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Superstition and Animal sacrifice portrayed in the English Novels of Kuvempu

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Abstract

Superstition, worshipping of spirits, deities of different kinds and approaching Conjurers for advice was common in the native life of Malenadu. People used to offer Animal sacrifice to demons, deities and unknown spirits on the basis of their economic and social status. Worshipping of deities was also on the basis of their social background like people from the South Canara used to worship their own spirits or idols. The natives of Malenadu worried of their devils and demons and believed in being haunted by such spirits if something went wrong. Superstitions and blind beliefs dominated their lives. The fear of spirits was hundred times stronger in the minds of the villagers than their fear of wild animals.

Keywords: Worshipping, animals, Malenadu, economic and social status

Introduction

Dr. Kuvempu, widely known as the greatest Kannada poet and the first Kannada writer to receive the Jnanapith Award for his Classical work Shri Ramayana Darshanam, had portrayed the deep rooted popular beliefs in the Malenadu region in his novels which are translated into English as The House of Kanooru (Kanooru Heggadathi) by Ramachandra Sharama and The Bride in the Rainy Mountains (Malegalalli Madhumagalu) by Dr. K.M. Srinivas Gowda and G.K. Srikantamurthy. Both the novels deal with the rustic life of natives of Malenadu region of Karnataka and how superstitions and blind beliefs have dominated the life of them in their everyday life like magical spell, omens, religious offerings, worshipping of spirits, deities, and offering sacrifice to them.

Superstitions and blind beliefs played a very important role in the lives of natives of Malenadu region. They had dominated and controlled the life of the people in the region prior to introduction of modern education. The novelist portrayed those popular superstitions and blind beliefs which existed in the region in his novels. Both the novels are rich with the depiction of such superstitions and blind beliefs. In The Bride in the Rainy Mountain, Gutti in order to marry his intended woman met the Kanna Pandita and requested him for an amulet which would turn the mind of Thimmi towards him. Similarly Shankarappa Heggade to overcome his suffering son's disease approached the nearby Siddaramatha and brought sacred thread and ash and applied to his son. This shows how the natives believed in such magical powers of the magicians and priests.

The conjurer, priests and even people with little knowledge and practice were involved in giving instructions and maintaining such beliefs among the natives. For example when the mother of Thimmi came to know that her daughter eloped with Gutti went inside of her cottage and took out an old coin, washed it and performing arathi to a pestle in the corner, remembering the Lord Ganesha of Kalluru temple and folded in a piece of cloth and hung it to the ceiling among other such hangings. Similarly, Devamma of Bettahalli, to save her infant from the harmful influence of the spirits Jakani and Panjrolli, got the coconut of magic spell from the Joisa of Kalluru and sacred thread and amulet from Kanna Pandit and tied them to the hanging rope of the cradle of the infant. It was clear from this kind of beliefs and customs, how they became so powerful in controlling the minds and psyche of the natives of Malenadu.

Magic spell or charm was also used to restore the property if lost, to decide what is right or wrong and for other legal purposes in the native life. For instance, Anthakka Sethy to restore

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or find out who had stolen the ring of her daughter Kaveri, suspecting on Koraga's boy asked him to touch the magic coconut and swear in. In The House of Kanooru, the cart driver Ninga, in order to find out his hidden gardening implements which were stolen by some men, wanted to get the charmed coconut touched by the suspects.

Another popular belief prevailed in Malenadu was that of 'asking reason for some problems' from the conjurer or priest. The priest or juggler being possessed by some spirit would deliver the message or instructions to the people, who would approach them to overcome their suffering from miseries, loss of someone or something, etc. and sought after the remedies from them. In The House of Kanooru, when Seethe of Hoovalli found bedridden from severe mental distress, her father Shyamayya Gowda approached the Joisa to know the 'reason' for her distress and They promised to offer something to deity of Agrahara in order to frighten the evil spirit. After looking into the reason for her illness, the Joisa of Agrahara declared that it was the ghost of the deceased son of Seethemane Singappa Gowda, Krishnappa who had been haunting Seethe. He also suggested Seethe's parents apply vermilion, sacred ash over her body and has given a charmed coconut and asked them to tie it over the bed of her sleeping room. It believed that by doing this kind of ritual the possessed spirit would go away 65.

The natives of Malenadu were worshipping a number of spirits and rendering offerings to them according to their social and economic status. Among such spirits popularly worshipped were Annappa, Panjurli, Jakani, Choudi, Masani, Kalkudka, etc. These spirits did not have any specific structure in reality. In the beginning it was believed that these spirits would dwell in the vicinity of the houses, they would also live in the branches of the big trees and plants in the nearby forests. Later the people of Malenadu started believing that the spirits would live in the backyard of their houses and sometimes it was said that they would live exclusively in the forest restricted to others, called 'forest of spirits, or 'Bhutada bana'. Moreover in Malenadu region people used to worship 'docile deities' because of their pious influence whereas those people hailed from below the ghats used to worship 'cruel deities'. This difference in the manner of worshipping was due to the power and influence of deities on the psyche of the people. Generally, it was understood that the concept of 'ghost' or 'Bhuta' entered into Malenadu region from the people who hailed from below the ghats. Further the people from below the Ghats had the belief that the spirits of Malenadu were more dangerous and so they were very much afraid of them. They believed that the spirits of Malenadu like apparition, fire devil, and other strange spirits used to wander in the forest during night and on New moon nights.

In The House of Kanooru there are several references to the worshipping of spirits. "It was the custom of Malenadu region that all the houses worshipped a few spirits, ghosts, and devils. A few stones lay at the foot of trees in the forests around the house, known as the 'Garden of spirits', the Deyyada Bana. Every year, chickens and sheep were sacrificed to the spirits. . The fear of spirits, ghosts and devils controlled the mind of the natives of Malenadu. When Hoovayya got wounded falling from the cart, his mother Nagamma's did all the magic to ward off the evil spirits from her son. She had coins of small denominations taken round her son and remembering every god and spirit she

knew from Thirupathi and Dharmastala to Bhoota and Panjurli and pledged offerings to them in gratitude. Again when Chadrayya Gowdda laying on his bed unconscious and the people who gathered round him started pledging offerings to spirits, within an hour, the Gowda got up and described his experience in detail. He said that some menstruating women might have entered Bhootharaya's field and so he became angry against the Gowda. Further, it was believed that Bhootaraya cannot stand the sight of a Christian. This statement shows how the spirits of Malenadu were against the people of other religion.

The novelist has given us a detailed description of the offerings and sacrifice to spirits, ghosts and devils in Malenadu. One could see the pledge for the spirits; especially blood sacrifice was the most disgusting one. It was common for those who undertook religious vow for their spirits, devils and deities, to offer roosters, sheep on the basis of their status and the status of the spirits. "The greatest number of people went to the place where Chowdi was enshrined, whose sacrificial goat was not killed with a knife. After tying up the animal's legs tightly and turning it over with the stomach up, a man would pound its and its chest with a pestle over and over again to kill it and it was believed that Chowdi would be most gratified!". Thus there was such a heinous and cruel way of offering animals to the spirits in Malenadu. Again the natives believed that some time Bhootha would enter into animal and human bodies. The goat, Balindra' which was brought to offer Bootharaya was not sacrificed; the spirit entered its body. Chandrayya Gowda possessed by a spirit spoke to singappa Gowda. Similarly, in the native life there was another belief that the spirits Jakkani and Panjurli would haunt and harm the infants and young children, so that the parents used to get sacred ash and thread and amulets from the priests and magicians.

The mode of punishment meted out to the possessed persons was also very cruel and inhuman in nature. When Chandrayya Gowda heard from Ninga that the spirit of his own enemy's son who had met with an untimely death, had taken possession of Seethe, he was aflame with anger. He decided to wreak vengeance by torturing Krishnappa's ghost: "various methods of punishment flashed through his mind one after another: making it eat dung, scalding and burning it, starving it and giving it a lump of cumin and chili powder to eat, throwing some chilly-powder in its eyes if it failed to eat this, putting some crystals, hair, asofoetida, dry chilies and so on into the fire and directing the burning smoke towards its nose, asking Venkappayya to cast a spell, imprisoning it and trying out all manner of torture through spell.....!". In order to avoid the ghosts from outside, "slippers, brooms, charmed coconuts and other objects were strung across the windows and door.

Conclusion

Thus one could find the delineation of popular beliefs and existed in the native life of Malenadu and they had controlled their day to day life. The psyche of the natives was dominated by such superstitions and they used to approach conjurers and priests for both good things to happen and to spoil others out of jealousy or hatred.

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