

RADIANCE-III

III Semester B.A./B.S.W/B.A,(Music)

GENERAL ENGLISH

**Under the State Education Policy
(SEP-2024)**

Chief Editor

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**BANGALORE CITY UNIVERSITY
Bengaluru**



RADIANCE-III: General English Textbook for III Semester B.A/B.S.W/B.A (Music) and other courses coming under Faculty of Arts, is prepared by the Members of the Textbook Committee, Bengaluru City University (BCU).



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**Published by:
Bengaluru City University (BCU)
Central College Campus
Bengaluru- 560001.**

FOREWORD

Radiance-III General English Textbook for III Semester B.A./B.A. (MUSIC)., and other courses under the Faculty of Arts has been designed with the dual-objective of inducing literary sensibility and developing linguistic skills in students. The texts have been curated to provide students with holistic perspective on life through the various lenses of literature while honing their linguistic, language and communication skills.

The selection of literary texts not only reflect literary riches but a deeper relevance to contemporary social and cultural themes.

I take this opportunity to congratulate and appreciate the meticulous efforts of the Board of Studies (BOS) and the Text Book Committee for successfully bringing out this textbook through their thoughtful selection of texts. I also thank the Director of Bengaluru Central University Press and their personnel for bringing out the textbook neatly and on time.

I hope the text will motivate the teachers and the students to make the best use of it and develop literary sensibility as well as linguistic skills.

Prof. K. R Jalaja
Vice-Chancellor (Acting)
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PREFACE

Radiance-III General English Textbook for III Semester B.A./B.A. (MUSIC)., and other courses under the Faculty of Arts, Bengaluru City University (BCU), has been thoughtfully developed to strengthen students' language proficiency and communication skills. As the third instalment in the B.A series under the newly implemented State Education Policy, this textbook builds on a progressive approach to English education.

This syllabus provides a thorough exploration of various literary genres, essential linguistic concepts, and practical communication techniques. It's crafted to develop critical thinking, refine analytical abilities, and foster a deep appreciation for the richness of literature and the strength of language.

Through well-known literary works and organized grammar lessons, students will delve into the details of storytelling, rhetorical expression, and language structure. The goal is to broaden their literary knowledge and provide them with crucial skills for both academic success and effective real-world communication.

I truly commend the textbook committee for their dedicated work in preparing this valuable resource. My sincere thanks also go to the Director and the team at Bengaluru City University Press for ensuring the book was published accurately and on time.

Dr.T.N. Thandava Gowda
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Note to the Teacher

Starting year of implementation: 2025-26	Total Credits for the Programme: 04
Subject: GENERAL ENGLISH	Teaching hour per week: 04
Name of the Degree Programme – B.A.	Total number of lecture hours/semester 60/64

It is with immense pleasure that we unveil this academic volume, meticulously conceived to offer undergraduate students a well-integrated foundation in both literary appreciation and linguistic competence. This textbook judiciously brings together an eclectic array of literary texts and essential grammar modules to support a truly multidimensional learning experience.

The selection of content within this volume reflects the committee's unwavering commitment to academic excellence. Special attention has been diligently given to incorporating distinguished literary works that represent a broad spectrum of styles, periods, and cultural contexts. The literary section includes a representative assortment of plays, poems, short stories, and essays, each serving as a gateway to understanding varied literary forms, thematic complexities, and interpretative approaches.

Ultimately, this textbook aspires to nurture intellectual curiosity, sharpen analytical skills, and strengthen students' command of the English language, thereby comprehensively preparing them for both academic pursuits and practical communication beyond the classroom.

‘Shivaratri’ by Chandrasekhar Kambar is a powerful play that delves into the complexities of tradition versus modernity, caste dynamics, and social reform within a historical Indian setting. Through this play, students will gain insight into evolving societal structures, the impact of individual agency on collective change, and the interplay of myth and reality in dramatic narratives. ‘Marginlands: A Journey into India’s Vanishing Landscapes – “Prologue” by Arthi Kumar - Rao offers a poignant exploration of environmental degradation and the human stories behind vanishing *ecosystems across India*. Teachers can highlight the urgency of ecological awareness, the role of investigative journalism, and the power of non-fiction

narrative, while students learn to grasp complex environmental issues and appreciate evocative descriptive writing.

‘Transgender Parenting: the Impact It Had on Me’ by Akkai Padmashali is a compelling TED Talk that shares a deeply personal journey of gender identity and the profound effects of transgender parenting on individual lives and family dynamics. Teachers can utilize this talk to facilitate discussions on gender diversity, social inclusion, human rights, and the significance of personal testimony, enabling students to cultivate empathy and understand diverse lived experiences. ‘Of Mothers, among other things’ by A.K. Ramanujan is a nuanced poem that explores themes of memory, family relationships, and the subtle complexities of cultural identity through vivid personal recollections. Teachers can guide students to analyse rich imagery, poetic structure, and the portrayal of emotional bonds, while students learn to appreciate the depth of familial connections and the art of poetic expression. Lastly, ‘Those Winter Sundays’ by Robert Hayden is a poignant poem that reflects on the quiet sacrifices and unspoken love within a parent-child relationship, often recognized only in retrospect. Teachers can use this poem to discuss themes of duty, gratitude, and the recognition of everyday acts of love, helping students to explore emotional subtext and universal human experiences.

Through its varied and contemporary themes and genres, this text offers students a detailed and comprehensive experience. Each piece is further supported by a pre-reading activity, an introduction to the author, a glossary, a concise note about the text, and suggestions for further reading to effectively aid the learning process.

To foster effective learning, we prioritize active student participation and meaningful classroom discussions. Integrating multimedia resources will enrich the teaching-learning process, offering varied and engaging experiences. We also aim to cultivate an inclusive classroom environment where every student feels confident and empowered. Furthermore, embracing experiential learning and peer-to-peer collaboration will bridge theory with practice, enhancing both engagement and academic outcomes for all.

The Textbook Committee expresses its sincere appreciation to Dr. Thandava Gowda T. N., Chairperson (UG/PG), Bengaluru City University, for his steadfast support and significant contributions towards the successful publication of this textbook. We are also deeply thankful to Prof. K R Jalaja, Honourable Vice-Chancellor of BCU, for her valuable guidance and thoughtful suggestions throughout the process.

As Chairperson of the Textbook Committee, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the Textbook committee members for their dedication and collaborative spirit in bringing this challenging project to completion.

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**CURRICULUM STRUCTURE FOR THE UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE
PROGRAMME**

**B.A./B.A. (MUSIC) AND OTHER PROGRAMMES UNDER FACULTY OF
ARTS**

III SEMESTER - GENERAL ENGLISH Starting year of implementation: 2025-26	Total Credits for the Programme: 04	
Subject: GENERAL ENGLISH	Teaching hour per week: 04	
Name of the Degree Programme – B.A.	Total number of lecture hours/semester 60 per semester	
III SEMESTER- GENERAL ENGLISH B.A./B.A. (MUSIC) AND OTHER PROGRAMMES UNDER FACULTY OF SCIENCE	60/64hrs	80 marks

III SEMESTER - GENERAL ENGLISH – B.A.		60/64hrs	80 marks
UNIT - 1			
LITERARY SKILLS		30 hrs	40 marks
PLAY	Shivaratri - Chandrasekhar Kambar	14 hrs	20 marks
ARTICLE	Marginlands: A Journey into India's Vanishing Landscapes – “Prologue” – Arthi Kumar - Rao	4hrs	5 marks
TED TALK	Transgender Parenting: the Impact It Had on Me - Akkai Padmashali	4hrs	5 marks
POEM	Of Mothers, among other things – A.K. Ramanujan	4hrs	5 marks
POEM	Those Winter Sundays – Robert Hayden	4hrs	5 marks
UNIT – 2			
COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS (LSRW SKILLS)		30 hrs	40 marks
LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS	PRESENTATION SKILLS	5 hrs	
	Types - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informative/Instructional Presentation • Persuasive Presentation • Decision Making Presentation • Demonstrative Presentation 		5 marks
READING AND WRITING SKILLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension Passages 	3 hrs	5 marks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para Jumble/Para Completion 	3 hrs	5 marks
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Story Writing 	3hrs	5 marks
	CORRESPONDENCES		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resume and Cover Letter 	2 hrs	5 marks
	Formal Letters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave Letter • Application Letters • Enquiry Letter • Inviting Letter 	3hrs	5 marks
	Business Correspondence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters of Enquiry • Placing an Order Letters • Letters of Complaint • Reply to Letter of Complaint 	6 hrs	5 marks
	COMMERCIAL WRITING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertisement Writing (Classifieds & Commercial) • Poster and Brochure Writing/Designing 	5 hrs	5 marks

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Dr. Chandrashekhara Kambara

Dr. Chandrashekhara Kambara (b.1937), poet-playwright-novelist-critic, has to his credit **44** works including eight poetry collections, 22 plays, three novels, and 12 collections of critical articles. Most of his works have been translated into English and other Indian languages. After his Doctoral degree in 1975, he taught in many institutions including Chicago university and Bangalore University. He was the founder **Vice chancellor**, Kannada Univ., Hampi (1991-97); **Chairman, NSD** (1996-2000); and **nominated MLC**, Karnataka (2004-2010). His major awards and honours include **Padmashree** (2001), Central **Sahitya Akademi Award** (1991), **Kabir Samman** (2003), and the prestigious **Jnyanapith Award** (2010).

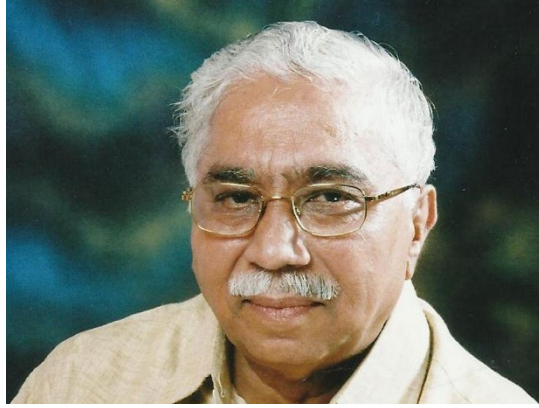
Dr. C.N. Ramachandran

Dr.C.N. Ramachandran (b. 1936), M.A., L.L.B. & Ph.D. has taught English language and literature in various universities in India and abroad. He retired as 'Professor Emeritus' from Mangalore University in 1996. Primarily a critic and translator, he has pulished both in English (10 books) and Kannada (16 books). He has translated many works from Kannada to English, including the translation of the oral epic in Kannada (**Malé Madeshwara**, 2001). He has attended National and International Conferences; and his awards include the **Karnataka Rajyotsava Award** (2007), **Karnataka Sahitya Akademi Award for lifetime Achievement** (2001, and **K.K. Birla Fellowship** (2005).

ŚIVARĀTRI

(The Dark Night of Shiva)

A Play



Dr. Chandrashekhara Kambara

Translated by
Dr. C.N. Ramachandran

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INTRODUCTION

7

1

Chandrashekhara Kambara, playwright-poet-novelist-critic and Jnyanapith awardee (2012) holds a unique place in the field of post-independence Kannada literature; he fuses modern sensibility with traditional forms of performance and expression. With 22 plays, eight poetry collections, four novels, and 12 collections of research articles on theatre and literature, Kambar is one of the most significant writers in Kannada, today.

In the light of the rural vigour and gusto of Kambar's poetry and plays, it is not a coincidence that he was born in a small village called Ghodgeri, in Karnataka. Born in 1937 into a poor family of blacksmiths by profession, Kambar had to struggle for education from the very beginning. But, while he was growing up in his small rural place, he began to absorb the very spirit of popular performances like '*Sangya Balya*' and '*Lavani*'; and he developed an undying love for their music and theatricality.

Most of Kambar's works have been translated into English and other Indian languages; and almost all of his plays have been staged in different parts of the country. Here, I consider only his plays. After introductory comments on the characteristics of Kambar's theatre, I go on to give the historical background of *Śivarātri*; and, in the third section, I briefly discuss the play.

At the time when Kambar wrote his first play in 1961, the Kannada theatre had begun to move away slowly from the Theatre of Realism (Kailasam and Sriranga), exploring new concerns and newer forms of representation. The 'Angry Young Man' of the Fifties had begun to catch the attention of the city audiences (with the Modernist plays of Lankesh) along with the 'Absurd Plays' of Chandrashekhara Patil and Chandrakantha Kusanur. Girish Karnad's first play *Yayati* (an interrogation of the old myth from a woman's point of view) had just been staged (1960), introducing mythopoeic drama to Kannada theatre.

Although the first three plays of Kambar heralded the arrival of a major playwright on the scene, it was his *Jokumaraswamy* in 1972 that won him national recognition. The production of this play, under the direction of B. V. Karanth, was, as Rajendra Chenni records,

"...by consensus the most significant event in modern Kannada theatre. Here was a play for 'total theatre.' It had great songs set to music by Kambar, ritual worship of the phallic fertility god, humour, uninhibited treatment of sexuality, conflict and tragedy, albeit muted. Kannada theatre seemed to have undergone a major scene-shift, from the realistic proscenium 'prosy' stage to the colours, movement, music, and rhythms of a mythopoeic folk-theatre." ¹

Jokumaraswamy was followed by a series of major plays including *Jaisidanayaka* (1975), *Kadu Kudure* (1976; its film-adaptation won National Award), *Harakeya Kuri* (1983; film version won National Award), and *Siri Sampige* (1991; Sahitya Akademi Award). Including the recent play *Śivarātri* (2011), in all, Kambar has 22 plays to his credit.

Before we go to discuss the play, a few points in general concerning Kambar's distinctive theatre may not be out of place. To start with, Kambar, thanks to his childhood days, seems to have absorbed almost all the stage-techniques (like mixing the serious with the comic, use of myths and legends, use of local idiom, music and dance, etc.) of folk-theatre. In his introduction to the English translation of *Siri Sampige*, he makes it clear what his roots as a playwright are:

"... the folk theatre includes dance, drama, narration, song, sex, death and religion. Most importantly, it is not only the actors who are separate from the world outside but the audience of the play as well. For the audience of the folk play *participates* in what is ultimately a shared religious ritual in the form of a play. ... A Londoner finds his dance, song, drama and religion at different places. A man from my village looks for all these things together. To simplify, Ibsen is impossible in my village; but may I add, he should not be possible."²

Let me add that this is as good an exposition of 'Total Theatre' as expositions go.

However, he exploits all these techniques and stage-accessories of folk theatre to express modernist themes, which are common to both his poetry and drama: the primeval force of sexuality (*Rishyashruna*, *Jokumaraswamy*, etc.), contemporary political decadence (*Jaisiddanayaka*, *Harakeya Kuri*, etc.), conflict between illusion and reality (*Siri Sampige*, etc.), tradition and change (*Tukrana Kanasu*), etc. The point to be stressed here is that Kambar's plays are not 'single-agenda-plays'; more often than not, most of the major plays of Kambar harmonise two or three themes together.

The last two plays stand apart from the rest of the plays: *Mahāmāyī* (1999) and *Śivarātri* (2011). Even though they also employ 'prologue' and narrators to bring together narration and dramatization, and include songs and dances, they do not tell a 'story'. While the first one is an allegory, dramatization of an abstract speculation about Fate and Human freedom, the second one views the great 12th-century Veerashaiva movement in Karnataka from a subaltern point of view.

Mahāmāyī ("The Great Mother")³ is a play that dramatises the most abstract ideas in the most concrete form. The issues it deals with are those that have haunted the human mind since time immemorial – the limits of human freedom and predestination. Where does one begin and the other end?

The myth through which Kambar chooses to examine these abstractions is one of death. There are many such Indian myths like *Satyavan-Savithri* and *Markandeya* ⁴ which examine the issue of 'human will vs. death.' But the myth Kambar uses is the one in the oral tradition. (Interestingly, in this myth it is not a god like Yama as in the classical tradition but a goddess, Shetavi Taayi (Mother Shetavi) who is responsible for one's death.) Shetavi Taayi adopts an orphan (Sanjiva) and blesses him with miraculous ability to cure any person of any illness. But the condition is that he should treat only those persons whom the Mother approves. When Sanjiva comes to know that the king's daughter is fatally ill, he consents to examine her; but when he is getting ready, his Mother orders him not to treat the princess, making Sanjiva sad. Later, Sanjiva accidentally runs into the princess who, sick of her illness, is about to commit suicide. At once, he diagnoses what illness she suffers from; and gives her a root to wear around her neck always. Miraculously, she recovers; and both fall in love with

each other. However, the Mother, terribly angry with her son's actions, orders him to remove the root from the princess's neck and allow her to die as she is predestined. Sanjiva refuses to listen to her. In the end, the Mother manoeuvres in such a way that the princess herself removes the root from her neck and dies. However, when the Mother blesses her son doubling his life-span, he gives half of it to the princess and saves her.

The paradox of 'Man's freedom and pre-destination' is at the centre of the play and it is emphasized throughout. In the prologue itself, the Mother declares: "*I am the Mother / the final destination / of all things, moving and motionless.*" When Sanjiva tells the Mother that he treated the princess so that she may escape "untimely death," the Mother bursts out: Who are you to decide what is timely or untimely for her? Can you decide her fate / With your medicine?

Sanjiva:- Then, is my medicine – Human effort – of no consequence at all?

Mother:- Truth lies too deep. Your knowledge, son, does not have the power to dive so deep."

Despite his Mother's admonition, Sanjiva chooses to disobey her because he knows, as a man blessed with knowledge, he has to make a conscious choice and that only through such an attempt can he define himself as a man. Accordingly, he makes the conscious choice of saving the princess and thus establishing his human identity.

While discussing the inter-textuality of the play in his introduction, G. S. Amur states:

"The 'triumph' of man over death has been the theme of myths all over the world, though the instruments of

victory have not been the same. In the Markandeya myth, which figures prominently as a sub theme in *The Mother Supreme* for example, it is **bhakti**, devotion to God; in the Savithri myth it is **jnana**, true knowledge, and in the Hercules myth, it is sheer physical power.”⁵

So, what does the play connote overall? Does it endorse the freedom of Man? For, Sanjiva does save the princess against the Mother’s wishes. Superficially, it does appear that ‘human effort, Love, conquers all including death’; but, we should remember that even the princess’s re-birth is due to the indirect blessing of the Mother in that it is she who doubles the life-span of Sanjiva. Then, is death the only ultimate truth available to Man? Not exactly; it is Sanjiva who consciously decides to give half of his life to the princess. While the myths of Savithri and Markandeya celebrate love and bhakti respectively, *Mahamayī* is open-ended and leaves the ambiguity of Life and Death unresolved.

*

Śivarātri

The Sharana Movement:

‘Sharana’ means ‘one who has taken refuge’; and in this particular context, the term refers to those who took refuge in Shiva. Karnataka, in the 12th century, witnessed a great socio-religious-literary reform movement, called variously Śaraṇa Movement or ‘Vīraśaiva’/ Lingāyata movement.

Basavēśwara (also called ‘Basavaṇṇa’), 1106-1167, was the founder/ leader of this movement. Though most of the particulars about him including his birth, caste, and such other

issues are constantly debated, the following are accepted as facts about his life by most scholars. Basavanna's parents were Brahmins: Madarasa and Madalambike; and his place of birth was a town called Bagewadi (Bijapur district, Karnataka). From his childhood itself, Basavanna cultivated devotion for Shiva and contempt for conventional Vedic rituals and beliefs. At the age of 16, he decided to seek Shiva, rejected the sacred thread worn as a sign of his caste, and left for the place where three rivers meet, Kappadisangama / Kudalasangama. There he found his guru; and under his guidance he studied the Vedas and other spiritual texts. His fame as a great scholar and devotee of Shiva spread as far as Kalyana, the capital of king Bijjala, of the Kalachurya dynasty. Baladeva, Basavanna's uncle, was a minister of Bijjala; and he sent for Basavanna. Basavanna went to Kalyana, married his uncle's daughter Gangambike, and became a trusted friend of the king. He joined the king's service as an accountant and, very soon, rose to become the royal treasurer (*Bhandāri*). During this period, Basavanna turned into an ardent social reformer, and began to preach against casteism, blind rituals, animal sacrifice, and such other social evils. Very soon, he gathered around him a large number of followers who came from different castes and classes in society; and they grew into a sect called Vīraśaiva, a particular form of Shaivism. It also came to be called 'Lingāyata' because, Basavanna made all of his followers wear, after initiation into the new sect, a small linga, a symbol of Shiva on their body (called *Iṣṭalinga*), as a mark of identity. He established an institution called '*Anubhava Mantapa*' (Hall of Experience; also called *Mahāmane* in the play), under the aegis of which all devotees would meet on equal footing and discuss social as well as spiritual issues. Owing to his reformatory and humane teachings, the number of his followers increased enormously. At this time, two of Basavanna's

followers, Madhuvarasa (formerly a Brahmin) and Haralayya (a former dalit) decided to get their children married. This inter-caste marriage infuriated the orthodox sections in power; and owing to their coercion, Bijjala cruelly punished the parents who had disobeyed the caste-system. However, Basavanna's followers also retaliated against the king. Ultimately, the revolt was forcefully put down; Bijjala was killed, and those of Basavanna's followers who escaped death fled the city for safety. Basavanna, deeply hurt by this bloodbath, went back to Kudalasangama and ended his life there.

The new sect attracted many great philosophers, scholars, and poets of that period, including Allama Prabhu, Mahadeviyakka, Siddharama, and a host of others from all walks of life. In order to express their thoughts and feelings, they created a new literary form called *Vachana* (which, literally, means 'spoken'), a form partly poetic and partly prose. For a long time, these *Vachanas* were preserved in the oral tradition until, in the 16th century, they were collected and given a formal written form by name *Shunya Sampadane*. Though many are lost, more than a thousand *Vachanas* by one hundred and odd *śaraṇas* have been preserved today; and they constitute a body of compositions that stand out boldly in the literary-philosophical history of Kannada.⁶

Basavanna's *Vachanas* are variegated in themes and tone: pungently satirical (when he ridicules Vedic sacrifices and rituals), intensely dramatic (when he talks about the path of *bhakti*), highly didactic (when he has to lay down the ethical codes of the new sect), and acutely poignant (when he registers the gulf between his limitations as man and the divinity of Shiva). Among his precepts, these three are at the core of the new Lingāyata sect: *kāyaka* (work-ethics), which respected

every kind of manual labour and thereby gave dignity to artisans like potters, carpenters, and tanners; *dâsôha* (food, and metaphorically education, given to others in charity), which allowed even the poor and the penniless to live with dignity; and *linga* (faith in Shiva), which put an end to the innumerable local gods and goddesses, and rituals to appease them. He rebelled against all Vedic rituals and social discriminations, advocated simple and pure living, and love of all living beings. The following famous *Vacana* expresses the moral-ethical nature of Basavanna's new sect:

'Do not steal, do not kill; don't tell lies and don't get angry; do not dislike others; don't praise yourself, don't ridicule others; this is inner purity and this is outer purity; this is the way to please our lord of Kudala Sangama'.

*

"*Gelatige*" ('To the Friend'), the last poem in the recent poetry- collection of Kambar, *Ellide Shivapura* (2009), ends with these lines:

"What do we need to live?
A few illusions, a few more dreams!
My dreams are young, and I have scores of illusions!
Even an aged tree can put on new leaves if there is sap;
I possess a little even now to give – and to receive;
That is enough to lift up the horizon."

These lines reveal why, even after 21 plays and six collections of poetry besides fiction and critical essays, Chandrashekhara Kambar has something new to say, something

new to show. He has still a few dreams of ideals and functions; he is still left with a few illusions –dreams and illusions of a better society, and a just social order.

This new play of Kambar also is the dramatization of a ‘dream’ –the dream of Basavanna and his followers, who initiated the 12th-century- socio-political revolution, the *Sharana* Movement. As a matter of fact, the *Sharana* movement was of such great significance and impact that, beginning with Harihara, the 13th-century Kannada poet, till today, there have been at least 200 literary works on that movement and the leaders of that movement. Even if we limit ourselves to the 20th century, we find eminent writers like A. N. Krisnarao, P. Lankesh, H. S. Shivaprakash, and Girish Karnad writing plays on the movement.⁷ However, the *Sharana* movement was of such magnitude and so inclusive that no single work can do justice to all the aspects of that movement. All that a writer can do is to view the movement from one perspective or another.

Kambar’s play is different from all other works on that movement; also, it is different from almost all other plays of Kambar himself. Surprisingly, this play of Kambar strictly follows the three Unities enumerated by Aristotle: the duration of the play is limited to just one night –the terrible, dark night after the *Sharanas*, Haralayya and Madhuvarasa, were meted out a cruel form of death punishment; the night in which king’s soldiers hunted out the *Sharanas* (Basavanna’s followers); the night in which the atmosphere of fear, spread everywhere, made the dark new-moon-night darker. The place of action is also limited to just one part of the city of Kalyana, king Bijjala’s capital –that part of the city in which the marginalized sections of society such as dalits, prostitutes, gamblers, thieves and such

others lived. In fact, excepting Basavanna and Bijjala, all other characters of the play belong to the lowest strata of society. Kambar as a playwright is known for his well-built plots and fully developed characters; but, in this play, there is not much of a plot which has a clear development consisting of beginning, rising action, climax and the falling action. Rather, we have a series of scenes beginning with the socially 'lowly' ones and ending with the meeting between Basavanna and Bijjala. In the beginning, the *Sutradhara* briefly sums up the story up to the death of Haralayya and Madhuvarasa, and then the play begins. While some characters are on the realistic plane, a few others like Sangayya the innocent, and Kalyani, the patron-goddess of the city of Kalyana, waver on the borderline of realism and symbolism. All these details add up to the fact that this play attempts to view the *Sharana* movement from the perspective of the marginalized sections of society. The play, keeping time constant, goes on moving from one place to another in the city, like a good cameraman moving from one place to another to catch the varied activities of different people at different parts of the city, carried on at the same time.

Through such techniques (lack of an organic plot, focus on the marginalized sections of the city, shifting locale, unity of time, etc), the play intends to address certain interesting questions regarding the *Sharana* movement: a) How did the contemporary lower classes view the *Sharana* movement? b) What values of life generated by the movement entered their lives? a) and, what was the nature of conflict between Basavanna and Bijjala?

a) we should note that every socio-religious movement has two aspects: the first aspect deals with certain abstractions

regarding the nature of God, creation of this universe, God-man relationship, etc. which are based only on faith; and b) the second aspect consisting of certain codes of conduct (including food, dress and social behaviour) pertaining to daily life.

Coming to the first aspect of abstractions, although the *Sharana* movement was a mass-movement, one cannot say that the lower classes had understood such concepts of '*iṣṭa linga*' (Shiva's symbol, linga, worn on the body), '*dāsōha*' (sharing what we have with others, especially food), '*kāyaka*' (physical labour put in to earn our daily bread), '*sthāvara-jangama*' ('stationary-moving'), and such. In the play, on one occasion, Kallappa (a poor manual labourer) tells his neighbours: "It is said that *Anna* (elder brother; referred to Basavanna) gives every one a soul? Is it true?" Then Kashavva, replies: "And they give it free; it is called lingappa." Kallappa then exclaims: "If it is given free, couldn't you bring home two or three? We could also be happy playing with it." This piece of conversation makes it clear that common people, even the contemporaries of Basavanna, hadn't grasped the abstract symbolism of '*iṣṭa linga*.' However, certain basic codes of conduct and behavior preached by Basavanna (such as 'do not kill; do not steal; do not tell a lie; . . .) had reached the common people and had certainly made an impact on them.

The incident of 'the stolen gold necklace belonging to the palace' establishes this point. When Damodara, the son of Harihara pandita (court-scholar), steals the necklace on the instigation of his father and hides it in Kashavva's hut, the old man declares that 'there is some unbearable stink of a dead rat inside the hut.' When Sangayya the innocent gets it and gives it to a prostitute, Kamakshi, she thinks she is not worth such an

expensive gift and transfers it to Savantri the prostitute. She declares that she hasn't earned it by her sweat and discards it in a corner of her house. But, the scholar-Brahmin Harihara covets such a precious necklace and induces his son to steal it.

Similarly, as the play points out, such unlettered and poor people like Kallappa, Kashavva, the old man, and such evaluate the incidents of the death sentence meted out to Haralayya and Madhuvarasa, inter-caste marriage, and such on the basis of 'Natural Justice.' Tungavva, a poor woman, declares in anger: "That wretched king! One doesn't know how many people he gets killed and what for!" Kallappa responds: "Damn his mother! Look, I cannot bear even to look at such people." Savantri the prostitute defends her profession with the king: "Sir, we also have certain principles. They do not change from person to person; king or commoner, they are the same for all." The thief, Chikkayya, who comes from Kashmir (sent by his king) to kill Basavanna, goes through a change of heart and becomes a *Sharana*, a follower of Basavanna. All these details establish the fact that Basavanna's movement had percolated even to the lowest strata of society and had deeply influenced their lives. The ones that remained untouched and away from the socio-religious movement of Basavanna were those that belonged to the upper strata of society and Establishment like Harihara the scholar and palace-dwellers.

The entire play of Kambar is built on the binary contrast of '*Aramane-Mahamane*.' ('*Aramane*' means the palace, an institution established by kingship; '*Mahamane*' or *Anubhava Mantapa* was the meeting place of all *Sharanas* irrespective of their class or caste.) At the climax of the play, both these binaries confront each other, at midnight, at the house of Savantri the prostitute. Whereas Basavanna, representing *Mahamane* comes

there in search of Sangayya the innocent, the king, representing the palace, comes there seeking pleasure. This is the most dramatic point in the play: the saint confronting the king in a prostitute's house, on a dark night of new-moon day, when the king's soldiers are hunting down the saint's followers everywhere. The playwright exploits this incident to establish the values and principles of 'Mahamane' and 'Aramane.'

Basavanna treats Savantri the prostitute as 'mother,' but Bijjala the king treats her as a whore who lives selling her body. 'Aramane' (palace) connotes rules and regulations, scandal mongers, spies and soldiers; 'Mahamane' is a place where all the *Sharanas* meet irrespective of their caste-creed-class and discuss their experiences. The language of 'Aramane' is Sanskrit, the language of gods ('devabhāṣa'); the language of 'Mahamane' is the spoken language of all people, scholars and commoners .

On this occasion, the words spoken by Basavanna to Bijjala constitute the organizing motif of the play:

“ Sir, a king's laws should be based on god-consciousness; and they should uphold every man's self-respect. You continue to be a king only till your laws do not violate these two principles. But your laws violated them; hence we had to seek a path different from yours.”

Bijjala comes to fully understand the purport of these words of Basavanna when he is about to be killed by Jagadeva and Bommarasa. “ After all is said and done, I am a 'Bhavi,' a man of this world; pardon me, Basava,” Bijjala confesses with regret and gets ready to die.

Kambar uses the *Vachanas* of Basavanna and other *Sharanas* in appropriate places, which lend the play a different dimension altogether.

They are not quoted either directly or in full; rather, their echoes are heard in certain phrases and sentences, which not only make such situations more dramatic but also harp back to the poetry and concerns of the *Sharanas*, and give a spiritual grace to such passages.

The title is charged with multiple meanings. Interestingly, even the highly experimental and allegorical novel *Chakori* also is narrated by dreams 'on the night of Shivaratri.' The term 'Shivapura,' a fictitious locale that occurs in most of Kambar's poetry and plays as a metaphor for 'ideal society' echoes 'Shiva-ratri.' This play, at a particular point, equates Kalyana (Bijjala's capital) with 'Shivapura' ('... *It was our dream to make stagnant water flow, mix it with new and fresh water, and thus create 'a meeting of rivers' called Shivapura* ').

At another level, the term Śivarātri is charged with terrible irony. According to ancient Hindu myths, the rituals conducted on the day of 'Maha Shivaratri' (on the 14th day of the black fortnight, in the month of *Magha*) symbolize such life-giving values as 'non-violence, Truth, sympathy, and forgiveness.' But, as the play shows, that particular *Shivaratri* was characterized by heartless violence let loose by a cruel political system. As the Sutradhara says, "on that day, nothing was there, in the city of Kalyana, in the proper place and proper order. None had any trust in others. . . . in that night, the night of Shivaratri, Kalyana didn't sleep at all." What we find on that night, in the place of Shiva's worship and prayers, are the bloody chase and murder of the *Sharanas* by the soldiers; the abominable cruelty of kingship that doesn't want to return even the dead bodies to their relations but prefers to offer them as food for hawks and crows; fathers who force their children to steal from the palace; the established thief who becomes a *Sharana*; the prostitute

who adheres to certain principles even in her lowly profession; Sangayya the innocent who insists on performing his *linga-puja* only in the prostitute's place; and, to cap it all, the meeting between the saint and the king in the house of a woman of low repute —this is indeed an absurd world and the play's title compels the audience to grasp this absurdity.

Śivarātri, which echoes back to Kuvempu's *Smashana Kurukshetram* (the cemetery called Kurukshetra) and Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, is a major contribution to Kannada theatre.⁸

*

While writing the Foreword to the original (Kannada) play, I was so caught up with it that I felt I had to translate this unusual and powerful play to English so that it could reach non-Kannada readers also. Fortunately, when I expressed this wish, Dr. Kambar readily agreed and gave me permission to translate it. Also, he has patiently explained certain concepts and expressions that I found either difficult or ambiguous. I am extremely thankful to him for his trust and co-operation in this challenging task.

Sri N. Ravikumar, an established Publisher in Kannada, has come forward to publish this translation. I am obliged to him and his wife, Dr. Chandrika for their interest in this work.

In my translation, I have been very faithful to the original text. I have tried to keep the use of Kannada cultural terms to the minimum; whenever a particular concept or expression appeared to be unintelligible to non-Kannada readers, I have glossed it in 'notes.' One major aspect of the play is its use of 'caste-class specific' dialects of Kannada to distinguish the

characters belonging to different strata of society. For obvious reasons, I couldn't show such linguistic features in my translation. I hope my efforts in this direction are successful and the readers of this English version will respond to the text as enthusiastically as the readers of the Kannada text.

C. N. Ramachandran

NOTES

1. Rajendra Chenni, "The Theatre of Chandrashekhara Kambar," intr. *Siri Sampige And Other Plays* (Bengaluru: Provokeindia, 2009), xii.
2. Chandrashekhara Kambar, "My Writing," intro. English translation of *Siri Sampige*, 1996.
3. Chandrashekhara Kambar, *Maha Mayi* in *Siri Sampige and Other Plays*, 139-218.
4. The story of 'Satyavan-Savitri' is found in many puranas. As foretold before his birth, Satyavan meets an early death; but his wife, Savitri, argues with Yama, the god of death, and persuades him to grant life again to her husband. Aurobindo's epic in English is based on this myth. Markandeya, a mythical figure, is a devotee of Shiva. He is also doomed to early death. When Yama's assistants come to take away his life, he embraces Linga, the symbol of Shiva, and thus escapes death.
5. G. S. Amur, in his introduction to *Mother Supreme* (English translation of *Maha Mayi*), ix.
6. For a good translation of the *Vachanas*, see: A. K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Shiva* (Penguin Classics, 1973). This work contains the *Vachanas* of only four saints (Basavanna, Allama Prabhu, Mahadeviyakka, and Devara Dasimayya), along with a very useful

critical introduction. A more recent translation of the *Vachanas* is by O. L. Nagabhushana Swamy et al., *The Sign* (Prasaranga: Kannada Univ., 2007). This work contains the translations of 468 *Vachanas* by 60 saints.

- 7 B. C. Balur's *Basaveshwara* is, perhaps, the first modern play on the *Sharana* movement. A. N. Krishna Rao (*anakru*), *Jagajyoti Basaveshwara*; P. Lankesh, *Sankranti*; M. M. Kalaburgi, *Kettitu Kalyana*; H. S. Shivaprakash, *Mahachaitra*; Girish Karnad, *Taledanda* — these are some of the most important plays written in the 20th century on the movement.
8. K. V. Puttappa (*kuvempu*)'s *Smashana Kurukshetram* is a poetic play that pictures the Kurukshetra battlefield on the last day of the war; it looks at the 18-day war from the point of view of common soldiers and their widowed wives. See: *Kurukshetra The Graveyard* in Prabhu Shankara, *Kuvempu's Three Plays* (Bengaluru: Directorate of Kannada & Culture, 1989), 67-126.

ŚIVARĀTRI

(The Dark Night of Shiva)

CHARACTERS

SUTRADHARA	: Manager-Director of a Performance
ACTRESS	
BIJJALA	: King of Kalyana
BASAVANNA	: The great saint-poet and social reformer of the 12 th -century Karnataka; former minister-friend of Bijjala.
SANGAYYA	
THE INNOCENT	: Young <i>Sharana</i>
CHIKKAYYA	
THE THIEF	: A thief who later turns a <i>Sharana</i>
DAMODARA	: Son of Harihareshwara
HARIHARA	: Scholar in the court of Bijjala
JAGADEVA &	
MALLIBOMMANNA	: <i>Sharanas</i>
SAVANTRI	: Formerly a mistress of Bijjala; runs a house of prostitution
KAMAKSHI	: One of the girls in Savantri's house
LALITHA, VANAJA	
& SHARADA	: Girls in Savantri's house
KAASHAVVA,	
OLD MAN,	
KALLAPPA,	
TUNGAVVA	: Poor dalits
MAD WOMAN	: The patron-goddess of the city of Kalyana
CHIEF OF POLICE	
KING'S SOLDIERS	
COMMONERS	
PERIOD	: 12 th Century; PLACE: Kalyana, in Northern Karnataka

PROLOGUE¹

Sutradhara² : Bijjala, who had been a feudatory of the Chalukya emperor, broke away from him and declared independence; he shifted his capital from Mangalaveda to Kalyana. Kalyana was a new place even to Bijjala; he could not trust anybody in the matters of state finances. Then Basavanna, totally trustworthy, came to Kalyana. Among his multifarious concerns, Basavanna did not forget his primary concern for Kudala Sangayya.³ In order to bring together the worlds of gods and mortals, he undertook a great mission. He founded an earthen 'house,' *Mahamane*,⁴ as opposed to the palace of gold. Whereas desires and temptations surround gold, human beings surround mud. The brilliant light of *Mahamane* dazed the Palace-eyes.

Actress : Haralayya and Madhuvarasa were the *Sharanas*⁵ of *Mahamane*; but in the eyes of the Palace, they were Dalit and Brahmana. *Mahamane* declared that *Sharanas* had no caste-distinctions; but the Palace insisted that all human beings belonged to one caste or another. Although the healthy relationship between Haralayya and Madhuvarasa was agreeable to Basavanna, Bijjala found it wrong. Basavanna's words were transparent, like

a necklace of pearls; ⁶ Allama's words were enlightening, like a Linga shedding light;⁷ But Bijjala's words were contrived; they seemed to say one thing, meant ten different things, and had eighteen different motives. Bijjala got the eyes of Haralayya and Madhuvarasa gouged out; got them drawn tied to a plough,⁸ and then impaled. But cunning History turned a blind eye to it.

- Sutradhara** : Basavanna built a 'house,' and saw to it that it was always clean, that the 'owner' always stayed in the 'house.'⁹
- Actress** : The present confusions and turmoil of Kalyana – God alone can clearly describe. Only yesterday, Haralayya and Madhuvarasa were impaled on stakes; Today, all sanctuaries of Shiva and even *Mahamane* are under surveillance. All the streets and lanes of the city are silent, empty. Nobody knows who are the spies and who are the thieves, who are gentlemen and who are officials – there is utter confusion.
- Sutradhara** : This is what happened in the twelfth century – the confrontation between Righteousness and Politics in Kalyana. Whether this conflict has reached the ears of Time is unknown; but, the drum-beats of Shiva did reach Basavanna's ears. All that's left for us is to visualise what he heard. Bhusanur Math, the scholar, and Siddharameshwara,¹⁰ the saint of Shivalingeshwara Matth at Savalagi,¹¹ being our witnesses, we are going to unfold the story. Look!

(a mad woman comes running, yelling in a frightening voice)

Actress : Nobody knows who this woman is. All those whom you inquire say, 'she is a very old woman who belongs to the Palace.' But the people in the palace maintain that she is an outsider, and that she has been here since Kalyana was founded. When the whole city of Kalyana, with its lips sealed and breath bated, is still, this woman is foretelling the future. Listen! Listen to her.

Scene One

Mad Woman¹²: Hear! O hear! You, who have been trampled by customs, hear! You common people, who chew only pains with your jaws, hear.

Wild rats will dig huge holes in your houses; in the deep pits dug out, the city will be buried; hear, O hear!

Poisonous words, bred by greed, will spread and the heads of honest people will roll; people, good for nothing, won't understand these words; but you, true devotees, listen to me with attention.

All the eight planets will be destroyed; terrible comets will arise on top of the palace, and those on the throne will be burnt to ashes. Lift up the *Nandi*-pennant high;¹³ the game of the Father who begot us will not turn false. When you tie the gong with tinkling bells to the decorated horns of Shiva's bull; when you step on the flaming sandals, pound the earth with your legs to which are tied anklets, and unfurl the *Nandi*-pennant high in the skies. History will be left with only ashes.

Hear, O hear.

(a small narrow lane on the outskirts of the city; this is where the dalits, prostitutes, the backward and the poor of Kalyana live. The home of Haralayya, who was impaled till death only the day before, is here. On the front mud-platform of a small house are seated, Kaashavva, an old couple, Tungavva their neighbor and her husband Kallappa.)

Tungavva : Listen! This mad woman's sooth-sayings will never let us alone. But what can we do? When we see her miserable condition, our intestines come out churning; we are utterly helpless.

Old Man : Her words –they sound true, don't they?

Kaashavva : Aye, forget it, old man. She also says often that she has turned Bijjala's foe; can it also be true?

Old Man : Only Shiva knows what it is. It seems she comes even to *Mahamane*.

Kaashavva : Yes, she does; but there, she doesn't utter such predictions.

Tungavva : There isn't a single lamp in this city now –not even a ray of light; thick darkness of this Shivaratri-night is frightening. In such darkness, this old woman wanders here and there; why can't she lie down in some corner, quietly? And that c . . t-lapper of a king! One doesn't know how many people he has murdered today!

Old Man : (softly) Hush! Be quiet, woman! King's guards are patrolling everywhere; they may overhear you!

- Kaashavva** : (changing the subject) Look at this sight! O, mamma! How clear and clean is the sky! Stars have come out like pearls sprayed out. Can't you see?
- Old Man** : You are making such a hue and cry as if you haven't seen the sky till now!
- Kaashavva** : Did you see that, old man? One small star from that side fell on the palace, burning. I know — you didn't notice it.
- Old Man** : Then — will the king croak? A falling star means that, doesn't it?
- Tungavva** : By-the-bye, Uncle — (in a hushed voice) did they handover Haralayya's body to his people?
- Old Man** : No. It seems they chopped up both the dead bodies and threw the pieces over there as food for dogs, jackals and hawks.
- Kaashavva** : (very sadly) O my God! What terrible times for the Sharanas, O Shiva! May that bastard king, Bijjala, die such a death that none will be there even to bury him! (She beats the ground with her palm and curses.)
- Old Man** : Shut up, woman! Supposing the king's men overhear you? It seems they are everywhere, with their ears glued to the walls.
- Tungavva** : O sister! See there! The two stars on top of Haralayya's hut — don't they appear like two small lamps?

- Kaashavva** : (excited) My ! — My! – they look like two small men walking together, holding hands!
- Old Man** : (looking at the stars) Yes, they do, don't they? Looks like somebody is moving in the sky, just like men. Could they be the souls of Haralayya and Madhuvarasa?
- Tungavva** : Do you think so? This is the moonless night of Shivaratri. They say, when the souls of the dead go up, they dance in this manner.
- Kaashavva** : Why do they do so?
- Kallappa** : Look! When they are freed from all the worries of life, they become light. They leave behind everything —family, property, sorrow, boredom – they escape from everything; and, hence, they dance in joy.
- Kallappa** : How wonderful it would be if we also possessed souls; then, after death, they would also go up dancing like these!
- Tungavva** : Soul – God – they are all for upper castes; not for people like us.
- Kallappa** : In the *Mahamane*, it is said, the Sharanas place their souls on their palms and make them dance. You should know all this, old man, don't you? It seems Basavanna gives every one a soul each.
- Tungavva** : How much would one cost?
- Kaashavva** : They are given free; they are called 'Linga the Father.'¹⁴

Kallappa : If they are free, couldn't you have brought one or two for us also, sister? Then, we would also place them on our palms and play with them.

Kaashavva : When I invite you to come to the *Mahamane*, you refuse. If you do come, Basavanna will be so happy.

(When these people are, thus, lost in their talk, a Jangama ¹⁵ boy enters from the other side of the stage and hides himself in a hut. But none of these people notices him.)

Old Man : Just because Basavanna will be happy, we shouldn't intrude into *Mahamane*; we eat and drink all sorts of things that are taboo. Going into *Mahamane* is like a strict ritual.

(By this time two guards enter; and looking at them, all get up, frightened.)

Guard : Did any Jangama boy come this way?

Old Man : No, sir; nobody has come this way.

Guard : Tell us the truth. Is he hiding inside this house?

Kaashavva : What we say is true, sir. None has come this way.

(In the meanwhile, another Guard stands at the door, surveys inside, and returns.)

Guard -2 : He isn't here. Come on, let's go. (Both leave.)

Kallappa : I can't stand these mother f. . .s of the king.

Tungavva : Keep your voice low; they may hear you.... Now look! Another has come here.

(A young boy in saffron clothes comes near their house. All are surprised, happy, and suspicious. The boy approaches them, and with child-like innocence, bows to them. Kaashavva goes near him with affection.)

Kaashavva : Who are you, my son?

Boy : I am called Sangayya the innocent.

Kaashavva : Sangayya? (holding the boy's chin) My child! You look like the Sangayya of Kudala Sangama! Whom do you want?

Boy : Mother, can you tell me where Savantri's house is?

Kaashavva : Savantri? Which Savantri?

Boy : Savantri the prostitute.

Kaashavva : O Shiva! Being so young, why do you want to go there, my boy?

Sangayya : I want to worship the Linga in her house.

Tungavva : Ha – Ha—Why should you worship the Linga? On the contrary, she will ardently worship your Linga,¹⁶ very well. –Well, looks like you are going to remain sleepless as befitting Shivaratri!

Kaashavva : Look here, my son! Instead of worshipping the Linga in the *Mahamane*, why do you have to go to a prostitute's house for the same purpose?

Sangayya : Many Sharanas tell me that one can worship the Linga in a befitting manner in Savantri's house. That's why I am going there. Are you going to direct me to Savantri's house or not?

Kaashavva : Let me tell you once and for all: I will not show you that house. If I lead an innocent child like you go astray, won't I be condemned to the darkest hell? My boy, go back.

Sangayya : So –you won't direct me to that house?

Kaashavva : No, I won't; go back. Alas! Someone has given this boy wrong advice; you, old man, can't you give him some good advice?

(By this time, the mad woman comes there and, in order to identify the boy, examines him from head to foot and circles around him.)

Sangayya : This old woman is approaching me, staring at me with a frown on her face. O Sharana! Who is this woman and where is she from?

Old Man : Listen boy! She is a mad woman. Even I don't know who she is. Since the time of the Chalukyas, she has been moving around like this, talking of this man and that woman; and she appears suddenly in unexpected places and times. You had better keep away from her.

Sangayya : But — she looks at me and smiles?

Mad Woman : Who are you? Whom do you want?

Sangayya : Savantri the prostitute.

Mad Woman : Do you want Savantri the prostitute? None but Savantri?

(Tungavva and Kallappa go away, smiling.)

Sangayya : I want only Savantri the prostitute.

Mad Woman : Of course, Bijjala also says the same thing and goes to her.... However, listen to me, boy; don't you know she is very old? Nothing but skull and bones.

Sangayya : Woman, I don't want her. Do you know that there is another woman by name Kamakshi, in her house? I want her.

Mad Woman : Kudos to your taste, my brave general! But . . . do you have that much of money she demands? . . . Why don't you look at me, fully?

Sangayya : O yes! Now I remember who you are. You are Kalyani, the patron- goddess of this city; aren't you, mother?

Mad Woman : Yes, you are right. You were with Basavanna on the first day he entered this city, Kalyana, weren't you? Basavanna walked ahead, and you were behind him; you hid yourself from everyone.

Sangayya : That's true, mother. That day, the sky was clear; sunshine was pleasant; and the breeze that blew from the river was exhilarating. I saw you that day.

Mad Woman : You remained silent that day. Your eyes shone with the lustre of dreams; and your face, like the moon, made everyone happy, my child.... But, today, your face is clouded. Your name...

Sangayya : Sangayya.

Mad Woman : Basavanna refers to you in one of his *Vachanas*, 'Friend you are, and I am old,' doesn't he?

Sangayya : Yes, mother! Then, Kalyana hadn't grown as much as it has now.

Kaashavva : Listen, why are you two standing ? Sit down, child; you too, sit down, mother.

(The old man and Kaashavva move a little so that both Sangayya and the mad woman can sit.)

Mad Woman : When Basavanna entered the palace, most of the people frowned. You were the only two people that stood there, full of dreams and happiness – you and Bijjala. The king showed Basavanna his place of work and various documents.

Sangayya : Then –you took him inside the palace and gave him lukewarm milk to drink; I remember it still.

Mad Woman : True. The palace at that time was peaceful. Later, you and Basavanna looked into the eyes of each other. What he begged of you, and what assurances you gave him –I know nothing of it. But, Basavanna took both of your hands to his eyes, respectfully, and said:

*Much before Kali could open her eyes,
much before the 'three cities' of the demons were
destroyed,
much before Vishnu and Brahma came into
existence,
much, much before Uma's marriage with Shiva,
since that time, you have been my 'friend' and I
am old;
the great and generous god of Kudala Sangama,
is my witness.¹⁷*

Do you remember those words? That scene is imprinted before my eyes.

Sangayya : Mother, your memory is astonishing. That's where relationships get knotty. The Inner Soul is the oldest; and it begot both Kudala Sangayya and Basavanna. Basavanna tried to understand that riddle; but, finally... (a deep sigh)

Mad Woman : Sangayya, I can understand your sad sigh. Among the many types of relationships in this mortal world, Basavanna didn't forget his primeval relationship. He built *Mahamane* by the side of 'Palace'; though both stood side by side, they faced opposite directions. Those in the 'Palace' couldn't see the *Mahamane*, and those in the *Mahamane* didn't see the 'Palace.' *Mahamane* needed Sharanas; but the Sharanas had no idea of the 'Palace,' since they were preoccupied with their own occupations. The 'Palace' needs informers and slanderers; they carried tales to the king; to justify their tales, they told lies; and, in order to prove lies as truth, they cheated. All these led to the Sharanas being blinded. At the time of impaling the Sharanas, I intervened to stop it, and Bijjala contemptuously defied me. As life in Kalyana got more and more knotty, Bijjala remembered you, often; but you didn't turn up at all. As I wandered through streets and lanes as a mad woman, no one came forward to protect me. Now, after everything is over, you have come here – to draw the curtains at the end.

Sangayya : Mother, every play has to come to an end. I was present as 'invitee' at the induction of the play; I am here, now, at the epilogue, to pronounce

benediction. Since those that were invited have to be seen off as well, I had to come here, now, Mother.

Mad Woman : You, of course, say the benedictory verses and go away winding up everything; but what about me?

Sangayya : I will pronounce the benediction in your presence. Then, will you, at least, show me the way to the house of Savantri the prostitute?

Mad Woman : You are insane. Have you seen Kalyana today? Today, it is *Shivaratri*; there is no light in any temple. All the gods have hidden themselves in darkness, scared of the king! Even I, the patron-goddess of this city, cannot make out which is the city and which is the cemetery; and, here you come asking for Savantri's house. No, I cannot do this. (goes away)

Damodara : (coming out of the house where he had hid himself) Why do you need others, my friend? Come, I will show you.

Kaashavva : (surprised) O God! Who is this man? When did he come here and hide himself? . . . Hey you, who are you?

Damodara : Keep quiet, woman! (addressing Sangayya) Come, I will show you the house of Savantri the prostitute... Do you see that multi-storied building there, full of light? That's her house; you have to go there, alone.

(king's guards enter, chasing a thief. The old man and Kaashavva go into their house and shut the doors in fear; immediately, Damodara runs away in a different direction. Sangayya stands there, wonderstruck, taking in everything; the guards do not see him. After a while, making sure that the guards won't return, Kaashavva comes out.)

Kaashavva : The other fellow –where did he go, Sangayya? The entire house is stinking.

Old Man : (coming out) Where did the other boy go? The whole house is full of a dead rat's rotten stench.

Kaashavva : Go in and see if he has done anything inside the house.

(Old man goes in. Damodara returns. Meanwhile, the old man comes out holding a gold necklace.)

Old Man : Look! Here is the dead rat... Whose is this? (turning to Damodara) Is this yours, brother?

Damodara : Yes.

Old Man : (throws the necklace, contemptuously, toward him) My good man, keep this with you. I wanted to throw it on the chief of guards; but, thank God, you are here. Take it and go away.

Damodara : Do you have any idea of its price?

Kaashavva : My boy, let it be anything; we don't want it. We haven't earned it with our sweat; neither do we have any need for it. You take it and be off. Come, old man; let's go in.

- Damodara** : Sangayya, now you know the house of Savantri the prostitute; don't you? Show this necklace to the doorkeepers there and they will let you in. When Savantri herself comes out, give her this necklace; and she will take you in. Do you understand? Don't be scared. Take this –and go. (Sangayya takes the necklace and goes.)
- Kaashavva** : O Shiva! What is all this happening now, Shiva, in our own lane? Gods and semi-gods, mad people, king's guards, kings and ministers – O God! All are coming to this place. What's in store for us this night?
- Damodara** : There is one more person inside your hut; be careful, old woman. (he runs away.)

End of Scene One

Scene Two

(Savantri's house —a huge veranda and a room attached to it are seen. A doorkeeper is seen standing near the door, holding a staff. Savantri, sitting in the veranda, sees Sangayya the innocent approaching the door and the doorkeeper barring him with his staff.)

Sangayya : Is this the house of Savantri the prostitute?

Doorkeeper : Yes.

(Savantri observes Sangayya and, both surprised and worried, she stands up.)

Savantri : Alas, O Shiva! Such an innocent boy! He isn't like other womanizers. What kind of wicked people have sent this boy, who is still green, here? — (respectfully) Who are you? (The doorkeeper allows the boy to enter.)

Sangayya : I am Sangayya the innocent. You are Savantri the prostitute, aren't you?

Savantri : Yes, sir. Come and take a seat. Can I give you something to quench your thirst?

Sangayya : To quench the thirst? No, no. You are old; those who sent me here, didn't tell me that you were old. O, yes; now I remember. The woman I need is not this woman but a young girl by name Kamakshi. Does one Kamakshi stay here?

- Savantri** : Yes, sir; Kamakshi does stay here.
- Sangayya** : You said your name was Savantri?
- Savantri** : What is there to be so confused, sir? You are Sangayya the innocent and I am Savantri the prostitute; and there are four beautiful young women in my house.
- Sangayya** : One is enough for me.
- Savantri** : All right. All those four young women will come here, and you can choose any one you like among them and repose.
- Sangayya** : I haven't come here to repose and rest.
- Savantri** : (with a half-smile) Okay; first, selection. – Hey Lalita – Vanaja – Sharada – Kamakshi – come here, all of you. (All the four come and stand in a line.) Look, these are the four women. This is Lalita; she sings in the northern style, beautifully. This woman, Sharada, is from Kerala; she plays excellently on Veena.
- Sangayya** : I am not interested in any music concert.
- Savantri** : Okay.... She is Vanaja, an expert Bharatanatya dancer.
- Sangayya** : Please –don't give me Bharatanatya or any other dance performance.
- Savantri** : All right, then . . . this one is Kamakshi, of Banavasi region. You select whomsoever you want.
- Sangayya** : All these four are beautiful; but Kamakshi is the one most beautiful. Let Kamakshi be mine.

Savantri : She is expecting the king; also, she is very expensive. Of the remaining three, if you choose...

Sangayya : What are you saying? I have come here only for Kamakshi. Supposing I give the same price that the king gives her, would it suffice? Look! Take this necklace – and tell me if this isn't worth more than what the king may give her.

(He hands over the gold necklace to Savantri. She examines it for a few moments and then gives it to Kamakshi. Kamakshi, in turn, looks at it and then returns it to Savantri.)

Kamakshi : Mother, this necklace is worth more than my price; I don't want it. I shall serve this gentleman to please my own soul. Please, allow me to do so. What happens next is your responsibility.

Savantri : You are blessed, my daughter; and, by such an act of yours, I am also blessed. Go, my daughter, and give Sangayya the innocent whatever pleasures he seeks.

(Kamakshi holds Sangayya's hands and leads him inside. Other girls also leave one by one. Savantri continues to scrutinize the necklace.)

Savatri : There seems to be something deceitful about this necklace. How did this highly expensive necklace come to the hands of Sangayya the innocent? Does Basavanna know about this? Or, has he himself sent this boy with the necklace? - - - Already, the city is burning; and now, this. What is happening, O Shiva?

(Entering the room, Sangayya is nervous; he is overwhelmed by the various pieces of luxury he sees there.)

Sangayya : Marvellous! Ecstatic! – soft feathery bed - carved swing - fan of aromatic leaves –silver platter containing betel leaves and nuts – most, most marvellous! This huge man-size mirror! Golden cup full of sweet-smelling water! Silken clothes and sandal-wood paste and camphor and joss sticks! This entire bedroom smells sweet! Ecstatic! Most ecstatic!! Ah! This is surely the palace of Indra, the king of gods! Ah! This woman is surely a heavenly damsel! Kamakshi, the most beautiful woman in all the three worlds, . . .

Kamakshi : Sir?

Sangayya : Sitting on this bed, I have to worship the Linga. It is a kind of worship that has to be repeated eleven times. It is not an ordinary kind of worship; you will realize, later, that the joy given by it is unequalled. You have to assist me in performing this worship, will you?

Kamakshi : Yes, sir. I shall do whatever you advise me to do.

Sangayya : Then, you should have a bath early in the morning, should bring water in a well-cleaned vessel, and come here in your wet clothes. In addition, you should bring different types of leaves, flowers, vibhuti, and such other things necessary for worship.

Kamakshi : Yes, sir.

(She exits. He takes up the objects in the room, one by one; appreciates each; fondles each one and sniffs; exclaims every time that it is 'marvellous, most marvellous'; and then is confused where exactly he should keep one if it falls down. He continues in this fashion till Kamakshi returns carrying all the things necessary for the worship of Linga. No sooner does she come in than he begins his Linga-worship. Repeating the sacred words '*Om Namah Shivaaya*' ('I fall at the feet of Shiva'), while he worships the Linga, Kamakshi assists him, handing over leaves and flowers. Later in the play, whenever any action takes place in Savantri's house, Sangayya's incantation can be heard softly.)

End of Scene Two

Scene Three

(Harihara and his son Damodara, disguised as Jangamas –devotees of Shiva and followers of Basavanna –enter the stage running and looking back now and then, as if somebody is chasing them. They sit on the platform built around a huge tree and stare vacuously at something at a distance. However, Chikkayya the thief, who is sitting on the other side of the platform, ignores them and continues to gaze at Savantri's house. The father and son talk to each other in a low voice so that they cannot be overheard by others.)

- Harihara** : Have we entered the Dalit lanes, by mistake?
- Damodara** : Looks like that!
- Harihara** : Foolish fellow! You don't have any sense of what is clean and what is unclean.
- Damodara** : Father, first let's think of some way of escaping from the king's guards; later, we can have a bath if necessary.
- Harihara** : You- miserable caretaker of the cremation grounds! How did you get to be born in my lineage! Even if I abuse you till I choke, my anger will not subside.
- Damodara** : Then — don't abuse me. You can keep quiet.

- Harihara** : For what you have done, how can I keep quiet – you miserable wretch?
- Damodara** : Then — you can begin your abuses.
- Harihara** : Worthless fellow!
- Damodara** : True.
- Harihara** : Rascal!
- Damodara** : True.
- Harihara** : You cheat!
- Damodara** : Can't you think of some fresh abuses? I am tired of hearing the same old stale ones.
- Harihara** : Hey –*Chandala*, miserable outcast!
- Damodara** : Even this is stale. I am a *Chandala*, rascal and cheat; is that all? Is your store of abuses so poor?
- Harihara** : Tell me, which abuse puts you to shame? I shall use that.
- Damodara** : Being born as your son.
- Harihara** : Son, what have I done that you are so ashamed of me ?
- Damodara** : You are the one who ordered me to steal the gold necklace from the palace; and, now, you are calling me a thief and a rascal.
- Harihara** : Keep your voice low; somebody may overhear you, my son.
- Damodara** : Let them overhear, does it matter? In the palace, someone recognized me and asked me, 'Aren't you Damya, the son of Harihara? When did you become a Sharana?'

- Harihara** : Who was that?
- Damodara** : How should I know? I got scared, and ran out without looking at him. I hadn't crossed even the inner doors, when someone shouted, 'thief! thief! Catch him.' As if to save my life, I came running out as fast as I could.
- Harihara** : Thank God, you didn't take my name!
- Damodara** : They did ask me if I wasn't Harihara's son; what does that mean?
- Harihara** : O no! O no!... You the son of a *Chandala*! It would have been much better had your mother given birth to a rock and not you!
- Damodara** : Looking at you, I should have been an ape; but . . .
- Harihara** : (turning his head) Who is there sitting? He continues to look at us; do you think he has recognized us?
- Damodara** : Look at our disguise, father. In these clothes, that too in a Dalit lane, who can recognize us? . . . Father, the king's guards are here.
- Harihara** : Don't try to run away, keep quiet. . . . Let us also quietly go there and sit with him. (Both approach Chikkayya and sit near him.)
- Chikkayya** : O venerable ones! I bow to you.
- Harihara** : We also bow to you. Basava! Basava!! — How hot it is!
- Chikkayya** : Just three hours ago, you converted yourselves as Sharanas, didn't you?

Harihara : (taken aback) We – We aren't Sharanas by conversion; we are Sharanas by birth. . . . By-the- bye (approaching Chikkayya), why did you feel that we became Sharanas just three hours ago?

Chikkayya : Doesn't one thief recognize another thief?

Damodara : No! No! We aren't thieves. We have been initiated as Sharanas only recently.

Harihara : It means – you are also a thief!

Chikkayya : I tell you, my name itself is 'Chikkayya the thief.'

Damodara : But I tell you, we are real Sharanas.

Chikkayya : Look here, you respectable ones! If you want to cover up one lie, you have to invent another lie; only then you will save yourself. On the other hand, if you tell ten lies in order to cover up one, it won't be covered –it opens up everything. Added to it, you will soon go bankrupt!

Harihara : How dare you call me a liar? Who are you?

Chikkayya : told you, I am Chikkayya the thief, didn't I?... See there! Time for the spies to come out. Be careful in your talk. If something goes wrong . . . then, it is between you and them.

Harihara : (with fear) I am sorry, excuse me. You know – when one gets old, one's tongue gets loose. . . . If you can, kindly, tell us about yourself . . .

Chikkayya : I am Shivasharana, Chikkayya the thief. You will ask me how a thief got converted as a Sharana, won't you?

Damodara : How did you, who had been a thief, become a Sharana? Tell us, O Sharana Chikkayya the thief!

Chikkayya : (to Harihara) Sir, your son is cunning. (to Damodara) Brother, you ought to listen to my story. I am Chikkayya the thief, from Kashmir; and I came all the way here, to kill Basavanna. Intending to kill Anna ¹⁸ at some appropriate time, when he came face to face to me, I tied a small stone round my neck and sat down for dinner in the *Mahamane*. According to the practice there, everyone has to worship one's Linga before taking food. I also had to take out the stone and worship it; or else, I had to go out. I couldn't go out breaking the line. So, desperate that I was, I took out the stone tied round my neck and placed it on my palm –and Lo! the thief was caught with the stolen goods. The Sharanas on either side of me got up and created an uproar. Let alone killing Anna, there was no way even to run away from that place and save my skin. Then came there Basavanna, like God. He said: " Even the real Linga that we wear on our body appears like a stone for us; but, you can glimpse Linga even in a stone. You are the greatest devotee, and your devotion is beyond words." With these words – can you believe it? – he prostrated before me full length. Forget my killing him; he killed the thief within me! On the very same day, I got myself initiated into the Sharana sect, and, in order to remember what I was earlier, I began to go by the name – Chikkayya the thief. I took an oath on Anna's feet that I would steal no more. Now, I

am free from all that. I do physical labour, eat what I earn, and, if something remains, I donate it to *Mahamane*. If I earn more, I pay taxes on it.

Damodara : That is the principle of '*kaayaka*,' isn't it? We should earn by physical labour what we eat?

Chikkayya : Yes, you are right. If we eat anything we haven't earned, we commit sin.

Damodara : In that case, I have committed plenty of sins.

Chikkaya : Why do you say so, brother?

Damodara : You work and you eat what you earn; hence your sins are pardoned. This teacher of mine (pointing at his father) commits sins, but he chants sacred prayers and his sins are forgiven. Me? Certainly, I commit three sins, every day.

Chikkayya : Three sins a day? What are those sins, brother?

Damodara : I eat three full meals a day; Basavanna says it is a sin.

Chikkayya : Brother, how is taking food a sin?

Damodara : This is how. Isn't eating without working for it a sin?

Chikkaya : Excellent! You have understood the principle very well, brother. Why don't you come to *Mahamane*? You see, many sharp young men like you come there. Ah! What arguments they put forth! What profound issues they discuss! If one listens to all that, one gets real joy.

Damodara : (softly) Father, king's soldiers are coming . . .

- Chikkayya** : (softly) You had better talk about ‘soul’ and ‘Super soul’ till they go away.
- Damodara** : (gets the hint; both father and son pretend as teacher and his disciple) Look here, O Guru! It seems you have a soul in you? Even after all these days, you haven’t told me about it.
- Harihara** : Some holy man came to me as Guru, and told me about my soul; in fact, he made me see its vision.
- Damodara** : If you have had its vision, you can help me also glimpse that vision, can’t you?
- Harihara** : Visualising one’s soul is very easy, O disciple! You firmly believe that there is a soul inside, and sit quietly, with your eyes shut. The soul, by itself, comes out and talks to you.
- Chikkayya** : Is that so? Does it talk in Kannada or in Sanskrit?
- Harihara** : Of course, in Sanskrit. Do souls talk at any time in Kannada?
- Chikkayya** : But — what you are speaking now is Kannada, isn’t it?
- Harihara** : Even though our physical bodies speak in Kannada, Souls talk only in the language of gods—in Sanskrit.¹⁹
- Chikkayya** : Since the soul resides in the body that talks in Kannada, doesn’t it get polluted?
- Harihara** : The Soul is beyond cleanliness and pollution. You shouldn’t talk about it lightly. (King’s soldiers, who have come much earlier and have been listening to them, come near them.)

- Chikkayya** : Anna also said, 'brother, one should have a soul.' I asked him, 'Anna, what is meant by 'soul'? Anna said, 'brother, soul means: conscience, compassion, large heartedness, respect and sympathy for others – that is 'soul.' But . . . what you are saying is something different?
- Harihara** : The reason is, what your Anna has told you is wrong. Do you understand?
- Chikkayya** : No, sir; I don't.
- Harihara** : That is soul.
- Soldier-1** : Listen, you Sharanas! Has any Jangama come running, this way?
- Damodara** : Jangama? Oh, no. Nobody has come this way.
- Soldier -2** : Who is this man?
- Chikkayya** : Sir, I am Chikkayya the thief ; didn't you recognize me?
- Soldier - 2** : Yes, I recognize you; who are these Sharanas?
- Chikkayya** : This man is his disciple, that one is this man's Guru.
- Soldier - 1** : What were you talking about, sitting here?
- Damodara** : Oh! We were talking about soul, Super Soul, and all that.
- Soldier -2** : Instead of talking of such things in *Mahamane*, why are you doing that in these outer lanes?
- Harihara** : *Mahamane* is where Sharanas are. That's what the great Anna himself has laid down.

- Soldier -2** : La! La! La! What miracle of Anna is this, friend? If, even in the outskirts and poor lanes of the city, discussions are held about soul and Super Soul, it has to be the biggest miracle of Anna.
- Soldier -1** : An expensive necklace has been stolen from the palace, and we have been searching for the thief everywhere. We are suspicious of this young Jangama here, and, hence, we would like to take him to our chief. We will send him back after some enquiry; Is it all right with you, Chikkayya?
- Chikkayya** : Oh, no! This young Jangama is one of us; he has become a Sharana only recently. Young blood – and he gets involved in a few minor skirmishes; but he is not a thief. Believe me.
- Soldier -2** : Do you say so? Okay, we shall forget it. You see, the one who ran away from the palace was just like this young man and we followed him. But, if you say he is innocent, it is fine. We shall look for the thief elsewhere. (Soldiers go away; the father and son heave a sigh of relief.)
- Damodara** : Chikkayya, you have saved us; we are grateful to you. But, before an honest man I have to disclose the truth. Listen to me, Chikkayya.
- Harihara** : You dumb ass of my son! Are you in your senses? If you continue, your life will be like swallowing a sickle. Be careful.
- Damodara** : Keep quiet for your own good; otherwise ... (Damodara picks up a big stone and gets ready to hit his father.) Otherwise, I will smash your head with this stone.

- Chikkayya** : Brother, listen to me . . .
- Damodara** : No, you listen to me, first. Look here, Chikkayya; I was the one who stole the necklace from the palace. The chief of guards was at my back; and, scared of him, I gave the necklace to Sangayya the innocent, and sent him to the house of Savantri the prostitute. (addressing his father) Now – go and do whatever you want.
- Harihara** : Damn you, coward! You have thrown away a treasure, the goddess of Lakshmi herself. You outcaste! (cursing his son, he goes away.)
- Damodara** : Truly, Chikkayya, my heart is light now. Let's now talk freely and intimately. What work do you do?
- Chikkayya** : I work as a coolie.
- Damodara** : What were you doing when you were a thief? Tell me that whole story. Didn't you regret anytime giving up thievery?
- Chikkayya** : That's a different story, altogether. When I was a thief, thirty-five other thieves worked for me; and I was their trainer-mentor. I lived in a cave –call it a palace – amidst a forest. One day, the king of that region came to know of this, attacked me with a big army, and caught me. He told me: 'There is one minister, called Basavanna, in the city of Kalyana of the Chalukyas. If you can murder him, I shall give you half of my kingdom.' That was his promise and he cemented it with an oath. Had I killed Basavanna, I too would have been a king. But, to tell you the truth, brother,

I wouldn't have been as contented as I am now. Now, believe me, I am really happy. However, I am not a virtuous man as you think.

Damodara : You told the soldiers that I was innocent, and thus saved me. Why?

Chikkayya : Why? — because, I know you are not a thief. But the old man with you —he is a thief through and through. A thief works within him, always. But you aren't a thief, forget it; there is one within you, like Sangayya the innocent; that's why I told them what I did. Your good luck! They believed me and went away. Now, what you should do is this: go to Anna, and make a full confession of your misdeeds; or, go to the police chief and tell him everything. Then, you will also come out of this mess; and you will be aiding the process of justice. What do you say?

Damodara : I will do as you have told me. (he gets ready to leave)

Chikkayya : Wait, wait for a moment, and see there! See who is going to the house of Savantri the prostitute. Look!

End of Scene Three

Scene Four

(House of Savantri. While Savantri is sitting in a luxurious armchair, inside, Sangayya is performing silent worship, with his back to the audience. Kamakshi is away to collect things needed for worship; she enters after some time and joins Sangayya. In the meanwhile, Bijjala comes there in disguise. Although the doorkeeper recognizes him, he pretends that he doesn't and bars Bijjala from entering, with his staff. Bijjala is happy that his disguise is complete. But Savantri immediately knows who it is and orders the doorkeeper to allow the king inside. Savantri, who goes to the door to welcome the king, flings the necklace in her hand onto the shelf nearby, straightens her saree-border, and gets ready to welcome the king. Bijjala enters.)

Savantri : Welcome, your majesty! I have been waiting for you.

Bijjala : Even in today's disguise of mine, could you, so easily, recognize me?

Savantri : A lion, even in disguise, cannot be anything but a lion, my lord.

Bijjala : In that case – all those who saw me on the way – do you want to say that all of them recognized me? Then, this is no longer a successful disguise, is it?

- Savantri** : But, none of them bowed to you respectfully, did they?
- Bijjala** : No, that's true. On the other hand, none of them ignored me also as a stranger. You have easily peeled off the veneer of my vanity regarding my disguise. All right! ... Do you gloat over the fact, with your sisters-in-law, that a king visits you often in disguise?
- Savantri** : My lord! How can I divulge the particulars of customers visiting my house? It is not ethical on the part of prostitutes. Since dogs may cause nuisance to my customers, I haven't kept even dogs here.
- Bijjala** : Maybe, you are right.... It appears that Kamakshi doesn't know this secret till now. That's why she hasn't come out to welcome me.
- Savantri** : She cannot come out today, your majesty.
- Bijjala** : Why?
- Savantri** : She is in the service of another customer.
- Bijjala** : (angrily) : What did you say, you whore? How can Bijjala's mistress serve any other customer?
- Savantri** : My king! Don't get angry. We, in this profession, have to equally treat all the customers that come seeking our service. That is professional ethics. When he tendered the same price that you do, I couldn't reject him.
- Bijjala** : (sarcastically) Oh, I see! Ethical considerations have reached even the houses of prostitutes!

Great; Basava, you are great. (Savantri smiles)
Even those who live selling their bodies have
become arrogant enough to laugh at a king, have
they?

Savantri : My king! It is true I laughed at your anger. I am
the one who was an intimate companion of you,
in your youthful days at Mangalavedha. I was
one of the heroines of your romantic tales. The
lusty leopard that enters your flesh and blood
when you get angry is no stranger to me; and, the
ecstatic pain inflicted by that leopard's assaults
floated to my mind and made me smile. Along
with the other girls, I too have grown old; but
your majesty has the same youthful vigour even
now – the same leopard's roughness, the same
rage. Those memories made me laugh. I beg your
pardon, my lord.

Bijjala : Okay, dear! Your flattery has soothed my anger.
Now, tell me; the one who is with Kamakshi now,
the one who had the temerity to compete with
my wealth – who is he?

Savantri : There – the door is open, and he is sitting there;
Your majesty can go and see him personally.

(Bijjala, still aggrieved, gets up and looks inside; his
grievance gives place to a disdainful smile.)

Bijjala : Worshipping Linga on the bed of sins!

Savantri : (mischievously) Every day, on the same sinful
bed, you too . . .

Bijjala : Who is this Jangama?

- Savantri** : The respectable Sangayya the innocent.
- Bijjala** : Sangayya the innocent? I vaguely remember having seen him!... Where was it? Basavanna introduced him to me; and he stayed with Basavanna himself. Anyway, didn't you have any other woman for him?
- Savantri** : Surely, I had. But, my lord, this youth insisted, that he wanted none other than Kamakshi.
- Bijjala** : (to himself) Oh, I see! This Sangayya the innocent is bent upon testing Bijjala!
- Savantri** : Consider this, your majesty. All the customers who come here are prone to lust; they have flesh all over and they have a beast in their flesh. Whenever the beast gets hungry, they come here seeking our flesh; and then, go home satisfied. But, look at this man! Does he have even an ounce of flesh anywhere on his body?
- Bijjala** : You are right, Savantri. This man has no flesh, and he isn't like other lechers. But, still, he provokes me from within. I know who has sent him here.
- Savantri** : Who, my lord?
- Basavanna** : Basavanna. Hm. Basava has grown to such an extent that, he thinks, he can mock even the king's private life.
- Savantri** : Sir, how does Basavanna come into the picture in this?

Bijjala : Savantri, listen. There are two kings in Kalyana: one is Basava the king, and another king Bijjala. When king Bijjala lay in his palace, Basavanna complained that the nature and goal of the palace were deceitful, left it, and built *Mahamane*. Can it be called a palace? It has even a pennant on its top. Paupers, beggars, people living on cremation grounds, tanners, dalits, outcastes – with these people, Basavanna has founded an empire, and he is their king. Many great men have been in the past; they taught their doctrines, didn't worry about whether others followed them, and in course of time, left this world. But this king, Basava, isn't like them. He preaches, practices what he preaches, and invites all those who find his doctrines meaningful, to join him. He is insane. With beggars, dalits and paupers as his followers, can he ever hope to build a palace? Even if he builds one, can it be called a palace? Does an empire mean only the places where outcastes, the homeless and beggars live? Does he know, Basava the innocent, that there are in an empire *agraharas*,²⁰ towns, and capitals, which exist even without those poor, dirty, lanes?

Savantri : My Lord! Somebody has given you a wrong picture of *Mahamane*. As I understand, in every act and word of Anna, there is the spirit of dedication, honesty, and heart. Those whom you dump as beggars and paupers are working now and earning their food, proudly.

Bijjala : They call it *kaayaka*, don't they?

- Savantri** : Yes, your majesty! Now, the dalits and outcastes are no longer idlers! Because they are honest workers, the yearly income of your kingdom has increased, says the treasurer. Now, people are happy and contented, and are leading a peaceful life, as if they have found their god. Isn't this a matter of great significance, Lord?
- Bijjala** : Being a minister, he could have done all this from the palace itself, couldn't he?
- Savantri** : No, sir. Palace means laws, do's and don't's. Though palaces have been there for thousands of years, people couldn't find in them peace or god due to the laws. The palace-laws and law-enforcers are the ones bereft of even humanity; the ones who firmly believe that compassion is beyond Man; the ones who suspect you too if you show any compassion for the people. Is it possible for ordinary people to change such palace-dwellers and make them see god within them?
- Bijjala** : (sarcastically) Of course! It is possible only for Basava!
- Savantri** : Rightly said, my lord. Let me give you an instance. A thief, who came all the way from Kashmir to kill Anna, was so influenced by him that he gave up his thieving and became a Sharana. I have personally met him, my lord.
- Bijjala** : Woman! I don't have any need for such hollow miracles. There are codes to lay down dharma; and there are scholars to interpret them. Now, tell me: the laws of our land lay down that the

king has a right over everything in the land. I, king Bijjala, demand now that I need Kamakshi, wherever she is, and in whatever condition. Get her here, immediately.

Savantri : Sir, we aren't here to sell our bodies, freely; we have also to obey certain laws, and they are not the ones that change according to the position of customers; they are the laws that are common to all people. Just as there are certain intrinsic rules in music, there are so even in a woman's body. Otherwise, how can you explain the women's world? The woman, who, till her last breath, retains the memory of the tremulous and warm touch of the man, who circled the fire with her, hand in hand, seven times, is Wife. The woman, who forgets the experience of that touch as soon as it is over, is a Prostitute. My lord! Kamakshi has already forgotten your touch. The woman here doesn't put a price on her body, from the point of view of her customers; she looks at herself in a mirror and decides on a price. She gives herself to whoever pays that price. In Love, man and woman become one, see themselves through the eyes of the other, and build a world of their own, to fulfill their own wishes. But, when force is used, the woman is subdued, strangled, and kept in dark so that she cannot see this way or that. Only in your kingdom, kings fix the price for everything. If there is a civilized administration in this country, you shouldn't enforce your authority on others.

Bijjala : How well have you learnt to argue and outwit your opponent! You talk of 'taxes' on and on; now, tell me what price has Sangayya paid for Kamakshi? I have to fix the tax on it.

Savantri : Is that so? I will show you just now. (to the doorkeeper) You know, I kept a gold necklace on the shelf in which we keep our footwear; could you bring it here, please?

(The doorkeeper goes to the shelf, picks up the necklace, brings it and hands it over to Bijjala. Bijjala keenly observes the whole procedure, full of surprise and interest. When he sees the necklace, his eyes brighten.)

Bijjala : Do you have any idea of what this necklace costs?

Savantri : No, my lord! Kamakshi said that this necklace was worth more than her price, and returned it to me. In order to hand it over to the police chief, I kept it above the shelf; and now it is in your hands.

Bijjala : You woman! This necklace is worth many lakhs. At least now, will you take it back?

Savantri : What does it matter how much it is worth when we don't need it? Now it is like pebbles to us. Kamakshi told me she would serve Sangayya for her own satisfaction; and that's what she is doing now.

Bijjala : Don't you also want it?

Savantri : Sir, the work and the remuneration for it must match each other; otherwise, it would amount to corruption.

- Bijjala** : You are justifying your wretched profession; aren't you ashamed of it?
- Savantri** : When a rich man, who became rich through stolen money, brags about his wealth; when a king, who became a king killing people, brags about his victories; when an officer, who got his position through corruption, brags about his power – do all of them feel ashamed of themselves, sir? If they do not, why should we, who live selling our bodies honestly, and pay taxes on what we earn, feel ashamed? You don't find anything repulsive in their way of life, but you find ours repulsive; why? You are the king; and it was your responsibility to see that everyone lived an honest life. On the contrary, you come here, at night, disguised, and preach us what is right and what is wrong; isn't this a little abnormal, my king?
- Bijjala** : (shaken up with the onslaught) Enough! Stop... Now, tell me; how did this come to the hands of Sangayya the innocent?
- Savantri** : I don't really know, my lord.
- Bijjala** : Do you know that this is the necklace that has been stolen from the palace, today itself? Suspecting a Jangama of having stolen the necklace, the Police chief and his guards are searching for him everywhere in the city; do you also know this?
- Savantri** : I know none of these things, Sir. Since this necklace was in the hands of Sangayya, he is in a better position to explain how he got it. When he

gets up, if you need I will send him to you; Or, if the Police chief comes here . . . (The doorkeeper enters hurriedly.)

Doorkeeper : Madam! Basavanna the treasurer has come here; he wants to know if he can come in.

Savantri : Basavanna ! To my house! Wait, I am coming.

(She gets up in great excitement; straightens her saree-border, and goes to open the door. Bijjala continues to observe her movements in surprise; Basavanna comes and stands near the door.)

End of Act Four

Scene Five

Sutradhara : On that night, in Kalyana, nothing was in the right place and right order. None had any trust in others; and each one listened to others with suspicion. Everyone's words had two meanings: the apparent and the hidden. On that night, the dark night of Shiva, Kalyana didn't sleep; but it wasn't awake as well, as the rituals required. Everyone, with eyes and ears riveted on Savantri's house, afraid of when and what could hit them, waited; those that had a bit of courage, waited, sitting in front of the huts and cottages on the outskirts of the city, hidden from the watchful eyes of guards. Hiding their real meaning and import, they were using words, casually and at their face value. Hear, O hear!

First Group

Sharana -1 : The hunt for the Sharanas has begun. Having caught hold of Machayya the washerman, they tore his clothes, beat him black and blue, and then they sent him home. In this situation, if Anna comes to the house of Savantri the prostitute, what shall we say?

Sharana -2 : When they are murdering Sharanas through impalement, it is clear that they have the upper hand. There is none, now, to oppose them.

- Sharana - 3** : Even after they have impaled Haralayya and Madhuvarasa, we are sitting quiet, without doing anything. . . .
- Sharana -4** : It is not a small thing that they have impaled our people and got away with it. Henceforth, I am sure, they won't simply let go the defeated ones.
- Sharana - 5** : I hear they have summoned ruffians from every nook and corner of the kingdom.
- Sharana -1** : Come on, why do they need any ruffians? They have their army, haven't they? Blowing horns and trumpets, letting loose hunting dogs barking, spreading a huge net over the city of Kalyana, they will hunt the Sharanas. Everything has a price; these are bad days for the Sharanas.
- Sharana - 2** : Only Shiva can help us.
- Sharana -3** : Shiva is on mount Kailasa; who is there to protect us here?
- Sharana - 4** : Listen! We are Sharanas. Basavanna has told us that we should keep everything under control.
- Sharana - 1** : God has given him a trident; but, giving us only a Linga, He wants us to bear everything; what can we do? .
- Sharana – 2** : God is One. But the same God who has given him plenty of protection, hasn't given any for us. That means, we ourselves have to protect us.
- Sharana – 1** : Anna has gone into Savantri's house; it appears the king is also inside, there. Now, during this awful night, if something untoward happens in

this king-minister confrontation, what will happen to us? Who will save us?

Sharana – 2 : No, no! Nothing that you fear will take place. Have courage; if something unfortunate happens, do you think Anna will keep quiet? He will perform some miracle or another and come out of this safely; rest assured.

Sharana -4 : But – what I feel is, we should be ready to face anything.

Second Group

Lay Man -1 : Listen! Whatever you say, impaling Haralayya and Madhuvarasa was going too far.

Lay Man -2 : But, old man, this is a serious question that involves two families; caste, clan, and such have to be considered. Marriage between dalits and somebody else is one thing; but, between Brahmins and Dalits is something else. Can you ignore religious injunctions of thousands of years?

Lay Man -3 : Gentlemen, look here. We are scholars; and we shouldn't discuss matters of this world. It doesn't do if what we talk about falls short of sublimity, even a little. Please change the topic.

Lay Man -1 : Come into this dark area; why are you in the middle of the road? After all, these are noisy and disturbing days. If the king comes to know, that's the end of us. 'Do you also covet Kamakshi?' – that's what he is going to question us about.

- Lay Man -2** : I don't think so. The reason is, can any of us afford to pay her what she demands? Even if she invites me herself, I am not the one to go there.
- Lay Man-3** : She would never become that poor to invite you! She earns as much in one night, it is said, as we do lifelong.
- A Boy** : (Pointing out the doorkeepers of Savantri's house) Among them, who is the king? The one standing near the door, with his spear tightly held?
- Lay Man -1** : Be quiet. The king is inside; when he comes out, I will show him to you.
- Lay Man - 2** : Hey, this is not the place meant for small boys. Go away – quick. If the king's soldier spots you, he will hold you by your tuft and drag you to the king.
- Boy** : Pappa! See what this fellow says!
- Lay Man -2** : Can't you, people, be quiet? It is such a thrilling entertainment for the citizens Of Kalyana they had never experienced. Have you, ever, heard of both the king and his minister visiting a whore at the same time? Ever seen such a sight? You just observe: in the least, the king and the minister will come out, pulling each other by hair.
- Lay Man -3** : Or else, the king will come out, holding Basavanna's head, bleeding. Could the citizens of Kalyana ever imagine such a scene?
- Lay Man -1** : It is just a lucky break for us. The minister goes inside, thinking that the king isn't there; But – the king is sitting there inside, all solid. It is like

a rare solar eclipse; its shadow falling on the earth, has caused total darkness during day- time itself. Stand here quietly –and observe.

Lay Man –2 : The two most powerful leaders rubbing shoulders with each other in a whore-house, when the entire city of Kalyana is in flames, . . . all that I can say is, it is most strange. Now, let us thank the king and the minister for having provided us this golden opportunity, and keep watching –with our mouths shut.Can you do so? There – the king’s soldiers are coming this way; Seal your lips.

End of Scene Five

Scene Six

(While every one inside Savantri's house looks at the door, surprised, Basavanna comes near the door and stands there. Having seen the king unexpectedly, Basavanna exclaims, 'O your highness!' and folds his hands in respect. Meanwhile, Savantri's excitement is beyond words.)

Bijjala : (standing up) Come, Basavanna; welcome!
(stretches his hands to welcome.)

Savantri : (becoming highly emotional, shedding tears of joy) Father! My Father! O Godlike Basavanna, have you really stepped into my house! Have you come all the way to a whore-house, my father!

(She prostrates before Basavanna and wipes the dust of his feet, with her saree border. Basavanna, full of compassion, raises her.)

Basavanna : Mother, please get up.

Bijjala : I can't believe this, Basavanna! The king and the respectable minister of a country, meeting each other in the house of a prostitute! Is this just a coincidence? Or, does it signify religion and politics coming together?

Basavanna : Yes, your majesty! The king and his ex-minister meeting each other in the house of a very pious woman like Savantri – it is indeed a rare

coincidence. None else but the virtuous get such an auspicious moment. Have I interrupted your pleasures, my Lord?

Bijjala : What pleasure, my friend! Whenever I got bored with politics, there was Kamakshi to entertain me; but your Sangayya came here, and stole her also. Now, what else is left for poor Bijjala in this kingdom? But — how come you are here? There is so much life before you. Being tired of eating the same pulses and rice, you may have come here —I presume —seeking new tastes.

Basavanna : Nothing like that, my Lord. Sangayya the innocent suddenly disappeared from home. Worried, I was looking for him here and there, when somebody told me he could be here. Hence, I am here to take him back home.

Bijjala : Is that so? Oh! What can I say about your Sangayya and his Linga-worship! Go in and see for yourself. Savantri, show Sangayya to Basava.

Savantri : Venerable Brother! See —Sangayya is here.

(Basavanna goes inside, and moved, he folds his hands in respect.)

Basavanna : Mother Savantri, you are blessed! Blessed you are, indeed. I hadn't seen till now the kind of satisfaction reflected in the face of Sangayya, resulting from his worship.

Savantri : It is all due to your compassion, Father. Could I get you some fruit and milk?

- Basavanna** : No, mother. Having seen Sangayya today, I am as satisfied as having had a good dinner.
- Savantri** : I have heard that you haven't eaten anything for three days. I shall be very happy if you take some milk, at least.
- Basavanna** : Please, don't force me, mother. Today, it is *Shivaratri*, the night of Shiva. I am satisfied; highly satisfied, mother.
- Bijjala** : Oh! This whore is your mother, is she?
- Basavanna** : If she who is the mother of Sangayya becomes my mother also, wouldn't I be fortunate, Sir? If Savantri consents to consider me her son, I shall be really blessed.
- Savantri** : Father, you have sanctified the life of this prostitute. Sangayya has come to my place; and, now, the noble Basavanna also has come to my house. With such unexpected stroke of luck, this whore's life has fulfilled its purpose.
- Bijjala** : What black magic have you practiced on these people, O Basava? None in Kalyana has fidelity to his master; but all are devoted to Basava. Devotion to Basava, and devotion to master — we have to test which is higher and greater.
- Basavanna** : If one or two minutes of your time of pleasure are taken away, should you be so envious, your majesty? Can I, ever, be a rival to you?
- Bijjala** : (pointing to Sangayya) You have already seated my rival inside. Forget it; it is a different story altogether. You have performed such a miracle

that even the king and his palace are nothing to these people.

Basavanna : I am not a miracle man, my lord! Not in the least.

Bijjala : You have caused both Kailasa the abode of Shiva, and Vaikuntha the abode of Vishnu to come down to a whore-house, for the sake of this poor Bijjala; Is this less than a miracle? Consider: on one side, there is godly Sangayya absorbed in his worship; on the other, there is Basavanna the Noble! Poor king Bijjala sandwiched in between the two. Can there be a greater miracle?

Basavanna : Having performed such miracles one after another, I have become a clown like 'the man of many faces.'²¹ What shall I do, my lord? What miracle and when and where I perform I myself do not know. Every day, a new miracle is tagged on to my name.

Savantri : (to the king) Your majesty, there are many miracles ascribed to you also; shall I describe them?

Bijjala : Really? See, you haven't told me anything about them. Tell me one, at least.

Savantri : Once upon a time, in the court of Bijjala the king, there was a priest by name Kramita. The king was so taken in by Kramita's scholarly rituals, that he once told Kramita, 'tell me whatever you want; you shall get it.' 'Lend me your ears, every day, for two minutes,' said Kramita, and the king agreed happily. Beginning with that day, the priest

would approach him every day, and confide in the king about state-matters. At first, he would tell the king only the truth; and thus he won the king's confidence; later, he began to tell him half-truths and, still later, only lies; and the king believed him. The result was, in course of time, my lord, Kramita became a minister and the minister a poor attendant.

- Bijjala** : Did you hear, Basava, the pranks of this cunning woman?
- Savantri** : It is not my story, your majesty; it is folk-genius. Many other such miracles are tagged on to your name; shall I narrate a few more?
- Bijjala** : No more, my dear woman; it is enough. By chance, I have met Basavanna in your house, who had been angry with me, all these days. We have a few intimate issues to discuss. You can also stay here if you wish; you won't disturb us. Am I right, Basavanna?
- Basavanna** : It's all right, my lord. But, there is something I have been struggling to ask you; shall I do so, now, my lord?
- Bijjala** : Of course; don't hesitate. Go ahead and ask me, Basavanna.
- Basavanna** : Are you still angry with Sheelavanta, the son of Haralayya?
- Bijjala** : Of course, not.

- Basavanna** : In that case — I am worried that his life is in danger; my lord, could you deign to give him protection?
- Bijjala** : Surely. Here is my word. Henceforth, Basavanna, cease your worries; he is my responsibility. Who is there? (claps)
- Doorkeeper** : (entering) Your Majesty?
- Bijjala** : Whoever is there, my bodyguard or the Police chief, call him in.
- (The doorkeeper goes out and returns with a soldier; the soldier bows to the king, and stands there respectfully.)
- Bijjala** : Listen! Go to the Police chief at once, and tell him that strict protection should be given to Sheelavanta, wherever he is. Do you understand? Now, go.
- Soldier** : As you order, your majesty. (he leaves)
- Bijjala** : Now, let's come to something more personal. I have received your resignation letter about ministerial position; but I haven't yet accepted it.
- Basavanna** : Your majesty! Once you said, 'tender resignation and then you may return to your town,' I cannot continue in that position. It was Kudala Sangayya who sent me to you; so, until I get his orders to return, I shall stay here. That's my decision. The minute I get his order, I shall leave. I request you, my lord, to permit me stay at Kalyana till then.

- Bijjala** : Oh! You have declared a war against me on the religious front!
- Basavanna** : No, your majesty! A war on the religious front involves a conflict of principles; here it is not so. Even the scandal-mongers know that they are only play-acting. I cannot tell a lie for the sake of king's patronage.
- Bijjala** : When you raised '*Mahamane*' against my palace, Basavanna, you moved away from me.
- Basavanna** : That's true, my lord. Fresh breeze had begun to blow; and those who breathed the fresh air of new life desired change. They declared they were also human. The sacrificial victim got voice and sang *Vachanas*. But your system continued to breathe the same stale air of thousands of years. How can it survive? Won't you think on these lines, my lord?
- Bijjala** : In the guise of 'fresh breeze,' how can you encourage a marriage that challenges the *Varnashrama* system, and involves a commingling of different castes?
- Basavanna** : That marriage didn't involve different castes, your highness; it was according to the major doctrine of the new dharma. True, once upon a time Madhuvarasa was a Brahmin; it is also true that once Haralayya was a Shudra. But, after they were initiated into the new dharma, both belonged to the same dharma –of Shiva. Having turned a *Sharana*, Haralayya is no more a dalit, neither is Madhuvarasa a Brahmin. *Sharanas* do not

practice any caste-distinctions. Therefore, that marriage involved two people of the same caste and same dharma. It was a heroic adventure to root out casteism. Till now, our doctrine was only theoretical; but that marriage extended that theory into practice.

Bijjala : O Basavanna! This society doesn't have the strength to digest your doctrines.

Basavanna : What is a society, my lord? Does it mean only an *Agrahara* meant for Brahmins, when there are ninety percent of the rest living outside it?

Bijjala : The system has the strength to give the kind of dharma to all the people, according to their needs. The god of this system is capable of looking after all people. This system is unavoidable; and we have been living under this system for the last ten thousand years. In this situation, if you intrude suddenly, recognize the needs that don't exist among people, and attempt to give them such a god that fulfills those non-existent needs, wouldn't it be egotistical?

Basavanna : My lord! Just for the reason that something has existed for thousands of years, it needn't be considered Truth. Possibly, it could have been falsity and injustice. For even they have been with us for thousands of years. If something appears true for the elite minority, and the same appears false to the rest, the rest have a right to reject

what is not true for them; don't they? It cannot be held that my truth should be your truth also.

Bijjala : Then, how do you decide what is Truth?

Basavanna : On our own experience. Our long experience assures us what is true and eternal. It scrutinizes everything, throws out what is useless and retains what is healthy, and continues to live. Again, it may change in course of time. Even that, what needs to change, is decided by experience.

Bijjala : This is what I called tradition.

Basavanna : If that tradition is helpful only to you, and not to me, I have the right to reject it. You talked of 'long experience'; it has to be a sum total of the experiences of both of us, not merely yours. The god of your system draws some people near, and keeps away many, many others. Such a god cannot be my god. If he were to be my god, he should touch both or keep away both, equally. I need such a god; otherwise, I don't need god at all.

Bijjala : Do you mean to say that an institution that opposes a system, with a new god and a new dharma is always necessary?

Basavanna : Your majesty! As you know, these people have been banished from dharma; but they also need a dharma and a god who talks to them. This is not an oppositional institution. If you are not ready even to concede that they are human, what else can I say?

Bijjala : Does it mean that all of them are in the dark now? Are you going to give them a new dharma, a new god, and thus carry them straight to Kailasa, Shiva's abode?

Basavanna : That, my lord, even your system cannot do. There is dharma in your kingdom –only for the elite; and they are imposing it on poor people. These poor people do not have an opportunity to reach god, to touch him, to talk to him, and share with him their pleasures and pains. In your system, you have to talk to god only in 'the language of gods'; but in *Mahamane*, god talks to them in their own language. Now, god and the destitute talk to each other directly; and, thus, their self-confidence has grown that they also have a dharma. They don't interfere with others, and they follow whatever their dharma teaches them. They do their jobs and pay whatever taxes are due. Isn't it enough?

Bijjala : All right! But, haven't you failed to realize that the 'Kalyana' you strive to build needs a Bijjala also, besides Basavanna? When you were busy giving a form to your dreams, I was there, just by your side, wondering if I had any place there. I searched for my place; but, let alone seats, there wasn't even a nook where I could sit on the floor. When all the *Sharanas* sat together, where could others go to?

Basavanna : Your majesty! We attempted to transform your own Kalyana into '*Kudala Sangama*,' the place

of Shiva. It was our dream to continue you on your throne, to provide a new outlet to the still waters of the system, to bring in fresh water and thus build a '*Shivapura*,'²² a place good for all. But you wanted to tread on the same old paths that led to darkness. Hence, we had to seek new paths.

Bijjala : I used the word 'king' to mean a sum of laws and duties.

Basavanna : King's laws should have a strong base of 'god-consciousness'; they should respect man's self-respect. As long as the laws do not transgress these two criteria, you remain a 'king'; However, since your laws transgressed these principles, we had to seek, my lord, other possible paths.

Bijjala : Basavanna, beware; you are now dealing with a world which is beyond you. This is a world of day-to-day life. Many like you, who wanted to cleanse the existing systems, have been in the past; even they played their role and disappeared. Tell me, now; what is your role in this process? You are a Brahmin, not an outcaste. In this long journey from Kalyana to Kudala Sangama, what precisely is your role? Are you a martyr or a middleman?

Basavanna : I am a friend of theirs; since, not being one of them, I am doing their work, I am a middleman. If you violate the laws and kill me, I will be a martyr.

Bijjala : Surely, it is evident that you have declared a war against me.

Basavanna : Not at all, your majesty. I have neither declared a war nor fought any war. If the king is wounded, those wounds are self-inflicted; Or, they are the wounds of love caused by his mistresses.

Bijjala : Thank God, you laughed! It has been years since I saw you laughing.

Savantri : If your majesty and the venerable Brother permit me, can I say a few words in the end?

Bijjala : Go ahead.

Savantri : Our Brother showed us a path to Kudala Sangama; he also showed us, drawing pictures on sand, how to grow rows of trees on both sides of that path. If we could visualize how that path would appear after one hundred years: the plants had become trees, providing cool shade and shelter to wayfarers all through the path leading to the ideal –Kudala Sangama. But, prematurely, your soldiers came there, rubbed out the path drawn on sand, and destroyed the plants, trampling on them. And you, you shut out the path leading to Kuadala Sangama.

Bijjala : Okay! With these words of Savantri, let's conclude this discussion. Although the discussion is incomplete, I hope there is time for you to reconsider the issue of your resignation.

- Basavanna** : No, Sir. The day the *Sharanas* were tied to the plow and drawn, my life ended with them. What remains is only a shadow. Since that day, I have been babbling without any meaning. Pardon me, Sir, if I have uttered something inappropriate.
- Bijjala** : Another issue needs to be clarified. Sangayya the innocent has given a gold necklace, stolen from the palace, to Savantri as her price. How he got the necklace has to be decided; if he himself confesses, there ends the matter.
- Basavanna** : (terribly shaken) Impossible. Mother Savantri, what's all this about?
- Savantri** : It is true that Sangayya the innocent gave me the necklace. But, Brother, I feel some deception has been carried out here. Since Kamakshi also refused to accept it, I have given it to the king himself.
- Doorkeeper** : Your highness, Kramita has sent someone to see you; he is waiting outside, Sir.
- Bijjala** : Send him in.
- Harihara** : (entering) Forgive me, your majesty. We had been waiting for the issue of the necklace to crop up; hence, we had to intrude thus, suddenly.
- Bijjala** : Oh! Our venerable scholar, Pandita! Tell me, what unavoidable reasons forced you to barge in.
- Harihara** : Today, in the evening, when all the palace-guards were busy making arrangements for the great *Puja*, the necklace was stolen. We tried hard to catch the thief, but he ran away and escaped.

- Bijjala** : Could you detect who the thief was?
- Harihara** : Not yet, Sir. We could only see his outward features. As we could make out, the thief was a young Jangama.
- Bijjala** : Okay, Pandita; but I fail to understand why you are here.
- Harihara** : That's what we have come to tell you, Sir: someone told us that the young Jangama is hiding in the house of Savantri the prostitute. We wished to bring this to the attention of the king, who is as just and great as Dharmaraya.
- Bijjala** : How many of you have come here?
- Harihara** : We are the only one, Sir.²³
- Bijjala** : Oh! I see!... The thief was a young Jangama; the necklace is found in Savantri's house . . .
- Basavanna** : Respected Pandita, please come here. (Harihara hesitates) Come, sir; after all you have seen the boy who stole the necklace. You said he was a young Jangama?
- Harihara** : Yes.
- Basavanna** : If you see him, can you identify him?
- Harihara** : Certainly, I can.
- Basavanna** : Then ... look inside; you see the boy who, sitting on the bed, is worshipping the Linga, . . .
- Harihara** : Worshipping a Linga? Awful!
- Basavanna** : Having seen the thief, how can you say so? Can that boy, worshipping the Linga, be the thief? See him, clearly.

- Harihara** : (goes inside and looks at the boy) Wonder! Wonder of wonders! Yes, sir; this is the young Jangama we saw in the palace.
- Basavanna** : Your majesty, in the name of our mutual relationship, I tell you, Sangayya the innocent is not a thief. You can make enquiries about him with anybody.
- Harihara** : One Sharana-woman has come with us as a witness; could we call her in, Sir?
- Bijjala** : All right. (to the doorkeeper) There is a woman, it seems, standing outside; bring her in.
- (When all look at the door intently, Kaashamma, followed by Damodara, enters. Harihara looks at his son contemptuously and turns away his face. Kaashavva sees Basavanna, and overcome with emotion, folds her hands.)
- Kaashavva** : O my Father! Did you give me the opportunity to see you here, Basava, Father? (She prostrates at the feet of Basavanna.) Why did you summon me, Father? This man told me that you wanted me as a witness, and brought me here.
- Basavanna** : (pointing at Bijjala) The king! Bow to him, mother! (Kaashavva prostrates before Bijjala also.)
- Harihara** : Hey Kaashi, one Jangama boy came to your place, today, and hid a gold-necklace inside your house, didn't he?
- Kaashavva** : Yes, Sir. He hid himself in our house to escape the king's soldiers. He lay hidden till the soldiers

left; and then, he left the necklace in our house and fled.

Harihara : That's enough; you can go now. Go! I believe your highness is now sure of what is what.

Bijjala : Wait! Why are you in such a hurry? She said, the Jangama boy left the necklace in her house; In that case, how did it come to Savantri's house?

Harihara : Is that the problem? Then, wait. (turning to Kaashavva) Hey Kashi, the Jangama boy who was hiding in your house, wore ochre clothes, didn't he?

Kaashavva : Yes, Sir.

Harihara : Did you hear her, my lord? Kashi, leave us now.

Savantri : Sister Kaashavva, come here. (Kaashavva goes near Savantri.) Can you see the Jangama sitting inside? Tell us: is he the one who brought the necklace to your house?

Kaashavva : Oh, no! This boy is Sangayya; that Jangama boy was different. It was he who gave Sangayya the necklace, showed your house, and sent him here.

Harihara : (sees his son standing near the door) Your majesty! This woman doesn't know what she is talking about. If you show her any one in ochre robes, she will say he was the thief. Shall I demonstrate? (his voice shaken) Permit me to demonstrate, your highness; you are our Dharmaraya.

Bijjala : All right! Proceed.

- Harihara** : Damodara! (Damodara appears dramatically, as if he was waiting for a cue.) Kaashi, did the one, who hid in your house and left the necklace while running away, look like this young man?
- Kaashavva** : Why 'like him'? It was this man. When the soldiers left, my old man began to smell some stench, and he went inside to see what it was. The necklace was there. When we were about to throw it away, this man approached us and claimed the necklace as his.
- Damodara** : Forgive me, your majesty; I have come without your permission. Whatever this motherly woman has said, is completely true.
- Bijjala** : Does it mean that you are the thief of that necklace?
- Damodara** : Yes, your majesty. I came here to tell you just that.
- Harihara** : This is going beyond us, my lord. We don't know who this man is; and we haven't seen him in the palace. These people of *Mahamane* know how to create a duplicate Jangama, in order to protect their own people. They also know how to convince people like you.
- Bijjala** : Pandita! Control your tongue. (Bijjala glares at him angrily; Harihara gets scared. Addressing Damodara) You – do you know who this gentleman is?
- Damodara** : Yes, my Lord! He is my father. (Everyone is shocked. Bijjala questioningly looks at Harihara.

Harihara regains his composure and becomes alert.)

Harihara : If my words of truth sound bitter to your majesty, it reflects the misfortune of this kingdom. If you want to test the truthfulness of my statement, you can do so here and now. This boy is a duplicate Jangama; and the witness is also false. Examine his body and see if he is wearing a Linga on his body. We do not know who this young man is. We have told you what we wanted to; and now, if you permit us, we will leave.

(He goes out speedily; even Bijjala is surprised at his arrogance.)

Damodara : Your majesty! I pray that I should be permitted to say a few words.

Bijjala : Tell us, are you really his son?

Damodara : If you want, you can summon the minister, Kramita, to clarify this issue, your majesty.

Bijjala : Kramita? Do you know him also?

Damodara : Could I speak for two minutes, just two minutes, my lord?

Bijjala : Speak.

Damodara : My lord, forgive me. I am the one, who, disguised as a Jangama, stole the gold-necklace from the palace; I am the one who hid himself in Kaashavva's house; again, it was I who gave the necklace to Sangayya the innocent and sent him to Savantri's house. This is the truth; I swear on

the feet of Basavanna that this is the truth. As my witnesses, I have Kaashavva and Chikkayya the thief standing outside; would you permit me to call them in?

Bijjala : No. Basavanna, until it is proved that this boy is the son of Harihareshwara the scholar, I will not take any decision. Tomorrow, I will personally conduct an enquiry and decide. Is it acceptable to you?

Basavanna : Till that time, Sangayya the innocent and this . . .

Damodara : Damodara is my name.

Basavanna : Should Sangayya and Damodara be your prisoners until tomorrow?

Bijjala : Just for one day. It is a matter of law, Basavanna.

Savantri : Your majesty, I shall pledge myself for Sangayya; please don't hurt him.

Basavanna : I shall stand surety for Damodara.

Bijjala : This is a question of respect for the state laws. If I extend some concessions to the *Sharanas*, I will have to do the same for others; am I right, Basavanna?

Damodara : I am responsible to prove my words; beginning with theft, I alone am involved in sending Sangayya to this place. Therefore, your majesty, won't it suffice if I alone am your prisoner?

Bijjala : Okay, I agree with you. You declared that Harihareshwara is your father; can we rely on that?

- Damodara** : You have to, since it is the truth.
- Bijjala** : If that's true, why did your father refuse to accept that he was your father? What do you say, Basavanna? Is it possible for any father to lie in the presence of others that his son is not his son?
- Savantri** : Your majesty! The final decision is left to you; all the others have said what they had to say. Irrespective of who is right and who isn't, kindly, don't hurt the feelings of respected Anna. He is not the same Basavanna he was earlier. Ever since the day Haralayya and Madhuvarasa were bound to the plow and drawn on the streets, Basavanna hasn't even touched food and water. He doesn't speak much also. But for his brief conversation with you, today, he hasn't broken his silence even with his wives. His wives also are under fast, and so are the *Sharanas* after the news reached them. With folded hands, I pray to you: please release Sangayya the innocent. (weeps)
- Bijjala** : (with a touch of envy) Does Basavanna love you?
- Savantri** : Yes, he loves all. Even you and also Kramita.
(shrieking and shouting heard from outside. People inside look worried.)
- Bijjala** : What's this noise? . . . Who is there?
- Doorkeeper** : None of your people is here, sir. Oh! Looks like someone is coming. (Chikkayya comes shouting the name of Basavanna, and falls on his feet.)
- Chikkayya** : Brother! Brother! Something terrible has happened. All the houses on the lane of Haralayya have caught fire.

Kaashavva : O no! Sheelavantha? He was hiding in my house.... Father! Save him.

Chikkayya : Mother! It was your house that was first set on fire.

(Hearing this news, Basavanna, shocked, stands motionless. Kaashavva, beating her chest and crying loudly, 'Oh, God! O my boy! Sheelavantha!' goes out running. For a moment or two, all stand still, stupefied. Then, Sangayya the innocent approaches Basavanna as if he is possessed, and begins to foretell the future: 'Over! Everything is over.')

Sangayya : Hear! O Basavanna, hear! With the fact that Sheelavantha couldn't be protected, our story comes to an end. Now I need the presence of the patron-goddess of this city to pronounce my benedictory verses. Where is that mother?

Mad Woman : (entering from the outer door) I am here, my boy; unable to face all the unexpected, and terrified, I got lost in the crowds. Even when young children are dragged out and killed, there is none to oppose the killers or protect the helpless. I am so helpless that I cannot protect even your Sharanas. Now, I am just barking empty nothings like an old dog; forgive me, my father.

Basavanna : Mother, don't belittle yourself. When I set foot in Kalyana for the first time, many wondered: 'who is he? Whom does he belong to?' Then you took me under your fold and said: 'he is ours; he belongs to us,'²⁴ and protected me. You made available to me many opportunities; and I served

you, to the best of my abilities. If my service to you is flawed at some point or another, consider me your son and forgive your son's shortcomings.

Mad Woman : What are you saying, my son? Any mother would be proud to have you as her son. May your mother be happy and contented. Basava, I was proud of you and I loved you.

Basavanna : Mother, would you permit me to leave now?

Mad Woman : Have you to go?

Basavanna : One has to leave sometime, mother?

Mad Woman : Our story was concluded hurriedly; and it was equally bitter. Basavanna, I never thought it would end in this ghastly manner. Like a hill holding up a new horizon, Basava, you entered Kalyana. But, we should have known – even the sky leans on the horizon in the evening; and, when the hill shrinks, the horizon as well shrivels. Even the fire of Time, it seems, didn't mellow us.

Basavanna : It is very painful, mother, to go away from you!

Mad Woman : Basavanna! My own Basava! Your dreams will survive till they are realized. It was just a question of a bit of haste. In your sheer enthusiasm, you awoke at midnight itself. As soon as you got up, you sprinkled cold water on your face, and gave a call to all the people: 'Come –come all of you to welcome the new dawn.' To tell you the truth, the morning star hadn't arisen at all. The dark night still lay leaning upon the hillock, dreaming;

and, near her feet, Time was lost in sleep, his measuring implements scattered hither and thither. Of course, those people who heard you did ascend the hill; but, unable to sight the signs of dawn, they just slept. Their eyelids are still closed. Let's forget it; and let's hope that, at least when it dawns, they will get up and live a life that you drew for them. May you be happy, Basavanna! Sangayya, . . .

- Savantri** : Anna! I need a favour from you.
- Basavanna** : Tell me, mother.
- Savantri** : Father, do I also have a place in your *Mahamane*?
- Basavanna** : *Mahamane* is not a standing, concrete structure, mother. Whatever Sangayya gives us is *Mahamane*; and, with the grace of Sangayya, you have transformed your own house as *Mahamane*; you are a bold and blessed devotee of Sangayya, mother!
- Savantri** : If what you say is true, am I also allowed to join the great pilgrimage to Kudala Sangama, Father?
- Basavanna** : Certainly, mother.
- Mad Woman** : (to Savantri) Then... what about this grand edifice and your wealth and treasure?
- Savantri** : All that belongs to my earlier life; and, mother, I don't want to carry any sign of my earlier life.
- Kamakshi** : Respected Anna! Permit me also to join you, Father.
- Basavanna** : You are also welcome to join us, sister.

Mad Woman : (addressing Bijjala who is sitting quietly) Can you send away, unceremoniously, the god sitting on a ceremonial seat? Even farewells require an order, a form. Sangayya is ready to leave now; bid him farewell, with devotion; place on his feet a *bilwa* leaf, at least.

(Bijjala stands up. While delivering the epilogue, Sangayya says 'Basavanna,' others respond shouting '*kade rudra*' in chorus. In tune with this, shouts of '*karadi troupe*' –a folk performance²⁵ – from outside are heard.)

Sangayya : Over! Everything is over! The play at Kalyana has come to an end. A brief period is over; but eternal Time continues. I and you, Basavanna, are going to meet at Kudala Sangama, to conclude the play. Others, staying back at Ulivi, agonize over whether what they attempted sincerely would reach its desired conclusion.

Kalyani, the patron-goddess of Kalyana, finding the city bereft of Basavanna, can only see herself in a mirror and plead for her city, through the pages of history. Enough of this; go Basavanna, leave for Kudala Sangama.

(Roaring thus, Sangayya walks at the head; his words, spewed out, mingle with the noise of '*Karadi* performance' taking place outside. Following Sangayya, Basavanna and the mad woman who, spellbound, bows to him, go out; Savantri, Kamakshi and Chikkayya pay their formal respect to Bijjala, and go out. Bijjala and Damodara stand there in a state of shock. Not very sure of whether he should remain

there or leave, when Damodara gets ready to leave, Bijjala signals to him to stop. For some time, the entire atmosphere is filled with terrifying noise and shouts. When it gradually subsides,)

Doorkeeper : (entering) Your Highness! The Chief of Police is here.

(The doorkeeper goes out and returns with the Police Chief, who, coming inside, bows to the king and stands.)

Bijjala : (pointing at Damodara) Do you know this young man?

Police Chief : Yes, my lord. Beginning with his theft of the necklace, . . .

Bijjala : Wait. This man stole the necklace from the palace, then hid himself at Kaashavva's house, then gave Sangayya the innocent that necklace and sent him to the house of Savantri the prostitute; are these details right?

Police Chief : Yes, my lord!

Bijjala : All this is his own confession. He says, he is the son of Harihareshwara; is it true?

Police Chief : Yes, my lord!

Bijjala : (in doubt) How many wives does Harihareshwara have?

Police Chief : Only one wife, and this man is his only son. Father, mother, and son, all the three live together. Essentially, this man is a rebel and a progressive thinker, my lord! Due to his opposition to all the

old traditions, in his young age itself, he has earned many opponents among his kith and kin.

Bijjala : Why did such a person stoop to theft?

Police Chief : I am also surprised, my lord. This man is a blunt speaker, but not a liar; he has no respect for the words of any person. Those who know him suspect that he may have his own reasons to commit the theft, your majesty.

Bijjala : This is all the more surprising; it means, all that he has confessed to till now is true.... Tell me, any more news?

Police Chief : My lord! The entire lane of Haralayya was set on fire; and Sheelavanta, catching fire, is dead.

Bijjala : (taken aback) Who set the fire?

Police Chief : Kramita's men, your majesty.

Bijjala : You fool! Why do you hold Kramita responsible for anything and everything? What proof do you have for your accusation?

Police Chief : My lord! When those who set fire to the cottages were running away, they were caught by the people. Even when they were caught and bound, they glorified their own 'brave deeds,' and hailed the name of Kramita.

Bijjala : Where were you then? What were our soldiers doing?

Police Chief : We were all on the spot, my lord. We even made it clear to them that Sheelavantha was under the king's protection. While a few engaged us in

conversation and took us away to another side, the two who remained there, set fire and ran away. They killed even two soldiers who attempted to stop them. I have brought those criminals here, in chains; shall I present them to you, now, my lord?

Bijjala : No, put them in prison; we shall try them tomorrow. Where are my bodyguards?

Police Chief : There is none, here, my lord!

Bijjala : Did they follow Basavanna?

Police Chief : I went there also, searching for the thieves; among the people who accompanied Basavanna, none of our soldiers or guards was there, my lord.

Bijjala : Has Basavanna left?

Police Chief : First, he went to the houses destroyed by fire and consoled the poor victims there; then, he recited certain duties and asked me to convey them to you, and left. Countless Sharanas followed him, your majesty.

Bijjala : It must be very dark outside, isn't it?

Police Chief : It is the darkness of Shivaratri; even the temples of Shiva have no lamps lit.

Bijjala : Since we came here in disguise, we couldn't see clearly; are there many people outside?

Police Chief : Although the entire city of Kalyana is drowned in the darkness of Shivaratri, no citizen is sleeping, my lord. Stealthily, all had their eyes

and ears glued to the house of Savantri. It was an exciting piece of news that both the king and his minister were in the house of the same whore. But, once, Basavanna came out and left for Kudala Sangama, all of them followed him, your majesty.

Bijjala : (regretfully) I couldn't fulfill even the last wish of Basavanna!... All right! Go out and bring my bodyguards here.

Police Chief : As you order, your majesty. (he leaves)

Bijjala : Today is the day of Shiva; isn't it?

Damodara : Yes, your majesty.

Bijjala : The entire city appears empty and lifeless, doesn't it?

Damodara : Yes, your majesty.

Bijjala : You are the son of Harihareshwara; when did you become a Jangama?

Damodara : Just today, I put on the disguise of a Jangama, in order to steal the gold-necklace.

Bijjala : Do you know the punishment for stealing from the palace?

Damodara : I have come prepared for it, sir.

Bijjala : You committed the theft disguised as a Jangama; when did you begin to feel it was wrong?

Damodara : I felt so, my lord, after I met Chikkayya the thief. Tempted by greed, I put on the disguise of a Jangama; I also believed that giving that necklace

to my parents, I would make them happy; I felt happy that I could easily get a priceless necklace, which I couldn't earn even after many lives, and hence I stole that. But I believe there was another, stronger reason for my theft; if your majesty assure me of forgiveness, I will disclose it.

Bijjala : All right; I assure you. Now, tell me.

Damodara : I also coveted Kamakshi, my lord.

Bijjala : What? Even you have the temerity to vie with me?

Damodara : Your majesty, you have promised to forgive me.

Bijjala : Yes, continue.

Damodara : I did steal, of course; but was noticed by the police chief; so I ran away and hid myself in Kaashavva's house.

Bijjala : Why didn't you run back to your own house?

Damodara : I was afraid your police chief might identify me; hence I ran to the lane of Haralayya. It is an area full of crooked roads and narrow paths, And, I thought, I could easily save myself there; I went there and hid myself at Kaashavva's, your Highness. I was afraid, Kaashavva and her husband might snatch away the necklace; but they, outcastes, saw it as a dead rat. There was something more, your majesty! When they were about to toss it on the streets, I asked them if they knew its price; 'whatever it is, we don't want what we haven't earned through honest work,' they said. Imagine, your majesty, the jolt their words

gave me! When I came here, I was in for another shock. That was the kind of necklace that beautiful women and young maidens would intensely crave to possess; but even Kamakshi, I am told, refused to accept it, because it was worth more than what her price was for a day. Are all such people living with us? I wondered; if they do, what an entirely different world it is! Could I put you a question, your majesty?

Bijjala : Yes.

Damodara : Can you hope for such behaviour from the upper castes?

Bijjala : No, young man; what you imply is correct.

Damodara : Then, who is 'high-born', my lord?

Bijjala : You are right; but there is something like custom, you know.

Damodara : Your majesty! The nature and behaviour of *Mahamane* are something we cannot understand. I had heard of it, earlier; but I have experienced it today. There is a noble experiment going on in Kalyana, of ushering in a total change in Man's way of living; but, even through this incident of the gold-necklace, we have failed to understand it, your Highness! Even though you struggle hard to keep this system intact, your own system does not have a rationale for it; and you yourself do not have any control over it. But *Mahamane* possesses both those qualities; and, hence, it gives a meaning to the stories of people like Savantri

the prostitute and Chikkayya the thief. She, a whore in the palace, can become a devotee of Shiva and the mother of Basavanna in *Mahamane*. Isn't this a miracle, my lord?

Bijjala : When you freely confessed to your theft in the palace, I was really happy, you know. But the way you are getting converted as a Sharana, has eaten away all that happiness. How long ago was it that you became a *Sharana*?

Damodara : I haven't been initiated yet, your majesty.

Bijjala : Now, tell me. I have no doubt that the one who incited you to commit the theft in the palace is Harihareshwara who knows the palace in and out. Wouldn't you consider his act a betrayal of the trust the palace had placed in him?

Damodara : If the king's ears are eager to hear every slander that they carry; if, trusting all those slanders, the king can commit so many murders that he has committed; why shouldn't they, your shadows, cash in on the trust you place on them, your majesty?

Bijjala : That's what Basavanna also did. He painted me as a demon to the Sharanas, and robbed me of everything—even my love and popularity.

Damodara : You say so because you love to believe it that way; and you want me to reinforce your belief. But the truth is, your majesty, when you brought about many comforts to the dalits and the poor; more importantly, when you respected their self-

confidence; you were really popular, your majesty. Had you continued on the same path, you could have transformed Kalyana into the abode of gods. However, you began to rely on slander and gossip, and reduced Kalyana to Hell. Many years ago, when Bijjala stood by the side of Basavanna, amidst people, he was a young man with radiant dreams. Now, having a crown on the head like Indra and wearing sparkling ornaments, you see yourself through the eyes of the slanderers. Do you know how you look now, my lord?

Bijjala : (displeased) How?

Damodara : Like the ghost of the young Bijjala.

Bijjala : (angrily) You rascal! If Kalyana were to be a Hell, would you have dared to address the king in singular, that too in his presence? Standing before the king, could a high-born dog talk in this tone?

(Mad in anger and almost in a daze, Bijjala takes out a knife from his waist and stabs Damodara; Damodara writhes in pain and dies. Getting desperate due to Damodara's bloody death, Bijjala tries to hide the dead body behind his seat, when he hears the mad woman and the doorkeeper talking outside, and gets more desperate.)

Doorkeeper-2: Who is there? Who allowed this mad woman inside?

Mad Woman : Why should anybody else allow me? I have come voluntarily. I want to see the king.

Doorkeeper-2 : He doesn't see anybody now.

Mad Woman : Go inside and tell him that I want to see him. I heard somebody screaming inside; didn't you hear?

Doorkeeper-2 : Look here, old woman! In fact, you have already come too far without permission. I feel sorry for you; I myself will come with you and conduct you outside. Please come.

Mad Woman : I haven't come here just to go out again; don't you trouble yourself. Go in and tell the king that I have to meet him.

Doorkeeper-2 : It's impossible to see the king now; he doesn't see anybody now.

Mad Woman : He needn't see me; I will see him and tell him who you are.

(She pushes the doorkeeper to a side and goes in. When Bijjala, dispirited by all the happenings, comes near the door, he sees both the doorkeepers standing with their weapons ready, and the woman in the middle. Frightened, Bijjala goes back a step or two, and kneels before the old woman.)

Bijjala : I am a being of two halves, mother, which are totally dissimilar. In the first half, Basavanna created Sangayya the innocent. His innocent face and *Vachanas* influenced me greatly. Sangayya made me feel small before him and repent for my misdeeds; but does any king like to repent for long? In the other half, the slanderers created Indra, the king of gods; they held an innocent man before me and said: 'Your majesty! Here is

the demon; it's your duty to kill him.' After I killed him, I realized I had killed Sangayya the innocent. Thus, one half of me has come apart, leaving a gaping wound; and the other half is bleeding profusely, mother. Once I killed Sangayya, none who opposed me returned alive. But now, the same people, who created Indra in me, are scared to see my face even in broad daylight. Even God is afraid of punishing me; whom can I unburthen myself to? How? I betrayed the Chalukyas to become a king; I betrayed Basavanna and killed Sangayya. The dead man rises up again and again, and chases me everywhere, and stabs me with his innocent eyes. I am a murderer, mother; mete out my punishment.

(The mad woman pushes the two doorkeepers to the front, tells them 'to look after him,' and goes out. The doorkeepers approach Bijjala who had knelt on the ground, lift him up holding his hands, and make him sit on the royal seat. Then they mechanically shut all the windows one by one. Bijjala is frightened.)

Bijjala : Who –who are you?

Doorkeeper-2 : He is Jagadeva, and I am Mallibommanna; your old enemies since the time of the Chalukyas.

(Bijjala stands up in fear and shouts: 'Who is there?' Jagadeva and Bommanna remain undisturbed.)

Mallibommanna: Nobody comes in now, because nobody is there. We have made arrangements that the Police Chief also cannot come here.

Bijjala : Who has employed you?

Jagadeva : Nobody, my friend. I employed Bommanna and he employed me. In the entire city of Kalyana, nobody knows who we are. . . . You too didn't know us. Only the patron-goddess of Kalyana knows us – even she came to know of us only today.

Bijjala : What do you want?

Jagadeva : Your life. We have waited for one month for this opportunity, you know!

Bijjala : One month?

Mallibommanna: There was that Basavanna, you see! His friendship with you shielded you till now. Once he went away, your shield disappeared, and our weapons began to sparkle sharply. You see, we are not in a hurry; if you have any work pending, you may attend to it.

Bijjala : Why did you shut all the doors?

Jagadeva : Why should others outside be disturbed by the happenings here? Look here, brother; you have two options to die. One option is of glory: not only you will go straight to heaven but also, you will go down as a brave and noble hero in history; and poets will write elegies about you: "O king Bijjala! won't you return?" Kamakshi will reject all the others, feeling that compared to you, they are all less than dust. This way, even death comes easy to you; no pain at all; and the duration –only a minute. As if he were a poet, Mallibommanna has devised this way for you.

Mallibommanna: Now, the other option: this room will be splattered with blood, and the sight will be so ghastly that, in the morning, when women and children come here and see your dead body with the tongue protruding, terrified, they will scream and collapse; pregnant women will vomit and swoon; and Kamakshi will feel embarrassed that she slept with such a cheap cur. This is the way devised by Jagadeva. Between the two, the choice is yours.

Jagadeva : Now, we don't have even the spirit of revenge. Do you know why? You, who deceived even Basavanna, are no more a human being; and killing you, no noble end will be served. Choose quickly and let's be done with this inconsequential ritual.

Bijjala : I have a few questions.

Jagadeva : Ask the angels in hell to answer those questions. The kind of transcendental answers they can give you cannot be matched by ordinary mortals.

Bijjala : (desperately) Alas, Basava! He was one friend who knew the answers for all questions. I couldn't fulfill one last wish of his; what other 'unfinished work' can I have? You saw, didn't you, how Basavanna left me without a single word to me; he didn't even see me; he left darkness to Kalyana and just went away. The darkness of all silences, of all mysteries, the sum total of nothingness of everyone and everything, the darkness of Shivaratri he left us, and went away.

(with the knowledge that his death is inevitable, he readies himself to face it.)

O Basava! O Basavanna! You left me alone to this darkness and went away; how could you, Basava?

You are the only one, Basavanna, who touched, and patted all the untouchable parts of my heart! Your *Vachanas* had that power, true; but slander had greater power, and speed, Basavanna. Caught in the excitement of slander, I couldn't lift my head and see you; couldn't see the ground beneath my feet, and stumbled and fell, Basavanna.

Memories have gathered together, as in a fair! But none of them has a smile on its face; and all, mocking at my vanity, torture me, friend.

There! Look there! In the gloom of snow-covered death, not a single face of memory comes before my eyes. Becoming vague outlines, moving backward slowly, everything is disappearing. No person's memory is felt. But —only your face, the face of exuberant dreams, the face that rejoiced in the ideal world you wanted to build, that's the only face that soothes me.

With heart-felt thanks and gratitude, I shall bathe the sacred memory of your face with my tears. I shall wound you no more. Systems are heartless, and Sangayya is pitiless, Basavanna; and I stand in the middle of two rejections. I too am wounded all over, my friend; vanity is pouring down from all the wounds. All said and done, I am a *bhavi*, a man of this world, Basava. Forgive me.

Jagadeva! Mallibommanna! Come, I am ready.

(He stands up and stretches his arms as if to embrace them. They also embrace him with one arm, and, with the other, they stab him. As Bijjala slowly collapses, darkness envelops everything, everywhere.)

NOTES

1 : Prologue: This is called '*Purvaranga*' –what takes place before the regular play starts. Bharata, in his seminal work, *Natyashastra*, lists 20 constituents of this part of the play, of which the first nine (which include prayer and worship of Ganesha, offering flowers and fruits to him, musical instruments being brought on the stage, and such) take place behind the curtains and the rest before the curtains, visible to the audience. The most important parts are those that take place after the *Sutradhara* enters the stage; he recites benediction, and in his discussion with an actress, he indicates the story and plot of the play to be enacted. Some gifted playwrights like Kalidasa use the song/s sung by the actress to establish the mood and motif of the play also.

2: Sutradhara: literally, one who pulls the strings, a puppeteer; he combines in him the functions of modern-day managers and directors. Modern playwrights use him as a narrator who provides a flashback so that the audience can easily follow the play which begins *in medias res*.

3: Kudala Sangayya is another form of Shiva, located in a place where three rivers meet, in Bidar district, Karnataka. *Kudalasangama deva* is the signature of Basavanna in his Vachanas.

4: Mahamane: literally, 'a big and noble house' (of God); it is also called '*Anubhava Mantapa*' (Hall of Experience); it was in this house or hall that all the followers of Basavanna met and shared their thoughts and experiences.

5: Sharana: one who has sought shelter (in Shiva); members of the new sect founded by Basavanna.

6: “like a necklace of pearls”: This is an allusion to one of the Vachanas of Basavanna on speech; the entire Vachana is: ‘*If you speak, it should be like a necklace of pearls; If you speak, it should be like a flash of ruby; If you speak, it should be like a bar of crystal; If you speak, even the Linga should nod its head and assent. If you don’t speak within the bounds of speech, how will Kudala Sangama be pleased?*’

7: Allama Prabhu: was an important member of the Sharana movement; he was a skeptical philosopher-poet, and his vachanas are full of paradoxes questioning every established position.

8: ‘drawn . . . plow’: a very cruel form of punishment, in which condemned persons would be bound to the shaft of the plow and drawn in the streets; the victims would bleed till they died. Bijjala meted out such a punishment to Haralayya and Madhuvarasa because they broke caste-barriers and got their son and daughter married.

9: ‘the owner . . . house’: This is an allusion to another metaphorical Vachana of Basavanna; the Vachana is: ‘*Is the master of the house in or not? / Grass is grown on the threshold, / The house is full of dust, / Is the master of the house in or not? / The body is full of lies, / The mind is full of lust, / The master of the house is not in, O God of Kudalasangama!*’

10: Siddharameshwara: another important follower of Basavanna; he was interested in such social work like building water-tanks and roads in villages. He is supposed to have died in Sollapura (Sholapur) of present-day Maharashtra.

11: Savalagi: is the name of a place, famous for its Lingayata math; the writer, Kambar, was given food and shelter in this math when he was a student.

13: Nandi: Literally, it means 'bull'; mythically, it is the mount of Shiva; and in every Shiva temple, there is an idol of Nandi facing the Linga in the sanctuary. During the festivals related to Shiva, long poles called 'Nandi pennant' are held high by the devotees, and they all go in a procession, singing songs in praise of Shiva.

14: 'Linga the Father': Symbol of Shiva, worn on the body; it is called '*ishta linga*.'

15: Jangama: an itinerant Sharana, who in many places is accepted as a guru by those belonging to the Lingayata sect. Also, 'sthavara-jangama' (stationary-moving'/ *sthira-chara*) is an important opposition in Veerashaiva theology.

16: 'Linga' : In this context, the speaker puns on the word; Linga means both 'a symbol of Shiva' and 'phallus.'

17: 'Much before Kali ...': a metaphorical Vachana of Basavanna; the first line of the Vachana, 'Much before Kali was a corpse,' is slightly changed in the play. In this Vachana, Basavanna may be expressing his oneness with the Primordial Spirit (before Creation). The characterization of Sangayya the innocent moves at both symbolic and realistic levels: as a few narratives point out, Sangayya was one of the Sharanas who, owing to his innocence, was made fun of by others; also, he is a dramatization of the Primordial Spirit.

18: Anna: means in Kannada 'elder brother'; a term of high respect and affection. In fact, the term Basavanna is a compound of 'Basava + anna.'

19: 'language of gods': The classical language Sanskrit is the one in which most of the Indian spiritual texts, including the Vedas & Upanishads, are written; hence, Sanskrit was called '*deva bhasha*' – the language of gods. Beginning with the second millennium, during which all modern languages of India developed, there has always been an uneasy relationship between those 'regional languages' and Sanskrit.

20: Agrahara: Villages or lands gifted to Brahmanas in appreciation of their learning and religious practices are known as *agrahara*. Such *agraharas* were intended to be the centres of learning and models of behaviour.

21: 'like the man of many faces': The Kannada term used here is *bahurupi*, which means a man or woman appearing in different guises; an actor or actress. One of Basavanna's followers was 'Bahurupi Chaudayya,' who was famous for successfully putting on different roles and moving from village to village.

22: 'Shivapura': '*shiva*' means 'auspicious' and good; '*pura*' means a city or town. 'Shivapura' is the fictional 'ideal place' like Plato's *The Republic* or More's *Utopia*; and it is the locale of almost all novels, plays, poems and stories of Chandrashekhara Kambara.

23: 'We . . . one, sir': The court-scholar, Harihareshwara uses the 'royal we' to refer to himself; and, he doesn't grasp the irony in Bijjala's question. Through such usage, the playwright ridicules the vain and egotistical Harihara.

24: 'he is ours . . . us': allusion to another Vachana of Basavanna, which dramatizes his desire to mix with all the sections of society on equal footing: '*Don't make me hear/ Whose man is he? Whom does*

he belong to? / Let me hear / This man is ours, he belongs to us. O God, Kudalasangama, let me hear, I am the son of your house.'

25: 'karadi majalu ... kade rudra': 'karadi' means 'an oblong drum,' beaten on both sides; 'karadi majalu' is a folk performance, in which oblong drums are beaten loudly, along with other wind instruments. This performance, popular in north Karnataka, consists of ten or more artists, wearing special dresses, standing in a semi-circle and dancing. While dancing, if a few sing the story of Veerabhadra (a terrible form of Shiva), others in chorus say '*kade rudra*.' The entire performance is marked by very loud drumbeats and shouts.

I. Answer the following in about a page:

1. Write a short note on the Sharana Movement.
2. Write a short note on the theme of devotion and rebellion in the play.
3. Explain how the play explores the theme of tradition versus change.
4. Write a short note on the character of Savantri and her role in the play.
5. Explain the significance of the character Sangayya in "Sivaratri."
6. Write a short note on the theme of devotion and rebellion in the play.

II. Answer the following in about two pages:

1. Evaluate the character of Basavanna in Kambar's "Sivaratri" and his conflict with Bijjala.
2. Discuss the theme of social justice and equality in Kambar's "Sivaratri." How does the play portray the conflict between the Sharana movement's ideals and the existing social order?
3. Analyze the theme of power and authority in "Sivaratri." How does Kambar depict the clash between spiritual and political power through the characters of Basavanna and Bijjala?
4. Analyze the character of Basavanna in "Sivaratri." How is he portrayed as a social reformer and spiritual leader, and what are his key conflicts in the play?
5. Discuss the character of Bijjala. How does Kambar present him as a ruler, and what are the motivations behind his actions and decisions?
6. Analyze the character of Basavanna in "Sivaratri." How is he portrayed as a social reformer and spiritual leader, and what are his key conflicts in the play?

Pre-reading Activities:

- Do you think urbanisation and development are affecting India's natural resources? How?
- What are the human activities that might be harming India's environment?
- What steps can we take to save our environment?

About the Author:

ARATI KUMAR-RAO is a National Geographic Explorer, an independent environmental photographer, a writer, and an artist, documenting the effects of environmental degradation. Working primarily in the Indian subcontinent, she chronicles anthropogenic changes in landscapes and their fallouts on livelihood, culture, and biodiversity. She communicates through still and moving images, soundscapes, long form narratives, and art. Her work has appeared in National Geographic, The Guardian, Emergence, and BBC. She was named in the BBC 100 Women list. When not on assignment, she splits her time between a biodiversity hotspot—the Western Ghats—and Bangalore, India, where she is a happy mother to three rescued indoor cats

**About the Text:**

‘Epilogue’ is an extract from ‘Marginlands’ A journey into India’s Vanishing Landscapes by Arati Kumar-Rao. The author reflects on the stark contrast between viewing landscapes from high above—like from an airplane—and experiencing them intimately at ground level, where the nuances of geography, culture, and ecology become apparent. Through personal journeys along the Ganga and observations of Bangalore’s environmental degradation—where reckless urbanization has destroyed ancient lake systems, causing devastating floods—the essay highlights the erosion of hyperlocal knowledge essential for resilience in the face of climate change. Similar crises, like landslides in Joshimath, reveal the consequences of ignoring natural topography. Yet, hope remains in communities deeply attuned to their environments—farmers, fishers, and indigenous peoples—whose wisdom offers solutions for sustainable coexistence with the land. The piece urges a return to respecting local geographies rather than exploiting them, emphasizing that true understanding comes from slowing down, observing, and listening to the earth.

Epilogue

Learning to See

What I stand for is what I stand on-

WENDELL BERRY,

Standing by Words

FLYING HIGHER THAN MOUNT EVEREST, I LOOK DOWN FROM THE **smudged**, double-glassed oval porthole of a commercial plane; 37,000 feet below me I see a twisting, turning blue-and-white river, **braiding** into itself silt and sand. On its banks are **hamlets** and a mosaic of green and brown farmland. A bridge straddles the river; clumps of trees punctuate the landscape.

Half an hour later, another river snakes below me. This one is browner, thicker, carrying more water, sand and silt. Big towns sprawl on its banks. **Cocooned** within our airborne tube and disconnected from the land below, my fellow passengers snooze with the shades pulled down.

I turn to the map on the screen embedded in the seat-back in front of me and trace the flight's path. We are over the Ganga, where it bends into West Bengal from Bihar. Just two days prior, I was in that area. On an almond shaped wooden fishing boat, we had pushed upriver and gone downstream all week long. The monsoon **freshet** was abating and the water level was decreasing slowly, revealing old silt islands, birthing new ones.

What I knew from being on the river, that I could never have known from flying high above it, was that it behaved differently on either side of the bend. The left bank was vastly unlike the right bank. The people on either side lived **disparate** lives, they did not speak the same language, they grew different varieties of crops and rice; they harvested at different times and in vastly dissimilar ways. They experienced the same river differently. And this becomes clear only at ground level, while moving slowly through the landscape and paying close attention.

That process of 'seeing', where we experience a landscape with all our senses, is unavailable to us when we cocoon ourselves in planes and cars and buses and trains, rushing through the terrain without experiencing it. I have learned over time that it is essential to move at a human pace rather than a machine's; to be alive with all our senses in order to begin to truly know. Not unlike the way the shepherds in the deep Thar keenly understand the desert and its rhythms, or how the fishers in the Sundarban are one with the river, unlocking its secrets and deftly negotiating the dangers lurking within its dark waters.

A knowledge of hyperlocal geographies, of the **undulations** and **perturbations** of the land over small distances and how these change over seasons, is not only vital to survival but also integral to our resilience in the face of changes in climate. And it is that very intimate, hyperlocal knowledge that is fast eroding today, as traditional livelihoods become unviable in the face of degraded landscapes and people are forced to move away from lands which they know deeply, to desperately find work in cities that are **incongruous** to their ways.

By some projections, over 200 million people are on the move in South Asia, displaced from their traditional lands, **pin-balling** from one city to the next. Imagine their progeny, our future generations, growing up with no knowledge of the traditional livelihoods that have sustained their ancestors, nor suited for any meaningful urban employment. We are on the cusp of a humanitarian disaster of colossal proportions.

Nowhere is the value of understanding local geographies more eroded than in our cities. Take the city I live in, for example, a ballooning metropolis housing thirteen million people and counting, and one of the fastest growing cities in the world as measured by increase in influx by the hour. Bangalore sits smack in the centre of peninsular India, perched 900 metres above sea level; it has no **perennial** rivers or water sources.

In the sixteenth century, a local chieftain named Kempe Gowda and the rulers who followed him built and maintained an ingenious cascading chain of lakes and wetlands so that the excess in one water body would flow through to the next and so on, down the chain. Maps from Bangalore's past indicate that, at one point, the city had over a thousand lakes. Water was plentiful, floods were unknown.

The latter half of the twentieth century ushered in a new buzzword: development. Land for industry and later, big tech, became the most precious commodity; water bodies were 'reclaimed', superimposed with concrete. By the 1960s, there were only 280 lakes left. At the time of writing, there are just eighty, many of which are already facing encroachment; almost all are **putrid** with sewage and untreated industrial waste, and not one can supply potable water to the population. The cascading chain of lakes designed to drain the land and recharge groundwater has been irreparably broken, built over and choked.

During the heavier-than-normal monsoons of 2022, large parts of Bangalore became submerged. It rained continuously for a couple days in September, and the waters could find nowhere to go. And so it found its own level, flowing downstream, seeking the lowest lands and collecting in the depressions – areas that were once wetlands and overflows from interconnected lake systems and have since been built over.

One particular suburb, a conglomeration of giant tech parks and swanky gated communities, hit the headlines; viral images of the inundated basements of million-dollar residential properties, Jaguars, Bentleys, Audis and Mercedes Benzes floating amidst the **detritus** circulated on social media. And still the waters rose, seeping into the ground floors, drowning expensive carpets and designer furniture.

The CEOs and leaders of Bangalore's **vaunted** tech companies had to be evacuated by inflatable boats and hardy tractors. The shanties that had mushroomed around these gated communities to service them were washed away. The waters from just two days of heavy rain took several days to recede; daily life took weeks to return to normalcy, property of all sorts was lost forever.

Woe-is-us postmortems in the aftermath conveniently shifted the blame for the incalculable losses onto that readymade scapegoat: 'climate change'. The government officials who had given indiscriminate building permissions and the builders who had **flouted** all norms to build over storm water drains looked the other way.

These stories, unfortunately, are not particular to Bangalore or to big cities.

In the freezing winter of 2023, residents of the pilgrimage town of Joshimath in the Himalaya were forced out of their houses when cracks began to appear in the walls, through the foundations, and on the roads. Unchecked tunnelling and drilling, road-cutting and construction have long been the suspects. The region has always been prone to landslides. The town of Joshimath, 2,000 metres above sea level, sits on the remains of an old landslide. But warnings over the years, from geologists and hydrologists have been ignored – here and throughout the Himalayan region. After the cracks appeared at Joshimath, alarm bells were sounded by towns all across the young mountain range.

Cities big and small across South Asia increasingly suffer from all manner of environmental hazards due to ill-conceived development carried out by ivory-tower 'city planners' who have not attempted to understand the topographies of the lands they are remaking in the name of development.

Even so, much of the sub-continent still has its ecological assemblage in some semblance of intactness, giving it a fighting chance to make itself resilient in the face of change. All we need to reclaim even broken cities like Bangalore is a willingness to go back to basics, to understand and acknowledge the local geography, and the inclination to work with the land rather than in defiance of it.

The ideas to effect change, to make our cities water-secure, to make our mountains safe and rivers ecologically healthy, exist. The solutions sometimes disarmingly simple and not requiring expensive technology – are at hand.

I peep out of the porthole; below me stretches the incredibly biodiverse Western Ghats – a chain of heavily forested hills that runs down the spine of the Indian peninsula's western coast. Somewhere below me is a little piece of land I steward. This piece of forest land on the eastern **escarpment** of the Ghats, is contiguous on three sides with forests and bordered on the fourth by cultivated fields.

I had long dreamed of stewarding – one never 'owns' the land – a patch and spending years getting to know it well. I have lived all my life in cities; looking after this piece of forest will be an extended learning experience.

Living on – and with – the land brings lessons every day. I lean back in my seat and close my eyes, letting my mind drift to one October morning in 2021. I had woken up to the three-toned hoot of a fish owl that had floated up through the mist hanging heavy over the stream that runs through our land. The Hunter’s moon had set. Voices drifted over the paddy fields, where the farming families were preparing for the auspicious day ahead. On that day, they would pray to the land, the trees, the fruits, vegetables, cereals, soil – to everything that sustained them. ‘Bhoomi Hunime’ – full moon of the land – they call it.

The full moon after the festival of lights, Diwali, traditionally marks the end of the monsoon and heralds winter. But in 2021, the monsoon ignored the calendar and refused to retreat. **Doomblack** clouds raced in from the southwest and pelted the paddy fields, the trees, banana plantations and the **areca palms** heavy with ripening fruit. The forecast was for more rain, which spelled bad news for the farmers. The paddy had ripened; some of it had been harvested. Rain falling on the harvested grain caused the paddy to germinate and spoil. In 2021, rice and wheat farmers across peninsular India lost their crops to **unseasonable** rainfall.

Even as they prepared the festive offerings to honour the land and its gifts, the local farmers were perturbed. In the region known as *Malenadu*, the land of rain in the south Indian state of Karnataka, October would never be wet and August never dry. The monsoon here was always blindingly heavy but steady and dependable – a much-anticipated renewal and rejuvenation for the parched earth. But by Diwali, in late October or early November, the skies would have long cleared.

No longer. ‘These are strange times,’ the farmers say. The rains seem to follow no rules. The past year has seen cloudbursts and sudden floods, and then an abrupt ceasing of all precipitation mid-monsoon. It drenches and desiccates, erodes and parches at will, drowning hopes, deepening debts, throwing **aeons** of **agrarian** rhythms out of whack.

The old ways are changing too. There is an increasing push towards ‘cash crops’ – lucrative but water-intensive, thus potentially disastrous in places prone to droughts and in the face of uncertain monsoon patterns. The time-tested, resilient ways of life that were built on a deep understanding of one’s environs, is dying out.

But I don’t despair – not yet. There are those all over the Indian subcontinent who have immersed themselves in landscapes and show us the way. The Chhattar Singhs who are one with their desert lands, the Katons who can negotiate every rock and shrub in the mountains, the Lekhus who can read rivers and summon dolphins, the Wangchuks who use the local topography to preserve their world in the face of **humongous** odds, and millions of others who live attentively so they may still be able to hear the land, understand it, show it respect, adapt and survive.

In my **nascent** journey, in sharing time with such people in their **milieu**, seeing through their eyes and contrasting their vision with the land-gaze of interlopers, I have come to agree with a wise writer’s words:

‘The hardest thing of all to see is what is really there.’



Glossary:

Smudged – Marked or blurred, as if rubbed or stained.

Braiding – Twisting or weaving together (like strands of a river).

Hamlets – Small villages.

Cocooned – Enclosed or protected in a comfortable but isolated space.

Freshet – A sudden flood or rush of water (often due to monsoon rains).

Disparate – Essentially different, unrelated.

Vaunted- praised or talked about more than you deserve

Hyper local – Extremely localized, specific to a very small area.

Undulations – Gentle rises and falls in the land (like waves).

Perturbations – Disturbances or irregularities.

Incongruous – Not in harmony or keeping with the surroundings.

Pin-balling – Moving rapidly and unpredictably from one place to another (like a pinball in a machine).

Perennial – Lasting through the year (referring to rivers that flow continuously).

Putrid – Decaying and emitting a foul smell.

Detritus – Debris or scattered fragments.

Woe-is-us – An expression of lament or self-pity.

Scapegoat – Someone blamed for the mistakes of others.

Flouted – Openly disregarded (rules or norms).

Escarpment – A steep slope or long cliff.

Areca palms – A type of palm tree (whose nuts are used in betel chewing).

Unseasonable – Not typical for the season.

Aeons – Extremely long periods of time.

Agrarian – Related to farming or agriculture.

Cash crops – Crops grown for profit rather than sustenance.

Humongous – Extremely large.

Nascent – Just beginning to develop.

Milieu – Social or environmental setting.

Interlopers – People who intrude where they are not welcome.

Chhattar Singhs, Katons, Lekhus, Wangchuks – people she met all over India during her journey

Comprehension:

I. Answer the following questions in about a page each:

1. How does the author contrast the "bird's-eye view" of landscapes with ground-level experiences?
2. What were some of the causes of the 2022 floods in Bangalore, according to the author?
3. Analyse the consequences of ignoring local geography in urban planning, as illustrated by Joshimath.
4. What changes in rainfall patterns have local farmers in the Western Ghats noticed in recent years?
5. Explain the significance of 'Bhoomi Hunime' as mentioned in the essay.
6. What role does traditional ecological knowledge play in resilience, according to the author? Provide examples.
7. How does the author show that rivers can be experienced differently by people living on opposite banks?
8. How does the text critique modern "development" through the cases of Bangalore and Joshimath?
9. In what ways does the author highlight the importance of knowing and respecting the land? What lessons can we take from traditional communities about living close to nature?

Suggested Reading:

- Read the books:
 1. 'Marginlands' A journey into India's Vanishing Landscapes by Arati Kumar-Rao. (Available at Anna's Archive)
 2. 'The Great Derangement' by Amitav Ghosh' (*Climate change & cultural blindness in South Asia*)
 3. 'The Vanishing Lakes of Bangalore' – Report by ATREE (*Ecological study on Bangalore's lost water bodies*)
- Watch the movie 'Samsara' (2011) (*Cycles of nature and human life—visually stunning*)

Transgender Parenting: The Impact It Had on Me

Akkai Padmashali

Pre-reading Activity:

- "How do you define yourself? Think beyond labels like 'boy' or 'girl'—what makes you, 'you'?"
- "What questions do you have about transgender people? Discuss."
- LGBTQ people need recognition, respect, acceptance and opportunity and not sympathy. Discuss.

About the author:

Akkai Padmashali is a pioneering Indian transgender rights activist, artist, and motivational speaker from Bengaluru, Karnataka, whose courageous journey from societal rejection to celebrated advocacy has reshaped LGBTQ+ rights in India. Assigned male at birth in 1985, she endured severe discrimination, homelessness, and violence before transitioning and emerging as a fearless voice for her community. A key figure in the landmark 2014 NALSA judgment recognizing transgender rights, Akkai founded *Ondede*, an organization fighting for gender justice and child rights, while using theatre and public speaking to dismantle prejudices. Her historic 2015 police clearance certificate—the first in India to recognize her as female—and *Karnataka Rajyotsava Award* highlight her transformative impact. She has written a book 'Akkai- karunegondur savalu' in 2021 and her autobiography 'A small step in a long journey' was released in 2022, which is translated into many languages and has been the text for 18 universities and autonomous colleges in Karnataka. Through her unrelenting activism and art, Akkai embodies the fight for dignity, famously declaring: "*We are not begging for rights—we are demanding what is constitutionally ours.*" Her life stands as a testament to resilience, challenging systemic oppression while inspiring marginalized communities nationwide.



About the text:

This TedX speech was delivered at St. Joseph's college of commerce in Dec 2023. In this speech Akkai Padmashali's powerful narrative, traces her journey from a male-assigned child who embraced her feminine identity at age eight, facing relentless bullying, familial rejection, and societal violence, to becoming a fearless transgender activist. Enduring decades of sex work and discrimination, she founded *Ondede* (ಒಂದೆಡೆ) to champion gender and sexual rights, while challenging patriarchal norms through her marriage to a cis man, adoption of her child Avin, and radical advocacy for bodily autonomy and LGBTQ+ inclusion. Rejecting societal judgments, Akkai embodies resilience—pledging her body to medical science,

defending diverse relationships, and nurturing her child's right to self-determination. Her life, marked by unapologetic self-acceptance and tireless activism, culminates in a clarion call: *"Judge not, support gender identity; judge not, support sexual diversity."* Through raw storytelling, Akkai dismantles oppression, demanding a world where every silenced voice thrives.

Transcript:

My voice is silenced, my identity is silenced, my existence is silenced, my sexuality is silenced, my class is silenced, my background is silenced and why I'm here today- to break the silenced voices of society. I feel that I am part of my Society, I am part of my culture, I am part of my tradition and that to belonging to this beautiful world which is just an awesome.

The Journey of being in the huge Society, I represent and come from is not so easy. Taking up each initiative to fight and **combat** for your identity, your sexuality, you're expressing about your self-Oneness, of just talking who accepts you, why they should accept you, when they should accept you and what's the need for you to accept the way you are today.

I feel proud and pride to be part of the huge Community who are being socially discriminated, socially excluded, **stigmatized**, oppressed communities, **vulnerable** sections is that the **jogappa, marladi, shivashakti ,Jogtha, Aqwa, Nirwan, Satla, Pantisatla**, intersex, lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, demisexual, asexual and hijra communities. I think, I have composed this song which is for 2 minutes and 30 seconds in English; I wanted to sing this song because this song carries about what is Akkai's Journey in brief. (Sings a song)....

I was born as male,
My feelings changed,
When I was 8 years,
My feelings are feminine.
I started behaving like a girl,
I started walking like a girl,
I started dressing like a girl,
When my parents forced me to stop myself,
When my parents forced me to stop myself,
I was beaten up,
I was locked up,
I was tortured by my..... parents...
My school mates...
My college friends,
My friend Circle,
My neighbour started teasing me,

like Chakka like ombattu,(Nine)
like sanga..something-something,
I joined to work, colleagues came to know I am feminine
they started teasing,
they started blaming,
they started sexually harassing,
there was nobody to ask these things,
started doing sex work,
started doing sex work,
I did for 40 years,
I was not very happy,
this kind of torture, violence, harassment is not facing only by me,
there are other transgender who faces similar problems,
where to live,
where to share,
where to express,
where to survive our lives,
You should tell us,
You should tell us,
You should tell us what to do...

Thank you.

Knowing that this song has moved a lot, I know many of you are in tears. This is the connect between the human world and to uphold the justice of humanity and acceptance. I think as a community, why you are being discriminated, why you have been thrown out of the family institutions is not so easy and I want to share my story and through sharing story I can really build a tomorrow's World of acceptance and loving, until I share my story, till I die I think that's what I strongly believe sharing story is not so easy in such a big audience ,sharing story needs guts, sharing story needs an amount of passion, sharing story needs an amount of self-acceptance, dignity and voice. And today we are struggling to access that sort of dignity, voice and sexuality.

I was born a male, I transformed to a female- in the process of transformation, I was not accepted by my families, my siblings, my brothers, my sisters, my own relatives, my neighbours. I think the whole section who discriminated you and I'm not a degree holder, PhD passed. I am 10th standard mathematics failed; but how this determination to be in the society to speak for your life, to speak for your Justice. I think being part of the Hijra culture accepting the notion of fraternity accepting the notion of- you know the plurality that is being part of hijra community, I was part of the Hijra community did my sex work and did my begging for four years then, I wanted to drop out this- No, I don't want to be in this profession of sex work and begging. I wanted to be in the mainstreaming; what is mainstreaming? just to be with one amongst you -I think, what did my Society do? Did it let? No, it didn't. It keeps

saying that you are something different and we can't accept you, then the question is who is perfect.

One who is not perfect. So, this whole idea of perfection was really triggering me a lot self-questioning a lot and there are so many people who are in the profession of begging and sex work today and few of them are wanting to quit that profession come here but as Akkai what is my responsibility yes, Akkai's a 10th grade failed. Akkai did not continue her education, Akkai was in sex work and begging, Akkai has seen so many false cases against her, Akkai fought against and is fighting against all forms of social exclusion, Akkai is a person who is belonging to one very middle-class working-class family and my father was working with Ministry of Defence. Akkai has two siblings, one is Anita -my elder sister my younger sister I just recently lost him and I'm the founder of an organization called "*Ondede*", an idea of convergence bringing every movement together to speak on the issues of gender, sex and sexuality to build Tomorrow's World of acceptance.

Then the whole question of Akkai, Akkai is a person who got married and was into multiple relationships and people said you are looking something different you cannot have you know the so-called multiple relationship so what, it's none of your business. it's my business I decide -I decide my life, I decide my existence and I decide my sexuality and it's none of your business, if so I want to question you back? who are you to judge.

In the process of prideness, in the process of proudness, I would say that I am so happy for what I am today, I'm least bothered about Society because as a society you have so much of social construct and your social construct is something called patriarchy, it's so powered, it's so dominance and I don't want to accept such dominance to justify your fulfillment of your gender stereotypical thinking notion.

Akkai has dedicated her life to the movement of Justice. speaking to the movement of social justice. Knowing that many of my people who still died today, do not have a dignity to cremate them or to bury them, so Akkai has decided to pledge her body to the Bangalore Medical College after death, her body shall be given to the Bangalore Medical College, for the medical purpose to use. So, in the next process Akkai also got married to a cis man you know, being in the relationship of marriage, something that I was really appreciated and so moving and welcoming this thing, but the institution of marriage is again an orthodox, so patriarchal, so how do I raise my voice as a transgender woman questioning the notion of patriarchy, question the notion of, as being a transgender woman, questioning their power. So, Akkai says right to marry is my **Hakku**, right to divorce is also my Hakku.

Akkai has also adopted a baby called Avin Akkai Padmashali. I think today's topic on parenting, about being a transgender person, what is parenting hood to you. My child who is named as Avin Akkai Padmashali is just four years child as a mother or as a woman, where I was judged because of my identity, by my own existing family members, School teachers friends and many other sections of society. But, as a mother I do not want to do the

same mistake to my child because my child is four years and studying in a small school there, the society is so curious to know about Akkai what your child's sex is.

They're so curious to know whether my child is a boy or a girl or something else and the notion is also for society, Akkai will you make your child like you only? I would say that as a mother, I'm not even bothered about my child's sex, gender or sexuality, let my child decide and as a mother I'm here to accept what my child says.

So this society's process of thinking needs to change in such context rather than judging people's identity, knowing that as an Akkai being into the profession of begging, profession of sex work in the name of tradition, culture everything is its Open Secret in society, but Akkai's future life I would say is challenging why it is challenging and you know, right to marriage is not your fundamental right, but I would say right to having relationship being in relationship having your own existence of family is your fundamental right and that right cannot be judged by a majoritarian, cannot be judged by a totalitarian Society. If so, I would definitely take my resistance to fight against that sort of society and the personal challenge for Akkai is definitely about how do I nurture my child, because my child tomorrow sitting in such a huge Auditorium; people may ask what is your mother what is your father what is your Etc..... But what would the child reply and what would the child consequences might be emerge in that situation, so this is something called a very sentimental, very very crucial, very sensitive and how do I address but Akkai as a person I'm not here to address. I leave my child to society, let my child in society, be a society of its own to speak about the issues of, you know -Humanity Justice and love.

Avin's Society of life is a public life and we should build that momentum in society just to speak for people's issue then stand for people's issue and you know as a community who we belong to the intersex, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and many- many other identities do not have space and how do we bring up this space how do we speak about the inclusive space for people who have been socially, systematically, culturally, traditionally has been excluded in that process Akkai is here, till I die my Fight Continues.

Thank you TEDx SJCC for having Akkai Padmashali on this Dias to speaking to the global audience to say that statement I would want to wind up here- *"Judge not, support gender identity; Judge not, support sexual diversity."*

Thank you so much and

Yours Akkai.

Glossary:

Combat: a fight, especially in war.

Stigmatized: unfairly regarded by many people as being bad or having something to be ashamed of.

Vulnerable: weak and easy to hurt physically or emotionally.

Jogappa: In Kannada, "jogappa" (ಜೋಗಪ್ಪ) refers to a transgender community, particularly in North Karnataka and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Marladi: A transgender community in South India, deeply devoted to worship, sustains itself through traditional begging practices while abstaining from sex work.

Shivashakti Jogtha: A transgender community of Andhra Pradesh.

Aqwa: A person who has not undergone Sex reassignment surgery.

Nirwan: A person who has undergone Sex reassignment surgery.

Satla: A transgender wearing feminine dresses.

Pantisatla: A man who has feminine feel but wears men's dresses.

Hakku: Rights

Comprehension:

I. Answer the following in a page each:

1. How did Akkai's early experiences of rejection shape her later activism?
2. Why is Akkai's approach to parenting revolutionary in the context of transgender rights?
3. How does Akkai's story reveal the limitations of traditional LGBTQ+ advocacy?
4. What does Akkai's body pledge to medical science symbolize about her activism?
5. How does Akkai redefine concepts of family and belonging for marginalized communities?
6. Analyse how Akkai Padmashali's personal experiences with violence and exclusion shaped her intersectional approach to activism.
7. "My body is my political manifesto." Discuss this statement through Akkai Padmashali's life choices—from sex work to marriage, adoption, and body donation.
8. Akkai declares: "Judge not, support gender identity." Evaluate this philosophy against contemporary Indian socio-legal realities for transgender communities.

Suggested Reading :

- Listen to the tedtalk:
<https://youtu.be/S9inbn44cyA?si=rwN3lsWao1w0yszL>
- Watch the movie "Naanu Avanalla...Avalu" (Kannada, 2015) – Based on activist Living Smile Vidya's life.
- "Redefining Realness" by Janet Mock – A memoir exploring Black-trans womanhood and resilience.
- Read the book "The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story" by A. Revathi – Indian transgender activist's autobiography.
- Watch "Shabnam Mausi" (2005, Hindi)- A biopic about India's first transgender politician.
- Watch the movie "A Fantastic Woman" (2017, Chile)
Oscar-winning film about a transgender woman fighting for dignity after her partner's death.

Of Mothers among other things

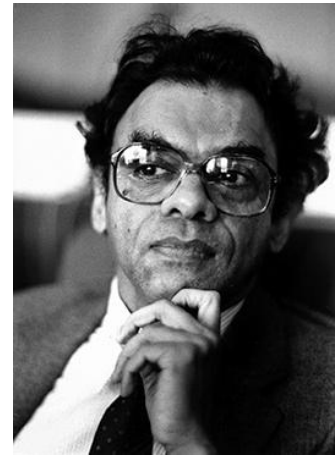
A.K. Ramanujam

Pre-reading Activity:

1. Do you remember your mother while she was young? Try imagining her during her youthful days?
2. Ask your relatives and gather information about how your mother was in school/college?
3. How often does your mother complain about old-age problems? Do you speak to her often about them?

About the Poet:

Attipate Krishnaswami Ramanujan (16 March 1929 – 13 July 1993) was an Indian poet and scholar of Indian literature and linguistics. Ramanujan was also a professor of Linguistics at University of Chicago. Ramanujan was a poet, scholar, linguist, philologist, folklorist, translator, and playwright. His academic research ranged across five languages: English, Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, and Sanskrit. He published works on both classical and modern variants of this literature and argued strongly for giving local, non-standard dialects their due. Though he wrote widely and in a number of genres, Ramanujan's poems are remembered as enigmatic works of startling originality, sophistication and moving artistry. He was awarded the Sahitya Academy Award posthumously in 1999 for *The Collected Poems*.



About the Poem:

'Of Mothers, among other things' by A.K. Ramanujan is a vibrant portrait of the speaker's mother, and the way she has moved through the world. It is separated into sets of four lines, or quatrains. These quatrains do not follow a specific rhyme scheme but there are moments of half, or slant, rhyme that help to unify the lines. These are seen through the repetition of assonance or consonance. This means that either a vowel or consonant sound is reused within one line or multiple lines of verse.

I smell upon this twisted backbone tree
the silk and white petal of my mother's youth.
From her earrings three diamonds

splash a handful of needles,
and I see my mother run back
from rain to the crying cradles.
The rains tack and sew

with broken threads the rags
of the tree tasselled light.
But her hands are a wet eagle's
two black-pink crinkled feet,

one talon crippled in a garden-
trap set for a mouse. Her saris
do not cling: they hang, loose
feather of a one time wing.

My cold parchment tongue licks bark
in the mouth when I see her four
still sensible fingers slowly flex
to pick a grain of rice from the kitchen floor.

Glossary:

Blackbone tree: The poem uses this imagery to evoke the strength and resilience of the mother figure, comparing her to the twisted and weathered branches of a blackbone tree.

Tack and Sew: the rain patching or repairing the torn tree's branches with its droplets. The phrase also suggests the rain's gentle, almost nurturing action, contrasting with the harshness of the world.

Tasselled; a decorative item; usually hung on trees for decoration

Talon: Sharp claws of an Eagle

Parchment: a material made from the skin of sheep and Goat; used to write upon

Flex: to move or bend

Comprehension:

I. Answer the following in a page:

1. Explain how the poet uses imagery from nature to explain his mother's physical state.
2. What is the central theme of the poem?
3. At the end, does the poet feel guilty and hurt for neglecting his mother or sad because she's become old? Explain with references from the poem.
4. How does the poem bring about the difference between his mother and how she was in her youth?
5. Briefly explain the figures of speech used in the poem.

Suggested Reading:

Read the poems: "The Mother" by Gwendolyn Brooks

"Small-Scale Reflections on a Great House" by A.K. Ramanujan

Those Winter Sundays

By Robert Hayden

Prereading Activity:

- Think about a time someone showed you love through actions instead of words. How did it make you feel?
- What kind of sacrifices do parents or guardians make that often go unnoticed?
- Look at the title: “Those Winter Sundays.” What kind of mood or setting does it suggest to you?
- Can love exist without warmth, smiles, or kind words? How do we recognize love that isn’t openly shown?
- Why do we sometimes understand people’s actions better only after time has passed? Have you ever felt this way?

About the author:

Robert Hayden (1913–1980) was an influential American poet, essayist, and educator. Born as Asa Bundy Sheffey in Detroit, Michigan, he was raised in a foster home and later took the name Robert Hayden. Despite facing poverty and a turbulent childhood, he developed a deep love for literature and went on to study at Detroit City College and the University of Michigan, where he studied under poet W. H. Auden.



Hayden's poetry is known for its historical insight, formal mastery, and deep emotional resonance. He often wrote about African American history and experiences, with notable poems like *"Those Winter Sundays"* and *"Middle Passage"*. In 1976, he became the first African American to be appointed as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress (a role now known as U.S. Poet Laureate).

Throughout his life, Hayden emphasized the universal human experience while celebrating African American heritage. He also taught for many years at Fisk University. His work continues to be widely studied and celebrated for its lyrical beauty and moral depth.

About the Poem:

Robert Hayden wrote this deeply personal poem drawing from his own experiences growing up in a poor foster home in Detroit. He often endured a harsh environment, marked by emotional distance and economic hardship. The poem reflects the complex father-son relationship and highlights the restrained emotional expression typical in many working-class families of the time. Hayden’s skilful use of imagery, sound, and tone conveys both the

physical and emotional coldness that characterized his upbringing, and the mature recognition of love's "austere and lonely offices"—a phrase suggesting that love can be self-denying, quiet, and often unrecognized.

In "*Those Winter Sundays*", the speaker reflects on his childhood and the silent sacrifices his father made out of love. Every Sunday, despite the exhaustion from a week of hard labour, the father would wake early in the cold to warm the house and prepare for the day—acts of care that went unappreciated at the time. The speaker now realizes, with regret, that he didn't understand the quiet, selfless nature of his father's love. The poem explores themes of parental sacrifice, unspoken affection, and the later realization of love expressed through actions rather than words.

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?

Glossary:

Blueblack cold: A vivid image describing the harsh, early morning cold with a colour that suggests bruising, darkness, and discomfort.

Cracked hands that ached: The father's hands were rough and painful from hard manual labour, likely outdoors or in harsh conditions.

Weekday weather: The difficult, perhaps cold or wet, working conditions the father endured during the week.

Banked fires: Fires that are kept burning slowly, often by covering them with ashes, and then stirred or rekindled to make them blaze.

No one ever thanked him: Reflects the unnoticed or unappreciated sacrifices made by the father; emphasizes emotional distance or lack of acknowledgment.

Cold splintering, breaking: A metaphor describing the sounds or sensations of heat penetrating the cold, perhaps the crackling of fire or ice breaking as warmth spreads.

Fearing the chronic angers of that house: Indicates a tense, emotionally volatile household where anger was common and persistent.

Indifferently: Without emotion or appreciation; the speaker spoke to the father in a detached or unconcerned way.

Driven out the cold: Literally, the father heated the house; symbolically, he provided comfort and care.

Polished my good shoes: A quiet, loving act of preparation and care, done without recognition.

What did I know... of love's austere and lonely offices? : A reflective and regretful realization: the speaker, as a child, didn't understand that love can be expressed through self-sacrifice and silent acts of duty, not always through words or affection.

Austere: Strict, severe, or plain.

Lonely offices: Duties or responsibilities carried out alone, without acknowledgment or companionship: especially those motivated by love.

I. Answer the following in a page:

1. How does the poem show that the father loved his family, even though he never said it?
2. What pictures or images does the poet use to show how cold and hard life was?
3. Why is the last line of the poem important? What does the speaker understand at the end?
4. What kind of relationship did the father and son have in the poem? How does the son feel about it later?
5. How do the poet's words help us feel the father's pain and hard work?

Suggested Activity:

Read the Poem- "My Father's Song" by Simon J. Ortiz

Read the story- "A Devoted Son" by Anita Desai

Watch the movie- Children of Heaven (1997, Iranian), The Pursuit of Happiness (2006)

**SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT
QUESTION PAPER PATTERN
B.A./B.A. (MUSIC) AND OTHER PROGRAMMES UNDER FACULTY
OF ARTS
III SEMESTER
GENERAL ENGLISH**

Time:3 hours

Max.Marks:80

Instruction: *Read the instructions*

Answer all the questions

**UNIT – 1
LITERARY SKILLS
(PLAY)**

- | | | |
|-------------|---|----------------|
| I. | Answer in a page (Two questions out of Three) | 2x5=10 |
| II. | Answer in about 2 – 3 pages (One question out of Two) (Play) | 1x10=10 |
| | (ARTICLE, TED TALK and POEMS) | |
| III. | Answer in a page (Four questions out of Five)
(Answer from all the three literary texts) | 4x5=20 |

**UNIT – 2
COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS**

- | | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| IV. | Presentation Skills | 1x5=5 |
| V. | Comprehension Passage | 5x1=5 |
| VI. | Para Jumble/Para Completion | 1x5=5 |
| VII. | Story Writing | 1x5=5 |
| VIII. | Correspondence | |
| | a. Resume and Cover Letter | 1x5=5 |
| | b. Formal Letter | 1x5=5 |
| | c. Business Correspondence | 1x5=5 |
| IX. | Commercial Writing | 1x5=5 |

MODEL QUESTION PAPER
III SEMESTER B.A./B.S.W/B.A. (MUSIC) Degree Examination
GENERAL ENGLISH
General English: RADIANCE-III
(SEP SCHEME)

Time:3 hours

Max.Marks: 80

Instruction: *Read the instructions*

Answer all the questions

UNIT – 1
LITERARY SKILLS
(PLAY)

I. Answer any TWO of the following in about a page: 2x5=10

1. Explain how the play explores the theme of tradition versus change.
2. Write a short note on the Sharana Movement.
3. Write a short note on the character of Savantri and her role in the play.

II. Answer any ONE of the following in about 2 or 3 pages: 1x10=10

1. Analyze the theme of power and authority in ‘Sivaratri’ How does Kambar depict the clash between spiritual and political power through the characters of Basavanna and Bijjala?
2. Discuss the theme of social justice and equality in Kambar’s ‘Sivaratri’. How does the play portray the conflict between the Sharana movement’s ideals and the existing social order?

(ARTICLE, TED TALK and POEMS)

II. Answer any FOUR of the following in about a page: 4x5=20
(Answer from all the three literary texts)

1. How does Akkai redefine concepts of family and belonging for marginalized communities?
2. At the end of the poem, does the poet feel guilty and hurt for neglecting his mother or sad because she’s become old? Explain with references from the poem.
3. How does Robert Hayden’s words help us feel the father’s pain and hard work?
4. What are the consequences of ignoring local geography in urban planning, as illustrated by Joshimath?
5. How does Akkai’s story reveal the limitations of traditional LGBTQ+ advocacy?
