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**SANSKRIT KI RITI,
MATTUR KI VARTAMAAN STITHI**



**SANSKRIT KI RITI,
MATTUR KI VARTAMAN STITHI**



DISCOVER INDIA PROGRAM

2019-20

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work incorporated in this report entitled “Sanskrit Ki Riti, Mattur Ki Vartaman Stithi” submitted by the undersigned Research Team was carried out under my mentorship. Such material as has been obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

The Sanskrit language is an ancient language that has played a very important role in shaping the Indian history, literature and traditions. It is slowly moving into the category of the declining languages. Interestingly, this is not the case in Mattur, a village in Karnataka, popularly associated with the phrase ‘The Sanskrit village’ in the world of media. But the extent of the truth in this claim is questionable. This report aims to explore the possibility of a ‘hype’ by the media while mainly highlighting the everyday usage of Sanskrit, if it is used, in various situations in Mattur. Alongside the hype, this report also seeks answers to the various gaps in the existing literature, some of which are- the sociolinguistic situation at Mattur, the status of women and minorities and their extent of knowledge in Sanskrit, the contribution of Samskrita Bharati, organization that aims to preserving Sanskrit, the government policies and their contribution towards the language -if any and the role of the Sankethi community in Mattur. Data to support this study has been collected by using both primary and secondary data collection methods. Primary data was collected using three methods - oral history, semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. Secondary data was mainly obtained through - books, scholarly articles and newspaper articles. The field research in Mattur revealed deeper insights on the various aspects of this study and fostered a deeper understanding of the village and the role of the Sanskrit language in its entirety.

Keywords: Sanskrit Language, Mattur, Hosahalli, Culture, Media Hype, Sociolinguistics

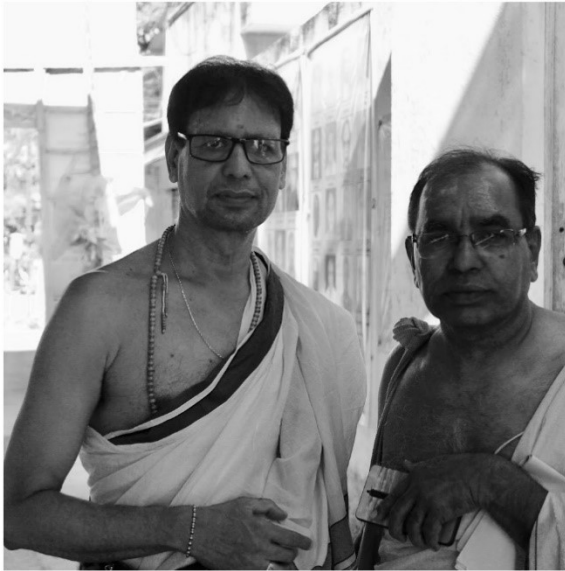
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Chapter I: Introduction



न चोरहार्यं न च राजहार्यं न भ्रातृभ्राज्यं न च भारकारि।

व्यये कृते वर्धते एव नित्यं विद्याधनं सर्वधनप्रधानम्॥

It cannot be stolen by a thief.

It cannot be taken away by a King.

It cannot be divided among brothers.

It does not cause load. It always increases when spent.

The wealth of knowledge is the greatest of all wealth.

Sanskrit has played an important role in maintaining continuity within the Indian Civilization. It was spoken and used in all areas of India excluding some parts of South India. Tamil has been autonomous in the southern region of India for customs and communication. In other regional languages, the influence of Sanskrit can be observed in its script and words.

Communication has made survival easier for humans and with the help of language, we have made sense of how to confer our thoughts in an arrangement of sounds that correspond to a particular meaning. Language creates communities as well as a sense of belonging within society. It can be said that a language is a tool that makes it easier for one to bond with others through friendships, companionships and cultural ties. Certain cultures and traditions are common between those who speak the same dialect. It can thus be concluded that language is deeply rooted in one's identity and various idiosyncrasies.

Sanskrit is deeply rooted in Indian Culture. It is considered sacred as prayers and other rituals are performed in Sanskrit. However, there is a significant decline in the language as its use is limited to rites and rituals. The number of people that speak Sanskrit on a day to day basis has reduced in India. ("Sanskrit Least Spoken Of India's 22 Scheduled Languages, Hindi Remains The Most Spoken One," 2018)

However, that is not the case for Mattur, a village in Karnataka near the Shimoga district. The media reports claim that in Mattur, Sanskrit is spoken on a daily basis. Mattur gets a lot of attention from the media and is reported to be the 'Sanskrit Village' even though there are many other villages in India that have a large Sanskrit speaking population.

Historical background of Mattur

Mattur is a village located on the banks of the river Tunga in Karnataka. It is known as the ‘Sanskrit Village’ of India. It is just 8 kilometers from the city of Shimoga. Several blogs and articles written on websites like Economic Times, NDTV, BBC and The Better India state that Mattur is a village in which every single person can speak Sanskrit and the most fascinating thing about this village is that it is located in Karnataka, wherein the most widely spoken language is Kannada, which is not an Indo-European language, but rather a Dravidian one. There are multiple reasons as to why Mattur is popularly known as the ‘Sanskrit Village’.



Map 1: Map of Mattur

Source: Google Maps

The Sanketi Brahmins are a community of Brahmins who migrated to Karnataka from Kerala 800 years ago. ‘Sanketi’ is a dialect of Sanskrit. It is a mixture of several languages - Sanskrit, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam. During the 16th Century, King Krishna Devaraya had gifted the twin villages - Mattur and Hosahalli to the Sanketi Brahmins to make sure that the language, Sanskrit is preserved (Viswanathan, 2013). Children become the focus when it comes to preserving a language and hence they begin to learn the Vedas at the age of 10. Your Story, an entrepreneurship blog even mentioned that all the villagers can speak ‘fluent’ Sanskrit. This is how the language is sustained and perpetuated, from one generation to the next, through schooling.



Image 1: An overview of Mattur

Source: Discover India Program 2019-20

In 1981, Samskrita Bharathi conducted a workshop in Mattur for the people who are interested in learning the language. This could be the possible starting point where the people of Mattur showed interest in preserving the language. Samskrita Bharathi is an organization that was founded in 1981 with a mission to continue preserving the Sanskrit language and making sure that the texts, traditions and anything related to Sanskrit is preserved. Their goal is to teach and propagate Sanskrit irrespective of caste, religion, gender and the native language they speak ("About Samskrita Bharati", n.d.). Until then, Sanskrit was the language of upper caste Brahmins only.

Demographics of Mattur

Mattur is a village located in the Lingsugur sub-district of the Raichur district of Karnataka on the banks of the river Tunga. The local language is Kannada but the people of Mattur also know Sanskrit and Sankethi. The village is 8 kilometers away from Shimoga, which is the nearest town. According to the census data from 2011, the population of the village is 2864 out of which 1454 people are men and 1410 are women. Scheduled castes constitute 27.7% of the total population and scheduled tribes constitute 10.61% ("Mattur Population - Raichur, Karnataka", 2011).

Villagers practicing agriculture amount to 30% of the total population. The village has all the basic facilities like a bank, a post office and a primary health care center (Srikanth, 2001). There are three schools in Mattur and also a Veda Pathshala that provide primary and secondary education, giving equal emphasis to providing the students with all-rounded education.

In 2011, the literacy rate of Mattur was 60.83%, which is lower compared to the literacy rate of Karnataka as a whole which is 75.36%. The literacy rate of females was 46.62% and the male literacy rate was 74.36% ("Mattur Population - Raichur, Karnataka", 2011). It can be observed that the female literacy rate is very low. People have migrated to different places to pursue higher education or jobs. It is reported by the media that there is at least one IT professional in every household.

Research Statement

To explore the sociolinguistic situation of Mattur, Karnataka with a specific focus on culture and the representation by media.

Sociolinguistics entails studying the sociological aspects of language. The discipline concerns itself with the role language plays in maintaining the social roles in a community (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020). We will persevere in identifying the linguistic features that are used in particular situations and mark the various social relationships among the participants and the significant elements of the situation

Scrutinizing the media coverage of Mattur will be imperative in order to differentiate the claims made by the media regarding the hype of Mattur being the exotic “Sanskrit Village” and the actual ground reality.

Research Objectives and Questions

Understanding the overall sociolinguistic composition of Mattur. This would essentially imply comprehending who speaks in which language and with whom.

Understanding which language people use in various social situations for example in a market or at train stations, etc.

How exactly is Mattur's reputation sustained or in other ways dependent upon the Media? Since the media has presented an extremely idealistic and romanticized idea of a completely Sanskrit speaking village it has led to an immense amount of curiosity among academics, tourists, etc. This would imply minutely examining the claims made in order to debunk or uphold the validity of the idea of Mattur as presented by the Media.

The main focus of our research is to emphasize how like Sanskrit in the midst of a heavily Kannada speaking population is being preserved and prevailing despite the decline of Sanskrit in other parts of the country. The research would tend to gain more insight into the fascinating endurance of Sanskrit solely as an aberration in Mattur when compared to the rest of the country.

The role of the Government of India and organizations like RSS affiliated Samskrita Bharati in preserving Sanskrit will be meticulously examined owing to the ideological leanings of the ruling party and the RSS. Whether the ideological leanings of the RSS and GOI have led to an unwarranted imposition of sorts or the preservation tactics have been genuine and organic.

Research Methodology

This research mainly focuses on the day to day usage of Sanskrit in Mattur- the 'Sanskrit Village' and its portrayal in the media. Secondly, this research also focuses on how the people of Mattur and the neighboring villages are preserving the language, how traditions are being upheld, norms being followed and also the status of women and other minorities in a village dominated by the Brahmin community.

Primary data –

Primary data is the data that researchers collect on-field using various methods with the informed consent of the subjects of the study. The collection of primary data was mainly through the following research methods:

1. Oral History - It is very important to know the history of Mattur and how people began speaking in Sanskrit in Mattur. This method is a very important part of the research since it will resolve the problem of the existence of multiple theories on how Mattur came into being.
2. Semi-structured Interviews - Semi-structured interviews give the researcher broad insights on the topic of discussion. Open-ended questions and the formulation of questions on the spot makes the interviews more interactive and helps the researcher extract more information. This method of data collection will be used since the research was mainly exploratory. Also, it allows the interviewer to be more flexible and ask follow-up questions based on the topic of discussion.
3. Non-participant observation - Non-participant observation gives the researchers a chance to observe the subjects of research with their consent and without actively participating in the situation. This method will help understand the dynamics of the people of Mattur, the cultures and traditions of the village, situational behaviors and the mindset of the village as a whole.

Secondary data –

Secondary data is the data collected before the researcher goes on the field to conduct research. This data aids the researcher to understand what they could explore when they go on the field and how to go about with the research. It also helps identify gaps in the available literature which is a very essential part of the research. Collecting preliminary data related to Mattur was a challenge since there was no published research on the village and we had to rely primarily on blogs and newspaper articles as a source of information. Conflicting information across these sources was a major problem. The main sources used in our preliminary research are listed below.

- 1) Books and scholarly articles – Scholarly articles and books were used to collect information on the Sanskrit language, its cultural significance and perception, how it is being preserved in India and about the Vedas and the Shastras. The main books used for the research are listed below.

- Being Different: An Indian Challenge to Western Universalism by Rajiv Malhotra

- The Battle For Sanskrit by Rajiv Malhotra
- RSS: A Menace to India by A. G. Noorani
- Early Indians - Tony and Joseph

2) Newspaper articles and blogs – Newspaper articles had to be used since the main focus of the research is to explore the possibility of a ‘hype’ and blogs were used to understand the various perceptions of the place and also as a secondary check to the news articles. There was a possibility that the blogs were hyping up the village too. However, contrasting opinions are important. We also found a few articles written by credible sources that have proven very useful for the research.

- Chakravarti, R. (2015, October 20). The use and abuse of Sanskrit. Retrieved from <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/the-use-and-abuse-of-sanskrit/>
- Caravan, T. (2018, August 29). "What Has Been Happening in Recent Times Could Well Develop Into Fascism": An Interview with Romila Thapar. Retrieved from <https://caravanmagazine.in/vantage/notes-nationalism-interview-romila-thapar>
- Krishna, S. (2016, September 16). Ram's Rajya. Retrieved from <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/books/story/20160926-ramachandra-guha-amartya-sen-brahims-politics-829559-2016-09-14>

Chapter 2: Literature Review



Language

Henry Sweet, an English phonetician and language scholar, defines language as “The expression of ideas by means of speech-sounds combined into words. Words are combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of ideas into thoughts” (Robins & Crystal, 2019). Bernard Blotch and George L. Trager, who are American linguists, have given the following definition to language “A language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group cooperates” (Robins & Crystal, 2019). Language is an essential part of society. It helps make communication much easier. It also keeps communities or regions bound together in India’s context. A single language can be spoken and written in different ways in different regions of the same country, state or city. A dialect is a version of a particular language that is similar to the language but has different ‘linguistic features’ (Robins & Crystal, 2019). For instance, Sanketi is a dialect of Sanskrit.

Sanskrit and Sankethi

Sanskrit has a unique place in human history. It is known as the ‘language of gods’ and most of the ancient Hindu texts including the epics, the Vedas and the Puranas have been written in Sanskrit. Sanskrit is a very powerful language and has contributed to developments in various languages not only in India but also in Southeast Asia. It is a useful tool to comprehend various ancient languages, mathematics, sciences, yoga and medicine. Sanskrit is a very ancient language, and it is slowly moving into the category of a declining language (Majumder, 2014). But this is not the case in Mattur, a village in Karnataka which has been given the name of ‘The Sanskrit village’ by the media.

According to The Better India, a blog, “Everybody in Mattur, from the vegetable vendor to the priest, understands Sanskrit. Most speak the language fluently too. Even young children squabbling and playing cricket on the ground speak Sanskrit fluently.” The walls of the village have graffiti of Sanskrit slogans and ancient quotes painted on them. The people of the village are very welcoming and are ready to teach Sanskrit to anyone who approaches them (Pal, 2016). NDTV has an article named “Karnataka’s Mattur, The only Village in India that

still speaks Sanskrit”. According to the article, the children at the Pathshala in the village start learning the Vedas at the age of 10 and can speak in Sanskrit fluently (Taneja, 2018).

Sanskrit was once the language that dominated philosophic, literary and artistic discourses in India--and not just India, but all of Southeast Asia as well. Sanskrit had a huge impact on early philosophical discourse in China too, prior to the seventh century AD. It is still used in Hindu religious ceremonies like weddings and rituals and colleges and schools still have Sanskrit as a second or third language. But, “Sanskrit is now spoken by less than 1% of Indians and is mostly used by Hindu priests during religious ceremonies” (Majumder, 2014). The complexity of the grammar of Sanskrit makes the language difficult to learn. The language has different words for different genders which makes it a little difficult to recall, whereas adding suffixes to roots, accent and changes of the sound just adds to the complexity.

It is also reported that the people of Mattur speak in a rare dialect of Sanskrit called Sankethi, but they can also converse in Sanskrit fluently. Sankethi is a mixture of Kannada, Tamil, Sanskrit and Telugu. Sankethi Brahmins migrated from Tirunelveli to Kerala and then Karnataka 800 years ago (Thatha, 2018).

According to the News Minute, most of the Sankethi have settled outside India. Many Sankethi Brahmins marry outside their caste or religion since most of them have settled abroad and they have limited choices. “All such marriages are accepted as a matter of routine” (“Sankethis â€” A Sanskrit Speaking Community That Blends Tradition & Modernity”, 2014). Sankethi women have a high literacy rate and it is very hard to find an uneducated woman from the new generation. The crime rate among the community is extremely low. The Brahmins and the non-Brahmins sit and dine together as well. “Many Sankethis being professionals, it is necessary to have people from different castes at home” (“Sankethis â€” A Sanskrit Speaking Community That Blends Tradition & Modernity”, 2014). However, surprisingly, other sources present a contrasting view.

According to Economic Times, the Sankethis in Mattur are a very well connected community, and most of the non-residents make sure that they return to India for something important like a ceremony or festival. In 2013, a boy from one of the Sankethi families married a girl from the northern part of India and the people in the village were yet to accept the marriage in 2014. A teacher at a school reportedly said “This family is rich and that is why

they dared to break tradition. If any of us commoners were to break tradition, there would be hell to pay” (Kumar, 2014). The elders of the village are still reluctant to break the traditions and norms (Kumar, 2014).

It is interesting to observe that the two newspapers above have very contrasting opinions and both of them were written in the same year. They were written in 2014, and no new articles with new insights could be found. Mattur, in the traditional sense, presents a duality.

Government Policies

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat claimed in 2019 that without knowing Sanskrit, it would be virtually impossible to comprehend and understand India ("Without Sanskrit, India cannot be understood fully: RSS chief", 2020).

He further stated that all existing languages in the country, even the tribal ones are made up of at least 30 per cent Sanskrit words (India Today, 2020). These comments reflect a broader worldview and thought process of the RSS and its various affiliates with regards to Sanskrit (Noorani, 2018).

The RSS through its affiliate Samskrita Bharati, founded separately in 1981 has been vigorously involved in preserving and propagating the importance of Sanskrit and making sure that the texts, scriptures and scripts linked to Sanskrit are adequately preserved. Their goal is to teach and propagate and teach Sanskrit irrespective of the recipient's caste, religion or gender (Bhosale, 2020).

Especially since the BJP government came to power in 2014, there has been a concerted push in favor of increasing the popularity of Sanskrit altogether.

There have been several instances wherein there has been an arbitrary push for Sanskrit such as in Tamil Nadu’s Anna University made it mandatory for engineering students to study philosophy which included the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads which were to be read in their original form, i.e. Sanskrit ("After Hindi, row over Sanskrit in Anna University: Is Tamil Nadu's language politics dated?", 2020). Another example was in Assam wherein the

Assamese cabinet decided to introduce Sanskrit as a compulsory subject till Class VIII which was seen as a move to promote Sanskrit at the expense of Assamese (The Economic Times, 2020). Along with state-specific examples, there was a surprising move from the central ministry 2014- the Human Resource Development Minister Smt. Smriti Irani announced that Sanskrit would replace German as the third language in central schools. These moves resulted in massive protests and severe backlash from various sections of society from students, teachers, political parties among intellectuals among multiple others.

Over the past six years, there have been numerous irrational remarks from various RSS and BJP functionaries. One such remark by Ganesh Singh, a BJP MP from Madhya Pradesh stated that Sanskrit is the cure for diabetes (“BJP MP trolled over his 'Sanskrit cure for diabetes' remark”, 2019).

However, leaving histrionics aside and relying on facts, a mere fraction of elite Indians spoke Sanskrit, which resulted in the popularity of other languages such as Pali, Prakrit, Urdu among various others over the years (Joseph, 2018). Although pushing for Sanskrit reflects the core ideology of the Sangh Parivar wherein based on pure canards, distortions and fabrications of history (Noorani, 2018). The Sangh Parivar wants Indians to believe that Sanskrit is imperative to unite the country and consequently end up homogenizing the various different languages and subsequently cultures (Tripathy, 2020).

Media

The sources available that will help understand the current situation in Mattur and the influence that media has on its reputation are limited to bloggers and newspapers. It is difficult to pinpoint whether Mattur is, in fact, a village that primarily speaks Sanskrit in these articles.

Thus to approach this part of the research, the following steps were undertaken:

1. Disseminating and scrutinizing articles, websites emphasizing on the “claim” that “Mattur is the only Sanskrit speaking village in India.”
2. Understanding information symmetry and correct information in media.

3. If we assume that people in Mattur speak Sanskrit, we have to find relevant studies on the challenges they would face in preserving the language.
4. Refer and broadly compare opinions of bloggers with news reports.
5. Based on previous research conducted, conclude how well the media has represented Mattur and its impact on tourism in Mattur.

Most of the mainstream media such as BBC, Times of India and blogs like The Better India have provided information in an extremely romanticized and idyllic manner regarding Mattur by claiming that almost everyone speaks fluently in Sanskrit. Most articles and blogs emphasize that Sanskrit is spoken in all social situations.

After perusing through the prevalent secondary data, it is imperative to deduce and corroborate the authenticity and veracity of the claims made by various media platforms.

If the claims made by the media are relied on, questions arise on the information symmetry. The next step of research was understanding if Mattur is actually a Sanskrit speaking village, what possible challenges would they have faced in preserving the language. Many credible journals like UNESCO, Cambridge University Press and The Penguin press have listed and discussed the challenges to keep a language alive in detail.

In Mattur, preserving Sanskrit has many challenges associated with it. Firstly preserving ancient manuscripts is difficult as the integrity of the manuscript must be maintained and handled with care over the years. Secondly, making sure that the pronunciation is correct and free from any regional influence, mainly accent; is a difficult task (UNESCO, 2005). The aforementioned factors are challenging, but they are responsible for piquing the curiosity of common folk which thus results in people visiting Mattur to see for themselves. Over the years, various people who have visited Mattur mainly tourists and bloggers have shared their opinions on Mattur.

Many questions remain unanswered. In some blogs, it is mentioned that people in the village speak in Sanketi; a mixture of Sanskrit, Tulu, Tamil and Kannada which is not discussed extensively in the articles by the media. The real picture seems scattered in all these sources.

Vedas and Manusmriti

Vedas, literally translated as “knowledge” in English, are essentially a collection of poems or hymns which were composed in the earliest Sanskrit by Indo-European people who lived in northwest India during the 2nd millennium BCE. Although the exact dates of composition are extremely disputed among scholars but are generally purported to be around 1500-1200 BCE. The hymns made up a liturgical body that partly revolved around the soma ritual and sacrifice and was also recited or chanted during rituals (Doniger, 2020). There are four Vedas. The Rigveda which can be translated as the Knowledge of the verses and it is a collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns. Sacred formulas which were widely known as mantras and verses were drawn into the overall composite collection. They were known as the Yajurveda which translates literally to "Knowledge of the Sacrifice". The third component is the collection of verses which were arranged separately and known as the Samaveda which can be translated to "knowledge of the chants". The fourth and final collection of hymns and chants is known as the Atharvaveda, which again can be translated as "Knowledge of the fire priest" (Doniger, 2020).

Among the various texts inspired by the Vedas are the Dharma sutras which can be translated as the "manuals on dharma" which contained the rules of conduct and rites as they were practiced in various schools (Doniger, 2020). The Dharma sutras consisted of various facets to do with duties of people at various stages of life, dietary regulations as well as the rights and duties of kings among various other things. These various segments were eventually further elaborated and expounded upon in the more intricate and organized relatively Dharma Shastras became the very basis for Hindu law (Doniger, 2020). The very first of them was the Manusmriti or the Laws of Manu who had 2,694 stanzas divided into 12 chapters. The contents ranged from topics such as cosmogony, the definition of dharma, the sacraments, initiation and Vedic study, the eight forms of marriage, hospitality and funerary rites, dietary laws, pollution and purification, rules for women, the doctrine of karma and so on. Law in the judicial sense is henceforth completely embedded and enshrined in religious law and practice (Doniger, 2020). The overall influence of the Dharma Shastra of Manu has pervaded in multiple spheres of Hindu society with its grounding and basis in practical morality. The Manusmriti has been castigated over the years for its extremely draconian and regressive tenets which were

inherently discriminatory against lower castes and women on multiple accounts as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, while Dr. B.R. Ambedkar blamed the essential Indian village for being the very root cause behind the ills plaguing the country on the whole. While both had their specific contextual reasons owing to atavistic and backward practices in villages with regards to scientific reasoning, rationality and caste respectively (Economic and Political Weekly, 2020). Till date, several Indian villages are bogged down by certain dogmas and regressive practices primarily based on the idea of entrenched practices and traditions that have been carried on over the years (Aiyar, 2020). Which has resulted in common Hindu folk continuing to follow even the regressive and arbitrarily discriminatory clauses and contents of texts such as the Manusmriti even Mattur has not been able to buck the trend and continues to follow age-old archaic traditions to do with lower castes and women. Only Brahmin males are allowed to read the Vedas owing to norms and traditions that have been normalized and ingrained in the minds of ordinary people over the years. Lower castes aren't allowed to partake in primarily Brahmin dominated rituals and rites in Mattur as well as Hosahalli- the neighboring village



Image 2: Boys returning from morning Pooja rituals in Mattur

Source: Discover India Program 2019-20

Women

“India is officially a secular nation, but it is dominated by the social organization, culture and ideology of its Hindu majority. That ideology assigns females in a position distinctly subordinate to males: constrained, dependent, exploited, oppressed, physically and

psychically endangered” (Miller, Barbara et al., 2020). Women have always been looked down upon by the Indian society. Women are expected to follow certain norms and stick to certain traditions.

In the Hindu culture, the concept of ‘women’ presents a duality – the bestower and the destroyer. Women are praised in times of prosperity and are blamed when misfortune strikes the household. Hindu Mythology talks about many powerful goddesses who have saved humanity from the evils of the universe. Alongside this, Hindu Mythology also represents women as advisors to their husbands and also as motivators. Dharma Shastra is a ‘Hindu law book’ written in Sanskrit in which all the “Rules of right conduct” are established. These laws define the right behavior of women in various roles associated with men – mother, sister, wife, daughter and daughter-in-law. Male control and domination are the major observable themes in the Dharma Shastra (Wadley, 1977).

“She who controls her thoughts, words, and deeds, and never slights her lord, resides with her husband (in heaven after death), and is called a virtuous (wife)” (Wadley, 1977).

“Nothing must be done independently, even in her own house by a young girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one” (Wadley, 1977).

Sanskrit literature also depicts a woman as someone who keeps the family together and someone who always follows her husband’s orders, respects his decisions and stays faithful to him. Vedic women were portrayed as ‘powerful and important figures’ who destroyed many mighty kings and kingdoms. They have also enjoyed a very high level of respect in the Vedic society. Widows were allowed to remarry and monogamy was widespread. “Daughters were never ill-treated although male children were given preference over female children” (Punam & Sharma, 2017). Kshatriya women could also choose their husbands, a practice called Swayamvara. There is evidence of this in epics like The Ramayana and Mahabharata (Punam & Sharma, 2017).

The Ramayana explores multiple duties of a Hindu woman according to the Sanskrit scriptures and literature. Sita goes into exile along with her husband Rama for 14 years out of sheer devotion for her husband. When she gets abducted by Ravana, an evil king, she proves

to her husband that she is 'pure' by placing herself on a lighted pyre and coming out of the flames unharmed. However, her purity is put to doubt even after proving herself and Rama deceptively abandons her when she was carrying his two children. She raises her children all by herself and fulfils the duty of being a mother. After the children come of age and don't need their mother anymore, she retires from her 'duties' leaving the children with Rama. Preposterous social evils like sati are also a part of the Hindu culture. A woman who burns herself to death on the pyre of her husband, leaving her whole life and children in some cases behind is worshipped as a goddess. In Sanskrit literature, the duties, responsibilities and norms for women are discussed, but there is rarely a mention of what the Hindu men are expected to do (Wadley, 1977).

There is a very evident contrast between the status of women in the Vedic period and the Epic period. In the Vedic period, there is almost no gender discrimination at all while in the Epic period, there was discrimination to a great extent ("Status of women from Vedic period to modern period", n.d.). The status of women in Indian society is comparatively much better now, but the restrictions and impositions still exist. The status of women in Mattur and the question of whether or not they are allowed to practice the Vedas is unknown.

Gamaka Art

Gamaka art is a classical Kannada art form that makes use of Kannada poetical works, also known as 'Kavyas' to tell stories. "It is the musical rendering of classic poetry with emphasis on literature" (Shankaracharyan, 2016). Usually, two people are involved in performing the recital. The two people perform the duties of a singer and an interpreter. The artist who sings verses of poetry from Carnatic literature is called the 'Gamiki' and the artist who interprets the verses and presents them beautifully is called 'Vaachankara'. Both the Gamiki and the Vaachankara must be well versed in the ragas as well as the literature. The interpretations are sometimes made relatable by adding contemporary ideas and reflections to them (Shankaracharyan, 2016).

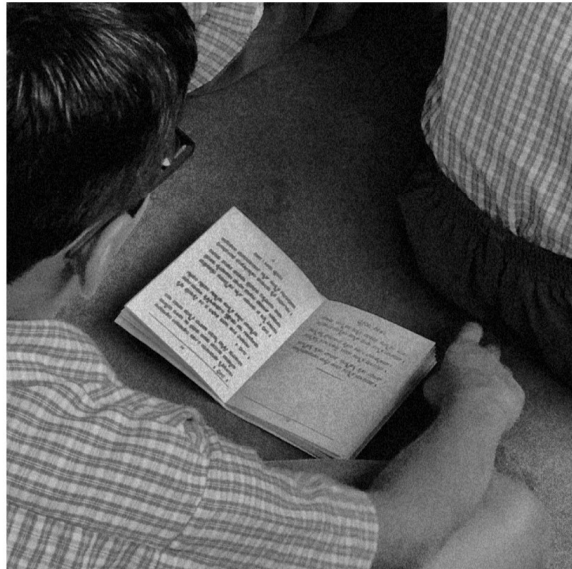
In the past, poetry reading sessions without the interpretations were conducted in temples and were known as 'Kavyavachana' programs. Gamaka art has evolved over the years

and different styles have been explored. The most common classic works of Gamaka art include “Kumaravyasa Bharata, Jaimini Bharata of Lakshmisha, Girija Kalyana of Harihara, Harishchandra Kavya of Raghavanka, Haribhaktisara of Kanakadasa, Gadha-Yuddha of Ranna, and the Pampa Bharata" (Shankaracharyan, 2016). The Gamaka artists have an association called ‘Gamaka Kala Parishath’ which contributes to keeping the art form alive. They organize workshops and conferences regularly and also conduct exams and offer certificates. Mattur and the neighboring village Hosahalli are playing an important role in preserving this art form.

Gaps in the literature

1. Existing Literature on Mattur hasn’t been able to cover the overall dynamics and functioning of society in its entirety. For example- do the minorities speak in Sanskrit?
2. Why have the people of Mattur decided to preserve Sanskrit and what role does it play in their daily lives?
3. How has Mattur been able to promote Sanskrit? Have they collaborated with any institutions or organizations?
4. The purported evolution of Sanskrit which has made Mattur keep up with changing needs and demands of society and subsequently continue to thrive.
5. Lack of published research about the customs/traditions prevalent in Mattur.
6. Lack of clarity about Sanketi culture and its current form- has it evolved?
7. Is Sanskrit spoken at home and in everyday situations? If yes, then who speaks in Sanskrit and in what form is it spoken?
8. Lack of information on the status of women in Mattur.
9. Samskrita Bharati - how is it promoting Sanskrit in Mattur and its importance in the reputation of Mattur being called a ‘Sanskrit Village’?
10. Gamaka art - is it the art form of that village specifically, its importance in their culture and if it is declining or not.

Chapter 3: Observations and Analysis



A lot of questions about Sanskrit and its usage in Mattur- the Sanskrit village, were unanswered. To dig deeper into the dynamics of this village, three places were visited - Mattur, Hosahalli and Sringeri. Visiting these three places, gave us a broad perspective and new insights on the topic of research. Other than just filling the gaps, these visits have made it possible to gain a much deeper understanding of Sanskrit in Mattur and also why Mattur is called the Sanskrit village.

The story of Mattur and Hosahalli

The story of Mattur and Hosahalli started around 800 years ago in Tamil Nadu in a present-day town called Shenkottai which is situated in the Tirunelveli district. The Sankethi Brahmins in Shenkottai were teaching Sanskrit but due to unknown circumstances, the Sankethi Brahmins from that place had to leave and hence, their search for new suitable places started. The land that the twin villages Mattur and Hosahalli are presently located on, was then a very dense jungle with wild animals in it. However, when they came across the Tunga River, they instantly connected to the place and also knew that the water body would make their life convenient. Apart from that, the land had everything they would need to survive. So, they stayed at that place and lived on the food and resources available in the jungle. They didn't have any source of livelihood like farming or fishing back then (K. Avadhani, personal communication, 10th February, 2020).

A few years passed by and King Krishnadevaraya was passing through that jungle. The people of the village, after receiving that information decided to do something special to welcome the king. When the king arrived at the settlement via the Tunga River, they started chanting the Vedas. The King was very impressed by the showcase of such talent and interest and asked the people where they came from and what they were doing at that place. The Sankethi Brahmins explained to him about how they have migrated from Shenkottai and want to teach the Vedas and spread the knowledge of Sanskrit. They said "It is our wish to teach the Sanskrit Vedas. Because it is important for society and for mankind. It is the ultimate goal of human life and that's why we are here to teach it to others. We have no other wish in life, we eat what is available in the jungle, we don't have houses or farms here either" (K. Avadhani, personal communication, 10th February, 2020).



Image 3: Bridge that connects the twin villages - Mattur and Hosahalli

Source: Discover India Program 2019-20

King Krishnadevaraya was known to be the ‘patron of arts’ and he never left an opportunity to keep art, language and culture alive. Therefore, he decided to gift them the villages Mattur and Hosahalli which are now known as the twin Sanskrit villages. King Krishnadevaraya said to them “please go ahead with your goal of teaching and practicing Vedas and Shastras in this village and keep Sanskrit alive.” The

people promised King Krishnadevaraya that they would do their best. The land that was gifted to the Sankethi Brahmins was very vast. So the land was divided into 120 parts. The parts are called ‘Mritis’. One Mriti has paddy lands, dry land and forest land as well and they were assigned to the Brahmins. They are given Mritis based on the type of Brahmin they are. For example, the Agnihotri Brahmins are given 2 Mritis (M.B. Srinidhi, personal communication, 11th February, 2020).

This was how Mattur became the ‘Sanskrit’ village. Today, the villages Mattur and Hosahalli have around 7 extended families who follow the Ved Shastras and they are keeping the Sanskrit language and the Vedas alive. They have been carrying forward this tradition for hundreds of years. After the villages were formed, ‘other people’ came and settled in the village in 1983 or 1984 (K. Avadhani, personal



Image 4: Group of Sankethi Brahmins in Hosahalli

Source: Discover India Program 2019-20

communication, 10th February, 2020). According to Kirana Avadhani, a Brahmin who belongs to one of the main families, they came to work on the fields in the village and settled there. Until 1983 or 1984, everybody in the village could speak Sanskrit. He said that his ancestors

have made attempts in the past to teach the newcomers Sanskrit. Even today, they are trying to teach Sanskrit to anyone who approaches them (K. Avadhani, personal communication, 10th February, 2020).

Around that time, Samskrita Bharati, an organization that aims to preserve and teach the Sanskrit language to everyone, regardless of their caste, religion or gender. They stepped into the village with the main goal of teaching Sanskrit to those who may not have had access to it in the past. Kirana Avadhani said “Everyone knows Sanskrit as a language. But Sanskrit is not just a language, it is our lifestyle. This lifestyle helps us get away from all the sorrows and problems in this world and this lifestyle is called Sanskrit” (K. Avadhani, personal communication, 10th February, 2020).

Internet sources discussing the history of Mattur, heavily credited King Krishnadevaraya and his contributions to the village. According to these sources, Samskrita Bharati is also listed as one of the reasons for the existence of Mattur’s media name- ‘The Sanskrit Village’. But on-field research gave a conclusion that Mattur is called ‘The Sanskrit Village’ because of the Sankethi Brahmins as well as the media and not because Samskrita Bharati, even though they played a major role in propagating the idea of everybody being able to learn Sanskrit.

Sanskrit

Sanskrit for the people of Mattur and Hosahalli is not just a language. It is their mother, it is their god, their culture and tradition and their way of life. There have been a lot of new discoveries and innovations in technology recently. The knowledge on how to use these technologies can be traced back to ‘Samskaar’ - which is derived from the Sanskrit language. This is because the knowledge that we Indians have is all in and can be derived from the Sanskrit language. The light of this knowledge can be found in the word ‘Bharat’ itself. ‘Bha’ means knowledge and light. The people who are immersed in that knowledge and aspire that knowledge, those people are called Indians, ‘Bharatiya’. ‘Bhagya’ means knowledge (Achuth Avadhani, personal communication, February 11, 2020).

Sanskrit is called the ‘language of the gods’ and ‘mother Saraswathi’. “Sanskrit is considered to be a form of mother Saraswathi and hence, all of us should learn Sanskrit. Without knowing Sanskrit, we cannot be called Indians or ‘Bharatiya’. Indians and people who want to be Indians need to learn Sanskrit for sure.” said Achuth Avadhani, a Sanskrit professor (Achuth Avadhani, personal communication, February 11, 2020).

“Sanskrit is the language of our nation. Previously it was used in everyday conversation. Sanskrit is not specifically a language used in Puja’s or the language of the gods, it is a language of the heart, language of culture, language of unity” said Dr. Mahabaleshwar, a Sanskrit teacher. Sanskrit creates a sense of harmony and it helps avoid discrimination, he said. However, the situation observed in Mattur and Hosahalli was completely different. Sanskrit, the Vedas and the idea of “upper caste and class” have become the reason for discrimination in these villages (Mahabaleshwar, personal communication, 10th February, 2020).

According to Dr. Srinidhi, there are three main problems that Sanskrit was facing in the 1980’s – Sanskrit is the language of Brahmins only, Sanskrit is a difficult language and Sanskrit is a dead language. The solution to all of these problems, he said, was to teach and speak Sanskrit (M.B. Srinidhi, personal communication, 11th February, 2020).

While talking about the importance of Sanskrit, Dr. Srinidhi said that “English is just giving us money, but Sanskrit is giving us treasure.” If you know Sanskrit, it gives you good health, mental peace and money too. Poets depend on Sanskrit, Yoga, Bharatanatyam, Ayurveda, all of these depend on Sanskrit and they give us knowledge of the arts, mental peace, good health and also economic benefits. Shankaracharya, Madhavacharya and Ramanujacharya, some of the great scholars and philosophers used only Sanskrit. The ‘Brahma Sutras’ and ‘Upanishads’ are written in the ancient language- Sanskrit (M.B. Srinidhi, personal communication, 11th February, 2020).

People are slowly starting to realize the importance of Sanskrit and the role the language plays in our daily lives. The language is slowly standing up on its feet again. There is a very high demand for Sanskrit teachers in India. The importance of Sanskrit in innovations and technology is also being noticed (M.B. Srinidhi, personal communication, 11th February,

2020). It was observed that Sanskrit was taken very seriously by the people of Mattur and Hosahalli. They regarded it as their mother and were very keen on preserving ‘their’ language.

Do the villagers speak in Sanskrit or Sankethi?

Sankethi- a dialect of Tamil and Sanskrit, is spoken at homes in Mattur and Hosahalli. Sankethi doesn’t have a written script, and is only speaking. Dr. Mahabaleshwar says that after 800 years Sankethi is a little corrupted now, but in the beginning, it was pure Tamil. At the Kerala and Tamil Nadu border, the language spoken is Tamil with a Malayalam accent. Now, there’s a mixture of various languages: ‘Sankethi’ means ‘Sanghav’ which in turn translates to ‘mixture’. Today, it is a mixture of various Indian languages and the originality is gone. The language doesn’t have any script or literature (Mahabaleshwar, personal communication, 10th February, 2020).

“We all converse in our mother tongue within our community. The mother tongue is Sankethi and there is no script for this language. The tone is the highest valued thing in the language” said Lakshmikanth Uppavadyaya. They grow up speaking Sankethi and as they go to school they learn English. Oral Sanskrit is mainly taught in schools and if they want to pursue the field of Sanskrit teaching, they learn all the other things that accompany it (L. Uppavadyaya, personal communication, 9th February, 2020).

Apart from Sanskrit and Sanketi, it was also observed that most of the minority population in Mattur know Tamil. A very small part of the Brahmin community knew Tamil. Everybody in the village could speak fluent Kannada. Most of the people in the village knew Basic English. The signboards in the village had either Kannada or Sanskrit on them.

Culture and traditions

Culture provides a medium to identify with different groups of people. It creates a sense of belonging and this is reflective of the behaviors they showcase. In the case of Mattur, it was evident that Sanskrit was deeply rooted in their identity. Sanskrit itself is a culture to the people of Mattur. They consider their language to be their norm and their guide in life.

“Our culture is our life and our mother and to protect our culture, Sanskrit is like a safekeeping box,” said Ashwathnarayana Avadhani. He emphasized that their culture is diverse in nature and everyone has a vital role to play in it. This role or ‘Kartavya’ should be fulfilled and everyone should love whatever work they are doing. The two main things that everyone in the village values are – first- ‘Bharat Mata’ or mother India and second- God. Ashwathnarayana Avadhani says, whatever they have belongs to god - their life, their culture and everything else. The Vedas spread love and teach everyone to be united. Even if everyone in the world belongs to a different culture, their souls are one. According to him, there is only one God and one religion and the Bhagwat Gita defines their culture (Ashwathnarayana Avadhani, personal communication, 9th February, 2020).

The people of the village also believe that Vedas are their culture and that they guide them in the right direction. “We learn Sanskrit and the Vedas from childhood itself and we try to go on the path that the Vedas show us. People ask why we do this. We say that this is our duty and duties shouldn’t be questioned. That’s why we try to follow the Vedas and the Upanishads” said Achuth Avadhani, who is a Sanskrit professor (Achuth Avadhani, personal communication, February 11, 2020).

In Mattur and Hosahalli most residents are seen draped in long white clothes and sometimes walk barefoot. Upon asking they specify that they believe in dressing in simple ways and do not invest their time in materialistic desires.

The festivals and events at the village are conducted with a lot of interest and grandeur. Their Navratri celebrations last for 10 days. The festivals are celebrated with much enthusiasm and dedication. They also make sure to include all the rituals and read all the necessary mantras while performing the pujas – remarked a woman from Mattur. They also have an event specifically for the Sankethi community which takes place every year. The event marks the yearly anniversary of the Sankethi community. The event acts as a fundraiser for the underprivileged people of the community and the funds are used to aid their education, medical treatment and for other social service related events (Anonymous, personal communication, 11th February, 2020). They do dance and music performances and other cultural activities to celebrate their culture. This event also helps bring the whole community together and almost

everyone who belongs to the community, even though they do not reside in the village attend the event.



Image 5: Brahmins from Mattur and Hosahalli gathered for Ganga Pooja

Source: Discover India Program 2019-20

happily agreed and she took us to her house which was two minutes away from where she was sitting. She introduced her daughter and gave us tea and biscuits. She patiently answered our questions with honesty. On the contrary, there were also people who acted differently.

It is to note that before interviewing a retired Sanskrit professor he asked the interviewers if they were Brahmins. He asked everybody their names and last names and then proceeded to give consent to answer the questions that were asked by the interviewer.

It was evident that Sanskrit was imbibed in their identity however the claims they made during interviews had a tinge of



Image 6: Brahmins greeting each other with a 'Namaskaram'

Source: Discover India Program 2019-20

chauvinism. They believed it was their duty to protect the language and in doing so they were “preserving” other regional languages.

Gamaka Art

The need for expression and articulation of thoughts is a fundamental requirement for human survival and it has taken various forms in art since ancient times. Of the different works of art, storytelling has been a powerful form of art as it has provided a medium of cultural and traditional expression. It has provided a bridge to the past reflecting on what has occurred and helps values, beliefs, and behavior to be passed on in the future.

There is value in understanding culture through songs that tell stories and hence understanding Gamaka art and its relationship with Mattur is vital for the research as it gives us an insight into the culture of Mattur. Gamaka is only limited to Karnataka and mainly sung for Kavyas from Kannada (Anonymous, personal communication, February 13, 2020).

It can be said that Gamaka art is the synthesis of storytelling with singing. It not only complements the aura of the sacred texts sung but provides a medium of expression for the artist’s emotion integrated with his or her social expression and cultural heritage. It is not restrictive in nature and the only requirement is to possess a good voice. It is a difficult art to master as one requires hours of practice to memorize and recite. The tone in which the content is recited is also given significant importance as it is essential in conveying the story. In all the Slokas, which can be defined as a verse of two lines with 16 syllables each (“Sloka”, n.d.), every word has a different Raga, which can be defined as a composition of conventional patterns of melodies and rhythms (“Raga definition and meaning: Collins English Dictionary”, n.d.). The application of Raga is thus important to learn. For example, in fighting scenes, the tone should be encouraging and bold in nature. There are many Ragas and it thus requires a lot of practice to attain the knowledge of using the proper Raga (Anonymous, personal communication, February 13, 2020).

Another reason as to why it is harder to learn Gamaka is the fact that there has been a decline of the art form with the decline of the number of people who speak Sanskrit. Earlier Mattur and Hosahalli had many people conversing in Sanskrit on a regular basis but now very

few people talk in Sanskrit as the majority of the younger generation do not reside in Mattur and there are very few people from the older generation. The language that is predominantly spoken is Sanketi. Therefore, interpretation in Gamaka is practiced the most. Meanings are hence shared after the music is taught, rehearsed or performed. This proves the claims made with reference to cultural musicology that music has social significance and the melodic importance must be made with the medium of language. Along these lines, the procedure of interpretation and translation acts as a connection between music and content (Anonymous, personal communication, February 13, 2020).

Cultural understanding, however, is complex and multi-layered in nature. Research findings depict that there exists a degree of discrimination against women. It was claimed in the interview that women have “special parts” that are “scientifically” affected when girls chant the Vedas and traditionally only the boys chant the Vedas. Moreover, claims were made that there exist long sentences that need to be said in one breath and therefore “affects” women. These reasons are guarded and are inadequate in providing a justification for the restriction of women to chant Vedas (Anonymous, personal communication, February 13, 2020).

Despite the decline of Gamaka due to the reasons listed above, efforts have been made to preserve it within the community. Competitions are held at the Hosahalli Gamaka Bhavan. Awards are also given to encourage the students and the community to keep the tradition alive. It is also broadcasted on the television (Achuth Avadhani, personal communication, February 11, 2020).

Women

In Mattur and Hosahalli, it was observed that there is a lot of gender discrimination and stereotyping. It was found that women are not allowed to study or practice the Vedas and they do not have equal status as the men. When asked why, some blame it on the Hindu literature and the ‘duties’ that everyone is assigned, some on the women, some even question the abilities of a woman while some bring out scientific reasons corresponding to the Vedas in light of the physical build of a woman.

Sanskrit was promoted as a language of purity which would certainly unite different people but the ground reality is different. There exists caste as well as gender discrimination in the village.

Sri Chandrashekhara, a Sanskrit scholar from Mattur, said that women are impure when they are menstruating and they are not allowed to enter the temples during that period of time. In an operation theatre, they do not allow people who have no knowledge of the profession or specialization. Similarly, a code of conduct is observed in all temples very strictly. There are several reasons as to why menstruating women and the minorities are not allowed to enter the temples. “But I don't want to speak in the ‘open streets’ how ladies will not be allowed,” he said (S. Chandrashekara, personal communication, 9th February, 2020). By which he indirectly meant to say that he didn't want to address “menstruation” out in the public. There is a clear stigma associated with women and menstruation in the village.

“If women are worshipped, that house will be worshipped. If women are not worshipped, that place cannot be called home according to Hindu traditions” said Sri Chandrashekhara. “Matru Devo bhava, Pitru Devo bhava, Acharya Devo bhava” always, a mother comes first. Kalidasa says that women have certain duties like making the rangoli, welcoming the guests, taking care of the household and watering the holy Tulsi plant. However, women are not meant to be involved in religious duties, he said. Two contrasting views from the same person can be observed here (S. Chandrashekara, personal communication, 9th February, 2020).

“Shastras and all, ladies don't talk about. That is only for the gentlemen. Women can learn Sanskrit though.” said Shashikala, who is the wife of a priest (Shashikala, personal communication, 11th February, 2020). The same answer was repeated in most of the interviews in which the question of whether or not women can study the Vedas was posed.

When asked why women can't study the Vedas, Kirana Avadhani said “Who said women can't? If others start doing carpenter's work. What will he do? All of us have given life objectives. That is why women are kept away from studying. But otherwise, they have a right to learn Sanskrit. There's no disagreement on that” (K. Avadhani, personal communication, 10th February, 2020). He said that they follow what the Dharmashastra says. The concept of

‘duties’ comes into play here. This reason was given by quite a lot of interviewees that women have to take care of household duties and children.

There are also scientific theories as to why women can’t practice the Vedas. A woman from Hosahalli said that women are not allowed to chant the Vedas because there is a scientific reason behind it. “We girls have some special parts and it affects our body so we are not allowed,” she said. They are not allowed to chant the Vedas but they can gain knowledge about the Vedas and perform Veda Bhashya, which can be translated to commentary on poems from the Vedas (Anonymous, personal communication, 13th February, 2020).

In one of the interviews, women were blamed for the decline of the interest in saving or preserving Sanskrit. Ashwathnarayan Avadhani, a Sanskrit teacher said, “You girls want to run behind money and nothing else. You want a job and status. Women in our village do not want to get married to the men in the village.” According to him, women go out of the village to get educated and they don’t come back after they complete their education. They settle in the big cities and towns and don’t show interest in marrying the men in Mattur. He said that most of the village has only old people. “My wife is a homemaker and that is how all women should be. If Sanskrit is not there anymore in the village it is only because of the women in our village, only they can save the culture, but they are not” (Ashwathnarayan Avadhani, personal communication, 9th February, 2020).

What Ashwathnarayan Avadhani said, presents two contrasting viewpoints. In his opinion, women always run behind money, and are leaving the village for that very reason. But it can also be said that women are leaving the village because they are not allowed to do most of the things that men do in Mattur, i.e.- learn Sanskrit. Women go to other cities seeking better education and do not wish to come back and settle in a society with no room for their progress. Ashwathnarayan Avadhani also blames the decline of the Sanskrit language on women’s migration to other cities. Interestingly he also remarks that all that a woman should be is a homemaker and she should fulfill her ‘role’. He doesn’t comment on the fact that, even if they choose to stay in Mattur, they are not given equal opportunity to grow or learn Sanskrit. They leave in search of an opportunity to grow and have nothing to do with the decline of Sanskrit because they had no access to it in the first place.

Also, 'Patriarchy' is one observable characteristic of both the villages Mattur and Hosahalli. Men seemed to have conservative opinions about women and their status in society. Men respected and appreciated women for all that they are contributing to the household. However, most of them believed that women were physically and mentally weak and didn't have the capacity to practice and learn the Vedas or made use of scientific reasoning to try and validate their 'opinions'. Women had different opinions though. Some believed that they can and should be allowed to and can do anything they have the zeal to do, while some others said that they were not interested in learning Sanskrit or the Vedas. For instance, Sashikala, who is the wife of a priest said, "My line of interest is different and I have interest in household work, stitching and embroidery and I am not inclined towards learning Sanskrit" (Shashikala, personal communication, 11th February, 2020).

Minorities

On the outskirts of Mattur and Hosahalli lies the village of Srikanthapuram where a considerable segment of non-Brahmin Tamilians reside. These people helped us gain an insight into the unitary and homogenized nature of Sanskrit speakers. Tamil women who were interviewed stated that only Brahmins speak in Sanskrit in Mattur as well as in the neighboring villages. Through the course of the interview, they revealed and busted several myths that were propagated by sections of the media with regards to shopkeepers and the common folk, etc., in the context of Sanskrit being used in one's day to day life. They claimed that no shopkeeper converses with his customer's in Sanskrit. With regards to Brahmin hegemony and imposition, they claimed that the Brahmins in the villages as mentioned earlier arbitrarily deliberated on village-level issues on their own and passed resolutions without consulting any other community representatives. The Tamil community has separate temples from the majority Brahmin community, and according to the interviewees they are not allowed to partake in the festivals and rituals of the Brahmins. Since the Tamil community eats non-vegetarian food, they are ostracized from the Brahmins wherein they are told to stay away from the Brahmins out of fear of polluting those (Bharatiya & Radha, personal communication, 11th February, 2020).

While with regards to the Muslim minority perspective, there were two extremely adverse reactions from a Vegetable vendor and an elderly Muslim housewife. The vegetable vendor complained about hostility from the upper caste Brahmins in the village and faced severe ostracisation from them with regards to the general day to day affairs in the village (Muzibulla, personal communication, 11th February, 2020). While the elderly Muslim lady, on the contrary, stated that the Hindu and Muslim communities live amicably in the vicinity wherein there is no friction at all (Anonymous, 11th February, 2020).



Image 7: Non-Brahmin Tamilians in Srikanthapuram

Source: Discover India Program 2019-20



Image 8: Minority women helping with construction chores in Mattur

Source: Discover India Program 2019-20

A member of the Lambini community- minority in numbers, spoke about the struggles his community goes through. The interviewee was able to corroborate the claims of the Tamil ladies with regards to the hostility and imposition of the Brahmins in the villages. As the Tamil community was ostracized from conventional and mainstream village customs and rituals in which the Brahmins are the forefront similarly, the Lambini's are not allowed to enter temples. They are seen with contempt by the Brahmin community. According to the interviewee, Brahmins interact with the Lambini's when some form of help with regards to servile work in households is required (Prem, 10th February, 2020).

Across the spectrum of minority voices, there was unanimity in the belief that Sanskrit is primarily seen as the domain and fiefdom of Brahmins and other communities are not incentivized to learn and converse in Sanskrit.

Schools and Colleges

Education is an approach to proliferate thoughts, propagate ideas and practices. Schools articulate ‘vision and mission’ statements, portray the aim and intend to provide a set of expectations for student behavior. Before the existence of the Guru Kul system, education was imparted orally and written on palm leaves by the sages and the scholars and was passed on from one generation to the other. But, as Hindi cannot be spoken and spread in all parts of the nation, Sanskrit can be responsible for creating inclusion in the whole nation as it is believed to be the only language that can unite the country (Mahabaleshwar, personal communication, 10th February, 2020).

According to the Indian Constitution PART III, Fundamental Rights, under Cultural and Educational Rights, point 29 (1) states that, “Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same” ("The Constitution Of India", 1949).

In all the schools visited in Mattur, Sanskrit is seen as an important part of the education system as it is considered to have “so much information that one cannot gain all the knowledge in one lifetime.” Attaining knowledge is considered the most important and it is believed by the teachers in the school, that it is every Indian’s duty to learn Sanskrit. (Anant Krishna, personal communication, February 10th, 2020). The influence of Sanskrit traditions and ideologies can be seen within the schools. Values are given more importance. Children start their days with chanting Sanskrit Shlokas. They enter their classes barefoot and arrange their shoes outside the classes. Sanskrit is encouraged to be spoken every day. The curriculum prescribes mandatory Sanskrit classes for children from preschool level to 10th grade. Sanskrit is given major importance and is taught to the children in all the three levels- Primary, Secondary and High school. Students in elementary school are taught various Shlokas and are

told to practice the Shlokas in their respective Pooja rooms at their homes (Babita Bhavuna, personal communication, February 13, 2020).



Image 9: Sanskrit Pathshala in Mattur

Source: Discover India Program 2019-20

These schools also teach English and Hindi and have recently started to give importance to English and Hindi by conducting conversation classes so that students are not only enriched with Sanskrit knowledge but also are prepared to keep up with the pace of the world.

The Sanskrit Pathshala is aided by the state government and teachers receive their salaries from the government. Board exams are arranged in the school along with other exams for Sanskrit distinction. The question papers come from Bangalore and are sent back to Bangalore for evaluation (Anant Krishna, personal communication, February 10th, 2020).



Image 10: Students chanting morning prayers

Source: Discover India Program 2019-20

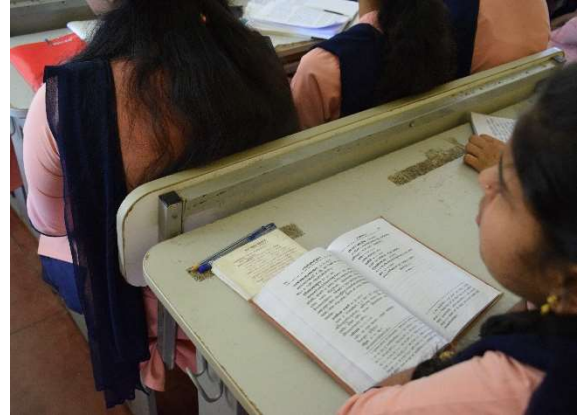


Image 11: Students attending Sanskrit class

Source: Discover India Program 2019-20

As seen in earlier sections of the report, there is discrimination against girls when it comes to chanting the Vedas. However, while interviewing schools it was found that girls are not restricted there and are given every right to study or drop out from studying Vedas and are given the liberty of choice. Mr. Anant Krishna, the teacher, claimed that girls show more initiative in learning Sanskrit.

Sanskrit is treated as a medium of inclusion and its roots have never been attributed to a single location, region or background. The members of Samskrita Bharathi hail from different castes and religions and they claim there is no discrimination. Most students in the schools are poor and their parents work all day at the fields. The schools provide a “good” atmosphere for children to learn new things and develop their knowledge. There exists an equal sex ratio in each class, but till 10th standard, there are approximately 10-20 girls more than boys (Anant Krishna, personal communication, February 10th, 2020).

During the school visit, it was seen that girls were given more responsibility and showed more interest. Anant Krishna, the teacher at the school also claimed that girls were more enthusiastic than the boys. It could be clearly concluded that the school did in fact believe in inclusion within school premises. During the morning prayers, many different prayers were sung. Specifically different Hindu prayers and one Buddhist prayer. At the end of the assembly, it is interesting to note that the students sang a “Karnataka song” before the national anthem. Moreover, it is to note that many sign boards within the school were written in Kannada. The students read their prayers out of a prayer book that had handwritten Shlokas in them, it was astonishing to see that the prayers in the book were written in Kannada.

At the end of the school visit, there was a sense of suspicion that what was being shown seemed superficial and orchestrated. Everything was perfect and in place for our visit and everybody was excited to meet us and were extremely welcoming as well. We were given a tour of the school and taken to the playground where elementary school kids sang a few rhymes, songs and prayers in Sanskrit. It had a “performance” feel to it.

It is questionable whether the schools put their best foot forward to send the message that they were working hard to revive the language in the village, or it was a futile attempt to live up to the media hype. Through observational analysis, it can be concluded that the first part of the statement is true as the schools were following old Sanskrit traditions but also

attempting to reduce discrimination in the education of the masses. The attempts being made to preserve the language have an underlying honest tone. Upon casual questioning, the students claimed to like Sanskrit and they enjoyed singing the prayers, their answers were underlined with fear and seemed genuine. It is safe to say that the schools are slowly but surely striving for a more inclusive environment.

Political Influence and Samskrita Bharati

Sanskrit as a ‘language’ and Sanskrit as a ‘subject’ – these are the two broad views that people have. The Sanskrit that is spoken among the masses and the face of the language that is known to the public is that Sanskrit is just a ‘subject’. But Samskrita Bharati is working, from the very beginning, on showing the world that Sanskrit is a ‘language’. If we view it as a subject, somehow we relate it to examination and to achieve the end goal of doing well in an assessment but if we view it as a language, there is so much more to it, said Dr. Sachin Kathare (S. Kathare, personal communication, 13th February, 2020).

What is spoken can be called a language. If it is not practiced or spoken, it cannot be called a language. Sanskrit is a language, and unless people speak Sanskrit, it won’t be called a language. For this, Samskrita Bharati started a ‘Sambhashan Andolan’, translated to-conversation Protest. The protest aimed at making people use their Sanskrit conversation skills for 10 days, 2 hours each in today’s technological world and called it ‘20 hours’ package’. This helped spread awareness about Sanskrit by making people speak and practice Sanskrit (S. Kathare, personal communication, 13th February, 2020).

“We started this and are proud to say that we have included around 1 crore people in the ‘Sambhashan Andolan’ and taught them to speak in Sanskrit,” he said. This has been conducted in small villages and big towns. Places like Chhattisgarh, Nagaland where people only spoke their native language were also included in the program. The attempt was to include anyone and everyone and help them learn spoken Sanskrit without any books. When people started to speak, they understood how simple it was to speak and wanted to learn more, after which they started a correspondence course. They started 4 sessions of 6 months each and today the same course is taught in 11 different mediums - Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam,

Bangla, Hindi, Marathi, English and Gujarati, etc. all the western languages as well. More than 60000 people are enrolled in this course presently (S. Kathare, personal communication, 13th February, 2020).

Then Samskrita Bharati thought it is better if Sanskrit is learned at a younger age, and that's why they started a program called 'Baalak Kendra', in which they use Sanskrit as a medium to teach children moral values. This program is run in many places. Presently, 460 kids are studying the course this year.

As people developed more interest in the program, they started printing small books in Sanskrit. Samskrita Bharathi has successfully launched more than 350 books in Sanskrit. Everywhere else, Sanskrit itself is imbibed in other languages. If Bhagwat Geeta is translated into another language, then we would say that the book has reached a larger audience because of the translation. However, this is a small thing according to Dr. Sachin Kathare, if it is translated into any other language, it would be limited to that region only. "I believe every other thing should be translated to Sanskrit. This is when it will be shared nationwide. For example, Samskrita Bharati has translated the stories of Sherlock Holmes in Sanskrit and today the entire country is reading it. Another example is the books of Rabindranath Tagore, Indian poets and Narendra Modi," said Dr. Sachin Kathare. He believes that Sanskrit is a language that should be adopted nationwide (S. Kathare, personal communication, 13th February, 2020).

We noticed yet another absurd thing. As Samskrita Bharati progressed towards their goal, they decided that there should be some families that converse only in Sanskrit. He said, "I can name a few, there's a man called Deepak Kathiya who has done his PhD from IIT and is from Mumbai. When his marriage proposal was put forward, and the girl was chosen, the marriage was confirmed. The girl was chosen but the date of marriage wouldn't be fixed until she learns to speak in Sanskrit. She accepted the challenge and asked for one month's time. In a month, she learned to speak in Sanskrit and only after they both spoke in Sanskrit, the date of the marriage was fixed. They have a daughter whose mother tongue is Sanskrit." There are more than 5500 families in India who due to the influence of Samskrita Bharati, are Sanskrit families. If in a family, 2 people talk in Sanskrit, it is called a Sanskrit family. (S. Kathare, personal communication, 13th February, 2020)

Over the past six years specifically, there has been a visible concerted push for Sanskrit to be propelled into the limelight owing to the ideological inclinations of the Sangh Parivar on the whole. The Bharatiya Janata Party the party currently in power at the National level as well as the state level in Karnataka specifically where Mattur is located also falls under the broader ambit of the Sangh Parivar. The Sangh Parivar is essentially the amalgamation of various organizations with the same ideological worldview. Samskrita Bharati is a subset of the Sangh Parivar which is directly affiliated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Samskrita Bharati has been involved over the years in concertedly pushing for increasing the visibility and popularity of Sanskrit. Along with patronage and support from an ideologically supportive government on the surface level, there seemed to be a lot going for the resurrection and upliftment of Sanskrit. However the ground reality according to several interviewees is a stark contrast from what various Sangh Parivar functionaries would have us believe.

One such interviewee was Kirana Avdhani, a Brahmin resident of Mattur who was well versed in Sanskrit. He stated that governments cutting across party lines have failed in supporting Sanskrit (K. Avadhani, personal communication, 10th February, 2020). The government is extraordinarily opportunistic and myopic when it comes to the preservation of Sanskrit because when it suits their myopic interests, they will sprout verses and paeans in praise of Sanskrit. However, when it comes to allocating funds and resources to do something fruitful for Sanskrit, there is a lack of conviction. However, Avdhani praised the work of organizations like Samskrita Bharati for the ordinary people who still consider Sanskrit purely in economic and monetary terms. He said that if Sanskrit ends up getting economic prosperity for people only then is it worth pursuing (K. Avadhani, personal communication, 10th February, 2020).

However, an interview with a female Sanskrit teacher who simultaneously was a part of Samskrita Bharati at the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, Rajiv Gandhi campus in Sringeri revealed many things. She elaborated the broader worldview of the operations of Samskrita Bharati. She spoke about the need for a single unitary language which can unite the whole country from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. The power to do this lay in the Sanskrit language (Anonymous, personal communication, 13th February, 2020). However, a single unitary language would be the first step in the consolidation of the Sangh Parivar's interests. The Sangh

Parivar ever since its inception has advocated for a Hindu Rashtra or a nation only for Hindus wherein Sanskrit would act as a stepping stone or the initial conducive step in the eventual fulfilment of their aspiration of attaining a Hindu Rashtra. The dangers of single languages, cultures, religions, etc., are well known ranging from the homogenization of different plural and syncretic traditions, diverse ways of life that India has always been proud of and has cherished over the years. Now with the imposition of a single language, minority voices and traditions would be suppressed and would lose out their identity and voice. However, the interviewee did not see reason in these arguments and stuck her ground regarding the overall strength of a single language.

Media

Media has a strong influence over peoples' perceptions. Accordingly, the media has many obligations while reporting on any specific subject. Firstly, the media should ensure that the information provided must be real and free from any generalizations or one-sided articulations or biases. When covering a certain place or any culture for that matter, the media has to also be cautious and considerate. Moreover, regions have pride and religious sentiments attached to the people residing within it, and thus it is the responsibility of the journalists to ensure that information symmetry is provided when they report anything related to a specific region or place. Flawed depictions of societies or social orders have a negative effect on travelers and the general public. News coverage is described as the fourth pillar in our country and should accordingly put forward genuine and fair-minded perspectives. The focus should be on the relevancy of the stories and they should figure out and present a fair view of the controversies instead of creating them. Being such a powerful weapon to the world, its powers are to be exercised for the betterment of the people.

After visiting Mattur it was clear that the actual situation of the village was not consistent with the claims made in the articles by various news organizations. Right off the bat, the case of Sanskrit being spoken in all of Mattur is false as research findings unmistakably demonstrate that the presence of Sanskrit is restricted to a little segment in Mattur that comprises the Brahmins. Inside this fragment, Sanskrit isn't spoken on a day to day basis but

rather Kannada and Sanketi is. The sign boards in Mattur are in Kannada. In fact, the sign boards outside the town are also in Kannada.

The perceptions people residing in and around the village appear to be befuddling as some say that Mattur is in fact a Sanskrit village while others claim that the media has publicized it.

Following are claims of people who agree that Mattur is a Sanskrit village –

- Kirana Avdhani, states that Mattur is, in fact, a Sanskrit village and there is no discrimination to learn Sanskrit, the only requirement one has, is to “qualified to get knowledge” and have “Intelligence, Wisdom and mind” (Kirana Avadhani, personal communication, February 10, 2020).
- Achyut Avadhani, a Sanskrit professor at B.V.S College in Shimoga, says “Mattur is in fact a Sanskrit village and that the specialty of this village is that, everyone here can speak in Sanskrit. That’s why the respected Pejawara Guruji proclaimed this village as the ‘Sanskrit Village’ ” (Achyut Avadhani, personal communication, February 11, 2020).
- Yogeshwarag, a student from the Ved Pathshala visited Sringeri said, “Yes I have heard of those villages but I have never been there. But I’ve heard that they speak in Sanskrit and they don’t talk in any other language” (Yogeshwarag, personal communication, 13th February, 2020).
- Anant Krishna, a Sanskrit educator in Mattur, indicated that the media has not demonstrated anything false and their portrayal of everybody being able to speak Sanskrit is right. He has expressed that only Pandits speak Sanskrit and have learned Vedas; but these Pandits run shops also. Subsequently the media expressing that "Even Shopkeepers speak Sanskrit" isn't bogus. He further disclosed that endeavors to make Mattur a Sanskrit town have been reliably made since 1981. He suggested that “About 50% know pure Sanskrit, about 40% are capable of talking in Sanskrit, about 25% of people talk with each other in Sanskrit in the village” (Anant Krishna, personal communication, February 10th, 2020).

Following are claims of people who state that Mattur is not completely a Sanskrit village–

- Babita Bhavuna, a teacher, teaching outside of Mattur claims that the entire village does not speak in Sanskrit and the usage of Sanskrit is limited to the saints in the temple. She suggested that “The whole village doesn’t speak in Sanskrit but 50% of the people speak.” While conversing with Babita, a student told us about Vartavali, which is a news channel that promotes Sanskrit and talks about the new opportunities in the language, it is broadcasted at 6:05 am every day on DD news. It was emphasized that the program has an equal representation of men and women (Babita Bhavuna, personal communication, February 13, 2020).
- Dr. Sachin Kathare, a volunteer at Samskrita Bharati in Bangalore says that what the media portrays might be exaggerated as it is human behavior to do. He says that “Things that make us happy, we tend to exaggerate” (Sachin Kathare, personal communication, February 13, 2020).
- Dr. Srinidhi stated that for 37 years efforts have been made to spread the message to “Let this be a Sanskrit village” and the media has only propagated “This is a Sanskrit Village” (Srinidhi, personal communication, February 11, 2020).

There is a clear divide of thought and it is apparent that there is a misrepresentation by the media of the town but there are people who still strongly claim that Mattur is a Sanskrit Village. The reason of the media propagating the idea of Mattur being a Sanskrit village seems confusing as the news has fabricated the sociolinguistic situation in Mattur and claimed that ‘Mattur is the only Sanskrit speaking village in India’ whereas as stated by Dr. Sachin Kathare, there are more than 10 villages situated in Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Assam.

More doubts arise on whether Mattur was a Sanskrit village at a point of time but due to the decline of the population residing in the village and heavy influences from regional languages, Sanskrit has declined in Mattur. However, concluding based on its present-day situation, it is safe to say that Mattur has been hyped by the media and Sanskrit is not spoken in daily conversations. The reality of the village is that there are definitely people who speak in Sanskrit and it is being preserved but not to the extent as is presented by the media.

Chapter 4: Independence



The whole basis of this research project was to explore and reason as to why the media has hyped Mattur as the ‘Sanskrit Village’. However, after going to Mattur, we found out that Media hype is just a very small part of the whole idea of the village being called the ‘Sanskrit Village’. The reason for the hype is unclear and questions arise on the credibility of the Indian media.

With regards to the overall media coverage which presents Mattur as an extremely idyllic village wherein people converse in Sanskrit comprehensively and all communities live amicably in a utopian and ideal manner. However, the ground reality was extremely different since there were several minority community members who narrated instances of discrimination and marginalization with regards to access to temples and other mainstream village amenities along with the fact that speaking Sanskrit was seen as a privilege which was primarily enjoyed by the Brahmin community. Media coverage of Mattur seemed extremely superficial and surface-level without really digging deep into the ground realities prevalent in the village which reflects a much broader issue plaguing online media platforms like blogs, social media and news sites. They indulge in sensationalizing and exaggerating their articles in order to gain better ratings, keep their customers engaged and to make a good amount of profits.

The village has a vast sea of ideologies, opinions and beliefs. Some of them were logical and consisted of deductive reasoning whereas others were stereotypical. The people of the village had justifications for all of their practices and views. The village was very welcoming to the visitors. But they also had a very different side to them. When the house of a Brahmin was visited for an interview, they were being very welcoming but before leaving the house, the researchers were given a few bananas and it was observed that they didn't touch any of the researchers and the bananas were thrown into their hands and they didn't touch them. It could be because they didn't know what caste the researchers belonged to and this shows that there is a clear caste discrimination.

‘Sanskrit’ is thought of as a ‘superior language’ just like Brahmins are the superior caste. “Every kid can attend the school, but only Brahmin kids go to school to learn Sanskrit,” said Prem, who belongs to the Lambini minority. Two children belonging to the Tamil community said that they go to the government school in Mattur and that they are not taught

Sanskrit there and Sanskrit is taught only in the private school. The Brahmins themselves say that Sanskrit is a language that unites the nation and helps make peace between communities. The contrasting opinions and practices of the same community can be observed here.

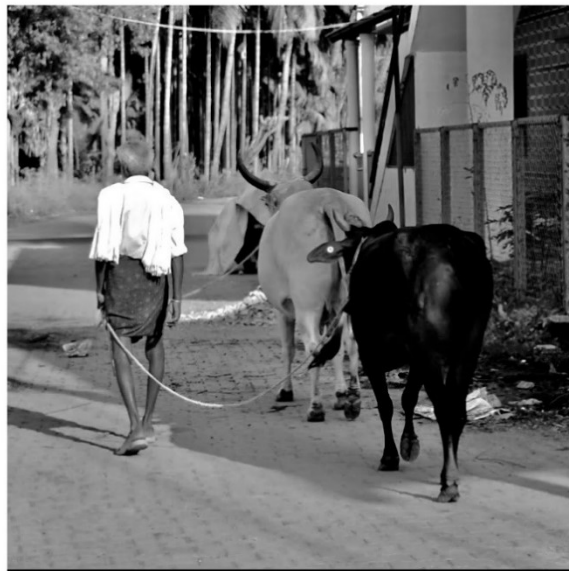
In an interview with a Sanskrit professor at Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, Rajeev Gandhi campus in Sringeri, it was mentioned that the number of students learning Sanskrit in their institute have increased over the years. He said “The number has increased. At the very beginning, there were 300 or 400 students and now around 500 students. I think that in 2-3 years the number might increase to 600 or 700.” This leads to an observation that the number of people interested in learning Sanskrit has increased. Sanskrit is not a declining language. The importance of the language is slowly and steadily being recognized.



Image 12: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, Rajeev Gandhi campus in Sringeri

Source: Discover India Program 2019-20

કેપ્ટર ૩: રદીદત્તોનરૂ અને તેશીદનરૂદરૂ



One of the main objectives of the research was to understand the problems that exist in preserving the language but being on the field for eight days is very little time for attaining sufficient and in depth knowledge of the culture of Mattur.

Getting around Mattur where the majority of the signs were in Kannada proved difficult. Possessing limited knowledge of Sanskrit speaking abilities, meant that the researchers had to be cognizant while imitating and greeting the people of the village as pronunciation and tone would change the connotation.

Learning to be patient and handle interviewees that dodged questions needed much effort. Moreover coming to terms with the fact that people changed their claims once on camera proved to be frustrating.

Another important ability that the researchers were expected to have is being sensitive to the culture. Being aware and refraining from passing judgement was crucial. The fact that people were accustomed to certain norms and that the research did not aim to “change” opinions was to be accepted.

Understanding and establishing a difference in perceptions and perceived reality proved to be a difficult skill to attempt to master. While conducting interviews it had to be kept in mind that everyone had their own opinion and reserved the right to stand by it. This proved challenging as researchers needed to be sensitive to the culture and prevent engaging in debate with the people of the village, mainly because the key interviewees made sexist, degrading and derogatory remarks. Learning how to remain neutral and respond in an objective way was essential for collecting data that was not unbiased. Conflict of Interest had to be kept away from research as any tampering would result in defensive answers. Biases in information would only be prevented by avoiding to take any opinions personally.

Accepting opinions that questioned predefined values, created dissonance and proved to be fundamentally challenging. Moreover accepting the fact that these opinions came from people who were key to the research was difficult.

Following are the major reflections that were observed during the fieldwork done for the research:

“A commonality was observed. The people who spoke Sanskrit and actively promoted it strongly believed that the language comes “from the heart”, and that it is the language of purity. Most of them were affiliated with Samskrita Bharathi one way or the other but were scattered. The students in the college, despite being a part of our generation, believed strongly in the uniting capability of Sanskrit.” – *Aditi Taravati V*

“I was intrigued when we found out that the people of Mattur and Hosahalli speak in Sankethi and not Sanskrit. Apart from Sanskrit and Sankethi, villagers belonging to certain communities also speak Tamil and Kannada. I remember how on the first day, the first person we spoke to communicated with us in Tamil and I was surprised. Also, it was interesting to observe the villagers going on with their daily activities in the village. It was a completely different environment. It was like a scene out of a movie when I saw the Brahmins performing the Ganga Puja at the banks of the river Tunga and the dramatic flames from the ‘Havan’” – *Jahnavi Ravi*

“Although before going on field we had an extremely idyllic picture of Mattur and Hosahalli with regards to the diversity, plurality as well as religious and caste harmony in mind owing to glowing coverage on the respective villages but unfortunately on field we discovered that owing to the plight enjoyed by the Brahmins residing in the respective villages have been consistently exploiting the power and prestige they enjoy to exclude and marginalize the minority communities in both villages. These developments reflect a wider malaise affecting our country on the whole wherein upper castes exploit the power they wield to further discriminate and marginalize minority communities.” – *Kabir Dev*

“Not everyone in Mattur speaks in Sanskrit, it’s just that they know the language but do not use it as a medium to converse with each other. I believe it has been hyped by the media. Some people agree to the fact that it’s just a media hype while others advertise about their village being a Sanskrit Village. Even though the villagers are modern but still they do hold some ancient beliefs and practices that give more power to the men. The elder people of the village are very rigid and conservative while the middle-aged and youngsters are comparatively open-minded.” – *Khushi Gupta*

“Personally I felt that getting people to talk about Sanskrit or in fact about the reality of the village was challenging. There was a communication barrier because of the language. People were hesitant in telling if there was any discrimination they were personally facing. Some people are still trying hard to preserve Sanskrit, due to lack of support they are failing.”

– *Manav Kela*

“Opinions were really biased. Most of the people believed that women can’t learn Sanskrit, Shastras & Mantras because it’s not in their benefit and that they will harm themselves. Women have a ‘duty’ of getting married and having kids that’s why they can’t practice the Vedas.” – *Mehek Shah*

“After the fieldwork, I realized that Mattur is partly a media hype. It’s upsetting to see that the women in Mattur and Hosahalli are being discriminated against and they accept how they are being treated. I’ve also learnt that our identity is very important, we have to preserve it and carry it forward for the benefit of our upcoming generations.” – *Nalin Senthil*

“ I saw a close-knit community which believes in some sort of democratic decision making at the same time retaining its patriarchy thus this, in my opinion, was a village of polar opposite practices. Furthermore, it provided me with an understanding of what language can provide in the progress of a village. The self-sufficient nature of the village is also one to admire as it moved away from the traditional methods of sustaining a new project such as depending on grants and government assistance to forming their own committees and infrastructure. The village in addition to this was moving towards becoming an academic retreat by providing sanctuary through innovative means which were still backward in their approach to some extent.” – *Nithilan P*

“It was a challenge to be sensitive to other cultures and retract from wanting to change opinions. However, after visiting Mattur I developed a deep appreciation for the people who are attempting to revive the language and preserve the culture for future generations. For Mattur, Sanskrit was their identity and it created a sense of belonging in the society. It was confusing at first to see conflicting opinions of Mattur but it was relevant to come to conclusions. I had an unrealistic expectation of the village and was disappointed that in the current scene of the village, Sanskrit was not spoken by a majority of people. Interacting with

the priests and the different people of the village was an enlightening experience as oftentimes there existed a language barrier.” – *Prachi Nivgane*

“After visiting Mattur, we found out that Mattur was hyped by the media for being a complete Sanskrit village. However, I appreciate the measures taken by the village community, government and scholars to keep the mother of all languages- Sanskrit alive. Those in the village who speak and do not speak in Sanskrit are proud of the language and are encouraging the youth to learn it. As expected, we did encounter and face sexist and caste comments but all kept aside, it was surprising and great to see how aspects of modernity such as lifestyle, technology and education intertwine with keeping the traditions and the language alive. Mostly everyone in the village was extremely educated but led a simple honest lifestyle. There is scope for improvement in terms of how still women’s capabilities are questioned and how even today there exists a subtle caste-based dichotomy. Opposing views recorded in our interviews show that there is an improvement in the mindset of people to some extent but there is still a long way to go.” – *Priyanka Mehta*

“After the interesting field visit to Mattur, a general point I looked out for is regarding the government hype by media platforms. Before going on-field, we came across literature talking about how the government supports the ‘Preservation of Sanskrit’ but on-field, we observed that the actual level of support was minimal. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Sanskrit Day, had declared Mattur to be a Sanskrit speaking Village on ‘Mann Ki Baat’ without referring to actual facts regarding the same. The reality is that only the Brahmin community in the village converses in Sanskrit.” – *Ronak Chhallani*

“According to me one of the few challenges was the heat, I got a heat stroke which reduced my productivity a lot. We faced a little bit of language barrier as well. As Kannada was their first language we could not communicate with a few people easily. After a lot of interviews, I realized it was just a hype started by the media to promote Mattur as a Sanskrit village saying that everyone in Mattur speaks Sanskrit which was most definitely not the case. Not all of the people knew how to speak in Sanskrit. The older generation had very old conservative ideologies. Some of them were blaming women for the decline of Sanskrit.” – *Sanskriti Toshniwal*

“Before going on the field due to the research we had done we had a lot of preconceived notions on how the village is going to be and how everyone speaks in Sanskrit in the village. Upon going there we realized that the village was hyped a lot by the media. On the first day itself, we had difficulty finding many people and priests who communicate mainly in Sanskrit. I also feel that even though a lot of it is hyped by the media. This village is at least making an attempt to preserve this language and carry it forward and they realize the importance of this language. Many of the interviews were given by people who were very sexist in nature and I also noticed caste and gender discrimination is present in the village. It was challenging to listen to such thoughts and handle it with respect. Lastly, understanding that there was a completely different truth to Mattur as a Sanskrit village was a little hard to accept in the beginning but we figured it out and are happy with whatever information we gathered. All in all, it was a very good and knowledgeable experience.” – *Tanvi Binani*

“The people of Mattur and Hosahalli always showcased a sense of ‘belonging’ to the place which might have occurred because of the language, Sanskrit. Mostly everyone from the Brahmin community that were interviewed used the words “Our Village” and I believe that the language has a deep influence or impact on the same. Also, the fact that they took Sanskrit as a language really seriously when they said “Sanskrit is our mother”.” – *Varun Kumar Nair*

Chapter 6: Conclusions



Exploring the sociolinguistic situation of Mattur was consequential and subsequently understanding the effect of media, government-affiliated organizations and schools was crucial for this research, Comprehending the effect of regional languages on the village and observing the interactions within the village was vital in drawing conclusions for the problems faced in sustaining the Sanskrit language in the village.

Firstly, it is to note that Mattur is not completely a Sanskrit speaking village. Sanskrit is spoken by people belonging to a small section of the village. They have an ambitious vision and are committed to value and virtues from Sanskrit traditions. Sanskrit is deeply rooted in their identity and is showcased in the way they dress, converse and treat their guests. They believe that Sanskrit is their ‘mother’ and their ‘culture’. They also believe in ‘oneness’ and gather at the village for all the festivals and celebrations. It is interesting to see how Mattur has preserved Sanskrit over the years. One of the declining art forms of Karnataka, Gamaka art is also being taught in the village.

However, Sanskrit is declining and attempts are being made by organizations such as Samskrita Bharati to revive the language and preserve the culture. Samskrita Bharati aims to make Sanskrit available to everyone irrespective of their caste, class, creed, religion or gender. They are attempting to pass on the traditions of Mattur to the younger generation as the future generations play a pivotal position in the future of Mattur and the preservation of the language. The central government however, seems to be very detached from making any real contributions towards promoting the language even though they claim to be doing a lot.

In schools and colleges, attaining knowledge was considered the most important and it was believed by the teachers in the school of Mattur that it is every Indian’s duty to learn Sanskrit. Values are given more importance. Children start their days with chanting Shlokas in Sanskrit. They enter their classes barefoot and arrange their shoes outside the classes. Sanskrit is encouraged to be spoken every day. The teachers also believe that learning Sanskrit can also be associated with job opportunities as well.

During field research, it was observed that women were subjected to discrimination in a few parts of the village. Women, according to most of the interviewees play a very crucial role in fulfilling ‘household duties’ and are oftentimes referred to as physically weak. Women are not allowed to practice the Vedas due to this stigma of ‘the duties of a woman’. They have

a very important role to play, but it does not include learning the Vedas. They call Sanskrit their 'mother' and it plays a very important role in their lives and yet they are very narrow-minded when it comes to allowing women to do certain things- like learning to read the Vedas. Along with discrimination against women, discrimination against minorities was also observed. They live in a different part of the village and admitted to feeling left out. In contrast to this, a Muslim woman claimed that there is no discrimination in among the people in the village. There is a dichotomy in both the cases of women and the minorities of the village.

Despite Sanskrit not being the language used in day to day conversations, there is a misrepresentation by the media about the town. Understanding 'why' such claims were made by the media is debatable.

In today's context, it can be summarized that Mattur's ground reality has been hyped by the media whereas Sanskrit is not spoken in daily conversations. Attempts are being made to preserve Sanskrit and propagate it to the masses. An important factor to consider is that the sociolinguistic situation is dynamic in nature and the development of Sanskrit in Mattur is a continuous process. The evolution of Sanskrit will only be understood after subsequent in-depth methodological research in the coming years. But in the current situation, it can be concluded that Mattur is not a fully Sanskrit speaking village although there are constant efforts towards preserving and promoting the language.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A – Interview Guide

Preservation of Sanskrit/ Traditions:

1. What are the challenges of continuing to speak in Sanskrit?
2. What do you think, does everybody agree that Sanskrit should be preserved?
3. How are you managing to carry the Sanskrit language forward?
4. What motivates the youth to carry the language forward and what is the need for it?
5. Do you think is it necessary to carry it forward or are you just carrying it forward to maintain the tradition?
6. Do you try to spread the language? What are you doing to spread the language?
7. Do you think the language is dying? How do you think the Sanskrit language can be preserved?
8. Why Sanskrit is still considered an important language even though regional languages and English is required for jobs and other businesses?
9. What do you think is the future of the language Sanskrit?
10. How has following or taking this language forward impacted your life? (Benefits etc.)
11. Does modernization due to media and tech influence the decision of preserving the language
12. What traditional practices are still followed and what are not? And why?
13. Is Kannada as important as Sanskrit in the Village?

Tourism in Mattur:

1. How many tourists visit Mattur every year?
2. Is tourism in the village because of the media hype or the reputation of the village being a Sanskrit Village?
3. If tourism exists, how has the financial growth been over the years?
4. Are they doing something to improve necessities in the village because of tourism?
5. When tourists come to visit are they very interested in how Sanskrit is being preserved and followed or just Mattur as a village?
6. When people visit Mattur do they also visit Hosahalli?

7. Are the villagers okay with the idea of tourism?
8. Are the villagers welcoming towards the tourists who come?
9. Are the villagers happy to accommodate the tourists who visit the village?

Media:

1. Are you okay with the customs and traditions of your village and how you follow Sanskrit being exposed to the media?
2. Has Mattur or its importance for Sanskrit ever been covered by the media already?
3. Do you want to do anything to increase media coverage?
4. Does modernization due to media and tech influence your decision of preserving Sanskrit?
5. Do you think there are some factors that have not been covered by the media but you want it to be covered?
6. Does media cover Hosahalli village equally as it is known as the twin village of Mattur?

Brahmin/Priests:

1. What are you doing to spread the language?
2. What are the benefits of learning Sanskrit?
3. Is Gamaka art still given a lot of importance?
4. Are you okay with media coverage of your village or its Sanskrit teachings?
5. Do you think it is important for everyone to learn Sanskrit?
6. How do you persuade people to learn Sanskrit?

Professors/Teachers:

1. What are you doing to spread the language?
2. Do you enjoy teaching the language?
3. Do you think children like to learn the language?
4. What are your points of focus when teaching Sanskrit?

Minority People:

1. Do you face any problem with the upper-class people or everyone is given equal rights?
2. Do your children get equal educational rights when it comes to learning Sanskrit?
3. Is everyone allowed into all the temples or are there any restrictions?
4. Are you allowed to be a part or give your opinion when important decisions are being taken regarding the village or regarding Sanskrit?

Children:

1. What motivates/inspires you to follow the Vedic system/speak in Sanskrit?
2. Are you forced to follow this system or do it on your own will?
3. What do you like about this lifestyle?
4. Do you think it is important to study Sanskrit?
5. Would you want to spread the importance of this language?
6. What do you do throughout the day? (Activities/ pujas etc.)
7. Do you study any other language? Is it mandatory to study any other language except Sanskrit in the schools?

Villagers/Women (regarding the performance of Vedas):

1. Are you doing anything to spread the language Sanskrit?
2. Is it true that women aren't allowed to perform the Vedas?
3. Are women allowed to teach Sanskrit in Pathshala?
4. What are some of the rights or decisions you are deprived of?
5. What other languages except Sanskrit are spoken in Mattur? (list them)
6. What makes your village different from Hosahalli?
7. Do you share good relations with the Hosahalli village?

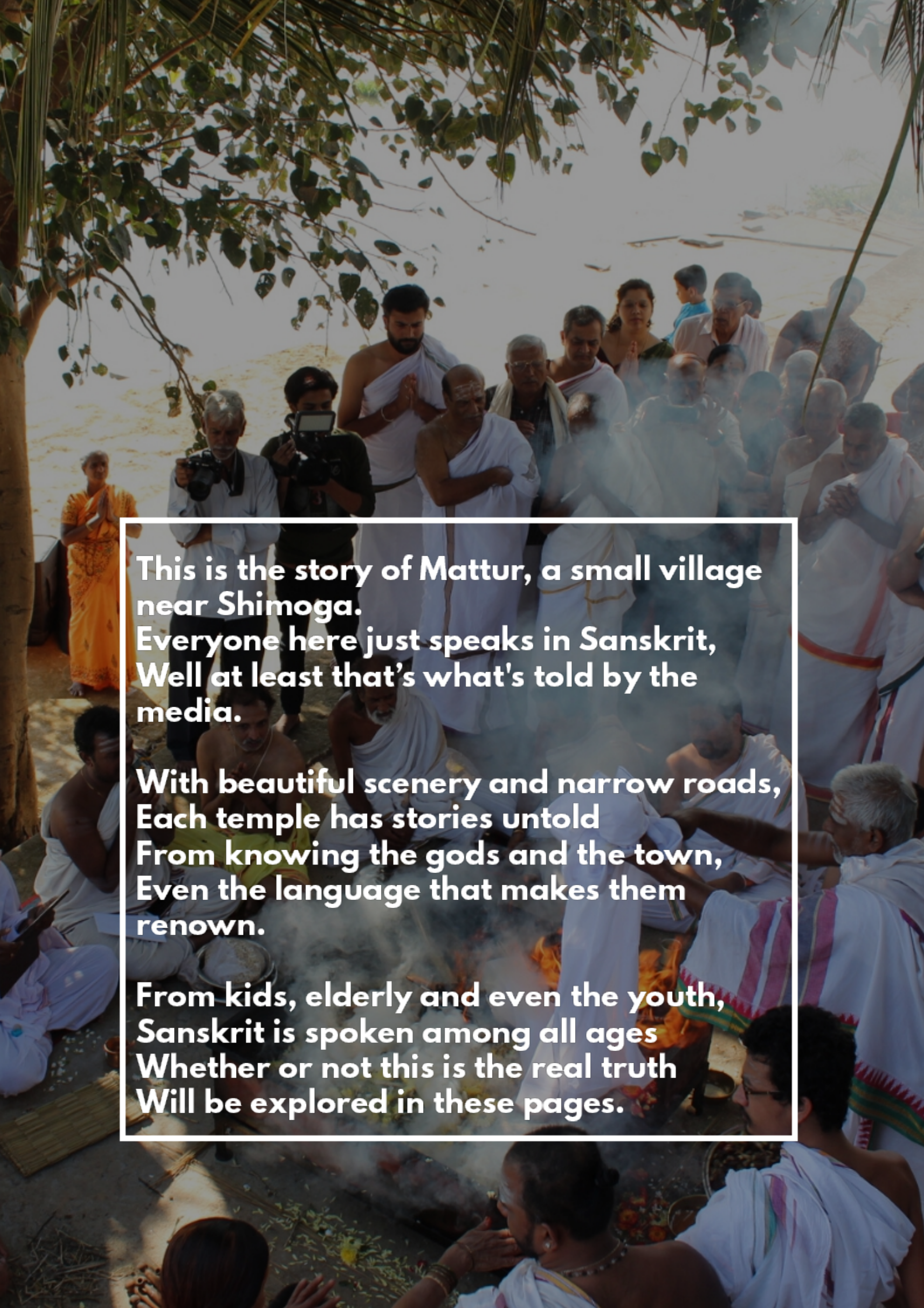
Sanskrita Bharathi, Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan & Veda Pathshala:

1. What does your organization do? (history/role)
2. What had motivated your organization to revive Sanskrit in India?

3. What activities does your day consist of?
4. What does your organization aim to achieve?
5. How did the plan of reviving Sanskrit in Mattur come along?
6. Has there been a change in the number of Sanskrit speakers in Mattur? If yes then by how much?
7. Are you aware of any other Sanskrit speaking village in India apart from Mattur & Hosahalli? If yes, can you name a few?
8. Do you believe that everyone in Mattur speaks in Sanskrit?
9. What is the daily routine of the students here?
10. What opportunities open to the students after they graduate from this institution?
Especially women?

Appendix B – List of Interviews

Date	Name of the Interviewee	Designation	Location
09-02-2020	Sri Chandrashekara	Sanskrit Scholar	Hosahalli
09-02-2020	Lakshmi Kanth Uppavadyaya	Mattur Resident	Mattur
09-02-2020	Ashwathnaryana Avadhani	Sanskrit Teacher	Mattur
10-02-2020	Prem	Minority Resident from the neighboring village	Hosahalli
10-02-2020	Dr. Mahabaleshwar	Retired Professor in Sanskrit	Hosahalli
10-02-2020	Anant Krishna	Sanskrit Teacher	Mattur
10-02-2020	Kirana Avadhani	Sanskrit Scholar	Mattur
11-02-2020	Bharatiya & Radha	Srikanthapuram Residents	Srikanthapuram
11-02-2020	Sashikala	Srikanthapuram Resident	Srikanthapuram
11-02-2020	Anonymous	Muslim Resident from Mattur	Mattur
11-02-2020	Muzibulla	Minority - Vegetable Vendor	Mattur
11-02-2020	Venkatesh Avadhani	Teacher at Veda Pathshala	Mattur
11-02-2020	Mr. Srinidhi	Mattur Resident - Sanskrit Promoter from Mattur	Mattur
11-02-2020	Anonymous	Mattur Residents	Mattur
11-02-2020	Anonymous	Mattur Residents	Mattur
11-02-2020	Achyut Avadhani	Sanskrit Professor	Mattur
13-02-2020	Dr. Sachin Kathare	Member of Samskrita Bharathi	Bangalore
13-02-2020	Anonymous	Gamaka Art Professor	Hosahalli
13-02-2020	Anonymous	Sanskrit Professor	Sringeri
13-02-2020	Anonymous	Hindi Teacher	Sringeri
13-02-2020	Mukul	Student at Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan	Sringeri
13-02-2020	Yogeshwaran	Student at Veda Pathshala	Sringeri
13-02-2020	Vinayak Udappa	Principal at the Veda Pathshala	Sringeri



This is the story of Mattur, a small village near Shimoga. Everyone here just speaks in Sanskrit, Well at least that's what's told by the media.

With beautiful scenery and narrow roads, Each temple has stories untold From knowing the gods and the town, Even the language that makes them renown.

From kids, elderly and even the youth, Sanskrit is spoken among all ages Whether or not this is the real truth Will be explored in these pages.