

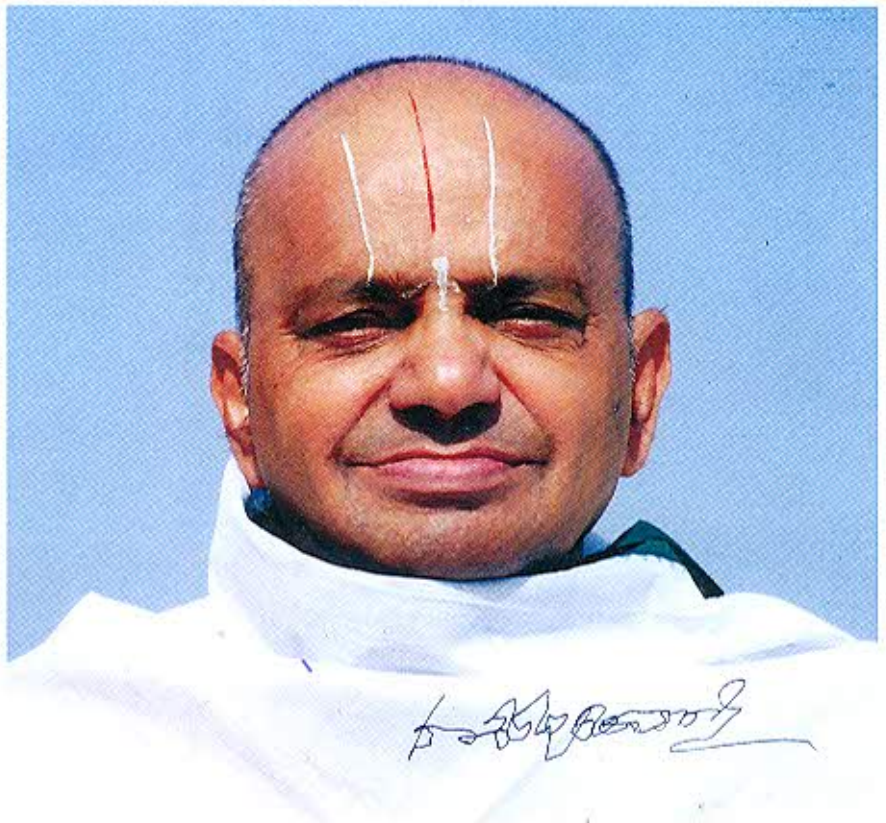


Sahitya Akademi

24 January 2012

meet the author

Dasarathi Rangacharya





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"It is uncommon for a scholar to be a creative writer. That is why it is said that scholarship is different and poetry is yet more different. It doesn't mean that a scholar should not be a poet, but the two are quite different talents and skills.

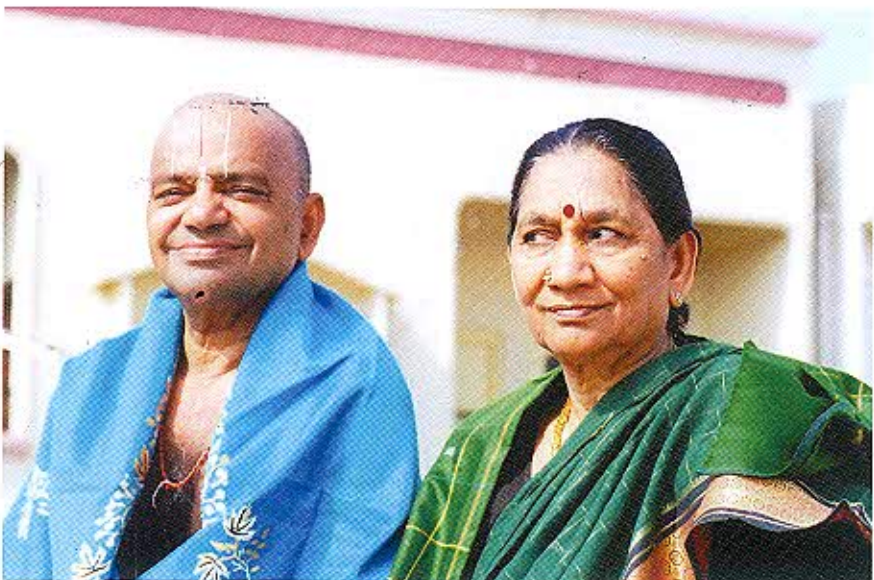
Dasarathi Rangacharya is a scholar as well as a creative writer. Therefore his literary individuality is unique. Not only that. Creative writers, do not, generally evince interest regarding spirituality and philosophical thinking. Rangacharya's scholarship, creative genius, spiritual yearning, inclinations towards philosophical thinking have transformed his literary personality into a full-fledged one."

- Akkiraju Ramapathi Rao 'Manjusri'

Rangacharya's creative works are varied in nature running into fifteen thousand pages. He is a bridge between traditionalism and modernism; he has formulated a synthetic outlook. Both Karl Marx and Mahatma Gandhi who propounded different ways for the development of society and an ideal social set up, are dearer to him. In Rangacharya's view there is no contradiction in their objectives.

Features of modern Telugu literature were clearly formed hundred years ago. In this modern literary history of hundred years, more than any other genre, the novel has generated a wide circle of readers as a powerful literary medium, and has attained popularity. For portraying contemporary society, the novel has a wide range and opportunity which other genres lack. A talented novelist can, through his style, imagination, descriptions, capability for devising situations, visualize fundamental imaginative faculty and sensibilities; he can also display the creative splendors of the poetic, dramatic and creative faculties etc.

Identifying Dasarathi Rangacharya's place as a greatly talented writer becomes possible only through his novels. He has retold the four Vedas in the style of the present day parlance which has won him accolades, but this does not establish his literary magnificence. Rangacharya has an urge of dedication



Ideal couple - Dasarathi and Kamala



Photo from his family album.

towards Indian cultural heritage and the righteous spiritual tradition. For the fulfillment of that urge, he has ventured upon a task which no Telugu savant has ever attempted in the 20th century. Not only in Telugu but even in other Indian regional languages, none have retold the Vedas in the modern parlance. Besides this, he has also rendered the original Sanskrit texts of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Bhagavata and Harivamsa into Telugu. Rangacharya has a great liking for Ramayana. Rangacharya might have developed a great passion and adoration for the Ramayana because of its being a long poem of deliverance and a venerable one to the Vaishnava tradition. Vaishnavism preaches total surrender which means complete and final self abnegation. There is another specialty in his study and understanding of the Ramayana. Valmiki too called the legend of Rama to be a great narrative of Sita. Rangacharya has once again narrated the Ramayana in his magnum opus, 'Sita charitam' (Sitaayascharitam mahat). So, It can be said that he has written the Ramayana twice, based on two approaches.

✓ The reason for the development of such a feeling of an absorption in Rangacharya as regards the Ramayana is the existence of a basis for it in his genealogy. His surname is Dasarathi which means son of Dasharatha (Lord Sri Rama). There is a pleasant, old legend regarding their family's acquisition of the surname of Dasarathi. His ancestry was of thousand years old and in this there was a highly endeared disciple to Bhagavad Ramanuja of the 11th century. The name of the disciple was Dasarathi. When Srimadramanuja went to the region of Telengana for propagating Vaishnavism, this endeared disciple also accompanied him. Telengana was then under the rule of the Kakatiyas. Rulers of the early period of the Kakatiya empire were Jains who later converted to Saivism. This Dasarathi settled down in Telengana for the spread of Vaishnavism, as per the accomplished desire of Bhagavad Ramanuja. All the men of his dynasty were great scholars and devotees and had a large group of disciples, who ardently systematized the forms of adoration and rituals of the worship of Lord Sri Ramachandra of Bhadrachalam. Sri Venkatacharyulu, the

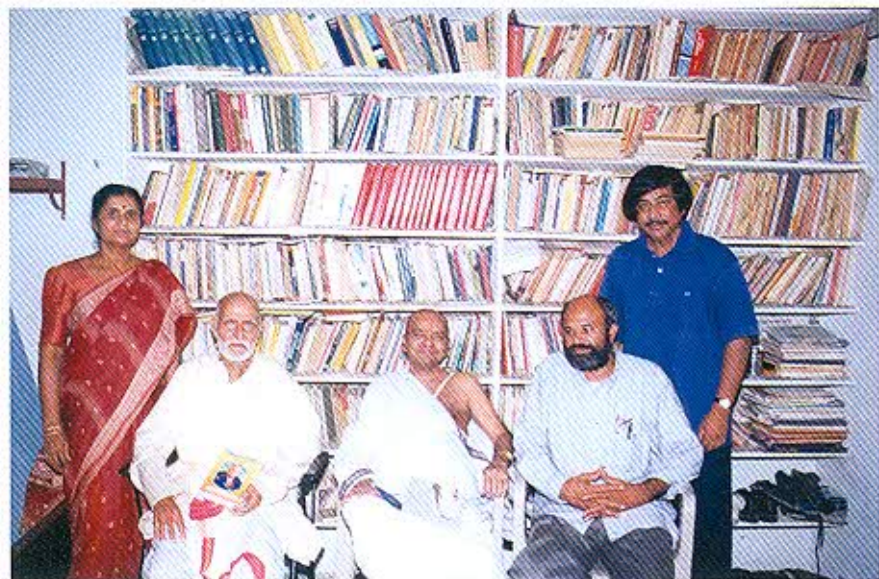
grandfather of Rangacharya was an eminent scholar in logic, who was honoured by the then kings. Rangacharya's father was also a great Sanskrit scholar. Dasarathi Krishnamacharya, elder brother of Rangacharya who attained fame as an eminent poet in the modern times, was in his childhood, taught grammar and the science of prosody by his mother.

When Rangacharya was a young boy, the regime of the Nawab of Nizam used to be oppressive. It was the year 1928. Rangacharya was born on August 24 of that year at Chinna Gudur village of the then Warangal District. He studied in Khammam upto 6th standard. Mir Osman Ali Khan, the then Nawab of Nizam, was a religious bigot, opposed to human rights. Thinking that if people were to be educated in their mother tongue, they would acquire knowledge and be enlightened and would rebel against him, he distanced the people from learning their mother tongue, culture and dignity of life. When Rangacharya was in 6th standard, the Nizam imposed the regulation that all the school students should wear certain uniform. Even at the tender age of twelve, Rangacharya defied the Nizam's dictatorial order and organized a strike by the students. He was expelled from the school for assuming leadership of the students' strike, and the state authorities imposed that he should not be admitted to any school or institution in the Princely State of the Nizam.

Due to some problems, Dasarathi Rangacharya's family had to stay at a Jagirdar's place named 'Garla'. In the meanwhile, people's movement against the Nizam's rule was intensified. Concentrating all the powers at his disposal, he participated in the movement. At sixteen years of age, he was taken into custody by the police, but as his age was not conducive for sentencing him to imprisonment, he escaped the jail term.

In 1948, after the police action was successful and the princely state of Nizam was liberated, he found employment in a library of Hyderabad Municipal Corporation and by self-effort and perseverance acquired B.A., and L.L.B, degrees and rising in service by stages, retired as Deputy Commissioner. In 1998, the Kakatiya University honoured him by conferring D. Litt.

At the age of 40, he took up creative writing. His first novel is 'Chillara Devullu' (Sundry Deities). Though it has been forty years since the novel has been published, it has acquired a permanent place in the hearts of the readers. In many universities research has been undertaken on this novel. It has become a subject of study for M.A. Students, and was translated into Hindi and English. The Central University of Hyderabad awarded Ph.D. degree to the thesis of the 'Comparative Study of Phaniswarnath's 'Myla Anchal' and 'Chillara Devullu.'



Dasarathi with Kaloji Narayana Rao

It is Rangacharya's conviction that 'rebellious movements will not be born through literature but literature of a higher order will emerge out of revolutionary movements.' The themes of Rangacharya's novels revolve around the Telengana movements of approximately two decades prior to the liberation of Hyderabad and the subsequent two decades, life of the commonality, revolutionary trend, deceits and oppression by the officers. He wrote these novels suffusing them with lively characters, situations and incidents and these traits brought them closer to the readers.

To quote eminent critic, D. Ramalingam, "The intention of the author is not to relate a story. His aim is to recreate the village life of those times in its varied conditions on a bigger canvas. Persons living in the village are themselves the characters."

Particularly on the theme of 'Chillara Devullu', he says, "The novel provides a kaleidoscopic view of the life that obtained then in its social, economic and cultural aspects."

The novel, 'Chillara Devullu,' got the Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi's award in 1970. Later this novel was also made into a movie for which Rangacharya himself wrote the dialogues.

Rangacharya's second novel, 'Modugu Poolu,' depicts the woes of Telengana experienced under the rule of the Jagirdars. Rangacharya has skillfully portrayed the life of the rural folk between 1940-48. 'Janapadam,' is his third novel, depicting Telengana's political, economic and social conditions between 1948-60. This was published in two parts. In this novel, Rangacharya describes how rural life has been subjected to deceits and exploitation. This novel has presented urbanization and the outcomes of industrialization. The novelist has brought out limitations of armed revolution, its failures and the undesirability of violent ways.

The fourth novel of Rangacharya is 'Raanunnadi Edi Nijam; (Prophetic Reality of the Future) in which he has strongly advocated optimism and the emergence of an egalitarian society. In this novel we can find the presentation of his optimistic, utopian, ideal society.

"His other novels 'Manavata', 'Saratalpam,' 'Maya Jalataru,' and 'Pavani,' depict the shallowness of caste system which mars the human relations and brings degradation in human lives", opines Atreya. (The Hindu 16.01.1998.)

About 'Janapadam', (1976) The Hindu reviews "The novel also depicts how the era of money being once upon a time secondary to power and domination cause to and end and how new era of money creating and securing political power to individuals irrespective of history begins."

About 'Modugu Poolu,' (1971) Indian Express opines that "Tales of great heroism are told with a passion for liberty and truth."

His autobiography "Jeevana yanam-Jeevitam" appeared in a Telugu daily for over 100 weeks as a serial and was very well received with acclaim.

Rangacharya has translated the great works of eminent writers from Urdu into Telugu, from Telugu into Urdu and from Telugu into Hindi. This has become possible only because he is highly proficient in Urdu and Hindi. On China's aggression of India in 1962, he had edited inspiring anthologies of poetry and encouraged young writers.

Besides translating the Four Vedas, he has also translated a host of Upanishats running to 30 in number.

He has contributed to Television Channels too by adopting his own novels and delivering talks on cultural matters.

In 1998, 'Andhra Pradesh Times', an English daily has extolled the distinction of Rangacharya's works as : "Dasarathi Rangacharya reflects the fine sublimation of action and wisdom into devotion towards the betterment of the fellow humans and that is why he places duty above ideology."

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- Saratalpam (1978)
- Pavani
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- Ramanuja Charitamrutam

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- Aksharamandakini
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- Vedika

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