INTRODUCTION

It is a comparative study of the three earliest available South Indian vernacular versions of the great epic, Mahabharata of Bhagavan Vyasa. The three texts are Perundevanar's Bharata Vembha, Pampas Vikramarjuna Vijaya and Nannayya's Andhra Mahabharatamu.

The scope of this thesis is, to show the variations from the text of Bhagavan Vyasa in these three vernacular versions and to point out the similarities in them.

While making a study of Perundevanar an attempt is made to focus light on his status as a Bharata poet, and his influence on the later Bharata poets in South Indian languages. I have not come across any second opinion about his date as 5th century A.D. Pallava - Rashtrakuta, and Rashtrakuta - Chalukya relations seem to have brought near the Tamil and Kannada literatures. Though remote, chances of disproving the seniority of Perundevanar may occur; but the similarities in the texts of Bharata Vembha and Vikramarjuna Vijaya remain for ever. If we do not hesitate to accept Perundevanar as an earlier poet, we also need not hesitate to accept his influence on Pampa. If we doubt his date as arrived at now, we have to say that Pampa and Perundevanar had a common source for their variations.

While commenting on the variations in Pampa, earlier critics have done enough of a comparative study of Vikramarjuna Vijaya and the prominent Sanskrit Kavyas based on the Bharata theme. But a comparative study of Pampa's Vikramarjuna Vijaya and Perundevanar's Bharata Vembha is not attempted at by any critic. I have made a sincere attempt to show the similarities in the two texts. It is my fortune that the earlier critics have given me a chance to focus this kind of new light in the field of comparative study.

Ultimately the comparative study of Perundevanar and Pampa has become the main purpose of this thesis.

A new approach to interpret Pampa's 'Laukika' in Vikramarjuna Vijaya is also made in this thesis.

Much has been said about Nannayya in comparison with Bhagavan Vyasa and Pampa. So I hesitate to say that I have said revealing
things in the field. But some minor changes in Nannayya which have
not gone to the notice of earlier critics have been brought to light.

The study is made mainly based on the texts.

I have followed the Geetha Press Edition of Mahabharata, Sendam-
mil Mandiram Puttaka Malai edition of Bharata Vemba, and the Mysore
University edition of Vikramarjuna Vijaya.

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