TYAGARAJA PQR EXCELLENCE

(ESSAYS)

By

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Essays on Telugu Language and Literature

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PREFACE

In this little volume are included a collection of eleven essays on Telugu language and literature, old and modern, written on different occasions by my husband late Sri. Challa Radhakrishna Sarma. These essays, I am sure will give the reader a fairly good idea of the modern and old Telugu literature.

Since the essays were written at different intervals, certain ideas and names had to be repeated for the sake of completeness. But while they were collected an attempt was made to avoid repetitions as far as possible. Still repetition does find a place here and there for which I feel sorry.

I take this opportunity to express my grateful thanks to Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam for the financial assistance extended by them for bringing out this book.

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CONTENTS

1. A SAINT - COMPOSER PAR EXCELLENCE 1
2. ACHARYA NAGARJUNA, THE VERSATILE GENIUS 8
3. ANDAL AS DELINEATED IN A TELUGU POEM 22
4. THE IMPACT OF THE RAMAYANA ON TELUGU LITERATURE 30
5. KAMBA RAMAYANAM AND VISWANATHA’S RAMAYANAM 41
6. EPIC TRADITION IN TELUGU POETRY 50
7. VEMANA 59
8. TYAGARAJA OF PEOPLE’S SONGS AND TRENDS IN TELUGU POETRY 66
9. CONTRIBUTION OF THE SOUTHERN TELUGUS TO TAMIL 80
10. WESTERN CONTRIBUTION TO TELUGU 89
11. THE FAMED SARASWATI MAHAL LIBRARY AND A NOTE ON INDIAN LITERATURE 103
1. A SAINT - COMPOSER PAR EXCELLENCE

"Tell me truly
O mind! which affords more happiness
 treasure trove or service to Rama?

which is more tasty
 curds, butter and milk or
 ambrosia derived from
 worship of Rama and his contemplation?

which is happier
 bath in Ganges
 equalling the restraint of senses
 internal and external or
 bath in the well
 resembling the mire of mean sense-pleasures?

which is happier
 praising men tied by self affection or
 singing the hymn on Rama
 eulogised by the sound-minded Tyagaraja?"

Thus sang Tyagaraja, the renowned saint singer
 who attained samadhi (Union with God) 150 years ago
 on the bank of the river Kaveri at Tiruvayyaru (land
of the five rivers- Pancha nada) in Thanjavur district in Tamilnadu.

Tyagaraja is a house-hold name wherever the South Indian style of music is prevalent. Endowed with poetic excellence in Telugu coupled with Sanskrit scholar-ship and traditional knowledge, he stands foremost as a true devotee, a champion of spiritual heritage and above all a great composer. He is infact the greatest Rama-singer. Tradition speaks of him as having com-posed 24,000 kirtanas (songs) on the grandeur of Rama, like the sage poet Valmiki, who wrote the immortal Ramayana in 24,000 slokas. Alas, only about 800 compositions are now extant and they explicitly demonstrate his amazing capacity as a composer. In them, it is said, a considerable variety of form and type exist besides much scope for musical elaboration.

The saint-singer is undoubtedly a true devotee of Rama. Still he has not contributed a regular Ramayana as such though he was every inch qualified to compose a poem on the Rama-theme. His two musical plays - Prahlada Bhakti Vijayamu (the victory of Prahlada's devotion) and Nauka Charitramu (the story of a boat excursion on the river Jamuna) and a series of several fine songs meant for congregational singing bring out his scholarships in Sanskrit and puranic lore. His soul-filling songs couched in simple, sweet and spoken Telugu bear an ample testimony to his erudition in the lan-guage though his fore-fathers had migrated from the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh and perma-nently settled down in the heart of Tamilnadu. His Telugu, therefore, is akin to the speech of those learned families domiciled in Tamil districts. Some Telugu pur-ists may like to call it impure Telugu which in reality not so. Even a cursory look at the songs reveal the composer's acumen in retaining his language though separated from the native speakers. His idiomatic
expression, extensive use of proverbs and homely similies will make any one wonder at his command over the language. In fact the popular idioms, proverbs and the like have added lustre to the songs. Otherwise they would have been dull and dry.

Tyagaraja is an in-born poet to whom similies or analogies come as a natural flow. He expresses subtle feelings with comfort and ease. For instance, even a philosopher will find it difficult to elucidate the abstruse feeling of the relationship that exists between the Almighty and devotee in simple and clear words. But he, like a master poet, unambiguously says in a homely language:

"Does a mother come to the child to comfort it or does the child go to its mother?
Does the cow follow it's calf or do the crops go after the clouds?
Does the paramour approach his lover?"

After asking these questions, the saint-singer asks his favourite deity to explain this mystery to him. He makes it clear through such simple but most effective analogies that the omnipresent Almighty comes down to protect his devotees.

In another song pooh-poohing the futility of physical strength and caste or noble birth when compared to devotion which brings in all accomplishments, Tyagaraja gives vent to his wide wordly knowledge. He vehemently asks:

"If devotion to Rama is absent, then what purpose will strength and community serve?
Fish and crows always drown into water. But does it amount to a morning bath?
Cranes shut their eyes, is it divine meditation?
Goats feed on leaves, is it fast?
Birds fly high, does it show that they are equal to the Sun and Moon (who are very high)?
The maskers live in caves, do they become virtuous hermits?

Monkeys dwell in forests, are they ascetics? Children are unclad, could they be called digambara hermits?"

What Tyagaraja wants to drive home is the fact that all external appearances should not be believed as genuine. Towards the end, he stresses his point saying that the true devotion will prevail as an accepted coin (Chellina kaasu). Though so simple, this expression is a clear indication of Tyagaraja's mind. He is quite confident that true devotion will be acceptable to people as valid coin and he, therefore, implores God's grace. He prays that he should be given bhakti as alms (biccham) as Rama is his master.

It is truism that philosophers usually deal with higher truths of life discarding mundane affairs of the existing world. Tyagaraja is a philosopher with a difference. As he declares in one of his songs, the adoption of any mode of life including the ascetic order is not necessary for one who perceives God in everything. He is such a realised soul. No wonder, therefore, that he has scant regard for pilgrimages, bath in holy waters, fasting and the like. If these are considered meaningful, he says in satirical tone that fish in water or birds flying high should merit consideration. He dislikes pomp and show, adulterers and thieves and hypocrites and dishonest beings and vehemently condemns their actions. Looking at the society full of persons who showered praises on the wealthy filled his heart with pain and sorrow. It is but natural for such saint-poet to refuse riches and honours from the Thanjavur rulers despite their cultured behavior and lead a mendicant's life living on alms. To sum up, it may be said that Tyagaraja was, perhaps, contented with the self invited poverty and suffering, finding inde-
scribable happiness in ever singing the glory of Rama. He addressed himself in one song as 'desireless' Tyagaraja and this seems to be an epithet full of truth.

Internal purity has found a prominent place in many songs. If the mind is controlled, he says that mantra (incantation), tantra (contrivance), japa (repeating prayers) and tapa (penance) are not only superfluous but fruitless also. Mind should be kept under control. He makes it emphatic that Rama's grace could be obtained only when the mind does not go after sense enjoyments. Engaging in worldly pleasures and seeking Him will be as futile as preaching a deaf man. The Ganges, of course, is a holy river; but will a bath in that river save the wicked? Worship devoid of pure mind is like a hog's profession. In the popular song "manasu nilpa sakti lekapote" Tyagaraja is, perhaps, impatient with those who have no concentration. The Pallavi itself (burden of the song) commences without mincing words. The saint-poet questions:

"What can the worship do? sweet bells and flowers used but unable to concentrate the mind.

How can Kaveri and Ganga will save? he takes dip into them but filled with evil thoughts. Is a somayaji fit for heaven? when his wife longs for paramours. Does the recipient of praise from Tyagaraja save? succumbing to lust and anger, if one does penance"

The songs of Tyagaraja are not mere epithets on Rama strewn together in a chain. Rather most of them
are satires or a subtle criticism on hypocrisy. Several songs read like subjective poetry. The following song is an instance to prove the point. Just as a master poet who sees himself in others, the saint-poet expresses in a pathetic tone his miserable life. In fact, it is the life of several others too.

"Alas
my story is harsh to hear
Like a bull tied to a post
I roamed
just bothering for my feed only.
I praised for my food
the born-misers
I joined the wicked
doing misdeeds and
indulging in scandal.
I know not
how you will save Tyagaraja
showing kindness,
O Rama!"

Music and devotion are the two eyes of Tyagaraja. Which of these was considered by him as the most important is a trickish question. He considered them equally important for he realised liberation through soul-filling music and found it quite purposeful only through spotless devotion. However from his observation in one of his songs, it may be remarked without any hesitation that devotion is a prime factor. He says, "Rama, only you are my refuge. I worship you and I am in your hands. Who equals you? Glance at me. I am your man. Talk to me. Your name sounds excellent to me. Meditation on you is sufficient. You bless me and your great self is enough for me. A word from you is treasure.

Song on you alone is fit to be called a song. Your path is the path for me. I shall not leave you whatever happens to me."
The original, studded with pithy and sweet words, is a happy blend of sound and sense. In another song also, he makes it clear that a song which does not praise the glory of Rama is not worth singing at all.

To conclude, one can find in Tyagaraja a devotee, a singer, a composer, a poet and above all a saint all rolled into one. His songs constitute an excellent work on the Rama-theme in song form. Realised souls like him are not many in the history of human kind. But it is unfortunate that we are not given an authentic history of a great man. He was born in Tiruvarur in 1767 and attained samadhi in Tiruvaikyaru. His father was Ramabrahmam and the family name was Kaakarla. Tyagaraja had his musical rudiments from Sonti Venkataramanayya, a well known composer of the day. It is learnt that the *Mahabhagavatam* a reputed poem in Telugu by Bammiera Potana of the 15th century, was the saint-singer's book of daily recitation. And Potana himself, essentially a saint-poet led a simple and pious life. This book along with Tyagaraja's *tambura*, sandals etc., are well preserved by the Saurashtra Sabha, Madurai. They were given to the Sabha by the grand daughter of Venkataramana Bhagavatar (1781-1874) one of his foremost disciples, it is said. The disciples were so devoted to their master that they had preserved the Guru's compositions and the world of music is naturally indebted to them. It is a pleasant sight to see several musicians, musicologists and music lovers all over the country congregate at the samadhi site on the *Samadhi* Day every year. Thus the Samadhi Day affords a rare opportunity for the connoisseur and the layman to listen to the songs of the saint-composer sung with devotion and ecstasy.
2. ACHARYA NAGARJUNA, THE VERSATILE GENIUS

Mr. Chairman and friends,

I am grateful to the authorities of Amarajeevi Potti Sreeramulu Memorial Society for inviting me to deliver the 12th Potti Sreeramulu Memorial Lecture today and let me express my gratitude to my esteemed friend and the Hon. General Secretary Sri Y.S. Sastri Garu for giving me this rare opportunity. I have deliberately used the term rare for the obvious reason that this lecture is instituted in honour of the Architect of the Linguistic States in our country, namely, the Martyr Potti Sreeramulu and that such martyrs are rarely found in any part of the globe. As you all know, the Andhras have been agitating for a separate state since 1913 when the Andhra Maha Sabha was started in Bapatla, Guntur District. A meeting of the Sabha was held in 1917 in Nellore and the poet, patriot Subramania Bharati, under the psuedonym Sakthidasan, wrote an article in Tamil supporting the stand taken by the Telugu leaders. The long cherished desire of the Andhras was fulfilled only after the supreme sacrifice made by Potti Sreeramulu in 1952. I was fortunate enough to
have met and talked to him during my college days in Nellore. Even though I was in my teens, I could understand from his facial expressions the deep fascination he had for the constructive programme of Gandhiji. True to the Gandhian spirit, he ceaselessly worked for propagating the ideals of the Mahatma. I take this opportunity to pay my humble homage to him.

On this great Annual Event of commemorating the memory of this great soul Amarajeevi Potti Sreeramulu, I considered it would be apt and appropriate to remember this time another great soul Acharya Nagarjuna who happened to be an Indian from the South and remembered with reverence for over 2000 years now all over the Buddhistic World for the relevance of his philosophy and teachings to those countries. He lived, worked, preached to the world Buddhism and finally had his Nirvana in Andhra Desa, Guntur Dist., in a place called Nagarjuna Konda.

In ancient India, as in other countries, religion which played an important role in the social and political activities was backbone of cultural activities too. One such religion which moulded the Indian thought is Buddhism. In the galaxy of the Buddhist seers and sages, the name of Nagarjuna stands almost unique. In the first place, he is regarded as the greatest exponent of the Mahayana Buddhism, one of the two branches of that great religion, the other being the Hinayana. According to the eminent philosopher-statesman Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the Hinayana lays stress on Individual attainment of salvation while Mahayana on the Divine grace. Secondly, Nagarjuna is the founder and also the expounder of the Madhyamika School of the Mahayana Buddhism which advocates Nihilism or the Sunya Vaada. Thirdly he is the founder of the great University at Sri Parvata in the 2nd Century A.D. which later came to be known as Nagarjuna Konda.
(the mountain of Nagarjuna) located in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh. And lastly, he is a great scholar and celebrated author of several important Buddhist works. Thus, Nagarjuna is one of the greatest thinkers of India. It is no wonder, therefore, that he is hailed as the second Buddha. He is believed to have made the modern Andhra Pradesh his home. And the name Nagarjuna Konda is a convincing evidence of it.

Nagarjuna is viewed with great reverence and respect not only in India but in other countries also. In China, he is known as Lung-Shee which means Bodhisattva Nagarjuna. The Japanese call him Ryumo Boratsu. He is acclaimed as Arya or Acharya Nagarjuna in Tibet. In the Himalayan Kingdom Bhutan also, he is greatly honoured and his teachings followed. It is said that Bhutanese, in many of their prayers, express the wish that in their next life they might be born in the Nagarjuna Konda area. All this proves the great respect and reverence the Buddhist world has for the second Buddha!

In Sanskrit literature, we come across many names attributed to him such as Naga, Nagarjuna, Nagahvaya, Bodhisattva Naga, Tathagata Naga, etc. But he is referred to as Bodhisattva Nagarjuna in the Buddhistic records. We also come across one Nagarjuna, perhaps, Siddha Nagarjuna, in the Jaggayyapet inscription dated 7th century A.D. These references bear ample testimony to the name and fame of Nagarjuna who was a popular figure of his times. Since we find many Nagarjunas in the history of ancient India, scholars hold different views as regards the number of Nagarjunas. According to one view there were four Nagarjunas. One was a philosopher, another was a Tantric writer, yet another was a medical writer and the last was an alchemist. Owing to the identity of names, confusion has arisen. But it is obvious from the
Tibetan and other records that Bodhisattva Nagarjuna was both a philosopher and a writer of repute.

The early life of Nagarjuna was shrouded in mystery. His place of birth is still open to doubt. Nagarjuna a South Indian Brahmin, who flourished in the 2nd century A.D. is said to have been born in Vidarbha (North east of Maharashtra). There is a view that he was born in Southern Kosala. Some are of the view that he was born in Andhra. This is based upon the fact that in the time of Andhra Satavahanas, the Telugu country had extended upto Magadha in the north which included Vidarbha too. It is mentioned in Lankavatara that he was born in a village by name Vedali in South India. We find one village by the same name, Vedali, in Guntur District (Palnad) in Andhra Pradesh. It appears that the word Vedali has been interpreted as Vedahi by some Tibetan scholars and Vedahi was identified with Vidarbha. K.R.Subrahmanyan, in his Andhra History observes: "So, Nagarjuna, a subject of the Satavahana King, as we shall see presently, lived mostly in Andhra and was a naturalized if not born Andhra." There is yet another view that Kanchipuram in the South was his birth place. However it may be mentioned that according to the popular view, Nagarjuna was a South Indian who was born in Vidarbha and had spent a great part of his life in the Telugu region.

Varied are the views regarding the date of Nagarjuna. According to his Chinese biographer, Kumarajiva, he must have flourished about the middle of the 2nd Century A.D. Some scholars place him between 5th and 7th Centuries. He is beleived to be the contemporary of the King Kanishka. We find the names of the Kings Kanishka and Kulika, of Vasumitra, Asvaghosha and Rahulabhadra who flourished in the 2nd Century A.D. occurring in the writings ascribed to
Nagarjuna. It is said that in the Manjusrimulatantra the Buddha himself had predicted the birth of Nagarjuna 400 years after his death. Taking these into consideration we may assign 2nd Century A.D. for Nagarjuna.

Thanks to the Tibetan and Chinese scholars, it has become possible to trace out the history of Nagarjuna. Several of his works have been translated into Chinese; thus they are preserved in China. The interesting account of Chinese travellers- Yuan-Chwang and Itsing contain valuable references to the life and work of Nagarjuna. Apart from the Chinese and Tibetan chronicles, Bana's Harsha Charitra, Somadeva's Kathasaritsagara, Kshemendra's Brihatkathamanjari and Kalhana's Rajatarangini throw some light on his life. Gowrana, a Telugu poet of the 16th century, in his famous poem Navanatha Charitramu has referred to one Nagarjuna.

Acharya Nagarjuna is said to have been born to Brahmin parents in A.D. 134. Even at a very early age he mastered the Vedas and the Vedangas. He had a tenacious memory by which he used to repeat whatever he heard or read. He was well versed in the Mantra Sastra too which is testified by the following story which appears of course dubious.

Once, Nagarjuna accompanied by his friends went to the King's palace. Unmindful to the consequences, they went straight to the harem and molested the royal ladies there. Afterwards, they were caught and apprehended by the King's servants. Nagarjuna, then it is said, made an escape from the palace with the help of his mystic powers while his friends were caught and beheaded. In his anxiety for life, Nagarjuna took a vow to become a Buddhist if he should be spared with life. After his escape, accordingly, he entered the Buddhist society and renounced the world.

Nagarjuna under the influence of Mahacharya Rahulabhadra, gave up Brahmanism and became a.
Buddhist ascetic. There are some Gathas in which Saraha, Simhabhadra and others are mentioned as teachers of Nagarjuna. After embracing Buddhism, he took to the study of the Tripitakas and it is said that he mastered them within a short period of 90 days. Afterwards he undertook a tour of the country. Returning from Ceylon, he engaged himself heart and soul in spreading Buddhism throughout the country. It is believed that he was able to convert ten thousand Brahmins to Buddhism. And further he began writing books glorifying the philosophy of the Buddha.

Nagarjuna's association with the Andhra Satavahanas is a turning point in his life. Though the Satavahana Kings were followers of Brahminical religion, they patronised Buddhism as well. It is at the hands of the Satavahanas and their followers- Ikshvakus and Brihatpalayanas, Buddhism received royal patronage in the Telugu Country. This religious toleration of the Andhra Kings gave an impetus for the spread of Buddhism throughout the country. K.R.Subrahmanyan observes that the Andhra Buddhism was pre-Asokan. Though it is difficult to say when exactly Buddhism entered the Telugu Country or South India, it may be said that the part played by the Andhras in spreading the religion is noteworthy. In the Buddhist literature too, they have found a place through their work Andhra Atta Katha. However, it is only after Nagarjuna's permanent stay on the Sri Parvata that it became a stronghold of Buddhism as well as a seat of learning to the entire Buddhist world. For nearly six centuries 3rd century B.C to 3rd Century A.D.-Buddhism flourished in the Telugu country and it is interesting when it was at its zenith, almost all places lying on the banks of the rivers Krishna and Godavari became important centers of pilgrimage for the Buddhist devotees. The Buddhist centers in the Telugu country
extended from Salihundam in the north to Gutti in the west and from Chinaganjam in the south to Bhattiprolu in the east. Of these reference may be made to the following places: Srikakulam, Amaravathi, Jaggayapet, Ghantasala, Gudivada, Goli, Guntupalli, Adduru, Bhattiprolu and Ramireddyipalli. Though the Buddhist art and sculpture had their finest flowering in the Telugu region, it is unfortunate that the Buddha had never tread in the Andhra.

From the account given by Yuanchwang, it is believed that Nagarjuna was an intimate friend and a contemporary of the Satavahana King named Sha-to-op-ha-na. He is identified with Siriyana or Yajna Sri Goutamiputra Satakarni (A.D. 166-196) the last Satavahana ruler over the eastern and western Deccan. Itsing also pointed out that the patron of Nagarjuna was Sha-to-opha-na meaning Satavahana. But the Tibetan records claim on Udayana, a Satavahana king as the patron of Nagarjuna. However it is generally believed that Yajnasri Gautamiputra Satakarni was his patron.

At the request of his patron Yajnasri, Nagarjuna settled on the Sri Parvata which was called Po-Lo-mo-Li-ki- Li by the Chinese. Since the accounts given by Pahien and Yuanchwang are confusive in nature, some scholars mistook Sri Parvata for Sri Sailam which is in the Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh. Sri Parvata which lies on the southern bank of the river Krishna in the Palnad Taluk of Guntur district is 15 miles away from the Macherla Railway Station. Since Nagarjuna is said to have stayed on this mountain considerably for a long period, in later times, it was rightly called after the sage. So it is the mountain of Nagarjuna or Nagarjununi Konda. But it is popularly known as Nagarjuna Konda. It is learnt from the Tibetan records that he lived at Nalanda also for sometime.

Yuanchwang in his valuable account paid a glorious tribute to the arresting personality of Nagarjuna.
He looked majestic. His looks were full of grace. His heart was lofty. A glance at his serene face would compel his audience to bow to him with deep reverence and respect. His scholarship was of the highest order. He had such a power of eloquence that even scholars are forced to admit their ignorance and become his disciples.

Yajnasri Gautamiputra, the patron of Nagarjuna, had quarried for him a beautiful monastery in the Sri Parvata and had cut in the rock a path communicating with the monastery for about 10 lis or 2 miles (1 mile = 5 lis). Sri Parvata is also known as Bhramaragiri as it looked like a long line of bees. In Telugu, it is, therefore, called Nallamala Kondalu. The Satavahana king spared no pains to complete the monastery.

At one stage, it is said that his treasury became exhausted. Yajnasri was much worried of his inability to complete the construction. One day, he approached the saint with tears trickling in his eyes. The saint enquired the reason and cheered thus: "Oh! King! Don't lose your heart. Be courageous. Good work will not remain unfinished?" Yajnasri was relieved of his worry and went to his palace. In the meanwhile, the saint, being an alchemist, converted the huge rocks of the mountain into gold with the help of mercurial compounds (rasas) and herbs.

The next morning, the king noticed the huge rocks of gold stood aghast. Immediately he ran to his friend and philosopher and exclaimed, "Oh! Saint! many a rock of gold I have seen. Is this the efficacy of the divine beings?" The saint replied smiling: "No, it is not so". Further, he remarked "This wonder is the result of the purity of your heart and sincerity of your duty. Go and have your ambition fulfilled". Afterwards, with the blessings of Nagarjuna, the king completed the monastery.
The monastery had cloisters and lofty halls; these halls were in five tiers, with four courts, with temples containing gold life size images of Buddha of perfect artistic beauty. In the topmost hall, Nagarjuna deposited the scriptures of Sakyamuni Buddha and the writings of the P'usas. In the lowest hall were the laymen attached to the monastery and the stores and three intermediate halls were the lodgings of the Brethren. It is believed that nine crores of gold coins were spent for the maintenance of the workmen engaged for the construction.

It was during the stay of Nagarjuna at Sri parvata, that the mountain became the sanctum sanctorium of Buddhist learning. At his feet many scholars thronged from places far and near and imbibed the teachings of Buddha. Among his disciples, mention may be made of Aryadeva, Nanda, and Naga. An interesting story connected with Nagarjuna and Aryadeva is narrated.

Aryadeva, a great scholar, was a native of Ceylon. Attracted by the profound scholarship of Nagarjuna, he travelled all the way from Ceylon to Sri Parvata to have a darsan of the saint. When he was told of Aryadeva's arrival of whom he had heard earlier, Nagarjuna was overwhelmed by joy. When they met each other the saint found profoundity of knowledge in Deva and greatly appreciated him. He told him that he was growing old and his strength dwindling away. Further he said he had found in him a suitable person who could succeed him and preach to the world the glory of Buddhism. Aryadeva then thought himself a great man and began to exhibit his vanity. Disgusted with his behaviour the saint felt very sorry for him. The Deva realised the mistake he had done and begged the saint to pardon him. As the story goes, Aryadeva became one of his disciples.
Nagarjuna is supposed to have stayed on the Sri Parvata for 139 years. His patron, Yajnasri, too had a long life devoid of old age and disease. But the wonder is that both of them departed from the world on one and the same day. The story runs as follows:

One day, the youngest son of the king approached his mother, the Queen, and expressed to her his desire to ascend the throne. Some believe that is Susuktì, not the son, but grandson of the king. In turn, the queen told him that as long as his father was alive he could not fulfill his desire.

She also disclosed that his brothers and their sons also had passed away without ascending the throne. The secret of the king's long life, according to the queen, lay in the rare medicines supplied to him by the saint Nagarjuna. The saint had the same and unique compassion towards all living beings. He was such a sage who could even sacrifice his own person for the welfare of his brethren.

It was one fine evening, Nagarjuna was repeating the holy Tripitakas in the front yard of his room. At that peaceful hour, the king's son approached the saint. Noticing the anxiety in his looks, the sage asked him the reason. Without the slightest hesitation, he urged the saint to give up his life for his sake. He immediately agreed to his wish; but said he would lose his father if he were to give up his life. But the king's son pretended as if he had not heard him. Afterwards, Nagarjuna made a search for an instrument. He was not successful. Then taking a dry kusa grass into his hands, he looked at the king's son and said he would give up his life for his sake. So saying, he cut his head off with the blade of the dry grass. Thus, like a true Bodhisattva, he abandoned the life. The king's son unable to stand the ghastly scene took to his heels and approached the king. He told him the
sudden and the tragic death of the saint. Over come with the grief for the passing away of his friend, philosopher and guide, Yajnasri immediately left the world to join the saint.

Since this has been narrated by Yuanchwang in his graphic description of the Sri Parvata and since Itsing too believed that the death of Yajnasri was immediately followed by that of Nagarjuna who died as the result of the Queen's foul play, perhaps, there is some truth in the above account. But there is also another version which says that Nagarjuna entered a vacant room after entrusting to Aryadeva the care of the Buddhist Dharma. He was in that room for one full day. Breaking the door open, his disciples found the saint in a trance or *Samadhi*. Thus he attained *Nirvana*. After his death, there was a severe earth tremor followed by a twelve-year famine.

Acharya Nagarjuna was primarily, a great philosopher. He was equally well-versed in the Brahmanical and the Buddhist scriptures. As he was a great exponent of Mahayana Buddhism which became very popular in Tibet, China and other countries, he found a place in the Tibetan and Chinese literatures also. He wrote several valuable works in Sanskrit enlarging and ennobling the principles of the Buddhism. But only 24 of his books are in existence. Of these, the following - *Prajnamula, Sunya Saptati, Vigrahavyavartini, Suhrullekha, Prajaa Paramita Sastra* are considered the best by the scholars. The above works clearly bring out the fact that Nagarjuna was a great teacher, a finished logician, profound scholar, and a celebrated dialectician. In the Buddhist literary world, he stands next to Asvaghosha.

Madhyamika philosophy, an old system which can be traced to the original teachings of Buddha, is one of the four schools of Buddhism. Buddha himself
named his ethical teaching the middle (Madhyama) path since it is between the "two extremes of an exaggerated asceticism and an easy secular life". But the main text for this system of philosophy is Nagarjuna's Madhyamika Karikas which consist of 400 Karikas and so he is rightly regarded as the expounder of this system. The Madhyamika Vaada which is otherwise called the Sunyavada is the mean between extreme affirmation and extreme negation. In other terms it is the mean between the doctrine of eternity and the doctrine of annihilation. Nagarjuna himself had said: "Stars, darkness, a lamp, a phantom, dew, a bubble, a dream, a flash of lighting and a cloud- Thus should we look upon the world".

Nagarjuna, perhaps, called the Anatman theory of Buddha as Sunyavada. According to him, individual or individuality does not exist. "Things are neither transient nor eternal, neither produced nor destroyed, neither same nor different, neither coming forth nor passing away". So, his Sunyata or nihilism stands for anitya. In short Sunyata may be described as the destruction and origination of things.

Among his other writings, Vigraha Vyavartini which contains only 72 karikas deserves mention. In this treatise also, Nagarjuna explained in detail the philosophy of Sunyavada. The fact that he himself wrote commentaries to this and Madhyamika Karikas as well shows that these works should be studied with great care. He also wrote the Ekasloka Sastra which reads as follows:

"My body (or substance) in its nature is not permanent. Thus, then, my body is not a body.
My body in its nature not being a body.
I, therefore, say that it is empty and not permanent". (Tr. Rev. Edkins)

It is worth noting that Nagarjuna based his theories on the sutras which Buddha had left for the
benefit of his disciples. According to the learned scholars like Rhys Davids and others, the important dogmas of Buddhism are nothing but the spirit of the *Upanishads*. It is said that Buddha, bearing in mind, the conditions of his times gave a new shape to the neglected truths of the *Upanishads* in such a manner as to attract scholars.

Itsing in his memorable account of Nagarjuna had referred to his *Suhrullekha* (Friendly Epistle) a compilation of letters addressed to Gautamiputra Yajna Sri Satakarni. It appears that this was a popular work in those times and it was learnt by heart by several people. Suhrullekha was also popular in Tibet and China. Itsing himself translated this work into Chinese.

*Vajrachhedika* (the Diamond Sutra) is another well known work of Nagarjuna. Maxmuller had translated this into English. In his preface he said: "It represents a treatise on metaphysical agnosticism and was delivered expressively for those who entered the path leading to Nirvana". According to Buddhist scholars this work will outlive all other knowledge known to philosophy, as the diamond exceeds all other gems in brilliance and indestructibility.

Above all, by founding a University and a library on Sri parvata, Nagarjuna will be ever remembered. In the library, it is believed he had preserved many rare texts of the Buddhist scriptures. In his university were students drawn from all parts of the Buddhistic world. From the account of Yuan Chhwang, we can perhaps, conclude that the university was a great centre of Asian culture in those times. But the glory and grandeur of this Buddhistic university dwindled away after the passing away of the saint-philosopher.

Although, about 2000 years have elapsed, Nagarjuna is still alive and he will be ever remembered for the obvious reason that he was a distinguished
philosopher and a great thinker. The mountain on which he spent his best part of life as well as the evening of his saintly life was a reputed centre of learning and light which attracted even foreign scholars. That place where the huge masonry dam constructed over the river Krishna has been reverentially called after Nagarjuna (Nagarjuna Sagar Dam). While laying the foundation stone for the dam in 1955, the first Prime Minister Of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru described it as a symbol of future prosperity. So also, the University located in Guntur has been rightly christened as Nagarjuna University which in 1982 saw the inauguration of the Mahayana Buddhist studies chair centre by His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the king of Bhutan. It is hoped that this centre would flourish as a fitting memorial to the illustrious son of our country, Acharya Nagarjuna.

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3. Andal As Delineated In a Telugu Poem

Sri Krishnadevaraya of the 16th Century who ruled over the famous Vijayanagar Kingdom which included the entire South India and also upto the river Mahanadi in the North was an enlightened emperor of his day. Though a Kannadiga by birth, he is even today hailed as Andhra Bhoja, an adept in Kavya (poem) nataka (drama) and alankara (rhetorics) and Emperor in the fields of literature and warfare. The last attribute brings out the Emperor-poet's skill in both literature and warfare. A distinguished patron of letters, he was well known for his immense regard and respect for poets. A stray verse attributed to Allasani Peddana, the court poet of the Emperor, describes in moving terms the intimate relationship tinged with deep respect that existed between him and his patron. The foremost detail afforded by him is that when the poet came in opposite direction, the King riding on his elephant lowered it and got the poet on the elephant lending his hand. Another poet said that the Emperor had prostrated to him. Though Sri Krishnadevaraya is called after the Emperor Bhoja of the 11th century, who was an outstanding Sanskrit poet, besides being a great patron of letters, the Sanskrit poet is not said to have exhibited such magnanimity as shown by his counterpart of the 16th century.
As is evident from the above, Sri Krishnadevaraya, also popularly called as Rayalu or Rayalavaru, is an unique poet in Telugu. Needless to mention that he was a poet in Sanskrit and had to his credit a few poems in it and they are not extant. As a poet of repute, his name and fame mainly rest on the Telugu poem entitled Amuktamalyada also known as Vishnuchittiyam. It is one of the five major poems in Telugu, the other four being Manucharitram, Vasucharitram, Pandurangamahatmyam, and Sringara Naishadham. The poem of the Emperor-poet is generally acclaimed as a masterly work. In it is convincingly established the supremacy of devotion-centered music over knowledge. A careful and critical study of the poem will enable even the casual reader to appreciate it's literary excellence and also understand the polity and the social conditions of the times.

Amuktamalyada is the name of Andal or Goda Devi who is well known in Tamil literature as Chudikkodutha Nacchiyar. The God intoxicated devotee, as the name suggests, had offered to God wreaths worn by her. This may sound peculiar, but the fact is that her devotion was so intense which was accepted by the merciful Almighty who is fond of sincere devotees and spotless devotion.

Amuktamalyada is the first Telugu poem dealing with the Visishtadvaita school of thought. Happily, it is also the first poem on the saint-poetess too- even in Tamil. Why should the poet choose this particular story is itself a fascinating one.

Sri Krishnadevaraya had led an expedition towards Kalinga country (modern Orissa) with a desire to conquer the same and during the expedition he stayed at Vijayawada for a few days. From thence he proceeded to Srikakulam a nearby holy place on the banks of the river Krishna. The deity of this Vaishnava centre is called Andhra Vishnu. Then he observed fast on the Ekadasi
day and during the last watch of the night the deity appeared to him in dream and said: "you have already authored several poems in Sanskrit. It would not therefore, be difficult for you to compose a poem in Telugu. The theme you select should be dear to my heart. The reason for asking you to pen a Telugu poem is that the country is Telugu, I a Telugu deity and as you know, Telugu is the best among the indigenous languages. I suggest that you narrate the story of that maiden who adorned the deity with garlands first worn by her and whose marriage took place with her favorite deity at Srirangam (on the banks of river Kaveri). I also suggest that you dedicate the poem to Venkatapati, the Lord of Seven Hills, as we are one and the same".

The salient point that emerges from this dream story, which should not be deemed as mere fiction, is worth noting. The Telugu deity had asked the Karnataka king to compose a poem in Telugu on a Tamil devotee. The poem is, therefore, unique as it has strengthened emotional integration. It is also worth noting that no Tamil poem portraying the story of Andal has appeared before Sri Krishnadevaraya albeit her story is very popular in Tamil homes.

Though the Telugu poem has been named after Andal, her story does not cover the entire poem. Her story has been described in the fifth and the seventh cantos while the remaining give the stories of other devotees- Vishnuchitta (Periyalwar), Khandikya and Kesidhwaja, Yamunacharya and a devotee hailing from the so called low caste. Despite the fact that different stories are strewn together, they have one and the same idea in common, namely, that spotless devotion (bhakti) is superior to other forms of worship and this binds the different stories together. We shall presently see Andal’s story as delineated by the master poet.
A devotee of Lord Vishnu named Vishnuchitta lived in Srivilliputhur town in the Pandya Region (Madurai) of Tamilnadu. Full of beautiful gardens and sky-high buildings, the town was like a locket suspended on the forehead from the parting of the hair of the lady of the Pandya region. Vishnuchitta was an affluent Brahmin, still he willingly engaged himself in making garlands for the local deity Vatapatrasayi (Vada perungoilan). He was not a man of letters, but an innocent devotee of the Lord and of God-men.

In accordance with his routine work, one day, Vishnuchitta went to his garden and began plucking Tulasi leaves near a pond. He found to his astonishment a female baby, tender and good featured. The bewildered devotee said to himself that the merciful Almighty had thus blessed him, a childless, and soon left the place. He handed over the child to his wife who was much pleased. She tended the child with motherly affection and care. She was named Goda Devi. As years elapsed she reached her bloom of youth, becoming tight-lipped. Curls appeared on her hair, looks became dainty and waist thin. The different limbs looked attractive. Her throat, resembling that of a conch, shone like a real one when it was smeared with sandal paste.

She was Bhudevi (Mother earth) in her past birth. Her friends of those days, the Naaga virgins, were born to her neighbours as Maraalika, Sragvini and others. They used to assemble at one particular place and spend their time, celebrating doll-marriages and singing the songs of Lakshmi’s wedding. Listening to the soul filling songs again and again the young Goda was moved by the noble traits of Narayana in his various incarnations and she made up her mind to marry him in the present birth, prompted by their past relationship.

Without her father’s knowledge, Goda first used to adorn the garlands meant for the Lord under her tuft
bending to the left and see her shadow in the well water. Afterwards, she would place the wreaths in her father's basket. Gradually her love for the Lord became intense and also pangs of her separation from Him unbearable. As Hari had in the past turned a deaf ear to the wishes of those women who loved Him, she began to taunt Him saying: “As Yamana, He caused sorrow to Lakshmi, as Parasurama to Bhudevi, as Rama to Surpanakha and others, as Krishna to the Gopies. Recollecting all those stories, she became sad and dejected.

As days passed by she became thin. She had sleepless nights. All her thoughts were concentrated on Him. Her actions became the talk of her friends. One of them said to her friend : “Perhaps, you are not aware of this wonder. One day, Goda devi before taking a dip in the pond, had removed her pearl necklace and put it on my throat. Afterwards, I followed her and took a dip in the pond and found to my surprise that the pearl necklace had changed into lime. However, after bath, Goda insisted on my returning her necklace, but was quite ignorant of her inner sorrow”.

Unable to contain her feelings, sometimes during nights, Goda devi said to herself : “Oh! Krishna! You had played on flute brilliantly alluring the Gopi women and making them approaching you leaving their homes. Oh! Ye Radha! Is it fair on your part to make the Gopies suffer and monopolise for yourself enjoyment with Krishna? Oh! Yamuna, the daughter of the Sun God, you are truly the sister of the Lord of Death, Yama, as you have made the Gopies leave their homes to meet Krishna and later roll on your sands due to love-sickness”.

Overhearing Goda’s utterances, her friends remarked that she was, perhaps, Satyabhama in her past birth. Soon Goda recollected her past experiences and fainted. Regaining her senses, she feared that her father
might fix her marriage with a mortal. So she was keen to give up her life, through yoga. Her friends then dissuaded her from doing so and cheered her remarking that the deity of Srirangam was no other than Lord Krishna and hence she could attain Him through the local deity. This advice comforted her.

To be relieved from the pangs of separation, the young Goda used to sleep on the flower-bed, draw her lover's portrait, play on the veena songs in His praise and singing hymns sounding the Tambura with finger nails. Still there was no solace for her and suffered as before.

She used to wake up from her bed in the early hours of the day. Accompanied by her friends and carrying with them golden plates containing turmeric, kumkum and the like, she would go to the pond in the garden and take a dip in it chanting the Dravida Veda (Nalayira Prabhanbdham). Afterwards, she would wear a pink colored garment and fix on her forehead tirumani and srichurnam. She would then proceed to the temple, worship the Lord and offer with devotion sugar, ghee and plantains. Returning home, she would eulogize the glory and the grandeur of Lord krishna.

The innocent father watched his daughter's peculiar behavior but failed to understand her love-sickness. On the contrary, he mistook it as some sort of penance. However, he became very sad as she was thinning day by day. Unable to guess the reason, one day, he expressed his anguish before the deity whom he worshipped daily seeking his help. Pitying for his innocence, the Lord said: "Vishnu, in his Varaha incarnation, had told Bhudevi that singing His praise was the best and the easiest path for salvation. To translate it into practice and also to stress its significance, she took birth as your daughter, spending her time in singing songs full of meaning under the pretence of separation. Is there any superior penance other than singing with devotion? Every-
thing would end well if she worshipped the Lord of Srirangam."

As advised, Vishnuchitta took Goda Devi to Srirangam in a golden palanquin accompanied by several attendants and fellow devotees.

Reaching Lord Ranganatha’s abode situated on the banks of the river Kaveri, also known as Viraja, Vishnuchitta and his daughter had a dip in the river. Later, the embellished Goda Devi was taken to the temple where her father worshipped the deity. Looking at her, Bhudevi-incarnate, Lord Ranganatha could not restrain Himself and took her to His chamber, keeping in her stead a fake young woman. After receiving God’s prasada, Vishnuchitta and others left the temple for their quarters. But Goda Devi was not found in the palanquin. The sorrow stricken Vishnuchitta blamed Ranganatha for his act. Trembling at the devotees sorrow, the Lord appeared before him saying he had unnecessarily blamed him while keeping his daughter in his quarters.

After Vishnuchitta and the party had returned to their place, Ranganatha requested Brahma, Siva, Saraswati and Parvati to visit Srivilliputtur and ask him to give his daughter in marriage to him. Vishnuchitta was too happy to agree to the proposal; but laid a condition that the Lord of Srirangam should marry his daughter in his house. In deference to the devotee’s wish, Ranganatha came to Srivilliputtur with his retinue and married Goda Devi according to the Vedic rites. Afterwards, accompanied by Goda Devi, he returned to his place. Thus the story has a happy ending.

Though Sri Krishnadevaraya has followed the Sanskrit poem Guruparampara Parbhaava, a repository of the stories of the Vaishnava teachers, it is significant that the poet has made two deviations from the original. First, the poet has stated that Goda Devi was an incarnation of Bhudevi while it is said in the original that she
was of Lakshmi. This deviation has enabled the poet to narrate the story of a devotee said to belong to a low caste who by his undiluted devotion proved beyond doubt of superiority of the soul-filling music over mere knowledge.

The saint-poetess Goda devi, as daughter of a devotee, has demonstrated in unmistakable terms the truth contained in the above narration. Hence the deviation is justifiable.

According to the Sanskrit text, Goda Devi had intimate union with Lord Ranganatha soon after her marriage took place with Him in Srirangam. However, the emperor-poet has narrated that the marriage was celebrated in Vishnuchitta’s house- the bride’s house- in Srivilliputtur as is the practice followed by human beings. This deviation is, therefore, not only convincing but also gives the story a human touch.

In conclusion, it deserves mention that Sri Krishnadevaraya’s portrayal of Andal is at once interesting and pleasing. Being a descriptive poet, his elaborate descriptions of the spring season has been made in about fifty verses, putting a break to the main story. However, it should be said that such descriptions reveal the royal poet’s keen observation of nature and life and also his mastery over the language.
4. THE IMPACT OF THE RAMAYANA ON TELUGU LITERATURE

Telugu, also known as Tenugu or Andhram, is one of the major Indian languages. It is Dravidian in origin and Sanskrit in development. Known for its euphoric sweetness, it is hailed as the “Italian of the East”. A classical and a modern language, it is mainly spoken in the present Andhra Pradesh state and the Telugu speakers constitute the second largest linguistic group in the country. Several old songs and poetical works in Telugu are believed to be lost.

Since the Telugu literature owes a lot to Sanskrit, needless to mention that almost all outstanding works in the language including the Ramayana have been rendered into Telugu. Besides, Valmiki’s poem, the other well known versions of the epic story, namely the Adhyatma Ramayana, the Ananda Ramayana and the like have also found a place in Telugu. In short, it may be said that the Ramayana literature in Telugu is old, unbroken, pervasive, vast, and varied. It is so extensive that the story has been narrated in all literary forms from the classical type of kavya (poem) to the folk song sung by the unlettered. It is no exaggeration if it is said that works in Telugu based on or about the Rama theme are in legion. It is no wonder, therefore, that the story of Rama has a tremendous impact on the literature and the
life of Telugus as well. The presence of several *Rama mandirs* (temples) in villages and towns in the Telugu region, the celebration of Rama's birthday (*Sri Rama Navami*) with devotion and festivity, the popularity of Rama as personal name among the Telugus, remembering Rama's name with reverence in day-to-day life and the availability of innumerable works in Telugu on the Rama-theme lend support to the view that the Telugu mind is a stronghold of the Rama cult. It is worth noting that some Telugu scholars have regarded Rama as not only their beloved deity but also as a Telugu deity. Hence the story of Rama should be regarded as not a piece of dead mythology but a living faith among the Telugus. It is significant that some Telugu families have their surnames as *Ramayanam, Ramavajjhala, Sitamraju* etc., and that the surname is must for every Telugu person.

The fact that the story of Rama has gone deep into the language can be proved from the several proverbs and sayings current among the people. Assuming form out of long experience, they not only reflect the people's mind but also preserve some of the interesting episodes of the Ramayana, as prevalent among masses. For instance, *uduta bhakti*, meaning, squirrel's devotion, is a common saying among Telugu speakers. This is frequently employed by the Telugu-educated or uneducated and sophisticated or unsophisticated, whenever they desire to express their admiration for the sincerity of action, however trivial it might be. The non-Telugus may not fully appreciate this saying if they are not aware of the details of the story behind it. This episode is absent in the Sanskrit original. But *Ranganatha* and *Bhaskara Ramayanas* in Telugu have vividly narrated the story which occurs in the *Yuddha Kanda* (Battle Book) of the epic.

The story goes, Rama is engaged in the construction of the great bridge (*Setu*) across the ocean. Seeing the
monkeys lifting and throwing mountains and trees in the ocean, a little squirrel thinks that it also should help Rama in the construction. Immediately it takes a dip in the ocean first and then rolls itself in the sands on the sea-shore and later drops the sand particles, deposited on its body, on the construction. This process is repeated with great devotion. Rama looks at the squirrel and deeply moved by its spotless devotion, asks his brother who was standing nearby to fetch it to him. Taking the opportunity, Lakshmana remarks that whoever offers with devotion even a straw, it would become a huge mountain and that devotion is the only reason for the same. Rama then takes the squirrel in his palm and gently pats it on the back. As a result three strips show on its body.

Those who are not aware of these details will naturally miss the spirit of the episode and also of the saying.

The squirrel episode is no doubt a simple one, but it effectively brings out the efficacy of genuine devotion through which God's blessings can be obtained. Though the Telugu poets have not said it directly, it can be assumed that excellence of devotion will work wonders and that it is the message that they wanted to offer.

The impact of the Ramayana on Telugu literature is tremendous and we shall presently see how the story has penetrated through its different forms.

Poem is the oldest literary form in Telugu and the story of Rama has been narrated in several poems, major and minor. Telugu can be proud of several complete Ramayanas (with all the six kandas or books) and abridged versions as well. In Telugu are written many poems based on the later story of Rama also, which is called Uttara Ramayana. Besides these Purva and Uttara Ramayana, there exist faithful translations of Valmiki, Adhyutma and other versions of the story. There also exist Satakantha and Sahasrakantha Ramayanas
and translations of *Tulasi Ramayan* from Hindi, *Kamba Ramayanam* from Tamil and *Vichitra Ramayan* from Oriya.

Even though major Ramayanas in Telugu-*Ranganatha Ramayanam* and *Bhaskuru Ramayanam* - have closely followed Valmiki’s poem, still they contain many episodes and details which are not found in the original. The reason for these new details or deviations is, perhaps, due to the Ramayana authors consulting the other versions of the story and Sanskrit plays based on the Rama-theme, the different *puranas* and their desire to record the folk stories as vogue in the Telugu region. Some of the deviations might have been made for the sake of propriety or refinement. In this connection, it may be said that exact translations of Valmiki’s epic have appeared only in modern times. The old Telugu poets, though they were Sanskritists also, did not produce faithful renderings. We shall note some of the deviations made by the ancient poets.

The episode of Ahalya is an important one in the Ramayana. Rama is hailed as *Patitapavana* meaning the Emancipator of the fallen. This meaningful attribute is quite appropriate in the case of Rama since he emancipated Ahalya, the wife of the sage Gautama. According to Valmiki, the sage has cursed his wife to lie as a heap of ashes (*Bhasma-sayini*) for thousands of years and also unseen by anybody. Such a lady of heap of ashes is equal to a stone and hence the Telugu poets including the folk authors have described Ahalya as a stone as a result of her husband’s curse and this is in keeping with the south Indian belief. It is stated in the *Adhyatma Ramayana* that the sage has cursed his wife to become a stone.

Valmiki is silent about the days on which Rama and his brothers were born though the poet has mentioned their birth stars. According to the Telugu Ramayanas,
Rama was born on Wednesday, Bharatha on Thursday and Lakshmana and Satrughna on Friday. Even *Kamba Ramayana* does not mention this detail.

The reason for Kaikeyi’s maid servant Manthara’s enmity with Rama has not been mentioned in the Sanskrit original. While describing the childhood of Rama, one Telugu version says that Rama has broken Manthara’s leg with his playing stick while another version mentions that Rama has hit her with his leg. This detail is, perhaps, included to suggest that Manthara who later sabotages the coronation ceremony of Rama has been nursing a grievance against him even from his childhood. Valmiki just says that Manthara is a woman of evil intent (*papa darsini*).

The killing of Jambukumara, son of Surpanakha, by Lakshmana is not narrated in the original while it is prominently narrated in the Telugu versions.

*Ranganatha Ramayanam*, in an interesting episode which is not found in Valmiki or other Telugu versions, paints Ravana in bright hues.

Ravana desires to instill fear in the minds of Rama and his followers by exhibiting all the precious ornaments he has acquired in several battles. Learning from Vibhishana that his brother has acquired them after defeating the Gods in different battles, Rama shoots an arrow which removes the ornaments worn by the maids attending on Ravana. Even his umbrella and chowry (chamara) are also broken. But no one was hurt. This astonishing feat of Rama attracts Ravana who forgets his enmity atleast for a moment. He admires his enemy’s skill in archery and says that none could excel Rama in archery. Hearing those praises, his ministers gently caution their master that the enemy should not be so liberally extolled. But Ravana chides them saying that the mighty hero deserves every praise. This episode highlights the noble trait in Ravana, namely, the grace of sportsmanship.
to appreciate the excellence of a hero even he be his worst enemy.

The episode of Ravana's daughter-in-law - and Indrajit's wife Sulochana is one of the most important episodes in Ranganatha Ramayanam. The story is narrated in 374 lines. This episode, absent in Valmiki and other Telugu versions, is found in the Ananda Ramayana. Though a Rakshasa woman, Sulochana is a noble lady who could be compared to Sita regarding chastity. Though she is a minor character in the story, her wisdom and chastity draw admiration from one and all. Her story brings out the fact that all Rakshasas are not bad. Her story, as narrated in Ranganatha Ramayanam is as follows:

Sulochana is the daughter of Adisesha, the supporter of the earth. She deeply mourns the death of her husband Indrajit and decides to commit sahagamanam (burn herself on the funeral pyre of her husband). Then she approaches her father-in-law and requests him to recover the dead body of her husband from the battlefield. But the great Ravana expresses his inability. Immediately, she leaves for the battlefield in the hope that she could get the dead body. The monkey mistake her for Sita when she was flying in the air. She approaches Rama and requests him to revive her dead husband. Being an incarnation of pity, Rama is at once moved by her words. Knowing his mind, Hanuman requests him to respect the word of Brahma. Rama changes his mind and comforts her saying that she and her husband would finally attain the paradise of Vishnu. Sugriva, intervening, asks her to speak with her husband if she is a chaste lady. Accordingly, she speaks to the dead body of Indrajit and he replies. Then the dead body is handed over to her and she returns to Lanka. Even Ravana is astonished to see his son's dead body brought from the battlefield. She seeks his permission for sahagama. After obtain-
ing the same, she gladly burns herself with the body of her husband.

The episode of Kalanemi is yet another one which is not found on the present version of Valmiki Ramayana. He is one of the trusted followers of Ravana.

As directed by his teacher Sukra, Ravana performs *Patala homa* (sacrifice) and this detail is not found in the original.

Before the construction of the bridge across the ocean (*seshu*), Nala worship Lord Ganapathi and this is in accordance with the popular custom of the Telugus.

During the coronation of Rama, Lakshmana, being possessed by the Goddess of Sleep, abruptly laughs in the court which creates a stir among the dignitaries present. Even Rama mistakes his brother and asks him the reason for his laughter. Lakshmana explains the story of the Goddess of Sleep and all feel relieved to hear the same. The laughter of Lakshmana is a popular episode and is narrated in *Ranganatha Ramayanan*.

Yet another important deviation made by the Telugu poets, like their counterparts in other languages, is the deification of Rama as an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

In this connection, mention may be made of *Dwyarthi kavyas* and pure Telugu poems called *Atcha Telugu Kavyas* narrating the story of Rama. *Dwyarti Kavya* is a two-in-one; i.e. two poems are narrated in one work and this is really a literary feat. Pure Telugu is devoid of Sanskrit words and compounds. There are several *Satakas* (work of 100 verses), *Dandakas* (a metrical composition eulogising of hero of the work) and *Yakshaganas* (dance dramas). Many dramas on the Rama-theme have been written and several of them have been staged. So also learned treatises including writings criticising some of the episodes have also appeared several praise versions of the Ramayana story have been published.
It is noteworthy that folk authors, too, have been greatly inspired by the story of Rama. As a result, several inspiring songs describing the Ramayana story either in full or in part have been composed and they are popular. The banishment of Sita, the daughter of Lakshmana, the sleep of Urmila, the wife of Lakshmana are some of the popular folk songs. There is also a concise Ramayana in a lengthy folk song which is usually sung by the women folk. Even though it is faithful to the classical version of the story in several of its details, one can find many details which are not found in the Valmiki’s poem. Curiously enough, a few folk poets followed Kamba Ramayananam in one or two places. Abduction of Sita is an illustration to this point. As against the original, Kamban’s Ravana uproots the very cottage in which Sita lives and puts it on his chariot and flies to Lanka. This detail is found in a few Ramayana folk songs. It is significant that folk authors have popularized the Rama story and their contribution to the Ramayana literature is substantial and perhaps, some details and episodes they have mentioned are their own inventions.

It can be seen from the above brief account that the impact of the Ramayana on the Telugu mind and Telugu literature is noteworthy. Telugu literature, old and modern, has shown that the Ramayana story is not a piece of dead wood but a live bark. The story as narrated by Valmiki has greatly inspired the Telugu poets including folk authors and the readers as well. The influence of the story is longstanding and continuous. In brief, it may be said that the Rama literature in Telugu is endless. At this juncture, a word about two distinguished Rama-singers is essential. Tyagaraja is the greatest Rama-singer and Ramadas of Bhadrachalam, a staunch devotee of Rama have done yeomen service to Ramayana literature through their mellifluous and soul filling songs. The songs of Tyagaraja have spread not only the Rama cult
but also helped the Telugu language cross the barriers of language and region. In one of his beautiful compositions, the saint-musician asks a few questions which seem relevant even today. The questions are: "Oh! My mind! Tell me truly, which conduces greatly to the happiness-wealth or the sight of the lord? What is more delicious-milk, butter and curd or the nectar of the worship and contemplation of Sri Rama? Which is happier- the control of the senses and forbearance which are comparable to a bath in the Ganges or the bath in the well with the mire of low sense-enjoyments? Which gives more happiness-flattery of mere men bound up in their own conceit or the saying of the Lord who has been praised by the wise Tyagaraja?

The popular belief in India is that Ramarajya symbolizes peace and happiness. This Indian thought is preserved in the following Telugu folk song composed in question and answer form.

"Why was the monkey born?  
To cut the branches of trees.  
Why should the branches be cut?  
To make a chariot  
Why should the chariot be made?  
To help Rama ascend it.  
Why should Rama ascend it?  
To kill Ravana.  
Why should Ravana be killed?  
To bring Sita back.  
Why should Sita be brought?  
To enable Rama reign.  
Why should Rama reign?  
So that people may live in happiness.

SELECT LIST OF WORKS ON  
OR ABOUT THE RAMAYANA

(A) Major Ramayanas:
1. Ranganatha Ramayanam - Gona Buddha Reddi (13th
2. Bhaskara Ramayanam - Bhaskara and others (13th Century)

3. Molla Ramayanam - Molla (a woman poet belonging to the potter community - 14th Century)

4. Sri Ramayanam - Katta Varadaraju (17th Century)

(B) Uttara Ramayanas
1. Nirvachanottara Ramayanam - Tikkana (13th Century)
2. Uttara Ramayanam - Kankanti Paparaju (17th Century)

(C) Poems
1. Ramabhyudayam - Ayyalaraju Ramabhadrudu (16th Century)
2. Atcha Telugu Ramayanam - Kuchimanchi Timma Kavi (18th Century)

(D) Two-in-one poems
1. Raghava Pandaviyam - (the stories of Ramayana and the Mahabharata - Pingali Surana (16th Century)

(E) Satakas
1. Dasarathi Satakam - Ramadas of Bhadrachalam (17th Century)
2. Bhaktamandara Satakam - Kuchimanchi Jagga Kavi (18th Century)

(F) Modern Ramayanas
1. Gopinatha Ramayanam - Gopinatham Venkata Kavi (19th Century)
2. Sri Krishna Ramayanam - Sripada Krishnamurti Sastri (1866-1960)
3. Ramayana Kalpavriksham - Visvanatha Satyanarayana (1895-1976) (Received the prestigious award from the Bharatiya Jnanapith)

(G) Translations from Valmiki
1. Andhra Valmiki Ramayanam (Verse) - Vavillikolanu Subba Rao (1863-1939)
2. Andhra Srimad Valmiki Ramayanam (Verse) -
3. Valmiki Ramayanam (Prose) - Puripanda Appalaswamy
4. Valmiki Ramayanam (Prose) - Srinivasa Siromani

(H) Other versions of the Ramayana
1. Adhyatma Ramayanam - Kanadam Peddana Somayaji (18th Century)
2. Vasishtha Ramayanam - Madiki Singana (14th Century)
3. Ananda Ramayanam - Chilukuri Srirama Sastri

(I) Dandakas
1. Sri Rama Dandakam - Adidam Sura Kavi (18th Century)

(J) Yakshaganas
1. Sugriva Vijayam - Kandukuri Rudra Kavi (16th Century)
2. Dharmapuri Ramayanam - Dharmapuri Seshachala Kavi (18th Century)

(K) Dramas
1. Paduka Pattabhishekam - Dharmavaram Ramakrishnamacharya (1853-1912)
2. Sita Kalyanam - Kolachalam Srinivasa Rao (1854-1919)
3. Kalyana Raghavam - Panuganti Lakshminarasimham (1865-1940)

(L) Songs
1. Adhyatma Ramayana Kirthanalu - Kalahasti Subrahmanya Kavi.
2. Lakshmanadevara Navvu.

(M) Treatises
1. Ramayana Viseshamulu - Suravaram Pratapa Reddi
2. Sri Ramayana Saroddharam - Mulukutla Narasimhavadhani.
   (Ph.D dissertations are not included.)
5. KAMBA RAMAYANAM AND VISWANATHA'S RAMAYANAM

Needless to mention that whoever writes the Ramayana in any form or any language is inevitably inspired by the sage-poet Valmiki. Despite the fact that diverse versions of the Ramayana story are extant, almost all the Ramayana poets, old or modern, are to a certain extant indebted to the adikavi, as Valmiki is gratefully remembered throughout the ages in literary history. It is, therefore, not unnatural that poets hold him in great regard, for he is the first poet to sketch the story of the epic hero who is also reverentially hailed as God-incarnate. No wonder, therefore, that the influence of the Ramayana is three-fold-literary, religious and ethical. Thus the poem has at once attained the stature of the veda and an epic and it has become a perennial source - book for the Ramayana poets in every generation-perhaps, generations to come also.

Besides being an excellent poem in the original language, the Ramayana in its various language versions too is an important work and this speaks of the uniqueness of the original. For instance, Kamba Ramayanam in Tamil, Ranganatha and Bhaskara Ramayanas in Telugu and Ramacharitmanas in Hindi are remarkable works. Coming to the modern age, Sri Ramayana Darsanam by K.V. Puttappa and Srimad Ramayana Kalpavrikshamu
by Viswanatha Satyanarayana are great poems in Kannada and Telugu respectively and both received the coveted Jnanapith award. This again reveals the uniqueness of the story which becomes much more pronounced in the deft hands of a master poet.

Kamban is said to have flourished in the 9th or 12th century while Viswanatha is a modern poet with a difference. To him, traditional values have a deep fascination and this is evidenced by almost all his writings either in poem or prose. Thuse the Tamil and the Telugu poets who are steeped in ancient lore chose the familiar and popular theme for their poems. Their love for the theme and respect for Valmiki are not only abundant but also stupendous.

Kamban, in one of his prefatory verses, makes it known that he had followed Valmiki’s version though three poets had written the Ramayana in Sanskrit, the language of the Gods. He further declares that his desire to compose the Ramayana when Valmiki’s version was in vogue, is like that of a cat’s desire to drink the entire milk in the ocean of milk. This brings out his humility. But the consensus among the Tamil scholars is that it is a matchless poem tinged with dramatic and lyrical beauty. In the words of V.V.S Aiyar, a distinguished scholar-critic, *Kamba Ramayanam* can challenge comparison not merely with the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, the *Paradise Lost* and the *Mahabharat*, but with Valmiki’s *Ramayana* itself.

Though I hesitate to make a similar remark about Viswanatha’s Ramayana (V.R. for short), it can be said without any hesitation that it is a remarkable work compelling commendation. The two poems are voluminous in nature containing about 50,000 lines each. Interestingly both Kamban and Viswanatha are popularly known as *Kavi Chakravarti* and *Kavi Samarat*, meaning the Emperor among poets. To elaborate the comparison further,
the poets are independent and original though they took the theme from Valmiki and their creative imagination coupled with deft handling of the story has made their poems great. And their works are not at all translations but only able re-creations even though they adhered to Valmiki in the narration of the main incidents. In choosing the Ramayana theme, Kamban’s aim was to “demonstrate the greatness and divinity of poetry”. Viswanatha was of the view that rasa (emotion or feeling) was thousand times superior to that of the story and this is amply illustrated in his narration.

Kamban named his epic as Ramavataram (the Descent of Rama). It is also known as the story of Rama (Ramakathai) and Kamban’s play (Rama Natakam). However, the popular name is Kamba Ramayanan. (K.R. for short). Viswanatha’s poem is titled Srimad Ramayana Kalpavrikshamu meaning Ramayana the divine wish-fulfilling Tree. The title is highly suggestive as the reading of the poem affords punya, aesthetic pleasure and whatever imagination can think of. However, some critics vehemently criticise the poem for its terse expression which is sometimes abstruse. Whatever is said, a scholar who is well-versed in Sanskrit and Telugu and who is also endowed with knowledge of prosody and other branches of learning can better appreciate the poem. Kamban, too, has not escaped from shrewd critics who feel that his is a poem of interpolations. K.R. in its present form has 1420 stanzas in Bala Kanda, but a scholar like T.K.C. (Chidambaranatha Mudaliar) has included in his edition of K.R. only 167 stanzas. Some critics feel that the poet’s descriptions are somewhat elaborate, for his description of Dasaratha’s journey to Mithila has been done in 300 stanzas while it has been carried out briefly in Valmiki. V.R. describes the journey in about 20 stanzas. However, Viswanatha is also very fond of elaborate descriptions. He does not lag behind Kamban in this regard.
In the first canto itself is vividly exhibited the creative genius of the Tamil and the Telugu poets.

As the story goes on, the sage Viswamitra advises Rama to shoot at the demoness Tataka. But the latter refuses saying that a woman should not be killed. Thereupon the sage exhorts him to kill her as she was a monster inflicting misery on the peace-loving hermits. Finally Rama agrees and shoots an arrow at her. Kamban makes this insipid incident worth quoting with his amazing descriptive skill. "Then Rama sent out an arrow, which was as sharp and hot as an unkind word and which penetrated her chest and shot past the heart, like the good counsel given by the virtuous to the wicked. The blood that swelled out of her holed heart spread throughout the desert", (S.Maharajan). If Kamban attracts the reader with his apt similes and minute description, Viswanatha captivated with his splendid narration. He observes that the demoness breathes her last, tremendously afflicted, falling on the ground. Seeing this, the birds clapped waving their wings; the trees nodded their heads losing control; the forest animals standing at a distance were wonder-struck. Quivering at the snoring of the demoness when she was alive, the wild animals had a sound sleep. Even the night shone well in tranquility. Thus the same situation enabled one poet to demonstrate the greatness of Rama's arrow and another poet to describe in detail the immense relief enjoyed by the forest dwellers from Tataka's death.

The episode of Ahalya is disputable one. According to the tradition, she is one of the five chaste women. Rama came to be known as an emancipator of the fallen (patita pavana), only after his emancipation of Ahalya who was cursed by her husband Gautama. Valmiki says she was lying unconscious as a heap of ashes unnoticed by anyone. However, the South Indian belief is that she became a stone which was later transformed into a sweet
maid only after Rama’s feet touched it. The Tamil and Telugu poets have confirmed this popular belief. Even before Ahalya’s account was narrated, Kamban gives the episode of the sage Durvasa who cursed Indra for his misbehavior with a woman. This episode also accounts for Indra’s mean behavior and hence Kamban’s narration becomes quite meaningful. The episode of Durvasa is not mentioned in V.R.

However, Viswanatha’s respect for Ahalya is not less as is evidenced by the fact that he has allotted a separate chapter captioned Ahalya Khandam. He describes Rama in tears even at the very first sight of her cottage which is bereft of any prosperous sign. The poet remarks that Rama’s face resembled that of Vaikuntha which Lord Vishnu had abandoned. The sage before going to the Himalayas, it is said, consoles his sorrowing wife that Rama would come and remove her rockish nature when her lust fully vanished. Afterwards, Gautama accepts her and Ahalya serves dainty dishes to Rama and others. The poet takes the opportunity to describe her mind charged with spotless devotion. She wonders why such an infatuation for Rama and intense delight should spring in her heart. She feels as if the eulogies of Narada and Tumbura and the sweet sounds of the anklets of the celestial women ring in her mouth and her mind become a repository of the songs of the devotees of Vaikunta and a common place of Rama’s worship. Viswanatha, perhaps, desires to convey through her story that a human being is altogether transformed after he finds complete disgust in worldly things.

Significant to point out is that both Kamban and Viswanatha exhibit ineffable reverence for female characters. If the former excels in depicting Tara of the Vanara clan in bright hues, the latter admirably describes Sabari the forester-devotee par excellence.

Tara, the wife of Vali, is of course a minor charac-
ter in the Ramayana. In Valmiki, she is described as a beloved of Sugriva, after Vali's death. V.R also, following the original, refers to her joining the company of Sugriva after Vali's passing away.

Perhaps, this was the social custom prevailing among the Vanaras. Even though she is depicted as a woman of tact and wisdom by almost all the Ramayana poets, Kamban seems to be the only poet who described Tara as a saintly woman, a devout wife loyal to her husband even after his death and above all a noble character. Being a strong defender of tradition, the poet might have ventured to make this deliberate change, for Tara is believed to be one of the five chaste women (Pancha Kanyas). By the time Kamban wrote his Ramayana, Sita, Tara, Ahalya and others are regarded in popular belief as reputed chaste ladies and the poet gave vent to this popular belief.

Seeing her widowed attire, even the terrible Lakshmana became soft and is reminded of his widowed mothers. Though, Tara's description as devoted wife dramatically changes the situation into a smoother affair. In this connection, it may also be pointed out that Kamban's Ravana does not touch Sita even when he was abducting her as he uproots the very cottage in which she lived and put in on his chariot. This and such other deviations from the original make Kamban a staunch defender of traditional womanhood even though a few critics question some of the deviations. Even though V.R. follows the original in this regard, the poet significantly makes a remark that Sita felt happy for her body was not touched by the demon king.

Before considering the portrayal of Sabari by Viswanatha, a few words about his respect and regard for female characters become necessary. As already mentioned, a separate part (Khandam) has been assigned for Ahalya. Separate parts are assigned for Anasuya and
Sabari too. Besides highlighting their distinguishing qualities, Viswanatha has also given a rare picture of Kaikeyi which is quite different from that of Valmiki or Kamban. According to the Telugu poet, Rama regards her as Goddess Lakshmi. An understanding between Rama and Kaikeyi is said to have played its role in the execution of dharma. It is also said that Rama loved visiting Kaikeyi from the very moment he practised walking. So also she craved for him from the moment she woke up from bed. Thus the poet describes their mysterious relationship whenever an opportunity arises.

Kamban’s Rama, too, had great respect for Kaikeyi, pleased with the reunion of Rama and Sita, all the celestial beings including Dasaratha feel great relief and happiness. Dasaratha offers to grant Rama a boon. Then Rama requests his father to allow him to treat Kaikeyi and Bharatha as his mother and brother respectively whom Dasaratha had renounced earlier. In another situation also, Rama’s respect for her is revealed. When Hanuman meets Sita in the Asoka garden, the latter asks him to remind her husband of an incident - Rama suggesting Kaikeyi’s name for the parrot tended by her. This incident which none else knew excepting she and her husband.

As regards Sabari, her devotion has become proverbial. Rama has not only accepted her spotless devotion but also gave her liberation. Ramayana versions in Tamil and Telugu describe Sabari as the only devotee who offered delicious fruits to Rama after she was satisfied with their taste. V.R. is no exception.

In V.R., Sabari appeared as a woman carrying on her head assorted flowers and fruits. She is like a dried branch of a tree which is flowered at its top. Rama sees in her eyes his image and the pangs of separation disappear. Then she entreats him to eat the fruits brought by her. Rama replies that he cannot do so unless she testi-
fies them as delicious, to which she replies that she had already tasted them. While eating the cut pieces of the fruits, Rama makes an interesting conversation with her which is interesting and also endowed with special meaning. Their mutual respect is also exhibited. For instance, Rama says: "OH! Mother! Your head resembles that of a basket full of white powder meant for decoration purpose?" She answers "Oh! Lord! The head has ripened so as to decorate with designs the front gate of your soul."

It is worth mentioning that Kamban and Viswanatha had abundant love and regard for their culture and language. Tamil scholars feel that Kamban’s description of Ayodhya reminds them of some place located in the poets native district Thanjavur on the banks of the river Kaveri. Though Valmiki is his chief inspiration and followed his work, he does not forget the genius of the Tamil language. To be in conformity with it, he translated some Sanskrit names as found in the original. For example, Risyasringa has been translated as Kalaikottu Munivar; Dhumraksha as Pukainirakkannan; Dasaratha as Dayarath and Kausalya as Kauchalai.

Kamban’s respect for his patron and admirer Chadayappa Vallal, a land lord, deserves mention. According to Valmiki, the coronation of Rama takes place under the guidance of Vasishtha. Kamban slightly differs and states that Vasishtha places the crown, which was given to him by the ancestors of Chadayappa, on Rama’s head. Though this is an anachronism, this detail brings out Kamban’s gratitude to his patron, an ordinary person, when it is believed, that the then Chola emperor failed to honor him as a poet.

Viswanatha’s love and respect for his language, age-old customs and the likes are praise worthy. V.R. presents a rich variety of metres-Sanskritic and indigenous-attuned to the varying emotions. He has brought to height
several indigenous metres which shows his innate love for the language. Further, he is a master of native Telugu idiom. Some of his verses in the Ramayana are at once simple and elegant as they are couched in pure Telugu idiom. It gives an impression that only a poet like Viswanatha, well acquainted with Telugu life, customs, manners etc., could write such fine verses! Sita’s wedding in V.R. is not only elaborate but also a typical Telugu marriage. Thorough with the Telugu marriage customs, the poet does not forget even the black dots that are usually applied on the cheeks of the couple. This does not exist among the Tamils.

Viswanatha, like Kamban, gratefully remembers his patron-listener Vasireddi Chandramouliswara Varaprasad, Zamindar of Myktyala in Krishna District. He mentions him not only in the prefatory verses but towards the end of every part (Khandam) of his poem which is divided into thirty parts.

To conclude, both Kamba Ramayanam and Viswanatha’s Ramayanam are great poems in Tamil and Telugu respectively. The former has stood the test of time, inspiring innumerable readers for the past several centuries. Posterity will only decide the case of V.R. as times and values are more rapidly changing than ever before.
6. EPIC TRADITION IN TELUGU POETRY

A poetical creation of the achievements of great heroes of tradition or history is usually regarded as an epic and we have in Telugu almost faithful and thoroughly readable versions of the two immortal epics of our country, namely the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Despite changes in literary trends necessitated by the changing times, the epic tradition, happily, is continuous and unbroken in Telugu as is evidenced by the modern epics, though their number is not big. The epic is called in Telugu by the names of Itihasa and Mahakavya.

It is worth noting that these two world known epics are living poems as they are not regarded as pieces of dead mythology or history and that the different characters and situations are remembered even to this day. They have culturally and linguistically united the vast country of ours extending from the Himalayas to the Kanyakumari in spite of the fact that several differences exist among us. Further, they are held in high esteem as forms of the Veda - the Ramayana as equal to the Veda (samhita) and the Mahabharata as the fifth Veda. In this connection, I am tempted to quote what Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has said about these popular epics. "Ramayana (like Mahabharata and others) is woven into the texture of lives of millions in every generation for thousands of years. I have often wondered if we forgot all this, what
then will it be like. It would be uprooted and lose its basic characteristics which have clung to it and given it distinction throughout long ages. India would cease to be India. Valmiki himself has attributed several names to the Ramayana - mahakavya (great Poem) Gitam (song), Charitam (History), and itihasam as it describes the four objectives of a man’s life along with an old story charged with instruction.

The first known literary work in Telugu is the Mahabharata, authored by three distinguished masters of poetry popularly known as poet-trio (Kavitrayam). Happily it is also the best poem and an authority for usage. It is Veda for the Telugu poets, so said the distinguished twin poets Tirupati Venkata Kavulu.

Among the poet -trio, Nannaya (11th century) is the first poet followed by Tikkana and Errana (13th and 14th centuries respectively). Nanayya wrote the first two and a half books (parvas) and Errana completed the major portion of the third parva in the name of the former. While Tikkana wrote the remaining 15 parvas commencing from the Virata Parva. Thus the entire Mahabharata was made available to the Telugu readers who proudly proclaim that if you want to hear, hear the Bharata; if you want to eat, eat garelu (round pan-cakes made of black gram). Like the crisp garelu, this has become a favorite proverb among the Telugus. This is the proof of the immense popularity that the Telugu version of the Mahabharata enjoys.

If Nanayya is an accomplished poet with amazing story-telling ability, Tikkana is an excellent poet with dramatic skill and Errana a descriptive poet. Their sublime poetry and fine diction have lent grace to the epic. Even though the first poet is a great Sanskrit scholar, steeped in the Vedic lore, he did not attempt an exact translation. In other words, he did not render the Sanskrit epic sloka by sloka. Still he was faithful to the sage
poet and could bring out the spirit of the original. Thus he set a model for recreating an epic in Telugu, which almost all later poets adopted in translating the Sanskrit poems. One can easily grasp the greatness of the *Mahabharata* from Nannaya’s description of the epic. According to him, it is a code of laws, a theological work, a book of ethics, a great poem, a metaphorical book, an *itihasa* and a collection of several *puranams*. Translation or recreation of such a poem is a stupendous one. The poet-trio was fully aware of the nature of the work and the poets are believed to have rendered the same from an epic point of view. However, they tried to embellish their rendering by making a few touches wherever they thought necessary.

For instance, Kichaka approaches Draupadi and praises her beauty before revealing his evil intent. At this juncture, Vyasa’s Draupadi makes an elaborate ethical advice and finally warns him that her *gandharva* husbands, filled with wrath, would kill him, but Tikkana, one of the poet-trio, perhaps, thought that it would be futile to preach about ethics to an evil minded person and dropped the entire sermon but took only her warning and elaborated it in a beautiful 4-line verse(** Foot Note In Telugu**)of which the first two lines form a long compound (*samasa*) highlighting her anger and also the valour of her husbands. It is evident from this that Tikkana’s verse tinged with indignation is more effective than the ethical advice as found in the original.

Significant to mention is that our epics are followed by supplemental poems (*anubhandha kavya*) and *Harivamsam* is said to be a supplementary work to the *Mahabharata*. Telugu is fortunate to have *Harivamsam* in 15 cantos wherein the story of Sri Krishna has been vividly narrated. The author is Errana. He called his poem by different names- *Prabhanda, Purana*, and *Itihasa*. By whatever name it is called, it is essentially a
poem of great merit. Interestingly, Nachana Somanatha who flourished in the later half of the 14th century wrote *Uttara Harivamsam*, giving the after story of Sri Krishna. It appears that he has not attempted the earlier part of *Harivamsa*. As the theme is almost the same, there has been a lot of discussion in literary circles over these two poems.

We shall now consider the other epic.

The Telugu versions of the *Ramayana* are many in number. Though they are read and enjoyed, they are not as popular as the poet-trio’s *Mahabharata*.

Among the available works, *Ranganatha Ramayanam* written by Gona Buddha Reddy and composed in the 2-line indigenous metre called *dwipada* is considered as the earliest and complete *Ramayana* in Telugu. Though the date and authorship of this work are disputable, it may be assigned to the 13th century. It contains 17,290 *dwipadas* or 34,580 poetic lines. By and large, it is a popular work even among the average readers. It is not a faithful translation of Valmiki’s epic. It appears more or less as an independent poem as it contains several non-Valmiki episodes culled from the other Sanskrit versions of the *Ramayana* and even stories prevalent among people. Still Buddha Reddi’s devotion to Rama and his story are supreme. The deviations he made depict the superman’s bravery, righteousness, character and other virtues in the bright hues and hence they appear justifiable. However *Bhaskara Ramayanam*, contemporaneous with the former, is generally viewed as a fine piece of poetry. Though it is a long poem of 6 cantos containing 6081 poems and prose passages, it is considered as a concise *Ramayana*.

Besides these two versions, there are some more and among them the royal poet Katta Varadaraju's (about 1650 A.D.) *Ramayana* is worth mentioning. It consists of 6 books and 23,270 *dwipadas* or 46,540 poetic lines,
thus easily becomes the biggest *Ramayana* written in the indigenous metre. It is also the first exact translation of the original though it has a few deviations. Significantly, faithful translations of the *Ramayana* in epic style have increased as years passed by - i.e., from the 18th century onwards.

Gopinathuni Venkata Kavi (1813-1892) closely followed Valmiki and rendered the epic in chaste verse, adding a few new details. Kanada Peddana Somayaji (later half of the 18th century), Vavilikolanu Subba Rao (1863-1939), Janamanchi Seshadri Sarma (1892-1950) and a few others have also published their renderings. Somayaji’s work is called *Yathasloka Tatparya Ramayanam* and as the title indicates this poem is *sloka* for *sloka* translation. Vavilikolanu is hailed as *Andhra Valmiki* and he took eight years to complete the Ramayana in verse which was first published in 1909 in 2 volumes. This is generally considered as an exact translation of the epic. Interestingly, this huge work was published four times during his life time which speaks volumes for the popularity it acquired. He also wrote a valuable commentary on the poem entitled *Mandaram*.

At this juncture, mention must be made of two scholar-poets whose *Ramayana* poems are worth mentioning. They are Sripada Krishnamurti Sastri (1866-1961) and Viswanatha Satyanarayana (1895-1976). Author of about 200 works, major and minor, Sripada translated all the three great poems the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata* and they are prefixed with “Sri Krishna”. Viswanatha is also a voluminous writer who had to his credit more than one hundred books including poems, novels, criticism, dramas and others. Among them stands foremost is his *Srimad Ramayana Kalpavriksham*, an epic of about 2,200 verses. He took about three decades to complete this great poem in which one can see the customs and manners of the Telugu. *Janapriya*
Ramayanam by Puttaparthi Narayanacharya is an epic worth mentioning. The significance of this work is that it could be set to music.

Like the Mahabharata, the Ramayana too has a few supplementary works in Nirvachanottara Ramayanam a canto poem (1260 verses) by Tikkana of the poet-trio and Uttara Ramayanam by Kankanti Paparaju (17th century). This work containing 3,000 poetry and prose passages is definitely an elaborate poem while the former is a concise one.

Even though minor poems (Khanda Kavya) have taken the place of long poems in these days, one can come across independent epics or great poems, thanks to the unlimited zeal of the poets. That the epic tradition is happily kept up despite the discouraging trends deserves special mention. If the old poets had concentrated on the distinguished heroes of tradition or mythology, some modern poets have dwelt on the achievements of great personages of history, both old and modern, including the heroic Freedom struggle. Most of the works are called by the name of Mahakavya. It may be mentioned that modern poets, generally, prefer this term to the term epic. However, it should be said that the number of Mahakavyas dealing with the Freedom movement, though it spanned for more than a century, is small.

Among the modern epics, Durbhaka Rajasekhara Satavadhani’s (1888-1957) Sri Rana Pratapasimha Charitra (1934) in 5 cantos stands foremost. The scholars and critics of the day had paid encomium to the epic saying that the theme was taken from real history and that it was “one of the most memorable of modern productions” It contains about 2,000 verses couched in chaste language. A nationalist and a follower of Gandhiji, the poet makes Rana Pratap say that the king out of his thirst for kingdom should not make his subjects lose their freedom and become slaves. His contemporary, Gadiyaram
Venkata Sesha Sastri (1901-81) is one of the outstanding poets of the day. His *Siva Bharatam*, considered as a national epic, portrays the great hero Sivaji in bright hues. Written during 1942-46, the poem is saturated with *vira-rasa* (valour) as it should be. He is of the view that heroic stories chiselled as heroic poems should appear in our country which was then deprived of freedom and new ideas. As one critic has rightly remarked, the poem on Rana Pratap is a new *Ramayana* and the poem on Sivaji is a new *Bharata* and that they merit equal patronage. The valorous story of Sivaji had greatly attracted the Telugu poets and one poet had brought out a poem in 10 cantos (674 pages) as early as 1979.

*Jhansi Rani* by Viswanatha Satyanarayana, a 9-canto poem comprising about 450 verses, describes the heroic account of that unfortunate queen who put up a stiff fight against the British to attain freedom from the foreign shackles. But she could not accomplish her wish. Since the poet wanted to give a philosophical meaning to historical event, this great poem was written from a different angle. The poet attributes the Queen’s defeat to the ‘time’ which is nothing but the real form of the Almighty. Hence he indirectly accuses fate which led to her defeat in the battle. It is felt that the poet’s giving a philosophical touch to the brave queen’s account has given a new vision to the poem.

Besides actively participating in the freedom movement, several Telugu leaders were also agitating for a separate state. This had its echoes on the Telugu literary world. As a result, two notable epics pertaining to the Andhra history have come to light. They are *Andhra Puranam* by Madhunapantula Satyanarayana Sastri and *Potana Charitramu* by Vanamamalai Varadacharyulu.

Though modelled after an epic, Sastri called his 9-parva (chapter) poem *purana* as it describes the achievements of the historical personages, like the Satavahanas.
Chalukyas, Kakatiyas and other Telugu rulers. Hence, this purana is a happy blend of historical facts and fascinating poetry. Describing the emperor Hala Satavahana’s literary sentiment, the poet says: “Man’s life is a good work. Even a single drop he culls from it blossoms into a great poem. That is a stream for a good poet. A single verse is sufficient for the success of a poem.” Potana Charitramu is also a notable poem. In it is portrayed the life of Potana the author of the Telugu Bhagavatam. It may be said here that on account of his authorship, the Bhagavatam has become a favorite poem of even modern Telugu readers. There are some scholars who feel that Potana’s poem is the best work in Telugu literature.

Vande Mataram by Mudigonda Virabhadra Murti is an 18 chapter poem and the number 18 has a significance in Indian literature. Bhagavad Gita contains 18 chapters, the Mahabharata battle continued for 18 days and the Mahabharata epic is called “Jayam”. According to numerology, “Jaya” means 18. Perhaps, the poet desired to call his work a Maha kavya and divided it into 18 chapters (khandam). The poem, dedicated to the people, describes the eventful story of the freedom movement from 1860 to 1906. The lives of Dadabhai Naoroji, Balagangadhar Tilak, Gopalakrishna Gokhale, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and others are narrated in a fascinating style. According to the poet, “since the poor, the downtrodden, uneducated, the shoemakers and others are born on the same soil to the same mother, they are all one. All men should behave with a sense of equality. Auspiciousness will then prevail”. Thus exhorts the poet, true to the name as the slogan Vande Mataram brings to memory several details pertaining to our freedom movement, so also this epic induces the reader to think about the national heroes, who sacrificed their lives for the sake of their mother land.

In this connection, a word about Mahatma Katha
by Tirumal Sitarasamurti Choudari, a nationalist appears relevant. Though this is not regarded as an epic, it is still a great poem on the Father of the Nation. But Mariganti Seshacharyulu another nationalist wanted to write Sri Gandhi Bharatam in 18 parvas on the Mahabharata model, but only a few parvas were published. It is not known whether the entire book came to light. What is important for the present study is that the epic tradition was very strong among the Telugu poets in the Gandhian age.

It is significant that the urge for writing an epic has not perished even in these days of science and technology. Gunturu Seshendra Sarma, a well known modern poet, has written an epic entitled Adhunika Mahabharatam highlighting the present day conditions. Following the epic tradition, he has also written a supplementary poem to it and it is called Janavamsam divided in six Kandas.

To sum up; to say that the epic tradition in Telugu poetry is not dead is not an exaggeration. It is as alive as poetry itself, though prose has already taken its place as it should be. However, it is to be noted that the epic or the long poem has lost its glory and readership as the modern reader finds it difficult to concentrate his mind due to paucity of adequate leisure. Further, poetry for the average reader, appears to be less attractive since it is not pleasure reading. Different figures of speech, imagery and other embellishments that are usually found in good poetry, stands as stumbling blocks in understanding. Despite these barriers, even the modern reader finds immense pleasure in reading and enjoying the Mahabharata written by the renowned masters of poetry- Nanayya, Tikkana and Errana. So it may, perhaps, be remarked that the innate ability of a poet, whether old or modern, is to a large extant responsible for making his readers enjoy a poem, long or short.
7. **VEMANA**

Vemana is essentially a humanist and a rationalist though he is popularly known as a saint-poet. Whatever label is attributed, he is, no doubt, a peoples’s poet. It is a household name wherever Telugu is spoken. However, exact details like his date and place of birth are a bone of contention among the scholars. That he has no equal in verse is a common contention in the Rayalaseema region of the Andhra Pradesh.

Vemana also called Vema has not consciously written any poem. On the other hand, being a product of oral literature, he composed innumerable extempore verses of outstanding merit, perhaps in thousands, as is evidenced by presence of different manuscripts available in Manuscript libraries. Captivated by the magic of Vemana’s verses, some versifiers must have interpolated their own verses in the name of the poet. Even today several writers venture to emulate his style; but it is not as easy as they imagine. He is inimitable and unique.

Free from ambiguity and obscurity, his style is direct and straight. His utterances look like epigrams and sublime thought lends grace to his verses. In short, simplicity of expression and nobility of thought are the unique characteristics of his verses. Hence one can easily detect the genuine Vemana, as the verses bear a distinct stamp of his own.

Though varied are the views about Vemana’s date etc., the consensus among critics is that he flourished in
the 17th century (AD 1650) and that he hailed from the Rayalaseema region, perhaps, Kadapa area. Of his history, very little is known, though cock and bull-type stories are plenty. As regards his religion, some opine that he was a non-dualist while some say that he was a Virasaiva, an ardent follower of Lord Siva. There is also a view that he belonged to the Yoga-centered Natha tradition which was anterior to the Virasaiva creed. Yet another view is that he was a follower of Lokayat (atheism) tradition. To whatever creed he belonged, one can find in Vemana’s verses contradictions, which were, perhaps, borne out of his rationalistic or humanistic thought. He did not take it for granted whatever was said earlier but questioned the authority. This may lead one to conclude that this approach is negative one, but in reality it is not so. He only condemned the inhuman and unjust element and directed his anger towards unrighteousness.

Before considering Vemana’s verses, it is essential to recall the valuable services rendered by Charles Philip Brown (CP Brown for short, 1798-1884) of the Madras Civil Service to Telugu literature in general and to the peoples’s poet in particular. Not only did he collect palm leaf manuscripts from different places and prepare copies but also collected them and fixed textual readings with the help of scholars. His admiration for Vemana was supreme and he refereed to him at several places in his well compiled dictionaries. He advises Westerners interested in Telugu to first study Vemana who employed familiar terms though the thoughts expressed in some verses were abstruse. Brown’s English rendering of the verses was first published in 1829 and he was the first English translator from Telugu since no English translation of a Telugu classic was attempted till then. He classified the verses under different heads- moral, satirical, devotional, mystical and miscellaneous.

It is not an exaggeration to say that only after
Brown, Telugu scholars had evinced keen interest in Vemana. Among them stands foremost Rallapalli Ananta Krishna Sarma (1893-1979), a distinguished scholar and critic and also a musicologist. His Vemana, a collection of seven lectures is an original treatise on the poet. Later a good number of books and articles and translations in different languages have appeared which constitute the Vemana studies.

Vemana generally employs similes culled from day to day life to make his ideas crystal clear. And his handling of the indigenous Telugu metre ataveladi is so superb that his name has become the synonym for the 4-line metre. He elucidates his idea in the first three lines of the verse while the last line is a refrain - Visvadabhirama Vinura Vema. (Listen, O Vema; dear to the Lord of all.)

A few verses in English translation by Brown are given below:

**Moral**

"If you look at a grain of pepper, it is externally black, if you bite it, you perceive that internally it is pungent. Thus imperceptible is the worth of the excellent."

"There are crowds upon crowds of those who reckon the faults of others; yet every one in the world has his failings. Those who look to the faults of others are often ignorant of their own."

"If a light man gains authority, he will not enquire who is worthy or not, he will overthrow all. What should the shoe-gnawing dog know of the sweetness of the sugarcane?"

"A stone in the shoe, a gadfly in the ear, a mote in the eye, a thorn in the foot, and a quarrel in a family - however small in themselves are unspeakably tormenting."

"Classes and customs vary, but birth is one. Viands differ but hunger is one."

"King Sibi cut a piece out of his body to give for
a dove to a hawk. He became the topic of report and attained fame. They will not esteem him who is wicked, but will praise him who is charitable”.

Needless to say that vemana considered the ethical way at the best. In one Verse he said that a word void of wisdom is a blow with a stone. In another, he considered a man who is bereft of excellence as worse than a monkey. He therefore felt that an ignorant mind cannot restrain the soul. Hence only purity of heart will lead to beatitude.

**Satire:**

Several verses are satirical in nature. As he was a rationalist, he made a fun of practices of human beings or of celestial beings, caring little for them. A few verses:

“A man makes a stone image, and sets it up in dignity, and worships it. He is devoid of sense. He cannot comprehend the deity that dwells within him”.

“Men imagine stones to be Siva, and magnify them. Stones are stones and not Siva. Why is it that we cannot discern Siva who dwells within us”.

“Though he hath the hills of silver and gold, Kailasa and Meru, why doth the God Siva wander and collect alms? His neighbor’s property is sweet to every man however great”.

In the same vein, he pooh-poohs pilgrimages undertaken. The pilgrims who visit the holy shrines are like the asses that bear the sandal tree. The criticism is of course pungent. He remarks “Shall not we cut down the forest of ignorance with the sword of knowledge! Let us not think of ignorance in our mind, but look to the places where the light of wisdom is fixed”.

**Devotion :**

Despite his criticism of some of the established practices, one should not venture to call Vemana an atheist. His firm belief was that the Almighty universally exists in fullness and that He dwells in one’s own mind.
So he stressed that. He does not stay in any land, but only in the body. According to Vemana, he who can stay his mind is fit to be called a saint. He vehemently opposes disputes and discrimination concerning God. So he exhorts: "Unable to know the great secret, they continue and frame religions, and merely give sorrow to each other, like as a dog that is agitated at the sight of the mirror." The poet’s advice is not only relevant but also universal. A wandering saint he was, he discovered unity in diversity. In one verse, he observes: "They cannot understand that there is but one God in Siva, the Vishnu and all other creeds! Though these differ, can any diversity exist in truth (tatwa)?"

He notices the same unity in different languages. "They call a pot, olla; They name a hill, collis; salt they call sal; are they not however one? The languages alone are diverse the essence is one". (In the original are used Sanskrit words which Brown replaced them in his English translation by Latin expressions.) Verses of this nature make Vemana relevant for all times and places.

**Mystical:**

Saints are usually mystics. Vemana is not an exception. The following verse may be cited to illustrate this point.

"He that eats dogs (quells his passions) is the Jangama teacher. He that eats hog (quells his bodily lusts) is the Parama Yogi (supreme saint). He that eats the elephant, how wise must he be!".

Here the expression dog, hog and elephant stand for passions, lusts and arrogance respectively. He who conquers passions, kills craving and is free from arrogance is entitled to saint hood. He is definitely the wisest among human beings.

It is quite natural for a humanist like Vemana to discuss in his verses the excellence of man. "The lord seeketh the man that seeketh Him", says the poet. He
further says that you should not harm even your enemy who deserves the punishment of death, instead you should show mercy to him and set him free. Economic ideas, too, are found in his verses. His faith in man must have forced him to declare that only the excellent man could perceive the Almighty in the world. In another verse, he observes: "He that knows his mother knows the deity. He that knows the earth knows heaven. He that knows the heaven and earth knows himself". Fully realising the earth - i.e.., man- one could know himself. This seems to be the poet's conviction. It is not unnatural for such a poet to despise even heaven, if man possesses a virtuous partner and wise children. He then sees the so-called heaven on earth.

To conclude, the saint-rationalist and the one-time neglected Vemana is now revered as a people's poet by one and all.

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8. TYAGARAJA OF PEOPLE'S SONGS

Among the Telugu poets who infused patriotic fervor along with anger and loathsomeness against the British Raj stands foremost Garimella Satyanarayana. A genuine Gandhian by precept and practice and a staunch freedom fighter, Garimella, the surname by which he is popular, is today chiefly remembered for his *magnum-opus* beginning with the refrain *Makoddi telladoratanamu* meaning we don’t want this white rule. In fact, this historic song containing 162 lines is, perhaps, the longest one sung in the hey day of our freedom struggle. It is also unique for the Father of the Nation, it is said, not only applauded it but also wished that it should set a model for other song writers. It should not be treated merely as an inspiring song but a poet’s white paper on the prevailing political, social and economic conditions. Thus it is useful for a poet and a sociologist as well. Even if the other writings including the other songs of the poet disappear, this song is enough to keep his memory evergreen.

As a budding poet, Garimella, in his school days in Vizianagaram commenced singing the song coached in a popular folk tune. It fully blossomed as time elapsed. However in the early days listeners used to tremble when the song was heard. The song took new dimensions owing to his close association with patriots and freedom fighters in Rajahmundry, where he joined the LT course
in the Teacher’s Training College in 1920. Towards the end of the year the resolution for non-cooperation was unanimously passed at the Calcutta conference of the Indian National Congress. As a result, hundreds of students gave up their studies, lawyers their practice and entered the movement. Earlier, Bipin Chandra Pal of the Lal trio who had visited several places including Vizianagaram in the South had inspired innumerable people with his fiery orations. All these had kindled the patriotic fervor in a youth like Garimella who entered the fray unmindful of the consequences.

In those days, *Makoddi telludoratanamu* song was cyclostyled and copies were sold at twelve paise per copy. The song became so popular with all sections of the society that even bandsmen and harlots favored it.

An English translation of the song, it is learnt, was published in *Andhra Kesari* Tanguturi Prakasam Pantulu’s *Swarajya* daily.

By then, the poet Garimella became well known to the public and police as well. In 1921 and the subsequent year saw the publication of the two parts of his *Swarjya Geethamulu* (songs of self rule). How the songs in them were received by the police is revealed in the letter dated 4th February 1922 of the Godavari District Superintendent of Police to the Personal Assistant to the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Madras. “One Garimella Satyanarayana of Tilak Ashramam, Rajahmundry has written a book called *Swaraj Geethamulu* in two parts and it has been printed by V Muniswamy Moodaliyar & Sons, Sivakami Press, 41, Linghi Chetty Street, George Town, Madras. It has been written in colloquial Telugu intended for the use of the ordinary people, specially the lower classes and contains several portions highly seditious and objectionable. The third part is said to be in the press. I am told that as all the local presses refused to print it, he got it printed in Madras. It is being sold
by the Indian Agency Bureau, PB No. 240, Triplicane, Madras. I have, therefore, the honour to request you to take immediate steps to get the offenders punished and prevent the publication of the third part. The said Satyanarayana recently published here a similar cyclostyled leaflet and steps have been taken for his arrest and warrant is pending."

The popularity of Makoddi telladoratanamu song reached the ears of the District Collector G T H Braken who was in a way sympathetic towards the Indians. The police reports also reached him. He summoned Garimella and asked him to sing the song in his presence. The poet did so in his bell-metal voice, echoing the entire premises. Hearing it the Collector exclaimed: "Though I know not the language, I am horripilated. I realise now the emotion it will infuse among the natives". Immediately Garimella was arrested under 124 A Sedition Act and was awarded one year rigorous punishment. The arrest took place on February 9, 1922 and The Hindu in its 11th February edition published the poet’s message which reveals his self confidence and the trust he reposed on the Telugu public.

"Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I have done my little work and am going to a comparatively long rest. The British bureaucracy have determined to lull my pen and my voice for a period of one year. It pleased them to think that I am dangerous to the “public tranquility” which means its own existence. Certainly it is a revelation to me if I am really such as it suspected me to be, it certainly caught me at too late an hour. I have given out to the country what is best in me. My physical body is to be locked up, but my soul I have left off into the country through literature. Let it be gathered, consolidated and worked out. It will work more than my frail body. The times are past when the government’s prescription or prohibition could gag our
liberties. I often at times wished to move among my people through my songs than through my person. The government have created that peculiar opportunity, if the people can avail themselves of it. I feel that I am most hollow now and may God grant that I should return into your midst for the sake of singing the establishment of Swarajya and the glory of your achievements."

It is to be noted here that a prosecution case was already initiated against Garimella for his Swaraajya Geethamulu for which he was later awarded a 2 year sentence and that he underwent both sentences concurrently. He wanted to read out his long statement in the Presidency Magistrate’s Court at Madras but permission was refused. The Andhra Patrika published it in its issue dated July, 28. An excerpt from it: "When the 5,000 copies of my book were heaped together at my feet, I felt both pride and grief. Those immortal babies, out of fear of death, stared at me with compassionate looks, asking me to protect them ....... But I am quite helpless....." It is significant that Garimella was convicted for writing and singing patriotic songs. He was also a singer. His collection of songs was proscribed.

Long before the conviction, Garimella it is said, had decided to enter the freedom struggle and went to his father to apprise him of his decision. Though not a freedom fighter himself, he advised: "My dear son, you enter the fray as you like. But remember this. You should not return under any circumstances, tendering apology. Please promise me." The worthy son of the worthy father kept his word! When he was undergoing imprisonment he lost his loving father and grand father. Neither did he return on parole nor perform obsequies. And he kept his vow till he breathed his last., though his later days were overtaken by poverty, misery, disregard and ill health. Even though he was persuaded to write a song discouraging the Indian rule, he did not budge an inch from the
resolve for self-rule and never wrote such a heinous song. Such was his love for self rule and freedom! It is also indicative of his anger towards alien rule.

Besides authoring Swarajya Geethamulu in two parts, Garimella wrote Nutana Jaatiya Geethamulu (New National Songs), Harijana Paatalu and several songs on varied subjects, most of them are believed to be lost. When Guruzada Venkata Appa Rao, the champion of the spoken Telugu movement and the first Telugu poet to declare, "Country does not mean soil, but it means people" passed away in 1915, Garimella wrote a moving elegy in 80 lines paying rich homage. In one of the stanzas, Garimella said: "You have untied my quilts and shown a clear path", perhaps meaning that Guruzada through his poems, had exhibited a right path for writing songs in spoken idiom. Prior to that, Garimella wrote poems in traditional metres. Besides songs, he has to his credit many essays on literary and political subjects. In fact, he said to one of his friends in 1927 that poets should select themes from political situations. He was also a linguist in his own way. He learnt Tamil when he was in jail in Tiruchirapalli and rendered the well known classic Tirukkural into Telugu, only the first part was published in 1926 under the title Arthatraya Sarvasvamu. Interestingly, he also translated Parimelazagar's commentary along with the original. His love and regard for Tamil is extraordinary. It is said that he used to sing Tamil songs when he was in a jolly mood. He also translated Naaladiyaar, but it is not extant. He began translating the Kannada play Tallikota. He ably rendered into Telugu Pattabhi Seetharamiahya's The Economic Conquest of India. He was not only a translator from English, but also penned a few original poems in English, like Heart of India under the same S.N.Garimella.

Being a Gandhian it is natural that Garimella in his songs gave vent to some of his ideas in a forceful
manner. Since he was a poet, he could say artistically and hence they are to a large extent free from propagandist tone. He was of the firm view that the Indians, despite their differences, were brothers born to the same mother. He observed:

Men may say as it pleases them
But we Indians, to one brotherhood belong
The sin of untouchability we do not have
A horrid crime it is, we will declare.
Bury those lame excuses deep
Brother not those differences to keep
Brahmin, Non-Brahmin or Harijan.
Burn those differences anon
And yield not to evil precepts
And heed not the beggarly professions.
About violence, religion etc., he said:
Men thou art; yet
Wilt thou shed thy neighbour’s blood?
Thy belly will burst to pieces
If on thy neighbour’s flesh though feast.
Love alone will turn a foe into a friend
Bloodshed, no doubt, is the way of the friend.
Lift up the down trodden
Lest misery befall all men.
All religions are one
Their greatness unique
So when though decry any
Thou defame the One
Bear in mind the good of all
And work not for thy selfish cause
And think of thy beloved country and her people.
Among the songs of Garimella, the one written under the caption Anyaaya Kaalambu daapurinchindipudu, published in his book of National Songs in 1938, is memorable one. He raised his voice against the increasing exploitation of the labour class and
hence he appropriately called his song *Anyaaya kalam* meaning days of injustice. Perhaps, frustrated at the sad state of affairs created by social inequalities existing in the society, he might have written such songs. In them he appears to be a revolutionary poet changed with socialistic outlook, though he himself has not said so. He envisages the necessity of unity among tillers of the soil and labourers. He is so frank that he observed: "I consider the grandeur of the rich as a torturing wound". He, therefore, boldly declared:

The gains of the big are in banks
The sorrows of the poor are in hearts.
It is, therefore, natural for such a poet to declare:
I am the motherland for all people
Pierce these difference of inequalities
It is you, it is only you, please wake up
And make me cheerful out of delight.

He urged that the injustice of 'mine' be shunned and the glories of 'our' be sung. It may sound as a socialistic tone for the *upanishadic* voice which encouraged collective nature. It may be recalled here that this fiery song (without knowing that it was a Garimella's writing) was enthusiastically sung in the 1937 elections on behalf of the Congress candidates. The communists also favoured the song and this only shows that any writing tinged with progressive ideas is above politics.

Garimella Satyanarayana was born in 1893 at Gonepadu, a village in Narasannapet Taluq, Srikakulam District. The exact date of birth and month are not available. His parents were Venkata Narasimham (also called Ramakrishnamma) and Suramma. To them were born eight children- five sons and three daughters and Satyanarayana was the eldest of them. The Garimellas belong to Priya Agraharam, a hamlet near Gonepadu and perhaps they lived on agriculture.

Garimella had his primary education at his native
village. He continued his higher studies at different places like Vizianagaram and Machilipatnam and took his B.A. Degree. He joined the Teacher’s Training College at Rajahmundry to become a trained teacher, but did not complete the L T Course as he joined the National Movement. His well-wishers persuaded him to complete the course and lead a decent life; but they were not successful.

In 1924, Garimella came out of the prison only after completing the sentence. On the way to his native village, he was accorded a hero’s welcome and that perhaps, the most joyous movement in his life. Not only did he refuse the reception, but also get into the palanquin brought by the villagers and went to his village walking and paid his respects to his departed father and grandfather.

An ardent follower of Gandhiji, he was averse to service under the English, averse to English education and averse to the English style of dress. Not only did he discourage the study of English by his brothers, he also dissuaded his daughters from learning English. He made them wear only khadi sarees; silk clothes were a taboo in the family. It is not unnatural for a person possessing fascination for everything that is Indian to have had unlimited love for his mother-tongue. But he was not a fanatic. He started in his native village a publishing concern named Sri Sarada Granthamaala with the sole aim of adorning the Telugu muse with fresh ornaments. As he was not financially very sound and sought the help of others, he faced some public insult. Bearing the abuses, he ran the concern but could not make out a decent living. It is learnt that several copies of the publications were either spoiled or eaten away by white ants as adequate attention was not bestowed on them. Income dwindling and expenditure increasing, he faced economic crisis.
In 1933, Garimella moved to Madras for livelihood and other family members also followed him. He was drawn to Telugu journalism. He worked in several journals either as Editor or Sub-Editor. But nowhere could he stay for long as his fearless temperament and independent outlook stood in the way. Finally he became a freelance journalist. Along with his brother, he ran a boarding house in Mylapore where he stayed, expecting a better living. But it fell on bad days and to collect the arrears of rent, it is learnt, the furniture was thrown out into the street and auctioned. The mental agony that he had undergone is beyond words. To add to the injury, his brother, later died of ill-health.

It is evident that Garimella’s change of place has only increased his miseries. He was so unfortunate that he was driven to dire poverty compelling him to ask for alms from unknown persons. When a close friend enquired, his immediate reaction was: There is great advantage in asking for alms in a big city like Madras, for a person of another locality was not aware of what I do in one locality. Besides poverty, old age and ill-health also haunted him. Of course, a few noble souls like Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao, K.N.Kesari, Vavilla Ramaswamy Sastrulu and a few others used to help him now and then. However, his miseries did not come to an end. He breathed his last at the age of 59, on 18th December, 1952. Only his teenaged daughter was at his bed side when the end came, as his old mother and wife passed away earlier. Obsequies were performed by the neighbors, as no relatives of his could reach Madras due to disturbances in Andhra as a result of the supreme self-sacrifice made by Potti Sreeramulu, who died just three days earlier and this resulted in dislocation of rail traffic.

Garimella was unfortunate even at the last hour. Still more unfortunate thing is that the people’s poet, hailed as *Prajaa Paatala Tyagayya* (Prof. N.G.Ranga described
him as Tyagaraja of People’s Songs) who sang national songs was unsung and unwept. His third son-in-law’s (Sri Y. Venkatakrishna Rao) letter dated 12th July, 1963 to a question deserves a mention in this connection: “After the demise of Satyanarayana Garu, some took away his books. So, at present, I do not have with me any of his books. Some manuscripts were with me till some days. But they too have been destroyed during these eleven years and I feel ashamed to bring this to your notice. You are the first gentleman expressing a desire to learn about him after his demise”

Happily, efforts are now being made to perpetuate Garimella’s memory. However, his clarion call-like words are true: “Some should sacrifice and perish. Only then the country will improve.” One such noble soul is Garimella Satyanarayana!

**Trends in Telugu Poetry**

Telugu poetry is as old as its literature itself. In fact the first known literary work in the language is *Maha Bharatamu*, couched in mellifluous poetry, it is written by Nannaya, a master poet, who is reverentially hailed as the first poet, *adi kavi* in Telugu. Significantly the first poet and his work are even today held in great respect.

Even though poetry has, at present, fallen on evil days and though it is not the best seller, genuine poetry still attracts the writer and the reader alike. Almost all practitioners of writing consider poetry composing as a prestigious one and they feel elated when they are addressed as poets. This only shows the immense popularity that poetry, as a literary form, enjoys. Further, the Telugu mind is a stronghold of enchanting poetry. The fact that the two Jnanpith Awardees in Telugu are eminent poets and that several Telugu poetical works have bagged the Sahitya Akademi Award prove beyond doubt that verse is still pre-eminent.
Barring a few traditionalists who prefer metrical compositions, most of the modern poets are in favor of employing free verse (vers libre) which in fact is poetic prose. These are the days of science and technology and exact expression is the need of the hour. Prose which was lying low in Telugu for a long time has, therefore, emerged as a force with all its vigour. Interestingly prose has entered the arena of the already established literary form, namely, poetry and found a permanent place in it. The protagonists of the free verse movement employ prose (poetic prose) with advantage. As a result, poetry which some critics consider as a show-piece to be preserved in a corner almirah, has breathed in fresh air besides becoming a force to reckon with. And modern poetry is as popular as any literary genre. Even a casual reader of journals will be easily convinced that contemporary Telugu poetry is rich and varied. Free verse in Telugu is called by several names - Vachana Kavita, Vachana Padyam, Vachana Geyam, Mukta Chandam and the like. Of all these Vachana Kavita is the best and the most popular term, and Vachana means prose.

Thanks to the modern poet, the contemporary Telugu poetry has ceased to be the exclusive domain of the sophisticated classes. The hardships experienced by the downtrodden, the fallen woman and others are highlighted in such a way that some modern poems read somewhat harsh. Critics may even label and condemn them as writings of vulgar reality. Some may like to describe them as poems of propagandist tone. The propagandist tone deserves condemnation: but the portrayal of the so called vulgar realities in present day life is to be welcomed since such writings have considerably helped the society at large, understand the miserable life of the unfortunate. The modern poet cannot close his eyes and sit in an ivory-tower when he looks at something lacking social justice. However, the main charge levelled against such
writings is that they lack the aesthetic beauty of the traditionalists and the lyrical splendor of the romantics. Though it may sound little rude and harsh, truth should be viewed as truth.

Despite the fact that poetry is an old literary form, it looks as fresh as morning breeze, since several experiments have been successfully conducted from time to time regarding form and expression. And one can also find in several Telugu poets, a spirit of revolt. If the romantics revolted against the traditionalists, the progressives revolted against the romantics. Even Nannaya the first poet appears to possess a little bit of revolutionary spirit in him when he ventured to render into a regional language like Telugu the Sanskrit Maha Bharata which is considered as the Fifth Veda. He must have incurred the displeasure of the scholars of his day who were against rendering a classic written in the language of the Gods (Deva bhasha) by the sage Vyasa who was revered as an equal to the Lord Vishnu. Though some critics may not relish this observation, it may be said that the spirit of revolt has made the Telugu poetry dynamic and vigorous.

Progressive poetry, which came into vogue as a revolt against the then established trends - traditionalism and romanticism - became less popular after 1965. As a movement, it might have vanished later. But the fact remains that most of the modern poets are progressive in outlook.

1965 witnessed the emergence of Digambara movement launched by six angry poets. Digambara or naked poetry was a revolt against the progressives and the romantics, but also against everything related to the past. Though their language is less polished, they have ably succeeded in shocking the readers and made them realize the ills of the society. Their writings have been translated or adopted into other languages. Their influence on the
readers was only a short-lived one.

The *Digambara* and Marxist trends in poetry were ridiculed by a few poets styling themselves as *Chetanavarta Kavulu* and their collections were brought out between the years 1967 and 1978.

Then came the *Paigambaras* (prophets) with the sublime motto: The hands that help are superior to the lips that pray. They were more or less preachers and they are against exploiting nobody, and their influence is not considerable.

Several angry poets, especially young poets have strongly protested against meaningless customs, habits, superstitions and the like. They came to be known as *Tirugubatu* (rebels) and *Viplava* (revolutionary) poets. Rebel poets do exist among the feminists too.

Patience is the characteristic of an ass; let us arm ourselves and rebel; let us also make the downtrodden rebel - seems to be the motto of the rebel poets. The revolutionaries are of the view that it is not worthwhile sitting and abusing darkness but better light a torch and fan a flame. The line of demarcation between the rebels and the revolutionaries is thin.

Then came on the scene *Anubuti Vada* (Poetry of experience) highlighting the original feelings that linger in the poet. The poetry favouring this trend advocates that the poet should not charge his writings with any ‘ism’ but write as dictated by his heart.

During 1977, *Kavisena* came into vogue. Intelligent leadership is quite essential and the poet should lead the society. This seems to be the motto of the *Kavisena*.

Though mini-poems first appeared in journals as space fillers, mini poetry has come to stay as a literary form in recent years. Several collections of mini-poems have been published and they are read and enjoyed. Whether it is progressive or revolutionary, the modern Telugu poetry is to a large extent humanistic in character
and hence it deserves a careful study.

It is quite obvious from this brief survey that Telugu poetry has been subjected to several experiments and that they made it a live-wire. And no other literary genre has undergone such a wide-ranging experiments, since poetry is subjective in nature and ever changing.
9. CONTRIBUTION OF THE SOUTHERN TELUGUS TO TAMIL

Telugu and Tamil belong to the same linguistic group, namely, the Dravidian family, though the former is grouped under the Central Dravidian and the latter under the South Dravidian. Besides this linguistic affinity, racial relationship did exist between the speakers of these two major languages from very early times and this connection was further strengthened by historical, religious and social contacts making it a mosaic one. It is worth mentioning that the early Tamils had referred to the Telugus as Vadugar, as evidenced by the ancient Sangam classics. These references, occurring in ten places, are much valuable as they mention a few names of the Telugu Chieftains of the by-gone days and their food habits and the like. It is only in later times they were called Telungar meaning the Telugu.

Even though Telugu and Tamil literatures have been to some extent mutually influenced and that the Telugu-Tamil contacts were intimate and continuous, the flow from Telugu literature into Tamil or the vice-versa is not considerable. This is mainly due to the fact that Telugu, though Dravidian in origin, is Sanskritic in development.

Discussing the impact of the Telugus who are also known as Andhras on the cultural life of the Tamils, the distinguished poet-patriot Subramania Bharati in his illumi-
nating article entitled *Telunka Makacapi* (Andhra Mahasabha, 1917) had observed as follows:

“The notable among the songs sung by our musicians belong to the Telugu language. Among the *varnams*, *Jaavalis* and the like sung by the Devadasi women while dancing, the fascinating ones belong to Telugu. The Telugu Reddis, the Telugu Nayudus, the Telugu Brahmin *purohits* and the Telugu *Devadasis* residing in our villages had migrated from the Telugu country during the time of Raya (Sri Krishnadevaraya) and permanently settled here. The *paata*, *laali* and other songs are sung during marriages belong to the Telugu tradition. Several Telugu words like *gamanam*, *sogasu ecoharka*, *dora*, *vadika* etc., have come to stay in our language”.

Since Telugu and Tamil have emerged from the same root, it is not unnatural that they have several words common to them which may be called indigenous words. However, a few Telugu loans like *koncham*, *komatti*, *kosaram* and the like have made their way into Tamil. The vice-verse is also true. Kavi Chakravarti Kamban (9th or 12th century) appears to be the earliest among major Tamil poets to have used a few Telugu words like *tammi*, *akkata*, etc., *Tiruppukal* and other Tamil works also contain a few Telugu expressions. In this connection, the observation of S.V. Subramanian is worth quoting. “Among the Dravidian nations, Andhradesh which has continuous contact with Tamil land from the early days of Sangam and it is Telugu which has contributed the largest number of loan words among the Dravidian languages to Tamil”.

It is significant that a few Tamil proverbs like ‘*Dilliku Padusha tallikku pillaidan*’ (though king for Delhi, he is to his mother a child), ‘*vararala kettan, norala Kettan*’ (By whom he is spoiled, only by his word) bear Telugu influence. Their words *talli* (mother) and *noru* (mouth) are Telugu expressions. However, it
should be noted that *tallai* meaning *talli* is found in the Sangam works and that it is in vogue in Kanyakumari district of Tamilnadu. Hence determination of loan words in sister languages is somewhat a ticklish problem.

During the reign of the Nayak rulers of Madurai and Thanjavur, the age-old Telugu-Tamil contacts became much more strengthened and a good number of Telugu families had migrated to Tamilnadu, permanently settling down in different towns and villages. This accounts for the presence of several Telugu speaking families throughout the South and as per the 1981 census about 50 lakh of people speak Telugu in Tamilnadu.

In other words, the Telugu-speakers constitute the largest linguistic minority in Tamilnadu. And this migration has enabled the Telugus learn and master Tamil and the Tamils the Telugu language. The result is that some Telugu works found their way into Tamil literature. *Vasu Charitram* of Ramarajabhushana is an illustration to the point.

At the behest of one Timma Bhupati who hailed from the Aravidu dynasty and who ruled over Maduvai in Tiruchirapalli district, Ambalattaaum Aiyan, a Tamil poet, rendered his well-known Telugu poem with the assistance of his two Telugu friends-Balayya Deva and Namassivaya Deva. The Tamil rendering which is said to have been composed towards the end of the 16th century or the beginning of the next century, was published in 1952 as a publication of the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras. And the Tamil rendering is considered as a fine literary work only next to *Kamba Ramayanam* and other Tamil works.

Palkuriki Somanatha was a source of great inspiration to the author of the Tamil *Basava Puranam*. The Tamil poet had considered his birth worthwhile as he had the good fortune of serving the lotus-feet of Somanatha.

The *Mahabharatam* authored by the distinguished
poet-trio (*Kavitrayam*), the verses of Vemana, *Sumati Satakam* and a few others have been rendered into Tamil. It is significant that the Telugu *Mahabharatam* was translated into Tamil prose by Subbarama Dikshitar, the eminent musicologist and that the Tamil translation was published by the enlightened Maharaja of Ettipuram. After the advent of the Sahitya Akademi, the National Book trust, India, and the Southern Languages Book Trust, Madras many Telugu works—mostly modern works—have been translated into Tamil. This is, however, the indirect contribution of the Telugus to Tamil literature.

Coming to the direct contribution, Salem Pagadala Narasimhulu Naidu, Annamalai Reddiar and a host of others whose mother tongue was Telugu immediately come to our memory and they deserve every praise. It is a fact that the Southern Telugus have no adequate opportunities and facilities or even necessity to study Telugu since Tamil is the regional language and also the language of study in schools and colleges. And their writing language is naturally Tamil. Due to lack of opportunities and regular contacts, some of them have even forgotten their mother tongue. They study Telugu out of their spontaneous love for it. Even though their Telugu is interspread with a high percentage of Tamil expressions and compounds, still they have retained Telugu as kitchen language. Hence some prefer to label the Southern Telugu as impure or hybrid or Tamil-Telugu. On the other hand, one should appreciate the love and affection they possess for their mother tongue, despite unfavorable circumstances.

Author of about One hundred books and a journalist, Salem Pagadala Narasimhulu Naidu (1854-1922) is one of the distinguished Tamil scholars. He was hailed as *Jnana Dipam* (Light of Knowledge) which he richly deserved as he was a walking encyclopedia. Among his numerous publications, *Ariyar Satya Vedam* (the Vedas of the Aryas), otherwise known as the Hindu Bible,
stands foremost. This learned work, written in lucid Tamil for the youth, explains in detail various tenets as propounded in the Vedas, the Upanishads etc., Besides this memorable work, he wrote on varied topics like history, geography, education, philosophy and the like. After making an extensive tour of the Telugu and Tamil regions of the country, he wrote the history of the Balijas, a non Brahminical community, and this is the first authentic work on the subject in Tamil.

Born in 1861 in a village called Chennikulam in Tirunelveli district, Annamalai Reddiar has become a synonym for Kavadicchindu, a music-oriented work. This is well-known for its mellifluous sounds. Even though he wrote a few poems, his name and fame now mainly rest on his Kavadicchindu songs which are even today sung and enjoyed by the devotees of the Lord Shanmuka (Murugan) and scholars. He died a premature death in 1891 and he was then just 30.

Another distinguished scholar is Jagavira Pandiyar (1866-1967). An outstanding poet and a prolific writer, he was respectfully addressed as Kaviraja Panditar, meaning a great poet. Born in the lineage of Vira Pandya Kattabomman who was the first to put up a stiff fight against the British imperialism, the poet composed 4000 verses (800 pages) and it is titled Virapandyam. He also wrote a prose work under the title Panchalamkuriicchi Viracharithiram, eulogizing the heroic story of Kattabomman brothers. His other works include Kamban Kalai nilai, - a huge volume- a critical appraisal of the immortal poet Kamban. Dharma Dipikai, a didactic work in 1000 verses and a poem cum commentary on the well-known didactic work Tirukkural. In fact, he was one of the earliest writers who produced appreciative commentaries on the famous Kural. A distinguished poet he was, he was held in high regard as Kaviraja Panditar. A self made man, and a natural poet, he learnt Telugu,
Sanskrit and English by self study.

Jagavira Pandiyanar exhibited his remarkable poetic skill even during his teens. He had once participated in a poetic competition in which several poets took part. They were asked to compose a verse extempore on Panchangam (Hindu almanac or calender). The turn of the young Jagavirapandya came up. He said a verse in honor of Lord Siva, the meaning of which is as follows: The moon wandering in the sky, the deer living in the forest, the hare in the garden, the serpent of the naga world, the fire which can burn anything-Do they dwell amicably at one place? Yes they live comfortably only on the head, leg, hand, throat and forehead respectively of Lord Siva who unhesitationally swallowed the poison. To the young poet, Panchangam meant the five different limbs (anga means limb) of Lord Siva.

V.Venkataraaju Reddiar, who was a reputed scholar in the four major South Indian languages, is another writer worth mentioning. A Tamil lecturer in the University Of Madras, he wrote learned works including Ten Mozhigal,(Southern languages), Kapilar, Paranar etc., In the former was given a 77 page scholarly account of the Telugu language and literature. This is the first book in Tamil introducing Telugu literature to the Tamil reading public. His learned treatises on Kapilar and Paranar, distinguished poets of the Sangam age, discuss their works in detail. Reddiar’s readable translation of Gandhiji’s My Experiment With Truth under the title Sattiya Sodanai is said to be a model translation.

Another traditional scholar of repute is B. Purushotham Naidu, who was also a lecturer in Tamil in the University of Madras. He is one of the few authorities on the Vaishnava literature and his learned commentary on Tiruvai Mozhi is held in great regard. It is not out of place here to mention that many Telugu-speakers have been serving in the departments of Tamil in different
universities and colleges. Even though they are Tamils for all practical purposes, most of them have retained Telugu as kitchen language.

Among the creative writers, Kaviyogi Suddhananda Bharati stands foremost. Born in Sivagangai (Madurai District) in 1897, Kaviyogi was the first to win the prestigious Rajarajan Award of rupees one lakh instituted by the Tamil University at Thanjavur for his epic poem Bharata Sakti Mahakavyam. Kavikkul, Tirukkuralinbam are some of his other writings. Besides being a prolific writer, he was also a polyglot.

Whenever modern Tamil poetry free from traditional metres is discussed, the name of N.Picchamurtti (1900) immediately occurs to the mind. He was also a fiction writer and a playwright. Among his writings, Padinettam Perukku (Short story collection), Kali (play), Kuyilin Suruti deserve mention.

Born in 1905, B.S. Ramiah is yet another distinguished writer. He was a short story writer and a playwright. He had successfully edited the well known literary journal Manikkodi and his contribution to modern Tamil literature is considerable. His Malarum Manamum (short story collection), Nandavilakku (novel), and Terotti magan (play on Karna) are some of his important writings and the last one had received a prize from the Government of Tamilnadu.

Ku.Pa.Ra. (Rajagopalan) has almost become a synonym for short story. Born in 1902, he had worked in Manikkodi, Bharata Devi and other noted journals which enriched modern Tamil literature. He was considered a writer’s writer and his short stories are famous for profundity of thought. He had developed his own style. A polyglot, he died in his 42nd year (1944).

Another important short story writer is K.Alagirisami who had to his credit ten short story collections, six essay collections, two plays and several children’s stories.
He had also published works of research value. Pleasing style and creation of characters have lent grace to his writings.

Natesiah alias C.L.Natesan is another distinguished short story writer. Born in 1896 in Salem district, he was a writer both in Tamil and English. His pseudonym was Sankar Ram. He had published thirteen short story collections in Tamil and one collection of short stories in English.

Another writer who made an indelible mark as a researcher and scholar is N.Subbu Reddiar (1917) who was Professor and Head of the Department of Tamil in the Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati. He has to his credit more than 100 publications on different subjects - Tamil literature, religion, science and philosophy. He is also an able translator. His Ph.D. thesis *Religion and Philosophy of Nalayira Divyaprabandham with special reference to Nammalwar* is an outstanding work on the subject. Besides, he had contributed in Tamil and English several research papers.

The following writers of repute have made notable contribution to the modern Tamil literature through their writings in the field of poetry; Tiruloka Sitaram, AVR Krishnaswamy Reddiar, Mudiyarasan, “Suratha” (Rajagopal), V. Duraiswamy, M.C. Jagannatha Raja, Balarama Raja, K.M. Kothandam and others; in the field of fiction, K. Rajanarayanan, “Chitti” (P.T.Sundara Rajan), P.A. Durai Raja, Jayanthan, Rudra Thulasidas, and others; in the field of research, R. Srinivasan, A.A. Manavalan, M.C. Kesavan, G. Vijaya Venugopal, Jagannatha Raja and others. Krishnaswami Reddiar, Tiruloka Sitaram, S.V.S. (Venkata Subramanyan) and others have also distinguished themselves as journalists. Jagannatha Raja, Rudra Thulasidas and a few others have been writing or translating in Tamil on different aspects of Telugu literature. I am aware of the fact that the present
list is not at all exhaustive and it is only due to ignorance.

As already mentioned, though there are no adequate opportunities to study the language, still the Southern Telugus have retained Telugu as their kitchen language and this deserves commendation. Only a few study the language out of their love for mother-tongue. And their contribution to Tamil language and literature in different branches deserve every praise.
10. WESTERN CONTRIBUTION TO TELUGU

Introductory:

Westerners came to our country as traders, missionaries and civil servants. The traders were interested only in amassing wealth at the expense of the natives. The missionaries, in the beginning, were mainly interested in spreading their faith among the natives. However as years elapsed, some of them evidenced keen interest in the study of regional languages. And the civil servants prompted by official exigencies, had had to study the local languages. Later the missionaries and the civil servants had made significant contribution to Indian languages including Telugu, which deserves commendation.

Despite the best efforts of the missionaries, in initial years, the new faith could not attract the natives. Shrewd priests like Robert-de-Nobili (1577-1656) realized that Christianity could become popular among the natives only when preaching was done in the regional languages. Addressing himself as a Roman Brahmin, Nobili not only abandoned his western robes and western manners, but also adopted the Indian style of dress and learnt the Indian languages like Tamil and Telugu, besides Sanskrit. The great Tamil scholar Constanties Joseph Beschi (1680-1747) like Nobili, gave up his European attire and adopted the native dress and also preached in the local language. If Nobili had adopted an Indian name like Tattwabodhaka
Svami, Beschi had called himself Viramamunivar.

The Jesuit missionary Fr. Mauduit who did missionary work in Chittur and Anantapur districts in Andhra Pradesh state also doffed his long flowing dress and donned himself in the kashaya (saffron) clothes and preached in Telugu, the local language. As a result, several caste Hindus also adopted the new religion. The missionaries successfully demonstrated the fact that regional languages have a tremendous effect on the Indian mind.

The Christian missionaries had ceaselessly worked to spread education among the downtrodden and the so-called untouchables and also ameliorate their living conditions. With this noble aim in view, they had set up schools and dispensaries. Through their efforts, the printing press had been imported as early as 1577 and printing presses were established in Bombay and Madras towards the close of the 18th century. Spread of the Christian knowledge through the printing press was, originally, the main aim of the missionaries. However, in later years, epics like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and other works were also printed. In this connection, the efforts of Benjamin Schultze, the German missionary, William Carey and a few others who were responsible for printing Telugu books deserve praise. In fact, Schultze was the first Telugu publisher. Printing activity developed in Tamil, Hindustani and other Indian languages even before Schultze appeared on the scene. Needless to mention, therefore, that printing activity in Indian languages including Telugu developed only with the advent of the Westerners.

Schultze's name will first occur to the mind whenever the spread of the Christian literature and book publishing in Telugu are discussed. He came to our country in 1719 and wrote six books in Telugu. As there were no printing facilities in Telugu in India at that time,
he got them published in Halle in Germany and the first Telugu book thus printed was *Motsaniki Koncu poyye Dova* (Via Sive ordo Salvtis, 1746). He is said to have published some Telugu books in Roman script and this is also one of the results of the advent of the Westerners to our country.

Schultze is said to have written a Telugu grammar entitled *Gramatica Telugia* with the aim of introducing the Telugu grammatical principles to those Westerners who were interested in learning Telugu. It was published in 1728 in Madras. Whether it is a standard work or not, his intention in providing a Telugu grammar to the Westerners is laudable. He was also associated with the Telugu translation of the Bible. He was one of the western savants who desired to translate the Bible and his Telugu translation (only a part) was published in 1747. Earlier, the Danish missionary Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg (1683-1719) of Tranquebar (Tarangambadi in Tamil) had attempted to render the Bible into Telugu.

The interest evinced by the Westerners in Telugu language and literature is astonishing and their many-sided interest can be studied under the following main heads.

1. Lexicography
2. Grammar and Prosody
3. Translations from Telugu
4. Research
5. Collections and Commentaries
6. Publication of Telugu books
7. Studies in the history and culture of South India

**Lexicography**

The contribution of the Westerners to Telugu lexicography is substantial and it is remembered even to this day. Even though lexicography is not new to Telugu, compiling a dictionary in alphabetical order is quite new as the old ones, couched in verse, are mainly compilations of synonyms. Further they are subject wise.
William Brown was the first to publish a Telugu-English dictionary in alphabetical order. His *Vocabulary of Gentoo and English* (1807) lists about 4000 Telugu words which were in vogue in his time. Since he had followed pronunciation, he employed consonants instead of vowels. For instance, the head words beginning with the vowels i, i, e, e have been replaced by the consonants yi, yi, ye, ye respectively. Similarly the vowels u, u, o, o have been represented by the consonants vu, vu, vo, vo respectively, as sound denotes the same.

A.D. Campbell of the Madras Civil Service (1760-1857) published his dictionary of the *Telooogoo Language* in 1821. Dedicated to Francis Whyte, Ellis, a scholar, this work is usually regarded as the first Telugu dictionary in its real sense. It is also worth noting that he called the language as Telugu while most of his predecessors had termed it as Gentoo. Among the earlier dictionaries, English-Telooogoo dictionary compiled by J.C. Morris, FRS (1798-1858) deserves mention. Published in two volumes and modelled after Dr. Johnson’s dictionary, this work explained in Telugu various shades of meanings of English words.

Though some commendable work has been done by earlier scholars, the name of Charles Philip Brown, C.P. Brown for short, (1798-1884) stands foremost in the history of Telugu lexicography. He will be ever gratefully remembered for his monumental dictionaries - Telugu-English dictionary (1852) English-Telugu dictionary (1852) and a dictionary of the Mixed Dialects (1854). It is worth noting that Brown was a pioneer in dictionary making and his dictionaries precede the valuable dictionaries of Winslow in Tamil (1862) Gundert in Malayalam (1872) Kittel in Kannada (1893) respectively.

Though a foreigner, Brown had ventured to make some innovations in Telugu script to remove the difficulties involved in Telugu printing. The symbols which he
had invented to represent \textit{repham} have been accepted and they are called Brown \textit{rakaram}. He had adopted flap to denote both trill and flap.

Ably compiled by A. Galletti of the Indian Civil Service, \textit{Telugu Dictionary} (1935) is a veritable dictionary of current Telugu and a manual for learning Telugu. As Galletti has rightly observed, there is no other Telugu dictionary in the least like it, for it has left out words that are not in common use. The head words (Telugu words) have been transliterated in Roman characters and their various meanings are given in English. Telugu phrases with their English equivalents are also provided. Wherever necessary, Galletti has given English counterparts of the Telugu proverbs. Thus the usefulness of the dictionary has been enhanced and the authorities of the Universities situated in Andhra Pradesh may consider bringing out a reprint of the dictionary which has been out of circulation for several years.

\textbf{Grammar and Prosody}

It is significant to mention that several Westerners had realized the importance of grammar and dictionary in acquiring adequate knowledge in a foreign language. Hence they compiled grammars and dictionaries.

A.D. Campbell was the first to write a Telugu grammar in English. It underwent three editions in 1816, 1818, and 1840 and this shows how it was received by the learners. Curiously enough, this grammar has not been referred to by C.P. Brown in the preface to his \textit{A Grammar of the Telugu Language} (1840). Earlier, William Brown had published his grammar of the Gentoo Language in 1817.

As grammarian too, C.P. Brown deserves special mention since Telugu grammars which appeared before him had almost lost their popularity after his grammar was published. His grammar is divided into 12 parts and is worth mentioning that it is somewhat an exhaustive
one. Besides dealing with nouns, pronouns, adjectives and the like, he elaborately dealt with verbs, prosody etc., A note explaining the classification of Telugu words as *tatsama* (equal to Sanskrit), *tadbhava* (born from Sanskrit) etc., has been appended. Since foreign learners are not conversant with Telugu, he explained in detail all the Telugu grammatical principles, giving suitable examples. He did not hesitate to give illustrations from Italian and Greek languages also wherever he thought them necessary. A revised and enlarged edition of the grammar was published in 1857.

In the beginning of his Telugu studies, Brown had not aspired to study the Telugu prosody. But when once he was fully convinced of the necessity of the knowledge of prosody in understanding the Telugu poem, he thoroughly studied it and felt that study of prosody should not be neglected. He opined: Telugu literature being principally in verse, a knowledge of prosody is a requisite as a guide of enunciation.

Besides devoting a separate chapter (11th chapter) for Telugu prosody in his grammar, Brown made a comparative study of the Telugu and Sanskrit prosodial systems in his *Andhra Girvana Chandamu* (1827). He had also published *Vakyavali* or Exercises in idioms- English and Telugu (1852). His *Telugu Reader* being a series of letters, private and public, with grammatical analysis and a little lexicon was also published in the same year, and it is a valuable one.

Rev. Riccar published an *'Abridgment of Telugu Grammar'* (1869) for the use of school going children. 1873 saw the publication of a *Progressive Grammar of Telugu* by A.H. Arden and this is one of the well-written grammars in Telugu.

**Translations From Telugu**

Though there exists an Italian proverb decrying the translators as traitors, the translators are in fact builders
of bridges between two different languages. The importance of readable translations had been realized after the advent of the Westerners.

C.P.Brown was the earliest Westerner who felt the necessities of reliable translations from Telugu into English. No Telugu poem or classical composition was translated and published in English before him. So he was a pioneer in this field too.

Among the Telugu poets, Vemana has considerably attracted Brown. He was of the view that no other Telugu work should be attempted before mastering Vemana. Brown's English rendering of the poet first appeared in print in 1829 under the title *Vemana Padyamulu* (Verses of Vemana). Moral, religious and satirical - it contains 693 verses, though he had collected about 2000 verses from different places. Since Brown's translation is mainly intended for the Westerners, he attempted a very faithful translation, at the same time retaining readability. The following verse could be cited as an example.

*Katimanta cheta kamuni gelichina
Velpu pedda penti viduya ledu
Penti basinatti peddalu galaroko*

Brown's rendering runs as follows:

Siva, the chief of Gods, though he burnt up cupid with the flame of his forehead eye, cannot leave his wife, who then are the chiefs of Sages who can desert woman?

*Velpu pedda* has been rendered as chief of Gods. However, to make himself very clear to his Western readers, Brown has added Siva before the chief of Gods. So also *katimanta* has been rendered as flame of his forehead eye thereby suggesting that it is not an ordinary flame but that emanated from Siva's forehead eye and this is a new concept for the Westerners.

Brown had also translated *Sumati Satakam* and a few verses from *Bhaskara Satakam, Vishnu Puranam*,
Sunanda Parinayam and other poems. Dasavatara Charitra, by Dasaradevula Rama Mantri is one of the few Telugu poems which attracted Brown. The episode of Ahalya has a special fascination for him. He has, therefore, translated the episode under the title The Loves of Ahalya and Indra. He has given in English the summaries of Kalahasti Mahatyam and Bhanumad Vijayam. He has translated the popular tales by Tatachari and published the rendering along with the original in 1855.

From his various observations made in some of his works, it can be said that Brown has considered translation from Telugu to English or vice-versa a difficult task. According to him, translation of words which are purely idiomatic is beset with difficulties. Hence he has retained in his Telugu rendering of the Bible words like Baptism as they are.

Research
A few western scholars were deeply interested in research - research in language and research in literature. It is note worthy that all those scholars who studied Sanskrit and the main Dravidian languages came to the conclusion, that the dravidian languages constitute a separate family of languages. This gained currency as years passed by almost eclipsing the older theory that Indian languages were principally derived from Sanskrit.

Francis Whyte Ellis of the Madras Civil Service (1780-1891) who ‘devoted all his spare time to the cultivation of Sanskrit and the various dialects peculiar to Southern India’ was the first scholar to observe that the South Indian languages formed separate family of languages. But it was given for Bishop Robert Caldwell (1814-1891) to develop Elli’s theory later and publish his monumental work A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages (1856). It was Caldwell who termed the South Indian languages as Dravidian. He was five years old when Ellis died.
Beside being a lexicographer and a grammarian, C.P. Brown was also a researcher. Even though he said that all Southern languages borrowed largely from Sanskrit as far as literature was concerned, he was of the firm view that the Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, and Malayalam languages resemble each other in their grammar which is wholly different from that of Sanskrit, Maharatta and Hindustani. He emphasized this view in his other writings too. It is interesting to note that while explaining the word dialect in his English-Telugu Dictionary, he observed, 'some people say that Telugu and Tamil are dialects of Sanskrit, but this is false.'

Collections and Commentaries

Since Brown was essentially a researcher, he endeavoured his best to bring out well-edited texts of Telugu poems. It should be remembered at this juncture that 'Telugu literature was dying out, the flame was just glimmering in the socket' when Brown undertook the study of Telugu. Hence therefore put in to rejuvenate the language is indescribable. He had also spent most of his earnings for the same and further more Brown was a collector of 2000 manuscripts in Telugu, Sanskrit and other languages. Besides preparing press copies for several Telugu poems with the assistance of erudite scholars, he also encouraged them to write commentaries in simple language. *Manu Charitram, Vasu Charitram, Pothana's Bhagavatam* are some of the many poems which were edited under his able guidance. To prepare the press copy for *Ranganatha Ramayanam*, the earliest Ramayana in Telugu, he took the trouble of consulting 15 manuscripts! The elaborate process he adopted in the preparation of press copy is explained in his own words. 'I first had a copy made from any manuscript of tolerable accuracy the alternate pages being left blank, and the verses duly numbered then the volume is bound. I collected twelve or fifteen other manuscripts (few of them
complete) A clerk sat with the newly written copy ready, and before him two, each having charge of five or six manuscripts, the oldest I could discover. Three progressors sat by the masters of grammar and proverbs, both Sanskrit and Telugu; but the others knew only their mother-tongue. Each assistant in turn read a stanza, which thus was recited ten or twelve times, the scribe recorded every deviation, the Pandits formed their judgements on each line, and then one of them taking the blotted copy, selected the pure text and dictated it to a reader. This vividly describes how Brown was careful and diligent in getting the press copy prepared.

Col. Collin Mackenzie (1754-1821) was another distinguished collector of manuscripts. Though as engineer by profession, he showed extraordinary interest in collecting manuscripts concerning South Indian history, literature and enthrupology. His collections, running into several volumes and known as Mackenzie manuscripts, are well preserved in the Madras Govt. Oriental Manuscripts Library. The Mackenzie manuscripts are a source of valuable information to the literary minded as well as historian.

Publication of Telugu Books

Publishing activity has already been referred to. In the initial stages it could not make much progress. It was again C.P. Brown who strived hard to make the Telugu printing a success. According to Brown, printing commenced among the Telugus about the year 1806, but it made little progress till 1850. It was after his strenuous efforts for several years, Telugu printing picked up momentum. He greatly appreciated the laudable work of Vavilla Ramaswamy Sastrulu (1826-1891) in this regard, of whom he said as follows: ‘In the days when people had to read books written by hand, V. Ramaswamy Sastrulu relieved their difficulties by starting a printing press.’

As in printing, the Christian missionaries were pio-
neers in Telugu press also. Though the early history of the Telugu press is shrouded in mystery, it may be said that *Hitvadi*, published by a Christian missionary hailing from Machilipatnam seems to be the first Telugu journal.  

**Studies in the History and Culture of South India**

Some western savants showed deep interest in the history and culture of South India. Among them stand foremost Colin Mackenzie, C.P. Brown and Tavarnier. Several manuscripts of poems and local records of historical and cultural value were unearthed and preserved for posterity. Thus their contribution is invaluable.

Though an engineer by profession, Mackenzie like Brown had spent a huge amount in acquiring manuscripts. It is said that the Mackenzie collection contained 1568 manuscripts, 8076 inscriptions, 2630 pictures, 75 plans, 6218 old coins and 106 idols. This astonishing collection has been described in 570 pages in the catalogue of Oriental Manuscripts prepared by Rev. Taylot. This is suffice to show that the contribution of Mackenzie and his able assistants is substantial.

If Brown had trained the traditional scholars like Zuluri Appaya Sastrulu, Vathyam Advaita Brahma Sastri and a few other Pandits in editing the old poems on Modern lines, Mackenzie had trained the famous Cavelly (Kavali) brothers- Venkata Boriah, Venkata Lechmiah (Lakshmamayya) and Venkata Ramaswamy - in historical research. As Dr. Nelaturi Venkata Ramanayya the renowned historian has rightly observed, Mackenzie's assistants were the first researchers in Andhra history. At this juncture, I am tempted to quote what Mackenzie had said of Boriah: 'The connection then found with one person, a native, a Bramin, (the lamented V.C. Borach, then almost a youth of the quickest genius and disposition, possessing that conciliatory turn in mind) was the first step of my introduction into the portal of India knowledge from the moment the talents of the lamented
Boraih were applied, a new venue to Hindoo, knowledge was opened..."

Caldwell described Brown as a restless Pandit. He also called him his teacher. Brown’s enthusiasm for Indian learning was proverbial. Spending a huge amount, he collected about 5000 palm leaf manuscripts in Telugu and other languages from different parts of the country. He installed Telugu printing press and his house was known as Brown’s College. His valuable essays on *Language and Literature of the Telugus, on the creed, customs and literature of the Jangams* and the like reveal his penetrating study of the Telugu literature and the culture of the Telugus. It is due to the tireless efforts of Brown and other western savants, Telugu language and literature became accessible to the Europeans. The following cardinal points emerge from the above.

1. The Westerners have not only unearthed manuscripts of literary value and local records of historical importance which would have been lost for ever but also preserved them for posterity.

2. Besides manuscripts, they collected proverbs, folk songs, folk tales etc., and translated them into English.

3. Telugu was introduced to the western world through English translations of classics, grammars and bilingual dictionaries etc.,

4. Telugu was only a literary language till the advent of the Westerners. They gave the language scientific outlook which brought in renaissance. Telugu prose emerged as a new force to reckon with.

5. Through missionary efforts, printing of books in Telugu developed and printed books, which were unknown before, became popular. Spacing of words, using punctuation marks etc., also became popular. Printing has brought about a tremendous revolution in our thinking.

6. Grammars, which were written in verse, came to
be written in prose. Westerners have made the grammar easy by adapting the method of questions and answers. This catechistical method later became popular.

Though the system of education as introduced by the Westerners has been criticized by some of the educationalists and others, it produced some good results too. It should not be totally looked down and brushed aside.

Doors of education and knowledge were opened to all communities-high and low. Systematic method of teaching came into vogue and the native teachers learnt it. Native scholars realized their golden past and they imbibed western methods and ideas in their writings. They were also introduced to western sciences, technology etc., Those scholars who were inspired by the European literature have tried their best to adorn their own literature with new genres like novel, romantic poetry, criticism and the like. Thereby, age old literature has acquired vitality and freshness. As a result of our contacts with the Westerners, Indian culture was introduced to the west through the different Indian languages. This paved the way for their admiration and respect for Indian culture and establishment of centres of Indian studies. As a result, world language status has been accorded to the Indian languages.

However, some educated Indians began to show scant regard for their languages. Education has meant western type of education. Due to this unhealthy trend, most of the English-educated Telugus showed indifference towards Telugu studies and the Telugu scholars in schools and colleges were denied due respect. This deplorable situation has been referred to by the distinguished twin poets Tirupati Venkata Kavulu in their Nanaraja Sandursanamu. They said: Schooluna delgu teacharani kshudrulu kondaru nannu sarekun helana cheyu cundinanu.... Some persons of mean mentality have been
ridiculing me in the school as Telugu teacher.... Signifi-
cantly this trend has now changed and Telugu scholars
are held in high regard.

In this connection, I would like to quote what Dr.
John Murdock, a western Tamil scholar has said: 'Let
them (natives who studied English and neglected Tamil)
be assured, that so long as they despise their mother-
tongue, they have merely a thin white-wash of civiliza-
tion'
11. THE FAMED SARASWATI MAHAL LIBRARY

Hailed as the granary of the South India, Thanjavur in Tamilnadu is equally famous in mythology, history, literature and fine arts. Such places of unique interest are not many in our country.

In Thanjavur are situated the Big Temple and the Tanjore Maharaja Sarabhoji’s Saraswati Mahal Library. The Big Temple (Brihadiswara Alayam) sanctified by Puranic lore is a well known pilgrimage centre.

Likewise the library, which is rightly called the abode of Muse is a distinguished centre of research and learning. It is said that this library was the result of the fusion of three different cultural influences—namely, the Tamil Cholas, the Telugu Nayaks, and the Maratha rulers. Thus it provides food for the body and the brain.

The library is a veritable treasure house of valuable books written in different Indian languages like Sanskrit, Telugu, Tamil and Marathi. Interestingly, it also contains several works in English, French, German, Latin and other foreign languages. Thus it is happily a meeting place of eastern and western cultures.

Besides printed volumes innumerable manuscripts written on both paper and palm leaf are also well preserved. Even a casual visitor to the library will be astonished to notice a lot of variety in subjects. Apart from
poems, *puranas*, and grammatical works, one can see books on history, philosophy, medicine, astrology, music, dance, religion, architecture and other branches of knowledge.

A close examination of the manuscripts also reveals a rich variety in script. It is said that about 25 thousand Sanskrit books have been written in 11 Indian scripts. Some Tamil manuscripts are in Telugu script and while some Telugu and Tamil manuscripts have been written in the Nagari script. We also find some manuscripts written in the Nandi Naggari and Modi scripts. Viewed from the immense variety of subjects and voluminous collections, the library was an unparalleled one in those days. In this connection, it is worth while to recollect the words of Dr. Burnell who was appointed in 1871 to prepare a catalogue of books available there. He observed ‘The Saravatih Mahal library is not only big but also an important one in the world’. One of the honorary secretaries of the library said ‘Wonders of the world are more than seven and Saraswati Mahal Library is one of them’. It richly deserves this commendation!

Besides these books and manuscripts, several rare pictures and photos are kept in the library. Pictures relating to a few towns in India and Europe, paintings in respect of botany and other sciences and the like adorn the wall of the library building. The excellent drawings depicting man’s resemblance in animals drawn by a French artist of repute and of Madhava Swami, a renowned artist of the deserve mention.

The fact that a key aspect of Indian culture is tolerance has been well demonstrated in the history of the rulers of Thanjavur which was under the reigns of three different dynasties. They were patrons of learning. Some of them like Vijayaraghava Naik (1633-73) were great builders too. He built the famous Mantapams in Mayuram and Tiruvirdaimarudur, besides constructing huge Praakarams
(surrounding walls) to the Thanjavur palace. Even though the Saraswati Mahal Library building might have been constructed during the Naik period, the Library must have taken a definite shape in the time of Sarabhoji who ruled over Thanjavur between 1800 and 1832 and the Library has been appropriately named after the enlightened Maharaja.

Sarabhoji was a distinguished scholar and writer in Sanskrit and Maratha. He was also a well known collector of books, manuscripts and paintings. Several stories portraying his irresistible love for them are in vogue. He procured almost all important English books of his day for the library, got them bound in black colored cloth and signed every book as Serfoji Raja. He was the first Indian ruler who founded a printing press and published books. His service to literature was recognized even by the British who installed in 1807 a beautiful statue in marble just opposite the library. This imposing statue in standing posture will bring to mind Sarbhoji's deep reverence for the Goddess of Learning. His son Sivaji, it is said, had spent in 1849 a huge amount of about 22 thousand rupees for the library.

The library has published many valuable books in different languages and the 23,570 dwipada (2-line) Ramayanam in Telugu by Katta Varadaraju (17th century) is one among them.

The conclusion is unavoidable that the Saraswati Mahal Library is a store house of knowledge and of different cultures.

A Note on Indian Literature

"The literary artist has not merely to reflect the word, he has to redeem the world. He is not merely to portray the experience which he has, but he has to recreate that experience. He has to enter into solitude, glimpse the vision of truth, bring it down to earth, clothe it with emotions, carve it into words", so observed the
philosopher statesman Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan while discussing the functions of a literary artist.

Significant to mention is that the Sanskrit rhetoricians regard a poet as Brahma, the Creator. Creation, is therefore, the poet’s principal function and only the creative writer deserves to be hailed as a poet. Though the poet is also a member of the society and though his function is to portray the ups and downs and the troubles of the society to which he belongs, he has to create some characters. Not all poets are capable of doing this; only a few can do. This creation of characters gives life and permanence to a work.

In ancient India, as in other countries, old literature was confined to a few people-kings, nobles, poets and scholars. No wonder, therefore, that we find in old literature several works dealing with kings, queens and their stories. Thanks to numerous changes, social and political, literature now ceases to be a subject for the chosen few but belongs to all. So modern literature has become wide and varied. And in olden days, verse was the chief vehicle of expression.

Even dictionaries, books on astronomy and other sciences were composed in verse. Only the verse composers were regarded as poets and they were patronized by the kings and public as well. But as years passed by, prose replaced the verse and as a result prose writers, too, came into prominence. Even the term writer has acquired a new connotation and literature new dimensions. Still the chief purpose of literature remained constant. Literature should aim at the welfare of the society. However one may wonder how literature can effectively play its role in the present day technological world. True, the modern world is making tremendous progress due to the discoveries and inventions of the scientists. Still good literature is an integral force which can unite divergent minds and check the divisive tendencies. In the changes
circumstances, the purpose of literature is not only to
give pleasure but also knowledge. Both pleasure and
knowledge are vital for the welfare of the human society.

Ours is a multi lingual, multi racial country. This
multi faceted nature poses problems and presents advan-
tages as well. Then how did we achieve emotional inte-
gration or cultural harmony in the past? The following is
the answer.

Spiritual outlook is the back bone of Indian litera-
ture, The two great epics, originally written in Sanskrit,
namely the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have brought
in the cultural unity among the Indian language -speakers.
There is no Indian language which does not have the
Ramayana in full or in parts. It is quite interesting that
Rama was the earliest king who travelled all the way
from the north to the south, making friendship with the
people belonging to the non-Aryan tribes. Among his
friends or admirers include Guha, a tribal king, Hanuman
and Sugriva of the Vanara sect and finally Vibhishna, a
Prakshasa. The message of the Kamba Ramayana in
Tamil, one of the earliest Ramayanas, according to the
critics, is this universal brotherhood as exhibited by Rama.
He is also said to have constructed a causeway (setu)
across the sea near the modern Dhanuskoti and we have
a happy phrase asetu himachalam meaning from the
setu to the Himalayas. A similar phrase exists in Tamil
which says Kanyakumari to the Himalayas- i.e., from
the South to the North. Thus the Rama-story presents a
happy picture of a united India and that the Rama-theme
has enriched the entire Indian literature. In fact the soul
filling story of Rama has been narrated in almost all
literary genres - poem, drama, song and the like. The
Mahabharata, too, has moulded the Indian thought to a
considerable extent. It is a favorite poem of the Telugu
and Oriya speakers. In fact they hold the poem in great
regard and respect. Besides those copies, the Puranas,
the philosophy of the Bhagavad Gita, the Bhakti movement and the Jain and the Buddhist scriptures, especially the doctrine of nonviolence (ahimsa) shaped the Indian thought and culture.

It becomes, therefore, meaningful to understand the significance of the two great epics before making an attempt to study the vast Indian literature. What Romesh Dutt, a scholar and statesman of repute, had said some decades ago holds good even today. "The Hindu scarcely lives, man or woman, high or low, educated or ignorant whose earliest recollections did not cling round the story and characters of the great epics". According to the great Indologist Suniti Kumar Chatterji, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata are India.

While discussing the Ramayana literature in South East Asia, J.M. Cadet, the Thailand (Sian) writer described the Ramayana as "a work combining the popularity of the Arthurian legends, the literary force of the works of Shakespeare and the authority of the Bible." This learned opinion is suffice to explain the importance of the epic.

It is, therefore, worth mentioning that Sanskrit and its great literature did bring the different language-writers and scholars to one and the same platform. Till recently it has been an effective integral force since the epics, the puranas and the celebrated works of distinguished poets like Kalidasa, Bhavabhupati and a host of others have been rendered into various languages. Besides, almost all Indian languages have freely borrowed vocabulary from Sanskrit enriching themselves. Sometimes, the borrowed expressions seem to be much more intelligible than the indigenous words of the concerned language. Thus Sanskrit literature has brought the cultural unity in a multi lingual society. However it should not be forgotten that different literatures in regional languages are as much representative of the Indian thought as Sanskrit and their
contribution in upholding the Indian culture is considerable. A study of the Indian literatures should not be regarded as complete if one turns a deaf ear to the study of regional literature. In fact, regional literature have enabled the average readers and the common man to understand and appreciate the greatness of the epics and the like albeit Sanskrit is almost foreign to them. Even folk and tribal literatures, too, have played a significant role in the assimilation of Indian culture by the common people.

As mentioned earlier, the Ramayana has appeared in almost all the languages of the country and the sage Valmiki was the chief source. But their important point to be noted in this regard is that no old poet worth the name has translated the sage’s poem verbatim, but only adapted it. For instance, Kamba Ramayanam in Tamil vividly describes the pre marital love of Rama and Sita. So also the description of Dasaratha’s journey to Mithila is very elaborate and this is done in about 300 stanzas. In the Tamil poem, Aditya hrudayam as found in the original is absent, instead the stories of the killing of Hiranya, the account of the fake Janaka, the mediation of Vibhishana and the like have been added. In the Ranganatha Ramayanam in Telugu narrates the absorbing episodes of Kalanemi and Sulochana, the wife of Indrajit. These episodes or details are not extant in Valmiki’s poem in its present form. In the Ramayana folk songs in Telugu are found several interesting non-Valmiki stories and details. Urmiladevi Nidra (sleep) is an instance to the point. Devendra Satyavedhi, a devout student of Indian folklore and an author was greatly moved by this soul-filling song and published his English translation of the same. So also the well known Hindi poem Ramacharit Manas by Goswami Tulasidas contains several non-Valmiki details and episodes. Thus the regional poets have retained their individuality though they drew
inspiration from Valmiki and other Ramayana poets in Sanskrit.

At this juncture, the observation of Sri Aurobindo who considered the versions of Kamban and Tulasidas as best, deserves mention. The patriot-poet felt that they are the living recreations of the ancient story.

In the medieval India, Persian was the court language of the Mughal emperors and it was studied by scholars of the day. Several administrative terms found their way into the language. Along with Persian came the Urdu and Arabic expressions too which were warmly received even by the common people. However, Indian literature was not very much influenced by the Persian or Arabic.

As time elapsed, our contacts with the European culture through English literature have strengthened and new vistas opened. Many a new literary genre like novel, short story, elegy, parody etc., found favour with writers and readers alike. In almost all Indian languages, to day fiction is the best seller. To be frank, it is their favorites, surpassing the age-old poetry which has been relegated to a corner. Most of our modern writers or scholars know much about the western writers than their counterparts in different Indian languages. A Tamil poet does not know that Gurujada Venkata Appa Rao has written a great social play in Telugu when poetry was reigning. So also a Telugu writer is not aware of the fact that Subramania Bharati wrote a great poem in Tamil portraying nationalistic ideas. This peculiar situation should change. And readers and writers in Indian languages should be acquainted with at least distinguished writers in their neighboring languages.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that Indian literature is one though written in different languages. As Bharati has rightly pointed out, "Bharat speaks eighteen languages but her thought is the same." Vemana of the
17th century, a household name in the Telugu region, has observed: "They say for pot kunda in Telugu and kumbha in Sanskrit. Mountain is called konda in Telugu and parvata in Sanskrit. So also salt is known as uppu in Telugu and lavana in Sanskrit. But are not they one! Languages are varied, spirit remaining the same." This observation holds relevant even today and Indian writers have realized the oneness of Indian literature. This only reminds us of the Upanishadic saying: "Truth is one though scholars interpret it in different ways."
CHALLA RADHAKRISHNA SARMA (1929-1998) studied in Andhra and Madras Universities. He was trained at an early age by his father, Ashtavadhani Challa Lakshminarayana Sastri, a distinguished Scholar in Telugu, Sanskrit and Hindi and author of several poems and plays in Telugu.

Dr. Sarma, a student of Comparative literature, is a trilingual writer. His books, numbering over Hundred, cover poetry, literary criticism, essay, history, biography, stories and poems for children and translations from Tamil and English. A recipient of the Soviet Land Nehru Award for the totality of his writings, he was awarded prizes by the Governments of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telugu and Tamil Universities for some of his books and was honoured by many Literary Associations. He had visited Munich, Mauritius and Singapore.

After serving the Sir Theagaraya College, Madras for a few years, Dr. Sarma joined the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. After voluntarily retiring from the Akademi, as its Regional Secretary, he joined the Madurai Kamaraj University as Professor and Head of the Department of Telugu. He worked as UGC Emeritus Fellow in Telugu.