do not believe him when he said that he took with his concurrence. Seeing Rukmini, Sundari accuses Krishna Rao that he

earned another nautch girl here. Krishna Rao thrashes her. Rukmini is bewildered. Sundari sees the necklace which adorned Rukmini's neck, points it out to the soldiers and asks them to take her into custody. She is chained along with Krishna Rao.

Krishna Rao shows Srinivasa Rao as the man who beat him earlier and Sundari as his previous keep and says there is no comparison between the two. Rukmini asks Subbalaxmi to be careful at home. Krishna Rao recognizes her and says he is the second Muslim that beat him. Subbalaxmi says she is not either a Muslim or a man, she is a woman. She removes her upper Muslim garment and stands with her wheat –coloured sari.

The soldiers ask Subbalaxmi to retain her Muslim dress and the beard and arns that nobody should change until the Nawab saheb delivers his judgment.

Episode – 12

Sankara Sastry, a noted Ayurveda doctor, comes across Ramasastry and identified him as the well-learned man who has become mad. He decides to take him home and treat him.

Somavadhanulu and Venkata Sastry are walking along the road. Somavadhanulu says that he has completed obsequies of his missing wife. He is happy because he is known as a great 'Karmishti' and all ritual acts must be done according to shastras.

The soldiers mistake Somavadhanulu as the mad man they are searching for. Somavadhanlu is brought to the prison. Subbalaxmi, who is already there, recognizes brother-in-law and identifies herself. She asks where her sister is. Somavadhanlu tells her that his wife is dead.

Venkatasastri brought food for Somavadhanlu. He also brings for him a wheat-coloured sari and asks him to wear it and run away. Otherwise he will have to be in prison.

Somavadhanlu runs away.

Episode – 13

The Nawab's public announcer announces that whoever conceals the mad man will be punished.

Rangachari tells Subbisetti that the case regarding the necklace is going to come for hearing and he must get ready with whatever presents he wants to. Setti offers five rupees. Rangachari says that Setti is a miser of incomparable qualities.

The Nawab comes to the court to hear the cases and give verdict.

The first case is regarding the complaint given by Subbisetti about a Vyapari pantulu, Krishna Rao stealing his necklace. The other cases follow Sundari and others give evidence she complains that a Muslim beat Krishna Rao, took her to a house and demanded her signature on papers transferring the properties that Krishna Rao gave her to one Rukminamma.

The Muslim who took away Sundari gives evidence that his name is Srinivasa Rao and he is the father-in-law of Krishna Rao and father of Rukmini. For his acts of omission, he beat Krishna Rao and got the properties transferred to his daughter under pressure.

Episode – 14

Similarly the cases of Subbalaxmi and Somavadhanlu are also argued and facts come out. Ramasastry has been cured for his madness by Shankara Sastry and he repairs his normal status.

Somavadhanlu and Bangaramma recognize Ramasastry as Subbalaxmi's husband who is believed to have died as he did not come back from Nawadweep for 12 years.

Krishna Rao is happy that he got a noble wife. Subbalaxmi and Ramasastry are united. Subbisetti gets back his necklace. Krishna Rao says that it is all because of the necklace that this happy unification is achieved. Venkata Sastry invites all of them for a dinner that night.