



CENTRE FOR TELANGANA STUDIES (CTS)

Dr. MCR HRD INSTITUTE OF TELANGANA



Message

Since 2014 Dr. MCR HRD IT through its Centre for Telangana Studies (CTS) has taken up number of research studies and sponsored number of works titled Itihas journal, Telangana Land and People, Temples of Telangana-through the Ages, Epigraphia Telanganica, Origin and Growth of IT-Industry in Hyderabad, Cultural Heritage of the Kakatiyas, Engineering and Technological achievements during the Kakatiya Period, Marvels of Nature-Rockscape of Telangana, etc. in order to encourage the scholar to collect and compile the history, heritage and culture of Telangana. These publications are readily available for research scholars and the public to know about the rich culture and heritage of Telangana.

The present monograph titled 'Telangana the Confluence of Cultures' is the latest addition to this repository which throws light on the concept called 'Panchaveni Sangam' of Telangana. It gives us knowledge about the emergence of linguistic cultures in Telangana. It discusses the patronage and spread of Telugu, Urdu, Hindi, Marathi, Kannada languages in Telangana.

I hope this monograph will help people to know about the historical importance of languages and their spread in the Telangana region from an early period onwards.

I compliment Capt.(Dr.) Lingala Panduranga Reddy for bringing out this article in a short period for the benefit of various stakeholders.

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TELANGANA THE CONFLUENCE OF CULTURES

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Telangana is a link between the south and the north, a draw bridge between the Dravidians and the Aryans, a meeting point of melting races and a confluence of living languages. It is a gateway to South India. It holds the key for peace and prosperity of integrated India.

It has very often characterized that Telangana as a Panchaveni Sangam, and, therefore, in its secular aspects more important than the Triveni which is the confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswathi. For centuries, five different strains of linguistic cultures have mingled together to develop, in what used to be the old Hyderabad State (Telangana) generally and In the city of Hyderabad particularly, a common cosmopolitan outlook of life which is the peculiar characteristic of the people and which has evoked the admiration of many outsiders, not actuated by any sentiments of local patriotism. The political history of the area itself presents a colourful picture of various dynasties of Hindu and Muslim kings vying with one another for power and peaceful governance of the country.¹ Speaking linguistically, while Telugu is the predominant language of the people, contact with Marathi and Kannada and later with Urdu and Hindi has developed into a wholesome combination and led to be called a Pachaveni Sangam.

It is necessary to keep in mind the ancient history of Deccan in order to trace the growth of this cultural assimilation. The Southern portion of the Indian peninsula lying south of the Narmada river is known, from time immemorial, as the plateau of the Deccan. This land does not comprise merely the modern four Southern States of India-Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Kerala, but it covers a vaster area comprised in

Maharashtra, part of Gujarat, Orissa, and other States to the South of the Narmada, Deccan or Dakshinapatha, as it used to be called in ancient days, is characterized by historians as the land of “Evasive Mysteries”.² It is in this vast area that the Aryan civilization first came into contact with its more ancient counterpart viz., the Dravidian civilization. The sage Agastya is said to be the most important legendary leader of this process of cultural assimilation. The origin of the four languages spoken in the South namely, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam, as now established by scholars, is a positive proof as to how the Aryan and Dravidian languages underwent a process of assimilation leading to their development in modern days as we see them. The influence of Sanskrit and the Vedic culture of which it was the vehicle, has been tremendous and overwhelming on these languages of Dravidian origin. The percentage of words of Sanskrit origin may vary from language to language, but the stamp of its influence is undeniable even on Tamil which has the least percentage of Sanskrit vocabulary. Scholars of comparative philology have conclusively proved how even Sanskrit with its perfect grammar was influenced by the Dravidian languages with which it came into contact. All these processes must have taken hundreds of years or even thousands of years. While Tamil literature has a history of about 3,000 years, Kannada goes back to 1350 years, Telugu to 1150 years and Malayalam to about 950 years. In fact, Malayalam was split up into a separate language out of Tamil about 950 years ago. Prakrits also traveled to Deccan along with Aryan migrations and one of them developed into what is now known as Marathi. This general feature of the history of Deccan continued up to recent times, and there was further amalgamation of cultures of Urdu and its variant Deccan Urdu. All these historical and cultural developments have led to the Deccan being the confluence of cultures.

The early inhabitants of the Deccan had developed a distinct form of civilization before they came into contact with Aryans. Quest for peace and solitude seems to have led the Vedic Rishis to Dandakaranya, where a

section of the Aryan³ community consisting of Andhra, Pundras, Sabaras, Pulindas and Mutibas, etc., had separated from the main stock and had fused with the 'Dasyas' and settled down to well-established tribes. The Aryan conquest seems to have extended by the time of Panini, the great Grammarian, upto Berar (Vidarbha). Katyayana later mentions Pandya, Chola and Kerala. Two forces hastened the pace of the Aryanisation of the lands south of the Vindhya; the Imperialism of the Nandas and the Mauryas, and the missionary activities of the followers of the protestant creeds of Jainism and Buddhism.⁴

The hegemony of the Nandas and the Mauryas was shortlived. The empire of Ashoka disintegrated soon after his death. After that this area of Deccan was ruled by the Satavahanas, the Vakatakas, the Chalukyas of Badami, the Rastrakutas, the Chalukyas of Kalyani,⁵ the Eastern Chalukyas, the Yadavas, the Kakatiyas, and last but not the least the Rayala kings of Vijayanagara. Their dominions varied from time to time, but did not coincide with any particular linguistic area. After the invasion of Devagiri by Allauddin Khilji in 1294 the perspective changed and led to more intimate contact gradually with Islamic culture. He was the first Muslim leader who crossed the Vindhyas and came to the south. The origin of the Bahamani kings is itself symbolic of some concept of Hindu-Muslim unity. While it cannot be said that all of the Bahamani Kings were equally free from religious or communal fanaticism, it can be said without fear of contradiction, that all the five dynasties of the Bahamani kings possessed more catholicity of outlook than the later Moghuls or other Muslim rulers. The Qutub Shahi kings of Golconda were particularly famous for their broad-mindedness and for the patronage of local languages and literatures. Ibrahim Quli Qutub Shah was known to the Telugu poets and writers as "Ibhiramudu".⁶ It is said that he not only patronized Telugu poets but he himself composed poetry both in Deccan Urdu and Telugu as well as in Persian. He had lived in the Vijayanagar court for 7 years. It was during his reign that Yayaticharitramu and Tepat Samvaranopakhyanam, were composed by Telugu poets who enjoyed royal patronage. Addanki Gangadhara Kavi and the author of the latter masterpiece was patronized by

the king himself. To one of his nobles, Amin khan, was dedicated the famous work *Yayati Charitramu* by the author Ponniganti Telaganarya who hailed from Patancheru.⁷ Ibrahim's successor Md Quli Qutub Shah was even a greater devotee of Telangana Desa and a patron of Telugu literature. He himself is said to have composed Telugu poetry, though no such work has been discovered. His Urdu collection of poetry is interspersed with an unceremonious use of Telugu words and phrases, and his poems centre round local Hindu festivals and other subjects of Hindu culture. In fact the birth of Urdu language took place in the Deccan according to one school of thought. The new language of Urdu was the product of the contact of the foreign Muslims and the Hindu population in the North speaking the various Prakrits and therefore contained Turkish, Persian and Arabic words with a large admixture of Brij Bhasha which was another name for Sourasari Prakrit and which had become current in a wide territory extending from Sindh and to Bihar and from Lahore to Malwa. This language was brought to the Deccan with the invasion of Allauddin Khilji, but it received a stimulus after Mohammed Bin Tuglak made Deogiri or Daulatabad his capital. According to latest research the first Urdu poet of Deccan was Khwaja Banda Nawaz, the great saint of Gulbarga (825 A.H.). This language was called the 'Hindi' language which was patronized by the Bahmani kings who gave it the status of an official language. The Deccan became a great centre of learning soon after Allauddin's conquest (1294)⁸ and attracted a large number of celebrated scholars of Arab and Persian origin as well as many Muslim saints who made this language the vehicle of their propagation of religion and philosophy. During the hegemony of the Maratha kings and Peshwas, Marathi language spread far and wide and the Modi script came to be used for village records even in parts of Telangana and Karnatak areas.⁹ While Persian was the court language of the Bahamani kings including rulers of Golconda, the Sanads or documents of grants, etc., were usually inscribed in two languages - Persian as well as the local language Marathi or Telugu. The Western Chalukyas held sway also over a large part of Telugu speaking area. 'Saints like Tukaram, Janardhan Swami

who were born in the Marathwada area spread the Bhakti cult in one part of the country while the Vaishnava cult of Bhakti was spread through Acharyas of the Ramanuja and Madhva schools in the other areas. The Kakatiyas were Saivas.¹⁰ The Reddys also followed generally the Saiva cult. The Velamas largely subscribed to the Vaishnava religion. While in the Marathwada area a new sect of Bhakti culture (Mahanubhav Panth arose, a great religious leader Basaveswara became the preceptor of Veersaivism over the country. He was a Minister in the court of the kings of Kalyani (Bidar district) where the capital of Western Chalukyas had shifted. All these historical and cultural developments in the Deccan tended to create a spirit of unity in diversity.¹¹

The Muslim saints like Khwaja Banda Nawaz of Gulbarga and many at Aurangabad became the objects of worship not only by Muslims but even an extraordinarily large number of Hindus on account of their piety and great mystic powers. While strict conformity to one's own religious tenets and to one's own school of philosophy was limited to what were traditionally known as the upper classes of Hindus and Muslims, the multitude of the masses belonging to both communities followed saints or Sufis, Hindu or Muslim, whose universal messages of love of God and man without distinction of caste or creed and whose distaste for religious and traditional distinctions, attracted them tremendously. Hindus were employed by the Muslim kings and Muslims were employed by the Hindu kings in this area and were entrusted with the highest posts requiring perfect loyalty and confidence. Even during the early rule of Asafjahi dynasty in Hyderabad, the highest posts concerning revenue and civil administration were entrusted to Hindu who were held in the highest esteem and who enjoyed the same privileges, jagirs, Mansabs and others which were open to the Muslims. History shows examples of Muslims being military commanders of Hindu Rajas and Hindus being military commanders of Muslim kings. This was the result of the general outlook which pervaded the culture of the people of these areas. Akkanna and Madanna rose to be Prime Minister and Commander-in-Chief respectively during the reign of

the last Qutubshahi king who was forced to surrender Golconda to Aurangzeb. Even during the Asafjahi rule, the late Maharaj Kishen Prasad held the highest post of Prime Minister twice during his lifetime, for long periods. Social life in Hyderabad till a few decades ago was unalloyed by any tinge of communal differences or distinctions.¹²

The city of Hyderabad had itself a romantic origin. Mohammed Quli Qutubshah laid the foundation of the city in 1590 A.D. originally as Bhagyanagar or Bhagnagar in the name of his Hindu mistress who was converted to Islam later and became his legal wife.¹³ Bhagmati later came to be known as Hydermahal and the name Bhagyanagar was also changed to Hyderabad. Though the veracity of this story is doubted by some historians,¹⁴ it is nevertheless one that has become current and holds the field in history and tradition.¹⁵ In this city, which soon became the capital of Asafjahi kings, joined streams of people representing different languages and cultures. There were Muslims of Turkish, Arabic and Persian origin who formed the highest echelon of officialdom who were of foreign origin. The Asafjahi kings brought with them Kayasthas from Northern India,¹⁶ Khattris from Punjab, etc. Brahmakshatriyas joined them mostly from Gujarat and other places. The rulers and the nobles patronized these poets and literary men who developed Persian, Arabic and Urdu literatures under their auspices. The Peshwas gave a fillip to Marathi language and the saints of Marathwada propagated it through their socio-religious activities. The holders of Samstanams who were the descendents of the ancient Reddy and Velama kings who had been gradually subjugated; followed the practice of the rulers. They patronized Sanskrit and Telugu poets and literary men and maintained the old traditions of the courts of the Hindu Rajas, particularly those of Vijayanagar and Kakatiya rulers, who were noted for their great patronage of learning. Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagar was their ideal in this respect. He called his mother tongue Telugu as Karnatakabhasha because he was the king of the whole of the whole of Karnataka and a large

part of Andhra.¹⁷ Though he patronized Telugu literature and was himself a great poet he was the king of Karnataka. His rule was the golden era in the history of Telugu literature. His court with the Astadiggajas - the eight poets was the source of a literary and cultural effulgence unequalled in any other period of Andhra history. All these historical and cultural developments tended to make Telangana a real confluence of cultures.¹⁸ It is to be only hoped that this historical and cultural characteristic will continue to grow and will not be adversely affected by any spirit of narrow chauvinism, either literary, regional or communal. It should be the proud privilege of Telangana to maintain these valuable traditions.

Notes & References:

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About Centre for Telangana Studies (CTS)

The Centre aims to design, develop and conduct training and research on Telangana history, heritage and culture. Also organises conferences/seminars/one day symposiums conducted on different aspects of Telangana history, culture, and governance.

The Centre organizes field visits and cultural activities for creating awareness on Telangana heritage and culture. It also promotes/sponsors research projects, monographs, documentaries, and publications related to Telangana in all aspects.

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