

ENGLISH VERSION OF THE ARTICLE IN LADIES SPECIAL –
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OUR FAMILY DEITY---ENGA VEETTU DEIVAM

I am indeed a lucky person! In our home, our most prized possessions are the beautiful Radha Krishna vighrams in marble – passed on as a family heirloom. Made in Jaipur, they were brought by my mother-in-law Smt.Rajalakshmi Sethuraman to Bombay (our home in Matunga) in 1963. My mother-in-law was an ardent devotee of Krishna and had regular bhajan sessions every Wednesday in our home –in the afternoons.

She also taught Soundarya lahari, Abhirami Andadi, Bhaja Govindam and other devotional music to eager learners – all free of charge! My father- in- law Shri Sethuraman supported her in all her endeavours. Shri Radha Kalyanam and Shri Krishna Jayanti were celebrated in a grand manner.

My parents Bhama and Balakrishnan nurtured me with great care and taught me music, religion and God-fearing ways. Both my parents were extremely interested in music. My father was a Sanskrit scholar and an art critic as well.

When I got married to Raja at the age of 18 in 1973, I entered a household brimming with music and bhakti. One of the first things I learnt soon after marriage from my mother-in-law (in addition to

cooking!) - was a song to wake up Lord Krishna---a suprabhatam in raga Bhowli. "Jago bansi ware Lalana, Jago morey Pyarey"

The bhajan sessions at home would consist of the bhajana sampradaya songs, Oothukkadu krithis, Narayana Teerthar tarangams, Meera bhajans & so on. Many ladies would throng the house and the atmosphere resounded with music.

To listen to the bhajans was a divine experience. In fact, my mother-in-law Smt.Rajalakshmi, being such an ardent devotee, passed away early – at the age of 52 years in Feb 1977, had anayasa maranam and merged with the Lord.

She decorated Radha – Krishna – for the ensuing Radha Kalyanam and passed away in a few days.

We all know that Bombay flats and apartments have a lot of space constraints – they are pretty small. We had an apartment in Matunga – a hall, kitchen & Music room. We called the music room – "Kitta room" or Krishna room. Radha & Kitta filled up our consciousness. My husband's sister Aruna Sairam, her two daughters and our two daughters – all of us breathed this beautiful air of devotion. Any laurels / prizes in school and college won by the children were kept at Kitta's feet - by them.

Musicians like Brindamma, Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, K.V. Narayanaswamy, Voleti Venkateswarulu, Hindustani vocalist Amir Khan, dancer T.Balasaraswathi, spiritual gurus like Swami Haridhos Giri, Shri Krishna Premi Swamigal, Needamangalam Krishnamurthy Bhagavathar, have graced this unique "Kitta room". It had a great sannidhyam.

All daily activities would occur in this small 'multipurpose' space – the kitta room – eating, singing, playing, studying for exams – and Radha Krishna would watch over all the happenings with their charming smiles!

For Krishna Jayanti, fruits and various tempting sweets would be strung near the mandapam in addition to colourful and fragrant flower garlands. Radha and Krishna would be dressed in different coloured attire and beautiful ornaments. The "Govinda ala re" song and "uriyadi" famous in Bombay – would complete the picture and create an ambience filled with happiness and joy.

It would be the practice to dress up the children like Radha Krishna, with peacock feathers and all; stage "Krishna leela anukaranam", and teach them songs on Krishna.

Another family member, Mrs.Vaijyanthi Moulishankar, hailing from the respected Sangu Subramaniam family known for its roots in

namasankirtanam – used to teach all of us many gems from her vast repertoire of bhajana sampradaya.

I have no doubt that our 'Kula deivam' – our Radha Krishna – will guard us always and protect everyone with their benign smiles and abhaya – hasta. I have firm faith in them and pray daily for the welfare of everyone. It is very comforting to know that Krishna and Radha are there for me in the journey of my life.

Radhe krishna!