



TWENTIETH-CENTURY KANNADA LITERATURE-A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Writers belonging to different movements write in Kannada at one and the same time. Till recently, Kuvempu or Adiga, two writers belonging to two completely opposite literary movements, were writing along with Devanura Mahadeva, another totally different kind of writer. As a result, one comes across varieties of literary expression in Kannada. This has also resulted in the interpretation of reality through different viewpoints. One can say that all these viewpoints help in understanding Indian reality. They have also added significant chapters to the history of Kannada literature, which began with Pampa in the tenth century A.D. Among writers in the three centuries after, Muddana (1869-1901) had the potentialities of a great writer, and Śīsunāla śarīpha Saāheba (1819-89) did achieve greatness. But Muddana died young. Moreover, his works gained critical recognition only in the twentieth century, after his death. Śīsunāla Śarīpha Saāheba, a Sufi poet, could predict industrialization, emergence of big cities, and the destruction of traditional village culture. But his poetry was edited and published only in the 1970s. Till then, he was known only to the people in and around Dharwad district, where he lived (see Mugali 1953).

KEYWORDS- KUVEMPU, SHIVARAMAKARANTA, SRIKANTIAH, BARAGURU RAMACHANDRAPPA SHIVARUDRAPPA, SRI RAMAYANADRASHANAM.

INTRODUCTION

After Sanskrit and Tamil, Kannada has the oldest written literature in India. Pampa, the first major poet to write in Kannada, was born in A.D.902. In Vikramārjuna Vijayam, an epic, he combined contemporary history with myth, thereby creating a new form. For Basava, Allama, Akka Mahādēvi, Dēvara Dāsīmayya, and other Virasaivite poets of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, poetry was the outcome of a movement against caste, inequality, falsehood, and injustice. Akka Mahādēvi, who abandoned her husband in search of God, is one of the first major feminist writers in any language. Harihara (c. 1200), Janna (c. 1225), Kumaravyāsa (c. 1400), and Purandaradāsa (c. 1500) were some of the major writers who expanded the possibilities of the Kannada language. They were innovative in technique and deeply responsive to their age. For example, Purandaradāsa, a Bhakti poet, was a witness to the decadence of the Vijayana-gara Empire, and his poems record various images relating to the decadence of a culture and lifestyle. For Janna, life is an endless attempt to escape from the consequences of one small act committed unknowingly. Kumaravyāsa gives pictures of the lives of ordinary Kannadigas of the fourteenth century in the course of retelling the story of the Mahabharata.

Among writers in the three centuries after, Muddana (1869-1901) had the potentialities of a great writer, and Śīsunāla śarīpha Saāheba (1819-89) did achieve greatness. But Muddana died young. Moreover, his works gained critical recognition only in the twentieth century, after his death. Śīsunāla Śarīpha Saāheba, a Sufi poet, could predict industrialization, emergence of big cities, and the destruction of traditional village culture. But his poetry was edited and published only in the 1970s. Till then, he was known only to the people in and around Dharwad district, where he lived (see Mugali 1953).

There were a few interesting developments at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Establishing a printing press and a publishing concern by Basel Mission, a German missionary organization, in the second half of the nineteenth century, played a major role in the development of modern Kannada literature. Rev. Ferdinand Kittel (1832–1903), a German missionary, compiled and published a Kannada–English dictionary, which is still one of the best dictionaries in Kannada. Bengali novels by Bankimchandra and

Marathi novels by **Harinarayana** Apte were adapted into Kannada by **B. Ven-katacharya** (1845–1914) and Galaganatha (1869–1942). M. Govinda Pai (1883–1963), a scholar, was the first poet to give up the traditional second-syllable rhyme pattern to make daring experiments in stanzaic forms. He also wrote poems about the conditions of ordinary people. Hattiyangadi Narayana Rao (1863–1921) and **S. G. Narasimhachar** (1862–1907) adapted a few English poems, using traditional metrical forms. But none of these writers could establish a new tradition of writing. Govinda Pai was interested more in research than in poetry. The scant body of poetry he wrote is burdened with pedantry. Hattiyangadi Narayana Rao and S. G. Narasimhachar could not create a new idiom to express a new sensibility. Only B. M. Srikantia (1884–1946) and Masti Ven-katesha Iyengar (1891–1986) started a new movement in poetry and fiction, respectively.

Poetry

Srikantia, Bendre, and Kuvempu

M. Srikantia published his new poems during 1919-24 in various magazines and brought them out in book form under the title English Gīgalu (English Songs) in 1926. This was a collection of 62 poems. Except for three original ones, they are Kannada renderings of poems from Palgrave's Golden Treasury. Some of these are by Wordsworth ("Written in March," "Rainbow," "The Pet Lamb"), P. B. Shelley ("To a Skylark"), Sir Walter Scott ("Gathering Song"), Tennyson ("Charge of the Light Brigade"), Cowper ("Loss of the Royal George"), Campbell ("Ye Mariners of England"), Byron ("Could Love for Ever"), Robert Burns, Thomas Hood, Charles Lamb, Lady Nairne, Christina Rossetti, Clough, and Sir Henry Wotton.

Obviously, these poems are not the best in English literature. Probably, Srikantia's choice reflects the taste of the English teachers in India and in England at that time. It is interesting that his book does not include any poem by John Keats. Wordsworth and Coleridge are not represented by poems that make greater creative use of the English language. All the poems he chose are simple in structure and theme.

Srikantia was remarkably successful in making use of these poems to write a new kind of poetry. Quite a number of new stanzaic patterns, modeled on English stanzaic patterns, were introduced into Kannada. He also used modern Kannada idioms and the language of the ordinary people. Poets like S. G. Nar-asimhachar and Hattiyangadi Narayana Rao had earlier failed to write new poetry because they used old stanzaic forms and archaic language.

The subject matter also changed. Kings and gods gave place to birds, rainbows, riversides, and ordinary soldiers. "**Māda-Mādi**," an adaptation of **Robert Burns's "Duncan Gray,"** depicts Māda and Mādi in their hunting spree. The names Māda and Mādi suggest that they are man and woman of lower caste. Earlier in Kannada poetry, the pleasures of hunting were limited to the royal couple. For the first time, a poet was giving expression to the pleasures of untouchables. The shift was obvious, and the consequences were far-reaching.

Srikantia translated Aeschylus' Persae and adapted Sophocles' Ajax and Ranna's Sāhasabhīmavijayam, a tenth-century Kannada poem. His intention was to introduce the concept of hubris and hamartia. These were the beginnings of poetic drama in Kannada, which was later developed by **Kuvempu, Pu.Thi.Narasimhachar** (b. 1905), and Ramachandra Sharma. Kuvempu wrote poetic drama by making use of myths from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Pu.Thi.Narasimhachar created a new opera by making use of Carnatic music. Ramachandra Sharma used free verse for poetic drama.

As a poet, Srikantia's was a liberating influence. Many poets now had a new way of expressing themselves. Among them, Da.Ra.Bendre, Kuvempu, Pu.Thi.Narasimhachar, V. K. Gokak, and **Kadengodlu Shankara Bhatta** (1904-68) are important. Of these writers, **Da.Ra.Bendre** is considered the greatest.

Da.Ra.Bendre was exposed to the latest developments in Marathi poetry also. Kannada folk songs, one of his dominant interests, also helped him find new idioms. This gave racy vigor to his poetry. But in his major poems, he uses folk idioms and rituals to suggest the difference between folk and urban cultures. For example, in a poem titled "**Hubballiyāmva**," Bendre captures the longings of a village girl for a man from Hubli, a city. Another poem, "**Sanna Sōmavāra**," depicts the days of childhood when a folk festival relating to spring was celebrated. Now, both the childhood and the days of folk festival are gone. The only thing that remains is memory and the longing.

Bendre believed that life is a source of joy. In "Belagu," he celebrates morning as the time of peace and joy. It is the beginning not of daily routine, but of happiness. Another poem, "**Kuniyōnu Bārā**," suggests that the cosmos is in a state of dance, and the protagonist invites his mate to dance to the rhythm of day and night and to celebrate life.

This has led many critics to remark that evil was alien to Bendre's sensibility. It would be proper to say that Bendre was aware of evil in life but gave it a secondary place in the all-pervading joy of creation. In this respect, his "Jōgi" is a representative poem. The poem creates an atmosphere of darkness and terror. A bird, sitting on the

branch of a tree surrounded by snakes, lures the protagonist. Its call is so fascinating and enchanting that it compels the protagonist to ignore the terror created by the atmosphere. He is unable to understand the meaning and the consequences of this call. Probably, it is a metaphysical call, or it is a call of the joys of life hidden behind terror and darkness. But the call is continuous, haunting, and one cannot help responding to it.

Bendre's other writings include plays, literary criticism, and essays. His plays are tragicomedies about the absurd behavior of people in power.

Another influential poet of this period is Kuvempu. His lyrics sing the glory of Karnataka, its culture, and civilization. These are simplistic in structure and theme, very popular, and sung in almost every public function. They also help Kannadigas to feel proud of their past during the freedom struggle. His plays include adaptations of *The Tempest* and *Hamlet*. Both are simplistic versions of Shakespeare's plays. Kuvempu's literary criticism explains Kannada works by using Sanskrit poetics. But his criticism is generally descriptive in nature. His **Śrī Rāmāyana Darśanam**, retelling the story of the Ramayana in verse, is considered the mark of genius by his disciples and an exercise in pomposity by a few critics. His "Niran?kusamatigalāgi" (Be Free in Thought), a lecture, taught the importance of freedom from superstition to a whole generation of Kannadigas.

Kuvempu and the Novel

Kuvempu's remarkable achievements are his two novels—Kānūru Heggaditi (1937) and Malegalalli Madumagalu (1967). Kānūru Heggaditi is about the conflict between Huvayya and the superstitious, ignorant people of his village, to which he returns after education in a city. **Huvayya** is a reformer, and he represents the best in Indian and Western traditions. The village Kuvempu depicts, like all the Indian villages of the twentieth century, is in transition. Huvayya tries to bring about a change in the lives of the villagers by rooting out the negative influence of the West and the past so that they become aware of the best in both traditions. The villagers resist the change; at the same time, they are fascinated by it.

Like **Kānooru Heggaditi, Malegalalli Madumagalu** is a novel about Indian villages in transition. The cluster of villages Kuvempu depicts in the novel belongs to the nineteenth century, when bicycles and Christianity entered the villages as a consequence of colonization of India by the British. These and other things, like cash instead of bartering, have loosened the hold of traditional values on the lives of the people. As a result, relationships are strained, and families are destroyed. But Kuvempu's attitude to this change is ambiguous. He also notices that these changes have awakened a desire for freedom even in the minds of the low-caste people.

G. Krishnamurthi (1931-75), a modern critic who taught Kannada in the universities of Wisconsin and Chicago in the 1960s, says that the novel has too many insignificant details and is therefore a failure. Recently, it has been pointed out that Krishnamurthi considered different levels of consciousness and different kinds of sexual relationships as the major themes of the novel, and therefore many details seemed insignificant to him. But some of the major concerns of the novel are the conflicts between tradition and modernity, Christianity and Hinduism, love and marriage, and the individual and society. Seen in this light, many details that Krishnamurthi thought insignificant gain meaning. The novel is also a profound study of the emergence of capitalism from the hold of feudalism.

Novel

The first social novel, *Indirābāyi*, was written by Gulvadi Venkatarav in 1899, and this was followed by Bolara Baburav's *Vāgdēmac;vi* (1905). Baburav depicts *Vāgdēvi*, a married woman, betraying her husband to have sexual relations with the head of a Hindu religious organization, thereby showing the decadence of both family and the traditional religious organization. *Mādiddunnō Mārāya* (1916), the first major novel in Kannada, depicts life in a village near Mysore, the then-capital of the Mysore province. In a traditional Indian society, the temple, the king, the guru, and the Brahmin family are seen as the "protectors" of communal values. But in this novel, the temple is occupied by thieves, the guru has become a bully, the Brahmin family has lost its moral right due to internal quarrels, and the king is unable to establish order in the society because of his inability to see corruption among his lieutenants.

The novel gives graphic pictures of decadence of all the traditional ways of living. The king, the Brahmin, and the daughter-in-law, who shape their lives according to traditional values, are unaware that these values are challenged by the changes taking place around them. Ultimately, order is established. But the ending is ambiguous: the question of who establishes order, the British or the king of Mysore, remains unanswered.

Masti Venkatesha Iyengar's works include translations of some of the major plays of Shakespeare, critical works on the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, poetry, and plays. He was also the chairman of Kannada

Sahitya Parishat, a democratic literary body founded by B. M. Srikantia and others in 1915, and the editor of an influential little magazine. Masti was also responsible for publishing the first works of Bendre and Kuvempu.

Masti's writings show remarkable insight into the lives of the ordinary people in the villages. His short story, "**Mosarina Mangamma**," depicts the quarrels in a joint family in a village. Mangamma, a curd-seller, is insulted by her daughter-in-law and decides to live separately. But the village is so traditional in its values and lifestyles that she can live peacefully only in a traditional way. Any attempt to upset this system leads to strained personal relationships. His "**Kalmaādiya Kōna**," another short story, is about the relationships among people, society, and animal. Muniya, who has raised a male buffalo, is forced to sacrifice it to Mari, a goddess. By portraying Muniya's efforts to save the buffalo and the people's insistence on sacrifice, Masti is drawing our attention to the stronghold of superstitions on the minds of the people. Any attempt to bring about a change in the traditional lifestyle leads to its continuation with greater vigor.

His "**Chattēkara Tāyi**" depicts the lives of Anglo-Indians. "**Masumatti**" and "**Ranganahalliya Rāma**" are about the reactions of Europeans to Indian culture and civilization. Both stories explore the ways the Indian past can become real in the present. In "**Masumatti**," Indian antiques are used for commercial purposes by all European characters except Emily, who is able to link her personal life to the Indian past. "**Ranganahalliya Rāma**" narrates the ways a persuasive Britisher makes the lost past real to the superstitious, but courteous, Indian villagers. All three stories are important because they show different aspects of the encounters between the East and the West.

His novel **Chikavirarajendra** (1956) depicts the process of colonization of Kodagu, a small province in Karnataka, by the British. It is colonized because of both the cunning of the British and the decadence of Chikavirarajendra, the king of Kodagu. Masti powerfully portrays how the goodness and the traditional values of these tribal people turn out to be their weaknesses when it comes to the question of encountering an alien culture and military power. As Masti suggests in the novel, this could be the story of any kingdom in India when it encountered the British in the nineteenth century.

Kākana Kōte, one of the plays by Masti, is also about the encounter between two cultures. **Kākana Kōte**, a tribal settlement, is threatened by the king's men, who demand an illegal levy. The tribal settlement can be protected if the headman of the tribes requests the king of Mysore, whose life he once saved, for protection. But then the cultural and political autonomy of the tribe will be destroyed. The headman is ultimately forced to ask for protection. As a result, the tribal settlement comes under the king's jurisdiction and thus loses its identity.

The play is a profound study of the encounter between tribal and urban cultures. In minute details, Masti brings out the psychology of the tribal and urban people when they encounter each other. It is also a study of the colonization of a tribal settlement by the city dwellers. Masti suggests that the change was inevitable. The king's men, who were demanding illegal levy, would have continued to interfere in tribal culture and would have thus changed it. The headman, by requesting the king for protection, has only given official sanction to the change.

Shivarama Karanth (1902) is another major literary figure of the twentieth century. He gave up a college education to participate in the freedom struggle in the 1920s. He has experimented in the areas of education, painting, and music. His experiments in yakshagana, folk dance drama, has won him worldwide acclaim. During the last 20 years, he has been active in ecological movements. He has written plays, children's literature, essays, and criticism. But his major contribution is in fiction.

His **Chōmana Dudi**, **Sarasamma Samādhī**, **Marali Mannige**, and **Maimanagala Suliyalli**, some of his major novels, depict various aspects of life in rural Karnataka. **Chōmana Dudi** narrates an untouchable's attempt to become a farmer. In traditional Indian society, an untouchable is forbidden to till the land. Chōma fails in his attempts. But in the course of narrating Chōma's attempts to become a farmer, Karanth depicts the changes that were taking place in the lives of the untouchables in the twentieth century. He also portrays the ruthlessness of the upper-caste people determined to retain caste distinctions. Karanth's greatness lies in showing how the psychology of both the upper- and lower-caste people is determined by caste considerations.

His **Marali Mannige** is a story of three generations. **Rāma Aithāla** is a traditional Brahmin fascinated by English education. He wants his son to be a lawyer and decides to give him an English education. But his son, Laccha, is alienated from his family, relatives, and the native land due to the negative influence of the West. Rāma, grandson of Rāma Aithāla, is able to use the Western influence creatively to renew himself and the tradition-bound society in which he lives.

Maimanagala Suliyalli is also a story of three generations. The woman of the first generation is a *dēvadāsi*, God's bride. She is supposed to entertain chosen men in the name of God. She is famous for her integrity and music. But Karanth knows that she belongs to a dying culture. Her daughter and granddaughter show the negative and positive influences of the Western culture, respectively. The novel also examines the philosophical problem of the unification of body and mind. All the characters satisfy either their mind or their body, not both. As a result, they always remain unhappy.

Karant's attitude toward change is ambiguous. He thinks that the change brought about by the influence of the West or the East becomes positive only when one links oneself to one's people and their culture. It becomes destructive when it takes one away from one's roots, a result that, for him, seems to be one of the radical problems of colonial India.

Shivarama Karant's novels were criticized for lack of form in the 1960s. M. G. Krishnamurthi's reevaluation sums up his contribution as a novelist:

The novels of Mr. K. Shivarama Karant may as well prove to be test cases for the literary critic in Kannada because of their apparent artlessness. One is tempted to say that they are impressive because of their subject matter, and thus beg the question.

It seems to me that Mr. Kurtakoti, like many others, underestimates the art, the organization in Mr. Karant's novels. It is true that the techniques that Mr. Karant uses do not draw attention to themselves, and this is probably his strength rather than his weakness. In this he compares with the great 19th century English novelists. (Krishna-murthi 1994, 305)

Progressive Writers

There was a movement of progressive writers in the 1930s and 1940s. This was led by A. N. Krishna Rao (1908-71). Other important writers of this movement are **T. R. Subba Rao**, **K. S. Niranjana**, **Basavaraja Kattimani**, and **Chad-uranga**. Their favored form was the novel.

All these writers were influenced by Marxism. They propagated that literature should serve the needs of social revolution. Accordingly, they wrote about the downtrodden, the exploited class. One of their favorite topics was the problem of prostitution. All were prolific writers. A. N. Krishna Rao, leader of the movement, wrote more than 100 novels. They sold very well, chiefly because of the non moralistic writing when it came to questions like prostitution. However, the limitations of Euro-Marxism in theorizing caste become apparent.

These writers believed that Indian reality could be explained in terms of class struggle, and they ignored the dominant role played by caste in determining human relations. The result was oversimplification (see section on Lohia).

Gopalakrishna Adiga gave expression to the realities of postindependent India. Adiga's *Bhāvataranga* (1946), the first collection of poems, shows the influence of Bendre. He also had a stint with the progressive writer's movement in *Kaṭṭuvevu Nāvu* (1949), his second collection of poems. But his *Caṇḍe-Manddaḷe* (1956), the fourth collection of poems, marked a definite break from Navōdaya literature. He used free verse instead of metrical forms. He also wrote about urban experiences, which hitherto had been considered unfit for poetic treatment.

The broken sentences, sudden jolts, and use of irony to show the pomposity of rhetoric, juxtaposing mythical characters and situations with present-day reality, are some of the characteristics of his new poetry. He rebelled against Kuvempu's poetry of statements and Bendre's musicality. He emphasized that any experience not realized in concrete terms cannot become literature. Like T. S. Eliot, from whom he learned his art, he also argued that poetry is the outcome of intellect as much as of emotion. He wrote in an epic mode instead of Bendre's and Kuvempu's lyrical mode. He argued that poetry should give expression to all levels of experience. The high ideals and dreams people had during the freedom struggle remained unfulfilled, and Adiga's poetry gave expression to this disillusionment. It was also a great attempt toward the unification of sensibility.

His "**Bhūmigīta**" (1958), "**Vardhamāna**" (1972), and "**Idannu Bayasiralilla**" (1975) show full realization of the promises shown in *Caṇḍe-Maddaḷe*. "**Bhūmigīta**" and "**Bhūta**" are two of his representative poems. In "**Bhūmigīta**," earth is no longer the mother interested in the welfare of her offspring. Instead, she is a stepmother continuously engaged in copulation and childbirth. An individual is left alone to find his or her way in the darkness by the indifferent mother and unknown father.

The contrast among the poems of Srikantia, Bendre, and Kuvempu, where earth is considered the mother, is striking. Adiga also suggested that the fate of humankind is that of blinded Oedipus. In "**Bhūta**," another great poem, Adiga considers the past something that haunts like a ghost. (In Kannada, *bhūta*, a Sanskrit loanword, means both past and ghost.) In the process of escaping from it, we have gone West. Now, we have to learn the ways of digging up the significant things of the past as one digs up the golden ore and molds them to suit our personal gods. The poem ends with the great image of the stagnant water of the well evaporating to form clouds. Then it rains, and the land becomes green. Thus, past, present, and future combine to make life whole. In almost all his major poems, Adiga returns to this theme of fragmentation of life in modern times and the ways of making it whole.

Adiga was actively involved in the problems of society and contested, unsuccessfully, both for the Parliament and Karnataka Assembly seats. He edited *Sākṣī*, an influential literary quarterly, for 10 years. His influence on the younger generation was as great as Srikantia's influence on the previous generation of writers. He recognized the changed sensibility after independence and created a new idiom to express it. His poetry also led to the reevaluation and reinterpretation of poetry written by Virasaivite saints of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Navya Sāhitya

This new movement founded by Adiga is called Navya Sāhitya or New/ Modern literature. This phrase was first coined by V. K. Gokak. He also wrote some new poems. But they are chiefly versifications of ideas borrowed from others and can hardly be called poetry. He thought modernity was a question of technique. For Adiga, it was a question of sensibility.

Lankesh (1935), U. R. Anantha Murthy, Shantinath Desai, Yashwanth Chittal (1928), Purnachandra Tejaswi (1938), Girish Karnad, A. K. Ramanujan, Ramachandra Sharma, and Gangadhara Chittala are other important writers of Navya literature.

Shantinath Desai's *Mukti* (1962) was the first major attempt to express modern sensibility in fiction. Gowrish, the hero of the novel, is a weak man with high ideals. This leads to a split in his personality that ultimately drives him to suicide. Desai's short story "Kṣītija" portrays the predicament of a traditional Hindu woman traveling to England for higher studies. Yashwanth Chittal and P. Lankesh portray the changing Indian society in urban and rural settings. Lankesh's short stories, plays, and novels portray the psychology of weak people caught in the labyrinth created by the people in power. His poetry has influenced younger poets like **K. V. Thirumalesh and B. R. Lakshmana Rao**. He is also a filmmaker and journalist. Ramachandra Sharma's poetry has details taken from both the West and the East. Purnachandra Tejaswi's novels and short stories depict life in very backward villages. His two novels, *Nigūḍha Manasyaru* and *Karvāḷlo*, are about an encounter between educated people and uncivilized villagers. K. S. Narasimha Swamy's poetry upholds the importance of familial relationships in modern times.

R. Anantha Murthy's *Samskāra* (1966) received considerable praise. It portrays the decadence of traditional Brāhmanic society and the changes facing it. Conflict between traditional and modern societies is one of the major themes of Anantha Murthy's novels and short stories. His *Bhāratīpura* (1972), a novel, depicts the changes a Western-educated person tries to bring about in a feudal town built around a temple. *Avasthe* (1978), another novel, explores the same theme in the larger context of politics in a state capital. His "Akkayya," a short story, depicts the relationships between a traditional Hindu woman of a village and her brother, who now lives in America.

The portrayal of the relationships between this earthy woman and her brother symbolizes the relationships between Indian and American cultures determined by precapitalist and capitalist forces, respectively. Anantha Murthy's writings are remarkable for their portrayals of different kinds of rebels against tradition. Through them, he portrays Indian society in transition.

K. Ramanujan's Kannada writings include three collections of poems, three short stories, and a novel. His poetry showed a new way out when younger poets were trying to escape from Adiga's influence. He concentrated on the little details of daily life. His writings are also about the problems of migration. His short story "**Annayyana Mānavasāstra**" is about an Indian academic living in America. This academic is so far removed from India and the past that he can now know about his relatives, including his mother, only through a book on anthropology. Ramanujan's casual narrative method saves it from melodrama. Such method marks his poetry, too. He is capable of writing about some of the profoundest experiences in a casual, matter-of-fact manner. For example, his "Angula Huluvina Parakāya Pravēśa" is about a small bird trying to save its identity among big birds and animals. Ramanujan's casual way of narration makes one feel that he is telling a children's story. But subsequent readings make one realize the political and metaphysical undertones of the poem.

Ram Manohar Lohia (1910-67), a Parliamentarian and one of the founders of the Samyuktha Socialist Party, was a strong influence on Navya writers. Adiga, Anantha Murthy, Lankesh, and Purnachandra Tejaswi were actively associated with the Socialist Party. Adiga and Tejaswi translated Lohia into Kannada, and Anantha Murthy and Lankesh have written extensively.

Lohia was one of the important writers to question Marx's concept of history. According to Lohia, the movement of history toward progress is cyclical and not linear. If it is linear, he asked, why was the West in a state of barbarism when India was at an advanced material stage, say, during the Buddha's time, or in the Gupta period? Why is India backward now, when the West is at the height of its glory? Lohia suggests that Marx's concept of linear development takes into account only the European countries after the Renaissance and ignores Asia. His other contributions include analysis of the caste system, some of the Hindu myths, and Mahatma Gandhi's contribution to

Indian thought. He was a strong advocate of decentralization and opposed Jawaharlal Nehru's attempts toward centralized rule. He also opposed multinational companies investing in India.

Lohia helped Navya writers to understand Indian society with greater insight than Marxism did. Most of the social ideas of Navya writers, which sometimes have forced the government of Karnataka to change its policy, are influenced by Lohia. His influence on Adiga is seen in poems like "Nehru Nivruttarāgudilla" and "Śrī Rāmanavamiya Divasa."

Navya Theater

Girish Karnad, a major playwright of the Navya movement, uses historical and mythological stories for plots. In *Yayāti* (1961), his first play, he uses the Mahabharata story to dramatize the conflict between old and younger generations. *Tughlaq* (1964), a historical play, mirrors Indian society of the Nehru era. His *Taledaṇḍa* (1990), based on the life of Basava, eleventh-century Virasaivite saint-poet, also dramatizes the conflict between castes.

His *Hayavadana* (1971) and *Nāgamaṇḍala* (1989) use the techniques of folk theater. Another important playwright who uses the techniques of folk theater is **Chandrashekhara Kambara**. But his plays lack the remarkable insight into mind and society that mark Girish Karnad's plays.

The tradition of using history to write plays on contemporary issues began with Samsa (1898-1939). He dramatized the history of the Mysore royal family. He learned this technique by reading the plays of Shakespeare.

Samsa's plays also show the decadence of the royal family. In all his plays, he looks for an ideal king who can be a link between God and people. He thought that only an ideal king could oppose British rule. But he was so aware of reality that, in all his plays, one comes across an empty throne symbolizing the absence of an ideal king. He was also the first Kannada writer to portray characters disturbed by the loss of faith in people, God, and religion.

The first major playwright to write in Kannada was **T. P. Kailasam**. The locales of his plays are the middle-class homes of cities in Karnataka. He also used Kannada—mixed with English words—in his plays. Thus, he was the first writer to make creative use of the kind of Kannada spoken by members of the educated middle class.

His *Baṇḍvāḷvillada Baḍāyi* is about the shallowness of a Westernized lawyer. He pretends to be knowledgeable by speaking English-mixed-Kannada with other semiliterate members of his family. But this leads only to laughter and contempt. *Tollugatti*, another play, brings out the contrast between two sons of a government employee. One is bent upon an English education and climbing socially. The other, indifferent to academic learning, is attached to other members of the family. When a fire breaks out in the house, the English-educated son is interested only in saving himself, whereas the not-so-educated son saves all the others without bothering about his own safety.

The play is a simplistic one. Kailasam, like his contemporaries, was responding to the rootlessness caused by Westernization. Writers like **Shivarama Karanth** and **Adiga** wrote about the same theme with greater insight.

Kailasam's Bahiskāra represents the inhumanity of a middle-class Brahmin family. Ranganna, a government employee and a Brahmin by birth, is banished from his caste for not marrying off his daughter before she attained puberty. Ultimately, his daughter is left with no option but suicide. Even though the play is melodramatic, it focused attention on the inhumanity of some of the practices of Hindu religious organizations.

Shriranga (1904-84) has written more than 45 full-length plays. Most of his plays are marked by hasty or indifferent writing. He refused to revise them. Therefore, out of his vast body of writing, only 4 or 5 plays can be considered significant. Till 1960, he wrote with reformistic zeal.

His *Harījanvāra* (1934) can be considered a representative play of this period. It is about the conflict between upper-caste Hindus and untouchables. Ultimately, the humanity of an upper-caste widow gains victory over rigid caste rules. His *Sandhyākāla* (1939) and *Śōkacakra* (1957) are also about the importance of reformation. But *Kēlu Janamējaya* (1960) shows a remarkable change in his method of writing. It combines techniques from absurd and realistic drama. Everyone in the play seems to be groping for something in darkness. The play is considered a powerful dramatization of the helplessness of people before their rulers.

A Hindi translation of this play was staged in New Delhi in 1963 by the National School of Drama. This began a new era in Indian theater. Till then, it was believed that one had to look toward the West for modern plays. It was the first time that theater personalities became aware of an Indian play with modern technique and theme. This opened new doors in writing and staging of plays in India.

Shriranga was actively involved in developing theater activities in Karnataka. He has also written novels. His other publications include a Kannada translation of **Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra**.

Theater is very active in Karnataka. Prasanna (1951), a young leftist director, began a movement of staging street plays in the 1970s. B. V. Karanth (1929), another important director, uses techniques of folk theater in his plays. He also stages plays in Hindi and is one of the very influential directors. Karanth's influence can be seen behind Girish Karnad's and Chandrashekhara Kambar's experiments with folk theater. The plays Karanth directed include Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Sophocles' *King Oedipus*.

V. Subbanna is another important theater personality. He was influenced by Lohia's ideas about cultural decentralization and started a theater movement in Heggōdu, a small village with a population of around 500, in the late 1960s. Now he runs a theater center training around 20 students every year and a repertory. It tours Karnataka every year with three plays, which include classics from a European language and Sanskrit. As a result, theater activities have developed even in small towns and villages in Karnataka. Before Subbanna started this movement, cultural activities of this type were limited to big cities like Bangalore and Mysore.

Women's Writing

Triveni (1928-63) wrote novels chiefly about the emotional repressions of middle-class women. This suppression becomes necessary for them to gain respectability in a middle-class family. But it leads to various psychological problems, as in the case of **Kaveri in Śarapanjara** or **Malathi in Hannele Ciguridāga**. Kaveri suppresses her love for one person and marries another approved of by her parents. This ultimately leads her to madness. Malathi, a widow, decides to suppress her feelings for a man in order to please her orthodox father. Triveni suggests that no change in the condition of women is possible until men recognize their problems. She is the first Kannada writer to recognize the specificity of women's psychologies, but one gets the feeling that she sentimentalizes women's problems.

Rajalakshmi N. Rao's Sangama (1954), a collection of short stories, is also about the emotional repression of women. Her "Illa Illa" is a story about a middle-class woman who dons the mask of a faithful wife in order to gain respectability. She now represents the class against which her former lover, a communist, rebelled. She cannot admit that she is still secretly in love with him, because she cannot break off from the society in which she now lives. The only thing left for her is to suppress her feelings and lead a double life. Parvathi, the heroine of "Phedra," another story, also resorts to daydreaming in order to give expression to her feelings. She also cannot break off from the society and live a separate life.

V. Bhagyalakshmi's Berala Sandiya Baduku (1976), a collection of poems, is about the suppressed feelings of unmarried women. This was the first collection of poems that unhesitatingly told Kannada readers that unmarried Indian women suppress their feelings in order to make themselves acceptable to men in the marriage market. This collection of poems started a new trend in Kannada poetry because Bhagyalakshmi had created a new idiom to express women's feelings.

Both **Rajalakshmi** and **Bhagyalakshmi** have stopped writing after their first books. Bhagyalakshmi is married and lives in Delhi. Rajalakshmi married in the 1950s, was disillusioned, and has been living as a sanyasin (ascetic) somewhere near the Himalayas during the last 30 years. In an interview she gave to a magazine when she visited Karnataka in 1983 to attend the birth centenary of B. M. Srikantia, her grandfather, she admitted that renouncing writing in Kannada was the most difficult thing to do. A writer who gave expression to suppressed sexual feelings of women, in the interview she admitted that she hated sex after marriage, which ultimately led her to sanyasa.

Other important women writers are **Vaidehi** (1947), **Tejaswini Niranjana**, **S. Usha**, **Pratibha Nandakumar**, and **Vina Shanteshwar** (1945). The women characters that Vaidehi and Vina portray are freer emotionally than earlier. Vina's "Higonda Kathe" portrays an unwed mother who feels that giving birth to a child is the right of every woman. Vina's protagonist and Vaidehi's Akku, another woman character in a recently published story with the same title, are female characters who feel that their lives do not have to be determined by the requirements of men. The connection of this freedom to economic factors is also significant. All the characters in Triveni's and Rajalakshmi's fiction are housewives, dependent on their husbands for income. Vina's and Vaidehi's characters who show freedom of choice have independent sources of income. The difference also indicates the change that has taken place in the status of middle-class women in the last 20 years. Many of the contradictions in women's position still need to be addressed.

There were women writers among Virasaivite saints of the tenth and eleventh centuries. Apart from Akka Mahādēvi, a writer like Sūle Sankavva expressed what she felt while working as a prostitute to make a living. The women writers of recent times have been able to link themselves to this tradition of Virasaivite poetry. Women's writings have also led to a new interest in the writings of some of the ignored aspects of Virasaivite poetry.

Protest Literature

There was a movement against **Navya literature** in the 1970s and 1980s. This movement, led by **Baraguru Ramachandrappa** (1945), a Marxist, is called **Bandaya** (Protest) literary movement. Other writers of this group include **Kalegowda Nagavara, Ramjan Darga, R. K. Manipal, and Hosuru Munishamappa**. Protest writers criticized Navya literature as too complex to be understood by ordinary people. They propagated the view that writers should write in such a way that their writings are easily understood by the people. Bandaya writers also linked themselves to progressive writers of the 1930s and 1940s. Unfortunately, none of the Bandaya writers have shown interest in the nuances of words. Quite often, their poetry is versification of **Marx's** or **Lohia's** ideas. Bandaya writers, however, raised some fundamental questions about inequality and exploitation. They also attracted the attention of the exploited people, who were looking for opportunities to express themselves. While their contribution is significant in the field of social activity, its poetic aesthetic content remains questionable.

Devanura Mahadeva (1949) and **Siddhalingaiah** (1954) come from the untouchable caste. Devanura Mahadeva's publications are limited to a collection of short stories and two short novels. He writes about his experiences as an untouchable. His writings usher in a totally new world in Kannada literature. He has also used language in a new manner. There is almost no young writer who is not influenced by his use of language. Siddhalingaiah's poetry has also given expression to the conditions of untouchables in present-day society. While occasionally propagandist, he has introduced a new world of experience to Kannada literature.

Kannada Literature and Traditional Poetics

There was also a new movement in the 1980s to go back to the traditional narrative methods of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and other writings of ancient India. All the Kannada writings of the twentieth century consist of logically verifiable details. But writings of ancient India are not based on logically verifiable details. In these writings, a squirrel's speaking or a mountain's flying is as real as a human being's taking a bath or eating. The argument is that the tradition of Indian writing can be continued to create a totally new way of writing, hitherto unknown in twentieth-century Kannada literature. But this theory has not yet given birth to any important creative writing.

CONCLUSION

Writers belonging to different movements write in Kannada at one and the same time. Till recently, Kuvempu or Adiga, two writers belonging to two completely opposite literary movements, were writing along with Devanura Mahadeva, another totally different kind of writer. As a result, one comes across varieties of literary expression in Kannada. This has also resulted in the interpretation of reality through different viewpoints. One can say that all these viewpoints help in understanding Indian reality. They have also added significant chapters to the history of Kannada literature, which began with Pampa in the tenth century A.D.

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