

Classic Poetry Series

Kumara Vyasa

- 0 poems -

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Kumara Vyasa (12th ? -16th ?)

Kumara Vyasa (Kannada: ಕುಮಾರ ವ್ಯಾಸ) is the pen name of Gadugina Veera Naranappa (Kannada: ಗಡುಗಿನಾ ವೀರ ನರಾನಪ್ಪ), a classical poet of Kannada. His pen name is a tribute to his magnum opus, a rendering of the Mahabharatha in Kannada. Kumara Vyasa literally means Little Vyasa or Son of Vyasa.

Place and Time

The period of Kumara Vyasa's life had been a subject of scholarly dispute. Scholarly opinion placed his time in varying periods starting from the 12th Century to 16th Century. However, opinion has now agreed that Kumara Vyasa lived during the late 14th and early 15th Centuries.

His magnum opus, Karnata Bharata Kathamanjari was completed in 1430 when Deva Raya II was ruling the Vijayanagara empire. Kumara Vyasa earned high esteem as a poet in his court. Kumara Vyasa's historicity is also based on the fact that other prominent poets of the 15th century, such as Kanaka Dasa and Timmanna Kavi, have mentioned his works.

Kumara Vyasa lived in Koliwad a village 35 km from Gadag in North Karnataka. He is also called Narayanappa. A pillar in the Veera Narayana temple of Gadag exists till date. According to popular legend, Kumara Vyasa is said to have composed his work at the temple. This pillar is also known as Kumara Vyasa's pillar (Kannada: ಕುಮಾರ ವ್ಯಾಸ ಪಿಲ್ಲಾರ, ಕುಮಾರ ವ್ಯಾಸ ಪಿಲ್ಲಾರ).

Works

Kumara Vyasa's most famous work, the Karnata Bharata Kathamanjari (The Mahabharata of Karnataka) is popularly known as Gadugina Bharata and Kumaravyasa Bharata. It is a sublime adaptation of the first ten Parvas (chapters) of the Mahabharata. A devotee of Krishna, Kumara Vyasa ends his epic with the coronation of Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandavas. The work is easily the most celebrated in Kannada literature. Its fame arises due to its universal appeal.

Gadugina Bharata is composed in the Bhamini Shatpadi meter, a form of six lined stanza. Kumara Vyasa explores a wide range of human emotions, examines values, and displays extensive mastery over vocabulary. The work is particularly known for its use of sophisticated metaphors. It has earned him the honor of Rupaka Samrajya Chakravarti (Emperor of the World of Metaphors).[citation needed] Kumara Vyasa is also renowned for his characterization. Karnata Bharata Kathamanjari is also known as Dasha Parva Bharata because it originally had only 10 parvas as opposed to the 18

in the original Mahabharata.

Kathamajari was not complete. Reliable sources of information goes like this - The lord Narayana would narrate the story of Mahabharata that took place several years ago from behind the temple's statue. Kumaravyasa would listen to the story and translate it into poetry. Lord had laid down a condition that Kumara was to only listen to this voice without attempting to see the source or the spirit narrating the story. This was a daily routine and went on for years. One day, at the stage when the 10th parva of his work was complete, Kumara developed deep curiosity with impatience and wanted to desperately see the narrator.

Much to his surprise, it is said he saw the lord himself narrating the story. He also saw a scene of kurukshetra battle and it seemed it was happening in front of him again. However, Kumara had violated the condition of not exploring the source of the voice. At that point, the lord disappeared and the narration of mahabharata story stopped forever.

Kumara's Kathamanjari covers only till the Gadayuddha, the battle between Duryodhana and Bheema, killing Duryodhana. The subsequent parts of the original Mahabharata like the Yudhisthira Pattabhishekha, Ashwa Medha yaaga and the Swargaarohana parva are not included.

It may be noted that Lakshmeesha, another great poet who was born a few decades after Kumara's death, took up and completed AshwaMedha yaaga parva alone in his work "Jaimini Bharata" in Kannada. This spiritual work was considered equal to Kathamanjari for its literatural ecstasy and the fragrance of narration it emits.

There is a strong belief among locals that Kumaravyasa was a blessed poet of Sri Veera Narayana i.e. Lord Vishnu. The poet used to sit in front of sanctum sanctorum in the temple and the Lord himself narrated the story of the ancient Mahabharata from behind the statue. The poet transformed the story into an excellent poetry.

Kumaravyasa has shown an exemplary style of writing in the introduction. He proudly claims that his poetry is matchless and that it caters to the taste of all kinds of readers. He writes "A king enjoys the valor in the poetry, A brahmin the essence of all vedas, Philosopher, the ultimate philosophy, ministers and state administrators the tact of rule, Lovers, the inspiration. Besides this he proudly acclaims that this work of his is the "GURU" of the works of all other great scholars." However, his self-lessness may be noted when he says he merely noted all that was narrated by his lord, his actual poet".

The other, lesser-known work of Kumara Vyasa's is Airavata.

Influence on Kannada Literature

Kumara Vyasa's works belong to the Kannada language#Phases of evolutionNadugannada (Middle-age Kannada)period of Kannada literature. His influence on later Kannada literature is significant. Gadugina Bharata is still widely read. It is popularly sung in a unique style known as Gamaka.