

**BASAVARAJ NAIKAR, RAYANNA, *THE PATRIOT AND OTHER NOVELLAS*, NEW DELHI: GNOSIS 2015. PP.300. RS. 300**

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**1 Jakkana, the Architect Divine:**

After studying the horoscope of his new born baby, Jakkana, the architect divine, was misled to believe that his wife, Laxmi, was an adulteress, and the baby was not all his son. Being extremely disillusioned he became a *virakta* and went away from his house as it was the will of God. Later on he became a builder of magnificent temples as he was ordered by God. He wondered at his own superhuman powers when he was regarded as an avatar of God.

Emperor Bittideva of the Ballala dynasty was renamed as Vishnuvardhana when he accepted Sri-Vaishnavism advocated by His Holiness Ramanujacharya who advised him to construct a matchless temple for Lord Vishnu with the help of Jakkanacharya, a genius in sculpture and architecture. So Emperor Vishnuvardhana invited Jakkanacharya to build a marvelous temple who readily accepted the stupendous task. At the time of the installation of the statue in it, a young boy of eighteen years came forward and announced that the statue was not perfect but defective. Without knowing that the challenger was his own grown-up son he said publicly that if it was proved he would cut off his right hand itself. When the royal priest observed the navel closely it was found to be wet with water and sand. Suddenly a small frog jumped out of the hole of the navel proving that it was imperfect. The son had excelled his own father in talent and skill. He came to know that the young boy was his own son called Dakkana. Accepting his defeat Jakkana cut off his right hand which made the onlookers unhappy and sorrowful. Dakkana became the son-in-law of Emperor Vishnuvardhana. Everything took place as God had willed. The reunion of the father, son, wife and mother made all of them glad and they lived together happily.

It is a historical novella dealing with the lives of four important characters, Jakkana, Dakkana, H.H. Ramanujacharya and Emperor Vishnuvardhana. It is full of suspense, surprise and miraculous events. The story is quite absorbing but the idea of *Suvarna Rasa* that could convert any piece of stone into gold is fanciful.

**2. Kanakadasa: The Golden Servant:**

Kanaka was born by the blessings of Lord Venkateshwara of Tirupati in Bada village of Dharwad district. He was educated privately and studied all the ancient scriptures and epics written by the great saints and sages. After his father's death he was appointed as an Administrator of Bada and Bankapur in the Empire of Sri Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagara. Once he felt that he was ordered by Lord Tirumalesha to become his servant or *dasa*. At once he

gave up his job and became a servant of God only. Once he experienced that he was caressed and treated by Lord Tirumalesha who miraculously healed up all his wounds. He had several such spiritual experiences on different occasions.

Afterwards he became a favourite disciple of H.H. Vyasaraaya, the greatest scholar and philosopher of that period, who knew the spiritual attainment and mystic achievements of Kanakadasa. Once he conducted a test to show one and all the greatness and worthiness of Kanakadasa. He gave everyone a banana to eat in a secret place where none could see them. All ate them in some hiding place. But Kanakadasa alone brought the banana back without eating it, and told frankly that he could not find any hiding place which was not seen by the divine eye.

Once, Kanakadasa had gone to Tirupati during the festival time. When the devotees were dragging the stone-car of Lord Venkateshwara, all of a sudden the car stopped moving and did not budge an inch. At that time Kanakadasa came forward and sang a devotional song spontaneously in praise of the supreme power of God. The greatest surprise was that the stone-car moved slowly ahead when Kanakadasa pulled it. The people who witnessed this miraculous event prostrated at the feet of Kanakadasa.

The greatest miracle was at Udupi. In Udupi people mistook Kanaka for a beggar after seeing his dishevelled hair and shabby beard and did not permit him to enter the temple. But he went on singing about the *lila* or glory of Lord Krishna outside the temple. Lord Krishna was immensely pleased with his pure *bhakti* and gave him *darshan* by breaking the stone wall and turning towards him. Kanaka could see Lord Krishna to his heart's content. The crack or the peephole in the wall became well known as Kanaka's Window.

He built a temple in Kummuru and named the deity "Timmakeshava". In his old age he spent the days in meditation of Lord Adikeshava of Kagineelli and Timumalesha of Kummuru. He breathed his last at the age of ninety eight in 1606.

This is a hagiographical novella of Kanakadasa who enriched Kannada Literature by writing hundreds of devotional, philosophical, moral and narrative poems. His *Narasimha Stava* is a hymn of 97 stanzas in which there is a glorification of the ferocious Narasimha Avatar. He wrote *Gajendra Moksha* in 53 stanzas. But the crowning achievement is his *Mohana Tarangini*, which is famous for its love-story of Lord Krishna, with philosophical and allegorical undertones.

His soul was like a star and lived apart without caring for the worldly fame or popularity.

### 3. Raja Mallasarja:

Raja Mallasarja, the adopted son of Virappagowda Desai, became the ruler of the Kittur Kingdom in 1782. On 1785 Tipu Sultan was planning to subjugate and conquer the kingdom of Kittur by hook or by crook. Under the leadership of Commander Burhanuddin Tipu's army captured the fort and palace of Kittur without any resistance or opposing because Diwan Gurunath Pant conspired against his own king and became a traitor. The innocent Raja Mallasarja became a captive and prisoner of Tipu who kept him first in the prison of Srirangapattana and in the fort of Kapaladurga afterwards.

Both Raja Mallasarja and his loyal servant and friend, Madivala suffered a lot in the prison for several days. They waited for an opportunity to escape from the jail of Kapaladurga. One day the guards and the jailor enjoyed themselves on a Muslim festival day by drinking too much liquor and fell asleep. That was the proper time for Raja Mallasarja and Madivala to break

open the lock of the cell and they came out of it closing the bar hurriedly. Both of them ran away and swam in the river by catching hold of a big log of a tree. Luckily they reached a safe place which was the border of the British region. The British authorities treated both of them respectfully by giving them food and shelter.

By this time Commander Budrul Jamankhan who was in charge of the Kittur fort and palace had converted it into a place of enjoyment and entertainment. One night when all of them were immersed in the grand dance, music and pastime, the Commander of Kittur army, Timmanagowda and his soldiers climbed the wall of the fort and slaughtered the enemies and recaptured the palace and the fort. Timmanagowda, the Commander, cheerfully told all the people that their Raja Mallasarja and Madivala had escaped from the prison of Kapladurga and they would come back to Kittur shortly. This news made them jubilant.

The Raja's joy was multiplied when he heard the news of the conquest of Kittur from Tipu's army. He received a glorious welcome by his young wife and the people of Kittur. They celebrated their victory and the event by waving *arati* lamp around the Raja's face and Madivala's face. The king was restored in glory and grandeur.

In fact, this is a historical novel in which there is a tale of Kittur kingdom lost and regained. The chief characters are mainly historical which are well defined and readymade. There is no scope for the free play of imagination. Had the author given exact dates and months of the events its authenticity would have increased. No doubt it is a heroic tale of the adventurous, grand escape and patriotism based on research.

#### **4. Rayanna, the Patriot:**

Rayanna, the great patriot, was a favourite bodyguard of the imprisoned Rani Chennamma. He told her that he would not rest until he regained the kingdom of Kittur from the British Company Government. He developed the thought of vengeance against the British rulers, among his followers who were nearly three thousand.

He became a sworn enemy of the British and began to plan his rebellion by looting and burning the government offices. The Company Sarkar, at last, announced a big cash prize and land for those who would capture Rayanna dead or alive. The Company Government took the help of Mamledar Krishnarao who was advised by Collector Nisbet to capture Rayanna by fair or foul means. In the eyes of the British officers Rayanna was a rowdy, criminal, rebel and a trouble-maker. But in the eyes of the natives he was a great hero and patriot. The British officers never liked others being patriotic.

Rayanna did not have enough money to maintain a big army. Gradually his army became smaller and smaller. Mamledar Krishnarao took the help of Padalli Bhimya to feign friendship with Rayanna to capture him deceitfully. Padalli Bhimya took the help of Lakkyia, who was like a snake in the grass. Lakkyia was the maternal uncle of Rayanna and was found to be trustworthy in the beginning.

One day both Bhimya and Lakkyia were secretly ready to accomplish their treacherous task of captivating Rayanna. He was abruptly attacked when he completed swimming in the book. The gangsters of Linganagowda of Khodanpur and Venkanagowda of Neginahal rushed out from their hidden place and captured the 'tiger' of Sangolli when he was unarmed. He was taken to Dharwad jail for the trial. Collector Nisbet thanked Mamledar Krishnarao for trapping the rowdy Rayanna. In the prison Rayanna was given secretly quicklime-water to drink which

made him suffer from loss of appetite and liver problem. The trial against him was conducted on 16 December 1830. It was announced that Rayanna and his companions should be hanged to death. He was brave till his last breath since patriotism was in his blood and marrow. His dead body hung like a limp in the air. That was the tragic death of a great patriot and hero.

In this novella there is a truthful portraiture of Rayanna's personality. He was a pioneer of the freedom struggle through rebellion. He was like a spark which ignited the flame of patriotism afterwards.

The narrative technique of all the novellas is superb. Nowhere the book is tedious or monotonous. There are beautiful and vivid descriptions that catch the reader's attention. For example, the inhuman treatment of Tipu's prisoners in the jail is described: "Prisoner Mallasarja was dragging the yoke of the heavy plough as if he was an animal. The prisoners used to be served with a mixture of half a seer of millet dough and half a seer of ash rolled into a ball. The ash could not be separated from the dough. They had to gulp it down forcibly with ample water to send it down the gullet" (P.192). Scores of Kannada, Sanskrit and Urdu words have been used to create proper local atmosphere. For example, *karma*, *punya*, *lila*, *mangalasutra*, *gowdre*, *walika*, *chavadi*, *kacheri*, *darshan*, *puja*, *vibhuti*, *pakado*, *chup raho*, *sala*, and *rotti* etc., are meaningfully used. Had the author given a glossary at the end, foreign readers would have understood them clearly.

The language of all the novellas is full of ease and grace. The author has been successful in creating beautiful episodes and domestic scene. One is tempted to read the whole book at one sitting, because the plots develop swiftly arousing interest and curiosity.

Unfortunately India has remained unknown to Indians, simply because it is geographically a vast country with heterogeneous languages, cultures and literatures. People of one region or state do not know anything about other regions or states. If India is to be made known to Indians as well as foreigners, writers like Basavaraj Naikar should be encouraged to write may more books of this type. We should admire and appreciate his scholarship besides creative power. By reading this book one can have a glorious glimpse of India in general and of Karnataka in particular.