

# MODERN KANNADA NAVODAYA LITERATURE

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*Abstract: The development of modern Kannada literature can be traced to the early 19th century when Maharaja Krishnaraja Wodeyar III and his court poets moved away from the ancient Champu form of prose toward prose renderings of Sanskrit epics and plays. Kempu Narayana's Mudramanjusha is the first modern novel written in Kannada.*

**Introduction:** Modern Kannada literature was cross-fertilized by the colonial period in India as well. with translations of Kannada works and dictionaries into European languages as well as other Indian languages, and vice versa, and the establishment of European style newspapers and periodicals in Kannada. In addition, in the 19th century, interaction with European technology, including new printing techniques accelerated the development of modern literature.

The first Kannada newspaper called Mangalore samachara was published by in 1843; and the first Kannada periodical, Mysoru Vrittanta Bodhini was published by Bhashyam Bhashya Herman Mogling acharya in Mysore around the same time. Herman Mogling translated Kannada classics into a series called Bibliotheca Carnataca during 1848–1853. while British officers Benjamin L. Rice and J. H. Fleet edited and published critical editions of literary classics, contemporary folk ballads and inscriptions. Following the rich tradition of dictionaries in Kannada since the 11th century, the first dictionaries expressing meanings of Kannada words in European languages were published in the 19th century, the most prominent of them being Ferdinand Kittel's Kannada-English dictionary in 1894.

There was a push towards original works in prose narratives and a standardisation of prose during the late 19th century. Translations of works from English, Sanskrit and other Indian languages like Marathi and Bengali continued and accelerated. Lakshman Gadagkar's Suryakantha (1892) and Gulvadi Venkata Rao's Indira bai (1899) signalled the move away from the highly stylised mores and aesthetics of prior Kannada works to modern prose, establishing the modern novel genre and fundamentally influencing the essay, literary criticism and drama genres. At the dawn of the 20th century, 'B. M. Sri regarded as the "Father of modern Kannada literature" called for a new era of writing original works in modern Kannada while moving away from archaic Kannada forms. This paradigmatic shift spawned an age of prolificacy in Kannada literature and came to be dubbed the Nayodaya period a period of awakening. B. M. Sri led the way with his English Geetegalu (English Songs) a collection of poems translated from English set the tone for more translations using a standardisation of a modern written idiom. Original and seminal works which drew greatly from native and folk traditions also emerged alongside the translations. Stalwarts like S. G. Narasimhachar, Panje Mangesha Rao and Hattiangadi Narayana Rao also contributed with celebrated efforts. Literary subjects now veered from discussing kings and gods to more humanistic and secular pursuits. Kannada writers experimented with several forms of western literature, the novel and the short story in particular. The novel found an early champion in Shivaram Karanth while another prominent writer, Masti venkatesh Iyengar ('Masti'), laid the foundation for generations of story tellers to follow with his Kelavu sanna Kathegalu (A few Short Stories, 1920) and Sanna Katheglu (Short Stories, 1924).

The consolidation of modern drama was pioneered by T. P. Kailasam with his Tollu Gatti (The Hollow and the Solid, 1918). Kailasam followed this with Tali Kattoke Cooline (Wages for tying the Mangalsutra), a critique on the dowry system in marriage. His plays mainly focused on problems affecting middle class Brahmin families: the dowry system, religious persecution, woes in the extended family system and exploitation of women. Novels of the early 20th century promoted a nationalist consciousness in keeping with the political developments of the time. While Venkatachar and Galaganath translated Bankim Chandra and Harinarayana Apte respectively, Gulvadi Venkata Rao, Kerur Vasudevachar and M. S. Puttanna initiated the movement toward realistic novels with their works. Aluru Venkatarao's Karnataka Gatha Vaibhava had a profound influence on the movement for Karnataka's unification.

While the first quarter of the 20th century was a period of experiment and innovation, the succeeding quarter was one of creative achievement. This period saw the rise of acclaimed lyricists whose works combined native folk songs and the mystic poetry of the medieval Vachanas and Kirthanas with influences from modern English romantics. D. R. Bendre with his collection of 27 poems including such masterpieces as Gari ("Wing", 1932), Nadaleele (1938) and Sakhigeetha (1940), was perhaps the most outstanding Kannada lyricist of the period. His poems covered a wide range of themes including patriotism, love of nature, conjugal love, transcendental experiences and sympathy for the poor. Govind Pai narrated the story of Christ's crucifixion in his work Golgotha (1931). The success of this work encouraged Pai to follow with three Panegyrics in 1947; Vaishakhi, Prabhasand Dehali, narrated the last days of the Buddha, God Krishna and Gandhi respectively. His Hebberalu ("Thumb", 1946) dramatises the story of Drona and Ekalavya, characters from the epic Mahabharata.

K.V. Puttappa who would subsequently become Kannada's first Jnanpeetha awardee, demonstrated great talent in writing blank verse with his magnum opus Sri Ramayana Darshanam (1949). This work marks the beginning of modern Kannada epic poetry. The work, through the use of metaphors and similes, focuses on the concept that all living creatures will eventually evolve into perfect being. Other important works of the period are Masti's Navaratri and P. T. Narasimhachar's hanathe. D.V.G.'s Mankuthimmana Kagga ("Dull Thimma's Rigmarole", 1943) harkened back to the wisdom poems of the late medieval poet Sarvajna. A celebrated writer of conjugal love poems, K. S. Narasimhswamy won critical acclaim for Mysore Mallige ("Mysore Jasmine", 1942), a description of the bliss of everyday marital life.

Growth in poetic drama was inspired by B.M. Sri's Gadayuddha Natakam (1925), an adaptation of Ranna's medieval epic. While Kuvempu and B.M. Sri were inspired by old Kannada, Masti and later P. T. Narasimhachar explored modern sensibilities in their Yashodhara (1938) and Ahalye (1940). The 1930s saw the emergence of Sriranga, who joined forces with Samsa and Kailasam to pen some of the most successful plays in Kannada. Samsa completed his trilogy about Ranadhira Kantirava, a Mysore king of yore, with his Vijayanarasimha (1936) and Mantrashakti (1938). Kailasam's mastery over wit and stage rhetoric come to the fore in his Home Rule (1930) and Vaidyana Vyadi ("A Doctor's Ailment", 1940) while he explores his serious side in Bhahishkara (1929); with Soole ("Prostitute", 1945), he unleashed his contempt for outdated quasi-religious mores. Societal ills were also examined in Bendre's Nageya Hoge ("Fumes of Laughter", 1936), and in Karanth's Garbhagudi ("Sanctum", 1932), which decried the exploitation of society in the name of religion.

The novel came of age during this period, with Karanth (Chomana Dudi, 1933), Masti (Subbanna, 1928) and Kuvempu ("Subbamma Heggadathi of Kanur", 1936) leading the charge. Significantly, writers chose to carry on from where Puttanna, Gulvadi and Kerur had left off around the start of the 20th century rather than continue with popular translations in the style of Venkatachar and Galaganath. Aesthetic concerns replaced the didactic and a sense of form developed. Devudu Narasimha Shastri distinguished himself with his Antaranga (1931) and Mayura (1928); the former was a much acclaimed work which delved into the psychology of the protagonist, while the latter was a historical novel tracing the emergence of the Kadamba dynasty. Another high point of this period is Karanth's Marali Mannige (1942), the saga of three generations of a family, reflecting the social, cultural and economic developments of over a hundred years.

### **Literary criticism:**

which had its beginnings in the first quarter-century, also made significant progress. B.M. Sri's Kannada Sahitya Charitre (1947), Gundappa's Sahitya Shakti (1950), Masti's Adikavi Valmiki (1935), Bendre's Sahitya Hagu Vimarshe ("Literature and Criticism", 1932) and Krishna Shastri's Samskrita Nataka (1937) are particularly notable. The essay, another form adopted from western literature, was richly served by A N Murthy Rao (Hagaluganasugalu, 1937), Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar's ('Gorur') humorous Halliya Chitragalu (1930) and Karanth's Hucchu manassina Hattu mukhagalu (1948).

### **Late Navodaya and the rise of the progressives:**

As the Navodaya period waxed, the Pragatishila (progressives) movement led by novelist A. N. Krishna Rao ('Anakru') gained momentum in the early 1940s. Left-leaning school contended that literature must be an instrument of social revolution and considered the Navodaya to be the product of aesthetes, too puritanical to be of any social relevance. This movement drew both established and young writers into its fold and, while it produced no poetry or drama of special merit, its contributions to short story and novel forms were appreciable. Pragatishila was credited with broadening readers' horizons; works produced during this period dealt extensively with subjects of everyday life, rural

themes and the common man. The language was less inhibited and made generous use of colloquialism and slang. Anakru himself was a prolific writer of novels but the best works of this school are attributed to T. R. Subbarao ('Ta Ra Su'), Basavaraju Kattimani and Niranjana. T. R. Subba Rao initially wrote short stories, although he later turned his talents to novels, which were popular. His early novels, Purushavatara and Munjavininda Munjavu, told the stories of the underprivileged, the downtrodden and the outcast. Best known among his novels some of whose plots are centred on his native Chitradurga are Masanada Hoovu ("Flower from a cemetery"), a story about the plight of prostitutes, and historical novel Hamsa Gite ("Swan Song"), a story about a dedicated musician of the late 18th century during annexation of Chitradurga by Tipu sultan.

Marked as its influence had been, the Pragatishila wave was already in decline by the close of the 1950s. Legendary writers of the previous era continued to produce notable works in the Navodaya style. In poetry, Bendre's Naku Tanti ("Four Strings", 1964) and Kuvempu's Aniketana (1964) stand out. V.K. Gokak brought out the innate insufficiencies of the more advanced western cultures in Indilla Nale (1965). Navodaya-style novels continued to be successful with such noteworthy works as Karanth's Mookajjiya Kanasugalu ("Mookajji's visions", 1968), where Karanth explored the origins of man's faith in the mother goddess and the stages of evolution of civilisation. Kuvempu's Malegallali Madumagalu ("The Bride of the Hills", 1967) is about loving relationships that exist in every level of society.

Masti's two classic novels of this era were Channabasavanayaka (1950), which describe the defeat of Bidanur's chief Channabasava Nayaka (on Karnataka's coast) by Haider Ali in the late 18th century, and Chickavirarajendra (1950), which describes the fall of the tiny kingdom of Coorg (ruled by Chikka Virarajendra) to the British East India Company. The common theme in both works is the despotism and tyranny of the incumbent native rulers resulting in the intervention of a foreign power appearing on the scene to restore order, but with its own imperialistic intentions. S. L. Bhyrappa, a charismatic young writer, first came to attention in the 1960s with his first novel Dharmasri, although it was his Vamsavriksha ("Family Tree", 1966) that put him in the spotlight as one of Kannada's most popular novelists. It is a story of a respected scholar, Srinivasa Srotri, his family and their long-held values. The protagonist's young and widowed daughter-in-law wishes to remarry, putting his family tradition at risk. Bhyrappa's best novel of the period was Grihabhanga ("Breaking of a Home", 1970), a story of a woman surviving under tragic circumstances. The characters in the story are rustic and often use vulgar language. His other important novel is Parva, a major work in Kannada fiction acclaimed as an admirable attempt at recreating life on the sub-continent during the time of the epic Mahabharata.

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