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Honorary Editor

Prof.M.Doraswamy

Chief Editor

Prof. D.V.Sravan Kumar



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Dravidian Studies : A significant milestone in the preservation of Dravidian Linguistic Research

The Dravidian University was established in 1997 at Kuppam, a trilingual junction of Andhra Pradesh. It stands as a beacon for the integrated development of Dravidian languages and cultures, a vision championed by the late Padma Shri Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao, former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, a legendary film actor. The university has dedicated itself to advancing research in Dravidian languages, including Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, and numerous languages. Among its significant contributions to Dravidian scholarship is the publication of academic journals, with Dravidian Studies serving as the flagship journal, alongwith four journals introduced in the year 2007: Telugu, *Dravidi*, Kannada, *Kannada Kasturi*, Tamil *Dravida Malar*, and Malayalam *Dravida Dwani*. These journals have played a pivotal role in disseminating high-quality research on the linguistic, literary, and cultural aspects of Dravidian languages. After a hiatus in publication since 2019, the Dravidian University, with renewed support from the Government of Andhra Pradesh, is proud to announce the relaunch of all journals in 2025, marking a significant milestone in the preservation and promotion of Dravidian linguistic heritage.

The *Dravidian Studies* journal, launched in the early 2000s, was envisioned as a platform to showcase rigorous academic research on Dravidian languages, which collectively form one of the world's oldest living language families, spoken by 250 million people across South India and the global diaspora. The journal aimed to address critical questions about the recognition and evaluation of Dravidian contributions to Indian literature, philosophy, history, and culture. It published peer-reviewed articles on diverse topics, including folklore, tribal studies, and comparative linguistics, fostering a deeper understanding of the Dravidian linguistic landscape. Despite occasional delays in publication due to logistical and funding challenges, Dravidian Studies established itself as a vital resource for scholars worldwide, contributing to the global discourse on dravidian languages and their

interconnectivity with other language families. The journal's interdisciplinary approach also aligned with the university's mission to promote national integration through the study of dravidian languages and cultures.

The four specialized journals in four South Indian languages focus on the linguistic and literary traditions of their respective languages. These journals provide platforms for in-depth research on Dravidian languages while promoting cross-linguistic dialogue. They cover topics from ancient inscriptions to modern sociolinguistic issues, enriching dravidian ideology and supporting the university's mission of national integration through linguistic studies.

The journals had also facilitated groundbreaking research in the aspects related to Dravidology. The relaunched journals will continue their legacy of publishing high-quality, peer-reviewed research while embracing modern academic trends. The journals will prioritize research on endangered Dravidian languages. By fostering interdisciplinary and comparative studies, the journals will continue to limelights the richness of Dravidian languages, literatures and cultures, ensuring their enduring legacy in the global academic landscape.

Kuppam

Prof.M.Doraswamy
Vice-Chancellor i/c

Saga of Dravidian Studies

We are delighted to announce the 2025 relaunch of *Dravidian Studies*, alongwith its sister journals Telugu, Kannada, Tamil, and Malayalam. Since its establishment in the early 2000s, Dravidian Studies has served as a basis of academic discourse, publishing innovative research on the cultural intersections of Dravidian languages, which are spoken by 250 million people worldwide. The discontinuation of these journals in 2019 marked a significant setback for the academic community. However, with renewed and generous support from the Government of Andhra Pradesh, we are excited to revive these essential platforms, heralding a new era of Dravidian linguistic scholarship.

This relaunch underscores our steadfast commitment to addressing both the challenges and opportunities in studying Dravidian languages, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Tulu. This vision aligns with the mission of Dravidian University to advance interdisciplinary scholarship. By fostering collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches, we aim to ensure that Dravidian languages flourish in both academic and digital domains, preserving their rich heritage while embracing modern advancements.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Andhra Pradesh for its unwavering support, which has been instrumental in making this relaunch possible. This editorial board invites scholars and researchers to contribute to this revitalized endeavor. Whether investigating ancient Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions, analyzing Telugu proverbs, or exploring the syntactic innovations of Kannada and Malayalam, Dravidian Studies and its sister journals provide a dynamic platform to illuminate the diversity and resilience of Dravidian languages. As we embark on this exciting new chapter, we invite our readers to join us in celebrating the enduring legacy of these languages, fostering a global dialogue that honors their rich historical roots in a rapidly evolving world.

Prof.D.V.Sravan Kumar

Chief Editor

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***Views expressed in the articles are personal opinions of the contributors.
Neither the Dravidian University nor the Editor is responsible for them.**

1

From Pre-history to Zamindari polity: A Micro-Historical study of Kangundi in the Upper Palar Basin

- Prof.K.Shyamala

The historic village of Kangundi is located in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh , was constitutive of Baramahal during the late medieval period and witnessed the successive layers of economic stages ranging from Tribal formations to feudal mode of production and then shared tastes and dispositions thus making it as cultural and social habitus. The Kangundi Zamindari, located in present Kuppam Constituency of Chittoor district in Andhra Pradesh is an ancient estate in south India, and it had occupied a strategically crucial position in the south-west corner of Krishnagiri district in the pre-independence period , spanning 347 square miles between coordinates 12°35'-12°56'N and 78°14'-78°35'E. This triangular region served as a cultural and administrative link between three distinct linguistic zones, where Telugu, Tamil, and Kannada naturally coexisted due to the area's border location.

The settlement of Kangundi occupies a historically layered position in the Upper Palar basin of South India, where ecology, culture, polity, and economy have interacted over a long durée. Situated at the intersection of the Deccan Plateau, Eastern Ghats, and the Tamil plains, Kangundi estate represents a borderland zone shaped by transhuman pastoralism dry and wet agriculture, forest-based subsistence, and shifting regimes of political authority. The Palar river, along with its tributaries Kaundinya and Agaram/Kaigal specific to

Chittoor district, traverses a terrain characterised by discontinuous gneissic rock formations, rocky hillocks, valleys, scrub forests, semi-arid plains, and pockets of cultivable land. This ecological mosaic places Kangundi within a transitional zone between the Eastern Ghats and the Mysore plateau, producing conditions that supported diversified human activities such as pastoralism, dry cultivation, limited wet agriculture, and forest-based subsistence within a single geographical unit. Rather than treating Kangundi as a marginal village unit, this paper approaches it as a micro-historical site through which broader processes of South Indian history—megalthic territoriality, tribal eco-centric cultural knowledge, medieval feudal/zamindari formation, temple-centred agrarian expansion, colonial revenue intervention, and post-colonial land reform etc. can be analytically reconstructed.

This study integrates archaeological evidence, Sangam literary traditions, folklore, architectural analysis, epigraphical records, colonial administrative reports, district gazetteers, and post-colonial policy documents. The study is concerned about the distinguishing the available inscriptional evidences, regionally contingent chronology, and oral tradition, while situating Kangundi within the extent of Upper Palar and southern Deccan contexts. Except the two inscriptions explored by the researcher first time in Kangundi and Gundla sagaram villages, the scarce of inscriptions in the region, is addressed through comparative epigraphy from contiguous regions, following established historiographical methodical practice.

The pre-historic sites highlighting Bargur factory explored by Bruce Foote and Archaeological surveys conducted by H.N.Singh, K.Rajan, V.Ramireddy P.C.Venkata Subbaiah etc in the Upper Palar basin have revealed a dense concentration of prehistoric sites, among which megalithic burials depicting the iron cultures form the most prominent material remains. As per their studies, two principal types of megalithic monuments are observed: dolmens and stone circles. Dolmens are typically located on rocky hilltops and elevated terrain, while stone circles are found in foothill zones and valley margins. The positioning of these monuments is not random; instead, it shows a clear connection to ecological zones, particularly the mullai (pastoral) and palai (arid) landscapes. This pattern suggests that the builders of

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the megaliths were aware of environmental factors like the availability of pasture, access to water, and travel routes, rather than just focusing on areas suitable for agriculture.

The Upper Palar megalithic zone is recognised as the cultural landscape of a segmentary lineage based society with an economy characterized by animal husbandry, fragmented land holdings with dry cultivation, and seasonal mobility. Archaeological evidence indicates that the dolmens in this region are largely memorial in nature and do not contain any material remains, distinguishing them from megalithic burials elsewhere in South India that emphasize elite status exhibition. The combination of this feature and the strategic placement of monuments along forest paths, roads, and pastures suggests that these structures served not only as burial sites but also as territorial markers within a landscape of scattered resources.

This perspective is strongly supported by classical Tamil (Sangam) literature, which provides a framework for understanding the connections between the environment, how people survive, and how society is organized. Sangam texts, such as the *Tolkappiyam*, *Ettutokai*, and *Pattuppattu*, describe the Tamil region as divided into five ecological areas (aintinai): kurinji (mountains), mullai (pastoral lands), marutam (river valleys for farming), neytal (coastal areas), and palai (dry areas). Each tinai is linked not only to a specific environment but also to specific jobs, social behaviors, emotional states, and patterns of conflict. Interestingly, these divisions are not fixed geographical areas; instead, they are dynamic ecological states that change with the seasons and over time.¹

Within this literary framework, the mullai–palai continuum holds specific significance for Kangundi. Mullai signifies a pastoral environment, distinguished by cattle husbandry, limited agriculture, and a degree of permanence; conversely, palai arises when kurinji and mullai areas experience drought, leading to scarcity, peril, and conflict. Sangam literature consistently links palai with cattle raids, territorial conflicts, and violent confrontations among neighboring factions. It is within these circumstances that the construction of natukal (hero stones) is documented, honoring warriors who perished while safeguarding cattle and grazing lands.

Scholars have long debated the relationship between *natukal* described in Sangam literature and megalithic monuments identified archaeologically. Several studies argue convincingly that the dolmens of the Upper Palar basin correspond to the *natukal* tradition. Literary references describe stone monuments erected along pathways, forest tracts, and significant points in the landscape, often worshipped by passers-by and adorned with symbolic markers such as peacock feathers. These descriptions closely match the archaeological context of dolmens in the Kangundi region, which are frequently located along movement corridors and near critical pastoral resources rather than within settled village cores. The functional understanding of dolmens as territorial indicators is consistent with comparative archaeological theory. Renfrew and Chapman, in their investigations of European megaliths, highlight that burial monuments frequently functioned to delineate resource areas and establish group entitlements, rather than solely serving as memorials. When this framework is applied to the Upper Palar basin, researchers contend that dolmens demarcated claims over pastures, water sources, and transit routes within environments characterized by dispersed and seasonally contested resources. The linear configuration of dolmens along forest edges and pathways in the Kangundi region further substantiates this interpretation. Furthermore, ethnographic comparisons offer supplementary validation for this viewpoint.

Pastoral societies in South India, which included historical populations living in mullai environments, structured their social organization around extended kin groups called *kuti*. Social identity was closely tied to owning herds and following migratory patterns. Tamil literary sources link *kuti* not to fixed territorial states, but to flexible social units. These units depended on shared access to grazing lands and livestock for their unity. In these societies, lasting stone monuments likely served as visible symbols of group presence in landscapes that were otherwise open and contested. The *palai* landscape, as described in Sangam literature, offers a contrasting but related ecological setting. Defined by dryness, rough terrain, dangerous paths, and limited resources, *palai* is associated with fear, violence, and mortality.

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Literary accounts portray the palai population as engaged in cattle raids and violent clashes, a consequence of constrained agricultural opportunities. These aggressive encounters frequently culminated in fatalities among the involved parties, and their memorialization via stone monuments served to solidify both collective recollection and claims of territorial possession. Consequently, the erection of megalithic structures necessitates an appreciation of a fluctuating ecological context, defined by the relationship between pastoral abundance and episodes of aridity. Furthermore, Sangam-era grammatical texts, such as the *Tolkappiyam*, detail the steps involved in building *natukal*. These steps include choosing the stone, performing a purification ritual, the actual construction, and the eulogy for the deceased hero. A specific stage, called *perumpatai*, involves creating a stone platform, similar to a *mandapa*, and is similar to the later *pallipatai* or hero stone temples built for deceased kings.

. This literary evidence suggests a conceptual continuity between megalithic commemorative practices and later South Indian memorial architecture, reinforcing the argument that megalithic traditions formed the ideological substratum of subsequent political and ritual forms.²

The architects of the Upper Palar dolmens are most accurately conceptualized as small-scale segmentary societies, residing within territories that were either unbounded or only vaguely defined, and distinguished by the presence of dispersed essential resources. Archaeological investigations reveal burial practices that are inconsistent, which aligns with a low population density and a flexible social structure, rather than the characteristics of centralized political entities. These societies likely depended on conspicuous landscape features to manage access to grazing land and water sources, to mediate disputes, and to strengthen social bonds through communal ritual activities. The enduring presence of these megalithic sites within the subsequent village environments of the Kangundi region demonstrates a significant degree of cultural continuity.

Many dolmens and stone circles were incorporated into the religious practices of villages, becoming associated with local goddesses, ancestral spirits, and protective deities. Neolithic tools have been found in the Shevaroyis, Kalrayans, Kolli-malais, Vattala-

malais, Melagiris, and Guttirayan areas. However, these tools have not been found in the plains.

The cairns in the area are said to have been built by natives, each about a span or cubit tall, who had the strength of giants. Many “pits” and “shrines” linked to the Pandavas are found throughout the region, especially along the Morappur-Harur road, near Kundani, and on a hill near Gummalapuram. These pandavagullu are also found at Bapalanattam, near Palamaneru, and in many villages around Kuppam, where the Kurubas consider them to be their ancestors.³

Megalithic burials are common in the area, and these practices continue among the local communities. Although ironworking was known in the North by the eighth century B.C., the spread of ironworking and the “megalithic” culture to South India may have started around 700 B.C. The specific identity of the ironworking “megalithic” people, as well as the exact number of cultural influences involved in this complex, are still unknown.

In contrast, the cultural characteristics associated with megalithic burials are, in most cases, clearly more advanced than those of earlier populations in South India. Moreover, the presence of a well-developed political system, which could organize the labour of many people to move large stones, supports this idea. Therefore, the “megalithic” people were probably the dominant group in South India, especially during the later part of the first millennium B.C.

These people were associated with Dravidian speakers, who were the most advanced group in South India.

The megalithic culture of the upper Palar Basin, in northern Tamil Nadu and parts of Chittoor district (specifically the Kuppam region), covers about 600 square kilometers. The Palar River, along with its main tributaries, the Kaundinya and the Agaram, flows through this area, which is bordered by uneven gneissic rock formations. The region is characterized by a variety of landscapes, including hills, rivers, valleys, dense forests, and dry, arid areas, as well as agricultural and pastoral lands.

The archaeological survey of the upper Palar basin revealed many sites, with a particular focus on megalithic burials. Two main

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types of burials were found in the upper Palar basin: dolmens and stone circles. Dolmens are typically located on hilltops, in rocky areas. In contrast, stone circles are found in the foothills. Giddaepalle: A dolmenoid-cist, a megalithic structure, was found roughly 250 meters south of Giddaepalle village, within Ramakuppam Mandal⁴. The locals, having repurposed the monument, now refer to it as Akkagarla gudi, a temple dedicated to the village Goddess. Oral histories play a crucial role in preserving cultural changes and collective memory, often integrating stories about landscapes and ancestors. Megalithic sites, such as dolmens and stone circles, are reinterpreted as shrines connected to village deities, suggesting continuity rather than disconnection in cultural practices. Through rituals and festivals, these ancient monuments actively participate in religious life, ensuring that memories endure through time.

This shift did not diminish their initial importance; rather, it reframed them within changing social and political contexts. The continued veneration of these sites highlights the profound temporal stratification within Kangundi's cultural environment, where prehistoric, literary, and historical traditions converge. Consequently, the megalithic underpinnings of Kangundi cannot be regarded as a separate prehistoric occurrence, isolated from subsequent history. They represent, instead, the earliest discernible expression of territoriality, ecological adjustment, and ritual dominance in the area. These foundations influenced later patterns of settlement, conflict, and governance, furnishing the cultural framework through which subsequent tribal, medieval, and colonial entities comprehended and restructured the landscape.

Tribal Society, Oral Memory, and Landscape Cognition in Kangundi region

The social history of Kangundi, prior to the advent of formal political institutions, is illustrated by its tribal communities, whose ecological practices and spatial arrangements were fundamentally connected to their environment. Archaeological evidence indicates continuous occupation by groups including the Irula, Yanadi, Kuruba, and Valmiki, who were dependent on forest and pasture ecosystems, and who engaged in hunting, gathering, pastoralism, and shifting

cultivation. These communities occupied diverse landscapes and exhibited a spatial logic determined by resource distribution. The Irula and Yanadi communities, specifically, demonstrated advanced ecological understanding, which facilitated their endurance within semi-arid and forested settings; they employed sustainable survival techniques such as hunting, tuber gathering, and restricted agricultural endeavors. Moreover, their oral traditions illuminate a deep-rooted relationship with their environment, incorporating narratives of ancestral movement and environmental conservation, with the land functioning as a repository of social memory.

Pastoral communities such as the Kuruba occupied a complementary ecological niche within Kangundi's landscape. Their economy centred on cattle, sheep, and goats, requiring access to extensive grazing lands, seasonal mobility, and knowledge of fodder cycles. The Kuruba social organisation was kin-based and segmentary, aligning closely with the *kuti* model described in Tamil literary sources for mullai landscapes. Cattle were not merely economic assets but symbols of lineage continuity, social status, and ritual power. Conflicts over pasture and livestock, frequently referenced in oral narratives, reveal how competition over ecological resources shaped early social relations in Kangundi.

It is a matter of surprise, considering their limited resources, that the Poligars of Hosur Taluk were able to equip and maintain small armies, but if each Poligar could maintain, in every village of his Raj, an average of ten musketeers at his beck and call, it would be simple enough for him to concentrate a thousand fighting men at a few hours' notice. The former martial character of the population of the Taluk is testified by the number of *Umbilikkai* (military service) Inams or *Rakta-maniyams* ("blood-fiefs"), as they are called, which are scattered over the Taluk, especially in the Palaiyams, where they are generally located near the foot of the passes to the Baramahāl. These military fiefs are usually enjoyed by settlements of Vodars or Kurubas, both of them fighting castes, which still preserve their military traditions. The proportionately numerous Muhammadans in the larger villages are probably descendants of Haidar's and Tipu's garrisons.

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The Valmiki community, historically linked to forest-based labour, law enforcement, and subsequently agricultural endeavors, inhabited an intermediary status between populations residing in forests and those with established settlements. Their historical function in safeguarding borders, pathways, and forested areas signifies an initial incorporation of tribal groups into developing political frameworks. Oral traditions indicate that Valmiki forebears served as protectors of routes, elevated terrains, and key locations, thereby supporting the understanding of Kangundi as a landscape where mobility and territorial cognizance preceded permanent habitation.

The Kangundi community's indigenous spatial cognition is expressed through a folk taxonomy of land, which is still used in oral traditions. The landscape is generally divided into three main categories: *Bayalusima*, *Chettusima*, and *Kanumakindigadda*. *Bayalusima* refers to open plains suitable for both cultivation and grazing, *Chettusima* to forested, riverine, and wooded areas, and *Kanumakindigadda* to upland and hilly terrains. These classifications do not indicate fixed land-use zones, but rather dynamic ecological conditions that change in response to human activity, rainfall patterns, and seasonal changes.

This folk ecological perspective resonates with the wider South Indian conceptualization of 'vana' (forest) and 'khestra' (cultivated land). Rather than being perceived as discrete domains, 'vana' and 'khestra' are understood as mutually reliant, with the landscape undergoing continuous transformation, conflict, and ritual observance. In Kangundi, the act of forest clearing did not necessitate the total eradication of 'vana'; rather, it was reshaped through the establishment of sacred groves, ancestral shrines, and boundary demarcations. Despite agricultural expansion, forested regions retained their ritual significance, viewed as sites of origin, safeguarding, and potential danger.

The convergence of social identity, settlement configurations, and ritual landscapes predates the advent of formal agrarian governance. Although the Kangundi populace adopted more settled lifestyles, these tribal knowledge systems endured, though selectively assimilated into the evolving political and religious structures. Early

leaders and later zamindars exploited established sacred geographies to legitimize their power, often appropriating tribal shrines, sacred hills, and ancestral sites for incorporation into newly erected temples and fortifications. As a result, this process did not entirely displace tribal communities; instead, it redefined their roles within a hierarchical framework, transforming forest custodians into ritual attendants, guards, laborers, or marginal cultivators. The examination of tribal memory within Kangundi underscores its essential function within societal frameworks, thereby contesting conventional perspectives on state formation. Contrary to the perception of obsolescence, tribal societies functioned as a fundamental component underpinning political and agricultural infrastructures. Their ecological knowledge and associated rituals exerted considerable influence on both land management and governance. This viewpoint accentuates the constraints inherent in an exclusive reliance on written documentation, as oral traditions and ecological methodologies offer crucial perspectives on social organization and historical persistence. Consequently, a thorough comprehension of Kangundi's historical trajectory necessitates the integration of these factors, thereby illustrating the significance of tribal interactions with the environment and the sustained relevance of their cultural practices, notwithstanding evolving political contexts.

Rise of the Little Kingdom/The Order of Legitimacy

Kangundi Kuppam, rose as a precapitalist samsthanam/principality functioning as an intrinsic connection between the sovereign and the people from time to time for over centuries. It is one of the Ancient estates in South India, having ruled by almost 27 generations as stated in the genealogical records. It also served as a connection between the colony and the metropolis in the process of transition to modernity during the 19th and 20th centuries. For nearly nine centuries, the Kangundi Zamindari was ruled by nearly 26 rulers who owed their allegiance to the political powers that held their sway over the entire South from time to time.

The political situation in Kangundi changed between the late tenth and early twelfth centuries CE, when the Chola dynasty was expanding its agricultural control into the hilly areas of the Upper

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Palar basin. Chola inscriptions from Gudiyatham and Tirupattur provide evidence of organized land distributions, specifically devadāna and brahmadēya grants, as well as tax reductions and the organization of villages into nā u and valanāu divisions. These actions occurred during the reigns of Rājarāja I (A.D. 985–1014 A.D) and Rājendra I (A.D. 1012–1044 A.D).¹ These inscriptions, as documented in South Indian Inscriptions, Volumes XII and XV, suggest that semi-arid upland areas bordering Kangundi were integrated into a structured revenue system throughout the eleventh century, even though direct epigraphical evidence from Kangundi itself is absent.

Oral histories from zamindari families in the area attribute the acquisition of Kangundi hill to Kambinaidu, a Boya chief who came from Pyapili, now in the Kurnool district. This event is generally placed in the late eleventh or early twelfth century A.D. At that time, the Chola central power was weakening across South India, and local military leaders were gaining influence. The lack of royal Chola inscriptions in the Upper Palar uplands after the mid-eleventh century supports the idea that Kangundi became a locally controlled stronghold during this time of political change, rather than an imperial administrative center. The stone fortifications found on Kangundi hill are archaeological evidence of this period of local military control.

The Kangundi Zamindari, and the temples that dot its landscape, tell a remarkable tale of endurance, spanning nearly a millennium within a single family. The Kambi Nayudu dynasty held sway here, a lineage of 28 rulers from roughly 1026 A.D until 1947.⁵ This dynasty's origins lie in a migration from the Kurnool district, which eventually led to the construction of a fortified stronghold amidst the rugged terrain near Kuppam. It was there that Kambi Nayudu, the dynasty's founder, first established his presence. The name "Kangundi" itself is a nod to a pair of tribesmen, Kangi and Kanga. Legend has it that they helped the area's founder when he got lost during a hunt in the thick woods. The recorded history of the Kangundi-Kuppam region begins in 1066 AD. This coincided with the arrival of Kambinaidu, a descendant of Mallinaidu from the Pyapili chieftdom in Kurnool district. Kambinaidu's move to Anganamala, also known as Maharajgadai, allowed him to rise to prominence.

Maharaja-gadai is a small village nestled at the foot of the hill that shares its name, located where the roads to Krishnagiri and Kandi Kuppam meet. From here, the village overlooks the entrance to the pass that once linked the Baramahal to Kuppam, giving it a quiet but strategic importance.⁶Rising northeast of the village is the imposing Maharaja's Hill, reaching a height of 3,383 feet. Local tradition associates the hill with Shivaji, who is said to have built the fortifications at its summit. Long before it came to be called Maharaja's Hill, it was known as *Angana-malai*, a name that survives today and recalls the goddess Angala-Nachi-Amman, the presiding deity of the Old Peta.

The path to the summit begins east of the village and climbs steadily for about 300 feet, opening onto a broad, level rock platform that was once the Old Peta. This settlement was naturally protected by hills to the east and south, and by the fort itself to the north. Even now, fragments of the old walls can be traced among tamarind trees. Nearby, to the east, lies the sacred grove of Angala-Nachi-Amman, keeping alive the memory of the village's earlier life. The final climb to the fort is steep, with the last 200 yards crossing a smooth, almost polished slope of bare gneiss. The fort has two lines of defence: the outer wall of rough stone, topped with a simple rampart, and the inner wall of carefully trimmed blocks fitted without mortar. Natural hollows were used to store water, though no buildings remain in the outer enclosure.

Inside, two small hills rise within the inner rampart. The southern hill is crowned by a plain brick shrine dedicated to Venkataramana, alongside a mosque of unusually elegant design. Nearby, rounded tombstones mark a Muslim burial ground. Below one bastion, a striking eight-foot-high bas-relief of Hanuman is carved directly into the rock, one of the finest carrying in the region. On the so-called Palace Hill, two round towers and four roofless rectangular buildings hint at a once-thriving administrative or residential area. The northern hill, though higher, is quieter. Its summit, known as the *Jeriddu-medu* or flagstaff mound, offers sweeping views of the surrounding countryside. Close by stands a brick structure divided into two barrel-roofed chambers, said to have stored ghee and oil. Stone cannonballs found nearby,

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some no larger than a tennis ball, testify to the fort's martial history. The main entrance, once on the northern side, is now inaccessible. Below it is a flat rock called *Angadi-parai*, or "Bazaar Rock," where villagers likely sold provisions to the garrison during peaceful times.⁷

To the north and east of Maharaja-gadai, the land tells a quieter story. Once densely populated, it was gradually abandoned during the eighteenth century. By the early nineteenth century, the Old Peta was deserted, and the Great Famine of 1878 further deepened the decline. Today, only a few cultivated plots survive, and the countryside is largely scrub jungle, punctuated by grindstones or shards of pottery, the last traces of former prosperity.

Historically, Maharaja-gadai was part of the Kangundi Zamindari and played a significant role in its story. Tradition recounts Kambi Nayudu, the son of a minor chieftain from the Krishna River, who left home in search of fortune and settled at Angana-malai. He is said to have ruled for sixty-six years, extending his influence over Bundi-kota, Mallappadi, and the Javadi Hills. During the reign of his grandson, Mummudi Chinna Virappa Nayudu, the "Venkatapatti Raja" passed through the region. The Poligar's bravery in taming an unruly elephant earned him confirmation of his territory and the honour of a white umbrella. Soon after, however, conflict with Jagadeva Raya led to the loss of Angana-malai and surrounding lands, events that likely occurred towards the close of the sixteenth century. He fortified it and the village Gonuguru was raised around the fort. The temple of Betaraya Swamy was constructed on the hillock. He did this by defeating the local Irula tribal chiefs, 'Kangadu' and 'Kangi,' who controlled the strategically vital Kangundi hill.

As mentioned in Salem District Manual, Kangundi located 54 miles south-west of Chittoor was the residence of Kangundi Zaminadari of Javvaji lineage and there is a hill-fort built by the ancestors of the then zamindar.⁸ Half way up is a cave filled with the bones and horns of cattle. The village Tummisi is 7 miles north-north-east of kangundi, 8 1/2 miles west of Kuppam Railway station and on the tank-bund in this village lies an illegible inscription.

According to official records of the Zamindari of Javvadi lineage, after defeating the tribal couple, the Zamindars made it

mandatory to perform puja to their burials on Mallappa Konda (the Kangundi hill), demonstrating a complex relationship between conquest and spiritual acknowledgment. He fortified the hill and on the request of Irula community, he named it as Kangundi Durgam after the tribal leader Kangadu. Large tracts of forest in this area were cleaned and villages were constructed as Kangundi Durgam and constructed a palace at its base, while building temples dedicated to Malleswara and Basaveswara on the hilltop, creating both military and religious infrastructure. His territorial expansion extended across multiple regions including Tummisi, Diguvaipalem, Chinna Kangundi, Betamangala, Tayalur, Budikota, Melpatti, and Javadipalem through defeating respective feudal lords, establishing a feudal chiefdom that would evolve into one of South India's most enduring zamindari systems. At the heart of this territory is the Kangundi Fort, a formidable granite structure perched atop a steep hill. The fort was designed with a unique circular base that offered significant defensive advantages against regional powers, including the Mughals, Marathas, and the British.

The southern region of Kangundi with forest tracts was named as Chettu Seeme while the plain region was known as Bayalu seema.. During 1185-1231, Raja Chinnavenappa Naidu not only constructed the temples of Krishnaswamy and Virupaksha Temple but also infused spiritual thinking in the minds of people by establishing the 'Nataka Samajam' for entertainment the women in the harem..Local Folk Ballads, Gobbi Songs, Kolatam, leather puppetry etc. were introduced to the people. During his regime, Vijayendra Bhattacharya, the Kuchipudi Bhagavatar migrated to Kangundi and entertained the Zamindar with his performances. In the subsequent period, Kuchipudi Bhagavatam was replaced by street plays popularly known as Kangundi Plays and the village 'Kothaindlu' has become the heritage village for Kangundi plays. Many artists have earned reputation at National and International levels in the modern period.

Tank irrigation was introduced during 1241 A.D. with the digging of tank in 'Chettu Seema' (forest tracts) and named as "Tata Veerappanayudu's Cheruvu". Land grants were given to the Brahmins by donating the Agraharas of Masikam, and Gandlapalli

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villages. During 1299-1361 A.D. Raja Vankatapathi Naidu constructed the village 'Kakimadugu' as agraharams for Brahmins. The village of Bangarunatham was constructed for them and an irrigated tank was constructed in the village. This tank is still known as the source of irrigating the lands and for fisher men communities. The Veerabhadreswara Temple was constructed at Busi Naidupalyam and was donated to Saiva Brahmins. The *Pannagasayana Bhavan* belonging to the Zamindars of Kangundi, located at Kuppam stands as a symbol of power reflecting the syncretic spirit of Hindu and Muslim styles of architecture. Hosur which was a victim of shifting alliances in South Indian Power politics stood as a contested site for identity by both the Islamic and Hindu styles along with western influences during mid-sixteenth century. Folk architecture is another means by which the sense of place inscribes itself on the land scape, visible as well as invisible as can be seen in the town of Kuppam. The patterns of traditional building discovered directly by field documentation, furnish an index to regional personality.

Temples, Ritual Economy, and Cultural Production in Kangundi

The emergence and consolidation of temple institutions in Kangundi formed a critical axis around which political authority, agrarian control, and cultural production were organised from the twelfth century CE onwards. Temples functioned not merely as religious spaces but as nodal institutions integrating land, labour, ritual, and surplus redistribution. The earliest phase of temple construction in Kangundi corresponds to the late Chola and early Hoysala period (c. twelfth–thirteenth centuries CE), when Shaiva religious centres proliferated across the Upper Palar basin as instruments of agrarian expansion and political legitimation. Architectural features of the Malleswara and Basaveswara temples—such as plain adhicmhānas, austere wall treatment, and square sanctums—are consistent with contemporaneous Shaiva temples dated to this period in neighbouring regions.

Kangundi Krishnaswami Temple and Virupaksheswara Temple were built by Momurddi Chinnaveerappa Naidu during 1185 A.D. – 1231 A.D. The villages of Kennavasana palli and Sivakuruburu were given as grants for maintaining the perpetual lamp in these temples.

In 1923 Madras Endowment Board had taken the temple under its control. Vijilapuram Venugopalaswamy Temple was constructed during 1265 A.D.-1299 A.D. by Varamala Naidu. The Zamindar had donated 32,000 rupees worth of villages of Beggilipalli, Gudla kadirepalli and Pakampalli for the maintenance of perpetual lamp and conduct of annual and routine rituals. The hereditary ritual rights were acquired by the descendants of Zamindars on 05.05.1937. The consolidation of political power at Kangundi was accompanied by religious legitimation through Shaiva and Vaishnava temples construction. The temples of Kangundi and Vijilapauram were of chola style. Chola temples can be categorised in two groups– Early Temples and Later Temples; early temples are influenced with Pallava architecture while later have Chalukya influence. The Krishnaswami Temple at Kangundi is surrounded by high boundary modest in size . At the top there is oval shaped shikhara known as Vattara Shikara in Dravidian architectural terms on which kalash like part is placed. The Prakara (Enclosure Walls) – High protective walls built of granite with a walkway for devotional rounds (pradakshina). the architectural style of the temple reflects the Sandhara Ekayatana style, a classic layout associated with early chola temple transitions where a single , independent sanctum sactorium(Garbhagriha) dedicated to the primary deity Krishnaswami and the entire structure being elevated upon a massive, high stone platform known as ‘Jagati’serves to physically and symbolically lifting the deity above the earthly plane. Absence of antarala with pillars is conspicuous.

Makara Torana, Dasavatara and other symbolic motifs are reflected on the main entrance of prakara in Kirshnaswami temple at Kangundi. This depiction symbolises kala, or Time, which destroys and destroys and devours all human beings. In the course of time, the makara was conceived as a large leviathan animal that could accommodate even an elephant between its jaws. Water Cosmology thus relates to the belief in the aquatic origin of all life, which must have, naturally, been conceived by hydraulic civilizations that sprang along rivers like the Nile, Euphrates, Indus and the Ganges, where seasonal rains and the constant flow of rivers produced abundance, through agriculture. The later chola temples from Vijilapuram were

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huge and large with Vimanas or Gopuras dominating the landscape. The Kalikamba temple at the foot hills of the Mallappa konda in Kangundi fort was once the centre of mother goddess for sacrificial rituals by tribal community of Irula which was later converted into Kalikamba temple by local Silpi castemen while constructing the fort. The sri chakra over the roof in the anatarala speaks the conversion of cult centre into a sanskritised sakta centre prohibiting the sacrificial traditions.

Epigraphical evidence from the Upper Palar belt indicates that temples were systematically endowed with land and revenue rights during this phase. Inscriptions from Gudiyatham, Tirupattur, and Krishnagiri, dated between Śaka 1120 and 1180 (c. 1198–1258 CE), record *devadāna* grants of wet and dry lands to Shaiva temples for the maintenance of lamps, daily worship, and festivals.⁹

An inscription dated February 22(Saturday), in AD 1776, found in the premises of Kangundi Panchayat office, on the right side of the boulder supporting Hanuman statue, registers that Gutti, Konkana armed chief and Anganamali Chieftain ‘Basava Sankara’ titled Metapalem Javvaji Kambi Naidi Pamminaidu’s grandson and son of Venkatapati Naidu Sri Varamurthi Naidu, constructed the temple for Hanumantharaya and consecrated the God’s idol in it. This was done as the dharma in the memory of his mother Mangamma garu and his father Venkatapati Naidu.¹⁰

The stone inscription recorded as **AREP No. B of 2018–19**, found at **Gundlasagaram village in Kuppam Mandal of present-day Chittoor District**, is engraved on a large rock lying close to the **Virabhadraswami Temple**, a space that clearly functioned as a focal point of village life.¹¹ The record dates back to Saka 1482 corresponding to A.D 1560 and begins with an auspicious invocation and speaks of a Dharma charter bestowed by Mahamandaleswara Modini Misaraganda Maharayana Bhujapratapa Devaru Narasanayaru through his officer (karyakarta) and the commander (danayaka) Veeramarasayya for the Amaranayaka authority, the village of Gundlasagara, situated in Gonuguru seema is granted to Gonuguru veerabhadraswamy for the daily naivedya of Amritapadi. This **late medieval period, between the fifteenth and sixteenth**

centuries CE, was the time when the **Vijayanagara state and its successors shaped the political and cultural landscape of the Rayalaseema–Kuppam region**. The inscription tells us that this royal order was issued for the benefit of the village, after which the villagers themselves came together to mark boundaries and affirm rights over land, water, and income. This was not merely a legal act but a collective decision, rooted in local participation and shared responsibility. Similar to numerous inscriptions from this era, the text situates the act within a moral framework, offering significant religious rewards to those who uphold the grant while simultaneously cautioning against the grave sin of its infringement. The inscription's invocation of future monarchs, officials, and village leaders to protect the donation for the duration of the sun and moon's existence aims to transmit this accord across time. Consequently, the stone inscription not only documents a land grant but also provides insight into the operational dynamics of Vijayanagara-period rural administration in the present-day area (circa 1400–1600 CE), where kingship, communal agreement, temple-based economic systems, and dharmic principles were inextricably linked.

The Venugopalaswamy temple of Vijilapuram and the Varadarajaswamy temples of Kanamanapalli and Lakshmiapuram in the region increasingly served as mechanisms for integrating diverse social groups into the agrarian order. The presence of Agrahara even today known as Agaram denoted the land grants given to the Brahmin caste. Service castes such as temple drummers, lamp-lighters, flower suppliers, and guards received *manyam* or tax-free lands in recognition of hereditary ritual duties. Such arrangements are documented in Vijayanagara-period inscriptions across the region, particularly those dated between Śaka 1300 and 1450 (c. 1378–1528 CE), which specify obligations tied to land tenure.³ These grants institutionalised ritual labour and transformed temples into centres of economic dependency and social hierarchy.

Vaishnava and saiva influences also became visible in Kangundi during the later medieval period. The Krishnaswami and Virupaksheswara temples, stylistically datable to the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries CE, reflect Vijayanagara patronage of Vaishnava

institutions alongside Shaiva centres. Inscriptions from the wider region indicate that Vaishnava temples often received grants of irrigated lands and were associated with Brahmin settlements (*agrahāras*), reinforcing Sanskritic ritual authority evidenced from Lakshmipuram, Kanamanapalli, Tummi and Vijilapuram temples. The coexistence of Shaiva and Vaishnava temples in Kangundi suggests a plural religious landscape in which sectarian affiliation did not undermine political cohesion but rather expanded the zamindar's ritual legitimacy.

Temples also functioned as centres of cultural production, sustaining a range of performative and artisanal traditions. Ritual music, dance, and dramatic performances formed integral components of temple festivals. Over time, these practices gave rise to distinct local traditions such as Kangundi eighteen day Mahabharata plays, folk theatre pertaining to Sasavula Chinnamma, Prahlada katha, Bhakta Siriyaludi Katha etc and such other narrative folk performances that drew upon mythological and historical themes.¹² Leather puppetry (*tholu bommalata*), folk epics, and oral storytelling were often performed in temple courtyards or festival spaces, indicating a close relationship between religious institutions and vernacular culture. These cultural forms served both to disseminate religious narratives and to reinforce social norms within the village.

During the seventeenth century CE, following the decline of Vijayanagara authority, temple institutions in Kangundi continued to function under the patronage of successor states such as the Mysore State under Haider Ali and Tippoo Sultan. Although large-scale inscriptional activity diminished during this period, administrative records and later gazetteers indicate the continuity of temple landholdings and ritual privileges. Temples thus provided institutional stability during periods of political transition, preserving established patterns of land control and social hierarchy.

Agrarian Expansion, Irrigation Systems, and Settlement Growth

The agrarian transformation of Kangundi, which occurred between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries CE, was closely linked to the expansion of irrigation, the organization of land, and the establishment of zamindari control. Before this, the region's farming

was mainly based on rain-fed crops, with pastoral activities and seasonal forest resources playing a supporting role. The shift towards more stable agrarian production began during the late Chola and early Hoysala period (c. 12th–13th centuries CE), when upland and semi-arid tracts across the Upper Palar basin were increasingly brought under tank-based irrigation systems. Inscriptions from Gudiyatham and Tirupattur dated to Śaka 1120–1180 (c. 1198–1258 CE) record grants for the excavation, repair, and maintenance of tanks (*eri*, *kunta*), indicating a deliberate policy of expanding wet cultivation in ecologically marginal zones.¹

Although no dated tank inscription survives directly from Kangundi, the pattern of irrigation development visible in the village conforms closely to these regional trends. Large and medium-sized tanks associated with Kangundi—traditionally attributed to local chiefs such as Tata Veerappanayudu—are best placed chronologically in the Vijayanagara period, particularly between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries CE. Vijayanagara inscriptions from the Krishnagiri and Mulbagal regions, dated between Śaka 1300 and 1450 (c. 1378–1528 CE), repeatedly mention Nayaka officials sponsoring tank construction and assigning revenue-free lands for their upkeep.² These inscriptions demonstrate that irrigation works were central to the consolidation of local authority and the expansion of agrarian surplus in upland tracts like Kangundi.

The expansion of irrigation transformed the settlement pattern of Kangundi by enabling the growth of nucleated villages around tanks and canals. Wet lands (*nanjai*) emerged alongside older dry lands (*punjai*), producing a dual agrarian economy that combined paddy cultivation with millets, pulses, and oilseeds. This diversification reduced dependence on rainfall alone and allowed for more predictable revenue extraction.

Irrigation infrastructure also facilitated the incorporation of new occupational groups into Kangundi's agrarian society. Fisher communities were settled near tanks of the villages such as Peddabanganattam, Atthinattham, Bisanatham etc to manage water bodies and exploit aquatic resources, while cultivator castes such as Kammas, Balijas and Reddis expanded their holdings in newly irrigated

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tracts of palar basin. Stone cutters such as the Wadderas played a crucial role in constructing and maintaining tanks, embankments, sluices, and canals. Their expertise in stone and earthwork suggests continuity from earlier megalithic and proto-historic traditions, now redirected towards state-sponsored agrarian projects. Grants of *manyam* land to such service groups, recorded in regional inscriptions of the fifteenth century CE, formalised their integration into the agrarian order.

Pastoralism persisted alongside agricultural practices during this era, albeit under increasing regulation. Grazing pathways became incorporated into the agricultural environment, frequently tracing tank bunds, forest peripheries, and uncultivated highlands. Cattle maintained their significance, serving not only for plowing and transportation but also as a source of manure, milk, and ritual significance. Numerous hero stones from the Kangundi–Kuppam area, stylistically attributed to the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries CE, portray cattle alongside armed individuals, thereby highlighting the sustained importance of livestock protection within a society experiencing agrarian intensification. These memorials reflect tensions between cultivators and pastoralists as land use became more rigidly defined.

The zamindari's control over irrigation conferred both economic and symbolic power. By regulating water distribution, the zamindar positioned himself as the guarantor of fertility and prosperity, a role reinforced through temple rituals and public benefactions. Vijayanagara inscriptions frequently describe tanks as *punya* works whose construction accrued religious merit to donors. In Kangundi, tanks were often ritually associated with temples and festivals, integrating water management into the sacred geography of the village. This sacralisation of irrigation masked underlying relations of power by presenting agrarian control as a benevolent and divinely sanctioned act.

Settlement expansion during this period also involved the systematic clearance of forested tracts (*Chettusima*) and their conversion into cultivable plains (*Bayalusima*). While this process expanded the agrarian base, it also curtailed the customary rights of tribal and forest-dependent communities. Inscriptions from the wider

Upper Palar region record the assignment of formerly forested lands to temples and Brahmins, indicating a redefinition of land from shared resource to taxable property. In Kangundi, similar processes can be inferred from the contraction of forest zones and the reorientation of tribal groups towards marginal cultivation or service roles within the agrarian hierarchy.

The agrarian expansion of Kangundi illustrates how irrigation acted as the principal mediator between ecology and power. The control of water enabled the transformation of a flexible pastoral–forest landscape into a territorially bounded agrarian domain, while simultaneously generating new forms of social stratification and dependency. This transformation did not erase earlier ecological practices but subordinated them to a revenue-oriented regime. The agrarian order that emerged during the medieval period thus laid the material foundation for both zamindari dominance and later colonial intervention.

Today, the region is known not only for its historical ruins but also for its geological antiquity. The geological literacy of the region is well narrated by the people. The hills surrounding Kangundi-Kuppam region are ancient granite formations, similar to those found in Hampi, are now a popular destination for rock climbers and history enthusiasts alike thus celebrating the Bouldering festival under the aegis of Government of Andhra Pradesh and Tadekam Foundation. The legacy of the Kangundi Zamindars remains visible in the surviving mandapams, artillery remnants, and the intricate stone carvings that continue to tell the story of a petty principality that ruled over 360 villages for about thousand years.

Architectural features of the Malleswara and Basaveswara temples—such as square garbhag[has, plain adhicmhānas, and minimal ornamentation—are consistent with late Chola and early Hoysala idioms datable to the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries CE. Comparable temples in the Upper Palar region preserve inscriptions dated in Śaka 1120–1180 (c. 1198–1258 CE), recording endowments for lamps, offerings, and temple servants. These inscriptions, indicate that temple-centred agrarian expansion formed the ideological and economic basis of local polity during this period.¹³

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Hero stones (*vīragallu*), found in the wider Kangundi–Kuppam belt and stylistically datable to the twelfth–thirteenth centuries CE, provide further evidence for the militarised nature of authority. The strongest inscriptional anchoring for Kangundi’s medieval polity belongs to the Vijayanagara period. Numerous inscriptions from Krishnagiri, Mulbagal, and Gudiyatham, dated between Śaka 1300 and 1450 (c. 1378–1528 CE), record grants by Vijayanagara kings and Nayaka officials for tank construction, village assignment, and temple maintenance. Published in *South Indian Inscriptions*, Volumes XVI and XVII, these records show that upland regions like Kangundi were administered through hereditary local chiefs entrusted with military and fiscal responsibilities. The zamindari lineage of Kangundi conforms to this Nayaka model of delegated sovereignty.

During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries CE, the zamindar functioned as the primary agent of state authority, controlling land, labour, irrigation, and ritual patronage. Inscriptions from nearby centres refer to *manyam* grants for service groups and tax-free lands assigned to temples, reinforcing a hierarchical but stable agrarian order. Control over tanks—central to wet cultivation in an otherwise dry region—further strengthened zamindari authority, as irrigation works symbolised the ruler’s role as guarantor of fertility and prosperity. By the sixteenth century CE, Kangundi had acquired the defining features of a mature agrarian settlement: a hierarchically organised village society, a dual wet–dry cultivation system, regulated grazing, and a network of tanks and canals under zamindari control. The collapse of Vijayanagara authority after 1565 CE did not immediately disrupt these arrangements. Successor states such as the Bijapur Sultanate and later the Wodeyars of Mysore largely retained existing irrigation and settlement structures, recognising their importance for revenue stability. Administrative manuals and later revenue records confirm the continuity of tank management and land classification practices into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Following the decline of Vijayanagara power after the Battle of Talikota in 1565 CE, Kangundi passed under the influence of successor regimes, including the Bijapur Sultanate and later the Wodeyar kingdom of Mysore. Although inscriptional production

declined during the seventeenth century, revenue records and later administrative manuals confirm the continuity of zamindari structures, including control over forests, tanks, and village assemblies.¹ By the late eighteenth century, Kangundi functioned as a recognised zamindari unit under Mysore administration, immediately prior to British intervention after 1792.

Before Kangundi became a part of Andhra Pradesh, it was a part of Baramahal in the then Madras Presidency. Baramahal is a name loosely applied in English histories to the north-eastern corner of Salem District, Madras, but no longer in use. It apparently included the taluks of Tirupattur, Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri and Uttangarai in Salem, and the Kangundi. The historical atlas of this region can be produced by correlating data on geographical content, ecosystems and the local significance of different types of settlements. Such background data is not readily available in the inscriptions themselves which are the major source for the construction of the history of this region. One has to rely upon the institutional history and the political geography of the settlements.

The political narrative of the Jagadeva Raya lineage situates the Baramahal region as a strategically significant frontier zone during the late Vijayanagara and immediate post-Vijayanagara period.¹⁴ This tract, granted around 1578 A.D. as a reward for military service in the defence of Penukonda, was sparsely populated, heavily forested, and militarily volatile. The deliberate encouragement of settlement through liberal land grants to followers, migrant communities, and indigenous populations indicates a systematic effort to transform a frontier landscape into a productive and defensible territorial unit.¹⁵ Within this framework, Kangundi should be understood as part of the Baramahal region, which was shaped by Fort-based administration, palaiyam authority, and agricultural expansion, rather than as a distinct village.¹⁶

Thus, the medieval history of Kangundi, when anchored through inscriptional, architectural, and comparative regional evidence, reveals a gradual transformation spanning the eleventh to eighteenth centuries CE. This transformation integrated earlier tribal landscapes into a territorially defined zamindari polity, legitimised through temples,

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fortified by military control, and sustained by agrarian surplus. The absence of inscriptions from Kangundi itself does not weaken this reconstruction; rather, it reflects the historically attested pattern whereby upland chiefdoms are best dated through regional epigraphical networks rather than isolated finds.

Sri Prasanna Venkateswara Swamy Temple at Thimmampeta was built during 1783 – 1823 by Raja Venkatapati Naidu I. He authored the book ‘Pashusastram’ and the book ‘Cheraku’, on sugar cane, the important cash crop of the Samsthanam. To improve the Dairy farming, Raja Venkatapathi Naidu II (on behalf of minor Court of Wards), imported Delhi stock Buffaloes during 1926, 1927, 1928 and organized agricultural, Industrial and veterinary exhibitions. As per the Annual Administration Report of the Madras Civil Veterinary Department for the year 1928-29, the Zamindar of Kangundi promised to pay Rs.750 annually towards the upkeep of the Veterinary Dispensary at Bhattuvaripalli and construct necessary buildings according to type design. He has provided a suitable rent-free building for the location of the Veterinary Dispensary. The Department expressed its gratitude for the generous support offered by private individuals and local bodies.¹⁷

Annual cattle shows were a common occurrence. In South India, especially during the early to mid-20th century, these shows were important for improving livestock and spreading modern animal husbandry methods. The article “Cattle Shows,” published in Indian Farming in November 1943, explains that the All-India Cattle Show Society, because of World War II’s impact on transportation and large exhibitions, changed its approach. They started organizing smaller, local cattle shows in different provinces and breeding areas, including South India. These local shows eliminated the hassle of lengthy train journeys, bringing the exhibitions right to the countryside. This made it simpler and less expensive for farmers to get involved. The shows weren’t just about fun, either. They played a crucial role in encouraging improved breeding practices, showcasing the advantages of native cattle breeds, and convincing farmers to embrace more advanced cattle husbandry. They also functioned as educational opportunities and, in a sense, a form of “propaganda” for livestock enhancement,

reaching rural areas that had been largely excluded from the grand exhibitions of the cities. Ultimately, these local cattle show bolstered cattle improvement initiatives across South India, playing a significant role in the enduring success of the agricultural landscape.

During the British period, the **Kangundi cattle shows** in the Chittoor region of South India closely reflected the broader objectives and functioning of cattle shows promoted by the colonial administration and bodies like the All-India Cattle Show Society. The Raja of Panagal and Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams Executive officer Sri Mahant Prayagdas attended these shows. People were introduced to the modern agricultural technology such as Iron ploughs (Nagali and Gorru), Paddy Transplantation techniques etc. Sindhivahini Hearth (Poyyi) was introduced to boil the sugarcane juice.¹⁸ To identify the well water springs, hand boring method was introduced. Sindhu cattle were bred in Hosur cattle farm. Unlike the flatlands, where the usual cattle roamed, Kangundi was home to the strong Mysore-breed bullocks. These animals, valued for their endurance and ability to handle the hilly landscape, were vital for both agriculture and moving goods. This connection mirrored Kangundi's ties to the Mysore plateau, which was just outside the district.

The administrative achievements of Varamala Naidu are recorded in the inscription at Venugopalaswamy temple in Vijilapuram. The Siva temple belonging to Chola Period was renovated by Raja Venkatapatai Naidu (1910-1947), the last Zamindar of Kangundi, who also renovated the Venugopalaswami Temple at Vijilapuram in 1923. Post office, Police station and Public Transportation were introduced during 1930's. Russel Road, Meloni Road, Bayyai's Road, Seetaramayya street were laid at Vijilapuram. He made 'Vetagiri Kotturu' as Tribal habitation for Irula and Yanadi communities. The Kodanda Rama Alayam in Ramakuppam was built by Jodidars. In 1890, Tulasiram das, the disciple of Bhakta Kabirdas propagated the Bhakti and infused humanism among these people. Annadanam (Food offerings), Bhajanas and Harikathas were common. The Chaudeswari Temple, the oldest temple belonging to Chola period in Ramakuppam contain the Sapta Matrikas engraved on a monument. The Lakshmi Narasimha temple at Ramakuppam is next only to Kadiri Narasimha

Swamy temple. During the Vijayanagara period at Basinikuppam, over the 2000 feet height Krishnamma Konda, was built the Venugopalaswami Temple.

Kangundi as an integral part of Kolar Gold Resources

Kangundi also formed part of South India's auriferous belt. Colonial mining literature identifies Kangundi Jaghire alongside Bagalur, Beriki, and Sholagerry as sites purchased by mining companies. The *Journal of the Society of Arts* records that "the jaghires of Bagalur, Beriki, Sholagerry, and Kangundi have been purchased by companies formed for the purpose of mining".¹⁹ Mallapakonda hill is described as "a conspicuous object in the landscape... containing numerous ancient workings," with excavations driven deep into extremely hard rock.²⁰ A paved road nearly a mile and a half long led to the mine entrance, indicating organised, large-scale mining activity. Although gold was not always visible, "careful washing invariably produces fine grains of the precious metal".²¹ Colonial observers expressed surprise that such galleries could be driven "with the primitive appliances at their command," inadvertently acknowledging sophisticated indigenous mining knowledge. The mining operations at Chigurukunta and Mallappa Konda are evident with the presence of wootz shafts at the mouths of mining tunnels.²²

By the early twentieth century, colonial governance extended into ritual and infrastructural domains. In 1923, the Madras Endowment Board assumed control of Kangundi's temples. During the 1930s, roads, postal services, policing, and public transport further integrated Kangundi into colonial administrative networks. Its later transfer to Chittoor district after Independence reflects administrative reorganisation rather than historical marginalisation.²³ Taken together, the evidence establishes Kangundi-Kuppam as a historically layered landscape shaped by territorial consolidation, temple economy, mineral extraction, forest exploitation, and colonial revenue administration. Its evolution illustrates how local power formations in the southern Deccan were continually re-scaled through ecological conditions, administrative restructuring, and state intervention.

The Kangundi-Kuppam region today represents a unique cultural preservation success story, where centuries-old traditions

continue to thrive along with the age old geological formations with local names within modern administrative and economic frameworks. The festival celebrations maintain their elaborate traditional forms while incorporating contemporary elements such as improved transportation, modern communication systems, and enhanced commercial infrastructure that supports both local communities and visiting participants. The Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Board's supervision of major festivals ensures organizational efficiency while respecting traditional community leadership and hereditary religious roles. The region's festivals continue to support extensive interstate commercial networks, with vendors and participants traveling from multiple districts across Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, creating temporary commercial centers that rival permanent market towns in their scope and economic impact.

The region's role as a living laboratory of Indian cultural synthesis, where tribal, feudal, colonial, and modern influences have created a distinctive and enduring cultural identity, provides valuable insights into the processes of cultural continuity and change that have shaped South Indian civilization over nearly a millennium of documented history.

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2

Feminist Literature in Telugu: A Comprehensive Study

- Prof.D.V.Sravan Kumar

Abstract

Feminist literature in Telugu has played a crucial role in challenging patriarchal norms, advocating for women's rights, and reshaping societal perceptions of gender. This research article explores the evolution of feminist literature in Telugu, its major themes, prominent writers, and its impact on society. By analyzing key literary works, the article highlights how Telugu feminist writers have addressed issues such as gender inequality, domestic violence, caste oppression, and female autonomy. The study also examines the intersection of feminism with Dalit and subaltern voices in Telugu literature. Through a detailed discussion of feminist poetry, fiction, and autobiographies, this article underscores the transformative power of feminist literature in shaping Telugu cultural discourse.

Keywords

Feminism, Telugu Literature, Women Writers, Gender Equality, Dalit Feminism, Female Empowerment, Subaltern voices, Patriarchy.

1. Introduction

Feminist literature in Telugu has emerged as a powerful medium for expressing women's struggles, aspirations, and resistance against oppressive structures. Rooted in socio-cultural movements, feminist writing in Telugu has evolved over decades, reflecting the changing dynamics of gender politics in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

This article explores:

- The historical development of feminist literature in Telugu.
- Major themes and concerns in feminist writing.
- Influential feminist writers and their contributions.
- The intersection of feminism with caste and class.
- The impact of feminist literature on Telugu society.

2. Historical Evolution of Feminist Literature

2.1 Early Influences (Pre-Independence Era)

Before the 20th century, Telugu literature was predominantly male-dominated, with limited female voices. However, early influences came from:

Social Reform Movements: The efforts of reformers like Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu, who advocated for women's education and widow remarriage, indirectly influenced feminist thought.

Women's Journals: Early 20th-century magazines like "Grihalakshmi" and "Saraswathi" provided platforms for women's writings.

2.2 Post-Independence Feminist Awakening (1950s-1980s)

The mid-20th century saw a gradual rise in women's voices, influenced by:

Progressive Writers' Movement: Writers like Kodavatiganti Kutumba Rao and Rachakonda Viswanatha Sastry addressed gender issues.

Early Women Writers: Ranganayakamma (questions of "Male Domination") and Volga (a prominent feminist voice) began questioning patriarchy.

2.3 The Rise of Radical Feminism (1990s-Present)

The 1990s marked a turning point with:

Explicit Feminist Narratives: Women writers openly discussed domestic violence, sexual oppression, and economic independence.

Dalit Feminist Literature: Writers like Joopaka Subhadra and Gogu Shyamala highlighted the dual oppression of caste and gender.

3. Major Themes in Telugu Feminist Literature

3.1 Patriarchy and Gender Roles

Many feminist works critique traditional gender roles. Examples:

- Volga's *Sveccha* - Explores women's autonomy.
- K. Sathyavathi's Poetry - Challenges male dominance.

3.2 Domestic Violence and Marital Oppression

Works like Abburi Chaya Devi's "Nirbhaya" expose domestic abuse.

3.3 Caste and Gender Intersectionality

Dalit feminists like Jupaka Subhadra ("Neeli Meghalu") highlight caste-based sexual violence.

3.4 Female Sexuality and Body Politics

Writers like Kondepudi Nirmala discuss women's right to their bodies.

3.5 Economic Independence and Education

Feminist literature emphasizes financial autonomy, as seen in Buchi Ramagopal's works.

4. Prominent Feminist Writers in Telugu

4.1 Ranganayakamma

Notable Work: "Male Domination" (Purusha Rajyam) - A Marxist-feminist critique of patriarchy.

4.2 Volga (Popuri Lalitha Kumari)

- Contributions: "Sveccha" (Freedom) - Advocates for women's liberation.

4.3 Abburi Chaya Devi

Famous For: "Nirbhaya" - A bold narrative on sexual violence.

4.4 Joopaka Subhadra (Dalit Feminist)

Key Work: "Neeli Meghalu" - Discusses Dalit women's struggles.

4.5 Gogu Shyamala

Contributions: "Father May Be an Elephant and Mother Only a Small Basket, But..." - a book written on Dalit feminist perspective.

4.6 Kondepudi Nirmala

Themes: Female desire and resistance in “Ammaku Vacchenanta”.

5. Feminist Poetry in Telugu

Feminist poetry has been a powerful medium for dissent. Key poets:

- K. Sathyavathi (Stree-critiques gender norms).
- Jayaprabha (A Woman Unbound - celebrates freedom),

6. Feminist Fiction and Short Stories

- Buchi Ramagopal's Women's Room Examines women's isolation.
- Vasanth Kannabiran's The Sharp Knife of Memory - A feminist memoir.

7. Autobiographies and Testimonials –

- P. Sivakami's The Grip of Change - A Dalit feminist autobiography
- Gita Ramaswamy's “Land, Guns, Caste, Woman” - discusses activism.

8. Impact of Feminist Literature on Telugu Society

- **Increased Awareness:** Feminist texts have sparked debates on gender justice.
- **Legal Reforms:** Influenced policies on domestic violence and women's rights.
- **Cultural Shifts:** Changed perceptions of women's roles in literature and media.

9. Challenges and Criticisms

- **Backlash from Conservatives:** Some feminist works face censorship.
- **Limited Reach:** Rural women still lack access to feminist literature.
- **Caste Divisions:** Upper-caste feminism sometimes overlooks Dalit issues.

10. The Rise of Radical Feminism in Telugu Literature (1990s-Present)

The 1990s marked a significant shift in Telugu feminist literature, transitioning from reformist feminism to “radical feminism” a movement that sought to dismantle patriarchal structures rather than merely negotiate within them. This period saw women writers boldly addressing issues like sexual autonomy, caste-based oppression, domestic violence, and economic independence through unapologetically feminist narratives.

10.1. Socio-Political Context of Radical Feminism in Telugu

10.1.1 Influence of National and Global Feminist Movements

- The 1980s-90s Indian feminist movement (Post-emergency) emphasized legal reforms, anti-dowry campaigns, and anti-rape activism, influencing Telugu feminists.
- Global feminist waves, especially Third-Wave Feminism (1990s), which focused on “intersectionality, sexuality, and bodily autonomy”, resonated with Telugu women writers.

10.1.2 The Role of Progressive and Dalit Movements

- The Progressive Writers’ Movement (Praja Sahityam) laid the groundwork, but radical feminists critiqued its male-dominated discourse.
- The “Dalit feminist movement (led by writers like “Jupaka Subhadra” and Gogu Shyamala) exposed how caste and gender oppression intersected, pushing feminism beyond elite perspectives.

10.1.3 Women’s Education and Literary Platforms

- The rise of women’s magazines (Stree, Bhoomi) and feminist publishing houses (“Sweccha, Bhumika”) provided platforms for radical voices.
- University departments (HCU, Telugu University etc.) encouraged feminist literary criticism.

10.2. Key Characteristics of Radical Feminist Literature

10.2.1 Rejection of Patriarchy (Not Just Reform but Revolution)

- Earlier feminist works (e.g., Kodavatiganti Kutumba Rao’s) sought gender equality within existing structures, but radical feminists like Volga and Abburi Chaya Devi demanded complete systemic change.

- Example: Volga's "Sweccha" (Freedom) - Stories of women breaking free from marital and societal bondage.

10.2.2 Explicit Discussion of Female Sexuality

- Earlier literature avoided topics like desire, lesbianism, and reproductive rights, but radical feminists openly explored them.

- Kondepudi Nirmala's "Ammaku Vacchenanta" A novel on a woman's sexual awakening outside marriage. Jayaprabha's poetry celebrates the female body and erotic autonomy.

10.2.3 Critique of Brahminical Patriarchy & Caste Oppression

- Dalit feminists like Jupaka Subhadra ("Neeli Meghalu") and Gogu Shyamala exposed how upper-caste feminism ignored Dalit women's struggles.

Example: "Gogu Shyamala's Father May Be an Elephant." stories of Dalit women facing caste-based sexual violence.

10.2.4 Autobiographical & Testimonial Literature

- Radical feminists used personal narratives to challenge societal norms.

- P. Sivakami's "The Grip of Change" A Dalit feminist autobiography.

- Vasanth Kannabiran's "The Sharp Knife of Memory"- A memoir on feminist activism.

10.2.5 Feminist Rewritings of Mythology

- Writers reinterpreted epics from a feminist lens.

- Volga's "The Liberation of Sita" (Telugu: "Sita Vimukti") - Reimagines Sita as an independent woman rejecting Rama's dominance.

10.3. Major Radical Feminist Writers & Their Works

Writer	Key Works	Contribution
Volga	Sweccha, Sita Vimukti	Rejected patriarchal myths, advocated female autonomy.
Abburi Chaya Devi	Nirbhaya	Exposed domestic violence and rape culture.

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Jupaka Subhadra	"Neeli Meghalu"	Dalit feminist perspective on caste & gender
Gogu Shyamala	"Father May Be an Elephant..."	Highlighted Dalit women's oral narratives.
Kondepudi Nirmala	Ammaku Vacchenanta	Explored female desire outside marriage
K. Sathyavathi	"Stree (Poetry)"	Radical feminist poetry challenging gender norms.
Jayaprabha	"A Woman Unbound"	Celebrated erotic freedom, broke taboos.
Volga	"Sita Vimukti" (Sita's Liberation)	Reclaimed mythology for feminism.
Swathi Priya	"Nenu, Naa Vāṇi" (Me, My Voice)	Instagram poetry", Gen-Z feminism.

10.4. Impact of Radical Feminism on Telugu Society

10.4.1 Literary & Cultural Shifts

- Normalized feminist discourse in mainstream literature.
- Dalit feminism gained recognition, challenging savarna feminist narratives.

10.4.2 Influence on Activism & Law

- Feminist writings supported anti-domestic violence campaigns (e.g., Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005).
- Increased reporting of sexual harassment due to feminist literature breaking taboos.

10.4.3 Backlash & Challenges

- Conservative critics accused radical feminists of destroying Indian culture,
- Limited rural reach many women in villages still lack access to feminist literature.

11. Historical Evolution of Feminist Poetry in Telugu

11.1.1 Early Voices (Pre-1970s): Subtle Protest

- Early women poets like Muddupalani (18th century, "Radhika Santwanam" hinted at female desire but were constrained by societal norms.

- Sri Sri (Mahakavi Sri Sri) in “Mahaprasthanam” (1950s) introduced progressive ideas but was male-centric.

- First-generation women poets (1960s-70s) like Dr. K. Suneetha Rani wrote cautiously, using metaphors to critique patriarchy.

11.1.2 The Radical Turn (1980s-90s): Explicit Rebellion

- The 1980s feminist movement led to bold, direct poetry challenging gender roles. K. Sathyavathi (“Stree”) - One of the first to openly condemn domestic oppression.

- Jayaprabha (“A Woman Unbound”) - celebrated female autonomy and sexual freedom.

11.1.3 Contemporary Feminist Poetry (2000s-Present): Intersectional & Digital

- Dalit feminist poets (Jupaka Subhadra, Gogu Shyamala) merged caste and gender struggles.

- Queer feminist poetry (Kondepudi Nirmala, Volga) explored lesbian desire.

- Social media poets (Rakhee S., Swathi Priya) use Instagram & YouTube to reach younger generation.

11.2. Major Themes in Telugu Feminist Poetry

11.2.1 The Body as a Site of Struggle

- Menstruation, childbirth, and aging - previously taboo-became poetic subjects.

Example (Jayaprabha):

“నా శరీరం నాది, నా రక్తం నాది”

- (“My body is mine, my blood is mine)

11.2.2 Sexual Autonomy & Desire

Rejecting the pure wife trope, poets wrote about female lust, extramarital love, and lesbianism.

Example (Kondepudi Nirmala):

“అమె కళ్ళల్లో నిప్పులు, నా ఊపిరి ఆగిపోయింది”

(Fire in her eyes, my breath stopped)

11.2.3 Domestic Violence & Marital Slavery

Poets like Abburi Chaya Devi exposed dowry deaths, marital rape, and emotional abuse.

Example (K. Sathyavathi):

“ఇంటి పేరున ఒక చెరసాల, భర్త పేరున ఒక జెల్లెడ”

(“A prison in the name of home, a cage in the name of husband”)

12. Caste & Gender: Dalit Feminist Poetry

Jupaka Subhadra's 'Neeli Meghalu' depicts dalit women's double oppression.

Example:

“జాతి ముళ్లు నా శరీరంలో, పురుషుడి చేతులు నా గొంతులో” (Caste's thorns in my flesh, man's hands around my throat)

12.1 Mythological Subversion

Volga's "Sita's Refusal" reimagines Sita “walking away from Rama.

Example:

“నేను అగ్నిలో దూకతా కానీ నీ పాదాలకు మ్రొక్కను” (“I'll jump into fire, but never bow to your feet”)

12.2. The Language of Rebellion: Stylistic Innovations

- Breaking Traditional Meter: Feminist poets rejected classical “Chandassu” (meter) for free verse.

- Telugu-English Mix: Younger poets blend languages for modern appeal.

- Oral & Performance Poetry: Gogu Shyamala uses dalit oral traditions in her verses.

12.3. Challenges & Future Directions

12.3.1. Backlash & Censorship

- Conservative critics dismiss feminist poetry as “vulgar” or “Westernized.”

- Dalit feminist poets face “casteist trolling”.

12.3.2. The Road Ahead

- More queer feminist poetry is needed.

- Translations must make Telugu feminist poetry global.

Conclusion

Feminist literature in Telugu has transformed the literary landscape by giving voice to marginalized women. From early reformist writings to radical Dalit feminism, Telugu feminist writers have challenged oppressive structures and inspired social change. While progress has been made, ongoing efforts are needed to ensure inclusivity and wider reach.

Telugu feminist poetry has grown from whispered protests to roaring manifestos. It challenges, heals, and empowers, ensuring women's voices are 'never silenced again'. The future lies in 'intersectionality', digital activism, and bold new voices.

The rise of radical feminism in Telugu literature transformed women's writing from pleading for equality to demanding liberation. By addressing sexuality, caste, and systemic oppression, Telugu feminists created a new literary canon that continues to inspire activism. However, challenges remain in making feminism inclusive across caste and class lines.

Feminist poetry in Telugu has been a powerful medium for expressing women's struggles, desires, and defiance against patriarchal norms. Unlike prose, poetry allows for "raw emotion, subversion of language, and symbolic rebellion", making it a crucial tool for feminist expression. From early whispers of dissent in the mid-20th century to the bold, unapologetic verses of contemporary poets, Telugu feminist poetry has evolved into a revolutionary literary force.

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9. “Ammaku Vacchenanta” (As Mother Said) Kondepudi Nirmala - A feminist novel exploring female desire and societal constraints.
10. “Father May Be an Elephant and Mother Only a Small Basket, But...” Gogu Shyamala - A collection of short stories from a Dalit feminist perspective.
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3

Thinking Through a Green Lens: Ecocritical Concerns in Literature with Special Reference to Northeast Indian Women Writers

- Prof.V.Nirmala

ABSTRACT

The global ecological crisis has intensified the relevance of ecocriticism—the study of the representation of nature, environment, and ecological values in literature. This paper examines how literature engages with environmental change, resource exploitation, climate anxieties, and ecological ethics, thereby shaping collective environmental consciousness. It specifically focuses on the literature of Northeast India, a region ecologically rich yet socio-politically vulnerable, to show how writers such as Mamang Dai, Tamsula Ao, and Mitra Phukan explore issues of land, belonging, environmental loss, cultural memory, and ecological responsibility with eco-feminist perspectives. It highlights how global ecological crises necessitate a deeper engagement with literary imagination and underscores how ecological awareness, cultural memory, and women's experiences intersect with each other. The study argues that ecocritical literature is not only reflective but transformative: it articulates sustainable modes of living rooted in relational ethics, Indigenous knowledge systems, and gender-sensitive environmental consciousness. Such literature, therefore, becomes crucial for “reshaping a greener future” grounded in justice, sustainability, and socio-cultural harmony.

Key words: Ecology, green studies, nature and culture, ecocriticism, environmental degradation, sustainability, memory , intervention.

Introduction

Climate change, deforestation, pollution, and species extinction are no longer remote possibilities but lived realities. As scientific discourses and policy debates intensify, the humanities—particularly literature—offer another dimension of ecological understanding. Literature humanizes environmental crisis, interpreting it not only as a scientific phenomenon but as a cultural, ethical, emotional, and existential experience.

Ecocriticism—the study of literature from an ecological perspective—emerged as a formal field in the 1990s with seminal works by Cheryll Glotfelty and Lawrence Buell. Ecocriticism explores how texts depict:

- **the human relationship with nature,**
- **environmental destruction and extractivism,**
- **place-based identity and cultural memory,**
- **ecological ethics and sustainability.**

Reading through a green lens therefore reveals how environmental concerns are embedded in narrative, symbolism, character, landscape, genre, and imagination.

The accelerating ecological crisis has demanded not only scientific intervention but also critical ethical re-imagination. Literature—one of humanity’s most powerful sites of reflective thought—has increasingly turned towards ecological awareness and environmental justice. Within this expanding green discourse, ecofeminism emerges as a compelling framework, connecting the domination of nature with the historical oppression of women and other marginalized communities. To think through a *green lens* in the contemporary world is therefore to recognize the intersection of gender, ecology, and power structures.

The unprecedented ecological crisis of the 21st century—manifested in rising temperatures, biodiversity loss, resource depletion,

Thinking Through a Green Lens: Eco-critical Concerns in Literature with Special Reference to Northeast Indian Women Writers and socio-environmental conflicts—demands not only scientific intervention, but also ethical and cultural rethinking. Literature is one of the most powerful mirrors and influences of social consciousness; it can expose the ideological roots of ecological destruction and envision alternatives. Reading literature through a **green lens** thus not only foregrounds ecology but also reveals the structural inequality that underpins environmental degradation. It promotes values such as empathy, care, reciprocity, and coexistence, which are essential to ecological survival and literature critiques the structures that bind both.

The literature of Northeast India demonstrates some of the richest ecological consciousness in contemporary South Asia. The region is characterized by:

- dense forests and fragile ecosystems,
- Indigenous worldviews linking land with ancestry,
- histories of ecological disruption via extraction, militarization, and development projects.

Ecofeminism as Theory and Practice

Ecofeminism, a term popularised by Françoise d'Eaubonne in the 1970s, draws attention to the connection between patriarchal domination and environmental exploitation. Vandana Shiva expands this argument, suggesting that capitalist and scientific rationality have systematically devalued both women's labour and ecological balance (Shiva, 1988). Val Plumwood (1993) further highlights how dualistic thought—mind/body, man/woman, culture/nature—creates hierarchical structures that justify domination.

Key tenets of ecofeminism include:

- Recognising structural linkages between environmental degradation and gender oppression.
- Critiquing extractive and patriarchal notions of progress.
- Affirming women's and Indigenous ecological knowledge systems.
- Emphasising relational ethics rather than hierarchical values.
- Advocating sustainability through community, care, and responsibility.

- While early ecofeminism occasionally risked romanticising women as “closer to nature,” contemporary ecofeminism is intersectional. It acknowledges that environmental impacts are shaped by **gender, class, caste, ethnicity, and geographical marginalisation** (Gaard, 2011). This makes ecofeminism particularly relevant to Indigenous, forest-dwelling, or ecologically vulnerable communities—such as those in Northeast India.

The Northeast is rich in biodiversity as well as cultural diversity. For many communities here, nature is **kin, heritage, cosmology, and sustenance**. However, the region has also suffered from militarisation, ecological extractivism, monoculture plantations, climate disruption, and cultural displacement. Women—especially tribal women—bear disproportionate burdens through livelihood loss, reduced access to forest resources, and disruptions of community networks (Bagra, 2024). Ecofeminist readings of Northeast Indian literature reveal recurring motifs:

- **Nature as history and identity**
- **Women as water/forest/seed-bearers**
- **Ecological grief linked to cultural loss**
- **Resistance through knowledge and storytelling**

Writers from this region frequently depict land not as scenery but **as their culture, identity, archive, and sentient presence**. Some of the north-east Indians who created a paramount of consciousness about nature through their writings are;

Mamang Dai: Landscape as Cultural Memory

In *The Legends of Pensam* (2006), Mamang Dai portrays the Arunachal highlands as a living repository of myths, community memory, and spiritual belonging. Environmental damage signifies not only loss of habitat, but loss of meaning. Dai’s descriptions of forests, rivers, and terrain underscore what Lawrence Buell calls “place-attachment” — the deep psychological and cultural stakes of environmental continuity. *The Legends of Pensam* interweaves oral histories and ecological cosmology of the Adi tribe. The environment is not passive but a spiritual and emotional force. Women in the novel

Thinking Through a Green Lens: Eco-critical Concerns in Literature with Special Reference to Northeast Indian Women Writers share deeply reciprocal relationships with rivers, forests, and cycles of time.

Dai writes of a “land where the earth remembers,” collapsing the boundary between human and environment. The exploitation of tribal land is juxtaposed with the marginalisation of tribal women, illustrating the parallel structures of domination. Scholars describe Dai’s work as mapping “an ecofeminist cartography of loss and belonging” (Lalawmpuii, 2021).

Temsula Ao: Ecology under Conflict

Temsula Ao’s works recurrently link ecological change with political conflict. In *These Hills Called Home* (2006), the Naga hills bear witness to war, resource strain, and cultural fracture. Nature is not an untouched pastoral realm but a **participant in history**, absorbing scars of struggle. Ao’s writing foregrounds the emotional cost of environmental disruption, particularly when it affects Indigenous ways of living. Her short story “Laburnum for My Head” clearly indicates her concern for the protection of nature with the suggestion of growing laburnum trees near the grave instead of raising a tombstone on the grave.

Mitra Phukan: Urbanisation and Ecological Anxiety

In *The Collector’s Wife* (2005), Mitra Phukan portrays the Assamese landscape amid social tension and urban transformation. Ecological decline—river pollution, loss of open spaces, shrinking green zones—shapes both public turmoil and private psychological stress. Changes in land and climate appear intimately linked with changes in community and self. *The Collector’s Wife* explores ecofeminism in a contemporary urban-political setting. The protagonist Rukmini’s psychological crisis parallels the region’s sociopolitical upheaval, environmental anxieties, and urban degradation. Critics argue that Phukan “locates ecological and emotional damage within shared structures of patriarchal power” (Deka & Choudhury, 2025). The novel highlights how ecological instability affects women’s agency, mobility, and sense of home.

Eco-Swaraj and Indigenous women’s environmental knowledge:

Across much of Northeast India, women play critical roles in:

- seed conservation
- water and forest management
- medicinal biodiversity
- community food security

Recent scholarship calls this **Indigenous ecofeminism** or **eco-Swaraj** (Bhattacharya, 2022), acknowledging women not merely as victims of ecological damage but as **stewards and ecological thinkers**.

Ecofeminist Literature as Pathway to a Greener Future:

Ecofeminist writing from Northeast India contributes to greener futures in several ways:

✓**Valuing traditional ecological knowledge:** It foregrounds sustainable practices that predate modern environmentalism.

✓**Restoring relational ethics:** It challenges anthropocentric models of progress and restores relationality with land, water, and non-human beings.

✓**Gender-sensitive climate discourse:** Women's experiences demonstrate how climate justice must include social justice.

Ecofeminist texts do not merely mourn—they **teach**. They provide alternative ways of living grounded in care, empathy, reciprocity, and accountability—values that must shape environmental policy and collective consciousness.

Conclusion

Thinking through a green lens allows us to perceive how ecological crises emerge from deeper cultural, epistemological, and ethical ruptures. Ecofeminism highlights that sustainability cannot be achieved without challenging patriarchal and extractive systems that devalue both women and nature. Literature—particularly from ecologically vulnerable and culturally rich regions like Northeast India—sharpens this understanding.

Writers such as Mamang Dai, Temsula Ao, and Mitra Phukan not only depict environmental degradation but also articulate

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ecological hope rooted in memory, myth, community relationships, and indigenous ecological ethics. Ecofeminist literature thus becomes a blueprint for reshaping a greener future—one grounded in justice, sustainability, gender equity, and harmony with the non-human world.

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4

Renuka Ellamma: The goddess of Marginalised Assimilation and amalgamation of local cult with Pan Indian cult

- Prof. M.N. Venkatesha

Key words:

Oral Epics, Religious Cults, Deity, Goddess, Renuka, Ellamma, Sathyakka, Mathangi, Upakatha, Mythical characters, Folk Deity, Folk epic, Sanskritisation, Savadatti, Chowdike, Folk Music.

Abstract

It is interesting to see many of the local cults are amalgamated and assimilated with pan Indian cults which is a result of culture mixing and acculturation. Here Ellamma is a local deity who is supposed to be a local chieftain, deified and further equated with Renuka, who is a pan Indian mythological character, considered to be Mother of Parashurama. There are many folds of narratives in the epic of Ellamma which is one of the prominent Oral epic of Karnataka prevailed around Savadatti, an important cult centre of Renuka Ellamma.

‘Oral Epics’ are considered as treasure house of local knowledge systems which are preserved, conserved and transferred from one generation to another with a touch of folk religion. Therefore, facts are codified and meanings in the present context are changed due to non-availability of decoding tools. The techniques of Recording History are also a part of the knowledge system and therefore, History is codified and added in myths and legends. But while transmitting from one generation to the next it has missed the links and failed in

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decoding to re-establish the authentic History unlike the Inscriptions and written documents preserved in palm scripts. Still, there is History in Oral Epics.

This research work deals with the inquiry into the establishment of a folk cult and its assimilation with a pan Indian construction of Mythical establishments. The submerged historical information, the historical characters equated with mythical characters, synchronisation of Devotee and Deity and considering devotee as deity itself over the time period all have overlapped in the contemporary structure of the Cult. Ellamma cult is a good example to conduct such an inquiry, because documents states that this tradition was live even during the times of Rashtrakuta Ratta Kings who have ruled this place much before 10th century A.D.. Today the centre is popularly known as Renuka Ellamma Temple. History speaks about Ellamma, Sathyakka and establishment of a female kingdom in South India and its links with Kakatiya kings. There are many issues to study to understand such overlapping to understand the History and the nature of the cult established in this region. Therefore, a study is conducted to understand the contemporary structure of Ellamma cult and also its historicity.

1.1.Ellamma; The goddess of marginalised

Ellamma is a local deity as well as a Pan Indian Deity. Ellamma is the other name of Renuka or Renuka Ellamma is dual name of the same deity . The case of Renuka Devi has its origin in Ramayana as an ‘upakatha’ to brief the story of Parashuram whom Rama meets at the time of Sita swayamvara. Parashurama is son of Jamadagni, a sage living on the bank of Sarayu river near Ayodhya. Renuka is his wife. She gave birth to three sons and the last one is Parashurama. Renuka had divine blessings and because of her pativrata Shakthi, she used to prepare a clay pot everyday and used to bring water for the sacred pujas of her husband. She was assisting her husband in his priestly duties with the power of her chastity.

Once, Renuka, who was on her routine duty of bringing water in a sand made clay pot, saw Gandharvas playing Jalakride in the river and got disturbed. As she lost concentration she could not prepare the sand pot and failed to collect water. Sage Jamadagni understood

this with his mystic power and got angry. With his uncontrollable anger he ordered his elder son to cut off the head of his mother. He hesitated. Then he ordered other sons one by one but none of them obliged the father's order. At last Parashurama's turn came. He is the most obliging son. As per the orders of his father sincerely he cut off the head of his mother. He was further ordered to cut off the heads of all his brothers. He did the same. By this act of sincerity father Jamadagni got very much pleased and sanctioned boons to his most obliging son Parashurama. Intelligently Parashurama asked for his mother's life and Jamadagni was so happy about his son's demand and taught him how to get the life of his mother back. Accordingly, Parashurama was asked to connect the head of the mother with the body. Mother Renuka got her life back so also his brothers. Parashurama is the axe which Rama always uses as his weapon.

An interesting variation is while beheading his mother, Renuka rushed to Matangi and hugged her. Parashurama's axe beheaded both Renuka and Mathangi. When Jamadagni obliged to give life to them Parashurama is asked to join the head with the body. While doing so, in confusion and anxiety the heads got exchanged. There is a lot of culture mixing and controversial logics which question social stratification in Indian Society through this epic variation which is popular in folk literature. There are many more developments to this epic tale.

Later, Karthaviryarjuna showed his enmity towards Jamadagni and snatched the divine cow 'Kamadhenu' and this led to the great fight between Jamadagni and Karthaviryarjuna. As Parashurama got angry against all Kshatriyas, he roamed all around (India) twenty-one times, invaded all kingdoms and killed almost all Kshatriyas. His aim was to remove all Kshatriyas from this earth. By that time, he met Rama and understood that Rama is his own avatar, that is another incarnation of Lord Vishnu. He has transferred all his mystic powers, which he has gained by tapas, to Rama. He went back to Mahendra Parvatha to conduct tapas forever.

This is the skeleton story of Renuka mahatma. There are many variations and also several additional parts of this story. There is an elongated puranic detail of enmity between Karthaviryarjuna

Renuka Ellamma: The goddess of Marginalised Assimilation and amalgamation of local cult with Pan Indian cult and Jamadagni. So also about the visit of Karthaviryarjuna to the Ashram of Jamadagni where he observed the sacred powers of cow Kamadhenu. Similarly, many versions of folk narratives are there. According to one such version, when Parashurama raised his weapon Parashu to kill his mother she hugged her servant Matangi with fear. The force of the axe cut-off the heads of both Renuka and Matangi. The folk version tells that when, Parashu rama stitched the heads to the corresponding bodies, it was exchanged. So that there is a mixed form of mothers. Both are being worshipped at Ellamma Temple.

There are many versions of epic of Ellamma. The main content of the tale is almost same. The folk epic describes the birth, marriage, death and other miraculous deeds of Ellamma. Ellamma appears to be folk version of Renuka, where Renuka is the classical version of Ellamma.

This study aims at understanding puranic affinity and historical establishments of the cult at South India, particularly in Karnataka. To understand the cultural complexity, folk and classical discourse, overlapping of historical characteristics of Ellamma, Sathyakka and other similar personalities later are equated with epic character Ellamma are very difficulty task. Then demarking between historical character and epic character is a hard task in the present scenario. The synchronisation and overlapping of characterisation made it difficult to distinguish the deity and devotee in case of Deity Ellamma and a character Ellamma who worshipped mythical Ellamma.

Ellamma tradition is one of the prominent religious cults in South India. Though it is popular throughout Karnataka, we can see its dominance in northern part of Karnataka. Savadatti is one of the major centres of Renuka Ellamma tradition. There is one temple of Ellamma whose history dates back to Ratta jain kings who ruled this place earlier in 10th Century A.D. The details of Inscription give the details of establishment of this temple in 10-12 centuries. This study aims at understanding the historical details of this temple as good the historicity of this cult. There are references of Kakatiya king Prataparudra of Warangal and his devotion to this deity Ellamma.

Therefore, the present study demands enquiry into history as well inquiry into religious manifestations and overlapping of culture with in this cult. Because, Brahminical, Kshatriya, Jaina, and Veerashaiva influence is largely seen on this cult whereas the devotees of the present generation belonged to lower strata of the society. The inhuman devadasi system and jogathi tradition is connected to this temple as well to the cult. Earlier, this seat was considered as a centre for yogic practices. Therefore, Ellamma cult has many folds of culture mixing and complexity is seen in the present establishment. The poverty, ignorance, illiteracy, fear about natural hazards and many such things made the devotees to surrender themselves to the deity as well to the priests and other dominant authorities of this cult. The social structure has unknowingly controlled such exploitation and further made the life more complex to the devotees of this cult. The active bearers of this tradition kept the momentum on, without proper understanding of what they are meant for. The society accepted the norms and rituals created as a traditional practice and have taken social sanctions for many of the activities conducted in the name of deity and tradition. Therefore, a sociological and folkloristic study is necessary to conduct on this tradition to understand the psyche of the society as well human behaviour in a group. The Individuals simply moved with the mass without questioning the authority of the cult and their practices. The poverty always had the last laugh and individuals not only suffered but also compelled the generation to accept the settled values as socially accepted values. Therefore, this study raises several questions about the group psyche and its influence rather than explaining the social status of the individuals and active bearers of this tradition.

The problems in the life of common people are originated because of various contextual reasons. The poverty is the main cause of many issues in life. It is important to have psychological strength to confront the difficulties whichever arises in the life various periods. The folk seeks solution for all such problems either through devotional faith or through appeasement of supernatural elements. They believe that it is possible through faith, devotion, and by the mystic power gained by specific yogic achievements. This mentally prepares our folk to accept the difficulties and happiness with equal tolerance.

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The folk rituals are created with the good understanding of nature and culture interactions which are the totality of experiences of several generations. Folk-culture includes folk arts, folk literature, folk rituals, local knowledge systems and traditional experiences. Through these rituals' folk have created a system of various religious beliefs in which these deities are functioning as consoling powers to nullify the effects of difficulties. There are creations of deities of various forms which are regional, local or pan-Indian according to the acceptance and spread of epics surrounded such deities and also the establishment of concerned epic cultures. This process is happening from the day of evolution of human kind on this earth. In the beginning, of this evolution-chain, humans worshipped tree, mound, ant-hill and whatever they feel important in this earth. Similarly, they thought of their origin either through sun or moon, or from a tree which they believed prominent and started worshipping them. All this later has become a practice and these rituals further structured as culture.

Even when people started living in civilised society their belief in god or any such super natural element has continued to be part of human life. Further, the method of worshipping has modified with the invent of different kinds of living system. So, temples are constructed and deities are made to sit between four walls under a human constructed roof.

Humans with their evolution understood their intimate attachment with 'Panchabhutas' the five basic elements of nature, *Agni-vayu- Varuna- Aakasha – Pruthvi, Fire- Air -Water- Sky* and Earth. Folklore studies mainly aims at understanding the interconnections between human life and these panchabhutas. This is reflected in Rituals derived through the living style in which humans utilised these panchabhutas to make their living more comfortable. The folk knowledge systems are mainly derived through various methods of Harnessing of these five elements of nature. As scientific knowledge is advanced, human needs and demands increased to lead a comfortable life in the midst of lapse of so much of facilities, one has forced to harness this nature. For this he needed mental strength. To gain such mental power to fight against Natural hazards, to satisfy hunger and other two basic needs (Food, Clothes, and Shelter) humans

has started inventing new methods. As 'Need is the mother of Invention', Hunger made humans to urge for understanding new methods of hunting or searching for food. Further, this leads to agriculture, because, man understood, instead of moving for food from one place to another, one can produce the same wherever he is. This has given birth to the development of village system. Mutual cooperation and system of respecting the other made people to work together for the benefit of both. Civilised understanding leads them to establish cooperative system in every walk of life. The equality or logical understanding in distribution of food and further distribution of all-natural products has led to creation of social norms, moors, customs and practices. Thus, a village consists families, individuals and schools of socialisation. Human beings are made to behave in a proper way in a society through education which is the key for socialisation.

The sudden changes, variation, and natural hazards created fear and confusion in human beings. Attacks from wild beasts created fear about our very neighbourhood. Human psyche created concept of God to find a solution to such confusion and fear. This god has given a feeling of security and hope. The form of god is varied according to the conceptual understanding, 'what the God is!'

The evolution and understanding of Nature are a never-ending process. The issues like Illiteracy, poverty, ignorance, financial dependency is still not eradicated from our villages even today. There are additions of new social problems. Even in this modern India, the villages are still to be developed economically to attain all modern amenities. This economic development is rightly influenced their socio-cultural establishments. Every society will have some fixed norms, but will continue to accept changes. Social change is a process. The village life not only calculates economic advancements but also seeks comforts in the life through attaining peace which is derived from satisfaction and contempt-ness. These rituals, belief system, Do's-Don'ts, customs and practices, all these are well-defined according to the worldview and group psyche.

Indian Society established in a systematic way by establishing a structure with in it. This has got caste system and demarcation of economic influence to find rich and poor. The poverty, illiteracy, and

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fear ahead of innocence created scope for exploitation and formed dominant and predominant community groups. Though all had equal opportunities, the physical and sociological weakness created stratification. A few have become dominant and others are either suppressed, marginalised or neglected and further are exploited and made to lose many opportunities for progress. But, the devotion, belief in god, and hopes for a bright day continued. Therefore, the concept of god and methods of worshipping has taken a deep-rooted meaning in the life of folk.

The folk have started worshipping deities of their choice. They have given a form of their imagination. Anthill, Mound, Tree, Stone, Serpent, Wild animals and other abstract forms of power, all became forms of deities where these Gods and Goddesses assumed to have specific divine powers. A few of them started taking care of protecting this world. Others took the responsibility of protecting their village, crops, cattle, etc. A few of them got the specific powers like sanctioning boons to get children and prosperity. Some of them are considered as goddess to save them from endemic diseases. Maramma is considered as one such deity who saves them from Plague. The concept of village deity is established with the concept of protecting a village by a deity. Ellamma is to be studied with this concept.

Indian anthropologist Deviprasad Chattopadhyaya argues that the concept of mother goddess is a result of matrilineal families practiced in India during the period of Kola- mundas. In his Lokayatha he argues that Kola-Mundas are the aborigines of India, who lived much before the advent or establishment of Aryans and Dravidians, had strong familial bond which was controlled by women. He assumes that there was matrilineal family system. This has given birth to the concept that a supernatural woman can control the natural diseases or hazards and can protect them by all evil forces. Further, they believed that such mother Goddess can give boons to them to get children. This has given birth to the emergence of Mother Goddess cult. The protection of village has become the primary duty of Mother Goddess, because, she is the mother of all villagers. Ellamma is also considered as a village deity in many villages of South India. As

‘women’ is considered as superpowered with her ability to give birth to offspring, she is equated with mother ‘earth’, who is giving birth to plants and trees. Further, this mother is identified in super natural power which protects us. Therefore, the goddess who protect our village becomes village deity.

In south India there are many centres of Goddess Ellamma. Among them Savadatti in Karnataka and Maavur in Maharashtra appears to be very famous. There are long oral Epics sung in the name of Ellamma which has got a history attached as well. The Epic of Ellamma also suggested the presence of a Tradition where Narrative and Ritual performances evidenced the existence of a living tradition of Ellamma. This Ellamma tradition is widely spread in South India. The Goddess Ellamma is identified as a synchronised form of Renukadevi who is a Pan-indian deity character whose story is narrated in Ramayana as an ‘Upakatha’. This Renuka is believed to be the mother of Parashurama, a senior character of Ramayana.

Renuka Ellamma cult has many centres in South India. South Kanara, the coastal Karnataka part is considered as Parashurama kshethra. Such a belief is extended even to the state of Kerala. But Ellamma cult is very popular in Northern Part of Karnataka. Mavur near Nanded in Maharashtra and Savadatti near Dharwad in Karnataka have been considered as strong centres of this Tradition. The other centres such as Chandraguthi, Bagaduru, Bankapura,, and a few more are equally important centres. It is interesting to see that there are a few more deities like Huligemma, who are considered as other forms of Ellamma or worshipped as sisters of Ellamma where the cult practices are almost same.

Ellamma is a folk deity. In Ramayana or other myths there is no mention of Ellamma. But folk strongly believes that Ellamma and Renuka are one and the same. The temple boards are signified with the names as Renuka Ellamma Temple. It is crystal clear that sanskritisation and classical upgradation of a local deity Ellamma made to be equated with Sanskrit Brahmanical deity Renuka.

Here is an attempt to identify the folk roots of Ellamma. If at all Sanskritisation made Ellamma to be equated with Renuka, then the primary objective of this research is to identify the independent

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roots of Ellamma. If so, then the first question would be ‘who is this Ellamma?’ Whether there was any historical character named Ellamma who further deified through a process of death and deification. There are many versions of Epic of Ellamma. The different nature of the characters established in them suggests merging of different tales together in this cult. This leads to the speculation that If this Ellamma is further worshipped by any other characters in history, then whether their real story is merged with the mythical tales of Ellamma! Ultimately this research aims at understanding the Historicity of Ellamma cult and to understand the overlapping happened in the process of furtherance. An enquiry will be made to know Whether the historical documents available about the old temple in Savadatti can provide enough evidences to such queries. Through these overall observations this study directs to understand the cultural establishment of Ellamma Tradition in South India.

As per the establishment of Temples it is considered that Mavur near Nanded of Maharastra, Savadatti of Belgaum, Bankapura near Haveri, Chandragutti near Shimoga are important centres of this Tradition. Among them Mavur is considered as the main centre where she got connected with Kakatiya dynasty and other northern Marata Kings. According to folksongs Bankapura is considered as her birthplace. Chandragutti is a very important centre as far as ritual practices are considered. One of the version of folk epic of Ellamma also describes the intimate relation of this deity Renuka and Matangi with Idiga community who lives around Chandragutti. Chandragutti Ellamma is a centre where infamous nude worship was in practice in the near past of a few decades.

Therefore, the importance is felt of conducting a comparative study of the sources related to History and Oral History which finds references of Ellamma.

Hisotrical Details about Ellamma and Saundatti rulers:

Saundatti Ellamma Temple is located in Belgaum district at a distance of 70 kms. from its district headquarters and 38 kms. from Dharwad. Saundatti is popular for the ancient temple dedicated to Goddess Renuka, whom folk also called as Yellamma. The temple is situated on Yellammagudda, which is 5 kms away from Saundatti

Town. The Yellamma Devi Temple is located on the top of a hill near Saundatti. It is associated with Renuka, the wife of Jamadagni and the mother of Parashurama, whose story is told in the puranas. Here, she is worshipped as Renuka Devi or Yellamma Devi. The Renuka Devi Temple is the most famous pilgrimage spot in Saundatti. It is one of the oldest towns in Belgaum district. Saundatti is an ancient town which was the first capital of the Ratta Dynasty. Saundatti Yellamma Temple is built in Chalukya and Rashtrakuta style of Architecture. The carvings in Saundattiyellamma Temple indicate the Jain Architecture. The temple complex houses multiple shrines dedicated to Lord Ganesha, Lord Mallikarjun, Parashuram, Ekanath, Siddeshwar in its premises.

The temple of the goddess Yellamma or Sri RenukaDevi is a popular pilgrimage site for Shakti devotees. Every day, hundreds of pilgrims visit the temple with great devotion. The congregation is especially large, crossing ten lakh mark on two auspicious days BanadaHunnime and Bharatha Hunnime. The jat্রে is also known for the ill-practice of dedicating girls to the devadasi system. The yellammaJatre is more about the worshipping of the power of women in the form of shakthi. During this jat্রে an idol of Yellamma devi is taken out in procession and she is worshipped as Goddess Shakti. The Renuka sagara, formed by the Navilu Thirtha Dam touches the low-lying areas of Saundatti. There is a spot called Jogula Bhavi here, where there is a temple. Pilgrims take a holy dip here before visiting the yellamma hill.

The Historical name of Savadatti was Sugandavarti orSougandipura. It was the capital of the Ratta Dynasty, from 875 – 1230AD, until the capital shifted to Belgaum. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Belagaon was the capital of the Rattas, the chieftains of Saundatti. The fort at Belgaum was built by Bichi Raja of Ratta Dynasty in 1204AD. The Ratta clan was one of several which came out of the Rashtrakuta Dynasty. Rattas of Saundatti accepted the overlord ship of Taila II (AD 973- 977). Two of the pillars at Belgaum fort have Kannada Incriptions in Nagari script. One inscription from around 1199AD is attributed to the Ratta King Karthaveerya IV. Savadatti was the kingdom of Rattas of

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Rashtrakutas who ruled the Suryavamshi Kingdom. In one of the inscriptions related to Rattas of Saundatti it is mentioned that Krishna III appointed Prithvirama as a chief feudatory had dignified the Ratta Dynasty of Saundatti. There are questions about the ancestry of Rattas, whether they belonged to Latur or Manyakheda and are they really belonged to Rashtrakutas. The Rattas of the Saundatti, who were used to represent themselves as lords of the Lattaluru, present Latur, could have represented their ancestors as Manyakhetapuravaradhisvara instead of Lattalurapura varadhisvara, if they wanted to avoid their connection with Latur,. A few such questions are yet to be answered.

At Saundatti, there are two Jain inscriptions written in Sanskrit and Kannada. There is a mention of Krishna of Rashtrakuta shaka 797 (c. 875 AD) and Vikramaditya, shaka 1017 (c. 1095 AD). These dates are to be verified. At Saundatti, in the front wall of Ankeswara Temple which is in Western Chalukya style, there is an inscription carved in the wall by the Ratta Chief Ankarasa. The Rattas of Savadatti are Jains by religion. In the 11th century Rattas of Saundatti and their provincial governors were great patrons of Jainism. There are references about a few great jaina followers of that time. Mention can be made of Kartivirya's son, a jain saint Munichandra, a minister of Lakshmiditya and a teacher, who has the title of Acharya, and the founder of Ratta-Rajya. Savadatti has two small jain basadis dating back to Ratta period.

Importance of Oral History:

Oral Epics are considered as treasure house of Local knowledge systems which are preserved, conserved and transferred from one generation to another with a touch of folk religion. Therefore, facts are codified and meanings in the present context are changed due to non-availability of decoding tools. The techniques of Recording History are also a part of the knowledge system and therefore, History is codified and added in myths and legends. But while transmitting from one generation to the next it has missed the links and failed in decoding to re-establish the authentic History unlike the Inscriptions and written documents preserved in Palm scripts. Still, there is History in Oral Epics.

Ellamma cult is having a pan Indian structure in Renuka cult. But the epic of Ellamma available in Savadatti and other centres in

South India gives a wide picture of local history embedded in it. The writings of Guntur- Sontheimer highlighted the importance of study of these deities to understand the nature and culture of the connected pastoralists and marginalised communities. The interconnections between these epics, as folk believes that Renuka Ellamma is the sister of Mailaralinga an incarnation of Lord Siva and Junjappa as one of the sons of Mailaralinga who is also considered as incarnation of Lord Veerabhadra, speaks a lot about cultural mixing. The incidents described in the epic unveils several interconnections between certain subtle Historical issues.

The reference of Ekangira or Ekavira Devi worshipped by Kakatiyas, the Pramila Rajya, the state of women which has sheltered Pratapa Rudra or controversial Rudrama Devi of Kakatiyas, and the Historical establishment of Ellamma of Savadatti are to be studied with utmost care to know about historical issues embedded in them. The deification process found in connections between Ellamma and Renuka of mythic period is to be studied theoretically. The possibilities of equating a Local lady chieftain Ellamma with Mythical Ellamma seen in many places of Deccan is the key issue which is to be established with the careful understanding of the establishment of existence of a historical character Ellamma as chieftain at Savadatti. The other characters related to this local chieftain Ellamma are to be studied carefully to understand how history has taken shift to mythic level as historical personalities such as Mahendra nath, Gorakh nath, Chowdike Rama- the son of Ellamma, the chieftain etc are further equated with pan Indian deity Renuka, Jamadagni, Parasurama and Karthavirya respectively. The History of Machendra Nath, Gorakh Nath and other Yoginathas in Ellamma's Pramila state at Savadatti place are all to be restudied with a view that History is submerged in the mythical tales of these oral Epics.

Epic of Ellamma. - Inter connected History of Kakatiyas. :It is popularly believed that Ellamma is a local form of Pan Indian deity Renuka. The reality is quite reversal. Ellamma¹ is a local historical character and deified through the process of Death and Deification. This paper deals with the historicity of Ellamma of Savadathi . The deity is so popular in the Deccan with Mavur of Maharashtra is said

Renuka Ellamma: The goddess of Marginalised Assimilation and amalgamation of local cult with Pan Indian cult to be her main centre. Sathyakka, Matangi, Chowdike Rama alongside Ellamma, Jamadagni and Parashurama are the characters to be studied with the proper understanding of *Nath* cult established in the southern Deccan where the names of Machendranath and Gorakhnath appears to be very important to analyse the equalisation of Jamadagni and Machendranath. Similarly understanding of life of sathyakka and Ellamma, as a local personality who hold a kingdom ruled by women which is considered as Prameela Rajya is also important to know the interrelations between a local history, local epic and its equivalence with pan Indian epic. There are several phases of repeated upgradation of local diety to the level of Pan Indian deity.

The references related to Kakathiya Kingdom, Warangal and controversial lady character Rudrama Devi and Pratapa Rudra are to be noted with careful observations. The reference of Pratapa Rudra hiding in a women's kingdom with a disguised form and getting treatment for skin disease and reference of Yallamma and Sathyakka all to be studied with a new perspective. Further Ellamma in its religious cult to be addressed properly as a Hindu mother goddess and questions related to Jaina yakshi references at Savadatti are to be answered through proper Research.

Therefore, it is evident that finding History in folk epic is not so easy as one could find the oral history in Folk epics.



There are several research works conducted to analyse the History embedded in Myths related to Savadatti Ellamma. A few of them are noted below:

Ellamma belonged to Panchamas, Munda, or Kola tribe. In these tribes there is importance to mother as family head. Ellamma was worshipped as Shakthi swaroopini. (Chandrappa. N. 2002,p-154) ².

The names like Ekala Devi, Ekkalaveery, Ekkanaadi, Ekanathi, Ekanathamma are seen in inscriptions where as Ellamma, Ellayi is seen among folk. (Kalburgi. M.M. 1988, p-294).³

It is interesting to see that the word *Ell*i is not seen in any of the inscriptions but it is popularly seen in the usage among folk. She might be Elle + *Amma* = *Ellamma*, a border security mother goddess mostly worshipped by Hindus. This cult might have many folds.

Ellamma might not just a Hindu deity, she might be a pre-Hindu tribal mother goddess. Ellamma cult have got influenced by Pre-Hindu tribal religion, Hindu religion and also from Jaina, Natha, Shaiva, Shakthapanthas. The devotees who are following all these panthas are seen in Savadattien today.

The characters of Ellamma worshipped by the people even in earlier centuries are to be analysed to know the history to identify different folds of characters in Ellamma

- i. *Ellamma, a local chieftain, a historical person lived in Savadatti region. Her period is almost the same that of period of Pratapa Rudra, a Kakatiya king ruled at Warangal.*
- ii. *Ellamma, a local deity, who had similar centres in the nearby south Indian region.*
- iii. *Ellamma, who has got equated with Renuka, the mother of Parashurama, a mythic character. Now, the name of the deity at savadatti is Renuka- Ellamma.*
- iv. *Ellamma is also called as Sathyakka, Sathyavva, and Kari Ella in Savadatti.*
- v. *It is certain that there should be one woman by name sathyakka and her life story should be quite similar to that of Ellamma and an equation is made between Sathyakka and Ellamma.*

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Another important discussion can be made to highlight Chowdike Rama, the son of Savadatti Ellamma. Chowdike Rama appears to be folk version of Parashurama. But the episode of chowdike Rama is seen only at savadatti. It is not seen in any other region.

It is essential to study the places connected to the tale of Ellamma. There are several other researchers who have expressed their opinion differently. All are to be studied carefully for further understanding of history embedded in this Oral History.

Ellamma was Born at Bankapura, grown in Vijaya nagara, stayed at Hubli - Dharwad Mound (Mathighatta Krishna Murthy, 1965- p73)⁴.

Ellamma is a Jaina woman - Researcher Kamala Hemmige doubts.

Ellamma belongs to Ratta dynasty who are followers of Jaina religion- Rattas are basically BahusaraKshathriyas - (A. Sundara, Janapada Sahithya Darshana II, 1987, p-25)

Rattas believed that Karthavirya is totemic ancestor of their Vamsha (Moola Purusha of their Varsha)

Ellamma temple at savadatti crossed through the administration of Jainas, Kshathriyas, Brahmin and Lingayath

Ellamma's yogic achievements and service towards marginalized that too to scheduled castes people is a remarkable service.

Ratta Raja Karthaviryarjuna's and Warangal Kakathiya King Pratapa Rudra's references are there in songs of Ellamma. This gives a clue that Historical personality Ellamma might have lived during 12th- 13th century. (Rajashekar P.K. Munnudi 1974 P xxxviii)

Ellamma is referred as sister of Karthavirya. Either she is biological sister or she was cared by Ratta Kings and thus she attained sociological sisterhood.

The inscriptions referring Ellamma is seen in 1514 A.D. as Jattaka Devi. - Jina Devi. - (Ellamma). (Kannadavishwakosha- No. 3, 1971 p-99).

The research is continued further with the above understandings which revealed a few inferences. Some of them are worth mentioning. There are several transformations of the nature, name and structure of this deity and the worshipping culture.

1st Transformation:

Jogula Bhavi sathyakka- Ellamma is shifted from Jogulabhavi place to Basadi as Ellamma.

2nd Transformation:

When Shirasangi Kings started administering the temple, Lingayats

became the priests and Ellamma is equated with Renuka. The tale similarity is established.

The oral epic is telling the details related to oral history in a submerged way. Prof. K. M. Metry⁵ collected the Epic of Ellamma sung by Daroji Iramma. In this collection several historical facts are noted for further research:

Kshatriyas did not like his sister getting married to a Kaapalika, Kaula — Rishi Jamadagni.

Our question is Who is this Jamadagni at savadathi-Machendranath?

Because, there is a reference that devotees use the slogan *Chalo Machendra — Gorak Aaya...* a famous saying in savadathi.

The oral epic describes the secret marriage of Machendra with Ellamma. Ellamma gets pregnant. By that time Machendra wanted to leave that place and before leaving the place he orders Ellamma not to reveal his identity to anyone. This compelled Ellamma not to tell about the FATHER to his own SON Chowdike Rama. The son gets suspicion about his mother's chastity and gives lot of trouble to her. There was rivalry between Machendranath and the brother of Ellamma. Machendra left the place because of this rivalry. Later, when Machendra came back to Savadatti he got a doubt that Ellamma might have provoked her brother to kill him. With this misunderstanding he ordered his son Chowdike Rama to kill his own mother.

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There is reference of Chowdike Rama- son of Ellamma in Oral Epic which is also considered as Oral History of yallammana Gudda or of Soudatti. Whether this Sathyakka or Ellamma of Savadatti had a son by name Rama and whether she had a conflict with her husband and had any problem in disclosing his name to their son Rama. The questions are yet to be answered.

There are many other instances described in different parts of Oral Epics related to Ellamma. Two of such instances are very important as far as the need for analysis is considered.

It is said that Prathapa Rudra stayed in a Pramila Rajya for several days for two reasons: one to get rid of a skin disease. The other one to escape from Mughal enemies. Ellamma might have given shelter to Pratapa Rudra or she might be a good healer of such skin diseases. Even today, Savadatti's Jogulabhavi is considered as a holy spot in which if the people suffering from skin diseases takes holy dip to get rid of that disease.

In contrast to this story another story tells that Ellamma has suffered from skin disease- EkanathJoginath helped her to get rid of that disease but made her to participate in their tantric yogic siddisaadhanas. Ekanath - Joginath might be a single person. Yoginis were participating in all tantric cults in Karnataka. Sri Saila, Siddana Kolla, Huligi, Ellammana Gudda, Shirasangi. —are Shaktha cult centres. They were doing Chakrasiddi. In Karnataka, there was no significant understanding of difference between Nath sanyasis and kapalika- kaulas. When Ellamma understood she is being exploited she rebelled against Nathas. Further there might be rifts between different sects of Nathas. Because, there is a mention of a curse by Gorakh stating *Nathas should not live in Karnataka*. (M.G.Biradar, 1999 p-506). And the question is Why?

According to folk belief, Machendra lived in a female kingdom which might be one among Simhala, Assam Kamakya, Kerala, or Kaula- yogini's Srisaila. None of these centres belonged to Karnataka. The female kingdom mentioned in the epic might be this Savadatti. Because, in Savadatti Ellamma centre there is a strong belief that 'while drumming Maddale Gorak sounds it as '*Chalo Machendra Gorak Aaya*'.

There is a reference of Gorakh in Halumatha Purana. According to Halumatha purana Gorakh is the Guru to Kurubas, the shepherd community in Karnataka. Gorakh had religious discussions with Nivruthinath, Jnaneshwar, Kabir, Gopichand of Sind, Rasalu of Assam, (Shankar Mokashi Puneekar). By name analysis it can be read Gorakh - cowherd and machendra- fisherman.

It is further analysed that Savadathi might be a female kingdom, Prameela Rajya during the period 12-13th century ruled by Ellamma or sathyakka. It is a known history that Rattas are ruling in that part of Karnataka during 10th to 13th century. There are further mentions that Parashurama - who killed Karthvirya- approaches Gorakh for Prayashchitha. There is a possibility of equation of mythic personality Parashurama and Chowdike Rama.

Another reference states that 'Gorakhnath sent his disciple Shamaraya to fight against Delhi sultanet'. (TarikereRahmath⁶).

In the text collected by Prof. K M Metry, there is an episode where Ellamma invades Orugallu and wins over him. This orugalludore is none other than Pratapa Rudra and his fight with Ellamma is narrated as oral Epic.

Secondly, the epic related to Chandragutti Ellamma and Matangi is to be analysed with specific care to elicit the local history embedded in them. Matangi demands Ellamma to take her to Oragallu so that she will be helpful in battlefield. On the way they reached Chandragutti. Route map does not agree with this. Chandragutti is a place of Idigas even today and those toddy toplers had confrontation and finally Matangi overpowers them and establishes her centre there. Therefore, even today ChandraGutti is a famous centre of Ellamma.

Why Pratapa Rudra and Oragallu Dore episode is so prominent in Ellamma Cult. Why there is Ekangira Devi temple in Warangal Temple and why it is considered very powerful at Warangal Fort even today? Whether the epic at Chandragutti is an addition to the original story? When Matangi is added with Ellamma? Whether Ellamma introduced Devadasi system or Matangi introduced this system? How the lower strata of the society only exploited? Whether the tale of Matangi is created with the specific intention of promoting

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Devadasi system? Who is Matangi? Whether she is an historical character? Several questions are there to answer.

Synchronise:

The story of Renuka as in myths and Oral Epic of Ellamma are comparatively studied and a few observations were made:

Ellamma married to Jamadagni against the will of her brother Kaarthaviryarjuna.

Jamadagni - sage, went to tapas and asked his wife not to tell anybody about his arrival or whereabouts. (Here the question is whether he is Machendranath?

If so, Machendranath is equated with Jamadagni)

She got pregnant and delivered a baby boy (Parashurama. - or- chowdike Rama)

Son Rama enquired about his father and mother did not answer properly-

Ellamma's chastity is questioned by the son.

Machendranath might have left the place secretly for unknown reason.

People believed that Karthavirya killed him.

Machendranath came back and thought that there is conspiracy against him and also thought that Ellamma might have provoked Karthavirya to kill him.

He might have doubted the chastity of Ellamma also.

He might have had doubts to accept Rama as his son. (Rama wanted to prove that he is the real son of his Father Jamadagni . In case of Ellamma it is Machendranath)

Father asked his son Rama to take revenge on Mother.

Ellamma took shelter at Matangi—

Matangi is considered as sister of Ellamma.

The oral epic of Ellamma will not stop there by bringing Ellamma and Machendranath issue. It absorbed somany other issues which are related to local history. One such major issue is Ellamma helps Pratapa Rudra, a Kakatiya king of Warangal. The details are listed as follows:

Pratapa Rudra- to escape from Delhi sulthanet rushed to a secured place - a prameelarajya- Kingdom of Ladies - SavadathiEllammana Gudda.

In Orugallu- warnagal, there is an Ellamma temple called as ‘Ekangira Devi’

Ellamma might have given Pratapa Rudra - Sthreevesha. Even today it is common that men also dress like women and worships Ellamma in the name of Jogappa or Jogathi

Ellamma helped Kings of the Deccan including Maharastra and Andhra to fight against Delhi Sulthans.

That is why Ellamma is praised by Marathi, Telugu, Kannada folk singers

There is one folktale. — Orugalludoreyagarvabhanga — Ellamma attacks on

Orugallu and tale continues till Orugallu Dore surrenders to Ellamma.

Conclusion:

It is evident that Oral Epics are rich sources of Oral history. This is tested with the cited examples of Epic of Ellamma. The case of Ellamma is considered for further study. The historical issues related to Sathyakka- Ellamma, Ellamma- Prataparudra, fights between Delhi sultans and Chieftains of south India have clubbed with the story of Ellamma.

Researchers are supposed to workout in two different directions. A note on history mentioned in story of Ellamma is to be taken out and to be arranged chronologically and places mentioned are to be identified. Further, the history related to these local places are to be studied and if evidences are available to understand that King Pratapa Rudra visited this place then the weaklings in oral history can be taken as evidences and further study can be taken up.

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There are historical evidences in Oral History embedded in Oral narratives. But the methodology is not yet derived to unveil such information to get confirmed. This is not because oral epics are not documented history properly. The intention of Oral History is not to tell the History. It has other functions which are more dominant in making the story telling process go in a different way. Here incidents are important, not the person or place. Folk have never questioned the ability of Ellamma as deity. They believed that she will protect her. If she is capable of protecting them, she should have protected Pratapa Rudra also, because he surrendered to her. The devotees may go to the extent to feel that even Delhi sultan also could have got protected by Ellamma, but it is his unfortunate that he has not surrendered to Ellamma in devotion. When the narrations are so complicated, a careful observation is very necessary and a good tool is to be established to continue this type of Research. The aim of this paper is only to make an effort to consider Oral Epics as means for Interconnections between History and Oral History and to describe the Challenges in unearthing the History submerged in Myths. Further to understand the difficulties and need of Techniques and development of tools to understand Oral History as a documented source of History.

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(Footnotes)

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5

Ecological Collapse and Rural Displacement: A Study of Telugu Short Stories on Environmental Crisis and Migration

-Prof. K. Sree Devi

Abstract

This article examines how contemporary Telugu short stories articulate the intertwined crises of ecological degradation and rural displacement under modern development and globalization. Drawing on a corpus of more than eighty short stories—of which nearly fifty focus explicitly on environmental consciousness and a comparable number on migration—the study demonstrates that Telugu writers have powerfully documented the collapse of agrarian ecosystems and the disintegration of rural social life. These narratives trace the consequences of industrial agriculture, deforestation, groundwater depletion, pollution, biotechnology, and market-driven reforms that have undermined traditional livelihoods and forced large-scale migration.

Through close readings of stories such as Addhepalli Prabhu's Nagulakonda and Bhoommeeda, Peddinti Ashok Kumar's Keelubommala and Nammakunnaneela, Gaurinayudu's Valasa Pakshi, and Valluri Prasad's Talli Bhudevi, the article shows how environmental destruction is inseparable from the erosion of community, cultural memory, and human dignity. Migration emerges not merely as economic movement but as a loss of identity, collectivity, and belonging. The stories critique the dominant discourse of

“development,” exposing how corporate interests and state policies prioritize profit over ecological balance and social justice.

Ultimately, the article argues that Telugu short stories constitute an organic form of ecological literature, rooted in lived rural experience. By portraying land, water, forests, and animals as integral to human existence, these narratives challenge anthropocentric and capitalist models of progress and call for an alternative ecological imagination grounded in sustainability, empathy, and collective resistance.

Keywords

Ecocriticism; Telugu Short Stories; Environmental Crisis; Rural Displacement; Agrarian Collapse; Migration Narratives; Globalization and Development; Ecological Literature; Cultural Ecology; Industrial Agriculture; Biotechnology; Groundwater Depletion; Deforestation; Loss of Livelihoods; Rural Modernity; Community Disintegration; Sustainable Development; Ecological Justice; Capitalism and Environment; Identity and Migration

Introduction

The modern human experience has grown increasingly complex, shaped profoundly by industrialization and technological advancement. The machine civilization, while expanding productivity and promising abundance, has severed our organic ties with nature. This so-called “development” has come at a steep ecological and social cost. Nature, once central to rural life and livelihoods—through land, water, forests, and animals—is now being systematically eroded, resulting in environmental imbalance and social alienation.

The early seeds of ecological degradation were sown with unrestrained industrial growth and the opening of markets to multinational corporations under liberal economic policies. Though economic reforms promised prosperity, they also led to irreversible environmental damage and a collapse of the agrarian economy. Modern Telugu short stories have captured these seismic shifts with sensitivity, offering poignant narratives that explore how nature, community, and traditional ways of life are being dismantled.

This article identifies over 80 Telugu short stories that engage deeply with ecological issues, with 49 directly focused on

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environmental consciousness and nearly 50 on migration caused by ecological and economic displacement. These stories offer insights into how industrial agriculture, pollution, deforestation, groundwater depletion, and globalization have disrupted the ecological balance and the rural socio-economic fabric.

I. Environmental Crisis in Telugu Short Stories

One of the most compelling narratives on environmental degradation is Addepalli Prabhu's "Nagulakonda", which portrays how corporations manipulate the concept of development to exploit land and nature. Farmers are seduced by promises of wealth, urged to abandon their reverence for hills and forests. Nagulakonda, the hill, symbolizes biodiversity and cultural heritage. As corporate agents push for its destruction, a village elder resists, warning that this path leads not to progress but to devastation. Eventually, villagers unite in a powerful act of civil resistance, halting the excavation.

The story exposes how traditional values once embedded in spirituality and superstition fostered environmental respect. As these values are eroded by capitalist ideologies, communities lose their unity and emotional connection to the land. "Nagulakonda" underscores that protest and collective resistance remain potent tools in confronting environmental injustice.

Similarly, Peddinti Ashok Kumar's "Keelubommala" critiques the ecological and health crises caused by pesticide-heavy commercial farming. The story opens with a village shrouded in the chemical scent of rose gardens no butterflies, no bees, just poisoned air. The narrative traces the collapse of traditional livelihoods like poultry farming under the pressure of global markets and imported goods. Venkat, a poultry farmer, is driven to suicide, symbolizing the systemic violence inflicted by free trade, deregulation, and state apathy.

The devastation spreads across sectors. The Blue Revolution is dismantled by aquaculture. Palm oil and synthetic milk destroy traditional oil and dairy industries. Commercial agriculture replaces subsistence farming, pushing rural communities into dependency and poverty. Ashok Kumar's narrative is not just about ecological decline it documents the erosion of human empathy and communal bonds,

encapsulated in the heartbreaking observation: “There is even a famine for tears in the villages.”

Environmental degradation is portrayed not only as an ecological phenomenon but also as a human one. Kethu Viswanatha Reddy’s “Nammukunnaneela”, Valluru Shivaprasad’s “Talli Bhudevi”, and Ganteda Gourunaidu’s “Valasapakshi” also depict how damaged ecosystems affect the emotional, spiritual, and social integrity of rural communities.

II. Globalization, Biotechnology, and Loss of Autonomy

These stories offer a critique of globalization’s impact on rural India. As borders opened to global trade, foreign corporations flooded Indian markets with genetically modified seeds, fertilizers, and food products. The result was a collapse of the traditional agrarian economy. The government, favouring large corporations, dismantled subsidies, closed local industries, and promoted commercial crops like roses over grains.

In “Keelubommalu,” the narrator reflects on how companies like Hanbo karo took over village lands to grow export-oriented flowers, converting farmers into wage labourers. Even traditional markers of rural life rice mills, fertilizer shops, schools have transformed into corporatized versions. Education, commerce, and agriculture are now driven by profit, not community welfare.

The entry of multinational corporations, such as the French company Gérin, which patented human liver genes and started, producing genetically modified vegetables in Andhra Pradesh, raises disturbing questions about the future of food and health. The suggestion that even newborn children might one day be “designer babies” is not far-fetched in this dystopian reality.

In these stories, the producer has lost autonomy over the product. Farmers, labourers, and artisans no longer control their output or its value. Every aspect of life food, clothing, shelter is determined by market forces beyond their control. The loss of ecological balance is mirrored in the loss of self-determination.

Environmental Degradation and Migration

Migration emerges as a critical consequence of ecological collapse. The mechanization of agriculture and the depletion of

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groundwater through bore well dependence have triggered a profound agrarian crisis. As environmental conditions worsen and agriculture becomes unviable, entire communities are forced to migrate.

Nearly 50 Telugu stories focus on this rural exodus. Stories like “Yugantam” by Nelluri Keshavaswamy, “Lachchi” by G Ramulu, “Rangadu” and “Maaraju” by Guduri Seetharam, and “Valasa” by Jukanti Jagannatham capture the pain of displacement. Migrants live in harsh urban conditions, often dying in obscurity. Those who return do so physically broken and culturally dislocated.

In Telangana, environmental devastation and social inequality intersect most sharply, leading to a flood of migration-related stories. The collapse of the handloom industry pushed workers to cities like Mumbai and Bhiwandi, as shown in stories like “Goodu Nittadu” by Guduri Amaravati. Other narratives depict those who migrated abroad: “Muscat Mallayya”, “Edari Deepalu”, “Doorapu Kondalu”. These stories reveal the emotional, social, and cultural disintegration caused by migration.

The displacement is not merely physical. It erodes traditional occupational identities. In Gaurinayudu’s “Asarasala”, the protagonist wonders what happens when caste-based professions vanish. The decline of artisanal trades and the commercialization of agriculture mean that even those who once produced food cannot afford to eat it. This loss of purpose and dignity is central to the rural crisis.

Collapse of Collectivity and Cultural Ecology

Earlier, rural life thrived on collectivity. Agriculture was a communal endeavour from sowing to harvesting, laborers, artisans, and farmers collaborated. Tanks and canals nourished crops, and mutual aid sustained communities. Environmental balance supported social harmony.

Today, borewells and machinery have atomized village life. Television replaced community radio. Each household is isolated. Individualism has risen. Where once everyone shared in joy and sorrow, now suffering is private, and help is scarce. Ellakka’s inconsolable sobs go unheard no one has time to care.

This shift has cultural consequences. Traditional songs, rituals, and occupational skills fade. Human relationships are now mediated by money and machines. The emotional bonds that once tethered people to land and each other have frayed. What remains is a disjointed, commodified existence.

Writers from Uttarandhra and Rayalaseema capture this cultural erosion with remarkable clarity. They recognize that environmental degradation is not only about trees and soil, but also about the social ecosystem rituals, relationships, and emotional continuity. Their work reflects a profound sense of alienation, yet also a deep empathy that transcends mere scientific critique.

“Valasa Pakshi”: Migration as Loss of Identity

In *Valasa Pakshi* (“The Migrant Bird”), Gaurinayudu chronicles four decades of rural transformation through the life of Narayana, who migrates to Hyderabad for work. His friend, returning from Rajasthan after ten years, finds their village unrecognizable—tractors have replaced bullocks, commercial crops dominate, and the rhythm of rural life has been mechanized. The narrator laments: “The village seems like a wounded child curled up in its nest.”

Once content with farming alongside his friends, Narayana now sees that satisfaction has vanished. The sorrow of his mother, Shantamma, who loses one son to migration, another to militancy, and the third to the army, symbolizes the fragmentation of rural families. These sons, born of the same soil, are scattered by the storm of economic crisis. The story stands as a powerful record of how traditional farming collapsed under the pressure of market forces and land alienation, pushing farmers onto the path of migration.

Gaurunayudu continues this exploration in *Needanivvani Pandiri* (“A Shelter That Gives No Shade”), where characters like Simmon and Raju lose their lives in the city, caught between nostalgia and harsh urban realities. The urban experience of migrant labour working in pharmaceutical factories or construction sites brings psychological trauma, echoing Shivaram’s disillusionment. The stories present a grim reality: displacement does not just break physical ties to land but erodes personal and collective identities.

“Nammakunnaneela”: The Trusted Land and Broken Promises

Peddinti Ashok Kumar’s *Nammakunnaneela* (“The Trusted Soil”) is a meditation on trust, loss, and ecological disintegration. The narrator, settled in Hyderabad, returns to his Rayalaseema village to settle a land dispute. What he finds is a shell of the once-thriving community. The temple no longer draws crowds, the neem tree no longer gathers villagers, and migration has scattered social life. He observes: “In days like these without rain, not even the faintest semblance of communal life sustained by superstition remains.”

Industrialization, far from saving the village, deepens its ruin. Cement factories, built where fields once flourished, spew ash and erase biodiversity. The narrator walks with villagers whose lands were sold for cheap; in the horizon, a “red glow” signals not development but ecological doom. The transformation of roads, the replacement of local brands with Red Wills cigarettes, and the erasure of wells all symbolize false progress. The story exposes the illusion of industrial development and questions whether it is worth the human and environmental cost.

Veeranna, Munireddy, and the narrator all mid-sized farmers are victims of this “development.” Their faith in agriculture is betrayed by drought, debt, and dispossession. *Nammakunnaneela* presents the village as a living organism wounded, dehydrated, and dying—and critiques the transformation of soil into stone, community into fragments, and nature into capital.

“Talli Bhudevi”: Reverence vs. Modernity

In *Talli Bhudevi* (“Mother Earth”) by Valluri Prasad, the photographer Srinivas visits the Bonda tribal hills, hoping to capture their “exotic” culture. What he encounters, instead, is a profound environmental ethic. When he steps into a cultivated field with his shoes on, a tribal farmer rebukes him: “Until the goddess forgives you, we must fast.” This moment of confrontation becomes a turning point—Srinivas recognizes the spiritual bond the Bonda as have with their land.

The story critiques the arrogance of modernity, which treats land as a commodity. While “civilized” societies pollute and deplete

nature, tribal communities respect and preserve it. Talli Bhudevi subtly asks: Who is truly civilized? It urges readers to rethink development not as domination over nature, but as coexistence with it.

“Neellabai” and “Antukomma”: Vanishing Waterscapes

In *Neellabai* by Jajula Gouri, the narrator watches in horror as the wells of her childhood are filled with rubble to make way for housing colonies. Once a source of life and joy, the well is now a “pit of sewage.” Her anguish is palpable: “The sweet water that once tasted like nectar has now become black and foul.”

Similarly, in *Antukomma* by Bhattiprolu Akkiraju, an elderly woman, Anasuyamma, walks to a defunct village tank, once a life-giving reservoir. The tank, now polluted and neglected, stirs in her memories of collective water rituals and simple joys. These stories illustrate the spiritual and emotional trauma caused by environmental destruction. They are not sentimental narratives of nostalgia, but cultural critiques—documenting how urbanization and real estate development have degraded water sources and disrupted shared living.

“UFO”: The Meaningless Progress of a Lost Species

B. Ajay Prasad’s *UFO* presents a futuristic vision where human life itself is at risk of becoming obsolete. The protagonist’s reflection—“Every reaction today goes against life”—is a poignant indictment of consumerist civilization. This story laments the disappearance of birds, forests, and animals, warning that humans may soon follow.

By calling the trajectory of “progress” into question, *UFO* aligns ecological destruction with moral collapse. It calls for a return to balance, compassion, and humility. The story resonates with younger readers who increasingly view environmental responsibility not as activism but as necessity.

“Bhoommeeda”: A Protest Against False Progress

In *Bhoommeeda* (“On This Earth”) by Addhepalli Prabhu, the narrator’s father cuts down neem, mango, and sapota trees to build a cement shed and buy a tractor. Trees that once gave shade, fruit, and attracted birds are sold for money. The younger generation, however,

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begins to push back: some return from tech jobs to adopt organic farming.

The story reflects an evolving ecological consciousness. The earlier generation destroyed nature in the name of utility. Now, the current generation seeks to revive that lost balance. Bhoommeeda is not only a critique of development but also a call for re-rooting—literally and culturally.

It also questions state-sponsored development projects. In a scene where Boorayya and Minister Pedakapu oppose the displacement caused by a mega infrastructure project, they are branded “anti-development.” Boorayya’s retort—“Yes, we are anti-development if it means destroying ecosystems for profit”—summarizes the story’s core ethic. Unlike state committees formed to protect migratory birds, displaced people are left without support. The story asks: if birds cannot simply relocate, how can human communities be expected to?

Resistance and Reimagination: Towards Ecological Justice

The Telugu short stories explored here move beyond portraying individual suffering to map the structural violence of development. Writers like Attada Appalaidu (Beela, Sandigdam, Vikruthi), and Prabhu (Nagulakonda, Bhoommeeda) connect environmental degradation to caste, class, and displacement. These stories view the Earth as a collective inheritance, not as raw material for elite gain.

They echo the concerns raised by ecological thinkers like Arundhati Roy, who argues that protecting habitats often results in better outcomes than displacing them in the name of dams and factories. When Nehru called dams the “temples of modern India,” did he grasp the full extent of the lives submerged beneath them?

The stories discussed here refute token compensation packages and the false promises of job creation. Local youth who once farmed with pride are now reduced to migrant labourers. Once construction is over, they are discarded. In contrast, real development, these stories suggest, would ensure sustainability, dignity, and ecological balance.

Conclusion: Towards a New Ecological Imagination

Contemporary Telugu short stories offer urgent reflections on the relationship between nature, memory, and development. They document how once-vibrant village cultures have been destroyed by drought, migration, industrial farming, and commercialization. But they also gesture toward a hopeful future one rooted in organic farming, biodiversity, and collective resistance.

In stories like Neellabai, Antukomma, Bhoommeeda, and Talli Bhudevi, water, soil, and forests are not just background settings they are characters, victims, and sometimes even deities. These narratives urge a redefinition of development one not measured by G D P or cement production but by environmental integrity and social justice.

The ecological crisis depicted in these stories is not inevitable it is human-made. And if it is human-made, it can be human-unmade. These stories, thus, are not just elegies for lost villages but blueprints for a different future.

Conclusion

The Telugu short stories explored in this study do not merely present environmental awareness they embody it. These stories are not ecological literature by design but by organic integration of rural life and its unraveling. They articulate the transformation of development from a collective vision to a corporatized, alienating force.

These narratives document how environmental destruction and globalization have reshaped rural India: collapsing ecosystems, fragmenting communities, destroying livelihoods, and triggering massive displacement. At the core of these stories lies a collective sorrow—a mourning for lost ways of life, poisoned lands, and fractured human bonds.

From “Nagulakonda” to “Keelubommala,” from tales of migration in Telangana to the despair voiced in Uttarandhra, these stories remind us that the crisis we face is not only ecological but deeply human. The only path forward, they suggest, lies in reclaiming that lost balance—between nature and society, progress and empathy, individualism and collectivists.

Contemporary Telugu literature powerfully reflects the growing tension between rural ecological collapse and the model of progress

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that accelerates it. The short stories examined here by authors such as Peddinti Ashok Kumar, Addhepalli Prabhu, Valluri Sivasagar, and others navigate the terrain of environmental degradation, forced migration, and the psychological dislocation resulting from industrial development. These stories challenge the dominant narrative of progress, presenting instead a critique of modern civilization's devastating impact on traditional rural and tribal life.

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6

Urdu in Kerala: A Study of Linguistic and Cultural Interactions between Kerala and Urdu Language

- Dr.Sajila

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the linguistic and cultural influence of Malayalam and Urdu. Malayalam is a Dravidian language spoken predominantly in Kerala and Lakshadweep. Although Urdu was never a native or widely spoken language in Kerala, its indirect impact—transmitted through Persian, Arabic, and Islamic cultural channels—has contributed to the Malayalam lexicon, particularly within the Mappila Muslim community of northern Kerala. This study explores the historical and social factors that facilitated this interaction, including trade, religious education, and cultural exchange during the Mughal, Mysorean, and British periods. Urdu's direct influence on Malayalam remains limited compared to that of Arabic, Persian, or Sanskrit.

Key words

Introduction, Historical Influence, Characteristics of Urdu and Malayalam, Common Urdu words in Malayalam.

Introduction

Malayalam is a Dravidian language spoken mainly in Kerala and Lakshadweep. Thunchaththu Ezhuthachan is called the Father of Malayalam literature. Malayalam has a rich tradition of poetry, folk songs, novels, and short stories. Malayalam native speakers are called **Malayalis**. It is one of the **22 official languages of India**.

Urdu is one of the 22 official languages recognized in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. It is the official language of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. India has been a major centre of Urdu poetry and prose. Many Islamic texts, religious schools (madrasas), and cultural institutions continue to use Urdu for instruction and communication. Urdu is written using the **Perso-Arabic script**, specifically in a style called **Nastaliq**. The **Nastaliq style** is known for its elegance and complexity; it's often used in **poetry and calligraphy**. **It is a modified version of Arabic script**. Urdu is not just a language, but a rich cultural and literary heritage of India.

Historical Influence

Having explored the broader cultural background, the next section examines specific historical interactions that brought Urdu into contact with Malayalam. The language has been influenced by many languages due to centuries of trade, migration, colonization, and cultural exchange. **Urdu** has contributed a relatively smaller but still notable set of words. Urdu was not directly spoken in Kerala, but Islamic culture, Persian-Arabic traditions, and North Indian influences (including Urdu) filtered through Mappila Muslim communities, Islamic missionaries, and trade routes. Many Urdu words came via Persian and Arabic first, and were further localized in Malayalam. Urdu itself is a Persianized form of Hindustani. These influences came mostly via Muslim communities, trade interactions, and the Mughal cultural sphere.

The traditional Muslim folk songs of Kerala that often mix Malayalam with Urdu, Arabic, and Persian vocabulary, especially in religious or romantic poetry. Once Urdu's influence on Malayalam is not as dominant as Arabic, Persian, or Sanskrit, it has left a meaningful imprint, especially in Islamic, legal, poetic, and cultural vocabulary. This influence is mostly indirect, arriving via North Indian Islamic culture and Mappila traditions.

Kerala has a long history of trade with the Arab world, Persia, and later North India. Through merchants, travellers, scholars, and administrators, linguistic elements including Urdu/Persian/Hindi terms moved into Malayalam usage. Kerala had strong trade links with North Indian Muslim traders, especially during the colonial period.

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Urdu-speaking traders and clerics traveled to Kerala, influencing language and culture. Urdu was also used in postal, administrative, and military communication under British rule, especially in places with a strong Muslim presence.

Religious and Educational Institutions

Muslim religious education (madrasahs, Arabic colleges) in Kerala used Arabic and Persian as well as some Urdu / Hindustani content. These institutions acted as channels for religious vocabulary and other cultural terms to enter everyday Malayalam among Muslim communities. Arabi Malayalam is a script variant where Malayalam is written using Arabic script, and in practice often includes many non Malayalam words (from Arabic, Persian, Urdu, etc.). This hybrid form is a cultural marker: it shows linguistic blending. Urdu was used in Islamic theological teaching, especially in madrasas (Islamic schools), which introduced religious vocabulary from Urdu/Persian sources. Many Islamic books and sermons were written in Urdu and later translated into Malayalam, retaining much of the vocabulary. Islamic scholars (Ulema) often used Urdu in oral and written communication with fellow scholars in North India.

Islamic scholars, missionaries (like Sufis), and traders from North India traveled to Kerala and brought religious texts, ideas, and terms—many of them in Urdu or Persian. Malayalam-speaking Muslims adopted these terms into their religious vocabulary, especially in mosques, madrasahs, and folk traditions. Urdu's influence on Malayalam is **not widespread across the whole language**, but is **deeply embedded in specific socio-religious and cultural contexts**, especially among the **muslim communities of northern kerala**. It's part of a broader **Persian-Arabic-Urdu impact**, which shaped kerala's linguistic landscape through **religion, poetry, and trade**. Malayalam cinema and music occasionally borrow **Urdu poetic forms**, especially in songs about love or sorrow.

The Mappilas (Muslims of Kerala) were heavily influenced by Arab, Persian, and later Urdu-speaking North Indian Muslims. The Mappila tradition of poetry and songs (Mappila Pattu) includes Urdu-origin words, especially in themes of love (ishq), devotion (ibadat), and praise (naat). Urdu words entered everyday speech and liturgical

vocabulary in northern Kerala, especially in Malappuram, Kozhikode, and Kannur.

Mughal and Post-Mughal Influence

While the Mughals did not directly control Kerala, Hyderabad and Mysore (which had Urdu influence) had cultural and military interactions with southern Kerala. The Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan period (late 18th century) brought Mysorean Muslim soldiers and administrators, many of whom spoke Urdu or Persian. This indirectly brought Urdu vocabulary to parts of northern Kerala. During British rule, Urdu was promoted in parts of South India as a language of the Muslim elite. Some Kerala Muslims who studied in Hyderabad, Aligarh, or North Indian madrasas brought back Urdu vocabulary. Post-independence, Urdu literature and cinema (like Bollywood) popularized Urdu words across India, including Kerala.

Poetry and Popular Culture

Mappila Pattu (Mappila Songs) are a major example of cultural Urdu influence. These are traditional Islamic songs in Malayalam but often with Urdu, Persian, and Arabic words. The themes like Love (ishq), beauty (husn), gatherings (mehfil), grief (gham), and more. These songs were passed down orally and contributed to the popularization of Urdu words among non-scholarly speakers. Mappila songs (Mappila Paattu) in the Malabar region are a prime example: genres of folk song that include words from Arabic, Persian, Urdu (or Urdu influenced forms). Songs often reflect religious themes, love, heroism, satire, etc., and are part of weddings, community gatherings. Their vocabulary naturally absorbs whichever languages are in contact. Poetry, ghazals etc., have been popular in Kerala. Even when written in Malayalam, the influence of Urdu poetic forms and vocabularies is evident.

Adaptation and Semantic Shift

When these Urdu / Persian / Arabic words enter Malayalam, often they undergo changes: sounds are altered, usage context changes, sometimes meaning shifts. For example, religious terms may become secularized, or formal terms become colloquial.

Shaayiri

“shaayiri” is the Urdu word for poetry, especially lyrical or emotional poetry — often expressing love, beauty, pain, or spirituality. It is deeply rooted in Urdu literary and cultural tradition and is one of the most celebrated art forms in South Asia. Shayari literally means poetry or poetic expression. A person who writes or recites it is called a shaayar (poet) it is not just about rhyming lines; shayari is about deep emotion expressed in rhythm and metaphor. Shayari—especially from Urdu and Persian traditions has had a subtle yet meaningful influence in Kerala, blending beautifully with local culture, literature, and music. While Kerala has its own strong poetic heritage in Malayalam, the emotional depth and lyrical beauty of Shayari have made an impact in several ways.

Kerala’s Mappila songs (Mappilapattu), especially in Malabar, show strong influence of Arabic, Persian, Urdu poetic styles. These songs often follow themes found in Shayari. Love (Ishq), Devotion (Ibadat) Separation (Hajr/Widap), Spiritual longing (Sufism) Examples like Muhyidheen Mala, Badar Mala Songs by Moyinkutty Vaidyar. Moyinkutty Vaidyar’s works particularly reflect Persian poetic meters & emotion.

Sufi Influence

The Sufi tradition brought poetic styles similar to Shayari into Kerala through:

- a) Traders from Arabia and Persia
- b) Sufi saints who lived in Malabar

Themes like divine love, longing for God, and mystical union became part of Kerala’s literature and songs. The relationship between Sufism and Urdu in Kerala is a cultural bridge, not a direct linguistic dominance. Sufism brought poetic, mystical expressions; Urdu served as one of its beautiful vessels. Kerala blended these influences with Arabic, Persian, and Malayalam, creating a unique spiritual–literary heritage rooted in devotion, love, and harmony. Sufism influenced Kerala through Arab and Persian contacts, and later through North Indian Islamic cultural exchange. Urdu, being a major language of Sufi poetry in India, contributed emotional and devotional expressions

to Kerala's Islamic traditions. Though Malayalam is dominant, Urdu vocabulary, ghazal style, and Sufi poetic themes entered Mappila songs, Arabi-Malayalam literature, and spiritual gatherings. Thus, Sufism acted as the spiritual bridge, and Urdu served as a literary medium enriching Kerala's devotional culture.

Common Urdu Words present in Malayalam

The following words might be influenced from Urdu.

- 1) The word **കബർ (Kabar)** is borrowed from the Urdu word "**Qabar**" which means Grave. It is a common Islamic term using within the community.
- 2) The word **നമാസ് (Namaz)** is borrowed from the Urdu word "**Namāz**" which means Grave Prayer. It could be originated from Persian or Urdu for indicating Islamic Prayer.
- 3) The word **ദുവ (Dua)** is adapted from the Urdu or Arabic word "Du'ā" which means Supplication, prayer, Religious term
- 4) The word **ജനാസ (Janaza)** is originated from Urdu "**Janāzah**" which mean Funeral Islamic funeral prayer
- 5) The word **ടോപ്പി (Topi)** is a Urdu word for Cap Religious or general use
- 6) The word **ശർബത് (Sharbat)** is arrived from Urdu word "Sharbat" which means Sweet drink
- 7) The word **അദാലത് (adaalat)** is an Urdu word, which is used for "Court" Still it is widely using in legal terms.
- 8) The word **ബാക്കി (baaki)** originated from Arabic / Urdu Means "leftover," "remaining," "balance" etc. This word Used in everyday speech among Malayalees including non Muslim speakers.
- 9) **പറങ്കി (parangi)** From Persian / Urdu meaning is "European / foreigner." This word is used to refer to Westerners / Europeans / foreigners
- 10) The word **മഹ്ഫിൽ " Mehfil"** is an Urdu word, which is used for Gathering, event Used in literary or cultural contexts
- 11) The word **ഇഷ്ട് (ishq)** is Urdu word which is widely using in Maappila pattu and literature, movies etc cultural aspect way one can use this word
- 12) The word **മൊഹബത് (Mohabat)** which means Love, likeness word which is widely using in Maappila pattu and literature, movies etc cultural aspect way one can use this word

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- 13) The word **ഖൽഖൽ** (*Khulb*) which means Love, likeness word which is widely using in Maappila pattu and literature, movies etc cultural aspect way one can use this word
- 14) The word **കിതാബ്** (*Kitab*) is originated from Urdu/Persian **کتاب** means book. It is widely using in Madrasa education

Conclusion

The number of genuinely *Urdu origin* words (i.e. not Arabic or Persian via other routes) is relatively small compared to the core vocabulary. The presence of Urdu loanwords in Malayalam is a reflection of historical, social, and cultural exchanges. They testify to contact zones where communities communicated, intermarried, traded, worshipped, and learned together. The blending and transformation of words across languages underscore that language is not a closed system but a living medium through which cultural memories and identities pass. Through this study we deepen our understanding not only of Malayalam's vocabulary, but also of the larger patterns of South Asian linguistic and cultural interconnection. This study's catalog of Urdu Malayalam words can aid lexicographers, historical linguists, and cultural historians, offering a resource for further research.

The influence of Urdu on Malayalam, though relatively limited in scale, represents an important dimension of Kerala's linguistic and cultural history. It demonstrates how languages evolve through centuries of contact, trade, religion, and cultural interaction. Urdu's impact in Kerala was mainly indirect, arriving through the channels of Persian and Arabic and taking root primarily within the Mappila Muslim community. Through religious education, poetry, folk traditions like *Mappila Pattu*, and everyday communication, several Urdu-origin words became part of Malayalam's expressive vocabulary.

Words such as *namaz*, *dua*, *janaza*, *ishq*, *mehfil*, and *mohabbat* reflect not only linguistic borrowing but also the deep emotional and cultural connections between communities. These terms have been naturalized in Malayalam, often undergoing semantic and phonetic adaptation while retaining their cultural resonance. The blending of vocabularies illustrates that language is not a closed or isolated system but a living reflection of shared histories and

interactions. The study of Urdu's influence on Malayalam thus offers valuable insight into the broader narrative of South Asian linguistic and cultural interconnection.

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7

Environmental Ethics to Sustainable Action: Paramount Importance for Teachers

- Gudi Subba Rao & Dr. V. Mercy Jyothi

Abstract:

The paper emphasizes the critical role of Environmental Ethics among teachers in addressing ecosystem degradation and sustainable development challenges. It argues that teachers act as key mediators in translating environmental ethics into sustainable practices within schools. Four interconnected stages are identified Viz., Ethical awareness, Formation of values and attitudes, Behavioral intention and Sustainable practice. The paper suggests that integrating environmental ethics into teacher training and school curricula is essential for fostering environmentally responsible citizens and ensuring long-term ecosystem protection. Ultimately, it provides a conceptual framework for aligning ethical education with sustainable action, contributing valuable insights for future research in this field.

Keywords: *Environmental ethics, sustainable action, environmental protection, sustainable development.*

Introduction

The degradation of ecosystems, biodiversity loss, climate change, and unsustainable resource use constitute some of the most serious challenges confronting the entire life on Earth. These environmental crises threaten ecological stability and undermine the social and economic foundations of sustainable development. In response, international frameworks such as the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasize the central role of

education in fostering environmental responsibility and sustainable lifestyles. Education is increasingly viewed not merely as a vehicle for transmitting environmental knowledge but as a transformative process capable of shaping values, attitudes, and ethical commitments.

Sustainable development is inherently an ethical project. It requires individuals and institutions to reconsider their relationship with nature and to adopt principles that prioritize long-term ecological integrity over short-term gains. Environmental ethics provides the moral foundations for this transformation by addressing questions of human responsibility towards nature, the intrinsic value of non-human life, and obligations to future generations. These ethical considerations are essential for understanding why ecosystem protection matters and how sustainable action can be justified and sustained.

Ecosystems provide indispensable services, including climate regulation, soil fertility, water purification, and biodiversity conservation. Their protection is therefore central to sustainable development. Yet ecosystem degradation continues due to deforestation, pollution, urbanisation, and unsustainable production and consumption patterns. Addressing these challenges requires not only technological solutions and policy interventions but also deep-seated changes in human values and behaviour. Education offers a strategic pathway for initiating and sustaining such change.

Teachers play a decisive role in this process. As educators and role models, they shape students' understanding of environmental issues and cultivate dispositions that influence lifelong behaviour. Beyond imparting knowledge, teachers guide ethical reflection, promote critical thinking, and encourage responsible citizenship. When environmental ethics is systematically integrated into teaching and learning, it can foster a transition from awareness to action that supports ecosystem protection.

Despite growing attention to environmental education, the ethical foundations of sustainable action and the mediating role of teachers remain insufficiently theorized. Many studies focus on knowledge and attitudes, while fewer examine how ethical awareness is transformed into sustained practice. This conceptual paper addresses

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this gap by examining the relationship between environmental ethics and sustainable action, with particular emphasis on teachers' role in ecosystem protection. The paper synthesizes theoretical perspectives and proposes a concise conceptual framework to explain this transition.

Review of Related Literature

The relationship between environmental ethics, education, and sustainable development has been widely examined across the fields of philosophy, environmental education, and sustainability studies by Leopold (1949). Rolston (1988) and Callicott (1989) established environmental ethics as a normative foundation for conservation and sustainable development.

Within the field of education, Orr (1992, 2004), emphasized that unsustainable practices are rooted in flawed values and worldviews, and therefore educational reform must address ethical dimensions of human–nature relationships.

Sterling (2001, 2010) introduced the concept of transformative learning and the theory highlights the importance of reflective practice, dialogue, and experiential learning in fostering deep-seated ethical change. This perspective aligns with the ethical foundations of sustainable action .

Stevenson (2007) observed that contradictions often exist between the aims of environmental education and institutional practices, underscoring the need for teacher competence and supportive school cultures.

At the policy level, UNESCO (2014, 2017) and the United Nations (2015) have strongly advocated education for sustainable development as a key strategy for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Environmental Ethics: Conceptual Foundations

Environmental ethics examines the moral principles that should govern human relationships with the natural world. It extends ethical concern beyond human interests to include non-human life, ecosystems, and future generations. Three broad perspectives have shaped the field: anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and ecocentrism.

Anthropocentric approaches prioritize human welfare and justify environmental protection primarily in terms of human survival

and well-being. While often criticized for instrumentalising nature, anthropocentrism has contributed to conservation by highlighting human dependence on healthy ecosystems. Biocentrism perspectives extend moral consideration to all living beings and emphasize respect for life and biodiversity. Eco centric perspectives further broaden moral concern to entire ecosystems, stressing ecological integrity, balance, and resilience.

Several ethical principles are central to environmental ethics. The principle of responsibility emphasizes accountability for environmental consequences of human actions. Stewardship highlights the duty to care for and manage natural resources wisely. Intergenerational justice asserts obligations to future generations, while the precautionary principle advocates preventive action in the face of environmental uncertainty. Together, these principles provide a normative basis for sustainable development.

In educational contexts, environmental ethics involves cultivating moral virtues such as respect for nature, moderation, and ecological sensitivity. Ethical reflection complements scientific knowledge by guiding value formation and decision-making. Integrating environmental ethics into education is therefore essential for fostering sustainable action and ecosystem protection.

From Ethical Awareness to Sustainable Action: A Conceptual Framework

Knowledge of environmental problems does not automatically lead to sustainable behaviour. Ethical understanding and value formation mediate the transition from awareness to action. This paper proposes a four-stage conceptual framework: ethical awareness, value and attitude formation, behavioural intention and sustainable action.

Ethical awareness involves understanding environmental problems and their moral dimensions. Through curriculum content, discussion, and experiential learning, teachers introduce concepts such as ecological interdependence and human responsibility. This awareness includes cognitive and affective components, such as concern for biodiversity loss and empathy for affected communities.

Value and attitude formation constitutes the second stage. Through reflection, dialogue, and case-based learning, students

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internalize ethical principles and develop pro-environmental attitudes. Teachers facilitate moral reasoning and help students clarify values related to sustainability and ecosystem protection.

Behavioural intention represents readiness for action. When values are internalized, they influence intentions to adopt environmentally responsible practices. Teachers support this transition by linking ethical principles to everyday choices, such as waste reduction, energy conservation, and biodiversity protection.

Sustainable action constitutes the final stage. Individual and collective practices, including school-based projects and community initiatives, translate ethical commitments into concrete behaviour. Teachers act as facilitators and role models, reinforcing consistency between values and practice. The progression is iterative: action further deepens ethical understanding and strengthens commitment.

Implications for School Education and Teacher Training

The proposed framework has significant implications for school education and teacher training. Environmental ethics should be a core component of pre-service and in-service teacher education. Teacher preparation programmes need to integrate ethical theory, sustainability pedagogy, and practical applications. Continuous professional development should strengthen teachers' competence in moral education and sustainability-oriented teaching.

Curriculum frameworks should embed environmental ethics across subjects and specify learning outcomes related to values and responsible behaviour. Interdisciplinary approaches can integrate ethical reflection into science, social studies, and humanities. Assessment should recognize not only cognitive learning but also participation in sustainability practices.

School culture plays a critical role. Eco-friendly management, student-led initiatives, and whole-school sustainability programmes provide authentic contexts for translating ethics into action. School leadership should support such initiatives through resources, time allocation, and recognition of teachers' efforts.

Conclusion

This conceptual paper has examined the relationship between environmental ethics and sustainable action, emphasizing teachers' role in ecosystem protection. By synthesizing ethical theory and educational practice, it has proposed a concise framework explaining how ethical awareness can be transformed into sustainable Action. The analysis underscores that knowledge alone is not sufficient where as ethically grounded education and committed teachers are essential for long-term ecosystem protection. Future empirical research can test and refine this framework and further illuminate the contribution of education to sustainable development.

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8

The Humanistic Vision of the Vachanakāras

- Dr.Malleshappa Sidrampur

Abstract

The Vachana movement of twelfth-century Karnataka represents one of the most remarkable humanistic revolutions in Indian cultural history. Rooted in profound philosophical insight and shaped by lived experience, the Vachanakāras articulated a vision of society grounded in equality, compassion, and rational thought. Their humanism manifested across social, religious, political, and cultural domains. Socially, they challenged caste hierarchy, gender discrimination, and ritual pollution, advocating instead for dignity of labour, inter-caste harmony, and egalitarian citizenship. Religiously, they critiqued priestly dominance, rejected hollow ritualism, and redefined devotion as ethical conduct and inner realisation, thereby shaping a universal and life-centred spiritual vision. Politically, they questioned the alliance of monarchy and priesthood, introduced participatory dialogue through the Anubhava MaGmapa, and imagined a decentralised, inclusive socio-political order. Culturally, they transformed rigid norms through critical inquiry, creating a space where individual experience matured into collective consciousness. Together, the Vachanakāras articulated a comprehensive humanistic philosophy that continues to illuminate contemporary discussions on equality, social justice, and cultural renewal. Their writings also foregrounded the inseparable bond between personal integrity and collective wellbeing. They demonstrated how ethical self-discipline could reshape social structures from within. The Vachanas served not merely as literary expressions but as instruments of moral pedagogy and social reform.

By bridging the sacred and the secular, the Vachanakāras established a holistic worldview capable of addressing the complexities of human existence. Their enduring legacy invites renewed engagement with humanistic values in present-day pluralist societies.

Key Words : Vachana movement, Vachanakāras, humanism, Anubhava MaGmapa, kayaka, dasoha, caste critique, gender equality, religious reform, cultural consciousness, socio-religious movements, medieval Karnataka.

The Humanistic Vision of the Vachanakāras

Within the cultural history of Karnataka, the period of the Vachana movement occupies an exceptionally significant place. The Vachana poets gave themselves over to socio-religious awakening with human-centered concerns and with their own distinctive philosophical premises. While on the one side they pronounced the metaphysical grounds of religion, on the other side, they worked tirelessly for social equality and the spread of human love. They were not just poets; neither was it mere poetry they wrote. They simply expressed in words the experience they lived through as they felt it. As moral instructors invested with deep social awareness, they looked upon society as central; they responded to the lived experiences of the people through their respective philosophic standpoints.

The socio-religious movement that began with lofty ideals was enriched by the contributions of a wide range of Vachana composers: Basavanna, a humanist; Allama Prabhu, a mystic; Channabasavanna, a keen intellect; Akka Mahadevi, a fearless woman; Siddharama, a social worker; Muktayakka, a wise woman; Machayya, a dedicated practitioner of kayaka-and hundreds of others. Although the movement was led by Basavanna, the many Vachana composers named here and several more, both directly and indirectly, strengthened the movement and fulfilled their respective responsibilities with great competence. Nowhere else in the world, especially under monarchical rule, do we find a movement that so meticulously set aside the divisions of caste, colour, class, and gender, and advanced with such a distinctive metaphysical vision.

The result of this movement is fantastic: many communities came forward to strive for social welfare. Dohara Kakkayya, Madara

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Chennayya, Nuliya Chandayya, Hadapada Happanna, the Aydakki couple, Gānada Kannayya, Turugayi Ramanna, Kinnari Bommaya, and many more emerged and were distinctly identified for their philosophical thought due to this movement. These Vachana poets worked and reflected for social equality without any expectation of personal reward. They voiced humanism with their own unique philosophical insight on Karnataka soil in the twelfth century.

Society had been stratified and fragmented for centuries due to systemic oppression. Many communities suffered exploitation; religious life had been fractured; and life in society had become divided. The Vachana composers generated new social values by infusing such a society with the touch of humanism. Their progressive ideas are relevant for all times. They sought both individual spiritual upliftment and collective social advancement and tried to purify the impurities inherited from tradition. Hence, their thoughts and reflections continue to illuminate life's understanding. The Vachanakâras were indeed humanists as they viewed all forms of life with equality and aspired for the formation of an egalitarian society.

As a movement of resistance, the Vachana poets questioned the religious thought of one class dominating a social structure and envisaged that devotion and religion would become easily accessible to the common people in one stroke. They tried to reactivate the essential postulates of cultural life by uniting social life with religious life. All the ups and downs of worldly existence having been thoroughly experienced by them, the householder composers of Vachanas, lovers of dasoha, practitioners of kayaka, and workers committed to social upliftment and human welfare, resorted to spiritual reflection. Humanism thus naturally bursts in their thought. The following discussion attempts to identify in brief the different dimensions of such humanism.

Social Dimension

For several centuries, due to various reasons, social life had never been uniform. A highly structured stratification system had been firmly established. The first major intervention of the Vachana poets, through their sharp and rational thinking, tried to speak against this stratified social order. They condemned traditional and inherited

notions of impurity, social taboos, caste system, gender inequality, and polluted ideas ingrained within the social structure. Through their vachanas, they stressed the need to adopt new social values to replace those which were created for the benefit of only for few selected groups. This was a sharp and critical response against meaningless customary social practices. The Vachana poets exposed the conspiracies that gave birth to the caste system. By saying “karnadalli janisuvare unte jagadolage” (Is there anyone born through the ear in this world?), they directly denied the theory that different castes originated from different parts of the human body. At the same time, such statements instilled much-needed self-confidence among communities long subjected to oppression. As a result, many people from the lower social strata voluntarily participated in the Vachana movement.

The Vachana poets believed that the caste system was a deep stain on this land. They again and again asserted that caste is not something determined by birth; rather, it arises from one’s conduct.

Basavanna upheld the ideal of human equality thus:

Basavanna upheld the ideal of human equality thus:

Nelanoṇḍe holageri śivalayakke

Jalavoṇḍe śaucāchamanakke

Kulavoṇḍe tanna tānaridavange

Phalavoṇḍe ṣaḍdaruśana muktige

Nivoṇḍe Kūḍala Saṅgamadevā nimmanaridavange (Basavanna, 879)

This vachana, though simple in appearance, carries a profound meaning. In Basavanna’s thought, one notices a unique conception of earth - the soil of the agricultural field and the soil of the temple is of the same earth. Similarly is his notion of water. The tragedy about this land is that though living upon the same soil and drinking the same water, people never developed the sense of being “one”. All humanity is one- an idea which never evolved into universality. Perhaps this is an issue that remains unresolved even today. After all, the superficial changes do occur, yet the underlying structure persists in

new forms according to changing times. However, the Vachana composers condemned such a system even then. They tried to awaken social consciousness through rational thinking. They explained logically and realistically what humane living means. They were so committed to changing social life that they said they were ready to accept any punishment if there was even a little variance between word and action. Indeed, they lived what they preached.

Another important issue that deeply upset society was the reinterpretation of the term holeya, meaning “untouchable,” by the Vachana poets. In one of his vachanas Ambigara Chowdayya criticizes orthodox society by raising a simple yet pointed question: “Is the ‘holeya’ found only in the slum? Are there no ‘holeyas’ in the town?” For him, one becomes a holeya not by birth but by one’s behaviour. A person filled with evil qualities-immorality, irreligiosity, injustice, and unrighteousness-is the real holeya. This was his clear position.

In the Vedic system, kula followed a person like a permanent shadow. The system cared only about who one was born to, never about who one could become. Furthermore, one was not allowed to become anything beyond that birth. Such bondage destroyed human potential both physically and intellectually, causing the antyaja to remain eternally marginalised. Bonthadevi strongly questioned this absurd hierarchy in her vachana:

“Ūra horagaṇa bayalu, ūrōḷagaṇa bayalu unte? Ūrōḷage brāhmaṇa bayalu ūra horage holeya bayale unte?” (Bonthadevi, 3)

She says that it is meaningless to look at human beings as just brahmin or holeya; only humaneness counts. Life without humaneness, she insisted, is not worth living.

The Vachana poets suggested inter-caste marriage as one way to demolish the caste system-an idea which radically overturned conventional social norms. It is the cruel truth of the caste system itself that made them dream of such a solution. Basavanna did not shrink from this bold step though he knew the consequence it would bring to the movement. For this reason, their thought remains relevant even today.

Once a person became a sharana, caste ceased to exist; all belonged to one single kula. It finds clear expression in the vachana:

Āva kula vādadēnu?

Śivalingaviddavane kulajanu |

Kulavanarasuvare śaranaralli jāti saṅkaranāda balika² (Basavanna, 718)

Lingamma's vachana-"kaniṣṭadalli huṭṭide, uttamadalli beḷede, satya śaranara pādavidide"(Punyasthree Lingamma, 64)- also illustrates how the Vachana movement sought to dismantle caste and envision a new society. As Mōlige Marayya says, such inter-caste marriage became the way whereby "the great accomplishment of humanism" was effected among the sharanas:

Agraja, antyaja, varṇadharmada eraḍu dhruvagalu

Ondu utara, innondu dakṣiṇa, madhyadalli doḍḍa kamari

Anurāgada gāli bīsi prēmasūtra bandhisi ttu eraḍannu

Agrajana putri antyajana magana kaihi didadu

Sādhisitu mānavateya mahāsiddhi śaranaralli

Nīkaḷaṅka Mallikārjuna nōḍi beragāde nānu

This marriage, by their own admission, led to a profound social change. The bride and bridegroom, Haralayya and Madhavayya, were related sharanas, yet the marriage, in effect, was an inter-caste marriage. The implications were significant and cannot be ignored.

The other important social dimension of Vachana humanism is related to kayaka, or sacred labour. Many Vachana poets were known by their occupations. Despite their active participation in the socio-religious movement, they did not give up their professions. The movement gave great respect to the people in different vocations and thereby kayaka assumed a sacred status. Therefore, the Vachana movement may rightly be termed a kayaka movement. The notion of devoted labour being worship imparted dignity to a host of professions. This humanistic premise rose above caste and self-interest:

Setti yembene siriyāḷana,

Maḍivāḷa yembene Māchayyana,

Mādār a yembene Chennayyana,

Ānu hāruvane ndare Kūḍala Saṅgayya naguvanayya.(Basavanna, 345)

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A central concern of Vachana humanism was gender equality. For thousands of years, in a predominantly patriarchal society, women lived a subordinate life. However, during the Vachana period, women were given unprecedented opportunities. Concepts such as æarana-sati, liEga-pati created an atmosphere in which women could breathe freely. In a society that believed gold, land, and woman to be the three obstacles to spiritual pursuit, it was the Vachana poets who dismantled this age-old superstition. Allama Prabhu asserted that gold, woman, and land are not illusions (maya); rather, it is the desires of the mind that constitute illusion. Kayakayogi Siddharama elevated woman to a divine status in his vachana:

Tā mādida heṇṇu tanna taleyanerittu

Tā mādida heṇṇu tanna toḍeyanerittu

Tā mādida heṇṇu Brahmana nālage anerittu

Tā mādida heṇṇu Nārāyaṇana edeyanerittu

Ādu kārāṇa heṇṇu heṇṇalla, heṇṇu rāksi siya lla

Heṇṇu pratyakṣa Kapila Siddha Mallikārjuna nōḍa. (Siddharama, 607)

Such ideas gave a special status to the woman who was long subjected to indignity under patriarchy. The Vachana poets gave her the dignity she deserved. The idea of sati-pati devotion also defied the obedience and bondage the Vedic system had long imposed upon women, proclaiming that woman was possessed of full freedom to live on equal footing with man.

In short, the social dimension of Vachana humanism was anchored in the perspective of universal equality, without distinctions based on class, caste, varna, and gender. Many vachanas testify to this lofty aspiration.

Religious Dimension

Religion and religious practices have played a great role in the social life of this land. Under the guise of religion, the priestly order kept society under its control. The vachana composers boldly criticised this priestly system. They observed with great subtlety how people were made to follow meaningless rituals, how several hierarchical

divisions had been created in society in the name of religion, and how gender discrimination was promoted. For them, real religion meant viewing all things and all people with equality and stepping beyond superstitious practices to live with on human values. In this sense, they articulated a deeper philosophic understanding of religion. By challenging established traditions, they created several alternative ways of thinking. They condemned the varna-ashrama system which were propagated by the Vedic order and sought to curb cultural cruelties perpetrated in the name of religions.

Historically, humanistic religion first emerged during the time of the Buddha. As an alternative to Vedic culture, the Buddha taught cultural ideas rooted in human values and established what is called as true human religion. Although many alternative cultures arose later, none succeeded in bringing about humanism as effectively. During the Vachana movement, however, this notion of human religion turned into a unique form.

The central aim of the vachana composers' human religion was to transform the ordinary human being into an enlightened individual. For this, they depended both philosophical principles and natural elements. Hence, they were able to look upon all living beings with equal consideration. Thus their religion acquired the strength to blossom into a universal religion. They accepted with equal openness the different cultural patterns that prevailed in this land. They guided many others through the light that they themselves had come into and showed-through the light of their wisdom-the rituals that had thrown human life into the darkness of ignorance.

The vachana composers asserted that religion rests fundamentally on human conduct. Benevolent intention and righteous behaviour constitute the essence of true religious practice. They declared that desiring the welfare of all living beings is the real religion and that compassion forms the root of religion. Their teachings found expression through devotion, for they were devotees of Shiva. They analysed devotion intellectually, explaining how one attains liberation through it. Such devotion, they insisted, must be pure, transparent, and untainted. The vachana of Dasimayya-"kariyanittade olle, siriyannittade olle, hiridappa rājyavanittade olle; nimma ūaraGara

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sûlnudiya ondagaligeyittade nimmannitte kânâ Râmanâtha”(Dasimaya, 63) -is the longing of a simple and sincere devotee who, relinquishing worldly attachments, moves towards spirituality. Having realised that excessive worldly desires lead to human downfall, the vachana composers emphasised living a life free of delusion. They upheld the supremacy of devotion through kayaka (work) and social responsibility. Devotion, they maintained, should not be bound by caste, creed, or gender; Dasimayya’s vachana itself is evidence of this supremacy.

“Satipatigala ondaada bhakti

Hitavaagippudu Shivange

Satipatigala ondaagadavana bhakti

AmrutadoLu visha berasidaante kânâ Râmanâtha” (Dasimayya, 152)

Likewise, Allama Prabhu proved that it is human thought which shapes life philosophy when he proclaimed:

"tanna tãnaridadde nudi yella tattva nōḍā; tanna tã maredadde nudi yella māye nōḍā." (Allamaprabhu, 1207)

His reflections on the concept of God are remarkable:

Bhūmiyolagilla ākāshada olagilla

Chaturdasha bhuvanadolagilla, horagilla.

Ēnendarayiyaru entendarayiyaru hēlirayyā?

Kṛtayugadandina mātu bēḍa

Guhēśvara andū illa, indū illa. (Allamaprabhu, 650)

This is a strong refutation of the concept of an immobile, fixed deity. The vision of the divine can be realized only by purifying one’s inner self. Many other sharanas also held similar views. Their collective belief was to reject the culture of fixed temples and accept the jangama-living tradition. It was with regard to this that they voiced their religious sentiments. They declared that true knowledge comes only by realizing oneself; it does not come through worship, austerities, or rituals like homa and havana. Their view of the human body itself as a temple is an excellent philosophical thought.

“Maṭhavekō parvatavekō janavekō nirjanavekō”

citta samādhānavulla śaraṇange

matte horagaṇa cinte dhyāna mauna-japa tapa vekō

tanna tānarida śaraṇange Guhēśvarā.

“kallamaneya māḍi kalla devara māḍi”

ā kallu kalla meLe kaDidare devaretta hōdaro?

linga pratiṣṭheya mādidavange nāyaka naraka Guhēśvarā.” (Allama Prabhu, 1417)

Through such vachanas, Allama Prabhu rejects conventional notions of God, construction of God, and methods of seeking God. He proves that the intellectual inquiry rising out of the human mind can dispose the strong foundations of religious superstitions and lay new foundations for thought.

Basavanna, too, simplified complex metaphysical misconceptions when he stated: “devaloka martyaloka yembau matte bṛuGme?” He called upon people to see everything here itself. For him, Shivachara is Shivaloka, the place that the devotee dwells in is Devaloka, and the community of devotees is Varanasi. For him, pure devotion alone is adequate to reach such state.

Madimala Machideva has expressed it in a beautiful manner that righteous behaviour removes fear of religious doctrines:

“satya sadācāra, sadbhakti, satkriye, samyajñāna sadbhakti priya”

saddharmige, kālakarmada bhayavuGme Kalidevaradevā.” (Machideva, 319)

The first characteristic of human religion is good conduct; through it, one can attain everything - a clear philosophical understanding.

Religion and religious practices have, through centuries, governed facets of social life. However, during the time of the vachana composers, these very practices became the target of intense criticism. Their central message-that religion devoid of concern for life is no religion at all-strengthened the philosophical basis of human religion. Therefore they condemned the anarchy perpetrated in the

name of religion and showed the essence of religion through simple, day-to-day practices.

Political Dimension

The conception of political authority was markedly different in the case of vachanakâras. One of the major characteristics of our political history is the mutually reinforcing alliance between kingship and priestly dominance. Owing to this alliance, the priestly order—having placed royal administration under its ideological control—never allowed the common people any scope for autonomy. Governance, being conducted in accordance with the vested interests of priestly power, never upheld the aspirations of the general populace. This had become an unquestioned tradition over time.

However, Basavanna, who himself worked within the frame of the state, critically scrutinized this deep-seated order. As Basavaraj Kalgudi remarks, “In critiquing the varga system, the exalted status accorded to the Brahmin caste was denied. This, in turn, constituted an indirect blow to the king, who believed in the religious claims of that caste.” (Kalgudi 238). This assertion is indeed correct.

Thus, the vachanakâras challenged political authority even as they interrogated religious authority; they contested the irrationalities of the ruling order even as they contested religious dogmas; they protested against meaningless rituals and simultaneously resisted political absurdities. In consequence, the model of duty-bound loyalty to kingship was profoundly transformed during the age of the vachanakâras.

The priestly order and the royal order were always like two sides of the same coin. Basavanna was initially part of these structures; yet he transcended them both to reflect on the concerns of ordinary people. Notably, a majority of the participants in the movement he initiated were from socially marginalized communities. Basavanna’s stand is thus indicative of how he viewed the contemporary system of power. This unique standpoint made him the herald of a distinctive socio-religious movement. Therefore, the Vachana movement did not remain confined to religion and society alone, but also incorporated political critique into its fold.

Basavanna was neither enamoured of political office nor deluded by the allure of power. In one of his vachanas he declares in transliteration:

“Āneyanērikonḍu hōdire nīvu

Kudureyanērikonḍu hōdire nīvu

kunkuma kastūriya pūsikonḍu hōdire aṇṇā

Satyada nilavan ariyadē hōdirallā.” (Basavanna, 638)

Meaning: Whether one rides an elephant or a horse, whether one adorns oneself with saffron or musk-none of these matter. What truly matters is the realisation of life’s deeper truth. Basavanna therefore accorded no importance to worldly pleasures or displays of opulence; instead, he emphasized the necessity of recognizing the truth underlying human existence.

The struggles waged merely for the possession of land made people forget the very essence of humanity. Compassion and conscience seldom found a place in such contests. Therefore, Allama Prabhu declares:

“āsege sattadu koṭi

Āmiṣakke sattudu koṭi

Honnu, heṇṇu, maṇṇinge sattudu koṭi

Guhēsvara nimagāgi sattavarānāru kāṇe.” (Allamaprabhu, 91)

Here, beyond the yearning for divine union, lies a profound call to live without attachment and to respond to the sufferings of ordinary people.

Another unique contribution of the vachanakâras is that of the Anubhava Mantapa. An equivalent of the parliament in a democratic polity, the Anubhava Mantapa formed the basis of the Vachana movement and its humanism. It created new consciousness and critical thinking among the people. People from all castes, classes and genders

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convened there and spoke their minds without fear. Many key issues were discussed. Probably, at no place on earth, during a monarchical age, there was seen such a meeting of minds.

This forum was joined by saints and sharanas from different parts of the country, articulating their experiences and insights. Later, the ideas discussed there were conveyed to the larger community.

The political humanism of the vachanakāras was thus articulated through:

- rejection of authoritarian power,
- envisioning an inclusive framework of shared political participation,
- seeking alternatives to priestly domination,
- revisiting its function in local self-governance.
- Affirming individual freedom.

It was a politics of humanisation, per se.

Cultural Dimension

For the vachanakāras, culture signified an intellectual tradition unspoiled by superstition, distanced from rigid convention, and anchored in a deeply humanistic conscience. In the cultural world of the Vachana movement, individuals from every conceivable cultural sphere participated. Setting aside their inherited backgrounds, they articulated their ideas upon new philosophical foundations on fresh intellectual soil. As a result of that they overcame cultural stagnation and infused culture with renewed dynamism.

They recognized the relationship between the individual and society as important in cultural life. By critically viewing the forces operating behind established social structures, they contributed to the betterment of the relationship between the individual and society. In other words, they reflected on the all-round development of the human being. The vachanakāras examined how the religious, political, social, and economic conditions of an individual determine the wholeness of human life, finding both strengths and flaws within these conditions. To eradicate the hierarchical cultural attitudes of high and low, they

disseminated their ideas far and wide. They initiated innovation in many spheres of culture; in some areas they synthesized traditions, while in others they directly confronted and generated new modes of critique.

They thus promoted the process of cultural synthesis through heightened individual consciousness and collective consciousness. The personal awareness that dawned within the vachanakāras was shifted and discussed in the Anubhava MaGmapa, and from there it flowed into society. At that stage, it took the form of collective consciousness, imbibing newer dimensions and addressing various social concerns. The concept of the Sarana itself stands as a mirror to the cultural thought of the vachanakāras.

The following vachana expresses the very spirit of the movement:

The following vachana expresses the very spirit of the movement:

“Śaraṇa nidregaidade japa kṇirō

Śaraṇaneddu kuḷitade śivarātri kṇirō

Śaraṇa neddedudu pāvana kṇirō

Śaraṇa nuḍidadu śivatattva kṇirō.” (Basavanna, 1187)

This summarises the central aspiration of the entire Vachana movement. It symbolizes the ideals that consistently shaped their reflections. Their thinking was always oriented towards society and firmly based on an ethics of humanism.

Within the cultural dimension of the vachanakāras’ humanism, the úaraGa culture emerged as an alternative to the culture of hierarchical dominance; it involved a search for truth and a commitment to preserving cultural identity.

As Siddharama declares, “Kuladalli manadalli Mahādeva nelega Gavane nija œaraGa nōa,” (Siddharama, 1788) the vachanakāras transcended all boundaries, working for the welfare of all and striving tirelessly for the sustenance of a universal human ethics. To a society filled with complexities and confusions, they offered several

alternatives. Drawing upon the wisdom of the spiritual realm and the rational insight of the material world, the vachanakāras indeed offered humanity the principles of humanism they repeatedly demonstrated that outward purity is possible only through inward purification. They made it clear that the inner world of the human being must absorb the dynamism of the external world. Through the concepts of dāsôha and kāyaka, they kept reminding the society of the very ideals which are essential for humanism.

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9

Street Plays of Kangundi Kuppam – Folk Play

- Dr.S.Hemalatha

Abstract:

The English equivalent of *Janapada* is *folk*, which broadly refers to people with shared characteristics. The renowned Western scholar Alan Dundes defined *folk* as those who share similar traditions, whether they are forest dwellers, tribal communities, rural inhabitants, or urban citizens. According to Dundes, “*The term ‘folk’ can refer to any group of people whatever who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is. It could be a common occupation, language, or religion, but what is important is that a group formed for whatever reason will have some traditions which it calls its own.*” Dr. R. V. S. Sundaram, who conducted extensive research on the folk traditions of the Andhras, stated, “*The 19th-century scholars opined folk as illiterates and rural people. Folk once may mean a village, but today the word Janapada, which we use as an equivalent to folk, is irrelevant if used in the sense of rural people.*” He further supported Alan Dundes’ definition of *folk*.

Key words : janapada, folklore, limericks, yakshagana, mimetic imitations, rupakam.

Introduction:

Folk play is considered the most prominent among all folk arts. These performances, often referred as street plays or *Street Bhagavatas*, are enacted in public spaces. Based on their plot, style of enactment, and regional popularity, they are known by different

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names. While scholars classify the folk plays of Chittoor district as the *Street Plays of Kangundi Kuppam*, they are locally known as *Kelika plays (Aata)*. Additionally, a significant portion of the local population refers to them as *Bharatam*.

Among Telugu folk plays, the *Kangundi Kuppam* plays hold a distinctive identity. In India, the tradition of enacting a dramatized version of the eighteen cantos of the *Mahabharata* over eighteen days is exclusive to the *Kangundi Kuppam* tradition. Although various other Telugu folk plays also depict stories from the *Mahabharata*, it is only within the *Kangundi* tradition that the entire epic is traditionally performed. This practice continues in the districts of Chittoor, Nellore, and Kadapa, where annual festivals dedicated to *Dharmaraja* and *Draupadi* are celebrated with great devotion and reverence.

The Evolving Interpretation of ‘Folk’

The term *folk* has gained widespread popularity in contemporary discourse. A historical analysis, tracing its usage from ancient to modern times, reveals significant variations in its meaning. The phrase “*Janena sadythe Janapadah*” explains that *folk* is a term associated with rural communities. In ancient Telugu literature, *folk* was understood in the context of a nation, a state, a village, or a group of people engaged in *yagnas* and residing in rural areas. However, at no point was *folk* used in the sense of “*uncivilized*.” The modern perception that equates folk with the uncivilized and illiterate has been widely accepted by scholars, though historical and literary evidence contradicts this notion. Examining the meanings of *folk* in Telugu literature demonstrates that ancient texts never equated the term with uncivilized communities. The *Mahabharata* refers to folk as people engaged in *yagnas*, implying a level of cultural and spiritual sophistication. This suggests a historical equilibrium between urban and rural cultures rather than a hierarchical divide.

The Expanding Scope of Folklore Studies

Folklore was initially considered to encompass only orally transmitted literature. However, as the scope of research expanded, it came to include not only oral traditions but also various other cultural aspects. American scholars view folklore as an ever-evolving field,

paralleling the expansion of human life itself. Recognizing folklore studies is essential for understanding the growth of human culture, tradition, and overall development across different ages. The term *folklore* was first introduced by William John Thoms, who suggested and partially explained its meaning in a letter published in *The Athenaeum* under the pen name Malabros Morton on August 22, 1846. In his interpretation, *folk* referred to the unlettered peasantry, while *lore* signified knowledge. Thangirala Venkata Subbarao later elaborated on Thoms' definition, describing folklore as the traditional knowledge of illiterate villagers. Due to its vast scope, folklore is difficult to define concisely. Nevertheless, scholars have attempted to classify and interpret it in various ways. It has been widely accepted as the *science of survivals*, encompassing narratives such as folk tales, heroic tales, ballads, songs, and local legends, as well as customs and traditions including festivals, rituals, and traditional games. Additionally, beliefs and practices such as superstitions, witchcraft, fortune-telling, popular assumptions, proverbs, riddles, and rhythmic expressions have also been recognized as integral components of folklore.

Alan Dundes, in his book *The Study of Folklore*, explores the question *What is folklore?* and lists various elements that constitute it. He states that folklore includes myths, legends, folk tales, jokes, proverbs, riddles, charms, blessings, curses, oaths, insults, retorts, taunts, teases, toasts, and tongue twisters. It also encompasses folk costume, folk speech, folk drama (and mime), folk art, folk belief (or superstitions), folk medicine, folk instrumental music, folk songs, folk speech, and folk names. Folk poetry, ranging from oral epics to autograph-book verse, epitaphs, limericks, ball-bouncing rhymes, and nursery rhymes, are also a significant part of folklore. Furthermore, folklore includes games, gestures, symbols, prayers, practical jokes, folk etymologies, food recipes, knitting and embroidery designs, house, barn, and fence types, street vendor cries, and even the traditional sounds used to summon animals. Minor forms such as mnemonic devices, envelope sealers, and traditional comments made after bodily emissions are also classified under folklore, alongside major forms such as festivals and special-day customs.

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The *Young Students Encyclopedia* defines folklore as, “People in every country have traditions and beliefs that have been passed down from generation to generation, usually by word of mouth. These traditions and beliefs are called folklore—the knowledge or lore of the people or folk.” R.V.S. Sundaram, in his work *Folklore of Andhras*, asserts that “folklore is a part of culture.” While some equate culture with civilization, this interpretation is not entirely accurate. From the era of primitive man to the present day, human efforts towards prosperity are regarded as culture. This includes various aspects of life, such as poems, stories, proverbs, language, beliefs, clothing, games, culinary practices, medicine, and arts, all of which reflect the lived experiences of folk communities.

Dr. G.S. Mohan, discussing the extensive scope of folklore, explains that folklore is embedded in everyday life. He states, “While teaching lullabies, riddles, and songs to children in schools, singing and dancing, a mother training her daughter in cooking and weaving, a father guiding his son in matters related to agriculture, or artisans such as carpenters, potters, blacksmiths, and cobblers passing down their skills, the experiences, habits, and technical knowledge of the ancients are transmitted across generations. Folklore, therefore, is observed in a vast and comprehensive manner.” Dr. Mohan further divided folklore into oral literature, social folk customs, material culture, folk arts, and folk language, while Dr. Ravi Premalatha categorized it into folk arts, folk sciences, folk material culture, and folk language. Various researchers have classified folklore based on their respective areas of study, highlighting its multidimensional nature and its deep-rooted connection to the cultural and social fabric of communities across the world.

The Significance of Folk Arts in Folklore

Folk arts are not only an integral part of folklore but also hold significant cultural importance. They are deeply interwoven with various other aspects of folklore, making them an essential element of traditional heritage. While the broader definition of art encompasses a vast spectrum, folk arts are more specifically defined, primarily consisting of performing arts such as music, dance, and skits. References to folk arts in Telugu literature are evident in the works

of prominent literary figures such as Nannaya, Tikkanna, Palkuriki Somana, Nanne Chodudu, Nachana Somana, Srinadha, Vallabha Raya, Gowrana, Peddapati Errana, Sri Krishnadevaraya, Tarigoppula Mallana, Raghunadharaya, and Marada Venkaiah. However, if one considers the view that folk arts serve as the foundation for more structured and systematic forms of art, then it is evident that even before *Gathasaptasati* of Hala and *Natyasastra* of Bharata, folk arts existed as an independent tradition.

Dr. Bittu Venkateswarlu provides an insightful perspective on the origins and evolution of folk arts. He explains that ancient researchers believed that natural calamities and the unpredictable forces of nature heightened human consciousness towards the divine. As a result, devotional offerings took different forms, shaped by the desires of people, their geographical locations, cultural practices, and individual tastes. Music and dance, as expressions of human emotions and devotion, became fundamental instruments in articulating religious sentiments, social structures, and even gender roles. The influence of caste, region, and culture is evident in the diverse forms of folk arts, where artistic expressions transcend mere entertainment and become deeply embedded in spiritual and communal practices.

In Andhra Pradesh alone, nearly 150 varieties of folk art can be found today. If spiritual consciousness is considered a gift of religious belief, then all artistic traditions associated with caste and religion can be regarded as part of spirituality. While entertainment serves the purpose of spreading joy and pleasure, traditional art forms, when practiced at a fundamental level, contribute to the establishment of a spiritual atmosphere. However, when traditions expand beyond their initial cultural boundaries, they evolve into a medium of entertainment. Dr. Bittu Venkateswarlu suggests that when the barriers of caste, religion, and region are removed, folk arts transition into a more universal form of entertainment.

To systematically study folk arts, scholars and researchers have developed different methods of classification. Darson categorized folk arts into three primary forms: music, dance, and skits. Dr. Birudu Raju expanded this classification by adding a fourth category, listing folk arts as visual art, music, dance, and skits. Nayani Krishna Kumari,

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on the other hand, classified folk art into three branches: poetry, prose, and visual representations. G.S. Mohan further extended the classification by including painting and *Vastu* art alongside music, dance, and skits. Despite the variations in classification, nearly all forms of folk art can be accommodated within the three fundamental branches of music, dance, and skits.

Among these, skits serve as a visible presentation of stories and are performed using costumes that align with the characters depicted. The concept of skit in Telugu has its roots in the term *rupa*, which was originally synonymous with drama. Over time, the term evolved into *rupaka*, meaning a structured dramatic performance. Bharata, in his *Natyasastra*, used the term *rupa* to describe the structural form of drama, outlining ten variations of *rupas*. The scholar Abhinavagupta later elaborated on Bharata's concept, explaining that *rupa* refers to any meaning that is visually represented. Since the 8th century, the term *rupakam* has been commonly used in this context.

Dhananjaya, in his work *Dasarupakam*, employed the terms *rupam* and *rupakam* interchangeably. He defined *natyam* as the imitation of situations, describing it as a form of *rupakam* or visual presentation. He further explained that *natyam* encompasses ten different emotional expressions or *rasas*. Just as colors such as blue (*neela*) and yellow (*peetha*) are used interchangeably in specific contexts, so too are *rupam* and *rupakam*. From the very beginning, the role of Rama has been imitated on stage, which is why dramatic performances were historically referred to as *rupakam*. Similarly, different epithets such as Indra, Purandara, and Sakra all refer to the same deity, just as *natyam*, *rupam*, and *rupakam* all signify the same fundamental concept of dramatic representation.

The distinction between *rupam* and *rupakam* also extends to the perspectives of the audience and performers. While *rupam* refers to what is perceived by the spectators, *rupakam* pertains to the process of enactment by actors. Bharata, in his visual treatise on drama, used various terminologies such as *presentation*, *drama*, *rupam*, and *rupakam* to describe the essence of theatrical performance. While Abhinavagupta primarily employed the term

rupam, Dhananjaya introduced the concept of *drushya kavya* (visual poetry) to describe *rupakam*, and Dhanika utilized all three terms interchangeably. Ultimately, *rupakam* encapsulates the idea of enacting different roles, moods, and situations on stage. The fusion of *janapadam* (folk art) and classical *rupakam* in ancient times led to the emergence of traditional theatrical forms. Folk theatrical performances such as *Bhagavata mela*, *Yakshagana*, and street plays embody this synthesis, demonstrating a shared motive and structure. Thus, all these forms of performance can be categorized under *rupakam*, highlighting the intrinsic connection between folk arts and classical dramatic traditions.

In classical and folk traditions, *rupakams* served as a bridge between scripted and improvised performances, incorporating elements of storytelling, religious themes, and social satire. The *Bhagavata* stories, *Yakshagana* performances, and street plays all fall under this broad category, reinforcing the idea that folk *rupakams* played a crucial role in shaping theatrical traditions.

Among various forms of folk art, *rupakam* was given prominence due to its flexibility, simplicity, and ability to connect with audiences without requiring elaborate resources. Unlike classical theater, which often maintained a clear distinction between performers and spectators, folk *rupakams* thrived on interactive engagement, allowing minimal separation between the actors and the audience. These performances seamlessly blended music, dance, poetry, painting, and narration, making them a holistic form of artistic expression. Since all arts are fundamentally rooted in imitation, Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, argues that epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, and musical performances all stem from the same principle of mimetic representation. He emphasizes that artistic imitation varies based on the medium, subject, and manner of execution, reinforcing the idea that *rupakam* is a comprehensive reflection of human experiences.

The origins of drama and *rupakam* have been explored through various perspectives, with some tracing its roots to the Vedas. While the Vedas themselves are unwritten scriptures containing vast knowledge, certain discourses, such as those between Yama and Yami,

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Urvashi and Pururava, and Indra and Nemi, hint at early dramatic elements. These discourses may have contributed to the evolution of *rupakams*, though the destruction of many original prose sections of these texts makes it difficult to establish direct links. The Greek tradition similarly associates the emergence of drama with religious rituals and nature worship, drawing a parallel to how Indian folk traditions incorporated spiritual themes into their performances. In ancient times, storytellers who narrated epics would often accompany their recitations with gestures and movements, gradually giving rise to performative enactments. Over time, the need for multiple performers to narrate and enact stories led to the development of theatrical traditions.

Many scholars believe that *rupakam* originated from the puppet show tradition, which existed in two primary forms: leather shadow puppetry and wooden doll puppetry. Puppeteers controlled the movements of these figures using strings, and over time, human performers began taking on the roles of these puppets, leading to the birth of live-action drama. The transition from puppetry to human performance played a vital role in shaping theatrical traditions, as puppet shows themselves were a form of silent drama that relied heavily on visual storytelling. Ancient references to *Sutradhara*, the director or narrator in classical plays, further indicate the influence of folk *rupakams* on structured theater. Saint Patanjali, in the 2nd century B.C., mentions three key artistic expressions—Shobhita (ornamented art), Chithrika (painted art), and Grandhika (recorded art)—which closely resemble puppet shows in their aesthetic and narrative techniques. The term *Aata*, meaning play, was widely used to describe both puppet performances and human dramas for a long time, reinforcing the idea that puppetry played a significant role in shaping theatrical traditions. The evolution of *Bommalata* (puppet shows) into full-fledged theatrical performances highlights the deep-rooted connection between folk arts and structured drama, emphasizing how folk traditions have contributed to the development of storytelling and performance art in Indian culture.

In the olden days, plays were called by different names based on their background and place of presentation. They were known as Street Bhagavata (Veedhi Bhagavatam), Street Play, Yakshaganam, Bayalaata (open-air plays), and Aata (play). The names often varied depending on the location of the performance or the people who performed them. However, folk plays can be classified into two categories.

Plays by Puppets Plays by men

Plays by Puppets

Plays by Men

Some people do not find any significant difference among Street Bhagavata, Street Play, and Yakshagana, as these names are used differently depending on the content and location of the performance. Reciting themes from the Bhagavata is referred to as Street Bhagavata, while plays enacted in the streets are called Street Plays. Bhagavata refers to performances staged in open spaces like a ground, and Yakshagana involves singing and dancing to stories of Yakshas. Street plays can also be categorized based on caste, region, and performance contexts.

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The street plays of Kangundi Kuppam belong to the regional street plays in the classification of folk skits (Rupakas). This drama tradition is referred to as the Kangundi Kuppam Street Play, as it originated in Kangundi, a place near Kuppam in the Chittoor district. The play is called Aata (play). In this tradition, performances are predominantly based on The Mahabharata, though other themes are also enacted. These plays are known as ‘separate plays’ (Vidi Natakas) and are performed at the end of the Bharata festival, which lasts for a month. During this period, plays with themes other than The Mahabharata are enacted and referred to as Vidi Natakas. At the end of the festival, the artists perform a free show called Inaam Aata (the free performance).

Dharmaraja and Draupadi have been worshipped in the Chittoor, Nellore, and Kadapa districts for a long time. However, the tradition of worshipping the heroes of Bharata and Draupadi has been more prevalent in the Chittoor district. Some villages even have temples dedicated to Draupadi and Dharmaraja. A central village is selected for the Bharata festival, and the festivities are performed at a designated place called Bharatam Mitta (Bharatam Top Place). The performances of Bharatam lasted from 10 to 21 days, as determined by the temple trustees. During the daytime, stories from The Mahabharata were narrated, while at night, these stories were enacted. The performances started with the birth of Sri Krishna and concluded with the death of Duryodhana. This type of Bharata festival is also performed in the Kadapa district.

The Origin of the Street Play of Kangundi Kuppam, AP

Many times, the names of artistic traditions or performers indicate that the artists either lived in a particular place or were patronized by the rulers of that place. From this perspective, it is

evident that the Kangundi Zamindars patronized drama troupes, providing them with gifts, titles, and facilities. Since the troupe was supported by the Kangundi Kuppam Zamindars, it came to be known as the Kangundi Kuppam drama troupe. Some members of the troupe carried surnames like Samudrala, Madala, Thota, and Challa, indicating that their ancestors migrated from Krishna district and nearby coastal regions.

Dr. Govinda Reddy conducted studies on the origin of Kangundi Kuppam plays and linked their birth to Kuchipudi Bhagavata. The Kuchipudi Bhagavatars used to present Yakshaganas, but as the art form lost popularity, artists sought patrons from the coastal districts and eventually found support from the Kangundi Zamindar, Mamurdi China Veerappa Naidu. This led to the arrival of Vijayendra Bhattacharya from Vijayanagar to Kangundi with his drama troupe, where he entertained the Kangundi Zamindars with his Bhagavata performances. After his death, Street Bhagavatam declined, giving rise to Street Plays, and Yakshagana developed as a separate art form.

According to the known history of Kangundi artists, Sri Gade Muneppa was the founder and pioneer of Kangundi Kuppam dramas. The first generation of artists included Seenappa, who, along with Gade Muneppa, practiced and trained others in the art form. The second generation, including Thota China Gangappa and Ande China Venkatappa, played a significant role in popularizing Kangundi dramas, particularly Mahabharata-themed performances, establishing them as a distinctive Chittoor district art form. Later, artists such as Chitteri Muniswami, Budda Rangaiah, Seeda Venkatesa, Seeda Appaiah, Chelteri Chinnabba, and Mutyala Muniratnam further contributed to the growth of Mahabharata-based dramas.

The fourth generation of Kangundi Kuppam artists included Thota China Venkatesu, Seeda Munaswamy, Seeda Muppoji, and Challa Munivenkatappa. Among them, Challa Munivenkatappa earned the title 'Dance Muni Venkatappa' for his exceptional dancing skills. Another notable artist was Kuppam Ramachandraiah from Animigami village, who, even at the age of 70, continued to captivate audiences until his recent passing. His son Neerajaksha and his disciple Mohan

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are regarded as highly talented artists capable of performing any role on stage. Currently, Kangundi artists reside in villages such as Kotha Indlu, Animigani Palle, and Gundla Palle, approximately 10 km from Kangundi. These artists continue to train individuals from various castes in performing Kangundi Kuppam dramas. Today, the name Kangundi Kuppam dramas has become synonymous with the theatrical traditions of Chittoor district.

Mode of Presentation

Though the plays of Kangundi Kuppam are performed during Bharata festivals, their main objective is to entertain the people. The play typically starts at 9 PM and ends at 6 AM the following morning. The Potharaju idol is carried in a procession from the temple and placed on the right side of the stage, facing the artists. After worshipping the idol, the play begins with a small Ranga Pooja (stage prayer). Camphor is lit on a stone at the edge of the stage, followed by the prayer. The harmonium is played on one side, and the tabla on the other, providing musical accompaniment. The artists stand on both sides—some sing, while others play cymbals. The prayer usually starts with a Sanskrit sloka, “Suklam Baradaram Vishnum,” or a Telugu song, “Sri Ganesha Sivuni Kumara, Para Bramha Parameswara.”

After the prayer, the play begins with the entrance of the king. Traditionally, the introducer (Chopudara) first enters to announce the king’s arrival. However, many troupes do not follow this system anymore. The presence of Sutradhara and Chopudara was once observed in rare performances, such as those staged in Hyderabad by Sri Krishnadevara Nataka Samaj. It is believed that this system ceased to exist around 60 or 70 years ago, as noted by Sri Tota Lokanadham. Today, the functions of Sutradhara and Chopudara—such as character introductions and situational descriptions—are performed by the characters themselves. For instance, in a performance of “Pandava Jananam” (Birth of Pandavas), Shakuni narrates the prologue. In “Keechaka Vadha” (Killing of Keechaka), Sairandri introduces Keechaka’s arrival while exiting the stage.

Dance and music are predominant in Kangundi Kuppam plays. Every song and every extended note in a song is accompanied by rhythmic drum beats and harmonium music. The harmonist, seated

on the left side of the artists, plays continuously from the prayer to the play's conclusion. Though the artists have little formal training in music, they have gained expertise through years of performance.

The traditional dramatic events

The Kangundi presentation of dramas is unique and special as it seamlessly blends entertainment, devotion, audience participation, and tradition. A distinct feature of this tradition is the direct involvement of the audience in the dramatic events of the story. With utmost reverence and respect for the characters on stage, the audience actively engages in key moments of the performance. Below are some of the most renowned dramatic events that provide opportunities for such deep audience participation in the play.

The sacrificial food on the cart

The event of Bheema carrying food on a cart for Bakasura is known as *Bandi Kumbham* or *Bandlu Kattadam* (Arranging the Carts). On the day of the event, approximately four to five carts are decorated with colorful papers and flowers and sent around the villages sponsoring the drama. A man dressed as Bheema is seated on the cart and drives it through the village, singing a song that signifies his search for Bakasura. Household members clean their homes, decorate the areas in front of their houses, and prepare food items in anticipation of the cart's arrival. As the cart reaches each house, the collected food is loaded onto it. The accumulated food is then transported to the drama venue, where it is distributed among the attendees. Only after this ritual does the performance of *Bakasura Vadha* (Slaying of Bakasura) commence in the evening.

The enactment of Arjuna meditating or performing *tapas* for Lord Shiva is referred to as *Tapassu* or *Tapasman*. A long Asoka or palm tree is trimmed and brought to the designated site of *tapas*. After a formal worship ceremony, wooden slabs are affixed to both sides of the tree, enabling the actor to ascend it. This tree, known as *Tapasman* (a tree meant for *tapas* or meditation), is then erected firmly in a prepared hole in the ground.

Following this, prayers are offered to the *Tapasman*. It is a prevalent belief among village women that participation in this ritual

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can bestow fertility upon those who are childless. Women, having bathed and clad in wet garments as a mark of purity, approach the site with reverence and prostrate before the tree. Once these rituals conclude, the dramatic performance begins, featuring actors portraying Arjuna, Shiva, and Parvati, dressed in attire appropriate to their respective characters. The performance is accompanied by songs that align with the thematic essence of the occasion.

The Capture of Cattle

The *Gograhana* event (capture of cattle) is an important episode from the *Virata Parva* of the *Mahabharata*. In this episode, the Kauravas lay siege to the cattle of King Virata and attempt to drive them away from his kingdom. On the day of the enactment of this scene, villagers from neighboring areas bring their cattle to the site, believing that participation in the ritual will lead to an increase in their livestock and enhance their health.

As part of the ritual, a *Jammi* tree is ceremonially installed at the venue. Arjuna, accompanied by Uttara Kumara, arrives at the tree. Uttara Kumara then climbs the tree to retrieve the weapons that the Pandavas had previously hidden there. Once the weapons are retrieved, Arjuna arms himself and symbolically drives the cattle back to safety. The *Gograhana* presentation concludes with this dramatic sequence.

The Slaying of Ilavantha

Ilavantha, the son of Arjuna and Uloopi, is a prominent character in traditional drama performances. He is also known by various names; in Tamil, he is referred to as *Aravaan*. The Telugu term *Yuddhabali* corresponds to *Kashtabali* in Tamil. Ilavantha is sacrificed as part of the Kurukshetra war rituals.

According to prophecy, victory in the war would be granted to the group that sacrificed a Kshatriya man with a significant amount of hair on his chest on the day of *Amavasya* (New Moon). This prediction was made by Sahadeva. Aware of this secret, Duryodhana approached Ilavantha and secured a promise from him that he would offer himself for sacrifice on behalf of the Kauravas. However, Lord Krishna, recognizing the importance of the prophecy, intervened by

instructing Dharmaraja to obtain a similar promise from Ilavantha on behalf of the Pandavas.

To ensure the Pandavas' victory, Krishna altered the course of events by making *Amavasya* occur a day earlier than expected. As a result, the Pandavas performed the sacrificial ritual with Ilavantha, securing their advantage in the war.

The Slaying of Duryodhana

This is the last incident in the enactments of the *Mahabharata*. It is traditionally scheduled to take place only on Sundays, with all other episodes of the Kurukshetra war concluding by Saturday night. A large mud idol of Duryodhana is crafted and positioned in the *maidan* (open ground). An earthen pot filled with red-colored water is placed inside the thigh of the idol. The idol is then painted, with special emphasis on coloring the face.

Before the enactment begins, the idols of Draupadi, the Pandavas, and Krishna are brought to the location. The characters of Bheema, Duryodhana, and Krishna then arrive on stage, accompanied by elaborate fanfare and music. Prior to the fight sequence, a narration of the scene is presented in the *Harikatha* style. Once the narration concludes, Bheema and Duryodhana engage in combat. At the climactic moment, upon receiving a signal from Sri Krishna, Bheema strikes Duryodhana's thigh with his mace. As the pot inside the idol breaks, red-colored water flows out, symbolizing blood, and Duryodhana collapses, roaring in pain. Following this, the spectators rush onto the stage, attempting to collect as much mud from the idol as possible. It is widely believed that preserving this mud in their homes will bring prosperity and ensure a life of wealth comparable to that of Duryodhana. With this final episode, the *Mahabharata Natakas* reach their conclusion.

Conclusion :

Once the enactment of the *Mahabharata Natakas* is completed, the troupe performs an additional play as a complimentary gift to the audience. These traditions highlight the distinctiveness of *Kangundi Kuppam Natakas*, marking them as a unique and exceptional dramatic genre in their own right. By enacting the 18

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cantos of the Mahabharata, our ancestors instilled moral values and ethics, passing them on to the next generation is our responsibility. Recently, the Government of India has launched a programme “**Ekha Bharath Shrestha Bharath**” which encourages to understand every states culture tradition and tries to foster national integration.

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10

Comparative Study of Telugu and Other Languages

- A.G. Arogya Maria Prakash & Dr.V.Gopal

Abstract

This article traces the evolution of Telugu linguistic research from its 18th-century origins to modern descriptive methodologies. It examines the shift from traditional Sanskrit-based frameworks to scientific comparative studies, highlighting the identification of the Dravidian language family by early Western and Indian scholars. Key contributions from pioneers like Korada Ramakrishnayya and Badriraju Krishnamurti are analyzed besides epigraphical research that successfully reconstructed the language's pre-literary history. By reviewing the development of historical grammars and phonological theories, the study emphasizes the transition from classical analysis to modern functional needs. Ultimately, it argues that ongoing comparative research is essential for adapting the Telugu language to contemporary official and instructional domains.

Keywords

Telugu Linguistics, Dravidian Language Family, Historical and Comparative Grammar, Descriptive Linguistics, Epigraphy and Inscriptions, Proto-Dravidian, Phonology and Morphology, Evolution of Telugu, Socio-Linguistics

The comparative study of languages and the classification of world language families were initiated when Western scholars, in the later half of the 18th century, began learning Sanskrit and identified its relationship with Greek, Latin, and other European languages. In the 19th century, linguistic studies in Europe focused mainly on

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comparative and historical aspects. By the 20th century, descriptive linguistics began to develop significantly. In 1933, Bloomfield's work brought a more scientific approach to linguistic studies, particularly through the influence of Descriptive Linguistics. During this period, grammar developed for many unwritten languages.

Earlier, grammars for various languages were constructed within the grammatical frameworks of Sanskrit, Greek and Hebrew. However, linguistic research demonstrated that each language has its own structural nature, including distinct systems of phonology, morphology, syntax and grammatical categories. This led to the development of descriptive grammars, and linguistic inquiry began to address practical language issues beyond classical forms. Efforts were made to formulate general linguistic principles. With the emergence of Noam Chomsky's Syntactic Structures in 1956, numerous new linguistic theories progressing grammatical description examined deep sentence structure.

Linguistic research in Telugu, especially in historical domains, was significantly influenced by the work of Western scholars. One of the pioneers of independent linguistic research in this field was Korada Ramakrishnayya. He studied and assimilated comparative and historical linguistic methods from Europe and applied them to Telugu language history. Accepting Caldwell's theory of the Dravidian language family, Korada authored seminal works such as 'Sandhi' and 'Desi'. In 1929, he wrote the article "The State of the Telugu Language before Nannaya". In his critical study of "Andhra Mahabharata Vimarshanam", he incorporated linguistic analysis. Using inscriptions, he attempted to reconstruct the pre-Nannaya form of Telugu and was the first person to identify the division between literary and spoken Telugu during that era.

Korada concluded that "By Nannaya's time, the conditions for composing poetry in the style of Andhra Bharata were already established." He firmly believed that language changes are inevitable, based on his observations of linguistic evolution.

The first systematic modern studies of the Telugu language were undertaken by Western scholars in the early 19th century. While serving in colonial, Scholars such as A.D. Campbell, C.P. Brown,

and A.H.Arden, wrote grammar and compiled dictionaries for Telugu. Unlike scholars like Chinnayasuri who wrote grammar using Sanskrit methods and technical terms, these Western scholars produced grammar based on the contemporary structure of Telugu. They brought new insights into concepts like grammatical acceptability and sentence construction.

Comparative studies of Dravidian languages began with Campbell's 'A grammar of the Telugu Language, laid the foundation. In 1816, Francis Whyte Ellis, in his essay attached to Campbell's grammar, identified the genetic relationships among languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Tulu, Kodagu, and Malto, arguing that they belonged to a separate family but not related to Sanskrit. He discussed the phonological and grammatical similarities among these languages with illustrative examples.

P.S.Subrahmanyam's doctoral dissertation, "Dravidian verb morphology: A comparative study", published by Andhra University, in 1964 is a significant work analyzing verb structures in Dravidian languages from descriptive and comparative perspectives. In a study, he demonstrated how short vowels in proto-Dravidian conducted in 1970 roots lengthened before certain consonants in Telugu (e.g., cheyi / cheyyi). He wrote many related papers as part of his comparative linguistic research.

Research towards the evolution of Telugu language based on inscriptions has been extensive. Scholars like Budaraju Radhakrishna (200–1100 CE), M. Kandappa Chetti (1101–1400 CE), and K.K. Ranganathacharyulu (1401–1900 CE) conducted detailed studies. These efforts were supervised by Badriraja Krishnamurti, examined inscriptions from their respective periods and traced linguistic developments.

Bhudaraju Radhakrishna's doctoral thesis "A Historical and comparative Grammar of Early Telugu (Inscriptions)" examined 269 inscriptions from 200 to 1100 CE and gave a comparative account of ancient Telugu. He demonstrated that several changes observed in colloquial Telugu before Nannaya. He disproved the earlier notion that Telugu lacked verbal predicates before Nannaya, instead showing ample evidences for verbal elements. His research resulted in the book 'Evolution of Colloquial Telugu'.

Comparative Study of Telugu and Other Languages

Similarly, in 1966 Kandappa Chetti's dissertation "A Historical Grammar of the Telugu Inscriptions" from (Sri Venkateswara University) examined the period between 1101 and 1400 CE—a crucial phase which was significant when lexical and grammatical developments took place. His work analyzed these transitions in depth.

R. Annapurnamma from Annamalai University conducted a comparative study of ancient and modern Telugu. Scholars such as T.M. Seshagiri Shastri (Anusvara Tatvam, 1947) and Vakkalanka Srinivasa Rao (1942) contributed valuable insights into the historical development of nasal sounds in Telugu. Nidudavolu Venkatarao, in his essay on the role of phonetics in poetic devices like Yati and Prasa, offered comprehensive analysis which is beneficial to studies on colloquial evolution. He authored several linguistic papers.

Badriraju Krishnamurti name is synonymous with modern Telugu linguistics. He was internationally acclaimed scholar in Dravidian comparative studies. Krishnamurti laid the theoretical foundation for writing historical and descriptive grammars in Telugu. His Ph.D. dissertation from the University of Pennsylvania, "A Historical and Descriptive Study of Telugu Verbal Bases", published in 1961, remains to be the foundation. Though focused on Telugu for linguistics verb morphology, this work has significant implications in comparative Dravidian studies and frequently cited in this field. Krishnamurti has also published additional research on vowel alternations in verbal roots, including studies on i/e, u/o alternations, consonant mutations, and elision patterns. These papers in American linguistic journals. He formulated and published comprehensive phonological rules that clarified long-debated issues in Dravidian phonetics and reconstructed Telugu evolution from Proto-Dravidian based on verb roots language.

Though his research primarily dealt with Dravidian comparative studies, N. Kumaraswami Raja's 1969 article "Post-nasal voiceless plosives in Telugu: a comparative study" and G. Sambasiva Rao's 1973 Ph.D. dissertation "A comparative study of Dravidian noun derivation" from Cornell University also made significant contributions. Kumaraswami Raja did comparative analysis to demonstrate that nasalized aspirated stops in Proto-Dravidian evolved into voiced stops

in Telugu, unlike Tamil which retained geminate stops. Sambasiva Rao refined theories proposed by Krishnamurti and others on vowel alternation in Dravidian roots, contributing to discussions on nominal derivation.

Many descriptive grammars of Telugu poetic language emerged after 1960. Jasti Suryanarayana focused on Tikkana's use of Samasa (compounds) and earned a Ph.D. from Sri Venkateswara University under supervision of B.Krishnamurti. This was the first doctoral research in Telugu Linguistic in the university. Kalluri Suryanarayana Rao's dissertation "A Descriptive analysis of Nannaya's Usage (1965)" on Nannaya's language explored phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and style using modern linguistic methods.

In 1974, Badriraju Krishnamurti edited A History of the Telugu Language, and it was published by the Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi. A revised edition appeared in 1978. This volume included contributions from various scholars on Telugu epigraphic and literary language evolution. In the final chapter titled "A Retrospective Overview, Krishnamurti systematically outlined the historical stages of Telugu". An English version was also released by the academy.

Lakamsani Chakradhar Rao, from Andhra University, researched Urdu and Marathi loanwords in Telugu court literature. His dissertation examined the phonological and semantic changes such borrowings (1967) underwent.

Studying poetic usage alone, is inadequate when Telugu language is expanding as an official and instructional language across multiple domains. While understanding language change is essential for specialists, broader linguistic inquiry must align with modern functional and practical demands. Comparative studies of Telugu in light of contemporary needs are therefore not only relevant but essential.

Therefore, comparative studies of Telugu language is the need of the hour, which is not only relevant but also essential to meet the modern demands.

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11

Mythological Stories behind Archaeological Sites in South India: Special Reference to Rayalaseema Region of Andhra Pradesh

- Prof.N.Kanakarathnam

ABSTRACT

The Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh – particularly the districts of Kurnool, Ananthapuram, Kadapa, and Chittoor – yielded numerous megalithic monuments in the form of menhirs. Menhirs are tall, upright stones erected over burial pits and are characteristic of prehistoric funerary practices. In contemporary local traditions, these stones continue to be venerated, as they are believed to possess supernatural or protective powers. According to popular belief, the monuments – locally referred to as *Pandavula Gullu* – are attributed to the Pandavas, the mythological heroes of the Indian epic tradition, who are said to have constructed them during their period of exile.

A significant number of megalithic sites are recorded in the Chittoor and Kurnool districts, where ritual practices associated with these monuments persist to the present day. Annual ceremonies are conducted by local communities, some of whom believe themselves to be descendants of King Dharmaraja. At Durvesi village in Nandyala taluka, a megalithic site comprising four menhirs – two small and two tall – have been identified. Local oral tradition associates these stones with a familial narrative, according to which they represent a couple and their two children, one male and one female. Another notable cluster of megaliths consisting of five menhirs is located at the center of Parumanchala village in Atmakuru mandal. These monuments are

locally known as *Perantala Rallu* or *Perantala Arugu*. One of the stones exhibits a form resembling a woman carrying a child on her waist, while the remaining stones vary in size and shape. Daily ritual practices are performed by villagers at this site, indicating the survival of cultic traditions that may have originated in prehistoric times. The distribution of these sites suggests that megalithic communities favored hilly and rugged terrain, typically in proximity to perennial water sources.

A defining characteristic of megalithic culture is the careful treatment of the dead, with large stone monuments erected primarily for burial and commemorative purposes. Excavations conducted by the Andhra Pradesh State Department of Archaeology have revealed megalithic burials containing grave goods and implements. Dolmens and menhirs were commonly erected near the head end of the burial, likely serving as markers indicating the position of the deceased. In contemporary local usage, these monuments are referred to as *Rakshasa Gullu* or *Rakshasa Rallu*. In certain villages, fear and mythological associations surrounding these sites have led to their avoidance by the local population.

Keywords: Metamorphic sedimentary rocks, megalithic, mythology, stone age, menhir dolmen, burials cists, graveyards, horizontal, vertical, antiquity, excavation.

Rayalaseema is a cluster of four districts of southern Andhra Pradesh, comprising Anantapur, Chittoor, Kurnool, and YSR District (Kadapa District). All the constituent districts individually exhibit unique lithology of igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic rocks that existed during the Archaean and Precambrian ages. The region as a whole is composed of varied geological formations starting from the Archaeans, composed of older metamorphics constituted by hornblende–talc–mica schist, quartzo feldspathic schist, and banded ferruginous quartzite. These rocks are followed by the Peninsular Gneissic Complex with granodiorite, granitoid gneiss, and migmatite. Overlying these rocks, Lower Proterozoic rocks consisting of the Dharwar Supergroup are present. These include banded ferruginous quartzite, quartzo feldspathic gneiss, and Champion gneiss. These rocks are immediately overlain by Palaeoproterozoic rocks containing

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alkali complexes such as syenite, epidote hornblende gneiss, acid intrusives containing granites, and basic intrusives such as dolerite and gabbro. The Palaeoproterozoic sequence is followed by a non conformity, which indicates a period of non deposition.¹

In parts of the Rayalaseema region, the post Archaean formations encountered a meteorite impact upon the non conformity, resulting in the formation of the crescent shaped Cuddapah Basin. The Cuddapah Basin is filled with sedimentary rocks consisting of alternate strata of arenaceous, carbonaceous, and argillaceous rocks, with periodically erupted igneous intrusions in the form of sills. The strata of these rocks are known as the Cuddapah Supergroup of rocks (W. King,² 1872; Bhattacharji and Singh,³ 1983; Nagaraja Rao et al.,⁴ 1976).

Megalithic monuments, scattered in different parts of South India, number a few thousand in existence. The megalithic monuments of antiquity are always related to certain myths and traditions. Myths and traditions vary from place to place and region to region. However, most of these traditions and legends are similar in both character and content, and usually convey a similar meaning.

The Pandavas, the mythological heroes of Indian lore, are often credited with the construction of megalithic monuments, particularly dolmens and dolmenoid cists. Such monuments are locally known as *Pandavula gullu*, *Pandavula penta*, *Pandugutta chenulu*, and similar names. In Telugu, *banda* means “stone.” Terms such as *Pandavula banda* and *Pandavula gudi* or *gullu* are frequently associated with megalithic sites in Chittoor District. Particularly in the Rayalaseema districts of Andhra Pradesh, there exists a widespread belief among local communities that the Pandavas constructed these monuments during their period of exile.⁵

In some regions, megaliths are closely linked with mythology. For example, in parts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, megalithic monuments are referred to as *Pandavara mane* or *Pandu pare*, meaning “house of the Pandus” or “stone of the Pandus.”⁶ In some areas of Telangana, the same monuments are referred to as *Rakshasa gullus*. At Kaperlaguru in Warangal District, an area containing megalithic monuments is known as *Rakshasa gudiam*, meaning

“village of demons.”⁷ Sewell recorded Telugu names such as *Rakshasa gullu* or *Goli-the Rakshasa* and derived the names of Goli villages from these traditions.⁸

The Tamil epic *Manimekhalai* throws light on various modes of disposal of the dead practiced by different communities. According to Tilley, the construction of monuments balances the cultural memory of a place, and in the Indian context, local legends have often been used to understand megalithic burials.

Over the course of many years since the evolution of humanoids and humans, significant changes occurred in form, habits, and all walks of life. Eating habits, social behaviour, tools, technology, and dwelling patterns evolved alongside advances in cognitive capacity. From early hominoids to *Homo sapiens*, spanning the Stone Age to the modern period, this transition occurred over thousands of years, marked by numerous milestones, cultures, and developments. A block of time characterized by a similar culture is termed an “Age.” The Three-Age System divides human prehistory into the Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age, based on dominant tool-making technologies.

The Tamil epic *Manimekhalai*, throw light on various modes of disposing the dead, practiced by different groups of people.⁹ According to Tilley, the construction of Monuments balances the cultural memory of the place and in Indian context, the local legends were used for understanding the megalithic burials.

There were many years passed since Humanoids and Humans have evolved there had been a change in form as well as habits and all walks of their life. The eating habits, social behavior, tools, technology, dwelling place everything started changing based on advancement of application of his capacity of brain. From early Hominoids to Homo Sapiens, Stone Age and up to Modern Human, the transition is not in short period. It took thousands of years with lot of milestones, cultures, developments. The block of time period of a similar culture is called Age. The three age system is the timelines of human prehistory into three consecutive time periods, named respectively based on their main tool making technologies: The Stone Age, Bronze Age, and Iron Age.¹⁰

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At some sites urn and sarcophagus burials are also found in association with lithic appendages. At Chingleput and Kunnattur urn and sarcophagus burials were found placed within cairns or cists made of stones slabs and there are more examples from Tamil Nadu¹¹ and Andhra Pradesh¹² where urns and sarcophagi were found with lithic appendages such as stone circle, cist, dolmen and capstone. However, there are some arguments regarding the incorporation of the commemorative monuments of menhir and alignments in the megalithic culture. Broadly, megaliths denote a socio-religious and socio-economic mode of burying the dead in a grave with or without lithic appendages. It may be said that megaliths denote monuments made of stones or where stones were used as appendages to place the dead or in commemoration of the dead. Megaliths, mainly in peninsular India, are associated with early and extensive use of iron and characteristic pottery type known as black and red ware (BRW).¹³

The sarcophagi either in pit circles or cist burials are found from South Arcot, Chengalpat and North Arcot districts of Tamilnadu, Kolar district of Karnataka and Cuddapah, Kurnool, and Mahaboobnagar, Krishna and Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh. The most common types are oblong cists with apsidal ends, vertical walls and thickly – grooved. The walls slightly bent inwards, resulting in a bulging body. Sometimes they are provided with two or three rows of legs, ranging from 4 to 21 or more in number, often hollow and pierced with holes as at Enner, Kunnattur, Sunur and Peddanarur.¹⁴

1. Balapanuru

Balapanuru¹⁵ is a village situated about 15 km north-west of Nandyal mandal headquarters in Kurnool District. In the centre of the village, two megalithic slab menhirs are present. These menhirs, locally known as *Niluvurallu* (standing stones), are conical in shape, with a stumpy base and a narrow apex resembling a human head. Based on their size, the larger menhir is called *Poturaju*, while the leaner one is known as *Lingamaiah*. According to local oral tradition, these menhirs were transported on a bullock cart from Nalgonda to Munagala. The cart halted at the present site, where the bullocks refused to move further. A ten-year-old boy with spiritual insight revealed that a seasonal stream flowed nearby and that the stones desired to remain at *Poturaju Katta*. Accepting the boy's revelation,

the villagers installed the menhirs at the same location. Annual rituals were performed at the site, though they have not been conducted in recent years. The *Poturaju* stone measures 1.80 m in height, 1.70 m in width at the base, 1.20 m in the middle, and 0.90 m at the apex, with a thickness of 0.20 m. The *Lingamaiah* stone measures 1.80 m in height, 1.30 m at the base, 1.40 m in the middle, and 0.70 m at the apex, with a thickness of 0.35 m.



Plate 1 : Menhirs, Balapanuru
Kurnool Dt.



Plate 2 : Menhirs, Balapanuru,
Kurnool Dt.

2. Bilakalaguduru

Bilakalaguduru¹⁶ village lies on the left side of the Gadivemula–Nandyala Road, about 5 km east of Gadivemula. Approximately 1 km southeast of the village, a megalithic site with nearly one hundred cist burials is located on a hillock locally known as *Gujjari Guttala Banda*. The monuments are referred to as *Pandavagullu*, *Pandava ramane*, *Pandupare*, and *Pandavakkuli*. Local tradition attributes their construction to the Pandavas during exile. In some regions, similar monuments are known as *Rakshasa gullu* or *Rakasi gudi*. At this site, however, villagers believe the monuments were constructed by short-statured people known as *Gujjari* or *Marugujju*. The cist burials, constructed of dressed orthostatic slabs, have been disturbed by natural forces and human activity. The slabs are arranged in a swastika pattern, mostly clockwise, to prevent collapse.¹⁷



Plate 3: Cist Burials,
Bilakalaguduru
Kurnool Dt.



Plate 4 : Cist Burials,
Bilakalaguduru,
Kurnool Dt.

3. Durvesi

Durvesi¹⁸ village is located 5 km from the Nandyala–Gadivemula road. Four menhirs known locally as *Niluvu rallu* are found in the centre of the village. One stands upright, another lies horizontally, while the remaining stones form a cluster. These menhirs range from 3 to 6 m in height. Local mythology narrates the story of a brother and sister who unknowingly married and were later turned into stone after returning to the village, violating a taboo. Despite disturbance, villagers continue to worship the stones as local deities.

Sarcophagi found in pit circles or cist burials occur in South Arcot, Chengalpattu, and North Arcot districts of Tamil Nadu; Kolar district of Karnataka; and Cuddapah, Kurnool, Mahabubnagar, Krishna, and Guntur districts of Andhra Pradesh. The most common types are oblong cists with apsidal ends, vertical walls, and thick grooves. The walls are slightly curved inward, creating a bulging body. In some cases, they are provided with two or three rows of legs, ranging from four to twenty-one or more, often hollow and perforated, as seen at Enner, Kunnattur, Sunur, and Peddanarur.



Plate 5 : Menhirs, Durvesi,
Kurnool Dt.



Plate 6 : Menhirs, Durvesi,
Kurnool Dt.

4. Edu Chutla Kota

A megalithic dolmen known as *Edu Chutla Kota* is located near the village of the same name along the V. Kota–Gudiyatham route. The monument follows an anti-clockwise arrangement and is also referred to as *Pandavula Kota*.¹⁹

5. Kammaguttapalli

Kammaguttapalli²⁰ village is located 6 km northwest of T.Sundupalle village and mandal in YSR Kadapa District. Towards southeast of the kammaguttapalle these megalithic monuments were noticed at distance of 2 km, noticed on a granite hillock, locally named as ‘Pandurajubandagutta’. The noticed monuments are Megalithic dolmens and Slab circles encircled in 3 to 4 circles. Nearly 10 to 12 monuments are noticed, the dolmens are encircled with slab circles. The slabs are semi circular in nature with one circle to four circles. In one circle the slabs are reach to height of 2 to 2.50 m and width of 1.50 m., the slabs are packed with stone rubble for strength and support. Normally the slabs are 8 to 9 in a single circle. In the centre of these monuments dolmens are noticed with orthostats and the front orthostats of all the monuments are missing. One of the monument having four slab circles, the smaller circles are in the outer circle, going into the inner circles the size of the semi circular slabs are increasing in their size. In the second slab circle instead of Stone slab, a megalithic anthropomorphic statue was noticed with bottom in the form of a plank, in middle or in the waist region of the statue is narrow in appearance, in the pectoral or the proximal region of the statue noticed with two half jointed together without a head. In the place of the head region a ‘V’ shaped depression was noticed. This type of statues is noticed at ‘Midimalle’²¹ in Chittoor district, explored by Prof. K.P. Rao of University of Hyderabad. Over the entire site Kammagutta palle is a peculiar site having this type peculiarity with anthropomorphic statue noticed in YSR district. In the same mandal, another site ‘Devandlapalle’ was noticed within few km. In the surrounding places of these monuments megalithic pottery was encountered.

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Plate 7 : Slab Circles
Kammaguttapalli, Kadapa Dt.



Plate 8 : Dolmen,
Kammaguttapalli, Kadapa Dt.



Plate 9 : Anthropomorphic
Statue, Kammaguttapalli

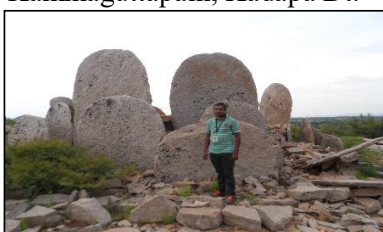


Plate 10 : Slab Circle,
Kammaguttapalli

6. Pagidyala

Pagidyala²² is a village situated 8 km northeast of the Nandikotkur town, and south bank of Tungabhadra river. To the west of the present village with a distance of $\frac{1}{2}$ km. a megalithic site is found with nearly ten menhirs. These menhirs are locally known as “*Niluvurallu*”. Behind these menhirs a local myth is traditionally following by the local people. Once upon a time from the present village a family was going to another village for marriage, when they reach the out skirts of the village they have to sacrifice some formalities to the local village deity. But they forget that formality and crossed the village borders near “*Badanamma Bavi*” (*Badanamma well*) hence the local deity got angry upon the family and given curse to the family. The family becomes stones, not only family but also bullocks, bullock courts, animals’ children, women, their relatives and their different things all were became as stones. These are the megalithic menhirs were made by lime stone. These are measuring from $\frac{1}{2}$ m to 3 m. height. Due to the road extension the village people disturbed the site and some of the stones are remaining.



Plate 11 : Menhirs,
Pagidyala, Kurnool Dt.



Plate 12 : Menhirs, Pagidyala,
Kurnool Dt.

7. Parumanchala

A group of five menhirs were noticed in the centre of the village. Parumanchala²⁴ village is located in between Nandikotkur – Atmakur main road, which is situated 15 km southeast of the Nandikotkur, and 5 km south from Atmakur. The author assumes that some of the menhirs look with megalithic anthropomorphic features, how for it is correct we don't know? Villagers call these monuments as ***“Perantala Rallu”*** (the local people telling a tale about these stone structures), and the platform is known as ***“Perantala Arugu”***. Among these erected stones one of them looks like women, which carry a child in her waist. These erected stones measuring one meter, two meters, and one and half-meters respectively. Due to the widening of the road, these menhirs are kept aside, performing daily rituals to these stones. So these figures might have played an important role in the cult of the megalithic people and early historic times.²⁴



Plate 13 : Menhirs,
Parumanchala



Plate 14 : Menhirs,
Parumanchala

8. Tenagal

Tenagal is a village in Kundurpi Mandal in Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. It is located 68 km. towards north from district headquarters. Tenagal is a small hamlet which is situated about 2.4 km south west of Kalyanadurg town in Anantapur district.¹

9. Rock Art site Enugugavisandu

The Rock Art site location locally known as “Enugulagavisandu” which means Elephant’s cave is about 2 km south west of Tenagal. This site was discovered by Dr.Rami Reddy (1971). There are eight natural caverns or shelters- all opening to the north situated on the northern slope of the gorge. It is experienced by many that there are some wild animals are inhabited in this caves. On two of the eight caves the paintings which are basically human activity in white ochre were found.²⁶

10. Megalithic Dolmens

At the foot hill of the hill is a plain surface consisting of plenty of Megalithic burials. The surface of the mound also yielded many of

megalithic pottery and iron ore and slag pieces. This plain areas yield a lot of Black and Red ware, sometimes with white ochre, black ware and red ware which are typically classified as the megalithic pottery. Rich megalithic habitation deposit at this site also yielded pottery and other material remains. Starting from the foot hill a vast place has numerous stone circles were also noticed here. Thus it can be decided to the chronologically Megalithic Age. The State Archaeology department conducted excavation and exposed two megalithic burials which had burial goods and tool implements.²⁷

Conclusion

The megalithic people generally preferred hilly and terrain regions with nearby some perennial water source, and probably also the hilly tracts were rich in iron ore. Especially burial builders concentrated near the river valleys in hilly terrains. A comprehensive study of the distribution of the megalithic burials in the Rayalaseema region which include both sepulchral and non-sepulchral throw some light on their typology, orientation and architectural patterns. Especially in Anantapur and Chittoor districts have located many typological burials. Among the varieties, the square and rectangular being large in number, the Swastika, the double chambered, those surrounded by stone circles as well as slab circles, most of them representing port-hole of both circular and square types, have been built by exactly cut orthostatic slabs, in a majority of cases, have been placed vertically either in a pit dug specially for that propose or above the ground. In the case of a few, the arrangement of orthostats with a view to prevent the other form in that is in Swastika pattern represent both clock wise and anti-clock wise. The orthostats and the cap stones used for all these monuments have been formed both from undressed rough blocks of stones and partly dressed flattish one. Among the other non-sepulchral monuments, the menhirs, a few of which also being surrounded by stone circles, occur in a number of sites in the close vicinity of the other monuments in the Rayalaseema region. Closely allied to the menhirs, the alignments and avenues appear to be quite rare. Cairns and Stone circles of sepulchral types are spread in all over the Rayalaseema region. Megalithic cultures emerged in various parts of the world in different periods. However no direct connections can be seen between these Cultures. The only common point in the

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Megalithic cultures is that special care was taken to preserve the bodies buried under the stone monuments. In various parts of India people constructed monuments using huge stone, mainly for the purpose of burial and memorial.

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12

Vemana and Avvaiyar A Comparative Perspective

-Dr.P.S.Ganesh Moorthy

Abstract

Tamil and Telugu are languages with rich literature. Most of the literature found in these languages is romantic literature. Short stories, novels, poems, and plays are the common forms of literature in these languages to this day. The aim of this article is to examine the moral values expressed by Avvaiyar in Tamil literature to pave the way for a good life in this world, and the way in which Vemana expressed his life experiences to this society in Telugu literature.

Keywords: Avvaiyar, Vemana, Family, Society, Creations,

Introduction

Literature is more enduring than other arts. The literary art is more likely to live in the minds of other than books. Therefore, it is more enduring than painting and sculpture that people have preserved through the ages. That is why we can see that even though painting and sculpture from thousands of years ago have disappeared, only the literature of that time is still appreciated today. Literature is centred on human life. It is related to human language and is also a form of speech. It is set in a specific form, verse and prose. It has the power to create a surge in the mind of the learner and a bloom in the heart. It has the power to delight the human mind and instruct. Literature is said to be created by divine inspiration. Whether it is life or art, if we want to make others receive the emotion we have received, it is useful to talk about emotion. The art of literature is to make the

object of emotion visible to their external or internal eyes. (Literary Ability – P.249) Plato's view is that divine inspiration is the driving force for artistic creation in general and literary creation in particular.

Freud, the founder of psycho analysis, said, "Internal stimulation is a tool for expressing human emotions and thoughts that lie dormant in the subconscious mind of a person."

Vemana

Vemana, is admired by everyone in the country today, is a great poet. Vemana's fame has spread not only in the Telugu country but also in other Dravidian-speaking states surrounding it. It is known that a book called 'Vemana Pathiyam' appeared in Tamil language in 1926, 100 years ago. The great poet Vemana, who lived in the Chittoor and Kadapa districts of the Rayalaseema region in the seventeenth century, composed over two thousand seven hundred songs.

Avvaiyar

Avvaiyar is a well - known female poet. There were many poets with the name Avvaiyar. When viewed from a historical perspective, considering the literature, Tamil tradition, related people, it becomes clear that they lived in different times. The name Avvaiyar refers to many female scholars who lived in various periods. It can be distinguished that there have been six Avvaiyars in the Sangam period.

The ideas conveyed in these songs are diverse. Many of them specifically describe real-world truths and alchemical tricks; they can be compared to the songs of Tamil Nadu Siddhas, especially the songs of worth considering in conjunction with some. There are many songs about virtue and materialism that are appreciated by everyone and are of general use to everyone. Therefore, it is not surprising that they are compared and compared with the Thirukkural. Some songs explaining the principles of justice are also included in the Vemana songs.

Many books have appeared in Telugu today about Vemana's life and his poetic legacy. Through them We get know that Vemana was born in a farming in a prosperous village.

The one who is involved is a hermetic life is called a monk, He was a monk of the village, sang many songs with simple parables in

the sweet style of ‘**Adalavathi**’, which, once read, would remain in the heart, so that everyone could understand the joys and sorrows of the common people.

He is celebrated by the people of this state as a people’s poet because the parables he uses are derived from people’s lives.

The layers of metaphor found in one of the songs below are meant to support the above truth. It arises from a domestic struggle between husband and wife. He compares the suffering of the heart to a stone that gets stuck in a shoe and presses on the foot, a fly that gets stuck in the ear and makes a noise, dust that falls into the eye and stings, and a thorn stuck in the foot.

“The king of the saviours, the

“ Seppiloni raayi seviloni joreega

Kanyanthu nalusu kaali mullu

Intiloni poru inthintha kaathayaa

Visvathabi Ramaa Vinara Vema!.”

The series

“Mantra Jalamuganna Mangali Jalam Kechu”

Shows his reformist tendencies.

The image of a ‘Avvaiyaar’, a grandmother with a broken leg, appears before people’s eyes today; the lyric of the Kavimani song ‘**Avvai Kizhavi Nam Kizhavi**’ creeps into his tongue. But actually, ‘Avvai’ does not refer to the old age of a woman. The word ‘Avva’, which is used in Telugu today, was not used in Tamil at that time. If desired, it can be taken to mean maturity of knowledge and growth of experience.

The Tamil Purappadal sequence “Madavaral Unkan Vaanuthal” (Purananuru 89:2) refers to a beautiful, young Sangam - era Avvai. The Tamil Encyclopaedia explains that women who excelled in knowledge and character were called Avvai. (Encyclopaedia Part 2) (Page No. 756)

The Seevaga Chintamani refers to a woman who has become a Monk by the word “Avvai”.

Is it just one person?

Is it many? is a question.

He does not doubt the idea that all scholars are many.

It can be seen that in the medieval period, when mythological stories were prevalent, and in later times, when miracles were possible and creative, many considered the goddess to be one.

However, all those who study the history of Tamil literature systematically will agree that many scholars with the name of Avvaiyar have appeared and been known from time to time in Tamil land. Many poets, such as the Sangam period poets who were praised by Adhiyaman Neduman Anji, the Cheraman period poets, the medieval poets who sang the books of justice, and the later poets who sang the voice of wisdom, have lived and sung many songs and enriched the Tamil language.

These poets and the medieval poets also sang some sweet solo songs. In later times, some poets with dramatic ability and imagination who came to sing the story of the poets in accordance with the Puranas, sang some short songs in the name of the poets and many poets also created their lives as if they were their own. All of these can be seen today mixed in solo song collections and become Avvaiyar songs. Among these Avvaiyar, Mudurai, Nalvazhi is one of them. Her songs can be compared here with the songs of the Telugu poet Vemana. Both of them have similar views on society, education, religious morality, and life, and each one sings as if the other is explaining the idea.

Society

The basis of society. ‘Meaning this world is for the ignorant.

No’ he said Poyyamozhiyaar. Expanding on that a bit, Avvaiyar says

“Illanai illalum Vendaal

Eentedutha Thaayum Vendaal”

Vemana says that relatives respect only those who wear turbans, nice clothes, and gold ornaments.

Paak Pachadambu Paidambu Sommulu

Kagugivaarinai kai kodupan Thuval

Paragalomisey Panthuvul Bagavaari (522)

He further explains that the meaning of the song is that a relative becomes an enemy. Avvaiyar says that if he has something in his hand, everyone will praise even a person who does not have a stone.(Nalvazhi 34)

The world will praise even the one who has material possessions, as can be seen from the song

‘ **Pusa Pogum Pasiki** ‘.

Hunger is a scourge caused by poverty.

Vayire! Unnodu Vaazhthal Arithu (Nal -11)

Says the sage. It can be understood that the sage thought that the Vemana could live with a tiger but could not live with Kali (hunger).

Conclusion

Avvaiyar and Vemana are considered to be the greatest poets of Tamil and Telugu languages. They have sung with various moral concepts to improve the lives of the people in Tamil and Telugu society. It can be seen that the views of Avvaiyar in Tamil and Vemana in Telugu on society, education, religious morality, and life are all in harmony. It is no exaggeration to say that both of them have written about the daily sufferings and trials that people go through in the family environment. They written about their life experiences in their own style is an indelible asset to the Tamil and Telugu languages.

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13

The Correlation Between Teacher Self-Efficacy and Teacher Effectiveness in Higher Secondary Schools in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh

- V. Srinivasa Rao & Prof. S. Vijaya Vardhini

Abstract: This research article explores the significant positive correlation between teacher self-efficacy (TSE) and teacher effectiveness in higher secondary schools. It highlights how TSE influences student academic achievement, behavior, and motivation. The article discusses key dimensions of TSE, contextual differences among teachers, predictors of success, and the vital role of administrative support. Findings indicate that enhancing teacher self-efficacy can lead to improved educational outcomes, and recommendations are provided for educators and policymakers to foster a supportive environment for teachers.

Key words: Self-efficacy, Teacher effectiveness, Academic achievement, Motivation, Educational outcomes, Supportive environment.

Introduction: Teacher self-efficacy (TSE) refers to the beliefs teachers hold regarding their capabilities to influence student engagement and learning outcomes. This concept, rooted in Bandura's social cognitive theory, has gained significant attention in educational research due to its profound impact on teaching effectiveness and student success. Highly efficacious teachers are often more committed, resilient, and effective in classroom management and

instructional strategies, which directly correlates with student outcomes. This paper aims to synthesize existing literature on TSE, examining its implications for teacher effectiveness in higher secondary education.

Literature Review:

The relationship between teacher self-efficacy (TSE) and teacher effectiveness has been extensively studied, revealing critical insights into how teachers' beliefs about their capabilities influence educational outcomes. **Bandura's (1997)** social cognitive theory serves as the foundation for understanding TSE, positing that self-efficacy affects motivation, behavior, and performance. This theory is particularly relevant in educational contexts, where teachers' confidence can significantly shape their instructional practices and interactions with students.

Research by **Shahzad and Naureen (2017)** demonstrates that teachers with high self-efficacy are more effective in promoting student academic achievement and managing classroom behavior. Their findings indicate that these teachers employ diverse instructional strategies and maintain a positive classroom environment, leading to improved student outcomes.

Zeb, Zhang, and Khan (2024) further explore the dimensions of TSE, identifying three key areas: classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement. Their study highlights that effective teachers not only manage classroom dynamics but also engage students actively in the learning process, which is crucial for fostering a conducive educational environment.

Contextual factors also play a significant role in TSE. Research indicates that urban teachers often exhibit higher self-efficacy compared to their rural counterparts, likely due to differences in resources and professional development opportunities (*Informatics Journals*, 2024). Additionally, gender dynamics have been shown to influence TSE, with female teachers demonstrating effectiveness in specific contexts (**IJFMR, 2024**).

Administrative support is critical in enhancing TSE. Effective leadership practices, such as mentoring and resource allocation, can

foster a supportive environment for teachers, ultimately leading to improved educational experiences for students. This literature underscores the importance of addressing both individual and contextual factors to enhance teacher self-efficacy and, consequently, teacher effectiveness in higher secondary education.

Theoretical Framework:

Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory posits that self-efficacy influences motivation, behavior, and performance. In the context of education, TSE affects how teachers approach their work, their persistence in the face of challenges, and their interactions with students. TSE is critical in shaping educational practices and student experiences.

Impact on Student Achievement:

Numerous studies have established a link between high TSE and improved student outcomes. **Shahzad and Naureen (2017)** found that teachers with elevated self-efficacy levels contribute to better academic performance among students. These teachers are more likely to implement effective instructional strategies, maintain classroom discipline, and foster a positive learning environment of which are essential for student success.

Key Dimensions of Teacher Self-Efficacy:

TSE is typically assessed through three primary dimensions:

- 1. Classroom Management:** The ability to maintain a conducive learning environment by managing student behavior effectively.
- 2. Instructional Strategies:** The competence in employing diverse teaching methods tailored to meet the needs of all students.
- 3. Student Engagement:** The ability to motivate and engage students actively in the learning process.

These dimensions are interconnected and collectively contribute to a teacher's overall effectiveness.

Contextual Differences:

Contextual factors significantly influence TSE and teacher effectiveness. Research indicates that teachers in urban areas often demonstrate higher self-efficacy and effectiveness compared to their

rural counterparts (Zeb, Zhang, & Khan, 2024). This disparity may stem from differences in resources, professional development opportunities, and student demographics. Additionally, studies suggest that female teachers may exhibit greater effectiveness in specific contexts, highlighting the importance of gender dynamics in educational settings.

Predictors of Success

Beyond TSE, several key predictors contribute to teacher effectiveness:

- **Digital Competence:** As highlighted in a study by Informatics Journals (2024), teachers proficient in digital tools can enhance their instructional methods and engage students more effectively.
- **Professional Commitment:** The IJFMR study (2024) emphasizes the role of a teacher's commitment to their profession in fostering a positive learning environment.
- **Pedagogical Skills:** Strong pedagogical skills are essential for implementing effective teaching strategies and addressing diverse student needs.

Role of Administration

Administrative support plays a crucial role in enhancing teacher self-efficacy. Effective school leadership can foster a supportive environment through:

- **Mentoring Programs:** Providing guidance and support to less experienced teachers.
- **Inspirational Leadership:** Encouraging teachers to pursue professional growth and development.
- **Resource Allocation:** Ensuring teachers have access to necessary resources to manage classroom challenges effectively.

Methodology:

This study utilized a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to explore the relationship between teacher self-efficacy (TSE) and teacher effectiveness in higher secondary schools. A sample of 100 higher

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secondary school teachers was selected through stratified random sampling, ensuring representation from urban and rural settings. Data was collected using the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES) to measure TSE across three dimensions: classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 30 teachers to gain deeper insights into their experiences. Quantitative data was analyzed using statistical software, while qualitative data was thematically analyzed.

Research Design:

This descriptive study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to gather comprehensive data on TSE and teacher effectiveness. The research targets higher secondary school teachers across various urban and rural settings in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh.

Participants:

The study sample consists of 100 higher secondary school teachers in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh from diverse backgrounds, including urban and rural schools. Participants are selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across different demographics.

Data Collection:

Data is collected through:

- **Surveys:** Utilizing the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001) to measure TSE across the three dimensions.
- **Interviews:** Conducting semi-structured interviews with a subset of 30 teachers to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions regarding self-efficacy and effectiveness.

Data Analysis:

Quantitative data is analyzed using statistical software to identify correlations between TSE and student outcomes. Qualitative data from interviews is thematically analyzed to extract key themes and patterns related to teacher experiences and perceptions.

Findings:

The results indicated a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.75$, $p < 0.01$) between TSE and student achievement. Teachers with high self-efficacy reported better classroom management, effective instructional strategies, and higher student engagement. Qualitative insights revealed that administrative support and peer collaboration significantly enhanced TSE, while challenges in rural settings negatively impacted teachers' confidence.

Quantitative Results:

Preliminary analysis indicates a strong positive correlation between TSE and student achievement, with a correlation coefficient of 0.75 ($p < 0.01$). Teachers with higher self-efficacy reported better student engagement and fewer behavioral issues.

Key Dimensions Analysis:

- **Classroom Management:** Teachers scoring high in this dimension reported fewer disruptions and a more positive classroom atmosphere.
- **Instructional Strategies:** A significant number of high-efficacy teachers employed varied instructional methods, leading to higher student engagement.
- **Student Engagement:** Teachers who felt confident in their ability to engage students reported higher levels of student motivation and participation.

Qualitative Insights:

Thematic analysis of interview data revealed several key themes:

1. **Supportive Environment:** Teachers emphasized the importance of administrative support in fostering their self-efficacy. Many cited mentoring programs and professional development opportunities as vital.
2. **Peer Collaboration:** Collaborative practices among teachers were highlighted as essential for building confidence and sharing effective strategies.

- 3. Challenges in Rural Settings:** Teachers in rural areas expressed feelings of isolation and a lack of resources, which negatively impacted their self-efficacy.

Discussion:

These findings highlight the critical role of TSE in promoting teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. The study emphasizes the need for ongoing professional development, administrative support, and collaborative practices to foster a culture of self-efficacy among teachers, ultimately leading to improved educational experiences for students.

Implications for Educators:

The findings underscore the importance of fostering teacher self-efficacy as a means to enhance educational outcomes. Educators should focus on:

- **Professional Development:** Implementing ongoing training programs that address both pedagogical skills and digital competence.
- **Collaborative Practices:** Encouraging peer collaboration to share best practices and build a supportive community among teachers.

Recommendations for Policymakers:

To create an environment conducive to high teacher self-efficacy, policymakers should consider the following:

- **Resource Allocation:** Ensuring equitable access to resources, particularly in rural areas, to support teachers in their instructional practices.
- **Administrative Support:** Promoting leadership practices that prioritize mentoring and professional growth for teachers.

Future Research Directions:

Further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of enhanced teacher self-efficacy on student outcomes. Additionally, studies should investigate the role of cultural and contextual factors in shaping TSE across different educational settings.

Conclusion:

This study highlights the critical relationship between teacher self-efficacy and teacher effectiveness in higher secondary schools. By understanding and addressing the factors that influence TSE, educators and policymakers can create a supportive environment that enhances teaching practices and ultimately improves student outcomes. The recommendations provided aim to foster a culture of self-efficacy among teachers, leading to a more effective educational system.

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14

Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle*: Life Is a Children's Game

- Dr.V.Viswanath, Dr.P. Murali Krishna Reddy

Abstract

Kurt Vonnegut's *Cat's Cradle* (1963) is a critique of 20th century's veneration of science, worship of technology, proliferation of destructive weapons, and dominance of politics. Furthermore, it challenges the belief that abstract earthly religious philosophical ideas can control human thought and offer solutions for world's problems and enigmas.

People worldwide have observed prevalence of injustice, corruption, and folly in their societies. This led to a desire for a utopian system where they can coexist in a perfect ideal community. Whether such a society is attainable or not is a central question explored in many of Vonnegut's works. This research will seek a compelling answer to this query through the dystopian chaos of San Lorenzo, which often exacerbates problems without providing solutions.

This research aims to examine *Cat's Cradle* in relation to dystopian concepts. It emphasizes dystopian occurrences and actions within the novel's complementary settings: Ilium, New York, and San Lorenzo. The research unveils failure of science and technology to deliver a better life, sheds light on role of mundane religious philosophy in misleading society, and discusses inability of various economic systems to generate material prosperity. Additionally, the paper offers a symbolic analysis of novel's title in relation to its central theme.

Keywords: - Bokonism, religion, science fiction, ice-nine, untruth

Introduction

Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut presents life as a chaotic, meaningless, and ultimately destructive “children’s game”. The novel uses the metaphor of the string game to represent the fatalistic, and arbitrary nature of human history and knowledge, culminating in the apocalypse caused by irresponsible technological advancement.

Key aspects of the “life is a children’s game” theme in *Cat's Cradle* include:

- **The Metaphor of the Game:** The title refers to the string game, suggesting that human existence is based on “cats” and “cradles” that are not actually there.
- **Meaninglessness:** The narrator and characters exist in a world where actions have no inherent purpose or control over outcomes, similar to how players move strings without creating a real, lasting structure.
- **Bokononism:** The religion of the island, Bokkononism, promotes *foma* (harmless untruths), suggesting that life is only bearable if treated as a game or a lie.
- **Destructive Nature:** The game in the book is dangerous, leading to the ultimate destruction of humanity through ice-nine.
- **The Ending:** The novel concludes with the narrator, Jonah, witnessing the annihilation of the world, highlighting the folly of human knowledge.

For the past four centuries, writers of science fiction have been trying to create a modern conscience for the human race. Kurt Vonnegut, one of the most famous twentieth century American writers, combines satiric social commentary and black comedy with surrealist and science fiction elements in his novels. Known for his outspoken political opinions, Vonnegut also produced a host of essays, articles, and short stories. A number of his works have been translated into television or film. Vonnegut was also a graphic artist, and illustrated a number of his works himself.

Common themes in Vonnegut’s work include the dehumanization wrought by technology, as well as by bureaucracy and media indoctrination. Sexuality and violence and the myths that

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spring up around them are also common themes. While Vonnegut's work has sometimes been criticized for flouting accepted narrative conventions and for vulgarity, there is no mistaking the passion of his underlying arguments – for pacifism, for socialist equality, and most of all for the need for common decency. Yet what separates Vonnegut from other social commentators and political do-gooders is that he never seemed compelled to elevate himself above the rest of humanity.

Kurt Vonnegut was born in 1922, on Armistice Day, in Indianapolis, USA. His father was a well-to-do architect whose fortunes, job opportunities, and mental health fell off drastically with the Great Depression. As a teenager, Vonnegut attended Shortridge High School, where he served as a writer and editor on the school paper, the *Shortridge Daily Echo*. After high school he enrolled in New York's Cornell University. Although he lent his writing and editorial skills to the *Cornell Sun*, his major was biochemistry. It was a choice made at the urging of his father, who believed that a degree in the hard sciences would better prepare his son for financial success than had his own background in architecture. But Vonnegut performed rather poorly in these studies and ended up leaving Cornell to join the US Army in 1942.

In the military he received training as a mechanical engineer, both at the Carnegie Institute and the University of Tennessee. He was then sent off to the European front lines, where he served as an infantry battalion scout. On 14 December 1944, Vonnegut was captured by the Germans during the Battle of the Bulge. Vonnegut, a fourth generation German-American, was sent to a POW camp in Dresden. During the day he worked in a liquid vitamin factory and by night he and his fellows were locked in the basement meat locker of a slaughterhouse. This lodging proved a blessing as the POWs safely rode out the Allied Forces' two-day firebombing siege (13-15 February 1945) of Dresden. While firestorms swept through other underground shelters, linked by various tunnels and openings, and suffocated or incinerated their occupants, the POWs remained unharmed. Meanwhile, the historic and breathtaking city was razed. Some 135,000 civilian residents, refugees, and wounded soldiers were annihilated. After the carnage Vonnegut was used by the Germans to help dig

out corpses from the rubble. He later told his father, "Civilians cursed us and threw rocks as we carried bodies to huge funeral pyres in the city." But eventually the city was overrun by Soviet troops and Vonnegut was freed. He returned to the United States on 22 May and was awarded the Purple Heart.

Much later, Vonnegut's World War II experience would form the core of his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*, published in 1969, during escalating opposition to the Vietnam War. Vonnegut's characterization of World War II, and all wars, as a "children's crusade," coupled with his sardonic depiction of the horrors of war, provided a potent antidote to patriotism and the Hollywood glamorization of battle.

When he returned to the US, Vonnegut married high school friend Jane Marie Cox. He spent the next couple of years pursuing an MA in Anthropology at the University of Chicago. But his thesis, "Fluctuations between Good and Evil in Simple Tales," was rejected and the degree was not granted. Characteristically, Vonnegut worked simultaneously as a news writer, working for the Chicago News Bureau as a police reporter. In 1947 he moved to Schenectady, where he became a publicist for General Electric. The move came at the urging of his elder brother Bernard, a scientist at GE who had recently made some important discoveries on the effectiveness of silver iodide as ice-forming nuclei, marking the advent of effective cloud seeding technology. Fifty years later, after Bernard's passing away, Vonnegut would pay tribute to his brother's discovery by scattering Bernard's ashes over Mount Greylock, in the same area where the scientist had once tossed salt from a twin-prop plane to study the dynamics of precipitation.

Vonnegut claimed that he enjoyed his time at GE immensely. But it was also an inspiration for him creatively, spurring a great deal of short fiction. In February 1950 his "Report on the Barn house Effect" appeared in *Colliers*. The work was well received, and within a year he was earning enough as an author to leave GE and move his family to Cape God. In 1951 Vonnegut published his first novel, *Player Piano*, which deals with the notion that excessive replacement of human labor by technology would rob human beings of a sense of purpose. Interestingly, Vonnegut's suspicion of technology continued for the rest of his life.

Kurt Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle: Life Is a Children's Game

Despite his initial success, Vonnegut was off and on forced to augment his earnings with various day jobs such as English teacher and ad man. He also started the first Saab dealership in the US – an enterprise that ended in bankruptcy. In 1957 his shut-in father passed away, and the following year, Vonnegut's sister died of cancer, two days after her husband had died in a train accident. The tragedy left the couple's four children orphaned. Vonnegut and his wife, who already had three kids of their own, adopted the eldest three children. (The fourth, an infant, went to live with another relative). Eventually, Vonnegut would adopt another child, Lilly, bringing the number of his children to seven.

All the while, Vonnegut's stature as a writer was growing. In addition to a plethora of short stories, he produced a string of solid novels: *The Sirens of Titan* (1959), *Mother Night* (1961), *Cat's Cradle* (1963), *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (1965), and *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969). In 1970, the same year he separated from his wife to move in with photographer Jill Krementz, he began teaching creative writing at Harvard University. A surprise bonus came in 1971, when Vonnegut belatedly received his MA in Anthropology from the University of Chicago when the University decided to accept his novel *Cat's Cradle* in lieu of a formal thesis. The book, in which an absentminded scientist accidentally destroys the world by turning all water into ice, also deals with themes of rationalism and science versus the role of mysticism.

Another downward turn came in 1972, however, when Vonnegut's son, Mark, experienced a schizophrenic breakdown. But as it had been with the elder Vonnegut, tragedy and suffering provided Mark with literary inspiration; he produced *The Eden Express: A Memoir of Insanity* (1975). Mark, who realized that his condition might have been inherited from his grandmother, was also motivated to take up the study of medicine and of orthomolecular psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

Vonnegut's career, which had been on a slow but steady rise since the publication of *Cat's Cradle*, seemed to peak with the movie release of *Slaughterhouse-Five* in 1972 and the subsequent publication of *Breakfast of Champions* in 1973. Although he had

become a major name within the American literary scene and a darling to the counterculture, *Breakfast of Champions* was harshly panned by many critics, and Vonnegut himself seemed to be running out of steam. He claimed he was retiring. More novels eventually appeared: *Slapstick* (1976), *Jailbird* (1979), *Deadeye Dick* (1982), *Galapagos* (1985), *Bluebeard* (1987), *Hocus Pocus* (1990), and *Timequake* (1997). Although Vonnegut announced that *Timequake* would be his last book, he started again another novel, *If God Were Alive Today*, about a stand-up comedian.

In 1984, Vonnegut attempted suicide with pills and alcohol. In January 2000 the top floor of his townhouse caught fire, and he had to be hospitalized for smoke inhalation. Although initially listed in critical condition, he was discharged after four days. Apparently, while Vonnegut was in bed watching the Super Bowl, an ashtray overturned, and he tried to extinguish the flames with a blanket. Ironically, Vonnegut, who had smoked unfiltered Pall Mall cigarette for decades, called his smokes “a classy way to commit suicide.” Kurt Vonnegut died on April 11, 2007, in Manhattan, New York, after suffering irreversible brain injuries as a result of a fall in his house.

Cat's Cradle seems to be based on what Robert Scholes calls “the old collision between science and religion.”⁴ Scholes says, “As the scientist finds the truth that kills, the prophet looks for the saving lie.”⁵ In *Cat's Cradle*, it is the simple children's game that provides the central symbol of man's essential task. The universe he finds himself in is an arbitrary and ever-changing system of meaningless strings, which man, through an act of his creative imagination, has to define as meaningful. If he cannot do that, that is, if he proves unable to invent a meaning that cannot be discovered, he will succumb to the despair of nihilism like the character in the novel who repeatedly observes that there is “*No damn cat, no damn cradle*” (114). But if he bases his imaginative creation of meaning on the helpful lies of religion, he will be much better off than if he grounds his understanding of the self and the world in the inhumane truths of science. This message, then, which made *Cat's Cradle* a cult book of the youthful counterculture of the sixties with its revolt against technocratic rationality, takes up and unfolds the concerns of Vonnegut's previous

Kurt Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle: Life Is a Children's Game

novels, and Bokomonism can be understood as a combination of Paul Proteus' need to "find something to believe in" (*Player Piano* 140) and the insistence of the narrator of *The Sirens of Titan* that the universe is "a nightmare of meaninglessness without end" (8) and that everybody has "to find the meaning of life within himself".

To Vonnegut all religions are manmade myths or lies, but they provide the sense-making structures necessary for man's survival. And they are more necessary today than ever before because they serve as the essential antidote against the most dangerous "religion" of all, the belief in unbridled technological progress with its alleged objectivity, which is nothing but amorality, and its tendency towards ultimate self-destruction.

The phrase "**LIFE IS A CHILDREN'S GAME**" is not a direct quote from Kurt Vonnegut's novel [Cat's Cradle](#). However, the entire novel uses the children's game "cat's cradle" as a central **metaphor** for the meaninglessness and absurdity of human existence

The Metaphor of the Game

Vonnegut uses the simple string game to explore complex themes of science, religion, and the human condition, suggesting that much of what humans consider meaningful is ultimately a harmless (or harmful) untruth, or "foma" in the novel's fictional religion, Bokomonism.

- **No "Cat" and No "Cradle"**: In the novel, the character Newt Hoenikker points out that in the actual game, there is "No damn cat, and no damn cradle". This reveals the illusion at the heart of the game and serves as a powerful symbol for the lack of inherent meaning or purpose in life.
- **A "Puzzle without an Answer"**: The game is described as a puzzle that has no real solution or end, which reflects Vonnegut's view on life's mysteries and the human drive to find answers where there may be none.
- **Scientific Indifference**: Dr. Felix Hoenikker, the amoral scientist responsible for the world-ending substance *ice-nine*, treats his groundbreaking (and destructive) work with the same detached

curiosity as he treats a children's game, highlighting the dangers of science without moral responsibility.

- **Religion as a Game:** The novel's fabricated religion, Bokononism, is an elaborate set of lies designed to make life bearable for the impoverished inhabitants of San Lorenzo. This suggests that religion, like a children's game, provides comfort and structure through shared fictions.

In essence, the novel implies that humans create elaborate rules, beliefs, and systems (like a "children's game") to cope with the reality of a universe without inherent meaning.

Cat's cradle is a game involving the creation of various [string figures](#) between the fingers, either individually or by passing a loop of string back and forth between two or more players. The true origin of the name is debated, though the first known reference is in *The light of nature pursued* by [Abraham Tucker](#) in 1768. The type of string, the specific figures, their order, and the names of the figures vary. Independent versions of this game have been found in [indigenous](#) cultures throughout the world, including in Africa, Eastern Asia, the Pacific Islands, Australia, the Americas, and the Arctic.

Play

The simplest version of the game involves a player using a long string loop to make a complex figure using their fingers and hands.

Another version of the game consists of two or more players making a sequence of string figures, each altering the figure made by the previous player. The game begins with one player making the eponymous figure *Cat's Cradle* (above). After each figure, the next player manipulates that figure and removes the string figure from the hands of the previous player with one of a few simple motions and tightens the loop to create another figure, for example, *Diamonds*. *Diamonds* might then lead to *Candles* (which is also known as *Pinkies*), for example, and then *Manger*—an inverted *Cat's Cradle*—and so on. Most of the core figures allow a choice between two or more subsequent figures: for example, *Fish*

Kurt Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle: Life Is a Children's Game

in a Dish can become *Cat's Eye* or *Manger*. The game ends when a player makes a mistake or creates a dead-end figure, which cannot be turned into anything else. Many players believe that *Two Crowns* or *King's Crown* is one such dead-end figure, although more experienced players recognize that it can be creatively maneuvered into *Candles* or *Pinkies*, which allows the game to continue.

Conclusion:

In *Cat's Cradle*, Vonnegut criticizes science, economy and religion and shows how politics misuses these as tools to deceive and dominate over people. Robert Scholes concludes Vonnegut's point of view on science and religion in this wonderful statement: "As the scientist finds the truth that kills, the prophet looks for a saving lie."³⁹ Actually, the obvious principle in *Cat's Cradle* is a contradiction between science and religion. This is shown in a sort of battle-like controversy between different characters. Science is introduced as creative progress, yet leads to total destruction (starting with first use of the atomic bomb and ending with the end of the world caused by *ice-nine*). Whereas mundane religion, one like Bokononism, cannot save the lives or solve the problems of poor people of The Republic of San Lorenzo, which is controlled by artificial peace and compelled by the "*foma*" of Bokononism.

Vonnegut's fictional society is provided with lack of purpose, with a horrible vision of man's irresponsibility and with what John R. May calls "our insane pretensions, both technological and religious". Vonnegut trenchantly warns humanity for their urgent need for a truthful human community and actual human unity against the forces of destruction. "The universe that is destroyed is one which corresponds with considerable sociological, religious, and logical precision to the universe which exists in reality for most of mankind"⁴². As a result, all the attempts have been done to make San Lorenzo a utopia, lead it to be a dystopia. As reaction to the disastrous end of the novel.

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MLA 9th Edition Stylesheet for *Dravidian Studies Journal*

This stylesheet outlines the formatting and citation requirements for submitting an article to the quarterly journal *Dravidian Studies*, following the MLA Handbook (9th Edition, 2021). These guidelines ensure consistency in manuscript preparation, in-text citations, and the Works Cited page for scholarly articles in the field of Dravidian studies.

1. Manuscript Formatting

- **Font and Size:** Use a legible font such as Times New Roman, 12-point size.
- **Margins:** Set 1-inch margins on all sides (top, bottom, left, right).
- **Spacing:** Double-space the entire manuscript, including the title, body, notes, and Works Cited page.
- **Alignment:** Align text to the left; do not justify.
- **Page Numbers:** Include page numbers in the upper-right corner of each page, preceded by your last name (e.g., “Smith 1”). Use the header function in your word processor.
- **Title and Heading:**
 - Do not create a separate title page unless specified by the journal.
 - On the first page, include your name, institutional affiliation, course or department (if applicable), and date, aligned to the left, double-spaced.
 - Center the title of the article below this information. Do not bold, italicize, or underline the title; use headline-style capitalization (e.g., “Cultural Narratives in Tamil Sangam Literature”).
- **Headings and Subheadings:** Use consistent formatting for headings (e.g., bold or italicized) and subheadings to organize sections. Numbered headings are optional but should be consistent if used.

- **Tables and Illustrations:**

- Label tables as “Table 1,” “Table 2,” etc., above the table, followed by a descriptive title.
- Label figures as “Fig. 1,” “Fig. 2,” etc., below the figure, with a caption.
- Place tables and figures close to their reference in the text.

- **Language and Style:**

- Use clear, concise prose suitable for a scholarly audience.
- For articles involving Dravidian languages (e.g., Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam), provide transliterations and translations for non-English terms in parentheses or notes, following a standard system like ISO 15919 for transliteration.

2. In-Text Citations

- **Basic Format:** Use parenthetical citations with the author’s last name and page number, without a comma (e.g., (Krishnan 45)).
- **Author in Text:** If the author’s name is mentioned in the sentence, include only the page number in parentheses (e.g., Krishnan argues that... (45)).

- **Multiple Authors:**

- Two authors: (Raman and Suresh 72).
- Three or more authors: (Raman et al. 19).

- **No Author:** Use a shortened title in quotation marks (e.g., (“Tamil Poetics” 23)).

- **Multiple Sources in One Citation:** Separate with semicolons (e.g., (Krishnan 45; Suresh 19)).

- **No Page Numbers:** For online sources or articles without page numbers, omit the page number or use paragraph numbers if available (e.g., (Narayanan, par. 5)).

- **Indirect Sources:** Use “qtd. in” for quoted material from a secondary source (e.g., (Subramanian, qtd. in Krishnan 89)).

- **Non-Latin Scripts:** For sources in Dravidian languages, provide the transliterated author name and title in the citation, consistent with the Works Cited entry.

3. Works Cited Page

- **Placement and Formatting:**

- Begin the Works Cited list on a new page, titled “Works Cited” (centered, no formatting).
- Double-space all entries and use a hanging indent (0.5 inches).
- Alphabetize entries by the author’s last name or, if no author, by the title (ignoring “A,” “An,” or “The”).

- **Core Elements:** Follow the MLA 9th Edition template for all entries:

1. Author.
2. Title of source.
3. Title of container,
4. Contributor,
5. Version,
6. Number,
7. Publisher,
8. Publication date,
9. Location.

- **Examples for Common Source Types in Dravidian Studies:**

- **Journal Article with DOI:**

Rajan, K. “Archaeological Evidence of Early Tamil Trade Networks.” *Dravidian Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2023, pp. 45-67, doi:10.1080/12345678.2023.0987654.

- **Journal Article in a Database:**

Nair, Sreekumar. “Narrative Structures in Malayalam Folktales.” *Journal of South Indian Literature*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2022, pp. 112-30. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/98765432.

- **Book:**

Subramanian, T. S. Sangam Literature and Its Cultural Context. Oxford UP, 2021.

- **Book Chapter:**

Menon, Anil. "Linguistic Diversity in Early Kannada Texts." Dravidian Cultural Narratives, edited by Priya V. Rao, Cambridge UP, 2020, pp. 89-104.

- **Source in a Dravidian Language:**

Tiruvalluvar. Tirukkural. Translated by G. U. Pope, Penguin India, 2019.

Note: Use transliterated titles and author names for non-English sources, followed by a translation in square brackets if necessary (e.g., Tirukkural [The Sacred Couplets]).

- **Online Source:**

Venkatesan, Archana. "Digital Archives of Telugu Manuscripts." Dravidian Digital Repository, 15 Mar. 2024, www.dravidianrepo.org/telugu-manuscripts. Accessed 5 July 2025.

- **Archival Material:**

"Palm-Leaf Manuscript of Tolkappiyam." Tamil Nadu State Archives, Chennai, MS 1234, 18th century.

- **Notes for Dravidian Studies:**

- For sources in Dravidian languages, include the original script in parentheses after the transliteration if relevant to the journal's audience.
- If citing oral traditions or fieldwork, describe the source clearly (e.g., "Oral Narrative, collected by Anil Menon, 12 Jan. 2024, Kerala").
- For multilingual sources, indicate the language of the source in the citation if not evident.

4. Additional Guidelines

- **Inclusive Language:** Follow MLA 9th Edition guidelines for inclusive language, avoiding biased or exclusionary terms. For example, use gender-neutral terms unless historically or contextually relevant.
- **Abbreviations:** Spell out abbreviations in the text (e.g., “Tamil Nadu” instead of “TN”) unless commonly accepted in scholarly writing (e.g., “ed.” for editor). See MLA Handbook, Appendix 1, for standard abbreviations.
- **Notes:** Use endnotes sparingly for explanatory content, numbered consecutively. Avoid using notes for citations unless necessary for clarity.
- **Submission Requirements:**
 - Check *Dravidian Studies* journal guidelines for specific submission instructions (e.g., file format, word count, or additional metadata).
 - Submit manuscripts in a standard format (e.g., .docx or .pdf) with a cover letter including your contact information and a brief abstract (150–200 words).

5. Resources

- Consult the *MLA Handbook* (9th Edition, 2021) for detailed guidance.
- Refer to the MLA Style Center (style.mla.org) for examples and updates.

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