
UNIT 16 LANGUAGES AND LITERATURE¹

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16.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will learn about:

- the decadence that had crept into the quality of Sanskrit works produced during the period under review;
- development of some notable Sanskrit works in the following categories: *Kavya*, Law books, Scientific treatises and religious works;
- the factors responsible for the growth of regional languages and literature in north India; and
- development of languages and literature in south India.

16.1 INTRODUCTION

From the point of view of literature, the period between 750-1206 CE is considered as one of the most productive and creative periods of Indian history. Several literary works were composed under the patronage of royal courts. Like the earlier period,

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Sanskrit continued to be important in literature. It was the preferred language of court poets. At the same time, the practice of composing texts in vernacular languages gained momentum. While texts in Tamil language are known since 300 BCE, for the first time, literary compositions in regional languages of Kannada and Telegu appeared. Thus, Sheldon Pollock (2006) has considered this to be a transformative phase, a time when Sanskrit's dominant literary position was challenged by vernacular languages.

Another important point about the literature of this period is that we are more certain about the dates of the poets, and their patrons. In the earlier period a lot was in the realm of speculation. For instance, we really don't know much about the life of Kalidasa or Bhasa, their dates, and the royal courts they were patronized by. But in this period there is greater certainty with regard to important poets, their works, and also their patrons.

16.2 SANSKRIT LITERATURE

The Sanskrit texts of this period can be divided into literature, scientific treatises, law books, and religious texts. The law books and religious texts composed in this period still have an influence on modern Hindu society. The language employed in these compositions enjoyed an elite status as it was primarily associated with the courts. This use of Sanskrit, according to Daud Ali (2014), can be traced back to the Gupta and post-Gupta period (350-750 CE) when it emerged as the lingua-franca of a common political culture. A similar position continued in the courts of Rashtrakutas, Gurjara-Pratihars, Palas, Cholas, Western Chalukyas, Paramaras, and Candellas. These rulers patronized court poets, and also sometimes authored great works themselves.

It is generally believed that the loss of official patronage caused the decline of Sanskrit literature during the Sultanate period. While it is true that Persian replaced Sanskrit as the official language, there was no quantitative decline in the production of Sanskrit literary works as such. The period is remarkable for the immense production of literary works in different branches of Sanskrit literature such as poetical narrative (*Kavya*), religion and philosophy, grammar, drama, stories, medicine, astronomy, commentaries and digests on the Law books (*Dharmasastras*) and other classical Sanskrit works. Nor was the loss of official patronage to Sanskrit absent for there were many kings who patronized Sanskrit poets — especially in south India and Rajasthan. While Sanskrit works continued to be produced in large number, there seems to be a marked decline in the quality of these works. This decline had set in before the establishment of the Sultanate and became more pronounced during the Sultanate period. There was not much originality in most of the Sanskrit works that appeared during this period. Much of the Sanskrit writing was wearisomely repetitive, artificial and forced. Sanskrit works on religious themes were often characterised by metaphysical speculations. Biographical works were mainly in the form of heroic ballads which contained hagiographical details and stories of romance. Sanskrit lost the patronage of the new Persian speaking ruling class but the Sultanate did not interfere with the independent production of Sanskrit literary works. In fact, the introduction of paper during the Sultanate period gave impetus to the literary activity of

reproduction and dissemination of already existing Sanskrit texts such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*.

South India, Bengal, and western India played the leading role in the production of Sanskrit literary works. The Vijaynagara kings patronised Sanskrit poets. The Jain scholars in western India also contributed to the growth of Sanskrit literature. The most famous Jain scholars of Sanskrit literature in western India was Hemachandra Suri who belonged to the 12th century. Mithila in northern Bihar developed into yet another centre of Sanskrit. Later, towards the end of the Sultanate period and during the Mughal period, the Chaitanya movement in Bengal and Odisha contributed to the production of Sanskrit works in several fields like drama, *champu* (a mixed form of verse and prose), grammar, etc.

16.2.1 *Kavya* Literature

A major part of literature that was composed in this period was *kavya* literature or ornate poetry. This poetry is marked by the use of several similies, artificially constituted metres, rare words, compound words having more than one meaning (Winternitz 2015). The usage of this form is visible in the various *charitas* (biographies), and *natikas* (dramas). *Charita* is a form of biography which has a king or minister as the protagonist. Unlike modern-day biographies, they may cover the entire life span of a ruler, or might focus on particular events of his reign. As a result, these may contain important clues on past events, but they are not written as critical historical writing. Very often *charita* literature might also contain eulogies glorifying the ruler, and also his genealogy, linking the family to glorious dynasties of the past. Hence, these legitimized the rule of the ruler in whose honour the *charita* was composed (Thapar 2013).

A classic example of *charita* literature is *Harshacharita* composed by the court poet Banabhatta. It gives us details of his patron king Harshavardhana's genealogy and childhood, with special focus on the events which led him to become the ruler of Kannauj (Thapar, 2013). The other important *charitas* are: Bilhana's *Vikramakadevacharita* composed under Vikramaditya VI of the Chalukyas of Kalayani; Padmagupta's *Navasahasankacarita* composed in the Paramara court; and, *Ramacharita* by Sandhyakaranandin in the court of Palas. Sandhyakaranandin's work is a unique kind of *charita* literature which employs a dual narrative, describing the achievements of Pala king Ramapala within the larger narrative of the Epic story of *Ramayana*. The poet discusses the recovery of Varendri region from the Kaivartas by king Ramapala. The Kaivartas had rebelled against the Palas. In doing so, he equates Varendri with Sita, and Ramapala with Rama. Another *charita* work is found in Gujarat, where Hemachandra composed *Kumarapalacharita*, a biography of Kumarapala, the ruler of Anahilawada. The purpose of this work, in addition to praising the ruler, is also to illustrate the rules of grammar. The work is bilingual in nature, being composed in both Sanskrit and Prakrit (Singh, 2008).

Another significant form of Sanskrit literature in this period is *natikas* or dramas. These dramas were generally based on characters from *Puranas*, or scenes from the Epics. King Harshavardhana is credited with authoring three dramas: *Ratnavali*, *Priyadarshika* and *Nagananda* (Winternitz, 2005, p. 54). The first two have a similar plot. *Ratnavali* is a story of Udayan, the king of Vatsa (also a hero of

another Sanskrit *Natika* by Bhasa) who falls in love with Ratnavali, a princess disguised as a maid servant. The plot of the second *natika*, *Priyandarshika*, is also very similar, but the play is known for introducing a new literary device, 'play within play.' The third drama, *Nagananda* (Joy of Naga), is story of a *Bodhisattva* Jimutavahana. The play combines Hindu and Buddhist elements. Harsha's court poet Banabhatta wrote the play *Kadambari* which presents a complex plot dealing with the lives of lovers going through two incarnations.

The most famous playwright of the period was Bhavabhuti who lived at the court of Yasovarman of Kannauj. His fame rests on his work *Malatimadhava* (Drama of Malati and Madhava), and two *Ramayana* based dramas – *Mahaviracharita* and *Uttaramacharita*. He is particularly known for his use of language, and is the most famous poet after Kalidasa. His patron King Yasovarman is also credited with the authoring of the drama, *Ramabhyudaya*. Further, he also patronized a Prakrit poet Vakpatiraja who wrote *Gaudavaha*, discussing the war campaigns of his patron.

The next prominent dramatist was Rajashekhara who lived at the Pratihara court under ruler Mahendrapala. He was a master of both Sanskrit and Prakrit and employed great proverbs in his prose. Two of his Sanskrit dramas – *Balaramayana*, and *Balabharata* – are based on the Epics *Ramanyana* and *Mahabharata* respectively. He is best known for *Karpuramanjari*, a comedy written in Prakrit.

During the 11th-12th centuries some of the most famous poets were from Kashmir. The poet Bilhana has been mentioned above. Other than him, Kshemendra wrote abridged versions of *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, religious poems, didactic texts on poetry, prosody and politics; Somadeva created a compendium of Indian fables, *Kathasaritasagara*,; Mankkha, under King Jayasimha wrote an epic *Srikanthacharita*, which deals with the legends of Siva; and in 1148 CE, poet Kalhana composed *Rajatarangini*. *Rajatarangini* is considered an important masterpiece, being a true historical chronicle of Kashmir.

Other plays which are traditionally held in highly esteem are: *Anargharaghava* by poet Murari (1050-1135 CE), It is a retelling of the *Ramayana*; *Unmattaraghava* by Bhaskarabhatta, which enacts the scene of Rama and his anguish after the capture of Sita. While most of the dramas mainly drew inspiration from the *Ramayana*, some poets also based their work on the *Mahabharata*. Thus, the king poet of Kerala Kulashekharavarman wrote *Tapatisamvarana* and *Subhadradhananjaya*. Besides this there are few dramas which dramatize the life of the ideal and truthful king Harishchandra: *Chandakaushika* written by poet Kshemishavara, and *Satyaharishchandra* by Ramachandra (12th century) (Winternitz, 2005, p. 279).

There are few dramas which are based on the life of Chauhan ruler Prithviraja and Gupta ruler Chandragupta II. *Prthivirajasaso* written by Chand Bardai, and *Prithvirajavijaya* written by an unknown author discusses the victory of king Prithviraja over Muhammad Ghori in the first Battle of Tarain.

16.2.2 Law Works

In law works, there was hardly any new *smriti* which was written in this period; instead the focus was on writing commentaries on the existing important *smritis*. Thus, we know of at least three commentaries on *Manusmriti*: *Manubhashya* by Medatithi (9th century CE), *Manutika* by Govindaraja (11th/12th century CE) and

Manvartha Muktavali by Kulluka Bhatta; and two on *Yajnyavalkya Smriti: Mitakshara* by Vijnaneshvara (11th-12th centuries), and *Yajnyavalkya Dharmasastra Nibandha* by Aparaka (12th century) (Jois, 2004, p. 37). The *Mitakshara* commentary is an influential work on law, and even today many of the Hindu laws are based on this work.

Other significant work is *Dayabhadra* written in Bengal by Jimtuhavahana. It mainly deals with matters like partition of property, and inheritance. It greatly differs from *Mitakshara* which ordains that the sons have the right to property at birth, whereas *Dayabhadra* gives this right only after the death of the father. This property laws enumerated in this text are still followed in Bengal.

Two other important texts that deal with law are *Lakshmidhara Kritya Kalpataru* (12th century), and Devanabhatta's *Smritichandrika*.

16.2.3 Scientific Works

Several works dealing with various branches of knowledge also emerged from the royal courts. In the 9th century, at the court of the Rashtrakuta ruler Amoghavarsha, a Jain author Mahaviracharya wrote *Ganitasarasangraha* dealing with Arithmetic. The text is known for attempting to solve issues like the measurements of depths and shadows. Another significant text on mathematics is a 12th century work *Lilavati Bhaskaracharya*.

King Bhulokamalla Someshvara, a 12th century Western Chalukya king, wrote *Manasollasa* or *Abhilashitarthacintakamalla*, an encyclopedia dealing with several topics like politics, army, astrology, jewels, food, and others. It is a huge work consisting of 8000 *granthas*. Another ruler who is known to be prolific writer is king Bhoja (1010–1055 CE). Texts on several different topics are attributed to him: *Samaranganasutradhara*, a treatise on architecture; *Shringaraprakasha* and *Sarvasvatikanthabharana*, a treatise on *kavya* literature; a treatise on medicine, *Rajamarathanda*. In total, around 84 texts are attributed to him (Vishnulok & Srivastava, 2009).

Mention must be made of two more texts: *Aparajitapriccha* and *Krishiparashara*. *Aparajitapriccha* authored by Bhuvanadeva deals mostly with architecture in south India. *Krishiparashara*, is a text written in Bengal discussing various aspects of agriculture: the seasons, technology and crops. The text is written by an unknown writer, possibly a brahmana author, pointing to the their increasing involvement in agriculture as they became recipients of land grants.

16.2.4 Religious Works

Puranic literature is a rich repository for understanding Hindu rituals. They generally deal with five topics: the creation of world, its destruction, genealogies of gods and sages, the reigns of 14 Manus, and finally the history of the rulers of solar and lunar dynasties (Flood, 2014). The bulk of this literature was composed during the Gupta time. However, some of the *Puranas* were also composed in the post-Gupta period such as *Bhagavata Purana*, (10th century), *Brahmavaivrita Purana* (10th to 16th century), and *Kalika Purana* (10/11th century). These discuss topics like pilgrimage, religious vows or *vratas*, *dharma*, and others thus lending us an insight into the main religious practices of the time.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. How did Sanskrit fare in the early medieval period? Discuss any two categories of Sanskrit literature.

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2. Write a note on Scientific works composed in this period.

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16.3 REGIONAL LANGUAGES

One of the important features of the literary history of this period is the development of literature in regional languages in various parts of India. Regional languages which grew rapidly during this period in northern India included Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Assamese, Odiya, Marathi and Gujarati. Each one of these languages originated from a corresponding Indo-Aryan Prakrit in its *apabhramsa* stage. This origin can be traced back to the seventh-eighth centuries. The three south Indian languages — Tamil, Kannada and Telugu — have a longer literary history than that of the north Indian regional languages. The literary history of the Tamil language goes back to the beginning of the Common Era. Kannada and Telegu also have older literary traditions than the north Indian regional languages. Malayalam is the youngest among the south Indian languages and it was not before the fourteenth century that it developed as an independent literary form.

16.3.1 Social Background of the Development of Regional Languages

Important factors which contributed to the development of the literature in the regional languages during the early medieval period are as follows :

- i) During the post-Gupta period, the growth of 'feudal' society, economy and polity led to the emergence of regional entities and cultures roughly from the seventh-eighth centuries. One consequence of the growth of regionalism was the emergence of the earliest forms of the regional languages from the *Apabhramsa*.
- ii) As has been mentioned above, the decline in the quality of Sanskrit literature had set in much before the establishment of the Delhi sultanate. Much of the Sanskrit literature which appeared from the 10th-11th centuries lacked spontaneity and did not appeal to the masses. Its appeal was confined to a very small Brahmanic circle. The replacement of Sanskrit by Persian as the official language during the Sultanate period further intensified the process of the decline of the Sanskrit literature. Once it lost the official patronage it had enjoyed at the centre, many kingdoms during the Sultanate period

promoted the use of regional languages since Persian was an unfamiliar language in many parts of the country. Regional languages were used, in addition to Sanskrit, for administrative purpose in many kingdoms even during the pre-Turkish period. In the territories under the rule of the Sultans of Delhi, there are references to Hindi knowing revenue officials at the local level.

- iii) The Turkish conquest of northern India during the 13th century led to the end of the Rajput-brahmana alliance and consequently the influence of the brahmanas diminished in the society. Once the upper caste domination diminished, the supremacy of Sanskrit received a setback, and regional languages which were spoken at the popular level, came to the fore.
- iv) The growth of non Brahmanical and non-conformist *Nathpanthi* movement and later that of various bhakti movements—both conformist and radical monotheistic — played an important role in the rapid growth of regional literature. We have already discussed the historical background of these movements earlier. Before the rise of the *Nathpanthi*, much of the literature of their predecessors — the Buddhist *siddhas*—was written in regional languages including Hindi. The *Nathpanthi* movement, which was the first beneficiary of the diminished influence of Brahmanism and which reached its culmination during the 13th and 14th centuries, promoted the cause of regional popular languages. The growth of the bhakti movements in north India from 15th century onwards played the most crucial role in the development of the regional languages and contributed to the rapid development of a great corpus of literature in these languages. The bhakti saints composed their verses in the languages understood by the people who were attracted towards them. They made use of popular idioms, popular legends and folk tales. The bhakti movements contributed to the growth of popular regional languages in yet another way. The bhakti saints, in particular those who belonged to the conventional stream of the bhakti movement translated or adapted the Epics, *Puranas* and the *Bhagavad Gita* from Sanskrit into regional languages in order to make their contents accessible to the people. In this way, the bhakti poets popularized *bhakti* episodes drawn from various Sanskrit texts. The contents of these texts were not only translated in the languages in which people could understand them but they were also presented in simple terms before the people.

16.3.2 Hindi

What is today known as Hindi developed in various forms in the medieval period. The dialects of Hindi included Brajbhasha, Awadhi, Rajasthani, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Malwi, etc. In our period the literature of Hindi language developed in these dialects. In addition to these dialects, a mixed form of Hindi, known as *Khari Boli* (originally meaning a rough, crude and raw speech) was also developing.

Scholars have placed the origin of the Hindi language between 7th and 10th centuries — it was in this period that Hindi was evolving out of *Apabhramsa*. The period between 7th-8th centuries and 14th century (before the rise of the bhakti poetry) is characterised as '*Veergatha Kala*' (age of Heroic Poetry) by scholars. Another name used for describing this period is *Adi Kala* (early period). Much poetry of this period was composed by bards who were patronised by various Rajput rulers.

The bards glorified such virtues of their patrons as chivalry and bravery. They also highlighted the element of romance in their poetical narratives. In its essence, this literature symbolises the values and attitudes of the Rajput ruling classes. The bards who composed this literature were not concerned with the aspirations of the common people. Most of the bardic poetical narratives was composed in the Rajasthani dialect of Hindi. The most famous of them is the *Prithviraja Raso* which is attributed to Chand Bardai, the court ministerial of Prithviraja; the most famous rajput ruler. Other heroic poetical narratives included *Visaldeva Raso*, *Hammir Raso*, *Khumana Raso* etc. The authenticity of most of these *raso* narratives in their existing forms is open to grave doubts and it seems that their contents were expanded during the later centuries. Thus for instance, it is only the nucleus of the *Prithviraja Raso* which was written during this period (12th century), and interpolations were made later in the original draft. Not all the Hindi literature of the period between 7th-8th centuries and 14th century belonged to the genre of bardic poetry. The Buddhist *siddhas* and later the *Nathpanthi yogis* composed religious poetry in an archaic form of Hindi. In western India, the Jaina scholars also composed religious poetry in Rajasthani highlighting various aspects of religious and social life of the people. The contribution of Amir Khusrau to Persian literature was monumental. But he also composed poems in mixed form of Hindi which ultimately developed into *Khari Boli* or *Hindustani*. He called this language *Hindavi*. Some of his Hindi verses are found in his *Khaliq Bari* which is often ascribed to him but was most probably written much later.

16.3.3 Tamil

The early part of early medieval period was mainly a continuation of the literary movement inspired by Bhakti which had emerged in the sixth century CE. The origin of this literary culture may be traced back to the sixth century when under the patronage of the two dynasties — Pallavas and Pandyas — the poets composed hymns dedicated to either Shiva or Vishnu. The Shaiva poets were known as *Nayanars* and Vaishnava poets were known as *Alvars*. Their hymns represented a significant phase in the development of Tamil language, as these were composed in the middle Tamil as opposed to the classical Tamil of the *Sangam* period. A major portion of these hymns were composed between the seventh and ninth centuries. While new hymns continued to be composed in the subsequent centuries, there were also attempts to create a compendium or a collection of these hymns. The first such compendium was compiled by *suntarar* (780-830 CE) who collected the poems of 62 *Nayanars*. Besides he also authored several new hymns which were added to the compendium in the 11th century by Nampi Antar Nampi (1080-1100 CE) (Zvelebil, 1974, p. 91) The Vaishnava canon '*Nalayirativya- prapantam*' (lit. means The Four Thousand Divine Work) was compiled later in the 10th century by Natamuni. It is a collection of 4000 hymns composed by 14 poets, of which 12 were *Alvars*.

From the ninth century onwards, under the patronage of Cholas, we see new trends in Tamil literature. At the court, two new genres of panegyric literature — *parani* and *ula* — were introduced. *Parani* mainly deals with military campaigns; the first one was authored by Jayamgonda, a poet at the court of Kulottunga Chola. He authored *Kalingattuparani*, which discusses his campaign to Kalinga. The text not only gives detailed understanding of war tactics of the time, but also comments on the times of peace and the dangers and terror of war (Zvelebil, 1968, p. 14).

The second genre of literature ‘*ula*’ was introduced by poet Ottukutar, a court poet of three Chola monarchs — Vikrama Chola, Kulotunga II and Rajaraja II. The term means ‘procession’. It was reworking of the idea of the procession of the deity in which the latter is replaced by the reigning king (Dehejia, 2009, p. 59). The literature is an attempt to glorify the ruler during peaceful times, and it shows the king moving around the city completely free of troubles, foreign or domestic. The literature is divided into two parts: the first part introduces the king, discusses his ancestry, his achievements and his court; and in the second part there is a discussion of his tour of the city, and how warmly he is received by the people (Venkatasubramanian, 2010, p. 35). The three works authored by Ottukutar are *Vikram-Chola Ula*, *Kulotunga Chola Ula*, and *Rajaraja Chola Ula*.

The most famous Chola poet was Kampan who is known for his composition of Tamil *Ramayana*. He lived during the reign of Kulottunga III (1178-1217 CE). He was honoured as *kavichakravarti*. His *Ramayana* is known as *Rama-avatharam* and is still known among the masses. However, his work is not a simple translation of *Ramayana*, but also has reinterpretation of some parts. His language is considered brilliant, being marked with expressive language and musicality of verse (Zvelebil, 1968, p. 13).

A significant Jaina contribution to the Tamil literature was *Jivakachintamani* by a Jain ascetic Tiruttakkadevar. The poet lived in Madurai. The epic is also known as *Mananul* or Book of Marriages. Its plot revolves around the story of Prince Jivaka who realises the futility of worldly pleasures, and adopts the Jaina road of renunciation (Ramaswamy, 2017, p. 178). It is important because it for the first time introduced Sanskrit *kavya* literature style to Tamil (Mukherjee, 1998, p. 151). It further inspired poets like Kampan. Another important Chola poet was Sekkizhar who wrote a haigiography of 63 *Nayanars*, ‘*Periyapuranam*.’ Besides these great works, Tamil literature was also enriched by some translations of Sanskrit texts like Nala and Damayanti episodes from *Mahabharata* called *Nalavenba* by Pugalendi, a contemporary of Kampan. In the 14th century, there was a composition of abridged edition of the *Mahabharata* by poet Villipuththuarar.

16.3.4 Kannada

The initial impetus to the development of Kannada literature came from the courts of Rashtrakutas and their feudatories. Although the usage of Kannada in inscriptions is known since the fifth century, there is some proof that the oldest surviving texts come to us from the early medieval period. The first important Kannada work ‘*Kavirajamarga*’ (Royal Road of Poets) was written in the ninth century at the court of the Rashtrakuta ruler Amoghavarsha (814-878 CE). While its authorship is traditionally attributed to the king, some scholars believe that it was mainly authored by his court poet Srivijaya. This text, consisting of 527 stanzas and three chapters, largely deals with the rules of Kannada grammar and poetics. It is considered as Sanskrit *kavya*; scholars note the influence of Dandin’s *Kavyadarsha* and *Bhamaha Kavyalankara*. There is discussion of rules of mixing Kannada and Sanskrit, the combination of sounds and others. It was intended as a guide for the poets in Kannada, making it a landmark work in the development of Kannada *kavya*.

The new literary movement strengthened further in the next century with the emergence of three great poets – Pampa, Ponna and Ranna who are celebrated as

the three gems of Kannada literature. The three poets mainly wrote on themes of Jainism and *Mahabharata*. The first one, Pampa, was a court poet of Arikesari II of Vemulavada, a feudatory of the Rasthrakutas. He is known for two important works – *Adipurana* and *Pampa-Bharata*. The first work, *Adipurana*, is based on the life of the first Jaina *tirthankara*. It is highly regarded for its literary style. The second work *Pampa-Bharata*, also known as *Vikramarjuna Vijaya*, is a major reinterpretation of the epic *Mahabharata*. Instead of five Pandavas, the main hero of the story is Arjuna and it ends with him being crowned as the king of Hastinapur. The story however also aimed at glorifying his patron who is identified as being equivalent of Arjun. The second poet Ponna, was at the court of Rasthrakuta ruler Krishnaraja (939-968 CE). He was a bilingual poet who wrote beautifully in both Sanskrit and Kannada, thus earning for himself a title of *Ubhaya-Kavi-Chakravarti* (Imperial poet in both the languages). Being a Jaina convert, his work centred on Jaina themes. *Shanti Purana* is his most famous composition. It is based on the life of the sixteenth Jain *tirthankara*, Shantinath. His other important work is an acrostic poem *Jinaksharamale* praising the Jinas.

The third important poet Ranna is associated with the court of Western Chalukyas. Although, he was initially patronized by a minister of contemporary Ganga Chavunda Raya, he soon became the court poet of the ruler, Tailapa (973-997 CE) and his successor Satyasraya (997-1008 CE). His chief texts are *Ajithpurana*, based on the life of the second *tirthankara*; *Sahasya Bhima Vijaya* or *Gadha-Yudha* is based on the life of Bhima; the text equates king Tailapa with him.

Other important works were by Chavunda Raya who authored a history of twenty-four *tirthankaras* *Trishashti-lakshana Maha-Purana*, also known as *Chavundaraya Purana*. Nagavarma I authored *Chhandombuddhi* (ocean of Prosody) which is a discussion of Kannada prosody. Besides this, he also translated Bana's *Kadambari* into Kannada. The literary movement halted in the 11th century due to the war with Cholas. But it revived in the next century.

A reinterpretation of the *Ramayana* from Jaina viewpoint was authored by Nagachandra in the 12th century. However, a great impetus came from *Virashiavas*, a Shaiva sect founded by Basava who rejected the authority of the brahmanas. His sect was open to everyone irrespective of caste background. They introduced a new kind of prose literature *Vachanas* or sentences which were composed by people of diverse backgrounds. These were composed in a simple language which did not require any special learning. They mainly deal with religious issues like the futility of religious rites, wealth, and book education. Instead they extolled people to live simple lives, affirming faith in Shiva. They were composed by people of diverse backgrounds, and it included few woman writers too.

16.3.5 Telegu

The usage of Telegu in inscriptions goes as back the 6th century, but the first literary texts were composed in the early medieval period. The oldest work in Telegu literature is a translation of the *Adi* and *Sabha parvas* of the *Mahabharata* by poet Nannaya. It dates back to the 11th century CE. In the subsequent centuries, there were further translations of the *Mahabharata*. Two poets Tikkana (1220-1300 CE) and Yerrapragada (1280-1350 CE) respectively translated *Virata-parva* and *Vana-parva*. These works laid the foundation of Telegu literature, and the three

poets are highly regarded as *kavitraya*. The other great Epic of *Ramayana* was translated in the 13th century by Kona Buddharaja. Thus, some of the oldest works in Telegu literature are translations of the great Sanskrit works.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Discuss the social background of the rise of regional languages.

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- 2) Discuss the origin and growth of any two languages of south India.

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16.4 SUMMARY

In this Unit we have traced the growth of language and literature during the early medieval period. The decline in the quality of Sanskrit works produced in this period has been emphasized. The Unit takes into account the growth of regional languages and literature. Many other languages such as Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi, Assamese, Odiya, Gujarati also flourished but their time period is beyond the purview of this Unit.

16.5 KEY WORDS

- Prosody* : Rhythm stress, intonation of a language.
- Allegorical* : Style of writing in which the characters and events extoll virtues.
- Hagiographic* : A biographical account which is full of praise for the subject it deals with.

16.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) See Section 16.2 and its Sub-sections.
- 2) See Sub-section 16.2.3

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) See Sub-section 16.3.1
- 2) See Sub-sections from 16.3.2 to 16.3.5

16.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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