CHAPTER VI

PŪRNASAŚARASVATĪ

Life, Date and Works of Pūrṇasarasvatī
Whomsoever is admired in the world are those who have said something for themselves. This is an inborn blessing which Pūrṇasarasvatī possessed immensely. He was a commentator, a poet and a dramatist. Considering the merits of his works, he was best known as a commentator. He was a great scholar who was well-versed in various branches of learning and a man of literary taste. The blending of pāṇḍītya and sahṛdayatva adds to his work an extraordinary charm and usefulness.

Vṛタककुंकुर Raja Rāja Varma is of opinion that Pūrṇasarasvatī is one of the best among the commentators of Kerala because he perceives things just like a scholar and a man of literary
taste. He possessed erudition as well as literary taste. The commentators must have the ability to express the ideas of the originals keeping up the imaginative capacity of every reader. It is this very quality that gives life to his commentaries. Despite his several outstanding original literary compositions embracing different fields he had made his mark as a unique commentator.

1. Life and Time

The complete history regarding his nativity, identity, date etc. are not available. He is generally believed to have belonged to Kāṭṭumāṭas, (a family of Nampūtiri Brāhmins noted for their proficiency in Mantra and Tantra Sastras), in the Ponnanit Taluk in Malabar¹. Certain others believed that he might be a Vaiṣṇava of Kancīpura².

Some consider him to be a member of the cennās family and yet others say that he was a native of Tréccambaram. This view does not gain much support. R.V. Kṛṣṇamācarīar supports the first view and states that the great commentator was named after God Pūrṇatrayīsa at Tripunithura in Kerala³. This view does not
gain much acceptance because the deity at Tripunithura is popularly known as Pūrṇatrayiśa not Pūrṇajyots a term that the commentator often mentions. It is probable that Pūrṇajyots may be his preceptor from whom the name might have been taken by his pupil out of respect and regard. The commentator himself states in the prologue to his Kamaliniṟājahaṁsa that the name of his guru is Pūrṇajyōti. Another view is that Pūrṇasarasvatī was blessed with poetic inspiration by the mercy of the God, Pūrṇatrayiśa and so he very much deserves the name.

The view that he was a Keralite scholar finds more support. It is stated in the prologue to the drama Kamaliniṟājahaṁsa that it was written to enact at the Siva temple of Trissur. In Hamsasandeśa, the poet reveals his feelings of patriotism by requesting the haṁsa to go by Trccambbara ignoring Tripunithura, a place of prominence and acquaintance on the way.

तस्मिन् नेने मेने टामला द्रव्यस्तावं दृष्टिमाणे
क्षेत्रं रक्तवर्मिति महतं केरलेश्व यायाः।
तत्रायेन विविधं सनकेष्वतारणां समाजे
तद्या्लुः न खलु घटसे धर्मकायोऽध्यातनाम्।।

161
If that sweetheart doesn’t come in your sight there, proceed to the great Trécambararam temple well known in Kerala. If you can’t find him even there, think of him to be caught up in a group of devotees. To those who have started to attain some moral cause, laziness is not at all suitable.

In the Hamsasandása, he refers to Trivandrum and Trécambararam.

His admiration for Trivandrum is found in the following verse:

तेषा भूषामण्डिमनामं संविं योगिमुः?
प्रायानन्ते पुरमहिषायं ज्योतिरानम्य भवत्यं।
अन्विष्येत्ते जनमकरण मन्यनाथचोरमाराद्
देशे तस्मिन् स खलु रतने देवकीपुण्यराशिः।

And having reached Trivandrum city and saluted with great devotion that light which lies upon the serpent bed, please search for that kindless, one who has stolen my heart and who is relied upon even by great sages and the ornaments of theirs, there plays that bunch of goodness of Devaki.

Pünásarasvatí indicates his name and that of his preceptor in the prologue of his drama Kamalinitriyajahamsa and at the end of
each act of the commentary of Rasamañjari. Pūrṇa jyotis is also referred to in two verses at the beginning of the same commentary and in the Anargharāghavatīkā and Vidyullāṅgā.

Personal details of this great commentator is not available. The name Pūrṇasarasvatī indicates that he must have been a sanyasin of the Sarasvati order. His preceptor must also have been a sanyasin under whose guidance he was initiated to the order of ascetics. The first part of his name ‘Pūrṇa’ might have been assumed from his guru, Pūrṇajyōtis and added Sarasvati since it represents one of the ten titles accepted by mendicants in general. It also suggests his literary qualities. His name and works, if any, in his previous āśrama are not known.

R.V. Kṛṣṇamācāriyar observes that Pūrṇasarasvatī is later than Mallinātha since the former seems to refer to the latter in his Vidyullāṅgā commentary. But Ullur does not subscribe to this view on the basis of the quotation made by Mallinātha from the ‘Sāhityaçintāmaṇi’ of Kātayavema who passed away in 1420).

K.S. Mahadeva sastri who edited Rasamañjari commentary
pointed out that Pūrṇasarasvatī quotes a passage from Citsukācārya who has commented on the Nyāyamakaranda of Ānantabodha. The date of Citsuka must be latter half of the 13th century or the former half of the 14th century. So Pūrṇasarasvatī can be placed towards the latter half of 14th century or first half of the 15th century.

Pūrṇasarasvatī is later than Jagaddhara since the former criticises the view of the latter in certain places. Prof. Gode assigns Jagaddhara to the 14th century. Prof. N.A. Gore places him between 1200 and 1450 A.D. Payyur Parameśvara, the author of Sumanōramaṇī on Mēghasandēśa who severely criticises the views of Pūrṇasarasvatī must be a contemporary of the latter otherwise these criticisms will lose much of their force. Parameśvara cannot be later than the middle of the 14th century. So Pūrṇasarasvatī can be assigned to the first half of the 14th century.

K. Sāmbāśivaśāstri observes that Pūrṇasarasvatī does not mention the great poet scholar and devotee Sri Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭapāda of the 17th century although he alludes to Divākarasūri,
father of Šāradatanayā who wrote Bhāvaprakāśa. So his date must fall in between 1150-1590 A.D.

ii. Works of Pūrṇasarasvatī

Pūrṇasarasvatī has written several works viz commentaries, poems, a drama and a work on grammar. He has made his mark as a commentator par excellence. Among his commentaries the Vidyullata on the Mēghasandēśa of Kalidasa is the most popular. The commentators must have the ability to express the ideas of the original keeping up the imaginative capacity of every reader and Pūrṇasarasvatī possesses this quality to a greater extent. The best way to go deep into Pūrṇasarasvatī’s mind are his works themselves. Vidyullatā

A commentary can give the reader a wide horizon of reading and amusement. Even though a poem is beautiful, it becomes fruitful only when it is fully appreciated by the reader. The poet, though the ultimate source of all the senses conveyed by the poem, has no significant role in its appreciation by the reader. Though he is said to be the great creator in the world of poesy, the reader is widely
accepted as the supreme authority of all the meanings in the poem.
The reader has a quite creative role in reading and understanding a poem. Vidyullatā offers invaluable help to men of literary taste to understand and appreciate the ideas intended by Kālidāsa in his monumental work, Mēghasandēśa.

The title Vidyullatā itself suggests that as lightning is an embellishment to the cloud so is the commentary to Mēghasandēśa. Also lightning (Saudamini) is the consort of Megha. He pinpoints the suggested sense every now and then and indicates the same by the words - dyōtyatē, iti dhvanyatē, dhvanati, pratīyatē, etc.

The important features which gave Vidyullatā a unique place in the realm of commentorial works are: 9

i Discussion on the utility of studying a work.

ii Disclosing of suggestive sense

iii Elucidation of new meaning to words

iv Explanation of ideas left behind or precisely stated by other commentators.

v Citation of authorities in support of the views expressed by himself
vi Introduction to each verse
vii Discussion on the propriety of the particular words used.
viii Presentation of the literary beauty of the sentences.
ix Remarks on the connection between the preceding and succeeding stanzas
x Selection of genuine reading of the texts.

A work which has pleasing qualities which can enculture human minds can be designated as an excellent one.

He discusses in detail the usefulness of studying a poetic work while commenting upon the first verse kaścit kāntāvirahaguruṇā. Knowledge of sound and sense; customs and manners of people belonging to different countries; habits and behaviour of chaste women; merit arising from the knowledge of holy land; fame and wealth; knowledge in various sāstrās, music, dance, fine arts; proficiency in handling love in union and separation; recognition as a man of literary taste in the assemblies of the learned and aesthetic relish of the sublime variety are some among them.

Besides these general benefits, he hints at the moral education contained in the work on which he comments. He says
that yakṣa committed a mistake on account of his incessant attachment to his wife and consequently he lost his greatness and mirth. He was separated from his wife and had to live in exile.

The moral one gets from this is that too much attachment will bring unending chain of disaster. So it should be avoided.

Pūrṇārasavatī devides his work into āsvāsās instead of pūrvamēgha and uttaramēgha. He has commented on only one hundred and ten verses (sixtythree in the first āśvāsa and fortyseven in the second) ignoring the others as interpolation. The Indian tradition has accepted several readings according to various commentaries of a work. It is the creativity in the composition of classical works that makes relevant to all ages. The literary works which lack this quality are neglected.

The commentator has shown considerable skill in pointing out the defects found in certain verses and there by provided the correct reading. At times he assumes the role of a critic. He analysis, comments, compares, evaluates and decides the merit of the work. An artist taking raw materials from life creates a composition where the critic modifies it. In this respect
Pūrṇasarasvatī does a new creation and his commentary attains the status of an independent work.

The commentator has gone deep into the inner meanings of Mēghasandēsa and so he could point out the aesthetic elements latent in it. He excels other commentators - Payyur Parameśvara and Dakṣiṇāvartanātha in this respect. While commenting on the verse:

\[ \text{сантаставां त्यञ्च शरणं ततो पयोद! प्रियायाः} \]
\[ \text{सन्दिशं मे हर धनपतिक्रोहविशेषत्तस्य} \]
\[ \text{गन्तव्या ते वसितरलका नाम यस्तेश्वराणाः} \]
\[ \text{बहुद्वानस्थिताःलरुपं धनं निविष्ट्काहौत्तमाः} \]

You are the refuge of the distressed. Hence, Oh! cloud, convey my message to my dear, now that I am away from her by the wrath of the Lord of wealth. Your destination shall be Alaka, the abode of lordly yakṣas, whose mansions are washed by the moonshine from the head of Siva seated in the garden in its outskirts.

He high-lights the suggestion of adbhutarasa and the attainment of mōkṣapuruṣārtha at the sight of God Śiva\textsuperscript{16}.

The commentator cleverly, like an expert critic, explain
certain innovative ideas in the original. The explanation of the word kāntāvirahaguruṇā is a classical example. Taking the word kāntāvirahaguruṇā as an adjective of the word śāpa, he interprets that the curse is a preceptor who teaches the miseries arising out of separation.  

Besides explaining the words and sentences as other commentators do, he often tries to go deep into the aesthetic beauty of the text. It seems that writing a commentary for the sake of common readers is not his aim. He wants to enjoy the piece in the light of rich scholarship. His commentaries are rather appreciative discussions in which he is often carried away by his boundless enthusiasm.

Certain defects are also there in his style. To exhibit his scholarship, he prolongs the commentary by quoting profusely from various sastras which may perhaps seem irrelevant to the context. The use of the long compounds makes the work not easily palpable. Considering the merits of Vidyullatā these are negligible.

He bestows much attention to identify the figures of speech and discusses them in detail.
Pūṇārasasvatī successfully fulfils his duty as a commentator by helping the reader to understand and enjoy the words of the original work. The poet and dramatist in him find expression every now and then and this feature makes his commentary an original treatise aimed at appreciating the poetic genius of Kālidāsa.

**ii Bhaktimandākinī**

Bhaktimandākinī is a commentary on the Viṣṇupādādīkeśastōtra of Śaṅkarācārya. Since the commentator does not try to add literary charm to his work, it is devoid of certain defects such as artificiality of style, long compounds etc. found in Vidyullatā and it shares all the merits of Vidyullatā. The work is simple, pure, soul-stirring and easily palpable. It enables one to go deep into his mind. It is rich with citations from Bhāgavata, Viṣṇupurāṇa, Amṛtatarāṅgini, Ambāstavaṁ, Mukundamāla, Vēṇīsāṃhāra, Sāvitrīhṛdaya, Harivarṣa, Bhāvaprakāśa, Māgha and Rāghuvaṃśa.

Mandākinī reveals the author’s erudition, power of thinking and devotion. Mandākinī offers invaluable help in grasping the profound ideas expressed in the Viṣṇupādādīkeśastōtra.
The benedictory verse,

श्रीमचाद्रकरपूज्यपारंगितं पादविकेशाविधि
सते दत्तमधय नेत्रमलं गातं हरं: प्रेक्षितं।
व्याख्यासति मयहो: भलि सतामेघा विधा हासितुं
व्यत्ता भक्तिरथयिह विशुपदयो: पुण्याति मे पृष्णुनाम।

Shows that Pūrṇasarasvatī has written the work out of his esteem for ŚrīŚaṅkarācārya. It possesses all the good qualities of Vidyullatā.

He quotes from various sastras and other works. He is unrivalled in indicating implied meaning. The explanation of the word in verse 21 पीताम्बरस्य is an example.

पीतं कवलीकृतं अबरं आकाशं। येन आत्मनं: आकाशं संभूतं: इति श्रुतेः कारणेन भूतान्तरणामयुपलक्षणम्।

It means one who has absorbed the space. The space is absorbed because it is the product of ātman and ātman is Pītāmbarā himself. The reference to आत्मनं: आकाशं संभूतं: indicates the cause and effect relation between ātman and ākāśa. It is to be remembered that the effect is always concomitant of the cause. Moreover the word अङ्क्षः stands for all the five elements of earth, water, air, space and fire. Mandakini is pure, lucid and soul stirring.
III. Rasamanjari

Rasamanjari is an elaborate commentary on Mālatimādhava of Bhavabhūti. Like Vidyullatā the work is accepted far and wide.

Pūrṇasarasvatī has given philosophical interpretation to his work. It is reckoned as a remarkable piece in dramatic criticism in Sanskrit. The work is studied in detail in the next chapter.

IV. KamaliniRājahamsa

KamaliniRājahamsa in five acts describes the love between Rājahamsa, the king of Swans and Kamalini, a lotus of the Pampa lake and their subsequent marriage. The hero’s rival, an elephant chief of Vindhya mountain, Kālamegha (the thunder cloud) and Puromāruta (storm) pose problems which hinder the course of love. Brahma intervenes and sets every thing right and in the end the hero is re-united with the heroine.

In spite of being an important work of Pūrṇasarasvatī, it did not gain much popularity. This is a drama having a stamp and different theme with a specific aim and is full of emotions. The characters are drawn from nature and attributed with human feelings.
and emotions. This is a unique feature of the play.

It appears that the play was written for enacting in the Śiva temple at Vṛṣapuri, modern Thrissur. Śṛṅgāra is the dominant sentiment. It is original in concept but in its representation it closely conforms to the conventional rules. He uses the word sthāpana instead of prastāvana as seen in the plays of Bhāsa. The sthāpana contains details about himself, his preceptor and descriptions of Kerala. The verses are excellent with sweet words and emotions.

Pūrṇasarasvatī considers the sweet words of poets as havis and lashes at the critics comparing them to the dogs trying to profane the havis in the Bharatavākyā of the play12.

Dr. K. Kuñjuṇṇirāja is of opinion that the Prabodhacandrodaya of Kṛṣṇamiśra might have prompted him to write this play13. It is a dramatic poem than a drama having more narration and very little of action. The male characters Rājahamsa and Kalahamsa are made to appear more imbecile than valorous and this can be pointed out as a defect in characterisation. Kālamegha and Puromārtta are better drawn. The characterisation
of Kamalinī, the heroine is also far from defects.

The poetic merits of this work is of a high order. Fine pieces of poetry and description of nature add a rare charm to the play. The prose passages are poetical and only a great poet like Pūrṇasarasvatī could compose such a work. The most outstanding merit of the work is the introduction of objects of nature as characters. This drama stands as a lighthouse in the field of Sanskrit dramas beaming its splendour everywhere.

V Hamśasandēśa

Hamśasandēśa which is a harmonious combination of devotion and love, is a short poem of 102 verses in the Mandākrānta metre. It is divided into purva and uttarasandeśa. The subject matter of this sandēśa is the message communicated to Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa sporting in the Brindāvana by a lady residing at Kancīpura who was enamoured of him on seeing his triumphant procession on the occasion of a festival. Unlike other sandēśakāvyās, it is the heroine who sends the message in the poem. The poets used to state the cause of separation at the beginning of the Sandēśakāvyās but it is
absent here and left to the readers.

Impropriety may be felt in the love affair between the heroine - an ordinary girl and Kṛṣṇa the supreme being. As gopikās do so, this can also be justified. Further the dint of the power of realising the various imaginative fancies, she happily floats in supreme bliss and the Lord’s blessing gratifies her, assuming the forms that are in conformity with her varying fancies.

The messenger is requested to pass through the regions in the country of Colas, the river Kaveri, the temple city of Śrīraṅga, the Pāndya country, the sacred river Tāmraparṇī the country of Kerala, the holy city of Anantaśayana, the temple of Trāccambara, the river Kālindī and finally at Brndāvana, the destination. It said that the poet was a native of Trāccambara in Kannur and so shows his feeling of patriotism in his request to the Ḥamsa to go by Trāccambara ignoring Tripunithura, a place of prominence and acquaintance on the way. His admiration for Thiruvananthapuram is expressed in the verse:
The beauty of Kerala ladies is described in the following verse:

The beautiful description of Kerala also finds a place in the kavya.

Beware, you though thoughtful and trying to help your friend should not be caught up by the playful sports of the young beautiful ladies there. By the very dark, thick, curly hairs which excel even the feathers of the peacocks, the faces of the Keralite beauties will attract even those who are self controlled.

The beautiful description of Kerala also finds a place in the kavya.
Proceed seeing sea-shore, scented by the presence of cardamom creepers, darkened by the presence of many a palm and hit by the waves of the sea. You may transit seeing various parts of Kerala which stands like heaven and spread their fame to various direction, with many palmtrees which grow thickly.

There is an echo of Mēghasandēśa in some verses and descriptions, for example the first verse beginning with kācit kāntāvīrahaśikhīna reminding kācit kāntāvīrahaaguruṇā of Mēghasandēśa. It seems that he deliberately uses such terms. This shows that Pūrṇasarasvatī might have composed Hāṃsaśandēśa after writing the Vidyullatā. Mēghasandēśa might have prompted him to make an attempt on a similar line. He has effected a slight deviation by changing the messenger and the sentiment. He never goes below Kālidāsa’s standard in developing rasa, alankara and introducing new meanings to the words. His poetic talent burstingforth from the remarkable power of imagination is displayed in the verse:
The picture of Lord Krishna depicted in this verse will remain in the heart of the men of literary taste forever. This poem can be considered as an offering of devotion brightened with the tenderness of love.

vi Anargharāghavatippaṇaṁ

This is a short commentary on the drama of Murāri and lacks the poetic qualities of Vidyullatā. The tippana is yet to be published. Manuscripts of the work are available in the Grantha Library of Govt. Sanskrit college, Tripunithura.

Pūrṇasarasvatī is said to have written ṭīkās on Śākuntalā and Uttararāmacarita.

vii Ṛjulaghvī

Ṛjulaghvī is a short poem consisting of 266 verses composed in various metres, giving the intricate plot of Mālatīmādhava in a straight and brief manner. Nine verses from the original drama are
included in it. In the beginning Purṇasarasvatī expresses his high regard for Bhavabhūti and salutes him. Then he proceeds to state his intention in epitomizing the theme:

प्रकरणनिलं क यमानातीमाधवांवः

सुकुटिलितिवृं म तत्स्य श्लेषुदुरांपमः।

सरस्विनिधव्रूस्तं पद्धव्येच्येतःसतोऽहः

प्रणावतिरिचिं तदर्षिव्वेत समासः॥

He says that the plot of Mālatīmādhava being complicated it is not easily palpable to the students. To satisfy their needs Rjulaghvī is composed in verse form.

ix Carmaṇvatīcaritaḥ

This is not an independent work but the story of Rantideva in nine stanzas, composed in the course of commenting the verse ārādhyaṁ of Mēgasandēsa (1.45)

Nāṭyavēdavivṛtisaṅgraha

M. R. Kavi, the editor of Nāṭyaśāstra attributes the authorship of Nāṭyavēdavivṛtisaṅgraha, an epitome of Abhinavagupta’s commentary on the Nāṭyaśāstra to Purṇasarasvatī.

A treatise called Nipātavṛtti on grammar, commentaries on Śivakēśādipādastava and Siśupālavadha are also attributed to his authorship.
REFERENCE

1 Hamsasandeśa of Pūrṇāsarasvatī, ed. K. Sambasiva Sastri.
   TSS. No. C. 29, 1937, Inr. P. 3

2 Ibid P.3

3 Mēghasandēśa with the Vidyullatā commentary edited by
   R.V. Krishnamacariar, Srirangam, 1926, Preface 11

4 Mēghasandēśa, ed. Unni N.P. with the commentaries -
   Pradīpa, Vidyullatā and Sumanoramaṇī - Bharatiya
   Vidyaprakasan, Delhi, 1987 Ch. 4 P. 68

5 Mālatīmādhava with Rasamaṇjarī commentary, Ed. by
   K.S. Mahadeva Sastri, 1953, TSS No.170, P. 102


7 Mālatīmādhava with Rasamaṇjarī commentary, ed. K.S. Mahadevasastri, Intro. P. 24
8 Introduction to Haṃsasandēśa, ed. K. Sambasiva Sastri, P. 5
9 Rajarajavarma Vadakku nkur, Keraleeya Samskrita Sahitya Charitram, Sri Sankaracarya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, 1997, ch. 10. p. 420
10 Mēghasandēṣa with Vidyullata, ed. N.P. Unni, P. 21
11 Ibid P.3
13 Kunjunni Raja K., The Contribution of Kerala to Sanskrit Literature, University of Madras, Madras 1980 Ch. XI - P. 215