Chapter-III

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3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chilakamarthi Lakshmi Narasimham was a prolific writer. In the words of P. Suryanarayana Murthy, Chilakamarthi was the most popular and prominent writer in the last quarter of the 19th c. and the first quarter of 20th c. He like his teacher, Kandukuri Veeresalingam, expressed his ideas in many literary genres of creative writing. Besides the time honoured styles of poetry, verses, dramas and stories, he experimented with the new trends like prahasanams, novels, biographies, newspaper, periodical and autobiography. All of them, in one way or the other, reflect his ideas and changes he desired in his contemporary society.

3.2 NOVELS

Chilakamarthi Lakshmi Narasimham was the author of several popular novels. He began writing novels under two prominent influences — that of “Rajasekhara Charitra”, the pioneering Telugu novel of Kandukuri Veeresalingam and that of western writers like Charles Dickens and Sir Walter Scott. To the western descriptions and narration, he, like his teacher added local nativity — theme, practices, issues and solutions. The novels thus reflect the contemporary society and his ideas of reform.

The inspiration to write the novel came to Chilakamarthi from Nyapathi Subba Rao Panthulu, the editor of Chintamani. He announced competitions in novel writing in 1894 and thus wanted to promote this new genre of Vachana.
Prabandhamu. The competitors were advised to refer to the novels in English and Rajasekhara Charitra in Telugu. Chilakamarthi had gone through the novels and found Veeresalingam’s work interesting as its fibre and texture were based on native life. It was an original work, not a translation nor an adaptation of Oliver Goldsmith’s “The Vicar of Wakefield”. Thus Chilakamarthi began his writing of his first Telugu social novel i.e., Ramachandra Vijayam. He shared the first prize with one Goteti Kanaka Raju whose Viveka Vijayam also stood first in adjudication. He could get first prize successively twice i.e., in 1896 and in 1897 for his two historical novels – Hemalatha and Ahalya Bai. This made him to go ahead in novel-writing and he overtook his teacher Veeresalingam, the author of one novel, by writing more than 15 novels.

Chilakamarthi's novels can be grouped into social, historical, epic and translated ones. Thus, he took a step forward in novel writing and became a forerunner to many modern novelists like Adavi Bapiraju and Nori Narasimha Sastri.

3.2.1 Social Novels

Chilakamarthi’s Ramachandra Vijayam, Ganapathi, Rajaratnam and Vijayalakshmi are distinct social novels and each presents a contemporaneous social issue and reflects his humanitarian zeal and the need for reform.
Ramachandra Vijayam was the first novel written in 1894 with a view to win the prize in the novel competitions conducted by Nyapathi Subba Rao. In this, he had selected the theme of the sincere efforts of an educated youth Ramachandrudu to come up in life and the story of his success. The hero was extremely good, faced many hardships, created by Sobhanachalam and Venkataratnam, the two villains. Sarabharaju, respectable richman helped the hero and finally gave his daughter Parvathi to him. Thus, the success of good over the evil was presented with nativity along with, the contemporary beliefs and practices. In the opinion of Avantsa Somasundar, the novel presents the dignity of the middle class Niyogi Brahmin families, along with the plight of Brahmins fallen into vices like gambling and cheating. The latter were devoid of vedic studies and were not inclined to take up English education seriously. The prosperity of Amalapuram and surrounding area of Godavari region in post-anicut period must have also made some youth to resort to vices. By presenting the fallen youth, this novel, claims a place among the early written novels as representing the realistic picture of the transition of society. The influence of western novels like those of Charles Dickens could be noticed as the hero was presented as one who struggled hard to come up in life like David Copperfield in an honourable way. At the same time, Chilakamarthi was influenced by Veeresalingam’s Rajasekhara Charitra where the nativity figured and the hero was presented as innocent. Both Muktevi Bharathi and Dr. Kottapalli Veerabhadra
Rao opined that the influence of the western novels was more on Chilakamarthi in novel writing than that of Rajasekhara Charitra, Chilakamarthi presents the hero as ideal youth inspiring younger generations to put up hard work and sincere efforts.

*Ganapathi*, written in two volumes between 1918-21 was the most popular novel of Chilakamarthi entertaining even the present generation. The hero Ganapathi is presented as ugly, idle and lazy young man causing laughter by every act of his. He was vain, illiterate and a cheat. The issues of poverty, child-marriage, Kanyasulka and cheating were intertwined in the narration of the story. The novel has 20 prakaranas (chapters). The author cleverly narrated the history of Papaiah Sastry, the grandfather and Gangadhara Sastry, the father of the hero. He thus proved that the hero had inherited the genes of insatiable appetite, greed for money, idea to marry a child and aspiration to become great through any method from his forefathers. Ganapathi appears only from 8th prakanara as an ugly, idle and ignorant person causing laughter by his appearance, words and actions.

All the efforts of the elders to educate Ganapathi fail. But he succeeds in learning the art of playing cards and in stealing money from his uncle’s house and from others in the neighbourhood. He develops the art of justifying his actions in a spontaneous manner – whether it is riding an ass or in interpreting a poem in “Dasarathi Satakam”.

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In the words of Vadrevu Veera Lakshmidevi, Ganapathi inherited capacity of great eating from his father, laziness from his maternal grandfather, high-handedness from his paternal grandfather and ignorance and stupidity from his mother. She opines that though the novel is sugarcoated with humour, it contains in reality the tragedy of how the poverty and ignorance of two generations can produce a decadant anti-social element like Ganapathi.³

This novel is also compared with Dicken's novels. Ganapathi is compared with Yorkshire schoolmaster of Dickens, the common thing being the ugly appearance and cruel mentality. Dickens introduces the schoolmaster in a humorous way. “Any man who had proved his unfitness for any other occupation in life was free without examination or qualification to open a school anywhere.”⁴

Thus, this novel was a satire on lazy and dependent people, child-marriages, Kanyasulka and prostitution. The character of Ganapathi appears in the middle and disappears suddenly while seeing the police, gives message to the society that a degeneration of morals among young people will lead to the fall of the society. Ganapathi could not succeed either as an actor, or a cook or as a school master or as a respectable gentleman. This popular novel has been dramatised by the All India Radio and was telecasted by the Doordarshan too.

Rajaratnam was a heroine oriented social novel, focussing on the evil of dowry. The author presented the image of a girl receiving knowledge in
Ramayana, Mahabharata and Bhagavatham and clarifying her doubts with pandits. Her father and brother were on the lookout for an English educated boy. Jagannatha Rao, the friend of heroine’s brother, liked the girl. But he was not dare enough to oppose his father’s greed for dowry. This made him to be a security for the loan and later on put him in troubles. On one side, he had to answer court summons and on the other he had to resist the proposals for remarriage. The plan of killing Rajaratnam through poison got reversed. The book ended in the death of the villains of the novel. Thus, the author portrayed the issue of dowry and its consequences. The educated couple were presented as patient, and ideal, standing for certain values in life. The educated brother of the heroine was presented as one refusing to attend nautch parties, thus reflecting the impact of contemporary reform and the idea that education alone could provide a way out to social evils. The love for easy money can drive the people to attempt murder and thus the author cautioned the people not to aspire for it. He further advised the people not to give too much importance to horoscopes and marriage-brokers and asked them to avoid nautch parties and gambling on auspicious occasions.

Vijayalakshmi is another heroine oriented social novel of Chilakamarthi. It has its focus on women education. Ramesam, the father of the heroine was a social reformer, opposing child marriages and its supporters – uneducated men, women and old people. The hero of the novel was Viswanadham, an advocate of anti-nautch. By writing novels like Rajaratnam and Vijayalakshmi, Chilakamarthi
wanted to prove that education alone can enable women to have independence and to stand on their own and to face the problems in a patient and bold manner without getting into depression and without resorting to suicides.

Hence, he was keen that every girl be educated. Education for girls was only for becoming a better housewife and not for a career. Profession is an alternative for widows to escape dependent life. He discouraged child marriages, kanyasulka and dowry and expected that educated youth should take the initiative of giving up such practices. He fought vehemently against uneven marriages, corruption and nautch. He condemned the habits of gambling, cock fighting, alcohol drinking, and maintaining mistresses. He was sympathetic to the plight of widows leading dependent lives and advised them to get educated. He narrated the mischief of the mess-owners and cautioned the people to be careful. The abuses in the educational system also find their place in these novels. He exposed in-humorous manner the ignorant and untrained teachers and their ways of conducting themselves.

3.2.2 Historical and Mythological Novels

Chilakamarthi wrote many novels against historical backdrop. Ahalya Bai, Krishnaveni, Suvarna Guptudu and Sapamu come under this category, while Soundaryalatika is a semi-mythological novel. Chilakamarthi was more a creative author than a trained historian. Hence, even though those novels had been titled
historical novels, they were only stories conceived in historical background and hence can never be considered as true record of past, adhering to precise dates and events. Despite this, this category also became very popular and earned him the title of Andhra Scott. This is because of the care he used to take in getting full details of the proposed subject before attempting to write.

Chilakamarthi was inspired to diversify Telugu novel writing by choosing historical theme. Till now, it was confined only to social themes. The inspiration came to him after going through the English novels of Meadows A. Taylor like *Tippu Sultan, Tara* and *Chand Bobi*. Hence, he experimented with the historical theme by writing *Hemalatha* for the novel competitions in 1896. It imbibed Scott's technique of romantic fiction and descriptive method of Meadows Taylor. This was selected for the first prize among the ten novels received. This novel details how the Muslim rule was established and strengthened in India – by tracing it from the repeated attacks of Mahamud of Ghazni, the invasion of Muhammad Ghori and the successive rule of slave and Khilji rulers. The story was about the events of Allauddin Khilji's rule in 14th c.A.D. and his attack on Chittoor in Rajasthan. In this, he presented the Queen Padmini, not merely as a beautiful lady but also as an intelligent and resourceful person. When the rulers of Chittoor were imprisoned, she devised a plan. Under the guise of accepting the proposal of the Sultan, she attacked him with forces, gave a battle and released the prisoners. Thus he changed the entire story from the tragedy of Johar to that of success,
perhaps to convey the message that women should be capable of meeting the challenges and to be courageous enough to find solutions to save themselves, their kith and kin and even the kingdom. The story is concluded with the marriage of Hemalatha, the daughter of Janardhan Singh with Madan Singh. Another significant feature of the novel was the Hindu-Muslim unity presented through Madan Singh and Nazaar and the friendship between Maulali and Narayan Singh, perhaps to focus on its relevance in freedom movement.

_Ahalya Bai_ was another semi-historical novel of Chilakamarthi written in 1897 and it bagged the first prize among the 14 novels received. It describes how the Queen assumed authority and emerged as successful over the rivals, conspirators, traitors and decoits. Though the Queen’s character has resemblances with that of Chand Bibi in Taylor’s novel, Chilakamarthi rendered it as an independent work.

3.2.3 Others

_Sapamu_ relates to the story of Raja Kalinga Gangu and Bhimakavi of Vemulavada, belonging to eleventh century. It is about a poet who had the powers of cursing and protecting people. The story is thus set against historical backdrop.

_Viswanathudu_ is a story about how the Chalukyan queen was protected by a patriot Vishnu bhattu victorious against the king of Kalinga and how the Queen’s family adopted in honour the name of Vishnuvardhana as a family name.
Chilakamarthi's *Karpoora Manjari* was serialised in his Journal 'Manorama' in 1906. It is significant for narration and style. It describes how the princess who was suffering from chronic disease was cured by the Malwa Prince Makaranda and how he marries her despite various hurdles.

*Krishnaveni* is a story about Telugu region under Qutb Shahis in 17th century. Ramaraju, the hero saves Krishnaveni from the decoits and finally marries her. Ramaraju narrates the history of Kakatiya rule and its glory under Ganapati deva, Rudrama devi and Prataparudra to Jagannathadasu and its cultural contributions. Except that part, there is no historical element.

*Suvarna Guptudu* is another famous novel which highlights human values like honesty and gratitude. It shows how a dog which saved the life of Suvarna Gupta received more respect than Suvarnagupta's own ungrateful brothers who tried to kill him.

*Mani Manjari* narrates the story of the wife of Vidarbha king. She was a pious and chaste lady which is proved through out.

*Soundarya Tilaka* is a semi-mythological story of Krishna, Bhima etc., with created characters like Soundarya Tilaka.
3.2.4 Translated Novels

Besides these original novels, Chilakamarthi rendered three novels from English into Telugu. Ramesh Chandra Dutt's "Lake of Palms" has been rendered into *Sudha Saratchandramu*, the combination of the names of the hero and heroine. Besides describing the general conditions in Calcutta, he spoke elaborately about the social reformer - Eshwar Chandra Vidya Sagar and his widow marriage movement. He dealt with the British administrative measures like the introduction of permanent revenue settlement, doctrine of lapse and the liberal reforms of Rippon. He ends the story with the marriage of Sudha, child widow, with Sarat Chandra.

*Dasi Kanya* is another Telugu rendering of Ramesh chandra Dutt's *Slave Girl of Agra*. It is a story about Jelekha and her evil minded activities in the harem of Emperor Akbar. Chilakamarthi described the glory of the cities of Delhi and Agra under the Mughals and the love story of Jahangir and Nur Jahan.

Chilakamarthi wrote *Syamala*, a novel adapted from the Shakespearean play *Macbeth*. The Telugu King of Nidubrolu, the conspirator Vijayaramudu and his wife Syamala can be compared with Duncan, King of Scotland, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

In all these novels - whether social, historical or mythological or telugu rendered, Chilakamarthi's description of individuals, lives and events is
predominant and nativity in conspicuous. His social novels convey definite message.

3.3 PRAHASANAS (Broad Farce)

Prahasana in Sanskrit means a “hearty and loud laughter, coupled with mirth and is further explained as a ridicule, a farce or burlesque produced by peculiarity in body, dress and talk”\(^5\). This genre was popularised in the West through French playwrights like Moliere and Voltaire who used burlesque very effectively. It should create much laughter.

In Telugu, the credit goes to Veeresalingam who had knowledge in both Sanskrit and in English to make full use of this literary form i.e., satire to ridicule the contemporary practices and to focus on necessary reform. He has written about 40 prahasanas.

Chilakamarthi, as a true disciple, followed his teacher. He even overtook him by writing more than 80 prahasanas. In the view of Jayanthi Ramayya, Veeresalingam’s humour is thick while that of Chilakamarthi is thin; further Chilakamarthi’s humour evokes laughter through tickling while that of Veeresalingam pinches and pains.\(^6\) Veeresalingam’s prahasanas are like police lathi charges while Chilakamarthi uses modest words. Further he tries to ridicule the human weaknesses while Veeresalingam attacks them directly.
Among the prahasanas those that were written only to create humour, mention be made of Gayyali Gangamma, Vichitra Godanam, Chamatkara Sambhashana, Badhira Chatushtayamu, Vichitra Marana Sasanaamu, Apoorva Narakamu and Adbhuta Kavitvam. These were very popular.

Among those prahasanas that focussed on society in general was Sapta Graha Kutami wherein he says that the malfacts of the combination of Saptagrahas in the sky can be prevented by doing worship and rituals whereas the effects of the combination of seven grahas on earth like the gambler, the addict, the cheater, the murderer, the robber etc., cannot be prevented. Sevavahanam or Seva Prahasanam is about the pal-bearers and their ways of behaviour. Tokachukkala Mahimalu narrates the social evils as the result of comets. Janaabha Natakam is about the difficulties of census enumerators.

Varadakshina prahasana, Pellikodukula Dharalu and Kaavalenu Kaavalenu or Apoorva Swayamvaram deal with issues connected with marriage like dowry, uneven marriages etc.

Padakagadi Muchchatlu (Chit-chat in the Bed chamber) and Srirama Navami Pandiri discuss the relevance of continuing nautch parties at the functions and festivals.
Through Kanaka Sunaka Prahasana, and Balavantha Brahmanartham, Chilakamarthi opposed the rituals that were done carelessly without the involvement of concerned persons. He exposed how the blind beliefs of the common people can be exploited by the cunning pandits. He warned the people to be careful in keeping them away.

Through the prahasana of the Court of Chamalamma, Chilakamarthi gave the message of giving up animal sacrifices and through Chitramaina Tanti vartha, he gave the message about the need for women education. Maha Rasika and Manorasika Prahasanams deal with extra-marital relations and the prostitutes and he warns people to be away from such things.

Votlakai Tiruguta or rambling for votes and Yamadhararaju Kacheri, the court of Yama focus on the malpractices done both by the voters and the contestants during elections and suggest a new hell for dealing with the new cases.

Dowry issue has been dealt with in Vara Dakshina and Pendlikodukula Dharalu.

To these various prahasanas may be added the book Navvulagani (mine of laughter) (Parts-I and II) which contains a number of witty broad forces. Hence, both Muktevi Bharathi and V.V.L. Narasimha Rao opined that these could be included in Prahasanas. To cite a few examples: Chilakamarthi tells us that a rich
man can become poor in two instances i.e., at the time of paying taxes and that of paying maintenance to a widowed daughter-in-law or sister-in-law. In a similar way, he answers the question of an old man becoming young in two instances i.e., at the time of getting a government job and at the time of his wife’s death. The subtle wit and sparkling humour can be seen.

*Dharma Sandehamulu* raises questions of the functioning of the municipality, working of the employees, activities of the politicians etc., and thus can be called a satire.

*Kaligeetha* with 15 chapters, written on the model of Bhagavadgita, is another strong satire presenting Kali as charioteer to Ahamkara in the war against Viveka brothers in support of adharma and injustice.

In *Dharma Paripalana Sabha*, Chilakamarthi describes in a humorous way the efforts of traditionalists to prevent reform by passing ten resolutions under the presidency of Chadastapu Chalamayya at a village called Madhurapuram. They relate to child marriage, Kanya Sulkam, dowry, restoration of sati, tonsuring of the widows, closure of already existing schools to girls and not to start any new school, to keep the Sudras away from education and jobs, separate trains for Brahmins, use of cow dung, and pro-nautch. Thus the author criticised the traditionalists and their practices.
3.4 MAHAPURUSHULA CHARITRA

Chilakamarthi’s *Mahapurushula Charitra* is one of greatest contributions, as it describes the biographies of Great men.

❖ It introduces the lives of great men from Bengal, Maharashtra and from South India distinguished in religion, social reform and in literary contributions to the common people in simple prose. He drew inspiration from their lives and conveyed it to the public in an interesting way.

❖ Chilakamarthi rose from being a story teller to that of a biographer, introducing the lives of committed persons from different regions. He as biographer narrated the lives as faithfully as possible.

❖ Prose was becoming more popular and Chilakamarthi rose to the occasion by presenting the narration in a more naive and simple way.

❖ The advent of Journals and Magazines and the school text books required the presentation of the lives of great men, narrated in a simple and in an absorbing manner.

Chilakamarthi must have drawn inspiration to write this book from Veeresalingam’s *Andhra Kavula Charitra*. But unlike him, Chilakamarthi did not bother about the debates in fixing dates but narrated the story in an absorbing manner.
Among the lives, the biography of Raja Rama Mohan Roy occupies the premier position as he was considered to be the forerunner of modernism. He was the father of Indian Renaissance, as he fought against sati, infanticide and polygamy. He was the founder of Brahma Samaj and facilitated the introduction of western education, thus paving the way for modernism. Chilakamarthi, with a bias towards Brahma Samaj, presented the lives of other social reformers like Eshwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Keshav Chandra Sen, Mahadev Govind Ranade, Devendranath Tagore, Madhusudhan Dutt etc. He had high veneration for devotees like Samartha Ramadas, the preceptor of Sivaji, Tukaram, Guru Nanak, Guru Govind Singh, Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Vivekananda. The biography of Nanda finds its place and the author focuses more on the need to give up untouchability. He described the contributions of Muslims like Salar Jung, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan etc.

If Andhra Kavula Charitra happens to be the greatest contribution of Veeresalingam, Mahapurushala Charitra stands as the solid contribution of his disciple, Chilakamarthi.

3.5 DRAMAS

Chilakamarthi’s fame as a writer began with the writing of plays in quick succession. He was not merely a play writer but was also a producer and for sometime the Manager of Hindu Natak Samaj. He wrote a large number of plays
for the purpose of enactment. This brought him the title of Local Shakespeare from Pandit Sivanatha Sastri of Bengal. While assessing his contributions to this particular genre, the socio-cultural milieu has to be taken into consideration.

❖ Western education familiarised English dramas to the Telugu people, especially the Shakespearean dramas. Hence, the popularity of the dramas made the creative authors to think in terms of producing a number of plays, reflecting the nativity.

❖ There were a number of dramatic companies that have come up in the latter half of 19th century. Among them, the performances of the Parsi players of Dharwar troupe were very much appreciated in Andhra. Guntur Natak Samaj was giving performances in Andhra.

❖ Sanskrit Dramas have been revisited, especially those of Kalidasa and Bhasa.

Thus against the Sanskrit and English literary traditions Telugu play began to emerge. Korada Ramachandra Sastry's *Manjari Madhukareeyam* was considered to be the first Telugu play. Paravastu Venkata Rangacharya was the first translator of *Abhijnana Sakuntalam* into Telugu. Vavilala Vasudeva Sastry translated *Julius Caesar* from English into Telugu. Thus attempts were made to translate classics from Sanskrit and from English Dharmavaram Krishnamacharyulu was another personality who enriched Telugu dramas.
In 1887, for the first time in Rajahmundry, the students under the direction of Mr. Mas, their teacher, enacted “Merchant of Venice”, the Shakespearean Drama. The students were trained for two to three months in pronunciation and also in action. Chilakamarthi’s friends – Parupalli Achyuta Ramaiah, Chilakalapudi Sitaramaiah, Tallapragada Chalapathi Rao and Satyaraju Mrutyumjaya Rao acted in that. Chilakamarthi attended that and felt immensely happy.7

Veeresalingam trained his own students to perform the Telugu adaptation of Shakespearean Drama “Comedy of Errors” with the Telugu title of Chamatkara Ratnavali.8

Chilakamarthi’s meeting with Immaneni Hanumantha Rao, a teacher dedicated to the enactment of dramas, resulted in the writing of several plays. Hanumantha Rao, a native of the then Guntur district, migrated to Rajahmundry in 1887 along with his family members and with his favourite student and a child actor Tanguturi Prakasam. He joined as teacher in the Theistic School run by Yeluri Lakshmi Narasimham and began supporting Prakasam in his studies. He further inspired Chilakamarthi to write plays for enactment. He formed Hindu Natak Samaj and staged on 8th June 1887, Harishchandra drama written by Toleti Subba Rao. Chilakamarthi attended it.
Chilakamarthi's first play *Keechaka Vadha* was the second play to be enacted by the Hindu Natak Samaj on June 15, 1889. Hanumantha Rao acted as Bhima while Prakasam acted as Draupadi. This was enacted twice and was appreciated well by the audience. With this encouragement, Chilakamarthi began writing *Draupadi Parinayam* (1889). In that, Hanumantha Rao acted as Bhima while Prakasam acted as Arjuna. In this, he introduced verses in the drama only for those actors who could present them, as he knew it pretty well that both Immaneni Hanumantha Rao and Prakasam could not recite poems. Madduri Nagabhushanam, a student, joined Natak Samaj. He was good at reciting verses and hence poems were introduced to the role of Drupada which he was enacting.

After these two dramas Immaneni Hanumantha Rao encouraged Chilakamarthi to write the play *Gayopakhyanam* and Chilakamarthi began to write it in October 1889. He wrote poems for the role of Sri Krishna, as the actor was proficient in reciting poems. Four acts were completed by December 20, 1889. Before it was staged, there was a necessity to enact *Srirama Jananam* as the present play of Hindu Natak Samaj was not well received. Hence, on the request of Hanumantha Rao, Chilakamarthi completed this drama by 31st December 1889. Hanumantha Rao was acting as Ravana while Prakasam played the role of Dasaratha in the beginning and later on portrayed the role of Kausalya.
Among all the dramas of Chilakamarthi, the most popular one was Gayopakhyanam, written at the age of 22. This was first staged in April 1890. It has five acts and six sets. Hanumantha Rao enacted the role of Gaya while Prakasam that of Chitra Rekha. This mythological story with its twists and melodrama and also with the dialogues and poems began to amuse the audience. More than one lakh copies had been sold in those days. The poems reached not merely the literate but also the semi-literate and even the illiterate. An incident had been narrated to the author about a cart-man reciting poems in Gayopakhyanam.

Parijathapaharanam, Nala Natakam, Seeta Kalyanam, Prasanna Yadavamu, Prahlada Charitra, Chatura Chandrahasanam and Tilothama were Chilakamarthi’s other original plays. Bammera Potharaju and Harishchandra were his incomplete plays.

Besides the above mythological dramas, Chilakamarthi translated some Sanskrit dramas. Parvatee Parinayamu, a play written by Abhinava Bhatta Bana, a court poet in 16th century was the earliest to be translated by him. From Bhasa Nataka Chakram, he translated thirteen other plays. Some of them were Pratima, Abhishekam, Pancharatamu, Duta Ghatotkachamu, Duta Vakyamu, Uru Bhangam, Bala Charitramu, Pratijna Yougandharayanamu, Swapna Vasavadattamu, Charudattamu etc.
Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* impressed Chilakamarthi who rendered it into Telugu with the title *Syamala*. In this, he followed Veeresalingam who rendered Shakespeare’s *Comedy of Errors* into Telugu with the title of *Chamatkara Ratnavali*.

The total number of Chilakamarthi’s plays, both original and translated goes up to 28, including the two incomplete plays. The original plays number eleven – *Keechaka Vadha* (1889), *Draupadi Parinayamu* (1889), *Sreerama Jananamu* (1889), *Gayopakhyanamu* (1890), *Parijatapaharanamu* (1890), *Nala Natakamu* (1890), *Seeta Kalyanamu* (1890), *Prasanna Yadavamu* (1905), *Prahlada Charitramu* (1907), *Chatura Chandrahasam* (1907) and *Tilottama* (1907). The plays translated from Sanskrit number 13 from *Bhasa Nataka Chakramu* from 1909 to 1927 and one *Parvatee Parinayamu* in 1899. So the total number comes to 14+11=25. The two incomplete plays *Bammera Potharaju* and *Harishchandra*, started in 1946 complete the number 27. To this may be added *Syamala*, adapted from Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*.

Chilakamarthi combined in himself the influences of Sanskrit and English writers. He borrowed Nandi and Prastavana namely prologue in the beginning and Bharatavakyamu namely the epilogue at the end from the Sanskrit dramas. The introduction of the theme and the author were done by the Sutradhara in this beginning. Regarding the division of the story into various acts and scenes, he
followed the English dramas of Shakespeare. Hence, his plays reflect both the Sanskrit and the English influences. Thus he tried to introduce popular works from other languages to the common people.

Another speciality about Chilakamarthi’s plays is his poems. They “are meant to be sung with music by the actors. The metrical form of the verse, splitting the lines, together with the thought content and diction of the verse to suit the sentiment and easy articulation made Chilakamarthi’s plays more popular among the people including the common folk like cow-herds”.

3.6 POEMS AND Satakas

Chilakamarthi distinguished himself even from his childhood as an extempore poet with ready wit. The popularity of various verses in his dramas, especially in Gayopakhyanamu exhibit his craftsmanship. The poems composed on personalities like Tanguturi Prakasam, Kandukuri Veeresalingam, Pedabapaiah (Brahmo) and Dadabhai Naoroji display his affectionate tributes to the illustrious persons. The verses composed for fun, in perfect metre, on entertaining themes like ‘pakodi’ (an eatable made of bengalgram) still stand forth as poems of fun and entertainment.

Besides these stray verses, Chilakamarthi composed a few long poems. Samgraha Ramayanam was an abridged Telugu version of 700 poems out of
24,000 of Valmiki Ramayana. This book which was prescribed as a text-book for higher elementary grade students fetched him the cash prize of Rs.350/-.

This was written at the instance of Nyapathi Subba Rao.

Chilakamarthi wrote Prithvirajeeyam, a translation of Manmathanatha Dutt’s “The Heroines of India”. The theme related to the marriage of Queen Samyukta with Prithviraj. This remained as an incomplete work with 200 verses and was lost due to an unintended incident of being torn.

The poems presented at the Godavari District conferences won the applause from one and all, both for the style and for its content. Gurajada Appa Rao translated into English the fourteen poems read by Chilakamarthi at the first Godavari Mandala Sabha at Kakinadain 1895.

Among the poetical works, Chilakamarthi’s Satakas occupy prominence. Geetha Manjari, published in two parts was written in tetageethi metre and was meant exclusively for school-going children. Part one deals with good conduct while the second part imparts knowledge of worldly affairs.

Kripambhonidhi Satakam is a devotional work, containing about 213 verses. Many of these deal with the idea of God, as explained in the Upanishads. It further explains the principles of Brahma Samaj. It was released in the year of the death centenary of Raja Ramamohan Roy as the tribute from the author.
Chilakamarthi’s *Bhallata Satakam* was a faithful translation from Bhallata’s Sanskrit work. The technique of Anyapadesa, instruction through an indirect reference, was followed in this.

The poems that were composed at the time of his wife’s death in June 1930 reflect his attachment of 32 years with her and her devoted services to him and to the larger family.

Thus Chilakamarthi, from childhood to the old age, continued the work of composing poems. He distinguished himself as ‘Ashtavadhani’* thrice. In 1891 at Dowlaishwaram hisavadhanam attended by Tirupati Venkata Kavulu, two disciples of Cherla Brahmayya Sastry at that time. Later on these two popularised Ashtavadhana. Second time, he did it at the college in Rajahmundry in the same year. Third time, he performed it at the house of his friend Vakkalanka Kameswara Rao. After this, his friend Achanta Sundararamayya advised him to prefer the writing work rather than this programme work as it can affect his health.16

*Ashtavadhani is a person capable of attending simultaneously to eight people with eight different themes and is capable of reciting the whole programme without any error at the end. In fact, it means speedy creative composition and memory to recite it later on. This is a distinct Andhra genre.
3.7 STORIES

Chilakamarthi was a writer blessed with the art of narrating stories. The advent of Journals, Periodicals, text-books and dailies necessitated the writing of stories and short stories. The lives of great men had to be introduced to the children and to the semi-literate in a simple manner. Hence, Chilakamarthi began the writing of stories.

Chilakamarthi introduced 24 stories of Rajasthan by translating Tod's Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan into Telugu in 1907 with the title of *Rajasthan Kathavali*. Like Tod, Chilakamarthi did not care for historical truth but used the material to present the values cherished by Rajsthanis like self-respect, bravery, family honour and patriotism.

*Chitra Katha Guchamu*, a bouquet containing 8 stories was Chilakamarthi's another story-book.

*Chamatkara Manjari*, another story book contains forty-eight stories, the lives of great-men not only in India but also abroad. It includes the lives of George Washington and Rockefeller along with Bhartruhari and Yogi Vemana. The stories of Rudramadevi and Tarigonda Vengamamba might have been included as they convey the message to the women to be brave enough to face the traditionalists, withstand criticism and thus stand for careers of ruler and scholar.
Bhagavatha Katha Manjari contains 19 stories, taken from Potana’s Bhagavatham. Chilakamarthi published another bunch of stories from Mahabharata with the title of Bharatha Kathamanjari. Thus he retold the stories of the lives of great people and the stories from the Epics.

3.8 AUTOBIOGRAPHY

This genre was a modern one and appeared from the middle of the nineteenth century. English was the medium language in which the earlier autobiographies were written like that of Vennelakanty Subba Rao. Kandukuri Veeresalingam’s ‘Sweeya Charitra’ is considered to be the first popular autobiography written in Telugu.

Chilakamarthi began his autobiography in 1942 at the age of 75. He started this with a humble note for having written this at the request of his intimate friends who maintained him with the required subsistence during the period and also in post-completion period. The work was completed within 4 months and 24 days i.e., from 18 March 1942 to 12 July 1942. He remembered every incident with exact date and recorded it faithfully.

This work is a document revealing the multifaceted contributions of Chilakamarthi to the society told in a humble manner.
❖ It presents the socio-cultural milieu of Andhra society in which the author was placed.

❖ It presents the life story of Chilakamarthi from his childhood in an honest manner. The early weakness for playing cards and his early failures in the examinations were narrated in the same way as he had narrated the popularity of his works. The way in which he stealthily read books is also narrated. Veeresalingam's book in the press i.e., Nachana Somana's 'Uttarama Charitha', secured through its manager Kopalle Seshagiri Rao, was described in an honest manner. He reports that he had read Vaddadi Subbarayudu's "Veni Samhara Natakam" before it was released.¹⁸

❖ It reveals his humanly qualities affection and generosity towards his relatives, sincerity and commitment towards friends, readiness to help others, support to the right cause and preparedness to face hardships for cause of reform and nationalism. It further records his profound nature of never entering into controversy either with relatives or with friends unless he was provoked or was rubbed on the wrong side. He was never in the habit of rebuking or reprimanding others and never used to utter any harsh word towards any.¹⁹ He used to be silent or withdraw or abstain from food, whenever he was disturbed. His sense of gratitude was such that he was wholeheartedly acknowledging any kind of help or any inspiration received from anybody. He was an active writer, seasoned speaker and a balanced journalist.
Chilakamarthi’s last chapter Simhavalokanamu is nothing but an assessment of about 50 years of reform done in Andhra. He tells us that the problem of nautch has been resolved. But the other issues like dowry, corruption, uplift of the depressed etc., still continue and hence he finds fault with the indifference of the educated. Then he also suggests certain remedies for a better future like the unity between Brahmins and non-brahmins, Hindus and Muslims and the rich and the poor.

3.9 CONCLUSION

Thus, Chilakamarthi was a versatile author of novels, prahasanas, dramas, verses, stories, biographies and autobiography. Though he was not the first to try his hand at many of the literary forms, still he was the literary craftsman who carried these forms to a greater extent and excelled in many of them. In the words of V.V.L. Narasimha Rao, “Chilakamarthi was a torch-bearer along the path” of the new ground being broken by Veeresalingam, the path-finder. He excelled him in the number of novels, prahasanas, dramas, stories etc. Practically there was no genre that was untouched by him. He went a step further when he founded a monthly Manorama in 1906 and a newspaper Desamatha in 1910. Thus, he experimented with the latest methods of writing and through them, promoted patriotism.
REFERENCES


16 Prachee, p. 93.

17 Narasimha Rao, V.V.L.: op. cit., p. 25.

18 Ibid., p. 72.

19 Ibid., pp. 73-74.

20 Infra ... pp.