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PERCEPTIONS ON GRAMAPADDHATI

Nagendra Rao

The *Gramapaddhati* is a traditional chronicle which contains the history of the brahman settlements in the Tulu region. There are different versions of this work. It is a text in Kannada; but there are a few Sanskrit versions also.¹ The present study is based on three versions which the author has been also able to consult. One of them is a printed version and this version we label as GP1². A second version which we label as GP2, is preserved in the University of Tubingen, found among the papers of the Basel missionaries who worked in the Tulu country, a copy of which was procured by the kind courtesy of Professor. B.A. Vivek Rai of the Department of Kannada, Mangalore University. A third version which we label as GP3, in palm leaf manuscript, is available in the collection of Department of Kannada, Mangalore University (No.79).

Gramapaddhati claims to form part of *Sahyadri Khanda* which is again considered to be a part of *Skanda Purana*. This indicates the attempts of the authors of *Gramapaddhati* to claim authenticity on account of puranic origins.

The *Gramapaddhati* is broadly divisible into three parts. The earlier parts belongs to the realm of mythology, dealing with the creation of the land and its settlement by Parasurama as well as with the role of Siva in the origin of kingship and state in this region. In the earlier part we find the narration of Parasurama creating the land. Subsequently when the brahmanas from other regions refuse to go this newly created land on the plea that this land is not peopled by brahmanas, Parasurama becomes angry and decides to create brahmanas by himself. Thus he converts the local fishermen into brahmanas by investing them with the treads of jute and donates them land. Further on in the same part is the narration of the origin of state where monarchy is the form of government. The story is concerned with the birth of Trinetra Kadamba and it gives, during the narration of events, a list of different rulers who ruled the Parasurama *kshetra*.

In the second part there are details of the rule of Kings, some protest and even rebellions. It gives the details of rule of different Kings like Mayura Varma, Chandraganda and Lokaditya. It also mentions the rebellions by the original inhabitants under the leadership of the "Chanda" chief Hubbasiga.³ It mentions the protests from the side of the earlier brahmanas who were estranged by the decision of Mayura Varma to bring brahmanas from Ahicchatra. While the rebellions of the 'holeyas' is suppressed ruthlessly, the protests of the brahmanas is met with compromise. In this part there is

atleast one instance of inheritance obtaining in South Kanara. Mayura Varma, the Kadamba King is stated to be the son the Kadamba princess Susila, and a prince of the solar dynasty, Hemangaraya. Mayura Varma obviously traces descent from his mother's dynasty of the Kadambas. Later on in this text, is also stated that as this was how Mayura Varma came to the throne, he ordered that the entire country should follow the matrilineal system (*dauhitra dharma*).⁴

In this third part of this work there are statements which can be tested against other documents. This part refers to the settlement of brahmanas in thirty-two *gramas* along with their family names being mentioned. it is possible to identify these different *gramas*.

There are continuing traditions in these villages, where the brahman families and their continuing traditions survive to this day. We follow the narrative of one version, GP1, with additional information from other versions.

Parasurama after slaying the Ksatriyas twenty-one times, gave away the entire land to Kasyapa as a fee for sacrifice performed to expiate for the sin. Kasyapa told Parasurama that it is wrong to live in the land donated by him to others. So Parasurama came to Sahya hills and wrested fresh land from the western sea. In the newly created land there was no brahmana population and brahmanas from outside would not go there on any account as it was an *abrahmanya desa* (land without brahmanas). So he converted *Dasas - Revaras - Kaivartas*, type of Moger caste people, into brahmana caste and assured them prosperity. Then he retired to mount Mahendra, telling the brahmanas that if they faced any danger they could call him for help and that he would come immediately. In order to test Parasurama the brahmanas called him without any reason. Realising this Parasurama became angry and cursed them to become sudras.

The next part of the story narrated the birth of Kadamba. When Siva and Parvati came to Sahya hills, a baby was born to them under a Kadamba tree. The child has three eyes. Since he was born under a Kadamba tree, he was named Kadamba and was blessed to become a King. He was succeeded by Vasu Chakravarti whose daughter Susile married Hemanga Raya of Surya Vamsa. They gave birth to Mayura Varma. When Mayura Varma became the King he was advised by the Rsis to bring brahmanas from Ahicchatras, on the banks of River Godavari. As per the suggestion of the Rsis, Mayura Varma went to Ahicchatra and brought brahmanas from there. Previously Parasurama had divided Parasurama *ksetra* into following territories 1. Karata 2. Varata 3. Marata 4. Konkana 5. Ilaiva 6. Toulava 7. Kerala. The brahmanas brought by Mayura Varma were made to settle at Haiva, Toulava and Kerala.

The brahmanas were settled in eighteen villages of Haiva, thirty-two villages of Toulava and sixty four villages in Kerala. Along with the brahmanas were also brought sudras to work for them and they were named nayars. They were kept under the control of the brahmanas. When such arrangements were being made, the fallen brahmanas, who were earlier converted as brahmanas and

later cursed, protested against it. Mayura Varma as a matter of charity, did not punish them instead, devised a *sanketa paddhati* by giving them the following villages: Naguru *grama*, Mattina *grama*, Kushasthali *grama* and Svasthi *grama*.⁵ They were named in accordance with the village in which they settled. But they were only brahmins in name and their position was in reality, that of sudras.⁶

In order to make the sudras co-operate with the brahmins, Mayura Varma gave two *desas* to sudras and those who settled in these *nadus* became the *nadavas*.⁷ These *nadus* were divided into Kelanadu-Nalavattanadu-Halasanadu-Yaradunadu⁸ and the shudras were settled there as *nadavas* to enable them to assist the brahmins at *agraharas*. In these *agraharas* the brahmins were expected to study the vedas, perform the *Isvara puja*, *Mahavishnu puja* and *Mahaganapati aradhane*.

During this time Mayura Varma had a son called Chandrangada. When he was still a minor Mayura Varma went to do penance leaving the administration in the hands of ministers. In the absence of Mayura Varma, the brahmins lost earlier patronage and returned to their homeland, Ahicchatra. Chandrangada, after assuming power realised this and gave them *agraharas*.

After some time Chandrangada had a son called Lokaditya. While Lokaditya was still very young, Chandrangada passed away. When the state had become kingless, a Chandala called Hubbasiga together with several of his fellowmen, harassed Lokaditya whose mother took him and fled to another country. Hubbasiga gave a series of troubles to brahmins who left for Ahicchatra. But some of them remained in Tulunadu and coalesced with Hubbasiga. The property of the brahmins were appropriated by the non brahmin peasants who were called *nayars*.

In the meantime, Chandasena of Gokarna wanted to give his sister Kanakavati in marriage to Lokaditya. But Hubbasiga threatened Chandasena and asked him to give Kanakavati to him in marriage. Chandasena worked a plan and with the help of Lokaditya killed Hubbasiga. Later Lokaditya occupied his lost territory and married Kanakavati. Here different types of 'holeya' castes are mentioned: Bakka, Mera, Goddi, Bile, Hasalava and Koraga. They were made to work under the brahmins.

Lokaditya decided to bring brahmins ^{from} Ahicchatra and approached Bhattacharya who accepted his request and persuaded the brahmins to proceed to Parasurama *ksetra*. In Gokarna, with the objective of donating land to Brahmana a sacrifice was performed in front of God Mahabalaesvara. Along with land donations, two Brahmins from Kota village were given the *tantrita* and the right to perform *puja* at Mahabalesvara temple.

GP1 goes to give the details of thirty-two settlements in Tulunadu, which are divided into sixteen western villages and as many eastern villages. The households which constitute each of these settlements are also described. Lokaditya, after donating land made these details to be written in the native language. Bhattacharya asked Lokaditya to make the shudras and holeyas as

subordinates of nayars. All business activities like *agnihotra*, *pancha mahayajna*, study of vedas etc. The division of villages and the details regarding different households came to be called *sanketa paddathi*.

The last part of GP1 gives a list of the different households, their grades, their duties and their powers. It mentions *Bhattas*, *Agnihotris*, *Smartas*, *Sabhapatis*, *Panditas*, *Prabhus*, *Tantris*, *Gramanis*, *Adhivasis*, *Pakshanathas* and *Jannis*.

Sabaraya and Tiburaya were the *Sabhapatis*. Kalluraya and Uparannaya were the *Panditas*. Netrattaya, Icchalattaya, Putraya, Pangannaya, Udupa and Brahmakaranta were the *Tantris*. Mudilaya and Nidamburaya were the *Pakshanathas*. Chauta, Banga, Mudilaya and Nidamburaya were the *Prabhus*. Munnuraya, Arinaya, Kovinaya, Perannaya, Koyamegettaya, Kuduraya, Majjittaya, Talattaya, Pijittaya, Paturaya, Indulvalittaya, Koyakadanaya, Simanturaya, Punchannaya, Machanuturaya, Mogeraya, Mitrantaya, Alevooraya, Tunga, Brahma Karanta, Kalluraya, Udupa, Baipadittaya, Atradittaya, Appantadittaya, Belannaya, Aramanettaya, Idapadittaya, Sabaraya, Uparannaya, Korginaya, Ametatittaya, Sambaraya, Kolatya, Mudampadittaya, Bajittaya, Kornaya, Sagurittaya, Madantillaya, Patturaya were the *Bhattas*. Simanturaya, Muchanturaya, Munnuraya, Alevooraya, Kodencha, Manjittaya, Saralaya, Madipalittaya, Kadambalittaya, Kunjittaya, Naduvantillaya, Sagurittaya, Tenkilaya, Putraya, Tekudenaya, Bayarittaya, Kalluraya, Baipadittaya, Vappantaya, Idepadittaya, Kornaya, Maradittaya, Udupa, Brahma Karanta, Banninjitaya and Sivaraya were the *agnihotris*. Nujittaya, Kidenaya, Naralattaya, Talantraya, Ayapinaya, Mannakalattaya, Alevooraya, Brahma Karanta, Kalluraya, Udupa, Baipadittaya, Korginaya, Mundapadittaya and Kodancha were the *smartas*. It also gives a long list of *Jannis*.⁹

The text also mentions the designations like *Ballala*, *Dore*, *Savanta*, *Nadu*, *Bidu*, *Divana*, *Simhasana* and *Rajasthan*. Talepadi, Manjanadi, Nidamburu and Mudila are the *Ballalas*. Kunda Heggade, Muda Heggade, Marmaba Heggade, Bidaresa Omanjuru, Ramanatha, Boladadesingattaya and hundred of Heggades and Ballalas were the *Dores*. Iravatturu Basava and Muliike Kinnika Savanta were the *Savantas*. Nalavattunadu and Kelanadu were the *Nadus*. Baiduru and Bhatkala were the *Bidus*. Kadari and Karkala were the *Divanas*. Barakuru and Mangaluru were the *Simhasanas*. Barkuru, Mangaluru, Kadaba and Honnavara were the *Rajasthan*.

GP2 consists of two parts; the details regarding the division of villages, the names of brahman families and their designation etc. are found in the first part. It is written in Kannada. The second part of this document is named 'Maurya Varma Vamshavali' and it is written in the Sanskrit language, in Kannada script.

GP2 does not explain elaborately the creation of Parasurama *ksetra*. So the elaborate mythological narration found in GP1 and GP3 is missing here. It gives more importance to the different villages and different brahman households. These brahman families are graded into

atyuttamaru (highest grade), *uttamaru* (second grade), *madyamottamaru* (middle grade) and *viprottamaru* (good brahmins). *Shroutas* and *Smartas* belong to the first grade. *Bhatta*, *Tantri* and *Pandita* belong to the second grade. The middle grade are *Pakshanathas*, *Sabhapatris*, *Ballalas*, *Annagramanis*, *Gramanis*, *Janni*, *Adhivasi*, *Loukikas* belong to the last grade.

GP2 also mentions that Chittupadi Ballalas were *Pakshanathas* for eastern sixteen villages and Nidamburu Ballalas are *Pakshanathas* for western sixteen villages. Sabaraya and Sibarya were the *Sabhapatris* for eastern and western villages respectively. Vappantaya and Pijattaya are *Pandits* for eastern and western villages respectively. The function of the *Pakshanathas* or *Pakshanayakas* is to look after the *caturvama* system of the country. Their assembly was regulated by the *Sabhapatris*. These *Sabhapatris* were given suggestions by *Panditas* regarding *smriti*, *shastra*, *prayaschitta* and *Karma*. It mentions four Ballalas who were the heads of eight villages each. There were eight *Annagramanis* each of whom were the heads of four villages. There were sixteen *Gramanis* and thirty-two *Annamanis*. Each of these designations had their superior officers. There were twenty-four *Shroutagnihotris* and sixty-four *Bhattas*. The Tantris were responsible for management of the temples, *kshetras*, *nagabrahmahutas*, *Agama*, *Mantra shastra*, *kalashastra*, *tares* and *festivals*. *Jannis* are heads of the temples. They were expected to be served by *adhivasis* and *adhivamsi*. All these brahmins would meet at Kuta Narasimha temple and Shivalli Anantesvara temple.

The second part of GP2 known as 'Mayura Varma vamsavali' purports to give the genealogy of the Kadamba dynasty. However, the succession is not always established. In many cases only the names of rulers and the length of their reign are given, without even a mention of the relationship in which one ruler stood his predecessor. So rather than describing it as a genealogy we may regard it as a list of rulers belonging to Kadamba family and other families as well.

GP3 is stated as written by Varaha Timmappa in kavya form and copied by Somayaji in Shalivahana Saka, 1768 i.e., A.D. 1846. It is written in a more conventional form starting with all the necessary formalities for writing a sacred work. It starts by involving the Goddess Parvati. It states that it should be heard in secret and should not be questioned.

The mythological part goes back in time and it starts with the story of Jamadagni, his relations with his wife and his son Parasurama. It explains in detail the desire of Kartaviryajurna to appropriate the invaluable cattle wealth of Jamadagni and the revenge taken by Parasurama. This part is absent in GP1 and GP2. In the next part it explains elaborately the donation of land by Parasurama to brahmins and Mayura Varma's patronage to strengthening of brahmin settlements.

GP3 contains interesting details regarding the traditions of fallen brahmins and certain important terms which are absent in the earlier two versions. It states that there was a controversy between the brahmins of Kotesvara and Kota regarding the ownership of a land.¹⁰ The Kotesvara brahmins used cunning methods by digging the ground and hiding a Kotesvara brahmana there and

when the Earth (bhumi) was questioned as to who owned the land, the brahman answered that it belonged to Kotesvara brahmans. But an *ashariravani* revealed the cunningness of the Kotesvara brahmans and cursed them to become fallen brahmans.¹¹

While referring to Hubbasiga, GP3 mentions that Chandrasena killed Hubbasiga with the help of *chandrayudha* and he cursed the fellowmen of Hubbasiga to become slaves of others and they will have no unity among themselves. This work also mentions Brahmavarta, Aryavarta, Padmavarta and Nagavarta. It mentions Maharashtra dravida, Andhra dravida, Karnatikas and Cola dravidas. It also mentions *battisa* (thirty-two) which is curiously a Hindi word. It mentions *hattu savira jagattu*¹² and the process of building Narasimha temple at Kota.

In these three versions we find certain geographical details. GP1 states that Haiva is situated between Gangavali in the south, Sahya hills in the east and sea in the west. Toulava is situated between Gangavali in the north, River Nilesvara in the south, Sahya hills in the east and sea in the west. *Kerala desa* is situated between River Nilesvara in the north, Kanyakumari in the south, sea in the west and Sahya hills in the east. These details provide geographical descriptions of Haiva, Toulava and Kerala. Geographically *Gramapadahati* is set in the South Kanara including the present day district of Kasargod in Kerala. It contains a geographical division of South Kanara into thirty-two big villages which consisted several *adhivasis*, the smaller units. A study of place names occurring in these texts enable us to identify the antiquity of these places.

In the earlier part, which can be designed as the mythological section, the text refer to number of places and other geographical identities. GP1 mentions river Godavari, Ahicchatra, Sahya hills, Mahendra hills, Kanyakumari, Kerala, Varata, Marata, Konkana, Haiva, Toulava, Kerala, River Gangavali, River Nilesvara, Naguru *grama*, Mattina *grama*, Kushasthali *grama*, Svasthi *grama*, Gokarna *desa*, Kota, Kandavara and Shivalli.

The places mentioned in GP2 are Ahikshetra, Shivalli, Kota, Tulu, Maleyala, Haviga, Jayantika nagara, Barkur. GP3 refers to Gajapura, Kotesvara, Saligrama, Venupura, Vatapura, Sivabelli, Nituru, Talitode, Mangaluru, Barakuru, Kukke and Machivuru.

The later part of different texts of *Gramapaddhati* gives details regarding the thirty-two villages where the brahmans settled and the boundaries of certain important villages like Kota and Shivalli. GP3 gives details regarding brahman population in Shivalli and mentions its different *adhivasis*.

These three versions mention the names of thirty-two villages in which the brahmans settled. GP1 refers to Tareuru, Varkadi, Marane, Kolyanadu, Padi, Kudalu, Mogebailu, Mittanadu, Nirumarga, Shimanuru, Tenekala, Shivabelli, Brahmapura, Niravara, Kuta and Skandapura. These are categorised as western *gramas*. The eastern *gramas* are Shripadi, Odilu, Nala, Karanduru, Ujire, Kunyamarga, Kakkada, Raminja, Pude *grama*, Balapa, Ainnadu, Idakedu, Kemminja, Padinja, Siriyadi and Kudipadi.

In GP2 in the western *grama* section Tareuru is referred as Karuru, Tenekala is called Kanakkala, Kolyanadu is referred as Kolavinadu and Skandapura is referred as Skandavara. Instead of Mogabailu GP2 mentions Mogralu. In the eastern *grama* section GP2 refers to Kareys, Kavaia and Manikala which are not mentioned in GP1. But the same text leaves out Airnadu, Siriyadi and Kudipadi which are mentioned in GP1. GP2 refers to Karanduru as Karanjuru, Kunyamarga as Kunjimarga, Raminja as Ramanjuru, Belapa as Belavya and Padinja as Palinja.

GP3 mentions all the sixteen western villages mentioned in GP1, but instead of Mogeabailu it refers to Moganadu. Kuta is referred as Gajapura and Skandapura is called Skandagrama. In the western *grama* section it calls Shripadi as Sirripadi.

The discrepancies are generally of two varieties. One of them is related to the identity of the *gramas* mentioned. In a few cases while the number sixteen is kept sacred, a few villages mentioned in one list are altogether absent in another list. The identity is therefore, completely different. In certain other cases, the villages mentioned in different lists are the same although it is either spelt differently or a different name itself is given.

APPENDIX : IDENTIFICATION OF THE VILLAGES

<u>Name of the Grama</u>	<u>Location (Taluk)</u>
<u>Western Gramas</u>	
1. Kandavara	Kundapura
2. Kota	Udupi
3. Brahmavara	Udupi
4. Varakadi	Kasargod
5. Karavoor	Mangalore
6. Padi	Kasargod
7. Mogral	Kasargod
8. Kudalu	Kasargod
9. Mittanadu	Kasargod
10. Tenakala	Kasargod
11. Shimanturu	Mangalore
12. Marane	unidentified
13. Kolavinadu	Bantwal
14. Nilavara	Udupi
15. Shivalli	Udupi
16. Nirumarga	Mangalore
<u>Eastern gramas</u>	
1. Shripadi	Bantwal
2. Vodila	Belthangadi
3. Nala	Belthangadi
4. Kareya	Belthangadi

Name of the Grama**Location (Taluk)**

5. Ujire	Belthangadi
6. Kamaduru	Belthangadi
7. Kavala	Bantwal
8. Kunhimarga	Belthangadi
9. Kikkada	Belthangadi
10. Ramakunja	Puttur
11. Pude	Sullia
12. Balapa	Sullia
13. Idekidu	Bantwal
14. Palinja	Puttur
15. Kemminja	Puttur
16. Aivarnadu	Sullia

1 This author was able to find one version of *Gramapaddhati* in the house of Harikrishna Tantri, Udipi, which is in Sanskrit language.

2 It is published by Holla Krishniah, Balanadu in 1924.

3 For traditions regarding Hubbasiga cf., Purushottama Bilamale, *Koragara Samskriti*, (Bangalore, 1993), PP. 29-33.

4 GP 1 P.22 Even those who are presented as antagonistic to the Kadambas, viz., the Koragas, followed the same type of inheritance. cf., Purushottama Bilamale, *Op.cit*, P.37.

5 Kushasthali and Svasthi villages can be identified in the present state of Goa.

6 The Matti Brahmins seem to be agrarian oriented brahman community since there is a story that branjal seeds were given by Vadiraja Svami of Sode Mutt. In South Kanara people know about the branjal called *Matti gulla*.

7 In the region around Kundapur nadavas belong to bunt community, who were the non brahman agricultural caste.

8 According to a list given by P.Gururaja Bhat, three out of these four figure in inscription, P. Gururaja Bhat, *Studies in Tuluva History and Culture*, (Kailianpur, 1975), P.147. He has prepared a list of *nadus* on the basis of *South Indian Inscriptions (SII)* Vol.VII and IX Pt.II and Karnataka Inscriptions Vols.I and III Pt.I.

9 Jannis are also referred as Chinnas in GP1 PP 46-47.

10 Another brahmanical tradition *Sahyadri Khanda* speaks about the same incident. See Nagendra Rao, 'Reconstructing the Social History of South Kanara - A Study of the *Sahyadri Khanda*', *Indica*, Vol.36, No.2, September, 1999, P86.

11 Also see Ko.Sha.Karnata, *Kuta Maha Jagattu*, (Saligrama, 1958) PP 25-26. Some of the families of the Kotesvara brahmins have now settled in a place called Iddya, near Suratkal. It is said that the Kotesshvara brahmins were made the followers of Sode mutt by Vadiraja Swami, See P. Kuppannacharya, *Sri Guruvara Vadiraja Charitamrita*, (Kinnigoli, 1983) PP.44-45. In spite of this story, the Kotesshvar brahmins continued to maintain equal status with other brahman communities of South Kanara. This is proved by the marriage alliances between the Kotesshvara brahmins and Kota and Shivalli brahmins.

12 An inscription dated A.D.1520 refers to ten thousand Mahajagattu, A.R.No.515 for 1928-29.