

An Analytical Exploration of Social Values and Cultural Narratives in Satyam Sankaramanchi's "*Amaravati Kathalu*"

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Abstract

This research paper mirrors Amaravati Kathalu (Tales of Amaravati) a known collection of stories by Satyam Sankaramanchi that are well-regarded for their depiction of rural life and traditions in Andhra Pradesh region as well as conveying spiritual beliefs and practices within the community. The research delves into the structure of these tales while examining their richness and cultural importance. Sankaramanchi's narratives skillfully blend folklore with emotions; capturing the contrast between values and modern influences; individual dreams and societal expectations; and the dynamic interaction between human experiences and divine forces. The study explores themes, like responsibility, honour, selflessness and fairness to discover how these narratives mirror the shared beliefs and ethical principles of the society they portray. By upholding the history and enriching it with enduring perspectives Amaravati Kathalu acts as a connection between bygone days and current times evoking responses from people, in various social and cultural settings. Hence, *Amaravati Kathalu* serves as a bridge between its 'high' and 'low' cultural contexts, simultaneously positioning Sankaramanchi's work as a medium for regional literature to engage with universal themes. It also reaffirms the significance of oral traditions in shaping cultural narratives and ethical frameworks relevant to the modern world. Historically, it stands as an invaluable archive of cultural heritage and a tribute to the transformative potential of storytelling in enriching and redefining lives.

Keywords: Rural Life, Social Customs, Philosophical Insights, Tradition and Modernity.

Introduction

The fact that many leaders pay close attention to the idea of regionalism as an attempt to recognize and sustain culturally unique regional identities has recently manifested in the international emphasis on regional literary production over the last three decades. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi often emphasizes the use of regional study material, language, and culture. His drive towards regional language integration in educational institutions and traditional features of Indian identity through projects such as "*Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat*" reflects his commitment to cultural integration. People like Modi understand this necessity for the community to maintain its knowledge, appeal, and practices through local literature production. These initiatives enhance the visibility of diverse perspectives in the global context and provide cultural identity, which aligns with increasing tourism and interest in regional literature worldwide. Such a relationship shows how leadership and literature interplay to enhance diversity and inclusion.

The Author and his Literary Contributions

This paper aims to explore selected stories contained in Amaravati Kathalu, a collection of 101 short stories authored by Sathyam Sankaramanchi written in the Telugu language. Born in Chapadu, which is very close to Vijayawada, Sankaramanchi Satyam started his career at the High Court before joining All India Radio, Hyderabad as an Executive Officer. He wrote Repati Dari, Akhari Premalekha, Karthika Deepalu and Amaravati Kathalu which are quite famous. He was literature loving man, who was passionate about nature and the countryside.

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Amaravati Kathalu: Themes and Social Realities

Amaravati Kathalu is a collection of short stories that draw inspiration from Andhra Pradesh's mythologies, natural beauty, and social realities, particularly from Amaravati, a place he held in the highest regard. These poignant and elegant tales provide a window into village life while illustrating social concerns. Because of his skill in telling brief but powerful stories, Satyam's works are timeless and approachable, especially to readers in the present era who value succinct and profound narratives. They tell about social drawbacks and the ordeal that people, who are invisible to society, have to go through and are written in a manner that will be quite familiar to the readers of the present day. The colloquial Telugu descriptions give a new dimension to the possibility of how people tell their stories.

The themes include caring, responsibility for nature, the actions of people and their outcomes. In each story there are specific didactic lessons for our contemporary world and the call for people to learn to become simple, compassionate, and responsible. The textual analysis of Amaravati Kathalu effectively shows how critical the regional literature is and how it incorporates universal elements. Notably, the stories are universal, and they always carry simple but good messages, which can be adopted around the world. This is a good reminder that no matter the difference people all over the world like hearing stories. They stress the importance of regional prose and assert that it can present the world as wise, beautiful, and compassionate. These are fictional-styled based on folklore of Amaravati and cast light on the social issues in a way that speaks of hope and compassion. The research seeks to present these stories to an international audience by leading cultural study and interpretation.

Incorporation of Local Myths and Symbolism

Satyam Sankaramanchi emphatically incorporates local myths into Amaravati Kathalu and builds this narrative foreground upon the cultural ethos of Andhra Pradesh. Krishnamma, the holy river, symbolically represents not only spiritual purity but also silently witnessing all the human drama unfold. The river represents continuity in change and becomes a recurring symbol of God's grace and man's exertion. The entry of Krishnamma into many stories, for instance, shows that a good deal of myth and reality would coexist. Even more importantly, the river beckons the characters themselves for solace, advice, or even salvation. This intermarriage of myths enriches the stories in the sense that the stories rest upon a cultural framework that resonates with the readers. But beyond Krishnamma, he weaves in the stories with

other mythological elements so subtly that they are not the main spotlight. More often than not, it's the myths that create that ambience that brims with moral messages or serves as some sort of vehicular lens for interpretation regarding the ethical nuances and spiritual dilemmas the characters are wrestling with. Such a flourish of features transforms the narratives from mere social commentaries into parables that would last.

Folklore: As a Means of Social Commentary

Folkloric elements deeply embedded in the stories of Sankaramanchi make them authentic as well as provide a tool for subtle but powerful social commentary. Idioms, country customs, and local life as presented by the author himself call up vivid pictures of life in Amaravati. For instance, in describing the traditional fairs, rituals, and community functions he portrays the spirit of collectivism in country life, yet also criticizes those very inherent limitations as strictly being hierarchical and steeped in superstitions. Folklore used in these stories also provided a platform to fill up the gap of the olden days and nowadays link it to people with their historical heritage lost rapidly because of modernization. The infusion of folklore and traditions into the tales gives Sankaramanchi the freedom to oppose the ongoing societal values in society without disturbing his readers, as this allows him to portray the importance and relevance of existing cultural elements, even compared to the ongoing social changes in society.

Literary Review

Richly sensuous and evocative, the stories capture the sights, smells, sounds, touches, and tastes of Amaravati. The roads and the dust and the cattle and the vehicles marching through them; the Indigenous craftsmen and sellers, markets and temples, and the gleeful portrayals of people from all strata of life with their local sentiments and mannerisms; and the surrealistic depiction of the flora and fauna of Amaravati bears the testimony to the creative maturity of Sankaramanchi. Frequently cited in the stories, Krishnamma, the sacred river that winds through Amaravati, serves as the most ancient witness to all the trivial acts of people and their simple zest of life. The stories are delightful and funny with an occasional note of the cruelties and vagaries of life. Notwithstanding their frailties and blemishes, the writer shares a great sense of empathy for his characters. He does not pretend to tell the fact that not all stories get a happy ending and, yet, life moves on.

Despite its rich wisdom of life and the classic art of story-telling, *Amaravati Kathalu* has not drawn any

important scholarly attention. The anthology is still read and appreciated by a limited number of readers from the Telugu communities only. On the other hand, this important work of art needs to be presented before the global readers and the twin important means of achieving this goal is translation and critical inquiry. Against this backdrop, this study proposes a cultural analysis of *Amaravati Kathalu* utilizing the cultural theories of “text”, “context”, “dialogue”, “position”, “articulation”, and “mediation”.

The analytical framework of the study is built upon theoretical and methodological insights from Mikhail Bakhtin’s concepts of “dialogics” and “heteroglossia” and Douglas Kellner’s “multi-perspectival approach”.

According to Mikhail Bakhtin, dialogics, or dialogism means the process by which meaning evolves out of the interactions among the author, the work, and the reader. These elements are affected by the socio-political contexts in which they are located. Languages, genres, or ideas do not exist in themselves, but only in their relations to each other. The being is not autonomous but a co-being in simultaneous co-existence. Therefore, Bakhtin pleads for locating the author in the speech genres he deploys, and in his spatial and temporal context.

Bakhtin is a critic of the mono-logical view of the novel form that lays too much importance on the author’s originality. His concept of “heteroglossia” describes the coexistence of multiple voices, points of view, styles, and discourses in a work of art. The author’s originality, he argues, lies in the combination of these elements. For Bakhtin, language is not a closed, centralized system but a heteroglossia of multiple everyday speeches produced by diverse people from diverse walks of life. There is an assortment of “languages” within a single language and this is not entirely a linguistic phenomenon. Heteroglossia, therefore, is an orchestra of world views, each characterized by its objects, meanings, and values.

Douglas Kellner’s (1992b) “multi-perspectival approach” pleads for interrogating the relationships within the three important dimensions of culture: (A) the production and political economy of culture; (B) textual analysis and critique of the artefacts of culture; and (C) the uses of media/cultural products and their reception by the audience. He argues that textual analysis should use multiple perspectives and critical methods and audience reception studies should recognize the multiplicity of subject positions through which the audiences respond to cultural products.

Based on these theories and methods, this study undertakes a hetero-logical, multi-level, and perspectival notion of the poetics of texts and the hermeneutics of contexts to analyze the representation of the Telugu life

and culture in *Amaravati Kathalu*. The major research questions raised are:

1. How the Telugu life and cultural phenomena represented in the stories?
2. What positions do the stories offer on class relations and gender relations?
3. What are the unique contributions of Sankaramanchi to the art of storytelling?

This paper examines the thematic elements and narrative structures of five distinct stories: *Don’t Tell Anyone*, *Wisdom of Eyes*, *The Uncried Man*, *There He Is Subbaiah Master*, and *A Year’s Wait for a Day*. Each story offers profound insights into human behaviour, societal structures, and emotional struggles, illuminating universal themes such as power, education, grief, teaching, and glory. Through their unique narrative approaches, these stories provide a comprehensive reflection on the complexities of human life, emphasizing the enduring relevance of literature in understanding societal and individual dynamics.

Don’t Tell Anyone

It offers a satirical look at human behaviour, social hierarchies, and the contradictions that lie within traditional relationships. It humorously critiques the complexities of rural and urban divides, gender roles, and the dynamics of power and control within households. Subbamma’s dominance over Sankarayya, paired with Sankarayya’s attempt to regain his dignity through storytelling, forms the backbone of this comical yet insightful narrative. The following are the themes depicted in this story.

It highlights the complex relationship between Sankarayya and Subbamma, where Sankarayya appears to be the figurehead of the hotel, but Subbamma holds the real power. She uses her urban background and language (mixing English and Telugu) to assert dominance in the household and the business. Despite Sankarayya’s efforts, he is always at the mercy of his wife’s commands, and her scolding reflects her control over him.

Subbamma’s use of English is a reflection of her perceived superiority as a city dweller. Her dismissal of the village folk’s way of life and the rural setting contrasts sharply with her more “modern” and “civilized” attitude. This theme brings out the tension between rural and urban identities and how people from different backgrounds navigate social spaces.

Sankarayya’s vulnerability, particularly in the face of the younger men’s threats and his wife’s scolding, shows his fragile ego. His ultimate response to telling the entire village his story suggests that despite his outward

strength, he craves validation and sympathy from the community. This human weakness is magnified by his inability to control the narrative or his environment.

It illustrates how Sankarayya, despite being a “man of authority” in his hotel, is powerless in his home. His wife runs the show, and even when Sankarayya tries to exert some form of control over the situation, it is Subbamma’s words and actions that dominate. The irony is that he runs a business but can’t run his own life.

It delves into the nature of village gossip. No matter how much Sankarayya tries to hide the incident, the entire village knows about it within a day. This reflects the tight-knit nature of rural communities, where information travels fast, and personal matters are often shared openly.

‘Don’t Tell Anyone’, illustrates the continuing tensions between rural simplicity and urban sophistication through the complex characters Sankarayya and Subbamma. Subbamma’s urban background and use of English further support her perceived superiority, which contrasts sharply with Sankarayya’s ingrained traditional rural demeanour. This dichotomy makes the cultural rift between the rural and urban identities even sharper. This poisoning spread is a joining and at once an invasion into their lives. This one is a story of Sankarayya conversing with the villagers directed towards these people, amplifying his desire and, much more, for acceptance in this society which works that way. A good narrative weaving together the respective roles of gender, a society’s power, and a cultural border is all a short drama that appeals to the audience; humour and irony about the changing relationships between tradition and modernity in village life cannot be neglected.

Visionaries of Wisdom

Indeed, such storytelling represents a deeply profound saga revolving around the capacity of enlightenment through education, the nobleness of teaching and at the same time, the sacrifices held in one’s pursuit towards enlightening others. At this point, it presents how whatever personal struggles will be translated into something involving social transformation. Even though they never enjoyed material wealth, the legacy they passed on to succeeding generations, and the legacy of a spread in literacy and wisdom benefits an entire community.

The villagers could hardly believe it. These men, born poor, with no wealth to bequeath, came all this way to teach what they had learned. The two young men had evolved to become a fount of knowledge for hundreds of little children. The region swarmed with knowledge and sagacity, a light at an end that will surely burn for

centuries. Although these four teachers never got any ornaments for their daughters’ marriage or dowry for the arranged marriage, they gave something to the world. They did not have any personal fortune or material property but had tilled the earth of education and enlightenment in the world. And knowledge flourished there like a rich harvest. The four teachers, now wiser and older, sat back, smiling through their tears, watching their efforts bear fruit. The themes of this short story are mentioned below:

In transforming this power, the people had four impoverished and full of ridicule who started off establishing a school and disseminating knowledge throughout this very locality. The mode of the transformation here is a means of social change offered through these four to every individual child to acquire this understanding of improving the living and life that awaits each person.

Teachers are exemplary when it comes to sacrifice. They stand in the face of poverty, ridicule, and hardship to educate other people. Their desires are secondary to their duty; hence, they do not make time to arrange the marriage of their daughters or make money. They possess no material wealth but abound with wisdom and selflessness.

A village witnessed school-opening-for-first-time-ever by the action of teaching. This is one typical example of rebellion towards societally accepted ways, and the villagers used to mock the idea of education entirely in English. Yet strong efforts by scholars resulted in a revolution in the far-flung areas of rural society. Perhaps it expresses that changes are also developed from such rebellious warriors who do not have shyness in initiating reforms in society.

Teachers are represented as dignified figures, even while jeered. They find joy in the work that education brings to them; despite this, society is far from giving them worthy recognition. Their ridicule through such a correspondent and more by others reveals how in modern societies where material gain more than knowledge is respected; intellectual labour is generally disrepute.

The story highlights that it is through their work in education that the teachers leave behind a much greater legacy than what they would have if they had left behind personal material gain. Their contribution to the community is their true wealth, as it transforms the lives of hundreds of children and improves the future of the region.

The four teachers working together to start a school really epitomizes the effects of collaboration. Despite individual failings and societal rejection, in combination, they created something powerful: a learning space that

benefits the community as a whole. Their collective purpose and unity demonstrate strength through collective action for the greater good.

This means knowledge in the novel is not only bookish but also empowering. The lessons taught by the pundits empower children to control and shape their lives by giving them a future that shines brighter and, more promisingly, than the future generation has. Then, the school is a symbol of hope for the community to better itself. It is an enriching story of the Powerhouse of Knowledge: transformation using education, the dignity of teaching as a vocation, and sacrifice, made by people trying to uplift others.

It reveals how knowledge could be power to overcome personal struggles and also become a force for social change. While the teachers never got material wealth, their legacy of spreading literacy and wisdom enriched an entire community and marked the minds of future generations.

The Uncried Man

Esobu is a man who has not been touched by sorrow and death in his life. His insensitivity is so deep that even when his father dies, and when calamities come, he feels no sorrow. He is known to be a heartless and cruel man in his village. However, when his son becomes ill and dies, Esobu first experiences a deep, overwhelming sorrow. He cries like he never cried before; the intense pain of loss can be seen on his face. His grief is so powerful that it shatters the previously stoic and detached persona of Esobu. In his last breath, he looks up to the sky, maniacally laughing, and declares that when he dies, no one should mourn for him because he never mourned for anyone else. The following are the themes portrayed in this story. The story explores how death is a natural part of life and how one's relationship with grief and loss can shape character. The detachment of Esobu with grief throughout his life reflects a cold acceptance of mortality.

Esobu is an individual who has cut himself off from his emotions by constant exposure to loss and suffering. He fails to convey his feelings when his father died, his house was stolen, and others' sorrows; this brings about emotional numbness to him. His detachment in the case of death with his son brings to light the depth of human emotion in even the coldest heart.

The central theme is Esobu's transformation from an emotionally detached man to one who experiences the most intense grief. The very person who had never cried in his life is now overwhelmed by sorrow when he loses his child. This shift challenges the idea that one can remain unaffected by loss indefinitely.

Esobu's emotional detachment can be seen as a defence mechanism. His lack of a reaction to death and suffering, throughout his life, would be his way of avoiding the inevitability of mortal death. However, such detachment becomes his undoing when he is forced into personal loss, that being the loss of his son.

It thus relates to the human condition, illustrating how grief, loss, and death shape lives and understandings. Ultimately, in Esobu's case, the final, helpless grief reminds us that, as much as one tries to resist it, the emotions of loss cannot be locked away forever. The story of Esobu is a deep reflection on the themes of bereavement, death, and emotional detachment.

Throughout his lifetime, Esobu is a silent stoic figure, seemingly without reaction to the sorrow and anguish that surrounds him. Indeed, his detachment is extreme. He appears to define the very characteristic of his relationship with the world; still, the death of the son forces him to recognize an emotion he had suppressed for so long as grieving. This is the point of turning in the story, as it reveals that however hard a person may try to move away from life's pain, the certainty of loss can still be that which will break even the hardest heart. It is cathartic and pathetic, finally uncontrollable sorrow.

His breakdown becomes more of a liberating release from years of pent-up emotions and a reminder that human beings are intrinsically tied to love as well as loss. After all, the story still clings to the conviction that separation is impossible, which becomes unsustainable regarding even deeper personal losses although offering some relief to pain. The final cry by Esobu, in his declaration, that no one mourns over my death, is at once a declaration against conventional grieving and an outlet for the deeper, ontological despair that exists with him. This ending laughing Esobu to the sky, gazing ahead at the passing of his son- speaks powerfully to the human challenge to fight against the ineluctability of death and its unpredictability within the psyche of grief.

It also makes us think about how we deal with loss whether through emotional anesthesia or by letting ourselves feel the pain of loving other people. Finally, it tells us that no one is exempt from this human condition of suffering and that grief, in its rawest form, is part of the journey everyone has to take.

There he is Subbaiah Master!

Subbayya Master, a dedicated and beloved schoolteacher nearing retirement, is known for his compassionate teaching methods and unique punishments. One day, he sends a student, Subbaraju, to cut grass for his cow and calf as a lesson for skipping homework. Through this act,

he imparts a life lesson about responsibility and gratitude, equating the cow's duty to give milk after eating grass to a student's duty to study well in return for their parents' care. After retiring, he is deeply missed by his students, who visit him with bundles of grass to express their love and gratitude. Subbayya Master reflects that his true fulfilment comes from teaching his students.

The story highlights the profound bond between a teacher and their students, emphasizing the importance of gratitude, responsibility, and lifelong learning. It showcases how a teacher's values and lessons can shape students' lives, making teaching not just a profession but a heartfelt vocation.

The central theme of the story is "*The Transformative Power of Teaching and Gratitude*." It explores the profound influence a dedicated teacher has on students, instilling life lessons that go beyond academics. The story also highlights the reciprocal relationship of respect, love, and gratitude between a teacher and their students, showcasing how true teaching nourishes both the mind and the soul.

One Day as a Tiger Each Year

Nabisaheb is a poor man in a village. As a tiger, dancing on the day of Dussehra, he turns into a tiger for four hours a year. He undergoes the pang of poverty and scolding by his wife, Ameenabi, while remaining unattended during all of the other three sixty-four hours. And though he can no more dance now as he grows older, he stays in that dream world remembering all his triumphs. He lives just for the realization in his dying days that a rare kind of kindness from his wife could have made life significant beyond one day.

The story shows how short-term glory is and how deep is the human desire for respect and honour. It shows that neglect by society and cold personal relationships may reduce the value of man, forcing him to clutch onto moments of temporary happiness.

It relates its very core idea about how glory is always a small-time phenomenon, a need for fame by a human being, and neglect at various levels of personal as well as social relationships. As such, Nabisaheb's life, at that, is all about fights of those whose importance, only lies in that small time contribution, with truer values ignored. The story explores how an absence of kindness and empathy in intimate relationships can make one yearn for even the most minute gestures of love. It also mocks the societal hypocrisy of people cheering for a performance or a pseudo-expression of something but does not treat the person performing it as a human being. The story finally throws light on the power of empathy in transforming lives and makes one value individuals beyond their roles.

One Day Has Gone

Note: This story was mentioned by Sri Trivikram Srinivas Garu, a renowned director in the Telugu film industry, during a successful meet function in Guntur.

Great to live without a single mistake. A story about a common man. The name is Pitahaya. He wakes up early from Amaravati. Goes to the Krishna River for a bath, visits the temple, pours water on Lord Shiva, and comes back home. At home, he tells his wife what to cook for lunch.

He then rests on the steps and socializes with friends. Towards night time, he directs his wife as to what should be cooked for dinner. During festive seasons, he visits the temple for puja. So, simple are his days spent talking to his friends and visiting the temple for puja.

He lives like that until he is 65 or 70 years old and then dies. This is the real challenge to live such a life, without making mistakes.

Conclusion

These stories speak volumes to today and possess an eternal aspect that points out what society exerts faith in and aspires to, with contemporary concerns that are truly relevant. Every narrative elaborates on all the essential parameters of human existence, trust in any relationship, empathy for another's afflictions, surviving harrowing situations, transformation in life from education and grooming, and eternal love for hope and patience. These are not mere stories; they remind us of those human attributes that cannot be replaced and substituted in an age where the rate of technological revolution cannot be compared with any. Trust and bonding, as portrayed in these short stories, reveal the essence of existence that which individualism thrives. Further, such narratives point out that in an age relentlessly sped up by technology, empathy may tend to be dismissed as falling out of focus. Such stories create an opening for a more meaningful touch to conversations and create inclusive communities through an appeal to share humanity. However, resilience, as presented in the works, remains central to making appropriate responses to the pressures and vagaries of modern life. There is encouragement for readers facing challenges in circumstances to summon courage and determination, and submerged emotions and silent strength are opened to embrace personal growth. The potent features elaborated throughout on the subject of education and mentorship highlight how urgent the call for teaching and learning remains in determining both an individual and a community. These themes are very relevant and resonate brilliantly with today's knowledge economy and testify to how mentorship could

in some way redefine the entire concept of personal and professional development. The stories, therefore, depict an array of hope and patience values that are so pertinent to a changing world of uncertainty. Encouraging and reiterating the need for open-mindedness is a tough stretch; all one needs is endurance and optimism to persist.

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