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Thirty-fifth Issue



**C. P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR
INSTITUTE OF INDOLOGICAL RESEARCH**
(affiliated to the University of Madras)
The C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation



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CONTENTS

1. **An analytical study of Historiography in Ancient India through the lens of Puranic texts** 9
R. Rajeshwari
2. **Reviving Kerala's Maritime legacy: insights from archaeological excavations at Thaikkal (Alappuzha) and Muziris (Ernakulam)** 29
Pratheesh P
3. **Serpentine motifs in the temple art of Odisha: a study of the Naga/Nagi Stambha** 48
Ujwala Kumar Mohanandia
4. **A study of the archaeological remains of Kaleswar Mahabhairav Dham at Jalukbari, Guwahati Assam** 62
Paromita Das
5. **Economic and Social implications of Revenue Systems in Early Medieval Kashmir** 72
Rashid Manzoor Bhat
6. **The representation of sovereignty and sources of legitimacy in the Deccan kingdom: A study of Yūsuf Ādil Shāh of Bījāpūr** 89
G. Ahmad Raza
7. **Life-size human skeletons made of ivory and sandalwood by Sarabendra Bhupati Bhoślé of Tanjavur Mahratta Dynasty** 104
Anantanarayanan Raman

- 8. Impact of Portuguese Colonial rule on Devadasis of Goa:
extracts from the Goa Archives** **113**
Shruti Subhash Bhosale & Ganesh Dattatraya Raut
- 9. Earth-salt production and colonial intervention in the
princely state of Pudukkottai: Exploitation, Resistance
and Legacy** **124**
A. Alexander & R. Muthukumar
- 10. Nation and Nationalism through Diasporic lenses:
A study of the life and times of Madam Bhikaji Cama
and Shyamji Krishna Varma: the Unknown Patriots** **134**
Anshu Surve & Indira Jadav
- 11. The evolution of Travancore State Force
and its deployment in Second World War** **149**
Bipin Kurup S.R & P. Jinimon
- 12. Water Management in Chennai: History, Plans and
current scenario** **168**
G.J. Sudhakar
- 13. The Role of Pali Buddhist Literature in shaping
Myanmar's Nationalist movements in the 20th century** **180**
Pannatikha & Aruna Awasthi
- 14. Culinary heritage: sustaining Indian identity
through food in the Diaspora** **196**
V. Deepika & J. Sobhana Devi
- 15. Nchui-Ngi, the Zeme Naga ritual of final adieu to
the soul of the year's dead** **211**
Nakaulang Nriame

- 16. The Origins and Ethnogenesis of the Kodavas of Kodagu 224**
Shriti Parvathy BS & Meenakshi MM

Section II - Environmental History

- 17. Ecology, Diversity and Literature: A perspective on the
Culinary traditions of the Sangam Age 237**
P. Sadasivam
- 18. Sarpa kavukal: Spirituality's interface with
Ecology and Culture 255**
Reshma Suresh & Preeti Sharma
- 19. Book Review 271**
Kamala Gopalan

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Journal of Indian History and Culture (JIHC) is turning thirty-five! It has been a long journey. JIHC has been attracting high quality papers from scholars all over India and even abroad.

Papers in this issue range from “Serpentine motifs in the temple art of Odisha” to “Culinary heritage”.

We invite more papers for the section on Environmental History and also Book Reviews from Senior Scholars.

I thank Dr. Kamala Gopalan for contributing a Book Review to this issue.

We thank all the contributors and referees. We also request all our future contributors to strictly follow the guidelines in our website <https://journalcpriir.com/> (for contributors) and restrict their papers to a maximum of five thousand words and to a maximum of ten illustrations per article.

I place on record my sincere thanks to all the members of CPR Institute of Indological Research and the C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation for helping in bringing out this issue of the Journal.

Professor G.J. Sudhakar



1

An analytical study of Historiography in Ancient India through the lens of Puranic texts

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Abstract

Ancient India was home to a profound historical awareness, showcased through an abundance of diverse historical materials. During the rule of Chandragupta Maurya, meticulous attention was given to the collection and preservation of records and state officials were specifically designated to capture important occurrences. Insights into the recording practices of the time can be found in Kautilya's Arthashastra. At the Maurya court and across various states, historical archives were preserved, including chronicles and royal family trees. Valuable information about history and time can be gathered from inscriptions on stones, copper plates and coins. The Puranas, with Veda-Vyasa recognized as the composer of the Mahabharata and the Puranic texts, had an indispensable role in keeping historical traditions alive. These texts include genealogies and histories of dynasties, furnishing a structure for tracking the ancestry of kings and interpreting the social and political evolution of

ancient India. Even though there might be some differences between the Brahminic and Kshatriya traditions, the Puranas together enhance our comprehension of ancient Indian history. These writings stand as significant historical documents, providing insights into political history, the interplay of power, and the cultural legacy of the time.

Keywords: *Ancient, culture, history, Puranas, preservation, tradition.*

Introduction

In the study of ancient Indian historiography, an emphasis on artistic expression rather than systematic or scientific methodologies often prevails. A noteworthy observation is that contemporary scholars frequently overlook the archaic forms and notions that laid the groundwork for prehistoric historical writings, a practice that can lead to a misunderstanding of the context and richness of these texts. Vedavyasa emerges as the first documented historian within the ancient Indian tradition, and the practice of historical writing endured through the 12th century CE. A prime example of historical awareness in India's early past can be traced to the hymns of the *Rigveda*. These hymns provide an illuminating glimpse into the lives of the Aryan people and the historical context. The genesis of Indian historiography is often attributed to Vyasa's composition of the seminal works, *Bharata Itihasa* or *Bharata Samhita* and the *Purana Samhita*, during the *Dvapara* era.

Within the early period of Indian historiography, two major traditions prevailed: the epic tradition and the Puranic tradition, with the latter frequently accorded greater significance. The Puranas were instrumental in documenting and preserving the pivotal genealogies and chronologies of historical dynasties, offering an exhaustive account of India's dynastic history through the commencement of the Gupta era. While the chronology within the Puranas may not always be systematically arranged, their historical value is further underscored by the descriptions

of kingdoms and dynasties during the Gupta and subsequent post-Gupta periods. Beyond the epic and Puranic traditions, ancient Indian historical writing also encompassed two other significant traditions: Buddhist and Jain. Prior to the seventh century CE, scholars within the Buddhist and Jain traditions authored numerous semi-historical texts that contributed to the advancement of knowledge regarding ancient Indian history. This multifaceted approach to historical writing underscores the complexity and richness of ancient Indian historiography, calling for a nuanced and appreciative understanding that transcends a mere focus on artistic expression.

The term ‘Purana’ and its antiquity

The term “Purana” historically meant “old” or “ancient.” In the *Rigveda*, it was used in this sense. The *Vayu-Purana*, *Padma Purana*, and *Brahmanda Purana* derive “Purana” from “Pura” and “An,” meaning, “that which breathed in old times.” Panini’s analysis suggests that “Purana” may have originated from “Pura” + “tyu” + termination. In Vedic times, Puranas were associated with the sacredness of the Vedas and the *Itihasa*.¹ While “Purana” later referred to a literary genre, its specific connotation in the Vedic period remains uncertain. In *Atharvaveda*, it meant a body of stories or legends, and this meaning persisted in the Brahmanas and Upanishads.² “*Itihasa*” also had a similar meaning. Scholars make subtle distinctions between “*Itihasa*” and “*Purana*,” but both often meant “an ancient legendary history,” and they were sometimes used interchangeably. This marks the initial phase in the evolution of Purana literature.

The Puranas cater to popular needs, offering immediate material benefits, unlike the Vedas, which were seen as exclusive. The appeal of Puranas, with their tangible results like wealth and pilgrimage benefits, became popular in Hinduism. They serve as an encyclopaedia of Hinduism, encompassing mythology, religion, philosophy and political history. The earliest Puranas were likely prose compositions, later versified, with 18 Puranas and as many Upa Puranas, the latter being

relatively recent. They share a religious origin with the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Puranas vary in age and circumstances of compilation. Internal evidence and India's religious history provide insights into their nature. Puranas are defined by five characteristics: *Sarga* (cosmogony), *Pratisarga* (world destruction and renewal), *Vamsa* (genealogy of gods and patriarchs), *Manvatara* (periods of Manus), and *Vamsanucharitam* (history of Solar and Lunar dynasties).³ The Puranas' theogony and cosmogony can be traced to the Vedas, and tradition attributes their authorship to Vyasa.

Puranas are generally classified into three divisions. Some classify them based on the three Gunas, while others use the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva for categorization. Both approaches are valid as the trinity corresponds to the three *gunas*: Passion (*rajas*), Purity (*sattva*), and Inertia (*tamas*). In this unmanifested state, matter and spirit coexist. When the *gunas* of matter are disturbed, the three *gunas* and intelligences emerge. *Rajas* gives rise to Brahma (the creator), *Sattva* to Vishnu (the preserver), and *Tamas* to Shiva (the destroyer). The three *gunas* and intelligence cannot be entirely separated. The eighteen Puranas can be divided into three classes based on matter or consciousness: some are dedicated to Brahma (*Rajas*), some to Vishnu (*Sattva*), and some to Shiva (*Tamas*). For instance, the *Vishnu*, *Naradiya*, *Bhagavata*, *Garuda*, *Padma*, and *Varaha* Puranas are *Sattwika* due to the predominance of *Sattwa* quality, making them *Vaishnava Puranas*.⁴ The *Matsya*, *Kurma*, *Linga*, *Siva Skandha*, and *Agni Puranas* are *Tamasa* Puranas, characterised by the prevalence of *Tamas*, making them *Saiva Puranas*. The third series, including *Brahmānda*, *Brahma Vaivarta*, *Markandeya*, *Bhavisya*, and *Vamana* are designated as *Rajasa* due to their association with *Rajas*.

Historians and Puranas

Historians have offered differing perspectives on the historicity of the Puranas, reflecting the intricate nature of these ancient Indian texts. These views often revolve around the balance between historical reliability and the presence of mythological and legendary elements

within the Puranas. R.C. Hazra, believed that these texts contained valuable historical information, particularly regarding the chronicles of ancient Indian dynasties and periods. Hazra argued that while the Puranas may be embellished with legendary elements, diligent and critical analysis could extract genuine historical data. In his view, the Puranas serve as credible historical sources.⁵

On the other hand, D.D. Kosambi adopted a more sceptical perspective regarding the Puranas' historical reliability. He viewed these texts as unreliable for historical research due to their pervasive mythological and legendary content. Kosambi contended that the Puranas were products of later periods, which casts doubt on their historical accuracy.⁶ Ludo Rocher, advocated for a more nuanced approach. Rocher acknowledged the historical value of the Puranas, while cautioning against interpreting their narratives as straightforward historical accounts. He argued that while the Puranas could provide historical insights, their contents required scrutiny for accuracy, recognising the complex interplay of history and mythology within the texts.⁷ While Wendy Doniger, emphasised the complexity of the Puranas, she recognised that these texts represent a blend of history, myth and cultural narratives. Doniger's perspective underscored the need to approach the Puranas with an understanding of their symbolic and multifaceted nature. Rather than treating them as straightforward historical records, she highlighted their role as repositories of cultural and religious knowledge.⁸

Nevertheless, despite the varying viewpoints and debates among historians, it is important to acknowledge that many scholars still hold the Puranas in high regard as valuable historiographic lenses for understanding ancient India. These texts, with their intricate blend of history, mythology and cultural narratives, offer unique insights into the ancient culture, society and belief systems of the Indian subcontinent. The Puranas serve as reservoirs of knowledge that encompass a wide range of subjects, including cosmology, mythology, religion, genealogy and socio-political history. They have played a significant role in shaping

the religious and cultural landscape of India over centuries. As such, many historians consider them indispensable sources for reconstructing the history and heritage of ancient India. While it is true that the Puranas may contain elements of legend and myth, their historical accounts, especially regarding dynasties and rulers, have been corroborated by other archaeological and epigraphical evidence. Furthermore, the Puranas have provided a consistent narrative of India's past, allowing historians to trace the evolution of Indian civilization over millennia.

Puranas: the lens of history

The historical consciousness of ancient India is evident in the varied forms of genealogies, biographies, royal chronicles and diverse historical materials. During the time of Chandragupta Maurya, there was a diligent practice of collecting and recording historical data, a process supported by existing evidence. State officials were designated to document important events, creating the foundation for primary historical sources.

Insights into this practice are further provided by Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, which details the responsibilities of the Gopa, an official in charge of overseeing villages.⁹ This role included maintaining records pertaining to agriculture, trade, social groups and occupational categories. These records offer essential information for understanding the social and economic history of that time, deepening our comprehension of the complexities of ancient Indian society.

Kautilya and the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang bear witness to the fact that the Maurya court maintained extensive archives filled with historical documents.¹⁰ During his fifteen-year stay in India (CE 629–645), Hiuen-Tsang observed that each province had designated authorities tasked with maintaining written records, known as “Ni-lo-pi-Cha” and “Ni-lo-Pi-t'u.”¹¹ Some historical content found its way into the Puranas, preserved by the Sutas, who documented royal family lineages. These archival documents laid the groundwork for chronicles

and *Vamsavalis*, evidence that the tradition of keeping written records endured over a prolonged period.¹² This practice is further corroborated by the existence of historical chronicles in regions like Kashmir, Gujarat, and Nepal.

Inscriptions, another historical legacy from ancient India, also offer invaluable information.¹³ These texts on rocks, copper plates, rock pillars, walls and coins present crucial historical and chronological details, including genealogies, biographies, and information on royal land grants and endowments.¹⁴ Notable among them are the Aihole inscription (CE 634) by Ravikirti, praising Pulakesin-II, and the Allahabad pillar inscription (CE 335) by Harisena, detailing Samudragupta's conquests.¹⁵ Many inscriptions are dated, serving as chronological markers and specifying the reign periods and durations of rulers' governance. Inscriptions from a wide range of rulers provide vital insights into ancient India's history and chronology. Scholar Fleet, in his Gupta inscriptions studies, recognized the historical acumen of ancient Indians.

Coins further contribute important dating information about rulers and events, enriching the understanding of ancient India's historical context. Contrary to some past impressions, ancient India exhibited a profound historical consciousness, and its people were accomplished historians.¹⁶ The wide variety of historical materials found in literature, inscriptions, the Puranas, Pali chronicles, Jain works, and Kalhana's writings attests to a comprehensive understanding of history and chronology.¹⁷ By meticulously documenting genealogies, biographies, and chronicles, the ancient Indians left behind a legacy that refutes any suggestion of their lack of historical insight.

The Puranic tradition of history writing is both ancient and significant. The *Purana Samhita* (or *Itihasa Samhita*) was the original work, and it was said to have been written by Veda-Vyasa, the twenty-eighth in a series of sages named Vyasa. The responsibility of archiving and compiling Puranic information was passed down to Veda-Vyasa.

Puranic traditions claim that after dividing the single Veda into four *Samhitas*, he wrote the Purana, which is broken up into eighteen sections and contains *akhyanas* (stories), *upakhyanas* (mini-stories), *gathas* (verses) and more. Veda-Vyasa wrote the *Mahabharata* (*Bharata Samhita*), an *Itihasa* (history) that incorporates some information from the Puranas, during the Dvapara era itself.¹⁸

Many aspects of Aryan history are preserved in the eighteen Puranas. It is unclear how or why A.K. Warder came to the conclusion that "...the original Purana was written in the eighth century B.C. during the reign of Adhisimakrsna of the Kali period (sixth in the succession from Abhimanyu)." Contrary to popular belief, the Purana was not written but rather told during the time of the aforementioned ruler. In reality, the Dvapara era was the beginning of the early Indian historical writing tradition.¹⁹ Important historical topics, such as dynasty genealogy from the pre-Bharata war era and contemporaneous occurrences, may be found throughout Maharsi Veda-Vyasa's *Puranas* and the *Mahabharata*. This is why Umasankara Diksita called him "a great historian" and "Itihasakartta" (creator of historical work). In addition, N.S. Rajaram notes that Veda-Vyasa was hailed as a brilliant historian back in his day. The historical *Mahabharata* is said to have been written by him, and he is also attributed with the duty of maintaining the records of the ancient Puranas.

It is hard to situate Veda-Vyasa in a precise time period and to arrange all of his writings in chronological order. He really existed in history. The *rsis* (sages) and *maharsis* (great sages) were the ones who first established the custom of keeping historical records. Veda-Vyasa taught his students the rudiments of history.²⁰ According to the Puranic sources, "He taught the *Itihasa Purana* to his most renowned pupil, Romaharsana (also known as Suta), who in turn taught it to his son, Ugrasrava, and at least six other followers, five of whom were Brahmanas." The *suta*-class Brahmanas from the Puranas grew to appreciate the past.²¹ Their understanding of the past was heavily

influenced by the writings of Veda-Vyasa. Romaharsana and his followers almost certainly finished the project started by Veda-Vyasa. Following the example of Veda-Vyasa and his pupils, the study, teaching, and interpretation of the *Itihasa* and *Purana* were handed down from one generation to the next.

Origins and evolution of the Puranas

In the period between 500 BCE and CE 500, the Puranas experienced revisions that led to the removal of references to pre-Bharata war dynasties and their genealogies. Occasionally, Puranic scholars, who exhibited an interest in history, infused these works with historical references.²² The role of Puranic *sutas* was paramount in preserving ancient Indian historical records, with some writings attributing to them the primary duty of compiling, organizing, and safeguarding ruler genealogies (*vamsavalis*) used in the creation of the *Itihasas* and *Puranas*.²³ Constructed from information extracted from priestly and royal households, these genealogies were not only encapsulated within Puranic texts but were also utilized by monarchs to chronicle their dynastic history. Thus, the *sutas* operated as guardians of historical traditions, custodians of lineage records, and chroniclers of historical events.

According to Kautilya's writings, kings and princes employed three salaried officials the *pauranika*, the *suta*, and the *Magadha* to engage with *Itihasa* and *Purana* narratives. Maurice Winternitz observes that both the *pauranikas* and *aitihasikas* were professional storytellers of antiquity. V.S. Pathak identifies the *sutas* as belonging to the Brahmana caste, specifically descending from the priestly Bhrgu, Angiras, and Kasyapa families, or alternatively, being warriors or of mixed origin.²⁴ There is evidence of a school of Bhrgvangiras historians rewriting the *Itihasa-Purana* tradition between the end of the Paurava period and the onset of the Magadha kingdom. When evaluated alongside modern historiographers (*Itihasakaras*), the contributions of the *sutas* to historiography appear equally significant.

Often likened to bards, the *sutas* were known to compose or sing praises of renowned rulers and historical heroes. Yet, the formalization of bards' roles within royal courts as professional or hereditary did not occur until the seventh century CE. With the shift in historical emphasis from heroic to courtly traditions, the prominence of the *sutas* began to wane. This transition reflects broader changes in historical consciousness and the role of historical actors within the society of ancient India, offering insights into the complex interplay between tradition, memory, and historical record-keeping.

Pargiter classified ancient Indian historical tradition into two groups: the Brahmin and the Kshatriya.²⁵ He deemed the events described in the Brahminic tradition as lacking historical accuracy, while the Kshatriya tradition purportedly dealt with history. According to him, Vedic and other Brahminic literature provided perspectives on ancient times from a purely Brahminical standpoint, not focusing on history.²⁶ In contrast, the Kshatriya tradition preserved in the Puranas offers a glimpse into ancient India and its political conditions from the Kshatriya perspective. Pargiter argued that the Brahmanas heavily relied on tradition to refer to figures and events from the past and even contemporary occurrences before the introduction of writing.²⁷

Even after writing became prevalent, the Brahmanas were reluctant to incorporate it into their religious texts. He claimed that the Brahmanas lacked a historical sense, often blurring the line between history and mythology by mythologizing historical events or historicizing mythology. He also accused them of fabricating incorrect stories and fables and neglecting to revise or harmonise historical traditions. Pargiter contended that the Puranic Brahmanas preserved a substantial amount of Kshatriya and popular tradition inconsistent with Brahminic stories and tenets. He further argued that the Kshatriya tradition in the Puranas displayed a stronger historical sense, providing accounts primarily focused on kings, heroes, their deeds, and genealogies.²⁸ These Kshatriya tales and ballads exhibited a degree of historical consistency, especially

in the context of royal genealogies, which reflected a chronological order.²⁹ These observations may seem to elevate the Kshatriya tradition while diminishing the Brahminic tradition. However, the fact remains that Vedic texts, epics and Puranas collectively contribute to our understanding of traditional history. It is erroneous to claim that ancient Indians lacked both history and historical instincts. The Puranas hold invaluable historical treasures. From the earliest times, the literature of the Brahmanas has been complemented by the literature of Kshatriya kings.

In truth, Vedic, epic and Puranic traditions supplement one another, and a comprehensive picture of early India can only be formed by considering the combined testimony of all three. It should be noted that Puranic accounts often provide more elaborate and amplified narratives compared to Vedic and epic sources.³⁰ The Puranas, with their rich historical content, serve as significant sources for understanding ancient Indian history. It is evident that ancient Indians recognised the importance of recording and preserving historical information. From the Puranic *sutas* and their role in genealogical records to the efforts of kings in maintaining court records and inscriptions, various sources attest to the existence of historical awareness and the documentation of events. While there may have been debates and variations in historical interpretations between the Brahminic and Kshatriya traditions, these perspectives collectively contribute to our understanding of ancient Indian history.³¹

The Puranas detail many different things: the original creation (*Sarga*), the destruction and rebirth (*Pratisarga*), dynastic histories (*Vamsanucarita*), and lineages (*Vamsa*). All Puranas share these five characteristics, which are generally referred to as *pancalaksana*. The genealogy and dynasty histories included within these books are especially important to the study of the past. The Puranas' authors, the Puranakaras, had a deep appreciation for the past and the lessons they could teach. Particularly important to the Puranas' political history, are

the dynastic genealogy. V.A. Smith recognises the dynasty lists of the Puranas as a systematic record of Indian historical tradition.³² A closer look uncovers a plethora of authentic and useful historical material included in these Puranic lists, despite some modern European writers casting doubt on their authority.

The Puranic genealogies provide a framework for tracing the lineage and succession of kings and dynasties. They offer insights into the political landscape, the rise and fall of ruling families, and the connections between various ruling houses.³³ These historical accounts contribute to our understanding of the socio-political developments and power dynamics of ancient India. While the Puranas encompass a wide range of subjects beyond pure history, such as cosmology, mythology and religious teachings, the sections devoted to genealogies and dynasty histories offer a valuable window into the historical traditions and perspectives of ancient India.

Puranas in preserving Indian history and culture

The historical significance of Puranic genealogies in ancient India is an area that has drawn attention from scholars and historians. Pargiter emphasizes that despite the dearth of historical works on ancient India, the tradition has indeed preserved comprehensive genealogies of ancient dynasties. These genealogies, delineating the succession of kings, hold historical value as they represent scarce sources of information about ancient political developments in Sanskrit literature.

Additionally, some Brahminical texts contain chronological lists of teachers, constituting evidence of the Brahminical succession.³⁴ These genealogies serve as a critical foundation for evaluating traditional narratives for historical authenticity. They offer some of the most reliable chronological insights, given that Vedic literature often falls short in historical precision.³⁵ Tod's analysis also resonates with this viewpoint, acknowledging that skilled investigators can unearth

valuable materials for Indian history within native works such as the Puranas and genealogical legends of princes. Although, often veiled in symbolic details and legendary specifics, these texts are laden with factual references that enable historians to reconstruct the past. Particularly, six Puranas, namely the *Matsya*, *Vayu*, *Vishnu*, *Brahmanda*, *Bhagavata* and *Bhavisya*, are deemed essential from a historical perspective out of the eighteen main Puranas. Recognized by their authors as *Puratana Itihasa* (old history), these six Puranas are considered credible historical documents. They yield informative histories of various kingdoms both pre and post the Bharata war, facilitating an intricate understanding of ancient Indian political dynamics.³⁶ When it comes to dynastic, genealogical, and chronological analysis, the Puranas stand as invaluable resources. A. Weber's acknowledgment of historical passages in ancient Puranas, detailing monarchs, dynasties, genealogies, and chronologies, strengthens this position. J.F. Fleet's observation that ancient Hindus could construct concise but informative poems on historical subjects further underscores the deliberate attention to history in ancient Hindu society.

A detailed examination of the creation and compilation of various Puranas reveals a complexity of authorship and time periods. For example, the *Vayu* and *Vishnu Puranas* were finalized by the mid-fourth century CE, detailing dynasty history up to the beginning of Gupta reign.³⁷ The *Matsya Purana*, one of the earliest, began compilation in CE 236 and concluded by the end of the third century CE, whereas the *Brahmanda Purana* has been present from around CE 400. The exact dating of some, such as the *Bhavisya Purana*, remains complex due to the inclusion of events from various periods. The mention of land grants from different eras referencing verses from specific Puranas like the *Padma*, *Bhavisya*, and *Brahma* substantiates the claim that the Puranas were composed well before the year 500 CE. Alterations to texts like the *Agni Purana* between 500 and 900 CE, and the existence of other Puranas such as the *Karma*, *Markandeya*, *Brahmavaivartta*, *Linga* and *Vamana* before CE 500, add layers to this rich historical landscape.

Significance of Puranic literature for historical research

Investigating the reliability of Puranic texts as historical sources requires a critical examination of the events, timelines and genealogies presented in these ancient Indian texts, as well as an evaluation of the methodology employed by ancient Indian historians in constructing their narratives. Puranic texts, such as the *Matsya*, *Vayu*, *Vishnu*, *Brahmanda*, *Bhagavata* and *Bhavisya Puranas*, among others, contain a blend of legendary and historical accounts. While they provide valuable insights into ancient Indian history, it is important to approach them with a cautious and critical mind set due to their mythical and allegorical elements. When assessing the accuracy of events in Puranic literature, it is essential to consider the context and purpose of these texts. The Puranas were not written as straightforward historical records but rather as compilations of myths, legends, religious teachings and genealogical accounts. The inclusion of supernatural elements, symbolism and allegory often obscures the factual accuracy of the events described. Therefore, extracting historical information from the Puranas requires careful analysis and corroboration from other reliable sources, such as archaeological findings, inscriptions and other historical records.

Timelines presented in the Puranas can be challenging to verify, as they often span vast periods, incorporating both mythical and historical epochs. The chronological sequencing of events within the Puranas can be inconsistent, making it difficult to establish precise timelines.³⁸ Further, the lack of specific dating methods or standardised calendars in ancient India adds complexity to the task of determining the accuracy of Puranic timelines. Therefore, cross-referencing with other contemporary historical sources is necessary to validate and establish a reliable chronology. Genealogies in Puranic texts play a significant role in tracing the lineage of dynasties and rulers. They often provide insights into political successions, social structures and familial connections. However, the legendary and mythical elements intertwined with these genealogies can blur the line between fact and fiction. Ancient Indian historians, while constructing their narratives, relied on oral traditions,

existing genealogical records and the available literary sources. They sought to present a coherent historical account based on the available information, but the influence of religious and cultural biases might have influenced their interpretations and presentations.

It is important to note that Puranic texts were not intended to be comprehensive historical records in the modern sense. They served broader purposes such as imparting moral and religious teachings, preserving cultural and mythological traditions, and glorifying ruling dynasties. As a result, the accuracy and reliability of specific historical details within the Puranas can vary.³⁹ To fully assess the historical value of Puranic texts, it is crucial to approach them as supplementary sources rather than standalone accounts. Cross-referencing and corroborating the information found in Puranas with other contemporary sources, including inscriptions, archaeological findings, foreign accounts, and literary works, can help establish a more comprehensive and accurate understanding of ancient Indian history. Puranic texts offer valuable insights into ancient Indian history but must be approached with caution due to their blend of myth, legend and history. Assessing the accuracy of events, timelines, and genealogies presented in the Puranas requires critical analysis, cross-referencing with other reliable sources, and an understanding of the broader cultural and religious contexts in which these texts were composed. By employing a multidisciplinary approach and scrutinizing the methodology of ancient Indian historians, we can utilise the Puranas as supplementary sources to enhance our understanding of ancient Indian history.

The portrayal of historical events in Puranic texts was heavily influenced by ideological, religious, and cultural biases.⁴⁰ The authors of these texts, often Brahmanical scholars, shaped and interpreted historical narratives to align with their socio-political context and religious beliefs. This subjectivity and perspective in ancient Indian historiography necessitate a nuanced understanding of the Puranic texts as historical sources. Religious bias played a significant role in shaping

the content of the Puranas. These texts served as repositories of Hindu religious traditions and beliefs. The authors aimed to emphasise the divine and supernatural aspects of history, often intertwining mythology with historical accounts. This religious bias is evident in the inclusion of gods, goddesses and their divine interventions in historical events, highlighting the importance of religious narratives and the superiority of Hindu deities.

Another bias present in the Puranic texts is dynastic bias. Certain ruling dynasties or lineages were often given preferential treatment in these narratives. The genealogical accounts and stories presented in the Puranas frequently prioritised the lineage of specific ruling families or sought to elevate the status of particular rulers.⁴¹ This bias reflects the socio-political context of the time, where rulers aimed to establish their legitimacy and divine sanction through mythical and genealogical connections. Brahminical bias is also noticeable in the Puranic texts. As the authors were predominantly Brahminical scholars, the narratives were shaped to highlight the power and influence of the Brahminical class. The role of Brahmanas as custodians of knowledge, rituals, and religious authority was emphasised. The historical narratives were often constructed to underscore the significance of the Brahminical class and their indispensable role in society.

The Puranas were products of their time and reflected prevailing cultural norms and values. These texts aimed to preserve and promote specific cultural traditions and practices. As a result, cultural biases are present in the portrayal of historical events and figures. Certain practices, rituals, and traditions were glorified or emphasised, while others were downplayed or marginalised. Social hierarchies, gender roles, and caste dynamics within the Puranas were influenced by cultural biases. Understanding these biases and subjectivities is crucial when using Puranic texts as historical sources. While these texts offer valuable insights into ancient Indian history, it is essential to critically analyse the narratives, cross-reference with other contemporary sources, and

adopt a multidisciplinary approach. By acknowledging and considering these biases, researchers can navigate the complexities of ancient Indian historiography and gain a deeper understanding of the historical events and socio-political contexts of the time.

Conclusion

The analysis of ancient India's historical consciousness reveals meticulous record-keeping practices and the importance of historical information. During Chandragupta Maurya's era, supported by texts like Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and accounts from Hiuen-Tsang, a strong tradition of preserving historical records is evident. Inscriptions on stones, copper plates, and coins, along with the Puranas, provide essential historical insights. The Puranas, tracing back to Veda-Vyasa, offer valuable information about the political landscape, power dynamics and socio-political developments through detailed genealogies and dynasty histories. These accounts enable the understanding of lineage and succession of kings, thus illuminating connections between ruling families and historical events.

Even though the Puranas cover a wide array of subjects, the sections concerning genealogies and dynasty histories stand out for their historical significance, contributing substantially to our knowledge of ancient Indian history and culture.

Thus, despite the intricate blend of history and mythology within these texts, they emerge as valuable sources for understanding the ancient Indian past. The antiquity and evolution of Puranas underline the enduring significance of these texts in Indian culture. The diverse views of historians highlight the on-going scholarly debate over their historicity, reflecting the nature of the Puranas. However, their role as repositories of knowledge on cosmology, mythology, genealogy and socio-political history cannot be overlooked.

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Reviving Kerala's Maritime legacy: insights from archaeological excavations at Thaikkal (Alappuzha) and Muziris (Ernakulam)

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Abstract

Due to unsuccessful searches, the ancient port locations on the Indian Ocean littoral were thought to be lost, and the ports of the Malabar coast that were described in the literature were not identified. Prior to the discovery of Pattanam, there were no authentic signs of early historic settlement or port sites on India's southwest coast. The study explores Kerala's maritime heritage by examining trade relations and archaeological findings at Thaikkal and Muziris. The ancient ports, strategically located along the Malabar Coast, played a crucial role in global trade networks. The study focuses on the cultural exchanges, economic activities and maritime technologies that characterized the region's historical connections with other parts of the world. The stratigraphy and typology of the artefacts help reconstruct the chronological development of these ports and their integration into global trade routes. According to the study, Kerala's historic ports are well known for their Early Historic Roman ties and

have the greatest number of amphora sherds on the Indian subcontinent. Archaeological relics include turquoise-glazed pottery and point to pre-Roman economic activity. A tiny Greco-Roman head figurine and a seal ring with a Greek She-Sphinx pattern were also discovered during the excavations, suggesting that trade with the Mediterranean realm extended beyond practical goods.

Keywords: Kerala, maritime heritage, Thaikkal, Muziris, archaeological excavations, trade relations, material culture, Indian Ocean trade.

Introduction

Kerala, a part of ancient Tamilakam and the historic seat of ‘Chera Empire’, one of the prominent ancient political powers of South India, has a long and illustrious maritime history that stretches back, thousands of years. The state is situated on the Indian subcontinent’s southwest coast and has been a ‘significant trade hub and cross-cultural exchange centre due to its vast coastline’ along the Arabian Sea. Maritime activities have significantly influenced Kerala’s history since prehistoric times, with evidence of maritime contacts with Asia, Europe and Africa found in foreign accounts, archaeological evidence, ancient native historiographic works and epigraphic records dating back to the 1000-500 BCE. The Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea receive special mention in this, resulting in active interactions among various cultures, cultural developments, socioeconomic complexities and the rise of ‘ancient ports such as Muziris (Kodungallur), Tyndis (Kadalundi) and Bakkare (Purakkad)’, which were critical to Kerala’s maritime historical and cultural history.

The maritime history is deeply intertwined with its economic prosperity and cultural diversity. The ancient ports facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and technologies, attracting traders from across the ancient world, including the Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Chinese and

Persians. The spice trade, in particular, played a pivotal role in Kerala's maritime activities, with pepper, cardamom, cinnamon and other spices being highly sought after in global markets. Alappuzha (one among the 14 districts of Kerala), is connected to the state's ancient nautical map and maritime history through 'Bakkare', also called Purakkad, one of the nation's ancient ports. The port's significance is underscored by its mention in various historical texts and travelogues, which highlight its role in the spice trade and its connections to other major ports in the Arabian Sea or Indian Ocean. Other than Purakkad, Alappuzha was home to several other important ports, including Alleppey and Kayamkulam. These ports collectively contributed to the region's maritime activities, facilitating the export of spices, coir and other local products.

This study aims to revisit the ancient history of Kerala by providing a re-examination of Kerala's ancient maritime activities, their historical context and their impact on the region's development by examining the latest findings from recent archaeological excavations at Thaikkal (near Cherthala in Alappuzha) and Muziris (near Paravoor in Ernakulam). The remnants of an ancient sailboat (iron-fastened one), thought to be prior to the available known accounts for the routine of iron nails in regional boatbuilding were discovered during recent excavations at Thaikkal (Kadakkarappally). The state organisation (Kerala Council for Historical Research), has been excavating Pattanam (Muziris heritage project), which is near Paravoor (Ernakulam district, Kerala), since 2007. The excavations have shown the remains of a pre-historic (probably between 500 BCE–100 CE), local habitation, multi-cultural port site that is now widely regarded as an essential component of the early historic port of *Kodungalloor* (Muziris).

The primary research question is: What insights can be gained from the archaeological excavations at Thaikkal (Alappuzha) and Muziris (Kodungalloor, Ernakulam) regarding Kerala's maritime legacy? This question leads to further sub-questions: what types of artefacts and structures are present at these sites, and what they reveal about the trade

networks and cultural exchanges that took place? By uncovering and analysing archaeological evidence from Thaikkal and Muziris, the study aims to provide new insights into the maritime activities that shaped Kerala's history, highlight the role of these ancient ports in global trade networks, contribute to the preservation and documentation of Kerala's cultural heritage and inform contemporary efforts to revive and celebrate Kerala's maritime traditions.

Ancient Ports in Kerala

Historians contend that Kerala's multiple key ports in the Arabian Sea coast have enabled the land to maintain thriving maritime ties with the rest of the world for centuries. Due to similarities in Sumerian and Beypore (near Calicut) shipbuilding¹, as well as the discovery of teak wood in Ur, the first contact was considered to be with the Mesopotamian culture². Evidence from archaeology, epigraphy and numismatics proved that Kerala's close maritime ties, particularly with the ancient Romans, persisted till the ninth century C.E. Kerala ports was also connected to Egypt, West Asia and other European countries through the same Roman relationship. King Solomon (Jewish King) dispatched his vessels to Kerala frequently (once every three years) to acquire silver, gold, monkeys and peacocks, according to Nair (2002)³. All these underscore the ancient port's importance and notoriety.

Kerala's socio-economic history was significantly influenced by a number of historic ports. The most significant of these are Muziris (Muchiri), Tyndis, Nelcynda, Kollam (Quilon), Barace (Barakur), Naura, Sopatma, Kolkar, Angengo and Vizhinjam (Balita). Muziris, also known as Muchiri or Muciripattanam, was one of the most important ancient ports in Kerala. It was a major trading hub for spices, particularly black pepper and other commodities. Muziris is referred to in several early historic sources, together with the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* and the works of Pliny the Elder, who referred to it as "the first emporium of India"⁴. The old port of 'Tyndis' holds significance because it was one of the key trading seaports on the south west coast of India, mentioned

in ancient texts like the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, ” and is believed to be the precursor to the modern-day Ponnani port in Kerala, playing a crucial role in the spice trade during its time, especially with connections to the Chera kingdom⁵. By Claudius Ptolemy, Tyndis was considered a “town” and was located north of Muziris⁶.

Nelcynda (Neacyndi), another ancient port in Kerala, was a significant trading hub on the Travancore’s coast for centuries, exporting valuable goods like spices, pearls and ivory to the Mediterranean world. It was also mentioned in the above early historic western accounts as ‘Neacyndi’⁷. It was thought to be the capital of the Ay kingdom⁸. Quilon has a maritime history of over 2500 years. Its early antiquity is connected to ‘Thai dynasty’ records of China as the travelogue of Sulaiman suggests became an affluent harbour, serving as the royal seat of Venad and facilitating Chinese transactions with Kerala⁹. However, the emergence of Cochin a dominant port, Portuguese policies, and Chinese withdrawal from the Travancore coast led to its decline. Barace (Bacare), was the ancient port in north Travancore; sometimes identified with modern Purakkad¹⁰, a coastal region of Alappuzha District of Kerala. Naura, located in Kannur district, Sopatma and Kolkar near Kozhikode, were also prominent ancient ports known for their commerce in spices and commodities with the western world, particularly with the Roman Empire, as referenced in the historical records.

During the early Christian era, Kerala experienced extensive maritime trade due to its unique environmental conditions. The region supported the growth of various plant species, including pepper, cardamom, ginger, cinnamon and nutmeg. Arab and Chinese traders were key partners, with Arab trade and navigation attending new enthusiasm since the birth and spread of Islam. By the middle of the eighth century CE, Calicut became a hub for international maritime trade. The region’s security, efficient trade facilities and commercial and climatic conditions led to further settlements along the Malabar Coast.

References in literature

There are a variety of sources with various genres which refer to the significant prehistoric port sites in the Indian Ocean Rim¹¹. Numerous non-Indian textual sources, including *Geography*, *Periplus Maris Erythraei* (Strabo), *Natural History* (Pliny), and Ptolemy's *Geography*, attest to the rich history of marine exchanges along India's Malabar Coast. The *Peutinger table*, *Charition*, *Cosmas Indicopleustus* and the *Muziris Papyrus* are further sources. The primary Indian sources on marine exchanges are epic poems such as *Cilappatikāram*¹² and Sangam literature, as well as classical Tamil literature. There are tales and traditions about trade and ports along the Malabar Coast as well, although they are more like intricate puzzles than historical research tools.

Rajan Gurukkal's 2010 study *Social Formations of Early South India*¹³ examines social formations in Tamil Nadu and Kerala from pre-historic to medieval times, focusing on the transition from agro-pastoral to agrarian, hereditary occupations and technology spread. The study highlights the region's strategic location along the south-western coast of India, making it a hub for maritime trade. Ancient ports like Muziris, Tyndis, Bakkare and Vizhinjam were significant maritime trade spots, exporting spices and connecting to the old Roman Kingdom, Middle East and the Indian Ocean region. Abraham's 2003 book¹⁴, discusses ancient ports in South India, which brought wealth, infrastructure development, and trade guilds to Kerala, but also highlighted challenges like natural disasters.

Himanshu Prabha Ray's study¹⁵ discusses cross-cultural contacts, ancient ports, and religious institutions' role in defining Kerala's past. V. Selvakumar's book¹⁶ emphasizes the importance of maritime dynamics in Kerala's past, with ports becoming essential for long-distance trade and exchanges. Early historic seaports on the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea littoral were believed lost, but Pattnam's discovery of early historic habitation sites on the southwest (Malabar) coast has revealed

various trading communities and their belief systems. Studies show intercontinental maritime connectivity, and that ancient ports in Kerala have potential as international ports, highlighting the importance of preserving and understanding this vital aspect of the state's history.

Remains of Kerala's historic port – Pattanam (Muziris)

Located on India's southwest coast, the Pattanam site represents a diverse-cultural maritime location that dates back between 500 BCE and 100 BCE. The excavations here started in 2007 but now the findings reveal the presence of a port city which is, the ancient port of Muziris. Present excavations have discovered a wooden canoe, an old brick-layered wharf (probably 2000 years old), and innumerable of fragments of West Asian and Roman pottery from here. The site somewhat identified as Muziris, an old port city mentioned in ancient Tamil texts, *Akanunuru*, and maritime guide of ancient Greece (describing ports along the Red Sea and in India), the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*.

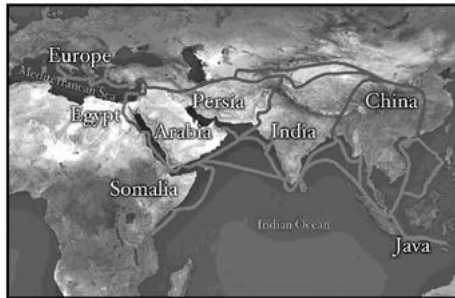


Figure 1: Long-distance routes from Europe to India - potential paths connected to Indian ports and the Malabar coast

The Pattanam or Muziris Heritage Project aims to revive this lost legacy and preserve the culture of 3000 years or more for posterity. The artefacts unearthed from here suggest the presence of an extensive prehistoric seaport comprising enormous evidence, suggesting maritime relations, beyond the existing information. A six-metre-long wooden canoe, a wharf with wooden bollards to hold boats and fragments of

Roman pottery containing material from southern Italy, Egyptian and Mesopotamian pottery also support this viewpoint. Due to the match in descriptions of the prehistoric maritime spots in Tamil literature (first century AD), the site is presumed to be the ancient port Muchirpattanam (Muziris). It is believed that the site was first inhabited around 1,000 BC and continued to be a thriving trading hub with cultures from West Asia, Mediterranean and even Southeast Asia until the 10th century AD.

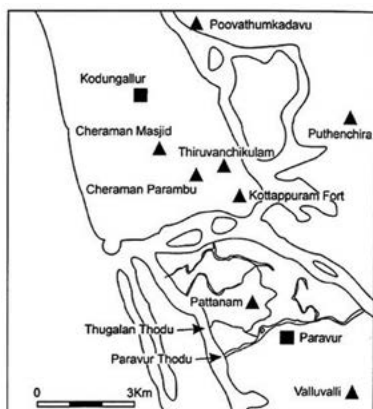


Figure 2: Location of Archaeological Excavation Site (Pattanam Project)

The location of Pattanam site is at *Vadakkekkara* (village) in *Paravur* (taluk), Ernakulam District in the Periyar River delta of Kerala, (76° 12.587' E Longitude and 10° 09.434' N Latitude). About 4 kilometres to the west of the location is the Arabian Sea. The river Tattappally, also known as Munambam Kayal is a backwater river that parallels the Arabian Sea and is located roughly one kilometre from the site's western edge. The site's network of canals connecting it to the Paravur river (tributary of Periyar) and the Tattappally River is a notable aspect¹⁷. Many inhabitants recall seeing country boats travel these waterways up to the middle of the 20th century.

The estimated chronology of the site spreads across three millennia. The inhabitation and early trade have begun with the Iron Age, Maritime activity reach its peak between 5th & 1st c BCE and followed by socio-cultural inbuilt continuities and discontinuities¹⁸. Native habitation had started in Pattanam during the Iron Age period (about 1000 BCE), according to Carbon14 (C14) dating and high precision Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) on the charcoal samples from the aeolian

sandy layers at depths ranging from 340 cms. to 370 cms¹⁹. In addition to its nautical characteristics, the site's urban architecture, personal ornamentation and industrial elements highlight its importance in regional and long-distance marine interactions. Additionally, it provides proof of the local's role in promoting these interactions. The following table lists the significant archaeological material evidence as well as the items that were excavated:

Table 1: Antiquities (2007 onwards)

SI No	Object or Artifacts	Count (in numbers)	Ceramics	Count (in numbers)
1	Gold	76	Local Ceramics	3537464
2	Copper Artifacts	191	Rim sherds	144,044
3	Lead Artifacts	209	Rouletted	8534
4	Iron Artifacts	7584	Amphora	6029
5	Bead consists of glass	38718	Torpedo	3098
6	Stone Beads	5758	Glazed Pottery	861
7	Ring Stones	74	Black and Red Ware	125
8	Glass Objects	1338	Chinese Ceramics	239
9	Coins	198	Graffiti	95
10	Spindle whorl	43	Turquoise Glazed Pottery	1527
11	Cameo blank	48	Terra sigillata	122
12	Lamps	78	Pattanam Ware	286

The archaeological excavations have unearthed 1,29,183 artefacts, 5,26,676 diagnostic potsherds, 1,40,265 non-Indian pottery sherds and 4.6 million local body sherds. The architectural eyes of the site, such as roofing tiles, toilet features, well-made bricks and mud-ring wells, suggest urban living and industrialization. The most significant archaeological materials found in Pattanam include amphorae fragments,

broken glass beads, torpedo jar fragments, triple grooved tile and a four-legged quern. Amphorae were used to transport olive oil, wine, and fish products, while broken glass beads were found in the Early Historic layers. Torpedo jar fragments were of Mesopotamian origin and had similar uses. The site also features a variety of roof tiles with three grooves and a single groove on the edge, and a stone bench with four legs. The terracotta figures comprised spindle toy wheels, whorls, lamps, discs, oven knobs and stoppers, hopscotches, bricks, tiles and potsherds of enormous quantity.

Located beneath a ceramic layer, is a rich collection of botanical remains, preserved by a 25-35 cms. thick clay layer. Other items include botanical and non-botanical remains including cardamom, Indian jujube, brinjal, rice, wheat, gooseberry, ladies finger and the like. Frankincense is also an important botanical item. The local canoe, dating back to the Roman empire, is a key source of information on the spice trade.

The ceramic remains are divided into fine/distinct ceramics and local pottery ranging from Indian to foreign types. Foreign ceramic remains includes Indian Rouletted Ware, Mediterranean (Roman) pottery, and unidentified fine wares. Native pottery dominates with around 3.5 million sherds²⁰. Based on the existence of tangible evidence in the form of ceramics, P.J. Cherian and the senior research team from the Pattanam excavation make the following claims in favour of the overseas route that connected Indian subcontinent with the outer reaches of West Asia, Red Sea and the Mediterranean.

- Amphora, a jar (terracotta) used for fish sauce, wine and olive oil has been found at Pattanam, India, indicating its connection to the Roman empire²¹ during the ancient times. The site has the highest number of amphora sherds ever found in the Indian subcontinent. These amphorae sherds at Pattanam, including double-rod handles, supposed to be wine transport containers, dating back to the 4th century BCE²². Their production primarily occurred

during the Hellenistic period (c.336-30BCE) and continued into the Roman world up to first century CE²³. According to Tomber²⁴, the most prevalent type at Pattanam, Dressel 2-4, is native to Kos, Campania, Southern Italy, and Cilicia. Other sherds come from Egypt, the Rhodes Islands, Gaul and Catalonia. This evidence calls for a more thorough examination of amphora sherds in order to comprehend India's trade with the Red Sea regions and Mediterranean in the late BC and early AD centuries, particularly along the Malabar coast.



Figure 3: Roamn Amphora (Terracotta)

- Pattanam excavations yielded 122 Terra sigillata sherds. It is another imported ceramic item (Italian) which was also known as Arretine ware. Its presence provides compelling indication in favour of transcontinental maritime trade in the site. This magnificent imprinted tableware has a smooth, waxy surface, a soft gloss and a crimson slip.

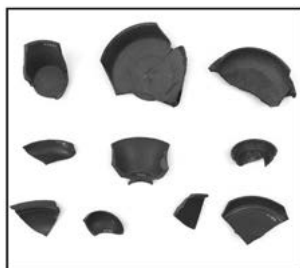


Figure 4: Terra Sigillata Pottery Sherds

- The previous assumption is further supported by the discovery of artefacts, particularly the Turquoise Glazed Pottery (TGP) from Pattanam. TGP, an ancient type of glazed earthenware generally produced with light beige fabric and a glaze having green, white, yellow, or blue shade. It was also referred to as alkaline glazed ware, Sassano-Islamic, or simply the alkaline ware. It was an essential part of Babylonian tradition which led to maritime relations link with Mesopotamia. TGP is believed to have been primarily manufactured in Southern Iraq, possibly near Basra. Its presence was marked in all Indian Ocean maritime sites which were discovered and indicators showing Mesopotamian nautical relation up to Japan, throughout the early historic period. Its widespread distribution in Pattanam site also strengthens the region's early marine links as early as the fifth century BCE.



Figure 5: Turquoise Glazed Pottery (TGP)

- The stratigraphy sequence of amphorae and TGP aligns with Tomber and Kennet's chronology, suggesting commercial activities at Pattanam site during the pre-Roman phase. Generally, these amphorae were distributed along the early historic soil layers of the site but TGP sherds are found along the Iron Age-Transition layer itself. The presence of IRW was detected in all stratigraphic layers other than iron age and the modern layer, indicating regional trade's prolonged role. Despite the site's disturbed condition, the stratigraphic pattern remains uniform.

- The wharf setting at Pattanam is another noteworthy structural feature that supports the preceding arguments, as it is located near a port and includes a canoe, bollards and a commercial warehouse. Excavated, it was a massive edifice composed of nineteen-course laterite granules with exterior brick lining. A dugout canoe built of *Aanjili* wood (*Artocarpus hirsutus* Lam) could be found in the wet region. The entire piece is 6m+ in length and 30 cms wide; its calibration age using C14 ranges between BCE1300 and 100 BCE. Also, the other organic sample, the teak bollard, ranges from 1100 BCE to 1300 CE as per the C14 calibration.
- The excavations produced massive amounts of IRW (Indian Rouletted Ware), with the most sherds (8534) among unique ceramic textiles being found. IRW are fragments of fine pottery (Indian) discovered in practically all maritime cites in Indian Ocean rim, indicating India's importance in the Indian Ocean maritime network. The presence of IRW, possible links with Buddhist and Jain periods indicating this site's connection with the dynamic Indian Ocean maritime trade.
- Pattanam's local pottery, which totals 94671 is an important assemblage and a crucial study material. The local pottery, which totals 3.5 million sherds, illustrates the socio-cultural lives of the site's population. The pottery contains containers for daily use, commercial application and architectural features including ring wells, tiles and bricks. The study of these pottery sherds is critical for understanding Kerala's social history and the Malabar coast's maritime heritage.

Moreover, the Pattanam wharf at a depth of 3m, contains ample botanical remains, including bread fruit seed, coconut fronds and shells, black pepper, teak and more. The assemblage also includes rice, wheat, cardamom, green gram, mango seeds and gourds. These palaeo-botanical evidences reaffirm the information on the spice trade that flourished here

during the Roman period. The Sangam poem 149 (*Akananooru*) and 343 (*Purananooru*) mention a water craft '*kazhithoni*', similar to the dugout canoe excavated at Pattanam. The presence of these evidences lends credence to Kerala's supposed maritime past through its port sites during the Roman or Indo-Roman periods.

Excavation of a unique sailboat at Thaikkal (Cherthala)

Thaikkal (Kadakkarappally) is a quiet village in the Alappuzha District, about 30 kms. south of Kochi, close to Cherthala, and about 1.5 kms. from the Arabian Sea coast. The recent excavations have uncovered an intriguing watercraft that is partially complete. This is a rare discovery because of the boat's construction method, which has no known equivalents and the wood's excellent preservation given India's harsh climatic conditions.

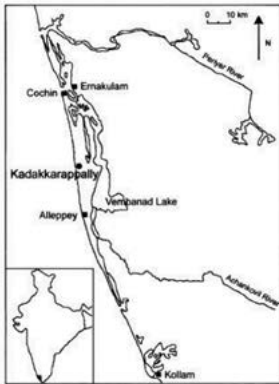


Figure 4: Location of Thaikkal (Kadakkarappally)



Figure 5: The remains of the sailboat at excavation

In the 1990s, villagers excavating a paddy field for coconut cultivation discovered the wreckage of a watercraft. The stern end of the boat was destroyed during their attempts to unearth it due to their lack of knowledge about archaeological monuments and scientific excavations; however, later investigations by the Department of Archaeology, Government of Kerala, verified its existence and initiated scientific studies. The boat came to light and nearby stratigraphy was examined

during excavations conducted in 2002 and 2003 by the Department of Archaeology and the Centre for Heritage Studies, Tripunithura. The full-scale discovery of a double-mast, flat-bottomed sailboat reveals an incredible and unique aspect of Kerala's maritime heritage. The sailboat is 18.70 m by 4.05 m, with 11 compartments and a pointed bow²⁵. The stern and upper parts of the hull are damaged, but the boat is as wide as it can be amidships. The stern appears to have a transom, and the wooden parts that comprised the stern end are no longer in their original locations.

The boat's structure is exceptional and one of a kind in the area. The boat's wall and floor meet at the intersection of two chines, or L-shaped transition strakes, each of which is about 14.5 metres long. The hull's two layers of planking/strakes are 7 cms. thick on the outside and 8 cms. thick on the inside. Ten 22-cms-high frames support the hull and separate the boat into 11 sections. Each chine has socket-like characteristics that the frames have been fitted into. The structure itself made use of a number of wooden (tree) and iron nails of different sizes. The wooden nails have square parts, but many of the iron nails appear to be clinched. In several locations, caulking has been completed using a cementing material. The inner hull has a number of cleats carved into it where ropes can be inserted, perhaps for the purpose of lashing the inner hull with a rope for added strength. Kerala is home to about 51 different kinds of traditional boats, such as rafts, dugouts, and plank-built boats. The majority of these boats are stitched together, with the plank-built boats being nailed. It is noteworthy that there are no precise similarities between the construction methods used in the excavated boats and the pre-modern boat-building techniques seen along the Kerala coast. Items recovered from the vessel include coir rope fragments, iron nails and a dressed stone made of beach rock or *kankar* stone²⁶. The boat's wood samples reveal that mostly *Artocarpus hirsutus* Lamk (*Anjily* in Malayalam) was used for building the boat. The C14 dating of two wood samples from the archaeological remains indicates that the wood part of the boat could be about 800-1100 years old. If the date of the wood falls between AD 920 and 1270, the vessel probably belongs to the time

period of the 12th and 15th centuries AD. However, another opinion holds that the boat might have been made during the Portuguese era, based on the idea that iron nails were only widely utilized in boat construction in India following contact with the West. Although the reason for the boat's abandonment is unknown, it might have been destroyed in a storm or stranded in an inhospitable location. Given how well-preserved it is, the boat was either abandoned in an inaccessible, wet location or close to the historic coastline. According to its design, the boat was intended for coastal travel and inland transportation, most likely on the Vembanadu Lake, one of the area's largest inland bodies of water. The boat's unique technology needs to be preserved for future generations, although its exact nature and condition remain unknown.

Conclusion

New archaeological evidence from Pattanam (Muziris) reveals the Indian Ocean maritime trade route connected prehistoric Kerala with the Mediterranean, Red Sea and West Asian coasts. The available artefacts and its signs indicating that Pattanam could have been part of the historic port of Muciri Pattanam (Muziris). The excavations at Pattanam and Thaikkal provided substantial archaeological evidence about Kerala's long marine history, supporting the presence of Muziris, a prosperous port city in ancient Kerala. The maritime legacy of Alappuzha is a testament to the enduring significance of Kerala's coastal cities in the global trade networks of the past and the excavations at Thaikkal underline this. Pattanam's archaeology presents diverse ways to bring historical spaces alive through art, incorporating local histories and myths that engage the public imagination. All of the results support the notion that Kerala has a rich maritime history. Because of its alleged extensive farming techniques, surplus output, robust local commerce networks and strong central governance, Kerala's marine heritage as evidenced by ancient literature requires further study. Additional research is required to determine whether military and legislative enforcement of safeguards, support and regulation mechanisms existed to support these large marine commerce links.

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Serpentine motifs in the temple art of Odisha: a study of the Naga/Nagi Stambha

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Abstract

From ancient rock art to mediaeval temple art, animals were a major theme in Indian Art. Ancient Indians respected, cared for and even worshipped animals because they understood that they had the right to live alongside humans. In addition to demonstrating the skill of Odishan craftsmen, the temple's mosaic of intricate and varied animal decorations also demonstrates their most creative mood. The serpentine Naga (male) and Nagi (female) design was one of the many animal-related elements that contributed significantly to the temple's overall decorative plan. These themes have been depicted in a number of ways. But the distinctive characteristic of Odishan temple art is the prevalence of naga and nagi motifs in the decorating of pilasters or stambhas, in a unique amalgamation of human and snake forms, which is largely unparalleled in other regions. In addition to adding beauty to the structure, these designs also function as auspicious symbols that protect the temple. The folk identity of the motif is justified by the

fact that some tribals of Odisha recognise their totemic relationship with them and even worship them. Along with epigraphic documents, these motifs offer a wealth of information on art, artistry besides dating the temple.

Keywords: *Naga/Nagi, Serpentine, motif, Stambha, Odishan, temple art.*

Introduction

In Odisha, the veneration of *naga* and *nagi* serpents has a long history and is comparable to practices in other parts of India. In addition, the *naga* is a prominent figure in literature and art in many Far Eastern nations that have been impacted by Indian culture¹. As the sacred art of Japan and China has largely been influenced by Gandhara, it is not surprising that here the snake-kings are shown as men in Chinese clothing, with a dragon erupting from the back of their neck². These figures are considered auspicious and can be found in Khmer art in Cambodia. The *naga* is always shown in human form in the Indonesian island of Java, at the famous Borobudur Stupa. Such figures appear in solely serpentine form on Khandagiri-hill cave number-III, dating back to the 2nd/3rd centuries CE near Bhubaneswar, and their relationship to the entrance as an apotropaic mechanism, defending the structure is clear. In contrast to this pure form, there are separate standing *naga* and *nagi* images in entirely human shape, with serpent coils carved on the back of the image and a canopy of hoods above, which may date from the 2nd/3rd centuries CE³. The Svarnajalesvara at Bhubaneswar, dating from the 7th century CE, is the earliest temple to have it on the lintel of the north central niche, despite its small size. By the 8th and 9th centuries, these representations had given way to standing figures who served as attendants of *dvarapalas*. During the 10th century, these motifs became standardised and appear to embrace the pilaster or *stambha* design. On later temples, they were decorated as the guardians to the temples at the sides of the entrance. The serpentine figures have appeared in various instances throughout the history of Odishan temple construction which needs a chronological study.

The primary purpose of this study is to examine the arrangement of serpent motifs as a component of art composition in the Odisha temple building activity, as well as their value as a component of the architectural plan. For the study, field investigation and photographic documentation were used, as well as data from available published literatures, both traditional and modern. Every temple, whether small or large, built between the 6th and 13th century CE was documented in terms of *naga/nagi* motifs. The important temples for the study are listed below:

1. Svarnajalesvara temple, Bhubaneswar (7th century CE)
2. Kosalesvara temple, Baidyanath (10th century CE)
3. Twin temples (Siddhesvara and Nilamadhaba), Gandharadi (10th century CE)
4. Varahi temple, Bhubaneswar (10th century CE)
5. Tirthesvara temple, Bhubaneswar (10th century CE)
6. Muktesvara temple, Bhubaneswar (10th century CE)
7. Rajarani temple, Bhubaneswar (11th century CE)
8. Sun temple, Konark (13th century CE)

A brief overview of Odishan temple art

Nagara, Vesra, and Dravida are India's three major temple groups. The Nagara temple exemplifies the earliest architectural style. The Nagara style of architecture, which was invented during the imperial Gupta period, became the distinguishing feature of Odishan temple art⁴. Odisha witnessed continuous human endeavour in the field of temple construction for around 700 years, beginning around the 6th century CE and ending around the 13th century CE, and has revealed common features. The tremendous religious and cultural resurgence that began with the political period of the Sailodbhavas, accelerated under the the Bhaumakaras and the Somavamsis, and peaked during the Ganga period leaving the Kalinga school of temple art in full swing. The operations continued even beyond the above mentioned period, although on a very small and subsistence scale. For the discerning observer, Odisha's temple art shows a clear evolutionary process from Parasuramesvara to the Lingaraj temples in Bhubaneswar, culminating in the massive Sun temple at Konark.

The increased interest in the study of Odishan temple art may have been strengthened by the availability of architectural manuals such as the *Bhubanapradipa* ⁵ and *Silpa Prakasa* ⁶. The different components of Odishan temples were named using local terminology and linked to the human body, implying that the temple was constructed as a miniature image of Prajapati⁷. Bhubanapradipa specifies three common types of temples: *rekha*, *pidha*, and *khakhara*. When joined, the *rekha* and *pidha* form a coherent architectural system. The architectural style of the *rekha* or *deula* includes a sanctum with a curved spire and a *pidha-jagamohan* or porch with a stepped pyramidal roof.

However, in a fully finished temple, two more buildings, the *natya-mandira* or dancing hall and the *bhoga-mandapa* or hall of offerings, were built in front of the *pidha* or *jagamohana* along the same axis. Both *rekha* and *pidha* have the fundamental components. Whereas the *khakhara* order is distinguished by its semi-cylindrical vaulted roof, presumably derived from the early *chaitya* halls⁸, it resembles a modified survival of the primitive hut with a cylindrical roof⁹.

Odishan temples are divided vertically into four parts, distinguishing them into three separate groups. These are the *pista* or platform, *bada* or wall, *gandi* or body, and *mastaka* or finial. The numerous components are smoothly integrated into a visually appealing architectural arrangement. The architectural feature of the *pista* is not considered mandatory, but it has been added in more evolved temples. The exterior plans of both the *deula* and *jagamohana* are split by offset projections. The exterior surface of the *rekha* temple is created with projections, or *pagas* or *rathas*, that run vertically up the structure, while the inner chamber remains unchanged. These projections “produce an effective play of light and shade”¹⁰. Early temples were constructed using the *tri-ratha* projection technique.

However, as the *tri-ratha* matures, it becomes a *pancha-ratha*, with *kanika* acting as the corner *paga*, *anartha* as the middle *paga*, and *raha* as the central *paga*. The *pratiratha* was included into the *sapta-*

ratha style during the 12th century CE. The temple could possibly have evolved into *nava-ratha*, which includes two *pratirathas*. All of these projections enhanced the temple's appearance. The *anuraha*, or spaces between these *pagas*, are adorned with a variety of designs, such as *naga/nagi* on *stambhas* or other composite animal motifs.

Temples in Odisha are cohesive units made up of component features such as architecture and sculpture. However, the two distinguishing aspects of the Odishan temple from other groups of Indian temples are as follows:

- Firstly, the internal walls of the Odishan temple are plain, but the exterior is lavishly decorated with cult icons, religious scenes, human figures, animal motifs, floral motifs, scrollwork and designs, as well as other architectural motifs. Cult images have a heavenly essence and are found in all temples while adhering to stringent iconographical regulations. In contrast, the ornamental figures show human features. The decorative motifs of the Odishan temple are auspicious in the larger decorative scheme, serving to both beautify and defend the shrine.
- Secondly, *naga* and *nagi* motifs on the pilaster or *stamba* are prominent in Odishan temples, but they are nearly unknown elsewhere. The figures are bejewelled and capped with five or seven snake hoods, and they hold things such as conch shells, cups, and jewel garlands in their hands. Their coiffure is encrusted with exquisite gems and their face is illuminated by a warm, charming grin. The use of free-standing pillars in Odishan architectural style is not as common as in other temples in India. In a few cases, they were used inside the *jagamohana* to provide extra structural reinforcement, but they were usually devoid of ornamentation. Instead, the design uses engaged pillars or pilasters as an integral component.

Naga/Nagi as Cult Icons

There are various examples of *nagi* representations venerated as cult deities in Odisha temples, including Ambalika/Amba, Manasa and Astikajaratkaru¹¹. Amba and Ambalika are shown in *paryanka* pose, with

a canopy of seven serpent hoods above their heads. They have two arms, one bearing a flower stem and the other a lotus. Manasa was discovered sitting in *padmasana*, with a similar canopy of serpent hoods above her head. She usually holds a vase or *purna-ghata* with both hands, in front of her breast. Astikajaratkaru is one of the most popular forms of Manasa, in which she sits in *lalitasana* with a dead warrior on her lap. The large *naga* figures may also be found in the sanctum of the Vaital Deula and the *jagamohana* niches of the Sisiresvara temple in Bhubaneswar. The present researcher has also found independent snake-slab worshipping in Odisha's remote tribal districts¹².

Naga-Mithuna-Bandha

Though the snake-tailed serpent figure remained a popular theme in mediaeval Indian art, it is best represented by the loving *naga* couple in Odishan temple artwork. The serpent bodies are found in an elegant manner. The coils of the *naga* and *nagi* are gracefully intertwined to produce a *naga-mithuna-bandha*. The Sun Temple at Konark perfectly represents such images (Fig.1).



Fig.1. Defaced *naga-mithuna-bandha* sculpture, Sun temple, Konark

Naga/Nagi Stambha

The *Silpa Prakasa* refers to two types of pillars for decoration: *naga-stambha* and *kumbha-stambha*. The best pillars are the *nag/nagi* pillars, with the *kumbha-stambha* considered a secondary alternative. Furthermore, it was said that the carving of the *naga* protects the temple and boosts its auspiciousness¹³. The *sastras* reveal a concealed verity that emphasises the imperative role of sculpting *naga* sculptures

in multiple locations within the temple premises, as a means to ensure its safeguarding and promote propitiousness. “These *naga*-folk give protection to the temples”¹⁴. In an Odishan temple, during the whole 10th century, the *naga-nagi* pillars or *stambhas* are positioned in the *anuraha* recesses at the *bada* of both the *deul* and the *jagamohana*. But it is also found at the entrances as an auspicious guardian or as the flanking motifs of the architectural *mundi* designs in later temples.

Serpentine motifs were already depicted in the temples throughout the early period, as was previously described. Only on the *stambhas* that are positioned into the *anuraha* recesses of the *jagamohana* more especially, on the Kosalesvara temple at Baidyanath can the earliest existence of these sculptures be seen. In a vertical progression, the *stambha* rises to the *jangha*’s height, where the image is positioned at the top. The shape of the *naga* is completely serpentine. The *stambhas* of the twin temples of Gandharadi are shaped like a *naga* and *nagi*. The female figure is positioned on the left, flanked the *jagamohana*’s *gavaksa* window projections and entrance, while the male figure is on the right. In the uppermost part of the *stambha*, these figures appear with their tail flowing elegantly under them, and they are also holding a water-filled pitcher and a wreath. The lower portion of the *stambha* is decorated with a double *gajakranta* design, and the figures are encased in a set of seven hoods.

Like those at Gandharadi, the *stambhas* may also be seen at the entrance (Fig.2) and in the *gavaksa* design. It should be mentioned, though, that the larger *stambhas* at the entry have an *alamba* motif, although the base lacks the *gajakranta* motif. The *stambha* also found in the *anuraha* recesses of the Varahi *deula* at Chaurasi (Fig.3). Here, it is seen that the figures are depicted in a dualistic fashion, moving upwards while being accompanied by the *gajakranta* symbol at the bottom. Nevertheless, the *gajakranta* design is not standardised since it varies in design, sometimes having twin motifs and other times having just one motif. Beyond the figure portrayal, the *stambha* extends into the *gandi* area, where a *salabhanjika* motif adorns it.



Fig.2. Serpent figures at the entrance of Varahi temple, Chaurasi



Fig.3. Serpent motif on the stambha in anuraha recess, Varahi temple, Chaurasi.

An architectural characteristic of the Tirthesvara temple at Bhubaneswar is the placement of the *naga/nagi stambhas* inside the *anuraha* recess, which extends past the *jangha*'s limits and into the *pabhaga*. There is a double *gajakranta* at the base, followed by a *naga* or *nagi* moving downward rather than upward in a pattern of ascending, and its tail coiling upward. The *nagi*'s serpent hood has now shrunk to five individuals. In addition, the *nagi* is portrayed with a vase in her left hand and a *cauri* or flywhisk in her right. The *naga*, on the other hand, is shown clutching a garland. Additionally, a little *kirita* or crown-like pattern adorns the *stamba*.

The Muktesvara temple at Bhubaneswar also features *stambhas* positioned within the *anuraha* recesses of the *jagamohana* (Fig.4). In the longer sides, three *stambhas* are present on each side of the *gavaksa* window. Among them, two *stambhas* are *nagis*, while one *stambha* is a *naga*. The ornamentation bears resemblance to that seen on the Tirthesvara, with the addition of a supplementary embellishment in the form of a diminutive *alamba* positioned towards the uppermost section of the shaft. In the *deul*, they found in the recess between the *kanika* and *anuratha pagas*. They added an extra panel under the *kirita* that has a woman standing in a doorway on it. The *naga* is in the left hollow and

the *nagi* is in the right, which is the opposite of standard conventions. The objects held in the hands include a conch shell and lotus in addition to the vase, *cauri* and garland. The sculptures of the Muktesvara temple are depicted in a descending arrangement, with their tails wrapped around the shaft above. The figures exhibit alternating male and female characteristics, each adorned with a canopy consisting of five serpent hoods embellished with opulent jewels.



Fig.4. Serpent motifs on the *stambha* at the *bada* of Muktesvara temple, Bhubaneswar

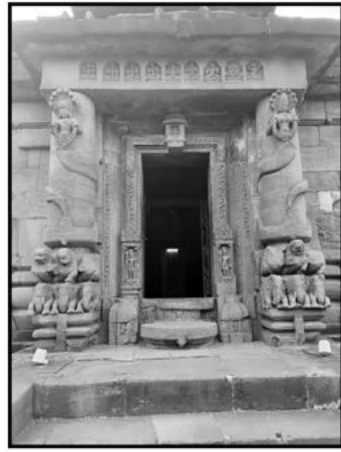


Fig.5. Serpent figures at the entrance, Rajarani temple, Bhubaneswar

During the 11th century CE, the introduction of two-storey *jangha* to the *deula* and *jagamohanai* led to the replacement of *naga/nagi stambha* with *vyala* and *nayika* figures, or *mithuna/maithuna* motifs, as the prevailing embellishment for *anuraha* recesses. However, the serpentine figures also exhibit sporadic occurrences in the forefront of the *gavaksa* window and entrance portals of the *jagamohana*. At the entrance of the Rajara are arranged in a vertical progression, atop a *stambha*, featuring a triple-*gajakranta* motif at its base (Fig.5). The depicted images feature a prominent arrangement of seven snake hoods forming a canopy, while also exhibiting the presence of a garland positioned in front of their breasts. The hairstyle of the *nagi* is fashioned in a vertically elongated *kirita* design.

The *naga/nagi stambha* design in the recess of the *jangha*, were afterwards incorporated as customary embellishments in the architectural compositions of the *tala-garbhika*, initially positioned below the *raha* niche and later, beneath the *gavaksa* window. Within the Rajarani temple, in the *tala-garbhika* beneath the *raha* niches, the *stambhas* positioned on either side of the extended *khakhara-mundi* exhibit a pair of serpents. These serpents consist of one *naga* and one *nagi*, organised in a manner that creates both horizontal and vertical pairings. The evolution of tripartite patterns for the *pagas* of the *jagamohana* gradually transitioned towards spread recesses. The utilisation of intricate *pithas* has led to the prominent exhibition of *naga/nagi stambhas* on the temple's base.

While it is common for the *tala-garbhika* of later temples to feature regular designs, it is worth noting that these motifs do not necessarily appear in pairs. The increased presence of *stambhas* positioned below the *gavaksa* window has led to a higher level of popularity for the *nagi* in comparison to the *naga*. In contrast, the depictions found on the Sun temple exhibit a greater diversity in poses, with some figures even engaging in musical performances, notably showcasing their exceptional talent on the flute¹⁵.

Here the *naga/nagi stambhas* are shown with *naga* and *nagi* either single or in embraced *naga-bandha*. The *naga* and *nagi stambhas* are frequently carved at the lower *jangha* of the *pitha* (Fig.6). The *bada* of the *jagamohana* is also placed with *naga* and *nagi stambha* which have double *gaja-vyalas* at the base. Here, the beauty of the *naga-kanyas* inspired the artists to depict them in pleasing variety.



Fig.6. Serpent figure decoration at the *pista*, Sun temple, Konark

Conclusion

The *naga/nagis* are referred to as the “guardians of the jewels and treasures”¹⁶ and are viewed as inhabitants of the underworld. They are considered as “mythical semi-divine being with a human face”¹⁷. Such depictions include a serpent’s tail and a cobra’s hood that has been extended. These sculptures are most effective when, “paired with male and female counterpart which together form symbols of fecundity and auspiciousness”¹⁸.

The Odishan temples have a distinctive portrayal of the *naga* and *nagi*, wherein they are depicted in a unique amalgamation of human and snake forms. This depiction grants them a semi-divine status. Initially, despite their small size, such images are located on the higher corners of the lintel above the north *raha* niche.

During the 8th and 9th century CE, these images were utilised as the attendants accompanying the *dvarapalas*. They became a standard decoration in the *anuraha* recess of the *bada* during the 10th century CE as an architectural motif. But they were typically restricted to the *pabhaga* and *pitha* from the 11th century onwards, indicating that they are chronic in nature.

During this period these motifs were substituted by the *vyala* figures in the *anuraha* recess of *bada*. But the symbolical *stambha* is commonly observed in temples of 11th to 13th century CE, strategically placed beside the *mundi* designs in order to augment the aesthetic appeal of the overall construction. However, the major *naga/nagi stambha* during this period are observed along the side of the entrance portal of the temple.

Aesthetically, the *naga/nagis* are “the most beautiful and sensuous images created by the Orissan sculptor”¹⁹, and the development of such figures in Odishan temple art can be traced back to its roots in folk tales, legends, mythology, customs and tradition. Their embellishment adorning

the temple served to augment the allure of the cult-centric edifice. The profusion of regional ornate temple art in Odisha influences many artistic practices and provides inspiration for a wide range of artistic activities. These phenomena still exist in their rudimentary forms in modern social and cultural environments. Sculpting figures and designs is an artistic practice that could serve as a lasting source of inspiration for sculptors, artists and academics in the future.

Glossary

- *Alamba*: an ornament of hanging bead-garlands generally issuing from the mouth of leonine mouth/*kirtimukha*.
- *Dvarapala*: door guard at the entrance of the temple.
- *Gajakranta*: motif of a lion seated with three legs on the back of an elephant. The other front paw is held in front of the chest ready to strike the crouching elephant.
- *Gavaksa*: mullioned window.
- *Khakhara-mundi*: miniature representation of *khakhara* temple as the architectural decorative motif.
- *Lalitasana*: relaxed stance with one leg pendant and the other under the body like in *padmasana*.
- *Naga-mithuna-bandha*: interlocking amorous serpents.
- *Nayika*: adolescence girl, *kanyai*.
- *Padmasana*: lotus seat; sitting pose where the legs are crossed and the feet brought to rest on the thighs.
- *Paryanka*: seated pose with one leg resting on top of the other; both soles are visible but the legs are not crossed and locked as in *padmasana*.
- *Salabhanjika*: a female/*yakshi* embracing a tree.
- *Tala-garbhika*: a motif below the niche of the lower *jangha*, inserted into or over the *pabhaga* mouldings; generally consists of a miniature temple design which may flank either side by a *naga/nagi* stambha.
- *Vyala*: a hybrid leonine form. It is also known as *virala*, *viraja*.

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A Study of the archaeological remains of Kaleswar Mahabhairav Dham at Jalukbari, Guwahati Assam

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Abstract

The Kaleswar Mahabhairabh Dham in Jalukbari is a Saivite shrine located within the campus of the Gauhati University. It is a modern temple that houses ancient remains. Its origin is shrouded in local lore. This shrine has escaped the notice of the academic world and does not find mention in any published work on the art or sculpture of the region of Assam. The present researcher was informed about the possibility of the shrine housing ancient remains by some students of the Post Graduate Department of History of the Gauhati University and after visiting the site, found rock-cut sculptures and lingas. Upon visiting the site, the modern temple was found to enshrine rock-cut sculptures and lingas. This paper is primarily based upon a field study of these evidences at the temple and personal information provided by its caretaker, regarding its history.

Keywords: *Kaleswar, Mahabhairabh, Sivalinga, Uma-Mahesvara, rock-cut.*

Introduction

The shrine known as Sri Sri Kaleswar Mahabhairav Dham is located within the premises of the Gauhati University campus in Jalukbari, Guwahati, Assam. Its coordinates are 26.147618 ° N Latitude and 91.655112 ° E Longitude. It is a modern brick temple with a roof made of corrugated iron sheets. According to the signage, the temple was established on the 18th day of Chaitra in the Bhaskara Era 1377, corresponding to a day in the first week of April 1971. It houses a Sivalinga and some rock-cut sculptures upon a huge boulder. The Sivalinga is worshipped as the aniconic representation of Siva and is known as Kaleswar Maha Bhairav as it lies at the foot of the Kaleswar Pahar (hillock). The rock-cut sculpture is worshipped as Bhairav. In spite of being located in close proximity to the students' residential quarters of the Gauhati University, the temple and its remains find no mention in extant academic publications. Neog (1973) in *Pabitra Assam* provides a detailed description of all existing shrines of the state, old and new in a comprehensive work covering all districts of Assam. Yet inexplicably, there is no reference to the Kaleswar Mahabhairav Dham. Years later in the *Holy Shrines of Assam*, Pradip Sharma (2002) also gives brief sketches of all places of worship in Assam, but there is no mention of the present shrine under discussion. Manoranjan Dutta (1990), Rabin Dev Choudhury (1985) and other scholars too have never taken notice of the remains found in this shrine. Upon learning about the existence of the shrine, the present author visited the site in May 2023 and studied the ancient remains found therein.

The present paper is based primarily upon a field study of the archaeological remains found within the premises of the modern shrine known as Kaleswar Mahabhairav Dham. These archaeological remains consist of rock-cut sculptures and Siva lingas. These are closely related to the myths associated with the foundation and history of the shrine that houses these remains. In this paper, there firstly, there will be an examination of the myths related to the history of the temple, followed by a discussion of the archaeological remains found therein.

History and associated myths of the temple

The origin of the remains is shrouded in mystery. But the present caretaker cum priest of the shrine, Ramakanta Mali narrated the history of the modern temple and its remains. His father, a farmer named Gaji Ram Mali who hailed from Satpokhili village near Rampur, had reportedly dreamt about the existence of the shrine. Siva had appeared to him in a dream, three days in a row and commanded him to worship at his shrine, the location of which was also revealed to him by the deity to be near the Kaleswar Pahar (A hillock is locally known as *pahar*). Initially, he had not paid any attention to his constant dreams about the shrine but on the fourth day, Siva appeared before Gaji Ram Mali while he was awake and ordered him to unearth his hidden shrine within seventeen days. Gaji Ram sought to ignore the divine command but he ultimately felt compelled to travel to Guwahati and started searching for the shrine with the help of some people.

However, they had failed to find it. So Gaji Ram prayed to the deity (Siva) to give him some indication of the exact location of the hidden shrine. Suddenly he was overcome by a sweet scent. Upon following it, he came to the present site, upon a small hillock that was approachable by a small path, that lies between R.C.C. III and R.C.C. IV boys' hostels of the Gauhati University. He started digging up the soil and discovered an old basil tree, locally known as Ram Tulasi. The sweet scent was emanating from it. Upon further digging, he discovered the present sivalinga and the boulder with the sculptures. Following that, he sought the help of the residents of the boys' hostels in the vicinity and they helped him to set up the shrine and commence worship. Gaji Ram Mali was permitted by the authority of the Gauhati University to reside in the campus of the hostel and conduct the daily worship at the temple, in accordance with the instructions he reportedly received from Siva himself. Over time, the shrine, with its peaceful ambience gained popularity and many devotees began to visit the site. Among them was Chandan Gogoi who gave a donation in 1994 to construct the small structure with a dome to protect the remains, as well as an assembly hall

or *mandapa* and a small cottage for the caretaker cum priest. (Ramakanta Mali: personal communication). However, the signage on a marble slab outside the sanctum gives the date of construction as 1971, probably referring to the time from which worship commenced at the site. After the death of his father, Ramakanta Mali has been performing the rituals of the temple. Every year, on the occasion of Maha Siva Ratri devotees throng the temple.

Architecture of the modern temple

The shrine consists of an inner sanctum in the form of a shed, constructed in 1971 over the archaeological remains, preceded by a *mandapa*. The sanctum is square in shape, made of bricks and covered by cement plaster. It has a flat concrete roof surmounted by a small *sikhara* like dome with double *kalashas* (pitchers). There are windows and ventilators on the side walls through which light filters in. At present, there is a brick plinth upon which stands the *mandapa* designed like that of the *namghars* (Neo-Vaisnavite prayer halls) in Assam – a central nave flanked by two aisles separated by a row of pillars each (Fig.1). The roof is made of corrugated iron sheets. The wooden rafters or beams form triangles over which are the slanting roof that slopes down, on either side. The roofs over the aisles are at a lower level. The sides of the *mandapa* are open, with just a low half wall.



Fig. 1

Archaeological remains

Upon entering the sanctum behind the *mandapa*, on the left, we find a huge pillar like rock-cut structure, with a rounded top. Its base is covered by a raised cemented *yonipitha* whose sides are covered with vitreous tiles like that of the floor. Its height is 110cms. The circumference at the base is 190cms. while, at the top it is 86cms. It is this object that is regarded as the aniconic representation of Kaleswar Mahabhairav, a form of Siva and at present worshipped as a *sivalinga* (Fig.2). It appears to be made of granite gneiss (B.P. Dowerah: personal communication, 2023).



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Behind this *sivalinga* is an outcrop of rock, upon whose surface, are found sculptures. Facing the entrance to the sanctum, near about the centre, is found a *sivalinga* with a *yonipitha*, facing east. It measures 60cms. in height and 69cms. in breadth (Fig.3). Towards the right of the rock-cut *sivalinga* within a semicircular niche, are found two eroded figures. The composition measures 110cms. in height and 80cms. in breadth. On closer examination, one can discern the following features: A male figure is upon a shallowly cut seat, with the left leg placed horizontally, while the right leg rests upon the back of a bull, carved below him. Thus, the figure is seated in *lalitasana*. A female figure is seated upon his left thigh and below her, is the figure of a lion. Her left leg is kept upright on the seat (*asana*), while her right leg rests upon the

back of the lion. The male figure is embracing the female. Both appear to be adorned with ornaments upon the neck and upper arms. However, details cannot be discerned as the sculptures are eroded. The faces and hairstyles too are eroded. The left arm of the female figure is placed upon her left knee and appears to be holding an object that could be either a lotus or a mirror (Fig.4).

Puranic references

The *Kalika Purana* is an important *upa-purana* composed in Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa (Assam) in c.9th-10th century C.E. to glorify the goddess Kali or Kamakhya. This goddess is regarded as the consort of the deity Siva and the different forms and manifestations of the latter are vividly described in this text. The *Kalika Purana*, while relating the circumstances under which Kamakhya came to be worshipped in Assam, states that the land was regarded by Sambhu (Siva) as his own domain (Nyayatirtha 1978:398). In Assam, Siva was not only worshipped in the anthropomorphic form, but also in the aniconic *linga* form. Huge stone *lingas* in *yonipithas* have been unearthed from the Ambari site in the heart of Guwahati city (Das 2007: 66).

The present city of Guwahati, identified with the ancient city of Pragjyotisapura (Das 2007:9-10), consists of rocky outcrops and spurs that are an extension of the Shillong Plateau. These rocky surfaces were found suitable for carving icons and sculptures which have survived to this day. A great many of them are of the deity Siva and Saivite deities, especially Ganesa, thus testifying to the popularity of the worship of Siva as stated in the text. To the east of the present site at Jalukbari stands the famous Kamakhya temple on the Nilachala Hill.

On the western slopes of this hill, to the right of the gateway, we find miniature rock-cut *Nagara* temples, complete with *amalakas*, *sikaharas*, each enshrining a tiny rock-cut *Sivalinga*. At the centre of Guwahati city, on the Chitrchal Hill is the temple of Navagraha, famed for planetary worship. Besides sculptures of the planets on the inner walls

of the temple, the shrine has aniconic representations of seven planets, as well as the sun and moon. The latter resemble the typical *lingas* in *yonipithas*. Moreover, to the east of Chitrachal at Kanvachal, as many as thirteen numbers of *lingas* in *yonipithas* were unearthed at Bapuji Housing Colony in various sizes (Das 2007:38). In the present instance the rock-cut *Sivalinga* with *yonipitha* carved upon the boulder and the presence of the huge *Sivalinga* worshipped as Kaleswar Mahabhairav also bolsters the statement of the *Kalika Purana*. At Surya Pahar archaeological site in the Goalpara district, are found square small rock-cut cave shrines, enshrining a *Sivalinga*, (Sarma 1988:34), besides numerous rock-cut *Sivalingas* upon the flat surface of the hill, especially the area leading down to the river Brahmaputra as observed by the present author. The majority of the copper-plate land grants issued by the three main ruling dynasties of Assam prior to the thirteenth century, namely the Varmanas, Salastambhas and Palas - all begin with invocation to different forms of Siva (Das 2007:142-147).

For instance, verse one of the Doobi copper plate inscription of Bhaskarvarman refers to “that God *Sasisekhara* who is to be meditated upon, who wears the moon as the crest jewel, who is lovely, who holds the *pinaka* bow and whose body is bedecked or besmeared with ashes”(Sarma 1981:8; Sharma 1978:11) while, the Nidhanpur copper plate land grant of the same ruler in verse two, proclaims: “Victory to the unsullied form of *Mahesvara*, endowed with his own riches...having a girdle made of the Lord of Snakes, that destroyed the body of Kama” (Sarma 1981:20 Sharma 1978: 50). This further bolsters the statement of the *Kalika Purana* regarding the popularity of the deity in early Assam.

Regarding the identification of the male and female rock-cut images, though eroded, they appear to be a depiction of Uma-Mahesvara. According to Gupte, different texts like the *Matsya Purana*, *Visnudharmottara Purana* and *Rupamandana*, prescribe that the Uma-Mahesvaramurti should depict Siva with his consort Uma or Parvati. While the former is seated and may have two or four arms, the latter is

to be depicted to the left of Siva, either seated or in a standing posture. Generally, the goddess is to be depicted as seated upon his left leg. Siva may hold his usual attributes like the *trisula* or trident, *damaru* or kettledrum, etc., while embracing his consort with his left hand. The goddess also holds her consort with her right hand, while her left hand may hold a *nilotpala* (blue lotus) or a *darpana* (mirror). Both deities are usually seated on a padmasana or lotus seat and below them, their *vahanas* (mounts) – the bull and the lion respectively- are to be depicted. Both are bedecked with their usual *alamkaras* or ornaments like armbrands, necklaces, etc. (Gupte 1980:61). Thus, our image corresponds to the textual description found in canonical literature.

Similar rock-cut images have also been found in the region of Mayang in Morigaon District to the east of Guwahati city and quite a few such images have been reported from the Badganga, Mikirati, Rajbari, Devasthan, etc., all in Nagaon District (Choudhury 1985: 62-65). On the north bank of the Brahmaputra, at Sita Parvat where the Dirgheswari temple is situated, in North Guwahati, we find a rock-cut Uma-Mahesvara sculpture. It is however, very badly eroded. Similar is the case with the rock-cut image at Mayang in Marigaon district, to the west of Guwahati city.

Besides rock-cut images, we also find the same motif in sculptures in the round, some of which are at present preserved at the Assam State Museum in Guwahati. An image of Uma-Mahesvara from Rajbari (72cms.X42cms.) in Hojai district is presently installed inside a temple (Fig.5). Siva is seated in



Fig. 5

lalitasana, with his right leg upon his mount, Nandi. His consort Uma is seated upon his left lap. However, unlike our rock-cut image, here both the legs of Uma are upon the *padamsana* or lotus seat. She holds a *darpana* or mirror in her left hand, while her right arm is placed around the shoulders of Siva. He embraces her bosom with his left arm, while the right arm holds a *dhatura-puspa*, a variety of Indian nightshade with hallucinogenic properties. Below the deities are their mounts, the bull and the lion. They are decked with the usual ornaments.

On stylistic grounds, the image can be placed in the tenth century CE (Choudhury 1985: 64). This date is based on the observation that later images of Uma-Mahesvara are more elaborate in that, above the deities, we find a *kirtimukha* flanked by two flying *vidyadharas*. As this image is very similar to the one found in the Kalleswar Mahabhairav Dham, the latter too may be assigned to the same period.

Conclusion

The archaeological remains at Kalleswar Mahabhairav Dham, consisting of Siva linga, and rock-cut *linga* in *yonipitha* and a rock-cut image of Uma-Mahesvara indicate that the deity Siva was worshipped in this region. Taken in conjunction with other similar remains in the Guwahati region, as well as in other parts of the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam, the remains may be placed in circa tenth century CE. The evidence of the inscriptions indicates the popularity of Saivism in Assam at least from the seventh to the twelfth centuries CE. Siva was worshipped in the aniconic *linga* form. The presence of *linga* in *yonipitha* and the image of Uma-Mahesvara indicate that the deity was worshipped together with his consort Uma, both in the anthropomorphic form as well as in the aniconic form.

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Economic and Social implications of Revenue Systems in Early Medieval Kashmir

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Abstract

The study explores the revenue collection system of early medieval Kashmir, focusing on the fiscal policies implemented by its rulers and the resulting social and economic consequences. Through an analysis of the administrative structures under different rulers, the study examines the network of officials responsible for extracting wealth from peasants, artisans and traders. The system relied on departments like the aṭṭapatibhāga and gr̥hakṛtya to impose taxes, but it also facilitated widespread corruption and abuse of power. Revenue officers, such as skandakas, grāmakāyasthas, and paripālakas exploited their positions, imposing arbitrary fines, contributing to the impoverishment of rural communities. The study explores how the state's policies of resource centralisation contributed to economic instability, stifled agricultural productivity and increased social inequality. The impact of these policies was profound, leading to famine, economic stagnation and a breakdown in the relationship between

the state and its subjects. It also examines how systemic exploitation and mismanagement significantly influenced the socio-economic structure of early medieval Kashmir.

Keywords: *Revenue collection, State officials, systematic oppression, Taxation Policies.*

Introduction

The collection of revenue has consistently played a vital role in the administration of any state, and in Kashmir, this process is recorded as far back as ancient times. The *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, reveals how land revenue and other taxes were managed in the region. According to Kalhaṇa, the system of revenue collection can be traced to before the reign of Jalauka, the son and successor of Emperor Aśoka. Kalhaṇa mentions a group of seven officials known as the *prakṛtis*, tasked with managing various administrative duties, two of whom the superintendent of the king's revenues (*dhanādhyakṣa*) and the superintendent of the treasury (*koṣādhyakṣa*) were specifically responsible for the financial administration.¹ It is stated that during the reign of King Jalauka, eighteen offices were established (*Karmasthāna*) to further streamline the governance system.²

A significant transformation in revenue administration is credited to King Lalitāditya, who is said to have established five new offices, including a royal store-house (*mahābhāṇḍāgāra*), aimed at better management of revenue resources. Kalhaṇa refers to Lalitāditya's political testament, which included a strategic regulation that limited the wealth of villagers, ensuring they only possessed enough food and livestock to sustain themselves for a year. This was to prevent the rise of powerful feudal lords (*Ḍāmaras*) who could potentially undermine royal authority within a short period.³ The administrative system of revenue collection under these kings reflects a deeply organized structure, aimed at maintaining control over resources and preventing internal uprisings. The official departments may be divided under the following heads:

Aṭṭapatibhāga and Gṛhakṛtya

One of the earliest recorded instances in the revenue history of Kashmir can be traced to King Śaṃkaravarman, who is noted for introducing a series of financial measures. According to historical sources, Śaṃkaravarman established two key revenue departments: *aṭṭapatibhāga* and *gṛhakṛtya*. These departments were designed to manage distinct areas of the kingdom's economy. The *aṭṭapatibhāga* was tasked with the collection of taxes from commercial activities, such as market shops and artisans. On the other hand, the *gṛhakṛtya* was responsible for overseeing domestic affairs. This department, as detailed in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, was managed by a treasurer known as *ganjavara* and supported by five secretaries referred to as *divira*.⁴ Śaṃkaravarman implemented a salary system for this role, which included adjustments through fines imposed on villages and other similar taxes.⁵ The office of the *gṛhakṛtya* created by Śaṃkaravarman was again found in the reign of Cakravarman, the ruler of the Utpala Dynasty. He appointed his elder brother, Shambhuvardhana, to oversee the *gṛhakṛtya* department, marking him as a significant official directly selected by the king.⁶

Skandakas and Grāmakāyasthas

The officers tasked with revenue collection from the villagers were designated as *skandakas* and *grāmakāyasthas*.⁷ The specific duties of a *skandaka* are not elucidated in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, however, it is conjectured that this role was akin to that of a village headman, entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring the payment of revenue. Similarly, the precise functions of the *grāmakāyasthas* remain unspecified in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*. It is hypothesised that this position parallels that of the contemporary village accountant (*patwari*), charged with maintaining documentation related to the land area subject to revenue assessment.⁸

Gaṇjeśa

The subsequent development in the realm of financial governance occurred during the regency of Queen Diddā. In his account, Kalhaṇa mentions the title *gaṇjeśa*, referring to the official responsible for

managing the treasury. In this period, a prominent figure named Sindhu, who had previously served as treasurer, is credited with the establishment of a distinct revenue department called *sindhugañja*. This department, formed under the rule of Queen Diddā, was assigned unique and dedicated sources of revenue, marking a significant advancement in the kingdom's financial administration.⁹

Nagarādhikṛta

Kalhaṇa uses the term *Nagarādhikṛta* to refer to the city-prefect during the reign of Yaśaskara.¹⁰ This official appears to be the same as the *nagarādhīpa* from the Karkoṭa dynasty. During the Karkoṭa period, the *nagarādhīpa* likely had a role focused on overseeing the moral behaviour of the populace. However, in Yaśaskara's time, this officer is seen to have transitioned into a role centred around revenue administration.

Gṛhakarṭyamahattama

It is mentioned in *Narmamala* that the head of the home department was variously called *gṛhakarṭyamahattama*, *gṛhakarṭyādhikārin*, *gṛhakarṭyādhīpati*. This official wielded authority over both civil and military divisions, as well as the *dharmartha* department.¹¹ According to Kṣemendra, the position introduced during the reign of Śaṅkaravarman gradually became one of the most prestigious offices of the period. It was considered the pinnacle of a revenue officer's career to attain this role. The individual holding this post had significant authority, as no domestic expenses including grants to temples, Brahmins, the needy and strangers, as well as funds for the care of animals and the salaries of royal staff could be approved without their consent.¹² Kṣemendra also makes a critical observation, characterising this official as profoundly hypocritical.¹³ This is exemplified by his behaviour prior to attending his office; he would visit a Shiva temple, visibly emotional with tears, and recite devotional verses, ostensibly displaying fervent religious devotion.¹⁴ Kṣemendra refers to him as a fraud. He was privileged to have seven officers under him and he had the prerogative of having officers under him of his own choice.¹⁵ Kalhaṇa mentions a class of officers called *mahattama* whose

status and functions are not clearly stated.¹⁶ Ray believes that it is not unlikely that this is an abbreviated form of *gr̥hakṛtyamahattama*.¹⁷ The *gr̥hakṛtyādhipati* had various officials under him and Jamwal believes the following are main among them:

- **Niyogī:** In *Samayamātr̥ka*, they are referred to as earning a lot while collecting revenue from the villagers especially during the winter season.¹⁸ M.K. Shastri believes that Kāyastha appears as *niyogī*. His function as such, is supervising the villages and the Parganas, checking their accounts and inspecting roads etc. he is an executive officer with first class magisterial powers to decide the civil and criminal cases just like a *tehsildar* of today.¹⁹ To quote Shastri, “His life, before his present appointment, was most miserable. By becoming the *Niyogi* he has gained an important status, both in society and the state. His wealth has increased in kind and cash by his resorting to unfair means.”²⁰
- **Pīśuna:** He can be called as a secret agent under *gr̥hakṛtyādhipati*, whose main object was to inform the latter of the amount collected in the temples, etc.²¹ The importance of his job is proved from the fact that the *gr̥hakṛtyādhipati* himself used to offer seat to *pīśunas*.²²
- **Paripālaka:** According to Kṣemendra, the officer who ranked just below the *gr̥hakṛtyādhipati* was the *paripālaka*.²³ This official was likely responsible for collecting taxes from the villagers. It is mentioned that he plundered temples to augment the royal treasury, a practice that seems to have continued from the policies initiated by Śaṁkaravarman.²⁴ Remarkably, he possessed the unilateral authority to dismiss and appoint officials without any governmental oversight.²⁵ Kṣemendra, recounts an incident where this *paripālaka* removed a governor from position, subsequently assigning the role to another individual. It is noted that the role of *paripālaka* was typically allocated to individuals who had exhibited unyielding and harsh demeanours. In his

efforts to augment the state treasury, this official engaged in actions that led to the desecration of temples and incited fear among the villagers. The *paripālaka*'s history was marred by heinous crimes, earning him notoriety as a perpetrator of patricide, 'brahmanicide' and cow slaughter.²⁶

- ***Lekhakopādhyāya*:** The chief clerk of the *paripālaka* was known as *lekhakopādhyāya*, responsible for managing confidential official records.²⁷ According to Kṣemendra, he was an exceptionally skilled writer, capable of drafting up to two hundred documents simultaneously and issuing them all at once. He was also highly proficient in quickly reconciling accounts and possessed in-depth knowledge of accounting principles.²⁸ His primary duty, as described by Kṣemendra, was to record the directives issued by the *paripālaka*, particularly those pertaining to the collection of dues from the people.²⁹ *Lekhakopādhyāya* was responsible for managing resources for his master's household. He exerted authority over villages, procuring various items such as wood, grass mats, wickerwork baskets, and other commodities that contributed to his master's stockpile.³⁰ His attire was described as modest, primarily consisting of patchwork. His entry into clerical service marked a transition towards a more lavish lifestyle and desires.³¹
- ***Ganjañjadivira*:** Another official, known as *ganjañjadivira*, served under the *paripālaka* and held the position of superintendent of finance, overseeing the treasury.³² Ray suggests that this officer may be the same individual referred to by Kalhaṇa as *gañjavara* or *gañjeśa*.³³ However, the name *divira*, also finds mention in the *Rājataranṅiṇī*.³⁴ In this context, they are described as secretaries within the office of *grhagr̥hya*. Kṣemendra mentions that these officials were responsible for preparing a budget covering both income and expenditures for a six-month period. After drafting the budget, they would present it to their superior, the *paripālaka*. Upon receiving approval, the budget would then be implemented.³⁵

- **Grāmadivira:** As mentioned earlier, his work was mainly to maintain village records. Suman Jamwal mentions that “the *grāmakāyasthas* were also in charge of the maintenance of village records with the help of *grāmadiviras*. These officials received their salaries out of the revenue collected from the villages.”³⁶
- **Śakdār:** Besides, the above-mentioned offices and officials, there is also mention of a watchman who held a role at the threshing-floor, known as *Khalapāla*.³⁷ Stein observes that, “under the old revenue system, the produce could not be removed from the threshing floor by the villagers until the state’s share had been taken from it. As, often a long time elapsed until this was done, special watchmen (known as *Śakdār*) were employed at the *Khalas*. Their employment extended practically over the whole year.”³⁸
- **Śaulkika:** An officer likely known as Śaulkika was responsible for overseeing the collection of customs duties at frontier routes, monitoring the goods entering and leaving through designated watch stations.³⁹ In the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, during the reign of Jayasimha, it is noted that a rebellious chief, after imprisoning the king’s officials, took control of the customs collection at military posts (*draṅga*).⁴⁰ He went so far as to stamp his name in red lead on the merchandise, presenting himself as the king. This not only highlights the use of military stations as customs posts during this period, but also reveals a particular method used to ensure toll payments from merchants.

Revenue policies as tools of oppression

Revenue collection was deeply entwined with the exercise of power by the ruling elite. The revenue administration, which evolved significantly under rulers like Lalitāditya and later during the regency of Queen Diddā, was characterised by the imposition of stringent taxation policies that extracted wealth from the peasantry and artisans. These

policies were ostensibly designed to maintain the state's treasury but often left the lower classes impoverished and vulnerable. For instance, Lalitāditya's directive that villagers should retain only one year's worth of food supply and oxen sufficient for field tillage exemplifies the exploitative nature of revenue policies.⁴¹ Lalitāditya orders:

Every care should be taken that there should not be left with the villagers' more food supply than required for one year's consumption, nor more oxen than wanted for [the tillage of] their fields.⁴

While the policy was justified as a means to prevent the rise of feudal lords (*dāmaras*) who could challenge royal authority, it effectively reduced the economic resilience of common masses. With minimal resources at their disposal, the peasants were perpetually at risk of starvation and had little opportunity to improve their socio-economic standing.

Moreover, the establishment of offices such as the *aṭṭapatibhāga* and *grhakarṭya* during the reign of Śmkaravarman further institutionalized oppressive practices.⁴³ The *aṭṭapatibhāga*, responsible for collecting taxes from markets and artisans, disproportionately targeted those engaged in trade and craftsmanship. Similarly, the *grhakarṭya* department imposed fines and levies on villages, adding to the financial burdens of the rural population. The salaries of officials in these departments were often supplemented by the fines they imposed, incentivizing corruption and arbitrary penalties.⁴⁴

The burden of the revenue system fell disproportionately on the lower strata of society, including peasants, artisans and small traders. While the elite were often exempt from taxes or benefited from privileges, the common masses were subjected to heavy levies and fines. The *skandakas* and *grāmakāyasthas*, who acted as intermediaries in revenue collection, further perpetuated this inequality.⁴⁵

Although their exact roles are not fully detailed in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī*, they appear to have functioned as village headmen and accountants, ensuring the compliance of villagers with oppressive tax demands.

One particularly egregious example of exploitation is the role of the *śakaḍāra*, or threshing-floor watchman. Employed to oversee the collection of the state's share of agricultural produce, these watchmen often delayed the removal of crops from the threshing floor until the state's dues were settled. This practice not only disrupted the agricultural cycle but also exposed the villagers to financial and physical hardships, as their produce remained vulnerable to theft or spoilage.⁴⁶

The systemic oppression embedded in the revenue administration had far-reaching social consequences. The impoverishment of the peasantry and the artisan class led to a widening gap between the elite and the lower classes. As the lower strata struggled to meet their basic needs, the ruling elite and revenue officials enjoyed privileges and amassed wealth through corrupt practices.

The fear and insecurity instilled by officials such as the *piśuna* (secret agents) and *lekhakopādhyāya* (chief clerks) further exacerbated social tensions. The *piśuna*, tasked with monitoring revenue collections, often reported false accusations against villagers, leading to unwarranted penalties.

Similarly, the *lekhakopādhyāya*, who managed confidential records, exploited their position to manipulate accounts and increase their personal wealth.⁴⁷ Such systemic exploitation also had cultural and moral implications. The desecration of temples by officials like the *paripālaka* undermined religious and community institutions, eroding the spiritual and social fabric of society.⁴⁸ Kṣemendra's scathing critiques of these officials highlight the moral decay and loss of ethical governance during this period.⁴⁹

Rājataranṅinī provides a valuable but complex perspective on the revenue administration of medieval Kashmir. While it offers detailed accounts of the offices and officials involved, its narrative often reflects the biases and limitations of its time. For instance, Kalhaṇa's descriptions of policies like Lalitāditya's food supply restrictions are presented as pragmatic statecraft, overlooking their oppressive implications for the peasantry. Modern historians, such as Suman Jamwal and M.K. Shastri, have critically examined these accounts, stresses the systemic nature of exploitation and its impact on social inequality. They argue that the institutionalisation of corruption and oppression was not merely a reflection of individual malfeasance but a structural feature of the revenue system. The concentration of power in the hands of a few officials, combined with the lack of accountability, created an environment where exploitation could thrive.

Corruption in Revenue Administration

The role of the *gr̥hakṛtyādhīpati*, a high-ranking official, overseeing both civil and military divisions, exemplifies the depth of corruption within the revenue administration. Kṣemendra's sharp criticism of this official highlights how personal greed often overshadowed public duty. The *gr̥hakṛtyādhīpati* controlled expenditures related to temples, grants for Brāhmaṇas, and salaries for royal servants.⁵⁰ However, this authority was frequently abused to amass personal wealth. Kṣemendra describes these officials as hypocrites, feigning piety by publicly reciting devotional verses while privately engaging in fraudulent activities. Such behaviour not only undermined the integrity of the revenue system but also alienated the populace, fostering distrust toward the administration.⁵¹

The *paripālaka*, wielded unilateral authority to appoint and dismiss subordinate officers, a power often exercised arbitrarily. Historical accounts indicate that *paripālakas* engaged in temple desecrations and exploitative practices to fill the state treasury.⁵² Their actions, driven by an unyielding pursuit of revenue, incited fear and resentment among the villagers. In one instance documented by Kṣemendra, a *paripālaka*

dismissed a governor arbitrarily and replaced him with another individual, underscoring the misuse of authority. Such instances illustrate how the lack of accountability among revenue officials eroded the administrative framework, leaving the state vulnerable to inefficiency and social unrest.

The corruption extended to lower-ranking officials, such as the *lekhaḥkopādhyāya*, who managed confidential records and resource allocation. Kṣemendra portrays these clerks as adept manipulators, capable of drafting and issuing numerous documents swiftly. While their expertise was indispensable, their practices were often marred by graft.⁵³ They exploited their authority to procure resources for their superiors, imposing additional burdens on already impoverished villagers. This exploitation deepened economic inequalities and reinforced a system that prioritized personal gain over public welfare.

Moreover, the *skandakas* and *grāmakāyasthas*, responsible for collecting revenue at the village level, were complicit in perpetuating corruption. These officials frequently exaggerated assessments and imposed undue fines to extract bribes.⁵⁴ The absence of stringent oversight mechanisms allowed such practices to thrive, further alienating the rural populace. The plight of the villagers, burdened by excessive taxation and exploitation, is poignantly captured in historical texts, which describe them as living in constant fear of state officials.⁵⁵

The impact of corruption on governance was profound. The arbitrary and exploitative practices of revenue officials disrupted the equitable distribution of resources and weakened the state's ability to maintain social order. Public trust in the administration eroded as officials prioritized personal enrichment over their duties. This loss of trust had far-reaching consequences, undermining the legitimacy of the ruling authority and fuelling dissent among the populace. Historical accounts suggest that the systemic corruption within the revenue administration contributed to the decline of centralized authority, as disgruntled citizens sought alternative means of redress.

One of the most egregious consequences of corruption was its role in perpetuating social inequality. The excessive taxation and arbitrary fines imposed by officials disproportionately affected the lower strata of society, deepening existing disparities. The wealthy elite, often complicit in corrupt practices, were able to evade their obligations through bribes and influence, while the burden of taxation fell squarely on the shoulders of the poor. This imbalance not only exacerbated economic inequalities but also created a sense of injustice and resentment among the marginalized.

Economic impact of revenue policies

Lalitādiya's revenue policies aimed at curbing the rise of feudal chiefs, known as *Ḍāmaras*, the policies restricted village resources to what was essential for one year's consumption and minimal agricultural operations.⁵⁶ While this effectively prevented the consolidation of power among local elites, it inflicted significant economic hardships on rural communities and stifled broader economic growth. The directive to limit food surpluses destabilised agricultural households by stripping them of a crucial buffer against crises such as crop failures or natural calamities. Surplus production, a cornerstone of agrarian resilience, was rendered unattainable, leaving farmers vulnerable to famine and economic instability.⁵⁷ The policy also discouraged investment in agricultural innovation, as any benefits from increased productivity were likely to be appropriated by the state. This approach perpetuated traditional farming methods, hindering agricultural advancement and stymieing rural development. The restriction on the number of oxen further undermined agricultural productivity. Oxen were indispensable for efficient ploughing, timely sowing, and other essential farming operations. Limiting their availability reduced the efficiency of these activities, particularly during peak seasons when timely cultivation was critical. Moreover, oxen often provided supplementary economic opportunities, such as transport or rental income, which were curtailed by this policy. The loss of these avenues deepened the economic stagnation of rural households.

The centralisation of resources through state-controlled granaries, such as the *mahābhāṇḍāgāra*, compounded the economic strain on rural communities. Although these granaries were ostensibly intended to safeguard against scarcity, they became instruments of exploitation.⁵⁸ Officials, including the *gdhakṛtyādhipati* and *paripālaka*, frequently abused their positions to extract excessive resources from villagers. This systemic corruption drained the limited resources of rural households and eroded public trust in the revenue administration, exacerbating the economic distress of the peasantry.

The suppression of agricultural surpluses disrupted local markets, which depended heavily on the exchange of agricultural goods. Farmers, deprived of surplus produce, were unable to participate meaningfully in market transactions, thereby reducing economic activity. This decline had cascading effects on other sectors, particularly artisans and traders, who relied on a thriving agricultural base for raw materials and customers. The interdependence of these sectors meant that the restrictive revenue policies stifled the economic dynamism of early medieval Kashmir. Corruption within the revenue administration magnified these challenges. Historical accounts, such as those by Kṣemendra, reveal how officials prioritised personal enrichment over public welfare. The power wielded by officials such as the *gdhakṛtyādhipati* often resulted in exploitative practices, with villagers compelled to part with their meagre resources through bribes or additional levies.⁵⁹ This systemic exploitation entrenched rural poverty and undermined the economic stability of communities.

The long-term consequences of Lalitāditya's policies were profound. The suppression of surplus production, combined with systemic corruption and oppressive resource extraction, led to a decline in agricultural productivity. This decline weakened the state's revenue base and exacerbated poverty, creating a cycle of economic stagnation and social inequality. While the policies achieved their immediate political objective of curbing feudal dissent, they came at the cost of sustained economic and social development.

Despite these adversities, the resilience of Kashmir's rural communities must be acknowledged. Farmers adapted to constraints using traditional knowledge and resource-sharing practices. Villagers often came together in acts of solidarity to mitigate the worst effects of these policies, ensuring a degree of survival and continuity. However, these measures were insufficient to counter the systemic oppression that defined Lalitāditya's revenue administration.

Thus, the revenue system in the period under study indicates a pattern of systematic oppression. Although the official land revenue ratio was seemingly lenient as Bamzai argues that "in normal times the proportion was one-sixth of the produce as the share of the government. This increased to one-half during the time of later kings."⁶⁰ While the state's approach to revenue collection varied; for instance, during King Ananta's rule, the share was reduced to one-twelfth. But additional financial burdens in the form of fines and dues were imposed on the people, with the cultivators particularly heavily exploited. This repressive tax policy, initiated during Lalitāditya's rule in the eighth century CE and continuing with few exceptions (notably, King Ananta) through the eras of Kalaśa and Harṣa in the eleventh and twelfth centuries CE. And, it is said that under king Śaṃkaravarman, taxation was so heavy that the poor were left only with air to live upon.⁶¹ The severity of tax collection methods, often leading to abuses of power, compelled individuals to take law into their own hands.⁶² This systemic corruption is exemplified in Kṣemendra's depiction of the *Kāyasthas*, characterised as cunning individuals engaging in deceptive practices to expropriate wealth.⁶³ This exploitation extended across all social strata, affecting temples, Brāhmaṇas, and common people alike. Kṣemendra enumerates sixteen methods used by *Kāyasthas* to defraud people of their assets.⁶⁴

Conclusion

The study reveals the profound social and economic impact of the state's fiscal policies and administrative structures. The rulers such as Śaṃkaravarman, Lalitāditya, and Queen Diddā, established a composite

network of officials and departments, including the *aṭṭapatibhāga* and *gr̥hakṛtya*, designed to extract wealth from peasants, artisans, and traders. These policies, while intended to bolster the state's treasury, often resulted in the systematic exploitation of the lower classes. The role of revenue officers, including the *skandakas*, *grāmakāyasthas*, and *paripālakas*, was marked by corruption, arbitrary fines, and abuses of power, which further impoverished the peasantry. The economic impact was severe, as policies limiting food supplies and livestock stifled the resilience of rural communities, making them vulnerable to famine and economic instability. The centralisation of resources and the exploitation of agricultural produce through state-controlled granaries exacerbated these hardships. The systemic exploitation led to the deepening of social inequality, as the elite and officials reaped the benefits, while commoners bore the brunt of taxation.

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The representation of sovereignty and sources of legitimacy in the Deccan kingdom: A study of Yūsuf Ādil Shāh of Bījāpūr

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Abstract

The present paper deals with the way in which the idea of sovereignty was represented and sources of legitimacy were pursued to justify the claim to rule in medieval Deccan. The study contextualizes information contained in textual and non-textual sources to unshackle the idea of sovereignty in the Bijapur Sultanate. By analysing Persian literature, inscriptions and architecture, the study examines how a ruler constructed and projected his sovereignty to reinforce his claim to rule and how historians looked at and interpreted it. It discovers what played a significant role in shaping the perception of authority. Furthermore, it highlights how regional and trans-regional interactions influenced a ruler's idea of sovereignty. This paper contributes to understanding the nuanced ways in which power and legitimacy were articulated in South Asia in the medieval period.

Keywords: *Sovereignty, legitimacy, kingship, divinity, Āfāqī and Deccanī.*

Introduction

The tradition of representing the idea of sovereignty to justify political rule, assert authority, persuade opponents and reinforce order was an integral part of the process of state formation in premodern South Asia. The representation of sovereignty to make it acceptable to both centre and periphery was the core concern of the king. In the light of primary sources, there is an attempt to explain the sources and the methods that Yūsuf Ādil Shāh (r. 1490-1610), the founder of the Sultanate of Bijapur (1489-1686) used to justify his sovereignty and represent it in a way that could be acceptable to his subjects with diverse social backgrounds.

Representing Sovereignty

According to the Islamic tradition, a king must be a man who possesses *Rushd* (physically and mentally mature), *Aql* (possesses wisdom, intelligence, and sound judgment), *Adalah* (just, impartial, ensuring equality to subjects), and *Amānah* (independent), and *imān* (faith in Islamic tenets).¹ Hence, medieval court chronicles and theologians always emphasized having the said merits for a king. The court chronicles exaggerated in projecting their patron kings including their ancestors, who founded the kingdom, in a way that all were equipped with the said merits.

Yūsuf Ādil Shāh, a *Āfāqī* noble of the Bahmani dynasty, established an independent kingdom exploiting scrims born of nobles' 'struggle for power'. He needed to make his rule legitimate. Thus, he used numerous resources to justify his sovereignty and represent it in a way that could be acceptable to his subjects with diverse social backgrounds. In their writings, the court chronicles like *Firishta* and *Raḥḥ'al-Dīn Shīrāzī* attempted to project him as having all the merits required for a just king. They represented him as an ordinary man before becoming king. They stated that a merchant Khwāja Zainul Ābidīn Samnānī² brought him to the Deccan and presented to the Sultān of the Bahmanī Sultanate along with other Abyssinian and Turkish slaves. But, when he founded the

Sultanate of Bijapur, they tried to point out all the said merits of his personality. They looked even at his position of slavery as if it was a divine favour that brought him to found a kingdom full of justice in a country, far from his native place. The divine choice was based on an assumption that even though he was a slave, he was equipped with all temporal and spiritual abilities. Firishta wrote that Khizr, a messenger of God appeared in Ādil Khān's dream and gave him the good news of a new sultanate.³ Correspondingly, Raft' al-Dīn Shīrāzī stated that Yūsuf Ādil Shāh saw in his dream the establishment of a new dynasty.⁴

It is interesting to know that the two historians looked at Yūsuf Ādil Shāh's physical attributes as kingly virtues that brought him close to the Sultān. Farishta wrote that Mahmud Gawan appointed him as *mīr-i ākhūr* (chief officer of royal horses) and very soon raised him to the position of *seh-sadī* (revenue collector) in the Bahmanī Sultanate. Amīr Nizāmūl Mulk, the most influential Turkish noble, and the governor of Berar, raised his position further. He was honoured with the title of Ādil Khān. Praising his personality, Firishta wrote that looking at him reminds the virtues and personality of Yūsuf (Joseph), a prophet of God in Islamic tradition.⁵ Joseph was sold in a slave market in Egypt. Later on, he established a kingdom. Firishta metaphorically tried to connect attributes of Yūsuf Ādil Shāh to Joseph. Like Joseph, Yūsuf Ādil Shāh was sold as a slave in Deccan but later on, he established an independent kingdom in Bijapur.

In contrast, according to Raft' al-Dīn Shīrāzī, Yūsuf's personality and bravery made him close to the Sultān who appointed him his personal bodyguard and soon raised him to the chief *kotwāl* of the city. The special favour shown by the Sultān, created jealousy among other nobles who attempted to get rid of him by sending him away from the court. The Sultān sent him to a region called Kovil Kunda in the province of Telangana, which was under constant threat of powerful robbers. Here, he got rid of the robbers and annexed a large portion of Telangana to the Bahmanī Sultanate. When the adversaries knew about Yūsuf's

victories, they began to plot once again and made the Sultān Ahmad Shāh Bahmanī believe that his growing power was a danger to the Sultanate, and that he should be recalled to the court. The Sultān sent his loyal messenger Maulāna Ismā‘īl Munshī with the royal order to come back to the court. Yūsuf very politely denied the royal command excusing his life is not safe in the court. He specified that the Deccanī minsters were often looking for an opportunity to destroy him along with other *Āfāqī* nobles.”⁶

The two contemporary historians Firishta and Shīrāzī represented Yūsuf Ādil Shāh as a powerful warrior, a just man and a defender of Islām. They describe his military success as if it was for establishing justice, suppressing anarchy, ensuring law and order, and spreading Islāmīc. They labelled his policies with justice, peace and prosperity. They projected him as someone quite capable of ruling. They made their arguments strong with the emphasis that Yūsuf proved himself most suitable to rule through his intellect, vision, military victory and finally by founding an independent kingdom when the Bahmanī kingdom was on the verge of disintegration and the *Āfāqīs* and the Deccanīs were struggling to capture the empty throne at the end of the fifteenth century.⁷ Since religion was an integral part of medieval politics hence in Persian chronicles, a ruler was regarded as an ideal who fought for justice and religion. Thus, the two court historians looked at Yūsuf as if he fought for justice, peace and Islāmīc cause.

For example, discussing Yūsuf’s capture of the forts of Raichur and Mudkal, Shīrāzī describes the victory in such terms as *parchami-i Islām* (the flag of Islām) was waved, the *alam-i kufr* (the flag of infidelity) was put down and justice prevailed in the province.⁸ Shīrāzī made an extraordinary effort to represent him as an ideal ruler. He cited many instances from his life in order to prove him an ideal ruler. He wrote that after the victory of Telangana, he sent a letter to the Sultān stating that by the grace of God, he succeeded in conquering *lashkar-i Islām* (the Muslim army) and had defeated the infidels. In every village and

town, mosques were constructed.⁹ Some of this was war rhetoric and some of it was true. It is true that Yūsuf constructed mosques and erected minarets after the victory. The justice of the Sultān prevailed in the whole kingdom. Most people accepted the regime loyally.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the court chronicles highly exaggerated his achievements and incorrectly coloured his victory with religion. Religion was never a prime concern of the medieval ruler.

Sovereignty, Legitimacy and Sources

In political theory, sovereignty is the highest authority. The principles defining the role and standing of a monarchy in a polity may be referred to as the theory of kingship.¹¹ In political philosophy, the idea of legitimacy refers to the popular acceptance of a sovereign authority or government.¹² The question of legitimacy, in any kingdom, was bound with the question of sovereignty. The sovereign authority denotes the ability to make and carry out decisions that are binding on the rest of the population. Legitimacy, on the other hand, justifies the king's claim to exercise power over his kingdom.

Yūsuf Ādil Shāh was preoccupied more with the question of legitimacy than other Deccanī rulers. This was because he took power from Sunnī rulers with the help of *Āfāqīs* who were mostly Shīa. While the bulk of the population remained Sunnī, the founder himself claimed to promote Shīism in the newly founded sultanate. For this, the Sultān faced criticism and opposition from his Sunnī supporters. In the Shīa theory of kingship, the consensus among the Shīa jurists was obedience to the *imām* (or his representative), who was considered sinless.¹³ The sources of legitimacy played a decisive role in recognising the sovereignty of aristocrats and commoners to power. Every ruler sought sources of legitimacy to justify his sovereignty on various grounds. A close study of the primary sources of the Ādil Shāhī Sultanate tells us about the sources which Sultān Yūsuf Ādil Shāh used to justify his sovereignty, may be broadly categorised as: (i) genealogy, (ii) divinity, (iii) religion, (iv) justice, and (v) might.

The first source of sovereignty and legitimacy was genealogy which played a significant role in the recognition of kingship in medieval times. Hence, every ruler claimed to be from a ruling or aristocratic family. In case of the absence of such an ancestry, a fictitious genealogy was created linking the ruler with some real or legendary ancestor. Balban (1266-87), the Turkish ruler of the Delhi sultanate claimed his descent from the legendary Turānī king Afrasiyāb.¹⁴ Although the genealogy of Akbar was firmly established, still Abu'l Faẓl presented Akbar as the 53rd descendant of Adam.¹⁵ Abu'l Faẓl argued that Adam was the first source of the manifestations of the Divine attributes transferred to Akbar. The founder of the Safavid empire, Shāh Ismā'īl claimed to be associated with Shaikh Shāh Safiuddīn Ardabelī (1252-1334) because of the latter's influences on the Turkomans, who played a vital role in the founding the Safavid empire. Later on, he claimed to be *murhsid-i kāmīl* (perfect spiritual leader).¹⁶ In the case of Alāuddīn Ḥasan Bahman Shāh (1347-1358) whose genealogy was forged to connect him to the royal family of Kakuyīds that ruled Isfahan and Hamadan for many years and later on settled down in the environs of Ghazni.¹⁷ Rafī' al-Dīn Shīrāzī writes that the genealogy of the founder of the Bahamanī dynasty was connected to Isfandyār bin Gushtasp, an Iranian king known from Firdausī's *Shāhnāma*.¹⁸

Likewise, two important Persian historians of the medieval Deccan, Firishta and Rafī' al-Dīn Shīrāzī often buttress the genealogy of Yūsuf Ādil Shāh with extraordinary feats. They represent his high birth and kingly virtues with glorious achievements. Rafī' al-Dīn Shīrāzī connects his genealogy to a ruling family of Āq-Qoyūnlūs.¹⁹ Āq-Qoyūnlūs Turkomans ("white sheep") ruled from 1378 to 1502 in eastern Anatolia and western Iran until the Safavid conquest in 1501-03.²⁰ In contrast, Firishta traces Yūsuf Ādil Shāh's genealogy to the Ottoman emperor. He considers him to be Turkish and the son of the Ottoman Sulṭān, Murād II.²¹ In this way, both historians consider the genealogical connection with the royal family to be important for legitimate rule. Although they have different views, they linked his genealogy to the ruling family.

The second source of sovereignty and legitimacy was divinity partly influenced by Sufism. As we know, Bijapur was a major centre of Sufism in Deccan and had an abundant impact on society and polity.²² Without Şūfis' presence in the coronation ceremony, the enthronement was considered incomplete.²³ Quoting from *Firishta*, Eaton writes that "the people of the Deccan have such a respect for the saint that a Deccany, on being once asked whom he considered the greatest personage, the Prophet Mahomed [Muḥammad] or the Syud (Saiyed), replied, with some surprise at the question, that although the Prophet was undoubtedly a great man, yet Syud (Saiyed) Mahomed [Banda Navāz] Geesoo-duraz (Gesū Darāz) was a far superior order of being."²⁴ It shows the imperial and public perception of a Sufi saint's divine personality and authority. It also indicates the influence of Sufism in the polity and society of medieval Deccan.

Rafī'al-Dīn Shīrāzī mentioned that once Shaikh Gesū Darāz gave his *dastār* (crown) to Alāuddīn Ḥasan Gangūh who was standing close to him so that he could perform *wazū* for prayer at Kanji (Korchi) near Murtazābād. Gangūh placed the crown on his head. After seeing Gangūh's act, the Shaikh remarked that Gangūh had requested to bestow him with a kingdom. Later on, the Shaikh crowned him at the coronation ceremony.²⁵ Gangūh is said to have received the tiding of his future sovereign from Shaikh Nizāmuddīn, a great Chishti Sufi of Delhi.²⁶ Shedding light on Yūsuf Ādil Shāh's association with Sufism, Rafī'al-Dīn Shīrāzī writes that once Sulṭān Maḥmūd (Bahmanī) came to visit the *daragāh* of Shaikh Moḥammad Sirāj Junaidī. A gown (*jubba*) was given at the *daragāh* by his decuples to him as a gift from the Shaikh. The king refused to accept it. Yūsuf was standing at the doorway. The same gown was gifted to him with the hint that he had been bestowed with the kingship (*bādashāhī*). Yūsuf Ādil Shāh wore that gown and performed *sijda-i shukr* (prostrating before God to pay thanks to Him for special favour)...Six months later he became king and said that the blessings of the friends of God (*Auliyā Allāh*) had made it happen.²⁷ These instances signify that the right to rule was divinely ordained to Yūsuf Ādil Shāh.

In phenomenological terms, spirituality existed in the lives of sacred people and remained in its form even after death, active in enshrined graves, apparent in dreams, or resurrected in blood descendants and successors. In effect, the dominant experience of spiritual authority came from mysticism and sainthood.²⁸ The grace (*barakāt*) of the saint can be passed on to other people like disciples, devotees and kings. The divine virtues attracted the political figures to imitate them and practice in the political sphere. The Ādil Shāhī Sultāns sought advice from the Ṣūfī saints of Bijapur and went to visit their *khānqāhs* (hospices) and *dragāhs*. The relationship between Ādil Shāhī court and Ṣūfīs' hospices could be described as informal.²⁹ The Sultāns gave revenue grants to Ṣūfī saints.³⁰ Richard Eaton argued that granting land to *khānqāhs* was a policy through which the Sultāns secured the loyalty of elite groups because of their influence in the society.³¹ Precisely, Yūsuf Ādil Shāh directly and indirectly in both way used mystical influence for temporal and spiritual gains.

Yūsuf Ādil Shāh derived inspiration from Sufism and attempted to project himself as a saintly ruler. Thus, after his death, his grave was erected like a Ṣūfī shrine. Rafīal-Dīn Shīrāzī recorded his observation when he was in a town called Gogi located at one *farsakh* (around 5 kms) from Sagar. He saw that the tomb of Yūsuf Ādil Shāh was erected like a shrine and his descendants arranged *langar* on a large scale. A group of hundred *ḥuffāz* (those who learned the whole Quran by heart) recited the Qurān daily in the morning and evening.³² The evidence suggests that people visited his tombs as if they went to the Ṣūfī shrine to seek blessings. Such accounts tell about the use of divinity to legitimize sovereignty and project the king as a saintly person.

In this context, another source of strength for the king was visionary experience.³³ It was accepted in medieval society that perceiving the noblest truths of the world of being was possible through dreams. Dreams served as emotive metaphors and powerful tools of propaganda. Moreover, dreams implied a prophetic link to the invisible

world. The person, who experienced the vision, was regarded as having prophetic powers. Interestingly, the dreams of a saint or a royal figure did not require interpretation and were regarded as the highest truth. The visionary experiences had significance particularly for divine kingship. As I have already indicated, the establishment of the Bijapur sultanate was foreseen in Yūsuf's dream at Lār.³⁴

The third source was religion, notably the purported defence of Islām. Religion was a dominant source of power in the medieval period and the king was considered to be the protector of religion. Yūsuf himself projected himself as a defender of Islam after conquering Telangana. Furthermore, Raḡīal-Dīn Shīrāzī described Yūsuf Ādil Shāh's military expeditions, conquest, victory, and even destruction of temples as if he was as a profound defender of Islām.³⁵ His narrative of the scene of battle and victories also stressed the expansion of Islām as his prime concern. He used terminologies and phrases to highlight his military success as if he were the true defender of Islām.³⁶ Such narratives are full of exaggeration, but the intention was to represent him as a champion of Islam by glorifying his actions. Such narratives are more about the exploitation of religion to justify and glorify sovereignty.

Apart from exhortation to Islām as a source of legitimacy, Shīism was used as an additional source. Firishta writes that on his accession Yūsuf Ādil Shāh proclaimed that he had received the good news of a new kingdom to be bestowed by God to him and was instructed to strictly follow the commands of God and to respect *ahl-i bait* (family members of the Prophet Muhammad) and promote Shīism. He further adds that Yūsuf Ādil Shāh declared that he had promised God in his dream to add the names of the twelve Imāms to the *khuṭba*. Thus, in Friday prayers in the Jāmi Maṣjid, the names of the first three caliphs (Abu Bakar, Umar and Usman) were replaced with the names of the twelve Imāms of Shia tradition in the *khuṭba*.³⁷ Yūsuf Ādil Shāh's policy to promote Shīism in his kingdom was foiled by Kamāl Khān, the regent of the prince Ismāīl Ādil Shāh. Ismāīl Ādil Shāh after securing power tried to reintroduce

it, but upon accession, Ibrāhīm Ādil Shāh I dismissed it. After the death of his father, Alī Ādil Shāh I attempted to promote Shīism but, after his death, Ibrāhīm Ādil Shāh II followed the Hanafī school of thought and put restrictions on conversion to Shīism and inclusion of *wilaya* in *azan*.³⁸ Alī Ādil Shāh-II followed his father.

It is important to understand why Shīism became so important for the Ādil Shāhī kings. The politics of religion may be understood better through the analysis of the sectarian feelings of the two elite groups of nobles, *Āfāqīs* and Deccanīs and the impact of their schism on the Ādil Shāhī polity. Yūsuf Ādil Shāh gave preference to *Āfāqīs* because, at the beginning of his career, he had no good terms with the Deccanīs who were against him as it is evident from his letter to Ahmad Shāh Bhamani. Ismā‘īl Ādil Shāh dismissed mostly Deccanīs from the military services and appointed the *Āfāqīs* who were mostly Shīas. Moreover, both the rulers were obliged to defend the *Āfāqīs* who helped them in getting the throne. Ibrāhīm II's politics can be understood by an analysis of the behaviour of the *Āfāqī* noble Kishwasr Khān who forcefully usurped power³⁹ and imprisoned Chand Bibi on the charge of inviting Murtazā Nizām Shāh to invade Bijapur.⁴⁰ Such attitudes of the *Āfāqīs* did not leave a good impression on Ibrāhīm II's mind. To balance this, he limited the *Āfāqīs'* influence by appointing Deccanīs, the local people Brahmans and Marathas in the administration. He terminated all the *Āfāqī* officers except a few influential ones and instead promoted Deccanīs and Abyssinians. This policy proved very effective in repositioning the sovereignty.

The fourth source was justice. In a kingdom, the people looked upon the king as the fountainhead of justice and expected him to maintain a just regime. The administration of justice was an essential part of the sovereignty.⁴¹ Justice (*adl*) means to render to everyone his or her due. From the Islāmīc Mirrors for Princes, justice appears as a virtue, which God enjoins upon his prophets, notably Muhammad, to inculcate and exercise in their dealings with the people ('judge with justice'), both believers and non-believers. The believers are specifically

exhorted to follow justice since it is the equivalent of piety.⁴² Justice appears as an idea and an institutional process linked with the exercise of political power. The Sultān Yūsuf Ādil Shāh was the dispenser of justice and always warned his ministers to act with justice and integrity.⁴³ He adopted the imperial title of *Ādil Shāh* (just king) to inculcate his idea of peaceful governance full of fairness and integrity into his subjects.

The last source of sovereignty and legitimacy were might – nobility and army. The *Āfāqīs* and Deccanīs were the two most powerful groups who played a decisive role in the polity of Deccan. They played an important role in enthroning and dethroning especially when the Sultān was minor or weak. On the other hand, the nobles were often in search of opportunities to get closeness to the Sultān by exercising their influence to maintain their power and status throughout the history of Bijapur. I found the Sultān exploited their desires for power and social status as an instrument to get their service and keep them loyal. Alternatively, the Sultāns tried to maintain their control over these two groups by reshuffling their composition with consideration to their loyalty and contributions.

Since the acceptance of the king's authority by the nobles was imperative for legitimacy, in 1503, Yūsuf Ādil Shāh called an assembly of nobles and *ulamā* (religious scholars) and declared his sovereignty and announced his intention to promote Shīism abiding his dream. The leading Sunnī nobles were against this policy and performed prayers at their home instead of the mosque to express their disagreements. Some nobles followed the principle “*an-nasu ‘ala’ dīn mulūkihīm*” (the religion of the kings is the religion of the subjects).⁴⁴ It is remarkable that Yūsuf Ādil Shāh was unable to fulfill his divine dream without the support of nobles and first tried to gain their support.

Like nobles, the army, regardless of divisions, played a significant role in establishing the kingdom and protecting its boundaries. Yūsuf Ādil Shāh was a competent soldier and commander before becoming ruler. He was an expert in archery and the use of other weapons.⁴⁵ Soon

after coming to power, he paid attention to the selection of the army because he believed in the role of the army in establishing sovereign authority.⁴⁶ He continued Deccanis in less number. He increased his army strength by appointing mostly from the *Āfāqī* group. He maintained a powerful army consisting of cavalry, infantry and war elephants.⁴⁷

Conclusion

Yūsuf Ādil Shāh made use of five sources to justify and strengthen his sovereignty influenced by Islāmic and Iranian traditions. Religion (Shīism) did not prove to be as much effective as he had expected. The most effective was the divine theory of kingship because authority granted by God had cross-cultural appeal. Since it was already a popular notion in the religio-political culture of the pre-modern world, it was easier to convey and more acceptable to subjects of different backgrounds. Among the elite groups, the *Āfāqī* nobles and army greatly helped him in establishing the sovereign authority. In this way, his might and source of valour significantly contribute to his kingship. The idea of justice as usual proved instrumental in representing him as an ideal king.

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Life-size human skeletons made of ivory and sandalwood by Sarabendra Bhupati Bhoslé of Tanjavur Mahratta Dynasty

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Abstract

In an earlier article on papier-maché anatomical model used in the hospital located in Fort St. George, decades before it formally transformed into the General Hospital in Madras in the 1800s, that trained personnel for the Subordinate Medical Service, we had made an inconclusive reference to two life-size human skeletal models made by Sarabendra Bhupati Bhoslé (the 6th ruler of the Mahratta dynasty) of Tanjavur.

One Runganath Krishna Rau, M.B., F.R.C.S. (Edin.) had published a paper first in the Antiseptic in 1932, republished in the Bulletin of the Indian Institute of the History of Medicine in 1944 on these artificial skeletons indicating their present location. The present article pertains to the notes made by Rau in the re-published article. Rau says that both the models are safe in the anatomy museum, Andhra Medical College, Visakapatnam. A write-up published in the Hindu, Visakapatnam edition,

of 06 April 2018 confirms that, which is gratifying because these artefacts are brilliant pieces of scientific art.

Keywords: *Medical interest of Saraboji II, Runganath Krishna Rau, Danda Venkata Subba Reddy*

Ivory and sandalwood human skeletons made by Saraboji the Second

In an earlier article, we referred to a *papier-maché* human anatomical model used in classes conducted for trainees enrolled for appointment in the Subordinate-Medical Service of the Madras Presidency¹.

In that article, we indicated the interest of Sarabendra Bhupala Bhupati Bhoslé (a.k.a. Serfoji the Second, Saraboji the Second; r. 1787–1793; 1798–1832), the titular ruler of Tanjavur Mahratta principality (presently in Tamil Nadu), in human anatomy. Sarabendra's interest in and knowledge of medicine is documented by Nair^{2,3}. Nair (*ibid.*) speaks of a human-eye model kept in his *Kunstkammer* (Cabinet of Curiosities⁴) in the 1800s. Important it will be to recognize that Sarabendra performed cataract eye surgeries⁵, although we have no record of success rate. Sarabendra's medical depository included two complete and accurately made life-size human skeletons: one of ivory and the other of sandalwood.

In our earlier article (Raman and Raman, *op. cit.*), we could not shed any light on the present whereabouts of the skeleton models made and maintained by Sarabendra. Our comments in that context were inconclusive.

However, in recent past, we found an article by a medical doctor, R. K. Rau, entitled 'Some interesting anatomical exhibits' (Fig. 1), published in the June–December 1944 issue of the *Bulletin of the Indian Institute of the History of Medicine* (presently, the *Journal of Indian Medical Heritage*, Hyderabad, Note 1)⁶.

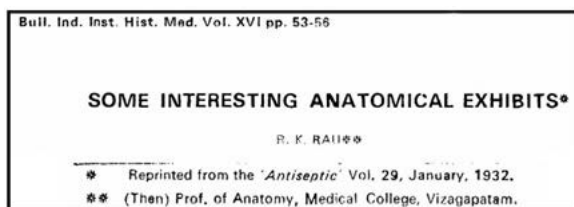


Fig. 1. Masthead (and explanatory footnotes) from the title page of R. K. Rau's article⁶

Before we go into details of the skeletons spoken by Rau, providing some details of R. K. Rau, the author of the 1944 paper, will be in order. He was 'Runganath Krishna Rau', Professor of Human Anatomy, Andhra Medical College, Visakapatnam, in 1929–1946. He had qualified for the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. The Archives and Library website of the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh (<https://archiveandlibrary.rcsed.ac.uk/surgeon/4024616-runganath-krishna-rau>, accessed 5 October 2025) shows his roll number (3295), date of admission into the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh (19 October 1927), and his professional status (Fellow). In early 1920s, Rau was lecturing in human anatomy at the Tanjore Medical School (Note 2; Fig. 2), Tanjavur. Rau originally published the anatomical-exhibits article in the *Antiseptic* (a monthly Journal of Medicine and Surgery), Volume 29, 1932 (Note 3). The same article was later re-published as such, by Venkata Subba Reddy in the *Bulletin of the Indian Institute of the History of Medicine* in 1944.



Fig. 2. The ornate wooden signage 'Tanjore Medical School' on the gable roof of the entrance of the *Raja Mirasdar* Hospital (a.k.a. the Prince-of-Wales Hospital), Tanjavur. Source:<https://thanjavur.info/thanjavurs-first-public-hospital-and-medi-cal-school>, accessed on 6 October 2025.

In p. 54, Rau (1954, *op. cit.*) remarks:

‘I am given to understand that the skeletons were made to order by the illustrious King Serfoji who was not only a brilliant scholar himself but a munificent patron of learning and fine arts. ... It was during the reign of the King that considerable additions are said to have been made to the library at the suggestions of his tutor, C. F. Schwarz (Note 4). It would appear that the sovereign evinced a keen interest in the study of the subject of human anatomy and an articulated bony skeleton was duly installed in the library. The presence of a bony skeleton within the precincts of the habitation of the royal household is said to have been deemed sacrilegious and strongly objected to by the queens and other conservative and orthodox relatives. Thereupon the King out of deference and regard to the sentiments and feelings of his kith and kin is said to have placed an order for two skeletons made of materials which were unobjectionable. These specimens were executed by the skilled artists of Tanjore who flourished under the royal benefactors during the early part of the nineteenth century.’

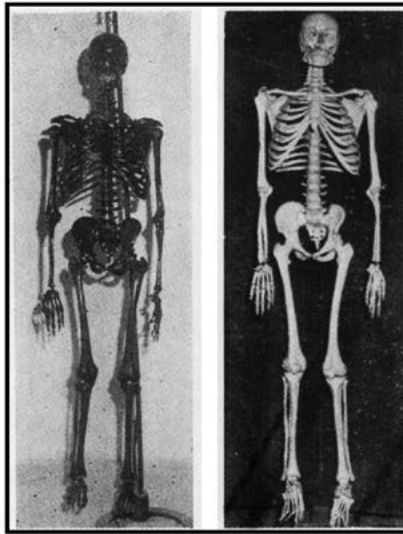


Fig. 3. Sandalwood (*left*) and ivory (*right*) skeletons made by Sarabendra.

Source: R. K. Rau (1954, *op. cit.*). Rau supplies photographs of these skeletons as anterior, posterior, and lateral views. In the present reproduction, only the anterior views of both skeletons are supplied.

Rau thinks that these near-life-size skeletal models (5' 7"; c. 175 cm tall) may have been displayed in the foyer next to the Saraswathi-Mahal Library developed by Saraboji the Second⁸ in 1805–1810 (Fig. 3). These models were made at the interest of Saraboji for instructional purposes. Rau tracks details of how he managed to get hold of these skeletons (Box 1). Anyhow, a 2018 issue of *the Hindu* (Visakapatnam edition) refers to the same ivory and sandalwood skeletons safely stored in the Anatomical Museum of the Andhra Medical College, Visakapatnam (Fig. 4). That is gratifying because these pieces are treasures of scientific art and are still within India.

The erstwhile descendants of the once magnificent, puissant and valiant Mahratta kings were reduced to such a sorry plight that the art treasures, antique curios and expensive pieces of furniture came unfortunately under the hammer at the instance of the exacting creditors and many costly articles were sold away at just nominal prices. The two skeletons with the rosewood almirah for holding them were bought by a friend of mine who had an eye to business for about Rs 75/-. He went in for them with a view to profit by the sale of ivory that could be had by dismantling the skeleton. He congratulated himself in having struck a veritable bargain and took the precious articles home but his wife and children got such a fright that he had to get them removed soon after to some other place in the neighbourhood. He wanted to effect a sale of them as quickly as possible. The local High schools were too poor to buy them for even the cost price for which he was prepared to part with them. I chanced to meet the gentleman who mentioned to me the details of his purchase. Interested as I was in anatomical specimens (I was then lecturer in Anatomy in the Tanjore Medical School), I expressed my wish to go in for them. I paid the amount straight away and had them removed to my house during April 1926. Since then they have been with me.

Box 1. Screenshot of the text that refers to how Rau obtained the skeletons (Source: R. K. Rau, 1954, op. cit. p. 55).



Fig. 4. A recent-time photograph of the sandalwood (left) and ivory (right) skeletons stored in the Anatomical Museum of the Andhra Medical College, Visakapatnam. Source: *The Hindu* (Visakapatnam edition, 06 April 2018); <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/andhrapradesh/anatomy-and-history-of-a-200-year-old-ivoryskeleton/article23448299.ece> (accessed 5 October 2025).

I could not track down details of how Saraboji II may have thought of creating an ivory and a sandalwood skeletal replicas. Rau (1954, *op. cit.*) does not clarify this point either. Presumably, Rev. Schwartz, his mentor, was the trigger. The Henry Wellcome Museum Collection, London, includes an ivory anatomical figurine of a pregnant human (far smaller than the Tanjavur skeletons; *c.* 20 cm in overall length) with some removable organs, crafted by an unidentified French person in the 17th–18th centuries (<https://collection.Science-museum-group.org.uk/objects/co76803/ivory-anatomical-figure>; accessed on 11 October 2025). The Henry Wellcome Museum also includes a wooden sculpture (what wood?) of a human male showing muscles and arteries, carved in the mid-18th century Switzerland with no sculptor identified (<https://collection.sciencemuseumgroup.org.uk/objects/co77780/carved-wooden-male-anatomical-figure-switzerland-1731-1770>, accessed 11 October 2025). Many new knots have been identified in the present article and hopefully time will untie them.

Notes

1. The *Bulletin of the Indian Institute of the History of Medicine* has a distinguished history and was founded by Danda Venkata Subba Reddy (1899–1987), who graduated from the Madras Medical College in 1925. Reddy set-up the Department of History of Medicine in Andhra Medical College, Visakapatnam in 1956. He pioneered in exploring the medical history of India. Subba Reddy was a medical-science professor and he pioneered medical history of South Asia. Subba Reddy started the Department of Medical History in Andhra Medical College, Visakapatnam in September 1956, but shifted to Hyderabad in December 1956. He was majorly inspired by Henry Ernest Sigerist of the University of Zürich, a medical historian, and a loud proponent of universal health care in the 1940s. Today the Department of Medical History, Hyderabad has grown into the National Institute of Indian Medical Heritage, Hyderabad managed by the Ministry of Ayush, Government of India.

2. The Tanjore Medical School grew out of the Prince-of-Wales Medical School, named so, synchronizing with the visit of Albert Edward (the Prince of Wales) to Madras Presidency and established in Tanjore in the late 1870s. In the 1910s, this facility metamorphosed as the Tanjore Medical School utilizing the Raja-Mirasdar Hospital (R.M.H.) as the hospital facility that was founded in 1876 through the initiative of Henry Sullivan Thomas, Collector of Tanjore. The generosity of the Mahratta royals (particularly, Kamatchi-Amba Devi) both as cash (Rs. 30,000) and as kind (40 acres of land) made the R.M.H. possible. A few wealthy local *mirasdar*-s (*Mirasdar* refers to hereditary landowners in pre-colonial and colonial India; they held rights to manage land - *miras*; they paid either rent or revenue to the rulers of pre-colonial days or to the administrators of colonial state) contributed further towards this effort, meeting the total expense of Rs. 96,000. The *Madras Presidency Administration Report for 1907-1908*⁸ Ch. 6, p. 83 speaks of the Tanjore-Medical School that offered 'hospital training' in 1907-1908. The 'hospital training', most likely, implies the 4-year long training towards an L.M.P. (Licenced Medical Practitioner) title. The L.M.P. qualified personnel were eligible for employment in the Subordinate Medical Service of the Presidency of Madras. One notable alumnus of the L.M.P. programme of the Tanjore Medical School was 'Vengu-Iyer Kuppaswami' - later Swami Sivananda, [1887-1963] - who established the Divine Life Society, and who was born in Pattamadai, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu.
3. The *Antiseptic* was first established in Madras in 1904. It was edited and published by Udupi Rama Rau (1874-1952) and Taravath Madhavan Nair (1868-1919), who were medical practitioners in Madras city in early- and mid-years of the 20th century.

4. Christian Friedrich Schwarz (1726-1798) was an Evangelical-Lutheran Missionary belonging to the Halle Mission and was stationed in Tranquebar [Tarangampadi]. In 1766, Schwarz moved to the Madras-Army Garrison, Trichnapoly (Tiruchirapalli), as the Garrison Chaplain. Schwarz was a friend of Thulaja Bhonsle, ruler of Tanjavur between 1763 and 1773; 1776 and 1787. Saraboji was the adopted son of Thulaja and the legal heir to the throne. When Thulaja died in 1787, Saraboji became the ruler of Tanjavur, at his 10th year of age. Comprehensive education of Saraboji occurred in Madras under the direction of another Evangelical-Lutheran Missionary Christian Wilhem Gericke. Throughout his life, Saraboji maintained high regard and respect to both Schwarz and Gericke.

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Impact of Portuguese Colonial rule on Devadasis of Goa: extracts from the Goa Archives

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Abstract

Goa has a unique, rich and lively cultural heritage and it is specially known for performing arts. One of the most valuable assets of Goa has been its temples and associated with these temples during the pre-Portuguese and Portuguese period, were the devadasis. With the new conquests, the Portuguese encountered the Hindu Devadasi community, whom they saw as mere dancing girls and referred to them as Bailadeiras. Devadasis who were skilled in the performing arts, performed in the temple in front of the deity as a regular ritual and outside on festive occasions during the deity's ceremonial procession. Later, the dance also came to be performed in royal courts and on other social occasions like weddings. Devadasi system gained patronage from the kings. They were treated with respect during the pre-Portuguese period and their status

got degraded due to the manipulative social customs of the upper castes and the Portuguese colonial rule. It faced a set back because of the political instability and loss of patronage.

Keywords: *Devadasi, kalavant, bailadeira, dance, temple.*

Introduction

Temples have been an important social institution of the Indian society. Indian values, culture and traditions have emerged from the temples. All art forms, including devotional music and dance were important components of temple rituals. Practice or performance of art in front of the deity was considered as a devotional offering to the god. Hence, emerged several customs and traditions which considered art forms as holy. One of the most important elements of the temples since ancient times were the *Devadasis*. *Devadasi* literally means servant of god. They had subclasses - *Fulkar, Kalavants, Bhavins* etc. Their functions have been explained further in this paper. The art of the *Kalavants*, who were dancers, musicians, singers, was believed to please the gods in temples and shrines. They enjoyed a respectable position in society and were patronised by the state and the people. History illustrates that the chaos in temples during Muslim invasions and Portuguese conquest of Goa disturbed the royal patronage they enjoyed. The once prosperous *Devadasis* saw such a rapid decline in their fortunes that their return to their original position of power caused many disputes and tensions regarding their hereditary rights.

Prosperity of the *Devadasis*

The origin of *Devadasi* system in India is not yet clearly known. However, one of the earliest references to the *Devadasis* were found in Tamil Nadu, in the sacred texts called *Agamas*. *Agamashastras* are texts relating to the principles of temple building and making of icons. According to B. D. Satoskar, the *Devadasi* custom entered Hinduism after the Vedic period; when in the Puranic period, the Aryans accepted

Dravidian deities and temple customs.¹ *Devadasi* system in its purest form flourished under the Cholas, Pallavas and Pandyas. Numerous inscriptions from Chola times tell us of the philanthropy of the *Devadasis*.² With the Muslim invasions, the royal patronage that the *Devadasis* enjoyed, got disrupted in South India.³

After the fall of the Chola dynasty, the dark phase of the *Devadasis* lasted for more than a century. A new fillip to the *Devadasi* system was seen under the defenders of Hindu culture- the Vijayanagar rulers. The Vijayanagar temples were considered to be incomplete without a *devadasi*. The prosperity and stature of a temple was determined by the number of *devadasis* it maintained.⁴ Krishnadeva Raya, the mighty Vijayanagar king was involved in restoration of temples and thereby, the *Devadasi* system. He showered wealth over the development of temple dance and music for a long period. Two Portuguese accounts of Fernao Nuniz (1520) and Domingo Paes (1536/37), describe the South Indian culture under the reign of the Krishnadeva Raya. A text on dance by Goppa Tippa composed during the Vijayanagar period throws light on the status of *Devadasis*. He illustrates that the art of *devadasis* shifted from temples to royal courts. They started enjoying patronage from the kings and aristocrats. The death of a *devadasi* was grieved, her body was draped as *nityasumangali*⁵, and temple kitchen fires lit her funeral pyre. During the festival processions in Vijayanagar, *devadasis* attracted the attention of traders, merchants and Portuguese travellers like Domingo Paes and Fernao Nuniz.⁶ It is evident from the records of Domingo Paes and Fernao Nuniz that the *Kalavants* or *Devadasis* enjoyed a reputable position in society because of the royal patronage. Almost all the ceremonies including *garbhadan*⁷, marriages etc. were celebrated amidst the dancing and singing of the *kalavants*.⁸

In Goa, *Devadasis*, or temple artists have contributed in a special way to the preservation of spiritual beliefs, music, dance and creative history. *Devadasis* participated in the temple rites. As mentioned earlier, their subclasses were determined by the tasks of temple servants:

flower producers were referred to be *Fulkar*, while musicians, dancers, and singers were called *Kalavants*. *Bhavins* were those who prepared *arti*, lit lamps, and embroidered and embellished clothing. In the past, these positions were revered and regarded as sacrosanct. Artists shared revenues with priests and lived close to temples so they could concentrate on their religious development. In exchange for their services, *Devadasis* occasionally earned grants of temple land. But eventually, people started to despise these artists.

The *Mahajans*, strong Saraswat people who managed the temples and their property, disregarded the *devadasis*' noble standing.⁹ *Devadasis* had to deal with a decline in their work and a loss of financial security. They were forced to live in seclusion, close to the premises of temple complexes with very limited access to resources and were expected to entertain village chiefs and principal villagers and appease the sexual demands of powerful feudal elements who wanted their services.¹⁰

According to B. D. Satoskar, who quotes from *Bharatiya Sanskriti Kosha*, any sacrifice made to the gods is accepted by the priests. Accordingly, the *devadasi*'s offering of her body to the priest was an offering that the god ultimately accepted. As a result, she lapsed into becoming accessible for the gratification of large landowners, sardars and monarchs. When the temples were assaulted and destroyed, the *devadasis* remained in the shrines, hid, and risked their lives to carry the gods to safety.¹¹

The deterioration of the *Devadasi* system

With the Portuguese conquest of Goa, an intense process of political and religious transformation directly affected the Hindu temples and the *Devadasis*. In this process, the temples, altars and other icons that represented a threat to the new religion introduced by the Portuguese, were destroyed.¹² The royalty that extended patronage to *devadasis*, who were also known as *kalavants*, declined in power and prestige which might have resulted in the downfall of the *devadasi* system. The Portuguese regarded Hindu temples, dancers and musicians as a degenerate phenomenon. The

destruction of the temples and the confiscation of temple lands caused a significant change in the lives of those who survived on income of the temples. The new colonial rule started a spree of destroying Hindu temples, along with which decayed the *kalavants*. Their plight became obscure. Portuguese looked at the sacred art form practiced by *devadasis* or *kalavants* as mere dance and called them *Bailadeiras*.

A *Devadasi* faced a confusing social status. She was socially devalued and defamed; however, within the temples, her presence for important ceremonies and rituals was mandatory. The *Foral* of 1526 mentions that the *kalavants* had the privilege of performing at the Chief *Goankar*'s¹³ house during village festivities.¹⁴ One of the most famous *Dekhnni*¹⁵ songs, "*Hanv Saiba Poltodi Vetam*" by Carlos Eugenio Ferreira (1860-1926) explains the same.¹⁶ *Dekhnni* is a very popular combination of Indian song and Western music cum dance performed by women. It is a dialogue between two temple dancers and a boatman, wherein the dancers want to go across the river to perform at a wedding. They request the boatman to ferry them across the river. The boatman disapproves saying the river is very rough. The dancers offer the boatman their gold jewellery; but the boatman is still firm. So, the dancers dance for the boatman and that is when he agrees to ferry them across the river. A Modi Marathi record dated 1790 refers to a list of the material and a party of dancers and musicians which were sent from Antruz Mahal (Ponda, Goa) for the wedding of the Virvader of Sunda.¹⁷ These records indicate that the Gaonkars gave a social acceptance to the system of *devadasis* and that the *kalavants* danced for their living at the house of the village Gaonkar and during festivals and weddings.

In the temples, *kalavants* sang and danced. They danced in public and at the homes of prominent individuals, including Portuguese officials, on joyous occasions. Every Sunday during Gaspar Correia's reign, *bailadeiras* performed during lunch and dinner at the Terreiro do Sabaio, which had a view of the palace where the Viceroys of India resided until 1554.¹⁸

However, one of the first attempts of the colonial government to control the spaces that the dancers could attend was implemented through the Third Provincial Council of Goa in 1585.¹⁹ The Portuguese realised that in the marriages of the neo- Christians there were still some things that were considered as less decent. Thus, according to the decree, the presence of unfaithful persons, rites or ceremonies was to be prohibited. The presence of dancers, songs or anything similar was also forbidden. Exclusion of prostitutes could be seen in the Charter of 1526 which lays down procedures for proof of one's rights.

In cases concerning hereditary rights or immovable properties, witnesses could not be produced. The Charter laid down the conditions that disqualified a person from being a witness. Therefore, minors of sixteen years and below, a drunkard, a blind man, deaf, dumb, son of a prostitute, disreputable men were not to be accepted as witnesses.²⁰ From the *Foral* of 1526, it can be understood that the Gaonkars validated the dancers, and the Portuguese did not.

Pictorial depiction of *Bailadeiras*

Painting has been overpowering evidence since earliest times. *Devadasis* have been a muse to the poets as well as artists of the past. In 1956, a German researcher, Georg Schurhammer explored 76 huge and extraordinary coloured drawings in Rome, in the '*Biblioteca Casanatense*'. These drawings were created in India around 1540. They were labelled in Italian as '*Disegni Indiani*' (Indian Drawings) and in Latin as '*Figurae variae tum hominum tum animalium Asiae et Africae a quodam Lusitano viatore delineatae et depictae saeculo ut videtur XVI; in folio cum brevibus descriptionibus in lingua lusitana*' (Several pictures of people and animals from Asia and Africa as seen and painted by a Portuguese traveller in the sixteenth century, "in folio" with descriptions in the Portuguese language).²¹ Based on the study of these pictures, Maria Manuela Mota claims that these pictures were created by an Indian painter who had an impact of local tradition and a knack with Iranian miniatures.



Figure 1: Dancers at a Canari wedding (Originally from C.32, fls. 100-101. Codex Casanatense. Biblioteca Casanatense, Rome)
Source:https://www.academia.edu/121618993/The_Kalavant_Bailadeiras_of_Goa_from_c_1540_to_c_1880_Image_and_Text²²

Folio 98 to 101 of ‘*Codice Casanatense*’ depicts a ‘Canari²³ wedding’ which illustrates a procession of barefoot guests which is going towards the ceremonial room carrying presents for the decked-up couple who are sitting in a pavilion. Female dancers are depicted in this drawing accompanied by musicians with cymbals, a drum, a gong and a trumpet, could be the kalavants who danced at the weddings for their livelihood.



Figure 2: Depiction of the ‘baldadeira’ in Linschoten’s *Itinerario*, 1596. (Originally from University of Utrecht, special collections) Source:https://www.academia.edu/121618993/The_Kalavant_Bailadeiras_of_Goa_from_c_1540_to_c_1880_Image_and_Text ²⁴

Jan Huygen Van Linschoten, a Dutch traveller who served in Portuguese Goa from 1583 to 1588, maintained a detailed diary of his observations of Goa, its people and polity.²⁵ He also sketched what he saw around him during his stay in Goa. *Itinerario*, a work of Linschoten

is based on the sketches and observations he made. A sketch of his depicts a farmer and his family along with a soldier and a nautch girl- *bailadeira*. He describes them as:

“By the pictures following you may see... a true description of *canarin* with his wife, and the manner how the Indian heathenish children are brought up: also of the soldier of Ballagate, which is called *Lascarin*, with the heathenish whore called *Bailadeira* (nautch girl), who is a dancer, because she is commonly used thereunto, in any feast or open plays, and are ready to be hired for a small piece of money, whereof many of them dwell in Goa, with the manner of the dwellings and houses of the Deccanis, *Canarins*, and *Corumbins*, and how they row in the rivers with their scutes (small boats)...”²⁶

Linschoten’s description of the *bailadeira* through his words and sketches shows the degraded condition of *bailadeira* under the Portuguese regime.

In 1684, the *Bailadeiras* or *Kalavants* were banned from staying in old conquests and would suffer death penalty for staying back. Portuguese *fidalgos*²⁷ giving shelter to *bailadeiras* were fined about 1000 *ashrafis* and confiscation of titles. Locals who would help them were threatened with gruelling imprisonment. Thus, *Kalavants* and *Devadasis* migrated in large numbers to the New Conquests, where temples were shifted from the old conquests or to the neighbouring states like Bombay and Pune. Numerous women were pushed into poverty and prostitution.

Conclusion

The sociological changes in Goa affected people’s outlook to such an extent that the respected *devadasis* fell from grace to disgrace; never to recover their status of respect. Only a few of them survived this downfall, solely because of their courage, talent, commitment to

their art and support of the patrons. The Portuguese colonial rule did not appreciate the art and skill of *devadasis* or *kalavants* in its original and traditional form. To them, the sacred art of *kalavants* was a sheer dance or music which was disgraceful. The Europeans looked down upon any practice of Indians as uncivilised which is evident from the description of Linschoten about Goans, including *Bailadeiras*.

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26. Ibid, p. 64.
27. *Fidalgos*- Noblemen.



Earth-salt production and colonial intervention in the princely state of Pudukkottai: Exploitation, Resistance and Legacy

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Abstract

This paper examines the history and socio-economic significance of earth-salt production in Pudukkottai during British colonial rule. Colonial interventions disrupted this traditional industry, which depended on women and marginalized groups. British policies imposed restrictive licenses, bans and monopolistic controls. These measures dismantled the practice, displacing communities and creating widespread economic hardship. Earth-salt production relied on the natural resources of the region and was crucial to the livelihoods of the Uppiliyar caste. The colonial administration criminalized local producers and forced many out of the trade. Women, who were central to the industry, faced severe hardships due to these suppressive policies. The study explores how local

communities resisted these measures and continued producing salt illegally despite harsh penalties. It draws on archival research, oral histories, and qualitative analyses to provide insights into resource exploitation, gender roles in labour, and colonial economic policies. The impacts of these disruptions extend beyond colonial India, offering lessons on modern resource control and its socio-economic effects. By highlighting the resilience of the affected communities and the lasting consequences of colonial policies, this study contributes to understanding the effects of imperial exploitation on local industries and marginalized populations.

Keywords: *Earth-salt production, colonial monopoly, Uppiliyar community, gendered labour, resistance to colonialism, resource exploitation.*

Introduction

Salt production has been a vital economic activity and a powerful symbol of autonomy in South Asia. During British colonial rule, control of salt became a key mechanism of imperial authority, exemplified by the Salt Satyagraha of 1930. While the broader impacts of colonial salt policies have been widely studied, less attention has been directed toward their effects in princely states, like Pudukkottai. These semi-autonomous regions, though not directly under British governance, were profoundly influenced by imperial policies. Earth-salt production in Pudukkottai, a centuries-old tradition sustained largely by women and marginalized communities, played a crucial role in meeting local needs. Unlike coastal salt production, it relied on the unique saline soil of the region. This industry was more than an economic activity; it was intertwined with the social and cultural milieu of the state. However, British policies targeting resource control and revenue generation undermined this traditional practice. This study investigates how colonial policies reshaped the salt industry of Pudukkottai. It examines the socio-economic consequences

and explores the forms of local resistance. By drawing on archival records and local accounts, it uncovers the broader patterns of exploitation and control imposed by the colonial administration and their lasting effects on the development of the region in the post-colonial era.

Historical context of Pudukkottai

The princely state of Pudukkottai was a semi-autonomous region located in the Tamil-speaking Madras Presidency during British colonial rule. Spanning an area of approximately 1,178 square miles, Pudukkottai comprised three administrative subdivisions: Alangudi, Kulathur and Thirumayam. These subdivisions were home to diverse communities engaged in agriculture, small-scale industries and local crafts, including earth-salt production. In 1911, the state had a population of 411,886 ¹. Unique among its Tamil counterparts, Pudukkottai retained its princely status, even during the colonial era. While other regions within the Madras Presidency were directly governed by the British, Pudukkottai operated under its local rulers, albeit with indirect colonial oversight through appointed political agents. This administrative structure allowed the state to maintain limited autonomy, yet it remained vulnerable to colonial economic policies. After India's independence in 1947, Pudukkottai was integrated into the Indian Union in 1948 and became part of Trichy District. Later, in 1974, it emerged as a separate district following the incorporation of parts of the Aranthangi Taluk and adjacent regions from Thanjavur District. The modern Pudukkottai District includes a 26-mile coastline along the Bay of Bengal's Palk Strait, unlike its princely-era boundaries, which had no direct access to the sea. This lack of coastal access made earth-salt production critical for meeting the salt demands of the state.

The economy of Pudukkottai was largely based on agriculture, yet the local production of earth-salt was crucial for meeting the salt needs of the region. Unlike coastal salt-producing areas in the Madras Presidency, Pudukkottai depended on its naturally saline soil to extract salt. This made earth-salt vital for the area, especially for the economically

disadvantaged who could not afford the more expensive, heavily taxed sea salt². The British colonial administration used a two-fold strategy to maintain control over princely states like Pudukkottai. They allowed nominal autonomy under local rulers but exerted influence through political agents. These agents enforced British economic policies, which favoured the monopolistic interests of the East India Company. As a result, the colonial monopoly on salt also affected princely areas such as Pudukkottai. This led to tensions between local rulers and British authorities. Despite these challenges, the administration of Pudukkottai continued its earth-salt production, often conflicting with British officials. The salt production of the region became a significant issue because it threatened the profits from British-controlled sea salt. These political tensions set the stage for the eventual suppression of earth-salt production in Pudukkottai, to be discussed further, in later sections.

Earth-salt production: techniques and practices

Earth-salt production in Pudukkottai depended on the naturally occurring saline soil of the region found abundantly in specific villages. This resource was crucial for a princely state that lacked direct access to coastal salt works. The method of producing salt was labour-intensive but straightforward and cost-effective, allowing local communities to maintain their livelihoods through this trade. The production cycle was most effective during the summer, the optimal season for salt extraction due to the high temperatures that accelerated evaporation. The process started with gathering saline soil from the land's surface. This soil was then placed into earthen pots and mixed with water to form a brine solution. The brine was filtered either through cloth layers or holes at the pot's base, dripping into collecting vessels below. After filtering, the brine was poured into shallow clay pans and left to evaporate under the sun. As the water evaporated, white salt crystals, known as earth-salt, formed. This salt was particularly high-quality, containing 97.6% sodium chloride³. The entire process was environmentally sustainable, using no advanced tools but relying solely on the natural resources of the region and the efforts of local producers.

The production of earth-salt was predominantly carried out by the *Uppiliyar* caste, a community with a rich history of expertise in land and water management. Records indicate that the *Uppiliyar* community migrated to Pudukkottai from Telugu-speaking regions during the Vijayanagar period. They initially worked on reclaiming barren lands and constructing irrigation systems before transitioning to salt production, a trade that aligned with their knowledge of soil and water chemistry. By 1911, the *Uppiliyar* population in Pudukkottai was recorded at 1,472 individuals⁴. They played a central role in sustaining earth-salt production across 175 villages, where the trade flourished until the late 19th century.

Apart from producing salt, the *Uppiliyar* diversified their activities to include the production of saltpetre and camphor, which earned them titles like *Karpurachettis* or *Uppili Naickers*⁵. Their villages, known for their salt production sites, were colloquially referred to as *Uppiliyan Thittus*. Women were indispensable to the production process. They carried out labour-intensive tasks, such as collecting soil, filtering brine, and maintaining the evaporation pans. Due to the hardworking nature of *Uppiliya* women, brides were given substantial gifts at the time of marriage⁶. The heavy reliance on women for production highlights the gendered dynamics of labour in the salt trade of Pudukkottai. While the *Uppiliyars* were the dominant caste in earth-salt production, other communities also participated, albeit in smaller numbers. The salt produced in Pudukkottai was not limited to local consumption; it was traded in nearby regions, including Thanjavur District. Traders often used bullock carts and donkeys to transport the salt, which was exchanged for paddy or sold for cash. The affordability and superior quality of earth-salt made it particularly popular among the economically disadvantaged.

Colonial suppression of earth-salt production

The British colonial administration prioritized monopoly control over key resources, and salt was no exception. The East India Company, followed by the British Crown, systematically eradicated indigenous salt production to establish complete control over its production and distribution.

By 1805, the Madras Presidency formally enforced this monopoly. This ensured that local producers could not compete with the heavily taxed sea salt controlled by the colonial government. In Pudukkottai, the self-sufficient earth-salt industry posed a challenge to the colonial monopoly. British officials frequently complained about the ‘illegal’ trade of Pudukkottai’s salt into neighbouring Thanjavur, which they argued resulted in significant revenue losses for the colonial government. This tension ultimately led to a series of measures aimed at dismantling the earth-salt industry in Pudukkottai and integrating its economy into the colonial framework⁷.

The suppression of earth-salt production in Pudukkottai began with the enactment of the Earth-Salt Suppression Regulation in 1887. This law made it illegal to produce earth-salt without official permission and set severe punishments for violations. In the same year, British officials gave the Pudukkottai administration a compensation package of Rs. 5,000 to dismantle salt production sites, along with an annual grant of Rs. 38,000 to make up for the revenue losses incurred by the state⁸. The regulation also authorized the destruction of salt production facilities and established a dedicated police force to enforce the ban. Producers caught making salt illegally faced stiff penalties, including fines up to Rs. 500 and imprisonment for up to six months⁹.

The colonial government’s efforts to suppress earth-salt production extended beyond shutting down facilities. They also aimed to eliminate the itinerant trade of earth-salt, which was crucial for many rural communities. The economic tactics were equally harsh. The colonial administration pressured Pudukkottai to price its earth-salt at the same level as British sea salt, making the local salt unaffordable for its main users—the poor. This pricing strategy forced local producers out of their own markets and compelled consumers to buy the more expensive, heavily taxed colonial salt. The colonial crackdown on earth-salt production disproportionately affected women, who were central to the industry. Historical records reveal that between 1888 and 1898, 95%

of those prosecuted for violating salt laws in Pudukkottai were women¹⁰. These women were subjected to heavy fines, imprisonment, and public humiliation, reflecting the gendered nature of colonial oppression. The Criminal Tribes Act further exacerbated the plight of marginalized communities involved in salt production.

Under this law, communities associated with ‘criminal’ trades, including salt-making, were systematically stigmatized and monitored. In 1935–36, for instance, 139 members of the *Uppukkuravar* community in Pudukkottai were arrested under this act, 60 of whom were women¹¹. This dual oppression-economic marginalization and criminalization-effectively dismantled the livelihoods of the salt-producing communities of Pudukkottai. Women, who had been the backbone of the earth-salt industry, were forced to abandon their trade and seek alternative means of survival.

Resistance and legacy

Despite the severe challenges posed by colonial policies, the salt producers of Pudukkottai showed remarkable resilience. For over two decades, these communities resisted the suppression of their traditional livelihood. They continued to produce earth-salt clandestinely, risking heavy penalties to support their families. Women, in particular, played a key role in this resistance, with their labour being crucial to the ongoing production of salt. The *Uppiliyar* community, known for their salt production expertise, led these efforts. Even after losing legal recognition for their trade, they utilized their traditional knowledge and networks to maintain underground operations. This resistance stresses the ingenuity and determination of the salt producers of Pudukkottai in the face of systemic oppression.

The colonial suppression of earth-salt production led to significant economic dislocation, forcing many producers to give up their ancestral trade. Dispossessed of their livelihoods, a large number of salt producers migrated in search of work. Between 1921 and 1931, over 88,000 people

from Pudukkottai, which represented 21% of the state's population, emigrated. A significant number of these migrants, over 75,000, moved to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to work on tea and rubber plantations¹². This migration was not a choice but a forced outcome of colonial economic policies that dismantled local industries and turned the local population into an exploitable labour force. The widespread displacement of communities from Pudukkottai highlights the far-reaching impacts of colonial exploitation, which fundamentally reshaped the socio-economic landscape of the region.

The history of earth-salt production in Pudukkottai provides valuable insights into contemporary issues such as labour rights, resource management, and resistance against systemic exploitation. This case study illustrates how colonial monopolies over essential resources were used as tools for power consolidation, a strategy that resonates with modern neoliberal policies. These policies often prioritize corporate interests over local producers, echoing colonial tactics. The deliberate dismantling of indigenous industries and the creation of artificial scarcity through restrictive laws show how economic policies can be used to oppress local communities.

By understanding this history, we can identify similar patterns in the global trade policies of today. This awareness supports advocacy for more equitable resource distribution systems, especially in developing economies where traditional industries remain vulnerable to threats from market liberalization. This knowledge empowers us to push for reforms that protect and promote local industries and labour rights.

Conclusion

The story of earth-salt production in Pudukkottai is a significant chapter in the colonial history of India. Under British rule, the self-sufficient salt industry of the region turned into a site of economic and political struggle, severely impacting local communities. Women, who were central to this traditional industry, experienced the harshest

effects of these policies, yet they showed remarkable resilience, resisting suppression for nearly two decades. Their determination to preserve their livelihood, despite facing legal persecution and economic challenges, highlights their extraordinary resilience. This story, often overlooked, emphasises the importance of documenting and reclaiming the histories of marginalized groups, especially women whose contributions have frequently been ignored in historical accounts. Revisiting the story of the salt producers of Pudukkottai, not only honours their legacy but also deepens our understanding of how local communities contended with and resisted colonial domination. Their enduring resistance serves as a proof of the power of collective action and the vital role of traditional knowledge systems.

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**Nation and Nationalism through Diasporic
lenses: A study of the life and times of
Madam Bhikaji Cama and Shyamji Krishna
Varma: the Unknown Patriots**

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Abstract

*This paper explores how the first-generation of the Indian diaspora in England resisted colonial rule, with the support of India House and the Indian Home Rule Society in London. This qualitative and exploratory research focuses on two biographical works: *The Life and Times of Madam Bhikaji Cama* by Rachna Bhola and *Shyamji Krishna Varma: The Unknown Patriot* by Ganeshi Lal Varma. These biographies examine the efforts made by Madam Bhikaji Cama and Shyamji Krishna Varma to construct their national identity. Additionally, the research investigates how the Indian diasporic community played a crucial role in fostering the idea of a nation under colonial supremacy and in promoting the spirit of*

nationalism among both the British and Indians. Drawing on the critical framework of Benedict Anderson's notion of print media's role in fostering national consciousness and Marshall McLuhan's media ecology theory, particularly, his view of the media's impact on social perception and identity; this paper demonstrates the significance of the Indian diaspora's contributions to the emergence of India as a free nation.

Keywords: *Indian Diaspora, nationalism, nation, colonial, Home Rule, first-generation, and national consciousness.*

Introduction

The first generation of the Indian diaspora played a pivotal role in constructing the idea of nationalism and advocating for independence from colonial rule. They argued that a nation is an abstract concept existing in the minds and hearts of people, both within and beyond geographical boundaries, struggling to claim their identities, native culture, values, traditions and customs in the host land. By the 21st century, diaspora gained significance, encompassing diverse meanings in political, social, economic, cultural, behavioural and psychological contexts, influencing the dynamics of identity from fixed to fluid, emerging as a population living away from home.¹ Historically, the Indian diaspora existed even before being defined as diaspora owing to the mercantile relations in the then countries. The question undertaken in this research article is how did this diaspora play a crucial role in constructing nationalism, based on the hypothesis that the contributions of the first-generation Indian diaspora in shaping the idea of nationalism in a foreign land have seldom been discussed in academia.

The research makes an attempt to identify, locate the members of Indian diaspora in England, Paris and Iran and explore the means and ways of their participation in the freedom struggle. Indian diasporic thinkers -Madan Lal Dhingra, Lala Har Dayal, Tarak Nath Das, Subhash Chandra

Bose, Kartar Singh Sarabha, Maulana Barkaatullah, Sardar Singh Rana, Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, Raja Mahendra Pratap, Sohan Singh Bhakna, Rash Bihari Bose, Chempakaraman Pillai, Sufi Amba Prasad, Sardar Ajit Singh, V. D. Savarkar, M. N. Roy and Vishnu Ganesh Pingle created history with their sacrifices for motherland/homeland. They revived Indian values, ideas, and cultures and promoted the geo-cultural and the spiritual concept of '*rastra*', distinct from the Western political notion of the nation. The researchers randomly identified Shyamji Krishna Varma and Madam Cama, as the background study and literature review revealed them to be the first-generation diaspora.

Biographies: *The Life and Times of Madam Bhikaji Cama and Shyamji Krishna Varma: The Unknown Patriots*

The selected biographies bring to the fore, Madam Cama and Shyamji Krishna Varma's nationalist ideologies, including their contribution to the development of Indian nationalism and understanding of cultural identity, political activism, anti-colonial activism, the role of women in nation-building and the role of education in nurturing national consciousness.

"Shyamji Krishna Vama's public life began at Bombay with his involvement in the reform movement, especially the emancipation of women...He, therefore, threw himself into the movement started by Madhavdas Raghunathdas who denounced child marriages, and encouraged widow remarriages".² This commitment to social reform and education laid the groundwork for Varma's later contributions to the nationalist movement, illustrating how personal identity and social progress were intertwined in the struggle for India's independence.

Shyamji Krishna Varma followed Swami Dayanand Saraswati's footsteps and joined the Arya Samaj reform movement. In 1879, he joined Oxford University as an assistant of Dr. Monier Williams and established the Indian Institute at Oxford University. In 1881, "Shyamji was invited by the Secretary of Royal Asiatic Society, London to read a

paper on the ‘Origin of Writing in India’³. This paper had a significant impact, leading to Shyamji’s election as “a non-resident member of the Asiatic Society⁴”. He read a paper titled, ‘Sanskrit as a Living Language,’ repudiating the British propaganda that ‘Sanskrit was as dead in India as Greek and Latin in Europe’:

I venture to say that Sanskrit is a kind of lingua franca among learned men throughout India. Few European scholars know to what extent we use Sanskrit among ourselves. I have friends in different parts of India who cannot communicate with me in any other language except Sanskrit.⁵

Shyamji Varma was gradually emerging as the ambassador of India. The way he used ‘India’ proclaimed to the world that the land of Aryans is worthy of universally being acknowledged as a ‘nation’. He utilised his association with Oxford University and the scholars, professors, Indologists in England, through his lectures and papers to acquaint the people of Europe about the ancient and rich civilisation of India, gradually inculcating the call for justice to India through articles and pamphlets. In one of his interviews with Gladstone, the then Prime minister of England, he boldly asserted that “British rule was kicking the Indians in the stomach”, alluding to the economic exploitation of India.⁶

In October 1905, Shyamji Varma published *The Indian Sociologist* to explore ways to end British rule in India and promoted the idea that a nation’s growth and well-being depends on the collective contributions and shared aspirations of its diverse people. Varma used his scholarship, acquaintances, channels of university education to further the links with nationalist movements in other Western countries, building a national consciousness outside India. Shyamji wrote:

It is not necessary for Indians to resort to arms for compelling England to relinquish its hold on India. If the brown men struck work for a week, the Empire would collapse like a house of cards, and every ruling man would be starving prisoner in his house.⁷

He believed that Indians have the potential to end British rule in India through non-violent means, such as mass strikes or boycotts, due to India's significant contribution and capacity to cripple British authority.

Shyamji Krishna Varma, a member of the Indian National Congress, opposed the moderate agenda and advocated for a proactive approach to Indian independence. He demolished the notion of the so called blessings of British Rule in India as impressed upon the world by Sir Henry Cotton: "Indian people were grateful for their education, liberty and immunity from invasion, demonstrating their loyalty and gratitude towards British education"⁸. Shyamji critically reciprocated that "this sort of education had done them harm mentally, morally and physically".

Just as shepherds take care of their sheep for wool and mutton and protect them against the ravages of their enemies in order that they may have the exclusive right of butchering them, the poor helpless animals, so the British rulers of India are most anxious to keep Indians as their exclusive property.⁹ He critiques British education and governance serving as a form of imperialism, exposing the harmful effects of imperial rule on Indian society.

In 1905, Varma established India House in London, as a residence for Indian students, aiming to promote revolutionary hub for diaspora nomenclatures - the House of Terror, the House of Mystery, the Beehive, the Devil and his Dirty Dozen and the Lair, which instilled fear in the British Intelligence Bureau. "This was the centre of activities of her comrade revolutionaries, who delivered motivating speeches, undertook different types of activities, wrote articles and conducted meetings".¹⁰ The Indian diasporic community, including Shyamji Krishna Varma and Madam Cama contributed to creating, building and asserting a collective consciousness of free India that values and respects the varied identities of its citizens. Despite being away from India, their role in cultural preservation, anti-colonial activism and the utilisation of diaspora

networks played pivotal roles in shaping the discourse surrounding nationalism. India House served as the focal point for all revolutionary operations. “Weekly meetings were held in the India House. It was here that she formulated plans to carry forward the movement in conjunction with the revolutionaries like S.S. Rana, Hardayal, Senapati Bapat, Virendranath Chattopadhyay, Parmanand, M.P.T. Acharya and Veer Savarkar”.¹¹ B. G. Tilak facilitated the overseas education of individuals-Savarkar, Bapat, and Madhavrao Jadhav through fellowships provided by Shyamji Krishna Varma, Madam Cama, Dadabhai Naoroji, H. M. Hyndman, and Madan Lal Dhingra. They received training and accommodations at India House, which served as the hub of revolutionary activities in the freedom struggle.

Shyamji’s followers were many after the publication of the *Indian Sociologist*, they increased tremendously, hence there was a need of a new organisation. Therefore, on February 18, 1905, a number of Indians including Dr. C. Muthu, J. M. Parikh, Dr. D. E. Pereira, Parmeshwar Wardy, J. C. Mukherjee, M. R. Jayakar and others met at Shyamji’s residence at Highgate, London to form a new society. In those days Indian patriots were familiar with Home Rule for Ireland and therefore it provided a model for their organisation.¹²

Varma, along with S.R. Rana, established the Indian Home Rule Society in London to promote the spirit of ‘Home Rule’ in the United Kingdom, making Indians residing there aware of the freedom and national unity and sponsoring Indian students through scholarships to study in the UK and prepare them to establish Home Rule in India. The Indian Home Rule Society aimed to promote the idea of self-governance and mobilise support for the independence movement. India House became a hub for revolutionary activities, where intellectuals and activists gathered to strategise and disseminate nationalist literature. This marked a major turning point in the history of the first generation of Indian diaspora. H. M. Hyndman, politician and socialist, delivered a historical speech celebrating the unity of diversity in India. He emphasised the futility of

relying on England for freedom and hailed the founding of India House as a significant step towards India's freedom, envisioning its eventual success. In India House, all revolutionaries sang *Vande Mataram* at the start of every meeting and conference held at India House. They performed collective prayer before going to bed: "*ek devata, ek desh, ek bhasha; ek jati, ek jeev, ek aasha*. (One God, one country, one language; one race, one being, one hope)".¹³

Madam Cama emerged as a significant figure, nurturing, supporting and actively participating in and organising revolutionary activities at India House. She became a maternal figure for the revolutionaries. "However, Gandhiji considered the people of the India House as a violent team", as he was against their nonviolent methods, "yet he also appreciated them for their intellectual prowess, truthfulness and spirit of self-sacrifice".¹⁴

"Madam Cama was born on 24 September, 1861 in a wealthy Parsi family of Bombay".¹⁵ Madam Cama entered public life through social service. She could no longer bear the English atrocities in the name of controlling plague. In the beginning, she took part in political activities through the Congress, and finally became a part of the extremist and revolutionary Congress. In 1901, Bhikaji fell ill and the doctors advised her to go to abroad for treatment,¹⁶ where her true political career began.

Cama's entry into public life and political activism arose from her outrage against colonial injustices, resonating with many Indians suffering under British rule. Her commitment to social service and involvement in the Congress Party created a sense of urgency to challenge imperial authority. By aligning with revolutionary movements, she enlarged anti-colonial sentiments and inspired individuals to embrace their national identity. Thus, Cama's journey illustrated how her personal awakening and activism played a pivotal role in nurturing a broader national consciousness in India. The Indian revolutionaries played a crucial role in cultivating a sense of national unity by using the flag as a symbol

of shared identity and collective aspirations. Through their activism and international engagements, they fostered feelings of solidarity among Indians worldwide, reinforcing the commitment to independence and a unified nation.

In 1906, after the partition of Bengal, Sachindra Kumar Bose used a three-colour flag that symbolised several aspects of Indian identity during the anti-colonial resistance. The top stripe was saffron, representing courage and sacrifice, and featured eight half-bloomed lotus flowers, symbolising renewal, purity and resilience of the Indian spirit. The green colour stripe featured a sun and a moon, fostering values of vitality, prosperity, growth and enlightenment. The middle yellow stripe, bearing the inscription *Vandemataram*, symbolised the unity and love for the motherland, encapsulating feelings of solidarity in the face of colonial oppression.¹⁷

Later, Indian revolutionaries unfurled the flag in front of hundreds of foreigners at the Berlin Committee, leading to its recognition as the Berlin Committee flag. This event represented a major moment in the history of the colonial struggle of India.

‘Sister Nivedita was the first to imagine the Indian flag, developing a Vajra shape with yellow pattern on a saffron background. This design encapsulated spiritual, cultural and national ideals, embodying consciousness striving for freedom and self-determination during that era. Madam Cama’s adaptation of the flag drew international attention when she unfurled it at the International Socialist Conference in Stuttgart, Germany in 1907’.¹⁸ This display of the Indian flag on a global stage was a bold statement of India’s quest for freedom, symbolising the collective aspirations of its people. The flag’s evolution contributed to reflect the dynamic nature of India’s independence movement, with various versions emerging, each representing the diverse voice and visions within the struggle. Ultimately, the Indian flag became a powerful emblem of national identity, uniting individuals across different backgrounds in their shared pursuit of a free and sovereign India.

Yet, Madam Cama's display of the Indian flag significantly elevated its international recognition. At the International Socialist Convention in Stuttgart, Germany, Cama in a Parsi saree with a full-sleeved blouse, raised the Indian national flag. This act heightened global awareness of Indian nationalism, symbolising the interplay between cultural identity and nationalist sentiment. She said in her speech,

Dignitaries, this is the flag of India's freedom. Look, this has taken birth. The great martyrs of India have shed their blood to approve of it. Taking this Tricolour as witness, I appeal to the freedom-lovers all over the world that they should assist in freeing one-fifth of the world's population.¹⁹

At the international level, there was a clear and direct call for the British to leave India for the first time. The Indian flag highlighted the aspiration of Indian nationalists, underscoring the role of cultural artefacts in fostering nationalist fervour and promoting anti-colonial resistance in the early 20th century. The celebration of indigenous symbols at the international level, advocating social reforms, and promoting spiritual consciousness marked the emergence of a collective Indian identity that laid the groundwork for vibrant nationalist discourse.

Madam Cama's active participation in various political and social movements along with her commitment to the principles of self-determination and equality, exemplify her dedication to the idea vision of a free and united India.

In 1910, she addressed the national conference of Egypt with a poignant question:

Friends, where is the second half of Egypt? Sons of Egypt, where are your mothers? Where are your sisters? You must not forget that the hands that rock the cradles also build persons, these gentle hands must not be ignored in the course of national life.²⁰

Madam Cama's advocacy of gender equality, social justice and the empowerment of women promoted the idea of an inclusive and egalitarian society where individual identities are crucial in shaping the broader national identity, and people are valued for their unique contributions irrespective of their gender, caste, or religion. She often said: "Independent India will be a republic; Hindi will be its national language and Devanagari its national script".²¹ Madam Cama promoted nationalist sentiment through literature dissemination, seeking support from revolutionaries in Ireland, Egypt, and Russia, while facilitating the circulation of clandestine revolutionary literature. She organised the clandestine transport of arms and ammunition from foreign countries, challenging the British Empire's power and instilling fear among its authorities. Despite British government restrictions, she used her strength on foreign soil to promote nationalistic activities, promoting Indian culture, traditions and religious beliefs. She travelled to Germany, Scotland, and France, eventually settling in London.

As a part of the struggle to attain India's identity as an independent nation, the members of the Indian diaspora formed the Ghadar Party in year 1913 (the Pacific Coast Hindustan Association) in the United States, under the leadership of Lala Har Dayal, Sant Baba Wasakha Singh Dadehar, Baba Jawala Singh, Santokh Singh, and Sohan Singh Bhakna on 15th July, 1913. Shyamji Krishna Verma played a pivotal role in the establishment of this party liaising between the leaders in America and India. This can be comprehended in the form of an armed revolution in India planned by Ghadar Party on 5th August, 1914, with the assistance of 6,000 revolutionaries, designating 21st February, 1915 as the day of the revolution. An additional new force of 20,000 revolutionaries helped restructure the revolution back in India in Varanasi.

However, the British government captured armed forces and prominent leaders at various locations, again paralysing the entire plan. Despite the challenges, the Ghadar Party's activities galvanised further nationalist sentiments and inspired subsequent movements, underscoring

the persistent and evolving struggle for India's independence. This resistance gained significant support from organizations such as the Indian Home Rule Society, India House, Abhinav Bharat. Dedicated figures such as Kartar Singh Sarabha, Sufi Amba Prasad, devoted their entire lives to the cause of the nation.

Abhinav Bharat (formed in 1904) founded by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar supported and collaborated with the Ghadar Party, and planned large-scale uprisings and sought to inspire a mass movement against colonial oppression by conducting secret meetings and co-ordinated efforts to overthrow British rule through armed struggle. The combined efforts of the diaspora demonstrated the vast and resolute resistance to colonialism, and sustaining the momentum of the struggle for independence, shaped the course of India's independence movement.

“Anderson highlighted the role of the popular Press in fostering a national consciousness”.²² The printing press significantly contributed to the development of national consciousness by mass-producing and disseminating printed materials - newspapers, books and pamphlets, creating a shared identity among individuals belonging to the same imagined community.

Through the distribution of printed materials relating to revolutionary actions in a common and vernacular language, standardised communication enabled the propagation of nationalist ideals, raising awareness among citizens. This phenomenon fostered a sense of belonging and solidarity among geographically dispersed individuals who shared a common cultural and linguistic heritage. ‘This not only shapes national consciousness but also molds the individual identities by providing a framework for individuals to connect with and participate in the imagined community created revolutionary ideals, unite diverse groups and promote national identity among Indians’. According to Marshall McLuhan, media ecology theory examines how media and communication technologies influence human perception, society and

culture. He posited that media function as environments that shape out consciousness, interactions and social structures. McLuhan emphasised that ‘the medium is the message’, suggesting that the characteristic of media-television, print and digital media are as significant as the content they deliver.

This concept fundamentally affected how people understand and engage with the world around them. Print media exerts a significant influence on human cognitive processes, perceptual frameworks and social structures, irrespective of its specific content. Print media significantly contributes to identity formation, connectedness, and story dissemination in diaspora settings, fostering a sense of community and shared narratives.

Revolutionary media such as books, journals and magazines, distributed by Madam Cama, Shyamji Krishna Varma and others from foreign lands (London and Paris), through institutions such as India House and Abhinav Bharat, played a crucial role in fostering collective identity and public awareness. It effectively spread ideologies, fostered solidarity among individuals, and fuelled support for the nationalist cause. Varma’s *‘The Indian Sociologist’* and Cama’s Revolutionaries pamphlets served as platforms for expressing anti-colonial sentiments and advocating for Indian independence.

Revolutionaries used printed materials to cultivate shared identity and mobilise public opinion against colonial rule, exemplifying the strategic use of media in shaping collective consciousness and advancing nationalist agendas during the independence struggle. These Print media are a vital tool for diasporic communities, facilitating cultural preservation, communication, and advocacy by exchanging information, propagating heritage, and promoting collective action. It allows the diaspora to challenge dominant narratives, assert their presence in host countries, and maintain connections to their ancestral home lands through broader social discourses.

Frantz Fanon in, 'On National Culture' highlighted that 'the culture is the expression of national consciousness'.²³ Madam Cama and Shyamji Krishna Varma utilised semiotics of language and culture (poetry, flag, festivals) as nationalist rhetoric, promoting the Indian identity, celebrated Indian civilisation's richness and nationalist ideas working towards political liberation from the British rule. Individual attachment to cultural heritage, language, tradition and customs are metaphors of nationalism and characterise nation. This linguistic and cultural semiotics inculcate a profound sense of identity and pride. Furthermore, a combination of these individual and collective identities become a collective expression of the nation itself. The diaspora of the first generation in the 19th century played its vital role in protecting and fostering cultural (national) identities within a larger international setting. Their movement emphasised both the unity and distinctiveness advocating for the safeguard of customs, traditions, values and languages as integral components of national identity.

Conclusion

The content analysis of the two texts in question establishes how cultural elements-language, customs, art and other symbols were pivotal in defining India's character, in fostering nationalism and subsequently becoming instrumental in resisting colonial rule. Shyamji Krishna Varma, and Madam Bhikaji Cama transcended geographical boundaries to build a sense of nationhood from abroad. They contributed to constructing the idea of a nation from a foreign land, inspiring the coming generation to join the freedom movement and contributing nation-building, including Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Rajguru, Chandrashekhar Azad, and Subhas Chandra Bose.

The late 19th and 20th centuries witnessed a surge in Indian nationalism, driven by revolutionaries living abroad who played pivotal roles in shaping the discourse of Indian independence. Among these influential figures were Shyamji Krishna Varma and Madam Bhikaji Cama, whose biographical journeys encapsulate the fervour

and determination of the Indian diaspora. Varma and Cama not only championed the cause of Indian nationalism but also adeptly utilised print media to propagate anti-colonial sentiments and foster a sense of national identity. This paper has contributed to the corpus of literature bringing into the ambit of debate, the first-generation diaspora and the construction of the idea of nationalism. Drawing on Anderson's theory of imagined communities and McLuhan idea of 'medium is the message,' the article asserts that in the diasporic literature, nation and identity intersect in and through the print medium. Shyamji Varma and Madam Cama emerge as the (Saidian)oriental intellectuals who played an exemplary role in resisting the ideological misrepresentation that an 'occident' culture performs over the 'other'.

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The evolution of Travancore State Force and its deployment in Second World War

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Abstract

The advancement of the Travancore State Force (T.S.F.) is a significant chapter in the military and political history of princely states in colonial India. Rooted in the martial traditions of the Nair Brigade, the (T.S.F.) emerged as a modernised military segment under the leadership of Travancore ruler Sri Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma and Diwan Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar. This transformation, initiated under the Indian State Forces Scheme in 1935, involved comprehensive restructuring, modernisation and recruitment of soldiers from diverse communities. The adoption of Western training methodologies, advanced weaponry and professional military practices elevated the force to the standards of British Indian Army. Their contributions during World War II draw attention to their strategic importance, as part of the efforts of British Indian Army. Travancore provided infantry units, logistical

support, adequate material and human resources. The involvement of the State Force extended beyond combat to include significant material and financial contributions, reflecting commitment of Travancore to the Allied powers in the Second World War. Internally, the T.S.F. played a pivotal role in maintaining law and order and security functions. The trained and well-equipped force's strategic involvement curtailed law and order issues in Travancore, setting a precedent for regional military forces in colonial India.

Keywords: *Nair Brigade, Travancore State Force, military modernisation, Allied Powers, Second World War.*

Introduction

The Travancore State Force, which evolved from the Nair Brigade, illustrates how regional forces adapted to modernisation, colonial rule and global conflicts. The evolution of the T.S.F from its re-organisation in 1935 to its contributions during the Second World War, captures the broader historical transformations within the princely states in India. Located in the southernmost part of India, Travancore had a long-standing tradition of military organization, embedded in its socio-political fabric. The Nair militia, established during the pre - colonial era, characterised this martial ethos and acted as an embankment against both external and internal threats. As a result of political and administrative changes, the Nair militia gradually declined, undergoing several transformations implemented by the British authorities. This process of restructuring continued during the reign of Rani Gouri Parvathi Bai in 1818, when the remaining native force of Travancore was reorganised into a private security guard for the royal family. Eventually, in 1830's, King Swathi Thirunal officially renamed the force as 'Nair Brigade', marking a significant shift in its role and identity. Later, British colonial authorities introduced major changes, prompting Travancore to reconsider its military strategies

and align with the overarching framework of the Indian State Forces Scheme. It transformed the structure and function of the Nair Brigade and laid the groundwork for the creation of the T.S.F, a modern military force, adept at meeting the demands of the 20th century.

The implementation of Western military practices, the establishment of specialised units, and the recruitment of personnel from diverse communities marked a significant departure from the past. These changes were not merely administrative but reflected a broader vision of creating a force that could contribute meaningfully to both regional security and imperial defence. The strategic importance of the T.S.F became particularly evident during World War II, when Travancore's contributions extended beyond its borders to global battlefronts. The integration of princely state forces into the Indian Armed Forces following independence marked the end of unique identity of the T.S.F. This study emphasises the transformation and operational strategies of the Travancore State Force and the historical significance of military modernisation in colonial India.

Establishment of the Travancore State Force

The transformation of the Nair Brigade into the Travancore State Force was a crucial vent in the military and political history of Travancore. In 1931, Sri Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma, ascending the throne of Travancore initiated several reforms in the Nair Brigade. Then the Nair Brigade became part of the Indian State Force scheme in 1935, under the command of Brigade Commandant Lt. Col. S.H, Stewart and as a result, the Nair Brigade was renamed as Travancore State Force.¹

In order to enhancing the strength of the force, the King also became a member of the Travancore State Force and he assumed the rank of Colonel-in -Chief of Travancore State Force.² An officer cadre post on the European model was also framed in the Travancore State Force as a new concept in this regard. For the first time, four local military personnel were selected as officers and two were assigned as captains

and two as lieutenants.³ Then the first Battalion was renamed as the first Travancore Nair Infantry and the second Battalion as the second Travancore Nair Infantry as part of the restructuring process and they were given rigorous military training.⁴

Although the First Battalion had a maximum strength of 500 in 1935, the force comprised only 489 men. As part of the re-organisation process, the total number of personnel was revised to 772, including all officials.⁵ Following this, selected soldiers and officers from the first battalion of Travancore were dispatched for training within various units of the British Indian Army. Subsequently, officers from the Indian Army visited Travancore to provide instruction to the Travancore forces. The reorganization of 1935 resulted in fundamental changes to the first battalion. Prior to 1935, the Subedar Major was the highest-ranking officer below the Battalion Commandant, with Subedars leading the companies under the authority of Subedar Major.

By 1935, the King had issued an order giving local officers the rank of lieutenant and captain and after that they served as Commanders, Adjutants, and Quartermasters.⁶ An Honorary Officer, a Quartermaster, and an Adjutant were assigned to the first battalion under the Battalion Commandant. The first battalion also included 591 Sepoys, forty-seven Lance Naigues, forty-one Havildars, seventeen Buglers, four Subedars, three Lance Havildars, thirteen Jemadars, thirty-nine Naiks, and one Subedar Major.⁷ Following the 1935 reorganization, each of the two battalions was standardized to have 772 soldiers. The first Battalion, which remained four companies in total, was encamped at Pangode. The soldiers wore the white review order uniform, but its front portion was green in colour. Then the official name of the first Travancore Nair infantry was changed to first Travancore Infantry Unit.⁸

Consequently, the second battalion of the Travancore force came to be known as the Second Nair Infantry of Travancore State Force. Lt. Col. S.H.Stewart, who then took over as the Commandant of the Travancore

State Force, took vigorous measures to renovate the battalion, on the lines of the British Indian Battalion.⁹ The second battalion was reorganized similar to the first battalion, making it equivalent to the British forces. To enhance troop efficiency, trainers from the Indian military were brought in and officers of the battalion received training under Indian infantry units across various parts of India. As part of the reorganisation that began in 1935, the second battalion underwent complete modernization. It comprised four companies, was renamed the Travancore State Force Infantry Unit-2, and was stationed at Pangode.

By 1936, the strength of the second battalion was reduced to 772 soldiers.¹⁰ The second Battalion of the Travancore State Force achieved the same standard as the first Battalion due to the Commandant's effective measures. Therefore, the second Battalion developed into a strong military unit in Travancore. The force, led by a native officer, included four company commanders, a Quartermaster, a Subedar Major, an Adjutant, eight Subedars, 591 Sepoys, thirteen Jemadars, seventeen Buglers, three Lance Havildars, forty-one Havildars, forty-seven Lance Naigues and thirty-nine Naigues.¹¹

When the first and second Infantry units became part of the Indian State Force, the Travancore Government recognised the need for a new infantry unit. The government initiated the formation of a new battalion to undertake security duties. Consequently, in 1935, the third Infantry unit of the Travancore State Force was established through the efforts of S.H. Stewart, the commandant of Travancore State Force, and Travancore King Chithira Thirunal.¹² The third Battalion was formed as a unit comprising of two soldiers, 263 Sepoys, three Subedars, sixteen Naigues, fourteen Havildars, five State Officers, five Jemadars, a Subedar Major, thirteen Lance Naigues and four Buglers were subsumed in the newly systematised third Battalion.¹³ Soldiers from the second Battalion, which had abated in strength with the reorganisation in 1935, were initially transferred to the third Battalion and the remaining vacancies were filled through new enlistment.¹⁴

Then a new infantry unit was organised, and its soldiers were selected from the second Battalion and named as the third Travancore Nair Infantry.¹⁵ By 1936, people from the Ezhava, Christian, Muslim and Nadar communities were admitted to the Travancore Army for the first time.¹⁶ The expansion of the Travancore State Force gained momentum upon the appointment of Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar as the new Diwan of Travancore.

In 1937, the headquarters of the Travancore State Force was relocated from the old cantonment to Pangode. In 1938, out of 717 soldiers in the second battalion, 596 were combat-ready. Their uniform was white review order, and its front portion was green in colour. Along with this, steps were also taken to train Travancore State Force personnel at Western Training at Ambala Signal School, Indian Military Academy at Dehradun, and Army School at Belgaum.¹⁷ Enlistment notices were published in newspapers and special officers were assigned from every region for selecting able bodied men for the army without caste, creed and religion.¹⁸

As a result of these measures of the government, four Hindu Nadars, three Christian Nadars, thirty-four Ezhavas, thirty-eight Christians and 103 Nairs were enlisted into the third battalion of the Travancore State Force in 1940.¹⁹ In the same year, 516 youths were enlisted into the third battalion, and underwent reorganisation. As a result, the third battalion's roles as a training unit and a garrison unit ended.

A special training battalion was then formed, consisting of about half of the infantry from the third battalion and became a complete military unit. Since the first two battalions had already served in the Second World War, the third battalion was converted into a semi-battalion of the Indian State Force.²⁰ In 1945, the total numbers of soldiers of the first battalion were 1069.² But in subsequent periods, soldiers from the first battalion were transmitted into other battalions and accordingly, the total numbers of the first battalion were reduced to 856 in 1946 and

754 in 1947.²² The number of soldiers and officers in the first Battalion during 1946-1947 and 1947-1948 is listed below:

Year	Total Number	Fighting Men	officers	Junior Commissioned Officers	Non-Commissioned officers	Invalid members	Discharged	Pensioned
1946 to 1947	856	640	11	24	181	1	6	1
1947 to 1948	754	531	12	26	185	4	23	4

During the periods of 1946-1947 and 1947-1948, the total strength of the second battalion increased to match that of the first battalion. This adjustment was made accordingly.

Year	Total Number	Fighting Men	Officers	Junior Commissioned Officers	Non-Commissioned Officers	Invalid Members	Discharged Members
1946 to 1947	822	680	13	21	107	25	58
1947 to 1948	742	588	14	20	120	3	5

In 1941, when the third battalion was made military operational wing, it became necessary to form a new battalion for maintaining law and order and security of government offices. The Travancore State Force in 1941 commandant formed a new battalion and named it half battalion²³. As part of the formation on a war-time basis, the newly formed battalion was strengthened by Commandant through enlisting retired personnel from the Travancore State Force and the Indian Army,²⁴ Gradually, as the fresh enlistment process progressed, the deserted soldiers, who served fourth battalion, were discharged.

The military records of Travancore disclose an exceptional fact that the Travancore forces possessed advanced seaplanes as part of their arsenal. The pilots operating these seaplanes were mandated to comply with the Indian Aircraft Act of 1934, which included penalties of imprisonment for up to seven years, as stipulated in *The Defense of Travancore Manual*.²⁵ The manual also outlines the rules for seaplane landings on water.²⁶ Non-compliance with these conditions could result in a prison sentence of up to five years for the seaplane pilot.

Travancore State Force during the Second World War

Travancore provided strong support to the British Indian Army during the period of World War II. Accordingly, a traveller and a Travancore-built minesweeper ship H.M.I.S (His Majesty's Indian Ship) were given to the British Indian Navy at a cost of six lakh rupees.²⁷ Along with that two fighter jets named, Travancore I and Travancore II, and one and 50,000 rupees were also donated to the Indian Air Force.

In addition to this, Travancore donated 10,50,000 rupees to the wartime fund and 1,50,000 rupees for the women on the war front, 1,00,000 rupees to the Indian Red Cross, 2,00,000 rupees to the Viceroy's Consolation Fund and 25,000 rupees to the King George's Marines Fund.²⁸ Rani Parvathi Bai, mother of the King of Travancore, donated a first field ambulance core unit and the required amount to the Lady Linlithgow Fund. Then the Government of Travancore collected 4,00,00000 rupees worth of materials including from the private sector and handed them over to the British Indian Army. The rope aggregates alone were worth more than one crore rupees and rubber products worth more than one crore rupees from the rubber factory located in Thiruvananthapuram alone and timber required for shipbuilding, vehicle body construction and railway sleepers for the Defense Department were donated to the British Indian Army by Travancore.²⁹ As part of the war, the Travancore Technical Training Scheme was promoted in a big way. Travancore Engineering College and Textile Technology Institute played a major role in it and trained more than 500 people.

As a result, Travancore was able to provide the services of engineers, fitters, electricians, carpenters, etc. to the British Indian forces. In this way, Travancore participated in the fight against the fascist forces by providing the services of 1199 technicians to the British Indian Army for various war services.

The Central Recruitment Committee, along with its subordinate committees, operated continuously to facilitate military enlistment from Travancore. By the end of 1943, the Central War Recruitment Agency had successfully selected a total of 346 individuals for military service. The Department of Chemistry was established in 1939 as the Department of Applied Chemistry, functioning as a division of the Central Research Institute under the University of Travancore. In its early years, the department played a significant role in wartime efforts, particularly in producing coconut charcoal for gas masks and developing effective substitutes to mitigate wartime shortages.³⁰

Apart from commissioned officers, Travancore recruited 45,000 men into the British Indian Army.³¹ Travancore also assigned about fifty thousand civilian workers for various tasks as part of the war in the regions including Assam. In 1941, 326 more men were annexed to the third Battalion, and it was made for fighting in war field. Thereafter, the total number of soldiers in this battalion was gradually enhanced and it rose to the status of first and second Infantry. As a result, the first and second units were staffed by state military personnel and served in connection with the World War.³²

As more troops were required, the number of the third infantry men was raised from 355 to 375 and they were trained under the Indian Army. As part of that, the Chief Military Advisor of the British India visited Travancore and he emboldened the Travancore State Force troops.³ Also, it can be understood from the report of the commandant in the year of 1943 that modern weapons, such as four hundred ten bearing muskets, V P guns, D P rifles and R F rifles were used in the first battalion of Travancore State Force.³

The Travancore State Force underwent a major overhaul in 1940-1941, ahead of its participation in World War II. A half-battalion of the Indian State Force was systematized with 362 men of the third Infantry who were working as a training battalion and fourth training battalion was systematized, with the retained 343 men of the third Infantry Battalion.³⁵ Due to the need for more battalions in war times, another half battalion was also systematized for the intestine defense of the kingdom. Then, to enhance the strength, the Commandant ordered to induct 362 people, who retired and left from the British Indian military and Travancore forces, into the Travancore State Force in 1941.³⁶

Owing to the concerted efforts of the King and the Diwan, C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, the Travancore State Force grew in strength and played a significant role during World War II. Unlike previous years, the annual expenditure on the Travancore State Force saw a steady increase. The annual disbursement and the total number of soldiers in the force over the five-year period from 1936 to 1941 were as follows:

Year	First Infantry	Second Infantry	Third Infantry	Fourth Infantry	Expenses
1936 - 1937	767	717	221	0	850036 rupees ³⁷
1937 - 1938	737	726	359	0	831444 rupees ³⁸
1938-1939	749	748	355	0	1019925 rupees ³⁹
1939-1940	659	624	675	0	984298 rupees ⁴⁰
1940-1941	687	690	675	329	951000 rupees ⁴¹

On 18 October 1940, the first Battalion of Travancore State Force was dispatched from Thiruvananthapuram to participate in World War II. The British Resident Colonel Murphy and Diwan C.P Ramaswami Aiyar

addressed the Travancore State Force team that left Travancore. Then the State Force team arrived at Kodungallur and was visited by the army officers, led by General Frank Gwatkin and wished them success.⁴² At this time the British forces led by Wavell dealt a heavy blow to the Italian army and captured many Italian soldiers.

Subsequently, Travancore State Force personnel were deployed in Ahmed Nagar for the security of the imprisoned Italian soldiers. Travancore State Force soldiers had to spend two months in Ahmed Nagar and sixteen months in Bangalore for the same mission. By this time, the German advance in the Pacific regions had alarmed the British authorities and they assigned the Travancore State Force to guard the Trichy Airfield. With the horrors of war in India felt, the top officers of the British Indian Army decided to entrust the protection of the Madras coast to the Travancore State Force.⁴³

The British Indian Army recognized the strength of the Travancore State Force by giving them security of Madras, the strategic center of British rule in South India. It is also noteworthy that Madras had to face only one air attack during the tenure of Travancore State Force in Madras. In June 1944, after completing one year service in Madras, Travancore State Force were posted to Bangalore where they underwent rigorous training.

In January 1945, they received orders to go to the Southeast Asian Command.⁴⁴ After reaching Guwahati, the trained personnel were posted to Comilla and from there, they reached Singapore via Calcutta in December 1945 and were then posted to Hong Kong (Figure 1). The troops also served on the World War II front, along with Jaipur Sawai Man Guards and Jodhpur Sardar Infantry in Hong Kong. A military group, including the Travancore State Force under the leadership of Admiral Cecil Harcourt undertook a tough task in China, which was devastated by the Japanese invasion.

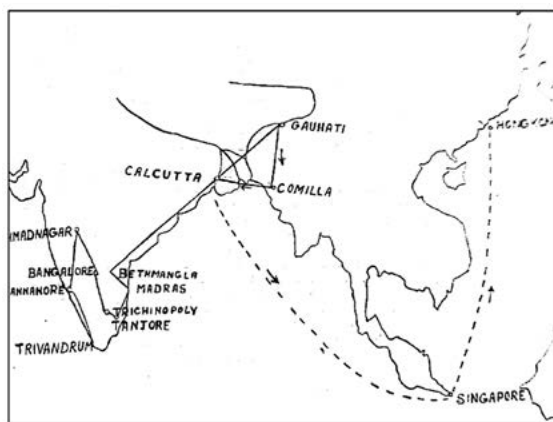


Figure 1: Places where the first Travancore infantry served.

Source: *The Travancore State Forces Annual*, 1946.

On 18 June 1941, the second Battalion of the Travancore State Force was also assigned for World War II. At the same time, Sri Chithira Tirunal Balarama Varma, the King of Travancore, praised the first Infantry for its excellent service on the battlefield. In his message, the King wished both the battalions to render dedicated service throughout the battlefield and thereby, the fame and prowess of the Travancore Army to all.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the second battalion reached Visakhapatnam through Secunderabad and received military training from the 44th Indian Army Division.⁴⁶ Then in August 1944, the second battalion reached Bombay and arrived in the Middle East and camped near Bistun on the road to Kazvin.⁴⁷ Then they marched 180 miles through Persia to Iraq and served memorably in World War II (Figure 2). The ships of the British Indian Navy excelled in chasing Japanese ships out of the Indian Ocean during World War II. Notably, Travancore contributed four out of the eighteen ships of the British Indian Navy.⁴⁸ The Labour Corps was a training experiment, unique in the university history of India. This helped the educated youth to get opportunities in the military. The Labour Corps was organized on the model of the university training corps in the universities of British India associated with the Indian Territorial Force.⁴⁹



Figure 2: Places where second Travancore infantry served.
Source: *The Travancore State Forces Annual*, 1946.

At the direction of the King of Travancore, the teaching staff of the City Colleges were selected and given intensive training. The person appointed as the first commandant of the corps was Godavarma Raja. Formed into two companies, the Labour Corps consisted of ten officers, twenty-six N.C.O.s and two hundred cadets.⁵⁰ Membership of the Labor Corps was mainly considered as a qualification for recruiting officers to the Travancore State Force. Along with that, the Labour Corps also worked as an organization to provide the required soldiers for the defense forces during the war. By 1944, a Military training Course was started as part of this to provide training in military science and the use of modern weapons. It was also intended to train the soldiers in responsibility, leadership qualities, etc. As part of that, the Labour Corps was renamed the Travancore University Officers Training and Labour Corps office.⁵¹ Those who successfully completed the training were also required to pass the Certificate A and Certificate B examinations.

On 5 January 1945, Sir Claude Auchinleck, the Commander in Chief of the Indian Army, inspected the Corps and appreciated the progress made by them.⁵² In this context, the soldiers asked the

Commander in Chief not to treat them as labourers and to withdraw the practice of appointing Corps members as labourers in areas including Assam and he accepted it. In turn, the Travancore University Officer Training and Labour Corps was renamed as Travancore University Officers Training Corps.⁵³ Subsequently, in response to the request to provide training arms to the Corps members, the Government of India directed Travancore to affiliate the Corps as a unit of the Travancore State Force and procure the training arms from the Travancore State Force. Accepting this proposal, Travancore converted the Corps into the Travancore State Force's third Infantry in December 1945. With this, the Corps got the services of Travancore State Force officials and officers. As a result, V. N. Parameswaran Pillai, a Major in Travancore State Force, was appointed as a member of the advisory board of the Corps and Chairman of the Board of Examination.⁵⁴ The Corps was strengthened under the command of Major D. L. Deshpandey because of the co-operation of the officers of the Travancore State Force. Subsequently, the strength of the Corps increased to 16 officers, 39 NCOs and 771 cadets.

The work of the Women's Committee formed in Travancore under the leadership of Parvathi Bai to manage the war relief activities was highly praised. Many women across Travancore worked as part of this committee and participated in the fight against the Nazi-Fascist forces by making mufflers, jackets, pants, etc. needed by the soldiers.⁵⁵ Apart from this, the Signal Corps, part of the third Battalion at Travancore, was deployed on the battlefield along with the Indian Signal Corps.⁵⁶ Distant from military aid, Travancore along with other princely states also provided many material- medical aids to allied forces led by Britain directly.⁵⁷ In 1945, Major General V N Parameswaran Pillai was assigned as General Officer of Travancore State Force.⁵⁸ He was the first local officer assigned as the post of the Commandant of the Travancore State Force. His visit to Baghdad became a great encouragement to the soldiers of the second battalion of the State Force who were engaged in the world war there.⁵⁹

After seven long years of selfless service in world war battlefield, the first battalion of Travancore State Force came back to Thiruvananthapuram on 31 January 1946 and the second battalion came back on 5 May 1946.⁶⁰ In gratitude for the dedicated military services rendered by Travancore, the British King assigned Sri Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma, the King of Travancore, as a honorary Major General of the British Land force.⁶¹

Simultaneously, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, the Diwan of Travancore, initiated measures to further strengthen the Travancore State Force. In 1946, he was appointed Lieutenant General of the force and sought to transform it into a formidable military entity, even as the freedom struggle intensified in Travancore. He proclaimed that Travancore would not come under the authority or control of any external power following the end of British rule and escalated efforts to establish naval and air forces for the state's defence.⁶²

As a result of his efforts, the number of Travancore State Force members enlarged to 376 in 1947. Meanwhile, the annual disbursement of Travancore State Force enhanced to 22,19,031 rupees.⁶³ Following independence, Travancore gradually integrated into the newly formed independent India, the significance and prominence of the Travancore State Force steadily diminished and it merged into the Madras regiment of the Indian army.

Conclusion

The Travancore State Force (T.S.F.) stands as an extraordinary testament to the interplay of tradition and modernity in the context of a military evolution of princely states in colonial. Rooted in the storied martial legacy of the Nair Brigade, the T.S.F. exemplified the ability of regional forces to adapt to new political, social, and technological paradigms during the colonial era. This transformation, undertaken amidst the broader context of the Indian State Forces Scheme of 1935, was both ambitious and reflective of Travancore's progressive outlook under King Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma's leadership.

The restructuring of the Nair Brigade into a modernized force was a deliberate and strategic move from the part of Travancore Government and British administrative authorities. It modernized the military practices of the T.S.F and emphasized inclusivity, incorporating individuals from diverse socio-religious backgrounds. This marked a departure from traditional recruitment patterns and reflected the state's commitment to fostering unity and collective identity. The T.S.F emphasis on rigorous training and discipline, in tune with Western military standards, positioned it as a formidable regional force in British India. The force's participation in the Second World War, including deployments in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, underscored its operational capabilities and adaptability. Moreover, the provision of critical resources such as rubber, timber, and manpower highlighted Travancore's proactive role in supporting the Allied war effort. The T.S.F.'s involvement in these endeavours bolstered its reputation and positioned Travancore as a significant player in the broader geopolitical landscape of the time.

Its responsibilities ranged from maintaining law and order during periods of political unrest to participating in royal ceremonies and state events. These activities underscored the force's integral role in the socio-political framework of Travancore. The inclusive recruitment policies, which welcomed individuals from Ezhava, Christian, Muslim, and Nadar communities, further reflected the security consciousness of the administration of the state and the changing paradigms of socio-political milieu. The process of colonial modernisation and its impact led to the emergence of the Travancore State Force as a distinct native military unit within British India. This transformation provided the T.S.F with the opportunity to participate in the Second World War against the Axis powers on various battlefronts outside India, where they demonstrated their martial prowess during the Second World War. Despite its achievements, the T.S.F. faced significant challenges, particularly in the context of India's independence and the subsequent integration of princely states into the Indian Union. The eventual dissolution of the Travancore State Force marked the end of an era, as its unique identity

was subsumed within the larger framework of independent India's armed forces. It encapsulates the complexities of navigating colonial rule, modernization, and the eventual integration into independent India. By examining the T.S.F.'s journey, it highlights the decisive role of regional forces in shaping India's military and political landscape.

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Water Management in Chennai: History, Plans and Current Scenario

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Abstract

Several cities around the world face water crisis due to urbanization, industrialization and climate change. Chennai is an example. Water Management in Chennai is virtually as old as the city's scarcity. Government in the post-independence period faced problems of finance, human resource and proper administration in water supply. But slowly, there was improvement in water supply due to special committees for the work. Corporation of Chennai was the pioneer in discharging the work related to the water supply in the city. In spite of enormous funding, none of the long term measures satisfied the increasing water needs of the growing city. So, the government invested in desalination projects, along with tapping of water from the aquifers and well fields, besides harvesting rain water. But all these methods contributed only about 30 per cent of the water needs of the city. Later, efforts to harvest rain by all domestic and commercial establishments witnessed considerable improvement in the ground water table. A critical review of water management suggests that water

supply is irregular. Evidence indicates that the Chennai water boards are trying their best to resolve the issues and improve water supply but there are certain obstacles that affect this, including policy strengths, schemes, distribution and quality issues, customer advisory, awareness, etc.

Keywords: Poondi, Veeranam, Retteri, Kosathalaiyar, Chembarambakkam.

Several cities around the world face water crisis due to urbanisation, industrialisation and climate change. Chennai is an example. Urban water management refers to the interaction between stakeholders consisting of governments, private sector, international agencies and civil societies that are involved in socio and political confrontations around how water resources and services should be governed, by whom, and for whom¹. It is critical to understand that urban nature is not given but socially produced.

There are three sides to water management - water administration, utility management and supply and demand side management. Certain administrative programmes for adaptation include upgrading customer advisories (for the user), improving utility measures, reducing water loss, surveying and provisioning effectual informatics, practical approach and goal setting for future management, enhancing education and creating awareness, improving local participation and managing grievances and feedback. Ground water extraction, pricing, fines within the regulatory system, staff regulations and code of conduct for the public and administrative boards make up the major policies within the administrative system for utility management. The supply side policies, programmes and projects incorporate enhancement and renovation of supply infrastructures, maintenance of quality and amendment of policies to include strategies, i.e., allocation, zoning, source maintenance, quality control, etc. Major distribution related adaptation strategies² are: inspect and renovate pipelines, maintain valves and sumps, improve service for setting up of rainwater harvesting equipment, renovate

supply infrastructures (including dams and canals), install and maintain transfer conduits and increase supply through desalination plants. While the demand side includes all the policies, programmes and projects to improve the demand related technologies and policies, i.e., conservation, pricing, pipelines and metering, etc.

History

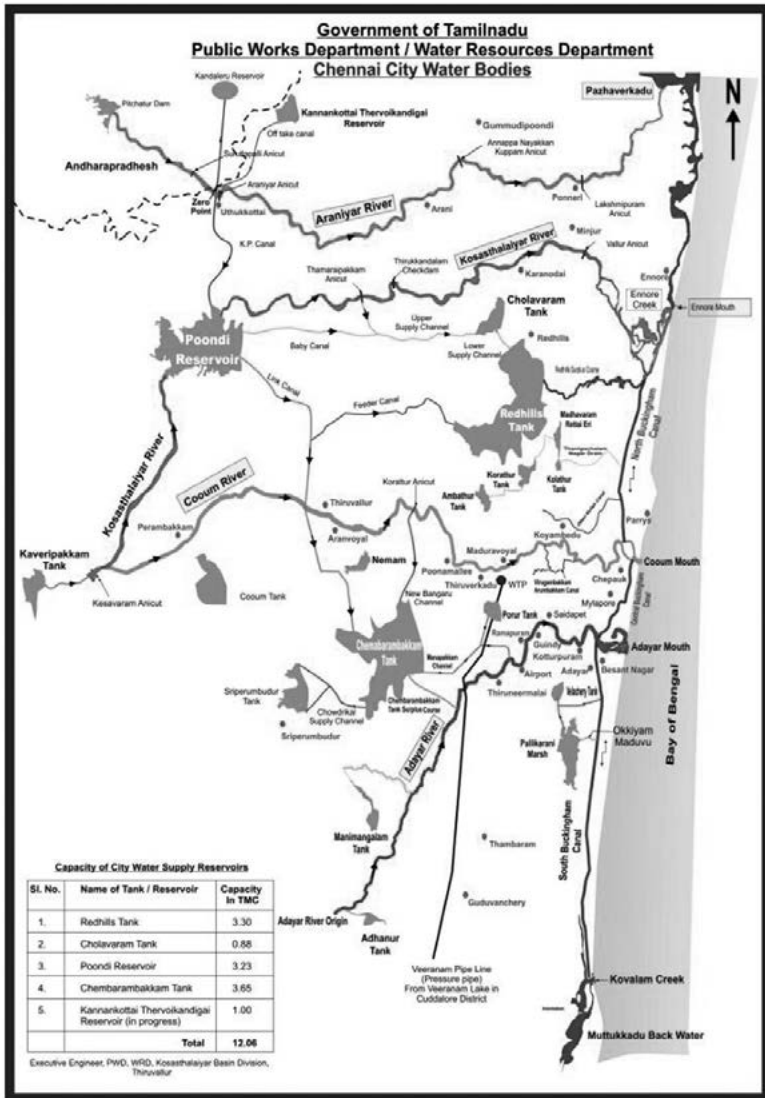
Water Management in Chennai is virtually as old as the city itself. The British in Chennai had suffered from the problem of water scarcity. The first water supply scheme for Fort St. George settlement was executed through a contract awarded to a Captain Baker in 1772, for what was called the Seven Wells Scheme³. However, till about 1870, the people of Chennai were dependent on shallow wells situated in their own houses or on public wells and tanks in the neighbourhood for their water supply.

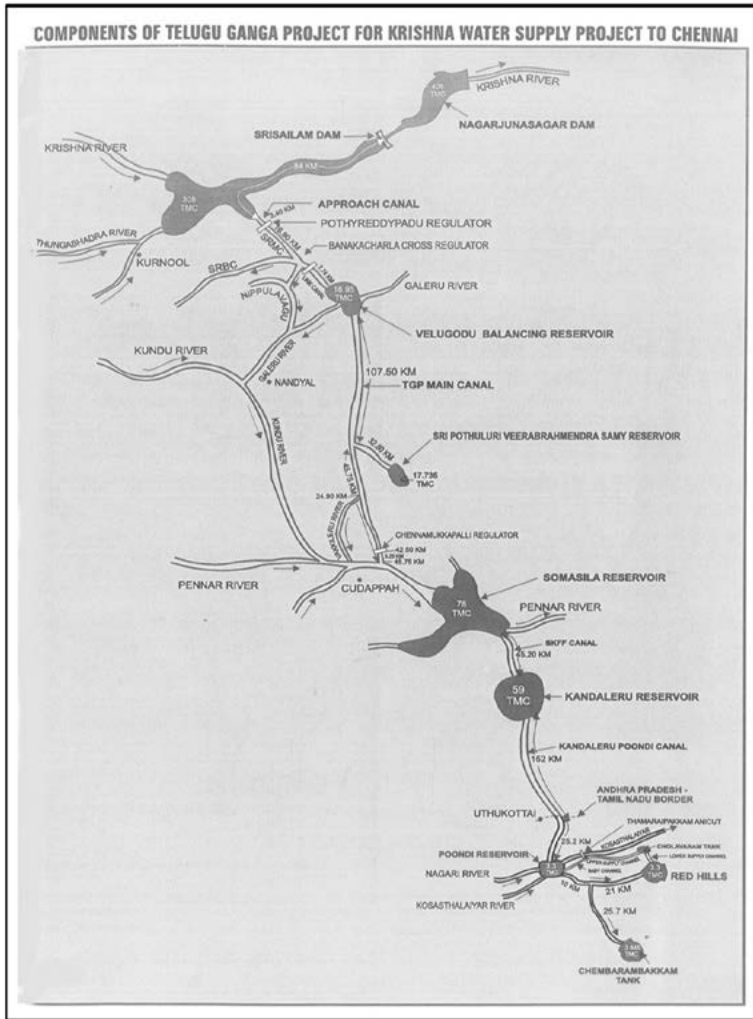
The absence of perennial water bodies in the region, combined with the pollution in its available waterways had forced the British engineers to look for distant sources to harness water. They introduced the system of a regulated water supply. It was commenced in 1872 and this is the nucleus of the protected surface water supply system now in existence in Chennai city. The first major milestone towards protected water supply using of filtration and pumping was achieved during the year 1914.

Poondi Reservoir (later named Satyamoorthy Sagar) was constructed in 1944, across the Kosasthalaiyar River, with a capacity of 2,573 Mcft.

Governments in the post-independence period faced the problems of finance, human resource and proper administration in water supply⁴. But slowly, there was improvement in water supply due to special committees for the work. Corporation of Chennai was the pioneer in discharging the works related to the water supply in the city.

There were more than 80,000 house connections of water supply by 1966⁵. In spite of all the effort, the supply of water was less than the demand. Government was not able to get water from other states, due to lack of funds.





Governments after 1967⁶, concentrated on long term measures like Veeranam water supply but this scheme could not materialise for a long time due to embezzlement of funds. Later, Krishna river water supply scheme was tried and even this scheme did not help much, due to the supply of less quantity of water and illegal tapping of water en route.

An important development in 1978⁷ was the establishment of a separate department for water supply called the Madras Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (MMWSSB). The New Veeranam Scheme was launched under its aegis. This ongoing scheme partially satisfied the city's water needs.

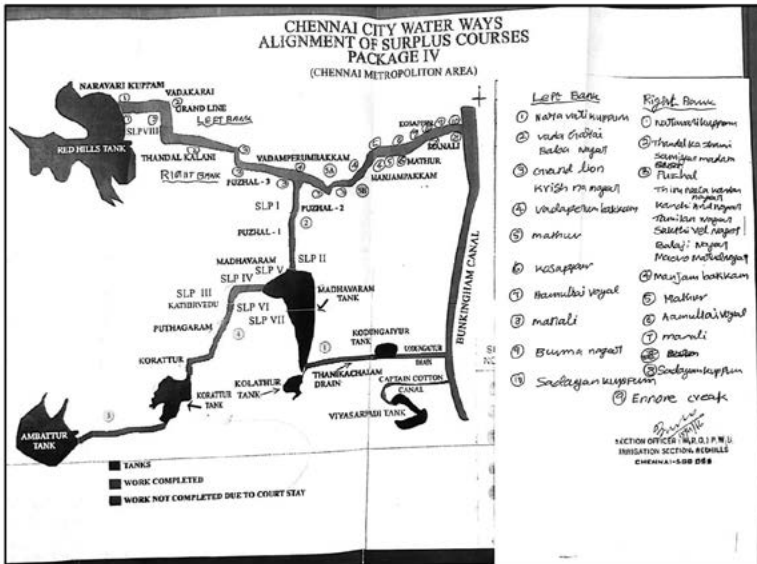
In spite of enormous funding, none of the long term measures satisfied the increasing water needs of the growing city. So, the government invested in desalination projects, along with tapping of water from the aquifers and well fields, besides harvesting rain water. But all these methods contributed only about 30 per cent⁸ of the water needs of the city. Later, efforts to harvest rain water by all domestic and commercial establishments witnessed considerable improvement in the ground water table.

The Amma Drinking Water Scheme⁹ was very popular. However, the supplies of such mineral water bottles have been restricted only to the Government bus depots. The efforts of the private mineral water suppliers¹⁰ in Chennai have helped in ensuring the provision of safe drinking water to the people to certain extent. Water experts opined that the administrators could not save rain water and allowed it to drain into the sea, after flooding the city.

Plans

The Retteri Lake will be improved as a water source at a cost of Rs.44 crores¹¹. The storage in Retteri would be doubled from the existing 62 million cubic feet to store more water for the city's growing needs.

Va Tech Wabag, a Chennai based multinational corporation in the field of water treatment and desalination, has secured a design, build, operate (DBO) order, for the 400 million litres per day (MLD) Sea Water Reverse Osmosis (SWRO) desalination project from Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMSWSSB)¹².



The Company said in a statement that this was a landmark project for Chennai and India as it will be the largest desalination plant in the Southeast Asian region. This project, which is being funded by Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA), will enhance the water security for Chennai through a stable source of drinking water. With the completion, Chennai will have a total capacity to produce 750 MLD of desalinated water.

In one of its initiatives to meet the challenges of the vagaries of monsoon and reduce the impact of climate change on Chennai, the Water Resources Department (WRD) has taken up a feasibility study to form in-stream storage structures or reservoirs across the Kosasthalaiyar river. Four locations have been chosen in upstream and downstream portions of Poondi reservoir, which primarily stores water for Chennai. In a concerted effort to prepare Chennai for the cycle of floods and droughts, the department has begun to study to conserve the flood water and increase water sources for Chennai's growing water needs. The government sanctioned nearly Rs.5.6 crores for the study.

Officials said flood water would be stored within the river's bund by constructing a regulatory arrangement across the Kosasthalaiyar and made as in-stream storage structure.

In its earlier study for augmenting water supply and flood mitigation in the city, the Water Resources Department had estimated the water demand in Chennai Metropolitan Area to be 2,522 million litres a day (MLD) by 2035¹³. The deficit in water supply is likely to be nearly 1,000 MLD then. Thus, such in-stream storage structures in the Kosasthalaiyar would sustain daily water supply throughout the year.

The Water Resources Department has appointed Royal Haskoning DHV, a Netherlands based consultant, to study the feasibility of projects to increase storage potential in water bodies and make Chennai water resilient. The aim is to boost the availability of water resources to meet the needs of the expanding city. The Consultant will prepare a detailed project report on augmenting storage in Chennai Basin as an approach towards water conservation, flood mitigation and climate adaptation.

Nearly, Rs.5.12 crores have been allocated to prepare the report¹⁴. Officials said that the Water Resources Department had chalked out proposals to control the water intrusion, improve groundwater quality, intra-basin transfer to conserve floodwater and augment storage capacity in water bodies. One of the major proposals is to create a new source at Ramanjeri across the Nagari river and upstream of the Poondi reservoir. With a water spread of nearly 9.20 sq.kms., it would store nearly 1.20 tmcft. There are plans to increase the storage potential of Poondi reservoir by 1.77 tmcft.

Similarly, the Water Resources Department is looking to boost the capacity of water bodies in Sriperumbudur and Pillaipakkam to store more water in the upstream of Chembarambakkam reservoir as a flood mitigation measure. The Water Resources Department is attempting to replicate the Porur lake model of blending treated waste water for reuse.

Current Scenario

Chennai was able to face the summer shortages in 2023. The five reservoirs, which are the major water source for the city has a combined storage of nearly 67% of their total capacity of 11.7 tmcft.¹⁵ Water board maintained a supply of about 1,050 million litres a day. Of this, nearly 969 MLD was provided through pipelines, both in core and peripheral areas.

Evaporation loss in reservoirs has been minimal. The city's water supply can be sustained till the year end with the sources in Tiruvallur district and Veeranam lake. The Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board hold the monthly¹⁶ grievance redress meetings in all area offices across the city, between 10 a.m. and 1.00 p.m.

Heavy rain around Poondi in Tiruvallur led to an increase in water discharge from the reservoir in the end of September 2023. It was increased from 1,000 cubic feet per second (cusecs) to 2,500 cusecs¹⁷. Instead of draining water into the sea, the Water Resources Department is diverting 550 cusecs from Poondi to the Cholavaram through the upper supply channel. Water is being let into the link canal to step up storage in the other reservoirs in Red Hills and Chembarambakkam. Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB) will increase¹⁸ the number of water samples collected across the city to check for quality during the northeast monsoon.

When the storage was steadily building up to the maximum level, the Water Resources Department decided to open¹⁹ the shutters of Chembarambakkam reservoir on 8th October, 2023 as a precautionary measure before the onset of the northeast monsoon.

The Water Resources Department held the grievance redress meeting²⁰ in its area offices on 14th October, 2023 and allowed residents to register their complaints about drinking water supply, sewage blocks, tax and status of new connections.

Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (CMWSSB) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)²¹ with the German Water Partnership to jointly develop a conceptual design for upgrading an existing waste water treatment plant under local conditions on 18th October, 2023.

A good southwest monsoon has increased groundwater level across the city, except for a few zones. In a bid to ensure optimism harnessing of rainwater, Metro water will conduct a random survey of rainwater harvesting²² (RWH) structures in buildings, particularly multi-storeyed ones.

The abandoned quarries in Sikkarayapuram near Mangadu would soon get another source of inflow. The Water Resources Department will soon call for bids²³ to build a channel to carry surplus water released from Chembarambakkam reservoir to the quarries. The 25 quarries in Sikkarayapuram are already part of the network of sources to store drinking water for the city. The Water Resources Department now plans to improve inflow into these quarries and also conserve a portion of the surplus water released from Chembarambakkam reservoir into the Adyar river.

Conclusion

A critical review of water management suggests that water supply is irregular. This is due to accessibility issues in certain areas. Contamination is mild to high due to domestic and other wastes and, hence the water-borne diseases spread during summer. Open sewers increase contamination in certain areas.

While rainwater harvesting does exist, management through conservation and efficiency needs further enhancement and dynamic action. It is clear that water scarcity issues and security concerns exist in Chennai due to many unheard voices from the communities²⁴. Evidence indicates that the Chennai water boards are trying their best to reduce the

issues and improve water supply but there are certain obstacles that affect this, including policy strengths, schemes, distribution issues, quality issues, customer advisory, awareness, etc.

In short, Water Management is an ongoing process. The Water Resources Department and the government have to meet the challenges regularly. They are trying through their plans²⁵ and work.

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The role of Pali Buddhist Literature in shaping Myanmar's Nationalist movements in the 20th century

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Abstract

This article investigates how Pali Buddhist literature was essential to nationalist movements in modern Myanmar during the twentieth century. Culturally speaking, Buddhism served significant purposes in fostering and preserving the unity among the Burmese people during the colonial period of their history. The article focuses on how Pali texts, particularly the Tipitaka and other associated commentaries, served as the intellectual and spiritual reference for ideologies. Many tend to note the role of Burmese literature in reconstructing the nationalistic spirit, aiming to break the chains of what we may see as interventionist literature. Be it as it may, Buddhist idealism, including a sense of right (Dharma) or ethical (Sila) consciousness, permeated the contour of the nationalist spirit and its political speech and engagements. Besides, the article deals with the systematic changes

and interdependencies between the aspects of religious monastic and secular hierarchical roles and their mutual workability and disruption: Pali sensation literature, in this case, unifies and divides various political wings of nationalists. Last but not the least, he raises the question about the role of Buddhist literature and its influence on the management of Myanmar affairs today, in which the school of Buddhist nationalism cannot avoid dictating the political affairs and final identity of the Myanmar state. By following these historical shifts and interactions, this article sheds light on Myanmar's intertwined connection of religion, politics and identity in the recent past.

Keywords: *Pali Buddhism, Myanmar nationalism, Buddhist nationalism, colonialism*

Introduction

Modern Myanmar's development, especially in the twentieth century, stands out in terms of conflicts, political turmoil and war. It has endured and survived three crucial events: the fight for independence, inter-ethnic conflicts and various military regimes. A province of the British Empire in the making, from 1886 until World War II, Myanmar was expunged of its economic and political independence. British colonialism deprived them of local governance and increased reliance on Britain. It also fractured the society along ethnic and religious lines. This experience of subjugation led to the growth of nationalistic forces, which strove for the end of colonial rule and the restoration of Buddhism in Myanmar's politics, culture, and civilization.¹

As the colonization of Myanmar ultimately declined after World War II, many nationalists began to be active, including various Buddhist groups.² Buddhism has been an essential aspect in shaping Myanmar's society and politics. For a long time, the Burmese people have remained devoted to the Theravada form of Buddhism, which

stresses gaining wisdom, possessing virtues and the power of the mind. Buddhist monasticism and the ancient Pali scriptures have been crucial components of the country's spiritual, cultural and intellectual mosaic. The British colonizers sought to weed out Buddhism's influence and control its institutions, but faced opposition, confirming the belief that Buddhism was an integral part of the colonized nation. The ideology of Myanmar as a Buddhist state mobilized the struggle against colonizers, enabling the consolidation of different ethnic and social groups within a common cause.³

The Pali Buddhist writings, in their turn, contributed significantly to the growth of this nationalist ideology. The Pali canon, sometimes called Tipitaka, which are the sermons of Buddha, has always been an area of interest for specific Burmese scholars and monks throughout history.

Also, other core Pali works, such as *Comprising Moral Governance, Social Justice and Struggling Against Foreign Lordship*, provided peeling keys to such principles. In consideration of nationalism in Myanmar,⁴ Pali literary texts were not only religious texts, but also politically loaded documents. Nationalism in Myanmar was very much stirred up by Righteousness (*Dhamma*) and the duty of safeguarding the community principles, which drove the leaders and activists to desire the restoration of Myanmar's independence and native civilization.

This article will discuss the significance of Pali Buddhist literature concerning Myanmar's national movements throughout the twentieth century. It will analyze the impact of Buddhist teaching on some prominent persons and to help understand how Pali literature influenced the national and cultural character of the people of Burma. In this sense, the article will also illustrate how religion and nationalism shaped the course of the movement for Myanmar's independence and its further postcolonial development.

By analyzing the connections between Buddhism and nationalism, the article aims to shed light on how key figures in the anti-colonial struggle utilized Buddhist principles such as *Dhamma* (righteousness), *Sila* (moral conduct) and the concept of sovereignty. The article also aims to explore Pali literature's broader cultural and social impact, examining how it reinforced the sense of national identity and unity among the Burmese people during a period of intense colonial oppression and political turmoil. Furthermore, the article highlights the tensions between religious monasticism and secular political leadership and how Pali Buddhist literature unified and divided factions within the nationalist movement. Finally, by exploring the historical role of Buddhist literature in Myanmar's nationalist history, the article aims to provide insights into the continued influence of Buddhist nationalism on contemporary political developments in Myanmar. Through this analysis, the article hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex intersection between religion, politics and national identity in Myanmar's modern history.

This study will concentrate on a historical and supplementary study of Pali Buddhist works, notably, the Buddhist canonical texts, commentaries and other works that formed an integral part of Myanmar society's culture and religious life.

Contextualizing Myanmar's Nationalism in the 20th century

Burma was invaded by the British during the Third Anglo-Burmese War in 1886, and as a result, it became a part of British India. Thus, British appropriation has historically always sought to economically exploit and politically invade Burma, to destroy its cultural religion and general social order completely. Once again, the British looked at the monetary value of the people of Burma; some of the policies they implemented conquered their land and stripped overseas territories of resources whilst instilling an economy, reliant solely on their markets. Such a monetizing approach stirred the indigenous elites and imported institutions to erode different principles and practices in Burma.⁵

The transformation of Burma's identity had profound implications across religious and cultural identities, attributed mainly to the British. They formulated policies in favour of Hindus and Christians, while mostly ignoring Buddhism in the process, by amalgamating power and controlling monastic orders, the British colonial regimes aimed to dominate Buddhist institutions' authority over the Burmese populace.⁶ This element is particularly noticeable at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when British officials attempted to stunt the growth of Buddhism by interfering with monastic administration, much to the general populace's disapproval.

The early twentieth century ushered in independence movements among various Southeast Asian countries, including Burma, which began to establish a distinctive Burmese identity in the face of colonization. Political repression was fused with increased economic exploitation to form a cocktail where independence, the ability to reclaim sovereignty and the preservation of the rich culture emerged as the driving forces. Thought leaders, both educated elites including monks and lay intellectuals, were mainly at the helm of this independence movement: during the colonization, the economic, military and religious traditions of Burma were successively eroded.

At the turn of the 20th century, particularly conservative forces within Burma emerged alongside the protest movements in Myanmar, and the Policing Act of 1935 further weakened colonial control over Burma. The 1919 Montagu-Chelmsford reforms fuelled two additional events, including mass demonstrations and strikes by Western-educated Burmese elites, disillusioned with British intervention.

Aung San, an eminent leader of the independence movement and his contemporaries in Liaoning greatly depended on such an anti-colonial atmosphere, and they strongly politically advocated the restoration of the Buddhist traditions of Burma.

The strengthening of Buddhism as an element of cultural pride and as a form of national resistance was concurrent with the emergence of nationalism. Suffice it to say that both Buddhist monks and secular nationalist leaders knew that the Buddhist past of Burma would be crucial for developing a new national identity that could withstand colonial rule. In this context, the development of Buddhism was seen as a vehicle for both religious integration and political integration, therefore militarizing the spiritual cause and the nationalist movement. So, the nationalist movements in Myanmar in the late twentieth century can easily be understood as embedded in the context of maintaining and nurturing the Buddhist heritage. As such, Buddhism emerged as more than a source of spirituality but rather an effective instrument in the struggle for independence. The political zeal among the Burmese people that catalyzed the religious revival would dictate the character of the nationalist movement for Myanmar in the postcolonial era.⁷

Pali Buddhist literature: an overview

Theravada Buddhism considers Pali to be its sacred language. The Buddhist texts, called Pali literature, are collections of sacred writings in the Pali language. To start with, Pali literature consists of Tipitaka, which translates to Three Baskets, and it is considered the primary scripture of Theravada Buddhism. The scripture has three sections, and the first section is ‘Vinaya Pitaka’, which consists of rules, codes and ethics for the monks. The second section is ‘Sutta Pitaka’, which contains the discourses and teachings of the Buddha, and the third section is ‘Abhidhamma Pitaka’, which covers the philosophical and doctrinal studies of the religion.⁸ Eminent monks and scholars formulated the remaining classical writings over the centuries and remain relevant to Buddhism within the Theravada tradition.

In Myanmar, the history of survival and dissemination of the Pali contents can be traced back to deep historical frameworks. The Burmese Court, in general, and the Konbaung Dynasty (1752 – 1885) helped preserve the Pali works. Monasteries were educational institutions where

Buddhist literature was copied and studied. At this time, a large volume of literature in Pali was created, and Myanmar became one of the centers of Pali literature. In Myanmar, the major producers and distributors of the Pali texts were monks, scholars, and religious institutions. Studying Buddhist scriptures, including Tipitaka, commentaries, and Livonian texts, became integral to the Burmese intellectual and spiritual milieu. The Sangha operated a well-established network of monastic universities, including those in Mandalay and Yangon, where both novices and laypeople were taught Buddhism and textual studies. As will be explained later, these institutions were crucial also in the gradual development and preservation of the oral and written traditions of Pali literacy.⁹

The intricate connection between Pali literature and Burmese Buddhism is clearly manifested in the Pali texts, and their associated scriptures have affected the Burmese religion, culture and even intellectual activities. The Pali Buddhist texts were instrumental in laying a doctrinal basis for Buddhism in Burma, which was reflected in rituals, monastic practices, and laity practices thereafter. The texts also reaffirmed that Buddhism is the country's dominant religion, whose hierarchy and ownership are the nation's pride, paving the way for the production and preservation of Buddhist texts. So, the writing of the Pali texts and their worship were crucial in safeguarding and propagating the spirit and culture of Buddhism in Myanmar, serving both anti-colonial purposes.¹⁰

Buddhism and Nationalism: the symbiotic relationship

Buddhism has long been the spiritual, cultural and political bedrock of Myanmar's identity, and its role in shaping the country's nationalist movements in the 20th century cannot be overstated. Deeply woven into the fabric of Myanmar's way of life, is intertwined the struggle for sovereignty and self-determination. At the core of this relationship is the profound influence of Pali Buddhist literature, which became the primary vehicle for transmitting Buddhist teachings and guiding ethical and political actions. Embedded in the Pali canon and the

various commentaries are principles that resonate deeply with notions of justice, righteousness and moral leadership. These teachings provided a framework for spiritual development and a guide for societal governance and resistance against foreign rule. The Buddha's teachings on *Dhamma* (righteousness), *Sila* (moral conduct) and the concept of sovereignty as protecting the people's welfare were seen as intrinsic to establishing a just society that should be free from foreign control.¹¹

During the British colonial period, when Burma was subjected to economic exploitation and political subjugation, Buddhism provided both a source of resistance and a vision for an independent Myanmar. Buddhist leaders and intellectuals began to mobilize these teachings to foster a collective sense of national unity, emphasizing the restoration of Burmese sovereignty as a sacred mission. Buddhism was thus employed as a tool to create a sense of "we-ness," uniting the diverse ethnic and social groups under a shared religious and cultural heritage. Buddhist monastic institutions became not just places of worship, but centers of political activism, where the educated elite and monks collaborated in resisting colonial oppression. The influence of Buddhism on the leaders of Myanmar's nationalist movements is most clearly seen in figures like U Ottama and Bogyoke Aung San, who both drew inspiration from Buddhist principles to guide their political ideologies and strategies.

U Ottama, a prominent monk and nationalist leader, was one of the first to link Buddhism to the resistance against British rule openly. His deep study of Pali texts, especially the *Sutta Pitaka*, shaped his belief in Burmese independence's moral and spiritual necessity. U Ottama viewed the struggle for Burma's sovereignty as aligned with Buddhist ideals of freedom from suffering and the restoration of righteousness. He often used Buddhist teachings in his speeches, framing the colonial struggle as a political and spiritual battle. His sermons and writings called for Burmese unity and independence, invoking the moral imperative to protect the Buddhist faith and the Burmese way of life from colonial forces.¹²

The role of Pali literature in shaping nationalist ideologies

Pali Buddhist literature was crucial in shaping Myanmar's nationalist ideologies, particularly by integrating core Buddhist concepts like Dhamma (righteousness) and Sīla (moral conduct). These concepts were not just spiritual principles but also became moral imperatives in the political discourse of the independence movement. Dhamma, which emphasizes justice and ethical conduct, provided a foundation for nationalists to argue that the struggle against colonialism was a righteous endeavor, in line with the principles of Buddhist morality.

Similarly, Sīla, which focuses on self-discipline and virtuous living, reinforced that Myanmar's struggle for sovereignty required a disciplined, morally upright movement.¹³ Pali texts, particularly the *Suttas* and *Vinaya Pitakas*, inspired leaders and activists to view resistance against British rule as a form of moral and spiritual duty. Upholding justice and righteousness in the face of oppression became central to the nationalist ideology, framing the fight for independence as a political necessity and a moral imperative. By drawing on these teachings, nationalist leaders could unite the population under a common cause, reinforcing the legitimacy of their struggle through a Buddhist lens.¹⁴

Pali literature played a significant role in defining the nation's identity in postcolonial Myanmar. Buddhist nationalism emerged, where the nation's identity was intrinsically tied to its Buddhist heritage. This was reflected in political movements that emphasized the need to preserve Myanmar's Buddhist culture and traditions in the face of modern challenges. The teachings in Pali texts were used to assert Myanmar's identity as a Buddhist nation, reinforcing cultural unity and distinguishing the country from its colonial past. Ultimately, Pali literature provided the intellectual and spiritual framework that helped shape Myanmar's political and cultural identity, aligning nationalist ideals with Buddhist teachings to promote a cohesive national narrative.¹⁵

Challenges and tensions

The use of Pali Buddhist literature in Myanmar's nationalist movements was not without its challenges and tensions, particularly between traditional Buddhist monasticism and the emerging nationalist leadership. Traditionally, the Buddhist monastic community in Myanmar had maintained a largely apolitical stance, focused on spiritual practice and religious duties. However, with the rise of nationalism in the early 20th century, monks became more involved in political activism and tensions emerged between the conservative monastic establishment and more secular nationalist leaders. Many traditionalists feared that political involvement could undermine the integrity and neutrality of Buddhism. At the same time, secular leaders saw the religious establishment as an essential source of moral authority and public support for their independence struggle.¹⁶

Pali literature was pivotal in shaping the ideological divide between conservative monks and secular nationalist leaders. Conservative monks often drew upon the texts to argue for a political strategy deeply rooted in Buddhist principles, emphasizing morality, discipline, and spiritual sovereignty. They viewed the political struggle as an extension of Buddhist values and pushed for a vision of independence entirely based on preserving traditional Buddhist practices and values. Conversely, secular leaders like Bogyoke Aung San were more pragmatic in their approach, advocating for a modern state that could balance Buddhism with the demands of the global political landscape. For them, Pali texts served more as a source of cultural legitimacy than a comprehensive political blueprint. The challenge of reconciling religious identity with modern political structures also presented a significant obstacle. While Buddhism was deeply entrenched in Myanmar's cultural fabric, the modern world's demands such as nationalism, democracy, and secular governance required a departure from purely religious rule. Nationalist leaders had to navigate the complexities of upholding Buddhist values while creating a political framework that could function within the global order of the 20th century.

Furthermore, Myanmar's religious and ethnic diversity presented additional challenges. Pali literature, while central to Buddhist identity, was not universally embraced by all communities in Myanmar, notably by ethnic minorities such as the Rohingya and Chin, and other non-Buddhist groups. The nationalists' emphasis on Buddhist nationalism, drawing from Pali texts, exacerbated inter-religious and ethnic tensions, as it often alienated those who did not identify with the Buddhist faith. This exclusionary aspect of the nationalist rhetoric created significant divisions in Myanmar's postcolonial political landscape.

In conclusion, while Pali Buddhist literature played a central role in shaping Myanmar's nationalist movements, it also highlighted the tensions between traditional monasticism and secular nationalism, the challenge of integrating Buddhist values into modern political structures, and the difficulties of addressing inter-religious and ethnic diversity in a predominantly Buddhist nation. These tensions continue to influence Myanmar's political and social dynamics today.

Legacy and contemporary relevance

Even after independence, Pali Buddhist writings have remained fundamental to Myanmar's national culture and discourse. Following Myanmar's 1948 independence from Britain, the country's leaders decided to use Buddhism to help the country develop. By linking the government to the nation's deeply ingrained spiritual heritage, the local Pali customs helped to legitimize it. According to the *Papancasudhani* and other writings, *Dhamma* encompasses morality, justice and virtues and is essential to promoting societal harmony and a single national identity.¹⁷

Today's nationalist movements are still built on Buddhist concepts borrowed most directly from Pali texts. This tradition is infused into the speech of the political leaders, the behaviour of Buddhist monks and the ideology of the nationalist movements. More specifically, the executive power of Myanmar and other leaders frequently appeal

to Buddhist teachings in their speeches, considering it particularly appropriate in such cases, as ensuring the country's independence, resisting foreign intrusion and maintaining the nation's culture. In these moments of crisis, these ideas are still deeply seated in the psyches of the people of Burma, particularly during these times of distress or political uncertainty. The nationalist discourse of contemporary politics counters ethnic disintegration by emphasizing a common Buddhist identity, which also manifests itself in current struggles for political and ethnic self-determination.¹⁸

But Pali Buddhist literature has birthed a lot of complexities regarding Myanmar's view and treatment of religions and ethnic minorities, which remain troubling. Even though nationalism is beneficial in terms of national togetherness, it harms the nation as it results in practicing exclusionary tendencies with the Muslim Rohingya, among others; practices catalyzed 'Myanmar' as a full-blown nation. Myanmar has also received its fair share of criticism for the human rights abuse accusations, together with ethnic cleansing and how they treat their social minorities. In this context, all the social minorities that may be excluded or persecuted by the state and its actors seem to be opposing the use of Pali literature or Buddhist teachings as a key source of exclusion legitimization.

Nonetheless, it is apparent that Pali Buddhist literature has continued to impact constituencies in modern-day Myanmar by differentiating narratives. Through cultural and political aspects of a nation-state, such literature remains relevant in Myanmar, but the situation of mindfulness of inclusion remains challenging. Religion interpreted through the prisms of Buddhist text and language tends to be a little more assertive than more pacifying forms of Politics. It goes without saying that such a tapestry, when placed together, forms a complicated matrix in Myanmar consisting of religious patterns and identities fused with nationalism and gentler strands of politics, which sadly still neglects its minorities.

The discussion of the role of Pali Buddhist literature in shaping Myanmar's nationalist movements underscores the complex interplay between religion, culture and politics. While Pali Buddhist texts provided a moral and philosophical framework that bolstered the nationalist cause, they also introduced tensions within the movement, particularly between traditional religious views and the demands of modern political structures. Incorporating Buddhist principles like *Dhamma* (righteousness) and *Sīla* (moral conduct) into nationalist ideologies helped frame the struggle for independence as a moral imperative, justifying resistance against British colonialism as part of a larger quest for justice and sovereignty.¹⁹

However, the use of Buddhist literature was not without challenges. The alignment of Buddhism with nationalism, especially in its exclusionary form, led to significant tensions with ethnic and religious minorities, particularly non-Buddhist communities. The privileging of Buddhist identity in political discourse has been a source of division, which continues to influence Myanmar's internal politics. The treatment of the Rohingya and other minority groups highlights the problematic aspects of using Pali texts to justify state policies that marginalize non-Buddhist populations.

Despite these challenges, the legacy of Pali Buddhist literature continues to shape Myanmar's national identity, serving as both a unifying force for the Buddhist majority and a source of contention in the country's ongoing struggles with ethnic and religious diversity. The enduring influence of Pali texts in Myanmar's political life reflects the enduring tension between Buddhism as a cultural force and its complex role in shaping modern nationhood.

Conclusion

The article explored the profound impact of Pali Buddhist literature on Myanmar's nationalist movements in the 20th century and its lasting influence on the nation's cultural and political identity. Key points

discussed include the central role of Buddhist teachings, particularly those derived from Pali texts, in shaping the ideological foundations of the nationalist struggle. Concepts like *Dhamma* (righteousness) and *Sīla* (moral conduct) were pivotal in framing the fight for independence as a righteous, morally driven endeavor. Furthermore, the article examined the role of Buddhist monks, scholars and religious institutions in promoting these values and the tensions between religious monasticism and secular nationalist leadership.²⁰

While Pali literature provided moral guidance and legitimacy to the nationalist cause, it also fostered an exclusionary form of nationalism that marginalized ethnic and religious minorities, particularly the Rohingya Muslims. This tension between Buddhist identity and the treatment of minorities has remained a significant issue in Myanmar's postcolonial political landscape. In conclusion, Pali Buddhist literature has played an integral role in constructing Myanmar's national identity, providing both a cultural foundation and a source of political legitimacy.

However, the complexities surrounding its application in modern Myanmar highlight the challenges of reconciling religious identity with inclusive political practices. Understanding the historical relationship between Buddhism and nationalism in Myanmar is crucial for addressing current and future political developments. It offers insight into the ongoing challenges of fostering national unity while respecting the diversity and rights of all communities within the nation.

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Culinary heritage: sustaining Indian identity through food in the Diaspora

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Abstract

*Food is an important tool for cultural preservation and personal expression, especially in the Indian diaspora. The paper analyzes how the use of food and meals works as a personal and cultural symbol, both for the characters in *Serving Crazy with Curry* and *The Abundance*. For the characters in these books, food serves as a personal tool for their self-expression, but also as a cultural anchor that helps interlock generational and geographic distances. Using *Diaspora Theory* and *Cultural Identity Theory*, this research explores how culinary practices preserve Indian cultural heritage, while simultaneously negotiating the realities of migration and hybrid identities. This paper explores the use of food as a personal and cultural symbol in the literary works, *Serving Crazy with Curry* and *The**

Abundance. Food in these books serves as a personal instrument for self-expression, as well as a cultural anchor that crosses generational and geographic barriers.

Keywords: *Culinary heritage, Indian diaspora, cultural identity, Diaspora theory, food and memory*

Introduction

Food has been presented as a central constituent in the exercise of preserving cultural identity, especially in the context of diasporas. In Indian culture, food is not just some form of nutrition; it provides a lot of symbolic value related to heritage, tradition and belongingness as well.¹⁷ In the diaspora, food is a very effective way of maintaining a connection to one's country and acts as a conduit through which cultural traditions and memories are kept and passed down through generations.²⁰ Food ties diaspora groups to their historical past and, for this reason, is a connector, linking geographies and generations, as well as identities together. Culinary traditions in India are intertwined with social, religious and historical structures, making food an inevitable part of research in the dimensions of culture and history. Through its regional, religious and colonial themes, Indian food becomes a potential tool for sustaining cultural identity within the diaspora, with dining traditions symbolizing memory, ritual and a sense of belonging. Through its symbolic potential, food, too, acquires a voice in Indian literature, as witnessed in the narratives of R.K. Narayan with themes such as caste and industrialization. Furthermore, religious traditions such as Jainism, which is based on dietary purity, bring forth the connection between spirituality and culinary practices.³⁰

In archaeology and numismatics, food-related traditions in ancient India throw light on complex agricultural systems and trade networks while royal feasts and food offerings indicate food's political and cultural significance in Indian history. In the national struggle, food was used as a form of resistance. The Swadeshi movement was advocating for native

food to express cultural independence against British rule.⁴⁷ Moreover, food production has shaped India's agricultural policy and social organization. The Green Revolution has revolutionized food distribution and rural life in India.⁵⁷ This provides a great insight into cultural identity development and transformation across time, in Indian history.

Two contemporary novels, *Serving Crazy with Curry* by Amulya Malladi and *The Abundance* by Amit Majmudar, provide rich literary landscapes for exploring the intersection of food, identity and migration. In *Serving Crazy with Curry*, the protagonist Devi uses cooking to negotiate her place within the diaspora, constantly balancing, between the preservation of her cultural roots and the desire for individual freedom. Thus, food gets intertwined with family dynamics, memory and migration in the portrayal of *The Abundance*. This narration reflects that Indian cultural identity can be preserved while staying overseas through the medium of culinary traditions. Such novels contribute insights into how food works to be an anchor on the personal and cultural grounds.

This study investigates the role of food in preserving the Indian cultural heritage in diaspora communities and its dual role as a private means of self-expression and a cultural reference point. The paper uses Diaspora Theory and Cultural Identity Theory to analyze *Serving Crazy with Curry* and *The Abundance*, which illustrate how food can be used to maintain both cultural continuity and adaptability in the Indian diaspora. To further understand how food is pivotal in these texts, this paper will use the frameworks of Diaspora Theory and Cultural Identity Theory, which shine light on the complex processes of negotiation of identity, transmission of culture and adaptation, when people migrate.

Diaspora studies explore the experiences of displaced communities and the ways in which cultural practices are preserved or transformed in new geographic contexts. In this paper, diaspora theory would apply to try and understand ways that Indian food practice forms a machinery which sustains an attachment or links to one's homeland, amidst encountering

assimilatory and hybridization odds against characters settling down in strange or new climes.^{6 & 7} The works of diaspora scholars maintain that diaspora communities do not ‘migrate’ but, rather, they generate new forms of culture rooted both in the homeland and in the host country. Food is dynamic, evolving within the two novels to symbolize the interactive movement between the past and the present⁸.

In reference to Stuart Hall, the paper delves into Cultural Identity Theory, regarding how cultural identity is constructed and performed. Here, according to Hall, an individual’s identity is not constant but constantly in flux and is produced out of a negotiation of both individual and collective experiences and memory. It shall take up the analysis to determine in the context of these novels, how food forms a locus for individual as well as collective identity. In *Serving Crazy with Curry* and *The Abundance*, food assumes a significant role in the expression of characters’ sense of belonging to their cultural heritage, while negotiating their place in new, often conflicting, environments. Analyzing food as a marker of identity, the paper will explore how culinary practices both preserve and adapt cultural values, thus allowing for a nuanced understanding of Indian identity in the diaspora.

In a nutshell, Diaspora Theory offers a perspective through which food in these novels can be interpreted as a metaphor for migration, memory, and cultural survival, while Cultural Identity Theory sheds light on how food is a potent tool for negotiating and articulating individual and collective identity. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive framework for understanding how food preserves Indian cultural heritage overseas, negotiating the complexities of both continuity and transition.

Food and Identity Negotiation

While food features in the maintenance of cultural heritage, it is, arguably, of more critical significance in the negotiation of identity in diaspora. The process of characters using food to navigate the intricacies

of belonging and cultural adaptation is well illustrated in *Serving Crazy with Curry* and *The Abundance*. “According to Hall, a diasporic identity is constantly open-ended and negotiated.”⁹; food acts as a medium for this negotiation process.

In *Serving Crazy with Curry*, Devi’s exploration of innovative recipes symbolizes her attempt to carve out a space for her individuality, while remaining rooted in her cultural heritage. Her fusion of traditional Indian dishes with contemporary twists mirrors her internal struggle to balance the expectations of her Indian upbringing with her desire for personal autonomy. This blending of culinary traditions reflects the broader phenomenon of cultural hybridity, a concept explored by Bhabha.¹⁰, where diasporic individuals create new cultural expressions that are simultaneously rooted in their heritage and their host environment.

Similarly, in *The Abundance*, the second-generation characters grapple with their dual identities as Indian and American.¹¹ The book explores how food becomes an arena of negotiation among generations, where, the earlier generation insists on the preservation of traditional recipes and the younger generation adapts such recipes to taste, in consonance with its own preferences and life style.

In this intergenerational dialogue, the role of food becomes crucial both in preserving as well as changing cultural identity within the diaspora. This negotiation of identity through food reveals that cultural belonging is fluid, as traditions are both preserved and reinterpreted in the face of new social and geographical landscapes. This is the reason why food becomes such a strong agent for identity negotiation: it can allow characters to make claims of cultural heritage at the same time as they live in the real world of life in the diaspora. Thus, food does not only depicts the continuity of culture; it is an interactive medium in which individuals and communities negotiate and engage with cultural identity in the transnational.

Food as a bridge across geographies

In order for diasporic communities to survive, food takes centre stage as something that visibly interlinks distant geographies and generations. Cooking and breaking bread is such an important habit that helps maintain links to home amongst Indian immigrants; they preserve customs, memories, and family ties through food. Through the love affair with food, Devi works through personal crises and rediscovers her cultural heritage in *Serving Crazy with Curry*. She makes a traditional Indian dish as a means to reclaim a space that represents her origin, by using local products and familiar traditions that enable her to continue relating to a culture that escapes and defines her. Cooking builds her position within the diasporic family, while establishing relationships. In *The Abundance*, Majmudar explores food as a connection between generations. The mother's cooking of Indian food, not only preserves cultural traditions but also passes on heritage to her children. Even though they are increasingly being absorbed into American culture, these meals provide a connection to their Indian past. This dynamic mirrors Clifford's concept of diaspora, maintaining a continuing link with the homeland.¹² in this, food becomes a cultural anchor that conserves identity, even as individuals adjust to new social and physical situations.

Food in hybrid spaces

Food in diasporic contexts thus, occupies a hybrid realm, bringing together traditional traditions with influences from the host culture, reflecting the fluid character of cultural identity. The idea of hybridity, put forward by Homi Bhabha, is one that suggests how cultural expressions grow through the synthesis of many influences.¹³ Applied to cuisine, this means Indian culinary traditions assimilate with the local ingredients and preferences and then create fusion meals that are unique to the diaspora, but rooted in the culture that they represent. The communal eating nature in these stories links up to the past and develops a sense of belonging. As noted by Holtzman, diaspora groups can be nostalgic and remind them of their traditions as they create new experiences in the host nation through food rituals.¹⁴

In *The Abundance*, hybridity also occurs not only in the food but through the mother-child relation. As the mother stays with traditional cuisine, her children turn them into the Western lifestyle and point out how food traditions are negotiated and reinvented in diaspora.¹⁵ The transformation of food in these hybrid spaces showcases the resilience and ingenuity of diasporic populations as they evolve cultural traditions to hold on to the past, while creating a new identity. In *The Abundance*, the mother's obsessive cooking of Indian food becomes a memory ritual that connects her to her past while establishing her identity in the unfamiliar nation. Cooking transforms the kitchen into a place where memories, emotions, and history are preserved (Majmudar, 2013).

Similarly, in *Serving Crazy with Curry*, Devi employs food as a tool to preserve and reinterpret her memories, which leads to an unconscious conversation with her family's past¹⁶. Nora suggests that food is a "site of memory," where concrete objects hold cultural and personal history. The shared act of eating in these stories connects one to the past and creates a sense of belonging. Holtzman observes that food rituals in diaspora groups can elicit nostalgia, recalling traditions while generating new shared experiences in the host nation. experiences in the host nation¹⁷.

Food is adaptive as it changes forms across different cultures, but remains its fundamental nature. Indian traditional recipes adapt themselves to local sources and preferences within host cultures that transform into fusion foods such as butter chicken pizza and masala fries which retain a bit of Indian spices mixed with world-wide flavors in pursuit of claiming distinctiveness and culture¹⁸.

Historical development by Persian, Portuguese and British influences clearly testifies to its very intrinsic diversity; adaptation further spills into diaspora, where it becomes a negotiating tool of eating for identity. In *Serving Crazy with Curry*, Amulya Malladi depicts hybridity with Devi's fusion cuisine, like "Tandoori Tacos" and "Curry Pot Pie."

These are her attempts to merge the two identities: by implementing traditional spices of India and merging them with Western culinary traditions, she attempts to show her individuality while preserving her cultural origins.

In *The Abundance*, Amit Majmudar makes dietary adaptation the pragmatic way out of cultural dislocation. While the mother remains attached to the recipes of the homeland, her daughter Mala, for example, reduces the spiciness for an American context. This compromise represents a larger process of balancing cultural preservation and adaptation to a new context¹⁹.

Beyond these myths, food's flexibility gives people a sense of cultural anchor throughout the diaspora. Diasporic people, by combining familiar Indian flavors with local ingredients and techniques, create hybrid cuisines that tell stories about migrations and identities. Such adjustments demonstrate how hybridity is not a loss of tradition but a development that ensures cultural continuity under changing circumstances.

Both *The Abundance* and *Serving Crazy with Curry* use hybridization of Indian food as an element of metaphor in coming to terms with diasporic identities. Interpretations of traditional dishes represent the fluidity and dynamics of Indian culture. Food symbolizes the difficulties of diaspora existence by representing both continuity and change.

Applying traditional recipes

But what food does - in addition to carrying the freight of memory and tradition - is reflect the versatility and strength of diasporic identities. Through the novels, characters alter authentic Indian recipes for the use of local ingredients and tastes, as cultural practices grow in response to new environments and maintain their very foundation. In this adaptation lies the dynamic characteristic of cultural identity within the diaspora, where elements of continuity and change are constantly present²⁰.

In the work *Serving Crazy with Curry*, cooking experimentation on the part of Devi is her personal journey through identity negotiation. Here, fusing traditional Indian recipes with weird ingredients, she creates a new flavour which symbolizes her double identity, that of being Indian and an Indo-American of a multicultural diaspora. These changes are not renunciations but acts of creative transformation where the essence of Indian cuisine is maintained even as it is repositioned for a new context. The process here finds an analogy with Bhabha's idea of cultural hybridity,²¹ wherein the diasporic individual and group create new forms of culture, which are grounded in, but different from, their own ancestral traditions.

In *The Abundance*, the mother insists on the traditional methods of cooking, which contrasts with her children's more modern and localized approach to food. While the children often simplify recipes or substitute ingredients based on availability and convenience, they maintain a reverence for the core elements of Indian cuisine.

This interplay between tradition and innovation underscores the evolving nature of diasporic identities, where cultural practices are simultaneously preserved and adapted. The blending of traditional Indian flavors with local elements reflects the broader phenomenon of cultural negotiation, where diasporic individuals create hybrid identities that honour their heritage while embracing their new realities²². This adaptation process also shows the pragmatic resilience of diasporic communities. In the adaptation of recipes, characters are not abandoning their heritage but are ensuring its relevance and sustainability in a new context. According to Appadurai, food practices in the diaspora are both preservation and reinvention, revealing the creative ways in which cultural continuity is attained²³.

Negotiating cultural identity through food

Cultural Identity Theory is a theory of identity formation, which is made through communication and interaction, impacted by cultural

norms, values and symbols. Food, being a powerful cultural symbol, becomes vital in reconciling conflicting identities within the diaspora. In both the novels, food serves as a vehicle for characters to traverse their Indian history and diasporic reality.

In *The Abundance*, food represents familial relationships and cultural continuity. The mother, who is strongly entrenched in Indian customs, views food as an extension of her identity and wishes to pass on this history to her children via the act of cooking. Her children, who were raised in America, often feel disconnected from her cultural heritage but become included into her culinary world as reminders of their “otherness.” When the mother falls ill, it is her daughter Mala who starts cooking these Indian foods, first out of concern about saving her mother’s past but later, to find an American identity for her Indian heritage. Majmudar says, “Her fingers, unused to the touch of spices, staggered but insisted as if her roots expected it from her²⁴” The culinary preparation is akin to Mala’s journey about learning to own up to one’s cultural identities with the burden of being placed within the diaspora.

Similarly, in *Serving Crazy with Curry*, Devi uses food as a form of expression and negotiating her identity. After attempting suicide, Devi finds solace in creating innovative Indian recipes that combine old flavors with new ingredients. “Tandoori Tacos” and “Curry Pot Pie” are some of her creations that exemplify how she tries to build a fit identity that validates her Indian ancestry and at the same time reflects her diasporic modernity. Malladi states, “In the mixing of turmeric with barbecue sauce, Devi came out—a pastiche of oxymorons that tasted just right²⁵” Through food, Devi explores her identity and heritage to create an environment that celebrates both tradition and creativity.

Both works highlight the way food is used to negotiate cultural identity in the diaspora. *The Abundance* focuses on keeping tradition and balancing cultural norms with personal needs. *Serving Crazy with Curry* shifting the focus to the reimagining of tradition and how food, serves

as a cultural signifier, is versatile. In both situations, food transcends its primary purpose as nourishment to become a strong symbol of belonging, transformation and identity negotiation, which reflects the intricacies of diasporic experiences.

Nourishing bonds across generations

Thus, a vehicle that offers an ideal environment for discussion to take place amongst generations and familial units within diasporic cultures as well, the food represents it. On its own, a source of basic sustenance but it transmits history, religious beliefs, feelings, which will make food vital toward generational connectivity across the family hierarchy. Especially with the Indian diaspora, such ideas are extremely useful in understanding its households with tradition in the cuisine, bringing cultural relevance of the inter-generational communication. Scholars have indicated that food is “a performative act of memory, enabling connections across temporal and cultural boundaries”²⁶ From this perspective, food becomes an essential means through which conflicts can be addressed and intergenerational reconciliation promoted.

Food preparation and eating are frequently at the heart of Indian family relations. For example, the kitchen is more than simply a home area; it is also a symbolic arena for sharing values, beliefs and cultural knowledge. As Ray points out, cooking in Indian homes “carries gendered and generational significance, often becoming a site for the transmission of cultural and familial identity”²⁷. This message often occurs in the form of stories shared over food preparation or around food consumption practices. For instance, recipes are rarely written in Indian homes, but passed through generations orally, which has allowed for interactions between generations.

Through *The Abundance*, Amit Majmudar captures how food sparks intergenerational discourse. In the mother’s persistence about her desire to teach her children traditional Indian meals, a lot of this is a

means of safeguarding heritage in the face of cultural assimilation²⁸. It reflects an even larger phenomenon in Indian diasporas: using food as a vehicle for cultural preservation. As Narayan points out: “Food becomes a mnemonic device for diasporic communities, invoking memories of home and ensuring that cultural practices endure across generations”; thus, while the children in *The Abundance* initially resist these attempts, viewing them as archaic or redundant, cooking eventually becomes a means to reconnect with their mother and heritage. This clearly demonstrates how food acts as both a bridge and a conflict between generations.

In *Serving Crazy with Curry*, Amulya Malladi explores the transformative potential of food in resolving family tensions. Devi’s creative approach to cooking represents a departure from traditional Indian culinary norms, sparking conflict with her mother, who views this as a dilution of their heritage. This mirrors the tension often seen in diasporic families, where younger generations adapt traditions to fit their hybrid identities. These dishes, however, ultimately become a medium for dialogue and mutual understanding as her family begins to see her culinary innovations not as a rejection but as cultural evolution. Avakian and Haber say that food is dynamic, “capable of adapting and evolving to reflect the lived realities of individuals and communities”²⁹. This changeability allows food to absorb the conflicts across generations and promote reunion.

Beyond the specific themes of the novel, the role of food in facilitating intergenerational conversation holds broader social significance. Food practices, like having meals at festivals or family reunions, present opportunities for narration and intergenerational bonding. Such practices further the consolidation of familial structures and responsibilities; older generations are often the transmitters of information. At the same time, younger generations redefine these practices, discussing their position within the family and the greater cultural sphere.

Both works utilize the communal act of cooking and eating meals as a metaphor for the negotiation of cultural and familial identities. The stress on food, in both of these works, is to make it a means for settling disputes, imparting cultural knowledge, and enhancing familial relationships by highlighting its role as a venue of intergenerational discussion. Holtzman concludes that “food operates not only as sustenance but also as a tool for the construction and negotiation of identity, memory, and relationships”³⁰. Thus, food serves as an effective vehicle for communication and connection, enabling the transmission of cultural and family bonds through generations.

Conclusion

Much of this study requires further attention in the field, particularly how food changes and reflects diasporic social systems such as family relationships and intergenerational transmission of cultural values. Future research should investigate how technological advancements and media impact the spread and evolution of culinary traditions in globalized diaspora communities. Further, it is through such an investigation into the role of food in negotiating cultural and gender identities that one can gain a better understanding of food as both a cultural icon and a form of resistance.

Food is a both a personal and cultural tool in diasporic societies, offering an effective means of preserving, expressing and transforming cultural identity. *Serving Crazy with Curry* and *The Abundance* portray food as an important cultural symbol of continuity and change.

The stories show how food, beyond its physical purpose, creates a symbolic thread, linking the past with the present that helps humans confront the problem of identification within a new cultural environment. It is a proof of the resiliency of diasporic identities, thus showing that culture is never frozen but always shifting in response to new situations. This confluence of food, diaspora and cultural identity theories gives a prism through which to study the continued negotiation of belonging and

legacy. Food does not only serve to strengthen ties to the country but also permits the reinvention of cultural activities in a diasporic context. This duality highlights cultural identity's malleability and fluidity as groups seek a balance between preserving tradition and meeting the needs of the host society.

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Nchui-Ngi, the Zeme Naga ritual of final adieu to the soul of the year's dead

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Abstract

The Nchui-Ngi, also known as Herui-me-Ngi, meaning the 'festival of the dead soul', takes place just before the Hega-Ngi, the year ending and the most important festival. This ritual marks the symbolic separation between the living and the dead, signifying the final departure of the souls of deceased family members of the year.

According to Zeme beliefs, the spirits of the dead of the year are thought to linger in their former homes until they are properly sent off. The Nchui-Ngi ensures that these spirits do not cause harm to the living, fulfilling an important cultural duty. Worship and reverence to the spirit of ancestor and other dead members of the family is one of the ancient Zeme Naga traditions which also shares commonalities with practices across various cultures worldwide, including those in Africa, China, South East Asia and India, where ancestors are believed to influence the lives of their descendants.

Keywords: *Nchui-Ngi, Zeme Naga, rituals, ancestor worship, dead soul.*

Introduction

The Zeme Naga is a community in North East India, considered part of the greater Naga group¹. Their native regions span across three states: Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. Specifically, they inhabit areas in Dima Hasao district of Assam, Tamenglong and Senapati districts of Manipur and Peren district of Nagaland. The Zeme population is estimated to be around 300,000 people. Before the arrival of Christianity in the 20th century, the Zeme people practiced a polytheistic belief system, honouring various deities rooted in their cultural traditions and experiences with nature. Their religion did not have a specific name but it was closely linked with the natural world and agriculture. The arrival of Christian missionaries in the early 20th century coincided with a religious reform movement within the community. This movement eventually led to the emergence of *Heraka*, a reformed faith that blended traditional beliefs with new religious ideas. In the 20th century, a new name was imposed upon the pre-reformed religious practices, and they were referred to as *Paupaise*². Nevertheless, the term *Paupaise* has been widely used in recent times to describe the pre-reform and pre-Christian religious traditions. For the sake of convenience and clarity, the term will be used in this article as well.

As previously mentioned, in the Paupaise tradition of the Zeme Naga community, many deities are venerated during various occasions. Some of the key deities worshipped include Tesuang, the village deity; *Hera-Nsia*, *Chiprai*, *Makhang* and *Lhu*. There are also many other deities known to them, though they are rarely venerated, such as *Kechingpeu*, *Mishnu*, *Hechawang*, *Nrak* and *Kecha-kau*³. Almost every peak, large or small, in the Zeme area has its own deity, and villagers in nearby areas occasionally invoke these deities. The Paupaise people are also significantly influenced by omens, magic and divination. As the Zeme community is primarily agricultural, their festivals, rites and rituals

largely revolve around the various stages of agriculture. However, aside from agriculture-centered rites, there are many other rituals of great importance to them.

Among the many aspects of Paupaise religious beliefs and traditions in the Zeme Naga community, the belief in the afterlife and the associated rituals hold significant meaning. According to their traditions, the soul of the deceased lingers in their old home until it is ready to leave. Therefore, food and drink are offered daily to the spirit of the deceased throughout the year, until the ceremonial separation is completed at the end of the year⁴. In addition, ancestor spirits are sometimes invoked in times of misfortune, such as when a family member falls ill. This paper, however, will focus on the annual rituals of bidding farewell to the souls of the dead, as well as the belief in the influence of ancestors on the lives of the living.

Tradition of ancestor worship across the globe

The tradition of reverence for the dead and the worship of ancestors is a worldwide phenomenon, deeply rooted in diverse cultures across the globe. This practice has been observed for millennia, often linked to a belief in the enduring presence of deceased family members' spirits, who are thought to influence the living in various ways. For instance, in many African cultures, ancestor worship is a central aspect of spiritual life. This belief is based on the idea that ancestors, as spirits, act as protectors of their families. However, there are also malevolent spirits that may need to be appeased through offerings or sacrifices to prevent harm⁵. Many African tribes also hold that deceased members continue to interact with their families, often appearing in dreams, where they offer guidance or assistance during difficult times. In China, ancestor worship is closely tied to both spiritual and familial practices. While the African tradition emphasizes divine protection from ancestors' spirits, Chinese customs involve the careful recording of family lineages and the maintenance of genealogies. This practice serves not only to honour the dead but also to strengthen family unity and uphold moral values.

The Chinese hold family gatherings at the graves of their ancestors to pay respects, reinforcing the importance of both spiritual and social connections⁶. Similarly, in Vietnam, ancestor worship has been a tradition for thousands of years. The Vietnamese believe that the spirits of their ancestors can affect the fortunes of the living. As a result, they offer food and other tributes to honour their ancestors and seek their blessings⁷. Across these varied cultures, the reverence for ancestors and the belief in the continued influence of the deceased on the living world, show the profound human desire to maintain a connection with past generations, ensuring that their wisdom and protection are not lost to time.

In India, Hindu society observes the tradition of *Shraddha*, a ritual performed to honour and offer appreciation to deceased family members. This tradition dates back to the Vedic period, with the earliest references to ancestor worship found in the *Rig-Veda*⁸. According to Vedic beliefs, ancestors bestow wealth and success upon those who venerate them⁹. Typically, a *Shraddha* is performed between the 11th and 31st day after the death of a family member. However, for parents, this ritual becomes an annual observance, held on the death anniversary of the parents each year. While the basic principles of the ritual remain consistent, there are regional variations. For instance, Bengali Hindus observe a special occasion known as *Pitru Paksha Amavasya*, which is the first day of the *Durga Puja* festival. On this day, they honour and remember their deceased parents and ancestors, paying their respects with offerings and prayers. Through these customs, Hindu society expresses reverence for the deceased, reinforcing the belief in the continued presence and influence of ancestors in the lives of their descendants.

In Assam and Northeast India, ancestor worship is a significant practice among various ethnic groups. One notable example is observed in the Ahoms of Upper Assam. Every year, they celebrate *Me-Dam-Me-Phi*, a ritual dedicated to honouring their ancestors. The term *Me-Dam-Me-Phi* is derived from the combination of three words *Me*, meaning offerings; *Dam*, meaning ancestors; and *Phi*, meaning God. Therefore,

the ritual involves offering oblations to the deceased ancestors and sacrifices to God¹⁰. Among the hill tribes of Northeast India, where many have now converted to Christianity, ancestor worship was traditionally widespread. For instance, the Kuki, a prominent hill tribe, used to honour their ancestors, believing that the spirits of the deceased assist the living in obtaining blessings from the supreme God, *Pathen*¹¹.

The Zeme tradition of reverence to ancestors and dead

The Zeme people also practice a tradition of reverence for their ancestors, as seen in many other cultures. In situations like the prolonged illness of a family member or frequent misfortune, the Zeme may invoke the spirits of their deceased ancestors to seek blessings. In the past, they were often influenced by prophecies, fortune tellers and spiritual leaders, who would sometimes advise families to call upon their ancestors' spirits to help alleviate misfortunes or illnesses¹². One significant tradition among the Zeme Naga is the annual ceremony marking their parting from the spirits of deceased family members. Unlike some other communities that observe similar rituals at different times, the Zeme perform this rite at the end of the year. One of the most important festivals for the Zeme community is *Hega Ngi*. Before the celebrations begin, each family performs rituals to bid farewell to the souls of those who have passed away during the year. This practice ensures that the spirits of the deceased are respectfully acknowledged and released, paving the way for the New Year's celebrations¹³. As mentioned earlier, *Hega-Ngi* is one of the most important festivals of the Zeme Naga people. The name *Hega-Ngi* is derived from the Zeme Naga word *Hega*, meaning 'luck stone', a festival of boon and it is regarded as the last festival of the year, marking the transition into the New Year. Life for the tribal people in ancient times was far from easy. In addition to natural challenges like sickness or poor health, they faced constant threats from external forces, such as enemies, headhunters and wild animals. Surviving an entire year was considered a significant achievement and a sign of good fortune. *Hega-Ngi* thus, symbolizes the end of the past year and the beginning of a new one. The festival is seen as a celebration of luck and survival,

acknowledging the challenges of the previous year and welcoming the opportunities and blessings of the year to come. This is why the festival is referred to as the “festival of luck” or “festival of fortune,” reflecting the community’s deep appreciation for life and the hope for a prosperous and safe year ahead¹⁴.

***Nchui-Ngi*¹⁵**

As mentioned earlier, the Zeme Naga people believe that the souls of the deceased linger in their old homes until they are properly sent off. Since *Hega-Ngi* marks the beginning of the new year, the Zeme ensure that all the debts and responsibilities of the past year are settled before the new year begins, starting the year on a clean and positive note. Before the *Hega-Ngi* festival begins, the Zeme perform a “ceremonial separation” of the deceased souls¹⁶. This final separation ceremony takes place over a single day, but the preparations and related rituals span about a week, leading up to the actual *Hega-Ngi* celebration. These intervening days are called *Nchui-Ngi* or *Heruime-Ngi*, the “festival of the dead.”

Day one of *Nchui Ngi*

The *Nchui-Ngi* begins with *Hechitra Day*, a ceremony in which the villagers appeal to *Chiprai*, seeking his protection for the village during the *Hega-Ngi* celebrations. The Zeme believe that if *Chiprai* is not properly appeased, the village could be vulnerable to epidemics or misfortunes, especially after the harvest period. To avoid such calamities, the villagers observe a day of abstention from normal household work, marking their surrender to the authority of *Chiprai*.

Day two

Following *Hechitra Day* is *Megauchakpe*, a ritual marking the completion of the agricultural cycle. With the harvest of the crops and the granaries filled with new stock, the Zeme cultivators observe a day of rest to signify the end of the farming season. After *Hega-Ngi*, the new agricultural cycle will begin once again. The day after *Megauchakpe*, the *Tingkupau* (*Head Priest of the village*), or village elder, instructs the

villagers to chew the seeds of *nchui* or sesame. The Zeme believe that the souls of the dead sometimes carry away their loved ones during the final separation ceremony. Eating the *nchui* seeds is thought to act as a protective shield, preventing such incidents from happening and ensuring that the living are safe from the spirits of the deceased during this time.

Day three – *Hemeupia*

As mentioned earlier, the Zeme people believe in life after death and maintain a symbolic connection with their deceased ancestors by continuing to offer food and drinks to them. As the “ceremony of final separation” approaches, the old barricades around the graveyard are removed, and the necessary materials for the next world are placed on the graves to be buried with the body. These items include *nsung* (cane baskets), *hetia* (wooden paddles), *hekuak* (wooden plates) and matches, among other items. This occasion is called *Hemeupia*. It is a day observed by the family members who have lost someone during the year along with *Hemei-me*, a married female member of the family and their husband, while other family members may go about their daily work¹⁷. After sunset or the following day, the materials placed at the grave are taken back by the *Hemeime*—married female members of the family from the father’s side.

Hengi-Pa

The two or three days following *Hemeupia* are called *He’ngipa*, a period of rest between the rituals and ceremonies. This interval is crucial for the host family, as it allows them time to gather the necessary materials and prepare for the next phase of the “separation ceremony.” This pause ensures that everything is in order before the final rites are completed, maintaining the flow and sanctity of the rituals.

Resumption of ceremony after a gap – the *Hekaktam* day

After an interval of two or three days, the ceremonies are recommenced. The first day following this break is called *Hekaktam*. In the weeks leading up to this day, the members of the host family are busy

preparing for the final “separation ceremony.” They search for cattle to sacrifice and for a suitable stone slab to place on the grave of the deceased. On *Hekaktam*, the entire male population of the village comes together to drag large stone slabs. In cases where there have been multiple deaths in the year, the villagers divide the work accordingly. Since Zeme villages are typically situated on hilltops or slopes, transporting and dragging the heavy stone slabs is both risky and requires significant manpower. While the younger men carry the stones, the older members of the community focus on other tasks, such as chopping the meat prepared for the ceremony.

The *Kering-Ngi* day

The next day is *Kering’Ngi*. The stone slabs are placed over the graves, and the final resting places of the deceased are repaired and decorated. This marks the beginning of the celebration. Throughout the day, all the men in the village, along with other male relatives, participate in a grand feast. As night falls, the women and children retire to bed, but the men stay awake. They enjoy rice beer, sing songs, share stories with the older generations and play traditional instruments such as the violin and flute. The hosts’ parents, too, remain awake throughout the night, as it is considered a bad omen to dream of the deceased during this time.

The *Hekak Ngi* day

The final day of separation from the spirit of the deceased is called *Hekak-Ngi*, which occurs the day after *Kering Ngi*. It is believed that on this day, the world of the dead opens its doors to admit new members, and those who have passed before rise to welcome their loved ones. Up until this point, the dead are thought to remain within the family’s household, still partaking in the same hearth and sharing in the family’s life. However, during the ceremony of *Hekak-Ngi*, as they are sent to the lower world, they are transformed into alien beings, no longer part of the living¹⁸. After this separation, their return to the upper world is seen as a cause of grief and misfortune for the living,

as it is believed to bring harm to those they visit. Thus, ancestors and the dead are not seen as benevolent beings who continue to watch over their descendants. For this reason, they are not invoked or called upon to help or guide their kin¹⁹.

Apart from the ‘separation ceremony’ for the dead, a special ritual is also performed for those suffering from chronic diseases or illnesses during *Hekak Ngi* Day. These ceremonies are led by the *Tingkupau* (Head Priest of the village) and *Kebaizame* (Subordinate Priest). At the break of dawn, those who wish to participate in the rituals observe a fast until the ceremonies are over, which typically occurs by the afternoon. As the sun rises, the *Tingkupau* (Head Priest of the village) and *Kebaizame* (Subordinate Priest), assisted by selected youth, go from house to house to gather ritual materials such as chickens, goats and beer from the homes of those for whom the rituals will be performed. These individuals remain in the village, fasting until the rituals are complete.

All those involved gather in one place. The rituals are performed one by one, with each ceremony varying depending on the nature of the illness or disease being addressed. Once the rituals are over, the *Tingkupau* (Head Priest of the village) and his subordinates share a meal, typically consisting of meat from the animals sacrificed during the ceremonies. By noon, after all the ceremonies and meals are completed, the *Kebaizame* (Subordinate Priest) announces the end of the rituals and warns the villagers to close their doors.

It is believed that the living soul could become trapped in the crowd of departing ghosts, so as a precautionary measure, everyone shuts themselves indoors. The *Tingkupau* (Head Priest of the village) then proceeds to close the upper gate of the village and walks down the now-empty street, bidding the ghosts of the year’s dead to take their grave goods and depart. The chant goes: “*Hekak ting changdelei, kechaimpekilamtettu, kering me ailia, herachitkanneumedu, herei chit kanneumedunneutalau, herei du gada, hera du gadelei,*” meaning “The

occasion of Hekak is over, oh! You dead! Go to your own place and leave the living here. O! All you dead! It is time to part. Let the living stay back and let the dead go.”

Meanwhile, the families of the deceased prepare for the final parting. Relatives bring out delicious dishes and rice beer, placing them in the backyard for the last time. The mournful cries of the parents and relatives fill the evening air in the Zeme village, creating a sombre and eerie atmosphere. These offerings are later taken away by *Hemeime* and kept for the spirits. After the *Tingkupau* (Head Priest of the village) reaches the lower gate and closes it, he returns to the village and announces the end of the ritual. At this point, those who have been fasting may finally break their fast.

The *Heraguabe-Mai* – A final day of cleaning the village of all the dues of bygone years

The next event, following *Hekak Ngi* is *Heraguamai*, an occasion dedicated to driving away evil spirits and further cleansing the village of supernatural forces²⁰. Early in the morning, the *Tingkupau* (Head Priest of the village) and *Kebaizame* (Subordinate Priest) gather at the upper gate of the village, accompanied by a sniffer dog. After closing the upper gate, they move down the village street, throwing wormwood in all directions, while chanting: ‘*Herambai, herambai, aramtesangeimelei, nkiherajeimelei, nkimeramperagabe ram mbetet du lau,*’ meaning ‘Go away, you ghost! Go away, you ghost! We will no longer entertain strangers. Go to your proper place.’

Before this, the villagers are warned by the *Kebaizame* (Subordinate Priest) to stay indoors. As the procession moves down the street, the householders also scatter wormwood inside their homes, starting from the back door and moving to the front, with the intention of driving out any lingering spirits²¹. Since the upper gate is closed with stakes tipped with wormwood, any spirits driven from the houses are swept down the village street (before the line of elders) and out through the lower gate,

which is then closed in the same manner. At the conclusion of the day's rituals, the *Tingkupau* (Head Priest of the village) sacrifices a pig, and the ceremony is complete. The village is strictly closed to strangers and outsiders until the following morning.

The end of Nchui-Ngi

The Nchui Ngi ritual ends with *Herapuimai*. After that, the actual *Hega-Ngi* (for the living) begins. There may be a gap of two or three days between these two significant festivals, allowing villagers time to attend to urgent matters before the next round of ceremonies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Zeme Naga community's *Nchui-Ngi* ritual, as part of their annual *Hega-Ngi* festival is a profound expression of reverence for the deceased and the cyclical relationship between the living and the dead. Through intricate ceremonies such as the ceremonial separation, feasts and offerings, the Zeme people ensure the respectful parting of souls from the living world, acknowledging the profound impact of ancestors on the community's well-being.

These rituals are deeply embedded in their agricultural and spiritual practices, symbolizing not only a farewell but also a renewal of life and fortune for the coming year. With the transition from traditional beliefs to Heraka, a reform sect and Christianity have influenced the Zeme's spiritual landscape as they discontinued many of such intricate rituals. The ancient practice of ancestor worship in the form of *Nchui-Ngi* no doubt reflects the role of their ancestors' spirits in their lives, both in terms of blessings and protection.

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2. The term 'imposed' is used here because the name was coined in the 20th century. Christianity was an alien religion to the forefathers, and some new elements absent in the earlier religion were included in the reforms of the Heraka sect. Hence, to distinguish the earlier religious practices from the reformed sect (i.e., Heraka) and Christianity, a new name, Paupaise, was given, or rather imposed, in the 20th century.
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The Origins and Ethnogenesis of the Kodavas of Kodagu

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Abstract

This paper explores the historical origin of the Kodavas, an ethnolinguistic group native to Kodagu, India, in relation to their culture and identity preservation. The study attempts to trace the historical lineage of the Kodavas, present evidence of their early existence and identify potential avenues for future research. The research points out the controversy over the origin of the Kodavas, considering the theory of Aryan descent and possible connections with the Kadamba dynasty. The narrative traces the origin of the Kodavas to Chandra Verma, the son of an Aryan king who is said to have settled in Coorg with his army, possibly of Kadamba lineage. Connections with the Ganga dynasty, the Chola Empire and Hoysalas are also considered. During the Haleri Rajas' rule, the Kodava community was stratified into sub-castes, with current classifications persisting as Amma and Kodava. The study

recommends further research through archaeological investigations, genetic analysis, and comparative studies with neighboring ethnic groups. Acknowledging limitations such as reliance on secondary sources and potential translation inaccuracies, the paper contributes to a deeper understanding of cultural preservation, identity resilience and the historical context of ethnolinguistic groups worldwide.

Keywords: *Kodava, Kodagu, Coorg, ethnolinguistic, origins, ethnogenesis.*

Introduction

Human beings instinctively form distinct groups based on common cultural heritage and ancestry. These groups frequently employ cultural markers such as attire, language and social structures as symbols to define and distinguish their ethnic identity.¹ An ethnolinguistic group, sometimes called an ethno-linguistic group, is a community defined by both a shared ethnic heritage and a common language. Typically, members of such a group also speak the same first language. However, the term ‘ethnolinguistic’ is often used to highlight the role of language as a central element in shaping the group’s identity, particularly in relation to neighboring groups.^{2 3 4}

“Our National life is full of diversities. We have here a variety of languages, of faiths, of communities, of modes of living, and schools and styles of literature and art. This diversity reflects the abundance of our national life, and needs to be preserved and promoted,” is what Vajpayee at Indore, in 1968 said, about the diversity of India.⁵ Ethnic group is a social group or category of the population that in a larger society is set apart and bound together by common ties of race, language, nationality or culture. In a country as diverse as India, which is among the top five nations globally in terms of the number of languages spoken—approximately, 456—there is also a substantial number of officially

recognized ethnic groups, totaling nearly 705.⁶ This count is statistically significant and likely exceeds the number of officially recognized groups, reflecting the country's rich cultural and ethnic diversity.

Ethnic groups across India have shown remarkable resilience in preserving their cultural heritage, despite the challenges posed by colonialism and the post-colonial period. Although colonial influences and processes such as Sanskritization⁷ during the transition from colonial rule to independent India prompted cultural changes and assimilation in many communities, numerous groups have successfully maintained, celebrated, and upheld their unique cultural traditions. One such community exemplifying this resilience is the Kodava community of Coorg.

The terms 'Kodava' (denoting the indigenous people, their language, and culture) and 'Kodagu' (referring to the region) both derive from the word 'Koda,' which means 'mist.' Interpretations of this term vary, with some suggesting it refers to 'hills' and others linking it to 'west,' reflecting the region's geographical setting amidst the Western Ghats. In the native Kodava language, Kodagu is known as 'Kodava Naad.' During the British Raj, the term 'Kodavas' was anglicized to 'Coorgs.'⁸

Numerous prominent anthropologists and sociologists have explored the diverse facets of Kodava societies, with a particular emphasis on their cultural dimensions. Esteemed scholars such as Radcliffe-Brown and M.N. Srinivas have made significant contributions to this field. Nevertheless, the most authentic empirical evidence often comes from contemporary Indian scholars and individuals with deep connections to Kodava culture. Notable figures, including I.M. Muthanna, K.K. Subbaya, Soumya Dechamma, Veena Poonacha, Major General Codanda Karumbaya, and P.T. Bopanna, among others, have enriched our understanding of Kodava culture with their detailed insights. Additionally, the comprehensive documentation by historians of

the Mysore State, in various historical records, further enhances our grasp of Kodava heritage. This paper aims to explore the historical origins of the Kodavas of Kodagu, consolidating evidence from historical sources.

Ethnogenesis of Kodavas

The origins of the Kodavas have been subject to ongoing debate, with various researchers and scholars proposing differing theories. In his 1893 work, *The Original Inhabitants of India*, Gustav Oppert argues that the people of Coorg are not the original inhabitants of the region and therefore cannot be considered representatives of the Gauda-Dravidian race. Similarly, in his 1969 publication, *People of India*, Risley classifies the inhabitants of Balochistan, Maharashtra and Coorg as part of a group of 'broad-headed' people, designating this specific race as 'Scytho-Dravidian.'

According to Risley, this racial group spans from the southern region of Punjab to the Dravidian lands, extending across western India from Gujarat to Coorg.⁹ Richter identified the people of Coorg as Dravidians and rejected the designation of 'Aryan Hindus.' He suggested that the Kodavas might be of Rajput descent, although this claim lacks substantial historical evidence. The only supporting reference is Bhandari's 1857 work on the kinship structure among the Rajputs of Baila, where families are organized into sections known as 'Als.'¹⁰ & ¹¹ An 'al' represents a lineage group descended from a common ancestor, with members behaving as siblings and maintaining close social ties, especially during festivals and special occasions.¹² This organizational structure bears resemblance to the Okka System of the Kodavas, which is explored further in the study.

Holland asserts that the Coorgs were inhabitants of Bharatavarsha, prior to the Aryan invasions. He argues that the Kodavas, unlike other tribes in the region such as the Yerava, Irula, and Paniyan, show minimal signs of intermingling with other lineages or reductions in markers of aboriginal ancestry. Holland further describes the Kodavas as 'the finest

race, without exception, in South India.’ He also suggests that while religion, social structure, and languages can undergo significant changes with minimal external genetic influence, the fact that the Kodavas speak a Dravidian language one influenced by Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam and Tulu does not necessarily imply that they belong to the Dravidian race.¹³

Hutton posits the existence of a non-Armenoid Alpine population with *brachycephalic leptorrhine* traits that extends from Baluchistan to Coorg in western India. While Risky proposes a Scytho-Dravidian connection, Hutton challenges this view, noting that the Sakas, linked to the Scythians, are generally *dolichocephalic*. Hutton concludes that the theory of an Alpine migration from the Pamirs to account for the *brachycephalic* traits observed in western India is plausible. He suggests that this Alpine population may have coexisted with the Rigvedic Aryans.^{14 & 15}

Subbaiah (1978) extends Hutton’s views by suggesting that the Aryans, upon entering the Indus Valley during the Harappan Civilization, may have also influenced the western coast of Coorg. Hutton further posits that the Alpine stock, originally inhabiting the cultivable regions of northwestern India, might have been displaced southward, westward, and eastward during the Rigvedic invasions. This population’s burial practices resemble those of the Rigvedic Aryans. Both groups worshipped Agni, a tradition still observed by the Parsis of India, who claim Aryan heritage. Similarly, the Kodavas of Coorg practice a form of Agni worship by lighting a lamp in the niche of the Nellaki Bolka, while honouring their common ancestor, Guru Karana. This practice, devoid of mantras or prayers, represents a simplified and primitive form of Agni veneration.¹⁶

Claims suggest that migrating Aryans who settled in the southwest, including Coorg, eventually adopted the languages of the predominant Dravidian castes and tribes in the region. Despite this linguistic shift, these Aryans are said to have maintained physical characteristics and

ancestry similar to the people of Balochistan, while preserving their distinct cultural identity without significant Dravidian influence. The Coorgs' affinity for horse riding, which mirrors Aryan traditions, may have adapted over time due to the region's scarcity of horses. This cultural adaptation has evolved into the festive event known as '*Puttari*,' during which, two individuals dressed as horses participate in village gatherings and dance, reflecting a blend of traditional Aryan customs with local cultural practices.¹⁷

Another nuance to consider is the claim that, due to their status as relative newcomers to the Dravidian region, the Kodavas might have adopted the native attire styles during festivities to better integrate with the local population. However, it is important to note that such claims lack substantial evidence and are generally dismissed within the Kodava community. The Kodavas have a deep-rooted presence in the region, predating the settlements and tribes of neighbouring areas that later emerged in what is now Kodagu.¹⁸

The origins of the Kodavas in Coorg, as described in the *Skandapurana*, trace their ancestry to Chandra Verma, the fourth son of Siddharth, a notable Aryan king from Matsya Desha. According to Subbaiah's account, Chandra Verma arrived at Brahmagiri Hill in Coorg with his army, where he disbanded the troops and devoted himself to the worship of Goddess Parvati. He prayed for a kingdom and a Kshatriya wife.

While he received the former, he married a Sudra woman under the condition that their descendants would be recognized as Kshatriyas and labelled as '*Ugra*,' meaning '*Valiant*.' Chandra Verma's eleven sons subsequently married the daughters of the Raja of Vidarbha and settled in the hilly regions of Coorg, establishing a lineage with many descendants. This account suggests that the initial settlers of Coorg originated from the Kadamba kingdom in the northwestern Mysore region. Colonel Wilks supports this lineage theory, affirming that the Coorgs are descendants of the Kadamba's conquering army.¹⁹

In an unofficial edition of Krishnaiyya and Subbaraya's work, '*Kodagu Samasthanada Rajendranaame (Kodagu Rajyada Charithre Edaralli Seride)*', it is noted that from the 2nd to the 6th century, the Kadamba dynasty held sway over areas corresponding to modern-day Mysore and Kodagu. However, Kodagu itself was not fully integrated into the Kadamba kingdom during this period. Kodagu's mythology, particularly the *Kaveri Mahatme*, provides insights into Chandraverma's role and the settlement of his troops in the region. Following the Chalukyas' victory over the Kadambas in the 10th century, some Kadamba royals took on roles as provincial rulers and established themselves in areas such as present-day Wayanad, Sakleshpura, Hangal, and Goa, where they remained until the 12th century.²⁰

Early references to Kodavas

The early origins of the Kodavas are linked to their reputed ancestor, Chandra Verma, from the Kadamba period. By the 10th century, the Ganga dynasty had risen to prominence in the region, forming close matrimonial alliances with the Chalukyas. Their reign is documented in several inscriptions, such as the Bilur Stone Writings, Kiggatnad, and Malambi stones.^{21&22} The Gangas, who were Jains, ruled over the Mysore Talekaadu region from the 2nd century. Copper inscriptions found in the Madakeri treasury offer a detailed account of the Ganga rulers in the Kodagu province.^{23 & 24}

By the 11th century, the Tamil Chola empire defeated the Gangas, assuming control of their territories. The Malambi inscription from this period refers to the region as 'Kudumaalenaadu,' identified as Kodagu.²⁵ Under Chola rule, provincial rulers such as the Chengalvas and Kongalvas, who were also Jains, governed the region. During the Chengalva period, Rajendrachola emerged, adopting Lingayat practices as part of a broader shift among Jains towards the Veerashaiva philosophy.^{26 & 27} The Hoysalas, under Himmadi Veeraballalla, conquered the Cholas in 1116 CE.²⁸ By 1175 CE, Veeraballalla granted land to Kodagu, as indicated by contemporary inscriptions.²⁹ Notably, Pemmaveerappa, a Chengalva

ruler, referred to the locals for the first time as ‘Kodagaru,’ meaning ‘Kodavas of all lands’ in his inscriptions. Similar references are found in Kongalva inscriptions.³⁰ The 14th century Islamic invasions led to the loss of many historical records, obscuring further details of the Kodava history during this period.³¹

Notably, two inscriptions from the 14th century, approximately from 1370-1371 CE, are of particular significance. These inscriptions identify ‘Bodharoopa Bhagavar’ as the ruling authority of the time.³² Interestingly, they also mention Melpundi Kunniyarasa as the regional governor. The term ‘*Kunniyarasa*’ implies a local chieftain or ‘little ruler.’ These inscriptions, found in the Bhagandeshwara Temple at Bhagamandala and the Mahalingeshwara Temple at Palur both dedicated to Shiva mark an important milestone in the historical study of the Kodava language, offering new insights into the region’s linguistic heritage.³³

During the Haleri Rajas’ rule in Kodagu, from around 1600 to 1834 CE, the Kodava community was categorized into four sub-castes: Amma, Sanna, Malla, and Bodda. Today, however, only the Amma and Kodava sub-castes remain. It is important to note that the term ‘*Kodaga*’ has acquired derogatory connotations due to various interpretations. Consequently, members of the Kodava community prefer to be referred to as ‘Kodava’ rather than ‘Kodaga’ or ‘Coorgi’ owing to the complexities and potential derogatory associations of the other terms.

Conclusion

This study traces the historical origins of the Kodava community, paying special attention to their ethnogenesis. Secondary sources from academic databases, historical records, and books are analyzed as the research delves into the lineage of Kodavas traceable to the Aryan king from Matsya Desha in Chandra Verma. Historical evidences such as 14th-century inscriptions provide insights about their early existence and linguistic background. This paper aims to deepen the understanding of cultural preservation and identity resilience in ethnolinguistic groups.

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SECTION II

ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY



Ecology, Diversity and Literature: A perspective on the culinary traditions of the Sangam Age

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Abstract

The social formation based on ecological division is a unique character of the Sangam age. The Sangam literature demonstrates in detail the social formation of ancient Tamilakam, and portrays the categorisation of ecological habitation based on tinai in Tamil society. Further, the literature bestows us an elaborate knowledge about culinary traditions of the Sangam age. Though, the Sangam poems dispense ample knowledge of the culinary tradition of the age, no comprehensive recipes could be traced. In addition, the puram poems provide us account of food and drink and the sway of ecology of five tinai in the culinary habits of the people.

Therefore, the diverse nature of each tinai and its coexistence can be identified, even their culinary traditions. Furthermore, this era's culinary traditions reveal regional and occupational nature, as well as the affiliations of various social groups within each tinai and

their coexistence. Hence, the present work concentrates on the evolution of ecological habitation and culinary traditions' gleaned from Sangam literature.

Keywords: *Sangam, Ecology, Social Formation, Culinary & Literature.*

Introduction

Archaeology shows that with the diffusion of iron-using people of the black and red ware tradition Tamilakam had emerged more or less as a single cultural zone by the first millennium B.C.E.¹ Further, Sangam literature, the earliest written evidence, provides us with an incredible profuse of material regarding social life of the ancient Tamilakam.² Hence, Rajan Gurukkal points out, the language, perhaps the archaic Tamil must have come into being as an important factor of the broad cultural unification in ancient Tamilakam.³

Therefore, the chief source with detailed information not only the social but also the political, economic and cultural life of this period is the collection of the Sangam literature, mostly in the form of bard songs orally transmitted for generations and collected in anthologies by the Sangam academy towards the close of that age.⁴ This literary corpus serves as prime evidence of the Sangam age and facilitates us to comprehend meticulously the social formations and culinary traditions of the ancient *Tamilakam*. The culinary traditions of the Sangam age were unique in umpteen ways, because it was an evolutionary stage of the social landscape and carried diversity within it too.

Further, the culinary traditions of this age expose the regional and occupational terms and affiliations of different social groups of each *tinai* and their coexistence. Thus, the present work narratively focuses on three important aspects; the early social formations, the ecological habitation, diversification and the culinary traditions of the Sangam age.

Ecological domains and nature of diversification

The Sangam classics are a major source of evidence in constructing the early social life of the Tamils and are classified as early Sangam literature and later Sangam literature. The early Sangam literature consists of *Ettutokai* (Eight Anthologies) and *Pattuppattu* (Ten Idylls). *Tolkappiyam*, the earliest Tamil grammar, is also said to belong to this literature and the scholars assign it to the post-Sangam age. Further, the post-Sangam literature consists of the two epics *Cilappathikaram* and *Manimekalai* and also *Patinenkilkanakku* (Eighteen ethical works).⁵ Traditionally, the Sangam classics are classified as “*Tokaiyum-Pattum*” by the commentators of *Tolkappiyam*.⁶ *Tokai* is the compendium and this term refers to *Ettutokai* (the Eight Anthologies), *Pattu* manifest the compendium of ten longer poems which is known as *Pattuppattu* (the Ten Idylls).⁷ However, there were some differences of opinion among scholars in dating the Sangam literature.

With regard to the dating of Sangam literature, Kamil Zvelebil in his book *The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India*, published in 1973, gives authentic evidence for dating the Sangam literature. In addition, Kamil Zvelebil points out an entirely different situation which prevails in Tamil literature. According to Zvelebil, the earliest literature in Tamil is a model unto itself, it is unique in the sense that, in subject matter, thought content, language and form, it is entirely and fully indigenous, that is, Tamil, or, if we want Dravidian.⁸ There is an obvious historical explanation of the fact that the earliest vigorous bloom of Tamil culture could have had strong impact on Tamil society. The development began of pre-literary Tamil a stage of the development in the history of the language which may be rather precisely characterised by important and diagnostic phonological changes into the next stage, old Tamil, the first recorded stage of any Dravidian language.⁹

Moreover, Tamil literature is not the literature of the barons; neither it is the literature of a monastic order; nor the literature of an elite, or of a *nagarika*; it is thus, not the literature of a particular social class. One

major type of Tamil classical poem reflects the life of ordinary, though idealized men and women, not the life of a sacerdotal or ruling nobility, of a priestly class, of nuns, monks, or of any elite group or groups of society. The whole gamut of basic human experience is contained in what has been best in Tamil writing".¹⁰ There is scarcely any allusion to religious ebullition in Sangam literature. They mirror a profound religious peace unmarred by unseemly rivalry.¹¹ Thus, the poems of Sangam literature encompass layman's social, political, economic and cultural life of that age.

In general, a society has been defined as an organized interacting aggregate of individuals who follow a given way of life. In still simpler terms, a society is composed of people.¹² But how this society becomes a part of historical dynamics, according to P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar, history means the account of the slow evolution of the social and religious life of a people under the stimulus of the geographical conditions of the environment and the influence of contact with peoples who have developed different kinds of culture.¹³

In addition, the chronology of language and thought, on which Max Muller laid much stress, is nothing but history extended beyond its generally accepted province of the civic and political events of society.¹⁴ Therefore, the social formations in ancient *Tamilakam* looked into myriad approaches within a historical context. The social organizations are assumed to have become widespread in the Tamil south by the middle of the first millennium B.C.E., bringing about homogeneity and linguistic identity in the region.¹⁵ The most useful signifiers are those rendering clues to the subsistence pattern and social relations which are extremely important for the reconstruction of the historical process of early society.¹⁶ Meanwhile, historians observed that each region developed a distinct form of human culture with the division of the earth into five types of landscapes or regions playing a cardinal role in shaping Tamil culture in ancient *Tamilakam*.¹⁷ This unique system of character existed only in the Tamil historical tradition.

Regarding social formations, Rajan Gurukkal, speaking theoretically, says that a social formation refers to the interactive coexistence of two or more economies structured by the dominance of one. It is used here as an eminent conceptual framework for understanding the social history of any region where peoples of unevenly developed economies coexisted.¹⁸ In par with this theory, the development of society in early *Tamilakam* was considerably determined and influenced by geographic and physiographic variations.¹⁹ This region is taken up for study as it is distinct as a region from other regions on account of physiographic and ecological differences. It is almost a truism to say that geography governs history. The choice of occupations, physical and mental efficiency, standard of living, social customs, and institutions of individuals are all shaped by the geographical features of the land they inhabit.²⁰ In resonance with that, the early Tamils classified their land into ecological niches or *tinai*s. Here we are dealing with the ecological situation. These were called *aintinai* (Five Tinai) as a whole. The regions were also conceived as a whole as it is difficult to demarcate the area of a *tinai* as the *tinai*s are interspersed with one another.²¹

The ancient Tamils observed that the habitable parts of the earth could be divided into five natural regions, each referred to as a “*tinai*”. The term “*tinai*” appears to derive from the root “*tin*” or “*tit*” meaning a stretch of land that constitutes a distinct topographical entity. Additionally, the word “*tinai*” was used more broadly to denote the earth as a whole. The ancient Tamils not only classified the earth’s surface into five natural regions but also recognized the corresponding human lifestyles shaped by the unique characteristics of the environment in which each tribe evolved.²² In addition, human beings were also thought of as participating with the other species in the life of the *tinai*. Essentially, the early Tamil relationship or companionship was not only with their species but was also with the other species within the physical milieu of the *tinai* which constituted their society.²³ The physical characteristics of each region served as a catalyst for the development of its unique culture.²⁴ The nature of interaction among social segments and the

process of subsequent integration of the largely self-sustaining eco-zones has received some serious attention. There are numerous references in the poems to the interaction of the *tinai*s against one another in terms of material goods,²⁵ which broadens our comprehension.

The *tinai*s mentioned in early Tamil literature are the *Kurinci* (Mountainous tracts), *Mullai* (Pastures), *Marutam* (riverine tracts), *Neytal* (the coastal/littoral tracts) and *Palai* (waste tracts). The *Palai* was not treated as a separate *tinai* as it was a seasonal ecological zone created at times, as it was mentioned in the texts which show the transformation of *Mullai* and *Kurinci* in a particular part of the year (seasonal) into *Palai* lands.²⁶ The below verses from *Tolkappiyam* and *Silappathikaram* give us a description of *tinai*s in a well-articulated manner.

The forest tract which Mayon tends,
The hilly tract which Ceyon tends
The fertile cultivable tract which Ventan tends
And the littoral tract which Varunan tends
Are known to be

Mullai, kurinci, marutam and neytal respectively.²⁷

The above song from *Tolkappiyam* portrays how each landscape division was demarcated in *Tamilakam* during the Sangam age. The below song from *Silappathikaram* shows *Palai* was not a separate *tinai* as found in many writings, it explains when *Kurinci* and *Mullai* face a dry spell in any seasonal space the *Palai* ecological zone occurs.

“You have come with your wife in the season
When the forests and hills have shed their nature
Lost their fresh looks by taking the form
Of a wasteland, thus causing hardship”²⁸

It is remarkable that the Tamils had the idea in ancient period and were able to define the five natural regions, each of whom followed the professions suited to the region. The first *tinai* according to the literary evidence “*Kurinci*” region, as depicted in the Tamil texts extended over

mountainous and hilly tracts. These regions would correspond to the Western and Eastern Ghats, Anaimalai, Nilgiris, Palani, Cardamom, Agasyamalai ranges, Varshanad hills and the Tamil Nadu hills (namely Javadis, Shevaroys, Kollimalai, Pachaamalai). Most of these lay in Cera territory with a few in Pandya land. The inhabitants of these tracts were the Kuravar and Kanavar and their economic activities were limited to hunting-gathering, honey collection, digging up edible tubers and slash-and-burn-cultivation.

Though poor in day-to-day resources, they were rich in natural products like pepper, wood, ivory etc., which figured in the trading network outside *Tamilakam*.²⁹ The second *tinai*, "*Mullai*" were pastures, meadows and scrublands. Those areas which could be categorized as *Mullai* would be the forests and meadows on the lower slopes of the Tamil Nadu hills, Kerala hills and Coimbatore plateau. Cattle rearing were the dominant activity of this tract.³⁰ The pastoralists living in this tract were the Itaiyar, Iaiyar, Kovalar and Ayar who domesticated cows, goats and sheep. Some form of shifting cultivation was practiced here. The main crop grown was *Varaku* (a kind of Millet). From descriptions in Perumpanarrupatai and Maturaikkanchi, we may surmise that these *Mullai* lands were peripheral to the *Marutam* lands.³¹

The third *tinai* "*Marutam*" regions were river basins that constituted the fertile agricultural tracts with the main rivers flowing in this region being Palar, Pennaiyar, Kaveri, Vaikai and Tamraparani, flowing into the Bay of Bengal and Periyar and Ponnani flowing into the Arabian sea. These fertile tracts were the main rice producing areas and the nuclei of the three kingdoms viz. those of Cera, Chola and Pandya lay in these areas. They were nuclear regions or areas of attraction. The inhabitants of these *Marutam tinai*s were the Ulavar and Toluvar. The fertility of the land, agricultural operations and irrigation facilities in *Marutam* are vividly portrayed in the literature.³² The fourth *tinai* coastal littoral tract or "*Neytal*" was another area of attraction.

Both the east and west coasts were studded with ports and centres of trade (*Pattinams*) even though there were no natural harbours to accommodate large ships. In these tracts lived the fishermen (Paratavar) and salt manufacturers (Umanar). Traditionally, this region was known for its fishing and salt manufacturing activities. It is only in passages of later texts that one finds reference to the Paratavar who were described to be merchants and shippers living in coastal cities, in the big mansions engaged in trading in conches, pearls, tamarind, salt, horses and fish.³³ The fifth *tinai* “*Palai*” tracts denoted the arid regions which included areas that experienced temporary drought due to the absence of rainfall or scanty rainfall. The people of these tracts were Maravar, Malavar, Eyinar etc., and took to plundering and looting wayfarers as a way of life for their sustenance as nothing much could be grown or was available in these areas.³⁴ The below given verses from *Tolkappiyam* expose the emergence of *Palai* tracts and natural characteristics.

“As we see it,
The hot season and midday hour
Go with the centrally placed (arid) tract.
The late dew season,
Is also held to be proper to the arid tract”.³⁵

Thus, the interaction of people with the environment in the early phase of *Tamilakam* escalated the process of landscape diversification according to their ecological niches. Further, each *tinai* portrays the attachment of each social group inhabited in different region and this exposes the uniqueness of each group’s culinary traditions along with habitational functions in this age.

Culinary traditions as gleaned from literature

Hippocrates, the Greek philosopher mentions, “Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food”. It glimpses how food is essential in human development as well as indispensable for survival. In historical account, food historians trace food as a fundamental component of human society, which resonate the socio-economic and cultural structure.

Further, food history centralises implications and constraints on human culture, economy, environment and social aspects. However, culinary history, on the other hand, is a long-standing field that differs from preceding. Culinary history is concerned with the genesis, development and implications of food and evolution of cooking skills and eating pattern. From this, the Sangam era's culinary traditions, Tamil poets have given us with some amazing poetry to relish. There are numerous allusions to the renowned Sangam Tamil cuisine in the poems. The cooking method used in Sangam Tamil cuisine is distinctive. The cooking style is distinctive and linked to the Sangam era; it is distinguished by distinguishable ingredients, cooking methods, and skill.

Several poems in Sangam literature contain references to the Sangam people's culinary customs *Pattuppattu* poems describe the kings and chieftains' kindness and give detailed accounts of the meals they provided the bards, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Besides, a visual representation of Sangam Tamil society can be found in the poetry of *Purananuru* and *Patitrupattu*, as well as in the eight anthologies (*Ettutokai*) and graphic descriptions of food and beverages are also a feature of *Akam* poems, sometimes known as love poems (*Akananuru*, *Narrinai*, *Kurunthogai*, *Ainkurunuru*, and *Kalittokai*).

From the very beginning, the culinary traditions of the Tamil country were always portrayed in regional and occupational terms. The landscape of *Tamilakam* with its mountains, pastoral slopes, river beds and coastal shores formed the basis for the distribution. During the Sangam period, the Marutam region was ideal for the growth of major food crops. The below poem of Sangam literature depicts the diverse culinary habits and the nature of Marutham *tinai*.

Encircling fields of rice
In which plants grow so high that elephants
They stand in them are fully lost to view
The tufted fisherman who trades fish

The fish he caught in the marutham tracts where grows
The korai reed.

The toddy-drinking ploughmen's shouts
The panar's clean their fish beneath the trees.³⁶

The above song from *Maduraikanji* of *Pattuppattu* is composed by Mangudi Maruthanar. This song explains the prosperity of Marutham *tinai* and its important productions used by people. In this rice was more a staple food; the cultivation of rice is not very easy because abundant water must be available and this region was more suitable for that.

In addition, the poet explains the paddy was sufficient to hide the elephants; thus, expounding on the prosperous production of that and sugarcane cultivation whereas, selling and cleaning of fish and usage of toddy were in vogue in the Marutham region. It resembles the categorical nature of this *tinai* and abundant natural wealth of this prosperous place. In the song below, the poet narrates the modification of culinary habits in the Mullai region. The people of this region depended more on millets and *varaku* because they inhabited the forest areas where these grew in abundance.

The sesamum and black-stemmed *varaku*'s ears become mature.³⁷

The short-stalked *thorai* rice on uplands sown
From which the *akhil* tree and the sandal wood
Have been well cleared, the long-stalked pepper
White rice, and *aivana* paddy mixed with it,
Green pepper, ginger, turmeric, *tinai*: these
And other plants do grow luxuriant there.³⁸

That merchants sold and bought
Salt, sweet tamarind and salted fish that look
Like sides of drums prepared by fishermen
On widespread sands.³⁹

The above two songs depict the natural habitation of Kurinji and Neithal *tinai*s. In the preceding *thorai* a unique paddy cultivation was developed. Further, mustard, ginger, turmeric, black pepper and boar

eating were prominent and the sea food products were more popular in the later one. Hence, through these songs the poet expresses deep ecological attachment of people in each *tinai* and their respective productions.

The inhabitants of the Sangam age were far from vegetarian. Rice, *varaku* and millets were the basic food, and they ate fish, crab, pigs and porcupine cooked with spices. Further, fruits like mangoes, jackfruit, sugarcane and honey made up the candy component of their food. They also preferred edible roots, curd kept in bamboo pipes, honeycomb-shaped cakes, coconut and sugar pasties and pickled fruits. Alcoholic beverages were readily available and drunk by people of all socio-economic background. The below poems elaboratively explain the varieties of culinary practices of the Sangam people as mentioned above.

The sesamum that springs up from the seeds
Mature becomes black
On their stubbles short
The *avarai* creeper sheds its blossoms white
That look like drops of curds; its fruits are curved
Like a sickle, in wide fields the *varaku* plant,
Quite ready to be reaped with double stalks
In flower filled forests sheaves of bamboo rice
Matured by rains are ready to crushed
The mustard sown are ready
The roots of ginger grow in image shapes
The mango sweet is so replete
With juice that one does not
Desire enjoying any other fruit.
Banana groves flourish surrounded by boulders.
winds have dropped black fruits
from *nāval* trees.
breadfruits crack dispersing their seeds, and

clusters of ripe jackfruits that hang above and below.⁴⁰

Along with food that they bring climbing on the
bright mountains,
they will give you sweet liquor aged in bamboo pipes
which you can drink without limits, and for your
hangover to go, in the morning, they will serve you
a dish made with dropped seeds of jackfruits brought
down by waterfalls, big pieces of meat of rapidly running
forest deer that are killed, chopped up pieces of fatty
meat of porcupines killed by female dogs, sweet
tamarind fruits with light covered shells and stems,
fine buttermilk, and seeds growing on bamboo added to
the boiling liquid along with white rice, cooked by
a mountain woman with flowers on her huge.⁴¹
honeycombs with mature blue-coloured
honey in the tall mountains, abundant breadfruits.⁴²
A mortar like small hoop with holes whose tusks
Resemble bamboo shoots, and a pickle jar
Those dancers.⁴³

The above poems from *Malaipadukadam* of *Pattuppattu* resemble the detailed description of the varieties of culinary habits of different *tinai*s and ecological associations of the people.

During the Sangam period, hospitality was a distinct custom in ancient Tamilakam. People in Tamil nation were always in close contact, and they employed barter system to swap crops and items prepared in different areas. They were familiar with cooking techniques such as basting, grilling, smoking meats, fermenting milk to curd, buttermilk and butter, and producing ghee from butter. People enjoyed eating out and picnicking, with food sellers selling a variety of specialties. These poems also contain interesting details about ingredients and cooking processes.

The streams are filled with water, and the fields
Produce full harvest. Then the ripened rice
Doth rustle tossed by winds; the harvesters

Are noisy in their work; the birds create

A clamour great.

The spacious sea that smells

Of fish, in which contending sharks do swim.⁴⁴

Some vendors sold sweet dishes.

Some sold betel leaves from long vines along with

areca nuts with sweet juice and pulp inside that

gave beauty to the body, and some sold lime

obtained by burning conch shells. Some carried

many food items and roamed around to sell them.⁴⁵

When you arrive at the prosperous small village of the

forest dwellers with vegetables, they provide honey,

tubers, and the flesh of small-eyed pigs with undesired parts.

Using elephant tusks as carrying poles,

you and your big clan will have enough of food.⁴⁶

Fishermen will give you aged

liquor If you go to Kidangil town

with groves full of flower clusters

and sing the praises of the noble king

adorned with fresh bud garlands,

with perfect rhythm and beats

as your *viralis* dance, they will give you

kuzhal fish dishes in all the houses.⁴⁷

During the Sangam age hospitality was seen as a virtue by the people and enjoyed serving their visitors. On celebratory occasions, the king and the wealthy hosted feasts and served a variety of delicacies. The food that the monarch offered for his court poets, troops, and subjects is frequently mentioned. Many of these classic poems describe common people's delicacies and feasts cooked and served in palaces, festivals, and at weddings. Regional food rules, such as moral, social, and religious codes, have an impact on cuisine as well. The Sangam Tamil culture considered that feeding everyone, with a smile on those who arrive home, was the most essential domestic duty of every householder.

There is much noise in which
Are served along with other food, the pulps
Of fragrant honied jak and other fruits
Of various kinds like mangoes sweet, both ripe
And unripe, greens whose soft, short, unrolled leaves
Abundant grow on vines when showers do fall
In due time; sugar-candy sweet that tastes
Ambrosia-like; rice cooked with chunks of flesh
That's relished much; roots edible dug up.⁴⁸

Food cooked with seeds of bamboo that are red like
vēngai flowers cooked with rice grown on high grounds,
along with tamarind gruel with *avarai* beans.
In all the villages with huts built with poles and thatched
with grass, you will receive daily, huge balls of rice made
with tiny, perfect rice, like tiny gold pieces, ghee, and
sprinkled white flour. If you stay there and rest, every
day you will be given dishes made with fine millet flour
mixed with sifted sugar powder.⁴⁹

When darkness sets, drink toddy, start cooking, boil rice,
chop meat, prepare dishes, cook for your guests on your stove
and feed them without limits.⁵⁰

Opening toddy jars, killing fatted
Male goats, cooking continually
Fine food with stewed meat and rice
And being rich enough to give
As much of it as one desires.⁵¹
She mixed the tasty tamarind sauce
With her very own hands;
Her eyes like *kuvalai* flowers,
Became filled with smoke, from the seasoning;
She straightened her unwashed sari
Which had been stained when touched
by her tender finger, like *kantal* flowers,

After they had squeezed the thick curd
When her husband tasted it
And said, it was good
The face of the girls with a bright forehead
Smiled almost imperceptibly.⁵²

The above songs of Maduraikanji of *Pattuppattu*, *Malaipadukadam* of *Pattuppattu*, *Ettutokai*, *Purananuru* and *Akananuru* portray hospitality offered by the king, village households and the role of women in hospitality. From this, we can observe during the Sangam age people from different *tinai*s set moral standards in culinary traditions through hospitality.

Conclusion

The Sangam age was distinguished by an extensive culinary culture. The Sangam people's diet included both vegetarian and non-vegetarian foods, which were classed according to *tinai*s, the Sangam's ecological division. The Sangam people ingested diverse grains, which included rice, black gram, chickpeas, millets and lentils were also often consumed. The people in Sangam age were widely consumed a variety of vegetables and fruits that balanced their diet. Further, curd, buttermilk and milk related products were essential components of the Sangam people's diet. The Sangam people lived in coastal regions relied heavily on fish and they consumed widely numerous sorts of fish. The turmeric, cumin, mustard seeds, coriander, cardamom and black pepper were among the most commonly used spices. Thus, comprehensively the Sangam people ate a broad and stabilised diet, with a focus on locally sourced and seasonal products.

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Sarpa kavukal: Spirituality's interface with Ecology and Culture

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Abstract

This paper examines the intricate ecological and cultural aspects of serpent worship within Kerala's sacred groves (Sarpa Kavukal), emphasizing iconographic and artistic expressions. Sacred groves, as protected ecological sanctuaries, are crucial for biodiversity conservation, supporting native flora and fauna, and promoting environmental balance. Simultaneously, these groves hold deep cultural significance as revered spaces where serpent worship integrates with art, iconography, and ritual practices. This study highlights how sacred groves function as ecological habitats and cultural hubs of spiritual art, where serpent idols and other symbolic representations embody a cultural reverence for the interconnectedness of nature. By exploring the dual role of sacred groves as

ecological and cultural entities, this paper provides an in-depth perspective on the fusion of art and ecology within the practice of serpent worship in Kerala.

Keywords: *Serpent worship, sarpa kavu, sacred groves, ecological conservation, cultural significance.*

Introduction

Some ancient communities lived in close harmony with nature, respecting both the living and non- living components that are a part of the eco-system. Mostly, the connection that people make with nature can be influenced by various aspects of their lives, either material or spiritual. The Hindu tradition exemplifies the reverence for ‘Mother Earth’ contributing to a lifestyle that is in harmony with the nature.¹ Living in close interaction with nature, humans appreciated the indispensability of natural resources for their survival. Besides the pragmatic approach, they also assigned a sacred connection with natural forces; for instance, the practice of attributing a specific animal as the vehicle of deities. Such practices and beliefs exemplify that from the beginning of community life, the interconnectivity amongst elements of this universe was realised. They were held to be interdependent, and also the humans’ basic responsibility to protect and preserve their natural habitat was accepted.²



Figure 1: *Sarpa kavu* nestled beneath a sacred tree in Kerala. Credits: Reshma Suresh

By honouring nature, early humans sought to achieve a balance between their material and spiritual needs, and to foster a sense of gratitude and responsibility towards their physical/natural surroundings.

This worldview helped early man to accept diversity and respect the complexity of life, besides nurturing the spiritual aspect of existence, at times manifested through the medium of religion. Religion, thus, is integrally connected to ecology, as it reflects the values and practices that uphold the sustenance of nature and biodiversity. In the course of time, these practices were woven into human cultures and identity, fostering a symbiotic, harmonious relationship with the natural world. The cult of sacred groves manifests one such popular practice.

Universality of sacred groves

The concept of sacred groves might have been conceived with the spread of agriculture, when slash and burn system gained momentum.³ The sizes of sacred groves may vary from place to place. Sacred groves are found far and wide, world over, in varied forms of religions and social and economic organizations in Africa, Asia, Australia, Polynesia, Europe and the Americas.⁴ Sacred groves can be found across various regions of India, known by different names in each state. They can be found in the Khasi and Jaintia hills of Northern Himalayas, Western Ghats, Aravali hills and Central India. They are commonly known as *Dev* in Madhya Pradesh, *Deorais* or *Deovani* in Maharashtra, *Saranas* in Bihar, *Orans* in Rajasthan, *Sidharavana* or *Devarakadu* or *Pavitravana* in Karnataka, *Kavu* in Kerala, *Kovil Kadu* in Tamil Nadu.⁵ The groves are often dedicated to various gods, goddesses, animals and sometimes, even to spirits or demons. They are considered highly sacred, with a strong belief that anyone who enters and harms these sacrosanct areas will face consequences. This belief plays a central role in their protection.

Study area

Provenance of snake worship in India spans through antiquity, dating back to the Vedic period and spreading widely across the country. This study focuses on major serpent god temples such as the Mannarashala temple, Ameda temple, Pambummekkatu mana, Vetticode temple, with specific attention given to the *sarpa kavukal* ⁶ (serpent groves) of Kottayam district in Kerala. The region, known for its

agrarian economy, particularly rice cultivation, serves as the foundation for its socio-economic structure. Kottayam is culturally diverse, home to various caste groups and distinct religious beliefs. The area was chosen for study as it is the native place of the field researcher.

Field surveys were conducted to gather in-depth information about the practices of serpent worship, also focusing on the significant role of art in shaping the ritualistic practices. For this, the iconography of serpent figures placed in *sarpa kavus* has been studied. Interviews were conducted with individuals who maintain *sarpa kavus* on their properties. The study includes insights gained from people belonging to various social backgrounds, including Brahmins and members of the Pulluvan community a traditional group deeply involved in performing serpent worship rituals.

Further, visits to temples dedicated to serpent deities across different regions of Kerala were undertaken to examine their historical, cultural and religious purports. These combined approaches provided a holistic understanding of the artistic, ecological, cultural and ritualistic dimensions of serpent worship in the region.

Serpent worship in Kerala's social landscape

The sacred groves of Kottayam encompass a variety of the sacred spaces, each dedicated to different deities such as Ayyappan, Shiva, Bhagavathy, Durga and Brahmaraksha.⁷ Despite this diversity, the most frequently found groves in the district are the ones dedicated to serpent gods, known as *sarpa kavus*. In Kerala, as in some other South Indian states, serpents hold a revered position, with both male and female deities



Figure 2: Egg offerings to the serpent gods in a temple. Credits: Reshma Suresh

being venerated. Nagaraja and Nagayakshi, both occupy significant roles in serpent worship. They are worshipped for good health, fertility and prosperity. Various offerings are made to them in Kerala, with the most common being milk, eggs and turmeric.

The snake gods have multiple manifestations and are accessible to devotees in a range of physical forms.⁸ In almost all the groves, the deities are usually placed beneath the trees and they are always placed on a cemented platform. Rarely, the deity is directly placed on the ground.

Groves can be classified into various types. The first category includes primitive groves, which have been preserved through the ages and are typically owned by families with a *tharavadu*, i.e. traditional ancestral homes. The second category comprises recently established groves, created and maintained by individuals as an act of atonement for past mistakes or misdeeds. The third type is groves devoid of greenery, which lack vegetation but are believed to house serpents. These groves often feature a mound or stones that are revered as sacred and worshipped. People diligently protect these serpent groves with great care and dedication, driven by a deep sense of connection to both the groves and the serpent deities believed to reside within them. It is thought that, when pleased with offerings, these deities bestow blessings such as good health and fertility. Thus, while *nagas* are certainly understood as divine beings and thus invite worship, in many cases, these rituals have a prophylactic element aimed at averting potential- or mitigating actual curses.⁹ This prophylactic dimension principally stems from the popular belief that disturbing, harming, or killing a snake, whether knowingly or inadvertently, in this life or in a previous birth, produces a condition called *naga dosham* (snake blemish).

Remarkably, similar beliefs continue to thrive in Kerala even today. The field researcher met several individuals whose *tharavadu* included a traditional *sarpa kavu*. One such individual was Lata, a resident of Areekara in Kottayam district. Originally from Ernakulam

district, Lata did not have a *kavu* at her ancestral home. However, after her marriage and moving to her husband's house, which has a *sarpa kavu*, she developed a deep fascination and faith in the deities associated with it. According to Lata, these divine beings are responsible for the luck and prosperity her family now enjoys:

The snake gods possess immense power. If you have faith in them, they will fulfil your wishes and protect you, even if some wishes take time to materialize. They are always watching over you, ensuring no harm comes your way. When I got married and moved into my husband's home, I was amazed by his family's unwavering dedication to worshipping these deities. Initially, my belief was limited. However, when I faced difficulties conceiving, my mother-in-law advised me to worship the snake gods daily. After four years of devotion, I conceived, and I became convinced of their powers. I will always regard them as my foremost gods. These deities are our family gods, and we turn to them for every challenge, big or small. If they are pleased, they will keep us happy.

Lata views her relationship with the serpent gods as one of mutual responsibility. She believes that these deities possess immense power and, if angered can bring about significant troubles, often referred to as *naga dosha*.” She holds the conviction that once afflicted by this *dosha*, it is exceedingly challenging to overcome. In her understanding, the gods are benevolent to those who treat them with reverence and goodwill.



Figure 3: *Sarpa kavu* at Areekara in Kottayam district, Kerala. Credits: Reshma Suresh

***Sarpa kavu* as guardian of ecological harmony**

In Kerala, as previously mentioned, various types of sacred groves are found, with *sarpa kavukal* being among the most common. The primary deities worshipped in these serpent groves include Nagaraja (the serpent king), Nagayakshi (the serpent goddess), Chithrakooda Kallu, Maningam and Anjana Manninagam. In some cases, worship revolves around simple termite mounds or uncarved stones, showcasing the diverse practices of veneration.

In larger *sarpa kavus*, spanning several acres, it is common to find ponds associated with them, known as *sarpa kulam*. These ponds are believed to hold pure water with healing properties, particularly beneficial, for treating skin diseases. Maintaining purity of mind and body is of utmost importance within the *sarpa kavu* to ensure the deities remain pleased. Any actions such as cutting trees, removing shrubs, or displacing stones within the sacred grove are strictly forbidden. It is believed that causing harm to the *sarpa kavu* can lead to various misfortunes, including skin ailments, patches or infections, leprosy, childlessness, delayed marriages and other forms of adversity.

A notable aspect of Kerala's tradition is that many households maintain small serpent groves. However, there are also prominent temples managed by the Brahminical families that oversee expansive lands dedicated to serpent worship. Among the most renowned are the Mannarashala temple, Ameda temple, Pambummekkatu Mana, and Vetticode temple. These temples are custodians of vast *sarpa kavukal*, reflecting their profound connection to serpent worship.

In the *sarpa kavukal* owned by Namboodiri Brahmin families, daily *pujas* are performed by the eldest female member who is free from menstrual taboos. A significant feature of serpent worship in Kerala is the distinction in the rites and rituals associated with it. In the *sarpa kavukal* of the Namboodiris, rituals are conducted in the Vedic style, while in the *sarpa kavukal* maintained by Nairs, Ezhavas, and other communities,

rituals follow a more traditional style. Additionally, another group integral to serpent worship in Kerala is that of the Pulluvans¹⁰. Known for their expertise in performing traditional art forms associated with serpent worship, they are celebrated for *Sarpam Thullal* and *Pulluvan Pattu*¹¹, which are deeply symbolic and spiritually significant practices.

The *sarpa kavukal*, being home to a rich diversity of flora and fauna, naturally hold significant ecological importance for environmental conservation. The folk rituals associated with serpent worship are often performed either within households that maintain a *sarpa kavu* or in front of these sacred groves. In this way, these traditional practices not only preserve cultural heritage but also play a vital role in protecting and sustaining the natural environment. It may be assumed that traditional Hindu society recognised individual species as objects of worship, based on accumulated ancient knowledge and their identified value for specific use. Some species are employed in religious ceremonies as part of socio-cultural traditions.¹²

Sarpam thullal is a ritual deeply linked to the sacred groves and plays an important role in their preservation. A key aspect of the ritual is the creation of intricate *sarpa kalams*, as vibrant patterns crafted using natural powders in various colours derived from organic materials. The Pulluvan community leads the ritual, which is typically performed for individuals or families seeking relief from *naga dosham*. Accompanying the *thullal* is the Pulluvan community's music, known as *Pulluvan pattu*, featuring chants and songs that assign a spiritual dimension to the ceremony.

By associating these sacred practices to the groves, *Sarpam thullal* fosters respect and preservation of these ecologically and culturally significant spaces. During this ceremony beautiful *sarpa kalams* are made of different serpent gods such as Ashtanagakkalam, Nagayakshikkalam, Sarpayakshikkalam, Bhasmakkalam, Sudarsanakkalam, Santhathikkalam, Nagarajakkalam, Nagakanyakkalam and Ananthasayanam. Through oral

traditions and myths narrated during *Sarpam thullal*, people understand the importance of respecting nature and maintaining the ecological balance. By linking conservation to religious practices and religiosity, *Sarpam thullal* ensures that *sarpa kavu* remains protected as a cultural and ecological heritage.¹³

Through serpent worship is done throughout the year, serpent worship in Kerala is particularly popular during specific times of the year that hold religious and cultural significance. The most prominent period is during the Ayilyam *Nakshatra* (star) in the Malayali calendar. The day, especially in the months of Kanni (September-October) or Thulam (October-November), is considered highly auspicious for rituals and offerings to serpent deities. Temples like Mannarashala and other *sarpa kavukal* hold grand Ayilyam *pujas* during this time, attracting devotees who perform special rituals to seek blessings for prosperity, protection and relief from *naga dosha*.

Furthermore, serpent worship gains significance during Vrischikam (November-December), particularly in connection with traditional art forms like *Sarpam thullal* and *Pulluvan pattu*, which are often performed during festivals and special occasions. These times are believed to align with celestial and astrological factors, enhancing the efficacy of prayers and rituals dedicated to serpent deities.

Artistic aspect embedded in the sarpa kavu

The practice of *Sarpam thullal* and *Pulluvan pattu* as art forms contribute significantly to the preservation of sacred groves, as these rituals are deeply intertwined with the groves and form a sense of reverence among people for these natural spaces. The iconic imagery and representations in *Sarpa kavu*, the carved stone idols of serpents, further enhance the preservation instinct. These visual, iconographic depictions serve as constant reminders of the cultural and spiritual significance of the groves, encouraging communities to safeguard them as sacred and integral to their heritage. The representations focus on the symbolic and

cultural significance of figures, themes, and narratives. For instance, in Kerala, the iconography of serpent deities plays a pivotal role in the religious and cultural traditions, particularly within the *sarpa kavu* and temples. Iconology delves deeper, analysing the symbolic meanings and cultural contexts of the projected representations, offering insights into their spiritual and ecological connotations.

The religious icons, popularly known as *vigraha* or *murti*, are an integral component of theistic worship patterns in India. Crafted variously from materials such as stone, bronze and *panchaloha* (alloy), these sculptures symbolize divine attributes, narratives, and ideologies.

In Kerala, the serpent imagery has been depicted in theriomorphic (snake-like), anthropomorphic (human-like), therio-anthropomorphic (combining snake and human forms) and symbolic forms. These representations are generally crafted from durable materials like chlorite stone, ensuring longevity in outdoor settings. The crafting of these icons follows traditional textual guidelines from *Shilpashastra* and local traditions expounded by the priests and astrologers. While variations in iconographic features exist due to regional practices, these images are revered as embodiments of divine power, fostering both spiritual reverence and ecological preservation within the groves and temples.

Theriomorphic images

Theriomorphic serpent images are central to serpent worship in Kerala, featuring deities with single or multiple hoods, are found in temples and household *sarpa kavukal* across South and Central Kerala. Key temple sites include Aadimoolam Vetticode Shree Nagarahaswami (Alappuzha), Mannarashala (Alappuzha), Pambummeekkattu (Thrissur), and Ameda (Ernakulam), alongside sacred groves in Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Ernakulam and Kannur districts. The multi-hooded serpent is the most common form, followed by single and two-hooded depictions. Temples like Mannarashala preserve these idols near the *garbhagriha*, where they are actively worshipped, especially during rituals like



Figure 4: Naga idols, Mannarashala Temple, Kerala. Credits: Reshma Suresh

Ayilyam Puja. Similarly, Ameda temple showcases both single-hooded idols and unique *mithuna* representations of serpents. Family-owned *sarpa kavukal* also exhibit a mix of theriomorphic, anthropomorphic and symbolic representations. Unique features include multi-hooded serpent intertwined with a small *linga* in Pathanamthitta and single-hooded idols in Kottayam.

Symbolic images

Symbolic images, especially the *Chithra-kootam*, are widely observed in temples and *Sarpa kavukal* of Kerala. These structures, made from laterite or concrete, represent shelters for snake gods and are integral to rituals. Mythical serpent deities like Maninagam, Kuzhinagam, and Nagacamundi are believed to be invoked in these stones, during consecration. Offerings are made at these sites during festivals, alongside anthropomorphic and theriomorphic idols. Temples like Ameda, Pambummeekkattu, and Aadimoolam Vetticode showcase *Chithra-kootam*, while family-owned *Sarpa kavukal* in Kottayam districts also house these symbolic stones.



Figure 5: *Sarpa kavu*, Kottayam district, Kerala, with symbolic imagery of *Chithra-kootam*. Credits: Reshma Suresh

Anthropomorphic images

Anthropomorphic representations represent serpents in human form with cobra hoods, often adorned with headdresses and jewellery. Male figures are identified as Nagaraja, while female forms, like Nagayaksi and Nagachamundi, are characterized by bulbous breasts and elaborate ornaments. These figures are crafted using the *saptatala* or *navatala* systems and hold symbolic objects, such as swords or water pots.

Temple idols, such as those from Aadimoolam Vetticode and Ameda temples, show Nagayaksi in standing or seated postures, often with hands in *abhaya* or *varada* mudras. Some idols are well-preserved, while others, like those at Aadimoolam Vetticode, exhibit deterioration. Male and female figures sometimes include depictions of Gana, further enriching the iconography of serpent worship.



Figure 6: Anthropomorphic serpentine representations, Kerala. Credits: Reshma Suresh

Serpents representing the *ganas*

Sculptures of Nagaraja and Nagayakshi accompanied by *ganas* are significant elements of serpent worship. These figures, often seated on coiled snake pedestals or plain platforms, are portrayed in postures like *savya-lalitasana* and supported by one to seven *ganas*. At Aadimoolam Vetticode Temple in Alappuzha, a Nagaraja adorned with three snake hoods and elaborate ornaments is supported by a seated male *gana* with a raised hand. Similarly, at Mannarashala Temple, coiled serpents are

positioned atop a less ornamented *gana*, though the idol is poorly maintained and clustered with others. In a *sarpa kavu* in Kottayam district, one striking idol portrays a Nagayakshi with three snake hoods and two *ganas*, adorned with tribal-style ornaments and holding snakes. Another depicts a serene Nagayakshi in a standing-*sthanaka* posture, crowned with five cobra hoods and detailed with intricate ornaments like *karnapuspa*, holding a serpent in the right hand. These depictions highlight the rich artistic and spiritual traditions associated with serpent worship in Kerala.



Figure 7: *Naga gana* with an uplifted hand. Credits: Reshma Suresh

Conclusion

The *sarpa kavus* of Kerala are vital ecological sanctuaries that preserve biodiversity and maintain environmental balance. These sacred groves function as micro-ecosystems, protecting rare flora and fauna while embodying sustainable practices deeply rooted in cultural and spiritual traditions. Central to the sanctity of these groves is their intricate iconography, which includes anthropomorphic, theriomorphic, and symbolic depictions of serpent deities. The art of crafting idols and sacred symbols on stone, such as multi-hooded cobras and the *Chithra-kootam*, plays a pivotal role in fostering a profound spiritual aura. This artistic and ritualistic significance instils reverence for the groves, deterring encroachment and ensuring their preservation.

The meticulous process of creating these idols, often by skilled artisans, amplifies the perception of *sarpa kavus* as divine realms. The craftsmanship, combined with the symbolic representations, evokes a deep psychological impact on people's minds. The visual and spiritual appeal of these icons triggers a sense of awe and veneration, embedding

a collective belief in the sanctity of the space. This sacred perception transforms the groves into inviolable sanctuaries, discouraging acts that might harm their ecological and cultural essence.

From a philosophical perspective, ideas such as Arne Naess's, *Deep Ecology* argue that nature possess intrinsic value, affirming that all forms of life human and non-human are inherently significant.¹⁴ The degradation of nature, including sacred groves, represents not only a practical loss in terms of biodiversity and ecosystem services but also a spiritual failure. This philosophy underscores the interconnectedness of all living beings and aligns with the idea that preserving sacred spaces like *sarpa kavus* honours both the spiritual and ethical dimensions of life.

Similarly, Tim Ingold's, *Dwelling Perspective* emphasises that human activity, including art and ritual, is intrinsically linked to nature.¹⁵ The act of crafting sacred idols and symbols is not merely artistic but is marked with a profound integration of culture and environment. Through their iconographic depictions the *sarpa kavus* become more than mere ecological zones; they evolve into spiritually and culturally significant environments that demand care and respect. The art and rituals surrounding these groves reinforce cultural beliefs, fostering a shared responsibility among local communities to protect and nurture these sacred spaces.

Thus, the artistic representations in *sarpa kavus* play a dual role: they enrich the spiritual significance of the groves and create psychological impressions that reinforce their sacred status. This combination ensures that these groves remain central to both cultural identity and environmental conservation. The spiritual aura, supported by iconography and art, serves as a powerful protective mechanism, preserving these sacred ecosystems as essential spaces for biodiversity, cultural heritage, and psychological well-being.

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4. Hughes, J. D., & Chandran, M. S., (1998). Sacred groves around the earth: an overview. *Conserving the sacred for biodiversity management*, Oxford and IBH, Delhi. pp. 69-46.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Sarpa Kav*u (Sacred Grove of Serpents) is a traditional sacred space in Kerala, dedicated to the worship of serpent deities. These groves are integral to the region's ecology, culture, and spirituality, serving as sanctuaries that blend environmental conservation with religious and cultural practices.
7. Devika, B., (2024). 'The Sacred Groves of the Serpent Gods: 'Sarpakavus' of Kerala as Indigenous Ecology.' *Rupkatha Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, Volume 16, Number 1, West Bengal. pp. 1-14.
8. Allocco, A. L., (2013). 'Fear, reverence, and ambivalence: Divine snakes in contemporary south India', *Religions of South Asia*, Volume 7, Number 1-3, pp. 230-248.
9. *Ibid.*
10. The Pulluvans are a distinct community in Kerala, traditionally associated with serpent worship and rituals. They have played a significant role in preserving and perpetuating the cultural and spiritual traditions linked to *Sarpa Kav*us. The community

is known for their unique art forms, music, and rituals that are deeply intertwined with the mythology and reverence for serpents in Kerala.

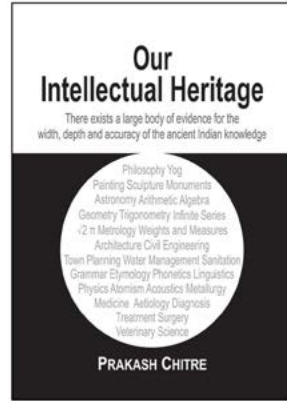
11. *Sarpam thullal* and *Pulluvan Pattu* are integral rituals of serpent worship in Kerala, performed to honour and appease serpent deities. *Pulluvan Pattu*, sung by the Pulluvan community, involves devotional hymns accompanied by traditional instruments like the *Pulluvakkudam*, narrating myths and invoking divine blessings. This music sets the spiritual tone for *Sarpam thullal*, a ritualistic dance where women enter a trance-like state, embodying the energies of the serpent deities. Together, these rituals are performed in *Sarpa Kavus* or homes to ensure prosperity, fertility, and protection from serpent-related curses. They reflect a harmonious blend of music, spirituality, and cultural heritage.
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Book Review

Our Intellectual Heritage

Author : Prakash Chitre
Publisher : Motilal Banarsidass
Publishing House, Delhi
Year : 2024
Pages : 752



It would not be a misnomer to call this scholarly, voluminous work running into 752 pages, a compendium of sorts and a ready reckoner for attempts to trace the Indian intellectual heritage from the Saraswati-Sindhu civilisation (as the author insists on calling it) to the 15th century CE. The author's professed aim is to acquaint the reader with the width rather than the depth of the wide canvas of our intellectual history and with good reason.

Prakash Chitre seems to spare no pains to uncover the hoary past, with its magnificent wonderous achievements of the civilisation, collating data painstakingly gathered from diverse sources, including eclectic ones, almost always using irrefutable and impeccable evidence from about 45 different fields of scholarship – Acoustics, Archaeology, Astrophysics, Genetics, Mathematics, Metallurgy and Sanskrit to name a few.

The writer, with the highest of credentials and track record from the IIM, Calcutta, India is well qualified for this herculean task. He uses a unique, postmodern genre, pulling in data based on priceless research

papers, essays and video lectures to create an uninterrupted narrative for most part. He uses the word “unquote” within sections to mark out his own perceptions and writing in the midst of the colossal compilation of the evidence presented from multiple sources.

Interestingly, some of the dates, often accepted as established, often uninformedly and gullibly have been called into question due to modern technological methods of verification, now available in the form of carbon dating and Genetic Studies. Consequently, the given dates are set back by a few thousand years, highlighting the fact that the sensible architecture and town planning systems go way further back than originally stipulated. Likewise, scriptural references get dated further back.

The book vociferously sets about the task of decolonising the Western educated (Indian and non-Indian reader) in a professedly scientific manner, “with evidence based on multiple disciplines of science”. The writer quite unabashedly puts it as, “We are perfectly justified in being proud of our ancient past. It is okay as long as our pride is based on facts, not on emotions or imagination, and as long as we do not look down upon that of others.” (Preface, xxiii) This is certainly a noble aim and sound advice to researchers.

The book has seven chapters which cover evidence, both tangible and intangible from across the country, from a kaleidoscope of disciplines ranging from Archaeology to Architecture, Sculpture and Painting, the textual works of our intellectual forefathers to ancient knowledge systems of Astronomy, Mathematics, the Sciences and Philosophy, of course.

The necessary thrust for the book’s argument is quite appropriately provided by its first chapter titled, “Debunking the Aryan Invasion/Migration Theory, the AIT/AMT”. There is a virtual collapsing of the theories of Aryan invasion/migration which have been part of our education and imagination, at least since the beginning of colonialism.

The questioning, refuting and the inevitable demolition of the theory occurs in a multi-pronged attack, which results in the rejection of these two theories, scrutinised by the writer from several angles and telescoped through multi disciplines, including geology and ancient astronomy. The writer's focussed study of the Saraswati river and the civilisation that is said to have grown around it is a good case in point for the above observations. Sadly, one can still hear our own countrymen referring to Saraswati as the "mythic river (myth used derogatorily).

The deconstructing of these widely held false notions of Aryan invasion/migration is a necessary first step for a deeper, unbiased look at the ancient architectural remains in new light, which the next chapter does.

The third chapter explores marvellous creations in the fields of Engineering, Architecture, Sculpture and Painting, across the length and breadth of the country and beyond; thus, demonstrating the outreach and extent of this great civilisation – the building blocks as it were.

The next two chapters uncover the exciting, close-to-heart and infinitely vast backdrop of the "Brilliant Minds of Ancient India and their Works" – the thinkers and sages, encompassing huge storehouses of knowledge, yielding unexpected treasures to the genuine seeker through their eternal treatises. Following this is a chapter on "The Ancient Indian Knowledge of Astronomy, Mathematics, the Sciences..." which delves deeper into the ancients' contribution to not just the world of Ideas but disciplines like Astronomy, Mathematics and Physics which have retained their contemporaneity.

Chapter 6 foregrounds the great centres of learning, ancient times onwards, from different parts of the country and these predate the very beginnings of Western notions of 'University' education. The 'Colossus,' which the book really ends with an awe-inspiring chapter on "Ancient Indian Manuscripts found Outside India" which ironically could prove to

be a point of commencement of lifetimes to be spent in future, researching what the ancients have handed down, bringing the reader a full circle and on to new beginnings that await scholars enticingly.

The writer holds an uncompromising conviction that, contrary to what has been traditionally accepted as a lack of documentation, arising out of the prevalence of the oral tradition, our forefathers wrote a lot, documented a great deal, now lost due to deluge and invasions.

The book, in an unconventional manner begins with a sea of acknowledgements to various reputed academicians and intellectuals with their contributions from a wide cross section of disciplines from sciences and the humanities. The author's effort has gone into culling and collating this ocean of evidence and creating a viable and holistic narrative.

The writer, in his own work puts into praxis, the often held up ideal of not compartmentalising knowledge systems. He succeeds mostly in finding syntheses and presenting a coherent, non-contradictory picture of our glorious past.

The writer has indeed laboured to establish new dates for our civilisational milestones, drawing on actual findings from archaeological sites. The book marks the commencement of the work to be done by scholars who need to begin examining critically the given history, usually accepted docilely and unquestioningly. For such worthwhile future research work, Chitre's book promises to be a beacon in guiding them to explore hitherto uncharted, even treacherous territories to bring more light to Truths – hidden perhaps but not lost!

Prof. (Dr.) Kamala Gopalan

Currently Asst. Editor, Journal of Indian History and Culture
The C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation, Chennai.

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- Ananthakrishnan, S., (2015). 'Critically Evaluating the Uprising in the Tamil Country' in G.J. Sudhakar (ed.), Popular Uprisings in India with Special Reference to Tamil Nadu 1750-1857, CPR Publications, Chennai. pp. 43-51.

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DIACRITICAL MARKS

International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration

Vowels

Devanāgarī	Diacritical Marks
अ	a
आ	ā
इ	i
ई	ī
उ	u
ऊ	ū
ऋ	r̥
ॠ	r̄
ऌ	l̥

Devanāgarī	Diacritical Marks
ए	e
ऐ	ai
ओ	o
औ	au
ॠ	m̐
ऌ	h̐
ॡ	ṃ
ॢ	ṣ
ॣ	ṣ̄

Consonants

Devanāgarī	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ
IAST	ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa
Devanāgarī	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ
IAST	ca	cha	ja	jha	ña
Devanāgarī	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण
IAST	ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa
Devanāgarī	त	थ	द	ध	न

IAST	ta	tha	da	dha	na
Devanāgarī	प	फ	ब	भ	म
IAST	pa	pha	ba	bha	ma
Devanāgarī	य	र	ल	व	
IAST	ya	ra	la	va	
Devanāgarī	श	ष	स	ह	
IAST	śa	ṣa	sa	ha	

Consonant clusters

Devanāgarī	क्ष	त्र	ज्ञ	श्र
IAST	kṣa	tra	jña	śra

Tamil - Transliteration Table

அ	...	a	ஊ	...	ñ	ஜ	...	j
ஆ	...	ā	ஈ	...	t	ச	...	ś
இ	...	i	ஊ	...	n	ஶ	...	ṣ
ஈ	...	ī	ஊ	...	n	ஸ	...	s
உ	...	u	ஊ	...	n	ஹ	...	h
ஊ	...	ū	ஊ	...	p	க	...	k
ஏ	...	e	ஊ	...	m			
ஐ	...	ē	ஊ	...	y			
ஔ	...	ai	ஊ	...	r			
ஒ	...	o	ஊ	...	l			
ஓ	...	ō	ஊ	...	v			
ஔ	...	au	ஊ	...	l			
க	...	k	ஊ	...	l			
க	...	k	ஊ	...	l			
ங	...	ṅ	ஊ	...	r			
ச	...	c	ஊ	...	n			

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I, Dr. Nanditha Krishna, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dr. Nanditha Krishna

Director

CPR Institute of Indological Research