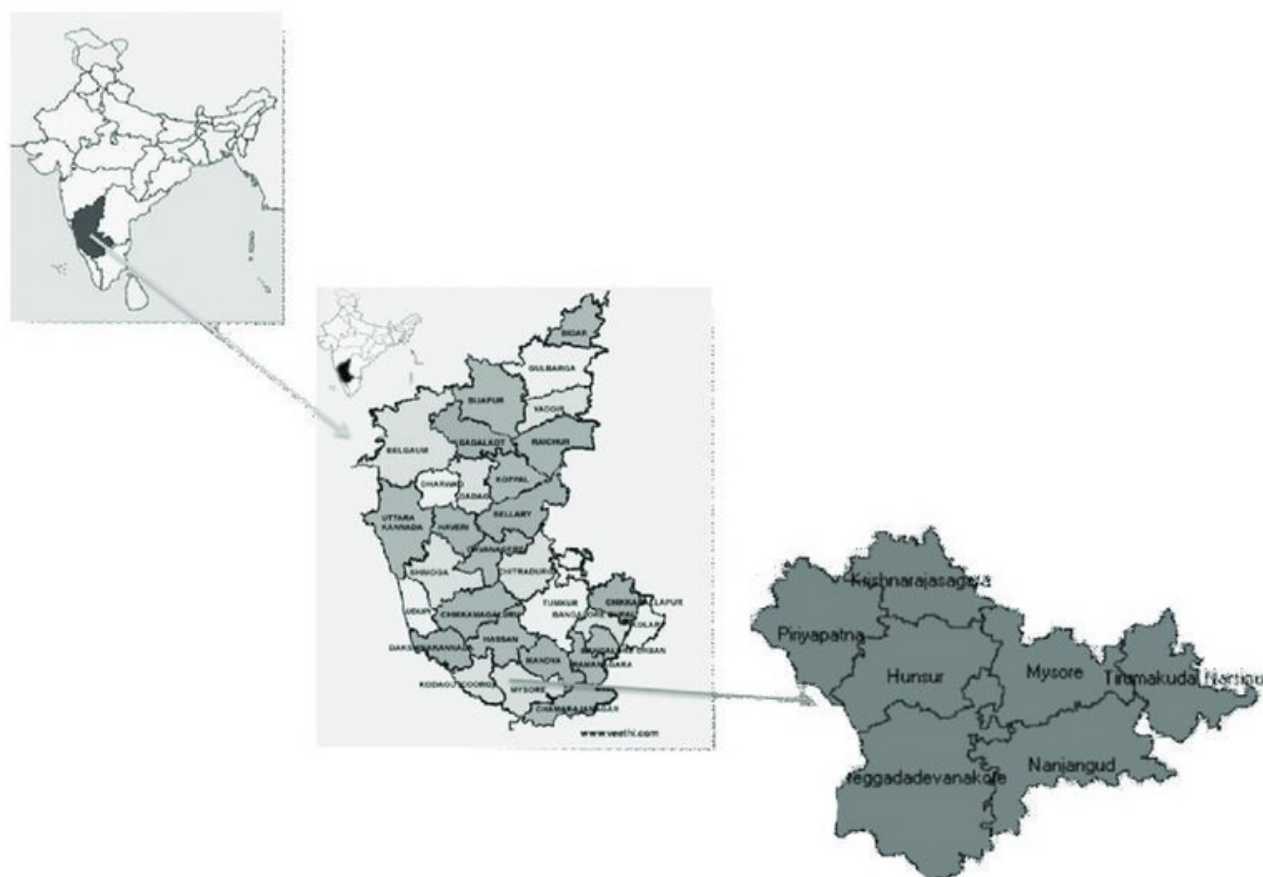


# Water, Culture And Society: A Case Study of Kapila River

Chandana C.

Rivers bring individuals, places, and other modes of life together, inspiring and preserving a wide range of cultural traditions, values, and lifestyles. Rivers are not only a natural element, but they also have cultural and social significance. Rivers are seen as both a generative and an agentive co-constituent of social interactions and meanings.

**SITE LOCATION: KAPILA RIVER - NANJUNDESHWARA TEMPLE, MYSORE DISTRICT, NANJANGUD TALUK.**



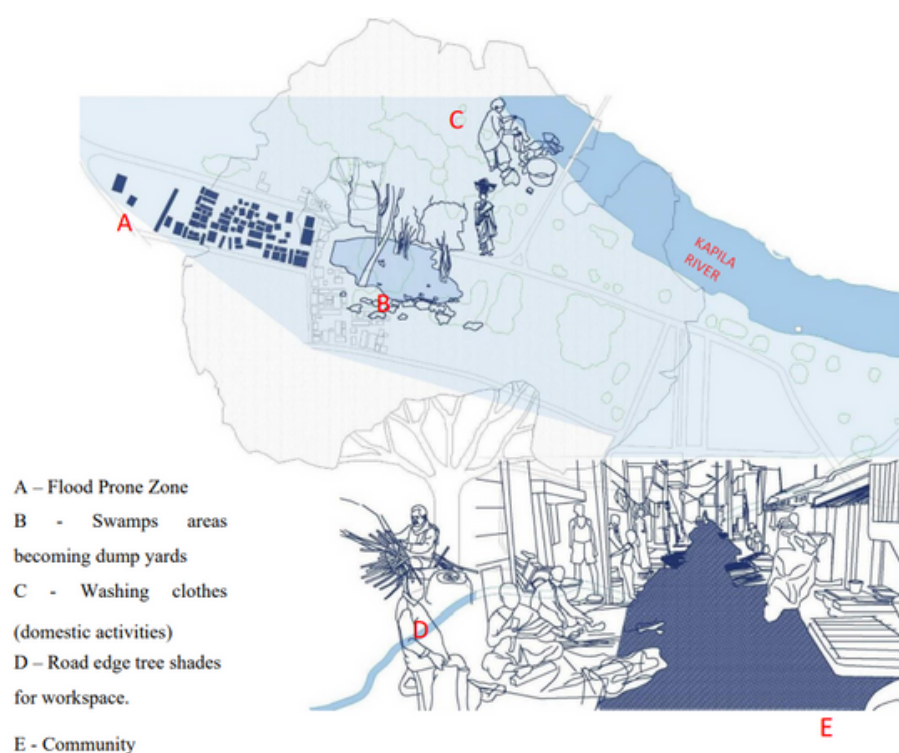
The Nanjundeshwara temple is an ancient temple in the Hindu pilgrimage town of Nanjangud in Karnataka. The Srikanteshwara temple is located in the town on the right bank of river Kapila, a tributary of Kaveri, where a dip in its waters on any momentous occasion is considered more meritorious. The river is believed to have a self-purification ability. The Kapila serves as the primary source of irrigation and domestic water supply for nearby towns and villages. The river also supports some recreational activities like boating and fishing.

Among the festivals celebrated in the pilgrimage town, *Dodda jathre* is one of the grandest where thousands of devotees visit the temple. During the *Dodda jathre* and *Chikka jathre* festival, large floating Theppotsava for Lord Shiva can be found on the Kapila river for a day. In addition, during the celebration of Sri Girijakalyana, for three nights on the Kapila River, there remain large floating Theppotsava. Ritual activities like Theppotsava, bathing, and offerings in the river have a major impact as plastic waste enters the holy river. Unconsciously devotees end up abusing their holy river.

The livelihood of 300 to 500 families in Nanjangud rely on agriculture and bamboo weaving. They are known for their creative bamboo products. Every year in the monsoon season, the Kapila overflows due to huge discharge from the Kabini dam and the massive water force from the drainages meant for the flow of flush water. The shopkeeper and bamboo merchant localities are prone to submerge. Due to climate change, the bamboo weaver's community floods every year now, causing a huge loss of livelihood and forcing people to move far away.

People are often displaced due to this catastrophe. The nature of the location and the means of livelihood are often neglected in the process of reintegrating into new surroundings. Perhaps, instead of moving away from their homes, can we not learn the strategies and techniques which would be strong enough to withstand natural disasters such as floods?

## COMMUNITY'S RELATIONS WITH RIVER



Community relation with river (Chandana C)

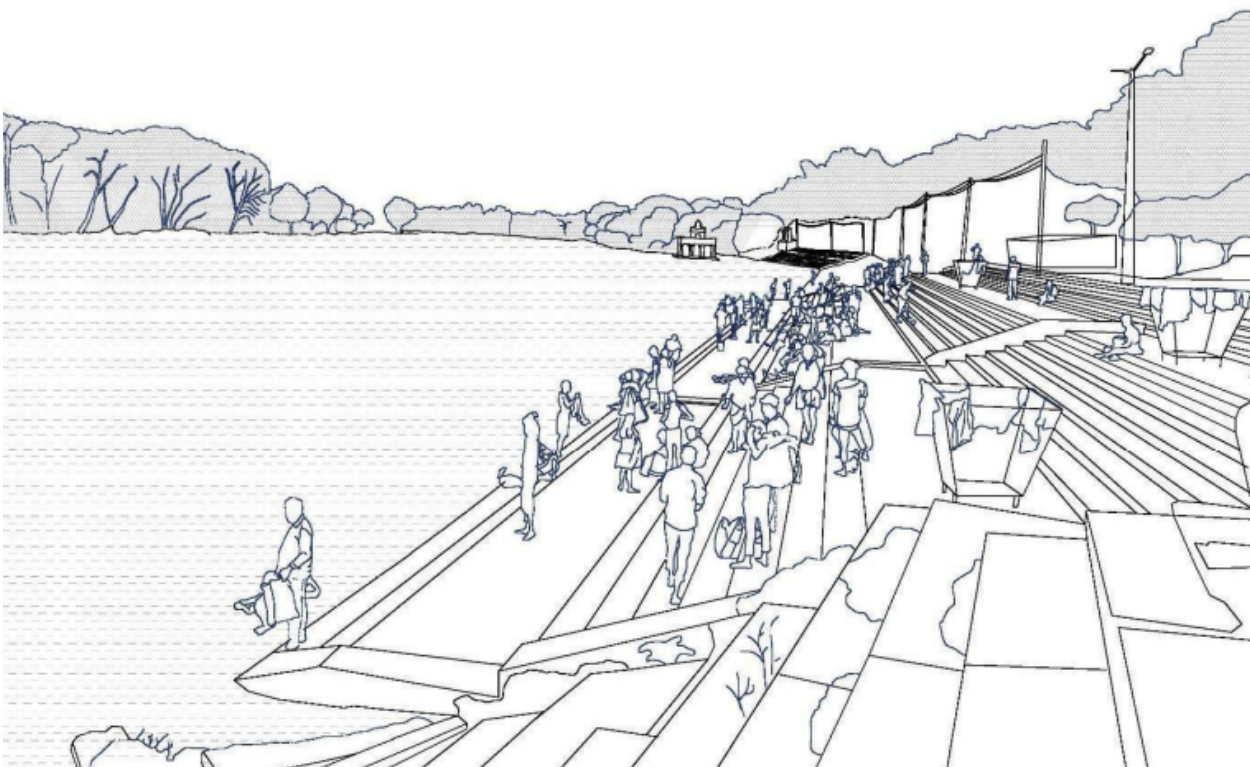
Kapila River is the main source of water for domestic activities for the communities around the river. Swamps are wetlands with trees usually found along flood plains, and poorly drained basins are being converted into dump yards due to poor waste management in the community. This waste is washed away by floodwater every year. The water rises in the monsoon season, affecting the bamboo weavers who store the bamboo in open spaces. Sidewalks are the workspace and market space for the bamboo weaver community. When there is a flash flood, their entire stock of bamboo and products are washed away.

## ACTIVITIES ON THE RIVERSIDE

My connection with the Kapila River started at the age of 8 when I attended a ritual performed in the river. When I was young, I used to play with fish in the river--trying to hold them and feed them--but with time, the fish population started diminishing, and one day, I could barely see one. If we see the current state of rivers and how it has evolved over time, it is clear that the gathering of people on river banks, river festivals, rituals and other heavy activities have led to the banks and water to fill up with waste.



*River edge pictures (Chandana C)*



*River edge pictures (Chandana C)*



## MEDARA BEEDI - BAMBOO WEAVERS COMMUNITY

In Medara Beedi, dwellings of the bamboo weaver's community extend to internal roads through the extended plinth, where these extended plinth and door fronts act like a workspace for the weavers. Open spaces and alleys in the community are used as drying yards and storage spaces. The internal roads are used as community spaces, and the sidewalks of bigger roads are occupied as their temporary markets.



*Community pictures (Chandana C)*

## AN ALTERNATIVE: Flood resilient community housing with skill development centre

The proposed community housing project was born as a proposal to promote resilience in the communities near the Kapila River where the inhabitants are facing floods every year. The methodology adopted here helps to drive and establish a significant program, which tries to address the below-sea-level housing issue and thereby develops a sensitive design solution.

Throughout the process, the participation of the community is of vital importance for the formulation and construction of the project. The proposed prototype is based on the existing typology analysis of these communities.

The skill development center has been designed to promote and empower the bamboo weaver's communities in Nanjangud. The aim is to develop their traditional skill set through a skill development centre and promote usable spaces based on their participation in the bamboo weaving process. In this manner, the proposed programme can help develop resilience in communities where these usable spaces can become a living space for a short period of time (maximum eight days).

Therefore by using local materials and local craftsmanship, carbon footprints can

shrink considerably and benefit the local economy. Natural materials do not only have an aesthetic appeal but enhance health as well. Therefore, by moving towards sustainable infrastructure, we protect our environment and also provide lessons for our future generations.

Having grown up in a small town in the Chamarajanagar district, I was someone who wasn't aware of sustainable principles. Yet, here I am, having a passion and having developed an understanding of sustainable principles and the need for the existence and conservation of self-sustainable communities in order to sustain the balance in the environment.

**Chandana is an Architect and a passionate birder, who likes interacting with nature through birds.**