

The Literary Contribution of Allasani Peddana at Vijayanagara Empire

*Dr. Somanatha.C.H, Asst Professor of History, Govt First Grade College, Kurugodu.

Abstract

This paper aims at studying the contributions of Allasani Peddana to Telugu literature and the patronage provided by Vijayanagar empire. Vijayanagara ruler Krishnadevaraya's reign was a glorious era especially for the Telugu literature. Till 1500, Telugu literature mainly consisted of the translations; Telugu authors borrowed theme, substance and details from the Sanskrit literature and translated it. Under Krishnadevaraya's guidance and patronage the practice of translating old Sanskrit literature was given-up and writing in Prabandha style and narrating Puranic and other independent stories came in vogue.

This period is also known as Prabandh period or the romantic phase of the Telugu poetry. What is unique in Telugu literature of Krishnadevaraya's time The compositions of this period usually have musical flow and rhythm. The plot was generally woven around obscure Puranic episodes and the chief interests of the author lied in presenting passing moods, and the passions of main characters. This marked the beginning of new era of freedom, creativity, and self-expression. This impetus to the Telugu Language, given by Krishnadevaraya, went far beyond his time. The Ashtadiggajas of Vijayanagara Empire Krishnadevaray's court was adorned by Ashtadiggajas, the eight distinguished scholars of the time, similar to the nine gems of Vikramaditya's court and the Navratnas of the Mughal emperor Akbar. The Ashtadiggajaja (Ashta + dik + gaja) as per Hindu mythology are the eight elephants that hold the earth in eight directions. Similarly, these scholars were believed to conquer world in eight directions with their creativity, poetry, knowledge of language and scriptures.

Poet Allasani Peddana was born about the year 1430 of Salivahana, and flourished during the reigns of Nrisimha Raya and Krishna Deva: a village called Daranala, which is situated in the district called Dupad, in the ceded provinces, claims the honor of being his birth place. Allasani Peddana in his infancy studied the Sanscrit and Telugu languages, in due time, obtained a critical knowledge of those tongues, and was able to compose verses either of them his abilities procured him the situation of Court poet to Nrisimha Raya, on which monarch he wrote several panegyrics. After the death of the above-named King, his son and successor Krishna Raya, patronized our poet, and appointed him as one of his "Asta Diggajas," or eight celebrated Court pundits, in allusion to the eight elephants which support the earth, according to the mythology of the Hindus.

Keywords— Vijayanagara, Krishna Deva Raya, Teleugu, Allasani Peddana, Manu Charitra, Kannada

Introduction

Allasani Peddana was a votary of Rama, and his poems in the Telugu language are much esteemed for their harmony. He composed an elaborate work, entitled "Swarachisha Manu Charitra," in four books. The following are the contents of the poem in question:— A religious bramin, by name Pravarakhya, and an inhabitant of Mayapure fet an ardent desire to visit the sum mit of the Himalaya mountain, and as it was impossible to proceed there by human means, he was anxious by some supernatural process to effect his wish, he in consequence stopt every ascetic and traveller, that he saw journeying thither, that he might obtain from them the secret, by which they were able to surmount all difficulties, and attain the top of the mountain—he was in the habits of inviting these people to his house, and courteously to entertain them in hopes to obtain from them the secret. One day, a devotee came to his

dwelling, and as his manner was more than usually complaisant, the bramin strenuously beseeched him to furnish him with the means of proceeding to the top of the Himalaya mountain, the devotee yielded to his request, and furnished him with the juice of a plant, which he rubbed on his feet, and desired him to fly away, repeating the name of the goddess. Pravarakhya at once flew away to the top of Himalaya mountain, without thinking to ask, how he should return again to his dwelling: when the juice on his feet was dried up, Pravarakhya lost the power of flying, and wandered about the delightful gardens on the top of the mountain, while he was thus strolling about, the sound of soft music saluted his ears, and proceeding towards it, he saw a beautiful female Gundharva, he went up to her and besought her to direct him in the right road. As the bramin was of a very comely person, and the female Gundharva had never before beheld a man, she fell in love with him, but was resolved to behave with reserve, so that he might not discover her real sentiments—she therefore reprimanded him for entering her hower without permission, and told him to find out the road as well as he could himself.

Pravarakhya discouraged at the harsh tone, in which the female Gundharva spoke, made a precipitate retreat and making his way to a neighbouring grove, performed intense devotions to the god of fire, who, it is said, appeared to him under the semblance of a bramin and conveyed him to his own dwelling house, in the mean time the female Gundharva was inconsolable at his loss, and had no idea that her behaviour to the bramin would have ended in this manner, she expressed her grief by the most extravagant actions by dashing her head on the ground and rolling on the floor, and various other deeds that shewed the poignancy of her affliction. A male Gundharva disguised himself like the bramin and coming to the female Gundharva passed himself off for Pravarakhya and enjoyed her: she discovered the trick when too late, but was determined to be revenged. The female Gundharva became pregnant, and was in due time delivered, and the child waxed great and became Swarachisha-manu the sovereign of Jambudweep. In the introduction to this work the poet takes an opportunity of expatiating on the valour of Krishna Roya, and describing his victories over his enemies, especially the Mahomedans.

Allasani Peddana composed another work called Ramastava Rajeyam, consistipg principally of the praises of Rama. In the fifty-fifth year of his age, he wrote a philosophical work entitled Adwaita Sedhantam, this work was written in the Telugu language. When Allasani Peddana was sixty years old he experienced a severe misfortune in the loss of his Royal Patron Krishna Deva Maha Rajah—the poet wrote a very pathetic elegy on the occasion, and lamented the loss of the King in strains the more touching as they were really felt. The sorrow that Allasani Peddana expressed was unfeigned on his part as the munificence of his Royal Master, on many occasions created in our poet sentiments of the most fervent gratitude. Allasani did not long outlive his Royal Patron, for he died a few months after Krishna Deva, at his own residence at Doranala. The heir and successor of Krishna Deva, Rama Roynloo shewed great kindness to our poet, who enjoyed great reputation. His works are disseminated in every province where the Telugu language is spoken and understood, and few poets have existed who gained more popularity during his life time and was esteemed by posterity than Allasani Peddana.

Objective:

This paper intense to study about one of the illustrious Ashtadiggajas of Vijayanagara Empire Allasani Peddana and his contributions to the Telugu Literature.

Allasani Peddana – the most illustrious Ashtadiggaja of Vijayanagara Empire

Allasani Peddana – Krishnadevaraya adorned him with the title of “the Grandfather of the Telugu Poetry” – Andhra-Kavitha-Pitamah. He towers over all other Ashtadiggajas, and is considered the most illustrious.

His learning in Sanskrit and Telugu was prodigious and his choice of words in weaving and narrating stories were extraordinary. He transformed kavya into a medium of grace, precision and exquisite lyricism. His descriptive passages are strikingly realistic and the poet had complete control and command over his compositions, with every syllable in proper place and almost irreplaceable. He was the son of Chokkanamatya and his literary training happened under Sathakopayati – a Vaishnav patriarch of the time. He also played an active role in state of affairs including collection of taxes and participated in military service too.

Books written by Allasani Peddana

Peddana’s main work is Manucarita or Svarocisha Sambhava. It is believed that the motivation to write this epic story came from Maharaja Krishnadevaraya when he praised Allasani Peddana as below in the court. It led him think of writing something that is really praise-worthy.

You’re my friend, a master of crafted speech.

Your memory holds the meaning

of incomparable texts—

puranas, agamas, itihahas,

all rich in story.

You are the creator of Telugu poetry.

No one can equal you.

What is special about Allasani Peddana’s Story of Manucarita: The story narrated in Manucarita is taken from Markandaya Purana relating to the birth of fourteenth Manu – Svarocisha Manu – a mythological figure seen as one of the several progenitors of the human race. The original story has around hundred and fifty poems and Allasani Peddana extended this work into six chapters with six hundred poems by adding fictional-episodes and detailed descriptions. Peddana was able to do justice to his writings as he was well-learned in ancient texts and could give meanings to them in an innovative manner with his creative understanding that enhanced the meaning and added depth. In-fact Peddana made kavya as archetypal mode for centuries to come.

The story of Pravara in Manucarita by Allasani Peddana

The story of this book starts with the description of a learned Brahmin Paravarakhya living in a town, Arunaspadam, on the banks of River Varuna. The brahmin followed rituals religiously and welcomed learned sages. Once, a ‘Siddha’ with great knowledge of Mantras and Tantras and an expert of medicinal herbs and plants arrived at his place. Pravara pleased the sage with his aadar-

satkaar and shared with him his longing wish to travel to places far and wide. The Siddha gifted him a magical herbal ointment to apply on his legs which can take him to whatever place he wanted to go in no time.

The Siddha told him that if he desired to visit Himalayas he could close his eyes and straight away he would be there!

“in an instant, the pious one reached and caught sight of heavenly water gates birthing whorls and eddies, unending echo abounding a beautiful sky, footfalls of lumbering elephants shaking the trees deceived peafowls, unfurling a riot of feathery hues, a snowy peak’s divine beauty no longer mysterious”

The meeting of Pravara with Varudhini in Manucarita by Allasani Peddana. However, as the young man explored the place to his heart’s desire, and wished to return back, he realized that the magical ointment was washed away in the snow. The story then moves to the narration of the Manu’s grand-mother, Varudhini, daughter of the celestial apsara Menaka, who met this pious brahmin while he lost his way and asked for directions from her.

One part musk enhanced by two parts camphor:

densely packed betel

sent its fragrance,

masking all others, to announce

the presence of a woman.

Allasani Peddana Literary Style

He wrote Swaroachisha Manu Sambhavam (also known as Manu Charitra), which is a development of an episode in the Markandeya Purana relating to the birth of Svarochishamanu, who is one of the fourteen Manus. Pravarakyudu is a pious Brahmin youth who goes to the Himalayas for Tapasya. In the Himalayas Varudhini, a Gandarava girl, falls in love with him, but Pravarakyudu rejects her love. Knowing this a Gandarava youth who was earlier rejected by Varudhini assumes the form of Pravarakyudu and succeeds to win her love. To them is born Svarochisha, the father of Svarochishamanu. The theme for his Manu Charitra is a short story from Markandeya Purana. It is about second Manu of fourteen manus (fathers of mankind societies according to Hindu mythology), translated into Telugu from Sanskrit original by Marana (1291–1323), disciple of Tikkana. The original story was around 150 poems and Peddana extended it into six chapters with 600 poems by adding fiction and descriptions.

His work Manu Charitra was treated as one of the Pancha Kavyas, the five best works in Telugu. Some of his other famous works such as Harikathaasaaramu are untraceable now. His famous work was "Swarochisha Manu Sambhavam" (also known as "Manu Charitra"). This work is the development of an episode in Markandeya Puranam relating to the birth of Svarochishamanu, who is one of the fourteen Manus. Pravara is a pious Brahmin youth who goes to Himalayas for Tapasya. In Himalayas Varudhini, a

Gandarava girl falls in love with him, but Pravara rejects her love. Knowing this a Gandarava youth who was earlier rejected by Varudhini assumes the form of Pravara and succeeds to win her love. To them is born Svarochisha, the father of Svarochishamanu.

Rejection of Varudhini's proposal by Pravara – Manucarita by Allasani Peddana

The love-lorn damsel proposes him, but the pious brahmin rejects her advances telling her that he is a married Brahmin youth with a vow to follow ekpatnivrat and the only thing in his mind is the way to return back. He then prays to the Agnideva, who appears and takes him back to his native town.

Birth of Manu in Manucarita by Allasani Peddana

Another gandharva, Kali, who was earlier rejected by Varudhini, noticed the incident. He took the form of Pravara, and weds Varudhini. The story then talks about the birth of Manu's father Swarochi with radiant features matching those of Pravara as his mother thought only about him during her pregnancy.

Vijayanagara Empire literary zenith

While Vijayanagara Empire reached its literary zenith under reign of Sri Krishna Deva Raya, there have been many literary greats who flourished under various rulers, most of whom were patrons of art and architecture. Even though Vijayanagara is often claimed as the Golden Age of Telugu literature, an equally great number of works were written in Tamil, Kannada and Sanskrit too. It was a period when you had all kind of literary works published from Prabandhas(collection of stories) to works on religion, medicine, grammar, music to biographies. Hampi was a thriving cultural center, to which flocked some of the greatest scholars and writers of that era. Different languages such as Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada and Tamil flourished in the regions. There was a great development in Sanskrit and Telugu literature. The peak of literary achievement was reached during the reign of Krishna Deva Raya. He himself was a scholar in Sanskrit and Telugu. His famous court poet Allasani Peddana was distinguished in Telugu literature. Thus the cultural contributions of the Vijayanagar rulers were many-sided and remarkable.

Most of the Kannada literature published during Vijayanagara era, related to the Veerashaivism and Vaishnavism traditions, and to some extent that of Jainism. It was not just poets and scholars, many rulers of Vijayanagara empire, court nobles, soldiers too were equally great writers in their own way. Apart from the court literature, you had a vast body of folk literature, produced by travelling bards and saint poets too. Most of the writing was in 3 categories, the 6 line verse called shatpadi, the musical compositions called Sangatya and the 3 line verse called tripadi. One of the striking aspects of Kannada literature under Vijayanagara Empire was the growth of Veerashaivism and the vachana poetry, which till then was the domain of Jainism and their champu style of writing. The Jain school tried to challenge the rising popularity of the Veerashaivism and Vaishnavism literature, reinventing themselves, focusing on more contemporary topics. One such author was Andayya, whose magnum opus Kabbigara Kava(Poet's Defender), tried to project the victory of Kama, the God of love over Shiva, written in the typical champu style associated with Jain traditions. Champu is a style of writing that mixed prose with poetry, and it was pioneered by Adikavi Pampa, known as the first poet of Kannada literature.

Conclusion

The Vijayanagar rulers were also great patrons of literature. Under their patronage, several religious as well as secular books were composed in different languages such as Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada and Tamil. The peak of literary development was reached during the reign of Krishna Raya, who is rightly called 'Andhra Bhoja'. Allasani Peddana – Andhra Kavita Pitamaha ("the grand

father of Telugu poetry”). Allasani Peddana (15th and 16th centuries) was ranked as the foremost of the Astadiggajalu. Peddana was a native of Somandepalli near Anantapur. Allasani Peddana wrote the first major Prabandha and for this reason he is revered as Andhra Kavita Pitamaha (“the grand father of Telugu poetry”). It is believed that he was also a minister in the king’s court and is hence sometimes referred as Peddanaamaatya (Peddana + Amaatya = Peddana, the minister). Some of his other famous works such as "Harikathaasaaramu" are untraceable now.

References

1. Iyer, Panchapakesa A. S. (2006) [2006]. Karnataka Sangeeta Sastra. Chennai: Zion Printers.
2. Kamath, Suryanath U. (2001) [1980]. A concise history of Karnataka : from pre-historic times to the present. Bangalore: Jupiter books. LCCN 80905179. OCLC 7796041.
3. Lewis, Rice (1985). Nagavarmma's Karnataka Bhasha Bhushana. Asian Educational Services. ISBN 81-206-0062-2.
4. Moorthy, Vijaya (2001) [2001]. Romance of the Raga. Abhinav Publications. ISBN 81-7017-382-5.
5. Mukherjee, Sujit (1999) [1999]. A Dictionary of Indian Literature. Orient Longman. ISBN 81-250-1453-5.
6. Nagaraj, D. R. (2003) [2003]. "Critical Tensions in the History of Kannada Literary Culture". In Sheldon I. Pollock (ed.). Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia. Berkeley and London: University of California Press. Pp. 1066. pp. 323–383. ISBN 0-520-22821-9.
7. Narasimhacharya, R (1988) [1988]. History of Kannada Literature. New Delhi, Madras: Asian Educational Services. ISBN 81-206-0303-6.
8. Pranesh, Meera Rajaram (2003) [2003]. Musical Composers during Wodeyar Dynasty (1638–1947 A.D.). Bangalore: Vee Emm.
9. Rice, E. P. (1982) [1921]. Kannada Literature. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services. ISBN 81-206-0063-0.
10. Sastri, K. A. Nilakanta (2002) [1955]. A history of South India from prehistoric times to the fall of Vijayanagar. New Delhi: Indian Branch, Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-560686-8.
11. Sharma, B. N. K (2000) [1961]. History of Dvaita school of Vedanta and its Literature. Bombay: Motilal Banarsidass. ISBN 81-208-1575-0.
12. Shiva Prakash, H.S. (1997). "Kannada". In Ayyappanicker (ed.). Medieval Indian Literature: An Anthology. Sahitya Akademi. ISBN 81-260-0365-0.
13. Singh, Narendra (2001). "Classical Kannada Literature and Digambara Jain Iconography". Encyclopaedia of Jainism. Anmol Publications Pvt. Ltd. ISBN 81-261-0691-3.
14. Sinopoli, Carla M (2003) [2003]. The Political Economy of Craft Production: Crafting Empire in South India c.1350–1650. Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-82613-6.
15. Various (1987) [1987]. Amaresh Datta (ed.). Encyclopaedia of Indian literature – vol 1. Sahitya Akademi. ISBN 81-260-1803-8.
16. Various (1988) [1988]. Amaresh Datta (ed.). Encyclopaedia of Indian literature – vol 2. Sahitya Akademi. ISBN 81-260-1194-7.
17. Various (1992) [1992]. Mohan Lal (ed.). Encyclopaedia of Indian literature – vol 5. Sahitya Akademi. ISBN 81-260-1221-8.

18. Howes, Jennifer (1998). *The Courts of Pre-colonial South India: Material Culture and Kingship*. Psychology Press. p. 43. ISBN 978-07-0071-585-5.
19. Bridges, Elizabeth J. (2016). "Vijayanagara Empire". In Dalziel, N.; MacKenzie, J. M. (eds.). *The Encyclopedia of Empire*. pp. 1–5. doi:10.1002/9781118455074.wbeoe424. ISBN 9781118455074.
20. Stein 1989, p. 1.
21. Longworth, James Mansel (1921), p.204, *The Book of Duarte Barbose*, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, ISBN 81-206-0451-2
22. J C Morris (1882), p.261, *The Madras Journal Of Literature and Science*, Madras Literary Society, Madras, Graves Cookson & Co.
23. Sen, Sailendra (2013). *A Textbook of Medieval Indian History*. Primus Books. pp. 103–106. ISBN 978-93-80607-34-4.
24. Dhere, Ramachandra Chintaman (2011). *Rise of a Folk God: Vitthal of Pandharpur*. Oxford University Press. p. 243. ISBN 978-0-19977-764-8.
25. Lewis, Rice B (1897). *Mysore: A gazetteer compiled for government, vol 1*. Mysore: Archibald Constable & Co. p. 345.
26. Sastri, Nilakanta (1935). *K. A. Nilakanta Sastri Books: Further Source of Vijayanagara History Volume 1*. p. 23.
27. "Master Plan for Hampi Local Planning Area" (PDF). Archived from the original (PDF) on 30 April 2013.
28. K.V.Ramesh. "Telugu Inscriptions from Vijayanagar Dynasty, vol16, Introduction". *Archaeological Survey of India*. What Is India Publishers (P) Ltd., Saturday, December 30, 2006. Retrieved 31 December 2006.
29. Subbarayalu, Y; Rajavelu, S, eds. (2015). *Inscriptions of the Vijayanagara Rulers: Volume V, Part 1 (Tamil Inscriptions)*. New Delhi: Indian Council of Historical Research. ISBN 978-9380607757.
30. Thapar (2003), pp 393–95
31. "Vijayanagara Coins". *Government Museum Chennai*. Retrieved 31 December 2006.
32. Prabhu, Govindaraya S. "Catalogue, Part one". *Vijayanagara, the forgotten empire*. Prabhu's Web Page on Indian Coinage. Retrieved 31 December 2006.
33. Harihariah Oruganti. "Coinage". *Catalogue. Vijayanagara Coins*. Archived from the original on 30 December 2006. Retrieved 31 December 2006.
34. Ramesh, K. V. "Stones 1–25". *South Indian Inscription, Volume 16: Telugu Inscriptions from Vijayanagar Dynasty*. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
35. Sastry & Rao, Shama & Lakshminarayan. "Miscellaneous Inscriptions, Part II". *South Indian Inscription, Volume 9: Kannada Inscriptions from Madras Presidency*. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India.
36. Pollock, Sheldon; Pollock, Arvind Raghunathan Professor of South Asian Studies Sheldon (19 May 2003). Pollock, Sheldon. ISBN 9780520228214. Retrieved 23 July 2013. Quote:"Telugu had certainly been more privileged than Kannada as a language of courtly culture during the reign of the last Vijayanagara kings, especially Krsnadevaraya (d.1529), Nagaraj in Pollock (2003), p378
37. Quote:"Royal patronage was also directed to the support of literature in several languages: Sanskrit (the pan-Indian literary language), Kannada (the language of the Vijayanagara home base in Karnataka), and Telugu (the language of Andhra). Works in all three languages were produced by poets assembled at the courts of the Vijayanagara kings". Quote:"The Telugu language became particularly prominent in the ruling circles by the early

16th century, because of the large number of warrior lords who were either from Andhra or had served the kingdom there", Asher and Talbot (2006), pp 74–75

38. "Telugu Literature". Retrieved 19 July 2013. Telugu literature flowered in the early 16th century under the Vijayanagara empire, of which Telugu was the court language.