Towards a Common Language: Social Movements and Vernacular Publics in Telugu, 1900-1956

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Introduction: The Vernacular and Its Commons

Language is both intimate and collective. It holds the specificity of the early, infantile encounter with communication, the linguistic and emotive pull that a deeply intimate language (not only, or always, the mother tongue) exerts, and the challenges and desires that constitute our personal relationship to language. A language that belongs to many others[1] can still be deeply intimate. Language also gathers into a collective. Some concepts that are predominant in academic writing – nation (Benedict Anderson), public sphere (Jurgen Habermas) and vernacular – name this gathering.

Both the nation and the public sphere rely on the vernacular to produce collectivities out of people. As we usually understand it, both the nation and the public sphere consist of people participating in them, through speech and written discourse, using a language they already know and share in common with others. The public sphere comes into existence by this very process. The vernacular then opens up questions that are more than linguistic – it helps us investigate concepts which are key to the disciplines we inhabit.

Vernaculars, in the conventional sense, denote local languages shared among their speakers, distinct from classical, non-place based languages that are not shared similarly in speech. Outside of language, the vernacular denotes the local, something that is specific to a place, in fields such as architecture and art and aesthetics. The relationship between place, language and people is not particular to the concept as we know it in English; the word for place-based languages in South Asia (*desabhashas*) also brings together region (*desa*) with language (*bhasha*), held together by the implied presence of people (*praja*).

[1] Spivak 179.

This gives us the most common cluster of words that are used to invoke the vernacular in Indian languages: *desa-bhasha-praja*. These three words were frequently used together in twentieth century discourse to establish the importance of vernaculars. They make vernacular languages seem bounded and coherent, giving them the status of well-defined, discrete entities. The discourses on vernaculars also make these three concepts seem irrevocably connected, such that each can be identified through the other.

However, there is a historicity to the consolidation of region and people through language. The sociological dimensions of this historicity have been recognized for long. Already, Benedict Anderson's pioneering work demonstrated how the printing revolution helped vernacular linguistic communities emerge, changing the plane of reference from religious to secular, homogeneous time. But there is another level to this history where the very concept of the vernacular comes to be constituted. For there was nothing self-evident about the vernacular, as might appear in retrospect.

At the turn of the twentieth century in India, there was more evidence for the ruptures and disjunctures within these languages than there was for their coherence and commonality. Perhaps partly because of the ruptures and partly in-spite of them, this was a time of discernible collective investment in making the vernacular common to all its speakers, in order to overcome regional and social (caste, gender and occupation-based) differences in its use. The best way to describe vernaculars, then, is not as an existing common, but as the aspiration and movement to create a common tongue. This is the first distinctive sense in which the common is related to language.

The second is the pejorative meaning of the common – low, uncouth, uncultivated – significations that have historically been associated with vernaculars and with the people

who speak them. The vernacular comes into being by instituting a distinction between the low and the common. Other scholars have argued for the significance this distinction holds for the vernacular.[2] In this dissertation, I argue for treating the aspirational and the pejorative as two key nodes which the vernacular harbors long after its historical moment of constitution, by which I mean not only the vernacular's evolution as a discrete language but particularly its emergence as a language that welds people and region together.

This movement between the common the vernacular aspires to and the pejorative common, a process intrinsic to the vernacular, makes language a tricky basis for the public. I refer to the public here because we understand the public sphere as premised on (linguistic) democracy. In particular, scholars of South Asian Studies (drawing on Habermas) have understood the vernacular public sphere as formed when vernacular discourse and orthography were simplified and made available, through widespread printing, to people who had traditionally been excluded from the public (women, the working classes, lower castes and so on).

This is not only an academic formulation. Historically, writers and intellectuals have attempted to forge a vernacular whose spoken and written forms are not distinct from each other, precisely in service of such an expanded public.[3] Between the late 1800s and the early 1900s, native scholars in South Asia argued that if the language used in printed texts was similar in syntax and vocabulary to the language people spoke, it would eliminate the

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[2] For instance, Ollet's tracing of the shift from the common (*samanya*) to the vulgar (*gramya*) in South Asian vernacular grammars that adopted Prakrit grammatical categories (159-168), and Sorensen's pithy remark on the move from the low to the common: "I use the term 'vernacular'…because it names the linguistic instance of the movement between low and common that I track in this book." (275n44).

[3] In Telugu, the most popular advocate of linguistic democracy in these terms was Gidugu Venkata Ramamurti (1863-1940). Engaging with the Japanese *genbun itchi* movement, Karatani helps us see that the very demand for writing to be "equivalent to speech" was new and particular to the turn of the twentieth century (39).

rules of admission into public discourse.[4] Hence, the demand to make writing resemble speech is deeply tied to the attempt to foster and expand the public. This demand takes on fresh life when those who were previously excluded from public discourse, specifically literary discourse, claim recognition and legitimacy for their use of language.

For instance, in the 1990s, Telugu women writers who were censored for their poetry articulated a critique of the gendered distinction between obscene and decorous language. It was gendered norms of linguistic usage, they argued, that let male writers criticize their use of sexually explicit vocabulary as obscene while those writers themselves used similar vocabularies in their poetry.[5] This critique by the women writers foregrounded the hypocrisy in determining whether vocabulary was obscene or not on the basis of the writer's gender identity, without attending to the literary and political contexts of its use.

The claim for linguistic inclusion is often voiced as a demand for making writing resemble the speech of those who are excluded, by loosening or abandoning rules that are specific to literary writing. In the dissertation, I explore the contours of this demand as it emerged at the turn of the twentieth century (the early 1900s). Here, I want to turn to a poem from the end of the twentieth century (published 1996) to show how claims for linguistic inclusion continued to turn on the same axis for the greater part of the century. It is the continued premise of language as a site for such inclusion that make it necessary to think of language in relation to the aspirational and the pejorative common.

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[4] Nor is this phonocentric attitude toward language particular to South Asian vernaculars. In addition to Derrida's now famous location of phonocentrism at the heart of Western metaphysics, scholars such as Ertürk and Karatani have shown the relevance of such phonocentrism for language reforms in Turkey and Japan respectively.

[5] See Volga 205-211.

The poem "Kshamapana" ("Apology"), by the Telugu dalit poet, Sikhamani, offers a particularly evocative and ironic staking of the above claim on language.[6] The first verse of the poem follows.

> Forgive me, dalit, forgive me!
> I am a poet, an ancient poet, an extraordinary poet
> Of what relevance are my name and place
> I am a follower of Apastamba, I am of the Niyogi sect
> Forgive me dalit!
> I am he who
> in a thousand years of poetry
> except for blinded *bhakti* and salivant *srngaram*
> could not write one sentence about you.
> Like our *alankarists* said
> you are neither a hero nor a noble man
> Like the expounders of our rasas proclaimed
> your *mala* woman does not belong to the rank of Padmini.
> Poetry written by a shudra, our Appakavi said,
> is like *payasam* touched by a crow
> Tell me, how can I write poetry about you, a shudra?
> Tell me, how can I confer on you the honor of poetry? (235)[7]

The verse is an address by an unnamed poet to a reader who is marked as both Dalit and shudra. Dalit is a term of self-representation that names the outcaste, castes which fall outside the traditional caste hierarchy. In the vernacular, the word contains a linguistic recognition of oppression (it translates into 'broken people'). Shudra refers to the lowest of the four castes (brahmins, ksatriyas, vaishyas and shudras), which fall within and not outside the caste hierarchy. It does not have a similar connotation of political empowerment.[8]

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[6] Born in 1957, Sikhamani (Karri Sanjeeeva Rao) emerged as one of the foremost writers of Telugu Dalit poetry in the 1990s.

[7] All translations from Telugu in this dissertation are mine, unless otherwise noted.

[8] Discomfort over the political connotations of the word 'Dalit' are evident in a recent directive (September 2018) issued by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry in India asking media outlets to avoid usage of the word in news reportage ("Replace 'Dalit' with SC"). 'SC' is an acronym for 'Scheduled Castes,' the official designator used in the Indian constitution for Dalit castes.

The speaking voice in this verse is of a poet who belongs to the social and aesthetic world of classical poetry: a Brahmin, of the sect of secular, linguistically skilled brahmins (Niyogi),[9] writer of religious (*bhakti*) and erotic (*srngaram*) poetry. The religious and the erotic are the two main themes of classical Telugu poetry, and they sometimes co-exist in the same literary work.

In addition to denoting religious poetry, *bhakti* poetry or poetry from the 8th-17th century *bhakti* movements in South Asia also has an indelible connection with the subcontinent's vernaculars. The corpus constitutes a unique and rich collection of orally transmitted poetry that sung of a personalized relationship to god in a highly vernacularized idiom. Poets and scholars have adopted a celebratory stance towards this poetry, reading these qualities as marking a revolutionary shift in both language and religion.[10]

On the other hand, at the turn of the twentieth century, eroticism in Indian literature came to be read by British colonial officers and some native intellectuals as a moral problem, marking a shift from the erotic as a literary category (*srngara*) to the obscene as a moral and legal category.[11]

The poem sets up the aesthetic categories that classical poetry abides by – figurative ornamentation (*alamkaras*), aestheticized emotion (*rasa*) and the aesthetic categorization

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[9] "…because of their willingness to serve as social and economic intermediaries between the local world of the village and the cosmopolitan world of the court, Niyogis as a class came to embody an unusual constellation of linguistic skills and attitudes toward language. On the one hand, they tended to identify more closely with the local south Indian vernaculars than they did with Sanskrit, which was seen as the intellectual preserve of their more traditional counterparts; on the other hand, they also cultivated skills of literacy in a succession of cosmopolitan administrative languages, from Marathi and Hindustani to Persian and eventually English." Wagoner (796).

[10] For a contemporary articulation of this view, see Subramaniam. The established perspective on *bhakti* poetry for an English audience is Ramanujan. Two works that reorient these perspectives on the literature are Novetzke, who in his reading of the *bhakti* movements decouples the use of quotidian language from social critique, and Wakankar, who attends to *bhakti* poetry's place in subaltern religiosity through the tropes of miracle and violence.

[11] See C. Gupta, particularly 30-84.

of women into groups based on their caste and personal traits (*nayikabhed*). However, the poem itself does not participate in the aesthetic world created by these systems, resembling unadorned and unmetered speech in its language and form. Categories of classical poetry are evoked in the poem to gesture to the exclusion of the shudra and the Dalit from such poetry, both as its author and its subject. These categories are evoked to foreground the violence of a tradition that automatically considers poetry written by the shudra as ruined, something sweet and flavorful (*payasam*) contaminated by the crow's saliva. This line paraphrases the following declaration by Telugu grammarian Appakavi (17th century):

> A poem made by a sudra, however rich
> in similes and texture, is not to be received.
> Even a well-cooked rice pudding
> cannot be offered to the gods, if it is touched
> by a crow.[12]

Speaking on behalf of this tradition in Sikhamani's poem, the poet asks his reader, who is figured as both Dalit and shudra, how he could have written poetry about him. Tell me, he asks, how can I confer on you the honor of poetry (*kavyagauravam*). Perhaps the most striking aspect of this verse is the shift from the Dalit to the shudra. The verse opens with an address to the Dalit ("forgive me, dalit"). This address is carried all the way into the first half of the verse – "In a thousand years of poetry…[I] could not write one sentence about you."

When the poet begins to invoke terms from classical poetry, a specific Dalit caste is evoked (*maleta*), which refers to a *mala* woman and carries derisive connotations in the original even though it sounds descriptive in English. From here, the verse addresses the shudra:

Poetry written by a shudra, our Appakavi said,

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[12] Narayana Rao and Shulman 237.

Is like *payasam* touched by a crow
Tell me, how can I write poetry about you, a shudra?
Tell me, how can I confer on you the honor of poetry?

The slip between the Dalit and the shudra in the poem presents a rupture. If the Telugu poetic tradition is a space of exclusion and violence for the shudra or the lower caste, it cannot begin to account for the Dalit or the outcaste, even by reducing the Dalit to a producer of contaminated poetry. The speaking voice, however, addresses the reader as Dalit, thereby inserting into the poem a contemporary political awareness, even as it skirts any real engagement with classical poetry. It is from this tradition – read as a space of violence and exclusion – that Telugu Dalit and feminist writers attempted to wrest poetry in the twentieth century.[13]

In the debates on language at the turn of the twentieth century, we can see an inverse relationship emerge between literature and linguistic democracy. In the rhetorically charged realm of these debates an irreconcilable distinction is instituted between literary tradition and linguistic modernity, a distinction for which literature is essential. A significant aspect of linguistic tradition was the role literature played in the study of a language. To study a language, one studied its literature; the grammars that were available tended to be literary works; and textual language itself was permeated by the literary.[14]

Native scholars who argued for modernizing language also tended to argue against this close link between literature and linguistic training, seeing literary training as distracting from and presenting unnecessary challenges to new learners of the language. These learners were new to the extent that they were imagined as belonging to sections of the population

[13] The larger project is not particular to Telugu. Similar poetry is available in other South Asian vernaculars. See Tharu and Lalitha for a pan-India survey of women's writing and Tharu and Satyanarayana, *No Alphabet in Sight* and *Steel Nibs are Sprouting*, for a survey of South Indian Dalit writing.
[14] See Busch for an elaborate treatment of this link in Brajbhasha, a literary precursor to modern day Hindi.

that were previously not literate. Scholars imagined them as speakers of the vernacular in question, and hence, did not see them as new to the language itself. Here, scholars saw a written vernacular that resembled the spoken as closely as possible as a necessary medium for the spread of literacy and education in a largely illiterate population. Linguistic modernity then came to symbolize the demand that writing resemble speech, an increased hankering after and construction of a distinctive, genealogically demarcated literary tradition for the language and a clearly discernible investment in equality and democracy that carries over into language.

This last makes language itself the carrier of democracy, equality and justice as evidenced in the call to expand the realm of whom language can represent and whose language can be represented, hence welding the social with the linguistic. As we can see from the poem above, these ideas also inform Dalit and feminist engagements with language in the latter half of the twentieth century, resulting in further attempts to make literature anew in opposition to existing literary tradition. As a result, even though literature continues to be the preferred battling ground for these ideas about language, language itself increasingly separates from the literary.

There is, we can agree, a remarkably close interweave between linguistic and social exclusion. What is designated as far too common in language unsurprisingly usually maps on to the social, to the language of those who are themselves considered low and common. Because language contains within itself the movement between the desirable and the pejorative common, language also remains complicit in social exclusion. Such complicity cannot be weeded out from language.

Language excludes, even as certain forms of language use that were previously designated as low become acceptable, and vice versa. This acceptability is not only a result of the subaltern demand on language; it is also indicative of the very process by which vernaculars exist. Even as scholars who study South Asian vernaculars have foregrounded the exclusions that mark the publics constituted by vernaculars,[15] they treat vernaculars as bounded and discrete languages whose limits of linguistic use could potentially be expanded.

In this dissertation, I argue instead that vernacular languages are split by contestations over the common because of which both the languages, and the publics they generate, are unendingly fractured. The challenge in writing about modern vernaculars is the challenge of attending to these fractures even as we recognize language itself as an exclusionary site.

To take on this challenge, we have to perform multiple translations. The first of these translates the Telugu language into the wider world of Anglophone academic discourse, by relying on the established link between region, language and people. Telugu is not a minor language; it is among the constitutionally recognized official languages in India. About 6.7% of the population claims Telugu as its mother tongue, making Telugu the language with the fourth largest number of speakers in India. It is primarily spoken in the Southern Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, and also has speakers across other states in India, including Tamil Nadu and Karnataka and diasporic speakers outside of India.

The Telugu language offers a substantial textual corpus that can speak to disciplinary questions on world aesthetic traditions. Premodern and modern Telugu writers celebrated the language’s close literary relationship to Sanskrit, thus offering a different model for the

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[15] See Orsini’s *The Hindi Public Sphere*; Dalmia; and Novetzke.

emergence of vernacular literary traditions from that of other South Indian languages such as Tamil, whose literature did not draw its primary aesthetic rubrics from Sanskrit and with whom Telugu shares a linguistic genealogy (both Telugu and Tamil are considered Dravidian languages).

In spite of being a significant language within India, the Telugu language has not entered the world of comparative Anglophone academic discourse to the extent that other South Asian languages such as Hindi, Urdu and Bengali have. This is particularly true of comparative literary studies, with a bulk of the writing on Telugu emerging from and engaging the disciplines of history and anthropology.[16]

As a second act of translation, I work with three Telugu concepts that pose a challenge to Anglophone concepts of language and the public. These three – regional community (*jati*), the vernacular common (*gramyam*) and the common public (*janasamanyam*) – offer three takes on the common that language constitutes. *Jati* signifies the creation of a linguistic community held together by a literary heritage, which attains a distinctly socio-religious coloring in the early twentieth century. *Gramyam* connotes what had to be excluded from Telugu in order for it to emerge as a common language. And, *janasamanyam* testifies to the attempt to create a common public that was not entirely determined by the linguistic.

As I show in the dissertation, *jati*, *gramyam* and *janasamanyam* are repeatedly invoked in Telugu discourse, as in other Indian languages,[17] and they are significant precisely because they traverse more than the particular archival record I examine here. Focusing on

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[16] English writing on Telugu literature, especially for audiences who are unfamiliar with Telugu, is largely limited to the work of Velcheru Narayana Rao produced during his three decades of teaching and research in North American universities, and his collaborations with David Shulman.
[17] Such as Bengali, Kannada and Malayalam.

these concepts offers one way to open up the siloed study of modern vernaculars that share linguistic and regional histories.

Also significant is language's role in the emergence of these three concepts. Not only do they emerge within three movements that were all related to language, but language is also the basis for their formation. In other words, these concepts are a response to the challenge of language. A crucial reason they are so widespread in the discourses of the time is because of the varied and repeated engagements with language during this period.

The three movements I explore in this dissertation were roughly contemporaneous with each other: the Andhra movement (1900-1956), which sought to establish a separate state for Telugu speakers in Madras Presidency (under British colonial rule) and represented the collective interests of Telugu speakers in Hyderabad State (a large princely state under the Nizam of Hyderabad's rule); the Telugu language debates (1910-1915), which argued over what form of Telugu (classical, literary or modern, non-literary) should be used in contemporary prose writing; and the public library movement (1900-1956), which established public access libraries across the region. Together, these movements and the cornucopia of print material (ephemeral and not) that emerged from them led to the emergence of a public discourse to which language was central.

In the dissertation, I explore the three concepts as they emerge out of the three movements, hence, Andhra and *jati* in the Andhra movement, *gramyam* in the Telugu language debates and *janasamanyam* in the public library movement. The mapping of these concepts on to these three movements is meant to construct the particular historic and discursive contexts within which the concepts emerge rather than to limit them to these movements alone.

I make three critical interventions in my dissertation. In Chapter 1, "*Desa*: Andhra – Region, Movement, Concept," I attend to the ruptures in the concept 'Andhra,' the word used to name the Telugu language, Telugu-speaking people and the Telugu-speaking region. The Andhra movements in Andhra and Telangana used the same name but conceptualized the linguistic region differently from each other. While the Andhra movement in the former exhibits the now familiar link between region, language and people, I show the incipient alternative to regional-linguistic identity that is available in the Telangana Andhra movement because the latter did not disavow the multilingualism of the space it operated in.

'Andhra' is also a literary-linguistic concept ('Andhram'), and as such, it is distinct from Telugu. 'Andhram' refers to the orthographic interiorization of Sanskrit within Telugu; it is the form of Telugu that contains all the letters necessary for spelling out Sanskrit words. Scholars in the twentieth century used the word 'Andhra,' instead of Telugu, when they wanted to emphasize a link with Telugu's regional and linguistic heritage, especially the language's relationship to Sanskrit. Because these arguments tended to constitute Telugu as a Hindu language by default, I see them as avowing a linguistic community (*jati*) which has communitarian implications.

In Chapter 2, "*Bhasha*: The Challenge of the Vernacular Common," I read the Telugu language debates outside of the binary of writing (classical, literary Telugu) and speech (modern, nonliterary Telugu) that scholars have frequently used to read them. I revisit texts from the debates to argue that even though scholars in those debates used that presumed binary, the focus of their arguments was a third term, *gramyam* (vulgar or ungrammatical

language), which they sought to excise from Telugu in order to constitute the language as a commonly shared vernacular.

In a move that is crucial both for the philosophical and the sociological study of language, scholars read the pejorative commonness of *gramyam* in caste- and gender-specific ways. They rendered gramyam as the language spoken by lower castes against whose lack of chastity and propriety Telugu had to be defended. I argue that in order to understand these debates, we have to move beyond binarized ideas of vernaculars that split these languages into writing and speech, and language itself into vernacular and classical.

The pejorative sense of the common, rooted in caste and gender, shows us what scholars had to exclude in order for a common language to emerge. We cannot address the importance of this pejorative common merely by critiquing the inadequacy of linguistic binaries or by positing a continuum of uses for language.

In Chapter 3, "*Praja*: Constituting a Common Public," I suggest that our existing concepts of the public do not capture the public as it came to be evoked in the Andhra library movement, since that movement emphasized two dyads, each seemingly contradictory: texts and non-textual learning, on the one hand, and an exclusive community (*jati*) and inclusive access to libraries for a wider public (*janasamanyam*), on the other. I show that we can make sense of these contradictions only if we bring an alternative understanding of the vernacular to bear on a different concept of the public.

The library movement refused to limit access to public libraries on the basis of gender, caste or religion – thereby articulating a "common" that challenged the very lines on which the language debates had excluded certain communities from the linguistic "common." However, the movement also sought to make libraries serve the Andhra *jati*, a community

held together by linguistic and religious ties. Here, I read the public as it was constituted in the library movement in light of the linguistic concepts formed in the Andhra movement and the language debates.

Together, these three chapters work with one concept each from the constellation *desa-bhasha-praja* to foreground the ruptures and contradictions that mark the emergence of the triad, even as they contextualize its significance for studying Indian vernaculars.

Chapter 1
Desa: Andhra – Region, Movement, Concept

Svasthana-vesa-bhasabhimatas santo rasa-pralubdha-dhiyah.
Those who are seduced (*pralubdah*) by the aesthetic (*rasa*) desire their own place (*svasthana*), its fashions (*vesa*) and its language (*bhasha*).

-*Andhrasabdacintamani*, grammatical treatise, 17th century[18]

Region (*desa*), language (*bhasha*) and people (*praja*) provide a coherent framework for thinking, quantifying and narrating vernaculars. We know this from scholarship in area studies and comparative literature.[19] For the Telugu language, the emergence of this framework at the turn of the twentieth century involved two key rhetorical moves, the first of which was particular to the language. The word 'Andhra,' which had historically signified the local language of the Andhra region in South India (for instance in the *Andhrasabdacintamani*'s designation of the local language as Andhra in its title), became synonymous with 'Telugu,' a word that designated the language but not the region.

'Andhra,' however, came to bear a cultural weight that exceeded the significations of Telugu: popular social movements in the region and Telugu journalistic and literary writing used the word to refer to Telugu speakers, their shared cultural heritage which writers claimed was embedded in the language, and their political, social and other aspirations. Because many of these claims were based on the language's literary history, 'Andhra' as a linguistic-literary concept got a fresh lease on life at this time.[20]

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[18] The *Andhrasabdacintamani* (*Treatise on Andhra Speech-Forms*) is a Telugu grammar written in Sanskrit that tradition attributes to poet Nannaya (11th century, the first Telugu poet whose works are available). Telugu literary historians such as Kandukuri Viresalingam (1848-1919) and others have argued that the text was composed much later in the seventeenth century. For an overview of the text's dating and its structure in English, see Sundaram and Patel iv-xii. My translation of the line is slightly modified from Sundaram and Patel's translation of the verse (4).
[19] On modern South Asian vernaculars, see Mitchell. For the relevance of this framework for vernaculars in the medieval ages, in addition to the modern, in South Asia and elsewhere, see Somerset and Watson.
[20] More on this later in the chapter.

The second rhetorical move though which *desa-bhasha-praja* emerged as a framework was not particular to the Telugu language. Narratives about linguistic regions began to cast them as monolingual in principle, even though different languages, linguistic communities and proficiencies existed within regions thus marked. In vernacular and English discourse, this manifested in implied and overt tropes of languages having to guard themselves from the encroachment of other languages, fight for their due (especially for political representation) and stake a claim on their wayward speakers' hearts and minds, speakers who were wayward because of their desire for and investment in learning English, which had emerged as the lingua franca of the socially mobile world in India by the early twentieth century. In addition to fearing English, at least some vernacular writers saw other vernaculars as threatening the lexical integrity of their own.

The perception of a battle among these languages led to a peculiar situation: in a country and a region where people continued to be multilingual and to possess varied proficiencies in languages, there was little attempt to harness, cultivate or propagate multilinguality. Some of the very scholars at the forefront of the movements I analyze in this dissertation were either bilingual or multilingual, and they sometimes had long intellectual engagements with scholars who wrote and worked in other Indian languages.

For instance, Komarraju Lakshmana Rao (1877-1923), linguist, historian and compiler of the first Telugu encyclopedia, studied in Marathi medium schools, was recognized for his proficiency in the language and had a long history of interactions with famed historian and scholar of the Marathi language, Visvanath Kasinath Rajwade.[21] Lakshmana Rao was

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[21] Ramapati Rao, *Komarraju Venkata Lakshmana Rao* 26, 80-81. See Wakankar on Rajwade's Marathi grammar for an analysis of the scholar's place in the Marathi linguistic world and his linguistic ideology (93-124). The ideology itself is at least partially similar to Lakshmana Rao's construction of a Hinduized Telugu sphere.

among a group of people who began the Sri Krishnadevaraya Andhra Bhasha Nilayam in Hyderabad, a public library intended to protect and propagate the Andhra language which the library's founders believed was under attack in Hyderabad State, under the Nizam's rule.[22] The library was named after famed sixteenth century ruler of the Vijayanagar empire, Sri Krishnadevaraya (r. 1509-1529), who was presumably multilingual but was claimed as a Telugu king in the twentieth century, at odds with his representation as a Kannada king by Kannada speakers.[23]

Madapati Hanumantha Rao (1885-1970), founder of the Andhra movement in Telangana, studied English, Urdu, Persian and Sanskrit, in addition to Telugu, and wrote Urdu editorials and translated Urdu texts into Telugu for his history of the Andhra movement.[24] Jayanti Ramayya Pantulu (1860-1941), literary historian, epigraphist and founder of the Andhra Literary Council (Andhra Sahitya Parishat), Gurajada Venkata Apparao (1826-1915), poet and dramatist, and Gidugu Venkata Ramamurti (1863-1940), linguist and propagator of a movement to bring written Telugu closer to spoken Telugu (the modern Telugu movement) were all proficient in English and Sanskrit.[25]

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[22] Chapter three describes the importance of this library to the public library movement in Andhra and Telangana, and the linguistic ideologies that underlay its establishment. The Nizams, rulers of the Hyderabad princely state, were followers of Islam, and the lack of a significant place for Telugu in Hyderabad State was at least partially viewed in communitarian terms – a Hindu language that was suffering under Islamic rule. This communitarian construction was not always explicit, and I engage with these discourses and their significance below.

[23] See Mitchell for a perspective on Krishnadevaraya's multilinguality. Krishnadevaraya holds an important place in Telugu literary history (Mitchell 98-99). He was the author of *Amuktamalyada* (*Giver of the Worn Garland*), a famed classical poem, ornate and descriptive (*kavyam*), one among five such Telugu classical poems that together constitute the five *kavyas* (*panca kavyas*) of Telugu classical literature. For more on this text, see Reddy who situates *Amuktamalyada* in its literary and historical context (xxi-xl). Narayana Rao offers a broader description of the place of *kavya* as a genre in Telugu classical poetry (*Text and Tradition in South India*, 47-56).

[24] Hanumantha Rao iv (from the foreword by Pervaram Jagannatham). His translations from Urdu texts are scattered across the book.

[25] Chapter two engages with these three scholars, in addition to others, who engaged in vociferous debates about whether the Telugu language needed to be 'made' modern and how it could modernize.

Some Telugu writers (similar to writers who wrote and identified with other Indian vernaculars) did not see English and Sanskrit as equidistant to the Indian vernacular. These writers saw Sanskrit as the linguistic ancestor to Indian vernaculars and English as a colonizing invader. Urdu, which in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries began to be identified exclusively with Muslims, was seen as the precursor to English's colonization of Indian languages.[26] A crucial corollary then to the emergence of modern discourses on the Indian vernaculars was the rendition of these languages as Hindu.

A throwaway comment in the foreword to Madapati Hanumantha Rao's history of the Andhra movement in the Telangana region indicates the importance of religious identity for the construction of language. 'Telangana' refers to the Telugu speaking regions in Hyderabad State.[27] In a biographical note on Hanumantha Rao, the writer of the foreword (Pervaram Jagannatham) refers to Rao's friendship with "Marathi speakers ["Maharashtriyulu"], Kannada speakers ["Kannadigulu"], North Indians ["Uttara Hindustaniyulu"] and Muslims ["Mohammadeyulu"]," a passing indication that 'Muslim' was the one identity increasingly left out of the *desa-bhasha-praja* cluster for vernaculars such as Telugu, Marathi and Kannada (viii).[28]

The equation of Muslims with Urdu and the segregation of Urdu from Telugu happened within a language that has historically shared ties with Urdu because of the geographical proximity of the two languages in the Telangana region.[29] Not all prominent Telugu

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[26] Datla documents the identification of Urdu with Islam in the Deccan, a region that is often not considered in the histories of the emergence of the Urdu language in modern India. She works against such an equation to argue that the constitution of the first Urdu medium university, Osmania University, in Hyderabad State was a secular project that did not limit Urdu to Muslims or to Islamic education.

[27] The distinction between Andhra and Telangana is important to the arc I explore in this chapter. More on the differences and the overlaps between these two regions below.

[28] Also, this sentence obfuscates linguistic differences within North India, presenting the entire region as one linguistic unit.

[29] Urdu as it developed in the Deccan region, of which Hyderabad State was a crucial part, is called Deccani

scholars participated in this equation; some, such as Gidugu Ramamurti, criticized marking Sanskrit as Telugu's own (*swabhasha*) while Hindustani (Urdu) was marked as its other (*parabhasha*).[30] However, it was a well-established argument in the Telugu sphere and one that was advocated to varying degrees by prominent scholars who spoke on behalf of the language.

All this shows that in a multilingual space, the rendering of languages as ownmost (*swabhasha*, one's own + language*)* also made them incommensurable with each other.[31] I use the word 'incommensurable' here to refer to the fundamental lack of equivalence between a language that is marked as one's own, to the exclusion of all others, and all the other languages that one might be able to speak, understand, be proficient in or proximate with. The translatability of these languages into each other does not make them commensurate. Nor are they made commensurable in sharing common ground as markers of social and political identity, precisely through the discursive welding of place and people with language.

Language's ownmostness makes the singularity of language a collectively shared experience. Any language's emergence as an element of collective identity is premised on its commonness and shareability among its speakers. There is plenty of evidence to show that vernaculars were constructed as common, particularly at the turn of the twentieth century, even though this commonality was fractured by caste, gender, religion and region.[32]

Urdu (Dakkhini). Datla attends to the marginalization of Deccani Urdu within histories of Urdu. Also see Mustafa for a short essay on the language.

[30] Ramamurti, *Sri Suryarayandhra Nighantu Vimarsa* (*Critique of Sri Suryarayandhra Dictionary*) 12.

[31] I am drawing here on Skaria's translation of the prefix '*swa*' into the concept 'ownmost.' In chapter two, I will have occasion to elaborate on the reasons for this translation.

[32] This is in essence the process that unfolds within the Telugu language debates. Rama Mantena says of the differences between the attitudes of Telugu speakers in Andhra (Madras Presidency) and those in

The twentieth century equation of 'Andhra' with the Telugu language, its speakers, the territory within which they resided and their collective memory and aspirations was one such act (reiterated numerous times over that period) that established the vernacular as common.[33] This equation helped create a consonance between region, language and people, to which the commonness of Telugu was essential. With the linguistic organization of states in India, beginning with Andhra State in 1953, this consonance was reified and given administrative and political purchase: language became a key element of socio-political and territorial organization within India.

One key aim of this chapter is to investigate the role of language in such organization and in representing people and region. After all, one of the significant outcomes of the welding of region, language and people in India was the creation of linguistic states and the annexing of parliamentary representation to these states.

We do not necessarily have access to a different perspective on language from this time. Even B. R. Ambedkar's astute argument against the creation of mega states (particularly the Northern state Uttar Pradesh) continues to equate each state with one language even as it shows remarkable prescience about the future of Indian political systems.[34] His view differs from the prevailing political rhetoric at the time because he proposes the creation of more than one state with the same language, for example Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, instead of one united Andhra Pradesh, and sees this as necessary for the protection of the

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Rayalaseema towards the demand for constituting a separate Andhra state: "Clearly the Andhra activists knew that there was no inherent natural community based on language that would lead to a political community. It had to be cultivated and constructed and made politically viable through producing consent amongst the various parties. Consent would come about by carefully addressing the needs of all the Telugu-speaking districts." Mantena, "The Andhra Movement" 343.

[33] Common here resonates with the concept of the commons – shared resources held collectively by a community.

[34] Ambedkar, "Thoughts on Linguistic States" Part II.

minority and for an equal distribution of electoral power between the Northern and Southern states in India. However, he also holds the equation of a language with a state as inviolable (Part II, Chapter III).[35]

Along with the political-historical trajectory of South Asian vernaculars, the equation of language with region and people also underlies academic comparative and regional literary studies. While academic scholarship in history, area studies and comparative literature has moved away from thinking of vernaculars as 'natural' and emphasizes instead how they are constructed as such, we continue to rely on nation, region or the self-definition of speakers to establish the significance of non-global vernaculars for English discourse. And, we continue to attach an imagined coherence to the vernacular when we use region and number of speakers to establish its significance.

For example, one way to create a context for scholarship on Telugu is by invoking the numerical strength of the language, given in the number of speakers who identify the language as their mother-tongue (6.70% of the population according to the 2011 census, making Telugu the language with the fourth largest number of speakers in India)[36] and by naming the region in which the language is spoken (Southern Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana). While this brief exercise is essential for translating the specific site of Southern India into the world of Anglophone discourse, in order to momentarily translate and establish the significance of the Telugu language, it necessarily elides the many ruptures within the *desa*-*bhasha*-*praja* cluster.

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[35] Ambedkar, "Thoughts on Linguistic States" Part II, Chapter III. Speaking on behalf of Hindi as the national language, Ambedkar says, "One language can unite people. Two languages are sure to divide people. This is an inexorable law. Culture is conserved by language. Since Indians wish to unite and develop a common culture it is the bounden duty of all Indians to own up Hindi as their language" (3).

[36] Government of India 15.

Our task then is to investigate this cluster in order to foreground the ruptures it contains. This is a precursor to arriving at other possible renditions of the question of language and its relationship to place and speakers. In this chapter, I investigate the first of those three words – *desam* – which connotes both region (indicating the local, *desiya*) and nation. *Desam* and its aesthetic equivalent, *desi*, connote the local, usually against the pan-subcontinental. *Desi* takes on these connotations in literature, music and dance traditions in India. While these connotations are not new – they are already available in premodern vernacular texts – with the demand for the organization of states on the basis of language in the twentieth century, the relationship between region and language underwent new articulations that annexed political power and representation to language.

As I have indicated before, 'Andhra' was the concept that came to integrate these different connotations within Telugu discourse and in discourses about Telugu. Hence, this chapter is an exploration of the word 'Andhra,' the trajectories it took in the Andhra movement (1900-1956),[37] and what the word connotes as a linguistic and literary concept. I hope to not only foreground the ruptures within the demands made for 'Andhra' but also to explore the territorial and the linguistic-literary separately from each other.

The word 'Andhra' was used to name the Telugu language, Telugu-speaking people and the Telugu-speaking region. The Andhra movements in Andhra and Telangana used the same name but conceptualized the linguistic region differently from each other. In the first half of this chapter, I explore the differences and some significant similarities in how the movement in both regions conceptualized language. I show below that there was an

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[37] The Andhra movement agitated for the creation of a Telugu speaking state out of the Telugu regions in Madras Presidency and it represented the collective aspirations of Telugu speakers in Hyderabad State.

incipient alternative to regional-linguistic identity in the Telangana Andhra movement because the movement did not disavow the multilingualism of the space it operated in.

In the second half of this chapter, I explore the difference between the words ‘Andhra’ and ‘Telugu.’ Scholars in the twentieth century used the word ‘Andhra,’ instead of Telugu, when they wanted to emphasize a link with Telugu’s regional and linguistic heritage, especially the language’s relationship to Sanskrit. I work with these significations of ‘Andhra’ to argue that one of the key vernacular words for community at this time – *jati* – has to be read as imagining and creating a specifically linguistic community, one with communitarian implications.

Andhra – Region and Movement (1900-1956):

There are two Telugu-speaking states today: Andhra Pradesh, formed in 1956 when Andhra State (formed 1953) was merged with the Telugu-speaking parts of the erstwhile Hyderabad State, and Telangana, formed in 2014 out of the Telugu-speaking regions which were formerly in Hyderabad State. Andhra Pradesh and Telangana encompass districts that were formerly under Madras Presidency (coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema) and Hyderabad State (Telangana) respectively. Madras Presidency in Southern India was a major administrative unit of the British colonial government, and Hyderabad was the largest princely state in British India; it was under the rule of the Nizams. Both these regions contained areas where Telugu was spoken or, stated another way, where Telugu speakers reside.

Historically, ‘Andhra’ referred to the Telugu speaking areas in Madras Presidency, and ‘Telangana’ to similar areas in Hyderabad State. Since these were the geographic referents of the two names in the period under consideration in this dissertation (1900-1956), I will

use the words Andhra and Telangana to refer to the two regions. However, Andhra as a concept was not particular to the Andhra region; as I show below, it was used as a self-designator in both regions, within and outside the Andhra movement. This chapter explores the significance of this common designation.

Here, I want to flag the differences between both regions, even as they belonged to the same state (Andhra Pradesh) from 1956 to 2014. In the 1950s, during the constitution of Andhra State, Telugu speakers in Telangana agitated to have a separate state for themselves.[38] The basis of these and similar agitations in the later decades was the recognition of a different historical trajectory for the two regions pre-independence,[39] the unequal distribution of economic resources between them once Andhra Pradesh was constituted, and the lack of cultural and political capital for people from Telangana.[40]

Language, particularly the linguistic production of literature, was at the center of the question of Telangana's cultural capital in relation to Andhra. Telugu as spoken in Telangana has been seen as vulgar and uncivilized, in comparison with Andhra Telugu.[41] In the most famous articulation of these views about Telugu in Telangana, Suravaram Pratapa Reddy published an entire anthology of Andhra poets from the Hyderabad region

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[38] "There had been a steady movement within Hyderabad as the breakup of Hyderabad was inevitable, a movement towards Telangana statehood. There were clearly strong reservations against joining Andhra. In Telangana, a mulki agitation [in support of employment for locals] erupted between 1948-52 in response to the incoming coastal Telugu speakers [from Andhra] who began to take up posts in the administration of Hyderabad in the aftermath of the police action of 1948. While in 1955, the Andhra assembly passed a resolution to form a single state merging with Telangana. However, the majority of members of parliament in Telangana supported a separate state for Telangana in late 1955. Even the *Golconda Patrika* [weekly, published in Hyderabad State from 1926] switched its support of a united Andhra in 1954 and began to support a separate state of Telangana in 1955." Mantena, "The Andhra Movement" 354.

[39] More on this trajectory below.

[40] See Balagopal and Haragopal for a historical perspective on these inequalities between the regions.

[41] Muppidi describes the vulgarity that was attributed to Telangana Telugu in contemporary political discourses (19-22).

in 1934, in response to an opinion expressed in *Golconda Patrika* that there were no Andhra poets in the Nizam State.[42]

In his preface to the volume, Pratapa Reddy declares that a *jati* without poets is an uncivilized collective.[43] Later in this chapter I will elaborate on the role language and literature play in constituting Andhra as a concept. For now, I want to foreground the perceived differences between Andhra and Telangana during the early 1900s. These differences did not impact the constitution of the state itself for another half a century, but even during the Andhra movement, they presented important challenges to the emergence of the linguistic region.

In the modern world, identifying geographical areas with the language predominantly spoken in them has become a fairly common practice. Such identification was the basis of the demand for the linguistic organization of provinces in colonial India; the formation of one administrative province out of the Telugu speaking areas in Madras Presidency was the primary demand of the Andhra movement in that region.

However, the metonymic conflation of region with language, whereby one vernacular signifies the entirety of the region, is at least partly an exercise in fiction. It is not false, to the extent that there are speakers of Telugu in the regions identified as Telugu speaking. But, in order for a region to be conflated with a language, speakers of other languages have

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[42] Mudumba Venkata Raghavacharyulu's opinion cited in Pratapa Reddy xii. 'Golconda' here signifies both the journal where these poets were first anthologized (*Golconda Patrika*) and the place the poets belonged to – Golconda being the name of the fort and region that was the seat of Qutub Shahi rule (16th-17th centuries) over the Deccan region. Suravaram Pratapa Reddy (1896-1953) began the popular Telugu weekly, *Golconda Patrika*, in 1926 and served as its editor till 1947. He was multi-lingual, like many of his fellow writers and intellectuals, being well-versed in English, Urdu, Hindi, Persian and Sanskrit, in addition to Telugu. In addition to his contributions to the weekly, he was a renowned historian and wrote among other things *Andhrula Sanghika Caritra* (*A Social History of the Andhras*) (1949). Also note the emphasis on Andhra here: Venkata Raghavacharyulu alleges there are no Andhra poets in the Nizam's state, not Telugu poets.

[43] "*Kavileni jati yanagaraka sanghamu*." Pratapa Reddy xii.

to be reduced to minorities and people in general have to be cast exclusively as speakers of one language, hence also ignoring multiple linguistic proficiencies and other language modalities.[44]

In addition, the conflation of language with region also sits uneasily with variations within the same vernacular, and with differences in the political demands of similar linguistic communities from different regions.[45] In the Andhra movement, in addition to the different demands of Telugu speakers in Andhra and Telangana, these differences were also seen in the reluctance of Telugu speakers from Rayalaseema (the Ceded Districts) to join the demand for a united Andhra province whereby Rayalaseema would be merged with Andhra (Telugu speaking areas in Madras Presidency).[46]

Scholars have shown that British colonial surveys and attitudes toward language helped shape language into an enumerative category and made it a marker of regional identity in India.[47] We also know that the emergence of language as such a marker was aided by histories – literary and other – that read premodern textual and literary production (including grammars and historical artifacts) through the modern trope of regional linguistic identity.[48]

The Andhra movement was the site and occasion for the figuration of these tropes for the Telugu language. Konda Venkatappayya's English tract *The Andhra Movement* manifests the tropes I speak of here. Venkatappayya (1866-1948), founder of the Andhra

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[44] As Datla's work on Urdu in Hyderabad State shows, minoritizing othered languages and ignoring multiple proficiencies has effects on the cultural and political representation of the people and languages thus ignored.
[45] As the case of the differences between Andhra and Telangana demonstrates.
[46] Rayalaseema is located to the South of the Andhra region and it was ceded by the Nizam of Hyderabad to the British colonial government in 1800, hence its colonial moniker, 'ceded districts.'
[47] See Cohn; Dirks; Bhattacharya; and Datla.
[48] For how this plays out in Telugu, see Mitchell 68-99. For a comparable perspective on Marathi, see Wakankar 93-124 and for Hindi, see Dalmia, 175-216.

movement in Madras Presidency, served as the secretary of the first Andhra Conference (Andhra Mahasabha) held in Bapatla in 1913. He continued to be associated with the movement till his death and in addition to the Andhra movement, he also played other key roles in the literary and political worlds of Madras Presidency.[49]

The short tract (about 45 pages in length) was published in 1938, in the midst of the Andhra movement in colonial India; it documents the history and evolution of the movement and sees the formation of an Andhra province as the primary goal of the movement in the Andhra region.[50] The text begins however with an expansive declaration: "This movement aims at the development of the Andhra people [Andhras] in all spheres of life" (3). I call this expansive to highlight the broader and more open-ended agenda such 'development' could envision, since it does not conflate the development of Telugu speakers with political representation.

The possibility of any open-endedness in thinking about language is quickly replaced in Venkatappayya's text by the demand for an Andhra province. The support for this demand escalated quickly in the Andhra Conferences. It was deemed 'premature' when it was first raised in the Andhra Conference in 1912 (17), but it was seen as 'inevitable' and 'desirable' in the next conference held in 1913 (20) and by the third Andhra Conference (1914), it became "essential for the uplift and well-being of the Andhras" (24). The quick escalation of the demand for constituting the province also meant this became the central goal and focus of the Andhra movement in Madras Presidency.

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[49] He was founder-editor of *Krishna Patrika*, a weekly newspaper (est. 1902) that shaped public opinion and vernacular discourse on key contemporary political issues. In 1937, Venkatappayya was elected to the Madras Legislative Council.

[50] Mantena's essay "The Andhra Movement" offers a reading of the same text in light of the emergence of political demands about language in Madras Presidency and Hyderabad State.

Returning to the cursory moment of open-endedness in Venkatappayya's text, it is necessary that we distinguish a non-administrative approach to language – what I mark as expansive above – from the closed cultural community that even this open-ended approach constitutes. Early in the text, before the demand for an Andhra province takes center-stage, the author provides an account of the history of the "Andhras" that welds the linguistic to the cultural, stating that prior to the Andhra movement, "few people outside the Telugu country knew who the Andhras were," and goes on to explain that Andhra was a "Sanskrit term to denote the Telugu people (ibid)."[51]

Venkatappayya narrates the development of the Telugu language and literature with a brief excursus into the histories of Telugu-speaking rulers and how they shaped Telugu country. He follows up this history with two statements that bring home the linguistic beliefs that underlie the proposed organization of provinces. He states:

> The Andhra country, which was comparatively a single unit, with common history and tradition, with common customs and usages, common language and literature and under the supremacy of one common king, was, after the advent of Mahomedan rule, split up into divisions and forcibly placed under different Muslim governments. And when the British established their power in the South, they gradually extended their territories by compelling the Navabs to surrender one territory after another, till the whole of the Madras Presidency came under their control. Thus, new acquisitions, one after another, were added on to old possessions and placed under one single administration without any regard to ethnological, linguistic, historical or geographical considerations. Thus the territory under Madras Government is a conglomerate of races and languages, of customs and traditions, and a combination prejudicial to the development of people living in it (12).

He further adds:

[51] In this account, as in some others from the time, Telugu writers' relationship to the Sanskrit language holds an important place. K. Venkatappayya lists Telugu writers who wrote in Sanskrit or on Sanskrit texts and aesthetic theories (5) and later states, "The Telugu country has also been famous for Vedic learning, and scholarship in Sanskrit. The Telugu Pandits have been considered experts particularly in point of correct pronunciation of Sanskrit scriptures. (11)." More on the relationship between Telugu and Sanskrit later in this essay.

> A study of the conditions of other provinces in India, will disclose that they too were not formed on any rational grounds but were shaped into what they are, by similar accidental and empirical reasons. If the people living in those provinces are to have an organic growth and development, they must be constituted into separate, handy, compact and homogeneous entities, so that the natural binding forces of society, such as, language and literature, custom and tradition, culture and sentiment, may have free play and promote unity, tolerance and responsibility and other noble qualities characterizing a race or community entitled to self-government (13).

Reading the first passage, even from this side of the historical conflation of region, language and people, it is difficult to not be struck by the repetitive emphasis on the common that language constitutes. Language is constitutive of this common because in this text and in others from the time, the commonality of tradition, custom, culture and history was seen to inhere in language in general and literature in particular. This commonness, given by and represented in a shared language, distinguishes races (not only communities) from each other and makes it unwieldy for different 'races' to be governed under one administrative unit.

The common here is the homogeneous, as is evident from the passage that follows the first. Venkatappayya ties the governing of people as "homogeneous entities" with the promotion of "qualities," such as unity and tolerance, that entitle a race/community to "self-government."[52] It is language again (and everything that is subsumed within it) – a "natural binding force" – that cultivates these qualities in people and constitutes them as "homogeneous entities." This last phrase is also now the description of 'race' and 'community.'

In constituting linguistic homogeneity in these passages, Venkatappayya relies on the opposition between homogeneous Andhra country and 'Mahomedan rule' that fractured it;

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[52] The common as an ethical impulse does not seek to establish homogeneity, but the common here and in relation to language, certainly does.

hence, he tacitly constructs Andhra as a religiously homogeneous space, even as religion itself is absent as quality or consideration in his passages. In constructing it as such, he is not advancing a new claim. The very oppositions he relies on to make his argument here were reiterated across twentieth century vernacular discourse in Telugu, Marathi, Hindi and other languages. For our purpose here, it is essential to note that within the logic of Venkatappayya's argument above, the linguistic organization of provinces is also seen to address the fracturing of this (religious) cultural homogeneity by Islamic rule, not by going back to a pre-Islamic past but by bringing in a new logic of administrative organization that would nonetheless govern entities that were homogeneous.

'Andhra' in the text *The Andhra Movement* comes to symbolize these exclusionary histories that a homogeneous community relies on. In light of this, how do we read the other possible approach to language that the text begins with? Is there in fact a difference in what becomes of language when it is not immediately annexed to administrative, political demands? To state it otherwise, if language was not linked to the governance of a region, what would happen to the relationship between region, language and people that is nevertheless present in all discourses about language from this time? To explore what the difference might be, if there is indeed one, we would have to turn to the trajectory the Andhra movement took in Hyderabad State, as narrated in Madapati Hanumantha Rao's Telugu book *Telangana Andhrodhyamam* (*The Telangana Andhra Movement*).

Hanumantha Rao (1885-1970) was the founder of the Andhra Jana Sangham, the association for Andhra people in Hyderabad State, through which the Andhra movement, including the Andhra Conferences in the state, were organized. He continued to be the main driver of the movement in Hyderabad, till the emergence of a strongly communist voice

from within it, that of Ravi Narayana Reddy.[53] Hanumantha Rao was an established lawyer, a renowned Telugu historian and writer, and in addition to the role he played in the Andhra movement, he was also an active participant in the library movement in the region. As part of the library movement, he and other prominent intellectuals established two of the first public libraries in Hyderabad State: the Krishnadevaraya Andhra Bhasha Nilayam, in Hyderabad (est. 1901) and the Rajaraja Narendra Andhra Bhasha Nilayam in Hanumakonda (est. 1904).[54]

The Andhra movement in Hyderabad did not demand that Telugu-speaking districts be brought into one unit, either within the state or by attaching those from Hyderabad to the Andhra province under consideration in Madras Presidency. The latter demand, if it had arisen, would have created a political quagmire, given the difference in the administrative status of Hyderabad State and Madras Presidency. As a princely state, Hyderabad retained sovereignty over its territory, unlike Madras Presidency which was under British colonial rule.[55]

In Madras Presidency, the Andhra movement addressed its demand for the constitution of an Andhra province to the British administration. In Hyderabad State, out of deference to political expediency, the movement did not align itself with the demand for a separate Andhra province. However, people from both regions sometimes shared the same

[53] Hanumantha Rao 149, 152. Ravi Narayana Reddy (1908-1991) was a founding member of the Communist Party of India who played a crucial role in the Telangana armed rebellion against the Nizam's government. He was also elected to the first house of representatives (*lok sabha*) in India (in 1952). See Parliament of India.
[54] Hanumantha Rao vi.
[55] However, as Leonard shows, Hyderabad State had to contend with British oversight on its administrative and revenue systems and it employed British and native officials from colonial India (non-mulki, those from outside the state) in administrative positions. Hence, even though the princely states were sovereign, their sovereignty was under watch by the British colonial government.

journalistic platforms,[56] and the moniker Andhra. To this extent, the Andhra movement in both regions was not segregated, perhaps the reason why it is seen as unitary in spite of the significant difference in demands in both.

Politically, Madras Presidency and Hyderabad State had different trajectories post India's independence from British colonial rule. In independent India, the Presidency was renamed Madras Province (1947),[57] a change in name and administration but not territory. Andhra State was created in 1953 out of coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema, both under the erstwhile Madras Presidency and Madras State. However, the Andhra movement's demand for Madras to be made the capital of Andhra State was rejected and Madras, the previous colonial capital, remained the capital of Madras State (later formed into Tamil Nadu, the state of Tamil speakers).[58]

The ruler of Hyderabad, Nizam Mir Osman Ali Khan, wanted his state to remain sovereign and unattached to both India and Pakistan after independence. Osman Ali Khan and the Nizam dynasty to which he belonged were Muslim. In the aftermath of the partition of India and the resulting location (conceptual and partly geographic) of Hindus within India and Muslims within Pakistan, the Indian State feared the Nizam would choose to join Pakistan. Anxious to preempt this, India launched a military operation in 1948 (Operation Polo, 'Police Action' in common parlance) to forcefully annex Hyderabad State.[59] The operation is estimated to have resulted in the loss of 40,000 lives.

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[56] They wrote in and to the same journals, among them *Granthalaya Sarvasvam*, the journal of the public library movement.
[57] Madras Province was later renamed Madras State in 1950.
[58] Both Mitchell (90, 219n3) and Mantena in "The Andhra Movement" (344, 354) touch on the significance of this demand and its rejection.
[59] S. Purushotham makes a persuasive case for considering the annexation of Hyderabad as a manifestation of the violence used to constitute independent India. The essay attends to communal politics, the impact of the violence in Hyderabad State on the Muslim population in the state and outside of it, and the relationship of these elements to partition violence in Northern India. As Purushottam shows, India's action against

In the decade after Hyderabad State's annexation, its different linguistic regions were absorbed into existing states and the territory no longer existed as one unit. This was when the Telugu regions of the erstwhile Hyderabad State (Telangana) were added to Andhra State in 1956, during the linguistic reorganization of states in India. The resulting geographic unit was called Andhra Pradesh. The protests in Telangana against the decision to merge Telangana with Andhra Pradesh indicate that the distinction between the two regions (Andhra and Telangana) was not merely a result of political expediency.

I describe this checkered political history here to contextualize the discussion that follows on region, language and people in Hanumantha Rao's text. In engaging with that text, it is crucial to keep in mind both the parallels and the incongruences in the Andhra movement in both regions.

Hanumantha Rao's text, *Telangana Andhrodhyamam*, consists of two parts, the first one published in 1949, after India's annexation of Hyderabad State, and the second published in 1950. It provides a detailed history of the Andhra movement in Telangana, beginning with its origins, its relationship to the public library movement in the region, the Andhra Conferences held as part of the movement and the resolutions adopted by them. It pays particular attention to the Nizam government's surveillance of the movement, documents the restrictions imposed on it and the decisions made as a result of such surveillance.[60]

Hyderabad was also driven by the communal rhetoric about the state and its Muslim ruler. From Datla's work, we know such rhetoric was already palpable in the 1930s.

[60] Leonard provides important context for reading the surveillance of the Andhra movement. Her essay shows that there was large-scale surveillance of and wariness over political organization in Hyderabad State, driven in part by the conflict between those from within (mulki) and those from outside (non-mulki) the state, and also by the strident communalism of the Arya Samaj and the Hindu Mahasabha's representation of Hyderabad. Datla documents the Nizam government's restrictions on political organizing in general, in light of student movements at Osmania University, which were contemporaneous with the Andhra movement (139-164).

As I indicate above, the Telangana Andhra movement's non-engagement with the demand for a separate Andhra province, as raised in neighboring Madras Presidency, clearly arose from the desire to keep the Andhra movement going, within the narrow parameters for political organizing available in the state. However, at a time when language was the explicit locus for other political movements, including the Andhra movement in Madras Presidency, it is hardly surprising that the Nizam's government continued to surveil it in spite of assurances about its apoliticalness.

Even without a capacious definition of the 'political' and restricting the word to mean representation in a narrow sense, language was inescapably political.[61] How then does the Telangana Andhra movement constitute an approach to language that is different from the other Andhra movement?

Multilingual Publics:

As I show below, like Venkatapayya's, Hanumantha Rao's text also offers a communitarian construction of Telugu, implicitly describing it as a Hindu language. Here, the opposition we have seen above between Urdu and Telugu also figures as a political opposition to the Nizam's administrative policies, hence equating Urdu with Islam (since the Nizam was a follower of Islam). In spite of this communitarian locus, the difference between the movement in Telangana from what we have seen in the Andhra region, to the extent that it exists, lies in the distinction in the former between Andhra as language and Andhra as regional identity, and in the annexation of language to public discourse rather than to the creation of a monolingual space.

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[61] In addition to this, the Nizam government curtailed all movements and conferences that were capable of 'causing political consequences,' a quality that as Hanumantha Rao points out is impossible to determine before the fact (48-49).

There is a striking similarity to the way Hanumantha Rao and Venkatappayya's texts begin. While Venkatappayya provides a very brief history of the 'Andhras' via Telugu's regional and literary history, Hanumantha Rao takes a linguistic-cultural route to introducing the emergence of the Andhra movement in Telangana. He begins by commenting on the lower socio-economic status of Telugu speakers in Hyderabad State, in comparison with others who are marked as Hindu, such as brahmins from Maharashtra, and as Muslim (4).

He deplores the bad state of Telugu language in Hyderabad State and the muddying (*kalayika*)[62] of Telugu with the influx of numerous Urdu, Marathi and Kannada words into Telugu speech in the cities. All his examples for such mixing, which he cites from an essay in the journal *Andhra Patrika*, are of Urdu-influenced Telugu speech (5-6).[63] Based on these observations, he declares that we have to search for 'Andhraness' (*Andhratvam*) in the appearance (*vesam*) and language (*bhasha*) of Telugu people in the Nizam's dominions, implying that such a quality was hard to find (6).[64]

Urdu was the administrative language of Hyderabad State and one of the local languages of the Deccan region in Southern India, in which Hyderabad was located. Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Urdu in Hyderabad State began to be equated with Islam, just like the equation of Urdu or Hindustani (North Indian Urdu) with

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[62] '*Kalayika*' or intermixing/meeting does not possess an inherently negative connotation. It was used most famously in a poem by Gurajada Apparao to refer to the mixing of the old and the new. Here, it implies something closer to adulteration.

[63] He includes here a footnote that deplores the establishment of a university with Urdu as its primary language (Osmania University, est. 1918), stating that it is unnecessary to describe to what extent such a university might have fulfilled the wishes of the Andhras. See Datla for an excellent critique of the common representation of Osmania University and its use of Urdu for medium of instruction as a communal project.

[64] This sentence that brings together appearance and language (*vesha, bhasha*) also recalls the seventeenth century Sanskrit text, *Andhrasabdacintamani* (*Treatise on Andhra Speech-Forms*), which figures the importance of native/regional language by stating that those who are 'seduced' (*pralubdah*) by the aesthetic (*rasa*) desire their own place, its fashions (*vesa*) and its language (*bhasha*) (*svasthana-vesa-bhasabhimatas santo rasa-pralubdha-dhiyah*).

Muslims in Northern India.[65] The prevalent equation of Urdu with Muslims is partly the context for Hanumantha Rao's comments above. Even when he does not in the opening pages explicitly identify Urdu as a Muslim language, in the historical and textual context he is operating within, the text's primary opposition between Urdu and Telugu also creates an opposition between Muslim and Hindu on the basis of language.

The implied opposition is made explicit by some of the tables on these pages, particularly one that shows a decline in the number of Hindus among 10,000 people across four decades (1881-1911) for Hyderabad State (4).[66] The statistics work along with the narrative of decline and cinch Hanumantha Rao's argument later in the chapter that the decline of Telugu speakers is part of the larger decline of Hindus in Hyderabad State.[67]

The recurrence of the opposition between Hindu and Muslim in texts about Telugu shows that this opposition was not only operational in discussions on the "parentage of the Urdu language and the modes of its subsequent development."[68] While languages such as Telugu did not lay claim to the same linguistic or literary heritage as the language that was othered (as in the case of Hindi and Urdu, the context for Datla's comments), the distinction

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[65] Datla 106-137.

[66] These tables and the earlier examples for a mixed Telugu are all taken from an essay in the year end issue of the *Andhra Patrika*, dated April 1, 1914. Hanumantha Rao claims that nothing has changed in the situation of the Telugu speakers in Nizam State from then to nearly a decade later when the Andhra movement began in the region (6), in 1922, with the establishment of the Andhra Jana Sangham. Because of the importance of the Krishnadevaraya Andhra Bhasha Nilayam (est. 1901) to the movement, and in keeping with the practice among other historians of the movement, in this dissertation I have treated the Andhra movement in both Andhra and Telangana as beginning in 1900.

[67] While there is a mention of education and employment levels as well here, the 'decline' in the table I mention is clearly an invitation to think about the population surveys that the statistics arise from and whether categories within those surveys changed over the four-decade period. It is also possible that these tables represent an increase in the number of non-Hindus coming in from outside the State, which then overlays Hindu-Muslim, Telugu-Urdu onto existing discourses of the local (*mulki*) and non-local (non-*mulki*).

[68] The sentence is from Datla's book. The full sentence reads: "Unlike the other vernaculars of India, the parentage of the Urdu language and the modes of its subsequent development have long been and continue to be discussed and debated as part of a larger conversation about the relationship between Hindus and Muslims" (119).

between Hindu and Muslim and the constitution of Telugu as a Hindu language *by default* are inescapable tropes in much of the writing on Telugu from the period under consideration here and in Datla's book.

In Hanumantha Rao's text, the first few pages already indicate that to possess 'Andhra' as a quality is to be Hindu *and* Telugu-speaking. At minimum, it signifies an acceptance of 'Andhra' as a designator of one's identity. There is a significant difference between the attribution of a religious identity through the use of the word 'Andhra' and its use to designate an identity that is not similarly defined. The first (Andhra as Hindu and Telugu-speaking) is more in line with the connotations that Andhra acquired as language and region in the movement in Madras Presidency. Here, language is a significant element and you cannot be 'Andhra' without being a (Hindu) Telugu-speaker.

The second (Andhra as a designator of identity) makes room for a distinction between language and region. This difference plays out in a modification of the Andhra Jana Sangham's rules, proposed at the sixth Andhra Conference, held in Nizamabad in 1937.[69] The occasion for the proposal was, significantly, the question of whether all speeches at the conference had to be delivered in Telugu – a question that came up because of the presence of two committee members who could not speak Telugu. The two members eventually spoke in Urdu and their speeches were simultaneously translated into Telugu by the secretary of the conference (Mandumula Ramachandra Rao).[70]

Those who did not object to non-Telugu speeches claimed that the Andhra Conference was not a conference of the Andhra language but one that emerged for discussing the

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[69] Since the resolution and debates about it emerged in the Telangana Andhra movement, I do not see the distinction between language and region as particular to Hanumantha Rao's text. The distinction is present in the trajectory of the Andhra movement in the region, as I show below.

[70] Hanumantha Rao 135.

welfare of the people in the Andhra region (Telangana).[71] They quoted in support of their opinion the following rule from the Andhra Jana Sangham: "Those who have been permanently resident (*sthiranivasulu*) in Nizam State (*Nizam Rasthra*) and have Andhra as their mother tongue and those who have been permanently residing in the Andhra region in Nizam State (*Nizam Rashtra Andhra Desam*) and *call themselves 'Andhrulu'* will be counted as Andhras under these rules (*niyamavali*)" (134n, emphasis added).[72]

The category of 'permanent residence' accrued cultural, discursive and administrative significance in Hyderabad State during the *mulki*-non-*mulki* conflict, as Karen Leonard shows.[73] While this is clearly one context for the invocation of the category of permanent residence in the Andhra Jana Sangham rules, the emphasis on 'permanent residence' here also shows the importance of the local population for the Andhra movement in the state, and the choice (perhaps tactical) to have 'Andhra' reference this location rather than serve as a broader category for all Telugu speakers (which would include those in the Andhra region).

The phrasing of this rule clearly makes space for 'Andhra' as a marker of identity that can accrue to those who are not Telugu speakers, hence producing a distinction between Andhra as language – an exclusionary mother tongue – and Andhra as regional identity –

[71] Hanumantha Rao 134. However, these speeches were translated into Telugu, hence establishing a primacy for Telugu within the Andhra Conferences, even as the attempt to create a monolingual space was not successful.

[72] Also see Hanumantha Rao 9-10.

[73] "From 1884 to 1886, a series of government resolutions defined 'Mulkis' and outlined procedures for government employment. A Mulki was defined as a person who had permanently resided in Hyderabad state for fifteen years or who had continuously served under the government for at least twelve years; he and his lineal male descendants to two generations were legally Mulkis. While no non-Mulkis were to be appointed on a high or low post, either permanently or temporarily, without special government permission, a non-Mulki could apply for such permission by detailing his special knowledge and experience not yet available in Hyderabad. The successful applicant received a certificate of domicile known as a Mulki certificate. These regulations enabled non-Mulkis and their sons to retain their monopoly on administrative positions." Leonard 76.

a self-designation that comes from residing in the Andhra region. The distinction, however, is not only about the momentary absence of language (in Andhra as regional identity). It is also a difference between the privative and pressing demand that language represents as a mother-tongue, a language singularly encountered in infancy alongside mothers and their bodies, and the choice represented in designating oneself as 'Andhra,' which presumably leaves space to transact in and claim other languages. Further, the demand exerted by the mother-tongue is not merely a cultural exercise of figuring language as mother (and goddess),[74] and the spectacle and sacrifice it commands. It is also about the physiological and linguistic impress produced by the sounds of the language thus encountered, leaving the mark of the mother tongue on the languages spoken after.

Hanumantha Rao's text leaves us largely with the potential of the distinction I extrapolate above, which emerges a couple of times in the book. As his book shows, the Andhra movement in Telangana mobilized a linguistic community in a multilingual space, without constructing a linguistically homogeneous space. This was unlike the movement in Madras Presidency, which also took place in a multilingual space but sought to create a linguistically homogeneous unit. The difference between the two is evident, for instance, in the decision to include non-Telugu speeches at the conferences and the subsequent difference articulated between language and region.

Beyond this crucial distinction, the text offers a consideration of what language could be mobilized for outside of the political reorganization of territory, and what 'developing' the condition of the 'Andhras' could mean beyond such reallocation. The cue to this is in the resolutions adopted at the annual Andhra conferences, which spanned social reform

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[74] Ramaswamy.

issues (widow remarriage, child marriage, reforming traditional art communities (*kalavantulu*)), education and language (education in the mother tongue, compulsory primary education, teaching students one other language in addition to their mother tongue) and issues that came up in other movements and associations in the region (state patronage for libraries, issues faced by traders and farmers, taxes imposed on farmers).[75]

In becoming the focal voice and forum for all these diverse demands, not all of which are clearly identified with 'Andhras,' the Andhra movement in Telangana was working to make Telugu into one of the languages of public discourse in the state, on par with Urdu, Marathi and Kannada. This comes through best in the incident which led to the formation of the Andhra Jana Sangham in 1921. The Jana Sangham was formed after Telugu speakers at a social reform conference walked out when lawyer Alampalli Venkataramarao was prevented from speaking in Telugu at the conference, even though others (including the president) delivered their addresses in Urdu, Marathi, and English.[76]

It was paradoxically this attempt towards creating a vernacular public discourse that perhaps led to a slightly more open interpretation of who could qualify as a 'Andhra' person in Hyderabad State. The attempt was not to make Telugu the default language of public participation and state administration, but to make it available as one of the languages for them. We could argue that in demanding a separate Andhra province, the Andhra movement in Madras Presidency was taking a language that already had a significant public

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[75] Hanumantha Rao's text lists the resolutions adopted by each Andhra Conference in Hyderabad State (201-278). The movement in Madras Presidency also took on other issues, including education and social reform issues. Mantena, in "The Andhra Movement," comments on the annexing of language to public discussions in both regions. She states: "Interestingly in both cases in Hyderabad and in Madras, Telugu speakers felt compelled to organize a linguistic unit for public discussion of issues ranging from cultural-literary to political reforms" (347).
[76] Jithendrababu 54.

presence in the Presidency and demanding that it be given a region that would be identified solely as Telugu.

Hence, even while both movements participate in constructing a communitarian locus for language, one of them also offers a partially different welding of region, language and people, where because the language does not saturate the region, there is place for non-speakers of the language to nonetheless claim Andhra as an identity.

This is the arc of the linguistic-administrative (and hence political) meanings of the word 'Andhra,' which coalesce in the course of the Andhra movement in Andhra and Telangana. The lack of fit between the designators Andhra and Telangana remains one indicator of the fault-lines within the vernacular that continues to be conveniently designated as one. Meanwhile, 'Andhra,' which was used in the writings and public meetings in both regions, itself contains a unique set of meanings that make the word not quite equivalent to Telugu.

Andhra – Linguistic-Literary Concept:

In Telugu print material from the early 1900s, we find many tautological statements about 'Andhram,' or the Andhra language. Telugu scholars declare that Andhra is the language spoken by Andhras in the Andhra region.[77] Such iterative framing seeks to make uncontestable and commonsensical what has indeed been contested since. As we know from the preceding, the Andhra region strictly refers to the Krishna-Godavari coastal belt, earlier in Madras Presidency and now in Andhra Pradesh. Framing Andhra in these

[77] For example, "Andhra language is the language used by the Andhras in Andhra country (*desam*)" (Kocherlakota Venkata Krishna Rao Bahadur, *Granthalaya Sarvasvam*, vol. 2, no. 2, 90); "Andhra desam is the name for the ownmost place (*swasthanam*) of the people (*janulu*) who speak Telugu. The ownmost language (*swabhasha*) spoken by those who feel pride (*abhimaanam*) that this region (*desam*) is theirs is called Andhra language (*bhasha*)" (Subbarao, *Sulabha Vyakaranam* (*Easy Grammar*) 5).

geographic terms excludes the Rayalaseema and Telangana regions from what is properly Andhra. However, as I show above, 'Andhra' was also the moniker of choice for the Andhra movement in Telangana; hence, the name was clearly claimed beyond the particular geographic region that 'Andhra' denotes.

Beyond its geographical referents, the word Andhra is also a linguistic-literary concept. As a literary concept, the word takes on connotations that 'Telugu' does not possess. In particular, 'Andhra' names Telugu's proximity to Sanskrit. Linguistically, the word was used in Sanskrit texts to denote the Telugu language, as in the Sanskrit grammatical treatise, *Andhrasabdacintamani*. Orthographically, at least one influential scholar saw 'Andhram' as the interiorization of Sanskrit, since it names that form of Telugu that includes the entirety of the Sanskrit alphabet and a few letters from pure Telugu (*acca Telungu*), or the local language that was not Sanskrit-derived.[78]

'Andhra' connotes Telugu's closeness to Sanskrit both in the Andhra and the Telangana regions: for instance, Suravaram Pratapa Reddy sought out poets writing in Sanskrit and in Andhram to include in his anthology of Telugu poets in Hyderabad State.[79] 'Andhra' also connotes the figuring of Sanskrit's relationship with Telugu as a genealogical, literary and religious connection, bringing with it the question of how to construct the Telugu literary tradition and how to educate people in it, if such learning was disconnected from learning Andhram.

In other words, these questions gesture to the pressing problem of how a modern linguistic community accesses and owns its literary tradition, a problem that is not

[78] "Andhra language (Andhram) has 56 letters – these are the 50 letters from Sanskrit and the 6 from *acca Telungu* that are not there in Sanskrit" (Subbarao, *Sulabha Vyakaranam* 8).
[79] Among the rules Pratapa Reddy lists for the inclusion of poets in the volume is this one: "4. Every poet can compose in Sanskrit or Andhram, or both" (xiv).

particular to Telugu.[80] Andhra, however, connotes the literary and communitarian resolution of these questions, giving it a distinctly different trajectory from Telugu as a name.

What is the place of Telugu then? The language spoken (predominantly spoken) in the Andhra and Telangana regions is identified as 'Telugu' in English discourse, both in English texts written by native scholars and those written by scholars from elsewhere. In vernacular discourse, the nouns Telugu and Andhra were sometimes used interchangeably to refer to the same language; we can find this in the many textual instances of an essay or book with 'Andhra' in the title that goes on to narrate the history of or make an argument about the Telugu language without necessarily foregrounding or explaining the switch, and vice versa.[81] Hence, in the early twentieth century, these two words were used interchangeably.

The interchangeability of these words, though a widespread phenomenon, poses a problem. As Lisa Mitchell articulates it at the beginning of her book *Language, Emotion and Politics in South India*, there is indeed a "long, complicated, and not always uncontested history" behind the equation of Telugu with Andhra (35). This equation testifies to the emergence of the link between region, language and people – whereby vernacular languages are associated with the people who live in the region (the subject of the early part of Mitchell's monograph) – erasing the difference between historical Andhra and modern Andhra Pradesh (38) and transforming language into a marker of identity, via the census and its enumeration of languages and people (56-60).

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[80] For a reading of how these questions play out in the Sanskrit language, see Sawhney.

[81] Examples for the use of Andhra in text titles are far too many to note here, but one instance of Telugu making an appearance in the title is Komarraju Lakshmana Rao's *Telugu Bhasatattvam* (*Telugu Philology*), which begins with the chapter "Andhra Bhasotpatti" ("Origin of the Andhra Language").

While contemporary scholarship has established the significance of the shift to language as an identitarian category through enumerative practices, we have yet to account for the role of literature and linguistic ideas deeply tied to the literary (both grammar and aesthetics) in forging the equation of Telugu and Andhra. I am referring here to vernacular discourses on and about language in literary discourses rather than to the production and circulation of literary and other texts.[82]

By ‘literary discourses’ I do not mean only those that strictly dealt with literary texts. I use the phrase here to refer to narratives and arguments in nineteenth and twentieth century texts about other fields that also debated the literary, such as history (often literary history), aesthetic categories (such as *rasa* and *oucityam* (literary appropriateness)) and education (and literature’s place in it). In these discourses ‘Andhra,’ not ‘Telugu,’ emerges as a linguistic-literary concept, tied to community (*jati*) and linguistic production (*vangmayam*). Hence, references to Andhras who speak the Andhra language in the Andhra region not only fuse region and language with people, they also invoke literary-cultural resonances that do not accrue to ‘Telugu.’

Central to these invocations is the place of Sanskrit and a newly emergent conception of Hinduism. These two help forge a cultural discourse about the Telugu language, which makes the emergence of Telugu as a modern language different from that of its neighboring Tamil. Tamil is considered one of the oldest classical languages in the world with an extant literary tradition that goes back to second century B.C. It is also a thriving spoken vernacular claiming about 69 million speakers.[83] In the twentieth century, Tamil had a

[82] Mitchell’s book focuses on these texts, particularly on literary histories and grammars of the Telugu language. Narayana Rao and Shulman comment on the literary understanding of place (Andhra) in classical Telugu poetry (2-6).

[83] Government of India 15.

much more evident cultural and political investment in claiming its Dravidian linguistic and literary genealogy,[84] and historically the language did not draw its grammatical or aesthetic categories from Sanskrit.[85]

Telugu and Tamil are seen as belonging to the Dravidian family of languages, along with Kannada and Malayalam. That is to say these are South Indian languages which some linguists, philologists and historians of language have perceived as distinctly different in their history and evolution from the languages that evolved in Northern India (also called Aryan languages). Foremost among these scholars were Francis Whyte Ellis (1777-1819), who first proposed the Dravidian hypothesis, classifying Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam as belonging to the South Indian or Dravidian family of languages, and Alexander Duncan Campbell (1789-1857), who expanded on Ellis' work to demonstrate more substantially the shared affiliation among these languages.[86]

As Thomas Trautmann has shown in *Aryans and British India*, other European linguists formulated a racial theory of India based on the differences between the 'Aryan' and 'Dravidian' languages which drew on racial distinctions between the Aryans whose languages originated from Sanskrit and Dravidians whose languages did not, welding race and language to physiology (131-164). Trautmann also shows that these theories did not

[84] See Ramaswamy for a reading of the modern split between Tamil and Sanskrit, and the contestations of this split in the Tamil sphere.

[85] However, Shulman cautions against reading into the Tamil literary tradition a relationship of antagonism or rivalry to Sanskrit. On the historical relationship between Tamil and Sanskrit and its difference from Telugu's relationship to Sanskrit, Narayana Rao and Shulman say: "It is also important to acknowledge that Telugu crystallized as a distinct literary tradition *after* the full maturation of Sanskrit erudition, including the domains of poetic theory, grammar, social ideology, scholastic philosophy, and so on. Unlike Tamil, which absorbed Sanskrit texts and themes in a slow process of osmosis and adaptation over more than a thousand years, Telugu must have swallowed Sanskrit whole, as it were, even before Nannaya" (3).

[86] Trautmann argues in his book *Languages and Nations: The Dravidian Proof in Colonial Madras* that Campbell's method for demonstrating the relationship between the South Indian languages is significant for comparative philology (and, drawing on Bhattacharya, I would argue for the comparative study of literatures), because it relied on lists of shared etymologies to establish this link. See Bhattacharya for the place of comparative philology within comparative literature, and the latter's truck with colonialism.

carry purchase beyond the nineteenth century even in Europe and even though the differences between Northern and Southern India, premised as the difference between Aryans and Dravidians, began to play out in electoral politics, the idea of the Aryan was equated by some Indian scholars with the antiquity of Hindus (221) and seen as a sign of "intra-Indian unity" (222).

The theory of a Dravidian school of languages which were all historically tied to each other and which developed differently from those that were Sanskrit-derived was premised on the Telugu language. Campbell (drawing on Ellis) used the presence of local (*desya*) words in Telugu and the etymological similarity between these and such words in the other languages classified as Dravidian as proof for the theory of a Dravidian family of languages.[87] Though neither Campbell nor Ellis see Sanskrit as native to the South Indian peninsula, they comment on the presence of multiple Sanskrit words in Telugu, treating the relationship between Sanskrit and Telugu as one of affiliation rather than of filial origin.[88]

In the work of early twentieth century Telugu scholars, the question of Sanskrit's relationship to Telugu comes to inhere in claims made about 'Andhram.' The range of

[87] "The nub of the matter is the status of the *desya* vocabulary in Telugu. In a nutshell, the Dravidian proof consists of showing that the *desya* words of Telugu are traceable to roots found not in Sanskrit but in the South Indian languages generally." Trautmann, *Languages and Nations* 157.

[88] "In common with every other tongue now spoken in India, modern Teloogoo abounds with Sanscrit words, perhaps it has a greater proportion of them than any of the other southern dialects; nevertheless there is reason to believe that the origin of the two languages is altogether distinct." Campbell xvi. "I am inclined, however, to believe that the Teloogoo will be found to have its origin in a source different from the Sanscrit, a source common perhaps to the Teloogoo, with the superior dialects of the Tamil and Karnatca [Kannada]. But the introduction of Sanscrit words into this language must have taken place at so remote a period, as to be now almost beyond the reach of inquiry." Ibid., xx. "It is the intent of the following observations to shew…that neither the Tamil, the Telugu, nor any of their cognate dialects are derivations from the Sanscrit; that the latter, however it may contribute to their polish, is not necessary for their existence; and that they form a distinct family of languages, with which the Sanscrit has, in latter times especially, intermixed, but with which it has no radical connexion." Ellis, quoted in Campbell 2. These views were not particular to the British colonial officers. See Lakshmana Rao's *Telugu Bhashatatvam* for similar ideas.

opinions about Sanskrit's place in Telugu's history vary from the linguistic-mythological, where Sanskrit is seen as Andhra's mother, emerging from the Hindu goddess of speech (*Vac*),[89] to the literary-grammatical, where Telugu's function as a literary language is seen as impossible without its historic relationship to Sanskrit,[90] to the historical-linguistic perspective that saw Telugu as interacting with Sanskrit, since the latter was the language of grammar and poetry in the subcontinent, but did not attribute either filial or religious meanings to this interaction.[91]

Telugu did share a substantial relationship with Sanskrit: the early grammars for the Telugu language were written in Sanskrit (as they were for Kannada) and the first available literary works in Telugu were translations of the epic *Mahabharata* from Sanskrit to Telugu. These translations by poets Nannaya (eleventh century),[92] Tikkana (thirteenth century) and Errapragada (fourteenth century) have been memorialized culturally as works of the triumvirate of poets (*kavitrayam*) with whom Telugu's literary history begins.

There was at least one substantial literary critique in the early twentieth century that saw these poets as translators and refused to consider them as creators of poetry; this was

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[89] Venkataraya Sastry, *Gramyadesa Nirasanamu* (*Rejection of the Gramya Order*) 1.

[90] For instance, the editors of the landmark Telugu dictionary published by the Andhra Sahitya Parishat, *SriSuryarayandhra Nighantuvu* (*Sri Suryaraya Andhra Dictionary*), include a substantial corpus of Sanskrit words in the dictionary and justify this as a necessary resource for reading and writing Telugu books, since words which were not used by older poets might be used by new poets. Ramayya Pantulu, *SriSuryarayandhra Nighantuvu* 11-12. Ramayya Pantulu in his *A Defense of Literary Telugu* also states: "Telugu cannot be said to possess the capacity for word-formation to a large degree…But it has always at its service, the inexhaustible store of Sanskrit vocabulary and the immense capacity of that language to form new words. It may be said that Sanskrit also is a foreign language to Telugu. It is not so. It is nearer to Telugu than Latin and Greek are to English. Sanskrit and Telugu have been united from time immemorial and it is foolish and useless to try to separate them" (60). At stake here is not only Telugu's function as a literary language but also its ability to produce scientific literature. In this passage, Ramayya Pantulu goes on to endorse using scientific vocabulary from Sanskrit.

[91] For instance, see Apparao *The Telugu Composition Controversy*.

[92] Nannaya is also considered Telugu's first grammarian. It is unlikely that the grammar attributed to him (*Andhra-sabda-cintamani*) was in fact composed by Nannaya, and more probable that it was a later work that used Nannaya's name and stature to establish its own authority. In addition to Patel and Sundaram, see Narayana Rao and Shulman 8-14.

Cattamanci Ramalinga Reddy's *Kavitva Tatva Vicaram* (*Inquiry into the Essence of Poetry*), first published in 1936, though he shared parts of the text in public speeches from 1914 onward. Ramalinga Reddy (1880-1951) was an important literary figure and educationalist and was well-connected to larger discourses on education in the country;[93] as such his opinions brought with them a stamp of cultural authority.

To the extent that Ramalinga Reddy does not treat classical poetry as valuable in its own right, his is an undoubtedly modern take on literary tradition. However, he is able to offer an evaluation of what these literary texts were able to accomplish and in doing this, he treats translation as a substantial attempt at linguistic and literary recreation, opposing recreation to (original) creation. To this extent, he does not disregard the importance of these poets as much as reorients modern approaches to them.[94]

I pause on these opinions on the earliest extant Telugu literary texts because they represent in a microcosm the question of what is at stake in Telugu's relationship to Sanskrit. In their anthology *Classical Telugu Poetry*, Narayana Rao and Shulman state the following: "The enlivening presence of Sanskrit is everywhere evident in Andhra civilization, as it is in the Telugu language: every Sanskrit word is potentially a Telugu word as well, and literary texts in Telugu may be lexically Sanskrit or Sanskritized to an enormous degree, perhaps sixty percent or more. Telugu speech is also rich in Sanskrit loans, although the semantics of Sanskrit in Telugu are entirely distinctive" (3).

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[93] He founded the Andhra University and served as its vice chancellor from 1926 to 1931 and again from 1936 to 1949. The Andhra movement in Madras Presidency listed the establishment of a university in the Andhra region as one of its demands. Ramalinga Reddy also worked at Baroda College (in the Baroda princely state) and Maharaja's College (Mysore) in the Mysore princely state.

[94] See particularly Ramalinga Reddy 17-18.

This captures in a nutshell the literary and linguistic importance of Sanskrit for Telugu. Undoubtedly, Telugu has a percentage of words that do not derive from Sanskrit (the category of words – *desyas* – that Campbell's Dravidian theory of languages is based on), and even with the words that derive from Sanskrit, their pronunciation and use could well be different in Telugu. Depending on the era, and the genre of literary texts under consideration, Telugu syntax and meters drew on those of Sanskrit, but this convention began to transform from the turn of the nineteenth century with the emergence of modern Telugu prose and poetry.

Even with the influence of Sanskrit meters and aesthetic categories on Telugu literature, knowledge of the Sanskrit language and the ability to read Sanskrit literature (particularly classical poetry, *kavyam*) does not automatically translate into the ability to comprehend Telugu classical poetry. Noted Telugu short story writer Sripada Subrahmanya Sastry (1891-1961) narrates with poignancy his discovery of this impasse of translation when after studying Sanskrit, he picked up Nannaya's *Bharatam* and found it incomprehensible (95). He highlights in particular the difference in the two languages, his lack of familiarity with the usages (idioms) and the pure Telugu words (*acca Tenugu*) used in the text (ibid).

In sum, Subrahmanya Sastry, like some other scholars of his time, makes a clear argument for the independence of the Telugu literary tradition, even as the tradition drew its content (in the translations of the Sanskrit *Mahabharata*), metrics and aesthetic categories from Sanskrit. The process of cultivating literary familiarity in Telugu had to then chart its own course. The large-scale attempts to enable such literary knowledge for a newly literate public were the raison d'etre for the establishment of literary associations,

the publication of literary histories and critical, scholarly editions of and commentaries on classical Telugu poetry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Telugu's relationship to Sanskrit began to occupy a place in contemporary textual discourses. Scholars who were translating the modern sciences from English to Telugu and were invested in strengthening Telugu textual production turned to Sanskrit as a source for the necessary vocabulary.[95] Others who sought to enable access to older Telugu literary texts argued that Telugu dictionaries had to incorporate a fair share of Sanskrit words to ensure these older texts remained intelligible to new readers, who were also potentially new writers.[96]

But the intensity of the cultural investment in Sanskrit comes across in opinions that mark Sanskrit as the ownmost language (*swabhasha*) of the Andhras, distinct from othered languages (*parabhasha*) attributed to foreign invaders, both medieval (Arabic and Persian) and modern (English). It is important to note here that '*para*' indicates not the foreign but that which is absolutely other and cannot be integrated into the self.

These perspectives come to a crescendo in Burra Sesagiri Rao's speech "Telugulogala Lakshana Sampradayam" ("The Grammatical Tradition in Telugu").[97] Disagreeing (vehemently) with an anonymous letter written to *The Hindu* in which the letter writer claimed that 'we' are 'Telugus' and not 'Andhras,' Sesagiri Rao says:

> We are Andhras. Andhra language is our language. There is no doubt about this. It is a mistake to call only those people who live in the region between Krishna-Godavari as Andhras. *Tadbhavas* [Sanskrit-Prakrit derived words] and *desyams* [local words] are pure Telugu (*acca Tenungu*). There are some people who claim

[95] Borrowing from Sanskrit for these purposes was endorsed by scholars such as Jayanti Ramayya Pantulu who states, "The Sanskrit language contains a great deal of scientific literature which, if carefully explored, will, I have no doubt, yield many ready-made words which can be made use of to convey many of the modern scientific ideas." He gives as a model the Benaras based Nagari Pracarini Sabha's *Glossary of Scientific Terms* in Hindi which used many Sanskrit words (*Defense of Literary Telugu* 60).
[96] Ramayya Pantulu, *Sri Suryarayandhra Nighantuvu* 11-12.
[97] Published as part of *The Gramya Controversy* (1912), edited by P. Suri Sastry.

> Andhram is a mingling of *tatsama* [Sanskrit-Prakrit origin words], *tadbhava* and *desyam*. We are Aryans. We are the progeny of Aryans. Brahma, Ksatriya, Vaishya and some Shudras are from among the Aryans. The division of the four castes (varna) was the work of the Aryans. This division does not exist among the non-Aryans (*anaryulu*). We can refer to the fifth castes (*pancamas*) as non-Aryans. The word '*yanadi*' shows that people of my community (*jati*) have lived in this region (*desam*) eternally. The import (*bhavam*) of *yanadi* comes from the word '*anadi*' [Skt. eternal, without beginning or end]. The English refer to them as aborigines [in English in the original]. The etymology of the two words is the same. We are not from that sect (*tega*). When we are Aryans, what is our ownmost language (*swabhasha*)? Isn't it Sanskrit? (69-70).

Far from articulating any coherent idea of a Dravidian family of languages, Sesagiri Rao's speech ties language, caste (*varna*) and community (*jati*) by invoking two grammatical categories: words that import Sanskrit and Prakrit meanings into Telugu, through the orthographic and vocal rendition of these words in Telugu (*tadbhavas*) and words that are local to the Telugu speaking regions (*desyam*).[98] He places 'Andhras' in the same lineage as the 'Aryans' who developed the hierarchical division of society into four castes, and distinguishes Andhras/Aryans from the outcastes (*pancamas*) and the aborigines (*yanadi*).

From invoking the Andhras whose language is Andhra (not Telugu), he transitions to invoking Aryans whose language is Sanskrit, erasing the historical and linguistic differences between the two – differences which the references to *tadbhavas* and *desyams* indicate – in service of a communitarian theory of language. Sesagiri Rao was not an exception in this; early twentieth century public speeches in Telugu routinely invoke the audience as 'Aryans.' While this invocation links Telugu speakers to an emergent (Hindu) national community, the discursive construction of 'Andhra' binds language to a more local community, *jati*.

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[98] For the importance of these categories (*tadbhavas*, *desyams*) for constructing a history of the Telugu language, see Mitchell 100-126 and Trautmann, *Languages and Nations* 151-185.

Language and *Jati*:

Jati, a term that was frequently invoked in nineteenth and twentieth century vernacular texts, is a key South Asian concept that names a collective. Prior to the twentieth century, the concept had both social and aesthetic uses. In classical Indian texts of philosophy and grammar, the word connotes a class – a higher order category to classify particulars.[99] In Indian musical traditions, *jati* is presumed to designate an older category (now lost) for the combination of notes that produces different melodic structures in classical music (*raga*) ("Jati"). The *Natyasastra*, a second century to fifth century CE treatise on drama attributed to Bharata, describes some of these older musical elements.

The same text (Natyasastra) also classifies *jatibhasha* or "common language" as one of four types of language that could be used in drama; here, the word '*jatibhasha*' referred to language that was spoken by the commoners. This common language is distinct from the others – *atibhasha*, *aryabhasha* and *yonyantari bhasha* – or language of gods (*ati*, beyond), of kings (*arya*, noble) and of other animals.[100]

The use of the word *jati* to refer to the language of commoners (common humans) is important because in it we get *jati* both as a classificatory category *and* as a substratum that is shared not only in common (we can argue that the other languages are also shared in common amongst their kind) but among those who are common. For now, I want to flag this connotation – *jati* as a substratum of the common – as a key element of what *jati* comes to designate at the turn of the twentieth century.

[99] Matilal 31-39.
[100] Ghosh 326-327. This seemingly Borgean classification prefaces the text's description of the correct use of recitation (type of speech) in each language, producing a minutely detailed categorization of how to dramatically depict the 'real world.'

Scholars of South Asian studies have largely studied *jati* as a sociological category. Here, *jati* as a designator of caste is distinguished from other such vernacular concepts, primarily *varna*.[101] *Varna* refers to pan-Indian castes whose hierarchy is (textually) ordered with brahmins at the top, followed by kshatriyas, vaisyas and shudras at the bottom. This recognizable hierarchy is not regionally specific; it is a general ordering of the four groups which drew its justification from the Hindu textual canon.[102]

At the turn of the twentieth century, many different caste groups sought to move within this recognizable, pan-regional hierarchy, particularly from the lowest group (shudras) to the middle (kshatriyas).[103] This movement involved the amassing of economic capital (through land settlements and allocation of land to farmers), cultural capital (through education, a turn to non-agricultural occupations, formation of caste associations and writing and disseminating caste histories) and demographic movement from villages to towns and cities.[104] As a designator of caste, scholars have seen *jati* as best understood as a reference to these particular, region-specific caste groups.[105]

In modern writing, the word *jati* underwent a massive semantic shift from being a descriptive category for caste to signifying a larger collective that was not caste-based, such as the nation.[106] To be clear, *jati* continued to denote the former even as it began to

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[101] '*Kulam*' is another word in Telugu that denotes caste.
[102] For the textual sanction for this division in Hindu religious texts, see Ambedkar, *Who Were the Shudras?* 21-25.
[103] In *Who Were the Shudras?* Ambedkar argues that the *shudras* originally belonged to the *ksatriya varna* but their social status was downgraded due to their frequent confrontations with brahmins.
[104] See Damodaran for a pan-Indian history of this transformation; for the Telugu-speaking states in particular, see Thirumali.
[105] See Rao especially 40-42. She describes the two terms as follows: "*jati* being the term to describe regionally distinctive caste clusters (e.g., Maratha, Mahar, Deshastha Brahmin) associated with long-term processes of state and society formation" and *varna* as a "prescriptive pan-Indian category" (40). For a take on the incompatibility of the pan-Indian and the regional in these two terms and the implications this had for the theorizing of caste in India, see Samarendra.
[106] With the aesthetic connotations of *jati* largely disappearing from twentieth century vernacular discourse in Telugu. It is likely that a similar process was underway in other Indian vernaculars at this time.

be used for the latter. As more than one scholar has commented, the word represents collectivities that do not quite share the same semantic space. The term appears to designate any and varied collectivities, from the national to the regional, the pan-human to the narrowly professional.[107] While we can conceptually distinguish the textual framework of the *varna* hierarchy from the historical and social processes and practices that *jati* names, it is clear from this short outline of the two terms that *jati* designates collectivities which do not sit well together.

It is this irreconcilable multivalence that Partha Chatterjee (drawing on Sudipta Kaviraj) calls "fuzziness" in his wonderfully generative essay, "The Manifold Uses of Jati." I want to pause on this essay for a moment to tackle a productive equation Chatterjee establishes between the communities that *jati* denotes in the vernacular and the possibility of finding (English) theoretical vocabularies that are not determined by modern state forms. He offers the word *jati* and its applicability to multiple, non-equivalent communities – indeed to community itself – as a concept that does not fit state-based forms of politics and sociality, locating *jati* in anti-colonial, nationalist civil society and commenting that "community, with all its fuzziness, is not easily appropriated within the discourse of capital, or for that matter the discourse of the modern state" (290).

These discourses which also filter into nationalist and post-colonial political discourse make it possible, according to Chatterjee, to use the term *jati* to denote both a "good"

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[107] Samarendra describes this as follows: "Jatis, however, were of diverse types and shared not one feature in common. For example, in vernacular literature, we come across expressions such as the Baidya and the Bhumihar jati (endogamous communities regarded as caste), the Kunbi and the Yadav jati (communities regarded as caste but not endogamous), the Lohar and the Sonar jati (professional communities), the Maratha and the Bangla jati (linguistic communities), the Hindu and the Mussalman jati (religious communities), the Munda and the Oraon jati (communities presently registered in the government documents as tribes), mardon ki jat and aurat jat (community of men and community of women), manav jati (community of humans), and so on. Evidently dissimilar, these communities are not necessarily endogamous either" (229).

community – that of the nation – and a "bad" community – where caste collectivities for instance, or caste-based representation, can be seen as bringing in primordial forms of community that do not fit in with modern times. Against the modern state's reduction of *jati* to nation and to a single "legitimate meaning" (291), Chatterjee posits the possibility of other theoretical vocabularies that retain the multivalence of the term.

Jati does offer a potential theoretical alternative that emphasizes the community and its multiplicity, potential which as Chatterjee notes has been clipped in categories such as nation, tied as they are to a logic of the majority. However, the trajectory of *jati* in vernacular texts not only points to the multiple solidarities which were encapsulated under the same concept, it also raises the question of what holds these multivalences together. In emphasizing *jati*'s multivalence, Chatterjee perhaps does not distinguish between the linguistic multivalence of the word and the communitarian connotations it began to accrue at the turn of the twentieth century.

I am thinking here particularly of the following characterization in his essay: "The rhetoric here [in the cultural domain] is of love and kinship, of *jati* sliding from one fuzzy sense of community to another, seeking to branch out and encompass large political solidarities through an imagined network of natural affinity" (291). The multiple collectivities *jati* denotes all build on an imagination of "natural affinity" to create political solidarity; however, the rhetoric is not only one of love and kinship. It also sets up what cannot be kin (similar to the unassimilable foreign in *parabhasha* or other-ed language) to construct communities that do not easily intersect or build into each other.

This problem is particularly evident in one collectivity that *jati* designates which has remained under-explored, perhaps because the word has been read largely as a sociological

concept. As anyone familiar with vernacular writing can attest, one of the main connotations of *jati* at the turn of the twentieth century was that of a linguistic community. Phrases such as 'Andhra *jati*' or 'Telugu *jati*' (and indeed Bangla *jati*, Maratha *jati*, etc.) referenced a collective held together by language, which nonetheless did not only designate a community of speakers. This collective was more than the caste-community (the primary sociological meaning of the word *jati*) *and* it was distinct from the nation (the newer connotation of *jati* at the turn of the twentieth century).[108]

It is my wager that in these phrases (Andhra *jati* and other such), language and community modify each other to produce a concept of community that is premised on language, even as it gestures to and creates a collective that nominally transcends the specificity of both caste (Andhra *jati*) and language (Bharatiya (Indian) *jati*). It is because of the central role language plays in this semantic process that the first (Andhra *jati*) does not easily morph into the national, even as vernacular scholars speak on behalf of both and do not necessarily see a split between these two collectivities. To attend to this problem, we will perhaps have to redefine community in light of the older aesthetic sense of *jati* as that which is shared among those who are common. But first, more on Andhra *jati*.

The literary rhetoric on *jati* relies on region (*desam*), history (particularly illustrious kings), literature (the literary canon) and culture (cultural attributes that were specific to the region, the local dance form for instance (*kuchipudi*)) to construct a narrative about the Andhra *jati*. Not only is language central to the narrative, but aesthetic, literary elements traverse the key preoccupations of vernacular textual production at the turn of the twentieth

[108] These significations are not particular to the Telugu language. The word takes on similar meanings in other languages too, Hindi and Bengali for instance. For a reading of the shift from *jati* to nation (*desam*) via the social (*samaj*) in the Bengali sphere, see S. Gupta.

century. The literary histories, particularly lives of poets, that were published at this time drew on newly available epigraphical, textual and inscriptional evidence to produce historically grounded biographies of canonical literary figures.[109]

These histories lent wider historical authority to the cultural memory about Telugu literature. Similarly, texts on the history of the Andhra region and its famed rulers helped establish a historical claim to the region, hence making solid the link between region, language and people.[110] And much of the body of Telugu essays and poems published at the time sought to show what was particular, unreproducible and unique culturally to the Andhra, Telangana regions and Telugu speakers.

A quite conventional rendition of these links is available in a short poem ("Andhra Mata" ("Mother Andhra")) by poet Atmakuri Govindacharyulu, most famous for his Telugu *kavyam* based on the Ramayanam, *Govinda Ramayanam*.

> *jaatiki bhasha jeevamu; yasaskarulai sukavindrulendaro*
> *khyatigadincinaaru mana yandhriki tengunu tircididdi yan*
> *to tami vaaru ni kidina trovam jarinci kavitrayammu sam*
> *trupti smarincucun satamu vidakumi mana andhra samsrkrtin*
>
> *Jati*'s life-spirit is language; many famous and great poets
> gained renown for our Andhra by shaping Telugu.
> With much desire, keep to the path they wandered on,
> affectionately recollect the *kavitrayam*,
> and for eternity do not let go of our Andhra culture.[111]

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[109] Kandukuri Viresalingam's autobiography, *Swiya Caritram*, details his efforts to acquire historical material to write his Telugu literary history, *Andhra Kavula Caritra*, and the challenges he faced in establishing a chronology for the poets (164-165). He especially rues the lack of identifiable dates in the literature itself (with poets paying obeisance to their literary predecessors, some of whom predated them by centuries) and the lack of historical information for determining regnal years to date the poets by. It is this difference between a historical account of literature and the literary tradition's tendency to engage its antecedents without establishing a recognizable history that Kaviraj speaks to in "The Two Histories of Literary Cultures in Bengal." See Pollock's *Literary Cultures in History* for the essay.

[110] A statement that was often made in essays on the Telugu language or the Andhra region was that the region got its name from Andhra kings.

[111] Naidu 100.

The poem uses contemporary Telugu vocabulary but follows phonological rules that conjugate morphemes in adjacent words (*sandhi*). These rules as they were followed in Telugu poetry and prose were derived from Sanskrit poetics, though the Telugu language had a few rules that were its own. Although it was not a uniform practice among all writers, modern poetry and prose is identified with the shedding of these rules in the interest of simpler syntax, simpler because non-*sandhi* syntax does not require the reader to possess knowledge of the rules of conjugation. The poem also adheres to other rules of metrical composition, primarily, enjambment where the syntactic-semantic unit spills over into the next line, giving the poem a tightly controlled meter in each line.

The poem's opening sentence is essentially a paraphrase of the relationship between *jati* and language that we began with above. The poet goes on to describe aspects that constitute *jati* – specifically Andhra language and literature – but, at the beginning he establishes language as the basic building block of *jati*. "*Jeevam*," the word he uses here, connotes life, not the state of being alive but the basic component that brings something to life, makes it alive. Everything else in the verse is about poetry, culminating in a reference to Andhra culture (*Andhra samskruti*). It also differentiates Telugu from Andhra, making Telugu into that which was chiseled by the good poets (*sukavis*), bringing renown to 'our Andhra.'

The injunction at the end asks that (we) hold on to Andhra culture, thus shaped, for eternity. Govindacharyulu delineates the elements of *jati* – language that gives it life, language itself in turn shaped by poets, culminating in culture, of which we can see both language and literature as crucial components. It is fascinating that except for the title, the language is not referred to as a 'mother' anywhere else in the poem.

In other poems by writers who were contemporaries of Govindacharyulu, we get the same links for thinking *jati*, sometimes with a more elaborate treatment of the themes of literature (usually poetry), history and culture. A good example is a poem titled "Andhra Jati" by poet Viswanatha Satyanarayana (1895-1976), published in the same collection as Govindacharyulu's poem.[112] Satyanarayana is best known for his novel *Veyyi Padagalu* (*A Thousand Hoods*) and for holding on to a conservative literary position into the late 1900s, when explicitly political literature had taken over the larger Telugu literary sphere.[113]

The conservative streak in Satyanarayana's literature comes from his attempt to speak on behalf of literary and cultural traditions that were fast losing space in the modernizing literary (and social) world.[114] The palpable desire to do so often sets up a worthy contest in his literary texts between irreconcilable ideological and cultural positions. He does sometimes offer disappointing resolutions of the conflict that he sets up so marvelously.[115]

The poem, "Andhra Jati," offers none of this juicy conflict. It has a tone that is unequivocally proud and celebratory in its descriptions of the Andhra *jati*, beginning with a statement at the end of the first verse that Brahma was particularly fond of this *jati* (57). Brahma, as we know, is the godhead of creation in Hindu mythology. In the lines prior to this, Satyanarayana claims the *jati* (which he calls both *jati* and 'Telugu *jati*') as unique on the basis of its integration of Hindu religious texts (Bhagavatam and Bharatam) and other cultural practices (56).

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[112] Naidu 56-59. Both poems are taken from the same anthology from the 1970s, *Telugu Talli* (Mother Telugu).
[113] Narayana Rao and Shulman see Viswanatha Satyanarayana as the last of the "classical" minded poets in modern Telugu literature, and refuse to categorize him as "conservative," opining instead that Satyanarayana formed a remarkable bridge between classicism and literary modernity (51-53).
[114] See his novella *Visvanatha English Caduvu* (*Visvanatha's English Education*) for instance
[115] For example, the denouement in the novella *Celiyalikatta* (*The Seashore*).

He moves from this description to a listing of the names of great kings associated with the region, Timmarasu, Krishnadevaraya (poet-king) and Tenali Ramakrishna (poet), Dharmappa, Vasireddy, before transitioning to the aesthetic and the cultural. Among these, he lists dance-drama (*kuchipudi*) and folk theater traditions (*vidhi natakam*) native to the Telugu speaking regions, Telugu's close relationship to Sanskrit (dubbing it the 'only language in which Sanskrit meter can be perpetuated'), and the region as the birthplace of all Vedantas (57).[116] All of these converge in a penultimate verse that posits Andhra as the pinnacle (59):

bahujanma krtapunya paripaakamunamjesi
andhrudu dhatrilo avatarincu
bahujanma krtapunya paripaakamunamjesi
andhra bhashanu maatalaaducundu
bahujanma krtapunya paripaakamunamjesi
andhratva mana niddiyani yerungu
bahujanma krtapunya paripaakamunamjesi
andhriimahamurti naikyamundu

ripening the auspicious acts of many births
Andhrudu [Andhra person] incarnates on earth
ripening the auspicious acts of many births
(he) speaks the Andhra language
ripening the auspicious acts of many births
(he/we?) learn that this is Andhratvam
ripening the auspicious acts of many births
the great form/body [mahamurti] of Andhra reaches unity.

Here, Andhra *jati* is presented as the apex of civilization, evidenced by everything the poet has said about the religious, literary, historical and cultural elements that constitute it.

The constitution of *jati* as a linguistic community is not only evident in literary texts. It figures as such in other texts too, especially those on language. In much of the writing

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[116] He also claims credit (on behalf of the Andhra *jati*) for the sheer variety of mangoes in the region. This might seem a trifle to an Anglophone audience, but the importance of mangoes to the food culture and imagination in South Asia should prove otherwise!

on language that emerged during the Telugu language debates,[117] *jati* appears in three forms. The first is the social, where *jati* differences in the spoken use of the Telugu language create irrepressible variations that have to be curtailed in order for a unitary Telugu language to emerge. Here, *jati* figures as social caste,[118] alongside other categories that produce linguistic variety, such as region, occupation, etc. Second, the national, "Bharatiya *jati*," which regional languages (*desabhashas*) were seen as being in service of. *Jati* as the national also appears sometimes as the farther horizon for arguments about the cultural unity of Indians.

Third, Andhra *jati*, the concept I have focused on here. This concept of *jati* is produced by eradicating the *jati* differences in language use, either by using language that was literary-textual and did not retain as many social differences as non-literary spoken language did or by making available for wider textual use 'refined language' as it was spoken by the higher castes (*jatis*).[119]

Conclusion:

I have so far engaged two crucial ideas about *jati*: one, *jati* as the substratum of the common, shared among those who are common. The second is *jati* as a linguistic community, not only an amorphous concept that could apply to different collectivities but specifically a community for whose constitution language became crucial. Here, I bring in the references to *jati* in texts on the Telugu language, where Andhra *jati* was produced by seeking to eradicate caste-based differences in language use in service of something that

[117] Debates among Telugu scholars about the modernization of the language occurred between 1910-1914. I deal with these debates in the next chapter.
[118] Note the many references in these essays to lower castes (*nimmajatulu*), whose linguistic use was at the center of this anxiety about language.
[119] These were the two contradictory positions held in the Telugu language debates.

all Telugu speakers were presumed to share – whether that was literary-cultural memory or the language itself.

How are these two senses of *jati* related to each other? If *jati* is shared among those who are common, *jati* as linguistic community takes on the common as an attribute. But, it also curtails who could lay claim to the community thus constituted. Here, it is necessary to bring back the two kinds of 'Andhra' we see emerge in the Andhra movements. There is Andhra as a part of the region-language-people cluster (in the Andhra movement in Madras Presidency) and another Andhra that does not limit 'people' in this cluster only to native speakers of the language (the movement in Hyderabad State). However, both premise community on language and its speakers, whether native or not.

From the history of vernacular languages in twentieth century South Asia and the articulations of (religious) linguistic communities, we see that *jati* lays claim to both the common and the majoritarian. The common of language thereby does not necessarily generate an ethical compulsion toward the other. Rather, it brings into relief the incommensurability of that language that is marked as most one's own (*swabhasha*). This link between the common and the incommensurable hinges on the injunction implicit in *swabhasha* to forsake all others. *Jati* makes an ethic of this forsaking.

Chapter 2
Bhasha: The Challenge of the Vernacular Common

…traces of revivalism are bound to be in evidence, for among those who wish to banish English, will be some who yearn for their ancient idylls. Let us not be frightened of them, for they will soon enough see that their Hindi or Marathi or Tamil must become generous and spiced, a vehicle for philandering as for chastity, for unravelling of the truth as for travel to the moon, a language of the widest possible sweep, elegant in its total correspondence with reality.

-Ram Manohar Lohia, "Feudal Language Versus People's Languages"

Since the advent of comparative philology under colonialism, the presence of a language in a region – evident in the provenance of inscriptions, texts and speech – has served as the basis for claims that a given region belongs to the people (speakers of the vernacular) who inhabit it. The fusing of people, region and language meant that within political discourse 'people' began to be imagined not only as constituting a nation, but also as speakers of particular languages. Vernaculars have hence been an important aspect of representation and self-definition within political discourse. Under these conditions, with the morphing of a community of people into a community of speakers, the question of how common a vernacular is becomes a highly potent one, since to admit to fractures within the language destabilizes what colonial enumerative practices established as a unitary language.[120]

Against this assumed integrity of the common, I posit the pejorative sense of the common – that which is far too common and has to be excluded from the vernacular in order to constitute it as a common language. To attend to the exclusive within the common, we have to move beyond two key binaries that have shaped linguistic thinking within literary studies – classical and vernacular, writing and speech – and confront a fractured vernacular. I argue in this chapter that the appearance of the question of the commonness

[120] As Bhattacharya has shown, the imbrication of people with language was also achieved by the methodology of the colonial surveys, which were used to count both.

of the vernacular within non-Anglophone discourses and the simultaneous constitution of the commonness of the vernacular as an exclusive instrument deserve to be revisited because they help us interrogate the concept of the vernacular that we rely on to bring world languages into academic discourse.

I base my claims on a textual corpus from one part of the previously colonized world, the Telugu-speaking regions of Madras Presidency in Southern India, one of the major administrative units of the British colonial government. Here, between 1910 and 1915, Telugu scholars debated which form of Telugu (classical, literary, *granthikam* or modern, non-literary, *vyavaharikam*) should be made default for use in contemporary prose writing. These two divisions of the language were seen as irreconcilably different from each other, both ideologically and formally. Scholars who advocated for the use of literary Telugu, or *granthikam*, argued that Telugu as used in older literary texts was adaptable for use in contemporary writing. Scholars who advocated for the use of modern Telugu, or *vyavaharikam*, argued that written Telugu was vastly different from spoken Telugu and contemporary written Telugu should be brought closer to speech.[121]

Because the difference between these two forms hinged on the binary of writing and speech, scholars both within and after the Telugu language debates have read the debates as an argument about this binary, where writing signified standardization and an unbroken link with the language's past, and speech signified contemporaneity and keeping pace with the present.

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[121] These scholars used the English word 'literary' as a synonym for *granthikam* and 'modern' as a synonym for *vyavaharikam*. In service of readability, I have retained these translations when referring to the language debates. However, I propose an alternative translation for the terms later in this chapter.

Lost within these representations of the Telugu language debates was a statement that a remarkable Telugu scholar made about language that continues to haunt the concept of the vernacular. In a 1913 English treatise titled *A Defense of Literary Telugu*, Jayanti Ramayya Pantulu (1860-1941), who floated the idea for the first literary association for Telugu (Andhra Sahitya Parishat/Andhra Literary Council), declared: "The fact is that there are very many variations in the spoken dialects of even the same part of the country. Of course, Mr. [Gidugu] Ramamurti would say that the people somehow understand each other. So do the brahmin landlord and his pariah field servant. None would think of saying that they *speak* the *same* language" (emphasis added, 48-49). Ramayya Pantulu's treatise argued against the modern Telugu movement launched by Gidugu Ramamurti (1863-1940).

Even though Ramayya Pantulu's statement about whether speakers divided by caste (brahmin/pariah) and socio-economic location speak the same language comes in the midst of the Telugu language debates, he does not resort to the binary of writing and speech here (he does turn to the binary later in the same passage). Instead, he splits the vernacular not into dialects but into dissimilar languages. Writing in a period when the demand for a separate state for Telugu speakers was gaining force through the Andhra movement in Madras Presidency (1900-1956), Ramayya Pantulu momentarily forces his readers (which included the British colonial administration) to think of language not as shared but as split between speakers, challenging a core assumption that grounded claims for the linguistic organization of states.

My chapter accounts for this split vernacular against the prevailing idea that vernaculars are commonly shared among their speakers. Instead of reading the debates

among Telugu scholars as a conflict between written/literary Telugu and spoken/modern Telugu, I focus on their struggles to posit Telugu as a commonly shared language.

Focusing on the question of a common language within the Telugu language debates is important for two reasons: one, treating literary Telugu and modern Telugu as synonyms for writing and speech respectively makes it impossible to attend to the anxiety over the third term (*gramyam*, vulgar or ungrammatical language) in the debates. I propose here that *gramyam* determined the formation of the linguistic ideologies represented in both literary and modern Telugu. Two, it helps us distinguish between the common and the communitarian in language.

While Ramayya Pantulu's writings, especially the tract I quote from above, help us move towards the common in language as a question, other advocates of literary Telugu writing during the same period posited a socio-cultural heritage for Telugu that all its speakers were imagined as sharing. This heritage was overwhelmingly Hindu and gendered. The communitarian locus of the vernacular is part of what makes the invocation of language as *swabhasha* (language that is most one's own) powerful. *Swabhasha* in the above sense is distinct from the claiming of a natural, familial link with the vernacular, which is given in the invocation of the vernacular as the mother tongue (*matrubhasha*).[122] While these two tropes are distinct, native writers invoked them simultaneously and constituted the 'commonness' of the vernacular through both.

As scholars, we have yet to read early twentieth century texts for their tussles over *how* to constitute the commonness of vernaculars even as these languages were being

[122] The assumption that vernacular languages were unquestionably natural was not unique to the South Asian context. Dante invoked the vernacular as "our first true speech" as early as the fourteenth century (Purcell 16). Scholars in South Asian Studies have written on the figuring of the vernacular as a goddess and a mother (see Ramaswamy), and on communitarian claims made about the vernacular (see Dalmia).

claimed as one's own. The challenge of the vernacular common – which denotes the anxiety over how to make a language common to all its speakers – follows from interrogations of the existing concept. Recent work by scholars on South Asian, East Asian and Middle Eastern languages has brought some key assumptions about the vernacular into question, especially its equation with speech and its distinction from the classical.

Shang Wei has argued that Chinese scholars who adopted the European concept of the vernacular and with it the division between writing and speech inadequately translated key linguistic concepts – *wenyan* and *baihua* – into the primarily Anglophone concepts of writing/classical and speech/vernacular. Against this, he presents the spectrum of written uses for Chinese which cannot be demarcated on the basis of their correspondence with speech or lack thereof (278) and which are not uniform either in their writing or their reception (290). Wei's critique of the vernacular as a place-based and identity-creating language set new precedents for contemporary scholars working with these twice-inflected concepts.

Working with a pre-modern language from the Indian subcontinent, Andrew Ollett's study of Prakrit offers a history of the language that goes against the Pollockian scale-based binary of classical/cosmopolitan and vernacular.[123] Ollett foregrounds the range of qualities that Prakrit came to exhibit in its long history, elements of the classical (refined, pan-regional, literary) *and* the vernacular (colloquial, place-based, non-literary), and shows that the existing binary cannot adequately help us understand a language like Prakrit. In doing this, he breaks some common assumptions about Prakrit, including the

[123] Sheldon Pollock's binary of classical and vernacular opposes Sanskrit's "invariability across time and space" or "cosmopolitan space" to "vernacular place" where the vernaculars continue to be defined by the region even when they travel across it (*The Language of Gods* 16).

long-held perception that the name refers to vernacular, spoken languages that were in use during Sanskrit's reign as a language of erudition and literature.[124]

Shaden Tageldin's recent work draws on writings by ninth- and long-nineteenth-century Arabic scholars to argue that complicating the split implied by the binary of colloquial and standard Arabic (*ammiyya* and *fusha*), those scholars articulated a point of convergence between the two in common Arabic. She makes a case for treating common Arabic as a sociolinguistic medium – a middle language that is grammatically and morphologically standard but uses simplified syntax and a vocabulary accessible to masses and elites alike – that challenges a binarized concept of the vernacular. Finally, Kojin Karatani has previously established that the very concept of a writing that was "equivalent to speech," which the Japanese *genbun itchi* movement sought to achieve, was new and particular to the turn of the twentieth century (39).

All these studies critique the collapse of two sets of linguistic distinctions into each other: writing and speech, and classical and vernacular. They see these binaries as unable to attend to the valences of linguistic concepts from non-Anglophone languages. In his approach, Karatani reorients the terms of linguistic/literary discourse entirely by considering the relationship of other aspects of Japanese modernity (landscape painting, confessional writing, etc.) to the linguistic discourses of the period.

Wei and Tageldin emphasize the spectrum of textures, forms and capacities within vernacular writing that derive from elsewhere (variations in region and oral reception for Wei, 'eloquence' for Tageldin). Ollett and Tageldin also distinguish between the vernacular and the common – Tageldin suggests that the common implied by *ʿāmma* in

[124] Madhav Deshpande's early work, *Sanskrit-Prakrit: Sociolinguistic Issues*, is a precursor to the shift Ollett's work enables for understanding Prakrit.

Arabic is closer to the older sense of the vulgar as the common rather than the vernacular (122); Ollett argues that the category 'common' (*samanna*) as it applied to Prakrit did not signify either the regional or the quotidian, both aspects we associate with the vernacular (158-159).[125]

The question of the common in language follows on these interventions that draw out non-Anglophone concepts against the binary of writing and speech. Whether as vulgarity or as unrefined language, the vernacular common signifies an unendingly fractured language. After all, no one wants to attribute vulgarity to *their* language, except to criticize its incorrect or uncivil use. Further, vernaculars are also assumed to be naturally and intimately tied to the people who speak them (hence the emphasis on 'their' in the previous sentence). Even when we have come to recognize the 'naturalness' of vernaculars as constructed, we continue to attach an imagined coherence to the vernacular when we use region and number of speakers to establish its significance. While this exercise is essential for translating the specific site of Southern India into the world of Anglophone discourse, in order to constitute a unified vernacular, it necessarily elides the many variations, differences and ruptures in how Telugu is used.

Scholars in the Telugu language debates were troubled by the region- and community-based diversity in the use of Telugu. In order to reconcile these differences, they posited a third term – *gramyam* or the vernacular common – under which they gathered what had to be excised from Telugu in order to constitute it as a language commonly shared by all speakers. As I have noted earlier, the binary of writing and speech

[125] Significantly, Ollett shows that in vernacular grammars (particularly Telugu and Kannada) *gramya* (vulgar or common) was used as a category parallel to the Prakrit grammatical category *samanna*, and connoted quotidian, non-literary words rather than obscene words (165). Here as well, 'vulgar' is closer to the older sense of common rather than the contemporary meaning of the word vulgar.

was used by scholars during and after the Telugu debates to delineate their linguistic positions. However, this binary cannot account for the third term – *gramyam* – they excluded from their vision of the vernacular. To grasp the ways in which the vernacular emerged for these scholars, we have to account for the role the pejorative sense of the common played in constituting a *select* Telugu that nevertheless was represented as unmarked.

The constitution of Telugu through the exclusion of *gramyam* had two crucial implications: on one hand, such exclusion also excluded lower castes, women and non-Hindu religions from the realm of what was properly Telugu because their usage of language was assumed to be inherently flawed. On the other hand, in the debates a distinction emerged between the literary and non-literary uses of language, where drawing on older aesthetic theories of dramatic representation, some scholars argued the use of vulgar language in literature was acceptable whereas the use of similar language in non-literary texts was not.[126]

The role *gramyam* played in the Telugu debates helps question the attribution of commonness to the vernacular and of reciprocal belonging between the vernacular and its speakers. Hence, it helps us question existing theories of vernaculars as place-based, constructed-as-natural languages. Further, following Ollett's work, we see that the emergence of vernaculars on the Indian subcontinent cannot be understood without the emergence of *gramyam* as a concept in early non-classical languages to signify the common.

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[126] This view was held in particular by traditional literary scholars such as Vedam Venkataraya Sastry (1853-1929), who also advocated an explicitly Hindu locus for Telugu.

The classical, pre-modern provenance of the word *gramyam* provides one potential anchor for comparative studies across South Asian languages, and perhaps one way to overcome the siloed study of languages that share geographies and histories. To rethink the vernacularization movements in South Asia then, we have to begin by attending to twentieth-century arguments about *gramyam*.

Archives, Pedagogy and the Literary-Modern Binary:

The first set of arguments where scholars used the binary *granthikam* and *vyavaharikam* to designate two distinct and irreconcilable forms of Telugu appeared around 1910. By 1911 a number of essays appeared in Telugu journals that were in support of either literary or modern Telugu. In the same year, the Andhra Sahitya Parishat, the foremost literary organization of its day, was founded to advance the cause of Andhra language and literature.[127] Ramayya Pantulu, the key voice of the literary Telugu movement, proposed that such an institution be established.

Ramayya Pantulu and the Parishat's other founders saw the modern Telugu movement as destroying Telugu speakers' access to the language's literary and linguistic heritage by substituting grammatically correct textual language with a syntactically and morphologically simplified Telugu. They claimed that these simplifications made contemporary written Telugu unpalatably different from older written Telugu, and because of these changes, new learners of the language would no longer pick up the grammatical skills or vocabulary necessary to make sense of older Telugu texts.[128] Advocates of modern

[127] Jayanti Ramayya Pantulu's history of the Parishat, *Andhra Sahitya Parishat Vrttantamu* (*A Narrative Account of the Andhra Literary Council*), remains an excellent resource for understanding the institution in its context. 'Andhra' refers to the Telugu language and the region where the language is spoken. The use of the word 'Andhra' in the twentieth century also emphasized the language's literary history, particularly its philological relationship to Sanskrit.
[128] The concern over loss of access to older literary traditions with changes in pedagogy and transformations in the language was not limited to early twentieth century native scholars. It persists in contemporary South

Telugu, by contrast, claimed that literary Telugu differed from spoken Telugu in its syntax and vocabulary, and that, because of its frequent use of conjugations and Sanskrit words, literary Telugu already had to be learnt anew even by those who spoke the language. These scholars claimed that literary Telugu presented unnecessary hurdles to education.

At the center of these debates were different views on education, since even the literary Telugu scholars recognized that the knowledge of literary Telugu came from a different pedagogical practice. This practice involved in-depth grammatical and etymological training in classical Telugu that often privileged Sanskrit as the linguistic locus for the language.[129] With the relatively newer educational institutions that were at least in spirit open to people of all castes, the question was how to extend the painstaking attention to language that was necessary to read older texts on a scale that seemed to render it an impossible exercise. In light of this challenge, we have to read claims by Ramayya Pantulu and like-minded scholars that literary Telugu was the source of communal heritage as attempts to retain access to what was marked specifically as a literary heritage.

In 1912, the Secondary School Leaving Certificate (SSLC) Board, under the Director of Public Instruction in the Madras Presidency, permitted students to write their exit examinations in literary or modern Telugu, after appeals by modern Telugu proponents Gidugu Venkata Ramamurti and Gurajada Venkata Apparao. Gidugu Ramamurti was the forceful voice of the modern Telugu movement. He articulated the most explicit relationship between democracy and language in Telugu and sought to reform written

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Asian studies scholarship, for instance, see Busch's work on *riti* literature and Ebeling's work on Tamil literature.

[129] Among these scholars, Venkataraya Sastry (1901) most explicitly outlines the difference in these two linguistic-pedagogical practices.

language and education to strengthen this relationship.[130] Gurajada Apparao (1861-1915) is counted among the first modern poets in Telugu for his use of language and his choice of themes. In addition to his participation in the modern Telugu movement, he also argued for language reform in the prefaces he wrote to his popular play *Kanyasulkam* (*Bride Price*), a text that played an important role in the language debates.[131]

The British colonial officer and inspector of schools, J. A. Yates, was a part of the modern Telugu movement along with Gidugu Ramamurti and Gurajada Apparao. However, the 1912 order by the school board was the first large-scale step by the colonial government in favor of the movement. Amidst widespread debates about this move, the Parishat wrote to the governor of Madras claiming that the inclusion of "*gramya bhasha*" in textbooks would amount to a "catastrophe." A committee was appointed by Madras University to look into the "possibility of fixing a standard for composition in Telugu" for college examinations.[132] The committee decided in 1915 that it could not recognize "'modern' Telugu for university purposes" and based on this decision the Director of Public Instruction withdrew its previous permission that had granted students a choice in using either form of Telugu while writing their examinations.[133]

This withdrawal of permission ended the colonial government's official endorsement of the linguistic ideas popularized by Ramamurti and Apparao. However, as we know from other contexts in India as well, the British government provided (unintentionally) the infrastructure and frameworks that such scholars used to propose an

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[130] For an analysis of Gidugu Ramamurti's linguistic politics and his role in the Telugu public sphere, see Mantena "Vernacular Publics and Political Modernity."
[131] More on *Kanyasulkam* in the section on *swabhasha*.
[132] Ramayya Pantulu, *Andhra Sahitya Parishat Vrtantamu* 44-45.
[133] Ibid.

alternative relationship to language. For instance, in the case of Telugu, colonial officers such as Charles Phillip Brown archived language and literature in textual forms that made them accessible to early twentieth century readers. Brown was involved in a long process of 'standardizing' Telugu literary texts to streamline them for modern audiences and produced the first Telugu-English dictionary in 1852.

The modern Telugu proponents widely drew on work done by officers such as Brown to claim that an alternate, non-literary archive could be constructed for language.[134] They used these texts and archives as a resource for textualizable examples of contemporary language use. Gurajada Apparao in his English tract *The Telugu Composition Controversy: A Minute of Dissent* famously claimed there were ways to determine modern language use even in the absence of a linguistic survey, since any cursory visit to the nearest railway station, court or school would yield many examples of the use of modern Telugu and its difference from literary Telugu (12).[135] Apparao's suggestion was an attempt to move away from the literary text-based examples that the literary Telugu scholars were adducing, in their speeches and writings, to support the claims of the Parishat.

It is likely that, in converting a wide array of language uses into formally circumscribed texts, the newer archives constructed by proponents of modern Telugu were used to reify a stricter binary between the literary and modern forms of Telugu.[136] It is also

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[134] See Ramamurti *Memorandum on Modern Telugu* and Apparao *The Telugu Composition Controversy*.

[135] Apparao's text articulates his disagreement with the Telugu Composition subcommittee's claim that there was scant evidence for the general use of contemporary, spoken forms of Telugu. The Madras government appointed the subcommittee to prepare a list showing the differences between old and current forms of Telugu words. The subcommittee consisted of Gurajada Apparao, Vedam Venkataraya Sastry and Komarraju Venkata Lakshmana Rao; Apparao's was a dissenting voice within the subcommittee and the text, *The Telugu Composition Controversy*, presents his disagreements with Venkataraya Sastry and Lakshmana Rao's decisions. For more on Apparao's text in relation to the Telugu language debates, see Venugopal Rao.

[136] Narayana Rao has previously written about the role of printing in formalizing modern Telugu prose and

likely that the highly charged and rhetorical atmosphere of the Telugu debates played a role in reifying that binary, such that it became difficult for scholars to argue for a spectrum of uses for language.

Both literary and modern Telugu scholars were also contemporaneously involved in publishing activities that solicited and supported a plethora of emerging writing in and about Telugu. They established institutions that supported vernacular textual production in varied formats: historical writing, science and social science textbooks (for example, the Vijnana Chandrika Mandali), and encyclopedias, dictionaries and critical editions of older Telugu literary and grammatical texts (Vijnana Chandrika Mandali and Andhra Sahitya Parishat). Joining such textual production were newer genres of literary writing such as Romantic poetry and textual criticism (beyond the commentary tradition) that emerged in the early twentieth century.

Thus, Telugu scholars were engaged in the process of working with and reconfiguring language outside and beyond the language debates, and their interventions in these other spheres were less stratified. Even in the texts that scholars wrote within the debates, the language in which they wrote could not easily be classified into either literary or modern Telugu, a charge they often levied against each other and that later scholars have levied against them. However, the differences between the language of their writings and their advocacy of one of the two forms of Telugu should not be construed as a failure of these scholars' linguistic positions. It indicates, rather, that textual language was both more particular (context-based) and elastic (adaptive) than the debates allowed it to be.

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the divisions between literary and modern Telugu ("Print and Prose"). More recently, Ahmed has argued that the colonial approach to non-European vernaculars attenuated these languages by extricating them from language use, speech and the lives of native speakers, and rendering them into text.

Despite these contradictions and ambiguities, the language debates set up a dichotomy between literary and modern Telugu, mediated by *gramyam*, that has determined the contemporary valences of these terms. After the language debates, it become commonplace in Telugu literary discourse to refer to certain genres and literary-political positions as traditional and difficult to comprehend or brook (*granthikam*) and certain others as contemporary, progressive and also prosaic and unliterary (*vyavaharikam*). The quality of being literary has often been attributed to writers who are adept at *granthikam* and the quality of being political (at the cost of the literary) has been attributed to writers who either do not or cannot write in literary Telugu.

As we can see from this short history of the debates, we have to perform lexical gymnastics to equate literary Telugu with *granthikam* and modern Telugu with *vyavaharikam*. 'Modern' when made distinct from the 'literary' served to locate literature in the past. But the twentieth century was a period when literary writing proliferated. Some of this writing used older textual syntax and vocabulary and some of it changed syntactical rules and used more contemporary vocabulary. Hence, modern Telugu was used in literary writing, non-literary writing and in speech. On the other hand, literary Telugu as a linguistic position concerned itself with prose writing, articulating a keen interest in a genre that was not central to classical Telugu literature. Hence, the literary Telugu position in the language debates symbolizes a modern attitude towards literary and non-literary texts.

In other words, the language debates reconfigured older literary categories. From a grammatical and aesthetic category, the debates recast the word *gramyam* into a linguistic category that had to be excluded from the realm of textual Telugu. Prior to the Telugu language debates, *gramyam* was a grammatical and an aesthetic concept, both in vernacular

grammars (for Telugu and Kannada)[137] and in Telugu literary critical writing on drama. The latter focused on whether it was appropriate to use uncivil or vulgar language when translating Sanskrit drama into Telugu, where such language was appropriate for the characters in question (*patrocita bhasha*).[138]

In spite of these reconfigurations and the important distinctions that the two terms evaded, the terms *granthikam* and *vyavaharikam* have been used since the twentieth century to distribute Telugu writing across a spectrum of tradition, modernity and literariness. The language debates helped create an enduring association between literariness and *granthikam* and (linguistic) politics and *vyavaharikam*. The third term, *gramyam*, on the other hand, has been reclaimed by scholars who read it as a denigrative reference to Dalit speech.[139] But, the fact remains that language designated as *gramyam* has to be re-signified (as Dalit speech) in order to be reclaimed: *gramyam* itself continues to have derogative valences.

World (*Lok*) and Language (*Bhasha*): *Vyavaharikam*:

Though both sets of scholars, those who advocated for a "modern" Telugu and those who advocated for "literary" Telugu, argued that language that was either unrefined or grammatically incorrect should not be included in texts, they differed on what constituted unrefined or grammatically flawed language. For Gidugu Ramamurti, at the vanguard of the modern Telugu movement, *gramyam* meant the speech of outcastes and villagers,

[137] Ollett 161-168.

[138] These debates occurred prior to the Telugu language debates (in 1899) but involved scholars such as Venkataraya Sastry who were also part of the debates. For more about these debates, see Prasad, especially 229-230.

[139] See Keiko; Manohar; and K. Purushottam. 'Dalit' refers to castes previously denoted as untouchable that fall outside the traditional Hindu caste hierarchy. These scholars see *gramyam* as a reference to Dalit speech because of arguments made in the Telugu language debates by modern Telugu scholars, particularly Gidugu Ramamurti. More on this below.

because they were presumed to be rustic and uncultivated. The literary Telugu movement, by contrast, argued that *vyavaharikam*, the language whose use the modern Telugu movement advocated, and *gramyam* designated the same Telugu. In responding to this charge, Ramamurti in his essays reactively makes *gramyam* into a linguistic category that only applies to the speech of the villagers or *gramyulu* such as the *malas* and not to the speech of *pandits*.[140]

In his review of *Suryarayandhra Nighantuvu* (*Suryaraya Andhra Dictionary*), an exhaustive Telugu dictionary compiled and published by the Andhra Sahitya Parishat, Ramamurti deepens this argument by positing the world as the criterion for linguistic usage but bracketing the outcaste from that world.[141] The foreword to *Suryaraya Andhra Dictionary* declared that the compilers took usage, both in verses (*padyam*) and in the non-textual world (*lokam*), as the main criterion for determining the forms and meanings of words.[142] Though they also use spoken language (*vyavaharikam*) to make decisions about which words to include in the dictionary and how they would be spelled, the editors state that they turn primarily to literary and non-literary texts (*vangmayam*) to help them make these decisions.[143]

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[140] "The name '*gramyabhasha*' is suitable for the speech (*maatalu*) of those who are *gramyulu*, i.e., malas and others but it is not suitable for the language that is used everyday by *pandits*." Ramamurti, "Gramyabhashakadu-Vyavaharikabhasha" ("*Vyavaharikam*, Not *Gramyam*") 207. 'Mala' is the name of a Dalit caste native to the Andhra region. The word is used in Ramamurti's text as a reference to Dalit castes in general. I have italicized the now common English word pandit above to indicate its use by Ramamurti not as a general reference to anyone who was learned (its English meaning), but as a reference to learned brahmins.

[141] The dictionary was named after the ruler of Pithapuram, Venkata Kumara Maheepati Suryarao, chief patron of the Parishat and a major advocate of literature, education and social reform in the Andhra towns, Rajahmundry and Kakinada. The title of the dictionary combines Suryarao's name with the noun 'Andhra' (Suryaraya + Andhra).

[142] Jayanti Ramayya Pantulu, *Suryarayandhra Nighantuvu* 13.

[143] Ibid.

In his review of the dictionary, Ramamurti declares that the world is the epistemological criterion for linguistic usage in all instances and thus the compilers of the dictionary have to treat '*lokam*' as the primary criterion for language, over poetry.[144] The world was in fact a crucial part of the language the modern Telugu movement advocated for; a literal translation of the Telugu word that came to denote the language advocated by the movement, *vyavaharikam*, would render it as language from/of the world. The noun '*vyavaharam*' connotes the quotidian world of business, habit and practice.

In support of his argument about worldly language as a criterion, Ramamurti footnotes the following comments on the *lokam*:

> *Lokam* does not mean the *malas* and their kind! "'Loka' is the opinion of cultured people. Usage and non-usage (of words) are not established based on the speech of just anyone, but only the speech of the cultured. These words and speech forms have their basis in worldly transactions, through which their common usage becomes popular.'[145] Worldly language (*laukika bhasha*) is not learnt from studying poetry (*kavyam*). "Knowing the relationship between a word and its meaning is based solely on the usage of wise elders (*vrddha*); on account of an unbroken transmission of traditional knowledge by elders."[146] Who are the learned (*sistulu*)? The quality of being learned (*sistatvamu*) does not occur because of the grammatical knowledge (*vyakarana-jnata*) of worldly language. Why is that? Because this grammar was composed (*racincu*) on the basis of educated usage (*siṣṭa vyavaharamu*). "Grammar is rooted in usage."[147] "Usage is that which has been practiced."[148]
>
> This (*prayogam*) does not mean usage in poetry. If in worldly usage (*loka-yatra*) 'learned' referred only to grammarians, linguists (*bhashakarulu*) said the flaw of mutual dependence (*anyonyasraya dosamu*) will occur. Then who are the learned? It has been said that the learned can be known by their dwelling (*nivasataḥ*) and their conduct (*acarataḥ*). Appakavi called them elders (*peddalu*). Fallacious arguments (*vitanḍa-vadamu*) are a wasted effort.[149]

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[144] In assuming that the dictionary was using poetry over the world as the primary criterion for language use, Ramamurti in his review conflates the emphasis on texts in the dictionary with poetry, a narrower and not necessarily textual use of language.

[145] "*Loka ca iti śiṣṭa-loka-abhiprāyam. Yasyakasya cit vacanāt prayoga-aprayogau na vyavatiṣṭhete; api tu śiṣṭānām-eva vacanāt. Ye loka-yātrā-hetavo bhāṣā-śabdāḥ taiḥ eva laukikatvam prasiddham*."

[146] "*Vṛddha vyavaharāt eva sabdārtha-sambandha-avagamaḥ. avicchinna vṛddha-pāramparya-upadesāt.*"

[147] "*Prayoga-mūlam vyākaraṇam.*"

[148] "*Prayujyata iti prayogaḥ*."

[149] Ramamurti, *SriSuryarayandhra Nighantuvu Vimarsanamu* (*Critique of Sri Suryarayandhra Dictionary*) 57. The footnote in the original contains sentences in Telugu and in Sanskrit. All sentences in inverted

Ramamurti makes the usage of language in the world the sole criterion for correct usage. However, "*lokam*" (rooted in the "opinion of cultured people") for him is the world, excluding the outcaste – "it does not refer to the *malas* and their kind." He performs a second level of bracketing by making the "speech of the cultured" the basis for the usage of words. Worldly language cannot be learned from studying poetry; it is not within the realm of scholarship and learning. It comes solely from the "unbroken transmission" of knowledge from cultured elders. It should be noted here that a similar notion of knowledge transmission is what makes the literary Telugu scholars advocate for *granthikam*.

Ramamurti conceives of the cultured elders as both a contemporary, living community and as a historical entity. The conflict between a historical and a living community remains unresolved in the passage. Who then are the learned? The quality of being learned (*sistatvam*) does not derive from knowing worldly language through grammar. Grammar itself was composed "on the basis of educated usage"; he doubly emphasizes usage here – "educated usage," "usage" and "practice" all quickly follow on each other, in Telugu and in Sanskrit. He also separates such usage from the use of language in poetry. For if 'learned' referred to grammarians, there would not exist a world of linguistic use beyond the world of the grammarian.

Against this circularity ("flaw of mutual dependence"), he argues "it has been said" that the learned (*sistas*) can be known by their "dwelling" and their "conduct." The 'learned' in other words come to represent not merely learning (which is already distanced from scholarship in grammar and poetry) but a way of living, existence and conduct. The

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commas in the translation above indicate Sanskrit sentences in Ramamurti's footnote, and the above endnotes give the original Sanskrit text. These sentences were translated into English by Srinivasa Reddy, for whose help I am grateful. Sentences that are not similarly designated indicate Telugu sentences in the original.

reference to the seventeenth century Telugu grammarian Appakavi here could be read as inscribing "worldly learning" within a genealogical paradigm, since Appakavi, as a Telugu grammarian and poet, would himself qualify as an 'elder.' However, this is also an intriguing reference, given Ramamurti's emphasis in this passage on a relationship to language that is specifically not determined by grammatical texts. Ramamurti then declares that arguments that are fallacious, not grounded in these perspectives, are flawed.

Ramamurti proposes that the learned (*sistas*) are not grammarians in order to avoid a circularity between correct linguistic usage and grammar-dependent usage for Telugu. Even though the conflict he traces here is not new or endemic to the twentieth century,[150] Ramamurti in this footnote formulates an explicitly social location for the learned. In expanding the connotations of *sistulu* into conduct and customary practice, habitation and genealogy, he doubly excludes the outcaste from the relationship between language and the world.

Nor is this exclusion limited to this particular text. Even in essays where Ramamurti does not explicitly locate *gramyam* within caste hierarchies, the relationship between refinement, cultivation and usage/practice (*vyavaharam*) remains.[151] His endorsement of a caste-based locus for the correct use of language is what enables the modern Telugu school to seek to unify region and community by adopting what it believed was the only form of Telugu that was worth emulating: Telugu as it was spoken by the upper castes in the coastal regions of Andhra.

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[150] It was also a concern for early Sanskrit grammarians. See Deshpande's excellent commentary on the word '*sista*' in Sanskrit grammar in "The Changing Notion of *Sistah*" for more on this.
[151] For example, Ramamurti "Gramyapada Prayogamu" ("Use of the Word *Gramya*").

The logic of Ramamurti's argument and his limitation of *vyavaharikam* to language used by particular castes were called into question in his own time by scholars who advocated for literary Telugu. These scholars argued instead that *gramyam* referred to language that was grammatically incorrect and sometimes explicitly refused to limit such language to particular castes.[152] The literary Telugu scholars, in turn, saw textual language as the most common form of Telugu; they believed it was this Telugu that would enable the language to transcend particulars of caste-communities (*jatis*) and region.

Text as the Common: *Granthikam*:

Ramayya Pantulu saw the language favored by Ramamurti as limited, both regionally and socially. He saw Ramamurti as advocating for language used by educated people in the coastal regions of Andhra, to the exclusion of all other Telugu speaking regions.[153] In the passage from which I quote at the beginning of this essay, Ramayya Pantulu says the following about the language Ramamurti espouses:

> The terms polite-spoken Telugu and the language of the educated classes are delightfully vague. Who are the polite people and who are the educated classes? Are Brahmins only meant by these terms? If so, are they all educated? Is the language of the educated Brahmin exactly the same as that of the uneducated Brahmin? Are Brahmin women to be included in the fold of educated classes? Do women speak exactly the same language as men? If you extend the scope of the term educated classes, do educated non-Brahmins generally speak exactly the same language as the educated Brahmins? The fact is that there are very many variations in the spoken dialects of even the same part of the country. Of course, Mr. Ramamurti would say that the people somehow understand each other. So do the Brahmin landlord and his pariah field servant. None would think of saying that they speak the same language.[154]

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[152] For example, Ramayya Pantulu (discussed below) and Suryanarayana Sastry, especially 167-168. Malladi Suryanarayana Sastry, like almost all the other advocates of *granthikam* cited in this essay, was also involved in the Andhra Sahitya Parishat. He was part of a team of eight people that acquired palm-leaf texts for the Parishat, presumably both to find new texts for publication and to preserve the texts in the Parishat library (Ramayya Pantulu, *Andhra Sahitya Parishat Vrtantamu* 58).
[153] Ramayya Pantulu, *Andhra Sahitya Parishat Vrtantamu* 8.
[154] Ramayya Pantulu, *A Defense of Literary Telugu* 48-49.

What is Ramayya Pantulu's primary disagreement with Ramamurti? He sees the language Ramamurti proposes as far too particular. He asks, how do we designate who the referents of phrases such as 'polite people' and 'educated classes' are? While at an earlier time such a concern might not have arisen, by the early twentieth century it was indeed a difficult proposition to seek to delineate a particular people as educated and polite, roughly fifty years after the attempts to make education, in spirit, available to all without caste distinctions began in the region.[155]

In his series of seemingly rhetorical questions, Ramayya Pantulu arrives at something beyond education and cultivation that determines the use of language. Significantly, these are distinctions of gender (the distinction between brahmin men and brahmin women) and caste (educated brahmins and educated non-brahmins). He sees spoken Telugu as beset by variations even within particular castes and across different caste-communities (*jatis*). These variations do not hamper communication, but they make it difficult to claim that languages spoken by different *jatis* are similar.

In other words, Ramayya Pantulu is claiming that there are significant differences in speech given by factors beyond education. To try to posit any one of these constituents as exhausting the meaning of the terms 'polite' and 'educated' would perhaps artificially fix these as operative distinctions while overriding the actual variations that exist in language use. These questions bring him to the crux of the challenge posed by language: does the ability of people to understand each other constitute a similarity in their languages? The "brahmin landlord" and his "pariah field servant" can understand each

[155] See Vittal Rao.

other but do they *speak* the *same* language? Significantly, he couches this final point in a declarative statement rather than a question, and his conclusion is that they do not.

The charge of the question that Jayanti Ramayya Pantulu poses so astutely is lost in the larger debates in which he and other scholars represented textualized language, *granthikam*, as the only existing unified form of Telugu that does not vary by region and community, unlike spoken Telugu. In short, this is what the literary Telugu scholars, including Ramayya Pantulu, who wrote to the Madras governor under the aegis of the Andhra Sahitya Parishat in 1912, claim about *granthikam*: it is the only language that is known across the Telugu region.[156] Hence the literary Telugu school sought to unify region and community by adopting a form of Telugu they believed transcended the fracturing of the language into varied spoken forms. In proposing the literary as the basis of such unification, Ramayya Pantulu and others locate the "common" in the literary and not in the "world" or in worldly usage.

Both in this essay and others, Ramayya Pantulu makes a previously standardized language necessary for resolving the fractures within spoken language. That standardized language was *granthikam* or textualized language, regulated by rules of grammar and poetics that are common to all users, and hence was not subject to the distinctions that accrue to speech. In other words, he offers a linguistic resolution to the fracturing of

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[156] "Unlike what the reformists say, there is currently no *vyavaharika bhasha* in the Andhra world (*lokam*) that is of one form (*eka rupam*) and is commonly available to all (*sarvasamanyam*). It is of different kinds based on *jati* and *desam* differences. If [we say] texts are to be written (*racincu*) in the language that is used (*vyavaharimpambadu*) by those belonging to one *jati* in one of these regions, how will those books be understood as easily as the reformists desire in other regions (*desams*) and by other *jatis*? If we say that a rule can be made that a *lakshanam* [enforceable grammatical rule] should be created for that language and everybody should respect that *lakshanam*, won't it emerge as a *granthika* language and become a vessel for all the flaws that are attributed to the existing *granthika* language? It is *granthika* language alone that is known across Telugu *desam*." Ramayya Pantulu, "Appeal to Madras Governor," *Andhra Sahitya Parishat Vrtantamu* 42.

language by caste and gender in order that a common Telugu may emerge. Elsewhere, he also inserts literary Telugu into a civilizational discourse by charting the movement from spoken (*vyavaharikam*) to literary (*granthikam*) language as a movement from savage language (*aatawika*, also forest-dweller) that lacks a script to a language with *vangmayam* (literary and non-literary forms of textualization).[157]

If the position on language of Ramayya Pantulu and other exponents of literary Telugu is reliant on the textual, so too that of the modern Telugu school. Recognizing the reach of written texts, exponents of modern Telugu sought to widen the use of spoken language (*vyavaharikam*) in Telugu texts. They argued that such textual language would be less rarefied and easier to access with no prior literary training.

Central to all the writings that emerge from the Telugu language debates is an anxiety over how to make Telugu a common language, underlined by the recognition that it was currently not. The language was in a bad state,[158] and in the absence of literary and religious texts, it was difficult to claim that Telugu existed as a cohesive language, capable of unifying its speakers. During the language debates and later, the question of what constituted a shared language was approached largely on the basis of the instability and change attributed to speech, on the one hand, and the constancy, standardization and permanence attributed to writing, on the other.

In other words, both the language reformists and the language conservers respond to the question of what constitutes a shared language by deferring to comprehensibility.

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[157] Ramayya Pantulu, "Gramyavada Vimarsanamu" ("Critique of the Argument for *Gramyam*") 37.

[158] Concerns shared by scholars on both ends of the debates, such as Gurajada Apparao who endorsed *vyavaharikam* and Akkiraju Umakantam who was a founding member of the Andhra Sahitya Parishat and who endorsed *granthikam*. For instance, see Apparao "Gramyasabda Vicaranamu" ("Discussion of the Word *Gramya*") and Umakantam (1912).

Granthikam has historically been used in texts and consists of a set of rules that readers either already know or can acquire by reading older literary texts, hence it is the truly shared, common form of Telugu. *Vyavaharikam* is the refined spoken form of Telugu that is accessible to everybody because it does not require linguistic training, and it is learned by emulating the polite, refined castes. It is common to everyone because of a shared everyday cultural and linguistic milieu. Both of these perspectives that came to dominate the Telugu language debates, however, leave the question of shared language unresolved.

Advocates of modern Telugu, represented in Ramamurti's writings, endorse a democratic relationship to the vernacular yet are untroubled by the particularities of caste from which the language they sought to standardize emerged. While advocates of literary Telugu called into question this particularity of the language endorsed by proponents of modern Telugu, their writings more explicitly marked by the difficulties in arriving at a common language, they nonetheless – in their quest for such a language – posited a social world rooted in a shared cultural (linguistic, literary but also religious) heritage. This world, no less particular than the caste-inflected world of modern Telugu, is sometimes explicitly marked as Hindu.

Though Ramayya Pantulu may have viewed the historical heritage of the Hindu world as embedded in language, his endorsement of literary Telugu and his concerns over how to make Telugu common did not explicitly contour the language into an exclusively Hindu language. However, other scholars of literary Telugu claimed that the modern Telugu movement was an assault on a socio-religious world, and their arguments about language bring forth concerns that are distinct from the two positions I have examined so

far: Ramayya Pantulu's on literary Telugu's reach and Ramamurti's on modern Telugu's democracy.

The arguments made by these other advocates of literary Telugu – drama critic Kasibhatta Brahmaiah Sastry (1863-1940), linguist Vavilakolanu Subbarao and literary scholar Vedam Venkataraya Sastry – introduce a different emphasis within the recurring concern for a common language. These scholars stake a deeply personal claim to language, which welds self and community, and simultaneously excludes other claims to it.

Ownmost Language: *Swabhasha*[159]

The constitution of language as "*swabhasha*" – '*swa*' a Sanskrit root that emphasizes what is most one's own, innate to the self, and '*bhasha*', language – coalesces gender, religion and caste through language. As we saw above, the question of the vernacular common is already premised on the question of caste. Gender so far has remained either tangential, arising once in Ramayya Pantulu's question about whether brahmin men and women speak the same language, or has remained implicit, for instance in Ramamurti's constitution of *gramyam* as lower-caste speech, which explicitly excluded Dalit speech from the realm of proper Telugu but left gender unremarked on and perhaps bracketed within Dalit speech.

In the texts I consider here, language is explicitly gendered – the desire to conserve language is rendered as the desire to return women to their proper roles, ordained by caste norms. For these advocates of literary Telugu, *gramyam* was not merely language that was

[159] My use of the originally Heideggerian term "ownmost" here and elsewhere in this dissertation is inflected through Skaria's translation of "*swa*" as 'ownmost' (220-221). I adopt Skaria's translation here because it captures the emphasis on what is properly one's own, to the exclusion of all others, that inheres in the uses of the word "*swabhasha*." To the extent that the use of the prefix "*swa*" in vernacular discourse in India names the ownmost that scholars and activists attempt to bring into fruition, the ownmost as it pertains to this prefix is different from Martin Heidegger's concept of the ownmost. I thank Skaria for this distinction. Also significant for the cluster of socio-linguistic ideas that determine the valences of *swabhasha*, Skaria's engagement with the *swa* in Gandhi's texts turns on the question of the prostitute as the improper woman.

vulgar or ungrammatical, and unlike Ramamurti they did not see it as pertaining specifically to lower-caste speech. Instead, they constituted *gramyam* as an unchaste transgression of linguistic norms that broke codes of gender and caste, and as an assault on the Hinduness of the Telugu world.

Brahmaiah Sastry, Subbarao and Venkataraya Sastry use the terms *vyavaharika bhasha* and *gramya bhasha* interchangeably, hence not allowing for a distinction between spoken Telugu (*vyavaharikam*) and language that was considered vulgar and unrefined (*gramya bhasha/gramyam*). This is a fairly common practice in texts critical of the modern Telugu movement, including Ramayya Pantulu's; however, the conflation of *vyavaharikam* with *gramyam* in the writings of these three scholars helps further consolidate the relationship between literary Telugu and *swabhasha*.

Part of the conversation about *swabhasha* in the terms above was driven by a particular interpretation of modern Telugu advocate Gurajada Apparao's play *Kanyasulkam*.[160] The title of Apparao's play (*Bride Price* in English) refers to the practice of older, widowed brahmin men paying a bride price to marry girls much younger than themselves. The play is critical of this practice and shows up the selfishness of the parents of the girls and the older men who seek to marry them in a wonderfully farcical setting. In his preface to both editions of his play, Apparao celebrated linguistic reform and social reform and declared that his play was in service of both, because of the themes he chose (the critique of the practice of bride price, in particular) and the spoken dialect in which he wrote the play.[161]

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[160] The play was first published in 1897 and revised and published in 1909, just as the Telugu language debates were taking off.

[161] As in Bengal, social reform at the turn of the twentieth century in Andhra focused on the betterment of the lives of brahmin women and involved the advocation of the remarriage of widows in addition to the

In his review of the play, drama critic and literary Telugu advocate Brahmaiah Sastry attacked Apparao's position on language, particularly Apparao's support for the modern Telugu movement. He compared *vyavaharikam* to an unchaste, adulterous woman ("*kulata*") because it was not bound by limits, it lacked good culture (*samskaram*) and it "moved freely" (*sweccha sancaram*) in "everybody's mouths." He opposed *vyavaharikam*'s transgression of (gendered) limits to *granthikam*'s "chastity" by comparing *granthikam* to a chaste, virtuous wife (*pativrata*).[162] Elsewhere in his essay, Brahmaiah Sastry saw these limits not only as rules of social organization but as rules deriving from a Hindu social world, where religious duty (*dharma*) ordained behavior on the basis of social hierarchy (caste as *jati*).[163]

It is particularly striking that Brahmaiah Sastry turns to the perceived difference between the harlot and the chaste woman in an essay that critically reviews *Kanyasulkam*. At the center of the play's dénouement is its memorable character, Madhuravani, a dancer-courtesan figure. She is located at the cusp of the transition of feudal economies that exploited/supported *devadasis* to the modern economies that rendered *devadasis* into "prostitutes," both linguistically and structurally. "*Devadasi*" refers to women accomplished in the arts, especially dance performances and vocal music, who belonged to low-caste communities and were seen as "wed" to the gods (*deva*: (masculine) god, *dasi*: slave). They played a crucial role in perpetuating the knowledge and practice of older artistic traditions in the Indian subcontinent, but the women and their art were marked as vulgar because of the presence of sexually explicit elements in their performances and

reform of religious practices.

[162] Brahmaiah Sastry 17.

[163] Ibid., 9.

because the women were seen as sexually available to landed, aristocratic and upper-caste men.[164]

The anti-nautch movement in colonial India (1890-1947) drove a transition from the feudal exploitative economies of the *devadasi* to the marketplace of the "prostitute," where there was a more direct correspondence between the woman's sexual labor and her wages. This movement worked to ban public dance performances that were seen as lewd, vulgar and immoral (one set of connotations of the word "common"). The anti-nautch movement is one of the two contemporary social issues Apparao's play foregrounds; the practice of bride-price for marrying young girls is the other.

In assessing the use of spoken Telugu in *Kanyasulkam* in the terms he chooses for this critique (*kulata*/unchaste woman – *pativrata/*chaste wife), Brahmaiah Sastry's essay can be read as an attempt to reinscribe Telugu within linguistic and social codes (grammar and *dharma*). He attempts to wrest Telugu away from the representational possibilities the play opens up for it. According to Brahmaiah Sastry, one reads both for language and for implied emotional content (*bhavam*). In order to achieve both, writers have to strive towards a chaste (*pavitra*) and good (*manchi*) style, which is grounded in a language made chaste, i.e. in *granthikam*.

Brahmaiah Sastry's gendering of language and its inscription within *jati* rules are mirrored by other *granthika* supporters of that time, whose writings on language were explicitly marked by an anxiety to conserve religion (*matam*). Linguist Vavilakolanu Subbarao, in an essay on the mother tongue ("Matrubhasha"), posits a relationship between

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[164] Soneji's work provides a fascinating account of the twentieth century transformation of dance practices in South India by focusing on the artistic repertoire and practices of women from these communities and the stigma that continues to be attached to them in contemporary times. For a treatment of the same themes in a novel that is also suffused with minute and textual attention to dance, see Natarajan.

language, religion and nation that builds on Brahmaiah Sastry's inscription of language within gendered *jati* norms. In the essay, Subbarao argues for educating people in their own language (*swabhasha*) by constituting an intrinsic relationship between three *swas*: *swabhasha*, *swamatam* (ownmost religion) and *swadesam* (ownmost country). *Swa* as used in these forms – *swabhasha*, *swadesam*, *swamatam* – emphasizes the ownmostness of the language, religion and country (region) so marked to the exclusion of all others.

For Subbarao, *swabhasha* enables access to *matam* (religion) and helps cultivate respect for the nation. He sees an intrinsic link between texts in one's ownmost language and ownmost religion because, in his view, language conveys the philosophical principles inherent in religious texts. *Matam* in Subbarao's essay comes to designate religion professed by a *jati*, a community bound by caste, thus integrating people and nation with religion. The relationship between *jati* as homogeneous community and language in the essay does not require the formalization of script, writing and textuality. Language itself, beyond and through the script, carries forth the unity of *jati*. Hence, in how he renders *jati*, Subbarao makes caste-based community integral to language. Subbarao repeats the comparison that Brahmaiah Sastry made between *granthikam* as a chaste wife (*pativrata*) and *gramya bhasha* as an unchaste, adulterous woman (*kulata*), deeming the former as worthier of worship and respect than the *kulata* (107). Further, Subbarao compares knowledges from othered religions (*anyamatavidyalu*) to the (milk from) the breast of a woman from another caste (*kulam*), thought to cause deformities in the child's body and mind (101). The gendered graphing of knowledge-language onto *jati* norms enables education, language and religion to emerge as a coalesced concept here.

In Subbarao's essay too *gramyam* disrupts the potential coalescing of the *jati*. *Gramyam* for him, as for Ramayya Pantulu earlier, is beset with regional variations and he sees it as incapable of enabling people to comprehend texts given by the ancients (*purvulu*). For Subbarao, *gramyam* and *vyavaharikam* are synonymous. He states that *gramyam* is not adequate to comprehend stories, morals and aspects related to the practice of religion (*mataachaaram*); for him, reading anything about religion in *gramyam* is as insufficient as reading religious texts in translation (105). Hence, Subbarao others both *gramyam* and other languages.

In order to prevent the catastrophes that come from the loss of access to one's ownmost religion, Subbarao believes it is necessary to retain *granthikam* as the language of texts and education. In other words, in Subbarao's text, *granthika* Telugu becomes essential for conserving access to the now homogenized Hindu religion. The inscription of *granthikam* into such a *jati*-oriented locus (*jati* here understood not as caste but as people) is an essential difference between Subbarao's and Ramayya Pantulu's perspectives on *granthikam*.

By 1912, the relationships that scholars such as Brahmaiah Sastry and Subbarao were seeking to conserve between language, religion and community converge into an appeal for the protection of the Hindu faith in Vedam Venkataraya Sastry's presidential address at the Andhra Sahitya Parishat's annual meeting.[165] His speech is directed against the "forceful imposition" of *gramyam* (a reference to the school textbook committee's

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[165] Venkataraya Sastry, *Gramyadesa Nirasanamu* (*"Rejection of the Gramya Order"*). 'Order' in the title here refers to the Madras government's order mandating that students can write their examinations either in literary or modern Telugu. The order was issued in 1912, the same year as Venkataraya Sastry's speech. He refers to the modern Telugu movement as '*gramyavadam*' in the text, hence equating modern Telugu with *gramyam*.

adoption of textbooks written in modern Telugu) and it charts a mythico-historical trajectory for the evolution of Telugu from Vedic speech (*vac*) to Sanskrit to Telugu. Venkataraya Sastry sees *gramyam* as a degeneration of the history he charts for the originary goddess of language, rendered as speech (*vagdevi*, Saraswati).

Venkataraya Sastry's critique is perhaps distinctive in the Telugu language debates in that he argued for retaining the grammatical and other prescriptions within which the use of *gramyam* was permissible under certain conditions – especially those of dramatic representation deriving from the classical treatise on drama, *Natyasastra*. Under these conditions, he is appreciative of the use of *gramyam* in some dramatic texts.[166] However, when *gramyam* exceeds the space allotted to it, he sees it as threatening both language and religion; he famously rendered the modern Telugu movement as an attack on "our" Hindu religion because it ruptured the modern reader's relationship with older texts, consigning these texts to oblivion.[167] He writes, "Many are under the illusion that this [the modern Telugu movement] is only an attack on language. This is not so. It is an attack on Hindu *matam* [religion]. It is a movement that pulls out each brick and makes a hole, and as if pillaging a house, it debauches all *desabhashas* [regional languages] one by one and completely captures our *matam*" (43). These lines are very strongly coded as a gendered attack on the Hindu *matam* – the word I translate as "capture" (*haranamu*) has strong connotations of rape and a forcible taking away or seizing of something.

Venkataraya Sastry deems this implied attack as a tragedy not for particular castes within the Hindu world but for the entirety of the Hindu world. On that basis he rebukes those calling for a reform of textual language. He sees the reformists as making a *gramyam*

[166] Venkataraya Sastry, *Gramyadesa Nirasanamu* 12-14.
[167] Ibid., 43-47.

of the upper classes into the new language of composition, choosing the language of one *jati* over many others (34). Here, he renders all spoken forms of language – without regard to whom they are spoken by – as *gramyam*, providing a surprising break from the consonance between language hierarchies and caste hierarchies that we see in Gidugu Ramamurti's writing.

Venkataraya Sastry argues against the desire of the reformists to make common a particular, *jati*-bound language in order to uplift the depressed classes. He states instead that there should be wider dissemination of traditional pedagogies that prioritized linguistic training through the non-caste-segregated schools that are now available (40). In other words, for Venkataraya Sastry a common language comes not from abandoning literary Telugu but from teaching it to a wider population than was previously possible.

Gramyam and the Vernacular:

During the course of the Telugu language debates, scholars made claims about Telugu that traversed the literary, debating Sanskrit and Telugu literary and linguistic traditions; the cultural, annexing Telugu to particular histories of the region and of language; and the political, attempting to speak in the name of a people safeguarding their cultural inheritance and communal identity. All these claims constructed Telugu as a discrete language, distinct from other languages and their histories. While scholars in the Telugu language debates designated an outside to Telugu, they also believed that language had to be commonly shared. In order for it to be commonly shared, they believed Telugu had to transcend the particulars of region or community.

It is not difficult to see that for both sets of scholars the common enabled by language was an important challenge. The common could help grant mobility and a reach

to the vernacular that was increasingly thought of as predicated on the *number* of Telugu speakers, as well as unify the Telugu speaking regions into a common unit. However, such commonality did not easily translate into a language that is common to all (*sarvasamanya*).

In their quest to make Telugu a common language, Telugu scholars either distinguished between the good and the pejorative in common speech (high caste and low, respectively), or between Telugu (the language that was most their own, *swabhasha*) and its others (*parabhasha*). They were also anxious to make language chaste by not making it far too common ("*samanya*," whose gendered valence of the common woman/harlot clearly haunted the writing of Brahmaiah Sastry and others).

Yet these scholars differed in how they saw the desired common emerging in language. The concern to transcend particulars of community in Gidugu Ramamurti's writing turns into an endorsement of language as used in the world (*loka vyavaharam*) by the upper castes in the coastal Andhra regions, people he invokes as "*peddalu*" or elders, and the civilized (*nagarikulu*), whose contemporary use of language he perceives to be the rightful model for textual language. On the other hand, advocates of literary Telugu believed that only textualized language could transcend Telugu's particulars because it helped language enter a realm of literary writing that is governed by a higher order of rules, those of grammar and poetics: a process of refinement that frees language from the particulars of the world.

None of the scholars debating language claimed *gramyam* as a positive referent for the language they propagated. Proponents of literary Telugu used the term to discredit their critics' language – both the language in which those critics were writing and the language they wanted to make standard for texts. On the other hand, *granthikam* had both positive

and negative significations. It referred both to language that was available in Telugu texts, language that adhered to grammatical rules perhaps more closely than spoken, contemporary language did, and to language that was arcane, difficult to comprehend and lacked a place in contemporary writing. Advocates of modern Telugu saw *granthikam* as the latter.

Similarly, *vyavaharikam* could refer to language used in the contemporary world, language that was closer in syntax and vocabulary to contemporary spoken language. It could also be dismissed as un-textualizable because it was region- and community- specific and could not be the basis for a shared language. In texts that were critical of modern Telugu, the switch from referring to modern Telugu as *vyavaharikam* to referring to it as *gramyam* happens without an explanation. The doubling of *vyavaharikam* and *granthikam* into positive and negative meanings, and the lack of such doubling for *gramyam* in that it was always a negative referent is the primary difference between these three terms.

It is *gramyam*, however, that enables a common to emerge in the Telugu language debates. It served as a designator for the particulars of caste and region, which were bracketed in order for a Telugu unmarred by these particulars to emerge. The terms *granthikam* and *vyavaharikam* should be read as attempts to secure the transcendence of Telugu from such problematic particulars. While Ramayya Pantulu's *granthikam* turns to a civilizational locus to overcome the internal fracturing of Telugu, Gidugu Ramamurti's *vyavaharikam* turns to a language bound to upper-caste speakers to overcome the same fracturing.

In the writings of other literary Telugu scholars, the relationship between language, religion and community gives rise to a much more explicit investment in maintaining a link

between an older and a newer Telugu world, both imagined as Hindu. Significantly, these scholars attempted to re-inscribe Telugu into a world bound by gender norms and a caste-based, religious community.

Hence, in the resolutions offered in the language debates, the sociological and the literary converge to constitute *gramyam*'s lack of fit with proper language. But the question of the social takes two different routes. The turn to a caste-ordered world (*lokam*) establishes the importance of the quotidian, everyday world for language but creates a false division between this world and literary-aesthetic traditions. The socio-religious construction of a Hindu Telugu community (*jati*) emphasizes literary tradition but casts it retrospectively as Hindu, presenting a parallel to the projection of modern linguistic identities into the past.

While both positions provide a response to the challenge posed by the vernacular common, neither is particularly effective at resolving the questions it sets up for itself. Gidugu Ramamurti's writings show a clear investment in creating a language the people (*praja*) can understand, and hence an investment in linguistic democracy. But he premises this project on a caste-inscribed linguistic world, closing off the literary openness to common language and the possibilities that the traditions he was critiquing offered for such language. The literary space for *gramyam* accorded by classical conventions, however confined it may have been to dramatic representation, belies the modern Telugu movement's claim that literature bound by classical rules was inherently undemocratic.

Gidugu Ramamurti's critics in the literary Telugu school also limited *gramyam* to the vulgar or the ungrammatical and deprived it of a place in the linguistic common, whereas classical aesthetic theories of dramatic representation allowed a limited space

within which even so-called vulgar forms of the language could become part of a literary text. Venkataraya Sastry remained one of the few scholars involved in the debates who spoke in favor of *gramyam* as an aesthetic category, and we have seen that this was a limited endorsement of the concept.

Ramayya Pantulu and the other literary advocates – to vastly different degrees – constructed the Telugu literary tradition as a religious and cultural monolith. However, their desire to conserve access to this tradition did not lead to the creation of a sustainable model for literary education that could survive the transition to newer systems of formal education. The literary Telugu movement was fighting for a broader significance for literature: if all writing in the vernacular were governed by rules about literary writing, it would ensure that literature continued to have a space within modern pedagogical and discursive practices. Such a vision that tied the literary cultivation of language to education was not to be. In the century since the Telugu language debates in India, vernacular literary education and literary education per se have become marginal to mainstream educational practices and institutions.

In tying the question of a literary education to the preservation of textual language, the literary Telugu school presents an unsatisfactory resolution to an intriguing question. While the spirit of the question it posed remains to be addressed for contemporary times, the ground it traverses along with the modern Telugu school offers some important correctives to our existing concept of the vernacular.

Presenting the vernacular as a place-based or geographically bound and affectively powerful language does not attend to what *gramyam* came to designate in the Telugu language debates of the early twentieth century. *Gramyam* fractures the presumed integrity

of the vernacular; it is what a vernacular language seeks to cordon off within itself in order for a sufficiently standard, common language to emerge. In other words, the vernacular seeks to make itself chaste by purging itself of or disassociating itself from the vulgar and the unsophisticated.

If we take the pejorative sense of the common as a serious challenge to our existing concept of the vernacular, we arrive at two important distinctions. First, it enables us to distinguish between the democratic and the common in language. The resemblance between written and spoken forms of vernaculars undergirds our conception of linguistic democracy; the vernacular public sphere is considered democratic because people participate in it, through speech and written discourse, using a language they already know and share in common with others.

Because of this link, attempts to expand the realm of the public have been articulated (in the Telugu language debates and elsewhere) as a demand for expanding the bounds of acceptable linguistic use within vernaculars. This potentially unending project does not in and of itself mitigate the differences between the common as the vulgar and the common as the ordinary, both of which the vernacular contains within itself and its history.[168]

Second, we have seen that the split between the classical and the vernacular is also internalized within vernacular languages.[169] The Telugu language debates, for one, construed the older form of the vernacular as a classical language, a literary language whose recorded literary tradition goes back to at least the eleventh century. To arrive at a

[168] Sorensen comments on the relevance of both commons to the vernacular (275n44).
[169] Shankar touches on a similar relation between the classical and the vernacular in the Tamil language.

more complex concept of the vernacular, we would also need to undertake a deeper engagement with this classical as it inheres within modern vernaculars.

Third, the socio-religious locus that emerges for Telugu in these debates proves that it is necessary to engage with the role of the communitarian in the constitution of modern South Asian vernaculars. We have known this for the major languages outside of Southern India, such as Hindi and Marathi, and Urdu (which has largely been seen as a non-Southern Indian language). However, the case of Telugu shows that the communitarian played a significant role in how modern vernaculars were imagined across linguistic divisions in India (between the Aryan and the Dravidian language families for instance). The concepts of *swabhasha* and *jati*, along with *gramyam*, help us synthesize the problem of the communitarian and the extent to which it inflects the vernacular.

Chapter 3
Praja: Constituting a Common Public

As the wind is possessed (*svadheenam*) by everyone
knowledge (*jnanam*) should be similarly possessed
As water is venerated (*saevyamai*) by everyone
knowledge should be similarly venerated
As the light (*tejassu*) of the sun and the moon give comfort to everyone
knowledge should similarly comfort.

-Chilakamarti Lakshmi Narasimham[170]

Within the Telugu sphere, the desire to arrive at a common through textual language led to incredibly significant developments. The institutions that were established in the early twentieth century, including the Andhra Sahitya Parishat, the publishing house Vijnana Chandrika Mandali and libraries established in the public library movement were driven by a collective desire to amass and share linguistic and literary resources. The Parishat itself built and maintained a library towards this end and the library movement sought to make public libraries widely available in the Andhra and Telangana regions. While all three movements I examine in this dissertation play out in what we can recognize as the emergent vernacular public sphere, it is the public library movement that offers the potential for expanding the relationship of language to the public.

In this chapter, I investigate what the 'public' connoted in the Andhra library movement (1900-1956) and what the relationship of language was to this public. My focus on these two questions is driven by the historical and conceptual trajectories of the movement. The library movement was contemporaneous with two others that helped shape vernacular linguistic discourse in the period: the Andhra movement (1900-1956) and the

[170] As recited in Chilakamarti Lakshmi Narasimham's speech at the first Andhradesa Library Representatives conference. Cited in Nagabhushanam 17, and used as an epigraph to the journal of the Andhra Library Association, *Granthalaya Sarvasvam*.

Telugu language debates (1910-1915). The language debates involved many of the foremost literary scholars of the day who argued over what form of Telugu (classical, written or modern, spoken) had to be made default for use in contemporary prose writing. The Andhra movement demanded the constitution of an Andhra state out of the Telugu speaking parts of Madras Presidency, premised on the argument that people who shared a linguistic heritage should be governed as one administrative unit, or that states should be organized on the basis of language.

Both these movements helped crystallize the link between people, region and language, by making the Telugu language key to the past and future of the Andhra *jati* (a community held together by linguistic (and religious) ties). Hence, the Andhra library movement took shape in a context where claims about Telugu were made on behalf of (in the name of) the Andhra *jati* and as these claims were coalescing in a sharper delineation of Andhra as a region (*desam*). It is no surprise then that in the extant textual archive for the library movement, we find repeated claims about libraries serving the Telugu language and the *jati*.[171]

However, unlike the language debates where scholars excluded certain communities from the linguistic "common," the library movement refused to limit access to public libraries on the basis of gender, caste or religion – thereby challenging the very lines on which the linguistic discourse of the time constituted Telugu as a common language.

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[171] For instance, Ayyanki Venkata Ramanayya, one of the founders of the Andhra library movement, attributes "*jatiya* awakening" (*prabodhamu*) in the Andhra region to libraries and declares that libraries should eternally continue to strengthen (*pusti*) the *jati* (*Granthalaya Jyoti* 158-159). It is not clear from the essay if Ramanayya was referring to a pan-Indian community (nation) or the Andhra *jati* here. It is likely that he was referencing both the nation and the region, especially given the role libraries played in national political movements (more on this in the next section). References to the service libraries could render or were rendering to the Telugu language are numerous; I will deal with these in the section on textuality.

This seemingly contradictory invocation of an exclusive community (Andhra *jati*) *and* inclusive access to libraries for a wider public (*janasamanyam*, people + common) is one of the two dyads that constitute the library movement. The other is the emphasis on literary texts – not just printed texts in general, but a specific emphasis on texts that were literary – *and* on non-textual learning and edification. Finally, there is a third element to the public in the library movement, and this was the emphasis on creating a hyper-local community through libraries, which were spatially designed to serve as ideal communitarian spaces.

It was the movement's attempt to build libraries into textual repositories *and* into public institutions that were unlike any other available in the day that made the Andhra library movement distinct. Further, the community that the library movement was attempting to build did not have the exclusionary slant that language and community take on in either the Andhra movement or the Telugu language debates. To this extent, the communitarian as it emerges in this movement is different from the thinking of community in the previous movements.

To understand the public as it was constituted in the Andhra public library movement, we have to attend to the relationship between the public and the common, the public and a linguistic-religious community and the public and the communitarian. We also have to attend to the relationship between textuality and literature, in light of the movement's emphasis on non-textual edification. These themes can perhaps be gathered into two questions: is there something common to these different invocations of the public in the library movement? And, what is the relationship of language to this common public? These are the two questions to which my chapter articulates provisional answers.

As I show in this chapter, Telugu scholars in the Andhra library movement engaged with the linguistic ideas that emerged within the Andhra movement and the Telugu language debates. Hence, these three movements constituted a discursive field within the Telugu sphere, and the journals published within the Andhra library movement provided a platform for the debates that marked the other two. In addition to these movements in the Andhra and Telangana regions, the Andhra library movement also had significant interactions with the all-India and the Baroda library movements. Two key figures in the Andhra library movement – Ayyanki Ramanayya and Suri Narasimha Sastry – occupied major administrative posts in the All India Library Association. There were other overlaps between the two: the Andhradesa Library Association was affiliated to the All India Public Library Association (est. 1919), and the association's journal (*The Indian Library Journal*) was published in Bezawada by the Andhra Granthalaya Press (Andhra Library Press). The Andhra library movement was also influenced by the library movement in Baroda; in its outlook, functioning and organization, the Andhra movement saw the latter as an ideological and administrative model, in spite of important differences in patronage between the two.

Given the importance of the all-India and the Baroda library movements for the movement in Andhra and Telangana, my chapter compares and contrasts all three to construct a history of the Andhra library movement.

Language and the Andhra Library Movement (1900-1956):

The significance of a linguistically bound community to the library movement is evident in its beginnings. The first public libraries were established in Madras Presidency and

Hyderabad State between the 1870s and 1890s.[172] As we see with the use of the word 'Andhra' in the demand for a Telugu-speaking state in both the Presidency and Hyderabad State, the word came to denote shared linguistic and cultural heritage among Telugu speakers in both units. 'Telangana' referred to the Telugu speaking regions under the Nizam's rule. The library movement spanned both the Andhra and the Telangana regions; following existing histories of the movement, I treat the movement in these two regions as one because of their shared imagination of the Telugu language.

Out of the libraries established at the turn of the twentieth century, Telugu scholars perceive Sri Krishnadevaraya Andhra Bhasha Nilayam (est.1901) as having the most significant impact on the library movement.[173] The Bhasha Nilayam (extant today) was begun in Hyderabad by scholars who were influential figures in the Telugu sphere – Komarraju Lakshmana Rao (1877-1923), Ravicettu Rangarao (1877-1911) and Adipudi Somanatha Rao (1867-1941).[174]

The library was established to promote the Telugu language ("Andhra bhasha") and the progress of Telugu speaking people in a state where the language was perceived to have taken a backseat to Urdu, the administrative language in Hyderabad State. Inspired by Robert Sewell's history of the Vijayanagar empire, *A Forgotten Empire: Vijayanagar* (published 1900), Lakshmana Rao and others named the library after the sixteenth-century

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[172] V. Venkatappayya, *Public Library System in Andhra Pradesh* 7. Raju states that 163 libraries were established in Andhra before 1914 (2) but mentions only one by name, Saraswathi Granthalayam, established in 1886 in Vishakapatnam (1).

[173] Jithendrababu 46. Also, Raju in his history of the movement credits the Bhasha Nilayam with leading to the "spread of the library movement in Telangana and Andhra Desa" and to the emergence of the "renaissance movement" (?) (1).

[174] Lakshmana Rao was a linguist, historian and encyclopedist who compiled the first encyclopedia in Telugu. Adipudi Somanatha Rao was a Telugu poet and translator employed in the Pithapuram court. Ravichettu Ranga Rao also supported another library in Hyderabad State (Rajarajanarendra Andhra Bhasha Nilayam, est. 1904) and was involved in the establishment of Vijnana Chandrika Mandali, a publishing house for Telugu texts, along with Lakshmana Rao and others.

ruler of Vijayanagar, Krishnadevaraya, a poet-king who famously declared that Telugu was the most excellent of all regional languages.[175]

Sewell's influential history of the Vijayanagar empire popularized the trope of 'despotic' Islamic rulers attacking Hindu kingdoms, and rendered Vijayanagar as the most glorious among such kingdoms.[176] For the Telugu scholars who named the library after Krishnadevaraya, Sewell's history of the empire struck a chord: they perceived the glorious past of the Telugu language as lost in contemporary Telangana and sought to revive the language.[177] The library inspired the establishment of other similar libraries in the region. By 1927, there were nearly 110 libraries in Hyderabad State.[178]

In contrast to these efforts for the revival of the Telugu language in Hyderabad State, the 1914 call for a separate forum for library representatives in Vijayawada (in Madras Presidency) foregrounds social issues and distinguishes libraries from political and literary organizations. Ayyanki Venkata Ramanayya (1890-1979) and Suri Venkata Narasimha Sastry issued the call for a conference for all library representatives in the region, to be held in Vijayawada on April 10, 1914. They declared that a special forum was necessary for these representatives since they took on "other social issues" (*itara sanghika visayalu*) in addition to the "advancement of language" (*bhashabhivrddhi*) and hence could not be represented within the Andhra Sahitya Parishat (which was working "only in the area of literature (*sahityam*)").[179] They also distanced themselves from the Andhra

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[175] Jithendrababu 46-47.

[176] Chekuri's doctoral dissertation explores this trope of religious conflict in Sewell's text and its influence on later histories of the Vijayanagar empire (21-27).

[177] These influences are discernible in Jithendrababu's history of the library. In addition to Sewell, the Telugu scholars also read the description of Krishnadevaraya in Kandukuri Viresalingam Pantulu's influential literary history, *Andhra Kavula Caritra* (*History of Andhra Poets*).

[178] Jithendrababu 48.

[179] The Andhra Sahitya Parishat (Andhra Literary Council) was established in 1911 by scholars affiliated with the literary Telugu position in the Telugu language debates. From its inception, the Parishat collated,

Mahajana Sabha's political agenda.[180] The Andhra Mahajana Sabha, working in the Madras Presidency, launched the demand for forming a separate Andhra state; the counterpart of the Mahajana Sabha in Hyderabad State was called the Andhra Jana Sangham.[181] In stating that their proposed conference had no connection to the Andhra Mahajana Sabha, Ayyanki Ramanayya and Suri Narasimha Sastry were distinguishing their proposed conference from the Sabha's second meeting, also held in Vijayawada, on April 11, 1914, a day after the former. The Andhradesa Library Association (Andhra Desa Granthalaya Sangham) was established at the end of this first conference of library representatives.

Accordingly, in the Madras Presidency, there was no direct organizational link between the Andhra Mahajana Sabha and the library movement, and unlike in Hyderabad State, language was not a formative issue for the Andhradesa Library Association. However, the imagination of a community bound by language played a crucial role for the association and the movement in Madras Presidency as well. In general, the association was sympathetic to the principle of linguistic organization, as is evident from the support Ayyanki Ramanayya and Suri Narasimha Sastra offered for linguistically divided library associations governed by the All-India Library Association (including the Andhradesa Library Association).

Ayyanki Ramanayya as the secretary of the All-India Library Association and Suri Narasimha Sastry as the chairman of the Executive Committee supported the national

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supported and published scholarship in and about Telugu. It helped shape early twentieth century Telugu textuality by producing a landmark Telugu dictionary, definitive editions of older literary texts and scholarship on language and literature based on historical and philological research.

[180] Quoted in Adiseshuvu 79-80.

[181] For more about the Andhra Jana Sangham and its role in the Andhra movement, see Mantena, "The Andhra Movement."

Association's decision to organize provincial library associations on the basis of language (hence, one for Telugu, another for Tamil and so on).[182] Ayyanki Ramanayya says in favor of this proposal that it is "universally accepted that people speaking one language belong to one region (*rastra*)."[183] A resolution passed during the 1927 library conference in Madras urged that linguistically organized library associations "should encourage the production and publication of books and journals in Indian languages, and should collect, conserve and publish old manuscripts."[184]

On the other hand, the Andhra Jana Sangham in Hyderabad State annexed libraries to its larger goal of bettering the status of Telugu speakers in the State. It included the establishment of libraries, reading rooms and schools as one of its agendas,[185] and positioned itself as working for those who belonged to the linguistic community 'Andhra' either by birth or by 'continued residence' in the princely state.[186]

Crucially, for both the Jana Sangham and the Krishnadevaraya Andhra Bhasha Nilayam, libraries were important because they could help impart knowledge to people in their mother tongue. The same impulse carried into the Jana Sangham's other goals and it was the premise behind the setting up of the Telugu publishing house, Vijnana Chandrika Mandali. Both these organizations believed that people's relationship to the vernacular was

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[182] "There shall be a provincial organization for each of the linguistic areas comprised in the British territory and each of the Native States shall similarly have a provincial organization." *Indian Library Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1, 38. "Vernaculars being the chief medium through which most of the libraries work and the improvement of vernacular literature being one of the vital questions with which the provincial associations have to grapple, the constitution of the associations provides for the organization of Provincial Associations on language basis [sic]." *Indian Library Journal*, vol. 1, no. 3, 4.
[183] Venkata Ramanayya, *Granthalaya Jyoti* 76.
[184] *Indian Library Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1, 31.
[185] Jithendrababu 57-58.
[186] Ibid., 55.

foundational and exclusive – you learn best if you learn in the language that, in exclusion to all others, is already your own.

After it was established, the Andhradesa Library Association became the organizational core of the Andhra library movement. The association organized annual conferences that featured presidential speeches by some of the most prominent literary and political figures of the time (the Andhradesa Library Representatives' Conferences).[187] It published a journal, *Granthalaya Sarvasvam* (est. 1915), that was a forum for news about the movement in India and abroad, and for literary and historical writing ("Upodghatamu" ("Preface"), *Granthalayam Sarvasvam*, vol. 1, no. 1). The Association counted influential patrons such as the ruler of the Pithapuram estate, Venkata Kumara Mahipati Suryarao, among its donors.[188] It also established ties with the library movement in Baroda and the All-India Library Association, because of the crossover of both Ayyanki Ramanayya and Suri Narasimha Sastry into the national library association. In addition to the journal it ran and the annual meetings it organized, the Association's work provided a substantial forum that helped bring together library representatives and petition the Madras government for allocating government funds to libraries.[189] In sum, the Andhradesa Library Association provided a platform for consolidating the burgeoning interest in libraries in the region.

A number of libraries were established between 1914 and 1925, perhaps influenced by the growing visibility of libraries in vernacular and English periodicals and newspapers, and by the growth in political organizing around the same time. According to estimates from the presidential speeches at the Andhradesa Library Association annual conferences,

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[187] Such as Chilakamarti Lakshmi Narasimham, Kasinathuni Nagesvararao, Chilakuri Virabhadrarao and others, most of whom identified as Telugu-speaking.
[188] Suryarao was also the primary patron for the Andhra Sahitya Parishat.
[189] *Andhra Granthalayam*, "The Andhra Desa Library Association," vol. 1, no. 2, 140-141.

the number of libraries in Andhra grew from 192 in 1916, two years after the library association was established, to 600 in 1920.[190] There were a total of 83 libraries in Hyderabad State by 1925.[191]

Unlike the library movement in Baroda, where the movement and the library association were supported by the ruler of Baroda State, Sayajirao Gaekwad, and the library movements in the United States and Britain, where taxes were used to run libraries, the movement in Andhra was run without substantial state support for the first three decades. Voluntary contributions for the movement came from wealthy patrons such as the Pithapuram king (who supported the association and the publication of the association's journal, *Granthalaya Sarvasvam*),[192] patronage on a smaller scale by individuals who established libraries in their villages and towns endowing them through personal funds,[193] and from individuals who raised money to build and maintain local libraries.[194]

In Telangana, the Nizam government financially supported some libraries through grants.[195] The Madras government's support for libraries came at a later stage, after petitions by Konda Venkatappaiah, who was elected to the Madras Legislative Assembly in 1937, and petitions by the Andhradesa Library Association.[196] Both in Hyderabad State

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190 Numbers cited in Kasinathuni Nagesvararao's speech to the third annual conference of the association in 1916 (Nagabhushanam 39) and in Vemavarapu Ramadasupantulu's address to the tenth conference in 1928 (Nagabhushanam 138).

191 *Indian Library Journal*, vol. 1, no. 3, 26. This number grew to 110 by 1927 (Jithendrababu 48).

192 Ayyanki Venkata Ramanayya, "Vinnapamu" ("Appeal") and list of patrons in *Granthalaya Sarvasvam*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1915.

193 Such as Utukuri Venkatasubbaraya Sastri who built and endowed the Saraswati Niketanam library in Vetapalem. According to a report in the *Indian Library Journal*, the building cost about Rs. 5000 and Venkatasubbaraya Sastri is believed to have endowed the money for the "benefit of the public at large in the shape of a commodious library building and well-assorted books and liberal endowment for its upkeep." *Indian Library Journal*, vol. 1, no. 3, 5.

194 For example, the Viresalingam library in Kumudavalli that Bhupatiraju Tirupatiraju contributed to. For more on Tirupatiraju and the library, see Adiseshuvu.

195 "The First Nizamrasthra Andhra Library Conference," *Indian Library Journal*, vol. 1, no. 3, 26.

196 Venkata Ramanayya 94; Vemavarapu Ramadas's presidential speech (Nagabhushanam 140). Ramadas states that as a member of the Legislative Assembly, Venkatappaiah petitioned the government to grant 20

and in the Madras Presidency, the allocation of funds by the government brought with it state censorship over the material in the libraries and their involvement in political movements.[197] In Hyderabad State, the Nizam's government issued an official order against libraries, perhaps to curtail the link between the library movement and the Andhra movement.[198]

The lack of reliable financial support for libraries seems to have produced a lot of anxiety for those involved in the Andhra library movement. This anxiety is evident from the recurring comments and suggestions offered in the presidential speeches about where and how to raise funds for libraries. The Andhradesa Library Association itself dealt with a paucity of financial resources, and Ayyanki Ramanayya contributed his own finances to the running of the journal *Granthalaya Sarvasvam*.[199] In spite of these efforts, the journal ran out of money and ceased publication between 1938 and 1941, during which time the Association published the bilingual (Telugu and English) journal *Andhra Granthalayam*.[200]

These organizational questions about raising funds and the administration of libraries were perhaps unique to the library movement, among the three movements I examine in this dissertation. The Telugu language debates elicited widespread interest and participation from scholars and laypeople; the latter's participation can be discerned from

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lakh rupees to the Andhra libraries every year.

[197] Vemavarapu Ramadas alleges that the Madras government's grants were not allocated to libraries where young people (running the libraries?) dressed in *khadi* (following the boycott on foreign manufactured goods) and to libraries that subscribed to magazines such as *Young India* (anticolonial journal published by M. K. Gandhi from 1919 to 1931) (Nagabhushanam 140).

[198] V. Venkatappayya, *Public Library System* 7; V. Venkatappayya, *Telugunata Granthalayayodhyamam* (*Library Movement in the Telugu Region*) 42. Venkatappayya states that the Andhra Jana Sangham played the same role in Telangana that the Andhra Library Association played in the Andhra region; hence this was probably an attempt by the Nizam's government to curtail the Jana Sangham's functioning (*Telugunata* 38).

[199] "Granthalaya Sarvasvamunaku Candalu" ("Donations to *Granthalaya Sarvasvam*"), *Granthalaya Sarvasvam*, vol. 1, no. 1.

[200] Vijaya Kumar 25-26; *Andhra Granthalayam*, "The Andhra Desa Library Association," vol. 1, no. 2, 140-141. *Granthalaya Sarvasvam* began publication again in 1948 and it continues to be published today by the Andhra Pradesh Library Association (the erstwhile Andhradesa Library Association).

letters that were written to different journals and newspapers of the time by people whose names do not appear elsewhere in the Telugu textual record and from the references to the many people who turned up at meetings held in support of the two forms of Telugu.

When institutions such as the Andhra Sahitya Parishat did emerge from the debates, they functioned within a more circumscribed locus. The Parishat was supported largely by the Pithapuram king and it did not run other libraries or institutions besides itself, even though it undertook activities that required financial support, such as the identification and acquisition of manuscripts. Perhaps because of this, the financial maintenance for the Parishat could be centralized in a private donor, whereas support for libraries could not be similarly centralized in the absence of the state (the Baroda library movement is a good example of this). In other words, private donors were necessary but not adequate for the scale on which the library movement functioned.

The Andhra movement involved conferences and appeals to the Madras government, but it did not maintain or run a network of offices which demanded constant upkeep, as libraries did. Even though the Andhradesa Library Association did not directly establish or run all the libraries that emerged through the movement, it represented the interests of others who ran them, and it served as a forum for reflecting on the movement at its annual conferences and through its journal.

Also distinct to the Andhra library movement was the degree to which libraries and people involved in the movement participated in the political movements that emerged simultaneously with it. Among these were the non-cooperation movement, the movement against foreign-manufactured goods (swadeshi movement), the Andhra movement and the

Quit India movement.[201] Libraries served as a site for meetings for these movements and as a site for storing and distributing textual material censored by the state.[202] A number of figures involved in the library movement seemed to welcome this close connection between libraries and other political movements.[203] However, this level of political involvement might have also led to a decline in the functioning of the libraries themselves. At least one of the presidential speeches delivered at the Andhradesa Library Representatives' Conferences states that some of the village libraries established as a part of the library movement began to languish when the civil disobedience movement was at its height in the Andhra region (between 1921 and 1923).[204]

In the absence of sustained attention to the relationship between libraries and the political movements of the time, it is difficult to arrive at a better understanding of what influence these movements had on the running of libraries. We know that both the Andhradesa Library Association and at least some of the libraries established during the movement survived into the 1950s and beyond, long after the culmination of the other political movements of the early twentieth century.

In 1956, the state of Andhra Pradesh was formed. Perhaps because of the strong links between the library movement and the Andhra movement, particularly in Hyderabad State, historians of the library movement mark it as spanning the years 1900 (close to the

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[201] V. Venkatappayya, *Telugunata* 22. Also see Duggirala Gopala Krishnayya, "Nationalism and the Library Movement," *Indian Library Journal*, vol. 1, no. 2, 9-17.

[202] Among these, Venkatappiah lists V. D. Savarkar's book on the 1857 revolt in British India (published 1909) that was translated into Telugu and distributed through the Andhra libraries, and Telugu writer Unnava Lakshmi Narayana's *Malapalli* (published 1922), both of which was banned by the colonial government. *Malapalli* is widely considered the first Telugu novel with a Dalit protagonist. V. Venkatappayya, *Telugunata* 26.

[203] Suri Narasimha Sastri states that modern Andhra libraries were established to spread political knowledge in the region and that the swadeshi (1905) and Home Rule movements (1917) reached villages because of libraries (Nagabhushanam 81-89).

[204] Opinion expressed by Vemavarapu Ramadas in his speech (Nagabhushanam 139).

establishment of Krishnadevaraya Bhasha Nilayam in Hyderabad (1901)) to 1956.[205] The libraries themselves continued to exist well into the late 1900s, with some of the libraries established during the movement extant today.[206]

However, the libraries no longer remain an active forum for a community to congregate in, or for the creation and sustenance of a public life; they exist largely as the surviving holders of textual archives from the early twentieth century, and they operate reading rooms and hold current collections of books and periodicals for a literate (even if not socially mobile) readership. Hence, after the decline of the movement, libraries in Andhra seem to have reverted to a more conventional role for libraries as textual repositories.

The textual was indeed an important concern for the Andhra library movement as well and the movement's engagement with the textual largely relied on an exclusionary idea of the vernacular that privileged Telugu over other regional languages. Even though Madras Presidency and Hyderabad State encompassed other linguistic regions and linguistic communities, none of the library journals established in the course of the Andhra library movement included writing in these other languages. Precedent for such a multilingual journal was available in the Baroda Library Association's journal, *Library Miscellany*, which featured writing in English, Marathi and Gujarati; Marathi had a significant presence in Gujarati-speaking Baroda State. *Andhra Granthalayam* (1939-1941) which briefly replaced *Granthalaya Sarvasvam* (the Andhradesa Library Association's journal) featured essays in English and Telugu, but neither journal, nor

[205] For example, Raju.
[206] Such as the Krishnadevaraya Andhra Bhasha Nilayam, Gowthami Granthalayam in Rajahmundry (est. 1898) and Saraswati Niketanam in Vetapalem (est. 1918).

Dharma Granthalaya Patrika (1924-1926), carried any writing in Tamil (which had a significant presence in Madras Presidency).[207] The journals were almost all exclusively Telugu, the speeches at the Library Association's annual conferences were delivered in Telugu, and the libraries emphasized collecting Telugu textual and epigraphic material, even if not exclusively.

Further, the library movement in general emphasized collecting and enabling access to Telugu texts. Texts from the movement reiterate that libraries should invest in and help propagate Telugu publishing, by subscribing to Telugu magazines and journals and buying Telugu language books.[208] This position stands in contrast to the acquisition and maintenance of books in Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi and Urdu in the Baroda Central Library.[209] The libraries in the Andhra movement prioritized collecting and enabling access to material in Telugu, Sanskrit and English but did not have plans in place for other vernaculars. The emphasis on collecting material in these three languages conveys the importance Sanskrit and English had come to acquire in the early twentieth century for Telugu scholars.

As I show in Chapter 1, scholars in the early twentieth century saw Sanskrit as the repository of Telugu's literary and cultural heritage. To ignore English language material in library collections at a time when English had become increasingly important for economic, occupational and social mobility would make libraries less attractive to its

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[207] All three journals were published in Madras Presidency: *Andhra Granthalayam* and *Granthalaya Sarvasvam* in Bezawada (Vijayawada) and *Dharma Granthalaya Patrika* in Kakinada.
[208] For instance, see Ayyanki Venkata Ramanayya's list of goals all libraries should have, which includes 'accruing all books in the Andhra language, and to the extent possible in Sanskrit and English.' Venkata Ramanayya, *Granthalaya Jyoti* 35.
[209] Mohun Dutt 6. We can attribute some of this difference to the differences in holdings between a central library and smaller libraries. However, in the essays and speeches from the Andhra library movement, there is much more attention to Telugu texts than a general attention to wider textual collections in other vernaculars.

patrons. The lack of similar attention to collections in other regional languages indicates that these other languages were not seen as similarly indispensable to the goal of educating Telugu speakers.

The emphasis on Telugu texts was certainly not unusual for the period, where the importance attributed to cultivating knowledge in one's own language (*swabhasha*) and the propagation of vernacular printing technologies and networks led to the proliferation of vernacular print material in Telugu and other languages. However, because of its emphasis on Telugu, in spite of the movement's orientation towards an unmarked common public (*janasamanyam*) and its desire for making knowledge available universally and freely, in its name, networks and imagination, the movement remained tied to and in service of the Andhra community (*jati*).[210]

This is despite important articulations within the movement of a more universal agenda. People within the movement explicitly stated that libraries should be open to all without discrimination on the basis of caste, gender, religion, etc., and the most famous lines from poet and dramatist Chilakamarti Lakshmi Narasimham's presidential speech at the first Andhradesa Library Representatives' conference urged those in the movement to make knowledge free and universal, as free and undiscriminating as the wind and the rain themselves.

While the library movement's treatment of the textual merits further attention (I engage it at length below), reducing the libraries that emerged from the movement to textual repositories does not do justice to the Andhra library movement's attempt to also build libraries into public institutions that were unlike any other available in the day. As

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[210] More on this below.

Newton Mohun Dutt, curator of libraries in Baroda State and author of *Baroda and Its Libraries* (1928), says in the book: "It appears that the Andhras (the Telugu-speaking inhabitants of Northern Madras) have developed quite a new type of library, incorporating in its organization amongst others the hoary indigenous institutions of the Hindu temple and the ancient village community and the modern public library" (54-55).

We have yet to account for the creation of libraries as institutions that combined the spiritual, aesthetic and epistemological roles attributed to temples with the communitarian roles attributed to village communities. All of these distinct functions were gathered together in library movement texts under the word "public."

Library Publics: Exclusory (*jati*) and Common (*janasamanyam*):

Though turn of the twentieth century library movements in India and elsewhere are designated as public library movements, within the movements, the term was not uncontested. In the United States and Britain, there were tussles over whether to designate libraries as 'public' or 'free' – with the former seen as lacking the unsavory intimations of charity that the latter word possessed – even while libraries were called 'public' because they did not charge a fee for usage, unlike mercantile and subscriber libraries.[211] There was also opposition to the provision of public services, including libraries, by the state.[212]

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[211] For instance, see the question about the use of the words "free public" in library names in the American Library Association's journal, *Library Journal* (266). In Great Britain, John Minto, librarian of Signet Library, Edinburgh attributes all misconceptions about public libraries to the use of the word 'free.' Speaking of the Public Libraries Act of 1855 in England which marked libraries as 'free', he states: "Public libraries are free just in the same sense in which the public streets and the lamps which light them are free – that is to say, they are maintained out of the rates for the benefit of the community, and no other charge is made for their use. We do not speak of free streets, but of public thoroughfares. Why, then, speak of free libraries?" (100-101).

[212] William Fredrick Poole documents this at least in one instance, attributing the opposition to "disciples of Herbert Spencer" (*Library Journal* 48).

In the United States, people expressed anxiety over the sociological consequences of enabling access to libraries for women and the working classes, even while unrestricted access for everyone was part of what made libraries 'public,' in contrast to libraries that were open only to specific groups of people (tradesmen or subscribers).[213] Hence, all the primary connotations of the 'public' – free, provided for by the state and open to everyone – were contested within the library movements.

In the Indian library movements, there is no palpable anxiety over designating libraries as free or over unrestricted access to them. In English texts such as the *Indian Library Journal* and texts from the Andhra and Baroda library movements, both words – public and free – were used in reference to libraries. In Telugu, libraries were designated as free and charitable (*dharma granthalayamulu*) and as catering to ordinary/common people (*janasamanyam*). However, libraries were not the first institutions to stake a claim to such a public. There were other institutions in Andhra that predated libraries and claimed to be public – in the sense of being open to everyone *and* discussing issues that had public relevance, such as literary and debating societies, native clubs and associations, all established in the mid-1800s.[214]

Libraries were public in both these senses: they were open to a common public, there was no criteria for, or price of admission and they sought to provide a space for activities that would generate wide interest, such as folk theater performances, gymnasiums, etc. Further, while libraries in other regions in India (Baroda for instance) were actively supported by the state, in the Andhra movement, as I show above, state

[213] Wiegand documents this history for American public libraries and shows how anxiety over the use of libraries by women and the working classes coalesced into debates about access to fiction, particularly novels, and influenced Melvil Dewey's cataloging choices.
[214] Kompalli 8-12.

support was limited and restrictive. When the state's role in public libraries was contested in the Andhra library movement, it was because it was restrictive rather than due to active opposition to the state as the provider of services. Hence, in the Andhra library movement, the publicness of libraries largely figured as a question of who has access to libraries, under what circumstances and what could be done to generate wider interest in them.

In the library movement conferences and journals, where people were articulating a vision for libraries in addition to addressing issues with running them, what we might think of as the public is invoked using words which are not entirely synonymous – people in the movement see libraries as serving both the Andhra *jati* and the *janasamanyam* – the former a more defined and hence exclusionary idea of community than the latter. Other references to the public also appear indeterminate because they refer to both the public ("public life"/*prajahita jivitam*) and the social ("service towards the society"/*sanghu seva*), and it is not clear that these phrases signify different things.

In an essay where he articulates the relationship between libraries and the social, Ayyanki Ramanayya declares that libraries are the main instruments for a "public life." He states, "only a library can cultivate (*doohadam*) a public life (*prajahita jivanam*). It can become the central place for all programs and movements that bring prosperity to the nation (*desabhyudaya karyamulu*)."[215] A more literal translation of "*prajahita jivanam*" would render it as a life (*jivanam*) that is oriented towards/in service of the good (*hita*) of the people (*praja*), giving us the more conventional meaning of public life – a life spent serving the public.

[215] Venkata Ramanayya, *Granthalaya Jyoti* 16.

This phrase, along with others such as "*paurajivitam*" and "*prajajivitam,*" was adopted in Telugu as a translation for the English phrase "public life," following the practice of similar translations in Bengal and Maharashtra.[216] However, in describing what such a public life entailed, *Andhra Patrika* editor, Challa Sesagiri Rao, makes the following claims in his essay, "Granthalayamulu-Paurajivitamu" ("Libraries-Public Life"):[217]

> Conducting things that are conducive to a public life every day, such as conversations, discussions, debates would lead to the blooming of principles (*adarsamulu*) in the common people (*prajasamanyam*). Eventually, these principles will result in action. In every village it is the library that should create (*osangu*) the desire for a public life. Members of the library should be the ones showing the way on political, social, moral reform (*samskarana*). It is the library that can emerge as the central place for all the movements that benefit the progress of the region-nation (*desam*). (307)

Further in the same essay, Sesagiri Rao attributes the failure of social reform and political movements to bring about widespread transformation to the lack of a public life, particularly one that has "the village as its base (*punadi*)." He states:

> It is because a public life that had the village as its base was not begun that the good different institutions (*pratisthapanas*), such as the regional conferences (*desiya mahasabhas*), social reform conference (*sabha*), tried to do for the region-nation (*desam*) did not happen. From the time the Congress accrued knowledge about political and social reform in villages, if it spread it through village associations and conferences (*sanghams* and *sabhas*), the people (*janulu*) would have gotten self-rule by now. Village panchayats would have been widespread across the region-nation. Our efforts would have progressed (*abhivrddhi*). Social reform would have spread intensely. Political and social reforms would not have become laughable (*hasyapadamu*) like they are now. Right now, public life is without support (*niradharamu*), like a pillar built without strengthening the base (*punadi*). Because of the establishment of libraries, every village can become a strong base for the region-nation (*desam*). All our national (*jatiya*) institutions (*pratisthapanalu*) can offer enduring help (*sasvata sahayam*) to the betterment (*onatya*) of our *desam*. But the seeds for a public life should all grow in the libraries. We will find no other institutions currently that are helpful for a public life.

[216] Challa Sesagiri Rao, "Granthalayamulu-Paurajivitamu" ("Libraries and Public Life"), *Granthalaya Sarvasvam*, vol. 1, no. 4, 306. See particularly the editor's footnote and the opening sentences of Sesagiri Rao's essay.

[217] *Andhra Patrika* was a Telugu newspaper that Kasinathuni Nagesvara Rao began as a weekly in 1908 (it was made a daily in 1914). It became one of the most significant Telugu newspapers of the time, commenting on and influencing discussions on all the major issues and movements of its time (Somasekhar 61-63).

> Libraries can bring such grand wishes (*mahasayamulu*) to fruition without any extravagance (*aadambaram*). (308)

In these passages, among the most substantial descriptions of a public life in Sesagiri Rao's essay, the author covers much of what others in the movement also say about libraries. He establishes a link between libraries and reform movements, whether political, social or moral; he sees libraries as generating the desire for a public life; he tasks libraries with organizing everyday events that would make common people act on the basis of principles libraries generate (presumably principles of reform); and he connects libraries to the betterment of the region-nation (*desam*) and progress within it. In sum, Sesagiri Rao sees the success of all the major issues of the time – self-rule, political independence, and social reform – as linked to libraries. He declares that without building this public life, none of the social or political movements underway in the country can come to fruition. Public life cannot germinate without libraries.

What do public libraries offer however that the institutions that preceded it or others that existed simultaneously with it could not? The only concrete distinction we can make on the basis of these passages is that libraries fulfill these tasks, generate a public life in, and hence build villages. There is a discernible emphasis on villages in many texts from the library movement, whether essays published in the journals associated with the movement or the presidential speeches delivered at the Andhra Library Association's annual meetings. It gives credence to N. M. Dutt's claim that the Andhra library movement was building libraries into an amalgamation of Hindu temples and village communities.

The public life that libraries could build is seen as rooted in developing villages and in the progress villages bring to the larger unit: region-nation. This then is one of the first intimations of a distinct idea of the public in the Andhra library movement: 'public'

(*janasamanyam*, *praja*) and 'public life' (*prajahita jivanam*) as they emerged in the movement indicate not only a general orientation towards amorphous others, but a specific orientation to the village, and hence to a hyper-local community.

The second emphasis in Sesagiri Rao's essay is on libraries as the bedrock of social and political reform. We have seen earlier that libraries played a role in the political movements of the time by offering space, people and ideological support for those movements. If there was a more defined idea of the political that emerged within the library movement, it was tied to the social. The 'social' (*sanghika*, *sanghu*) was being constituted within social reform movements that also predated public libraries by a few decades; from here it permeated the larger literary, intellectual and discursive field.[218]

Social reform in Andhra and the backlash against it form part of the origin story for the library movement. This story, as narrated by Ayyanki Ramanayya, sees the library movement beginning in social reformer Kandukuri Viresalingam's inability to find a space to deliver lectures on widow marriages in Rajahmundry in 1879.[219] This inability led Viresalingam to search for a lecture hall that would be useful for all people (*sarvajanulu*); he eventually built a space, which also encompassed his library, and established a trust

[218] Social reform movements in Andhra began in the mid-1800s. Vakulabharanam Ramakrishna (2013) locates the emergence of this social within older vernacular and English traditions of critique, including bhakti poetry in India and Andhra, and questions about caste and equality posed through British colonialism that was influenced by liberalism. He also situates the emergence of both modern literature and education systems in Andhra in relation to the social reform movements. The association of social reform movements with literature is not particular to the Telugu language; coming to the question from different theoretical orientations, Kaviraj; Yashaschandra; and Asani all explore the impact of social reform movements on Bengali, Gujarati and Sindhi literature respectively. See their essays collated in Pollock, *Literary Cultures in History*.

[219] Rajahmundry is a town in coastal Andhra that holds an important place in the development of the Telugu textual and public sphere in the twentieth century. It was the hometown of Viresalingam and the base for all his publishing and social reform activities. It was also close to Kakinada, where the Andhra Sahitya Parishat eventually set up its offices.

deed to ensure that this institution was "always going to be useful for everyone without differences of community (*jati*), religion (*matam*) and caste (*kulam*) (82)."[220]

This narrative lends poignancy and urgency to the library movement. Viresalingam and his wife, Rajalakshmi, indeed faced intense backlash for their active support of and involvement in the remarriage of young brahmin widows. They were ostracized from their caste community and had to take the support of the police to safeguard themselves and others as they performed the first widow marriage in their home in Rajahmundry. In this narrative then, Ramanayya situates libraries within the personal and political stakes of social reform. Libraries provide a space that not only promotes ideas of reform, but also protects from the backlash against them. Libraries were imagined as providing equality of access, without mirroring the divisions and hierarchies within the social space.

Ramanayya is not alone in linking libraries to social equality; Suri Narasimha Sastry also declares that library associations are the only institutions that make it possible for the "educated and uneducated, the fortunate and the poor, Hindus and Mohammedans, employed and unemployed, landlords and farmers" to gather together.[221] In other essays, Ramanayya emphasizes related but different aspects of the social, marking libraries as institutions that help create a feeling of solidarity (*sanghibhavam*) among people,[222] are invested in a piety of service (*seva dharmam*)[223] and help uplift the society (*sanghu samuddharana*).[224]

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[220] Venkata Ramanayya, *Granthalaya Jyoti* 81-82.
[221] Suri Venkata Narasimham, "Andhra Granthalaya Odhyamam" ("Andhra Library Movement"), *Granthalaya Sarvasvam*, vol. 1, no. 1, 7.
[222] "Instruments that help in advancing solidarity (*sanghibhavam*) and the good fortune of mutual acquaintance (*anonya paricaya bhagyamu*) such as temples (*dharmapathana mandirams*), libraries, museums (*vastupradarsana shalalu*) and other institutions should be established everywhere in the *desam*" (Venkata Ramanayya, *Granthalaya Jyoti* 172).
[223] Venkata Ramanayya, *Granthalaya Jyoti* 30.
[224] Venkata Ramanayya, "Granthalayamana Nemi? Adi Ceyyadagina Dharmamu Levvi? ("What are

The social here emerges as that which is distinct from everyday life, determined by caste communities (*jati*, the brahmin community's backlash against Viresalingam and Rajalakshmi). It signifies the library movement's attempt to offer a space that is communitarian but distinct from the sociality of caste-communities, which was determined by *jati* structures. It designates an attempt to cultivate a space free of the exclusions that mark a communitarian life. And this sense of the social has to be distinguished from *jati*, which stands for a concrete community held together by linguistic, religious and other ties, which the library movement was also in service of (Andhra *jati*).[225]

If the communitarian and the social intersect, they do so to the extent that both were marked by the impossibility of proposing a collective that was devoid of the religious. We see this in the Andhra library movement's harking back to temples as models for modern public libraries, and in the movement's adoption of practices and vocabulary that could not be completely divorced from religion, including creating space in libraries for folk theater performances replete with Hindu mythological stories (*harikathas* and *jangamakathas*), the perception that libraries were important for helping people accrue the four goals of Hindu life[226] and the recurring references to religiously ordained duty (*dharma*) in library movement texts.

These then are the specific connotations that accrue to the 'public' in the Andhra library movement: a hyper-local community, a communitarian space that provided an alternative to the sociality of caste-communities and a specific orientation towards a bounded community (Andhra *jati*). These ideas are indicated in Telugu through the use of

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Libraries? What Are their Duties?"), *Granthalaya Sarvasvam*, vol. 1, no. 1, 10.

[225] This is perhaps the sense of community that comes closest to Anderson's concept of the community imagined in homogeneous time.

[226] Venkata Ramanayya, *Granthalaya Jyoti* 35.

words that connote what we know as the public (*praja*-) and the social (*sanghu*) in English. We have yet to deal with the most common invocations of the public in the library movement – *prajasamanyam* and *janasamanyam* – both of which combine the collective noun for 'people' (*praja*, *jana*) with the word for the common or the ordinary (*samanyam*).

People (*praja*) and Public (*prajasamanyam*):

Linguistically and conceptually, the collective nouns *praja*/*jana* are a part of the 'public' as it was invoked in twentieth century vernacular discourse. This is evident in words such as '*prajasamanyam*' or the phrase *samanya praja*, which appear countless times in Telugu essays from the era. However, it is important to note that '*praja*,' particularly in relation to language, does not always denote the public in the sense in which I explore it below.

The word '*praja*' particularly indicates the importance 'people' as a category began to have for thinking language and literature at this time. Other scholars have foregrounded the following aspects of people in relation to language: the constitution of people as a category of language speakers in the colonial census, with an emphasis on speaking and on one language (usually the mother tongue) over other kinds of linguistic proficiencies and modalities;[227] the constitution of people as speakers of a particular language who also lay claim to the region in which the language is spoken;[228] and related to the above, the emergence of linguistic identities and the increasing invocation of people as speakers (of a mother tongue) in political discourse.

There are two other connotations of the 'people' in relation to language that I want to emphasize here. Neither is particular to the Telugu language, but I use instances from Telugu to indicate a broader trend. In the writings of scholars such as Gidugu Ramamurti

[227] Bhattacharya; Ahmed.
[228] Mitchell.

and Jayanti Ramayya Pantulu, who were central to the Telugu language debates, ‘people’ emerges as a category opposed to the learned (pandits, scholars), defined by the lack of intergenerational access to linguistic-literary training and education that the latter had.[229] It is the desire to reach, educate and (especially in Ramamurti’s case) write about these people – the ‘uneducated masses’ – that drives the different positions on language that emerge in those debates.

‘People’ also signifies a shift from attributing the creation of language to writers and grammarians to attributing it to the users of language, people not similarly trained in literature or grammar. Though in the twentieth century the emergence of explicit claims about language on the basis of the *praja* is widespread, the idea of a non-textual and non-specialist origin for language is not particular to this period. It is available in the early grammatical traditions as well, as is evident from Madhav Deshpande’s notes on grammar-independent and grammar-dependent views within the Sanskrit grammatical tradition.[230] Vernacular textual production in the twentieth century is premised on the particular shifts I remark on above. These texts and the concerns they sought to address – chiefly about education, literacy and citizenship – instrumentalize language as a means to reach the *praja*. This brings in a more particular and instrumental relationship to the people as a collective than is denoted by the public.

Words for the public which emerge in the twentieth century (*prajasamanyam*, etc.) gather the people into a collective. But ‘*praja*’ in relation to language does not connote

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[229] For instance, see Gidugu Ramamurti’s essays on “Praja Sahityam” (“People/Literature,” or “People’s Literature”) and Jayanti Ramayya Pantulu’s *A Defense of Literary Telugu*, especially 15-17. “Praja sahityam” as “people’s literature” is taken up after Ramamurti by Telugu Marxist writers who gave the word “*praja*” a distinctly Marxist orientation to refer to the emergent proletariat.
[230] Deshpande, “The Changing Notion of Sistah.”

only the public (opposed to the private) and the collective (brought into being by textual and non-textual addresses to it). Language – particularly the mother tongue – is seen as what is intimately familiar to its speakers, and hence it invokes almost a primordial familiarity that makes singular as much as it collectivizes. In these senses, because of the importance of language to the moment and the movements I engage here, it is necessary to see 'people' as distinct from the 'public,' especially in the inclusivity that the public connotes.

The words that invoke the public – *prajasamanyam* and *janasamanyam* – were not particular to Telugu or to the library movement; they were in use in other Indian languages (such as Malayalam and Hindi),[231] and in the Telugu sphere, they were also frequently used during the Telugu language debates. In all instances, the words indicate an amorphous mass of people, designated as common, ordinary and opposed implicitly to those who were not (for instance, the patrons of the library movement).

In the library movement, the word was also perhaps implicitly opposed to the more bounded and structured idea of people available within caste communities. Hence, the 'common public' represented the unmarking of people otherwise slotted into categories of caste, religion and community, and for this reason, the words *prajasamanamyam* and *janasamanyam* share in the connotations of the 'social' that bring the ethic of social reform into the library movement.

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[231] See below for Malayalam. Orsini says this about the difference between the use of the terms '*sarvasadharan*' and *jati* in the Hindi sphere: "…*sarvasadharan*, a term generally used at the time to stress the openness and inclusivity of the 'public' (rather than the more cultural and community-loaded term *jati*, which instead emphasized internal unity). *Sarvasadharan* could be used in a reformist sense…or in a radical sense, to oppose restricted or hierarchical understandings of public" ("Booklets and *Sants*: Religious Publics and Literary History" 443-444).

While the three connotations of the public I delineate above do not necessarily contradict each other, '*janasamanyam*' and its counterpart '*prajasamanyam*' are distinct from a bounded and local community. These words introduce an aspect into the library movement (the common) that is not adequately rendered as the communitarian.

Reading the use of the same word in Malayalam writer, K. Ramakrishna Pillai's texts, Udaya Kumar states that even though a word signifying the English word 'public' was available in Malayalam (*pothu*), Pillai adopted the use of the word '*janasamanyam*' and '*pothujanam*' (also common or general + people) when referring to the public "without a concrete form" (83).[232] In arguing for the significance of this linguistic move, Kumar states the following:

> The word '*pothujanam*' does not work in the same way as '*pothunirathu*' (public road) or '*pothumaramathu*' (public works), as *janam* [people] already designates an entity that is inclusive and general. The prefix seems to add an extra dimension of commonality: as if the concept of the people were being intensified, or raised to a higher power, reemphasizing its characteristic as the space of the common. The people, a dispersed entity, is conceived here not as a coherent collective as in Pillai's earlier formulation '*janasangham*' but as gathered together in its exposedness to itself and in a shared recognition of its commonality (82-83).

The primary distinction Kumar makes above is between the generality of 'people' (*janam*), 'people' as a "coherent collective" (*janasangham*) and the "commonality" of 'people' in the phrase *pothujanam*, which he has already shown is synonymous with *janasamanyam* (above). He rightly remarks that these last two formulations intensify the concept 'people' by adding the common to an already general entity. He equates the general with the inclusive.

[232] Pillai's texts are roughly contemporaneous with the Andhra library movement; they span the decade and a half from 1901 to Pillai's death in 1916.

The distinction between the coherence and collectivity of *janasangham* and these other concepts (*janasamanyam*, *pothujanam*) is clear. The idea of people as such a collective is central to what we recognize as social and political movements, and outside of the Malayalam sphere, it reflects in the names and forms of address adopted by these movements. For instance, the agitation for the rights of Telugu speakers within the Nizam's dominion was conducted under the aegis of the Andhra Jana Sangham. Here, and in the library movement as well, 'people' figure as a collective that can be addressed, mobilized and collectivized.

While the commonality of the people (*janasamanyam*) is distinct from the call to action that *janasangham* implies, it is not entirely clear – either from the Andhra library movement or from Kumar's reading of Ramakrishna Pillai – what the difference is between the general and the common and what each imparts to the concept of the people. In other words, we have to ask what does the common intensify the concept of the people into, and how does this differ from 'people' as an already general concept?

Drawing this question from Kumar's essay but asking it of the Andhra library movement, we arrive at a concept that is mediated by the social as it is described above. The common intensifies 'people' by evoking both the register of general inclusivity that any address to the people brings *and* the register of equality that comes from unbracketing people from categories of caste, community and religion.

The invocation of the common people in the library movement is not only the invocation of a generalized, inclusive collective; it is also the creation of a collective that is not otherwise explicitly marked. In its orientation towards this common people, the library movement was not merely reiterating the common as it was already available in

vernacular discourse; it was creating the common by generating a public, communitarian life through libraries.

In foregrounding an ethic of equality for libraries – both in the policy of non-discrimination with regard to who uses libraries, and in the desire to make libraries serve first and foremost the common people – the movement was orienting libraries towards those who were not generally served by them, particularly the unlettered.[233] In adopting such an orientation, the movement was able to create a common that did not necessarily come into being with other contemporary references to the *janasamanyam*. The chief distinction is from the Telugu language debates, which also repeatedly invoked the common people but excluded certain versions of the common from the realm of proper textual Telugu, creating a linguistic space that was both common (because it was vernacular) and not.

The linguistic common is also opposed to libraries as the space of the common in another sense. Our existing ideas of the 'public', including Kumar's concept of the common public, assign a critical role to the textual in producing the public.[234] The library movement also reiterates the relationship between the textual and the public by emphasizing the textual in its journals and conferences. However, the relationship of library publics to the textual has to be revisited in light of the movement's emphasis on the common people and its attempts to reach this public through adopting non-textual methods.

[233] For instance, "It is the duty of libraries to spread knowledge (*vigyanam*) even to people who cannot read" (Venkata Ramanayya, *Granthalaya Jyoti* 145).

[234] Kumar sees Pillai as concertizing the non-concrete public (*janasamanyam*) though the performative address of texts, newspapers in this case (83-84). Other theorists who do the same include Habermas; Anderson; and Warner.

Textual Publics:

There were obvious and strong relationships between the textual and the common public in the Andhra library movement. As I have shown above, the movement was invested in collecting and preserving Telugu texts and in enabling access to them. Speeches at the annual conferences and essays published in the association's journals regularly comment on the important role for libraries in preserving textual and other material that was already available, whether these were printed texts, manuscripts or historical artefacts such as inscriptions, coins, etc., because of the paucity of other such preservation efforts.[235]

Here as well, there is particular emphasis on the village, on libraries collecting, recording and preserving the village's history and its historical artefacts and documents.[236] There was some interest in access to English and Sanskrit texts, but there was no widespread interest in making other vernacular texts available. This was one of the instances within the library movement where one could argue that the Andhra and Telangana regions were imagined to be linguistically homogeneous.

In addition to these efforts, the library movement also invested in textuality on a different register. Telugu scholars envisaged the library movement playing a crucial role in developing Telugu textuality, particularly literary textuality. For instance, Ayyanki Ramanayya proposed that every library should have a journal that published book reviews

[235] For instance, Ayyanki Ramanayya's speech on the creation of public libraries cites the acquisition of all books in the Andhra language, books in Sanskrit and English, and the acquisition and protection of palm leaf texts, inscriptions, coins, etc. among the primary goals for all libraries. Venkata Ramanayya, *Granthalaya Jyoti* 35. Vanguri Subbarao urges libraries to step in to save decaying manuscripts (*Granthalaya Sarvasvam*, vol. 1, no. 1, 16-17).

[236] Venkata Ramanayya, in the essay quoted above, states that every library should collect stone and copper inscriptions, old idols, etc. that are available in its village and surrounding villages, and the library should record the village's history. He declares: "One who doesn't know his own *kula-gotram* [caste-lineage] is not worthy of respect, similarly villagers who do not know the history of their own village are not worthy of respect" (*Granthalaya Jyoti* 29), hence articulating a place for the village within the lineages that grant identity and social space to a person.

by the president of the library, thereby inserting libraries into the emerging world of contemporary literary criticism.[237]

Further, the association's journal, *Granthalaya Sarvasvam*, was imagined as a forum for literary discussions and for publishing well-researched essays on history, language, literature and other arts. This comes across in the prefaces to the first issue of the journal and in the many literary pieces (particularly poetry) and literary essays that the journal published, making it almost indistinct from a literary journal such as the Andhra Sahitya Parishat's *Andhra Sahitya Parishat Patrika*.[238]

Granthalaya Sarvasvam's interest in the textual and the literary is in keeping with the general interest in vernacular textuality at the turn of the twentieth century.[239] It is possible that in their vision, the journal's editors were also modelling the journal on the Baroda Library Association's *Library Miscellany*, which in addition to publishing essays on libraries and the library movements in English also published surveys of literature in both Marathi and Gujarati. From the extant issues of both journals, *Granthalaya Sarvasvam* appears to have had a more explicit interest in historical research and writing.

In distinction from both these journals, the English journal published from 1924 by the All India Public Library Association, *Indian Library Journal*, reads like a manual for setting up libraries and running them; this journal's content was limited to proceedings from the conferences of the regional and national public library associations, profiles of

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[237] Venkata Ramanayya, *Granthalaya Jyoti* 49-50. Another essay in the first volume of *Granthalaya Sarvasvam* states: "Growth (*abhivrddhi*) of language is the primary means of prosperity (*abhyudayam*) for the nation. For the growth (*abhivrddhi*) of language, it is libraries that are the primary instrument." *Granthalaya Sarvasvam*, vol. 1, no. 1, 63.

[238] *Andhra Sahitya Parishat Patrika* was the official journal of the Andhra Sahitya Parishat. It began publication in 1914 and focused on essays on literature, literary writing, literary history, criticism and historical and etymological analyses of Telugu and Sanskrit.

[239] This is what we know as the constitution and proliferation of the vernacular public sphere, through the Habermasian concept of the public sphere.

libraries from across regions, essays on the library movements and on issues facing those running libraries, and reprints from the *American Library Journal*.

Granthalaya Sarvasvam also demonstrates an interest in the workings of the library movement: like the other library journals, it also published profiles of libraries, speeches from the library association meetings, essays on the workings of libraries etc., but it supplemented these with a focus on literary and historical writing, and this is what makes it nearly indistinguishable in content from the literary journals of its time. Its focus on the literary is evident in a preface published in the journal's first issue. In this text, an appeal that introduced the journal to its readers, Ayyanki Ramanayya states the following as the locus of the journal:

> Essays (*vyasamulu*) that show ways to improve (*abhivrddhi*) Andhra literary scholarship (*sarasvatam*) and that inform about the life histories of great men have been written by capable people. Essays which have historical research can be found in every issue. Efforts have been made to critically evaluate the literary appropriateness (*oucityam*) of characters in old and new texts. We have given a venerable place to Andhra speech (*vani*) that is ringing with new tunes. By publishing melodious songs, we have created a budding desire (*ankurita dohadamu*) for the progress of modern poetry. Literary discussion (*sahitya carca*) that is dignified (*udaattamu*) and beautifully ordered (*samanvyaya sundaram*) has been begun. We are giving opportunities for affectionately popularizing (expanding) (*abhimaana prasaaramu*) forgotten poets and a textual world that has become dirty. We have endeavored to make songs of aesthetically pleasing (*rasaramaniyam*) poets and devotees from companion languages heard in our own language. We have also tried a little to bring to life painting which is a natural relative (*sahaja bandhavi*) of literature (*sahityam*).
>
> We are not unaware that these are tasks to be taken up in a linguistic world that has attained the highest stage of its proficiency (*praveenya paramaavadhi*). But, we are subject (*vasam*) to the belief that such a beginning can bring the contemporary condition (*bhavam*) to a fever.[240]

The emphasis here is on texts, especially on essays about literature and history. The preface demonstrates an unmistakable investment in vernacular textuality, in the genres,

[240] "Vinnapamu" ("Appeal"), *Granthalaya Sarvasvam*, vol. 1, no.1.

conversations and attitudes that make the vernacular textual. It envisions contributing to the language attaining its 'highest proficiency.' This vision comes through in the emphasis in the preface on literary scholarship, biographies, critical evaluations of texts, literary discussions, rediscovering forgotten poets, and on reinstating a textual world that has become 'dirty.' There is also attention to songs in Telugu and translations of songs from other vernacular languages, and on painting – all of which are imagined to contribute to the strengthening of a literary, textual world.

The explicit focus on song over poetry and on other arts that are allied with literature, such as painting, introduce a desire to make textual what isn't already available as (written) text. The language of scholarship is given not as Telugu but as Andhra – *Andhra sarasvatam*, *Andhra vani* – a designation that ties the journal's vision for contemporary Telugu textuality with an investment in Telugu's historical ties with Sanskrit, its pre-modern textuality and in the regional provenance of the language.

The Andhra library movement, like the journal, invoked the textual against this familiar horizon of region, language and people by articulating an indelible link between the *jati* and vernacular texts. Other texts in the movement articulate this link in two ways. On one hand, speakers at the annual conferences of the library association state that libraries help preserve knowledge, attributing to libraries a role similar to that played by the emergence of script at an earlier time in the development of language.[241] They argue that script helped stabilize and preserve knowledge beyond the life of the particular community that accrued the knowledge and the period in which it was accrued.[242]

[241] For instance, Kasinathuni Nagesvararao's address to the third Andhradesa Libraries Conference in 1916 (Nagabhushanam 29-44) and Vikramadeva Varma's address to the fifth Andhradesa Libraries Conference in 1918 (Nagabhushanam 58-77).
[242] Kasinathuni Nagesvararao's address to the third Andhradesa Libraries Conference (Nagabhushanam 30).

The speakers also locate script within a linguistic prehistory – they see script as preceded by non-text-based genres in which people preserved and transmitted knowledge (such as the oral transmission of the Vedas). These speeches situate libraries at the end of the evolution of language from orality to script to texts, and see libraries as contemporary spaces, emerging at the end of that evolution, that will accumulate and preserve all knowledge about the *jati*.[243] The emphasis on script in these speeches follows a fairly conventional perspective that attributes civilizational development to languages with a script, hence extending the reciprocal constitution of language and communities. This attribution renders communities without a script as 'uncivilized' or as located at the lower end of the civilizational scale.

Hence, the Andhra library movement located libraries within a civilizational discourse that hinged on script and constituted *jati* as a community that was reliant on texts. In the absence of texts, this community would not persevere. When *jati* is invoked as community in this context, it signified a community whose identity came from textual language and the region, linking libraries to the memorialization of a defined community in language. The constitution of *jati* as a religious, regional and linguistic community is not particular to the Andhra library movement. Of the other movements of its time, both the Telugu language debates and the Andhra movement invoke *jati* in this manner.

However, in the language debates, the concept of the common public (*janasamanyam*) was also marked by and imbricated in *jati* to an extent where it is possible to argue that the debates did not have a conception of the public that was not already

[243] See especially Gadde Rangayyanaidu's speech at the ninth Andhradesa Libraries Conference in 1925 (Nagabhushanam 122a-132). Also see Panuganti Venkata Ramarayanigaru's address to the second Andhradesa Libraries Conference in 1915 (Nagabhushanam 18-20); and Nagesvararao's address (Nagabhushanam 29-30).

implicated in the communitarian connotations of *jati*. There is no outside to *jati* in the debates because even in their attempts to make Telugu transcend the particularities of region- and caste- based speech patterns, Telugu scholars constructed a homogeneous Andhra *jati*, making non-Hindu and lower caste uses of language external to this community.

In the Andhra library movement, on the other hand, because of the particular connotations that the concept of the common public accrues in the movement, neither the common nor the communitarian remain limited to *jati*. Going further, given the simultaneous invocation of both *jati* and *janasamanyam* in the movement, we could also argue that in its imagination of libraries as common spaces, the library movement was perhaps bringing the concept of *jati* significantly closer to the concept of an unmarked common public.

In light of the above, what do we make of the attention to the non-textual in the Andhra library movement? The movement opens up this realm by making space for the performative, the aesthetic, and a leisurely spatial experience of libraries. Even when the movement had a clear focus on texts and a textual public, it also articulated a distinction between knowledge, literacy and education. It recognized the limitations of the education system and the limitations of texts in making people knowledgeable, especially given the high percentage of illiteracy in the common public the movement was oriented towards. In recognizing these limitations, the movement was perhaps offering something outside the frameworks available in its own time for thinking what education meant and for rethinking its conflation with literacy.

The non-textual emerges in the library movement in various ways, some of which are predictable, particularly the turn to orature – using audio-visual means such as cinematographs to communicate information, allocating readers to read out aloud to the unlettered and making space for folk theater performances and lectures in libraries. All of these attempts use the oral to constitute the textual.

Part of the distinction between knowledge and literacy emerges from these attempts. "We can make a man knowledgeable without making him literate," states Ayyanki Ramanayya before going on to list other means to impart knowledge, such as reading out aloud, the use of cinematographs, etc.[244] Orature in this regard is already implicated in the textual publics of the vernacular sphere.[245] However, there is a kernel of a distinction between the two, the active and literate participation commanded by one and the other that does not require active or literate participation as a precursor to the public.[246]

With these forms of orature, we arrive at a non-script-based version of a public that is still firmly textual in its constitution. However, there were other methods adopted by libraries, or envisaged by them, that do not quite fall within the realm of inattentive participation in the textual public. These included, for instance, the introduction of gymnasiums and games in libraries, attention to spatially designing library buildings such that they amplified a leisurely, aesthetic and pleasurable experience, hosting regional-national festivals, patronizing the arts – such as painting – and the general goal to have libraries assist in people achieving the four goals of human life (*purusharthas*).

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[244] Venkata Ramanayya, *Granthalaya Jyoti* 12.
[245] Orsini, "Booklets and *Sants*" 436n6.
[246] This is the distinction that Warner helps us think with his argument that "mere attention" constitutes the public (60-61).

All of these bring in elements that are not textual in our general understanding of textual publics; they are partly ephemeral (festivals at libraries), and they render the common public not just as readers – either the readers addressed by library journals or the readers who come to libraries to access texts, oral or written. In a movement that was also clearly committed to the textual and the public, these elements offer a spatial rather than a performative concretizing of the public, and hence extend the public that the movement was also creating through the conferences, public discourses and journals that it participated in and organized. These elements make the public multi-dimensional, by rendering common people not only as readers, evidenced in the opening up of other layers of experience and participation in public space – elements that are aesthetic, spiritual, physical and leisurely. The library movement then was investing both in the common public and in public space, bridging the public that one could claim right of access to (Kumar's public roads) with the public that had to be created and concretized before it could be addressed.

Conclusion

In January 2019, following the screening of a documentary on the aftermath of communal violence in a town in Northern India, an audience member reflected on the everyday acts of othering that she encountered as a young Muslim growing up in Hyderabad, the city where the screening took place. For instance, she said, her school put down Urdu as her mother tongue in their official documentation, even after she told them that her mother tongue was Telugu, not Urdu. The implication was not lost on anybody in the room – the perceived lack of fit between the audience member's religious identity and her linguistic identity. From the sigh of disappointment rather than surprise that filled the room, it was evident however that this perception was neither new nor unexpected.[247]

The constitution of religious identities is not unfamiliar to anybody who studies modern Indian languages and their histories, especially languages such as Hindi and Urdu. It is one of the more common tropes which, along with colonialism and its impact on native language users and scholars, transformations in education in modern India, and the emergence of the vernacular public sphere, has formed an indelible part of how we have theorized these languages. From these histories and from inhabiting these languages, it is evident that though religion, community and identity cannot be reduced only to language, language is a significant element in the formation of these collectives.

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[247] The documentary in question, *The Colour of My Home/Yeh Mera Ghar* by filmmakers and activists Farah Naqvi and Sanjay Barnela, tracks what happened to people who were displaced by the communal violence in Muzaffarnagar in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh in September 2013. Muzaffarnagar was an exceptional instance in the history of communal violence in independent India because of the number of people displaced as a result of it – between 51,000 (Khyati 11) and 75,000 (Mander et al. 40) people, most of whom were Muslims fleeing their villages and towns. This displacement is ongoing – a majority of the people who fled have not returned to their villages, nor do they see a possibility for return – one of the more poignant narratives in Naqvi and Barnela's film. It is also reportedly the largest such displacement in India after the partition of India and Pakistan (Khyati 2).

The Telugu language has not previously been examined as a site for the formation of exclusionary identities, especially those that pertain to religion. Within South Asian Studies, our understanding of language's role in this process has focused on the histories of Hindi and Urdu, with some attention to how similar trajectories have played out in Marathi and Bengali. In my dissertation, I have argued that the emergence of Telugu as a modern vernacular cannot be understood without its simultaneous constitution as a religiously homogeneous language.

Unlike Hindi and Urdu, the manner of this constitution was for the most part tacit – in the movements and debates I examine in this dissertation, religion was not an explicit organizational locus for Telugu and the public discourses in and about it. However, the imagination of a monolithic Hindu community and the constitution of Telugu as the language of this community is palpable in the Andhra movement, the Telugu language debates and also to some extent in the public library movement (especially in the rationale for starting the Krishnadevaraya Andhra Bhasha Nilayam in Hyderabad). It is this history that makes it possible for Telugu to be cast in contemporary times as Hindu, for Muslim and Telugu to appear as contradictory invocations.

Such constitution happens as Telugu scholars were debating other things, primarily as they were attempting to create and participate in a public discourse and space for Telugu, as they were 'making Telugu modern,' and reinventing literary tradition and education for a new public. The concepts through which I show the exclusionary emerge in language – *jati*, *swabhasha* and *gramyam* – are linguistic concepts. These concepts are important not only because they signify the interweave of the social and the linguistic, but also because they help us attend to the vernacular itself as constituted by the exclusionary. It is this idea

of the exclusionary, premised on the pejorative, that the movement between the low and the common in the vernacular helps us think.

While this is a dissertation about Telugu, the concepts that I engage here are also invoked in other Indian languages. At least two of these concepts (*jati* and *swabhasha*) played a significant role in discourses in these languages on the nation, community and history. This resonance makes it possible and necessary to examine the broader constitution of modern Indian vernaculars. I do not claim that these concepts take the same trajectories in other languages, but existing scholarship shows us that the locus within which they emerge is similar to the case of Telugu.

To the extent that there is a different staking of the common, it lies in how the public library movement thought the common public (*janasamanyam*). Even here the other senses of the common inhere. However, though it remains tied to the linguistic and the textual, *janasamanyam* begins to move away from the vernacular common as it emerges in the other two movements. The distinct concept of the "common public" that emerges in the public library movement in Andhra and Telangana edges away from the exclusionary and thus represents a potentially transformative "open" common.

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