

## Professor K. G. Kundanagar's Contributions to the History and Culture of Karnataka

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### Abstract

Professor K. G. Kundanagar was a well known scholar in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century wisdom of Karnataka. As a researcher, critique, and creative writer, his works found remarkable value. He was the first professor in Kannada and research guide to the Ph.D. students. He became a professor of doctors in safeguarding the Kannada and modern Karnataka. Kundanagar created the crew of Kannada scholars and teachers in a bigger volume. He was one of the builders of Kannada heritage. Study about Kundanagar is a study of the wholly culture of north Karnataka in the beginning decades of twentieth century.

**KEYWORDS:** Creative, Critique, Culture, Heritage, Wisdom

### EARLY LIFE:

Professor K. G. Kundanagar was born on 14.8.1895 in the Koujalgi village of Gokak taluka. It was a poor gold smith (pattar) family. Giriappa and Shakambar were his parents. He lost his parent at his early age of three and faced the series of hurdles and obstacles. He started schooling with the help of his uncle Ningappa. Kundanagar attracted and passionate by narration and recitation of Ramayana, Mahabharata, Harishchandra Kavya, Prabhulinga Leele and other works in his early age. Further he went to Belgaum for his middle school by the inspiration of Vaman Rao and Venkatrao Kulkarni. Thereafter Kundanagar joined for high school in Dharwad with the help of his for long relative Bhimappa Koujalgi. He passed his matriculation as first backward class student in the region.

Kundanagar joined his college education at Fergusen College, Pune and completed intermediate in 1913. He joined Rajaram High School at Kolhapur as Head Master in 1916. He was appointed as science teacher to Anglo-Vernacular High School of Gokak in 1918. He was completed his degree in 1919 as first graduate. Even he passed his degree as Chemistry was major subject, he chose Kannada Literature for Post Graduation and passed it as first post graduate.

### As First Professor of Kannada:

Kundanagar was first Kannada professor as he passed M. A. in Kannada literature as optional subject, and appointed to the one and only college of Karnataka (Dharwad) in northern Karnataka region in 1925. Then T. S. Venkannaiah was only professor of Kannada was working in Mysore region. Kundanagar was actively participated in the study of historical records viz., inscriptions, copper plates, cotton folders, palm leaves etc., were collected in the Karnataka College, by himself and his numerous disciples. Now, Karnataka College made an visiting centre to the scholars across the state. Prof. B. A. Morois owed his gratitude to Kundanagar for his bibliographic help in the study and research pertaining to the Kadamba dynasty. This museum laid a stepping stone to establishment of Kannada research institute in 1940 in Dharwad.

Diwan Anna Saheb Latte of Kolhapur princely state, knew the scholarship and simplicity of Kundangar, appointed him as principal of Rajaram College, under the auspices of Chatrapati Maharaj of Kolhapur in 1927. Kundangar developed a well equipped library with voluminous and valuable books. In Kolhapur, he organized the Kannada Sangha from 1928. He started 'Geleyara Balaga', and 'Basava Balaga', and made Kolhapur as Kannada pilgrimage. He called honorary resource persons like B. M. Shri, Rajaratnan, D. V. G., M. R. Shri, A. N. Krishnarao, Gubbi Veeranna, Venkatrao Alur, Karant, Dinakar Desai, V.K. Gokak, T.P. Kailasam and others for delivering lecturers on various facets of Kannada, culture and Karnataka.

Kundangar made many persons trained for rendering their yeomen service in various fields for further a half century viz., B. D. Jatti, K. H. Patil, G. B. Shankar Rao, V. K. Gokak, R. S. Mugali, Prof. S. R. Malagi, Prof. A. T. Sasanur, Dr. R. C. Hiremath, Dr. D. C. Pawate, M. P. Patil, Dr. M. S. Sunkapur, Prof. S. S. Malawada, Prof. S. S. Bhusnurmath, Dr. Hiremallur Eashwaran, Dr. B. R. Bendre, Dr. H. T. Sasanur and so on. Kundangar served for about four decades to furthering the Kannada and research until his death on 22.08.1965.

#### **Works of Kundangar:**

Prof. Kundangar's writing is multi faceted. He contributed about twenty one works to the enrichment of Karnataka's history and culture. Few selected works as follows:

1. Notes on Sri. Mahalaxmi temple.
2. Inscriptions in northern Karnataka and the Kolhapur state.
3. Vocabulary of inscriptions of Rattas.
4. 117 Research articles.

Among his 117 research articles twenty are in English version and thirteen articles are pertaining to inscriptions and six articles have been belonged to coinage and archaeology, he was dedicated about half of his articles to Jain and Veerashaiva religions.

#### **Research and Prof. Kundangar:**

Even though Kundangar served in many stratas of Kannada and literature, scholars traced his outstanding service in the field of research. From his student hood he was interested in wandering towards collection of the inscriptions, copper plates, coins, archrivals and etc. With the knowledge of Kannada and English, he urged the scholarship and proficiency in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Ardha Magadhi and Marathi languages by self interestingly.

Prof. Kundangar interested in study of Mahalaxmi of Kolhapur was very initial and magnum opus study towards the Ambha Bhavani, the Goddess of Kolhapur in 1929. He composed the work entitled 'Notes on Sri Mahalaxmi Temple', Kolhapur, gave a foundation stone to his cultural research. For composition of the work, he used purana, legends, inscriptions and other thirteen sources. Where he declared that, "now the temple was belonged to Saiva sect, it was got alteration as Padmavati Jain temple in the period of Rattas. But again it comes as Hindu temple in the regime of Yadavas of Devagiri as usual today" was proven thought by Kundangar. The design of temple, art and architecture, and other temples in Kolhapur had shed light in the work.

Kundangar got popular in the mass and class people of Maharashtra. The above work was had a foreword of father Heras. He says "The Rajaram College is to be congratulated on having such a diligent investigator in the field of epigraphy and

archaeology". Father Heras stands Kundangar in the lines of R. Narasimhachar and others. Haras described his work and stated that "This monography is valuable contribution to the archaeological studies of south India". Even till today it is a first hand book to the researchers and guides as good source.

By the Kundangar studied the cultural aspects of Jain puranas and wrote a article 'culture in Kannada Jaina puranas'. He narrated the art, paintings, architecture, sculpture, education, music, dance and other sixty four arts, games, instruments, rituals, officialdom, agri, trade and commerce etc., as stated in Adipurana, Vardhamana purana, Bharatesha Vaibhava, Vaddharadhane and other works. He was described the long journey of sculpture, paintings, music and so on, from Guptan period to Chalukyasa.

Kundangar wrote few articles on sculpture of Karnataka. Kopeshwara temple at Kidrapura an article had the font information of Kopeshwara temple at Kidrapur. In another article 'Antiquities of Hukkeri' gives the detailed knowledge of the epigraphy, antiquities of the Hukkeri provisions. Hence, 'Arches, Domes and Vimanasa', is another article shed the light on art and architecture of south India.

'Development of the Kannada Drama', is a remarkable article of Kundangar, gives the detailed history of Kannada drama and theatre. His article 'Pashupati and Saiva sects in Karnataka' published in 1938 and proposed the similar incidences in the inscriptions of Bijapur and Belgaum. Then, Kundangar tried to clarify the Kannada and Karnataka's truthful dominance over the view of provinciality of Belgaum, in his articles 'Belgaum province of Kannada', 'Influence of Marthi on Kannada' and 'Retrospect and Prospect of Kolhapur'.

Prof. Kundangar had written about twenty eight articles regarding to 'contribution of Jains to Kannada language and literature, culture and heritage'. He edited obviously rear and rare works in middle Kannada literature.

Kundangar had having deepest love towards the research of epigraphy. He believed inscriptions are the real and definite records of history, culture and literary importance of a particular state and people. So, many scholars called him as a 'successor of fleet'. He wondered many villages, mountains, temples and ponds himself to collect the true copies of many inscriptions and copper plates. He was published the book entitled 'The vocabulary of the inscriptions of Rattas', as early as in 1928. Kundangar published the book 'Inscriptions in Northern Karnataka and Kolhapur state'. In this work there are twenty three inscriptions discovered and evaluated by him only. The inscriptions, which creates history of politico-cultural aspects of Chalukyasa of Kalyana, Shilaharas and Kalachuris of twelfth century.

Kundangar wrote many scholarly high valued articles to state and national level reputed journals and papers. These are covered the chronology, dynasties, heroic and sati stones, nishadhis, scripts, importance and types of inscriptions, coinage, religion, sages and kings of swadi dynasty, Harihara II, Akalavarsha of Mudhol principality are considerable and reflects the Kundangar's knowledge in the field of epigraphy.

Kundangar was also interested in the field of archaeology as good as a history professor. He was worked about two decades as director of archaeological museum of Kolhapur state from 1929. He was put an effort to excavate at Brahmapuri near Kolhapur from his own expenditure for about fifteen years. Many utensils crewed including copper and mud utensils and coins revealed the living standard of people of Kannada in the Satavahana age. These explanations ousted in his article 'Archaeological finds in

Brahmapuri excavations, Kolhapur'. Martimar wheeler exclaimed "Excellent, marvelous", as observed the above writings and excavations of Kundangar.

After Brahmapuri excavations, Kundangar turn his sight towards the river bank of Panchaganga and excavated many valuable materials and a rare copper statue of Roman sea goddess proved the Kolhapur relation with Greece. Nevertheless, he declared the high values of Buddhism on the study undertaken at the caves of Ganganbada, Pavale, Alate, Phanhal and Karhad.

Kundangar was first and for most indigenous scholar studied about the numismatics. He wrote an article about 'coinage in the ancient Kannada nadu', is a rare article dealing with the ancient coins. He collected many coins surrounding the panchanganga and they shed a light on the life and society of Shatavahana period in Karnataka.

Kundangar traced various names of the kings, Brahmi script, chaitya, swastika, Alive tree and other symbols on the coins leads the dominance of Buddhism in the province of Kolhapur. He was presented the paper on 'coins of Andhra' in auspicious of 'Numismatic society of Calcutta' in 1930, all the scholars bowed their head for the shoalrity of Kundangar.

#### **As a Research Guide:**

Prof. Kundangar didn't had the Ph.D. degree himself, but Mumbai University honoured him as research guide, hence, his scholarship and deep knowledge in Kannada literature. He was called Professor of Doctors. After his retirement Karnataka University of Dharwad has also honoured him as a research guide. Under his guideship Dr. D. S. Karki got doctorate at first time in Kannada literature from Mumbai University in 1949. Then Dr. B. S. Gaddagimath awarded the doctorate under Kundangar's guideship at first time in the history of Karnataka University, Dharwad.

#### **Estimate:**

Professor Kundangar was an ideal teacher, researcher guide and independent thinker. He introduced the Karnataka culture to the Marathis. As the result of his research in epigraphy, polity, literature and cultural aspects of Karnataka history had been published to the outer world in several aspects. In the same way he enlightened the many geographical excavations, coins and museum. He published many books and inscriptions as successful editor. He was a fair model to one who can achieve many things possible by their own effort.

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