INTRODUCTION

Right from the Vedic period, the contribution of women in all walks of human life, in all spheres of human activity, has been notable in the heritage of Indian culture, although their position in the society is found to be not uniform. In the ancient period, their status was determined in terms of their nature and accomplishments, and the situation in which they were placed.

"Ancient Indian sculptures serve as a mirror of social life and one notices women in the company of their husbands at secular as well as religious gatherings, thus pointing to their active participation in social activities. They created endowments and gave donations for religious purposes, and their names are recorded in the inscriptions. Some of them actively participated in administration, functioning sometimes as regents on behalf of their minor sons like Prabhavati Gupta, Naganika and Bālasri (did). There are also references to talented and highly educated ladies. Some also served as distinguished teachers (upādhyāya or upādhyāyi)."

Even in the literary activities, women did not lag behind. Having been the lovers of literature from the earliest times, they rubbed shoulders with men either in writing kavyas or in acting in dramas and proved themselves none the inferior to men. Women had a share in the composing of Vedas, as the Vedas themselves ascertain. More than twenty suktas written by women have brought immemorial renown to them. Even the deeper problems of philosophy were probed into by talented ladies like Gārgi and Mātreya, but this was probably discouraged in later times. The Grihya sutra mentions uttering of Vedic mantras by the wife at ceremonies along with her husband suggesting that women were fairly educated and were able to participate in sacrifices. Since the men had realized that unless women actively participated and extended whole-hearted co-operation to any creative activity that is undertaken, it would not be fruitful, they never
condescended to keep women in the dark.

Even Manū is of the opinion that woman should be treated with great respect, for the success of every activity, both worldly and other-worldly and depends upon their being happy. Hence the statement of Manū is oft quoted:

यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते समन्ते तत्त्र देवता: ।

यथेतरस्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वस्वस्त्रा फला: क्रिया: । ५ ५६१ । प. ९९३ ।

The contribution of women was not limited to the writing of Vedic verses, but it extended to the sphere of creative and secular writings. They were also accomplished in singing, dancing, and playing musical instruments. Rajasekhara refers to women's competence in political skill and mentions the example of princess, daughters of high officials and even courtesans who were poetesses as well as adept in the sciences (Sāstras). His own wife, Avanti Sundari, from a noble family, was learned and talented and her views on rhetoric are quoted by this poet-cum-dramatist. On one occasion he says:

पुरुषवत् योगितापि कविभवेषु: । संस्कारो हालनि समवतः, न स्त्रीणौ पैलूयं विभागमयेक्षते ।

बृहत्ते च राजपुजयो महामायो दुहितरो गणित्वा: कैलिकिमायाय शास्त्रप्रत्य सुधयः कवयंशः ।४

However, it is very unfortunate that in the fast flow of time, a number of literary works composed by the poetesses, have been lost. In the centuries that followed the Vedic Age, since the Epic Age, the degeneration of the society set in. A corollary was the definite deterioration in the status of women. The women were suppressed and equated with the sudras. They were segregated and confined to the four-walls of their home. This unfortunate development lost to the vast Sanskrit literature, many gems of literary talent that otherwise would have enriched it to a great extent.

However, whenever provided with an opportunity, the poetesses did emerge
out and carve a niche for themselves in the annuals of Sanskrit literature, irrepressible and unsuppressable as they were. It should be mentioned that between 16th century and 18th century, poetesses by name Bharati, Vijjita, Mohanangi, Gangadevi, Rāmabhadrāmbā etc., adorned the world of Sanskrit literature. Gaṅgadevi wrote the ‘Madhurāvijayam’ which deals with the story of the conquest of Madhurai by the King Kairpana.

A poetess Vijjika by name, explains with all justification of Goddess Sarasvati. Hence she takes an objection to Daṇḍin’s claim as regards Sarasvati as being sarvasukla fully white.

Rāmaṇībikā has translated into Sanskrit, the entire Telugu-Rāmāyana by Raghunātharāya. A female Sanskrit scholar has composed a Sanskrit drāmā which deals with, how the authoress won over many pandits in the royal assembly of Rājasthān. From these, we can unhesitatingly concluded that the contribution of poetesses to the Sanskrit literature is no mean. It is simply impossible to ignore the works of these poetesses. The great poet Bhavabhuti has warned us against looking down upon the creative ability and poetic faculty of women just because they are women. Thus he says:

(Bhavabhuti, Uttararāmacharitam IV 11). One such illustrious poetess was Tirumalāmbā, who wrote Varadāṁbikāparinaya campū, a campū during the first half of the 16th century. She was the beloved queen of Achutarāya an emperor of vijayanagara, who ruled between A.D. 1529 and 1542. Her work narrates the story of Acutarāyas marriage with Varadāṁbikā daughter of Salaga chief,
closing after making Cina Veṅkaṭādri the emperor's son by her, the heir-apparent to the throne. It is according to Dr. Maan Singh, one of the few historical kavyas in the Sanskrit literature. Not all the facts related in this campū are historical, however Dr. Vasundhara Filliozat points out several unhistorical elements included in it. The father of Acyuta, Narasiriha was never a crowned king. But, the poetess says that he was seated on the throne of Vijayanagara (Vidyāpuri) and deals at length with his conquests over various kings including the Sultan of Mānuva, which, in fact was conquered by Krishṇadevarāya in A.D. 1521. Another unhistorical fact mentioned by the poetess is that soon after the death of Narasa, Acyuta, was nominated a king. “Between Narasa, and Acyuta, there were two kings Bhujabal Narasimha who ruled over the kingdom for a short period of four years (1505-1509) and abdicated the throne in favour of his younger brother Krishṇadevarāya under whom, the Kingdom reached its zenith of glory”.

Whereas Acyuta is presented with big moustaches in a portrait at Tirupati, taking fancy for beards, the poetess says that the king had a thin line of beards. No Hindu king of Vijayanagara period is presented with beards. Referring to these and some other unhistorical facts narrated therein, Dr Vasundhara Filliozat has concluded in these words, “On the whole this campū kavya Varadāṁbikāparipāyaya should be read as a piece of literar work and not as a serious historical kavya unlike the works of Diṇḍimā poets of Vijayanagara period. This campū, no doubt a masterpiece in the field of literature, by a poetess, is not a reliable work, so far as historical details are concerned.” In fact such objections can be raised against even such historical works like Kalhana’s Rājatarāṅgini, which tells the story of the kings of Kāshmir, Bāṇas
Harsacaritam, which narrates the story of king Harṣa and Daṇḍin’s Dasakumārcaritam, which deals with the story of the royal youths. There is a good deal in all these works which does not partake of the nature of correct history. That is why it is not an easy task to write India’s past history in the frame of literature. Some ideas of meagre history, sprinkled very often by literary works, may substantiate the basis of a preconceived history. The literary works are also not free from misperception and prejudices of their authors. The historians, therefore, need to develop an objective outlook which is possible by taking recourse to archaeological, epigraphical and numismatic resources in order to cross-check the facts mentioned in the literary works. Given this background, the present campū forms an important literary source in the reconstruction of the history of Vijayanagara empire, a glorious episode in the annals of the mediaeval history of India.

What is of prime concern to us, however, is the literary merit of Varadāṁbikāparināya campū, which we have chosen for a critical study and appraisal. In this enterprise, of necessity we have overlooked the unhistorical facts that are related in it. Critically examined, with reference to other historical works, however, are the date, life and works of the poetess Tirumalāṁbā, in course of the following pages. Before that it is essential in the first place, to examine as to what constitutes a campū since the present work too is a campū. A brief history of campū Kāvya is also given along side.

Campū is that kind of literary composition in which there is a balanced mixture of both prose and poetry. Campū is defined as a kind of elaborate and highly artificial composition in which the same subject is continued through alterations in prose and verse.

According M. Winternitz, "The campūs form a particular type of kāvya."
They are poetical compositions in which verses in ornate metres and ornate prose are mixed up together without letting either the metrical verse or prose form become dominant. That is to say, both the verses and prose are equally important. If some verses are found in narrative works like pañcatantrā, they are present only to emphasize a movement, or reiterate an old saying. On the contrary, "the campū is a particular type of literature in which verses do not serve any purpose other than what is served by prose".

Dāṇḍin a poet of 6th century A.D. has defined campū as a mixture of prose and poetry in his Kāvyadarśa. The same definition although in different forms, adding here and there a new element, has come down to us through Viswanātha. Bhōja to the most recent authors. When did the campū form of literature originate is not definitely known to us. But Krishṇamāchārī's opines that it came into vogue about the beginning of the Christian era. We can be sure that by the time of Dāṇḍin, Campū must have developed to the full stature since Dāṇḍin has given us a definition of Campū, which holds good even today. However, no earlier Campū Kāvyās are available. Nevertheless, literary works containing both verse and prose were in existence even before the Christian era commenced, although in the strictest sense of the term, they cannot be considered as campus. For instance, Taittirīya Samhita Maitrayani Samhita, and Kathaka Samhita, of Krīṣhṇayuṣvamedhika contain both prose and verse. By this, one can easily conclude that the mixed style was very much in practice in the ancient period. In the 33rd canto of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa of Rgveda is Hariścandropakhyaṇa which is even earlier example of this style. A portion of it, is quoted below:

यं निःयं पुरुषोदयति ये विज्ञानं ये च न
Another instance of poetry being interspersed with prose can be found in the first Adhyāya or chapter of Kenopanishad. Like wise, in the Prasāna, Muṇḍakā, Kathā Úpanisads, also this mixed style is found. Among the inscriptions, the Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta, which was composed by Harisena is a fine blend of prose and poetry. The modern researchers have called it as “Prashasti Kāvya” an altogether new category, yet if we go strictly by the classification by lakṣaṇikas, the name campū is more appropriate for it.¹⁶

The earliest campū, that is available to us is the Nalacampū, composed by Trivikrama Bhaṭṭa in 915 A.D. campus became very popular, thus in the 10th century A.D. and they were largely composed in south India. Some of the popular campus are Yaśastrilaka Campū written by Somedeva in 951 A.D. Bhāratacampūtilaka by Lākṣmana, Bhāgavata campū by Abhinava Kālidasā in early 11th century etc., in keeping with glorious tradition of campū. Tirumalāmbā has written the present Varadāṁbikāparināyaya Campū. It is laden with all those intricacies that characterise a triditional Sanskrit prose, and the charms that characterise the poetry. The prime object of the poetess in writing this campū is to display the beauty of Sanskrit prose, and variety of imagery, as was doubtless the case with Subhandu, Daṇḍin and Bāṇa. This and the other facts shall reveal to us by the ventures made in the following chapters to explore the world of Tirumalāmbā, as represented in her work, which is of extreme beauty and elegance, in fact the only Sanskrit romance written by a woman Sanskritist.
The importance of the present study lies in the fact that apart from the scholarly edition of the text of Varadāmbikāparināyaya campū, published by Dr. Laxman Swarup, and an equally scholarly translation of the text into English by Prof. Suryakānta, very few studies have been undertaken. A few articles dealing with some aspect of the campū or the other have been published. At any rate, no attempt has been made to study the campū as a whole, in order to bring out all the literary merits thereof. We propose to make such an attempt in the present study.

In the present study, the theories of poetics on Rasa, Alāṅkāra, Riti, Guṇa etc., propounded by the Sanskrit literary critics, are applied to the study and assessment of the different aspects of this campū. The development of the theme, the various descriptions, the characterisation, the language and style etc., of the poetess are studied critically with suitable illustrations from the text and other texts whenever some point is made, by way of comparison and application of theoretical principles. A sincere attempt, thus, to highlight the different aspects of the campū, and the literary merits thereof in their proper perspective is made in this critical study. In order to make the study as exhaustive as possible, the following scheme of arrangement as well as discussion of the material is adopted:

Chapter I: Life, Date, and Works of Tirumalāmbā.
Chapter II: The Art of Narration
Chapter III: Descriptions in the Varadāmbikāparināyaya campū.
Chapter IV: Characterisation in Varadāmbikāparināyaya campū.
Chapter V: Alāṅkāras in the Varadāmbikāparināyaya campū.
Chapter VI: Rasa delineation in the Varadāmbikāparināyaya campū.
Chapter VII: An Appraisal of the study and conclusions.
Before placing humbly this thesis into the hands of scholars as a bonafide work of my sincere study and research, I sincerely express my sense of gratitude to the scholars from whose works I have derived information and more importantly inspiration to formulate my views on the different aspects of the campū under study.
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