

A Study on Karnataka Unification Movement: A Historical Study

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Abstract— Historically, there was no such thing as Karnataka state. In the beginning of 20th century, unifying all Kannada speaking areas into one was still a dream. Except for Mysore, most of Kannada areas were under the administration of non-Kannadigas, where Kannada language and culture were facing an extinction. This had historical causes. After the fall of Vijayanagara empire, Kannada was the official language only in Keladi and Mysore. After Keladi kingdom was annexed into Mysore in 1763 A.D., Mysore became the sole representative of Kannada. Even in Mysore Samsathana, 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. Though it was abolished by the English Commissioner, Mark Cubbon. With the ascendancy of the English in Mysore, 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, due to the predominance of the outsiders, particularly from administrators of Madras Province origin. Yet, Kannada managed to survive with the help of the life-support System in Mysore, which remained the core Kannada state. But the condition of Kannada in the remaining vast Kannada speaking areas was pitiable. In the Bombay Presidency, it was dominated by Marathi, Gujarati and Sindhi. Even till 1920-1922, the public meetings here were held in Marathi. As recorded by Kannada Kulapurohita Aluru Venkata Rao "In this region (Dharward district), people knowing Marathi, dominated the important cities. Kannadigas did not have the knowledge of their separate identity". The areas of Mangalore (Dakshina Kannada), Bellary and Kollegal were in three comers of the Madras Presidency, unconnected with each other. While Telugu was invading Bellary, Tamil had upper hand in Kollegal, and Urdu was dominated in Hyderabad-Karnataka. The remaining 10-15 establishments belonged to the Marathi rulers, who were indifferent to Kannada or the development of their areas. Such was the scattered image of Kannada. Then how the present Karnataka evolved? Needs to be understood and is of much historical importance. This paper attempts to highlight all those milestones, in the process of Karnatakas' unification process, popularly known as 'Karnataka Ekikarana Chaluvalli'.

Index Terms- Administration, Dominance, Kannada Language, Mile stones, Unification.

I. INTRODUCTION

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. History was a powerful instrument of national unification and integration. Thus, the growing awareness of their predicament, made many sensitive Kannadigas to realize, that they should lead the movement to highlight the different types of harassment on Kannadigas and the need for unification. This was essentially an expression of Kannada nationalism, which typically sought its support, assurance and inspiration from a discovery and celebration of its past heritage.

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. This was foundational to the launching of Karnataka movement, having as its aim the creation of a separate Karnataka state.

The use of history in Karnataka movement had less to do with the historians writing history than harnessing the history already written or using it for strong emotive function. In fact, more than being a science or an intellectual activity, history had a powerful emotional appeal. It should move your hearts and

launch you to action. For example, Alur Venkata Rao was inspired by the glorious ruins of Vijayanagara to begin the work for integration of Kannada speaking areas. To Alur Venkata Rao, the ruins of Vijayanagara were the metaphor to Karnataka- its sad predicament now, its glorious record then. But people had not only forgotten this empire, but their history altogether. In this context, the statement of Alur Venkata Rao, made while analyzing the reason for non-participation of Kannada speaking areas in Swadeshi movement, that- “While, the people speaking each language in Hindustan have been researching their ancestor’s history with interest, still only Karnataka is in deep slumber. The reason for this is our lack of historical knowledge” is instructive. Further, Alur Venkata Rao emphasized the need for awakening Karnatakta (respect for Karnataka) and said, “What is the use of trying to sow the seed of nationalism among their people, who have no respect for ancestors?”.

Many sensitive Kannadigas started realizing the importance of History and the way it has been constructed. The history written under colonial dispensation and as recorded in Gazetteers and Manuals were designed only for their advertisement. At the best, these materials could supply some useful data, but lacked the essential historical greatness and its present potentiality. Moreover, unifying the common Kannadigas, who did not possess the knowledge of English was much needed. These problems could be effectively addressed only re-writing the history of Karnataka with its full greatness and potentialities.

The growing print capitalism made it possible for a large number of people to think about themselves historically and relate themselves to others, which was not possible till then as Kannada areas were divided into 20-22 administrative units. This interaction laid the foundation for Karnataka consciousness in various ways such as, creating fields of exchange between Kannadigas of different Kannada areas, forging uniformity of Kannada language in print, etc. Apart from dissemination of history, the votaries of Karnataka movement also used festivals having historical significance to awaken people. According to Hans Kohn the nationalism, which is conditioned by backward state of political and social development, finds its first expression in the cultural field. It is at the

beginning the dream and hope of scholars and poets, unsupported by public opinion- which does not exist and which the scholars and poets try to create-a venture in education and propaganda rather in policy-shaping and government. This is also true of Karnataka nationalism and movement. Thus, gradually from the beginning of the 20th century, an attempt was made to create an imagined community of Kannadigas, that is, whoever spoke Kannada language or those areas which were under the control of Kannadigas in the past. This forging of unity and identity by invoking history led to the emergence of Karnataka nationalism demanding a separate Karnataka state by unifying the scattered Kannada areas.

Karnataka nationalism was never pitted against Indian nationalism or the freedom movement. The savants of Kannadatva (Karnatakatva) like Alur Venkata Rao were strong nationalists who believed that the awakening of provincial self-respect was necessary for the nationalist awakening. He said that, “if nationalism has to get complete footing, then the people of that province should first remember the glory of their heroes”. Karnatakatva was an idea which created nationalism. To him “Bharatamata was inside Karnataka”. Hence, the respect for their language or land was not opposed to the respect of nation; instead provincial pride, promoted national pride.

Initially, the identity of Kannada community was created only on the basis of language, and Kannadigas, that is, those who spoke Kannada were perceived as single community, constituting Karnataka. But this theory was built on unsure foundation, as in India there were several such linguistic groups vying with each other for space, recognition and domination. Hence, the votaries of Karnataka movement were led to invoke history to show that the areas constituting Karnataka was a union in the past, which proved that there was more than language to it. Their present claim was sought to be justified and legitimized by the past, especially on the basis of statements made such as Kannada area extended from Godavari to Kaveri, and in the descriptions of the people of that area. The champions of Ekikarana drew liberally from historical data to draw and re-draw the historical boundaries of Karnataka. By this they could rejoice at the past glory, mourn the later loss of territories and honour and

appeal to recover them. This method helped the cause of Karnataka as certain areas wherein dialects of Karnataka were spoken were included along with those areas such as South Kanara and Coorg, where the languages spoken were not dialects of Kannada, thereby creating a larger 'Kannada community'.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the study:

1. To understand the importance of History, in unification of Karnataka.
2. To record different milestones in the process of Karnataka's unification.
3. To explore the different phases, involved in creating a larger 'Kannada Community'.
4. To highlight the contributions of personalities involved in the process of initiation and implementation of Karnataka unification process.

III. TYPE OF RESEARCH: IT IS A HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Data Sources: The report is basically based on Secondary data, which has been obtained by referring to various sources such as: (a) Epigraphical sources (b) Copper Plate inscriptions (c) Records of foreign travelers (d) chronicles and other Literary Sources. The necessary information is also procured from various books, Ephigraphia Karnataka, Various articles published in several national and international journals, websites etc.,

IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The Ekikarana movement, which resulted in the emergence of Mysore state in 1956, naturally became an eager subject matter for scholars and historians. It could now be written as a success story, or nearly so. The first book was written in 1956 to mark the occasion. *Karnataka Ekikarana Kathe* by R. R. Diwakar was the work of a keen leader of the movement and contains some auto biographical strains. It is a grateful book; it steers clear of unpleasant memories that soured the movement at various times, apparently to make sure that at the hour of triumph and fulfillment, such memories are better banished. It is also a book written from the Congress point of view, without highlighting the complexities of

the movement. But, the autobiographical sketches of Alur Venkata Rao, the high priest of Karnataka movement, in *Karnatakavada Vikasa* and *Nanna Jeevana Smrithigalu*, sound a different note. They show a dedicated nationalist leading the Ekikarana movement by providing it with ideological and historical inputs and draping it with the much needed passion. Further, they give insightful information of various stages of development of Karnataka movement, along with the description of the thought process that went into the making of the movement.

Apart from these two participants, there were other personalities, like, Gangadhar Rao Deshpande, T. T. Sharma, Sivamurthy Sastri, K.F. Patil, etc., who gave their account of the movement. The participants' account of Ekikarana movement were followed by modern works on the theme such as S. U. Kamat's *Karnatakavada Jagruthi* and *Karnataka Ekikarana - Siddi Matthu Sadhane*, H. S. Gopal Rao's *Karnataka Ekikarana Ithihasa*, Patil Puttappa's *Karnataka Kathe*, S. Chandrashekar's *Ekikarana - Ondu Kathana*, etc. They largely deal only with history of Karnataka's Ekikarana, leaving out certain other ideological aspects including the use of history to construct Karnataka, arguments regarding the cultural history of Karnataka and most importantly, the historicization of Karnataka which provided the data for votaries of Karnataka movement to draw boundaries of Karnataka and use them for creating the Karnataka identity. Apart from the writings on Ekikarana movement, we have a rich writings, which addresses the problem of Karnataka nationalism or movement from point of view of literature, suggesting that ancient poets were its precursors, since they took up the cause of Karnataka or Kannada in the literary Kavyas or inscriptions, starting from *Kavirajamarga*. Rich as these efforts are, they naively telescope modern ideas and developments to the ancient past, and recruit ancient authors and poets to the cause of Ekikarana. The notion of nation and nationalism is a modern development and should be recognized as such. How it perceives the past is important than the past itself. But often enthusiasm gets the better of critical historical sense. The works such as, K. V. Srinivasamurthy, *Kannada Sahitya Mathu Karnatakavada*, C. R. Govindaraju's *Karnataka Ekikarana Chaluvali Mathu Kannada Sahitya*, K. V. Srinivasamurthy's *Kannadapara Chintane Mathu*

Parampare, Banjagere Jayaprakash's *Kannada Rashtriyathe*, K. V. Subbanna's *Kavirajamarga Mathu Kannada Jagattu* and other works can be cited as examples for this genre of writings. Besides the study of Kannada culture has attracted attention of Kannada scholars, who have tried to present it without quite linking it to the Ekikarana movement, especially how cultural history of Karnataka was constructed by identifying the makers of Karnataka and by creating their cultural history. The major works dealing with cultural history are M. Chidananda Murthy's works like *Kannada Samskrithi*, *Kannada Shasanagala Samskruthika Adyayana* and *Kannada Samskrithi-Namma Hemme* and Tippe Rudraswamy's *Kannada Samskrithiya Sameekshe*.

CONCLUSION

Attempts to construct Karnataka, both historically and culturally, the best example being Alur Venkata Rao's work titled *Karnataka Gatavaibhava*, wherein both historical and cultural data are forcefully presented before Kannadigas. Before launching a movement for the making of Karnataka, certain spadework had to be done, especially that relating to historicization of Karnataka. In this task, they were helped by the availability of adequate data in the *Manuals*, *Gazetteers*, epigraphical data collected and published in such compendiums as *Epigraphia Camatica*, publication of Kannada Kavyas by government, works on art and architecture, etc. The votaries of Karnataka movement used these copious data and constructed the history of Karnataka. This was necessary as the neighboring people like Marathis, Tamils and Telugus too had become historically aware of their past and as a result were staking claim on coterminous Kannada areas. Hence, the pioneering efforts of the votaries of Karnataka movement in constructing its history gains immense significance.

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