Chapter II
Palanāṭivīra Caritrā: Literary Analysis

1. The Popular or "Dēśi" Literature:

The analysis made in the preceding chapter, Prolegomena, has reached the conclusion that literature as source-material to historical investigations remains indispensable, inspite of the archaeological studies developed as preeminently important and widely coming into vogue as the decisive source of information. Of the various categories of literature, the sacred literature consisting the of the Vēdas and their component treatises, the as well as the epics and purāṇas, which were extensively used in historical researches in the past, are considered in the present analysis as less suitable for the purpose. It is because of their distinctly religious nature and emphasis on dharma, especially, the dharmasūtra and dharmashastra works, which are codes of legal provisions that were intended to regulate the life of individuals as well as groups of individuals in their social character and conduct are, in fact, prescriptions but not the factual reports and thus could not be taken as evidence. Thus, more than these classes of literary works, the secular literature with themes reflecting the worldly life of common man, his hopes and fears as well as aspirations and activities in terms of reality, better serves the need of historian in his collection of source-material. The secular literature is again distinguished into two categories, the classical and popular, the former being highly stylized (mārgā) compositions by scholar-poets, who were patronized by kings and emperors and they were usually produced in royal courts. The latter was the work of people, true to its name, more famous by the connotation as folklore and also called as dēśi.

Classical literature was the production of scholar-poets, well articulated in language and adepts in literary techniques—the techniques were partly the rules and regulations, laid down in the rhetorical treatises. They are partly governed by the conventions, in other words, by following the earlier poets with a feeling of
respect and reverence to their works. Mostly such literature is composed on themes of mythological nature, celebrated in epics and *purāṇas*, or conventionalized tales and even purely imaginary subjects. However, they deal with personalities of supernatural character and embodiment of ideals that were mostly perfected in the sacred literature. Poetical compositions of such class are referred to as ‘classical’, because they form a class by themselves, following the standards set in the past and themselves setting standards for poetical compositions of future poets. In Sanskrit and in other Indian languages that came under a heavy impact of the language and literary works in that language, such as Telugu, the classical literature is called ‘*mārga-kavītā,*’ literally meaning the path-setting poetry, or that had adopted a definite path, or method (*mārga*, meaning path). Such poetical works present a graceful and delightful world of idealized personalities and embodiment of ideals, before the readers, obviously intended to provide them an aesthetic effect (*rasā*) as the result of their reading and enjoyment. The poets took delicate themes in composing them, suited for their purpose, concerned with love and romance and impress the mind of readers with the delightful and aesthetic feeling so as to forget the world around and move in a different and fanciful world, with the imaginary personalities. In order to create such an appealing effect, the poet would transform an ordinary event, of less or no importance, into a great and memorable one¹.

Not only creating such a fine feeling of delightful ecstasy, poetical compositions were intended to convey a message to people, by setting the examples of characters in the narratives, as to the good and bad, the *dharma* and *adharma*, for the people to understand easily and adapt in practice². As such, the poets used to take themes mostly from the epic-*purāṇic* literature of celebrity and the episodes in the lives of great personalities, but the compositions were mainly aimed at pleasing their patrons, the kings and emperors in whose courts the poets flourished. They selected the heroes for their themes, mostly their own patron-kings themselves, or their ancestors and described their achievements in highly exaggerated terms so as to project them as extraordinary personalities. Thus, the poets had little freedom either to choose the theme for their literary compositions,
or in treating them in the natural way, so as to impress ordinary people, living ordinary lives.

As the kings and emperors used to live in luxury, the poets in their patronage also lived luxuriously to the extent that they had little knowledge of the daily life of ordinary man, if not abhor him. As such, the heroes in the classical literary works were to the greatest extent, princes with exceptional rather extraordinary handsomeness, physical strength and martial spirits, with high degree of valour and chivalry, highly accomplished in various branches of knowledge as well as personification of virtues and meritorious qualities. Similarly, the heroines appear usually, as unique in beauty and charm, extremely delicate, with a high sense of modesty and virtue, and extraordinarily accomplished in all types of delicate and fine arts, such as literature, music, dance, etc. The life of toiling masses was unsuitable for such literary compositions, in their preference to an unreal world of happiness and delight.

The heroes and heroines in the classical literature too have their own problems and they are depicted as to have braved them; unless there was a problem and the personalities are described as to have courageously faced and solved them, there would be no poetical element, worthy of poetical composition. But their problems in the world of delicate imagination were so delicate that they were suitable to their personalities. Usually the problems were connected with love and separation of the heroes and heroines and they are described to have come over them, in order to bring the narration to the happy ending of their reunion. In short, the classical literature has its themes delicate and imaginary, intended to create a delicate and aesthetic effect, mainly to appeal the minds of their patrons so as to be richly rewarded. Besides, they expected fame for their scholarship from elite readers—scholars in grammar, metre, poetics, etc., and ordinary people as readers were never in their view. As such, the classical literary works were bound to be more imaginary and conventionalized in themes and in their treatment, in accordance with the techniques, prescribed by rhetorical works and conventions established by the earlier poets, but scarcely caring for reality and historical accuracy.
On the other hand, the popular literature, essentially the production of people, in the villages, with little or no education and simple in their aspirations and activities, is simple and unostentatious as the people themselves. It is composed in a less ornate and the spoken language of the people, without being regulated by grammatical rules and the thematic treatment is less articulated, reflecting the life of the people to the nearest possible point of truth. Thus, it freely expresses, instead of being regularized by rules of rhetorics, without literary embellishments in accordance with the provisions of poetics, reflecting the joys and sorrows, wonders and excitements, of the innocent man in the countryside. It presents glimpses of his hopes and fears, ideas and aspirations as well as experiences, of the common man thus providing an insight into the factual truths in his worldly life. Instead of taking subjects from stories in epics and purāṇas, the popular literature is composed on the themes taken from the social or historical events that had actually happened in the region and moved their poetic mind, though they may not be able to satisfactorily depict the historicity of the events, to satisfy the scientific norm of modern historiography. The themes were thus native to the country and very much familiar to the people and especially to the composers that came out of them, and thus the literature is called déšī in the native literary traditions. Because of these features, the popular literature is supposed to have been easily enjoyed and easily understood by the common people and adapted in their pattern of life. While the classical literature tries to convey moral message through its aesthetic appeal to mind (rasā), the popular literature does the duty by conveying it in the language of the people themselves, by presenting factual events and real personalities rather than imaginary in conventionalized themes.

The term déšī literally means, pertaining to déśa. Even though, the term déśa is often understood in the sense of a country, originally it means a village as well as a cluster of villages, constituted into a janapada. Thus, the déšī literature is called jānapada as well, composed mostly by less literate poets from rural folk, who lived mainly in the country-side. It lived primarily on the tongues of the specialized class of singer-poets, who composed them and used to sing before the popular gatherings in villages. Thus, it still remains largely in oral tradition and
anonymous very often, in the performances of the minstrel singers, inspiring the rural folk with an emotional ecstasy, immortalizing the personalities in the episodes as well as the glories of the episodes themselves.

The folklore is still remaining mostly in oral tradition, undoubtedly, because of its not having not been cared for preservation in the form of writing down, by scholars and urban elite of higher socio-economic ranks. It needs no emphasis that literary works, composed by scholar-poets are studied and enjoyed as well as comment upon by intellectuals, or the elite in civilized societies. Modern critics are enthusiastic to accuse the scholars' dislike of the popular literature and negligence in preserving it, going even to the extent of attributing them wonton destruction of it, obviously, ignoring the reality. As a matter of fact, the literature is considered inferior in quality, compared to the scholarly works, for several reasons, even by the rural folk, notwithstanding their emotional ecstasy at the time of watching their performance.

More than the cause, explained above and it would be presented in its appropriate place in the present essay, in greater detail, the ruling elite at the time, who patronized scholar-poets and their classical compositions hailed originally from rural background and from low social status. Yet, they preferred to discount the popular literature in preference to classical literature, for which it is not difficult to assess the reason. Once an individual, or a community, goes up in terms of economic and political orders, they usually prefer to forget their low social status in the past and to look at their present, with pride and an assumed prestige. They hope to attain a commensurate social level in terms of civilization, by rubbing shoulders with the civilized social sections and patronizing scholar-poets and desire to have matrimonial and familial connections with the ruling elite that commanded prestige from the past. As such, they undergo a cultural metamorphosis by their interaction with people on plains, by emulating their patterns of behaviour and conduct. No wonder, they would have considered the folk literature and culture as primitive and backward, characteristic of the civilization of masses and try to cultivate Sanskrit and other polished languages like classical Telugu and prefer to enjoy the literature in such languages, but not
the inarticulate literature of uneducated masses. The scholar-poets were ready for composing eulogies, or *prāsastis* in their praise and thereby to confer the higher social status of Kshatriya-hood and a prestigious descent on them and to produce literary works dedicating to them. The *prāsastis* would find prominent place in the preambles of those literary compositions of scholar-poets and kings and emperors would get their vanity and pride satisfied by it. Their patronage to such poets and literary activity demonstrates their prestige and splendour before their equals, whether they were naturally interested in that literature, or not.

But it has to be noted that by designating the popular literature as *dēśi*, it has to be accepted that scholar-poets had not only recognized its existence but also admitted their indebtedness to it as the source for poetical themes to their literary works. Often they employ the idioms and proverbs, current among common people and take subjects often from folklore, though they present them in an articulated literary technique and stylized language. Thus the imaginations and fantasies of common people, such as their beliefs in celestial beings as well as the aquatic (*apsaras*) nymphs and serpentine (*nāgā*) damsels from nether world, often come across in the poetical compositions of classical style. Those beings of other worlds appear as minor characters; the fears at demons and goblins as well as hopes at benign angels, etc., from the popular literature find place in the classical literature as well. Scientific analysts consider historically that folklore is the beginning of literary activity in human societies, which in course of time developed stylistic techniques in the form of metres and figurative expression of ideas, by means of improvised language, regulated by grammatical rules. Thus the classical literary production, known as *mārgā* style had come into existence only as the flowering of the popular literature.

### 2. Beginning and Progress of Popular Literature in India:

Beginning of popular literature is traced to the primitive times in remote past, when people were living in the fold of nature in small groups, naturally feeling happiness or sorrow in their lives and shared them in common. Those primitive peoples are believed to have expressed their feelings, or ideas not only in word, as
the word was not enough developed; but also in the form of spontaneous movement of their bodily limbs and making some tuned sounds (rāgā). These bodily movements and sounds are believed to have developed gradually into dance and music, by way of systematization. Thus the literature, in the form of word, is held to have been preceded by dance and music and progressed along with them; and thus the earliest literature is universally held to be popular in origin.

It is quite logical to suppose that even in subsequent times, literature remained mostly in the form of lyrics of simple rhythmical notations, suitable for singing and dancing. As such, it must have been performed before gatherings of people, associated by a rudimentary form of dance. All these developments unmistakably suggest progress of faculties of early man, with the progress of civilization in which his language must also have undergone articulation for better expression. It would have thus facilitated, in course of time, poetical composition in metrical forms that were developed and invented and further compositions of voluntary nature must also have progressed in addition to the refinement of past compositions. Such literary wealth, composed on native themes, in native tongue, as well as native metres, must have naturally become a matter of pride for the people in their cultural heritage and generated a feeling of fraternity and communal cohesion. These developments were universal, from which India could not have been an exception.

History of written documents, including literature, cannot be traced earlier than 6th century B.C. at the earliest, anywhere in the world but literature existed, undoubtedly, even before obviously in oral form. It must have been handed over to generation by generation, in the course of which much literary wealth must have been lost. Composition of fresh poetical works and thereby the proliferation of literature must have rendered its preservation beyond possibility and much of the older compositions must have disappeared. Traditionally, the Vēdas are said to have extended over hundred sākas, but only ten sākas are extant to the present day. Even if there is some exaggeration of mythological nature in this traditional belief, there could have been every possibility for the loss of literature in the past,
millennia before, when population was small, the people interested in it must have been still smaller and the mode of acquiring knowledge and literature was an unrewarding hardship.

However, some of the literary works were cared for preservation, withstanding the difficulties involved in it, and even when it was not rewarding, undoubtedly, because of the intrinsic beauty as well as universal applicability of the ideas and language of their expression that must have appealed to their minds. Thus, some people must have come into being, who were especially interested in literature, its study, revision and refinement and preservation, and preferred to live in the literary world, without much interest in the phenomenal world. Thus, preservation of literature in oral form came to be a specialized profession, but it was bound to be subjected to changes in the course of improvisation for better clarity and beauty of expression, under changing conditions civilization and culture. For example, the Vēdas are believed to have been *apauruṣṭēya*, meaning that they were not the products of conscious effort of any human being, and *śrītis*, meaning that they were simply heard—heard when the God Almighty revealed them. Those that heard them and preserved for posterity were sage, the *ṛiṣhis* or seers, who were able to foresee the coming prosperity (*ṛiṣhinah-krānta-dārśinah*) of humankind.

Most of the hymns in Vēdic *samhitās* are associated with one or other sage, such as Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra, Bharadvāja, Agastya, etc., as their *mantradraṣṭas*, or those who had seen the *mantras* and preserved them by way of teaching to their disciples. But what was seeing a *mantra*? A *mantra* consists of sacred syllables and words, which could only be heard, but cannot be seen unless they are in written form; but there was no script and thus they were not in written form. As such, this traditional explanation as to the origin of the Vēdas as *apauruṣṭēya* and that the seers, or the *ṛiṣhis* to have seen the *mantras*, would logically mean that the *mantras* were floating in the air, in other words on the tongues of people and attracted the attention of the sages. The *mantras* must have been composed long back, traditionally coming down orally and, in all probability, they were popular compositions in a primitive language underwent process of improvisation, as
pointed out above. The primitive languages must have been the Prākṛitis, which literally means the languages of nature, in other words, natural in their origin and evolution and used by the people that lived in nature—uncivilized and unpolished. Such of the traditional sayings in the Prākṛits might have been collected by the sages, for their literary beauty and spiritual significance and the compositions underwent the process of improvisation, in a refined language, the Sanskrit, which term literally means that which refined, apposite to Prākṛit, or the natural language.

The Vedic literature consists of a type of compositions, known as gāthas and nāraśamsis; gāthā means a verse and obviously a composition consisting of only a single verse while the latter, nāraśamsi, ostensibly consisting of plurality of verses. They were essentially the compositions in praise of a great personality, usually singing the glories of kings and conquerors, sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments together with expressive gesticulations. Those compositions seem to have developed into ballads, or compositions eulogizing the valour and chivalry of great kings, and they came to be called as vīragāthas. There was separate class of poets for their composition and narration, called sūtas and kuśīlavas, their narration being in the form of singing, to the accompaniment of music played on instruments and bodily gestures. The sūtas probably composed prose narratives in the form of short stories and they must have come to be incorporated into pūrāṇic literature. On the other hand, the compositions of kuśīlavas were probably lyrical compositions. Such narrations and performance were usually taking place before public gatherings and at the time of performance of some rituals, immortalizing the renown of great personalities.

Sometimes different poets might have composed one and the same story or eulogy individually, or different poets might have composed one and the same personality, but in indifferent aspects; or composed eulogies on different personalities of a single episode. Such compositions must have been compiled into a single integrated story, while they underwent improvisation in course of time, including additions and alterations. Such compilations are referred to as ballad-cycles, which can be plainly understood as a body of literature consisting
of a number of ballads, connected into a continuous story; or several ballads thematically connected with each other to a principal one.

But there can be no doubt that only a few compositions that stood the test of time must have undergone the process of improvisation, as explained above and much of this process must have taken place only on the popular tongue. It must have taken place through centuries and in the course of it, the compositions remained anonymous, as the names of their original composers were long forgotten. Scientific analysts consider anonymity as one of the characteristics of popular literature. Such elaborated and improvised narrations of popular literary work, are supposed to have been incorporated into the larger body of epics and purāṇas, when that body of literature came to be compiled. Thus, the considered opinion of scholars is that popular form of ballad literature was earlier than the epic-purānic literature, in any part of the world, the works of Homer in ancient Greece, the great epics Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata as well as the purāṇas in India, were products of such a process of composition and compilation of ballads.

3. The Epic-Ballad Literature in Telugu:

But, the so-called secular literature in Telugu, as it is available at present, is mostly court-poetry or the classical poetry and it came into existence, earlier than the popular literature, known to us at present. The beginning and progress of Telugu literature was largely in the form of translations of celebrated Sanskrit works, beginning with the epics and followed by kāvyā literature in mārgā style, with a heavy influence of Sanskrit language and literary techniques. But it cannot be said that popular literature did not exist at all, in this part of the country, before the classical compositions, as an exception to the general rule, explained above. It could have been in a language, which cannot be said Telugu, Telugu as a language emerged after a long process of metamorphosis in the interaction of Prakrit with some of the primitive tongues the land, such as those of Kōyas, Cencūs, Savaras and Gopāls, in different parts of the country, in the earliest phase and with Sanskrit at a later stage. As such, popular literature of early centuries of Christian era could not have long survived during the instability of linguistic
developments and the compositions could not have spread far and wide, over the Telugu speaking country of the present time.

An example to the popular literature, connected with Āndhradēśa, in the early time, if not in Telugu, but in the Paisācī Prākrit was Brīhatkathā. The Paisācī Prākrit, is supposed to be the foundation for the growth of Telugu language, and the Brīhatkathā, which is a veritable ocean of narratives is said to have pioneered, providing the formulae and technique of imaginative and fanciful stories to the composers in subsequent times. Another notable work in the same language was, Gāthāsaptaśati, compiled by the Sātavāhana king Hāla, which is considered to have contained a good lot of Telugu terms, of course, in archaic forms. The latter work reflects very closely the life of people in villages in ancient Āndhradeśa, more or less similar to the rural life in Telugu speaking country in the recent past. These literary productions, though not in Telugu of the present time, were nevertheless the popular compositions that people of this part of the country could proudly claim.

More than these literary works, there were popular compositions suitable for performance with music and dance, called Yakṣagānas, in other words, the ballads of Yakṣhas. The Yakṣhas were obviously the masters of the arts of music and dance and probably produced the literary works that could be presented by performance, to the accompaniment of music and dance. They were one the earliest inhabitants in this part of the county, and their forms of arts came to be the foundations to the subsequent progress of literature, music and dance.

However, inspite of this heritage of popular literature, as far as the extant literature of the country is undoubtedly in the classical form, scholar-made, with subjects and language borrowed from Sanskrit, in other words, the classical poetry of mārga style. We have no other literary work, of popular origin that can be dated earlier than Palaṇāṭivīra Caritrā, which cannot be assigned to a time, earlier than translation of the two and half books (parvans) of Mahābhārata, by Nanāya-bhatta, about the later half of the eleventh century. As explained above, the vernaculars in India and literary activity in them, especially the Telugu, had
their foundations laid on Sanskritic and Prakritic traditions and grew up with the support of the epic-purāṇic works and belles-lettres in those languages, especially the Sanskrit. However, from about the twelfth century A.D., there arose a movement in favour of popular form of poetical composition, but certainly not popular productions. Just like the Buddhism and Jainism in their earlier stages used Prakrit and Pali languages for propagation of their creeds, the militant Śaivism that came into wide popularity in Andhradēsa about twelfth century A.D., selected the popular language and techniques of poetical compositions, as the means to spread the creed. Thus, a new trend began in Telugu literature, in opposition to the classical (mārga), in which the Brähmanical literature, especially the great epic, Mahābhārata, was being translated. The pioneer of the movement, Pālkuriki Sōmana, abhorred the classical style of composition, as much as he hated non-śaivite people. Pālanāṭivīra Caritrā, the subject of the present study, belongs to that class of literature—the popular literature, though not to the militant creed of Śaivism and more or less to the same time. However, the work came to be believed to have been the composition of Śrīnātha, one of the great classical poets in Telugu language who lived in the fourteenth century.

4. Pālanāṭivīra Caritrā: The Epic-Ballad of Pālanāḍu:

The Pālanāṭivīra Caritrā, the epic-ballad that constitutes the subject of the present study, belongs to the class of popular literature, by its characteristics though it does not appear in such a form at present. It is famous as to have been the work of Śrīnātha, one of the celebrated classical poets in Telugu language, who flourished in the first half of the fourteenth century. But the question of its authorship is by no means a settled fact, because the epic-ballad is still living primarily among folk singers in rural side. Scholar-critics in modern period mentioned that the singing of the epic-ballad, with suitable gesticulations by the folk-singers stimulated their interest in it, and motivated them to collect and preserve it. But, even by the time, the ballad was preserved by several interested people, in the form of palm-leaf manuscripts and the scholar-critics could collect some of them at a great difficulty, before they began their scholarly edition of the ballad.
Papdita Akkiraju Umakantam, was the pioneer among such scholars, who brought out a part of the epic-ballad, by name “Bālacakandruni Yuddhamu or Palanāṭivīra caritrā”, meaning the Battle of Bālacandra or the History of the Heroes of Palanādu, in print in the year 1911, critically editing from a number of manuscripts that he could collect. Subsequently, about half-a-century later, Sri Piṅgaṇi Lakṣhmīkantam, had collected several other parts of the ballad in manuscripts and brought out the epic-ballad, in its entirety. However, the epic-ballad has to be primarily considered as to have belonged to popular literature, from the points of view of its local theme, language and meter and still being preserved by folksingers, whose version is said to be different in theme as well as treatment, from the scholarly editions, as it will be explained in detail in the course of the essay.

Śrīnāṭha was a scholar-poet, perhaps, with the largest number of poetical works to his credit of composition, in a highly ornate Telugu language with a large percentage of Sanskrit vocabulary, and pre-eminently in metres of Sanskritic literary tradition—in other words, in the mārgā style. Almost all his poetical compositions were constructed on the themes, taken from purāṇic stories and other celebrated literary works in Sanskrit language, in which local dialect of common man scarcely found place. He flourished in the court of the Reddi kings of Kopḍavīdu for a long time and moved, to several other royal courts in search of patronage, following its down-fall and dedicated his poetical works to several kings and wealthy persons of his age. The poets of popular literature are mostly anonymous but certainly not patronized by kings and never dedicated their compositions to them, even when their names are known to us. Quite interestingly, another popular epic-ballad, “Kaḷamarāju-kathā” the events in which were more or less belonged to the same period as of the Palanāṭivīra Caritrā, is also known to have been the work of Śrīnāṭha, but the question of its authorship, as well remains a controversy as of the latter.

The preamble to the part of the epic-ballad, “Bālacakandruni Yuddhamu”, gives clearly that it was composed by Śrīnāṭha12, that he belonged to Bhāradvāja-sagōtra, held the title Kavisārvabhuama, meaning the emperor of poets, and that
he was an ardent devotee of Śiva. These details are very much relevant to the
great poet Śrīnātha, who produced a number of literary compositions in mārgā
style and thus the author of the epic-ballad can be taken identical with him.
Further, his own declaration that it was his composition, at the command of Lord
Cennakēśava at Mācerlā, in the name “Palanāṭivīra Bhāgavatam”, forced the
scholar-critics to implicitly believe him to be its composer.

However, the second book in the standard edition of the epic-ballad, brought
out by Pingali Lakshmikantam, named “Kōḷlapōru and Gōpanna Virūgu,” gives
that it was composed by one Mallaya13 and the tenth book, named “Komnarāja
Yuddhamū” gives the name of one Koṇḍayya, as its composer. But the latter
mentioned that he was only presenting it, as it was originally composed earlier by
Śrīnāṭha14. These two poets are relatively unknown to the students of Telugu
literature, except by the preambles of these parts of the ballad, but their statements
that they were presenting those parts of the epic-ballad, as they were composed by
Śrīnāṭha in the past strengthens the belief that it was composed by him in the
past15. A number of manuscripts of the ballad are known from different parts of
southern parts of Andhra Pradesh, from Guntur, Prakasam and Nellore districts,
none being complete, and mostly varying with each other in details of the events
and their treatment, but most of them contain the statement that it was the work of
Śrīnāṭha. Thus, scholar-critics in general had no reason to reject the claim of the
famous poet and supporting statements in a number of manuscripts,
notwithstanding the highly corrupt and ungrammatical language in most of the
manuscripts of the epic-ballad16.

As to the difference in the language and metres in the Palanāṭivīra Caritrā,
from the other known works of Śrīnāṭha, the scholar-critics supposed that the poet
must have purposefully selected the popular language and metre, the Maṇjarī-
dvipadā, as they are better suited for singing before popular congregations, by
which the poet might have hoped his work easily penetrating into common
people. But it is an intriguing point why he did not feel similarly in the case of
his other poetical works, but composed them in mārgā style, with a heavy luggage
of Sanskrit vocabulary and in Sanskrit metres. They point out that yet, the style
of Śrīnātha, in imagery and poetical conventions as well as the language, used in
the ballad-epic, in some parts of it unmistakably indicate that it was the work of a
highly accomplished scholar-poet, but not by illiterate bards in villages, and tried
to substantiate their presumption. But these similarities by themselves cannot
determine his authorship, for it is a well-known fact that poets usually emulate the
classical style of their predecessors, in language and poetical conventions with the
aim of reaching the set standards and to set new standards, if possible, by
exceeding them.

The poet, Śrīnātha, had described himself as a devout śaivite in the preamble
of the epic-ballad, as he usually did in all his other known poetical works. He was
certainly a devout śaivite and mostly took themes from śaivite mythology for his
poetical composition and scarcely exhibited any vaiśṇavite leanings in them. But,
in the preamble of Bālacandrūṇi Yuddhamū of the ballad-epic he described
himself not only a śaivite but also as a devotee of Cennakēśava of Mācerlā and
that he was composing the story of the heroes of Palanāḍu, under His instruction,
as Palanāṭivīra Bhāgavatam. The name ‘Bhāgavatam’ implies that it was the
story of Viṣṇu, and the principal character in it, Brahmanayudu, was held as an
incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, and often addressed in the course of it as Lord Śrī
Kṛṣṇa and by numerous synonyms of the name of the god. Undoubtedly, the
Battle of Palanāḍu and its antecedents must have inspired poets, to that matter
Śrīnātha in the present context, and the personality of Brahmanayudu had won
their admiration. But it is difficult to take that his person could have been deified
within so short a time, of a century, for mere admiration would not be enough for
it. People who had seen and described him as human being, must have passed
away long back, before he could be deified. As such, the extant work of the ballad
must have attained its present form after sufficiently a longtime, but not in the
immediate centuries after the event.

It is well known that Śrīnātha had to face much difficulty in his old age,
having lost royal patronage, and undertook tour to Palanāḍu with the hope of
finding some patronage of the wealthy landlords of the region. But he was, in
fact, thoroughly dismayed with the conditions prevailing there, as can be known
from a large number of extempore poems, or cāṭus, attributed to him, that he
could not develop a good liking or love to Palanāḍu. But, Pandita Akkiraju
Umakantam supposed that the poet could have developed such sentimental
attachment to the country, as he described in one of his cāṭus that Kārempūḍi
was equal to Kāśi (the Banares, which is most sacred spot on the banks of the
river Ganges and the seat of Lord Śiva as Viśvanātha) for the people of Palanāḍu,
the heroes with the sacred liṅgas, (obviously, of several holy śaivite spots at Kāśi)
and Nāgulēru was the sacred Ganges for them. But this description by the poet,
of Kārempūḍi and its surrounds, seems to speak his ridicule of the people of
Palanāḍu, rather than a sentimental attachment that could have developed in him.
In fact, the description seems to compare the people of the region with frogs in
well, so backward that their thoughts never go outside their own region so as to
know about civilized places and sacred spots elsewhere in the country. However,
there is force in the arguments of scholar-critics that the epic-ballad was the work
of Śrīnāṭha, as well as in the argument, that rejects his authorship and accounts it
to the credit of popular literature, no less and no more, as will be briefed below.

The epic-ballad, Palanāṭivīrā Caritrā, as it has been mentioned above, lives
mainly among villagers of the region rather than among literati, which is one of
the primary characteristics of folk literature. There are temples constructed in
memory of the heroes of the battle at a number of villages in Palanāḍu, especially
at Kārempūḍi, where the battle was fought, in which their images as well as their
weapons are consecrated and worshipped in annual festivities, even to this day.
The singing of the epic-ballad, enacting the battle-scenes while it is sung to the
accompaniment of musical instruments of popular tradition is, still in practice
during the festive days at Kārempūḍi. Besides, there are a number of batches of
minstrel singers, going round the country seasonally, singing and enacting the
epic-ballad in villages all over Āndhradēśa.

A poetical ballet in Telugu, called Krāḍāḥhirāmam, whose authorship is again
attributed to the poet, Śrīnāṭha, and the matter being controversial, refers to the
Battle as well as the existence of the ballad, as early as thirteenth century, about
half-a-century later than the event. The preamble of the ballet gives that it was
the translation by one, Vinukonda Vallabhamaitya, of the Sanskrit original, called Prəməbhirəmam, by Rəvipə Valipəntaka. It describes the city of Warangal and the luxurious life of people in the city, during the time of Pratəparudra, the last of the Kəkaṭiya kings, who ruled up to A.D. 1323. As such, the Sanskrit work, Prəməbhirəmam, should have been composed during the rule of the king, before the year. Krədəbhirəmam refers to street singers, singing the epic-ballad to a high degree of emotional ecstasy of the audience, in the streets of Orugallu, the capital of the Kəkaṭiya king, the modern city of Warangal, and thus attests to the popularity of the ballad, within a century of the event. Notwithstanding the controversy as to its authorship, Krədəbhirəmam, presents clearly the hand of Śrənātha, in the style and diction of its poetical composition and suggests that the poet would have involved in its composition in one or other way. As such, the existence and popularity of the ballad, as a folk song, by the time of Śrənātha is beyond any doubt and thus the Palanāṭivāra Caritā was a popular composition, and not of the poet.

Even the scholar-critics, who edited and brought out the epic-ballad in print, from numerous copies of manuscripts, were clearly aware of the fact that it primarily lived through centuries of time in folk traditions, in the performance by itinerant singers. Pingali Lakshmikantam21 had noted from his reminiscences of childhood that a tribe, called "Pichcukutfla-varu", used to annually visit villages in Andhra Pradesh, in the southern part of the state particularly and perform the ballad. He reported that they used to receive alms from the householders of Kamma community and give performances of the ballad, consisting of singing to the accompaniment of musical instruments of country type and by suitable expressive gesticulations, which was so much emotional that the villagers present there would get inspired and transported into the world of heroes, under its effect. He reported that the ballad had been kept living by them, in their performance and the same was reported by his predecessor, Pandita Akkiraju Umakantam22, that minstrels of a "tribe", were traditional experts in singing and performing the epic-ballad, usually visiting villages, but had not specified them as "Pichcukutfla".
Both scholars took pains to collect numerous manuscripts of the ballad, from various sources and from different parts of the country, as could be possible by their time. They found none of them was complete in the narration of the entire story and widely divergent from each other, in the narration of events and portrayal of characters. However, the events were nevertheless connected with the personalities and the main substance of the narration was the same. They had thus come to the understanding that each of the stories, or episodes, could have been specialized by different batches of singers and got them composed and written down, so as to master them by-heart. But all the batches of minstrels invariably mastered the part that deals with the Battle of Bálaacandra and perform it obviously, because it is the most important and interesting of all. As such, it may not be improper to suggest that it was the original composition and the remaining were latter additions, by various hands, at different time. Perhaps, this was the reason that prompted Pandita Umakantam to publish it, and name it as *Palanāṭivīra Caritra*. The remaining were probably composed to sing the glories of different other heroes in the event, composed by different poets, separately, but added flesh and blood to the main ballad and made it a complete work. Pingali Lakshmikantam had observed on this point that for about a period of two to three centuries after the battle, the story of the heroes of Palanādu must have been continuously growing. He explained that it was by way of fresh compositions by several poets, and copies of the ballad being made by several interested people, to those parts, in which they were interested.

As the numerous and various manuscripts scattered over the country were bewildering the readers and audience, the two scholars took up the task of editing and publishing the epic-ballad in a complete, well-connected, and readable form. Both of them were prompted in the task by their emotional experiences in their childhood, as they happened to watch the performance of minstrel singers.

Taṅgirāla Veṅkaṭa Subbārāo, who conducted an in-depth analysis on the folk literature of Andhra Pradesh in Telugu, in all its aspects, has recorded several instances in support of the observations made by Pingali Lakshmikantam, as to the continuous growth of the epic-ballad by fresh compositions. He noted that
*jangama* and other itinerant minstrels were usually invited by wealthy and aristocratic families in villages for composing ballads in memory of their ancestors and to perform them in the course of last rites for the departed souls. Thus the popular literature continuously grew by addition of new works and similarly, there could have been composition of ballads, on different personalities in the story as well, who were in fact less important and even less connected with the story. They must have formed auxiliaries to the main work initially and eventually came to be its parts and parcel, creating much confusion due to diversity in the theme, by reporting events as well as roles played by some personalities that were not inseparably connected to it.

But the two scholars, who edited and published the epic-ballad and Tangirala Venkata Subbarao, had no doubt about its original authorship of Śrīnātha and presented their conclusions, after detailed analyses of the literary style of the epic-ballad drawing close resemblance to the other known works of the poet. But the ungrammatical usages of its language, too bad even to be corrected at several places, in several manuscripts, was something inexplicable to them, which would not have been so bad, even if the poet had purposely selected popular language for the composition.

Pandita Umakantam mentioned that out of his emotional upsurge at watching in childhood, the performance of the minstrels, enquired as to the origin of the epic-ballad and that he was answered that it was originally the poetical work of Śrīnātha, but came out in corrupt language in the performance of the illiterate minstrels. What is to be noted with special interest, in this context, is a profound scholar in Sanskrit and Telugu having studied in the traditional pattern, Pandita Umakantam, to have been so much inspired with the folk tradition and taking interest in rescuing it from the linguistic corruptions through decades and centuries, has to be considered a revolution by itself. Such an intellectual revolution resulted in the collection and compilation of folklore in different types for preservation, for future generations, by a host of scholars following those pioneers. The modern scholarship that accuses the traditional scholars for their
supposed apathy and even antipathy to folklore should note this important historical development, before making such baseless allegations.

Pandita Umakantam recorded a tradition that was current in Palanādu that Śrīnātha was afflicted by a disease, as a result of his licentious life. When he took bath in the river Candravānka at Mācerlā and presenting himself before the presiding deity of the place, Lord Cennakēśava, the god verily appeared and ordained him to compose a poetical work on the heroes of Palanādu, by which he would get cured of the disease. The poet did the same and got relief from the disease in a short time, but reverted to his earlier vices before long, for which the lord Cennakēśava grew angry with him. He not only stopped to appear before him, but also cursed him to suffer the disease once again, which made the poet thoroughly disappointed and to throw away the composition, tearing into pieces. The tradition thus goes that the pieces had fallen in the hands of outcastes, the Mālas and Mādīgas, who possessed them dearly and mastered over the ballad, so as to carve out their livelihood by singing and performing it. But, it resulted in the loss of chastity of language of the original composition of Śrīnātha, in the course of their performance.

G.H. Roghair, who had been the latest to work on the literary and performing aspects of the epic-ballad, opined that Umakantam had probably concocted the account, in support to his attributing its authorship Śrīnātha. He failed to note that Pandita Umakantam was a bitter critic of Śrīnātha and had never the intention of forcibly attributing him the authorship of the work, but he simply accepted it because the preamble of the epic-ballad in numerous manuscripts states that it was the work of Śrīnātha. He referred to the tradition current in the region, as a matter of fact, as he had knowledge of it being the native to the region and subscribed to the traditional belief that Śrīnātha composed the epic-ballad, having been informed by elders and the information was supported by the prima facie statement, mentioned above. Moreover, had no evidence to reject it and to discuss on the issue. Notwithstanding Roghair upholding the folk literature for purity and serenity, it has to be noted that traditions of the sort originate among people and need not be concocted. Even
Pingali Lakshmikantam, in spite of his being a great admirer of Śrīnātha, had not taken up as a mission to attribute the authorship of the work to Śrīnātha and propagate it over the world. He discussed at length, certainly on scientific lines of linguistic and poetical analysis, and presented his argument exhaustively in his forward. Hence, the attributions made by Roghair and others on the integrity of the venerable scholars are rejected as baseless.

B.S.L. Hanumantarao, one of the recent historians to study the history of the Haihayas of Palanādu, with reference to the epic-ballad, had not dwelt at length on the question of authorship. However, he seems to have logically viewed in suggesting that that the folk-singers, called Māladāsarulu, or Vīravidyāvantulu, who used to sing it before popular congregations in villages were responsible for some of the twists and turns in its singing and performing. He supposed that they were probably the descendents of the outcastes, who were initiated into Vīrāvaiṣṇavism by Brahmanāyudu and got social elevation in the past and thus they must have deified him in token of their veneration to the level of an incarnation of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and correspondingly depicted his rival, Nāgammā, alias Nāyakurālu, as the embodiment of treachery and evil. Thus, he suggested that the epic must have acquired the name, Palanāṭivīra Bhāgavatam, with clearly a vaiṣṇavite bias. But it has to be noted that the bias had taken place by the time, when Śrīnātha composed the epic-ballad, as it has been explained above that the preamble to the work mentioned the name.

It has been referred to above that the poetic ballet, Kṛdābhīrāmam, whose Sanskrit original must have been composed about the end of thirteenth century, refers to the existence as well as popularity of the epic-ballad. Thus, within a century, the event became the subject for lyrical composition and to become widely popular over the country, but probably it would not have spoken of the divinity of the heroes, including Brahmanāyudu. There need not be any doubt to say that the epic-ballad, which was composed by rural minstrels, less articulated in language and poetical technique, underwent improvisations from time to time. The apotheosis of Brahmana and other heroes of the epic-ballad must have been one such improvisation, which cannot be taken place within a century, by the time
of Śrīnātha. As such, the author of the work, notwithstanding the statements in the preamble of the ballad in a large number of manuscripts, would not have been Śrīnātha, the celebrated poet in classical Telugu and must have been some one else. The poet, whose name cannot be ascertained, might have refined and reformed the original folk poem in a polished language, but could not claim its authorship for the obvious reason, that it was already popular over the country but for the unpolished rustic dialect. Hence, he must have attributed the work of composition to the great poet, Śrīnātha, who must have belonged to a few centuries ago, and thereby the tradition of its corruption in the performance of illiterate minstrels would have come into vogue. Of course, examples for the composition of the story in refined Telugu language are not in want, as we have the latest instance of Mudigopda Virabhadrakavi, about the middle of the nineteenth century.

A poet, by name Mudigopda Virabhadrakavi, composed another poetical work of the story, named Palanāṭivīra Bhāgavatam, in the middle of the nineteenth century in the mārgā style of composition and in the pattern of a purāṇa. Telugu literature in the nineteenth century was characterized by rigid conventionalism and high articulation of language and style, woefully lacking original thought and aesthetic appeal. Because of these features, the work is rejected by historians in the past, to be of any use as source material for historical studies. However, his narration seems to have followed essentially the oral tradition, current among the itinerant singers, as it widely differs from the standard edition of scholars, Pandita Umakantam and Pingali Lakshmikantam, dealing with such episodes like Anugurāja adopting Peddana Bādarāju and the heroes of Palanāḍu hunting birds to the displeasure of the king of Candōḻi, etc.

The theme of the epic-ballad, Palanāṭivīra Caritrā, is the civil war in the family of Haihayas, who were ruling over Palanāḍu in the twelfth century, but a good deal of similarity between it and the great epic, Mahābhārata, has been drawn³⁴. At the first instance, both the epics narrate the events that arose out of rivalry between two agnate branches in their respective ruling families. Their rivalry eventually culminated with the two contenders playing games—the
cockfight in the present and dice in the *Mahābhārata*—by laying down the condition that the defeated party had to leave their kingdom to spend in exile. It was for a period of seven years in the present epic, but twelve years of forest dwelling and one more year to spend in *incognito* in the *Mahābhārata*. Secondly, the parties that stood for lofty principles and sublime ideals were defeated in the game, in both the epics and went to exile, and the victors tried to cause them all sorts of troubles, during the course. Thirdly, in both the epics, evil advisors provoke hostilities between the two parties and prevailed upon the vicious among them, till the final showdown and their ultimate collapse. He was Śakuni in the great epic and his counterpart in the epic-ballad was Nāgamā *alias* Nāyakūrālu in the Haihaya court at Palanādu. In both the epics, at the fourth place, the defeated parties demanded the return of their kingdom, after spending the stipulated time in exile, but the other party flatly rejected their demand. Not only that, they assaulted the emissaries, who were sent to plead for the return of the kingdom, Lord Kṛśṇa, in the *Mahābhārata*, was attempted to enchain and imprison by the Kauravas, while Alarāja, or Ala Rācamallu, was killed in the present epic, at the instance of Nāgamā. At the fifth place, both the epics had brilliant young heroes, who fought valiantly and laid down their lives on the battlefields, Abhimanyu in the *Mahābhārata* and Bālacandra in the ballad of Palanādu.

Just as, Śrī Kṛśṇa appears in *Mahābhārata* as incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, the god of gods and who gave exposition to highest philosophical knowledge in the *Gītā*, used to advise the Pāṇḍava brothers both in political as well as philosophical matters, Brahmanāyudu appears in the ballad of Palanādu. He was elevated to the position of an incarnation of the highest god, Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇu and addressed by one and all in the narration, by various synonyms signifying the god. He was the philosopher and guide to the weaker but righteous party, of Peda Malideva, in the epic-ballad, and all the course events are described in the manner that they were pre-ordained by him. As Lord Śrī Kṛśṇa taught *Gītā* in the great epic, he is believed to have started a socio-religious reform movement with a
militant Vaiśñavite inclination, in order to eradicate the caste distinctions and untouchability, by emphasizing the essential unity of humankind.

Because of these close similarities, the epic-ballad of Palanāḍu came to be called also as Palanāṭivīra Bhāratam, in the sense, a replica of Mahābhārata in all its details, but relevant to Palanāḍu. Now, it is a moot question, whether these similarities between the epic-ballad of Palanāḍu and the great epic, Mahābhārata, were originally there quite accidentally, or deliberate twists given at a later time, in order to make the former more interesting as well as intrinsically important and thereby making it more popular. If it were the latter case, this twisting of the story must have been one of the methods of its improvisation and making some of the characters in it being depicted in close resemblance to those in the Mahābhārata. It has to be noted that neither the scholarly editions nor the oral tradition of the epic-ballad sufficiently emphasizes either on the socio-religious movement of Brahmanāyud, or on the thematic similarities between the two epics, in the course of narration. The former aspect appears, but only as a matter of fact reference and the parallelisms between the two epics have not been drawn in the course of narration.

However, the poetic-ballet, Kṛidābhīrāman, refers to the events that led to the culmination of the Battle of Kārempūḍi, mentions cāpakūḍu as one of the causal factors, beside the cockfight and machinations of Nāgammā. Chāpakūḍu, was the name it gave to the interdining of people of various castes, sitting in single row, reportedly organized by Brahmanāyud, as an aspect of his socio-religious reform movement. But neither the standard edition nor oral version of the ballad refers to the event and even the term cāpakūḍu does not come across in them. There are of course numerous instances of banquets in the royal families, coming across in the narration and in some of them Brahmanāyudu had also taken part, but none of them are designated by the name, or specified as to have connected with his socio-religious movement.

There is a pīṭham, or an institution, called Palanāṭi-vīravidyā-pīṭham, at Kārempūḍi in Palanāḍu, where the battle was reportedly fought. It is dedicated to
the vīr-ācāra, in other words, the socio-religious traditions that were supposedly founded by Brahmanāyuḍu, which celebrates annual festivities in honour of the heroes (vīras), which are still the occasions for the minstrel singers, called vīravidyāvantulu, or ācāravantulu to arrive and present the performance of the ballad. The institution is said to have possessed some manuscripts of the epic-ballad and the scholar-critics, both Pandita Umakantam as well as Pingali Lakshmikantam\textsuperscript{39} mentioned that they have consulted them, but found them too bad from the points of view of language and meter to be useful in preparing their scholarly editions. More than the manuscripts, the pīṭham patronizes the minstrel singers of the oral tradition, as mentioned above, arrive at the time of the celebrities and perform the ballad, dressing themselves suitably and enacting with proper gesticulations, arousing an emotional excitement in the audience. G. H. Roghair\textsuperscript{40} took pains to collect the original version of the epic-ballad from those oral singers, vīravidyāvantulu, and found that it widely varies from the versions, presented in the edited texts by the scholar-critics, mentioned above. He remarked that their version is only a part of the whole and missing many details that speak the personalities and the whole socio-cultural setting of the epic. His study is banked extensively on the oral version of the epic, sung for him by the singers, Āliseṭṭi Gāleyya from the village of Jānapāḍu\textsuperscript{41} and Mēdikōṇḍūru Ĉennayya, from the village of Lām, near Guntur. He got it recorded while they sang and had a lot of appreciation for them, as masters of Palanāṭi-vīrācāram, but commented on the edited texts of Umakantam and Lakshmikantam as patching together of pieces from different manuscripts, lacking the spirit and significance of the oral tradition and not authoritative for historical research\textsuperscript{42}. On the other hand, he felt that the oral tradition reveals the whole world of the story setting, a world by itself, which has ‘an immediacy and coherence,’ to the country and people of Palanadu. He found that the “Gods and Heroes who inexplicably appeared in the printed texts often had whole stories about how they came to be involved in the epic events.”

It is true that the oral tradition must have been complete and more spirited in its language and in its performance by the ācāravantulu, who specialized in the
art of its enactment. Obviously, Roghair was carried away by their inspiring performance and experienced the underlying spirit of the ballad, as his testimony to their art clearly demonstrates, but it was the case with the scholar-critics, Umakantam and Lakshmikantam as well. Roghair may have been right also in coming to the conclusion that the oral tradition is more trustworthy, for historical researches, than compositions of scholar-poets like Śrīnātha, which are lacking original spirit of the original composition in folklore. But his derision of scholars, who brought out editions of the epic-ballad in modern times, as their works were mere patching together of pieces from manuscripts, cannot certainly be appreciated. He should have recognized the simple truth that literary activity about half-a-century ago was based only on collecting manuscripts and editing the texts from them, so as to prepare them free from mistakes. Manuscripts usually contain howlers and blunders that creep into the texts, while they were copied down by less qualified copyists as well as their innovative alterations. Catching hold of the singers and recording the oral tradition by means of modern electronic devices was quite unimaginable, even for Pingali Lakshmikantam, not to speak of Umakantam. As such, the interest that such traditional scholars evinced on the folk literature like Palanāṭivīra Caritrā and the pains they have taken to present them to the literate world should have been appreciated whole heartedly and with historical sense. Roghair’s efforts to learn Telugu and collecting the oral tradition of the epic-ballad are undoubtedly commendable, and his efforts would surely be inspiring fresh inquiries into the subject, as well as set models to future scholars in rescuing the folk traditions that are still living, withstand ing the ravages of time. The most recent scholar to work on the subject, Sri Tirupati Lakshmi Narasimharao, who had reportedly made extensive use of oral tradition, ostensibly following work of Roghair, is an example in this context.

Tangirala Venkata Subbarao has to be mentioned to have been the earliest to make unsparing effort to collect the oral traditions, of various sorts—the historical, semi-historical, socio-religious, etc., setting models for scholars like Roghair. He had carried on a thorough analysis on the ballad literature, in its historical development as well as literary values, collecting oral as well as written
versions on palm-leaves, scattered over the Telugu-speaking country. He could discover thus, a few more manuscripts of the epic-ballad of Palanādu that were not available to Umakantam and Lakshmikantam and brought to light some more episodes of the story, hitherto unknown, throwing light on some dark corners of the events.

However, it has to be noted that almost all the scholars, who had so far worked on the subject, making use of the manuscripts of the epic-ballad as well as its oral traditions, were mostly the linguists and littérateurs. Thus their studies were mostly limited to the language and literary values of the ballad literature, but not much significantly from the historical point of view, either political or cultural. However, it has to be admitted that every one of them, had not totally overlooked the historical aspect of the epic-ballad and attempted to correlate the events with the known history of the country, as it was possible for them in their time. They too consulted a few epigraphical records, available by their time and analyzed them, yet, they were not historians primarily and thus historical analysis was not their concern. The recent studies on the epic-ballad by G.H. Raghair made an attempt to study the historical setting of the time, both in political as well as cultural, but his attempt had not struck much significant advancement over the earlier studies, though his contribution to the literary and cultural aspects of the ballad are more significant. Two outstanding historians, VāraṇāsiYaṣōdādevī and B.V. Krishnārāo, deserve mention as among historians, leaving those of their predecessors, whose works are not in vogue at present. They were followed by B.S.L. Hanumantarao in more recent time, to have contributed to the historical literature on the epic-ballad. However, it has to be noted that their studies were based on one or other versions of the manuscripts that widely varied from each other, in the details of events and portrayal of the personalities. Thus, there is no unanimity in their presentation of facts, which is the basic requirement, before an analysis could be taken up. Secondly, their historical perspectives and approach to the source-material were more or less conventional and they have become significantly out-dated. As such, a fresh study of the epic-ballad, in historical aspect, in accordance with the recent developments of historiography, is
not only an urgent need but also very much required to interpret the ballad, to the nearest proximity to truth.

Keeping these requirements in views, the present attempt is to study the epic-ballad *Palanāṭivīra Caritrā*, to bring out the factual realities as against numerous beliefs that are current among common people as well as scholars and historians, about its details. No doubt, it serves as the main source of information in the study, especially in view of the insufficiency and imperfectness of epigraphical material, as well as absence of any other source of literary evidence that would come to help the research study.

**Notes and References**

2. On the purposes of poetical compositions, in fact, there had been cart-loads of rhetorical literature in Sanskrit language, which came to govern the literary activity in all Indian languages, groomed and governed by it. Pingali Lakshmikantham had given a fine analysis in brief, on the purpose of poetical composition, as given in such texts, in his introduction to *Palanāṭivīra Caritrā*, Hyderabad, 1991 Reprint.
5. For example, a cāṭu verse, usually attributed to Tenali Rāmakṛṣṭa, when he praised the poetical talents of another great classical poet, Nandi Timmana, speaks that poets of his sort coming from *janapadas*, or country-side, were very much limited in talents and techniques and their poetry could never reach the standards of composition of poets like the latter. It reads like: *Mā-koladi-jānapadalakup| Nī-kavanapu-ṭhīvłyabbunē|| Kūpanaṭad-bhēkmulakup| Nākadhunī-ṭharamula-cemma-Nandi-Singaya Timmē||* In this verse Tenali Rāmakṛṣṭa compared the poets in country-side, the *jānapadas*, with frogs moving in deep waters in a well and the dignity of classical poetry with the cool moisture in the raining cloud in the sky, that they could not feel the latter, but could only feel the coolness of the waters in the well.
6. It is very much necessary to note in this context that the medieval ruling houses in Andhradēśa, who hailed from the Śūdra, or the fourth caste and expressly mentioned in their inscriptions, issued a majority in them in Sanskrit language. Even the remaining records in Telugu were composed by poets, apparently with a good scholarly background and a number of them give the names of their composers. These facts clearly point out that compositions in well-articulated Telugu has become a profession, professional composers of the records began to grow, obviously because the rulers were richly rewarding them. Beside, quite worthy of note is that the Reddi
kings of Kondvīdu, who were undoubtedly belong to the fourth caste, were beside being patrons of great poets of excellence like Śrīnātha, some of them were themselves adepts in Sanskrit language and literature and composers of poetical works in that language and produced commentaries on works of Kālidāsa. Under such circumstances, there would be little surprise that royal courts consisted exclusively of scholar-poets and their literary works were highly esteemed, but not the folklore, even if it was flourishing side by side, but in villages.


8 Birth of literature among the early human societies, as described above, was involuntary, being the spontaneous outburst of their feelings. It was not the result of purposeful effort, but in course of time, with the progress of civilization, literature came to be composed purposefully with effort, which in course of time became avocation to scholar-poets, in royal courts. But during the intermediary stage, the literary activity seems to have been undoubtedly popular, but it was not so innocent and spontaneous as it had been in its primitive stage, but the outcome of the voluntary literary activity, which is explained below in detail.

9 The root *śams*, means speaking of and with the addition of an *upasarga*, or a prefix, like *abhi*, or *pra*, it forms into terms, like *abhīśamsā*, or *prasāmsā*, in classical Sanskrit, meaning respectively scolding or praising a person. But in Vedic Sanskrit, only compositions in praise appear in poetical form and thus, the *nārāśamsī*, was essentially a eulogistic composition, of a *nara*, or person.

10 Tangirala Venkata Subbarao, *Telugu Viragāṭhā Kavitvamu*, (Hyderabad) I, has collected a large body of information as to the origin and nature of the ballads, citing a number of authorities on the subject, had explained that the term ballad, literally means singing lyrical compositions with suitable bodily movements and expressive gesticulations and the modern usage of ballet, was only a variant of the term ballad. As such, ballad was not limited only to the composition of heroic subjects, but it was only a technique of composition and performance for the enjoyment of people, on festive occasions, or other celebrations, when they would gather at a place. Gradually, the term ballad came to mean the compositions of themes concerned with heroes and their achievements.


12 These details are found in the eighth book, or part, named “Kallu Pratiṣṭhā”, in the standard version.


14 Ibid., pp. 517-518.

15 It might also be a possibility that they were simply copyists, rather than composers by themselves, and prepared copies of that part of the ballad when some group of minstrels required for their usage.

16 Pandita Umakantam and also Pingali Lakshmikantham in general felt that the ballad could have been linguistically corrupted in the course of performance, by the illiterate minstrels. But, the corruptions could as well have been the results of scribal errors in the course of making copies from the original and such errors are quite common in manuscripts.
17 Pingali Lakshmikantam, opp. cit., p. xxxv.

18 The summary of the verse goes like, “No man with fine tastes would ever go to Palanādu—where even Rambhā, the celestial nymph, spins cotton spindles; even the king goes to till the land and the Eros eats the food of sorghum”.

19 The summary of the poem goes like, “Heroes are sacred lingas, Viśṇu is Nāyudū, Kalli Pōtarāju is verily the Bhairava and Aṅkammā is Pārvatī, the daughter of the snow-clad mountain; Māpiṃaṇyikā, the sacred ghāṭ on the Ganges at Benares, is the Nāgalēru (as they are locally esteemed)—with these things, Kāremplū is Kāśi for the people of Palanādu. Kālabhairava is supposed to be the governing deity of Kāśi, the sacred pilgrimage centre of Hindus, where the god is installed in a temple and worshipped at par with Viśvanātha, the Śiva at the place and His consort, Pārvatī, is worshipped there in the name of Annapūrṇā.

20 Introduction to Kridabhiramam, Ed. Veturi Prabhakara Sastri, pp. 102-03, gives an analysis to the references in it, and thus suggests that the battle of Palanādu and the Heroes came to be popular and the ballad-song was composed by the time of Kākatiya Pratāparudrā.


23 Ibid., pp. xxxiii – xxxiv.


25 Rhetorical works note this type of defect in poetical compositions as, vastv=an=aikyatā, meaning, lacking unity of plot

26 In his Preface to the First edition, in the year 1911.

27 Ibid., pp. 69-70.

28 The Epic of Palanadu, p. 10.

29 This characterization by Roghair and attribution of prejudice to, one of the greatest literary figures of the Telugu language, of modern times, are utterly unjustified and more prejudicial than the prejudice attributed to that great person. Pandita Akkiraju Umakantam was a profound scholar in Sanskrit as well as Telugu, studied in the traditional system of arduous instruction and yet he was quite modern in his views and analysis. Unfortunately, his depth of scholarship and fearlessness in expressing his considered opinions have not been yet properly recognized even by the Telugu people of the present generation. In this characterization of that great man, by Roghair, reminds the Christian missionary-turned historians of the eighteenth century, whose criticism and analysis of the languages, literatures and religions of the country were exclusively motivated either by outright derision of Hinduism and her divinities and literature, or segregating the Brāhmaṇas from the rest of the society, characterizing them as aliens and that they had brought their language and religion from outside and imposed on the people of the country. It is a known historical fact that they worked hand in hand with the officials of the British Government, to provoke such hostilities aimed at disintegrating the Hindu social order. The same thought process is working in emphasizing on the relative superiority in quality, of the folk literatures and cultures to the Brahmanical ideals and institutions, as the former are pristine pure and native, unblemished by the latter. These views are patronized and promoted at present
by the Marxist school of historiography almost with a religious zeal and some such scholars might have guided Roghair, in his attempts to understand the civilization and culture of Andhradėsa, if he was not a Christian missionary and his purpose of studying the epic-ballad was to reinvigorate the proselytizing techniques of the missionaries in the past.

30 Social Mobility in Medieval Andhradesa, p. 101.
31 Ibid.
32 Even the Palanāṭivirā Caritrā applies the name to the epic in some occasions and Mudīgoṇḍa Virabhadraṇa composed it exclusively by the name.
33 More popular name of the community is “Pīcchuṇḍa-vārū”, who used to go over the country, village by village, sing and emotionally enact the episodes and obtain their livelihood. As such, it is quite natural to expect them as to have made periodical changes in the story, as and when necessary so as to make it more interesting and thereby they could have livelihood.
34 For example, Pingali Lakshmikantham, opp. cit., pp. xxvii – xxix.
35 It appears in the course of analysis, that the similarities were largely the result of deliberate twists of the minstrels as well as the scholar-poets, who composed it in the form of an epic, especially in characterizing Brahmāṇyudū as the incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. The twists, no doubt, amplified the basic character of the story and enhanced its popular esteem, but it cannot be said that similar events had not taken place in any other part of the Indian subcontinent at any time, but to get such a celebrity, by depicting the characters as incarnations of lord Viṣṇu. Undoubtedly, this was the result of conscious effort of the bards as well as scholar-poets.
36 The ballet is technically called in the Sanskrit rhetorics as “vīḍhi” one of the ten types of drama, defined in the texts.
39 Ed. Pingali Lakshmikantham (Vijayawada: 1980), referred to as standard version in the present study.
41 The village is in Palanadu in the region of Karempudi.
42 Ibid., p. viii
43 Introduction, p.8.
44 The head of the Pitham, in his foreword to the work of Sri T. V. L. Narasimharao. However, these recent works also lack clarity as to several personalities in the ballad and the course of events, because of the divergences in the source-material, in the form of variety of versions and their disagreements, as well as the lapses in epigraphical sources.
45 Palnativira Kathachakramu, 1968.


48 Social Mobility in Medieval Andhradesa, Hyderabad: 1995.