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Kannada Identity: Mapping the Trajectories of Community

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Abstract

Historians argue that in India, arrival of new socio-political subjects and counter literary trends in post-Emergency period, had reshaped the idea of 'regional community' in a modern sense. To comprehend expansion of print practices and to perceive themselves as a rational public; communities in Karnataka-a South Indian state, exposed to media world, started articulating their own set of identifiable opinions through different mediums. To review the statement, this paper, intends to understand the key motives which are supposed to be enabled 'community of readers' to emerge as a 'Kannada community' will be discussed in detail. By looking at major historical imprints such as - Reorganization of Indian states (1956), Re-naming of the state as- Karnataka (1973) and Gokak linguistic movement (1980), the popular sense of 'community' and ideological debates, which seemed to be compelled periodical publications to articulate Kannada identity politics will also be elucidated.

Key Words: Community, Region, Identity

Introduction

The inter-connection between the print and politics need to be understood along with the various tropes, stakeholders, and dialectics involved in the ‘social space’ of a democratic society. Hence, this social space or ‘the formation of a sense of public sphere’, needs to be understood as a “culturally embedded social practice” (Oliver, B.B: 2012)¹. In India, the historical analysis of media, especially studies on print, are limited to the conventional historical methods, which emphasis more on institutional chronologies, and their relations with the state and elites. For instance, Robin Jeffery’s (2003) work on Indian language press belongs into this analytical paradigm or framework. Therefore, an attempt to understand media’s role in the process of ‘constitution of publics’ social and political subjectivity in the context of national and regional identity politics, is becoming challenging exercise. Forms of print media and materials, which include newspapers, books, pamphlets and the like, play a vital role in shaping the ideas and perspectives of the reader, viewer of the consumers, whose emotions are simultaneously disciplined and stimulated not only for a political and social mediation but also for commercial exploitation. As it is pointed out that “the popular press has always expressed a rich engagement with the dissemination of cultural norms and survives on its ability to maintain a dialogue with contemporary cultural trends (Martin Conboy, John Fiske, Peter Dahlgren, 2002:1)”². In this context, it is important to explore the interlinks between the print and social and cultural mediations of the readers.

In order to explore the inter-connection between print and its effort to construct social identity of a community and the ways in which how print material has been used to propagate notion or sense of belongingness among its readers, the study will use concepts such as ‘print capitalism’ and ‘public sphere’. The ‘Press’, as a major organ of public sphere, is necessary to form a public sphere, wherein the members of community come together, under a common platform to debate and discuss the issues critically (Habermas: 1991). However, according to Anderson, by giving a fixity to the language, print could deepen the necessary feelings of ‘belongingness’ amongst the

¹ See ‘Conceptualizing the Public sphere’ in *Approaches to Media: A Reader*, Edt: Oliver Boyd-Barrett, Chris Newbold, Rawat publications, (2012) New Delhi.

² In the *Press and Popular Culture*, Sage, 2002.

people, who share a common cultural and geographical setting (2006:44). In a way, print repetitively produces a commonality through the language which is essential to create the identifications of communities, that had been driving force of nationalities. Robin Jeffery extends this idea and mentions:

Anderson suggests that the uniting of printing (technology) with capitalism (economic dynamism) provided the impetus to carry common message widely and relentlessly, while at the same time homogenizing languages and creating “national “mother tongue (1983:41-49). For modern nationalism, “print-capitalism” is the vehicle without which the sentiments and practices of “nationhood” cannot grow.³

Perspectives and emotive sentiments, which are disseminated by the print not only associates individuals but it also releases a great socio-political energy which can make members of community to articulate and assimilate with certain common cultural practices of the region. As print fostered the regional and national feeling among the communities in India, (Jeffery. R Aloysius, G: Padikkal, S: Thirumal, P), that were scattered earlier in princely states and provinces during struggle for independence and it also spread the idea of unifying people on the linguistic lines.

The present paper is divided into two parts. First part will discuss about the initial efforts made by the Kannada scholars, nationalist-writers and few Christian missionaries, who wanted to form a *Swatantra Kannadanaadu*-an independent Karnataka, through various means of entities. In this ‘region-building’ process, different communities were involved and they successfully used print and literary forums to propagate the idea of ‘Kannada community’. In the second part of this paper, it will be focused on the new political subjects and their effort to contest the earlier notion of Kannada identity formation. It is important to look at the print and literary practices of these new political groups, as they not only turned to be popular medium but also a dominant organ of public sphere in the state. The section will also look at the way it has produced a realm of freedom through which the representational public got to be visible.

³ Quoted from Jeffery’s paper on *Testing concepts about print, newspapers, and politics: Kerala, India, 1800-2009*, in *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (May) 2009: 465–489.

‘Recovering’ the past and Embedding sense of ‘Community’:

While explaining the Kannada identity articulations; it will be focused more on important historical phases such as a) Renaissance period (1810-1900), b) Modern period (1900-1950), c) Unification period (1956), d) Renaming period (1973) and the e) Period of Gokak linguistic movement (1980s). Here emphasis will be laid on the attempts made by the individuals (who engaged in literary and print production), communities and language-literary agencies, those who wanted to establish a strong base to have a modern sense of ‘Kannada community’, either purely based on the linguistic lines or cultural history.

It is in the early 19th Century that the communities (Lingayats of northern-region and Vokkaliga, Brahmin’s of Old Mysore-region) or literary and language associations (Karnataka Vidyavardhak Sangha-1890, Kannada Sahitya Parishat-1915, and Karnataka Sabha-1916⁴), was trying to *imagine* the state to come up, through the various forms of representations and articulations, in their own means. By propagating the cause of state unification, these bodies also used effective approaches to protect the interests of the group/community in which they were belonging to. The very decision of Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC,1886), to reunify the territories on the linguistic lines was somewhat turned as an advantage for some agencies (Lingayat community, Vidyavardhaka Sangha, Sahitya Parishat), against the idea of forming two states - Mysore state and non-Mysore state. The proposal of forming two or more states within Kannada-speaking areas made by the writers like DV Gundappa, who was addressing audience on developing the Kannada language at Karnataka Sangha Rajothsava held in Bangalore's Central College, in 1944.

The idea of Kannada identity and its articulations have been defined and redefined several times from the inceptions of Renaissance insights to the modern period. But it is observed that it was during the post-independence phase “that the domain of popular culture (films, print magazines) became an important site for the assertion of Kannada identity” (Nair 2005:256). In the process of redefining the identity construction, certain communities, organizations, individuals-mentioned above, have emerged as representatives of Kannada identity and asserts its political significances.

⁴ Renamed as *Karnataka Ekikarana Sangha* in 1934.

These populist forces used various forms of community such as associations, print publications and literature, to disseminate their agendas. However, when we trace the historical existence of such identity formation, it can be noted that *Kavirajamarga*, an earliest available inscription (850 C.E.) that deals with the idea of unique Kannadiga identity while giving emphasis through the rhetoric and poetical power as well as the grammar of the Kannada language. It was in the last decades of the Nineteenth century that the idea of '*Kannadanaadu*'—an early concept of 'nation' came into the larger domain of the public sphere with the efforts the intellectuals and historians of this time which subsequently elaborated by the intellectuals and writers belonging both in the political and cultural spheres of the society.

Early roots of such intellectual stimulations might have emerged through the missionaries efforts of gradual introduction of printing into the regional languages. Christian missionaries, apart from translating Bibles to spread the facets of Christianity, they also took initiative and published dictionaries such as Kannada dictionary by Rev. F Kittel, 1903), and folk and classical literature (Dasara padaglu-songs of Purandaradasa and Kanakadasa, Kannada Jaimini Bharata 1848 are some examples). Missionaries effort to provide modern English education, simultaneously helped to develop native consciousness and a sense of regional culture. To 'imagine' their past and appreciate their 'cultural awakening' which was termed as 'cultural renaissance' of Karnataka, a 'systematic' historical study of Kannada literature, language and its cultural practices was conducted. Studies were done by different missionaries and native scholars who were influenced by the modern ideas that facilitated community to claim their past. So, by the end of 19th century, Mysore and Dharwad, important cultural centers of southern and northern regions, have become the epicenters of mobilizing people for linguistic cause and witnessed major phases of Kannada movement.

The coastal region or South Canara, which was under the influence of Christian missionaries and received printing presses, had produced rich literary works⁵ much before other regions. But the debates around language, community and unification did not elevated from this coastal basin as clearly as it was from the above-mentioned cities. However, Hyderabad-Karnataka region, which

⁵ For instance, writers like Govinda Pai, Shivarama Karant have produced works ranging from encyclopedia to novels, essays, drama and poetry. And even though, the first Kannada newspaper *Mangaluru Samachara*, a four-page started in 1843 from Mangalore city but it rarely witnessed any language movement.

was historically under Nizam's control even after independence, the influence of Urdu, Telugu and Marathi did allow Kannada to grow as a language of community as medium of elementary education was Urdu⁶.

Whereas, to distribute books, circulars and important notices among the scholars in the court of Mysore palace, the Amba vilasa palace had a lithographic press, and was considered as the first printing presses in Mysore⁷. Contextually, it should be noted that the *Karnataka kavya manjari* and *Kavya kalanidhi* and several other classic texts were printed in the Star Press at the Sadvidya mandir (1868). *Karnataka grantha Male* was published by GTA press, whereas Jaganmohini Press had printed some of the Veerasaiva literature. It was in the same period that Tirumalacharya and Bhashyacharya, prominent journalists from Mysore had started few important publications such as, *Mysore Vrittanta Bodhini* (1859) and *Karnataka Prakashika*(1865).⁸ a fortnightly, in which they were providing telegraphic news, brief news from Gazette and occasional notes about administration. The former has been considered as the first weekly in Karnataka, and the later was a fortnightly, which often published brief news from Gazetteer and some official notes and news about administration.

⁶ The region Hyderabad-Karnataka was under the clutches of despotic rule of Nizam of Hyderabad. Though, India achieved political freedom in 1947 but the region comprising of Gulbarga, Raichur and Bidar was freed only after an year in 1948. Nizam imposed certain restrictions and introduced elementary education only in Urdu. And it was Arya Samaj, that took over the leadership of the anti-Nizam movement partly owing to the late arrival of the Congress in 1940. See Frontline Vol. 15 :: No. 21 :: Oct. 10 - 23, 1998.

⁷ The *Sankhya Ratna Kosha* (1852) a Marathi book chess game, *Saugandhika Parinaya* (1860) and the *Sriman Maharajara Vamshavali* are the evidences of early printing in Mysore. See, B S Kesavan's *History of Printing and Publishing in India, A story of cultural re-awakening, Vol-II, in Origin of Printing and Publishing in Karnataka, Andhra and Kerala, p-45. NBT*

⁸ *The Sankhya Ratna Kosha* (1852) a Marathi book chess game, *Saugandhika Parinaya* (1860) and the *Sriman Maharajara Vamshavali* are the evidences of early printing in Mysore. See, B S Kesavan's *History of Printing and Publishing in India, A story of cultural re-awakening, Vol-II, in Origin of Printing and Publishing in Karnataka, Andhra and Kerala, p-45. NBT*

It was due to this technological advancement of print, which made possible for Maharaja's college Kannada Sangha to publish *Belaku*,(1875) a magazine dedicated to adult literacy campaign to reach the villagers and spread awareness about language and literature. And most importantly, in Mysore alone, there were number of publication houses like- *Kavyalaya*(1940), *Suruchi Prakashana*(1950), *Sharada Mandira*(1945), *Usha Sahitya Male*(1935), *Mohana Prakashana* (1950), *Bharati Prakashana*(1954), *Geeta Book House*(1940), *People's Book House, TV Memorial Series*(?) *DVK Murthy publishers*(1930), *Vishwa Sahitya*(?) and *Vidyanidhi Prakashana*(?) which were actually nurtured the writers of Navodaya school-modernist writers and gave an impetus to the Kannada movement(Kesavan;1988). And many literary and social figures who were based in Mysore, like BM Srikantaiah (*English Geetegalu*,1921), DV Gundappa, (Samskriti, 1953), Kuvempu (*Sri Ramayana darshanam* 1957, *Vichara Krantige Avhana* 1964), P T Narasimhachar (Ahalye, 1941) of Navoday school and Gopalakrishna Adiga (Bhoomi Geetha – 1959), Ananthamurthy (Samskara, 1965) and Lankesh (Kereya Nirannu Kerege Chelli,1963) of Navya school. These writes were broadly representing two important Kannada literary traditions: a mystical romanticism and modernist elements⁹.

From Dharwad, intellectuals such as Alur Venkat Rao (*Karnataka Gatha Vaibhava*,1917), Sham Ba Joshi (*Kannada Nele*, 1939), Da.Ra Bendre (*Gari*, 1932, *Nadaleele*1940), R. S. Mugali (*Kannada Sahitya Charitre*, 1950), P. Galagali (?) V.K Gokak (*Navya Kavitegalu*, 1950), Patila Puttappa (*Vishwavani, Prapancha*, 1954) had been engaged in constructing the Kannada regional

⁹ Term Navya refers to the 'Modernist' approach of the writers who associated themselves with a new literary trend that emerged after Progressive phase in Kannada. Though it was formally inaugurated by V. K. Gokak with his Navya Kavitegalu ("Modern Poems", 1950), but actually it was Gopalakrishna Adiga who had defined the philosophy of the movement. Poetry and short story have become major forms of the trend. With the passing of the Gandhian era and its influences, a new era in which to express modern sensibilities had arrived. The Navya writers questioned the time-honoured standards of plot of the earlier schools. Thus, life was seen not as a pursuit of already existing values, but as an introspective search for them, occasionally narrated in stream of consciousness technique. Literature enjoyed the highest status during the modernist era which no other discipline had till then occupied in the Kannada socio-political scenario.

and cultural entities by drawing from the history of religion, literature, language and different forms of art. The advantage of English education paved way for the translations, which were made from English, Bengali and Marathi and this in turn also helps to introduce the ideals and imaginations of modernity and the facets of modern individual consciousness in the Kannada literary imaginations.

Hence, print made it possible to introduce the works of classical European authors and as well as works of Indian authors which include authors such as Bankima Chandra Chattopadhyay, Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda to Kannada readers, which indeed enhanced the worldly imagination and perception of Kannada writers as well as enriched the intellectual history of the print traditions of the region. As the demand of unification of Bengal province was considered as a starting point of independent movement in India, in a similar way, it also stimulated the people like Aluru Venkata Rao, a leader of the Karnataka unification movement, to raise the issue of unification of Karnataka¹⁰. Aluru's idea behind establishment of Karnataka Historical Research Association in 1914 in Dharwad, was very clear that it would promote the awareness about Karnataka's history. He also brought out a journal called Ancient History through which he executed the excavations in collaboration with archeological department. Lithography and letter press printing also had become available during 1920 period. Basel Mission became active in Dharwad and evinced keen interest in Kannada printing, learning and teaching of Kannada. Inspired by the missionary schools and printing activities, scholars such as Channabasappa, Venkatarangokatti and Sheshgiri Rao Churamari also started printing literary works, dictionaries, books on history, folk tales, elementary education books and newspapers, which became an instrumental in promoting the linguistic regional consciousness in a Marathi dominating area¹¹.

¹⁰ Aluru raised several questions about 'having a history of own' and thoroughly campaigned for a separate state encompassing of Kannada-speaking areas of Mysore, Bombay Presidency and the Nizam's Hyderabad, that was purely based on the linguistic lines.

¹¹ Focusing Dharwad, an important city of the then Mumbai-Karnataka region and once a 'Sothern Maratha country', British authorities like Eliot and Russel had transferred Channabasappa, Venkatarangokatti and Sheshgiri Rao Churamari, Kannadiga officers to open more Kannada schools to promote the medium of instruction and to print text books in Kannada language.

After 'Karnataka Sabha' (1916) a pro-Kannada organization, it was Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee the first political organization that was established in 1920 for the cause of state-reformations. But before KPCC, there were several non-political organizations such as, Karnataka Vidyavardhaka Sangha (1890), Kannada Sahitya Parishat (1915) and Karnataka Chamber of Commerce and Industries (1916), which were working towards promoting literary and historical studies and popularizing Kannada literature during the formative period. To intensify and achieve the linguistic state, several linguistic fractions came into exist in all the sub-regions except in Hyderabad Karnataka, which was under the control of Nizam's rule. In a way, the historical trajectory of Karnataka unification, to emerge as a regional entity, had interlinked with the literary practices, political negotiations of dominant agencies and organs of public sphere.

Geleyara Gumpu^{12/13}-a literary Friends circle started by Dr. Ra. Bendre in 1922, turned to be an influential forum to study the 'literature and culture'. In this forum, many writers started their writing career in a big way. Writers like Betagere Krishna Sharma, Vinayaka Krishna Gokak, R.S. Mugali, S.G. Kulkarni, Prahlad Nargal, Narayana Sangam, Madhurachanna of Bijapur District, Revappa Kapase, Dhoola and others who were part of it and played a key role in the development of different facets of the Kannada language through various forms of literature. And taking over the journal *Jayakarnataka* from Alur, the circle used it as an official mouth piece that was reflecting upon the works of Navoday writers, a period of high romanticism in Kannada literature. As part of it, Bendre and his friends also started a festival called *Nada-Habba*, a

¹² Dharwad District Gazetteer - English version of Kannada Volume (1995) A Government of Karnataka Publication, p-643-644

¹³ Influenced by the activities of *Geleyaragumpu*, several writers undertook literary activities in a big way. And this cilrce consisted of major writers of the Navodaya school like, Bendre, his friends, students and lovers of literature, had an opportunity to read before the circle once in a week and develop critical understanding about it. Betagere Krishna Sharma, Vinayak Krishna Gokak, R.S. Mugali, S.G. Kulkarni, Prahlad Nargal, Narayana Sangam, Halasangi Madhurachanna of Bijapur District, Revappa Kapase, Dhoola and others played a key role in the development of different facets of the Kannada poetry, though Bendre was central to the circle.

celebration of land and culture of the region. But it is doubtful that whether member from the non-dominant or lower castes were part of the circle as most of the literary and cultural forums and their spaces were occupied by the dominant communities such as Brahmins and Lingayats. So, to imagine *Kannadanaadu*, more as a socio-cultural space, several political, regional, literary and communal fronts came into exist; to form a state as administrative bloc, and to merge all fragmented -Coorg, Bombay Karnataka, Hyderabad Karnataka, Old Mysore and Madras Karnataka sub-regions into single territory.

The print-driven identity movement was appropriated by the dominant caste-communities, in which publications played a had an instrumental role to change the consciousness as well as to cater the regional and linguistic sentiments. To extent, these textual communities, Brahmin and Lingayats, were engaged in editing magazines, to strongly advocate their association with the nationalist movement as well as cultural politics of the land, whose secondary objective was to protect the interests of their communities. Thus, this cultural and linguistic movements in Mysore were not radically assertive, while comparing to the other regions of the state. One of the reasons for this should be that cultural elites who were either part or closely related to power were not ready to lose their privileged position by showing their association with the language movement. However, to question the Brahmin supremacy, other communities and caste groups which include Lingayats, Vakkaligas, Kurubas and Muslims, had come together and articulated a diverse kind of Kannada culture. what is important here is to understand that the availability of news print and gamut of knowledge, which not only facilitated the communities to take part in process of creation of separate regional state but also it also remarkably widen the activities of their caste associations in a big way.

Another landmark development that fostered Kannada imagination was the rise of novel and related reading habits. As a new literary genre, it became a motivating force to propagate various essence of *Kannadaness* in it. And major Indian languages which got printing facility, enhanced novel as a popular fictional form and authors used it as a means to re-write the regional histories in literary form. Nevertheless, as a literary expression for political aspirations and cultural imagination, print-media, supported this 'modern' way of constructing or imagining regional identities, either based on language or other forms of entrenched cultural subjectivities. As

Shivaram Padikkal (1993)¹⁴ argues, the medium of print, “created unified fields of communication and thereby provided new status and prestige to the vernacular languages” which had not only shaped nationalism but also gives “identities of the modern Indian languages”, which in turn, had molded language centered regionalism and regional populisms.

In doing so, poets and scholars were trying to construct the unified Karnataka region as *Udayavagali namma cheluva kannada nadu*¹⁵ (let dawn a beautiful Kannada land) and of fictional figure of *Kannadamaate*-a female deity, which was crucial for them to narrate the glorious past of ‘their’ ‘mother land’ and to mobilize people to counter the ‘other’ political, economic, linguistic and cultural forces that came from ‘outside’ the region. So, this act of ‘politicising’ natives to be claimed as ‘community’ of nation-state, to extent successful during the fight for independence. But, in the later period of the states re-organisation and struggle for identity, it was magazines and the novels, along with the various organizations which made them further potential to negotiate with the state. The culturally dominant communities, such as Brahmin, Lingayat and Vokkaliga, have taken key positions in this struggle for identity and the reclaim for region. Thus, they mainly argued for a state, which is completely based on the language identity, so that the questions pertaining to caste, religion and linguistic minority were marginalized and an idea of ‘*Kannadanaadu*’ a non-inclusive space is formed.

So, though print had extended the cultural and political possibility of a common language, but it had failed to address the heterogeneous linguistic or language tradition of the other newly included sub-territories which was completely different from the Mysore state. It is because,

1) Even though, print gave a fixity to the language, which was not commonly used all other parts of the region

2). Though, it enabled Kannada as a powerful language and gave it to a centrality, but it failed to anticipate the collective ‘sense of belongingness’ among the people who were part of territory, however, belonging to margins of the dominant, and their linguistic and cultural diversities were

¹⁴ *Interrogating Modernity: Culture and Colonialism in India*, edited by Tejaswini Niranjana, P. Sudhir, Vivek Dhareshwar
Seagull, 1993

¹⁵ Composed and sung by Huyilagola Narayanarao, at Karnataka Unification Conference held in 1924, Belgaum.

marginalized while cultivating the “unconscious process” based on the unity of language (Anderson: 1991).

So, this effort of producing monolithic version of community not only reject the possible co-existence of communities but it also refutes to accommodate the historical existence of other traditions which have been existing within the region for the ages. Thus, as Ramakrishnan¹⁶ observes that, during the early decades of 20th century, “the divide within the press became pronounced after *Praja Mitra Mandali*, the first non-Brahmin party constituted in Mysore in 1917, led a ‘journalistic campaign demanding special treatment for the backward classes’ (2010)¹⁷.

But, as a matter of fact, the novels those were written during the modern period, mainly come from regions like, Mysore state, Coastal region and Mumbai region, and that too by mostly authors from same social segment- upper-caste, Hindu male. Whereas, Kuvempu, a writer from Shudra community, whose idea of Kannada identity was seemed more democratic-inclusive, was based on the *samskruti* Karnataka, that is literary cultural history of Karnataka not the geographical history. And the efforts to ‘inculcate sense of belongingness’ in other Indian regions and languages was not different.

And in their writings Kannada authors; both in creative and journalistic, were trying to invoke the regional sentiments: as poet, Channaveera Kanavi described it *Hesaraayitu Karnataka, Usiraagali Kannada*¹⁸ (Karnataka become name Karnataka; let Kannada be the breathe) in order to ‘unite’ the readers in the name of ‘*Kannadada makkalu*’-sons of mother Kannada. However, the literary imagination and the foregrounded sensibilities of these writers were mainly incurred from two sources: Hindu vedic philosophy and Modern English education. Though, these categories seem to be contradictory to each other, but actually these sources had

¹⁶ His historical analysis (1997) of the nexus between the press and key political developments in princely Mysore between 1859 and 1947 is considered a remarkable one.

¹⁷ Sadhana Udupa quotes Ramakrishnan in her write up *Print communalism: The press and the non-Brahmin movement in early Mysore, 1900-30*, Contributions to Indian Sociology, 2010.

¹⁸ Written by Channaveera Kanavi after re-naming the state as Karnataka in 1973.

sharpened their writings on 'being morally right' and absorbing ideas of being modern, without addressing the questions pertaining to political-democracy and social inclusion.

Negotiating Identity formation:

However, according to Madhava Prasad,

“Identity is of a quality of the entity in question; (as) there is no substance in Kannada or Karnataka that guarantees our (Kannada) identity. It is rather a question of a set of identifications, which we develop in order to serve as coordinates guaranteeing the stability of our sense of who we are, language being the most important of these. These identifications change frequently, and we endeavor to maintain continuity in the midst of such changes. If there is no change, then the identity freezes into something that must be preserved. (2004:xiii)¹⁹

Therefore, the concept of identity is a collection of certain 'signs' that helps to build 'ourness' in the minds, as there is no pure race (community) or pure language in the world that can claim the “distinct identity” (K.V Subbanna:2009).

Seeing it from the Marxist point of view, Saki (2004) argues that the rise of Kannada nation and its realization of a nation-state come to materialize with the emergence of a home market and the fight against feudalism. Further, he adds, it was purely a capitalist sponsored process including artisans 'merchant upsurge' to contest the 'economic targets of British colonialism'. However, British colonialism succeeded in destructing the home market but the political forces, which centralized and united the home market, brought other social classes that constituted the firm economic basis under a single forum as a 'false consciousness' by invoking ethnic sentiments. As Saki writes:

Another major distortion caused by colonial intervention on the home market was the break-up of the agriculture-industry-agriculture continuum. It was this organic continuity, which caused the development in one sphere to spill into the other. This tendency in

¹⁹ A note on the theme: Kannada Identity, in Journal of Karnataka Studies, Nov 2003-April 2004.

agriculture also led to a gradual dialectic of awakening the peasantry and contributed to the rise of the Kannada nation (2004:84-85).

Further, as immediately after the fall of Tipu Sultan, power shifted from British colonialism (under the supervision of a Dewan appointed by a British) to Mysore king Krishna Raja Wodeyar, “who was no more than cultivated as a cultural symbol” (Saki 2004:85). Under the dominant Srivaishnava Brahmins, who always enjoyed comfortable relationship with the Wodeyars, all the decadent feudal values and culture started getting reintroduced and strengthened among the masses. Saki defines the emergence of Kannada identity as an outcome of institutionalization of hegemonic dominance of feudal values that framed the Kannada cultural identity, which, he believed, was not the culture of labor class.

Aluru Venkatarao, tries to construct the ‘memory of ourness’ with the help of religeo-historical identifications that were recovered from the past. He studied the ‘Karnatakaness,’ in a way by collecting the evidences regarding Kannada language, literary history and relating these identifications to the social religion (Tharikeri, R:2003). Therefore, his idea of Kannada identity formation had an organic relation with Hindutwa or Hindu nationalism. But as Nagaraj mentions, “Though his Kannada nationalism was beholden to western-style nationalism despite of having a concept of ‘Satvic egotism’ (satvika ahankara) which could achieve the Sarvabhutahita “universal well-being” (Nagaraj D.R: 2005). Thus, the Kannada national identity in Aluru Venkatarao attains a more primordialist stand that consists of spiritual elements. As Nagaraj describes further, it as a “spiritual nationalism” and not an instrumental. However, Alur’s study of Karnataka’s past somewhat was overwhelmed that explicitly implies the Vijayanagara empire, as a lost Hindu nation, where his language of Kannada identity and culture acquires a religious touch but surely not the communal account as it takes in the description of M Chidanandamurthy, in the later period. But, Alur’s account, as Janaki Nair points out

“...glides over Karnataka’s Jain heritage, the revolutionary doctrines of Basaveswara and completely ignores the subaltern religiosities of the Bijapur/Gulbarga Sufi traditions of

the 14th and 16th centuries which often bitterly opposed to the Adil Shahi/Bahmani Sultans” (1996:2813).

To develop the sense of Kannadiga as a community, Alur used print magazines such as *Rajahamsa* (1891), *Vagbhushana* (1897-1973), *Karnataka Patra* (1907), *Kannada Kesari* (1907) *Karmaveera* (1921) *Jayakarnataka* (1922) and *Karnataka Vritta*(1927) that gave political momentum to the history of the region.

Defining identity within nationalist framework, Shambaa Joshi, another important scholar, considers the contribution of ‘other’ social classes including different religions by taking a non-brahminical position. Moreover, he argues that in Kannada language most of the writers who produced literature had preferred to be part of an avaidika (non-Vedic) tradition. Thus, it is natural that people who sought to develop the Vedic-religion might not have had much affection towards elevation of Kannada (Joshi, Shambaa: 1952). Although he agrees with the scholars, who prefer to construct the existence and antiquity of Kannada or Karnataka as a geo-cultural entity, but he is very skeptical about sources and the references that ensures the Kannada identity. Thus, he states “...Nrupatunga (author of *Kavirajamarga*) refers the land that had spread over river Kaveri to Godavari known as Kannada janapada (Kannada folk). Therefore, there must be several regions in-between these rivers” (Joshi 1952: 212). In a way, Joshi’s approach to Kannada identity construction is based on ethnographic, linguistic, geographical and even mythological considerations that rarely takes emotional or glorious mode. Whereas, D V Gundappa (1996), on the other hand, believes that *culture* is nothing but ‘goodness’ and becoming ‘polite’, and, thus, suggests striking a balance between self-reliance and external dependence in the construction of both Kannada culture and national/regional identity (Rao 2000).

During nationalist movement, the idea of ‘nation’ had emerged on the basis of political ideology ‘swaraj’ and after Independence the concept of state/region had come up with the demand for separate state formation and unification of the regions on the basis of language that the people speak in their respective areas. In the post-colonial period, as already there was a “model” of constructing, “we” was “imagined” by social elites in the Bengali, Marathi and all together in

some of the southern states. Subsequently, other linguistic regions too, started re-inventing or “imagining” their statehood with the available substances and the ‘logic of political representation’ turned language as an ‘incarnation of goddess’(Madhava Prasad, M: 2004)

For instance, in Kuvempu, a modern Kannada poet, the idea of Kannada region takes a form of feminine identity – *Kannadama* (‘Kannada mother’), daughter born to *bharatamate* (*bharata-jananiya tanu-jate* born out of the body of mother Bharata’), used purely for ‘affectionate purpose’ (bhavopayogi) and not for ‘worldly purpose’ (lokopayogi). Whether it is affectionate or worldly, the Kannada nationalism, according to Kuvempu, was clearly an anti-colonial construct based on *sahitya samskruti* Karnataka, i.e. literary cultural history of Karnataka, and not geographical one (Satyanath 2009). Thus, he appeals:

Elladaru iru; entadaru iru;

Endendigu ni kannadavagiru

which means ‘live wherever and however but be Kannadiga’ excluding all other entities. Although his idea of Kannada identity may give an impression of following a primordialist approach comprising spiritual essentials (similar to Alur Venkatarao), in its overall outlook, but it takes a non-priestly position. For nationalist thinkers the concept of ‘Kannada cultural identity’ was clearly an emotional and religious-spiritual one. Thus, most of them portrayed it as ‘*Kannada Bhuvaneswari*’ (in the form of female deity). Kannada nationalist identity, as Madhavaprasad(2004)²⁰ traces out like other linguistic, regional, national identities, was constructed on the model of Indian national identity or, at least, located within a national framework. Thus, the elites who had built Kannada identity, was completely based on invisibility and marginalization of caste, religious, linguistic minority groups. The period witnessed several crucial leaps in terms of power structure through the formation of unified Mysore state (1956), rise of modern popular culture and vital spread of literacy among lower classes. At the same time, it also paved way for sub-national/regional and social movements such as Kodagu (Coorg) and backward classes movement that added a new subjectivity to Kannada identity. Even the Karnataka *ekikarana* (unification) movement was constantly hijacked by caste conflicts between

²⁰ A note on the them-Kannada Identity, Journal of Karnataka Studies, Nov-2003-April-2004,

Brahmins, Lingayats and Vokkaligas, the major dominant castes, and sub-regional conflicts between old Princely Mysore State and rest of Karnataka (Rao 2004). After unification the princely state of Mysore was somewhat considered as a nominally independent, best poised to articulate the cultural aspiration of Kannada people within the framework of the nation state.

Though, the state had re-organised the territories under single geographical space amid an unsettled condition, but it had failed in bringing communities under an emotionally 'common' cultural entitlement as Kannadigas, though non-Mysore Kannada speakers politically merged into Mysore state. So, in this context, state and dominant agencies and their popular organs, succeeded in unifying the scattered speakers into an imagined *Kannadanaadu* but actually they could not associate communities based on the cultural memory. So, this 'cultural split' remained till the time of urbanization and the politicization of caste-communities, which were introduced to the elementary education and modern popular communication systems. During the period-1956-1980, "Karnataka state emerges as a politico-economic state rather than a cultural state" (Thirumal, P:2003)²¹ So, the caste has not only become an important aspect of politics but also literary and language movements. Moreover, the control of Lingayats and Vokkaligas over electoral institutionalized politics, who were instrumental in Karnataka's politics, was successfully loosened by Devaraj Urs freed till the 1980s. And political modernization had reshuffled the communities and their social position as it questioned the older systems. As a result, the political stand of Navoday and Navya writers on dominant practices and social aspect of their writings was questioned by the newly educated writers from non-dominant communities. Through varied print practices, the young writers politically motivated by Gandhian, Marxist, Socialist and Ambedkarite ideology, started addressing the fragmented groups and politicized their literary and journalistic expressions. Thus, the political integrations of these communities had questioned the "Kannadaness" of dominant communities, in which presence of linguistic, religious, minorities and castes was missing.

Thus, the post-colonial "imagination" of Kannada identity more or less got an assimilationist turn where the unique characteristics of every community got merged into a particular shape and

²¹ See *Region as an imagined community* an interpretative study of Deccan herald, an unpublished thesis submitted at Pondicherry University, 2003.

reduced the boundaries among communities by erasing the signs and memories of multiethnic/plural elements (Park 1950). However, in the later period, the rise of new social movements and the critical tensions within the Karnataka society, had led the state to undergo a structural change, and, hence, emerged a completely different form of identity. Kannada, thus, become more inclusive of “remaining” or “other” communities of Karnataka society, which comprised Dalits, Muslims and Christians and other linguistic communities who had shaped Karnataka after its formation. By including its sub-cultural communities, which have long been existed within the territory, the concept of cultural identity acquired democratic, modern and secular outlook.

In this period, the notion of Kannada identity in different substances such as literature, music, language and print took a more popular representation in opposition to the dominant construction. To elaborate it with Satynath’s observations:

The period actually covers the emergence and consolidation of modernity in Kannada speaking cultural milieu. The emergence of educated class, print media and a popular culture in the urban and semi-urban centers of Kannada speaking regions, now called Karnataka, brought in fundamental changes in the form and content of the modes of representations and eventually was responsible for a change in the sensibilities among the Kannada speaking population. (2009:209-210)

However, in Kuvempu, a Kannada poet, the idea of Kannada nationalism or regionalism and culture, as mentioned earlier, takes a feminine identity- *Kannada bhuvaneshwari*, a daughter of bharatamate (mother Bharat) by which he meant *bharata-jananiya tanu-jate* born out of the body of bharatamata (Satyanath,T.S : 2005). This is purely *bhavopayogi* (affectionate) not for *lokopayogi* (worldly purpose) (Kuvempu: 2004).

And in this phase, as Madhavaprasad traces out the Kannada nationalist identity, like other linguistic regional-national identities, was constructed on the model of Indian national identity or located within a national framework. In doing so, the elites had built Kannada identity that was based on the invisibility and marginalization of caste, religious, linguistic minority groups.

Hence, it witnessed several crucial bounds in terms of power structure through the formation of unified Mysore state (1956), rise of modern popular culture and vital spread of literacy among lower classes. At the same time, it also paved way for sub-national/regional and social movements such as Kodagu (Coorg) and backward classes movement that added a new subjectivity to Kannada identity. And even the Karnataka ekikarana (unification) movement was constantly high jacked by caste conflicts between Lingayats and Vokkaligas, the major dominant castes and sub-regional conflicts between old Princely Mysore State and rest of Karnataka (Raghavendra Rao, K: 2004).

Yet, after unification the princely state of Mysore, was somewhat considered as a “nominally independent, was best poised to articulate the cultural aspiration of Kannada people within the framework of the nation state,” but it is very important to note here that the “...very impetus for shaping Kannada’s identity came not from Mysore but the Bombay Karnataka region” (Nair, Janaki : 1996) And on the other hand, during the unification, as the people from the rest of the state felt the name Karnataka would carry the sense of belongingness among Kannadigas, the priestly classes of old Mysore state was completely disagreed with the demand. However, in the later period, the rise of new social movements and the critical tensions within the Karnataka society has led the state to undergo a structural change and witness for a completely different form of Kannada identity.

As Raghavendra Rao observes (2000)²²:

Karnataka, in spite of unification, has failed to develop a strong identity as well as a crystallization of common interest, because of two reasons. Firstly, its diversities, historical, cultural and geographical, have tended to block the process of generating a strong identity and clear-cut articulation of common material interests. The second reason is the presence of linguistic minorities of considerable numerical strength, which has tended to weaken the presence of Kannada itself. This was the result of the fact that the Kannada-speaking population was historically fragmented into several administrative-political systems in which they remained a neglected minority.

²² See page 18, *Imagining Unimaginable Communities*, K Raghavendra Rao, Prasaraanga, KU, Hampi, 2000.

However, due to growing print-capitalism, these neglected or marginalized caste, linguistic, religious minorities, got a space in the public to debate issues pertaining to their representation and participation in the politics by uniting under associations. It was because, though print could not produce the 'common'ality in the social structures but it had qualified non-Vokkaliga, non-Lingayat and non-Brahmin communities to be part of print-capitalism. As advanced print culture which underpinned the concept of the public sphere in European modern societies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which according to McLuhan, also shaped the entire experience of Western civilization. And the impact of invention of movable type printing as McLuhan suggests, was not restricted to technological advantages but it also rearranged the modes of communication, social and cultural practices. So, evolution of these 'new forms of political and social organizations was primarily founded upon a national community of identity expressed through the medium of print' (Barker,H. Burrows,S: 2004).

Politics of language and Presence of new public:

The post-Unification Karnataka (1960) had witnessed several structural changes. Even after the formation of Karnataka as Mysore-state in the year 1956, different socio-economic and cultural institutions remained under the dominance of the politically dominant castes - Brahmin, Lingayat and Vokkaligas. And new territories which were included in to the state, continued to be under the cultural influence of earlier provinces, like Telugu speaking districts under Hyderabad presidency, Marathi speaking villages under Mumbai presidency and Tamil speaking areas under Madras presidency. And historical peculiarity of these areas, had ultimately resulted in producing a socio-political and cultural tensions in the state. It was expressed through the chain of incidents and Kannada linguistic identity took several forms such as anti-Tamil, anti-Urdu, anti-Hindi and communal turn as the concerns about the *culture* of the land felt under treat. Importantly, as linguistic assertion was getting more economic outlook, the base of the movement, at least till the Gokak agitations (1982), increasingly shifted from Mysore and North-Karnataka to Bangalore city. Especially, during four historical times,

a) Demand for Kannada singers in the annual Ramotsava cultural festival, in Bangalore(1962)

- b) Announcement of financial assistance²³ to make films in Karnataka and shift of Kannada film making from Madras to Bangalore. (1966)
- c) Agitations in connection with *Boosa*²⁴ remarks. (1973) and
- d) Foundation of *Bandaya*²⁵ *Sahitya Sanghatane* (1979) (Protest organization).

To make Bangalore a city of *Kannadigas*, against its linguistic composition of 65 per cent Kannada speakers and sharing Konkani, Tulu and Kodava sub-regional languages and Tamil, Telugu and Marathi of other linguistic minorities in 35 per cent, several pro-Kannada, cultural and youth associations emerged as linguistic-political force to question the dominance of ‘outsiders’ but not the dominance of the culturally powerful ‘insiders’.

As cultural presence of Tamil artists was increasing in the city, in 1962, as Janaki Nair (2005) observes, leading Kannada novelist Aa Na Krishna Rao (who associated with Pragatisheela literary school) and Ma Ramamurthy, launched a protest against Tamilians for inviting MS Subbalakshmi's to give music concert during the Ramanavami festival in Bangalore. Under Karnataka Samyukta Ranga, they were demanding for space for Kannada singers and they ended negligence of Kannada artistes terming as *Idu Ramotsava alla, Tamilotsava* ("This is not a festival for Rama, but of Tamils"). Probably, it was the period when Kannada film industry was shifting from Madras to Mysore region and was very important for the development of linguistic identity.

²³ During 1960s due to cultural movements in the state, government began patronizing Kannada cinema. And in the year 1966, the state government had announced financial assistance to produce films in the state. Rs. 50,000 were given to the black and white films, whereas for color films it was Rs. one lakh. It had encouraged several filmmakers from outside the state to shoot their films in the state. However, later it was restricted to Kannada, Kodava, Tulu and Lambhani language films. And this idea was initiated by the then state finance minister Ramakrishna Hegde.

²⁴ B. Basavalingappa, a minister Devaraj Urs cabinet, from a Dalit community remarked whatever literature produced in Kannada so far, as *Boosa* (cattle feed) in a function held in Mysore University in 1973.

²⁵ Means ‘Revolt’. Young writers organized under Bandaya as demand to have a separate session on Dalit issue at All India Kannada Sahitya Sammelana-Dharmasthala, was rejected by the then Sahitya Parishat president, in 1979.

On the other side, political thoughts of Lohai and Jayaprakash Narayan were influencing socio-literary spheres of the state, so major writers of Navya literary school (KP Poornchandra Tejaswi, U R Anantamurthy, P Lankesh, activist K Ramadas, peasant leader M D Nanjundaswamy) associated themselves with the socialist organisations such as *Samajavadi Yuvajana Sabha*, *Nava Nirmana Samiti* and *Kannada Yuvajana Sabha*. but it had failed to gain the electoral success. And even founder members of Dalita Sangharsha Samiti (DSS), B Krishnappa, Devanoora Mahadeva, Siddalingayya and Govindayya also joined these forums as political thoughts of Jayaprakash Narayan and Lohia were considered as base for alternate cultural politics. As a part of Lohia's an *Angrezi Hatao* (Abolish English) campaign, in 1967, J H Patel, the only Socialist Party MP from the state, made a speech in Kannada language in Parliament, which has gained publicity and Patel was considered as the first politician in India to speak in his mother tongue a language other than English or Hindi.

But Socialist politics in Karnataka, failed to address some of the important questions pertaining to the social justice, caste discrimination and land distribution as raised by the members of the Dalit community. To find pragmatic solutions to these caste specific problems, Dalit intellectuals found Ambedkar's political philosophy as a significant solution to form an independent dalit organization, which was "combined with the absence of anti-Gandhi sentiments and the rejection of violence as a means of seeking social justice"(Gowda, C:2010)²⁶ And most importantly, DSS did not advocate violence as the members of the organization hailed from the Socialist background and welcomed progressive minds to be part of its activities. And regarding caste privileges that these Navya writers were enjoying within the political and literary world were not only questioned but also sharpened the debate over Brahmin-Lingayat dominance. These political questions posed by the young writers had also raised debate about social stand of Navya writers who were busy in discussing modernity and English literature that too sitting in the Coffee Houses in Mysore²⁷ city and living in their own English world. These coffee houses

²⁶ *Many Lohias? Appropriations of Lohia in Karnataka* by Chandan Gowda in EPW October 2, 2010 vol xlv no 40.

²⁷ From *Suragi*, autobiography of U R Anantamurthy, translated by S R Ramakrishna, Talk Bureau, 26th Dec, 2012.

turned to be a meeting spot for urban, upper-caste English intellectuals and artists who politically affiliated with Gandhian-Lohiate ideology.

Remarkably, as it has been observed by M. N. Srinivas and M. N. Panini²⁸ that unlike Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Kerala which had been hospitable to radical social movements, but the backward classes and Dalit movement, that emerged during Urs's period, had infused a new consciousness among the members of the lower castes who preferred to call themselves *Dalits* (Oppressed) and seemed to be born of new forces in Karnataka. At the same time, awakening of these classes to question the cultural dominance, and demand for equal rights, had led the state to undergo a structural change. To understand the factors behind this 'internal disturbance' it is necessary to look at the political changes occurred during Devaraj Urs's regime and strategies that he tried to bring in the non-dominant communities into politics to capture power and to retain it. Though, Emergency was considered as a most thoroughly wicked episode in the history of Indian politics but for some party men it was a stroke of luck in political terms. It was a luck they got a chance to stifle dissidence within the party. As outrages occurred in Karnataka, like in other states, they were mainly checked by Urs himself who used his powers to neutralize his rivals and accommodating supporters by reshuffling the cabinet. In doing so, he "maintained the balance between regions and castes"²⁹ states Raghavan and Manor (2009).

Emergency greatly assisted Urs in implementing two of his major policy innovations which were designed to consolidate support among lower-status groups: land reforms and caste reservations. Civil liberties were sufficiently curtailed to make popular protest on any issue unthinkable. Stifling Emergency laws also censored the press, preventing the dissemination of any news of dissent.³⁰

And most importantly, Urs decision to constitute a backward classes commission under the chairmanship of L G Havanur, that submitted a detailed report in 1974, defined the backwardness by considering the economic, educational and social status of the castes, communities, tribes or

²⁸ Politics and Society in Karnataka, EPW, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Jan. 14, 1984), pp. 69-75

²⁹ In Broadening and Deepening Democracy: Political Innovation in Karnataka, page 53.

³⁰ Ibid

groups. And the parameter used for inclusion or exclusion in the backward classes category was caste and sub-caste. In doing so, the “Commission not only emphasized the group or collective character of backwardness in the Indian context but went against the recent tendency of distinct *jatis* or sub-castes to come together for political and other purposes” (Srinivas, M.N, Panini, M.N: 1984)

This ongoing inclusive political process had not only started shaking the structure of the politics, but also reshuffled the societal relations even at the rural level. As a result, the increased frustrations and social tensions seems provided a ‘social space’ for lower-castes and communities that were accommodated at the state level. And this was mostly an inclusive accommodation. Apart from the impact of government policies, the inclusive accommodation persuaded leading Lingayats and Vokkaligas not to seek a restoration of state level dominance and denial of space for lower-castes after Devaraj Urs. These dramatic political changes of the 1960s and 70s decade that posed a strong oppose to the conservative social order and were demanding an explanation. Kannadigas, whom it was considered as ‘being quiet, unambiguous’ and their agitations/ movements were ‘not without conservative streak’ somehow started shedding their stable conservative structure. And Urs, a first Chief Minister hailing from a non-dominant caste, emerged as a leading backward-classes leader and nominated several individuals from the backward-classes, scheduled castes, tribes and minorities to contest elections during 1972. Politically, it was a wise decision of Urs to reserve five per cent of the seats and jobs to those who were economically backward without referencing their caste. So, it was measured as most ‘comprehensive and radical policy that was introduced by any Chief Minister in the country.’ (Manor :2009)

This reflected his secular concerns and vision towards lessening economic and social inequalities and eradication of poverty. To reduce the disparity between urban and rural areas, Urs made an effort to introduce planning that was directed at improving the living conditions of the poor living in the rural Karnataka. This was supported by number of package programmes such as fund allocation for district level projects, an act passed to relief debt, housing programme, the aid of a government subsidy, a pension scheme and restructuring of land relations in the state. The amendment to the Land Reforms Act 1961, enabled tenants to become owners of the land that

they were cultivating. And to mention, under his rule, in 1973, state was re-named as Karnataka, as per the wishes of non-Mysore Kannadigas.

However, Urs's exercising of power, had prevented Lingayats and Vokkaligas to re-establish their past dominance, as the educated youth among dis-advantaged classes were increasingly becoming aware of their rights and were aggressive in their dealing with the upper castes (Srinivas, M.N (1984) Manor, J (2009)). "A number of Ambedkar Clubs have been formed in the villages which serve(d) as nurseries for training future leaders of the scheduled castes. A new consciousness seems to be emerging among the members of the lower castes who prefer(red) to call themselves (D)lits (oppressed)."³¹ Though, Dalit consciousness was not as 'strong' as it was in the neighboring states like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, but the *Boosa* episode has increasingly produced social tension between various social groups irrespective of urban and rural areas. Going through such a diverse socio-political change, in Karnataka society, caste, on the one hand did not exist merely at the level of ideas or sentiment but it possessed maturity which was more political and at the same time as an undemocratic social institution on the other hand. As a reason, Basavalingappa's remarks also led to a wide range of debates on Kannada literature and language which was later resulted in formation of Karnataka Writers and Artists Association that came into existence in the year 1974. Kuvempu, in his inaugural speech of the association, called upon the young writers of the forum to oust the dominance of a single class, over Kannada literature, art, newspapers, radio including cinema and to re-produce it for all sections of the society. In addition, Dalit Panthers (Maharashtra), Socialist unions, organizations and progressive writers like U.R. Ananta Murthy, P. Lankesh, Devanooru Mahadeva, Siddalingayya, Chandrashekhar Patil, K. P. Purnachandra Tejaswi, K. Ramadas and others defended the remarks of Basalingappa and condemned the policy of priestly class.

And it was literary and little magazines which had kept the atmosphere of literary discussions and dialogue vivacious. Most of them had certain ideological basis with which the major writers associated and their writings got published. Pointing this out, Sugata Srinivasaraju (2008) notices that these publications had represented and functioned as organs of different literary movements or groups. "...if *Prabuddha Karnataka*, *Jeevana* and other such magazines in the early phase of

³¹ *Politics and Society in Karnataka*, EPW, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Jan. 14, 1984), pp. 72.

the century supported what is known as the Navodya literary movement, *Sakshi* and *Rujuvaatu* promoted Navya, as literary modernism is known, in Kannada. *Sankramana* consciously decided to promote the Dalit-Bandaya³² movement³³. However, based on their own socio-political philosophy, writers associated with these publications projected their own set of ideas. But, the gradual decrease in the number of these periodicals made writers to depend upon the newspapers and popular publications to promote their views.

As Robin Jeffery observes, when the ‘all-India capitalism in Karnataka, a process that led the rapid growth of Bangalore from the 1970s’, had also widened the audience for written vernacular. In the post-Emergency period, it was clearly seen in the form of *Gokak*³⁴³⁵ linguistic movement. This development ensured publishers that there were some issues which were directly

³² Dalit and Bandaya are the two most important radical movements of Kannada literature. Dalit writers, mostly, from untouchable castes and Bandaya of young leftist writers began writing in the mid 70s. Various forms of social and economic exploitations were the central themes of their literature

³³ See Death of Little Magazines, page 77 in *Keeping Faith with The Mother Tongue* by Sugata Srinivasaraju

³⁴ Gokak agitation was a language rights agitation in the 1980s that took place in Karnataka. Agitation was the first agitation for the language status of the Kannada language in the state. It was named after the committee that was headed by V. K. Gokak. The three language formulae were adopted in the schools of Karnataka since linguistic organization of states in 1956. In the 1960s there was a strong opposition to usage of Hindi language. Sanskrit was the dominant language in schools where students completed their education without having to study Kannada language. This created incompatibility between languages that were used for state administration and education. This led to a linguistic movement against maintaining Sanskrit as the first language in School. This movement was supported by political parties, groups of Kannada teachers, students, college and university professors, playwrights and creative writers.

³⁵ Gokak committee report was about making Kannada a compulsory language for primary education. Considering that the language is spoken by a majority of people in Karnataka, the Gokak movement’s goal was to give Kannada the same basic right already enjoyed by other official languages in their respective states of India. See the end note.

linked to the communicative power of Kannada linguistic community and needed an urgent attention. Importantly, it helped community to politically articulate and picturise itself as one body with common interests and perceive itself as a 'public' which was absent earlier. Although, this resurgence of Kannada movement had more to do with the emerging dominant communities such as -*Lingayats, Brahmins* and *Vokkaligas* than the Dalits, Backward classes and minorities. To exploit the opportunity the dominant communities established a template for the development of a nation in print through the use of a widely-accepted set of linguistic patterns, in a dialect which was to move from highly Sanskritised Kannada, as markets for the lower classes emerged. Or "(P)erhaps, one can draw a connection between their being dislodged momentarily in the political sphere by Devaraj Urs" but "their trails at occupying the cultural sphere" continued (Thirumal, P:2003:167). But the moments in which non-dominant communities started engaging themselves with the linguistic agitations had actually brought in another dimension to the Kannada identity movement. And formation of *Bandaya Sahitya Sanghatane* in 1979, on the denial to include a session on dalit issue by the then president of Kannada Sahitya Parishat, in Akhila Bharat Sahitya Sammela sessions held at Dharmasthala was one among such developments. Even, for instance:

- B Krishnappa's³⁶ protest against Sanskrit radio programmes at the All India Radio regional station at Bhadravati drew the media attention.
- Rajkumar's active participation in the Gokak linguistic agitations rallying from Belgaum to Bangalore, became the force behind the movement.

Though, the Kannada movement previously was in the hands of dominant upper castes but the Gokak agitation in 1980s, which initially started by writers and students received a popular positive response from the entire Kannada speaking community including minorities, except from Mysore region. It seems movement gained momentum when Rajkumar joined in and asked to lead. As observed by Chandrashekar Patil-organiser of the agitation, that the "movement took

³⁶ One of the three founders of the DSS, the first major Dalit organization in the state, had strong intellectual ties with socialists. See *EPW*, October 2, 2010 vol xlv no 40.

the proportion of a ‘people’s movement’ only after Rajkumar joined in”.³⁷ This added a groundbreaking cultural agenda to the language politics. Rajkumar, a popular mass figure, had emerged as a pride of Kannada, who ‘beleaguered Kannada identity that was completely different from other southern regions. Though, his entry into linguistic politics had not influenced the electoral politics, as it had happened with N T Ramarao in undivided Andhra Pradesh and M G Ramachandran in Tamilnadu, but certainly it was seen as reassertion of Kannada identity politics. In doing so, he attained an image of Kannada savior, which in fact helped him to convert his *abhimanyalu*-fans into audiences (Niranjana, T:2000). Both B. Krishnappa and Rajkumar hailed from the non-dominant Backward castes. So, the dominant communities which led the earlier Kannada movements, sensed that they are losing the dominance and to extent threatened by the Dalits and Backward classes which were rising as a force and taking initiative in Kannada and other important literary and social movements. At primary level, identity movement, by declining the previous hierarchies it was becoming a more democratic and inclusive, but the increased frustrations and social tensions at secondary level undermining accommodative policies that created difficulties to govern the state. Thus, the ruling parties had to bring an end to the accommodative tradition in the state politics. And it was visible during the regime of Gundu Rao, who came into power after Urs. To please certain pressure groups he used to take the immature decisions without bothering about their long-term implications. Gundu Rao, “made issues out of non-issues and prepared the ground for the launching of the Farmers and Kannada movement” (Srinivas, M. N, and Panini, M. N:1984), and eventually caused the end of his own government.

All these factors had made state to experience an unprecedented transformation in the economy, politics, and socio-cultural spheres which had in fact resulted in the formation of an extraordinary tension within the society during 1980s decade. Drawing the condition, many progressive minds from dominant castes and communities, started experiments in writing. As a result, even non-dominant writers too united under the Writers and Artists Forum that was established in the year 1974, in Mysore. Besides, questioning the monopoly, all the social,

³⁷ Former president Kannada Sahitya Parishat Chandrashekar Patil who was leading the Gokak agitation. See *Deccan Herald*, April 13, 2006

linguistic and literary protest movements reached their peak and were eagerly looking for a medium that could portray their demands as genuine. To fill this vacuum, a very few newspapers had started to report the ideas of these groups which were more or less neglected by mainstream publications. It is assumed that it was *Boosa*³⁸ episode which actually ‘alerted’ rational citizenry to form a ‘creative minority’ respond immediately to the state as for as socio-political changes are concerned. It produced a generation of young writers who became active giving raise to *Bandaya* (The Protest) literature by focusing on class, caste and gender issues and extend the scope to launch magazines like *Dalita*, *Panchama*, *Andolana*, *Shudra* and *Sankramana* that gave a thrust to the period. Basavalingappa’s statement, “upper caste dominated Kannada literature and language, which contained a lot of boosa...” (chaff) had not only provoked massive ‘controversy’(driven by Kannada press) but also produced prominent writers and a new form of writing. As a result, poetic lines -*Dalitaru bandaru daari bidi, Dalitara kaiyige rajya kodi*, (1975) (The dalits are coming, step aside –hand over the reins, let them rule) of Dalit poet Siddalingaih, were composed and often sung at the agitations and played a significant role in

³⁸ A minister for Housing and Municipal Administration in Devaraj Urs cabinet -B.

Basavalingappa from a Dalit community remarked that Kannada Literature as *Boosa* (cattle feed) in the function at Mysore organized by Dr. Ambedkar Vichara Vedike and Backward Class Students Forum of University of Mysore, on November 19, 1973. The event famously called Boosa Controversy that caused for decisive turn in Dalit movement in Karnataka. To Basavalingappa that meant the Kannada Literature did not have proper stuff. His contention was that the students coming from exploited sections of the society should learn English.

reshaping the language of poetry in Kannada. It gave a conceptual basis to the private self of marginalized groups to be *printed* and circulated.

However, the critical tensions within Kannada literary history had created a new brand of writers who caused a paradigm shift in the Kannada literary public sphere as literary movement shifted from *Navya* school to *Bandaya*. In the background of new brand writers' engagement with the journalistic practices and their association with popular publications has been described, in a historical context, as 'counter-journalism'. The popular publications started defining themselves as an 'alternative medium' and asserted as 'new wave publications' in opposition to commercial mainstream media. And the profound influence of Gandhi, Lohia, JP, Ambedkar and Marxist ideas and progressive sensibilities were reflected later in the pages of *Lankesh Patrike* (1980) a political weekly tabloid started by Lankesh. The cultural views of young authors were so influential, as critic D R Nagaraj notices, those 'can be seen in the conceptual vocabulary of even post-Navya writers'. However, it was reflected in the works of *Bandaya* and *Dalita* (The Oppressed) writers but it was entirely a new 'world of experience' that entered the 'textual world' which predominantly set a new trend in the state. With the emergence of Dalit literary figures there was a boom in the literary and political magazine publication as initially Dalit movement came up with the issues broadly related to relevance of the literature. To make contestation 'public', during 1980s, apart from print, these young writers found *meravanige*, (procession) and *bandh*(strike) as popular forms of protest.

And society in Karnataka was not an exception. Tension erupted in Kannada public sphere, when Dalits, Backward-castes and Minorities started producing the literary works and in quest of entering into the world of letters as 'news subjects' and politically conscious. As Habermas called it "the literary public sphere," that consists primarily of journalism and fiction, provides a forum or "training ground" wherein individuals share their private experiences and mutually affirm a new form of subjectivity-universal humanity. So, in one of his most interesting points regarding the literary public sphere, Habermas declared that the private self was "always already oriented to an audience" and always already to "fit to print" (Habermas, 1991). Thus, literary public sphere has been defined as a discursive community of writers, pressmen, critics and

readers who are brought together not just by books, periodicals, reading circles, literary associations, and publishing houses but by the constant exchange of emotional experiences.

Later, it was also felt that Kannada was facing threat from Sanskrit, which was the dominant language in schools, leading to a situation, where students could complete their high school education without having to study Kannada. This created a wide incompatibility between languages used for state administration and education. This led to the Gokak Chaluvali a linguistic movement against retaining Sanskrit as the first language in school education. Interestingly, the backward class and “other” socio-cultural movements (e.g. Dalit, Bandaya, Raitha and Samuday) though they were not exactly battling for the cause of Kannada, but added a new dimension to the Kannada literary output and identity. However, later, new challenges were posed to the Kannada language, as the entire notion of identity formation took an “economic” perspective.

The developments took place in Karnataka, especially after 1970s posed a sharp contrast to the social order that demanded an explanation from the state, which had experienced a gap for some time. Simultaneously, if we understand these developments from Gellner’s point of view, as he observes the need of formation of ‘nation’ (or an identity) is an outcome of the new mode of production. Thus, the capital city of the state, Bangalore, as it has turned a centre of modern urban-industrial hub; automatically the question of Kannada identity in the form of ‘nativity’ or as an idea of local became more complex which could be seen as ‘economic nationalism’. As part of this project, with the vested interest, the bourgeois merchant class and communal forces tried to articulate the Kannada identity merely as an instrumental that consisted of anti-linguistic and ant-religious minority elements. Interestingly, at the same time the backward class organizations that were intended to end the dominance of upper castes over the different spheres of production somewhat eagerly looking for support from the dalits “but they usually shy away on fundamental social and cultural issues”(Nagaraj, D.R:1993) Somewhere, this kind of passive response to the “other” social groups within the Kannada community, forced dalits and democratic/progressive organizations, individuals to form substitute political forums to articulate and perceive themselves as rational public to re-define identity in their own way. Launch of regional parties *Karnataka Pragati Ranga* by P. Lankesh in 1987, *Kannada Desha Paksha* by

M.D. Nanjundaswamy in the year 1989 and *Hosa Karnataka Samavesha(?)* need to be understood in this context.

However, with the introduction of neo-liberal policies and with emergence of information technology and its explicit policies many third world countries took on a new significance. As an expansion, the state capital Bangalore city started attracting the people, not only from neighboring states but also from different states having different linguistic and religious background who were looking for livelihood. This has created a new tension that led Kannada movement to “construct difference” and become more Bangalore centered. But it is clear that the formation of Kannada identity in the writings of Chidanandamurthy, another scholar who constructs the Kannada cultural identity by saying it is way of life of a community and as some critics termed it “fear centered” to which he draws from philosophy of Hindutwa political history. Locating the Kannada identity framework in this phase, Nair points out:

Therefore, the focus of the Kannada activists’ fury has been other equally dominated cultures in the (Bangalore)city, namely, Tamil and Urdu. In 1990, the Cauvery dispute endangered vicious attacks on the city’s primarily working class Tamil population: not surprisingly, such organizations as the Kannada Shakti Kendra were actively aided in this effort by the apparatuses of the state. This time, around, in the absence of the state support, the Kannada activists have been joined by another growing social force the Sangha parivar and its local allies. (1996:2864)

As a counter to this, considering “local” factors, including individuals and parallel Kannada movements, such as Karnataka Vimochana Ranga, tried to articulate the idea of Kannada identity by declaring that there is no threat to Kannada either from ‘insider’ (sub-national identities existed within Kannada society such as Kodava, Tulu, Konkani) or from ‘outsider’ (broadly migrated communities such as Tamils, Telugu, Urdu, Marathi and Malayali etc) “laborers who come into Karnataka-particularly, the south – as they will be only selling their labor and not loot the resources here to invest elsewhere” (Bairy, R:1996:94) In contrast, to the dominant construction of Kannada identity as a process that unfolds in relation to historical, literary,

economic and political contexts, P Lankesh, as a writer and an editor of a weekly tabloid *Lankesh Patrike*(1980), though agreeing with the Indian national framework but constructs the idea of Kannada identity, by intentionally including all religious, linguistic and caste minorities and defends to have an institutional protection by the state.

As D. R Nagaraj states:

But Lankesh's thinking about Karnataka has given another distinctive dimension to the formation of Kannada identity debate. Without employing the language of cultural nationalism, without venturing into the division and reorganization of memories, he speaks from within a modern socio-political framework. Here the debate acquires immediate social and political utility and concreteness. His thinking takes off from the immediate perception that Karnataka includes many linguistic minorities and that the state's welfare is tied to their welfare.”

As a modern thinker, Lankesh tries to deconstruct the 'image' of Karnataka that is constructed not from the 'past' but within the 'present'. Moreover, he rarely interprets the periods of identity construction and its institutionalization by looking at the historical junctures. Continuing this process of speaking within the modern socio-political framework accepting the immediate socio-political utility another scholar, K.V Subbanna, constructs Kannada identity in similar way where he adds, "...every community and every family of languages emanate shades of their unique identity from time to time. In the places where each community dwells, the land, water, plains, mountains, forests, and streams, rivers, lakes and oceans, and the unique sense of community that blossoms there and other features probably keep creating identities and differences". (p. 192, quoted in Chakravarthy 2009).

To conclude tentatively, in modern period of Karnataka, from the poetry lines of Uyilagola Narayanarao *Udayavaagali chaluva kannadanaadu* ('let dawn a beautiful Kannada land, may it rise') to *Deshbhakta Sulemaana Gadya Geete* (A prose-song of a patriotic bastard) of Lankesh, the identity of Kannada community has been formed either from the experiences of the past or from present. Thus, as Gramsci states, every definition of the concept is an outcome of the age

which gets formulated by a group of dominant “functionaries” or “area specialists” (Chatterjee,P: 1995) of the society which largely depends upon the structure of the state. But, the print, a dominant organ of public sphere in Karnataka, has produced a realm of freedom through which the representational public got to be visible. And the critical discussions generated by Lankesh through his weekly tabloid, as it took the responsibility of critiquing the state and politically dominant communities, had produced a *general* meaning of politics, culture, theatre, literature, development, which actually enabled ordinary readers to be part of larger debates. Growing literacy rate (56 per cent 1981-1991) among women and marginalized sections, who were excluded from the political public sphere and considered as “common human beings”, now started entering into the literary public sphere, as active members of the society to reinforce the idea of *Kannadiga*.

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