

## KANNADA LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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### Introduction

Kannada literature is the corpus of written forms of Kannada language, a member of Dravidian family spoken mainly in the Indian state of Karnataka. Kannada literature has a history dating back to at least 1500 years. The Kannada words made an entry through Halmidi inscription of 450 AD. The Halmidi inscription provides invaluable information regarding history and culture of Karnataka.<sup>1</sup> Old Kannada inscription dated AD 578 (Badami Chalukya Dynasty) at Badmi cave temple, inscription discovered at Talakad 326 AD, from the rule of King Shivamara-I, 2 Sripurusha (Western Ganga Dynasty) and inscription discovered at Durga Devi Temple, Hampi, Karnataka 9th

Century are some of inscriptions discovered written in Kanada language. Over 30,000 inscriptions written in the Kannada language have been discovered so far<sup>2</sup>. The earlier copper plates inscribed in old Kannada script and language, dated to the early 8th Century AD, are related to King Alupa Aluvarasa II from Belmannu (Dakshina Kannada District), and display the double crested fish, his royal emblem.<sup>3</sup> The oldest palm leaf manuscript in old Kannada “Dhavala” dates back to around 9th century which is preserved in the Jain Bhandar, Mudibidri, Dakshina Kannada district.<sup>4</sup> A Kadamba coin was traced belonging to 5th Century AD at Banavasi<sup>5</sup> the favourite place

of Pampa a notable first poet of Kannada literature in Karnataka.

### **Kannada Literature**

The Kannada Literature is usually divided into three linguistic phases. Old (450-1200 CE), Middle (1200-1700 CE) and Modern (1700 - present). The oldest record of Kannada poetry in tripadi is the Kappe Arabhatta record of AD 700<sup>6</sup>. Starting with Kavirajamarga (850 AD) until the middle of 12th century literature in Kannada was almost exclusively composed by Jains. Kavirajamarga is a writing a literature in Kannada was almost exclusively composed by Jains. Kavirajamarga is a writing on literary criticism and poetics meant to standardise various written Kannada dialects used in literature in previous centuries. Since Kavirajamarga is one on grammar and a guide of sorts to unity existing variants of Kannada grammar and literacy different styles, it can be well assumed that literature in Kannada must have started several centuries earlier. Amoghavarsha Nripathunga's Kavirajamarga deals notably with figures of speech like 'rasa' and 'dhwani' but also gives descriptions about the geographical boundaries of Karnataka, as well as its dynamic life and culture.

Sangam literature one can find the word 'Erumainat' whose Kannada version is 'Eruminad'. This eruminad comprises Kodagu, Dakshina Kannada, Mysuru and some portions of Northern Kerala. The oldest Karnataka tribal royal dignitaries were supposed to be 'punnata' recognised in the 2nd century, by Ptolemy, who also refers to punnata alongwith Banouse (Banavasi), Patrigal (Pattadakal) and Maise (Mahisha Mardana). The people were adept in royal folk varieties prior to Kavirajamarga.

Chudamani (Crest Jewel - AD 650) by Srivardhadeva is a milestone in the literature of Kannada language.<sup>7</sup> Gajastaka<sup>8</sup>, a work on elephant management by King Shivamara-II belonged to 7th century and the Chandraprabha Purana by Sri Vijaya, a court poet of Amoghavarsha-I is said to be the early 9th century.<sup>9</sup> Though Chudamani is a philosophical work, much earlier to Kavirajamarga the earliest Kannada prose work is Sivakotyacharya's 'Vaddaradhane' which even to this day is considered as masterpiece. It is a collection of 19 Jain stories, seems to have been based on an earlier Prakrit commentary called Bagavathi Aradhana of Acharya Shivaraya. Vachana Sahitya tradition of 12th century is purely native and unique in the global literature and

the aggregate of contributions by all sections of society.

### **Middle Kannada**

During the period between the 15th and 18th century Hinduism had a great influence on Middle Kannada (Nadugannada) language and literature. The sixteenth century saw Veerashaiva poets of extra ordinary merit. Sarvajna who was a real vairagi had no settled dwelling house, no religion, wrote, "Sarvajnana Padagalu" in tripadi style. Dasakoota or the Vaishnava movement led by Purandara Dasa, influenced Kannada literature and culture. Purandaradasa though belongs to Advaita Havyaka brahmin named Srinivasa Nayaka, a diamond merchant near Karawara and blesed by Sri Vyasarayara to convert himself as Dwaitha Philosophy. The Karnataka culture reached its Zenith during the Vijayanagara empire. The Wodeyars of Mysuru gave a boost to Kannada literature, especially during Chikkadevaraja Wodeyar's period (1672 to 1704).

### **Modern Kannada**

The Kannada works produced from the 19th century make a gradual transition and are classified as Hosagannada or Modern Kannada. Most popular among the modern poets Nandalike Muddanna whose writing

may be described as the "Dawn of Modern Kannada".

Chamaraja Wodeyar's period saw a new era in Kannada literature. M. S. Puttanna's Madidunno Maharaya, detective stories like Parimala and Arindamana Sahasagalu' of D. Venkatachalayya, Dr. B. V. Venkateshwariah and Galaganath's social and historical novels. Kittel's dictionary, Cha Vasudevaih's Bala Bodhe belongs to this period. Muddanna's 'Ramashwamedha' is an epic episode in prose.

In 1921, B.M. Shree heralded the Navodaya movement. His English Geethegalu was a free rendering of some great English poems. Around this period Kuppalla Venkatappa who switched over to Kannada from English writing and the famous work 'Sri Ramayana Darshanam' written in blank verse. Kuvempu propogated 'Vishwa Manava' a social thought which stipulates all beings are equal without any religion but universal. He is also popular for his works "Malegalalli Madumagalu" and Kanur Subbamma Heggadathi.

In 1930's D. V. Gundappa's 'Mankuthimmana Kagga' stands out as a jewel. It is supreme since it contains ethical principles, philosophic truths and experiences of life. Samsa wrote many plays

and his play 'Vigada Vikramaraya' written in Halegannada is outstanding. Dr. Ja Cha Ni wrote more than 300 books comprising poetics, vachanas, poems, research work historical account of Sindhu culture and Veerashaiva philosophical works like Jeevana Siddhanta and 'Sampadaneya Sompu' is yet another highly philosophical work of highest standard.

Modern Kannada in 20th century has been influenced by many literacy movemnts and important among them, Navya, Navyottana, Dalita and Badaya. It is important to know that except Dr. U. R. Ananthamurthy and Girish Karnad, the other six Jnanapeeta awardees in Kannada have been writing since Navodaya period. Naku Thanti a metaphysical poetic work written by Da. Ra. Bendre attracted many literacy savvi readers Shivarama Karantha's writings right from encyclopedia to novels, essays, drama and peotry. His popular works 'Marali Mannige', 'Bettada Jeeva', 'Chomana Dudi' and 'Mookajjiya Kanasugalu' are acclaimed as best literacy works and popular and are based by Dakshina Kannada cultural ethos. Masti Venkatesha Iyengar a famous short story writer, his Chennabasava Nayaka and Chikkaveerarajendra are historical popular novels. Dr. V. K. Gokak a popular for his

magnificent 'Bharatha Sindhu Rashmi' which seeks to find solutions for the modern man's dilemma in ancient epics. Dr. Ananthamurthy 'Sanskara' a rational presentation of views. Girish Karnad basically a play wright whose dramas are popular and enacted many times. Another Jnanapeetha awardee Chandrashekar Kambara is a poet, folklorist and playwright and highly popular for 'Sangya Balya'.

Further the supreme works by Narasimha Swamy K.S. 'Mysuru Mallige' a collection of poems is highly popular and ever rememberable with love and separation as theme, is a landwork of the Navodaya period. Rajarathnam's Rathnana Padagalu perhaps stands unique in global literature in seeing truth as a beauty in drunken man's gay Gibberish. Pu Thi Na's 'Gokula Nirgamana' A. N. Murthy Rao's Hagaluganasugalu and M. R. Srinivasa Murthy's Rangannana Kanasin Dinagalu also stood as masterpieces in Kannada literature.

Among the notable S.L. Byrappa, the Saraswathi Sanman receiptient is ever rememberable. His novels clearly sends message of necessity of cultural and social equality. Parva, Nayineralu, Gruhabhanga, Bhatti are independently jewels adorable and

I wish him better success for his coming novel not yet named but socio economic background at Chikkamagaluru.

Post-Navya sometimes called as Navottara Sahitya or Bandaya Sahitya or even Dalita Sahitya. The writers belonging to this movement viewed that Dalits can authentically write about their trails and tribulations and others if written may remain as second-hand experience. Devanuru Mahadeva is popular for his works 'odalala' and 'kusumabale' and won many laurels. Chenanna Valikar, Siddalingaiah and B. T. Lutiha Naik, Aravinda Malgatti, Geetha Nagabhushana and others also important

**References:**

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- (2) Sahitya Academi (1988), P. 1717.
- (3) Gururaj Bhat in Kamath (2001). P97
- (4) Dr. Gopal, Director, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History (6th Feb. 2006). 5th Century copper coin discovered in Banavasi. **Hindu Monday, 6th Feb. 2006**, (Chennai, India, The Hindu) Retrieved 18th Oct 2007.
- (5) Kamath (2001), P 67.

writers who have identified with notable Dalith works.

However, the Kannada literacy works can not be constructed by way of representing only a few writers and so-called literacy movements. Kannada literature and its relationship with the genral public is complex phenomenon. Writers and readers, who constitute the genral public, do not belong to a single community. They hail from variety of communities with different social and cultural backgrounds and experiences. It is obvious their literacy contribution is driven by social and cultural backgrounds.

- (6) Jyothsna Kamat, History of the Kannada literature-I. **Kamats Potpourri, 4th Nov. 2006**. Retrieved on 25th Nov. 2006.
- (7) The 7th century Kannada grammarian Bhattkalanka wrote about he Chudamani as a milestone in the literature of Kannada language (Sastri 1955). P. 355.
- (8) Kamath (2001). P. 50, P. 67.
- (9) The author and his work were praised by the later day poet Durgasimha of AD 1025. (Narasimhacharya 1988, P. 18).

(10) Different Websites.