

CHAPTER I

LIFE, DATE AND WORKS OF TIRUMALĀMBĀ

Although it is unequivocally known that ‘Varadāmbikāpariṇaya Campū’ was written by the illustrious authoress Tirumalāmbā, unfortunately very little can be said about the authoress herself with equal certainty. Owing to the scarcity of any authoritative source, different theories have been formed by the later writers as regards the name, identity and life of Tirumalāmbā. One such contention is that Tirumalāmbā was queen of Achyutarāya. To substantiate this statement a few literary works are taken into account. The Telugu poem ‘Vijayavilāsam’ by Chenakūra Venkatakavī states that a certain Sevvappa married the sister of the queen of Vijayanagar King Achyutarāya and got the Tanjore principality, perhaps as dowry.

In another Telugu work “Subhadrāpariṇayam” it is said that one of the sisters of Tirumalāmbā was married to the above mentioned Sevvappa. By this we are drawn towards the conclusion that Tirumalāmbā must have been a queen of Achyutarāya. Tirumalāmbā speaks of herself as the confidante and object of the deepest love of Achyutarāya, “which shows that she was his queen. It can also be noted that the several records of Achyutarāya preserved at the Viṭṭhala temple at Hampi, one describing his gift of ‘a mountain of gold’ [Sūvarṇa-meru] is composed by one Oduva Tirumalāmbā’, in all probability none else but the illustrious authoress of the Varadāmbikāpariṇayam.

Prof. Suryakānta identifies the poetess Tirumalāmbā, with a court-reader who became one of the queens of Achyutarāya. The Śrīraṅgam temple inscription mentions that the king Achyutarāya visited the temple along with his two principal-

queens Varadārajāmma, Oduva Tirumalāmbā and the young prince Veṅkaṭādri.

However the great poet Rajanatha Diṇḍima in his “Achyutarāyabhyūdayam” says that the Salaga princess Varadāmbikā was the queen or “Mahisī” of Achyutarāya.

But in his Kāvya nowhere has he alluded to Tirumalāmbā, therefore Dr.M.N. Srinivas Aiyangar says that, had Tirumalāmbā been the “Pattamahisī”. She should have written about the same in bold letters.

A divergent opinion is held by T.V. Mahalingam. In addition to identifying Oduva Tirumalāmbā and Tirumalāmbā, he adds that a poetess by name Mohanāngi said to be the authoress of the “Marīcipariṇayam” a love poem, might be the same as Tirumalāmbā, the wife of Aliya Rāmarāya and the daughter of Kṛṣṇadevarāya.

But C. Hayavadana Rao observes that it can not be definitely stated whether Oduva Trimalāmbā can be identified with Tirumalāmmā Mohanāngi and Tirumalāmmā, the queen of Achyutarāya. But this scholar has doubts about Oduva Tirumalāmbā and Tirumalāmbā being one and the same person.

If it is accepted that Oduva Tirumalāmbā ^{and Tirumalāmbā} were one and the same, consideration has to be given to the term “Oduva” and its meaning and import. The term “Oduva” to the author of ‘The Source of Vijayanagara History’ means a student. If Oduva means a student naturally ‘Odisvars’, means a teacher. This has inscriptional evidence. But the term “Oduva” with respect to the erudit scholar and poetess Tirumalāmbā is very unconvincing, because wherever this term has been used, it has meant an ordinary student. It would have been understandable if Tirumalāmbā was a rare case to take to studies, but it is very well known that education among women [belonging to the aristocratic families, Royal houses, and Courtesan class] was quite common;

many of them achieving high degree of proficiency in various branches of learning.

Therefore, suggestions have been made that she was a reader in the court, whose duty was perhaps, to read poetry to the ladies of the royal house and royal court. But the office of the reader has not been referred to anywhere although there were lipikaras (scribes), Karnika (accountant), engraver, calender makers etc., as frequently mentioned in various inscriptions. Thus we can notice that divergent opinions have been voiced by various scholar as regards the identity of Tirumalāmbā. However, this uncertainty and ambiguity is set at rest by the discovery of an inscription of Achyutarāya in Sriraṅganātha Temple at Sriraṅgam. This epigraphic evidence clears all the clouds of doubts about the identity of the authoress. It goes thus: “Be it well! Hail! Prosperity! in the Śaka Year 1461 (expired) Corresponding to the (cyclic) year Vīkarin in the month of Bhādrapada on Tues day, which was a day of the Twelfth tithi of the first fortnight, with Sravan Nakṣatra Maharājadhīrāja Rājaparamēśwara Sri Vēerpratāpa Sri Vīra Achyutarāya Māharāya was pleased to perform the Tulabhara Māhadāna (ceremony) for [i.e, in commemoration of this the queen (Rājamahishi) of the Maharaya, named Oduva Tirumalādevi Ammanavargal was pleased to compose two sanskrit slokas”.

Although this inscription cannot be taken as the conclusive evidence to prove that Tirumalāmbā the poetess, was the queen of Achyutarāya since contrary evidence and arguments also do exist, but it can be taken as sufficiently authentic to establish the identify of the poetess Tirumalāmbā.

Generally Sanskrit authors do not give any information about themselves which would enable us to construct their personal history or to fix their times.¹²

Nor are there biographies in the sense of modern western biography, available in Sanskrit. In fact, the term 'biography' itself is ill-suited to Sanskrit. However, biographical and historical elements are found in the works of various authors. Fortunately, the epilogue of *Vardambakāpariṇaya* furnishes some valuable information regarding its authoress. She herself states that she was the confidante and the object of the deepest love of Achyutarāya, the king of kings (RājadhīRāja). The afore-said epilogue goes as follows:

इत्येकवाराकर्णनमात्र- दृढावधारित-नव्य- काव्य-नाटकालङ्कार-पुराणागम- रहस्य-सारस्यानुबन्ध-समिन्धान-
स्वाभाविक- प्रतिभानुभावया, विधाविशेष-निरवध-विद्वद्धर-सकल-कविकुल-श्रवणानन्द-चिन्तितानन्ताभीष्ट-
फलाश्रयण- विश्राणन- काम-गवीभवदशेष-भाषा-विषय-सविशेषोन्मेष-चतुरिम-गर्भित-सरस-प्रबन्ध-
सन्दर्भया, विविध-विधा-प्रगल्भ-राजाधिराजाच्युतराय-सार्वभौम-प्रेम-सर्वस्व-विश्वास-भुवा,
निरुपाधिक-महोपकार-निर्माण-धर्म-निर्मल-हृदयया, निखिल-लिपि-विलेखन-नियत-वितरण-
कृतहस्त-हस्तारविन्दया, विरिञ्च-चञ्चल-नयना-नखाञ्चल-समुदञ्चित-विपञ्ची-प्रणञ्चित-पञ्चम-
मधुरिमोदञ्चन-विकस्वर-कण्ठस्वरया, विपुल-तलातल-विहार-विनोद-साकारावतीर्ण-शतपर्णासन-
वरवर्णिनी-मति-निर्णायिकया नानादेश-प्रतिष्ठितानेक-विरचित-वाजपेय-पौण्डरीक-सर्वतोमुख-
महाध्वर-व्दिजवरवितीर्यमाणाशीर्विशेष-परिपोयषित-भाग्य-सौभाग्यया, नियत-रक्षित-कविकुटुम्बया
, तिरुमलाम्बया निर्मितं वरदाम्बिका-परिणयन्नाम चम्पूकाव्यम् आचन्द्रतारकम् अभिवर्धताम् ।

“The glory of Tirumalāmbā’s natural genius has been augmented by her continuous appreciation of the ins and outs of the wonderful Novels, Kāvyaś, dramāś, poetics, the Purānaś and the Vēdaś, fully retained in memory after hearing them read but once. Her beautiful literary compositions, characterised by striking flashes of genius in regard to all subjects and all languages, are a feast for the ears of all poets and all eminent scholars,

proficient in the highest sciences, and are veritable cows of plenty for bestowing imaginable, innumerable and desirable fruits on those who need them. She is the confidant and the well-be loved wife of the emperor Achyutarāya, the King of kings, well versed in all the sciences. Her heart has been purified by righteous deeds in the form of great and unsimulated benefits. Her loutus-like hands are expert in making constant gifts and in writing all scripts. Her voice, sweet as cuckoo's notes, swells with the sweetness of the Pañcama notes, produced by the lute played on by the tips of Sarasvatī's nails. She produces the conviction of her being Sarasvatī descended in corporeal form for the pastime of roaming over the surface of the earth. Her good fortune and prosperity were enhanced by potent blessings granted by eminent Brahmanās at the great Vājapēya, Pundarīka and Sarvatomukha sacrifices performed by many Brāhmanās held in high esteem in different countries. And she constantly protects families of poets.”

We can take note of, that according to this epilogue, Tirumalāmbā was a versatile poetess of manifold accomplishments. “It presents her as a profound scholar endowed with wide and varied learning, a poetess of great repute, and a generous patron of letters, a beloved queen, and a righteous, virtuous and bounteous lady of religious temperament.”

TIRUMALĀMBĀ'S DATE

It is hardly surprising that the same ambiguity which we encounter while deciding about Tirumalāmbā's identity, surrounds her date. Various and varied, but often contradictory opinions are voiced, convincing as well as unconvincing evidences ^{cited. But it is fairly} are certain that she lived during 16th century A.D. However, it has been subjected to much controversy, whether she lived during Krishnadevarāya's period or during that of Achyutarāya. We have already seen that opinions are also expressed that she began her career in the days of Krishnadevarāya and continued to reach the pinnacle of glory during the reign of Achyutarāya.¹⁶

However in the foregoing analysis about her life, we have noticed that overwhelming evidences support the argument that she was the Paṭṭamahishī of Achyutarāya. All the same this does not seem to solve the problem of fixing her date. Very little or almost nothing is known about her antecedents, her ascendance to the position of the queen, her education, so on and so forth.¹⁷

Another problem that we have to contend with is that, the date of Achyutarāya itself is debatable. There is hardly any unanimity regarding the exact period during which Achyutarāya was at the helm of affairs in Vijayanagara.

Achyutarāya, who finally succeeded Krishnadevarāya was a half-brother of the latter, being the son of Ombamāmbā the last of the three wives of Narasayāka.¹⁸ The Kadladi Copper Plates of Achyutarāya, dated in Śaka 1451 Virodhi, makara, ba, 13 Tuesday corresponding to December 28, 1529 A.D. declare that Achyutarāya succeeded Krishnadevarāya after the natural demise of the latter.¹⁹ As the epigraphical evidence confirms the ascendancy of Achyutarāya to the throne of Vijayanagara, only after the natural death of Krishnadevarāya and the dates of the coronation of Achyutarāya being given as October 21, 1529 A.D.²⁰ and November 20, 1529 A.D.²¹ and corroborated

by “Achyutarāyabhyūdayam” as well , it can be summerised that Krishnadevarāya might have breathed his last earlier to october 21, 1529 A.D. Contradictory opinions have been expressed by schalors like Sewell. Nevertheless umpteen numbers of epigraphical evidences prove the fact that Achyutarāya ascended in 1542. Since we have forcefully argued that Tirumalāmbā was the Queen of Achyutarāya and fairly succeeded in establishing this fact, we can easily conclude that Tirumalāmbā also lived during the reign of Achyutarāya i.e. from 1529 to 1542.

However, it is too well known that a few important questions which naturally arise in the mind of a student, who proposes to write on the life and date of any Sanskrit author, forever remain unanswered. Even in the case of a few authors like Kālidāsa, Bāṇa, Daṇḍin etc., who have provided some information regarding themselves in their works, it is inadequate.²² The case of Tirumalāmbā is no exception to this general rule .We have to be content with whatever little information that we are able to elicit from different sources.

HER WORKS

Tirumalāmbā has written a Campū-Kāvya titled Varḍāmbikāpariṇaya campū. It seems it was her only work, for no other work is credited to her name. As the name itself suggests, it is written in campū style, i.e., verses interspersed with prose.

It is very difficult to fix the date of the composition of this work. Some scholars opine that it was written during the days of Krishnadevarāya, while some other think that it belonged to the period of Achyutarāya. Prof. S.K Aiyangara thinks that the Campū must have been composed between 1540-42,

taking in to account the facts mentioned by the poetess that Achyutarāya was married to Varadāmbikā after his coronation and the campū ends after making Veṅkaṭādri, son of Achyutarāya and Varadāmbikā heir-apparent. But epigraphs from Kāñchipuram temples mention that Varadāmbikā and Cina Veṅkaṭādri along with the king were weighed against pearls in the temples in A.D 1532. 23 Dr. Vasundhara Filliozat, says that relying upon some inscriptions in which the young prince Veṅkaṭādri is called 'Chikka-Odeya' which means the heir-apparent, that it is possible that Tirumalāmbā must have composed her campū, between 1532-34. But she also suggests another possibility taking into account her glorification beyond what was historically warranted, of her husband, who died a premature death in 1542, that this work must have been written after 1542 A.D.²⁴

This Sanskrit campū narrates the marriage of princess Varadāmbikā with Achyutarāya, who later on became the emperor of Vijayanagara, as the theme. Thus the plot of the campū is considerably short. It is simple too because it relates a single story and all its events unite so as to lead one to the final catastrophe, the marriage of Achyutarāya with Varadāmbikā and the birth of Cina Veṅkaṭādri by her.²⁵

The work gives a genealogy of Achyutarāya's family. The description of Achyutarāya's family and his father Narasimha and his heroic adventures in undue details, which covers almost half of the Kāvya renders it insipid and unlively. This is a grave flaw of this work. The preponderance of elaborate descriptions, some times even overshadowing the story line, makes it dull to a considerable extent. "Tirumalāmbā seems to care more for the display of her profound erudition, mastery of Sanskrit language and rich descriptive power than for the narrative."²⁶

That Tirumalāmbā was endowed with rich power of description, is evident from her campū which abounds in beautiful and lively descriptions. In addition to the delineation of chief personage, it depicts the countries of Tundirā and Cola, the river Kāverī, armies and the fierce battle, the sea and Rāmeśwara bridge, the garden, the spring-season with all its persuasiveness of love, the noon and evening and aquatic sports.²⁷ This work, unlike the other Sanskrit works which give the description of the beauty of the body of a woman, gives an elaborate description of the body a man, which is a rarity. A man's feet, thigh, waist, chest, arms, hands, shoulder, neck, throat, face, beard, eyes, ears, nose, forehead and hair are described by the poetess. This description of a man by a woman is indeed what distinguishes this work from all other Sanskrit works. This description, a lovely caricature of emperor Achyutarāya, is characterised by minute and faithful representation of the nature of things. "But one could hardly decline to admit the fact that the descriptions by their profusion and length slow the progress of the narrative, and appear to hang loose on its slender thread."²⁸

There is a narrow range of characters in this campū kāvya, for Tirumalāmbā picks them up only from royal families. It is but natural since the campū concerns only with royal personage. They are real men and not merely qualities translated into their human embodiment.

The chief of characters are Narasimha, Achyutarāya, Śrī Venkaṭādri and the female characters Ombamāmbā and Varadāmbikā who arrest our attention. The depiction of human emotions and sentiments (Rasas) is also worthy of notice. Of the sentiments that she has delineated, there are the erotic (Śrīṅgāra) heroic (Vīra) furious (Raudra), the terrific (Bhayānaka) and disgusting (Bībhatsa) rasās. However the main sentiment of her campū is the erotic (Śrīṅgāra) as its main theme is the depiction of love and marriage of Achyutarāya and Varadāmbikā.

This sentiment is delineated by her with remarkable insight and vividness ²⁹

One remarkable feature of the campū is the profusive employment of rhetorical embellishments (alaṅkāra). Various types of alaṅkāras such as Alliteration (anuprāsa), paranomasia (ślesā) Repetition (yamaka) simile (upamā) mālopanā, paronomastic similes (ślistopamā) poetical fancy (utprekṣā), transition (arthantaranyāsa) Antithesis (virodhābhāsa) and (aprasuta-prasaṅga), parīṅkya, representation (ullekha), sahoṅkī (swabhavokṅkī) and verbal (Śhabdāṅkāra) the ideal (arthāṅkāra) have been beautifully employed which have contributed to the beauty of the campū and have enlivened it.

The style in which the Varadāmbikāpariṅaya is composed is the Gaudī containing the literary excellence (guṇa) of vigour (ojas) which consists in the letters expressive of vigour.

This campū, according to Prof. Suryakānta contains the longest compound which is to be found in Sanskrit literature. He points it out to be the following:

निर-तरान्ध कारित- दिगन्तर - कन्दलदमन्द - सुधारस- बिन्दु- सान्द्रतर - घनाघन- वृन्द-,सन्देहकर -
स्यन्दमान- मकरन्द- बिन्दुबन्धरतर- माकन्द- तरु- कुल- तल्प-कल्प- मृदुल- सिकता- जाल- जटिल- मूल-
तल-मरुबक- मिलदलघु- लघुलयकलित- रमणीय- पानीय- शालिका- बालिका- करारविन्द- गलन्तिका-
गलदेला- लवङ्ग- पाटल- धनसार- कस्तूरिकातिसौरभ-मेदुरलघुतर-मधुर- शीतलतर- सलिलधारा-
निराकरिष्णु- तदीय- विमल- विलोचन- मयूख- रेखापसारित- पिपासायास- पथिक- लोकान्" (P. 18,
line 4 P. 19, line 2)

Like wise, Tirumalāmbā has employed about twenty four kinds of metres, the important ones of which are (1) Anustubh, (or sloka) [7, 27, 55, 73, 74, 84, 90, 91, 108, 114] (2) Āryā Verses[151]; 3 In:dravajrā, verses

[2,6,41,49,52,139,148]; (4) Upajāñi, verses [1, 4, 8, 11, 12, 20, 21, 34, 43, 46, 50, 53, 57, 67, 68, 78, 96, 98, 107, 110, 111, 116, 117, 125, 126, 127, 134, 136, 138, 140, 142, 143, 147, 149, 150, 152, 154, 162, 166, 168, 168, 170]; (5) Upendravrājā verses [15, 37, 47, 58, 72, 97, 102, 120, 122, 145]; (6) Kalaharñisa verse [158]; [7] Drupavilambita verses [35, 174]; (8) Narakuṭaka verse [26, 45]; (9) Prṭhvi verse [80] (10) Puṣpitāragā or aupacchāndasika verses [10, 62, 66, 100, 141, 160, 161, 164]; (11) praharsñi verses [42, 63]; (12) Mañjubhāñi: verses [83, 105] (13) Mandākrāntā:verse [17] (14) Mālini verses [38, 85, 91, 93, 103, 106, 156] (15) Vaṁisāstha:verses [3, 9, 16, 54]; (16) Vasantatilakā:verses [13, 18, 19, 22, 33, 44, 51, 61, 64, 71, 81, 87, 109, 112, 115, 119, 128, 129, 130, 132, 133, 137, 144, 163, 165, 169]; (17) Viyoginī or Sundri: verse[79]; (18) Rathoddhātā: verse 65; (19) Śārdūlavikrīḍita: verses [14, 24, 29, 30, 31, 69, 77, 88, 89, 94, 101, 104, 121, 123, 124, 131, 171, 172, 173]; (20) Śālini verses [32, 36, 39]; (21) Śikhaini verses [23, 40, 113]; (22) Suāgatā (verses 5, 48, 59, 82, 99, 157, 159, 167); (23) Sragdhara:verse[56];and (24) Hariñiluta: verse [75].

The language of this work is fluent. There is vividity, melody and beauty in it. At many places we find compound words longer than those found in Kādambari or Har'śh carite. Apart from lengthy descriptions that we have already referred to, there are Rhyme and rhythm and slesas. Throughout this work, there are beautiful comparisons or similies (upamā) which are very apt to the circumstance in which they are used. She has stated that she has written this campū for those who are as scholarly and erudite as herself.

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