

Self Writing. Writing History

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Abstract: Using a couple of examples of Life Writing published in the 19th century Andhra country, this presentation will try to explore how different individuals inscribe their selves into history even as they become witness to history. I am picking up for detailed analysis two examples of life writing, Enugula Veeraswamy's *Kasiyatra Charitra* (1838), a journal or a travelogue (in Telugu), whichever way one prefers to see it, and an autobiography in English titled *The Life of Vennelacuntty Soob Row...* (1873). Both worked as translators and interpreters under the East India Company. Though Veeraswamy's travelogue was published earlier, and Soob Row's autobiography was published posthumously many years later, the period both the texts cover, is the first half of the 19th century.

Keywords: 19 Century Andhra, Soob Row, travelogues, Kasiyatra Charitra, The Life of Vennelacuntty Soob Row

Soob Row's autobiography is full of personal references not only to Soob Row but to many of his close relatives. It deals not only with his professional advancement to the highest position of Translator and Interpreter in the Company's service, but of the benefits he was able to get from the Company, of his success in getting several of his relatives employed according to their qualifications. Though Soob Row's autobiography deals with some religious places he visits and the rituals he performs to adhere to various customs and practices, it is by far secular in the sense that Soob Row does not present himself as a spiritual person, but much more as a worldly wise man.

On the contrary, Veeraswamy's Journal is much more spiritual. It shows him as one who is not only thinking of his own religion, but of the others too, such as the Muslim and the

Christian. He delves into the merits and demerits of various practices among these religions. Though written originally as a series of letters to his friend, Komaleswarapuram Srinivasa Pillai, and is termed a journal or a diary, the published text leaves no trace of the personal. Veeraswamy's pilgrimage by road on palanquin lasted from 1830 to 1831, over a year and three months. We understand that he made his pilgrimage to Kasi with a large contingent comprising as many as two hundred members of his family and friends. Surprisingly, the narrative voice is in the singular. It appears as if the generic traits of a journal or a diary too may have been smoothened out, because except for the sequential dates and the details of the journey mentioned, the text reads more like a long essay, with observations on specific cultural and religious aspects of the various places across the country, each of them reading like mini discourses. Veeraswamy comes out as a seasoned traveller with all the elaborate arrangements he had made of his long pilgrimage by road along with his retinue. He ensures that he has adequate supplies of all the food and other everyday necessities. He starts his journey from Madras and reaches Kasi via Tirupati, Srisailam, Hyderabad, Nagpur, Reema, Jabalpur, Allahabad. He returns to Madras via Patna, Calcutta, Cuttuck, Rajahmundry and Nellore. For the unfamiliar journey beyond Hyderabad towards Kasi, he makes sure to have a set of postal runners to help him by writing in advance to various officials requesting them to make necessary arrangements. He is meticulous when it comes to mentioning the details of the distances from place to place, even of the differences in measurements in each region, of the currency and its variations at different places etc.

The most remarkable thing about Veeraswamy's journal is its frank expression of his views on various subjects ranging from men and manners, astrology, astronomy, religion, *sthalapuranas*, rulers etc. Conscious of future travel to Kasi by others Veeraswamy makes it a point to mention precise details of the places, distances, the terrain, weather condition etc. A typical entry reads like this:

I reached Buggagudi on the 22nd [May 1830] morning. The path is easy. The distance is twelve miles. This is a holy place. Three eternal springs—as holy as the Ganges, the Yamuna and Saraswathi—ooze out from the nether regions of this shrine and join the river near the shrine.... The shrine is located at a place where there is neither a township nor any habitations. Pilgrims have to perforce purchase or obtain their victuals from a far-off place on the banks of the jungle stream, with adequate water facilities. I reached Puttur this night, by way of Nagari. (Sitapati and Purushottam 2)

Appreciative of the British for their administrative skills, Veeraswamy compares the difference in the administration of Hyderabad where the Nizam ruled and the Secunderabad area which was under the control of the British. He says: “The conditions in this city, and the state of rule in this kingdom are frightening to those who have enjoyed good government elsewhere” (Sitapati and Purushottam 27).

The districts of Cuddapah and Bellary have been ceded by the Nawab to the Company to meet the expenses of the subsidiary force [of army] located here [Hyderabad]" (Sitapati and Purushottam 28). Veeraswamy finds the entire kingdom frightened of the Company.

Not that Veeraswamy is unaware of British machinations. He says: "The English entered this [Nagpur] kingdom in the time of Buddoji and [are] dabbling and interfering in the war-politics of his children. Raghoji and others obtained some standing here. The East India Company started swallowing bits of this kingdom in the North and East, whenever they had some disagreement with Raghoji [elder Raghoji's daughter's son]" (Sitapati and Purushottam 45)."

A substantial portion of Veeraswamy's journal deals with his discussions with various English officials he meets on his pilgrimage, on different customs and religious practices of the Hindus and Christians. Here is an excerpt that deals with his discussion with one Mr. Groeme about how good and evil coexist in the world:

The world is a mixture of virtue and vice. Virtue or merit is associated with Brahma's active principle while sin is associated with artificial animation caused as a result of 'Maya'. The world has been created with an admixture of both, with the result that evil co-exists with virtue. The illustrations for this are as follows:

Godliness is attributed to images among Hindus to enable children and the ignorant to concentrate on God and achieve Bhakti. However, such faith is injurious to matured minds. In opposition to this Christians however preach the manifestation of the Lordly One in such a way that the children and the ignorant cannot obtain a correct comprehension of the Father in Heaven. Hindus again do not permit second marriages to their women with the result that some of them suffer as child-widows, whereas the English permit women to remarry with the result that women who are naturally fickle minded are not loyal to their husbands; and husbands are killed sometimes deceptively to marry other men. (Sitapati and Purushottam 49)

Here then is a defence of Hindu idolatry. Veeraswamy is conscious of the ill effects of Hindus not permitting remarriage of widows. Nor is he unmindful of the advantage English women might derive. Of course, we cannot miss out on his attitude towards women as fickle minded!

Talking about how the women who came with him on the pilgrimage were very orthodox and would not want to eat in non-brahmin households, Veeraswamy says that when Brahmin habitations could no longer be found they were forced to accept it. He says: "Later they got used to such dining even in the view of others and actually delighted in it" (Sitapati and Purushottam

68). “It is therefore evident that restrictions or customs of this kind are only creations of the mind and obstacles to right thinking. Giving them up is in no way a calamity whatsoever without doubt” (Sitapati and Purushottam 68).

Veeraswamy has a discussion on religion with Mr. Nepean, member of a Finance Committee, who asked him if he believed that the rivers and shrines symbolized God. He says:

You have not seen Madras but if you are shown a map of India and Madras is pointed out to you, will that be Madras to you? When one has to teach the location of Madras to people, and it is not possible to take them personally and show it, it becomes necessary to show them on the map. Just as you draw maps and publicise unknown countries, Karmasthalams of this kind help in fixing the devotion of the ignorant on the Lord. These *swarupas* then help as symbols for worship by them ultimately leading to the true knowledge of God’.

He was then satisfied that I was a good Christian.” (Sitapati and Purushottam 95)

Note the last sentence where Veeraswamy seems to take the approval of the Christians for his having views similar to them.

Here is an instance where Veeraswamy is at pains to see the similarities between Protestantism, Visistadvaita philosophy, Muslim beliefs and those of the Roman Catholics:

The Protestants among Christians following the precepts of visista-advaita preach that the Creator has created the animate and inanimate world of life. Karmas and worship of that kind resulting in ‘Eswara Dristi’ on lowly materials is dangerous. Therefore Karma and rituals connected with karma should be avoided. The Lord should be worshipped in the mind. Even the Muslims are of a similar view that rituals arising out of Karma do not help in the ‘Nischalata’ or poise of the mind and therefore the Lord should be prayed to and one or two Karmas only followed. Roman Catholics also believe like the Muslims in abridged forms of Karma worship. Muslims and Catholics differ only in the karma worship they make and not in ‘tattva’.” (Sitapati and Purushottam 99)

Only Buddhism is isolated as being very different and even dangerous:

Buddhism was preaching the dangerous argument that the body or ‘*Deham*’ was ‘*Brahman*’ before the advent of Sankaracharya in this Karmabhoomi. This religion exists still in the country here and there. Just as milk is mistaken for ghee, the ‘*Sthula deha*’ or gross body is mistaken for *Brahman* and Eswara in this religion. (Sitapati and Purushottam 99)

Veeraswamy raises the question whether women, like other creatures of the world, are not eligible for “moksha” like men. After discussions with the sage Tiruvalluvar Ragnathacharya and others, and his own reflection, he comes to the conclusion that while women are physiologically different from men in that they have a gland in the lower part of the body that produces ova every month, men have a gland in the upper part of the body that helps them gain intellectual advancement. Therefore, he argues that women like other animals in the world are fit to give pleasure to men and that they would do well to confine themselves to household duties (Sitapati and Purushottam 99-100). Here is another instance of male attitude towards women manifesting itself in the justification of a social practice that confined women to the household.

Veeraswamy frequently refers to the caste system in the country. He says that the Brahmins of the North do not insult other castes, nor are they very unkind to them, with the result that the proselytizing activities of the Christian missionaries are negligible there. On the contrary, in the South, the Sudras, especially the “Chandalas” are insulted so much that even their sight is prohibited. Veeraswamy says that because of the insults inflicted on them, they have been converting to Christianity between Pedapalem and Mylapore in Madras.

Interestingly, Veeraswamy says that the Brahmins have to perform the karmas mentioned in the Sruthis and pray to the Lord for the welfare of the entire universe. They must respect the Kshatriyas; be friendly with the Vysyas who obtain merchandise (not available locally) by way of trade from different countries. Similarly, they should treat the Sudras who assist them and serve them very kindly. He says that it is nowhere mentioned that the Sudras who are really eligible to cook food for the Brahmins are not fit to be seen by Brahmins. An interesting observation indeed that expects the Brahmins to respect people of other castes, while cleverly defending the *varnashrama dharma*! Mark his justification of it by alluding to the Sruthis, the “revealed” wisdom of the Vedas.

Veeraswamy makes a distinction here between what the Mulasmruthis say and what the later ones say. He says that nowhere do the Mulasmruthis lay down or support the custom that the Sudras should not enter Brahmin streets. Only the new smruthis which give importance to Karma mention these unhappy disabilities, with the result that rituals and customs connected with karma have increased. In view of the insulting of the Sudras, the Sudras and others have taken to meat-eating etc. They also feel that instead of being insulted and suffering all these insults, it is better they join a religion which gives them equality. It is thus that they become amenable to the influence of Christians (Sitapati and Purushottam 108-9).

Going back to the issue of caste, Veeraswamy says:

The great chaos of intermixture of castes is the direct result of the misdeeds of the angry Brahmin community and God willed to punish them by force and hence the malignant Mohammedan community was brought into this land and thus punished the Brahmins enough.... The merciful God Almighty later, in order to preserve this traditional material world from extinction, gave this land as an easy gift to the English people who are known for the quality of goodness and who by virtue of their knowledge tamed the universe and studied the courses of the galaxy and thus traversed the great oceans and believed that the all pervading preserver of the universe is one and the same. (Sitapati and Purushottam 108-9)

We must note how Veeraswamy seizes the opportunity to insert a negative comment about Mohammedans to justify the British rule in India. While we appreciate his being so self-critical of the Brahmins, we cannot comprehend his prejudice against the Muslims. He goes on to say:

God created bestowed animated beings into different shapes with different sounds, different colours, and with different meanings. Till these beings attain the favoured look of God they resort to the worldly pranks of abusing others and praising self. Though the English do not profess that their Christianity is greater than the Hindus, they think that it is equal. The religion of the Hindus is just like an almond fruit with fibred outer skin and hard shell covering the sweet seed inside. Not knowing the secret of this religion the English try to convert the Hindus to Christianity in order to save them from the supposed doom. Otherwise the English are just, in their rule and by the grace of God they are gaining His favour day by day.” (Sitapati and Purushottam 185-186)

He makes the Upasmruthis responsible for the idol worship too. Upasmruthis of today have gone far away from the initial stand and are wasting their time by insisting on rituals alone. He says that temples also are being constructed with images and pictures which arouse desire. Such useless activities have displeased God who is manifested everywhere. According to him, this is the reason why the English have been preferred to the Hindus. With a view therefore to purify the customs and worship here, God has sent the truthful English rulers to this karma bhumi. He sees the English people as being “endowed with several virtues such as kindness, penitence, ability to weigh values, cleanliness, good taste, virtue, devotion to God etc. Therefore the Whites have become eligible to the grace of the Lord and have become emperors of this country to assist in one’s realization” (Sitapati and Purushottam 109).

The doctor at Gaya, John Davidson, asks Veeraswamy whether the four castes in India were God-made or man-made. After a long discussion, he convinces him that they were man-made. He has a discussion with Morris, the Judge, about “Sahagamanam” (Sati) which was banned by Lord Bentick. Veeraswamy says that there is no mention of Sati in the Moolasmruthis. Only the Upasmruthis mention it. The Varnashrama Dharma also had not

preceded creation, nor was it in the Lord's command. The Brahmins who came down South created several Upasmruthis in the name of Vyasa, Vasista, Narada etc. (Sitapati and Purushottam 126). He goes on to say:

This is a Karma Bhumi, where the '*Brahman*' can be realized through Karma following the path laid down by our ancient sages. Lord Visweswara has punished the people of India by making Mlecchas rule over them as a punishment for veering away from the path of virtue. The English now rule this country with the privileges of emperors. The kindness and the grace of the Lord alone can excuse the 'aparadhas' committed by us, so that the Karmas ordained originally by the Sruthis and the Smruthis and Brahmanusandhanam may be followed easily by one and all here for 'Siddhi' or realization. (Sitapati and Purushottam 128)

Note here that the word *mlecchas* which is usually employed for both the Muslims and the Christians is used by Veeraswamy to refer only to the Christians. Veeraswamy explains to Davidson at Gaya that the three crore gods Hindus worship are nothing but divine persons like the Christian saints: "Just as you believe and adore different saints, we adore three crore celestials and they are not the supreme rulers of the Universe Iswara. Iswara is one. That word Iswara alone can be translated as God" (Sitapati and Purushottam 148). Veeraswamy says, "I could explain this to him with very great difficulty" (Sitapati and Purushottam 148). He then goes on to ask: How can we expect patient enquiry into the inner truth of our religion from foreigners who come from a country 24000 miles away when Saivaites and Vaishnavaites start quarrelling among themselves?" (Sitapati and Purushottam 148)

The Mohammedans and Islam once again get a raw deal in *Kasiyatra Charitra* as in the following words:

The Mohammadan race entered Hindustan through Kabul and first destroyed the Somanatha Temple which was studded with nine diamonds, on the banks of the river Sindhu and plundered the jewels. When the local residents and Hindus living in the five river basin named Punjab totalling about one lakh resisted to be converted into Islam, they were beheaded..... In spite of the compulsions made by the Muslims not one in thousand adopted Islam as they adopted Christianity now through the clever tactics of the English. Hindus gradually avoided Muslims and renovated all the temples destroyed by them. That which is not possible by valour is possibly [achieved] by contrivance is the principle adopted by the British and they gradually took into their religion that section of the community which enjoyed the least status in society and preached the glories of Christianity to them who are ignorant of the intricate religious actions..." (Sitapati and Purushottam 186).

By making a distinction between the Sruthis (Heard/Revealed Texts) and Smruthis (Remembered/Realised Texts), between the Moolasmruthis (Foundational Smruthis) and the Upasmruthis (Subsidiary Smruthis), Veeraswami brings out a subtle distinction between different orders of Hindu epistemology. He also brings out a distinction between the relative value attached to the Spoken and Written-down texts in our knowledge system.

Compared to Veeraswamy's discursively rich journal, Vennelacunty Soob Row's autobiography (it is also termed as a journal in the first page of the book) seems very mundane. A typical rags to riches story of a person who rose to the rank of the Head Translator and Interpreter in the Sudr Court at Madras, *The Life of Vennelacunty Soob Row* comes out as a very personal account of the rise and growth of an individual.

How do we understand Veeraswamy's travelogue? Why is he so keen to win the support of each of the English officials he meets? One might understand Veeraswamy's attitude better if one understands that this period also sees the beginnings of organizations such as the Brahmo Samaj and the Arya Samaj, which are understood as attempts at the reform of Hinduism in the light of the Christian principles of one God and anti-idolatry on the one hand, and to stem the growth of Christian attempts at proselytization.

The very personal details of Soob Row range from the four marriages he has had during his life time, the various nuptial ceremonies performed, the details of his illnesses such as shortness of breath, incontinence of urine and kidney problem, the details of the salaries he has earned starting from 18 star pagodas per month to 95 pagodas by gradually incurring the favour of different English masters he had served during his long tenure of twenty six years, the number of houses he had built and property he had acquired etc. There are occasional descriptions of the places he visits during his professional career, such as the beauty of the Canara country, the customs and practices of the tribes there, his pilgrimages to Benares and Rameswerum etc. But what strikes us most in the autobiography is Soob Row's attempt to impress on his readers (which obviously includes the English ones, for it was written in English) the abundant confidence and trust the English officers reposed in him during his long career. Let us focus on some of the details pertaining to this aspect. One might begin to look at this aspect by taking note of the anglicized spelling of his name—Soob Row, instead of Subba Rao, as we do today.

Soob Row reproduces the first letter from Mr. Alexander Read, his employer at Onore to “convince my readers of the confidence placed in me by my employer in 1803” (9). He also mentions as to how he was employed as a private Moonshee by Mr. John McKerrelon on a salary of 12 star pagodas per month, how he taught him Telugu and of how having passed the examination in it, his master handsomely rewarded him with a reward of 1,000 pagodas.

Soob Row mentions his having assisted McKerrel in preparing his Canara Grammar. In this context he says:

So great was the confidence placed in me by my master that independent of his entrusting me with the management of all his private affairs, he...desired me to go on a trip and to collect all possible information on the subject [the real estate and the annual collection of each of the Districts] in the Mysore country. (Row 16)

He refers to his taking the oath of office in the Sudr Court as Translator and Interpreter at 40 pagodas per month on 6th April 1815 and of his clearing all the accumulated arrears of work (Row 34). Here too he reproduces a letter of 2nd January 1817 from R. Clarke, Deputy Register praising Soob Row's abilities as a Translator and the correct and idiomatic knowledge of English possessed by him:

While the Court thus record their high opinion of the zeal and ability of their Translator, they cannot but feel anxious that he should be rewarded in proportion to his merits" (Row 38) Recommend that his salary be raised to 80 pagodas per month. This sum "they consider as not more than an adequate compensation for the labors of a faithful and diligent Native competent to fill that respectable and important office. (Row 39)

He also talks about his having been appointed as Canarese and Maharatta Interpreter of the Supreme Court at an additional salary of 15 pagodas a month, the total salary amounting to 95 star pagodas a month (Row 45).

He mentions with justifiable pride of his having been nominated Member of the Madras School Book Society and of his having submitted a long letter to its Secretary detailing the deficient mode of education of the natives in the Telugu speaking areas of the Madras Presidency. At the end of this letter which had been later published as an Official Report, Soob Row refers to its reception by the Society:

This long report received the high approbation of the Members, both European and Native, of the Madras School Book Society; and was printed and published for the information of the public in the book entitled "The first Report of the Madras School Book Society for the year 1823" (vide page 43-C in the Appendix.) The following is a copy of a letter which I received from the Society giving me thanks for the information afforded by me on the deficient system of education among the Natives of South India in a subsequent Report of which I lost the copy. (Row 75)

Soob Row claims he had translated several useful books, some of which have been published, printed and sold for the use of students in schools (Row 76). He also mentions the

Madras School Book Society requesting him for more printed copies of his translations of his *Pleasing Tales* and suggesting that he improve the 2nd edition. He says that it does not require any revision, its having received universal approbation. (Row 88) A rare instance of his self-respect asserting itself!

Soob Row refers to a murder case when a judge sought his opinion on how a judgement had been passed (Row 86). George J. Casamajor, Register to the Sudr Court, says this of him: “Having served as Register to the Sudr Adaulut for nearly three years, I have not hesitation in stating that Vennelacunty Soobrow (the Head Translator to the Court) is the most efficient native public officer in his line that I have ever known; that it would be exceedingly difficult to replace his services...” (Row 88). He talks about how his application for pension has been favourably considered: “On mature consideration of the long and able services of this valuable public servant for a period of 26 years, the Judges are of opinion that he has the strongest claim to a pension of half his salary...” (Row 97). He is paid half of 80 pagodas, i.e., 140 rupees. Soob Row relinquished office in 1829.

Soob Row comes out as someone who is completely detached and non-emotional in his response to various events and incidents in his life. Nor was he affected by the winds of social reform. He refers to his being invited by all his friends “for dinners and suppers and *nautch*” (Row 46) and returning to Madras in 1821. A second reference to a *nautch* performance occurs during his pilgrimage to Rameswarum in 1825. Here too he makes a casual statement of it: “We were for 2 or 3 days invited by our friend and relation Ravepauty Ramaswamiah, Deputy Sheristadar and for a night supper and nautch by Biccaju Row, the Cash-keeper in the Collector’s Cutcherry” (Row 80). Even more striking is his reporting of an incidence of *Sati*. Before his pilgrimage to Benares, he refers to his having “visited the ceremony of the widow of Toomoo Paupiah who had just died burning herself on the funeral pyre of her deceased husband” (Row 52). The following sentence, “I went then to Rajahmundry through Ellore with my wife, and we lived there for five days with our relation...” (Row 52) as though nothing had happened. Shocking indeed! Nor is he affected by such historical events as the capture of Seringapatam in 1799 or of a violent storm in Ongole in 1800. (Row 5)

One progressive view he displays is in his adopting a girl when he had no children and of wishing to make her heir to his property, even as he entertains hope of having one of his own in future. He wishes that his wife Mahaletchmi take charge of his whole property in the event of his death and his son succeed him once he comes of age. No one else is to have any claim. He has a son later on, who then becomes his heir. Soob Row says that the birth of his son has “deprived his adopted daughter ...the presumptive right of her succeeding to any of his property...” according to the Hindoo Law (Row 104). He gets his adopted daughter married to his fourth wife’s brother who dies subsequently in 1838.

The most progressive of his views are in the field of education. It is rather unfortunate that his detailed report of English education has not received any attention till date considering that his letter to the Secretary of the Madras School Book Society, which is later published as an official report precedes the much talked about letter of Raja Rammohun Roy to Lord Amherst. After giving a detailed account of “the imperfect mode in which the natives are educated in schools” where rote learning is practised and teachers are paid low wages, Soob Row emphasizes on the teaching of grammar and morals in the study of Indian languages. He asks: “The study of the Grammar in every language would appear absolutely necessary for perfectness and while such very foundation is neglected, how is it possible that any correct knowledge of a language can be expected?” (Row 69) He has the following to say on the teaching of English:

I now proceed to state the manner in which the English language is taught among the Natives of this country. There is not any specific rule as to the age at which a man may begin to learn any other language after he once commenced on his own. I know persons in this country, who, anxious of studying English, began to learn it when they were above sixty years old. When a Native, therefore, enters into an English school in this country, he first learns the alphabet, of course from a printed spelling book, and then he receives a lesson from his master every morning in it; as also in a Vocabulary and a Dialogue prepared, I believe, on one occasion at Madras by the Old Native English masters for the use of the students. When the student has learnt about a hundred words and to write a tolerable hand, he enters into one of the public offices first as a volunteer, and then by degrees he obtains a small situation by the interest of his relations. (Row 72)

He goes on to say:

The only books known and read by the English students in the schools in the out-stations, are the Vocabulary, the Dialogue and the Arabian Nights. As to the Grammar, I believe, they have very little knowledge. The Vocabulary and Dialogue I spoke of are by no means correct or grammatical, nor are they sufficient lessons to enable a student to speak the language with any degree of correctness. The mode of instructing the English language at present not only in the schools at the out-stations but at the Presidency itself, would, therefore, appear obviously inconsistent with the just principles of affording education. Among the native English school-masters at Madras, there are, I believe, very few who have any knowledge of grammar. The income of the English school-masters was really very considerable some years ago at Madras, while there were no more than three or four schools. At present there are so many of them that the emoluments of each of the masters are hardly sufficient for his own maintenance. (Row 72-73)

As to the pronunciation of the English language it is out of the question that a native can ever be expected to speak it with any degree of fluency. It is therefore, to be supposed

that it would be quite sufficient for a native if he could write the language well and grammatically, for it must be admitted that no man can pronounce a foreign language to the fullest degree of fluency and perfection; for instance, there are more than fifty characters in the Sanscrit language, yet it is difficult for even a complete Sanscrit scholar to pronounce the English language correctly, notwithstanding there are only twenty-six characters in it. (Row 73)

He then goes on to make specific recommendations for the two sets of Schools:

FOR THE NATIVE SCHOOLS

1. Abridgments of the existing Telugu, Tamil, Canara and Mahratta Grammars written in prose and explained in the modern languages.
2. Tales extracted from different books composed chiefly of morals, written in the modern languages.
3. Arithmetic and Mathematics explained in prose in the modern tongues.

FOR THE ENGLISH SCHOOLS.

1. An abridgement of the English Grammar explained in all the vernacular languages.
2. The History of the World from its creation with translations into different languages.
3. Familiar dialogues in English with translations into the different languages.
4. Vocabularies in English and the country languages.
5. Some pleasing tales with translations. (Row 74)

Note here that the study of books of morals is recommended only for the “native” schools and not the English schools. There is an assumption here that the morals are automatically taken care of in the curricula of the English schools. Another assumption pertains to the study of the history of world which he considers unnecessary for the children who go to the “native” schools.

Here are two texts then that are so unlike each other written roughly around the same time period by two individuals who are related to each other and share similar backgrounds. What brings the texts together for me is their attitude towards the masters and the master-cultures they served. They both seem to be at great pains to justify their ways to the gods they serve.

How do we then understand these two examples of life-writing? How do we see them as autobiographies of the “self” when both of them are so heavily directed towards the “other”, the

English people they served? Or, do we read them as recorded histories of our colonized past? Or do we read them as instances of complex texts that defy easy categorizations of writing selves and writing history?

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