

## **PORTRAYAL OF INDIGENOUSNESS, TRIBE, CULTURE AND LAND ENCROACHMENT IN THE MOVIE KANTARA- AN OVER VIEW**

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**Abstract:** This paper explores eco critical conceptual problems, emphasizes on how Kantara movie portrays the application of ecology and ecological concepts. In this context the possible relations between Kantara movie, culture and nature are examined in terms of ecological concepts. Eco criticism, then, attempts to find a common ground between the human and non human, how they co-exist in various ways, because the environmental issues have become an integral part of our existence. In Tulu Nadu people identify themselves as nature's people. Though they depend on nature for their sustenance and are deeply aware of nature's bounty invoked through the blessings of deities and ancestors. They too are influenced and carried away by the sweeping winds of Aristocrats, British imperialism, adopting the foreign culture and customs at the cost of serving from the customs and rituals of the community. Biodiversity is under serious threat as a result of human activities. As estimated 18 million acres of forest land is lost every year. Due in part of logging and other human practices, destroying the ecosystems on which many species depend. It examines the mutual influence of ecology and language and how humans develop their quality of life through their sensitivity to ecology and environment. It discusses Tribal culture, Indigenous practices, Tulu nadu culture, Boota cola, land encroachment issues, which influence the environment in Kantara Movie. Being human every one has his own ethnic cultural practices to abide by and to transmit his free thoughts to the future generations of the society. Culture and indigenous practices must be meticulously preserved and protected.

### **Key words**

Nature, Eco criticism, Marginalized, Traditional culture.

**Tribes:** Aristocratic society regard the tribal people as barbarians, illiterate, primitive people alienated from development in all fields of life. The term "Tribe" is highly used for marginalized people. L.M. Lewis considers them as "a group of people confined within a space and personal range of socio-political and legal relations." In the common people language they

are called Adivasis. (Priyanka Jain)

In Karnataka, 6.57 percent of tribal people constitute the state population. The hills areas are their place of residence and they play a crucial role in shaping the 50 tribal communities listed in scheduled Tribe. Karnataka culture has many similarities that are closely associated with the tribal customs and rituals.

**Bedas :** The Bedas played a major role in the protection of empire in Karnataka from the ancient times to colonization. In the initial stages, they mainly appeared in the annals as raiders , transformed their lives as military generals of the ruling class. During Vijayanagara reign, they became ‘Amarayan ayakas’. After the declination of Vijayanagar empire, they declared themselves as independent rulers.

Bedas practised hunting - animals, fish and birds and also domesticated animals. Nilakanta Sastri, “ The Colas” book highlights Bedas. Some 12<sup>th</sup> century inscriptions of Karnataka regarded them as Boyas (Palanquin carriers). Bedas served the ruling people in Vijayanagara period, showed expertise in warfare and administration. These tribal people donated land to temples as well as Brahmins. The Beda tribe slowly assimilated into Hindu society.

**Indigenous people and practices:** Tulvas, who live in south Karnataka, practiced Yaksha gana, Bootha kola, which are popular in Tulu culture. Konkani people who live in Belgaum, speak in Konkani and Tulu. Kambala is a two day festival, the buffalo race is 800 years old rural community sport.

**Indigenoussness in Kantara :** Environmental activities are considered as recent developments in Western and Indian culture, Indigenous communities play a major role in the management of environment and biodiversity preservation. In the global population, indigenous people’s population is only 5 percent but have considerable impact on land mass (28%) of earth and 20% of protected areas of Earth ( Garnet etal.2018)

They represent themselves as caretakers of ecosystems having valuable and in-depth local knowledge that is essential for maintaining a sustainable natural environment. Indigenous systems are generally known for extensive activities of inter connection with social-ecological knowledge and beliefs. It shows a rich diversity of new practices and various forms of knowledge, oral, written and practical expertise.

Ritual acts can be studied through methods and theories extracted from numerous interdisciplinary subjects such as history, sociology, performance arts, studies and anthropology.”

**Culture:** The word culture denotes many things, such as the way of people living, behavior, physical and intellectuality. Ethnic culture is evident in art, literature, dance, music and drama. Taylor finds culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief , art, morals, law, customs or any other capabilities and habits acquired by humans as members of society. This definition captivates the extensive nature of culture.

Culture embraces a wide range of human phenomena, material achievements and norms , beliefs, feelings, manners, morals and so on. It is the patterned way of life shared by a particular group of people that claim to share a single origin or descent.

In addition, culture is passed on from generation to generation. The acquisition of culture is a result of the socialization process. Fafunwa (1974:48) states how culture is passed on : “the child just grows into and within the cultural heritage of his people. He imbibes culture, in traditional society, not taught, it is caught.”

Hicks & Gwynne (1997) states that “Culture has five basic characteristics. They are culture is learned, shared, symbolical, integrated, and dynamic.”

Culture which is supposed to be the lived experience of an entire society becomes the talk of the patriarchs. History records only the lives of the people in power and in this process the sub cultural groups are brushed aside and eventually wiped away from the conscious of time. They have to adhere to the rules of the society as laid down by the dominant cultural group.

After independence the reorganization of states was made on the basis of language. The patronage of languages as in the days of the British ceased. The language policy of independent India failed to preserve and foster the growth of languages of the country; instead, it endangered violence and discomfort. Linguists claim that some dialects and languages in India had been thrust into oblivion. India has the second largest number of languages in the world and the highest (197) number of languages endangered.

Languages are repositories of local knowledge and traditional wisdom. Language is the conduit through which people ideas, thoughts and culture are transmitted from generation to generation. Consequently, traditions and beliefs that have been passed on from one generation to one generation are gradually going extinct.



### **Tulu Culture Practice Image**

Tulu Nadu region culture paved the way for Kantara movie. As a part of study , I would like to highlight some information interrelated with Tulu culture. The Tulu people are ethnic live in Udupi, southern Karnataka and kasar god district in kerala. Their rituals are Bhuta Kola, worshipping of snake. They practice rural sport Kambala (buffalo race).

Bhoota Kola is a yearly festival, Kambala is a festival dedicated to Lord Manjunath. Tulu people show reverence towards gods of nature , serpent God, Earth goddess. They celebrate annual festivals Bhoota kola, nagapanchami and nema. This culture unifies the bond between people. Bhoota kola is an amalgamation of musical narrative, dance, and trance. Bhootas can be symbolical of panjurali or tiger.

In local dialect Bhutakola is called kolakattuni. “A performance of bhoota kola consists of at least one priest, a patri, percussionists and sometimes an interpreter.” Neha Adiga (2018) composes in her blog : Kola is a dance drama. The ritual and drama are closely knit together. All the theatrical elements –singing, dancing, make up, masks, dialogues, stories, and actor – performed are present in it.”

Tulu Nadu region environment provides as a real agent of ecological treatise. At the central point of this association be placed with a great respect for nature. Bhootara goddess lives among the natual landscapes like rivers, mountains, forests, not as passive divinities but as energetic forces showing impact on the area’s well-being. (Hegde, 2007,P.35). Shiva’s transformation into a Bhootara god later awakens the interconnection and shows how human welfare is interconnected with the environment’s health.



### **Bhoota Kola Image**

Shiva is a multi talented eco warrior , capable, unwavering devotion to the land. Kantara portrays the Bhootara's ecological wisdom via its picturizing of conventional practices. The respect towards Bhootara spirits encourages a sense of stewardship, indigenous ways to development. Through Bhootara cult , Kantara allows audience to reexamine their association with nature. It amplifies marginalized people voices and collaborative efforts for ecological responsibility. (Alfred & Whyte ,2018)

Language is a representation of communication and culture of people. Tulu language is spoken in western Karnataka and some areas of Kerala. Kundapura is a part and parcel of Tulu Nadu. In this region most of them speak Kunda Kannada. In Kantara movie , Kundapura dialect is used for the composition of Singara Siriye song. The word Singara word taken from singara hoov, it holds culture. (A lyrical ode to culture)

Language death has negative impact on biodiversity preservation. There is a fundamental linkage between language and traditional knowledge of biodiversity. Local indigenous communities have a deep and profound understanding of their local environment. The environment knowledge is embedded in indigenous names, oral tradition, and taxonomies and can be lost when a community shifts to another language. It is an exigency that no dialect should be lost but preserved for posterity and preservation of biodiversity.

This is a story where a happy family is walking towards their village with lush green fields and a bumper harvest fields with abundant water facilities, Amongst the chirping of birds the father narrates the story about their village deity to his son Sivanna and his wife. Once upon a time , there was a wealthy king who led a happy and contented life. He was kind and compassionate to his people. He did many good things like serving food to people in the names of his fore fathers. Though he led a very happy life with his family and people but he was not content in his heart.

To get rid of this problem he visited many holy places like temples and thirtas, etc. Even after so many endeavors, he couldn't find a way to his problem. So he consulted a sage to seek a solution for his problem.

While he was travelling through a forest , he finds that the people from forest were worshipping a God who was in the form of Varaha or a stone known as panjurli. When he sees the god, he unknowingly kneels down, throws his sword down and folds his arms in the form of prayer. He felt divinity is ready to restore peace in his life. He requests people to give their God to him. Initially, they rejected, but a man gets Garjuli daivam, says ok on one condition that he should give his properties to the people of his village . King agrees. He takes the God to his province and in their province forest people venerate god. The king celebrates as if his son was reborn

when he takes the god to the village. Later he lived happily forever.

Now, the narrator (father) participates in Bhuta Kolam. Bhuta Kolam means a sacred ritual where a person is dressed as panjurli and pronounces that panjurli wants to speak to the people. Most of the villagers believe in panjurli but the Jamindar of the village didn't believe & raises questions that the God speaks or the person speaks without answering the man runs into forest. He files a case to get back the land which is handed over to the villagers. When he enters the steps of court, he dies there it self. After 10 years, Zamindar son occupies his father's legacy. He too craves to grab the land from the people. One day, in the village some competitions are held.



**Kambala Sport Image**

Sivanna participates in Kambala sport, becomes winner. He always fights with a batch, never listens to his mother. He hunts pigs and eats. He opposes a forest officer and falls in trouble. Sivanna's cousin Guruva for the first time participates in Bhutakolam. There, Sivanna meets his childhood friend Leela and falls in love with her. She wants to be an officer in the forest department. She gets job with the help of the protagonist. On the first day of her duty, the forest officials force the local people to evacuate from the area and Leela tries to convince the people. Later on, Sivanna becomes furious and he doesn't speak to her.

Once, Sivanna and their batch goes to forest to hunt wild pigs but suddenly it rains heavily. They cut the tree where it falls on forest official car. He is wounded, takes revenge on Sivanna. Sivanna gets arrested in land encroachment act and the officer adds on many cases on him and his batch. One day Zamindar speaks and threatens Guruva to convey to people that they have to return the land to him in the name of Panjurli He rejects, Zamindar kills him and leaves his dead body (Guruva's) near the temple. Guruva's parents become saddened by the demise of Guruva and visit the prison.

Sivanna comes to know the death of Guruva from his mother and Leela. He gets bail with the help of Zamindar, participates in the zamindar party. After the party, he comes to know about the cause of Guruva's death from an old neighbour. Zamindar sends people to fight with him. Sivanna defies the goons of zamindar. Zamindar tries to grab the land from the people, people revolt against the deeds of zamindar. Sivanna gets the help from the forest officer, it led to the loss of people. One man hits Sivanna, he falls on a rock (Panjurli) Then he gets Garjali Daivam, he kills zamindar, his goons and eats puffed rice. He decides to take part in Bhutakolam, his mother stops him but he doesn't listen to her. He goes into the forest and meets his father.

Kantara movie captivates the audience with Tulu Nadu spirit, transforms Eco – cultural empowerment. It emphasizes marginalized voices through Bhootara rituals, yaksha gana dance as main parts of the movie, portrayal of nature and cultivates a intuitive connection to the Tulu Nadu landscape. (Srinivasan,2019). The Yakshagana dance, with its sophisticated costumes, energetic movements, and rich mythological narratives, provides as a powerful tool for restoring cultural agency (Gowri2010). Kantara reverberates the vanishing practices and aggravates the voices of marginalized communities suppressed in powerful environmental narratives. (Morrow,2008)

### **Land Encroachment:**

Forest land encroachment in Karnataka presents a critical challenge with far-reaching implications on biodiversity, ecology, and the well-being of indigenous communities. Karnataka, renowned for its diverse ecosystems spanning from the lush Western Ghats to the arid dry deciduous forests, confronts encroachments spurred by population growth, agricultural expansion, urban sprawl, and developmental projects. These encroachments not only diminish forest cover but also disrupt fragile ecosystems, jeopardize wildlife habitats, and worsen environmental degradation.

To address this pressing issue, Karnataka has implemented stringent laws and policies aimed at safeguarding and sustainably managing its forest lands. The Karnataka Forest Act of 1963 stands as a cornerstone, empowering forest authorities to curb encroachments through measures such as evictions, restoration of illegally occupied lands, and legal actions against offenders. Furthermore, the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, operating at the national level, mandates central government approval for non-forest activities on forest lands, ensuring their prudent use and preservation of ecological value.

Despite these legislative safeguards, forest land encroachment persists due to challenges like tax enforcement, corruption, and socio-economic pressures. Encroachers exploit loopholes to occupy forest lands illicitly for agriculture, settlements, and commercial ventures.

The Karnataka government has undertaken various proactive initiatives to combat encroachment:

1. **\*\*Eviction Drives\*\***: Periodic campaigns to curb the activities of the encroachers and reclaim the unlawfully occupied forest lands.
2. **\*\*Forest Land Surveys\*\***: Comprehensive surveys to delineate forest boundaries and identify encroachments, enabling targeted enforcement.
3. **\*\*Community Involvement\*\***: Promotion of Joint Forest Management (JFM) and participatory approaches involving local communities. This not only aids in conservation but also empowers forest-dependent communities with sustainable livelihoods.
4. **\*\*Legal Measures\*\***: Stringent legal actions against encroachers under forest laws, emphasizing deterrence and accountability.
5. **\*\*Awareness Campaigns\*\***: Educational programs and outreach efforts to raise public awareness about forest conservation, legal provisions, and the adverse impacts of encroachment.

However, addressing forest land encroachment in Karnataka necessitates sustained vigilance, bolstered enforcement capabilities, capacity building for forest officials, and enhanced collaboration among stakeholders including government bodies, civil society, and local communities. Ensuring sustainable forest management is pivotal not just for preserving Karnataka's natural splendor but also for mitigating climate change effects and supporting the livelihoods of millions of dependent on forest resources. By fostering a shared commitment to land conservation, Karnataka can strive towards a future where its forests thrive alongside human development in harmony with nature.

**Portrayal of Socio-ecological element in Kantara:** The movie kantara's story centers around environmental elements, stresses the importance of indigenous communities. Rishab Setty , who steadily maintains his belief that “regional is universal”, where his way of film making adopts tribal culture and local ecosystems for better understanding of local rituals and culture. (Goutham Kumar & payel pal)

Director integrates tribal cultivation culture with the local demi god and goddesses which has great importance in our daily lives. Kantara has recognized marginalized and suppressed communities. Kantara in this scenario, highlights that, “ the margin be no longer margin but it covers multi angles, an autonomous center of knowledge production among others.” ( Goutham

Kumar & Payel Pal) It promotes the decision making process of environmental sustainable activities, active involvement in solving environmental issues.

**Conclusion:** Kantara is a testimony of transformative story telling. It crossed the limitations of traditional narratives, it is game changer , immerses the audience into Tulu folk culture. Visual graphics of the film intensify the movie's ecological message. It offers the bond between story telling and ecological agencies , enable the audience to think about conservation of nature for the purpose of solving environmental issues.

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