



Namasthe Vasavidevi | Namasthe Vishvapavani |

Vratha-sambadhha | Koumathrethe Namonnamaha ||

Kusuma Shresthi, the king of vasyas ruled the kingdom Vengidesha, which was ruled by King Vishnu Vardhana. His capital was Penugonda. Though he and his wife Kusumamba were blessed with all the riches and happiness in the world, they had no children. On the advice of his Guru Sri Bhaskara Charya, Kusuma Shresthi performed Putrakamesti yagna. Parvathi devi was pleased with the yagna and blessed the couple with twins a boy and a girl.



He named the boy Virupaksha and the girl Vasavamba. Astrologers forecast that the girl would bring untold fame to Vysya community. With great joy and happiness, Kusuma Shresthi performed the first ritual of a parent – the Jathaka Karma. He invited all the learned and sanctimonious people to bless his children.

Vasavamba was the apple of her father's eyes. He called her Kanyka after the name of the vratha he would perform – **Sarannava Vratha Kanyka Puja**. All the other family members and friends called her by her given name.

As the children grew up, the boy Virupaksha exhibited strong characteristics of being a great ruler. Under the able guidance of the Guru Bhaskara Charya, he learnt Puranas, fencing, horse back riding, martial arts, archery, statecraft etc. On the other hand Vasavi showed inclination toward fine arts and philosophy. She visited Lord Shiva temple and spent hours singing and meditating.

She would discuss philosophy when playing with her friends. She would talk about learning from nature, to be steadfast like the rocks and mountains and not be shaken by difficulties in life; to learn patience from the trees. Her opinion was peril would be inevitable if running after materialistic pleasures. She would participate in the discussions on politics with her father and the guru. The councilors always welcomed her suggestions and were very amazed at her perception and right decisions.

In a short time, both the children grew up to be talented, handsome and accomplished. Virupaksha married Ratnavati the daughter of Aridhi Setty of Aelur town.

One day, king Vishnuvardhana went on an expedition to expand his kingdom. On his way back he decided to visit his vassal at Penugonda city. Kusuma Shresthi arranged a grand welcome for the King and he personally went to receive him. The citizens of the town gathered in huge numbers to welcome the King. Amid this pomp and pageantry the king entered the Darbar hall where he was given a ceremonial arathi

by Vasavamba.

As the evil king laid his eyes on the beautiful Princess he lost his senses and without deliberation decided to marry her. He ordered his minister to send a formal proposal to Kusuma Shresthi. This desire of the king was like a mortal blow to Kusuma Shresthi, his family and the entire clan. Vysya community had certain practices regarding a girl's marriage. As the Vysya girl could not be married to a person outside the family structure, he gently denied the king's request but the king being blinded by lust was not ready to hear a denial.

Kusuma Shresthi then said that he would have to consult with the other elders as he being a leader, should not be breaking the laws. He conveyed a meeting of the leaders of the 714 Gotras. They were called Gotrajas. Out of them 612 Gotrajas were of the opinion that it was a God sent opportunity that Vasavamba to marry to the king.

They opinionated to Kusuma Shresthi that they were not strong enough to face the wrath of the king and they were too timid to fight. They saw no point in wasting time, effort or life in fighting with the King. The other 102 Gotrajas were of the opinion that it was immoral to break traditions for riches or fame. They did not want their beloved princess to marry the wicked king. They were ready to give up their wealth and life if necessary to uphold their traditions and protect beloved Vasavamba.

Thus the meeting of the Gotrajas ended in a split decisions. The Gothrajas who sent a "Yes" to the king were rewarded and given valuable gifts. The other Gothraja's messenger was ill treated by the king.

Not knowing what to do, Kusuma Shresthi called his young daughter and appries her of the situation. She was Goddess Durga herself. In a firm and clear voice she addressed the 102 Gothrajas, she said that 'The king is powerful. It will be futile to face him in the war. Instead of being killed in the war let us sacrifice ourselves to the holy Fire – Agni. Let us prepare 103 fire pits and all of us including my parents will enter it'.



That evening Vasavamba bedecked in jewels and a beautiful silk Sari, the radiant Vasavamba entered the holy fire and performed an Atma Balidana to prevent bloodshed and destruction that a war with the king would have brought about.

Vasavi's life is worth remembering because of her belief in non-violence, religious values and her defense of status of women. She became immortal as she has been mainly responsible for the propagation of reputation of Vysyas throughout the world. Vasavi, who had rejected worldly pleasures, won the minds of Vysyas and is the champion of peace and non-violence and will be remembered at all times by one and all.