

**Bhakti Movement in Andhra Desa with Special Reference to Thalapaka
Annamacharya and Bammara Pothana**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work embodied in the present dissertation entitled “**Bhakti Movement in Andhra Desa with Special Reference to Thalapaka Annamacharya And Bammara Pothana**” is carried out under the supervision of **Prof. Rekha Pande**, for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in History from the University of Hyderabad, is an original work of mine and to the best of my knowledge no part of this dissertation has been submitted for the award of any research degree or diploma at any University. I also declare that this is a bonafide research work which is free from plagiarism. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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Chapter 1

In the present thesis, an attempt is made to study the role and contribution of Annamacharya who is popularly known as Annamaya and Bammara Pothana who is commonly known as Pothana, to the spread of the Bhakti movement in the Deccan region during 15th century. The significance of the study lies in the fact that though there were a large number of works that describe the development of Bhakti movement most of them presented a North centric view applying it to South India as well. Hence, in this thesis, the Bhakti movement would be studied in the context of medieval Andhra Desa with a special emphasis on Annamacharya and Pothana. Though there were a large number of works credited to Annamayya and Pothana, they tried to highlight the contribution of Annamayya and Pothana in terms of Karnatic music and Telugu literature respectively. However, the works of these two poets have been significant in the spread of Vishnu Bhakti in the Andhra region, which is popular even today. Before getting into the research methodology and objectives of the study, an attempt would be made to discuss the origin and the progress of the Bhakti movement. Religion plays an important role in determining the socio-political structure of a particular society; there is also a need to study the political structure as it is also an important factor in shaping the character and behaviour of the individual. The various other aspects which provide a better understanding of the society include economic status, the attitude of the ruling classes, degree of economic exploitation, level of religious tolerance, and other social issues.

The self-respect of the individual and peaceful existence has been the prerequisite of every society. Reform movements have gained significance due to the prevailing circumstances that reflected the interests of common masses. The Bhakti movement brought into light the dissatisfaction against the existing social system and has paved the way for the emergence of new sections in the society. The changes in the social system have been an important aspect of research. The protests and rebellions have also been studied in terms of their causes.¹ These changes in the social system have been analysed by scholars of each generation based on their analytical tools and also the needs

of the generation from the 1960s when feudalism was top on the agenda to women's role in the 1970s and the question of devadasis in the 19+80's and is an evolving question.

The Bhakti movement was also a revolt against the feudal system. It also facilitates the development of composite culture by incorporating different religions and linguistic communities. This devotional movement marks a national renaissance in the cultural sphere.² The cult of Bhakti gained prominence between the 6th and 7th centuries and has extended its influence over different parts of the country by observing different sections of the society into the fold of Hindus. This devotional movement began in south India which gradually reached the northern part of the country. However, the factors that contributed to the growth of the movement have been different in the south where the Bhakti emerged against the sects of Buddhism and Jainism, while in the North it sprang up against the authority of the Brahmins and the system of caste. In south India, Bhakti received patronage from the ruling dynasties of Chalukyas, Cholas, Kakatiyas, and Vijayanagara, unlike the North which was under Turkish supremacy.³

The study of the nature and concept of Bhakti indicates that it underwent many changes in its purpose and character over time. These varying characteristics of Bhakti have provided it with different perspectives. The term Bhakti is derived from the Sanskrit root word "Bhaj" which implies to engage, to practice, to turn and resort, to pursue, to cultivate, to honour and save, to adore and love. Bhakti also means recourse, participation, and experience. Bhakti is a relative and general term that can be used in both secular and religious contexts. Bhakti can also refer to Desh-Bhakti, guru-Bhakti, swami-Bhakti, of which guru Bhakti has been given greater significance by the Bhakti saints. This devotion also varied based on their love expressed to a particular divine form such as Shiva-Bhakti, Rama-Bhakti, etc. This movement of devotion as it tried to eliminate socio-economic and caste distinction.⁴

The development of Bhakti as a concept could be traced back to the Vedic period where the Upanishads emphasised Upasana or concentration on the Supreme Being, which would glorify the divine and result in intense devotion towards the lord. The Svetesvara Upanishad gives a description of the godhead and pure serenity that is distinct with admiration and love. Further, the Upanishad states that one's intelligence would result in the self-surrender of an individual.⁵ According to Sandilya sutras, Bhakti is interpreted as sublime and most immediate attachment

towards the Lord or Paramanurakti. Bhakti sutras view Bhakti as en-composing paraprema or love of the divine.⁶

Bhagavadgita attaches great importance to Ekanthika dharma which exposes the doctrine of Bhakti. It describes the interaction between humans and the divine where the personal lord invites complete surrender from the Bhakta, in which the divine Being grants liberation to the individual guiding him towards the path of Dharma.⁷ Thus, Bhakti implied single-minded devotion which was personal and was not willing to surrender to the dominance of the priest or religion sanctioned by the state.⁸

In South India, the tradition of Bhakti could be located in the ancient Sangam text 'Paripadal', which is one among the eight anthologies of Sangam literature, that introduces the idea of temple based worship and religion which becomes an important tradition in the later period. Thus Bhakti emerged as a central concept that was further developed in the succeeding centuries.⁹

Another Sangam literary text Tirumurukarrupatai, which is a guide to Murugan, mentions Shiva who becomes important in the later Puranic age however the text gives the least importance to the deity as he was not one among Tinai deities.¹⁰ This idea of devotion emerged as a movement with the efforts of the Alvars and Nayanars in the Tamil country who were the worshipers of Vishnu and Shiva, respectively. These poets used the vernacular language of Tamil against Sanskrit in propagating the message of devotion among the masses. The Tamil country during this period witnessed the emergence of three major sects of Saivism, Vaishnavism, and Shaktism.

The Alvars were 12 in number and came from different sections of the social structure composed Prabandhas which were compiled into a work called NalayiradivyaPrabandha. Prominent among the Alvars was Nammalvar who composed many verses, thus adding to the Prabandha literature. These Alvars in the course of time attained a position of divinity along with different manifestations of Vishnu in Vaishnavite temples.¹¹

The Alvars were succeeded by Acharya's who attempted to spread Bhakti on the Brahmanical lines. They provided philosophical bases to worship the personal God and created the faith among the masses. Nathamuni was the first among the Acharya's who laid the foundation of Vishisthadvaita. He also compiled compositions of Alvars into the work called Divya Prabandha. He was followed by 3 Acharya's and later by Ramanujacharya, who was popular

within the Acharya tradition. He travelled extensively promoting his philosophy which had a great impact on the Bhakti movement and the spread of Sri Vaishnavism in the society. The origins of Ramanuja's philosophy could be taken from the Narayanaya section of Bhagavad Gita, Purana's, Panchatra agama, and Alwars. He provided a synthesis of Upanishad based on absolutism with pancharathra theism. Thus, he provided a harmony between the demands of religious feeling and logical thinking.¹²

The philosophy provided by Ramanuja served as a basis for the succeeding Bhaktas like Madhava, Limbaraka, and Vedanta Desika who contributed for the growth of Sri Vaishnavism. The sect of Vaishnavism which was popular initially was on its decline during the period of the Cholas, and the Kakatiyas as these ruling dynasties extended their patronage towards the Saivite saints. However, the worship of Vishnu regained its prominence with the establishment of the Vijayanagara Dynasty in 1336. The sect of Vaishnavism developed not only with the patronage received from the royal family but also with the trade guilds and individuals. During this period, there were many saints like Sathagopa yogi, Annamacharya, Purandardas, and many others who promoted the sect of Vishnu among the masses.¹³

The Bhakti movement gradually spread its influence into North India with Ramananda, who was a disciple of Ramanujacharya. In North India, this devotional movement manifested itself in the form of Nirgun and Sagun Bhakti. Nirgun Bhakti was opposition to the worship of various personal deities and presented a view that their devotion was from the Nirgun Brahman. This was a prominent form of devotion expressed in the medieval period Para Bhakti was the highest form in this school of thought. This form of Bhakti is a doctrine of Impersonal, Omnipresent, Body less, and passionless spiritual assent that is animating and Pervading the Universe.¹⁴

Sagun Bhakti implies devotion expressed for a personal God .as individual could not worship God without attributes; hence a form of worship emerged where God is identified as one with attributes. This form of devotion provides individuals with the consumption of personal God. The poets belonging to this school of thought are interested in describing the features of the personal God. Thus, Nirgun School indicates devotion which is free from external forms of worship particularly the image worship on the contrary Sagun Bhakti presents a devotion that could be felt and seen convincing the devotee about the existence of God.

Ramananda belonged to the Saguna school of Bhakti carried the Bhakti movement to North India and belonged to the early 15th century. He was born at Prayag and was educated in Varanasi. His Philosophy was largely influenced by Vishisthadvaita put forward by Ramanuja. Ramananda strongly opposed the system of the cast and accepted disciples from various sections of the society. He propagated the message of equality before God, and his devotees were called the emancipated as they could overcome the discrimination based on caste.¹⁵

Kabir stands as an example of the Nirgun School of Bhakti. He was a disciple of Ramananda his religion was influenced by both Hinduism and Sufism; he was against the superstitions and bigotry prevailing in the formal religion. Kabir viewed the practice of yoga fasting and alms as meaningless without the reputation of the lord's name and expressing love towards him.¹⁶ He further attached importance to a spiritual teacher and promoted the message of universal brotherhood.

The Bhakti movement in Maharashtra was the form of Vaishnavism where the seeds were sown by Ghana Dev, and the sect was popularised as Varkari tradition. The poets of this region came from different social strata like Mukta Bhai a servant, Namdev a tailor, and Tukaram, a merchant. The devotees of the Varkari tradition worshipped the image of Vithoba located at Pandaripur and also undertook an annual pilgrimage to this holy shrine. Namdev was an important poet of the Maharashtra tradition who acted as a bridge between Maharashtra and the North Indian poets. These poets used the Vernacular language of Marathi in propagating the message of Bhakti and the compositions made by them were popularly known as Abhyangas.

In Bengal, the Vaishnavite sect was popularized by Chaitanya who was associated with the school of Gaudiya Vaishnavism. The sect in Bengal was distinct from other regions as it expressed devotion to Lord Krishna along with his consort Radha.¹⁷ The ideas of Chaitanya came into conflict with the existing Hindu social order where his social reforms were viewed as by-products of his devotional movement. He stated that there are no limits in accepting men into the stream of religious experience, which was disturbing to the Orthodox communities. The compositions of Chaitanya transcended caste barriers and proved to be revolutionary in medieval Bengal.¹⁸

The Bhakti movement gradually extended its influence to Rajasthan, Kashmir, and Assam. In Rajasthan, the devotion to Lord Krishna was popularised by Mira Bai by a royal princess called Mira Bai. Who gave up the royal life in the process of expressing Bhakti to the lord. Kashmir saw the development of Bhakti in the form of Virasaivism with the efforts of saints like Nandha rishi and Lal-Ded.

Research Objectives:

- To examine the historical background of the Andhra Desa.
- To study the progress of Vaishnavism and Saivism in this region.
- To examine the life and contribution and philosophy of Annamacharya.
- To examine the life and contribution and philosophy of BammaraPothana.

Research Questions:

- What was the background and impact of the Bhakti movement in Medieval Andhra Desa?
- What were the literary contributions of Annamacharya and his philosophy?
- What were the literary contributions of BammaraPothana and his philosophy?
- What was the view of Annamacharya and Bammara Pothana on God, Caste & Women?
- What were the poets' message towards humanity and their contribution to society?

Research Methodology: The methodology for the present study required intensive research for which we have examined both primary and secondary sources. As this work would study the compositions of the Bhakti poets' historical and literary method has been employed. In addition to these various archival materials and sources from different libraries have been used. In the course of the study different works that described the progress of the Bhakti movement and the contributions of the Bhakti, poets have also been taken into account. Finally, we would try to use the sociological perspective in order to understand the impact of the teachings of the Bhakti poets on society.

Sources for The Study: This study is based on a good number of primary and secondary sources. The works of Annamacharya and Bammara Pothana itself become an important source through light on their philosophy, spread of Bhakti movement in medieval Andhra, and their impact on society. Annamacharya wrote 32000 sankeerthanams out of which 12000 keerthanams have been preserved. These compositions could be broadly divided into Adhaytmika and Sringara where the former deals with the principle of detachment, moral, spiritual, and social

values, while the latter discusses the romantic feeling expressed by a woman Bhakta towards the lord. On the other hand, Bammara Pothana has written Bhagavatam, Narayana Sathakam, Veerabhadra Vijayam among which Bhagavatam occupies an important place as he has put a great effort in not only translating the Sanskrit text Bhagavata written by Vyasa but also incorporated his interpretation of Bhakti based on prevailing circumstances.

As far as the inscriptional sources are concerned, there are very few directly associated with these poets. Hence, various inscriptions belonging to the 15th century have been referred. The copper plate inscriptions put down by successors of Annamacharya that were published by Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanam have been of great help in the course of the study.

Review of Literature: There are different arguments put forward by scholars regarding the origin of Bhakti where some scholars saw it as a result of Christian influence while few others saw it as an outcome of Islamic influence. As against the foreign influences, certain scholars tried to locate Bhakti in the indigenous, ancient Hindu scriptures. As Bhakti emerged during the age of feudalism, a group of scholars interpreted Bhakti as loyalty that emerged due to feudal relations. Another group of writers viewed this devotional movement as a mark of social protest against the existing evils in the society.¹⁹

The orientalist construction of the idea of Bhakti was largely influenced by the Christian thought which was in turn based on three principles that include the difference between monoecism and monotheism, the division between religion and philosophy, and belief in a personal god as a symbol of true theism.²⁰ These principles thus formulated was directly related to the dispute between religion and philosophy that developed in the 17th century. The Christian scholars did not accept the idea of God provided by the philosophy and treated philosophy and religion as two distinct streams of thought. Hence, they put forward the idea of Christian theology in order to justify the concept of a personal god. The concepts of monism, Monotheism, and Theism have emerged in the Indian religious contexts.²¹

H.H. Wilson was the first to use Bhakti as a religion in 1846; he highlights the characteristics of the vaishnavite sect and states that the entire religious, moral code can be summarized called Bhakti. Bhakti implies a synthesis of extreme devotion with implicit faith, which is accompanied with the constant repetition of divine Krishna with complete faith which would help in salvation.²²

Wilson presented Bhakti as a doctrine which is an advancement to that of primitive religion which was based on Vedic sacrifices to acknowledge the supremacy of the divine power. According to him complete devotion to a Divine being was considered to be best beyond other materialistic religious duties. The author also gives the characteristics of Krishna Bhakti which is based on realistic attributes and also gives an instance of Bhagavad Gita, where Lord Krishna grants wishes to his devotees based on complete devotion.²³

Krishna Bhakti, according to Wilson, was popularized by Chaitanya and his followers. Though his essay discusses different sects of Vaishnavism Bhakti is associated only with Goswamies of Bengal who expresses the devotion to Krishna along with Radha and Gopikas. This idea put forward by Wilson has presented a path for western scholars to interpret Bhakti in relation to Christianity.

George A Grierson presented an integrated account of Bhakti and considered it as the monotheistic religion of early India that could be traced back to Bhagwadgita. However, the development of Bhagavathesim in the post-Christian era would have been subjected to the influence of western teachings due to the various factors like the migration of Christians and Jews into the Malabar Coast. According to another tradition, Saint Thomas also preached Christianity in North-West India, which could be certain as many Christian inhabitants did exist in the Western region. The Jesuit missionaries have also entered India during the time of Akbar in order to propagate their religion. Hence according to Grierson from the first century Hindus had an opportunity to interact with Christianity and incorporate certain traditions.²⁴

Grierson attempts to give few instances of Christian influence on the native religious practices, for instance, the worship of infant Krishna was the local manifestation of the Christ worship that was introduced to India from the North-West. Similarly, the ritual of celebrating the birth of Lord Krishna is also perhaps borrowed from Christianity. In South India the Doctrine of Christianity had a large impact on Hinduism the idea of the fatherhood of God through indigenisation to ancient India received greater imputes due to the beliefs of the Christian communities that reacted upon the medieval Bhakti poets.²⁵

According to him, Ramananda gave up caste exclusiveness due to Christian influence. He puts a dividing line when he describes Krishna Bhakti based on the love of a woman express towards the lord and considered Rama Bhakti as a pure form of love like that of a son and his father.²⁶

Monier Williams gives a threefold classification that includes Vedism, Brahmanism, and Hinduism. He associates Vedism with the forces of the law of nature and the efforts of individuals to receive their favour. Brahmanism is considered as an Indian form of pantheism that sprang up from Vedism that are the forces of nature, merged into the universal being called "Brahma", According to him Brahmanism belonged to the high and cultured classes of the society. While Hinduism, which was based on devotion to the personal deities, belonged to the masses and lower sections of the society. Monier Williams views Vaishnavism as a form of monotheism that undermined the qualities of the trinity in favour of Lord Vishnu. This sect shares many commonalities with Christianity.²⁷ The author also discusses the characteristics of the Vaishnavite irrespective of their sect affiliations. The Vaishnavites believe in the plurality of manifestations, among which the humans' forms are significant. Each sect also treats a text as a bible based on their association with either of the human forms. He also highlights the process of how small children are initiated into Vaishnavism and compares it with the ceremony of Baptism.²⁸ He opined that the development of Bhakti Marga had overpowered Gyana and Karma Marga in order to attain eternal bliss. Bhakti is equivalent to a meritorious task rather than that of faith in the Christian context. This path of devotion has also given up all rank distinctions and varied interests.²⁹

A group of scholars interpreted Bhakti as that which emerged due to the influence of Islam; the Indian territory was subjected to a large number of invasions from foreign groups which were gradually assimilated into the fold of Hinduism, after performing various rituals. However, this was not the case with the Arab Invaders who tried to maintain their distinct identity, hence the arrival of the Arabs had a great impact on its social, cultural, and religious sphere that brought about a structural change in the earliest system. The medieval Indian history moved from confrontation to cooperation that was followed by interaction and synthesis between the two religions.

According to Tarachand, the principles of universal brotherhood and human equality which appears prominently in Bhakti moment are largely derived from the Sufi tradition.³⁰ According to him, the monotheistic tendencies were due to the influence of Islam. Shankaracharya, who was born in Malabar Coast where the Monotheistic philosophy of Islam had a great influence in his attempts of establishing spiritual monism. The succeeding Bhakti Saints like Ramanuja,

Nimbarka and Madhava present a close resemblance to Islam in expressing their religious philosophy.³¹

He further states that various principles have been incorporated into the fold of Hinduism, which is an imprint of an Islamic mould.³² Tarachand states that the various characteristic that has been absorbed from Islamic thought include a greater emphasis on monotheism, worship based on emotions self-surrender, adoration towards the teacher and lack of interest in Rituals and the caste system. The idea of Prapatti and Bhakti, according to the author, was not the result of Christian influence. But are derived from Islam as they are the prominent features of Islam and the word Islam itself means self-surrender. And the Muslim himself is a Praparna. The idea of submission to the Supreme being is also absorbed from the Sufi tradition.³³

Humayun Kabir also expressed a similar view in which he states that Arab conquest of Sindh has led to the imposition of Arab culture and also the adoption of certain local practices. Initially, the relations between the Indians and Arabs were hostile but later resulted in a synthesis that provided uniformity in social customs, food, dress, court etiquette, and administrative system.³⁴ According to him, the new religion based on humanity and social egalitarianism attracted large masses from Hinduism, who were dissatisfied with the elaborate rituals and sacrifices. He views Shankaras philosophy as a revolt against pluralism. His activities being considered as an effort in reviving the original truth, principal of extreme monism, and the concept of Maya are those principles that find similarities in Islam. Various arguments have been presented by him in order to justify the establishment of Arab settlements in South India. That served as a catalyst in the development of the Bhakti movement. In the religious sphere with the establishment of Muslim power, Sanskrit was relegated to the background where the religious reformers began to preach the message of devotion in the local dialect which in turn led to the production of literature in the local language.³⁵

Susmitha Pande denied the Islamic and Christian influence states that the similarities between Bhakti and Christianity are only superficial, and the major principles of Bhakti are pre-medieval and pre-Christian in its development.³⁶

She states that the contribution of Shankara and other Acharya's was largely based on the text of Puranas and Upanishads. The teachings of Ramanuja, according to her, were based on the philosophy of Yamuna Charya who was preceded by Nathamuni. He was further preceded by the Alvars, the Pancharatra tradition, Bhagavad Gita, Agamas, and commentaries. The philosophy of

Madhava was based on the Puranas, and that of Nimbaraka was based on the Bhagavata tradition. The philosophy of all these medieval Bhakta's had the least connection with the World of Islam.³⁷ In describing the medieval religious moments, the author states that it is necessary to avoid the use of terms from other ages and types of thought. The criticism of the caste system should not be misunderstood with social egalitarianism. The concept of social equality was not relevant in the pre-modern times where differences in terms of power, wealth and recognition were inherent and not questioned. Susmithapande locates the criticism of caste in sramanic traditions of Buddhism and Jainism where the criticism was not directed towards the birth but was against the superior position of the Brahmins and ultimately denied the relevance of caste in spiritual life. According to her the criticism of caste system in medieval Bhakti literature could be taken as a contribution of Sramana tradition of anti-Brahmanism and caste transcendence rather than that of the modern idea of individual rights and classless society.³⁸

R.G. Bhandarkar denied the influence of Christianity and Islam in the progress of the Bhakti movement. He gives pieces of evidence from inscriptions and textual sources to trace the Bhakti movement from the earlier times, for instance, the author mentions the Nanaghat inscriptions dated in the 1st century B.C. which mentions the name of Vasudeva and sankarshana along with devotional images in the beginning. Bhandarkar also describes the text of Patanjali where Vasudeva is treated as a figure of worship; thus, the author portrays Vasudeva who emerged as a central figure in the 3rd & 4th century B.C. with the disciples known as the Bhagavatas.³⁹ Presentation: The author says the Development of Vaishnavism reform movement based on the principles where Bhagavadgeeta served as the basis for this sect. In the early Christian era, the miracles deeds of Lord Krishna were incorporated in the sects of Bhagavatism which continued till 8th century A.D. Later, the spiritual monism of Shankara gained prominence; this philosophy was replaced by Vishisthadvaita by Ramanuja. Bhandarkar states that the earlier concept of Vaishnavism with Radha and Krishna as central figures were replaced in the Maratha region by the worship of Krishna in the form of Vithoba gained significance to that of Radha.

Ram Narayan Vyas discussing the philosophy of Shankara, Ramanuja and Vallabha state that Bhakti that involved in the course of several centuries was also present in the primitive past of humanity and equated the basic element of Bhakti with Shradha that is prevalent from the Rig Vedic times. Bhakti is presented as a culmination of Shradha.⁴⁰

Vyas further attaches the Psychological element to Bhakti by stating that mental disorders could be solved through a healthy psychological life which is possible through Bhakti. A person with devotion would face every challenge with the confidence that he would be rescued by his lord, and all his hindrances would be resolved. Thus, the attitude of confidence would help a person to challenge even the mightiest among the men.⁴¹ Bhakti also contributes to achieving human prosperity and social progress as it promotes Universal love and the World as an invisible unit. According to him, the true devotees are the ideal social beings who strive for all-round development of the society.⁴²

Following the nationalist interpretation, the Marxist historians tried to view Bhakti in the socio-economic context and treated it as a mark of submission. D DKosambi related Bhakti to feudalism and says that Bhakti has provided a new path of expressing love towards the personal God that facilitates in attaining all benefits from the divine being. The decline of centralised authority resulted in the birth of a new state that was feudal at each level where personal loyalty has kept the serf associated with the lord which was based on the collection of taxes, ownership of land and transformation of raw material into finished commodities. He further states that loyalty to the king was identical to the devotion expressed to the all mighty.⁴³ Bhakti that was personal devotion is crucial in putting the society and the state together, though Bhakti served as a basis of feudal ideology, the benefits of which were limited to few sections of the society. By the 12th century, heavy taxes were imposed on the farmers who also paid for the luxurious life of the ruling dynasty and temple. Hence the peasants resorted to Bhakti in order to liberate themselves from elaborate sacrifices.⁴⁴

According to Irfan Habib, there was a shift from an egalitarian system where there was an increased demand for urban labour and new crafts which also contributed to the improvements in technology like efficient distillation, spinning wheel etc. The new crafts got much demand from the urban population who collected land revenue from the rural areas. The increased demand for the commodities has not only created new professions but also brought in new people in the existing professions these new developments were partly met by conversions, enslavement and adjustments made in the prevailing Hindu cast system. He states that conversions, adjustment and enslavement would lead to instability, cast, and religious distinctions would be questioned by those groups who had an impact of the socio-economic developments. He states that the popular movements based on monotheism is significant and says that Chaitanya, Tulasi Das and Meera

Bai who belong to the Sagun school of Bhakti came from the elite Brahmanical classes while the popular leaders like Namdev, Kabir who came from the other side of the social hierarchy opposed the orthodox religious practices. According to him, Kabir was against both Hinduism and Islam. He put forward new preaching that addressed the poor masses who accepted the divine being by rejecting the traditional religious ideologies. Kabir was thus identified as neither as Muslim nor Hindu but a Monotheist.⁴⁵

SuviraJaiswal states that a new form of Vishnu worship emerged due to a fusion with the local cults that was different from Vedic period, where the Supreme Being was offered elaborate sacrifices; this tradition was continued even in the later Vedic period. However, the Bhakti undermined the role of sacrifices to that of devotion in order to attain liberation.⁴⁶

She says that devotion in Bhagavathgeeta implies pure affection towards the Supreme Being who is inconceivable, he also possesses a physical form that facilitates an individual to experience closeness to the lord. The relation between the lord and the devotee is like that of father and son, lover and beloved.⁴⁷ According to her sects of Buddhism and Jainism were great challenges to Brahmanism. The emerging foreign groups like Sakas and Kushans could not be adopted in the existing social structure through a challenge to the Brahmanism. However, some liberal Brahmins promoted the worship of local cults whose worship was based on devotions rather than rituals. The author locates the emergence of Vaishnavism to the early centuries of the Christian era, which strengthened cultural Unity by integrating local cults into the Brahmanical system. Jaiswal identifies the depiction of Lord Ram to the 2nd Century A D which has developed into a cult only in the early medieval period. According to her the secular Tamil literature assumed a religious dimension and helped in reducing the impact of Buddhism and Jainism.⁴⁸

Hiran Gohain states instances from Bhagavathgeeta & Bhagawat Purana, where Bhakti is subordinate that served the interests of dominant ruling classes and intelligence in the era of social crises. This devotion transformed into a protest against the oppressive social system in the works of the Tamil poets who carried the message of the devotion into the masses. According to him, Bhakti is better than Tantra, which is viewed by him as a form of primitive communism. Gohan also highlights the role of Ramananda who opened this path of devotion to the people of various professions and propagated Bhakti among the masses in their own language.⁴⁹

According to him in the medieval period, there was a change in social relations and mode of production in which artisans did not confine themselves to a particular village but extended them

activities to a distant place through a market where small merchants facilitated the sale of products away from the production centre. This period also witnessed the emergence of monetary transactions replacing the barter system, which contributed to a better economic position, of the artisans. Increase commodity production led to specialisation and division of labour which in turn had an impact in the social relations that facilitated in the emergence of new castes who became independent and were driven to the teachings of Ravidas, Kabir, and others who emphasised on one's labour and self-reliance as against renunciation and path of asceticism.⁵⁰

Many other scholars viewed Bhakti movement as a mark of dissent, protest and reform. The reforms movements have gained prominence based on the prevailing circumstances and are a reflection of the desire and aspirations of the common masses. The Bhakti movement brought forth the existing dissatisfaction against the social order and gave rise to a feeling of new caste and classes that emerged during the period.⁵¹

M.S.A. Rao talking about the ideology of the protest movement states that these movements in Pre-British India were mostly concerned with religious practices and believes as they were considered the chief reasons for religious deprivation. The Brahmanical sections of society established a monopoly over the paths of liberation by rejecting access of common masses. People became aware of discrimination. Hence the path of Bhakti proves to be a double-sided ideology of providing equality for different classes in the society on one-hand and attacking the supremacy of the Brahmins. These religious movements have brought about a significant change in the principles of purity and pollution underline the caste system for long.⁵²

Kamble saw Bhakti movement as a catholic egalitarian movement that broke the external shell of Hinduism and penetrated into the real common mysticism. This movement represents India's way of combating the religious and social challenges put forward by Islam. The teachings of these saints spread across the country and made a call to the people to raise against the situation and be self-reliant and fearless. The author looks at this moment as the bloodless revolution.⁵³ Kamble states that the Bhakti poets played a role in creating a feeling of Hindu conscience and the need for reforming the age-old superstitions and social customs. He further states that the wave thus created against the caste system did not last long as the socio-economic bases of the caste system were never challenged. According to him, the efforts put forward by the Bhakti.

saints in promoting equality were confined to the religious sphere and did not extend to the secular domain.⁵⁴

Andrew Shelling states that Bhakti poetry is distinct to South Asia and has been a great temptation to the modern educated people to absorb the emotions and aspirations available in the form of literature.⁵⁵ The numerous Bhakti poets emerged from the excluded socio-political hierarchy whose composition revolutionized the number of families and also extended its impact throughout the kingdom. Where people were longing for spiritual freedom and socio-economic equality. The concept of Bhakti, according to the author is characterized by an intensity that requires honest probing and intellectual effort to get close to the divine being. Shelling attempts to locate parallels in native American literature, like a protest song, African American gospels, and his own tradition.⁵⁶

The work by Krishna Sharma marks a significant departure from the established definitions of Bhakti and the Bhakti movement. She questioned and rejected the existing definitions of Bhakti and the representation of the movement based on the definition. According to her, the interpretation of Bhakti by the western scholars was not based on careful observation; on the contrary, it was based on their own judgment influenced by Christian Bias. The clear demarcation between religion and philosophy, monotheism and monism and the concept of the personal and impersonal ward that exists in the west does not find relevance in the Indian context. She affirms that the Bhakti movement is an amalgam of numerous devotional movements with divergent character.

Bhakti, according to her, was neither a doctrine nor a cult and it is not proper to equate Bhakti with Vaishnavism. The explanation of Bhakti in terms of monotheism as a pose to monism also proved to be faulty. Hence, Bhakti cannot be viewed as an integrated Phenomenon. The origins of Nirguns school of Bhakti were traced by her in the conversions of Nastika and Astika traditions that began in the early medieval period⁵⁷

According to her Bhakti instead of suppressing desires embraces devotion and love in the body and heart of the devotee, such involvement of the Bhakta helps him move away from theory doctrine and metaphysics and directs him to the path of music poetry and dance.⁵⁸ She states that Bhakti poetry is oral, which receives textual form in later centuries with many distortions in the process of transforming them into the script.⁵⁹ The Subaltern scholars like RanjitGuha describes Bhakti as an ideology of sub ordination.⁶⁰

He argues that Bhakti presents the collaboration with Hegemonic forces through the different means of expressing devotion that includes Dasya, Vashtalya, Sakhya and Sringara among all these forms the term Dasya that implies to be a servant or a slave is the most important governing principle in the devotional relationship. According to him even in the mode of Sringara Bhakti, the relation between the deity and the devotee is not based on equality where the primary function of this Rasa is to euologise and spiritualise the male dominance in the society.⁶¹ Different legends about Krishna's sexual adventures with the Gopi's and also present an authentic instance of male supremacy in the sexual politics' that exists in a patriarchal society.⁶² Tracy Coleman also expresses a similar view by demonstrating the Gopi narrative in the Bhagavata Purana, where Puranic Bhakti is much a conservative ideology rather than a revolution in a social context. Through the cowherd women are considered to be the most blessed in the Bhagavata Purana their spiritual achievements occur within the wider context of conventional Sri Dharma from which the woman is never liberated. Colman presents a comparison between the HariVamsa and the Bhagavata Purana, which indicates that the concept of devotion in the BhagavataPurana is based on domination and subordination. The cowherd women are also disempowered and glorified as slaves of Krishna in which the concept of Viraha Bhakti coincidence with patriarchy.⁶³

Christian lee Novetsky interprets Bhakti, not as a personal devotion or social movement but attempts to portray Bhakti as occupying an important space in the public sphere rather than associating itself with the particular community.⁶⁴ According to him, Bhakti expresses itself in the form of performances that attract a group of audience. The concept of Bhakti enters into the realm of history, not as a private affair but gained significance through the institutions of the society like labour, caste written and non-written media, and places away from home.

He gives an instance of the spiritual monism of Shankar Acharya in which he uses the river as a metaphor that symbolises an individual self that joints the ocean, which is a replica of Brahmin. He states that though the river is an individual stream but a centre for socio-religious activities of the Hindu and Universal means for commerce, urban development and travel which is an apt expression for the public similar to that of Bhakti.

Bhakti expresses devotion in different forms like puja, song, Pilgrimage and Darshan that take place in the presence of an audience. Thus, Bhakti implies not only a shared experience in

The form of anger or love, but external self-expression of emotions which is reflected in the form of public performances.⁶⁵ In the public sphere, Bhakti can be integrated into the discourse of nationalism which is *Desa Bhakti* that implies a commitment to the public and devotion to the nation that constitutes an idea of the nation.⁶⁶ Thus, Novetsky gives a different outlook towards Bhakti by giving importance to the audience. Who provides a place for this devotional sect in society?

Champakalakshmi looks at Bhakti as intense devotion directed to attain the supreme being the traces back the element of Bhakti in the Sangam the element of Bhakti in the Sangam literature where the text of *paripatal* that emphasises on the idea of absolute godhood and also devotion to Vishnu. This text marks a transformation from the worship of folk deities to that of the formal religion based on devotion.⁶⁷

The concept thus taking its roots from the earliest literature gained prominence with the contribution of the always between 5th to 8th Century A.D. The author also highlights the role of pilgrimage that facilitated an individual to get rid of emotional stress; it also marks a shift from natural to that of the landscape that focused around the south Indian temple. Not only for the development of the cult but also in enhancing the power of the temples, cosmos and territory.⁶⁸

She states that the Bhakti movement initially propagated the devotion of Vishnu and Shiva. This is the course of time resulted in a rift between Vaishnavism and Saivism where the later emerged victorious due to the patronage from the royal dynasties of the Cholas and the Pandya's.⁶⁹

According to Champakalakshmi the support from different communities in the society has led to the establishment of *mathas* which has provided an institutional basis for the movement and as the protectors of the philosophy of Saivism. She also viewed Bhakti as a system of ethical and moral conduct that was lacking in the previous systems. The cult of Bhakti has also made the temple a significant entity in economic activities and providing employment that led to the development of various crafts and professions like architecture, weaving and pottery etc.,

Vijaya Rama Swamy, states that in a patriotic society, the position of women was limited to the domestic space, and they lacked the power of self-expression and independence. In such circumstances, the path of devotion helped these women to come out of their stereotype roles and conventions. As a devotee, she was able to overcome all the restrictions that were imposed by the society the woman Bhakta's attempted to reach the Supreme Being in Skelton or naked forms the

compositions of these devotees marked a social protest moving away from the existing social order.⁷⁰

The author states that the women who adopted the path of Bhakti came from the class of Brahmins or Surdas, where the former were literate to a certain extent in religious and secular aspects while the latter acquired knowledge due to their economic and social equality with men and also due to the influence of folk traditions. She provides a classification of the women saints based on their path of devotion. The first category consisted of chaste woman like the wives of ViraSaivait saints who were involved in family life and considered it as the greatest duty. The second categories of women were rebels and left family life to reach the divine being. And the 3rd category woman devotees gave up the formal institution of marriage by devoting themselves to the lord.⁷¹ The author also highlights another significant feature where the woman devotees overcome all the virtues of femininity life like modesty gentleness and beauty.⁷²

Rekha Pande focusing on the women saints says that Bhakti movement released forces which facilitated many women to open up alternative space. By stating that Bhakti is open even to the lower caste and women, religious space has been opened. It is through Bhakti that women negotiated patriarchy very effectively at times. Hence women were able to walk out of their marital relationship and remain childless. Few others also attempted to break the traditional norms of a feminist behaviour by walking naked, dancing in public and wearing ankle belts. For some women, Bhakta's rejection of the dominions of men to whom they were tied up in a subordinate relationship became an element of struggle. According to the traditional scriptures, women should be devoted to her husband, and a complete merger should be her ultimate aim. It is against this view that women in Bhakti were courageous enough to deny this traditional norm and walked out of the patriarchal restricted spaces or transformed their husband to their way of thinking. Bhakti served as a source of moral courage for these women to create an alternative space away from patriarchal dominions. She further states that studying women in Bhakti would act as a beacon light which illuminates the dark past and provides greater clarity to history and accords a right full place for women. It stands an example of how some courageous women's voices did not die down even after the silence that was prevalent for long.⁷³

M.G.S. Narayan and Kesavan Veluthat state that the Bhakti ideology emerged as a cementing Force that brought together the kings, priests and the common masses in a harmonious manner.

Bhakti enables the elite to forget their pride and lower sections of their misery. Thus, creating an illusion of equality while retaining the inequalities that exist in a feudal system of production.⁷⁴

They further state that Bhakti not only began from the temples but also connected various temples through the path of pilgrimage, which in turn lead to the proliferation of temples.⁷⁵ They also saw Devadasi system as an important by-product of the Bhakti Movement as this path of devotion spread through the means of dance, song and beauty. The temple dancing girls played a significant role in developing the popular appeal of the temples.⁷⁶

According to them, Nayanars and the Alvars constituted the elite while there was a large number of general masses who did not involve productive activities were devoted to a significant Bhakti saint. These devotees moved from one temple to another and received food and shelter as they travelled across the region. This treatment received by them was only possible due to the service motive of the temple servants not only the major temple centres but also those in the countryside. These large sections of the people who were added to the rank of Bhakta's provided a strong popular base for the devotional movements.⁷⁷

Rajgopal in his works beyond Bhakti steps ahead attempts to establish similarities between the religious movement in the historical time and the movement that emerged during 19th century in Tamilnadu. In the first case, the Bhakti movement emerged as a counter to Jainism and Buddhism while in the 19th century, the contribution of Ramalingaswamy and his devotional movement was directed against Christianity and Islam. The Bhakti movement into different historical times created a wave among the masses through which they became aware of their Tamil heritage.⁷⁸

He says that in the 19th century Ramalingaswamy re-organised the traditional Bhakti movement to challenge Christianity with a similar tool of establishing institutions for extending social services in order to prevent conversions into the foreign religion.⁷⁹

Among the very few works that throw light on the growth of Srivaishnavism in the region of Andhra the contribution made by O.Sambiah .In his work Vaishnavism in Andhra Desha occupies a significant place. The work focuses on the sect of Vaishnavism for a period of 6 Centuries which is based on Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit and Kannada literary sources. Epigraphic and Numismatic sources presented the evaluation of Vaishnavism in the Andhra region. Further, he attempted to show how Vishnu emerged as an important deity from the Vedic period followed by the development of the Avatar concept and vyuhas. The work also highlights the contribution of Alvars and Acharya's with special focus on Ramanuja who's travel in Andhra Desha had a great

impact on the spread of Vaishnavism. He also discusses the royal patronage received by the sects of Vishnu from the rule of Sathavahana's. The author highlights the position of Vaishnavism in the post Ramanuja period and the growth of a sect in the Vijayanagara period.

The impact of Vaishnavism is presented in terms of society in the backdrop of Rural and Urban economies. The positions of lower sections of the society, their privileges and their claims to social and ritual status have been elaborated at length. As the Bhakti movement has contributed to the development of vernacular languages, the work focuses on the influence of this devotional movement on the Telugu literature, as a result of which different texts such as Mahabharata, Jai mini Bharata and various kinds of Ramayana has been produced. As Vaishnavism was based on personal devotion, Sambaiah discusses the development of different Vaishnavite temples that have emerged and survive due to the patronage received from the ruling dynasties, trade guilds, and communities of Artizans.⁸⁰

William Jackson, in his work songs of three great South Indian saint, the presence the voices of the three saints Annamacharya, Purandardas, and Kanakadas who lived between the 15th & 16th centuries during the Vijayanagara dynasty. Jackson gives a biographical account of the saints and also presents an analysis of a few compositions of the saints in language that could be enjoyed by millions of readers.⁸¹ He considers Bhakti as a mutual relationship like that of Arjuna and Krishna in Bhagavadgita, which is also seen between a husband and wife.⁸² He says that Bhakti is caring correspondence to the devotee who has someone to talk to, express his thankfulness, love, hope for help and constant access. The lives of the devotees are not glorified with pleasures, but they also face different challenges that were overcome by the feeling of love. According to him, this devotional movement is a purified system and saints of Vijayanagar treated Bhakti as which is simple to be lived varied to be attractive. The element of Bhakti should be strong in legitimising the power of the king and also the villager to express his love with great sincerity. Jackson states that classical India had its own idea of devotion and love free from Marxist platonic and Victorian influences. This work also talks about the sect of Haridasa that was popular in the Vijayanagara territory it is through this community of Haridasa that the sect of Vishnu reached the illiterate masses.⁸³

As this work would deal with the contribution of medieval Bhakta's, various other works and translations have also been referred to one such work is by Norman J. Cutlers songs of

Experience poetics of Tamil devotion. As the title of the book indicates, the poems compiled in this book are based on experiences of the saints. The experiences presented in this book are considered to be similar to the experiences of the lord himself. Cutler characterizes the Bhakta's relationship with the divine being as similar to that of servant master parent-child, friend-friend and lover beloved. Cutler emphasises on the importance of such a relationship in Tamil country. This devotional movement that began in the 6th and 7th centuries in the Tamil region gradually spread to the other parts of the country. The author also presents a deep analysis of how Bhakti emerged as a popular movement and also contributed to the development of a large amount of vernacular literature in different regions of the subcontinent.⁸⁴

The most significant work describing the Vijayanagar singers was done by R. D Ranade in his work pathway to God. Ranade considers the songs and the poems are not only rhetoric in nature but also personal insights of an individual that are experienced at the level of soul and produced outward in the form of beautiful krithis, these compositions are filled with the everyday life of a layperson. In Kannada literature, the Compositions of Kanakadas and Purandardas help in understanding the religious order of the Haridasa sect in a better manner these verses are a body of knowledge and a storehouse for understanding different mystical concepts, religious practices and interpretations. The author states that the songs were sung in various religious gatherings and became a part of village life, and no serious attention was paid for a critical and analytical study. These kruthis served as a guide in the religious path in order to attain the universal soul. The lyrics give us the voices, warnings, disappointments and attitudes of those devotees who are engrossed in the expression of Bhakti. Ranade states that with the songs of the past, the devotees of the present would feel, understand, expect and share the devotion that contributes in having a spiritual imagination presenting an integrated vision of human life. He was instrumental in the process of articulating and understanding the mystical concepts of Bhakta's.⁸⁵

The work that becomes important is poems to Shiva by Indira V. Peterson. The author who spent her childhood listening to the compositions of the Tamil Nayanars and presented a translation of Tevaram him into English. These compositions of the Nayanars give an elaborate description of the moving images, rights, myths and adoration to Shiva which are still of great interest and sung in the Tamil region. This work not only concentrates on devotional songs but also presents the

the reader with an understanding of the prevailing socio-cultural and religious context that serves as a basis for understanding the development of Bhakti movement in South India. This work becomes a seminal text in the Tamil cultural history and presents a synthesis of pan Indian perspective and distinct expression of Tamil ceremonial religion. The study indicates Peterson deep understanding of the performance of Tevaram hymns and their relation with the rituals and art forms that existed in the Tamil country.⁸⁶

Velchuri Narayan Rao and David Shulman's work *God on the Hill: Temple Poems from Tirupati* is a collection of devotional compositions of Annamacharya who lived between 1408 & 1503 A.D. His songs are considered to be the greatest achievement in the classical Telugu literature. This saint in his efforts of popularising Bhakti introduced the short padam songs that spread throughout the Telugu and Tamil regions and became an integral part of Karnatic classical music. The author has translated about 150 Sankertanas which were addressed to the lord of seven hills associated with the pilgrimage center of Tirupati. These Sankertanas were composed by Annamayya in a simple language to be accessible to the common masses. The work deals with two types of compositions that is Adhyatmika and Sringara. God in the Adhyatmika compositions is presented in various forms, for instance, one who states that God is what an individual has in his mind another who says that God is only based on the imagination created by the devotee. This work portrays the Lord as possessing moral qualities rather than metaphysical aspects. The adhyatmika kritis are presented in the form of the seeker. In the erotic compositions, Annamacharya transforms himself into a woman and expresses the longing to the God of seven hills in a feminine voice. The compositions also describe the intimate relationship of love between God and the goddesses. The translations put across in this work could be read in the form of poetry which is presented in the universal language of English.⁸⁷

Ambica Ananth, in her book *Ambrosia*, attempts to translate 108 Sankeertanas of Annamacharya that were tuned by Nidunuri Krishna Murthy, her greatest efforts lie in translations, the verses into English with great accuracy. The compositions of the 15th Century poet expressed devotion in 32,000 Sankeertanas to Lord Venkateswara. These select compositions include both metaphysical and sensuous. Some compositions portrayed the Lord as Supreme who possesses the knowledge of all Vedas and as a lord of various worlds. Few other compositions present him as inner strength of the humankind that helps them in overcoming hindrances. Certain

Compositions depict lord who incarnates in the form of Lord Ram and overcomes the evils and is victorious in battles the Supreme being is also presented in the form of Lord Krishna in the songs offered by the poet. Few other compositions Annamayya presents himself as a mere slave who could not perform miracles but just surrenders to the divine power.

The poet also offers his devotion in the form of sensuous composition where the translation of the erotic feelings between the goddess and her **convert** has been beautifully presented in this work. This work is a beautiful rendering into English, where it enhances the knowledge of the devotion of a 15th-century poet to the people of the other regions as most of the composition were in Telugu.⁸⁸

Thus, the element of Bhakti had its Indian routes despite the arguments put forward by certain scholars who associated the development of Bhakti with the foreign influence. The development of this devotional movement may be partly influenced by the emergence of new religions, but the idea of a personal god and universal brotherhood are native to the ancient Indian scriptures. This devotional movement developed as a monotheistic religion during the Christian Era, which largely developed in South India against the Hetrodocs religions and then spread to the Northern parts of the country. In South Bhakti received royal patronage from of Cholas and Vijayanagar empire. During the Vijayanagar period, few individuals played an important role in popularising the Vaishnavite religion, prominent among them were Annamacharya and Bammara Pothana.

Chapterisation: - This entire thesis is divided into six chapters where the 1st chapter is an introductory chapter that discuss the origin of Bhakti its progress in North and South India. It also discusses how this movement emerged in different parts of the country and its contributory factors. This chapter goes on to discuss the different perspectives of Bhakti given by the orientalist, nationalist and the Marxist. It also talks of how few scholars saw this movement as a mark of protest against the existing evils and rescue for women from the dominions of patriarchy. This chapter also discusses the works that talk about the influence of poets in the spread of the Bhakti movement.

The 2nd chapter is the material context of Andhra Desa that throws light on the political conditions of Andhra Desa beginning from the Satavahana's followed by Ikshvakus, Vishnu Kundins, Chalukay's, Kakatiya's, Recharla Velama's and Vijayanagara Dynasties. It also talks about how the different rulers contributed to the growth of religion in that region through their

donations. This chapter then discusses the socio-economic conditions prevalent during 14th & 15th century A.D. where land revenue taxation and trade largely added to the state revenues. It also highlights the role of the temple, which emerged as a centre of economic activity. It also emphasises on the social division's position of women and the status of Devadasis that were prevalent those days.

The 3rd chapter would discuss the life of the two poets Thalapaka Annamacharya and Bammara Pothana. The chapter highlights the poet's childhood their interest in devotional activities their initiation into Vaishnavism. In addition to this, it also discusses how these two poets were reluctant in dedicating their works to the rulers of those days and how they decided to spread the message of devotion among the masses.

The 4th chapter that is the philosophy of Annamacharya and Bammara Pothana and their contribution to Bhakti movement discusses the view of these poets on God their philosophy, the ways in which one could express his devotion in order to attain salvation. It also shows how Saranagathi emerges as a final resort for a helpless devotee.

The 5th chapter discusses how the writings of Annamacharya and Pothana present the social conditions, the evils of caste, Sati, child marriage, etc. It also tries to show how the poets promoted equality amongst different castes and stated that the path of Bhakti is open to all. The chapter further discusses the economic conditions portraying agricultural activities, trade, handicrafts, and how women contributed to those economic activities. They also show how one could express devotion in the form of women who is the desire for the union with the lord.

The 6th chapter is the conclusion that summarises all the chapters and presents the outcome of this thesis.

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Chapter 2

Material context of Medieval Andhradesa

The region of Deccan is an amalgam of different eco-zones consisting of coastal planes, rocky plateau, agricultural planes, and forests. It had a varied social formation of artisans, hunting-gathering, agriculturists, and various kinds of producing classes and also the production-oriented language of these classes as represented in the primary sources. This region witnessed the rule of many great dynasties from ancient times. In the present chapter, an attempt would be made to trace the brief political history of Andhra Desa beginning from the Sathavahanas. It would highlight the contribution of the Recharla Velama and Vijayanagar rulers in terms of promoting the growth of Vaishnavism; it would further discuss the socio-economic conditions that prevailed during the 14th and 15th centuries.

The term Andhra was first mentioned in Aitareya Brahmana where they were referred to as the decedents of Vishwamitra who have been cursed by him lived in the borders of Aryan settlements along with the Non-Aryan tribes. Sebaras, Pulindas, Pindaras etc. It reveals that the Andhra's lived south of Vindhya. It is also believed that the Mahajanapadas extended into the region of Andhra Desa. Later the Maurayans extended their influence over this region.

The beginning of political history in the Andhra region is shrouded in obscurity. However, it is from the establishment of the Satavahana power, continuous history of Andhra Desa is available.¹ Some scholars believe that Satavahanas who were the feudatories of the Mauryas declared themselves independent after the death of Ashoka. According to the Puranas, the Satavahanas were 30 rulers who extended their power over a period of 450 years.²

Srimukha was considered to be the real founder of the Satavahana Empire. His son Satakarni was a great conqueror who assumed the title of 'Daksinapathapati', which indicates his supremacy over the region of Deccan. He was largely influenced by the Vedic religion though his predecessors followed Jainism.

He was succeeded by his son Satakarni II. It was during his rule that the Saka Satavahana conflict began and continued until the decline of Satavahanas. After Satakarni II the power of the Satavahanas deteriorated and was restored during the rule of Kuntala, who was succeeded by Hala. Later the Satavahanas received a setback due to the innovations of the Sakas. Gauthamiputra Satakarni was the most important ruler of the Sathavahanas whose accomplishments are available in the Nasik inscription. He conquered the Sakas, Pahlavas,

Yavanas and Ksaharathas and extended his territory from Rajputana in the north, Mysore in the south. He was well versed in Vedas and other scriptures. His sons VasisthiputraPulamavi and Sivasri entered into conflict with Sakas which resulted in the marriage alliance with sakas.³

The age of the Satavahanas witnessed great religious development which is evident from the contemporary coins, inscriptions and literary works. Brahmanism based on ritualism, Bhagavatism represented by devotion to Shiva or Vishnu and non-orthodox sects like Buddhism and Jainism based on cosmopolitan outlook were extending their influence in the Deccan. Both Bhagavatism and unorthodox sects facilitated the leaders of aboriginal tribes to attain social respectability based on which the satavahanas gradually preferred to adopt a popular religion which is evident from the names of the rulers like Srimukha and Kanha. Due to Sunga influence from the north, in the Deccan, an attempt was made to provide a synthesis between Bhagavatism and Brahmanism, which is visible in Nanaghat inscription of Naganika, in the inscription Vaishnavite deities, Sankarsana and Vasudeva are invoked in addition to the Vedic deities like Varuna, Surya, Indra.⁴

Vasudeva was mentioned in the sena inscription associated with the reign of GautamiputraYajnasriSatakarni, which indicated the arrival of Bhagavatism into Andhradesa from Western Deccan. Satakarni I was influenced by Vedic ritualism, but his successors adopted a popular religion. Gathasaptasati of HalaSatavahana also portrays a large number of Vaishnavite mythologies in which Vishnu is represented as Trivikrama Narayana.⁵ This work represents Krishna in the form of Damodar and Madhusudana. GautamiputraSatakarni was influenced by the cult of Bhagavatism, the Nasik inscription presents him as Agamanilaya and compared to the divine figures of Krishna and Rama. The coins of Gautamiputra and other Satavahana rulers indicate their inclination towards Vaishnavism, some coins of Gautamiputra have the images of lotus and conch. Coins found at Vidisa portray the image of Laxmi, few other coins of the later Satavahana have a small circle which is assumed to be a symbol of discus. The last popular ruler of the Satavahanas was Agnasri who was overthrown by the dynasty of Ikshvaku.⁶

The Ikshvaku who began as the vassals of the satavahanas declared themselves independent after overthrowing the last Satavahana ruler by Camtamula. These Ikshvaku rulers claimed

themselves to be the decedents of the Ikshvaku dynasty of Lord Rama. Chamtamula, the founder of the dynasty, performed Agnistoma, Agnihotra, Vajapeya and Asvamedha.⁷ He was a devotee of Mahasena Virupaksa. Few temples of Mahasena were constructed in Vijayapuri in his time. The successors of Chamtamula initially followed Buddhism but gradually believed in the worship of Lord Vishnu due to the influence of Abhiras of western India, who believed in the sect of Bhagavatism. The popularity of the sect of Vishnu was evident from the names in the inscriptions of Ikshvakus like Ramasri, Padmasri, Krishnasri, Mukunda etc.⁸ During the rule of Ehuvala, Sivasepha, a general of the Abhira's, established the image of Astabhuja-Narayana at Sethagiri. An inscription associated with the image also identified Narayana with Vishnu and gives the earliest reference to Vishnu with eight arms. This site also has Dhvajastambha and inscribed conches. These rulers, being influenced by Vaishnavite mythology, took titles like Ramasyaeva Sarvajanaabhi Ramasya by Ehuvala, which meant one who was loved by all like Rama.⁹ His virapurushadatta constructed the temple of Pushpabhadraswami, which is considered to be a temple of Lord Vishnu. Thus, the Ikshvakus who ruled as the successors of Satavahanas established their authority over the Andhra region with a good administrative system similar to the predecessors during this period. Vijayapuri and Nagarjunaconda became the meeting grounds for Mahayana Buddhism, Vaishnavism, Saivism, which were all based on devotion to god that were directed to attain spiritual grace. Ehuvala, son of Rudrapurushdatta, was the last among the Ikshvakus.

The origin of Pallavas is contradictory. However, the early inscriptions of Pallavas, as for Mancikallu and Maridavolu, indicate that rule over the regions of Guntur, Prakasam and Nellore districts. The early Pallava rulers include Simhavarma, Sivaskandavarma, Buddhavarma, Kumaravisnu and Vishnugopa, who extended their influence over the region south of river Krishna.¹⁰ The region north of river Krishna was ruled over by Brhatpalayanas, who was replaced by Salankayanas; in a short span of time they ruled with Vengi as capital while the western part of Andhradesa was occupied by a section of Vakatakas.¹¹ All these dynasties were brahmanical in nature and adopted titles like paramabhagavata, and paramamaheswar, which reveals the growth of devotional theism.¹² The Sanskrit inscription of Pallavas begins with an invocation to Lord Vishnu. The construction of temples was also increased during the 5th and 6th centuries, where a temple was constructed by Vishnugopa for Lord Vishnu. A temple of Vishnu made of red stone was excavated at Pedavengi that was attributed to the rule of Salankayanas. Land grants were made by Pallava queen Carudevi to a temple constructed by Kilimahataraka. The Salankayanar ruler Nanidivarman II considered himself as

ParamaBhagavata and donated land to Vishnugrhasvam.¹³ Hasthivarman II also made land donations to the shrine of Vishnu at Jayapura during the KalyanaMahotsava.

In post Satavahana period among the dynasties that ruled over Andhra Desa Vishnukundis occupied the most significant position.¹⁴ They rose to prominence in the region of sripurvata with velpur as their early capital. Vishnukundins put an end to the rule of Pallavas and extended themselves into the region of Telangana across the Krishna river. Madhava Varma was the greatest among this line of rulers who extended his supremacy over entire Deccan. He entered into matrimonial alliance with the vakatakas and performed various sacrifices like Rajasuya, Asvamedha, Sarvamedha and Purusamedha.¹⁵

They were strong patrons of Vaishnavism, according to a recent view their tutelary deity of sripurvata interpreted as Buddha till 5th century began to be considered as a manifestation of Narayan Vishnu. The names of the rulers the symbols on coins, seals and the titles assumed by the rulers are largely Vaishnavite in nature.¹⁶ These rulers styled themselves as Vishnu. Vikramanayasampadam though epigraphically references of land grants and establishment of temples are very scarce, the rock-cut temples of Undavalli and Vijayawada associated with 6th and 7th centuries indicate their patronage to the institution of the temple. The sculpture in the caves of Undavalli depicts Vishnu as Anantasayana Narasimha, Varaha, Krishna and Trivikrama few other sculptures at Mogalrajapuram and Undavalli portray the mythology of Krishna Govardhana, Gajendra MokshaNavanita Krishna etc. Similarly, the story of Rama is also presented. In one of the images, the story of Sita in Asokavana was described. Thus by the end of the 7th century with the stable rule of vishnukundins, many temples came up with the institution of land grants.¹⁷

The rule of Chalukyas of vengi marked a new epic in the history of Andhra Desa. This dynasty was founded by KubjaVishnuvardhana. They adopted the titles like Maheswara and Paramabhagavata the rulers except few like KubjaVishnuvardhana and RajaRaja Narendra patronised saivism. Their territory extended in the coastal area while the western and southwestern Andhra were divided between the imperial powers of Rastrakutas, later Chalukyas, Cholas and Pallavas. It was during this period that various sub-ordinate families like Chalukyas of Vemulavada, PithapurndKolanupaka, the kings of Velanadu, the codas of Pottapi, the Haihayas of Palnad, the Banas of Hemavati emerged as feudatories in Andhra Desa. These families were constantly involved in wars prominent battle which had a great impact on politico-cultural development in Andhra Desa. After the decline of later Chalukyas

taking advantage of the political vacuum, the Kakatiyas rose to power at Anmakonda Kakali Rudradeva, and Ganapatideva brought most of the Telugu speaking under their control with Orugallu as their capital.

It was under the Kakatiyas that Saivism received great momentum in spite of their affiliation with Saivism. They had a symbol of boar on coins and seals. They established an image of Hari in all the temples reveal that they also worship Vasudeva, king Rudradeva installed an idol of Vasudeva in Rudresvar temple at Anumakonda, his minister Vellaki Gangadhara build a temple of prasannakesava. The Inugurti inscription states that Ganapatideva sister queen Mailamba constructed a temple of Gopalakrishna and gave gifts. General of PrataparudraDevarinayaka granted a village Salakavidu to the god Srirangam of Kaveri Prataparudra made some donation to Chennakesava at Mahbubnagar in 1321 A.D. His queen was mentioned in an inscription as making gifts to the Lord. Thus, the rule of kakatiya's which reached its zenith under Rudramadevi and Prataparudra declined with the attack of Muslim rulers of Delhi Sultanate.¹⁸

The RecharlaVelmas of Rachakonda and Devarakonda played a significant role in the region of Telangana in the 14th and 15th century. They rose to prominence after the decline of Kakatiyas in 1323 A.D. Achievements of these rulers can be categorised into four phases, that of subordinate phase formative phase, peak phase and the phase of decline these rulers ruled from 1326 A.D. According to Velugotivari Vamshavali Betalanatakudu was the founder. It is under Singamanayaka. They consolidated their authority and declared themselves independent with their capital at Rachakonda. The prominent rulers include Anapota Nayaka, Madanayakavedagiri.¹⁹ Singamanayaka II it was under the last ruler singamanayaka III.²⁰ the great poet BammaraPothana and Srinatha visited the court of Velmas. These Velma chiefs were initially Saivites but were converted into Vaishnavism by Vainacarya. According to Vaishnavite work, he visited the court of Singamana Nayaka and defeated Sakalya Mallu Bhattu, a Saiva and established Vaisnavism. Maccamba the queen of Madanayaka constructed shrine of Cennakesava in Nalgonda Madhava Nayak son Mahipala built a temple of Skandagiri in Warangal district in A.D. 1375. An inscription of 1407 A.D. from simhachalam indicates the gift of a lamp to god Narsimha.²¹ Anapota Nayaka queen Kanakalaxmi donated a lamp to the temple of Simhadrinatha.²²

Madhava Nayaka, son of Singmanayaka II, followed Ramanuja's Vaishnavism. Recherla chiefs who claimed power after the kakatiyas protected the territory from the Turkish invasions and undertook welfare measures for the progress of the people.

During 14 and 15 century the region of the south of Tungabhadra was largely diversified in terms of environment and culture. People were organized into various sects and lived in different geographical areas ranging from the dense forest of Western Ghats to low land fertile river valleys and semi-arid upland areas. They spoke Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Telugu along with the numerous languages and dialects. The religions Islam, Jainism, and Hinduism, were widely practiced along with the local deities. The people divided themselves into various caste and sub-caste by carrying out numerous professions. It was with the emergence of the Vijayanagar Empire in the 14th century. There was a unification of this territory to a great extent until the 16th century. This was established by the two brothers Hari-Hara and Bukka. This territory was ruled by four dynasties namely Sangamas, Saluvas, Tulvas and Aravidu between 14th and 17th centuries.

Robert Sewell presents seven interpretations regarding the origin of sangamas, but most probable account considers Sangamas as the employees in the kingdom of Warangal. After the capture of Warangal by the Turks, the brothers moved to the territory of Raja of Anakondi. In the course of time, Anakondi was also defeated, and Sangama brothers were imprisoned by the sultan. The sangama brothers were later set free and restored the territory of Anakondi. This sangama brother founded the imperial city of Vijayanagar on the banks of river Tungabhadra in 1336 under the guidance of scholar and sage vidyaranya. Hari-Hara was the first ruler who gradually extended his territory by 1340 and established a strong administration with the help of his brother Bukka.²³ The Sangamas adopted virupaksa as their tutelary deity, which continued till 1565. The shrine of virupaksha gradually emerged into a huge temple due to the donations from the royal family. All the religious grants made by the sangmas were announced in the temple of virupaksa in order to inform the Lord about their meritorious deeds.²⁴ According to the account of Nuniz a temple was constructed by Hari- Hara in the honour of a Brahmin hermit at Hampi which is still preserved as a great structure and receives worship even today.²⁵ Hari-Hara also extended his patronage to the Brahmins which has been evident from the grant of the institution of Karnam to the Brahmins of Nandavedika sect during the holy festival of Sivarathri in order to obtain religious merit.²⁶

Hari-Hara was succeeded by his brother Bukka in 1343 and ruled till 1379. It was during his period that the struggle between the Vijayanagar and Bahmanis began, that lasted for a couple of centuries. Bukka also carried out religious activities by making donations to Brahmins and temples. According to an inscription from Nellore, Brahmins were granted a village in the same region.²⁷ The temple of Tirumala first received a grant from the Vijayanagara rulers during the time of Bukka which indicates a grant of a village to offer Tirupponakam to the Lord every day, which came to be known as Bukkarayan-Sandhi.²⁸

An expedition was sent by Bukkaraya under the leadership of his son VeraKampana to free Sri Rangam from the authority of Muslims, and later he restored the worship in the temple of Srirangam after a long time. In 1352 Cheli Nayaka a subordinate officer of Bukka completed the mandapa of Aubhaladeva temple at KadiriAnanthapur District. In 1361 a lamp and a flower garden were gifted by Mahapradhani and treasurer Vittappayyan to the temple of Edirikondaperumal.²⁹ In addition to the patronage extended to the Hindu temples, Bukkaraya was liberal to the sect of Jainism where an attempt was made by him to bring together the rival groups of Sri Vaishnavites and Jains. An edict was issued by him in this respect enumerating the policy of the state and measures to be taken and has also ordered the renovation of Jainalayas from the revenues collected.³⁰

Harihara II, who assumed power in 1379, was the first to adopt titles like MahaRajadhi Raja. He consolidated the supremacy of the Sangama Dynasty over South India and made numerous grants to temples. Sayanna brother of Madhava Charya was appointed as chief minister by Harihara and people from the sect of Jainism were also appointed as officials. This indicates the attitude of religious tolerance by Harihara.³¹ Harihara in 1388 instituted a festival in his name at Tirumala and allotted the revenues of the village through Vaishnavite Acharya for this purpose. The ruler also made donations to the shrines of Kanchipuram, Srirangam and Ahobilam. His officials have made certain grants to the temple of Tirumala.

The region of Bukkaraya II from 1404 to 1406, though short-lived has witnessed some grants where donations were made to Laxminarsimha Deva at Purushottampatnam in Narsaraopet and placed the pillar of Garuda in front of the shrine. He also made grants to the temple of Narayanadeva in Chittoor.³²

Devaraya – I who succeeded Bukka constructed a temple of Lord Rama who was considered as a manifestation of Vishnu, this temple was of great significance to the rulers of Vijayanagara which is evident from its location in the capital of Hampi.³³ A land grant was made by Devaraya son Ramachandra at paturu to Konduri Ramanuja, a VaishnaviteAcarya. A temple of KesavaPerumal was constructed at Bapatla by ChenukaliKesava an agent of Devaraya -I.³⁴

Devaraya II the grandson of Devaraya I ascended the throne in 1423, he further extended the territory of Vijayanagar by defeating Bahmanis, though being a devotee of shiva the king greatly contributed for the spread of Vaishnavism. Devaraya II personally visited the temple of Tirumala in 1429 and granted three villages of Vikramadityamangala, cirukurakalu and Elamandiya from the royal treasury and paid 2200 varahas of gold to offer 30 plates of cooked rice, one plate of sweet cakes and a plate of payasa to the Lord. A festival was introduced by him to be carried out in the month of Asvayuja for nine days beginning on the day of punarvasu Nakshatra.³⁵ A military chief TeppadaNageya Nayaka of Devaraya II visited the Venkateswara temples in 1443 A.D. and gave 3000 ponnu gold coins as a gift and 100 gold coins for offering sacred food. A village was also granted to the Brahmins to ensure the recitation of Vedas in the temple.³⁶ Devaraya was a well-versed scholar and extended patronage to scholars from different languages, two works namely Mahanataka Sudha Nidhi and Ratiratnadipika are attributed to the authorship of Devaraya.³⁷ He encouraged Muslims by recruiting them in military service, placed the Quran before his throne and built a mosque in the capital to be used by the Muhammadans.³⁸ The Sambeta chief Pinnaya Deva extensively worshipped Vishnu and made donations to the temple of CennaKesava in Cuddapah district.³⁹ Narasimha Peggada, the minister of Mahamandalesvara Raya deva Maharaja made donations to Laxminarayana temple at Rajampet, in addition to the donations the local officials repaired the irrigation channels that supplied water to the villages granted to the temples.⁴⁰

Devaraya II was succeeded by his son Mallikarjuna who ruled from 1447 A.D. to 1465 A.D. He was an incompetent ruler; as a result, the Gajapatis of Orissa tried to establish their authority over Vijayanagar; however, the territory was protected by the strong local Governor's.⁴¹ PantaBurrelaChinamaReddingaru established images of KesavaPeremal and Ramadeva at a temple in Nellore in 1448 A.D. A temple of Gopala Krishna was constructed

On the hill of Udayagiri in 1460 A.D. and gave offerings. The temple of Kesavaperumal was built by general Mallinayanigaru at Daggupadu in 1449 A.D.⁴² After the death of king Mallikarjuna power was taken over by his son Raja Sekhara, but it was captured by Virupaksa II, the last Sangama ruler.⁴³ According to few scholars Virupaksha II after hearing the greatness of epic Ramayana narrated by Narsimhacharya and his brother, he adopted Vaishnavism after which most of his subjects began to worship Lord Vishnu.⁴⁴ In MahaboobnagarVijayagopala temple was constructed by Nandi Malla Reddy, a General of Virupaksha. After this period Saivism gradually receded to the background and Vaishnavism gained prominence, but the rulers continued "Sri Virupaksa" as their royal deity till the emergence of Aravidu dynasty.⁴⁵ Saluva Narsimha gained prominence as Governor of Chandragiri during the reign of Mallikajuna and Virupaksa. He was able to defend the territory of Vijayanagar during the in-competent rule of Sangamas. Narsimha associated himself with Lord Venkateswara in 1456 A.D. by granting the village Alipuram in the chandragirirajya, two more villages of Mangoduvelada and Mupaduveta in Padaivitturajys were donated by him in 1468 A.D and 1473 A.D. respectively, in 1464 A.D Saluva Narsimha's cousin Mallaya deva granted the village Elambakkam to Tirumala Saluva Narsimha issued orders to the temple managers to offer perfumes and other articles to the shrines of Venkateswara and Govinda Raja for daily worship.⁴⁶

In 1485 A.D Saluva Narsimha captured the throne of Vijayanagar with the help of General Tuluva Narsa Nayaka. This capture of authority by the saluvas was very significant for the propagation of Vaishnavism. He established numerous mattas, and feeding houses called Ramanuja Kutams.⁴⁷ A crown was donated by Saluva Narsimha to Lord Venkateswara during his visit to Tirupati, he installed an idol of Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy presently called Kattalgiasingar on the pathway to Tirumala.⁴⁸ Saluva also regularised the worship of Sri Govinda Raja like that of Venkateswara and granted three villages in order to provide offerings to god every day. He introduced the practice of reciting Kaisikapuranam on the day of UtthanaDwadasi. Under his rule, new temples like that of Kula sekhar Alwar and Raghu nayaka were built, and old temples were made attractive by the addition of gopuras and mandapams.⁴⁹ The festivals of Pavitrotsvam, Dipavali and Ugadi were celebrated with the patronage of the ruler.⁵⁰ Saluva chiefs like Tammaya deva, Malla deva and Vallabha deva made numerous grants, Rayaparaja, the grandson of Cola Maharaja, constructed the Mantapa, Gopura and Prakara for Lord Ramachandra in Ramapuram in Anantapur District.

Saluva Narasimha allotted eighteen villages and introduced swing festival in Tirumala which was celebrated in the month of Midhuna. He constructed a mandapa in the middle of the Pushkarini and initiated the floating festival. He also built Mandapas in the second enclosed of the Tirumala temple. Towers and Gopuram were built in the shrine of Govindharaja. The Saluva king accepted Kandadai Ramanuja Ayyangar as his spiritual teacher and appointed him as the temple manager.⁵¹ Saluva Narasimha was a well-versed Sanskrit scholar and is believed to have authored the work Ramabhudaya.⁵² Saluva Narasimha was followed by his son Immadi Narasimha, in 1492 under the regency of Commander Tuluva Narasanayaka. It was during the rule of Immadi, the temple of Rameshwaram received the village called Rameshwaram as a grant. He not only made donations but patronised learned scholars to write poems by giving them gifts. The life of Narasa Nayaka came to an end in 1503AD, where the power was taken over by Veera Narasimha who played the foundation of Tuluva dynasty. It was during this dynasty that the Vijayanagara dynasty witnessed the eminent rule of Krishna Devaraya. This dynasty ruled till 1565AD and was defeated in the battle of Tallikota. This kingdom was later ruled by Aravidu dynasty till the end of seventeenth century.⁵³

Economic conditions during the 14th and 15th century:

Economic factors play a significant role in the growth of any state which was not an exception for regional powers in medieval Andhra. The post-Kakatiya period marked a revival in the field of an economy that was reflected through increased monetary transactions, donations, trade and commerce. Which resulted in the improvement of Royal treasury.⁵⁴ Regional powers like Vijayanagara rulers, Reddy's and Velmas gave large donations to temples, and other religious institutions that facilitated the growth of Saivism and Vaishnavism the land and monetary grants were not limited to the royal elite but also came from temples, functionaries, merchants, artisans and cultivators that stands an example of economic prosperity among various sections of the society. There was an increase in money circulation, where coins of gold, silver and copper in various denominations like Varaha, Panam and gadyana were used in addition to this coins, of Portuguese and Italian and Persian were visible indicating the commercial contact with a foreign land.⁵⁵ The Medieval Andhra Desa was largely agrarian in nature, and most of the revenue was obtained from the taxes imposed on different kinds of land the royal treasury collected one-third to half of the total production from the peasants as known as 'Koru' in Telangana area. The Amara land and bhandaravada villages had the majority share in the central revenue, while the other lands

were given tax concessions or completely exempted from taxes like sarvmanya lands. The assessment of land revenue was differentiated based on productivity and fertility of the soil while most of the revenue came from paddy fields the dry crops had the least share. According to a Tamil inscription in the crown lands the king had the melvaram or major share while the agriculturist was left with minor share kudivaram. When these lands were granted to the temples the major share was received by them, the heads of religious institutions and that were in turn allotted to the mathas, these taxes were some time diverted to the temple associated with those matas.⁵⁶ The Vijayanagara emperors under took various measures for the growth of agriculture, they encouraged de-forestation and formation of new villages in order to bring waste lands under cultivation the grants to the temples and Brahmins were made to attain religious merit which in turn contributed for the economic prosperity of the subjects.⁵⁷ The state undertook steps to provide irrigational facilities in the rain shadow area of Telangana by granting tax-free lands to those who undertook repair and construction of tanks in irrigational channels.⁵⁸

Trade:

The regional powers of Medieval Andhra in addition to land revenue obtained immense wealth from both internal and external trade, a large number of merchant communities carried out trading activities the increase in the production of commercial crops necessitated long-distance trade. The state had provided facilities for the safety of the merchants by constructing rest houses along the trade routes.⁵⁹ Pilgrim routes generally became the inland trading routes, popular centres of Vaishnavism and Saivism attracted a large number of people which made the traders adopt the pilgrim routes to market their products. Inland Trade was carried out by Vysyas and Verabalanjas; internal trade was largely promoted through Angadi, Santhalu and Thirunalu, organised during the festivals around the temple premises. According to an inscription from Simhachalam a Tirunalu was organized in the temple these fares and markets proved to be a great impetus for the development of trade and commerce.⁶⁰ The traders organized themselves into a guild called Calumulasamasta, nana desaPekkandru, granted a part of their profit on the sale of various articles, house site, land and garden to a temple in palnad

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International trade proved to be profitable for the state the overseas trade was carried out by the family of Avaci Srinatha a great poet of 15th century elaborated on the imports from various countries and islands for the celebrations of Vasanthotsavam. Few of the

supplies mention by him include camphor trees from panso, elephants and gems from Ceylon silk cloths from China etc.,⁶² According to foreign accounts during the time of Saluva Narsimha and his successors the import of horses was very expensive, according to Krishna Devaraya's *Amuktamalyada* describes the treatment of foreign traders and proper maintenance of harbours; the foreign sailors were to be protected from natural calamities. This foreign trade flourished in the Tulu region in Barakuru and Mangaluru. The evidence of international trade and availability of foreign currency was highlighted by K.V. Ramesh in his monograph.⁶³

Taxation

The medieval Andhra state-imposed various category of taxes that added to the royal treasury, these taxes include that paid by the merchant guilds traders etc. In addition to this, taxes were imposed on gardens and estates.⁶⁴

Taxes on shoemaker are available from an inscription of 1375 A.D. According to another inscription of 1382 camels were also a source of revenue. In 1396 A.D there was a mention of a tax on the sale of branded cattle, oil mines and marriage. A record of 1402 A.D. gives an account of revenues from local dues sugarcane mills, cooking and baking. During the reign of Devaraya II an inscription dated 1437 A.D to 1438 A.D gives a list of a large number of taxes that include those on dry and wetlands, inferior crops, looms, houses, fruit-bearing trees etc. In the period of Saluva Narasimha *sekkayam* and *magamai* were mentioned, the income also came from terrace lands, beetle leaves, salt pans gold, mendicants and fee were imposed on grazing grounds of the government.⁶⁵

In addition to the above taxes, custom duties served as an important source of revenue. These taxes called *Sunkams* were collected at markets and gates of the kingdom. Rice classifies these customs into three categories that include goods in transits goods sold at one place and commodities of export. The point at which these taxes were collected were known as *thanya*. According to Abdul Razak the strong ports were put under the supervision of powerful men who were efficient in collecting the tolls. He further states that the revenue from these customs adds 42000 *pardaos* to the treasury. The collection of tolls was assigned to a group of officers appointed by the government first among was *Sumka Nayakas* who purchased the right of collecting taxes in a certain area and had to pay the revenue share to the *Karnam* who

was responsible for receiving all the payments on behalf of the government. The 3rd officer was Tirpari who assessed the value of the commodities and the tax to be paid. He was responsible for seeing that the producer and the government were not subjected to loss due to the imposition of undue taxes. The fourth officer Kolagadu was who measured the weight of the articles brought to the gates. Thus, the toll collectors were four officials among which to were government-appointed while others were private individuals.⁶⁶

An inscription of 1382 A.D provides a list of goods on which customs duties were imposed that which include fresh camphor, grains carried by pack animals, precious stones, musk, dark sandalwood etc. Taxes were also collected on the cloths like silk, spun, cotton, woollen blankets etc.⁶⁷ All the imports thus were largely consumed by the state or donated for the use of various religious strains of the kingdom.

Temple as a center of economic power

The temple played a significant role not only in the religious activities of the people in South India but also emerged as a center for multifarious socio-economic activities. It was socio-economic institution that had an impact on the lives of the people in a big way.⁶⁸ It enjoyed an economic position equal to that of the state. Temple was the single institution that received patronage from both the kings and their subjects. These institutions received land monetary grants for carrying out various rituals. In certain areas, temples lent money to commercial institutions like merchant guilds for the interest of 20 per cent. They also accepted deposits from various sections of society; interest obtain from such deposits was used for providing daily offerings to the deity.⁶⁹ In a few other areas, the temples used the revenues for the developmental activities in the village. The donors generally made grants in order to attain religious merit for themselves, or their ancestors or their masters. Temple played a significant role in the maintenance and excavation of irrigation canals; it also mobilized resources of money and land to extend relief measures during natural calamities. Crops cultivated on the lands of temples served as ingredients in prasada offer to the Lord as part of daily rituals and during festivals. Temple was the largest consumer of various products like pulses, rice, ghee, oil, pepper, salt, cardamom, Turmeric, sandal paste, camphor, musk, beetle leaves etc.⁷⁰ The daily offerings were distributed among the temple functionaries in the form of maintenance allowance. The offerings made to god was considered sacred and provided

religious merit to the devotee who consumed it. The sale of consecrated food was leased to private individuals.⁷¹

The temple served as an educational institution for which it employed teachers and provided free boarding facilities for the students.⁷² The famous Nagai temple in Karnataka was a great center for learning. The construction of temples provided employment opportunities for various groups of people like masons, silpins, master builders, carpenters, weavers etc. Few temples also provided permanent employment to goldsmiths, blacksmith, potters, musicians, gardeners etc. Thus, temples in medieval Andhra emerged powerful parallel to the state with great economic power and social responsibility the temple has contributed for the growth of agriculture trade and commerce that enhanced the revenues for the state.⁷³

Social conditions during the 14th and 15th centuries:

The society in medieval Andhra was highly stratified but liberal in nature. The rulers portrayed themselves as the protectors of Varnashrama Dharma, they also extended their patronage to other religious sects. During this period the cast divisions though based on occupations were not strictly implemented and there was an emergence of numerous sub- castes.

In Andhra society, the Brahmins were the most respected community. They were no longer limited to the functions prescribed by the ancient text and excelled in various professions. According to Paes there were four categories of Brahmins including officials, priests, businessman and land holders. Hence, according to the accounts of Nuiz and Paes it can be considered there were four groups of this elite class which consisted of Agraharam Dars, priest's businessman and administrators. Among all the category of Brahmins the influence position was taken by the learned once, who include astrologers, physicians and those who rendered justice. While other categories like palace priests and state officials were held low by the people.⁷⁴ According to Nuniz and Paes some Brahmins under took trade which was much profitable, this was also asserted by Barbosa who absorbed a change in the economic position of this highest class.⁷⁵

The Vipravinodins, another sub-caste of Brahmins, were Jugglers who travelled to different places entertaining the Brahmins and collected money for the lively hood. These groups of

people were widespread in the region, which is evident from an inscription that mentions they lived in Vijayanagara, Dravidadesa, Bedakota and Kataka.⁷⁶

Nuniz also talks of a group of Brahmins who undertook government services like administrators, commanders, ministers and governors. There have been many instances where the kings carried out their duties under the able guidance of Brahmin ministers. Krishnadevaraya justified the appointment of Brahmins to superior positions by stating that the Brahmin is the most trusted person who would retain his position even in times of danger and continue his service even if reduced to a position of a subordinate. Thus, the positions of bureaucracy were no longer confined to Kshatriyas and were taken up by the Brahmins.⁷⁷

A significant feature of Varna structure in Medieval South India is the absence of the Kshatriyas community, the person who protects people is considered a Kshatriya. In South India, the peasant warriors who possessed coercive power became rulers in the course of time. They were called the Sat-Sudras, which included the Reddy's the Padmanayakas etc. The kakatiyas also initially claimed Kshatriyahood of lunar rays but later adopted Kshatriya hood of solar rays. After the Kakatiya the regional powers followed a similar tradition in claiming their ancestry. For instance, the chodas of Kandur, Nellore and Konidesa were considered the Kshatriyas of solar rays. This was done by various dynasties in order to maintain political authority. These rulers, in order to legitimize their authority and have ritual contacts with different cultural and power communities. They presented their ritual hegemony through affiliations, entitlement and extensive patronage of literature and arts.⁷⁸ Recherlavelmas who were the subordinate of Kakatiyas declared themselves as an independent regional power and adopted several titles to reflect their glory, pomp and grandeur that would act as a check on their subordinate chiefs.

The Vaisyas mostly carried out trade and competed with Lingayats and Brahmins. They exercised a strong influence in the society by organizing themselves into guilds; these guilds extended their support to various temples through gifts and land grants. They posed certain revenue and judicial powers which were performed by them in an efficient manner. According to Barbosa, these group of people were wealthy and traded in precious stones along with silver and gold. The Komtis were also money lenders who charged a high rate of interest and gained maximum profits. The vaisyas, though patronised by the royal families had to give gifts to the king and the ministers in order to carry out their business without any hindrances.⁷⁹

The Sudras who stood last in the caste hierarchy were a heterogeneous community comprising of numerous sub-castes, each of them had their own, caste rules implemented with great rigour. They were not entitled to receive education and culture was denied to them. The members of each sub-caste married within their narrow community, dining with others were allowed with few restrictions. The heads of these castes appointed as Amaranyakas by the state and were entitled to collect taxes. A share of which was to be received by the government. Majority of the sudras were agriculturists or tenants who form the backbone of the prosperity of the kingdom. The reddy's mostly belong to this category. The velmas and Kammas were the military groups who were mainly occupied in fighting. The balijas carried out trade followed the example of those military groups. The gollas and kurbas were the shepherds, weavers belong to padmasalis community, blacksmith were kammara, while the potters were kummaras, earth-diggers were upparas. All these castes functioned through a well-organized council.⁸⁰

The untouchables were relegated away from the four-fold caste and stigmatized in society. They were forced to live outside the village. They were subjected to ill treatment, humiliation and abused by the upper caste, who also imposed forced labour on these communities which were obeyed implicitly by them severe punishment was also imposed for small offences. They were socially excluded by not being allowed draw water from common wells, visiting other houses and temples. These untouchables were further divided into Madiga and Malas, where the former were mostly artisans who produced ropes and leather buckets to draw water from wells. While the malas were agriculturist who also practiced weaving as a subsidiary profession as these communities were not admitted into civil and military services, they resorted to the theft of traders, pilgrims and travelers on highways.

Position of Women:

Women enjoyed a significant position in the medieval society. They undertook important positions in economy, administration and military. They involve themselves in craft productions like weaving, Mat making, Basket making, pottery, tailoring, garland making etc.⁸¹ The women from Royal families made donations for the construction of irrigation channels. They express their devotion by making the grant to the temples both in cash and kind. The donations came from ordinary and Royal women which were used for daily offerings to the temple some of the women who donated to Mukalingeshwara were Simhala Devi, Vasama Devi, Kesamma and PrithiviMaha Devi. The inscription of Srikurman mentions Gangabha

and Sita Devi's donors. The names of women donors were engraved on the walls of Simhachalam temple include BrijaDevi, Tara Devi, Uttama Devi, RajulaMaha Devi etc.,⁸² In 1390, MukannaKadambavana donated land to provide offerings to god and maintenance of Choultry.⁸³

Women made immense contribution in the field of literature by producing work in Telugu and Sanskrit few of the popular scholars include Jagan Mohini, Ganga Devi and Tirumalambha.⁸⁴

Marriage was a significant institution in the medieval period, the custom of offering dowry was prevalent in royal families; for instance, the ruler of Chanavolu gave Palnatoseema on the occasion of his daughter's wedding. Brahmins got their daughters married at an early age and enjoy a heavy bride prize. In the Vijayanagara kingdom, taxes were collected on marriage and its processions Devaraya II granted an exemption on marriage tax. The society also witnessed the evil practice of sathi where the wife was burnt on the funeral fire of her husband. This practice was prominent among higher caste of society.

Devadasis were present in almost all South India Temples. Young girls were donated to the temples as Devadasis. These women were considered auspicious as they were married to god. These girls were employed to dance, play music before the deity and sing Nama Snakirthana's. They were given administrative responsibilities, clean and decorate the temple premises. The girls were also donated by kings, Nobles, vassals and generals, 30 daughters were donated to the temple of Mukhalingam by an officer of the eastern Ganga's to carry out various activities in the temple.⁸⁵ These Devadasis visited the temple morning and evening to carry out service to the god.⁸⁶ All the Devadasis were unmarried, literate and well versed in dance and music; they earned their livelihood. Through prostitution which was sanctified by the society, the girls received liberal gifts from rulers & Brahmins, during the rule of HariharaVambiyakka who was interested in the poetry of Harihara became a Devadasi in the shrine of Pampapathi based on her personal interest. During the reign of Devaraya II he donated land to the dancing girls serving in the temple of Vardha Raja Swamy. These women were wealthy and made donations in order to receive religious merit. Thus, the temple girls received great encouragement from kings, town & military officials, merchant's & traders. They were held in high esteem.

Hence to conclude Andhra Desa that had a stable rule from the time of Satavahanas, they were initially associated with Buddhism, but gradually they shifted to the sects of devotional.

theism. This was followed by their successors like that of Iskvakus, Pallavas, Vishnukundins, etc., the devotional movement based on Bhakti and worship of Vishnu was strengthened during 14th and 15th centuries under the rule of Velmas and Vijayanagar dynasties. The sect of Vaishnavism gained prominence due to the patronage received that resulted in the construction of temples and Matas, it has led to the spread of devotional sects with the efforts of Vaishnavite poets and saints.

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Chapter 3

LIFE OF TALLAPAKA ANNAMACHARYA AND BAMMERA POTHANA

During the 15th century, Andhra Desa was politically divided among the rulers of Vijayanagar, Velmas of Rachakonda, Reddy's of Kondaveedu, and the Bahamani Sultan's who were constantly in a struggle to attain supremacy. While in the religious sphere the Bhakti movement gained significance due to the efforts of various poets prominent among them were Tallapaka Annamacharya and Bammara Pothana who propagated the message of Bhakti to attain liberation through music and poetry respectively. This chapter deals with the life of Annamacharya and Bammara Pothana, their interest in the devotional service from childhood, the process of their initiation into Vaishnavism, how they were able to overcome family responsibilities to follow the path of Bhakti and made the rulers Selva Narasimha and Sarvagna Singha Bhupala to realise that the path of devotion is supreme to that of the materialistic life.

Birth of Annamayya:

Chinnana, who is also known as Chinna Tiruvengalanadha, gives an extensive account of his grandfather in the work Annamayya charitram. Tallapaka Chinnana being the grandson of the divine poet, gathered information regarding the significant events and achievements of Annamayya through his family members and close acquaintances. In the 15th century most probably on 28th May 1408, Annamayya was born to the Nandavarika Brahmin couple Narayana Suri and Lakkamamba in Tallapaka.¹ This Hamlet was close to Tirupati and his family acquired the sir name Tallapaka due to their association with the village for long.² Narayana Suri, and Lakkamamba belonged to Smarta sect, who worshipped Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva equally however they were much inclined towards lord Vishnu which is also clear from the names Lakkamamba and Narayana Suri indicating that the ancestors were also devoted to Sri Hari.³ The couple had a glance of Nandaka sword, one among the five weapons of Lord Vishnu in the premises of the temple of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala, while they were praying to be blessed with a male child. Soon the couple was blessed with a boy as an answer to their prayers. According to the traditional belief of the Vaishnavite devotees, their saints are a manifestation of attendance and objects of Vishnu in Vaikunta which was considered accurate after the birth of Annamayya.⁴

Even the prominent Vaishnavite saint Perialwar was considered as a manifestation of the sword of Lord Vishnu. The two great saints Nammalvar and Annamacharya were born under the star of Vaisakha and were enlightened at the age of sixteen. Narayana Suri and

Lakkamamba named the child Annamayya which was also stated clearly by Chinnana, the name according to many scholars had a mythological significance which was mentioned as "Annam Brahmeti Vyajanat." Which indicates food is god. The term "Annam" is one among the thousand names of Lord Vishnu which is mentioned in Vishnu-Sahasranama-Stotram found in the Anushasan Parva.⁵

Annamayya leaves for Tirumala:

The young boy Annamayya at an early age of eight years was extremely devoted to Lord Vishnu and had a strong desire to visit Tirumala after hearing the greatness of the place from his mother. Carrying 'dhandalu' a string instrument on his shoulder and constantly reciting the Lord's name he was fond of spending time at the abode of Chennakeshava singing and dancing before him.⁶ Annamayya was engrossed in devotional service which his parents thought would overpower him and explained to him the importance of worldly life they thought that their son was not capable of taking up family responsibility and wished to check his attraction towards Lord Vishnu. One fine day Annamayya was sent to the forest to fetch grass with a sickle as he walked through the forest singing "Hari" is to be praised alone it appeared as if the trees were dancing to his tunes. The boy knelt to cut the grass wondering. "This is how the sword of Sreepathi would cut all the sins."⁷ The little boy screamed as the sharp sickle ran through his finger, he thought that all the creation would be sustained by Hari himself who is the sole essence of universe as told by the great personalities even after knowing this fact, "I failed to see the supreme in each creation. All impermanent relations would give me numerous responsibilities; nothing is permanent, except the omnipotent."⁸ Dropping the sickle young Annamayya decided to proceed to Tirumala, at that very instance as if God has endorsed his decision a large crowd wearing the Shankara chakra mudras and Urdhava pundaras, and bunches of peacock feathers were preceding to Tirumala it looked like an ocean of Vishnu Bhaktas. The singing of Hari-Keerthanas, chanting of Govindanama, and beating of drums set ablaze a great fire of Hari Bhakti in the heart of Annamayya. The spark of Hari-Bhakti was strengthened as the boy joined the crowd and started on his journey to Tirumala.⁹

Alavelumanga's vision:

Annamayya, on his way to Tirumala, felt exhausted, and fell asleep. At the very instance Alamelumanga the consort of Lord Venkateswara, who is considered to have possessed qualities of divinity glorified the different worlds with a portion of her great power.

This divine personality slowly approached the sleeping young child Annamayya. The soft-touch of the goddess awakened Annamayya from his sleep, the vision of Laxmi made the child forget all his hardships of travel, but gradually the sight of Annamayya decreased due to which Annamayya expressed his dissatisfaction on his inability to have a glance of the goddess. Then Alavelumanga stated that the hill of Tirumala is a heavenly abode on earth filled with divine stones, hence she advised Annamayya that he needed to remove his footwear in order to have the vision of the holy place in many glorious terms.¹⁰ The child noticed that he did not remove his sandals, realising his mistake he removed his slippers and requested Alavelumanga to forgive him. His eyesight was re-established after which he was able to see goddess Laxmi and prostrated before her. Annamayya expressed his helplessness in offering his service to the Lord on hearing this goddess replied that it was only his extreme devotion that brought her there. She then gave the consecrated food and blessed him to have safe travel to the abode of Lord Venkateswara, she disappeared. Annamayya recalled the conversation and the vision of the goddess that filled his heart with extreme joy which transformed into words and came out in the form of sankeerthanas praising the glories of Alamelumanga. Annamayya being immersed in the sanctity of the mountain began his pedestrian way to the shrine of Tirumala.¹¹

Annamayya at Tirumala:

It was a pleasant cloudy morning when the young boy reached Tirumala. As Annamayya arrived at his desired destination he was taken aback by the spirit of sanctity on Tirumala. Annamayya admiring the beauty of the heavenly abode proceeded to the Holy Pushkarini that was filled with the sacred water, after offering his daily prayers, he visited the Temple of Varaha and bowed at the entrance and proceeded further.¹² Annamayya was very delighted as he reached the inner sanctum of Varaha Swamy. The poet expressed his wish of visiting the temple of Venkateswara to be fruitful, later he took a pradakshana around the Varaha temple and left to the temple of Venkateswara. As he arrived at the holy (Dwajastamba) his heart was filled with ecstasy. He then walked into the temple and prostrated before the idol of Alamelumanga.

Annamayya vision of Lord Venkateswara:

Annamayya stepped into the inner sanctum that was filled with the sound of Vedic scriptures recited by the priests. Finally, Annamayya had a glance at Lord Vishnu who was adorned with precious jewels. And looking at the ideal Annamayya was extremely joyful and addressed the supreme being with various names like Narayana, Vasudeva, etc. Then out of extreme devotion, a song sprang out of the melodious voice in which Lord was described as one who satisfies every one's desires, treasurer of the universe and the ultimate abode of the human devotion after completing the song Annamayya received great appreciation from the priest who offered him the holy water. As it was the time for the temple to close and the Lord to rest Annamayya moves out from the sanctum and found a place to rest. He soon fell asleep being deeply engrossed in the thoughts of Venkateswara. The next day the young boy offered his morning prayers and decided to visit the sacred ponds in Tirumala. He started his journey with Kumara Thirtha after which he had a holy dip in Akasha Ganga followed by Papa Vinasha and later proceeded to Pandava Thirtha where he composed a hundred Sankeerthanas glorifying the deeds of Srinivas.¹³ Annamayya went back to the temple where he was disappointed; looking at the closed doors he sat in front of the shrine and began to sing keerthanas. To everyone's surprise, the doors of the temple fell open themselves welcoming the poet. Annamayya then went in and prostrated before the Lord all these incidents surprised the Vaikhanasa priests, who took him to the inner portion of the sanctum and showed him the idols of Sita, Rama, Sugriva, etc. They then returned to the main shrine, where the priests chanted the vedic hymns offering flowers and lamps. Later the vedic priests hosted Annamayya with consecrated food and sandalwood, for which Annamayya was greatly thankful. Annamayya then left the temple premises and sat beside the Holy Pushkarni recollecting all the incidents of the day and presented them in the form of a beautiful composition. He later went to the shrine of Varaha and rested in the temple directing his thoughts towards the supreme being even in his dreams.¹⁴

Annamayya's initiation into Vaishnavism:

The popular shrine of Tirumala became a home for a prominent Vaishnavite saint called Ghana Vishnu who was a great devotee of Lord Venkateswara and devoted himself to the service of Lord. On the auspicious day of Ekadasi the Vaishnavite saint after offering his evening prayers and receiving the consecrated food went back home. The same night Ghana Vishnu had a dream in which Lord Vishnu told about the young child who expressed his devotion through a melodious voice and assigned him the task of initiating the young Bhakta into the cult of Vaishnavism by conducting the ceremony of pancha samskara, for which it is

believed that Ghana Vishnu received the mudra's used in the ceremony of Pancha Samskara by the Lord himself.¹⁵ The sage was also told that he would come across the young Bhakta the very next day. After this dream, the Vaishnavite teacher was anxious to see the young lad and thought that the almighty was compassionate towards his devotees. The next morning the sage after carrying out his regular rituals took the mudras and began to look for that passionate young Bhakta. At the same time, Annamayya after completing his daily routine offered prayers to Lord Vishnu and began to walk singing about the glories of the supreme being. While he was engrossed in singing, he came across Ghana Vishnu who immediately understood that Annamayya was the same child of his dream the previous night. The Vaishnavite Guru approached Annamayya and took him to a nearby tree where both sat discussing the magnificence of Lord Vishnu. Later the teacher expressed his intension of introducing the young poet into Vaishnavism by performing Pancha Samskara.¹⁶ On hearing this Annamayya's heart was overwhelmed with joy and he was also told that the formal initiation into Vaishnavism would result in a union between the immortal soul and the individual. Accordingly, Annamayya wore the Tiruchurnam accompanied by the recitation of Vedic hymns. Later the mudras of Vishnu like the Sudarshana Chakra were imprinted on Annamayya's body. The young Bhakta was also instructed the Narayana mantra by the saint. Thus, Annamayya underwent a formal process through which the bond between Annamayya and Lord Venkateswara was strengthened. From then on Annamayya came to be known as Annamacharya who was deeply immersed in the service of the Lord.¹⁷

Search of Annamayya:

As Annamayya left to Tirumala his parents were filled with grief and nobody could console them. For days together Annamayya's father Narayansuri took assistance from relatives and friends in searching the nook and corner of the forest surrounding the village of Tallapaka but to no avail. Narayansuri could not overcome his grief and look at his wife distraught was much more disheartening. Annamayya's mother Lakkamamba could not bear this remorse which resulted in the deterioration of her health. Whenever she thought of her son she hardly spoke and was inconsolable. The only thing she did was to go to the temple of Channakeshava and sit there praying throughout the day so that her child would return. The house that was filled with laughter and happiness was all gloomy and pale. In this way years passed by but the couple could not forget their son and hoped that their prayer would be answered soon.

One fine day while Lakkamamba was in the temple premises Narayansuri came to take her home it was then that Lakkamamba expressed her wish to visit the temple of Tirumala. She explained her thoughts and reminded him of how they were blessed with a child when they offered their prayers to the Lord of Tirumala. Initially, Narayansuri denied the idea of travelling to the shrine of Tirumala but later thought that fulfilling her desire would make her much better and nothing else was more significant for Narayansuri than to see his wife at peace and renowned.¹⁸ They prostrated at the feet of Channakeshava and prayed to him to succeed in locating their son, which would make their life complete. The next morning the couple started of their journey to Tirumala with new hope and great energy, though the travel was tiring Narayansuri noticed how the condition of Lakkamamba was improving due to immense faith in Lord and a positive spirit that facilitated her to move further.

As the days pass the couple arrived at the foothills of Tirumala, they decided to rest at the Govindaraja temple as they were too tired to climb the mountain. The next morning, they visited Alavelumangapuram and received the blessings of Goddess; they intended to reach Tirumala by afternoon and left the temple early. After an exhausting climb, the couple reached the Koneru, as they took a dip in the holy water it appeared that they got rid of their sorrows. The couple then bowed to Varaha Swamy and proceeded to the main shrine of Venkateswara. As they reached the Garuda pillar it brought back memories of the couple offering prayers earlier to be blessed with a child. Overcoming her pain and anxiety Lakkamamba through herself to the ground and prayed to the divine being.¹⁹ The latter walked towards the sacred shrine where the Lord was hidden behind the curtain as he was being decorated in his gracious form and the sanctum was filled with the chanting of vedic hymns. The smell of the flowers, incense, and light-reflecting ornaments made the sanctum much more attractive. Later the curtains were withdrawn and the Lord was revealed in his dazzling form, the devotees were mesmerised and taken aback by his beauty. The couple could not take their eyes away from the Lord and be staring at him even as they headed to the outer complex of the temple, Lakkamamba face was glowing in the presence of Lord and Narayanasuri was happy as he got more than what he asked for hence he achieved inner peace that he was longing for. A thundering welcome grabbed the attention of the couple by which they finally took their eyes away from the Lord, for the priests were ready to welcome someone. Soon an elderly sage walked into the temple complex wearing the twelve sacred Urdhava Pundaras on his body. He gradually proceeded into the inner sanctum to offer his prayers. The sage was none other than Ghana Vishnu who was followed by a young child

decorated with necklace, bracelets etc. The couple remained speechless as they witnessed the progress of the monk along with the young boy Lakkamamba's body was filled with joy when they recognised their most praised possession Annamayya.²⁰

Unable to control herself Lakkamamba ran towards her son and hugged him tightly to never let him go. Tears roll down her cheeks as she kissed her son. Though Annamayya was pleased to see his parents after long he insisted them to control their emotions as they were within the temple which made Narayansuri and Lakkamamba somewhat quite. Annamayya introduced his parents to his teacher who let them into the inner sanctum. Lakkamamba thought the Lord who is the protector of all the world's what else could go wrong except for answering the worship offered to him positively and prostrated before the Lord for showering his blessings on them. And giving back their beloved possession, and then took the consecrated food offered by the priest.²¹

Annamayya described his stay with Ghana Vishnu to his parents which made them bow at his feet. The sage offering his blessings told them to stay at his hermitage. Ghana Vishnu took Narayanasuri and Lakkamamba into the Ashramam and introduced them to the fellow disciples. The couple was then offered delicious lunch but they were not hungry as they were able to locate Annamayya. Annamayya narrated all the events that took place after he left Tallapaka. The parents heard all the experiences and thought that the prediction of the village goddess came true in the form of Annamayya who made their life radiant and effervescent.

Return to Tallapaka:

Those were the times when Annamayya along with his parents were staying at Tirumala in the hermitage of Ghana Vishnu. There was not even a single day when Annamayya's mother requested Annamayya to return home but those efforts were in vain. As it was not possible to isolate Annamayya from Lord Venkateswara. One fine day Lakkamamba greatly insisted Annamayya to return but he remained unmoved explaining his bond with the divine being and wondered how he could survive without serving the almighty. Looking at all the commotion the sage intervened and console's Annamayya and told his parents to give the child some time to be convinced. The sage then called Annamayya and told him that though he was a true devotee of the Lord it was equally important for him to be a responsible son.²²

Ghana Vishnu also assured that lord Vishnu would be the saviour of his Bhakta. Listening to his teacher's advice Annamacharya thought for a moment and prayed to Lord Venkateswara;

having being compassionate towards his faithful devotees lord Vishnu decided to put an end to Annamayya's worries. The same night the young Annamayya had a dream in which he was advised to see the Lord in every task that he performs and whomever he associates with so that every act would be considered as the worship of the divine. He was further advised to obey his parents and he needed to go back home in order to satisfy the wishes of his parents. After the dream, Annamayya considers himself fortunate and concluded that he would go back to Tallapaka with his parents.²³ The next morning after completing his morning rituals the young devotee informed his parents about his decision which made them very happy. Later he went to his teacher and told his opinion and sort his permission. Hearing this Ghana Vishnu told that his permission would not matter as he had the orders of the Lord himself. The young Bhakta then asked his teacher to offer his blessings and wait for his return. Annamayya walked towards the temple of Venkateswara and wondered how he could manage without having a glance of the supreme deity very frequently. Overfilled with emotions Annamayya sort the Lord's blessings looking at the idol with utmost devotion and interest for an everlasting memory.²⁴ Before starting his journey he bid a farewell to his guru Ghana Vishnu prostrating at his feet. As the early rays of the sun fell gracefully on Ananda Nilaya, Annamayya began his travel along with his parents.²⁵ At this instance Ghana Vishnu who considered Annamayya as his son was overpowered with emotions but still controlling his feelings, he bid goodbye to him with a smile. The joyful parents walked along with their son leading the path back home. It appeared as if the holy hill of Tirumala was being robbed of its divine treasure called Annamayya.

Annamayya's Wedding:

Annamacharya's parents began to worry when they realised that their son's feelings were much directed towards the Lord instead of worldly affairs. Annamayya was an introvert who preferred detachment from the materialistic life, hence his mother decided to get him married so that he would be diverted from the devotional service. Parents of Annamayya began to look for a suitable bride and in the process of which they approached many families but none of them were willing to give their daughter to a person like Annamayya who would be least concerned about his wife, Lakkamamba and Narayansuri were extremely disappointed as they were rejected by every family they approached, however, Annamayya was unmoved by the series of events and tried to convince his parents by stating that he had already been married to the feet of Lord Venkateswara and trivial things like marriage did not bother him.²⁶

As fate would have favored Annamayya the very next morning Annamacharya's parents were approached by two couples with a proposal to give their daughters to Annamayya. Annamayya's parents have decided not to disappoint either of them got Annamacharya married to both brides Akkamma and Timmakka. The poet appeared like a manifestation of lord Vishnu sitting between his two consorts "Bhu and Sree".²⁷ Annamayya was leading a pious life along with his wives, who proved to be worthy partners understanding Annamayya's devotion and helped him in his religious activities gradually the bond between Annamayya and his wives strengthened and they saw Annamayya as a guide, philosopher and friend. The poet however was disturbed with the fact that he was not able to pursue his studies and serve the Lord at Tirumala. Looking at his disappointment his wives asked him to forgive as they were the reason for his distraction, but the poet did not accept it and told that both Timmamba and Akkamba were supportive in his devotional service. Both the women decided to put an end to the poet's sorrow by planning to visit Ghana Vishnu at Tirumala followed by Ahobilam to seek knowledge under the guidance of Adivan Satakopa Swami who is considered to be true knower of Ramanuja Charya's visistadvaita.²⁸

Annamayya proceeds to Ahobilam:

The next morning Annamacharya along with his wife's began their journey towards the divine hills of Garudadri. The first day of their journey was quick enough to reach Tirupathi. The next morning they visited the shrine of Goddess of Alamelumanga to receive her blessings and then began to mount the holy hills of Tirumala. In this journey Annamayya narrated the experiences of his first visit. Finally, they arrived at the top of Tirumala and proceeded directly to the hermitage of Ghana Vishnu and sought his blessings. Looking at Annamayya and his wives the sage was very happy. Annamayya talking to Ghana Vishnu expressed his desire of visiting Ahobilam in order to study the philosophy of Ramanuja under the guidance of sage Satakopa. On hearing this Ghana Vishnu stated that Annamayya had taken a wise decision and suggested him to learn the perfect principles of Ramanuja's Visistadvaita. They finally left from Ashramam of Ghana Vishnu and visited the temple of Varaha after having a dip in the Koneru. The three of them went to the temple of Venkateswara where Annamayya composed a divine Sankeertana describing the magnificent deity, on hearing the song Annamayya's wives Akkamamba and Timakka were in tears and taken him into a spirit of spiritual delirium.

Annamayya sought the blessings of Lord Venkateswara to be successful in learning the scriptures from satakopa yogi. The priest offered Annamayya sandal paste satakopa and prasadam by which he considered himself sanctified. After seeking the blessings of Acharya Ramanuja the three of them decided to travel to Ahobilam. They began their travelled towards north to Tirupati. The journey was tiring hence they had to take constant breaks. However, Annamayya kept talking about the greatness of Ahobilam in order to keep them active throughout their journey. Even during adverse climatic conditions the poet continued the journey to the sacred hills and finally reached Ahobilam. Tracking through the lower Ahobilam they enjoyed the spectacular forest filled with the smell of various trees and the sounds of different specious. They visited the temple of Bhargava Narasimha and moved a little further where they came across a flat plane as they proceeded further they came across the gushing waters of Bhavanasi river where they completed their morning oblations and renewed their journey further. They visited the temple of Chakra Narasimha beneath a Banyan tree and prayed in the form of Sankeertana. Later they continued their pedestrian way through the forest and arrived at the shrine of jwala Narasimha and be held the Garuda pillar through which the Lord has made his way. Annamayya, along with his wives, passed through a small valley between the two hills and reached the temple of Varaha Narasimha.²⁹ Annamayya in a soft tone, requested the priest to take them to the sage Satakopa. The priest accepted and initially took them to Ahobila Narasimha and later were taken to a place situated within a dark cave where they had the glance of Malola Narasimha.

It was then Annamayya was taken to the monastery of Ahobilam. As they proceeded into inner quarters, they witnessed a large number of Vaishnavite Bhaktas chanting the Vedas and the hall was vibrating with the divine sound of trumpets and conches. Meanwhile, the sage made his way to the inner sanctum blessing the devotees on his way. After which the prayer was completed, and the disciples were given the consecrated food. The priest who understood the motives of Annamayya and took him into the inner quarters where the sage satakopa was seated. Annamayya looked to the saint with great reverence as he saw the "Tegus" on the forehead of Ghana Vishnu he fell flat on the ground, looking at Annamayya Adivan asked the young Bhakta where was he from and what he was seeking for Annamacharya replied that it was he whom he was looking for, and it was the shelter of the great Vaishnavite sage he was seeking for. Annamayya asks for an opportunity to serve the holy feet of the Acharya and revealed his intension of learning the Siddantha of Ramanuja, he further states that he has come to perform Bharanyasam and seek the wealth of his knowledge. Satakopa with a grin

accepts the proposal of the curious poet and decided to teach the philosophy of Ramanuja. He confirmed that the poet would be a part of Ahobila Mata from then on. On hearing those words Annamayya's heart was filled with ecstasy. Ultimately Annamayya was able to achieve his goal of seeking the refuge of the great Acharya Satakopa. This was considered as an auspicious occasion in the life of Annamacharya as it witnessed the emergence of "great personalities of Annamayya and Satakopa. It can be marked as a significant event in the history of Sri Vaishnavism due to which Annamayya greatly contributed for the spread of Ramanuja Siddantha."³⁰

Annamayya a disciple of Satakopa:

It was not an ordinary day as Adivan Satakopa would perform the ceremony of Bharanyasam to Annamayya. It was a system by which the total Surrender of the devotee on to the Lord would be complete. Acharya began the process by explaining what saranagati meant and told him to surrender three things that include total surrender of himself onto the Lord secondly to surrender the responsibility of protecting him and granting salvation. Thirdly to surrender all the fruits on to the divine being alone.

The saint declared the supremacy of lord Vishnu and told that Annamayya should realise supreme reality as he performs the ceremony. Those truths described the Lord as the supreme master of the entire world's and the one who would provide Moksha. After completing the ceremony the sage informed Annamacharya having completing this Saranagati he is treated to be a prapanna and is supposed to follow the conduct laid down by Ramanuja. The saint then elaborates the instructions to be followed by prapanna. Few of the regulation stated that Lord Vishnu cannot be considered equal to others but unique from others. A prapanna should give up the company of those who are not directed towards the supreme being. One should also serve his teacher as he extended his service to the Lord. After explaining the various regulations Satakopa offered him "Tiruman" and instructed him to spend each moment of his life in service to the Lord with utmost devotion. On hearing this, Annamayya stated that he was blessed with the compassion of his teacher, and he would serve the Acharya forever.³¹ Under the guidance of Adivan Annamacharya attained proficiency in Rahasyatraya Saram, Sree Bhasya, puranas, Ramayana and the works of the Vaishnavite Acharya's. The teacher also taught him the Nithya Grantham and the importance of Seranagati.

It was during that time Annamayya secured an Area form of the supreme being Venkateswara along with his consorts Bhu and Sree. The idol was taken to the saint who blessed the Vighraha and invoked the presence of Venkateswara into it and handed over the Vighraha to Annamayya. Over some time the bond between Annamayya and Adivan Satakopa was greatly strengthened, and they adored each other very much. Being impressed by the service offered by the poet Satakopa Swamy instructed the Venkateswara Mantra and Narasimha Mantra. Annamayya considered Satakopa as an incarnation of the Lord himself and presented the greatness of the Acharya in the form of Sankeertana. Thus, was the divine interaction between the divine personalities which contributed to the growth of Shree Vaishnavism.³²

Annamayya's encounter with saluva Narasimha:

During 15th century Andhra Desa was under the authority of Vijayanagar ruler's however after the death of Devaraya II the territory was kept intact by the powerful chief's prominent among them was Saluva Narasimha, on hearing the popularity of Annamacharya he went to Talapaka and requested him to visit his kingdom. Annamayya accepted the invitation and decided to stay with Saluva Narasimha. Meanwhile, Saluva Narasimha was successful in pushing back the Bahamani's and extended his authority over the territory of Vijayanagar, which was considered by him as an outcome of Annamayya's blessings. During his stay at Penugonda Annamayya composed numerous Sankeertana's praising the divine being.

One fine day the Saluva chief requested Annamayya to sing a Sringara Sankeertana praising the Lord. Obeying Saluva Narasimha's order, Annamayya began to sing describing how the concert of Venkateswara was made fun of by a friend after being engrossed in love with the supreme being Annamayya showed great imaginative skill in presenting the romantic composition. Being impressed by the Keertana, the chief asked Annamayya to compose a similar song praising the greatness of the ruler himself. However, this request was denied by Annamayya stating that his tongue was only blessed to sing compositions praising the Lord alone and would not glorify the earthly beings. On listening to the reply, Saluva Narasimha was furious and ordered his soldiers to put Annamayya in prison.³³ This was immediately implemented by his soldiers. Even in these crucial times, Annamayya continued his devotional outpour towards Lord Vishnu as he would be the saviour and could help his devotees overcome sufferings. To everyone's surprise, as Annamayya completed the song

the chains broke, and this was informed to Saluva Narasimha. However, Saluva Narasimha did not believe this and decided to witness the miraculous event himself. On seeing the incident the chief expressed his deep remorse and asked Annamacharya to forgive him after which Annamayya was accepted as the Raja Guru. Then Annamayya proceeds to Tirumala along with his wives and felt very happy serving at the aboard of Lord Vishnu. As he was residing in Tirumala Annamacharya composed a work called Sringara Manjari and offered this magnanimous work to the Lord of seven hills.³⁴

Purandara Dasa meets Annamacharya:

Purandara Dasa was a prominent composer belonging to the Hari Dasa line of musicians. He systematised the basic lessons of 'srale and janta swaras was a contemporary of Annamacharya. Purandara composed sankeerthanas in his mother tongue and preached the philosophy of Vedanta through music. He travelled extensively throughout south India propagating the devotional message of Bhakti through songs.³⁵ Purandaradas on hearing the greatness of Annamacharya desirous to see him and later on hearing his songs became much curious and started off to Tirumala. After visiting the temple of Lord Venkateswara at Tirumala, he proceeded to Tallapakka. As Purandardas entered Tallapaka, he heard a devotional song and was delighted as he received Prasad from Annamayya. Seeing this Annamayya's heart was filled with ecstasy, and he hugged Purandara Dasa who asked for the blessings of Annamayya and prostrated at his feet.³⁶

Last Days:

On the day of Ekadasi, the devotional poet Annamacharya along with his son Pedda Tirumalacharya went to the abode of Lord Venkateswara and offered few palm leaves containing devotional compositions and requested a release from the materialistic life and Annamacharya then went back home and told his family members that the time has arrived for him to leave, and he told his son that it would be his responsibility to render a sankeertana every day to the Lord on behalf of Annamacharya. Then the gracious poet consumed prasadam and finally reached the divine being in 1503 by reciting the name of the Lord.³⁷

Life of Bammara Pothana: Bammara Pothana, who belongs to the 15th century, was a great poet who propagated Bhakti through his literary contributions. His work Bhaghavatham is a mild stone in Telugu literature to date. The poet led a simple life unmoved by the Royal influences he decided to dedicate his work to Lord Sri Ram. In the village of Bammara, a

couple by name Kessana and Lakkamamba were leading a happy life carrying out agricultural activities they were the devotees of Lord Shiva and were greatly influenced by the sect of Veerasaivism. Soon after their marriage, the couple was blessed with an elder son called Thippanna. After some time Lakkamamba was carrying for the second time. During that time, she used to visit the temple in order to hear the preaching of Bhagavath by a Brahmin. One day Lakkamamba asked the Brahmin was it possible to get the writings of the text Bhagavath in Telugu for which the Brahmin replied that the baby in your womb himself would be a great poet who would accomplish your wish, stating thus the Brahmin blessed her, a few days later Lakkamamba was blessed with a child.³⁸

Though there are no exact records about his date of birth but his writings give some hints about his family and tradition. He belonged to Kaundinyasa gothra, and pasthambasuthra a brahmin community. This was mentioned in his work Veerabhadra Vijayam.³⁹ The name Pothana had a mythological back ground. In the opposite direction of every village deity, the devotees installed an idol of Potha Raju and worship both the deities. Hence Sri Kessana and Smt. Lakkamamba named their second son Potha Raju.⁴⁰

There is a lot of ambiguity, arguments, and differences of opinion, regarding the date of birth of Pothana: There are many differences of opinions on the date of birth and nativity of the great epic writer Pothana. The arguments were continued for a long period. The Mahabagawatha epic was printed by Puranam Hayagreeva Sasthri in 1948. According to his opinion, Sri Pothana belongs to Ontimitta village in Cuddapah district of Rayalaseema in Andhra Pradesh.⁴¹ This was supported by Vavikolanu Subba Rao. In the beginning, this was also supported by Veeresalingam Panthulu, but afterward, he confirmed that Pothana belongs to Ekasilanagaram. After some more time, the poet Kamaraju Laxman Rao accepted Bammara village of Orugallu mandal of Warangal district, Telangana state as the birthplace of Pothana. This was also proved by Anumula Subrahmanya Sasthri.

Many scholars, however, agree that Pothana, Srinath & the king SinghaBhupala were contemporaries. Which is also supported by the Government official inscription of Gudumuri which was found in the Bammara village? So the ancestors of Sri. Pothana were the natives of Bammara village. Truly the translation of Bhagvatha into Telugu was done in Orugallu. Some more opened that Pothana belonged to the second half of the 15th century. At last, it was decided that Pothana is period was during the period 1400-1470.

Childhood: During childhood, Potharaju followed his elder brother in every respect, and both of them had a friendly relationship which gave pleasure to their parents. Pothana, as a child, was constantly running around and was interested in outdoor games. He was very intelligent grasping any poem recited by his brother at once the child was always keen to visit the temple along with his mother for which he used to skip school at times. The young boy was curious to learn various scriptures and showed much interest in listening Puranas and Harikathas Pothana was constantly involved in offering his worship to Lord Shiva.⁴²

Bammera Pothana's visit to Palakurthi Jathara: Once young Pothana along with his parents visited the neighboring village of Palakurthi to attend a Jathara. Jathara's are the festivals generally organised around the shrine of the village deity which attracts a large number of people from the neighboring villages. These Jatharas are colorful with elaborate decorations and numerous shops selling various articles like bangles, rings, toys and food items such as grains, corn, sugarcane, fruits etc. These festivals also witnessed various cultural activities.⁴³

Kesana taking his son's and wife, entered the temple of the village deity and offered his prayers. After coming out from the temple, a street drama grabbed the attention of Pothana who put many questions to his father. In order to provide an answer to his son, Kesana decided to sit and watch the drama. As they were watching the drama, Pothana was curious to know what the drama was about. Kesana then replied that it was the story of Bhagawat on hearing his Pothana asked if he could have the book describing the story. Pothana's mother replied that the book was in the language of Sanskrit and he would not understand. Then Pothana asked was it possible for them to write it down in Telugu. His mother stated that she did not have the knowledge of Sanskrit then Pothana playfully stated that he himself would do the task which actually came true in future when the poet undertook the translation of the Sanskrit Bhagavatam. After enjoying the street drama Pothana's family started their travel back to Bamera.⁴⁴

Chitananda Yogi Mantropadesam to Pothana: One day as Pothana was grazing the cow's a Yogi wearing a orange dress with kamandalam in his hand and a tulasi mala around his neck approached Pothana and asked him where would this road lead to this was Yogi Chidananda. Pothana replied this path would take him to Palakurthi were the Samadhi of the great saivite sage Somanath is located. He further stated that you are great travellers visiting holy places and may not find food to eat and gave him his cow's milk. The Yogi accepted the milk and blessed him that his sweet and melodious poetry will be continued up to the sun and

Moon and he explained the power of Narayana mantra with its meaning and his different forms.

Chidananda Swamy explained "Rama manthra" and its meaning in this way. The alphabet "Ra" the main life in the "Narayana manthra, the "ma" syllable in manthra of "Om namahsivaya" combined together to become "Rama" manthra which gives salvation to all without differentiating between Saiva and Vaishnavite religions. The swamy also blessed, Pothana that he would get poetical, devotional scholarship naturally without teachings of any guru.⁴⁵ The writing of the epic must be continued with the patient perseverance of celibacy or else the epic would not have the heavenly power. Chidananda also strongly advised that the legend must be dedicated to omnipotent (Lord Sri Rama). If it is dedicated to a human being, the work would not be reputed. Swamiji preached many doctrines of Supreme Lord and departed from there. Pothana reached home as usual.

Pothana and Srinatha: Pothana went to watch the agricultural land as a routine. He talked with the harvesting labour, arranged ten to fifteen bundles of the paddy corn on the bullock cart and was reaching home. On the way, he observed another bull cart rushing hurriedly towards his direction. The poet laureate Srinatha was there in it. The poet Srinatha looking at Pothana's sharpness and single-minded devotion was overwhelmed with joy. Srinatha enquired the details of Potha Raju and followed up to his residence. Kesana, the father of Pothana wondered to see the poet laureate Srinatha of Kondaveeti royal court and invited the honourable guest and treated him with great respect.⁴⁶

Pothana's wedding: The poet Srinatha expressed his intention of giving his sister to Pothana as a life partner. Kesana accepted the proposal happily. The poet laureate Srinatha arranged the marriage of his sister with the great poet, Pothana splendidly, as per the status of Srinatha.⁴⁷ After marriage, Potha Raju followed strict rules to maintain celibacy as per the instructions of Chidananda swamy. At last, Pothana was defeated by the glances of his beautiful wife. Both were inundated with family love, causing the birth of Mallana. All of a sudden, there was a change in the attitude of Pothana. He diverted his concentration towards poetry. Keeping aside all the remaining matters he was overwhelmed to complete the epic "Veerabhadra Vijayam"

Suddenly one day the poet Srinatha visited the family of Pothana sorrowfully mentioning unexpected demise of his wife. Pothana's family members gave condolence for the death of wife of Srinath.⁴⁸ Srinatha handed over his lovely daughter to Smt. Lakkamamba

to look after her from then on. Srinatha stayed at Pothana's hermit for some time, bearing the pain of separation from his wife. Later Srinatha decided to go to Rachakonda, the capital city of Velma ruler Sarvagna Singha Bhupal along with Pothana. Pothana stayed for a long time in the capital city, enjoying the beauty of the royal gardens spread across the city of Rachakonda. Both the poets described the city and got the appreciation of Singhabhupal.⁴⁹

Description of a concubine by Pothana: There was a royal dancer in the court of the Recharla Velma ruler Sarvagna Singhabhupal. The ruler was very much impressed by the beauty of the dancer and married her. Bammara Pothana as he was enjoying the hospitality of the ruler, composed a work describing the personality of the dancer and named it Bhogini Dandakam. On hearing the Dandakam, King Singhabhupal and his queen were pleased, and the king decided to honour the poet in a majestic way. However, Pothana denied the royal gifts and stated that he would never accept anything except the Lord, who would satisfy his desires due to the worship offered by the poet. He further revealed that they were poor farmers who live in shelters made out of palm leaves and honour the guest as per their capability. He also states that they spent time by writing and would not lead life at the mercy of powerful human beings. On hearing the reply, the ruler was irritated but did not utter a word against the poet. Instead, he admired the simplicity and devotion of the poet. Later the king organised a royal feast that was attended by Bammara Pothana and Srinatha.⁵⁰

Pothana rushes to Bammara on hearing about the ill health of Lakkamamba: One evening as Pothana and Srinatha were enjoying the nature's beauty in the royal garden Pothana was keenly observing the birds and animals and recollected how the care of a mother is great, and nothing can replace it. At that instance, a messenger came there and handed over a letter. Pothana was hesitant to read the letter; hence Srinatha took the letter and read it aloud. The letter was from Pothana's brother Tippana who wrote that his mother was ill from the past ten days and was very anxious to see her younger son Pothana. Hence Tippana asked Pothana to start immediately.

Soon after hearing the message Pothana was disheartened and decided to start immediately. Pothana sent Srinatha to the king to inform him about the news and request a chariot so, that he could reach early. Srinatha returned sorrowfully and informed Pothana about the refusal and insulting words spoken by Sarvagna Singhabhupal.

Srinatha accompanied Bammara Pothana till the boundaries of Rachakonda and bid him a farewell. Pothana walked back from Rachakonda to his village Bammara. After he reached

Bammera Pothana did not talk to anyone as he was suspecting a bad news. Generally as Pothana reached home he used to be received by his mother and wife, but this time no one welcomed him including his brother. The whole family was struck with grief at that point Pothana's brother Tippana approached him and told him about the demise of his mother. Pothana unable to control his emotions ran to his father crying aloud. Kesana was also inconsolable and soon passed away unable to bear the loss of his wife. The simultaneous death of both mother and father left the brother's disappointed. However they carried out the funeral rituals according to the Vedic tradition.⁵¹

Vision of Lord SriRama: Pothana along with his brother Tippana started of his journey to the river Godavari in order to have a ritual bath on the eve of Lunar eclipse, on their way they heard the melodious chanting of scriptures and sweet smell of secret fire seeing which Pothana asked whether there was any Yagnashala around. Tippana replied that it was a region of Manthrakootam where there was constant recitation of scriptures and performances of Yagnas. He explained how this territory was ruled by Chalukya's followed by Gunduraju who was defeated by Prolaraju of Kakatiya dynasty. The ruler donated the area to Bhramin called Gopalakaswamy, Malikarjunasuri belonging to the same family was appointed as the chief priest under Prataparudra. Describing all this on the way both of them reached the banks of Godavari. Both the brother's had a ritual bath, completed their daily prayers and offered worship to their fore father's.⁵² Later Bammera Pothana setting on the banks of the river Godavari began to describe the sunset. On hearing this Tippana was very much pleased with the poetic abilities of his brother. Pothana then recollecting his mistakes thought that whoever commits a sin the result should be same. He also thought that he could not follow the instructions of Chithananda Yogi to practice celibacy for twelve years to achieve his aim, and to his misfortune Pothana could not follow bachelorhood. He further states that, "Oh! lord with your grace I was born as a poet and blessed with genius mind but how ever I misused those skills in praising the royal dancer which is a great injustice towards you. It is like neglecting the divine nectar and offering intoxicants." Thus Pothana expressed his deep regrets for his deliberate activities and made up his mind to get rid of his sins by praying to the river Godavari. He was thinking that the holy dip in the river would wash away all his sins. When Pothana was so depressed, Lord Srirama, along with his consort, stood before Pothana. On seeing them, Bammera Pothana recited the scriptures, and the Lord showered his blessings on the devotee. The Lord then instructs Pothana to translate the epic Bhagavata Purana into Telugu and dedicate it to him. Pothana replied, thus Oh! Lord is it possible for me to

undertake such a great task I do not have such abilities and it would be possible only for great scholars. As Pothana was expressing his doubts regarding the translation the Lord disappears.⁵³ Pothana gradually opened his eyes looking here and there. Looking at his brother Tippana asked why was he absent minded. Bammara Pothana described the vision of Lord Rama and his instruction to translate Bhagavatam, on hearing this Tippana was very delighted.

Ascent of Great scholars for the translation of Bhagavata purana: Both Bammara Pothana and Tippana started back home on the way Tippana was trying to motivate his brother to take up the task assigned to him by the Lord. On the way they stopped at Ekasilanagaram to worship Lord Shiva, there Bammara Pothana met great scholars and informed them about the vision of the divine being and his instruction to translate the epic. He asked the scholars to give suggestions regarding the same. The scholars were very pleased with the heavenly inspiration and blessed Pothana to start the translation.⁵⁴

Conditions of Drought: In the same year when Bammara Pothana decided to begin the epic work, the village of Bammara witnessed severe drought where there was no rain in the village and the surrounding areas. The farmers remained jobless as the fields were dry. The condition of drought intensified resulting in death of large number of people. Seeing the severe drought conditions Pothana recited the scriptures. As a result there were slight rains but was not sufficient to continue the agricultural activities. Pothana's family had a tradition of offering food to the needy due to which there were large number of people in front of Pothana's house however the condition of Pothana was also not so great due to drought and the family was not able to provide food. Pothana never bothered about the conditions at home and invited anyone to have food. Seeing this Tippana's wife was very angry and told her husband that she can't lead this family life as feeding everyone in the village would be impossible. She told her husband that his brother is irresponsible and would understand family responsibility only if he is left alone. She also advised him that it is better to move to Ekasilanagaram to join the government job offered by the king. So, that Pothana would realise his mistake. Tippana smiled and said that Pothana is just like our son who has great respect towards us, hence it is not right on our part to do so. He was not familiar with the government job and will not be able to adjust in the new environment, hence they should stay back. He further justifies that the donations made during drought are fruitful rather than extending their hospitality to the needless. He wished that the drought would end soon and all the troubles would come to an end, hence asked his wife to be patient.⁵⁵

The next day Pothana started off to the neighbouring village to get some food. On his way Pothana was very disappointed looking at the people who were starving. At that instance Bammara Pothana came across an old beggar who was trying to get some food but in vein. The poor beggar went to a merchant and refused to go away from there. The merchant was very furious and was trying to beat him. Pothana in the process of rescuing the beggar was subjected to an injury and became unconscious. The beggar gave some water to Pothana after which he gradually woke up and thank the beggar. The beggar expressed his gratitude stating that it's very rare to find a person like him who saved his life, stating thus he handed over a Ghantam which is generally used for writing. Later both of them went to Pothana's home on looking at the injury. Pothana's wife was terrified and asked what happened. The poet described the incident and instructed her to serve some food to the beggar. Pothana's wife was disappointed as she went inside because she didn't know how to tell her husband that there was no food. As she didn't come back Pothana started thinking that it was very difficult to send a beggar empty-handed. Though people are rich they are greedy, hence the beggar's would prefer approaching a poor person rather than a greedy. At that instance the merchant who injured Pothana came there asking him to be forgiven. Pothana told the rich man not to commit sin and hurt others as he would be punished by the supreme alone. Amidst this conversation the beggar gradually made his way out and vanished. Pothana enquired about the old beggar but could not locate him. Unable to find the beggar Pothana thought that it was God himself who came in the form of the beggar and offered the Ghantam instigating him to start the Bhagavatam. He then decided that he would honour him by completing the work and dedicating it to the Lord.⁵⁶

Blessing of Chidanandayogi and commencement of the translation: Bammara Pothana even after receiving the approval of the great scholars of Ekhasilanagaram was not sure of his abilities in translating Bhagavatam. Hence he decided to visit his teacher Chidanandayogi whose consider to be an incarnation of Dattatreya. He went to the hermitage of Chidananda and bowed before him to seek his blessings. Pothana narrated the instances of how he got the instruction from Srirama while he was reciting the Tarakamantra which was instructed by Chidananda and asked him to give some knowledge on the philosophy of Bhagavata purana in order to take up the writing. The sage fulfilled Pothana's desire by emphasising on the significance of the text and how the three margas of Bhakti, Ghyana and Karma can be used to attain salvation. In this way the Yogi after revealing the essence of the text blessed Pothana to complete the writing uninterrupted. Pothana then returned to Bammara and choose an

auspicious day to start writing. After taking the blessings of his brother Pothana offered his worship to the deities of Ghanapathi, Saraswathi, Shiva, Vishnu and great poets of the previous times and commenced the magnificent work in Telugu.⁵⁷

Completion of missing Stanza by a Brahmin: Pothana started writing Ghajendra Moksham in which an elephant was caught by a crocodile and was pleading to be rescued. Pothana was trying to describe the were about of Srihari but unable to proceed further, hence he stopped and decided to continue the work later on. The next day Pothana went to the neighbouring village for some work. As Pothana was not at home his son Mallana was watering the fields by singing the Nisada Kavya, then a Brahmin came close to Mallana and asked him was it the village of Bammera where is the house of the great poet Pothana. He wanted to see him the Brahmin further stated that he was Ramasharma a native of Ayodhya puri. On hearing this Mallana was very delighted and took Ramasharma to his house. The wife of Pothana invited the guest and touched his feet. While Ramasharma was offering his prayers he noticed a bunch of Palm leaves at the altar and asked Mallana what is this and could he read it! Mallana answered that it was his father, who was translating the Bhagavatam into Telugu with the acceptance of the prominent scholars and is dedicated to Lord Srirama and he should give his blessing stating thus Mallana went inside. After Mallana's departure Ramasharma opened the palm leaves and read the text and wrote the missing stanza. After which he tied back the palm leaves. The Brahmin then had his lunch and took leave from Mallana and his mother to continue his journey. Next day Pothana returned home and offered his morning prayers, during which he noticed that someone had seen his work. Pothana observing the incomplete stanza was surprise to see it completed. He called his son and asked who came inside an wrote the stanza, Mallana narrated the entire incident. After hearing this Pothana was overwhelmed with joy and thought that it was undoubtedly the Lord himself who came in disguise to fill in the gaps. Pothana felt that his son and wife were blessed to have the glance of the divine being, thinking thus he constantly repeated the stanza that was written by Ramasharma.⁵⁸

Srinatha's daughter desirous to see her father: Sarada the daughter of poet laureate Srinatha who was staying at the house of Pothana had a bad dream that her father was wandering in darkness with great difficulty. From then on Sarada was very sad, Pothana's wife found out the reason for her sorrow and tried to console her. She informed Pothana to make arrangement to bring Srinatha to Bammera. Accordingly Pothana called his son Mallana and instructed him to go to Rachakonda.⁵⁹

Mallana visits Rachakonda: As Mallana decided to go to the capital the disciples of Pothana, Narana and Singhana were also willing to accompany him in order to see the capital city. Before they began the journey Pothana advised them to be careful on their way describing the difficulties of the travel. Mallana along with Pothana's disciples started of their journey to the capital crossing forests hill locks and small streams. On reaching the capital they were greatly impressed by the beauty of the city. As they made their way to the palace they were obstructed by a security guard. They informed him that they were disciples of Bammera Pothana.⁶⁰ Then they entered the palace and were wonder struck by the grandeur of the palace. Mallana met Srinatha and handed over the letter from his daughter. On reading the letter Srinatha was very anxious to see his daughter and sought the permission of king Singhabhupala to visit Bammera. Meanwhile, the king expressed his desire to hear the text Bhagavatam.

The king sends Dandanatha to Bammera:

Srinatha who understood the intentions of the king stated that as he is going to see his daughter would bring Pothana a return. After hearing this king told him that there was no need for him to go to Bammera let Pothana come here along with his daughter and the epic Mahabhadgavatam. The king then ordered his ambassadors to bring Pothana to the palace with great honours. Srinatha was very happy seeing the generosity of the king. Srinatha called the military captain and told him to convey his apologies. He also asked him to request him in a pleasing manner to chant. Bhagavatam in the king's court. As the military platoon consisting of horses, chariots, elephants, and numerous soldiers along with royal gifts entered the village of Bammera. Pothana was narrating the story of Bhagavatam to his villagers. The sound of horses grabbed the attention of the listeners who were immersed in the devotional message of Pothana. Immediately Dandanatha got down from the chariot and touched the feet of the great poet. The commander in a pleasing manner informs that Sarvagna Singhabhupala a person of good character desired to listen to the text of Bhagavatam that would help an individual to attain liberation. He requested him to accept the invitation and come with them. Pothana refusing the invite stated that Oh! Dandanatha king Singhabhupala is very keen to hear my text for which I am very thankful. But I had a dream in which Lord Srirama has instructed me to translate the epic for the benefit of the common masses. Hence I will not be able to present my work in the presence of the royal court.⁶¹ The poet refusing all the representations said that the wealth and the luxuries of the kings are not greater than the devotion of the Lord. Hence convey my inevitability to your majesty. The military

commander became furious on hearing the reply and signals his troops to terrify the poet. At the sudden incident Pothana remained motionless, even the villagers remained helpless at the injustice. All the people then rush to the temple of Ram in order to safeguard the text and stood as a barrier. Among the gathering a person shouted that cowards, they were all land if they wanted to steal the text, they had to kill him and then take it. When the forces began to fight with him suddenly a wild boar came from somewhere and furiously attacked the soldiers. Unable to fight with the bore the military commander along with his troops ran away without taking the text. Pothana understood that the bore meant the incarnation of Lord Vishnu itself came to rescue the text of Bhagavatam. The military troops returned to Rachakonda and narrated the incident to the king and the refusal of Pothana to come to the capital. The king hearing the entire series of events did not utter a word but just looked at Srinatha. Srinatha then assured the king that he would go to Bammara and convinced Pothana to visit the royal court.⁶²

Srinatha's travel's to Bammara: Srinatha on receiving the approval of the king started on his journey to Bammara along with the king's servants. On their way they stopped at a temple of Lord Shiva where a young lady approached Srinatha for scholarship. She told him that no one could divert Bammara Pothana from his devotion and his work would be dedicated to the Lord alone. Stating thus she gave a gold ring and disappeared. Srinatha trying to find about her assumed that it was the goddess herself who came in the form of the young lady. As Srinatha neared the village of Bammara he saw Mallana ploughing the field and asked his palanquin barriers to let go the four arm of the palanquin which still moved freely in the air. Seeing this Mallana also released one of the bull from the plough, even then the plough ran as usual. Then Srinatha ordered his palanquin barriers to let go of the rare arm of the palanquin. Even Mallana release the other bull after which the plough move as if nothing has gone wrong. Looking at this Srinatha got down and greeted Mallana. He then asked Mallana how the farmers are doing. Mallana replied that poetry is like the goddess Saraswathi, but some money minded poets sell their work for the wealth given by the kings who are uncultured and through cash secure the work. But true poets would become farmers and feed their families by carrying out agriculture and work hard in order to satisfy their hunger. On hearing this Srinatha felt insulted but could not say anything and proceeded to Pothana's house along with Mallana.⁶³ Bammara Pothana welcomed his brother-in-law with great respect and took him inside. Sarada was also very delighted to see her father who handed her a golden ring. As Srinatha was accompanied by a large number of servants it became the

responsibility of Pothana to feed them. But Pothana was worried as there was no sufficient food. At this moment the queen Vageshwari of Jyothipuram who came there to listen to Pothana heard his intention to feed a thousand people and stated that the food required for that purpose is available in the carts. Pothana felt happy and made arrangements to provide lunch to the king's men.⁶⁴

Srinatha's attempts to convince Bammara Pothana: Srinatha and his servants had a grand lunch and rested for a while. Later they requested Pothana to narrate an episode from Bhagavatam. On hearing, these listeners were immersed in rapture. Even Srinatha was overwhelmed with joy and admired the art of writing of Pothana. Srinatha then instead of directly revealing his purpose told Pothana that such a great epic should be dedicated to a king for which he would be rewarded with gold, precious gems and ornaments so that he can lead a luxurious life. Pothana heard all this with great patience and replied that what he earns from farming is sufficient to satisfy the basic requirements of food, clothing and shelter. Anything beyond it would be the grace of god. In this world men go in search of precious stones but the precious stones don't come searching for men. Similarly, I can't go and beg. It is better to die rather than live at the mercy of other human beings. Srinatha further trying to convince. Pothana argued with Srinath that wealth could not bring respect and it is not proper to think that a poor man would not be respected. Pothana was very firm in his decision and rejected the financial offer made by the king of Rachakonda.

Srinatha mocks Pothana who teaches him a lesson: During his stay in Bammara Srinatha heard the story of Ghajendra Moksham in which Lord Vishnu would come to rescue the elephant from the crocodile. On hearing this Srinatha mocked Pothana about the arrival of the Lord in this way and asked how the Lord could save his devotee without any weapons. How come he wrote this story? He further states that how can a thirsty man go to the well without a bucket and a rope to draw water. Pothana replied with an example that if a child falls into the well his mother would rush to the well with a great anxiety without taking a rope that would help saving a child. Hence the main intention is only to save and protect her child rather than finding ways to rescue. As both of them were arguing, a messenger came with a letter from the king of Vijayanagar. Srinatha took the letter and felt happy on reading it as it was a request from the king to dedicate the text of Bhagavatam. Srinatha requested Pothana to dedicate the work, but Pothana refuse to do so which angered Srinatha and he left.

The next day as Srinatha's daughter and Pothana's daughter were watering the plants the bucket fell in to the well. On hearing the sound Srinatha who was having his lunch came running thinking that his daughter fell into the well. Pothana then recollecting the previous conversations stated that he came here even without washing his hands to save his daughter in the similar way the Lord has also come to save the elephant.⁶⁵

Srinatha then visited Pothana's brother Tippana and described the request from the royal families to dedicate the work and the adamant behaviour of Pothana. Though Tippana was not interested in intervening with Pothana's decision he advises his brother to dedicate the work as it would improve his financial status. Pothana unable to disobey his brother and failing to fulfil the Lord's wish started of his journey to dedicate the epic. On the way, while Pothana was resting in the temple of Rama at Mettagiri he had a dream in which goddess Saraswathi was in tears. After seeing her Pothana decided not to dedicate the work and sent a messenger to the king to inform about Pothana's decision. Meanwhile many scholars came to hear the greatness of Bhagavatam from the poet. As the poet was narrating the Bhagavata purana the military chief came and pleaded with Pothana. However Pothana denied the request which infuriated the military chief who ordered the troops to attack Pothana and capture the text. When the troops were trying to go away with Bhagavatam the troops of Singhabhupala fought with them and emerged victorious. The military chief of Rachakonda then told Bammara Pothana to come to the capital to receive the text from the king Singhabhupala.⁶⁶

Pothana was upset at the series of events and did not wish to go back home. Hence even without informing his disciples he started his journey to visit various centres of pilgrimage. When he reached Ontimetti Pothana found it peaceful and decided to settle down there. A yogi then approaches Pothana and instructed him to recite the Bhagavatam for seven days to witness miracles. Accordingly Pothana chanted the text.⁶⁷

Attempts of Singhabhupala to restore Bhagavatam: The Rachakonda ruler Sarvagna Singha Bhupala had a dream in which Lord Srirama threatens the king for steeling the work which was actually meant for him. The next day Singhabhupala ordered his servants to bring Bhagavatam. On seeing the destroyed part the king ordered Srinatha to restore the work and provided the adequate funds. Srinatha in turn assign the task to Pothana son Mallana.⁶⁸

Last Days: Srinatha was unhappy as he was not able to know the where about of his brother-in-law. He went to Vijayanagara and told the king Proudadevaraya about his missing brother-

in-law then the ruler made arrangements to look for Pothana who was found at Vontimetta. Then Srinatha departed to Vontimetta to meet Pothana. Srinatha was delighted to see Pothana and informed him about the ruined portion of Bhagavtam and ask him to rewrite. But Pothana did not pay much attention to it as it was seized by the military chiefs. On hearing this Pothana's disciples asked him to give an opportunity to take up the task. Meanwhile a messenger came there with a letter which stated that a ceremony would be conducted on the eve of Sriramanavami to dedicate the epic Bhagavatam to Lord SriRama. The proposal was accepted by both Srinatha and Pothana. Accordingly arrangements were made for the celebration that began in the presence of the devotees, tourists and the king's Survagna Singha Bhupala and Proudadevaraya where the work was offered to Lord Srirama accompanied with the recitation of Vedic scriptures. From then on Pothana spent his life in Vontimetta and is believed to have passed away in the later half of 15th century.

Thus Andhra Pada Kavitha Pithamaha Tallapaka Annamacharya and Sahaja Pandita Bammara Pothana were instrumental in popularising Bhakti through their Sankeertana's and poetry. These poets expressed their views on God salvation Seranagathi and different forms of expressing Bhakti in order to attain liberation in a simple language that was understood by the common masses. They were very much ahead in time in promoting message of social equality among the different sections of the society. By writing in the local language and not in Sanskrit their messages could reach the common people.

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⁴ Dr. Anupama Kylash, 2016, *The Nayikas of Annamacharya*, Hyderabad, p.34

⁵ Adapa Ramakrishna Rao, Op.cit, pp.27-28

⁶ Ambika Ananth and Adviteeya .N. Dixit, 2005, *Nectar Ocean of Annamacharya*, Tirupati, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Press, p.15.

⁷ Galla Chalapathi, 2012, *Annamacharya Charithra* (Tel), Tirupati, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam, p.118.

⁸ Samudhrala Lakshmanayya, 1983, *Annamacharya Sankirthana* (Tel), Tirupati, Parasarya Publications, p.11.

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¹⁴ Vani Kesarla, 1997, *Sri Talapaka Annamacharya Jivitha Charitra* (Tel), Tirupati, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam, p.30-31.

¹⁵ V. Venkata Narasimharaya Sharma, 2006, *Shree Thallapaka Annamacharya*, Ongole, Janatha Printers, p.49.

¹⁶ William J. Jackson, 2007, *Vijayanagara Visions*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.174

¹⁷ Galla Chalapathi, Op.cit, pp.249-256

¹⁸ Ambika Ananth and Adviteeya .N. Dixit, Op.cit, p.53

¹⁹ Ibid, pp.54-55.

²⁰ Ibid, p.55.

²¹ Ibid, p.56.

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²³ Ambika Ananth and Adviteeya .N. Dixit, Op.cit, p.58.

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²⁵ Vani Kesarla, Op.cit, p.38.

²⁶ V. Venkata Narasimharaya Sharma, Op.cit, pp.56-58.

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²⁸ William Jackson, 2012, *Songs of Three Great South Indian Saints*, New delhi, Oxford University, p.38.

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⁶³A.V.S. Sarma, 1957, *Excerpts from Potana's Bhagavatam*, Tirupati, Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams, p.2

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⁶⁷Ibid, pp.387-396.

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Chapter 4

The Philosophy of Annamacharya and Bammara Pothana and their Contribution to the Bhakti Movement.

The concept of bhakti which could be traced to the ancient scriptures gained prominence in the middle ages and gradually emerged as a movement among the people due to its reach. Different poets simplified this path of devotion among the masses. In medieval Andhra Bammara, Pothanna and Annamacharya propagated the divine message through their writings. As we have discussed the material context and the biographies of these two Bhaktas, we would now try to look into their views on different aspects of spirituality.

Philosophy of Annamayya:

Annamacharya was largely influenced by the philosophy of Visistadvaita formulated by Ramanujacharya. The close affiliation of the poet to the school of Srivaishnavism is evident through his rituals and doctrinal aspects preached in his teachings. His constant praise of the concept of Srivaishnavism and Alavandar's reveals his attachment to this sect. Looking from a philosophical perspective his view is based mainly on theism, he believes in the existence of the soul, god, and matter. He recognises the ultimate being with Lord Venkateswara who adorns the hill of Tirumala and those of other Vaishnavite deities glorifying other holy places, regarding the ex-logistical view of Annamayya's philosophy the vision of Brahman that an individual desire to attain constitutes the ultimate aim of one's life. But also constantly attacks the view of Advaita that says salvation cannot be attained pointing out the human futility working for liberation. Denying the path of Karma to attain salvation attaches greater significance to Bhakti and Saranagathi in many of Sankeertana's.¹

According to Annamayya, Brahman is not a mere entity without any attributes unlike the Advaitins who treat him as formless and attributeless. He states that Brahman without such attributes ceases to exist. According to him, Brahman possesses numerous auspicious qualities that are beyond the reach of human intellect. The absolute independent unconditional nature of Brahman is described in the compositions of Annamayya where Brahman is seen as MahaAbyudaya, Akala, Nirmala, etc. The poet glorifying the lord presents him as immutable, impenetrable and incomprehensible. This divine being has no equivalent or superior power.² In

one of the poems, Annamacharya says that you are the one in which all the worlds persist but which is the world in which you exist. You are the saviour of the entire creation but who is the one who would be your savior. He then goes on to ask that who would shower blessings on Brahman as he alone is the ultimate granter of boon to each individual. Annamacharya presents the lord as the possessor of infinite knowledge of everything in the universe. He interprets the knowledge of Brahman as equal to that of millions of sun rising. He says Oh! Lord when you have entire universe as your years and have vision that is all-pervasive and manifest in each of the sound can we complaint that you do not pay attention to our prayers, but the fault lies in us as we offer worship without devotion.³

Though Annamayya talks about the all-pervasive character of the Brahman he vigorously criticizes the view of the Advaitins on empirical grounds that the Brahman is formless. He bases his argument on the Purusha in which he describes Brahman having a universal form. He identifies two differences with the philosophy of Advaita firstly the acceptance of Purusha Suktha. But still denies the idea that Brahman has a form secondly they offer worship to the form of lord, but does not consider him as having eyes, ears etc.⁴

Annamacharya in describing the magnificence of the lord says that he has several faces, eyes, and ears to establish his superiority over the materialistic world. In the process of glorifying lord Narasimha, the poet says that the stars are his waistcoat, sun and moon as his eyes, sunshine as the weapons, teeth as planets, sky as the waist, ocean as the divine nectar and the mountain of Venkatadri as the cave in which the supreme being dwells. Brahman is free from all restrictions and the ultimate goal for each individual.⁵

Rebuking the followers of Advaita Annamacharya says that the world is not a mere illusion but a reality, he gives the example of sage Vyas who describes the greatness of the world in the Puranas. The poet attempts to justify the reality of the world on 2 grounds that is on the ritualistic basis were many great sages performed sacrifices, if the world was not real men would not have carried out meritorious and charitable activities. Secondly, if one has a proper vision, he would see the world as accurate, but if he lacks good vision, he treats it unreal.⁶

The composer derives the immortality of the soul from the philosophy of Bhagavathgitha and Sankya as he establishes a clear distinction between the soul and the physical body. According to him the body unlike the soul is to evaluate matter which is subjected to changes such as origin growth decay etc. and passes through different stages

such as childhood, adolescence, old age. On the other hand, soul being immortal and immutable is free from such changes; death marks the transition of the soul from one body to another. As the soul is undoubtedly and spiritual, it cannot be disintegrated through physical factors like those of air, water, fire etc.

The soul being pure carries out actions under the influence of 3 Gunas i.e. Raja's, Sathva and Tamas. Annamayya says that one should be bestowed with certain qualities such as happiness, anger, lust which should only be directed positively towards Venkateswara. For each individual, Brahman is the ultimate source of refuge. He also quotes an incident from mythology that Brahma seeks the help of supreme in times of distress. It is the organs of human beings as against the lord. He then goes on to question the view that if human beings are superior to that of the divine, can they carry out the tasks of creation, sustenance and dissolution. If men were god themselves, they would not have undergone suffering, frequent transmigration, pain and the troubles of earning their own livelihood. It is only the physical body that is subjected to pleasure and pain and the individual cannot overcome the ocean of samsara until he attains the knowledge of once own self.⁷

As stated earlier, the close poets acquaintance with Vaishnavisam is seen in one of the poems where he states that Vaishnavisam is only for those who treat it as honey. Real Vaishnavisam is where one gives up desire for materialistic objects, to sub-due constant anger and un-due attachment, not to be drenched in the pool of pleasure and pain which is experienced by the physical body and not to be submissive towards sensual pleasures and be troubled by the consequences. A Vaishnavite devotee to attain liberation should prefer taking up the path of Prapathi instead of Ghana and Karma Margas.⁸

Annamacharya then goes on to exalt the position of the tremendous Vaishnavite sages saying that those are the ones who are without any blemishes and mark with the symbols of discussing and conch on their bodies are the true Vaishnavites. Those people do not prefer bowing or serving normal human beings. They do not even accept the glorifying position if accorded. These are the ones who are beyond the reach of emotion such as Krodha, Matsarya etc. and would not give up their sacred duties. Hence it is improper to equate such great men with normal human beings who are bonded in the chains of worldly existence. So, he pledges each individual to seek the guidance from these Vaishnavite sages instead of quarrelling among themselves for dominance. He expresses his gratitude on being fortunate to have the

opportunity of serving great Vaishnavite teachers such as Gana, Vishnu and Satagopa who provided him the knowledge of various scriptures.⁹

In summary, the philosophy of Annamacharya was pantheistic, which accorded the supreme position to lord Venkateswara of Tirumala and also believed in the various incarnations. He clearly adheres to the principles of Visistadvaita. First, the Brahmin is real and not illusory. Secondly, the soul is immortal, and thirdly the matter is the physical body is temporary which persist over time. The poet not only glorifies the lord but also provides a superior position to the Alawar's who initially popularised the sect of Vaishnavism and the Acharya's such as Ramanuja who provided the basis for his musical compositions.

Annamayya's notion of God:

Annamacharya a devotee who was influenced by the sect of Vaishnavism adopted Sri Venkateswara of Tirumala as his favourite deity. He made many compositions in the process of describing the adventures of the Lord as his causal actions.

Annamayya attempts to bring out the essence of spirituality where he says that God is Omini important, Omniscient, Omini present. But we individuals are limited by our mind and cannot think beyond a certain point. Hence limiting God to time and space, which is a great fault, says the poet. Human beings are narrow in their outlook, so unable to perceive the broader perspective of the universe and the creator. The Supreme Being has known restrictions for his existence, but it is the human attitude that feels to construct a more significant image of the Lord. This divine being is beyond our grasp but provided one may gradually learn to look upon him with great dedication.¹⁰

In the poem Bhavamulona the poet advises his mind to constantly think the name of Govinda & indulge in selfish worship as all other deities are the forms of Hari, he is the one who bears all the universe within him, the inner spirit of the universe and the Veda's are the mere penance offered to him. Hence worship him without any distractions.¹¹

Annamayya as a common man puts across questions that generally arise in the human mind regarding the existence of the divine being in one of the Keerthana the curious poet asks as the Lord to clarify as to who are the other Deva's and Yogi's who attempt to run the world when there is this supreme being?

If God is one, why are there numerous temples to offer worship? If the divine being dwells in every individual, who are the others in heaven who try to dominate the humankind? Here the poet only tries to show that God is one and all others are inferior and created to execute a purpose. It is he who designates every creation to run this world, but we human beings unable to realize this fact are in a state of confusion about the divine existence.¹²

Annamacharya propagated among his followers to worship the Lord of seven hills who would help in times of difficulties and clears all hurdles. It is the name of Hari that would help a person get rid of sin and selfishness. The Vedas praise the Lord for his noble activities which are miraculous. We human beings should be courageous to face the misfortunes even during the hard times as heart and soul should be directed towards Srihari.

True devotion is when we can see the divine in both living & non-living as each minute particle in the universe is the result of his skill. Here the poet interprets god as a delicious fruit that satisfies one's appetite. So is our divine creator who takes care of every requirement. But such a divine fruit cannot be purchased like other Common fruits and exclusively secured through Bhakti. So, that he would shower his grace upon us.¹³

The composer says that Oh! Heart dedicate your life to the supreme and nothing more than that when food grains are mixed with dust particles and hey East wind is blown to obtain the grain. Similarly, it is the Omini present who would wash off all obstacles just as the grains separated using the East wind. Thus Supreme Being is the ensured golden hand to safeguard the common people.¹⁴

The divine being is not keen in receiving rich physical gifts such as flowers, ornaments fruits etc. but only desires for the love of devotee. A pure heart is ultimate for him the material gifts remain meaningless. It is when the Bhakta hankers upon the Lord he moves closer to the devotee as a symbol of respect.¹⁵

In one of the Sankeerthanas expressing his idiocracy says that oh! Venkateswara though you are the creator we think that the children are our own offsprings. It is you who provide us with the stamina but we consider it as the outcome of our hard work. You gift us

with spiritual abilities but we presume it to be the fruit of our endeavours. All such human illusions are impermanent; it is only, but the Lord of seven hills is everlasting divine light. According to the poet, the worldly cycle of birth and rebirth is associated with the sin's committed in a previous life. Such painful links could only be eliminated by the Bhajan's of Srihari.¹⁶

In an attempt of underlining the Omini presents of the lord the poet say's that man who is caught in the web of suffering, desire and ignorance is unable to escape. On the other hand it is the almighty that makes his presence during pleasure and sorrow, danger and ill health and every twist of human life. His hand would never leave the devotees hand if we care to extend it towards him. His eyes would follow us during good and bad times. He is our soul mate and saviour fulfilling our wishes and ultimately liberates us from the earthly bond.¹⁷

The poet identifies Venkateswara in different manifestations. One such composition describes the 10 incarnations of the Lord and the poet who expresses his incapacity in finding another God, such as Tirumalesa a glorifying force of this universe.

Look, here is a very unusual thief.

Here is the thief who stole hot milk and butter (Krishna Avatara).

Here is the thief who hid Himself underneath the water (Matsya Avatara)

He is the thief who hides by withdrawing his head (Koorma Avatara). (The tortoise is the only animal which has got the capacity to pull its head inside the shell).

He is the thief who burrows into the Earth (Varaahavataara)

He is the thief who comes out and wanders only during the dusk time (Narisimha Avataara).

Here is the thief who stamps the entire world with His Feet (Vaamana/ Trivikrama Avataara).

He is the thief who got angry even with his mother (Parasuraama Avataara)

Here is the thief who has firmly entrenched Himself in the forests (Ramavataara – 14 years of banishment in the forest).

Here is the thief dressed in the blue cloth (Balaraama Avatara – as Blarama is fond of blue dress)

Here is the clever thief who cheated the ladies (Krisha Avaatara).

Here is the thief who is very successful and who rides on the Horse (Kalki Avataara)

This thief who donned the different forms has come to reside happily on the top of Tiruvenkata hill, looking like a beautiful pearl, concealed inside a shell.¹⁸

Interpreting the text of Ramayana Annamayya presence all the significant events of the epic in a song where he depicts Ramayana as a text not limited by time and space and a story of the single perfect being called Ram who is none other than Parabrahma. According to him, it is the Lord alone who came down as Sri Ram to set an example for humankind for a perfect life. It is the same Sri Ram who takes the form of Venkatapathi with Tirumala as his aboard.¹⁹

Annamacharya not only limited himself to Tirumala and Talapaka, but undertook pilgrimage to numerous places, as a part of his travel. He composed innumerable verses on different deities such as Hanuman, Datatreya, Vamana, Vital, Adishesha, Alvelmanga, and her different manifestations.²⁰

During the saint's visits to the shrine of Gopala Krishna in the Vijayanagar empire he beautifully describes about the cowherd God Krishna, his childhood mischief, his play with Gopika's, his attempts to steal butter from the neighbourhood and his efforts in safeguarding the clan of Yadava's.²¹

He also visited Ahobilam a famous shrine of Narasimha where he glorified the different forms of Narasimha and offered his worship. As this Bhakta moved from one place to other, he propagated the main principles of Vaishnavism among the people. The poet due

to his close affinity with the school of Vaishnavism makes a mention of his predecessor such as the Alvars and Acharya in many Keerthanas for instance in one of the verses he talks about how the one who holds the chakra reveals the essence of Vedic Scriptures to Numalwar without inhibitions. How he took a share of food robbed by Tirumangai alwar and how he wore the same garland worn by the daughter of Peri Alwar. This actually indicates that the poet was closely acquainted with the philosophy of Alwar's and has read their Paasurams.²²

As the poet spent most of his life at Tirumala he got the opportunity of keenly observing different ceremonies conducted to the lord on the hill that observation transforms into Sankeerthana's describing the utsava's. In one of the compositions, he describes how the lord and his concert wearing expensive silk and precious jewels adorn the beautifully decorated chariot and move across the four streets of Tirumala with grandeur and pomp.²³

Annamayya's concept of Bhakti and its forms:

Annamacharya does not strictly formulate the principles of Bhakti, but there are numerous references to different forms of Bhakti in his compositions. The philosophy of Visishtadevita put forward by Ramanuja is based on the major principle of utmost concentration on God based on love and affection. The saint Annamayya interpreted Bhakti as a complete attachment to be united with the almighty by eliminating worldly attachments. Suggesting the devotees the poet says that one who has started his journey to the holy aboard instead of taking the right or the left path should follow the middle path of Bhakti which is the shortest route and free from troubles caused by friends, family, and relatives.²⁴ He attempts to establish a comparison between Bhakti and a hungry person craving for food. Just as a rich person is attached to his wealth in the same manner, a Bhakta should be completely attached to the Supreme Being and not to be mortal perks.²⁵

Annamacharya describes the various forms in which one could express his devotion that include sravanam, sankeertanam, smaranam, padasevanam, vandanam, athmanivedanam etc. The terms sravanam implies to listening. Annamayya refers to this form where in a

devotee listening to the stories of Hari would be gifted with innumerable merits and is beyond performing japa's, reading text's and offering Sandhya every day. It makes once life to be happy. Sravanam is fragrant and sweet as butter obtains from the buttermilk. This story is thus a gateway to the holy aboard. Listening to Vishnu Katha one could attain proficiency in various sciences, get rid of sorrows and understand the assents of Upanishad's. Hence it becomes necessary for one to hear and relish the glories of Vishnu with great enthusiasm.²⁶

Sankeerthanam is another form of expressing Bhakti which is to sing aloud the miraculous deeds of the Lord. According to Annamacharya singing these keerthanas would help an individual overcome worries, provides happiness, remove afflictions and acts as a saviour for all living creation, including the Gajendra that was rescued from the crocodile. It facilitates closeness to the divine being and frees oneself from the cycle of births and deaths.²⁷ The Vishnu Sankeertana alone acts as a rescue even in the most adverse circumstances like hunger indebtedness, imprisonment, death etc. thus, providing the Bhakta maximum benefit with no expenditure.²⁸

Chanting the name of the Lord aloud is not sufficient but should be accompanied with inner devotion to obtain the desired wishes. Hence Annamayya makes references to Smarana which is constant thinking and mental recitation of Lord Venkateswara. He advises the devotees that instead of troubling themselves in the hot sun and freezing cold, wandering in the forest and suffering from hunger. The constant thinking about the Supreme Being would help them flourish and reap gold.²⁹ Smarana frees oneself from delusion, orison & ignorance. Any ritual performed by an individual without internal devotion would be meaningless. Annamayya says that the perceiving lord itself is a source of livelihood and a great fortune for him.³⁰

In a large number of compositions, Annamacharya gives an extensive account of his own service at the feet of the lotus-eyed one. Signifying the importance of Padasevanam as a means of expressing love towards the Supreme Being, he says that these are the holy feet washed by Lord Brahma. The ones which has been used to subjugate the poisonous serpent kaliya. These are the feet that have been sort by great sages to be granted with

boundless boons.³¹ In another song a similar view is expressed stating that this is the foot from which the holy Ganga is born. The touch of this foot alone helped Ahalya in getting rid of her sins. These are the secret feet which are most desired by everyone for happiness and to attain liberation. So the poet prefers service at this glorious foot rather than worshipping the head of the king of seven hills.³²

Annamacharya attempts to establish the importance of Vandana, which implies the worship of the supreme with folded hands. He insists that one needs to visit the shrine of Tirumala that's filled with divinity and offer worship with folded hands which is equivalent to the sixteen kinds of charity and five big sacrifices.³³ The fruits obtained from such worship would also be appreciated by Lord Brahma and facilitates an individual to be liberated from all since committed out of ignorance and grant happiness in either world. Hence, this mode of devotion would prevent an individual from looking for other forms of self-mortification.

The composer treats Archanam as another means to remain in close proximity with the Lord in one of his compositions offering mental worship. He says that I do Archana to the indweller within me, I offer Ardhaya with the water from the Pushkarini Achamaniyam with the water from oceans, a holy bath with Varunajalam. Garlands made out of Malakara flowers and different kinds of Ambrosya. Treating the Lord's glorious deeds as expensive silk clothes and precious ornaments. He questions that what else could a poor devotee offer to the wealthy Lord except for full heart worship.³⁴

He further considers human activities as offerings made to the Lord and states that my body itself is a temple, head the Shikara, the vision of my eyes are the bright lamps, the words uttered by me are the temple bells and the numerous tastes experienced by the tongue are the different food offerings made to the Lord. Hence this is the way one could offer to the Lord by treating everyday activities as one among the sixteen kinds of offerings made to Lord Vishnu.³⁵

In the initial stages of Bhakti the devotee presents himself as a slave of God who is very keen in carrying out the master's commands. As far as Annamayya's Adyatmika,

Sankeertanas are concerned the Dasya Bhava remains the dominant mode of expressive devotion. The poet is not tired of calling himself Dasa Vettivadu Bantu etc. He acknowledges the blessings of the Lord and asks how a servant can clear his debt to his master except for faithfully executing the orders of his master.³⁶ Emphasizing on a worthy life the saint says that as a potter is required to make pots similarly, it is Lord who created us. Hence not rendering service would make our lives meaningless. He then states that I may be a landlord or low-grade servant, literate or ill-literate, but remaining your slave grants me happiness. I would seek joy in offering Kine Karia.³⁷

According to the philosophy of Visistadvaita, Dasyam emerges as Sesatva, which is where God treats the human being as an instrument through whom he manipulates and implements this worldly life. Annamacharya desire to attain this state of service to Lord Venkateswara. In the cumulative stage of Dasyam, voluntary acknowledgement would be a tautology.³⁸

A submissive attitude characterizes Dasya Bhakti while in Sakya Bhakti a devotee overcomes the fear and hierarchical subordination. In this form of devotion, God interprets as a close friend to whom the Bhakta reveals all his secrets. Further, the devotee is at liberty to fight with the supreme and authoritatively seek Mukthi. Annamacharya glorifies Lord Venkateswara as Narasakha and Vijayasakha where the first one refers to Srikrishna as a friend of Arjuna, and second, refers to the almighty as a friend of living creation.³⁹ The poet sings that friendship strengthens overtime promotes patience and does not discriminate among individuals. It is this friendship that keeps a society intact by enhancing joy. It is such friends who understand his companion's troubles and tries to find a way out. Hence Annamayya treats Lord Venkateswara as a friend who would extend a helping hand just as Kuchela who approaches SriKrishna with a hope of getting rid of hurdles of the materialistic life.⁴⁰

Athmanivedana is offering oneself to the divine being has been suggested as an ultimate form of Bhakti in various scriptures. Annamacharya also enumerates this concept in large number of sankeertanas. In one of his keerthanas, he says that he is naughty pleads the Lord to consider him as his devotee. He then says that unaware of the Vishnu's devotees I

ill-treated them at times though I forget to worship with the help of my family I developed trust on you so please come to my rescue but not counting on my blenders in this journey of life.⁴¹ In another verse, he reiterates the importance of surrender by saying that Omini present you have been the cause of our birth source of creation sustained and end. You are very close to the true Bhakta's who consider you as most precious wealth and a source of strength and happiness. Hence the poet surrenders himself to the magnificent creator to attain eternal bliss. These are the various forms of Bhakti describe by Annamacharya that could be followed by a Bhakta with immense love and devotion. Following any of the notes of Bhakti would provide the devotee with the highest gain would be equal to thousands of sacrifices and penance which are very complicated.

ANNAMAYYA'S CONCEPT OF Saranagathi

Annamayya, in his keerthanas presents the importance of Saranagathi as the simplest path for an individual devotee to attain liberation. AnnamaCharya innocently questions O! Lord though we have dedicated everything to you why do you impose restrictions in achieving our goals. We do not know the customs and practices to be followed in reaching you hence do not threaten us with your rules as we do not have anyone else to rescue except you.⁴² In another song the poet states that O! Lord think about my plea and I am only the one who propagates the message of devotion under your direction, though the physical body is mine the organs do not listen to me, the soul may be mine, but I am unable to understand the mystery of life, I may sleep peacefully but the dreams eye-witnessed are your deeds hence, O! Lord grant me the skill by which I can attain your grace.⁴³ This song depicts the helplessness of the Bhakta who seeks the help of the Supreme Being in order to attain salvation.

In another verse Annamayya presents his ignorance stating that he is ignorant and lack of knowledge of various scriptures, He does not know what is good or bad hence chanting the name of Venkateswara. He became his slave and bearing the Mudras of Pancha Samskaras. He became the slave of Lord Vishnu Annamayya then requests Venkateswara not to leave him alone and grant him the divine grace.⁴⁴ Annamacharya who has heard about the glorious deeds of the divine soul from his teacher Sathagopa Yogi and realized that his five senses captured him, so he requests the lord to consider him as the property of lord and rescue just as the lord rescued the devas from the demons.⁴⁵

In another Sankeerthana he states that seeking refuge at your feet itself is a great opportunity, everyone may reap the result of their karmas, but your grace alone is sufficient for me. The heavenly beings may consume nectar for a long life but for me, your name itself is the nectar. All human beings may have families but you are the only family that I have. Thus the poet in the process of seeking spiritual grace illuminates the role of Lord Vishnu.⁴⁶ He further undermines the role of various rituals and states that my life is mysterious, I do not know what is the Dharma or Adharma but blindly followed my ancestors in carrying out various Japas which are meaningless hence the poet states that embracing the Lord itself is the best alternative to come out of the materialistic life. The poet renders advice to a devotee saying that just as heat is required to shape gold ornaments in the same way devotees body may wander anywhere physically, but the mind should not have deviated from Kamalanabha. The body may degrade to the lowest stage but the shoulders should bear the symbols of conch and discus. An individual tongue should taste the essence of Sri Hari's name irrespective of his position.⁴⁷ In another composition, Annamayya says that though Supreme Being is present in both cent count and non-cent count creations but the true devotee should realize that all the creation is controlled by divine power and worship him alone to justify this argument. Annamayya gives various examples. Few of them are as follows: A pious wife would only approach her husband when he is alone but not in the crowd similarly a true Prapanna would worship Lord Venkateswara but not the supreme that exists as in dwellers in other deities. He then refers to the Vedic scriptures where the supreme existing as indwellers within a true learned Brahmin should be worshipped but not as the one existing a lower creation like a dog. He then goes on to say that a true Prapanna should realize that Lord Venkateswara alone is a spiritual leader and should not follow alternate paths but only seek refuge at the feet of Lord Venkateswara who is glorified in various texts as gnana, Satya and Ananda.⁴⁸

Annamacharya prescribes the chanting of the divine name itself is the heavenly medicine which helps in overcoming worldly illness, in one of the songs he refers to various diseases that afflict and trouble human beings and suggest that the only way to cure them is to seek solace at the feet of Lord Venkateswara. According to him, this sweet cool medicine was used by Dhruva, Narada, Prahalada, Janaka and Brahma which proved to be very beneficial for them, though using physical medicines may help an individual in getting rid off of physical sickness but the divine name would help in overcoming both physical and mental

illness, this powerful medicine is now available on the banks of Swamy Pushkarini at Tirumala and can be easily acquired by mortal beings to be relieved from various illnesses.⁴⁹ There are numerous keerthanas depicting the voice of the devotee and significance of Saranagathi for a Bhaktha, but in one of the Sankeerthana Annamacharya to install confidence among the devotees shows how the Lord would shower his grace on the trusted devotees where he says that the Lord who stays on the Venkata hill grants numerous boons to his devotee, he is the one who went to different places along with the ruler Tondaman and helped him in his battles. This divine being in disguise helped Ananthaalvar by carrying mud. He is the only one who showered his grace while at Kanchi and made Thirukkachi Nambi to come to his premises towards his devotees and go to any extent in rescuing them.⁵⁰

The path of Saranagathi thus is presented as a final resort by Annamayya for an individual to be liberated even the most wicked person could get rid of his sins by seeking Saranagathi at the feet of Lord Venkateswara – Annamayya states that just as a drop of curd is enough to transform entire milk to curd similarly a minute effort from the devotee would help him in getting rid of his sins. Saranagathi is described as the simplest path for a devotee which was widely propagated among the masses through Sankeerthanas of Annamacharya.

ANNAMACHARYA'S VIEW ON Salvation:

The idea of being liberated from the materialistic life and attaining moksha has been the essence of various religious scriptures, to attain salvation the religious text like Bhagavat Geetha prescribed Gnana, Karma and Bhakti marga among which Bhakti is considered the easiest way this Bhakti marga was adopted by various Vaishnavite sages to attain liberation, similarly, Annamacharya also realized the importance of salvation and presented it in numerous Sankeerthanas.

Salvation is not a place within the sky or a hallow beneath the ground but inside once heart and soul it is everlasting happiness that reveals in the abode of Lord Venkateswara. The divine name that is enclosed in all the mantras is so precious and used by numerous sages that can be compared to the moonlight.⁵¹ Every individual should first worship his parents followed by Guru who bestows us with knowledge Guru Brahma, it is this who leads us to the path of salvation. It is the Lord who created the illusory world and made the individual ignorant with his tricks, on the other hand, the Supreme Being lit the lamp of Vishnu beyond

the illusory world which can be only realized by those who gets rid of ignorance. We are all puppets in the hands of the master, who is making us live according to his wishes, we individuals are surprised at all his creations but unable to pay him back which is only possible when we gain wisdom which would lead to God's abode.⁵² The physical body is attracted by the chains of family, love, friends and cursed by sin and happiness that provide temporary benefits all of which keep one self away from the Lord Venkateswara which is so exhausting says Annamacharya.⁵³

As we get rid of the old clothes and get new ones similarly the soul also leaves the temporary body and enters into new body, hence the soul is permanent.⁵⁴ The human body enjoying the worldly pleasures is ignorant and captured like an animal for sacrifice that can only be relieved by means of chanting the divine name receiving Holy water, consecrated food and banishing luxuries.⁵⁵ All the creation exists due to the magnificence but we human beings are foolish thinking that the entire universe runs due to human energies. We are proud of our achievements treating it as a result of our hard work, little realizing the power of the supreme.⁵⁶ This ocean of samsara is very tempting that one quickly falls a prey without realizing that it is impermanent. He is driven away by all the good that happens that makes him forget the Lord for a moment. The saint requests Lord Venkateswara to help this ignorant Bhakta identify that eternity lies not in the transcend world, but only the almighty.⁵⁷

As long as we are intact to the earthly bonds it is not possible to understand God's actions. It is necessary to understand the fact that is deeds determine our path to heaven or hell, to a certain extent one can shape his own destiny. Both sun and moon exists in one self where the sun is Paramathma while the moon is once own soul which only shines with the help of Paramathma. The aim of the devotee is thus to realize the Paramathma within himself which would ultimately lead to Mukthi.⁵⁸ The real happiness lies in understanding the supreme assents or else it would be a life full of miseries. It is necessary for us to eliminate temporary happiness in order to be liberated. Human life is like a dream which vanishes in an eye blink. Hence the Bhakta should offer his prayers without any inhibitions.⁵⁹ Attaining the top position is not easy in this context Annamayya refers to eternal happiness the path to victory could only be identified by learning the depth of devotion and coming out of vicious circles of anger, hatred and jealousy.⁶⁰

According to the saint one should not be liable to any one which would result in a happy family in the same context he give several examples that we should not be very ambitious and to achieve those that give transcend extravagance and create feelings of Nepotism envy etc. He insists that one should express Bhakti towards Lord Venkateswara without being carried away by polluting thoughts that would lead to rebirth. Blaming, accusing and abusing others with a view of fulfilling our own needs with unstable heart would be a hurdle in the path of Moksha.⁶¹

Annamayya says that to be victorious over others he learnt some scriptures but is unable to control his own emotions. Though he is propagating the principles of Vishisthadvaita through numerous Sankeerthanams, he himself is not able to strictly follow the Bhakti Marga as some distractions constrained him. In this Keerthana, the poet expresses his disappointment due to the inability in reaching the lord of seven hills.⁶² Preaching these principles the poet says that life and death are the reality but everything that takes place in between birth and death is a mere play. All the since which have been acquired by an individual over his course of existence cannot be eliminated completely for which the solution lies in the Lord alone. It is only salvation which can be pursued without being seen.⁶³ Salvation thus according to Annamayya can be attained by a true devotee who follows the path of Bhakti and detaches oneself from the materialistic life even by carrying out his family life. He reiterates the fact that one need not practice severe penance or sacrifices to attain Moksha but offer worship to Lord Venkateswara whole heartedly giving up desires. This principle has been emphasized as a key to Mukthi in many of his Sankeerthanams.

PHILOSOPHY OF BAMMERA POTHANA:

The family of Bammara Pothanna was largely inclined towards the sect of Saivism and remained the great devotees of sage Palakurthi Somanath. Pothanna as a child due to his parents influence continue his devotion to Lord Shiva. It is only after the poet had the vision of Sriram who insisted Pothanna to take up the task of writing Bhagavatham, he extended his devotion to Lord Vishnu. It does not imply that Pothanna developed a sense of hatred towards Saivism but treated both Siva & Shriram equally.

This 15th century poet was largely influenced by the philosophy of Advaita that was propagated by Sankaracharya. According to the philosophy of Advaita there exist only one supreme reality called the Brahman and the Jeeva is considered to be the reflection of the Brahman which is characterised by Avidya. Jeeva is characterised by three coats that is Sthula Sareera, Sukshma Sareera and Karana Sareera, where Sthula Sareera is associated with conscious and mind and ultimately Karana is filled with extreme bliss.

Sthula Sareera comprises the cycle of births and deaths which acts as a link between different Janma's. When Gnana emerges Agnana would be eliminated and the cycle of rebirth would come to an end. At such a point Avidya is also dispelled and Sthula and Sukshma Sareer's are also dropped away which would ultimately help the Jeeva to reach its origin called the Brahmin.⁶⁴

Bammera Pothanna in both of his works Narayana Sathakam and Andhra Maha Bhagavatham shows his close affiliation to the philosophy of Advaita. Many such poems are presenting his attitude, few of which would be discussed further. The human beings touched by the emotions of Kama and Krodha are attaining best and worst positions but are unable to realise the true position of the Divine.⁶⁵

Pothanna says that Supreme Being is compassionate, free from illusion, beyond the reach of one's explanation and the blissful one. It is not easy to have the glance of such a meritorious being except by those who are victorious over the qualities of Tama's, Raja's and Sathva. Such divine form was made visible to the cowherd boys in the form of Sri Krishna.

The Lord's words alone stand as the best example of truth but not his deeds, hence great men follow the words of Lord alone and not his activities.⁶⁶ The poet tries to explain how the lord is treated by different Devotees when he says that the ones who follow the path of Karma say that, Oh! Lord, you are the only one but carryout the responsibilities in the form of Indra and other deities, while others who adhere to the path of Gnana give up all materialistic comforts and adopt a life of ascetic consider you as an intellectual form. Few others following the Pancharatra, tradition consider the Lord in the form of Samkarsana, Anirudha, Vasudeva and Pradhyumna and some others worship that universal being as Narayan or Shiva. All such worships cannot be considered as faulty because just as different tributaries flow into the huge ocean the essence of all the philosophies are completely observed by the divine form. Though the shadow of the moon appears differently in the water

that does not mean that the moon and shadow are not different but the same. Even when all the worlds perish it is the lord who stays alone to manage the further creation.⁶⁷

Oh Parameshwara, you being the knowledge is free from attachments as you do not possess physical body you are free from ignorance that would lead to numerous births.⁶⁸ One way find it easy to count the sand particles on the earth but it stands impossible to count the names, attributes and activities of the Lord.⁶⁹

It is due to the illusion created by the Supreme Being human beings develop a kind of self-love and treat few people as friends, others as enemies while few others as neutral just as sun, moon, etc...appear differently in a stream of water. Similarly, the man kind though having the same soul appear differently to each one of us. This physical body made up of five sensory organs and three qualities of Sathva, Tama's and Raja's that would help an individual to satisfy his worldly desires but the soul within the physical body lives without any sense of attachment and detachment, just as the sun rises in the east and carries out its duties without any influence as sets in the west.⁷⁰

We cannot come to the conclusion that Lord Vishnu is having a specific form with certain attributes. His philosophy cannot be easily understood by human beings. He is beyond the reach of three Guna's of Tama's, Raja's and Sathva and free from the chain of rebirths. This divine being not only becomes the source of troubles but also helps the humanity overcome them with his miraculous powers.⁷¹

Pothanna advises the human beings not to be depressed when the dear one's depart from this world as everyone who takes a human form should finally perish. Hence, one need not cry for such departed beings.⁷²

The physical body is a composition of five natural elements which implies that each physical attribute emerged from those elements such as earth is the source of skin and flesh, water is the source for blood, fire for hunger and thrust, movements from air and sky is the source of emotions, Kama , Krodha, Moha, etc. such physical body is like the house in which the soul dwells for a while, carries its activities based on its previous life's and later vacates the body.⁷³

All human beings are ignorant and trapped in the dark ditch called Samsara and cannot escape from it. These human beings see others with a differential attitude and not in a

position to realise all such variations exist only due to illusion created by the Supreme Being.⁷⁴

In an other verse Pothana tries to establish the significance of human life filled with Dharma he says that the human life is of hundred years within which fifty years is filled with darkness due to sleep, twenty years in childhood and youth and the remaining thirty years one would lead his life subjected to materialistic pleasures. He would also try to steal others wealth to satisfy the numerous desires and trapped in the bonds of wife, children, relatives etc....

Indulged in such pleasure one would forget the path of Moksha and make his life meaningless.⁷⁵

Bammera Pothanna narrating the episode of Prahladh shows how the young boy Prahladh explains to his friends about the divinity who he says that life is a reflection of the Supreme Being. He then says that a tree is the source of a fruit which would further grow and later dry up. This process is inevitable in the nature. Similarly, the physical human body would go through different stages of growth and development but the soul is unmoved by such developments. The soul is permanent, pure, self-glorifying, the result of supreme grace and complete in itself. Thus the soul is believed to have 12 such qualities. He then gives example of the gold mines were in stones and other dust particles are put into fire in order to extract gold to be moulded by the gold smiths. Similarly the ones who understand the essence of the soul would give up attachment, ego and desires and treat the soul differently from that of physical body that would help them have the vision of the Brahman.⁷⁶

Thus Bammera Pothanna in describing the divine in both of his works presence that the lord Vishnu is supreme and the soul is the reflection of him. He further emphasising the philosophy of Advaita says that the soul is permanent and free from this chain of Samsara. One could only get rid of such bonds is by developing the essence of devotion and giving up self-love that would only give momentary pleasures.

Bammera Pothanna Notion of God:

Pothanna who was initially inclined towards the sect of Veerasaivism, gradually turns towards the sect of Vishnu as he began to the right the text of Andhra Maha Bhagavatam. He elaborately describes the glories of Lord Vishnu and his different manifestations in his two works Narayana Satakam and Andhra Mahabagavatam.

In his work, Narayana Sathakam Pothanna says that Oh! Narayana I committed a large number of sins and faced its consequences in the form of troubles which are inevitable. Oh! Lakshmipathi I trusted that chanting your name would not go waste hence I praised you in this hundred poems so eliminate all my sins & be compassionate as I consider you as my parent and no one else could take up this responsibility.⁷⁷

Referring to the divine being the poet says that it is not easy to conclude that god is available in a specific form with specific attributes but at times assuming certain qualities gets trapped in Samsara and experiences it. He being the knower of everything, filled everywhere exercise his miraculous powers, adopt the qualities of Satva, Thomas and Raja's which would result in a human form that would seek entertainment. When the shadow of the huge trees fall in the flowing rivers, we perceive that the trees are also moving away similarly the divine being that is free from all such illusions and instable thoughts appear to the human being as one who lacks stability. But in reality, he is the one who remains unshaken.⁷⁸

Oh! Divine you are the one who possess the purest character, be it in heaven or in Pathala your powers are unimaginable. It stands impossible to praise such a miraculous being.⁷⁹ Pothanna says that Oh! Lord this earth is your thrown, the sky your umbrella the god's are your servant's praising your greatness, goddess Lakshmi is your wife and Lord Brahma your child and this entire universe is your luxurious palace you are such a gracious form whose glory would gradually enhance overtime.⁸⁰

Oh! Lord even the great souls such as Brahma could not realize you on the other hand a mere human being like me, who is drowned in ignorance, considering ourselves as the ruler of the three worlds and the worst person who does not even follow the basic rules is it possible for such an evil being to understand the essence of the deeds of the indweller.⁸¹

Presenting the episode of Gajendra Moksha, Bammara Pothanna in the voice of the tired elephant says that Oh! Lord who is the ocean of the Vedic scriptures, the Repository of the best attributes, unparalleled and who shines independently. It is in him that all descriptions dissolve but he remains constant by delivering justice and who pacifies the disoriented being like me. He cannot be easily approached by such who are keen in the material life. To such lord the elephant offers salutation for its rescue.⁸²

Oh! Great soul you have the capacity of covering the entire universe which is unable to exercise its dominance remains under your supremacy. You always desire to remain the guardian of the people with a pure heart and exercise your sovereignty over such devotees who consider constant meditation and contemplation as the only wealth. To such person the poor and helpless devotee praise for emancipation.⁸³

Addressing the supreme, the poet further says that you are not the mere child of Yashoda, but Parameswara. It is when Lord Brahma contemplated and pleaded to be the saviour you assumed this form in the clan of Yadava's in order to fulfil the request.⁸⁴ In an other verse the poet tries to compare each of the nature's elements to the body of the universal being and says that Oh! King fire is your face, the eyes, are the directions, feet are the ocean bounce are the mountains the air is your life and days and nights are equivalent to the blink of your eyes. In this way he incorporates the entire universe into the body just as the tree is filled with delicious fruits.⁸⁵

The **since** committed by the ignorant are generally overlooked by the compassionate being, but only when these blenders are beyond a limit are subjected to the consequences. He is complete in himself; hence it is best when one offers his deeds to the lords if done so one could have a clear understanding of the essence of divinity. So it is not the physical gifts that would be appreciated but only intense devotion and pure heart.

Just as saplings emerge from the seeds the forms of sath and asath glorify with in you the true devotees just as finding the bonfire during cold nights. These devotees would have the glance of the almighty. He is both Nirgun and Sagun, hence even the well worse scholars by giving up the study of Vedas may serve the Lord to attain their goal.⁸⁶

Pothanna then goes on to present the different Avathara's where he states that Lord Vishnu serves as the root for all the incarnations. The incarnations mentioned by him include a Brahmachary, Yagnavaraha, The great sage Naradha, Nara-Narayana, Kapila who propagated the Samkhya philosophy, Dhathathreya, Yagna, King Pruthu, Mathsya, Kurma, Jaganmohini, Narasimha, Vaamana, Parasuram. He also mentions the great sage Vyas who codified Vedas, Sriram, Balaram, Sri Krishna, Budha and ultimately Kalki to safeguard Kaliyuga. In this way Pothanna discusses the different manifestations that emerged to safeguard the universe.⁸⁷

Pothana's View on Bhakti and its Forms:

Among the three different ways of Gnana, Karma and Bhakti to attain liberation, Bhakti serves as the most accessible path that one could adopt. Pothanna enumerates the different modes of expressing ones bhakti towards the supreme which would be discussed in the following.

Sravanam is listening to the divine names, his attributes and history with great reverence is sravana bhakti. It is the simplest form that could be followed by an individual in order to attain the residence of Lord Vishnu.⁸⁸ The story of Parikshth stands as a best example Sravana Bhakti according to Pothanna, where the king Parikshith on hearing Bhagavatam from the sage Sukha states that these divine stories not only helped me in getting rid of material desires such as thirst & hunger but also facilitated in eliminating the fear of death.⁸⁹

The human since that have piled up over numerous lifes can only cool down with the stories of Lord Vishnu and has no other alternative.⁹⁰ Large number of diseases related to the worldly existence like jealousy, anger, etc. could only be removed by listening. The ones who are desirous in getting liberated would develop greater thirst in understanding the essence of the life of Sri Krishna.⁹¹ An individual develops an interest in the narratives only when he visits holy places and honour great sages. Once directed towards that path a Bhakta would not pay attention to the materialistic stories. It is in the hearts of such true devotees where Lord Sri Krishna stays and granting them all merits by helping them overcome all their sins. Hence, lending once years to the stories of Narayana would be an essential element of Bhakti.⁹²

Singing a loud the name of the Lord, his attributes and his different Avatharas is referred to us Keerthana Bhakti. When a devotee expresses his devotion singing alone is Keerthana Bhakti on the other hand, if the same devotee is accompanied by a group of other devotees in glorifying the Lord is Sankeerthana Bhakti. The poet says that even the worst sinner in this world who killed his own parents or a cow or a Brahmin would be sanctified from such sinful crimes by singing the name of Hari and would be directed to the world of Lord Vishnu.⁹³

It is said that people in different Yugas carried out various activities for liberation such as in Kritayuga, they carried out deep meditation for years together while in Tretayuga

they performed numerous sacrifices and in Dwapara yuga they served the Lord, while in the age of Kali an individual can be liberated simply by Hari Sankeerhtanas.

Life of those who lack interest in Hari Keerhtana is not justified except for causing trouble to his mother in the womb.⁹⁴ Pothanna gives the example of the sage Narada who constantly place the Veena chanting aloud the name of Narayana which not only provided eternal bliss to the sage, but also others who were mesmerized by Naradas divine Keerthana's.⁹⁵ The poet then says that the text that is filled with Hari Sankeerthana's is like the lake of Manassarovar adored with beautiful swans and lotuses. While the text which does not have any such keerthanas is like a dirty pond filled with debris emitting foul odour. Sankeerthana would serve as a boat for those who carry out actions with great desires to reach the bank.⁹⁶ Hence, true devotees would try to justify their life by accepting the presence of Lord in every creation, singing the miracles of the Lord chanting his names, listening to his stories with keen interest and constantly praise the supreme. All these would ultimately guide a devotee in the right direction.

The act of directing once thought towards the lord, constantly recollecting his form and his name is Smarana Bhakti. The real essence of Bhakti lies in the fact were a devotee who offers all his karma's to the divine undergoes suffering if he forgets the Lord for a moment which implies the necessity of constant remembrance accompanied with intense devotion. The poet revealing the voice of the almighty says that he would be easy for those who are constantly engrossed in the thoughts of Vishnu.⁹⁷

The one who is involved in thinking about worldly affairs and satisfying materialistic desires would not find the path towards liberation. At the same time, the heart of a true devotee that regularly memorises the name of Hari would merge with the Supreme Being.⁹⁸ People who are blessed with intellect would use the sword of Smarana to cut themselves from physical attachments characterized by ego, jealousy, hatred.⁹⁹

Pothanna in the voice of sage Sukha who narrates the greatness of Lord Vishnu to king Parikshit says that Oh! King one who does not understand the magnificence of the

divine being would be trapped in the ocean of Samsara and trouble himself. This ignorant cannot come out from the clutches of momentary happiness. Oh! My majesty even such people could attain eternal bliss thinking about the lord even for a short span of 12 seconds.¹⁰⁰

The term Archana literally refers to the Holy offerings to the Lord, the ones with true devotion may not make physical offerings but bhakti alone is enough. Those who utter the names of Vasudev , Aniruddha, Sankarsana and Pradhyumna with real devotion and offer their pooja would attain greater intellect. This Divine being possess numerous eyes, feet, shoulders etc.... Such a being would be in the constant worship by the great men.¹⁰¹ In an other poem ,

Pothana depicting the voice of the Lord says that those devotees who constantly worship me without any desires would receive the fruits of such heart full worship and attain Saalukyam, Saamipyam, Saarupyam and Saayudyam as prescribed in the Vaishnavite Philosophy. Hence, great Yogis would adopt this path rather than other means. An individual who takes birth on this Earth should be able to worship the Divine with his hands and utter the name of the Lord with his mouth and adopt the qualities of compassion and truth or else his existence would be meaningless.¹⁰²

Pothana gives an example of Archana bhakti in one of the verse while Sri Krishna was returning from his friends place, he comes across a woman called Khubja and asks her for perfumes. On hearing it, she says that “O’ Lord, I am the slave of Kamsa who is suffering from a physical deformity and I would be pleased to offer you these perfumes made by me”. It is believed that on receiving the perfume Sri Krishna helped her get rid of her physical deformity and transformed her into a beautiful woman. Archana bhakti thus contributes in attaining a position that could not be attained even by the Celestial beings says Pothana.¹⁰³

Padasevanam is not the mere admiration of the lord’s feet but includes the worship of this divine feet with utmost devotion, washing the feet of the Lord and consuming that holy water, to treat the dust particles from the feet of that heavenly being as sacred. The land and stones that were touched by the lord are also considered divine. In addition to this the area in which the lord walked around also emerges as great centres of pilgrimage. All these come under, the fold of Padasevanam Bhakti. The once who are starving for food would not satisfy their hunger by applying sandal wood & other perfumes on their body similarly the king Dharma Raj who was desirous in serving the Lord’s feet was not pleased by the immense riches possessed by him.¹⁰⁴

Pothanna shows how Krishna's childhood friend Sudhama offered water to Sri Krishna & Balram, washes their feet. On touching the feet of Sri Krishna, Sudhama's heart was filled with ecstasy and thought that his dynasty would be purified, all his desire's fulfilled and his house filled with prosperity which would be possible only due to his extreme devotion. Sudhama then pleading the Lord says that grant me the boon of constantly serving your feet, companionship of your true devotees and compassionate attitude towards all living beings.¹⁰⁵

According to the poet, the knowledgeable people who constantly worship the feet of Lord Vishnu, would use that feet as a ship to cross the ocean of Samsara in an easy manner just as a calf that would follow its mother's foot prints soon after its birth. Pothanna addressing the Lord as brother says that it is the touch of his feet that made the mother earth prosper with greenery and the different kinds of trees & plants were sanctified as the nails of the Lord touch them.¹⁰⁶

Some great devotees save this divine feet in their heart and with great curiosity discuss his glorious deeds which helps them attain a state of eternal bliss.¹⁰⁷ Pothanna thus presenting the significance of the holy feet reiterate that the Vedas may describe the greatness of Lord Vishnu, but would not show him. It is only the Yadava boys who were fortunate enough to accompany Sri Krishna and massage his feet whenever he was tired. This Padasevanam is a form of Bhakti which was mentioned by Bammara Pothanna in numerous verses of Andhra Maha Bhagavatam.

Bammara Pothanna starts of his work Andhra Maha Bhagavatam after offering worship with folded hands which is consider as Vandana Bhakti. He says that this task would help me liberate from the worldly chains, after I offer my worship to the goddess of knowledge, the lotus feet and sage, Vyas I would resort to this task of writing this great epic.¹⁰⁸

Just as an actor behind the screen, you run this world standing behind the curtain called Maya and your greatness is beyond our imagination. Your form cannot be visualised easily even by the great Yogi's who are free from the emotions of love and hatred in such case. How can be ignorant, caught in the family life reach you. Oh! Vasu Deva accept my Vandana filled with immense Bhakti.¹⁰⁹ There are some people who are proud of their

family's, wealth and knowledge. But you can only be attained by such great souls who overcame desires.¹¹⁰

Oh! Sri Krishna you stand as an ornament for the yadava clan, the most loved by the warrior Arjuna, the destroyer of those kings who troubled their people and the rescuer of the God's, Brahmin's and cow's in difficulty and the grantor of Moksha, to such divine i offer my salutation with folded hands.¹¹¹

The sun which glorifies the entire world appears differently for each creation. Oh! Lord you are the one who exists in the heart of each design during their life time to such magnificence I pray with a pure heart.¹¹² You being the source of each organ of the living being and its survival. You cannot be influenced by the natural changes as you exist from the earlier times. On the other hand, we the human beings filled with the qualities of Satva, Raja's and Thama's are unable to realize your magnanimity. I bore before that great power and pray to facilitate in reaching the heavenly aboard.¹¹³

The form of devotion where a Bhakta decides to remain submissive to the Lord is termed as Dasya Bhakti. Pothanna presents this attitude of the devotee in different situations. In one of the episode, he shows how Lord Brahma on seeing Lord Vishnu prostrating at his feet visualises the supreme form that he saw. Brahma addressing the supreme Lord says that oh! Lord in order to understanding your miracles is only possible with the touch of the dust particles that fall from your feet provide me the opportunity of being your close associate and remain in your constant service both in the present and next lives.¹¹⁴ Grant me the chance of being your Dasa. Oh! Sarveswara you are the one who sees and knows everything. Though I committed numerous sins forgive me and shower your grace.¹¹⁵

Bammera Pothanna presenting the voice of the Gopika's who plead the Lord that Oh! Krishna even when our family members restrained us from coming here. We came here disobeying them due to our intense devotion towards you. We are not sure whether we would be accepted by our kith and kin if we go back hence accept us as your servants and rescue us.¹¹⁶ The poet says that Oh! Lord you are not only the cause for this world, but also the saviour of this mother earth. It is with your presence that our families have being sanctified, my penance is successful and my house filled with riches. So I am ready to receive and carry out any commands that you desire.¹¹⁷

Pothanna not only shows how a devotee becomes a Dasa but also depicts the voice of the Lord as to how he would protect his devotee. In verse he says that I would be compassionate to those who would give up worldly interests and serve me with dedication, I being bestowed with the inherent quality of rescuing those who approach me I would be there saviour.

The term Sakhyam refers to friendship, extending friendly attributes towards Lord Vishnu would result in an inseparable relation between individual and the divine soul. Pothanna depicts this kind of friendship b/w Arjuna & Sri Krishna where Arjuna expresses his grief as his close friend, relative & minister has departed to another world.¹¹⁸ Recollecting the time spent with Sri Krishna, Arjuna states that he was the most loved by Sri Krishna who treated him as his best friend. Who used to make fun at times, feed him & also make him sit beside him to correct his mistakes?¹¹⁹ This Yaadava chief would share all his secrets with Arjuna & advise him to follow the path of Righteousness.¹²⁰

In another incident Pothanna narrates about Kuchela, a childhood friend of Sri Krishna who warmly welcomes his friend and both of them sit discussing the childhood memories. Krishna then asks his friend that 'Did he get anything for him'. He says that be it flowers or fruits offered great love & devotion would be pleasing for me rather than more incredible wealth offered by a person who lacks devotion. Here, Lord Sri Krishna not being averse to the shabby appearance, accepts the beaten rice brought by Kuchela. Pothanna clearly portrays the attributes of friend as to how extending friendship towards the Lord like Arjuna and Kuchela would help a mere devotee rather than impressing the lord with riches.¹²¹

Human beings life would be justified if they develop trust in the Supreme Being who has no attachments, no friends or enemies and all are same for him, to rescue the good individuals he would carry out the acts of creation and sustenance.¹²² Hence, one is required to offer himself in entirety that would help him reap the true essence of the nectar. The Gopikas by offering themselves to the Lord received a great appreciation even from the Heavenly beings.¹²³

The poet then narrates the conversation between Sri Krishna and the cowherd women where the Lord tries to assure them that any service offered to him with devotion would make the difficult path of salvation easy. Hence, they need not worry and go home. The Gopikas were pleased with these words and contemplated upon God with an attitude of self-offering that is Aathma Nivedhana.¹²⁴

Thus, Bammara Pothanna enumerates the nine forms of Bhakti that a devotee could follow to attain Salvation. In one of the worse, he beautifully summarises these forms of bhakti where he says that the hands that worship the Lotus eyed are hands the eyes that intent to see the Lord are only eyes if not they remain as mere holes in the wall called body. The tongue that does not wish to utter the name of the Lord remains a mere drum emitting sound and the life that is not desirous to serve the Lord would remain as a water bubble. Hence, one can make his life meaningful only by adopting the path of Bhakti.

Bammara Pothanna concept of Saranagathi:

Saranagathi that serves as a basis of Visishtadvaitha philosophy has been strengthened over a period of time. Bammara Pothanna tries to enumerate this concept in Andhra Maha Bhagavatam. Saranagathi does not merely mean that one should give up all his duties and seek refuge at the feet of the lord but he can carry out all his responsibilities with greater devotion and leave the results to the lord himself.¹²⁵

Saranagathi has been described by Pothanna in large number of poems some of which would be discussed here. In the episode of Gajendra Moksham a proud elephant that goes to a pond to quench its thirst was caught by a crocodile, being very strong the elephant try to get rid of it but in vein. The struggle between the two continued for long having failed to rescue it-self, the elephant became weak and lost his courage and hope of living. In such an exhausted stage the elephant began to pray to the lord saying that what a foolish thing it was to enter into this pond and threatened by the crocodile. Here the poet presence the voice of the helpless elephant which further says that Oh! Lord the only way that I could relieve myself is through your involvement. You are the creator of all the worlds and absorb them at your will. You are the root cause of both visible and invisible, you are infinite with ever perfection to such powerful being I worship for my succour.¹²⁶

The great sages whose actions have been pacified by the fire called penance worship you without any distractions and help the mankind with their charitable acts you are the personification of the heavenly aboard hence I find no other alternate then to surrender at your graceful feet.¹²⁷ Wise people giving up their desires for wealth and luxurious serve the lord with the ultimate aim of being subjected to his grace to such devotees he would grant the goal of reaching him as a result of which these two devotees would be in a state of eternal

bliss and constantly engross in singing and praising the glories of the almighty without expecting any rewards. I implore upon such god to be my saviour.¹²⁸

In the form of elephant Pothanna presence the position of human being who enjoys all worldly pleasures, things that he is supreme proud of his strength and assumes that everything is under his control it is only when he comes across hurdles in life he tries to fight the battle he turns to the lord like the elephant and pleads the lord who could elevate him from suffering and sorrow of those who seek Saranagathi at his feet. Thus the elephant makes an appeal to lord Vishnu to consider his case and shower his merciful grace on this helpless being.¹²⁹

In an other instance Pothanna presence the voice of princess Utara the wife of Abhimanya who on observing that the potent weapon soon approaching would create havoc to her child in the womb. She felt that Lord Krishna is the only source of hope, thinking this she lifted her hands in prayer to invoke Lord Krishna saying that Oh! Lord who else could save my child and me except for you. You have been the philosopher guide & friend of the Pandavas and took the responsibility for their protection & victory in the battle. Now the grandson of your beloved devotee is in my womb who's life is in great danger due to the Brahmastra released by Asvadhama with an evil intention of destroying the successor of the Pandava's. You are the only one who can quench the fire of the Brahmastra and save the baby. Hence I urge you to be merciful and be my protector.¹³⁰

Thus, in both the above episodes Bammera Pothanna not only portrays the please of the Prapana in the form of the elephant Gajendra and princess Uthara, but in the end he also narrates how the compassionate Lord Vishnu on hearing the pain and suffering of his devotees would rush to save the elephant from the menace of the crocodile and the unborn baby from the powerful arrow with the help of his Sudarshana Chakra. This attitude of mercy depicted by Pothanna would develop a greater trust among the devotees towards Lord Vishnu.

Bammera Pothanna Concept of Salvation:

The idea of attaining salvation has a great significance from the time of Veda's to attain Moksha different paths of Gyana, Karma and Bhakti have been prescribed. This highest position was only accessible to the upper sections of the society where they

performed large number of sacrifices and penance to achieve the goal of Moksha. However, with the emergence of liberal religious movement called Bhakti. The path to Moksha is available to even the lowest rank of society.

Bammera Pothanna like Annamayya emphasis on an individual attaining salvation by adhering to the Bhakti Marga. He says that one who realizes the importance of Srihari should consider it essential to remain in his service. An individual though may undergo good & bad faces in his life he mustn't neglect serving the lords feet. As it is with such service an individual can move from this earth to heaven without any hurdles which would result in unimaginable happiness. Such a dedicated devotee would not be trapped in the ocean of Samsara.¹³¹

The poet in the voice of sage Sukha reply to the king Parikshit says that the householders would never identify the essence of self and spend their nights with women and in sleep while during the days they devote themselves towards family affairs and earning riches. They trust that wives, relative's, body etc. as permanent and lead their life's. But ultimately tired of such materialistic life would breathe the last breath at the crematorium. Though they realize the terrifying situation in their final days would act as if they are unaware of such activities which would facilitate bliss.¹³²

The sage says that "O" King one cannot attain liberation by studying the numerous sections of the Vedas. But by looking the text of Bhagavatam the path to Moksha is simplified.¹³³

Bammera Pothanna presents a conversation between lord Sri Krishna and the Brahmin women where the lord addressing the woman says that as you are with me you would not be offended by your husband's or brother's instead you would be praised by the god's. Just as ordinary people, your union with me will not provide physical pleasures but would grant you Moksha.¹³⁴

The text of Bhagavatam narrates the story of the great devotee Muchukundha who saved the god's from the demons as a result of which he received a great appreciation from the god's who approached him and decided to grant him a boon. On hearing this the devotee asked for liberation.¹³⁵ In reply the god's said that you can ask us anything except for salvation as it is beyond our authority and can be provided by lord Narayana.¹³⁶

According to the poet, human deeds performed out of ignorance would provide the benefits of Dharma, Artha & Kama while it is only Gyan that would lead towards liberation.¹³⁷ He says that let us liberate ourselves from the illusionary trap of Samsara by being victorious over the six enemies of Kama, Krodha, Madha, Moha, Lobha & Matsarya and offer our hearts to Srihari.¹³⁸

The one who realizes that the physical body is impermanent incompletely develops ascents of detachment from it and leads his life happily just as a yogi would be directed to the right destination.¹³⁹ Pothana presence different contributory factors of such as Smarana, Jappa, Concentration, loneliness etc. that facilitate Moksha the one who does not practice the above would be interested in luxurious such individual who lacks Bhakti would fail to understand the philosophy of lord Vishnu.¹⁴⁰

Despite many arguments the ascents lies in the fact that even a person leading a householders life following the path of the Vedas and serving the feet of the Lord, his efforts would be fruitful.¹⁴¹ We human beings throughout the life are desirous in acquiring wealth and developing our families would not remember the divine being even in the final days possessing the tongue that is craving for tasty food and disinterested in chanting the lord's name such a person though standing in front of the ladder of Moksha is incapable of climbing it. Instead of being indulged in a materialistic life, he should have engrossed in the constant remembrance of the Lord which would have helped him in overcoming the circle of birth and death. The poet says that the life of the human is the best among the living creations. Hence instead of wasting such precious time in useless tasks that lead to a terrifying state its better if one remains in the service of Lord.¹⁴² If an individual performs numerous sacrifices without any devotion it would be like grinding the waste husk and regretting not securing any rice grains. So it is essential to worship with a pure heart and

not with selfish motives.¹⁴³ To some up Pothanna interprets salvation as a goal that can be attained by an individual with complete dedication filled with intense Bhakti and carrying out tasks without waiting for the result will help him stay away from bad habits, overcome since and reach Vaikunta.¹⁴⁴

Annamacharya and Bammara Pothanna in their writings have tried to present the omnipresence of Lord Vishnu and justified the Bhakti marga where a true devotee could resort to any form of expressing his love towards the Lord to attain Moksha. Salvation according to them, is not that which can be attained by elaborate penance and sacrifices but by expressing once trust in the divine existence. The writings of these great poets were very simple to understand for the people who were able to know the essence of divinity, different episodes from Purana's and the ways to attain eternal bliss.

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¹³ Gowripedhi Raamasubhasharma, Vol.7, Op.cit, Sankirthanana no.284, p.176.

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¹⁶ Gowripedhi Raamasubhasharma, Vol.2, Op.cit, Sankirthanana no.301, pp.201-202.

¹⁷ Gowripedhi Raamasubhasharma, Vol.1, Op.cit, Sankirthanana no.353, p.236.

¹⁸ Ibid, Sankirthanana no.322, p.215.

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- ²⁴Gowripedhi Raamasubhasharma, Vol.1, Op.cit, Sankirthana no.89, pp.61-62.
- ²⁵H.L. Chandrasekhara, Op.cit, p.122.
- ²⁶Gowripedhi Raamasubhasharma, Vol.3, Op.cit, Sankirthana no.355, pp.239-240.
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- ²⁸Ibid, Sankirthana no.158, p.107.
- ²⁹Ibid, Sankirthana no.101, pp.69-70.
- ³⁰Ibid, Sankirthana no.437, p.293.
- ³¹Ibid, Sankirthana no.191, p.128.
- ³²Ibid, Sankirthana no.66, p.44.
- ³³Gowripedhi Raamasubhasharma, Vol.2, Op.cit, Sankirthana no.498, p.337.
- ³⁴Ibid, Sankirthana no.134, p.90.
- ³⁵Ibid, Sankirthana no.82, pp.55-56.
- ³⁶H.L. Chandrasekhara, Op.cit, p.149.
- ³⁷Gowripedhi Raamasubhasharma, Vol.2, Op.cit, Sankirthana no.131, p.88.
- ³⁸H.L. Chandrasekhara, Op.cit, p.151.
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Chapter 5

Society and Economy as Represented in Annamacharya and Pothana's Writings

The socio-economic context plays an important role in shaping the thoughts of an individual which would also be visible in their attitude and their writings. Such an impact was visible in the writings of Thalapaka Annamacharya and Bammara Pothana who lived during the 15th century. In South-India during 15th century the Vijayanagar rulers dominated the territory along with Bahmanis, Recharla Velamas, the Reddy's etc. The society during those times was largely stratified based on the occupations of the people and the economy of the region prospered as people were involved in numerous economic activities ranging from agriculture to pottery. This is the term, contributed to the revenues of the state.

In this chapter, an attempt would be made to look at the view of Annamayya and Pothana about the system of caste, their interpretation of education, their attitude towards women and their emphasis on the economic activities that were prevalent in their surroundings.

Social Perspective of Annamacharya:

Annamayya's approach towards the society was based on equality, social justice and spiritual wealth rather than material wealth. He composed many songs that portrayed the social elements prevailing during that period. It appears to be revolutionary for anyone to talk about caste and community in the Indian Society. For poet's like Annamayya who lived five hundred years ago, it would have been even more difficult which would also lead to serious consequences such as ex-communication. If he propagated the concept of equality of all castes. The poet's extreme devotion, courage and clarity of thought could not stop him from putting forward the ideas that he believed in.

He composed many songs highlighting the role of morals, values, dedication, discipline, determination which are more important than taking birth in a particular caste. In one of the popular song, Annamacharya says that Parabrahma is one who dwells in each being and all of them are one for which he gives different examples by saying that the deep sleep of the rich king and that of his soldier is the same, the highest pedestal where the Brahmin lives and the plain land where the chandala who is considered as untouchable stays are the same. The conjugal happiness that is secured by the god's, angels, insects and even the animals is the

same. It is the same tongue which is destined to taste both delicious and the tasteless food. The wind that blows over the objects emitting a foul odour and those of the scented objects is the same. Finally, the poet ends the composition by saying that uttering the name of Venkateswara would provide equal safeguards to those who commit good and sinful deeds¹.

According to the poet here, the concept of caste doesn't belong to one's mind, intellect, soul but only to the physical body, when one is born into a specific caste without his interference. According to the ancient scriptures, caste has only been an occupational division and not provided a position higher or lower to an individual.

In one of his Sankeerthana, Annamayya says that if one realises how it would impact as to which caste he belongs to. He then says that if one is truthful, does not criticize others, compassionate towards fellow beings and consider others as himself does the concept of caste really matter? If he is pure-hearted, righteous, exercises self-control, adheres to one's own duties and does not give up Bhakti to Venkateswara. A person who leads his life without enemies and associates himself as a slave to the lord's Srinivasa the physical constraint of caste would not be a hurdle.² Hence, Annamayya says the concept of community and caste are delusive because the marks of one's caste are not visible on the face but are limited to the body and not even applicable to the mind, conscious, intellect, etc.. So the concept of good or bad, upper and lower caste largely depends on the behaviour of a person that is revealed by his intellect reflected by his Bhakti and represented by his attachment to the lotus feet.

The composer in a Sankeerthana says that "idea of caste is useless and questions to which caste does Ajamila belongs to?" This differentiation of caste belongs to the body after the body perishes the caste also disappears. On the other hand, the soul is pure and free from blemishes. Hence, differentiation should not depend on the caste to which one belongs to. Therefore, great sages interpreted caste to be a miss-concept. This idea of caste is only for those who indulged in physical, materialistic life and ritual practices. According to him, the good caste consists of those who serve the lord and the best riches could be attained by those who utter the name of Srihari.³

The social perspective of Annamacharya is based on the Vaishnavite philosophy which says that each of us is created by the supreme being and bare the element of divinity how could we insult, ignore, humiliate and look down upon others which in turn is the insult to the supreme alone.

Annamayya asks what the physical measure of one stomach is and how much he could eat for

which he carries out unholy acts. What is the use of power if it does not help in understanding the nature of god? What is the use of this physical body if it is not satisfied with the bliss of others. What are the others use of the riches that are not serving Lord Venkateswara

There are many instances where Annamayya thinks beyond the narrow boundaries of sectarian outlook. According to him, religion is humanity, and no discrimination is to be done on the grounds of social status, community, wealth, etc. Annamayya is a rationalist who raises certain questions that could not be answered by those trapped in the shackles of caste.

The poet says that nature does not differentiate amongst the creation but is the human beings alone who tries to segregate based on the social difference. In a song, the poet asks does the ray of sun becomes inferior as it extended its rays on the lower caste beings. He then asks in a similar manner does the moon lose its glory as it shines on thorny bushes and beautiful flowers.⁴

Thus Annamacharya believes in extending a helping hand to the downtrodden sections of the society that is enumerated in one of the worse which states that, the lower sections of the society should be rescued. We should be able to protect those who are being suppressed; help should be extended to those who are slaved. For all such purpose, Lord Venkateswara would be the saviour.⁵

Annamacharya highlighting the role of equal treatment in a song says that the birth of all individuals is similar but with different shapes and forms. Each of our work may be different, but their goal should be the same. Here the poet emphasizes the fact that each being may differ in physical, social and economic terms, but all of them are similar in thoughts.

The saint then questions the permanent existence of caste. He says that for all those who are in troubles, he is the wealth for the depressed classes and the knowledge of ignorant. In another composition, he states that it is due to the human illusion that we look at others with a variation though they are same. It is only the Lord who is permanent, but the socio-economic status of the human being is short-lived. Once life becomes meaningless if he thinks in terms of high and low, rich and poor, young and old, which are just the passing clouds. According to him, the greater the caste, the more ignorant one becomes, the greater the power more would be the disputes. The richer one becomes, the greedier. There is no permanent status one would be assigned with such temporary, comforts, but the absolute comfort lies in Srihari alone.⁶

The poet believed in the principles put forward by Ramanuja who instructed the Ashtakshari Mantra to everyone without any differentiation on the grounds of caste, community, etc..

Annamacharya largely promoted the tradition of Sankeertana, which implies singing in a group expressing their devotion to the supreme. This practice of Sankeertana attracted the masses from different castes that came together by over-looking their differences at birth. The poet further mentions about a group of people who came from the lowest caste who were called Dimeras. They were those who earned their livelihood by moving around and resorted to theft, murder etc. He makes a note of those who displayed puppets and narrated numerous episodes from the Purana's that served as a great source of entertainment in those days. These people were greatly rewarded for their service in the form of food grains and other offerings which came from the fields in the villages.⁷ It was the views of Ramanujacharya that has been revived as an important issue in contemporary Tamilnadu wherein new readings have prompted us to understand the nuanced but strong attack on caste at different levels. These views were to understand and also ameliorate the condition of different groups who were at the bottom rungs of the society.

Annamacharya views on Education:

Annamayya insists that education would contribute in the overall development of one's personality, and understanding the truth, inability to achieve the same purpose indicates that the real purpose of education is lost. Education should provide self- understanding, mere collection and teaching does not comprise the true versions of education. Five hundred years ago, Annamayya described the existing educational scenario where he says that it should only be provided to understand divinity and one's ability to distinguish between knowledge and ignorance. He was critical about the prevailing system as it did not satisfy the above principles but was purely materialistic in nature.⁸

According to him, education serves no purpose for those who lacks the stability of thought and gives an instance that if a blind dog would go to the market despite finding food to eat it would be punished by the merchant. Similarly, educating such a person would only enhance his desires.⁹

Another composition delineates the boundaries of the human intellect which says that human being has studied previously and would also in future, but he is not in a position to understand anything about himself he says that I have learned to ridicule others but not able to identify the sin within and abuse myself. Looking at other difficulties, I made fun of them, but I did not realise the troubles that I experienced over numerous lives. He then says that one would display anger over others behaviour but not able to show the same on his own

emotions of kama, krodha, etc. I preach morality to others but unable to realise the presence of the supreme within me. Thus, education that does not provide self-realisation and understand others attitude would remain useless. Here, the poet clearly emphasises on the principle of practice before preaching others.

He further renders an advice to the common people where he says that one should understand the essence of spirituality only when they are in the process of learning or else they would be lazy in their next phase of life and be occupied in worldly affairs.¹⁰ Hence, one should learn to lead a life based on sense of detachment just as the lotus on the water. In another keerthana, he says that “what is the need of this materialistic education?” It is between likes and dislikes that one’s mind is trapped. When one wishes something, it is bondage and when he leaves it alone, it leads to salvation. According to him, birth is a probability and death is a certainty. It is only those who receive proper education would realise these facts.¹¹ Thus, the poet talks about education that should help in the overall development of an individual and simplify the path to liberation rather than teach certain subjects that would only satisfy one’s physical needs.

Women according to Annamacharya:

Annamayya tries to place women on par with men on all fronts, affirming that both women and men are equal, but it is the society that provided greater liberty to men rather than women. It is the women who have always been dominated by men and oppressed by her family which would also lead to her suppression in the social structure.

The practice of Kanyasulkam or bride price was prevalent during the earlier days, even Annamayya mentions about this practice in his Sankeerthana’s where a price is to be given by the bridegroom to the bride’s father in order to marry her. This practice is mentioned in one of the Sankeerthana where Lord Sri Krishna was willing to marry the daughter of a milkman for which he offers a ring to the girl’s father and later married her.¹² The poet also mentions about the existence of child marriages and cross-cousin marriages.¹³

The poet being a product of the rural backdrop talks about different activities carried out by the women in their daily life. He says that women in the rural household are always busy in churning the curd, extracting butter and buttermilk and selling those products by walking on the streets. He depicts one such woman who tries to sell butter.¹⁴

The role of women in cultivation has also been highlighted in one of the folk song which was ultimately dedicated to Venkateswara where the word ‘Suvi’ was used. This song was sung by the women while they were pondering rice. Another composition shows how the women were happily pondering Talambralu for the marriage festival of Lord Venkateswara. This shows that women were not limited to domestic household work but also involved in outdoor agricultural activities. The women also celebrated their efforts in the form of songs which were sung during the festival of harvest called Sankranthi. One such song is the Gobbi song where Gobbi refers to a lump of cow dung that was decorated with flowers. The Gobbi’s were placed on the ground and women celebrated by singing and dancing around them. Such songs actually show how women praise the Lord for his blessings that contributed for their prosperity which was the result of a good harvest.¹⁵

Annamayya also mentions about the existence of prostitutes which was a common practice during the time of Vijayanagar kingdom where he says that young women use to sell themselves under the tamarind trees by holding a market. The women who had a happy family life also came into this practice. Those women who belong to the basket weaving community were largely turned into prostitutes.¹⁶ Thus, Annamacharya accords greater position for women though he talks about women who were interested in dressing up themselves using jewellery and not only limited to the family life but also carried out economic activities to earn a living.

Annamayya’s Madhura Bhakti:

The concept of emotion serves as the basis for various works in Indian literature. The poets have realised the significance of erotism in both union and separation. Such emotions when expressed towards the divine being are termed as Madhura Bhakti. This kind of devotion is mentioned in the Narad Bhakti Sutra’s as one of the eleven kinds of Bhakti and the most difficult to be followed. The Vaishnavite School highlights this form of devotion which is visible through the depiction of the relation between the Gopika’s and Sri Krishna.

Annamayya who was a strong proponent of Vaishnavism uses the element of Sringara in his songs which is beyond the physical pleasure. The poet visualises all the personality traits of the Gopika’s in the consort Alivelu Manga and that of Sri Krishna in Venkateswara. There are numerous compositions offered in the voice of the Goddess who was desirous to unite with the Lord of seven hills. There are different compositions that portray various kinds of Sringara nayaka’s , each one of them present the different dimensions of the poet’s dedication

and devotion towards the Lord. There is no such composition of Annamayya where the devotional element diluted the erotic compositions. When the poet composes then the style, language, and devotion, etc... are taken care. Hence, he became the pioneer in composing the Padha literature.¹⁷

Madhura Bhakti is considered to be the best where a person does not have any knowledge, duty and desire except for the union with the almighty. Annamayya was first among the poets who mark a perfect balance between devotion and eroticism. Though the psalms provide a description of the goddess it is the poet who imagines himself the consort who is longing for the union with Lord Srihari. Annamayya composed many romantic verses in which he forgets that he is a man and assumed himself to be a perfect woman who was keen to cherish the divine attachment. On one hand, he presented the romantic secrets while on the other hand he discussed deep philosophical aspects that were beyond the grasp of great Yogi's. This attempt of Annamayya was probably due to the influence of GeethaGovindham written by Jayadev.¹⁸

Among the fourteen thousand Sankeerthana's available today, about twelve thousand Sankeerthana's are attributed to Madhura Bhakti. The most popular song in this devotion is that which Annamayya presented in the court of Salva Narasimha. In that spontaneous composition, the poet describes how the Nayika was teased by her friends after spending a night with her Lord. This composition gives an exquisite description which goes like this. Why do spots of musk appear on the lips of this young woman, can it be considered as a love note from her to the Lord? Why did her eyes turned red, is it due to the forceful withdrawal of her glance away from the Lord? Why are the woman's cheeks decorated with the rose of pearls, is it the sweat which was the result of the love sport with her beloved? Annamayya considers the above poem as the praise of the Lord though there is nothing of such nature. He considers it so due to the intense dedication of the poet towards the dalliances of the divined couple.¹⁹

There are many such songs that describe the beauty of the Goddess. According to a tradition, divine women are described from head to toe while others from bottom to the top. In another Keerthana, the beauty of the goddess which says that the honey from the sweet lips is his feast. The half revealing smiles of her are offerings of camphor to the Lord and her embrace of the Lord is his immense wealth.²⁰

The highest form of devotion is the union with the lord where ones thoughts, deeds and actions are exclusively dedicated to the service of the almighty which implies the selfless

devotion where submerges into his thoughts. There are four stages in this mode of Bhakti that includes Salukya, Saayujya, Saamipya and Saarupya which begins with looking at him then the desire to join him, feeling close to him and finally becoming one with him. Annamayya made his compositions with the same intention.

The ultimate form of affection that is free from physical romance is visible in one of the songs for instance which says that “O Venkateswara, your companion who desires to be associated with you forever is longing for your favour. Hence, please shower your grace by satisfying her wish.”²¹ The poet further asks, “Is there any other happiness in the universe which is superior to that of the love of the Lord?” Is it proper to have physical attachments that are equivalent to the arrows of manmadha by ignoring the eternal bliss? The human mind should indulge in the romance of the divine couple that resembles the ultimate happiness. This portrays that relation between the true devotee and the supreme.²² Annamayya says that it is your great power which mesmerised me. I enjoyed the time spent in your company. My eyes received perfection by the glance of your beautiful form. My tongue felt happy by uttering your name and my hands felt complete by embracing you.

Generally Indian literature portrays the heroine who suffers due to the separation from her beloved. Even the moon light appears like a fire to her, the slightest breeze also appears to her. Annamayya gives a similar description and compares the Nayika to those great sages who are free from attachments and carry out rigorous penance. She is described to have a subdued mind that would attain tranquillity through concentration. She would attain the divine knowledge and stability of thought through the contemplation upon the god.²³

Another song of Annamayya reveals his greatest imagination, extreme devotion, ecstasy of poetic beauty and the ability of visualising the goddess and her beauty. This song describes the goddess in comparison to the different zodiac signs of telugu calendar which runs as follows.

She is a combination of all zodiac signs which makes her zodiac sign eligible to be your consort.

Her eyebrows are like the bows – Sagittarius-Dhanu Rasi

Her eyes are like – Pieces-Meena Rasi

Her breasts are like pots – Aquarius-Kumbha Rasi

Her waist is thin – Leo-Simha Rasi

Her wimple is like the flag of the cupid – Capricorn-Makara Rasi

She is a maiden – Virgin-Kanya Rasi

Comparable in her beauty with gold – Libra-Tula Rasi

Because of her sharp nails – Scorpion-Vrischika Rasi

Due to her bodily friction – Taurus-Vrishabha Rasi

With her erotic secrets in talk – Cancer-Karkataka Rasi

Because her tender leaf-like lips – Aries-Mesha Rasi

In the conjugal love with Venkatapathi – Gemini-Midhuna Rasi.²⁴

Annamacharya in another popular Sankeerthana describes the dance of goddess before the Lord he states that as she was dancing flowers from her head fell down and the strands of hair were falling on her forehead. In those dance posters she was beautiful like a half blossomed flower received appreciation from other women. While she danced behind a translucent curtain, the lord was impressed. This translucent curtain is similar to that which exists between the human being and the divine. Human beings have different layers of curtains such as jealousy, ego, etc... it is only when these curtains fall apart we human beings can unite with the lord as stated by Annamayya. As he composes songs in Madhura Bhakti he considers this quenching thirst for the lord itself is worship. There is no much difference between Bhakti and Srungara as both of them are characterised by consistency, dedication and devotion. Though both Adhyatmika and Srungara compositions are different in their themes, it is the poet's devotion expressed in those songs. That reveals the attachment towards the supreme. It is the longing of Annamacharya towards the lord that made himself transform into a Nayika.

Annamacharya on Economy:

Economic activities serve as source of livelihood for the people of any given territory. Similarly, in fifteenth century during the rule of Vijayanagar dynasty agriculture not only remained the major source of livelihood but also largely contributed for the states revenue as taxes were imposed on those lands of cultivation. Annamacharya as a child was inclined

towards devotional activities but once he was instructed by his parents to go to the field. Though he lacked interest he just goes to the field. While he was cutting the grass, he accidentally cut his finger; from then on he decided not to carry out such materialistic activities but remain in the service of the Lord.

There are many Sankeerthana's which describe agriculture along with other economic activities. In one of the Sankeerthana's he mentions about shifting cultivation in a devotional context where he says that a devotee needs to clear the grass called sin, plough the field called heart, wet the field with the rain called peace and sow the seeds of Bakthi. He also describes the existence of weeds which would destroy the main crop and advises the use of fertilizers to get a good harvest.²⁵

The poet also describes the existence of different kinds of fields based on their fertility, types of soil, availability of water, etc..... and uses the different names such as Hill field i.e Goberapu Polamu, River field i.e Madugula Polamu, Cultivated field i.e Nagetivegilaina Polamu, etc..... Generally the lands during those days were ploughed using a pair of ox or bull but in one of the Sankeerthana Annamayya describes how the field was ploughed using an ox and bull.²⁶

In another Sankeerthana, we find the description of the system of lease where the land was assigned to the poor peasants in return for a price where the poet requests the landlord not to charge heavy price but to be compassionate towards us.²⁷

He talks about the different professions in a village such as barbers, potters, goldsmith, etc. He says that the barbers who provided their service to the farmers received grains in return²⁸ the potters not only made pots but also toys for children. Annamacharya states that the service of potters is very significant as it is the vessels made by them which are used for making offerings to Lord Venkateswara.²⁹

Trade was also carried out within and outside the territory of Vijayanagar. Annamayya mentions different words related to trade in his compositions such as Santha, Angadi refers to market, Santhakutami to a trade union and Santhaberagadu to a seller in the market. He says that one should carry out trade keeping in mind the prevailing prices.³⁰ In a devotional context he describes the sea trade where he compares the Samsara to an ocean, one's body to a ship, an individual to a merchant, sin's to the goods that are carried and desires to the winds. This actually depicts how the merchants in those days used to carry out long distance

trade by overcoming climatic disturbances and reaching their destination safely.³¹ Thus, Annamayya not only limited himself to describing the divine based on the scriptures but related it to the day to day activities of the commoners which facilitated in the better understanding of devotion among the people. As we have looked at the view of Annamayya on society and economy we would now shift our attention to Bammara Pothana who resided in the territory of Recharla Singha Bhupala. The verses mostly referred to interpret view of Bammara Pothana are the poems of Andhra Maha Bagavatam.

Social perspective of Bammara Pothana:

Pothana who belongs to an agricultural family stands a witness for the life of common masses in a village. In many episodes of Bhagavatham he mentions about the four ashrams of human life, their food habits and their ways of survival. Referring to the caste system Pothana says that there was a fourfold system where Brahmin's occupied a superior position and were entitled to a greater respect within the society. They indulged in daily worship of the divine and provided food to the needy. They were great scholars who studied Veda's, Purana's and tried to enlighten others with their lectures. In addition to this performing Yagnas was inevitable for them.

While Kshatriya's were efficient administrators and help the King in taking care of the people, safeguarding the territory from the enemies remained their chief responsibility. Vaishya's not only carried out foreign trade but also provided the people with commodities of daily use and Sudra's carried out agriculture and animal husbandry. In addition to this fourfold system another group of people called Anthyakula who were kept away from the main stream society.

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He further says that the Kshatriya's who were born from the shoulders of Virat-Purusha are assigned with the task of safeguarding the entire mankind irrespective of their caste from thieves, wicked men and enemies. Vaishya's who emerged from the thighs of Paramathma are destined to carryout business and cow protection. The Shudra's who have the motive of social service are born from the feet of the supreme. All these people are required to perform their duties as allotted to them and finally seek refuge at the feet of the almighty. ³³

Bhagavatham makes a reference to the untouchables that include Kiratha's, Pulindha's, Yavvana's, Chendala's and even the most sinful, if pure hearted can serve the Lord and blessed with Moksha irrespective of their lowest position in the social context. ³⁴

For instance Pothana narrates an episode where a Nishada woman who walks around selling fruits caught the attention of the young boy Sri Krishna who was desirous to taste those fruits and he offered grains in return to that woman. The woman received the few grains brought by the boy and filled his hands with the aranyaka fruits. Pothana says that the woman though did not have the knowledge of Veda's and Shastra's could reap the benefits of great penance, meditation and sacrifice. After the woman goes back home she realises that her basket was filled with precious stones which was to facilitate her to overcome poverty. This shows neither high birth nor education nor riches would satisfy one's desire of Moksha but it is only true devotion that would simplify their path towards Liberation.³⁵

During those days social gatherings were quite common in the form of Jathara's which attracted large number of people from the nearby villages. These gatherings were generally held at a religious shrine. Pothana refers to one such jathara held at Palakurthi which was visited by him. He says that this jathara had large markets selling different articles such as bangles, beads, toys, etc. These festivals became a great source of entertainment for the people as there were different activities such as Acrobats who displayed their skills, Dramas narrating episodes from the Purana's, Harikatha, etc. And this festive atmosphere was intensified with the sounds of drums, flute and shells.³⁶

Pothana though mentions the prevalence of the caste system and the four ashrams of human life states that any service offered to the Lord with a pure heart irrespective of their caste affiliations would be fruitful. The social gatherings mentioned by him also serve as a ground for greater interaction among people coming from different castes who would come there for a religious pilgrimage.

Bammera Pothana's view on Education:

Pothana highlights the importance of education and its system in his works Narayanasathakam and Andhra Mahabhagavatham. In the episode of Prahaladha Charithra, Hiranyakashyap tells his son about the importance of education. He says "O' Child, one who does not study would remain ignorant and stands equivalent to an animal". It is education that would increase one's intelligence and the ability to judge between good and bad. Hence, each human being should take up education for which he would be sent to a good teacher.³⁷

Hiranyakashyap while addressing the teachers expresses his regrets and states that his son was lazy and doesn't possess even a bit of his own intelligence. Hence, it is their

responsibility to make him read the scriptures, Dharma Shastras, science of morality, etc and transform him which would only help safeguarding their dynasty .³⁸

The poet further goes on to portray the obedience of Prahalad as a student, he says that Prahalad was keen in learning different shastras and read them as instructed by his teachers though he did not like certain subjects. This attitude shows how students were very obedient and learnt things without any rejection towards their teachers.³⁹ The different subjects that were taught to Prahalad as mentioned by Pothana includes Sama, Dhana, Dhanda, etc... which implies that different people are to be addressed by using either of the above mentioned modes of education for instance, things could be obtained from some people by using Sama which is speaking sweetly to them. While others could be pleased by Dhana that is to offer something. And the final mode is Dhanda where things could be obtained by means of punishment. The process and the time in which such methods are to be used were mentioned in those times. All the subjects were taught to the student that shaped him into a perfect being.⁴⁰

Generally after completing education, a mark of appreciation is necessary from the parents for both student and the teacher which was portrayed by Pothana, Where Prahalad was taken to his father who tested him on the subjects that he learnt for those many days. This indicates even the attitude of the present day parents who would be keen in knowing about the performance of their child.⁴¹

Pothana makes a mention about the Gurukul system of education that was prevalent in his times by presenting the conversation between Sri Krishna and his friend Sudhama. Where Sri Krishna recollected the days spent in that residential system and how they were tutored by their intellectual guru. He then says that their teacher was the best among the Brahmin's, the light of knowledge and who carries out the best deeds .⁴² The poet also emphasises that the Lord would not be pleased by different Dhanas, Sacrifices, Penance, etc... but only those who would be kind and serve his teacher with great devotion. He also shows how Sri Krishna and Sudhama were obedient in implementing the commands of their teacher's wife to find sticks in the forest even without caring the heavy downpour, looking at these the teacher was so pleased and said that this service itself is his dakshina and further they would be blessed with wealth and victory.⁴³ Pothana gave greater importance to the obedience of the student, his ability to understand different subjects and their timely utility that would transform him

into a perfect individual. He also talks about the residential system of education called Gurukul and awarded the highest position for those teachers who were a part of that Gurukul.

Women according to Bammara Pothanna:

Pothana considers both men and women equally and accords greater respect for women. According to him, a woman should be able to take care of the house, skilful in convincing others with her words, soft natured, and the ability to guide her family in the right direction.⁴⁴

Pothana in the voice of the great sage narada reveal the love and affection of a mother, where the sage says that she carried out all services to her master without letting me know her difficulties. She was troubled by my hard work and tried to comfort me by showering her love. By looking at her the saint says that he decided to stay with his mother for a while.⁴⁵ This poem shows how a mother is compassionate towards her children and how she tries to be a part of their difficulties.

In another worse, the poet narrating the hardship of Kunthi says that she is the one who never experienced happiness due to the loss of her husband. She nurtured her children efficiently and made them successful. She never enjoyed luxuries and led a life of sorrow all throughout.⁴⁶ This actually reveals the difficulties faced by a single mother who tries to give her best in shaping the life of her off springs.

The poet not only portrays women as successful wife's and mothers but also present their courage in the episode of killing the demon Narakasura. Where Sri Krishna's wife Sathyabhama enters the battle ground. Here Pothana presents the assumptions about the women stating that how she could face the enemies who is scared even to climb the swing. Is it possible to her to bare the sound of the war drum and proceed further? Can she carry the bow and target the arrows in the right direction. However, Sathyabhama was ferocious in overcoming negativities and being successful against the enemies. Later on Sri Krishna applauded her ability of war fare.⁴⁷ This episode presents how women were active in the art of war fare and helping their kingdoms by overcoming the traditional perceptions surrounding a woman.

During 15th Century, the dominance of the Landlords or the Dhora's was prevalent. They extended their authority over the women of the lower caste. Pothana comes across one such woman who was not paid by her master and was struck in severe poverty. Pothana talks to her in a pleasing manner and satisfies her hunger by offering food.⁴⁸

The system of devadasis was quite visible during the 15th century. A woman called Bhogini, who belongs to the Devadasi community, refused to continue as a temple dancer and decided to remain in the court of Singabhopala and wished to marry him. Bammara Pothana, during his stay in the court of Singabhopala, witnessed the dance of Bhogini and wrote a work called Bhogini dhandakam. This work of Pothana describes the beauty of the courtesan, her skill of dancing and her personality. He presents her as a woman with the best qualities seeing which the king was impressed and married her. Thus, Bammara Pothana presents the different dimensions of women from a perfect housewife to that of a courageous warrior.⁴⁹

Bammara Pothana Madhura Bhakti:

Pothana presents the element of Madhura Bhakti in the episodes of Rukmini kalyanam and in the relation between Gopika's and Sri Krishna. In the episode of Rukmini kalyanam Pothana presents the mood of separation where Rukmini says that "Oh creator of the universe, what is the use of these years if they are not destined to hear your sweet words?" You are the one who entertains this world. What is the use of these eyes if they are not able to have your glance? She then says if I am not able to enjoy the nectar from your lips how the tongue would know the taste of fruit juices. If I am unable to smell the garlands around your neck, what is the use of this nose? If I am not able to serve you, my life would remain meaningless. Like this, Pothana states that each of the five sense organs should only be dedicated to the Lord alone in the voice of Rukmini.⁵⁰

The poet narrates his devotion in the form of Gopika's who were impressed by the sweet music that emerged from the flute of Lord Sri Krishna and could not bear his disappearance even for a moment. They began to look for him all around the place and even made a plea to the jasmine creepers by describing his physical appearance. They informed the creepers that the lotus-eyed one who wears a peacock feather on his hair. The handsome one who extends beautiful smiles and the one who stole the hearts of these cowherd women is not to be seen. Is he hiding amongst you? Please let us know. Here the poet refers to the creepers who are perceived as other women.⁵¹

In another episode of Bhagavatam, the mischief of Sri Krishna is described where he stole the sarees of Gopika's. The women later on realising this pleaded Sri Krishna in this way, Oh Lord, we will come wherever you want us, give you whatever you desire and even go wherever you instruct but please give our clothes back and rescue us. On hearing this Sri Krishna asks the women with a smile, may I know with what desire you are carrying out

these vratas, and who is that who created love amongst you? Do let me know as I am your dear one. ⁵²

The poet further presents the voices of different Gopika's who desired to live in close proximity to the lord and those who felt that their life was justified by having a glance of the Supreme Being. One of the Gopika who was hit by the arrows of Manmadha says that the days spent without looking at the divine would be like Yuga's. We can no longer stay at home. Hence, let us accompany Madhava and remain in his service. ⁵³ Another woman talking to her friend says that "while I was carrying out vrata's in my previous life's I should have wished for birth as a bamboo on the banks of the river Yamuna that would be played by Sri Krishna. ⁵⁴

Once the cowherd women who visited Lord Sri Krishna states that "O Lakshmi Manohara, it is not appropriate for you to be harsh upon us as we despite being warned by our children, husbands, family members; we came to serve your feet and we are not sure if our families would accept us if we go back. Hence, accept us as your slaves who would be in your constant service. ⁵⁵ Thus Pothana used Rukhmini and the Gopika's to display Madhura Bhakti where they were presented as longing to unite with Lord Vishnu who was in the form of Sri Krishna. They were prepared to submit themselves in entirety which was based on pure devotion. Such submission, according to Pothana, was beyond physical pleasure and would lead to eternal bliss.

Bammera Pothana view on Economy:

The primary occupation during the time of Pothana was agriculture. Rice remained the dominant crop, and other crops include cotton, millets, sugarcane, wheat etc., which were treated as commercial crops. The soil was very fertile to support different kinds of crops. The people belonging to Konda tribe largely cultivated millets. The cultivation of turmeric was also visible in some places. The areas of Rachakonda and its surroundings largely depended on artificial sources of irrigation; as a result of which Dams, tanks and wells were used to store the flowing water which in turn resulted in the healthy harvest. ⁵⁶

The fields were protected by a watchman in the night who used to walk around, shouting a loud and using borne fire to protect himself against winter and glanced the fields. The poet also mentions about the harvest season, which was to begin after cooking payasam in the field and offering it to the village Goddess. ⁵⁷ After making such offerings, both men and women

participate in the harvest by using a sickle. They carried out their work quickly for fear of heavy downpour.⁵⁸

The conditions of drought also found a mention in Pothana Charitra, which was very intense. During such situations, he says that all the areas including forests, lakes, and ponds dry up and people were eager to even for a drop of water. The peasants were hopeless and remained jobless in a season where they work tirelessly. The drought was so severe that due to the lack of water temperatures increased and even animals could not find food or water for their survival. As people did not have a source of livelihood, they resorted to theft in order to satisfy their basic necessities. Quarrels were also rampant for drinking water.⁵⁹

In addition to agriculture, people made their earnings by fishing by using stick boats while few others used fishing nets with a hook. Some people also earned their bread by rendering domestic help. Few others offered work only to receive food in return for their efforts. The activities of trade carried out through ships even internationally where traders without considering family travelled long distances for the sake of money. These traders used to bring gold and other precious stones in return for the commodities that they sell.⁶⁰

Bammera Pothana during his first travel to the capital of Singabhupala was overwhelmed by the grandeur of the city. He says that the capital was well built with huge buildings, palaces, etc. It was a great centre for trade as it witnessed a large number of markets selling different articles that attracted merchants from different places.⁶¹ Thus, Bammera Pothana shows how agriculture and trade prospered simultaneously in the territory of Rachakonda.

Thus Annamacharya and Bammera Pothana have largely discussed the prevailing socio-economic conditions where Annamacharya directly talks about those aspects in his songs and ultimately relates it to Lord Venkateswara. In contrast, Pothana, on the other hand, tries to present such aspects by using different episodes of Andhra Mahabagavatam and narrates in the form of a story. Both these poets efforts were very effective in penetrating the minds of the people in the region of Andhra their works not only remain as the text of promoting devotion but also help in ascertaining the life's of the common masses. They used the day to day activities in their compositions as it would have a greater impact on the masses.

¹ Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, 1998, *Adyatma sankeertnal* Vol 2, Tirupathi, TTD press, Sankeertana no.385, p.259.

² Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, 1998, *Adyatma sankeertnal*, Vol , Tirupathi, TTD press, Sankeertana no. 292, p.195.

³ Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, Op.cit, vol 2, Sankeertana no. 383, p.257.

⁴ Ibid, Sankeertana no. 129, p. 87

⁵ Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao, 2006, *Flowers at His Feet*, Hyderabad, Saptaparni, p.129-130. ⁶ Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, 1998, *Adyatma sankeertnal*, Vol 3, Tirupathi, TTD press, Sankeertana no. 89, p.60.

⁷ Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, Op.cit, vol 1, Sankeertana no. 10, p.7.

⁸ Ibid, Sankeertana no. 91, p.63.

⁹ Ibid, Sankeertana no. 198, p. 132.

¹⁰ Ibid, Sankeertana no. 449, p. 301.

¹¹ Ibid, Sankeertana no. 416, p. 278.

¹² Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, 1998, *Adyatma sankeertnal*, Vol 18, Tirupathi, TTD press, Sankeertana no.61, p.41-42.

¹³ Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, 1998, *Adyatma sankeertnal*, Vol 24, Tirupathi, TTD press, Sankeertana no.562, p.375-376.

¹⁴ Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, 1998, *Adyatma sankeertnal*, Vol 12, Tirupathi, TTD press, Sankeertana no. 228, p. 131.

¹⁵ Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao, Op.cit, p.114.

¹⁶ G.Usha Rani, 1995, *Annamayya Samkeerthanalo Stri*, Unpublished, p. 183-184.

¹⁷ Dr. Pappu Venugopala Rao, Op.cit, p.72.

¹⁸ Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, 1998, *Adyatma sankeertnal*, Vol 5, Tirupathi, TTD press, Sankeertana no. 82, p.57.

¹⁹ Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, 1998, *Adyatma sankeertnal*, Vol 5, Tirupathi, TTD press, Sankeertana no. 82, p.57.

²⁰ Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, Op.cit vol 18, Sankeertana no. 538, p.360.

- ²¹Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, 1998, *Adyatma sankeertnal*, Vol 19, Tirupathi, TTD press, Sankeertana no. 301, p. 201-202.
- ²²Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, Op.cit, Vol 5, Sankeertana no.230, p. 158.
- ²³Ibid, Sankeertana no.17, p. 12-13.
- ²⁴Ibid, Sankeertana no. 143, p. 97.
- ²⁵Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, Op.cit, vol 3, Sankeertana no.359, p. 242.
- ²⁶Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, Op.cit, vol 4, Sankeertana no.52, p. 36.
- ²⁷Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, 1998, *Adyatma sankeertnal*, Vol 4, Tirupathi, TTD press, Sankeertana no.52, p.36.
- ²⁸Ibid, Sankeertana no. 31, p. 381.
- ²⁹Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, Op.cit, vol 1, Sankeertana no. 151, p.103.
- ³⁰Ibid, Sankeertana no. 1, p.1.
- ³¹Gowri Peddi Ramasubhasharma, Op.cit, vol 2, Sankeertana no. 39, p. 37.
- ³²Koti Bhaskar Naidu, 2017, *Tharigonda Vengamamba Bammera Pothana Bhagavathalu Thulanathmaka Pariseelana*, p. 275.
- ³³(ED) Vidwan Mudivarthi Kondamacharyulu, 2017, *Sri Mahabagavatamu*, Vol.2, Skandham 3, Tirupathi, TTD press, Verse 217-220, p. 98-99.
- ³⁴(ED) Vidwan Mudivarthi Kondamacharyulu, 2017, *Sri Mahabagavatamu*, Vol.1, Skandham 2, Tirupathi, TTD press, Verse 63, p. 326.
- ³⁵Chavali Satyanarayana Murthy, 2008, *Lessons of Devotion form the Bhagavatam*, Jeeyar Educational Trust, Sitanagaram, p. 103-105.
- ³⁶Dr. Vanamamalai Varadacharyulu, 2011, *Pothna Charithramu*, Tirupathi, TTD press, Verse 133-137, p. 20.
- ³⁷DR. Samudrala Lakshmanaiah, 2017, *Sri Mahabagavatamu*, Vol 4, Skandham 7, Tirupathi, TTD press, Verse 130, p. 341.
- ³⁸Ibid, Verse 132, p.341.
- ³⁹Ibid, Verse 134-135, p. 342.
- ⁴⁰Ibid, Verse 157, p. 351.

- ⁴¹Ibid, Verse 160, p. 353.
- ⁴²DR. Samudrala Lakshmanaiah, 2017, *Sri Mahabhagavatamu, Vol 7, Uthara Skandham 10*, Tirupathi, TTD press, Verse 992-994, p. 424.
- ⁴³Ibid, Verse 1004, p. 428.
- ⁴⁴DR. Samudrala Lakshmanaiah, Op.cit , Vol 4, Skandham 7, Verse 115, p. 333.
- ⁴⁵(ED) Vidwan Mudivarthi Kondamacharyulu, 2017, *Sri Mahabhagavatamu, Vol.1, Skandham 1*, Tirupathi, TTD press, Verse 116, p. 78.
- ⁴⁶Ibid, Verse, 209, p. 125.
- ⁴⁷DR. Samudrala Lakshmanaiah, Op. Cit, vol 7, Uthara Skandham 10, Verse 178, p. 69.
- ⁴⁸Dr. Vanamamalai Varadacharyulu, Op.cit, Verse 83-112, p. 43-46.
- ⁴⁹(ED) Dr. Sangabatlla Narasaya, Bhogini Dandakam, 2018, Karshak Art Printers, Hyderabad.
- ⁵⁰DR. Samudrala Lakshmanaiah, Op. Cit, vol 6, Purva Skandham 10, Verse 1711, p. 695.
- ⁵¹Ibid, Verse 782, p. 311.
- ⁵²Ibid, Verse 833, p. 328.
- ⁵³(ED) Vidwan Mudivarthi Kondamacharyulu, Op.cit, vol 1, Skandham 1, Verse 236, p. 144.
- ⁵⁴Ibid, Verse 240, p. 146.
- ⁵⁵DR. Samudrala Lakshmanaiah, Op. Cit, vol 6, Purva Skandham 10, Verse 867, p. 340.
- ⁵⁶Koti Bhaskar Naidu, Op.cit, p. 281.
- ⁵⁷Dr. Vanamamalai Varadacharyulu, Op.cit, Verse 82, p. 43.
- ⁵⁸(ED) Vidwan Mudivarthi Kondamacharyulu, Op.cit, vol 2, Skandham 3, Verse 115-116, p. 85.
- ⁵⁹DR. Samudrala Lakshmanaiah, Op.cit, vol 3, Skandham 5, Verse 136-145, p. 205-206.
- ⁶⁰Koti Bhaskar Naidu, Op. Cit, p. 282,
- ⁶¹Dr. Vanamamalai Varadacharyulu, Op.cit, p. 117-119

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

The main aim of the present thesis has been to study and analyze the philosophy and contribution of Thalapaka Annamacharya and Bammara Pothana in the spread of Bhakti movement. Historians have attempted to study the contribution of different Bhakti poets such as Ramananda, Meera Bhai, Khabir, Ramanuja, and others but there is no significant study that has analyzed the contribution of Annamayya and Pothana. Though they have been few studies by certain intellectuals they have only tried to examine the contribution of these poets in terms of music and literature. But did not look at their contribution to the Bhakti movement. Hence, the study becomes significant as it provides information on how Annamayya and Pothana understood Bhakti, how they looked at the society, how they propagated the philosophy of Vaishnavism, and how they talked about the prevailing economy.

In the medieval period, Hinduism was characterized by elaborate sacrifices while other religions such as Jainism and Buddhism were simplified and attracted a large number of conversions. Hence there was an immediate need to reform the existing Hindu religion and reduce the dominance of the orthodox sections of the society. To simplify itself, a movement called Bhakti emerged which attached greater significance to love and devotion towards the supreme being against the numerous rituals. The Bhakti poets advocated equality among the masses and stated that the path of salvation is opened to all and not restricted to certain sections of the society. These devotees in the process of promoting the message of Bhakti were divided into Sagun and Nirgun saints.

The earliest attempts to study the Bhakti movement could be traced back to the 19th century. It began with the attempts of imperialists such as H.H. Willson who first used the term Bhakti in 1846 and associated it with the Goudia school of Vaishnavism and interpreted it as a synthesis between extreme devotion and implicit faith. According to the orientalist writers, Bhakti emerged due to the influence of Christian thought they tried to look at the shared religious attributes of Christianity and Bhakti. Another argument was put forward by a group of scholars who stated that Bhakti was a result of the Islamic influence which began with the Arab conquest. The principles of humanity and universal brotherhood highlighted in the bhakti movement according to them were the impacts of Sufi tradition.

Denying the foreign influence some scholars such as R.G.Bhandarkar and R.C.Zahener interpreted Bhakti as that which has its roots in the ancient scriptures such as Upanishad's, Veda's and Bhagavadgita and also gave epigraphic pieces of evidence to justify their argument. With a change in the perspective of writing history scholars like R.S.Sharma and Kosambi visualized Bhakti in a Marxist perspective where it is seen as a feudal relationship between a servant and his master. Few others saw Bhakti as a mark of descent and protest that emerged among the common masses to satisfy their aspirations. Some other historians saw this path of devotion that helped the women to come out of restricted patriarchies and walk against the established rules such as walking naked, dancing in public, wearing ankle belts, etc. However, most of the studies on Bhakti were all India centric though there have been major differences between the movements that began in North and South India. In the South, this movement emerged due to the royal patronage from different ruling dynasties and was largely centered around a temple. While in the North Turkish invasions resulted in many technological developments which in turn resulted in many prosperous communities in the society who desired inclusion that led to the birth of Bhakti.

The Bhakti movement which developed as a movement between the 7th and 8th centuries A.D. emerged into two branches of Saivism and Vaishnavism. Thus it becomes necessary to study South Indian Bhakti as a Tamil devotional movement. This movement did not make a sudden appearance at the end of the 6th century A.D. but could be traced back to the ancient times the worship of Vishnu was visible in the Vedas where he was considered as a manifestation of the sun. In course of time he incorporated Narayana, Krishna, and Vasudev into himself which led to the birth of the Bhagavata sect. This worship of Vishnu in Andhra received patronage from different dynasties beginning from the Satavahana's followed by Ikshvakus, Pallava's and Vishnu kundins. The next face in the development of Bhakti is its emergence as a popular movement with the contribution of Alvars who added the emotional element of devotion towards Lord Vishnu. These Tamil poets took the message of devotion among the masses in the vernacular language. The Alvars were followed by the Acharya's who provided a sound philosophical base for this devotional movements and strongly defend it. The Vaisnavite Acharya's and the institutions received great patronage during the 11th and 13th centuries from the dynasties of Chola's, Kakatiya's and Hoyasalas. This support to the Vaishnavite temples received a set back with the Turkish invasions which led to the destruction of various temples to establish their supremacy. However, the sect of Vaishnavism revived with the establishment of the rule of Recharla Velama's of Rachakonda in the 14th and 15th centuries and that of Vijayanagar from 14th to 17th century. The chiefs of

Rachakonda gained power in 1323 after the fall of Kakatiya's while the Vijayanagar empire rose to prominence under the Sangama brothers.

The rule of Vijayanagar marked a glorious face for the Hindu religion. These two dynasties made numerous donations to different temples such as Tirupathi, Srirangam, Ahobilam, etc. these donations were not only used to make daily offerings to the deities but also to provide irrigation facilities to the temple lands. A large number of donations were only possible due to a prosperous economy which was largely agrarian in nature. The majority of the state revenue was obtained by taxes imposed on the agricultural lands. Efforts were made by the different rulers to increase the area under cultivation by making land grants to the Brahmins called Agraharas. During 14th and 15th centuries temples also served as an important center of economic activity due to a large number of grants. The temples were not only the centers of religious practices but also extended the facility of loans at an interest of 20 percent. These temples also provided employment to different artisans such as goldsmith, potters, weavers, blacksmith, etc. Devadasis were employed in the temple to offer their service to the deity. They enjoyed an honorable position in society. The temples were also the centers of trade as there were different fairs organized in the temple premises. The merchants in turn helped in the development of the temples by their donations which were possible due to the prosperous internal and external trade. The improved trade contributed to a better economic position for certain communities who emerged as new social groups.

During 14th and 15th century the society in Andhra Desa was well stratified but did not have rigid rules of occupation for instance Brahmins no longer limited themselves to rituals but also involved themselves in military, bureaucracy, trade, etc. Vaishyas also emerged as a group strong due to their trade and also acted as money lenders. While the Sudras were limited to agriculture and other menial tasks. The society also witnessed evils such as child marriage and Sati. Women during those days occupied a significant position in the fields of administration, economy and military. The women from the royal dynasties displayed economic prosperity by making donations. Certain families in the society tried to propagate the message of Bhakti among the masses by using the mode of music, poetry, dance etc. against the dominance of the Brahmin's. They attracted a large number of people to resort to the path of devotion. Prominent among them were Annamacharya and Bammara Pothana.

Annamacharya who belongs to the 15th century came from a Brahmin family and was devoted to Lord Venkateswara by ignoring his day to day activities of livelihood. This

intense devotion of the composer directed him to the feet of the divine at Tirumala at a very young age. He was initiated into a sect of Vaishnavism by a sage called Ghana Vishnu on the instruction of the Lord himself. Annamayya though reluctant in leading a family life agreed to take it up due to his master's advice. He was well versed in different scriptures under the guidance of Satagopa at Ahobilam. Such education received by the young poet served as a basis for his devotional compositions. The works of this poet not only contributed to the growth of Telugu literature but even in the spread of the Bhakti movement.

Annamayya composed about 32000 sankeertanas glorifying the lord in different modes. In composing those verses he was largely influenced by the philosophy of Vishisthadvaita. He interpreted Brahman as the one who possesses divine qualities an all-pervasive force. He provides a clear distinction between the physical body and the soul. The songs of Annamayya were directed towards the supreme who is the omnipresent and the inner spirit of this universe. It is he who extends his golden hand in rescuing the individual from the materialistic bond. The poet then discusses the different forms of expressing one's devotion which are against the difficult sacrifices. He also adopts the path of eroticism in which he represents himself as a woman who has a desire to unite with the Lord. He further prescribes Saranagati which could be adopted by each individual in order to attain Moksha. According to him, an individual could attain eternal bliss by constantly meditating upon the feet of the Lord by overcoming materialistic attachments that only grant temporary satisfaction. He insists on being liberated rather than being trapped in the web of foolish thoughts.

Annamayya says that Lord Venkateswara is the ultimate solution for each individual irrespective of their social position. The caste system that was prevalent during those days was severely criticized by Annamayya who says that a person of low caste with true devotion is better than a Brahmin with the knowledge of all the scriptures. The divine being treats every individual on equal grounds irrespective of their social position which is only sufficient to satisfy the materialistic needs. Talking about the system of education Annamacharya says that it should be able to contribute for the overall development of a human personality. He was critical about the prevailing system of education which only satisfies the materialistic needs but not designed to develop one's intellect to distinguish between knowledge and ignorance. The poet also questions the male dominance in the society and attempts to provide equal status for women and shows how they became a part of economic activities such as agriculture, handicrafts, selling butter, etc. the profession of prostitution also finds a mention

by the poet, where he states that most of the woman from the basket weaving community turned into prostitutes. The compositions of Annamayya are by and large devotional in nature yet there are many instances where he mentions different kinds of crops, kinds of land, trade, and how merchants carried out international trade overseas. These compositions not only provide the message of Bhakti but also helps us understand the activities of people in that area for their livelihood as Annamacharya mentions the different professions prominent in a village and how the people belonging to such professions earned their living by rendering service to the farmers in exchange for their agricultural supplies.

15TH century also witnessed the contributions of another important poet called Bammara Pothana from Andhradesa who lived between 1420 to 1470 A.D. Pothana as a child was devoted to Lord Shiva and was keen in listening to different Puranas. He carried out agriculture as a source of livelihood. Once while he was in his field he came across a sage called Chidananda who instructed him the Rama Mantra and blessed him that he would be gifted with natural skills of poetry and would undertake the translation of the Sanskrit Bhagavata Purana for which he was required to follow the rules of celibacy. However, the poet without following the instructions of the sage married the sister of poet Srinath. Later Pothana realizes his mistake and decided to remain in the service of the Lord.

It is only after Pothana had the vision of Lord Sriram who instructed him to translate the Sanskrit Bhagavata the poet extended his devotion towards him. But he also equally treated Shiva and not show any hatred towards him. There were many efforts by the king of Rachakonda to convince Pothana in order to dedicate the epic to him but all those efforts were not fruitful as Pothana decided to dedicate the work to the Lord alone. This refuge in the Lord was a perfectly legitimate way of expression in the medieval period and using this vehicle of divine expression, both the poet saints as the saints of the bhakti tradition expressed the angst of the commoners. Amongst these angsts was also the question of caste that they took up along with issues of patriarchy.

Both Narayana Satakam and Andhra Maha Bhagavatam of Pothana glorified Lord Vishnu and his different incarnations. The poet was influenced by the philosophy of Advaita put forward by Shankara which was visible in his writings. According to him, the soul is the reflection of the supreme and it is unmoved by changes that a physical body experiences. He says that the physical gifts offered to the Lord would not matter but it is the true devotion that

one expresses towards the Lord. An individual who is caught in the dark ditch of samsara would treat others with a difference which is due to the illusion created by the divine being. It is only if the individual overcomes such illusions he can attain Moksha. For which Pothana prescribes different forms of Bhakti which were initially innumerable by sage Vyas's in the Sanskrit text of Bhagavata. The different episodes of Bhagavata discussed by Pothana shows how an individual used their own ways of pleasing the Lord. The poet also uses the erotic model in the voices of Gopika's who were desirous to attain Srikrishna. In addition to these methods of expressing devotion by a devotee, Pothana talks about the path of Saranagathi as an ultimate resort. He depicts the state of a helpless individual in the voice of an elephant caught by a crocodile. It is a representation of a helpless man who is unable to overcome materialistic attachment. Pothana then says that an individual should never neglect the service of the Lord even in times of happiness. He also says that one may not attain salvation by reading Vedic scriptures but can reach his goal by listening to the text of Bhagavata.

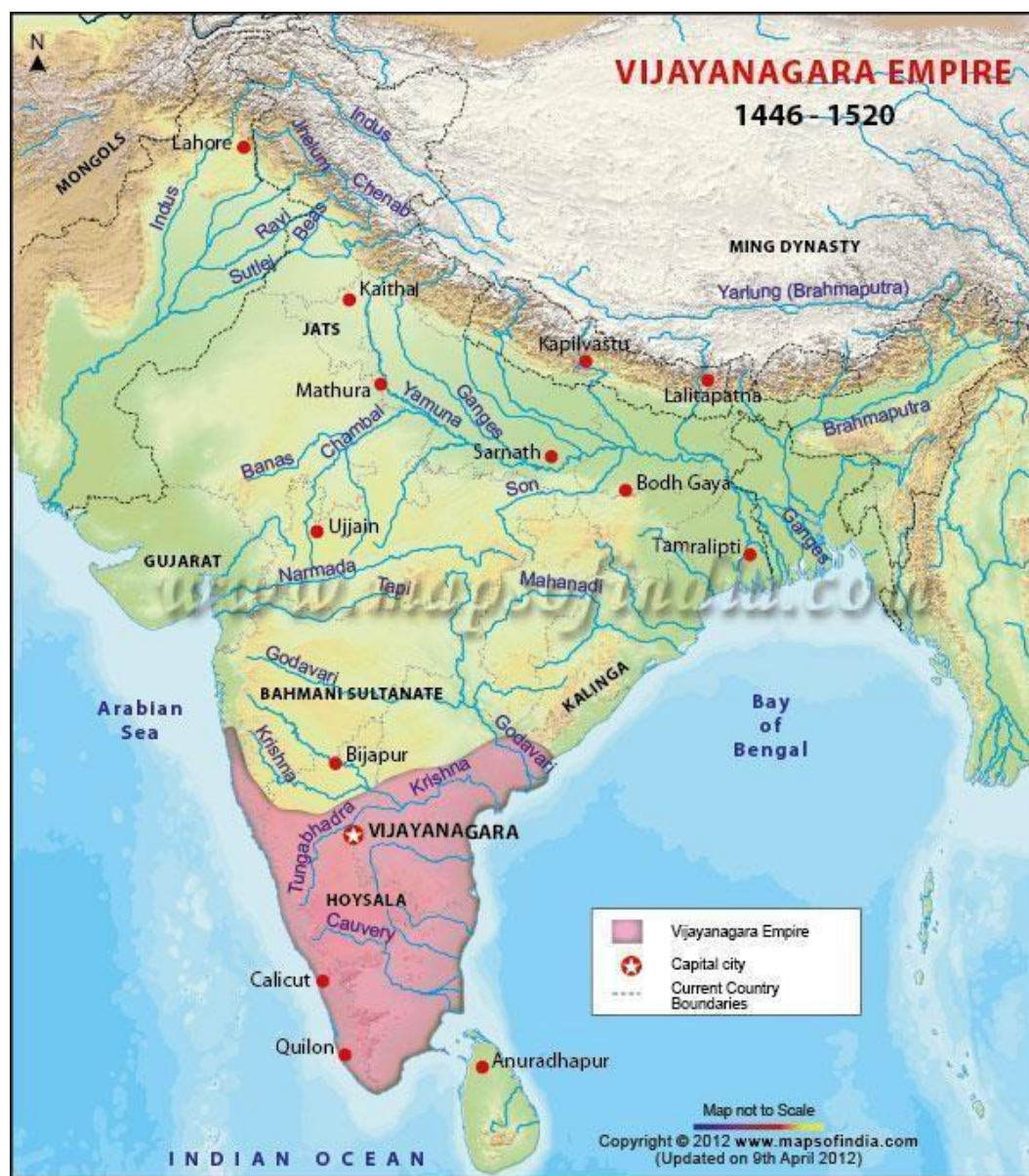
Pothana being a product of the village life mentions the day to day activities of the common masses their social divisions and how they carried out their occupations and how they were required to seek the feet of Lord. He says that even an untouchable such as the Nishada's would be qualified to attain salvation if they offer worship with true devotion where the birth of an individual into a specific caste would not matter. Talking about the importance of education he discusses the importance of the obedience of a student his ability to learn different subjects and use them appropriately which would transform him into a perfect individual. He also discusses the residential system of education called Gurukul and how the teachers of such institutions were treated with great respect. Pothana presents the different dimensions of a woman from that of a house-wife who is soft spoken and guides her family in the right direction. He further portrays a brave woman in the form of Satyabhama who was courageous enough to defeat her enemies by displaying great skills of war fair. He also shows the difficulties of a single mother who was able to make her children successful. Pothana during his stay in the capital of Rachakonda describes the courtesan of Singha Bhupala called Bhogini and how she was able to impress the king with her qualities.

Pothana goes on to describe the conditions of the economy, how agriculture was carried out with the help of irrigation facilities such as tanks, canals, etc. The conditions of drought which were prevalent in that area found mention in the work of Pothana where he says that how people were suffering due to lack of rains and how they resorted to robbery to satisfy hunger. He also gives a beautiful through his text of Bhagavata displayed the deeds of Lord

Vishnu in his different manifestations and also tried to throw some light on the prevailing socio-economic conditions of Rachakonda.

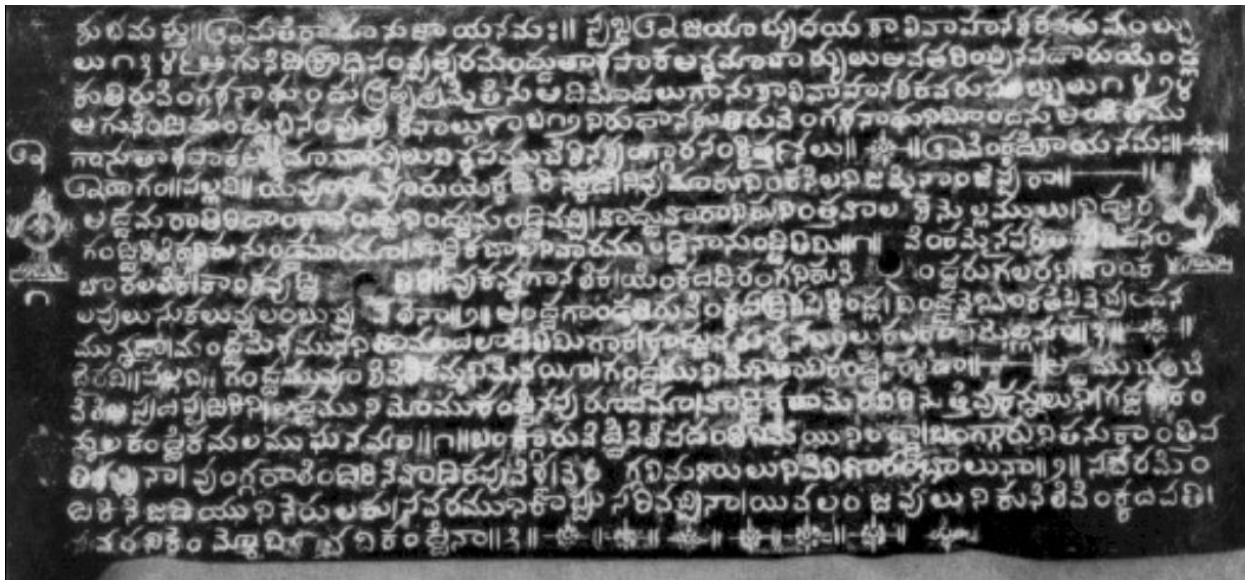
The contributions of both Annamacharya and Bammara Pothana played a significant role in promoting the message of Bhakti among the masses were the songs of Annamayya directly innumerate the different aspects of Bhakti while Pothana displayed it in the different episodes of Bhagavatam. These works of Annamayya and Pothana can not only be considered as greatest contributions in the field of music and Telugu literature respectively but occupied an important role in propagating the message of Bhakti among the masses in a lucid language. Hence the works of both these poets remain important in the minds of Telugu people even today. Therefore, there is a need now not only for philosophers and literature to look into the writings of both Annamayya and Pothana but also for historians. Neither a literary approach nor a philosophical approach or even a historical approach can exhaust all the meanings of these poet saints and they are open to be re-interpreted in different ways and offer us newer ways of understanding the past based on the new methods that have surfaced. A historian can trace the growth of the bhakti movement and the various socio-economic factors that shaped them and thus offer a more meaningful explanation of the events in their holistic context and explain the interconnections that shaped the flux in society caused by the bhakti movement.

Appendix I



Source: maps of India, <http://www.mapsofindia.com/history/vijayanagara-empire.html>.

Appendix II



In this Copper plate one can see the words "ShreeRasthu" and the Vaishnava chant: "**Shrimate Ramaanujaya Namaha**". Also notice the Lords symbol Shanka and Chakra on either side of the plate.

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ANNAMAYYA AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT

Pavithra Molugu
&
Rekha Pande

The term Bhakti implies a single minded devotion expressed by an individual in various forms of poetry, dance, songs etc.¹ The individual would dedicate himself to the supreme being in order to attain his grace. The Bhakti movement had its origins in the sangam literature and has emerged as a popular movement between 5th and 7th century A.D., with the efforts of Alvars and Nayanars who were the worshipers of Vishnu and Shiva respectively these poets adopted the language of masses as against the elite language of Sanskrit in propagating the message of the divine power. The Tamil country during this period saw the development of three major sects of Saivism, Vaishnavism and Shaktism.² The Alvars were the devotees of Vishnu who came from different sections of the society composed verses which were compiled into a work called NalayiradivyaPrabhanda. Namalwar was significant among these poets who has composed many hymns. The Alvars in course of time attained the status of divinity along with Vishnu and its forms the tradition of Alvars was followed by Acharyas that began with Nathamuni, who laid the foundations of Sri Vaishnavism this foundation provided by Nathamuni had given a strong bases for the Vaishnavite sect he was followed by three Acharyas and later by Ramanujacharya the most popular within the Acharya tradition. He emphasized on personal devotion in order to attain the divine soul. He put forward the philosophy of Visistadvaita which was largely based on Upanishads and Bramanasutra's this philosophy put forward by him served as a foundation for his successors like Nimbaraka, Madhava and Vedanta Desika in spreading the Bhakti movement.³ This movement reached North India with a 14th century poet called 'Ramananda' where it manifested in the form of Nirgun and Sagun Bhakti.⁴ However the factors that contributed for the growth of South Indian Bhakti were different from north where it emerged against the Brahmin superiority and Turkish rule. In the South the cult came in opposition to the hetro doc's sects of Jainism and Buddhism it also received royal patronage from various dynasties prominent among them was Vijayanagar in which various families also propagated Vaishnavism, Prominent among them was Talapaka Annamacharya.⁵ There were not many works focusing on Vaishnavism in Andhra region scholars attempted to look at the sect of Vaishnavism with a whole Indian perspective ignoring the specific features of South India. The



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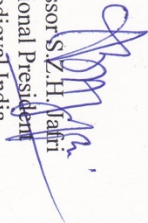
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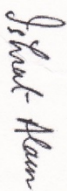
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