

Colonial Stereotypes and Postcolonial Realities

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This paper intends to discuss a few colonial stereotypes constructed and evolved during European colonialism in India. Stereotypical representations of people of Indian heritage are often manifested in colonial history and continued in media, literature, theatre and other creative expressions during postcolonial period. How Indians are presented in a different way through alternative themes, words, discursive strategies, positioning of various Indian cultural groups, and so on will be explained briefly in the beginning of the paper with examples. Based upon this analysis, meta-theoretical issues will also be addressed at the end of the paper. I am aware that there can be no final say concerning how best to represent cultural others in intercultural textbooks and how these representations may inform our understanding, a critical, self-reflective attitude will help create new forms of intercultural knowledge and discourse.

A "stereotype" is a type of generalization about a person, group of persons or a nation. Stereotyping is a way of representing other people. These are created when we encounter something new and try to define it. We develop stereotypes when we are unable or unwilling to obtain all of the information we would need to make fair judgments about people or situations. Hence, stereotypes may represent people entirely in terms of narrow assumptions about their biology, nationality, sexual orientation, disability, or any other number of categories. It is a simplified and/or standardized conception or image with specific meaning, often held in common by one group of people about another group. A stereotype could be a conventional and oversimplified conception, opinion, or image, based on the assumption that there are attributes that members of the other group hold in common

In the absence of the "total picture" stereotypes in many cases allow us to "fill in the blanks." Our society often innocently creates and perpetuates stereotypes, but these stereotypes often lead to unfair discrimination and persecution when stereotypes are unfavorable. Stereotypes are not only part of the culture and identity of those groups who are stereotyped, but they are also part of the culture of those who recognize and utilize them for interpreting certain groups. Stereotypes not only define and place others as inferior, but also implicitly affirm and legitimate those who stereotype in their own position.

In India, stereotypes are unfortunately taught at a young age, and they remain, as most mental models do - untested, unchallenged, confused with reality.

Stereotypical writings in Indian Social Sciences:

An example from history:

Scholarly pursuits such as history and anthropology in India have been professionalized and institutionalized, with academic departments established during colonial period. The texts, methodology and approaches were all adopted from the West. Often this was in the context of colonialism and military occupation, resulting in asymmetrical power relations. The writing of history was central to strategies of European colonial rule in the subcontinent. Some of these well-known generalizations (Stereotypes) are easily recalled: Hindus and Muslims were two different nations and peoples who could not live together; Indians were primarily a religious people or religious peoples; Indian communities were prone to violence; Indians were uncivilized even if in an earlier golden age they had been civilized; liberal values such as democracy or freedom of thought and expression were unknown to Indians etc. Numerous scholarly work have been examined how these stereotypes reflected a colonial agenda and were used to justify acts of colonial violence. The subject is far from exhausted; it continues to be a rich source of material for scholars of the colonial period as well as for postcolonial theorists.

The main purpose of this part of the paper is to understand the usefulness of re-looking in to our historical writings by taking an example from Vijayanagara history. Rejecting the standard stereotypical distinction between history, literature and folklore, that has prevailed for the past two centuries in the west, we tend to think that there need not have to be a distinction between them as all constitute part of the same discourse and are internal to language. This gives more scope and respect for indigenous sources of historical material such as literature and folklore. Hence, textures of time get represented in literary and oral representation. A non-stereotypical theory and methodology need to be developed to trace and understand such textures.

A part of the history textbook approved by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) for class XI, writes about Vijayanagara history as follows:

‘This state became a refuge for the Hindus, oppressed by the atrocities of the Muslims’.

This portion of a textbook represents the standard way of writing Vijayanagara history evolved during colonial period. Starting from Robert Sewell’s ‘Forgotten Empire’ to till date more than 900 books (Bilimale 1996) have been written on Vijayanagara in a same fashion.

Surprisingly, the writings on Vijayanagara history never mention about Kampila’s son Kumararama who lived in the early period of Vijayanagara. Historians mention his name in footnotes because inscriptions do not speak about him. Neither Kumararama had an extensive kingdom, nor did he built any big temple or a fort. Hence, his place in Karnataka history has been completely downsized. How ever, in literary texts and oral traditions, Kumararama has been considered as the most popular hero and a cultural champion.

1. Literary Creations:

Three epics were available in Kannada language on Kumararama. The poet *Nanjunda* wrote *Kumararama carita* in 1512. *Cennaraamana Saangatya* was written by

Pancaalaganga in 1650 and the third one was *Baalaraamana Sangatya* was written by Mahalinga Swamy in 1750. More than 80 manuscripts of these medieval epics are available and that symbolizes the popularity of these epic traditions. All these epics were written in *Sangatya* and are recited publicly even now. In the beginning of his epic, Nanjunda wrote, “This is not an auspicious story, not a mythology, not at all told by our ancestors” (I-91). Thru comparing Kumararama with Rama, and Arjuna, Nanjunda tried to connect Kumara Rama into the Sanskrit tradition. Pancaalaganga tried to connect him to the oral traditions of his time. Hence, he included many legends in his epic. As Mahalinga Swamy was much influenced by the Harikatha tradition of medieval Karnataka, his epic is full of “upa kathas” - sub-stories. Thus, the three medieval Kannada epics recreated Kumararama differently.

2. Oral epics on Kumararama:

Various scholars have collected following oral epics on Kumararama:

1. *Kumararamana dundume* : B. S. Gaddagimata (1959)
2. *Dhira Kumara Rama*: K.R. Krishnaswamy (1960)
3. *Cenniga Rama-Katuga rama* : Ambalike Hiriyanna (1970)
4. *Cenniga Rama*: J.S. Paramashivaiah (1975)
5. *Cenniga Rama*: D. Lingayya ((1976)
6. *Tampina Rajana Padagalu* : Jayaprakash Mavinakuli (1992)
7. *Tampala Rajana Padagalu* : V.G. Nayak (1993)
8. *Ramanathana kath* : P. Bilimale (1996)
9. *Ramana Kathe*: Savitri (1998)
10. *Gollaramana Katha* : Maithri Kamanna (1998)
11. *Haralai Ramana Katha*: P. Bilimale (1997, Unpublished).

3. Festivals of Kumararama:

Few festivals are attributed to Kumararama. The first and the important festival is celebrated at the hill fort of Kummata, where it is believed that Kumararama and his father Kampila lived, ruled, fought and died. On the top of Kummata hill there is a

Ramaswamy_temple. Every year on the full moon day, in the month of May, locally called the day of *agi hunnime*, people of the surrounding area celebrate the Kumararama jatra. The *Beda (hunting)* community and the *Ganga matasta (fisherman)* community take lead in the festival. The *Gollas (Cattle herders)* and the *Kurubas (Shepherds)* are the other two communities actively participate in the festival. Such festivals are also celebrated at Shimogga, Kolar, and Uttarakannada districts. At Bhatkal the festival is called, *Kallara jatire* means the “festival of thieves” where Kumararama is a leader of thieves. All Kumararama festivals are well-known and colorful.

4. Kumararama as a deity:

As a popular deity, Kumararama is widely worshipped by the people of Karnataka. It seems he is a fertility god. The *Viirguul*, which is a mixture of blood and rice, will be distributed as *prasada* during his worship. More than 42 shrines of Kumararama have been identified at the different parts of Karnataka. He is also called as *Gameshwara and Hasra raya* or *Hasraya*.

5. Kumararama in kaifiats:

Lt. Col. Mackenzie collected more than 6000 kaifiats, which are the written documents of local legends, during 1790-1796. Out of them, six kaifiats belong to Kumararama. They are

1. Taluku Kampli kaifiattu
2. Kampalirayana maga Kumararamana adi vruttanta
3. Kampli-Gutti kaifiattu
4. Daroji Gramada Kaifiattu
5. Sandur kaifiattu
6. Kumara Ramage Bhattaru hogaluvantaha Bhatangini (The praising words of Kumara Rama)

Mackenzie collected these legends from the common people in and around Kampli, which have some fascinating information on Kumararama

6. Kumararama in tales and legends:

According to some legends, which are available near Bhatkal of Uttar Kannada district, Kumararama had four wives namely Mala, Naga, Honna, and Kenda. They also say that he was a leader of thieves. According to the people of Anilagodu, Kumararama's eyes are available in a river. Some narrates the story of a fight between Kumararama and the people of Nadaru Shetty community.

7. Kumararama in Burra katha:

Kumararama's story is narrated in *Burra katha form* in Telugu and Kannada languages.

8. Kumararama in performances:

Madhu Kumar of Malpe, Udupi, wrote a Yakshagana *prasanga* called '*Kadugali Kumararama*'. This *prasanga* was brought on the stage by the famous *me/a-Sri* Mahammayi Krupaposhita Yakshagana Mandali, Surathkal or popularly known Surathkal Mela. The *mela* is performing this episode continuously for many years. The Killekyatas of Mornal and Hadagali perform leather puppet shows based on the story of Kumararama. Many amateur drama troupes perform a drama on Kumararama.

9. Kumararama in prose:

Various forms of prose writings are available on Kumararama in Kannada literature. To mention a few

1. Kummata Keasri : A novel by G. Varadaraja Rao
2. Ratnaji: : A novel by Varadaraya Huyilagola
3. Kummata Vallabha: A novel by Vasudevam Bhupalam
4. Ranarangasinga Kumararama : An essay by Alur Venkata Rao.
5. Komararama : An essay by Rama Shastri.
6. Amarakirti : A novel by C.R. Hosallayya
7. Kadugali Kumararama : A novel by D. Javare Gowda.
8. Kumararama : A play by Caduranga
9. Gandugali Kumararama : An essay by B.B. Rajapurohit
10. Kampila Kumararama : A research paper by P .B. Desai
11. Kumararama : An article by Hullur Shrinivasa Joisa

Till day Kumararama is a favorite subject for the creative writers. They write about Kumararama's heroic deeds, loveliness, and his incestuous relation with his stepmother Ratnaji. The story has been traveled through out Asia up to Japan and became a wonderful Kabuki performance.

10. The name Kumararama:

In and around Koppal, Gangavati, and Budigumpe cross the name Kumararama is popular among the common folk. People name their children as Kumararama even in these days.

11. Kumararama in inscriptions:

Only two inscriptions mentions the name of Kumararama-

1. The Sangur inscription (1407) gives some information about the installation of a statue of Kumararama.
2. The Hosamale Durga inscription provides details about the construction of the Ramaswamy temple at Hosamale Durga.

12. Kumararama in sculptures:

A beautiful hero stone is available at Kummata Durga, known to the people as '*Kagiramana Kallu*' means the stone of Crow Rama. The hero stone at Sangur also attributed to Kumararama. People worship colorful woodenheads as Kumararama at Kummata festival. In Shimoga and Uttara Kannada District, the common people worship many round shaped stones as Kumararama.

13. Kumara Rama in phrases:

In the districts of Koppal, Bellary and Raicur people use the name of Kumararama for good looks, velour and sex. "Are you Kumararama to do like this?" is the common expression in those places.

Thus, there are multiple constructions on Kumararama in Kannada culture.

Why Kumararama became so important to Kannada culture and not important to historians is a big question.

Geomorphologically the eastern part of central Karnataka consist mostly plains, low hills with some area of sand dunes of low fertility. The climate of this area is characterized by dryness in the major part of the year and a hot summer. The place where Kumararama and his father Kampila lived and ruled has an average annual rainfall of 574.9-mm (22.63”) which is both variable and unpredictable. According to Mysore State Gazetteer report, this average rainfall, and the uncertainty has not changed much in last 91 years (Hayavadana Rao 1930). On an average, this area has 39 rainy days in a year. The period from the latter half of November to the end of February is the coolest part of the year. By around the end of February, temperature begins to go up rapidly and by April, which is the hottest month, the daily maximum temperature is 39.2° C. (77.4 degree F). With the onset of the southwest monsoon early in June, the weather becomes slightly cooler and continues to be so through out the southwest monsoon season. On the whole this region is characterized by a dry climate, the summer and the cold seasons being the driest part of the year when relative humidity is 45 to 65 per cent in the mornings and 20 to 35 per cent in the afternoons. Relative humidity is higher in the southwest monsoon and retreating monsoon seasons, when they are generally 50 to 70 per cent. The landscape is characterized by barren hills and reddish-brown plains scattered with isolated clusters of bushes. The rivers in the plains dry up for six months each year.

This climate is perfect for the pastoralists. Hence, this is one of those regions in India where man has lived since the earliest period. The archaeological explorations carried on in places like Bellary, Kappagallu, Sanganakallu, and Gadiganur, have shown that the early man in this region has passed through all the stages of culture-Paleolithic, mesolithic, neolithic and iron age. A large part of the population is composed of pastoralist groups and groups that traditionally followed pastoralist occupation. The

principal groups are the *Bedas*, *Gollas*, and the *Kurubas*.

Before Kampila, the people of Central Karnataka used Tungabhadra river water and its tributaries for agricultural purposes. First time in the history of Karnataka, Kampila and Kumararama collected the rainwater in artificial reservoirs and allowed the people to use it for agriculture. They built barrages between two hills and collected the water. Even now, such tanks are in use. This experiment converted the large dry land into wetland. In this new agrarian context, nomadic pastorals were minimized. Many communities such as *Bedas*, *Gollas* and *Kurubas* adopted agro-nomadic pastoralism, where the herds had to be accompanied by few men. Old men, women, and children remain in the small village. Some groups retained the traditional occupations and adopted the agriculture too. This led to the development of agro-pastoralism in which the people are agriculturists and they generally participate to some extent in pastoralism. The agro-pastoralism ranges from people who are primarily farmers but keep a few goats, cows, or sheep for milk, to those who concentrate on livestock but also own small amounts of land. Unless an agro-pastoralist depends significantly on livestock, he is unlikely to migrate with his herds. Subsistence on agriculture was not exclusively possible in unpredictable and variable monsoon dependent situation. **Thus, converting dry land into wet land and the entrance of new communities into agriculture brought revolutionary changes in that area and resulted in accumulation of wealth.**

The shifts from river water to rainwater, semi-nomadic Pastoralism to agro-pastoralism are the main incidents behind the popularity of Kumararama.

Increase in the wealth naturally, caused many wars. From 1296 AD to 1313 AD there were many invasions by Muslim rulers on various parts of the Karnataka but not on Kummata. However, in 1327, Malik Jada Khwaja E. Jahan, Governor of Gujarat, killed Kampila and Kumararama in a battle. It is a belief that Kampila and Kumararama's heads were stuffed and sent to the Sultan Muhammad-bin-Tughlak. The death of young Kumararama had a deep impact on the people. To forget the pain of Kumararama's death, the people created a love story between Kumararama and Babamma, the beloved

daughter of Tughalak Mohammad. Most of the epics narrates Kumararama's marriage with Babamma in his next birth. The fall of Kummata thus created a wonderful love story, which is the core theme of many epics and performances even today.

Kumararama story is connected with the story of a horse called *Bolla*. The people worship some of the horse stones (Kudure Kallu) even now at the time of Kumararama festival.

The Kannada culture recreated Kumararama in various ways after his death in 1327. With these huge materials where we stand?

Textual stereotypes in Literature:

An example of Mahabharata editing

Through the centuries in India, writers and performers have produced and many patrons have supported diverse telling of the Mahabharata. These telling do not belong to any moment of history as they have their own history, which lies embedded in the many versions, which were woven around the theme at different times and places. Not only do diverse Mahabharatas exist; but also each text of Mahabharata reflects the social location and ideology of those who appropriate it.

Even so, most studies of this epic by both eastern and western scholars have concentrated on a single telling: Vyasa's Mahabharata. In recent days, there are pressures in the country to accept Vyasa's version of Mahabharata as '*the authentic version*' of the epic. The homogenization of any narrative tradition or stereotypical writings on such traditions results in a cultural loss; other telling of the Mahabharata story might be irretrievably submerged or marginalized.

In this part of the paper, I am going to focus on the diverse constructions or the telling of the Mahabharata prevalent in various parts of the country. However, I make neither pretense of giving an exhaustive survey of all the oral versions of Mahabharata in India

nor do I believe that such work is possible. My goal has been to be suggestive, rather than comprehensive. As you are all aware, it is a vast area and one could do no better than refer to a few representative versions.

The most extensive search undertaken for the various telling of Mahabharata was that of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute Poona (Sukthankar 1933). The institute worked more than fifty years with renowned scholars of the time, led by the great Vishnu S. Sukthankar to give an authentic text of Mahabharata. Sukthankar writes- ‘the need of a critical or a correct edition of the Mahabharata has been felt by Sanskritists for over half a century. It was voiced however in a clear and emphatic manner, for the first time by Professor M. Winternitz at the XIth International Congress of Orientalists, held in Paris, in 1897, when he read a paper drawing attention to the South Indian manuscripts of the great epic and ending with the remark that a critical edition of the Mahabharata was wanted as the only sound basis for all Mahabharata studies’ (Sukhtankar VS 1933: I). The idea received a concrete shape in his proposal for the foundation of a Sanskrit Epic Text Society, which he laid before the very next session of the Oriental Congress (XII th), held in Rome (1899). Again three years later at the following session of the Congress (XIII th), held in Hamburg (1902), Professor Winternitz reiterated his requisition. Thus, the plan of creating a ‘critical edition’ of a text actually begun and slowly spread over to all Indian languages during 19th and 20th century. Creating ‘one text’ with help of available many texts has become a stereotype during colonial period. One simple question like – why one text has been recreated in many ways could have helped the scholars to come out from their own stereotypical efforts.

Let us further this question. Till date I have never read the so-called critical edition of Mahabharata, which was written in Sanskrit by Vyasa during 7th century BC. But I know something about Mahabharata through Kannada language, which was my medium of instruction. I heard Mahabharata in Tulu, which is my mother tongue. I watch and perform *Yakshagana*, wherein I create my own characters of Mahabharata. I have heard bits and pieces of Mahabharata in a paddy field where workingwomen, most of them were illiterate and dalits, sing Mahabharata stories in their own style. In the class room,

my teacher narrated the episodes from Mahabharata from a 16th century Kannada epic '*Kumara Bharata Kathamanjari*'. I have heard many *Harikatha Kalakshepas* at Panja, a tiny remote town at Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka State, where the Mahabharata stories were recited, sang, and told in its own fashion in sections, night after night, usually under a temporary pandal lit by petromax lanterns with few hundred audience sitting on the mud floor or on their own rugs or mats. As a social custom, there was a test for bridegroom that unless he sings few verses from the famous *Jaimini Bharata* of Laksmisha (16th century) he could not marry any girl. In a small performances of Yakshagana, it was the responsibility of the Dharmaraya to see that the petromax lanterns should give enough light properly till dawn. Many a time I saw Bhagavan Shri Krishna repairing old tube lights on the stage while talking with his beloved sister Draupadi. Duryodhana smoking Ganesh beedi behind the screen, Bhishmacharya drinking tea are all part of the present day Mahabharata. Performing artists all over India sang songs in several languages; told tales, danced, argued, and quoted Sanskrit shlokas as well as the daily newspapers made the Mahabharata entertaining, didactic and relevant to the audience. Thus, the native cultures or genres have intermingled with the greater Indian tradition multi dimensionally. The folk associate the similar and suitable aspects of the classical tradition of India and reinterpreted it in their socio-cultural settings. Like wise, the popular elements prevalent in the folk societies are assimilated in written form and thus the stream of reciprocity in the cycle of oral-written-oral flow is evolved for Mahabharata epic.

The complex, many-storied or multi-layered plot of this enormous epic is remembered and recalled in a great detail by most Indians. Such a recall is possible because it is an illustrated work. In a largely oral tradition, one learns one's major literary works as one learns a language- in bits and pieces that fit together and make a whole in the learners mind, because they are parts that reflect an underlying structure. In the popular forms like Pandava Lila at Garhwal, Pandwani at Chattisgarh, Terukuttu at Tamil Nadu, Yakshagana at Karnataka, Kathakkali at Kerala, Chindu Bhagawata at Andhrapradesh, the stories are narrated in bits and pieces like Subhadra Parinaya- Karna Parva, Vira Abhimanyu - Gada Yuddha etc. Sometimes they cross the borders of the epic and joins

with other epics also. However, as it has a well-plotted network of relations, the people will not miss its unity.

The Himalayan versions of Mahabharata:

Most of the Himalayan Mahabharata are centered around Pandavas with little bent towards Bhima and Hidimba. Hidimba, Bima's first wife is a Himalayan deity. Hundreds of songs are available on her in the central Himalayan range. There is also a temple dedicated to Hidamba Devi at Mandi. Banasur is another popular and powerful character in this area. His daughter Usha's marriage with Krishna's son Aniruddha is narrated in detail in many Himalayan ballads.

Among the Gaddis of Bhannaour, the killing of Jarasandha is quite popular. The Gaddi tribes of Kangra also tell a wonderful story of Bhima's hunting. In Kinnaur folklore, Kunta, the mother of the Pandavas is a central character. In another version, Kunta has a wicked sister called Nanti or Nati. The Dalits of Kinnaur of Himachal Pradesh has a song, which explains that the Pandavas lived on the hilltops, and the sixty Kauravas had their abode down below the mountain. The people of this village believe that the Pandavas had a sister named Boora devi. There is short song that explains how Bhima slapped her once for her arrogance.

The Pandvaya or Pandain version of Mahabharata deals with arrogance of Bhima. In Tehri Garhwal, the Pandava naach or popularly known Pandava Lila will be performed usually during the month of November to January every year.

The Jammu versions of Mahabharata are popularly known as Duggar desh where the love between a Naga girl Ulupi and Arjuna was highlighted. According to one version Pandavas lived in Jammu region during their exile.

The North Eastern versions:

The northeastern constructions of Mahabharata favor Kauravas rather than Pandavas. The Assamese believe that Bhagadatta, Rukma, Babhruvahana , Banasur are their ancestors. The people of Manipur believe that Chitrangada, mother of Babruvahana belongs to them. Bodo folksongs declare that Krishna's wife Rukmini was a Bodo girl. Most of the northeastern tribes believe that they supported Duryodhana in the Great Kurukshetra war. The Khamti tribes of this region have a version of Mahabharata called Chao Ajong.

The Central Indian telling:

Probably the best-known folk form of the Mahabharata from central India is the Pandwani of Chattisgarh. Kunti is known as Katama and Hastinapura is Hasana Nagar in Pandwani performances. The Kond tribes of Madhya Pradesh narrate an epic called Bhimsidi where Bhima is coming down to earth, as a beggar, full of wound and worms. The two tribal girls Konden Rani and Dumer Rani drive him out of their house. However, while the two sisters were taking their bath by putting off their cloths Bhima invokes his father Pavanar devata (Vayu) to make their clothes fly away. He puts them in a bamboo box and takes the form of tiger, a bear and a monster to play with girls. The Binjhal tribes have an epic where the killing of Kicaka was highlighted. The Kamar tribes have an episode of Bhima's oil bath. The folk songs of Bhojpuri , Awadh and Braj regions mention the early life of Krishna. Killings of Kansa, his love towards Radha and other Gopikas, stealing of curd, butter etc are explained in details.

South Indian constructions:

In Andhra Pradesh a Telugu Mahabharata mentions eating of the corpse of the father as a custom that makes the son powerful, intelligent and immortal. In this case, Krishna is said to have cheated the Pandavas of the opportunity of eating the dead body of their father Pandu. Krishna himself ate it away and become immortal. Only Sahadeva who ate

a little finger inherited his father's energy and wisdom. Krishna could not eat the little finger and therefore an ordinary hunter killed him by shooting an arrow into his toe.

Subhadra Sare or Subhadra's dower is another text available in Telugu. It deals with a quarrel between Subhadra and Arjuna. The Karnataka versions are bent towards Bhishma. Eating of Pandu's corpse by his children was explained in some of the tribal versions. In Yakshagana, almost all episodes of Mahabharata have been recreating in following ways:

First, there is a *Prasanga* (episode) text written by various authors. Secondly there is a *musical texts*, selected by the Bhagavata during performances, which are intricately produced lyric compositions based on these episodes in various meters set to different *talas*. Thirdly, there is a *verbal text*, which elevates the first text into a visual text via second text. It includes the artistry of voice and body. Hence crosses the linguistic level. During this phase, the actor is independent to use all of his resources like scriptures, plays, literature, society, politics, and practically everything. His makeup and dance styles visualize the Mahabharata on a small stage. Finally the audience text, where various types of audience create or interpret their own Mahabharata watching performance on stage.

In Kerala, the Mavaratam Pattu deals with certain anecdotes from Mahabharata in which Duryodhana deceitfully organizes many traps to do away with the Pandavas, who successfully escape from all mishaps due to the courage of Bhimasena. The story known as Nishalkkuthu is sung in detail. Nishalkuttu means killing of enemy by invoking their shadow through magical powers and piercing them to death. In Tamil Nadu, at least three major epics are available on Arjuna's marriage. They are Alli Aracani Malai, Pavalakkodi Malai and Minnoliyal Kuram. Another epic Ponnuruvi Macakkai deals with Kama's marriage.

Aravan festival is unique to Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Southern part of Andhra Pradesh. Since Aravan married Krishna in the guise of woman, the eunuchs think that

Krishna represented them and believes that Aravan is their husband. On the day of Aravan's marriage with Krishna, the eunuchs also celebrate their marriage and the next day they become widows as Aravan was sacrificed. The Telugu version of this episode introduces Barbarika's pre-war sacrifice to Kali. A north Indian variation of this character is available about Bhurisravas from Kurukshetra. The famous Telugu version of the dice game is called Dharmaraju Judamu. In this episode, Duryodhana plays dice with his hand, whereas Draupadi plays with her feet. Thus, there are four major regional and thematic variations found in the oral traditions of Mahabharata. The Himalayan variations support the Pandavas, Northeastern constructions support Kauravas, the central Indian constructions bent towards Bhima and South Indian telling supports Draupadi. The other Mahabharatas need not be assessed against that standard of the Vyasa Mahabharata according to their angle of divergence from Vyasa's version. Rather we must consider the many Mahabharatas of which Vyasa's telling as one of the many Mahabharatas from different regions.

Stereotypical models of Anthropological writings:

Studies on funeral rites:

Anthropology like history also flourished during colonial period. Based on Sanskrit texts, both Indian and western scholars constructed a stereotypical image of India for more than 300 years and we are furthering it till date.

Let us examine a stereotypical writings on funeral rites in India.

There are not many studies available on funeral rites in India. The main reason for the paucity in such studies is the difficulty involved in conducting fieldwork at the time of a funeral. The rites following death involve a number of strict procedures more than any other ceremonial occasion. The problems become more complex if the researcher belongs to a different community. Often even entry to the house of death is forbidden to an outsider.

Interestingly, the available studies on funeral rites in India are confined to the analysis of Brahmanical funeral rites based on the Sanskrit text '*Grihyasutra*'. Since the written text of '*Grihyasutra*' is readily available, such studies have relied more on theoretical explanations rather than on field-level observations. In fact, no comparative study of the textual procedures and contemporary contextual practices are to be attempted. However, some useful studies on these lines have been conducted by Shambhu Sharma (1960), Hertz (1960), Beck (1976), Kaushik (1976), Knipe (1977), Inden and Nicholas (1977), Das (1977), Srinivas (1978), Dumont (1980), Parry (1981), Kulkarni (1983), Hiebert (1983), Shastry (1985), Satyanath (1988), Zoller and Schombucher (1999), Gaenzle(1999), Demmer(1999), Feldhous (1999), Skyhawk (1999), and Bruckner (1999).

All these writings are based on '*Grihyasutra*' focusing Brahminical rituals. Hamilton (1976) has considered the whole sphere of funeral rites as a world opposed to our real world and he has sought to establish connections between the two opposing worlds. Berger (1978) has analyzed the difference between "socially defined society" and the "death defined society." Both these scholars have drawn the symbolic aspects of the world created by death. These scholars represent the popular trend in the studies on funeral rites. Meena Kaushik (1976) has identified four types of symbolism in the funeral rites, namely lateral symbolism, special symbolism, culinary symbolism, and acoustic symbolism. For Dumont (1980), the whole society is divided into pure and impure and M.N. Srinivas is obsessed with explaining the aspect of impurity in the funeral rites. Both Dumont and Srinivas have considered the funeral rites as a means of getting rid of impurity. Hertz (1960) finds the complex rites involving the difference of right and left hands as important aspect of funeral. In a significant departure from the above lines of thinking, Sathyanath (1988) describes the funeral rites against the backdrop of death and rebirth.

Not even one scholar tried to collect data, interpret, and analyze the processes of funeral rites of the non-Brahmin castes or communities. Does it mean that no one died in India other than Brahmins?

In this part of the paper an attempt has been made to explain the funeral rites of an untouchable community, which has never been discussed in our intellectual writings. For this purpose, I have taken up brief study of the funeral rites of the *Maila*, an untouchable community living at Sullia taluk of Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka state.

There are pre-funeral rites like '*Neer miipune*' (water bathing), singing of '*Chavu pat*' (Death song), decoration of Corpse, cremation etc. The relatives bring '*kattu*' or *hore* which is a packet consisting of coconut, coconut oil, corn flowers, chicken, and cooked rice with turmeric powder. *Chatta* will be prepared with help of Bamboo. Post funeral rites include '*Chavuta vanas*'(death feast), the '*pattonji*'(eleventh day) and *padinaji* (sixteenth day rites). These details are to be seen differently from those of the upper-castes. I would like to mention just three issues to examine the possible ways of understanding the meaning of death among *Mailas*.

1. The death rituals are not to be called '*anti world*', but appropriate to call them '*mediating world*'. They exist for sixteen days.
2. The funeral rites of the *mailas* differ from those of the Brahmins. This becomes clear in the number of *pitrs* – for Brahmins it is three and for *Mailas* it is sixteen.
3. The bier consists of bamboo poles. The planting of a plantain tree on the cremation ground and preparing a dish of raw banana (not ripened) are essential during the *Mailas* funeral rites. Symbolically the use of bamboo and plantain indicates the attachment to the family (*kula*). It may be noted here that the new plants sprout at the base of bamboo and plantain. This symbolizes the emotional attachment to the origin of family, which metaphorically gets expression during funeral rites. Hence, it could be argued that kinship plays a dominant role in *Maila* funeral rites.

Conclusion:

Destroying deep-rooted stereotypes is not easy. Part of it involves knowing, or researching what Europeans believed us to be in the past, what they believe now and what they see for the future. We must do it systematically, by specific audiences that are important to us. Then we must ask some basic questions as to whether these stereotypes are accurate. What qualities seem to be missing or are different, between past, present and future? Today we must find them, hunt them out in our thinking patterns, and then destroy them, get rid of them and try to imagine how things are without stereotypes.

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