

R. NARASIMHACHARYA - 1860-1936

R. Narasimhacharya (RN) is one of the stalwarts who worked tirelessly for the cause of Kannada culture during the later decades of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century. His contributions to the areas of Archaeology, Epigraphy, Textual Criticism and History of Kannada literature are unsurpassed to this day and they have served as veritable gold mines for future generations of scholars many of whom were under his tutelage.

He was born in Srirangapattana and obtained his B.A. degree in 1882. He was the first person to secure a master's degree in Kannada from the University of Madras in 1893. After working for a few years as a high school teacher he was appointed as a lecturer in the Maharaja's College, Mysore. He served as a translator in the governmental department of translations as a Kannada translator for about five years. His passion for research was instrumental in his acceptance of a job as an assistant to the celebrated B.L. Rice in the department of archaeology. He rose to the post of the director in the department in 1906 and rendered yeoman service till his retirement in 1922.

R. Narasimhacharya was well versed in Sanskrit, Tamil, English and Kannada. He acquired many skills necessary for his life's mission under the able guidance of his mentor B.L. Rice. His contribution to various fields of knowledge involving erudition and commitment are described here afterwards.

Textual Criticism:

R. Narasimhacharya's work in this field was path breaking. The science of textual criticism was not established and he had to form his own rules and adopt methods that were invented by him. Some details about the works edited by R.N. are given below:

1. 'Kavyavalokana' by Nagavarma-2, 1903.
2. Karnataka Bhashabhushana by Nagavarma-2, 1903.
3. Karnataka Shabdanushasana by Bhattakalanka. (With 'Bhashamanjari' and Manjari Makaranda'.)

These works are models of textual criticism. R. Narasimhacharya has made use of all the manuscripts that were available. He has created many techniques of editing and used them competently. All the variants are indicated. The books are provided with an erudite introduction in English which provides information about the author and his works. A comparative analysis with other works in the same genre both in Kannada and Sanskrit are handy. The indices given at the end of the text are helpful.

Contributions to archaeology:

During his tenures both as an assistant to B.L.Rice and as the director of the department in independent charge, which lasted for more than two decades R.N. toured extensively all over the princely state of Mysore, looking for ancient temples, inscriptions and manuscripts. He could find almost 5000 new inscriptions and study

more than one thousand temples. Many of these monuments and thousands of coins unearthed by him were diligently photographed and preserved for posterity.

‘Shasanapadyamanjari’ an anthology of poems found in inscriptions arranged chronologically with appropriate notes have passed the test of time and are valuable even today. ‘Neethimanjari’ (Part 1 and Part 2) as well as Neethivakyamanjari’ were two more anthologies edited by this scholar.

He was responsible for the making of thousands of photographs and maps which are well preserved. He made a thorough revision of the second volume of the monumental Epigraphica Carnatica pertaining to the inscriptions of Shravanabelagola. The inscriptions which numbered 144 in the first edition escalated to 500 in the next edition. He collected a number of works in Kannada and Sanskrit and got them copied. They were preserved in one hundred volumes. It was Narasimhachar who established the Hoysala sculpture as a separate entity different from the Chalukya sculpture. He has published illuminating guides and notes on the temples of Keshava at Somanathapura, Keshava at Belur and Mahalakshmi at Doddagaddavalli. These three monographs were brought out as a three volumes set called ‘Architecture and Sculpture of Mysore’

1. The Kesava Temple at Belur, The Lakshmidēvi Temple At Dodda Gaddavalli, Architecture And Sculpture Of Mysore (3 Vols. Set))
2. The Kesava Temple At Somanathapur

He led the excavation work at places such as Chandravalli, Talakadu and Halebeedu. Many coins including those of Roman and Chinese origin were found during these forays.

‘Gangara Charitre’ and ‘Sayana-Madhava’ are two more works written by R.N. on the history of Karnataka. He was the author of the annual reports of archaeological department of Mysore for sixteen years between 1906 and 1922.

History of literature:

‘History of Kannada Literature’ (1934, 1988) and ‘History of Kannada Language’ [History of Kannada language, (Readership lectures) by R. Narasimhacharya, Printed by the Asst. Superintendent, Govt. Branch Press, 1934.] both written in English by R Narasimhachar provide a succinct and authentic introduction to the topics dealt with, of course within the frame work of the material available at that time.

‘Karnataka Kavicharite’ published in three volumes in the years 1907, 1919 and 1929 respectively constitutes the most significant contribution of R. Narasimhacharya to Kannada culture. This sets out to provide detailed information about every single work found in Kannada up to that point of time and succeeds in achieving that stupendous task with a commendable degree of success. He gives useful of information about the authors, texts, cross references and selected passages from the texts under consideration.

Karnataka Kavicharithe Vol-1, was written jointly with S G Narasimhacharya in 1907. This was later edited in 1924. Famous author DV Gundappa, in his Jnaapaka

Chitrshaale writes as follows:- “R Narasimhacharya and S G Narasimhacharya equally contributed towards the creation of the first volume of *Karnāṭaka kavicaritre*. In this work, it is evident that SG had a hand, in writing the sentences that are in praise of earlier poets. Such was his subtle understanding of nuances that in a few selected words, he highlights the special attributes of the poet. His words are selected after he has weighed them again and again. R Narasimhacharya’s scholarship was wide-ranging, fantastically spanning several treatises. He had deeply studied literature in Sanskrit, Kannada, Tamil, and Telugu. On the other hand, S G Narasimhacharya’s vision was only towards aesthetics, focussing on *rasa* alone.

R. Narasimhacharya has received many accolades from the government as well as a thankful public. Rao Bahaddur, Praktana Vimarsha Vichakshana’, “Prachyavidyavaibhava’ and “Mahamahopadhyaya’ are some of the titles awarded to him. He was made an honorary member of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1907. He presided over the fourth Kannada Sahitya Sammelana held at Dharawada in 1918.