

ECOLOGICAL CONCERN IN LITERATURE

ECOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY IN KUVEMPU'S POETRY

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Abstract

Mother Nature blesses us with our every need. But man's self-centered attitude makes him unhappy. Nature, by her splendid beauty and spiritual power makes man a poet also. The poetry strengthens us by the spirituality and brings peace to our mind and soul. Kuvempu the national poet and the first Jnanapeetha awardee of Karnataka, explores Shayhadri and Tunga river in his poetry. Kuvempu brings out anthropocentric and anthropomorphic views for the image of water in his poetry. The belief, "Ganga Snana, TungaPaana", means 'we ought to take bath in the river Ganga and should drink the water of river Tunga', to get purified and blessed with sacredness. This fascinates us to move towards the Western Ghats, the heavenly place where Kuvempu lived.

The paper discusses 'Water and Spirituality' in a broader sense, focusing on the river Tunga in Kuvempu's poetry. And it throws light on, how the river and water source in Sahyadri has brought the meaning, faith and love for mankind, which makes us to forget the geographical sufferings of Malenadu, and the sufferings of Malaria, other diseases and deaths. Kuvempu focuses on the universal truth that, the religion of humanity, reconciliation, the universal path, the prosperity of every creature, and the integral vision- these five mantras should become views of the future. In other words, what we want henceforth is, not this or that religion, but the religion of humanity.

Key words: Kuvempu, Spirituality, Sahyadri, Anthropocentric, Anthropomorphic, Ganga and Tunga, Malenadu, Religion, Humanity.

**ECOLOGICAL CONCERN IN LITERATURE
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-PRAKASH C. BALIKAI

“EELLI YELLAKKU EDE ARTHA;

YAVUDU ALLA VYARTHA;

NEERELLAVU TEERTHA;

NEERELLAVU TEERTHA; (Kuvempu, Malegalalli 1)

The above lines by Kuvempu brings out the truth of the nature that, ‘every creation of nature has meaning and nothing is waste in the nature. Every source of water on the earth, available in any corner is always the Sanjeevini i.e. the Amruta and that is always sacred’.

Kuvempu gives anthropocentric and anthropomorphic views for the image of water in his poetry. He considers ecology as his mate and water (river) as living being; Kuvempu personifies river Tunga and considers Her as mother. Kuvempu narrates biocentric aspects of ecology by giving equal importance for plants, insects, water and other ecological elements. We never find human environment separated from ecology in Kuvempu’s poetry.

Nature is not celebrated individually; rather it is celebrated through all human senses in order to surrender human soul to Lord. With spirituality the poetry of Kuvempu makes us to rethink over the scientific and commercial development which has increased the desires of man through the intervention into the ecology. Kuvempu breaks the falls notion of considering ecology as subordinate to man. Hence G.S.Shivarudrappa, another national poet of Karnataka, calls him as KadinaKavi i.e. afforest Poet.

The paper discusses ‘Water and Spirituality’ focusing on the river Tunga in Kuvempu’s poetry in a broader sense. The paper throws light on, how the river and water source in Sahyadri has brought meaning, faith and love for mankind by forgetting the geographical sufferings of Malenadu, such as Malaria, other diseases and deaths. Kuvempu brings the importance of spirituality. His poetry consist the picture of Malenadu region, human sufferings, hunger, diseases, deaths which make us to rethink over the consequences of modern society, which is so called the ‘growth’. Kuvempu neither opposes science nor dismisses ancient myths, but through spirituality Kuvempu tries to find out the meaning for human life, by connecting human life with water.

**ECOLOGICAL CONCERN IN LITERATURE: ECOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY IN KUVEMPU'S
POETRY-PRAKASH C. BALIKAI**

Kuvempu, the first national poet and the first Jnanapeetha awardee of Karnataka, lived during 1904-1994, born at Kuppalli in the Shivamogga district, Karnataka. Kuvempu says, 'Tunga is not just a water source for him and for the people of Malenadu, rather it is a boon which has given life and optimism to the poet as well as to the people of Malenadu'.

River Tunga rises at Gangamoola in the VarahaParvata, accompanying with another river Bhadra, They takes journey of 147 km and 171 km respectively, later travelling through Karnataka and Andra Pradesh, both together join the Arabian Sea near Mangalore. It is the same river by the name Pampa, which appears in the Epic Ramayana (there is another river Pampa by the same name in Kerala).

The belief, "Ganga SnanaTungaPaana", means 'we ought to take bath in the river Ganga and should drink the water of river Tunga', to get purified and blessed with sacredness, it fascinates us to move towards the Western Ghats, at Gangamoola. Along with the rise of the river Kuvempu's place Shiva-Mukha, the place of Lord Shiva that is Shivamogga, brings spirituality in its name itself. After the ancient poet, Pampa in Kannada literature it is Kuvempu, the nature poet of Navodayajana who breaks the silence of greenery by celebrating Sahyadri and the river Tunga. He deconstructs the artificiality and constructs naturalness in his poetry.

"NAA NINAGE NEE NANAGE, JENAGUVA" (Nangali, Kuvempu 12)

'I for youYou for me;

Come let's make the life full

Of honey and surrender our self to Lord'.

Through the above words Kuvempu's poetry leads from physicality to spirituality and rests at devotionality. Kuvempu says "The land of Tunga is his Motherland and it is God's land". Along with the banks of Tunga, the places and temples bring message to human life by uplifting the human values through spirituality.

The great places and temples namely SharadaPeetham (Established by AadiShankaracharya), MantralayamshreeRaghavendraSwamy Mutt (DakshinaKashi), Shringeri, The saiva Cults and Clusters of Nava Brahma Temple constructed by the Chalukyas make the river Tunga rich with Spirituality, which made Kuvempu a great poet. Kuvempu speaks about these sacred places in his poetry and says, these holly places will bring message of peace and culture to the modern society.

The poems *To Tunga, To Malenadu, Night of Full moon, God's Signiture, Brindavana, Invitation, The Century Year etc.* focus on Kuvempu's views of spirituality and how Kuvempu breaks the notion of untouchability for water source and he gives a broader identity and meaning for water. Here in describing water, Kuvempu doesn't suspend the ancient mythological understandings of water. Kuvempu describes mythological meaning, modern meaning and sacredness of water in his poetry. And he asserts water is for all and there should not be any kind of favoritism regarding water, as She is the mother.

**ECOLOGICAL CONCERN IN LITERATURE: ECOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY IN KUVEMPU'S
POETRY-PRAKASH C. BALIKAI**

In the Poem *ToTunga*, Kuvempu brings out his interaction, relationship and feelings with river Tunga at his childhood, adolescence age and in his post adolescence age. Mother Tunga gives a philosophical sense with spirituality to poet's life. Poet says mother Tunga blessed him, how to build intervention and develop the strength of the Soul. He finds the truth that worshipping the Nature is Worshipping the God. i.e. 'PRAKRUTIYA AARADHANEYE PARAMA (SHIVANA) AARADHANE'.

In the first half of the poem, *To Tunga*, Kuvempu describes how the river is full of silence and also with revolution. The river leads towards internal transformation and revolution in us. In the later part of the poem we find, river Tunga becoming the goddess of spirituality by constructing our internal stability, confidence and mastery. Kuvempu asks himself, 'Whatever the shastra we receive, is there a voice greater than our inner soul?' (Nangali, Kuvempu 11). Kuvempu tries to find out the meaning of life through river Tunga. Kuvempu's lines cast-up the spirituality of the river Tunga in our mind to forget the sufferings and pains, by loving nature which leads towards love for mankind by bringing the message of truth, peace and harmony in us. Tunga is not only the manifesto of sacredness but also Tunga is an anthropomorphic construction created by Kuvempu. 'Silence speaks'; Mother Tunga in Malenadu in Her deep silence swallows us in Her womb to enlighten us and gives greater meaning to human life.

Lines from the Poem,

'The Night of Full Moon'

"... ..As the Gage of Moon Light

Descends from the Sky

River Tunga dazzles

At a distance as if painted.... .." (Javare, Select 21)

i.e. the image of the flow of Ganga's Water from Lord Shiva's head itself brings bhakti-rasa in us. Kuvempu compares the flow of Ganga's water from the sky with Tunga's water flowing in Malenadu as if it is the painting of God. Bhakti leads us to peace and enlightenment.

As Kuvempu brings out in his poetry, ultimately what man desires?

Peace to mind and pleasure to Soul.

The Melodious singing of the nightingales on the banks of the river Tunga enriches the grandeur of the heavenly beauty of Sahyadri that makes the whole universe fashionable which is described in the poem, *To Malenadu*.

Wordsworth states in the *Prelude* that "Love of Nature leading to Love of Mankind". Kuvempu takes back us to Malenadu to love human life by loving nature on the banks of river Tunga. Imagery poems are found in the poetry where the writings appeal to our senses. Thus

**ECOLOGICAL CONCERN IN LITERATURE: ECOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY IN KUVEMPU'S
POETRY-PRAKASH C. BALIKAI**

Kuvempu successfully uses imagery, simile, metaphor and personification in his poetry to celebrate river Tunga.

In the poem *Flute*, Kuvempu describes the spiritual power in the waves of river Tunga; the pleasure of feelings in touching the feet of Tunga (waves) makes him to feel the touch with the rainbow. These experiences make him to feel as if he has won the world with love, and it gives him the spirit to tie the words of poetry with spiritual power. He continues his sublime attachment with mother Tunga in his another poem *To Poetry* and describes that, when he was wondering like a beggar in the desert he has lost faith in life (Here Kuvempu expressing his alienation from the artificial world), but soon he touched the feet of river Tunga (waves), Her pat on his cheeks made him a king from a beggar. Kuvempu says that is enough for his whole life. Poet describes how he got 'moksha' being blessed by mother Tunga, and becomes a poet. This is the spiritual power, which Kuvempu brings in, that how mother Tunga blessed him to make him a great poet. Kuvempu says 'Moksha' led him to find an aim and he begs mother Tunga not to go out of his soul.

In the Poem *Anirvachaneeya*, Kuvempu successfully tries to find out the magic of spirituality which is brought by the endless waves of Tunga. Poet says, 'O, Soul comes let us dip in the Jalanidhi' (Javare, Select 89) i.e. the source of water. Often we tried to find out the secrets of the universe but as long as we travel, we could not find the end. Where the end is for God's magic of creation? No, not possible to understand; we are defeated with fear to understand it. Now no need to think, let us dip into the womb of mother Tunga and understand what life is!

Kuvempu tries to find the remedy for the sorrows of life through the spiritual meaning of the running waves. In describing 'Karunadu' in the 'Naadageete' of Karnataka Kuvempu brings how spirituality is spread by the rivers Krishna, Sharavati and Tunga which became the boon for Karunadu and the symbols of spirituality over the blessed land.

The two poems with the same title *Art of Poet (Kavishaila)*, appeared in the collection *Images of Malenadu*, describe how Kuvempu is blessed with mother Tunga, by standing on the banks and enjoying the beauty of Jog Falls, Agumbe, Shringeri etc. where Kuvempu admits there is no greater beauty than mother Tunga who spreads spirituality to understand the meaning of life. The same meaning is conveyed in another poem *God's Signature*, in which Kuvempu describes how he became a nature poet by borrowing the spirituality from mother Tunga and what She contributed to human society. Poet says the garden of Sahyadri is amazing; the Sky above the Tunga is smiling with joy, to see the waterfall of the river Tunga. The beauty of Tunga brings the feeling of honey in poet's heart; this experience is God's boon which made him a poet by becoming one with mother Tunga.

Kuvempu brings out his attachment with Mother Nature and says it's same as the relation between the God and a devotee. He opines, no relation is greater than the relation between the Guru and the bosom, and between lord Hari and his devotee; Kuvempu says, he has the same relationship with mother Tunga who taught him the power of the spirituality, which he brings in the poem, '*Kadalatadi*'.

**ECOLOGICAL CONCERN IN LITERATURE: ECOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY IN KUVEMPU'S
POETRY-PRAKASH C. BALIKAI**

"Battadiralikanniru"

Kanniranorasiko! Kaledudakalalunamagehottilla

Elligemugiyalillayemmalalahore.attattukanniranellabattisabeda.munde

Daariyolemmanaddagattuvadukkhagaligaagialaluondinitukanniradaruerali

Yedeyaaralinali.

Yekene, nammakasthakkellakanniremaddu!" (Kuvempu, Samagra 78)

Here Kuvempu universalizes the significance of water by bringing tears as symbol in the nature. The lack of water, leads to flow of another kind of water i.e. tears. By bringing the relationship between water (Tunga) and human sufferings (Tears), Kuvempu states 'Water is life', which is understood through the power of spirituality.

In the two poems namely *Ramateertha* and *Running to Malenadu*, Kuvempu apologizes to mother Tunga and Yamuna; His unpeacefulness vanished dipping into the river. He prays mother Tunga to excuse Her infant by accepting him. Kuvempu says that, in the city being away from river Tunga he has lost the power of spirituality.

In a significant poem bringing the relation between spirituality and modern life in the poem *Mathadhipathi*, he dismisses the misinterpretation of God and Matha, Mandiras. He says God is in goodness. Annoying of people is not a Mathadhisha. One, who cannot understand the power of spirituality, should understand the human values of equality and kindness through the spiritual power of Tunga to know the life better. They should understand how mother Tunga treats all equally. We have to accept unconditionally that "All mankind is, verily, one (community). 'Orthodox religion' should be vanished from our society. 'Spirituality' alone, being a scientific principle, must be recognized. "Religion" should become "the religion of Humanity"; the Path should become the "Universal Path"; and man should become "Universal Man". (Kuvempu, Samagra 869)

As DVG (D.V. Gundappa) opines, what is the human life on the Earth? Just a water drop! Which can be vanishing in any moment. What we have seen in the last century? When we see the picture of last century the bloodshed, the wars, the violence and the deaths come before our eyes. How to love mankind? Through Her spiritual power mother Tunga becomes a Guru, a Preacher and She teaches us and delights our soul which Kuvempu expresses in the Poem *The Century Year*.

God has put the signature for our fate, but in the Poem *God's Signature*, Kuvempu brings the message of aesthetic pleasure which appears in the line of flying cranes ensures us that fate changes by the beauty of nature. Love for Nature lifts us from individuality to universality; this is the message Kuvempu brings in this Poem. His statement also says the same thing i.e. "VYAKTI NELE ENDA VISHWA MANAVA NELEYEDEGE".

**ECOLOGICAL CONCERN IN LITERATURE: ECOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY IN KUVEMPU'S
POETRY-PRAKASH C. BALIKAI**

Kuvempu explores the whole Sahyadri in his poems. In his poetry we find the breaking up of artificiality and building up of naturality. His poetry does not stable at physical level but it leads us towards spiritual world.

As Jonath Bate states in his work *From Red to Green*, "In Romantic poetics poetry is to be found not only in language but in Nature, It is not only a means of verbal expression, it is also a means of emotional communication between man and the natural world", which is brought by Kuvempu here.

Every child, at the birth, is a universal man. But, as it grows, turn it into "a petty man". It should be the function of education to turn it again into the original "universal man", and this is possible by understanding the nature and to be helped through spirituality.

The Religion of Humanity, the universal Path, the Welfare of All, Reconciliation, and the Integral Vision-these five mantras should become views of future life. In other words, what we want henceforth is, not this religion or that religion, but the religion of humanity, which is brought in Kuvempu's poetry.

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