

**RECAST(E)ING THE ‘HEROES’: MEMORY, IDENTITY AND
KOTI-CHENNAYA PUBLICS IN TULUNAD**

**A thesis submitted in July 2017 to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE**

**By
YOGITHA S.
(Reg. No.11HCPH01)**

**Supervisor
DR. SOWMYA DECHAMMA C. C.**



Centre for Comparative Literature

**School of Humanities
University of Hyderabad
(P.O.) Central University, Gachibowli
Hyderabad – 500 046
Telangana
India
July 2017**



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **Recast(e)ing the ‘Heroes’: Memory, Identity and Koti-Chennaya Publics in Tulunad** submitted by **Yogitha S.**, Reg. No. **11HCPH 01** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature is a bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance.

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Supervisor

Head of Department

Dean of School

DECLARATION

I, **Yogitha S.**, (Regd. No. 11HCPH01), hereby declare that this thesis titled **“Recast(e)ing the ‘Heroes’: Memory, Identity and Koti-Chennaya Publics in Tulunad”** submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Sowmya Dechamma C. C. is a bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/ INFLIBNET.

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(11HCPH01)

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INTRODUCTION

What now feels as long long ago, I entered Centre for Comparative Literature in the University of Hyderabad with a proposal on what I then called/thought, the “Siri Mass Possession Cult” of Tulunad. It proposed to study the variability within different Siri *paddana* versions, intertwining it with questions on gender, caste-communities, and ‘possession’ practices. While working with the frame of memory in the months that followed, I not only realized it was not the anthropological registers of ‘possession’ and ‘cult’ alone that were problematic in conceptualizing the Tulu religio-mnemonic cosmology, but I also was curious at the way anything like ‘Siri’ (a female deity pantheon, sustained largely by women-centric practices) was outperformed by the ubiquitous presence of masculine figures Koti-Chennaya across Tulunad. Koti-Chennaya pervaded the scene of memory, from Enmuru village in Sullia Taluk of Tulunad to Kundapura in the north and also making trans-regional travels in Kasargod of Kerala to Mumbai in Maharashtra, to the Gulf Countries across the Ocean. Almost all modes of memorialisation was occupied by these twin brothers relegating all other, let alone a female deity like Siri into the periphery of Tuluva imagination. What began as my curiosity into this ubiquitousness, its superstructural power to subsume other memories, soon matured into a full project on its own. Like the mnemonic landscape of Tulunad overlaid by the spread of Koti-Chennaya memories, the landscape of my doctoral dissertation also developed into a memorial boulevard for the brothers, also perennially being aware of/bothered by the questions of what it has been subsuming all through its way. While Siri has remained an intimate companion in my academic endeavours outside-the-thesis, the question of why couldn’t she be as omnipresent as Koti-Chennaya in Tuluva imagination is a thought that has stayed at the backdrop all through...

‘Always historicize!’

Fredric Jameson opened his *Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981) with this ‘slogan,’ affirming the act of writing history as politically imperative.¹ While the

¹ Fredrick Jameson quoted in Eric Bulson’s “This is a Headline”

<https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/this-is-a-headline/> Web on 27th July, 2017.

contour of professional history with teleological fixities of nation and modernity has been challenged by 'hybrid history,' (Skaria, 1999) 'vernacular history,' (Aquil & Chatterjee, 2010) 'provincializing,' (Chakrabarty, 2007) 'cultural history,' 'Subaltern history,' 'public history' and so forth, the prerequisite of historical imagination, especially for a 'politics of hope,' (Skaria, 1999) stands unchallenged. Although the discourse of history has witnessed hostile treatment by scholars,² the act of historicizing (albeit through different modes) is maintained as an essential component. Analyzing the many modes of recollecting a past, including historiographical, Christian Lee Novetzke (2008) asserts that,

The imperative (is) for publics to possess some system of historical memory. Such memories may be formalized histories or less logically structured modes of recollection... But publics must record themselves in order to be sustained even for the shortest duration – they must remember (23)

The creative craft of writing history that thwarts the grids of mainstream academic writing is also an act of resistance for the hitherto marginal. In the pursuit, they also reconstruct their own real and imaginary hero(in)es based on 'folk'/oral memory. Similarly, in "Tulunad,"³ an ethno-linguistic minority region in south west-coast India, rewriting a vernacular history in order to create the capital of legitimate memory has been a crucial imperative. The oppressed-memories of past (manifesting in all 'present's) are forged on the ontology of hundreds of deities⁴ remembered and worshipped from generation to

Jameson urged for the relevance of theorizing, at the same "impatient with the kinds of theoretical navel-gazing that effectively removed literature, and culture in general, from the forces of history." Ajay Skaria in *Hybrid Histories* (11) calls Jameson as one of the 'radical historians' who propound historicizing even as a "transhistorical" imperative.'

² Ajay Skaria discusses how history which is seen as necessarily western and modern is still perceived among scholars as without appropriate alternative (Skaria, 1999: 11).

³ 'Tulunad' is a widely used noun to refer to the geo-linguistic region consisting of Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and a few parts of Kasaragod district in Kerala. 'Tulunadu' is often used to refer to this ethno-linguistic minority region with Tulu as lingua franca. Apart from Tulu, Konkani, Kannada, Havyaka Kannada, Beary, Malayalam, Urdu, Kodagu, English languages are spoken in the region (*Survey of English: South Kanara District*, 1985). Unless used as in citations, I retain the term 'Tulunad' to remain close to the way it is designated in Tulu language.

⁴ I use their manifestation as deities (called by different names like *butolu*, *bhuta*, *daiva*, *satyolu*) here to emphasise how the exploited beings from the past are deified, which remains as the major mode of recollecting them. Bodily re-presentations during annual rituals called *nema*, *kola*, *boota-kola* is a central component of remembering these beings. All these ritual worships are bracketed under the category of *bhutaradhane* by predominantly Anthropologists and Folklorists of Tulu academia. Other scholars like K S Chithra (2010) have preferred to use the term "Daiva Cult" in order to shift away from the homogenizing categorization of *Bhutaradhane*. As a departure, I use the name "Buta Worship" throughout the thesis (except in quotations), also departing from the most commonly used spelling of *bhuta*.

generations. Deities like *Koraga-Taniya*,⁵ *Koddabbu*,⁶ *Tannimaniga*,⁷ *Kallurti-Kalkuda*,⁸ *Aliboota*,⁹ *Mayandal*,¹⁰ *Koti-Chennaya*'s¹¹ exploitation under the rigid grids of caste-Tulu society, their death and afterlife retaliation, leading to their eventual deification also by the oppressive social groups, pervade the religio-political cosmology of many marginalized Tuluva communities. The principles of transitional justice are inbuilt into these subversive narratives. Therefore, what is conceptualized as markers of distinct Tuluva culture in its orchestration both within and outside the region, also appropriated into the 'unity in

⁵ Koraga Taniya is a Dalit boy who lost his parents at a very early age. A Billawa woman called Mairakke Baidedi brought him up. He was sent to Kadri Temple once by his foster mother to deliver the baskets she had vowed to the deity in the temple. In the temple premises he was enticed to pluck a fruit from the tree nearby. No sooner he attempted, Koraga Taniya disappeared and turned into stone. Eventually he was deified.

⁶ Koddabbu is another Dalit boy largely worshipped among the Dalit groups in Tulunad. His is a story of upper caste jealousy at his efficiency in medicine, in magic, resulting in his murder.

⁷ The story of another Dalit female deity Tannimaniga is interwoven into the story of Koddabbu. She helps Koddabbu out of a well with her extraordinary power. In the course Tannimaniga and Koddabbu become brother-sister, entering the realm of *maya* together.

⁸ Kallurti-Kalkuda are a pair of twin sister-brother considered clearly as *bhutas* (Rai, 1985: 76). Their story in brief:

One of the six off springs of Shambhu Kalkuda and Iravati couple, Kalkuda, unlike his other four brothers with different occupations, became a sculptor. He surpassed his father in sculpturing skills, and was invited by the Bhairarasa of Karkala (taluk) to carve a statue of Gommateshwara (Jain god). After twelve years of time spent in successfully carving the statue, Kalkuda sought permission to return home. The king didn't want Kalkuda to carve statues elsewhere, and thus chopped his left hand and right legs off. Enraged Kalkuda then went to neighbouring Venuru, ruled by Timmannajila, and resumed his sculpting activities.

Unable to see her brother for twelve long years, Kallurti searched everywhere and finally reached Venuru. Enraged by the injustice meted out to her brother, Kallurti cursed Karkala and requested Lord Mahadeva, along with her brother, to make them disappear (*mayaka*). They reappeared in Karkala, and Kallurti burnt down Bhairarasa's palace into ashes. Unable to face her wrath, the king sought ways out of it, finally reinstating them as deities around.

⁹ Alibiyari was a popular Muslim sorcerer who was a womanizer in nature. He enticed a woman called Deyi with his conjuring abilities and violated her modesty. Dejected, the elders of a house sought the help of deity Mantramurti (Rakteshwari) in teaching a lesson to Ali. The goddess, naked in a river, persuaded the enthralled Ali to remove all his talismans and get into the water, making him disappear soon after. The goddess settled at Pambrana village after transforming Ali as a deity as well.

¹⁰ Mayandal is the story of a Billawa woman who is caught in the conflict between her affluent uncle Alibali Nayak and the Bunt landlord, Pangulla Bannar. Mayandal had arrived at her uncle's house to recuperate after child birth. On the other hand, Alibali Nayaka refused to heed to the demands of Pangulla Banner, who in turn turned to his ancestral deity Jumadi to take revenge. Jumadi appears before Mayandal & makes her disappear. In the form of *mayaka*, Mayandal as a retaliation makes Pangualla Bannar's niece Duggame also disappear. Eventually Jumadi brings Mayandal, Duggame and Tannimaniga with him to Enagudde garadi. While Mayandal finds place inside the garadi, Tannimaniga and Kolatta Jumadi are installed in the outer premises.

¹¹ Koti-Chennaya's story in brief is attached below. An elaborate translated version is attached as Annexure at the end of the thesis.

diversity’ premise of the nation,¹² is in fact, a narrative of exploitation and its recollection in many modes. One such saga of oppression and retaliation is encoded within the masculine bodies of ‘folk’ heroes-deities Koti and Chennaya,¹³ and they are the uncontested protagonists of this dissertation.

This doctoral dissertation is about the twin¹⁴ cultural-religious figures of Tulunad called Koti-Chennaya. It attempts a mnemohistorical analysis of Koti-Chennaya tradition, tracing its cultural history of memorialisation since at least one and a half centuries. Focussing on the diverse modes of recollection associated with these twin brothers, I trace a trajectory of its continual interaction with every spatio-temporality it encounters. In the course, for heuristic purposes, I mark various ‘publics’ that come to constitute the tradition as well as get constituted by it. These diverse publics produce a range of processes to remember and commemorate, creating a complex system of memorialisation that also comes to aid in the concretization of new national/regional, community and ethnic identities. Through such connections, it deliberates the hermeneutic of political modernity in post-colonial contexts that is founded on reconceptualization of both ‘historical’ and ‘religious’ categories.

Koti-Chennaya are believed to be historical figures who lived in 16th century Tulunad. They are said to belong to a particular caste in the region, Billawa or Biruva¹⁵ (with toddy-tapping as their traditional occupation) now categorized under the Other Backward Classes (OBC)¹⁶ by the Government of India. Although the narrative of Koti-

¹² K. S. Chitra in her doctoral dissertation criticizes the ‘Unity in diversity’ premise of the nation which homogenizes the “diverse cultural practices and their complex sociology within a region” (2010: 71). As a case study, she discusses how ‘Bhuta cult’ has come to represent “cultural identity of Tuluvas within the Tulu region which simultaneously also represents cultural diversity at wider levels of the state and the nation” (2010: 71).

¹³ Throughout the thesis, unless as used in quoted texts, I retain Koti and Chennaya as a singular entity with a hyphen to conjoin. Thus, all through I retain ‘Koti-Chennaya’ to signify their inseparable imaginary among recollecting publics.

¹⁴ The imaginary of twin male and female figures is a prominent feature of Tulu religious cosmology. Twins like Koti-Chennaya, Kalkuda-Kallurti, Abbaga-Daraga, Mudda-Kalala, Kanada-Katada, and so on pervade through Tuluva memory. Alf Hildebeitel has undertaken a comparative study between two sets of twins, one from the Tulu and other from Tamil context in his article “Boar and Twins: Comparing the Tulu Koti-Chennaya *Paddana* and the Tamil *Elder Brothers Story*” (2005).

¹⁵ Although there are variations in the spelling of Billawa caste as Billava or Billawa or Billawar, I retain Billawa throughout the thesis, unless used differently in the cited texts/book titles.

A detailed account of Billawa caste within the caste structure in Tulunad is provided in the “Introduction” to Section Two.

¹⁶ During my visit to The Billawar Association in Mumbai, the office bearers there recollected how through the Association’s incessant efforts OBC status for Billawas is also obtained under the State

Chennaya's life occupies three adjacent villages in southern Tulunad, their travails both in and after life spans across the Tulu belt, but barely outside the geo-linguistic region of Tuluvas. The foremost textual documentation of their narrative is found in mid-nineteenth century by the German missionaries, followed by compilations in different genres by the Tuluvas. As the story of Koti-Chennaya's life occupies central significance within the pages of this thesis, I have attached an elaborate translated version as Appendix at the end of the thesis. However, sidelining minor, contextual variations in the oral song,¹⁷ and the extensions before and after their purported existence in the recollective faculty of 'memory publics',¹⁸ I outline major incidents in Koti-Chennaya's life below:

A Brief Outline of the Koti-Chennaya *paddana*.¹⁹

A miraculously-born female child 'Suvarna Kedage' was raised by a Brahmin couple. As she attained puberty before marriage, she was blindfolded and left behind in the forest by her father. A Billawa toddy tapper 'Sayana Baidya' finds her in the vicinity and embraces her into his household. She is named after his sister 'Deyi' and was eventually married off to a Billawa caste man 'Kantana Baidya.'

On the other side, the ruler of the region called Padumale, 'Permale Ballala' went on a hunting spree, and a poisonous thorn pierced his foot. No medicine worked, and his health deteriorated. Upon hearing about Deyi's medicinal skills, she was called into his palace. Fully pregnant Deyi nurtured the king and assisted him in regaining health completely. She delivered twin boys in the palace, later named 'Koti' and 'Chennaya' by the king. Deyi was honoured with gifts for her service and the king promised to look after her children. Deyi passed away within a fortnight of the twins' birth, leaving the children to their uncle's care. The children grew up to be valorous youth, also accumulating oppressive hatred and jealousy of the upper caste boys, especially the upper-caste Court Minister 'Budyanta.' As they entered into adulthood, the king donated a piece of land to Koti-Chennaya, the lower part of the same land being given to Minister Budyanta. After paddy

government of Maharashtra. To quote from its website, "The Association is first among the Tulu-Kannadiga Associations to obtain the O.B.C. status for Billawas." <http://billawar.org/history/> Web on 25th July, 2017.

¹⁷ popularly called *Baidarle sandi*

¹⁸ More on 'memory publics' in the "Introduction" to Section One.

¹⁹ Songs, often lengthy, describing the genesis, travels and deification of Tuluva deities. *Paddanas* are categorized under the generic form of 'epics' by a large number of Tuluva scholars (Rai, 1985; Gowda, 1990; Upadhyaya, 1996; Nandavara, 2001).

seeding in their respective fields, a quarrel broke out between the twin brothers and Budyanta, culminating in the murder of the vicious Minister. Consequently, the king's attempt to capture the brothers went in vain. They demanded the 'undemandable' from the king as a fulfilment of his promise to their mother, and eventually left the palace on a high note of discord.

Upon leaving their village Padumale, they reached the neighbouring province of Panja ruled by the king 'Kemara Ballala.' The brothers were also reunited with their step-sister 'Kinnidaru' here. When they intended to visit Kemara Ballala, Koti-Chennaya were imprisoned at the behest of Padumale Ballala. However, with divine intervention, the brothers escaped from the prison, finally landing in the neighbouring province of Enmuru, which was ruled by 'Deva Ballala.' As there were many rifts between Panja and Enmuru already, the brothers took part in the battle between these two parties in great heroism, and contributed to the success of Enmuru force. During the battle, Koti was killed by the arrow of the Permale Ballala, and Chennaya crushed his head to death following his older brother Koti's death. Three remorseful kings united, and built worship structures called *garadi* as per the death-bed wish of Koti.

So the major episodes of the narrative take place in three provinces with three different rulers, all addressed as Ballala. Koti-Chennaya begin their journey in Padumale, moving on to Panja and finally ending their life in Enmuru. In some versions of the 'epic' the brothers continue their journey in the after-life, further traversing in parts of Tulunad.

The above is a cursory outline of the epic-length narrative largely transmitted orally by singers largely belonging to Dalit castes in the Tulu region.²⁰ While most of the compositions revolve around the above mentioned storyline, there are a few more versions extending the narrative way beyond the heroes' death. In addition, there are a number of what is called *sthalapurana* or 'edifice myths'/local mythologies prevalent among people who have built and maintained worship centres called *garadi*²¹ for these twin brothers. An

²⁰ Dalit caste Paravas and Pambadas sing the *paddanas* in large number. Koti-Chennaya *paddana* is also sung by Billawas/Poojarys and other castes (ex: Monta Gowda and Eerappa Gowda's unpublished version available in Regional Resources Centre for Folk Performing Arts, Udupi). I have been informed by a Bunt woman called Kargi Shedthi that she could sing the Koti-Chennaya *paddana* as well.

²¹ *Garadi* or *garodi* are meant almost exclusively for the worship of Koti-Chennaya as central deities. *Garadis* also consist of other deities like Bermer, Okku Ballala, Jumadi, Mayandal, Jogi Purusha and so on. They are considered as martial art centres in earlier period, like 'Kalari' in Kerala, eventually converted as worship places. Some *paddanas* of Koti-Chennaya mention that they got 66 *garadi* and 33

astonishing number of more than 220 *garadi* are built along the narrow stretch of Tulunad for these deities. They are invoked through mediumship practices during annual rituals across these *garadis*, and their memorialisation has spread into films, TV serials, performative arts, audio-visual documentation, theme parks, circles, topographic restoration and so on in recent years.

This vast realm of memorialisation intimately interlinked with emerging subjective consciousness needs a rather broader theoretical approach, and I return to a detailed note on the available frameworks to understand this tradition in a while. In the meantime I draw a trajectory of the geo-cultural imaginary of Tulunad, a collectively constructed region, an effective dynamic agent, that has come to possess a cultural personality of its own.

Imaginary of Tulunad and the Politics Within

Tulunad or the land of Tulu²² people, is an ethno-linguistic minority region located within the political boundary of majoritarian Kannada-speaking State of Karnataka. It consists of two districts of Dakshina Kannada²³ and Udupi²⁴ (and parts of Kasargod district in Kerala) with Tulu language as its lingua-franca. Bound by Arabian Sea on one side and the impenetrable mountains on the other, Tulunad has retained its ethnic singularity, making geo-cultural connections only with the neighbouring coastal regions and transnational connections with the Gulf countries.²⁵ Its 'uncontainable' linguistic and cultural terrain has remained outside the formulative principles of the State and Nation. While it occupies a linguistic minority space within the dominating Kannada State of Karnataka, it also ruptures into the meta-body of Indian Nation largely founded on the tenets of Brahminical

taavu built for themselves. A team from Udupi began its search for the 66 *garadis*, surprisingly to find more than 220 across the stretch of Tulu belt (Amin and Kotian, 1990)

²² Tulu is one of the five major Dravidian language as identified by philologist Robert Caldwell in his *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian family of languages* in 1856. Caldwell called Tulu as "one of the most highly developed languages of the Dravidian family. It looks as if it had been cultivated for its own sake." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tulu_language Web on 10th April, 2017.

According to the 2001 Census of Government of India they were 1,722,768 Tulu speakers.

²³ Also called as 'South Kanara,' or as 'South Canara' during colonial times.

²⁴ Udupi district was carved out of the larger Dakshina Kannada district in 1997.

²⁵ Started generally around 1900s, there has been a large scale migration of Tuluvas to Mumbai and the Gulf countries. It reached its peak in the period between 1960s and 1970s. However, Kotekar (2012: 188-202) points at how migration to Mumbai and elsewhere declined after the development of educational and other occupational sectors in Tulunad itself since 1975. There are many Tulu, also caste-specific associations in other cities of India like Delhi, Pune, Mumbai, Bangalore, and so on, also extending in large number in Dubai and other Gulf Countries.

Hindu nation. Despite adhering to caste hierarchy in its internal socio-economic schema, its regionalised religiosity is outside the fold of Brahminical deity pantheon, expanding to the worship of thousands of 'local' deities and apotheosised humans.

An entry point to the earliest German Missionaries in India, Tulunad was termed the most primitive by the Missionaries and Colonial officials, chiefly for the way it has retained its ethnic distinctness characterized by, what was wrongly translated as, 'devil' or *bbuta*²⁶ worship. Borrowing the Missionary notions of Tulu-people as the most conservative among Dravidians, Major R C Temple, a British Official also reiterated about their primitiveness when he said,²⁷

The seclusion, in which the Tuluvas live, further makes it probable that they have preserved that devil worship, on which so much popular Hinduism²⁸ is everywhere based, in greater purity than it is perhaps preserved anywhere else.

Therefore, its religious fabric of 'devil-worship' along with Tulu language "that in spite of the want of a written literature, (their language) shows no signs of disappearing"²⁹ constituted a new primitive-provincial imaginary for the colonial agents. Their Orientalist objectification of the Tuluva³⁰ people and their ways of life merely accorded the status of 'most conservative,' categorizing them under the two larger groups of Brahmins and the Shudras. The immediate entry of the natives, largely upper caste, into the sphere of knowledge production felt the necessity to exonerate the land from claims of primitiveness, and contribute to the anti-colonial discourse prevalent around.

In the process, they also assembled an imaginary of the land, albeit conditioned by their caste affiliations. K S Chithra (2010) in her doctoral dissertation has outlined the caste-conditioned claims made by native historiography, producing a juxtaposed history

²⁶ The word *Bhuta* in Kannada also translates as devil or demon. A.C. Burnell's collection of Tulu folk songs, later published by R.C. Temple in *The Indian Antiquary* between 1894 and 1897, was titled as *The Devil Worship of Tuluvas*, thereby creating the 'other' category of the 'heathens.' As against the general norm, I have used the spelling *buta* instead of *Bhuta* throughout the thesis, which according to me is closer to its Tulu pronunciation. Latter spelling is retained when it occurs in quotes.

²⁷ *Indian Antiquary - The Journal of Oriental Research*, Vol XXIII, 1894, pg 3.

²⁸ Marks 'popular Hinduism' as different from Brahminism - through terminological registers like 'devil worship,' 'Tuluva Bhuta cult' as 'Demonolatry' and 'non Brahminic worship practice of the lower/Shudra classes (Temple 1894, 3).

²⁹ Bishop Caldwell quoted by R C Temple in his 'Preface' to *Indian Antiquary* series on Tulu language and culture between 1894 and 1897.

³⁰ Tulu speaking people are also generally called as 'Tuluva' or sometimes as 'Toulava.'

for the Tuluva land, nevertheless consolidating the regional imagination. However, most dynamic decades in Indian political history, early 20th century also witnessed ideological battles between the Brahmin and other upper caste groups over the construction of Tulunad imaginary. As goes without saying, this ideological battleground not only created homogenous ideas of the region, but also normalized the religio-cultural fabric, engendering a unified notion of the 'Hindu' identity, devoid of any caste conflicts within.³¹

The early historiographical attempts in Tulunad could be better understood if the "crucial questions of caste and identity politics [are considered] at its micro-level" (Chithra, 2010:71). The two factions identified, one Brahmin and the other non-Brahmin upper castes vied with each other in creating the idea of Tulunad, both remaining grounded in their caste affiliations. Already equipped with written sources like *Gramapaddthathi*, *Mayuravarma Charitre*, *Sahyadrikanda* that highlighted the supremacy of Brahmin castes, along with the already established notions of their superiority in colonial accounts, the Brahmins didn't have to contest the 'primitive' claims of the colonial and missionary accounts. Their version of the history of Tulunad as Parasurama's creation, also bringing the Brahmins from outside, thereby establishing their supremacy over the local people was contested by a few historical studies of non-Brahmin upper castes like Bunts. The Brahmin authors' account of the religion of Tulunad described different mainstream faiths like *sanatana dharma*, *Bouddha dharma*, *Jaina dharma*, *Nathapantha* and *Veerashaiva dharma*, relegating the details of *buta* worship into a small paragraph. Their writings 'denied any historicity to the existing deities of the cult' in their imagination of *Tulu Rajyo* (Tulu State). Interestingly, the region of 'Tulu-land'³² was conceptualized as a distinct geographical entity in Brahmin accounts, obliterating any linguistic association with the language of Tulu, which, as Chithra rightly points out, would have kept the Havyaka-Kannada, Konkani speaking Brahmins out of the project of Tulunad regional identity.

Such a sidelining of Tulu language was contested soon by authors belonging to upper caste non-Brahmin groups³³ who brought *buta* worship to the centre of their analytical frame. With a sense of pride, the glory of Tulu way of life, its beliefs, rituals, customs, norms, revolving around the *buta* worship was emphasised. There was a "public

³¹ Discussed at length in K S Chitra's (2010) thesis.

³² I use the nouns 'Tulunad,' 'Tulu-land,' 'Tulu region' as interchangeable throughout the thesis.

³³ Kiile, N. S. and N. A. Sheenappa Heggade. *Prachina Tulunadu*. Mangalore: Universal Printers and Publishers Limited, 1954.

appeal”³⁴ given to expand the material basis of Tulu Nadu’s history by including exclusive Tulu sources like folk songs (*paddana*, *kabite*, etc), and not just confine to literary texts as done by previous authors. The counter-imaginary of the Tulu-land of non-Brahmin authors brought *buta* worship as its signature practice, and “pictured the Tulu history and culture entirely through the Tulu feudal system and through local chieftains and village chiefs” also represented by the parallel order of *butas* (Chithra, 2010: 84) whereas Brahmin accounts interpreted Tuluva history through Parasurama’s myth, and prominent dynasties like Kadamba, Alupa and Vijayanagara. The non-Brahmin caste Bunts not only contested the Shudra identity³⁵ accorded within colonial narratives, but also claimed a higher status for Bunt caste in particular through a rereading of the same mythologies like *Mayuravarma*. To sum up, the ethnic, linguistic identity achieved through Tulu language and its integral practices was brought at the centre of Tulu Nadu imaginary as contrary to the exclusively geographical entity that the Brahmin authors portrayed.

The significance attached to Tulu linguistic singularity soon found its wide base in the activities of a Saraswat Brahmin in Udupi, S U Paniyadi in 1920s and 1930s. Although short lived, the Movement gave rise to a heightened sense of linguistic identity among a certain educated class of Tuluvas. It derived its inspiration, and in turn, contributed to the nationalist demand at a larger level. In his introduction to the *Tulu Grammar* published in 1932, Paniyadi expressed his deep concern for the cause of Tulu language and its bearing on the parallelly prevalent *swadeshi* call. I quote:

I have had a particular love towards Tulu Nadu and Tuluvas since my childhood days... by the year 1916, I had determined to write and publish books in Tulu language... Owing to my love for mother tongue and the political situation around, I resigned from my job,³⁶ and set up business in Udupi since 1923. As there is reciprocity between this (Tulu) and political issues, and due to the insufficient mass and monetary support, although I could not invest more effort and pursue

³⁴ Kille rejected earlier authors like Aigal, Kudva and Govinda Pai whose accounts were based on literary evidences. His ‘Public Appeal’ was published in *Sarvodaya*, a local daily (Chithra 2010: 82).

³⁵ The attempt to debate and negate the ‘Shudra’ identity for Bunts continues to recent times like in the book *Puratana Tulu Nadina Janangala Hinnale mattu Samandhagalu* (2007). There is an attempt to retrieve a Kshatriya past (Adhur, 2007: 25), also replicated in the historical reconstruction of Billawa caste (Kotekar, 2012; Dallodi, 2012; Poojary, 2003).

³⁶ Caught in the fervour of ongoing struggle against imperial rule, the architect of Tulu Movement, Paniyadi resigned from his job at Baroda Library and relocated to Udupi in 1923.

my dreams, my attempt has been to distribute this madness to as many around and to create a like-minded group of people... (3) (*translation mine*).

In his commitment to the cause of Tulu and Tulu language, Paniyadi channelized all his time and resources in introducing multiple modern means like ‘Bharata Vastumandira,’ ‘Tulunadu Press,’ ‘Tulunadu Bank,’ *Tulu Sahitya male*,³⁷ ‘Tuluva Mahasabhe’ and magazines like *Antaranga*.³⁸ Browsing through the letters exchanged between Paniyadi and other members³⁹ of the Tulu Movement, and their debates and interventions in the newspapers of the period— reflect spread of vernacular awareness, and their immense contribution to the sustenance and transmittance of Tuluva linguistic identity. However, interestingly, Paniyadi’s project of Tulu didn’t incorporate the wide-prevalent practice of *buta* worship, and was solely focussed on engendering linguistic pride at the backdrop of *deshi* nationalist sentiments. One of the major contribution of Paniyadi and his associates was to bring the terms *Tulunad*, *Tuluva* more rigorously onto the scene, somewhat decentring the colonial name of South Canara District or Dakshina Kannada *Jille*.⁴⁰ By now, the idea of Tulu as a distinct ethnic, linguistic entity is already established in the minds of educated Tulus, at the same time, completely obliterating the heterogenous voices within.⁴¹

Such a screening out of the inherent subaltern cultural-religious practices of *buta* worship, singing *paddanas*, etc continued during Tulu’s entry into the ‘academic’ domain (in largely Brahmin hands again), particularly through doctoral theses submitted in universities elsewhere in 1960s and 70s.⁴² In pointing at how *paddana* as a genre was never

³⁷ Series of literature published in Tulu.

³⁸ *Antaranga* was a Kannada weekly started by S U Paniyadi in 1938, popularizing him in different places of Karnataka (Hiriyadaka, 1997: 33).

³⁹ Satyamitra Bangera, Polali Sheenappa Heggade, B.M. Tingalaya, D.D. Ashwal, D. Manjappa Hegde, and so on. Reprinted in *Tuluva: A Quarterly Journal of Tulu Language and Culture* Vol 1 No. 4 (1980): 14-50.

⁴⁰ It is also the period, when the Tulu way of pronouncing ‘Tulunad’ gets replaced by the Kannada-influenced ‘Tulunadu,’ to remain as a major way of addressing till this day.

⁴¹ Also elaborated in my forthcoming paper on the first Tulu novel *Sati Kamale* by S. U. Paniyadi (Shetty: 2017).

⁴² To quote a few examples: Gururaja Bhat’s PhD. thesis submitted to Karnataka University, Dharwad in 1965 titled, *A Political and Cultural History of Tulunadu -from Earliest Times upto 1600 A. D.*; K. V. Ramesh’s *A History of South Canara*, his published PhD, submitted to Karnataka University, Dharwad in 1970; Suryanath Kamath’s PhD thesis submitted to Bombay University in 1969 titled, *Tuluva in Vijayanagara Times*; K. G. Vasantha Madhava’s PhD. thesis submitted to Karnataka University, Dharwad in 1976 titled, *A Political History of Canara: 1565-1763*; B. S. Shastry’s PhD. thesis submitted to Bombay University in 1969 titled, *The Portuguese in Kanara*.

documented or presented in its original form but only through mediated practices of literature, music or performing arts, K S Chithra discusses how these genres were “rendered acceptable only through the interventions and negotiations of dominant canons” (109). However, what Chithra – and other scholars who identify the 1970s surge in Tulu consciousness as second/third phase⁴³ after Paniyadi’s movement – is the wide foundation laid by performative practices since 1950s, particularly through highly popular mediums like theatre, film and *bayalata*. What is generally perceived as a period of silence in Tulu awareness (from Paniyadi’s departure to 1970s) was in fact a phase of Tulu emergence through performative practices. In third chapter I have elaborated on how performance precedes and shapes the contours of literary genre, leaving the claims like Tulu emergence was an upper-caste-centric phenomenon as only a partial focus on the issue.

After an intense period of the surge of Tulu sources like *paddana* in popular performative mediums in 1950s and 1960s, a full-fledged Tulu consciousness spreading through institutionalization took place in 1970s, to be continued in similar fashion till this day. The otherwise neglected, undermined, obliterated Tuluva practices like *buta* worship, *paddanas* in their original form,⁴⁴ different dance forms, proverbs, stories, began to appear more and more in print, visualizing a distinct Tulu identity. Audio-visual documentation of these practices, their simulacraic reproduction as distinctly Tuluva on stages at State and national levels began on a wide scale, engendering a homogenous idea of ‘Tulunadu.’ These wide-scale subaltern practices were presented under the category of ‘folk,’ substantiated by both native academics who relegated them in their ‘scientific research’ as well as institutionalizing efforts of largely upper-caste and foreign collaborators to take control of the stage by 1980s. Further in the last quarter of 20th century, native scholarship

A little later, Vivek Rai’s (1985) published PhD thesis submitted to the University of Mysore titled *Tulu Janapada Sahitya* which opened avenues for later researchers to indulge in research on Tulu ‘Folklore’ at a large scale.

⁴³ Padekallu Vishnu Bhatta in his “Prasthavane” or Preface to the book *Tuluvarivar* (1997), classifies four phases of ‘Tulu awareness’ starting with the first intervention of Missionaries here. He identifies Paniyadi’s period as a Second phase, followed by a ‘new wave’ that arrived through Tulu Yakshagana, Tulu theatrical plays and Tulu cinema since 1960s. the fourth stage is identified since 1975 through efforts from different quarters. Bhatta also points at how scholars like Amrutha Someshwara (in his Presidential remarks during the “Akhila Bharatiya Tulu Sammelana” in 1989) and Haridasa Bhatta (in his Presidential remarks during the “First Tulu Sahitya Sammelana,” 1983) have failed to locate the third phase of Tulu movement (1997:11).

⁴⁴ Extensive audio-visual documentation began through the institutional efforts with foreign collaboration like Regional Resources Centre for Folk Performing Arts’ collaboration with Finnish team led by Lauri Honko, resulting in the production of a three-volumed magnum opus on Siri *paddana*.

“typecasts the Daiva cult into a homogenous and idealistic entity” (Chitra 2010: 118) foregrounding it as a singularly Tuluva characteristic, in projecting Tulunad as a distinct entity. By far, performative reproduction of *buta* worship, its audio-visual documentation, its simulacraic representation on ‘unity in diversity’ stages, both at regional and higher geo-political levels, its preservation as ‘folk materials’⁴⁵ for progeny, have remained at the centre of Tulunad articulation. In the process, the heterogenous voices within, the heteroglossic subaltern resistance, the caste conflicts inbuilt, the dominance-exploitation paradigm remain completely obliterated in the entire discourse built around the idea of Tulunad.

In such a context, the emphatic resurgence of cultural heroes like Koti-Chennaya onto the socio-political scene of Tulunad, their elevation from ‘folk’ figures to icons of social mobilization, their expansion from religious deities to unrivalled-humans fighting for social justice gains utmost significance in times of such homogenous conceptualization of the region. While the region definitely could rupture into the nation, the region is in turn challenged by such refigurations of the cultural-political, and it is this resistive grammar of Koti-Chennaya tradition that I turn my entire focus in this dissertation.

Towards a Methodological Search

The deliberate erasures, the masquerading of one with the other, the homogenization of practices under all-encompassing categories of ‘Tulu folk arts,’ ‘Performance Theatre,’ ‘Tulu culture’ or even ‘Karnataka culture’⁴⁶ and so on are also the preoccupations of Tuluva academia, which could, in fact, also delimit a comprehensive understanding of Koti-Chennaya tradition in Tulunad. In my attempt to grasp this most animated of politico-cultural practices of Tulu region, I find the existing theoretical frames offered by Tulu academia insufficient, and hence have to look beyond the parameters within which the distinct Tulu traditions like Koti-Chennaya are perceived so far.

⁴⁵ Very recent to come to my notice is the inauguration of a “Certificate Course in Folk Arts” for the students of Mahatma Gandhi Memorial College of Udupi, in association with the Regional Resources Centre for Folk Performing Arts, Udupi on 28th July, 2017. Interestingly RRC constitutes as one of the three bodies maintained by Manipal University for the preservation of cultural materials – Govinda Pai Samshodhana Kendra, RRC, and the Yakshagana Centre, all at Udupi. Setting up of separate bodies for (perhaps conceptualized as the ‘folk’ and the ‘classical’ arts) through RRC and Yakshagana Centre respectively, in itself, demonstrates the hierarchy conceptualized between these two cultural practices.

⁴⁶ I believe, like Indian nation that cannot subsume ‘local’ practices under one linguistic garb, but as diverse cultural practices within the nation, Tulu materials get projected under the homogenous ‘Karnataka culture.’

True to their colonizing/proselytizing aspirations, both British officials and German Missionaries who initiated the documentation of Tuluva socio-cultural milieu in mid-19th century categorized Tulu deities under the class of ‘devil worship.’ The uncontainable linguistic terrain of Tulunad⁴⁷ was also reflected in its cosmological perceptions, and naturally, it was a matter of great intrigue for the foreigners inhabiting here with different but connected agendas. In their process of classification, categorization, interpretation and other modes of knowledge production about the colonized, Koti-Chennaya were segregated under the class of ‘devils’ or ‘spirits’ who lived (‘fictional’ in their opinion⁴⁸) and were presently worshipped through rituals like *kola*, *agel*⁴⁹ by the Tulu inhabitants. Their orientalist historiography documented about hundred-odd Tulu *bhutas* or ‘devils/spirits’ as part of both creation of local knowledge corpus and also in support of their linguistic/philological activities. *Paddana* of many Tulu deities were collected, translated and published (initially only for internal circulation⁵⁰), including varied versions of Koti-Chennaya and their mother Deyi Baidedi’s. Their understanding of Tulu worship cosmology was founded in the firm belief of its superstitious, fictional base, nevertheless distinguishing it from the elevated Brahminical worship system.

The colonial historiography came to be soon critiqued by native scholars whose ideological positioning within the emerging nationalist sentiments informed their re-interpretation of local cultural practices. I have already outlined about the distinct ways in which native historiography responded to colonial knowledge corpus. There was an attempt to release Tulu deities from the stigma of ‘devil’ worship by a particular section of regional historicization, also projecting it as integral component of distinct Tulu identity. In this period, Koti-Chennaya were projected more as historical figures who walked in flesh and blood centuries ago,⁵¹ and also as figures who were crucial for Billawa caste imaginary. However, the Tulu movement that immediately followed although brought out

⁴⁷ German missionaries wrote about the Tulu language’s shifting texture at every small distance.

⁴⁸ Manner in his note to Temple on 7th June, 1886 attached with his ‘other version’ of Baiderlu/Koti-Chennaya story says, “I think it rather a fiction, but if you wish to have it, too, I will get you a copy of it” (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 362).

⁴⁹ *Nema*, *kola*, *agel*, *tambila* are rites held during annual worship of Tuluva deities. *kōla* or *nema* rituals are conducted every year at family and village levels in different parts of Tuluṇad so as to appease these protecting spirits. Bodily mediations constitute as a major facet during *kola* and *nema*.

⁵⁰ To quote from Manner’s “Preface” to his collection of Tulu *paddanas* in 1886, “...in the interest of the Mission-worker to whom, as afore said, such information is peculiarly valuable, and not with any intent to give wider publication to these stories... strictly prohibiting the loan or sale of such under any circumstances whatever, to the heathen” (Manner, 2008: 6).

⁵¹ Panje (1930), Mangaluru Jarappa (1930).

a series of literary texts under the title *Tulu Sahitya Male*,⁵² Tulu figures/deities remained outside its frame – emblematic of how the non-Brahminical remained outside the modern-progressive yet cultural (read Brahminical) tenets of the embryonic nation-in-the-making.

In the intermediary time period between the nation's formation and the resurgence of Tuluva academia in 1970s, Koti-Chennaya spread as exclusively Tulu materials on performative stage and connected textual endeavours. Expanding into theatre, films, Yakshagana⁵³ and *Bayalata*, they were appropriated into the rise tide of Tulu awareness, perceived primarily as heroic Tulu figures from the past. However, the parallel rise of Tulu academia through its spread into Universities and institutionalised spaces in 1970s resumed the process of categorization, classification and interpretation, albeit founded on different ideological inclinations than the colonial efforts. While most of the first set of (largely Brahmin) scholars researching on 'Tulu history and culture' only reserved a page or two for the discussion of 'Tulu devils/spirits,' the period soon witnessed a wide spread academic research into what came to be popularly called as *bhutaradbane* or the Worship of *Bhutas*. *Bhutaradbane* still remains as the reigning terminology and categorizing register for the worship of hundreds of Tulu deities across, also being projected as the visage of distinct Tulu identity.

The first to reserve an entire monograph exclusively on Tulu oral sources, Vivek Rai compiled the different oral songs in Tulu, with particular attention on Tulu *paddanas*, which he bracketed under the genre of 'folk epics.' Through the efforts of many scholars like Vivek Rai, Susheela Upadhyaya, U P Upadhyaya, and Amrutha Someshwara by now Tulu materials came to be established as 'folk,'⁵⁴ belonging to largely illiterate masses. The sudden disconnection that the register of 'folk' implied between one to the other generation; between the Tulu-teaching parents at home⁵⁵ and the Tulu-professionalizing

⁵² Including texts based in mythologies like *Tulu Kitnaraji Prasango* (B. Parameshwaraiah, 1929), *Tuluvala Baliyendra* (P. Sheenappa Hegde, 1929), and so on.

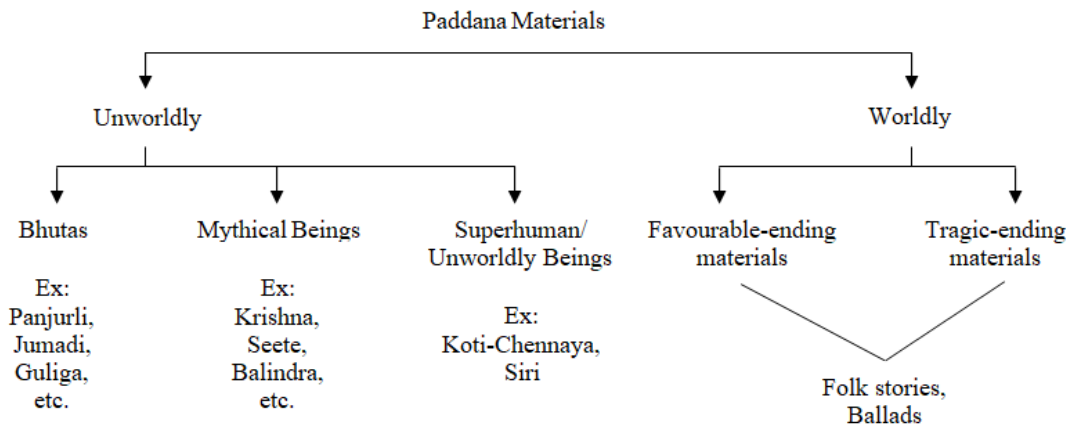
⁵³ "Yakshagāna is a theatrical, dance-drama form that combines, dance, music, dialogue, costume, make-up and stage techniques with a unique style and form. This theatre style is mainly played in the coastal districts and other adjacent regions of Karnataka, and traditionally played from dusk to dawn. Yakshagāna is the recent scholastic name (used in the last 200 years) for art forms known as *kēlike*, *āṭa*, *bayalāṭa*, and *daśāvatāra*: (Shetty, 2013) <http://rupkatha.com/siri-possession-cult/> Web on 5th March, 2016.

(<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yakshagana>)

⁵⁴ Also see *Coastal Karnataka* (1996) for how the category of 'folk epic' was extensively described.

⁵⁵ Vivek Rai dedicates his book *Tulu Janapada Sahitya* (1985) to his parents who taught him beautiful Tulu at home.

literates outside is an interesting shift, however remaining un-theorized/un-contemplated among ‘first’ generation Tulu scholars who banked on the same register of ‘folk.’ In a kind of first re-categorization of Tulu deities after missionary efforts, Vivek Rai classified them under the two main groups of ‘Un-worldly and Worldly,’ further assorting as below:



His categorization was solely based on the origin and characteristics of *bhutas*, as those transformed from ‘animal to *bhuta*,’ from ‘human to *bhuta*’ and from ‘human to *bhuta* due to other *bhuta*’s influence.’ He further listed Koti-Chennaya under the group of *paddana* or ‘folk epics’ narrating “the transformation of humans into *bhutas* through untimely death’ (53), and discusses the twin brother’s *paddana* as an exemplum of Tulu folk epics “delineating the culture of Tulunadu.” Further, focussing exclusively on the ritualistic arena of *bhutaradhane*, Chinnappa Gowda’s doctoral dissertation was an entire monograph based on extensive ethnographic research across Tulunad. Extending Manner, Gururaja Bhat, Rai and others’ categorization of Tulu *bhutas*, Gowda also suggested the possible reclassification of *bhutas* based on the ritualistic patterns (46), mediating languages (47) and the mediating bodies of Nalike/Parava/Pambada castes (48). Based on the foundational notion that *bhutas* are not evil forces as generally conceptualized, but ‘Divine Spirits’ (9), Gowda analyses all facets of *bhutaradhane*, extending the study to its social, judicial, cultural, artistic, folk theatrical aspects, bracketing under the larger disciplinary boundary of ‘Bhuta Cult: Folkloristic Study.’ Koti-Chennaya worship is perceived in terms of ‘ancestral worship’ (184), as ritual memorialisation of the dead ancestors, within his larger focus on *Bhutaradhane*’s ritual platform with its theatrical, artistic, performative dimensions.

Another extensive doctoral research monograph to have appeared on Koti-Chennaya exclusively is Vamana Nandavara's book *Koti Chennaya: Folkloristic Study* (2001). In the opening pages itself, Nandavara distinguishes between Cultural Studies and Folkloristic Study, demarcating the boundaries of the folk within the 'rural,' the 'original culture,' 'limited economical and educational conditions,' 'older community's lower strata in the schema of civilized society' (25) and so on. Despite rendering within the disciplinary concerns of Folklore, Nandavara's book extends the observation into 'Performance Studies' further discussing its historicity, its inter-connection with *kalarī*⁵⁶ practice in Kerala, a comparative analysis with other twin 'cultural heroes' of Tulu region, its emerging popularity in different media, the associated identitarian aspirations, and so on. Although touching different facets of the tradition, Nandavara's analysis needs further elaboration and the necessity to get rid of the disciplinary bounds of Folklore and Performance Studies. The tremendous refiguration that the tradition of Koti-Chennaya has undergone in last 10 to 15 years demands an independent study of its own, and a frame that trespasses the singularly Folkloristic approach of Tuluva academia is a more appropriate entry point into the resistive epistemology of Koti-Chennaya in present context. As already pointed out in the words of K S Chithra elsewhere, caste articulation and caste-based hierarchy and discrimination remain outside the normalizing registers of *Bhutaradhane* or 'folk performances.' Without connecting the question of Koti-Chennaya tradition into the legitimate emergence of caste on public sphere in Tulunad, without incorporating the multitude of memorial modes maintained by the diverse publics of Koti-Chennaya, without taking a paradigm shift away from Folkloristic Studies and Performance Theatre, without contemplating over the increasing historicization efforts of Koti-Chennaya, without analyzing it as discursive, creative epistemology of resistance, any study of communitarian cultural heroes like Koti-Chennaya is incomplete in contemporary academia. With this conviction, I proceed in search of a broader theoretical methodology, first to debate the efficacy/limitations of Subaltern Studies as a frame for my study, followed by a detailed note on the methodological insights offered by memory studies in more recent times.

In his Introduction to *A Brief History of Subaltern Studies*, David Ludden (2002) outlines the trajectory of 'social history' in last four to five decades in the Indian Subcontinent. In locating the historical origins of Subaltern School in 'insurgency,

⁵⁶ Martial art practice and centres in Kerala, similar to *garadis* in Tulunad.

nationalism and Social theory' Ludden draws the readers' attention to "countless studies of societies, histories, and cultures "from below" which have dispersed terms, methods, and bits of theory used in Subaltern Studies among countless academic sites" (3). By 1970s the discipline of history entered into a critical juncture with a rapid decline in the state-centered historical research, and the much discussed histories 'from below' began flourishing. Although still connected with the domains of nation and metatheories of modernity, common people and their politics constituted 'an autonomous domain' (Guha, 1982) giving rise to fragmentary histories of heterogeneous nature. Subaltern, hybrid, vernacular, social, oral histories pervaded the scene in Indian academia, all attempting to replace the mainstream 'history proper' and its preoccupation with the teleologies of nation or other official centres of power. As political nationalism lost its grip on the historical imagination with the rise of the idea of 'imagined communities',⁵⁷ the necessity to re-imagine the professional discipline of history itself took central stage in academic discussions; brought to global attention with the herald of Subaltern Studies School in particular.

This thesis is informed by, while simultaneously undertaking a critical look at, the theoretical propositions of Subaltern School and other alternative histories in analyzing the way past is recollected by the Koti-Chennaya publics in Tuluva context. Furthermore, the vast academic field of memory studies, more vibrant since the last decade of twentieth century, offers the theoretical paradigm necessary in analyzing how the religio-political community imagines public figures like Koti-Chennaya into being, albeit in multifarious modes. Like both social histories since 1970s in India, post-modern critique of history writing and the concerns of memory studies at global level, this thesis critically engages with the dominant historical narratives, challenging their foundational principles in recording a particular diachronic past. I draw from all the above fields of query in challenging the mainstream, Statist notions of history writing, while maintaining a critique of the Subaltern School's approach to re-reading the 'Subaltern' pasts. Although many diverse, alternative ways of historical reconstruction inform my understanding of the Koti-Chennaya tradition in Tuluva context, I rely more on the theoretical tools offered by memory studies in recent decades, and derive from the same in critically engaging with the Subaltern School as well.

⁵⁷ Ludden, 2002: 8

What claimed as a project to rectify the elitist bias in writing the history of Indian Subcontinent, Ranajit Guha (1982) identified the objective of Subaltern Studies was to free history from elitist domination – both colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism. Both these elitist groups, according to early Subalternists, engage in ‘elite politics,’ based on dominant idioms of political practice, and thus, the resultant historical discourse was also completely integrated into the discourse of power. Intervening specifically in the writing of modern Indian history, the Subaltern School participated in contemporary critiques of dominant history and nationalism, and of orientalism and Eurocentricism in the construction of social science knowledge (Chakrabarty 2000: 9). They sought to replace the elitist bias in recording history by writing ‘history from below,’ by bringing to fore ‘subaltern’ resistance to centres of authority, thereby ‘decolonizing the field of Indian history’ (Chakrabarty 2000: 14). They intended to produce historical analyses in which the subaltern became the subject of history, ‘the maker of his own destiny’ (Guha, 1984: vii). This intervention into epistemological practices like history-writing and language of political modernity was heralded by bringing to fore peasant rebellions, by untangling it from the dominant political registers of ‘pre-modern’ and ‘pre-capital.’

While scholars attempted to recuperate the lost subaltern voices by employing methodologies like re-reading the same official materials that constructed an elitist past, some other scholars like Ajay Skaria relied on oral narratives like *goth* of Dangis in western India, writing what he calls ‘hybrid histories’ challenging the mainstream narratives founded on written, official records. As Skaria says *Hybrid Histories* (1999),

tries to explore the distinctive sense of pasts involved in these *goth*, to recognize *goth* as a legitimate way of understanding pasts, to formulate the questions of the professional historian by taking cues from *goth*, and to attempt hybrid, contrapuntal narratives that bring together, necessarily inconsistently and incompletely, the concerns of Dangi narrators and professional historians. (1)

In his ardent pursuit to decentre Europe as sovereign theoretical subject of colonized histories, and identify written-based history ‘as a myth of modernity,’ Skaria analyzes the oral narratives of Dangis, gathering them from the ‘memorial’ faculty of the Dangi people in wilderness. By arguing history as a myth of euro-centric modernity, in other words as ‘mythocentrism’ (1999:10), he introduces “an affirmative discourse centred around memory [as] a far more profound rejection of modernity and western civilization” (12). He reconstitutes subaltern oral traditions – belonging to the other of history, i.e., memory – as

not lack but surplus, ‘a fascinating kind of hybridity’ (14), thus intending to go beyond subalternist histories that are rendered from within the professional discipline of history. In his effort to legitimize oral traditions as ‘hybrid histories,’ Skaria further articulates the coalescing of oral narratives and memory. However, while Skaria and other social historians attempted to bring the oral, the folk into centre of historical investigation as ‘memory,’ this thesis at large, identifies many modes of recollection under the theoretical category of memory, oral narratives just being one. The vast pool of recollective practices that animate the entire Koti-Chennaya tradition in Tulunad are explored within the theoretical rubrics of memory.

While Skaria and Chakrabarty (2000) attempt to decentre the hyperreal Europe from its nodal position in writing history, Partha Chatterjee (2008) collates ‘vernacular histories’ that challenge the space of the colonial modern – characterized by institutions like university, archive, publication media, journals, monographs, footnotes, bibliography – which engendered the new disciplinary practices of modern historiography in South Asia (2008:9). Based on novel, hitherto un-accessed sources and genres in the vernacular like *bakbar* and Persian tradition, memoir, *itihasa*, *vamshavali* traditions, *buranji* manuscripts in Ahom kingdom, folklore and legends, autobiographies and so on, the many vernacular histories already prevalent in the Subcontinent in what Chatterjee calls as the ‘early modern’ ‘period’ is recovered. Such rich field of vernacular histories act as critiques to and exist in their difference from the authorized modern academic history. To elaborate in Chatterjee’s words:

By emphasising the local or the regional, they challenge the national framework of mainstream professional history. By celebrating the living memory of the community, they question the state-centred logic of modern historiography. By indulging in fabulous and the enchanted, they mock the scientific rationality that is ideology of the academic historian. They often give voice to identities and aspirations that find no place within the institutional structures of professional history writing. (2008:22)

As Chatterjee traces a heterogenous formation of several publics and plural rules of discourse in recounting the past in vernacular histories, he also identifies “some rules of evidence, arguments, style, etc” (2008: 22) that pervade such diverse retellings. Thus, while remaining within either textual or oral sources, reliance on evidence, on stylistic rules assume significance in vernacular histories that are collated by social historians at different

points. Elsewhere, Chinnaiah Jangam (2015) critiques the sadness with which Dipesh Chakrabarty talks about a ‘crisis’ in the discipline of history due to the upsurge of mass politics based on partisan passions. Chakrabarty, to quote from Jangam, picked up the same issue of ‘evidence’ when he said, “Dalit historians have not always cared for ‘evidence’ in the way we might expect them if they were our colleagues or students in universities.”⁵⁸ Jangam instead proposes to perceive such awakenings as “a positive sign of consciousness among the marginalized challenging the elitist caste and class prejudices” (67). In line with Jangam’s proposition, I understand the highly flexible historiographical practices of Koti-Chennaya publics in Tulunad not as a ‘crisis’ of the discipline but as a celebration of the past, a reconstruction not based on evidences, but shared understanding of a common history.

Subaltern scholars’ shift of focus towards the heterogeneous discursive formation among the common people, their inclusion of multitudes of materials in recording the past, and alternative historical methods they have proposed through vernacular, hybrid, social, oral histories informs my analysis of one (dis)similar historicizing practice among the ethno-linguistic minority community of Tuluvas in southern India. However, the intricate systems of recollection of Koti-Chennaya past and its translation in every-present after that could be understood better with the theoretical formulations offered by memory studies since last two-three decades. The analytical formulations of ‘mnemohistory’ or the history of cultural memory proposed by Jan Assmann (1998; 2006) in particular could capture the dynamics of indigenous vernacular histories like those of Tuluvas in a more comprehensive fashion. By analyzing memory as a historical project, the diverse pool of public knowledge and the vast modes of memorialisation associated with traditions like Koti-Chennaya could be incorporated and understood in its dynamicity. Further, by always interacting with the continual temporal, memory releases past from the shackles of closure, and thus, opens it up for identitarian movements in postcolonial contexts. The analytical idea of memory and mnemohistory could add to, and take off from the material focus of Subaltern and other social histories, thereby integrating the vast pool of remembrance in its frame of interpretation. At large, such a mnemonic study of the Koti-Chennaya tradition in Tulu nation could provide an empirical illustration to the regionalized attempts of historicization and religiosity, and associated movements towards communitarian mobilization in diverse linguistic and cultural regions across India.

⁵⁸ Dipesh Chakrabarty quoted from “The Public Life of History: An Argument Out of India.” *Public Culture*, Volume 20, Number 1: Issue 54, Winter, (2008) 143–68.

The Memory Framework

Memory studies have seen a great surge in the last two decades in Western academia. The vast theoretical scholarship on memory within sociology, history and religious studies have also been referred to as ‘memory industry.’⁵⁹ However, most of these theoretical reflections on memory have transported the idea of memory from an individual faculty to the terrain of social and collective. A sustained and systematic study of the social dimensions of memory could be traced back to the works of French sociologist of the Durkheim School of Thought Maurice Halbwachs, especially his two books which in English translation are titled as *The Social Frameworks of Memory* (1925) and *On Collective Memory* (1950). Halbwachs argued in the *Social Frameworks* that it is through their membership of social groups that individuals acquire, localise and recall their memories. Any recollection, however personal it may be, finds expression only within the frameworks provided by societies or groups to which that individual belongs. In his later works *The Legendary Topography of the Holy Land* (1941) and *On Collective Memory* (1950) Halbwachs also brought in the publicly available commemorative symbols, rituals, and representations as ‘instruments’ for the sustenance of collective memory. While recollection takes place within the ‘frameworks’ provided and used by the people living in a group, he pointed at the way pasts get reconstructed on the basis of the present. New communities would take up the tradition of older ones and appropriate them according to the concerns, beliefs, aspirations, interests of the present. Memory is thus exclusively a social phenomenon for Halbwachs, and his fundamental contribution of establishing a connection between collective memory, social groups and symbolic commemoration has been a starting point for many memory centric studies to emerge later.

Halbwach’s proposition of memory as essentially a social phenomenon – to be reiterated by most of the memory scholars later⁶⁰ – that evokes collective consciousness, engrained through commemorative acts catapults social groups as active agents onto the stage of recollection. Grounded in Sociology, memory studies emphasise the preeminent role of the collective in reconstructing their pasts, thereby releasing it from the shackles of historical account that is largely an individual enterprise, however shaped by social

⁵⁹ Klein (2000: 127); Novetzke (2008: 26).

⁶⁰ Assmann and Czaplicka 1995; Assmann, 1998; Assmann, 2006; Olick, Jeffrey K. and Joyce Robbins, 1998; Klein, 2000; Srinivas, 2004; Novetzke, 2008, and so on.

conditioning.⁶¹ Further in its capacity to rework history's boundaries, memory could amalgamate multiple viewpoints, numerous material sources, and conjoin the workings of both 'scientific' and 'mythical' in proposing several alternative narratives.

The theoretical rubrics offered by memory studies assists also in diachronically charting out the ways in which a particular moment of past is recollected by social groups, as in the case of Koti-Chennaya past for Tuluva publics. By stretching the contours of historical analysis in diverse ways, memory draws together materials hitherto not recognized even within social histories in India, without delving into the rather compulsory questions of 'historical' versus 'ahistorical' or 'pre-modern' versus 'modern.' The explanatory frame of memory, as discussed at length by theorists, is richer than history proper by incorporating a range of sources of reconstructing their past for Koti-Chennaya publics in Tulunad like written literature, oral songs, 'academic/scientific' research, audio-visual documentation, films and TV serials, unique historical practices like *drushyanajana* and *asthamangala*, sacred geography, extensive monumentalization, and so on. Memory is cognizant of both literate and non-literate recollection forms, and as Novetzke suggests, "When approaching a cultural field largely defined by (a) performance art[s] that exists at the nexus of writing and orality... memory studies can offer novel insights" (25). The abundant and dynamic modes through which Koti-Chennaya are remembered in their entirety by the diverse publics across Tulunad are understood under the explanatory framework of memory in first two chapters of this thesis. Collated under one section, these two chapters dwell on the central question of – Who are Koti-Chennaya? Without setting out to resolve the paradoxes within, or to establish the historical veracity, or on the contrary, negating their historical subjecthood, these two chapters outline the two seemingly contradictory modes of remembering Koti-Chennaya. While these chapters act as supplementary to each other in presenting the imagination of Koti-Chennaya in their recollective entirety among what I call 'Koti-Chennaya publics' in Tulunad, for heuristic purposes, this section depends upon the dialectical treatment that 'history' and 'memory' have received in the hands of a few memory scholars.

The concept of memory was introduced to current debates by way of its opposition to history.⁶² To continue from where we left about Halbwachs' contribution to

⁶¹ The historical accounts on Tulunad in early 20th century described earlier here are examples of how their caste backgrounds largely guided the contours of their historical analysis.

⁶² More in Tamm, 2008. Some scholars have also argued that there is no distinction between history and memory. K.L. Klien in "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse" has observed, "the

memory studies, while extending the locale of memory from its neural to social basis, he also made an important distinction between history and collective memory. The contrast is not as one between ‘public’ and ‘private’ but is one based on the relevance of past to the immediate present. History is the remembered past to which we no longer have a relation—the past that is no longer an important part of our lives—while collective memory is the active past that forms our identities.⁶³ The former is viewed in terms of ‘dead’ and the latter as ‘living.’ He examined the presentist approach of collective memory as it reconstructs the past in the light of the present.⁶⁴ Past is thus a social reconstruction, if not wholly, shaped by the concerns of the present.⁶⁵ While it is true and demonstrated through the pages of first two chapters of this dissertation that memory thrives with fullness of being, dissociating ‘history’ completely from any organic connection with the present is also not a fuller understanding of it. Some scholars like American sociologist Barry Schwartz⁶⁶ in substantiation have pointed at the limitation of such an argument. According to them, presentist approach neglects the continuity of history altogether. History would just remain as ‘a series of snapshots’ without historical continuity if seen as was done by Halbwachs. In partial agreement, thus, not believing solely in the presentist dimension of memory that scholars like Halbwachs highlighted, this thesis maintains a dialectic between history and memory for the first two chapters, chiefly for the analytical edge it offers in capturing Koti-Chennaya memorialization in its agentic vitality. As explicated in the brief, separate “Introduction” to the first two chapters, this thesis as a whole is a project of memory – a cultural history of memory of Koti-Chennaya – wherein historical quest constitutes as one of the many modes of memory. It nevertheless becomes significant to make a distinction between ‘history’ and ‘memory’ since such a clear demarcation is internal to the memorial representation of Koti-Chennaya. The diverse Tuluva publics maintaining the memories of Koti-Chennaya distinguish between the irrational and the scientific in their search for the twin brothers, associating the former

declaration that history and memory are not really opposites has become one of the cliché’s of our new memory discourse” (2000:128).

⁶³ Olick quoted in “Forsaken Monuments and Social Change: The Functions of Socialist Monuments in the Post-Yugoslav Space.” *Symbols that Bind, Symbols that Divide: The Semiotics of Peace and Conflict*.

Eds. Scott L. M. et. al. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2014: 24.

⁶⁴ Beliefs, aspirations and interests of the present shape our views of the past. To give one example from Halbwachs’ work: Different pilgrims of different periods constructed the images of Holy Land differently.

⁶⁵ Coser in “Introduction” to *On Collective Memory* (1992)

⁶⁶ *ibid*

with ‘common, folk, emotional people’ and the latter with more ‘objective, informed’ engagement. Thus, the first two chapters are demonstrations of how the Koti-Chennaya publics in Tulunad, more so since last 6 to 7 years, have been imagining the figures of past like Koti-Chennaya in bi-dimensional modes – in what we could see as the two analytical categories of history and memory. These two analytical modes in turn constitute as varied recollective practices under the larger theoretical category of memory.

The first chapter demonstrates how what I call ‘history publics’ come together to unearth and establish the historical veracity of the iconic figures of Koti-Chennaya, relying heavily on the disciplinary concerns of history proper like objectivity, scientificity, rationality, verifiability and so on. It is a chapter that largely presents the historicization of the twin brothers as it is carried out by the history publics, chiefly through textual efforts, but also augmented by unique magico-astrological practices like *drushyanjana*, *asthamangala*, and visual standardization through pictures, miniature models, topographical quest and by weaving history as ‘textures’ into literary productions. Through discourse analysis and ethnographic observation, this chapter assembles the historicization endeavors of Koti-Chennaya publics, which, by means of its own rhetorical logic, suggests a shift from unstructured/unfounded ways of remembering the brothers. In the process, history publics also posit Koti-Chennaya as exclusively human, but elevated in the common man’s psyche as divine, thereby re-conceptualizing the figures in radically different fashion. Although not placing within or as a contrast to the larger academic conceptualizations of Koti-Chennaya, the history publics which has come to fore since 2-3 decades, pose a clear critique also to the different analytical frames of ‘folklore’, ‘folk’ religion, ‘devil worship’, *bhutaradhane*, ‘Daiva cult’, that has so far pervaded the Tuluva academia at large. The first chapter ruminates over these developments at ethnographic level, leaving the causal connection and its implication within identity articulations in recent years in Tulunad to the next section comprising third chapter, and continued in the conclusion of this thesis.

In continuation of the first chapter, the second undertakes a detailed study of the way Koti-Chennaya have been remembered by what I call ‘memory publics’, in what appears as rather loosely structured modes of recollection. This chapter presents the imagination of Koti-Chennaya as it pervades in the larger Tuluva psyche, reaching beyond the grids that dictate scientific search like that of history proper and ‘history publics’ of previous chapter. This analysis delves into diverse materials like what I call ‘edifice-myths’ or what is termed *sthalapurana* (Amin and Kotian, 1990), popularly prevalent anecdotes

about the twin brothers, their itinerary beyond life-death schema, the creation of 'Songlines' (Chatwin, 1987) through dreaming and so on – largely of which, in fact, gets denied by the 'history publics.' These constitute a repository from the shared pool of knowledge, complementing the historical search for Koti-Chennaya, in my attempt to present their imaginative-mnemonic entirety. The memory public is unconcerned with the grids of professionalized historical quest, and is rather structured on the creative potentialities of human imagination, making connections possible across any horizon. In the process, I have also demonstrated how the anecdotal reminiscence of memory publics internalizes the logic of social justice, couching egalitarian discourse in figurative, creative language. Multifarious figments from people's recollective faculty come together to construct an image of Koti-Chennaya who ensure complete surrender from all quarters, at the same time, thwarting the rigid contours of life-death, of human-non-human, probable-improbable. In addition, Koti-Chennaya thrive in the memories of people through their extra-human existence, and principally as deities worshipped across sections. Their deified self pervades the memory of people, re-embodying them year after year through bodily mediations.

While both identifying the lacuna and in continuation of Halbwachs understanding of collective memory, Connerton (1989) diverts his attention towards the 'acts' of transfer that make remembering possible for multiple social groups. According to him what is lacking in Halbwachs' formulations on collective memory is an enquiry into the symbolic rituals in which the collective memory is inscribed and conveyed, in and by the society. The chief question raised in his work is, "how is the memory of groups conveyed and sustained?" "where this phenomenon, social memory, can be found to be most crucially operative?" (1). As an absolutely new or radically different social order is impossible to imagine, Connerton argues that the recollected knowledge of past is 'conveyed and sustained' by two important factors: ritual performances and bodily practices; by bringing recollection and bodies together.⁶⁷ He connects memory to bodily inscriptions through a series of logically connected entities:

⁶⁷ The two exemplifications drawn by Connerton to illustrate his arguments are: the ceremonial trail and execution of Louis XVI and the adoption of certain styles of clothing in the French society. An attempt was made to alter memory and society through these two modes. But in order to alter an existing system, the society had to recall the past; ritually re-enact it in order to sustain or discard it. This is precisely what happened during the execution of Louis XVI. "The ceremony of his trial and execution was intended to exorcise the memory of a prior ceremony. The anointed head was decapitated and the rite of coronation ceremony revoked... one rite revoked another." (9) Through historic examples like change in clothing styles of French people, thereby rejecting the previous bodily behaviour; ceremonial

If there is such a thing as social memory, I shall argue, we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies; but commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative only in so far as they are performative; performativity cannot be thought without a concept of habit; and habit cannot be thought without a notion of bodily automatisms. (4-5)

Thus, bringing body to fore as a central mnemonic device for social groups to recollect their past is another of the insights from memory studies that assists in understanding the shaping of historical consciousness among subaltern communities, which are ‘often cast in religious terms and symbols’ (Novetzke: 24). Similarly, focussing on the changing dimensions of Karaga ritual in Bangalore city in Karnataka, Smriti Srinivas (2004) points at how memory plays a key role in the performance-centred practices like Karaga. The somatic/bodily mimesis involved in such ritual practices necessitates memory which plays a crucial role in sustaining the tradition.

Likewise, embedded within their symbolic religious cosmology, Koti-Chennaya are re-presented during annual rituals of *nema*, both externally invoking their selves as well as internally *becoming* their selves. The present bodies become *lieux de memoire*, or sites of memory, both a repository of memory as well as the embodiment of it in the present. Koti-Chennaya thus pervade the ritualistic scene, as figures of the yesteryear recollected through rites of memory, at the same time presenting themselves on bodies that shift between heterogenous spatio-temporalities through the night. The intricate ritual nights commemorating Koti-Chennaya somatically – thwarting the homogenous spatio-temporal search of history publics – is a part of chapter two that elaborates on the more animated arena of memory publics, deriving its impetus from shared pool of socio-religious knowledge. The field of memory thus harbours body as a chief recollective medium for diverse social groups, positing it as legitimate material in subaltern historical consciousness, also thereby bringing interconnected religion at the centre of subaltern resistive cosmology.

In his essay on the preoccupation of ‘religion’ in Subaltern Studies collective, Novetzke rises the pertinent question of –if the Collective has theorized the shaping of religion itself, instead of religion being activated in the name of subaltern subjectivity alone. In the course he suggests that, “Subaltern Studies is hindered in theorizing about

trial and execution of Louis XVI, thereby publicly rejecting the monarch system; newly-invented festivals during Hitler’s regime in Germany, etc Connerton exemplifies how past dictates present perceptions and actions. And, how memory sustains society through repetition and transmission.

religion as a site for historical agency by an antagonistic dialectic in modern historiography between religion and history” (102). He quotes from Chakrabarty at length to discuss how he grapples with the possibilities and limitations of ‘religion’ as an epistemological category in the context of historiography (107). At a point in *Provincializing Europe* while discussing Guha’s study that suggested ‘peasant-but-modern’ sphere as one that integrates the supernatural with the machinations of politics, Chakrabarty wrote disapprovingly that,

Historians will grant the *supernatural* a place in somebody’s belief system or ritual practices, but to ascribe to it any *real agency in historical events* will be [to] go against the *rules of evidence* that give historical discourse procedures for settling disputes about the past.⁶⁸ (*italics mine*)

Used in its positivist sense alone, for Chakrabarty history cannot ‘invoke the supernatural’ like Santals in explaining/describing an event, and thus religion that comes in many roles within the Collective still is “the site of the explicable, a problematic location for any historian” (Novetzke, 2006: 125). As has already been discussed elsewhere in this Introduction, despite bringing religion, unwritten sources into the fore, Subaltern Studies’ emphasis on ‘rules of evidence’ and an underlying limitation assigned on religious expressions makes it impossible to look at vernacular historicizing practices like *asthamangala* and *drushyanjana*⁶⁹ with its analytical frame alone. In uniquely magical, astrological, religious practices like *drushyanjana* what I have called both ‘history publics’ and ‘memory publics’ come together in historicizing the heroes, further substantiated by the grammar of scientificity through calendrical cross reference. On such a metahistorical platform, the publics of faith commingle with publics of scholarship in fixing a tangible, locatable historical identity to Koti-Chennaya. Memory in its un-antagonistic and non-reductive association with religion, returns the complete agency of historical consciousness to the marginal groups, in whichever mode they adopt, without external mediations in bringing ‘history from below’ to fore. Instead of *representing* the underlying historical sense, memory could assist in understanding the shaping of such consciousness, and thereby also do away with the dichotomous categories of the subaltern and the elite⁷⁰ altogether.

⁶⁸ From *Provincializing Europe* quoted in Novetzke, 111.

⁶⁹ astro-magical practices to determine past, present and the future. I discuss this at length in Chapter One.

⁷⁰ Chinnaiah Jangam (2015) critiques the analytical categories of ‘elite’ and ‘subaltern’ of Subaltern social histories as fraught with two fundamental problems: First that they do not represent the social and historical reality in terms of caste, class or community, and secondly that, “an experience of social

Historical awareness and the need to recuperate their lost pasts – either as experiential trauma like in slave castes in Kerala (Mohan, 2015) or as creative rereading as in Thass (Leonard, 2017), or reinventing their folk figures (Jangam, 2015) – is gaining heightened significance for different identity movements within the Indian Subcontinent. Reinventing their tradition and/or rediscovering a particular moment or figures from past have been the chief characteristics of identitarian assertions around, and it is this emergence of different identity concerns in its interaction with historical moments that I turn my attention in the next section of this thesis including third chapter. The Third chapter is also, like the first section, preceded by a separate “Introduction” contextualizing caste structure and relations in Tulu region, which assists in understanding the significance of Koti-Chennaya within emerging Billawa caste mobilization in the region. I trace a trajectory of how caste relations are largely founded on agrarian organization between different social groups, loosely categorised under two groups of landowning ‘upper’ castes and the tilling, labouring ‘lower’ castes. I foreground the emergence of Koti-Chennaya on both print and performative public sphere as a result of its interaction with rising linguistic and caste awareness in Tulu region. In this light, memory’s fixated connection with identity articulations makes it congenial as a method in studying different mobilizational politics, all the more significant in the context of the Subcontinent which has given rise to identity assertions routed in cultural rediscovery.

Its conviction that memory is a social phenomena,⁷¹ and that it ‘connects’/binds social groups or communities within, at the same time, in reverse, this socialization process helps people to remember⁷², is an insight that could further inform our understanding of identity articulations on more broader planes. The social and cultural determining of memories renders mobilizational concerns as a shared act, a space of interaction wherein communities are shaped and reshaped incessantly. Jan Assmann discusses the “simultaneously collective and “connective” bonding nature of memory” as *re-membering* and *re-collecting*, evoking the idea of putting ‘members’ back together and re-collecting things dispersed (Assmann, 2006: 11). Thus the temporal dimension of pastness that energizes community-hood and puts them back together could well be understood

being” and caste as an experiential social reality is not captured through such spurious categories. “they neither reflect the experience of being elite or subaltern nor apply to any living social beings” in Jangam’s words (65).

⁷¹ Halbwachs (1950) 1992.

⁷² Jan Assmann in *Religion and Cultural Memory*. 2006: 4.

through the frames of memory that establishes heterogeneity of both spatiality and temporality. By making the past amenable to suit present needs, in whichever shape the community envisages, memory is freed from the shackles of closure. The memory of Koti-Chennaya, mediated and transmitted through texts, body, visual representation, filmic renderings, performative practices, ritualistic arena, astro-magical recreations, and so on come together to evoke a sense of community-hood, particularly among the Billawa caste in Tulu region, and I focus on caste-based memorialisation of the twin heroes in third chapter of this thesis.

Beginning with the textual reproduction of Koti-Chennaya narrative since mid-19th century through the 20th, I focus on the representation of Koti-Chennaya in different genres like translated stories, Yakshagana episodes, as reference texts for theatrical productions in third chapter. With particular focus on decades from 1950s, it traces the trajectory of how Koti-Chennaya are deployed for two major identitarian concerns – emerging Tulu consciousness since the creation of majoritarian Kannada State in 1956, and the rise of Billawa caste mobilization since 1970s. Although a kind of decade-wise identity concerns are marked in the beginning, it is only to roughly highlight the preoccupation of these dynamic decades. At the same time I suggest that both Tulu and Billawa caste identity articulations are also inseparable from each other, particularly since the most epochal decades of 1980s for Billawa caste in Tulunad.

To begin with, the third chapter periodizes – only as a heuristic guide – the decades between 1960s through the 1990s as two interconnected stages, first focussing on the rise of what is called as ‘second wave’ of Tulu linguistic resurgence in coastal region, followed by 1970s as a period making space for the emergence of caste as a legitimate issue to grapple with in the public domain. While not delving in detail about the Tulu Movement since 1950s and 1960s, this chapter undertakes a study of the deployment of Koti-Chennaya during Tulu linguistic re-articulation through textual and performative practices. It traces the trajectory of how Koti-Chennaya were in the first set of ‘exclusively Tulu materials’ to enter into theatre and later film productions. Through a reading of the textualized theatre productions, it demonstrates the conceptualization of Mother Tulu in the period and how Koti-Chennaya were conceived as her proud progeny. In the course, I also emphasise how performance preceded textualization efforts during the early stages of ‘second wave’ of Tulu nationalism, thereby highlighting the centrality of performance in Koti-Chennaya mnemonic tradition. The appropriation of Koti-Chennaya into the

nationalist agenda of print platform *Rashtrathana Sabitya* is also discussed so as to show how different quarters of affiliation found the twin brothers suitable in their project of identity assertion. Discussion on the nationalistic/sub-nationalistic consumption of Koti-Chennaya is followed by analysis of how Billawa caste emerged onto the socio-political scene of Tulunad in 1970s, and how the same twin heroes soon came to characterize and represent the community in question.

The third chapter then moves on to scrutinize Koti-Chennaya as narrative of resistance, encoding anti-caste grammar into the memory of the twin brothers. Land that constitutes as central metaphor for the conflict between two sides of domination-subordination relationship within the narrative is analyzed at length, followed by how the same component of land figures as a catalytic agent during the emergence of caste in public domain in 1970s. The ascension of Koti-Chennaya on public sphere is foregrounded at the backdrop of the turbulent times since 1960s when Land Reform Acts were implemented serially across the State. The worsened agro-based caste relations in Tulu region is also hypothesized as one of the reasons behind the rise of Koti-Chennaya as exclusively Billawa icons in the immediately following decades. The extensive spread of worship centres of Koti-Chennaya called *garadi* and the structures' caste configuration is paid attention to as an elaboration of the ideas of land-centric *recognition* (Taylor, 1992; Jangam, 2015) and *reconciliation* processes internal to their memorialisation. This is followed by a discussion of how caste is either evaded or masqueraded within the narrative, while on the other hand, the Billawanness of Koti-Chennaya comes to fore in an unprecedented scale since late 1980s. Continually altering caste-relations in the region is interwoven with discussions on the narrative, land and *garadi* structures across Tulu region in chapter three.

In continuation, the third chapter focuses on different institutionalized practices since 1980s and 1990s that foreground Koti-Chennaya in more standardized fashion, resulting in a homogenous imagination of the tradition in question. I dwell in detail on the activities of an institute called Shri Brahma Baidarkala Samskrutika Adhyayana Pratishtana Kendra set up in 1989 for the exclusive study of Koti-Chennaya, phrasing it also within the larger Tuluva cultural identity. I then provide an account of the way the memorialisation of Koti-Chennaya has spread into various media, gaining all the more prominence on web and social media platforms since 2010 onwards. The intertwining of Statist/official memories with that of the public memory of the twin brothers in Tulunad lends legitimacy to their memory at the official levels, and I delineate the way in which State has been

participating in this memory formation, closely linked with spreading Billawa caste influence. The turn of present decade also witnesses an increased attention on Billawa historiographical efforts, also attempting to present Koti-Chennaya as exemplary human figures of Billawa caste; not as *butas* but *satvika* or benign beings (different from the large pantheon they have been a part so far); as belonging to Pandya/Alupa royal ancestry and so on. The thesis conclusion takes off from Chapter One in theorizing the inevitability of communitarian historiography for marginalized social groups, and discusses how diverse epistemological practices, thwarting the grids of professionalized history, are adopted by the community in their search for authentic past/history. In the course, I also analyze Koti-Chennaya within the conceptualization of “insider culturalist-rebelist models” of D. R. Nagaraj (2010) and the idea of “Social Banditry” of Hobsbawm (Novetzke, 2008) in understanding Koti-Chennaya’s significance for Billawa caste assertive articulation. Briefly I dwell on the re-conceptualization of women within the Koti-Chennaya tradition, underlining how women remain at the periphery of this otherwise resistive tradition. Finally I draw a parallel between the two icons of Billawa caste – between Koti-Chennaya and Narayana Guru⁷³ – and attempt an understanding of how and what moment of history necessitates the emergence of muscular warriors like Koti-Chennaya as icons for a community that already has figures of social justice like Narayana Guru in its communitarian imagination? Thus, the Conclusion at the end theorizes the role of the religious within the political in Indian Subcontinent, thereby expanding the contours of the political itself.

The ‘Publics’

In general, the ideas of memory and public run through the pages of this entire dissertation. It begins from the premise that “the production of collective memory is a crucial element in the construction of identity and the reproduction of the large-scale ‘imagined communities’ that constitute modern nation states.”⁷⁴ Koti-Chennaya in Tuluwad assist in the figuration and refiguration of imagined communities at multiple levels - that of caste Billawas; ethnic, linguistic Tuluva community at large; and at times, also being appropriated into the larger Kannada sub-national and national communities. While the continual re-presentation of Koti-Chennaya is understood within specific contexts of Tuluva history, this thesis, in the process, discusses the formation of many imagined

⁷³ Narayana Guru (1856-1928) was a Social Reformer from Kerala.

⁷⁴ Michael Dietler, 1998: 84.

communities, or what I call ‘publics’ of different kind. It demonstrates how the interactive play of interpretations around Koti-Chennaya, in turn, gives rise to diverse kinds of social collectives, or ‘publics,’ who sustain the memory of Koti-Chennaya, albeit in dissimilar modes. For heuristic purposes, I make distinction between diverse publics like ‘history publics’ ‘memory publics’ ‘publics of belief/faith,’ ‘caste publics,’ ‘publics of scholarship’ etc, all coming together to constitute the public memory of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad.

Jurgen Habermas’ influential theory of public sphere has been a reference point for scholars looking at distinct cultural-political identity formations, like the rise of Hindi as a bearer of Indian values in early 20th century in Francesca Orsini’s (2002) study of Hindi Public Sphere in northern India. Other scholars, even if expanded or challenged the Habermasean concept of the Public Sphere, it still remained as an inescapable concept to begin with. Habermas’ definition of ‘public sphere’ argued that “‘private citizens [came] together as a *public*’ to discuss matters of ‘public concern’ or ‘common interest’ and to criticize and put pressure on the absolutist state,”⁷⁵ in an intermediary sphere of social institutions like the club, journals and periodicals. It’s a domain of public life in which public opinions are formed, in response to the State, chiefly through literary and print activities. However, Nancy Fraser (1990) and other scholars later⁷⁶ challenged the exclusionary public sphere conceptualized by Habermasean ideas. According to Fraser, writing from feminist perspective, the exclusionary bourgeoisie public sphere as described by Habermas was “not adequate for the critique of the limits of actually existing democracy in later capitalist societies” (76). In her critique of the Habermasean concept from the perspective of Black Public Sphere, Catherine R. Squires (2002) points at the scholars⁷⁷ emphasis on ‘multiple publics’ differentiated by group identities like gender, ethnicity, sexuality, race or nationality.” She asserts how, “The move away from the ideal of a single public sphere is important in that it allows recognition of the public struggles and political innovations of marginalized groups outside traditional or State-sanctioned public spaces and mainstream discourses dominated by white bourgeoisie male” (2002: 446). Therefore, different scholarly responses to Habermasean Public Sphere already challenged and highlighted the limitations of his concept, to be reiterated also in the Indian

⁷⁵ Habermas quoted in Orsini, 2002:7.

⁷⁶ Catherine Squires (2002), Sandria Freitag’s *Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (1989) in Raminder Kaur (2003), Raminder Kaur (2003).

⁷⁷ Squires mentions C. Calhoun’s *Habermas and the public sphere* (1992) and B. Robbins’s *The phantom public sphere* (1993).

context by scholars like Sandria Freitag (1989), Raminder Kaur (2003) and Christian Lee Novetzke (2008).

Analyzing the emergence of constructed communities and their responses to a centralized State in colonial Uttar Pradesh, Sandria Freitag (1989) discussed about the ‘realm of the symbolic behaviour’ that “impinged simultaneously on two worlds – that encompassing activity by locally constituted groups, and that structured by state institutions.”⁷⁸ Colonial policies were confronted through the activities of what she called ‘public arenas’ which even accommodated the locally specific popular culture. However, Raminder Kaur (2003) in her analysis of the performative politics associated with Ganesh Chaturthi in Maharashtra expressed her reservation about Freitag’s idea of the ‘public arena’ which appeared to maintain a distinction between *realpolitik* and symbolic politics, correlating with the dichotomous categories of mind-body, rational-irrational, high-low, etc. In her effort to do away with such distinction within the political culture of local groups, Kaur discussed about the “intertwined zone of the media-oriented public sphere and the activist public arena” including festivals like Ganesha Chaturthi (16) under the name of “public field.” The integrative spaces of public field encompass both media networks and collective performative, religious arenas; both ‘symbolism’ of religion and the ‘pragmatism’ of debate (17). Thus, when it comes to capturing the identitarian, resistive language of the local groups, the necessity to incorporate the cultural, the religious under the field of the “public” was felt in scholars in the Indian Subcontinent context, albeit termed differently – as ‘public field’ or ‘public arena.’ Further, Novetzke’s (2008) conceptualization of ‘public memory’ in his analysis of Namdev’s tradition in Maharashtra offers insights highly useful for present study, by suggesting an interactive dynamics between memorialization processes and the publics that participate in such recollection. His emphasis on the ‘public’ as “a mode of social cohesion, temporally bounded, and united in its aim toward affective display” (14), as relying on collective agreement, as possessing inward circularity, an internal system of self-reference, etc (13-23) further sharpen the theoretical expansions offered by earlier scholars like Freitag and Kaur. All the above theorizations of the multiple publics constituting also as counterpublics (Squires, 2002) inform my understanding of diverse publics within the Koti-Chennaya tradition in Tulunad.

⁷⁸ Sandria Freitag (1989) quoted in Kaur, 2003: 15.

The idea of ‘publics’ used in this thesis doesn’t carry the connotations of a state-centred activity or doesn’t depend upon the apparatuses of modernity like the mass media, print and the nation alone. It is not just set within the designated modern period of nineteenth century to the present. Instead, it refers to the “social unit created through shared cultural phenomena, and reinforced by demonstrations in public of these shared cultural phenomena (Novetzke, 2008: 13). It is a mode of social cohesion existing solely by affective display. It carries fluid boundaries, open for any member to walk in or out anytime. ‘Publics’ are formed when an individual willingly becomes a social entity, and on the other hand, it is this collective agreement which makes people believe they are already a part of it. This public is reliant on some ‘embodiment’ in order to assert its presence. A kind of social agreement, an interaction by circulating a common stock of memory and mnemonic practices and, participating in a group is a prerequisite for public formation in predominantly mnemonic traditions like Koti-Chennaya.

The chief distinction between ‘history publics’ and ‘memory publics’ that I mark through the first two chapters is also reflective of the way the public memory of Koti-Chennaya as a whole is reconfigured in recent years. Such a hermeneutic categorization is adopted within the public memory of Koti-Chennaya itself, drawing a clear distinction between the two dichotomous imagination of the twin brothers. These categories of ‘history publics’ and ‘memory publics’ are also cut across by both caste publics and the publics formed for Tulu nationalism. Magico-astrological settings like *drushyanjana* bring together both history publics and the ‘publics of faith’ or memory publics, significantly overlapping in their intentional drives. Further, publics of faith turn into history publics in their historical quest, making it possible for any believer/researcher to reconstitute the tradition on continual basis. With performance and public demonstration of faith in Koti-Chennaya as central characteristic of this tradition, the configuration and reconfiguration of ‘publics’ constitute as a major component, and thus, through the pages of this thesis, I discuss the participation of multiple ‘publics’ albeit bound together by memorial dimension. While these ‘publics’ could not be understood only within the parameters of a state, civic centred activity, the idea of ‘popular’ could also not capture the religio-political, communitarian potentialities of Koti-Chennaya tradition. My understanding of the publics figuring and refiguring the tradition of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad is highly indebted to the existing scholarship on both publics and memory, and I firmly believe that the shifting of focus away from singular public sphere to the dynamic field of ‘multiple publics,’ even

within one particular resistive tradition like Koti-Chennaya could offer better insights into vernacular politics in Indian context in particular.

Thus, Koti-Chennaya publics is a collective that comes together to create an image of the past centred around the figures of Koti-Chennaya. This public is founded on a shared memory that is at the same time open to revision, contestation, alteration, expansion and deletions. The multiple publics within the larger collective of Koti-Chennaya publics that I describe through the pages of this thesis are bound by the urge to remember, albeit on their own terms. The memory of Koti-Chennaya, on the one hand, is constituted by public's sense of togetherness, by a sense of collectivity, and on the other it is this collectivity that further constitutes the memory that sustains Koti-Chennaya imaginary. Memories both affect publics and are effected by the acts of publics. The tradition of Koti-Chennaya as a whole undergoes continual transformation and refiguration by the participation of multiple publics within, at the same time these multiple publics are fastened by the single drive to remember, to sustain the memory of Koti-Chennaya. Nevertheless, the public memory of Koti-Chennaya is also characterized by erasures, silencing, sidelining, and I return to this underside of Koti-Chennaya public memory at the end of this thesis.

Also, a prerequisite for the formation of publics of Koti-Chennaya is the public demonstration of memory or memory's public appearance. Almost always, memory of Koti-Chennaya needs to be instituted in the public, amidst the presence of audience and memorializing publics together. The memories are scattered on landscapes, as circles in the midst of the road, as *garadis* or places of collective worship, as magico-astrological search in the presence of hundreds of people, as rituals in the presence of devotees, and so on. Bodily re-presentation/invocation of Koti-Chennaya year after year on the ritual arena is simultaneously a public manifestation of the brothers' memory, and a personification of Koti-Chennaya in the public. Thus, the publicness of Koti-Chennaya memory is also its constitutive prerequisite. These publics not only produce a religio-cosmic imaginary of Koti-Chennaya, but they also emerge as cultural public sphere intervening into the discourses of modernity – of social equality, justice and democratic principles. While they are a 'public memory' and a 'public field' simultaneously, they are also a 'public sphere' participating in the language of political modernity.

SECTION-I

INTERSTITIAL SPACES OF MEMORY:

BETWEEN *MĀYO* AND *KĀYO*; BETWEEN MEMORY AND HISTORY

Section-I: Introduction

Landscapes of Framing

He, reduced by his certainties. She, augmented by her ambiguity.

- Arundhati Roy (*The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*) (2017)

The two chapters under this first section are an attempt to introduce the figures of Koti-Chennaya as maintained within the memory of Koti-Chennaya publics in ‘Tulunad.’ They survey the communitarian efforts to present them as figures of ‘history’ first, and then move on to map out the image of Koti-Chennaya as preserved within the heterogeneous pool of public knowledge, which I term as ‘memory.’ Although the methodological tools of ‘mnemohistory’ and memory guide the contours of this entire thesis, for the purpose of presenting the image of warrior-deities as sustained by the diverse publics in Tulunad, I adopt a dialectical difference between history and memory only in these introductory chapters. While the conceptual categories of history and memory assist in tracing the legacy of Koti-Chennaya, both among what I call ‘history publics’ or ‘publics of research’ overlapping more often with the ‘memory publics’ or ‘publics of faith,’ they also open up a discussion on the diverse epistemological practices at work among South Asian publics at large.

Since its emergence as a significant analytical discourse in social sciences in particular, social memory studies have dealt extensively with the complex interrelationship between history and memory. Connected intimately with the postmodern critique of homogenizing historical linearity, a large number of memory theories have highlighted the contrastive characteristics between memory and history as suggested by the foremost social memory theorist Maurice Halbwachs (1950). Recent memory scholars like Pierre Nora (1989) and Jan Assmann (1998) also have emphasised the epistemological differences between history and memory. Olick and Robbins (1998) discuss about the erosion of distinction between these two concerns, and how competing pasts and historical legitimacy claims have proliferated, especially with the widespread interest in identity formations. While scholars like Ajay Skaria (1999) have perceived memory as a legitimate material for different histories – here ‘hybrid histories,’ – a few others have refused to perceive

memory as anti-historical, relativistic, or subjective¹ alone. With the emergence of postmodern concerns with ruptured sense of continuity and multiple temporalities, memory has been brought to fore as a counter to dominating historical practice, carried out by a group of elite few.

While this thesis is highly informed by social memory theorists who posit cultural memory as a counter epistemological practice, the thesis as a whole maintains that positivist history is one of the techniques of memory. It agrees with Peter Burke who understood ‘History as Social Memory’ (1989), further underlined by Marek Tamm (2008) in his analysis of the construction of Estonian nationhood under the conceptual idea of ‘History as Cultural Memory.’ Instead of perceiving them as diametrically opposite categories or even interchangeable with one another, this thesis understands history-writing as a mode of cultural memory, gaining particular significance under the communitarian identity concerns of a social group in Tulu Nadu. In this socio-political mobilizational context, I use Jan Assmann’s definition of cultural memory as comprising “that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose ‘cultivation’ serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image” (1995: 132). Whereas I use the idea of presentism,² and past-continuous associated with social memory by Halbwachs, I refrain from understanding history as a total dissociation from the past, carrying no significance in present lives. By translating history as a form of cultural memory, I also argue how the act of historicization gains relevance for the communities asserting their identity, and how history becomes an act of creative resistance, like other modes of re-collective practices in the Koti-Chennaya tradition in Tulu Nadu.

However, the two chapters organized under this Section, make a distinction between history and memory as two contrasting modes of remembrance in imagining the figures of Koti-Chennaya into existence across Tulu region. It maintains the academic categorization between ‘scholarly’ publics who resort to historical discovery of the figures of yesteryear, as against publics of memory who sustain a heterogeneous reservoir of knowledge, unconcerned with the grids of history proper. Through this introduction to the

¹ A. Huyssen’s *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (1995) referred in Olick and Robbins, 1998: 120. Huyssen is quoted as saying how “the shift from history to memory represents a welcome critique of compromised teleological notions of history rather than being simply anti-historical, relativistic, or subjective” (1998: 120).

² “In literary and historical analysis, “presentism” is the anachronistic introduction of present-day ideas and perspectives into depictions or interpretations of the past.”
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presentism_\(literary_and_historical_analysis\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presentism_(literary_and_historical_analysis)) Web on 22nd July, 2017.

two chapters, I highlight the conceptual distinctions I mark between history and memory in representing the image of Koti-Chennaya as maintained by the memorializing publics. Nevertheless, the historical representation of Koti-Chennaya along with their image in memorial faculties of people, constitute as parts of the intricate systems of memory sustained and transmitted by the publics of memory in Tulu vernacular region.

A normative use of the categories of history and memory with distinct set of objectives and method, could contribute in discerning the communitarian practices of remembering the past. It could further initiate a discussion on the discursive epistemological interventions of the heterogeneous publics at work in post-colonial societies. Analyzing one such field, I now demonstrate how such a modern distinction between history and memory is prevalent in the communitarian imagination of Koti-Chennaya in Tulu-country.

While lamenting the disappearance of experience, tradition, customs and the ancestral under the weight of historical sensibility, Pierre Nora in his seminal essay “Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire*” (1989) underlines the fundamentally opposite characteristics of history and memory. Like many memory scholars, Nora also points at memory as a connective to the present whereas history dissociates itself by merely representing the past. His idea of memory as life, eternally open to evolution, nourishing recollections, and ‘willed’ into being by erecting what he calls *lieux de memoire* or sites of memory is an idea that has had tremendous significance in memory studies since the publication of his article. Although I do not agree with Nora in associating memory with ‘prehistoric’ and ‘tradition’ or ‘ancestry,’ and the materialization of memory in the form of sites as a nostalgic act, Nora’s notion of *lieux de memoire* as contrary to historical objects, and as ‘pure, exclusively self-referential signs’ (23) is a very useful insight in understanding the memorializing dynamics of Koti-Chennaya publics. By possessing the characteristic of self-referentiality, the sites of memory created, sustained and transmitted by the remembering publics remain outside the archive of traditional historiography. To quote Nora, “Although these objects must be grasped in empirical detail, the issues at stake are ill suited to expression in the categories of traditional historiography” (24). Memory’s archive thus doesn’t rely on external evidence, but constitutes as a self-referential source. They possess symbolic power as the inchoate repository of historical memory.³ Further, unlike history that claims a correct, conscientious representation of past

³ Novetzke, 2008: 28

events,⁴ memory invokes an emotional representation, making connections easily, also presupposing a shared social knowledge. On the other hand, history as invoked by what we could call ‘history publics’ of Koti-Chennaya appeal to a rational adjudication of evidence, albeit discursively produced. The archive of indigenous science, sacred geography, literary historicism and textual materials are deployed by the ‘history publics’ in order to reconstruct a historical imagination of the twin heroes. To present a historical view of Koti-Chennaya for the ‘history publics’ is to establish an accurate view of the past, delivered as answers to the three chief ‘Wh’ questions of positivist history: When? Where? and What? History relies on scientificity, however discursive (as it is further corroborated by materials from the realm of the sacred for Koti-Chennaya publics during specific modes like *drushyanjana*). History controls time, dissociates itself from the present and attempts an accurate view of the past. Memory, as against, restores the connection with present, it thwarts the grids of spatio-temporality, it makes free connections, it traverses easily in the realms of life and life-after, it exhibits itself in the fantastic of dreams. Memory thrives on the emotional ‘truths’ of believers, whereas history seeks a language of authentic historiographic exploration. And more importantly, history attempts to dissociate itself from the sacred in general (except on occasions like *drushyanjana*), orchestrates secularity and rationality, whereas memory many times finds its archive in the religious. To quote from Nora,

History, because it is an intellectual and secular production, calls for analysis and criticism. Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history always prosaic, releases it again (1989: 8-9).

However, although the deep connection between memory and religion is uncontested since Halbwachs⁵ time, the total dissociation of historical search from the sacred material fails to grasp the historicizing pursuits of Koti-Chennaya public in its entirety. While memory definitely derives its sustenance from the religious, the historical image of Koti-Chennaya as presented by the ‘history publics’ also amalgamates the sacred material as corroborating evidence in its historical pursuits. Likewise Halbwachs’ claim that history is a

⁴ Novetzke, 2008: 39

⁵ Halbwachs’ later work *Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land* carries (1941) carries a detailed account of how religion and social memory are intertwined in the case of how Gospels are held by a common group as a collection of memories. One example from his works is the way images of the Holy Land undergo shifts in different times so as to suit the needs of the pilgrims. The question as to how religion could be studied from the point of view of social memory is discussed in detail in the article, “Religion and the Study of Social Memory” (2011) by Tuula Sakaranaho.

remembered past to which we no longer have a relation — the past that is no longer an important part of our lives, doesn't hold good for the history publics of Koti-Chennaya. Despite reaching after corroborating materials and attempts at closure, the significance of 'history' in their present communitarian lives is uncontested. The act of etching their history in fact becomes an act of creative resistance.

Furthermore, as outlined in detail in the Introduction to this thesis, memory is a social phenomenon, a collective act as emphasised by Maurice Halbwachs (1950). The re-collecting social groups inscribe memories on landscape as Halbwachs explained, and on bodily/somatic selves as demonstrated by Connerton (1989) in the context of French Revolution. Extending the artefacts of symbolic codifications of memory, Jan Assmann (1995; 1998; 2006) brought to forth the archive of cultural traditions like, myths and images, sagas and legends preserved in the psyche of people. While Halbwachs ensured the journey of memory in academic discourses as a social act, works like Connerton's and Assmann's situated it in the symbolic realms of body, myths, legends and other cultural materials. Memory thus gets inscribed and etched on multiple cultural objects, incorporating many diverse modes of recollective practices in its purview of inquiry. Unlike history that relies on the archives of textual, topographic and other tangible sources, memory encompasses any mode of remembrance, without reaching after facts or rational logic. Unlike history that attempts to arrive at accurate homogenous time – incontestable, fixed 'time' of past – memory makes 'disjointed' connections, always dwelling in heterogeneous, relative times. Unlike history proper, memory is not organized in linear mode but a diachronic connection between multiple points. Memory makes connections freely, interacts with or counters associated memories; it escapes the grasps of closure and certitude. Memory is a collective activity, at the same time accommodating any adaptation, mutation, or translation to suit the needs of multiple publics within. It cuts across time, thwarts spatio-temporality, and is solely founded on the logics of self-referentiality. Memory traverses after death, recreates an after-life, collapses the divides of animated living and destined dying.

Unlike positivist history which is merely inscribed either on textual materials, inscriptions or other written sources, memory is etched on diverse range of mediums including somatic, oral, performative, memorial, topographic, virtual, dreams and fantastic, and so on. As Smriti Srinivas (2004) has emphasised through *smriti*⁶ tradition – and the

⁶ Focussing on the changing dimensions of Karaga ritual in Bangalore city in Karnataka, Smriti Srinivas points at how memory plays a key role in the performance-centred practices like Karaga. The somatic

similar category of *nenake*⁷ in Tulu – memory or recollection is chiefly performative. It is only through public performance of the memorized that such traditions are sustained and relived in every spatio-temporal present. Unlike history proper that has hitherto hierarchized only the written or printed, memory is inscribed chiefly on bodies of the recollecting publics. Mnemotechniques bring to fore the materiality of body in willing a particular yore into existence in an always continuous past.

With this brief conceptualization, in the next two chapters I demonstrate how such a modern dialectic between history and memory assists in fully presenting the purportedly 16th century heroes Koti-Chennaya, and how such a distinction is maintained within and by the diverse publics of Koti-Chennaya in the Tuluva context. While the ‘history publics’ and ‘memory publics’ internally challenge each other in representing the twin warriors, together they critique the mainstream historiography that excludes diverse indigenous practices of recollecting their pasts.

mimesis involved in such ritual practices necessitates memory which plays a crucial role in sustaining the tradition. She refers to the textual distinction maintained between the terms *smṛiti* and *shruti* in classical Sanskrit literature, and highlights how the *smṛiti* (“that which is remembered”) texts are seen as historical and social products as against *shruti* that are divinely inspired and revealed to sages (2004: 27). Further, the similar word *smarana* or recollection and memory, with its practice-dimension assists her in analyzing Karaga performance as a mnemonic in South India. The following definition of *smarana* offered by Srinivas also could sum up the category of *nenake* or *smarane* maintained by the publics of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad.

The practice of *smarana*, more than *smṛiti*, is embedded in many regions in recitations, oral narratives, and musical, mimetic, devotional, and performative practices where one individually or collectively remembers and invokes the name or form of the divine, a historical narrative, or the deeds of ancestors, deities, paradigmatic individuals or mythic heroes (2004: 27). Thus the practice-aspect of *smarana* conceptualizes the multiple performative dimensions in the veneration of figures and their cults in India.

⁷ ‘*Nenake*’ in Tulu is to reminisce, to remember. Unlike only reciting of *shruthi*, *nenake* implies a memory in its totality; a thing willed into memory.

Chapter-I

Discursive Epistemology: 'History Publics' of Koti-Chennaya

With a history of print textuality¹ which is less than two centuries old in Tulunad,² the textual materials centred on the figures of Koti-Chennaya are largely literary in nature, both in Tulu and Kannada, with a few texts appearing in English as well. In my attempt to reclaim the image of historical Koti-Chennaya as posited by the inscribing publics, whom I call 'history publics,' I first set on to analyse the texts claimed by authors as 'researched' materials, most often apposed by the describing term *adhyayana* or study. With a large section of the ethno-linguistic community of Tuluvas remaining primarily oral-performative in their expressive medium, their participation in print technology has been minimal, at least up until the 1970s. Thus, 1970s and 1980s marks as a transitory period in the history of writing in Tulunad, the social, political and economic context of which would be discussed in detail in the third chapter. The above same period also marks a shift among the 'history publics' of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunadu, as a large corpus of both literary and the few available texts of 'study' are produced after the same transitory period. I undertake an analysis of such "research" works first to delineate the sense of history incorporated within them, and demonstrate how they are not relying on a larger communitarian acceptance of the subjects recalled, but appeal to a rational adjudication of

¹ Recently a few palm leaf texts (ex: *Shri Devi Mahatme*, *Shri Bhagavato*) have been discovered that are written in what is called as 'Tulu script' and in Tulu language. A host of writings in Kannada and other languages were found in the region in pre-colonial period, chiefly produced as administrative records and as records maintained by *mutts*.

² Introducing print in 'Tulunad' in 1841, the Basel Missionaries were the first to print and publish books in Tulu language, along with books in Kannada, English, German, Sanskrit, Tamil, Malayalam and Kodava languages. Early on during their venture on the Indian soil, the Basel Missionaries had realized the necessity of producing literature in Tulu language which "in spite of the want of a written literature, their language shows no signs of disappearing" (Caldwell quoted in R. C. Temple, 2008: 1) However, for the first time Missionaries relied exclusively on the Kannada script instead of the Tulu-Malayalam script adopted so far. Different hand outs, school text books, Biblical tracts, translation of *Bible*, *Pilgrim's Progress* and other catechistic materials necessary in both Schools and Christianizing activities were printed in large number in Tulu language. A Letter Press was set up in 1851 in Mangalore, further accelerating the publication of Biblical materials in Tulu. The Basel Mission Press at Mangalore was hailed by the Madras Government as unequalled for beauty by any other press in India.

While a lot of proselytizing and catechist texts were produced in Tulu in the second half of 19th century, the missionaries also displayed an enormous interest in the local religious practices of *Bhuta* worship ("devil worship") and associated oral narratives called *paddana* or *sandi* in Tulu. Their initial production of Biblical texts was thus immediately followed by compilation and commentaries on the oral, religious practices here.

evidence, to the proofs of veracity, in summoning Koti-Chennaya as authentically historical beings from a particular period in the past.

Historical Quest -- Textual

A historical search for the twin heroes Koti-Chennaya began in the second half of 1980s, finding institutional support in the body of “Shri Brahma Baidarkala Samskrutika Adhyayana Pratishtana” (Centre for the cultural study of Brahma Baidarkala³) (from now on BBSAP) registered in the year 1988. A team of young men consisting mostly of Billawas and largely funded by Billawa caste-men in Mumbai set out to explore the historical evidences for Koti-Chennaya oral narrative. What began as their search for the 66 *garadi* (ancient martial art centres, now turned into worship places) mentioned in the oral song of Koti-Chennaya – in itself an act of finding tangible structures corresponding with the mental text of bards – culminated in identifying more than 200 *garadis* spread across Tulu belt, also in the publication of a first-ever monologue reserved exclusively for historicizing the community heroes. A kind of first full length foray into the discourse of history in relation to Koti Chennaya, through the process of evidential search, authors of the monologue *Tulunada Garodigala Samskrutika Adhyayana* (A Cultural Study of the *Garadis* of Tulunad) (1990) also discussed about the historical existence of Koti-Chennaya and the lack of available textual sources to establish it. Without being a part of the debates of subaltern history that was gearing up in the same period, authors Amin and Kotian identified the “historical absurdities” that characterize the discipline of history which evades the “historical life event” of Koti-Chennaya who have remained eternally in the psyche of Tulu community (1990: 17). As the recorded, proper history doesn’t incorporate the figures of Koti-Chennaya in its purview of observation, Amin and Kotian rely on literary historicism and archival evidence to arrive at a temporal speculation. Tulu scholar Vivek Rai’s (1985) hypothesis about Koti-Chennaya’s purported existence as being definitely after the fall of Vijayanagar empire in 1565, therefore sometime in the 17th century is believed as a convincing date by Amin and Kotian. Further they rely on the year of Enmuru Battle (in which Koti-Chennaya breathed last) as recorded in the first ever prosaic rendering of Koti-Chennaya by Panje Mangesharaya in 1930.⁴ Panje’s text recorded 1695 AD as the year of Enmuru battle, which the authors of *Tulunada Garadigal*

³ Koti-Chennaya are popularly addressed as *Baidarlu*, and ‘Baidarkala’ is a derivative from the same.

⁴ Panje’s text was also the first retelling of Koti-Chennaya story by a ‘native’ after missionaries and the British officials.

Samskrutika Adhyayana believe was based on a palm leaf text found by Panje.⁵ So, the earliest search for the historical Koti-Chennaya relied partially on the hard evidence of written political history, further substantiated by the scripted source of a palm leaf supposedly found by Panje. However for further validation, Amin and Kotian propose the ‘modern scientific method of carbon dating’ as the necessary tool in determining the heroes’ life-dates (1990: 15).

Diverging from what has been proposed in preceding texts, in the only doctoral research⁶ on Koti-Chennaya available so far, Vamana Nandavara (2001) identified 16th century as the era of Koti-Chennaya’s existence. In his book *Koti Chennaya – Ondu Janapadiya Adhyayana* (Koti Chennaya – A Folkloristic Study)⁷ Nandavara relied on aspects like *paddana*’s (oral songs) origin, political scenario as recorded in professional history of the region and topographical markings to hypothesize the temporal existence of Koti-Chennaya. Available materials on the history of Tulunad and other cultural artefacts figure as proper archival materials in his search for the historical Koti-Chennaya. His deductive reasoning is centred around a figure called Kunzhi/Pili Kunzhi (a Muslim General in the army of Enmuru Ballala⁸) who is mentioned in an *inscription* as recorded by D G Nadka⁹ (2001: 117). With inscripional and other sources, Nandavara identifies mid 16th century as the period in which Koti-Chennaya lived and demonstrated their valour. His ‘decision’ about the purported period of Koti-Chennaya is arrived at as quoted below (110):

“The downfall of Vijayanagara empire	1565
Death of Pili Kunzhi’s father	1565
Pili Kunzhi’s birth	1565
Pili Kunzhi was around 25 years of age when he arrived at Enmuru in search of his master. Therefore, the year in which he came to Enmuru	1590

⁵ I am yet to come across reference to Panje’s palm leaf source in other text.

⁶ His doctoral dissertation was submitted to Mangalore University in 1994.

⁷ This book offers a comprehensive ‘folkloristic’ study dwelling especially on its oral and ritual manifestations in the last two decades of 20th century.

⁸ One of the three local rulers mentioned in Koti-Chennaya song. The Ballala (King) of Enmuru region, Deva Ballala, patronizes the heroes, in turn benefitting from their martial art skills in protecting his boundary. Koti-Chennaya died in the final Enmuru battle between Deva Ballala on the one side (with Koti-Chennaya) and the Ballalas of Permale and Panja on the other.

⁹ A retired teacher and agriculturalist who is interested in folk history, according to Nandavara. Interesting to see how such ‘amateur’ accounts are used in constructing a ‘history.’

(1565+25)

Enmuru Battle had already taken place by then. About five years may have passed since the battle. Therefore, the period of Enmuru battle is (1590-5) 1985

According to oral history, Koti-Chennaya were 30 years of age at the time of their death in the battle. Therefore, the year of their birth is (1585-30) 1555

The number of years since Koti-Chennaya's birth till today (2000-1555) 445

Along with the above quoted reverse-chronological inference Nandavara proposes, he also relies on the approximate period of *paddana* creation as determined by scholars like Vivek Rai (1985) and P. Gururaja Bhat (1975) as late 16th or 17th century. It helps him in situating the twin brothers definitely prior to 1650 AD, and better perhaps in the first half of 16th century.

A cursory view of the three communitarian 'histories' written about Billawa caste, all published in the last 16 years of 21st century, search for an image of historical Koti-Chennaya, and at the same indulge in rationalizing discussions, further adding to the necessity of presenting past in a correct and conscientious fashion. The first of these three texts, Babu Shiva Poojary's *Billawaru: Ondu Adhyayana* (Billawas: A Study) published in 2003 is a compilation of articles, all focussing on different facets of the Billawa community, attempting to arrive at an understanding based on sources available. In also the first attempt to present an elaborate glorious past for the Billawa community, dissociating it from the stigma of toddy-tapping, untouchability and poverty, Poojary undertakes a rigorous linguistic analysis of the language of oral songs, a study of the inscriptions and written histories available to establish a ruling class, warrior status to Billawa community until 13th-14th century AD. It is in this context that the figures of Koti-Chennaya are located at the historical juncture of 13th or 14th century when Billawa significance in the annals of history started declining according to Poojary. To quote him: "13th-14th centuries were a period when the Billawas were fighting to retain their social status, position and self-esteem. The story of Koti Chennaya oral narrative is a representation of one such struggle" (2003: 134). While Poojary's analysis marked a clear deviation from the earlier historical positioning of Koti-Chennaya in 16th or 17th century, lending an added antiquity of at least two to three centuries, it also opened up an elaborate debate on some of the 'ahistorical' elements in Koti-Chennaya narrative, and their association with a glorious

Billawa past. The socio-political implications of such aggrandizing discourses in the context of contemporary identity movements in India would be discussed in detail in the third and fourth chapter. Meanwhile, the historicizing efforts of ‘history publics’ of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad by positing Koti-Chennaya and associated figures in an authentic manner is observed in the three communitarian ‘histories’ produced in 21st century.

Both Babu Shiva Poojary (2003) and Dejappa Dallodi (2012) in their works on the community of Billawas dwell in detail on the figures of Koti-Chennaya, more often arriving at an image of the icons through surrounding ‘historical’ characters. Both these researchers identify themselves as different from the folk narrator or people of faith, emotion who couch the story of Koti-Chennaya in the language of the supernatural or unworldly. In their search for the historical through scientific truth and evidence, both researchers make a distinction between *aitihya* and *itihasa* (roughly, legend and history), and how the popularly prevalent *aitihya* couldn’t be accepted in scientific spirit. There is a persistent binary emphasised between the historical and legends, between the seen and unseen, between the internal and external sight, between the scientific and spiritual, between the folk and conscientious, between the truth and fictitious, and so on. This distinction in the way Koti-Chennaya are remembered, as pointed out by the community researchers, follows in line with the heuristic dialectic of history and memory identified for analysis in this chapter, and among the Koti-Chennaya mnemonic publics in Tulunad at large.

Disagreeing with all prior suggestions about the purported period of Koti-Chennaya’s existence as either 16th or 17th century, Poojary and Dallodi push it further back into at least two centuries. For both these authors, the identification of exact period of Koti-Chennaya assists in arriving at historical truth outside the narrative in question: while for Poojary, it is the larger debate about Billawas’ glorious antiquity and their eventual downfall, for Dallodi it is the search to establish Koti-Chennaya’s antiquity over two other twin heroes of Billawa community, Kanatabare and Budabare. Whatever may be the context in which they undertake a search for the accurate period of Koti-Chennaya, both of them negate certain episodes popularly prevalent from the narrative of the heroes, in their pursuit to present them rationally with plausible evidences. The rational adjudication that these scholars seek use diverse referents (discussed below), nevertheless arriving at the same point of history as the life period of Koti-Chennaya.

In his attempt to reclaim a glorious, affluent, ruling-class identity for the Billawa community for more than a thousand years in the Tulunad, Poojary (2003) rereads the available inscriptions and engages in a close reading of the terminologies used in *paddana* - the former inscriptional source used in positivist histories and the latter oral source deployed in alternative histories¹⁰ in recent decades. His trajectory of the glorious Billawa era in the first thousand years in Tulunad and its eventual downfall after the advent of Jain rulers (Hoysala, and later Vijayanagara) in 12th and 13th century places the warrior figures of Koti-Chennaya in the moment of transition between those two eras of rise and fall. The twin heroes epitomise as symbols of rising resistance against the feudatory Jain rulers who refigured the socio-religious foundation of the Tulunad after 12th century AD. His historical finding through inscriptional rereading established Billawas as the native rulers of Tuluva land, descendants of the great Pandya kings in South India, and rulers of Tulunad under the Alupa kingdom for more than 1000 years. Reclaiming of a celebrated, affluent warrior past for the cause of a caste identity assertion of Billawas will be dealt in detail in the third and fourth chapter of this thesis.

The discursive formations of a vernacular community, especially through the modern exercise of historicizing a past, involve an appeal to diverse sources, hitherto unrecognized within the disciplinary grids of history proper, but deemed scientifically rational by the participating vernacular publics. Similarly, Poojary also presents a historical image of the warrior figures by appealing to a set of evidences, ingrained in as diverse materials as inscriptions, oral songs, sculptures and so on. He challenges the already available period of Koti-Chennaya by invoking materials hitherto not applied, and concludes that they belonged to 13th century. The major sources he deploys in arriving at the historicity of Koti-Chennaya are: firstly, the small idols of 'Muslim kids,' perceived as servants, on either side of Koti-Chennaya statue in many *garadis* across Tulu region. He identifies these 'kids' as foreign, of Greek or Arabic origin, bodyguards employed by the Pandya Kings in South India, which is further corroborated by an ancient 2nd century AD inscription read by Dr. Hultzch and further analysed by early 20th century Kannada scholar Govinda Pai,¹¹ according to Poojary. With the help of Pai's reading of the inscriptional source, Poojary also arrives at the conclusion that Alupa rulers in Tulunad employed such Greek or Arabic bodyguards in their court. And, as he has already demonstrated a

¹⁰ Like Ajay Skaria's work on Dangis, termed as *Hybrid Histories* (1999) analyzing *goths* or oral narratives as a primary material in reading the history of Dangis.

¹¹ Source unknown in this thesis.

genealogical connection between Alupa rulers and Koti-Chennaya in previous pages, Poojary arrives at the summary that Koti-Chennaya belonged to the period when Alupa rulers were just losing their power in the region, due to the advent of Jain kings.

Secondly, Poojary undertakes an archaeological understanding of the female statues found in the *garadis* worshipping Koti-Chennaya, and proposes how the absence of nose-studs on these female statues indicate that they belonged to pre-14th century era. He mentions that the foremost instance of nose-studded female statues is found in the Padmanabha Temples of Kerala in 14th century, and thus concludes that Koti-Chennaya belonged to 13th century, the period of huge socio-political, cultural transformation in the Tulu region.

While through different inscriptional evidences Poojary recasts the Billawa social group as warrior class that ruled Tulunad as Alupa Kings, this proposition also necessitates, and in turn, feeds into re-presenting Koti-Chennaya as belonging to the lineage of Alupas of Pandya origin. His visual ethnographic observation of the luxurious clothing of Koti-Chennaya and their mother Deyi or sister Kinnidaru (similar to clothing pattern of the prosperous as recorded by the travellers in Vijayanagar kingdom), along with, the evidences integrated into the oral narrative, provide sufficient evidence to the historiographic search of Poojary in establishing the royal ancestry of twin heroes. He not only implies that the Permale Ballala (who raised Koti-Chennaya and eventually killed them in Enmuru battle in many *paddana* versions) is not a Jain¹² ruler as is generally believed but a Billawa of Alupa lineage, and also establishes that Koti-Chennaya and Ballala belong to the same ancestry of Arasu Ballala or Ballala lordship. It is the supernatural section of Kenjava birds and their two lost eggs¹³ that connects the heroes and Ballala as siblings, and Ballala's palace as the maternal home of Deyi. Such incorporation of the 'supernatural' in creating a past underlines the community's selective appropriation of 'folk' elements in reconstructing a particular glorious history, while negating the similar supernatural in other instances.

¹² One of the prominent, land-owning castes in Tulu region.

¹³ The Kenjava birds lay two eggs, first leading to the birth of Deyi Baidedi (Koti-Chennaya's mother), and the other to the birth of Gundadabbe Deyyar and Ekana Saler when the egg fell on ground and broke into two pieces. Deyyar and Saler together later produced Bamalla Kumara or Lord Berma, and later Permale Ballala. Following this logic, Poojary argues that Deyi Baidedi is Ballala's aunt, therefore turning Koti-Chennaya and Ballala into siblings. Later writers like Dejappa Dallodi refute such miraculous origin associated with Deyi.

A series of ‘facts’ from the narrative are highlighted to argue that Koti-Chennaya belong to the Kingly Ballala clan, and that they were entitled to a legitimate claim over Ballala’s palace. With the oral narrative as reference text, Poojary raises a series of questions like: Why did Ballala send a royal carriage to fetch Deyi for his treatment? Why was Deyi unaccompanied by either husband or brother in her journey to the palace, resembling an ‘in Tulunadu among Billawas’ ritual of pregnant woman travelling to her natal home alone before delivery? Why did Deyi deliver Koti-Chennaya in the interiors of Ballala’s palace? Why did Ballala promise a share to her children when they grow up? And, why were the last rites of Deyi performed in the palace again? Further, by raising questions like: Why were Koti-Chennaya so closely associated with the palace during their upbringing? With what authority could the heroes demand Ballala’s sword later? etc, Poojary appeals to the rational attribute of the readers in arguing for the royal ancestry of Koti-Chennaya along with their familial bond with the ruler Ballala. He concludes, “The above examples express a meaning that Koti Chennaya not only belonged to the Ballala clan, but also the legitimate authorities of the palace” (121). While invoking the logical connections woven into the story of Koti-Chennaya, Poojary negates a different set of logics arrived at by Vamana Nandavara about Deyi’s birth. He, and later Dejappa Dallodi too, denounce Nandavara’s claim that Koti Chennaya were perhaps the illegitimate children of Ballala from a servant woman Deyi. By establishing a natal home connection between Deyi and Ballala, and by demonstrating the affluence of Billawas (thus all Billawa characters in the narrative) in Alupa period, the above scholars engage in a historiographical endeavour for communitarian claims. Interestingly, all the questions raised by Poojary above places Koti-Chennaya within the social-familial organization of matriliney.¹⁴ To quote from Poojary, “Female members of a family conducting all sacred rites is a custom followed among the matriarchal families in Tulunad” (120). This connection with matriliney gets erased in later accounts like Dallodi’s.

As noted above, while the absence of nose stud in the female statues – which the author argues are statues of warrior-widows or *sati hodavaru* – in *garadis* and the presence of ‘muslim’ bodyguards on the sides of Koti-Chennaya offers evidence in establishing their warrior-royal lineage, Poojary also draws readers’ attention to the ‘Bhimarjuna’ (Bhima and

¹⁴ Castes like Bunts, Billawas, Mogaveeras in Tulunad have traditionally been the followers of matrilineal social system. The property is inherited by the female line through what is called as *Tammale-Aravatta Katt* (Maternal Uncle-Nephew Law). Maternal grandfather or maternal uncles or brothers manage the ancestral property that in principle belonged to the female members of family. Deyi’s and thus Koti-Chennaya’s claim over Ballala’s position is founded in the matrilineal principles of inheritance.

Arjuna of *Mahabharata* story) design etched on their backs during first shaving ritual described in the oral song as emblematic of the Alupa Kings belonging to Pandya/Pandava clan. The practice of carving Koti-Chennaya wooden statues from the wood of Jack tree which, according to Poojary, ‘belongs to the warrior caste’ also is presented as a source to ascertain the *kshatriya*/warrior status of Koti-Chennaya.

Interestingly, while the matrilineal social organisation of Tulu people in general and Billawas in particular, comes into Poojary’s assistance in establishing Koti-Chennaya as legitimate custodians of the Ballala’s palace (by presenting Deyi as the daughter of the palace, and thus its proprietor), the dilemma of evidential analysis remains unresolved. The reconstruction of history deriving from the matrilineal structure of Tulu people where daughter remains the possessor of natal property with her maternal uncle or brothers as its executors catapults Deyi from an ordinary medicine woman to the heir of manorial palace. It hypothesises the court conspiracies which might have ousted her from legitimate claim over maternal property. Ironically, the same matrilineal claim that could reinstate Kinnidaru (Koti-Chennaya’s sister) in the Ballala palace, much more rightfully than her brothers, is never brought into focus in the entire analysis. Kinnidaru’s minimal appearance in the narrative, and when appears only as a means to narrate Deyi’s superhuman origin (at least in the version Poojary uses), thus supplying evidence to reclaim an elaborate royal lineage, escapes the rational, evidence-based claims founded on the principles of matrilineal pattern of inheritance. Both the female leads, Deyi and Kinnidaru, are deployed as instruments in attesting the heroes claim over a regal present, thus remaining only at the periphery of reclaiming a masculine past by caste-history-publics. The female characters outside the narrative, women’s statues in the *garadis*, are also presented as widows (richly dressed sans the wedded symbol, nose stud) standing as proof of the warrior status of Koti-Chennaya. The female faction within the world of Koti-Chennaya remain at the margins, only as auxiliary in claiming a masculine warrior past.

Nevertheless, while drawing a familial relationship between the Ballala and Deyi, and thus establishing Deyi’s ancestral linkages to a royal Kingdom, Poojary still maintained the significance of matrilineal social fabric as a functional principle within the Billawa community. Inversely, Dejappa Dallodi’s (2012) historiographical search for Koti-Chennaya, Deyi and other figures puts away all matrilineal linkages drawn in Poojary’s conclusion, and founds his “scientific quest for truth” (2012:120) within the tenets of patriarchal ideals. Unlike Poojary, Dallodi doesn’t refute the Jain-caste affiliation of Permale Ballala, he doesn’t establish a natal connection between Deyi and Ballala, and his

search for the historical Billawas also doesn't present them as the ruling Alupa class of the glorious Pandya ancestry. Instead, Dallodi locates Lord Shiva as the originator of Billawa social group, and that Guha, Shabari and Ekalavya figures of *puranic* past are the ancestors of Billawa tribe in ancient times. Re-searched with the chief aim of "preserving the Billawa tribe's ancient founding culture at the verge of extinction," (4) Dallodi recasts the chief figures of Koti-Chennaya narrative as indubitable reference points to understand the culture and attributive refinement of Billawas since ancient times. In deploying the figures of Koti-Chennaya and Deyi especially as metaphors of Billawa virtue, Dallodi slips into the tenets of patriarchal discourse. Presenting them as epitome of character consequently necessitates presenting them as clearly belonging to the Billawa caste. And, it is this indispensability that leads Dallodi to 'search for truth' (121) with the evidence of written and oral sources, especially into the origin of Koti-Chennaya's mother, Deyi Baidedi.

In ascertaining a cultured, virtuous, valorous past of Billawa community in a spatio-temporal construct of the 'distant past,' Dallodi embarks on a factual search, excluding the folk, the impossible, the emotional, the superstitious and the religious from his search for the truth. First of his attempts to eliminate the 'unworldly' creation of folk raconteurs is to undoubtedly institute the Billawa origin of Deyi Baidedi. His attempt to rectify the popularly held perception that Deyi was born out of the egg of Kenjava birds and that she was raised as a Brahmin, is a part of the effort to establish Koti-Chennaya's uncontaminated Billawa origin. Towards this, Dallodi favours the textual evidence of Panje Mangesharaya's early 20th century prose version of Koti-Chennaya story, against most of the available oral versions narrating her miraculous birth. By selectively deploying the textual sources of missionary, colonial and Panje's version of Koti-Chennaya narrative, Dallodi establishes that Deyi was one of three children of a Brahmin woman (unnamed and shrouded in mystery) and Birmanna Baidya, a wealthy Billawa. Deyi was sent away to the Brahmin priest Pejanaka's household as their adopted daughter, who was later left in the forest by Pejanaka, making sure she is found by her own brother Sayana Baidya. By keeping the unworldly out of rational search for the real, and by accepting the "scientific truth that no child could be produced outside the man-woman physical union" (118), Dallodi discards the Kenjava bird-Deyi episode, and thereby the trope of almost-always miraculous birth of the virtuous.

As noted already, unlike Poojary's analysis, Dallodi sets his focus exclusively on drawing an elaborate account of the virtuosity, valour, grandeur and cultured life of Billawa ancestors, especially by situating the caste heroes at its centre. Consequently, his search for

the paradigm of female morals recasts Koti-Chennaya's mother Deyi as distinctly Billawa in origin with a wealthy spouse, and a pinnacle of virtue, chastity, fidelity and conjugal ideal. The warriors' sister Kinnidaru is also depicted as an epitome of female virtue (highlighted in the episode where she suggests the unfamiliar guests to occupy seats outside). However, Dallodi's remodelling of the female figures, in fact, is an exemplar for the patriarchal extrapolation of otherwise indeterminable female figures of the 'folk' world. In demonstrating the clearly human, Billawa origin of Deyi Baidedi, Dallodi relies heavily on the kinship patterns of patriarchal social structure. Unlike Poojary who retained the Kenjava egg-Deyi-Ballala connection to launch Deyi's claim over her maternal household with Ballala, Dallodi reclaims Deyi as a Billawa woman exclusively through the paternal link of Birmanna Baidya, a wealthy Billawa (who shared a cordial bond with the Pajanaka Brahmin couple). The historical recalling of a caste-woman is thus not founded on the major caste principle of matrilineal kinship pattern. To quote Dallodi: "The truth that she was a Billawa maiden is convinced as her father was a Billawa. It is a worldly practice that the caste, clan of any human is determined by his causative biological father... Therefore, even if her mother was a Brahmin, as the position of the 'active force' of father is occupied by a Billawa male, there remains no doubt about the Billawa status of Deyi Baidedi" (120). The author's logical reasoning locates his historical search for Deyi within the anachronistic past with patriarchal kin system. In addition, the same Panje's text that provided a clue to unravel the earthly existence of Deyi Baidedi is negated by Dallodi in its claim that Deyi was already a widow when she arrived at Ballala's palace to care for his wound. His selective literary historicism asserts that Deyi died as a *muttaide* or an auspicious married-woman, further articulating the necessity of gendered discourse to recast her as an epitome of ideal womanhood.

Further, Dallodi's rational quest for the factual excludes the folk stories which according to Dallodi are "a medium to open up, along with the real, unreal worlds to us. They normally consist of the fantastic, miraculous and divine. In toto, they are a conglomeration of the human, the superhuman, and the inhuman" (117). Relying on the textual sources and evidence internal to the popular versions, Dallodi determines Deyi as a Billawa woman, not Brahmin as is generally believed. In this pursuit, he also brings intertextual reference to other oral-'historical' narratives of Kantabare-Budabare,¹⁵ and also

¹⁵ Kantabare-Budabare are another set of Billawa twin heroes who are remembered in the Mulki province of Dakshina Kannada district. Though not as popular as Koti-Chennaya in Tuluva imaginary, there is an increased interest (through literary, 'historical' and filmic recreation) in Kantabare-Budabare in recent years.

to some of the customs prevalent among tribes in Gujarat and Rajasthan States.¹⁶ His scientific search for the matter-of-fact helps him conclude that,

Is it only to lend grandeur to the birth of Deyi Baidedi that the folk raconteur makes her be born miraculously in the Brahmin class who were considered superior in the society, besides which it has no factual basis (123).

Similar concern is expressed by Ramanath Kotekar in his book *Tulunadina Billawaru: Ondu Adhyayana* (Billawas of Tulunad: A Study) (2012), wherein the “folk people have projected an unworldly fictitious story with regard to the incident of Deyi’s birth” (2012: 85). Their rational query into communitarian past suggests a demarcation between *aitihya* and *itihasa* or roughly between legend and history, thereby sifting the folk narrator’s memorial account as an insufficient document. Besides, while on the one hand, the communitarian historians appeal to rational threads available within the textualized oral songs in establishing the heroes’ Billawa lineage by dissecting the mystery of Deyi’s birth, on the other hand, they negate similar rational hypothesis offered by Vamana Nandavara in his search of Koti-Chennaya’s birth. Nandavara’s suggestion that Koti-Chennaya were perhaps born out of an illicit relationship enforced by the ruler Ballala on Deyi is rejected outrightly by all three historians discussed above. Invoking a past of grandeur, dignity and recognition – within patriarchal castiest modes – necessitates postulating Deyi as a Billawa woman without any doubt, and as an epitome of virtue. The subsequent search for scientific evidence reflects this intended outcome. Caste-history-public’s attempt to recover a vanished illustrious past deploys the same materials of analysis, albeit interpreting it in newer modes, under the contours of ‘history proper.’ Its selective hypothesization excludes similar practices elsewhere in its efforts to determine “the internal issues of human beings (should) be determined based on appropriate evidences, while not adopting speculation as a resolving parameter” (Dallodi, 2013:146).

Once Dallodi untangles the mystery shrouded around Deyi’s birth, he moves on to exorcise the figure of Permala Ballala from all charges levied against him in preceding textual sources. Unlike Poojary who demonstrated the Alupa lineage and thus Billawa caste status of Permala Ballala, Dallodi sets out to reconstruct the relationship between Ballala and Koti-Chennaya. Deriving from his research outcomes in preceding pages, Dallodi further proves that Ballala shared a cordial connection with his protecting Billawa warriors, and didn’t shoot an arrow at Koti in the battlefield as most of the versions claim. His

¹⁶ Wherein the girls who attain puberty before marriage are symbolically left in the woods.

search for the historical truth through selective textual and oral sources determines that Ballala had a heavy discontent with his Minister 'Buddivanta' (more often, Budyanta), and he was more than pleased when Koti-Chennaya killed the Minister. Dallodi also refutes any court proceeding against the heroes, and even suggests that Permale Ballala died out of his grief of separation from Koti-Chennaya. Dallodi claims that, "Ballala had realized long ago that in valour, bravery, loyalty and honesty, Mallaya [Buddivanta] was no equivalent to Koti Chennaya" (139). In the scientific quest of history-publics the story moves as a silent visual text or silent film, and the accurate words are inserted into the character's mind and mouth by the researcher, contingent upon the larger objective of the communitarian history rewritten.

The Koti-Chennaya history-publics' search for 'concrete records' in determining their period of existence leads Dallodi to debate the historical coexistence of Koti-Chennaya with two other twin heroes of Billawa community, Kantabare-Budabare. It is commonly noted in oral and textualized versions that Kantabare-Budabare fought against Koti-Chennaya in order to retain their prominence in the region of Mulki (near Mangalore), and with the divine intervention of Goddess Sridevi of Bappanadu it was decided that no *garadi* structure would be built for Koti-Chennaya in the Mulki region of Kantabare-Budabare. Debate over this purported contemporaneity of these two sets of twin heroes provides a platform for Dallodi to determine the period of Koti-Chennaya. His investigation into verifiable truth invokes evidences both internal to texts and an appeal to external sources. He refutes a few textual claims that either Koti-Chennala lived a century or two after Kantabare-Budabare, and also the claim that they were contemporary in Tulu country. Through his quest into 'a few more records' (152), he demonstrates that Koti-Chennaya unquestionably lived in Tulunad much earlier than Kantabare-Budabare, and it is to this rational adjudication of evidence in determining their existence that I turn my attention now.

Firstly, the non-existence of Kantabare-Budabare in foremost texts like Manner's collection of Tulu *paddana* in 1886 and in Saletto's *Ancient Karnataka – History of Tuluva* in 1936 prompts Dallodi to believe that if contemporary, Manner in his text on "the birth and travails of some *bhutas* in historical Tulunadu" (153) would have recorded about Kantabare-Budabare as well. In his textual historicism, Dallodi doesn't identify any distinction between the 'literary' text of Manner and the 'history proper' text of Saletto. His quest for the truth incorporates diverse genres of textual production. Similarly, Historian Gururaja Bhat's claim that Koti-Chennaya lived roughly five centuries ago, and

Anthropologist Peter J Claus' claim that the language of Koti Chennaya *paddana* indicates an antiquity of at least five-six centuries assists Dallodi in situating Koti-Chennaya in 14th century AD. History publics like Dallodi find corroborating evidence for Koti-Chennaya's antiquity over Kantabare-Budabare in an archaeological comparison of topographical and other relics of memory belonging to the twin heroes. Further, the absence of ancient worship practice of *nema* (bodily mediation in annual rituals) for Kantabare-Budabare as against its extensively prevalence for Koti-Chennaya provides sufficient evidence for Dallodi to situate the former at least three centuries earlier than the latter. At the same time, the literary device of birds conversing with each other, which is impossible to happen in *kaliyuga* (Hindu belief of modern age) and a reality only in *kruta*, *treta* and *dwapara yugas*, only reflect "the raconteur's ancient perspective" (154) thus lending substantiation to the 14th century claims of Dallodi. The mythological periodization of *kaliyuga* and other doesn't deter the history-publics to deploy it in adjudicating past events. The hypothetical spatio-temporality also thus assists in determining the historical image of Koti-Chennaya for the recollecting publics in Tulu-country.

Historical Quest - "Textures"

In their attempt to 'listen for history' and locate historical consciousness in South India before the advent of British, Velcheru Narayana Rao, et al turn our attention to 'textural expressivity' (5) in hitherto unrecognized sources folk-epic to courtly poetry and prose narratives, and such other 'recalcitrant materials' (2). While pointing at the interplay of insufficiency and excess in history, Rao et al, demonstrate how historical awareness in a particular moment of history is visible in a corpus of texts, centering on 'traditional' loci of heroic figures and battle-scenes. They suggested 'listening' intently to the texts themselves in order to separate "the historical wheat from the non-historical chaff" (23). Similar presence of a historical wheat within the literary materials itself is present in Koti-Chennaya literary corpus as well, and I take up the first 'native' intervention – Panje Mangesarao's story version *Koti Chennaya* published in 1930 – into the inter-medial translation of the oral text of Koti-Chennaya into print as an example of the 'textures' suggested by Rao, et al. I present a case of how, the attempt to imagine public figures like Koti-Chennaya into being through the textual corpus carries attestations of history internal to the retelling.

Panje Mangesarao's *Koti Chennaya* deploys an epistolary evidence to establish both authenticity of the narrative and also to propose Koti Chennaya as figures from four centuries ago. Adhering both to Kannada literary style and also the lunar calendar

attributed to king Shalivahana – not the solar calendar referred by Tuluvas even to this day – the epistle sent by Permale Ballala to Kemara Ballala of Panja region lends a calendrical legitimacy irrefutable in any case. Invoking the Sanskritic panchanga, the letter opens thus:

Shri and enthroned in the Ballala chair of Panja *bidu* [manorial dwelling], Shri
Kemara Ballala of Panja province's letter to Deva Ballala of Enmuru *bidu* reads so –
Swasti Shri Jayabhyudaya Shalivahanashaka year 1717's Shrimukha sanvatsar's
(year) Tula month day 25" (61)

The exactness of date, and thus of calendrical 'proof,' is a 'texture' of history incorporated within the literary texts as proposed by V Narayarao et al in a different linguistic-cultural context. It is, as highlighted by Novetzke within the poetic composition of Namdev, "...an appeal to evidence outside the subject, in this case, to the celestial archive, the testimony of the moon, sun, and stars" (47). The exactitude of date achieved in the epistle form within the text is a written evidence integrated into the already scripted evidence of print medium. And this calendrical proof is further substantiated and linked to the 'present' of early 20th century by relying on the ritualistic event of fair at Subramanya Temple,¹⁷ popular even to this day. 'Textures' of history is inbuilt into the literary composition by continually evoking a reference point of the fair – undeniable by the reading publics in early 20th century too – in details like: "Tulunadu's highly popular Subramanya fair was approaching" (64), "Deva Ballala presented Koti-Chennaya with beetle leaves... at dawn exactly on the Shashti day of Margashira Shuddha" (64), and so on.

Further, the literary technique employed at the outset characterizes the story into three sections: 'in Padumale'; 'in Panja'; and, 'in Enmuru', all physically verifiable spots on the map of early 20th century 'Tulunadu.' and, the process of evidentializing is internal to the text as the author ends with referring to the '*garadi* structures as 'evidence heaps" (70), albeit of 'Billawa influence' (70). I quote his concluding lines:

... the *garadi* s built for Koti Chennaya in many villages are heaps of evidence for
the influence of Billawas in Tulunadu four centuries ago. (70)

While substantiating evidences like the above are incorporated into the text on one hand, on the other, 'the impossible,' 'unverifiable' are omitted from texts like Panje's. One of the most significant episodes remembered by the Koti-Chennaya publics – the escape from dungeon prison with the help of divine intervention – is systematically erased from Panje's

¹⁷ Located in Sullia taluk of Dakshina Kannada district. A popular pilgrimage centre, particularly related to serpent worship.

text. The replacing detail of escape from the prison with sheer brilliance and physical prowess is pictured in so minute detail, so as not to leave any scope for divine assistance in the act. On the contrary, the 'publics of faith' of Koti-Chennaya, in all their textualizing attempts highlight the significance of this episode and also maintain other miraculous instances from the warriors' life. Panje's text is replete with substantiations aiming at plausibility and logicity, both parameters necessary in any 'authentic account' like history. While Panje and later authors intend similarly to historicize the Koti-Chennaya episode, the 'publics of faith,' especially caste publics, are not solely guided the rigid grids of evidentiality, further emphasizing the diverse, fluid publics maintaining the memory of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad.

Further, while Panje's text resonates historicizing attempts of the publics concerned with its internal literary mechanism, however sporadic, it adheres to the teleological drives of 'history proper' by couching the story within the narrative of Ballalas, local chieftains of Tulunadu since the downfall of Vijayanagara empire. The very opening paragraph is a note on the different administrative divisions of 'Tulu State' and their respective rulers, chiefly the position of Ballala's. His interdisciplinary reference to the political history of the region in a matter-of-fact fashion while introducing the prime event of Ballala's hunting expedition and eventual fall, Panje adheres to the tenets of historical writing, tracing the itinerary of a king or kingdom or later nation in the history-turn.

Historical Quest – Topographic 'Sites'

Investigating about one of the major modern metanarratives, the nation, in French context Pierre Nora (1989) undertook a study of what he called *lieux de memoire* or 'sites of memory' bringing a very diverse range of entities which by dint of human will or the work of time have become a symbolic elements of the memorial heritage of any community. These material or non-material entities are evoked by the communities in continuous-present to assemble a view of the past, and to present it as a tangible reality. They offer an evidential basis for the remembering publics to establish historical veracity, and thus reckon on them as symbolic repositories of historical subjectivity. In another context, the history publics of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad have perpetually relied on the sacred geography and topographical mappings to authenticate the existence of Koti-Chennaya and invoke a historical image of these Billawa heroes. Their itinerary from birth in Permale to death and entombment in Enmuru is attested by an appeal to the physical sites spread across a small pocket in Tulu region, further expanded by the memory publics to other 'sites' (in detail in

second chapter), albeit within the geo-linguistic boundaries of Tulunad. To quote the relevance of topographical 'sites' in the historical image of Koti-Chennaya in Poojary's words: "the village, lanes and houses in which these gallants were born and grew up stand as testimony to their existence... all these present historical evidences to prove that these heroes did exist" (58).

Koti-Chennaya history public inscribe the narrative of Koti-Chennaya on landscape across Tulunad, especially in the Enmuru-Panja-Padumale region in Putturu taluk of Dakshina Kannada district. They find corroborative evidence for the historicity of their heroes by identifying sites like Koove Tota (Koove Garden) as Deyi's house, Sankamale forest as a place where Deyi was forsaken, the buffalo race tracts of Koti-Chennaya and villain Budyanta, Ballalas' palace, the stone on which Koti was laid after injury, Koti-Chennaya's tomb in Enmuru, and so on. Appealing to their historical presence, authors of the book *Koti Chennaya moukhiba sabityada antaratma darshana* (Revelation of the inner soul of Koti Chennaya oral literature) (1995) say, "Not only these, but also many other small memorials stand as archive to the history of Koti Chennaya. If a scientific, careful scrutiny is undertaken, much more light could be thrown on this historical account (8). Further, in the book *Baidya Darshana: Sachitra Kathakosha* (Baidya Revelation: Pictorial Story) (2003) a pictorial book on Koti-Chennaya¹⁸ the editors reiterate the significance of landscape, "Many sites related to the entire account of Koti Chennaya who lived hundreds of years ago are a living symbol and witness to the events that took place. The tangible cultures that reverberate the tale of Koti Chennaya – from 'koove tota' in Padumale in which Koti Chennaya's mother Deyi Baideti resided to the Enmuru tomb erected after Koti Chennaya attained heroic death concluding their life of extraordinary achievement – are accessible even to this day" (91). While the 'sites' or traces of memory constitute in establishing Koti-Chennaya's historicity, they are employed by scholars like Dallodi in also determining their purported period of existence to 14th century, situating them as the earliest heroic icons of the Billawa community.

Through the topographic mode of record, the community forms a historical vision of Koti-Chennaya's life, thus evoking a different set of referents to imagine the past. It is an instance of how a particular community re-imagines and constructs a landscape to historicize its 'legendary' icons, and how 'history' is authenticated by invoking a memory that is dispersed over geography. As is evident in the two quotes above, while the

¹⁸ Book published with the 3 lakhs financial assistance from Karnataka Government

conjectures of Koti-Chennaya's life are founded on the evidence of their *paddana*, they are reinforced by an appeal to physical sites. Thereby, the memory public of Koti-Chennaya creates its own historical archive, rewriting the grammar of historiographical exploration.

Historical Quest -- Drushyanjana

As illustrated above, there have been a lot of debate about when, where and how Koti-Chennaya lived; the exact date of their birth and death, and the accurate events in their life, as well as events leading to their life; all questions addressed within a biographical historiography. Diverse range of materials – oral, textual, topographical, visual, and so on – are employed by the history-publics to adjudicate the historical existence of figures from the past. The variety of sources introduced in summoning the historical beings expands all the more when the past invoked is associated with hitherto marginalized communities, who enter into the public sphere and knowledge production rather late. As an exemplum, while we notice a gradual shift in the communitarian efforts to historicise their icons in Koti-Chennaya tradition in Tulunad, we also observe that the major epistemological practice of writing communitarian history begins only at the turn of 21st century, more so in its second decade for the Billawa social group. In this period of historical dynamics, the community not only produces evidence-based, rational histories – chiefly centring on its warrior figures – in textualized form but also expands the discursive formations in exceptionally dynamic pathways. One such attempt to historicize the twin warriors by fluid groups of both history publics and memory publics is the practice of what is called *drushyanjana* or roughly, collyrium-view. The extraordinary ritual-practice of *drushyanjana* was carried out by a gathering, consisting largely of Billawas, in 2014 under the guidance of a self-acclaimed spiritual leader, Jeevan Vijayananda Guruji.

Drushyanjana, is a kind of astrological calculation carried out by laying a collyrium-like substance called *anjana* and recreating the past or future images on it. It is conducted generally in the mode of question-answer session between practitioner astrologer and the devotees. It is prominently prevalent in Tulu region along with parts of Kerala, coupled by another similar practice of *Ashtamangala*.¹⁹ These practices are more often used to determine auspicious dates for temple construction, renovation, to determine ritual dates,

¹⁹ *Ashtamangala prasnam* is a certain type of practice of the *prasna* branch of Hindu astrology... *Prasna* is one of the six important branches of Hindu astrology. It deals with horary astrology in which an astrologer attempts to answer a question by constructing a horoscope for the exact time at which the question was received and understood by the astrologer. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashtamangala_prasnam) Web on 3rd January, 2017.

to resolve religio-ritualistic problems, conflicts, ailments, etc. On March 11th, 2014 more than 500 people gathered at the house in which Koti-Chennaya supposedly grew up, called ‘Gejjegiri Nandana House of Sayana Baidya, their uncle. The astrologer-cum-spiritual leader Jeevan Vijayananda Guruji conducted the *drushyanjana* ritual in a magico-astrological style, recreating the events from Koti-Chennaya’s life – from the birth of Kenjava birds (refer Annexure for detailed story) to the suicide of Koti-Chennaya’s cousin/brother-in-law Kujumba Kanja in the most accurate form of historical periodization, the calendrical format of minute-hour-day-date-month-year of the event passed. These dates are also supplemented by the calculation of interspersing number of days between the linear arrangement of episodes. To quote an example: “on the day of full moon on 27-11-1553 (Deyi Baideti) was married to Sayana Baidya’s brother-in-law Kantanabaidya. Deyi Baideti was then 15 years 8 months 6 days old.” The astrologer’s recreation of the events between 1523 and 1556 is in the most accurate historical fashion, leaving no scope for any speculation regarding what-when-where tripartite concerns of professional history. His retelling/repicturization also goes one step beyond history proper by providing the exact time (in hour-minutes) of the events unfolding almost five centuries ago. While recreating/refilming the episodes of 16th century to the 500-odd audience assembled, the astrologer also throws light on the shrouded events, rectifies “exaggerated or erroneous”²⁰ descriptions in *paddana*, an otherwise multiple, fluid, memory-relying oeuvre.

The paradigmatic historical quest through astro-magical practice of *drushyanjana* unfolds as a detailed document, in a series of query-answer format, substantiates the narrative with unprecedented accuracy. The acute detail in which an event from the past is recorded is exemplified in the extract below:

“Q: When did the Kenju Kenjava bird lay eggs? What was its date month year day?

A: At 10.20 in the night of Saturday 19-02-1536 Kenju bird laid a golden coloured egg.

At 6.50 minutes in the evening of Sunday 20-02-1536, the first laid egg vowed to Lord Brahma fell into the Madakari lake while flying from Buntagiri hills, over the Madakari lake, to offer it to the Lord.”

²⁰ All such quotes in *drushyanjana* discussion is taken from a question-answer set compiled after *drushyanaja* event by the members gathered. Upon request I received a copy of it from one of the members present, Ramanatha Kotekar, the author of *Tulunadina Billavaru – Ondu Adhyayana* (2012) and *Billavaru mattu Basel Mission: Ondu Adhyayana* (2012).

Carried out in the question-answer session mode with 56 queries from the people gathered, *Drushyanjana* reconstructs the events in its minutest detail. The vision recreated on collyrium-like material unfolds a “422 years 11 months 4 days old life history of Koti-Chennaya” (up to the day of *Drushyanjana* on 11-03-2014 Tuesday).

Interestingly, the magico-astrological reading of the past through *drushyanjana* also ends by drawing a genealogical chart beginning two generations before Koti-Chennaya, and drawing it up to the 18th generation relative of Koti-Chennaya in the present, the mediating astrologer Jeevan Vijayananda himself. Like Dejappa Dallodi who – in tracing the authentic origin of Deyi Baidedi – did not refer to the kinship organization under matrilineal family system – largely adopted by Tulu people including Billawas, the astrologer in *drushyanjana* practice also doesn't rely on matrilineal kinship pattern. Vijayananda locates his genealogical link with Koti-Chennaya through their father's ancestry, unlike matrilineal structure under which consanguinity (blood relation) is identified through mother's lineage. Further, along with Koti-Chennaya history's genealogical percolation into the present, embodied in the astrologer himself, he also identified the present generations of a few other 'textual characters' as well.²¹ As a further evidence of his genealogical link with the twin heroes, the astrologer also revealed the daggers of Koti-Chennaya handed over to him from generations.

The communitarian efforts in recreating and sustaining the memorial by invoking it within the rigid grids of history-writing is evidenced in no better instance than the *Drushyanjana prashna chintana* conducted for Koti-Chennaya. Such 'local' efforts of reconstructing past express the intense desire to authenticate their heroic yesteryear through corroborating evidences such as indigenous 'science' versions of astrology. Such indigenous scientific efforts are brought forth for the verification and further validation of hitherto memorial, and thereby, they constitute as major evidence for the historicizing practices of participating publics. While a combination of the history-publics and publics of faith participate in creating a magical world of history – in what I call the 'third space' of remembering – the results of such a quest for truth are further authenticated by the print medium like newspapers and magazines. The discourse of historicity of the warrior figures is further legitimized by introducing it in the public sphere of print culture. March 31st,

²¹ Chavadi Shantayya and Budu Bommayya were two ministers in Permale Ballala's court. Vijayananda during *drushyanjana* identified the 21st progeny of these two ministers in the present, and also Kujumba Kanjava's (the third figure who appears with Koti-Chennaya during *nema* rituals; he is now claimed as their brother-in-law) 20th generation as the mother of a popular Kannada-Tulu film actor Vinod Alva. Vijayananda thus these three figures in Koti-Chennaya memory to present day individuals.

2014 Monday edition of the newspaper *Hosa Diganta* declared with certitude that “Koti Chennaya were born on 22-9-1556” with the sub-caption “New information about the birth of Tulunadu warriors.” the piece of information was circulated in many newspapers, also attracting readers’ comments eventually. After around five centuries of Koti-Chennaya’s purported existence in Tulunad and speculations about their period of existence, the magico-astrological calculations of *Drushyanjana* almost brought the curtains down, also challenging the previous research results which located them in the 13th or 14th century.

Consequently, while the magico-astrological calculations of an astrologer presents events in their most vividly created fashion, the history-public further validates his claims by matching it with the five centuries old calendar available on the internet. My request (to Ramanatha Kotekar) for details about the *Drushyanjana* practice came with a printed copy of the calendars downloaded from www.timeanddate.com, ranging from the year 1523 to 1591. In the interim period of 20 days – between the day *drushyanjana* was conducted and when it appeared in newspapers (on 29-3-14 in widely circulated *Udayavani* and on 31-3-14 in *Hosa Diganta*) – the publics seeking historical verification for their memorized pasts indulge in further verifying with corresponding dates on the calendar from five centuries ago. The historiographical attempt of the public commingles the practices of validation – one magico-astrological and the other digital archive in establishing the historical veracity of their heroic deities. The newspaper entry closes with the following remark: “Koti Chennaya’s life span was 34 years, 6 months, 11 days. The leaders of Billawa Association informed that all these days have corresponded with the dates days year on the internet.”

The indigenous, ‘scientific’ method of *drushyanjana* which is simultaneously ‘seeing’ as well as ‘reading,’ an act that necessitates the participation of audience present, thereby unfolding through the memory of both observer and mediator could be perceived as a metaphor for the historicizing process of the communities deprived of script, history proper and caste capital. Events of the past are revealed as solution to the questions raised, thereby the past envisioned is conditioned by an already envisioned memory. Further, through the facilitating ingredient of *anjana*, the mediator not only reads a Koti-Chennaya past but also reads his own genealogical positioning in the story unfolded. The materiality of *anjana* in turn re-creates the narrative of a material body fastening it to the corporeal present. The visual moves back and forth with the present recreating an embodied past and the past in turn embodying itself in the present. Furthermore, the re-narrativization of a 16th century Tuluva event in the western anachronistic calendrical grammar of Gregorian

calendars is in itself a metaphor for the hybridity of past-present, inner-outer spatio-temporalities through the complex of historical re-imaginings. In the process, a fuzzy, undetermined memory is superimposed by the homogenized temporality of history. By participating in the modern act of history writing, the community also engages in the act of sifting the uncontainable, the impure of oralities, of the sacred from its imagination. In all, the discursive history produced in the magico-astrological setting of *drushyanjana* emerges as a history of the perpetual-present, built on a rationale that is exclusively internal to the publics in quest.

In addition, the dagger and lineage claim of the astrologer is further certified by one of the prominent figures within the Koti-Chennaya history publics, Damodara Kalmady, by appealing to the referential text of ‘folk epic’ or *paddana*. Extracting from a *paddana* version that there is ‘one paddy grain difference’ between the ‘protection daggers’²² of the elder and the younger brother, Kalmady releases a justificatory statement to the *Kudla* weekly (31st October–November 6th, 2014) that the daggers possessed by Guruji also have a grain difference in length. Through the mutual corroborating evidences of oral text and artefacts, one mnemonic and the other tangible, the history-public reassures the existence and continuity of their heroic deities.

A discursive scientific practice like *drushyanjana* in 2014 was not the only such attempt adopted by the publics of Koti-Chennaya in locating their historicity. In one of the foremost exclusive monograph on Koti-Chennaya titled *Tulunada Garodigala Samskrutika Adhyayana* (1990) – an extensive study of their worship structures – the authors refer to *asthamangala prashne* carried out in 1983 in the *garadi* at Enmuru (Koti Chennaya’s place of death and entombment). While presenting their evidence for the period of existence of Koti-Chennaya as 17th century, the authors also mention about corresponding dates identified during the *asthamangala prashne* session 7 years back. Although with a tint of suspicion, Amin and Kotian point at how during the astrological calculations of *prashne*, a famous ‘tactician’ from Kerala determined the historicity of Enmuru Battle that took place 3 centuries ago, and how Koti-Chennaya were 35 years of age while partaking in their final battle. To quote the authors, “Although there exists difference of opinion about the scientificity of discovering historical events through the Indian method of *ashtamangala prashne*, by indicating their period of existence as around three centuries ago [*prashne*] offers an appropriate description in corroborating the opinion that these twin heroes belonged to

²² Different from the battle-daggers of Koti-Chennaya obtained in the martial art house of Nanara *garadi*. ‘protection daggers’ were said to be given to Koti-Chennaya by their uncle Sayana Baidya.

17th century” (1990:15). Hence, on the one hand suggesting the method of ‘carbon dating’ to determine the historicity of Koti-Chennaya, the history publics on the other, do not also recede from applying the ‘scientific’ adjudicatory evidence of magico-astrological practices.

Thus, for the history publics surrounding Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad, historical verification happens at multiple levels. While the mnemonic mode of ‘folk’ narrative constitute as a sufficient evidence for historically locating the heroes, the same fluid, uncontainable text of *paddana* is verified, rectified, substantiated, validated by the magico-astrological practice. In addition, this form of indigenous ‘science’ is further validated by the statutes of ‘proper’ history: by relying on the source of archived calendar. The astrological calculations of *drushyanjana* are substantiated by the temporal markers of calendar. Thereby, the ‘regional’ efforts of recreating the past meet the concerns of ‘professional’ historiographical methods. The history-writing acts of community, or what I call public, engage in continuously expanding the contours of historiography, an act of resistance as well as creative craft at the same time. While past and the future are reconstructed through indigenous archive, associated spatio-temporalities are fixed by locating the heroes on present-day bodies of the astrologer and others. Astrologically-assisted imagination of the past is also continued and sustained through the persisting chain of genealogy. As the concerns of mnemohistory emphasise, there is no discontinuity between the ‘past’ and the present as history percolates through every embodied present after that. Thus, unique practices like *drushyanjana* and *asthamangala*, as a mode of historical enquiry, re-establish connections with the past.

Historical Quest – Visual

Another historical record created by the history-publics to present an accurate image of the twin warriors is their pictorial representation, a visual record in imagining the figures in flesh and blood. Beginning with Manner’s outline sketch of Koti-Chennaya (1886) which represented the heroes more as one of the ‘devils’ worshipped in Tulu region, the twin brothers have been recreated in portraiture for different purposes. However a cursory view of these illustrations display the public’s necessity to present the heroes as hyper masculine figures, more often imagined in combative positions with bow and arrow or sword in their hands. Represented in alignment with the literary creations highlighting their sheer prowess and beauty, the visual records of Koti-Chennaya also picturise them as desirable-looking warriors in their 30s, corroborating with the established notions of their short lifespan of 30-odd years. More recent depictions of Koti-Chennaya in public and institutional

platforms place them in parallel with Narayana Guru, the social reformer who has been adopted as leader by Billawa community. Further, an attempt to normalize the image of Koti-Chennaya and thus add to the corpus of historical evidence has been undertaken by BBSAP, the institution set up exclusively for the study of Koti-Chennaya. This institution has created a large size oil portraiture of the twin heroes which it claims is authentic, based on the oral narratives describing the heroes. BBSAP asserts to have circulated a life-like portrait of Koti-Chennaya, and thus making it available in the market for public consumption. In one of its published texts, the BBSAP applauds P N Acharya's effort in pictorially depicting the warriors after a rigorous study. Acharya is said to have visited many *garadis* across, studied the Koti-Chennaya statues there and also understood *janapada antarya* (inner mind of the folk) before creating the image of brothers as both 'historical men' and as '*shishta daiva* (higher god) worship figures." It concludes, "This picture not only portrays Koti-Chennaya as historical figures... but it has also won the hearts of all 'Tuluvas'" (Amin and Kotian, 1990: 98). The oil portraiture of Koti-Chennaya is claimed to be representing all nuanced differences in the twins' appearance, also depicting their attributive temperaments. The officials in BBSAP claim that a total of around 200 minute differences between the twins have been recorded in their authentic visual representation in oil painting.²³ Any deviation from either the portrait or miniature model of *garadi* structure installed in the BBSAP office with 'accurate' dimensions is affirmed to be irreverent to the memory of historical icons as well as their worship in *garadi* structures. Thus, through multiple modes of record, the history publics of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad establish a historical vision of the figures, producing all corroborating evidences required.

Human -- Extra-human Debate

Pervading the psyche of people as one among the large pantheon of deities specifically worshipped within the geo-linguistic bounds of Tulunad, Koti-Chennaya, like other deities, traverse in the realm of the miraculous, of the supernatural and of the divine prowess. Beginning with the unworldly birth of their mother Deyi Baidedi to their traversal in the realm of the *mayaka/mayo* or abstraction after death, the recollection of Koti-Chennaya among worshipping groups, or what I roughly call, memory public is characterized by preternatural elements. While the memory publics is largely unconcerned with verifying the otherworldly abstracts by producing adjudicating evidences, the history public, as already demonstrated, engages in the counter act of attesting the narrative with corroborating

²³ In my interview with Damodara Kamady on 13th March, 2014.

materials. One such avenues of indigenous historiography seeks to establish the 'human' identity of Koti-Chennaya, by sifting the extra-human from its imaginary. In its attempt to historically re-present the warriors of centuries ago, the history public debates and excludes the 'irrational' as 'the superhuman' from its historical narrative. Its historiography endeavours to establish the heroes as patently human, relegating all 'extra-human' to the other realm of common people.

Such a sifting of 'miraculous' chaff from the grain of historical subject could be traced in all three research works studying the communitarian history of Billawas, all published after the year 2000. Starting from Babu Shiva Poojary (2003) to Ramanath Kotekar (2012) and Dejappa Dallodi (2012), these history publics attempt to unravel the historical Koti-Chennaya by excluding the supernatural as belonging to the world of emotional people and/or of folk narrators. While emphasising the historical significance of figures like Koti-Chennaya who stand for social values, Babu Shiva Poojary laments at the way those beings have been "shackled amidst the four walls of *garadi* ; installing their idols as gods who furnish boons" (109). He quotes Panje Mangeshraya's reference to Koti-Chennaya in 1930 as "... [people] called Koti Chennaya were beings like us, with flesh and bones, who breathed and lived here" (109). Marching on, produced in the period of heightened caste consciousness associated with the urge to participate in knowledge production, Dallodi analyses the available narratives of Koti-Chennaya, chiefly with the objective of dissociating the irrational, and producing a scientifically justifiable past. He insists upon the 'human' aspect of Koti-Chennaya, negating the associated adjectives of 'miraculous beings' or 'beings of divine prowess.' Dallodi also counteracts the 'superhuman' events from their life (like escaping from the dungeon with the help of divine intervention or the automatic opening a shrine door, etc) as deeds performed either with sheer muscle force or with divine grace (not intervention). Incorporation of Koti-Chennaya in the deity pantheon of *butas* in Tulu region also receives a disapproving note from the author. He dismisses a few supernatural reasons behind the erection of *garadi* structures (like Koti-Chennaya's appearance in dream) as completely unfounded. To use his words, "Only the sensitive mind of a devotee who is imbued with excessive confidence and faith in Koti Chennaya could have such a dream... It is impossible to justify such an incident through any evidential basis. The improbable could never realize itself in the modern timeline of *kalikaala*. Some matters gain permanent place in society through sheer propagandist circulation" (149).

Thus, the heuristic distinction of history publics and memory publics that I use in deciphering the historical image of twin brothers in Tulunad also is maintained within the recollecting publics of Koti-Chennaya here. The history publics, at least in the 21st century, uphold a modern distinction between the rational and irrational, between the scientific and superstitious, between historical truth and layman faith. I turn my attention to the memory publics in the ensuing chapter.

To sum up, drawing from Novetzke's understanding of Namdev tradition in Maharashtra, I also propose that there exists something of a modern distinction between history and memory working within the Koti-Chennaya tradition in Tulunad, one adhering to the scientific, rational adjudication of evidences and the other relying exclusively on the will to remember without being concerned about corresponding materials. In this chapter I have demonstrated how, what I call history publics, continually fall back upon sources and materials, however 'ahistorical,' in evoking a historical image of Koti-Chennaya from centuries ago in Tulu region. A careful analysis of the trajectory of historicization of Koti-Chennaya also reveals a gradual movement from doubts and incertitude to an irrefutable certainty about their existence and events within. However, what remains common in all these efforts is a search for evidences, a scientific quest for truth, eventually also establishing them as clearly human beings, inappropriately inculcated in the pantheon of deities in Tulu region. When on the one hand, the deity manifestation of Koti-Chennaya is emphasised less and less, on the other, there is a surge in representing the heroes in diverse historical roles – as belonging to a royal lineage, as warriors protecting the ruling class, as figures combating against the downfall of a community, and so on. Through scientific pursuit, they emerge as larger than life figures, less as deified beings but more as communitarian icons. A detailed study of the emergence of cultural politics with Koti-Chennaya as its functional centre, I reserve for the third and fourth chapter in this dissertation.

Chapter-II

Labyrinth of Remembering: 'Memory Publics' of Koti-Chennaya

This chapter seeks to retrieve the figures of Koti-Chennaya from the vast realm of memory maintained for centuries by what I call the 'memory publics' in Tulunad. In my attempt to present the image of twin warriors in the memory of Koti-Chennaya publics, I have relied on the heuristic distinction between history and memory. As the historicizing efforts of Koti-Chennaya history publics are dealt with in the previous chapter, the present chapter is a continuation of the delineation of Koti-Chennaya in Tuluva memory, albeit sustained by the recollecting publics on diverging fundamentals. While the distinction between history and memory is adopted in presenting a comprehensive portrait of twin brothers in this dissertation, I also emphasise that such a distinction is prevalent within the recollecting publics of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad. Accordingly in the previous chapter I demonstrated how the history publics evoke a set of referents continuously to establish the historicity of Koti-Chennaya, how they attempt to locate the figures in tangible real time, and how they mark a distinction from the 'innocent, emotional folk' who rely on unscientific, unverifiable image of Koti-Chennaya. Following, I demonstrate how the twin warriors pervade in the reminiscence of memory publics, and how the analytical categories of history and memory could assist in presenting the warrior figures in their recollective entirety. I also argue how the memory publics are interchangeable with 'publics of faith/belief' and also 'publics of performance' in the heuristic formulations adopted in these two chapters.

In the analysis that follows I consider a variety of materials ranging from what are called *sthalapurana* (local mythologies) to bodily practices all invoking an image of the twin brothers, which is largely outside the referential corpus of history publics. The history publics as described and detailed in the previous chapter exclude certain forms of remembrance and associated publics as belonging to the realm of the emotional, of faith, of common folk. Thereby, a kind of distinction between rational, scientific image of researchers on the one hand, and logic-defying beliefs of laymen on the other, is maintained within the larger category of 'Koti-Chennaya publics' itself in Tulu region. Drawing from this internal differentiation in two 'textures' of remembrance, and further informed by social memory formulations, I now set out to explore a vast range of iconic imaginations preserved by memory publics across Tulu region. By bringing such excluded

sources into fore, it not only ruptures the historicizing discourse raised within the Koti-Chennaya tradition, but that these 'history' and 'memory' practices together constitute a critique of the singular, statist ideologies that, as Boyarin puts it, "involve a particular potent manipulation of dimensionalities of space and time, involving rhetorically fixed national identities to legitimate their monopoly on administrative control."¹

In her analysis of the popular *Karaga* festival in Bangalore city, Smriti Srinivas (2004) focuses largely on the mimetic, somatic, musical, oral and other aspects of performance, linked closely to the practices of body. Bodily performance takes central focus in her analysis, also informed by Connerton's (1989) proposition about how societies remember through performative commemorative ceremonies which presuppose a concept of habit and bodily automatisms (1989: 5). While performance of memory occupies a central position in the Koti-Chennaya tradition in Tulunad, I extend the category of memory or *nenake/smarane* in this chapter to incorporate anecdotal figments from the memory of Tuluva people, popularly maintained causative myths and so on to analyze the image of Koti-Chennaya as recalled by the memory publics in Tulunad.

Death and After-Life Perceptions

In a highly diverse cultural milieu like South Asia, death and perceptions of afterlife are reflective of the plurality of concepts and discourses, many a times completely different from each other. A multitude of conceptual systems and ritual prescriptions exist with regard to the temporality of death and its aftermath. Similarly the problem of attitudes towards death and the disposal of corpse has occupied the theoretical discussions of anthropologists for a very long time now.² Ethnography of death ponders over the moment of death and subsequent rituals to reflect over the meaning of life as conceptualized by the communities in question. In the book *Ways of Dying: Death and its meanings in South Asia*, a range of communitarian conceptualizations of death and aftermath are documented, while at the same time recognizing the inability to "adequately grasp [the phenomena of death] by means of a universalistic model of theory" (Zoller and Schombucher, 1999: 17) in South Asian context.

¹ From Boyarin, J. Ed. *Remapping Memory: The Politics of Time Space*. (1994) quoted in Olick and Robbins (1998: 117).

² Kopping, Klaus-Peter. "Death As Experience and Institution in Anthropological theory." *Ways of Dying: Death and its Meanings in South Asia*. Eds. Elisabeth Schombucher and Claus Peter-Zoller. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 1999.

However, the dominant Hindu thanatological philosophies perceive death as a closure of body, the soul/*atma* thereafter occupying another body, until the release from this circle of reincarnation/*samsara* to attain *moksha*. The speed with which a person can be freed from *samsara* is dependent on the law of cause and effect or *karma*, which prescribes that all actions have corresponding results. The Brahminical Hindu conceptions of death and aftermath revolve around such prescriptive scriptural finalities, rendering it open for the politics of interpretation of the dominant caste alone.

Conversely, ungraspable by the notions of a composite culture that Brahminical Hindu religion espouses, the ritualistic world of a large number of Tuluvas remains outside its fold, despite being categorized as 'Hindu' in both popular and official levels. Their regionalised religiosity is outside the fold of Brahminical deity pantheon,³ and simultaneously, the conceptualizations of death are outside the scriptural, self-explanatory cosmologies and thanatologies of mainstream Hindu Brahminism. While multitudes of deified figures occupy its religious fabric, the Brahminical Hindu deity pantheon remains at the margin of public belief system, and so is the interconnected conceptual system. The Brahminical metaphysical solutions of *karma* or deed, *moksha* or emancipation, *atman* or soul and so on fail to answer the questions of death and afterlife that the Tuluva religious cosmology evokes. As Tulunad could create a rupture into the homogenized entity of Indian nation, its religiosity and associated epistemologies of death and aftermath could also offer a counterdiscourse to dominant conceptualizations characterizing the nation at large.

It is at this backdrop that the formulations of cultural memory assist in challenging the scriptural finalities of dominant religion, and derivatively, the homogenous ideologies of unitary nation. By bringing multiple memories of the marginalized to fore, the singular spatio-temporality of the nation could be contested. Similarly, the fluid boundaries between lived and the living after, between the moment of death and the life continued thereafter could challenge the mainstream thanatological conceptions in India. I have analyzed these fluid boundaries between life-death in Tuluva imagination under the theoretical rubrics of memory. Memory thus becomes a site of continuity of the historical subject unlike history that disassociates from the past, (Novetzke, 2008: 73) at least by

³ However, elsewhere I have further problematized the religious cosmology of Tuluva (of *buta* worship) from the perspective of caste and class hierarchy it is founded on. Despite remaining outside the fold of Brahminical conceptualizations of the religious, there is a reflection of Brahminical caste-based domination even within the fold of *buta* worship.

fixing the figures at a moment in history. Memory further integrates subjective bodies that exist in temporal continuities. It is not bound by the dictates of homogenous time, in derivative, also the sequential teleologies of life, death and eventual *moksha*.

Death and Life-After of Koti-Chennaya

The historicizing efforts of history publics that I have demonstrated in the previous chapter mark a clear distinction between rational, scientific truth about the heroes as against the beliefs of ‘folk’ people, solely founded on their indubitable faith. All their historical reconstructions of the warriors’ life conclude with their death, resulting in extensive constructions of memorial centres of *garadi* across the Tulu region. They ascribe the supernatural being-ness of Koti-Chennaya to the ‘religious beliefs’ of common people, at times also lamenting the distortion of truth ‘even in this era of scientific temperament’ (Dallodi, 2012: 149). On the contrary, the memory publics that I bring under observation in this chapter maintain a heterogeneous corpus of memorial figments, most of which are constructed around the after-life of Koti-Chennaya. What gets circulated in the memory of people gets relegated as “imagination of emotional people” (Dallodi, 2012: 156) by the history publics. In other words: “This is in no way proximate to the truth. All those who are humans could never manifest again after their death. Koti Chennaya are no exception to this as well. They remain as mere invisible forces after their departure” (Dallodi, 2012: 156). The narrative of history publics thus ends with the finality of tangible bodies of Koti-Chennaya, whereas it shoots off into multitude of knowledge branches in the imagination of memory publics. The heroes traverse in their life after ‘death,’ they engage in disputes over land with other warriors, they claim space in the form of memorial structures, they subdue resistances, they contest, compromise with and accommodate other deities, and thereby live on in the memory of predominantly publics of belief. It is this expansion of spatio-temporality, the plurality of being, the resistance to narrative closure that I turn my attention in this chapter.

The *aloukika* or un-worldly manifestations of Koti-Chennaya that gets negated in the human-izing efforts of the history public, comes to fore in the recollective dimensionalities of the memory publics of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad. Most of the *paddana* versions collected from the folk singers and textualized in different genres begin with the trope of miraculous origin, something common in the hagiographies found in many parts

of India. However, unlike the *sant* figures whose liquid origin⁴ is captured in hagiographies, miraculous origin is ascribed to their mother Deyi Baidedi in Koti-Chennaya *paddana*. Deyi is remembered to have taken birth from one of the two eggs laid by a pair of Kenjava birds, created by the supreme lord of Tuluva deity pantheon, Bermer.⁵ These versions of the Koti-Chennaya *paddana* also begin with the rise of Lord Bermer amidst seven seas, followed by the creation of a male and a female *Kenjava* bird. What were created as *inevulla pakkilu* or twinned sibling birds willingly transform themselves into conjugal couple with the benediction of Lord Bermer, thereby to escape from the pangs of “absence of familial bonds and the absence caste, creed ties.”⁶ The willed transformation of Kenjava birds from siblings by creation into the reproductive bond of husband-wife could perhaps be perceived as a metonymic representation of the predominant position that sibling-bond holds within the socio-familial organization of many matrilineal Tuluva castes, with conjugal relationship occupying secondary strata.

One of the eggs of Kenjava birds slips into the sea underneath and is found by a Brahmin called Pejanaka during his ablutionary rites, albeit in the form of a lemon (in a few other versions it remains as egg). Pejanaka carried the lemon home, which miraculously transformed into a female child next day. She was raised as a Brahmin girl, but had to be left for good in the forest at a young age as she attained puberty before marriage, a taboo among Brahmin caste. A Billawa toddy tapper Sayana Baidya found her in the forest, and adopted her into his Billawa household as Deyi Baidedi. Thus, a Kenjava egg translated into lemon when it came into proximity with a Brahmin body, and was reconverted into Billawa subject when adopted by the ‘lower caste’ toddy tapper. This indeterminableness of Deyi’s caste status or at least an oscillation between Brahmin-Billawa identity, and thus also of Koti-Chennaya later in many folk renditions of the epic, is undertaken for closer scrutiny by the history publics in recent times. Such publics (overlapping with Billawa ‘caste publics’) challenge the Brahmin origin of Deyi by clearly

⁴ Their birth is shrouded in mystery. Like Namdev, a *sant* figure in Maharashtra who was found by a couple on a riverside, Deyi Baidedi’s (Koti-Chennaya’s mother) birth is also shrouded in mystery. She is found in the form of an egg/lemon by Brahmin Pajanaka couple is the popularly prevalent perception. However, the ‘history publics’ contest such a miraculous origin, and instead have been ‘researching’ extensively into the origin of Deyi in recent years.

⁵ Bermer is the presiding deity in all the *garadis* of Tulunad. He is imagined as a warrior, mounted on horse with his sword raised. However, Bermer has transformed into largely into ‘Brahma’ now, also perhaps suggesting how an indigenous deity is appropriated into the dominant Brahminical pantheon.

⁶ In the unpublished *paddana* by Monta Gowda & Erappa Gowda, RRC Collection.

Also see Annexure at the end for a version of Kenjava Birds story.

establishing her Billawa subjectivity. They not only redefine Billawa status in the caste pyramid in Tulu region, but also clear Koti-Chennaya off any dubitable origin. The fluidity of caste affiliation,⁷ in the memory of folk narrators is rendered unjustifiable in the historicizing attempts of the researching history publics. Nonetheless, the diverse mnemonizing believers of Koti-Chennaya abstain from any such rationalizing efforts, unmindful of the haziness involved in Koti-Chennaya's caste status. While the trope of miraculous descent opens up the narrative of Koti-Chennaya for the memory publics, it is equally unconcerned with any totalizing conclusion to the story of twin brothers. The play of indeterminacy, of possible-impossible aporias characterizes what we could call as the 'extra-human' beingness of Koti-Chennaya. The 'extra-human' memory of Koti-Chennaya accommodates extensions, it branches out in different directions, it connects innumerable points of memory. To summarise in Klein's (2000:130) words, "If history is objective in the coldest, hardest sense of the word, memory is subjective in the warmest, most inviting senses of that word. In contrast with history, memory fairy vibrates with the fullness of Being."

Conversely, while the 'fullness of *being*' concludes with the absence of tangible bodies of Koti-Chennaya for the history publics, the dynamicity, vibration, of extra-human existence takes off from the moment of corporeal cessation for the memory publics. They weave several strands for the continuation of heroes' life, connect it with multiple spatio-temporals and imagine an always-Present 'Dreamtime' into existence.

Contrary to the concerns of history public that human-izes Koti-Chennaya by also acknowledging a closure with their death, memory continues the narrative of Koti-Chennaya even after their death in Enmuru Battle. One of the foremost textual documentation of Koti-Chennaya *paddana* – "The Story of Koti and Channayya," an English translation of German Missionary Hermann Moegling's manuscript by Burnell (Navada and Fernandes, 2008) in mid 19th century – the narrative of Koti-Chennaya's life continues even after their 'demise' in the final battle. While the Ballala engages in final rites for the departed warriors, Koti knocks at the door of 'throne of Brahma,'⁸ only to be rejected by the Lord. Brahma refuses to allow Koti enter his abode alone, dictating him to be accompanied by his younger brother Chennaya. Accordingly, Koti returns to the world, and finds Chennaya sacrificing his life in the absence of his elder brother. The twin siblings

⁷ It perhaps also indicates an attempt to elevate Deyi's social standing by weaving the story of miraculous birth and Brahminic surrogacy.

⁸ Lord Bermer's misnomer or mis-presentation as Vedic Brahma.

reach the doors of Brahma again. This time too, Brahma refuses to let them in, commanding to be purified before entering his abode. Koti-Chennaya now appear “in the shape of aerial beings”⁹ before Ballala, asking him to purify them. After receiving funerary rites similar to that of a ‘royal Ballala,’ Koti-Chennaya reappear before Brahma’s throne for the third time. Similar to earlier occasions, Brahma denied permission to enter, directing the brothers to bathe in holy Ganges before approaching him again. Accordingly, Koti-Chennaya “drank the waters of sixteen holy places in order to wash away their sins, and the waters of twenty-four others to earn merit” (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 102). Accommodated into the council of Brahma finally, Koti-Chennaya stood on the right hand side of the Lord, and “were ever afterwards in the world as much honoured as Brahma himself” (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 102).

The above is a cursory outline of the ‘extra-human’ explorations of Koti-Chennaya as recorded in one of the earliest textual documentations. Another version of the epic sung almost one and a half centuries later by Monta Gowda and Eerappa Gowda (RRC collection, documented in 1989) also narrates similar post-demise itinerary of Koti-Chennaya. In the memory of Monta Gowda and Eerappa Gowda, the twin brothers set out on a voyage to purify themselves before residing in the three *garadis* built by Ballalas of Permala, Panja and Enmuru. Also, at the final moments of earthly life, Koti-Chennaya assure their benediction on all those who have faith and to appear in *mayo* whenever required. They continuously shift between the two worlds of ‘*soyo* and *mayo*,’¹⁰ between ‘consciousness and abstraction’ in both communicating with the Ballalas of earthly life and Lord Bermer of the other world. They commute between the human manifestation of *soyo* or *kayo* and the abstract manifestation of *mayo* after their corporeal death, before settling on the right hand side of their deity Kemmalaje¹¹ Bermer. Once Koti-Chennaya appear in the form of *mayo* to the Ballalas, demanding the construction of *garadis* and offering of annual rituals. In another instance, they present themselves as “aural sound of mosquito, in

⁹ Moegling’s version of Koti-Chennaya *paddana* (preserved by Burnell) is available only in the form of English translation.

¹⁰ I derive these words from the Tulu rendering of Koti-Chennaya *paddana* by Monta Gowda and Erappa Gowda. The distinction between life and life-after is indicated by conceptualizations like *soyo* (literally, ‘in conscious state’) and *mayo* (in abstraction, in invisible form; an active realm where *butas* return to take revenge, perform miraculous deeds, and so on); *kayo* (in the physical form, in the form of human body) and *mayo*.

Mayo is a state of abstraction in the Tuluva cosmological perceptions. It is not only restricted to the prevalent idea of ‘illusion’, but also signify the extra-human existence of the deified figures here.

¹¹ Kemmalaje is a place, and the chief deity Bermer in Koti-Chennaya cosmic imaginary is always connected with the place Kemmalaje.

the language of lizard” (Gowda and Gowda, 1989: 119). After ensuring the construction of *garadi*, Koti-Chennaya set out for ritual ablution before residing in the structures built for them.

Koti-Chennaya’s Conflict with Kantabare-Budabare

At this moment comes one of the most prevalent vignettes sustained in the memory of Koti-Chennaya tradition, and also a figment of memory that is challenged and rendered ‘impossible’ by the history publics. While most of the textual and editorially-intervened compilations of the Koti-Chennaya story conclude with the ascension of the twin brothers in the council of Brahma/Bermer, the complete version of the Koti-Chennaya *paddana* sung by Monta Gowda and Eerappa Gowda (1989) narrates an intertwined public memory with another of the heroic twin warriors, also belonging to the Billawa caste. Their expanded memory enters into the public memory of twin heroes called Kantabare and Budabare in Tulu region, raising key questions about the way conflicts between different quarters of power are underlined in the worship of Tuluva deities. The purported tussle between these twin set of heroes also could account for the enormous popularity of Koti-Chennaya in particular, and also the socio-political significance of resistance against authority among the Koti-Chennaya publics at large.

As narrated by Gowda and Gowda (1989) and more prominently prevalent in the geo-religious memory of Koti-Chennaya publics, the twin warriors set out in the northern direction of Tulunad at the behest of Lord Bermer in their after-life, in order to purify by taking bath in the sacred Ganges river. It is during this sojourn that they encounter another set of twin brothers at the border of Mulki¹² province towards the northern direction of Tulu region. There is a confrontation between the heroes as Kantabare-Budabare demand from Koti-Chennaya to worship and offer tributes to their deity Jumadi, only to meet resistance from Koti-Chennaya who considered Kemmalaje Bermer as their clan deity. What ensued was a battle that ‘never ended in seven nights and seven days,’ only to be finally stalled by the appearance of goddess ‘maadeyi.’¹³ As per the negotiating proposal of the Goddess, it was agreed by both brothers that the Mulki province from the edge of

¹² Mulki is a town in Dakshina Kannada district. It appears as a border between the present districts of Udupi and Dakshina Kannada (bifurcated in 1997) called as Tulunad together. Mulki was also one of the major administrative centres during colonial governance.

¹³ The Goddess is merely referred to as ‘maadeyi’ or ‘deyi’ in Monte Gowda, Eerappa Gowda’s version. However, she is identified as goddess Sri Durge of Sri Kshetra Bappanadu in Dallodi (2012), Nandavara (2001) & Kotekar (2012).

Surathkal to Hejamadi¹⁴ will be free of any *garadi* for Koti-Chennaya, and only Kantabare-Budabare would reside as heroes in this region. As a result, Koti-Chennaya terminated their sacred pilgrimage to northern Ganges, and returned towards sacred river Talakaveri¹⁵ in the South.

This intertwining of the twin warrior brothers' memory could only be found in some of the versions of Koti-Chennaya *paddana*, but not in the *paddana* narrating the life and exploits of Kantabare-Budabare. Further, while only selective versions of Koti-Chennaya sing about the confrontation between these two sets of brothers, most of the 'research' interventions debate extensively about the historicity of these brothers in comparison. Discussions are carried at length about the confrontation episode chiefly to determine the historical period to which these figures belonged. Deviating from Amin and Kotian (1990) who established that Kantabare-Budabare preceded a generation before Koti-Chennaya (37), Dejappa Dallodi (2012) in his detailed examination of the historicity of Koti-Chennaya argued for the antiquity of these heroes in comparison to Bare brothers (156). Both Nandavara (2001), Amin and Kotian, and Dallodi hypothesize about the causes of this public memory, deeming it more as a conciliatory effort between admirers of Koti-Chennaya and Kantabare-Budabare pairs, an intra-communitarian agreement (Nandavara, 2001: 158), thereby marking the sphere of popularity of these heroes. It is perceived as a 'folk' effort to retain the prominence of Kantabare-Budabare, at least in the Mulki region, as against the popularity of Koti-Chennaya that was spreading fast into the northern quarters of Tulunad. Goddess Durgaparameshwari is remembered to have mediated between the two brothers, ensuring the construction of *garadis* for Koti-Chennaya in all directions except the nine *maganes*¹⁶ of Mulki province, reserving it for the memory of Kantabare-Budabare, without either *garadis* or annual embodying rituals in their memory.

This vignette linking Koti-Chennaya to the similarly valorous heroes Kantabare-Budabare elsewhere is maintained exclusively in the memory of recollecting groups, sometimes in the oral songs of Koti-Chennaya, but more prominently in the geo-religious memory of Koti-Chennaya publics. In an inverse mode of *lieux de memoire*, Koti-Chennaya are remembered in the Mulki region in absentia, by not building *garadis* for them, but by

¹⁴ Two towns on either side of Mulki.

¹⁵ Talakaveri is the originating spot of river Kaveri in Karnataka, located in neighbouring Madikeri district.

¹⁶ Subdivisions within an administrative province in colonial period.

sustaining them through the pervasive memory of another set of ‘all-the-more-local’ heroes Kantabare-Budabare. It represents a tussle between the two ‘locals,’ vying to find space in the memorial dimensions of same worshipping publics; publics belonging to the same ethno-linguistic identity. The dilemma of intra-communitarian devotion is thus resolved by the negotiating presence (in absence) of the Goddess, thereby employing the overbearing influence of a Brahminic deity, Goddess Durgaparameshwari of the famous Bappanadu Temple in Mulki. Unmindful of the ‘scientific’ quests of the history publics, the memory publics vividly recollect the battle between Koti-Chennaya and Kantabare-Budabare, and weave this vignette into their sacred geography by not constructing *garadis* for Koti-Chennaya even to this day in the nine *maganes* of Mulki region. The miraculous manifests twice in this memory, once by arranging this episode in the after-life of Koti-Chennaya, and again by invoking the appearance of the Goddess within this already-envisioned extra-human realm. The public of memory does not seek any evidential basis for these heroes encounter, nor is it inclined to search for the historical sustainability of this event.

All the three vignettes from people’s memory recorded by Nandavara (2001: 157-160) for the absence of *garadis* for Koti Chennaya in pockets of Tulu belt recollect them as part of the encounter between already existing deities in specific areas with Koti-Chennaya on their sojourn. Scholars have already pointed at how ‘*bhuta*’ worship in the region is a parallel system of governance (Gowda, 1990), more often colluding with the different layers of power. Koti-Chennaya’s encounter with Kantabare-Budabare or with Muddas¹⁷ of Nadkodi *guttu*¹⁸ or with the Ullakulu deities at Bangadi¹⁹ could be studied as the struggle

¹⁷ Muddas are members of a large manorial family (called Nadyodi *guttu*) who once killed a boy fishing in their pond. To escape from punishment they went absconding for 12 years. They met Koti-Chennaya on their way. The twin brothers demanded in rage that a *garadi* should be built for them on the land of Nadyodi *guttu*, and they would protect Muddas if done so. Muddas returned after 12 years of absconding but refused to build a *garadi* as they already had the protective shield from *their* deities Ullaya and Kodamantaya (interestingly, *rajan* or royal deities, largely worshipped by Bunts). Koti-Chennaya cursed the family to fight among themselves, and scatter in different directions. It is this curse of Koti-Chennaya that is remembered as a reason behind the Nadyodi *guttu*’s disintegration (Nandavara, 2001: 159).

¹⁸ *Guttus* are manorial houses, largely belonging to affluent, land-owning Bunt families across Tulunad. It is symbolic of the power, influence and affluence of some families with ownership over vast tracts of land.

¹⁹ Koti-Chennaya’s attempt to settle at Bangadi and nearby places was thwarted by Ullakulu and Kodamantaya deities. While Kodamantaya snatched away the dagger of Koti, another deity Bhumi Baraga snatched Chennaya’s dagger. It is remembered that these daggers are preserved in the shrines of Bhumi Baraga and Kodamantaya at Pudyottu *guttu* and Layila (a village) respectively. During the annual rituals every year, these daggers of Koti-Chennaya are placed in the hands of the deities worshipped (Nandavara, 2001: 159).

between different pockets of power, represented and upheld by particular *butas*. However unlike in Kantabare-Budabare episode, there is no reconciliation arrived at in their encounter with other deities, more often *rajan daivas*.²⁰ Nevertheless, what has prevailed in the memory of Koti-Chennaya publics is their conflict with Bare brothers, also undertaken for elaborate ‘historical scrutiny’ by the history publics. In extension of what the scholars have identified as an intra-communitarian fight for a ‘local’ icon (Dallodi, 2012; Nandavara, 2001) resolved by the divine presence, the encounter between Koti-Chennaya and Kantabare-Budabare could be understood as a struggle between two factions of power in the Tulu political history. Nine *magane* of Mulki was one of the two major administrative provinces under colonial rule, preceded by the rule of local chiefdoms like Savantas. What triggered the conflict between two sets of brothers is Koti-Chennaya’s refusal to offer tribute to the clan deity of Urappadi *guttu* demanded by its guardians, Kantabare-Budabare. They uphold their allegiance to Kemmalaje Berma, thereby refusing to yield to the authority of another deity Jumadi, protecting possibly the feudal clan of Urappadi *guttu*. The fight between these two duos and eventual mediation of a royal Goddess, demarcating their jurisdiction, perhaps is also reflective of the efforts of the dominant to restrict the sphere of influence of resistive figures like Koti-Chennaya. By excluding the nine *maganes* of Mulki province from the ubiquitous presence of Koti-Chennaya through symbolic *garadis*, a particular socio-political authority is protected, also the shadowing influence of a Brahminic Goddess, here Durgaparameshwari of Bappanadu Temple. Such a dominant suppression is carried out through the guarding figures of Kantabare-Budabare, who are already hailed for their unflinching loyalty to the ruling family of Chandraya Ballala and his Queen Pulla Pegadtti of Samanta (perhaps Savanta) kingdom.

Koti-Chennaya’s Conflict with Dalit figures

While the encounter between Koti-Chennaya and Kantabare-Budabare culminated in a resolution of geographical demarcation in the memory of Koti-Chennaya publics, especially in the Mulki region, Koti-Chennaya are remembered to have been defeated by another set of twin heroes Kanada-Katada,²¹ belonging to Mansa, a Dalit caste in Tulu

²⁰ *Rajan daiva* – occupy highest position in the hierarchy of *buta* classification. More often they are clan deities of ruling class, village chiefs and other prominent *guttus* in the area.

²¹ Kanada-Katada, also called as Kamberlu, are cultural heroes of Mansa caste, a caste placed much lower even within the caste-structure of Dalit castes in Tulunad. As Nalike caste mediators (higher than Manser) wouldn’t offer their ‘bodies’ to conduct *kola* for Kanada-Katada, only *agel* (rite of offering food) is conducted for these deities (Ashok Alva in a mobile conversation on 20th July, 2017).

According to Nandavara’s version (2001: 214), an encounter between Kanada-Katada and Koti-Chennaya takes place in Enmuru village. A combat ensued to determine who was superior in physical

region. Interestingly there is no mention of this defeat of Koti-Chennaya in the popularly prevalent memory of Koti-Chennaya publics. It is only in the *paddana* of Kanada-Katada that the subduing of Koti-Chennaya is reminisced, thereby overturning the subdual of Dalit castes²² within the narrative of Koti-Chennaya itself. These vignettes of the triumph of ‘untouchable’ castes over Koti-Chennaya could be understood as a counter-narrative to their domination over castes much lower in the social organization of Tuluva society.

Interestingly another set of twin brothers belonging to Dalit caste Mugeru or Meras called Mudda-Kalala²³ also have discord with Koti-Chennaya during an incident of boar hunting. Enraged, Mudda-Kalala go to the lake of Lord Bermer for fishing, and disappeared/entered into the realm of *mayo* there (Nandavara, 2001: 213). In variation, Abhay Kumar, who published an entire monograph on the Mugeru community (1997), discusses in detail the conflict between Koti-Chennaya and Mudda-Kalala. According to his version, Mugerlu brothers arrived at a river for holy bath, and found Koti-Chennaya too having arrived for the same purpose. When Billawa brothers failed to create water out of boulder with the help of their daggers, the Mugerlu brothers broke the boulder open with their arrows. Koti-Chennaya refused to take bath in the water generated by the arrows of ‘lower caste’ men and returned without their holy bath. Kumar reads the intended message of this episode as perhaps an attempt to demonstrate the greatness of Mugerlu deities in terms of *satya* (truthfulness) and valour as superior to that of Koti-Chennaya (1997: 65).

However, Kotekar (2012: 210-212) reserves a section for the discussion on the relationship between Mugeru and Billawas, which in fact, presents a completely opposite account of the relationship between their respective set of twin heroes. While underlining the favourable relationship between these two castes, Kotekar points at how Mudda-Kalala

prowess. In the course, Kanada-Katada defeat Koti-Chennaya, however arriving at compromise at the end. They continue together, and meet the other set of Mudda-Kalala on the way. Thus, three pairs of twin brothers continue their sojourn together.

²² Burnell’s manuscript titled “The Story of Koti and Channaya” contains an episode where the collective of Dalit castes, including ‘Bakders, Koragars and Mugeru’ are subdued by the sheer physical strength of Koti-Chennaya. “The Koragars, living in their sheds called *koppu*, the Mugeru in those called *voni* and the Bakders of the plain” (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 74) wait in the forest to attack Koti-Chennaya. However, the twin brothers displayed their dexterous skill with daggers, scaring the people in hide, employed by the villainous Ballala of Panja village. Witnessing the brothers’ prowess, they “cried for protection” saying, “For ever and ever we will serve you like crows” (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 75).

²³ Popularly called as Mugeru, Mudda-Kalala (or even called as Manyale-Pernale in Kasargodu area) are considered as Dalit heroes, deified eventually. *Mugerla kola* or *kola* annual rituals for Mugerlu brothers are widely prevalent among Dalit castes in Tulunad.

have remained with Koti-Chennaya all through their lives, and how there are no valorous acts of Mudda-Kalala without the presence of *Baidarkal*²⁴ (2012: 211). He points at the similarities between their annual rituals, between the brothers' temperament, and other similar episodes in their respective narratives. Nevertheless, Kotekar's account of the 'inalienable' relation between Mudda-Kalala and Koti-Chennaya is wrapped with an undercurrent of hierarchy between the two castes, placing Mugerlas as *muladavaru* or 'bonded labourer' of prominent, land-owning Billawa families, however, deemed as "members of the family itself" (2012: 210). His account of the rites performed during *Mugerla kola* (annual ritual offered to Mudda-Kalala) heirarchizes the Billawa caste, pointing at how the ritual begins with the rendering of Koti-Chennaya song, only then to be followed by *Mugerla sandi* (song), and how only after receiving milk from the women at Billawa household, Tannimaniga²⁵ enters into the ritual arena.

Thus, the widely-prevalent memory of Koti-Chennaya not only erases memories of Koti-Chennaya's defeat in the hands of figures 'lower' in caste strata, but also interpret the underlining hierarchy as a harmonious relationship. It is directly analogous with the hierarchized relationship between Bunts-Billawas, between *rajan daiwas*-Koti-Chennaya, that characterizes the *buta* worship as a whole in Tulunad. I will return to this aspect of structural caste relationship in Tulunad in the third chapter.

To return, as outlined above, the memory publics of Koti-Chennaya maintain a sequence of vignettes, unheeding to the modern demands for a rational, plausible past. The heroes traverse in their after-life, engage in jurisdictional clashes, get defeated in counter-memories and establish themselves as benedictory deities in the fluid memories of Koti-Chennaya publics. On the contrary, the history publics engage in a scientific quest and attempt to both historicize as well as sift the miraculous out of the memory-complex of Koti-Chennaya. A vast network of unconnected vignettes, more often spilling into the narratives of other heroes and also transgressing the life-death binaries, constitute as a texture of the memory publics. This dilution of the human-not-human, of the body and its

²⁴ Koti-Chennaya together are also addressed as *Baidarl* or *Baiderkalu*

²⁵ Tannimaniga is the female deity, considered as the sister of Mugerlu. Tannimaniga is almost always present in embodied form during *Mugerla kola*. The mediated form of Tannimaniga is carried out by men always.

cessation also could be understood by studying the *sthalapurana*²⁶ or what I call ‘edifice-stories’ associated with the construction of *garadis* across the Tulu region.

***Sthalapurana* : Edifice-stories**

The number of *garadis* worshipping Koti-Chennaya in present day Tuluwad extends to more than 220, and at least a half of them narrate edifice-stories, reflecting the deep-rooted devotion people have maintained for the twin brothers across the entire Tulu region, also making trans-regional connections among Tuluvas in neighbouring Kodagu district, Kadaragod district (in Kerala), the metropolitan city of Mumbai, and even in the Gulf countries. While I reserve a detailed analysis of the spread of *garadis* in these ‘regions,’ their spatio-social significance, and the political implications emerging out of it in ensuing chapter, I focus on the edifice-stories here in order to substantiate the “fullness of being” (Klein, 2000) that memory vibrates with in public practices like Koti-Chennaya. In continuation with the way ‘local’ is negotiated and demarcated in the after-life confrontation between two sets of twin heroes, the study of edifice-stories or what is termed as *sthalapurana* further bears out the way memory resists totalizing narrative closure and also the normalizing of modern secular, unified self. It contests the “empty, homogenous time”²⁷ by imagining something of a ‘time out of time’ or ‘everywhen’ as conceptualized among the Aborigines of Australia.

Dreamtime - Songlines

Alcheringa, an indigenous term in Aranda language expresses the idea of creation as maintained among the Aboriginal tribes of Central Australia. Implying something closer to ‘eternal, uncreated,’ the Aranda tribes conceptualize creation to be the work of cultural heroes who travelled across a formless land, creating sacred sites and important places of interest during their travels, thereby establishing what is called as ‘Songlines.’²⁸ Such Songlines are the dreaming and travelling trails of the sacred ancestors, whose spirits, the community believes, continue into the present, representing a time-out-of-time. They

²⁶ Amin and Kotian (1990) use the term *sthalapurana* to indicate the stories recounted by people associated with *garadis*. In stead of retaining its literal translation of ‘local mythologies’ I prefer to retain the phrase ‘edifice-stories’ so as to indicate that these stories are primarily narratives of how a *garadi* came into existence, and also to stay away from the Hindu mythological connotations associated with the word *sthalapurana*.

²⁷ Walter Benjamin quoted in Olick and Robbins, 1998: 116.

²⁸ Chatwin, Bruce (1987); <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dreamtime>; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Songline>; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Songlines; Web on 12th April, 2017.

continue to exist both before birth and after death, eternally residing in the realm of Dreaming. Such figures of heroic proportions with supernatural abilities dreamt and sang the land into existence, thereby both creating as well as trailing it. Through their dreams, the land both existed as well as got crafted out, engendering Songlines into the land created. Singing these Songlines or 'dreaming tracks' could map out a region, and are recorded in traditional songs, stories, dance and painting. Similarly, the spread of *garadis* or memorial-worship centres for Koti-Chennaya across the Tulu region crafts out the 'region' of Tulunad, at the same time, evoking a 'dreaming track' of the twin brothers. Dream constitutes as a chief mode of recollection of Koti-Chennaya, further mnemonized through the construction of *lieux de memoire* of *garadis*. Memory acquires a peripatetic nature, travels along the Songlines of Koti-Chennaya, and evokes a dreamtime, a time-out-of-time for the recollecting publics.

Most of the edifice narratives available always begin by connecting their *garadi* with one or few other places, always also expressed in terms of Koti-Chennaya's arrival in their locality from so and so village around. One spatial construction always connects with another spatiality, unmindful of the escaping-temporality.²⁹ The dreams of worshipping publics dream a track into existence, connecting locales of Koti-Chennaya's sacred travel within the geo-linguistic bounds of Tulu region. The 'meso space'³⁰ or 'region' thus imagined is an intimate geo-cultural production, which is at the same time, "a process, a spatio-social becoming' as discussed in G Aloysius' *Conceptualizing the Region* (2013: 19). Invoked by distinct ways of telling, and symbolic monuments of *garadis*, a distinct landscape is created which is, to sum up in Tilley's words, "a series of named locales, a set of relational places, linked by paths, movements and narratives."³¹ The Koti-Chennaya landscape thus emerges as a mnemonic of sacred belief, intimately connecting the biographical itinerary of Koti-Chennaya, social identities and a biography of the spatio-cultural imagination of Tuluva land. Thus constructed through an intimate spatial-social dialectic over a period of time, such intermediary³² 'regions' are invested with much human emotion and imagination, having continuous interaction and negotiation with the social

²⁹ I say escaping-temporality because these connected *garadis* recount completely different periods as the time when their *garadis* were set up, more often not allowing an easy sequential connection in time.

³⁰ G Aloysius's (2013) concept of "meso space" as a region between nation-state and locality; between macro nation and micro locality.

³¹ From Christopher Tilley's *A phenomenology of landscape: places, paths, and monuments* quoted in Pearson, 2006.

³² At meso level

structures, hierarchies, social realities existing within the ‘perennial becoming’ that the region essentially is (Aloysius, 2013: 34). The region is thus a production of myths-histories, memories, motifs, worldviews, dominance-resistances shared by a group of people within a specific ecological setting (Aloysius, 2013: 22). Similarly the region imagined by Koti-Chennaya publics also infuse the land with a network of communicative symbols, all woven around the construction of *garadis* in their respective locality.

A number of causative narratives for erecting *garadis* highlight the appearance of Koti-Chennaya in people’s dream; their arrival at different localities ‘demanding’ a site to reside in exchange for divine protection; sprouting of the boiled rice;³³ their ‘appearance’ on mediated bodies, and so on. More than half of the available edifice-myths recount a supernatural event leading to the construction of a *garadi* in hundreds of villages. Koti-Chennaya appear in multiple embodiments - as figures in dream, as travelling youth, through bodily mediations, by causing miracles in invisible form, by appearing in *joga* or physical form, by inspiring the sculptor to carve their statues,³⁴ etc. Thus a roster of miraculous events and memories are instilled within Koti-Chennaya’s life in the Tuluva public memory, more often interacting and negotiating with the spatio-temporal specificities of hundreds of ‘localities’ that come together to create the ‘region’ of ‘Tulunad.’

Continuous bargain over a tract of land, symbolized by the construction of *garadis*, characterize many of the edifice-stories recounted by the memory publics worshipping Koti-Chennaya. Most of these recollect the twin brothers, either in *joga* form or within dream-vision, approaching the most powerful in the locality, demanding *garadis* to be built. Such centres of authority are represented either by a powerful landowning *guttu* families (who could be the patel/chief of the village too³⁵), or the chief of the place, or even a most popularly remembered King around. After arriving from so-and-so place, Koti-Chennaya invariably approach the dominant first, demonstrate their *karanika* or divine power, even

³³ Sprouting of the already boiled rice is considered inauspicious.

³⁴ The edifice myth narrated at Kurkalu Garadi recollects how “immensely-sized,” “handsome, valiant youth with heroic radiance” appeared before the anxious sculptor, and inspired him in carving their wooden statues. It is generally believed that Koti-Chennaya will appear to the sculptors in dream, facilitating the erection of their statues (Amin and Kotiyan: 253).

³⁵ B. Surendra Rao (2010) points at how four prominent households or *guttus* were identified within a ‘Grama’ (the basic unit of administration) as functioning foci of power, and how “by way of formalizing their status and authority, their jurisdiction (*gadi*) were marked” in the hands of *guttu* gadipattinar/ *guttu* chief (55).

punishing those who defy their presence and demand. I discuss the trope of defy-punish-surrender that is woven into the edifice-stories of *garadis* at length below.

Memories of Allegiance

According to the edifice-story of Bailadka Garodi (also called Anekallu Garodi) in the village of Anekere in Karkala taluk in Udupi district, Koti-Chennaya appeared in the dream of Bairava King (Jain) and ‘cautioned’ him to build a *garadi*. The king didn’t heed any attention to their ‘caution.’ As a result, the throne-elephant starved itself to almost-death stage followed by many other ominous incidents in the palace, all owing to the *karanika* of the twin brothers. Concerned King sought the help of his astrologers, who pronounced that “Baider have arrived at this country” and a *garadi* needs to be built for them. Accordingly the Bairava King vowed that he would let his elephant draw a boulder to build *garadi* if everything is set in its proper course. Consequently, with things falling into their place and the throne-elephant recovering, the Bairava King got a *garadi* built for Koti-Chennaya’s worship. The *anekal* or elephant-stone is identified in front of the *garadi* even to this day (Amin and Kotian, 1990: 284-285).

While confrontation with the Bairava king is found in the edifice-stories of more than one *garadi* in Karkala Taluk where the Jain Bhairava kings ruled in for a long time, a similar confronting encounter takes place between the brothers and the Ballala (again, largely identified as Jains) as per the memory of people surrounding Laadi Saanada Gudde Garodi in Laadi Saanada Gudde of Karkala Taluk of Udupi district. During the times when *nema* ritual was conducted without erecting a *garadi*, Koti-Chennaya demanded in rage, “We are suffering in wind and rains. Build a *garadi* for us.” The Ballala didn’t pay attention to their rage, and instead suggested they could leave if they wished to do so. Koti-Chennaya, in turn, wanted to know if they could leave a mark of their departure behind? As Ballala nodded in affirmative, the next morning his Laadi *guttu* House had burnt down to heaps of ash. immediately, a *garadi* was built for Koti-Chennaya. According to a similar vignette from another locality, Koti-Chennaya arrived at Mallaru *guttu* and got a *garadi* built by the family. ‘Roughly 90 years ago’ when the chief of the *guttu* was away, a family feud resulted in the *garadi* being burnt down. However, a twin Fig sapling sprouted out of the heap of burning cinder, and the returned Chief uttered, “Nevertheless, you (Koti-Chennaya) did not burn away.” It is believed, the heads of Koti-Chennaya statues fell in front of the culprit’s house and burnt incessantly for seven days. Consequently, they faced extreme hardships, and at last offered seven foot wooden statues of Koti-Chennaya

to the same Mallar *garadi* in Udupi taluk in 1964 (Amin and Kotian, 1990: 262). The memories of wrath-reprimand, guilt-retribution continues through many generations, intertwining the biography of Koti-Chennaya intimately with the people's autobiographies.

While some of the memories recollect how repentance was replied with benediction of Koti-Chennaya, a few other memories draw a straight link between 'that past' and the present that still bears marks of the brothers' wrath. Koti-Chennaya once arrived at Mujuru village in Karkala taluk, and reached both *Haadi* house and *Melantaguttu* (upper storied house) one after the other. When Koti-Chennaya asked for water from the *arasa* or king there, the arrogant inmates only provided a tumbler to draw water from the nearby well. The brothers faced similar humiliation at *Melantaguttu* house. Enraged brothers cursed, "Let there be neither poverty nor affluence in this house." It is believed that the two houses in Mujuru village remain in the same condition even to this day (Amin and Kotian, 1990: 302).

Thus while a present is comprehended based on a specifically-'local' memory of the heroes' extra-human itinerary, a few others are intricately connected to their human life in the three villages of Permale-Panja-Enmuru. Panja in Sulya Taluk, a place of hostility during their lifetime, is believed, till this day, to be under their 'wrathful-eye' (*uri drishti*). The people here believe that there is no scope for an organized development in the entire Panja region. Their memory also supplies a proof for that belief in a Brahmin's story, who bought the land near Panja *garadi* 'some 30 years ago' (in 1960s), attempted agriculture only to face more and more hardships and hurdles later. An astrologer had also warned that the land belonged only to Koti-Chennaya. But as the Brahmin neglected offering periodic rituals to the brothers, it is said, he lost his sanity and vacated the place forever.

Other vignettes of Koti-Chennaya's encounter with the dominant caste and class include events like how once Tulunad's feudatory chieftain Pallattu Naika's horse kneeled and didn't take a step ahead near Udyavara,³⁶ and how his promise to build a *garadi* for Koti-Chennaya, 'who resided in that place,' made the horse rise on its feet again (Amin and Kotian 1990: 255); similarly how the palanquin of a priest of Undaru Mutt stopped at the spot where a *garadi* once existed, and how the palanquin moved only when the priest vowed to "reserve that piece of land to rebuild a *garadi*?" on the same spot (Amin and Kotian 1990: 260) and so on. Instances of a Jain or a ruler expressing distrust over the *karnika* of Koti-Chennaya, only to submit eventually also constitutes as a chief

³⁶ Edifice-story associated with Kutpadi *garadi* in Udupi taluk.

polyptotonic³⁷ vignette maintained by the Koti-Chennaya publics. According to the edifice-story associated with Manikallu Garodi in Billadi village, Udupi taluk, Koti-Chennaya arrived first at Chittaru of Billadi village, but couldn't reside as there were a host of 'local deities' already inhabiting in the area. They walked further and settled at Manikallu, and presented themselves as twin youth in the dream of the present Poojary's³⁸ great grandfather. The area belonged to a Jain Ballala who first demanded to see a vision of the youth as well. As Koti-Chennaya accordingly offered their glimpse in Ballala's dream, a *garadi* was constructed on his land. Further, they also guided the priest (Billawa poojary) about the rites to be offered periodically (Amin and Kotian, 1990: 260). Another vignette emphasising the divine influence of Koti-Chennaya over the worldly powers of a king or ruler is narrated by the publics remembering Koti-Chennaya in the Padugrama village of Udupi taluk. They recollect how the members of Bailaguttu (a *guttu* house) visited the site at 'Tenkanalokanadu' (Mulki) to witness the huge temple a king was getting built, and a horse sculpture to be installed in the temple. The people of Bailaguttu desired to have such a horse in their *garadi* as well. That same night Koti-Chennaya appeared in their dream and suggested to ask the king to give the horse. They also assured to 'take care' of the king if he didn't fulfil their wish. Once the king refused to hand his horse over to the people of Bailaguttu, he fainted, only to regain his consciousness when people vowed in repentance to the twin brothers. The king continued his stubbornness and threw the horse into the sea, pronouncing "If Koti-Chennaya were to be *karnika* men, let the horse walk on its feet to their *garadi*." To the great joy of villagers, the horse swam beside the *garadi* next morning, and also placed itself inside the *garadi* in villagers' absence in the night. The people here also recollect how the roof of *garadi* had to be raised twice as the horse inside has been growing in length (Amin and Kotian, 1990: 273).

Memories of Conflict with other deities

Further, the twin brothers not only confront the socially 'upper' groups during their itinerary, but also encounter other 'higher' deities in the memory of recollecting publics. The resistive imagination of Koti-Chennaya continues as they encounter religiously 'upper'

³⁷ Repetition of words with the same root but different forms. Here, repetition of the same intention/outcome but expressed through different anecdotes.

³⁸ Poojary is one of the surnames of Billawa caste; Poojary is more often associated with the 'priest' in *garadis* and also officiating 'priest' during *kola*, *nema* for other deities.

deities, categorised as ‘rajan daiva.’³⁹ While in some localities, they abide by the word of resident deity, largely belonging to the mainstream Hindu pantheon, in some other instances they challenge, albeit subtly, the deities principally worshipped by the landowning caste of Bunts like Kodamantaya. Such a challenge to the influence of ‘rajan daiva’ or ‘royal deities’ is in continuation of their resistance to the equivalent dominant castes of Brahmins, Jains and Bunts. to cite from the edifice-story of Kallottu *Garadi* in Tellar village of Karkala taluk, once when Koti-Chennaya were resting with beetle leaves in their mouth, a member of the Tellare *guttu* called Poni walked by in a dejected mood. The brothers promised to fulfil his wishes and enquired about the cause of his grief. Their assurance of benediction came in exchange for offering of *dharmā nema*, an elaborate ritual offering, as conducted for other deities Jaladurga Devi and Kodamantaya by the family. Poni held their feet and shared the reason of his grief as the impending loss of his land towards the government’s debt. Koti-Chennaya handed him over three small stones to be placed in his stone chest, and warned him not to look back until he reached his abode. When Poni was about to reach the entrance of his house, he heard the drums of his family deity Kodamantaya. Remembering the assurance of the twin brothers, Poni moved ahead and placed the stones in his stone chest. Koti-Chennaya reappeared in his vexed dreams that night. The next morning when he opened his stone chest in front of the debt collectors, to his immense surprise he found golden coins. Clearing all his debts, Poni worshipped Koti-Chennaya in lofty reverence. Couched in a subtle language, the instance of Poni not paying heed to the drum of his family deity Kodamantaya, but instead believing in the protective assurance of Koti-Chennaya denotes a shift in the allegiance of a most-likely ‘upper’ caste Bunt or Jain household. Koti-Chennaya enter into the interiors of his house, demand for *dharmānema* and thus get established as the chief protective spirit of his family. By ousting a relatively ‘superior’ deity from its central position, Koti-Chennaya also challenge the parallel order of authority of deities, symbolized by Kodamantaya and Jaladurga Devi here.

Expanding the memories of resistance, and offering an alternative seat of power by Koti-Chennaya is another vignette associated with Karje Garodi in Hosuru village of Udupi taluk. Once when some devotees set out to undertake pilgrimage to Kashi or Banaras,⁴⁰ the twin brothers stopped their journey saying, “There is no necessity for you to

³⁹ As already described elsewhere, *rajan daivas* occupy foremost position in the hierarchical categorization of the deities, worshipped largely by elaborate *guttu* families. Some of the *rajan daivas* are Jarandaya, Kodamantaya, Kukkinantaya, Jumadi, Ullakulu and so on.

⁴⁰ Considered holy by the followers of mainstream Hindu religion in India.

go to Kashi. The holy water of Kashi is available here.” Stating thus they settled at Karje, and a *garadi* was built eventually. By presenting themselves as sacred figures equivalent to that of the mainstream Hindu deity at Kashi Temple, and their *garadi* to that of the distant Hindu worship centre, Koti-Chennaya not only offer an alternative conceptualization of the sacred, but also open up possibilities for a vernacular religion for Tuluva ethno-linguistic minority. The sacred-supremacy of mainstream Hindu religion is contested, offering a local-sacral substitute in the vernacular bodies of Koti-Chennaya.

While the above narrated memories of the publics of faith of Koti Chennaya weave and maintain the vignettes of resistance and recognition in relation to both ‘local’ and mainstream Hindu deities, a few other inter-communal conflicts too get translated as memory associated with the twin brothers. For instance, the social conflict between proselytizing Christian missionaries and the local population is translated in cultural language in the edifice-narrative associated with Berandottu *Garodi* in Karkala taluk. People here remember how the ritual of *nema* was conducted at Atturu-Doopadakatte even before the construction of a *garadi*. However, every time the ritual was held, a Jesuit Cross nearby always tumbled into the ground. After three consecutive years of similar incidence, the missionary priest enticed the mediating Parava (belonging to the Scheduled Caste) couple to bring a handful of mud from the ritual site to add under the Cross. The Cross ceased to collapse, however, both the Parava couple and the missionary met with sudden deaths. Due to this, it is said, Koti-Chennaya left Atturu-Doopadakatte and settled at nearby Berandottu. This is an instance where the memories of Christian conversion, especially of the people belonging to ‘lower’ castes is interwoven with that of the erection of a *garadi*, thereby a section of the society recording its disapproval of conversion to Christianity, a wide phenomena since mid 19th century in Tulunad. Fear in the wrath of deities is commonly deployed by both sides in order to persuade and dissuade the ‘lower’ castes from and converting to it. While on the one hand, the Christian tracts often emphasised on how local deities are vindictive and fearful, on the other, conversion to Christianity was dissuaded, largely by the upper castes,⁴¹ highlighting the consequences of a deity’s wrath again. By interweaving such memories of caution into the edifice-stories of *garadi*, and thus with Koti-Chennaya, an anti-conversion position is encoded in a sacred language.

Through the above vignettes it could be understood how allegiance to Koti-Chennaya is achieved even by penalizing the non-venerating. However, a vast number of

⁴¹ From Missionary records about how Bunts were the most tenacious in holding on to their faith, and how Christian conversion, a hard task, was hailed abundantly among the Missionaries.

edifice-stories, especially belonging to the Udupi and Karkala taluks recollect how Koti-Chennaya arrived at a locality, approached the most-influential there, made their presence and power felt through miracles, and how a *garadi* was built in all reverence by the same 'upper' caste households. No retributive justice is carried out, but a total surrender to the power of Koti-Chennaya. The brothers sought land randomly, sometimes asking for it directly and some other time by the rite of throwing a coconut in any direction; both acts ensuring an uncontested apportioning of a piece of land to twin deities. An arbitrary claim over land, and resultant refiguration of land relationships triggered by the public memory of Koti-Chennaya is an interesting aspect to explore, and this I reserve for the next chapter.

The above narratives are outside the linear *paddana* sung about the brothers' life, and are also outside the tenets of negation of life after death. Through their travails in the form of *mayo* or world of abstraction, Koti-Chennaya demand their right over land in exchange for extending benedictory assurance. The dominant castes and class – Brahmins, Jains, Bunts, the ruling kings, priests of Mutts – are symbolically domesticated by ensuring a complete acceptance of their power. Submission to the presence of Koti-Chennaya and the construction of *garadis* on the land demarcated by the brothers uphold their unchallenged claim over the economic resources and religious allegiance of the dominant social groups. Land or economic rights that led to the warriors' confrontation with villainous Minister Budyanta, and later between Panja and Enmuru provinces, is legitimately claimed in their after-life, thus reinforcing their identity in the public, communitarian domain.

Within the contours of the vernacular religion of Tuluva people, deities like Koti-Chennaya, Kalkuda-Kallurti, Koddabbu, Koraga Taniya,⁴² belonging to socially deprived castes at different levels, fight against the temporal authorities, if not during their life time but at least in their after-life lives. The injustice meted out during their *joga* form is avenged in the form of *mayo*. Belonging to the same genre of retributive narrative, the memories of Koti-Chennaya span from their claims for justice within the oral epic associated, to the innumerable memories constructed on spatio-temporal contingencies. The large corpus of polyphonic edifice-stories assembled around hundreds of *garadis* carry the subtext of a 'subaltern' claim over both social and economic recognition. The roster of vignettes recorded above underlines Koti-Chennaya's claim over land, a significant actor in the

⁴² Their stories are outlined in the Introduction.

Tuluva religious cosmology; the dominant's submission to their authority; an unparalleled expansion of Koti-Chennaya publics across the Tulu 'region'; and finally, the creation of a 'region' that is constructed through a geo-cultural intimacy. While I discuss some of these thoughts at length in the next chapter, I have reserved the current chapter on memory to delineate how a large, ephemeral archive of religio-mnemonic recollection is maintained by the memory publics of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad.

Thus, "seen as an individual and as a social capacity, memory is not simply the storage of past "facts" but the ongoing work of reconstructive imagination" to sum up in the words of Jan Assmann (1998: 14). Memory is always processed and mediated depending upon the semantic frames and needs of a given society at a particular point of the present. The edifice-stories constructed by the memory publics of Koti-Chennaya also intertwine their sacred conceptualizations with that of the present socio-economic needs. In the process, the twin brothers transform into sites of continuity, living on and unfolding in the collective memory of remembering publics. Such collective memories summon the figures anytime, anywhere, thwarting the linearity of space and time. The memory publics, unlike history publics, do not rely on any external referentiality, but rely exclusively on their own stories, dreams, visions, beliefs in recollecting the past figures. The twin brothers are instituted in each village of their own; highly-personalized, localized narratives are woven, creating a songline for Koti-Chennaya Region. There is no reaching after "facts" or verifiable truths but instead, the truth of memory "is subject to time so that it changes with every new identity and every new present" (Assmann, 1998: 14). Further, there is no dichotomy imagined between the human and the extra-human, or between this life and the life-after. As demonstrated above, Koti-Chennaya traverse after their death, connect between multiple zigzag memories, make their presence felt through human-superhuman deeds, and thus, establish themselves as ubiquitous sacred figures.

Bodily Memory

Focussing his monograph on one of the major absences in social memory studies, Paul Connerton discusses at length the role of ritual performances in sustaining memory of communities around. He proposes to look beyond narratives, or what he calls 'inscribing practices' and to focus on 'incorporating practices,' found chiefly in commemorative ceremonies, or "the memorization of culturally specific postures" as an example (1989: 73). His emphasis is on incorporating practices which in fact provide "a particularly effective system of mnemonics" (102), thereby Connerton catapults body and performative

practices into the centre stage of his analysis. According to him, the social memory of a community is organized and demonstrated through the intensely inter-related social activities of commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices. Commemorative ceremonies are nothing but embodied forms of rites, acquiring symbolic significance only through the bodily enactments during ceremonial demonstration. To put it in his words, “if there is such a thing as social memory, we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies. Commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative (only) in so far as they are performative... performative memory is bodily” (1989: 71). As a completely new social order is not conceivable, Connerton suggests that memory is not only personal and cognitive but also socially habitual. The past is thus, in “habitual memory” sedimented in the body, i.e., “incorporating practices.” While my understanding here does not derive much insight from the ‘habit’ attribute of social memory, Connerton is highly significant in bringing the question of body and its diverse practices into the study of social memories. Culturally specific performances providing a mnemonics of the body is a useful insight especially while understanding the re-presentation of Koti-Chennaya during ritual performances of *nema* across the Tulu region. The embodied image of the twin brothers during ritual ceremonies constitute a significant vehicle of the public memory of Koti-Chennaya in Tuluva context, and it is to this mnemonics of the body that I turn my attention now.

While in the previous section I outlined how the kinetographic memory of people re-creates the presence of Koti-Chennaya in many spatio-temporalities, in continuation of the same ‘represented presences’ (Connerton, 1989: 68) I analyse the ‘gestural repetition’ that takes place in embodied forms of Koti-Chennaya during *nema* ritual ceremonies. However, without designating them as ‘rites of preliterate peoples’ as done by a few memory theorists, I understand the embodied re-presentation of Koti-Chennaya during annual rituals as a creative conjuring up of the active presence of beings, in a time-less present.

Between months of December to May, like all other deities of Tulunad, the ritual ceremonies of Koti-Chennaya, are conducted in hundreds of *garadis*. Either conducted as part of the large complex of annual worship, including offering to a few other deities, or held exclusively for the worship of Koti-Chennaya, *nema* ceremonies involve embodiment of the twin brothers as its central component. I focus on the ritual ‘praxis’⁴³ which includes

⁴³ I derive the idea of ‘praxis’ from Raminder Kaur’s work (2003) that attempts to amalgamate a set of practices associated with a public festival, here public ritual as integral to the socio-political study of

embodying aspects here, adding on to my understanding of the memorial dimensions of Koti-Chennaya publics in Tulu region. In the course I argue that a symbiotic interaction between death and life-after; or in extension, between past and present, are integral to the scared imaginary of Koti-Chennaya. While life-death-life schema guides the ontology of beings of yesteryear like Koti-Chennaya, they also percolate into every 'present' after that. This outside-the-closure, beyond-the-spatiotemporal essence of deified beings is, in fact, a fundamental constituent of the Tuluva religious cosmos. While not delving deep into the philosophical, anthropological or folkloristic or even psychological conceptualization of these rituals, I adopt the frame of mnemonic recollection in order to study the image of Koti-Chennaya as maintained by the memory publics here.

Before interpreting the ritual arena as a demonstrative stage of memory, it is relevant to add a linear account of the way *nema* rituals are conducted in hundreds of *garadis* across Tulunad. Except for a few ritualistic differences between the *garadis* in *tenkana* (southern) and *badagana* (northern) sides of Tulunad (roughly, Dakshina Kannada district as *tenkana* and Udupi district as *badagana*), most of the *garadis* follow similar ritualistic patterns (Amin and Kotian, 1990). The major rituals generally begin either on the previous or ritual night by serving vegetarian food to Koti-Chennaya, Kujumba Kanjava,⁴⁴ Tannimaniga,⁴⁵ in a rite called as *agel balasuni* (offering victuals). *Agel* rite is followed by the Parava⁴⁶ mediators (always the same Parava dalit caste members) singing⁴⁷ the *paddana* of Koti-Chennaya, in what is called as *bira panpunu* (singing the valour). Night-long *Bira panpunu* has been drastically reduced in recent years, confining it to singing small portions during the embodiment nights itself. Parava members are generally not allowed within the *garadi* interiors except during the ritual nights (Nandavara, 2001: 232). On the night of

such events. To quote Kaur (2003: 12) 'Festival Praxis' (in the context of Ganesha Festival in Maharashtra) include "rites, artistic work, mandal member's activities, means of financial gain and expenditure, the nature of spectators' visits and comments, the running of organised competitions, media coverage, political appropriations of mandal, and processions." 'Ritual praxis' in my thesis includes various aspects associated with the *nema* rituals for Koti-Chennaya, including bodily mediation, the songs sung, the exchange of words between deities-devotees, the audience present, the people organizing/managing the ritual, the officiating *poojary*, the *garadi* structure, the edifice-story associated, and so on.

⁴⁴ The third mediator during ritual nights. As noted elsewhere, the identity of Kujumba Kanjava is not clear, with some arguing he is a Bunt who looked after Koti-Chennaya's land after their demise, and recently a few others arguing that he is Koti-Chennaya's brother-in-law.

⁴⁵ A Dalit female deity to whom food is generally served outside the *garadi*

⁴⁶ They are called as *kola kattunaye* (literally, one 'tying the *kola*') in Tulu.

⁴⁷ Vamana Nandavara (2001: 232) understands the *bira panpunu* rite under 'public performance' frame of performance studies.

nema, Parava mediators,⁴⁸ along with the help of their family members, put on an elaborate make-up, costume and other paraphernalia specific to the deities to be invoked. On the other hand, the *garadi poojary* or priest along with other members associated with the *garadi* lay a temporary tomb-like structure in a rite called as *bariya padunu*. It is an elaborate ritual erecting the twin tombs of Koti-Chennaya, associated with the Paravas drawing a line sketch of two men either under or below the *bariya*. Once the *bariya* laying ritual is over, the Parava mediators invoke the deities, seek the permission of *garadi poojary* and authorities, and soon enter into an embodying state. They dance, recreate a few episodes from the *paddana*, sing portions of it and interact with the devotees present. In the middle of night, mediation/embodyment shifts on the bodies of *darshana patris* (Billawa ‘priest’) who are bedecked in a costume specific to Koti-Chennaya *darshana patri*. What ensues is shifting mediations between Parava and *darshana patri* mediators, also conducting benedictory-sessions with the *garadi* authorities and people of *garadi* house⁴⁹ first, followed by the devotees/villagers who have gathered. At a heightened moment of mediation, the *darshana patris* inflict themselves with daggers, and lose consciousness for a while. The major rituals of *nema* come to an end with the self-piercing of *darshana patri*, to be followed by other rites at the houses of *garadi* ‘owner’/chief (who largely belong to Bunt, Jain and Billawa castes).

What is strikingly singular during the ritual memorialization of Koti-Chennaya, when compared to the ritual arena of other deities, is the cyclical recreation of the heroes’ lives. Not perceiving the entire ritual night as a performance stage (as understood by folklorists) alone, I understand it as a visual re-enactment of the cosmological perception of Tuluva vernacular religion. The narrative schema of life-death-life is altered a little here, enacting the complex repetitive schema of death-life-death. The initiating rite of *bariya padunu* or what appears as a symbolic representation of the twin brother’s tombs visualizes

⁴⁸ I use the referent ‘mediator’ instead of ‘possessor’ or ‘performer’ that is generally used in the larger studies on *bhutaradhane*.

In another context, Claus discusses the registers of ‘possession’ ‘affliction’ ‘hysteria’ etc associated with the women’s mass mediumship practice of Siri in Tulunad as founded in western diagnostic conceptions. He offered a paradigm shift by locating the significance of ‘religious and ideological’ factors as the most fundamental principle behind ‘spirit mediumship’ among Tuluvas. He recognized the way their behaviour is identified in ‘the language of religious phenomena, rather than the language of mental illness (*marlu*)’ (1979: 37). Extending the basis of possession from social and psychological to the cultural and ideational, Claus points at the multiple factors acting behind the possession practice lending it more as a spirit mediumship – an honourable religious act. Although this has direct bearing on the Siri tradition in the region, his shift to ‘mediumship’ as a better register could add to the understanding of the field.

⁴⁹ The house of Billawa *poojary* who is the chief priest of each *garadi*.

the memories of their death. Firstly, facing the inner sanctum, the pictures of two figures are drawn using paddy grains. Leaves of jackfruit and mango trees are laid above the line drawings, further covering the leaves with Banana stems, so as to form two tomb-like models inside the *garadi* on the ritual night. A lamp is lit nearby, or placed within a half split coconut. The lamps are carried outside next morning, only to be lit again with the help of chief deity Bermer's lamp. Vamana Nandavara who has extensively documented the tradition clearly identifies *bariya padunu* as a symbolic representation of tombs of Koti-Chennaya, replaced by only line drawings in some other *garadis*.⁵⁰ Interestingly it is from within the same interiors of the *garadi*, where *bariya* is laid, that the embodied forms of Koti-Chennaya descend into the *garadi* portico⁵¹ in the front, in a heightened state of 'mediation.' It is in the same portico that portions from the life story of Koti-Chennaya are sung, selected events from their life are enacted,⁵² narratives of the deities' connection with that particular *garadi* is narrated,⁵³ an intimate interaction/adjudication with the devotees present is carried out, finally concluding with the *darshana patris* piercing their bodies (as if in a self-sacrifice), and extending their benediction next morning to the chief devotees⁵⁴ on the same spot where *bariya* is laid. Thus *bariya* becomes the meeting point in a cyclical re-creation of the schema of death-life-death. The entire ritual practice acts as a semiotic code, signifying the traversing of the deities between the porous worlds of life and life-after. As if rising from their death bed of *bariya*, the figures emerge in animated life-size before the devotees, mimetically re-creating their own life events, engaging in an intimate conversation with the devotees, self-inflicting in agony, and finally assuring their benediction around the same *bariya* from where they began their ritual journey. Even at the concluding scene, *bariya* becomes the threshold of their connection with devotees, thereby completing the circle of ritual commemoration.

The memory of Koti-Chennaya publics imagines the figures between mercurial lines of life, death and life-after, creating an intricate ritual 'praxis' that ensures the presence of Koti-Chennaya simultaneously in multifarious forms. Koti-Chennaya emerge

⁵⁰ Nandavara, 2001: 286-287

⁵¹ The vast in front of the *garadi* where most of the embodiment rites are carried out.

⁵² The Parava mediators recreate episodes from Koti-Chennaya's life like playing *chend* or ball game, Budyanta's murder through symbolic heightened rotation/movements, and so on.

⁵³ Parava mediators during their mediator-dance state also sing stories of how they came to that particular *garadi* where the *nema* is held, how they settled there, and how they have extended benediction and so on.

⁵⁴ Largely including the ritual organizers and the families closely associated.

as individualized figures on the stage of ritual commemoration, narrating their own life events in autobiographical mode, re-living moments from their life, narrating the ‘history’ of *garadi* in question, and finally also attaining death by self-inflicting, contrary to at least Koti’s murder in their life narrative. In the ritual praxis, they are imagined simultaneously as youthful warriors narrating, enacting their own life events, and at the same time deified figures embodying more than one body⁵⁵ during the course of the night. Koti-Chennaya could simultaneously ‘appear’ on the bodies of ‘lower’ caste Paravas, on Billawa *darshana patri* or priest, on the chief of the *garadi*/family⁵⁶ and also on any of the devotees present. They become porous, transparent beings, inhabiting like air, choosing multiple substances to embody. To quote from one of Koti-Chennaya’s (as deities during the night) personal, reflective dialogues in the embodied form:

While traversing in the sky, sun and moon

While traversing on the earth, Lord Berner

Koti-Chennaya, we are, We ensured to be called...

We got sixty-six *garadis* built

And, we got thirty-three *taavus*⁵⁷ built. (Nandavara, 2001: 292)

While the ritual praxis involves multiple visual re-presentations of Koti-Chennaya – as either wooden planks or wooden statues⁵⁸ inside the sanctum, as image⁵⁹ under the *bariya*, symbolically as tombs, as embodied deities – the vehicles of memory is further multiplied as ‘mediation’ is alternatively shifted between two pairs of Koti-Chennaya during the ritual. The twin brothers shift their personification between the mediating Parava pair and also the ‘mediating’ Billawa *darshana patri*. While in the ‘Parava-form’ they evoke a magical realm, particularly through their costumes, their almost life-like image is represented through the *darshana patris*. The aspects of life and life-after as conceptualized during ritual commemoration is perhaps reforged on the twin bodies of Parava *kola kattunaaye* (as raptures figures from *mayo*) and Billawa *darshana patri* (in their worldly *joga* form). Further,

⁵⁵ As embodiment happens through both Parava mediators and the Billawa *darshana patris* at the same time, and also shiftingly.

⁵⁶ The chief of *garadi* (also the chief of *garadi* management committee) also gets into a state of ‘trance’ at some point of the ritual night.

⁵⁷ *Taavu* – similar to *garadis*.

⁵⁸ Most of the time, Tulu deities are represented as *mancha* or wooden swinging cots, or as wooden statues. The wooden statues are called as *paape*. Koti-Chennaya are represented in either ways.

⁵⁹ Line drawings of human figures under the temporary *bariya*.

they could simultaneously embody on any of the devotees present around.⁶⁰ Thereby, the modern, rational singularity of being-ness is challenged, replicating themselves in any number, or on any physical body. In any case, the indexicality or referentiality of the body becomes crucial in the whole mnemonic schemata.

Additionally, their represented presence is invoked year after year, creating a 'same time,' through the repetition of ritual embodiment. The events around Koti-Chennaya's life and life-after are imagined within the frame of time units that are qualitatively identical, but not quantitatively equivalent (Connerton, 1989: 66). As Connerton understands time here, "The notion of time in commemorative rites is not that of a pure quantity; the parts of time are not conceived as being indefinitely divisible into successive units in an irreversible linear sequence" but qualitatively similar time that occupies same relative position in the calendar. It is due to this same attribute that the ritual time becomes indefinitely repeatable too (1989, 66). While within the ritual complex it thwarts linearity, between rituals every year, the qualitative time ensures repeatability of Koti-Chennaya's embodiment. Some moments in the 'life' of Koti-Chennaya are re-created 'as if were in the same time' thereby, conceptualizing the co-existence of two temporal orders in a permanently repeatable ritual time.

While the professional discipline of history has laid supreme importance on modern inscribing/referencing practices like writing, inscriptions, museums, library, archives and so on, it has paid scant attention to incorporating practices like orality, people's memories, their distinctive material and performative recollection of the past – also including bodily memories. As against the concerns of history proper, the memory publics infuse their recollection of past events on bodies that are always-'present.' However, as Connerton (1989) also opined, even social memory studies have ignored the crucial role played by body as the vehicle of collective memory. Inscribing the communitarian 'history' on present bodies is more or less neglected even under the deconstructive enterprises of 'memory industry.' However, scholars like Smriti Srinivas (2004) and Christian Lee Novetzke (2008) in the Indian context, have demonstrated how bodily performances, and performative practices assume higher significance as vehicle of memory. Extending Connerton's statement that the past is sedimented on the body in habitual memory, Srinivas writes, "cultural resources are sedimented on and stored in the bodies of citizens through particular gestures and practices. Memory is transmitted and

⁶⁰ There are instances when any devotee present on the audience side gets into a state of 'trance,' perhaps 'embody' the deities worshipped.

performed through movement, music, rituals, words, and other practices of the body” (2004: 30). Performance and the practices of the body are intricately connected and come together to construct memory for Srinivas. Similarly, for Novetzke who analyzes the public memory of Namdev in Maharashtrian context, “... performance, specifically oral performance, is the primary means of communicating Namdev’s Maharashtrian memory into any given present moment” (2008: 122). Understanding orality as ‘performance’ as against writing or ‘permanence,’ Novetzke demonstrates how the oral (and thus also bodily) performance assumes far more crucial role in the public memory of Namdev. Similarly, I argue here that, performative and embodying practices take centre stage in the public memory of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad. While the oral song associated with the brothers is sung by many even to this day, the story of Koti-Chennaya is most popularly prevalent in the memory of a large number of Tuluvas. Apart from other visual and performative practices like *yakshagana*, theatre, films, television versions, dramas enacted, and so on, the ritual stage of annual *nemas* emerge as the most prevalent mode of recollecting the twin brothers across Tulunad.

It is during the *nema* ritual that Koti-Chennaya appear as full, real beings before the devotees gathered. The heroic warriors are summoned from the realm of abstraction/*mayo* and embodied in corporeal forms on the caste bodies (of Paravas, of Billawas) every year in what could be understood as an intermediary realm conjoining both this and the other world. These ‘sites’ of pious bodies shift between the real and the abstract while they simultaneously enact, narrate episodes from their ‘past life’ as humans, and also perform duties as protective adjudicating deities from the other realm. They travel between the porous worlds of life and life-after in the intermediate platform erected by devotees year after year. While being present (as onlookers) during both recreation of the scene of death, laying temporal tombs, and as figures of protective benediction at the same time, they traverse between the two worlds of life and life-after in the conjoining third space of the ritual.

The past is, thus, alternatively sedimented on more than two bodies by the memorializing publics of Koti-Chennaya. A particular communitarian history is located on their bodies, simultaneously presenting as well as re-presenting it. The embodied figures of Koti-Chennaya not only narrate their own history but also create a historical panorama of the *garadi* for the devotees gathered. The figures of history come alive, recollecting their own past in the mnemo-historical stage set. Thereby, a double-framed historical view is offered through ritual commemoration. The memory publics both erect a historical stage,

as well as embody the historical moment in a continuous-presen(ce)ts. They not only bodily 'enact' a past, but also simultaneously become audience in visualizing the past. The ritual stage not only re-creates the life of Koti-Chennaya, but also intertwines with the present *garadi*, however unconnected it is from their linear life-narrative.

At the same time, body becomes a 'site' on which the past is 'incorporated,' thereby challenging the archival concerns of history-proper. However, what distinguishes the bodily re-presentation of Koti-Chennaya from the 'historical' material of visual imagery is the inherent transitory nature of embodiment. While textual and imagist voices seal a particular moment of significance (Zelizer, 2004: 158) or interpretation, mnemonics of the body renders memory unfixed and transient. While Koti-Chennaya could 'present' themselves on the bodies of elaborately dressed Parava *kola kattunaye*, they could, at the same time, also appear on/as the bodies of *darshana patri*. Similar to their shifting embodiment during ritual commemoration, is also their diverging representation across different *garadis* in Tulunad. Each of the public of faith associated with *garadi* imagines the figures on similar but diverging registers of language, attire, kinetic movements and so on, within also the larger shifting ritual 'praxis.' Remembrance of the heroes is conditioned by imaginary variations, thereby creating a multiplicity of somatic images, possible only within the memorial dimensions of recollecting publics.

To sum up, this chapter, together with and in continuation of the previous chapter, attempts to present the image of Koti-Chennaya as recollected by the Tuluva public memory associated with the brothers. I have demonstrated here how memory 'returns the observer to the immediacy of an event' (Novetzke, 2008: 73), creating space for the publics, predominantly religious, to imagine Koti-Chennaya in multifarious ways. A roster of miraculous events, both within (in the *paddan*) and outside (in the edifice-stories) the narrative, along with the heterogenous temporalities of bodily re-presentation during *nema* ritual, constitute as major vehicles for the sustenance and transmittance of memory. Unmindful of referentiality or factual logicity, the memory publics maintain an image of Koti-Chennaya that accommodates their itinerary throughout Tulu region, the miracles they caused, their after-life exploits, their divine embodiment and so on. It is only by understanding the vast range of vehicles involved, both 'historical' and 'memorial' that a comprehensive image of Koti-Chennaya as maintained by the Koti-Chennaya publics could be retrieved. The two dialectical categories of history and memory assist in capturing the memorial-totality of figures of the past like Koti-Chennaya, and the two chapters under this first section attempted to do the same.

Section-II

Embeddedness of Publics:

Caste, Language, and the Imaginary of Region

Section-II: Introduction

Chorography of Caste Relations

In the Introduction I have elaborated on the concept of ‘public’ and ‘public memory’ as it unfolds through the pages of this dissertation. The nexus between different kinds of ‘publics’ theorized by scholars starting from Habermas (Orsini, 2002) to Kaur (2003), to Freitag (1989), and to Novetzke (2008) has been discussed before arriving at the conceptualization of ‘public memory’ that assists in understanding the tradition of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad of south-west coast of India. The ‘public’ here, as outlined, doesn’t indicate a specifically state-centred activity, and is neither guided alone by the modern civic apparatuses of discussions, forum, print-media, state, institutions, and so on. The ‘public’ realm of Koti-Chennaya is more in tune with Novetzke’s notion of the ‘public’ as quoted below:

(a public is) a social unit created through shared cultural phenomena, and reinforced by demonstrations in public of these shared cultural phenomena. Publics are not exclusive – indeed they are hardly to be regulated at all” (2008: 13)

While the ideas of fluidity, un-fixity, circularity, demonstrative religiosity and ‘moral continuity’¹ characterize what constitute ‘publics’ of Koti-Chennaya in this dissertation, for heuristic purposes I have also distinguished between different kinds of publics within the larger bracket of ‘Koti-Chennaya publics in Tulunad.’ Such internal differentiations also reveal the complexities involved in understanding the multifaceted nature of the publics involved in memorializing the heroic warriors. It also indicates the confluence of both ‘public sphere’ in Habermasean terms and the ‘public field’ as conceptualized by Raminder Kaur (2003) along with the constructions of ‘public memory’ by Novetzke in fully understanding the dynamics of people’s participation in sustaining the memory of Koti-Chennaya. My attempts to unravel the memorial dimensions of Koti-Chennaya in its entirety was assisted by the heuristic distinctions I maintained between different kinds of publics like ‘history publics,’ or ‘publics of research,’ ‘memory publics’ or ‘publics of faith,’ and now, ‘caste publics,’ one or more always intertwining and overlapping with the other(s). However, one particular public that cuts across all the other fleetingly-distinct

¹ Michael Schudson quoted in Klein (2000: 130)

categories of the public discussed through this dissertation is the presence of ‘caste publics,’ a social group at the centre of the public memory of Koti-Chennaya across Tulumad. While the ‘publicness of *memory*’ is discussed in the previous chapters, this section will focus on ‘the memory of *publics*’ (two ways of unpacking the term ‘public memory’ as adopted by Kendall R. Phillips, 2004), with a chief focus on the realm of action, the public, a realm in which diverse groups act together. Memory here becomes a constitutive agent within which publics emerge and organize themselves, and “public memories serve as a horizon within which a public finds itself, constitutes itself, and deliberates its own existence” (Phillips, 2004: 4).

Thus, while in the previous chapters I made an attempt to study how memories are effected by various publics, in this section I focus on how memories affect publics in organizing themselves. As the previous section deliberated on how a particular past is constructed and the modes of it, the present section focuses on why a particular memory assumes central significance in the creation and sustenance of mnemonic communities, or what I call here, ‘publics.’ It discusses how past events shape generations through shared experiences, giving scope to the mechanism of ‘sociobiographical memory’ (Olick and Robbins, 1998: 123) that constitutes groups, and in turn, gets constituted by it in a circular fashion. This discussion, at a larger level, adds to the existing scholarship on how the act of creating ‘imagined communities’ is concerned with the production, recollection and promulgation of a common past, further connected intensely with various identitarian movements. In the course it demonstrates how identities are projects and practices, not properties (Olick and Robbins, 1998: 122), and how they are figured and re-figured continuously so as to suit the every-present in hand. Through this enquiry, I further add to the academic exercise of redirecting historical inquiry away from the nation-state as a unit of analysis in favour of groups and perspectives (Olick and Robbins, 1998: 126) excluded from mainstream narratives.

Caste Publics

Scholars in recent times have discussed about the absence of caste both as a legitimate project within the domain of the political (Pandian, 2002) and also as a category that has escaped history as a discipline (Banerjee, 2017). Pandian in his brilliant essay “One Step Outside Modernity” (2002) explains about how the Indian modern relegates caste as the other of the modern, always belonging to the lower castes. It is always kept out of the modern public sphere as an illegitimate project. A similar critique of the post-colonial,

subaltern theorizations of Indian modernity and caste is made by Shankar (Leonard, 2017). “He argues,” to quote from Dickens Leonard, “that the elitist post-colonialism created the vernacular as parochial and the space where caste resides as a residue” (2017: 23). The non-engagement with caste is thus criticised from the standpoint of vernacular cosmopolitanism as against the post-colonial and transnational cosmopolitanisms. While the above mentioned studies critique the absence of caste from public sphere –associated closely with modernity and outer domain – some other recent studies² have also demonstrated how caste and communities assume political significance in post-colonial Indian vernacular/regional contexts. While caste is discussed within the expanded category of the political, or in Michelutti’s words, as vernacularized democracy (2007), Sanal Mohan (2015), Chinnaiah Jangam (2016) and D. R. Nagaraj (2010) have theorized that the most oppressed, however, use caste articulations to counter upper-caste dominance, and in the process, a resistive imaginary routed in the vernacular, the regional, the cultural, the religious and the caste is invoked.

The above scholars, in different South Indian contexts, have emphasised the need to and attempt by Dalit castes to recuperate concealed histories in rebuilding emancipatory identities. Such histories are built on alternative imaginations of a caste identity, reenergizing itself from cultural symbols and practices. Shared practices like folk songs and stories, performative traditions and ritual acts are summoned to express the experiences of humiliation, oppression. In the process, the existing epistemologies of history and historical knowledge is contested, recreated, refigured in order to carve out alternative imaginations of one’s past. Articulations of caste and caste-based oppression enters into the discourse of history; experiential memories occupy central stage; thereby deploying historical reconstruction as an act of creative resistance. Such epistemic political acts are founded on the principles of modernity like equality, recognition and social dignity, thereby expanding the contours of resistance and ‘the political.’

It is at this backdrop that the pre-eminence of ‘caste publics’ in the similar resistive imaginary of Koti-Chennaya is studied in both third chapter and thesis Conclusion. While it travels across all other ‘publics’ I have discussed in previous chapters, the caste publics in Koti-Chennaya tradition assume central force in configuring and re-configuring the mnemopolitics surrounding the twin brothers. The emergence of Koti-Chennaya as

² Lucia Michelotti (2007); Smriti Srinivas (2004); Sanal Mohan (2015); Dickens Leonard (2017); Chinnaiah Jangam (2015); Sandria Frietag (1989).

cultural icons of a particular community in the Tulu region is also intricately associated with the socio-economic refigurations of both the region and the community in question. Thus in the chapter that ensues, I attempt to understand the vernacular – both in terms of caste identity and the regional imaginary – as it unfolds through the memorializing publics of Koti-Chennaya, through its caste publics in particular.

A brief account of the caste relations in Tulunad and its intimate connection with the socio-economic dynamics of the region is provided below, as a trajectory, to imply the complex workings of caste as a dynamic agent in the refashioning of vernacular cosmos like Tulunad in South Asian contexts. This also acts as a necessary setting in foregrounding the intimate relation between caste identity and the emergence of Koti-Chennaya as caste cultural icons within the geo-cultural bounds of Tulunad.

Caste Relations in Tulunad

My search for and grappling with the intricate, fleeting social status of Billawas among the rigidly-ritually-maintained vertical social organization of Tuluva society led me to rummage through different caste historiographies (Kumar, 1997; Rao, 2010; Poojary, 2003; Kotekar, 2012; Dallodi, 2012; Lyche, 2011; Kusuma, 2013) emerging in the region rather more recently. These historiographies dwell on the trajectory of respective castes, including details about the communitarian mobilizations triggered in their encounter with the apparatuses of modernity. Like most other ‘regions’ within the bounds of the subcontinent that witnessed resistive and refigurative movements in late 19th and early 20th centuries, Tulunad (with its ethnic-linguistic singularity and belonging to the Madras Presidency) also experienced drastic socio-political transformations under the influence of colonial modernity and rising nationalist awareness. Further, communitarian anxieties and aspirations continued to interact with the changing politico-economic scenario in post-colonial contexts as well, simultaneously reconfiguring the agri-culture based caste relations in the Tulu region. At this backdrop, I draw a brief account of the rise of different caste mobilizations in Tulunad in late 19th and early 20th centuries as a trajectory in understanding the centrality of caste in fashioning a subjective self, especially when pitted against colonial and vernacular modernities.

“When Bunts were setting up Bunts Hostel (facilitating Bunts’ youth study in Mangalore), Poojarys were busy in building Kudroli Temple” is a ‘joke’ making rounds

among the youth in Mangalore.³ While I failed to laugh at the ‘joke,’ it immediately made me ponder over the predicament of two communities, situated in the same historical context, but preoccupied with different contingent concerns to address. Taking on from the case of Bunts Hostel that was set up in as early as 1907, a cursory view of Bunts’ participation in modern education provides insights into the communitarian consciousness and the anxiety to reap from colonial modernity at the earliest. It is said that as early as 1865, one Timma Shetty started a school at Karnad near Mulki. To quote Rao, “By the end of the 19th century the Bunt preference for modern education was clearly registered in schools. They followed with alacrity the early lead taken by the Brahmins and Christians” (2010: 200-201) The *Bunt Sangha* (Bunt Association) which had come into existence in 1907 built hostels to accommodate the Bunt students from distant regions, and the Mutual Help Association built by the Bunts of Mumbai⁴ also supported the cause by extending financial help. In the first two decades of the 20th century, many elementary and primary schools, secondary schools, etc were established at different places with generous donations from the landlords and prominent persons of the group. One Nitte Mahalinga Adyanthaya joined the Edinburgh University in 1912 to pursue B.Sc. becoming the first Bunt to travel abroad for higher education, and this community also recorded its first woman graduate in 1924, who later took up the cause of setting up institutions for girls in the region by 1941. Thus, facilitating the education of Bunt youth became the primary concern of the first community association ‘Bunts Sangha,’ which started functioning simultaneously in different taluks like Udupi, Kundapura, Mangalore, Uppinagadi and Kasargod by 1907 itself. Bunts’ highly enthusiastic participation in educational renaissance, intimately associated with their community awareness, when placed in a juxtaposed observation with the concerns of Billawa community in early 20th century, opens up avenues to understand how caste capital or the absence of it shapes in the most fundamental way of how communities participate in same historical contexts, albeit conditioned by their experiential realities.

Further, while there is no doubt that Brahmins were first in the race to benefit from colonial modernity, a brief look at one of the most prominent Brahmin castes in the region, Gowda Saraswat Brahmins, popularly called GSBs (with Konkani as their lingua-franca), shows how they could not only refashion themselves, but also transform an entire

³ My cousin pursuing MTech in Computer Science jokingly mentioned this as a popular saying in his friends’ circle.

⁴ Called as *Paraspara Sahaya Sangha* and set up by 1915 in Mumbai.

landscape through their community-based endeavours. GSBs are one community in the region who have maintained a steady progress since mid 19th century, exerting socio-economic influence in almost all spheres across all time periods. Adding to the traditional Tulu social stratification based on agro-relations, GSBs migrated from Goa and established themselves as 'upper' Brahmin caste in the region. Thereafter, South Kanara, as opined by Harald Tambs-Lyche (2011), was restructured in pre-colonial times as a rice-producing area dominated by the Bunts, and a trading sphere dominated by the GSB. Tambs-Lyche through his extensive ethnographic study demonstrates how the GSBs by the turn of 20th century "established themselves as the dominant business community in Udupi, and their houses and shops effectively constituted the town centre and commercial quarter..." (2011: 109). Between 1900 and 1947, the GSB monopolized the commercial sector, establishing or controlling three of the major, later nationalized, banks of South Kanara: Corporation Bank, The Bank of Canara and Syndicate Bank, and the GSB thus dominated the new sector of banking in the first half of 20th century. In comparison, the Vijaya Bank set up by Bunts grew "to an important stature," the first Billava effort, the Pie-Money Bank remained small and was later absorbed by the GSB owned Syndicate Bank. Banking and educational sector went hand in hand for the GSB community, also retaining close connection with their caste-kinship ties. They went on to set up insurance companies, and participated in the heavy competition in 1920s to establish banks in Tulunad. A unique feature of GSB caste mobilization was their tightly-knit kinship workings, and in the absence of it, bond maintained between the members of Venkataramana temples.⁵ Apart from banking and educational institutions, largely based in Udupi and later Manipal, GSB established their presence in the weaving and handloom sector, in setting up Theatres, pharmaceutical labs, and so on. Focussing later on the satellite town of Udupi, Manipal, a few GSB families converted Manipal into educational and medical empire of Tulunad in a short span of 30-40 years from 1930s onwards. By 1970s full-fledged Manipal Institute of Technology was in place. To sum up, the GSB came to consider themselves as the main promoters of 'modernity' in South Kanara (Lyche, 2011: 129).

Hence, while caste and caste relations specific to Tulunad also perhaps constitute it as a 'region' outside the bounds of politically marked affiliation,⁶ caste-driven mobilization, simultaneously establish the Tulu region as a self-sustaining entity with its institutions and

⁵ Specifically built to cater to their religious needs and roots in Goa.

⁶ A similar argument is made by Tambs-Lyche when he points at how the northern border between Tulunad and the Kannada-speaking areas coincide with the boundary of the dominant Bunt caste here (2011: 12).

infrastructure developed by the communities within. A bird's eye view of the region provides sufficient evidence to the fact that Tulunad is a self-constructed and sustained geography, with very little governmental intervention in most of the public sectors like education, transportation, financial, medical care and so on. It is in this backdrop that Tulunad as a distinct geo-cultural entity, and caste as the major catalytic agent could be analyzed further. I now provide a detailed account of the transformation achieved by Billawa community in Tulu region, an essential backdrop to analyze the role of cultural figures like Koti-Chennaya in caste mobilization.

Billawas: A Community in Continuous Translation

Colonial ethnographers and Officials in the administration like Sturrock, Edgar Thurston, Herald A Stuart, Samuel Milay⁷ have made a note of the Billawa caste, along with other castes in the region, and perceived them chiefly in connection with the *buta* worship as officiating priests or *poojary*, as medicine men or *baidya* and as traditionally toddy-tapping caste corresponding with Tiyyas and Ezhavas from northern Malabar side⁸ and Shanars of Tinnevely. British Official Major R C Temple quotes the *Gazetteer of Southern India*, 1855, and writes in his "Preface" to *Indian Antiquary's* series of publications of Tulu *paddanas* that, "It will be seen, therefore, that the examination of Shanar ceremonies side by side with those of the Billavars of "Tulu-land" becomes important"⁹ (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 7) Following the general colonial understanding of the social stratification of the colonized, mediated largely by Brahmin informants, both British officials and the German Missionaries categorized the castes outside Brahmin, including the Billawas, as *sudras* with 'devil worship' of their own. Sturrock in his 1894 Report¹⁰ indicates the social status of Billawas who were not permitted to enter into the temples. If they wished to make any offerings to the temple, they could do so through the members of Bunt caste.¹¹ Interestingly Samuel Miley, a German Missionary in his 1882 book *Canara Past and Present* interlinked the growing number of Billawa students in missionary schools with their growing aspirations for social mobility, so as to rise equal to that of the Brahmins with the aid of Brahmo Samaj.

⁷ Ramanatha Kotekar compiles the accounts of these British officials when they described the Billawa caste in Tulunad (Kotekar, 2012: 18-33)

⁸ In J. Sturrock and Harold Stuart's *Madras District Manuals: South Canara* (1894).

⁹ Major R C Temple, "Preface" in Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 7.

¹⁰ *Madras District Manuals: South Kanara*, Vol. I

¹¹ Sturrock quoted in Ramanatha Kotekar (2012: 19)

The arrival of a branch of Brahmo Samaj in Mangalore in 1870, by the efforts of one of the few educated among the Billawas, Niresvalya Arasappa, also points to the tension that prevailed among different social groups in the Tulu region. Although Billawas, like 'upper' caste Bunts and Brahmins, benefitted from the missionary education and unlike those castes, even converted in a large number to Christianity, by the turn of the century a desire to remain within the religious identity of Hindu¹² paved way to inviting a branch of Brahmo Samaj to Mangalore by Arasappa. Arasappa, who was considering joining Christianity to improve his status had an unsuccessful negotiation with the missionaries and was instead, suggested to join Brahmo Samaj by his Saraswat Brahmin friend Ullal Raghunathayya. The episode of the setting up of Brahmo Samaj in Mangalore highlights the continuation of upper-lower caste dichotomy maintained in the region, even under the umbrella of Brahmo identity. The members of Saraswat Brahmin community soon found it impossible to gather at the house of a Billawa, and went on to set up a fusion of both Brahmo principles along with idolatry under the name of 'Upasana Sabha.' To quote Kenneth W. Jones, "Thus the Brahmo Samaj was transformed from a broadly critical movement led by an untouchable, to one of limited goals under control of the Saraswat Brahmins of Mangalore" (Rao, 2010: 214). Despite colonial and missionary education and the assistance of reform movements like Brahmo Samaj, the status of Billawas remained as 'untouchables,' (Kotekar, 2012: 203), thus paving way for Temple Entry Movement later. It is at the same time interesting to note that the first ever major Billawa Assemblage took place in 1869 under the leadership of the same Arasappa with the participation of 5000 Billawas. However, they were successful in converting only 14 members into the fold of Brahmo Samaj.

Despite the tensions with Saraswat Brahmin community that went on to set up Upasana Sabha, gradually taking the Brahmo Samaj under their control, Ramanatha Kotekar observes that Billawas remained in key positions of the Samaj from 1905¹³ to 1923.¹⁴ However, the relegated social status of Billawa community is further highlighted in the episode when a major leader of the community Mundappa Bangera's entry into the Kadri Manjunatha Temple as Munsif Judge was followed by the performing of

¹² Basel Mission Report, 1870 quoted in Kotekar (2012: 207-208)

¹³ When the Brahma Samaj's Trust Deed was registered. Kotekar says, 10 Trustees of the Samaj included three Billawas - Mundappa Bangera, Venkatappa, Niresvala Kantappa (2012: 205-206).

¹⁴ Until the death of Dewan Bahadur Mundappa Bangera who was the President many times between 1912 to 1923 (Kotekar, 2012: 206).

Brahmakalasha ritual¹⁵ by Brahmin priests of Kadri temple (Kotekar, 2012: 207). In the same period of Billawa attempts at reclaiming a social status, a prominent member Koragappa¹⁶ approached Shri Narayana Guru, a leader of the parallel Ezhava caste in Kerala, and brought him to Mangalore to inaugurate the Shivite Kudroli Gokarnatheshwara Temple in 1912, with Billawas as priests until this day. Later in 1964, another Shiva temple with Billawa priests was set up at Katapadi (Katapadi Shri Vishwanatha Kshetra) in 1964 by prominent Billawa leaders, and similarly inaugurated by a disciple of Narayana Guru, Shankarananda Swami (Dallodi, 2012: 303). Thus, the first half of 20th century witnessed Billawa mobilization under the guidance of Narayana Guru and his principles, although remaining within the larger umbrella of Hindu identity, albeit through an alternative spatiality. Commenting on the intimate connection between Billawas and Narayana Guru, Dallodi remarks:

Narayana Guru was not a leader belonging to a particular caste or communal group. Despite the fact that his religious principles could be adopted by sections of humanity, they couldn't suit the upper caste interests. Precisely thus, people like Brahmins, Jains, Bunts couldn't develop any zeal towards him. However, the Billawas of Tulunad have always maintained a particular interest in Guru. As the Ezhavas of Kerala represent the Billawas by caste, a special affection towards him as the priest belonging to one's own caste is a reason behind adopting Narayana Guru (*translation mine*, 307).

Narayana Guru continues to be a major icon for the egalitarian caste imaginary of Billawas in Tulu region even to this day. Until 2012, more than 280 Billawa associations named after Narayana Guru were functioning in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Kodagu, Mysore, Chikmagalore, Belagam, Shimoga and other districts of Karnataka (Dallodi, 2012: 312). Dallodi points at how Billawa associations had to be renamed into Narayana Guru in order to take governmental benefits that are otherwise not extended to exclusively caste-based associations (2012: 312). During my visit to the Billawa Association in Mumbai,¹⁷ I was a part of the communitarian gathering for the weekly worship of the chief deity Narayana Guru, interestingly accommodating Koti-Chennaya as another set of central figures,

¹⁵ A purifying ritual.

¹⁶ Started 'C Abdul Rahaman and Koragappa Company' in partnership with Abdul Rahaman, and the company thrived in the export of dried fish to Columbia, Singapore, Arabis and so on (Kotekar, 2012: 232)

¹⁷ I visited The Billawar Association in Mumbai on 12th August, 2016.

represented elaborately in pictures and visual narrative on all sides of the building enclosure.

Dejappa Dallodi (2012) in his extensive monograph on the cultural profile of Billawa community provides a brief account of the century old Billawa caste mobilization, focussing on the various associations. Starting from 1910 when the opening of an alternative religious space of Kudroli Temple was also associated with the setting up of Billawa Union in Mangalore, Dallodi records the presence of more than 280 associations at every village and district levels. Named after the community icon Narayana Guru, these local associations have been working towards the communitarian socio-political upliftment. To quote Dallodi, “By mobilizing the people of their community, these people have opened associations in very village of the land, and thus have triggered a civilizational consciousness among their tribal members” (2012: 311). The extensive spread of local-level organization of Billawas directly corresponds with the mobilizational efforts of the Nadar community in Tamilnadu as discussed at length by Dennis Templeman in *The Northern Nadars of Tamilnadu* (1996). Templeman’s claim that “a key factor in the Nadar’s strategy for advancement has been their network of town and village-level caste associations” (1) also augers true in the case of Billawas of Tulunad.

Apart from setting up local-level associations within Tulunad and elsewhere in Karnataka, Billawas, with a large section migrating to Mumbai since the beginning of 20th century, also created ‘Billawa Association’ in Mumbai in 1932, maintaining Narayana Guru as their chief communitarian figure. Moving on, a ‘Billawa Mahamandala’ was set up in Mulki in 1996 with 217 sub branches across the Tulu region, a youth wing called ‘Billawa Yuvavahini’ was set up in Surathkal in 1987, and another association ‘Billawa Jagruti Balaga’ was established in Mumbai again.

In his study of the Northern Nadars, Templeman notes how a number of Nadars consider the two decades of 1970s and 1980s as the most exciting and eventful in the entire history of community, which the author connects with their “increased level of success in various areas of endeavour,” and their heightened urbanization and commercialization (1996: ix). Correspondingly, the period of 1970s and 1980s, significantly post Land Reforms Act of 1974, appears as a major era of caste articulation and communitarian mobilization for the Billawas of Tulunad as well. Two major Billawa conglomerations took place in 1970s, the first in 1976 in Mangalore, assembling more than

25,000 people, and conducted in the presence of then Chief Minister D Devaraja Urs¹⁸ (who was the force behind Land Reform Act in Karnataka), followed by a 'Billawa Maha Sammelana' in 1979 in Belthangady of Dakshina Kannada district. These Assemblages were followed by similar events in 1989 (Mangalore), 1998 (Belthangady), 2002 (Bantwala), 2003 (Bantwala) and Billawa Mahila Sammelana (Billawa Women's Meeting) in 2004 in Mangalore.

While 1970s witnessed heightened caste awareness among Billawas in Tulunad, the next decade was a spectator for the spectacular spread of the community into various economic, political institutions. What was set up as a primary school in the name of Narayana Guru in 1977 at Kudroli went on to become Shri Narayana Guru College by 1991. Many other educational institutions were set by the Billawas in 1980s which grew into higher education institutions by 1990s and 2000s. Shri Gokarnatheshwara PU and Degree Colleges were set up in 1982 which became the first Billawa institution to offer higher education. The same decade also witnessed the surge of technical institutions of Billawas, coupled with medical institutions like S C S Institute of Nursing Sciences (1987), Karnataka College of Physiotherapy, Karnataka Ayurveda Medical College, and a mobile hospital called 'Shri Narayana Guru Mobile Hospital' in 1988. These educational institutions not only opened avenues for the deprived sections¹⁹ to participate in the educational renaissance but also created opportunities for the Billawa educated to be employed at a large scale. While Billawas continued to occupy their space in the public sphere of Tulunad, they participated with a great zeal in the fields of law, agriculture, industries, Yakshagana, films, theatre, literature and communication media (Dallodi, 2012: 316-319). As Billawa caste consciousness and mobilization in the 1970s and 1980s laid foundation for the community's overall socio-economic empowerment, it was conjugated by their reclaiming of political space at the state level. The demand put forth in the mega Billawa congregation in 1976 in the presence of the then Chief Minister D Devaraja Urs for a Loka Sabha ticket to contest from the Billawa community reaped benefits in the next year itself, with B Janardhana Poojary getting elected to the Indian Parliament from Mangalore Lok Sabha constituency as the first Union member of Billawa community. A

¹⁸ He served two terms as the 8th Chief Minister of Karnataka between 1972–77 and 1978–80.

¹⁹ Following is the objective statement of Shri Narayana Guru College at Kudroli: "Narayana Guru College was started with the main objective of imparting higher education to the backward and neglected sections of the society in and around Mangalore. However the college will impart liberal education to students of all denomination without distinction of caste, creed or sex."

<http://narayanagurucollege.com/>

few other caste-men also occupied berths in the State Assembly of Devraj Urs, largely remaining associated with the Congress Party at both national and State levels. The community has henceforth progressed on a large scale in both Tulu Nadu as well as in migrated trans-State cities like Mumbai, Pune and Delhi. Thus, like Nadaras in Tamil Nadu,

who, over the past century and a half, have moved upward in the hierarchy of their region from a status just above 'untouchability' to a solid, forward caste position – from lowly toddy-tappers to respectable business persons (Templeman, 1996: 1)

the largest population of Tulu Nadu,²⁰ Billawas have also, through cultural, economic and political endeavours, have reconfigured their position in the otherwise rigid social hierarchy of Tulu Nadu.

Agri-Culture based Caste Relations

As caste constitutes as a major principle of socio-economic organization in the Tuluva society till this day, caste-communities have also been reshaping their own identity, as well as their relation with other communities on a continual mode. While late 19th and early 20th centuries triggered major transformation in communitarian perceptions/constructions of their identity, Tulu Nadu has also been witnessing a resurge in mobilizational attempts since the 1960s and 1970s on a huge scale. Swiftly translating communities like Billawas in particular have been participating in the reconfiguration of their communitarian identities, and it is this major overhauling that I try to understand in the next chapter, with a focus on Koti-Chennaya at the transformational centre. As the resistive imaginary of these twin brothers is founded on caste-class conflicts and their struggles for social justice, I undertake below a brief outline of the trajectory of caste relations in the region. This introduction posits caste hierarchy and caste associations as a necessary backdrop in comprehending the appropriation of Koti-Chennaya as exclusively caste-cultural icons of Billawas, a community in the cusp of rapid social mobility.

In his brilliant analysis of the impact of Land Reform Acts (first in 1964 & then in 1974) in Dakshina Kannada (present day Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts together), Chandrashekhara Damle (1993) posits his findings on the established fact that agrarian relations that occupy definite positions in relation to land and the process of agricultural

²⁰ Billawas were recorded as the largest group of inhabitants in Tulu Nadu in colonial records like *Madras District Manual*, 1885; J. Sturrock, J and Harold Stuart's *Madras District Manuals: South Canara*, and so on.

production, at the same time, create attendant social, political and cultural systems that sustain and legitimise the system of production relations or what he calls, 'agrarian structure' (1993: 3). While establishing through his empirical study that the claim of mammoth success of Land Reforms in Karnataka, and in particular Dakshina Kannada, as a mere myth, Damle also lays bare the structural exploitation prevalent in a predominantly agrarian region like Tulunad. The analogous nature of land-related domination and embedded religious practices is also hinted through his study. To quote from Damle:

Historically, the legitimacy and hegemony of dominant classes occupying crucial positions in the structure of production relations manifested through a variety of traditional and customary privileges and obligations often endorsed by caste and religious sanctions (1993: 2)

His attempt to unearth the underlying structural exploitation even in the face of Land Reforms of 1960s and 1970s, and how the period in question, in fact, gave rise to rather opposite results in terms of land ownership for the hitherto deprived, makes it also necessary for him to adopt a frame of caste analysis. His broad categorization of the existing agro-cultural relations in Tulunad into three chief groups of 'high' castes, 'middle-level' castes, and the 'Scheduled Castes' is a relevant analytical frame even for the present study. Damle roughly categorised castes specific to the Tulu region in following modes, chiefly in terms of land ownership and relations:²¹

- Land owning 'high' castes consisting of the Bunts, Brahmins, Jains and Gowdas
- 'Middle-level' castes consisting of the Billawas,²² Mogaveeras, Naiks and the Scheduled Tribes traditionally associated with land cultivation who have historically been the tenants under landowning class
- The 'Scheduled Castes' who were predominantly agricultural labourers and have traditionally been tied to the land and manor house, almost in the fashion of bonded labour.

²¹ The criteria adopted by Damle in above categorization included components like land ownership, caste background, the genral standard of living, educational advancement and political access of a caste (1993: 19)

²² It is interesting to note here that, commenting on the Bunt-Billawa landlord-tenant relationship, Harald Tambs-Lyche points at how during 16th century the Bunts engaged in a vast land reclamation and an expansion in rice cultivation. They used Billawa expertise in growing coconut as fencing plantation, and "their role led to their taking to rice farming on tenancy contracts. Thus, the relationship between Bunt landowners and Billava tenants, and the 'traditional' Tulu village came into being" (2011:17)

With the above sampling frame, Damle's study establishes how the traditional land-owning 'high' castes continued to enjoy socio-economic benefits even with the implementation of Land Reform Acts, and how the 'middle-level' castes like Billawas – traditionally tenants in the land – were largely evicted before the final implementation of 1974 Act, and how the agricultural labourers among Dalit castes continued to be exploited by the manorial families.²³ As an aside, Surendra Rao in his extensive study of the 'high' Bunt caste points at how not all Bunt were landlords and neither could they retain control over land in every instance of filing declaration by the tenants. He quotes from *Bunts Panorama*²⁴ that sums up the general mood of landlords who lost ownership over their vast tracts of agricultural field, and I reproduce it here in order to point at the prevailing tensions between 'high' and middle-level tenant castes, however diverse these categories were internally.

For the tough, proud and dynamic Bunts, time stood still under the benign protection of 'Aliyasantana'²⁵ system. With the implementation of the ill-conceived Land Reforms the entire scene has turned chaotic within the span of thirty years. The change came like a bolt from the blues (*sic*) leaving behind a trail of untold misery and distress, the like of which never occurred even when a natural calamity struck the district of Dakshina Kannada (2010: 313).

It is this tumultuous period of tension between different castes and classes in the region that also witnesses the emergence of Koti-Chennaya in Billawa public sphere, and I return to this in detail in the ensuing chapter. Meanwhile, Damle's categorization of 'high,' 'middle' and 'Scheduled castes' acts as a sufficient base to understand the caste structure as it functions within the socio-economic scenario of Tulunad. A cursory view of the annual rituals of *kola*, *nema* also underlines the way caste hierarchy works through the language of the religio-cultural. While land-owning Bunts, Jains remain at the helm of ritual proceedings, receiving enhanced 'respect' from both deities and the people gathered, Billawas remain largely as *poojarys* or officiating priests. Brahmins due to their traditional

²³ Traditional *guttu* or large Bunt households

²⁴ Th Report brought out on the occasion of World Bunts Convention' 95.

²⁵ *Aliyasantana kattu* is the Kannada 'equivalent' (not aptly conceived) of Tulu *Tammale Arvatta katt* meaning Maternal uncle-Nephew Law. *Tammale Arvatta katt* established women's right over their maternal property in principle, however to be managed by either maternal grandfather, maternal uncle or brother.

‘superior’ claim, are considered ‘high’ despite remaining outside the Tuluva ritual ‘praxis.’²⁶ As already noted by Damle (1993) and Rao’s (2010) works, the land owning-tenant, ‘upper’-‘lower’ relationship between Bunts/Jains and Billawas started deteriorating further during land reform acts. However, there are no sufficient studies available to understand caste relations in detail in the region, particularly Billawas’ relationship with other castes like Gowdas, Havyaka Brahmins, dalit castes and so on. While not delving into the Billawa-Bunt relation, Kotekar (2012) reserves separate sections for his understanding of Billawa-Jain (215), Billawa-Mugeras (210) and Billawwa-Protestant Christians (218) relationship. In aggregate his analysis only presents a harmonious connection with these different castes, subsuming any underlying tension that perhaps prevails within.

Through different historical references, Kotekar points at how Jains and Billawas maintained a very cordial relationship until 16th century and how Koti-Chennaya and Kantabare-Budabare *paddanas* are reflective of the harmonious bonding with Jain rulers (2012: 215). Interestingly, Dallodi (2012: 80-115) in his monograph on Billawa community dwells extensively on the caste relations in Tulunad, however placing it within a distant past, and within the markers of ‘occupation, colour/class differences, *sanskara* (culture), *sampradaya* (customs), practices, beliefs, behaviour, food practices” (2012: 82).

By relying on a few historical records and texts like Gururaja Bhat (1975), Dallodi attempts to establish that by the time Bunts entered into Tulunad, most of the chief occupations of Tuluva life were under the control of Billawas and Mogaveeras (2012: 85). Although Mogaveeras are projected as original inhabitants along with Billawas, Dallodi also makes a detailed effort to establish how, unlike popular perception, these two castes do not belong to the same caste group, and possess any singular origin (2012, 93-94), and so are caste ‘clusters’ like Bunt-Jains; Brahmin-Jains; Bunt-Billawa-Mogaveera (2012: 107). Billawas, in all, emerge as significant players in all aspects of Tuluva life, along with being epitomes of ideal life/characters in ancient Tulunad. Thus, like Poojary (2003), Dallodi also locates roughly two kinds of periods in Billawa history – pre and post Koti-Chennaya, the former characterized by Billawa political supremacy, power and cultural greatness, and the latter ridden with relegated status. Intriguingly, *brahmana vadhe* (2012, 111) or Brahmin slaughter and toddy-tapping profession are presented as reasons behind the downfall of Billawa social status. However, Dallodi’s entire book is reserved in reclaiming a glorious

²⁶ Recent years have witnessed a surge in Brahmin intervention into the Tuluva worship system. They have been successful in introducing ‘purifying’ rites like *Brahmakalasha*, *Punarpratishthapane*, and so on, which are spreading rapidly in the Tulu region.

past where Billawas were at the helm of everything, however, providing little details about the way caste relations actually worked during the crucial periods post-independence.

The relationship between Billawas and *parishishta varga* or ‘Scheduled castes’ is also an important aspect that actually gets glossed under the normalizing ideas of harmony, co-existence and inter-dependence, particularly in the Billawa accounts like Dallodi (2012) and Kotekar (2012). Emphasising heavily on the ‘original inhabitants’ tag associated with Scheduled castes, Billawas and Mogaveeras in Tulunad, Dallodi points at how while Mogaveeras (one fifth of Billawa population) were close in affinity with Billawas,

the obedience that the elders of Scheduled castes like Koraga, Nalike, Parava and so on express towards Billawas in villages is an evidence for how the Scheduled castes have always maintained their respect, sincerity towards the largest inhabitants of the land (2012: 85)

Time and again reference to how Scheduled Castes have been ‘obedient’ to ‘upper’ castes like Bunts, Billawa, Mogaveera, and how they were labourers at the ‘upper’ caste houses, living in perfect harmony runs through Dallodi’s analysis (2012: 95). While the tabooed toddy-tapping profession is re-interpreted as a lucrative and dignified profession of Billawas in the past (less as consumers) (which also becomes a marker of their low caste status later), the Scheduled castes are projected as the consumers of toddy (2012, 94-95). Apart from these subsidiary-state references to Dalit castes, Dallodi doesn’t dwell on their relationship with Billawa caste in detail.

In his account of Billawa caste’s relations with different groups in Tulunad like Jains, Protestant Christians and Mugerars, Ramanatha Kotekar (2012) also dwells in brief on Billawa relation with a ‘Scheduled caste,’ Mugerars (210-213). As pointed in chapter two already, Kotekar’s account of this caste-association is also based on the hierarchy-guided language of how Billawas receive honour first during Mugerar rituals and practices. He mentions how Mugerars are called as *muladakulu* or in his own translation, ‘bonded labourer’ of Billawa caste people (2012: 210). He interprets the relationship between Mugerar cultural heroes, Mudda-Kalala with that of Koti-Chennaya, underlining the same subsidiary status replicated in the heroes’ ‘co-existence.’ “From birth to death,” he says, “Mugerars participated with Koti-Chennaya in all their valorous adventures. They [Mudda-Kalala] do not have any gallantry without the presence of Baidarkalu [Koti-Chennaya]” (2012: 211). He records a series of instances where Billawas receive honour from Mugerars

during their ritual offerings, further establishing the caste order in favour of Billawas, however couched in the rhetoric of harmonious co-existence. The lord– bonded labour correlation claimed between Billawas and Dalits is interpreted in the similar language that projects a cordial relationship between land-owning Bunts, Jains and the tenanat castes like Billawas in Tulunad. Framed and rationalized within the contours of religio-cultural, caste relations in Tulunad are almost always hierarchical in order, placing one or the other caste as subsidiary, dependant, serving caste.

At the same time, it is uncontested that caste and resistance to caste are central to the history of fashioning of the self/community and its internal, transformative dynamics,²⁷ simultaneous foregrounding of the cultural, the vernacular assumes heightened significance for many caste-communities, the oppressed in particular. While an erstwhile ‘untouchable’ community of Billawas is engaged in a steady social transformation, constructing assertive identity,²⁸ I hypothesize, an underlying caste tension is inevitable, and in the case of Tulunad, it takes a more explicit articulation through the act of rereading and reconstructing communitarian pasts. While I discuss in detail the deployment of Koti-Chennaya for a resistive imagination and a vernacular democratic politics in the next chapter, I also simultaneously ponder over the parallel launching of Koti-Chennaya along with ‘imported’ icon of Narayana Guru. Meanwhile, this Introduction to the next chapter, outlining briefly the traditional caste relations in Tulunadu and a trajectory of the growth of Billawa community in Tulunadu and outside, acts as a necessary backdrop in understanding the dynamics of cultural politics associated with the twin brothers. A hitherto deprived community’s efforts to recuperate hidden histories to rebuild an emancipatory identity (Jangam, 2015: 64) goes hand in hand with the reclamation of public space by the ‘caste publics’ of Billawas in Tulunad, and it is this resistive caste articulation and subversive cultural politics that I turn my focus in the next chapter.

²⁷ Banerjee, Prathama “Caste and the Writing of History” (2017: 10)

²⁸ As against ‘defensive identities’ discussed by Smriti Srinivas, 1992: 244

Chapter-III

Itinerary of Identities: 'Caste Publics' of Koti-Chennaya

In times of tyranny and injustice when law oppresses the people,
the *outlaw* takes his place in *history*.

- *Robin Hood* (Film) (2010)

In extension of the first and second chapters that discussed respectively emerging historicizing acts and the kaleidoscopic repository of memory maintained by the diverse mnemonic publics of Koti-Chennaya, this chapter discusses the way Koti-Chennaya are deployed as caste mobilizational tool within the geo-cultural bounds of Tulu Nadu. While the first two chapters foregrounded the twin brothers in their memorial entirety, the Introduction immediately preceding this chapter assists in contextualizing the rise of Koti-Chennaya as both figures for linguistic assertion and caste cultural politics. Together, they constitute as necessary backdrop in understanding the dynamics of resistive imagination conceptualized around the masculine warrior figures of Koti-Chennaya. This section is further continued in the next chapter, wherein I attempt to theorize the politico-cultural dynamics associated with the memorialisation of Koti-Chennaya in detail, thereby, adding to the existing academic engagement with the emergence of cultural resistive movements among different social groups in the Indian Subcontinent.

Cultural Capital¹

Elaborating on D R Nagaraj's idea that 'even the oppressed needs a Memory,' Chinnaiah Jangam (2015) brilliantly ruminates over the necessity of a cultural memory for Dalits and other oppressed in his essay on the politics of identity and the project of writing history. He discusses about the socio-political imperative of evoking a positive historical memory that instils hope and self-confidence and ensures 'recognition.' This imperative drives the oppressed communities to fall back upon their social archive of folklore or folk narratives to create a resistant democratic imaginary. Similarly, discussing the cultural politics and democratic participation of Dalits in Uttar Pradesh, Badri Narayan (2006) studies the burgeoning Dalit politics in UP that is based on their dissenting culture, women heroes and icons, and on how these are used as symbols of Dalit assertion in the context of the

¹ Deriving from Pierre Bourdieu's influential concept, I use 'cultural capital' as a sum of distinct cultural tools that equips a particular social group to claim higher status in the ladder of social organization. It is the accumulated cultural knowledge that confers social status and power.

rise of Bahujan Samaj Party in UP. Pondering over the illegitimacy of caste in Indian public sphere, M S S Pandian concludes his influential essay suggesting the marginalized to step outside of the claims of modernity, and to “resignify as positive those cultural practices which are deemed by the upper castes as lowly” (2002).

Accordingly, scholars like D R Nagaraj (2010), M S S Pandian (2002), Chinnai Jangam (2015) and Sanal Mohan (2015) in different South Indian contexts have emphasised the need to and attempt by Dalit castes to recuperate concealed histories in rebuilding emancipatory identities. Such histories are built on alternative imaginations of a caste identity, reenergizing with cultural symbols and practices. Shared practices like folk songs and stories, performative traditions and ritual acts are summoned to express the experiences of humiliation, oppression. While most of the above mentioned studies concentrate on Dalit identity formation, not much literature is available on the vernacularized cultural politics of intermediary or Other Backward Class (OBC) like Billawas in Tulu Nadu. In other South Indian contexts like Tamil Nadu and Kerala, scholars have studied equivalent OBC castes of Nadars and Ezhavas (Sreebitha, 2013; Velayudhan, 2017; Templeman, 1996; Osella and Osella, 2000). Whereas Billawas, since 2010 in particular, have focussed on rewriting their own cultural past, no significant study has come up so far analysing their participation in communitarian cultural politics. The present study assumes particular significance in this position, and also aims to contribute to the existing scholarship on the network of erstwhile ‘toddy-tapping’ communities in South India, significantly overlapping in their social mobility endeavours.

Although they belong to the larger category of Tuluva vernacular deities who fought against hegemonic oppression, Koti-Chennaya stand out both in terms of their resistive language as well as the prominence they have been accorded to by their mnemonic publics. My chief concern in this chapter is to understand two major preoccupations that foreground Koti-Chennaya within the geo-cultural boundary of Tulu Nadu:

1. 1960s and 1970s as a fertile ground for emerging Tulu consciousness, simultaneously positing Koti-Chennaya as cultural heroes.
2. The socio-economic and political situations since 1960s and 1970s as a necessary backdrop for the rise of Koti-Chennaya as exclusively caste-cultural icons of Billawa community in the 1990s, intertwined with the questions of Tulu identity.

In both these modes of enquiry, I attempt to understand the heightened significance associated with these twin brothers, and to posit them as a response to the most

tumultuous as well as dynamic decades since 1970s. I contextualize the emergence of Koti-Chennaya in the public space of print and other media first since 1960s as a part of the larger Tuluva identity, followed by their significance as resistive figures to the socio-economic conditions in Tulunad, and the self-(re)fashioning efforts of Billawa community in particular in 1990s. Later in the chapter I analyse the gradual transformation this mnemonic tradition is undergoing in more recent years, since 2010 in particular, so as not only to capture the expansion of Koti-Chennaya memory into newer media but also changing discursive practices of the community in question. In the process, outside the decade emphasis I have categorised above, I suggest the simultaneous coexistence of both Tuluva identity and caste Billawa consciousness, both energizing heavily from the masculine tradition of Koti-Chennaya.

Tuluva Identity and Koti-Chennaya

While attempting to understand the transformation of languages from being considered primarily as tools or local resources to their refiguration as the fundamental basis of individual identities, Lisa Mitchell (2010:14) emphasises the role of printing within pedagogical practices in South India. Along with language being personified as a maternal figure, corpus of textual materials on literary historiography, canon (re-)formation, pedagogy, grammar come to institute new linguistic identities. While this holds good in the case of languages with long written histories like Kannada, Telugu and Tamil, predominantly oral languages like Tulu and Kodava in Karnataka with no script of their own,² have to invest their affective attachments to language elsewhere. At the same time, the intimate connection between language and power also dictates the modes of such emotional belongings. In this situation, Madhav Prasad's words that "when a language is rendered structurally inconsequential to the political form, it reverts to the status of a cultural or ethnic attribute: this is the common fate of minor languages in modern nation-states" (Dechamma, 2017) appears true in the case of Tuluvas as well. In the absence of an elaborate canon for Tulu language, or the conspicuous reliance on written literature, the

² Since last two decades there has been vigorous discussion around the issue of 'Tulu script' in Tulunad. With the discovery of palm-leaf texts like *Sri Devi Mahatme* and *Shri Bhagavato*, it was claimed that the texts used Tulu script called 'Tigalari' which is a combination of Malayalam-Tulu Script debate in Tulu. There was an attempt to popularize the 'Tulu script' even through institutional efforts like Karnataka Tulu Sahitya Academy, Mangalore, and some individual efforts (even in Bangalore) to teach Tulu script to the interested. However, with a few scholars (Lakshmi Prasad) claiming that there is no exclusive 'Tulu script' and that 'Tigalari' was used by Brahmins in different regions of the South. Facebook in the months since January, 2017 is filled with debates over the viability of 'Tulu script,' with two sides indulging in in-tensed claims. <http://laxmipras.blogspot.in/2017/04/blog-post.html> Web on 22nd June, 2017.

Tulu language movement, triggered first in 1920s and 1930s, followed by its resurgence in 1960s and 1970s emphasised on producing literature, and perform the Tulu identity, respectively. While the initial stirrings for Tulu cause spearheaded by S. U. Paniyadi in Udupi in the first half of 20th century attempted to create both literary corpus as well set up institutions (like Banks, printing press), the second wave of Tulu consciousness, I argue, is largely performative in nature. While different cultural practices continue to be highlighted as distinct ethnic identity, the initial stirrings of Tulu identity, I suggest, were clearly grounded in performance in 1960s and 1970s. It is at this backdrop that I analyze the deployment of Koti-Chennaya towards constructing Tulu identity in the immediate decades following reorganization of States in India.

‘The Father of Tulu Film Industry’ K N Taylor³ (1939-2015) often contemplated over the ways through which the enmity, jealousies existing in society could be warded off, and how social solidarity was the key necessity. He realized the inevitability of conveying this to people, through plays, in *their own language*, and thus the necessity of writing plays again in their own language (Vedavahi and Jayasheela, 2016). With lofty ideals, he established “Shri Ganesha Nataka Sabha” in 1958 in Mangalore, opening a new chapter in the book of Tulu theatre. A bunch of Tulu men, including Seetarama Shetty, joined the ambitious initiative of the 19 year old Taylor, thereby adding to his intense affective attachment with Tulu language. He introduced Tulu on a large scale in theatre (which was already a popular medium across Tulunad, remaining thus till today), and the required written versions, evoking huge accolades from theatre-goers. Taylor thus became the first Tuluva to introduce Tulu language in its vibrant best in the popular medium of theatre, thereby inaugurating the second wave of Tulu consciousness to follow immediately. His plays also became a vehicle to spread the cause of Tulu, spreading itself in different cities of India like Mumbai, Madras, Goa, Delhi, Pune, Nasik, Meeraj and so on. His Tulu plays like *Yaan Sansyasi Ape* (I will become a Monk) was enacted in Mumbai in 1969 itself, and *Kandani-Bodedi* (Husband-Wife) was performed in Abu Dhabi for more than a month.

Expanding his creative ambitions, Taylor ventured into making Tulu films as well, producing *Daareda Budedi* (Conjugal Wife) in 1971 as the second Tulu film to hit the screens.⁴ Interestingly 9 out of the first 15 Tulu films were produced by Taylor alone. He

³ Name changed into Taylor from K N Tailor (Tailoring was his primary/secondary profession all through)

⁴ Also taking benefit from the government initiative of funding Rs. 50,000 to films made in any language.

further contributed to the Tulu cause by uniquely initiating “Tulu Theatre Festival,” later paving way for other events like *Tulu Natakotsava* (Tulu Theatre Fest), *Tulu Yakshagana Saptaha* (Tulu Yakshagana Week), *Tulu Talamaddale Saptaha* (Tulu Musical Instruments Week), *Tulu Harikate Saptaha* (Tulu Oral-Anecdotal Week), and so on. Taylor published 12 of his plays as printed texts. One of the audience present in Taylor’s 1969 play in Mumbai recounted how it was a great festive moment for Mumbai Tuluvas to gather at a hall in King Circle, and how “one should have witnessed the excessive joy with which kith and kin embraced each other! The reason for such a mirth was the performance of Taylor’s play. That was *Yaan Sanyasi Ape*. More than 3500 people gathered that day” (Vedavathi and Jayasheela, 2016: 26). My rather detailed account of Taylor’s achievements above is both to trace the genesis of the second wave of Tulu movement, and also to contextualise the early textualization efforts of Koti-Chennaya within the larger performative basis of Tuluva identity formation.

Therefore, while 1960s and 1970s witnessed an upswell in Tulu plays and cinemas, bringing to fore the question of Tulu identity, it already had a precursor in another of the performative practices of the region, Yakshagana. In 1950s, both Tulu language and Tulu materials (deriving from *paddana* stories and other social issues) gained high prominence in Yakshagana, thereby challenging the long supremacy of Sanskrit materials, Statist Kannada language and upper caste Brahmin presence in Yakshagana in the coastal region.⁵ Thus, Tulu’s entry into the Brahmin caste bastion of Yakshagana marks the first major response after the merger of Tulu-speaking region into the Kannada-dominated State of Mysore in 1956. Tulu Yakshagana performances became highly popular, drawing huge crowds to the mirth-filled enactments. As a necessary tool, the performances also preceded composing of the plays, though largely remaining unpublished (Kukkuvalli, 2007).

Unlike other linguistic resurgences elsewhere, as demonstrated above, Tulu didn’t first fall back upon the print capital, but made its presence felt in the performative practices of the region like Yakshagana, theatre and films, at least during its second wave. Printed texts only assisted in performances, largely also remaining in the shape of unpublished, but internally circulated, drafts. Through this, I suggest that, performance remains at the centre of both Tulu consciousness and the initial entry of Koti-Chennaya

⁵ It is interesting to make a detailed note of M. Prabhakar Joshi’s article (2000:957-964) “Tulu Yakshagana: Ninne – Indu – Naale” (Tulu Yakshagana: Yesterday – Today – Tomorrow) here. His rather Mark Antonyic article-speech on the emergence on Tulu in Yakshagana laments the loss of supreme artistic elements, continually underlying a distinction between the *shishta* of Yakshaagana and the mundaneness of Tulu materials and artistic projections.

into the print public sphere. While I dwell further on the centrality of performance in Koti-Chennaya tradition, intertwined also with Tulu identity assertion elsewhere in the thesis, at this point here, I focus on the foremost textual reproductions of Koti-Chennaya within the ambit of public performative practices.

In her analysis of the embeddedness of literary narratives like Padmini's, the Rajput queen, Ramya Sreenivasan (2007) extends her analysis to the circulation of manuscripts. In the process she identifies how narrative traditions in the Indian context simultaneously existed in both oral performance and manuscript form, distinguishing it from oral cultures in Africa and Central Asia, and also how it shaped both narratives and their circulation (2007: 11). In his brilliant analysis of Namdev's tradition in Maharashtrian context, Novetzke (2008) proposes the pre-eminence of performance in Namdev's public memory through his unique study of *badas* or 'notebooks' carried by *kirtan* performers. He perceives the written corpus on Namdev like *bada* as a by-product of the central performance tradition of *kirtan*, thereby establishing the transcendence of literacy through orality in largely illiterate spheres (2008: 100). While I prefer to do away with the 'illiterate spheres'⁶ connection of Novetzke's study in my analyses of the public memory of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad, I find his emphasis on the interaction between performance and writing highly useful in understanding the tradition of Koti-Chennaya through decades in general, and early period of textualization in 1960s and 1970s in particular.

Accordingly, the first set of texts published and available on Koti-Chennaya could be understood as a corpus adding to the emerging Tulu project after the formation of Mysore⁷ State in 1956. While they invoke the imagination of *Tuluvappe*⁸ or *Tuludevi*⁹ (Mother Tulu) like in most other linguistic re-articulations elsewhere, Koti-Chennaya are clearly posited as the great warrior children of the same mother, creating a valorous history in the annals of Tulunad. Vishu Kumar's 1967 version of Koti-Chennaya adds to the largely adopted genre of plays, interestingly standing as a contrast to Seetanadi Ganapayya Shetty's play version (1978) in its usage of both Tulu and Kannada. When Vishu Kumar published his play (he later produces the Koti-Chennaya back-and-white movie in 1973) he still had

⁶ The reliance on performative modes to propagate the cause of Tulu was not characterized by 'non-literate'/illiterate groups. Public demonstration of Tulu distinct culture is carried out on major platforms, both within and outside Tulunad, stage-managed and carried out by highly literate, professionals like lawyers, doctors and teachers.

⁷ Mysore State was renamed as Karnataka in 1973.

⁸ In Seetanadi Ganapayya Shetty's *Koti Chennaya: Tulu Nataka*, 1978

⁹ In Doomappa Master's *Tulunada Veerer: Koti-Chennaya Kate – Tulupada*, 1975

the Kannada audience in mind, thereby mediating and couching the Tulu play in Kannada. He says in the introduction titled “Antaranga” (Inner Voice), “Koti Chennaya’s story reverberates in every house and heart of Tulunadu... I had the desire to popularize the history of such heroes throughout Karanataka since many years” (1967: i). His note also provides the information that the play was enacted as early as 1963 in Mumbai,¹⁰ thereby adding to my argument that performance preceded textualization for the publics of Koti-Chennaya. The case of Vishu Kumar’s (and many others’) deployment of Kannada as a mediating language for Tulu printed texts offers another instance of inevitable ‘negotiation’ for a language of minority like Tulu with dominant, power-equipped languages, well articulated in the case of Kodava by Sowmya Dechamma (2016).

Thus, while Vishu Kumar’s play was still negotiating with the dominant canon along with its emphasis on the twin brothers role in social justice against caste inequality (to which I will return later in the chapter), the two texts published, one play and other poetic composition of the Koti-Chennaya *paddana* in 1970s, exclusively in Tulu, joined the clarion call for an independent Tulu identity, largely spearheaded by the institutionalizing efforts of S. R. Hegde¹¹ (1934-1996), with the establishment of “Tulukoota” in 1969. Doomappa Master, a Billawa, poetically presented the story of Koti-Chennaya, delivering them as “two steps ahead of *butas*, and a step behind *dever* or gods” (Master, 1975: i). The clear distinction between Koti-Chennaya and other *butas* of Tulunad that reappears time and again in Billawa religio-cosmic imagination has its clear articulation in Doomappa Master’s preface in 1975 itself. However, in Master’s poetic rendition, Koti-Chennaya emerge as the proud sons of Mother Tulu, lucidly articulated in the lines below (1975: iii):

O Mother *Tuludevi* Tulunad’s *Siridevi*

Protect well, O Great Mother

The twin loving children you gave birth to

Koti, Chennaya’s story I recite | | (*translation mine*, iii)

¹⁰ Making it clear that apart from K N Taylor’s Drama Company, a few other Tuluvas like Someshekhar Putran, Mohan Haladipur (of ‘Tulu Nataka Sabha’) were also instrumental in the performance of Tulu plays in Mumbai in 1960s itself.

¹¹ S. R. Hegde was a lawyer by profession. He concentrated on the development of Tulu language at organizational level by setting up Tulukoota or Tulu Association in 1971 (followed by Tulukootas in Madikeri, Putturu, Bangalore and Mumbai by 1973), Tulunad Press in 1972; organised all-India level Tulu Conferences, and so on.

Pointing at how the story of Koti-Chennaya has already been popularized through Tulu plays, *bayalata*,¹² and Tulu films (performative practices preceding textualization), Doomappa Master sums up the purpose behind his written endeavour thus¹³:

‘Tulukoota’ that is working incessantly towards serving the cause of Tulu and the growth of its literary canon, along with the great endeavours of Tulu zealots and artists – I intend to contribute in miniscule to these efforts, and offer this [book] at the feet of Mother Tulu. (*translation mine*, ii)

Like Vishu Kumar and Doomappa Master who point at how their printed versions of the plays of Koti-Chennaya are experimented on stage and circulated among the drama troupes many times already, Seetanadi Ganapayya Shetty (who otherwise largely wrote in Kannada language) also saw the spectacular success of his play Koti-Chennaya across northern Tulu before it was published in 1978. The popularity of his version, and thus Koti-Chennaya plays, can also be seen in the fact that in 1978 itself Shetty’s play was published twice, by two different publication houses.¹⁴ In his preface “One Word with Tulu Fraternity,” Shetty appeals to the Tulu audience – who had already popularized his performative edition – in following words:

I am hoping that the enthusiasts of Tulu language, the children of Mother Tulu will read this book with affection as their own. I will then consider my effort worth taken... The Tulu fraternity possesses enough admiration. They carry the desire to parade their language. They are also ready to struggle for that cause. I am aware of this devotion. It is by that courage, despite great difficulties, that I have published this book and offered to you. Now flaunting and preserving it is left in your hands.

Let God do good to us. Let Tuluvas attain victory. Let the Tulu language win.
(1978: iii)

Thus published in the heightened period of Tulu mobilization, all the above described texts could foremost be contextualized within the rising awareness of Tulu identity, and

¹² *Bayalata* is now defined as a form of Yakshagana dance performances found in South India. However, Willie R De Silva (1985) discusses how *Bayalata*, a field drama celebrating the exploits of heroes and heroines and a number of other historical persons like Queen Abbakka of Ullala came to be successfully replaced (as a subsidiary affair) by the ten avatars/ incarnations of Vishnu, under the name *dasavatara*. De Silva perceives it as “the success achieved in the cultural field in transforming the field drama into a religious one” (1985: 154).

¹³ Doomappa Master notes how the initial parts of the song were already published in *Tulukoota* paper (started by S R Hegde, and was printed between 1971 and 1977 with M Ratnakumar as its Editor)

¹⁴ First by Sahitya Sangha, Hiriyaadka, followed by Subhodha Sahitya Bhandara, Hiriyaadka, both in 1978.

how along with Tulu language, Tulu themes¹⁵ could also become sufficient materials in performative and literary productions. Through such and many other journalistic efforts like S R Hegde's *Tulukoota*, Tulu entered formally into the print public sphere, with emphasis on distinct Tulu identity. However, performance remained the central factor that not only dictated the contours of such literary productions, but also established the legitimacy of a self-identity founded on the language of Tulu. Further, the performative foundation of Tulu identity formation could also challenge the scholarly claims¹⁶ that Tulu movement was exclusively 'upper' caste in nature. While I partially agree that institutionalized efforts during and since the 1970s Tulu movement, and its base in the rise of Tulu in Yakshagana was largely the monopoly of Bunt caste, I also think such a reductionist approach might ignore, and thus silence, the participation of large groups including Tuluva youth who laid a firm foundation, vast base for the Movement by their presence, even if as audience, of the Tulu performative practices. As performance precedes, predetermines and becomes central in the production and dissemination of Tulu consciousness, the audience who shaped such performances also occupy space as primary force in that identity articulation. An exclusive focus on the upper strata that controlled a few modes of propagation might not, I argue, assist in fully understanding the dynamics of a counter, largely resistive discourse like distinct geo-linguistic identities.

Interestingly, folklore that that never became a vehicle for nationalism according to Stuart Blackburn's analysis of nationalism and print culture in the Subcontinent (2003), constituted as a major component of Tulu nationalism/sub-nationalism, as also argued by K S Chithra in her dissertation (2010:109). While Tulu 'folk' *paddanas* enter into performative traditions on a large scale during the consolidation of an ethnic Tulu identity as demonstrated above, fascinatingly, the story of Koti-Chennaya also figured in the compilation of booklets by clearly visible nationalist projects like 'Rashtrarthana Sahitya' in Bangalore. Circulated with the nation-building ambition, particularly to mould the youngsters, Rashtrarthana Sahitya expresses its ambition thus:

¹⁵ I mean themes from Tulu 'folklore,' Tulu social issues, etc.

¹⁶ Focussing on the way 'Daiva cult' is appropriated under the homogenous category of Tulu culture and a demonstration of caste harmony in the region, K S Chitra also suggests that the Tulu movement was 'upper' caste in nature. To quote: "The fact that organizations like Tulu Koota were headed largely by people belonging to the Tulu speaking non-Brahmin upper castes, whereas the research centres like Rashtrakavi Govinda Pai Samshodhana Kendra which were headed mainly by people belonging to Kannada and Konkani speaking Brahmin castes, necessitates for a careful analysis of the concept of 'Tulunadu' as projected by these centers." (2010: 110)

Here is the corpus of Bharata-Bharati Pustaka Sampada [publisher] as a beloved bunch of books of the Kannada children. It familiarizes [children with] great souls that shined bright in the life of India since thousands of years from ancient times to its modern period... Let the children of India lead a fulfilled life as the great souls of the world.

Here lies the supreme virtue of Indian tradition. Let us know it, let us pursue it.

Vande Mataram!

With this preface signed by L S Sheshagiri Rao in 1974, it presents a very brief account of Koti-Chennaya – “Tulunadu’s heroic brothers. Brave warriors who did not bow before arrogance, beastly powers and fought for justice, self-respect”¹⁷ – in Kannada language. Koti-Chennaya, so far, is the only Tulu ‘folk’ story to have made its entry into the print nationalist project of Rashtrotthana Sahitya. It is catalogued under the head of ‘Veerapurusharu’ or ‘Brave Men’ in the online selling platform of the publishing house, first published in as early as 1974 itself.

While examining the intersection of armed masculinity and nation, Sikata Banerjee (2006) debates about how male and female bodies are used as potent metaphors for expressing nation. She points at how the cultural expression of Masculine Hinduism has had considerable impact on the modern interpretations of Hindu nationalism. Images associated with masculine and feminine bodies are defined by values of martial prowess, muscular strength, a readiness to go to battle and moral fortitude. The inclusion of Koti-Chennaya in a modern nationalist project like Rashtrotthana Sahitya is an extension of the metaphoric deployment of muscular figures who fight for land, for ‘social justice,’ and qualify in all the above prerequisites noted by Banerjee. While I return to the excessive masculinity that characterize the tradition of Koti-Chennaya later in this chapter, I raise the question of how Koti-Chennaya are appropriated by three different quarters of power here: exclusively Tulu heroes being presented to and as Kannada figures catering to the nationalistic needs of ‘Kannada children,’ thereby appropriating them within dominant geo-political formations outside Tulunad; the vernacular religious figures of Koti-Chennaya again being appropriated into the mainstream Hindu discourse; and finally, the presentation of Tulu story in the ‘other’ language of Kannada, which is again on the better side of power equation.

¹⁷ That is how the booklet introduces Koti-Chennaya in the beginning.

Thus, through textual analysis, while I have discussed in brief how Koti-Chennaya were appropriated by the emerging Tulu consciousness, and how they assisted in configuring Tulu nationalism, I have also pointed at how they could be passed off as sufficient metaphors for armed Hindu nationalistic project. I now set out to understand in detail the deployment of Koti-Chennaya for caste mobilizational purposes, and how the same trope of armed masculinity could again function as a necessary tool in establishing a particular caste identity.

Narrative of Resistance

Koti Chennaya are twin heroes emerging from the heroic tradition of Tulunadu. Centuries ago, they won the hearts of destitute with their indomitable persona, and sacrificed their lives resisting the exploitative tendencies prevalent among ruling lords of *zamindari* system. (Kalmady and Perampalli, 1998: 1)

Thus summarized is the significance of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad by the authors of *Janamanasadalli Koti Chennayaru* (Koti Chennaya in the Psyche/Minds of People) (1998). Emphasising the need of making the ‘folk-based’ story of Koti-Chennaya (story requiring ‘seven nights and eight days’ to be recited) easily attainable to all, the authors set out to abridge the narrative supplementing it with a generous note on the ritual practices held in *garadi* premises. Similarly, one of the foremost textual interventions into the tradition of Koti-Chennaya, an extensive monograph on the 220-odd *garadis* across Tulunad (Amin and Kotian, 1990) sums up the gist of the story of Koti-Chennaya in following words:

In times of conflict and friction, these twin heroes of Tulunad uplifted the entire exploited section from amidst darkness, and paved way for a valiant struggle to attain social justice (for the exploited), is the story of this folk legend. (Amin and Kotian, 1990: xiii)

What emerges as the most significant aspect for the textualizing publics of Koti-Chennaya, largely belonging to Billawa caste, is their indomitable resistance to the exploitative dominant sections, more often identified as functioning within the oppressive *zamindari* or feudal landlord system. The twin brothers are conceptualized as valiant figures fighting against intertwined class exploitation and caste hierarchy. The interchangeability, and more often obscured, of these two modes of oppression is also intimately connected with the caste-based class exploitation prevalent within the

Tulu society, and the narrative of Koti-Chennaya demonstrates this in more creative ways. While I now briefly outline the resistive language inscribed within the narrative of Koti-Chennaya, I also underline the intermediary status of Billawas as encoded within the twin brothers' *paddana*. In the process, an ironical image of caste subjugation of the further downtrodden also emerges from within the narrative.

Land at the Centre

It is clear from the Introduction just preceding this chapter that the 'high' castes, chiefly consisting of Bunts, Jains, Brahmins and at times Gowdas, indulged in caste exploitation couched in agrarian arrangement, further validated by ritualistic practices. Land ownership constitutes a central component around which caste relations are organized and sustained. This centuries old hierarchy between the dominant and the subordinated in relation to land ownership and agrarian connection came to the forefront again at the backdrop of the implementation of Land Reforms Acts in 1960s and 1970s. The first Act was introduced in 1963 with a lot of leeway for the landowners to retain their control over vast tracts of land, thereby not producing any substantial transformation in the socio-economic fabric. However, the government implemented Land Reforms Act again in 1974 with more stringent regulations, this time intending to benefit the hitherto deprived on a larger scale. While most of the declarations by tenants during 1974 Act resulted in reaping benefits, Damle (1993) in his study has demonstrated lucidly how the time period between the first and the second Act witnessed large scale eviction of the tenants, thereby also escalating caste tensions between the landowning class and the tenant groups, largely consisting of Billawas. It is this backdrop of feudal landlordism and caste hostility that, I argue, led to the emergence of Koti-Chennaya into the Billawa public sphere. Further, in the previous chapter (Introduction) I have already made a note of the large scale Billawa caste mobilization taking place in 1970s, also resulting in a community member entering into the Union Parliament in 1977.

Furthermore, land that figured as a major agent in the reframing of caste subjectivity of the Billawa community since 1970s also occupies similar significance within the *paddana* of Koti-Chennaya. It is the preoccupation with land and associated caste conflict within the narrative that, I argue, translates into an appropriate resistive language for the land-based tension since 1960s and 1970s in the Tulu region. The most affected of the tenant-eviction move, the Billawas, foreground 'their' caste icons

Koti-Chennaya in a major fashion, thereby triggering a major refashioning of their self-identity.

What becomes a turning point in their lives, the killing of the wicked minister Budyanta, is centred around the twin brothers' land-related conflict with the minister.¹⁸ Armed by his 'upper' caste status and the minister-ship under the chieftain ruler Permale Ballala, Budyanta harbours hatred against the 'lower' caste Koti-Chennaya, preceded by the same emotion towards their mother Deyi Baidedi. Some versions of Koti-Chennaya *paddana* even hint at the murder of Deyi Baidedi by the same Budyanta, further validated by the technique of *asthamangala* by Swami Vijayananda Guruji in 2014.¹⁹ The existing caste animosity between Budyanta and Koti-Chennaya is escalated further when a same piece of land is divided between the two, leading to many conflicts thereafter. The minister had to face setback in every instance of provocation, culminating finally in his brutal murder by the twin brothers. The significance of land is conceptualized in most vivid terms when the brothers offer a spadeful of mud on each of Budyanta's inanimate body parts, burying him under the same soil that was at the crux of centuries old caste hierarchy. Interestingly also, according to some versions, what triggers an outright conflict with Budyanta was the demand by his children from Koti-Chennaya to pay toll on the play ground, again involving land as a catalytic agent. However, in all instances, the twin brothers establish their muscular supremacy over their opponents from the 'upper' caste.

Land struggle that instigates Koti-Chennaya to murder Budyanta also leads to self-banishment from their locality of birth, and seek refuge elsewhere. The synecdoche of land becomes a major contentious issue between the two feudatory rulers of Panja and Enmuru, spurred by Koti-Chennaya's initiative to re-install the boundary-mark between the two provinces in its original place. The same frontier mark evokes immediate fight between Panja and Enmuru during boar-hunt episode, ultimately resulting in the decisive battle between the two provinces. This battle witnesses the demise of Koti-Chennaya, nevertheless, not before ensuring a peaceful co-existence between the three Ballalas of Permale, Panja and Enmuru as their deathbed wish. The same chieftain Ballalas build memorials for Koti-Chennaya later,

¹⁸ Annexure I for a detailed summary of the Koti-Chennaya *paddana*

¹⁹ October 31st to November 6th, 2014 edition of *Kudla Tulupatrike*, a weekly in Tulu language carried Vijayananda Guruji's statement as the headlines, "*Deyi Baidedi Teerdini att, kertini*" (Deyi Baidedi didn't die, she was murdered). He is claimed to have arrived at this 'truth' through the magico-astrological practice of *drushyanjana*, discussed at length in Chapter Two.

again assigning portions of land in the name of the twin brothers. I return to this issue of the claim over land through *garadi* construction later in this chapter.

In short, land becomes the central trope around which the exploitation-resistance paradigm is woven in Koti-Chennaya *paddana*. Unlike other subjugated marginalized beings who retaliate against the exploitative class only after attaining deification, or *mayo* state in the large pantheon of Tuluva vernacular deities, Koti-Chennaya ensure justice for themselves and also for their well-wishers right during their *joga* or human form. Starting from the Ballala rulers to the hidden tribal men in the forest all are subdued by their sheer sense of justice and valour, at times also bordering on unjust violence.²⁰ Two of the aphoristic statements that repeat both within the narrative and also in every oral and textual rendering of Koti-Chennaya *paddana*, thus widely prevalent among the memorizing publics of Koti-Chennaya are as follows:

enkulu eddentinakleg tigated saadi korpa

*saadi tattinakleg suryodu saadi korva*²¹

(To the good, we show way to our hearts

And the vile will be shown way through our daggers)

And,

Nambinakleg imbu korpa

Satya gendaad korpa

(We will heed to the men, with faith in us

We will ensure always the triumph of truth)

The resistant struggle of Koti-Chennaya is not only aimed at caste hegemony but also anti-establishment in nature. While they thwart the domination of upper castes and class represented by the minister Budyanta and the Ballala of Kenja, they also challenge the authority of their benefactor Permala Ballala in the bargain episode. Expressed in the most defying language, Koti-Chennaya demand²² for things that belonged exclusively to the

²⁰ Instances like Koti-Chennaya threatening Payya Baidya (to know later that he was their brother-in-law); killing the toll-man and others violently is also mentioned in a few *paddana* versions.

²¹ From Vishukumar's play *Koti-Chennaya – Historical Drama in Tulu* (1967:29)

²² A promise made by Permala Ballala to Koti-Chennaya's mother Deyi Baidedi during their birth, which they come back to claim just after Budyanta's murder.

interiors of Ballala's household, thereby challenging the dominant, privileged status of the ruler himself. One after the other they seek claim over Ballala's personal belongings: *bakimar* field producing excessive paddy, a thousand-coconut reaping tree, unique jack Fruit tree bearing both soft and sweet fruits, a buffalo producing many litres of milk every day, and finally the flower backyard used by palace women.²³ With these demands the tussle between the brothers and Ballala reached its peak, leading to Koti-Chennaya's spectacular exit, both from the palace and symbolically, the patronization of a ruler. Land again, in the form of the demand for Ballala's agricultural field and women's backyard, returns as a central metaphor in establishing their assertive identity. It is in this context, I argue, Koti-Chennaya's entry into literature and audio-visual media, particularly since 1980s and 1990s could be interlinked with the escalating caste tensions, also resulting in Billawa community mobilization since 1970s in the Tulu region. The anti-authoritarian and anti-dominant language of Koti-Chennaya *paddana* could sufficiently translate as a resistive imaginary for the turbulent period since 1970s, and accommodative enough to creatively counter 'upper' caste supremacy.

Death, Land and Garadis

While Koti-Chennaya's demand for Ballala's personal belongings epitomises their defiance of authority, the Ballala's panic and eventual attempts to capture the brothers, even by aligning with the neighbouring Ballala, symbolically represents the 'upper' strata's fear of the rise of a lower-caste social group. Koti-Chennaya's demand to possess Ballala's *pattada katti* or throne-swords is further emblematic of their claim over land and authority, which the history publics of Koti-Chennaya will later read as their legitimate claim over the throne of Ballala, in their right of belonging to the regal ancestry of Pandyas. However, while the entire narrative of Koti-Chennaya is replete with subjugation-resistance climate, the death bed wish/demand of Koti from the same Ballalas who inflicted death emerges as a moment of transformation towards a more inclusive society. To quote Koti's final 'negotiation' with the perpetrating feudal lords:

We, as earthly beings

When we go to the spiritual world,...

We will appear,

²³ All the above things demanded by Koti-Chennaya are of supreme quality in their category, and also belong to the very personal domain of Ballala.

Wherever we are remembered;
 Justice, we will always uphold.
 From the spiritual world,
 For those who *have faith* in us,
 Fulfilling their yearnings
 We will continue to do
 The children assured.
 To crops and wealth
 Blessings and protection
 We shall extend,
 They promised (Kalmady, 2007: 397)

In their final battle against oppression and injustice, Koti-Chennaya offer their benedictory assurance of protection in exchange for a social recognition through monumental and ritualistic memorialisation from the same Ballalas who inflicted their death. As per their final wish, memorial structures called *garadi* (which are also martial art centres) were built by the feudal lords. Along with temple-like memorial centres, the King also builds a twin tomb for the deceased heroes, thus lending materiality to the grief and perhaps sense of guilt, remorse of the hierarchical hegemony of oppressive communities. Marginalised caste of Billawas occupy a mnemonic space within the geo-cultural bounds of the upper caste feudal lords, thereby engraving an identitarian claim for the socially subjugated groups. Death and eventual memorialisation turns into a site of negotiation, a mutual barter of recognition and benedictory assurance respectively.

Charles Taylor's (1992) emphasis on the politics of recognition in multicultural societies is a relevant perspective in analyzing the identitarian movements in different contexts. Drawing from Hegelian idea that identities evolved in a dialogic manner with the self and the other, Taylor establishes a concrete relationship between recognition and identity. Intersubjectivity opens up 'spheres of interaction' (Honneth, 2016) thereby assisting in self-realization. In other words, mutual recognition results in the concretization of identities, a lack of which could act as motivational basis for political struggles. Extending Taylor's arguments in the light of the resistive narrative of the twin brothers, I suggest that, the death bed 'wish' of Koti-Chennaya, resultant memorializing through

monuments, bodily mediations and eventual extension of memorials into multiple media since the 20th century could not only be perceived as a continual reaction of the oppressed social groups to recognition or the lack of it, but also as attempts at *reconciliation* between different social groups. The heavily masculine-infused subjectivity of Koti-Chennaya alters the power equation in a substantial way, and thus also renders the unidimensional relation of *recognition* not sufficient enough. The construction of *garadis* in particular, largely by the upper castes, I suggest, could thus be perceived as attempts at reconciliation rather than recognition of the excluded here.

While broadly agreeing with Taylor and other theorists of recognition, Nancy Frazer (Honneth, 2016) takes on from the monolithic recognition model, and adds the component of ‘redistribution’ as necessary ingredient in the justice movements of marginalized groups. As both misrecognition and unequal distribution of capital equally leads to social and economic injustice, Frazer argues for altering material situation of the oppressed through transformative redistribution (Honneth, 2016). This inclusion of redistribution or economic parity as an essential component of identity struggles helps me in analyzing the local mythologies or *sthalapurana* (discussed in detail in the second chapter) maintained by the fluid publics who are associated with *garadi* structures in Tuluwad. Since land constitutes a central locus of struggle in the predominantly agrarian communities like Tuluvas, claim over land through religious sanctioning could function as a mode of transformative redistribution. As noted previously in the second chapter, the Tuluva religious cosmology revolves around the schema of life-death-life, and it is through this life after death that Koti-Chennaya exercise their claim over land legitimately, and I have argued this through my analysis of the edifice-stories regarding the reasons behind constructing memorial structures for Koti-Chennaya. More than half of the causative narratives for erecting *garadi* monuments highlight the sudden appearance of Koti-Chennaya in their locality, and ‘demanding’ a site to reside in exchange for their benevolence. These narratives are outside the linear *paddana* sung about the brothers’ life, and are also outside the tenets of negation of life after death. Through their travails in the realm of *mayo* or world of abstraction, Koti-Chennaya demand their right over land in exchange for extending benedictory assurance. Land or economic rights that led to the warriors’ confrontation with villainous minister, and later between Panja and Enmuru

region,²⁴ is legitimately claimed in their after-life, thus reinforcing their identity in the public, communitarian domain.

The number of *garadis* in which Koti-Chennaya are worshipped in present day Tulunad extends to more than 220. The geographical and administrative configuration of these *garadis* is a far more interesting fact to observe in this context. While Koti-Chennaya's life revolved around the three provinces in southern Tulunad, the highest number of *garadis* are found in two districts in the northern side – Udupi (67 *garadis*) and Karkala (80 *garadis*) – both of which are centres of Brahminic (*Mutts*) and Jain (Jain Bhairasa rulers) authority respectively. With highest number of *garadis*, Udupi and Karakala taluks also have the highest number of *garadis* that are categorized as 'ancient' by scholars (Amin and Kotian, 1990; Nandavara, 2001). All the four *garadis* in Mangalore taluk are considered 'new' with oldest being Kankanadi Garadi since 1873, and interestingly erected by Billawas due to their conflict with a *garadi* elsewhere.

Similarly, although Koti-Chennaya are considered Billawa heroes, among the 217 *garadis* for which the data is available with me, a total of 134 are built/managed by the two 'upper' castes of Bunt and Jains. It amounts to 62% as against the 22% of (49 out of 217) *garadis* built/headed by Billawas. I reproduce the table compiled by Nandavara (2001), clearly categorizing caste-wise building/heading of *garadis*, below:

Caste-wise (headed/managed) *garadi* distribution

	Jains	Billawas	Bunts	Other	Total
Sulya	-	4	1	-	5
Putturu	4	4	3	3	14
Bantwala	1	3	-	4	8
Belthangady	10	2	-	4	16
Karkala	35	5	24	16	80
Udupi	-	19	45	3	67
Kundapura	-	9	9	3	21
Mangalore	1	2	1	-	4
Kasargodu	-	1	-	1	2
	51	49	83	34	217

²⁴ As I pointed already, the final battle between Panja and Enmuru in which Koti-Chennaya breath last is triggered by the twin brothers' readjustment of the boundaries between these two provinces.

The above table throws ample light on the intricate system of memorialisation (through *garadi* construction) that is characteristic of Koti-Chennaya tradition in Tulunad. Equating Jains and Bunts, Nandavara explains the dominance of these two groups in *garadi* building/maintenance as a result of the close Bunt-Billawa relationship in terms of *guttu* ownership of Bunts and its martial protectors, Billawas. As it was impossible to ward off Billawa assistance in the maintenance of vast manor houses, Nandavara suggests that, they were accommodated through their representatives Koti-Chennaya within the *garadi* structure, also assigning major role for Billawa priests (2001: 156-165). While Nandavara's hypothesis is in agreement with my proposition of *reconciliation* between dominating and the exploited castes, I would also emphasise the role of land ownership in such a configuration of *garadis*, especially in Udupi and Karkala taluks. The landowner-tenant relationship between Bunts/Jains and Billawas in these two taluks might have necessitated the construction of *garadis*, thereby accommodating the already imposing, muscular figures of Koti-Chennaya, albeit couched in the language of faithful surrendering. As I demonstrated in Chapter two, many of these acceptance/subdual are preceded by denial from the 'upper' strata of people. In addition, Nandavara, also points at how *rajan daiva* like Ullakulu/Kodamantaya, Kukkintaya enjoy space as central deities in the *garadis* maintained by Jains or Bunts. To quote his reason for this practice, "This is a system instituted by the upper class people when they are compelled to worship lower-caste deities" (2001: 162). By instituting *rajan daivas* (royal deities) as major deities who also receive annual rituals first, the 'upper' castes attempt to find leeway in the otherwise inescapable presence of intermediary deities like Koti-Chennaya. To sum up, an overview of the configuration of such vast number of worship memorials built for Koti-Chennaya presents us with a picture of oppressive castes in the narrative memorializing the heroes after their death much more rigorously than the community to which they belonged.

The embracing of Narayana Guru as communitarian icon is noted as the reason behind reduced number of *garadi* construction in 20th century by Nandavara (2001: 163). He suggests that the newly created Narayana Guru Associations replaced the setting up of new *garadis* more recently. While I return to the pervasiveness of Narayana Guru in Billawa consciousness in the next chapter, I will limit my response to Nandavara's claim on the reduced number of *garadis* in 20th century here. Diverging slightly from his claim, I argue that the antiquity of *garadis* should not be the only concern while analyzing the popularity and spread of largely mnemonic traditions like Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad. Instead of merely taking the period in which they were built into consideration, I suggest to expand

our empirical study by also including the extent of *garadi* renovation in more recent decades, which could perhaps lead to a better understanding of the public memory of Koti-Chennaya across the Tulu region. More and more *garadis* are renovated since 1970s and 1980s, largely by attracting the financial assistance from diasporic Tuluvas in cities ‘outside,’ Mumbai in particular.

Based on the book *Tulunada Garodigala Samskrutika Adhyayana* (A Cultural Study of the *garadis* of Tulunad) published in 1990, and with an awareness of the fact that I do not have updated data, my study suggests that a large number of *garadis* were built, rebuilt, renovated and modernized since 1970s. Such increased renovations also go hand in hand with the highest number of *garadis* in Udupi and Karkala taluks. By late 1980s more than 33 out of the total 67, and 31 out of the total 80 *garadis* in Udupi and Karkala respectively were either built newly or renovated in the two decades of 1970s and 1980s. This outnumbers the record of renovations in any decade earlier, thereby hinting at the heightened activity around *garadis* in the same crucial decades since 1970s. While we could understand this also within the general trend of people’s, particularly large migrated groups, affective investments in their cultural ethnicity back home since the economically flourishing decades of 1950s itself,²⁵ the tradition of Koti-Chennaya in specific needs to be analyzed within the larger drive of the Billawa community to invoke a distinct cultural capital, to be a major community marker in the immediate decades to come. Interestingly, all the *garadis* renovated in Udupi taluk are under the management, thereby perhaps the *garadi* land ownership too, of Bunts, barring only six that are headed by Billawas. While Udupi doesn’t have a single *garadi* under the management of Jains, Karkala taluk along with adjacent Belthangady taluk constitutes the highest number of *garadi* ownership/management by the Jain community. And, a study of the renovation pattern in Karkala suggests that the 31 *garadis* that were restored in 1970s and 1980s were equally divided between the Bunts and Jains in terms of *garadi* management. Thus, whereas the northern side of Tulunad presents a picture of Bunt and Jain monopoly over the management of *garadis*, most of the southern side *garadis* in taluks of Sulya, Bantwala, Puttur and Mangalore together comprise at least more than 42% of *garadi* management in the hands of Billawas. Further, the northernmost taluk of Kunadapura has equal share in *garadi* headship between Bunts and Billawas, with 5 out of 9 *garadis* renovated under the

²⁵ Similar to what Prabhakara Joshi (2007: 957-964) argues in the context of Tulu’s entry into Yakshagana since 1950s. He points at how the growing economic prosperity of Tulu people. (and also their commercial interests in his opinion).

care of Billawas. A comprehensive picture of the *garodi* network in Tulunad, thereby, offers a glimpse into the highly specific caste configuration in the region, intricately associated with its agrarian, ritualistic and land control factors.

While the major participation of Bunts and Jains could be understood as in commensurate with their hold over tracts of land, it could also be decoded within the process of ‘reconciliation,’ as previously discussed. However, most of the scholars have interpreted it as a symbol of caste harmony, particularly between Bunts and Billawas (Amin and Kotian, 1990: 197). To quote from Amin and Kotian, “As *garodi gurikara*,²⁶ people from both Bunt and Billawa societies enjoy preference, with a special respect accorded through *leppu*.²⁷ As both these communities are of *yodha* or warrior class (*kshatriya*) of Tulunad, it is not an exaggeration to say that *garodi* has provided just guidance to them to co-exist in harmony” (1990: 196). Elsewhere, Kalmady and Perampalli note that,

Garodis are like village temples in Tulunad... While Billawa community is directly under its *koodu-katt* or rule-binders, Bunt, Madivala [washermen], Mogaveera [fishermen] and others also participate in the worship. These are worship centres acting as platforms where all the people of the village come together to protect and ensure social harmony along with the prosperity of village. (1998:62)

Connected to this philosophy of social co-existence, is the question of caste identity of villainous characters within the narrative, Permale Ballala and Budyanta in particular. In this regard, I argue that while the early literary texts of Koti-Chennaya mark the identity of its opponent in clearer terms, in times of Billawa assertion since 1990s there has been an attempt to evade the caste identity of its dominating ‘other,’ a topic of intense debate in recent years. After presenting the case of caste relations, with land and control over *garadis* as the analytical focus, I now turn my attention to the way caste-of-the-opponent either makes its masqueraded presence or gets evaded altogether in recent debates.

Caste Evaded or Masqueraded

The 1886 variant of Koti-Chennaya *paddana* attached by the missionary Rev. M. Manner to R C Temple, the British official and editor of *Indian Antiquary*, contains profuse caste-

²⁶ *Gurikara* is the chief of *guttu/barke* houses. *Gurikara* is sometimes differentiated from *yajamana* of Bunt *guttus*.

²⁷ *Leppu* literally meaning ‘inviting’/calling. One of the aspects of *buta* worship is the respect accorded to different (read influential) families in order. Both Parava in his mediating form and the organizers of *kola*, *nema* are expected to offer due recognition to each families. There are instances when if the Parava mediator fails to address families in order of influence, he would be taken to task the next day, in his out-of-mediation form.

centric debates beginning with the Brahmin girl Deyi's 'conversion' into the untouchable²⁸ caste of Billavar. While purity-pollution debate is replete in the discussion between Deyi (initially as Brahmin) and Sayana Baidya (Billavar) before her adoption into the Billawa household, the supremacy of Brahmin caste is also emphasised through the registers of caste-body. The 'upper' caste body of Deyi is pitted against the 'lower' caste Billavar women, and in Sayana's exclamatory words: "Have you seen such a girl in our caste? God has graciously given us this girl... See how noble she looks. Are our girls like her?" (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 275). As the upper caste body of Deyi is already marked distinct, as a grace from God, the same rings later when the 'lower' caste bodies of Koti-Chennaya is also continually distinguished from their community folk in Burnell's manuscript. I return to the somatic significations of Koti-Chennaya's body later in the thesis.

While the 'low' caste status of Billavar is expressed only when pitted against the Brahmins here, there is a social strata clearly marked as 'low caste people' in Manner's version²⁹ too. Including "Koragars and Holeyas and other low caste people" (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 277), they appear at the Billavar house to drink toddy, and also offer services like fetching salt, weaving baskets and so on. Sayana, in a different tone, had a "favour" to ask from Settis or Bants (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 277). Likewise, a study of the different versions of Koti-Chennaya *paddana*, I suggest, highlights their intermediary, however indeterminable, status in the caste ladder of Tulu society. While Koti-Chennaya are emblematic of anti-caste position in Billawa imagination, their narrative, in fact, also articulates a caste hierarchy in a translated language. In their encounter with a Brahmin later, Koti-Chennaya refused to drink water "from the vessel that has been used by people of a hundred and twenty different castes" (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 318). They instead preferred to drink water through their daggers, once more signifying the centrality of their armed prowess. In addition, the episode where Koti-Chennaya first met their sister Kinnidaru also brings out the implicit caste division woven into the otherwise hierarchy-defying narrative of Koti-Chennaya. To quote Kinnidaru's initial words to her yet unknown brothers:

²⁸ The 'untouchability' of Billawas is posited against the 'upper' caste of Brahmins here. Throughout Billawa cultural history their status in the caste hierarchy, or as 'untouchables,' remains indeterminable. While they are perceived as 'lower' castes or 'untouchables' even in some references, there are claims of 'kshatriya' origin, more in recent scholarship.

²⁹ In my analysis here, I have attempted to use from the earliest textual version of Manner alone. Apart from having particular significance as one of the earliest texts, using exclusively Manner's version helps in avoiding many variant details elsewhere. I mention other version if they differ substantially.

If you are Brahmans wearing thread, sit down on the round pial of the coconut-tree bearing read fruits. If you belong to the Vakkater [Bunt] Tribe, sit down in the shed, built by the poor man. If you belong to our caste, sit down on the swinging cot within the house. (320)

Kinnidaru's reference to caste-specific seating arrangements does not even envisage the presence of 'low' castes within the premises of her house. Further, Koti-Chennaya also refuse to take water from the not yet identified sister without knowing her familial and worship background (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 321). These instances demonstrate how caste affiliation is worked out within the narrative itself, and how caste hierarchy is implicitly interwoven into the saga of authority-thwarting figures. Interestingly, the story of Koti-Chennaya is a chronicle of how these two Billawa youth subdue all other castes in the vicinity, represented by the suppression of Budyanta first (Bunt), followed by Ballala kings (Jain), the Brahmins of Kemmalaje Temple³⁰ and water-booth,³¹ and finally the collective of 'lower' castes represented by "the Bakders and the Koragars and the Mугers"³² (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 320) hiding in wait in the forest to wage attack on the brothers. All these caste groups witness the miracles/deeds/retaliations of Koti-Chennaya, thereby the narrative ensures a complete surrendering of almost all social groups around the Billawa figures. Further, without the continued presence of audience, Koti-Chennaya's martial/miraculous semiotic assertion is never complete. In a fascinating counter-memory to the already counter-discourse of Koti-Chennaya, similar pair of twin heroes from 'lower' caste background, Mudda-Kalala (called 'Mugerlu' of Mугera caste) and Kanada-Katada (called 'Kamberlu' of Mansa caste) defeat Koti-Chennaya in *their paddanas*, a marginalized space where the only counter-narrative to the 'dominant' memory of Koti-Chennaya finds its articulation, although never getting disseminated into any other modes/avenues of memory, a phenomenon discussed in Chapter Two.

³⁰ On their sojourn from Padumale to Panja, Koti-Chennaya arrived at Kemmalaje Berma's temple to fulfil the vow their mother Deyi had taken. The Brahmin priest refused to open the door of the temple. Koti-Chennaya joined their hands and prayed intently to the lord. Immediately the doors of the temple swung open, also making the Brahmin run away in fear.

³¹ Koti-Chennaya arrived at Brahmin's booth providing water for the travellers to quench their thirst. The Brahmin demanded to know Koti-Chennaya's caste first before giving them the water tumbler. The brothers uttered in rage that although low in caste, they were high in *neeti* or principles. They refused to take water from the same tumbler in which other castes drank, and instead preferred to drink through their daggers. The water-booth Brahmin shivered in fear.

³² While Bakder/Bakuder and Mугer/Mугerer are considered as Dalit castes, Koragar/Korager are categorized under Scheduled Tribes.

In continuation, when caste status makes its masqueraded presence through different instances in the story as recorded above, certain caste participation is rendered hazy in the debates outside the narrative, more so in recent years. While one of the foremost textual compilation of Koti-Chennaya's story, M Manner's (1886) version clearly identifies the caste of the villainous Minister Budyanta as Vakketer or 'Bant,' also identified as the same in other versions later (Vishukumar, 1967) the identity of Budyanta is shrouded in mystery (Dallodi, 2012). Two Billawa researchers investing heavily on the communitarian past, Babu Shiva Poojary (2003) and Dejappa Dallodi (2012) indulge in a thorough re-analysis of the two villainous characters of Permale Ballala and Budyanta. They present almost contradictory views about the caste affiliation of the kingly figure of Permale Ballala, by claiming him as Billawa and Jain respectively. Likewise, when Dallodi remains silent about the identity of Budyanta (he calls Buddivanta), Babu Shiva Poojary derides him as an exploiting Jain, couching it within a discussion on the vitiated Jain-Billawa relationship dating back to 13th - 14th centuries.

These two readings of a communitarian 'history' – despite possessing an identical teleological drive – reconstruct the past in entirely distinct ways, thereby presenting a case of how public memories are subjunctive, elusive, mutable, and that there exists a slippery relationship between memory-keepers and the memorized. Such re-presentations of a 'shared' past "have the capacity to be couched what is represented in an interpretative scheme of "what could be"" (Phillips, 2004:163), or better, 'what should be.' Similarly, the interpretations of both Poojary and Dallodi fall into the same hypothetical scheme, however propelled by the teleological urge to construct an alternative past for Koti-Chennaya, thereby to the Billawa community as a whole. Poojary, in the process, establishes an ancestral connection between Ballala and the twin brothers – as belonging to the same regal past of Pandyas and Alupa kings who were subjugated by Jain feudatory rulers in 13-14th century – and the vicious character of Budyanta to be emblematic of that oppressive Jainhood. Likewise, for Dallodi, the Ballala is a benevolent Jain figure who perhaps even died from the grief of separation from Koti-Chennaya. It is not possible, according to Dallodi, for a '*dharmanishta*' or truth-abiding Jain ruler like Perumala Ballala to 'act like a villain' (2012: 141), and he decides, "It is clear that such matters are the results of different kinds of modifications caused by authors from time to time on the story of Koti-Chennaya, and not true events at all" (2012: 141). Interestingly while he relies heavily on the textual compilations of missionaries and British officers in substantiating his claims

elsewhere, the same sources which rather fix a certain identity of Ballala and Budyanta is kept aside in his ‘speculative’ interpretation here.

Consequently, the most tentative of identities – contested, re-interpreted and rendered subjunctive – is the absence-presence of Bunts. While the early literary texts (Vakkarter or Banter in Manner, 1886; Okkaligaru in Panje, 1930; Shetty Bantaru in Mangaluru Jarappa, 1930; Okkela or Bante in Vishukumar, 1967) mark the body of Budyanta as Bunt caste, and sometimes even Ballala’s as Bunt,³³ we could observe, there has been an attempt to absolve Bunts of enmity with Billawas, particularly by evading/reinterpreting the caste identity of Budyanta. He is claimed as a member of Jain caste by Poojary (2003), whereas in Dallodi, it is never taken for any serious consideration. As noted elsewhere, the Billawa efforts have been to highlight a harmonious relationship between the two castes, largely on either side of agrarian relations. In substantiation, I bring a reference to Peter J Claus’ study of Mayandal cult (1979) – closely linked to Koti-Chennaya’s – and Babu Shiva Poojary’s (2003) critique of Claus’ observation to demonstrate how Bunt-Billawa relation has been reworked, especially in last two-three decades.

Conducting his fieldwork in the crucial decades of late 60s and 70s, the period of intense agricultural transformation, Claus attempts to contextualize the rise of ‘new cults and new temples to the spirits and deities of the *paddanas*’ including the emergence of female deity, Mayandal, “the fastest growing and spreading of all” (1979: 98). Mayandal, as I discuss more later in this chapter, is a female deity who pervades the memory of Koti-Chennaya publics. Every *garadi* for Koti-Chennaya also invariably includes a shrine for Mayandal, attracting a huge women crowd during the ritual days. During his detailed translation and contextualization of Mayandal ‘cult,’ Claus at a point suggests that the conflict between Pangulla Bannar³⁴ and Alibali Nayaka,³⁵ resulting in the tragic disappearance, and later deification of Nayaka’s niece Bale Mani or Mayandal, is symbolic of long-standing Billawa hatred towards landowning Bunt caste. To quote Claus:

This is not the only *paddana* in which a member of the Billava caste expresses his disdain for the attitude of superiority claimed by the aristocracy. As a whole, the

³³ Dallodi begins his search for Ballala’s caste with “There are no clear evidences for whether Perumala Ballala was a Jain Ballala or Bunta Ballala” (2012: 136).

³⁴ Claus describes him as a lord of one of the many semi-independent feudal kingdoms in Tulunad, later identifying him as belonging to Bunt caste.

³⁵ Identified as a Billawa

Billava caste harbors a barely contained animosity toward the higher castes, particularly the ruling Bant caste, who, as the Billava sees it, have risen to prosperity and glory on their labors, yet always hedge on the tacit agreement to return the favors, keeping the Billava in filial bondage (1979: 110)

In a sharp critique of the above analysis – despite agreeing that there did exist caste conflict between Billawas and landlords in 1967 when Claus arrived in Tulunad – Poojary (2003: 89-90) dismisses the upper-lower caste hierarchy marked by Claus as a result of the “lack of knowledge of Tulunad’s ancient history and tradition.” Through his historical enquiry, Poojary all through establishes that Billawas up until 13th-14th century enjoyed regal status in Tulunad, and thus the *paddana* of Mayandal existing since 1000 years (according to Claus) couldn’t depict a lower status for Billawas. In an interesting interpretation, he shifts the focus from caste into class by terming the conflicts of 1960s as “not between Billawas and Bunts as pointed out by Claus, but (was) a question of the rights of landlords and tenants” (2003: 90). More than anything else, this critique of Claus is to negate the ideas of 1000 year old ‘low’ caste status of Billawa members.

Even if Claus’ observation appears to have had recorded an extreme animosity, it is, at the same time, true that the Tuluva scholarship has maintained silence about the feudal foundation of its cultural practices, especially the worship of local *butas-daivas*. K S Chithra in her dissertation has discussed the limitations of ‘native historiography’ at length. Most of the scholarly interpretations have attempted to both glorify Tuluva ethnic distinctness, as well as gloss over caste hierarchy that is integral to its cosmos. While we could understand Poojary’s critique of Claus’ observation in the above light too, I further suggest that there is a conscious attempt to erase Budyanta’s Bunt identity in works to be produced later. The re-presentation of Koti-Chennaya as deities who could translate as benevolent icons cutting across all social groups, despite remaining within the stronghold of Billawa community, could also be a reason behind the erasure of the memory of oppressive-Bunts. Furthermore, the notion of Bunt-Billawa co-existence could also account for more than half of the *garadis* across Tulunad under the maintenance/control of Bunt members. In a fascinating engagement, while on the one hand different caste affiliations within the narrative are debated, reinterpreted, rendered subjunctive, on the other, there is an attempt to emphasise and establish the exclusive Billawa identity of Koti-Chennaya, at least in the literature produced since 1990s. I now turn my attention to this phenomenon of Billawization of Koti-Chennaya, a process of underscoring an identity that is already prevalent in the imagination of Koti-Chennaya publics.

Billawization of Koti-Chennaya

Although Koti-Chennaya entered into the modern sphere of print and theatre during late 19th and first half of 20th century itself, it is the last two decades (since 1990s) in particular that has witnessed an enormous surge in the literature produced on Koti-Chennaya. More specifically, there has been an attempt to investigate the ‘historical’ Koti-Chennaya, thereby ushering them vigorously into the public sphere where ‘caste has emerged as a legitimate category of democratic politics’ (Pandian, 2002). While, 1990s and 2000s witnessed a proliferation of historicizing literature on Koti-Chennaya, there was also an attempt to underscore the Billawa-ness of Koti-Chennaya, at times also triggering public conflicts. While I contextualize the surge of interest on both textualization and scientific research on the twin brothers since late 1980s through till day in a while, I will briefly trace a trajectory of the intimate connection between Billawas and Koti-Chennaya since the brother’s first entry into print public sphere.

Rev M Manner³⁶ (Navada and Fernandes, 2008) not only supplied his variant of Koti-Chennaya *paddana* but also was the first to catalogue, categorize, analyze the Tulu *butas*, thereby adding to the project of colonial knowledge creation. Koti-Chennaya *paddana* was one among the five collected and manuscripted by Basel Missionary Hermann Moegling (1811-1881) much before the task was continued by the District Judge of Mangalore Dr. A C Burnell (1840-1882), finally compiling 25 more “Tulu incantations used at the ceremonies of Bhuta worship as practiced in South Canara and which are chanted by the *pombadas* or priests” (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 1). Manner generously supplied “an original text and translation “On the Origin of demons,” a long note “On Bhutas,” and some long variants of the stories given by Burnell” as recorded by Major R C Temple in his ‘Preface’ to the publication of “The Devil Worship of the Tuluvas” series in *Indian Antiquary* between 1894 and 1897. Manner begins his essay “On Bhutas” (perhaps written in 1886) with a distinction already marked between ‘Beiderlu’ or Koti-Chennaya and other deities. I quote,

According to the imagination of the people in the Kanara District, the Tulu country is especially fitted for demons, which, they say, are partly created by God, like the Panjurli, and partly sprung from men, like the Beiderlu (2008: 9)

³⁶ A Basel Missionary who assisted R C Temple in translating and attaching notes on the Tulu worship tradition.

Elsewhere in his Tulu monograph on the *bhuta* worship among Tuluvas, published by the Basel Mission Press in 1891,³⁷ Manner sets out to hazily categorize *bhutas* into *pishachi*, *bhuta*, *preta*, *rabu*, *kule*, *gana* or *bhuta-gana*, likewise also categorizing the different ritualistic practices centred around the *bhuta* or ‘devil’ group. True to the intentions of colonial knowledge production (Shashikantha, 2007; Fernandes, 2006) Manner also terms Tuluva deities as ‘devils,’ and classifies Koti-Chennaya under the *bhuta* group (as *gana*/subsidiaries of Shiva), referring to them as *Koti-Chennaye inpi pokri biruwer* (hooligan Biruvas [Billawa] called Koti-Chennaya) (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 392). Apart from many reasons for the extensive spread of the public memory of Koti-Chennaya across Tulu Nadu that we have discussed at different points in this thesis, as early as in 1891 Manner distinguishes the worship of Koti-Chennaya – while unearthing reasons for the *bhuta* mediation practices – in following words:

Either for *bhutas* or for Beiderl, [*kola* ritual is offered] to appease them and for ostentatious purposes. If not, *kola* is also offered for the well-being of men and animals of the village. However, if *nema* is offered in particular to Beiderl, the one who offered will thrive in prosperity. The *kudukutumba* [large-family] will live well. Therefore, it is conducted in utmost faith with all resources possible. (*translation mine*)

While Manner’s record points at the heightened significance of Koti-Chennaya already by the end of 19th century, he elsewhere firmly fastens the twin brothers to Billawa caste as well. To quote from his description,

The Beiderlu are the departed spirits of two Billavar heroes, named Koti Beidya and Chennaya Beidya... The Temple set apart for the Beiderlu to reside in is called a *garudi*... *Agelu-Tambila* is a kind of worship offered only to the Beiderlu, and that annually by the Billavars only” (Navada and Fernandes, 2008: 10-12)³⁸

Thus, while by the end of 19th century Koti-Chennaya pervaded into Tuluva religious, public memory as figures associated with the Billawa caste, two texts from early 20th century translate them as communitarian icons, assisting in and interpreted for caste mobilizational purposes. As I have already mentioned that Koti-Chennaya were the first to enter into Tulu performative versions in as early as 1950s, they were also the first Tulu ‘folk’ figures to enter into native efforts of textualization. Foremost was the renowned

³⁷ *Tuluvered Nadapu Bhutaseve* (Bhuta Worship among Tuluvas)

³⁸ “Manner also includes ‘a Bant’ called Kujumba Kanje as a demon belonging to the class of Beiderlu.

Kannada author Panje Mangesharaya's (1930) abridged story version of Koti-Chennaya, acknowledged as a source text by many authors even into the 1970s and later, followed by a poetic rendering of Mangaluru Jarappa (1930), again in Kannada language. As contrary to the rising Tulu wave in 1950s and 60s that posited Koti-Chennaya for Tulu resurgence, both Panje and Jarappa's texts adhere to the Kannada literary canon, in terms of audience as well as literary techniques employed. While Panje's text could clearly be placed within the native historiography that looked up to the canon of Kannada literature, a prominent Billawa, Jarappa's work adopted the lyrical mode of popular Kannada folk song *Punya-Koti*,³⁹ is articulated within the rise of anti-caste movement of Billawas coupled with prevalent nationalistic sentiments in early 20th century.

Coming back to my immediate concern with the historical juxtaposing of the twin brothers with Billawa caste identity, Panje's textual intervention in 1930 is a lucid demonstration of how Billawa caste mobilization was taking place around Koti-Chennaya. The author's presentist perspective reflects back upon the story, overlapping political mobilizations of his period onto the linear narrative of Koti-Chennaya. His literary technique contrives the arrival of Koti-Chennaya to Enmuru as a Billawa caste lobby in the court of Enmuru ruler. He narrates the agitated state of Billawa fraternity thus:

... hearing the valorous deeds of Koti-Chennaya, the relatives and caste-men used to feel proud. That pride converted into fear-mixed faith as applauds for the warriors' courage spread more and more. The two heroic youth who epitomized the saying 'never born before, never will be born again' were eventually perceived as their own by the Billawas of Enmuru. In this way, any talk of Koti-Chennaya in Enmuru transformed into a caste issue" (Panje, 1983:45) (*translation mine*)

Panje's heteroglossic voice is the only literary evidence to hypothesize that Koti-Chennaya were gradually appropriated as exclusively communitarian figures for Billawas in early 20th century itself. The above mention of Billawa angst, only available in Panje's version, is a clear articulation of how the Billawa community at the crucial period of caste stigma attempted to lay an exclusive claim over the twin brothers. However, the emergence of Narayana Guru as emblematic of anti-caste movement perhaps renders the figures not central to Billawa resistive imagination in the first half of 20th century. The

³⁹ *Punya-Koti* is a fable narrating the story of a cow that is caught by a tiger, only to let it go at the end as the cow lives up to its promise to return after feeding its calf.

By a keen and loud reading of Jarappa's poetic rendering, I think, the lyrical pattern of *Punya-Koti* song is adopted.

mushrooming of many reformist movements in Tulu Nadu at the peak period of nationalist assertion also renders the vernacular religious practices like *buta* worship as rather ‘superstitious,’ a notion already circulated by colonial paradigm. Mangaluru Jarappa’s poetic composition of Koti-Chennaya in the lyrical style of the story of *Punya-Koti*, an epitome of truth and honesty in Kannada literary imagination, is perhaps an attempt of negotiation, an effort to translate the local into the idioms of truth and justice – within the dominant literary tradition of Kannada of course – necessitated by both Gandhian call and also the anti-caste drive of early 20th century. In a highly interesting piece of ‘Dedication,’ Jarappa lends voice to the larger concerns that the Billawa community had to address in the turbulent period of Temple Entry projects. I quote the ‘Dedication’ in full here, of course, also for the historical significance it carries:

This tiny effort of mine, *Koti-Chennaya padyamalike* (Garland of Songs), I dedicate with utmost faith and fidelity on the pious feet of Brahmashri Narayana Guru swami who appears as the supreme divine being for me, and who spread his benevolent glance on the entire faction of believers, and for the betterment of our society provided a separate temple to us, and who attained deified *Samadhi* on September 20 of the year 1928. (v) (*Translation mine*)

Thus, both colonial historiography and native literary interventions of late 19th and early 20th centuries establish Koti-Chennaya as intimately connected with caste Billawas, thereby laying foundation for the highly-vigorous appropriative claims at the turn of the century. Interestingly, the focus shifts from merely literary texts to scholarly interpretations and scientific quest, particularly since last 5-6 years. I will now elaborate on such refigurations taking place in the public memory of Koti-Chennaya, thereby analyzing how the modes of memory have expanded into diverse mnemonic platforms.

Institutionalization of Koti-Chennaya

In Chapter 1, I have already discussed in detail the historicizing acts of Billawa community, triggered by the setting up of Shri Brahma Baiderkala Samskrutika Adhyayana Prathisthana (BBSAP) in 1988, an institution meant largely for research and other activities around the figures of Koti-Chennaya. Preceded already by a decade of intense political mobilization of Billawas, 1980s also witnessed the spectacular entry of the community into different avenues like education, medicine, transport, business and other sectors. Many local level associations, registered in the name of Narayana Guru, were already mushrooming across the region. Migrated Billawas began redirecting capital into different emerging sectors, and

also in their cultural tangibles (temples, shrines, Associations, institutions, and so on) back home. In this period of heavy socio-economic, political reconfiguration, there emerges an institute exclusively set up for the study of Koti-Chennaya. No ‘folk’ deity/figure has enjoyed this benefit so far in Tulunad. Further as the group associated with BBSAP recollects, a fertile ground was already created by a bunch of Billawa youth through their research into the tradition of Koti-Chennaya, triggered first by their drive to locate the “66 *garadis* and 33 *taavu*” that Koti-Chennaya are recorded to have got built for themselves. Their initial fieldwork in Udupi taluk itself discovered more than 66 *garadis*, spurring them to discover more, thereby re-discovering the entire signification of the twin brothers’ imaginary for their communitarian identity.

Interestingly, by now, Koti-Chennaya’s essentiality within the geo-linguistic imagination of Tulunad was already established through literary and performative traditions, added by the rise of independent branch of “Tulu Studies,” focussing on Tulu folk-cultural materials for both institutional and amateur research, since 1970s itself. The ground was, thus, already fertile to launch Koti-Chennaya as both communitarian and geo-linguistically crucial figures, articulated in the endeavours of Billawa youth of BBSAP as well. To reproduce the list of “Projects Undertaken” of the institute by 1990 (Amin and Kotian, 1990: ix):

1. A cultural study of the Brahma Baider *garadis* of Tulunad. Publication of a source book in this regard.
2. Conducting research in order to throw light on the history of the Tulu twin folk heroes Koti-Chennaya. Publication of a huge literary compendium containing both *paddana* and its detailed analysis.
3. Setting up a museum for Tulu folk literature, folk museum, supporting related research.
4. Constructing a building called “Baidashri” in order to facilitate the fulfilling of above projects.
5. Functioning as a suitable platform for young researchers who intend to throw newer lights on Tulu folk history and undertake related cultural studies.

As evident in the above objectives of the BBSAP,⁴⁰ an immediate need to recuperate Tulu folk elements in general and the phenomena of Koti-Chennaya in particular was felt

⁴⁰ The Wikieducator entry on the Pratishtana is available in the link below, charting the institute’s future plans as well:

among the Billawa youth, their initiatives to be supported by Tulu/Billawa fraternity in Mumbai like industrialist Umesh Sanil, U Narayana and so on. As their path breaking achievement, BBSAP was successful in discovering 214 *garadis* for the first time across Tulunad, thereby rendering the notions of Koti-Chennaya, and thus Billawa, strength all pervasive in the region. Their research on *garadis* laid foundation for a legitimate claim over the cultural capital of Koti-Chennaya, to be immediately followed by books discussing, interpreting, reinterpreting Koti-Chennaya in several ways. Reading the magnum opus book (Amin and Kotian, 1990) as a major contribution to Tulu cultural studies, in his 'Foreword' Amrutha Someshwara explained the dynamics thus:

In this period of the rise of a kind of cultural awareness that has spread through the land, we witness that many culture-related activities are carried out at different levels... Although there exists a pull towards the western ways in society, on the other hand, the publication of a huge volume about *garadis* is a major event, particularly in times when a kind of self-consciousness and cultural awareness is emerging among all communities. (iii) (*translation mine*)

Amrutha Someshwara was precise in intertwining the emergence of Koti-Chennaya with that of the rise of community sense among Billawas, and the centrality of culture in such awareness. The Billawa youth elevated *garadis* and its study from the contempt of 'reviving superstitious,' 'too rural' 'too trivial' (Amin and Kotian, 1990: x) onto the cultural map of Tulunad, thereby also participating in the construction of a Tuluva regional imaginary. Correspondingly, I suggest the spread of *garadis* across also created a 'Songline' (discussed in Chapter 2) for the region, lending it a distinct tangible identity.

What followed the extensive study on *garadis* was the publication of a series of books, all emphasising the distinct psychological-religious significance of Koti-Chennaya among Tuluvas, albeit underlining their Billawa identity and connectivity. The indivisible bonding between Koti-Chennaya and Billawas, and a non-affective one with non-Billawas, is expressed thus in *Tulunada Garodigala Samskritika Adhyayana*:

Koti Chennaya are Billawa by caste. It is very significant to note that the people who build Koti Chennaya *garadis*, who offer special worship there, who conduct annual ceremony of *baider nema* are Billawas. Although people from other castes

believe Koti Chennaya to be divine beings and participate in ceremonies, they have not embraced them as their clan deities (*kula devanu*). On the contrary, Billawas worship them exclusively as their clan divinity. Not only socially, but even at religious and emotional levels, Billawas have maintained passionate connection with Koti Chennaya myth and ritualistic practices. (Amin and Kotian, 1990: 198)

While simultaneously presenting Koti-Chennaya as heroes who sacrificed their lives for the well-being of Tulunad (Kamady and Perampally, 1998: iii), the twin heroes were established as exclusively Billawa figures, unhooking them from the large pantheon of Tulu *butas*. What ensued was an attempt to standardize the rituals by prescribing ‘right’ process, rectifying the ‘mistakes’ in earlier versions, searching geo-historical evidence, and in all, homogenizing everything associated with Koti-Chennaya (Amin and Kotian, 1990; Kotian and Kalmady, 1995; Kamady and Perampally 1998). The textualizing, visualizing of the tradition in turn homogenized it, making anything aberrant susceptible to Billawa critique/rectification. To cite an example, the authors of *Koti Chennaya Moukhika Sabityada Antaratma Darshana* (Realization of the Inner Soul of Koti Chennaya Oral Text) identify and list, albeit deplorably, fourteen variations in Koti-Chennaya scripted narration between 1935 and 1995, drawing ‘scientific evidences’ from topographical search (1995:7). Their avidity to unravel the ‘truth’ and sift paradoxical elements out is clearly spelled out throughout their ‘Introduction,’ describing their book as, “It is a critical book aiming at resolving the *paradoxes* occurring in such [published texts and audio-visual medium] literature” (6). Further, the BBSAP museumized Koti-Chennaya’s ‘authentic’ pictures, the model of a ‘right’ *garadi*, the life-size display of *darshana patri* (interestingly not Parava ‘performers’), thereby becoming an agent of circulating the standardized tradition of Koti-Chennaya. The institutionalization of the twin brothers resulted also in an urgency to establish them as clearly historical figures, sifting any contradictory elements out of its imaginary. What began as BBSAP’s search for ‘historical’ Koti-Chennaya through geographical memory and the process of homogenizing various elements within the tradition, was taken for detailed vertical enquiry by scholars researching on the history of Billawa community as a whole (Poojary, 2003; Dallodi, 2012; Kotekar: 2012). However, Koti-Chennaya remained integral to the reconstruction of communitarian past as well.

Official-ized Memory

In addition, the influential political participation of the Billawa community – that was first recorded in Panje’s 1930 text that brought Koti-Chennaya to Enmuru; in 1869 that

brought Brahmo Samaj to Mangalore; and 1977 Billawa gathering that brought the then Chief Minister ensuring a Lok Sabha seat in 1978 – has been successful in drawing the attention of Karnataka government to the memorialization endeavours around the twin Tulu-Billawa figures. To begin with, different books published by the BBSAP have been recognized, awarded by Karnataka government bodies, including a Rs. 2 lakhs grant towards the publication of *Koti-Chennaya paddana* (2007). Karnataka government also allotted 100 acres of land for the construction of Koti-Chennaya Theme Park in Karkala taluk in Udupi which was inaugurated in 2012 by the then Chief Minister Sadananda Gowda, entrusting Kannada & Culture department to maintain the Museum.⁴¹ According to Damodara Kalmady, a member of the BBSAP, out of the 100 acres plot, 27 acres were set aside for Koti-Chennayya Folklore University if grants were released and 45 acres were reserved for Deyi Baidedi Medicinal Plant Garden, 25 acres would be reserved for Koti-Chennaiah Theme Park with only 6 acres developed till 2012. Interestingly, Kalmady in his interview to a newspaper⁴² also opined that over 50 different PhDs could be produced based only on the life of the twin heroes of Tulunad. These massive governmental assistance were followed by Rs. 5 crores to develop the ‘historical’ site of Koti-Chennaya’s birth place Padumale in Puttur taluk as a tourist destination in around 2 acres of land under the Tourism Department in 2013. In 2013, there was also a demand from the chief of Neere *garadi* Krishna Shetty to the Culture department, Government of Karnataka to develop Nanara *garadi*. He insisted upon developing Narara *garadi* where Koti-Chennaya practiced martial arts, along with Padumale’s conversion into tourist destination with Rs. 5 Crores grant from the government. In this demand, the importance of Udupi to the tradition of Koti-Chennaya was highlighted.⁴³

Thus, even the government, perhaps aiming at the large vote bank of OBCs in general, and castes like Billawas in particular, participates in the creation of a memorial corpus. Further, the public memory of Tulunad gets intertwined with official memory of the Kannada state, subtly also subsuming the ethno-linguistic differences through Statist appropriation. One recent instance of such Statist seizure of a distinct ‘regional’ cultural

⁴¹ The Deccan Herald newspaper coverage of the Theme park summarises its significance thus: “In fact, Koti-Chennayya Theme Park, built to spread the message of the twin heroes of Tulunadu, who have left a lasting imprint in the history and folklore of coastal districts, is a fitting tribute to the valiant heroes. A visit to the park would bring alive the glorious past of Tulunadu.”

<http://m.deccanherald.com/content/437010/cherishing-tulu-legend.html/>

⁴² <http://m.deccanherald.com/content/437010/cherishing-tulu-legend.html/>

⁴³ In *Udayavani* newspaper on 23-7-2013.

practice is the way *kambala* (buffalo-race typical in Tulu Nadu, associated with agriculture) was projected, debated, posited and reclaimed as a part of Kannada/Karnataka culture in the heightened scene of Tamil Nadu⁴⁴ fighting to retain its *jallikattu* (bull-catching) sport. What began in Tulu Nadu as people's anxiousness to retain and reinterpret it as not an inhuman adventure, the practice of *kambala* soon spread into the Kannada imaginary at large, discussed at length in the Legislative Assemblies, also passing a Bill in favour of it. Similarly, the promulgation of a uniform ethnic nationalism/statism involves 'monumentalizing strategy' (Dietler, 1998: 76) relying on symbolic utility of various 'sites' like Koti-Chennaya, Kambala and so on. The symbolic raw materials like Koti-Chennaya memory are materialized for a Statist identity through financial assistance to develop 'sites,' allotting acres of land, erecting monuments, and so on. On the other hand, there is an increased effort from the Billawa caste to benefit from the different governmental schemes available. Dallodi points at how Billawa Associations were renamed as Narayana Guru Associations in order to receive government's assistance. Similarly, on June 25th, 2017 member of Karnataka Legislative Council, Kota Srinivasa Poojary requested the Revenue Minister to transfer the *garadi* ("pooja mandira") lands/sites in the name of respective *garadis* so that governmental benefits could be availed. The Minister responded in affirmative directing the Udupi District Commissioner to register sites in the name of *garadis*. *Garadis* are translated into the language of power as *pooja mandira*, and thus transforming a mnemonic 'site' into a 'monument' for the nation/State.

Media Expanded

As demonstrated in detail in the previous pages, Koti-Chennaya entered into the Billawa public and cultural sphere in an unprecedented pace since at least 1980s. With Amin and Kotian's 1990 publication, it was clear that there were as many *garadis* with Koti-Chennaya as central deities across Tulu Nadu, as there are Billawa local-level associations in the name of Narayana Guru. In addition, since 1970s there has been a large scale renovation of *garadi* structures, institutionalization by setting up an exclusive study centre for Koti-Chennaya, and more since 2000 onwards – movies,⁴⁵ documentaries⁴⁶ and serials⁴⁷ produced by both amateurish and seasoned directors, mushrooming of Facebook and web pages on Koti-

⁴⁴ In January, 2017 massive rallies were taken out in Chennai and other places in Tamil Nadu against the Supreme Court ruling to prohibit *jallikattu*.

⁴⁵ *Koti-Chennaya*. Dir. P. Dhanaraj. Prarthana Creations, 2006; *Satyolu*. Dir. Ravi Poojary. 2014.

⁴⁶ *Legend of Koti Chennaya: Men, Places, Events*. RRC Video Production, 1989.

⁴⁷ *Koti Chennaya*. Dir. Chandras Alva. Praja Films, 2012-2017 (204 episodes).

Chennaya,⁴⁸ circles named after the brothers,⁴⁹ independent ‘historical’ search undertaken by Billawa youth,⁵⁰ sports and other events conducted in Koti-Chennaya’s name,⁵¹ group pilgrimages arranged to *nema* rituals at places like Enmuru,⁵² youth-centred enterprises like auto-unions, private daily-plying bus etching the name of Koti-Chennaya along with captions like ‘Billawa Rocks,’ ‘Proud to be a Billawa,’ and many more such activities are a daily sight across the Tulu-speaking coastal belt. The unprecedented spread of the heroic brothers into audio-visual, textual, virtual, ‘sites,’ and all other avenues of memory not only establish them as the only Tuluva deities to have received such extensive attention so far, but also the only figures, among human and deified, of Tulunad who have pervaded the public memory of Tulunad, and also outside the region.⁵³ The Koti-Chennaya public memory is figured and refigured by not only scholars and researchers, but also the everyday publics of Tulunad, since 2010 in particular, with the sudden appearance of these heroes on multimedia and virtual platform. These platforms not only establish an essential connection of Billawas with Koti-Chennaya, but also become stages to debate anything connected with the twin brothers, thereby participate in the continually-transforming

⁴⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koti_and_Chennayya; <http://www.kotichennaya.com/>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3c33W9nSio>; <https://www.facebook.com/kotichennaya.hiriadka>; https://www.facebook.com/koti.chennaya.5?hc_ref=ARRFcqdU0g5pumrkXRlbOrIyaC_ZFFPnFR4Z_MkHYBCedRqT8MiHNEtCNHmMh_q4B2k&pnref=story; https://www.facebook.com/boloormarnegarodi?hc_ref=ART5faxfEqPqoCiLQCJXyOuXOJEugXEHOFS5BF_m9DFr6Cx8nS5kIJVoAZ6uUPV1_5k&pnref=story.unseen-section; and many more.

⁴⁹ Koti-Chennaya circle was inaugurated at Nandigudda in Mangalore on May 19th, 2013 and the inauguration programme was organized by Narayana Guru Yuva Vedike, Mangalore. <http://www.daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay.aspx?newsID=174226> Web on 2nd February, 2016.

⁵⁰ During interview with Ravi Poojary, proprietor of a Computer Centre in Hiriadaka, Udipi taluk, shared in detail about the tour he and his friends undertook to Padumale-Panja-Enmuru villages in the south, in search of geographical traces of the heroes there. They audio-visually documented the various locations associated with Koti-Chennaya’s life, further verified it with a senior ‘researcher’ D G Nadka. They also conducted ‘interview’ with Damodara Kalmady in order to clarify about some of the variations prevalent within the narrative (Interview with Ravi Poojary on 6th February, 2014 & 16th February, 2014).

⁵¹ “Koti-Chennaya-2014” Annual sports festivals/Athletic Meet are organized in the name of Koti-Chennaya by the Billawas Association in Mumbai every year. <http://canaranews.com/news/kanara/The-Annual-Koti-Chennaya-Sports-Fest-There-should-be-a-feeling-of-amity-in-competition-BKHariPrasad> Web on 2nd August, 2016.

⁵² I was a part of one such group tour arranged to Enmuru *nema* on 15th and 16th March, 2014. Around 30 people went on a mini bus from Hiriadaka to Enmuru, travelling more than 4 hours.

⁵³ Recent being the production of a documentary on Koti-Chennaya as a part of the Kannada Abhivruddi Pradhikara documentation project with Arivu Trust in Mysore to introduce the ‘folk’ figures of Karnataka like Allama Prabhu, Mailara Linga, Male Mahadeshwara, Koti-Chennaya, Junjappa to the children of Karnataka in particular. As a second in the series, *Koti-Chennaya – Kavyateeta Kalapurusharu* was released in Kalamandira Hall of Mysore on 15.7.2017.

conceptualizations around Koti-Chennaya.⁵⁴ They come together to expand the contours of Koti-Chennaya publics at large, making public demonstration of recollection of the brothers a pervasive phenomena.

The above phenomena not only points at the exceptional widening of the mnemonic base of Koti-Chennaya across Tulunad, ranging from emerging newer medias, virtual platforms to official memories of the State, but also how there is a surge in authenticating the existence of Koti-Chennaya among Billawa youth. They make independent trips around the geographical base of Koti-Chennaya in Puttur and Sulya taluks, conduct ‘interviews’ with scholars and also produce films pooling money together, themselves acting in it. They open webpages cumulating all *garadi* details, the story of Koti-Chennaya and other information, Facebook accounts and whatsapp groups in the name of *garadis* and the twin brothers. Along with expanding the base of Koti-Chennaya memorialisation, these youth invest in historicizing the heroes, clarifying any missing links, removing the improbable, and thereby participating in the reconfiguration of entire mnemonic tradition.

Koti-Chennaya within historical Quest

Interestingly three out of the four Billawa ‘histories’ produced so far, are published since 2000 (Poojary, 2003; Kotekar 2012; Dallodi 2012; Kotekar, 2011), and apart from one (Dallodi 2012), three other are efforts of independent researchers to enquire into their past. The first of its kind, Babu Shiva Poojary’s *Billavaru – Ondu Adhyayana* (Billawas – A Study) (2003) is an attempt to search “when and how this community declined socially and how it came to be exploited” (2003: v) despite possessing supreme civilization in the past, and in the process, he accumulates “only a few glances into the lost grandeur of Billawas” (2003: v). Through inscriptional, etymological, oral, textual and other archival sources, Poojary constructs a glorious, royal Billawa past linking it to the Alupas (Pandyas) who ruled Tulunad till 14th century. The indigenous community of Tulunad, Billawas began to decline with the emergence of Jain feudatories of Vijayanagar kingdom, socially relegating them to the lowest status. Poojary’s quest is also aimed at negating toddy-tapping as traditional occupation, and establishing that Billawas have historically been agriculturalists and warriors by profession. The *paddana* of Koti-Chennaya functions as a sufficient

⁵⁴ As an example, Jeevan Vijayananda gives a justificatory statement in October 24 – 30, 2014 edition of *kudla newspaper* (under the heading “How Did Koti-Chennaya’s daggers arrive at Bajal?: Jeevan Vijayananda Guruji’s answer to Facebook defamation”) on how the daggers of Koti-Chennaya came in his possession, as a response to the Facebook tirade launched against his claim.

evidence for Poojary to substantiate his arguments, and further establish that Koti-Chennaya and Permale were related by blood, and therefore belonged to the regal lineage of Alupas who ruled Tulunad until the onslaught of Jain kings. In Chapter 1, I have already presented a detailed account of the historical evidences brought forth by Poojary in support of his claim, situating Koti-Chennaya at Janus-faced turbulent period of 14th century. In an anachronistic observation he says that Jain rulers retained control over *garadis* because “if all the *garadis* come together, the Billawa mobilizational strength might augment” (2003: 134) and pose a threat to their authority. Altogether, Poojary’s primary concern is to emphasize that Billawas were affluent, regal, agriculturists and warriors enjoying superior social status up until 14th century.

Lamenting the absence of “backward and scheduled class” as focus of enquiry among writers and scholars, (2003: 1) Ramanatha Kotekar sets out to study the history of Billawa community. As an amateurish researcher, Kotekar’s study is largely an accumulation of minute details that could assist in more focussed analyses. In tune with Poojary’s arguments, Kotekar also claims superior socio-economic status for Billawas which was eventually lost in the pages of history (2003: 164). In summary, to quote:

We can understand through this community study the process through which the Billawa community that led a grandeur and affluence filled life with control over huge tracts of land and animals once upon a time, declined due to various reasons and were transformed into untouchable caste (165)

However, unlike Poojary and Dallodi who utilize inscriptional and other sources in support of their claim, Kotekar suggests unearthing the vanished histories of affluent Billawa households called *barke* (similar to *guttus* of Bunts) and royal families, thereby re-establishing the existence of glorious Billawa past. In an interesting discussion, Kotekar, also referring to Poojary’s article elsewhere,⁵⁵ claims that the prominent Vijayanagar ruler Krishnadevaraya of Alupa dynasty belonged to the Tulu Billawa community, founding his argument on the ‘Nayaka’ surname of Krishnadevaraya’s father (157). This affirming of Krishnadevaraya, who is also prevalent as *their own* in caste Bunt memory, as a Billawa has sparked outrage among a few Bunts as expressed in personal interviews with me. However, I am yet to come across any public critique of this. Thus, although unlike Poojary, Kotekar doesn’t directly deploy the narrative of Koti-Chennaya to establish

⁵⁵ In an article titled “Vijayanagarada Arasara Tulu Moola” published in *Gurutu* magazine, 2009

Billawa lost grandeur, Kotekar's rather scattered search into history could open discussion on communitarian reclamations of a particular past.

Recollecting the way Billawas, although belonging to the larger Shudra (all those who haven't had *upanayana* ceremony, according to him) groups in Tulunad were considered as untouchables and were not accorded the right to enter into temples, *mutts* and upper caste (Jains and Brahmins here) households even during his primary school days (2012: 2), Dejappa Dallodi decides to recuperate the cultural history of his community for a doctoral degree dissertation. As a step ahead of the recuperative grammar of Poojary that negated aspects like toddy-tapping as Billawa occupation, Dallodi, in fact, re-reads and reverses the argument by demonstrating toddy-tapping as not a tabooed task but a 'scientific profession' through his analysis of minute details associated with this practice (2012: 5). In his words, the book is aimed at:

The objective of this study is not only to find reasons behind the untouchable status of Billawas in the society, both in the past and the present, which identified mankind through caste division. This study is chiefly aimed at preserving the ancient indigenous culture of that tribe that is vanishing for one or the other reason (4)

His entire monograph is founded on the act of translation, transcoding the language of deprivation, shame, loss, low, undignified, pollution, untouchable into the diction of success, achievements, scientificity, truth, justice, struggle, resistance, ideal, valorous and so on. In the process, Koti-Chennaya, no doubt, emerge as pinnacles of Billawa ideals of bravery, valour, truthful, and sincerity (139). However, what is interesting in Dallodi's analysis is his singular focus on Deyi Baidedi in demonstrating both the 'pure' Billawanness of twin heroes, as well as Deyi's significance in the grammar of Billawa ideal womanhood. Unlike Poojary, Dallodi doesn't claim Ballala to be a Billawa or Koti-Chennaya to be the descendants of royal Pandya, Alupa kings. Dallodi's extreme emphasis on Billawa characteristic of ideal men and women in the past is symbolized by Koti-Chennaya and Deyi, along with a few other characters from both Koti-Chennaya and other Tulu *paddanas*. As this necessitated establishing Koti-Chennaya as belonging singularly to Billawa caste, Dallodi reserves pages of lengthy discussion in resolving the Brahmin-Billawa dichotomy of Deyi's identity, finally demonstrating her ancestry as clearly Billawa, not Brahmin Pejanaka couple. In the course, he marks continuous distinction between the historical and the emotional; the rational, scientific and the unfounded, unverifiable. I believe, it is no

exaggeration to think that Dallodi's book could in itself be a sufficient material for one full dissertation on reclaiming communitarian agency in the light of emerging caste articulations in India. For lack of space, and given the singular focus of my thesis, I have riveted my attention, wherever necessary, exclusively on Dallodi's re-reading of Koti-Chennaya memory. All the above historiographical attempts of the community along with unique practices like *drushyanjana*, underline the increasing proclivity towards the 'scientific' discipline of history-writing among the Billawa community.

In the light of such intense orientation towards history and historiographical practices like search for sacred geography, verifying the historical truth, *drushyanjana* and so on, I try to deliberate about how historical reconstruction becomes the legitimate way of imagining a particular past for the community, more so when it comes into contact with the 'modern' epistemological practices in the Conclusion following this chapter. I analyse such search for an authentic past phenomena at the backdrop of such other historicizing articulations in other vernacular contexts. In the course I question if participating in the modernity of history writing, albeit discursive, is a necessary condition for refiguring the socio-political dynamics in the present?

Conclusion

Connecting the dots...

“Subjectivity introduces itself into history and gives it the breath of life.”

-Michel Foucault¹

This dissertation is a project of memory, an attempt to understand how particular figures from the past are summoned into the present, in creative modes that are ungraspable by the singular analytical categories of history, anthropology, folkloristics, literary studies, comparative approach, performance studies, and so on. Faced with a vast range of materials that expands from textual to somatic practices, from audio-visual to virtual platforms, from sacred geography to monumental structures, from anecdotes to ‘historical’ search, and from people’s petitions to governmental assistance, adopting a unitary frame of analysis is an insufficient exercise. The vast field of memory that “takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects” (Nora, 1989: 9) and ensures the coexistence of plurality in recollecting a past, is a far more enriching method. Further, it could throw ample light on how the object(s) of memory undergoes continual transformation, in turn, transforming the social groups who memorize the object. Memoriz-ing social groups occupy an agential role, according the object of memory a permanent life, a ‘fullness of being’ (Klein, 2000: 130). Their every-presents are reconfigured around that memory, eventually reconfiguring their subjective selves in the larger landscape of the vernacular/the national/the transnational. The theoretical tools offered by memory studies could assist in comprehending such dynamic processes in a more nuanced manner, and I have relied on the memory frame throughout this thesis.

This dissertation is a project of memory of Koti-Chennaya, the twin heroic brothers (of Billawa caste) who fought against caste discrimination and social injustice. As diverse as the modes in which memory of these brothers is inscribed/incorporated (Connerton, 1989) are the social groups who come together to memorialize them. While for heuristic purposes, and to underline the nuanced difference in which the memorial repository of Koti-Chennaya is sustained by people, I make the distinctions like ‘history publics,’ ‘memory publics,’ ‘publics of research,’ ‘publics of faith,’ and ‘caste publics,’ all coming together under the broader group of the ‘Koti-Chennaya Publics’ in Tulunad. The above groups that I have tried to understand under diverse names are interchangeable, and

¹ Quoted in Novetzke 2006: 125

maintain porous boundaries in between. Nevertheless, they are bound by the collective cultural memory of the twin brothers, both invoking as well as instilling it. The memory of Koti-Chennaya assists in reconceptualizing their diverse subjectivities, in the process the cultural memory of the brothers undergoes large scale figurations and refigurations. The themes of memory and publics run through the entire dissertation, organized under the two interconnected sections of “Interstitial Spaces of *Memory*” and “Embeddedness of *Publics*.” While memory guides the broader contours of this thesis, the question of ‘history’ haunts through its pages, and this Conclusion is also an attempt connect dots and to think through the categories of ‘history,’ ‘identity,’ ‘religious - political’ cutting across the frame of memory.

In the course, while focussing on the way heroic figures from the past are reconstructed in the present, I ponder over the questions of: How does an ethno-linguistic minority record its past, participating as well as challenging the disciplinary contours of history proper? What kind of transfiguration in public memory is intended in contemporary times, and how does it recast the figures of centuries old? Even with an elaborate system of mnemonic practices, why does a caste-community resort to positivist modes of recording their past? How does the practice of history-writing assist in bringing to fore the question of caste, in turn drawing from the materiality of body in question? And, what necessitates a caste-community to foreground heroic figures like Koti-Chennaya parallel to social reformers? And how does such a ‘movement’ contribute to resistive imaginaries at large in the Indian Subcontinent?

In his study of the slave castes movement in Kerala with special focus on the PRDS or Pratyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha, Sanal Mohan addresses the question of “why do subordinated people at certain stage of social change raise the problem of their history?” (2015: 271). In addressing this question in the context of slave castes in Kerala, he emphasises the role of textualized and ‘rememorized’ history (which he calls ‘history of the present’) as an important constituting element of the identity of its followers. He demonstrates how writing their own experiential history of slavery became fundamental to their project of equality, recognition and social dignity. Pointing at how “historical knowledge plays a pivotal role in the process of identity formation and the consciousness that evolves out of it” (272), Mohan distinguishes ‘history as political act’ as being different from ‘history as a discipline’ in terms of the ‘evidential paradigm’ (274). Not concerned immensely with the evidential basis or such, the recuperative histories of the subaltern create alternative imaginations of their past, also by selectively valorizing certain moments

of it existing “on the borderlines of history and fiction” (277). In the process “the retrieval of history is considered as one strategy to claim social agency by the subaltern groups” (279), thereby making the Dalit presence felt both in history and contemporary society.

Extending Sanal Mohan’s emphasis on the political act of history-writing based in experience, Dickens Leonard (2017) discusses how through speculative etymology and creative constructions of history, an anti-caste historical imaginary was conceived for Dalit castes by the early 20th century Tamil intellectual figure Iyothée Thass. Through the usage of journalistic print, Thass created an anti-caste vernacular-cosmology, initiating a resistant knowledge practice. In the process, Leonard highlights how written histories became inevitable for subaltern/minority communities “as resource to counter hegemonic structures” despite the radical practice in ‘non-written histories’ (20).

Similarly, although not categorized as Dalit but carrying similar experiential baggage of ‘untouchability’ and ‘lower caste’ status, the Billawas in Tulunad have been engaged in the act of reconstructing their histories, albeit founded on the rational only internal to the community. Since the turn of the century, there has been a surge in searching their communitarian past, in the course, radically reshaping the contours of history-proper. Newer means/modes of enquiry are brought to bear light on the past, the hitherto relegated are reenergized, communitarian attributes are fixed, and more significantly the icons from Billawa past are resurfaced through the chiselled lenses of creative historiography. While on the one hand, through rereading of written, archival and oral materials, a particular past is invoked, on the other, the community also engages in diverse indigenous practices like *drushyanjana*. Its textual endeavours have marked a generic shift by indulging more and more in re-establishing the communitarian past. Through acts like *drushyanjana*, establishing genealogical connection, homogenizing the narrative – both oral and audio-visual, mnemonizing through *lieux de memoire*, through scientific, historical quest, and so on, the publics in question restructure the memory of Koti-Chennaya.

Informed by the way memory theorists and scholarship on public memory in India suggests a distinction between history and memory, I have argued in Chapter One and Two that a segment of the remembering publics of Koti-Chennaya in Tulu region are moving towards a clear dialectic between history and memory. For the last two decades years there has been a consistent effort to historicize the warrior deities, followed by an

increased interest in historicizing their mother Deyi Baidedi² in the last few months. While what I called the ‘history publics’ and ‘memory publics’ internally challenge each other in representing the twin warriors, jointly they critique the mainstream historiography that excludes different indigenous practices of rebuilding their pasts. It is at this backdrop that we can attempt to understand unique practices like *drushyanjana*, rereading of the past through oral-written materials, conducting topographical surveys, and so on, as creative modes of enquiry deployed by the community to posit the heroes as authentically historical. The question of emerging desire to historicize ‘indeterminable’ figures like Koti-Chennaya in contemporary times also speaks about the dynamics of a social justice movement in the Indian context.

Although located in a more complex and shifting place in the caste structure in Tulu region, efforts to re-search their past is undertaken by the Billawa caste, especially in recent times. There has been a continuous attempt to recreate a regal past (discussed in Chapter Three), also deriving great impetus from the masculine subjectivity of the twin brothers Koti-Chennaya. Three communitarian histories have been published in the period, all claiming a royal heritage and indigeniety that was eventually taken over by the domination of ‘outsider’ castes. At the same time, these textual efforts of the community engage in an intense ‘rational, scientific’ search for the historicity of Koti-Chennaya, relegating both after-life existence of the twin brothers and their post-death deification to the realm of the ‘emotional, innocent believers.’ Through etymological search, by reversing the signification of distinctly Billawa properties like toddy-tapping, by creatively rereading the Koti-Chennaya *paddana* so as to establish a regal, affluent communitarian past, by creating an image of the Billawa ideal man and womanhood through selective emphasis on the oral songs, and so on, the recent textual efforts of Billawa caste publics craft out a dignified past for their community. While the textual constructions of an elaborate distinguished past preoccupies the efforts of what I called history publics, I have also argued in Chapter One how both publics of faith/memory publics and history publics come together during the unique historical search of *drushyanjana*. The debates raised in

² Dallodi (2012) reserves a lot of discussion on the origin of Deyi Baidedi. After considering the oral and textual sources in particular, he arrives at a conclusion that Deyi was a Billawa woman by birth, and not a miraculously-born, but adopted into a Brahmin household, as prevailing in the larger public memory. Kotekar (2012) also suggests the same in his ‘historical’ search. Shri Brahma Baidarkala Samskrutika Adhyayana Pratishtana (BBSAP) in Udupi, as Kotekar informed me over a telephonic conversation in January, 2017, is engaged in intense research on Deyi’s origin, and that a book would be out soon clarifying her Billawa root.

textual histories are resolved with hour-minute accuracy in the third space of *drushyanjana*, recreating the past events in a meta-historic precision.

Thus, through complex historical re-imaginings, a fuzzy, undetermined memory is superimposed by the homogenized temporality of history. By participating in the modern act of history writing, the community also engages in the act of sifting the uncontainable, the impure of oralities, of the sacred³ from its imagination. The discursive history produced in the magico-astrological setting of *drushyanjana* and *ashtamangala* symbolizes the whole historicizing process of the publics of Koti-Chennaya wherein what is instituted is the history of the perpetual-present, built on a rationale that is exclusively internal to the publics in quest. In the process, they not only interact, deliberate, share, negotiate, negate public memory of Koti-Chennaya but also, in turn, “public memories serve as a horizon within which a publics finds itself, constitutes itself, and deliberated its own existence” (Phillips, 2004: 4). Memories become sites of struggle, platforms for transformative action, transforming the communitarian position in the larger social structure. Similar to the process of political appropriation of the Shivaji symbol that “cannot be seen in isolation of the complex processes through which historiography and collective commemoration emerged as distinct practices in western India” according to Prachi Deshpande (2007: 2), the symbolic significance of Koti-Chennaya need to be perceived within the simultaneous ascension of Billawa historiography along with multifarious memorial modes.

Further, what is interesting to me in the historicizing process of Koti-Chennaya, either through textual reconstruction or other epistemic practices like *drushyanjana* is the anxiety of investigating community to posit Koti-Chennaya as exclusively human. The history-publics in particular that I identify in the Koti-Chennaya tradition (elaborated in chapter 1) attempt to negate the most prevalent memory of the brothers: i.e., as deities for worship, as figures of intermediary world. This indigenous historiography seeks to establish the ‘human’ identity of Koti-Chennaya, by sifting the extra-human from its imaginary. In its attempt to historically re-present the warriors, the history public debates and excludes the ‘irrational’ from its historical narrative (Poojary: 2003; Kotekar: 2012; Dallodi: 2012). Koti-Chennaya’s after-life itinerary, their conflict with another set of Billawa twin heroes and their eventual deification (subjects of Chapter Two) are rendered unreasonable, improbable, thus, ahistorical. The communitarian historical search thus

³ By sifting the sacred, I refer to how ‘miraculous’ ideas associated with Koti-Chennaya, their deified form, their extra-human itinerary, etc are negated by history publics like Dallodi, 2012; Kotekar, 2012. However, both sacred and the historical comes together on the ‘third space’ of *drushyanjana* and *ashtamangala*.

endeavours to establish the heroes as patently human, relegating all ‘extra-human’ to the other realm of common, emotional people.

Quite inversely in the context of early 20th century PRDS movement in Kerala, Sanal Mohan (2015) draws our attention to the ‘mythologizing’ of Yohannan, the founder of the movement, in the historical knowledge produced by the members of the Sabha. He points at a shift from biography to hagiography among organic intellectuals of the movement. In a divergent scenario, there has been an attempt to human-ize the figures of Koti-Chennaya among history publics of primarily Billawa caste. While the community not only tries to limit the spatio-temporality of heroes’ life, thereby disengaging from the plurality of memory, it also attempts to radically recast the heroes as warrior figures, embodying the regal, *kshatriya* past of Billawas. The memory of Koti-Chennaya as figures who retaliated the feudal lords and castiest ministers through sheer physical prowess, eventually getting more than 200 *garadis* built in their memory constitutes as the appropriate history to recollect. The extra-human itinerary of Koti-Chennaya along with their representation as one of the *butas* in the region is denounced in recent times. The ‘other’/ ‘outsider’ memory of Koti-Chennaya as one of the hundreds of deities of Tulunad – largely categorized under ‘deified humans’ of *buta* pantheon (Rai, 1985; Gowda: 1990) is negated. There is an emphasis on the reworked registers of *satyolu* (the truthful), *daivolu* to address the brothers, and the ritual associated with them as *nema*, not *kola*, the more popular bracket term for annual rituals. To quote an instance from just a few months ago, there was a huge furore over the inclusion of Koti-Chennaya’s pictures on a Conference Brochure in Udupi from largely Billawa caste members. Two major contentions were the inclusion of Koti-Chennaya under the category of discussions on ‘*bhutas*’ (*bhuta* being the contentious term) and the second, was separating the heroes on two sides of the Brochure page.⁴

Thus, along with the claim to Koti-Chennaya as exclusively caste cultural icons of Billawas⁵ and not merely one of the local deities or *butas* of the Tulu region, there have

⁴ The Conference was a part of the annual event called “Tulunada Garadigala Mahasammelana – Samskruti Chintana” (Mega Conference on the *garadis* of Tulunad – Pondering over Culture) conducted by Tingale Garadi in Udupi taluk since 2011. Tingale Garadi is under the headship of the elaborate Bunt family in Tingale with Vikramarjuna Hegde as the chief of their *guttu*. The Conference brochure of 2017 invited censure from the Billawa members, terming it an inappropriate representation of the brothers.

⁵ It is interesting to recount two instances connected to the exclusively-Billawa-caste claims in recent times: In the Conference proceedings of “Tulunada Garadigala Mahasammelana – Samskruti Chintana” held at Tingale *garadi* that was published as a book (Bhatta and Bhatta, 2012), Dr. Y. N. Shetty in his article “Garadi mattu Bhavishyat Chintane” (Garadi and Thought over its Future) requests the people

even been attempts to homogenize the ritual practices associated with Koti-Chennaya deities since 1990s. By making a clear distinction between *tamasa* and *satvika* deities, or between ‘fierce’ and ‘benign’ deities⁶ (largely based on meat or no-meat consuming deities), the Billawa community claims a higher sacred status to Koti-Chennaya, terming them more often as *satyolu*, *veerapurusher* (valorous heroes) or *samskrutika purusher* (cultural heroes), recognized by the ‘emotional’ worshipping community as benedictory forces after their death. Through such epistemic constructions and/or refigurations, the Billawa community attempts to reclaim the corporeal subjectivity of Koti-Chennaya. The discursive history produced in last 10 to 15 years through diverse modes only fertilizes the material imagining of twin brothers. In the process, the existing epistemologies of history and historical knowledge is contested, recreated, refigured in order to carve out alternative imaginations of one’s past. Articulations of caste and caste-based oppression enters into the discourse of history; experiential memories occupy central stage; thereby deploying historical reconstruction as an act of creative resistance. Such epistemic political acts are founded on the principles of modernity like equality, recognition and social dignity, thereby expanding the contours of resistance and ‘the political.’ As a primary tool of this ‘political’, the grammar of historical exploration is rewritten, nevertheless affirming the knowledge of past as a necessary capital. It is in this context that the PRDS Movement in Kerala mythologizes its founder Yohannan, and on the contrary, Koti-Chennaya public in Tulumad historicizes its warrior deities.

The utilization of Koti-Chennaya for anti-caste resistive imagination and for a project of social equality and self-respect further broadens the discussion on democratic politics in Indian context. A metaphor for the downtrodden, they emerge as symbols of cultural resistant imaginary upholding the democratic principles of equality, justice and

not to ‘claim’ *daivas* as belonging to one particular caste. Terming such ‘caste politicizations, conflicts’ as a weakness, Shetty attempts to reclaim *daivas* as deities belonging to entire Tulumad (2012, 72).

On the contrary, the Billawa members of Gurunarayana Swamy Seva Sangha in Belthangady (Dakshina Kannada district) submitted a petition to Chief Minister, Police Station and Police In-charge, Tahsildar of Bealhangady, etc against Dayananda K Santekatte who wrote an article titled, “Billawaru Koti chennayaralla” (Koti Chennaya are not Billawas) about the caste status of Koti-Chennaya in the newspaper *Karavali Ale*. Santekatte is said to have claimed that Deyi had an *aloukika garbha* or ‘unworldly conception’ and that she belonged to Mayila caste, and therefore, Koti-Chennaya are also Mayilas by birth. The Billawa petitioners claimed that the article was “written with the intention of disturbing social well-being.” In addition, the Vice President of *Rashtriya Billawa Maha Mandala* (All India Billawa association) released a newspaper statement that, “if such articles are written, we could file a case in the court. It is not appropriate to release such derogatory statements against Koti Chennaya.” Unidentified newspaper piece from Facebook, accessed on 11th August, 2013.

⁶ Such a distinction between Koti-Chennaya and other *daivas* was noted by Doomappa Master in 1978 in his book *Tulumada Veerer Koti Chennayere Kate – Tulupada*. Noted in Chapter Three.

right to property. They fight against the Ballala kings and their ministers who stand for deception and dominant oppression. It is the commingling of benedictory assurance by warriors and their virulent masculine selfhood that renders Koti-Chennaya most appropriate in an anti-oppression struggle and as a symbol of honoured identity. When the hitherto relegated community looks inward for an authentic voice in their project of identity assertion, cultural resistive figures like Koti-Chennaya emerge as iconic metaphors. By continually evoking the capital of masculine ancestral memory, in Michelutti's (2007) words, a 'vernacularization of politics'⁷ is set forth. The locale of democratization is thereby shifted from macro-level explanations and institutions to the practices and ideas of local people. In Tulunad, the Billawa caste assertion that also is parallel to their social and economic refiguration is expressed chiefly through the presentation of Koti-Chennaya as representative face of the community. Thus, positing the heroes as subversive, anti-hegemonic ancestors necessitates historicizing them in a particular fashion, and denouncing any other 'deviant' representation elsewhere. Such a counter-reading and writing is, in extension, a creative act of resistance; a historical investigation with political undertones.

As consolidation of new kinds of Shudra identity were conceptualized around the "culturalist-rebel models" as pointed out by D. R. Nagaraj (Shobhi, 2010: 97), where rage becomes the predominant mood than a plead for mercy, Koti-Chennaya similarly fit into the 'insider culturalist-rebelist' model, offering the idiom of retaliative resistance for a social cause. Further in their endeavours for justice and equality, they become metaphor for 'social banditry' emerging as hero for some and a bane to others (often represented by pockets of authority and their exploitative acts). The image and narrative of a social bandit that could offer "a poetics of quotidian resistance for the subaltern, generated not in moments of violent insurrection but rather, as a composite of the small rebellions of everyday life compressed and exemplified in the biography of a single heroic figure" (Novetzke, 2008: 163) comes out more alive in the memories of Koti-Chennaya. Their moments of counterinsurgency are not only limited to subjugating the rulers and the powerful, but also social elite like Brahmins, as noted in the water-booth episode in the *paddana*. The Brahmin's query about their caste is replied with the language of their daggers, by drinking water through the tip of same daggers. In an interesting tangibilizing

⁷ In Michelutti's meaning, "the ways in which values and practices of democracy become embedded in particular cultural and social practices, and in the process become entrenched in the consciousness of ordinary people." (639)

effort of the mnemonic publics, daggers resurface in 2014, further verified by the history publics (discussed in Chapter 1). This episode signifies the necessity of reclaiming a retaliative idiom embodied in their daggers, in the period of community's complex negotiation with history-myth dichotomy. Nevertheless, Koti-Chennaya, through their rebellious spirit, emerge as befitting examples not only for D R Nagaraj's insider culturalist-rebel model, but also Eric Hobsbawm's (Novetzke, 2008) 'social bandit' figures who in Novetzke's words,

represent a kind of political-economic rebellion, unclearly articulated and generally divorced of overt politics, but nonetheless observed, particularly by the disenfranchised, as a heroic counterforce against oppression (2008: 169).

In addition, through Koti-Chennaya, the memory of retaliation and reconciliation in relation to the oppressive 'other' is desired over/along with the inward-faced social mobility through Guru. The memory of rightful, but not patronizing, recognition is claimed through the warrior image of Koti-Chennaya, also coupled with the significations of indigenous icon that the twin brothers carry along. When *garadis* have already spread in nook and corner, in interior rural areas, the positing of Koti-Chennaya for a self-respect movement is a part of the religiously-founded political movement that characterizes many assertive marginalized articulations in the Subcontinent. Through 'subaltern insurgency' traditions like Koti-Chennaya, a new religious-modern public sphere is created.⁸

While it is uncontested that the 'historical' figures of Koti-Chennaya are appropriated for a caste identity assertion and re-evaluation, what is interesting to me in this resistive imagination is the foregrounding of twin brothers as a parallel to the already existing social iconization of Narayana Guru by the Billawa community in Tulu region. In turn, some of the questions this phenomenon – along with the radical reconceptualising of historical modes – raises are: What necessitates indigenous, vernacular histories to perceive their icons in fundamentally different modes? How does the verification of corporeality assist in imagining a dignified past? Why does the sacred manifestation of a figure subside in favour of an assertive masculine self? How is the masculine subjectivity of

⁸ It could be seen as a space that, "integrates the *supernatural* with the machinations of politics, a field of power available to subalterns that reflects access to networks and worldviews through which they operate" in the thoughts of Dipesh Chakrabarty as quoted in Novetzke (2006: 110). However, Chakrabarty's claim that such supernatural/religious materials intrudes on the authorized space of historiography is critiqued by scholars elsewhere (Novetzke, 2006; Jangam, 2015), and I agree with such critiques that question the authority accorded to history-writing even within the discourse of Subaltern Studies.

communitarian icons assist in claiming a cultural capital and agency? And, how is the *materiality* of a particular kind of body connected with caste identity? It is at this backdrop that the significations associated with the iconic figure of Narayana Guru could be discussed parallel with that of Koti-Chennaya.

Koti-Chennaya and /over (?) Narayana Guru

As I have already noted, the visit of social reformer Narayana Guru from Kerala to Mangalore in 1908 and later the establishment of a major temple for the then ‘untouchable’ caste of Billawas under his spiritual guidance, marked the entry of Narayana Guru as the icon of social equality and recognition for Billawas in the Tulu region. Belonging to equivalent Ezhava caste in Kerala, Narayana Guru was brought to Mangalore to inaugurate a separate temple for the Billawas in the heightened period of social justice movements in India in early twentieth century. He has since remained as a major figure of worship and remembrance specifically for Billawa caste.

Nevertheless, as demonstrated in Chapter Three, Koti-Chennaya have undoubtedly emerged as important ideological constituents in the construction of Billawa identity. An enormous amount of emotion is invested in this tradition, in turn, deriving equal impetus in their drive towards a distinct Billawa self. They have reenergized their community consciousness through the iconinc figures of Koti-Chennaya in pronounced ways. The vernacularized politics for social justice and equality highlighted through the political-egalitarian philosophy of Koti-Chennaya substantiates what Badri Narayan (2006) quotes: “that a fixed political language touches only the less important self of the society, but when it mixes with culture it goes much deeper. This is because Indian society is organized more around culture than around its politics (2006: 22). In similar language, D. R. Nagaraj emphasises the need to understand the consolidation of Shudra identity in general and Dalit identity in particular at the backdrop of the insider culturalist-rebel models like Narayana Guru of Kerala and Manguram⁹ of Punjab.¹⁰ The “insider culturalist-rebel model” that D R Nagaraj talks about could never better be understood than in the case of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad. His reference to Narayana Guru as a befitting model of rebellion also raises the pertinent question of what necessitates the foregrounding of Koti-Chennaya amidst the already prevalent caste icon of Narayana Guru for Billawa community in Tulunad? While Guru has remained steadily as a central figure of worship

⁹ Manguram – brief note from D R Nagaraj

¹⁰ “The Cultural Politics of the Dalit Movement” (2010:97)

and reverence for the Billawas since early 20th century, the parallel launching of Koti-Chennaya in Tulunad raises a few questions in mind: Does the resistive imagination of Koti-Chennaya raise the question of who could represent a community authentically in its project of equality and caste assertion? How is the quest for agency associated with the subjectivity of icons invoked? Whether there is a connection between claims to indigeneity and the question of representability? And, is the memory of retaliation and reconciliation preferred over the memory of oppression and recognition? These questions I believe could be answered if we understand the dynamics of investments in Koti-Chennaya memorialisation since 1980s in the ethno-linguistic region of Tulunad. This would, I believe, add significantly to the host of scholarly interventions on the rise of culturalist assertions, in particular within the discourse of caste, more recently in Indian context.

David Hardiman in his study of the ‘coming of a Devi’ in the Surat district of Bombay Presidency in 1920s emphasises the need to recuperate the subjectivity of the marginalized, *Adivasis* here, in making their own history (1987: 7-10), albeit proposing it within the school of Subaltern Studies. In the process of such marginalized articulations, the centrality of the ‘religious’ is also highlighted. He quotes Partha Chatterjee (Hardiman, 1987: 10),

the ideology which shaped and gave meaning to the various collective acts of the peasantry was fundamentally *religious*... Religion to such a community provides an ontology, an epistemology as well as a practical code of ethics, including political ethics. When this community acts politically, the symbolic meaning of particular acts – their signification – must be found in religious terms.

Agreeing with Chatterjee, Hardiman dismisses the claims of (let alone nationalist historians) socialist historians who have negated the agency of adivasi communities in shaping their own course of political action, relegating the ‘religious’ as “‘hegemonic ideology’ imposed on the peasantry by dominating class” (10). My analysis of Koti-Chennaya tradition is beyond the category of peasantry and rural that Hardiman, and initial Subaltern Studies scholars focus as¹¹ the memory of twin brothers is brought into fore through modern means of dissemination and public sphere including modern historiographical endeavours. Modernity here expands into the cultural sphere, “its values, aspirations, norms, practices that were subjectively defined and experienced in radically different ways” (Deshpande, 2007: 18). Thus within this ambit of the modern, what

¹¹ Despite emerging from within the agrarian and predominantly oral localities across Tulunad.

remains crucial is the cultural and the religious, as Hardiman and Chatterjee point out, that radically reshapes the contours of the political. By cutting across all ‘modern’-‘pre-modern’ modes of engaging with their present, through a cultural, religious reconstruction of the past, ‘the political’ of the present is refigured and enlarged. It is this agency of the marginalized communities in shaping a subjective self through the symbolic significance of the religious and the cultural, I suggest, should be the beginning point in the emergence of Koti-Chennaya on to the public space of Tulunad. One of the most dynamic of the castes in the region, Billawas have all through deployed the religious in their mobilizational endeavours, retaining the agency of any shift in strategic allegiance within their own community hands.

In the heightened period of German Missionary influence in Tulunad, proselytizing the highest number of Billawas into Christianity between 1869 and 1875, witnessed the introduction of Brahma Samaj as a resistive move by the educated Billawas in Mangalore (Kotekar, 2012:207). The largest Billawa gathering first recorded in the history of Tulunad was in 1869, in the house of Arasappa, who was instrumental in the arrival of Brahma Samaj in Mangalore, next only to Calcutta in India. According to the Basel Mission Report of 1870, the missionaries visited Billawa leaders to persuade them to join Christianity, only to be turned down, “not for any clear spiritual reasons, but their only purpose was the elevation of social status.” The Report quotes the reason as, “Instead of converting to Christianity to become Christian members, we intend to retain our distinct identity and socialize with people of our own society, and therefore Brahma Samaj is invited here” (Kotekar 2012: 208). The Basel Mission Reports of 1904 and 1907, interestingly, point at the way Brahma Samaj emulated¹² and functioned on the lines of Missionary faith and practices, albeit discouraging Billawa clan members to stay away from Missionary Schools, through newspaper announcements.

However, what triggered as their intense desire to remain within their “communitarian fold” (Kotekar, 2012: 208) through conversion to Brahma Samaj, was rendered useless soon with the domineering presence of Brahmins within the Samaj, also resulting in the creation of a separate Prarthana Sabha conducted in a Brahmin house. The Missionary Report of 1907 points at how the large number of girls of Brahma Samaj consisted of girls from the Missionary schools earlier. We can assume, rather clearly, that

¹² Singing the hymns of lord in *hindu paddati* or Hindu ways, praying to the almighty, all-creating God, and discourse on fighting against spiritual enemy, etc became main Samaj practices (BM Report 1907), consisting largely of Brahmin girls from Missionary schools earlier.

the social position of Billawas didn't ameliorate much, and immediately felt the necessity of a different resistive grammar altogether, symbolized, this time, by the arrival of Narayana Guru. The already established icon for the downtrodden, Guru instituted Shiva *linga* in a temple at Kudroli in 1912, providing an alternative religious space for the Billawas, founded on the ideals of social justice and equality. Two Billawa boys nearby were given *vaidika dikshe*, renamed as 'Krishna Shanti,' 'Shankara Shanti,' and appointed them as first priests at Kudroli temple with enough training in *Vaidik* rituals (Kotekar, 2012:128-130). The Billawa urge to rise in social ladder while also remaining within the larger communitarian fold materialized by the intervention of Narayana Guru from Kerala.

Both Brahma Samaj and the invitation to Narayana Guru were organized by the educated Billawa class in Mangalore city, initially at least catering to a small section. However, Guru helped in large scale Billawa mobilizations at local-levels, through 1970s and later, by appropriating Guru as an exclusively Billawa icon, standing for social equality. He remains as the central figure of *vaidik*-like worship in the Billawa Association of Mumbai.¹³ Nevertheless, fascinatingly, Koti-Chennaya emerge at the centre of Billawa caste imagination since 1980s, further verifying the centrality of the religious within a communitarian resistive articulation.

At this backdrop I suggest that the parallel materialization of Koti-Chennaya as Billawa caste icons is a result of the turbulent Land Reform period of 1960s and 1970s that perhaps further evidenced the role of caste as an exploitative agent, and the caste Billawa identity as relegated in social hierarchy. The distinctly religio-cultural figures of Billawas (or, perhaps consciously evolved thus) like Mayandal and Koti-Chennaya emerge on to the tense scene since 1960s,¹⁴ providing not just an alternative iconic identity, but a highly energized resistive imagination through masculine figures like Koti-Chennaya.

The twin brothers all through, both in literary and visual texts, are presented as excessively muscular figures, youth who died as celibate warriors within the short span of 32 years. They stand as stark contrast to the saintly body of Narayana Guru, one that could perhaps only supply an alternative model, but not coupled with retaliating resistance. Towards this, the caste publics of Koti-Chennaya make particular efforts to establish them as virile bodies, not rendered drained through any female association. Claims like, "In their

¹³ Noted during my visit to the Billawa Association in Mumbai on 12th August, 2016. Hymns were sung in praise of Guru, rituals were offered in the presence of a large Billawa gathering, not without mentioning the significance of Koti-Chennaya in Billawa efforts.

¹⁴ as demonstrated in the case of Mayandal by Claus (1979).

entire life they never even had a single thought about women” (Dallodi, 2012: 143), “Either the thought of women or the feeling that they should get married would not have appeared even in their dreams” (Dallodi, 2012: 149) repeat through the pages. Such statements establish the caste publics’ omnipresent claim not only over the narrative of Koti-Chennaya, but also on their dreams, thoughts and feelings, from inside the story. Further, the two daggers become emblematic of Koti-Chennaya, getting flaunted at every instance of discord, and the same dagger also is the chief paraphernalia characterizing the Koti-Chennaya deities on ritual stage. Daggers, that have been discovered recently also as belonging to Koti-Chennaya by caste-history publics¹⁵ is a symbol of the heroes valour, their virility, their unspent celibacy, and metaphorically the phallus. Thus, as nation presupposes armed masculinity and chaste femininity in its conceptualization of the nation, the communitarian imagination of Billawas also posits the muscular-warrior, caste-defying bodies of Koti-Chennaya, minus the impure of the feminine sexuality, like the impure of the oral is sieved out of the modern (Dechamma 2017).

Further, the twin heroes also emerge at the backdrop of rising Tulu consciousness across the region, mediated through both performative, literary, institutional, academic endeavours mushrooming all around. In this context, I hypothesise, the emergence of Koti-Chennaya for caste articulation is also an attempt to present an indigenous, local, Tulu figure as *our own*. Koti-Chennaya were both excessively Billawa as well as excessively Tulu, and therefore could represent the Billawa identity, rooted in a social egalitarian project, more legitimately than perhaps the saintly body of Narayana Guru. Once contextualized also within the rising Tulu consciousness, it was more appropriate to launch Koti-Chennaya as exclusively Tulu-Billawa figures, who turned the Tulu social order upside down centuries ago. Their heightened virility, muscular bodies, martial art supremacy, sense of social justice and equality, the strength to retaliate, the faculty to make rulers recognize and bow before them, their ability to reconcile, claim space across and ensure complete surrender, all makes the heroes more befitting than any other image for a caste-centred surfacing.

Bringing the retaliating, assertive, masculine caste bodies of Koti-Chennaya into the public as a dominating memory over the caste-effacing body of Narayana Guru could

¹⁵ The Swamiji Jeevan Vijayananda Guruji who conducted *drushyanjana* to determine the historical period and life events of Koti-Chennaya, also produced two daggers as belonging to Koti-Chennaya, and handed over to him through generations. In the *Kudla Tulu Patrike* (October 24 -30, 2014) a weekly newspaper in Tulu he also released a justificatory statement as a response to the ‘defamatory’ Facebook comments about his dagger claim.

be understood as analogous to the emergence of the language of caste as a legitimate subject of discussion in the public sphere in recent times, thereby being one step outside the civilizational claims of modernity, as Pandian (2002) and D R Nagaraj (2010) suggest, at the same time also remaining “a step inside modern history” (Leonard 2017: 20). While the symbol of Narayana Guru necessitates negating the language of caste, Koti-Chennaya bring the same caste identity to fore, both by belonging and by challenging it. They struggle for an anti-caste cause, also remaining within the fold of a caste subjectivity, thereby assisting in the project of refiguring a communitarian past. Through their retaliative-reconciliative presence, they offer a distinct and autonomous grammar of resistance and mobilization. In the course, the category of the political is expanded through the creative knowledge practices of Koti-Chennaya publics. The vernacular-religious makes its grand appearance in the political projects of contemporary caste assertive articulations.

However, the anti-oppressive imaginary of Koti-Chennaya in turn is characterized by erasures, silences and the reinforcement of a hierarchical social order. The domination-subordination order that is continually challenged by the twin brothers is, in reverse, internalized in their relationship with doubly-‘lower castes’ like Dalits and Scheduled Tribes. In the Introduction to Chapter Three I have pointed at how a hierarchical positioning is claimed by Billawas in relation to Dalit castes like Mugeris, and Koragas (categorized under ‘Scheduled Tribes’). Their interpretation of the Billawa-Scheduled castes relation is cushioned within the language of harmony, mutual dependence and unity. The practice of *leppu* (calling, invitation), which is a customary respect offered to the influential families in exact order of their power, wealth during *buta* worship is a practice clearly legitimizing the hierarchical social order. While on the one hand there is a claim that Billawas receive equal honour of *leppu* with Bunts owing to their *kshatriya* status (Amin and Kotian, 1990: 196), the same custom of ‘receiving first honour’ is reiterated as a marker of Billawa-Mugera relationship elsewhere (Kotekar, 2012), underlining the socially superior status of Billawas. The practice of *muladakulu* which connotes life-long slavery (‘bonded labour’ in Kotekar’s words (2012)) to affluent, land-owning families is interpreted as a unifying bond of Billawas with ‘Scheduled castes.’ Further, the cultural heroes of Mugeris like Mudda-Kalala are perceived as life-long shadows of Koti-Chennaya, whose valorous deeds assume significations only in the presence of Billawa heroes (Kotekar, 2012), as discussed in detail in Chapter Two. The memories of resistance from and of subjugation of Dalit cultural heroes like Mudda-Kalala, Kanada-Katada in their encounter with Koti-

Chennaya are glossed over in the dominating memory of Koti-Chennaya. This brings to fore the pertinent question of “whose memories are inscribed into the broader public horizon and whose are not” (Phillips, 2004: 5), positing the public memory of Koti-Chennaya against the suppressed memories such as Mudda-Kalala and Kanada-Katada. The consolidation of Billawa caste publics in the name of Koti-Chennaya, in turn, erases/ignores memories of oppression, of subjugation, thereby obliterating the hierarchical position it seeks in relation to castes further ‘low’ in social structure. Thus, an assertive, refigured caste status is claimed also by imagining a social order in which such intermediary (OBC) castes claim a superior status in relation to marginalized castes Dalits. Further, Koti-Chennaya are established as *kshatriya* warriors of Alupa, Pandya lineage, and the Billawa *kshatriya* status is also embedded in the discourse of their regal past. There is an increased drive to establish the *kshatriya* identity for castes like Billawas (also Bunts) thereby subscribing to the hierarchical social order founded in scriptural Brahminism. A question for further research is the possible connection between the rise of Hinduism in Tulunad, particularly since 1990s, and the emergence of Koti-Chennaya onto the public domain of this region in almost the same period.

The narrative of erasure, of suppression, of colonization continues in Koti-Chennaya tradition when the question of women is brought to fore as well. As a particular womanhood is conceptualized and proposed as suitable in the project of nation-making (Sarkar, 1995, 2001; Chatterjee, 1993; Shetty, 2017), the caste publics of Koti-Chennaya, albeit recently, also construct an image of ideal Billawa womanhood symbolized by the otherwise marginal figures of Deyi Baidedi and Kinnadaru, mother and sister, both roles confined within the ‘inner domain’ of an imagined, constructed community. Both Deyi and Kinnadaru are either presented in relation to the warriors, or as pinnacle of womanhood necessitated in characterizing the community itself, similar to the personification of the nation. This search for communitarian attributes, through its muscular male and ideal woman, prompts the caste-history-publics to dwell in detail on the pure Billawa caste body of Deyi Baidedi, how she died *muttaide* or in auspicious married-state, how she was prosperous, how she led a model *daampatya* or conjugality, and more importantly, how she “was a symbol of self-pride of the ancient Billawa women of Tulunad” (Dallodi, 2012: 130). There is an excessive emphasis on the *pativrata* or fidelity, virtuous trait of Deyi Baidedi – this presupposes establishing her as *muttaide*,¹⁶ done

¹⁶ Extensive debates on the married vs widow state of Deyi Baidedi is carried out in texts on Koti-Chennaya and Billawa caste. The popularly prevalent idea that her husband Kantanna Baidya was dead

elaborately in Dallodi (2012) almost rendering her 'divine' in attributes. In the process, the fluidity, unfixity, participat-ability of the oral is thwarted, subscribing to the age-old patriarchal language that interprets the subjectivity of woman in singular semiotic code. Dallodi's re-interpretation of the significations of Deyi within Billawa caste, as demonstrated in Chapter One, completely erases the way women are conceptualized within the matrilineal social organization. The subjectivity of Deyi is colonized within the tenets of patriarchy like *muttaide*, *patrivrata*, *saccharitrye* (noble qualities) and so on. She is posited as a Billawa woman based on her father's caste identity, thwarting the matrilineal custom of identifying lineage through mother. Thereby, the construction of patriliney emerges as analogous to the construction of heroic caste identity, symbolized by the highly masculinised figures of Koti-Chennaya.

Similarly, women remain as mere logistics providers and as audience outside the interpretive frame as well, in the entire ritual complex of *garadi*. It is only through the presence of Mayandal, a Billawa woman from another *paddana*,¹⁷ who is represented widely in the *garadis*, a phenomena that Claus (1979) witnessed rising since the 1960s. However, Mayandal has remained as a marginal figure within the *garadi* structure, symbolizing her marginalized imaginary within the Koti-Chennaya tradition. She is a figure of fertility, figure who is connected through the memory of child-bearing, of a woman who retaliated against the oppression meted out to her uncle – all confining her within the feminine roles assigned by the patriarchal order. The wide-spread inclusion of Mayandal within the memorial complex of Koti-Chennaya tradition as against the minimal presence of Deyi Baidedi¹⁸ could be reserved for another study elsewhere. However, there has been a resurgence of interest in the figure of Deyi Baidedi since last 6-7 years, more significantly, as I already pointed out, to authenticate the Billawa genealogy of Koti-Chennaya, and the prominence of Billawa ideal womanhood. Koti-Chennaya's sister Kinnidaru is a tool to reiterate, in her extreme pride over the brothers,' their handsome appearance and great deeds. Her worship has assumed significance due to the "imagination that their mother or sister assisted the twin heroes in their fights and achievements" (Kalmady and Perampalli, 2003: 83). They remain as subsidiary, assistive figures, imagined only in relation to Koti-

when Deyi delivered her twins is contested more and more in recent times (Dallodi, 2012; Kotian and Kalmady, 1995: 36-39)

¹⁷ Story briefed in the Thesis Introduction.

¹⁸ While almost every *garadi* has a shrine dedicated to Mayandal, only very few *garadis* have a space reserved for Deyi Baidedi (ex. Enmuru *garadi*).

Chennaya. The energetic versatility displayed by women within the Tulu oral tradition¹⁹ is obscured completely in the patriarchal re-interpretation, presenting a homogenous, idealized woman figure, subsumed under the cultural-political project of caste assertion. In fact, ritualistically, the entire *buta* practice in Tulunad relegates women to the role to the periphery, as mere logistic suppliers, except for uniquely women-centred practices like Siri worship.

Siri who symbolizes the matrilineal social fabric of many Tulu communities, is at the same time a symbol of resistance, of active agency, of non-dependence, of self-subjectivity. Despite the resistive potentials and significance she has remained in the realm of women. While the *paddana* of Siri narrates the story of three generations of women – Siri, her daughter Sonne and granddaughters Abbaga-Daraga – the ritual manifestation of her memory is sustained and disseminated only by the women.²⁰ Varying in number, from handful to hundreds, they gather at the temple premises and embody the women of Siri pantheon on their bodies. They offer service to Siri, recollect her life, and their bodies become the carrier of Siri's memory year after year, for more than 40-50 years. Siri is remembered as a member of Bunt caste, as the originator of matrilineal family organisation for Bunts.

However, Siri has not been able to translate into a communitarian cultural icon in the way Koti-Chennaya have emerged for Billawa caste. Unlike Koti-Chennaya who are the central figures of their *garadi*, Siri adjusts her space within the premises of a Shiva version, almost always as a subsidiary deity. The Bunt community's efforts to posit a caste-cultural icon are directed towards reviving a male warrior like Devu Poonja. Siri, although sporadically remembered for her Bunt origin, she fails to pervade into either Bunt or larger Tuluva public memory like the masculine figures of Koti-Chennaya. She remains confined in her *alades* (worship centres), in textualizing efforts, in documentaries but hardly in the broader, ever expanding mnemonic base of Tuluva public memory. She fails to rise

¹⁹ Like Kallurti who rebelled against the oppression of her brother; Siri who rebelled against her unfaithful husband decreeing him divorce and entering into second wedlock; Abbaga-Daraga, Siri's twin grand-daughters who fought over a board game, killing one and the other committing suicide; Samu Alvedi who cursed Siri for becoming her husband's second wife and who refused to heed to her husband's beseech; Tannimaniga who accompanies her brother Koraga Taniya in his exploits; Mayandal who reappears in the *mayo* form to take revenge, and so on.

²⁰ Except the role of 'Kumara' (her son in the *paddana*) in Siri rituals.

beyond the somatic carriers of women's body, their memories, and the enclosures of *alade* in which she resides, waiting patiently for a 'surfacing'²¹ like Koti-Chennaya.

²¹ From Margaret Atwood's novel *Surfacing* (1972).

Pictures/Maps/News Clips



Pic 1. Tulunad (also within Karnataka State)



Pic 2. Koti-Chennaya (Courtesy: Facebook)



Pic 3. Koti-Chennaya (Courtesy: Facebook)



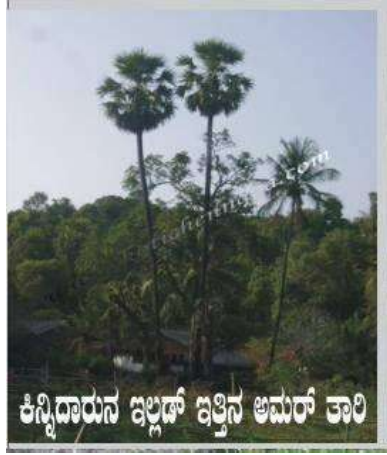
Pic 4. The portrait of Koti-Chennaya circulated by BBSAP, Udupi



Pic 5. A Still from *Koti-Chennaya* Film (2006)



Pic 6. *Kudla* newspaper clip with the heading “Deyi Baideti did not die, she was murdered” (Courtesy: Facebook)



Pic 7: Trees with the caption “The twin trees in Kinnidaru’s house” (Courtesy: Facebook)



Pic 8: *Kudla* newspaper with the heading “How Did Koti-Chennaya’s daggers arrive at Bajal?” (Courtesy: Facebook)



Pic 9: *Hosa Diganta* newspaper with the caption “Koti Chennaya were born on 22-9-1556”



Pic 10: “Dayi Baidedi” portico with pictures depicting the heroes life in Kankanady *garadi*, Mangalore



Pic 11: Kalmadi *garadi*, Udupi



Pic 12: Tingale *garadi*, Udupi



Pic 13: Kannangaru *garadi*, Udupi



Pic 14: Kankanady *garadi*, Mangalore



Pic 15. "Kalembidota" (Kinnidaru's house) (Courtesy: Facebook)



Pic 16. Koti-Chennaya's tombs at Enmuru



Pic 17. *Bariya Padunu*, Anjaru Garadi, Udupi (tomb-like representation during *nema*)



Pic 18. *Bariya Padunu*, Tingale Garadi, Udupi (tomb-like representation during *nema*)



Pic 19: 'Self-sacrifice' during *nema*
(Courtesy: *Koti Chennaya: Folkloristic Study*)



Pic 20: Koti-Chennaya (in Parava embodiment) during *nema*



Pic 21: Koti-Chennaya (in Darshana Patri embodiment) during *nema*



Pic 22: Koti-Chennaya and Kujumba Kanja during *nema*



Pic 23. A section of 'Publics' during Enmuru nema, Sullia taluk, Dakshina Kannada district on 15th March, 2014



Pic 24: An Old picture of Enmuru Garadi with Koti-Chennaya's tombs at the back (Courtesy: Koti Chennaya: Folkloristic Study)



Pic 25: Koti-Chennaya statues (with Bermer at the centre) in Kankanady *garadi*, Mangalore



Pic 26: Koti-Chennaya statues/*paape* (with 'Muslim kids') at Kalmady *garadi*, Udupi



Pic 27: A newspaper clip with title “Padumale *kshetra* to shine equally as Tirumale (Tirupati *kshetra*),” established during *ashtamangala*



Pic 28. Koti Chennaya Circle at Nandigudda, Mangalore



Pic 29. A public event under the name ‘Chennaya Koti’ (Courtesy: Internet)



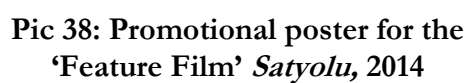
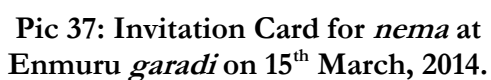
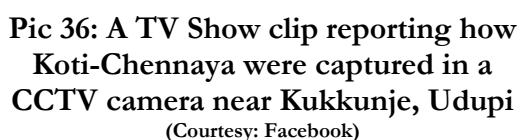
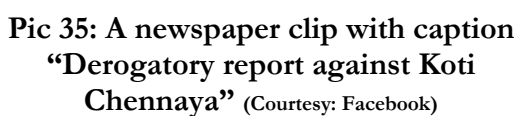
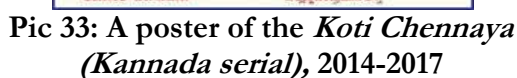
Pic 30. A Picture from the “Koti Chennaya Athletic Meet” of the Billawar Association, Mumbai in 2014



Pic 31: Caption suggesting the Karnataka State Minister Sorake’s sanction of 5 Crores to the development of Padumale (Courtesy: Facebook)



Pic 32: Logo of Billawa Association, Kuwait (Courtesy: Facebook)





Pic 39: Cover page of the book *Koti-Chennaya* published by Rashtrottana Sahitya, Bangalore, 1974



Pic 40: Cover page of the book *Baidya Darshana: Sachitra Kathakosha*, 2000



Pic 41: The CM of Karnataka Sadananda Gowda inaugurating “Koti Chennaya Theme Park” in Karkala (Courtesy: Internet)



Pic 42: A newspaper entry with the title, “Why shouldn’t a *garadi* be built in Padumale?”



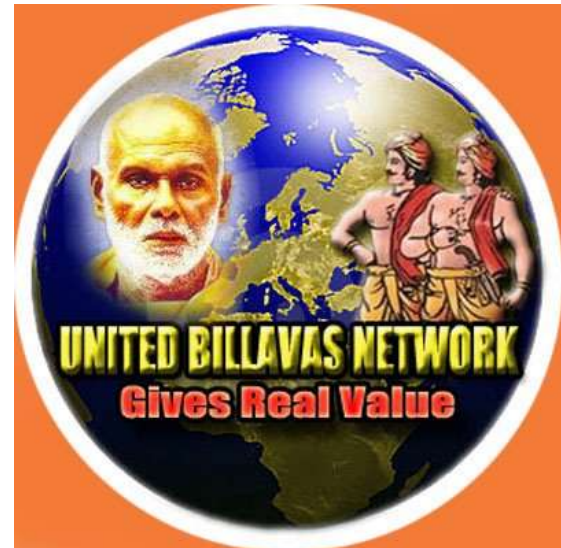
Pic 43: Mayandal with kid in a *garadi*



Pic 44: Gandhi’s statue in Kankanady *garadi*, Mangalore



Pic 45: A newspaper entry with the caption “Let Koti-Chennaya’s martial art school Nanara *garadi* be developed”



Pic 46: Profile picture of a Facebook account with the name “United Billavas Network Gives Real Value”



Pic 47: A Facebook profile picture



Pic 48: A visual representation of both Narayana Guru and Koti-Chennaya on a *garadi* wall

Annexure
Unrivalled ‘Two in the *Biruva* Crew:’
***Kôṭi-Chennaya* – A Tuḷu Folk ‘Epic’**

Story of the Kénjava Birds

Once upon a time there were seven seas in Tuḷunād. They were oceans of salt water, of plain water, of tears, of blood, of lotus, of *sulli* flower, of moss, and in the midst of the seventh sea god Sūrya Bāri arose in glare. The lord was surrounded by left anthills in the left side, and by right anthills in the right side. The left anthill cracked, giving birth to a female Kenjava bird, and the right anthill broke open giving rise to a male Kenjava bird. Siblings by birth, both Kenjava birds sat on the beech trees nearby. They built a beautiful nest on the *Siri Honne* tree, scraped stones and sand around, and grew up to be adult lives.

Soon enough, there arose a longing for offspring in the female Kenjava bird. The Sibling birds thus sought God’s consent and transformed into husband and wife. The female’s belly protruded in a while, and desires of different kind popped up. Male Kenjava traversed towards the northern *Gange* to fulfil his wife’s yearnings. In its attempt to pluck the Desire-fruit, Kenjava’s beak was caught deep, unable to unstuck and fly back. Alas! Kenjava male remained wedged there.

Journeying partner did not return, and the pregnant wife vexed in solitary.

“If my Kenjava returns, I will offer my first egg to the sacred feet of the divine Lord.”

Thus vowed the moaning Kénjavédi,¹ and to her extreme delight, male Kenjava returned to her side forthwith. Her yearning for the Desire-fruits was answered full.

Time eloped without notice; Kenjavedi laid eggs in her nesty abode. To fulfil the vow pledged for Kenjava’s return, the couple joined their wings soaring high with their first egg placed in between. Oh, here! The entwined wings detached, letting the pledged egg sink into the sea underneath. The second egg carried to be dedicated to the Lord also fell on the land beneath. Dropped egg on the ground broke into many tiny pieces. While parts of the broken shell transformed into *kanchikaḍaganda* palace, the flakes of egg core gave rise to *mayikanda* palace. ‘Ekanasāler’ was born in one of those palaces, hark! and, ‘Gundudabbe Ginḍe Giliramu Deyyār’ took birth in another palace. The two palatial

¹ Female Kenjava bird

children were eventually married, and the son born out of their wedlock was 'Bāmalla Kumāra.'

Jévu Kédage was born

The first avowed egg fallen into the sea sailed across; it traversed towards the bank of a lake. A Brahmin Pejanār engaged in ablutionary rites found the floating egg in the form of a lemon. He brought it along and handed over to his wife at home. Pejanar's wife carefully placed the lemon in a rice container. Next morning they heard sounds of a wailing child from the rice container, and to their sheer surprise they found a female child in the place of preserved lemon.

"We have not been blessed with an offspring until now. This is a boon from the God indeed!"

The Pejanar couple basked in the pinnacle of their happiness. The boon-child was named as Jevu Kedage, and was brought up with great love and care.

Jevu Kedage grew from a small child to an adolescent girl; from an adolescent girl into a 'woman.' However, it was not permissible for a girl to attain puberty before marriage according to the prescripts of their Brahmin caste. Abiding by his caste regulations, Pejanar brought Kedage into an interior forest, blind-folded the girl and left her behind in the forest.

Jevu into Déyi

Sāyana Baidye was extracting toddy from a palm tree in Sankamala forest. A wailing cry from somewhere knocked his eardrums. Looking around, he found a young girl crying inconsolably at the bottom of a palm tree.

"Oh God! Which human could leave this girl in such a state?"

Sayana removed the blinding band around her eyes, and took the orphaned girl to his house nearby. He raised the girl well and named her as 'Deyi Baidedi.' In a short while she was married to Kāntana Baidya from the areca plantation.

Boar Hunt in the Permle Forest

One day the king of Permle,² Permle Ballāḷa went on a hunting spree along with his attending retinue. During the hunting chase, a wild boar appeared from nowhere and

² Permle was one of the provinces in Tulunad, located in the present day Puttur taluk of Dakshina Kannada district.

teased the Ballala to dash after. Excited Ballala took out his bow, pulled an arrow, aiming at the swift Boar escaping his sight. No sooner he shot the arrow, one of his balancing foot stepped on a piercing thorn. It was a thorn full of venom. Ballala's eyes went blank in pain here, and the struck Boar fell on the other side there. Without delay, Ballala's crew cut down a bamboo tree, prepared a carriage and transported the Ballala back to his palace.

The thorn in Ballala's feet was poisonous, leading to a huge swelling in the affected end. Seething in pain, Ballala sent a word to both Bommaya of his palace and Sāntaya of his portico to arrive immediately. Amana Bannāye, a medicine man, mashed herbs and smeared the pierced area with the medicine he extracted. The swelling in Ballala's feet only increased, not an inch reduced. The sick man's pain augmented day by day; strength in his body diminished simultaneously.

"Oh! I will not survive, I am bound to die! O Bommaya! Is there anyone who can save my life, once barely?"

Ballala implored Bommaya for help.

She saved his life!

Sayana Baidye lived in the Éraje household. His sister was Deyi Baidyedi, renowned for her medicinal skills in the surrounding villages. Hearing about her abilities, Ballala sent his men seeking her curative assistance. However, to his dismay, Deyi was in her advanced stages of pregnancy. While stood she could not see her feet; to walk she could not cover four steps. Ballala sent his personal palanquin to bring Deyi to his manorial palace.

Deyi arranged all the required leaves and herbs. She brought seven handfuls of varied herbs from the hills, and kept an offering in the righteous palanquin of the King.

"I will not fill the same seat in this carriage of the honoured king Ballala."

Thus proclaiming, Deyi supported herself with an arm of the carriage and paced all through to reach the Ballala's palace.

Deyi who now arrived at the manor house was welcomed indoor by the ailing Ballala.

"Come in, O my mother! Please save my life just once this time. I will reward you with all that you deserve. If you give birth to a girl I will adorn her with many kinds of ear rings, finger rings and other ornaments. And, if you give birth to a boy I will bless him with land to cultivate, bulls to plough and many more precious gifts."

Deyi held Ballala's afflicted foot and washed all the coated medicine. She glanced at the wound, uttered *mantras* in reverence, and sprinkled water with leaves.

Deyi's healing touch and warm tending befitted Ballala. Swelling in his foot declined; strength in his muscles increased. He could stand on his feet and take a few steps around. Ballala's departing life returned. On a happy day, he invited the guardian of his life Deyi, and bestowed her with presents.

"O, my mother Deyi! You are no less than my mother Ginḍe Giḷirāma Deyyār who gave birth to me from her womb. The remaining presents I will hand over to your children."

"O Ballale! The task I came here for is accomplished. Please give me your consent; I will have to take my leave now."

Deyi started out towards her home.

Venomous He!

But fully-pregnant Deyi's gait found it difficult to scale the distance between palace and her home. As soon as she descended the steps of Ballala's palace and crossed the field ridges, she experienced cramps of labour pain. Unable to bear the pangs of ache, she stood fixed supporting against a tall coconut tree nearby. At the same time, Budyanta, a Minister in Ballala's Court, walked across the ridge of same Buffalo-race tract.³ He directed his gaze at the woman standing transfixed on the path. Budyanta had already harboured sufficient hatred against Deyi who received privileged treatment at the manorial palace.

"What about you, woman? You are not clearing the path today; is it the arrogance of money or the force of blood in you?"

Berating thus Budyanta walked through, clenching his fist tight.

"What did you chide me as, Budyanta? Tomorrow, let the children born in my stomach answer your reproach today!"

Thus uttered Deyi in her utmost pain. She broke the clouded sorrow through her throbbing eyes. No more steps she could take. There she sat, under the sturdy coconut tree.

Birth of Twin children

Ballala heard about Deyi's condition and immediately brought her back to the palace. He ordered all necessary arrangements for Deyi's delivery. In a palace corner Deyi gave birth

³ Called as *kambula* tract wherein buffalo race is conducted. Buffaloes are run through the field for tilling purposes before sowing the seeds. It is conducted as customary sport as well.

to beautiful twin boys. Period of pollution passed, and on the sixteenth day, they tied a cradle to lay the neonates. Twins were placed in the same cradle and they were rocked to sleep together. Ballala named the child born first as ‘Koti’ and the one that came next as ‘Chennaya.’

Children Orphaned

Deyi gave shower to the neonates one morning, fed their bellies and rocked them to sleep. She then left to the pond nearby to rinse the dingy clothes of her twins. On her head hovered the coconut tree branches, and under her was the pond of purification. Deyi rinsed all clothes in the flowing water below. No sooner she raised her head, a huge branch of the tree above fell on the centre of her scalp and Deyi collapsed immediately. She left the corporeal world to join in the otherworld of *kailāsa*. Neonates were left orphaned. Deyi was already widowed by the death of her husband Kāntaṇa.

Ballala handed over the deprived orphans in the care of his wives, Abbelu⁴ and the children grew amidst all affection. They were raised with enough food for the hunger and robes for the body. Tiny kids grew up to be young boys within no time. Ballala now sent a word to their uncle Sayana to appear in his Court. He left the children in his hands saying, “O Sayana! Henceforth it is your duty to look after these kids.”

Ballala sent Sayana and the children away with coins for the expense, cow for the milk and buffalo for the curd. He also made Ellūrabbe, his wife to furnish the children with warrior knives.

“From this day onwards, both you children mature up to be warriors of one kind.”

The children were showered with the blessings from all elders around.

Uncle’s upbringing

Sayana Baidya embraced the children committed in his guardianship. He seated them on his right and left shoulders moving on the paths of Eraje household. He encountered the same Court minister Budyanta on his way out as Deyi had once before.

“Hey Sayana, are these hatchlings of a lethal snake or harmless ones?”

Budyanta spit his malicious words.

⁴ Queens of the palace.

“As for today, these are snakelets in the sides of a fence. Harmless hatchlings on the sides of a road. They are yet to grow up as augers of anthill tomorrow. Hark Budyanta, they are yet to carry venom and sting you on a day!”

Thus retorted Sayana, and moved on in his journey towards Eraje. Reaching home, he called his wife Sonne Soyi Baidedi out. He asked her to look after the children in all comfort. Koti Chennaya were raised with great fondness in the Eraje household. Every now and then Ballala also sent things required in the upbringing of twin boys. He got bangle for the hands, anklet for the ankles, earring for the ears and waist band for the waists – all carved in gold.

Frolicking Children

Koti Chennaya had now transformed from children to young boys. They were playing with coconut shells and mud in the outdoors. It was impossible to contain them within the four walls of their home. At all times they heard *ali* from Alīyūru and *gīli* from Gīliyūru villages. Grazing the cattle, their feet were always eager to scale the far off hills. Equally excited they were to join the group of boys indulging in different games. A number of playoffs with spinning tops, pans, hitting sticks, nuts and fruits, and so on were played ceaselessly with great joy. However, their ecstasy was marred by a bunch of upper caste boys who wouldn't let the lower caste boys use the playground in vicinity. True to their blood, minister Budyanta's children did not tolerate other boys in their playtime. A separate playing field was reserved for them. One fine day, Koti Chennaya desired to play with Budyanta's children and defeat them in the gauntlet thrown down.

From sport to challenge

On another day, Budyanta's children entered the reserved playfield. Koti Chennaya vowed to share a game with them that day, and thereupon, gave a call to the Minister's boys.

“As we have already placed our ball in the field, we are joining you in the game.”

“If you have to lay your ball in this field, you need to pay a fare for it. Even if manage to pay, we will not have a game with you!”

Thus replied the Minister's children.

Hearing the boys' vicious reply, Chennaya felt seven goblets of anger⁵ rising within.

"A cost for the field is what you demand?"

Uttering those words, Chennaya snatched the ball from their hands and rolled it back into the playfield. He challenged their capacity to win against him and his elder brother in any match. Spurred by the contest proposed, Budyanta's children entered into the ring of dispute. They played. They lost.

"Not today. We will not rest without defeating you tomorrow."

Declaring thus, Budyanta's children turned their foot towards home. Koti Chennaya took the ball away into their dwelling, and brought it along for the next day's match. They rolled it into the playfield, and invited the Minister's children to start the game. Same as previous day, Budyanta's children lost again. Koti Chennaya continued to win in all such subsequent play offs against their rivals. Losing side always entered into an acrimonious debate with the winning boys. Verbal confrontation was also followed by physical brawl many times. Budyanta's children fought, lost and carried numerous complaints back home. One day, like other days, they ate many blows in the hands of Koti Chennaya. Their complaint was relayed with ample crying in front of their parents. Enraged Budyanta accompanied them to the playfield on following day. He snatched the ball away from the twin brother's hand and berated them in several ways.

"Hey you boys, what is it in you? Is it the haughtiness of square meal or the swell of blood?"

Saying thus Budyanta snatched the ball away from Koti Chennaya's hands, took it to his house and placed it cautiously in the attic.

"This day you nobbled it away from our small hands. Do preserve the ball safely. Tomorrow we will take it back with our grown hands!"

Koti Chennaya vowed against Budyanta at that moment.

The match of *Kambula*

The young boys of Eraje household grew up to be youth in no time. Uncle Sayana took all care in fulfilling the needs of maturing nephews. He sent them to many *garadis* to practice martial art skills. Koti Chennaya learnt from different *garadi* centres and returned after

⁵ Common figure of speech used to denote extreme anger in Tulu is *el ginde kopa* meaning 'seven goblets of anger.'

excelling in ten-sixteen varieties of *kalari*⁶ arts. Upon their return, Koti Chennaya expressed the desire to engage in ancestral occupations of cultivation and toddy tapping. They sent uncle Sayana to Permale Ballala's Court seeking land to carry out their intended occupation. Ballala bestowed the *kambula* land at Anilaje field to the brothers. He conferred the upper part of *kambula* land to Minister Budyanta and the lower side of it to Koti Chennaya. Along with cultivation, Koti Chennaya also indulged in toddy tapping in the Sankamale forest. Very soon, they earned the fame of most creditable youth in the entire village. On the other side, Minister Budyanta couldn't contain his resentment on the rising reputation of his rivals. He left no opportunity in inflicting harm on the twin brothers Koti Chennaya.

One day it was a time for *Suggi* cultivation. Budyanta set out to astrologer *balyaya*'s⁷ house to determine an auspicious day for *kambula* buffalo race in his agricultural field. On the way he bumped into Koti Chennaya,

"Budyanta, also please seek a propitious day for *kambula* tilling in our fields."

Requested the brothers with sincere heart. They took out a coconut from the attic, removed its husk and handed it over to Budyanta to offer as a payment to the astrologer *balyaya*. On his way forward, Budyanta crushed the coconut against a rock, ate its meat inside and threw the remains aside. He reached the *balyaya*'s house and sought a propitious date for tilling through *kambula*.

"The day for your *kambula* is seen in the next week, and the favourable day for youngsters' *kambula* has arrived right in this week."

Balyaya did his astrological calculations and predicted thus. However, wicked Budyanta took no time in exchanging the dates.

"Coming Tuesday is my day of *kambula*, and the Tuesday above is a day for you."

Koti-Chennaya swiftly understood the fraudulent intentions of Budyanta.

"We should carry out our *kambula* on the coming Tuesday itself."

They fixed the day for buffalo race, went every nook and corner, and invited people for the *kambula* in their field.

⁶ Martial arts, more popular in Kerala as *kalari*.

⁷ Astrologer who laid coins and other material to identify auspicious dates, to foretell the future, etc.

“Hark, farmers with four oxen. Lend us two for the day. All those with only two, please lead them into Budyanta’s land.”

What happened that day?

On the day of *kambula* all village men were up at the first crow of cocks. They gathered in the fields of Koti Chennaya with their cattle. By the time a few bullocks arrived at Budyanta’s field, the dauntless brothers had finished two rounds of tilling. Bulls were tied in the Minister’s land, and things were arranged to start the tilling race. Meanwhile, the elder brother Koti said,

“Let bulls stand in our field for laying planks,⁸ and let the tilling bulls move towards Budyanta’s land.”

Koti thus sent enough bulls to cultivate the land of his rival. Nonetheless, Budyanta couldn’t emerge out of his covetous trait. He mercilessly thrashed the men and bull gathered in his field.

“They are bulls of cultivation, Budyanta! Do not stand against those men and cattle. If you are raging in anger, vent it out only at us.”

Thus demanded Koti in his characteristic composure. Budyanta continued to spread his violence around. Seeds to Budyanta’s *kambula* field arrived in a grand palanquin and a bedecked *pookare*⁹ auspicious pillar was erected. The twin brothers merely carried a basketful of seeds on their heads to the land. The seeds were sown, and they returned to Eraje house with empty baskets overturned on their heads. The next day, and the day after passed. The elder brother addressed his younger,

“We have performed *kambula* and sown seeds in the Anilaje plains. But, we are yet to drain the muddy water out, we are yet to irrigate with fresh water and we are yet to witness the beauty of germinating crops. O my brother, if you set out to perform these tasks, there is all possibility of you employing your fist and pickaxe there. I will go to the Anilaje field and replace the muddy water with fresh damp. You brother, leave to the Sankamale forest in eastern direction for toddy tapping from the palm trees there.”

⁸ Tying planks to the yoke by means of a pole to level up the ploughed field before sowing. It is the next step after *kambula* tilling.

⁹ An ornamental post decorated with flowers. It is erected with specific rituals in some selected paddy fields and the fields of buffalo race to ward off evil spirits.

Koti took out his panoply of spade and other tools, and positioned them on his shoulders. He set out to the Anilaje plains. Chennaya arrayed himself in clasp and curved sickle, and hooked them around his waist. He tied the earthen pot to his *mundu* lower cloth and commenced towards the direction of Sankamale for palm wine tapping.

The germs of flight

Koti stood on the raised gate of stumps and gazed at the entire stretch of his *kambula* field. His land appeared as a vast sea of *Rāmasamudra*, and he found many pickaxes lying in the field of Budyanta. Butterflies lay dead in the pond of water while cranes danced in mirth. Koti reached the mud path adjoining his *kambula* land only to witness a gush of stream flowing from Budyanta's field to his cultivated tracts. Observing Budyanta's effort in cutting open his field blockade to let the excess water flow into their land, Koti pronounced,

"Let the course of water follow its own channel."

While Koti set out to close the water canal twisted by Budyanta, the Minister himself appeared interrupting his task,

"Hey You! Who permitted you the right to set a watercourse? You only create a pool and look out for crooked channels."

He flared up on Koti, and the latter spoke up,

"Ayyo Budyanta!! Visualize my younger brother you were confronting at this moment. Anilaje field would have witnessed the loss of one hand, and the stay of another."

"Damn you! What is your brother, and what are you after all? Do you say he would he have won straight? Has he jumped across the palm tree? Has he driven up all the plants and shrubs from ground to the sky? Has he struck down a bunch of coconut trees from above to the soil below? I should pluck a raw and leafless palm branch and thrash your back with it. With the braided thorny branch, should strike your visage enough. With the undried web of palm branches, should crack open your white teeth."

Budyanta reprimanded Koti until his mouth ached.

Hands on the *Suriya*¹⁰

Koti and Budyanta continued their arguments in the sides of their field. Tapping toddy from the palm trees in Sankamale forest, Chennaya could unmistakably overhear their violent disputation. He bent his ears steeper towards that direction; thought about what happened and what passed? At once, he jumped seven, seven and a half joints of the supporting pole. He stepped down from three, three and a half joints. He broke open the mouth of stone chest, and found both gleaming steel dagger of six moulds and superior dagger of three moulds. They were silver-hafted daggers of warfare. Chennaya took them in his hands and whetted with the powder of whitestone. He supported the daggers under his armpit, moved and leapt a Peacock dance on the palm ground; fiend the Tiger game; hopped the Deer jump. Chennaya descended into the plains!

From a great distance Budyanta viewed the ways of Chennaya's arrival. His feet lost ground at once. He attempted a jump down from the *saroli* toddy-storing shed. He tried hiding behind the hut. Running and running, Chennaya arrived at the spot.

"What happened Brother, what elapsed?

Inquired the younger brother in astonishment.

"A curse stopped from my mouth. Budyanta's is heightening."

Chennaya suddenly expressed seven goblets of severe anger. He drove Budyanta away like cattle, pulled his plaits asunder. Escaping from his clutches, Budyanta slipped on the ground. Enraged brother pulled him with legs through the length of their fields. He dragged the Minister to the ridge he himself had cut open and laid him across. Seething in ire, Chennaya took out his dagger and rooted it in the chest of reclining Budyanta. Budyanta spew black foam from his mouth. He expelled white foam. He departed from the corporeal body to reach *kailasa* above.

The twin brothers thus put an end to *budu* Budyanta's life in broad daylight. Even his death couldn't fetch sufficient consolation to them. They took spade in hands, plucked a spadefull of mud and poured on the waist of deceased Budyanta.

"Do not assume it as mud, Budyanta. Think it as robe."

A spadefull of soil they took and decanted it on Budyanta's head.

¹⁰ A Dagger. *Suriya* is particularly associated with the twin deities Koti-Chennaya. It is most commonly held by *buta* performers during *nema* annual rituals.

“Do not think it as mud, Budyanta. Perceive it as turban.”

They plucked a spadefull of mud and emptied it on his chest.

“Do not believe it as soil, Budyanta. Assume it as sacred sandalwood.”

A spadefull of soil they seized and spattered it on Budyanta’s feet.

“Do not view it as mud, Budyanta. Deem it as sounding sandals.”

They placed the Minister’s body on the water-opening and plastered it with mud like the *suggi*¹¹ time blockades.

Bundle in the garret

Koti and Chennaya now arrived at the *saroli* toddy storage. They laid shovels on the ground and covered with a white piece of loin. Straight from there, they arrived at Budyanta’s house. The Minister’s wife Arasédi was extremely astounded to find the never-appearing Koti Chennaya in her household!

“How did you find your way here, martial men? You wouldn’t step here but for a task in hand. Do quench your thirst with milk before returning.”

“Your husband is in the fencing path of *kambula* field. He asks you to fetch milk for thirst and fruits in a basket. It seems a *kuruntū*¹² bundle snatched away from our hands in those days exists. It has been hidden on the fireplace plank in the garret. He asks you to fork it over to us.”

Thus said the manly brothers reminding from yesteryears.

“Did you spare, children, or you ended?”

Arasakke enquired rapping her chest.

“If remained there will be foul smell. If gone, you get charred odour.”

Said both warriors. They climbed on the garret upstairs and pulled the bundle down on floor. They carried the bundle to Budyanta’s backyard and spread the seeds all around pronouncing,

“Let there be a wood of twigs here.”

They laid a curse. The brothers set forth towards Eraje then.

¹¹ During the second crop. *Suggi* is also the twelfth month of Tulu solar calendar corresponding to March-April.

¹² A small round shaped bundle of rice or other grains by wrapping them up in hay.

Wife Arasakke carried milk in a plate and water in a tumbler. She took arecanut beetle in a basket and travelled across the stream with her maid servants. Meanwhile, she witnessed a gush of blood flowing through the stream.

“You warriors, you who evoked hope in me! You betrayed!”

Arasakke was aghast struck.

“That is our brother’s beetle nut chew-spit, my lady!”

The maid servants attempted consoling their mistress. Heaving out of her horror Arasakke moved towards the toddy storage.

“Listen O, why are you sleeping here?”

She touched to awake, removed the hood to see, only to find spades laid across. They were covered with a white loin.

“Let it be preserved for the brothers’ chest.”

Arasakke cursed beating the ground. She arrived at the path edge of field, and was dumbfounded to witness the scene! She glimpsed the laid-across body of Budyanta on the course he had channelized.

“*Ayyyyo*, warrior brothers! You snatched away the auspiciousness of wedlock from me?”

She thrashed her chest and head; cursing and weeping inconsolably at the death of her husband.

Native became Hostile and Water Toxic

Sayana inquired the brothers who had left from home at the first rays of morning sun,

“What is it, Children? Why is there a sharpness in your knives, and a glow on your faces?”

No sooner words dropped out of Sayana’s mouth, a messenger from Permale Court reached the door of Eraje house.

“The youth who killed Court Minister Budyanta are decreed to appear in the Permale Courtyard immediately.”

Said the messengers from Permale.

“O Children, who do we have to bank upon from henceforth? This land has turned hostile and its water toxic. Go to the Permale Court, Children, you go. Describe the event in

detail. At the same time, also appeal for the reward due to your mother Deyi from Permale palace.”

Sayane taught a course for the difficult times to come.

Banta warriors arrived at the Permale Court room.

“Yes, we killed the Budyanta of that kind.”

Both brothers described the event earlier that day in the Court of Permale Ballala.

“I raised you orphaned children with milk-rice in meals. You repaid my kindness with such a brutal act? Did you assassinate the Minister of my Court Budyanta? What kind of punishment should I pronounce on you?

“Do impose whatever penalty you intend to. But, we have a query before your judgment. The reward promised to our mother Deyi is still awaiting here. You should bestow it on us.”

*Banta*¹³ youth beseeched in front of Ballala. And the King replied thus,

“What is it you demand? Speak, warriors.”

“There is a vast stretch with Banana plantation. Five *sér* measures of sowing will yield five hundred *mud̥i*¹⁴ straw-bundles of harvest. There is a fertile paddy field outside. It yields three hundred straw-bundles of rice. Present it to us.”

“It is required towards the expenditure of *būḍu* palace. Leave that and ask else.”

There is a *gendatāre* coconut tree¹⁵ near *padmakattē*. It reaps a thousand coconuts in one branch. Couldn’t the palace offer it us?”

“It is needed for the palace’s spending on tender coconut and its milky meat.”

“There is a jackfruit tree in the backyard. Every year it reaps both soft and hard fruits¹⁶ together. Leave it to us lord Ballala.”

“It is indispensable to be distributed among the unpaid labourers of the palace. Seek else.”

“There is a buffalo in the cattle shed milking five seers of milk. Furnish it to us.”

“It is required towards the lactic expenses of the palace. Demand else.”

¹³ Warriors, masculine men in Tulu. Also soldiers.

¹⁴ A bundle of rice or paddy packed in a special container made of straw measuring about thirty nine kilos or forty two seers

¹⁵ A species of coconut tree which bears reddish or tawny coloured fruit; considered finest in quality.

¹⁶ Called *tuluve* and *barke* in Tulu. Two varieties of jack fruit.

“If so, there is a flower garden where all your ladies take strolls. It would be fine if you could hand it over to us.”

“How dare you ask? The flower garden my wives walk around? Those who eye on the garden today might not restrain from demanding the women themselves tomorrow! *Abbabba!* I accorded surplus amity on you! I should not let you two go who killed the Minister of my Court!”

Ballala thundered with seven goblets of rage. He immediately summoned *budu* Bommayya and *chavaḍi* Santayya.

“What are you looking at? Seize the warriors! Bind them in hands and feet!”

Time-bound on the Palace

Hearing the Ballala’s words, Koti Chennaya uttered in dismay,

“Did you not fasten us to the same women who nurtured and brought us up, Lord? Let it be. You have six full months to accomplish our requests. This pillar of Permale palace is a witness to it.”

The warrior brothers left an incision on the pillar with their daggers.

“Let those who attack, attack, and those who confine us, confine. We will pave way for justice on our chests, but injustice will be directed with the sharpness of our daggers.”

Declaring thus, the twin brothers briskly descended the steps of Permale palace and away they walked!

Ballala deployed his royal elephant to capture the descending warriors. Koti and Chennaya however stood erect in front of the elephant. The royal giant didn’t take long to kneel before the youth and bow before its conquerors. The twin heroes moved on. Their way was now blocked by the men of Ballala. Koti Chennaya threw each one of them asunder. They replied through their daggers.

No to road toll!

The warriors laid a time frame on the palace. Descending, they walked to go away from their country. After a day’s uninterrupted walk, they reached the borders of Panja region. A toll collector was seated at the Panja entrance. He jumped up from his spot, and blocked the brothers, saying,

“Remit the toll before you move on.”

Chennaya intervened.

“Did you demand tax looking at the load on our heads? Or, is it looking at the bundle on our backs? Which tax are you demanding from us, manly man?”

“Deposit a tax for the daggers you are grasping.”

“Who is it, you virile? No man born on the earth so far has levied tax on our daggers! Should we pay it to you? Ok, let us pay, let us pay well!

They dragged the tax collector out of his tariff table and threw him down on the ground.

Koti Chennaya waged tax from the edge of their daggers.

“Henceforth no toll should be levied on any passersby on this path.”

The warriors announced in all nook and corners.

Caste at the thirst-quenching place

The twin brothers left tax collector’s seat and travelled further. They were exhausted through the day’s walk, and were thirsty-hungry. From distance they spotted a shed for thirst-quenching and found a Brahmin inquiring the travellers’ caste specificities.

Identifying Koti Chennaya’s caste as *Biruva* he said,

“Stand aside then. I will pour you water from the stone funnel at the backside. Drink it up.”

“We will grip our dagger and let the water flow there.”

The Brahmin started pouring water through their daggers, and the warriors gulped without letting a single drop on the ground. Without winking Chennaya stared at the visage of Brahmin while quenching his thirst. The Brahmin’s hands were shivering, and the tumbler was falling down. Seven goblets of anger were raging within the younger brother. He was waiting to strike a blow on the Brahmin.

“O my younger brother! No, brother! Do not raise your hand on the Brahmin.”

Koti intervened in his brother’s attempt to smack, and pacified him. He sought information on the whereabouts of trails ahead.

The Brahmin performed his *balime* astrological calculations and predicted about the different occurrences on different paths. Undaunted the warriors walked ahead.

Gooseberry split at the edge of their daggers

The twin brothers paced forth discussing about the course to embark on. Meanwhile, they entered a gooseberry forest only to witness strange things. Soil-chisels were stuck in the

ground around and stone-chisels were rooted in the stones. Trees were pierced with wooden chisels. A force of men was hiding in wait to capture the approaching warriors. The fruit selling woman Kāntakka took note of all these preparations on her way, and transmitted all details to the twin brothers passing through. Koti and Chennaya were on stroll, plucking and enjoying the gooseberries around. With a single wield of their daggers, they split open a gooseberry in thousand pieces and dissipated through the air. Men in hiding were dumbfounded by the skill of two warriors. Many took to their feet in a while and the others savoured thrash in plenty.

Gallant and virile Koti Chennaya steered their path through the Panja plains. Boulders burst under their feet and twisting roots severed. Dust on the ground splashed through the sky and sweat from their head ran through to the feet. In the airless plains of Panja, Koti Chennaya settled under a *gōli* tree. They took off their forked crown¹⁷ and placed it on the ground. Squatted their legs, and the warriors set aside silver-hafted daggers on their squatting laps. They crushed the beetle nut and chewed to heart's content. The elder brother spattered pigeon-coloured spit and the younger parrot-coloured.

Challenge against challenge

One-less-forty children were grazing their cattle animatedly in the plains of Panja region. Younger brother Chennaya addressed his older,

“Brother, we should play a trick on these children here.”

Koti replied, “No brother, cattle tending children are excessively smart. Unchecked boys are packed with naughtiness. Tiny mouse carry more mischief. Wild brinjals are bitter in taste. Do not think of deceiving these children”

Koti's attempt to dissuade didn't exert any impact on his younger sibling.

“Hey kids, come here. Did you hear, O kids? Did you notice, a cow has delivered a calf in your herd? Have you discovered, a bull is smelling the new-born calf!

Chennaya thus addressed the thirty-nine kids. They jumped and ran around. They sprinted from the herd of buffaloes to the herd of cows. From the herd of cows to the herd of cowboys. Assembled in a group, one-less-forty children looked in the same direction. There certainly were oxen with white mark on their forehead; long tails were surely there;

¹⁷ A crown with bifurcated branches worn by the performers of *koṭi-Chennaya*. It is specifically associated with the twin brothers.

all four legs were intact; coloured underbellies were definitely seen. One ox had just laid dung on the ground and the one behind was inhaling the fresh droppings!

Children put their heads together, and said,

“The warriors pulled a prank on us well. We must come up with one now!”

“At once glimpse at the Permale kingdom from which you arrived. Fire is raging across the seven seas. Do not miss the view of how *taroli* tree leaves are tied to the tail of a fox to extinguish vying flares.”

The children posed a befitting challenge in return.

Chennaya jumped up from his spot and raised his hand to thrash the mocking children.

The cowboys ran helter-skelter; those who ran, clutched the hills and those who fell, bit the grass.

“It is not the kindle of a conflagration in the western sea! It is the reddish hew of setting sun!”

Koti resolved the riddle posed by children, and he consoled them at great length.

“Hey children, do not dread and do not stagger away from us. Explain us about the diverse paths ahead before you leave. Could you guide our way to the village-affluent Payya Baidya’s house?”

“If you traverse in the left side, you are on the path to Enmuru region and if you traverse right, you are on the road to Panja. In the middle is the highway, warriors. The path at the centre will take you to Payya Baidya’s house. If you move further, near the field of five gauge seeds, you will find a yard of *padpe* plants. And near the three gauge seeds, you will see a yard of *chévu* plants. A barricading compound wall you will see next, and a huge *tuppe* hay granary within you find. A reposing shelter under the reddish *genda taare* coconut tree is erected there. Also find a thatched frame bearing enough beetle leaves.”

One-less-thirty cowboys thus portrayed the way to wealthy Paiyya Baidya’s place.

Kinnidaaru’s Story

Twin brothers pursued the path described by cowpunchers. They stopped in front of the narrow passage, and addressed in raised voice.

“O *boy*, is the village renowned Payya Baidya present at home?”

Meanwhile, *Ooo* she replied to the first call, contemplated to the second, and to the third, she responded in equal tone.

“Kinnidāru from interior of the house seeks to know who gave her a call.”

“If it is a Bunt or other landlords, be seated on the shelter under *padmakatte* coconut tree. If it is a Setty or Brahmin, take rest under the shade of beetle leaf creepers. If you hail from the same caste and clan, I invite you to be seated on the swing inside.”

Kinnidaru stood on the threshold and directed her guests thus.

Both the brothers sat in the *padmakatte* under coconut tree, and requested her to fetch a tumbler of water.

“No male member is present at the moment. I will not bring my head out of the threshold.”

She said and extended water in a silver goblet.

“We will not touch water without identifying the person. We will not drink water before knowing their caste status. You should share your identity, and quenching our thirst will follow.”

When both brothers insisted on knowing more, Kinnidaru disclosed her caste, clan identity.

“My mother is Deyi Baidedi and father Kantane. My uncle is Sayana. I am their first daughter Kinnidaru. I was married much afar, and I hear, my mother has given birth to twin sons after my departure. My burly, muscular brothers are named as Koti and Chennaya. I was told they are extraordinarily handsome amidst all other men. Alas! I have not heard them in my ears or glimpsed them in my eyes. Unaware of their whereabouts, my eyes are eagerly awaiting to peek at them. My mouth is tripping to have a word with them. My waist aches to embrace them in shoulders. Didn’t you enquire about our caste-clan? We are *Birwa* in caste but *Bunṭa* in morality.”

Mirth for the Sister, misery for the brother-in-law

Listening to Kinnidaru’s story, Koti Chennaya stared at each other. They leapt up and replied in haste,

“Ahh Sister! We are the same Koti Chennaya, your blood brothers!”

Kinnidaru's joy knew no bounds. No sky on her head, and no ground below. She was dumbfounded. She delved into the beauty of her two siblings from toe to head. She held their hands, sang in mirth and wondered who the elder was and who younger. She took them into the chambers inside, and swayed them in the swing chair. She beckoned the tawny cow that had been at *Kāshi*¹⁸ and extracted a tumbler full of milk. She served water in a goblet and milk in a plate to her younger siblings.

Meanwhile, Payya Baidya who was engaged in palm wine tapping returned home. Kinnidaru immediately went into the toddy shed. She assisted in unburdening the toddy, and helped her husband in finishing the task.

Payye peeped into the house, and exclaimed "Who are they? The cruel rogues who killed a human have reached this part of the world as well?"

Payya Baidya stuck his curved sickle in the wooden rooftop. He attempted an escape by sneaking out of the dwarfish door. Noticing their brother-in-law's struggle to wriggle out, Koti Chennaya stood in front of him. They addressed him repeatedly as bro-in-law, but Payya felt suffocatingly constricted between the two huge figures. Children who were completely enshrouded had returned now. Kinnidaru served them meals and honoured them with excellent hospitality.

Days passed. Tomorrow turned into other day. Payya escorted his new guests Koti Chennaya to the Panja ruler Kémara ballala's palace. However, Kemara had already received a letter!

Caught in Deception

"Two muscular youth in the Permala region have assassinated Minister Budyanta of Permala Court. They have absconded from Permala, and are informed to have entered the Panja region. You are requested to hand them over to Permala, or to put an end to their lives. This is an official epistle from King Permala Ballala."

Kemara read the letter again. He ordered the immediate presence of Chandugidi Chāvunda of Perambódi *garadi*. Wicked Chandugidi played many tricks to capture the warriors in his region. He orchestrated an affable show before the twin brothers, while scheming for their captivity. Nailing his deception to the end, Chandugidi imprisoned Koti and Chennaya in an inviolable chamber, fastened in firm chains. He secured the doors with sturdy locks.

¹⁸ A Hindu pilgrimage centre.

“O *banta* warriors, you must now live in this dark stony chamber. You must die in thirst and hunger.”

Chandugidi laid a curse on his captives.

“How is it, elder brother? The place we lived was also in darkness, and the one we have arrived now is benighted as well.”

Chennaya exclaimed with his brother. Younger and elder brother shed a drop of tear from the corner of their eyes.

“We were born in truth in the Permale palace. We were also raised in truth and uprightness. We have the grace of our merciful Lord, Bermer¹⁹ from the muddy stream of Kempulaje. Let us entreat to our lord Bermer.”

Both brothers joined their hands, prayed and made a vow to Bermeru. No sooner their plead was heard, a small ray of light pierced into the dungeon they were confined in. Alas! They were struck in astonishment. They drew their defamed daggers and moved it right-left in the tiny pore through which light penetrated. The infinitesimal hole grew into an ample opening. Brothers exerted a tough blow on this eastern exit, and the door came down in debris. It settled in the front field of Kemara’s palace. The warriors successfully escaped from the confines of underground dungeon. They breathed in relief thanking Lord Bermer for his benevolence.

The vow made to their Lord required to be fulfilled next. In this pursuit, Koti Chennaya followed a singular path ahead. They came across a storekeeper Koti Pūnje in one corner and in the other, they found Kāntu Pūnje, another shopkeeper. Both Punje understood the twin brother’s slip from their intended path. They sent Raṇzhalidūte and Kunzhilidūte²⁰ to bind the warriors in hands and feet. When they sprinted across all barriers to reach Koti Chennaya, the muscular youth showed them way through their daggers.²¹

Honoured heroes of Enmuru

Enmūru province was located adjacent to Panja region. Panja king Kemara had deceptively confiscated a portion of Enmuru’s land. He has pushed the border stone much further

¹⁹ Considered chief among the pantheon of Tuluva deities. Tuluva ‘Bermer’ is more often confused with the vedic ‘Brahma.’

²⁰ Both these individuals are worshipped as deities in Koti-Chennaya worship centres *garadi* across Tulunad.

²¹ Metaphorically to say that Koti-Chennaya killed them.

into his rival's expanse. At the time, Enmuru was governed by a ruler called Devannajiri. He heard about the arrival of twin warriors in Panja province, and had expressed an intense desire to honour them in his county. He sent his General Kinni Chennaya to persuade the brothers to settle in his kingdom. Kinni Chennaya encountered his target party walking out of the Panja frontiers. He attempted an acquaintance with Koti Chennaya.

It did not take long for the heroic youth to understand that Kinni was not a jeopardy to their life or liberty.

Devanna's General escorted both of them to Enmuru. On their way, a sight aroused curiosity in the brothers.

"What is that scene visible in that distant direction? Is it a worshipping Church of Christians or shrine of Jains or Mosque of Muslims?"²²

Heroes pointed at the remote structure.

"That! That is the *gundā*²³ of Kepulaje lord Jayalla Bermer."

Kinni Chennaya introduced Bermer shrine to the Lord's devotees. At once Koti Chennaya appeared before the shrine, performed their vow, and reached the palace of Devannajiri in peace.

Enmuru Ballala Devannajiri accommodated the muscular twins in his province, and he provided sufficient land in donation to engage in agricultural activities. Soon, Koti Chennaya inhabited in Ekanadka Eryangala *guttu* house, and shed their cultivating-sweat on the unyielding soil of weeds and shrub.

"It is a county devoid of games, gatherings, *kambula*, and mischievous sports of youth."

When the brothers thus contemplated over the prevailing boredom in Enmuru province, Ballala Devanna's nephew overheard their conversation. He relayed it to his uncle, and got a decree issued to indulge in a hunting spree in the company of Koti Chennaya. There was a skilled trainer of hunting dogs residing at a neem-arboured shelter in Battandadka. Word was sent to him, commanding his pressing presence.

²² The religious centres are respectively called as *Ingreji*, *battada* and *palli* in Tulu.

²³ Shrine, especially for Bermer.

Hog hunting – Heated Panja

Dog trainer signalled ten of his chained animals and ten unchained. ‘*duvo, duvo*’ he called, ‘*tauda, tauda.*’ ‘*kalu, kalu*’ he cried, ‘*bolla, bolla.*’ He served white rice to the *bollu* white dog and black rice to the *kalu* black dog. He took out hook-belts for ten chain dogs, and drove out the ten unchained. No sooner, he joined the two warriors and other soldier-servants from Enmuru. They grouped with the hunters in forest; they geared up to chase the preys around.

A swift chase for the hunt started in *enjir* hill, in *Madera* hill, around *kombal* stream, in *karmar* forest and so on. Despite creating enough commotion through the hunting ways, there were no snakes crawling out, no sluggish birds flying and no Samburs galloping. Expressing dismay the hunters’ troupe descended into a huge pit nearby, and to their utter excitement they spotted a boar that was as tall as elephant and as low as horse. A boar that would not allow the boiled paddy to dry! Would not allow the dried paddy to be sifted! Hog that was horny, steaming!

Meanwhile Chennaya propped up his back against the stump of *koraji* tree and his leg against the *kuntala* plants. He drew an arrow straight. The boar collapsed like a mountain and wriggled in pain to be heard in four and a half worlds. Its groan was heard in three and a half worlds. It dragged and fell on the *manjal pāde* rock. A thousand servants from Panja are present; thirty whitish servants have reached; three hundred muscular servants have arrived. They ran lengths and jumped breadths to reach the spot. One or all together, they couldn’t move a single whisker from the snout of the hunted boar.

The boar was dragged on a wood log to be cut for meat. Apportioned parts were distributed among different people as per their role during the hunting expedition. Meanwhile, there was a commotion in Panja camp demanding kind or meat for their labour. While their claim went in vain, the Panja men finally sought at least rough bristle of the boar to cleanse the jewellery of palace ladies. And, we know, an iota of it was not supplied by the other side!

Purified in Oil

The twin brothers had returned after victory over the gigantic boar. They were seated in the Eryangala *guttu* house in Ekanadka. Ritualistic oil-cleansing was carried out to ward off the sin of touching a swine. They got the required oil fetched through Oil Sanku from across the Ghats. Ten-sixteen varieties of oil were brought for the purpose. Oil Sanku

poured *neyyenne* oil on the centre of their heads and *esalenne* on the hair divides. He sent *keelenne* into the ears and smeared *bengadenne* on the backs. He supplied *bamagadenne* to the stomach and rubbed *sandenne* to the sides. He held *paniyenne* to the feet and streamed *uriyenne* into the nails. He rubbed down a quarter of a seer to extract two seers full of oil, and, one seer oil was pulled out of two seers oil kneaded. The identical twins were seated on the swaying swing extending their bodies to the anointing ritual.

The Letter read thus

Meanwhile, the Ballala of Panja, Kemara had sent an epistle to Enmuru chief.

“You must deport back the twin brothers into Panja boundaries. The Enmuru Ballala must answer in the plateaus of Panja. In times when the answer couldn’t be given, the robe of men should be replaced by the attire of women. You should bedeck with pleated *sāree*, and sweep the dwarf doors of palace with worn out broom.”

Enmuru Ballala was left with no other option. He blew the clarion call for battle against the despicable intentions of Kemara Ballala and his troupe.

For the sins of killing a boar, the warrior brothers bathed in the water of seven seas. Following purification, they received the customary²⁴ beetle leaf and areca nut before setting out to the war field. In order to ensure the prosperity of their lands, Koti Chennaya called for the nephew at Ballale Botṭu, Kujumba Kānja before embarking on their journey towards the battleground.

“If we return it is ours, and if do not, it is for you, Kujumba Kanjava. You, at least, remain here looking after the Eryangala land of Ekanadka.”

The muscular brothers requested thus. They left their land in the care of Kujumba Kanjava, and reached the plains of Panja for the call of war. The brothers stood together, exchanging their thoughts,

“O my younger brother, how would we know if either you or I breathe last in the battlefield? When I depart from this life, I will transform as a crow on the mouth-stone of well in the cavern. You must keep an eye on it. And, in case you pass away, you should, in return, appear in the same form!”

Elder brother Koti commanded his younger.

“Hereafter when will we unite, brother? Where will we come together?”

²⁴ Called *bulya*

The brothers bid adieu with painful words. The elder Koti took his armour to the encounter in upper land, and the younger Chennaya entered into the small force in lower ground. Mugéras of lane, Bākudas of field, Korayās²⁵ of shed had already arrived at the combat zone.

Final valour

This side, Chennaya continued to display of his valour in the lower ground. Any interrupting man was quashed with a swing of his dagger, and any soldier facing him was chased away with his bow and arrow. Cannot comprehend where it pierced through, but an arrow struck into the feet of Chennaya. He shook it off as swiftly as it had pierced into his body. The stray dog of Panja, Chandugidi had shot at Chennaya from behind the hide of a tree. In an ironical retribution, the same arrow threw off by Chennaya penetrated into the chest of its own master Chandugidi. He collapsed, and leapt out of the human world to reach the gates of other world.

That side, Koti reached the battleground in higher plateaus. He blew the conch of warfare. He chased the men obstructing and he drove the men confronting. Those combating on par, Koti acquainted with his dagger. Panja suffered on all fronts in the hands of heroic warriors. In the apocalyptic moment, Permale Ballala entered into the thresholds of warfield with his force. He proclaimed alliance with the Panja unit and blew the clarion of war. The combat between Panja and Enmuru stretched through seven dusks and eights dawns. None could triumph against the valorous warriors though!

Witnessing his destruction in the battlefield, Permale Ballala schemed a deceit on his counterparts. He stood concealed behind the Koti *baidya* and shot an arrow straight at his chest. What should be said? When he turned to face, Koti found Permale Ballala with a curved bow in his hand.

“*Ayyo* Ballale! How could you do it after raising us well on milked rice? How could you aim at my chest with your arrow? How could you drive yourself to do that? How could you?”

Writhing in pain in the moment of departure Koti uttered those words of dismay. Other side, Permale Ballala stood with his head bent, without a syllable from his mouth. Turning away, Koti beckoned the Ballalas of Panja, Enmuru and Permale together to his side.

“From this day onwards, all you three Ballalas must live together in harmony.”

²⁵ Different castes, all three considered ‘low,’ in the Tulu region.

Expressing his deathbed desire, Koti glanced at the kings around and breathed his last in peace.

Koti *Baidya* bid adieu to his corporeal existence and merged into the fold in heavenly *kailasa*. He descended into the sacred yard of Lord Bermeru to unite on his right side. However, before stepping into the Lord's abode, he heard an aerial message.

"Do not descend into the yard, do not touch the wall. Why have you arrived here alone? You both were born together and raised together. Return at once! Escort your brother as well. You siblings are united forever and are intended to be so!"

In the meantime, after accomplishing in the battle, Chennaya went in search of his elder brother. There! On the mouth-stone of well in the cavern he spotted a crouching crow.

"*Ayyo* Brother! Did you leave me behind alone? Do I have anything further to be alive in this world?"

Crying out in grief, Chennaya dashed his head against the same mouth-stone of the well and departed from his earthly body. He fell on his brother's corpse and wriggled in pain. He evacuated his corporeal self to re-emerge in the heavenly quarter of *kailasa*. The indivisible twin siblings gleamed in radiance in the abode above. While the light of their belly extinguished on earth, the immortal children glistened as forever-lit *nandādeepa* in the *gunda* of Lord Bermer.

Vying Ballalas bore the guilt of killing Koti Chennaya with their own hands. In a redemptive act to alleviate their guilt, the Ballalas built *garadi* worship centres across. The twin children who were born and raised together were memorialized through *garadis* in every stretch of Tulunad.

*biruvered iruver*²⁶

(Two in the Billawa Crew)

Thus honoured they were for eternity!!

²⁶ It is a popular way of addressing the twins Koti-Chennaya. I have provided its rough translation in English below.

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Damodara Kalmady. 13th March, 2014 & 22nd March, 2014.

Rajashri. 20th March, 2014.

Ravi Poojary. 6th February, 2014 & 16th February, 2014.

Sai Geetha Hegde. 20th March, 2014 & 13th April, 2014.

Shekhara Parava. 3rd March, 2014.

Vamana Nandavara. 10th February, 2014 & 11th March, 2014.

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NEMA ATTENDED/ GARADI VISITED

Anjaru Garadi. 2nd & 3rd March, 2014.

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Ermalu Tenka Garadi. 11th April, 2014.

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'SITES' VISITED

Koti Chennaya Theme Park, Karkala. 9th March, 2014.

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