
Āttūr Kṛṣṇa Piṣāraḍi was born on September 29, 1875 to Vatakkedathu Nārāyaṇan Nambūdiri and Pāppikuṭṭi Piṣārasyaṛ in Āttūr, a small village in Thrissur district, Kerala. He received primary education from his father. A maternal uncle, Bharata Piṣāraḍi initiated him into classical sanskrit. Further education in *vyākaraṇa*, advanced *kāvya*s, etc was provided by Meleḍathu Rāmuṇṇi Naṃbiār. A paternal uncle Vengeri Vāsudevan Nambūdiri, invited him to live in his house and taught him *nyāya*, *vyākaraṇa*, and *alaṃkāra*. For some two years he assisted an aged uncle in managing a vedic school at Ceruvannūr Sabhāmaṭṭam. At the age of eighteen, Āttūr unhappy with managerial responsibilities, left for Koḍuṅgallūr Kovilakaṃ with the twenty-five rupees that he had saved.

The Koḍuṅgallūr Kovilakaṃ was once a great center of learning. The preceptors at this center were the best known scholars of the age who imparted education in a wide range of subjects in classical arts and sciences. Āttūr who had already mastered *alaṃkāra*, specialized primarily in *nyāya* under Mahāmahopādhyāya Bhattaśrī Godavarma Tampurān. The education and the experiences at Koḍuṅgallūr Kovilakaṃ were instrumental in shaping Āttūr's intellect and outlook, as he recalled later in life. At 22, Āttūr returned home as a complete scholar and started instructing in Sanskrit. His first student was Mūp-pil Nair, the landlord of the house where he stayed. To the Nair, he imparted sanskrit lessons receiving lessons on the Vīṇā in return. At 25, he married Nāṅikuṭṭi Piṣārasyaṛ of Vatakkūṭṭu Piṣāraṃ in Pazhayannūr. This alliance was very propitious. Nāṅikuṭṭi was musically trained and a vainika, while the father-in-law, Bharata Piṣāraḍi was an expert vainika. It provided the perfect foil for Āttūr to continue learning from them music and Vīṇa while pursuing his exploration into the science of music. The couple shared this wonderful relationship imbibed in music for the next fifty-six years of their married life until the demise of Nāṅikuṭṭi.

His ascent as an academic begins with his appointment as a Teacher in Ālattūr High School. After that he worked for five years at the Bhāratavilāsam Press in Thrissur. In 1911, at the invitation of Kerala Pānini A. R. Rājarājavarma, he was inducted as a Professor at The Maharājas College, Thiruvananthapuram as a Professor. Following the tenure of Rājarājavarma, Āttūr presided over the Oriental language department for a period of sixteen years when he retired from public teaching career. This was followed by a prestigious appointment as Tutor to His Highness, The Mahārāja of Travancore in 1927 that lasted five years. After this, Āttūr officially retired and returned to Thrissur where he spent a very active post-retired life in his newly built home appropriately named 'Śrītilakaṃ'. Together with his wife, they ran a gurukulam where music flowed. After his wife's demise, Āttūr retired completely into himself, away from public life, away from teaching, the passion of his life.

The Man

First and foremost Āttūr was a teacher extraordinaire. He was multi-dimensional scholar, poet, dramatist, essayist, researcher and musicologist with Sanskrit and Malayāḷam as his medium. His ideal was: ‘of all wealth, knowledge is the foremost’ (विद्या धनं सर्व धनात् प्रधानं) and his life exemplified the dictum ‘with knowledge came humility’ (विद्या ददाति विनयं). He was the humblest among the humble and was always ready to oblige anyone who sought help. He was generous to a fault. His most illustrious student, the decorated sanskrit scholar K. P. Nārāyaṇa Piṣāraḍi (1909-2004) writes that Āttūr was equally eager to teach or learn from anyone.

The association with Bhāratavilāsam press began Attūr’s foray into literary career. His critical review of *Maṇidīpika* caught the attention of its author, A. R. Rājarājavarma which then led to his employment at the Māhārāja’s College. The association with Rājarājavarma honed his research abilities and provided an avenue to demonstrate his high caliber and scholarship. As a critic, he once disputed with T. Gaṇapati Śāstri, the renowned editor of the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, on the origins of Bhāsa’s plays. Among his early works were Bālaratnam, an elementary textbook on grammar followed by Lilātīlakam, an authoritative text on literary, historical and linguistic information. Thereafter he went on to write several books in many subjects. In 1925, Āttūr established the journal Rasikaratnam that brought out many unpublished classics. The translation of Kālidāsā’s Śākuntalam titled Keraḷa Śākuntalam in 1937 was the most popular book he published. It was the King of Cochin who conferred Āttūr the title ‘Paṇḍitarāja’.

His final work and magnum opus is Saṃgīta Candrikā, a treatise of music published in 1954, following several years of research. This is a *lakṣaṇagrantha* that spans 700 pages with 12 chapters that cover: *nāda, śruti, svara, vīṇā, grāmamūrcchana, melā, tāla, varṇālaṃkāra, gamakasthāyi, prabandha, rāga, and gīta*. The text follows the sūtra-bhāṣyaṃ format with 1728 sūtras. The final chapter on *gīta* is a compilation of 443 gītams which are stories from Rāmāyaṇa, each set to a distinct rāga and tāla complete with sāhitya and svara. The treatise is a compendium complete with analysis, references, quotes to numerous great musicologists and teachers from the times of Bharata to present.

He continued his literary pursuits until the very end. On June 5, 1964 this great soul breathed his last peacefully, surrounded by his children, grandchildren and students.