

# 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 into topics, like responsibility, honor, 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, etc.,

## 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 as “Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat” reflect 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 relationship shows how leadership and literature interplay to enhance diversities and inclusion.

### **THE AUTHOR AND HIS LITERARY CONTRIBUTIONS**

This paper aims at exploring selected stories contained in Amaravati Kathalu, a collection of 101 short stories authored by Sathyam Sankaramanchi writing 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 countryside.

### **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 the society, have to go through and are written in a manner that will be quite familiar to the readers of the present days. The colloquial Telugu descriptions give a new dimension to the possibility of how people tell their stories.

The themes include caring, responsibility for the 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 on 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.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

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 and 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 this 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 every day speeches produced by diverse people from diverse walks of life. There is an assortment of "languages" within a single language and this 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 a culture: (A) the production and political economy of culture; (B) textual analysis and critique of the artifacts of a 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 are 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 story-telling?

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 behavior, 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 from 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 tell 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 own 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.

## **VISIONARIES OF WISDOM**

The story of the Visionaries of Wisdom is a profound narrative about the power of education to transform lives, the nobility of teaching as a vocation, and the sacrifices made by those who seek to uplift others. It highlights how knowledge can transcend personal struggles and become a force for social change. Though the teachers never gained material wealth, their legacy in spreading literacy and wisdom enriched an entire community, leaving an indelible mark on future generations.

The villagers couldn't believe it: *These men, who were born in poverty, who had no wealth, had come here to spread knowledge. They had become the source of enlightenment for hundreds of children.* The entire region was filled with knowledge and wisdom, a beacon of light for generations. And though these four teachers never earned any jewelry for their daughters' weddings or arranged marriages for them, they left a legacy. They had no personal wealth or material possessions, but they had sowed the seeds of education and enlightenment in the land. And the region flourished with knowledge, like a bountiful harvest. The four teachers, now wiser and older, sat back, smiling through their tears, watching their efforts bear fruit. The below mentioned are the themes of this short story.

The central theme of the story is the transformative power of education. The four teachers, despite their poverty and ridicule, establish a school that eventually spreads knowledge throughout the region. Education becomes the means of social change, offering children from all walks of life a chance to learn and improve their futures.

The teachers embody sacrifice. They are willing to endure poverty, ridicule, and hardship for the sake of imparting knowledge. Their personal desires, such as arranging marriages for their daughters or acquiring wealth, take a backseat to their larger mission of education. They have no material wealth but are rich in wisdom and selflessness.

The teachers' decision to establish a school in a village that has never had one reflects a rebellion against societal norms. The villagers initially scoff at the idea of education, particularly English education, but the pundits' persistence eventually leads to a revolution in the region. The story suggests that change often begins with individuals who are willing to challenge societal conventions.

The teachers are portrayed as figures of dignity, even in the face of mockery. They take pride in their work as educators, even though society does not immediately recognize their worth. The ridicule they face from the correspondent and others is a reflection of how intellectual labor is often undervalued in societies that prioritize material success over knowledge.

The story emphasizes that the teachers leave a far greater legacy through their work in education than they would have through any personal material gain. Their contribution to the community is their true wealth, as it transforms the lives of countless children, improving the future of the region.

The four teachers' collective effort to start a school illustrates the impact of collaboration. Despite their individual shortcomings and societal rejection, together they create something powerful a place of learning that benefits the community at large. Their unity and shared purpose demonstrate the strength of collective action for a common good.

Knowledge, in this story, is not just academic but a form of empowerment. The pundits' teachings provide the children with the tools to navigate and shape their own lives, offering them a future that is brighter and more hopeful than that of the previous generation. The school becomes a symbol of hope, resilience, and progress for the community.

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## **THE UNCRIED MAN**

Esobu is a man who has been unaffected by sorrow and death throughout his life. His detachment is so profound that even when his father dies, and when misfortunes strike, he feels no grief. He is known for his unfeeling nature, and people in his village consider him a heartless, cruel man. However, when his son falls ill and dies, Esobu experiences a deep, overwhelming sorrow for the first time. He cries like never before, feeling the intense pain of loss. His grief is so profound that it shatters his previously stoic and detached persona. In his final moments, he looks towards the sky, laughing madly, and declares that when he dies, no one should mourn him as he never mourned for anyone else. The following are the themes depicted from this story.

The story explores how death is an inevitable part of life, and how one's relationship with grief and loss can shape their character. Esobu's detachment from grief throughout his life reflects a cold acceptance of mortality.

Esobu represents a person who has distanced himself from his emotions due to continuous exposure to loss and suffering. His lack of reaction to his father's death, his home being stolen, and others' sorrows highlights his emotional numbness. However, the death of his son shatters this detachment, revealing the depth of human emotion even in the most hardened hearts.

Esobu's transformation from an emotionally detached man to one who experiences the most intense grief is a central theme. 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 defense mechanism. His lack of reaction to death and suffering throughout his life could be his way of coping with the inevitability of mortality. However, this same detachment becomes his undoing when he is forced to confront the personal loss of his son.

Ultimately, the story reflects on the human condition, exploring how grief, loss, and death shape lives and perceptions. Esobu's final, uncontrollable grief serves as a reminder that, despite all efforts to resist it, the emotional impact of loss cannot be escaped forever.



The story of Esobu offers a profound meditation on the nature of grief, death, and emotional detachment. Throughout his life, Esobu remains a stoic figure, seemingly impervious to the sorrow and pain that affect others around him. His detachment is so extreme that it appears to define him. However, the death of his son forces him to confront an emotion he has long suppressed grief. This transformation marks the crux of the story, illustrating that no matter how much one might try to distance themselves from the pain of life, the inevitability of loss can still break even the most hardened of hearts.

Esobu's final, uncontrollable sorrow is both cathartic and tragic. His breakdown is not just the release of years of pent-up emotion but also a reminder that human beings are deeply tied to love and loss. The story suggests that detachment, while it may offer some temporary relief from suffering, is ultimately unsustainable in the face of profound personal loss. Esobu's cry at the end, along with his declaration that no one should mourn him when he dies, is both a rejection of conventional grief and an expression of deep, existential despair.

The conclusion, with Esobu laughing at the sky as he faces the death of his son, is a powerful commentary on the human struggle with the inevitability of death and the unpredictable nature of grief. It also invites us to reflect on how we deal with loss — whether through emotional numbness or through allowing ourselves to feel the pain that comes with loving others. Ultimately, the story suggests that no one is truly immune to the human experience of suffering, and that grief, in its rawest form, is an inescapable part of the journey we all must face.

## **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, a poor man in the village, transforms into a tiger during Dussehra by performing a tiger dance. For four hours a year, he is filled with pride, valor, and recognition. He waits an entire year for this brief moment of glory, as the rest of his life is filled with poverty, neglect, and scolding from his wife, Ameenabi. As he grows old and can no longer dance, he lives with the longing to relive those moments of triumph. In his final days, his wife expresses rare kindness, and Nabisaheb laments that her warmth could have made his life meaningful beyond just one day a year.

The story highlights the fleeting nature of glory and the deep human yearning for respect and recognition. It emphasizes how society's neglect and personal relationships lacking warmth can reduce a person's sense of worth, leaving them to clutch at moments of temporary happiness.

The theme of the story revolves around the fleeting nature of glory, the human need for recognition, and the impact of neglect in personal and societal relationships. Nabisaheb's life reflects the struggles of those who are valued only for their temporary contributions while their true worth is overlooked. The story explores how a lack of kindness and understanding in close relationships can leave a person longing for even the smallest gestures of affection. It also critiques societal hypocrisy, where people celebrate performances or superficial displays but fail to respect the individual behind them. Ultimately, it underscores the transformative power of empathy and the importance of acknowledging and valuing 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 success meet function in Guntur.*

Living without a single mistake is a great thing. It is story about a common man whose name is Pitchaiah from Amaravati wakes up early every morning. He 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.

After lunch, he sits on the steps and talks with his friends. In the evening, he tells his wife what to prepare for dinner. During festivals, he goes to the temple for prayers. His days are simple, spent chatting with friends and worshipping at the temple.

He lives like this until he is 65 or 70 and then passes away. Living such a life, without making any mistakes, is the real challenge.

## **CONCLUSION**

These stories hold significant relevance in today's world, offering timeless lessons on social values that resonate with contemporary challenges. Each narrative addresses fundamental aspects of human experience, such as trust in relationships, empathy toward others, resilience in the face of adversity, the transformative power of education and mentorship, and the enduring nature of hope and patience. In an era defined by rapid technological advancements, these stories remind us of the irreplaceable value of human connections. Trust and relationships, as highlighted in these tales, emphasize the need for mutual understanding and collaboration in a world increasingly driven by individualism. Similarly, the narratives underscore the importance of empathy—an essential quality often diminished in today's fast-paced, digital society. By fostering a sense of shared humanity, these stories advocate for more meaningful interactions and inclusive communities.

Resilience, as portrayed in these works, remains critical in addressing the pressures and uncertainties of modern life. They inspire readers to face challenges with courage and determination, demonstrating how unexpressed emotions and quiet strength can pave the way for personal growth. The role of education and mentorship, emphasized in the stories, reflects the enduring importance of guidance and knowledge in shaping individuals and communities. In today's knowledge-driven economy, these themes are particularly relevant, highlighting the transformative impact of mentorship in personal and professional growth.

Finally, the stories celebrate the values of hope and patience, which are vital in an ever-changing world filled with uncertainties. They encourage readers to maintain optimism and perseverance, even in difficult times, reinforcing the belief that progress and fulfilment are achievable through sustained effort and a positive outlook. By engaging with these narratives, readers can draw valuable lessons to address current societal challenges. The stories serve as a reminder that despite evolving circumstances, the core principles of trust, empathy, resilience, mentorship, and hope remain crucial for fostering a compassionate, equitable, and thriving society.

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