



History of Kannada Journalism - A Study

Mr.Yogeesh A

C/o T.G.Srinivas, Geethanjali Nilaya, 2nd Main, 5th Cross, Vijayanagara, Tumkur - 572101, Karnataka

KEYWORDS :

As in many other parts of India, Christian missionaries were the pioneers of Kannada journalism. The first Kannada newspaper, Mangalore Samachara, a fortnightly, was published in Mangalore in 1843. Rev Herman Moegling of the Basel Mission was its editor and publisher. Although its main objective was to propagate Christianity, it carried government circulars and notifications and also published news of importance and of local interest. After a year it was shifted to Bellary where it assumed a new name, Kannada Samachara. But it did not live long in its new habitate.

It may be noted that before Independence and the re-organization of the states, Kannada journalism was spread over two princely states (Mysore and Hyderabad) and two provinces of British India (Bombay and Madras). The publishing centres were Mysore and Bangalore in Mysore State, Belgaum, Oharwar and Hubli (Bombay), Mangalore (Madras), Gulburga (Hyderabad). In Mysore State it had to struggle for existence in the face of repressive measures by the state administration and it also had to face the wrath of the British rulers outside for espousing the cause of freedom and solidarity with the forces of nationalism. The Kannada press has had a proud record in the freedom struggle under the leadership of Gandhiji, and the sacrifices made and the persecution and imprisonment suffered by the great Kannada journalists have left a rich tradition of heroism and patriotism.

Belgaum has the distinction of bringing out the first Kannada weekly, Subuddhir Prakasha, in 1849. In Mysore, which was the home of Kannada newspapers in the later half of the 19th Century, Mysore Vrittanta Bodhini, a weekly, appeared in 1859 with Bhasyam Tirumalacharya as the editor. It was patronised by the Maharaja of Mysore and carried news of government activities. It lasted till 1864. The Mysore Government published an Anglo-Kannada weekly, Mysore Gazette, in 1866. L. Rickett, its first editor, not only published government notifications and circulars but also other news and views and even criticism of government policy. The first Kannada daily, Suryodaya Prakashika, was published in Bangalore in 1888 by B.Narasinga Rao but very soon its periodicity had to be changed to a weekly for financial reason.

M. Venkatakrishnaiah (1844-1933), considered by many as the father of Kannada journalism brought out his weekly, Vrittanta Chintamani, in 1885, in Mysore. He laid the foundation for modern Kannada journalism. "His writings were marked by simplicity, directness and effectiveness. He was sensitive, intelligent, honest, learned, unsparing in his views and disciplined in public and private conduct." He had a reformer's zeal. He fought the government with his pen and he was a hero to his readers. He was a member of the Mysore Representative Assembly and a philanthropist. He started educational institutions, hostels and orphanages and made a donation to the University of Mysore to be used to give a prize to the best student in journalism if and when such a course was started (it took 30 years for the university to start a course in journalism). Venkatakrishnaiah started more than 10 newspapers in Kannada and English. Among them, the Kannada journals were Sampadabhyudaya, a daily (1912), and Sadhwi, a weekly. Two journalists trained by him, M. Gopala Iyengar and M. Srinivasa Iyengar, started Kannada Nadegannadi in Bangalore in 1895. It became popular and had great influence on the readers.

In 1908, the Mysore Government enacted the Mysore Newspaper Regulation Act under which permission of the government had to be obtained before publishing a newspaper. It was laid down that the government could withdraw permission for any newspaper at any

time and those who published newspapers without permission or continued to publish after withdrawal of permission could be prosecuted. A victim of the Act was the editor of Kannada Nadegannadi who was deported from the state. Sharathi, a nationalist daily started in 1907, was shut down. Venkatakrishnaiah protested against the press regulation and closed down his newspapers as a gesture of solidarity. The Press Act was modified during the regime of Dewan Visveswarayya and Venkatakrishnaiah resumed publication of his papers.

Between 1880 and 1908, a number of Kannada newspapers appeared. Among them were: Kannada Kesari (1-Jubli, 1888), Vokkligara Patrika (Bangalore, 1907) and Arthasadhaka Patrika (1914). During the period, many women journalists made their entry into the profession and among them were T. Sanjeevamma (Shagyodaya 1914, Shimoga) and Tirumamma (Kannata Nandini, 1916, Mysore).

The early part of the 20th Century was also notable for the work of a distinguished Kannada journalist, D. V. Gundappa. A scholar in Sanskrit, Kannada, Telugu, Tamil and English, Gundappa started a Kannada daily, Sarnachar Sangraha, in Bangalore in 1907. It was followed by a weekly, Sumati (1909). Another weekly, Karnataka, lived for 14 years. The language used by Gundappa was scholarly. However, it exercised great influence on the public and administration. Bal Gangadhar Tilak exercised great influence on the Kannada press in the first two decades of the 20th Century, especially in the Kannada-speaking area of the Bombay Presidency. Among Kannada journalists who were influenced by Tilak were Alur Venkat Rao, who founded Jayakarnataka in 1922, Hardekar Manjappa whose Dhanurdhari carried translation of Tilak's articles in Kesari, and Sitarama Sastri who started Veerakesari. Alur Venkat Rao was one of the earliest writers to plead for unification of Karnataka (which was achieved after Independence). Other newspapers which made important contributions to the political movement were Chandrodya (1913), Karmaveera (1921), Sachitra Bharata (1913), K. Vasudevacharya's Shubhodaya (1917), and Vijaya (1921). All the papers were published from Dharwar. Karinadiga (1925), published from Bagalkot, was also a politically influential paper.

In 1921, Tirumala Tatacharya Sharma started Viswakarnataka, which played an important role in promoting the national cause and incurred the hostility of the government. For 20 years, Sharma launched a crusade for freedom, made great sacrifices, suffered imprisonment and refused to submit to the dictates of the government. The paper was suppressed in 1929 by the state government for its reports of riots in Bangalore. On the occasion, editors of two other papers, Sitarama Sastri of Veerakesari and Aswathanarayan Rae of Navjeevana, were prosecuted for sedition and sent to jail. Viswakarnataka, which had a different editor and management, in 1942, played a significant role during the Quit India Movement. It was again suppressed in 1944 for an alleged seditious editorial and an open letter to the Viceroy. It was revived in 1945.

Tainadu, founded in 1926 in Mysore by P. R. Ramaia (1894-1970), was another nationalist newspaper. It started as a weekly and then moved over to Bangalore where it was converted into a daily in 1929. It fought hard for responsible government in the state and the national cause. Ramaia and P. H. Srinivas, who became its editor later, courted imprisonment in 1943. Tainadu celebrated its silver jubilee in 1952.

Samyukta Karnataka, published from Hubli, was in the vanguard of the freedom movement in north Karnataka. It was started as a weekly in Belgaum in 1929 but it moved to Hubli and became a daily in 1933. Its sponsors were Kabbur Madhwa Rao, Rama Rae Hukkenkar and R. R. Diwakar. It became a byword in Karnataka journalism and its most famous editor was H. R. Mohray. Mohray came from a family of journalists and was connected with Karnataka Vaibhavak, one of the oldest Kannada weeklies in Bijapur started by his ancestors. Mohray, who in the post-Independence period became a national figure, being president of the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society and a director of the Press Trust of India, was editor of Samyukta Karnataka for over 25 years. He made the paper the authentic voice of the leaders of the freedom struggle and it enjoyed immense popularity in north Karnataka.

During the police action in Hyderabad after Independence, Samyukta Karnataka played a prominent part. The Nizam banned its entry into Gulburga and other areas of Hyderabad. However, Mohray managed to smuggle the paper into Nizam's territory. He was an ideal journalist who was endowed with rich common sense and who hated personal publicity. He went to jail during the Saft Satyagraha. He had two objectives: Swaraj (Self Rule — Independence) and Akanda (United) Karnataka, and he saw them realised during his lifetime. The people of north Karnataka were so fond of Samyukta Karnataka that when in 1940 it faced a financial crisis, they came forward and raised a fund to meet its commitments. Unfortunately, after the passing away of Mohray in 1960, the paper was involved in litigation which continued for a long time.

A powerful weekly in Dharwar in 1921 was Karmaveer which carried on in the face of heavy odds and official persecution its mission to propagate the message of freedom. R. R. Diwakar was its editor and Madhwa Rao its publisher. At one time Diwakar was arrested for the paper's anti-government attitude. Karmaveer later moved on to Hubli. Its most notable editor was H. R. Purohit who held the post for 30 years.

B. N. Gupta, an enterprising journalist, started many journals during the freedom movement. He started Prajamata, a weekly, in Madras in 1931 and then brought it to Bangalore. It was banned by the state government and was shifted to Hubli (then in Bombay Presidency). When its entry into Mysore state was banned, Gupta changed the name of the journal to Prajamitra and sold it in Mysore and Bangalore. M. S. Gurupadaswami was its editor. Gupta started a daily, Janavani in 1934 to promote the national cause. He later sold it to an industrialist of Bombay.

There was no Kannada daily in Mangalore (which until the recognition of states after independence was part of the Madras Presidency) until 1941 although it was the birthplace of a number of weeklies, as many as ten at one time. The daily, Navabharata, which appeared in 1941 under the editorship of V. S. Kudva is still going strong today. The Udayavani of Manipal (1970) and its sister illustrated weekly Taranga (1983) are also popular.

The most widely circulated Kannada daily by early 2014 was Prajavani. Founded in 1948 in Bangalore by K. N. Guruswamy, it was first published in 1948 as a sister paper of Deccan Herald. B. Puttaswamiah was its first editor. Prajavani has a history of being a politically independent newspaper; it is known for espousing the causes of Dalits, encouraging women's empowerment and taking pro-poor positions on economic issues. The weekly, Sudtia, published by the group (Printers Mysore) is also very popular. The Indian Express group's Kannada Prabha was brought out in 1957 with N. S. Sitarama Sastri as editor. Other newspapers which have earned a name after 1980 are Lakwani, Bangalore (1974), Vishala Karnataka, Hubli (1947), Janamitra, Chikmagalur (1969) and Nadoja, Belgaum (1974). Prapancha, an influential weekly in Hubli was published in 1954 by Path Puttappa who was also its editor.

Towards the end of 1984, there were 687 newspapers in Kannada, including 93 dailies. The total circulation of newspapers was 2155000. Six hundred and three newspapers were published from Karnataka and the rest from Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Three of the eight big dailies had a circulation of more than a lakh. Prajavani was the largest circulated daily and Sudha the largest circulated

weekly. By 2007-08, there were 2610 publications, including 493 daily and 573 weekly newspapers. According to the figures released by IRS (Indian Readership survey) Q-3 2010, the top five most read Kannada daily papers were: Vijay Karnataka (average Issue readership: 34.25 lakh), Prajavani (29.10 lakh), Samyukta Karnataka (11.31 lakh), Kannada Prabha (11.15 lakh), and Udayavani (8.90 lakh).

REFERENCES

1. Anil Seal- The Emergence of Indian National Capitalization and Collaboration in the late 19 Century, Oxford -1968.
2. Nadig Krishnamurthi -
3. Ahuja B.N - history of Indian Press Surjith Publication Delhi - 1986,
4. Parthasarathi Rangaswamy- journalism in Indian - Stairling Publication Private Limited, New Delhi, 16-1989
5. Chandrashekar.S -
6. Mysore District Minutes 1834
7. Halappa G.S -Shivarudrappa G.S -
8. Krishnamurthy K.V -
9. Chandrashekar.S -
10. Jareeda E Roigar - 17-7-1883, N.N.R -T.S.A Madras
11. The Hindu - 12-12-1885, N. N.R -T.S.A Madras