



Critical Discourses in South Asia

CRITICAL DISCOURSE IN TELUGU

Edited by
K. Suneetha Rani



ROUTLEDGE

Critical Discourse in Telugu

This volume forms a part of the Critical Discourses in South Asia series which deals with schools, movements and discursive practices in major South Asian languages. It offers crucial insights into the making of Telugu literature and its critical tradition across over a century. The book brings together English translation of major writings of influential figures dealing with literary criticism and theory, aesthetic and performative traditions, reinterpretations of primary concepts, categories and interactions in Telugu. It presents 32 key texts in literary and cultural studies representing thoughts, debates, signposts and interfaces on important trends in critical discourse in the Telugu region from the middle of the 19th century to the end of the 20th century, with nearly all texts translated by experts for the first time into English. The volume covers a wide array of themes, ranging from a chapter by Kandukuri Veeresalingam on women's education to Challapalli Swaroopa Rani on new readings of the oral literature of the marginalised communities. These radical essays explore the interconnectedness of the sociocultural and historical developments in the colonial and post-independence period in the Telugu region. They discuss themes such as integrative aesthetic visions; poetic and literary forms; modernism; imagination; power structures and social struggles; ideological values; cultural renovations and collaborations and subversions.

Comprehensive and authoritative, this volume offers an overview of the history of critical thought in Telugu literature in South Asia. It will be essential for scholars and researchers of Telugu language and literature, literary criticism, literary theory, comparative literature, Indian literature, cultural studies, art and aesthetics, performance studies, history, sociology, regional studies and South Asian studies. It will also generate interest among the Telugu-speaking diaspora and those working on the intellectual history of Telugu and conservation of languages and culture.

K. Suneetha Rani is Professor at the Centre for Women's Studies, University of Hyderabad, India. She taught in the Department of English, Women's University, Tirupati, and the Department of English, University of Hyderabad, before joining the Centre for Women's Studies in 2011. Her

areas of interest include gender studies, cultural studies, comparative studies, new literatures in English and translation studies. She translates from Telugu to English and vice versa. She has extensively published research articles and translations in English and Telugu. Her major publications in English include *Australian Aboriginal Women's Autobiographies: A Critical Study* (2006); *Flowering from the Soil: Dalit Women's Writing from Telugu* (translation of Dalit women's select writings from Telugu, 2012); *English in the Dalit Context* (co-editor, 2014); *Vibhinna: Voices from Contemporary Telugu Writing* (co-editor, 2015); *A House on the Outskirts and Other Stories* (translation of Devarakonda Balagangadhara Tilak's select short fiction from Telugu, 2016); *Influence of English on Indian Women Writers: Voices from the Regional Languages* (2017); *Identities and Assertions: Dalit Women's Narratives* (2017); and *The Rock That Was Not* (translation of Githanjali's select short fiction from Telugu, 2019).



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Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
<i>Translators</i>	xii
<i>Notes on transliteration</i>	xiii
Introduction	1
K. SUNEETHA RANI	
1 Women's education [February 1875]	28
KANDUKURI VEERESALINGAM	
TRANSLATED BY ALLADI UMA AND M. SRIDHAR	
2 Prologue to a <i>memorandum on modern Telugu</i>	35
GIDUGU VENKATA RAMAMURTHY	
3 Prologue to <i>Radhika Santvanamu</i>	40
BENGALURU NAGARATNAMU	
TRANSLATED BY K. SUNEETHA RANI	
4 Foreword to a <i>history of Telugu literature</i>	44
CATTAMANCHI RAMALINGA REDDY	
5 The harm done to Telugu	48
THAPI DHARMARAO	
TRANSLATED BY K. SUNEETHA RANI	
6 The Sitamma Tikkanna Sculpted	57
RALLAPALLE ANANTAKRISHNA SARMA	
TRANSLATED BY ALLADI UMA AND M. SRIDHAR	

7	Introduction to <i>Musalamma Maranamu</i>	68
	PINGALI LAKSHMIKANTHAM TRANSLATED BY ALLADI UMA AND M. SRIDHAR	
8	Man and woman (excluding the aspect of love)	75
	GUDIPATI VENKATACHELAM	
9	Freedom of the artist	87
	KODAVATIGANTI KUTUMBARAO TRANSLATED BY ALLADI UMA AND M. SRIDHAR	
10	Purpose of poetry	93
	K.V. RAMANA REDDY TRANSLATED BY N. VENUGOPAL	
11	The structure of poetic revolutions	103
	VELCHERU NARAYANA RAO TRANSLATED BY E. DILEEP	
12	Those six poets	109
	CHEKURI RAMARAO TRANSLATED BY E. DILEEP	
13	Why Sanskrit, Oh Swami?	115
	BOJJA THARAKAM TRANSLATED BY GITA RAMASWAMY	
14	The word is the world	120
	VARAVARA RAO TRANSLATED BY N. VENUGOPAL	
15	The story of Rama and the class character	126
	B. VIZIA BHARATI TRANSLATED BY GITA RAMASWAMY	
16	First-generation short stories of Telangana	137
	MUDIGANTI SUJATA REDDY TRANSLATED BY K. SUNEETHA RANI	
17	The origins of Telugu drama that one does not wish to see	145
	G. KALYANA RAO TRANSLATED BY ALLADI UMA AND M. SRIDHAR	

18 Literary criticism, too, is social praxis	152
RACHAPALEM CHANDRASEKHARA REDDY TRANSLATED BY E. DILEEP	
19 Music that's snapping its shackles	158
VOLGA TRANSLATED BY ALLADI UMA AND M. SRIDHAR	
20 Protest against the caste hegemony	166
JAYADHIR THIRMAL RAO AND A.K. PRABHAKAR TRANSLATED BY K. SUNEETHA RANI	
21 Literature and its philosophical premise	173
K. BALAGOPAL TRANSLATED BY E. DILEEP	
22 The trajectories of Kalingandhra story	178
ATTADA APPALA NAIDU TRANSLATED BY K. SUNEETHA RANI	
23 Rasa and women's experience	184
KATYAYANI VIDMAHE TRANSLATED BY K. SUNEETHA RANI	
24 Why has Madhuravani changed?	191
A. JAYAPRABHA TRANSLATED BY ALLADI UMA AND M. SRIDHAR	
25 Reflections on Marxist literary criticism in Telugu	197
N. VENUGOPAL TRANSLATED BY N. VENUGOPAL	
26 Coarse winnows that sift literature	206
JOOPAKA SUBHADRA TRANSLATED BY ALLADI UMA AND M. SRIDHAR	
27 Difference of perspectives between Dalit literature and revolutionary literature	212
G. LAKSHMI NARASIAH TRANSLATED BY E. DILEEP	

28	The furnace	218
	JULURU GOWRISHANKAR TRANSLATED BY K. SUNEETHA RANI	
29	A garden of mirrors—reclaiming the Sufi past and contemporary Muslim discourse	224
	AFSAR MOHAMMAD	
30	Poetry is but the reflection of realistic identities	241
	M.M. VINODINI TRANSLATED BY K. SUNEETHA RANI	
31	Muslim women’s poetry	250
	KHAJA TRANSLATED BY E. DILEEP	
32	The story of Yellamma—the philosophical perspective	261
	CHALLAPALLI SWAROOPA RANI TRANSLATED BY K. SUNEETHA RANI	
	<i>Index</i>	266

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Translators

E. Dileep teaches English Literature at Krishna University, Machilipatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India. The areas of his teaching and research interests include literary theory in general and Marxist literary theories in particular. His PhD thesis was published as *Biography of a Blunder: Base and Superstructure in Marx and Later* in 2016. He has delivered more than ten invited lectures, published two books, ten articles and presented over thirty papers in various national and international seminars.

Gita Ramaswamy works with the Hyderabad Book Trust, a not-for-profit Telugu publishing collective based in India. She has co-authored *Taking Charge of Our Bodies* (2004), *On Their Own* (2004), and *The Oxford University Press Anthology of Telugu Dalit Literature* (2016) and has authored *India Stinking* (2005). She translates from Telugu to English and has translated the book *Life in Anantharam* (2016). Also, she has edited *Here I Am*, an anthology of stories by P. Satyavathi (2018).

N. Venugopal is a poet, literary critic, translator, social scientist, journalist and public speaker based in Hyderabad, India. He has published twenty-five original books in Telugu and translated as many from English into Telugu. He is currently the editor of *Veekshanam*, a Telugu monthly journal of Political Economy and Society, Hyderabad, India.

M. Sridhar taught in the Department of English, University of Hyderabad, India, before he took voluntary retirement. He has published extensively in the areas of literary theory, language studies and comparative literature and translation. He has been translating (with Alladi Uma) for over twenty-five years. Among their recent translations are *Untouchable Spring* by G. Kalyana Rao and *Sorajjem* by Akkineni Kutumba Rao.

Alladi Uma taught in the Department of English, University of Hyderabad, India, before she took voluntary retirement. She has published extensively in the areas of African American literature, Indian writing in English, women's studies and translation. She has been translating (with M. Sridhar) for over 25 years. Among their recent translations are *Untouchable Spring* by G. Kalyana Rao and *Sorajjem* by Akkineni Kutumba Rao.

Notes on transliteration

Wherever words or lines from other languages such as Sanskrit, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil or Kannada have been retained, they are italicised, and the English meaning is given in brackets. Some code-switching, for instance, Telugu and Urdu by minority writers was hinted by retaining the Urdu lines/words and giving the meaning in brackets to convey the politics of language.

Names of the authors are spelt differently in different contexts. Writers, translators, publishers and critics have used different spellings in different contexts. Some writers have published and are well known with their short names and pen names. Quite often, the space that divided or undivided the name was a problem as it was not clearly mentioned in most cases especially when it is written in Telugu. Every effort was made to use the “standard” spelling of the names. Priority was given to the spelling that is used in the text that is included in this volume.

References

References to quotations in the texts have been provided most often by the editor. On a few occasions, the versions cited are from a later date than the original articles as earlier versions were not accessible.



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Introduction

K. Suneetha Rani

The Telugu-speaking region and people, spread over two states in India (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), have been part of different administrative units under various rules during different periods and have shared linguistic and cultural affinities despite shifting geographical borders. The Telugu region witnessed critical traditions, movements and discourses at different points of time, be it the reform movement, language debates, freedom struggle, political fluctuations, social mobilities and cultural transformations. All these forms of critical thought have been majorly expressed through writing, whether creative writing, critical essays, columns or journal contributions, or through cultural forms such as songs, stories and performances. The literary discourse in Telugu brilliantly deals with the critical discourse in Telugu region as it touches upon identity movements, linguistic influences, gendered understandings and complex hierarchies. Hence, the significance of exploring the literary discourse in Telugu is the most crucial tool to understand the larger debates in depth. The critical discourse in Telugu, like it is in many other Indian contexts and languages, has a grounding in movements and thoughts that have been aiming for change and questioning the existing patterns of the hegemonic institutions and hierarchical practices. Similarly, many such movements have voiced their ideologies through literature, and literature has been kept alive and dynamic by voicing these ideologies.

This introduction to the volume *Critical Discourse in Telugu* will focus on some important trends in the critical discourse in Telugu. One is the comparative approach that was used as an analytical tool to generate a discourse in literary circles. The second is the role played by the movements, especially the identity movements that brought tremendous change in the critical and literary discourse. Connected to these two is the influence of other literatures from Indian languages as well as the Russian and English literatures that becomes a major point of discussion in the critical literary circles. All these three points also reveal the ongoing dialogue between writers, critics and readers. This volume has attempted to choose excerpts from texts/writers who have stood for a certain point in critical discourse either corroborating or introducing or confronting or countering a discourse and thereby modifying it.

Ancient literature in Telugu

Ancient literature in Telugu was written approximately between the 11th and 18th centuries. The critical discourse in the modern Telugu context begins in the 19th century. It has a long history of almost two centuries. However, discussions about writing are found in early Telugu writings as well, according to some critics. Kovela Suprasannacharya (1936) observes that there is a great difference between the Greek grammarians who believed that literature is an imitation of the world and the Indian grammarians who believed that literature is an extraordinary outcome of the aesthetics. He gives examples of Tikkana Somayaji (1205–1288 AD), Bammaera Pothana (1450–1510 AD) and other early Telugu poets (xxxii).¹ He continues to argue that in the prefaces (kaavyaavatarika) and other writings by the Telugu poets, one can notice the poets' views about the art of writing and new thoughts. For instance, Nannaya (1022–1063 AD) has, in the chapters of *Mahabharata* that he has written in Telugu, poems that explain the poet's personality and the features of his poetry. Suprasannacharya traces this tradition to Kalidasa and other Sanskrit poets and says that this quality of writing about the self was at its peak during Nannaya's times. He observes that Nannaya makes a distinction between his readers as poets and others. He continues to analyse that Nannaya's criticism in *Mahabharata* reveals two methods, that is, examining literature through the poet and examining literature through readers (pp. xxxiv–xxxv).

While Suprasannacharya analyses such understandings as the beginning of literary criticism in Telugu, Chekuri Ramarao (1934–2014) in his article "Telugu Sahitya Vimarsalo Adhunika Dhoranulu"² (Modern Trends in Telugu Literary Criticism) observes that there is no literary theory in Telugu that is different from that of Sanskrit. All books of literary theory in Telugu are translations, either as poetry or as prose, from Sanskrit theories. Nannaya and other poets have expressed some opinions about poetry in their books, but they do not have the stature of theory. He continues to argue that it appears that literary criticism in Telugu began in the form of commentary on ancient poetry. This tradition of commentary has come to Telugu from Sanskrit (p. 133). He traces a clear connection between the Sanskrit literary tradition and its influence on Telugu literary tradition.

On the other hand, Mudiganti Sujata Reddy (1942) emphasises criticism as part of literature and goes on to say that criticism in ancient times was inherent in books on prosody and rhetoric. Many a book on rhetoric and rhetoric theory discussing the literary theories in Sanskrit literature came out from Telugu. The Sanskrit rhetoric treatise titled *Prataprudrayashobhushanam* was written by Vidyanatha (13th century) who was a native of Orugallu. Singa Bhupala the Two (1425–1475), who ruled Devarakonda wrote a treatise on rhetoric *Rasarnava Sudhakaram* with intense discussions on *rasa*. Visweswara (14th century), who was in the court of Singa Bhupala, proposed a theory of wit in his book *Chamatkara Chandrika*. Akbar Shah

(17th century), the son of the teacher of Abul Hasan Tanisha, who ruled Golconda, wrote a Sanskrit treatise on Telugu titled *Shringara Manjari*. It is said that Akbar Shah wrote this book in Telugu and translated it into Sanskrit. These can be called the ancient forms of literary criticism. The very first book on prosody in Telugu was written by Malliya Rechana from Vemulavada of Karimnagar district. His book *Kavijanasrayamu* (10th century) mentions the characteristics of Telugu poetry. Scholars such as Mallinatha and Somanatha wrote valuable commentaries for Sanskrit texts (p. 85).³

Another critic Bethavolu Ramabrahmam, in his article “Mrichhakatikam-Vyakhyana Sameeksha”,⁴ argues that Sanskrit theory witnessed commentaries on commentaries and multiple commentaries emerged on Sanskrit poetry. Difference of understanding, ideologies and periods caused such multiple commentaries. Somehow such a spread is not to be seen in Telugu. Many *kavyas* do not even have commentaries. Except for some such as *Parijatapaharanam* by Nandi Thimmana (15–16th centuries), the commentaries also do not enjoy much respect. Telugu commentaries were written for several famous Sanskrit *kavyas* and visual poetry. But there was objective criticism on such commentaries. There were no instances of commentaries that tried to fill the gaps in the previous commentaries. Till recently, there was no occurrence of collecting the famous Sanskrit commentaries on a *kavya*, prepare a source text after comparatively examining all the commentaries and write a comprehensive commentary in Telugu. Mostly, it was taking some Sanskrit commentary as the model and writing the Telugu commentary. Many people have difference of opinion on Telugu, its Teluguness, its readability and others in such commentaries (p. 43).

Kolakaluri Enoch (1939), a path-breaking writer and critic, in his book *Adhunika Vimarsa Sutram (A Theoretical Exposition of Modern Literary Criticism)*⁵ argues that majorly there are different perspectives with regard to subject in ancient and modern literatures. While ancient literature emerged with the divine system as the subject, modern literature emerged with the contemporary society as its subject. Ancient literary criticism belongs to text perspective, while modern literary criticism belongs to the subject perspective. It is not useful to examine the ancient literature from today’s subject perspective, but it can be done. It is not of great use to examine contemporary literature with the ancient text perspective, but it can be done. We need a modern literary critical principle to analyse contemporary literary theory (p. 176).⁶ He identifies two major periods in Telugu literature, that is, Ancient Literature written before 1806 and Modern Literature published after 1857. He observes that there was no significant criticism between these two phases. Interestingly, he says that modernity does not mean mere western influence and that there is a need to bring modern literary critical theory into access for everyone. His observation that modernity does not mean mere western influence is crucial in understanding the critical contexts in Telugu. The modernity or change in the Telugu context can be traced to the culturally specific locales that are typically grounded in the Telugu Indian

context. Kolakaluri Enoch himself has enlivened Telugu literature with his enormous contribution to Dalit thought and literature and in turn contribution to the Dalit movement with his writings such as *Asprushya Ganga: Kathanika Sankalanam* (The Untouchable Water: Collection of Short Stories–1996), *Munivahanudu* (2002), *Aadi Andhrudu* (The First Andhra Man–2008), *Kaki* (The Crow–2009), *Dandora* (Proclamation–2013), *Dalita Kathalu* (Dalit Short Stories–2014), to name only a few.

Katyayani Vidmahe (1955), in her book *Telugu Navala Kathanika Vimarsana Parinamam* (1995),⁷ observes that literary criticism completely belongs to the modern era. According to her, criticism started to be moulded as a genre with the influence of introduction to English language and literary traditions. Literary criticism existed in Telugu before this, but not in this form. It was in the form of commentary on poetry based on the *alankara sastra* traditions. Also, she attempts to trace the historical moves in literary criticism in Telugu.

Velcheru Narayanarao (1932) opines that Telugu literature has been crushed between two great languages and cultures for the past fifty years. Listing great theories from Sanskrit or English, citing examples from unknown books and theories that the readers have not read cannot be considered literary criticism. Literary criticism is different, and theories are different. However great a theory might be, it cannot decide what literature is and what is not. It has to be done by poets and writers as poets and writers (p. 86).⁸ Such an understanding of writing comes in sharp contrast to the views expressed by another writer, thinker and critic Viswanatha Sathyanarayana (1895–1976), who states that “It is one thing to examine something as it is but it is another to examine why it is like that. Examining why it is like that is critical inquiry” (Padya Vidya-Adi Parva Peethika, p. 26) (p. 112).⁹ He also opines that there is no relation whatsoever between the poet’s personal life and the poetic self (Viswanatha Panchasati Prarambha Padyalu) (p. 113).¹⁰

The aforementioned views also take us forward to understand how modernity was understood by critics in their analysis of the critical literary discourse in Telugu.

Modernity in Telugu

Many writers in Telugu have seriously engaged with discussions around modernity as a form, thought, change and resistance. Afsar Mohammad (1964), a poet and critic, observes that there is no clear definition for the word modernity. But it is being used in different meanings repeatedly. Some called it a time period, while others rejected this and said that it indicates a philosophical perspective. If the numerous social and literary changes in this century can be summed up in word, it would be apt to use the word modernity. Modernity has to be taken as a period but also has to be looked at as a perspective resulting from different developments in that particular

age. As far as literature is concerned, the changes in social foundations have completely changed the nature of literature in the 20th century. Thus, a perspective about the purpose of literature was formed. With this, a connection between the writer's psychological world and the material world was established. This connection is a huge jolt in contemporary Telugu poetry.¹¹

On the other hand, K. K. Ranganathacharyulu associates modernity with a personality who was into social transformation. He observes that Kandukuri Veersalingam (1848–1919) punctured the darkness of the decadent regime of the ancient literature and spread the light of modern literature. The new aspects through which Kandukuri attributed modernity to Telugu literature are four: (1) Making literature an instrument for social cause, especially social reform; (2) resisting poetry that is filled with rhetoric and lengthy compound words and indicating the need for simple poetry that is the major feature of modernity; (3) rejecting the writings filled with physical passion; (4) while there was only the form of poetry until then existent in Telugu literature, he introduced several forms of prose writing. His novel *Rajasekhara Charitramu* is considered to be the first novel in Telugu. He wrote social and literary articles, translated important books from English into Telugu, etc. He conducted competitions in novel writing. He started the journal *Vivekavardhani* and wrote the book *Telugu Kavula Charitra* (pp. i–ii).¹² According to the editorial introduction to the book *Adhunika Sahitya Vimarsakulu-Prasthanalu*,¹³ the first book in Telugu in the name of criticism is *Vigrahantra Vimarsanam* (1875) by Kandukuri Veeresalingam.

Critics have observed that one of the distinct features of modern literary criticism is the simple language (*bhasha saaralyam*). Modern poets belonging to the schools of writing such as romantic poetry, revolutionary poetry, feminist poetry, digambara poetry, Dalit poetry and others have firmly conveyed through their writings that there is no theme and no language that cannot be used in their poetry. Afsar Mohammad points out that the path shown by Sri Sri (Srirangam Srinivasa Rao 1910–1983) with regard to content, that there is no limit to content and that it could be a puppy, or a piece of soap, or a matchstick, was established, freedom came out surging as the major purpose of poetry. The freedom took the poet into an extended scope of life. Later, the prosaic poetry broke the remaining few shackles. With this, there was nothing that was beyond expression. Poetry reached close to the everyday language (p. 4). Afsar quotes from Kundurthi Anjaneyulu (1922–1982), who says that the prosaic song is a revolt against the prosody and restrictions but not poetic instruments such as rhetoric that help in calling it poetry. The very first characteristic of prosaic poetry is simplicity. The prosaic song has to stand only because of its power of poetry. It is unadulterated like pure gold (p. 34).¹⁴ This is very significant as it comes from Kundurthi Anjaneyulu, who is considered the father of prose poetry in Telugu.

English education in India started in 1804–1805, and printing in Telugu started in the year 1806. Colonel Colin Mackenzie (1754–1821) initiated the process of writing local histories. He got the ancient inscriptions

copied and preserved; collected the books and the *kaifiyats* (chronicles) while surveying the country. Kavali brothers helped him with the process of collection. Kavali Venkata Ramaswamy published *Dakkanu Kavula Charitra*, the history of Deccan poets, in 1820 in English. The book has a reference to 109 poets. This was the first book that introduced Telugu poets with a critical introduction which was the first attempt to record the history of Telugu writers. The thread that connected these life stories was criticism. The introduction to the writers in this book in a sense unveiled the analysis of the writers and their writings. The next collection of writers was published only between 1886 and 1897 when Kandukuri Veeresalingam published *Andhra Kavula Charitra* in three volumes. The first volume extensively discusses forty poets in Telugu from ancient times. The second part discusses the life stories of fifty to sixty Telugu poets from the medieval times. The third volume briefly introduces the lives of almost one hundred and forty writers in Telugu from modern times. All the three volumes were published by Hithkarini Samajam in Rajahmundry. A.D. Campbell (1760–1840) wrote the Telugu grammar in English and built a good dictionary. C.P. Brown (1798–1884) collected the spread-out books, resolved and systematised the disorganised books, added interpretations and commentaries and published them. The year 1835 witnessed literary journals in Telugu.

Sixteen years after the publication of Veeresalingam's *Rajasekhara Charitra* came the novel *Vivekachandrika Vimarsanamu* by Kasibhatta Brahmaiah Sastri. First, he criticised Kandukuri's novel in the journal *Rajayogi* and published that article as a book in 1896. He was the one who christened that genre as *navala*. Although he called his article "Vimarsanamu" (criticism), it was actually a condemnation of Kandukuri's novel. He had completely opposite views to that of Veeresalingam in social, moral, religious and philosophical issues. *Andhra Pracharini Granthamala* invited criticism on the two novels that they had published, *Durgesa Nandini* and *Vasumati Vasantam* (after 1910) for a competition. Their guidelines stated that the critiques should be written keeping in mind *patra poshanamu* (characterisation), *auchityamu* (propriety), *kalpana chaturyamu* (imaginative excellence), *katha nirvahanamu* (story telling) *rasaposhanamu* (emotions) and *gunamulu* (qualities).

Introduction of prose was a turning point in the use of people's language. The first travelogue in Telugu, *Kasiyatra Charitramu* (1830) by Yenugula Veeraswamaiah was written in prose format. In fact, the need to spread Christianity made the use of people's language inevitable from 1720 itself. The number of readers and the scope of publications also increased. Starting from 1802, the government orders were issued in Telugu. As the British Parliament in 1813 decided to teach Indian students in Indian languages, textbooks were also published in people's Telugu. However, the tables were turned when Chinnayasuri, a strong believer in classical language, became the president of Upayukta Granthakarana Desa Bhasha Sabha in 1848. He

published *Neethi Chandrika* (1852) and *Balavyakaranam* (1855) in classical Telugu.

Journals and magazines

Journals, magazines and newspapers contributed to Telugu literature and critical discourse. A number of journals came into being in the 19th century as part of the literary, cultural and reform discourse. All major discussions happened through these journals including the moulding of women. The journals started by Kandukuri Veeresalingam, especially, reflected his zeal for reform. The titles of journals spoke volumes about the subjects that were chosen for discussion in these journals. For instance, *Satihidabodhini*, one of the journals started by him, means teaching good to married women. Journals like *Gruhalakshmi*, *Anasuya* and various others that specifically focused on women's issues were published in the early 19th and late 20th centuries. In *Satihitabodhini* and *Satyasamvardhini*, Kandukuri advocated the removal of social evils such as child marriage, the caste system, the institutionalisation of prostitution, etc. The trials, tribulations and the achievements of *Vivekavardhini* are well recorded by Veeresalingam himself in his autobiography. Its unique qualities of bold, radical and comprehensive writing have earned for Veeresalingam the deserving name "Founder of Modern Telugu Journalism". *Vivekavardhani* (1874) was published from Rajahmundry by Kandukuri Veeresalingam. It used to publish a supplementary in English. It started as a monthly and turned into a fortnightly in July 1876 and into a weekly in 1885. Although its publishing was interrupted intermittently, it continued till 1891. Kokkonda Venkataratnam (1842–1915) was an opponent to Kandukuri in every matter. He brought out magazines such as *Andhra Bhasha Sanjeevani* and *Hasya Sanjeevani* (p. 196).¹⁵

Kasinathuni Nageswararao (1862–1938) started *Andhra Varapatrika* in 1908 in Mumbai, later shifted it to Madras in 1914 and ran it for three decades successfully. The monthly *Bharathi* was published in 1875 from Bellary. *Bharathi* is one of the very well-known literary monthlies in Telugu known for its contribution to literature. It was started by Kasinathuni Nageswararao Panthulu, who was also the founder of *Andhra Patrika*, another well-known journal in Telugu. It started in January 1924 and continued till March 1991. This journal published critical articles of high standard in the field of literature and language. It also published poetry, short fiction and essays. It was considered to be a standard in literature and literary criticism. Writers and critics of the time considered it to be an honour to publish their work in the journal.¹⁶ From 1891, restrictions were imposed on magazines in the Nizam state. Anything against the British or the Nizam or government officers or the state was strictly prohibited. Despite the restrictions and regulations, journals like *Andhramatha* (1917), *Tenugu* (1922–1927), *Neelagiri* (1927), *Sujatha* (1927–1930; 1050) *Golakonda Patrika* (1925–) *Hithabodhini* (1913–1914 from Mahabubnagar) and many others continued crucial

and critical debates around social, cultural, literary, economic and political issues. The first Telugu periodical published from Hyderabad was *Sedhya Chandrika*, which began publication in 1886 despite the imposition of certain restrictions on the press that applied to all language publications by the erstwhile princely state of Hyderabad. It was primarily an agriculture-related magazine providing information to farmers. The first newspaper in Telugu, published from Hyderabad, was *Golconda*. The newspaper was launched in 1926 by Suravaram Pratapa Reddy. The first Telugu news journal published from Telangana was *Hitabodhini* in 1912, edited by Srinivasa Sharma.

Magazines and newspapers with their literary sections have played an instrumental role in the contexts of dialogue between ideologies and ideologies. For instance, discussions around feminist writing found a platform in the newspapers and similarly discussions around Dalit writing and Muslim minority writing also found a platform in the literary sections of the newspapers apart from the magazines that are specifically devoted to literature. It is these newspaper discussions that could take the ideologies and the literatures to a large number of people. *Dalitavada Vivadalu* from which two articles are included in this volume is a good example to prove how the newspapers contributed to the debates. A beginning in Telugu journalism appears to have been made as early as 1835. It is believed that the first Telugu journal was a monthly called *Satyadoota*. It was a missionary journal started around the year 1835 mainly for the propagation of Christianity by the Christian Association of Bellary, printed in Madras.¹⁷ To counteract the missionary propaganda, a few journals were started, the most notable among them being *Tatvabodhini*. It was started in 1864 by the Madras Vedesamajam. Its aim was to propagate Brahmo principles and social reform.¹⁸ *Andhra Bhasha Sanjeevani*, a monthly journal, was started in 1871 by Kokkanda Venkataratnam Pantulu in Madras. The journal that deserves to be mentioned here is *Purushartha Pradayini* (1872), a monthly journal published from Machilipatnam. This was the first of its kind, because it was the first journal to be published from a purely Telugu district and edited by a Telugu writer and editor Umaranganayakulu Naidu. *Jayanthi* (1927), a literary fortnightly, was published from Bandaru. Viswanatha Sathyanarayana and Kolavennu Ramakoteswararao were the editors. It encouraged modern literature and published some of the best literary criticism and editorials. *Sabithi* was published by Sahithi Samithi, Tenali (p. 25).¹⁹

The journals published during this period, such as *Deshabhimani* (1896) and *Andhrakesari* (1904), served the cause of the Andhra movement creditably. The early decades of this century also saw the birth of leading Telugu National newspapers like *Krishna Patrika* (1902), *Andhra Patrika* (1914) and *the Congress* (1922). These papers identified themselves with the national movement carried on in the Andhra district of the country.²⁰ In 1915, Vavilla Venkateswara Sastrulu started the weekly *Trilinga*, which served the cause of Telugu for four decades. It was predominantly literary,

though politics also figured in its pages.²¹ The magazine *Chinthamani*, which came out with the encouragement of Kandukuri and with Nyayapathi Subbarao Panthulu as the editor, saw a period of competition in novel writing in 1892. It defined the novel as a *vachana prabandha* and decided on some principles for it (73–74).²²

Zanana Patrika was the second journal intended for women readers. It was originally founded in 1893 by Malladi Venkataratnam. These magazines echoed the conduct book tradition of 18th-century England bringing in several important issues for discussion ranging from domesticity to freedom struggle. They tried to instruct and create ideal women who are better wives and mothers. The subtle idea of grooming women is conveyed in the guise of reform, patriotism and nation-building. Magazines, especially women's magazines, reflect public opinion as it is expressed and moulded in that particular age. The period between 1883 and 1919, from *Satihita Bodhini* to *Soundaryavalli*, was a very significant phase in women's journalism in Telugu. About ten journals were started, some edited by men and others by women. Some of them are *Stree Hitabodhini* (1893), *Telugu Zenana* (1893), *Sri Balika* (1896), *Savithri* (1904), *Anasuya* (1914), *Stri Dharma* (Madras 1917) and *Vivekavathi* (1908) and *Intimations to Women* (1912) published by Christian missionaries. The dawn of the 20th century witnessed the first journal for women edited by a woman editor in 1902 from Kakinada. It was *Hindu Sundari* and its editor was Mosalakanti Ramabai. *Grihalakshmi* was the next journal to start in 1903 from Eluru in Godavari district. It was the first illustrative journal in Telugu and also it had the distinction of publishing a few articles in each issue meant exclusively for children. About twelve journals such as *Andhra Lakshmi* (1921), *Hindu Yuvathi* (1923), *Bharatha Mahila* (1925), *Grihalakshmi* (1927), *Viswagnani*, *Yasoda* (1930), *Andhra Mahila* (1944), etc., were published between 1920 and 1947. The early period of women's journalism (1883–1919) coincided with the most active phase of reform movements in Andhra while the later period till 1947 was devoted on the freedom movement and other political movements.²³

Women's journals accommodated most important discussions that the society and the country were debating at that time. Not only did the period see the emergence of writing and reading by women but also the editing and publishing by women. These journals reflected the larger movements happening at various points such as reform movements, regional movements, freedom movement and others. At the same time, they attempted to reconstruct the gender roles or gender images. Education, especially women's education, was one of the major agendas of these magazines. Some of them reiterated the traditional norms and values while some others questioned the restricting structures.²⁴

Critical voices in the early modern period

Some of the pioneering landmark critical works in the initial period are *Pingali Surana* (1892) by P. Dakshinamurthy, *Vivekachandrika Vimarsanam*

(1896) by Kasibhatla Brahmaiahastri, *Manu Vasu Charitra Rachana Vimarsanamu* (1899) by Penneti Ramachandrarao, *Manu Vasu Prakasika* (1902) by Kasibhatla Brahmaiahastri, *Nannaya Bhattarakudu* (1913) by Pudduppakam Subrahmanya Ayyar, *Pingali Suranaryudu* (1914) by Vinjamuri Rangacharyulu, *Kavitva Tatva Vicharamu* (1914) by Cattamanchi Ramalinga Reddy and *Vasucharitra Vimarsanamu* (1915) by Vajjala Seetharamasaastri. Some of them not only critique the classical Telugu texts but also enter into a dialogue critiquing the critique. The best example for this is the dialogue between the critics about the use of people's language. Similarly, the opponents of Kandukuri Veeresalingam publishing parallel journals is also one of the instances that reveal the arguments between the thinkers and the reformers. One such example is the work of Cattamanchi Ramalinga Reddy which came in for severe criticism for its modernist ideas. Chekuri Ramarao, in his article "Telugu Sahitya Vimarsalo Adhunka Dhoranulu",²⁵ discusses how Cattamanchi received opposition from the traditionalists. Kuruganti Seetharamaiah wrote *Alankara Tatva Vicharamu* (1915), Kaluri Vyasamurti wrote *Kavitva Tatva Vichara Khandana* and Akkiraju Umakantham and Nori Narasimhasastri also spoke and wrote against the work of Cattamanchi (p. 141). Chekuri Ramarao identifies a new trend in literary criticism in Cattamanchi, "It appears that the narrative criticism also started with him, which is the critic narrating the story of the book that he is criticising in his own words and adding his commentary" (p. 144). He lists out some of the points that are made by Cattamanchi in his *Kavitva Tatva Vicharamu*.

- 1 Imagination is more important for poetry, not rhetoric.
- 2 There should be unity in the story.
- 3 Social conditions lead to different literary forms.
- 4 Both content and style are important for poetry.
- 5 There should be diversity in characters and their behaviour.
- 6 Poetical compositions should be different from the rhetorical principles.
- 7 There should be a close connection between the descriptions and the story in poetry (p. 140).

Also, a well-known poet and critic Yakub, in his article "Sahitya Vimarsa Samajika Sthayiki Yedigenduku Krushi Chesina Ra.Ra",²⁶ explains how RaRa (Rachamalla Ramachandrareddy) extensively informed of the western and modern Indian critical tradition, got furious with Addepalli Ramamohanrao for attempting to analyse Sri Sri's poetry from the perspective of rhetorical principles. Sri Sri himself described, in one of his interviews, RaRa whom he greatly admired, as a cruel critic (p. 4). Poets like Gunturu Seshendra Sharma have analysed the ancient Telugu poetry as well as the modern (contemporary) Telugu literature.²⁷

G. V. Subrahmanyam in his article "Telugulo Sahitya Vimarsa Teeru Tennulu" from *Adunika Sahitya Vimarsa Reetulu* observes two trends

in literary criticism in Telugu, *sanghika spruha* (social consciousness and *sahitya spruha* (literary consciousness). Similarly, in his analysis of the emergence and progress of criticism in Telugu, he proposes eight phases for the convenience of analysis. They are, 1. *Grantha parishkara vimarsa yugam* (1829–1874) 2. *Vikasayugam* (1874–1913), 3. *Kavyanuseelana yugam* (1914–1948), 4. *Silpanuseelana yugam* (1948–1963), 5. *Samanvaya yugam* (1963–1970), 6. *Parishodhana yugam* (1970–1980), 7. *Sameeksha yugam* (1980–1990), 8. *Udyama vimarsa yugam* (1991–2000). Arudra, in his *Samagra Andhra Sahityam*, describes the period between 1757 and 1857 as the Kumphini (Company) age and the period after 1857 as the Zamindari age.²⁸

Some of the major periods in Telugu literary tradition, as classified by critics are Classical Period when only poetry and retellings were written, with no critical discourse and with Bhakti movement as the dominant trend; between classical and modern period, the period that witnessed people's writers such as Veerabrahmam and Vemana; Modern period with social, cultural, literary and linguistic reform as the dominant theme and purpose; Nationalist period; Romantic period, dominated by poetry and fiction; Digambara Poetry; Progressive Literature period; Revolutionary literature period, and the heterogenous and the most inspiring and path-breaking identity movements such as Dalit, feminist, Muslim minority, backward caste (Bahujan) and regional movements.

Critics have raised a crucial question about the nomenclature that can be used for the changes and developments in literature and literary criticism. One such question is whether to call the developments in literature as ideologies or as movements. Dwa Na Shastri, in his Telugu *Sahityamlo Udyamalu: Vadalu-Dhoranulu* (2012), identifies the major developments and schools of thought in Telugu literature as literary movements. He identifies the following movements—Bhavakavitvodyamam (Romantic period from 1910 to 1935–1940), *Abhyudaya Udyamam* (Progressive movement for almost ten years from 1935), Digambara Poetry movement (1965), *Vipla-vodyamam* (Revolutionary movement started in 1969–1970), *Strivadham* (Feminist Movement, started in the 1970s), *Dalitavadam*, *Sangha Samskaranodyamam* (Reform movement), *Navya Sampradayavadam* (Neoclassical period), *Hetuvadham* (Rationalism), *Anubhutivadham*, *Muslimvadham* (Muslim Minority movement), *BC vada kavitvam* (Backward caste literature), *Astitvadham* (Existentialism), *Adhunikottaravadam/Adhunikantaravadam* (post-modernism), *Pranteeyavadam* (regionalism), *Manavatavadam* (Humanism), *Prateekavadam* (Symbolism) and *Adhivastavikatavadam* (Surrealism).²⁹

The aforementioned are some of the periods and ideologies that could be found in Telugu literature. However, they cannot be divided into clear, watertight compartments as they have always existed in one form or the other and they have always been in dialogue with one another at some point or the other. The overlapping of these ideologies speaks for the

dynamic politics that has always been present throughout the history of Telugu literature, whether the ideologies were influenced by the classical or the western or the immediate contemporary. Kolakaluri Enoch insightfully names the various schools of thought in literary criticism in Telugu, apart from classifying the periods of Telugu literature. According to him, literary criticism in Telugu started with *Sangha Samskarana Sahitya Vimarsa* (Literary Criticism of Social Reform) and evolved into *Punarujjeevana Sahitya Vimarsa* (Literary Criticism of Renaissance), *Kalpanika Sahitya Vimarsa* (Literary Criticism on Fictional Writing), *Abhyudaya Sahitya Vimarsa* (Progressive Literary Criticism), *Digambara Kavitva Vimarsa* (Critique of Digambara Poetry), *Viplava Sahitya Vimarsa* (Revolutionary Literary Criticism), *Strivada Sahitya Vimarsa* (Feminist Literary Criticism) and *Dalita Sahitya Vimarsa* (Dalit Literary Criticism), which included, in the initial stages, Bahujan and Muslim Minority literary criticism.

Similarly, Tripuraneni Madhusudhanarao, a Marxist critic, in his *Sahityamlo Vastu Silpalu* (1997), divides the history of Telugu literature into the following periods—*maukhika sahityam* (oral literature), *likhita sahityam* (written literature), *anuvada sahityam* (translated literature), *bhakti sahityam* (bhakti literature), *prabandha sahityam* (prabandha literature), *dakshinandhra sahityam* (South Andhra literature), *pracheena sahityamlo prakriyalu* (developments in ancient literature), *adhunika sahityam* (modern literature), *praja sahityam* (people's literature), *adhunika sahityamlo prakriyalu* (developments in modern literature) and says that from this classification we can understand how Telugu literature emancipated itself from the religious ideology and the historical development in reflecting the reality. He also says that the literary historians are following the methods such as *adhyatmika vadam*, *saarvatrika vadam*, *saarvakalika vadam*, *svatantra pratipatti vadam*, *darpana vadam*, *paraavartana siddhantam*, *anyonyavadam* in writing literary histories. In his opinion, literary histories involve analysis but not mere chronological arrangement.

Critical discourse and the movements

Some of the major points that can be observed in the critical discourse in Telugu are movements, literary movements and critical discourse through literature and literature as critical discourse, interface between languages such as Sanskrit, English and Telugu, language debates not only in terms of which language but which variant of language such as literary language and spoken language as the medium of formal expression and writing, language debates around standard language in terms of identity that is based on caste, class, religion and region, writing back to the colonising languages such as Sanskrit, English and the “standardised” Telugu as language, literature and tradition, cultural and political influences of Sanskrit and western literary thought and theory, dialogue among the various schools of critical thought,

interface between written/published literatures and the oral/people's literary traditions, etc.

Two people who majorly contributed to the spread of people's language movement are Gidugu Rammurthy and Gurajada Apparao. Both of them were inspired and influenced by the language and literary movements across the world, especially in English. Gidugu put together a dictionary of Savara, a tribal language, thus not only highlighting the importance of Telugu but also the tribal languages. Gurajada Apparao's play *Kanyashulkam* (1897) was a milestone, as it was written in people's language, as opposed to the tradition of drama-writing in classical Telugu. His collection of songs *Muthyala Saraalu* (1910) was also written in people's language, thus bringing spoken language and oral tradition into the domain of literature. Madras University constituted a composition committee in 1914. There were some members who supported the use of classical language and some others who supported the people's language. There were also some who were neutral. The number of members supporting the use of classical language increased on demand and their argument finally won leading to an official resolution. Gurajada strongly opposed this and wrote a long essay in dissent. This is popularly known as the *Asammatti Patram* (Minute of Dissent—report against the decision of Madras University to retain classical language as the platform for curriculum development—1914). Kandukuri Veeresalingam too joined this movement for the use of people's language a little later. Similar arguments were raised about the school textbooks after 1965. Meetings were held and committees were constituted to discuss and make decisions in this regard. Finally, Telugu Akademi was established in 1968 to implement the standard spoken language to be used in textbooks. Writers, critics and linguists such as Pingali Lakshmikantham and Bhadriraju Krishnamurthy played a crucial role in these deliberations. Early texts used the word *Andhramu* for Telugu language indicating the language spoken by the people of Andhra or people of Andhra identity. Translation into Telugu is also called *Andhreekarana* and *Teniginchuta* emphasising the language into which the text is rendered rather than focusing on the process of translation. One cannot miss the political connotations of the words *Andhramu* and Telugu. Sujatha Reddy's article included in this volume informs the readers about an important detail that the word Andhra was used extensively in the Nizam state, such as Andhra Mahasabha, Andhrodyamam, Andhra Yuvathi Mandali, etc. Nizam was scared that Andhras under the British rule and the Nizam rule might come together and dethrone him by using the word Andhra. His government ordered that the word Telugu should be used in the place of Andhra. These words acquired more nuances during the Telangana movement when language became one of the crucial issues. This will be discussed later while discussing the regional movements as a critical discourse that influenced literature and vice versa.

Similar to the discussions around the influence of Sanskrit on Telugu literature and language, there are discussions around the influence of English on

Telugu literature and language. There were writers and critics who acknowledged English as an inspiration of emancipatory thought while some others criticised such influence that corrupted the indigenous Telugu language and culture. This becomes a layered discussion with multiple and contradictory dimensions. Whether it was Sanskrit or English, the influence was not only on language as a medium and a language but also as a thought and a culture. Similar to Sanskrit alienating women and marginalised communities, English was also an elite language as a colonial heritage. However, English has also been acknowledged as a source of emancipation from Brahmanical hierarchies for women and marginalised sections. Savitribai Phule's inspirational words about the need to embrace English in order to escape from the casteist structures had echoed in the Telugu context as well. Kandukuri Veeresalingam profusely praised the colonial rule and the English language and literature. He held the opinion that educating women will make them better family women leading to better homes. Analysis of theme and subject (*vastu tatva visleshana*) is primary in social reform literary criticism that Kandukuri wrote extensively. Moreover, there were writers like Panuganti Lakshminarasimharao (1865–1940) who strongly criticised the Telugu people who prioritised English over their mother tongue. His Sakshi essays are a collection of speeches by a fictitious character called Janghalasastru. These were articles published in different journals between 1913 and 1933.³⁰ The form resembles Joseph Addison's *The Spectator Essays* reminding the readers of several such texts by early modern Telugu writers modelled on the English texts in form but Telugu in content, especially by Kandukuri Veeresalingam. However, interestingly, Panuganti uses the model of a British text to criticise the influence of English language on Telugu people. The national discourse on women's issues had its local versions in the Andhra region as well. It was voiced in different ways and with different purposes.

A number of texts were translated from English to Telugu, while some were nativised and presented as adaptations, some others were translated "faithfully". Similarly, some translations went into multiple editions. This applies to translations from English and to translations through English. Language, like it is in literature, becomes an ideology in translation as well. For instance, *Anandamath* by Bankimchandra Chatterjee was translated in 1907, the very next year it was published in Bengali by Vavilla Ramaswamy Sastrulu with the help of a few others such as O.Y. Doraswamaiah. Doraswamaiah had translated *Kapalakundala* in 1899. Within three years after that, three translations of *Anandamath* were published in Telugu which went into multiple editions. Ideology continued to decide the translations into Telugu from British, Russian, American, Hindi, Bengali and other languages. As discussed in the introductions to the excerpts included in this volume, texts were carefully chosen to be translated in order to convey a particular context and an ideology to the readers.

Kovela Suprasannacharya acknowledges C.P. Brown for his contribution to Telugu literature that directly and indirectly strengthened the study of

Telugu language and literature. C.P. Brown, in the 19th century, collected manuscripts, got them rewritten with commentaries, wrote dictionaries and books of grammar, reprinted the classics in Telugu, collected, edited, translated and published Vemana's poetry in English. Suprasannacharya states that historical and literary critique in Telugu started on the foundation that Brown had laid. He clearly states that the origin and development of criticism in Telugu took place in the last decade of the 19th century (p. xxxvi).³¹

One of the first-generation literary critics in Telugu, Cattamanchi Ramalinga Reddy, examined Telugu prabandhas with the help of western, especially English literary traditions; he did not mention many western literary critics in his writings. Pingali Lakshmikantham went a step forward. He tried hard to introduce the theory of catharsis that influenced the Greek and western drama in his work. His book *Sahitya Silpa Sameeksha* has references to the work of western scholars. R.S. Sudarshanam refers to the English critics and quotes them extensively in his literary essays. G.V. Subrahmanyam's books *Andhra Sahitya Vimarsa-Angla Prabhavam* (1983) and *Literary Criticism in 20th Century* and his other writings also have references and detailed analysis (p. 20).³²

C. Mrinalini, in her essay "R.S. Sudarsanam", draws our attention to the fact that R.S. Sudarsanam appreciated Buchibabu that he succeeded in his aim to create a perspective on life in his novel. He says that "Freud, Russell, Marx, Kierkgard—The western cultural stream might well be flowing, but its destination in India is the ocean of philosophy. This novel proves this common issue" (p. 38).³³ Similarly, Rachapalem Chandrasekhara Reddy hails the critic Sardesai Tirumalrao as a comparitist critic in his article "Tulanatmaka Sahitya Vimarsakudu: Sardesai Tirumala Rao (62–69) as an extensive and avid reader of the world literature.

Language movements continued in later writings influenced by identity movements and became pivotal in certain ideologies and reformulations such as Dalit, feminist, minority literatures and movements for Telangana, Rayalaseema and North Andhra. As it has been said earlier in this introduction, language debates have been one of the major factors that became crucial for literature and critical discourse. Be it the question of creative writing or the academic language, politics of language has been most influential and inspiring for the readers, writers, critics and movements. Telugu literature and Telugu critical discourses of the 19th and early 20th centuries struggled to come out of the shackles of classical poetry and English, and the use of spoken language provided them with some tools to establish discussions that were accessible to people. But the language debates were not confined to language alone but also engaged with the identities of the people who could read and write.

Telugu literature has witnessed neo-traditionalism as well as rationalism in the early 20th century. While there were writers such as Viswanatha Satyanarayana who wrote *Ramayana Kalpavruksham*, there were also writers such as Gudipati Venkatachalam, Tripuraneni Ramaswamy Chowdhury,