



ISSN: 3049-2017
IJMh 2025; 2(6): 159-161
© 2025 IJMh
www.themultijournal.com

Received: 22-12-2025
Accepted: 29-12-2025
Publish : 30-12-2025

Dr Lakshmi Vijayan V T
Asst. Prof. of Nyaya,
Govt. Sanskrit College,
Thiruvananthapuram

Contributions of women in the historical poetry of Vijayanagaram

Dr Lakshmi Vijayan V T

Abstract

The historical poems authored by women during the Vijayanagara Empire serve as a significant testament to their intellectual prowess and literary contributions. Women such as Gangadevi, Ramabhadramba, and Tirumalamba transcended societal expectations by delving into themes of political strategy, societal movements, and military conflicts through their poetic works. These poets not only documented the rich cultural and political landscape of their era but also contributed to the preservation of historical memory through their insightful analyses. Their compositions, including "Madhura Vijayam," "Raghunathabhyudayam," and "Varadambika Parinayam," exemplify their ability to weave together narratives that celebrate valor, romance, and cultural heritage. By deftly navigating traditional poetic forms like Champu Kavya, these women demonstrated their mastery over language and narrative techniques, earning them recognition beyond their contemporary societal roles. Their poems continue to be celebrated for their literary merit and historical significance, challenging perceptions of gender roles in literary and historical documentation within Indian cultural history.

Key words

Historical poems, Vijayanagara Empire, Gangadevi, Ramabhadramba, Tirumalamba Madhura Vijayam, Raghunathabhyudayam, Varadambika Parinayam, Champu Kavya

Contributions of women in the historical poetry of Vijayanagaram

Introduction

The illustrious Vijayanagara Empire was documented and preserved by women writers through a very long period of its history. It's crucial to remember that women in India also had the courage to venture into the realm of historical poetry. Poets like Gangadevi, Ramabhadramba, and Tirumalamba deeply understood and analysed society. These poets were well-versed in the movements and trends of society, studied political strategies, and keenly observed and comprehended wars. Without precise knowledge, it would be impossible to write about such subjects. These three poets managed to encapsulate an entire era within their poems.

This serves as a response to those who claim that women in India were always second-class citizens. These women were educated, capable of understanding and embracing society, and their poems were never labelled as mere "women's writings." Instead, their works were wholeheartedly accepted by society. The focus was not on the gender of the author but on the beauty of the poetry itself. It can be said that in the past, there was no bias based on gender in the appreciation of poetry. In short, literature at that time was free from gender bias.

In Sanskrit literature, there has been a long-standing trend of using history, saga and mythological stories as the themes for poetry. This style was maintained for centuries with the aim of preserving the values and moral teachings of these texts, ensuring that their perspectives were never forgotten.

Correspondence:
Dr Lakshmi Vijayan V T
Asst. Prof. of Nyaya,
Govt. Sanskrit College,
Thiruvananthapuram

Gangadevi

Gangadevi stands as a testament to the unfettered freedom of expression and writing that existed in India. Unlike following the conventional styles of her time, Gangadevi became the first woman recorded in history to write a historical poem vividly depicting the social atmosphere of her era.

Gangadevi, the wife of Kumara Kampana, a king from the Kakatiya dynasty, wrote the historical poem "Madhura Vijayam." The poem narrates her husband's victorious war in Madurai and the expansion of his kingdom. Hence, the work is also known as the "Veera Kamparaya Charitham." The poem includes numerous praises of Virupaksha of Hampi. Gangadevi also mentions the Sanskrit poets of her time in her work. This demonstrates her comprehensive understanding of society, as well as contemporary literary contributions.

Gangadevi was also known as Gangambika. She was a 14th-century queen living in the Vijayanagara Empire. In her poem she writes about the heroism of the King and how he killed the Sulthan.

"Sa vanchayasthattaravaridharam
Dharavisheshapravanopavahyaha
Ashatayat tasya shiro nimesha-
Danena karnatakulapradeepaha." 17

The light of the Karnatas, Kampa and his horse at a great gallop, chopped off the Sultan's head with his sword, dodging his foe's whetted blade.

The temples in the land have fallen into neglect, as worship in them has been stopped. The sweet odour of the sacrificial smoke and chant of the Vedas have deserted the villages which are now filled with the foul smell of roasted flesh and the fierce noise of the ruffianly Turushkas. The wicked mlechchas pollute the religion of the Hindus every day."

Her work "Madhura Vijayam" was discovered in Thiruvananthapuram by Pandit N. Ramaswami Sastri. The palm-leaf manuscript contained nine cantos with five hundred verses. Today, through these lines, Gangadevi retains her place in history and, above all, lives in our hearts.

Tirumalamba

Tirumalamba lived during the flourishing period of the Vijayanagara Empire. She composed the poem "Varadambika Parinayam," which incorporates the royal family and the atmosphere of the time. The poem is recognized as a historical epic due to its inclusion of authentic historical events and conditions. The protagonist of the work is Achyutadevaraya, son of Narasanayaka (Narasimha), the founder of the Tuluva dynasty.

Tirumalamba, as a writer, added a romantic dimension to this historical narrative. "Varadambika Parinayam" features authoritative references to the cosmetic products used by women of the era, military victories, culture, and education. The poem is a mix of prose and poetry, known as Champu Kavya. Tirumalamba's work is considered the first Champukavya written by a woman, earning it a special place in history.

Through her poetry, Tirumalamba declared that it was the duty of noble women to awaken and sustain their motherland. The poem praises Venkatesa of Tirupati through the Vaishnava tradition and includes details about Achyutadevaraya's marriage. "Varadambika Parinayam" is rich in literary merit, illustrating the origins and heritage of the Tuluva dynasty. The poem contains elaborate sentences with as many as sixty words, enhancing the grandeur of the narrative with strict metrical patterns and ornamental language. Thus she follows the existing literary style.

While "Varadambika Parinayam" is a historical epic, it is also a romantic poem and a Champukavya celebrating heroic sentiment. Tirumalamba's work demonstrates that literary excellence is accessible to all, including women. This poem offers insights into the 16th century and is an invaluable historical document.

Ramabhadramba

A vivid depiction of the 17th century society can be found in Ramabhadramba's "Raghunathabhyudayam." This poem provides a comprehensive account of the Thanjavur Nayak king Raghunatha, describing everything from his daily chores to his military victories. Including the daily life of the protagonist in a poem later became a trend.

Ramabhadramba was a literary figure in the royal court of King Raghunatha. She was considered a gem in the royal assembly and earned the title "Saraswatabhadra Peetha" due to her exceptional writing skills. Records indicate that she was proficient in eight languages, earning her the title "Shatalakshini." The "Raghunathabhyudayam," comprising of the tales of the king's and the army's valor and victories, is predominantly marked by the heroic sentiment (Veer Rasa). The poem comprises of twelve cantos. Ramabhadramba was also a significant poet who composed in three languages and was known for her expertise in Ashtavadhana. She shone brightly in the literary sky of Sanskrit literature as a female star.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the women-authored historical poems of the Vijayanagara Empire stand as a testament to the profound literary and intellectual contributions of the women in ancient India. Gangadevi, Ramabhadramba, and Tirumal-

amba, through their works like "Madhura Vijayam," "Raghunathabhyudayam," and "Varadambika Parinayam," not only documented the political and social milieu of their times but also enriched Sanskrit literature with their deep understanding and insightful analysis. These poets defied societal norms by delving into themes traditionally reserved for male poets, demonstrating their mastery over historical narratives, political strategies, and cultural nuances. Their enduring legacy challenges stereotypes about women's roles in Indian society, showcasing their ability to shape and preserve historical memory through the power of poetry.

Work Cited

1. S Krishnaswami Aiyangar, Sources of Vijayanagar History, Aryan Books International, 2003
2. Suryanath U Kamath, A Concise history of Karnataka from pre-historic times to the present, Jupiter Books, MCC, Bangalore, 2001
3. Jackson, William J, Vijayanagara Voices: Exploring South Indian History and Hindu Literature, Routledge, 2016
4. Sewell Robert, A forgotten empire(Vijayanagara):A contribution to the history of India, Gyan Publishing House, 2025
5. Rev. H. S J Heras, Beginning of Vijayanagara History, Gyan Publishing House, 2025
6. Sastri Subrhmnya Sripada, Vijayanagara Rajula Kathalu, Nabu Press, 2010