Antiquity of Karnataka

The Pre-history of Karnataka traced back to paleolithic hand-axe culture. It is also compared favourably with the one that existed in Africa and is quite distinct from the Pre-historic culture that prevailed in North India. The credit for doing early extensive study of prehistoric Karnataka goes to Robert Bruce-Foote. Many sites of Pre-historic period have been found scattered on the river valleys of Krishna, Tungabhadra, Cauvery, Bhima, Ghataprabha, Malaprabha, Hemavathi, Shimsha, Manjra, Netravati, and Pennar and on their tributaries. The discovery of ash mounds at Kupgal and Kudatini in 1836 by Cuebold (a British officer in Bellary region), paved the way for the study of Pre-historic studies in India.

Some of the important sites representing the various stages of Prehistoric culture that prevailed in Karnataka are Hunasagi,Kaladevanahal li, Tegginahalli, Budihal, Piklihal, Kibbanahalli, Kaladgi, Khyad, Nyamati, Nittur, Anagavadi, Balehonnur and Uppinangadi (Lower Palaeolithic Culture); Herakal, Menasagi, Pattadakal, Vajjala, Tamminahal, Savalgi, Salvadgi, Naravi and Talakad (Middle Palaeolithic Culture); Kovalli, Yadwad, Ingaleshvara and Maralabhavi (Upper Palaeolithic Culture); Begaumpur, Vanamapurahalli, Sringeri, Hingani, Ingaleshwara, Tamminahal, Jalahalli, Kibbanahalli, Sanganakal, Brahmagiri, Uppinangadi, Mani and Doddaguni (Mesolithic Culture); Maski, T. Narasipur, Banahalli, Hallur, Sanganakal, Srinivasapura, Hemmige, Kodekal, Brahmagiri, Kupgal, Tekkalkote, Kurnal, Beeramangala, French rocks (Pandavapura) and Uttanur (Neolithic and Chalcolithic Culture); Aihole, Maski , Rajana Kolur, Badaga-Kajekaru, Bachigudda, Konnur, Terdal, Hire Benakal, Kumaranahalli, Tadakanahalli, Banahalli, Belur, Borkatte, Konaje, Kakkunje, Vaddarse, and Hallingali (Megalithic Culture).

Discoveries have revealed the existence of Gold in Harappa was found to be imported from mines in Karnataka. Thus many scholars believed that of ancient Karnataka was known to the people of Indus Valley Civilisation. Use of iron was known to the early inhabitants of Karnataka far earlier than the people of North India. The Iron tools dating back to circa 1500 B.C, found at Hallur in Hirekerur Tq. of Haveri district.

References to Karnataka are found in the Sabha Parva and the Bhishma Parva of the Mahabharata and in Śūdraka's Mrichchakatika and Kathasritsagara. Panini mentioned Karnadhaka as the Gotra of people. Karnataka is pre-eminently mentioned also in the old Sanskrit texts like Markandeya Purana, Bhagavatha, and Brihathsamhitha of Varahamihira. Scholars believed that Karnataka was the part of the Nanda and Maurya Empires. According to Jain accounts, Chandragupta, first Mauryan emperor, renounced his throne and followed Jain teacher Bhadrabahu to south India. He is said to lived at Chandragiri hills in Shravanabelagola for several years before fasting to death.

Among the fourteen Rock Edicts of Ashoka, so far found in Karnataka, 10 are Minor (two each at Nittur and Udagolam in Ballari district; one at Maski in Raichur district; one each at Gavimutt and Palkigundu in Koppal district; one each at Brahmagiri, Jattinga Rameshwara and Siddapura in Chitradurga district) edicts, and Four are Major (viz., 13th and 14th edicts found at Sannati in Kalaburagi district)

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Rock edicts. They testify to the fact that the Mauryan Empire had its jurisdiction over Karnataka also. It is interesting to note that, Emperor Ashoka's personal name "Ashoka" occur for the first time in his Maski minor rock edict.

Satvahanas also controlled northern Karnataka and with the disintegration of the Satavahana dynasty led to the rise of the earliest native kingdoms, the Kadamba Dynasty of Banavasi in modern Uttara Kannadadistrict with Mayurasharma as the founding king and the Western Ganga Dynasty in southern Karnataka. These dynasties made the region as an independent political entity. The earliest use of Kannada in administration was started by kingdoms, as evidenced by the Halmidi inscription and a fifth-century copper coin discovered at Banavasi. These dynasties were followed by imperial Kannada empires such as the Chalukyas of Badami, the Rashtrakuta Empire of Manyakheta and the Western Chalukya Empire and Hoysalas, Vijaynagar empire on the banks of Tunbhadra river, later on the Bahmani kingdom and the kingdom of Mysore which ruled over large parts of the Deccan and had their capitals in what is now Karnataka. the Hoysalas gained power in the region at the turn of the first millennium. Literature flourished during this time, which led to the emergence of distinctive Kannada literary metres, and the construction of temples and sculptures adhering to the Vesara style of architecture. Jaina scholars, and warriors from Karnataka during the period gained great regard.

Kannada Language and Literature

The origin of the Kannada language can be traced back to 3rd century BCE, as found in the Ashokan inscriptions. It is the second oldest of the four major Dravidian languages with a literary tradition. The Geography written by Ptolemy, a scholar from Alexandria, during the first half of the second century A.D. Ptolemy speaks of many places in Karnataka such as Kalgeris (identified as Kalkeri), Modogoulla (Mudugal), Badamios (Badami) and so on. All these are not only places in Karnataka, but are also names of Kannada origin. The Kannada script originated from southern varieties of the Ashokan Brahmi script. In the 150 CE Prakrit book Gaathaa Saptashati, written by Raja Haala,also contained Kannada words. But written evidences are available only from 5-6 century AD., like a stone inscription in brahmi characters, resembling Tamil, as was found in the early periods of other Dravidian languages. The language is classified as Old Kannada. Halmidi, Chitradurga, and Chikkamagaluru inscriptions are some examples. The copper plates of 8th century, and palm leaf manuscript of 1478 pages of 9th century, giving milestones of the language's march forward. three Jain writers, Adikavi Pampa, Sri Ponna (939-966 AD) and Ranna (b. 949 AD), collectively called 'Three Gems of Kannada literature', are credited to have introduced the age of classical Kannada in the 10th century. Pampa, the author of Adipurana (941 AD), is considered one of the greatest of Kannada writers. Vikrmarjuna vijaya, another contribution from Pampa, is based on the epic Mahabharata. Akka Mahadevi, who lived in Karnataka around 1100 was a great poet. Her poems, written in Kannada, in free verse style, were all dedicated to Shiva.

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Kannada language is divided by linguists into three distinct phases: Old (850-1200 AD), Middle (1200-1700) and Modern (1700 onwards). These phases represent the stages of the linguistic development of it. But from the literary point of view, scholars identify three different ages such as Jain, Veerashaiva and Vaishnava. Starting with the Kavirajamarga (of about 850 AD.), the oldest literary work in Kannada, through the middle of the 12th century, all the literary activities in Kannada were undertaken by the Jains. After the Veerashaiva movement, another phase of literary movement came up under the patronage of Vijayanagara rulers, and this is known as the kaivalya, which followed the advaita line of Sankara. The most prominent in the Kaivalya school of writing was Shivayogi. During this period, the two noted philosophers who influenced the life and thinking of the region, were Ramanujacharya and Madhvacharya. They were instrumental in converting the Jainists into Vaishnavites. Even the king was converted into Vaishanavism. The period of the Vijayanagara Empire marked a golden era for Kannada literature. Kumara Vyasa, of this period was one of the most influential of the Vaishnava poets of the time. He was a master of metaphors, and this earned him a title – Rupaka Samrajya Chakravarti ('The Emperor of the domain of Metaphors'). He wrote Kumaravyasa Bharata in the typical Vyasa tradition. Then came Kumara Valmiki (1500), the author of Torave Ramayana, an adaptation of the epic Ramayana, and this work inspired the folk theatre of Karnataka like the Yakshagana. During the 15th century, the development of the Vaishnava Bhakti movement which spread the message of the vedantin Madhvacharya to the common man. The chief proponents of this movement were Naraharitirtha, Jayatirtha, Vyasatirtha, Sripadaraya, and Purandara Dasa. A wandering poet, Purandara Dasa (1484-1564) is known as Karnataka Sangeeta Pitamaha (the Patriarch of Carnatic Music) and is believed to have composed some 475,000 songs in Kannada and Sanskrit languages.

After the decline of the Vijayanagara Empire, Kannada literature was vigorously supported by the Wodeyar rulers of Mysore. Not only did they encourage writers, but some of the rulers themselves were writers and composers. The most prominent of them was King Chikka Devaraja Wodeyar, the author of the famous treatise on music, Geetha Gopala. King Kanteerava Narasaraja Wodeyar Ii who authored 14 Yakshaganas. Mummadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar was another author with more than 40 writings to his credit.

The development of modern Kannada literature can be traced to early 19th century, marked by Kempu Narayana's novel Mudramanjusha. The advent of Christian missionaries, introduction of Western education system and the printing press strengthened the development and growth of modern Kannada literature. The first Kannada newspaper, Mangalore Samachara, saw the light in 1843. The first Kannada-English dictionary also came out in 1894. Translations from not only English, but other Indian languages like Bengali and Marathi became available. All this resulted in the influx of novel, essays, dramas and literary criticisms in Kannada language.

B. M. Srikantaiah is considered the 'Father' of Modern Kannada literature. He was the one who called the writers to move away from the archaic forms of writing, but to pursue the original path of writing. The impact was the rise of

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'navodaya', a new sunrise. The influence of Western culture and literature was so powerful that Kannada's novels, short stories, plays, literary criticisms, and poems experienced a new found creative urge. Shivarama Karanth (Chomana dudi) and Masti Venkatesh Iyengar (Sanna Kathegalu) laid foundations for a new style of story telling. T. P. Kailasam (Tollu Gatti, Tali Kattoke Cooline) broke a new ground for plays. Realistic novels became the in thing during the first half of the last century. Masti Venkatesh Iyengar, D.V. Gundappa, K.V. Puttappa (Kuvempu), Shivaram Karanth, G. P. Rajaratnam, V. K. Gogak and Gopal Krishna Adiga became the heroes of Kannada literature. Short story and poems became the vehicles for the struggles for a new life. K.S. Narasimhaswamy (Silalathe and Gadiyaradangdiya Munde), Chandrasekhara Kambar, D.R. Bindre, Chandrasekhar Patil, P.Lankesh, Girish Karnad (Tughlaq), U. R. Ananthamurthy (Samskara, Prasne, Ghatashraddha, Mouni, Navilugulu) and K.S. Nissar Ahmed became the best known writers of the language.

LITERARY SOURCES

The earliest extant Kannada work Kavirajamarga speaks of contemporary social and political conditions of Karnataka.

The Kannada poem by Pampa – Vikmmurjunavijaya, furnishes certain details regarding the Rashtrakutas.

Ranna's Gadayuddha deals with the history of the Chalukyas of Badami and Kalyani.

Chavundaraya Purana contains information regarding the Gangas.

Keladinripa Vijayam discusses in detail the history of Keladi family. In Sanskrit, an encyclopedia by Basavaraja, a Keladi ruler, Shivatattva Ratnakara, throws light on the history of Keladi and also on that of Vijayanagara.

Kanthirava Narasaraja Vijayam deals with the exploits of Kanthirava Narasaraja Odeyar of Mysore.

Chikkadevaraja Binnapam, Chikkadevaraja Vijayam, Chikkadevaraja Vamshavali and Apratimaviracharite s peaks about the achievements of Chikkadevaraya, the great ruler of Mysore.

Kumara Ramanakathe by Nanjunda contains information on the history of pre-Vijayanagara period.

In Sanskrit the achievements of Vikrama VI of Kalyana are narrated in Bilhana's Vikra- mankadeva Charitam. Manasollasa or Abhilashitart ha Chintamani by Somesvara III of Kalyana also contains valuable information on cultural history. This prince also wrote Vikramankabhyudyam narrating the exploits of his father.

Chaturvarga Chitamani of Hemadri deals with the history of the Sevunas (Yadavas).

Jalhana's Suktimuktavali narrates briefly the achievements of Sevuna Bhillama V and his father Mallugi.

Gadyakarnamritam by Vidyachakravartin II describes the war between Hoysala Narasimha II and the Pandayas.

Madhura Vijayam by Gangambika, Saluvabhyudayam by Rajanatha Dindima I, Achyuthabhyudayam by Rajanatha Dindima III and Varadambikaparinayam by Tirumalamba are most notable literary sources.

Krishnadevarayana Dinachari is a recently discovered Kannada source.

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The Extent of Kannadanadu

The Kavirajamarga, a 9th century Kannada work, describing the extent of Kannada territory. It was stretching itself from the rivers Cauvery and the Godavari. Though Kannada language is not spoken on the banks of the Godavari today, between sixth to 13th centuries A.D. Kannada dominated major parts of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Goa. Many inscription found in all these places testify to the fact that Kannada was the spoken language of the people of those areas. A kannada poet Pampa was from Vemulavada, a place now in Andhra Pradesh. Famous scholar and researcher, N.S.Rajapurohit (born 1887) wrote several articles in Kesari (the Marathi paper of Tilak) about the prevalence of Kannada language in several areas of Maharashtra and also the influence of Kannada on the literary composition of saints like Jnaneshwar. Even Tilak used to say that once upon a time the people of Karnataka and Maharashtra used to speak a common language and that language was Kannada.

With the decline of the fortunes of the Kingdom of the Chalukyan dynasty of Kalyani and its feudatories, the Hoysalas, Sevunas (Yadavas) and Kakathiyas established their independent kingdoms in regions now comprising roughly Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andra Pradesh. This resulted in a setback to Kannada as the latter two dynasties began to patronize Marathi and Telugu respectively. Kannada regions north of the river Krishna received further setback when the Bahamani kingdom was established in 1347. After the defeat of Vijayanagara in the battle Talikota (1565), even the areas to the north of the river Tungabhadra came under the influence of Adil Shahis of Bijapur. In 1686, the Mughals annexed the Bijapur kingdom and the subsequent decline in the former's fortunes saw the Marathas supplanting their hold over major part of North Karnataka. After the fall of Tipu Sultan in 1799, the territories inhabited by Kannadigas were divided into 20 different administrative units. These units being Mysore state under the Wodeyars comprising of roughly south Karnataka, Coorg under a Lieutenant Commissioner rule, South Kanara and Bellary districts under Madras Presidency, Dharwad, North Kanara, Bijapur and Belgaum districts under Bombay Presidency, Raichur, Gulbarga and Bidar districts under the Hyderabad Nizam's domain and a number of small princely states like Sandur, Jamkhandi, Jatt, etc scattered in North Karnataka.

The pathetic conditions of the Kannada-speaking people scattered in these various administrative units were unaccountable. The medium of instruction at school and the language of local administration had been mostly Marathi In the southern parts of Bombay Presidency. The Kannada speaking areas were called 'Southern Maratha Country'. In certain Kannada areas like Jatt, Akkalkot and Sangli, Kannada had almost vanished due to their subjection to Marathi princes. Kannada had been reduced to the position of only a spoken language as Urdu dominated both at schools and government offices in Hyderabad state. In the Presidencies like Bombay or Madras, the Kannada regions did not receive their due share of financial aid for the various developmental activities as Kannada regions were very small pockets, lying far away from the provincial capital. In the Central

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