

THE IDEA OF FREEDOM THROUGH TIME: A LITERARY STAKE ON THE THEME OF FREEDOM IN TELUGU LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

The concept of freedom is critical in understanding the political and intellectual movements of various societies. The two Telugu-speaking states of India, i.e., Andhra Pradesh and Telangana underwent such movements critically during the post-Independent Indian context. Prominent Telugu writers such as Srirangam Srinivasa Rao, Rachakonda Viswanatha Sastry, and Pendyala Varavara Rao had extensively produced their literary works on the concept of freedom by contextualizing it in different political and intellectual movements. This paper draws on their idea of freedom, their literary presentation of this theme enveloped in various forms, its implications, and reception by the readers. The paper comments on their reduced view of freedom that addresses issues of only particular sections of the Telugu-speaking society.

Keywords: *Idea of Freedom, Poetry, Illusion, Speech, Experience, Time, and Space.*

1. Introduction

In the introduction to her work *Literary historiography*, Ipshita Chanda talks about the “apprehension of time” that “is of dual nature”; “physical and intellectual” (2004: i). In the act of apprehension, a conscious human subject who has the burden to attribute meaning to the flow of time goes through this physical and intellectual apprehension. This “presence of consciousness [of a human subject] in relation to time [is] an integral part of the concept of history” (2004: i). This human consciousness not only “understands, perceives, and represents this flow of time itself through various media” (2004: i) but also plays a significant role in “shaping, marking and understanding human action”: Debord calls this the “transformation of reality” (2004: i). So, the idea of history as a concept, i.e., historiography, a representation of history is not possible without a fundamental understanding of the flow of time and its contribution. History as an abstract idea becomes possible when the “material context of a particular historical conjuncture ... [is] invaded by particular lines of force” (2004: i). And, a particular ordering of the fundamentals such as time, conscious human, and his location “yields different notions of philosophy” (2004: ii) of history. It is this historiography, she says, that is one of the significant aspects of comparative

literature methodology where history enters into the literary text, and the text and the history are “entwined with the reality within which the text is produced and received ... [that also] serves as a tool for reading ...” (2004: ii). Through this frame of study, this paper wishes to study the literary reception of the idea of freedom by readers and authors located in their time and space.

Sri Sri's *Mahaprasthanam*

Novelist, lyric writer, and radical poet Srirangam Srinivasa Rao (Sri Sri from here on) was born in Vishakapatnam and finished his BA from Madras University in 1931. During the outbreak of new literary forms in Europe in the nineteenth century, thought and practices around literature in India experienced a “vigorous and healthy development” (1992: 534). During the same time, Sri Sri got influenced by poets of existential thought like Allan Poe, Sartre, and other Russian revolutionary poets. The recurring themes of “revolt against imperialism, of nationalism and radical social reforms, were already common” (1992: 534) in the works of literature of Europe and America in the 1920s. “The impact of western ideas, coupled with the changes in socio-economic and political structures” in India “stimulated a new outlook towards social change” (1992: 534). Such progressive ideas and new

literary tendencies such as Imaginism, Impressionism, Futurism, and Dadaism made their way into Telugu literature in the 1920s itself and influenced writers of that time to free poetry from the traditional rules of prosody. Gidugu Venkata Ramamurthy, a linguist and social reformist, is the first Telugu poet to write and campaign against the literary expression confined by the rules. Sri Sri's *Mahaprasthanam* is the outcome of an amalgamation of the ideas and movements discussed above, that stunned not just the audience of Telugu literature but the entire country and world.

Mahaprasthanam, The Great Journey (to a new world), is considered Sri Sri's magnum opus in modern Telugu and Indian poetry written between 1930 and 1940 and published in 1950 by Vishalandhra Publications. In this anthology, he portrays his experiences as a child and a young man observing the world around him:

"whatever he encountered in life and imagination, his own hopes and despair and anger, his sympathies and hopes for the society, his impatience with the existing social order, his moral indignation at the treatment meted out to the labourers and down-trodden, his vision of new poetry and the new society make them all part of his blood and bones. He inhabits a new world of ideas and emotions and creates symbols for them in his poems" (1992: 536).

It is apparent that the content featured in this anthology is made of his experiences in life and his worldview. He addresses and teaches himself in these poems. In some of his poems, he interacts with abstract ideas such as poetry, freedom, and equality, his first encounter with those ideas, what they meant to him, and how he wishes to see them in the journey towards a new world that is going to be significantly different from his times.

Kavitha! O kavitha! - Poesy! Oh, poesy! – By Sri Sri

Kavitha! O kavitha! is one of his well-known poems written in the style of stream of

consciousness. He deals with complex free flow of ideas in this poem that is set to bombard with each other's ambiguities and particularities. Presented below is a detailed summary of this poem.

The Essence of the Poem

Poesy! Once upon a time, when I was young, on an auspicious occasion, in the distant streets, I saw the beautiful you. I was longing for a life with you every single second and saw you in everything that my eyes could see; in the cave, in the house, in the darkness, in my silent grave, I was meditating on you in my head and heard your sounds, languages, and images. I do not know what I have seen of you and how this poem that contains the power of you going to touch the hearts of others. I see you and hear you everywhere; on a sunny day, cloudy evening, rainy night, in the abandoned corners, in terrifying sounds, in conch that screamed the sound of the mid-sea, in sounds of drum, in the pitch-dark nights, thick forests, in every animal, in stars and the endless sky, in earthquakes, in government's fall, in revolution, war; all because of your divine and conscious presence in each of them. This is your *vishwaroopa sakshatkaram*, the manifestation of your universal form. When I chant you, what do I see and hear? I see diamonds falling out of the fire river, hear fevering beats of mridangam sounding in culverin, and cries of dark starving fights the wives and children of coolie in the strike. I see you in the eyes of a prostitute trapped into sleeping with evil to survive and hear you in her sickened moaning. I heard you in the secrets of those hanging heads in the *urikoyya*, noose. I could listen to the words of lakhs of stars, songs of crores of waterfalls, and screams of a hundred crore waves of the sea. I heard them and have tried to articulate them. These images of the poesies have chosen their journey towards articulation; they crossed the corpus of the dictionary, hand-cuffing grammar of the poetry and prose, slowly, they started walking, and then running towards me. *Kavitha!* Will you be able to listen to the deep exhales of my dreams drowning in sorrow? I write in your inspiration that one day the world finds a purpose in my writings. May my

work become the heartbeat of my people. May it become the chanting verse that they sing every day. When they sing this, may the sky come down, and may everyone share the objective of this work that sparkles in their hearts. May your form (the free form) bring meaning to their lives and make them stronger; may this poem become *naivedya*, offering, at your temple that I present in humiliation; may you take us over like the snakeskin.

The Idea of Freedom in Sri Sri's Poem

In this poem, the protagonist, "I", is addressing the objective form of poetry. He expresses his views on the idea of poetry, Poetry (from here on), and the boundless power of the poem that can express his real, unreal, and surreal thoughts. He discusses how poetry has mystically touched his heart and that, now, he sees nothing but poetry around him. Towards the end, he narrates the self-liberation act of poetry during which she unchained and broke the walls built around her in the forms of a corpus dictionary, hand-cuffing grammar, and many other traditional rules. He asks the liberated Poetry to *listen* to his sorrows. He wants to pen down his sorrows in freestyle, in her inspiration and hopes for people to find purpose in the poem. He calls people to make the poem their heartbeat, a mystical chant that they can sing every day for it can boost them to make the impossible tasks possible. He wants Poetry to take them over like snakeskin.

He also draws an interesting relationship between Poetry and Freedom. At the beginning of the poem, the narrator personifies Poetry as a female and eventually talks about how she broke the conventions and freed herself from age-old literary writing practices. Sri Sri broke the same conventions of writing by adopting free-style poetry such as this very poem that supposedly encapsulates the elements of inspiration for people to work for their own freedom. If poetry can break its prosodic and conventional thematic barriers, listen to the fights of hunger and secrets of the hanging heads on the noose, it certainly can motivate people to raise against the hegemonic and oppressive structures under which they are forced to live, collapse them, and set themselves

free. As the society of his time is in utter chaos, his 'dream' is drowning in sorrow because it is yet to come. Which is why he wants his people – who are labourers and downtrodden, to find purpose in this very work that can make the impossible of his times possible in the future. He expects his readers to grasp the gist of this intricate work rooting for freedom, cultivating these ideas, and fighting against the functions of oppressive systems. Sri Sri continued to use poetry as a significant medium to express his agony and distress with the order of the world. For him, poetry is the tool of inspiration and revolt. Acquiring freedom from very many things seems to be one of many important expressions of this particular poem. He seems to have written this poem in reference to the consequences of World War I and the events developing towards World War II. One can also infer the premises of the poem to the inhuman treatment of slaves and the working class in Europe and America in the early 20th Century and the practice of caste and class-based discrimination in India.

Gudipati Venkata Chalam, another influential Telugu writer during the time of Sri Sri, wrote the Foreword to *Mahaprasthanam*. Chalam expresses his discomfort with the taste of 'cultured readers' who are bound by their 'structure of feeling' – a familiar reception of a text experienced by the reader in the background of extensive reading, understanding, and appreciating the set conventions of a particular theme, genre, or a style of writing (Jauss 1969). When the cultured readers picked Sri Sri's *Mahaprasthanam* to read, they had no 'familiar experience' with the stylistic, thematic, and literary forms used in the work and could not appreciate it. Because they were used to reading beautifully written poems following the prosodic styles, ornamentations, and traditional plots. Sri Sri's *Mahaprasthanam* was a cultural shock work of art for many cultured readers of that time because the components of his poems are radically different from the kinds of texts that were there used to read. However, this literary masterpiece, eventually, set a foundation for a variety of literary practices to emerge.

Mahaprasthanam not only brought limelight onto the structures of oppression, manipulation, and power control but also inspired many writers to write on the theme of freedom. As time progressed, this literary marvel never disappeared from the plethora of revolutionary works. Many writers based their works on Sri Sri's idea of freedom and produced scintillating literature.

Rachakonda Vishwanatha Sastry's *Aaru saara kathalu*

The Madras Abkari Act, 1886 regulation by the Madras Presidency strictly regulated the making of local alcohols such as *saara*, arrack and toddy. When the Telugu-speaking regions of Madras presidency and Nizam princely state were brought together, this law continued to be under execution. The Prohibition of Liquor Act, 1960 by the state of Andhra Pradesh was formulated later to completely ban the making and consumption of alcohol across the state. Instead of making people's lives easier, the execution of this law trapped the lives of the poor in misery. Although the colonizers have left Indian colonies before Independence, their judicial, administrative, and revenue systems of governance continued to feed on the innocent natives of India. The Indian Penal Code of British India is one of such volumes of laws and punishments that the British during their rule in India used to execute Indian subjects. The government representatives working under the Ministry of Law and Justice such as police, lawyer, and judge who provide their services at the ground level, began to make perfect use of the loopholes of the Indian Penal Code established by British India not only to punish Indian subjects but also to torture them and loot money from the poor and innocent. In the name of illegal making and transportation of alcohol especially, piles of cases got lodged against small liquor shop owners and workers, and the poor workers were tortured and threatened by officers for bribes, in order to get bail.

It is during this time that Rachakonda Vishwanatha Sastry, famously known as Raavi Sastry, was a practising lawyer in the coastal regions of Andhra Pradesh. He began his practice as a lawyer in 1950 and evolved as a Marxist in the

initial days of the year 1960. He was deeply influenced by the Marxist philosophy featured in the works of Sri Sri, Gurrām Jashua, and Chalam, and shared many social, political, ethical, and economic ideas with them. When the Prohibition of Alcohol Act, of 1960 came into charge, he witnessed the impacts of such rudimentary laws on the rural poor whose lives rely on making and selling local alcohol. He witnessed how the administration branches of the judicial system misused their powers in the name of the liquor ban and how the innocent poor were victims of it (Subrahmaniam, 2021). In response to such atrocities, he penned one of his greatest works. Raavi Sastry's *Aaru Saara Kathalu*, the Six Arrack Stories are a literary representation of the plight of the poor in their battle with the judiciary. Drawing on real-life events, these stories feature plots on illegal transportation of alcohol among and across places, the union of police and lawyer who took advantage of poor and lower castes, and corruption in the judicial system. The stories mock the wicked conception of justice which works in favour of the powerful. Through these stories, Sastry criticizes government officials, the system of justice, zamindars, police, and politicians.

Maya, Illusion, is one of Sastry's six arrack stories which depicts corruption and misuse of power involved in the judicial and civil processes of governance. The story portrays Muthyalamma, the owner of a small and dysfunctional arrack shop, who was remanded to jail because she was accused to have made illegal liquor transactions from her shop. The Head Constable of her area filed this case against her because she refused to offer him his share of the bribe for that month. The title of the story is a mockery of the functions of judicial and civil systems that are illusioned to have served justice to the innocent.

Let us now look at a particular incident from the story and how the idea of freedom is featured in it. To set the context, a police charge is being filed against Muthyalamma and the court asked her to attend the hearing. Muthyalamma's alcoholic husband approaches a local Zamindar to set her free. The Zamindar meets Murthy, a newly practising lawyer, to defend the case. He gets a

share of the lawyer's fees for mediation. Murthy and the Zamindar demand a fee of hundred rupees in the beginning but she explains her economic situation and they settle down for twenty-five rupees. Murthy cross-questions the Head constable and strongly defends Muthyalamma. Murthy feels happy and hopes to win. Only later, when Muthyalamma explains the events of the previous day, he understands why the hearing went by smoothly, in their favour.

An Excerpt from the Story Maya

The head constable had come to see me yesterday and said, "Whatever happened is in the past. What can we do in the present, Muthyalamma?" What could I do when he took such a stand? I offered him a bribe when he offered to weaken his stand during the court trial. The concept of truth in the court is a different ball game, Babu! I have come here many times, and I know it well. The focus of the court is only on the witness statement. What would have happened to the case if the head constable stood firm like the other police officer? They would have inflicted me with some punishment. This is what happens during the trial. The witnesses proceed into the court one after the other. But they all meet before the trial and stick to a single story. They all listen to each other by hiding next to the trial room and on the veranda. One stands near the window and signals the other standing in the court trial room for examination. When they are asked to stay away from the proceedings, one of their people stays in the court hall consolidates the details of the narrative provided by one witness, and goes out to feed the second witness with that information. As a result, only injustice stands in the court ... I have paid two hundred rupees – my blood, my blood – as a fine for such false cases three times till today. So, I felt tired of this endless loop and offered some bribe to the head constable. While he gently accepted what I had to offer, I was scared of the Maya he would perform during the hearing. I am glad to hear from you that he weakened his position! So, there is nothing to worry about" ... Everything seems irrelevant, wrong, and illusion-like to Murthy. The police had not found *saara*, arrack, in her place, but a case

was filed that they found *saara*. In due course of time, the court dismissed the case stating that they did not find *saara*. Nothing happened. But that which did not occur was said, why even claimed, to have occurred. In the end, they declared that the alleged events, which were thought to have occurred, did not occur. No. Yes. No. Everything is the creation of Maya. But... He begins to think of Muthyalamma. "But, such suffering amidst Maya!" Murthy thinks. (158-59. Translated by M. Jagadish Babu).

This excerpt depicts the power of the police. The role of the police in bringing order to society is crucial. That is why they are provided with particular powers that many other government representatives do not have, such as holding weapons that have the potential to kill someone. The Head Constable in the story has similar power: the power to accuse and file a case against someone. But, the accusation filed against Muthyalamma is not true and illegal. He filed a false case against Muthyalamma because she could not bribe him. She should not be bribing him. She has no alternative but to save her life. She has to save her life from this accusation which can put her behind the bars. This assertion of the power of the police, who is the representative of a democratic justice system, against an innocent poor woman showcases how the judicial representatives control the definition of justice and freedom of the people. The role of the police is to safeguard the order of society and serve equality, justice, and protection for everyone irrespective of the differences among people. However, in the story, those who are responsible to protect people are playing with their basic rights such as justice and freedom. The Head Constable understands the power he holds, demands Muthyalamma for bribes every month, and when she refuses to offer, he files a false case against her to draw more money from her and threatens her freedom. As a result, she *cannot not* bribe him despite her economic difficulties. She is 'free' only if she offers him a bribe every month. She is 'free' till it is time to offer the bribe again the next month. This whole game of power is rooted in the institutions whose sole purpose is to

serve justice and 'free' the innocent. Usually, the police arrest the culprit and set 'free' the victim. When the police himself is the culprit, like in the story, everyone has to bribe him to sanction 'freedom' temporarily. As Murthy says in the excerpt, the world is a manifestation of *maya*, an illusion, where nothing can be stated to be true or false for sure. It will certainly be hard to understand if Muthyalamma is free before the false case was filed because she was paying the head constable every month. She won the case by bribing the head constable but that does not really set her free as she will have to continue bribing the head constable in the coming months.

If we closely look at the idea of freedom featured in the works of Sri Sri and Raavi Sastry, there is an interesting transition taking place as time progressed. Sri Sri's painted his vision of freedom through literary and societal revolutions. For him, literature needs to break away from religious, conventional, and traditional plots. There are more themes to write about than to glorify the same powerful men born in privileged socio-cultural and economic situations who save the world and fall in love with beautiful women. Literature can survive outside the prosodic meters and metrical styles. Which is why, he began to write about the themes of victimhood, revolution, oppression, and slavery. He wrote in the colloquial, local, and close-to-the-real-world language set in freestyle. At the same time, this is his way of calling the oppressed to revolt against their oppressor and fight for their freedom.

Sastry's notion of freedom finds its roots in revolutionary works such as Gurram Jashua's *Gabbilam* and *Mahaprastanam*, which are also an outcome of a particular communist ideology to render equality for everyone. Unlike, Jashua and Sri Sri, whose inspirational works are a general call for a revolution of the oppressed for freedom, Sastry's work draws particularly on a situation in his workplace where the innocent poor struggle to attain equality and freedom. His six arrack stories are fictionalized outcomes of the real-life events that took place in and near civil and judicial institutions of coastal regions of Andhra Pradesh. He depicts how the supposedly-democratic

governance fails to serve justice to the innocent and, instead, curbs their freedom. His stories are a mockery of the rights and values prescribed in our constitution because they are nothing more than mere statements which have no real-life impact. Thus, the idea of freedom experienced a transition from Sri Sri – freedom is real and important – to Sastry – freedom is an illusion and meaningless even in the context of democratic governance as long as the representatives of the government find loopholes with the judicial system and play with the basic rights of the innocent. Although Sri Sri decided to break away from conventional forms of writing that include traditional themes, style, and diction, his dense language continued to stand inaccessible to the common readers. If an illiterate man listens to someone reciting the revolutionary poems of Sri Sri to fight against the oppressors, it is highly impossible that they can make sense of his intentions. Sastry, on the other hand, used regional dialects of Telugu from Srikakulam and Vijayanagaram for his six arrack stories so that the stories are accessible to common readers and the illiterate as well. "As a Marxist who believes in the expression and revolution against the oppressed, he constructed such characters of victims in the stories that are conscious of the illegal proceedings of the judicial system and the fakeness of the shallow idea of justice" (Kodidala, 2020).

Pendyala Varavara Rao's *Captive Imagination: Letters from Prison*

Varavara Rao is one of the most persecuted Telugu poets in the modern Indian setting with more than half a dozen cases filed against him by many ruling government parties in the last fifty years. Born into a middle-class Brahmin family, he is a poet, writer, Telugu lecturer, communist intellectual, journalist, critic, orator, and translator who represented the voices of common people. In the context of the agrarian struggles prevalent across the country, Srikakulam Peasant Struggle was born "as an opposition to feudal and economic oppression, particularly in the tribal belt across the Eastern Ghats ... and rural mobilization gained momentum as mass

organizations, agricultural labour associations and youth fronts cropped up, debating land and water rights “ (Kodidala, 2020). During the second phase of the agrarian struggle in the late 1960s, Digambara Kavulu, Nude Poets, and Tirugubatu Kavulu, Association of Rebel Poets merged and formed Viplava Rachayitala Sangham (Virasam), the Revolutionary Poets Association, and Varavara Rao was instrumental in making this possible. In a way, the then-young Varavara Rao was not only influenced by the communist ideas of freedom presented in the works of Sri Sri and Raavi Sastry but also by his direct associations with them, as they are part of the Virasam. “Class struggles and rights of peasants, tribals, and the working class remain significant themes in his poetry for the same reason ... He also works around the themes of police brutality with equal amounts of outrage and sensitivity” (Kodidala, 2020). He published more than 15 anthologies with his credit on the themes described above.

Let us now look at the context in which he wrote his Memoir: *Captive Imagination: Letters from Jail*. Varavara Rao was arrested in 1985 under the Secunderabad Conspiracy Case and sent to prison for 39 months. In 1985, 46 persons were accused of attempting to overthrow the then Andhra Pradesh government, and Rao was one of them as he was closely working with tribals and Naxals from Karimnagar and Adilabad forests. He was also accused of attending a secret meeting that was making plans to assassinate two important police officers. So, during his time in jail, he was feeling isolated from the world outside and “deprived of control over his own self” (Kodidala, 2020), and that is when he wrote a series of articles in the form of letters to Andhra Prabha, a Telugu Daily Newspaper, and Indian Express, an English newspapers, located in India between 1988 and 1989.

“Under the vast sky, escaping the confines of prison and the occasional moon stuck between barbed wires, he mulled about plants, trees, birds, letters, freedom, and hopes. The prison reflected the captivity of the world ‘where sweat continues to be transformed into tears, freedom will remain an alien concept’. His abstract musings, prose

which easily transcends to lyrical poetry, were later shaped into his prison diary *Sahacharulu* [which came out as *Captive Imagination* in English]” (Kodidala, 2020).

Vijayan says that those who imprisoned Rao can control his physical being but not his captive imagination which can slip through as poetry. Rao’s letters in his memoir depict his experiences of exploring the prison: “the prison itself transforms into a metaphor for the innumerable curtailments of freedom in the world outside” (2011: 30). Rao discusses in one of his letters a comment made one of his visitors who said, “you [Rao] are in a small jail whereas we are in a big jail. That is the only difference” (2010: 162). This idea of freedomlessness is the heart of his memoir. The *captive imagination: Letters from jail* is a series of letters written in both prose and poetry. Rao’s memoir describes his relation to the world inside the jail and awaits to see how people exercise ‘freedom’ outside the jail. That being said, let us now look at one of the poems he wrote under the title “Words”.

Words

Words, smothered in the folds of the self, / Must be stirred awake, / Made to amble and watch / See if wings can bear aloft / The crippled limbs / And soar into the sky. / Like the first showers after the drought / To my parched ears, my own worlds, / Not any other’s, remain strange.

Like the marvel of the sky / Discovering its lost monsoon / I long to sprout on soil / In the vibrations of a sonorous world. / Once again I yearn to learn the utterance / At school and on the commune, / From pupils and plebeians / I dream of seizing syllables / From each of history’s furrows.

Without this voicing peal / How will this silence, / Loaded for so long in the self, / Explode? / Without this booming resonance / How will this scene, / Cryptic for so long in the eyes, / Scintillate?

Once again I must learn to utter / In communing with and listening to / Our people; / I must be tethered to the word and abide by it / What’s man’s legacy after betraying the word?

Nothing debases the word: / In the blazing

furnaces of time / Under the plummeting hammer
clangs, / This, as the fittest moment, / I go on
forging expressions. (2010: 84-85)

The poem opens with a sense of deprivation of the power of the physical body that lost its essence because the limbs are crippled to make it impossible to fly into the sky. Like the freshness of a monsoon's first rain after a severe drought, his own words sound new and parched to him as he has been deprived of the freedom of speaking. The protagonist wishes to study 'words' again from the beginning and sprout afresh from the universe of sounds. Rao is making direct references to his time in jail where he spent months alone in silence. As a result, his body and mind feel numb and powerless. He also experienced a sense of detachment from speech and words. As a speaking enthusiast working in the roles of lecturer and public orator, Rao loves being vocal. However, the government and the jail institution have looted his freedom of speech right and forced him to remain still and silent. Thus, he wishes to sprout like a sapling on the land of sounds.

Further, he wants to learn to speak from schools, conferences, children, and people, and pick words from the furrows of history. He is serious about pursuing words and sounds in the hope that they can help him explode the deeply inhabiting silence within himself. He wants to listen to his people and learn to talk again for his dreams towards a righteous world can only be described through words. Re-learning words from furrows of history, his people, conferences, and schools are the foundations for his revolutions. This hope for re-learning not only updates him on current events of the world but also allows him to grow stronger to fight for the freedom of Dalits and Adivasis. Then, he wants to use words as a medium to put together his line of action towards freedom that he formulated during his time in jail. So, his letters to the newspapers or the memoir are not merely a load of his thoughts and dreams from jail but guidelines for people reading the letters to work towards freedom.

The last stanza of the sentence depicts the significance Rao holds to words or speech. He

says, words do not degrade nor will lose their value. One can forge any kind of expression from words after they burn in the furnace of time and survive the clangs of a hammer. Rao establishes this significant relation between time and words or speech under the Marxist ideas of history which attempts to "understand human societies and their development through ... historical changes in social structures because of material and technological conditions" (Marx, 1845). As an Adivasi land rights activist who presented the concerns of the forest residents to the state and central government, Rao reads the court verdicts on land rights, tries to understand the Adivasi land right reforms with respect to time and space. Thus, the accumulation of information of the past and present through words and how those words need to reflect his ideas of basic rights such as freedom is an important phenomenon.

Both Sri Sri and Rao hold a significant power to poetry, words, and speech in the frame of time. They believe in the power of language that has an immense potential to act as a medium to achieving freedom. For instance, Sri Sri talks about his fascination towards poetry during his young days and how, through time, poetry itself transformed into something more than mere lines fit into meters, rhymes, and styles. The outcome of such transformation is powerful, immense, and deeply liberating. This change is an outcome of the structural oppression of the past, and this experience of past helps the individuals to dream of their future in a particular way. Rao has tried to depict a similar picture through the poem *Words*, where he felt the need to re-visit the past of the words because a narrative of Adivasi's relation to the forest lands and what it means for them to live there can only be formulated through words. In addition, he can understand court verdicts on Adivasi land rights, their premises, and vision only through words. As words are the only medium of expression, he wants to pay devoted attention to once again because he realized the potential of the words and speech that forms the basis for justice only when they are presented with respect to time and context. So, for Sri Sri, words are a medium of realization and resistance for freedom

while, for Rao, they are the foundations to understanding the difference between oppression and freedom. As a consequence, with the use of appropriate words from the past and present, one can work towards freedom. This ability to use the right words is the first step towards freedom as the use of words infers the act of speech by breaking the silence.

2. Conclusion

Sri Sri, Raavi Sastry, and Varavara Rao were practising Marxist writers of their own kind with visions to draw people's attention towards inequality and injustice. Although they share a common end goal, i.e., equality and freedom, their experiences of inequality and oppression influenced their ideas of justice and freedom. Set in the pre-Independent India, Sri Sri's idea of freedom addresses the colonial oppression, evil landlord system, and hurdles of the working class, and the need to break away from those deeply unjust structures. From Sri Sri's general aspiration to free from oppressive structures, we move on to Raavi Sastry's six arrack stories which are set in a post-Independent Indian situation. This work represents the illusions of freedom of the poor and how they can never be free from the oppressions of class and caste. Such an idea of freedom is precisely located in the Telugu-

speaking regions of the country where freedom is looted by the democratic government representatives with the help of the inherent loopholes in the administration systems of the British colonizers. From Sri Sri's aspiration for freedom and Sastry's idea of the illusion of freedom, we move to Varavara Rao's Memoir that speaks of the human mind to be the only free entity that has the freedom to use language to at least expose the forms of oppression and criticise them. Thus, freedom as a concept evolved through time and still remains complex to define. As three Telugu writers inspired by Marxist ideologies, they presented various forms of an action plan to think and work for freedom. While Sri Sri simply asked to break from the oppressive structures, Sastry believed that the concept of freedom is inaccessible to the poor and it will remain an illusion. Rao, on the other hand, said freedom is simply a psychological state because one can never have it. These diverse opinions on the idea of freedom are a result of their working environment and how entities around them impacted their freedom. Thus, these are the major diachronic shifts and ideological differences with respect to the concept of freedom in Telugu literature.

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