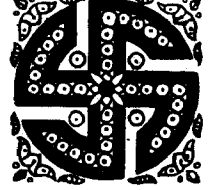


Jain Sahitya in Kannada Literature



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Some scholars are of the opinion that Kannada literature was in existence even before the Christian era. Excepting the inscriptions, the first literary work available in Kannada is the *Kavirājamārga* which is written by Amoghavarṣa Nṛpatuṅga in about 850 A. D. It appears from the references and the passages quoted in this work that there lived some Kannada poets earlier than its author. But unfortunately none of them is available. According to some scholars, the author of this *Kavirājamārga* is Amoghavarṣa but according to some others, its author is the court poet, Śrīvijaya. Though it is said that Śrīvijaya wrote the *Raghuvamśapurāṇa*, yet it is not available. Similarly, the works such as *Harivamśa*, *Sudraka*, by Guṇavarma, *Vatsarājacarite*, by Nāgavarma, *Sulocanācarite* by Nāgānanda, *Bhuvanaikarāmābhyudaya* by Ponna etc., are lost beyond recovery. All these works belong to Jaina literature in Kannada. Thus the Kannada literature made its start with Jaina works.

Besides the *Kavirājamārga*, we have two great literary Kāvya from the pen of the great poet Pampa e. g., *Ādipurāṇa* and *Vikramārjunavijaya*. Pampa won the epithets such as Ādikavi, Mahākavi of the Kannada poets. His works are counted as the first and foremost Kāvya and that Mahākavyas too. He lived in 941 A. D.

Pampa was followed by Ponna (950 A. D.) who composed two Kāvya : one a religious poem called *Śāntipurāṇa* and the other a secular poem by the name *Bhuvanaikarāmābhyudaya*. Ranna (993 A. D.) who followed Ponna wrote two poems : one a religious and the other a secular one viz., *Ajitarāthapurāṇa* and *Gadāyuddha* or *Sāhasabhīmavijaya*. Thereafter Janna who lived in 1209 A. D. gave to the Kannada literary world his two poems such as *Anantanāthapurāṇa* and *Yaśodharacarite* both of which are religious in character and contents. All these three poets won the epithet as Kavicakravarti. Nāgachandra who lived in 1100 A. D. has been ascribed to the authorship of *Rāmacandracaritapurāṇa* or *Pamparāmāyana*, and *Mallināthapurāṇa*. The former work is styled on the model of Pampa's second work and due to this he is called himself as "*Abhinavapampa*" All these poets continued their writings in the same trend and each of them wrote a secular and a religious one, in the Campū style i. e., mixed with prose and poetry (more poetry and less prose).

Apart from these literary works, the Jaina writers are said to have adventured to write books on scientific themes. Nāgavarma (990 A. D.) wrote his book on prosody with the title "*Chandombudhi*." The *Madanatilaka* which deals with erotics has been ascribed to Candrāraja. Śrīdharācārya (1050 A. D.) wrote his *Jātatilaka* on astrology. Nāgavarma II's (1040 A. D.) *Kāvyaśvalokana* on poetics, Bhāṣabbhūṣaṇa, a grammar, *Vastukośa*, a dictionary, *Chandovṛtti* on prosody, Jaga ddala Somanātha's (1100 A. D.) *Kalyāṇakāraka*, a treatise on medicine *Khagenāra-manīdarpaṇa* by Maṅgaraja on Vishavaidya are some of the excellent gifts contributed by the Jaina writers to the Kannada literature in particular and to the Indian literature in general. The *Śabdamanīdarpaṇa* of Keśirāja who lived in 1260 A. D. has won the popularity from both the

students and scholars as an ideal grammar of Kannada language and it has served as a model to the subsequent works on Kannada language.

Besides the above mentioned works, *Vardhamānapurāṇa* of Nāgavarma II (1040 A. D.) who is the author of *Kāvyaavalokana*, *Dharmāmṛta* of Nayasena (1100 A. D.), *Sukumaracarite* of Śāntinātha (1070 A. D.), *Samayaparikṣe* of Brahmaśiva (1150 A. D.), *Nemināthapurāṇa* of Karṇapārya (1140 A. D.), *Nemināthapurāṇa* of Nemicandra (1180 A. D.) etc., are some of the famous works which are written in Campū style.

Thus from 9th to the 13th century A. D. the Jaina poets are seen engaged themselves in the product of works embracing all branches of Kannada literature and thereby won the reputation as poets, scientists, rhetoricians, compilers of dictionaries, astrologers, physicians and grammarians etc. Just as the Jaina writers have proved themselves to be the pioneers of the above branches of Kannada literature, they are said to be the first to bring about literary works in the prose style. Cāvūṇḍarāya who is wellknown to the world as the one who got installed the colossal of Bāhubali at Śravaṇabelgola wrote his prose work called *Cāvūṇḍarāyapurāṇa* or *Triṣaṣṭhiśalākāpuruṣacarite*. After him Śivakoṭyācārya or Revakoṭṭacarya whose date has been put between 900-1070 A. D. wrote his famous Kannada prose work called *Vaḍḍharadhane* which contains 19 stories of varied length and these stories are found sprinkled over with Prakrit gāthās. This period has been called as the Age of the Jainas or the Age of the Campū, because this age has seen mostly the works of Jaina writers. After the 15th century A. D., the Jaina poets started composing their poems in the Sāṅgytya or Ṣaṭpadi metres because these metres were being used popularly by poets of other communities. It is found later on that the Jaina saints wellversed in Sanskrit and Prakrit have written extensive commentaries in Kannada on some of the most important Jaina philosophical works in Sanskrit and Prakrit. Thus these saints have enriched this section of Kannada literature also. The works like *Gommaṣasāra*, *Padārthasāra*, *Puruṣārthasiddhyupāya*, *Tattvaratnadīpikē*, *Pañcastikāya* etc. are made easily accessible to the Kannada readers only through these commentaries.

Though Kannada literature repletes with works of Viraśaiva and Brahmin writers, the Jaina literature forms a class by itself because of its being vast and varied in character and thus has become admirable to the Kannada world.

I love India not because I cultivate the idolatry of geography,
not because I have had the chance to be born in her soil, but because
she has saved through tumultuous ages the living words that have
been issued from the illuminated consciousness of her great ones.

—Rabindranath Tagore

