



POET RANNA AND THE CHALUKYAS OF KALYANA

Dr. Jayashree S. Prabha
Associate Prof. Dept. of History,
Govt. First Grade College, Bidar.



ABSTRACT :

The 10th century A.D was a period of political unrest; there were frequent wars between the kings of one region and those of another. The villagers had to depend on themselves for protecting their interests against cattle lifter and robbers. As a result, the atmosphere was charged with zeal and heroism. Men were ready to take up arms and sacrifice their lives for a cause.

KEYWORDS : Kannada literature , protecting , period of political unrest.

INTRODUCTION :

Jainism wielded great influence during this period. We cannot say, however, that it was the most popular religion. Like their predecessors, the Chalukyas of Kalyana extended their patronage to Jainism, though they themselves were not Jains, Kannada literature, in its early stages, owes much to the Jaina poets who cultivated the Kannada language when it was generally thought that Kannada was not a fit vehicle for literary compositions.

Kannada literature had made considerable advance by the time the Chalukyas of Kalyana established their supremacy. Several poets had composed works both in prose and verse; they had composed in a style called champu also, champu being an admixture of prose and verse. Among the poets of the champu style were Gunavarma-I, Pampa and Ponna. The influence of Pampa on later poets is remarkable. Indeed, the period of literature from Pampa to Basava has been justly named "The age of Pampa".

Ranna was the first poet to write under the Chalukyas. He was patronized by the emperor Taila-II. Ranna was born in 949 A.D. as the fourth son of Jinavallabha, who was a dealer in bangles and a devout Jaina. Ranna was born at Muduvolal, the present Mudhol. His education was under the celebrated teacher Ajitasenacharya. As Ranna puts it, his career was one of slow but steady progress. He was patronized by feudatories in the beginning, later by a *Mandaleshwara*, and finally by the emperor (Chakravarthi) himself, who bestowed on him the title "Kavichakravarthi". Two great figures who played a great part in Ranna's life were Chavundaraya and Attimabbe. The former was the author of Chavundaraya-purana; but he is better known as the person responsible for the gigantic stone image of Gommata at Sravanabelogola. The latter is one of the greatest women born in Karnataka. It is said that she got a thousand copies of Ponna's Santi-purana copied and distributed. Kings, ministers and religious men shaped his jewel (Ranna and Ratna), the jewel of poets (Kaviratna).

Among Ranna's works, two, or rather three, are extant. His Chakreshwaracharite and Parasurmacharite are not available. It is not easy to guess the subject matter of these poems, in spite of the attempts made by scholars. Ajitapurana, Gadayuddha (or Sahasa Bhimavijaya) and Rannakanda are extant. He wrote his Ajitapurana for Attimabbe during the reign of Taila-II in 993 A.D. It is short poem of twelve chapters. As the very name indicates, it is a purana with eight angas or parts, viz. *desam, puranam,*

rajavrittakam, arhadvibhavam, chaturgati, tapomargam and *phalam*. The story of Ajitaswami, the second Jina, is related here. It is a short story and contains a few interesting episodes. Ranna has tried to narrate the episodes in eight chapters padding the narrative with detailed discussions of Jaina philosophy attempt, and not a very successful attempt, of a great poet. But it is not suggested that the attempt of Ranna is a failure. There are a few sections in this poem that are unsurpassed. For example, the verses on renunciation spoken by Vimalavahana, who afterwards incarnates as Jina, have a lyrical beauty and emotional appeal of a universal character, they describe the futility of human glory and happiness in a language which poets like Ranna alone can wield.

But, as elsewhere, even here Ranna tries to elaborate, and one is left with the feeling that it is overdone. The portions describing the birth of Ajita, 'the Washing ceremony' (Janmabhishka) and Indra's dance are but imitations of Pampa. The finest portion in this work, of course, is the story of Sagara. The story of Sagara and Bhageeratha, as is narrated here, is the Jaina version, and differs in many respects from the well-known traditional Hindu version.

The second and the best of his works is *Gadayuddha*. It is a heroic poem and is in keeping with the spirit of the age. Written at a time and in country when heroism was practiced and honoured, it is the greatest work of one of the greatest poets. The story deals with the last day of the Kurukshetra war. It is the story of a single day that is narrated. But the poet has so narrated the story that almost the whole story of the Mahabharata is related in various dialogues and in numerous descriptive passages. "Simhavalokana Krama" is the name given to this technique by the poet. It is analogous to the 'flash-back' in film technique. The whole of *Gadayuddha* is indebted to the 13th canto of Pampa Bharata. Ranna has freely drawn his ideas, phrases and even verses from the earlier work and has enriched them by his imagination. The hero of this poem is Bheema, who according to the poet is no other than Irivabedanga Satyasraya. He was the son of Taila-II and was the reigning monarch when Ranna wrote his poem. It is Bheema who becomes king; Draupadi is not the wife of the five Pandavas, but of Bheema only. These are the some of changes made by Ranna while adapting the original story. Among the characters Duryodhana attracts us. According to Ranna Duryodhana is 'Mahanubhava' a truly great man. He has committed great sins but, at the same time he is a person full of human qualities. He is an ideal as friend, father, brother and disciple. He is a hero who is resolute. He clung to his ideals whether they are right or wrong, in spite of failures. He elevates himself to tragic heights. As a critic aptly remarks, the poet has elevated Duryodhana without lowering Bheema.