



SUSPENDED IN ANIMATION

The Dilemma of Kannada Identity in Bangalore

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by

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'ಹೆಸರಾಯಿತು ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ, ಉಸಿರಾಗಲಿ ಕನ್ನಡ'

'The name is Karnataka, now let the breath be Kannada'

(Nair 2005: 245)

'ಬಾಳ್ ತ್ಯಾಕರೆಯವರೇ, ನೀವು ಶಿವಾಜಿ ನಾಡಿನ ಜನರಿದ್ದರೆ,
ನಾವು ಹೊಯ್ಸಳರ ನಾಡಿನ ಜನರಿದ್ದೇವೆ.
ಆಗಾಗಿ, ನಿಮ್ಮ ತರ ನರಿ ಬುದ್ಧಿ ನಮಗಿಲ್ಲ.
ನರಿಗಳ ಜೊತೆ ನಮ್ಮ ಯುದ್ಧ ಅಲ್ಲ.
ಹೊಯ್ಸಳರ ನಾಡಿನ ಜನರ ಯುದ್ಧ ಯಾರ ಜೊತೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಅಂದ್ರೆ,
ಹುಲಿ-ಸಿಂಹಗಳ ಜೊತೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ನಮ್ಮ ಯುದ್ಧ!'

*'Bal Thackeray, if your people [Maharashtrians] are from the land of Shivaji,
then we are from the land of the Hoysalas. Unlike you, we are not scheming
foxes. Our fight is not the fight of the fox. The fight of the people of the
Hoysalas is the fight of lions and tigers. (Speech by KRV president Naryana
Gowda, January 2009)*

*'So respectful are the people of Bangalore city of the English language, said H.
Narasimhaiah, that they 'even converse with their dogs in English medium. I have
not come across a single Kannada medium dog all these [30] years'*

(Nair 2005: 282)

Contents

1. Introduction	4
1.1 Bangalore's (multi)culture and its divisions	7
2. The nature of Kannada nationalism	10
2.1 Gokak agitation for sole first-language status, 1982	11
2.2 Anti-Tamil riots of Bangalore, 1991	12
2.3 Anti-Urdu riots of Bangalore, 1994	13
2.4 The kidnapping of Rajkumar, 2000	14
2.5 Conceptualising Kannada nationalism from within	16
3. Comparing nationalisms: Telugu, Tamil, and Marathi	18
3.1 Telugu nationalism	18
3.2 Tamil nationalism	20
3.3 Marathi nationalism	21
4. Looking for the Shiv Sena in KRV	24
4.1 The working of the Shiv Sena	24
4.2 KRV's route to power	27
4.3 KRV: Another Shiv Sena?	32
5. Conclusion	36
6. References cited	41

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1. Introduction

This paper looks at whether identity is primarily defined by language in the city of Bangalore, Karnataka in southern India, and if such is the case, what its implications are. The language in question is Kannada, the primary local language of Bangalore, and one that is claimed by 35 percent of all city residents as their mother tongue (Nair 2005).

This paper wrestles with the politics of linguistic nationalism and attempts to outline the limits of such a nationalism in Bangalore. To that end, it examines the activities of the cultural and political organisation Karnataka Rakshana Vedike (Forum for the Protection of Karnataka) in a comparative perspective with the Shiv Sena in Mumbai.

This paper will establish that Kannada nationalism, which began as an intellectual, liberal movement in the early twentieth century, has increasingly become shrill, exclusivist and violent in its discourse. Next, this paper will argue that Kannada nationalism is going through a process of saffronisation, and that Kannada identity is increasingly a 'Hindu' identity. Finally, following Thomas Blom Hansen's (2001) work on Marathi, this paper argues that despite this increasing saffronisation, Kannada identity in its bid to distance itself from its Dravidian roots on the one hand and progressive saffronisation on the other, remains incomplete and therefore susceptible to violent tendencies.

Organisation of this paper

The paper is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, Bangalore's unique cultural history and geography is analysed. In chapter two, the nature of Kannada nationalism and the various ways in which it has been imagined by intellectuals and ideologues is presented. The third chapter looks at Kannada nationalism from the comparative perspective of Telugu, Tamil and Marathi nationalism. In chapter four, an attempt is made to draw parallels between

the Karnataka Rakshana Vedike (KRV henceforth) and the Shiv Sena in Mumbai, after a brief analysis of the KRV's publicly available propaganda material. Conclusions are presented in the fifth and final chapter.

Methodology

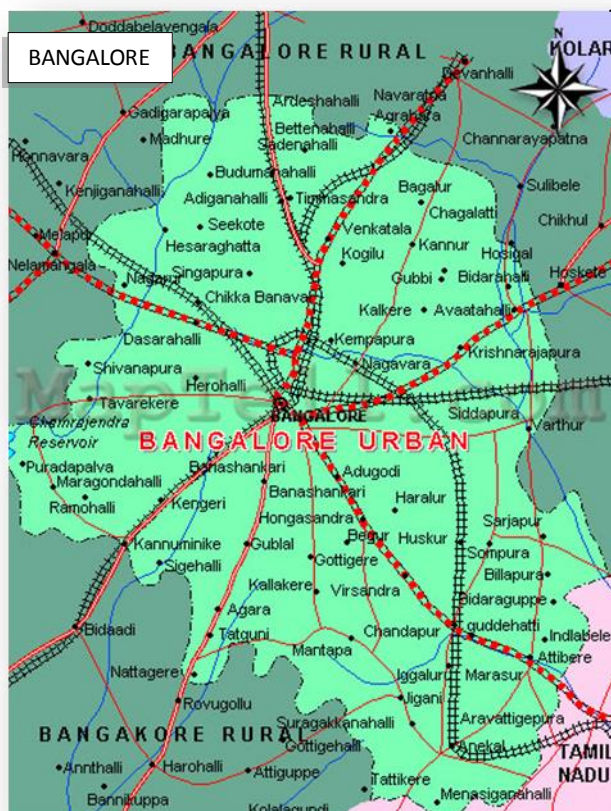
The discussion and analyses in this paper are largely grounded in secondary research. However, I conducted a content analysis of the KRV's website and blog as well as speeches of the KRV's president, Narayana Gowda. I also quote from e-mail interviews conducted with academics and experts. Finally, my brief experience as a journalist covering the KRV's agitations in Bangalore has informed my analysis.

Limitations of this paper

Given that I am a Kannada-speaker who has reported on the Kannada movement in Bangalore, personal bias is always a possibility. I have made every effort however to make sure my biases have not affected the framing of my hypotheses or analysis.

In her introduction to a collection of translated Kannada social science writings, A R Vasavi argues that regional language scholarship, which often 'inverts and questions established social science thinking' (Vasavi 2009: xi) is often overlooked. Even though this paper quotes a few translated works (notably Nagaraj 1997; Narayana 1993) and primary data that needed translating (KRV's publicity materials), it is disadvantaged in that some of the scholarship on Kannada identity and nationalism that is available only in Kannada could not be traced due to time and resource constraints. Similarly, the inability of the author to conduct field research (once again due to time and financial constraints) has meant that hypotheses and theories that have been advanced could not be empirically tested.

Map One: Maps of India, Karnataka and Bangalore



INDIA source: Pratap Tours

<http://www.pratap tours.com/images/india-map.gif>

KARNATAKA source: Culture tours

<http://www.cultureholidays.com/states/images/karnataka-map.jpg>

BANGALORE source: eindi maps.com

<http://www.eindi maps.com/maps-pics/bangalore.jpg>

1.1 Bangalore's (multi)culture and its divisions

Bangalore (see Map One) has lived through several characterisations: once known as the 'pensioners' paradise' and 'garden city', it is now most frequently described as 'IT city', or 'India's silicon valley' and some residents mockingly refer to it as 'garbage city'. It is where Thomas Friedman famously realised that 'the world is flat' (2005). This most modern of Indian cities – it was the first to be electrified (Heitzman 2004) – houses approximately 6.5 million people and is the fifth largest Indian urban agglomeration (The Economist 2009). Bangalore is also the most anglicized Indian city (Khilnani 2004) with pockets that are recreated versions of Palo Alto or Silicon Valley in California (Davis 2006). It is famous for its temperate weather given that it is situated on a plateau between 900 to 1000 metres above sea level (Heitzman 2004).

Bangalore is also possibly one of India's most cosmopolitan cities with a rich and multilayered history. It showed signs of being an urban settlement at least as far back as 1537, when a chieftain named Kempe Gowda chose the elevated settlement for his fortress town (Pani et al 2010). Before the sixteenth century, the area that forms the city today was controlled by various dynasties starting with the Gangas in the fifth century, and passing through the hands of the Cholas and the Hoysalas in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Nair 2005). In the sixteenth century, the fall of the Vijayanagar empire (in what is today North Karnataka), as James Heitzman argues, 'shifted trade routes and commercial activity towards the South...Bangalore thus inherited Vijayanagar's role as the leading economic centre in the plateau region of peninsular India' (Heitzman 2004: 26). In the seventeenth century, the city passed from the hands of the Sultan of Bijapur to the Marathas, from whom it briefly fell into the control of the Mughals. The Mysore Maharaja then bought over the territory for 3 lakh rupees (300,000 rupees), before it was captured by a chieftain from northern Karnataka,

Hyder Ali, who ruled Bangalore till it passed on to his son Tipu Sultan. It was after Tipu Sultan's defeat in 1799 that the British came to control Bangalore (Nair 2005; Heitzman 2004).

Under the British, Bangalore witnessed the sort of demographic change that left the city with 'two distinct linguistic, political and economic cultures' (Nair 2005: 26). Thus, the western part of the city continued growing as it always had, while the eastern part, the Cantonment established by the British saw mass migration from the neighbouring and primarily, Tamil-speaking Madras state (now Tamil Nadu). It was only in 1949 that the two parts of Bangalore were united under a common municipal administration (Pani et al 2010).

Bangalore may have been the capital of the predominantly Kannada-speaking Karnataka state for more than 30 years, but its location at the south-east tip of the state makes it closer to many parts of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala than a few districts in its own state. Indeed Bangalore's strategic location has enabled it to attract migrant workers from the other three states of southern India. As Heitzman puts it, Bangalore lies 'in the South-East corner of its territory a morning's drive away from Tamil-speaking Tamil Nadu, Telugu-speaking Andhra Pradesh, and Malayalam-speaking Kerala' (2004: 5). Thus, Bangalore's history and geography accounts for its rich cosmopolitan population and vibrant work culture.

However, Bangalore's explosive growth, beginning in the 1970s, has resulted in typical big city deprivations. Once the most middle-class of cities with only 10 percent of the population residing in slums (Nair 1996), Bangalore now has an estimated 2 million poor that live in a thousand or more slums in its peripheries, and 'half of Bangalore's population lacks piped water, much less cappuccino, and there are more ragpickers and street children (90,000) than software geeks (about 60,000)' (Davis 2006: 172).

Such economic inequality coupled with the intermingling of people from various linguistic, religious, caste and class backgrounds makes Bangalore fertile ground for identity-based fervour. The 1991 census reveals that only 35 percent of the people in Bangalore declared Kannada as their mother tongue. 25 percent said it was Tamil. 19 percent said it was Telugu while 17 percent declared Urdu as their mother tongue (Nair 2005).

According to Chiranjiv Singh there are several dividing lines in Bangalore between 'the native and colonial, the courtly and the democratic, the Old Mysore and New Karnataka' (Singh 2008, in De 2008: 53), and the IT and the non-IT. However, it is the divide symbolised by - but not restricted to - the City (predominantly Kannada-speaking) and the Cantonment (dominated by Tamil-speakers) that has proved enduring. In other words it is the linguistic divide between Kannada and Tamil, and in other iterations between Kannada and Urdu or Kannada and Hindi/English, that has led to disturbances in the past.

2. The nature of Kannada nationalism

It might be useful to begin by defining the terms *Kannadiga* and *Karnatakatva*. The term *Kannadiga* is usually taken to mean 'Kannada-speaker', but more accurately used to describe 'native of Karnataka'. This would include all non-Kannadigas who speak Kannada and reside in Karnataka, and all natives of Karnataka (regardless of mother tongue) who live outside the state. This is a term that would include Tamil-speakers or Hindi-speakers, and in some definitions even those who do not speak Kannada (Nair 2005).

However, the dominated status of Kannada in Bangalore has given the increasingly shrill and strident Kannada nationalistic discourse license to form an exclusivist definition of the term. As Tejaswini Niranjana argues, 'the question of who is a *Kannadiga* is posed in relation to who is not' (Niranjana 2000: 4148).

If the meaning of *Kannadiga* has been conceptualised differently by different people, what about *Karnatakatva*? It was outlined in 1917 by Alura Venkata Rao in Dharwar in what is now Northern Karnataka. It refers to 'a unifying ideology for Kannada-speaking people in terms of territory or culture (Gavaskar 2003: 1114). According to Gavaskar, the conceptualisation of *Karnatakatva* was the result of a sense of relative deprivation and envy of the more robust Marathi nationalism. (This sense of envy regarding Marathi and Tamil nationalism is something we will encounter later.) Its objective was to restore linguistic pride in Kannada, but as Janaki Nair argues, the concept of *Karnatakatva* was rooted in the language of worship, and failed to take into account the rich and varied Islamic, Sufi, and Jain cultural influences on Kannada culture. So *Karnatakatva* is exclusivist to non-Hindus,

and the elision of Kannadaness and Hinduness is a concept that is so naturalised today that it is barely noticed (Nair 1996).

The story of Kannada nationalism may be told through the formation of various organisations and movements. Or it may alternately be told through the lens of the various protagonists of the Kannada movement. Colourful though the latter approach may be, this discussion is best served if the story is outlined conceptually through four moments or events in the last three decades:

2.1. Gokak agitation for sole first-language status, 1982

Named after a report by the vice-chancellor of Karnatak University and educationist VK Gokak, the Gokak agitation of 1982 brought together for the first and perhaps only time, all the distinct voices of Kannada nationalism on to one platform. The purpose was to establish first-language status for Kannada in school education (Murthy 2006).

The roots of the Gokak agitation were in Hubli-Dharwar in North Karnataka, but it was in Bangalore that its effects were most powerfully felt, especially when star actor Rajkumar was persuaded to join the agitation. Rajkumar's entry led to a 'less sophisticated by more powerful, Kannada imagination rising at the same time' (Pani 2010: 196). As Pani argues, the nationalist awakening that Rajkumar indirectly helped bring – which was at odds with the intellectual-led imagination – not only helped mobilise the young urban Kannadiga, but also 'brought in a touch of the victim to this imagination' (Pani 2010: 196) in ways that did not discourage violence.

Deepa Ganesh emphasizes that the Gokak movement was not homogenous, that 'within the movement itself there were differences and misunderstandings' (Ganesh 2010: 198). Noted Kannada writer U R Ananthamurthy pledged his support to the cause and initially took part in

the agitations. But he increasingly critiqued it on the grounds that it was essentially unfair to the minorities of the states such as speakers of Urdu, Konkani and Kodava (Ananthamurthy 1982).

2.2. Anti-Tamil riots of Bangalore, 1991

The Cauvery river waters dispute between the neighbouring states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu is the biggest internal water sharing dispute in India. The river which originates in Karnataka and empties out on to the Bay of Bengal in Tamil Nadu irrigates large parts of either state. After decades of disagreements over the extent of water sharing, the government of India set up a Supreme Court tribunal in 1990 to settle the dispute. The tribunal's interim award, which was published by the government of India in the Central Gazette in December 1991, was received with anger and violence in Karnataka as being biased and unfair.

Kannada nationalistic groups held demonstrations in Bangalore, which over the next few days led to large-scale violence and rioting against the Tamil population of Bangalore, and Tamil-owned homes, shops and enterprises. There were two more such attacks in areas surrounding Bangalore, and it is estimated that 50,000 to 100,000 Tamilians fled or were evacuated from Karnataka during this period (Folke 1998).

According to the N D Venkatesh Committee report on the riots, 23 people lost their lives (Nair 2000). It quickly became clear that the riots were not so much about water as they were about something else: Kannada identity. As Janaki Nair argues, the attacks were about 'securing the identity of Kannada through attacks on linguistic minorities' (1996: 2810). Further, the attacks were characterized by an envy of Tamil's 'political and cultural solidarity' (Nair 1996: 2812).

2.3. Anti-Urdu riots of Bangalore, 1994

If the 1982 Gokak agitation was championed by the intellectual face of Kannada nationalism, and the 1991 riots - ostensibly about the sharing of the waters of the Cauvery river but actually over Kannada identity - were a result of violence by the chauvinistic elements of the language movement, then the anti-Urdu riots of 1994 were clearly about linguistic, and more importantly, religious identity.

On October 2nd, the state government brought forward the telecast of the daily 10-minute Urdu news bulletin on the state-owned television channel Doordarshan to the prime-time slot between 7.45 and 7.55 pm. Asghar Ali Engineer gives an account of the events that unfolded in the following days. On October 3rd, a few hundred people from various 'pro-Kannada organisations' held demonstrations in front of the broadcaster's offices, while others blocked traffic at a key road. Over the next couple of days organisations such as the Kannada Shakti Kendra and the Kannada Sahitya Parishad joined the fray, but subsequently the protests acquired communal overtones as members of the ABVP (Akhil Bharatiya Vidya Parishad; student wing of the BJP) joined them. On October 7th, members of the ABVP held processions in Muslim-populated areas of the city, exacerbating tensions (Engineer 1994). The resulting violence took the lives of 25 people, and resulting in large-scale damage to property (Nair 2000).

Unlike the Gokak agitation of 1982 and even the anti-Tamil riots of 1991, the Kannada intelligentsia did not provide ideological support during the anti-Urdu riots, but Nair argues that those who took part in the riots as part of the Kannada 'cause' were able to 'forge new solidarities with Hindu communal forces' (Nair 1996: 2810).

However, Nair argues that in some aspects the 1991 and 1994 incidents were similar. One, the attacks on Tamil and Urdu-speakers originated from fear and envy of the political and cultural solidarity of the Tamils and Muslims (Nair 1996). In 1991, the attacks were clearly linguistic in nature because Tamil identity is perceived as stronger and more virile than Kannada identity. And the violence of 1994 was clearly communal in nature, because the 'Urdu speakers' solidarity...springs in part from the solidarity made available by Islam, which more than amply makes up for the absence of a patron state' (Nair 1996: 2812).

2.4 The kidnapping of Rajkumar, 2000

We have already encountered the figure of Rajkumar the star actor, whose support and subsequent leadership took the state by storm during the 1982 Gokak agitation. The importance of Rajkumar as a symbolic and cultural figurehead for Kannadigas cannot be overstated. At the time of his kidnapping in August 2000, he had acted in 205 Kannada films, almost a fourth of all the films ever produced by the Kannada film industry (Srinivasaraju 2008). Unlike his contemporary actors, MG Ramachandran (MTR) of Tamil Nadu and N T Rama Rao (NTR) of Andhra Pradesh who went on to form political parties and become Chief Minister, Rajkumar did not enter the world of politics. His participation and support during the Gokak agitation was the beginning and end to his political life. In 1978, Rajkumar chose to go into hiding in order to avoid being forced to stand for elections against Indira Gandhi in Chikmagalur, and in the late 1980s, he distanced himself from the activities of the Rajkumar Fans' Association (Nair 2005).

Rajkumar's refusal to enter the world of politics is perhaps one reason why Kannada nationalism did not blossom into a full-blown political movement. Dakshina Murthy argues that it is precisely because of this vacuum in politics that Rajkumar 'came to symbolise the hope and angst of a large section of Kannadigas' (Murthy 2006: 1834).

On the evening of July 30th 2000, Rajkumar was kidnapped into the forests bordering Karnataka and Tamil Nadu by the notorious, Tamil-speaking sandalwood smuggler Veerappan. What made the situation even more explosive were the peculiar – and political – demands made by Veerappan for his release: 'a permanent solution to the Cauvery water dispute, adequate compensation to all Tamil victims of the Cauvery riots of 1991, [and] the inclusion of Tamil as an administrative language in Karnataka' (Nair 2005: 236).

The city of Bangalore once again stood on the brink of riots: with shops, offices, even public transport forced to shut down by his fans (Vyasulu 2000). Vinod Vyasulu argues that the city's response has to be seen in the light of Bangalore's rapidly changing demographics in the 1980s and 1990s which marginalised the localite. As Janaki Nair argues:

The abduction of Rajkumar was not just a criminal act of a forest brigand, but was staged as a dramatic encounter between two nationalisms, Kannada and Tamil, that had over the past two decades come into violent conflict over issues relating to land, jobs, and water in the southern regions of Karnataka and particularly Bangalore city. (Nair 2005: 235)

Tejaswini Niranjana argues that violent reactions to Rajkumar's abduction in Bangalore stem from perceptions that it was not just Kannada identity, but also Kannada's masculinity that was slighted: Veerappan's Tamil identity/masculinity vs. Rajkumar's Kannada identity/masculinity (Niranjana 2000). Representing Rajkumar's and by extension Kannada's masculinity were the fans, or *abhimaanis*, of Rajkumar. One of the reasons why Bangalore did not go up in flames was Rajkumar's recorded pleas for peace and assurances that he was in good health in captivity. It is worth quoting Niranjana in full:

The abhimani [fan] has to assume the language of violence as a performative gesture, and Rajkumar's words have to restrain him – this double performance is necessary for the preservation of Kannada pride. (Niranjana 2000: 4150)

Rajkumar's eventual release after 108 days in captivity brought relief, but his death six years later in 2006 saw Bangalore once again paralysed by violence: 'a final show of protest, defiance and expression of frustration at the loss of a dream' (Murthy 2006: 1835).

2.5 Conceptualising Kannada Nationalism from within

The Kannada movement was a late-starter as compared to linguistic movements in neighbouring states, partly because Kannada-speakers were spread out across different administrations in British India. The state of Karnataka was formed by bringing together different territories from the states of Bombay, Hyderabad, Mysore and Madras.

However, by the middle of the twentieth century, the Kannada intelligentsia had woken up to the need to reimagine Kannada identity. Scholars have identified two broad streams of Kannada nationalism: the 'spiritual nationalism' propagated by Alura Venkat Rao, and the 'fear-centred nationalism' propagated by M. Chidanandamurthy (Srinivasaraju 2008; Nair 2005).

According to Nagaraj, 'spiritual nationalism' conceived by Alura Venkat Rao, is an inclusive imagining that does not privilege Kannada identity over the identity of other languages (Nagaraj 1997). Venkat Rao's spiritual nationalism, however, has its limits. Just like Karnatakata, spiritual nationalism does not reach out to non-Hindus and fails to take into account Jain and Islamic cultural influences on the language of Kannada.

Nagaraj next looks at another strand of Kannada nationalism as conceptualised thirty years later in 1987 by Chidananda Murthy. For Nagaraj, Murthy's model is a result of insecurity and fear of other identities as opposed to pride in Kannada identity (Nagaraj 1997).

Nagaraj critiques both the strands of nationalism arguing that Kannada discourse was enriched by Christian and Muslim culture: 'to peg the idea of Karnataka on just Hindutva, is tantamount to weakening the foundation' (Nagaraj 1997, in Srinivasaraju 2008: 41). Nagaraj reimagines *Karnatakatva* as signifying multiple identities, much as an individual might have multiple identities.

This liberal, all-inclusive interpretation of Kannada nationalism has always had its champions, but is steadily losing ground to the more aggressive-but-insecure posturing that dictates the language movement today. Added to this is the increasing saffronisation of the Kannada movement. Emblematic of such aggression and saffronisation of the movement is the politico-cultural organisation that is the subject of this study – Karnataka Rakshana Vedike or KRV. Before we get to KRV however, we must look at Kannada nationalism's relationship to Tamil, Telugu and Marathi nationalisms.

3. Comparing nationalisms: Telugu, Tamil, and Marathi

An understanding of language movements in states surrounding Karnataka is necessary to get to the heart of the Kannada movement for three reasons. One, a study of parallel language movements in neighbouring states helps situate Kannada nationalism within the larger linguistic nationalistic discourse in southern India. Two, Kannada nationalism has a tendency to measure itself against other linguistic nationalisms, rather than against imperial power (Nair 2005) and, as Tejaswini Niranjana asserts, 'Kannada linguistic pride [is] often defined in opposition to and alongside Tamil pride' (2000: 4147). Three, there are parallels that can be drawn from the experience of not just Tamil, but Telugu and Marathi movements as well.

3.1 Telugu nationalism

While it is true that Kannada nationalism measures itself primarily against Tamil identity, Lisa Mitchell's work (2009) on south Indian language politics with an emphasis on Andhra Pradesh makes Telugu a useful starting point. Besides, there are a few similarities between the Telugu and Tamil movements in that both began in the late nineteenth century, as opposed to the Kannada awakening which took place primarily in the early-to-mid twentieth century. Further, Telugu and Tamil nationalisms have the dubious honour of having had someone dying for their cause. In the case of Telugu, it was Potti Sriramulu's fast-unto-death that ensured New Delhi's capitulation to the demand for states to be carved out on linguistic lines. In the case of Tamil, it was Chinnaasami's (and others') self-immolation that crushed the movement to impose Hindi as the sole administrative language of India (Ramaswamy 1997). Finally, it makes sense to begin with Telugu, since Telugu-speakers were the first to succeed in ensuring Indian states were divided on the lines of language.

Lisa Mitchell argues that identity first came to be reconfigured in terms of language in southern India because of specific administrative measures implemented by the British Raj: the census (which asked people to identify their 'mother tongue' for the first time), British-sponsored language grammars and lexicons (which aided in the standardisation of language) and the carving of districts on the basis of language in order to streamline administration (Mitchell 2009).

According to Mitchell, the concept of 'mother tongue' did not exist in any Indian language prior to the mid-1800s. So what are the historical processes that led people to believe that the language they speak defines their identity? Mitchell traces the Telugu language movement's roots to 1893 when the writer Gurujada Sriramamurti published his *Lives of [Telugu] Poets* with a reference or exhortation to those who take pride in the 'language of the Telugu country' (Mitchell 2009).

As Mitchell argues, by the early twentieth century, the transformation of language from an object of emotion to a basis for the 'reorganization of knowledge, everyday practices, literary production, historical narratives, audiences and ultimately populations' (Mitchell 2009: 15) had been complete.

However, it was not an emotional or sentimental attachment to Telugu alone that spurred on the movement for a separate state. As Narayana Rao argues, the fear that government jobs and positions would go to Hindi-speakers propelled forward the Telugu cause (Mitchell 2009). Indeed, concerns had sprung up during the Raj that colonial administrators did not recruit from the Telugu-speaking people.

By 1913, with the formation of the Andhra Mahasabha, the transformation from Telugu as a tool of communication to a definer of identity was complete; and in the 1920s and 1930s,

investments were made to 'catalogue and document every Telugu work ever composed. By the 1940s and 1950s, it involved printing, reprinting, and editing critical and popular editions' (Mitchell 2009: 38) of famous poetry. Indeed, as Mitchell asserts, 'in both pre-colonial and post-colonial India, Telugu-speakers were pioneers in defining and asserting interests on a linguistic basis (Mitchell 2009: 39).

As we will see however, Telugu-speakers do not display the excessive self-identity that Tamil-speakers, or even Urdu-speakers are associated with. Therefore, Telugu-speakers, despite constituting a large percentage of Bangalore's population, are not seen as targets, partly because of the Telugu language's closeness to Kannada, but also equally because Telugu-speakers seem to have integrated fully into Kannada society.

3.2 Tamil nationalism

Just like the Telugu movement - and unlike the Kannada movement which flowered in early-to-mid twentieth century - Tamil nationalism began to express itself from the late 1800s onwards. However, Tamil nationalism is more complex and struck deeper roots in the Tamil psyche than Telugu nationalism ever did, perhaps because Tamilness has been imagined in several distinct ways. According to Sumathi Ramaswamy (1997), Tamil imagination can be interpreted as expressing itself in four ways:

- i. **Tamil as divine.** Here, Tamil is literally seen as a gift from the gods, or more specifically, as reflecting the Shaiva (worship of the god Shiva) way of life. Shaivism itself is reimagined as separate from Vaishnavism; and Tamil and this 'Neoshaivism' are projected as 'authentic' as opposed to 'Sanskritic-Brahmanical-Aryan Hinduism' (Ramaswamy 1997: 30).

- ii. **Tamil as classical.** This imagining of Tamil is based not on religion, but the language's antiquity; on the backdating of its origins to the early centuries C.E. with the discovery of Sangam literature. More importantly, Tamil is seen as equal to Sanskrit and an effort is made to purge the language of all Sanskritic words.
- iii. **Tamil as Dravidian.** This imagining of Tamil is based on the interpretation that members of the Dravidian race – and therefore Tamil speakers – were the original inhabitants of India. The fundamental agenda of Dravidianism is to 'establish the pre-eminence of Tamil...and to ensure that devotion to the language (and its community) was not diluted by any other passions – for the Indian nation, for the gods of Hindu pantheon, or even families and mothers of individual devotees' (Ramaswamy 1997: 65).
- iv. **Tamil as Indian.** Tamil is imagined here as one of many languages that are pitted against the imperialism of English (as opposed to the Dravidian discourse which looks upon Sanskrit and Hindi as imperialistic as well). This strand of Tamil nationalism, not surprisingly, was most closely allied to the freedom struggle.

Eventually, the imagining of Tamil as 'classical' and 'Dravidian' won out, and such was the strength of its nationalistic discourse that people were willing to kill themselves for 'Tamilttai' (Tamil mother) during the 1960s debate to make Hindi the sole administrative language of India (Ramaswamy 1997).

3.3 Marathi nationalism

If Tamil nationalism was about Dravidian identity and the antiquity of the language, and if the Telugu movement was primarily about creating a state exclusively on language

parameters, then Marathi nationalism was about Hinduness and the reimagined virility and masculinity of the Hindu as opposed to the Muslim.

As Thomas Blom Hansen (2001) argues, in the nineteenth century the idea of a single Marathi identity was first advanced by Pune's high-caste intelligentsia. This eventually led to the formation of the state of Maharashtra in 1960. But for Hansen, there is something unresolved and incomplete about Marathi identity which has led to periodic episodes of violence (Hansen 2001).

There seems to be a reasonable case for advancing the notion that this 'incompleteness' left a void to be filled, a void that was eventually filled by the reimagining of Shivaji, as the great Maratha warrior who upheld Hindu pride against the (Muslim) Mughals. As this paper will argue, something similar is being witnessed in Bangalore; with Hinduness occupying the space left by an incomplete Kannada identity.

According to Hansen, the evolution of Maharastrian identity is a result of the miscegenation Brahmin and Maratha identities. If Shivaji Bhonsle was a great Maratha warrior, the Peshwas who followed his successors were Chitpavan Brahmins. Hansen argues that because of this miscegenation, Maharashtrian or Maratha identity has been reconstructed in three ways:

- i. **Mahashtra Dharma.** First advanced by M G Ranade and further developed by G S Sardesai, Maharashtra Dharma is all about a centuries-old shared language (Maharashtri which evolved into Marathi) that unified the region with the help of Shivaji and the emerging Bhakti movement which blurred caste boundaries.
- ii. **Shivaji the Shudra King.** The non-Brahman reformer Jotirao Phule advanced this interpretation which cast Shivaji's rule as non-Brahmanical and pre-Aryan. Here, Shivaji is seen as having opposed Brahman hegemony and unified power in the region

with the spiritual support of the Bhakti movement and the pre-Aryan goddess Bhavani, who, as legend has it, gave him his invincible sword.

- iii. **Shivaji the Hindu rebel.** Developed by the Brahman intelligentsia in Pune, this interpretation casts Shivaji as a Hindu rebel hero who opposed Muslim domination with the spiritual guidance of the Brahman saint-scholar Ramdas. In Hansen's words, 'like the other interpretations, this one also served a purpose in the emerging antagonism between Brahmans and Marathas: to claim the Peshwas as legitimate heirs to Shivaji's empire and thus portray themselves, the Chitpavan Brahmans, as legitimate and authoritative spokesmen and interpreters of Hindu culture, Maharashtra Dharma, and the national spirit' (Hansen 2001: 27).

Despite the considerable differences between them, all the interpretations have two aspects in common: Shivaji as the symbol of Maharashtrian pride and the Maharashtrian warrior as standing up against Muslim domination. Unlike Tamil or Telugu nationalistic discourse, Hinduness is at least as, if not more, important as Marathiness.

To summarise, Kannada nationalism is distinct from linguistic imaginations in the neighbouring states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra in that it developed and flowered only in the mid-twentieth century. Like Marathi in Blom Hansen's construction, Kannada identity is incomplete. It has, therefore, three realistic choices: one, to accept Tamil heritage; two, to embrace Sanskritic influence and religious identity; and three, to reimagine a powerful, all-embracing history.

However, in the absence of an overarching historical narrative (like Tamil has) or an all-powerful rallying figurehead (like Marathi has in Shivaji), Kannada identity lies in suspended animation, and it is no surprise that it seems to be tilting towards religion or Hinduness.

4. Looking for the Shiv Sena in KRV

As its tone gets shriller and more strident, Kannada nationalism is increasingly mimicking the Shiv Sena in Mumbai and Maharashtra. Its ideology, as Janaki Nair writes, has begun to resemble the Shiv Sena's, especially in its 'Hindu, anti-minority and patriarchal' (Nair 1996: 2814) self-definition and its political aspirations. Further, organisations such as the Karnataka Rakshana Vedike have explicitly styled themselves on the Shiv Sena (Srinivasaraju 2008). Whether KRV can follow the path that the Shiv Sena traced from the 1960s onwards is the proverbial million-dollar question. However, an examination of KRV's antecedents and a comparison with the Shiv Sena should yield a few answers. We begin with a look at the Shiv Sena's ascent to power.

4.1 The working of the Shiv Sena

Formed in 1966, the Shiv Sena's spectacular growth is due, in no small measure, to its charismatic and autocratic leader Bal Thackeray. Thackeray probably honed his trademark wit and sarcasm as a cartoonist in the weekly magazine he launched – Marmik (Satire) – in 1963.

Thackeray also has the ability to reach out to the common man in simple, rough and ready street Marathi, or *Bombaya Boli*. He makes an arresting figure, and is unlike other political leaders in manner, message and speech. Although he lives a luxurious life, Thackeray presents himself as a simple, uncomplicated man with 'manly' appetites likes any average Bombay-resident or Mumbaikar. On his manner of speech, it is worthy quoting Julia Eckert: *It is colloquial and unsophisticated, it is dialogical rather than sermonic. Thackeray excels in puns and sarcasms. He breaks taboos of urbanity and decency, employs slang and sleaze.*

Opponents are slandered by innuendo and mocked by aping. Wit of association replaces argument and clever retorts go for answers. His jokes take the audience into a complicity within the 'schadenfreude', the gloating towards the slandered. In their idealization, their roughness equates to their directness and their honesty. (Eckert 2003: 46)

However, neither biting wit nor the ability to connect with the man on the street is enough all by itself. Thackeray is also deeply charismatic, and this helps him keep an iron hand on his party. For the Shiv Sena is an autocracy with absolutely no room for dissent.

Thus, it was Thackeray's 'common touch', charisma and ruthless control over the party apparatus took the Shiv Sena to dizzying heights, culminating in 1995 when it won the state elections and formed the government.

Clearly, however, Bal Thackeray and the Shiv Sena would have amounted to nothing without two critical aspects: the presence of a receptive audience, and an easily identifiable 'other'.

According to Thomas Blom Hansen, the rise of the Shiv Sena would not have been possible had there not been 'sharpened competition over middle-class, white-collar jobs' (2001: 47).

Further, the formation of the state of Maharashtra had resulted in large-scale migration from the Marathi hinterland into the city, thereby growing the proportion of poorer, relatively less educated Marathi-speakers in Bombay.

The Shiv Sena's first target was the south Indian migrant, or the *madrasi* who 'stole jobs' from Maharashtrians. Then came the communists and the elites of Bombay, and increasingly in the 1980s (Hansen 2001), the Muslim minority of Bombay. In recent times, the Shiv Sena, in yet another attempt to reconfigure itself has targeted north Indian migrants. The targets are 'interchangeable as Eckert (2003) writes. Significantly, south Indians are no longer seen as the enemy. It was not possible to sustain the campaign against south Indians since the Shiv

Sena needed their support in order to expand politically: 'non-Maharashtrian groups had to be incorporated into the Sena's definition of legitimate citizens in order to claim their political representation, particularly since those declared to be true Maharashtrians defined by linguistic descent constituted only 38 per cent of Mumbai's population' (Eckert 2003: 89).

Thomas Blom Hansen identifies four dimensions to the Shiv Sena's spectacular growth. The first is the Shiv Sena's 'successful use of the ethnohistorical imaginary and at times xenophobic discourse of regional pride' (Hansen 2001: 48). The second is the Shiv Sena's organisational depth, and its spidery framework that penetrates households. The party apparatus can work at different levels: it may operate through neighbourhood services centred on the *shakha*, or the local branch office found in at least every municipal ward, or it may operate by embedding itself in religious and non-religious cultural practices, such as the *Ganeshotsava* (Ganesh festival) celebrations (Eckert 2003). The third factor is violence and the promise of action. The party's tactical use of violence at several levels and its celebration of virility, masculinity and youth instilled fear among its opponents, and 'created enormous de facto legal impunity for the public actions of Sainiks and their leaders' (Hansen 2001: 49). As Eckert writes, the Shiv Sena portrays itself as a party that is about 'getting things done'. It is statedly anti-intellectual.

The fourth and final factor is the Shiv Sena's ambiguous links with electoral politics. It grew roots under the tacit support of the Congress party - which had its own short-term agenda of destroying the communist party in Mumbai – and has since established close links with the BJP.

It could be argued that there is a fifth factor that explains the party's phoenix-like ability to regenerate, which is its ability to manipulate the politics of the 'blame-game'. Even when in power at the state between 1995 and 1999, the party was skilful in managing perceptions

about non-performance. This is because Bal Thackeray has never taken up office himself. As Julia Eckert observes, Thackeray has been successful in distancing himself from the government when his party is perceived to be corrupt or to have underperformed by reshuffling ministers, through public exhortations to teach his own leaders a 'lesson' and his own 'disappointment' (Eckert 2003).

In recent times, however, the party has been weakened by several defections to the Congress party and a succession battle. When Bal Thackeray's son Uddhav Thackeray was anointed the successor, his more natural successor, nephew Raj Thackeray split ranks and formed the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS). For the purposes of this paper, however, it is enough to discuss the Shiv Sena's rise to power and its operating style.

4.2 KRV's route to power

The KRV motto, *Kannadave Jati, Kannadave Dharma, Kannadave Devaru* – Kannada is my caste, Kannada is my Dharma, Kannada is my god - does not leave much to the imagination. Formed in 1999, the organisation claims it has set up thousands of shakhas or branch offices across the state and lakhs of members (KRV, An introduction 2010). This claim however, has not been independently verified and has been disputed (Srinivasaraju, personal communication, 27th May, 2010). Suffice to say, however, that the KRV is able to mobilise large number of people and it has, in its short 11-year long career, become infamous for violence.

KRV is helmed by 43 year old T A Narayana Gowda. There is little, if any, information about Gowda that is publicly available. According to unconfirmed reports, Gowda is understood to have been influenced by the RSS as a teenager, and worked in Mumbai for six years in an

ice-cream factory before returning to Bangalore to join a hardware assembly company after which he turned entrepreneur (“Narayana Gowda”, *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*).



www.allaboutbelgaum.com, 2009

KRV's discourse

For the purposes of this paper, I analysed some of the publicly available propaganda material of the KRV using a two-pronged approach: a content analysis of pages in its website and blog, and Narayana Gowda's speeches.

The analysis of the KRV website and blog began with a random selection of twenty articles and their translation into English. The next step was a frequency analysis of key words in the website and blog. This was achieved by classifying the labels on the site by topic. The same method of logging key words was used in the analysis of Narayana Gowda's speeches.

KRV's blog

The very first post (Cauvery agitation 2007) on KRV's blog was on February 20th, 2007, and the topic of its focus was the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal's final award on the sharing of the waters of the river Cauvery between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Since that first blog post and up to March 27th, 2010 - a period of roughly three years - 269 blog posts were published on a wide array of the KRV's pet protests and projects.

Not surprisingly, 66 posts are labelled 'bhashe' or 'language': the various writings under this label range from Kannada-specific aspects such as the struggle for classical language status for Kannada and the banning of banners and hoardings that contain no Kannada words, to Kannada's relationship with languages like Tamil, Hindi and Tulu.

45 posts carry the label 'gadi' or 'border': most of the writings under this category pertain to another of the KRV's pet campaigns, the sabre rattling between Karnataka and Maharashtra over the Belgaum border dispute. Belgaum or *Belagavi* is a northern district in Karnataka that is also claimed by Maharashtra state.

30 posts relate to 'udyoga' or 'employment': these are largely related to the KRV's call for quotas or positive discrimination for Kannadigas in various industries including IT and non-IT firms. KRV has agitated for more employment for Kannadigas in the country's largest employer, the railways.

The Cauvery dispute accounts for 15 posts, and the category of 'nadi' or 'river' has 19 posts devoted to it. The Hogenakkal water project dispute with Tamil Nadu accounts for 12 blog posts as well.

Clearly KRV's biggest preoccupations or 'agitations' as it prefers to call them, are language, land, water and employment.

KRV's website

The KRV's website – www.karnatakarakshanavedike.org – guides much of the web traffic to its blog. It also serves the function of apprising readers of its activities. Importantly, for the purposes of this paper, it contains what could be termed the manifesto of the organisation. Titled 'Horatagalu' or 'Agitations' ('Horatagalu' 2010), it is a document that details the many different fields of operation of the KRV. The document singles out employment for Kannadigas as a top priority and develops an anti-migration stance. KRV is also concerned with creating the right conditions for Kannadigas to turn towards manufacturing and industry, and even turn entrepreneur. KRV's next concern is for the Kannada language, and the document lays down two conditions that are necessary for progress: 'Kannada is the sole unifying force for Kannadigas, and there are two tenets that KRV believes in. One, Kannada alone can be the binding glue for Kannadigas, and two, it is only through Kannada that progress for Kannadigas is possible' ('Horatagalu' 2010).

The document also details KRV's other focus areas such as the sanctity of Karnataka's borders and water-sharing. Indeed, the contents of this 'manifesto' roughly corroborate the contents of its blog, which we have already examined. The document however, reveals a higher emotional register than is evident from the blog:

By forcing Hindi [on to Karnataka] in the name of unity, and by uttering the lie that it is a national language, other languages [such as Kannada] have been given step-motherly treatment. If this piling-on of Hindi continues, Kannada will be orphaned in its own state...It is the Kannadiga's right to seek entertainment in Kannada in Karnataka. KRV has fought against entertainment television channels that are oblivious to this fact and are bullying Kannadigas. ('Horatagalu' 2010)

Narayana Gowda's speeches

Narayana Gowda's speeches are confrontational in content and emotional in tone. Consider his speech during the *Vishwa Kannadigara Jagruti Samaaavesha* (Conference for the Progress of Kannadigas Globally) in January 2009 (Gowda 2009). In it, he thundered against industries that bought up land cheaply around Bangalore without generating employment for local farmers. Gowda urged the Kannada movement to follow Maharashtra's threat to industry, 'only if Maharastrians are guaranteed 80 percent of all jobs in Maharashtra, will industries be allowed to operate in the state' (Gowda 2009). Having held up Maharashtra as an example to emulate for Karnataka, Gowda however lashed out against Maharashtra's claim over Belgaum a few minutes later:

Marathi-speakers are not our enemy. They are also from our land. However, a party called the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti [MES, based in Belgaum], having eaten and lived off our land, is looking to set this land on fire. We have to teach those people from MES the appropriate lesson. There is a leader in Maharashtra who has said we will set fire to all the Kannada-owned hotels in Maharashtra. Another man, who thinks he is a great nationalist and a great Hindu leader, Bal Thackeray says, 'we are from the land of Shivaji, don't clash with us, we will not spare you if you do'. To him I say, 'Bal Thackeray-sir, if you are from the land of Shivaji, we are from the land of the Hoysalas' [amid loud cheers] and to those who look to set fire to the people of the two lands I say, 'in order to teach you a lesson, there are 45 lakh KRV workers who are ready to save this land by sacrificing their lives'. (Gowda 2009)

Such a speech seems typical of Narayana Gowda. In the speeches that were analysed, Gowda focussed on familiar themes such as the border dispute with Maharashtra, preferential employment for Kannada-speakers in Karnataka and a greater allocation of water for

Karnataka. His message is rarely simple, and he prefers to use heavily Sanskritised Kannada.

In other words, he is no Bal Thackeray; a point we will stress in the next section.

4.3 KRV: another Shiv Sena?

Comparing the KRV and Shiv Sena is like comparing apples and oranges according writer-journalist Sugata Srinivasaraju (Srinivasaraju, personal communication, 27th May 2010).

Indeed, comparing the two organisations without a rigorous analytical and comparative framework is unlikely to yield conclusions that can be tested on the field. However as we have seen, there are similarities between the two and important distinctions as well.

Janaki Nair's suggestion that Kannada nationalism has begun to mirror the Shiv Sena in its self-definition as 'Hindu, anti-minority and patriarchal (1996: 2814) is a useful point at which to begin this discussion. Is the KRV, like Kannada nationalism, Hindu, anti-minority and patriarchal?

In its impassioned imagining of Kannada-speakers as descendents of the Hoysala dynasty, and its refusal to associate itself with the rule of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, a case may be advanced for its avowed Hinduness. However, such a small correlation cannot be the basis of advancing the argument that the KRV is decidedly Hindu. Neither in its website nor in its President's speeches does the KRV advance a pro-Hindu, anti-Muslim image. Perhaps this is because the KRV does not have a comparable figure to idealise like the Shiv Sena does in the figure of Shivaji.

The KRV is however, clearly anti-minority, despite its claims that it fought for the inclusion of the Tulu language in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian constitution, a list of languages that are informally referred to as 'national languages'. KRV's agitations against Tamil and Marathi-speakers have been documented several times.

Finally, the KRV is not patriarchal in the sense that Narayana Gowda is the uncontested leader who rules the party in an autocratic manner, unlike Bal Thackeray's unchallenged leadership of the Shiv Sena.

The shades of similarity between the two organisations are upstaged by the sheer scale of the Shiv Sena's operations. If the Shiv Sena is militantly Hindu, the KRV is only mildly so; and if the Shiv Sena is clearly patriarchal, the KRV is only so to an extent. There are however, several other similarities between the two organisations:

One, they were both founded with 'protection' of the local language and its speakers as the primary focus of operation. It is another matter that the Shiv Sena changed its stripes during its several reinventions. Two, they were both tolerated or tacitly supported by the state government in the formative phase. In the Shiv Sena's case, it was the Congress party that used it as a tool in its fight with the communist parties of Mumbai (Hansen 2001), and in the KRV's case, it was the Janata Dal (Secular) which supported it (Srinivasaraju: private communication, 27th May 2010). Three, both parties have used the spectacle of violence to further their interests.

Despite these similarities however, the contrasts between the KRV and Shiv Sena are glaring:

- i. Scale of operation: The Shiv Sena is several times larger than the KRV in its networks and membership. We have already seen that Shiv Sena has a large network of *shakhas* or branch offices. The KRV claims to have thousands of *shakhas* and lakhs of members (Gowda 2009), however, this has never been verified (Srinivasaraju: personal communication, 27th May 2010).
- ii. Infighting: The KRV, unlike the Shiv Sena has been riven by infighting. Narayana Gowda's leadership has been challenged by Praveen Shetty, who floated a splinter

group of the KRV. On the other hand, Bal Thackeray's grip on the Shiv Sena did not weaken for more than 40 years. It is only in recent years that the Shiv Sena has been weakened by high-profile exits and a succession battle that has resulted in Bal Thackeray's nephew Raj Thackeray exiting from the party to form the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena.

- iii. Acceptance: Unlike the Shiv Sena's agitations in the 1960s which echoed the frustrations of the Marathi middle-class and working-class, the KRV has never been accepted widely by Kannadigas.
- iv. Caste: As Thomas Blom Hansen (2001) argues, several castes gravitated towards a single amorphous *Maratha* identity, making it easier for the Shiv Sena to have found acceptance in Mumbai and Maharashtra. However, there is no evidence that the KRV has found large-scale acceptance amongst all the castes in Karnataka. Narayana Gowda is himself a *Vokkaliga*, which is the most powerful caste in southern Karnataka. However, it is not clear if Gowda has found acceptance in northern Karnataka where the most powerful castes are the *Lingayats*.
- v. Violence: While the KRV has gained notoriety for the violence it uses, it is perceived to be a nuisance rather than a serious threat unlike the Shiv Sena in Mumbai. The KRV's brand of violence is restricted to vandalism and destruction of personal property, while the Shiv Sena, even before the 1993 Bombay riots, was associated with muscle power and personal violence.

The biggest difference between the Shiv Sena and the KRV however is in their leadership. Contrast the figure of Narayana Gowda with Bal Thackeray. Gowda does not possess the ready wit and sarcasm of Bal Thackeray. Neither is he able to reach out to the average

Kannadiga through language. Whereas Bal Thackeray excelled in the use of *Bombaya Boli* or street-Marathi with its unique patois, Gowda is only able to mouth Kannada that is heavily Sanskritised. Further, Gowda is not as charismatic as Bal Thackeray and this makes it more difficult for the former to be accepted as the undisputed leader of the KRV.

It is clear that the KRV does not have the momentum or prospects to build itself up like the Shiv Sena did in its formative stages. According to Srinivasaraju, the KRV is a 'spent force' in Karnataka (Srinivasaraju, personal communication, 27th May 2010). Srinivasaraju believes that the KRV's recent failure at the municipal elections in Bangalore echoes the failure of the Rajkumar Abhimanigala Sangha (Rajkumar Fans' Association) to win polls in the 1980s.

However, it is always dangerous to write-off an organisation's prospects. Julia Eckert (2003) draws our attention to premature obituaries written about the Shiv Sena in the 1980s, when scholars cited its Mumbai-centric, parochialist, exclusivist ideology as potential constraints. While it seems unlikely that the KRV can build itself up, there is no reason to underestimate its potential.

5. Conclusion

The questions framed in this paper are a result of the author's efforts to understand the nature of Kannada nationalism, its origins and its implications for Bangalore. The trail we have followed thus far began with the history of Bangalore, and led next to the conceptualisation of Kannada nationalism and its various manifestations. We have looked at why it is necessary to view the language movement in Karnataka from the perspective of other (and older) language movements in peninsular India. And finally, we have examined language chauvinism by analysing the Karnataka Rakshana Vedike's discourse and comparing it to the Shiv Sena's rise in Mumbai and Maharashtra. Along the way, we have forged an understanding of key words such as *Kannadiga* and *Karnatakatva*. We have learnt that Kannada nationalism developed belatedly in comparison to linguistic nationalism in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra; that Kannada identity has been expressed in a liberal, intellectual and inclusive manner as well as in a violent, exclusivist manner. In the absence of primary data (the examination of the KRV's discourse apart), how are we to make the conceptual leap to fill the gap between hypothesis and conclusion? A speculative discussion will serve no purpose other than to reveal an attempt to square conceptual circles.

However, reach a conclusion we must; and in order to do that, we must go back to the beginning. Not to the beginning of this paper, but to the beginning of the term 'nationalism' as Kannada intellectuals have understood it. According to D R Nagaraj, the rise of nationalism in India put an end to the multiple identities that any individual had until then personified - 'caste, region, religious tradition, artistic tradition, material culture, relationship with nature' (Nagaraj 1997, in Vasavi 2009: 7) – and that all identities in modern societies were based on

'reorganised memories'. Nagaraj argues that such a reorganisation of memories led to the creation of Indian, and Kannada nationalism.

For Alura Venkat Rao, there is a difference between western nationalism and Indian - and therefore Kannada - nationalism. In his paper '*Rashtreeyatvada Meemamse*' or *The Study of Nationalism* (Vasavi 2009), he evokes the image of a river to explain Kannada nationalism as he views it. According to him, just like a river begins small, grows bigger and finally empties into the ocean; nationalism too begins small, with the self, then grows to take on family, village, region and nation until it is conveyed to an ocean he calls *Sarvabhutahita* or 'universal well-being' (Vasavi 2009). Venkat Rao believes that western nationalism 'descends into self-interest. It does not flow into *sarvabhutahita*' (Vasavi 2009: 8).

This benign view of nationalism has been challenged within the Kannada movement by those convinced that the language is under attack from all sides. K V Narayana writes:

For any language in the world to keep pace with the modern world, it is essential that it be used in administration, education, mass communication and such public endeavours. When we talk of administration, we refer to institutions like the legislature, the secretariat, the courts and such like. And aside from this, language has its spheres of human endeavour as in the family, in private correspondence, in creative writing and so on. (Narayana 1993, in Vasavi 2009: 16)

Narayana argues that Kannada has ceded space to English in the fields of administration, education and mass communication, and that it is therefore dominated. Janaki Nair makes a similar point when she argues that English is overwhelmingly dominant in the financial, scientific and IT spheres, Hindi and Tamil are dominant in the cultural spheres of television

and film, with Kannada reigning only over the spheres of literature and domestic life (Nair 2005).

This domination of Kannada can be conceptually organised around the framework of a 'linguistic market', as Nair does by quoting Pierre Bourdieu's *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991). Thus, 'it is a linguistic market that sustains a division of labour between different languages and language competencies, defining a very restricted sphere within which Kannada may circulate' (Nair 2005: 242).

Kannada's dominated status combined with the total acceptance of English in commercial and technical spheres has inevitably affected Kannada nationalism, which in turn has had no option but to agitate for more support for the language in the administrative and cultural spheres (television, film, but not literature). Hence the periodic calls for a boycott of films other than Kannada in Bangalore's theatres. This limited space for Kannada nationalism makes it easier for the harsher and more exclusivist type of nationalism to take root, often at the expense of a more liberal and inclusive nationalism. Perhaps it is this limited space that initially helped organisations such as the KRV to begin operations and thrive, and perhaps it is because of this limited space for Kannada nationalism that organisations like the KRV find it difficult to develop further. If so, it is ironic. Kannada's dominated status, in other words, possibly allows for a more strident nationalism to emerge but not flower.

Connected to this more strident nationalism is the increasing saffronisation of Kannada nationalism that we have already discussed. According to D R Nagaraj, 'Kannada nationalism has, from the beginning, had an organic relation with Hindutva or Hindu nationalism' (Nagaraj 1997, in Vasavi 2009: 10). Nagaraj argues that this is partly because the various strands of Kannada nationalism ignored the manifold non-Hindu influences on the language. He points out that both Alura Venkat Rao's spiritual nationalism and Chidandamurthy's fear-

centred nationalism ignore the contributions of non-Hindu communities to Kannada culture (Nagaraj 1997, in Vasavi 2009). As we have already seen, there have been several others who have also commented on this increasing saffronisation of Kannada identity (Srinivasaraju 2008; Nair 2005).

In his study *Language, Religion and Politics in North India* (1974), Paul Brass wonders why some language movements in India do not develop into powerful political movements like the Maithili language in Bihar. His conclusion is worth quoting in full here:

Language in north India has generally played a secondary role to religion as a source of social and political differentiation. Yet it would not be correct to conclude from these cases that religion is inherently a more powerful motive force in identity formation than language because elsewhere in the world, and in India itself, the roles of these two forces have been reversed. In south India, in Europe, and in Africa, it has been more common for language to provide a basis for nationalism in religiously diverse societies whereas, in north India, religion has united linguistically distinct peoples, particularly the Muslims. Moreover, there is also very recent evidence from the South Asian subcontinent, in the case of Bangladesh, that language which at one time may play a secondary role to religion, may at another time become primary. (Brass 1974: 404-405)

Is it possible then, that the progressive saffronisation of Kannada nationalism is because religion, rather than language is increasingly the primary marker of identity for a Kannadiga? Testing such a hypothesis is beyond the scope of this paper. However, such a reading provides food for thought, and fits the facts quite easily. For instance, the BJP's electoral successes in Karnataka could be explained away by such a theory.

Perhaps such a theory is too convenient in this context. A R Vasavi cautions against speculating in the absence of rigorous and exacting field research: 'language chauvinism is the carrier of much of the new Kannada nationalism and there are economic and social factors for this, including anti-Tamil sentiments' (Vasavi, personal communication, 29th May, 2010).

It may be appropriate at this juncture to hijack Thomas Blom Hansen's assertion that Marathi identity is an incomplete identity (2001). Kannada identity, it could be argued, is similarly an incomplete identity, and like Hansen has shown with Marathi identity, easily attracted to violence. We have already established that nationalism (Indian and Kannada) is an artificial construct. Hansen argues that the processes of reimagination that are central to nationalistic thought do not always lead to a unanimous acceptance of a singular identity. It is always difficult to paper over cracks that develop within a nationalistic discourse. Hansen's central thesis is that the history of Marathi nationalism is characterised by several violent attempts to overcome such an incompleteness. Given that so much of Kannada nationalism has been influenced by Marathi nationalism, it is not unreasonable to conclude that Kannada identity remains incomplete, in suspended animation somewhere between its Dravidian and Tamil heritage on the one hand, and its Sanskritic influences and Hinduness on the other.

Word Count: 10,089

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