

# Recording the important milestones of Kannada as an administrative language and role of history in achieving it

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**Abstract:** After the down fall of Vijayanagara empire, Kannada was the official language only in Keladi and Mysore. Later, Keladi kingdom was annexed into Mysore in 1763 A.D. by Hyder Ali. During the rule of Haider and Tipu Sultan, due to many reasons, Marathi speaking people coming from Tamilnadu gained prominence in the administration and were appointed as administrators and Marathi got the same position as Kannada in administration, though the Marathi speakers in the kingdom constituted a meager percentage of the population. Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan were suspicious of the literate locals, as they were more loyal to minor factions of the Wodeyar ruler. One can assess the importance given to Marathi, from the fact that, 'Sanad', issued by Tipu Sultan to a Muslim Khaji of Hoodigere village in Shimoga district, was in Marathi. Even after the fall of Tipu (1799), the dominance of Marathi continued and Mysore became the sole representative of Kannada. Even in Mysore province, Kannada was elbowed by other languages, especially by Marathi. Infact the prominence of Marathi was so high, that, there used to be 'Double Daftar' by which official papers were kept in two languages, namely, Kannada and Marathi. The English Commissioner, Mark Cubbon abolished this system of 'Double Daftar', and English became dominant in Mysore. As a result, Marathi gave way to English. Even though, Mysore's administration was handed over to the Wodeyar ruler in 1881, Kannada did not get its rightful place. Even the primary schools in various parts of British Karnataka, (with the solitary exceptions of South Kanara) had either Marathi, Telugu or Tamil as medium of instruction. The Court and official languages were Marathi, Telugu and Tamil. The language of the stage, the platform and even of devotional Keertanas were not in Kannada. In this mood of apathy, there were few British administrators, who showed interest in the regeneration of Kannada, especially as medium of instruction. In 1826, the English Assistant Collector, Walter Elliot expressed his dissatisfaction against the establishment of Marathi schools in Bombay-Karnataka, thereby neglecting the language of the masses. In 1831, he established a Kannada school in Dharwad and for the next three years he himself managed its expenses. In the early seventies,

due to the efforts of Mr. Russel and Deputy Channabasappa, the Education Inspector and the Deputy Education Inspector respectively, Kannada primary schools were started in Bombay Karnataka. Besides, a Training College was started first at Belgaum and which was later moved to Dharwad. At the same time J. F. Fleet, the commissioner of the Southern Division, produced his remarkable work "Kanarese Dynasties", which played an instrumental role in creating awareness amongst the literate Kannadigas. This paper attempts to records all the important milestones, in the evolution of Kannada, in becoming the official and administrative language of Karnataka and the role of historizing the past glory of Karnataka.

**Key words:** Kannada, Domination, Other Languages, Administration, Milestones, Education.

## INTRODUCTION

To uplift Kannada and to give back its past glory, several attempts have been made by various visionaries. One such was attempt was founding of 'Karnataka Literary Society' at Dharwad, during 1890, by a number of young graduates. Many printing presses were established during that period, which published numerous Kannada Newspapers and Literature. It is worth noting the encouragement given by Mysore Maharajas in establishing Kannada Schools and in publishing Kannada books. The Maharaja himself established an Institute like 'Karnataka Bashajeevini Sabha'. However, Kannadigas were not the first to historicize their past glory. This was due to lack of historical knowledge amongst the Kannadigas in general. Such efforts as made by the British rulers to historicize the region were in English, and as such could not percolate among the general masses. This prevented them from discovering inspirational historical figures or dynasties and even a distinct history and culture that could define their personality. The state of historical

knowledge of Kannadigas in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century can be seen in the case of Kannada Kula Purohita, Alur Venkata Rao, the high priest of Karnataka Ekikarana, whose life itself underwent a sea change on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1905 when he had gone to Anegundi on a personal visit. At that point of time, he says, he did not know that Vijayanagara rulers lived in Anegundi, which was near to Hampi. It was believed that historical Vijayanagara was the town of Vijayanagara in Andhra Pradesh. There was no awareness of any historical connection between Karnataka and Hampi-Anegundi. The history of Vijayanagara seemed to belong to Puranas like Ramayana and Mahabharata. Alur Venkata Rao, came to the conclusion that unraveling of Karnataka's glory in front of Kannadigas would help them recover their respect for their land and thus began the task of historicizing Karnataka. It took nearly 12 years for him to publish a work on Karnataka history, which he completed only after undertaking travels to most of historical places. Apart from writing historical works, Alur Venkata Rao also started 'Karnataka Ithihasa Mandal' in 1914 with an intention to undertake research work in Karnataka history and as a counter to the work being done by Pune's 'Bharat Ithihasa Samshodana Mandal' on Maratha history. But, it was the publication of his history of Karnataka with its reminiscent title, 'Karnataka Gatavaibhava', in 1917, which opened the floodgates of historical research in Karnataka history. That it was written in passionate Kannada made it particularly appealing.

Important visionaries and their work of glorifying Karnataka history:

This pioneering effort of Alur Venkata Rao was followed by the publication of several works on the history of Karnataka, such as, R. H. Deshapande's 'Karnataka Samrajya' (2 volumes) (1926), Kannada Sahitya Parishat's publication 'Kannada Nadina Charitre' (1941), N. Laxminarayana Rao and R. S. Panchamukhi's 'Karnatakada Arasu Manethana' (1946), R. S. Mugali's 'Heritage of Karnataka' (1946), M. H. Krishna's 'Karnataka Poorva Charitre' (1953), R. S. Panchamukhi's 'Archeology of Karnataka' (1953), Hukkerikar. R. S (ed) 'Karnataka Dharshana' (1955) and others.

Along with the works dealing with general political history of Karnataka, there were works on individual dynasties, which had ruled over Kannada areas,

written by historians not being under influence of Aluru Venkata Rao, such as, H. Heras' 'The Aravidu Dynasty' (1927), G. M. Moraes' 'Kadamba Kula' (1931), A. S. Altekar's 'Rashtrakutas and their Times' (1934), H. Heras' 'Beginnings of Vijayanagara History' (1934), B. A. Saletore's 'Ancient Karnataka - History of Tuluvas', (1936) and 'Social and Political life in Vijayanagara Empire' (2 volumes) (1936), M. V. Krishna Rao's 'The Gangas of Talkad' (1938), S. Srikantaiya's 'Founders of Vijayanagara' (1938), T. V. Mahalingam's 'Administration and Social Life under Vijayanagara' (2 vols) (1940), C. S. Srinivasachar's 'The Vijayanagara Empire' (1943), H. K. Sherwani's 'The Bahamani Kingdom' (1947), William Coelho's 'Hoysala Vamsa' (1950), Dinakara Desai's 'The Mahamandaleshwaras under the Chalukyas of Kalyan' (1951), S. Srikanta Sastri's 'Early Gangas of Talkad', (1952), H. K. Sherwani's 'The Bahamanis of the Deccan' (1953), in English and P. B. Desai's 'Vijayanagara Samrajya' (1936), V. R. Hanumantaiya's 'Vijayanagara Samrajya Stapakarembudakke Sambandha patta Dakalegala Pustaka' (1936), V. Raghavendra Rao's 'Vijayanagara' (1949), Desai Punduranga Rao's 'Karnatakada Kalachirigalu' (1951) in Kannada.

Many individuals also contributed to the knowledge of Karnataka history. Sir. Walter Elliot, who over 7-8 years collected around 1300 stone and copper plate inscriptions from three areas of Karnataka province, western parts of Nizam state and northern parts of Mysore province. The government started a journal in 1891, dedicated for the publication of inscriptions by name 'Epigraphia Indica'. In 7 volume of the journal, Prof. Kielhom published a list of inscriptions from the south as useful material to historians. Besides, historical works centering round the history of Kannada speaking areas came to be written. 'The Dynasties of Kanarese District of Bombay Presidency' written by J. F. Fleet in 1881 and R. G. Bhandarkar's 'Early History of Dekkan' (1884) had initially appeared as chapters in 'Bombay Gazetteer'. Other works were Robert Sewell's 'A Forgotten Empire (1900)', B. Suryanarain Rao's 'The Never to be Forgotten Empire' and Venkata Rango Katti's 'Karnataka Gazetteer' (published in Kannada).

These works had put together considerable knowledge of Karnataka history and culture, which could be harnessed to a larger mission of kindling and spreading awareness of historical identity among the

Kannadigas. History is a powerful instrument of national unification and integration. History is a creator of nationalist impulse; it is much created by nationalism. An assurance of a glorious past is an inspiration, as it depicts how great you once were, you realize what you are capable of. Popularization of history, invoking its many images and symbols were an aspect of a people reinventing themselves, seeking their historically sanctioned identity. This enabled them to demand a separate, honourable existence for themselves. This demand was based on the creation of a geographical entity, the boundaries of which are drawn using the doctrine of home land, which historicization of their land enabled them to enunciate, with a belief that a separate, unified space for the Kannadigas would lead them to their destiny of progress and prosperity. Alur Venkata Rao, who is regarded as ‘Kannada Kulapurohita’ was pioneer in this job, as he has done commendable job in this area. Alur Venkata Rao, gives a description of Malkhed, the Rashtrakuta capital, as given in the inscriptions. The inscriptional account of Malkhed states that the city put to shame Amaravati, the city of Devathas. He presents the description of Kalyana by Vigneshwara in Mitakshara that there was no city like Kalyana in the past, not even now and would not be in future. This description of Vigneshwara is endorsed by Bilhana, who in his ‘Vikramankadeva Charitra’ states that the people of Kalyana would not close their doors as they were not afraid of thieves, a clear evidence of an effective administration. But the Karnataka capital city which attracted numerous foreign travellers was Vijayanagara. The earliest one was an Italian traveller, Nicolo Conti who visited Vijayanagara in 1420. He states that the circumference of the city to be 60 miles. In this city, there were estimated to be 90,000 men fit to bear arms. The city was bound by seven circular fortifications and due to abundance of water one can see rice and sugarcane fields. At places big and beautiful temples were found, to which learning centers were associated. Nicolo Conti was followed by Abdul Razzak a traveller from Iran, in 1442, who describes Vijayanagara as having about three hundred seaports. The extent of this kingdom was such that it could be covered only by continuous journey for three months. This ruler had 11 lakhs army. In the whole of hindustan there was no king more absolute than himself, “the city of Vijayanagara was such that eye has not seen nor ear heard of any place resembling it

upon the whole earth. The bazaars are very broad and long, so that the sellers of flowers, notwithstanding that they place high stands before their shops are yet able to sell flowers from both sides. Sweet- scented flowers are always procurable fresh in that city, and they are considered as even necessary sustenance, seeing that without them they could not exist. The tradesmen of each separate guild or craft have their shops close to one another. The jewelers sell their rubies and pearls and diamonds and emeralds openly in the bazaar (Eulogy of the gems). In this charming area, in which the palace of the king is contained, there are many rivulets and streams flowing through channels of cut stones, polished and even. There are many rooms in ground floor of the palace, which is filled with treasury. Opposite the minister’s office are the elephant sheds. Opposite to mint is the house of head of the city where 12,000 watchmen are there”.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To understand the importance of historizing in inspiring people.
2. To record some of the important literary work in this direction.
3. To highlight the contribution of Alur Venkata Rao in recording glorious Karnataka history.

#### DATA ANALYSIS

This report is based completely on secondary data. The required information has been collected by referring to various books, articles published in various national and international journals, websites etc.,

#### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Historizing the glorious past is an inspiration, as it depicts how great you once were, you realize what you are capable of. Popularization of history, invoking its many images and symbols were an aspect of a people reinventing themselves, seeking their historically sanctioned identity. Publication of books on Karnataka’s history, the freedom movement and the inspiring writings of Alur Venkata Rao, Huilgola Narayana Rao, Kuvempu, Bendre and others created a thirst for independence and also Unification of the Kannada-speaking regions. Freedom Movement was followed by the movement for the unification of

Karnataka. History is a powerful instrument of national unification and integration. History is a creator of nationalist impulse; it is much created by nationalism. An assurance of a glorious past is an inspiration, as it depicts how great you once were, you realize what you are capable of. Popularization of history, invoking its many images and symbols were an aspect of a people reinventing themselves, seeking their historically sanctioned identity. This enabled them to demand a separate, honourable existence for themselves. This demand was based on the creation of a geographical entity, the boundaries of which are drawn using the doctrine of home land, which historicization of their land enabled them to enunciate, with a belief that a separate, unified space for the Kannadigas would lead them to their destiny of progress and prosperity.

#### STATUTE OF KANNADA AS ADMINISTRATIVE LANGUAGE

After Independence, the Mysore State was created in 1953, wherein all the Kannada dominant areas under different dispensations were unified and the enlarged Mysore state carved in 1956 and was renamed Karnataka in 1973.

In 1958 the State Government appointed a Committee to make recommendations in regard to the adoption of Kannada as the official language in the State. After considering the recommendations of the Committee, several steps have been taken to implement the object of making Kannada as the official language of the State. Under clause (2) of Article 210 of the Constitution, the English language shall not be used for the transaction of business in the Legislature of a State after the expiry of fifteen years from the commencement of the Constitution, i.e., after 26<sup>th</sup> January 1965, unless the Legislature of the State by law otherwise provides. It is considered necessary to continue the use of English language in addition to Kannada and Hindi for the transaction of business in the Legislature of the State (Act 26 of 1963).

#### CONCLUSION

History serves as a great tool, in awakening the forgotten glory of the people. Just like proper record keeping enables a company to keep tab on what was its income and how much money it spent on different

variables, whether the organisation is earning profit or loss. In a similar manner, history is a powerful instrument of national unification and integration. History is a creator of nationalist impulse; it is much created by nationalism. An assurance of a glorious past is an inspiration, as it depicts how great you once were, you realize what you are capable of. Therefore, historicizing the events play a vital role.

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