

## FACTOR INFLUENCE FOR RENAISSANCE IN MODERN KARNATAKA: A HISTORICAL DIMENSION

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### ABSTRACT

*The historical period known as the Renaissance spans from about the 15th to 17th centuries. 'Renaissance' means 're-birth' and during this time Europe left behind the fixed ideas of the Middle Ages and created the beginnings of the modern world as we know it. The civilisations of ancient Greece and Rome were rediscovered, inspiring an interest in Classical learning which challenged medieval beliefs and ideas. The population was becoming wealthier which led to an increase in trade and travel and the spread of new ideas. The rise in prosperity also generated an interest in education, supported the flourishing of the arts and promoted scientific discoveries and new inventions. Perhaps the most important of these was the printing press (see image to the right) which enabled books to be printed rather than hand-written, and allowed the distribution of information to a much wider audience than ever before, further fuelling the clamour for more knowledge. The present paper discussed the factor influences on renaissance in Karnataka in a historical dimensions.*

**Keywords:** Renaissance, modern Karnataka, history, intellectuals.

### I. INTRODUCTION:

Renaissance in modern Karnataka as a part of similar phenomenon at the national level almost symbolized the transformation of Karnataka from medieval to modern times in every aspect of its life; cultural and political, social and religious, economic and industrial, transformation of such a great magnitude could not have been possible without alien influences on the one hand and internal response on the other, without the consciousness and persistent efforts on the part of the intellectuals on the one hand, and a wholeheartedness of the people on the other. It was in fact, the outcome of the longstanding interaction between the west and Karnataka as well as open-mindedness of the Karnataka people and their untiring efforts to imbibe and own such transformation. Therefore,

the present paper is devoted to delineating such factors which prompted the genesis as well as the progress of the renaissance in modern Karnataka.

## II. FACTOR CONTRIBUTION FOR RENAISSANCE:

The factors that were responsible for bringing about the renaissance in modern Karnataka were of varied nature. For the sake of convenience, they may be classified into five categories.

### 1. European influences:-

India came in contact with the European culture and civilisation through the Christian missionaries and the traders. Among those Europeans who entered India as traders and missionaries were the Dutch, Portuguese, French and the British. The fulfillment of their purpose in India was confronted with some challenging problems. Their task in India was not as easy as they assumed. There was a big communication gap between the Europeans and the Indians. In order to bridge this gap, the European traders, as well as missionaries, were obliged to learn the native languages, their grammar, their literature as well as understand their history and culture, besides teaching their own languages, literature, culture and tradition to the native people of India<sup>4</sup>. This was a gigantic task.

### 2. Impact of intellectuals:-

The Christian missionaries were chiefly interested in the propagation of their religion. They were clever enough to consider education as a sure means of propagation. Since they established their government here, it was inevitable for them to know our people, their customs and faith, their standard of living, art, literature and culture also religion.

The British established their rule in our land with great tact and cunning. In addition, they imposed the 'English language at all levels of administration. English became compulsory in our schools and colleges. Although the dominance of English proved detrimental to the development of Kannada, the knowledge of English helped us to cultivate a global awareness. It enabled Indians to develop a new insight, new ideologies learn new subjects and imbibe a sense of history and get a new critical consciousness. Our people were very much impressed by the British administrators and by the instruction in English. New models of study, instruction and writing were invented. Our literary sense also underwent a radical change. Education which was a monopoly of the few privileged people became available to all.

Since the government implemented the system of public education it was necessary to produce literature on a large scale. The Christian missionaries, therefore, diverted their attention to the printing and publication of books. Textbooks of different kinds that were necessary for schools and colleges were printed by the missionaries. They printed and published the ancient literature which was in manuscripts or palm-leaves and stone inscriptions. It should be noted that in the beginning Kannada books were printed outside Karnataka. Gradually the printing work came to be done in Karnataka. The Kannada script was reformed for the convenience of printing. Publication of Kannada literature increased because of the facility of printing.

Benjamin Herman Rice who had a sophisticated sensibility was a teacher and edited an Anglo-Kannada journal called Arunodaya. John Garret prepared textbooks in Kannada and an English-Kannada dictionary beside editing the old Kannada works.

The British administrators have done significant work in Kannada. They learnt Kannada for the love of the language and imparted their invaluable historical sense to the Kannada people. Colin Mackenzie, Buchan, Walter Eliot, Louis Rice, J. F. Fleet collected source material for research in Kannada studies. With great effort, they collected stone inscriptions, manuscripts, antiques, legends, topographical history, culinary arts and folk literature. Louis Rice, the Father of Kannada inscriptions published many rare inscriptions. E. P. Rice wrote the first History of Kannada Literature in English. Mackenzie inspired the poet Devachandra to write *Rajavali Kathe*. Wilks wrote the History of Mysore and Walter Eliot founded the Kannada schools. F. W. Ellis wrote *Kannada Bhashabhyasa*, (the study of Kannada Language). Meherel wrote a book of Kannada grammar. Charles Gover published a unique collection of folk songs under the title Folk Songs of Southern India. Buchan collected rare historical records J. F. Fleet has written about two hundred articles in the area of the study of Kannada history. He spent all his leisure in the company of villagers listening to their songs all through the night. He collected the historical ballads and published them. Thomas Hudson wrote a book called An Elementary Grammar of Kanarese language. George Wurth compiled a unique anthology of old Kannada specimens of poetry under the title *Prakkavya Male*. J. Mac edited a journal called *Vichitra Vartamana Sangraha* and published a collection of poems called *Kavya Punjab* (A cluster of poems). Herman Reiche translated The New Testament in Kannada and Rev. Keiqe wrote *Kannada Bala Vyakarana* and book of geography.

Some Christian writers have written about the Kannada language in Kannada and some others in Kannada English and German. Some others have written both in Kannada and in English. Through such efforts, Kannada developed and it spread inside and outside Karnataka. Both *Kannadigas* and non-Kannadigas became aware of the richness of the language and the scholars were convinced of the possibilities of further research work.

Although the Christian writers were not born *Kannadigas*, they surpassed the *Kannadigas* in their zeal for the enrichment of Kannada. They learnt the language with great zest and transplanted the creative and critical work of the Western countries into Kannada. They showed that Kannada was a living language and suggested the new ways in which the work could be continued. They travelled in Karnataka, mixed with the people and faithfully recorded the life lived by the people. They collected the proverbs and songs of the common folk and their endeavour was a beacon light to the other scholars; in fact, these records inspired the Indian scholars for further research<sup>32</sup>. The Christians, first of all, served their own cause, the propagation of Christianity and also served the cause of Kannada literature. The propagation roused the people to defend their own religion and their literary work opened new avenues of research<sup>33</sup>.

### 3. The Modern Education:-

It was indeed in the field of education that the west exercises its most profound and significant Influence. From the earliest times, India maintained a pattern of education based upon the belief that education was a perfectly harmonised and integrated development of the body, intellect, morals and emotions of the individual leading to the acquisition of spiritual power, which also could help the true fulfillment of the life purpose<sup>37</sup>. This conception of education was not only the development of the intellect leading to economic and social advance but also the supreme end of life lay behind all the system of training in vogue in ancient days. But subsequently, there was a distinct deterioration in objects and methods partly as the result of the political vicissitudes to which the country was repeatedly exposed and the economic backwardness which resulted there from. It is wrong to suppose that education was backwards or unscientific in the early days. Indian intellect had reached amazing heights in abstract speculative thought more than two million years ago and it is incorrect to say, as Macaulay did, that unmitigated superstition was the only feature of Indian culture<sup>39</sup>. Moreover, any society or any culture, if it is to retain stability and survive in the face of violent political shocks, as India did, must possess economic cohesion, and this presupposes a certain degree of technical knowledge also. Acquisitiveness at the expense of others, which is a prominent feature of modern industrial life was never looked upon as a virtue by Indians in those days, for it violated the moral values they had cherished. This partly explains why there was no scientific or technical advance in India in the early periods. But, a fatal defect in Indian education was that it was opposed to the spirit of free inquiry which alone can lead to scientific advancement.

### 4. Response of Karnataka:-

Whereas India as a whole was undergoing a profound transformation on account of Western impact and witnessing socio-religious movements which symbolised Indian renaissance. Karnataka favourably responded to

those changes and set the stage for a native renaissance during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. North-Karnataka came under the influence of the Prarthana Samaj to a large extent, while other parts were affected by the Brahmo Samaj. It was at about the turn of the century that a branch of the Brahmo Samaj was established in the civil station of Bangalore, whose moving spirit was Veereshalingam Panthulu of revered memory. Measures of social reform like the abolition of child marriage, widow remarriage, encouragement of education for girls as well as boys, were taken up. Books in Kannada dealing with the life and work of Ram Mohan Roy and explaining his message were published and popularised. The Ram Mohan Roy Middle school in Cotton pet and the Vanita Samaj of Bangalore, the Anathalaya of Mysore and many institutions of this type were due to the inspiration of the Brahmo Samaj. Sri Radhahrishnananda writing about the life of his father, the late B. Puttaiah says that his grandfather and Veerashalingam Panthulu were close friends and were native members of the Brahmo Samaj. The names of Ram Mohan Roy, Keshub Chandra Sen and Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore were household words in many families and prayer meetings were conducted regularly according to Brahmo Samaj rites.

“The pundits with one voice acclaimed him as a remarkable Vedic scholar of supreme realisation. The Diwan spoke of him as gifted beyond description and said he must have been a born ‘Brahma Jnana’ (known of Brahma), for at such a comparatively young age, how could he have gained all this knowledge and insight even with his mastery of the Vedas and Vedantas. ‘such brilliancy of thought such charm of personality, such wide learning and such penetrating religious insight won the admiration of his Highness for the Swamiji and when he spoke of departing, his Highness was so distressed that for a remembrance of his personality, he took a photographic record of his voice. ‘After a stay of about a month in Mysore, he left for Cape Comorin via Cochin, Trivandrum and Rameswaram’.

Another reformist movement which had influenced the people of Mysore was the Theosophical Society. Mrs Annie Besant’s personality and her moving appeals for social reform had a tremendous effect. She told the people that India in ancient days could achieve distinction in all folds of life chiefly because she had Maitreya as well as Yagnavalkyas, and her regeneration would come only when Hindu women would occupy the position of respect and dignity which they held in ancient times. Not only the chief cities like Bangalore and Mysore but the smaller towns also had theosophical centres. A theosophical high school was started at Bangalore in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and this institution has grown into the national college of today.

## 5. Rediscovery of the Soul of Karnataka:-

The Karnataka renaissance owes its genesis to historical researchers of the land. The reminiscence of the glory of the past constitutes the very essence of the Renaissance which is quite often characterised by the past glory. The history of the dead past, however, glorious it might have been being insignificant, as long as it is buried beneath the human memory and gone into the oblivion<sup>58</sup>. Rediscovering the past glory depends to a large extent on the historical consciousness and conscious efforts at uncovering the dead past. In other words, historical researchers in Karnataka were inaugurated more or less with the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal by Sir William Jones in 1784. The foundation of the Royal Asiatic Society in January 1784, was a landmark in the cultural history of India. A couple of research papers pertaining to the history of Karnataka were published in the early issues of the journal started by Royal Asiatic Society. The pioneering work done by the Western orientalist had created deep interest and awareness among the natives to take their heritage more seriously and with the sense of pride. The contributions of Col. McKenzie, B. G. Bebington, Voltaire, Elliot and James Bourges and other such scholars had paved the way for this movement. The works of Robert Sewell, Alexander Rea and Cousins added new dimensions to the glorious heritage of Karnataka.

The Historical research in Karnataka gained momentum with the establishment of the department of archaeology and museums by the enlightened rulers of Mysore as early as 1885. The Archaeological Survey of India concentrated its research activities in Kannada speaking areas of Bombay and Madras presidencies. The untiring efforts of great archaeologists like J. F. Fleet, B. L. Rice, Holtz, R. Narsimhachar and a host of others brought to light innumerable inscriptions and copper plates which were hidden in the remote rural areas and sometimes underneath the ground. The discovery and decipherment of the inscriptions which contained a rich treasure of historical knowledge were a gigantic task but the sincerity, zeal and enthusiasm of the scholars engaged in rediscovering the glorious heritage of Karnataka knew no bounds. The efforts of Western orient lists were augmented by the native scholarship of Dr K. G. Kundanagar, G. S. Gai, Dr P. B. Desai, R. S. Panchamukhi and a host of others. The outcome of the efforts of the scholars is deeply admirable. Nearly 10,000 inscriptions were published in epigraphic Karnataka volumes, published by Departments of Archaeology of the erstwhile Mysore state. The Archaeological Survey of India has so far published nearly 3000 inscriptions out of the 7000 epigraphs it has surveyed. Similarly, the Kannada research institute, Dharwad, Hyderabad Archaeological department also have brought to light innumerable inscriptions of the respective regions. Archaeological excavations conducted by the department of archaeology, Mysore and archaeological survey of India in places like T. Narasipura, Tekkalakote, Piklihal, Sanganakal, Hallur, Hunasgi have brought to light the early human

settlements in Karnataka indicating the antiquity of the region. Excavations conducted at Sannati in Gulbarga district throw light on the spread of Buddhism in an early phase of Karnataka history.

### III. CONCLUSION:

In the view that discovery and decipherment of inscriptions, archaeological excavations and systematic survey of monuments enabled the historians to throw a flood of light on the glorious heritage of Karnataka. J. Fleets, *Dynasties of Canarese Districts*, Robert Sewell's *The Forgotten Empire*, Father Heras *The Aravidu Dynasty*, Cousin's *Chalukya Architecture*, Altekari's *Rastrakutas and their times* and Bhandarkar's *Early History of the Deccan* were some of the early historical works which brought to the fore the glorious history and heritage of Karnataka and filled the hearts of Karnataka people with a sense of pride for their glorious past. The historical researches carried for about 50 years started yielding results during the last quarter of 19<sup>th</sup> century and first quarter of 20<sup>th</sup> century. They started taking pride with the fact that the Karnataka had a close association with epic stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata. Similarly, the heroism of Mayuravarma the founder of Kadamba dynasty, the victory of Pulakeshi II over Harsha Vardhana of North India, and Pallavas of Kanchi, the victorious marches of Rastrakuta army in North India, the empire-building activities of Krishnadevaraya, the glorious personality of Vishnuvardhana, the patriotic spirit of Tippu Sultan, the heroic fight of Kittur Channamma and the gallantry of Babasaheb of Naragunda and Venkatappa Naik of Surapur all filled the hearts of the Karnataka people with unprecedented sense of pride about heroic deeds and unstinted courage of their ancestors. People like Alur Venkatarao, Huyilgol Narayana Rao, Turamari and others exploited history of Karnataka to infuse a spirit of Karnataka's in the hearts of native people. In fact, they were not professional historians but their harnessing of history with full of emotions as an effective instrument of arousing the sense of pride for their native land, language and culture were unique and unusual. The efforts of these people not only provided the people of Karnataka with their history but the glorified account of the past history enabled them to revive the past glory, courage and heroism which was the need of the hour<sup>65</sup>. Similarly, the glorious account of the marvellous temples of Ellora, exquisitely called caves of Badami, the temples of Pattadakal and Aihole, Lakkundi and Lakshmeshwara, Halebeedu and Belur, the world famous monolith sculpture of Gommateshwara filled the hearts of the people of Karnataka with the sense of pride and distinction. There was no cultural programme which was without reference to the past glory and historical heritage of the Karnataka people. It is, therefore, quite reasonable to believe that reconstruction of the history of Karnataka was greatly responsible for bringing about a renaissance in modern Karnataka.

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