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KARNATAKA UNIFICATION IN CHITRADURGA: THE KANNADA LANGUAGE AS THE BINDING FACTOR

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ABSTRACT:

Poet Nrupatunga in *Kavirajamarga*, the earliest available work in Kannada dating back to 9th century, defined the geographical location of the Kannada land as the one that stretches between the Cauvery and the Godavari. However, in modern times, it was exactly 60 years ago on this day

(November 1) that Kannada-speaking people were brought together in one State.

KEYWORDS : *geographical location* , dramatic turn.

1. INTRODUCTION:

The region that constitutes Karnataka today was till then under 20 administrative regions of the princely State of Mysore, Nizam's Hyderabad, Bombay Presidency, Madras Presidency and the territory of Kodagu. The period of British rule had seen Kannadigas in these regions feeling alienated from one another.

Though the demand for unification as a linguistic State was a century old, it gained momentum as 'Ekikarana movement' with the founding of Karnatak Vidyavardhak Sangha in Dharwad in 1890. It took a dramatic turn with stalwarts such as Alur Venkata Rao (called Kannada

Kulapurohita) taking the lead role. Karnataka State Political Conference held in Dharwad in 1920 passed a resolution demanding the unification of all Kannada-speaking areas.

The first Karnataka unification conference was organised in Belgaum in 1924 and it was here that Huilgol Narayana Rao first sang 'Udayavagali Namma Chaluva Kannada Naadu', considered to be the first State anthem.

Writers of the time, including Kuvempu, B.M. Srikanthiah, Da.Ra. Bendre, V.K. Gokak, Sham.Ba. Joshi, Betageri Krishna Sharma, M. Govinda Pai, K. Shivarama Karanth, Kayyara Kinhana Rai, and A.N. Krishna Rao, were vociferous votaries of unification. "In a sense, the unification movement was a movement of writers," says culture critic Rahamat Tarikere in one of

his essays. Political leaders, including Kengal Hanumanthaiya, T. Mariyappa, Sowkar Chennaiah, H.C. Dasappa, and H. Siddaiah, also urged the Constituent Assembly to create linguistic States.

The 10th conference of the Ekikarana movement was held in 1946 in Bombay. Inaugurating the event, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel promised that interests of all linguistic groups would be priority in independent India.

2. DREAM REALIZED:

Post-Independence, Karnataka Ekikarana Paksha was formed, supported by litterateurs and politicians, including S. Nijalingappa, to push the cause further. Finally, the States Reorganisation Commission recommended reorganisation of

States based on linguistic demographics.

Finally, Mysore State, comprising Kannada-speaking territories, came into existence on November 1, 1956. Central College Cricket Grounds of Bangalore University was the place where the inaugural ceremony of the formation of Mysore State was held. But there were disappointments too. For instance, non-inclusion of parts such as Kasaragod — one of the centres from where the Ekikarana movement started — caused some heartburn.

Kinhanna Rai, till his death recently, was dreaming of inclusion of Kasaragod into Karnataka. The fight over sharing the Cauvery, Krishna and Godavari waters and the border dispute with Maharashtra are continuing even after 60 years. It was on November 1, 1973, that the then Chief Minister D. Devaraj Urs renamed Mysore State as Karnataka.

3. SYNTHESIS, A WAY OF LIFE:

Perhaps, thanks partially to its history marked by multiple identities, synthesis has been a marked feature of Karnataka's cultural life. As Kuvempu described in 'Jaya Bharata Jananiya Tanujate' (now the State anthem), the aspiration has been to see it as sarva janangada shantiya tota (a garden of peace for all communities). Though recent incidents may make one sceptical, a wider view of history shows that cohesion has been the State's mainstay. The statue of Bahubali, a messenger of non-violence, in Shravanabelagola or the shrine of Baba Budan and Dattatreya, sacred for both Muslims and Hindus, are symbolic of this despite attempts at disruption.

This diversity is reflected in all aspects of life. For instance, while Hubballi-Dharwad gave distinguished Hindustani musicians such as Bhimsen Joshi, Mallikarjun Mansur, Gangubai Hangal and Kumar Gandharva, the region of Mysuru has seen Carnatic music flourishing. This land gave birth to Madhwacharya, profounder of Dwaita philosophy, and hosted Adi Shankara, who gave the world Advaita philosophy, and Ramanujacharya, profounder of Vishishtadvaita. Basaveshwara, who preached equality and a rational and humanistic outlook, was born here. Christianity gained ground, particularly along the coast, while northern districts have a large presence of Muslims.

The State has seen 22 Chief Ministers from the Congress, the Janata parivar and the Bharatiya Janata Party. Eight writers who have got the Jnanpith Award (the second highest for a language after Hindi) represent different sensibilities, bound together by Kannada.

4. RAISING QUESTIONS

There have been a few major cultural, social and political churnings in Karnataka over the last 60 years. The most significant among them are Dalit and Bandaya movements in literature that questioned the dominant caste and class equations. The social, political and cultural upheavals of the early 1970s paved the way for the emergence of these movements. This phase also saw a major farmers' movement emerging in Karnataka, with M.D. Nanjundaswamy forming Karnataka Raita Sangha. In contrast, the current phase of over a decade is generally seen as one with "no big movements" or trends in literary, cultural or socio-political spheres.

As far as the language is concerned, a second significant movement after Ekikarana came with Gokak agitation. Recommendation by writer V.K. Gokak-led committee on making Kannada a compulsory language for students for 150 marks and another language as the second language triggered a big debate. This saw the entry of Kannada icons, including thespian Rajkumar, for the Kannada cause. However, the recommendation got caught in a legal tangle and never got fully implemented. A resonance of this can be seen in the continued debate on language learning and medium of instruction to this day.

5. REGIONAL IMBALANCE:

The biggest challenge to the very idea of unification, perhaps, comes from the unresolved issue of regional imbalance. The socio-economic situation in major parts of the north Karnataka, which fought for their inclusion with Mysore, has not improved in the six decades.

The high-powered committee headed by D.M. Nanjundappa, set up to study regional imbalances, identified 35 indicators to measure the extent of development. It categorised 21 taluks as most backward, mostly in Hyderabad Karnataka region. The previous UPA government at the Centre accorded special status to Hyderabad Karnataka (under Article 371(J) of the Constitution) to focus on development. However, discontent over being left behind in the development agenda still brews here, and sometimes finds expression in the form of stray demands for separate statehood.

6. TIMELINE: STATE UNIFICATION

1890: Karnatak Vidyavardhak Sangha, which played a pivotal role in the unification of Karnataka, founded.

1903: Alur Venkata Rao made a case for integrating all Kannada-speaking regions of Madras Presidency, Bombay Presidency, and Nizam's Hyderabad with Mysore kingdom

1905: Karnatak Vidyavardhak Sangha launched a unification movement by organising the first Kannada writers' conference

1912: 'Karnataka Gatha Vaibhava' by Alur Venkata Rao, which accelerated the unification movement, published

1915: Karnataka Sahitya Parishat, which was another driving force in the unification movement, founded

1920: Resolution on unification of all Kannada-speaking regions passed at Karnataka State Political Conference held in Dharwad

1924: The first Karnataka Unification Conference held in Belgaum and first the State anthem, written by Huilgol Narayana Rao, sung

1946: The tenth conference of unification movement held in Bombay

1948: Dhar Commission appointed to look into demands of unification

1951: Karnataka Ekikarana Paksha, a political forum, launched

1953: The States Reorganisation Commission, headed by Fazal Ali, set up

1955: Commission report on States reorganisation, including Mysore, submitted

1956: Mysore State formed

1963: Kannada declared as the official language of the State

1973: Mysore State renamed Karnataka by Chief Minister D. Devaraj Urs