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EDITOR'S NOTE

In view of the vast number of papers that we have received, we had to go by the norms of seniority, i.e., by the date of receipt of the papers in our office. Thereafter, those approved by the referees have been taken for publication.

This 27th issue is very pan-India in character, not only in terms of contributions but also in the variety of themes.

We would like to thank all our contributors for sending us well-researched papers. There are several very good papers and few excellent ones in this issue.

We are grateful to Dr. Nanditha Krishna, Dr. M.N. Rajesh and Dr. S. Ananthakrishnan for reviewing books for us.

We request all our contributors to follow the guidelines given on our website - <https://journalcpriir.com>, and include abstracts and keywords in their papers. The references MUST be as per the guidelines for us to even consider sending the paper to the referees.

I would like to warmly thank Dr. Nanditha Krishna, President, C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation, Dr. G. Balaji, Dr. Jyothimani, Mr. Narayan Onkar, Mrs. T. Pichulakshmi, Mr. H. Manikandan and all the staff members of the Foundation who have helped in bringing out this issue.

Dr. G.J. Sudhakar
Editor



1

ANTIQUITIES FROM THE EXCAVATIONS OF SANGAM AGE SITES - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE TERRITORY OF MINOR CHIEFTAINS

(From 3rd century BCE to 6th century CE)

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Abstract

Several minor chieftains ruled ancient Tamilakam in the Sangam period. Among them Pari (chieftain of Parambu nadu), Kari (chieftain of Mullur), Ori (chieftain of Kolli hills), Nalli (chieftain of Oymanadu), Pegan (Velir chieftain), Ay (chieftain of Podiyil hills) and Adiyaman (chieftain of Tahadur) were popular for their philanthropy and patronage of Tamil poets. They were known as kadai yelu vallalgal. Though these chieftains were subordinate to the three crowned monarchs, they were very powerful and popular in their respective regions. According to the Sangam literary works, these chieftains played a vital role in the polity, society and the economy of the Sangam period. But the studies about these chieftains are made from the Sangam literature rather than from the 150 archaeological excavated sites in Tamil Nadu. The archaeological investigation of the materials collected from the excavations in the

respective areas of the above mentioned chieftains had a culture impact of the society under their control. This study is to bring out the heritage and cultural significance of the respective territories of the minor chieftains through the archaeological findings.

Keywords: *Sangam, chieftain, excavation, Pari, Ori, Nalli, Kari, Pegan, Ay and Adiyaman*

Introduction

The ancient Tamil land had been divided into six main divisions such as Tondainadu, Cheranadu, Pandiyanadu, Cholanadu and Kongunadu. These regions were ruled by Kings of Chera, Chola, and Pandya dynasty. Apart from these major powerful rulers, several minor chieftains ruled ancient Tamilakam in the Sangam period. Among them Pari (Chieftain of Parambunadu), Kari (chieftain of Mullur), Ori (chieftain of Kolli hills), Nalli (Chieftain of Oymanadu), Pegan (Velir chieftain), Ay (Chieftain of Podiyil hills) and Adiyaman (Chieftain of Tahadur) were popular for their philanthropy and patronage of Tamil poets. They were known as *kadai yelu vallalgal*. Though these chieftains were subordinate to the three crowned monarchs, they were very powerful and popular in their respective regions. According to the Sangam literary works, these chieftains played a vital role in the polity, society and the economy of the Sangam period. But the studies about these chieftains are made from the Sangam literature rather than from the 150 archaeological excavated sites in Tamil Nadu.

This study is to bring out the heritage and cultural significance of the respective territories of the minor chieftains through the

archaeological findings. The archaeological investigation of the materials collected from the excavations in the respective areas of the above mentioned chieftains had a cultural impact on the society under their control. The variety of antiquities recovered falls in the major division such as potteries, terracotta objects, metal objects, shell objects, textiles arrow heads made up of bone deer horns etc., The pottery includes black and red ware, russet coated painted ware, rouletted sherds, red ware, black ware, coarse red ware potteries, potsherds with graffiti marks and writing with early Tamil script, conical jars and Amphorae pieces. The shell bangle pieces, shell, paste, terracotta and semiprecious stone beads, terracotta objects such as gamesmen, spindle whorls, dice, etc., are the other antiquities discovered from the excavation sites. The study of these objects will definitely change the image of the condition of Tamil land under these minor chieftains. The scientific study of the collected materials has also made the time span of the archaeological sites more precise and authentic. This will further strengthen the facts mentioned in the Sangam literature. The primary and secondary sources include the literary sources (Indigenous & Foreign Sources (ii) Archaeological sources (iii) Epigraph are consulted apart from the various excavated published materials.

There are published excavation reports by various institutions such as the Archaeological Survey of India, Government of India, the Tamil Nadu State Archaeology Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, University of Madras, Madras, Central University, Pondicherry, Tamil University, Thanjavur, Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi Viswa Mahavidyala, Enathur, Kanchipuram, Sharma Centre for Heritage Education, and University of Kerala.

It is proposed to undertake the study of archaeological materials collected from the excavations at Thirukkkoilur (the then capital of the Kari), Villupuram district, Andipatti, (ruled by Nannan) in Chengam, in Tiruvanamalai district. The scientific study of the antiquities and comparing with each other will bring out the local differentiation and regional variations. These excavated sites are located in the then South Arcot (present Villupuram, Cuddalore and part of Tiruvanamalai district) and North Arcot (part of Tiruvanamalai and Vellore) districts. These two sites lie in the northern part of ancient Tamilagam. The study of the antiquities revealed from the excavations at Thirukkkoilur and Andipatti brings out the condition of the society under the chieftains of the Sangam period.

Thirukkkoilur (Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu)

Thirukkkoilur (lat. 11.°-95' N., long. 79.2' E) is situated on the southern bank of River Thenpennai and is a taluk headquarters of Villupuram District, Tamil Nadu.

Literary references

Thirukkkoilur was the capital of Malayaman chieftain of the Sangam age. The mountain Mullur Malai was in his country. Malaian Tirumudikkari was the illustrious ruler of this dynasty. His capital was Kovalur. Kari is called lord of Mullur as well as the land adjoining the Pennai (Southern Pennar) (*Puram*. 126.1.23). He is called as malayan in the Sangam works. It is said that “Kari of the beautiful spear who wore the (heroes) anklet (on his feet), lord of Mullur killed the strong bowman, Ori of lasting fame, and gave to the Seras the fair vel tree as well as the jack tree, which are the produce of the fertile (region of) the Kolli (hills), where there is an idol of the eternal goddess praised

by many “(*Agam*, 209.II 11.17) The Kolli region was ruled over by Ori before Kari killed him. When he entered Ori’s place after killing him in battle, Ori’s warriors resisted him with much noise and shouting.” as loud as that which rose from his enemies when Kari entered the unrivalled broad streets after killing Ori” (*Nar.* 320, 5-7). Kari was a great benefactor, he practically yielded all his possessions to the needy and the learned. (*Sirupan.* 95). He had a possession of a horse called as Kari (*Sirupānārrupadai*, 110). The horse belonging to Malayaman was also named as Kari (*Puram*, 122:2, 158:6). Malaiyaman Tirumudikkari was praised by the poet Kabilar. Kabilar was the poet of the Sangam period belonging to a place called Kapilam. He is reported to have died by entering fire according to a late inscription at Tirukkoyalur.

Historical significance of Tirukkoyalur

Apart from the references about Tirukkoyalur, capital of Tirumudikkari of the Sangam age, there are number of archaeological findings such as inscriptions, coins and a historic monument at Tirukkoyalur.

Inscription

- There is an inscription of Rajaraja in his 27th regnal year (1012 CE) from Veeratteswarar temple, Tirukkoyalur. In this inscription, there is a reference to the Sangam poet Kabilar, who died after entering into fire. The inscription mentions the place as Kabilar kal. Even today, the rock on which he was sitting facing north is known as Kabilar hill situated in the midst of the river Penner. There is a saying that after having persuaded Malayaman to marry the daughters of Pari, one of the last seven philanthropists, poet Kabilar is said to have entered into a funeral pyre at this place. This

has been mentioned in the inscription of Rajaraja I on the wall of Siva temple at Tirukkcoilur. From this inscription, it is evident that the facts mentioned in the Sangam works were attested by the later rulers of Tamil country ie., the great Rajaraja of Chola dynasty in 11th century CE.

There is a reference in Tamil Navalar Charitai that among the daughters of Pari, Angavai was not married to Malaiyaman, who was known as Divigan and this marriage was performed at Tirukkcoilur. In a copper plate of 18th century CE discovered by Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology from Tenkasi, it is mentioned that Kabilar requested a King known as Arasappakkon to marry the daughters of Pari. This girl might have been Sangavai, another daughter of Pari.

There is a hill locally known as Kabilar Kunru located in the centre of Thenpenner river. It is said that the poet Kabilar was seated on this hill top facing north and he left his mortal remains by observing a fast unto death. It is a monument of the Tamil Nadu State Archaeology Department. It is evident from the inscription that the historic monument named after him proves the fact that the poet Kabilar was in existence in the Sangam age and he died at Tirukkcoilur.

Tamili¹ inscription from Jambai

The Tamil Nadu State Archaeology Department discovered an inscription on a rock inside a cavern on the hillock of Jambai, a village about 15 kms from Thirukkcoilur town. The inscription is in Tamili (Tamil Brahmi) except for the title in Prakrit.

1 Although Tamili means a Tamil girl, the word is also occasionally used for the Tamil Brahmi script.

The inscription of 1st century CE reads as:

sa ti ya pu to a ti ya na ne tu ma na a na ci i ta ta pa li
(*satiyaputo atiyān nedumaan anjji itta paali*)

It means that the hermitage was given by Atiyan Netuman Anci the Satiyaputta.

In Asoka's second Rock Edict at Girnar, there is a mention of the names of the rulers such as Colas, the Pandyas, the Satiyaputas, and the Ketalaputas.

1) The location of Jambai is also significant as it is near Thirukkkoilur, the capital of Malayaman Chieftain. Anji's victory over Thirukkkoilur was venerated by Parānar, another Sangam poet (*Puram* 87; 88; 89). So, the grant at Jambai was made to celebrate Anji's victory over Thirukkkoilur.

2) The Chieftain of Tahadur and owner of Kudirai hills was a great and consistent patron of Avvaiyar. He gave a *nelli* (Indian gooseberry) fruit capable of granting longevity to Avvaiyar, who praised this act of selfless generosity on his part. Athiyan from Tagadur mentioned in the Sangam literature made donations at Jambai. This shows that the Sangam period chieftains were independent rulers and acted on their own. From this, we can infer that the chieftain Adiyaman patronised Jainism and might have waged war against Malayaman for this reason.

Coins

The copper coins of square type were collected from the Thenpennar river by coin collectors. These coins were studied by Dr. R. Krishnamurthi, Dr. P. Shanmugam and Arumuga Sitharaman and published.

The common features of these coins are in the obverse i.e., the horse is depicted in standing posture facing right in front of tripod table, or trough above a stool, horizontal goad (ankusam) and crescent on top; in the reverse the river flowing from hillock, mound and two lines that represent a river. Sometimes, fishes are depicted inside the river or two parallel vertical spears to right and three different types of short spears with three dots on the left; most of them weighing in between 2.6 gm to 6.3 gm. One of the same type of coin is displayed at the National Museum, in New Delhi. The coins are dated to the 1st century CE.

Excavation

The Tamil Nadu State Archaeology Department undertook excavation at Thirukkoilur in the year 1993-94. Six trenches were laid in various places to find out the cultural sequences and stratified layers. Three cultural periods were noticed in the excavated trenches according to the occurrence of potteries and antiquities.

Period I represents the Iron age culture having its cultural deposit of 70 cms above the natural soil. The black and red ware, rouletted ware of thin and thick variety, amphora piece, red slipped ware, red ware and graffiti pot sherds, shell bangle piece and blue glass bead were the antiquities collected in this cultural sequence. The period is determined by excavators of the site as 100 BCE to 400 CE.

Period II represents the early medieval culture with the deposit of 1 metre thickness above the cultural period I. The ceramic variety included red slipped ware, red ware and copper objects. It is assigned to the period between 400 CE to 1300 CE.

Period III belongs to the late medieval and modern period with the deposit of 1.20mts thickness above the cultural period II. Coarse redware pottery was the noteworthy pottery of this period. The modern objects like bangle pieces and plastic objects were the other antiquities that were collected from the layer of this period; and as regarding dating 1300 CE to 1700 CE was assigned to this period.

Though it was a capital of the Sangam period, there was no inscribed pot sherds found at Thirukkoilur. But there were graffiti marked pot sherds collected from the excavations at Tirukkcoilur (TRK). The trench TRK 5 laid bare at the back yard of the Jeeyar Mutt was dug upto 2.20 mts. The antiquities of this trench belong to periods II and III. At the depth of 1.70 mts in layer 3, a terracotta pipe line was found. To find out the length of the pipeline, the trench was extended and marked as TRK 6, which runs in the north eastern direction and ends in TRK 5. The total length of the available pipe is 9.5 mts and 53 terracotta pipes were exposed. Each pipe measures 19x16.5x2 cm. This type of terracotta pipes were also found at Ulagadam in Dharampuri district in the medieval period. They might have been used for bringing water from the Thenpennar river or the nearby channel. Antiquities such as pate bead, blue glass bead, shell ring, black and yellow bangle pieces were collected from the trench.

Terracotta objects particularly of figurines, spindle whorls, hopscotch, beads, ear lobes generally occur in the excavated trenches of the early Tamil period. In the later period, occurrences of terracotta smoking pipes were noticed in the excavation. At Thirukkcoilur, four terracotta figurines were collected from the

trenches. The red ware potsherd with the motifs of a female figure is a centerpiece of the discovery. It was unearthed from trench (TRK-5) at the depth of 2 mts. The measurement of the antiquity is 68x71mm and it belongs to the 6th century CE. It is made up of fine clay and might have been made with hand. The figure appears in a standing posture. It is a mutilated one upto the waist, with two hands spread out horizontally; shaved head, wearing *patra kundars* or large sixed earlobes; the nose, protruding eyes and the mouth are shown with pinched clay; an ornament is found around the neck and a pendent hanging down between her prominent breasts.

The other terracotta objects were terracotta votive foot with beautiful workmanship and with fine clay. The hind portion of the leg has been made in such a way to fix it in a socket of the leg. The torso of a female figure in mutilated condition was with a left arm in a raised position. Another interesting finding was the crossed left knee portion of a terracotta figurine. The figurine was applied with red wash and decorated with two lines to give a prominent look. This figurine was applied with red wash. They all belong to the period between 6th century CE and 9th century CE. Other antiquities included copper bangle piece, coin mould, pear shaped terracotta bead, terracotta ear lobes and terracotta smoking pipes and these were collected from the excavated trenches.

Andipatti Chengam taluk of Tiruvannamalai district

The village Andipatti, (Latitude of 12° 13' E and Longitude of 78° 44' N), an important historical site datable to 3rd century BCE onwards, is situated at 15 km from Chengam in Chengam Taluk of Tiruvannamalai district in Tamil Nadu, India. This site lies on

the Chengam - Neepathurai road at 15 kms away from Chengam town. Andipatti village is approachable by road from Chengam and is bordered on the northern and western side by the inner Javadi hills and Ponnaiyar reserve forest. Ravandavadi reserve forest is located on the southern side of the village.

Physiographically, Andippatti village is a raised mound and is sloping eastward with a few perennial dry tanks in the close vicinity. However, the western side is covered by hilly terrain.

It was proposed to carry out an excavation at Andipatti, which was an ancient capital city of Nannan who ruled this region in the Sangam age. He was the hero mentioned in Malaipadukadam, also called as Kuttarrarruppadaai (*Kuttar*: dancers), one among the Idylls consisting the Pattupattu. This poem was composed by Iraniya Muttattupperungunrupperungausikanar in praise of Senganmattuvel Nannan Sey Nannan. The title of the poem Malaipadukadam was named after the expression which occurs in verses 347-48 of the same poem. The description of the hill, river, forest and the beast of the forest were elaborated in this work. It mentions that the chieftain Nannan ruled over the valley of Seyaru. The poet gives an elaborate description of the hills that belonged to Nannan.

An inscription from Rishabheshwarar temple at Chengam which belongs to 12-13th century CE mention the name Malaikadam pattu. From this, we can assume that the legacy of Sangam literary works particularly Malaipadukadam was in existence in the minds of the people even in the 12th century CE.

Hero stones

Tamil literary works give detailed accounts of the capture of cattle by the nearby tribes and their rescue by the owners. At the time of this encounter, some of the warriors lost their lives. In the memory of their heroism, stones with the name and figure of the hero were installed and worshipped by the them. This practice existed even in the Sangam age. The Malaipadukadam, the Sangam literary work of this region also mentions the installation of hero stones. (poem no. 386-389, 394-96). Nearly all the inscriptions record the death of heroes in the course of campaigns for capturing the cattle or rescuing them. The Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology also noticed 45 hero stone inscriptions in and around Chengam and published a book entitled '*Chengam Nadukarkal*'. The earliest hero stone inscription belongs to 6th CE of Simhavishnu of Pallava dynasty found at Narasinghanallur, near Andipatti.

Coins

In Tamil Nadu, for the first time, a lead coin with Tamil script was found at Andipatti near Chengam in Tiruvanamalai district in the year 1968. A hoard of 143 lead coins were found by chance. The coins were round in shape, the dia is 2.32 cm and weight 8gm. The coin may be assigned to 1-2 century CE and issued by Centan son of Athinana Ethiran. In the obverse, two parallel lines are noticed along with goad (*ankusam*) and two round circles are noticed above this which may represent sun and moon. The coin also bears 13 Tamil (Tamil Brahmi) letters; in the reverse, three *sikara* or peaked two hills on either side are present; in between them, two curved lines are present which represent the river. The name Centan was not found in Sangam literature or even later period literature and there was no epigraphical reference. Perhaps this might be the chieftain who ruled this region and issued coin in his name independently. It is interesting to observe

that the hill and river described in Malaipadukadam is depicted in the coin found at Andipatti. It is also noteworthy to mention that both the Sangam poem Malaipadukadam and the lead coin with legend Centan belongs to same period. i.e., 1st-2nd century CE. It is also interesting to note that the description found in the Sangam literature is noticed in the coin i.e., the hill and the river.

The selection of the mounds for excavation was done by using modern scientific method such as GPS (Global Positioning System) and GIS (Geographical Information System). The excavation was carried out at two habitation mounds locally known as Nattamedu and Sambalkadu and twelve trenches were laid bare. Two stratigraphical layers with average depth of 1.50 meters were noticed. The site yielded potsherds of Iron Age (megalithic) and historic period i.e. black and red ware potsherds and coarse red ware sherds. Nearly 12 trenches were laid in various parts of the village. Each of them were dug out till the natural soil, having depth of about 100 cms to 300 cms was reached. Each and every trench varied in its texture, colour, size etc. They yielded materials that would establish a remarkable significance regarding the Megalithic traits. On the basis of the excavation conducted and the materials unearthed, the period of this site has been divided into two phases.

Two cultural periods have been demarcated from the unearthed antiquities. Period 1: confined primarily to layer 4 and 3 (1 c. BCE to 5 c. CE) are characterised by the yielding of inscribed potsherds, graffiti potsherds and grooved tiles. Period 2: The archaeological debris from layer 1 and 2 (6 c. CE to 12 c. CE) is characterised by the presence of spindle whorls, hopscotches,

shell bangle pieces and terracotta figurines. Special mention should be made to sixteen potsherds with graffiti signs.

The excavation yielded two Neolithic Celts from trench 9 and 10 at the depth of 140 cms and 80 cms respectively. The tools were pecked and well grained. The first tool from trench no.9 is seen broken on both the top and bottom portions. The tool from trench No.10 is seen broken on the tip portion and they measured;

1. The tool from trench No. 9 measures 13.5 cms in length and 7 cms in breadth.
2. The tool from trench No.10 measures 6 cms in length and 5.5. cms in breadth.

Spindle whorl is another important terracotta object found in this excavation, which indirectly endorses the presence of weaving industry in this region. Earlobes, gamesmen, hopscotches smoking pipes and grooved tiles were other minor antiquities collected from the excavation.

Iron objects

Excavation at Andipatti had yielded iron objects used by the people of this region. The objects unearthed are chisel, dagger and knife etc., One of the identical finding in this excavation was iron slags in enormous quantity. A huge hoard of iron slags have been revealed from the trench no.8. The excavator is of the opinion that this site could have been an iron smelting site.

Deer-horn collected from the trenches shows the hunting habit of the people and that deer horn was exported to the Western world for its medical value. Arrow heads made up of bone is the other weapon identified in the excavation, and it shows the use of bone as a object for hunting animals in addition to stone and

iron implements. Bangles made out of glass and shells were also collected from the site. Beads made of carnelian and, beryl were the other noted materials that were unearthed from the site. There were 19 gold bits collected from the trench 8.

Pottery and terracotta objects from the excavation of the various sites around the world are the only available source material testimonies for the existence of ancient civilizations. In India, the antiquity of clay figurines goes back to the Neo-lithic and Chalcolithic periods. The clay figurines reflect the characteristic features of each period with regional distinctions both in style and type. The animal and human figurines were mostly made in the early civilizations. The earliest terracotta animal figurines found on the subcontinent are from the Chalcolithic sites of settled agricultural communities of Kulli, Quetta and Zob. The Bull was commonly found with raised humps and short legs. The exact utility of the animal figurines is not known but those with socket for incising axis of wheel might have been used as toys. Some figurines of the ram and bull could have been used as votive offerings or cult objects. In Peninsular India, Neolithic sites such as Piyampalli, Sanganakallu, and Tekkalakotta have yielded crudely made animal figurines. The Iron Age sites in Tamil Nadu such as Kunnathur, Sanur, Adichanallur, Amirthamangalam also have yielded animal figurines. In the excavations at early historic and medieval sites of Tamil Nadu, a large number of terracotta animal and human figurines were collected. Most of the animal figurines consist of bull, horse, buffalo and ram.

The excavation at Andipatti revealed some unique artefacts. One such finding was the terracotta humped bull. A unique terracotta humped bull of this kind was found for the first time

in south India; in the trench APT 3 at the depth of 80 cm. The height of the bull is 35 cm and length is 28 cm. The leg portion of the bull is similar to the legs of the sarcophagus and occurred in the first layer of period I datable to 100 CE. The other associated antiquities found in the same layer of period I are coarse variety of black and red potsherds and coarse red ware potsherds. The bull is portrayed in standing posture with raised hump. A bell adorns the neck below, which resembles the present day bell tied around the neck of the domesticated animals in the villages. The right side horn is slightly upturned and depicted like a crescent. Both the left side horn and ear are broken. The eyes are predominately shown open. The skin in the neck portion is shown interlaced. The mouth is shown slightly open. An interesting part of the bull is the belly portion. It resembles a round shaped pot without lip. An opening is also noticed below the belly.

Observation about the terracotta bull

Agriculture and domestication of animals were the main occupations of the Neolithic and Iron Age inhabitants. Hence, the animals that they used for household purposes were the centre of attraction for their votive and rituals. The bull is worshipped as Nandi, the mount of Lord Siva. The terracotta figurines found both in the exploration and excavation, though do not possess any artistic merit as that of medieval Chola period sculptures, but have their own merit depicting the artistic spirit of local artisans. In every village of Tamil Nadu, one can see terracotta images of bull installed in the village temples for the welfare of their cattle wealth. This bull from Andipatti excavation might have been used as votive object or for cult worship. It can also be assumed that it might have been used for storing ash of dead ones in the Iron Age

or early historic period (i.e. 100 BCE to 100 CE) because of the opening noticed below the belly portion.

The other remarkable finds include inscribed potsherds, graffiti potsherds, and terracotta figurines of mother goddesses and another head portion of a bull. The inscribed potsherds with Brahmi inscriptions read as; 1. *atta*, 2. *kuma* and 3. *inga na ir cha na*. The discovery of spindle whorls and iron objects proves the fact that this site once existed as a flourishing centre for weaving and iron smelting industries. The other antiquities include, semi-precious stone beads, terracotta beads, shell bangle pieces, terracotta ear lobes, grooved tiles, and terracotta pipes for smelting of iron ore, hopscotch, iron objects such as knife and nails, copper objects, terracotta figurines and pottery such as black and red ware, red slipped ware and coarse red ware.

From the recovered antiquities, the strategic position of Andipatti on the Chengam highway connecting Dharmapuri and south Tamil Nadu is proved from the excavation. The yielding of inscribed potsherds with Brahmi script and grooved tiles are testimony to Sangam habitation at Andipatti. From the material evidence, it can be inferred that the Sangam age and Iron Age (megalithic) of Tamil Nadu are contemporary. Thus, the excavation focuses on the material aspects of civilized culture.

Comparative study of the two sites Thirukkoilur and Andipatti and the observation made on study of the archaeological materials:

- Thirukkoilur and Andipatti (Chengam) were ancient places.
- Thirukkoilur and Andipatti (Chengam) are mentioned in the Sangam literature.
- Both of them were under the control of powerful chieftains

such as Thirukkcoilur under Thirumudikari and Chengam under Senganmattuvel Nannan Sey Nannan.

- The artefacts collected from these sites resembles to the objects from other Sangam period sites in Tamil Nadu.
- The coins were issued by both chieftains. But at Thirukkcoilur only copper coins were collected in the Thennpenneyar river. The lead coin with Tamili (Tamil Brahmi) inscription was found in a hoard at Andipatti which is noteworthy.
- It is interesting to note that the coins from both sites had the representation of mountain and river. In the obverse of these coins, there were emblems i.e., the emblem or symbol of horse for Thirumudikkari of Thirukkcoilur and Goad (*Angusum*) for Centan son of Athinana Ethiran. Both of the coins are dated by scholars to the 1st -2nd century CE.
- The inscription of the later period of Rajaraja Chola I in his 27th ruling year (1012 CE) gives reference about the great poet Kabilar at Thirukkcoilur. There is a monument present in the river Thennpenneyar, where the poet Kabilar is said to have breathed his last. Likewise, an inscription of 12-13th century CE from Chengam refers Malaipadukadam. Hence, the legacy of the Sangam age continued to exist even upto 13th century CE.
- Terracotta figurines and artifacts were collected from both the sites
- The existence of a weaving industry was indicated by the finding of spindle whorls in both the sites. Hence, it is understood that the people knew the art of weaving.
- The terracotta objects collected from these sites and the different kind of potsherds revealed the fact that in ancient times in the Tamil country, people knew the art of making pottery and terracotta objects.

Differences

- The excavated materials collected from the stratified layers at Thirukkoilur were classified and they represented three cultural periods from 100 BCE to CE to 1700 CE.
- Two cultural periods are demarcated from the unearthed antiquities at Andipatti from 1 BCE to 1200 CE.
- At Andipatti, remarkable finds include inscribed potsherds and graffiti potsherds. The inscribed potsherds with Brahmi inscriptions read as; 1. atta, 2. Kuma and 3. Inga na ir cha na. This shows that the people of this region knew the art of writing.
- The Chengam pass that connects the eastern and western parts of the ancient Tamil country passes through Andipatti, which served as an important trade centre.
- There are no inscribed pot sherds at Thirukkoilur.
- A terracotta pipe line was found from the excavation at Thirukkoilur. The total length of the available pipe is 9.5 mts, and 53 terracotta pipes were exposed. Each pipe measures 19x16.5x2 cm. From this, it is assumed that the terracotta pipes were used as water channels to bring water from the river or nearby water source.
- The excavation at Andipatti revealed a unique terracotta humped bull found for the first time in south India datable to 100 CE. It is associated with the Iron age or Megalithic period.
- The finding of iron slag at Andipatti reveals the fact that the people were aware of iron smelting technique.
- The people were familiar with metals such as copper and lead at Andipatti.

- The Hero stones were found at Andipatti, while they are absent at Tirukkoilur.

Observations

The discovered artifacts throw valuable light on the society that existed in that period, for eg., the adoption of an agrarian system. The archaeological discoveries of the sites reveal the richness of the culture of the ancient Tamil people of the region under the two chieftains name in Malayaman and Nannan in Sangam literature.

Conclusion

The Comparative study of the two explored and excavated sites, namely Thirukkoilur and Andipatti, strengthen the knowledge of the places mentioned in the Sangam literary works. These places played a vital role in the political, social and economic conditions of that period with slight regional variations. This kind of study definitely focuses the cultural richness of the ancient Tamil society. The statements mentioned in the Sangam literature were borne out by the archaeological material evidence collected from the sites.

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PROPRIETARY ASPECTS OF WIDOWHOOD IN EARLY INDIA - A STUDY IN INHERITANCE AND OWNERSHIP RIGHTS OF WIDOWS IN THE LIGHT OF LEGAL TEXTS

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Abstract

Despite vast research on various facets related to the condition of women in early India, little is known about the proprietary aspects of widowhood. The picture of widows' proprietary rights that emerges from existing research remains incomplete and inconclusive. To get a clearer picture, the present study analyses the legal texts of early India i.e. the dharmasutras and the dharmasastras. It aims to scrutinise matters such as, the standing of widows in the division of inheritance of their husbands, widow as successor to a son-less person and management of affairs related to stri-dhana. The results of this research will go beyond the notions of exploitation and subdued position of the widows. The

investigation reveals that (i) the presence of widows in society and management of various issues related to them posed complex questions before the law-givers (ii) the status of women within the group of widows was subjected to a large number of factors and it varied largely; so did their needs and necessities (iii) property rights were effective measures of regulating widows according to the prevailing social and family norms. This enquiry adds to our knowledge of the complex nature of the widows' property rights, influencing issues and relationship of widows with various stakeholders.

Keywords: *Punarbhū, Niyoga, Sapinda, Sagotra, Ardhangini, Stri-Dhana, Dharmasutras and Dharmasastras.*

Studying the status of women in early Indian societies is important towards developing an understanding about overall gender relations. A comparative knowledge of gender relations helps us in figuring out true position of women *vis a vis* men. However, this objective can be achieved only if we study different groups of womenfolk such as girls, married women, courtesans, nuns, widows etc., instead of combining all women in one single group. It is so because, despite all being females, economic and social conditions of women varied from one group to another. Especially in case of the widows, their condition was radically different from the other women for several factors. To begin with, some of the phenomena such as *punarbhū* (remarriage), *niyoga* (levirate), *sati* (self-immolation by the widows) etc., were largely associated with widows. Similarly, there was a marked variance in the economic sphere as well. For example, in case of

a married woman, even though her husband was to be the owner of the household resources, generally the utilisation was jointly undertaken. This concept of joint ownership was applicable for most of the property barring a few exceptions like immovables. On the other hand, the property (if any) under the domain of a widow was specifically defined. As the property rights were guided by the injunctions of the law-givers, their recommendations are analysed in this research paper to gain insights into the financial condition of the widows. In the context of property rights, law-givers primarily faced three important questions. Firstly, could a widow be given a share in the division of inheritance of a man when survived by sons? Secondly, could a widow be allowed to inherit property of a son-less man? Thirdly, what composed the *stri-dhana* of a widow and in what manner could she utilise it? As the recommendations of the law-givers are recorded in the legal texts; these works, collectively called as the *dharmasutras* and the *dharmasastras*, are explored and analysed to find out how these issues were solved. Prominent works of this genre, which are utilised for this study include the *Apastamba Dharmasutra*, the *Gautama Dharmasutra*, the *Baudhayana Dharmasutra*, the *Vasistha Dharmasutra*, the *Manu Smṛti*, the *Narada Smṛti*, the *Bṛhaspati Smṛti*, the *Yajñavalkya Smṛti*, the *Katyayana Smṛti*, the *Vishnu Smṛti* etc. The time-period covered by the present paper ranges approximately from c. 5th century BCE to the disintegration of the Gupta Empire i.e. c. 6th century CE.

We begin our study by analysing the position of a widow when the inheritance of her husband was being divided. Most of the early law-texts establish that the property of the deceased was to be divided only among his sons. The *Dharmasutra of Apastamba* provides the manner according to which the sons could divide

the property of their father. The text does not make provision for allotment of property to the widows. Though not much of an explanation is provided in the text, yet a verse of this text can be considered to explain the possible reason. It says that there is no division of property between a husband and a wife because from the time of their marriage, they are linked together¹. Following this logic, it is possible that with the death of her husband, the worldly duties of a wife were considered as over. So, no share was prescribed to her. Likewise, the *Baudhayana Dharmasutra*, the *Gautama Dharmasutra* and the *Vasishtha Dharmasutra* also do not allocate any part of property to a widow. The argument that the widows were generally kept out of the division of inheritance gains strength when prominent texts like the *Arthashastra*, *Manu Smṛti*, *Bṛhaspati Smṛti* etc. simply leaves widows out of the ambit of division of property. In the light of this analysis, it seems that if an individual was survived by sons, no share of his property was to be allotted to his widow. It is important to note that succession to property was influenced by the prevailing social norms regarding inheritance in each society. For example, it is argued by the scholars that in Hindu Law, an individual's capacity is 'almost always subordinated to the claims and the goals of the joint family to which that individual belongs' and this joint family revolves around the relationship between a father and son². Moreover, there prevailed the ideas according to which father and sons were considered identical. The *Satapatha Brahmana* highlights this identification of father and son stating, 'the father is the same as the son, and the son is the same as the father³.' Donald R. Davis Jr. argues that because of this common identity, mutual obligation emerged between a father and a son, according to which 'a father providing for his son in youth, and the son providing for the father in old age⁴.' It is certainly possible that under the influence of

similar ideas, inheritance was divided among sons and no share was allotted to their widowed-mother. However, this position was not unanimously upheld by all the legal texts, particularly by those which were composed in the early centuries of the Common Era.

Yajnavalkya Smrti, *Vishnu Smrti*, *Narada Smrti* and *Katyayana Smrti* are a few of those texts which were composed in the early centuries of the Common Era. An important feature of these texts is that they consider a widow as a party in the partition of inheritance. For example, the *Yajnavalkya Smrti* declares that a widow was eligible to receive a share when the property of her deceased husband was being divided among his sons⁵. *Narada Smrti* settles that such a share was to be equal to that of a son⁶. *Vishnu Smrti* provides that if the departed had multiples wives, all of them were to be allotted property in proportion to what was prescribed for their sons⁷. *Katyayana Smrti* also corroborates these texts and establishes that when the father is dead, the mother also gets a share equal to that of a son⁸. These texts, though allocate shares to the widows, yet they do not provide information about the extent to which they could control it and for what purpose it could be utilised.

As far as the utilisation of inherited property is concerned, the *Katyayana Smrti* and the *Brihaspati Dharmasastra* are the only texts which provide us some information in this regard. The *Katyayana Smrti* instructs that the wealth obtained by partition may more and more be employed for the purpose of sacrifices⁹. Commenting on this, P.V. Kane says the primary idea is that such wealth was intended for performing sacrifices¹⁰. As most of the texts are of the view that the temporal affairs of wives are over with the death of their husbands; widows were expected to spend the rest of

their lives by engaging themselves in religious observances, fasts, celibacy, self-control etc. Going by this logic, it seems feasible that these women were advised to spend their share in rituals for the welfare of the family-ancestors as well as for spiritual benefits of her offspring. This argument gains strength from the provisions of the *Brihaspati Dharmasastra*¹¹. This text recommends that a widow should utilise such property on performance of *sraddhas* (rites performed in honour of the deceased), funeral oblations and aiding the helpless persons of the family¹². Thus, it is evident that these texts favoured charitable and religious activities for widows instead of an involvement in worldly affairs. Moreover, even if these texts allotted property to widows, their purpose does not appear to provide economic security.

Having analysed the position of a widow when the property was being divided among her sons, we now turn our attention to a situation when a deceased male was survived by no sons. Technically, several relatives of such a man had claim over his property. These included his widow, daughters, *sapinda* (blood relations within six degrees), *sagotra* (bearing common family name), teachers, disciples, the King etc. From these, the law-givers were to select the most suitable successor. One question which was at the centre of their discussion was: whether a widow was eligible to succeed to her husband's property or not? Once the law-givers solved it after considering different customs and logic, there were no difficulties in disposing off the property. In order to understand it better, the legal texts can be divided into two broad groups. One group consisted of the texts which declared the widows as the sole successors of their husbands while the texts in the other group ruled against their succession. In the next section, the paper examines the provisions of these legal texts regarding a widow's succession to her husband's property.

The *Gautama Dharmasutra* tackles this issue by providing two alternatives. According to one arrangement, a widow could receive a part of property. Other parts of the property were to be inherited by several other people such as *sapindas*, *sagotras* and those shared by descent. Alternatively, the widow could opt to raise a son through *niyoga*, who would later inherit the property¹³. These provisions make *Gautama Dharmasutra* one of the earliest legal texts that allowed widows to succeed their husbands. However, the text does not decide which part of the entire property i.e. movables, immovables (or both) could be inherited by the widow¹⁴. Among the *dharmasastras*, the *Vishnu Smṛti* is one of the earliest texts that allows widows to inherit the property of their husbands. Moreover, this text provides that such women could be the scion of the entire wealth¹⁵. In case a man was not survived by a wife or his wife was unable to take over the property, his daughter was to be the legal heir.

According to the *Yajñavalkya Smṛti*¹⁶ and the *Bṛihaspati Dharmasastra*,¹⁷ a widow was to receive property even if the parents and close relatives of her husband were alive. Before arriving at the decision, the *Bṛihaspati Dharmasastra* goes on to explain the logic for doing the same. It refers to certain Vedic sources which call a wife as *ardhangini* (half the body) of her husband. According to this logic, even after death, a man survives in his widow. Consequently, the *Bṛihaspati Dharmasutra* argues that if half the body is still alive, then there was no way someone else could succeed. In this manner, the text not only declares a widow as the sole inheritor, but also provides the argument supporting this provision. However, in context of the immovable property, the inheritance of a widow was dependent on the fact whether her husband lived with the joint family or not. Being the sole heir, a widow was to receive the entire movable

and the share of immovable property if her husband was living with his coparceners at the time of his death. However, if the partition was made in his lifetime and her husband was living in separation from his coparceners, the widow could not succeed to the immovable property¹⁸. As stated in the text, ‘A wife, though preserving her character and though partition has been made, is unworthy to obtain immovable property. Food or a portion of the arable land shall be given to her at will (for her support)¹⁹.’ Apart from this exception, a widow could inherit everything which was recognised as wealth²⁰. To safeguard the property of these women, the *Brihaspati Dharmasastra* provides that if someone tries to harm the property of the widows, he was to draw punishment. The King was to inflict punishment on such people recognising such acts as that of theft²¹.

The *Katyayana Smṛti*, belonging to the genre of the *dharmasastras*, though permits the widows to be the heirs of their husbands, yet this succession to property is more conditional in nature than in the previously discussed texts. To begin with, the text declares that a son-less widow preserving the bed of her husband and residing with elders could enjoy her husband’s property; after her death, other heirs of her husband were to succeed²². Despite the fact that a widow could succeed her husband, the real succession was dependent on the status of the coparceners including her husband (whether unseparated or separated) and the decision of the family elders in this regard. For example, the text states that ‘the wife is entitled only to food and raiment, if her husband was not separated or she may get a share in (ancestral) wealth till her death. The widow intent on serving her elders is entitled to enjoy the share allotted to her; and if, she does not serve (her elders), food and raiment should be assigned to her²³.’ The word

‘enjoy’ was used to make it clear that a widow was not allowed to gift, mortgage or dispose of it. Thus, by the time of *Katyayana Smṛti*, a widow’s succession was highly conditional and regulated if her husband was not unseparated from his family. The case of separated coparceners in the *Katyayana Smṛti* is not as clear as it is in case of the unseparated coparceners; however, it appears that the text permitted a widow to inherit her husband’s property. Its provisions declare that ‘of a sonless man (the heirs) are declared to be wife of good family, daughters, on default of them father, mother, brother and (brother’s) sons²⁴.’ Emphasising the fact that in Indian societies, the widows were expected to live a regulated life while engrossing themselves in religious observances, fasts, celibacy, self-control etc.²⁵; the text does not hesitate to comment on the moral aspects of these women. The text declares that a widow who was full of evil deeds, adultery, immodesty did not deserve to inherit the wealth of her husband²⁶. The legal texts discussed so far permitted widows to inherit with certain terms and conditions. On the other hand, there were certain other texts which did not entertain these ideas. Some of the prominent texts of early India not only denounced the idea of widows as inheritors but also questioned their capabilities in this regard. They raised questions and passed judgements which were used to downgrade the status of women in the succeeding periods.

The laws of *Apastamba* state that if a person dies son-less, his property was to be acquired by the sons of his nearest *sapinda*. In their absence, the author provides a list of possible successors, one succeeding the other in absence of the former²⁷. However, widows do not appear in this list which seems to suggest that the text did not allow them to inherit. While discussing this issue, Georg Buhler refers to the commentary of Haradatta on *Apastamba*. Haradatta

declares that in the opinion of Apastamba, widows cannot inherit²⁸. That is why; Apastamba permits a King to take over the property in case no heir comes forward and completely ignores the case of widows. In similar fashion, Vasishtha also does not recognise a widow as the successor of her husband²⁹. However, in one respect, Vasishtha slightly differs from Apastamba. In the list of possible heirs, Vasishtha does not include even the daughter, who was to inherit as per the laws of Apastamba.

The *Baudhayana Dharmasutra* goes one step ahead and rejects the capability of women to inherit property. According to the text, the reason for rejection is that it is not possible for women to act independently. It quotes a verse of *Taittiriya-Samhita* in this context. As per the interpretation of this verse by the *Baudhayana Dharmasutra*, since women are too weak and powerless, they are incapable of inheriting property³⁰. Thus, the widows had no chance to be the inheritors. *Manu Smṛti* also keeps widows out of the purview of property-inheritance³¹. A widow could, at the best, be the guardian of estate in case she had decided to raise a son through *niyoga*. The *Narada Smṛti* makes provision for maintenance of widows but does not allow them to be the successors³². If such son-less men were not separated from their families, then his brothers were to divide his property among themselves except the *stri-dhana* of his widow. These inheritors could cut-off allowances of a widow, if she did not remain chaste.

Regarding the question of widows inheriting the property of their husband (having died sonless), there is an interesting observation worth highlighting. Generally, the texts which were composed before the beginning of the Common Era do not allot any share to the widows of a son-less man. Such text included

the *Apastamba Dharmasutra*, the *Vasishtha Dharmasutra*, *Baudhayana Dharmasutra* and the *Manu Smṛti*. On the other hand, texts which were composed in the early centuries of the Common Era (with the exception of *Gautama Dharmasutra*), such as *Vishnu Smṛti*, *Yajñavalkya Smṛti*, *Bṛhaspati Dharmasastra*, *Katyayana Smṛti* etc. generally permit a widow to succeed to the property of her departed husband; though the degree of the succession and the control of property varied from one text to another. It is well-known that money-based economy was gaining prominence in the early centuries of the Common Era, but, the legal texts do not answer the real reason behind this different approach towards property inheritance.

Stri-dhana, in one of its earliest usage as well as in a general context, refers to a woman's estate or any property belonging to her. Some authors of the *Sutra* and *Sastra* are often more specific in their definitions of *stri-dhana*³³. The specific scope of *stri-dhana* has changed from time to time due to various factors and has been subject to diverse interpretations by different law-givers. Only certain kinds of property came under the category of *stri-dhana* and not all the property that was possessed by women³⁴. No matter in what manner the definition and scope of the *stri-dhana* were outlined, regulations regarding its management had a consistent presence in nearly all the legal texts of early India. These texts settle the issues related to ownership and control; however, these varied according to the recipients, who could be wives, daughters and widows. This section attempts to study the legal provisions regarding *stri-dhana* of widows.

The earliest of the legal texts i.e. the *dharmasutras* do not provide much information except for the prevalence of such

type of property. For example, according to the *Dharmasutra* of Gautama, the separate property of a woman was to be inherited by her unmarried daughters or by those who were poor and needy³⁵. *Baudhayana Dharmasutra* provides that daughters should take over mother's jewellery and anything customarily given to her³⁶. *Apastamba Dharmasutra* does not use the term *stri-dhana*; but, it makes provisions regarding the management of ornaments and other items which were covered under the *stri-dhana* by law-givers of succeeding periods. This text also explains that the ornaments and the money, which a woman might have received from her relatives, belong to her³⁷. The existence of such provisions suggests that women, including widows, had certain amount of property at their disposal, which was under their control. However, these texts do not specifically mention as to what constituted the 'separate property' or the 'customarily given property'. The *Arthashastra* is one of the earliest texts that not only answers these questions but also brings clarity in multi-dimensional aspects of the *stri-dhana*.

According to the *Arthashastra*, *stri-dhana* consisted of maintenance and the ornaments³⁸. This text defines maintenance as an endowment up to a maximum of two thousand *panas* (metal coins). After the death of her husband; a widow was to get her *stri-dhana* along with the unused portion of dowry. Apart from dowry, ornaments and maintenance, gifts from her father-in-law and husband also formed a part of widow's property³⁹. It has been specially mentioned in the *Arthashastra* that a wife could use it for the maintenance of her sons and daughter-in-laws⁴⁰. However, there was no absolute control of widows over the *stri-dhana* and its retention was subjected to certain terms and conditions.

A widow was to be given ornaments, endowments and any remainder of dowry if she was willing to lead a life of piety. Even

in this case, she could use her *stri-dhana* only under the guidance and supervision of the elders⁴¹. If she intended to start a family and subsequently married according to the wishes of her elders, she was to be given everything which her father-in-law and husband had provided her⁴². In case a widow, who had sons, decided to remarry; she was not allowed to retain her property from her first marriage. However, if she was getting remarried for the sake of maintenance of her sons, she was allowed to keep it⁴³. If a widow married against the wishes of her father-in-law, she was to give up everything which was given by her husband and her father-in-law⁴⁴. The study of property rights as specified in the *Arthashastra* reveals that the text provided a narrow scope of inheriting and managing *stri-dhana*. However, the cases and conditions under which it could be used (or forfeited) must have helped in establishing a clarity regarding the rights of widows over it.

*Vishnu Smṛti*⁴⁵ and *Manu Smṛti*⁴⁶ declare that the ornaments of a widow, which she wore during the lifetime of her husband, could not be partitioned among the sons if she was alive. The force in these provisions is strong enough to let us to conclude that the ornaments solely belonged to the widows. In case, the offspring divided such ornaments, they were to be declared outcastes⁴⁷. The *Narada Smṛti* establishes that if a woman was survived by children, the *stri-dhana* was to be inherited by them; though they could not gain control and divide it during her life-time⁴⁸. However, if a woman died without any son or daughter, the *stri-dhana* was to be inherited by kinsmen as per the laws of Yajñavalkya⁴⁹. *Bṛhaspati Smṛti* declares that the property, movable or immovable, given to women by their father-in-law could not be taken away from them by her successors⁵⁰. According to Katyayana, if *stri-dhana* was promised to a widow by her husband in his lifetime, then it was

to be given to her as a debt by her sons provided she was residing with the family of her husband and not with her paternal family⁵¹. *Katyayana Smṛti* confers freedom on a widow in managing *stri-dhana*. She could deal with it in any manner that pleased her⁵². The sons, brother-in-law and kinsmen on the paternal side of women had no power over her *stri-dhana* throughout her life. Any action taken by any of these depriving her of *stri-dhana* was to be punished by imposing a fine⁵³.

Study of provisions regarding *stri-dhana* in legal texts of early India reveals that widows were given control over *stri-dhana*; though its components and degree of control varied over time. Ownership over it must have acted as a shock-absorber in troubled time. Some of the texts ensured that *stri-dhana* stayed under the control of a widow as long as she was alive. Such provisions had potential to compel heirs to treat a widow with dignity under the desire to gain control over it. However, it would be too far-fetched to conclude that its mere presence had a significant impact on the lives of widows. For one, probability of every widow owing considerable amount of *stri-dhana* seems to be very low. Second, even if a few widows had sizeable woman's property, generally they were not permitted to use it in any way that pleased them. The use and ownership of *stri-dhana* was conditional, subjected to numerous terms and, conditions like appropriate behaviour. All these factors were enough to diminish a widow's control over it. Nonetheless, such provisions were welcome features despite restrictions over freedom in managing this type of property.

To conclude, we can say that the *dharmasutras* provides valuable inputs on the rights of widows as well as the functioning of society. The management of these rights was not just an

economic issue; rather, it adopted the dimensions of a system of social checks and balances. It tried to strike a balance between subsistence of widows and keeping them in accordance with the aspirations of society. Regarding the property rights, though no easy generalisation can be made, yet certain phenomena appear more clearly than the others. For example, widows with the sons seem to be a regular member of the family to be taken care of by them. On the other hand, widows without offspring had an uncertain future. That is why; the debate on selecting successors to son-less persons resulted in wide-ranging arguments with a plethora of justifications and recommendations. The *stri-dhana*, while legally under the control of widows and always at their disposal but was not meant for free utilisation. It was to be protected for unforeseen events; ultimately, to be handed over to the next generation. Meanwhile, its utilisation was subjected to various terms and conditions. In a nutshell, the property rights of widows were of qualified nature and managed by a system of carefully concocted terms and conditions which ensured that widows follow the wishes of their families as well as the prevailing social norms. These rights could at the most ensure their survival it but did not give them economic freedom and decision-making powers.

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6. *Narada Smṛti*, 13.12.
7. *Vishnu Dharmasutra*, 18.34.
8. *Katyayana Smṛti* 851.

9. *Katyayana Smrti*, 852.
10. Kane, P.V., *Katyayanasmrti on Vyavahara*, p. 300.
11. *Brihaspati Dharmasastra*, 25.50-51.
12. It is necessary to clarify that these provisions deal with widows without male issues.
13. *Gautama Dharmasutra*, 28.21-23. As far as the issue of fatherhood was concerned in such arrangements, we can observe difference of opinions among texts. However, as per a general trend, if a text permitted *niyoga*, then the departed husband of the widow was to be declared as the father of such offspring.
14. Generally, an inheritance was composed of precious metals, ornaments, household utensils, agricultural lands etc.
15. *Vishnu Smrti*, 17.4-5. This text was composed in the early centuries of the Common Era.
16. *Yajnavalkya Smrti*, 138 and 139.
17. *Brihaspati Dharmasastra*, 25.46-47.
18. *Ibid*, 25.50 and 25.53-54.
19. *Ibid*, 25.54.
20. *Ibid*, 25.53.
21. *Ibid*, 25.50 and 25.52.
22. *Katyayana Smrti*, 921.
23. *Ibid*, 922-23.
24. *Ibid*, 927.
25. *Ibid*, 924-25.
26. *Ibid*, 929.
27. *Apastamba Dharmasutra*, 2.14.2-6.
28. Georg Buhler, *The Sacred Laws of the Aryas*, p. 132.
29. *Vasishtha Dharmasutra*, 17.81-84.
30. *Baudhayana Dharmasutra*, 2.3.44 and 2.3.46.

31. *Manu Smrti*, 9.187 and 9.190.
32. *Narada Smrti*, 13.49-52 and 13.25-26.
33. Mary McGee, '*Ritual rights: The gender implication of Adhikara*', p. 39.
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35. *Gautama Dharmasutra*, 28.24.
36. *Baudhayana Dharmasutra*, 2.3.43.
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41. *Ibid.*, 3.2.33.
42. *Ibid.*, 3.2.21. This provision was valid only if the remarriage was performed following the circumstances covered by the *Arthasastra*, 3.4.37- 3.4.42.
43. *Ibid.*, 3.2.28 and 3.2.30.
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45. *Vishnu Dharmasutra*, 17.22.
46. *Manu Smrti*, 9.200.
47. *Ibid.*
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49. *Yajnavalkya Smrti*, 2.147.
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FOLK DANCE AND DRAMA DURING THE CANKAM AGE

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Abstract

The caṅkam age is significant for its, Caṅkam literature consisting of Tōlkappiyam, Eṭṭutokai, Pāṭṭuppaṭṭu, Patinēṇkilkaṇakku and epics Silappatikāram and Manimegalai, is a mine of information on the social, economic, religious and cultural life of the period. The aim of this paper is to document the various forms of folk dances mentioned in Caṅkam literature. This work analyses the social and economic dynamics of folk dances in Tamilnadu, during the Caṅkam period.

Keywords: *kūṭṭu, Kurāvāi kūṭṭu, virāliyors.*

Caṅkam works describe the art, culture and civilization of these people. The *caṅkam* landscape was classified into five categories. *Kurunji* (the hills), *Mullai* (the forests), *Marudham*

(the plains), *Neithal* (the coasts) and *Pālai* (the desert region). Early dancers had developed separate tunes appropriate to their nature and mood and for the five conventional divisions of the land. Dancing which was then known by several names like *āṭal*¹, *kūṭṭu* and *kuṇippu* was common in the early *caṅkam* age². Every village had a common dancing hall and the village theatre was called *āṭal-iṭam* (stage or theatre)³ or *āṭavai*⁴.

Professional dancers are called *kūttar* (male dancer) and *āṭar-kūttiyar*⁵ or *virāliyar* (dancing girls). The grace of dancing girls is compared to the movement of the peacock⁶. While dancing, *viralis* appeared on the stage in colourful clothes with a tiny bell tied to their waist to produce sound⁷. The girls often had their hair made into five plaits and also painted their eyes lashes⁸ and wear jewellery⁹. At times, the male dancers appeared in the guise of women while dancing¹⁰. They used to dance in the night with the help of *Paṇṭāravilakku*¹¹ or *Paṇṭāra-t-tīvattī*¹² (public light) a lamp¹³. The *virāliyers* received support from the royals, female elephants¹⁴, golden flowers, golden jewellery¹⁵ and some lands¹⁶ were given as gifts. They travelled throughout the country giving music and dance performances to earn their livelihood.

Kurāvāi kūṭṭu must have occupied an important place in the life section of the ancient Tamil¹⁷. Each landscape had its own dance form called *kurāvāi*. It was a unique dance form wherein either seven or nine women joined hands with each other and sang in praise of the Lord¹⁸. *Aṅkurunūru* mentions about *kurāvāi* which belongs to *neidhal*, the coastal region¹⁹.

Puraṇānūru mentions about different types of *Kurāvāi* such as *magaleerkurāvāi*²⁰, *vetrikurāvāi*²¹ (victory), *meenavarkurāvāi*²²

(fishermen), *iṭaiyarkuravai*²³ (shepherds) and *kuravarkurāvāi*²⁴ (gypsy). A ferocious type of *kurāvāi* was the *verikkuravāi* commonly resorted to by *kurāvar* when in a wild temper by *kurāva* soldiers. Adorning themselves with palmyra garlands, they used to indulge in this dance in frenzy²⁵.

Kurāvar who lived in the mountain regions consumed old honey and performed *Kurāvāi* under the *vēṅkai* tree²⁶. *Kurāvāikūṭṭu* was performed by both men and women on sandy beaches²⁷. Married women when they went to the tank for fetching water consumed distilled toddy, and danced the *kurāvāikuṭṭu* under the shade of *kāñci* tree²⁸. According to the *Silappatikāram*, seven or nine women participated, clasping their hands together as a group. They moved gaily in a circle, dancing and singing all the time²⁹.

Tōlkappiyam prominently mentions two varieties of dance drama, called *Valḷi-k-kūṭṭu* and *kalaṇalai-k-kūṭṭu*. *Valḷi-k-kūṭṭu* was the representation of the dance of Valli, the consort of Muruga. *Kalaṇalai-k-kūṭṭu* was held in honour of those soldiers who firmly stuck to their posts, relentlessly fighting the enemy even after many of their compatriots had retreated. Another form of dance is described in the section on the *purattiṇai* (outer field) of *Tōlkappiyam*, which celebrates a king who died in the war and honouring him by dancing around his dead body³⁰.

Silappatikāram mentions the *kuṭam kūttu*³¹ which means dance with pots performed by cowherds in honour of Krishna, the avatar of Vishnu³². During *kuṭṭai-k-kūṭṭu*³³, the great battle between the asuras and devas, the divine boy Skanda, leader of the divine armies, lowered his great umbrella and used it as a side curtain and danced merrily.

*Kōṭu-kōṭṭi*³⁴ is ascribed to Lord Siva. The three invincible Asura brothers who ruled the three cities made of gold, silver and iron could be slain only when they came together once in many thousands of years for a second. During that movement, according to their boon, they had to be killed by a single arrow. Only Lord Siva could undertake that mighty task. Slaying them and standing on the battle field where lay the ashes of the burnt cities, he danced fiercely as a sign of triumph and victory. *Kaṭayam*³⁵ was the dance performed by Indrani in the same city of doom. She is said to have danced the last dance.

The dance of *vēṭṭuvavari*, a kind of *kūṭṭu* performed by women in a state of possession, has earned a great reputation in connection with the Murugan cult of Tamil Kuriñji land. The dancer was in a trance, presumed to be under divine inspiration³⁶. The dance *veṛiyāṭal* performed as possessed by a divine spirit mentioned in *kuruntokai*.

Tuṇaṅkai was associated with the battle field. After the victory, the King or Captain of the triumphant army used to lead this dance in the midst of the corpses of slain soldiers³⁷. A husband separated from his wife danced *tuṇaṅkai-kūṭṭu* with *parattaiyar*³⁸. During festivals, dances were performed in the village open theatre to the rhythm of drum beats by men and women together.

Kūṭṭu is an informal dance structure, in which performances generally depict scenes from Tamil classical epics. Types of *kūṭṭu* include *tuṇaṅkai-kūṭṭu*, *Kurāvāi-kūṭṭu*, *vēṭṭuvavari-kūṭṭu* and *valli kūṭṭu* which are about the state and culture of different peoples in Tamil country. Dance was the splendid art form in ancient Tamilnadu and played an indispensable role in ancient Tamil

society. People who lived in the *caṅkam* age excelled in dance to express their feelings, emotions, achievements and to bring out their creativity through dance. They created dance forms relevant to their lifestyle. Today, to encourage this dying art, there are some workshops for *kūṭṭu* called *kūṭṭu-pattarai*, and also some dedicated schools. *Kūṭṭu* eventually spread from Tamil Nadu to most of South India. It is very popular in rural areas and has remained relatively unchanged even in modern times.

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A LITANY OF AVALOKITEŚVARA IN THE SCULPTURAL ART OF THE WESTERN DECCAN

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Abstract

Avalokiteśvara holds a prominent position in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition. He is the spiritual son of Dhyanī Buddha Amitābha and his Shakti Pāṇḍrā. With these two, he rules over the present Bhadrakalpa. He is said to be a well Girsh, appearing in the forms of Buddha, Pacheka Buddha, Arhat, Brahmin, Devta, Kubera, Yaksha, Gandharva, Asura, Garuda, Kinnar, Mahoraga, monk etc. His form of protection has been glorified here, which became particularly famous in various art centers of western Deccan like Ajanta, Ellora, Kanheri and Aurangabad. He was popular in the art centres of the western Deccan as an attendant of Buddha. At the same time, as the independent deity of Mahayana tradition, his savior form especially remained an integral part of the art tradition here, where he was shown protecting the devotees from

various dangers. This form of Avalokiteśvara is commonly known as the Litany of Avalokiteśvara or Ashtamahābhaya Avalokiteśvara. Here, this form has special significance in the context of contemporary socio-economic conditions. The study presented is an attempt to analyze the contemporary socio-economic components related to this form of Avalokiteśvara in sculptural art of the western Deccan.

Keywords: *Avalokiteśvara, Mahayana, Buddha, Ajanta, Ellora, Kanheri and Aurangabad.*

Indroduction

Avalokiteśvara holds a prominent position in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition. He is the spiritual son of Dhyani Buddha Amitābha and his Shakti Pāṇḍrā. With these two, he rules over the present Bhadrakalpa. From the *Mahāparinirvana* of Gautama Buddha to the emergence of the future Buddha Maitreya, he has the right to observe the universe¹. An early description of Avalokiteśvara appears in The Larger *Sukhāvati Sūtra*², where he is described as residing in the Sukhāvati land of Amitābha Buddha. The origin of Avalokiteśvara from Amitābha Buddha is described in the *Amitāyur-dhyān-Sutra*³. Here, the golden light from the body of Avalokiteśvara and the Buddha's image in his crown is also stated. Those who worship him get freedom from all fears. In *Mahāvastu*⁴, he has been said to be an observer of the whole world and protector of all beings. In *Kāraṇḍa-vūha sūtra*⁵, he is represented as superior of all Buddhas. The sun and moon are from his eyes, Maheshwar from his forehead and Brahma is believed to have originated from his shoulders. In the *SaddharmaPuṇḍarīka*⁶, he has been given a high position among

all the Bodhisattvas. He is said to be a well Girsh, appearing in the forms of Buddha, Pacheka Buddha, Arhat, Brahmin, Devta, Kubera, Yaksha, Gandharva, Asura, Garuda, Kinnar, Mahoraga, Monk etc.

Only the simple evocation of Avalokiteśvara, rather than thousands of Buddha, is certain to attain salvation. His form of protection has been glorified here, which became particularly famous in various art centers of Western Deccan like Ajanta, Ellora, Kanheri and Aurangabad. He was popular in the art centres of the western Deccan as an attendant of Buddha. At the same time, as the independent deity of Mahayana tradition, his savior form especially remained an integral part of the art tradition here, where he was shown protecting the devotees from various dangers. This form of Avalokiteśvara is commonly known as *the Litany of Avalokiteśvara* or *Ashtamahābhaya Avalokiteśvara*. Here, this form has special significance in the context of contemporary socio-economic conditions. The study presented is an attempt to analyze the contemporary socio-economic components related to this form of Avalokiteśvara in sculptural art of the western Deccan.

Ajanta

A litany is carved on the right side of the entrance of Ajanta Cave no. 4 (plate 1). Avalokiteśvara is located at the centre of the complete visualization. Although both his hands are in a broken state, the lotus is clearly visible near his left hand. Generally, the effigy of Buddha is carved in the Jaṭāmukuta of the Bodhisattva, but here Buddha is depicted in Bhadrāsana in arched niche above the litany scene. Four brackets on either side of Avalokiteśvara have scenes of devotees pleading with the Bodhisattva to rescue them when they are in various crises. In the first bracket on the

left, a terrifying elephant is shown attacking and two devotees are shown seeking help from Avalokiteśvara. In the second scene, the lion attacks and the devotees take refuge under Avalokiteśvara. In the third scene, the robber's attack on merchants and in the fourth scene, possibly sinking of the ship and the merchant's request for help to Avalokiteśvara is engraved. On the right side, the scene carved in the first bracket is not completely clear. According to Gupte⁷, it is a woman beating a man, while Spink⁸ describes it as a forest fire. The second scene is of a snake attacking a woman and a man pleading to Avalokiteśvara. In the third scene, couple is shown praying, while in the fourth scene, a woman is probably beaten by a demon; presumably the woman has an infant in her hand. Buddha is engraved on the right side in Dharmachakramudra and on the left side in *Bhūsparśa mudra*.

The second litany is carved on the outer wall of Ajanta Cave no. 26 (plate 2). Although it does not present in detail as before, some scenes are traditionally carved here as well. In the middle of the whole view is an image of Avalokiteśvara. He holds lotus and *Kamandalu* in his left hand. His right hand is in the *Abhaya mudra*, in which he holds *akṣmālā*. On the left, a pair of nagas at the top are shown worshipping. Just below is the attack of the demon and the praying by mother and son is carved. Two other scenes depict the serpent and elephant attack respectively and the devotees seeking refuge in Avalokiteśvara. The fourth scene is completely destroyed, probably according to earlier tradition, there would have been a scene of shipwreck. While, on the right side a sword bearer dwarf and a Gandharva is carved. The forest fire below and the attack of the lion are recognizable while, the pattern of the other two scenes is not completely clear. In the first of these, the dwarf and in the second, the couple is shown with folded hands and praying.

Another example is also carved near it, although it is very damaged. In the scenes on the left, only the breaking of the ship, the attack of a lion and demon are clear, while the attack of a snake on the right side remains to be seen (plate 3).

This form of Avalokiteśvara is also displayed in Ajanta cave no.10 a, though most of it is in exile. The top part depicts two dwarfs bearing a crown. In the scenes on the left, only the fire of the forest and the sinking ship in the sea are clear. In the scenes on the right, the attacks of a snake, a lion and a demon are clear. In the scene of the attack by the demon, a woman is praying on her knees and she may be hiding have an infant in her hands (plate 4).

Ellora

There are only two examples of litany scenes in the Ellora cave group. The first example is in cave no. 03, which is relatively small and in a broken state. In the second example, engraved in the verandah of cave no. 04, only four scenes are carved on the right side of Avalokiteśvara. In the first scene, two devotees are praying to Avalokiteśvara, to save them from a forest fire. In the second scene, an attack of brigand on a couple is displayed. The man is holding something in his hand and the woman is praying with folded hands. The third scene is not clear; Gupte⁹ considers it captivity and describes arrival of Avalokiteśvara to liberate the captive. The fourth scene is in complete ruin and as per tradition it must have been the scene of a shipwreck. In these four scenes, Avalokiteśvara is seen flying to protect, his one hand is in Abhaya *mudra* which assures devotees protection from all fears (plate 5).

Kanheri

A litany scene is also engraved on the wall of Kanheri Cave no. 2 (Chaitya Cave). In the central part of the visualization,

Avalokiteśvara is shown holding a lotus stalk in his hand. Above his Jaṭāmukuta is carved small seated figure of Buddha. In the lower bracket on the left is the representation of the snake attack. The second scene shows a brigand attacking the devotee. The third scene is not entirely clear. Possibly demon's attack on the woman is represented here and the woman has an infant in her hands. In the fourth scene above, the lion's attack on the devotee and the Bodhisattva's flight to save is engraved. The snake attack is again displayed in the upper bracket on the right side. The second scene depicts a man beating a woman. The third scene is not entirely clear. Qureshi¹⁰ describes it as an eagles' attack on a Naga male. But it is not very clear. The next scene is of the ship sinking in the ocean. The man on the ship is praying to Avalokiteśvara for protection. Here in all the scenes, Avalokiteśvara is shown flying for help (plate 6).

Another litany is carved in Kanheri cave no.41, which is in ruins. But some scenes can be identified, such as - the top left is probably the representation of the man beating the woman and in the third scene, there is a snake attack. Bodhisattva is flying to protect the devotees. Avalokiteśvara in the first carved scene on the right is probably protecting Gandharva and in the second scene, he is protecting the naga-male from the eagle's attack. The third scene is probably the rescue of captive. In the middle is a fractal statue of Avalokiteśvara with a lotus stalk in his left hand. All scenes depict him flying to rescue (plate 7).

A developed form of litany is in Kanheri cave no.90. The main figure of Avalokiteśvara is accompanied by two female goddesses (plate 8). Scenes of peril are engraved in five brackets on either side. On the right side, respectively, the scene is of the

attack of elephant, lion and snake, while the fourth scene is of fire and the fifth is of shipwreck. In all cases, Avalokiteśvara is shown flying to rescue. In the scenes on the left, the first is the liberation of the captive, second is the rescue of the naga-male, the third is the attack on a woman by a demon and the fourth is the attack on merchants by brigands with a sword. The fifth scene is obscure due to damage.

Aurangabad Caves

The most outstanding example of litany is in Aurangabad cave no. 7. It signifies the developed phase of engraving and iconography (plate 9). There is a huge statue of Avalokiteśvara, his right hand is in *Abhaya mudra* and the left hand is holding a lotus stalk. The small figure of the Buddha is carved in his Jaṭāmukūṭa. Scenes of danger are carved in four brackets on either side of Avalokiteśvara. The first scene on the left shows two people pleading to Avalokiteśvara, frightened by fire. In the second scene, a brigand's attack on two people is displayed, he has a sword in his hand. The third scene is of two prisoners; behind them a man is standing with a chain in his hand. The fourth scene is about the shipwreck. In the three scenes on the right side, the attacks of lion, snakes and elephant are represented respectively. In the fourth scene, the demon's attack on the couple is displayed, the woman has an infant in her hand and the man is praying with folded hands. In all the scenes, the devotees are shown worshiping the Bodhisattva with great compassion and devotion. The Bodhisattva is shown flying and protecting them. He has a lotus in one hand and the other hand is in *Abhaya mudra*. In all the examples so far, this is the best in view of the artistic approach and visual combination. The artisans who had mastered the engraving have brought alive this traditional form of Avalokitesvara.

This form of Avalokiteśvara has been interpreted by scholars in various ways. According to Gupte¹¹, the crises listed in litanies were only faced by monks and traders during the journey. Spink¹² calls this form of Avalokiteśvara as the lord of travellers in the context of Ajanta, where he is shown protecting the devotees from various perils. According to him, most of the dangers that have been demonstrated in these examples were faced by merchants and travelers during the journey. He further states that this form of Avalokiteśvara was particularly popular in the Vakataka era. However, Gokhale¹³ sees it from a wider perspective, according to him, except the shipwreck and the attacks of wild animals, most of the crisis had to be faced by the general public also, so it does not seem that this form of Bodhisattva was particularly popular only among merchants and monks. It was equally popular with the general public as well.

This saviour form of Avalokiteśvara must have been a centre of special attraction for merchants and travellers. The syncretism of Buddhism and merchants was going on since the time of Buddha. The first among those who embraced Buddhism were from the trading community. Early Pali literature and *Jatakas* provide considerable data and details of the use of land route and waterways by the merchants for trade. Sanskrit Buddhist literature also details the trade routes and its difficulties. *Mahavastu*¹⁴ mentions the robber's attack on a horse trader of Taxila. Apart from this, various efforts of the merchants to save their lives in the sinking ship are also described. There is a detailed story of Poornavadaan in *Divyavadana*¹⁵, which mentions the sea voyage and the dangers inherent in it, as well as the description of the pirates who attacked the ships in the sea. In *Avadānaśataka*¹⁶, there is a poignant reference to the worried wife of a merchant going to sea trade.

These accounts of Buddhist literature also refer to contemporary economic activities where merchants had to travel far for business. During this time, they also had to face some adverse situations. A divine power was needed for salvation from these crises. Buddhism presented Avalokiteśvara for this purpose. A detailed description of the dangers is in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka sūtra*¹⁷ where Avalokiteśvara is projected as a saviour protecting the devotees from these perils. This description also represents the development of his cult-worship. He has been said to liberate and protect his devotees from misery, fire, drowning in the sea, sharpened weapons, demons, magic powers of goblins, *yakshas*, wild beasts, state punishments, murder, evil eye, bandits and fear of robbers. He can assume any form necessary in order to rescue them.

If we review the crises displayed in all the examples, scenes such as shipwreck, forest fire, wild animals attacked by and robbers have been engraved most frequently. Generally, these situations were mostly faced by the merchants or travellers on trade routes. The construction of Buddhist *viharas* on these trade routes started during the Satavahana period and by the fifth-sixth century, they were firmly established in the Western Ghats to the Deccan peninsula. ‘Many donative inscriptions which distinctly refer to merchants and artisans who belonged to guilds patronage of shrines located on capillary routes connecting the southern route to seaports across the Western Ghats’¹⁸. This indicates that the association of merchants with Buddhist *viharas* remained. Over the years, the prosperity of the trade routes of the Western Deccan increased and traders used to do business related activities not only inland but also in other neighbouring countries. Therefore, the existence of Buddhist *viharas* situated on these trade routes

played an important role. These were excellent shelters for the merchants who went on a long journey. Here, the saviour form of Avalokiteśvara must have been giving them mental and spiritual strength. Apart from this, the Buddhist monasteries would also have been receiving the necessary financial support for religious activities from these merchants.

Although some crisis were also related to normal life, and one of the other significant critical crisis was the demon attack. This crisis seems more related to the fears of the general public. Apart from this, the snake attack, the male beating woman and slavery were also clearly related to all the communities and people who had to face them in normal life. Hence, the saviour form of Avalokiteśvara was equally providing mental and spiritual strength to the pilgrims, who came to these Buddhist shrines for religious worship.

Thus, it is clear as to how Buddhism assimilated contemporary social and economic situations and moulded itself to the conditions. This form of Avalokiteśvara represents his growing stature in the Mahayana tradition as well as the existence of his cult worship in the western Deccan. It can also be seen as a Buddhist reaction to the competition of Vishnu, who assured his devotees that they would be saved from all the sufferings and dangers of life.

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Plate 1



Plate 2



Plate 3



Plate 4

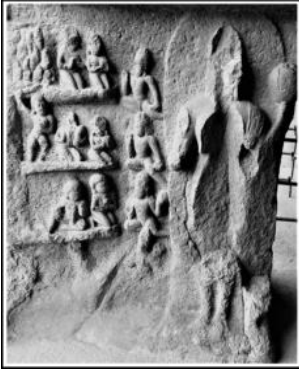


Plate 5



Plate 6



Plate 7



Plate 8



Plate 9



KUNṆĀTHAMMAN – TRANSFORMATION OF THE SAPTA-MĀTRIKAS

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Abstract

The worship of Sapta-mātrikas is familiar in India and almost all the northern and southern dynasties contributed much for its cult development. The sculptures of the Sapta-mātrikas were carved either in relief or as an individual image. In Tamilnadu, the Sapta-mātrikas are called Kannimārgal or Ezhukannigal and are worshipped either individually or in a group. While in a group, they are generally called as Sapta Mathargal or Ezhu Kannimar but when worshipped individually they are called by different names like Selliyamman, Ellaiyamman, Pidariamman, Kattuselli, etc. As believed by many scholars, these deities are of folk nature and later on amalgamated in the orthodox Hindu pantheon as Tantric deities. In this paper, we are going to discuss how a sculpture of Sapta-mātrikas has been transformed into a demigoddess, namely

Kuṇṇāthamman and worshipped in the midst of a busy urban centre.

Keywords: *Sapta-mātrikas, Durga, Kuṇṇāthamman, Selliyaṁman, Pidari, Iconography.*

Kuṇṇāthamman *kōvil* is a famous and well-known temple in northern Madras, now Chennai. It is situated near the MGR Central Railway Station and 3 km away from the Kalikambal temple (dedicated to Kali) and Kannika Parameswari Temple (Parvati as Kannika i.e. Matirka). This temple is exactly located at the junction where Choolai High road, Raja Muthiah road and Elephant Gate street meets in a junction. Kuṇṇāthamman is a *Kula devata* (family deity) of many families living in this area. For all the important occasions like child birth, marriage, house warming, good health, etc., people make *Pongal* (rice cooked with jaggery) as a votive offering and worship her. The hut type architecture of the shrine is very simple and reflects folk culture. The original statue of this deity may be worshipped under a tree in *Tirumurram* (open air courtyard with railings). At a later date, a small shrine was built around her statue and a *bali pita* and *dwajastamba* were erected in front of it. At present, daily pujas and other offerings are performed by a community of non-Brahmin priests. The priests are serving in the temple for the past 5 to 6 generations. They do not know much about the history of the temple and the origin of the name of presiding deity.

The statue of Kuṇṇāthamman is approximately 4 feet in height and 3 feet in breadth. Since she is under constant worship, we cannot take measurements or photograph her. The author managed to have a rough drawing of her during one of her

abhishekams i.e. scared bath. She is dressed in a saree and over that a silver *kavaca* covers her body all the time. With the help of that drawing, this paper attempts to reveal her real form as found in Hindu iconography.

The free-standing statue is made of granite. Without the saree and *kavaca*, she looks terrible and astonishing. Since she is the goddess of protection against evil and she possesses all the qualities a protector needs. She has eight arms; each carries a weapon and is seated on a high pedestal (*bhadrāsana*) in *lalithāsana* facing north. She has a *Jatabhara* with a skull placed in the middle. Her breasts are covered with a *kuchabandha* and wearing a simple *ekavalli vada* on her neck. Armlets and bracelets are also simple in nature and her lower garment covers up to her knee. She wears a *preta kundala* on her right ear and *bhadra kundala* on the left. Another interesting feature is that a swan either an emblem or a *vahana* is carved on her seat. The image and its iconographical features instilled a curiosity to research further about its origin and nature.

Her iconographical features coincide with the goddess Cāmuṇḍī or Cāmuṇḍā, one of the seven divine mothers or Ezhu Kannimar or Sapta-mātrika. Let us use the name Cāmuṇḍī, as it is well known in Tamilnadu. Before going into the details about the icon of Cāmuṇḍī and her nature, let us look into the origin of the Mātrikas. There are two mythologies connected with the origin of the Mātrikas. According to *Matsya Purana*, to win the battle against Andhakasura, who could duplicate from each drop of his blood that falls from him when he is wounded, Siva had created these Mātrikas with the purpose of drinking up the blood that falls from Andhakasura's wound¹. After the battle, the Mātrikas had

become very violent and started destroying the world to fulfil their thirst for blood. Siva subdued them with his Virabhadra or Bhairava manifestation. This leads them to calm down and people started worshipping them for their safety against evil.

In *Markandeya Purana* (MP), we find that goddess Parvati, as Durga, created these seven Mātrikas to help her in the battle against the Asuras, Sumbha and Nisumbha. In one verse of *Markandeya Purana* it is clearly stated that Saktis of Brahma, Siva, Karttikeya, Visnu and Indra came out of their bodies and went to help Durga (MP. ch. 88, v.12). It further narrates that each of these Saktis share respective forms, weapons, mounts of those gods. The Candika Sakti that came out of Durga is called Sivaduti or Kali. Kali who came out of Durga's forehead leads the battle against Canda and Munda, the mighty Asura generals of Sumbha and Nisumbha. Kali severed the heads of these two and presented them to her Devi. Hence, Parvati gave her the title Cāmuṇḍā or Cāmuṇḍī (MP.ch. 87. V.25)². The *Devi-mahatmyam* (8,14-21) does not include Cāmuṇḍā in the list of Sapta-mātrikas. She has been taking shape to lap up the blood of the Asura, Rakta-bija, for he had obtained the boon that every drop of blood that fell from his body would produce a myriad of Asuras, who were all replicas of himself.

The Sapta Matrika cult is popular all over India. Some scholars who believe Mātrikas were existent as early as Indus Valley Civilization and Vedic culture³. A seal with a row of seven feminine deities or priestesses witnessing a sacrificial ceremony of a mother goddess was cited as a reference to the Sapta-mātrikas theory⁴ (Fig.1). The *Rigveda* (IX 102.4) speaks of a group of seven mothers who control the preparation of Soma⁵. A clear depiction of *Sapta-mātrikas* appears in the epic *Mahabharata*⁶.

The sculptural images of the Sapta-mātrikas started appearing from as early as the Kushana period (1st - 3rd century CE) and later got standardised during the Gupta period (3rd - 6th century CE) according to Puranic descriptions⁷. The worship of the Sapta-mātrikas is familiar in India and almost all the northern and southern dynasties contributed much to its cult development. The Sculptures of Sapta-mātrikas were carved either in relief or as an individual image. They can be seen carved in relief on the early cave temples and in structural temples in a row bracketed by Virabhadra and Ganesha like in Ellora, Udhayagiri, Badami, Aihole, Belur, Halebid, Tiruparankundram, Malayadipatti, Tirukokarnam⁸, and Kanchipuram (Fig. 2). There are individual temples also built for Sapta-mātrikas, one such rock-cut temple is in Parhari, Madhya Pradesh which belongs to the fourth century C.E⁹.

In Tamilnadu, the Sapta-mātrikas are called Sapta-matargal, Kannimargal or Ezhu-kannigal and are worshipped either individually or in a group. While in a group they are generally called Sapta-matargal or Ezhu-kannimar, but when worshipped individually, they are called by different names like Camundeswari, Selliyamman, Ellaiyamman, Pidariamman, Kattucelli, etc.

As believed by many scholars, these deities are folk in nature and later on they were amalgamated in the orthodox Hindu pantheon as Tantric deities¹⁰. This worship in Tamilnadu is very ancient and still in practice for thousands of years. We get information about Sapta-kannikal and Sapta-matargal starting from the post-Sangam literatures. K.V. Raman says, "It is the opinion of scholars that this cult spread to Tamilnadu, probably from the Chalukyan country, around the sixth century CE. In Tamilnadu, the earliest reference to it is found in the *Silappadikaram* which

mentions the last of the Sapta-matargal (Chamundi as the youngest of the six other female deities)". There are thirty different names for the deities of the Sapta-mātrikas in their temples noted so far in Tamilnadu¹¹. The earliest sculptural panel of these deities with clear iconography is found at the Kailasanatha temple, Kanchipuram which belongs to the 8th c. CE. According to Leslie C. Orr, the Sapta-mātrikas, who first appeared in south India in the eighth century had temples dedicated exclusively to them, but from the ninth century onwards, they were demoted to the status of "deities of the entourage" (*parivara devata*) of Shiva. Their images moved from the sanctums to corners of temple complexes and now they are guardian deities in small village shrines¹².

As said earlier, worshipping individual sculptures of the Mātrikas are also popular in Tamilnadu. One such temple of Selliyamman at Alambakkam in Tiruchirapalli district is important for Mātrikas worship. The Madras Epigraphical Department Annual Report 1909-10 recorded inscriptions on the walls of the Alambakkam Selliyamman temple. This epigraph speaks about the Pallava King Rajakesarivarman's endowments to this temple which mentions that the temple was dedicated to Sapta-mātrikas¹³. There are several inscriptional records available about Sapta-mātrikas worship and endowments made to their temple in the Chola period. The Brahadeeswarar temple, Thanjavur inscriptions mention incidentally other minor deities worshipped in several outlying villages¹⁴. These minor deities are village goddesses like Kāla-piḍāri, Durgā-Paramēśvari, Emalattu Durgaiyār Ōmkārasundari¹⁵, Piḍāri, and Śēṭṭaiyār (Jyēštā). The Kolar inscription of Rajakesarivarman, mentions the allotment of yield received from the lands to the Sapta-mātargal¹⁶ temple with respective names. During the Chola period, the shrines of these

goddesses are known as *Tirumurram* (fenced open courtyard with or without shelter) as distinguished from the *Śrī Kōyil* of higher pantheon¹⁷.

With this introduction to Mātrikas worship, let us discuss the image of Kuṇṇāthamman and how she has been related to the Sapta-mātrikas. A free-standing sculpture of Cāmuṇḍā from Mahabalipuram gives us some clue about the image of this deity. Michael Lockwood states that the Chamunda figure kept at the Sapta-mātrikas group at a display in Mamallapuram was a stray sculpture moved from a nearby place¹⁸. This image is datable to the mid-seventh century CE. He further denotes that this kind of early free-standing image of goddess is rare and she is larger than the other Mātrikas in the group. Hence, he believes other Mātrikas are of later date i.e. post-Pallava.

The Mamallapuram Cāmuṇḍā image is a carved seated (*lalithāsana*) on a high pedestal with four hands (Fig. 3). The important iconographical features of this goddess are *jaṭābhārā* style of headress with a skull in the middle, bulging eyes, two fangs protruding downwards from her mouth, *bhadrakuṇḍala* on the left ear-lobe and *prētakuṇḍala* on the right. A garland of severed heads (*muṇḍamālā*) is seen wore diagonally as *yajnōpavita*. She has four arms, the upper left hand is missing and on the lower left hand she holds a corpse. She holds a dagger on the lower right hand and a bell on the upper right hand¹⁹. Many of these features synchronise with Kuṇṇāthamman especially the headress, protruding fangs, bulging eyes, dagger and bell in the hand (Fig. 4). As stated earlier, she has eight hands and each carries a weapon. On the right, in the upper most hand she holds a *trisula* with *damaru*, sword in the middle hand, a severed head in the bottom hand and in natural

front hand which she has kept on her right thigh holds a dagger. On the left, in the upper most hand she holds a shield, a bell in the middle, *naga pasa* in the bottom and in the front natural hand she holds a *kapala*. Her right leg was folded and kept on the seat and her left leg hanging casually. But, *munda mala* and corpse are missing which is a very common décor of Cāmuṇḍā. Hence, we are not able to put this deity at the right place immediately i.e. Kuṇṇāthamman = Cāmuṇḍā.

In the Puranic and Agamic texts like *Vishnudharmotra*, *Purvakarana* and *Amsumadbhedha*, we get detailed descriptions of Cāmuṇḍā or Cāmuṇḍī. According to these texts, she will be depicted in general as dark in complexion, fierce in aspect, and grotesque in appearance. She is distinguished by an emaciated body, dried or devoid of flesh, shrunken belly, sunken eyes and her teeth are bared, her tongue protrudes and tusks stand out. She wears a garland of severed heads. The hair on her head stands erect in strands that look like flames, and creeping serpents adorn her head. Her back is covered by the hide of the panther, while at her loins hangs the tiger's skin. She has hanging breasts which are entwined by serpents²⁰. The icons of Cāmuṇḍā with this dreadful appearance is found all over India (Fig. 5). But in Tamilnadu so far we do not come across the Cāmuṇḍī image with such a terrible nature either as an individual sculpture or in the Saptamātrikas panel. In Tamilnadu, she has been portrayed as a ferocious deity but not unpleasant. We get several examples of her image in Tamilnadu which belongs to the Pallava (Mamallapuram, Kailasanatha Temple, Kanchipuram, Tiruvellarai, Tiruchy, and Alampakkam), Pandya (Malayadipatti, Tiruparankundram, Tirukokaranam and Madurai) and Chola (Nartamalai, Ulaganayaki Amman Temple, Valadi, and Brahadeeswara temple, Thanjavur)²¹. With these

examples, we further analyse the Kuṇṇāthamman image which resembles the Cāmuṇḍī.

Ramachandra Rao states that Cāmuṇḍā may be two, four, ten, sixteen and twenty armed but when she represents all the seven Mātrikas, she is eight-armed. She carries in her left hands, skull-cup (*kapāla*), shield (*kheṭaka*), bell (*ghaṇṭā*) and a serpent (*nāga*) and in her right hands spear (*sūla*), and sword (*khaḍga*), vampire (*vetāla* – sever head), and hand-drum (*ḍamaru*). The eight-armed form is called in *Agni Purana* (50, 21-22) as Rudra-Cāmuṇḍā²². The above mentioned weapon sequence is exactly matched with the Kuṇṇāthamman Sculpture (see Fig.4).

Another interesting feature of the Kuṇṇāthamman Sculpture is the swan emblem on her pedestal. *Viṣṇudharmotra* mentions that she has provided a corpse as her mount. In *Purvākarna* (12th *paṭala*), along with the corpse, another *vāhanā* was also mentioned that is owl. She has a vulture as her banner. According to *Matsya Purana*, she rides on a vulture or crow. In the Jain tradition, Cāmuṇḍā has been accepted as the *yakshi* of the twenty second *Tirthankara*, Nemi Natha. According to Digambaras, she is terrible looking and rides on a crocodile. But for Svetambaras, she is Gandhari and has a white complexion, having swan as her mount (*haṁsa* – *vāhanā*). She carries in her hands, according to Hemachandra, sword (*khaḍga*), spear (*kunta*), pomegranate (*bījapūra*) and held one of the hands in *varada*²³. So, except the swan mount, nothing of other attributes suits her with Kuṇṇāthamman. Hence, we conclude that the option of Kuṇṇāthamman could be the Jain *yakshi*.

To conclude, since she has all the characters of Rudra-Cāmuṇḍā explained above and she does not have a skull garland and having eight hands, we can consider her as the representative

of all the seven mothers. The swan on the seat may be the creative idea of the artist who represented the presence of Brahmani within this image. Swan is the vehicle of Brahmani and it also serves as the emblem of her banner²⁴. As far as the date of this sculpture is concerned, we may place her between the late Pallava and early Chola period according to her iconographical features. Although she is essentially symbolizing death and destruction, she is benign to her devotees and believed to protect them from evil. Therefore, she has been worshipped by the devotees. In the Kuṇṇāthamman temple, she has been worshiped by offering rice cooked with jaggery (*Pongal*), fruits and coconut. Animal sacrifice is forbidden here. According to the Tamil lexicon, Kuṇṇā²⁵ means to shrink which gives us the understanding that she is the shrunken version of all the seven Mātrikas. Hence, we conclude that ferocious blood thirsty Mātrikas are all amalgamated into a single image and worshipped in a pacified manner as Kuṇṇāthamman in this shrine.

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Fig. 1. Indus Valley Seal depicting Seven female figures in front of a Mother Goddess, Mohanjo-daro.



Fig.2. Saptamātrikas, Kailasanatha Temple, Kanchipuram, 8th c. CE.



Fig. 3. Cāmuṇḍā, Mamallapuram,
7th – 8th c. CE.
(courtesy: M. Lockwood)

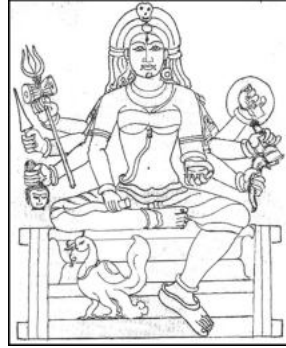


Fig. 4. Kuṇṇāthamman
(Drawing by S. Prema)



Fig. 5. Cāmuṇḍā, 11th -12th c. CE,
National Museum, Delhi.



ANTIQUITY AND SANCTITY OF VAIDYANATHA DHAMA

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Abstract

Vaidyanatha Dhama, popularly known as Devaghara, is presently situated in the state of Jharkhanda. The divine couple Shiva and Parvati is jointly or separately adored by the devotees at this holy place. Hence, the summits of the principle temples of these two, god and goddess are well connected with ropes of garlands. This place is blessed with one of twelve Jyotirlingas, conspicuously famous in India.

Keywords: *Vaidyanatha Dhama, Devaghara, Jharkhanda and Jyotirlinga.*

Vaidyanatha Dhama, popularly known as Devaghara, is presently situated in the state of Jharkhanda. It is known as one of the splendid sacred spots in India. The temple of Vaidyanatha or Lord Shiva are considered to be an extremely sacred shrine with

a glorious past. The divine couple Shiva and Parvati is jointly or separately adored by the devotees at this holy place. Hence, the summits of the principal temples of these two, god and goddess are well connected with ropes of garlands. This place is blessed with one of twelve Jyotirlingas, conspicuously famous in India.

The *Matsya Purana*¹, which is assigned between the third and the sixth centuries, is probably the earliest text which throws light on the sanctity of Vaidyanatha Dhama. Lord Shiva is said to have been enshrined here and is shining in full glory. There are, of course, temples of other deities here especially of Ganapati, Hanuman, Surya, Kala Bhairav and other goddesses, and they are supposed to have enjoyed the company of Shiva and therefore, this spot is historically linked to brahmanical religious ethos.

Myths of Vaidyanatha Dhama

There are a number of myths of divine and semi divine characteristics which relate to the sacred region of Vaidyanatha Dhama. Malinowski rightly argues that myth is told to establish a belief and by this belief we know the region of a particular society². The objective of these sacred tales is to establish the sanctity of the centre. The *Siva Purana*³ refers to a story which relates to the origin of this *tirtha* to an incident that happened in the life of Ravana, son of Pulastya and himself a King of demons. Ravana is said to have propitiated Lord Shiva through severe austerities and with utmost service on the mountain of Kailasha. When Shiva having been pleased with his penance, condescended to bestow a boon on him, he chose the boon of his (Shiva's) permanent stay in Lanka. Shiva, then, handed over the Vaidyanatha Jyotirlinga to him and suggested to him to establish it in his country, Lanka. Further, the god cautioned him not to place it anywhere in his

way, otherwise it would go down too deep to come up again. But the deities in heaven did not want the Jyotirlinga to go to Lanka. Hence, they requested the god Varuna to look seriously into this matter. Varuna, willing to sort out the problem of heaven, entered into Ravana's stomach and compelled him to physically prepare to attend nature's call. This made Ravana come down from the air. Coming down to the earth, he requested an old *brahmana*, standing there by to hold the Jyotirlinga for a very brief moment till he returned after nature's call. The *brahmana* was actually god Varuna, who was disguised and he took the Jyotirlinga in his hand and immediately kept it on the ground at Hari Lajori in the vicinity of Vaidyanatha Dhama. After a while, Ravana reached the place and demanded that the *brahmana* return the icon. Knowing every development in detail, Ravana fell into a rage and toiled his best to draw out the icon, but in vain. The icon is said to have touched the underworld (*patala*). Disappointed, Ravana finally constructed a pond there known as Chandrakupa, wherein he is said to have collected the sacred water of all holy places, which he sprinkled over the icon of Linga and left for his abode.

The other myth relates to a aboriginal person named Baiju of the Bhila tribe who later turned into a Shivaite saint⁴. According to this myth, Baiju is said to have offered his first prayer to this Jyotirlinga.

The place of Vaidyanatha Dhama represents sectarian harmony in the early medieval period. Apart from being a place of Saivite cult, it is also considered to be one of the fifty-one *pithas* (seats). The *Devi Bhagavata Purana*⁵ states that the goddess Sati is known as Bagla in this region. According to this text, the heart of Sati had fallen down here. There is a legend offering a

mythological explanation of the origin of the *pithas* which are attached to this spot⁶. Daksha, father of Sati, was celebrating a great sacrifice to which neither Shiva nor Parvati were invited. Sati, however, reached the house of her parents uninvited, but was insulted by her father. As a result of this ill treatment, Sati is said to have put herself into fire and finally perished. Then Shiva destroyed the sacrifice of Daksha.

Inconsolable at the death of his beloved wife Sati, Shiva wandered over the earth with Sati's dead body on his shoulders. The gods were anxious to free Shiva from his mad sorrow and requested Vishnu to do the needful. Then Visnu, accompanied by Shani, entered into the dead body of Sati and started cutting off her limbs. Wherever the limb fell became a holy place in the name of Sati. The heart is said to have fallen at Vaidyanatha Dhama, hence the spot is a Shakta *tirtha*⁷. Trikuta, Nandana hill, Tapovana, Shivaganga and so on are adjacent to this spot and are also referred to as holy.

Great attraction, fascination and esteem for Vaidyanatha Dhama in the heart of pilgrims is due to the fact that a belief was propounded here about the immunity from some diseases by touching the soil of this holy place. The *Siva Purana* manifests that Vaidyanatha Dhama is called *bhavarogahara* (destroyer of diseases) because Ashvini Kumar, a *vaidya* (doctor) of gods had observed a great penance at this spot⁸.

The healing character of the *tirtha* may well be epigraphically corroborated. The Siyan Stone slab inscription of Nayapala, a King of the Pala dynasty, dated about the middle of the eleventh century refers to a number of Shivaite temples, caused to be erected by

the King himself, like the shrine of Purari,⁹ Hetukesha Shambhu temple at Devikota, modern Bangarh in the west Dinajpur district of West Bengal,¹⁰ the stone temple of Ksemeshwara,¹¹ temple of Ghantish,¹² Bhairava temple is surrounded by sixty four mothers in his own city,¹³ and the temple of Vateshwara at Kahalgaon (Bhagalpur)¹⁴. The stone shrine of Bateshwara is described as the ninth *kulāchala* (the hillock is known as *kula*). All the above names apply to Shiva. Rudra too, who is referred to in the *Rgveda*, is the foremost name of Shiva. Eleven Rudras are installed for worship at eleven different temples by the King Nayapala¹⁵. Shiva in different names is known as the healer of diseases. He is such a god, who accepts poison for himself and provides nectar to the world. Rudra is also described as the destroyer of diseases of the human body¹⁶.

Near a temple erected by the King himself, an *arogyasala* was established for the treatment of sick persons and apparently a home for the accommodation of the *vaidya* or physician. The home seems to have been situated between the temple and the tank nearby¹⁷. The temple of Ghantisha also possessed *arogyasala* or hospital¹⁸. The religious aspect of such a construction in the vicinity of *tirtha* or temples was that the god would cure the disease in his premise. Shiva called Ashutosha is believed to cure diseases of pilgrims. It is interesting to add that Soma is applied to a plant brought to use as medicine (*osadhi*)¹⁹. Shiva is called Somadev because he is the god of medicine. According to a dictionary, Soma itself means Osadhisha, lord of herbs or medicine, i.e Shiva²⁰.

One important information from the above inscription is that the King Nayapala constructed the expanded cover (*khola*) made of gold for the god Vaidyanatha, Deoghara²¹. So, the antiquity

of the golden *khola* of the Vaidyanatha temple goes back to the middle of the eleventh century CE.

It is significant to note that a religious establishment of widespread fame seems to have inspired the *yajmani* brahmanas and other leading people from far and wide in the early medieval period to name small and developing localities similarly, in order to develop the latter's socio-religious significance. One chief motive of the *brahmanas* was also to make sure the means of a livelihood at a new sacred spot through the ritual of gift and other religious performances. The *Linga Purana*, which is one of the late Puranas, mentions one Vaidyanatha as a holy *subtirtha* of Varanasi. Dakshina Ganga, Dakshina Prayaga, Daksina Varanasi and Daksina Mathura are certain examples of this development. The word Vaidyanatha for Shiva became so famous after the erection of his temple at Vaidyanatha Dhama, as one shrine after this god was erected at Pushpagiri in Andhra Pradesh, and as is recorded in an inscription of 1210²².

Although most of the *tirthas* came into existence as a consequence of the decay of towns, migration of *brahmanas* and consequent sanctification of such settlements,²³ some seem to have evolved owing to other factors. Significant of these are tribal elements which appear to have rendered a vital role behind such developments. The tribal association of Shiva and the mother goddess in hilly and forest areas from the ancient past and their close ties with village communities paved the way for the spread of the cult of these deities, erection of their shrines and evolution of holy places after them. In course of time, many tribes coming in contact with *brahmanas*, who offered their co-operation in agriculture, became Hinduised, and transformed their profession

of hunting to agriculture. The so-called tribals of the past started living in settled villages. Gradually, several totem deities sacred to tribals were acknowledged in Hindu society. The concept of such religious ethos of the tribals helped acculturation in the form of later development of socio-religious institutions of brahmanical *tirthas* and temples. Land grants on a huge scale to *yajmani brahmanas* in forests and hillocks in the early medieval period may be said to have corresponded to the mingling of tribal and caste societies²⁴.

It is significant to learn that Vaidyanatha Dhama is enriched with two rare images. To the south of the Parvati temple at Vaidyanatha is a covered verandah. This verandah has been described containing images of Shyam and Karttikey. The image of Shiva kept after 1885 CE at this verandah belongs to the eighth or ninth century CE. It is two feet high and one and half feet broad. The image is inside a *torana*. The image has four hands. There is a *veena* in one of the hands. The front right hand is on the lower portion of the *veena* and its index finger is so quietly bent as if it were actually vibrating the strings.

The other image is that of Mahakala, one of the forms of Shiva. The Mahakala belongs to the Vajrayana sect. It has one main head, six subsidiary heads and another subsidiary reversed head on the crown of the main heads with sixteen hands and four legs. Eight female deities may be observed accompanying the image. The image was found at Lakhisarai and it is a good specimen of the late Pala period. It is near the main temple of Vaidyanatha known as Shroff Satya Narayan temple, one of the forms of Shiva²⁵.

The foregoing analysis would say that the sacred spot of Vaidyanatha Dhama housed both Saivites and the Shaktas in early medieval India. The months of *Shravana* and *Bhadra* are taken to be of utmost significance for offering oblations to the Jyotirlinga. The pilgrimage-centre of Vaidyanatha Dhama, thus, constitutes the keynote and bedrock of our enriched culture and civilisation.

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CONTEXTING THE TEXT: TRACING THE SOCIETAL IMPACT ON THE TEXTUAL TRADITION OF DĀRIKAVADHAM IN KERALA

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Abstract

Analyzing literary sources helps us to understand changes that had occurred in the community over time. It is very much visible when we look into a particular story or event in literature and then compare the same narration with different texts. While doing so, one can understand the evolution of the story at a different time and place. This paper tries to understand the changes undergone by folk tradition because of Brahmanical interference. For this, the paper takes into account the prominent story of Dārikavadham, which forms the core of most of the folk performances in Kerala and is considered by comparing it in two different genres of texts. This comparison would help us to trace the changes. The two stories used here are from Kaḷamezhuthu and Kiḷippaṭṭu. The stories described in both of these works reflect two different social setups. The

story of Kaḷamezhuthu is having many characteristics of an indigenous society, whereas Kīlippaṭṭu projects the society where the brāhmins had begun to show their presence. A careful study of these stories enables one to understand the process of Brahmanical appropriation in an indigenously developed society.

Keywords: *Dārikavadham, Kaḷamezhuthu, Kīlippaṭṭu, Folklore, Kāḷi.*

Introduction

Kerala is a land of vintage, folk, and time-honored performances. It is defined by its antiquity and the organic continuity of the Malayali people. Art forms of Kerala can be bifurcated into two: classical and folklore. The classical traditions of Kerala include dance-drama like *Kathakālī* and *Koodiyattam*, the only living examples of the ancient Sanskrit theatre performed according to the tradition of Bharātamunī's *Naṭyaśāstrā*¹. The art is supposed to be almost 2000 years old and is documented by UNESCO as a "Masterwork of the Spoken" and intangible heritage of humanity. The folklore tradition of Kerala includes traditional rituals, beliefs, and customs as found in the folk art and songs of Kerala. Some of the folk performances like *theyyam*, *thīrā*, *thookkam*, *paḍayāṇi*, *muṭiyēṭṭu*, *kaliyōṭ* and so on are some of the ritual folklore constructed around the Devi (Kāḷi) cult.

It is remarkable to state that most of the folk traditions of Kerala revolve around Kāḷi. Kāḷi is said to be a Dravidian goddess, who draws identity from Kottavai, a warrior goddess². Her cult appeases to syncretize autochthonous tribal³ and Dravidian on one hand Sanskrit beliefs and practices. This paper deals with

the story of Dārikavadham in *Kalamezhuthu*⁴ and *Kilippattu*⁵, and analyses the changes in society. It is done by studying the textual representation of the stories from the texts that are written in two different socio-cultural backgrounds.

Folkloric essence of Kerala

Local tribal gods and goddesses of different types form part of veneration before the dawn of all the religions mentioned above in Kerala. Most of these gods and goddesses were the symbol of nature, totem, and ancestors. These are, Maḍam, Muthāppan, Ayyāppan, Rakśas, Pathimōrthikal, Kuttichāhan, Kōli, Puliyampulli, Vaduthan, Karāli, Vaduthabhadran, Vaduthala, Chāthan, Sambannagulikan, Mōlapritru, Yāgiswaran, Māriamma and Marutha deities worshipped locally by indigenous peoples in Kerala. The *Śakti* cult is also very much popular in Kerala. *Śakti* is also referred to as Durga, Ambika, Bhadrakālī, Pārvaṭi, Mahālalakshmi, Bhagavati, Āmunda and by other names. One of the earliest temples in Kerala belonging *Śakti* cult is called as Bhagavati temple and this is located at Kodungallur, Trissur district. The cult of *Śakti* was prevalent even before the existence of all other religions in Kerala. Most of the indigenous peoples in Kerala have been worshipping Kālī or Bhagavati since the beginning the Christian era.

In Kerala, folk art forms belong substantially to the cult of Devī. Performers belonging to a particular community perform these at religious festivals. They wear elaborate masks, colourful headgears, costumes, and paint their faces. These performances include dances such as the *ŚastraKālī* and *EzhāmāṭṭuKālī*. Many famous modern world theatre experts like Eugenio Barba, Richard Scheckner, Peter Brook, Philip Zerelli, and many others

documented the richness and the dramatic spectacle of the folk and classical art forms of Kerala⁶. Drama and dance students from many parts of the world are enthusiastically learning these art forms from the master performers of Kerala.

If one looks at the works related to the goddess cult in Kerala, we can very well trace the evolution of worship from the one, which was practiced by the lower community⁷ to a more sophisticated culture of the *brāhmins*.

Narration in Kaḷamezhuthu

Kaḷamezhuthu is a ritual tribal in origin and Dravidian in spirit and was tampered with or enhanced by changing times and influences. *Nagā kaḷam*, *Bhagavāthī kaḷam*, and *kaḷams* dedicated to gods like *Vetekāran*, *Ayyappān*, and so on, trace their roots to the sacred groves. It gets performed during festivals in BhādraKālī (Mother Goddess) temples and on special occasions in Sarppākāvu (groves sacred to snakes) and Ayyāppankāv (temples dedicated to *Ayyappa*). Various deities get mirrored using coloured powders. This pictorial art, with its cherished rituals, takes a sensitive reader to the heritages of the aesthetic sensibilities of cultural Kerala. *Kaḷam* progresses through three steps; *Kaḷamezhuthu*, drawing of the picture, *Kaḷam pāṭṭu*, singing the myth to the accompaniment of instruments, and *Kaḷam thūḷḷal*, enactment of the legend in stylized performance, along with its three aspects - aesthetic, religious, and social. *Kaḷamezhuthu* was followed by various communities such as Kaṇiyān, Vaṇṇān, Pūluvar, Malayān, Pūlayār, Māvilar, Munnōṭṭan, Parayān, Paṇiyan, Āviyar, Veḷan, Maṇān, Koppālan, Kūravar, Theeyāṭuṇi, Theeyādi Naṁbiar, Theyyampādi Naṁbiar, Varanāṭṭu Kūruppanmār, Kallāṭṭā Kūruppānmār, Puthūseri Kūruppānmār, Marār and so on.

With the advent of the Aryans in Kerala, attempts were made by them to appropriate the tribal worship practices into the Brahmanical fold. The Nambōthirī brāhmins are said to be the oldest wave of brāhmins. The next wave included *brāhmins* from the coast of Tuḷū country and came to be known as Tuḷū brāhmins. Into the fold of Tuḷū, the brahmins who worship non-brāhmanical deities got absorbed, marking the entry of Devī worship into the brāhmanical fold. These brāhmins started giving brāhmanical colours to the non-brāhmanical gods. In this way, one can find the presence of Brahmanical symbols in a secretive way. The practices which were earlier limited to a particular community began to be institutionalized by laying out elaborate descriptions. It gave way for the *Brahmins* taking over of community-based practices, thereby establishing a Brahmanical authority⁸.

It is difficult to ascertain the foundation of the story of Dārika and Kālī. Dārika's presence in *Pānāthōṭṭam*⁹ gives an earlier origin and makes it a part of the tribal cult. In ancient times, Pānā was also known as *Kālī Nāṭakam*. There is a separate genre of *Pānāthōṭṭam*, which narrates the confrontation between of Dārika and Kālī known as Dārikan *thōṭṭam*. It is interesting to find that in this *thōṭṭam*, the presence of Viṣṇu is invisible, making it earlier than the arrival of *brāhmins*. The indigenous nature is brought into effect again with the superiority of Śiva. The story, according to *Kaḷamezhuthu*, is as follows:

The *deva-danavā* battle prolonged indefinitely, at times the *āṣuras* subjugating the *śuras*, or the conquered turning victorious with the help of Trio. In one of the struggles, the *āṣuras* were forced to retreat, decimated except for two females - Danāmaṭī and Dārumaṭī¹⁰. It necessitated them to hide in the *paṭhala*. The story starts with this fateful event. From here, the story takes

off, and a detail description of Dārumaṭī's pregnancy, related rituals like *Pulikuḍiaḍiyāntrām*, *Eṭṭilyapāṇṇi*, and so on forming part of household chores in Kerala get mentioned. Through this narration, one becomes familiar with the practices in *tharavaḍu*. This description keeps the story as a part of society. The poet also has not forgotten to describe the ill omens during the birth of Dārika, his penance, the boon from Brāhma of invincibility as desired by him against either man, or beast, *Surāṣura*, or weapon of any type, at any point of time. The poet elaborately discusses all these events. In his elaborate discussion, at times unknowingly he presents self-contradicting statements like, he begins the story by saying that all the āśuras except the two women are left out, and at the same time he also says that when Dārika came to power, all the āśuras who were hiding came forward. The poet also tries to insert an incident that becomes detrimental to the warning given by Brāhma. He says that after getting a boon from Brāhma, he meets goddess Kārthiyayāni, who says that she is ready to grant a blessing to him. For this Dārika, mockingly says that he is not the kind of man who accepts a boon from a woman. Devī could not bear this insult and cursed him that, a woman will become the cause for his death. We can perceive that in the latter part, it is a woman who becomes the reason for his death, thereby fulfilling the curse.

After giving this much background, now the poet talks about the construction of Dārikalōkaṁ. After the creation of his kingdom, he set out for Digvijayā. First, he fights with Agnī, Nīryatī, Varuṇa and, Vāyu and after defeating them; he goes to confront the *Navāgrahās*. With his unique war strategy, he trounces them. The next episode described by the poet is his marriage with Manodāri, daughter of Kalākeya. From here, the story talks about a purāṇic version, describing the agony and humiliation faced by

gods. In search of an answer to their difficulties, they approach Viṣṇu, who is absent in Dārikan thōṭṭam. From the period of Kaḷam pāṭṭu, we can see the presence of Viṣṇu, assuming that it was during this period that Viṣṇu cult came to Kerala. Here, the poet cannot stop himself from describing the eyes of Viṣṇu. He describes them in the way Abhinava Kalidasa and Harsha have made, thereby reinstating his knowledge about their works. He, along with all other gods, set out for Kailāsa, emphasizing the superiority of Śiva. The author also tries to describe Śiva, but both the descriptions seem to be a mismatch. The gods like Trīmurti's along with Indra, Yamā, and Subrāmaṇya, created their female counterparts and imparted their powers to them before sending them to the war field. They also proved to be no match for the formidable Dārika. It increased the confidence of Dārika, and he ordered his bellman to denigrate the Gods.

Subsequently comes the role of Nārada, who meets Dārika on his way to meet Śiva. Dārika abuses both the gods. Frightened by him, Nārada runs to Śiva, begging for help. On hearing about the incident, Śiva becomes furious, and from his third eye, Kālī is born. Kālī fitted with weapons, set out to fight Dārika with her army of ghosts and piśacās. She made Nāndi, the commander-in-chief of the military, and on the way, through the forest; she meets Vethaḷi, who then becomes her vāhana¹¹. Hearing the cadence of the army, he sends his messenger to take account of the situation. He learns that an army of ghosts headed with a woman is approaching him for a battle. He then gets his army ready and sets out to fight. As the war proceeds, the situation seems to be against Kālī. Dārika appears to be a strong opponent who is challenging. At this juncture, goddess Kārthiyayāni comes to help her daughter. Kārthiyayāni, disguised as a brāhman lady approaches Manodāri

and convinces her that she is on their side. After that, she learns the secret behind the power of Dārika. Sensing trouble, Dārika, goes to the palace and asks Manodāri about the situation. She tells him about the brāhman lady. Realizing that his end is near, he plans to inform Kālī about his devotion to Śiva. He also wishes to be killed in the battlefield while waging war. After killing Dārika, Kālī set out to assume her seat as Thirumāṇḍamkuṇṇilāmma. It is where the story of Kalamezhuthu ends.

The whole story is recited according to the type of offering, the devotees are making. People who cannot afford *Kalamezhuthum-paṭṭum* simply perform *Dārikavadham*. In *Dārikavadham*, only those parts get presented, which the narrator wants.

Era and authorship

It is difficult to ascertain the author and the period of writing. Based on the reference to Thirumāṇḍamkun, it should probably be around the 5th - 6th century CE. Due to the changes in literary style; it is difficult to say that the form was the same. Kūrup usually sings these songs, so there is a high probability that some Kūrup must be its author¹². Like Mahābhārata, this story might also have undergone an evolution. It was Vyāsa who has penned it down, and Vaiśampāyana, Jaimini, Śutāṇ, and Śoutī might have transmitted these stories orally to their disciples, which might have been handed down over traditions. According to the story, Gaṇapātī authored it and is handed down through tradition by his disciples. There was very little chance for any other interference. It might have been handed down orally and written down at a later period. Kalamezhuthum-paṭṭum even today, is handed down orally. The traditions of Kalamezhuthum-paṭṭum and Pānāthōṭṭam are different, but the story of Kālī, which

forms the base, is intrinsically connected¹³. With the coming of brāhmanical religion, the Kūrup, who were traditionally bardic of Kalamezhuthum-paṭṭum, made necessary changes in the story to be able to fit into the newly formed practice. It also operated as a pass for Kūrup to enter into the temple centric religion. Pānāthōṭṭam practitioners who could not accept change were not allowed to enter the temple premises. Though Kalamezhuthum-paṭṭum from the name denotes ‘song,’ but it is actually in the form of prose. It is the Kūrup, who made it a song. Though some distinctions are visible from Pānāthōṭṭam, but one can find striking similarities from the presence of Pānā, Kuruthī, etc., which are not in the textual form of Kalamezhuthum-paṭṭum. These practices still form an integral part of *Pānāthōṭṭam*.¹

Narration in *Kiḷippaṭṭu*

Kiḷippaṭṭu or parrot song is a genre of Malayalam poems in which the narrator is a parrot, a bee, a swan, and so on. The 16th-century poet Ezhuthāchan, who is also known as the father of Malayalam language, popularized it. It is an initial attempt from the part of the *brāhman*s to establish their culture. We can see the same tendency in *Mahābhārata* also, where we find birds as narrators.

With the coming of birds into the story, the background of the story itself changes. It also seems that the poet is not able to connect with the readers. The story also lacks a Kerala touch. The new poet¹⁴ does not assume that the story of *Kāḷi* was prevalent in the land. Poet tries to describe the story in the lines of a Purāṇic tale by creating the necessary environment. It is the reference of the *Thirumāṇḍamkunnu* temple, which gives it a Kerala affinity. The Kerala style of narration seems to be lacking and the characters

of Dārika and Manodārī also started lacking a Kerala style and become alien to the land. The Kerala traditional rituals elaborately discussed in the earlier version seems to be absent. In the same way, the description of the army of Kālī, which included ghosts, was also missing. The portrayal of Vethālī in the earlier text is omitted from this text altogether.

Kiḷippaṭṭu considers the inclusion of these characters as something not ideal for describing in the text. The bird through whom the story proceeds belong to Nandapōkavanam, a place outside Kerala. The story hence described in the context is the one, which is not prevalent in Kerala. According to this text, the story of Dārika is the one, which is recited by the sage Maṛkaṇḍeyā to Śivaśarmāvu. The story begins with an incident of Kashmiri King Candraṣena. On the way back from his hunting expedition, his elephant accidentally steps over a mound, and a ferocious ghost appears before them. The ghost eats up all elephants and turns towards the King. Candraṣena, along with bodyguards, ran for his life. They take refuge in sage *Ṣutheeṣṇa*'s hut. The sage bows before the ghost and asks him to let off the King. The sage tells the King that the beast belongs to the army of Kālī.

Out of curiosity, the King urges the sage to tell him the story of Kālī and her army. It is from here the narration begins in *Kiḷippaṭṭu*. Maṛkaṇḍeyā retells the story which *Ṣutheeṣṇa* told Candraṣena to Śivaśarmāvu. It is about how the purāṇic authors create an account and how the narrative finds a place in *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇam*, in the name of *BhādraKālī māhātmya*¹⁵. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* cannot be possibly dated earlier than 200 AD. The further addition made to the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* pushes the dating up to the opening of the fifth century A.D.¹⁶. It is how a tale that had all

the taste of Kerala became an pan Indian story. The balance of the story is similar to the story narrated in *Kalamezhuthu*, but with a slightly different narrative style. The elaborate descriptions, as given in the *Kalamezhuthu* are absent and use only limited poetic devices.

The story begins with the fight of Dārika and Indra, which is absent in *Kalamezhuthu*. According to the purāṇas, the first thing that the Aṣuras do is to defeat Indra in combat, after which they turn towards gods. After this incident, his marriage with Manodārī, daughter of Mayā is also mentioned. Frustrated by the destruction caused by Dārika, Devās went to Brāhma for help, who advised them to meet Viṣṇu. From there all of them proceeded to Kailāṣa for taking advice from Śiva, then the story continues in the same line as in *Kalamezhuthu*¹⁷. As in the *Kalamezhuthu*, the description of Vethaḷi is absent. After the fierce battle with Dārika, Kālī kills him and returns to Kailāṣa ferociously. To calm the anger of Kālī, Ganeśa and Nandikeśa assume the form of children and go before her unlike Kṣetrapalā and Vīrābhadrā in *Kalamezhuthu*. In *Kalamezhuthu*, it is Nandikeśa, who is the commander- in- chief of Kālī's army and after the battle, he returns to Kailāṣa with him. We can also find that after the battle, sages applauds Kālī. After this battle, Kālī stays at Daṇḍakāraṇya forest as the protector of the world.

According to *Kiḷippattu*, the story does not have any relation with Kerala. Most of the incidents are happening outside Kerala. The nativity of the tale is unaccounted because of the influence of Purāṇic authors. *Kiḷippattu* is a manifestation of gift by purāṇic authors for the Kālī cult of Kerala. Some fraction of *brāhmins* felt that it is essential to incorporate Kālī into purāṇic literature to give

prominence to the Kālī worship of Kerala. The tradition, which was earlier limited to the society of Kerala, attained a pan India identity because of this incorporation. Even though the story of *Kālī* got amalgamated into one of the oldest purāṇa, it could not attain much popularity as expected by some. Since the Kālī worship was integral to Kerala society, it stood time-honoured. Some of the works develop in Sanskrit on the Kālī cult. An indigenous character is made by writing in the form of a bird reciting on his way back from attending the temple festival of *Thirumāṇḍamkunnu*. The only benefit that we get from the author of *Kiḷippaṭṭu* is that now the story is known to the people who understand Sanskrit, thereby giving a pan-Indian nature. Some of the native authors like Kōchunṇi Thāmpuran, Vāṣḍevaśarma, Vallathōl, etc., have written works on Kālī. Some of them have named their compositions either *Bhādroḷpaṭṭi* or as *BhādraKālimahātmyam*. The content remained the same in both genres of works. In this way, the cult of Kālī has remained important to the culture of Kerala.

Era and authorship

It is from one of the manuscripts from Kaḷōṛ that we could see the date. According to the Kūrups, the text is approximately 200 years old. The author of the script might probably be a Kaḷōṛ Naṃbōthirī based on the reference of Thirumāṇḍamkunnu temple given in the work and the relation between Kaḷōṛ Naṃbōthirī and the temple. Initially, the ancestral home of the Kaḷōṛ family was at Koṭṭakal and perhaps some Naṃbōthirī might have written this during that time giving it an antiquity of 200 years.

Conclusion

A myth is sometimes a reflection of social tension and a way to resolve them. It is evident from the tale of *Dārikavadham* that

the myth never remains the same; instead, it evolves according to the time and situation. Every myth is adjusted to make it fit for a particular society. Sometimes the same myths in its different forms, with its either additions or subtractions, are present in the community, forming the platform for a specific system of belief. The study comprehended how little traditions try to attach itself with the *purāṇic* tradition for attaining pan-Indian status. Sometimes, the attempt seems to be fruitful. If we look into the oral tradition, we might come across an entirely different narration. Oral literature testifies to the fact that there are things prevalent in societies, which are not brought out in to paper but they do still exist. Both of these sources together aid in the understanding of culture. It is also worth mentioning that in most of the ritual practices of the more significant traditions, one can find the essence of an evolved folkloric heritage.

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3. The term “tribal” is used to designate a small social group with a unique culture and lacking a centralized political organization.
4. *Kalamezhuthu* is a ritual art form of Kerala wherein the deity’s form is drawn on the floor using five types of coloured powders

5. *Kiḷippaṭṭu* or parrot song is a genre of Malayalam poems in which the narrator is a parrot, a bee, a swan, and so on. *Kiḷippaṭṭu* was popularized by the 16th-century poet *Ezhuthāchan*.
6. *Op.cit.*, Ajith. K. Pillai, 2017, p. 42.
7. The term ‘Lower community’ is used in the paper to denote the followers of little tradition as proposed by Milton Singer and Robert Redfield.
8. Chelnat Achyutha Menon, *Kāḷi Worship in Kēraḷa* (Malayalam), University of Madras, Madras, 1959, p. 97.
9. *Pānā* is a tribal ritualistic art form performed to propitiate the goddess BhādraKāḷi in Kerala. *Thoṭṭam Paṭṭu*, is a tribal vocal ballad sung just before performing the ritual. In Pānāthōṭṭam, *Pānā*, a temporary thatched hut or canopy (*Panthal*) supported by 64 posts cut out from the *Pāla* tree (*Alstonia scholaris*) is made. After the purification of *Panthal*, a stump of the *Pāla* tree is ceremonially brought to the site and planted there for the performance. Non-figurative *kaḷam* is drawn in the centre using coloured powders, and it is followed by *Thoṭṭam Paṭṭu*.
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12. *Op.cit.*, Chelnat Achyutha Menon, 1959, p. 123.
13. *Ibid.*
14. By this, the author is referring to the poet of *Kiḷippaṭṭu*.
15. The poet might be using *Devī Mahātmyam* and *BhādraKāḷimahatmya* interchangeable, as we find only *Devī Mahātmyam* in *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇam*, and this includes the

story of Kālī also.

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17. See above section on *Kalamēzhuthu* for the complete story.

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JAINISM: A LIVING RELIGION IN GUJARAT

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Abstract

Jainism today is a living religion having its followers in different parts of India. Although compared to the entire population of our country, there are very less people that profess the Jain faith. Notwithstanding its numerical strength, Jainism has its own distinct appeal for a more informed acquaintance with its special tenets. Its origin lay to the east of that holy land which was the seat of the Vedic cult. But with the process of years, it has migrated westwards and northwards. The chief seats of Jain influence in modern times are the cities and trading marts of Western India. The mercantile communities of Gujarat owe little of their prosperity to Jaina enterprise. It has survived the onslaughts of rival faiths, foreign and indigenous despite a long history. As it has not received the attention that it deserved, this paper is intended to fill up the gap in the existing literature.

Keywords: *Gujarat, Jains, Svetambaras, Digambaras, Mendicants, Hemachandra, Kumarpala.*

Jainism is one of the ancient religions in India. It was propounded by Parsvanatha and was reformed and built into a closed system by Vardhamana Mahavira, who was a contemporary of Gautama Buddha. Though the Jains are spread all over India, their main concentrations are in Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. According to the 2011 census, the Jain population is third highest in Gujarat at 579,654 (0.959%) after Maharashtra and Rajasthan¹.

The historical origins of the Jain tradition lie far to the northeast of Gujarat, in present-day Bihar, but within a few centuries of the death of Mahavira, the Jains had spread to most parts of India. The earliest archaeological evidence for the presence of Jains in western India comes from a set of twenty rock-cut cells near Junagadh in Saurashtra, dated to the second century C.E.² Jain bronze images from the sixth and seventh centuries have been found in Mahudi in eastern Mehsana district³; in Akota near Baroda⁴; and Valabhi in Saurashtra⁵. Stone images from the fourth century have been found in Dhank in Saurashtra⁶ and from the late sixth or early seventh century in Idar⁷. Literary evidence also indicates Jain presence in the area. For example, Vinayavijaya, in his seventeenth-century *Subodhikd Tilka* on the *Kalpa Sutra*, preserves the legend that the *Kalpa Sutra* was first recited to the Jain laity in 454 or 467 C.E. in the presence of King Dhruvasena in Anandapura, modern Vadnagar in eastern Mehsana district⁸.

Jainism had a very close relation to Gujarat and Kathiawar, where we find the largest concentration of Jains at present, here on Mount Girnar in Junagadh district that Neminatha, the 22nd

tirthankara of the Jains attained salvation. The Council of Jain ascetics held at Valabhi in 466 CE and the Jain canon was, for the first time, reduced to writing. Just as south India is the stronghold of the Digambaras, western India is the centre of activities of the Svetambaras. Regarding the migration of Jains to these parts of India, it is thought that it must have taken place by 300 B.C. from eastern India. In this connection, the *Cambridge History of India* has given the following conclusion:

‘From the fact that the Jain tell us something about the reigns of Chandragupta Maurya and his son Bindusara but at the same time they have practically nothing to tell about the reigns of Ashoka and his successors in East India and that the division of the Jaina Church into two great sects of the Digāmbaras and Svetāmbars had probably begun after the reign of Chandragupta Maurya. It is concluded that the Jains were probably already at this time, i.e., 300 B.C., gradually losing their position in the kingdom of Magadha, and that they had begun their migration towards the western part of India, where they settled and where they have retained their settlements to the present day’.

Map of Gujarat¹⁰



Historical discourse

It is known that history determines the self-identity of the population or particular religion. Hence, it becomes important to know the history of this region, for knowing the self-Identity of Jains of Gujarat. From the early 4th century CE until around 600 CE, northern India was under the control of the Gupta dynasty. In the Gupta period, Gujarat seems to have become the most important centre of Jainism in India. During the 5th to 8th centuries CE, Valabhi was the capital of the Maitraka dynasty. It was an important Gupta centre. Valabhi was the site of two Jain councils which were held to standardize the recensions of the scriptural “canon.” The first was held under Acharya Nagasena in the mid-fourth century C.E., and the second one was under Devardhigani Ksamasramana in either 454 or 467 C.E.¹¹ Medieval narrative traditions record that the Jain logician Mallavadiśuri lived in Valabhi in the mid-fourth century¹².

During the early 7th century, northern Gujarat was influenced by the Gurjara Pratihara of Bhinmal, also known as Shrimāl. Bhinmal was a flourishing capital city in which, according to both textual and inscriptional evidence, the Jains played a major role¹³. A thirteenth-century tradition, recorded both in an inscription and the *Srimālī Purāṇa*, says that Mahāvira himself visited Bhinmal¹⁴. Most of the Jains of Gujarat trace their ancestry back to Bhinmal and the related nearby town of Osian and claim to have migrated south over the intervening centuries.

In the medieval period, Patan was the capital of Gujarat. It was established by the Chavda ruler Vanarāja in the 8th century as “*Anhilapataka*” which was later known as Patan¹⁵. Vanarāja was assisted in setting up and ruling his kingdom by a number of Jain

laymen. In repayment and recognition of their assistance, Vanaraja arranged for the construction of a Jain temple to Parshwanath and named the main image in the temple Shri Panchasara Parhswanath (after his home town). This is still the most important temple in Patan, although the image is undoubtedly of a later date and the temple has been relocated and totally rebuilt several times, most recently in the 1940s and 1950s¹⁶.

In the mid-tenth century, the Chavdas were supplanted by Mularaja, who was the founder of the Chaulukya or Solanki dynasty. Although Mularaja's donations were largely focused on the important Saivite temple of Somnath on the Saurashtrian coast but he built a Digambara and a Svetambara temple in Patan¹⁷. Chaulukyan kingdom with the Patan as its capital, reached its political and cultural zenith during the reigns of Jayasimha Siddharaja (r. 1094-1143 C.E.) and Kumarapala (r. 1143-1175 C.E.)¹⁸. The Caulukya rule stretched from Kutch to Malwa and from south Gujarat to Marwar¹⁹. Patan was an important link on the trade routes between the rich cities of north India and the ports of western India²⁰. The importance of Patan was always as a trading entrepot, not as a military, and it lacked any significant fortifications until the fourteenth century²¹. The reigns of Jayasimha Siddharaja and Kumarapala also saw a highwater mark for Jain influence at the political level in Gujarat. Jain laymen were influential both as merchants and as government ministers and Jain mendicants were influential as spiritual and intellectual advisors.

In the history of contemporary Gujarat, the greatest of the Chaulukyas was Jayasimha Siddharaja. He and his queens are credited with the construction of massive public projects throughout Gujarat, many of which are either still in existence

today or are famous ruins. Jayasimha had close contact with many of the Jain mendicants who came to Patan. During his reign, in 1125 C.E., a famous debate occurred in Patan between the Svetambara Devasuri and the Digambara Kumudachandra on the disputed questions of whether or not the enlightened but not yet liberated soul eats while still embodied²², whether or not a woman can attain liberation and whether or not a mendicant must wear clothes²³. It was held in the royal court, with Jayasimha himself as judge. Kumudachandra was defeated by Devasuri's eloquence and logic, even though he tried to counter the Svetambara by magically lodging a hair ball in Devasuri's throat. The result was the banishment of all Digambara mendicants from Patan and Jain historians credit this event with the virtual disappearance of the Digambara Jains from Gujarat²⁴.

Acharya Hemachandra was an Indian Jain scholar, He was born 'Changadeva' in 1088 in Dhandhuka, southwest of Ahmedabad in a Jain family. His mother gave him to the mendicant Devachandra (later Devasuri) when he was just five years old and he was initiated into the mendicant order as Somachandra. After thorough training under several mendicants, he was promoted to the post of Acharya in 1109, at the age of only twenty-one, and took the new name Hemachandra. He eventually became the court scholar and annalist of Jayasimha.

Jayasimha Siddharaja died without a son and was succeeded by his grand-nephew Kumarapala. Jain historians portray Hemachandra as being instrumental in Kumarapala's accession. Kumarapala was the one king in the Chaulukya dynasty, who personally became a Jain. Under the guidance of Hemachandra, he took the twelve vows (*vrat*) of a Jain layman. Following this

“conversion,” Kumarapala requested his teacher Hemachandra to compose several books on the Jain religion. These were the *Trisastisalakapurushacaritra*, a telling of the Jain universal history; the *Yogashastra*, on how to be a proper Jain layperson; and the *Vitaraga Stotra*, a hymn in honor of the *Jina*, which describes the proper Jain understanding of divinity. Kumarapala is credited with the establishment of twenty-one libraries²⁵ and with building even more temples.

During the reign of Kumarapala, the symbolic centre of the Srimal(Shrimal) Jain or Vania, who were the most important merchant caste in north Gujarat shifted from Bhinmal/Shrimal (presently in southern Rajasthan) in Marwar to Patan. These Jain Vania had been migrating from Bhinmal to Gujarat for many centuries. This migration accelerated after the mid-ninth century, when the capital of the Gurjara-Pratiharas was shifted north from Bhinmal to Kanauj²⁶. According to legend, a later impetus was a twenty-five-year drought in Bhinmal, from 1119 to 1144 C.E. Shrimal are thought to be the highest *gotra* in the Oswal merchant and minister caste that is found primarily in the north of India.

In the historical imagination of the Jains of Gujarat, Kumarapala represents one of the high points of their history. Another came a century later with the Jain brothers Vastupala (d. 1240 C.E.) and Tejahpala (d. 1248-1252 C.E.). They were ministers for the Vaghela feudatory prince, Lavanaprasada (d. 1232-1238 C.E.). Vastupala and Tejahpala were simultaneously government ministers, military generals, and merchant princes. The brothers became fabulously wealthy and used this wealth to further the glory of Jainism. They built spectacular temples at Abu and Girnar. Poet Arisimha who was a contemporary of the

brothers gives a description in his *Sukrtasamkirtana* of the vast congregational pilgrimage they led to the holy mountains of Shatrunjay and Girnar in Saurashtra. Arisimha also lists forty-three Jain religious endowments throughout Gujarat paid by Vastupala, which included the renovation of the temple of Pancasar Pars vanath in Patan. Other sources²⁷ say that Vastupala spent 180 million rupees on three libraries in Patan.

The rule of the Vaghelas came to an end with the conquest of Gujarat by the armies of Alauddin Khalji in the very last years of the thirteenth century. ‘Alauddin appointed his brother-in-law Alp Khan to rule as governor of Gujarat from Patan, which became now a provincial capital of the Tughluq Sultanate. There was great destruction of Jain temples as well as other religious and secular buildings during the original plunder of Patan (the Adina mosque built by Alp Khan from Jain and Hindu temples was the largest in Gujarat until the eighteenth century). Jain poet Ambadevasuri in his *Samararasu* composed in 1315 indicated the rebuilding of a largely new city after its destruction which is expected to be “New Patan”²⁸. This evidence can also be interpreted as indicating significant continuity in the population of Jain merchants. S. C. Mishra notes that Alp Khan went to great lengths to ensure cordial relations with the Jain merchants, whose continued prosperity was vital to the new rulers. Alp Khan not only allowed a wealthy Jain of Patan, Samaru Sah, to undertake the renovation of the temples of Shatrunjay in 1315, but also made a personal contribution to the project.

The historical event with the most profound impact on the Jains of Gujarat was Ahmed Shah’s shift of the capital of Gujarat from Patan to his newly founded city of Ahmedabad in 1411 C.E.

Patan went into a gradual economic decline from which it has never fully recovered. The shift of the centre of political and economic power from Patan to Ahmedabad in the fifteenth century also had the result that the Ahmedabad Jain *sangh* (congregation) replaced that of Patan as the pre-eminent *sangh* in Gujarat. Whereas the entire Svetambar community was convened in Patan in 1248 to discuss issues of mendicant practice²⁹. In later times, councils were more likely be held in Ahmedabad³⁰. The important pilgrimage site of Shatrunjay, the symbolic centre of Gujarati Jainism, was under the lordship of the Patan Jains from the time of Jayasimha Siddharaja and Kumarapala. But in the sixteenth century, it came under the control of the Ahmedabad Jains³¹. In the decades in the eighteenth century of political turmoil and economic instability in Gujarat due to frequent Maratha incursions, raids, and invasions, Ahmedabad went into a decline, while Patan revived again.

The establishment of British rule over Gujarat in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries led to a great change in the fortunes of Gujarat and its Jain population. The British took over Ahmedabad in 1817 and gradually restored its position as the economic capital of Gujarat. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Ahmedabad had recovered so well that in 1848, the Jain merchant Hathisingh Kesrisingh could spend one million rupees on the construction of a large temple near his bungalow³².

Patan on the other hand, was by then a relatively unimportant town within the dominions of the Gaekwads of Baroda. Many of the Jains in Patan were shopkeepers, moneylenders, pawnbrokers and landlords of agricultural land in surrounding villages. Desai and Clarke³³ report that the wealthier businessmen focused their business on insurance for long-distance trade and on the growing

opium trade based in southern Rajasthan and northern Gujarat. The need for insurance was eliminated by the peace and stability of British rule combined with the development of the railroad system. Opportunities in the opium trade were sharply curtailed in 1878, when its manufacture and sale were made a state monopoly³⁴.

As a result of the restricted possibilities for commerce in Patan, many Patan Jains joined Jains (and others) in the massive migration from all over western India to Bombay in the late nineteenth century. They did not move to Ahmedabad, which at the time was seeing a boom in the textile manufacture industry and the economy there was already closely controlled by Ahmedabad families and presumably also because of the long-standing rivalry between Patan and the Ahmedabad Jains. Bombay, on the other hand, was an economic frontier city, with great possibilities for immigrants. Some of the first to come were jewellers to princely families. The Jain family of Amichand Panalal, who was the personal jeweller to the Nizam of Hyderabad, contributed most of the money to the Adeshwar Jain temple in Walkeshwar. Built in 1904, this is one of the oldest and most important Jain temples in Bombay. The trust that manages this temple is the Amichand Panalal Adeshwar Temple Trust and it continues to be a major contributor to the temple renovations in Patan.

Other Gujarat Jains went into the hardware, machinery, chemical, and pharmaceutical businesses. There was thus a major shift among Jains from moneylending and small-scale (often retail) commerce to manufacturing and wholesale commerce. As Patan Jains became successful in Bombay, more and more followed. Writing for the 1911 census, G. H. Desai³⁵ noted that between 1901 and 1911, there had been a 14% decrease in the Jain population

of the northern province of Baroda state due to migration to Bombay. There was a temporary break in the migration during the depression of the 1930s and the Second World War, when many Jains moved back to Gujarat. Although significant colonies of Jains from Gujarat are also found in Kobe, Japan, where they are involved in the pearl business. The economic niche formerly occupied by the Jains who have migrated to other places has been filled in part by other castes such as Patels, but also by Jains who have migrated to Gujarat from villages and small towns of other parts of country.

Svetambaras of Gujarat

It was believed that about 150 years after the *nirvana* of Mahavira, there was a drought for 12 years³⁶. During this time, some monks along with Bhadrabahu swami migrated to the South. After the drought was over, some monks came back to north. They observed that there was some inconsistency in oral recollection of the Jain scriptures by different monks. That made them to compile scriptures. To accomplish that, the first council (conference) of monks was held in Patliputra about 160 years after Mahavira's *nirvana*. Monk Bhadrabahu, who had the knowledge of all the 12 *angas*, could not be present at that meeting. The rest of the monks could compile only the first eleven *angas* by recollection and thus, the twelfth *anga* was lost. The monks from the south did not agree with this compilation and this resulted in the first split in Jainism. Jains were divided into two main groups, Svetambaras(white-clad) and Digambaras(sky-clad). After the division, it is found that the main concentration of the Svetambaras is within 500 kilometres of Valabhi. Most of the Jains in Gujarat, and western Rajasthan are Svetambaras, while most of the Jains of eastern Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and of south India are Digambaras.

Svetambara monks and nuns wear robes (an upper and a lower garment) and they use a bowl into which alms are deposited and from which they eat. They believe that women can attain spiritual deliverance without being reborn in a male body and that the *kevalin*, the fully omniscient being, experiences hunger and needs to take physical nourishment. Fully initiated Digambara monks, on the other hand, wear no clothes at all (this does not apply to Digambara nuns) and do not use an alms bowl but eat their food from their cupped hands. They reject the authority of the Svetambara scriptures, as well as the possibility of deliverance for women and the omniscient being's need for food³⁷.

The Svetambara sect had been split to three main sub-sects:

1. Murtipujakas
2. Sthanakvasis
3. Terapanthis

Murtipujakas -The original sub-sect of the Svetambaras is known as Murtipujaka Svetambaras as they are worshippers of idols³⁸. They offer flowers, fruits, saffron, etc. to their idols and invariably adorn them with rich clothes and jewelled ornaments. Their ascetics cover their mouth with strips of cloth or use their hands while speaking. They stay in temples or in the reserved buildings known as *upasrayas*. They collect food in their bowls from the *sravakas* or householders and eat at their place of stay.

The *murtipujaka* sub-sect is also known by terms like -

1. Pujera (worshippers)
2. Deravasi (temple residents)
3. Chaityavasi (temple residents)
4. Mandira-margi (temple goers).

The Murtipujaka Svetambaras are found scattered all over India for business purposes in large urban centres, still they are concentrated mostly in Gujarat.

Sthanakvasis—The Sthanakvasi arose not directly from the Svetambaras but as reformers of an older sect, viz. the Lonka sect of Jainism. This Lonka sect was founded in about 1474 CE by Lonkashaha, a rich and well-read merchant of Ahmedabad. The main principle of this sect was not to practice idol-worship. Later on some of the members of the Lonka sect disapproved of the ways of life of their ascetics and declared that they lived less strictly than Mahavira would have wished. A Lonka sect layman, Viraji of Surat, received initiation as a Yati, i.e., an ascetic, and won great admiration on account of the strictness in his life. Many people of the Lonka sect joined this reformer and they took the name of Sthanakvasi, meaning those who do not have their religious activities in temples but carry on their religious duties in places known as *sthanakas*, which are like prayer-halls.

Terapanthis—The Terapanthi sub-sect is derived from the Sthanakvasi. The Terapanthi sub-sect was founded by Swami Bhikanaji Maharaj. He was formerly a Sthanakvasi saint and had initiation from his Guru named Acharya Raghunatha. Later, Swami Bhikanaji had differences with his Guru on several aspects of religious practices of Sthanakvasi ascetics and when these differences took a serious turn, he founded Terapantha on the full-moon day in the month of *asadha* in the year 1760 CE. The rise of Terapanthas is the last big schism in the Svetambaras sect and this *pantha* is becoming popular. The Terapanthis are still limited in number and even though they are noticed in different cities in India, they are concentrated mainly in Bikaner, Jodhpur and Mewar areas of Rajasthan.

Gujarat has been a stronghold of Jainism for centuries. In matters of religion, the Kings of Gujarat were very tolerant. Though most of them were not Jains, they thought it their duty to patronise Jainism as it was embraced by influential sections of their subjects. Thus, Jainism was patronized by the Maitrakas of Valabhi, and the Chavadas, Solanki Vaghelas of Anahilavada. The Jains are widely acknowledged as having made major contributions to the art, literature, culture and economy of Gujarat.

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THE TABLIGHI JAMA'AT MOVEMENT AMONG THE MEOS OF MEWAT: 'RESISTANCE' AND 'RECONCILIATION' WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

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Abstract

The 19th and early 20th century witnessed the emergence of a number of movements for religious revitalization, revival and reform among Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. One of these, Tablighi Jama'at is one of the largest Islamic movement in the Islamic world today. It initially took root in the mid-1920s in the area of Mewat, particularly among the Meos of Mewat and since then Mewat has been an area for constant Tablighi activity and experiments. A number of scholars asserted that the Tablighi Jama'at movement has greatly affected the earlier social structure and un-Islamic cultural practices of Meos of Mewat and transformed them as a reified Islamic community. This paper is an attempt to revisit the extent to which Tablighi Jama'at affected the Meos community and how the

Meos of Mewat responded and resisted the Tablighi intervention in their socio-cultural practices.

Keywords: *Meos, Mewat, Tabligh Jama'at, Islamisation, Resistance, Reconciliation.*

Area of Study

Mewat is a historical region of north India. Persian sources usually referred to Mewat as the land of Meos and Khanzadas. During the medieval times, the inhabitants of Mewat meant that they included the group of Meos, and other cultivating classes such as Khanzadas, Jats, Gujjars, Ahirs, Rajputs, Baqqals, Brahmans, Minas, Thathars, and Malis (Fazal, 1949, 202). Later, during the Mewat the region south of Delhi and included parts of the British districts of Muttra (Mathura) and Gurgaon, and a considerable portion of Alwar and some parts of Bharatpur (Hunter, 1886, 418).

In the present context it is difficult to ascertain the Mewat boundaries because the Meos are scattered in different districts of the four states of Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Mewat is situated approximately 64 kms southwest of Delhi, roughly corresponding to modern Alwar and Bharatpur districts of Rajasthan and Nuh district of Haryana. It comprised of the nine modern-day *Tehsils* of Tijara, Kishangarh, Alwar, and Lachmangarh (Alwar District), Deeg, Nagar, and Kama (Bharatpur district), and Nuh, and Firozpur Jhirka (Nuh district) respectively (Bharadwaj, 2012, 220).

The present day usage of the term “Mewat” simply means ‘where the Meos live’. Essentially, the Mewat region is a composition of different Muslim and Hindu social groups but

historically, known as the Meo community. The poet Lord Sannu Mewati also described this in his couplet very beautifully,

br fn Yy h mr v kx j "] v y o j v @ c \$ k B A
d ky " i g k M + l g ko . k] t k d s c h p c l s e o k r A
u w r " l k j h t k r g h j c l k a , d g h l k F k A
¼ i j ½ e o Ä . k h r k n k r e j u w c k t s e o k r A A

Meos of Mewat: Origin and Islamisation

The Meos are the important social group of the Mewat region. In fact, for nearly five centuries, the Meos were the dominant landowning sub-caste of Mewat in Rajasthan and Haryana and enjoyed privileges available to both Hindus and Muslims (Aggarwal, 1966, 66). Currently, the Meos are primarily an agricultural community and engaged in some other activities.

There are various views regarding the origin of Meo community. The Meos claim that they are Hindu Rajput and their origin can be traced to Suryabansis, Chandravansis, and Agnikuls of the Rajput nobility (Shams, 1983, 18). The Muhammad Makhdum (1989, 2-4) has doubted the claim of the Meos of their being of Rajput origin. He believes that the Meos originated from the Mina tribe, whose *gotras* and *pals* were common. The Meos were sudra for the *Patwari* and *Qanungo* of the eighteenth century (Mayaram, 2008, 110). Most of the British ethnographers on the basis of a marriage legend between Dariya Meo and Sisbadni Mina have proved that Meos and Mina had marriage relations with each other in the past, therefore, they belong to the same race (Cunnigham, 1885, Powlett, 1883, Crooke, 1975, Ibbeston, 1911).

Partap Aggarwal (1977, 39) stated that 'the Meos belonged to many different Hindu castes and not just the Rajput'. Yoginder

Sikand (2002, 110) also states that ‘while it is almost certain that many Meos are indeed of Rajput stock, it seems very likely that among them, there are many who are actually the descendants of ‘lower’ caste converts who either prior to, or after, their acceptance of Islam, laid claim to Rajput ancestry to enhance their social standing. Evidence for this is provided by the fact that many of the *gotras* or exogamous lineage of the Meos have in common with such lower status Hindu castes as the Minas, the Jats, and the Gujjar, who live in their vicinity.” But, in social reality, the Meos were regarded as ‘high caste’ Rajput Muslims by living within their own territory and they included the Brahman, Ahir, Bania and Jats. They are still one of the major landowning communities of this region and have a *jajmani* relationship with both the Hindu and Muslim caste of Mewat.

There are again various views regarding the Islamisation of the Meos. According to A. Cunningham, (1885 24-25), conversion did not take place until the reign of Feroz Shah Tughlaq. According to W.W. Hunter, (1186, 419) it is possible that the original Meos, together with other castes, became converts to Islam at the time of Ghazni in the eleventh century (Hunter, 419). In the Rajputana Gazetteer (1879, 265) ‘Meos were converted in the eleventh century after their conquest by Masud, son of Amir Salar and grandson of Sultan Mahmud (son of) Subuktagain on the mother’s side, general of Mahmud of Ghazni’s forces, who is venerated by the Meos and by whose name they swear.’ British ethnographers also stressed that the Meos embraced Islam due to the cruelties inflicted by Sultan Balban and other Muslim emperors on the Meos (Cunningham, 25). But, he believes that they were converted during the earlier period of the spread of Islam in India. They trace their first contact with the Muslims back to Mohammad

bin Kasim's attack on Sindh in the 8th century. The Arab invaders worked intensely for the spread of Islam in Sindh and the Meos believe that their habitation was spread out to Sindh at that time and must have come under the influence of Islam (Sakoor 1974, 317). The Meos further believe that the second phase of the spread of Islam among the Meos began at the time of Mahmud Ghaznavi in the 11th century, when Sayyaid Salar Sahu, Mahmud Ghaznavi's sister's husband, was in command of the royal force. He established himself in Ajmer and started conquering the areas around Ajmer, where his son Sayyad Salar Masud Gazi defeated Tejpal, a Meo chieftain, at Dhandgarh near Rewari. Tejpal is believed to have embraced Islam and thus became the first known Meo Muslim (Sakoor 317).

British ethnographers persist in the theory of the forceful conversion of the Meos, but medieval sources do not provide any information that Delhi Sultanate and Mughal ruler forcibly converted the Meos to Islam. But, as far as the process of the Islamisation of the Meos in terms of their adoption of certain practices such as *nikah*, *burial*, *Id* celebration and keeping of Muslim names begins during the late 17th and early 18th century with the help of *Dak Meroras* (The Meos who were working as post-carriers in the Mughal administration (Bhardwaj, 246).

Socio-economic and religious milieu of the Meos and the beginning of Tablighi Jama'at

The study of the rise and impact of the Tablighi Jama'at movement among Meos of Mewat would be incomplete without taking into account the social, economic, and religious context of the Meos from where this movement basically emerged. During the late 19th century in Gurgaon, Meos held 387 out of

the 1264 villages, or one-sixth of the land covering the entire south (Channing, 1882, 4). In Alwar, the Meos were numerically the first race in the state, and the agricultural portion of them was considerably more than double of any other class of cultivators. They occupied about half of the Alwar territory (Powlett, 3). But, the Meos villages were ordinary and very small, and it is rare to find in them well-built houses of stone or brick during the first half of the 20th century (Gurgaon District Gazetteer, 1911, 8).

According to an annual administrative report of the Government of the Punjab ‘the condition of the Meos was rapidly becoming hopeless. They lived so literally from hand to mouth, carelessly contracting a debt for marriage, funerals, and petty luxurious, even in average years that when a year, of drought came they are thrown on the moneylender’s who can make with them any terms he likes. During the past 15 months, some five per cent of the cultivated area of the two tehsils of Nuh and Ferozpur has been mortgaged, and now 17 per cent of the total cultivated area, was so burdened that there is little hope of its ever being redeemed’ (Punjab District Gazetteer, 1882-83, 70).

According to Wahiduddin Khan (1988, 34), one important reason for the Meos suffering was that many *banias* (merchants) would charge a very high rate of five percent per month on their loans, which worked out to an astounding sixty percent per annum. Many Meos simply could not repay their loans, because of which much of their lands began passing into *Banias* hands. By, 1910, nearly 40% of the lands of the Meos were under mortgage to the *Banias* (Rathee, 1971, 43). So it is evident from the above facts that even though the Meos were cultivating a large part of land in Mewat but their economic situation deteriorated after the emergence of the Tabligh Jama’at movement.

It is remarkable to note that Meos embraced Islam long back, but at the beginning of Tablighi Jama'at, they were ignorant of Islam and its basic faith and practice. Major Powlett (1882, 38) in his Gazetteer of Alwur (Alwar) has very vividly described about the Meos religion, customs, and traditions in the second half of the 19th century. He writes, that the Meos are now all Musalmans in name; but their village deities are the same as those of the Hindu *zamindars*. They celebrate too, several Hindu festivals. Thus, Holi is with Meos a season of rough play, and is considered as important a festival as *Muharram*, *Id*, and *Shabibart*; and they likewise observe *Janamashtmi*, *Dasehra*, and *Diwali*. They often keep Brahmin priests to write the *pili chitthi*, or note fixing the date of a marriage. They call themselves by Hindu names, with the exception of "Ram; "and "Singh" as a frequent affix. On the *Amawas*, or monthly conjunction of the sun and moon, the Meos, in common with Hindu Ahirs, and Gujars, cease from labour; and when they make a well, the first proceeding is to erect a "*Chabutra*" to "*Bairiji*" or "*Hanuman*" As regards their own religion, Meos are very ignorant. Few know the *Kalima*, and fewer still the regular prayers, the seasons of which they entirely neglect (Powlett, 38).

The great majority of the Musalmans of Ulwur (Alwar) are Meos; but, as already remarked, they are, in their habits, half Hindu. In their villages, they seldom have mosques, thus in Tijara, out of fifty-two Meo villages, only eight have mosques, but they have the same places of worship as their Hindu neighbors possess namely, a "*Panch Pira*" a "*Bhaiya*" and a "*Chahund*." (Powlett, 70).

It is also evident from various colonial sources that Meos embraced Islam long back, but they continued to hold many

Hindu beliefs and cultural practices until the early 20th century. The Meos feel proud to trace their genealogical relationship with Lord Krishna, Lord Ram and Arjun. They celebrate Hindu festivals such as *Diwali*, *Holi*, *Dussehra* and *Janam-ashtami*, the birthday of Shri Krishna. Reading of the *Qur'an* was less popular than reading the Hindu epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Their name and dress of both men and women resembles those of the Hindus. Their birth, betrothal, marriage ceremonies were like the Hindu communities of Mewat region. Therefore, Sir J. Malcom (1824, 175) says that it is hard to say whether the Meos of central India were Hindus or Muhammadans.

The entire social and political structure of the Meo community is based on their *pal-gotra* system. British ethnographic works based on Gazetteers, Census and accounts on tribe and caste in the 19th century have mentioned about five *bans*, twelve *pals* and *Pallakra* (territorial lineage or bigger unit consisting of several *gotra*) and fifty- two *gotra* (small clan organization) among the Meo community of Mewat. The *pals* are further divided into small groups or sub-groups known as *thamas*. A *thama* is a sub-group whose members are patrilineal descendants of a common ancestor. A *thama* acquires its name either directly from the ancestor or from the village where the ancestor was born.

Details about Meos *Bans*, *pals*, *gotras* and *thambas* are following

Sr. No.	<i>Bans</i> (Race)	<i>Pals</i> (Lineage)	<i>Gotra</i> (clan)	<i>Thambas</i>
1.	Tomar (Rajput)	Balot	Mangria, Sirohia, Baliyana.	----- -----
		Ladawat	Nanglot, Kataria, Sukeria Gonchia, Bodiyan	Serapota, Pahadapota, Jakat, Khuklia

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		Ratawat	Jamnia, Bilawat, Majlawat	----- -----
		Derwal	Kanger, Bigot, Marag, Mander, Tawar, Saugan, Kahout	----- -----
2.	Jadu (Rajput)	Demrot	Gorwal, Mewal, Kad <i>Nai</i> Bad <i>Nai</i>	Ghata ki baisi, Biwan ki baisi, Bisaria
		Chirklot	Baghtia, Bhoslia	Kotia, Rupadia, Utawadia, Dag, Bajja, Palanpota, Tidepota, Ochhepota
		Pundlot	Singalia, Machhalia	Gahua, Bhakera, Desula, Bahala, Kitor
		Dulot	Kharakia, Bhabhla, Jounwar Lamkhera	Aalsi, Tadia, Chhadalia, Tiskia
		Nai	Besar, Batlawat, MahaJatlawat, Sailania Bahmanawat, Nahrawar Khanjadoo, Morejhangal Guma!, Kheldar	Nikach, Sareta, Saroli, Raibaka, Karoli
3.	Chohan (Rajput)	Pahat (Pallakra)	Kanwalia, Chaunker, Chaurasia, Chauhan, Bhan	Bodian, Udawat, Bijwan, Godholia
4.	Badgujar	Singhal	Badgujar, Loka	
5.	Rathor (Rajput)	Kalisa, Dehngal	Bharkatia, Khokhat, Pawar Chalukia, Sagrawat, Gor, Khuswal	Rasodia, Dhulawatia, Kairania, Sarayan, Bdkia, Ghaseria, Sundia, Shahalia, Rehnia, Gwaldia
	5	13	52	

Interestingly *pal-gotras* are endogamous and territorial divisions help to regulate the marriage and other social norms among those Meos. The Meos usually do not marry in their own *pal* or clan, but they were lax about forming connections with women of other castes, whose children they receive into Meo society. During the late 19th and early 20th century, a Meo man could not marry

1. a woman of his *got* or *pal*
2. a woman of the village his mother belonged to, even though of a different *got*.
3. a woman of the village his father, and mother belongs to.
4. any women whose relationship with him is close enough to be traceable.

Thus, in the early 1920's, when the Tablighi movement was just about taking roots in Mewat, the Meos were being increasingly marginalized and were under heavy pressure due to the growing revenue demands of the State as well as rising indebtedness, with their lands fast passing into the hands of the Banias. This economic plight of the Meo peasantry headed to the outbreak of peasant uprising among them prior to the emergence of Tablighi activities in the area in the early 1930s.

Educationally, they still remained extremely backward. They very ignorant about Islamic practices and there was lack of modern education among them. Their social structure and the rules of marriage closely resembled those of the high castes in north India. Their name and dress of men or women resembled those of the Hindus. Tabligh Jama'at emerged in Mewat in direct response to the rise of the Hindu Arya Samaj in this region. Out of this sect, emerged two proselytizing movements of *Suddhi*

(purification) and *Sangathan* (consolidation), and they made large scale-effort to 'win' back 'strayed' Hindus, who accepted Islam during the Muslim political hegemony. In order to counter this proselytization, the Tablighi Jama'at embarked on the mission of Islamic faith, regeneration, and awakening among, the Meos of Mewat (Ali, 2010, 104).

Beginning of Tablighi Jama'at among Meos of Mewat

The Tabligh Jama'at movement started in 1926 with the slogan "*Aye Musalmano Musalman bano*" in the Mewat area by Maulana Mohammad Ilyas (1885-1944). Although it was started by Mohdammad Ilyas but it was his father, Maulana Mohammad Ismail, in the late 19th century who took initiative to reform the Meo workers in the *Banglewali* Mosque at Hazrat Nizamuddin, New Delhi. In the initial years, Maulana Ilyas established a large number of mosque-based religious schools or *maktabs* and *madrassas* in Mewat to appropriate Islamic belief and practices. But, Maulana Ilyas soon was disappointed with the progress of the spread of Islam through the regular *madrassas* and *maktabs*. Further, Ilyas around 1926, came-up with Tablighi Jama'at idea that is unique in its simplicity and its effectiveness. Tabligh literally means "to communicate" or "to preach" and the term Tablighi Jama'at literally means "preaching party". He first motivated Muslims to go in-group of ten peoples often to a Meo village. This group would go to a village, invite local Muslims to assemble in the mosque and present their message.

The Tablighi Jama'at people in 1930s stressed on the following 15 points - (1) The *Kalima* (2) *Namaz* (3) attainment and diffusion of (religious) knowledge (4) embracing of Islamic appearance and dress (*shakl o surat*) (5) seclusion of women (6)

performance of *nikah* (the Islamic form of marriage) (7) devotion to Muslim dress by the Meonis (Meo women) (8) non-deviation from Islamic beliefs and non-acceptance of any other religion (9) protection and preservation of mutual rights (10) participation of respectable persons in every public meeting (11) pledge not to impart secular education to children before they have received basic religious education (12) pledge to strive for the preaching of religion (Islam) (13) adoption of Islamic ceremonies and rejection of non-Islamic ones (14) observance of cleanliness (15) pledge to protect the dignity and respect of one another (Nadavi, 1983, 11) Further, Maulana Ilyas adopted the six-article (chhe number) course of teaching which formed the essence of this movement.

There is already enormous literature existing on various aspects of Tablighi Jama'at such as its existing origin, ideology, structure, organization and its penetration in different parts of world. So, it is not essential in this paper to discuss about the various aspects of this movement. But, most of scholars who work on this theme and community have emphasized in their works that the Tablighi Jama'at movement has considerably affected the social structure, customs, and traditions of the Meo society. For instance, Partap C Aggarwal (1966) states, 'One can confidently predict that in few years, the way of life of the Meos will become completely Islamized. He further argues that after partition, the Hindus no longer regard them as Kshatriyas, and they themselves are becoming 'full Muslims' Inder S. Marwah (1979, 96-97) argues that because of the Tabligh movement, the Islamic influence on the Meos increased considerably. The culture of the Meos is undergoing Islamisation rapidly. The process of Islamisation involves the elimination of non-Islamic or traditional Hindu elements on the one hand, and on the other, the conscious

and deliberate introduction of what are perceived as Islamic practices. The life-cycle rituals are being Islamized and Hindu elements are being weeded out. He concluded that the Tablighi Jama'at movement has resulted in the rapid Islamisation of the Meos society.

Abha Chauhan (2004, 78) also states that the pressure on the Meos to leave the customary practices and adopt the religious ones, especially with the increasing role of Tablighi Jama'at, whose influence in the mid-1930s became clear after 1947, is felt largely by the Meos. Under its impact, the Meos abandoned many Hindu rituals, ceremonies, and festivals.

Wahiduddin Khan (1988, 17-18) argues that due to the Tablighi Jama'at movement, 'the whole of Mewat was transformed and great spiritual excitement and enthusiasm could be seen among the people at large. Where previously, mosques had been few and far between, now mosque and religious schools come up in every settlement and they not only had increased in number and size, but the local people had also come to appreciate their activities. They changed their way of dressing and grew beards, shaking off one by one almost all the pre-Islamic customs that they had retained after their conversion. Lending or borrowing on interest as well as robbing and looting had decreased considerably. Liquor consumption came to an end. Hence, most scholars have emphasized in their studies that the influence of the Tablighi Jama'at, in the social and cultural life in Mewat underwent Islamisation rapidly particularly after the partition of India that had great impact on the Meos life.

That there are two sides of Tablighi Jama'at movement among Meos of Mewat, one, there was a sense of a new Islamic

spirituality among the Meos and but, at the same time, there was also a strong resistance to the teaching and ideology of Tabligh Jama'at among Mewati people. Firstly, the Tabligh Jama'at movement started in the 1920s in this area, its influence had been hardly evident before independence. But no doubt after the partition of India, its influence increased, particularly in the Haryana region of Mewat. This is also a fact that due to the great efforts of Tablighi Jama'at, Meos abandoned many un-Islamic practices in their social and cultural life. There were many Hindu rituals which the Meos performed earlier that are now being replaced by Muslim practices. The Tabligh Jama'at also denounces the holding *urs* and visiting the grave of *Pirs*. Therefore, the worship of *mazar*, of culture heroes and saints (Sayyid) and the local deities has been gradually abandoned. The celebration of Hindu festivals has been largely stopped. Hindu religious scriptures such as *Mahabharat* and *Ramayan* are going out of favor and the *Quran* is gaining popularity. This is a fact that the Tabligh Jama'at movement has affected the Meo community considerably in many socio-cultural practices and simultaneously this movement and its ideology had experienced a strong resistance from the social structure and cultural practices of the Meos of Mewat.

For example, regardless of long penetration of Tabligh Jama'at among Meos of Mewat, which gives great stress on equality and brotherhood, the influence of caste or *zati* remains strong among them. The Meos still feel proud of calling themselves as the *Suryavanshi* and *Chandravanshi Rajput*. Mewati Muslims still describe themselves and others in terms of *zati*, or *biradari* like in the Hindu community. The term *zat*, or *jati* or *biradari*, is used among both the local Mewati Muslims as well as the Hindus to indicate social status and an endogamous ethnic unit. The Muslims of Mewat stratified in the lines of *unchi zaat*, (high

caste) and *niche zaat* (lower caste) similar to those of the Jats and Ahirs of this area. The interaction between *unchi zaat* (Meos) and *niche zaat* (*Nai, Luhar, Sakka, and Fakirs*) were/are regulated by an established patron-client relationship which are called *jajmani* system in northern India. The patrons, Meos, who belong to the *unchi zaat*, are referred to as the *jajmans*, and the clients, comprising the various occupational castes of the *neechi zaat*, as *kamin*.

The Meos are an endogamous group and do not marry outside their community. There is very famous saying among the Meos of Mewat that *vote or chori to qaum ko hi dene chaiye*. Likewise, there is also very popular idiom among Jats of Haryana that, *Jat ke beti Jat ko, jat ke vote jat ko*. There were some cases of them marrying other Muslims from within Mewat, but such kinds of marriages are generally not accepted by the inhabitants. There was an episode during the 1960s in which a Meo lawyer living in Alwar had married outside his *zati* which was Meo and admitted that he could not come back to live in his natal village with his wife because his agnates would never tolerate such a state of affair (Jamous, 2003, 19).

The marriages in Mewat outside the community or region can only take place in certain situations: when a man is older than twenty-five, poor, handicapped, divorced, or widowed. It is remarkable to note that in Mewat, that if a woman who does not belong to the Meo or other groups of Mewati society and is married in Mewat, she is usually addressed as *Paro* or *molki* (*'molki'* literally means 'one who has a price') — the terms used for women who have been purchased in other states and brought to the Mewat region. Even her children are addressed as *Paro ki*, and

Paro ka (Paro's daughter and Paro's son respectively) by the local men and women. Their parents even face problems while finding a suitable match for their children within the Meo groups.

The Meos are endogamous community, but they cannot marry within their *pal*, *gotra*, and sub-clan or lineage (*thamba*). Marriage is prohibited inside the same clan, restricted as it is in their saying, '*goti so bhai baki ke asnai*.' Further, the Meo code of marriage prohibits a man from marrying in not only the *gotra* to which his father belongs but from marrying in the *gotra* of his mother or even from the *gotra* to which his maternal grandmother belonged. Even at present, marriage between a boy and a girl belonging to the same *gotra* is considered incest.

There are several examples in Mewat where a person who marries in the same *gotra* or couples of the same *gotra* eloping, being subjected to heavy punishment along with their families by the *biradari* or *gotra panchayat*. Thus, it is evident that despite the stress on equality and brotherhood, by Tablighi Jama'at in Mewat, the Meos and other social groups have preserved the social structure as it is. This becomes clear from the efforts of Tablighi Jama'at, which expresses its utter dismay by stating that '*gotra vali gari to chal hi rahi hi rokhte hain to bavandar hota hai*' (the *gotra* system has been going on pretty smoothly, whenever, we try to check it, it invites a lot of clamour). Along with the *pal*, *gotra* and exogamy, the Meos not only avoided marrying in their own village but also prohibited marriage in any of the villages in their *thamba* or even *pal* because the Meos believe that each village, *thamba*, and *pal* belonged to one ancestor; therefore, each boy and girl in the village, and *pal* is a brother and sister. Such as '*do sau das gavn ki navasi*' is a very popular saying among Meos.

The village men address the females of the village as 'sister' or 'daughter' depending on their age, irrespective of *pal*, *gotra*, and *jatis*.

Interestingly, Islam permits both cross-cousin and parallel-cousin marriage. However, these rules are strictly prohibited by the Meos of Mewat. A Meo cannot marry any woman whose relationship with him is close enough to be traceable and a woman whose relation is traced through consanguineal kin. Further, a Meo cannot marry his father's sister's daughter and mother's sister's daughter. Interestingly, when Tablighi Jamaat became well rooted in Mewat, they tried to discontinue this practice because it was considered as un-Islamic by Tablighi Jama'at. However, the Meo community never paid any heed to their instructions, for instance, in the 1963, there were some religious *ulemas* (religious teachers) who tried to organize patrilateral parallel-cousin marriages, i.e., marriage between the children of two brothers. The *Maulvis* of Uttawar, Ruparka, and Ghasera villages had sponsored three cases of marriage between the children of two brothers and they became the target of community anger. The Meos of Mewat not only boycotted these marriages, but also attacked the *Maulvis*. One was killed and his body ploughed over (Sharma, 1969, 183).

A large number of births, betrothal and marriage ritual practices have continued unabated and remain unchanged and they are contrary to Islam and the teachings of Tablighi Jama'at as well. Rules of purity and pollution are practiced for forty days after childbirth. In between betrothal and marriage, a number of rites are observed by the Meos and other social groups of Mewat, such as the *ghar dekhna*, (mate selection), *chora rokhna* (betrothal), *biyah likhna* (communication of the wedding), *sawasni ko nota*

bhejan (invite female companion), *nauta* (the contribution towards the expense), *mandho* (a ceremony a day before marriage), the *chuchak* and *bhat* (accompanying the mother's brother bringing of the *bhat* or dower), *chak puja* (women's worship of the potter wheels), *biyah likhan*, *dahej* (dowry) and so on. Further, in rules of inheritance, the Muslims of Mewat follow customary law and daughters do not have a share in the father's propriety. All these practices are totally against the tenets of Islam and are abhorred by the Tablighi Jama'at, but these practices along with the *fatiha* (death) rites and an elaborate dowry are openly flouted in Mewat. Even the *Zakat*, the mandatory charitable tax binding on all Muslims and one of the 'five pillars' of Islam, is said to be paid by very few Meos, the *Burqa* is almost unknown among Meonis (women of Meos) of Mewat. Music and consumption of liquor is still prevalent among them.

Conclusion

Thus, it is evident that Tablighi Jama'at lays great stress on equality and brotherhood and social change in Islamic tradition, but in reality the social structure of the Meo community remains almost unchanged. There is an element of hierarchy in their relationship with the Muslims of Mewat. They still practice endogamy strictly. Marriage between Meos and non-Meo Muslims is still not preferred. Cross cousin and parallel-cousin marriages are strictly prohibited among the Muslims of Mewat and the recent attempts of Tabligh Jama'at to purge the Meo Muslims of these un-Islamic practices have been vociferously contested by the Muslims of Mewat.

Therefore, Tablighi members are usually reported to be saying '*Bana to hai Musalman, Tarikha pakarte nahi*' (while the Meos have accepted Islam, they are not trying to embrace its

traditions), and they are '*Adhpare ke Musalaman*' (halfhearted Muslims). Further, members of Tablighi Jama'at frequently state in utter frustration that the Meos have been '*jahils*' (ignorant) since times immemorial and they will continue to remain so '*Ye nahi sudharne wale*' (they are not going to transform). In reply, the Meos usually says '*Mev to Mev hee rahnge Mullah nahain Banege*' (Meos will be always Meos and we will never become Mullah).

This proves that the Meos differ with Tablighi Jama'at ideology and teaching, to preserve their basic social institutions and cultural practices which constitute their identity. This also indicates that the Tablighi Jama'at movement has been unable to extend the application of Islamic laws and practices to the Meos. In conclusion, it may be worth observing that Meos may not merge their identity completely with the Muslims and would perhaps love to exist as Meo first and Muslim second.

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AGRARIAN RELATION AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN KASHMIR: 1925-1947

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Abstract

In the fifties of the twentieth century, the backbone of the Kashmir economy was agriculture. Therefore, the period from 1930 onwards witnessed some drastic changes in the agrarian system. These changes followed the birth of political consciousness in Kashmir. Under Maharaja Hari Singh, the pressure upon him to ameliorate the economic conditions of the peasantry assumed unprecedented proportions. The All India Congress, Muslim League and more importantly, the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (founded in 1931-32, which was converted into the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference in 1939) and many peasant movements voiced the grievances of the Kashmir peasantry and demanded their immediate redressal. The Maharaja had no other alternative except to make effective changes in the agrarian sector.

Keywords: *Kashmir, Dogra Rule, Land Revenue, Peasant Class, Tenants, Agrarian Reforms, Land Ownership, Landlords, Agricultural Seasons, Agriculture Indebtedness.*

The total population of the Jammu and Kashmir State in 1931 CE was about 3,646,243. The two main communities were Muslims and Hindus comprising about 2,402,000 and 7, 003, 00 of the population respectively. When Hari Singh became ruler, the Pandits constituted a key element in the Government monopolizing all crucial appointments. Though they formed only two percent of total population of the State, they were a powerful segment in the administration¹. Muslims formed the majority but there were a sizable number of Hindus and a lesser number of Sikhs, Buddhists and Christians. The people of valley in general, though poor spirited and poorly educated, were well off as compared to the inhabitants of western border regions and the northern parts of the State. But the latter were much stronger than their counterparts in the valley².

During the reign of Maharaja Pratap Singh, the Punjabis dominated the services. The young Kashmiri Pandits coming out of universities and colleges carried out a well organised propaganda in the press in British India in the name of ‘Kashmir for Kashmiris’. Subsequently, the new Maharaja Hari Singh banned the employment of non-state subjects in the public services. Simultaneously, he also forbade the transfer of land to them. The Punjabis had to go. But the Maharaja started to ‘Dograise’ the service. He filled all important posts by his kinsmen, the Dogras, from Jammu province, irrespective of their qualification, experience or suitability. One Dogra, who was appointed as Head

of the Department was even illiterate and signed all official papers by thumb impression³. The clerical jobs, of course went to the educated Kashmiri Pandits. The army was made the exclusive preserve of the Dogras and other Rajputs. Muslims were no more than ‘hewers of wood and drawers of water’. Even those few Muslims who somehow managed to study at the Lahore College and Aligarh Muslim University were given petty jobs as junior clerks and teachers⁴.

In 1927, the term State Subject was redefined to give it a much wider and effective meaning. It was in 1922 that at the instance of Hari Singh, who was then the senior member of the Council, a committee was appointed to define the term “Hereditary State Subject” so that practical shape to the policy of the State administration as regards born subjects of the state could be given. The Committee had reported that the term should be held to mean and include all persons born and residing within the State before the commencement of Maharaja Gulab Singh’s rule and those settled down therein before the commencement of Samvat 1942 (1885 CE) and had been since permanently residing therein. In 1927, an order was issued that none who was not a hereditary state subject would be appointed to any post under the government without the express permission of the ruler⁵. This went against the interests of a large number of Hindus settled in the State after 1885, and rendered them ineligible for State service and for purchasing land in the State, but was much in the interest of the Muslims. The people of the rest of the country demanded an explanation for this discrimination and the blame was laid at the Maharaja’s door, although many things done by the Maharaja earlier had been wiped out by them.

Many steps were taken by Maharaja Hari Singh to ensure the success of this policy, and it was necessary that there should be subjects of the State properly qualified to take up all technical and other appointments requiring special skills. In order to secure the proper supply of trained State subjects for the superior branches of the State service, the Maharaja constituted a Scholarship Selection Board with a grant of rupees one lakh per annum to select scholars for special training in British India and European countries⁶. The scholarships were given on grounds of academic qualification, physical and moral fitness and family services. A convention was subsequently established in which the scholarship was to be divided between the Hindu and Muslim on a fifty-fifty basis; probably on representation from Muslims that they could not compete with the educationally more advanced Hindus. Ten scholars were sent abroad during 1927 for training in many courses⁷.

A Department of Civil Supplies was established with the object of assisting local enterprises. Standing instructions were issued, so that preference be accorded to indigenous products. In matter of contracts, it was decreed that state subjects be given preference over others even if “other things being equal and the bid of the latter is five percent more favorable”. In another act of favouring the state subjects, it was laid down that only sons of the soil could be share-holders and directors of the semi-state bank (Jammu and Kashmir Bank-1938) that was being established⁸.

The period from 1930 onwards witnessed some drastic changes in the agrarian system. These changes followed the birth of political consciousness in Kashmir. Under Maharaja Hari Singh, the pressure upon the Maharaja to ameliorate the economic conditions of peasantry assumed unprecedented proportions. The

All India Congress, Muslim League and more importantly the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (founded in 1931-32 and was converted into the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference in 1939) and many peasants movements voiced the grievances of the Kashmir peasantry and demanded their immediate redressal⁹.

The Maharaja appointed a Commission of four non-official members with B.J Glancy of the Political Department of the Government of India as Chairman on Nov. 12 1931. The Commission made *inter-alia* the following recommendations:- (a) The Commission recommended the grant of proprietary rights in respect of all land of which the ownership was retained by the State and the right of occupancy is enjoyed by private persons, (b) religious places that had passed into the hands of Government, (c) recruitment of different communities in Government services. The Maharaja graciously remitted *malikana* which fell due to the State on the conferment of these proprietary rights.

As regards, the first, the government ordered the restoration of these places to the community over which their claims were substantiated. Regarding the second, minimum qualification was fixed for the educationally backward communities, to enable them to secure an adequate share in the government services, the third, the Maharaja not only granted proprietary rights to the cultivators, but also waved off the condition of paying *nazarana*¹⁰. Along with the implementation of the Glancy Commission recommendations, the good work that had been interrupted by the disturbances was resumed and by a series of measures, the State of Kashmir had been given an administration on modern lines¹¹. In the field of administration, the subsequent rule of the Maharaja Hari Singh had been marked by a series of progressive measures which made

a substantial contribution to the well-being and prosperity of the State. The suppression of bribery and corruption in the State services were taken¹².

Agrarian Reforms

The population of the State was mainly agricultural. During the period under study, agriculture was the main source of income to the Government and the most predominant sector of the State economy¹³. During Maharaja Hari Singh's reign, the Agriculture Department was doing good work to improve conditions in the State. The activities of the Department were at first confined to Kashmir province only and were later gradually extended to Jammu province also. Agriculture and horticulture experimental work and the demonstration of improved methods of cultivation of crops and fruit plants were important features of the department's work. It also distributed improved seeds, grafted fruit plants, agricultural implements and manures and also gave technical advice to orchardists and agriculturists. Agricultural training was imparted to the sons of *Zamindars* at Government Farms. The Department introduced high yielding varieties of wheat and corn, including sugar corns from the U.S.A, Canada, and Russia¹⁴. The Department also sent peripatetic parties of gardeners to the villages to demonstrate to the *zamindars*, the operations connected with orchards laying. A demonstration was given and the people were educated regarding the control of pests¹⁵. An act for compulsory spraying of fruit plants had been promulgated. Agriculture, fruit and flower shows were held annually at several places in the State to arouse the interest of the people in improved methods of agriculture, horticulture and floriculture¹⁶.

With the extreme pressure of population on a limited cultivable area, the potentiality was reduced to 1/5th of the cultivable

area as cultivable wastes and by a large though not major portion of cultivable land being situated in tracts where irrigation facilities were practically non-existent. It was not surprising that that there was a progressive decline in the size of holdings per land holder. The average figure of holding in so far as the figure are available is as follows:

Baramullah	6 Kanals (1 Kanal= 20 Marla)
Anantnag	2½ Kanals
Jammu	16 Acres (1 Acres= 8 Kanals)
Mirpur	5½
Muzafarabad	2.3 Acres
Bunji	1 Acre

In the Kashmir Province, the pressure of population was already a great concern but there was still some room for extension of cultivation and, therefore, also for increase of population in parts of the Muzafarabad district¹⁷.

The agriculture operation and the system of cultivation in the Kashmir province varied from place to place. This was due to variation in climate, nature of soil and irrigation facilities. The main crops of the sub-mountain and semi-mountainous tracts were rice, wheat, maize, while the outer hills abounded in forests of pines and deodar. The Kashmir valley yielded abundant fertilities of rice and fruit of various kinds. In the Indus valley, a kind of wheat or barley, was the chief crop and grows even at a height of 15,000 feet. The total percentage of gross cultivated area under rice was 19.3 percent, under wheat 19.5 percent, under barley 2.2, under Bajra 3.9 percent, under maize 29.6 percent and under other food crops including pulses it was 10.7 percent¹⁸. For the increase of agricultural production, the significance of irrigation from a

revenue point of view was always recognized by the rulers of the country.

Maharaja Hari Singh showed keen interest in the improvement of agrarian conditions. He constructed bridges, bunds and canals. He got the locks constructed at Gao Kadal and Munshi Bagh, so that the water level to Srinagar could be kept under control. The Zaingir canal in Kashmir province in Handwara tehsil was given a new shape, which irrigated 14,200 acres. Besides, Zaingir canal, the Dadi channel was also remodelled. In addition to these government canals, *Zamindari* kuls were maintained jointly by the *assamis* and the Government. Efforts were also made to extend the irrigation and to regulate the distribution of water supply by means of *pacca sarbands*¹⁹. The main sources of irrigation were a number of *khuls*, which were taken out of the Indus, Gilgit, Hunza and Astore rivers²⁰. There was an appreciable increase in the irrigated areas of valley through helpful steps.

The Agriculture Department maintaining a model farm did much to introduce improved seeds. A variety of seeds were supplied to the *zamindars*. During the Maharaja Hari Singh reign, the department distributed a quantity of over 1607 maunds of agricultural seeds and about 10 maunds of vegetable seeds to selected *zamindars*. Lakhs of fruits saplings were distributed year after year and possible assistance was rendered to orchardists by the Department. Spraying of plants in private and Government orchards had been conducted on a very wide scale. A Plant and Crop Act had been enacted, and an Advisory Board had been set up in different areas to enforce the provisions of the Act. As the result of these activities, the agricultural products received great impetus. The saffron of Kashmir, though cultivated only in small area, was very widely known²¹.

Land Revenue

The settlement of the land revenue was conducted in the early nineties. All arable land was measured, the rights of holders and tenants were recorded and land tax was fixed at not more than one-quarter of the gross produce. The estimate of the produce was made on the basis of crop. The crops were sown and harvested under the supervision of settlement officer for a number of years in various assessment circles. The commutation prices were fixed on the basis of the average rates at which the *zamindars* (not grain dealers) sold the grains at the time of harvesting²². The rights of the land-holders in land were carefully defined and there was no instance of a land holder being deprived of his rights after the settlement except by a court of law. The terms of settlement was fixed for 40 years. The rights of agriculturists were clearly defined. No tax was levied on land other than that announced at the time of settlement²³.

Land Revenue was fixed at the time of settlement and no additions and alterations to the demand were made till the expiry of the term of settlement. In case of natural calamities such as droughts and floods, recovery of revenue was suspended and enquires for the loss sustained by each land-holder was started. Remission in proportion to the loss sustained by each was granted by the Government. Rules known as “Suspension and Remission Rules” was substantially the same as similar rules in force in Punjab²⁴. Suspensions of revenue were granted even on such occasions as the destruction by fire of home-steads, deaths by epidemics and avalanches and loss sustained in communal riots. Moreover, when an estate or even a part of it was washed away by flood or rendered unfit for cultivation, the revenue assessed on it was remitted in accordance with the procedure laid down in the Alluvion and Diluvion Rules.

The assessment of land revenue though one of the many functions of the settlement department was perhaps the most important. The standard for fixing revenue in places where the State did not enjoy proprietary rights was the same as in the Punjab, namely “half net assets” or half of the profits of the proprietor from land cultivated by tenants-at-will. To arrive at the percentage represented by “half net assets”, some deductions were made from gross produce, 8 per cent to 10 per cent, altogether, on account of customary payments from the common harvest heap before division. In the prevailing rent-rate of half the produce, the net profits of the proprietors would be 45 percent of the gross produce and the share of the State at 22½ percent. Where cash rents were common, which was seldom the case, another set of “half net assets” was obtainable by the simple process of dividing by two the average net cash rent per acre of a given class of land. Where the State held proprietary rights in all land, as in Kashmir, it was in theory entitled to half the gross produce, which it actually took before the first regular Settlement, but this was changed subsequently and the standard fixed at 30 percent of the gross produce²⁵.

Ownership of Land

The *Ryotwari* land tenure was the most prevalent system in the State. The proprietary rights of land were usually vested in the State²⁶. The State ownership was not absolute in the Kashmir province. Nevertheless, the State possessed proprietary rights in greater parts of the province. In the *tehsils* of Ramnagar, Basooli and Mirpur *tehsil* of the Jammu province, almost all lands were owned by the State, but the landholders were *Malguzars*, who had to pay revenue directly to the State. They enjoyed the right of selling and mortgaging their land. In other parts of Jammu

province some lands were held by the State which under it had numerous occupancy tenants and in the remaining lands, the people enjoyed proprietary rights, but they were frequently parceled out for cultivation by tenants who had either occupancy rights or were tenants-at-will.

Prior to 1933, land in Kashmir province and in the frontier districts was held by *zamindars* either in *Haq-i-Assami* or as *tenants-at-will* or as tenants-at-will and in some cases as occupancy tenants. Under *Haq-i-Assami*, all the land was owned by the State, the actual *assamis* having the right of occupancy as against the State as long as they paid their dues, but had no right of alienation or by sale or mortgage. But tenants-at-will held the land subject to the will of the proprietor. Transfer was, however, permitted within the municipal limits of Srinagar and in Anantnag, Shopain, Bijbihara, Pampore, Baramullah, and Muzafarabad towns²⁷. Tenants-at-will held the land subject to the will of the proprietor, who could eject them at any time. In Kashmir, tenants-at-will included many *zamindars*, who had been found in A.D 1924 to have encroached on huge *Khalsa* areas and to have brought them under cultivation²⁸. The occupancy tenants on the other hand held a right of occupancy under a proprietor or an *assami* and could not be ejected without special reason nor could the rent on the land be altered at the will of the landlord. In Kashmir, occupancy tenants consisted mainly of tenants who held the land at the time of first settlement and had since been recognized as such by a competent court. They were granted *assami* rights in subsequent settlements²⁹. Their rights were hereditary and could be sold with the permission of the landlord.

Occupancy tenants were of two kinds, *viz.*, those who held land direct from a landlord or the State and those who held

land under the occupancy tenants of the first variety. In Kashmir, occupancy tenants consisted mainly of those who held land at the first settlement of Walter Lawrence and had since be declared by a competent court to be such; they were granted *assami* rights in the subsequent settlement³⁰.

It was only in A.D 1933, that Maharaja Hari Singh was pleased to grant proprietary rights to *assamis* in the Kashmir province and the frontier districts as well as to occupancy tenants in Jammu province in order to create in them a greater sense of self-respect and self-reliance. The payment of *Malikana*, as we have earlier stated, was waived as a matter of grace, but these grants were supplemented by legislation aimed at the prevention of alienation of land by the landholders beyond one fourth of his holding except with the permission of the *wazir wazarat*, it was prohibited. As a result of these reforms, no occupancy tenants under the State existed in Jammu and Kashmir province³¹. Such tenants existed in only frontier districts, where the *zamindars* were previously allowed to break waste land up to 20 *kanals* in each individual case³². On the recommendation of the Glancy Commission, this limit was removed. Further, lands brought under cultivation prior to A.D 1933 were ordered to be shown as lands held under proprietary rights and lands brought under cultivation subsequently to that date to be shown as lands held under occupancy rights of the cultivators. The *Zamindars* of the Frontier regions were thus the only occupancy tenants directly under the Government³³.

The status of cultivators of the land whose conditions were bad before the introduction of Settlement of Land and *Glancy* Commission had been improved considerably. The maximum State

share of revenue was fixed at 30 percent of the gross produce, and suspensions and remissions were granted from time to time. The term of a settlement was extended up to 40 years. Maharaja Hari Singh introduced an effective method of keeping in touch with the rural population through conferences of the representatives of each *tehsil* in Jammu and Kashmir held annually at the headquarters of the Government³⁴. As a result of these conferences and discussions, attention was directed towards the improvement of means of communication in the villages, improvement of livestock, grant of cultivable land as *nautor* and provision of more facilities for education and medical relief³⁵. Compulsory education of boys in cities and some important towns had been extended. Scholarships had been provided on a more liberal scale particularly to pupils belonging to educationally backward class and poor communities. Medical relief in rural areas was also extended and improved. Civil hospitals and dispensaries had been founded and continuously improved.

The establishment of *Panchayat* Department in the villages of the State under the *Panchayat* Act of 1932 was started in A.D 1935, but in A.D 193, a great fillip had been given, to the formation and functioning of the *Panchayats*, when it was replaced under a separate Department of Rural Development³⁶. These *Panchayats* had not merely to decide civil and criminal powers, but also functioned as village organizations to improve the conditions moral, social and cultural conditions of the village community in various spheres. Attention had also been devoted to the problem of migration of labour from the State to the neighbouring provinces³⁷.

The Alienation of Land Act of 1938,³⁸ prohibited permanent alienation in favour of non-agriculturists while temporary

alienation in favour of non-agriculturist took the form of usufructuary mortgage with or without possession of land limited to a maximum of twenty years, on the expiry of which the land automatically reverted to the mortgagee free of encumbrance³⁹. The mortgagee was at liberty to redeem the land at any time during the currency of the mortgage in payment of a reasonable sum. Much alienation purporting to be conditional sale of land was legally invalid and could be set aside by the Wazir Wazarat his motion in favour of usufructuary mortgage to whatsoever period it related. The produce of land could not be leased for a term exceeding five years⁴⁰.

In the year 1934, the “Aid to Agriculturists and Land Improvements Act” was passed authorizing the provincial governors and the *wazirs* of frontier districts to grant loans for the improvement of land and for advancement of any other purpose directly connected with agricultural objects and pursuits for relief of distress⁴¹. The right of Prior Purchase Act had been passed to prevent the transfer of land belonging to agricultural classes. The agricultural classes had been defined and special *ailans* were issued declaring agricultural holdings, livestock, implements, seeds, etc. as non-attachable for redemption of decrees by the civil court⁴². The Land Alienation Act 1938, further protected the interests of agriculturalists and stopped transfer of agricultural land to non-agriculturists. The *Zamindars* could under this Act, secure loan at any time on a simple interest of six per cent per annum for agriculture improvements. In case of any calamities, the loan was remitted in full or in part according to the requirements. These loans could also be made repayable by easy installments in a number of years⁴³. There were about 4,000 Co-operative Credit Societies with a capital of one crore rupees providing facilities for

credit to agriculturists. The *Kahcharai* Act removed inequalities in the incidence of the *Kahcharai* tax, (Nomadic Tax) and granted exemption to owners of livestock in respect of particular animals of a given age, number and classified the rates of taxation⁴⁴. The *Nambardari* cess formally realized for nomadic animals was remitted. A Forest Enquiry Committee was set up in A.D 1937 to enquire in to the grievances of *Zamindars* in relation to the forest. The Department had suggested means for redressing grievances. Many of its recommendations were accepted by the Government and orders were passed to implement them⁴⁵.

The State's geophysical features are responsible for providing it with rich forests. They are verily the green gold of Kashmir. In their extent, distribution and growth potential, these forests constitute a major industry and hence form the mainstay of the State's economy. Under Maharaja Hari Singh, the forests rules had been greatly liberalized. The *Zamindars* now, enjoyed under certain conditions had the right to fell certain kinds of tree growing on their lands which could not be so felled before without Government order⁴⁶. Millions of cubic feet of timber and firewood were every year removed by *zamindars* from the forests free of charges. Similarly several lakhs of cubic feet of timber and firewood were annually granted to puplice at concession rates⁴⁷. Forest industries and rearing of cocoons provided employment to tens of thousands in the villages.

Sericulture and horticulture were given great encouragement. Under Maharaja Hari Singh, the sericulture industry had been modernized and reorganized. One of the chief industries in the State was the sericulture industry, which was a Government concern. The silk filature in Srinagar was the largest of its kind in the world.

A special quality of raw silk had not been produced anywhere else. The rearing of cocoons for silk provided employment for thousands of homes in the villages. Owing to the rise in the price of silk, sericulture had already made a good contribution to the revenue of the State⁴⁸. The manufacture of silk depended on the cultivation of the mulberry trees⁴⁹. The Department also sent peripatetic parties of gardeners to the villages to demonstrate to the *zamindars*, the operations connected with orchards laying. Demonstrations were given and the people educated regarding the control of pests. The Plant and Crop Protection Act 1933 was passed to protect the standing fruit trees and new plantations from pests and diseases. The District Agriculture Officer was authorized to destroy all bulbs, plants, parts of plants infected with disease and to prevent their export or transport from one place to another. The Plant Protection Committee, consisting of official reports of insect pests, fungal diseases crop or noxious weeds, suggested remedial measures, inspected and prohibited sale of infected crops or produce and destroyed or disinfected it⁵⁰. As a result of these activities, fruit-growing had received a great impetus pear and apples, the principle fruits of the Kashmir valley were exported in large quantities.

The urban Muslims of Kashmir could even perhaps be termed as well off. In their hands were the complete trade, industry and skilled craft for which Kashmir was famous. What was unique about Kashmir is that instead of Kashmiri manufacturers going in search of the market, the market itself came to Kashmir annually in the form of tourists in search of Kashmiri products⁵¹. They made goods profits on their arts and crafts. It is, however, another matter if the employees of skilled labour (who were Muslims) treated the workmen in a scandalous manner⁵². There appears to

have been during the Hari Singh's rule a noticeable effort on the part of the Government to accelerate the general economic growth in the State. Trade and industry were particularly helped through the State Department of Industries which also arranged industrial exhibition, from time to time. There were in 1931, a match factory, santonine factory, several carpet factories, factories for willow work, Tannery and knitting, a tent factory and many hand-weaving silk factories to produce high class silk fabrics of different kinds. Industries were infact, being developed as a continuous process. There, were, for instance, plans for establishing a modern power loom for silk weaving and woolen goods. Efforts also appear to have been in hand to exploit the considerable mining resources of the State⁵³.

Cause of indebtedness

Agriculture was generally born into a legacy of ancestral debt inherited from a father to a son from generation after generation. Most of them were in the grip of money-lenders. It was considered a moral and pious obligation by tradition that debts contracted by one's forefathers had to be paid. After settlement operations in A.D 1893, no definite survey of the rural areas had been conducted and therefore, it is difficult to arrive at the exact extent of rural indebtedness⁵⁴. However, it is evident that owing to the heavy pressure of population on land, lack of intensive agriculture, virtual absence of irrigation facilities, application of primitive methods of agriculture and slow cooperative movement, peasants were hard pressed. In fact agriculture was a "deficit economy" which could hardly meet the basic necessities of life of the rural masses⁵⁵. The post-settlement period marked increased indebtedness in rural villages. This was a result of converting the payment of a least part of the revenue owed to the State from kind into cash.

In order to liberate the indebted villagers from debts, the government had stretched out extensive alleviation to the masses. Both the revenue settlement officers, Wingate and Lawrence had remarked on the uniqueness of Kashmir in that 'the *Banuya* (Hindu moneylender) of India (was) practically absent in Kashmir. Conditions changed in the post-settlement period, with a stamped increment in indebtedness. This was an immediate after effect of Lawrence changing over the payment of revenue owed to the State from kind to cash. This baneful outcome of settlement was even attested by Maharaja Hari Singh (successor of Pratap Singh). Later Maharaja Hari Singh declared the Agricultural Relief Act in 1926-27 with a view to liberating agriculturists from the grasp of moneylenders and shielded them from usurious rate of interest⁵⁶. By this time, indebtedness affected more than 70 percent of the rural population of Kashmir⁵⁷.

The Agricultural Relief Act was sanctioned in July 1926 and applied to persons earning their livelihood wholly or principally by agriculture labour. According to it, the Court was empowered to open and examine any current account between the creditors and the debtor from A.D 1921, ignoring any settlement of contract between the parties purporting to close previous dealings and create a new obligation; to disallow any accumulated interest converted into principle at any intermediate settlement of account. It could allow interest at the stipulated rate of interest or its absence, at the rate considered fair by the court but not exceeding twelve percent per annum. To evaluate payments in kind at tehsil rates for the month during which such payments were made and to credit the value to the debtor; to spread the balance due from the debtor over a number of equitable instalments in accordance with the capacity of the debtor; to vary the number and alter the amount of instalment

if the paying capacity fluctuates⁵⁸. By this Act, more than seventy percent of the population of Kashmir was affected. The cause of the malevolent growth of poverty was the exploitative economy accepted as a normal routine of money lending business. The *sahukar* was the real enemy of the peasant; he was like a fly in a spider's parlour borrowing from the moneylender⁵⁹. It is clear that the money lending profession was virtually a Hindu monopoly, while in agriculture, Muslims predominated. The moneylenders commanded weight and influence and his influence with the ruler was a valuable asset. No autocrat would keenly lose a powerful ally and burden himself with a positive liability of the peasant. This objection was dismissed by the State on the grounds that enactment was made in the interest of the agriculturists⁶⁰. The agriculture population of the State was poor and improvident. Owing to the lack of credit facilities necessary for all productive operations they were placed at the mercy of usurers. In order to meet this problem of agricultural indebtedness which showed a tendency to increase, Government established a Department of Co-operative Societies⁶¹.

Conclusion

The status of the cultivators, whose condition was bad before the introduction of the Settlement of Land and Glancy Commission, improved considerably. The maximum State share of revenue was fixed at 30 percent of the gross produce, and suspensions and remissions were granted from time to time. The term of a settlement was extended up to 40 years. Besides, Maharaja passed some helpful Acts to improve the economic condition of the peasants, The Agriculturist Relief and the Right of Prior Purchase Act. These Acts protected the cultivators from the clutches of money-lenders, who charged high rates of interest. The

peasants or occupants could take the money-lenders to the court, also fixed the instalments of debt, to be paid to the *waddar*; taking into consideration the paying capacity of the peasant. The Right of Prior Purchase Act had been passed to prevent the transfer of land belonging to the agricultural classes. Agricultural classes had been defined and special *ailans* were issued declaring agricultural holdings, livestock, implements, seeds, etc. as non-attachable for redemption of decrees by the Civil Court.

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12. *Ibid.*

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COLONIAL ASPECT OF AGRICULTURE IN ASSAM

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Abstract

There was no aspect of trade in agricultural products prior to the coming of British East India Company in Assam. The practice of barter system was the dominant medium of socio-economic life among the people of Assam. Involvement of commercial aspect in agricultural products began after the introduction of permanent settlement in Bengal which was linked to the trade and revenue policy of the British East India Company. The treaty of Yandaboo ended not only the political problem of Assam but also transformed the economic system as a whole. In due course of time, land became the primary source of revenue for the Company. The Company encouraged the peasants to proliferate agricultural products based on the demand of overseas trade. Thereafter, they began the collection of cash revenue from the peasants which became a new system

of land revenue collection. Besides, the former native rulers collected the land revenue either in the form of kind or through voluntary service to state known as the paik system. The agricultural products of India attracted the overseas market and gave considerable revenue to the British and it had also influenced colonial market interest in the agriculture products of Assam. However, British could not carry out trading activities efficiently due to less productivity of agriculture and shortage of skilled manpower. Though self-sufficient village economy was prevalent at that time, but it could not meet the demand of the commercial purpose of the British Company. Less population in certain areas of Assam was due to epidemic diseases and political upheaval and huge acres of fertile land remained vacant. The demand for cash crops in the market encouraged the British Company to call outside cultivators to grow cash crops which eventually led to green revolution in Assam as well as commercialization of agriculture. The outside cultivators who were enterprising and skillful introduced different types of agricultural activities in Assam later, the local inhabitants along with the outsiders began to adopt cash crop cultivation.

Keywords: *Land, Crops, Revenue, British Policy and New Agrarian Economy.*

The British East India Company came to India for the purpose of spice trade where different types of spices were found. With the passage of time, the political turmoil among the princely states involved the British East India Company for their strategic interests and economic benefits. The British involvement

in the political upheaval followed the disintegration of the Mughal Empire. Thereafter, they acquired many facilities from the tributary rulers of Mughal Empire and extended their trade and business with neighbouring countries. However, under the treaty of Alinagar, the British East India Company acquired 24 parganas from Mir Zafar, a new *Nawab* of Bengal that provided commercial facilities and *zamindari* rights¹. Furthermore, through the treaty of Allahabad, the Company received political, administrative and legitimate monopoly over trade. The treaty agreement signed on 28th February 1793 between Guarinath Singha and the East India Company embarked upon a new chapter of commercial relations with the Bengal province. Prior to the advent of the British in Assam, the Ahoms came into contact with the Mughal traders, who had already developed a money economy. The nexus of Mughal trade with Assam had gradually changed the economic pattern of the Ahoms². It was observed by Bogle that the transaction of commercial activity during the pre-colonial period was carried out in exchange of goods³. However, following the political aggrandizement of East India Company in Assam, revenue collection was drawn on the model of Bengal province which was associated with cash payment. With the introduction of a new monetized system of revenue payment, a group of moneylenders developed, who acted as loan givers to the agriculturists and they in return charged unprecedented rates of interest that finally triggered indebtedness⁴. The Colonial aspect of agriculture was associated with the promotion of commercial crops. Commercial crops provided better revenue prospects than the food crops. Since commercial crops cultivation required more labour force, the neighbouring province provided cheap labour, who later contributed their hand in production of cash crops for the market economy. The study attempts to analyse the colonial aspect of agriculture in Assam.

Prior to the Company rule in Assam, the Ahom Kings claimed that all the land belonged to the State that corresponds to the north Indian tradition⁵. Over the period, allocation of land was carried out on the basis of *khel* or *paik* system and land grant was practised as a mode of stipend payment to royal officials as well as religious institutions and Brahmins. With the advent of colonial rule in Assam, it opened a new chapter of transition in Brahmaputra Valley. At the time of British occupation of Assam, large areas of land remained uncultivated due to low density of population caused by epidemic diseases such as malaria, *Kala Azar*, cholera, etc. On the other hand, internal upheavals like Moamaria rebellion as well as external aggression such as Burmese aggression triggered de-escalation of population in Assam that significantly kept vast tracts of land without cultivation⁶. There was no concept of private ownership of land and commercial activity associated with land during the pre-colonial period of Assam. However, low density of population and fertile land of Brahmaputra valley gave an immense pleasure to the British to materialize their revenue policies on land with reference to land revenue policy as well as land alienation policy of Bengal, Madras and Bombay Provinces. The alienation of land began in the 1830s. The Colonial administration attempted to privatize land through settlements that subsequently became a common phenomenon. The main intention of privatization was to alienate the land that was held by existing proprietors. With the private ownership of land, classification of land came into force and land became a commodity. According to the productivity of land, it was categorized to fix the revenue. When the land was privatized, *pattas* legitimized the rights of land holding on certain tenures. Although permanent settlement was successful in the Bengal Province, the Colonial government could not implement this settlement policy in Assam due to paucity of bidders and

absence of monetization. However, another variant of settlement was directly established with the cultivators or *ryots* i.e., *ryotwari* settlement. Under the ryotwari system, land was given to the cultivator on an annual lease⁷. Goalpara being an integral part of Bengal province came under the *zamindari* system and it was there that land sale was seen as a common phenomenon⁸. Land grants were a common practice of the Ahom dynasty and the ownership of land was claimed by the *Satgharia* (seven blue-blooded royal families) through their ancestral participation in the establishment of Ahom kingdom⁹. Over the years, there existed two types of land ownership- permanent and temporary. Permanent land ownership conglomerated homestead and *bari* (garden areas). Besides, temporary ownership of land included grazing land, marshy land, char areas and forests where cultivation was yet to start. However, during the 1870s, the land was divided into two administrative segments such as ordinary cultivation and special cultivation¹⁰. The tea cultivation was held under special cultivation whereas peasant cultivation including land owned by religious institutions through land grants and was categorized as ordinary cultivation. Over and above, ordinary cultivation was further categorized into *khiraj* (full revenue land), *nisf-khiraj* (half revenue land) and *lakhiraj* (revenue free land)¹¹. The Colonial administration adopted a land settlement policy to recognize all the traditional rights to land and bring all the land under long term hereditary and transferable rights. There was no uniform system of land tenure in Assam. Before the Colonial rule, the private ownership of land was unknown in rest of the areas of Assam except Goalpara district where permanent settlement was already imposed due to it being an integral part of Bengal province. However, the Settlement Rule of 1870 recognized the permanent, transferable and heritable rights in *rupit* (wet rice growing land) and *bari*

(homestead) lands in private occupation. Through this settlement, the concept of private ownership of land got accentuated. All the land that had been owned by the religious institutions and high handed individuals was considered non-transferable and revenue free lands were liquidated and subsequently put under full revenue payment. It was the *mauzadar*, who was entrusted with revenue collection. District was split into *mauzas* or circles. *Mauza* was further subdivided into circles headed by *mandals* or the village surveyors¹². Over the years 1874-1875, the Colonial government accumulated over 56 lakhs of total revenue, of which land revenue alone was about 33½ lakhs, 14 lakhs from excise duty and 5 lakhs from stamp duty and from other sources¹³.

Since the early period of British rule in Assam, agriculture played a pivotal role in every aspect of sustainable development. No doubt, agriculture formed the basis of peasant economy in Brahmaputra Valley; likewise, land became the most valuable property due to agriculture. Thus, the Company attempted to impose tax on land which would supply regular revenue to the colonial state exchequer. In course of time, several earlier systems associated with land had been transformed by colonial administration and new policies were passed to yield considerable revenue¹⁴. The concept of monetized system of revenue payment was introduced by the colonial rule in Assam. During the Ahom period, people were looked upon as state property¹⁵ and *paik* system as one of the indirect modes of revenue collection in the form of voluntary service to the state. Under the *paik* system, the entire male population between 16 to 50 years of age were required as *paik* as well as revenue paying unit to render over 3 to 4 months of personal service to the state¹⁶. By and large, *paiks* were supervised by *Borahs*, *Saikias* and *Hazarikas*¹⁷. Mills reported that the Ahom

state collected revenue in the form of kind or agricultural produce and manual labour (*paik*)¹⁸. However, in the case of western Assam, revenue administration was directly supervised by the *Barphukan*. The State officers were provided land assignment as remuneration for their duty. In the wake of British take-over of Assam, the colonial administration introduced revenue reform in Assam that finally disintegrated the earlier system of drawing revenue in the form of personal service to the state¹⁹. Following the disintegration of the *paik* system, many of the disbanded *paiks* took refuge in neighbouring country so as to escape cash payment of taxes²⁰. When Assam was taken over by the Company, there was hardly any means for revenue generation. Indeed, land was the only source that provided little means for the colonial regime. Besides, other resources which had huge potential for revenue generation remained untapped. The Colonial aspect of administration was to meet the administrative expenses of the colony at the cost of public revenue that subsequently led to fixation of revenue settlement in the form of cash. There was no immediate and exhaustive transformation in revenue administration. However, the earlier practice of personal service to the state was replaced by poll tax and *khel* officials were entrusted with the collection of revenue. The impact of Burmese aggression was so severe, that it scattered most of the *khel* officials and finally led to the failure of poll tax and the *mauzadari* system was introduced in Assam, where settlement was directly established with the *ryots* and became better known as *ryotwari* system²¹. The earlier system of land rights was liquidated and all the erstwhile granted lands that mandated exclusive rent free rights were alienated by the colonial government and brought under regulation. Prior to the establishment of revenue settlement, all the lands were assessed based on measurements and subsequently revenue was fixed.

Following the political re-organization in Assam, the Colonial government had undertaken a series of policies to invite more European capitalists to invest in commercial crops and hard working peasants from East Bengal to work in uncultivated land for extensive cultivation. At the time of British control over Assam, several acres of land remained uncultivated due to several factors. These wastelands were viewed as a problem by the colonial state for revenue yield²². Since, the British systems had evolved from feudal society to advanced stage, it provided immense knowledge and experience in administration. As such, when Assam became a part of the British Colony, the East India Company endeavoured to identify valuable resources that possessed economic benefit. During the pre-colonial period of Assam, majority of the people lived in a self-sufficient agrarian economy. By and large, rice cultivation formed the dominant occupation of the people. There was no commercial importance for food crops due to lack of export market and trade. Besides, the Ahom rulers provided little space for commercial activity in Assam. The Colonial government sought every means to draw revenue out of the colony without giving any importance to food crops and ecological degradation²³. When tea was introduced in Assam, the Europeans as well as individuals invested in the tea industry. With the introduction of tea, the value of land increased and a vast tract of uncultivated land came under state regulation for commercial interest. The British acquisition of land was later facilitated by the policy of 'wasteland grant rule of 1838' that legitimized the Europeans to occupy large acres of uncultivated and forest land for commercial crop cultivation²⁴. Through this grant, planters were mandated favourable terms of land holding, minimal amount of tax and thousands of acres of land for growing tea²⁵. The wasteland grant settlement policy of 1838 was later revised in 1854 so as

to encourage more planters on long term tenure and convenient terms. Furthermore, Fee Simple grant was introduced in 1861 to facilitate the rate of land sale that was reduced to Rs.5 per acre. From 1876, a new system of long term of over thirty-year leases was introduced and sale of fee simple land was dwarfed²⁶. Since tea cultivation was labour intensive and the local inhabitants being self-sufficient were reluctant to work in the tea gardens, the Colonial government devised a mechanism to resolve the labour shortage. So as to supply labour to the special crop cultivation, the Colonial government amplified the revenue rate of the local cultivators that finally compelled the peasants to relinquish food crops cultivation and turn as a labour in Tea gardens. However, this policy was of no avail as most of the peasants moved to the countryside to escape from taxes. Eventually, this paucity of labour for tea cultivation was later resolved by bringing indentured labour from Central India and contiguous provinces. Another group of hard working peasants from East Bengal who were more advanced in growing commercial crops were later provided free access by the Colonial administration to enter into Assam for jute and opium cultivation which had commercial importance in overseas markets.

Prior to the advent of Assam, there was no commercial value on jute. Jute cultivation picked up momentum only in the twentieth century following the outbreak of the 'Crimean war' that interrupted the British supply of Russian flax and hemp²⁷. Over the years, Dundee dominated the Jute manufacturing industry and in order to substitute Russian hemp, the pressure was mounted on the British colony in India to supply jute fibre to Dundee (Scotland). The overseas demand of jute fibre increased cultivation of jute crops in Bengal and Assam. By and large, jute was used for packaging commodities such as grain, sugar, cotton, tea, coffee

and manufactured goods. The western part of Assam especially Goalpara and Eastern *Duars* of Assam produced bulk of jute, which was later transported to Calcutta through river borne transport and later it was exported to Dundee²⁸. Suitable climate of Assam and sandy alluvial soil of the Brahmaputra valley facilitated jute cultivation. With the growing importance of jute for commercial purposes, the jute grower was encouraged by Marwaris, the agents of the British, who provided advance cash and seeds for cultivation. However, Goalpara produced the largest quantity of jute in Assam, which had grown on a commercial spectrum²⁹. The jute grown in Manickchar and Jamadar Hat areas possessed a special quality, which had caught the eyes of the traders. Following six districts shed light on the area of lands, where jute was cultivated in 1879³⁰.

Districts	Extent of area cultivated
Goalpara	35,000 acres
Kamrup	400 acres
Nagaon	300 acres
Darrang	200 acres
Sibsagar	150 acres
Lakhimour	100 acres

According to H. R Carter, over 444,761 people took keen interest in jute cultivation both in the Char areas of Brahmaputra and in the foothills of the Duars³¹. In Goalpara, the *zamindars* persistently encouraged the marginalised peasants from the neighbouring province (East Bengal) to settle in the char areas (river islands and banks formed by silt deposits) for jute cultivation³². In course of time, most of the efficient and skilful cultivators

immigrated to Assam from the districts of Mymensingh, Rangpur, Pabna and Bogra of East Bengal³³. By the time of the Second World War, Assam turned out to be the third largest producer of jute in India.

Opium was one of the flagship commercial crops in 19th century India³⁴. It is believed that the cultivation of poppy in Assam was introduced by the soldiers of Captain Welsh during their temporary stay in Assam in 1793³⁵. However, different arguments reflected that the cultivation and use of opium took its turn at the end of the 17th century when Mughals came in contact with the people of Assam. This view was expressed by the Assam Congress Opium Enquiry Committee. No doubt, before opium was locally available in Assam, Bengal was the major producer and supplier of opium in India. By and large, opium was locally used as pain reliever and for treatment of bowel complaints³⁶. As per the report of Captain Welsh, it was revealed that poppy was grown in abundance in the lower province of Assam³⁷. Three years down the line, another renowned person from Assam better known as Anandaram Dhekial Phukan had observed that opium was cultivated everywhere in Assam³⁸. Initially, opium cultivation was not directly connected with commercial purposes, but when the British built a network of trade with China followed by opium cultivation in Bengal and Assam was undertaken. Till the second decade of nineteenth century, British monopolized the opium trade in China³⁹. The main objective of opium trade in China was due to the growing demand of Chinese tea, silk and porcelain pottery in the European markets. However, there was no demand for Europe's manufactured goods in Chinese markets and this caused trade imbalance and Europeans had to pay gold and silver for Chinese items. Therefore, to create balance in trade,

British exported opium to China. Following the business in China, it contributed to the revenue for the colonial government after land revenue⁴⁰. The demands of the Chinese market provided an impetus for extensive opium cultivation in Bengal and Assam, which eventually supplied revenue to the colonial government. The following data reflects the revenue generated by the Colonial State from opium. This data has been taken from the Assam Congress Opium Enquiry Report⁴¹.

Year	Revenue in Rupees
1875-76	12,25,141
1885-86	16,75,363
1895-96	19,55,706
1905-06	30,53,933
1915-16	38,37,125
1919-20	44,12,308
1920-21	Not Available

Before the advent of British in Assam, there was no concept of commercialization of agriculture. However, it was after the British take-over of Assam, commercialization of agriculture grew in momentum. The commercial activity of Assam was mostly carried out with the neighbouring province of Bengal⁴². The overseas market demand for colonial items compelled the colonial government in India to export. These export goods were tea, jute, cotton, and opium. Over several years, the Chinese monopolized the Tea market in the world for being the sole producer of tea. However, after the discovery of tea in Assam, it surpassed the Chinese tea by producing substantial amounts of tea in Assam and

Bengal that gave huge revenue to the colonial government. When the British attempted to establish trade relations with China, the Chinese Government rejected the initial proposal of the British commercial treaty. The British took it as a humiliation and hatched revenge against the Chinese government to destroy the Chinese societies with opium⁴³. Later, British established their trading activity in China. It was owing to this factor that the cultivation of opium was encouraged in Assam and Bengal and was finally exported to China. Warren Hastings, the Governor General of India transferred the opium monopoly from the merchandise's account to that of revenue. Throughout the 19th century, monopoly on opium remained an effective imperial mechanism for solving the acute plight of the remittance and Britain's ample balance of payments⁴⁴. In fact, there was another demand for the Indian cotton articles from the Manchester lobby. It was a substitute to the American cotton which stopped due to the American civil war. As a result, cotton cultivation picked up in the soil of Assam. Cotton spinning and weaving was one of the professions for every woman of Assam. Tanti, a professional caste associated with weaving, turned to cotton weaving⁴⁵. In addition, commercialization of jute began in the last quarter of the 19th century. With the emergence of jute as a global commodity, peasant communities began specializing in jute production for export⁴⁶. The Crimean War and the World Wars encouraged the Indian entrepreneur to switch to jute industry in Bengal. Jute was mostly used for war as jute bag, bullet proof jacket, tent material and packaging material. With the development of road and communication network, commercial activity progressed to a great extent.

The Colonial State brought a new pattern of agriculture that transformed the economic scenario of Assam. The

revenue realization was seen as the main objective of colonial administration. *Ryotwari* settlement was directly established with the cultivators that mandated proprietary rights of the *ryots* on land. Several policies were passed which encouraged the European capitalists to invest on land for commercial crops. The Colonial State sought every means and subsequently replaced the earlier system and practices which often led to retarded and stagnant economy. The pattern of agricultural practices was drawn in the line of market economy. The overseas market was very instrumental in changing the course of rural economy and encouraged the peasant communities to adopt commercial crops that possessed lucrative potential. Several obstacles that disrupted the export and import activities of the British in the global market were later resolved by the British authorities in India. To meet the demand of the export market, suitable lands were sought and as per demand, cash crops were grown in Assam. The market based production transformed the ecological setting and vast forest lands and grazing lands were converted into agricultural land. With extensive cultivation, more outsiders from adjacent provinces penetrated into Assam and changed the demography of Assam as well as the living space. Systematic colonial policy allowed the outsiders to settle in Assam for the purpose of cultivation and this provided a boost in economic growth. With commercial activity, the process of monetized system of revenue payment became feasible and land sale turned into a common phenomenon.

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ITINERARY COMMUNITIES AND DECCAN CULTURE: A CASE OF PERIKAS

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Abstract

Before the growth of modern transportation and communication, itinerarary communities played a crucial role in the operation of trading activities in India. Each itinerarary community was involved in a particular trade. In course of time, these groups evolved as a community and developed specific social practice and culture. Such development was more apparent in the Deccan region owing to various reasons like they had to depend on coastal regions for food grains and salt and had huge forest area for grazing cattle. Thus, the Deccan became the hub for the itinerarary communities. The Perikas is one such community which played a crucial role in the development of trade in the Deccan. This paper aims to explore how the culture of itinerarary communities is significant in the blend of Deccan culture.

Keywords: *Perika, Kakatiya, Vijaynagara, Beri Timmanua, Perika Bhavan, Perika Kula Prakashika, Linganna Pujari.*

Before the growth of modern transportation and communication, itineray communities played a crucial role in the operation of trading activities in India. They were mainly operating in the rural areas whereas the Baniyas based their trade in the urban areas. However, there were intrinsic relations between the two groups in the operation of trade. Each itineray community was involved in a particular trade¹. In fact, the formation of the community was based on the occupation. It was a general phenomenon in the medieval period in which individuals and groups joined hands to conduct a trade. In the course of time, these groups evolved as a community and developed specific social practices and culture. Such development was more apparent in the Deccan region owing to various reasons, like they had to depend on coastal regions and sea shores for foodgrains and salt and had huge forest area for grazing cattle. Thus, the Deccan became the hub for the itineray communities². The Perikas is one such community which played a crucial role in the development of trade in the Deccan.

The Perikas are one of the oldest groups/castes of the Deccan region. They are primarily settled in the Andhra region. 'Perika' means a jute sack. The people who carried merchandise of traders in these bags came to be known as Perikas. It is a fact that these people had played an important role in internal trade by carrying the merchandise from one region to another. As a mobile trading community, they have developed unique cultural practices. In some cases, they also emerged as big traders. From the late nineteenth century, they began taking to modern education.

Modern education clubbed with the other developments in the Hyderabad State had created a new consciousness among them. This led them to organize the community in a newer way by appropriating Brahmanic values and practices. This consciousness not only organized the community but also helped them to face challenges. This paper aims to explore how the culture of itinerant communities is significant in the blend of Deccan culture. An attempt is made here to examine the economic and social transformation of the Perikas under the regime of the Qutbshahis and Asafjahis.

Historical Evolution of Perikas

Although there is ambiguity about the origin of the Perika community, references to this community has been made in the Puranas. They are referred as 'Perika' or 'pereke'. In *Mahabharata*, there is a reference that Nakula, brother of Dharmaraja brings wealth in 'Perikas' (Jute Sacks) on 10 thousand camels after his victory over the southern kings on the eve of Dharmaraja's *Rajasuyayaga*. The notable aspect here is that 'Perika' term is used not to indicate transporting bag or bags but to indicate a social group or caste³. A similar reference of the Perikas is also made in (the literary work *Kumarasambhavam* of Nannechoda)⁴. It is said that

*'Ekkumutti Chakki Nekkanga marachi sam;
bramamubondhi pirudha bramadaganamu;
larvabhoothumeedha naddambu padiyuppu;
perikevole verachi vareche Jamudu'.*

Here the 'Perika' term is used as the carriers of salt in sacks. In the same Telugu work, branding on oxen which are used for transportation is indicated. There are many such references of

the Perikas in the later Telugu texts. In course of time, the term 'Perika' was referred in literature and epigraphs in various forms like Perike, Pereka, Perka, Perikaedlu, Perikesetlu, Perikaatam, Peechuperika, Perika Balija, Perikaraajulu, etc⁵. It is evident that the Perikas were deeply involved in grain transportation from the ancient period. The colonial ethnographic studies give plenty of information on their trade networks and activities.

Trade and Commerce in Andhradesa was developing on a huge scale due to the liberal policies of the Kakatiya rulers. Taking advantage of this situation, the 'Perikas' emerged as a significant transporting community. In fact, they received greater support from the Kakatiya rulers. One inscriptional evidence shows that they were given special concession for conducting trade in the region⁶. They carried their trade generally on their heads, oxen, donkeys, horses and earned their livelihood. Using horses in trade was a privilege in medieval times. The evidence of Perikas using horses comes from *Sukasaptati*,⁷ which says that:

*'Athadinka nemiseppudhu;
sathathamooriri santhasanthala kathyu;
Dhythi perike letthi Tharumun;
mathi narayumdinthayaina matthanu badhan'.*

*'Perikaye chaalu Naanaddi Virugacheyu;
Dhaanipai Thannunekku Vinthayunu goaka;
Akata Vayyaligaaka Bommanuchukottu;
Athani Chethulalo Chengalammagottu'*

Before they started their trade, they used to worship their God, particularly Siva. It is evident from the *Basawapurana* of Palukuriki Somanatha⁸. It says that:

*'Karakantagudiedhe kanti memanuchu;
perike setlathani pilichi chupudunu;
naayatha Bhakthi 'Shivaya namo nama';
yani Andhandha mokkhi mummaru;
Valagoni Intiki Vacchi Kurchunudu... '.*

This shows that the Parikas were greatly influenced by Saivism and they worshiped Siva as their family God.

The Perikas were generally supplying food grains and salt from surplus areas to shortage areas. Their role became very significant in the regions affected by famines. In such times, they were supported by the Kings, particularly the Kakatiyas. The Vijayanagara rulers also supported them⁹. However, their trading activities were always governed by the political conditions of the region.

The establishment of Muslim rule over Andhradesa by the year 1323 CE and the fall of the Kakatiyas gave a terrible shock to the socio-economic structure of this region. The political turmoil led to a decline of trade and the communities associated with this activity. But the establishment of the Reddy and Vijayanagara kingdoms by dynamic Sudra leaders and their liberal policies gave extra security to lower groups like the Perikas. During the medieval period, Andhradesa was known for its brisk internal and external trade. The Perikas played a significant role in the transportation of merchandise from one place to other. The local inscriptional records from Rollamadugu, Bukkapatnam, Udayagiri and Animala of the Vijayanagara period (1521-1546 CE) provide the details of merchandise carried by people of this group¹⁰. The

list of articles includes pepper, jaggery, pulses, cholamnuts, cloaks, sandal, camphor, musk, pilliroots, sugar, silk bales, cotton bales, fruits, vegetables, rice, ragi etc. The above fact is also supported by the details mentioned in an epigraph from¹¹ ‘Srisailam’ dated 1516 CE, of Tuluva Sri Krishnadeva Raya’s period. Contemporary literary and ephigraphical records have given lengthy illustrations about the passing of ‘Perika oxen’ with heavy loads in Tirupati, Ahobhilam, and Srisailam road. Their caravans were often targeted by bandits and robbers and they used to maintain their own force to protect themselves¹².

The introduction of modern transportation brought about multiple changes under colonial rule. They played an important role in furthering the development of a regulated market and the market economy in the Deccan. The railways connected the State with the colonial and world economy. It also furthered the exploitation of the subaltern peasants by unscrupulous traders, moneylenders and landlords, as they had an added incentive to procure goods at cheap prices to sell in the wider markets of which they had a better knowledge. The railway economy, in short, established a regulated large-scale trade in the Deccan that was almost entirely out of the control of the Perikas¹³. The establishment of roads and railways thus changed market relations in the State. The railways offered an organised system of import and export. This had thrown the Perikas out of their trading activities. After they lost their traditional occupation, they moved to modern occupations. Many of them migrated to other regions also in search of livelihood.

However, the Perikas are well spread out in Andhra Pradesh. The demographic picture of the community varies from region to region in Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana. According to

the 1901 Census, the overall 'Perika' population in the Madras Presidency and Nizam State was one lakh only. In Hyderabad State according to the 1951 census, their population was 10,723. As per a recent survey made by the 'Perika Sangam' in Andhra, Rayalseema and Telengana, their population is about 13 lakhs. The Perikas existence in the Deccan is marked by evidence. Many village names in Andhra Pradesh are named after Perika caste such as Perikapadu (Guntur), Perikeedu (West Godavari), Perikagudem (Krishna and Adilabad), Perikapalli (Karimnagar), Perikawada (Warangal) and Perukonibavi (Ranga Reddy). This shows that after the downfall of the Vijayanagara kingdom and advent of modern transportation, the people of this community lost their livelihood. The people of this community are settled in Tamil, Kannada, Maratha and Gujarat regions also. It is also a fact that a considerable number of Perikas had established themselves as traders, commission agents and money lenders. A new leadership had emerged and organized their caste. There is a long history of caste based mobilization of the Perikas.

According to one view 'Beri Timmanna' of the Perika caste was one of the leading merchants of Madras in the year 1640. His brothers, Pedda Venkatadri and Chinna Venkatadri were considered as the most influential leaders of the right side castes and they mobilized broad-based support in their struggle against Governor Streysan Master. The Beri family had enjoyed great respect in Madras city and they made a successful transition from a low 'Perika Baliya' sub-caste to the highest rung in the right-left caste ladder in Tamilnadu.

Beri Timmanna also took special interest in traditional religious activity on par with the upper caste people of Madras. He had constructed a temple complex in Madras city. The English

referred it as the 'Gentue Pagoda'. This temple complex was managed by the family members of Beri the family and Beri Timmanna, who also collected a small tax from all the local residents including Muslims. The Beri family members used this tax amount for the maintenance of the temple and its religious services. Beri Timmanna's brothers Beri Pedda Venkatadri and Chinna Venkatadri also exercised great control over the local residents, shop keepers, fishermen, and betel and tobacco merchants. They used this amount for charitable purposes. Beri Pedda Venkatadri in the year 1660 had appointed his own choultry accountant to collect customs duties from the local public. This led to a conflict between the East India Company officials and the Beri family. Chinna Venkatadri was arrested by the Company officials in 1660 CE. All the attempts made by the Company officials failed in reducing the influence of the Beri family in the local temples. In 1696, Beri Timmanna's hereditary right was rejected by Company officials. But due to the local people's protest against the Company's attitude and in support of Beri family's right, they were given a free hand to manage the temples¹⁴.

Towards modernizing the Perikas

The larger socio-economic and political developments under the rule of the British were crucial in reshaping the Perika caste. Particularly, modern education and the subsequent new awakening and reform movements across India had a serious impact on the community. Individual personalities and leaders from the community began extending help to their fellow Perikas voluntarily. Sir. "Gode Narayana Gajapathi Rao Bahadur" was one such personality in this respect. During the period of the English East India Company, his family was ruling a number of villages in the Northern Circars. The main villages under their control were Anakapalli, Embaram, Kuppili, Gottipalli, Munagapaka,

Korupolu, Godichalla, Bharanikam, Srirampuram and Sheikh Muhammadpuram. His family purchased Muhammadpuram from the Company in an auction for Rs. 18,445. He contributed towards the development of Telugu literature during the eighteenth century. Particularly, Telugu scholars of Visakapatnam were greatly patronized by his family.

His family members, Gode Murahari and Gode Peda Jagga Rao worked as Dubashis in the Chief Council Court at Machilipatnam. Sir Gode Narayana Gajapathi Rao Bahadur (1828-1903) was very popular among his caste. He was a well educated person. He was a Member of the Madras Legislative Council for ten years (1868-1878) and Senate Member of the University of Madras. He was deeply influenced by social reformers like Maharshi Devendranath Tagore and Keshab Chandra Sen. He patronized many scholars like Kakaraparthi Thirupathi, and Kakaraparthi Krishnaiah. Even the women of the Gode family like Madira Subhadrayamma and Gode Janakamma liberally donated large amounts to scholars and for the establishment of schools¹⁵.

Particularly from the beginning of the late 19th century, many educated Perika community personalities of both Andhra and Telangana regions played a crucial role in creating a new ambience and consciousness among their caste. A considerable number of Perikas were attracted to English education. Modern education indeed liberated the Perikas in many ways. Some of them played an active role in the freedom movement and occupied higher political positions. For instance, Ketthe Venkataswamy Naidu, who did his M.A. Economics and L.L.B. from the University of Madras was an active participant in the freedom struggle. He became Minister in the C. Rajagopalachari's Ministry (1952-1954). He was also honoured with the title '*Padma Shri*' by the

Government of India for his services to his community and nation. Thulabandula Nageshwara Rao (Guntur) (1917-1975), who did his M.A., L.L.M., from Lucknow University always strived hard for the cause of his community. He organized many meetings and educated the community on modern lines. He became member of the Backward Classes Commission appointed by the Government of India in 1954 under the Chairmanship of Kakasaheb Kalelkar. He got elected as a member of the Andhra Pradesh Assembly from Mangalagiri constituency in 1967 on Congress ticket. Using his position, he worked tirelessly to eradicate caste based discrimination in the society. Bodapuntipapaiah, B. Com, L.L.B., was another prominent personality from the Nizam State. He worked for spreading education among the Perikas. Bele Raghuvēeraiah of Hyderabad also played a prominent role in spreading new consciousness among the Perikas.

There were also attempts to rearticulate the history of the Perikas. Panasa Narayana and Veluri Narasimha Charya played an important role in recording their history. They collected all the oral and mythological stories that were still sung by the community and compiled it in book form. This book is titled as *Malhara Charitam*. This traces the Perika history from the earliest times. The advent of the modern printing press gave a new direction to the progress and unity of the community. The active leaders of the community used newspapers to spread new ideas among the community. Mutthineni Venkata Chennakeshavulu, an educated young man started a paper called *Puragiri Kshtriya Chintamani* in 1924 from Jaggayyapeta (Krishna Dist). However, this could not survive for long owing to the sudden death of Venkata Chennakeshavulu. But 'Perika Kula Prakashika' paper which was published in Telugu and started by Ambati Koteswar Rao in 1940 played a crucial role in spreading the history and culture of the

Perika caste. Although this paper was published in Vijayawada, it was equally popular in Hyderabad State as well. The tradition of running a caste newspaper is still continuing. The Perika Vaani paper started by Narishetti Venkateshwarlu in 1987 is playing an important role in educating the community on various social, economic and political issues.

Among all the Perika leaders, Linganna Pujari who hails from Domakonda village of the Telangana region was a prominent personality in awakening the community. His rise to the highest political position is interesting. He migrated with his family to Bombay in the year 1929. He settled in the Kamatipura locality. He worked very hard and earned a good name among the local public. He entered politics in 1946 and was elected to the Bombay Municipality as an independent member with the blessings of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. In the year 1947, he joined the Congress at the request of Jawaharlal Nehru. In 1972, he was elected to the Legislative Council. From 1974, he worked as an AICC member and Deputy PCC Chief of Bombay. Although he was politically active in Bombay, he continued to support the Perika movement in the Telugu speaking areas. This brought great reverence to him in the community for his efforts to promote education in the community. He was solely responsible for building the Perika Vidyarthi Hostel Building in Hyderabad City which provided free accommodation and education to Perika children.

Perika Bhavan became the centre for their caste mobilization after independence. A organization of the Perikas called Perika Mahasabha was formed in 1972 by the educated Perikas. This association worked as a pressure group to safeguard the interests of the community. The first conference of the Mahasabha was

held in 1972 under the presidentship of Ankathi Mallaiah, an ex-freedom fighter from Hyderabad, who had decided to build a hostel in Hyderabad for their community children. A trust was formed towards this end and money was raised from the community members. There was lavish donation from the rich members of the community. Some land was brought at the Raj Bhavan road and a building was erected in 1975.

In the early years of its inception, only 20 students were provided accommodation in this hostel. But subsequently, the number reached to 70 by 1990 and 270 by 2010. An extension of this hostel was also recently built in the Uppal locality of the city for girl students. Thus, the educated Perikas played a crucial role in promoting education in the community. The trustee of the Perika Bhavan has now reached to 3000. Students from the community were also given all encouragement including giving coaching for the competitive exams such as UPSC and State services.

Beside providing education to the students, the Bhavan also turned as a nodal centre for the community. Through this networking and continuous awareness programme and propaganda, the community members attained success in their respective fields. Thus, the community based organization became instrumental in their overall development.

Conclusion

The Perikas thus evolved as a caste/community around the food grain trade. As food grain transporters and traders, they played a significant role in the development of trade in the Deccan, particularly long distance trade. However, they declined in this trade due to the development of modern transportation and market

system. Although some managed to establish themselves in the modern market but a large number of them could not manage. Modern education led to a new consciousness in the community. This led the community to rearticulate their culture and history and modernize the community. In short, community solidarity and organization was instrumental in transforming the community into a modern one.

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UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL HISTORY: PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

E. P. Thompson through his work established social history as a research method. His study is considered to give due credit to workers which the traditional historians often overlooked and even excluded. On the other hand, R. Chandavarkar, being a prominent social historian, studies the Indian case of the workers during the initial stage of industrial capitalism in colonial India. His work examined the claims made by earlier historians on the working classes in India adopting and replicating Thompson's model of social history in the Indian context. For him, Thompson's model is based in the Western context and in order to study social history in India, one needs to have a culturally specific sociology. This paper is an attempt to understand social history as a method by looking at Thompson and Chandavarkar's studies on the working class in

England and India, respectively. Perspectives and problems of social history, as discussed by some other authors have also been briefly discussed in the paper.

Keywords: *Experience, India, Method, Social History, Working Class.*

Introduction

Social Historians have been using social science methodologies extensively. They present trends, formulate hypothesis, count and understand past societies among contemporary masses. They attempt to understand human behaviour in collectives and groups, especially in times of conflict. There is this traditional historical method and the social history method which are both differently studied and understood in social sciences.

In historical methods, the process is indirect, which obtains experimental and factual knowledge through referenced sources. This process is widely used in all positive sciences, where there are possibilities for verification and also the assurance to possibly reach the original observations systematically. To understand the present, we use the past as a reference point at most times. It is therefore necessary to use the historical methods, which is the only means to relive past events and recreate them in the present for the study. It is important to note that in the historical method, one cannot directly observe the data, and therefore only produces indirect knowledge from documented evidence and other factual notations.

Social History is the study of the past which emphasises various social concerns. Social History as a method of study

gained momentum during the 1960's and 1970's as a reaction to what was known to be the traditional historical methods which were extremely elitist in nature; and were practices in political and economic history. Social History became much popular since it was considered to be the expression of the "voice and concerns of the common masses". This highlighted the values, lifestyles and every day experiences of ordinary men and women. In the social history method, oral history as a technique was initiated as a tool, to expand the method qualitatively and capture the common people's narratives.

One of the major concerns, however, of the Social History method, states that the concepts, theories and methods used here are basically taken only from one discipline, which is sociology. Some other theorists have expressed their concerns, stating that social history in itself is empiricist and due to the availability of data, the method overemphasizes on data accumulation on a particular phenomenon. Rather than pursuing the historical problems or questions, collection of data becomes the focus.

Social Historians engage with their subjects in a way that they see the past in its own values and do not base their judgments of the past on the basis of present contexts. Samuel (1985) stressed the need of studying the subjects of the past emphatically, instead of extending sympathy and benevolence. In this way, the past will no longer be an alien subject; specifically when we find a "rational core to seemingly irrational behaviour". For example, eliminating beggars and homeless population is essential for the beautification and development of the city. Beggars and homeless groups are not obstacles for the development of city spaces, but are often viewed as unworthy and unnecessary inhabitants within cities by the State

and the residents. Instead of providing rehabilitation options, the state and judiciary take to punitive measures at most times, criminalising a huge section of urban poor on various grounds.

Social History celebrates ‘ordinary’ (common) humanity, bringing the past and the present closer together. The past comes in with multiple feelings: pain, love, anger, pride, solitude, helplessness, bitterness, etc. This gets documented and revisited in the present. However, the category of experience is not being used while documenting the past events. This, according to Samuel (1985) can be termed as ‘defamiliarisation’. According to him, the category of experience¹ is important due to its ability to access the intimate past. There is profound condensation in the notions of ‘ordinary people’. Social history as method and as discipline aptly deals with an endeavour to give ‘ordinary people’ their due credit in the present. For example, the role of working classes in the growth of industrial capitalism in 19th century Bombay.

One of the major tasks of social history is to enlarge historical knowledge into new areas through scholarly enquiry for instance, the making of the English working class, and business strategies during the inception of industrial capitalism in Bombay gave new life to the study of working classes and the city. Social history through its approach and methods became more hospitable to the subject of study than others. It helps to bridge the gap between what we exclude than rather neglect the past and the present.

This new field of social history demonstrated the study of particular events or phenomenon in the past qualitatively, getting rid of the quantifiable measures making history a mere statistical bloc. Traditional historical method excessively relied

upon positivist science using the tools of quantitative research. For example, in order to study kinship ties, household inventories were used.

According to Samuel (1985), so far, historians were restricted to study the past as an anti-progressive subject like folklore, vanished communities etc. but it is due to these resurrections of history in the variant form (social history in this case) it rescued the past from the 'enormous condescension' of future generation and remade the vanished component in history. Dignity of common people and celebration of everyday life is the key element in historical writing and research of this type.

Problematising Social History

According to John Breuilly (as quoted by Samuel, R, 1985), there are three dominant views about the nature of social history.

The first point of view being the oldest, focuses on the history of manners, of leisure, of social activities conducted outside political, economic, and military and any kind of other institutional domains, which were the concerns of history. This view was once dominant but later sank, as historians of women, family, leisure, etc. developed their own fields as distinct disciplines. These histories faced the threat of being trivialised because of the exclusion of politics, economics and the ideas of the kinds of activities they were interrogating.

The second view incorporates the study of the history of society (societal history), in which each discipline of history, for example, political, economic, and military, study only one aspect of a society. However, it is necessary to bring these various kinds

of historiographies together into one framework, if the society is to be understood holistically. This is according to Breuilly, the task of social history. The difficulty with this view is; a) the approach is based up on the assumption that there is a society to study but the term society does not necessarily mean a distinct social structure, rather, it refers to the inhabitants of a certain territory or subjects of particular political authority. However, it is not yet established that, a certain social structure shapes, people's lives. There is a constant threat to this assumption of a monochromatic society, that it will overshadow evidences of history. Thus, the assumption that Indian cities were modern prior to colonialism would require the idea of what modern cities are, how pre-colonial Indian cities and post-colonial Indian cities could be related to each other. To study this assumption, historians would get into the process of categorising various elements of Indian cities. For example, modern, pre-colonial Indian city, post-colonial Indian city, etc. A bulk of appropriate and relevant evidence would be necessary to support this assumption; lack of which would make these assumptions unhistorical, circular and empty of real meaning. Instead of studying the society structurally as a unit, if events in particular are attempted to be understood, historians will not be lured into categorising various elements of society. Social history as a methodology, therefore, plays an important role in leading historians to stick to their task by studying particular phenomena. It is equally important that the different branches of history be brought together under a single framework. This inter-disciplinary framework needs to be adopted in order to distinguish between various dimensions of history according to the second view.

The third view is more concerned with experiences rather than action. It emphasises on studying a phenomena or an event

from the perspective of the common or ordinary people, like workers, parents, citizens, etc. Here it is the responsibility of social historians to provide a general understanding, not at the level of society as a whole but at the level of individuals or the members of a particular social group. Doing social history from the third dominant view, according to Breuilly, is very problematic. The problem lies in the study of the experiences of people. The experience can be studied through their actions and these actions can eventually lead to unverifiable speculations. It can cause to drift its focus from social to psychological contexts. For example, if one intends to study the making of an industrial neighborhood in Mumbai, their existence will be understood from past events with the help of records and present day narratives. However, studying their actions of the past will merely be unverifiable speculations. If only the narratives of a particular individual is studied instead of events, then the study can be critically categorised as psychological rather than social and the whole study will be restricted to the study of antique and rare books of slum dwellers and urban poor.

Breuilly (Samuel 1985) questions social history as a method, problematising its application since the institutions like market, firms, states and organisations, through which social history is done are not constant, rather constantly changing entities. People's actions can be best understood by relating them with these institutions; and their actions determine how these very same institutions perform.

While Chandavarkar's (1994) problem with doing social history is related to studies on local groups and communities. The prime aim of social historians was to capture the 'experiences' of their focus groups, i.e., local groups and communities. In his

own words, they, therefore, “retained an increasingly tenacious determination, not to leave politics out”. With the increasing use of social history as a method of research gaining prominence, certain contradictions within the method also came to be known in its application and use. Firstly, its completeness came to be questioned. Considering the focus on local groups being so prioritised, the role of political actors and the state became sidelined more often. The different aspects of socio-political movements and protests and their linkages to the local community life remained inadequately justified to explain certain phenomena. Chandavarkar, refers to Stedman-Jones to highlight the need to study politics, in order to understand the political conflicts and not remain confined to the “local community²”.

Social History: a method for studying the voices of the common masses

Beginning in the 1960's, the agenda of social history as a specialisation within the discipline, was mainly driven by “a populist ambition to reconstruct the authentic social experiences of ordinary men and women and their everyday lives and struggles³” (Hobsbawm, as quoted by Chandavarkar 1994). Earlier historical methods were pre-occupied with elitist formulations which hardly incorporated the voices from the bottom rung of society. Therefore, the need was felt to revisit the historical methodology and develop a method which could interrogate the existing historiography; and put the common masses at the centre stage to study a particular phenomenon from their perspective.

One of the pioneering classics of E. P. Thompson (1963), ‘The making of the English working class’, is an interrogative work on the artisans and the working classes in England. Studied

during the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the study charts the initial formations and consecutive stages of the lives of the English workers. Thompson studies post-industrial English society from the point of view of the workers and contested the contemporary theories which restricted the working classes merely into statistical data. According to him, history has been unjust to workers, as it has always been written by those in power and control. He was of the view that the working class was in control of their own making. In the study, Thompson has attempted to recreate the everyday life world of the English working class, which made his work stand out in his times. He is very conscious about using the concepts and categories; for instance, his emphasis on the working 'class' rather than 'classes' throughout, stressed the increasing collective consciousness of working class amongst themselves. He also points out in his claim that there was a strong sense of identity between this working class due to common interests amongst them versus those groups with conflicting interests. Being the core of his work, Thompson's ideas on the working class and their lives, was greatly influenced by the English working class values of solidarity, mutuality, collectivism, political radicalism and Methodism.

Gareth Stedman Jones (1971) was one of the foremost social historians who used the social history method in urban studies. His magisterial study titled, '*Outcast London*', examines the relationship between poverty and politics in late nineteenth century London. Jones (as quoted by Chandavarkar 2009) discussed the issue of poverty and politics in three contexts. First was the study of the casual poor, in late Victorian London, who made up a considerable proportion of Londons' workforce, unlike in other areas of England which depended on factory labour. The

second was a consideration of how the housing question came to be seen by the wealthy of London, as it was inextricably linked to the questions of casual labour. The third was an account of how the ruling classes developed strategies for relieving the poverty of casual workers, which depended up on how they were perceived as demoralised and lacking the attributes of foresight and discipline and this was seen to characterise factory labour.

Chandavarkar (1994), in his study of working classes in Bombay, uses social history as a method to examine the contours of social formations of the industrial working classes. The impressions are derived from both - the influences of these formations and by charting the nature and development of industrial capitalism in colonial India, with reference to Bombay.

Chandavarkar has examined studies by E. Stokes⁵ that have predominantly understood the Indian economy within the domain of an 'agrarian' society. Stokes focusses on peasants, and his study, has also been largely concerned with agrarian economy and social order.

While R. Guha⁶, according to Chandavarkar (1994), is mainly concerned with "the land revenue systems, agrarian production and the rural social order and, more recently, with capturing the authentic experience, specifying the consciousness and distilling the 'popular culture' of the Indian peasant."

The emphasis on the agrarian economy in most of these studies has ignored its linkages with the urban and industrial economy (Chandavarkar 1994). This has an impact on restricting the discussion of Indian society and politics to a seemingly rural

centred economy; and by focusing on the economy of labour, Chandavarkar's study on the city of Bombay, aims to redress this imbalance in the subject. He also tries to bridge the gap between the rural and urban divisions and the distinctions in the nature and experience of work and workers in large scale industries and the causal labour market. He also studies the nature of social relationships in the work place and the urban neighbourhoods. Briefly, he investigates the social processes that determine the economy of labour and its social formations in the early twentieth century.

Based on these socio-historical studies, which went beyond the existing literature of their times, one can decipher the establishment of a new trend. This trend has been set by using the social history method and its tools to examine various complex social relationships. In most of these studies, the authors have not completely relied on the already available data, in the form of government records, past historical studies, etc., but, they have also captured the experiences of the working class, through oral narratives. Instead of studying the various groups and phenomena in isolation, they have studied them in association with one another. This has enriched their studies, also making them classics of their times.

In the next section, we will look at social history closely through the works of E. P. Thompson (*The Making of the English Working Class*) and R. Chandavarkar (*The Origins of Industrial Capitalism in India: Business Strategies and the Working Classes in Bombay, 1900 - 1940*) and try to understand the methods applied by them to explore further discussions on social history and the outcomes of their path breaking studies.

Social History: Perspectives

Social History emerged as a field of study to contest and challenge the world views and life of dominant sections in societies across the world. The inclusive nature of social history, beginning in the 1960's and 70's, as mentioned above, emerged with workers, women and people of colour writing their own histories or finding their historians, who presented their case in their own words. With this progression, the frame of multiple histories became highly in vogue and at the same time was being contested within the segments of these very social historians.

Being a social historian himself, E. P. Thompson presents weavers and labourers in English society as agents, who are collaborating for political action, reacting to the industrial revolution. He methodologically criticises historians who have presented the working class as mere victims of history by only using statements from those in the higher levels of social hierarchy. It is not Thompson who worked on working classes for the first time. The working class people have been studied for a long time socially, economically and historically. The focus of these studies, however, has been mainly on quantifiable aspects of their life, namely, wages, living conditions, unions, strikes, etc. What Thompson did differently was that, he studied the workers through their own experiences, as he himself mentions in the preface, "This book can be seen as a biography of the English working class from its adolescence to its early manhood" (Thompson 1963, pp-11). But in doing so, he did not get away with looking at these very quantifiable aspects. He himself claims that he, "seeks to rescue the stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the "obsolete" hand-loom weaver, the "utopian" artisans, and even the deluded followers of

Joanna Southcott, for the enormous condescension's of posterity" (*Ibid.*, pp-12) Thompson unearthed minute details like customs and rituals of workers, conspiracies against them, threats they received, letters, popular songs and other empirical evidences along with local and national archives, that were excluded and ignored by historians before him. His examination of this data presented a case for the working class, like never before. By using certain aspects of political theories of class consciousness, Thompson also tries to establish that class consciousness is a historical phenomenon rather than a structural creation.

Chandavarkar, in his study, partially adopts the methods used by E. P. Thompson, but at the same time, is critical while applying it in the Indian context. One of the major problems that Chandavarkar finds in Thompson's work is the romanticisation of the working class and their struggle.

Due to the absence of experience of the working classes, their protests during the inception of industrial capitalism in Bombay were understood from the lens of others⁷. The problems and concerns of the common people are taken up or put across only during times of mass protests, for example, or when those representing them in politics or society deem it fit to speak about them. It is in this way that popular history has come to be written, which is mainly based on certain assumptions. In the case of working classes in Bombay, the social formations were studied by historians based on similar assumptions. Chandavarkar, through his work, interrogates such assumptions, 'implications' and 'expectations' which serve as a model in the making of history and the politics around it.

Chandavarkar, methodologically, captures the patterns in the emergence of the city of Bombay through the shaping of the labour market and its influences on the evolution of the city from mercantile to industrial capitalism. He examines factors which shaped the formation of Bombay's labour force as whole, by understanding patterns of their migration, rural-urban linkages and the social organisation of the 'working class neighbourhoods' which came up in Bombay. In his seminal work, Chandavarkar uses a range of sources to establish various connections related to the social history of working classes. He does not only rely on government records, official publications - parliamentary papers, censuses, gazetteers, annual reports, etc., but also delves into less likely sources including unpublished proceedings of enquiry committees, private papers, papers of organisations, and non-official reports. He also explores overlooked sources like newspapers, books, pamphlets and articles and unpublished dissertations. What makes social history a lively field of study is the use of interview as a tool to collect and analyse data, which Chandavarkar aptly uses and presents the case of working classes in India (Bombay).

After interrogating, examining and analysing the representation of working classes in history, he further presents a case study of the cotton textile industry endeavoured in tracing the inception and development of textile industry in the city of Bombay. Chandavarkar, argues that the crises of 1920s and 1930s in the cotton industries are not due to the social technicalities between the industries and the workers but it is the 'earlier pattern of the growth' of the industries which is largely responsible. By making a case of the cotton textile industry of Bombay, Chandavarkar applies the social history method to capture the responses of the

workers to their situation of crises; and also their relationship with their employers and the nature of their work. He also presents a case, establishing that the social organisation of the working class led to their fragmentation, while industrialisation supposedly united them. He further investigates that the 'sectionalism' among the working class was not merely due to caste and kinship but it was a result of the process of economic development.

Conclusion

By looking at the emergence of social history as a method through the work of Thompson, one has tried to present how he brings to fore the role of 'experiences' in the making of the working class which historians have neglected, rather excluded. At the same time, Chandavarkar (1997) is highly skeptical of replicating the idea of class consciousness and its application to study the Indian context. Thompson's (1963) understanding of class consciousness as historical phenomena based on agency, struggle and experience - determined and strengthened the notion of class and class consciousness. He was fully convinced on the basis of his theory of class consciousness that the working class existed and can be studied in advanced capitalist societies only. According to Chandavarkar (1997), a general understanding of class consciousness is coming from the economists in the Indian context, who focus on the mode of production and miss the issue raised by social history. Indian history is the history penned down by the Indian elites, which limits the way in which Indian society is studied, focusing only on the British rule in India and the socio-cultural responses to 'westernization' and 'modernization' in India. He argues that the historiography developed by the influence of Thompson which "describes collective action without looking too closely at its constituent elements", e.g. leadership and ideology.

To substantiate this argument, he further discusses the strikes and protests led by communists in Bombay from 1918 to the 1960's; during this phase of communist dominance in Bombay, Chandavarkar claims that the patterns of the urban working class movement brought the workers together at different points in time and also had a crucial role in the developments in Bombay.

Due to the hugely varying contexts of the Indian working classes, it is a highly complex weave of social relationships, dominated by caste, religion and kinship in India. Considering this nature of urban working classes, their rural linkages, caste-class positions in society and the kinds of skills and occupations they have, forging a class solidarity becomes a challenge, despite repeated attempts. Chandavarkar, claims that the dominance of caste, kinship and religion plays a major role in defeating the claim of class consciousness.

Another crucial problem one needs to take seriously is Breuilly's focus on the excessive use of individual experiences which may lead 'social' to 'psychological'. But what has come through closely looking at the work of Thompson and Chandavarkar is the experiences of an individual or group is not studies in isolation, rather in association or with reference to the other elements. For example, Chandavarkar's study highlights the formation of the working class with reference to the emergence of industrial capitalism and the growth of Bombay vis-a-vis the influences of the labour market. While Thompson studies the working class in relation with their values like solidarity, mutuality, political action, etc. However, because of Thompson's focus on a group of radical artisans, generalising the claims made by him to a larger section of the working class becomes a highly skeptical

one. Therefore, it is important to lead the study and scrutinise all aspects of the study, and carefully linking the associations can help to retain the social from transforming into the psychological, if experience is used as a tool to engage with these associations.

And finally, the soul of social history comprises of the sources used. As we have seen in both of their works, the sources are very meticulously chosen, which is not confined to what has already been used, but rather they went beyond the existing norms and chose the sources which have been neglected and excluded. In this way, the social historians have contested and rescued history from the cage of elitist history writing, thereby making it grounded and open to multiple social realities.

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GEOGRAPHIES OF LIBERATION: WHEN ZOMIA LIBERATED THE HILLS OF MAINLAND SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND THE WAIT FOR THE TIBETAN HILLS AND THE TIBETAN CULTURAL AREAS OF INDIA

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Abstract

The central focus of this paper is to understand the concept of Zomia as a non-state space and its employment to the Tibetan hills and the culture areas of India by problematizing the unique historical development of Tibetan society that was a combination of both state and non-state societies. The paper argues that while the concept of Zomia as a non-state space that was articulated first by Willem Van Schendel and later made famous by James C Scott found instant popularity in the hill regions of north-eastern India and highland southeast Asia it hit a roadblock in Tibet. This paper looks at the problems in extending this concept to the Tibetan culture areas and the hills of Tibet and argues for modification in the concept keeping the historical context of Tibet in mind.

Keywords: *Culture Area, hills, highland south-east Asia, non-state space, Tibet, Zomia.*

This paper focusses on the impact and usefulness of the concept of *Zomia* as a spatial category to understand the hills of mainland south-east Asia as a non-state space over the last thousand years. *Zomia* emerged as a powerful narrative, gave a positive direction to the gaze on the hills, and brought about an enabling understanding. With the extension of the region of *Zomia* to parts of the Tibetan plateau, the reception is not so successful. It has created further problems in defining *Zomia* and also re-kindled the hopes of a label for the non-state spaces that extend all over the Tibetan culture areas including the Indian Himalayas.

In the year 2002, the hills of mainland southeast Asia suddenly acquired a distinct historical identity despite the lack of recorded history for millennia and the absence of any historical material. The impossible was cracked open by the arrival of a new concept in the academic scene known as *Zomia*. Willem Van Schendel, the historian who was propagated this concept in 2002, coined the same from two words- *Zo*, meaning Highlander and *Mia*, meaning man, a person in many of the languages of the hill regions of Myanmar (Burma) and their cognate people in India¹. Schendel argued that this vast swathe of hills extending from north-east India to Vietnam and encompassing almost all of the hill regions of mainland southeast Asia constituted a distinct geography, whose distinguishing feature was that it was a non-state space having successfully staved off attempts by the neighbouring lowland state societies who attempted to extend their domain into the hills².

Zomia became popular in academia and was well received and got a significant boost with the publication of a book by James C. Scott, titled *An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*³. This is termed as one of the essential landmarks in the history of south-east Asian borderland studies and what the author Nicholas Farrelly in his famous article titled *Notes on the Future of South-east Asian Studies* in the journal *South-East Asian Affairs* characterises this phenomenon ‘as the apotheosis of the concept of *Zomia*’ by Schendel in the work of Scott⁴. Scott elaborated Schendel’s ideas in detail and illustrated them with many notes and examples to demonstrate that their state of advancement was born out of a conscious choice and cultivated throughout. Among many other attributes of civilisation, the idea of writing was a marker of being civilised and coming into history. For Scott, the rejection of writing meant the rejection of any records or any fixed state apparatus that would be an impediment to escape if there were any serious marauding attempts by the state societies⁵.

In this reading, he subverts the negative associations with the idea of lack of writing. Similarly, the chieftains who lorded over the chiefdoms were not like little kings or monarchs in waiting, as this was a loose political system that could be disbanded and the people could flee to the distance in the hills and regroup under new leaders. Similarly, the oral narratives could be worked and reworked again, unlike the written word that was inscribed in different media and, therefore, served as a crucial legitimising strategy in these unstable hills. Scott lists many other aspects, like the absence of settled agriculture. In its place, there was slash and burn agriculture that rotated around fields and continues to this day in many parts of mainland south-east Asia (former *Zomia*).

In north-eastern India, this form of agriculture is known as *jhum* cultivation where a patch of forest is cleared and cultivated for two to three years after which period the site is deserted⁶. Another feature of this agriculture is that unlike rice that was and continues to be the staple of mainland south-east Asia which required elaborate regimes of hydrological management that, in turn, have inspired influential theories like Oriental despotism, here coarse grains and low-value root vegetables that could not be easily harvested by raiding parties were consciously cultivated⁷. Swidden agriculture with its low surplus could, therefore, not serve as a material enticement to the state societies, and this was noticed by the great anthropologist Edmund Leach, who characterised these borderland societies into two as valley societies and hill societies with the hill societies following a Chinese model and the valley societies following an Indian Sanskritic model⁸. This book also elaborates on many other generalisations about *Zomia* that are part of all the hill societies of mainland South-east Asia.

Zomia in 2002 was already imagined as vast region almost the size of Europe stretching from the hills of northeast India encompassing what is popularly known as the seven sisters of the northeast and one brother (to refer to the eight provinces of Assam (only the hill regions), Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya who are the seven sisters and Sikkim who is the brother⁹. All the hill regions of Myanmar prominently, the Karen, Kachin, Chin and Shan and the hills of Laos populated by the Hmong people, the largest of the hill peoples of south-east Asia were covered. *Zomia*'s map is complete with the addition of the contiguous hill regions of Thailand, and Vietnam and to some parts of Cambodia.

South-east Asia was now being imagined not only as of the mainland, and maritime or littoral south-east Asia but there emerged a new south-east Asia, highland south-east Asia that was vastly different from both these regions. *Zomia* constituted geography without written history that effectively marginalised the hills from the narratives of south-east Asia. The hill regions were imagined and represented as the primitive other of the plains that were the seat of traditional polities like the kingdoms centred in the fertile river valleys like the Brahmaputra valley of Assam, The Irrawady valley of Burma, the lowland Thai region and lake region of Cambodia and the fertile plains of Vietnam. For centuries the hills were imagined in mainstream south-east Asian understanding as a place of forests, populated by unlettered and uncivilised primitives who followed hunting and other forms of production¹⁰.

With the sudden popularity of the concept of *Zomia*, all that was supposed to be wrong and negative about the hills was overturned in one stroke by Scott¹¹. South-east Asia was never the same and university syllabi were now incomplete without any reference to *Zomia* particularly in any discussion on civilisation and south-east as exemplified in elite centres of learning like the University of California at Berkeley and Edinburgh University¹². In short, the concept of *Zomia* proved to be a concept that gave agency to the hills and south to change the rules of the game about how regions were understood. The lack of history, that was one of the biggest impediments that of *Zomia* was given a positive value by Scott. He argued that this lack of a written literary tradition provided for a flexible polity by re-articulating oral traditions that were relatively egalitarian from the monarchies and is also more democratic than the written word¹³.

The hills of the south-east were restive and teeming with armed insurgencies from the post-World War II period characterised by the mushrooming of many armed insurgents who battled the states. At the same time, many of these groups like the Hmong people of Laos and the Nagas of Nagaland in India and the neighbouring region of Burma and the various groups like the Chin, Shan and Karen of Myanmar and the Degar Montagnards of Vietnam continue to wage armed struggle. The concept of *Zomia* provided new frames of understanding these conflicts that dot the hilly landscapes of mainland south-east Asia¹⁴. All of these militant groups represent ethnic interests, and some of them are also part of the UNPO or the unrepresented nations and Peoples Organization headquartered in the Hague, Netherlands. The present members of the UNPO are Nagalim representing the Nagas of India and Myanmar, the Chittagong Hill tracts representing the more than a dozen tribes of Chittagong but led mainly by the Chakma tribe, the Shan people of Myanmar. Former members include the Chin people of Myanmar, the Degar Montagnards of Vietnam and surprisingly Burma. Still, Burma's grouse was only against the military junta and did not voice any ethnic grievance¹⁵.

The point of emphasis here is that a century ago, the hills were dangerous places as the tribes safeguarded their autonomy and defended it vigorously and violently and thus were teemed dangerous places. In the aftermath of World War II, these regions have become dangerous because of the sudden mushrooming of ethnic militias and armed insurgents¹⁶. These militias are in the upwards of a few hundred and constantly clash with both the security forces of the nation-states and also with other militias in internecine warfare which are mostly low-intensity conflicts. But they have, nevertheless, brought about a severe loss of life

and property. They have become part of the dark spots of the contemporary period like the Kuki-Naga War of 1993 in India¹⁷. To this, deadly cocktail drugs became another important ingredient form 1960 is so much so that the hills of Burma, Thailand and Laos were referred to as the golden triangle¹⁸. Among the militant groups, some of the more articulate sections also became members of the UNPO when self-determination movements were at their height in the 1980s and later in the 1990s following the collapse of the Soviet Union that kindled much hope among many of the ethnic group's¹⁹. Nowadays a new battle of sorts is also being waged in cyberspace with almost all the ethnic groups advocating their agendas of separatism and also as apologists for violence. In short, *Zomia* revealed the fault lines of all the flashpoints in mainland south-east Asia and provided new frames of reference that shifted the gaze from the plains to the hills and thus brought out a unique perspective to understand the disturbed hills.

A new twist to the map came in 2007 when *Zomia* outgrew the hills of mainland southeast Asia to include parts of Tibet and extended the hills of central Himalayas and to parts of Afghanistan²⁰. In a way, this helped to understand the conflicts in these regions since no stable state could ever come up in Afghanistan. At this crucial juncture, the question of the place of Tibet in *Zomia* came up. While Scott mentions Tibet only five times, the theme went for discussion and aroused a lively debate²¹. One of the problems of understanding modern Tibet under the shadow of area studies is that there are confusion and overlap between Tibet and the Tibetan Culture Areas. As David Stantzon in his book points out that if one were to fold a map into four at the borders where Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia and south-east Asia meet, we are presented with a complicated picture. Area studies demarcate India to be in

South Asia, along with Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan. The countries from Myanmar and the countries of Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia are undoubtedly in mainland South-East Asia. China is in east Asia according to the demarcation of the area studies approach, but a vast area of China extends beyond this. The Tibet Autonomous Region of China is studied as part of inner Asia. When we fold the map into four, we get all the areas in close proximity Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia and South-East Asia. In reality, they are all the borderlands of these four areas of Asia.

Further, other commonalities bind these regions where the map is folded, and they are all included in *Zomia*. These highlands except for the south-east Asian highlands are also all part of the Tibetan Culture Area, and they include Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh of India (South Asia), the Tibetanized regions of Yunnan in China (East Asia) and Central Tibet (Central Asia)²². These highland regions of Central Asia and the contiguous areas also felt new stirrings of their regional personality, and a new wave of academic enterprise started with the launching of the *Journal of Asian Highland Studies*. Meanwhile, the popularity of *Zomia* continued to grow in academia, as reflected in the number of publications and seminars and also reached regions as far as Inner Asia. In a seminar at Ulan Bator, the possibility of applying the concept of *Zomia* to Central Asia generated considerable discussion²³. While the heartland of Central Asia has its personality characterised by a nomadic economy on the Eurasian steppes and is also geographically far removed from the hills of mainland south-east Asia, the borderlands of Central Asia and particularly the Tibetan borderlands reorient the debate on *Zomia* and ask the question on whether the Central Himalayas can be included in *Zomia*?

Historical Tibet, political Tibet and ethnic Tibet are the three Tibet's that one encounters²⁴. We take up only a small part of the Tibetan borderlands for inclusion in *Zomia*. Firstly, historical Tibet is understood to be the period of the Tibetan Empire that ended in 842 CE with the breakup of the unified Tibetan Empire and was reconstituted many times²⁵. After various periods of disunity and the presence of extra-territorial actors like the Mongols, Tibet was unified to a large degree under the monastic rule of the Gelugpas, who ruled from Lhasa from 1642 CE under the leadership of the Vth Dalai Lama and his successors who followed the lineage. Varying degrees of Chinese political influence was felt under the rule of the Qing dynasty that ruled till 1911²⁶. However, for all practical reasons, Tibet became independent from 1911 to 1949 and was ruled by the XIIIth Dalai Lama and then his successor the XIVth Dalai Lama who fled in 1959 to exile in India and continues to live here. Political Tibet is a debatable term, and while the People's Republic of China defines Tibet as the Tibet Autonomous Region, the Central Tibetan Administration as the Tibetan Government in exile agrees on the definition of Tibet to include many parts of eastern Tibet and the contiguous Tibetanized regions that border India²⁷. It is a contentious issue that has led to a stalemate in the talks between China and Tibet and stands in the way of a resolution of the Tibet issue²⁸. At stake here are the nomadic regions of eastern Tibet that have for long resisted the State and even now burst out in rebellion regularly to pull down the Chinese flag and hoist the banned Tibetan national flag. The television correspondent covering these events live in 2008 reported on the horsemen that they came all the way from the mountains on horseback²⁹. Such an act clearly echoes both James Scott who quoted Fernand Braudel who in turn borrowed the phrase from Baron de Tott, "the steepest places have always been the asylum of liberty"³⁰.

It is these hills of the Central Himalayas far removed from the centralised Tibetan State at Lhasa that is the area at stake. These regions are what can be called parts of the Tibetan Culture Area, to borrow the concept of culture area from the German geographer Ratzel who defined this term to demonstrate the affinities between a large group of similar culture and in his case, the American Indian Culture. However, they spoke many unintelligible languages, had certain cultural practices that qualified them to be understood as part of a culture area³¹. In the case of Tibetan Culture, too, we encounter the same realities. Beginning from Ladakh in the westernmost extremities, and also including parts of Gilgit and Baltistan in Pakistan, to the Western Himalayan regions of Lahaul, Kinnaur and Spiti that are high altitude arid regions, these regions are more aligned to Western Tibet. In the Central Himalayas, we find the part of Sikkim and adjoining Bhutan along with the Tawang corridor of north-eastern India also encompassing the Tibetan Culture Area its southern borderlands³².

The high Himalayan ranges in the northern areas of Nepal that include Mount Everest and comprise the regions of Lo, Manang, Mustang and Dolpo are all Tibetanized regions. Lhasa in the U Tsang region forms the core of Tibet and also the seat of the Tibetan State from the seventh century CE³³. Adjoining this are the regions of Kham and Amdo in eastern and northwestern Tibet where the Tibetan plateau meets China³⁴. This is an area that has a high concentration of nomads and is one of the problematic regions regarding the definition of Tibet and its inclusion into the Tibet Autonomous Region that the PRC does not agree to. In the northernmost extremities, the entire region of Mongolia is Tibetanized and having adopted the Gelugpa traditions after the meeting between Altan Khan and the IIIrd Dalai Lama in 1578 C.E.

Buddhism and Tibetan influence extend to the adjoining regions of Buryatiya in Russia, the home of the Buryat Mongols and Tuva, which is the centermost point of Asia also in Russia³⁵. Along with these two, there is also Kalmykia in the Caucasus, which is one of the three autonomous republics in Russia in addition to Buryatiya and Mongolia³⁶. Kalmykia is also the last outpost of Tibetan culture and Buddhism and is the only Buddhist political entity in Europe. A wide array of languages and dialects are spoken in all these regions that are mutually unintelligible, even in Tibet proper itself but what unites them is Tibetan Buddhism and the Classical Tibetan language, the language of the *lamas* who are the literary elite and also the language in which all the texts are composed in³⁷.

When we take into account the different landscapes, production patterns and the cultural differences, we cannot take Tibet as a unit, in this case, to be included in *Zomia* and it is only the question of the Central Himalayas. Turning to the Central Himalayas, where the problem of Tibet's inclusion in *Zomia* figures in³⁸. While Schendel's original *Zomia* included Tibet and was essentially a geographic formulation, Scott's work is more of a historical enterprise that seeks to elaborate the non-state space. If we are to adopt and go by Schendel's original formulation, many parts of Tibet would be in *Zomia*, and a more precise understanding would be apparent when we take the issue of the Tibetanized populations in the remote Himalayas of Nepal and Bhutan as opposed to the Tibet of the Lhasa region³⁹. Lhasa, the capital of Old Tibet, was not only a destination but stood for all things Tibetan and was thus represented through Eurocentric paradigms as representing all Tibet. In the heyday of the romantic period, the die was cast, and Tibet became a byword for exotica, the high point of which was the imagination of Shangri-La⁴⁰.

Such Eurocentric constructions of Tibet were also possible as Lhasa was a more amicable and ordered region and the seat of the centralised Tibetan State with the government called the Ganden Phodrang headed by the Dalai Lama⁴¹. There were also three great monasteries with more than twenty thousand monks each in the city of Lhasa, Sera, Ganden and Drepung and the monastery of Drepung had large numbers monks with Drepung having 9000, around 5000 to 6000 in Sera and over 3000 in Ganden itself⁴². Tashilunpo, the seat of the Panchen Lama was another great monastery at Shigatse, one of the three towns in Tibet with 5000 monks⁴³. Beyond these agricultural settlements, where the sedentary populations could be controlled as they were bound to a place, the nomadic world was relatively free⁴⁴. While the central government at Lhasa collected taxes from the peasants, the nomads were challenging to rein in and mostly were ruled by their chieftains, and many were in shifting alliances. Therefore, there was a considerable political and cultural distance from Lhasa and the remote outlying areas like the regions of the Sherpas in Nepal that is almost inaccessible. Though many western writers had not mentioned this aspect seriously, the traditional government in Lhasa was well aware of these realities.

Among the essential sources for the study of Tibet, the autobiographical accounts of Dawa Norbu are mentioned, and there is some space devoted to the nomad life⁴⁵. He mentions the religious missions carried out among the nomads to fulfil their religious needs such as the death ceremonies, and his father was part of one such mission⁴⁶. The XIVth Dalai Lama also talks about a group of Nyingma people in Nepal and mentions the example of an old *lama* who had a distrust for the Gelugpa (the dominant tradition of Tibetan Buddhism) and how these people were runaways settled

in northern Nepal, in the high Himalayas. This example fits the idea of the runaway populations, as mentioned by Scott. Therefore as Sara Schneiderman talks about the '*Zomia* like attitude' among specific Tibetanized people like the Thangmi, she finds adequate justification for employing the concept of *Zomia* to central Tibet. This *Zomia* like attitude is also echoed by Geoffrey Samuel, who talks about similar populations of Tibetanized people⁴⁷. One of the problems that are peculiar to the Tibetan culture area is that while politically, some of the Tibetanized people resisted the Central government at Lhasa, mainly the nomads, in times of crisis it was, in fact, the nomads who supported the Tibetan State and among whom we find the last residues of martial strength in Tibet. This paradoxical situation is also reflected in the fact that reincarnate lamas can be born in any part of the Tibetan Culture Area, and one of the examples is of the VIth Dalai Lama who hailed from Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh⁴⁸.

One may conclude by emphasising that the concept of *Zomia* has led to a shift in the world's perspective on south-east Asia and the neighbouring region and given this region a positive agency and an enabling understanding. While the original *Zomia* of Schendel included parts of Tibet, where we find many characteristics of *Zomia* and *Zomia* like attitudes and thinking, Scott does not elaborate the same. His *Zomia* is restricted and is more historical. Examining the map of *Zomia*, one may therefore make a case for including the central Himalayas that are the southern borderlands regions of Tibet in *Zomia*. Therefore the re-consideration of *Zomia* and its applicability to Tibet will also impact the Tibetan Culture Areas of India and signal a shift in the understanding of regions and regional histories in India.

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RE-IMAGINING TULSIDAS AND HIS LEGACY

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Abstract

The paper examines the many shades of Tulsidas's legacy. It tries to grapple with the idea of re-imagining Tulsidas. He, during his life-time worked as a poet-scholar but came to be addressed as an avatar of Valmiki in his early historiographies of the seventeenth century. His recognized saintly attributes were played upon. As his composition Ramcaritmanas was patronized by the Rasik, Vaishnav community of the nineteenth century, Tulsidas was in Brajbhasha re-defined as a Rasik-a lover, who was now seen more in an erotic entanglement with his Lord than mere devotion. Anand Lahari of Ramcharandas and Manas Mayank of Shivrath Pathak, both paid attention to the Madhurya bhav that defined the worship of Tulsidas. By the colonial period, as a sense of national consciousness engulfed the country, the erotic element was not to be

seen and nor was Brajbhasha. Compositions in the nationalist period drew inspiration from the Khariboli of the Chayayawad era. Suryakant Tripathi Nirala wrote poetry on Tulsidas depicting him as a nationalist icon who had the power to awaken the country from turmoil. Novels on Tulsidas after independence underwent a dramatic shift. Rangeya Raghav's "Ratna ki Baat" showed Tulsidas as a common individual struggling while Amritlal Nagar's "Manas ka Hans" expanded upon his challenges especially from the women in his life to become an inspiration for others. From a saintly and Rasik depiction of Tulsidas, he had been transformed and given a realistic portrayal.

Keywords: *Memory, Identity, Re-imagination, Tulsidas, Ramcaritmanas, Transformation, Pre-Modern Genre, Modern Genre, Rasik*

Introduction

The paper examines the legacy of scholarly poet Tulsidas (1532-1623 CE), who amongst the many Bhakti saints of the 16th and 17th century India wrote in the vernacular languages of Awadhi and Brajbhasha to impress upon the story of Rama popularizing it as a narrative for millions of Indians. In order to understand the proliferation of a narrative tradition, the paper looks into various narrative texts and novels and understand ways by which Tulsidas was memorized in the successive centuries as part of his legacy.

Various narratives attributed to medieval scholar-poets can be seen as part of the domain of memory. Partha Chatterjee has

called to include memory as an appropriate practice within the counters of analytical history¹. Memory constructs an authentic association with the past and mobilizes social groups, institutions and their identities. The domain of memory rather than being seen as a suspect should be identified as a circulating device working within a community. Past has been re-imagined and reclaimed by different groups and a study of these multiple memories becomes necessary in order to have a holistic approach toward India's cultural historiography. In this manner, memory gives a novel insight. Velcheru Narayana Rao, David Shulman, Sanjay Subrahmanyam in their book trace several re-telling's of south Indian historical episodes across time, space, language and genre. They present texture of compositions not frozen to some single genre but rather opened up in order to seek differential ways of recovering the past as well as distinct historical characters². Ramya Sreenivasan explores the multiple Padmini narratives circulating amongst different audience-communities exhorting them to follow particular norms of conduct appropriate to a given socio-political order³. In celebrating a heroic queen Padmini, communities reconstructed memories according to their affiliations to caste, religion, region of origin and power play. Christian Lee Novetzke situates memories as a social effect of a historical process. He uses the term religious public memory to address the Maharastrian legacy and identity of Namdev. He suggests that Indian Sants were pulled by scholars and devotees in order to remember them for the emotional value of poetry and life stories⁴. Memory thus holds relevance of continuity with historical personalities and requires to be given a central place and studied diachronically. The following sections look at the Pre-Modern genre and Modern Genre to assess the multiple shades of Tulsidas's personality.

Tulsidas

Pre-modern genre

Tulsidas as a divine ascetic through the eyes of early hagiographers

The narratives on Tulsidas in the 17th and 18th centuries mostly belong to the category of earliest hagiographies. They display stories of devotees on the path of Bhakti across different religious communities. According to James Hare, the earliest hagiographies do not show their affiliation to any particular *Sampradaya* (sect/order) and provide exemplary status to devotees⁵. They treat Tulsidas as a supernatural element who was as divine as his *Lord*. Mythical elements associated with him raised him to the platform of a deity. This was part of the growing trend of hagiographical literature that evolved in north India as the Bhakti movement strengthened its grip over the seventeenth century. One important Vaishnava hagiography named as *Bhaktamal* or ‘the Garland of devotees’ was authored by Nabhadas in 1658 CE. He was a Ramanandi and a contemporary of Tulsidas, who had even met him⁶. Nabhadas was a disciple of Agradas, who was the *Mahant* (abbot) of Ramanandi *Math* (monastery) in Galta, Rajasthan. He is known to have authored a few Ramanandi texts but the most popular one is *Bhaktamal*. The *Bhaktamal* is a devotional literature in *Brājḥaṣha* that praises many devotees of the Vaishnav community in 214 verses. In chapter 129, Nabhadas devotes few verses on Tulsidas. He calls him to be the *avtar* of Valmiki who has come to save the people from *kalyug*:

d fy d qV y t ho fu Lr kj fgr j c kYe hd Br q l hP Ö; CA
= s k d kC fu c ak d fj ol r d fV je k; u AA⁷

Kali Kutil jeev nistar hit, Valmik ‘tulsi’ bhayo
Treta kabya nibhandh karivasat koti ramayan

In order to help people, overcome the sufferings of the Kali age, Valmiki has taken the form of Tulsi. In the Treta age, Valmiki wrote 100 crore tales in prose as well as in verse form on Lord Rama. Repeating the syllable of each of these tales saves all and even those who have indulged the killing of brahmins. After Nabhadass, Priyadas wrote a *tika* (commentary) on *Bhaktamal* named as *Bhaktirasabodhini* (the Illumination of the Flavour of Bhakti) *tika* in 1712 CE. It is in *Brajbhasha* and composed in 630 verses. Priyadas added seven narratives calling Tulsidas to be a charismatic Bhakti saint, who challenged Brahmanical norms. Three dramatic episodes that Priyadas described were the story related to his wife Ratnavali, his encounter with Mughal Emperor and Lord Shiva’s message to Tulsidas on the composition of *Ramcaritmanas*. There were other pre-modern works on Tulsidas that were re-discovered in the modern period and were claimed to be the eye-witness biographies of Tulsidas. Amongst these was the *Gautamcandrika* written in A.D 1624 by Krsnadatta Mishra, a contemporary of Tulsidas. It discusses in detail the visions that Tulsidas had about Lord Rama’s deeds. Another work was *Gosai Carit* (deeds of Gosai) composed in A.D 1753-4. *Mul Gosai Carit* (Brief account of Gosai’s deeds) written in A.D 1755-6 was brought into light only after its publication by the Gita Press in A.D 1938. *Bhaktvijaya* (Triumphs of the Saints) a work composed by poet Mahipati in A.D 1762 incorporated the vivid tales on Tulsidas. Mahipati was a Marathi poet who wrote the *Bhaktavijaya* in 40 thousand lines. It contains source material on Marathi saints from 13th to 16th century. Thus, well before modern times, the image of Tulsidas was re-constructed by various hagiographies.

Tulsidas, a scholarly poet during his life time was after his death expressed as a *Gosai*- a saint, a renunciate who was close and next to god. From being a poet, he had been exalted to a godly position. This replacement of the scholar-poet with the figure of saint was further expanded to a different level by the various activities of the Ramanandi *Sampraday* (order).

Tulsidas as a *Rasik*: through the eyes of Ramanandi Sampradaya

With the turn into the 18th century, there was a growth in the royal patronage given by regional Hindu rulers to *Ramcaritmanas*. The text had by now become the central text of the Ramanandi order. Bhagavati Prasad Singh claims that this happened because there was an urge amongst the Hindu rulers to tighten their grip on Hindu cultural traditions which had fallen in the face of Mughal onslaught⁸. But by then, the imperial Mughals had only collapsed giving way to the rise of regional kingdoms. They gained economic and political strength developing upon their own historical and cultural identity. In Benaras, the Maharajas commissioned many commentaries on *Ramcaritmanas*. Philip Lutgendorf traces the patronage of *Ramcaritmanas* in the Ramnagar court (Varanasi) from the context of oral tradition⁹. Varanasi became the centre for various activities by the Ramanandi *Sampraday*. The Ramanandi order had three branches- the *Tyagis*, *Nagas* and the *Rasiks*¹⁰. We are here concerned only with the *Rasik* (sentiment of love) Ramanandis who have been explored by many scholars as discussed below.

Scholarship shows how the *Rasik* Ramanandis were facing an identity crisis and were desperately seeking for support to authorize their legitimacy. Hortsman displays how these

Rasik Ramanandis evolved in the 16th century Galtā, Rajasthan under Agradas but by the 18th century suffered a lot under the interventionist activities of Sawai Jai Singh II (A.D 1700-1743) of the Kachavaha dynasty (the Jaipur State from colonial times)¹¹. Paramasivan asserts that it was because of this reason that the *Rasik* Ramanandis started looking for other options. By the 19th century they had settled in Ayodhya¹². Patton Burchett suggests that after they settled in Ayodhya, they faced a lot of competition from the *Dasnamis* (Shaiva warrior ascetics) and *Nagas* (Vaishnav warrior ascetics) there¹³. As a result, the *Rasik* Ramanandi Sampradaya started to include Tulsidas and *Ramcaritmanas* within the gambit of their tradition through the composition of various commentaries on the *Ramcaritmanas*. Peter Van Der Veer claims that Tulsidas was probably not a Ramanandi himself, but his story was promoted by the *Rasik* Ramanandis¹⁴. Paramasivan mentions that in order to receive patronage for themselves in Benaras and Ayodhya, the *Rasik* Ramanandis showed a relationship between Tulsidas and the Ramanandi *Parampara* (tradition)¹⁵. Daniela Bevilacqua argues that they decided to make *Ramcaritmanas* fit more soundly into their own tradition and hence stated accommodating their own interpretations into the various *tikas* written by them¹⁶. By this, Tulsidas was made part of the historical background that they were attempting to trace. The ideology of *Ram-Rasik* devotion was supplanted on to the memories of Tulsidas's devotion mentioned in the *Ramcaritmanas* providing great prominence. I would here like to take a transgression and discuss two important commentaries on *Ramcaritmanas*- *Anand Lahari* by Ramcharandas and *Manas Mayank* by Shivalal Pathak¹⁷. After that I will elaborate on the theology of the *Rasiks* and compare it with the theology of *Ramcaritmanas*.

The first commentary that associated the memories on Tulsidas and his text with the *Ram- Rasiks* in order to create a sectarian wisdom for Ramanandi Sampradaya was the *Anand Lahari* (the waves of the joys of Ram) written by Ramcharandas, a Mahant. He through *Anand Lahari* not only gave a solid foundation to his own affiliations but also changed Tulsidas's identity. Patton Burchett mentions that if Ramcharandas was crucial in connecting the *Ramcaritmanas* to *Rasik* theology, then his disciple, Jivaram Yugalpriya, was key in bringing Tulsidas himself within the *Ram-Rasik* community¹⁸. Let us consider Ramcharandas and his composition.

Ramcharandas (1760-1831 C.E.) was a Ramanandi, who belonged to the *Rasik* Sampradaya of the Ramanandis. He was a Brahmin born at Pratapgarh in Uttar Pradesh. He had got into the service of the King of Pratapgargh but soon resigned and went to Ayodhya where he was initiated to the Ramanandi *Sampradaya*¹⁹. His biographical details mention how he refused to go with his family and returned them back after astonishing them by eating the left overs²⁰. He then travelled to Chitrakut, Mithila and Raivasa to expand the domains of his knowledge. He established himself at the land covering Janaki Ghat (Ayodhya) granted to him by the Nawab of Awadh and became popular by the name of *Karuna Sindhu* (Ocean of Mercy)²¹. He began composing the *Anand Lahari* around 1805 and took around 20 years to complete it. The *Anand Lahari* is in Brajbhasha. On the pattern of Tulsidas, he divides his entire work into episodes called as *Tarang* (waves). After this, he completely alters the ideology presented by Tulsidas in the *Ramcaritmanas* giving it a *Rasik* flavor. He does this by claiming that he has revealed a secret of Tulsidas which he had purposefully hidden²². This hidden secret is based on an important

premise of the Ram *Rasik* theology which is *Madhurya Bhav* (erotic sweetness). The *Rasiks* in their *Sadhana* (practice) focus on the *lila* and intimate life of Ram and Sita during their stay at Ayodhya after marriage²³. This is presented through the cult of Ram-Sita who reside in *Saket* (The Spiritual Ayodhya in Heaven). The *Saket* becomes the playground of Ram-Sita who are served by *Sakhis*²⁴. Basing himself completely on this tradition of visualizing a divine city, Ramcharandas dwelled into a vertical journey from Ayodhya (the physical city in Rama's story) of the temporal realm to the Ayodhya (*Saket*) of the eternal realm in order to culminate in *Sadeh Mukti* (bodily liberation) through his commentary on *Ramcaritmanas*²⁵. Paramasivan clearly suggests that this was an attempt on the part of the *Rasik* Ramanandi to sought a legitimate physical space for themselves as they shifted their power from Rajasthan to Ayodhya²⁶.

Further commenting on *Ramcaritmanas*, Ramcharandas justifies the Awadhi language used by Tulsidas stating that his *bhasha* has spread across *Bharatkhand*. He gives importance to regional variation and popularity of different languages for praying to God and thus in a way legitimizes his own use of *Brajbhasha*. He justifies his own composition in the *Bal Khand* by stating that:

t " d "Ã d g s f d ÒK'k d " i Ñu ÒK'k f r y d d k d j u k
 f i l u s d " d k f i l u k
 v i u s v u Ño r s l Òh v FkZd j r s g S
 v i u h e k V h d s v u Ñ k j v FkZe S Òh d j r k g v
 l o k Ã f u t v FkZd j s r e a v k u a Òj s
 j k e p j u o j f r d e a v FkZÁ/kku g S²⁷

Jo koi kahe ki bhasha ko puni bhasha tilak ka karna
 Pisne ko ka pisna

Aapne Anubhav te sabhi arth karte hai
Aapne mati ke anusar arth mein bhi karta hoon
Sawai nij arth kare tamhe anandh bhare
Ramcharan vartik mein arth pradhan hai

People question as to why should a vernacular commentary work on a vernacular text. What is left in it to derive further meaning? Each one of us analyse it as per our own understanding and I too thus comprehend it as per my own intelligence. Everyone has their own meaning to it but Ramcharandas's understanding is the leading one. Further, Ramcharandas in order to maintain his *Rasik* orientation does some derivations and manipulations in the text. The Bhakti which was based on the *Sevak-Sevya bhava* (master-servant sentiment) in Tulsidas's composition is worked upon and re-addressed to be based on *Prem-apar bhava* (sentiment of love or juices of love in *Rasik* tradition). He talks about *Navadh* (nine forms of devotion) mentioned by Tulsidas and adds *Prem-apar bhava* as the tenth one calling it to be *dasadh* Bhakti (ten stages of Bhakti)²⁸. For him, this tenth Bhakti is supreme and even above *Ram-Naam*. Ramcharandas clearly asserts that one can escape the evils of Kaliyug not just by *Ram-Naam* but rather by *Prem-apar* Bhakti where one gets transformed to the position of a lover. He says:

Á ki kj Òfä
J h j k p æ f d l ñ k e a g s v : Á d f j f d v : l ñ k e a v k i j v a d s
Ò k k i r b R k f n d v k i j v a e a i f g j k o r s g s
v o j s Ò t u p k f g v o j s Ò t u n s g s
l Á ki kj Òfä
t g k l o Òfä e s
J h j k p æ Á é g s
i j h Á ki kj e a o s s Á é g s²⁹

Premapar Bhakti
Shri Ramchandra ki hai Aru Prem Kariki aru seva mein aapar
ang hai
Bhushan pat ityadik aapar ang mein pahirawate hai
Avare bhojan chahi avare bhojan det hai
So premapar Bhakti
Jahan sav Bhakti mein sri Ramchandra prasan hai
Pari premapar mein vese prasan hai

Those who practice devotion through the sentiment of love serve Lord Ram. In love with him, they embellish the Lord with clothes and jewellery. In case the Lord requires more food, they provide him with more food. This is the essence of Prem-apar devotion. Lord Ram is pleased by all the forms of devotion. But he is especially pleased by the sentiment of Prem-apar.

The second commentary under discussion, the *Manas Mayank* by Shivalal Pathak takes up many themes on the *Rasik* theology from *Anand Lahari*. Shivalal Pathak (A.D 1756) was born in Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh. He left for Varanasi where he was introduced to Ram-Bhakti. There is a story that surrounds him. One day Paramhans Ramprasad (a famous Ramanandi) came to Varanasi to learn Sanskrit from Shivalal Pathak. But when Shivalal Pathak heard Ramprasad reciting the *Ramcaritmanas*, he was so mesmerized that he decided to reverse roles³⁰. Ramprasad took him as his student and made him recite 108 hours and 9-day long *Ramcaritmanas*³¹. After this, Shivalal Pathak understood the hidden meaning of the text³². From here began his journey of writing *Manas Mayank* in Brajbhasha. He not only wrote the commentary on *Ramcaritmanas* in *Rasik* mode but also incorporated comments to reveal the hidden meaning. He addressed Ram and Sita as

Ladil-Ladili (lover-beloved), who are now worshiped from within the *Rasik* community. He focused upon the importance given to *Ram-Nam* by Tulsidas and added on the need to cultivate love for *Ram-Nam* i.e become *Rasik* of *Ram-Nam*. He discussed this through his mention of *Rasik lila* where the lover *Ram* is the bee and beloved *Sita* is the lotus. Hence for Shivrul Pathak, this is the *Madhurya lila* of *Ram* around which *Para-Bhakti* or devotion is centered. *Para-Bhakti* is the highest stage of *Bhakti* that leads to salvation. He says:

l j e g k j l j k k d " y h y k l t u k g j
l u r k g h , g e d " f e y h ; q u @ k i j ³³

Sar Maha Rajraja ko lila sajna har
Santa hiye ham ko mili yug par

The exploits of *Lord Ram* who is the epitome of *Shringar*, the King of *Rasas*, is the garland of saints. It cleans their wicked hearts. The *Para-Bhakti* is bigger than the *Navadh*. What *Ramcharandas* and Shivrul Pathak did was that they altered the way Tulsidas had been presented so far by his early hagiographers. From, being a *dasa* devoted to his *Lord* (presented as such in the *Ramcaritmanas*) they sought to emphasize Tulsidas as a *Rasik*, who is in an affectionate love with god. Tulsidas was transformed from being a scholarly poet devoted as a slave to the feet of his *Lord* to a *Sant*, who had now evolved as a *Rasik*.

Modern Genre

Tulsidas as a nationalist icon in the *Chhayavad* era

The kind of image that hagiographies and commentaries shaped provided space to Tulsidas and his poems in India's cultural historiography. His poems got infused into novels,

films, comics, folk, theater and classical music by the twentieth century. Within the domains of literature, the twentieth century saw the emergence of the *Chhayavad* period in Hindi literature. The term '*Chhaya*' means shadow. The poets of the *Chhayavad* group were mainly concerned with themes on romance, nature and individual content. This new form of mysticism expressed through subjectivity were the primary leanings of the *Chhayavad* poetry. Suryakant Tripathi (1899-1961 A.D) with the pen name of 'Nirala' belonged to this period of *Chhayavad*. He wrote in *Khariboli* over *Brajbhasha*. *Khari* or modern Hindi poetry had gained popularity in the *Chhayavad* period of which Nirala was an active member. By writing in *Khariboli*, he earned to break away from the *braj* tag of the medieval period. As we have seen, the 18th and 19th centuries had represented poetry based on eroticism with love between Radha and Krishna as the subject matter. But this theme had worn out with the rise in national consciousness. A new message had to be spread through a recognition of India's classical past. Nirala's poetry emerged as a spontaneous response to a reconciliation of new realities of the present with the challenges of the traditional past. Let us discuss Nirala and then examine his work.

Suryakant Tripathi Nirala is widely known in the Hindi literary circle to be a progressive author. The central theme in his works has been freedom and independence. Nirala's own thoughts and ideas were framed according to the prevalent social conditions and he expressed them in his literature. He was born in 1899 A.D in Mahishadal, a place in Medinapur district of Bengal. His father, Ramsahay Tripathi was originally a native of Gadkola- a village in the Unnav district of Uttar Pradesh. He worked under the royal family of Mahishadal. Nirala's mother Rukmini Devi a strong Vaishnav woman passed away when Nirala was only three

years old. Since Nirala's childhood was spent in Bengal, he was enrolled into a Bengali medium school but later he also studied in an English medium school. There he acquired the knowledge of various languages like Sanskrit and Urdu. He was acquainted with the *Ramayana*, became an adherent devotee of Hanuman and revered Tulsidas. But his mind was always in conflict and could not concentrate in school. He failed in one of his entrance exams and was ousted along with his wife Manohara Devi from home by his father. He had been married off to her in 1911. Homeless, he had to then go and live in his father-in-law's house³⁴. He did not receive education in Khariboli at school. Whatever he learnt was out of his own interest. His wife Manohra Devi inspired him to learn Khariboli. He had an access to two Hindi magazines: '*Maryada*' and '*Saraswati*'. He started earning knowledge in Hindi with these two magazines. He had a son named Ramkrishna and daughter named Saroj. In 1917, an epidemic of influenza broke out and he lost his wife, his elder brother, sister-in-law and uncle. The responsibility of his uncle's children also came on him. He took up job at Mahishadal's royal house but left it soon due to differences. He started getting attracted to the Ramkrishna Mission and was soon invited by them to edit the magazine '*Samanway*'³⁵. From here his career began in Hindi literature. He was appointed to the editorial panel for a magazine '*Motwala*' in 1923. In 1935, his daughter Saroj passed away. He wrote the poem '*Sarojasmriti*' in memory of her³⁶. Throughout his life time, he wrote a number of poems, novels, stories, essays and letters. He wrote a lot for children and took up translations. He was highly influenced by Rabindra Nath Tagore. His works have been collected and published in the form of Nirala Rachnawali in eight volumes. In 1939, he published his longest poem *Tulsidas* from Bharati Bhandar, Leader Press, Allahabad. This poem included in

the first volume of Nirala Rachnawali is our primary concern here. The way Nirala describes Tulsidas in the poem shows a sight of his own physical appearance:

v k r -- x] i ĩV n g] x r -Ô;]
v i u s Ád k k e s fu % à k
Áfr Òk d k e th -fLe r i f j p ;] l Ìe k j d ³⁷

Ayat-Drig, Pusht deh, gat-bhay
Apne Prakash mein ni-sanshay
Pratibha ka mand-smit parichay, sansmarak
Large eyed, full bodied, fearless, Sure of his own light
With a soft smile on his lips, He introduces his own genius,
Memorable is this youth for all others.³⁸

Nirala used the historic figure of Tulsidas in an intricate metrical form which was his own invention. There were certain common grounds that Nirala drew between his times and that of Tulsidas. Nirala wrote in the background of declining old traditions during the last phase of British Raj which was very similar to the way Tulsidas wrote. His poetic text re-historicized India's struggle to negotiate its declining classic Hindu tradition during the British Raj. Nirala dwelled into the socio-political conditions of the sixteen century to metamorphically explain the independence struggle movement of colonial India.

The dark times of the Mughal period were equated with the moral decadence of the twentieth century where people were struggling for independence from the British. Tulsidas thus became the cultural hero for him, who could save the people of India from the British. Tulsidas saw *Ramcaritmanas* as a culmination of spiritual quest of a mislead person, who taking a final dip in

the Manas lake emerged as a changed man. A similar pattern was envisaged by Nirala by which a guileless spirit could attain the object of his soul's yearning. Nirala thus presented Tulsidas as the national icon who could by his virtues free India from social and political oppression.

Nirala uses different episodes to narrate the journey of a soul which is lost and is awakened in course of time. The poem presents different dialogues that leads the listener away from illusion into the sunlight of truth. These dialogues are at the centre stage of Nirala's main message in the poem. The important dialogues are between Tulsidas and nature, Ratnavali and his brother, Tulsidas and Ratnavali, Tulsidas and his listeners. When Tulsidas visits Chitrakut with his friends, trees, grass, creepers, water and other objects around are trying to pass on a message to him. They inform him about the vices that have engulfed the world and how they look forward to a vision which will liberate the world and give a new lease of life to the people. The nature instructs Tulsidas to rise up from the spell and awaken the unconscious psyche of the nation:

d Ye 'k'k' k' d fo d s n q Z
p s u 'fe Z 'a d s Ák k ÁFk
o g #) } k' d k Nk k-r e r j u s d ''
d j u s d '' K k u ') r Ág k j --
r 'M s d '' fo 'k e o t z} k j (
me M s Ò k j r d k Ò v i k j g j u s d '' A³⁹

Kalmshotsar kavi ke durdam
Chetnomiryo ke pran pratam
Vah rudh dwar ka Chaya-tam tarne ko
Karne ko ghyanodhat prahar--

Todne ko visham vraj-dwar;
Umde bharat ka bhram apar harne ko.

Rose up the first ripples of unconsciousness Unvanquished, evil-destroying, formidable. To cross over the dark shadow to open the closed door, to break the growing awful barrier with the force of knowledge. It swelled and surged, to do away with India's boundless delusion⁴⁰.

The poems appeal is associated with a new lease of life to India's socio-political milieu leading to Renaissance⁴¹. So, if Tulsidas message is a complete surrender to Rama through devotion in order to reach the divine, Nirala pursues a different objective. He looks at the rise of a divine culture which has fallen to its lowest rug in his contemporary times. The rise he urges is possible only through the emergence of a national consciousness not necessarily serving political needs⁴². Tulsidas claims this world to be unreal and calls it *Maya*. But Nirala treats this world as real. Nirala is not concerned about individual salvation and unity with almighty. Tulsidas's *Advaita* philosophy concerning the union of the individual soul with the *Brahma* is taken up by Nirala to mean an elimination of the differences between human beings. He does not indulge in the self - annihilation for a unity with God. Rather he wants to serve humanity by dwelling into the actual problems of this world and find solutions. The poem Tulsidas becomes a fight for independence. The essence of the poem comes out from the following:

r e d s v e kT; Zj s r kj -r kj
t "j mu i j i Mh Ád K' k-/kkj
t x -oh kk d sLoj d s c gkj j § t kx "
b l d j v i u s d k# f. kd Ák k

d j y " l e {k n s n I; e ku -
n s x l r fo Ūo d " # d "] n ku fQj e kx "A⁴³

Tam ke samajeye ke taar-taar
Jo. Un par padi Prakash-dhar
Jag-Veena ke swar ke bahar re-Jago
Is kar apne karudik praan
Kar lo samaj dedipyamaan
De geet vishwa ko ruko, daan phir mango.

"Now are swathed with light streaming
The strings of deluded darkness,
Now wake up! O' thou spring, of the voice of the world's Vina,
Confront with this hand of thine, thy own breath of life,
compassionate
Filling it with splendour-offer to the world thy song first,
And pause, ask only afterwards for a gift"⁴⁴

Portrayal of Tulsidas as a social reformer through the modern Hindi novel

By the late twentieth century, we find that the rendering of Tulsidas achieved a realistic human form away from the mythical and heroic element. Emphasizing on the hardships and challenges faced by Tulsidas just like an ordinary person would, modern Hindi novels starting depicting Tulsidas, *Ramcaritmanas* and his narratives to be real stories of inspiration for people struggling to achieve success. In an interesting paper, *Ramcaritmanas* as a medieval narrative has been shown providing a potential platform to the birth of a new genre of novel-writing in India⁴⁵. The medieval narrative forms were used to compose Indian fiction. *Ramcaritmanas* was seen as a negotiated text which had inherent

possibilities or potential of providing a novelistic discourse. It is this novelistic discourse that I intend to capture through the study of modern novels on Tulsidas. Two novels that I discuss here are— and Rangeya Raghav's *Ratna ki Baat* (The statement of Ratna) and Amritlal Nagar's *Manas ka Hans* (Swan of mind).

Rangeya Raghav (A.D 1923-1962) with the birth name of Tirumalai Nambakam Vir Raghava Acharya was born in Agra (Uttar Pradesh) where his father had settled down. His father Shri Rangacharya was an adherent follower of Mahatma Gandhi and had participated in the freedom movement. Hence, the environment that Rangeya Raghav got was completely influenced by Gandhian ideology. Rangeya Raghav after completing his college from St John's College, Agra and Ph.d, emerged as a prolific Hindi writer of the modern period. Amongst his many compositions, his work on Tulsidas named as *Ratna Ki Baat* published in A.D 1954 is my prime concern here. He was very much influenced by his current socio-political scenario. Highly indebted to the Gandhian ideology and an earning for the unity of nation and upliftment of the society, he wrote *Ratna Ki Baat* showcasing Tulsidas from a newer perspective. Tulsidas was now shown to be a social reformer of his period who through various difficulties battled it out for his own community. In the novel *Ratna Ki Baat*, Tulsidas appears to be establishing a *Ram Rajya* for the welfare of his society. So, from a freedom fighter in the early 20th century, Tulsidas was now depicted in literature to be a social reformer who worked only for the solidarity and social cohesiveness of his community. The entire plot of the novel revolves around old Tulsidas who is lying on his death bed at *Asi ghat* (Benaras) and recalling different episodes from his life as well as communicating his thoughts to his pupils. Rangeya Raghav through this plot draws the entire life of Tulsidas

and associates him with the sacredness of Kashi. Many people come to see Tulsidas and one of them says:

b1 ÄKV d " r " v c d "Ä ugÈ Öw x kA ; gk j kt kv ka d k j kt k i M k g S t hr s
t h d k kh d " v e j / k e d s l k Fk l k Fk v ; " / ; k t S k i j e i fo = euk fn ; kA
t x g -t x g l q kr k g w t x g -t x g y " x J) k l s l j > q kr s g S⁴⁶

Is ghat ko to ab koi nahein bhulega. Yaha rajao ka raja pada hai. Jete ji Kashi ko amar dhaam ke sath sath Ayodhya jesa param pavitra bana diya. Jagah jagah sunata hu, jagah jagah log shradha se sar jhukate hai.

No one will forget this river bank (Asi ghat). Here, King of Kings is present. During his lifetime, he has made Kashi immortal and along with it Ayodhya has also been made sacred. I narrate this from place to place, people give reverence by bowing their head.

But the reverence that Tulsidas received did not come easy to him. The author shows how confused he was at one point of time. His decision to devote himself to God underwent significant struggle. The author depicts Tulsidas as an imperfect person who realizes the ignorance of his true being when he comes under the sway of her lady-love and this is what Ratnavali in popular narratives makes him realize⁴⁷. The author from the mouth of old Tulsidas recounts his desires of the youth which finally gave way to devotion to Ram:

e j h o l u k d k v r h r e q s ; kn v k x ; k Fk kA ml d h n k # . k y Tt k e q s # y ku s
y x h Fk h i j U q j kt k j ke d h n ; k v l h e g S og c k < + v c # d x Ä g S⁴⁸

Meri Vasna ka ateet mujhe yaad aa gaya hai. Uski darun lajja

mujhe rulanae lagi hai. Parantu Rajaram ki daya assem hai. Wah
badh ab rukh gai hai.

I have got memories of my past lust. They have brought a sense of
shame to me. But Lord Ram has graced me. That storm has now
ended.

Rangeya Raghav shows Tulsidas to be the blessed, who then
works to restore social cohesion. As one reads through the novel,
one finds Tulsidas unsatisfied and disappointed during his entire
life-span. He not only wants to do something for the country but
also urges for unity. Thus, keeping the post-independence situation
in his mind, Rangeya Raghav depicts Tulsidas as a propagator
of social cause who had united the *Sagun-Nirgun* disparity and
Shaiva-Vaishnava enmity. He portrays Tulsidas as an arbitrator
who resolves problems of moral disdain and differences through a
deep devotion to a benevolent Ram. The author writes:

; fn viusvius o. kZd kj y`x deZd jar` vo'; ghlc eal xBu g`
ld sk v k\$ i Fohij /ke A d` i ky usoky sjk kdk 'kl u g` ld skA⁴⁹

Yadi apne-apne varnausar log karm kare to avashey hi sab mein
sanghatan ho sakega aur prithvi par dharm ko palne wale raja ka
shasan ho sakega

If all the people work according to their *Varna*, then there would
definitely be unity amongst them and the rule of a benevolent king
will be established.

While Rangeya Raghav was exploring Tulsidas as a social
reformer, Amritlal Nagar a younger contemporary of him put

forward a more realistic character of Tulsidas in his novel *Manas Ka Hans* giving a human feel to him. Taking up from *Ratna Ki Baat*, Amritlal Nagar clearly showed Tulsidas as an ordinary man who was attracted to the opposite sex. Let us now discuss Amritlal Nagar.

Amritlal Nagar (1916-1990 A.D) was a prominent Hindi writer of the *Chhayavad* period. He was born in Gokulpura, Agra. He worked as an author, journalist, drama producer at AIR and even as an active writer in the Hindi film industry. He was inspired by Premchand (1880-1936 A.D) but yet in his novels, he developed a unique style of evolving complex characters by operationalizing his stories at multi-levels. His composition *Manas ka Hans* composed in 1972 A.D was part of the growing trend towards writing depictive novel popular in the Hindi literature of the twentieth century. The Awadhi area was the background of all his works and he was very much aware of the popularity of Tulsidas in Awadh. He clarifies the objective of his work right at the beginning of his book. He states that he wanted to take out the character of Tulsidas from the domain of superstition and present him to the masses in the right manner⁵⁰. His book also mentions that as a drama producer he was looking forward to a film based on Tulsidas not as a miracle man but as an individual fighter who worked to reform the society. He witnessed a constant criticism of Tulsidas during his contemporary times. Post-independence *dalit* politics which was on a high during the 1950's and 60's saw Tulsidas being accused of supporting caste system and *Varnashram*. Amritlal Nagar defended Tulsidas by stating that his thoughts were quite revolutionary for the times in which he was living and hence was a great source of inspiration. He attempted to give a humane and realistic portrayal of Tulsidas as a social worker. In his novel,

he focused on the challenges that Tulsidas faced in his childhood, his struggles with destitute, his protest towards scorn in society and constant humiliation within his community. The plot of his novel goes like this: Tulsidas returns to his village Rajapur where his abandoned wife Ratnavali lies on her death-bed in the hope to see him for the last time. Since Tulsidas had promised her that he would pay a last visit to her, her soul is not ready to leave her body. As soon as she sees Tulsidas, she rests in peace.

Tulsidas is accompanied by two of his pupils-Madhav and Ramu Trivedi from Kashi. The entire novel then revolves around different characters in Rajapur and their experiences. His pupil Madhav is shown to be writing a biography on Tulsidas and recording the many events in his life. He asks many questions out of curiosity which Tulsidas himself responds to. Amritlal Nagar mentions the physical challenges that Tulsidas undertook that led to a deterioration of his health in his older days. He details on the distress that Tulsidas saw in his later years at Benaras when epidemic and pestilence broke down in 1616 and 1623 CE. Tulsidas's health suffered as physical afflictions like pain in different body parts was experienced. But the main focus of the novel is on the plot around Mohini, an attractive woman whom Tulsidas meets before his marriage and gets attracted to. From this plot, Amritlal addresses his key concern. He depicts Tulsidas as an ordinary person who struggles to hold on to his own senses when exposed to the sensual exploits of a woman. When he got married to Ratnavali, her beauty also mesmerized Tulsidas to such an extent that he in his older days used to remember her. Amritlal Nagar writes:

Loj Fkk e ku" x y k g q k l "u k c g j g k g" A ml e a fe Bkl r" Fkh gh fd U q
v f/kd kj d k r s Oh Fkka⁵¹

Swar tha mano gala huya sona beh raha ho. Usme mithas to thi hi
kintu adhikar ka thej bhi tha.

Her voice was as if liquid gold was gushing through. There was
sweetness in it and also the essence of rightful claim.

Even when he again visits Ratnavali after so many years, he
is scared of getting attracted to her and keeps a veil between him
and Ratnavali while talking. Tulsidas is shown to have reached
the level of asceticism devoted to Rama only after his hard escape
from Mohini and Ratnavali. Amritlal Nagar writes:

e j k d k e o x v fr Á[k j j g k FkA x kg ZF; t hou fcr kus d s c kn fQj l s
c ā p; Z o z /k j . k d j u k g h e s f y , v fr d fBu p < k Ā d s l e ku fl)
g q k A d k e l s l Ò h j k t U s g S v k S ml h l s l e Lr fo Ò fr ; " ad k mn ; g r k
g S e S s v i u s d k e y " g d " j k e j l k u l s l " u k c u k f n ; k g S i j ' k j h j
d " ml d s v k Ā k r l g u s i M k S ⁵²

Mera Kama Veg ati Prakhar raha tha. Grahistya Jeevan bitane
ke baad phir se brahmacharya vrat karna hi mere liye ati kathin
chadai ke saman sidh hua. Kaam se sabhi raag janme hai aur use
samst vibhootiyon ka udey hota hai. Mene apne kaam loh ko ram
rasayan se sona banaliya, Par sharir ko uske aghat sehene padenge.

The drive of my lust was impinging upon. After spending the life
of a householder, living a life of a celibate again proved to be a very
difficult decision for me. All melodies arise out of passion and all
are born out of it. My own desires were turned into gold through
devotion to Ram but my body had to bear its consequences.

Hence, the strength of Tulsidas lied in the very fact that
he struggled to maintain self-control and grace. Amritlal Nagar

classifies Tulsidas as an ordinary man who got raised to a higher level of wisdom through his hard experiences. He accepts his weakness and struggles only to be personified as a devotee of Rama. He is depicted to be a struggler who promotes self-control and moral values in the name of Lord Rama.

From the above, we see how Tulsidas across different time zones was memorized by different communities and their texts. From being a poet-scholar of the 16th century, he was elevated to the position of a divine ascetic in the hagiographies of the 17th and 18th centuries. He was shown to be an *avatar* of Valmiki and impressed upon a range of magical powers. From the 19th century onwards, he was patronized by the *Rasik* Vaishnav community that gave a *Rasik* interpretation to Tulsidas and his composition *Ramcaritmanas*. With the turn of the 20th century and the consequent rise in the nationalist movement, one saw Tulsidas being used as a propellant to nationalist consciousness. As Tulsidas emerged as a nationalist hero in the pre-independence era, he was slowly and steadily pushed out of the image of a divine and shown to be a common man struggling against all odds in the post-independence era. It is not only in the domain of narratives that we see an image transformation of Tulsidas. His different renderings can be assessed from visual, verbal and performative media. We find a number of paintings on Tulsidas bearing Vaishnav identity marks. Maharaja Sawai Ram Singh II (1835-1880) of Jaipur had commissioned a manuscript on *Ramcaritmanas* and that also illustrates a portrait of Tulsidas⁵³. A number of statues of Tulsidas have also been prepared and kept in temples constructed especially for him. These temples represent him more as a deity⁵⁴. For example, Manas Mandir at Varanasi constructed in 1964 displays the marble statue of Tulsidas in *Abhamudra* (fearless mudra)⁵⁵. Hence, even if the

narratives evolved him out of the divine standing, these statues of Tulsidas in temples continue gave him godly stature.

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 19. *Op.cit.*, Singh, 1957, p. 419.
 20. *Ibid.*
 21. *Ibid.*
 22. Philip Lutgendorf mentions how the Ram *Rasiks* view their Lords as having two *lilas*-earthly and hidden. The hidden one is Ram’s ultimate reality which is expressed through the quality of erotic attractiveness. See Philip Lutgendorf, “The Secret Life of Ramcandra”, In Paula Richman ed. *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 217-234.
 23. Tulsidās does not focus at all on the newly wedded life of Ram and Sita.
 24. The Saket is conceived as a beautiful city. It is in this world of Saket that Rama resides with his *Parashakti* (feminine energy) Sita. The city is filled with pleasure and is an epitome of magnificence and splendor. A *Kanak Bhawan* (House of Gold) is placed right at the centre where eternal union takes place, The *Rasiks* consider this divine city to be more real than our conventional world, See Lutgendorf, 1991, p. 221.
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47. At the end of the story, Tulsidas while lying on his death bed dreams of Ratnavali. Ratnavali comes and says that by sacrificing herself she made Tulsidas legendary. Tulsidas replies and says that the truth is that it was her words that had a magical effect on him. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
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SOCIO-CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION, AMONG THE ORAON THE TRIBE - A CASE STUDY OF SUNDARGARH DISTRICT, ODISHA, DURING POST-COLONIAL PERIOD

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Abstract

The Oraons have lived in the large numbers in Chhotonagpur plateau in India since centuries. Oraon is a tribal community that is recognised by the Government of India. They are found in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. One of the most culturally vibrant tribe, 'Oraon' constitute a major tribal community of Odisha. They call themselves as 'Kurukh', which also is the name of their mother tongue. Their cultural life is enriched with their tradition, dance, music, arts and crafts. The Oraon, who were once upon a time conservative, are now in a transitional stage due to the impact of modernization. The impact of mining and industrialization in their habitat and Christianity, which many of them have embraced, has changed their traditional way of life to a great extent. Social transformation is taking place day

by day. They are traditionally animists and now there is a perceptible change in their life style because of planned change and development.

Key words: *Tribe, Oraon, Kurukh, Odisha, population, Modernization, Transformation.*

The Oraons are the largest tribal community in India. They are considered as a Dravidian tribe. The Oraons are believed to have settled in the Chotanagpur plateau centuries ago. They are also commonly known as the *Kurukh* tribe. Earlier, the Oraons depended on forests for their livelihood. A huge number of Oraons came and settled down in western Odisha during the British period. History has recorded them as a daring community, who fought against the British for the injustice done to them by curtailing their rights over natural resources.¹ After independence, the continuous manipulation of the unscrupulous dealers, distributors and recently the manufacturing and mining events in the area have pushed them to limits. In Odisha, they are mostly settled in Sambalpur and Sundargarh district. The Oraon inhabited areas are Bisra, Lahunipada, and Subdega blocks of Sundargarh, and Panpos and Bonai Sub Division of Sundargarh district of Odisha.

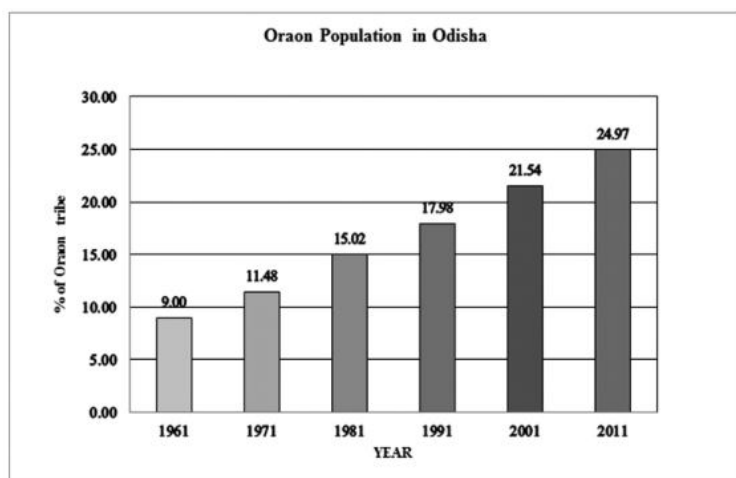
The tribes of Odisha constitute a large section of the population of the state. Their population is roughly over the million 22.22% of the total population of Odisha and 10.84 percent of the Indian tribal population. The constitution the scheduled areas in the state of Odisha includes the district of Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Keonjhar, Koraput etc. In Odisha, Oraon is one of the predominant tribal community inhabiting most in the districts of western Odisha such as Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Jharsuguda,

Deogarh and Bolangir. Numerically the Oraon constitute the biggest tribe of the district of Sundargarh and Sambalpur.

Sl. No	Name of the District	Year					
		1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
01.	Balasore	-	1280	965	1508	1664	2050
02.	Bhadrak	-	-	-	-	3	11
03.	Bolangir	04	16	48	207	133	160
04.	Sonepur	-	-	-	-	361	446
05.	Cuttack	05	18	294	485	609	231
06.	Jagatsinghpur	-	-	-	-	92	107
07.	Jajpur	-	-	-	-	204	128
08.	Kendrapara	-	-	-	-	13	17
09.	Dhenkanal	20	32	412	632	39	84
10.	Anugul	-	-	-	-	1130	593
11.	Ganjam	-	01	27	207	66	84
12.	Gajapati	-	-	-	-	04	37
13.	Kalahandi	03	12	50	124	89	98
14.	Nuapara	-	-	-	-	35	51
15.	Keonjhar	1003	2135	3720	4651	5164	4510
16.	Koraput	-	18	177	604	705	537
17.	Malkangiri	-	-	-	-	102	88
18.	Nowrangapur	-	-	-	-	102	123
19.	Rayagada	-	-	-	-	30	113
20.	Mayurbhanj	1783	1809	2944	3716	4568	5392

21.	Kandhamal	-	05	31	26	11	36
22.	Boudh	-	-	-	-	10	09
23.	Puri	11	05	171	341	334	38
24.	Khurda	-	-	-	-	735	953
25.	Nayagarh	-	-	-	-	01	11
26.	Sambalpur	12129	19429	28670	35324	27929	31388
27.	Bargarh	-	-	-	-	1055	1271
28.	Deogarh	-	-	-	-	7469	9687
29.	Jharsuguda	-	-	-	-	7736	10525
30.	Sundargarh	114103	139859	177287	210004	248538	289334
	Total	129061	164619	215336	257829	308931	358112

Source: Census of India 2011.



In the above table, there is a district wise distribution of population in Odisha (1961-2011). According to the data given

by the Census report in the year 1961, the total Oraon population was 129061 i.e. 9% of the total Oraon tribe. In the year 1971, the total population of the Oraon tribe was found to be 164619 i.e. 11.48% of the total Oraon tribe. In the gap of 10 years, the total rise in the Oraon population was 2.48%. Accordingly in the year 1981, 215336 numbers of Oraon were found. In the year 1991, the population increased to 257829. In this 10 years gap, the population of Oraon has increased to 2.96%. In the early part of the 21st century i.e. 2001 the total population of Oraon was 308931. According to the recent data, in the year 2011, the population of the Oraon tribe is 358112. In these 10 years, the population has risen by 3.43%. Here the Census reports have clearly indicated that there is a rise in the Oraon population in the past few years. If all the data is combined, it can be clearly said that the total rise in the population from 1961-2011 is 15.97%.

Oraon in Historical Perspective

The Oraons or Uraons call themselves *Kurukhar*. They refuse to recognise the names Oraon or Uraon as the correct name of their tribe. These names are considered to be nicknames given to them by their non-tribal neighbours. The majority of them living in the Chhotanagpur region of Jharkhand are known as *Kurukh*. The *Kurukh* speak a Dravidian language which is akin to Gond and other tribal languages. They used to live in the Rohta plateau but were dislodged by other people and accordingly, migrated to Chotanagpur, where they settled in the vicinity of Munda-speaking tribes². Traditionally, the Oraon depended on forests for their livelihood. Subsequently, some Oraons became settle agriculturalists. From Chhotanagpur, the Oraon immigrated to northeast India during the British period, where they mostly worked and were employed in tea estates. According to the

Anthropological Society of India, Konkan is original home of *Kurukh* tribe from where they travelled to northern India. The Oraons are divided into sub-tribes like Ekka, Tigga, Barla, Kujur, Bara, Lakra, Tirkey, Bakhla, Toppo, Kispotta, Minz and Kerketta. The Oraons have no proper sub-tribes in the central province. Even Kuda and Kisan who are assumed to be the sub-tribes of Oraon, regard themselves as separate tribes and avoid inter-marriage with Oraons. Oraons are separated into many totemic clans. They live in the Chotanagpur plateau of Central India, in Raigarh, Surguja, Jashpur districts of Chhattisgarh, Ranchi district of Jharkhand, Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal and Sundargarh district of Odisha.

Socio-Cultural Transformation

The transformation of tribe and culture is a continuous process. The tribes of India have come in contact with various external or internal forces and are in constant change. As they are no longer in isolation, and are exposed to various forces, change in their culture is inevitable. But their contact with the outside world has allowed a number of evils to infiltrate in them along with a number of benefits. Many people started exploiting the poor, illiterate, tribals to keep them below the poverty line. They are deprived of their rights over land and forests and often being fleeced by money lenders, big land owners, traders and businessman and others in tribal areas. The process continues till the poor have nothing but to sell except their body and labour. In eastern and Northeastern India, a large number of tribes are engaged as labourers in tea estates. Such tribal labourers came from Chotanagpur and changed their life-style. Change is more in their material life, which partly affected their religious and psychological life. Change in shift in agriculture to agro-based

industrial work- developed some propensity to factory work among the tribal youth. The ethnic life style and the socio-economic life style of tribal people in India differ from region to region. They follow different ethnic activities, follow different technology, economic pattern, and religious beliefs and speak different languages. Though there is 'variety in the life of these societies, there exists a good deal of resemblance in their socio-cultural and psychological and emotional level. Till today, the tribes try to maintain their separate identity and customs. As a result, they can be observed as moderately isolated and backward.

Tribal societies in India have borrowed cultural traits from their dominant Hindu neighbours and replaced their own cultural traits by these. The tribal people in the Indian subcontinent are living for centuries in close contact with the numerous dominant Hindu caste people on whom they depend economically. They have a strong desire to unite themselves with the cultural matrix of the dominant Hindus only to upgrade their position in the ladder of Hindu social hierarchy. During the long centuries of Hindu rule, the tribes assimilated the Hindu culture. Almost all the so-called aboriginal tribes have Hinduised segment, small or large, they have been in intimate interaction with Hindus for a long time, and that they have joint interest with Hindus in matter of beliefs and gainful profession. The tribes have shown an inclination to look upon themselves as Hindus or as people closely associated with Hindus. Only a very small section of tribes live in recesses of mountains and depths, of forest have not been touched by Hinduism and they retain the tribal creed and organization, but in reality they are Hindus. It implies interaction between tribes and Hindu neighbours which brought assimilation among the tribes.

Changes in Family

Table 1.1
Distribution of the respondents according to their family type

Sl. No.	Family Structure	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Nuclear	194	55.42
2	Joint	156	44.57
	Total	350	100

Source: Data collected during the field investigation through questionnaire.

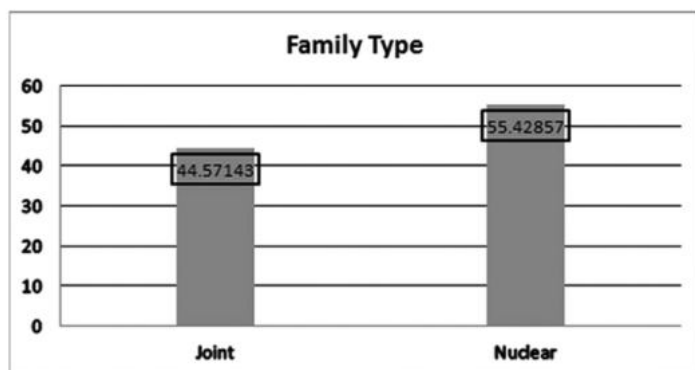


Fig: 1.1

The analysis of table 1.1 shows that 44.57 percent respondents belong to joint families and 55.42 percent respondents belong to nuclear families. In the past, the joint family system was much widespread in the Oraon community. But in this generation, nuclear family system is in vogue at larger scale. This trend in the direction of breakdown of joint family provides new dimensions to explain transformation at micro level. The main reasons for

this transformation are education, occupation and the influence of modernization and development. Thus, nuclear family is taking the place of the joint family system.

Marriage

Marriage is monogamous. Marriage between near relatives is not allowed. Bride-price and re-marriage are widely practiced among the Oraons. The widow of deceased brother becomes the wife of the younger brother. Divorce is among Oraons³. In present study, it is observed that inter-caste marriage is found to some certain extent among Oraons. S.C Roy comments that due to the contact with Hindu neighbours, there is inter-caste marriage⁴. But such trend are frequent among Oraons in western Odisha. Further, to some extent, it is observed that they also follow the customs of Hindus.

Change in Language

V. Xaxa says that when a tribe is integrated into Hindu society, it adopts the language of regional community. It is possible for a tribe to develop a caste only after it has been integrated into a regional verbal community such as Hindi or Oriya. Many tribal societies have lost their unique linguistic identity. The study undoubtedly designates that maximum of the tribes nowadays do not express their innovative verbal language or even inspire their offspring to study the elementary philosophy of their tribal ethos. Currently, the use of the indigenous language Odia, has become a significant feature in Rourkela and the tribal tongues have become imperfect and the use of Odia language has taken their place⁵.

Table 1.2
Distribution of Respondents according to their Use of Tribal Language

Sl. No.	Use of Tribal language	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	67	19.14
2	No	283	80.85
	Total	350	100

Source: Data collected during field investigation through questionnaire.

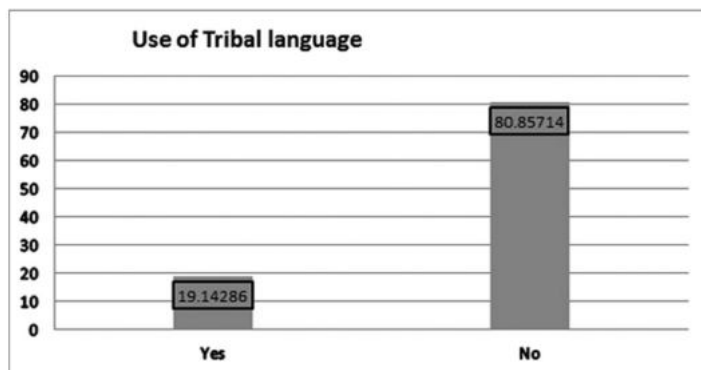


Fig: 1.2

The analysis of the table 1.2 shows that the majority of people of Oraon tribe i.e. 80.85 percent do not speak their tribal language and do not understand it. But there are only 19.14 percent Oraons tribe who speak and understand their language. It has been observed that Oraon tribals of Sundargarh district have adjusted to the two main tongues that are frequently being used in the State i.e. Odia and Hindi.

Dress and Ornaments

There has been noticeable change in dress and ornaments used by the Oraons. While it is still common to see the use of that *dhoti* in its miniature form, western style shirt with collar replaced native upper garments. The new and current style is mostly initiated by few young boys and girls who study in school or who are in contact with the nearby urban centres. Change of dress often means new psychology, a scorn of tradition and a sense of being ashamed of it. Traditional ornaments worn by Oraon women are *Baju*, *Nakfuli*, *Husle*, *Hathpatta*, *Dhul*, *Churi* and *Hikhol*. But at present, Oraon women do not use these traditional ornaments. Only a few Oraon women use their traditional ornaments on social occasions. The Oraon women now generally use modern ornaments instead of their traditional ornaments. They feel inconvenient to wear old kinds of ornament.

Table 1.3
Distribution of Respondents according to their use of Traditional Dress and Ornaments

Sl. No	Use of traditional dress and ornaments	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	33	9.42
2	No	317	90.57
	Total	350	100

The analysis of the table 1.3 shows that, the majority of the Oraons. i.e 90.57 percent of the respondents do not use traditional dress. Only very less i.e. 9.42 percent of the respondents are using traditional dress. This is a proof of social transformation that is taking place.

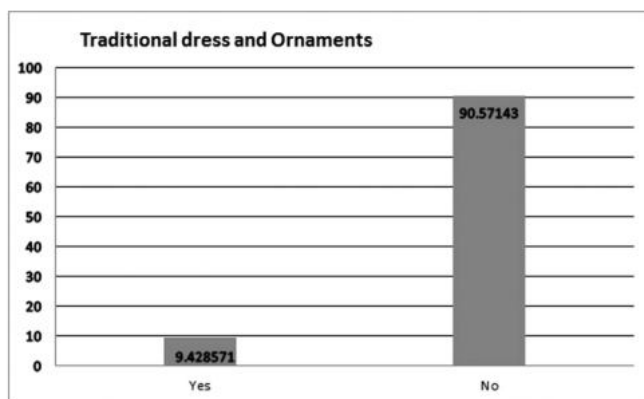


Fig: 1.3

Song and Dance

The Oraons have their songs and dances such as *Karam* dance, *Fagua* dance, *Jhumar* dance etc. Apart from that different musical instruments are played in accompaniment to singing and dancing on the occasion of birth, marriage, name giving, attaining of puberty, sowing of seed, harvesting, etc. But in the present scenario, it is observed that their traditional dances and songs are not being performed by them. On some occasions, they listen to Hindi, Odiya and Bhojpuri songs instead of their traditional songs.

Food Habits

Oraon food habits have also undergone a change. They are now habituated to take wheat in the form of *roti*. J.L Sharma and R.K Kar say that they eat boiled rice and millet. They no longer boil all edibles together in a hotchpotch⁶. Use of oil and spices are very common and they have learned the art of frying items. Besides, sweets and other dainty eatables are also brought. Items like tea and beetle-nut etc are also taken. Thus, average Oraon consumption habits are new in the present society.

Use of Tattoo

Table 1.4
Distribution of Respondents according to their use of Tattoo

Sl. No	In favour of uses of Tattoo	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	24	6.85
2	No	326	93.14
	Total	350	100

Source: Data collected during field investigation through questionnaire.

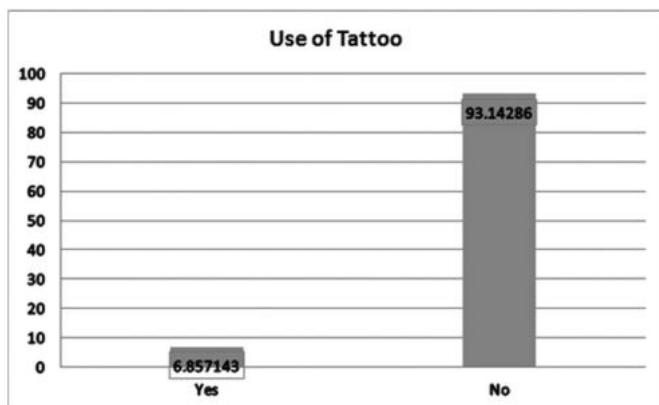


Fig: 1.4

The above table 1.4 shows, that the majority of the Oraons tribe do not practice the use of tattoo i.e. 93.14 percent and only 6.85 percent are in favour this practice. It can be observed that the main reason for this transformation is education, occupation and the influence of modernization. It presents a clear picture of the social transformation that is going on and there is a change in religious beliefs, social behaviour and habits of the Oraon tribe in western Odisha.

Treatment Methods

Tribal people have their own old traditional treatment methods, through herbs. They are not literates and they believe in good omen and bad omen. But, due to the development of infrastructure and connectivity, the tribal people take advantage of modern medical treatment techniques and service of doctors.

Table 1.5
Distribution of Respondents according to their treatment

Sl. No	Method of Treatment	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Traditional method	20	5.71
2	Hospital	330	94.28
	Total	350	100

Source: Data collected during field investigation through questionnaire.

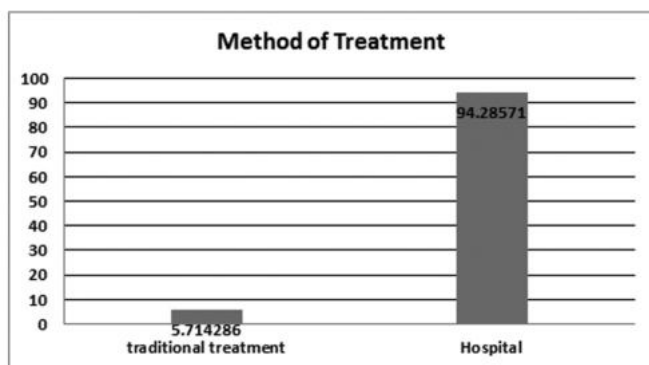


Fig: 1.5

Above table 1.5, about 94.28 percent of the respondents are consulting doctors who take advantage of modern treatment

techniques and only 71 percent of the respondents are using traditional methods of treatment. Through this data, we can see the social transformation.

Religious and Cultural Change

Ajit K. Singh says that the Oraons are traditionally an agriculturist tribe of Chotanagpur. Thus, their major festivals are connected with their agricultural lifestyle. At each stage of their agricultural operation, they propitiate their god and deity to seek their favour as their economy is mainly based on agriculture⁷. Traditionally, Oraons believe in a number of gods, goddesses, deities and spirits. At home, many of these super-natural spirits are propitiated ceremonially and at regular intervals. Thus, rituals connected with hunting expeditions are *Fagua-sendra*, *Bisu-sendra*, *Jeth-sikar*, *Jani-sikar*, and for agricultural operation it is *Hanan*, *kadlota* and *kharra-puja* and periodical *jatras* are no longer observed. But major festivals like *Sohrai*, *Karam* and *Phagu* are observed at regular intervals. The Oraon also propitiates a number of spirits like *chala* - *Pachcho Darha*, *Chordewa Sarni-Burhia*.⁸ The Oraons do not seem to be familiar with these spirits. Many traditional ceremonies and rituals are replaced by offerings at the village shrine. A few traditional *Pujas* e.g. *Khut Puja*, *Chatal Puja*, *Naga Puja*, *Karam Puja*, *Hariari Puja*, *Pachatia Puja* - *pahari puja* are still observed by them to some extent. These days it is also seen that they are accepting *Pujas* of other castes in the region instead of their traditional *Puja*. Almost all Oraons in the region perform Hindu rituals. They also celebrate Hindu religious festivals like *Durga puja*, *Kali puja* etc. It is observed that they take more interest with these *Pujas* than their traditional *Pujas*.

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SOCIAL LIFE OF THE KURICHCHAN TRIBES IN DHARMAPURI DISTRICT

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Abstract

The Kurichchans are one of the oldest inhabitants of Dharmapuri district in Tamilnadu. They manifest a complex culture in their rituals and beliefs. The Kurichchans were the first migrants into the Dharmapuri hills from the plains. Although the period of migration is not clear in literature, in all probability they migrated to Dharmapuri before the 9th century CE.

The Kurichchans are well known for their extensive joint family, marriage and kinship pattern, leadership and family management, better status for their women, economic self sufficiency, hard work, skill in hunting, primitive religion etc. They live in Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts in Tamilnadu only. In Dharmapuri district, they are called “Alambadi Kurichchans. The term Kurichchans is derived from the

word 'Kurichi' meaning hunting. The Kurichchans are an endogamous tribe. The Kurichchans were primarily cattle herders, and started to rear sheep and goats and became animals breeding and live stock traders. The Kurichchans Community have rich indigenous knowledge. They give treatment to both human beings and to animals using herbs found in their settlement.

Keywords: *Inhabitants, Primitive, Kurichi, Endogamous tribe, indigenous, herbs.*

The Kurichchans are one of the oldest inhabitants of Dharmapuri district. They are included in the list of “Scheduled Tribes” (no: 16) in Tamilnadu as per the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendments) Act, 1976. The Kurichchan Community lives in Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts. The statistics regarding the Kurichchan population in Tamilnadu published by the Census of India, gives different idea of Kurichchans. As per the 1961 census, they numbered only 5 persons, as per the Census of 1981 (published 1988) the total population of the Kurichchans in Tamilnadu was 7159 persons¹.

Etymology of Kurichchan

The “Kurichchan” is derived from word “*Kurichi*” mean “hunting”. Kurichchan means the hunter and the Kurichchans is the hunting community. In Dharmapuri district, they call themselves “Alambadi Kurichchans” because they were handling and grazing animals in the Alambadi forest region earlier. Now, they have shifted their profession to pastoral and settled agriculture, although they have not given up their hunting profession.

Dr. K.S. Singh, in his book “Scheduled Tribes” has written, that “The Kurichchans called themselves Alambadi Kurichchans and they are referred to by different synonyms such as Kunjgars, Kunjigars, and Kurichcha Gounder by others”².

Settelments of Kurichchans

In Dharmapuri District, Kurichchans are distributed in the following villages or settlements;

1. Jakakam Patti. 2. Menjanuginalli. 3. Kottayur.
4. Bodi Patti. 5. Palagoundanur. 6. Bannaganalli.
7. Hochhanahalli. 8. C.M Pudur 9. Atturnalli
10. Nadugundlahalli. 11. Melagudlahalli. 12. Kolinahalli.
13. Kodahalli 14. Golasanahalli. 15. Vedakannampatti
16. Bujjanahalli. 17. Chikkamaranahalli³.

Kinship and Famliy

The Kurichchan Community is a patriarchal or a partipotestal society as the power and the property was with the male. They say that they have about 116 Kulams, but now only 48 kulams are known. Kulam is the unit of separation based on certain characteristics which are not based on hierarchy⁴.

The Kulams that exist in the settlements are:

1. Kammalaneru. 2. Aluvaneru. 3. Basaleneru.
4. Avineru. 5. Vallakkaneru. 6. Janeukallneru. 7. Emmaneru.
8. Goneru. 9. Vanavaneru. 10. Elleneru. 11. Jaldhaneru.
12. Jeeriganeru. 13. Menasaeneru. 14. Andaneru. 15. Bellaelneru.
16. Eradageraneru. 17. Kurumbachineru. 18. Kalkkaneru.
19. Puthusenneru. 20. Yedapalaneru. 21. Yedathananeru.
22. Jalakaraneru. 23. Thalakaraneru. 24. Ponyeneru.
25. Sattenarneru. 26. Kokineru⁵. etc...

The have both nuclear and joint families as can be seen among these people.

Headman

The head of the family is called *Moopaneru* (in olden days) and in the present days, the headman is called *Yejanantru*. The office of the headman is not hereditary⁶. He can be identified by the knife and silver handle in an engraved sheath that he always carries.

Family Structure

The Kurichchan society was divided into a number of *Kulams* called *Taravad*. *Taravad* was further subdivided into *Mitton*. It was the smallest unit of Kurichchans society. The head man of *Mitton* was called *Karanon* and he was also called as *Odayakkaran* and is referred as *Odayakkarachi*⁷.

Puberty

When a girl attains puberty, her father has to report this news to the headman. He informs about it to her relatives and other members of their settlement. During menstruation, the girl should stay in time “*dine*” of the head. It is called “*Vasiya*”. She lives in a hut built by her maternal uncle. On all the seven days normally, they keep rice and Jaggery mix in the girl’s hut and offer her *thanatta* to eat. No male member is allowed to see her. On the 8th day, there will be certain ceremonies and a feast in the girl’s hut. Then she is brought to her house⁸.

Marriage

“*Telikettu kalyanam*” and “*Kettu kalyanam*” (fake marriage) before a girl attains puberty are common in the Kurichchan

community and the ceremony is known as “*Pandal Pathu*”⁹. It is a function exclusively arranged for a group of girls numbering 5, 7, and 11 depending upon the availability of girls of every lineage.

The Kurichchans are an endogamous tribe. Monogamy is the marital norm today, marriage alliance is fixed by negotiation and arranged marriages are predominant. Junior sororities are allowed in case the first wife is barren. Child marriage was earlier practiced, but nowadays, the age of marriage varies from 14 to 18 years for girls and from 22 to 25 years for boys.

Onthaiku onthu nellu is an important ritual conducted on the eve of the marriage. The paddy grains are put in the *kunthani* and hit with *ulakkai*. *Ullakai* and *kanthani* are tied up with *harisindhara*. The women also wear *harisindhara* in their neck and apply turmeric on their cheek and, have a *pottu* on their forehead. The paddy grains used for the rituals is used as *beerakki* on the next day during the marriage¹⁰.

Manjal poosudal is another ritual carried out during the evening by applying turmeric. Turmeric is applied to the couple three times and they take bath later. The turmeric is placed in betel leaves tied with a black thread called *Kanganam* and is tied in the handle of the couple.

They call their engagement ceremony as “*elai adika*” and for this occasion, seven betel leaves are given to the bride. The marriage expenses and the cost of jewellery are borne by the groom. The marriage takes place at the bride’s place. The marriage is conducted by people of the same age group. It takes place for five days. The groom gives rice, cereals, five *vallem* betel nuts and

Rs 21 as bride price. Dowry system is not existent among these people. The ceremony is performed by the village elders. The bride's face is closed with a white cloth, and then removed when she comes to the *pandhal*. A ritual called *Kalasa pancharuthi* is performed and the bridegroom looks towards the west and the bride to at the east.

The groom carries a bow and arrow. The weapon is called as *Jumbhudhadi*. A coconut is broken, following which a black thread is tied, the elders bless the *tali*, *yejaman* / *nattamai* takes the *tali* and gives it to bridegroom, which is then tied on the bride. Toe-rings are put on her toes. Both parties exchange *beerakki*. This is followed by a feast consisting of rice and cereals. During the marriage ceremony, no *Brahmin* is allowed inside the *pandhal*. Inter-caste marriages are not allowed¹¹.

Marriage outside the group, i.e. exogamy, is not permitted. If it takes place, their children cannot marry into this community again.

Divorce and Widow Remarriage

Divorce is permitted with the approval of the *kula panchayat*. Both the man and woman are consulted by the *kula panchayat* before giving the divorce. The grounds for divorce are barrenness or insanity. Compensation is given to the aggrieved party. If the fault lies with the wife, the elders of the *panchayat* ask her to remove the *tali*. This will be given back to her husband. The children are the responsibility of the father in divorce cases.

The widows and the widowers are permitted to remarry within their community. Remarriages however do not compromise ceremonies but the custom of *tali*-tying is not allowed¹².

Child Birth

When a girl is pregnant she is taken to her mother's house in the ninth month. She gives birth in her mother's house. A girl usually goes to the mother's house for delivery only for the birth of her first child. The Kurichchans do not observe any pre-delivery rituals but strictly do observe post- delivery pollution.

The mother and child are segregated in a corner with their belongings till the termination of the pollution period. They have their own *bethikkaarathi* (mid wife) to attend to delivery. Traditionally, if there were any delay in delivery, their ancestral spirits were consulted through divination. The difficult deliveries among the Kurichchans were believed to have been caused by the moral transgressions of women.

They celebrate the birth of a female child more than that of a male child. Five ladies are invited on the fifth day to bathe the new born baby and while cutting the navel cord of the newborn among the Kurichchans; the sex is announced by bending a bow and drawing its string if it is a male and by beating a broom against a wicker basket (sieve) if it is a female child.

After a child is born, they conduct the naming ceremony. They call it pal *uthuthal* / *alukodoothu*¹³ (feeding of milk). They invite their relatives and throw them a feast. The child is named usually after Muthappa or Bahavathi. They observe birth pollution for nine days. On the ninth day, both the mother and the child are given a bath and they offer a non- vegetarian feast to the invitees called *kausu shesthu*.

Funeral Ceremony

Most Kurichchans bury their dead. If the deceased has died due to a disease or suicide, the corpse is cremated. Whenever a death occurred in their tribe, a goat is sacrificed. The corpse is bathed. They adorn the corpse with a *nāmam* (Vaishnavite mark) and *vibhuthi* (sacred white ash) and a new cloth is wrapped around the body. The death rites are performed in the presence of the *kula panchayat* members. Everybody eats and drinks alcohol. The corpse is then taken on a bier to the burial ground amidst mournful music. The corpse is then buried. On the fifth day, a feast is once again arranged and some ceremonies are repeated in the burial ground. These customs are performed by the parallel cousin of the dead. In the olden days, they observed 40 days of period condolence and after completion of 40 days, they take, an oil bath called “*Thottukulithal*”¹⁴.

Belief System

The Kurichchans have no separate religion, but they worship their traditional deities. Some of the primary deities are Mudhappan, Rangasamy and Amman. Mudhappan is believed to use the dog as his transport and takes the dog along with him for help while hunting. The vehicle of the deity is the tiger¹⁵.

They also worship Malakkaru devaru (Sri Raman), Kolkari Bagavathi (Amman), Mooravadhu devaru (Krishnan), Mariamman, Pamalyamman, Arungeeswarar, etc...

They perform *pūja* for Mudharayana (Mudhappan) once a year during the month of October (the 10th of the Tamil month *Aippasi*). They go on pilgrimage to sacred centres such as Tirupathi and Sri Rangapattinam. They have their own *Nattami* as sacred

specialists, but a few Kurichchans engage the priest of the Sholiga tribe of Mysore district for the life cycle ceremonies and to cure ailments believed to be caused by evil spirits. They celebrate their annual festival in the Ponnachi hills in Karnataka. They also celebrate *Sankranti*, *Ugadi*, *Diwali*, *Pongal* etc. On festival days, they perform a *Kekilke*, a form of folk theatre depicting mythological themes in poetry and prose at night¹⁶.

Economic Activities

Production, distribution, and consumption form the three essential factors in the economic activities of the Kurichchans Community. In the tribal economy, everyone has to do all work. There are no restrictions for anyone to do any work.

Hunting and gathering, pastoral and settled agriculture form the economic activities of the Kurichchans Community. From hunting and gathering, they moved into the other occupations like pastoral and settle agriculture.

Hunting and Gathering

The Kurichchans hunt all kinds of animals available in the forest region and which are closer them. They also collect non-timber forest products (NFTP) like honey, firewood, bark, and fruits of trees. Mostly, they hunt wild boar, which are frequently available in the region. They also hunt hedgehog *kadamai* (a type of deer) and other animals. They eat most of the animals they hunt. The lower jaw of the hunted animal is sacrificed to their deity Mudhappan. They tie it in a rope and hang it on a tamarind tree.

The *bill - ambu* (bow and arrow) is used, to hunt small birds and animals¹⁷. They also hunt rabbits using special nets and

equipment called *Urulu*. The modern *urulu* is made up of metal strings. '*pakshi buuttae*' (Bird Cage) is used to collect and keep the hunted birds¹⁸. The hunted animals were traded for grains and cloth. Now with the development in the hills, the Kurichchans stopped hunting and during the British period; they changed from hunting to pastoral occupation. They obtained licence for guns to protect themselves from wild animals while grazing the cattle. The guns are used solely to protect themselves.

The Kurichchans also fish in the nearby lakes using a fishing net prepared by them called '*Meenu ideathu balae*'. They also catch fish in the stream and use '*Kodamai*', a basket like instrument which has two openings, i.e, a broad opening in the front side and a small opening at rear. Water enters through the broad opening. The small opening is covered by a cloth. The fish enters through the broad opening and gets caught.

Pastoral Economy

The Kurichchans rear two types of cattle i.e., the ordinary or the local variety and the wild variety called '*kattumadu*'. Bulls are of the wild variety. The bulls are used for the purpose of insemination to yield calves of variety with good health.

The bull does not have '*mookakankayaru*', the rope thread tied around the head through the nose. Those with *mookanankayaru* are identified as the local variety. The Kurichchans also rear sheep called "*Kuriyadu*". The meat of the sheep is consumed by them and sold in the market too.

The houses are designed to accommodate cattle too. A certain amount of space is provided for the cattle. '*Gaadi*' is a

structure constructed out mud and bamboo is a place where the food for the cattle are kept. '*Kuluthi*' is another structure, where water for cattle is stored¹⁹.

Agriculture Economy

Dry land cultivation is the main part of agriculture economy of the Kurichchan community. They also practice paddy cultivation. They cultivate *ragi*, horse grain, maize, beans, groundnut, *samai*, *thinai* etc... they use grain for their own consumption. Now, they also sell the product in markets.

They use different kinds of equipments with their indigenous knowledge. The Community uses wooden plough called '*Naegulu*' or '*Kalappai*' in Tamil to plough the land²⁰. Carpenters in the community prepare the equipment with available wood in the region.

'*Likki*' is an instrument used to remove weeds. It has a wooden handle with an 'L' shaped iron pices fixed into it. The edge of the '*Likki*' is sharp enough to cut off the weeds. '*Ooravali*' is another instrument which is used for the same purpose. It has a wooden handle with an iron piece fixed in the front of the handle. The handle is made sharp for the purpose of removing the weeds.

'*Kukkae*' is a cap shaped instrument which is used to cover the mouth of the bulls to stop it from grazing the agriculture corps. The '*Kukkae*' is made up of bamboo. '*Thundu*' is used to break, equalize and is made up of wood²¹.

'*Ragi Gundu*' is used to separate '*ragi*' grains from that of the plant. The ripened plant is reaped. It is kept in the field for few

days to dry and then is spread over the field. Using '*ragi gundu*', an instrument made up of stone, '*ragi*' grains are separated.

The Kurichchans were primarily cattle herders, and started to rear sheep and goats and became animals breeding and live stock traders. A few of them possess land and now most of them have become settled agriculturalists. The people who do not own land are forced to work as laborers in the field. Some of them are employed in government service. A few do petty business. Some of them have become white collar job holders and teachers²².

Political Organization

Among the Kurichchans, the *Kula panchayat* or tribal council exists at the village level. The political position in this kula panchayat is Voor gounder, Yejamana gounder, Mantri gounder and Nattami²³. The post of *yejamana gounder* is today referred as *pittan*, which is a linguistic influence from Kerala. There was another post called *Kotakaru*, which does not seem to exist today. All this posts are hereditary. The head of the household becomes a member in the *kula panchayat*. All decisions are taken by the above mentioned heads of the village. The usual problems that are sorted out are acts of physical attacks and problems relating to women. If the person punished does not abide by the decision taken by the village heads, they are excommunicated from the village. The tribes do not go to the police to solve their problems.

Indigenous Knowledge

The Kurichchans Community has rich indigenous knowledge. They give treatment to both humans' beings and to animals using herbs found in their settlements for snake bite, bone fracture, bulging of stomach, cataract, dysentery etc.

They believe that diseases can be cured with spells. Some treatments are for example, a cut is made using a blade on the spot and the infected blood is removed by pressing the surrounding part. *Saththae marundhu*²⁴ along with albumen of egg is applied over the bitten place. *Saththae marundhu* is also given after food.

Varanus, called 'Udumbu' oil is to treat bone fractures²⁵. The oil is extracted from the fat of the hunted animals. The oil is applied over the fractured area and then covered with medicinal leaves and dressing is done. No other medicine is given to the patient.

For treating jaundice, medicinal plants are powdered and kept in a clean white cloth and then tied in both the arms over the biceps for an hour. Such treatment is given to many people in their settlements.

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TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF MEDICINAL PLANTS AND THE HEALING PRACTICES OF THE BODOS

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Abstract

The plant is an important source of medicine. Medicinal plants have been known to be potential source of therapeutics. The use of medicinal plants attained a commanding role in the health care system all over the world. Along with the treatment of diseases, medicinal plants are also used for maintaining good health. Many countries in the world depend on herbal medicine for primary healthcare. Herbal medicines play a vital role for the remedy of many diseases. The Bodo people have been using medicinal plants to cure many diseases since ancient times. They acquired the knowledge of using such medicines through trial basis leading to an effective method in the traditional health care system. In almost all Bodo inhabited villages, there exist many person who possess a good knowledge of medicinal plants and are capable of healing people

by applying medicines obtained from plants. They are known as Oja in Bodo. The traditional process of preparing medicines from medicinal plants are mainly through the process of extracting juices by crushing and boiling the roots and leaves, smashing the leaves and making tablets by hand.

Keywords: *Bodo, traditional practices, beliefs, medicinal plants.*

‘Medicines derived from the medicinal plants have been widely used all over the world and the importance of such medicines has been increasing¹. Medicinal plants are those plants which have been used as herbal medicine for the treatment of many diseases. In the health care system, the medicinal plants play a vital role because of its richness in medicinal properties. Since the beginning of human civilization, medicinal plants have been used by mankind for its therapeutic purpose. Medicinal plants have curative properties. Since ancient times, medicinal plants and their product in the form of the medicine have been traditionally used as medicine for the treatment of various ailments by the Bodos. It is rightly observed that “Bodos are culturally and socially intertwined with the pristine forest around them and known to have developed a unique system of herbal medicines, some of which are not found even in Indian Ayurvedic system”². In almost every aspect of life, the Bodos have been depending on forest and medicinal plants for the treatment of various diseases and health related problems. It is also asserted that the Bodos have been depending on medicinal plants through the ages³. The names of the medicinal plants which are mentioned in *Boroni Muli Bifang- Laifang* are

“1. Asteraceae. 2. Apiaceae. 3. Hypericeae. 4. Lamiaceae. 5. Piperaceae. 6. Rubiaceae. 7. Chenopodiaceae.

8. *Polygonaceae*. 9. *Convolvulaceae*. 10. *Araceae*.
11. *Verbenaceae*. 12. *Thunbergiaceae*. 13. *Zingiberaceae*.
14. *Polypodiaceae*. 15. *Amaranthaceae*. 16. *Caryophyllaceae*.
17. *Brassicaceae*. 18. *Liliaceae*. 19. *Hypoxidaceae*.
20. *Amaryllidaceae*. 21. *Cannaceae*. 22. *Marantaceae*.
23. *Musaceae*. 24. *Papaveraceae*. 25. *Cyperaceae*.
26. *Bromeliaceae*. 27. *Oxalidaceae*. 28. *Palilionaceae*.
29. *Poaceae*. 30. *Portulacaceae*. 31. *Acanthaceae*.
32. *Nyctaginaceae*. 33. *Euphorbiaceae*. 34. *Urticaceae*.”⁴.

The Bodos used traditional medicines for their health care and health related issues. Being an economically poor community and due to lack of proper transport facilities, the Bodo people depend on traditional medicines to a great extent⁵. So, traditional medicinal plant has remained the only source of treatment of the Bodo people. The Ojas prescribed herbal medicines for treatment of the various diseases and the method of their treatment is quite similar to Ayurvedic and Tibetan methods⁶. Different techniques have been adopted by the Ojas to diagnose various diseases. For example, they used smashed leaves as antiseptic and boiled leaves with dried chicken legs and dried fish to heal cough as well⁷. Sometimes seeing the nature of disease, they prepare medicines combining different leaves.

The use of medicinal plants as medicine goes back to early man. A large section of the Bodo tribe is economically under-developed and resides in a very remote area, where modern medical facilities are not available. Several medicinal plants are traditionally being used by them as medicines against many diseases since long time. The Bodo people have age-old traditions or habits of consuming medicinal plants. But, unfortunately, these

traditional methods of using traditional medicines prepared from the medicinal plants have been forgotten over a period of time due to the lack of attention by the young generation⁸. Therefore, there is a need to protect, preserve and to give awareness to the young generation about the importance of traditional knowledge on medicine, medicinal plants and the traditional healing system of the Bodo.

Various types of traditional methods for preparing medicines have been employed by the Bodo people till today. They have been using medicinal plants both in fresh and dry form. It is used in the form of crushed juice, decoction and powdered for oral intake. Pastes are basically used for skin diseases and wounds⁹. Decoction involves crushing and then boiling the plant material with water to produce a liquid. Powder and pills are obtained by pestling plants and plant parts. Drying the plant material and then crushing is one of the traditional methods to produce powder and pills. Internal ailments are treated by making the patient drink extracted juice and external ailments are treated by applying herbal pastes. Roots are also as much important as leaves. They crushed the collected plant parts with *Uwal and gahen (traditional grinder)* to produce medicine to heal ailments like bone fracture and skin disease. The quantity of the ingredients is measured in terms of finger length, quantity of the leaves and certain pinch by the Bodos for preparation of medicine¹⁰. Finger length is to measure root, bark, stem, different quantities for leaves, seeds, fruits and flowers and pinch is for the measurement of powdered medicine. The treatment duration of ailments varied from one to seven days based on the nature of disease.

Almost every Bodo village is expected to have an *Oja*, who has sufficient knowledge for preparing medicines from medicinal

plants for the purpose of curing all types of diseases. They have their own method of diagnosing the diseases and preparing medicines. The *Oja* keeps readymade pills for common ailments like cold, flu etc. The plant materials are kept in the form of powder or hanged in the kitchen so that it could be used during emergency. According to Dr Kameswar Brahma, *Oja* or the medicine man are those who chants mantras during *puja* and can please the god and goddesses easily¹¹. The Bodos believe that the diseases are created by deities. It is stated that “With the help of the *Oja* or *Deodhani* (Deodini), they find out the deity by whom the disease is created or caused and then with the help of *mantra* they worship the particular deity and while the deity is pleased, the disease is removed¹²”.

Natural illness and evil effected illness are the two types of illnesses that are categorized by the Bodos. They believe that natural illness can be given treatment either by traditional medicine or modern medicine. On the other hand, evil effected illness is caused either by their family god due to his dissatisfaction for some reason or by the evil spirit or witchcraft. It is believed that some *Ojas*, who had acquired the knowledge to deal with the evil spirit can driven away the evil spirits and they are the only persons who can handle such problems or treat the evil effected illness¹³.

Following are some medicinal plants and their uses which are used by the Bodos since long:

Amlai is one of the effective traditional herbal medicines and it is widely used by the Bodos to treat various diseases for long time. The scientific name of *Amlai* is *Phyllanthus emblica* and it belongs to the *Phyllantaceae* family. It is beneficial for

allergy, hair growth, indigestion etc. Almost all parts of the plant are used by the Bodos as medicine especially the fruit, leaves and barks. Extraction by decoction and crushing method are the most common traditional method of the Bodos to obtain medicine from *Amlai*¹⁴.

Dubri Bilai is traditionally used to treat all types of bleeding and skin troubles by the Bodos since long time. It has a wide range of uses and has plenty of medicinal value. The scientific name of *Dubri Bilai* is *Cynodon dactylon*. It belongs to the *Poaceae* family. The extracts of the whole plant are used as medicine to treat various diseases. To obtain medicine from *Dubri Bilai*, firstly, its fresh grass is crushed and juice is mixed with warm milk and taken. For external wounds and to stop bleeding, a paste of *Dubri Bilai* is used by the Bodos¹⁵.

Khangsisa is traditionally used by the Bodos to treat various diseases. The scientific name of *Khangsisa* is *Leucas aspera*. It belongs to the *Lamiaceae* family. It is beneficial to bleeding, pain and painful swellings. Its extract obtained by decoction is also used by the Bodos as medicine to reduce high fever. Extract from raw leaves are very effective to nosebleeds. Flowers are also used as medicine. Mixed with warm honey is used as an effective medicine by the Bodos to treat cough and cold in children¹⁶.

Neem has been extensively used by the Bodos to treat various diseases since long. The scientific name of *Neem* is *Azadirachta indica* belonging to the *Maliaceae* family. Almost all parts of the *Neem* tree are used as traditional medicine to treat various diseases. *Neem* is beneficial to allergy, skin ulcers, gum disease and eye-disorders etc. Traditionally, Bodo people used the twigs of *Neem*

to clean their teeth. It is also used by the Bodos as insecticides and so leaves are placed in their beds, books, grain bins, and closet to keep away troublesome bugs. The pests obtained from raw *Neem* leaves can relieve skin infections like acne. Its extracts obtained by decoction is very effective for various skin diseases¹⁷.

Manimuni is used to treat various diseases by the Bodos since long. The scientific name of *Manimuni* is *Centella asiatica* belonging to the *Apiaceae* family. Almost all parts of the plant are used as medicine. Apart from wound healing, it is beneficial for fever, diarrhoea, burns, ulcers etc. Decoction and crushing are the traditionally used method of the Bodos to obtain medicines from *Manimuni*. Sometimes, the paste of raw leaves are mixed with ghee and consumed to increase memory power¹⁸.

Traditionally, *Thaigir* is used for the relief of hair related problems, cough, cold, jaundice etc. The scientific name of *Thaigir* is *Dillenia indica* belonging to the *Dilleniaceae* family. It is beneficial for hair growth and is very effective for cough. Extracts obtained by decoction is regarded as a very effective traditional medicine to cure cough by the Bodos. Since long time, jelly like content inside the fruit is used as shampoo by them and to treat dandruff and falling hair¹⁹.

Kamranga commonly known as star fruit bears a great significance in traditional medicine. The scientific name *Kamranga* is *Averrhoa carambola* belonging to the family of *Averrhoaceae*. Since long time, *Kamranga* fruit has been used as a traditional medicine by Bodos and can be eaten either raw or cooked. Sometimes this fruit is cooked with crab and taken as remedy for jaundice and high blood pressure²⁰.

Khipi bendwng is a climber and is used by the Bodos as traditional medicine since long. The scientific name of *Khipi bendwng* is *Paediria foetida* belonging to the *Rubiaceae* family. It is beneficial and useful in relieving a number of diseases like jaundice, rheumatism, diarrhoea, dysentery and liver damage etc. Its fresh leaf has the same smell like the human fart and can be consumed either raw or cooked²¹.

Sumfram has a wide range of medicinal properties. The scientific name of *Sumfram* is *Psidium guajava* belonging to the *Myrtaceae* family. The guava fruit is rich in vitamin C and have a number of health benefits. The fresh raw leaf's extract with a cup of milk is being used by the Bodos as medicine for diarrhoea, dysentery etc²².

Haldwi is used as herbal medicine by the Bodos since long time. The scientific name of *Haldwi* is *Curcuma longa*. It belongs to the family of *Zingiberaceae*. *Haldwi* is used by the Bodos as traditional medicine to treat inflammation - both inside and out. An extract made from the raw *Haldwi* can heal various problems like wound healing, skin diseases, small pox, chicken pox, liver disease and arthritis²³.

Sijou is not only considered as a religious plant but also as a medicine for various diseases. The scientific name of *Sijou* is *Euphorbia ligularia roxb* belonging to the *Euphorbeaceae* family. It is beneficial for various diseases like tumor, piles, inflammation, fever, cough, anemia and ulcers etc. Only the young plant is used as medicine and can be consumed either raw or cooked. Since long time, Bodos have been using it as one of the effective traditional antiviral medicine²⁴.

Haizeng is used by the Bodos as medicine to treat various diseases for long time. The scientific name of *Haizeng* is *Zingiber officinale* belonging to the family of *Zingiberaceae*. It is consumed as a preventive measure against flu, indigestion, vomiting etc. Horizontal stem from which the roots grow is the main portion of ginger that is consumed. Zinger can be used fresh, dried, powdered as or a juice²⁵.

As a medicinal plant, *Bwrma dari* is used by the Bodos since long. The scientific name of *Bwrma dari* is *Ageratum conyzoides*. It belongs to the family of *Asteraceae*. *Bwrma dari* is beneficial for dysentery, diarrhoea and its extracts are very effective to heal wounds and bleeding. It is also used by the Bodos as traditional insecticide and can be consumed either raw or cooked. Paste of fresh leaves is very effective for wounds and is used as primary traditional medicine for cuts, burns and bleedings²⁶.

Bel is used as medicine for various ailments like, diarrhoea, dysentery, liver problem, indigestion and all the stomach related problems by the Bodos since long time. All parts of this tree are used for curing human ailments. The scientific name of *Bel* is *Aegle marmelos* belonging to the family of *Rutaceae*. *Bel* fruits are considered as traditional medicine by the Bodos for constipation, gastric problems and diarrhoea. Its fleshy inner part of the fruit is used by the Bodos as medicine to heal all stomach related problems since long time²⁷.

Jabrang is one of the medicinal plants used by the Bodos since long time. The scientific name of *Jabrang* is *Xanthoxylumrhest* belonging to the family of *Rutaceae*. Its leaf and fruit are beneficial to various diseases like urinary disease,

stomach problems, cholera etc. The Bodo people consumed its seeds as an appetizer also²⁸.

Singri is used by the Bodos to treat various diseases like, fever, urinary tract infection, diarrhoea, muscular swelling, boils and pimples. The scientific name of *Singri* is *Oxalis corniculata*. It belongs to the family of *Oxalidaceae*. The whole plant is used as medicine by the Bodos. Extracts may be obtained by decoction and used as a medicine for gum problems. Fresh leaves paste is used as effective traditional medicine by the Bodos for burns and wounds²⁹.

Sibing is used as medicine by the Bodos since long. The scientific name of *Sibing* is *Sesumum indicum* belonging to the family of Pedaliaceae. *Sibing* seeds have one of the highest oil contents in any seed. The decoction of both leaves and roots and paste of *Sibing* seeds has been found to be very effective against chicken pox and used also for hair growth by the Bodos since long time³⁰.

Young leaves of *Saldaokhumwi* and shoots are used as medicine by the Bodos for blood dysentery. The scientific name of *Saldaokhumwi* is *Nephrodium cucallatum*. It belongs to the family of *Polypodiaceae*. Whole parts of the plant are believed to be having medicinal value. Its juice obtained by traditional crushing method is a very effective medicine for dysentery. Wearing its root in neck as garland is regarded by the Bodos as traditional medicine to heal jaundice³¹.

Maisundri has a wide range of benefits and is used as traditional medicine to treat pneumonia, hypertension, constipation

etc. The scientific name of *Maisundri* is *Houttuynia cordata*. It belongs to the family of *Piperaceae*. Extracts of *Maisundri* leaves by decoction is used in the treatment of cough, wounds, fever, acidity and various stomach problems. Young shoots are sometimes cooked with fish and consumed as curry to treat various diseases by the Bodos³².

Tulushi plant has many medicinal properties. It is not only considered as a holy plant but it is also a medicine for various diseases. The scientific name of *Thulushi* is *Ocimum sanctum*. It belongs to the family of *Lamiaceae*. *Thulushi* is beneficial for various diseases and can be consumed either raw or cooked. Whole plant is used as medicine by the Bodos since long time. Their leaves have expectorant properties and are beneficial for bronchitis, influenza and asthma. Extracts of raw leaves is used for colds, congestion, throat troubles and cough. Paste of fresh *Thulushi* leaves is a very effective traditional medicine of the Bodos for skin troubles like acne and itching. Since long time, juice extracts from fresh *Thulushi* leaves is used as eye drops for eye itching and its extracts is obtained by decoction and is used by the Bodos as medicine to reduce high fever³³.

Ushumwi is used as the traditional remedial agent for toothache, throat infection etc by the Bodos since long time. The scientific name of *Ushumwi* is *Spilanthes acmella* and it is from the family of *Asteraceae*. The whole plant is used as medicine by the Bodos. A decoction of leaves and flower is known as traditional remedy for toothache and sore throat. Sometimes the flowers are taken with warmed honey to treat severe cough³⁴.

These are some of the medicinal plants used by the Bodos which are free from side effects. Most of the medicinal plants mentioned above are prescribed to take orally either in the form of juice, paste or pills. Apart from these, some medicinal plants are also being used by the Bodos as a garland and sometimes tied in wrist. Besides these, many more medicinal plants, medicinal vegetables and fruits are also known to the Bodos.

Herbal medicine is always beneficial. It has been used for so many years till today. In this endeavour, an attempt has been made to study traditional knowledge on healing practices and medicinal plants have of the Bodos. Medicinal plants proved to be the major remedy in the traditional system of medicine. It provides humankind a large variety of medicine to eradicate infections and suffering from many diseases. The Bodo people have been using medicines extracted from the medicinal plants since long time. In order to be free from side effects, the ratio of curative measurement, applied to different diseases are very important and traditional medicines need. In fact, a point worth mentioning is that most of the modern medicines are also herbal based medicines. According to the informant's response, some of the most mentioned threats to medicinal plants are due to agricultural expansion and lack of care and deforestation³⁵. As a result, many medicinal plants are under serious threat. Therefore, to preserve and conserve the medicinal plants, the role of the local people and creating awareness among them through training may be encouraged.

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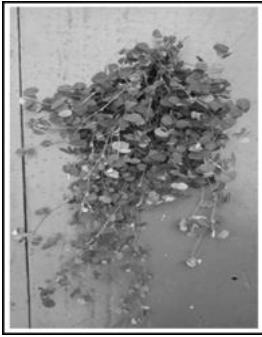


Fig.1. *Singri*

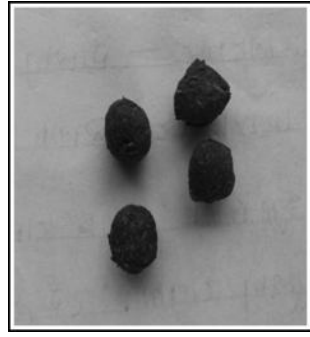


Fig.2. *Jahura*



Fig.3. *Dubri Bilai*



Fig.4. *Sumfram*



Fig.5. *Na Deona*



Fig.6. *Bwrma dari*



Fig.7. *Khangsisa*



Fig.8. *Thulushi Raja*



Fig.9. *Manimuni*



Fig.10. Collected Herbs



Fig.11. Soup for Cough



Fig.12. *Neem bilai*



Fig.13. Dry Fish



Fig.14. *Ushumwi*

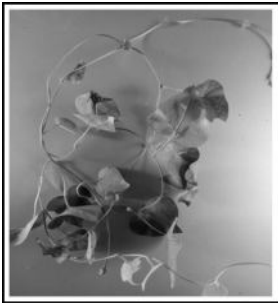


Fig.15. *Pwnel khuga*



Fig.16. Wearing plant to heal
Jaundice



Fig.17. Traditional method of
preparing medicines (pills)

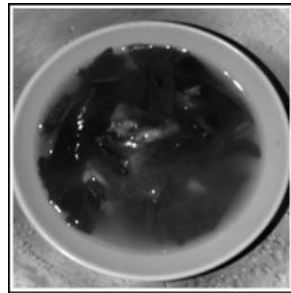


Fig.18. Soup prepared with different
medicinal leaves and dried chicken
legs for severe cold and cough.



THE HISTORICAL USE OF INDIGENOUS MILLETS IN TAMILNADU - THEIR DISUSE AND THE CURRENT RESURGENCE

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Abstract

Tamilnadu has been a consumer of cereals like rice, wheat and millets from times as early as the Sangam era (300 BC-300CE). With the climatic unpredictability and rainfall shortages in most areas, foods like millets lent themselves to dry and arid farming while rice and wheat were wetland crops, thus supplying the people with cereals and millets throughout the year. But a growing population, import cuts, famine, drought situations and acute food shortages brought about the birth of the 'Green revolution' started in post-Independence India in (1960-70). This strategized planning brought in High Yield Varieties of rice, wheat and maize that were designed to overcome the famine and shortage crisis. Along with these high

yielding varieties of rice (in the south) and wheat (in the north), the farmers were introduced to modern farming equipment, fertilizers and pesticides. The High Yield Varieties increased the production of these cereals dramatically. But, this, in turn, resulted in the loss of many indigenous rice varieties and reduced the uses and production of millets by farmers. However, recognizing their value, there is a new wave to revive, substitute and use indigenous millets (of which there are more than 10-15 varieties). Millets have also shown an intrinsic nutritional superiority (with regard to fibre and nutrient content) to the present type of polished, refined rice that is in prevalent use. A new wave of 'Millet Movement' has started to popularize millets through various dishes and has created a new awareness of its health and acceptability profile.

Objectives of this review;

- *To trace the history of eating patterns in India from the time when millets were the commonly-used staples of the day and to understand the reasons for the changes that have occurred, contributing to its disuse.*
- *To review some of the influences that changed the Tamilnadu Eating Pattern Profile and to recognize the resurgence of the use of millets with the concomitant increase in health awareness.*

Keywords: *Millets, Polished Rice, HYVP, Green Revolution, Nutrition Transition, C4 Crops, Millet Movement*

History of the use and disuse of cereals and millets

The *Perum pānātrupadai* of Sangam circa 300 BC to 300 BCE describes the use of rice as well as millets like Kodo millet (*varagu*). In this period, the use of broad beans, lentils, tamarind pulp and bamboo rice have been ascribed to people in the hilly areas (*kurinji*). Sangam literature (circa 300 BC to 300 CE) refers to cooking methods, such as direct fire cooking, frying and sun-drying. There are descriptions of the use of Foxtail millet (*tinai*), little millet (*samai*) and Kodo millet (*varagu*), rice, meat, spinach, vegetables, dry cereals, pulses and legumes as diet staples.¹ Kajale² and Srinivasan³ trace the growth of cereals, millets and lentils in the period between 1100 BCE and 800 BCE).

While the use of rice has also been delineated, a review of historical writings suggests that this cereal was not accorded the level of popularity in the early years as it has been given today. The ease of cultivation of millets even in the dry seasons or in arid areas may have been contributory causes to the sustained use of millets in the diet. While rice harvesting demanded an abundance of water supply, the more arid regions or dry seasons of the year allowed a harvesting of a variety of millets.–

“Thus were the arts of agriculture developed to such perfection in early days that modern science can add but little to the traditional wisdom of the South Indian farmer”⁴. Whether it was millets or rice, growing one’s food and harvesting was emphasized.

The importance of agriculture has been touted by the great poet, Thiruvalluvar. (200 BCE-200 CE). The *Thirukkural* (1033)⁵ clearly describes the importance of agriculture, stating that:

“உழுதுண்டு வாழ்வாரே வாழ்வார் மற்றெல்லாம்
தொழுதுண்டு பின் செல்பவர்”

*“Who ploughing eat their food, they truly live; The rest to others
bend subservient, eating what they give”*

The *Puṛaṇānūru* (333 CE), cites the use of different millets:

வரகும் தினையும் உள்ளவை எல்லாம்
இரவல் மாக்கள் உணக்கொளத்தீர்ந்தெனக்
குறித்துமாறு எதிர்ப்பை பெறாஅமையின்
குரல்உணங்கு விதைத்தினை உரல்வாய்ப்பெய்து
சிறிது புறப்பட்டன்றோவிலளேதன்னூர்

*“O poets, because the housewife, since all her common millets and
little millets have been given to those in need, and unable to give
anything else, will set the clusters of millets that was set aside for
seed on her pounding stone, and feed you, before she lets you go.”*

Below is a recipe listing the combined ingredients of rice and
millets:

சிறுதலைத்துருவின் பழுப்பு உறுவிளைதயிர், இதைப்புனவரகின்
அவைப்புமாண் அரிசியோடு, கார்வாய்த்து ஒழிந்த ஈர்வாய்ப்புற்றத்து
ஈயல்பெய்து அட்டஇன்புளி வெஞ்சோறு சேதான் வெண்ணெய்
வெம்புறத்து உருக, இளையர்அருந்த, பின்றை, நீயும் - *Aganānūru*
- Poet Unknown 394:

சிறியதலையையுடைய செம்மறி ஆட்டினது பழுப்புநிறம்
போன்ற முற்றியதயிரிலே, கொல்லையில் விளைந்த வரகின்
குற்றிய அரிசியோடு, கார்காலத்து மழையில் நனைந்து ஈரமான

வாயிலையுடைய புற்றிலிருந்து வெளிப்படுகின்ற ஈயலையும்
சேர்த்துச்சமைத்த இனிதான குடான புளியஞ்சோற்றினைப், பசுவின்
வெண்ணையானது வெப்பம் காரணமாக உருகிக்கொண்டிருக்க,
உன் ஏவலாளர் அருந்துவர் என்கிறது.

The above recipe from the Sangam era describes an elaborate meal thus: “*The curds from the milk of the sheep with a small head, cooked with the milled varagu millet (cultivated in the backyard during the rainy season), mixed with the winged white ant and the mixture melted with cow ghee was eaten by the working class.*” (Agnanūru - 394)

Sangam Literature describes many visitors and invaders of the southern part of India and their food habits must have invaded the local cuisine as well, with the advent of food items like saffron, fennel and fenugreek. Some of these were probably adopted into Ayurvedic practice. Throughout this period, the use of millets and cereals as staples seem to have continued.

Although this article focusses on the use and disuse of millets, mention must be made here of the cultivation of rice as one of the main staples of Tamilnadu. Rice (*Oryza sativa*) was domesticated 10,000-4,000 years ago. The origin of the word rice – from the Latin oriza arising from the Greek *oruza* - is suggested to have come from the Tamil *arisi*. There is archaeological evidence of rice from Adichanallur (2000 BCE-200 CE), Kunrathur (300 BCE), both in Tamilnadu and Periapuram, Kerala (100 CE-400 CE)⁶. Thus, rice cultivation in southern India should have been well developed and perfected at least 5,000 years ago⁷.

Inscriptions of the ninth to twelfth centuries from Tamilnadu indicate that rice yields were high, even by modern standards⁸. Epigraphical evidences of the late Chola period (thirteenth century) refer to the cultivation of *kār* rice variety while Tamil literature lists more than 150 varieties of rice with special names, based on their morphology, given to each. At this time, there were two crops in a year: *sambā* and *kuruvai*. C.C. Princep's report to the East India Company on Madras Presidency (1885) and J.A. Volcker's report on the improvement of Indian agriculture (1893) are useful records of the state of agriculture, especially rice cultivation, in Madras Presidency⁹.

The southern dynasties constructed several tanks and canals to encourage rice cultivation. The Pallavas were the greatest builder of irrigation reservoirs or *eri*, many of which are still in an excellent state of preservation today. The greatest of these was Mahendravarman Pallava (600-630 CE), who built the Mahendra *tatākam* at Mahendravadi and enlarged the Perumpidugu *vāykāl* (canal)¹⁰. According to Kasakkudi copper plates, Nandivarman Pallava re-built the Tiraiyan *Eri*, enlarging the earlier reservoir built by Ilan Tiraiyan (190 CE). In the Pallava period, a vast network of tanks, canals and wells were built for irrigation of rice fields by *jala sutrada* or engineers. The construction of irrigation tanks soon led to social inequalities, for the rich landowners obtained lands near the tanks and cut canals into their lands¹¹. In the 2nd century CE, Karikala Chola built the anicut across the Kaveri, for agriculture, for which he cut down forests and established villages and tanks. The Cholas were great builders of irrigation systems. Sangam literature delineates the spread of rice cultivation and the prevalent irrigation methods. Since many plains of Tamilnadu have an average rainfall of less than 1000 mm and were described

as *vānam pārtha bhūmi*¹². With all these efforts, rice cultivation expanded in Tamilnadu. Further fillip was given in the British period when agricultural lands were expanded in order to increase taxation revenue.

The rise in the use of rice as the main staple in Tamilnadu

Space does not permit a review of the changes in diet over the subsequent centuries and the focus of this article is on the changes that have occurred in the Eating Pattern Profile of Tamilnadu today. But as a result of the ‘Green Revolution’ introduced in 1960-1970, the use of rice increased and the use of millets steadily declined in South India. ‘Despite their nutritional qualities and climate resilience, the consumption of finger millets in India declined by 47 per cent, while intake of other small millets fell by 83 per cent in the last five decades’, according to Karthikeyan of Dhan Foundation¹³.

As India’s population grew to make it the world’s second most populous country, severe food shortages developed. “The government of India, after independence wanted to make India self-dependent in terms of food-grain production and these efforts coincided with the development of high-yielding varieties of seeds of wheat developed by Norman Borlaug and his associates in Mexico”¹⁴.

India’s post-Independence years witnessed a struggle between a newly-formed Indian Government trying to meet the food shortages of a growing population and farm lands that were dependent on archaic methods of farming. Modernization of farming techniques and the thrust to realize a high yield with the use of fertilizers and pesticides, selective farming of high-yielding crops and extensive farming yield were all part of the agricultural

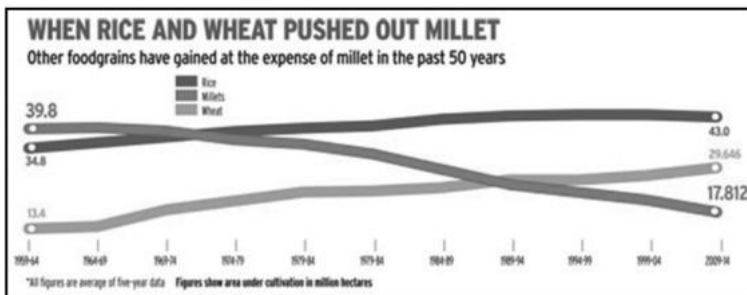
policy of the new Green Revolution of the 1960s that ‘paved the way’ for the increased production of rice, wheat and maize crops¹⁵. bringing success to the Green Revolution. However, Shetty states that while the High Yielding Variety Program (HYVP) improved the rate of production of rice, wheat and maize, it resulted in a ‘gradual decrease in coarse cereal grain production – like pearl millet, kodo millet, foxtail millet, little millet and barnyard millet’¹⁶ The global production of cereals increased by 174% between 1950 and 1990 while the global population increased by 110%. as per Otero and Pechlaner¹⁷. Ehrlich and Myrdal describe how the increased production of cereals enabled the nations to feed their growing population and averting the Malthusian scenario predicted in the 1960s¹⁸.

This, according to Pandian et al,¹⁹ has steered the country towards displacing ‘thousands of locally cultivated indigenous species of coarse cereal crops’ with the new high yielding varieties. The HYVP in India were mainly focused on five major food grains: rice, wheat, maize, jowar and bajra. These hybrid varieties of food crops were more responsive to fertilizer, were drought-resistant, and had a shorter growing period. But of these crops, jowar, bajra and maize were stigmatized as a poor man’s food, and with declining demands, farmers stopped growing them. Meanwhile the government’s Public Distribution System (PDS), providing cheap grains to the poor, played a key role in pushing nutritionally rich millet away from the plate²⁰.

The need for a resurgence in the use of millets

The Green Revolution of India was initiated by introducing the high yielding varieties of rice and wheat to increase the production in order to mitigate hunger and poverty, but Keshari

and Mishra write that ‘after a few decades of the Green Revolution, the production of millets had gone down, and the traditional rice varieties consumed prior to the Green revolution, had become non-existent, and the availability of local rice varieties had decreased²¹. Thus, India has lost more than one lakh varieties of indigenous rice after the 1970s that took several thousand years to evolve²². Gopalan attributes the ‘virtual disappearance of millet from the diet of a large section of Indian population to the over-emphasis on rice and wheat production’ and cites this as one of the ‘deleterious side effect of the Green Revolution’²³.



Source: Agricultural Census, Ministry of Agriculture

There is another factor that has impacted the Eating Pattern Profile of Tamilnadu, through the advent of ‘fast food products’. An ever-growing commercial food industry popularized packaged, processed convenience ‘fast’ foods using social media as an effective conduit to capture the market targeting populations of all ages. Success in this area has also been aided by urbanization. These factors have acted in concert to bring about changes in the traditional eating pattern. There has been a sharp rise in processed, packaged, ‘junk’ foods including soda, potato chips, fried foods, sweetened juices and drinks²⁴. India’s fast-food industry is growing by 40 percent a year and statistically India is in the 10th place in fast food per capita spending²⁵.

But, with the rise of diabetes and with an increasing number of people becoming ‘prone to diabetes, skewed lipid profiles and various lifestyle diseases’, history will chronicle how communities are mindfully switching over to a high-fibre nutritious diet. Fortunately, to keep up with demands, most varieties of millets seem to be well known for their hardiness and have the capacity to withstand prolonged periods of drought, high temperatures and still produce grains and fodder. Tamilnadu had been characterized as a ‘rice bowl’ where ‘a south Indian plate or *thaali* usually comprised of lemon rice, *sambar* rice, *rasam* rice and curd rice but today, ‘millet mania’ seems to have taken centre stage where a variety of millets and millet preparations are being substituted for rice and rice dishes, bringing in an added appeal of being ‘healthful and wholesome’²⁶.

A ‘Millet Movement’ in the country, according to Pandian et al,²⁷ can help to improve the health of the country by replacing the current use of high glycemic polished rice and refined wheat like *maida* with the low glycemic, high fibre, nutritionally richer millets. This revival of the use of millets and the increased cultivation of ‘climate-smart’ millets will not only be a sustainable step in agronomics but also contribute to improving the quality of the Indian diet²⁸. Jhaver shows how ‘the magic of millets’ compares well against the nutritional composition of wheat and rice²⁹. So, the cultivation of millets has come a full cycle - from feeding India through dry and drought times to falling out of favour and now resurfacing with growing acclaim.

Conclusion

Today, scientific studies have established the relationship between diet, disease and health. We are witnessing the whole

world turning back to traditional foods that include whole grains and millets and the food industry is trying to keep pace by exploring new and healthy ways to use them. The Indian food scene is also currently in the process of change where the dominant white rice and wheat/maida staples have had to yield to a competing array of millet dishes that are being created to appeal to taste, cost and nutritive richness.

There is also a growing population that is sensitive to foods like the gluten in wheat. To meet such challenges, ingenious, commercial, gluten - free grains and millets have come to the rescue and gluten-free dishes have carved out a niche for themselves in the supermarket shelves. Thus, the disuse of millets seems to have been a temporary aberration. Scientific research is also showing us that choosing from a wide array of choices in staples - from rice and wheat to millets, may even go a long way to improve the health of the nation's population.

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Book Review - 1

INDRAPRASTHA

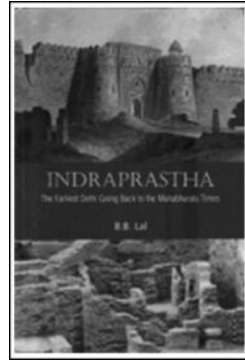
The Earliest Delhi Going Back to the
Mahabharata Times

Author: B.B. Lal

Publisher: Aryan Books International,
New Delhi

Year: 2021

ISBN: 78-81-7305-646-8



Delhi has always been described as 7 cities within one, beginning from Lal Kot/Qila Rai Pithora, a Rajput settlement, followed by Siri, Tughlakabad, Jahanpanah, Feroze Shah Kotla, Purana Qila and Shahjahanabad.

The eminent archaeologist Dr. B.B. Lal was dissatisfied with these descriptions of the antiquity of the city. An Ashokan Rock Edict was discovered in the Srinivasपुरi area off Outer Ring Road in South-east Delhi, which was obviously meant to be read by local people. Where did those people live? he wondered. The answer could be Indraprastha, mentioned in the *Mahabharata*. The region in and around Khandavaprastha on the banks of the river Yamuna, was burnt down by the Pandavas in order to build the beautiful city of Indraprastha. Indraprastha is also mentioned in *Jataka* No.515, which speaks of Indapatta (Indraprastha)

in the Kuru kingdom, whose ruler was Dhananjaya. Yudhittila (Yudhishtira) is also mentioned in the *Jataka*.

Several inscriptions also mention Delhi. The Naraina stone inscription dated to 1327 CE mentions ‘a province named Hariyana in which lies the city of Dilli’. Another inscription discovered in Raisina, the site of Rashtrapati Bhavan, dated to 1328 CE, mentions the construction of a well in the village of Saravala in the *pratigaṇa* (*paragaṇa*) of Indraprastha.

Inspired by references to the ancient city, Dr. Lal chose to excavate the region. He began in the area bounded by the fortifications built by Humayun and Sher Shah, known locally as Indraprastha. Painted Grey Ware (PGW) pottery, which is common to all the *Mahabharata* sites including Hastinapur, was found there. PGW pottery goes back to 1000 BCE. At the next level they found Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW). The houses, according to Dr. Lal, were made of mud and there were no kiln-fired bricks in Period 1. There were several interconnected *chulhas* used for large-scale cooking. Subsequently, a ring well was found. From 200 BCE onwards, the region was ruled by Sungas. Some Kushana terracotta figurines, belonging to the Kushana period and later, were also discovered. Obviously, Indraprastha or Dilli had a long history.

Dr. Lal goes on to discuss the historicity of the *Mahabharata*. Firstly, Krishna lived earlier than the Buddha, who lived in the 6th-5th century BCE. The *Mahabharata* was first called Jaya with 8000 verses and later Bharata with 24,000 verses. The *Mahabharata*, he says, ‘was not meant to be a history book. It is an epic’. The

PGW culture is the lowest common denominator at all the sites associated with the *Mahabharata*, including Hastinapur. In contrast to the earlier Harappans, the PGW people manufactured axes, nails, hooks, tongs, arrowheads, spearheads and daggers made of iron. Glass was also introduced in this period. The mainstay of life in PGW regions was agriculture and cattle breeding.

The *Mahabharata* describes the game of dice between the Kauravas and the Pandavas at which the latter lost everything. Interestingly, excavations in PGW sites have yielded oblong dice made of bone with the required number of holes. The board must have been made of cloth which is why it has not survived.

Dr. Lal found evidence of a great flood which washed away a considerable part of Hastinapur. Periods 3, 4 and 5 would have been washed away, leaving periods 1 and 2. Ochre Colour Ware of Period 1 does not occur at the sites associated with the *Mahabharata* whereas Period 2, namely the PGW, is present at all of the *Mahabharata* sites. The flood at Hastinapur is mentioned by the *Matsya Purana* and *Vayu Purana*, which say that when Hastinapur was carried away by the Ganga, Nichaksu abandons it and lives in Kausambi. Obviously, the capital was shifted from Indraprastha to Kausambi.

Dr. Lal traces the date of the *Mahabharata* war, working backwards from the reign of Udayana of Kausambi. He thus calculates that the Kurukshetra war took place around 900 BCE.

The book is a fascinating result of a study of the inter-relationship of archaeology and literature. Dr. Lal is the doyen

of Indian archaeology, and his reasoning is coherent and comprehensible. India's capital is reliably 3000 years old. He has discarded several theories to come to his conclusion. This book is essential reading for every Indian Historian.

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Book Review - 2

DIVINE SOUNDS from the HEART

Author: Rekha Pande
Publisher: Cambridge Scholars Publishing
New Delhi
Year: 2010 and reprinted in 2020



The book under review was published as a paperback in 2010 and then again as a hardbound copy in 2020, owing to popular demand. While there are a large number of books on *bhakti*, the special treatment to women *bhaktas* is the most important catch of the book and traverses the length and breadth of the subcontinent through the long temporal canvas of more than 1000 years, during which the *bhakti* movement spread from Tamilagam in the deep South to northern and eastern India constantly mutating, innovating and also responding to new situations and questions. Conventional scholarship on *bhakti* has also treated this question of the context as to where unique and creative responses marked the idea of *bhakti* as a lived experience, and this is analysed in detail here to point out some shortcomings in the earlier narratives that drew from colonial characterisations of Indian religion. What makes this book different is the stress on women *bhaktas* and their contributions in this process of the *bhakti* movement, not just as a

complementary to the male bhaktas, but as individuals and parts of movements in their own right, articulating their agency and also their problems in their voices.

The book is divided into seven chapters followed by an appendix on women saints that includes this spatial and the temporal context and also the social groups from which they hailed. The first chapter begins with an introduction that sets the tone and this chapter is titled as a history of religion: problems and possibilities of locating women in the Indian context. This is a historiographical and methodological essay on the state of religious studies in India and how certain Eurocentric assumptions have marred our understanding of the Indian reality and thus obscured many aspects of the sources through forms of reading and in this case it is the women who have been obscured from the religious narratives. This chapter unsettles the whole idea of Hinduism as a monolithic religion that was based on the colonial classification, and which heavily drew from Christianity, and thus was internalised by the Indians and did considerable damage to the discourse on Hinduism.

This is also continued and with reference to the primary sources in chapter 2, where the beginnings of *bhakti* are debated with a critical appraisal of the sources and their reception, which compliments the first chapter in challenging the colonial paradigms of Indic religions viewed through the prism of the dominant Western narratives. *Bhakti*, is thus a movement from the ground that had no single voice but was multivocal and this is the strength that gave it dynamism. It drew from many traditions, cultures and practices as exemplified by the Alvars, Nayanmars, the Virasaivas and the others.

The third chapter is titled as the material and ideological basis of the book. This chapter examines interrelated themes that explore the spatial and temporal context of the diverse regions of India against the background of large-scale changes. The most notable of these changes was the agrarian expansion and large-scale craft specialisation, which became the base for the emergence of regional kingdoms and at the same time, propped up new social groups. Therefore, the emergence was not just a religious phenomenon, but a reflection of the social process, which was again rooted in the materiality of everyday life. A new chapter begins with the entry of the Turks into India and in north India. Thus, it takes on a different shape from that of the earlier agrarian setting that began in the region of the Tamilagam and thus new responses were started. We, therefore, get the beginnings of the Nirgun *bhakti* of north India that was also influenced by the Sufi tradition.

Chapter 4 and 5, examines the operation of patriarchy in the Indian context and tries to understand how the multiple voices in which gender operates as a result of which women's voices are subjugated. Chapter 4 is titled as the trajectory of the *bhakti* movement and its dominant voices-a feminist critique, which traces the growth of *bhakti* from the early period in Tamil Nadu and then maps the spread of the *bhakti* to the Deccan and North India. In this chapter, the exercise is concerned not only with the idea of the success of *bhakti*. Still, it is subverted to drive home the point that though the *bhakti* movement embraced a vast number of people and extended following the dominant discourse that was articulated by men. It in no way diminishes the value of *bhakti* as the moment of social protest or reformative movement within the religious tradition. Though there are many subversions of

rituals and hierarchies in which new practices were introduced on a more egalitarian basis, one of the persistent problems was related to the question of women, and this chapter asserts that the age-old prejudices against women could not go away and thus they had a marginal place i.e., the change that was being sought. In the next chapter on women's history-patriarchy, a new forms of marginalisation: historical analysis, there is an analysis on the operation of patriarchy in various cultural values and institutions like family, class, caste, property rights, et cetera and how this has led to not only material disposition but also an erosion of considerable authority and freedom.

In Chapter 6, which is titled as the women bhaktas, childhood marriage forms the centre of the discussion and is on the women saints and their entry into the *bhakti* movement. In doing so, they utilised the sacred space to articulate descent against patriarchal norms of marriage, and thus walk out of the institution of marriage. However, we understand these women bhaktas today as deified beings in the contemporary period. They also had to face some opposition from the male bhaktas and also from society. Most of the women left their married homes like Mirabai, Andal, Gonai and a host of others except Bahina Bai who remained a housewife.

Chapter 7, which is titled sacred sounds from the heart-singing unfettered in their voices is a detailed analysis of the various narratives of the women bhaktas and argues that these voices are articulated as a religion, provided a space for them, and thus *bhakti* becomes an outlet for this articulation by entering the fold of *bhakti*, and they are able to give up their married home and all the associated problems and thus slip out of the patriarchal control and in this process, create alternative spaces for themselves.

Many of the lesser-known saints from varied backgrounds like Akkachchi, Hemambal, Lakshmi Devi or Paritikolla Nachchiar, Sorya Bai, Nirmala, Akka Bai, Jahana Bai etc. are discussed here and also in other chapters. Many of them were only a footnote in the earlier books, and they hail from all castes and communities, and this makes the canvas of the women bhaktas a vibrant and diverse representation.

The last chapter is titled as the conclusion, where the main arguments are encapsulated and here the chapter argues that all the saints are in their ways, questioning the existing system of religion and thus promoted religious egalitarianism.

This book is interesting due to the methodology used which does not just limit itself to historical methodology but uses methods from gender studies, literature and contemporary writing to talk of the women bhaktas. It points out that, as in the case of the male bhaktas, if we are to search for the historical figures of the women bhaktas, we will hit a wall. There is very little information on them. This was mostly an oral tradition. Most of the traditional sources available for writing about the past are very elitist, male biased, and women's voices are totally absent from these. None of these women have been patronized by any court biographers, nor is any religious hagiography available about them from the time they deemed to have inhabited. Much of their history has been reconstructed much later by writers and biographers from the emergent middle class and over the period, there have been many interpolations. Yet many of these women bhaktas go much beyond the shadowy realms of the past and are very much alive today in popular culture and the day-to-day life of an average Hindu household. We have to hence turn to the collective memories and

remembrances that are based on their bhajans and poems. This book would be of great interest to scholars interested in history, comparative religion and Asian Studies.

The book is at one level a critique against the mainstream narrative of *bhakti* in the traditional narratives and historiography. This critique is based on the limitations of *bhakti* when it comes to the gender question. In the second level, the book also talks about the celebration of a large number of women who became part of the book. The appendix at the end of the book serves well to illustrate the profile of the different women *bhakti* saints in various parts of the country.

M.N. Rajesh

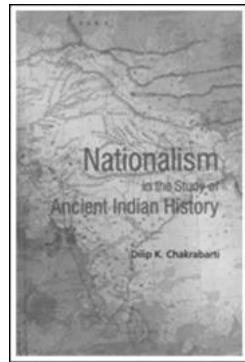
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Book Review - 3

NATIONALISM in the Study of Ancient Indian History

Author: Dilip K .Chakrabarthy
Publisher: Aryan Books International,
New Delhi
Year: 2021
ISBN: 978-81-7305-648-2



The author has chartered a fresh course in this book and has travelled a territory that has long been thought to have been an unbreakable citadel of the ideological forces holding to ransom the writing of history and the very thinking of historical scholarship in academics. The author goes about destroying the myth of writing history in a clinical and scientific manner, the very tools that were used by the leftists to consolidate their view points of history as History. “Nationalism in the Study of ancient Indian History” by Dilip K. Chakrabarthy, has been an exercise of the mind to bring out the importance and role of the pioneers, the traditionalists or the Nationalists. It is with this framework that the author draws or redraws the contours of understanding Nationalism in Ancient India and its role in history writing.

He writes, “it has long been alleged that the pioneer Indian Scholars of ancient Indian History were ‘nationalists’ and ‘Hindu

revivalists'. 'Pernicious' is also an adjective thrown at them. This word could have multiple meanings from being malicious to being destructive. For this, the book is a cause and the present volume scrutinizes the evolving research scenario and concludes that "these pioneer historians never willfully distorted any historical evidence and thus nationalism did not stand in a way of objective historical investigations."

The allegations leveled against them by Communists roughly since the 1960s were nothing but propaganda ploys to draw attention to themselves as 'progressives' and thus capture the Indian Council for Historical Research (ICHR), a government-supported institution in the field of history. He stresses the point that 'the period of communist dominance in this arena is about the darkest period in the history of ancient Indian historical research in the country since the late nineteenth century, when Indian scholars began to research ancient India in increasing numbers'. Further, the author argues that no commitment to a particular ideology with its obsession with the Aryans and the Sarasvati will help rigorous professional research on ancient India. The book also contains a detailed discussion on Rabindranath Tagore's and Sister Nivedita's ideas of Indian history.

There are five major chapters with sub-topics and analysis and a clinically written conclusion. The book chooses a path that runs on the historiographical methodology of ancient Indian history as an area of conflict.

The Nationalist books and articles were not considered models of historical writing by those who came into power in the world of Indian history after 1972. An important part of the

present book is to critically examine the character and originality of what was attempted to be introduced in ancient Indian historical studies by those who criticized the writings of their predecessors as Nationalist. The thoughts of certain outstanding personalities of history such as Rabindranath Tagore and Sister Nivedita are also analysed.

To argue that the British twisted the study of Ancient India is not enough. He concludes by saying that there is no indication to infer that the historians on the side of the present political power are even aware of the magnitude of the problem.

In the first phase till 1910, where he talks about Rajendra Lala Mitra, Bhagavanlal Indrajī, R.G.Bhandarkar, Ramesh Chandra Dutta, Hariprasad Sastri, Radhakumud Mukherjee, Kasi Prasad Jayaswal and Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, there is absolute analysis of these historians. He says that the late 19th century and earlier concerns in the figure ranges in Indian studies were primarily with the decipherment analysis and publication of primary data, including literary text instructions, coins, architecture and sculpture. Major archaeological survey also began in this period along with major architectural studies. It took a long time for Indian scholars to come to the fore and he has drawn attention to a few of them. The pride of place has to be given to Rajendra Lal Mitra and Bhagwan Lal Indrajī in the volume on the temples of Odisha and architectural ruins of Buddha Gaya, including the Mahabodhi Temple. R.C. Majumdar has done immense work and was a historian *par excellence*. His books stand for scholarship and meticulous writing and are proof by themselves.

He talks about D.D. Kosambi's, *An Introduction to the Study of Indian History* (1956) and makes many *ex cathedra* statements, that he was a brilliant academic in his own right and warmly committed to the land he desired to study.

The author has painstakingly written the conclusion by using almost all the debates and discussions in a very lucid and systematic manner. He concludes with the following words, 'We have traced in the book how the study of ancient Indian history developed both in the hands of representative English authors and Indian authors from the beginning till today and in each case we are focused on the sources and the ideas of ancient Indian history that were embedded in them, the sources being what they were and even now they could not attempt to write any of these in the true sense of the term, although I think Rabindranath Tagore and Sister Nivedita, alike in their own ways of a direction and thought.'

In this, "objective writings" on ancient Indian history are never seen except under the phase of the communal dominance of historical research in India from 1962 to well into the 21st century. Now, we witness the entrance of a number of non-professional people happy to be trying to propagate all kinds of things about ancient India.

The Nationalist historians have earned their rightful place. This book, based on an analysis of facts and in-depth scrutiny of each historian, places them on a high pedestal where they belong. Their work can be appreciated only by reading this book: it is indeed a copy for all research scholars to treasure, irrespective of their ideology. The approaches that the author has taken to

elaborate his point of view proves that the study of ancient Indian history is a passion and the author is, in his heart, a true nationalist. Nationalism in the study of Ancient Indian history will stand as a path for everyone trying to understand what happened to ancient history during the colonial times and between 1950 and 2020. How positive should the historian be and the importance of sources and archaeological excavations being the only way to write ancient Indian history is stressed time and again. The book is a sheet anchor by itself. The numerous books and journals referred to are mind boggling. It is clear that any particular research in ancient India can advance only after reading this classic book.

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