

Adikavi Pampa

Pampa, a Jain poet who wrote in the Kannada language and went by the epithet Adikavi ("First Poet"), was active around the turn of the tenth century. Pampa is well known for his epics Vikramarjuna Vijaya or Pampa Bharata and the Adi Purana, both of which were written in the champu style around 939 CE and were court poems for the Vemulavada Chalukyan king Arikesari II. He was also a feudatory of the Rashtrakuta dynasty king Krishna III. These pieces served as the template for all subsequent Kannada champu works. The "*Three gems of Kannada literature*", which are the writings of the Jain authors Pampa, Sri Ponna, and Ranna, marked the beginning of the 10th century in Kannada literature.

About Pampa

Regarding Pampa's early years and native tongue, there are conflicting views. Although it is generally accepted that Pampa came from a Brahmin family who converted to Jainism, their exact origin and native tongue (Kannada or Telugu) are up for contention. His father was Abhimanadevaraya (also known as Bhimappayya), and his mother was Abbanabbe, as per the trilingual inscription (in Sanskrit, Telugu, as well as Kannada) erected at Bommallamma Gutta in Kurikiyala town, Gangadharam Mandal (in present-day Telangana) by Pampa's younger brother Jinavallabha. It also stated that his grandfather was Abhimanachandra, a Brahman from the Kammanadu neighbourhood in the Guntur region of Andhra Pradesh who was from Vangiparru. Pampa was born in Annigeri, spent his formative years on the banks of the neighbouring Varada river, and his mother Abbanabbe was the granddaughter of Joyisa Singha of Annigeri, in the present Dharwad district of Karnataka state, as per the modern Jain scholar Hampa Nagarajaiah ("Hampana").

Pampa's epic Vikramarjuna Vijaya attests to the poet's devotion to the Banavasi region by frequently describing the grandeur of the Banavasi region (in the contemporary Uttara Kannada district), including the pouring (Abhishek) of waters from the Varada stream on Arjuna's head at his coronation. Pampa, however, is thought to have hailed from a Telugu-speaking household or area, as per Sheldon Pollock.

Poetic Life of Pampa

He became King Arikesari II's court poet after travelling around. Arikesari, who held the title Gunarnava, was moved by his intellect and literary prowess and bestowed the title Kavita Gunarnava upon him. He authored his first masterwork, "Adi Purana", in 941 CE when he was 39 years old. A short while after, he finished Vikramarjuna Vijaya, also known as Pampa Bharata. These two pieces are still among the finest examples of traditional Kannada composition.

Adipurana

The Adi Purana, a Kannada translation of Jinasena's Sanskrit work, describes Rishabha, the first Tirthankara of Jainism, in sixteen cantos and is composed in the champu manner, a hybrid kind of prose and verse. The trip of a soul to perfection and the achievement of moksha is the theme of the work in his own distinctive manner. The two brothers Bharata and Bahubali, sons of Rishabha, battle for dominance and control over the entire globe in this work by Pampa. Even though Bahubali triumphs, he chooses to abandon his worldly ambitions in favour of his brother. This work served as a model for other Jain Puranas from the Middle Ages.