

ମହା କବିତା ଚଳଣ

ମହାକବିତା ଓ କବିତାରେ ପଢ଼ାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ

ସମ୍ପାଦକ: ଶ୍ରୀ କାନ୍ତ କୁମାର

ଲେକ୍ଚରର: ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ

ଅନୁବାଦକ: ଶ୍ରୀ

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INTRODUCTION

The main aim of our research project was to know a little bit more about the Indian culture. From this wide amount of information and traditions, we have focused on the image of the sacred cow.

In a country where a lot of people suffer from malnutrition, there are thousands of millions of cows wandering freely through both cities and rural areas. This was, at first sight, a shocking data. Our aim was to investigate this Hindu's cultural and religion belief and to discover why the figure of the cow is so important for Hindus. Fortunately, our research team is composed by two Catalan and one Indian girl. This cultural diversity allows having a wider view of the same topic, from different cultural perspectives. We all believe that this has been a key issue to make a very complete project. For us, it has been an enriching chance, both academic and personally. We are asked to do tasks practically in every subject, but, unluckily, we have never had the opportunity to do such a creative work before. We are conscious that this is not the kind of task that we could have been asked to do, so we have tried to enjoy this as much as we could.

Every team member has specialized in what she enjoyed the most. Judith has done a really beautiful painting of a young boy next to a sacred cow. With it, she wanted to portray the importance and the respect that the Holy cow has in India. With the image of the young boy, she wanted to show how this respect and love for the cow is something that is inherited from parents to children. Ayushi has written a short story about Pongal, a South Indian festival related to the harvest and cattle. Apart from telling interesting things about this cultural festivity, the story focuses on the life of a Tamil woman whose grandchildren are visiting her from the Caribbean. So she encompasses two key issues in one text, on the one hand, she gives as details about this Indian tradition, and on the other hand, she also links it with the Indian people who lived in the Caribbean as slaves and the cultural differences they developed – contrasting the image of the grandmother with her grandchildren-. Finally, Sílvia, inspired by the TV3 programme of “Lletra Petita”, has created an

illustrated video. By using a few but full of content images she has exemplified the history of the origins and the “most-western” explanation of the Indian’s Sacred Cow tradition.

A sacred animal of a big culture

As my task is representing the scared cow figure on a painting I decided to paint a little boy next to a cow as a meaning of importance of this sacred animal for Indians. Since people are young they are taught to love and respect cows. According to colours I decided to use a reddish tone for the boy's costume. Red is directly related to passion and sincerity, two words that fit very well in this admiration for cows. I used blue for the curtain because of its direct connotation of vigilance and perseverance. I wanted to relate this curtain with Indian society that during for years are looking after this tradition.

- Judith Reina Mata

The History of the Origins of the India's Sacred Cow

The main aim of my task was to explain the “most western” view of the Hindu tradition of the Holy cow. The PowerPoint presentation has duration of 3:14 minutes. It is composed of 20 slides, all of them with full of content images.

In the following pages I adjunct the text of the video.

- Sílvia Figueras Bosch

'Thai pirandhaal vazhi pirakkum'

I chose to write a story as a creative work because I wanted to talk about some important matters that we studied in Postcolonial studies. The matters that I mention in this story are of indentured slavery, early marriage in India, the caste system of India and some other typical traits of Indian culture.

- Ayushi Kanda

‘tħai pirandīħai vavħi pirakrupl’



व्युपेहि कान्दा

1. thai pongal



Saraswati Maharaj has been waiting for her guests arriving from Trinidad and Tobago, somehow unknown to her, for three hours in the verandah in front of her house. Her house (better called a villa) is located outside a small village of Tamil Nadu surrounded by vast vegetation. Saraswati, in her seventies, is small-sized, dark-skinned woman but with beautiful features. She lives alone in this beautiful villa with her teenage maid, Tulsi and many other servants who look after her and her property. As in ancient India, all the servants of Saraswati belong to low castes.

After the long waiting of three hours, a black and yellow taxi stops outside the main gate. From the taxi four persons get off. There is a man, his wife and two children, one boy and a girl. All of them are dark-skinned and have some Indian features except Melanie Maharaj, who has African features.

Seeing them getting off the taxi, Saraswati orders Tulsi, “Tulsi, Bring me the Puja Thali.” and Tulsi immediately does what she is told. In a while, Saraswati is holding a small silver plate with a small golden pot with fire in it, a small quantity of fine red powder (kumkum), some uncooked rice and a small pot of mustard oil. She welcomes her guests

by doing aarti, putting tilak on their forehead and pouring some mustard oil on the floor on each side of the gate.

Once in, the man, Rajiv Maharaj and his wife Melanie Maharaj bend down and touch Saraswati's feet. In return, she blesses them by wishing them the best. Meanwhile, Akash and Aarti, son and daughter of Rajiv are astonished by the grandeur of the villa.

Just entering the huge metal gate, a path made of white marble leads to a small ochre villa build in the British colonial period. On the each side of the path, there are hundreds of winter flowers in a beautifully kept garden with a fountain which has a figure of Indian woman pouring water.

“Akash. Aarti. You have a plenty of time to explore this labyrinth. Now you should take blessings from Aai,” says Rajiv interrupting his children's thoughts. Without saying a word they approach to Saraswati and touch her feet. But as Aarti is about to touch her feet, Saraswati stops her, “No daughter, in Hindu families maidens don't touch the feet of the elders. Only the boys and daughters-in-law do,” and hugs both of them tightly.

Once inside the house, the guests are presented to Tulsi and other servants. As the guests leave for their rooms, Raju, one of Saraswati's chef asks Tulsi, “Who are they?”.

“They are Aai's father-in-law's family from foreign country,” Tulsi replies murmuring.

“Are they from Angland?” asks Raju innocently.

“No stupid. Their country is far away from England. Or this is what Aai told me,” answers Tulsi.

“Where is it?” Raju asks again.

“Who do you think am I? A professor? How am I supposed to know?”
Tulsi says angrily.

“Do you mean they are children of Dada’s black wife?” asks Raju after some time after doing some mental calculations.

“Yes Raju, they are Raja babu’s stepbrother’s family. Hey this is too spicy for kids. Be careful, they are not like local children who would eat anything you give to them. They are foreigners. What if they get ill? Who will be the responsible? Before any of you Aai will fire me,” says Tulsi testing some food.

“She wouldn’t fire you as you are her favourite. She loves you more than any of us. I wonder why you are her favourite?” answers Raju ironically.

“Because my mother was Aai’s maid for several years and after her death Aai brought me here to protect me from my stepmother. She cared for me as if I were her own daughter. She even didn’t care what village people said about my caste. It was very kind of a Brahmin woman to take care of a Vaishya orphan girl”, Tulsi says with a sad tone.

Suddenly she hears Saraswati asking for something and leaves the kitchen. Saraswati and the guests are already sitting on the dining table talking about their journey. As for the dinner, typical South Indian dishes are served. Some of them are sambar, dosa, papadum and karavattu kuzhambu. The grown-ups considered the food tasty and ate their food while the children keep complaining for the spices. When it’s the time for dessert, Aarti asks Saraswati, “Aai, when are we going to eat pongal?”.

Saraswati is taken by surprise. She answers, “We prepare pongal on the day of Surya Pongal with freshly harvested rice on the day of Bogi Pongal. But how do you know about pongal?”.

This time is Rajiv who talks, “Aai, it was Dada who told us about Pongal festival. We were not able to come to India because of financial problems at that time and when Dadi was alive, she wouldn’t let any of us in this house. I wanted to show Pongal to my children and meet you, our only family in India and in this world. That is why we are here for the time of Pongal, a time of auspiciousness.”

In answer to this, Saraswati welcomes all of them again but felt that her heart was breaking in her chest.

Before going to bed, Akash and Aarti ask Rajiv and Melanie if they could sleep with Aai and hear stories of Pongal. Their parents couldn’t say no. Even Saraswati wasn’t able to refuse after seeing the innocence of the children.

Once in bed, they bombed Saraswati with millions of questions about Thai Pongal. Aarti starts , “Aai, tell us about Pongal. Why do we celebrate Pongal?”.

“This festival marks the end of winter which means the movement of God Surya from South to North bringing us the auspiciousness and abundance. It is celebrated from 12th January to 15th January according to Georgian calendar which means that from the last month of Tamil month Maargazhi to the third day of Thai. The origin of this festival goes back to Sangam Age where it started as a Harvest festival. Maidens of that period would pray to the Gods for abundant rains to flourish the paddy. At the time of harvest, they would worship and thank the Gods.” answers Saraswati.

“Which is the first day of Pongal?” Akash who is listening carefully, asks.

“Tomorrow is the first day of Pongal called Bogi festival or Indran. On this day we thank Lord Indra for the abundance of harvest. Do you know who is Indra?”

“Yes, he is the leader of Hindu Gods and lord of heaven in the Hindu religion. So, what are we going to do tomorrow?” asks Aarti.

“This is a surprise. You’ll find it out by yourself. Now get some sleep. You must be tired.”

५. इंद्रान



Next morning, when everyone gets up all of the servants are busy cleaning the house as it is the tradition. All of the houses, from richest to the poorest are cleaned and whitewashed. When the servants are finished, they collect all the unwanted household things in the backyard.

All of the family members have their breakfast together. After that, Rajiv and Melanie head for the town with a servant; and Akash and Aarti stay with Saraswati. She takes them to the village temple where all the farmers are worshipping the sun and the earth.

Akash sees that many men are putting a ochre paste on their tools. “Aai, why are they putting that dirty looking thing on their tools?” he asks.

“Dear one, that is not anything dirty. It is sandalwood’s paste which consecrates their ploughs and sickles for the harvest. Now they are going to the fields and will harvest the rice with these tools.” explains Saraswati. “Now, let’s go home and prepare ourselves for Bhogi Mantalu.”

“What is Bhogi Mantalu?” Aarti asked.

“Did you see all the unwanted things that we have in our backyard?”

“Yes, we did”.

“In the evening, people are going to come to our place with their unwanted things. Then we’ll set fire to all those things and all are going to sing and dance around that fire.”

“Wow, what does that mean?”

“It is to praise the Gods for their kindness and it is supposed that this fire will keep us warm for the last lap of the winter.”

While talking, they headed for their house. But in their way there were some village women standing and when they saw Saraswati, they started gossiping.

“Look, there she goes, the Brahmin woman who gives shelter to Shudras and Vaishyas.”

“Yesterday, she received her foreign guests and today she is wandering here and there with those filthy things; even after knowing that they are the cause of her destruction.”

Saraswati hears all that but intends as she has not. She is deeply moved but doesn’t let all those feelings affect her.

In the evening, they all wear new clothes and dance and sing around the bonfire. The children are so tired that they have no questions for the next day.

But Saraswati is still upset about what those women had said about her and about those innocent kids. Her guests from Trinidad hold a special place in her life. In both, bad and good way. When she got

married at the age of 15, she came to know that her father-in-law, whom everybody called Dada was taken far away in a ship by the firangis.

He used to send a lot of money from there and her in-law's family became rich but after the 5 year contract of his work he didn't come back. He had married a black woman there. When his Indian wife, Sarawati's mother-in-law came to know this, she sent her son to bring his father back. At that time, Saraswati had no children of her own and never had one. First the father went and didn't come back, then the son. Her husband Rajesh, but called Raja among family died on his way back to India.

All these bitter memories bring tears into her eyes. She realises that Rajiv and his family are the only family left for her as for them she is the one. She doesn't know what to do. If to accept them as her family or reject them and be alone for the rest of her life. Finally, she falls asleep trapped in all these feelings.

3. इरुया पंगल



Today, the sun is shining brightly, trees are in full blossom, birds are singing, hearts are overflowing with happiness as the granaries are full.

Saraswati gets up early at 5 AM, have a bath and gets ready. Then, she awakes Melanie and the children. Tulsi is also ready for the preparations of this day. When they are ready, all of them take the colors for Kolam and go to the front door of the villa.

“What are we going to do today?” asks Akash to Saraswati.

“Today is the first day of Thai and Surya Pongal. We are going to worship God Sun for his mercy. Now we are going to make Kolam in the front of our villa’s front door.”

Tulsi does the outlining of Kolam on the ground and the others fill in the colors. After finishing, they had some color left. Melanie takes that color and adds some other figures which makes the Kolam look even more beautiful. Saraswati sees that and feels very happy for Melanie. Even though, Saraswati and Melanie don’t talk to each other, Saraswati likes her.

It takes them several hours to finish Kolam. Saraswati blesses all of them. Akash and Aarti are so excited for what they have done that they are still standing there, contemplating it.

“What are we going to do now Aai?” says Aarti.

“Now we are going to cook Pongal.”

Once in the kitchen, they see that some rice is being cooked in a painted pot. Suddenly, the rice overflows and everybody around starts shouting ‘Pngal-o-Pongal’.

Then Saraswati explains, the overflowing of the freshly harvested rice is called Pongal and the rice made is also called pongal. Akash and Aarti also start shouting ‘Pongal-o-Pongal’ and do that for the rest of the day.

At night, they have a delicious dinner of many Pongal dishes such as pongal, venpongal, chakra pongal, idli and sarkarai pongal.

4. Mattu pongal



A car was ready at the main gate of the house to take them to farm. Children were quite excited as they didn't know what they were going to do today. The car took them to Saraswati's farm which is on the opposite of the village.

In the farm, there are hundreds of cows, oxen and other cattle. There is also a poultry farm in which there are hundreds of chickens. They go straight to the point where there is cattle. The farmers were giving showers to the cattle and after that they put a Marigold garland in every animal's neck and a large tilak on their forehead. When they are finished, the animals are served pongal too.

A farmer asks Akash and Aarti to come near and put a garland in a cow's neck but they refuse to do so because they are afraid. On the other hand, Rajiv rolled up the sleeves of his shirt and helped them.

"Come on kids, these animals are not dangerous at all. They are domestic." says Rajiv giving a garland to his son and daughter.

First, they were afraid but later they started enjoying it. Once they are finished, Saraswati and the workers folded their hands in the position

of Namaskara and thank the cattle. Akash and Aarti copy them and do the same without knowing its meaning.

On their way back home, Akash asks Saraswati, “ Aai, why were they doing all that to the cattle?”

“Because the cows give us nourishing milk and the oxen plough our fields for our food. So every year they are thanked for helping us. On this day they are given a well-deserved day of rest.”she says while telling the driver to stop in the village.

In the village, the cattle are wandering here and there among humans. All of them are decorated with different kinds of ornaments. Some of them have horns painted and some have them covered with shining metal caps. In their necks, they have multi-colored beads, tinkling bells and beautiful flower garlands.

They get off the car and go the village center where the people are worshipping the cattle. They are feeding cattle pongal. Some devotees are paying their respect by bending down (like praying in temple) while others are touching their feet and foreheads. Some are doing aarti by singing and showing fire to the animals and the others are offering prasadam to them.

Akash and Aarti go ahead with Aai and practice all the rituals one by one. After seeing them Melanie and Rajiv are motivated to do the same. The villagers are happy to receive the guests and do their best to make them feel comfortable as any Indian would do.

After reaching home and having dinner, Saraswati tells them the legends behind this ritual.

“Once upon time, Lord Shiva sends his bull, Basava, to Earth to give mortals a message. In the message, he had to tell the humans to have an oil massage and bath every day and to eat once a month. But poor Basava delivered the wrong message. Instead of giving the right message he ordered humans to have an oil massage and bath once a month and to eat every day. When he got back to Kailash Mountain, angry Lord Shiva cursed Basava for his wrong message. As for his punishment he had to stay on Earth and help the humans to produce food. Since the Basava has been living on Earth among humans and helping them.”

After listening this story Aarti had more questions about the cattle.

“Aai, why don't the Hindus don't eat beef?”

“Because it's sacred dear one.”

“But why?”

“Cows are a symbol of wealth for Hindus. Their importance has been told since Vedic times. In ancient times, people depended a lot on cows. They give us milk for food, cow-dung as fuel and fertilizer. The oxen help us plough fields. Thus they are seen as our care-takers. Moreover, killing any animal would be a sin. Do you know what did Lord Krishna used to do?”

“He used to tend cows.”

“Right, the cow and the bull are a symbol of Dharma. According to Atharva Veda, cow's body is a representation of Devas. It is said that Gods reside in cow's body.”

“The milk of cow is of great importance as we get *ghee* from the milk which is used in the religious ceremonies and religious food. It has purifying properties.” added Saraswati.

They enjoyed the legends and stories and went straight to bed without any further questions.

5. kaanum pongal



On the last day of Pongal, which is also dedicated to Sun God, Surya, everybody rises up before sunset and prepare the materials for puja. This day has its origin from the Vedic times.

As whole of the family is awake, they have shower and dress neatly for Surya puja. The servants prepare for the puja and Rajiv's children help them.

First of all, they draw a design of Surya with chalk on the ground. Sugarcane is very important in this puja as it symbolizes sweetness and happiness. `Sarkarai pongal`, a sweet rice dish is offered to God Sun. They perform the aarti and pray or abundance of harvest for next year.

In the evening, women offer prayers for wellbeing of their brothers. Aarti prepares a aarti thali for Akash. She performs a aarti for him with turmeric water, limestone and rice. This water is sprinkled on kolam in front of house. After that she ties a red thread on Akash's wrist which symbolizes his security and that he will help her in return whenever she needs.

6. 'Thai pirandhaal vazhi pirakkum' (The starting of Thai gives new opportunities)

After passing a week more after the Pongal festival, Saraswati's guests are ready to leave. Akash and Aarti feel sad because they don't want to leave her.

In the morning, Saraswati goes out in the garden to have morning tea with Rajiv and Melanie. As they are talking about leaving, Saraswati says, "Rajiv, when you kids arrived I didn't know that I would love you so much. I lived here alone in this house for 20 years after Dadi's death. This place became alive with your arrival. I don't have any child of mine but saw my son in you and my daughter-in-law in Melanie. Akash and Aarti are most important than anything for me. The villagers said thousand things about you but I know how important are you to me...."

She hadn't completed her words when Rajiv gets up, touches her feet and put his head in Saraswati's lap.



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FIELDWORK RECORD

Date and time	Duration	Sites	Participants	Activity type	Comments
1 st March 12:00 am- 14:00 pm	2 hours	A bar near the faculty	Judith, Sílvia and Ayushi	Choosing the correct topic for our research	
15 th March 15:00 pm- 18:00 pm	3 hours	Ayushi's house	Judith, Sílvia and Ayushi and Ayushi's family	Asking for advise and getting information	It has been very useful for us
29 March 17:00 pm- 17:30 pm	30 min	Bar ub	Judith, Sílvia and Ayushi	Commentin g on how was the work going	
11 April 19:00 pm- 21:00 pm	2 hours	Library ub	Judith, Sílvia and Ayushi	Looking for bibliography	
25 April 11:30 am- 12:00 pm	30 min	Bar ub	Judith, Sílvia and Ayushi	Commentin g on how was the work going	
13 May 17:00 pm- 18:30 pm	1'30 hours	Library ub	Judith, Sílvia and Ayushi	Looking the other member's of the group's work	
10 June 18:00 pm- 20:00 pm	2 hours	Ayushi's house	Judith, Sílvia and Ayushi and Ayushi's mother	Working together on introduction and conclusion	We realised we enjoyed working together