



New Trends in Kannada Literature –History of its Development through the Ages

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Abstract: The present paper analyzes the trends in Kannada literature and its development. It has survived the forging trends from historical period to modern period. Literature in Kannada today is a big enterprise, with bustling centers like the University of Mysore, Bangalore, Mangalore, Hampi, Dharwar, Gulbarga, Kuvempu etc are striving towards amelioration of literature. Kannada sahitya parishad is organizing many programs to perceive a good scholastic temperament along with promoting literature.

Key words: Development literature, incumbency

Introduction

Kannada literature has an elongated protuberance. The stages of expansion of Kannada literary & scholastic concepts has survived since ages. Several dynasties who held sway in this region have facilitated the growth of literature through ample benefactions. The scholars & poets always envisaged an imminent incumbency of forging trends in Kannada Literary field. They acted as catalyst to enliven an atmosphere of scholastic freedom & constant support. There was a mature literary productivity because of the congenial support extended to all spheres of literature. This paper probes in detail about the new trends in Kannada literary development through the ages by focusing on the important compositions in vivid styles. The paper addresses several incumbent issues connected with the progression of these trends in current context.

Trend of Champu Style

The premature segment of Kannada literature is insufficient to lay claims to the literature's origins. 1. The oldest existing book is King Nripatunga's literary assessment Kavi Raja Marga. 2. Jainism being a popular religion at the time, there were some Jain poets like Srivijaya and Guna Verma. 3. A new scholastic inclination began with the 'Three Gems' of Kannada literature, Pampa, Ponna and Ranna in the 10th century, where prose and verse were mixed with the Champu style. The three poets extensively wrote on episodes from

¹ Period of prior to 800AD might have supported the development of Kannada literature but the information is lacking to trace the origin.

² 840A.D.

³ Sastri, Nilakanta K.A. (2002) [1955]. A history of South India from prehistoric times to the fall of Vijayanagar. New Delhi: Indian Branch, Oxford University Press



the great epic Ramayana and Mahabharata and Jain legends and biographies⁴. The Jain Theerthankaras & their life teachings were highlighted in these writings. Chavunda Raya, Ranna's elder contemporary then came up with an elaborate work on history of all the 24 Jaina tirthankaras.

Trend of Rejuvenation Of Vaishnavism During the early 12th-century, with the ascendancy of the Hoysalas there was a new change in the literary compositions. The kings of the dynasty entertained imperial ambitions. King Vishnuvardhana wanted to perform Vedic sacrifices befitting an emperor, and surpass his overlords, the Western Chalukyas, in military and architectural achievements. This led to his conversion from Jainism to Vaishnavism⁵. Around the same time, the well-known philosopher Ramanujacharya⁶ sought refuge in

Hoysala territory⁷. and popularized the Sri Vaishnava faith, a sect of Vaishnavism⁸. Although Jain scholars continued to dominate culturally in southern Karnataka region for a while, these social changes would later contribute to the decline of Jain literary output⁹. The growing political influence of the Hoysala kings attracted many bards and scholars to their court, who in turn wrote panegyrics on their patrons¹⁰.

TREND OF EFFECTS OF POLITICAL STRIFE-The literary & scholastic atmosphere in Tamil region was pathetic. The kings of this region were hit by the political turmoil & strife. They got too aggressive¹¹. This meant a lean phase in literary activities except for the works of a few writers like Naga Chandra, known for his Jain version of Ramayana, the Jain poetess Kanti, the grammarian Naga

personality, combining contemplative insight, logical acumen, catholicity, charismatic energy, and selfless dedication to God.

⁴ Talbot Cynthia, 'Temples, Donors, and Gifts: Patterns of Patronage in Thirteenth-Century South India : The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 50, No. 2 (May, 1991), pp. 308-340 Association for Asian Studies

⁵ Shiva Prakash, H.S. (1997). "Kannada". In Ayyappanicker. Medieval Indian Literature: An Anthology. Sahitya Akademi

⁶ Sri Ramanuja (1017 - 1137 CE), the most important philosopher-saint of Sri Vaishnavam and one of the most dynamic characters of Hinduism. He was a philosophical as well as a social reformer, displaying a catholicity that was nearly unparalleled in Hindu religious history before him. He revitalized Indian philosophy and popular religion so much that nearly every aspect of Hinduism has been influenced by his work. His life and works show a truly unique

⁷ The plight of Sri Ramanujacharya to the Hoysala empire was a deliberate act because the Chola kings of Tamil region prosecuted him.

⁸ Kamath, Suryanath U. (2001) [1980]. A concise history of Karnataka: from pre-historic times to the present. Bangalore: Jupiter books.

⁹ Pollock, Sheldon (2006). The Language of the Gods in the World of Men. University of California Press

¹⁰ Talbot Cynthia, 'Temples, Donors, and Gifts: Patterns of Patronage in Thirteenth-Century South India : The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 50, No. 2 (May, 1991), pp. 308-340 Association for Asian Studies

¹¹ The situation around the 11th century was full of political division & they fought incessant wars with each other



Varman II who wrote Karnataka Bhasha Bhushana in Sanskrit aphorisms¹², and Kirtti Varman and Vritta Vilasa¹³.

TREND OF RE-EMERGENCE OF HINDU CONCEPTS- During Vijayanagara period there was a rejuvenation of Kannada literature which took a strong Hindu curvature with the orthodox Vijayanagara kings prompting several Kannada scholars to pen their best accomplishments.¹⁴ Some eminent names were Bhima Kavi, Padmanaka, Mallanarya, Singiraja and Chamarasa who contributed to the literary arena¹⁵.

Trend of the bhakti literature

The growth of Bhakti movement during & after the rule of Vijayanagara dynasty also affected Kannada literature¹⁶. The Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas were translated afresh using the folk meters¹⁷. Devotional songs of dasas or singing mendicants were compiled, which formed an important part of accepted

literature¹⁸. The Impact of Vachana literature was assumingly very great even after 12th century¹⁹.

Trend of ignition of new trend in secular literature

The next two centuries were a busy period with many rulers and kingdoms such as the Wodeyar kings, Bijapur Sultans and later Mughals which ignited customary literary activity to scale a new high²⁰. Bhattakalanka Deva's Karnataka Shabdaushasana a work of 17th century 21 on grammar, Sakdakshara Deva's romantic champu- the Rajshekhara Vilasa (1657AD), the historical compositions of the Wodeyar period (1650-1713AD), Nijaguna Yogi's Viveka Chintamani of Shaiva lore (mid 17th century), Nanja Raja's Puranic works the Shiva Bhakti Mahatmya and Hari Vamsa

¹² sutras

¹³ Marulasiddai Dr H. M. -Dimensions of Bhakti Movement in India (Ed) Akhila Bharata Sharana Sahitya Parishad Mysore Karnataka 1998

¹⁴ Habib Irfan -Historical Setting of Medieval Popular Monotheism -- in History and Society (Ed) Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya K.P.Bagchi Calcutta 1976

¹⁵ 14th-15th AD

¹⁶ Talbot Cynthia ,'Temples, Donors, and Gifts: Patterns of Patronage in Thirteenth-Century South India : The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 50, No. 2 (May, 1991), pp. 308-340 Association for Asian Studies

¹⁷ in the 15th and 16th centuries

¹⁸ satpadi and regale

¹⁸ Talbot Cynthia ,'Temples, Donors, and Gifts: Patterns of Patronage in Thirteenth-Century South India : The Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 50, No. 2 (May, 1991), pp. 308-340 Association for Asian Studies

¹⁹ More than 200 authors from the 12th and 13th centuries--mostly from the lower castes, and including more than 40 women are known to have composed Vachanas"--Nagaraj, 2003, p. 348; Quote:"The Vachana literature contains Vachanas of 200 to 300 Sivasaranas of whom 50-60 are women"--Leela Mullatti, The Bhakti Movement and the Status of Women: A Case Study of Virasaivism, p. 23, (1989),

²⁰ Habib Irfan -Historical Setting of Medieval Popular Monotheism -- in History and Society (Ed) Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya K.P.Bagchi Calcutta 1976

²¹ 1604AD



(1760), were some of the notable conventional writings²².

Trend of augmentation in poetic compositions

There was a great augmentation in poetic compositions inherited through people from all walks of life. The popular singing called Yakshagana, which was the dramatization of Puranic tales combined with singing, was an innovation of the late 18th century. This form of singing & tale depiction became very popular. A good mass of folk poetry thus came to be written²³.

Trend of Modern Literary Compositions

Modern education made a late entry in Karnataka as compared to other parts of India. Works based on Sanskrit models, like Shakuntala of Basavappa Shastri, continued till the late 19th century²⁴. With a little initiation from the Christian missionaries, the Academy of Kannada Literature was set up in Bangalore in 1914. Gradually modern literature gained tempo and translations were made from English, Bengali and Marathi. Kerur and Galaganatha attempted the first novels in Kannada, followed by a host of novelists

like Shivarama Karantha, K. V. Puttappa, G P Rajarathnam, Basavaraja Kattimani, Nanjanagudu Tirumalamba and others. The short story too made its advent with Panje Mangesha Rao and Masti Venkatesha Ayyangar.

Trend of use of colloquial language-

A new trend in drama began with the use of colloquial language. Poetry, too, wasn't left behind; B. M. Shrikanthayya took Kannada poetry to great heights with innovations²⁶.

Conclusion

Kannada literature has survived the forging trends from historical period to modern period. Literature in Kannada today is a big enterprise, with bustling centers like the University of Mysore, Bangalore, Mangalore, Hampi, Dharwar, Gulbarga, Kuvempu etc are striving towards amelioration of literature. Kannada sahitya parishad is organizing many programs to perceive a good scholastic temperament along with promoting literature.

²² Subramanian, V.K. (2005). Sacred Songs of India- Vol VI. Abhinav Publications

²³ Warder, A.K (1992) [1992]. Indian Kavya Literature-vol VI. Motilal Banarsidass

²⁴ Pollock, Sheldon (2003). "Critical Tensions in the History of Kannada literary culture". Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia. University of California Press

²⁵ the first major woman writer in modern Kannada

²⁶ Rice, E.P. (1982) [1921]. Kannada Literature. New Delhi: Asian Educational Services