

CHAPTER TWO

S.R. KANTHI: BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

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Sri. S.R. Kanthi played a prominent role not only after Independence, but even before Independence. In the first chapter a brief life-sketch of Sri. Kanthi has been brought forth. In this chapter we will briefly analyse his role before Independence. Here efforts are made to depict him as a freedom-fighter, as a social reformer, as a Parliamentary Secretary and also as a Deputy Speaker. Even his role in the unification of Karnataka is also depicted here. Before analysing the above it is worth-while to briefly look in to the history of pre-Independence Karnataka State.

(A) Role of Karnataka in National Freedom Movement:

Karnataka has played a dominant role in the history of India from ancient time to the present. On many occasions it stood up against the alien rule, particularly in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries. Karnataka did not lag behind in taking part in the National Freedom Movement also. During the British rule in India the conditions of Karnataka were too precarious. Generally, the whole nation was conscious about the humiliating conditions throughout. It was more difficult for Kannadigas to play their role in the national history, because Karnataka was unfortunate, as it was divided into many provinces and it had no capital city of its own, where national

movement could spring up and extend to other places.¹ The districts of Bijapur, Belgaum, Dharwad and North Canara formed the North Karnataka, which was then the Southern part of the Bombay Presidency. Because of this, naturally, the people of this area came under the influence of national leaders of Maharashtra. Unfortunately they had to be followers of other leaders, than their own and they were deprived of the chance of self-expression and self-assertion. Even then the people of Karnataka or Mysore were not quiescent. Their patriotic spirit could not remain silent. They were much interested in the national activities, happenings of national events and they attended the meetings and conferences held in Bombay and Poona. For their political, social and educational development, they have always been much influenced by the developments in the then Bombay Presidency. In the earlier chapter it is also found that Kolhapur, since it had already emerged as a "great educational centre, had attracted many future statesmen to get education in Rajaram College, Kolhapur, established and developed under the able leadership of the reformer Prince, Shri Chh. Shahu Maharaja of Kolhapur".²

The spirit of nationalism and the Congress movement found greater expression in the areas directly under the British rule. The foundation of Indian National Congress had its reverberation in the area or region. Karnataka had become a part of the mainstream of the national upsurge. In fact Karnataka responded to the call of Swadeshi and boycott movements mainly by inspiration and influence

of Lokmanya Tilak.³ North Karnataka had been always following Bombay actions in most matters, as they had no separate Political entity. To create a sense of political and cultural community feelings amongst the Kannadigas, to bring them together in 1915 they established "Kannada Sahitya Sammelana" at Bangalore.

After 1920 there was a tremendous rise in the enthusiasm of people for carrying on Congress activities. All over Karnataka, the constructive programmes of the Congress were taken up. New schools and new institutions emerged throughout. The main activities among constructive programmes were: Khaddar programmes, abolition of untouchability, anti-drink campaign, encouragement for village or cottage industries etc. These activities helped to awaken a spirit of national service and to prepare people to face the bitter struggles in the forthcoming years.⁴

At Belgaum in 1924, the leaders of Karnataka made people realize the importance of session by conducting local or Taluka level conferences and created a political awakening in them. Particularly from 18 to 23 December 1924 many such Conferences and Parishads were held. In Dharwad District the conference was convened under the presidentship of Sri. Raj Gopalachari C.R. and even Sri Hardekar Manjappa on 24 and 25 December 1924. Both of them spoke mainly on non-violence and constructive programmes.⁵ In Bijapur district also several conferences were conducted like - Karnataka Provincial Conference, Karnatak Khilafat Parishad, Bhaginimandal Parishad,

Volunteer Conference, Karnataka Sahitya Sammelana and also Khadi exhibition. A devoted nationalist leader Sri. Hardekar Manjappa spread the message of Sri. Lokmanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi in his lectures. His speech made a deep impression on the mass of thousands, who attended the function. Sri. Hardekar Manjappa established a Vidyalaya at Alamatti to spread the ideas, views and messages of Sri. Lokamanya Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi. That is why he was called as 'Karnatak Gandhi'.

In 1929 Sri. Sardar Patel and Jawaharlal Nehru visited Northern Karnataka. They gave a call to the youths, and prepared the people of that area to fight for freedom. The working committee of the Congress which met on Jan. 1930 decided to observe Independence Day or Poorna Swaraj Day on 26 January. Accordingly, they were conducted throughout the district, successfully. These celebrations were a unique success.

It was during this period that Gandhiji decided upon launching the historic movement - The Dandi March - on March 12, 1930. Karnataka played a significant role in this historic movement. Here a Satyagraha Committee was established to awaken and inspire the people.⁶ Sri. Myalara Mahadewappa, one of the Kannadigas was there along with Mahatma Gandhi in that movement.

Preparation for the struggle was very promptly taken up. The leaders of Northern Karnataka met Gandhiji at Jambusar, while he was on march to Dandi. Our leaders explained to Gandhiji about

the happenings in Karnataka and they received the appreciations and blessings from Mahatma Gandhi. The Congressmen in North Karnataka organized themselves for the Civil Disobedience Movement. The campaign against alcohol, boycott of foreign cloth were the main items in the campaign. In 1934 Mahatma Gandhi visited North Karnataka for Harijan welfare work and constructive programmes in that area. In 1942 'Quit India' movement was launched and Mahatma Gandhi was arrested. Many demonstrations and hartals were organized throughout the nation including Karnataka. It was in 1942 that nearly 400 million people roused in to one nation. The sole song of the nation was 'Quit India'. Sri. S.R. Kanthi actively participated in it. By holding a free and fluttering national flag Sri. S.R. Kanthi marched ahead of his followers in his district. Thus, Karnataka, on all the occasions, responded to the call of Mahatma Gandhi with regard to constructive programmes with commendable zeal. The spreading of Khadi and village industries was taken up over Karnataka. Almost all the chief national leaders visited Karnataka and kept the national spirit alive.⁷

Political Awakening in Bijapur District:

As Sri. S.R. Kanthi belonged to Bijapur district, its particular and general role can be depicted as follows:

Bijapur, as one of the largest districts in Mysore State/Karnataka, has its own rich past history and glorious culture. Bijapur is one of the historic cities of our country. It is in the northern part

of the Karnataka State, occupying an area of 6,566.9 square miles/ 17,008.3 Kilometres. It is bounded on the North by the Solapur District and on the North-West by the Sangli District, both of Maharashtra State. On the North and North-east, the Bhima River is a boundry between Bijapure and the Solapur district. A stretch of the river separates Bijapur from the Gulburga district. On the East and South-east the boundary runs up to about 150 miles and is purely administrative dividing district from the Gulburga and Raichur districts on the South, it is bordered by the Ron and Naragund taluks of the Dharwar district and on the West by the Athani, Raibag, Gokak and Ramdurg talukas and Belgaum district. On the whole, it is a compact administrative unit.⁸

Bijapur District is popularly known as the Punjab of Karnataka, because it is touched by 5 rivers, viz., Krishna, Bhima, Ghatprabha, Malaprabha and Dhoni. Krishna river is one of the three biggest rivers of South India, the other two being Cauvery and Godavari.⁹

Bijapur district in general, and in particular Bijapur city is totally a tourist centre. Because it had a rich past history and glorious culture of its own. The district is full of variety of tourist and sacred centres. These are -

Bijapur: a historic city, in which the world famous Golgumbaz is located. This Golgumbaz is veritable wonders, considered as one of the 7 wonders of the world.

Basavanbagewadi: It is the birth place of Lord Basavanna, a divine power who enlightened our society during the Twelfth century, full of reform thoughts.

Badami: It is as important as Bijapur, as it has also its own glorious culture and history. Badami is famous for sculpture. The wonder of Badami is Menabasadi, where divine statues are carved out. It was ruled by Chalukya dynasty.

Kudal Sangam: It is a sacred centre, it is the 'Aikya Sthal' of Basavanna.

Aihole, Pattadkal, Shivayog Mandir, Banthanal, Yalagur, Nalatwad etc.: These are all tourists and holy centres in Bijapur district.

Bijapur district is so spread that it consists of 18 lakh voters, composed of two Parliamentary Constituencies, i.e., Bagalkot and Bijapur. It is composed of 15 Assembly Constituencies, viz., Indi, Sindagi, Hoovin Hippargi, Muddebihal, Basavan Bagewadi, Bilagi, Bagalkot, Badami, Jamkhandi, Mudhol, Ballolli and Hungund. Sri. S.R. Kanthi represented the Hungund constituency from the beginning to the end. That is for 5 times he got elected from this constituency and also represented this constituency in Bombay Presidency.

Thus, Bijapur district is one of the richest districts in the State from the point of History, Tradition and legend. The conditions and environment of the district and the political awakening persuaded every one to jump into the political field, public field

and follow the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi.¹⁰

With the spread of modern education and amenities, a fresh intellect ferment began in India in general and in Bijapur district, in particular. The past glories and achievements of this land were unfolded by the labours of scholars.¹¹ Many reform institutions arose in many parts of the country to eradicate the social evils and blind religious practices. Especially the Prarthana Samaj of Bombay, Sarvajanik Sabha of Poona, Deccan Education Society of Poona have exercised lot of influence on the Bijapur district and the other parts of Karnataka. Karnataka Vidyavardhak Sangh, Lingayat Education Association of Dharwad, Basaveshwar Vidyavardhak Sangh of Bagalkot B.L.D. Association of Bijapur, Shivayogmandir near Badami etc. were founded and launched useful for career of public service in educating the people.¹²

Bijapur district was politically so awakened that many important political personalities of the nation visited the district. In 1893, Sri. A.O. Hume, closely related Indian National Congress, visited Belgaum. This visit gave an impetus to public activities in the district. Swami Vivekananda had infused a new self-confidence in the people and had raised their morale by his inspiring speeches and writings. His visit to Belgaum had enthused the people of Bombay, Karnataka. The trio 'Lal, Bal and Pal' were leaders of the radical group of the nationalists and they had a good following in the North Karnataka area. The people of the district became politically awakened due

to the inspiration of the above great personalities.

The need of Swaraj and Swadeshi spread throughout the district. The people took up this cause very enthusiastically. The advent of Gandhiji on the Indian political arena changed the tenor of the agitation and made it a mass movement with new methods of struggle.¹³

The message of non-cooperation and Satyagraha was carried from town to town and from village to village by the nationalist youths. Pamphlets and books containing articles and light songs on patriotic themes were distributed. Several lawyers in the district give up their practice to join the non-cooperation movement. Bagalkot continued to be a main centre of national educational activities.¹⁴ Sri S.R. Kanthi, who was practising law at Bagalkot left the practice and joined the movement.

The constructive programme relating to Khadi and Village Industries, removal of untouchability, anti-alcohol campaign, fostering of Hindu-Muslim unity etc., were earnestly taken up in the district. The Harijan welfare activities received a stimulus by the establishment of a 'Harijan Balikashrama' at Bijapur.¹⁵ Sri. S.R. Kanthi was engaged in all these activities actively.

Mahatma Gandhiji expected non-violent volunteers to help in carrying various national activities. Accordingly, as in Hubli 'Sevadal' was established, so also a volunteer training course

was conducted at 'Sitimani' of Bijapur district. Bijapur district continued to pay greater attention to the training of volunteers¹⁶ and hence considered as centre of training.

When Mahatma Gandhi tempted the youths of the nation to give up all that was dear to them and to join the freedom movement, Sri. S.R. Kanthi did the same. He sacrificed the practicing of law and orderly life at the altar of freedom.¹⁷

During this period, Bijapur district played a role of host to conduct several conferences like Karnataka Provincial Conference, Karnataka Khilafat Parishad, Bhagini Mandal Parishad, Volunteer Conference, Khadi Exhibition, Kannada Sahitya Sammelan etc.¹⁸ Sri. S.R. Kanthi joined the group of freedom fighters and became the leader of the youth and had a determined wish to contribute his mite to the Freedom Struggle in India.

Sri. S.R. Kanthi was inspired by many personalities, incidents, and events. That can be analysed as follows -

The great personalities while shaping the course of events in their own life exercised a profound influence on their contemporaries. Their ideologies and determination gave rise to forces that carry people along with them and help them to have a glimpse of their own destiny.¹⁹ This is true in the case of Sri. S.R. Kanthi. It was the influence of Mahatma Gandhi, that shaped his future. Till his death he remained an ardent follower of Gandhian principles

in his life. Sri. S.R. Kanthi was too lucky or fortunate because he had an opportunity to see the great nationalist leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai, Shaukat Ali, Lokmanya Tilak, Sardar Patel, Jawaharlal Nehru, Hardekar Manjappa and above all Mahatma Gandhi at an early age. The sight of these leaders and the knowledge about their achievements opened in his mind a new vista of service and sacrifice for the motherland in general and his native place in particular.²⁰

When he was in college he had heard about the national call, but he waited for a proper occasion. Since his college days Sri. Kanthi was more and more interested in biographies and noble thoughts of Lokamanya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, and Hardekar Manjappa, who bestowed a magnetic force on him. This vociferous reading virtue kindled the spirit of independence in him.²¹ The knowledge of English language and literary reading would make any serious reader a freedom fighter. This happened in the case of Sri Kanthi. It was not only the case with Sri. Kanthi alone, but the whole district. The conditions and environment of the district and the political awakening persuaded everyone to jump into the political field, public field and follow the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi.²² By the time he completed his graduation and LL.B. degree, the time was very ripe for fighting the foreign rule in India, so he took a plunge into the freedom struggle.

During those days in the Bijapur district, Sri. Ambali Chanasappa was a wellknown leader of the Congress in Bijapur district.



Though he was not highly educated, he was the whole and sole of Congress in the District. It was presumed that Ambali means Congress and Congress means Ambali. Sri. Ambali was sincerely trying to strengthen the Congress party. He was intended to include young and educated youths in to the party. As Sri. Kanthi was the first Lingayat or Veershaiva of southern part of Bijapur district to complete the LL.B. Degree, so Sri Ambali intended to include Sri. Kanthi in the party. Accordingly he visited the native town of Kanthi, i.e., Ilkal and met Sri. Rudrappa, the father of Sri. Kanthi. At that time Sri. 'Yajaman' Rudrappa was associated with Sri. Sullad Desai, who was also dominant in the District and who opposed Congress activities. Sri. Rudrappa was really in good terms with Sri. Sullad Desai. Even then Sri. Ambali met Rudrappa and requested him to depute his son Shivalingappa to serve in the Congress party, as the party is in need of such young and educated youths, to which Rudrappa agreed. Accordingly Sri. S.R. Kanthi, who was practising law at Bagalkot joined the Congress and became the member of it and entered the political arena.²³

The dream of his becoming a successful lawyer had gone with winds. He theoretically decided to give up those dreams and to follow the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi and the principles and policies of the Congress party. Thus Sri. Kanthi frustrated the hopes, reposed in him by his father and mother, but gained what his whole being longed for i.e., the prospect of dedicated service to his land and people. He made up his mind to serve the motherland, native land and he took it as his life's motto. Once he entered

the political arena, the Congress Organization, he did not stop, nor he looked back, nor he rested till his death. His life is a book from which the young and old alike could learn in the generation to follow. He secured a proud place not only in the history of Karnataka but also in the glorious history of India. With the inspiration and influence of Mahatma Gandhi, Hardekar Manjappa, Ambali Chanabasappa etc. and the prevailing conditions of the society, Sri. S.R. Kanthi shouldered the responsibility of upliftment of downtroddens, Depressed Classes, providing of education, revolting against bad and meaningless customs and blind beliefs etc.²⁴

Thus, the politics of Karnataka received the rural articulation because of the successful reform movements carried out by the great social reformers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The political leadership claimed its roots in the rural Karnataka like Sri. B.D. Jatti, Ambali Chanabasappa, Hardekar Manjappa, Surpur Mallappa, R.M. Desai, Koujalagi, Kadidol Manjappa, Doddameti Andaneppa, Hallikeri Gudleppa, K.F. Patil, etc. besides Sri. Kanthi.

S.R. Kanthi as a Freedom Fighter:

Sri. S.R. Kanthi was a born fighter, who fought for the freedom of the nation. Many leaders devoted their life for the cause of National Movement, for the cause of freedom struggle. One amongst them is Sri. S.R. Kanthi. Though he was too shy and mild, he had his own methods of working in the freedom movement, who had responded to the call of Mahatma Gandhi's call to the youths

of the nation.²⁵

Karnataka responded to the call of Gandhiji with regard to the constructive programmes with commandable zeal. The spreading of Khadi and village industries were taken up in remote corners of Karnataka. Almost all the great national leaders visited Karnataka and kept the national spirit alive.²⁶ They carried out the constructive activities and programmes of the Congress. The Congress activities like spread of Khadi, Prohibition, upliftment of Harijans, establishment of village and cottage industries etc. was their mission. All such constructive activities were carried out by the people. This helped to keep the minds of the people centred around the Congress and its activities.²⁷ In this context Sri. Kanthi's active role for freedom struggle and his service to propagate the cause, resulted in his membership of A.I.C.C. and Presidentship of B.D.C.C. getting the strength and inspiration from great leaders of his time.²⁸ He was an important recognized leader in the Indian National Congress. In 1928 the Simon Commission arrived at Bombay, to study the Indian conditions and ascertaining Indian opinion for formulating the proposals for constitutional reforms in India, which was boycotted by the Congress. In this boycott "Simon Go Back", Sri Kanthi, though had not joined the Congress party, opposed the Simon Commission and condemned it.²⁹ He organized strikes and hartals in his own way as a protest.

Sri. Kanthi was against the injustices done to the students, weavers, agriculturists, labourers and Harijans. He possessed organizing ability since early days. As the 'Chief Minister', he always intended

to initiate many important steps to improve the conditions of the weavers, weaker section of the society and Harijans,³⁰ which he had learnt both during his childhood, and under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi. Unlike modern lawyers, he was not after money, name and fame, but always dedicated to the cause of poor, as a sincere lawyer. Sri. Rudrappa, and Sri. Ambali Chanabasappa guided his career as there were no educated Lingayats, no graduates in the Congress party. Sri. Ambali Chanabasappa of Bijapur District brought him in the Congress party which was in need of such educated and young youths to strengthen the party.³¹ Sri. Ambali Chanabasappa was his source of inspiration.

His commitment to public life was total, with the inspiration of Sri. Ambali Chanabasappa directly and Mahatma Gandhi, indirectly. Like many others of his generation, he was also attracted towards the leaders like Gangadharrao Deshpande, Siddappa Hosamani, T. Siddalingaih, H. Siddayya, S. Nijalingappa etc. Amongst these, S. Nijalingappa became the undisputed leader of the Congress in Karnataka. He rose not only upto the level of President of Mysore Pradesh Congress Committee, even to the President of All India Congress Committee. Sri. Kanthi was also having a great respect and reverence for Sri. S. Nijalingappa, not only before Independence even after the Independence also, because of which he became the member of the Congress and was to become the member of A.I.C.C. in 1939.

Sri. S.R. Kanthi was impressed by the sayings of Sri.

Ambali Chanabasappa, i.e., "You have to organize the Congress, you have to mobilize the people towards Congress, the Bijapur district should be the strong fort of congress". Sri. Kanthi applied his mind to the organization of the Congress. Really, it was believed that the presence of Sri. Ambali Chanabasappa and his dynamic personality was fully responsible for the success of Congress Party in the Mysore State in general, and Bijapur district in particular.³²

Sri. Kanthi, as a sincere congressman, had risen from a volunteer to a leader in Karnataka. He was the guiding force in the politics of southern part of Bijapur district. He was endowed with a great organizational ability, and was a guiding spirit of the Congress organization in Bombay, Karnataka. His organizing capacity and methods were superb, and in due course he became a tower of strength in the Congress organization. His loyalty to the Congress was very unique and un-paralleled. He became the backbone of Congress in the whole Karnataka, particularly in Bijapur district. His leadership of the Congress at the district was never undermined or overlooked.³³

He worked round the clock and toiled incessantly to strengthen the roots of Congress in the rural parts of the State. He toured the entire district, popularized party and gained the confidence of the people. He tried to convince the people about the policies and programmes of the Congress party. In those days the means of propaganda were very limited. Personal visits from place to place and person to person was the only *modus operandi* His personality

was admired and respected. Sri Kanthi contested election from Hungund constituency. He was elected continuously for 5 times. Along with Sri. Kanthi, Sri. S.B. Patil was also elected as M.P. from Bagalkot constituency. Though Sri. S.B. Patil was unknown to the constituency, he got elected by the influence of Sri. Kanthi.³⁴ This is how Sri. Kanthi got in the Congress, worked hard to propagate the cause of 'Freedom' and gained importance in Bijapur District. He saw that the Congress Party got firmly rooted in the District, because of which he was never defeated whenever he contested the elections. His grassroots work in organizational development of Congress was because of his convictions in Gandhian approach. He practised Gandhism until his end. During all these activities in the Congress organization Sri. Kanthi suffered a great deal.

S.R. Kanthi: Imprisonments:

As a freedom fighter and as a sincere volunteer of the Congress, Sri. S.R. Kanthi was arrested and imprisoned twice. He served as President of Bijapur District Congress Committee (B.D.C.C.) from 1940-1946. In 1941 he organized individual Satyagraha and was arrested. The idea behind this Satyagraha was that, when the Second World War was declared in 1939, "we Indians never inclined towards the Britishers, we were not interested to take part in it, in favour of Britishers". But the then Viceroy declared that, 'India is also at the war', which many leaders opposed and they started a Satyagraha against such a statement of the Viceroy.

The procedure to organize the Satyagraha was that they

were to write letter to Mahatma Gandhi and get his permission. Even they were to send a notice to the concerned officer of that area that - today, on such and such a place, I will start Andolan or Satyagraha. On that day there will be no lecture, simply they have to express two lines, viz., "Participating in the World War II is a sin". Sri. S.R. Kanthi did the same and he was arrested and he was put in Hindalaga Prison for 10 months. There he was along with his classmate Sri. Channappa Muddebihal of Ilkal along with other great personalities, in the Hindalaga jail.³⁵

In August 1942, Mahatma Gandhi gave a call to the youths of the nation to participate in 'Quit India Movement'. Accordingly, Sri. S.R. Kanthi engaged in the movement along with his followers, for which he was arrested and again put in the Hingalaga Jail. There he came in contact with great personalities like Doddameti Andaneppa, Dr. Kabbur etc. He was detained for taking part in the 1942 movement.³⁶ Sri. Kanthi had spent best part of his youth in Hindalaga Prison, where he came in contact with many great national personalities. While he was in the jail he fought against the worst and miserable conditions of the prison. Even he demanded the authority of the prison to treat the Harijans as equal with other castes. After release from jail he was closely associated with the relief work undertaken by the Bombay Famine Relief Committee, besides being an active member of the provincial food committee, Bombay.

In 1942 the state experienced a severe drought which is popularly

known as 'Bajra Drought'. At that time the Government started the 'Ganji Kendras'. For running these Kendras educated people were required. Mr Kanthi was chosen for that and he managed the Kendras effectively. He was a member of 'Bombay Provincial Food Committee' and he distributed the foodgrains and clothes supplied by the committee to the needy, poor and he was lovingly called as the 'Poor's Kin'. To work effectively he took the assistance of many other educated youths as volunteer. Some such volunteers were Sri. S.B. Bandargal, Sri. Veerangouda Patil and Sri. S.S. Kavishetti. Thus, Sri. Kanthi was in the public life before Independence itself.³⁷

Sri. S.R. Kanthi was born and brought up in a rural area. He had a deep interest for the rural development and progress. He had genuine interest for the agriculturists' well-being and was always a pioneer for the cause of farmers. Sri. Kanthi felt that he should not rest, but should continue to carry the efforts for the betterment of the farmers. He had these inborn feelings. He knew the woes and worries of the farmers, their problems, their needs and demands. It is these feelings of his that made him occupy the chair of the President of 'Rayat Sammelan' held at Bijapur in 1946.³⁸ He created a great awakening and enthusiasm amongst the ryats of the district. The success of the Ryat's Conference or Sammelan was totally due to Sri. Kanthi's capacity, his selfless devotion to the work and patriotism. Besides the national cause, rural cause was dear to Sri. Kanthi, because of which he also indulged in the cause of social reformation in his own way.

S.R. Kanthi: As a Social Reformer:

Sri. S.R. Kanthi, besides an organizer, was also a social reformer. Along with the strengthening of the organization of Congress Party in the district, he attached highest importance to social reforms. He always fought for the social developments. Whenever he found any injustice to any of the weaker sections of the society, either to weavers or to agriculturists or to Harijans, he used to take effective steps to reduce inequalities of eradicate them with a view to providing social justice to the weaker sections. He urged them to organize themselves into an Union or association. For example, Weavers' Associations, Labour Associations, Rayat Sanghs, Youth Organizations etc. He was above caste and creed. His friends and followers were from all class and from all castes and communities. He used all his energy to serve the people of all cadres and castes and fought against all odds and evils not only before Independence but even after Independence.

Sri. Kanthi earmarked his love, loyalty and dedication to the cause of freedom of the country and to the unification of Karnataka. He dedicated his latter part of his life with full rich experience, achievements and distinguished services to build up nobler and stronger Karnataka.

As a Chief Minister, Education Minister and even as the Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs, he contributed a lot to the social, educational and cultural fields. His contributions were

not restricted to political and educational field alone, but even to the social field. He stood above the caste, colour, creed and religion and devoted himself to the cause of humanity. He used all his efforts to achieve social progress, development and to avoid the social evils and social injustice. He was against customs, traditions and blind beliefs. He revolted against bad and meaningless customs.³⁹ Sri. Kanthi always fought for the welfare of others. Till his death he practised the ideals of Gandhiji. He took upon himself the loving fond of serving his people in their need and to their well-being. He was just like an oasis in the desert; he never failed to help the helpless and was a friend of all and an enemy of none.⁴⁰

He was very co-operative and anxious to help the people of Karnataka. Even when he was in Bangalore, either in the office of the Speaker or the Chief Minister or the Education Minister, his residence was always humming busy with the crowd of the people coming from different corners, particularly from Bijapur district, for seeking help from him. He used to ask not the area, caste, religion and community of the people but ask them what help he should extend towards them, what their problems were and what injustice had been done to them. After hearing the problems of the people, immediately he wrote letters to the concerned persons or officers or authorities, even some times he used to telephone the concerned authorities to solve the problems of the people. He always fought for the cause of common or social good, and even for the right or justice and social and cultural values of life.⁴¹

Sri. Kanthi was too religious and had great respect and reverence towards religion from his boyhood to the last breath of his life. His whole family was religious. His parents were having great reverence and they were great devotees of Vijay Mahanteshwar Swami of Chittargi and Ilkal. The 'Sanskar' of family inspired Shri Kanthi also. Though he was Lingayat, he had respect for all other religions. He never professed his religion publicly nor did he criticize other religions for any bad things in them. His friends belonged to all religions.

Sri. Kanthi had deep respect and reverence for 'Swamiji' of Ilkal, 'Sharanamma' of Sajjalgudda and 'Jagadguru' of Moorusavir Math, Hubli. Even when he was a sitting M.L.A., or Speaker or Education Minister or Law Minister or Chief Minister, whenever he came over to Ilkal he used to go to Swamiji, Sharanamma and even to the Sangameshwar temple of Kudalsangam.⁴² Sri. Kanthi was mainly responsible for the celebration of 8th centenary of Sri. Basavanna, in and outside the state. 'Basava' was a Kayakyogi. He was a man who believed in the dictum 'Work is Workship'. Sri. Kanthi developed Kudalsangam, the place where Basava achieved Moksha. He took interest in the Alamatti Dam and took interest in the construction of National High Way in between Chitradurga and Solapur. Though Sri. B.D. Jatti was the President of the 8th Centenary Celebration of Basavanna, Sri. Kanthi was actually responsible for the conduct of the celebrations in and outside the State.

When he became the Chief Minister of Karnataka, before taking oath he went to 'Sattur' Swamiji of 'Shivarathreeshwar Math' and visited the 'Chamundeshwari temple' at Mysore. Then only he took the oath. It shows his great respect and devotion to religion.⁴³

There are 'folk stories' about him that, Sri. Vijayamahant Swamiji of Ilkal and Chittraragi and even Sharanamma of Sajjalgudda forecast about the future happenings in the life of Sri. Kanthi. Both Swamiji and Sharanamma uttered some prophets about the two incidents that are to be quoted here. One is, when he was just a child he came to 'Math' along with his father Sri. Rudrappa. His father, Swamiji and others were engaged in some discussion. At that time, boy Shivalingappa went and sat on the chair or Bed of Swamiji. Every one was afraid of it. But Swamiji told that "one or the other day Shivalingappa will occupy the chair in future". It came true, because later he occupied many higher positions.

The second incident is - after 1962 General Elections he was declared elected from Hungund constituency. He went to Sajjalgudda to get the blessings of Sharanammaji and what happened was that when he entered the temple, Sharanammaji asked their servant to bring a chair. She made Sri. Kanthi to sit on that chair and started singing and dancing around the chair. Later, within a month Sri. Kanthi was selected as the Chief Minister of Karnataka. All these incidents show that, though he rose to the higher and higher positions, he never left the habit of attending the temples, Maths, Darga's, Swamiji's and Sharanamma's. It shows his religious mentality. That is why he was called 'a saint politician' or 'a; sharan Rajkarni'⁴⁴

Sri. Kanthi never observed or practised untouchability, right since his student life. He always tried to uplift the untouchables, and took several steps to educate the untouchables and improve their conditions.

Sri. Kanthi stated that, all the caste organizations should show toleration towards other caste organizations and each organization should try for the development of the other communities. He used to say that the 'religious tolerance' was a must for all, which points to his secular approach.

**Sri. S.R. Kanthi: As a Parliamentary Secretary
(1946 to 1952)**

Sri. S.R. Kanthi's political career actually began before the Independence. Much of his political life began in Bombay Presidency, and then later mostly in Mysore State. The emergence of Independence, and the demand of Linguistic States brought in a new set of leaders, perhaps in which Sri. Kanthi got pushed in second file leadership. But in Bombay Presidency he had already emerged as a strong leader of Karnataka.

In 1946 when the elections were held for Bombay Legislative Assembly, there was an interim Government. From Bijapur district there were two seats. As Sri Kanthi was sincere, hardworking and educated member of the Congress and had already earned the name as Acting President of Bijapur District Congress Committee (BDCC), he was allotted the Congress ticket to contest from the

Southern part of the Bijapur district. He was elected by overwhelming majority. Likewise, Sri. B.D. Jatti got elected from Northern part of the district. Both entered the Bombay Legislative Assembly, when Sri. B.G. Kher was the Chief Minister of Bombay Province.⁴⁵

From 1946 to 1952 as an elected M.L.A. for Bombay Legislative Assembly, he also served as a Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Food and Parliamentary Affairs sections of the Government. Along with him Sri. Y.B. Chavan, Sri. Jatti etc. also served as the Parliamentary Secretaries. Perhaps in this context, Sri S.R. Kanthi got his best training in Bombay Presidency.

The posts of Parliamentary Secretaries were nominal. Actually there was no specific work and responsibilities attached to these posts. Just for the name's sake these posts were created. Knowing this, Sri. Kanthi was very much disappointed. It was very difficult for him to sit without work, so he asked his other colleagues or Parliamentary Secretaries, viz., Sri. Y.B. Chavan and Sri. B.D. Jatti, to consult the Chief Minister Sri. B.G. Kher and request him to entrust certain specific responsibilities to the holders of the posts of Parliamentary Secretaries. The idea of Sri. S.R. Kanthi was, each department should have a Parliamentary Secretary. He should be allowed to supervise and put remarks on the working of each department. This idea of his was accepted by the Government and, accordingly, Sri. Kanthi was made Parliamentary Secretary for Food, Sri. B.D. Jatti for Finance, Sri. Y.B. Chavan for Parliamentary Affairs. Later, after 2 years, Sri. Kanthi was made Parliamentary

Secretary in Forest, Agriculture and Co-operative Department. While serving as Parliamentary Secretary only Sri. Kanthi came in contact with Sri. Gulzarilal Nanda, from whom he got proper guidance, direction and inspiration.⁴⁶ Not only this even he came in contact with Sri. Murarji Desai. Thus, for five years he served successfully as Parliamentary Secretary in Bombay Province, which has been wellknown for legislating very crucial legislation in matters of education of backwards, agricultural reforms, and besides social reforms.

**Sri. Kanthi: As a Deputy Speaker
(1952 to 1956)**

After Independence and before the re-organization of States Sri. Kanthi served even as Deputy Speaker in Bombay Province. That is, he served as Deputy Speaker of Bombay Legislative Assembly from 1952 to 1956.

In the general elections of 1952, Sri. Kanthi again got elected from Hungund Constituency to Bombay Legislature. By seeing his sincere and hard work as Parliamentary Secretary for 5 years, he was appointed as Deputy Speaker of Bombay Legislative Assembly. During this period Sri. Murarji Desai was the Chief Minister of Bombay Province.

As a Deputy Speaker he worked effectively and successfully; as he was a Law graduate, he was strict in conducting the business of the House and contributed to some good conventions and customs.

He acted impartially in conducting the business of the House. He used to maintain discipline on the floor of the House by his wise directions and instructions. He used to act freely and frankly. His experience as Deputy Speaker only helped him later in becoming the Speaker of Mysore Legislative Assembly, after the re-organization of States.⁴⁷

Thus, Sri. Kanthi served in the initial stages at the Bombay Presidency, first as the Parliamentary Secretary and later as the Deputy Speaker of the Assembly. During that period many Lingayat youths were becoming more and more popular, influential and powerful. Amongst them Sri. Kanthi had established his image in the Bombay Legislative Assembly and even in the unification of Karnataka.

Thus, Sri. Kanthi was a politician, educationalist, and reformer who was away from publicity either in Bombay Presidency, or in Karnataka. His experience in political life was varied. It is unfortunate that less has been written regarding such a personality. In this chapter an effort has therefore, been made with few references. Nevertheless, the fact cannot be ignored that he did serve with a great deal of success as Parliamentary Secretary, Deputy Speaker in Bombay Legislative Council and later as Speaker, Education Minister, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, and to crown the career, he had also served as the Chief Minister of Karnataka for a brief period from 9.3.1962 to 20.6.62.

Sri. S.R. Kanthi: Unification of Karnataka:

Sri. Kanthi was a renowned personality in Karnataka's politics, who dedicated his life to the cause of unification of Karnataka. As his role in freedom movement was very prominent in Karnataka, so also his role in the unification of Karnataka is significant one. Many great personalities have tried their best for the unification of Karnataka is significant one. Many great personalities have tried their best for the unification of Karnataka, among whom Sri. Kanthi is also one. The personality of Sri Kanthi stood unique among the galaxy of leaders in the unification movement of Karnataka.

In the pre-Independence days, freedom movement was a heroic chapter in the history of Karnataka, but in the post-Independence period, the formation of the linguistic states marked a glorious chapter in the history of India in general, and of Karnataka in particular.

The provinces under the British had no rational basis. Only political, military and administrative considerations had formed the basis then. Geographical, linguistic and economic points were not considered. Really speaking, language is to be considered as one of the most important factors to decide the boundaries of the provinces. Language has, historically, been the most potential part of nationalism. Nationalism of people politically enslaved took the form of passionate concern for the native tongue. How sweet it is to love one's mother! It is equally sweet to be proud of one's

own mother tongue. To read and sing in one's own mothertongue is to drain the nector of soul's song. So, the promoters of National Movement used the language as an effective instrument and they intended to formulate the linguistic provinces.⁴⁸ The Indian National Congress at its Nagpur Session held in 1920 disregarded the British pattern of provincial system and proposed for reorganization of provinces on the basis of language. An all-party conference was held in 1928 and even the 'Nehru-Report' favoured the formation of provinces such as Andhra, Karnataka etc.

Under Act 1935, when elections were conducted, the Congress party adopted the idea of 'Creation of linguistic States' as the main manifesto.⁴⁹

Under the British, the Kannada speaking people were hopelessly scattered over the Southern and Western parts. The Congress had started to create awareness amongst the Kannada speaking people. The awareness of this situation made the Karnataka people too eager to unite and demand for a separate state of their own. Two earlier institutions played a very significant role in this sphere, those were: Karnatak Vidyavardhak Sangh founded in Dharwad in 1890 and Kannada Sahitya Parishad formulated and founded in Bangalore in 1915. The most pioneering fight for this was given by Sri. Deputy Chanabasappa. Really he was the first person to take up the idea of creation of separate provinces on the basis of languages. Later Alur Venkatrao also fought for the cause. In 1920 'All Karnataka Provincial Conference' was held in Dharwad under the Presidentship

of Sri. V.P. Madhavrao.⁵⁰

In the session of All India National Congress 1924 held at Belgaum, the 'Karnatak Unification Sangh' was established by Sri. Mangalwede Srinivas Rao and others. This Sangh played a prominent role in unifying Kannadigas. Later Sri. Ranganath Divakar with the help of this Sangh, took up the issue of unification of Karnataka,⁵¹ under whom the movement was launched.

In 1927, the Silver Jubilee of Maharaja of Mysore was celebrated throughout Karnataka as a part of the unification movement. In 1931-32 many conferences were held at Dharwad, Karwar, Bijapur, and Hukkeri to support the movement. From 1921 to 1935 many effective efforts were made to have the issue raised in the various legislatures, both at the Centre and in the Provinces of Bombay, Madras and Coorg. Particularly Sri. Siddappa Hosamani raised the issue on the floor of the Central Assembly at Delhi. The personalities like Sarvashri S.T. Kambli, Jinaraj Hegade, Doddameti Andaneppa etc. were prominent in these attempts.

The Karnatak Unification Conference was held at Belgaum in 1936. The 10th of October, 1937 was celebrated as 'Karnataka Unification Day' throughout Karnataka. For the cause of unification of Karnataka many leaders of this period rendered a great service, amongst whom prominent were, Sarvashri S. Nijalingappa, Hallikeri Gudleppa, K.P. Karanth, Ambali Chanabasappa, Doddameti Andaneppa and S.R. Kanthi also.⁵²

During 1950's Sri. Kanthi was very popular throughout the district and in Karnataka, as a prominent Congress leader. He loved Karnataka dispassionately, and his fascination for Kannada art and literature was second to none. Whenever time permitted he honoured the authors, poets, writers and artists of Karnataka. When he was the Education Minister or as the Chief Minister, though he was a politician, he read the great works of Sri. Bendre, Sri Kuvempu etc.⁵³

The cause of Karnataka was always very near and dear to his heart. He was constantly engaged in one or the other activity meant for the development of Karnataka. Especially his sincere efforts for the unification of Karnataka are immemorial.

In 1953 the whole Karnataka areas were boiling with anger and impatience. They were demanding for re-organization of the State. Particularly separate Karnataka, a single Karnataka or Mysore and 'New Mysore' was the demand. The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee's meeting was held in April 1953. There a resolution was adopted that -

*If Karnataka was not formed before the close of 1954, and if the Government of India did not make it clear, the members of K.P.S.C. as a first step relinquish the office of Pradesh Congress Committee and the Karnataka members of Legislature and Parliament would resign for their seats.*⁵⁴

When there was no response from the Congress High Command

of Delhi to the K.P.S.C.'s resolution, then the then President Sri. S. Nijalingappa and others met Sri. Jawaharlal Nehru in September 1953 and explained him the serious situation in Karnataka. Accordingly on December 29, 1953 States Re-organization Commission which was popularly known as 'Fazal Ali Commission' was appointed. In that commission Sardar K.M. Panikar, and Pandit Kunzuru were the members. This commission visited almost all the parts of India wherever there was demand for the reorganization of state. They visited Karnataka; they toured throughout Karnataka and were highly pleased with the demand of the reorganization of state on linguistic basis.⁵⁶ Sri.S.R.Kanthi was the secretary of the 'Karnataka State Memorandum Committee' appointed by K.P.S.C. for presenting the case for a Karnataka/Mysore.⁵⁶ Sri. Kanthi submitted the memorandum to the commission.

Accordingly in 1956, the states were reorganized in India in November 1956, and the new 'Mysore State' arose. Later in 1973 the word 'Mysore' was replaced by 'Karnataka' to identify the area, where Kannada is spoken.

Thus, in the Karnataka unification movement a very significant role was played by Sri. Kanthi and other leaders. They had to face many difficulties during the unification movement. The main difficulty was that Sri. Jawaharlal Nehru was not favourable to it; the strong man of India Sardar Patel remained neutral. It was not a small task. At last the leaders of this movement overcome all difficulties. Sri. Kanthi gave an able support to Sri. S. Nijalingappa in the movement. The present Karnataka emerged on the linguistic

base as accepted by Reorganization Committee.

Thus these are the contributions which have been made by Sri. S.R. Kanthi towards the emergence of Karnataka State. He was given important assignments as a Congress leader, and for the cause he was always a silent and committed worker in the assignments made to him both at national and state levels.

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