

CHAPTER ONE

**INTRODUCTION AND BRIEF
BIOGRAPHY OF SRI S.R. KANTHI**

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Introduction:

*Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our life sublime
And, departing leaving behind us
Footprints on the sands of time ...¹*

In every generation very few men are born as 'men of mission' through whom destiny fulfills itself. These chosen few are the harbingers of hope, the steady beacon lights for the benefit of mankind. The men like Sri. S.R. Kanthi are the salt of the earth and the only hope of mankind. Like others they live their allotted span of life and pass away from the scene. But unlike others, they leave behind them ideas and ideals which would bring about the salvation to mankind. Such people are revered as great men.

There is an element of elusiveness in the personalities of great men who exercise a profound influence upon their contemporaries and also shape the course of events in their own life time. They release forces which carry people along with them and help them to have a glimpse of their destiny. These are the makers of history. When we see them in flesh and blood we stand amazed at the magnitude of their achievement, and we admire them, but

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(Sri. S.R. Kanthi, architect of Ilkal)



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we cannot see the source of power behind all this. Perhaps this is because we are different from them.² Accordingly, an effort is made to study a political profile of Sri. S.R. Kanthi, who was former Chief Minister, Education Minister, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister and Speaker of Mysore State (now Karnatak State). He also served as a Deputy Speaker and Parliamentary Secretary under Bombay Province, before Independence, and rendered yeoman service to the nation in general and to Mysore (Karnataka) in particular.

Sri. S.R. Kanthi (1908-1969) was a renowned personality in Mysore politics, who dedicated his life to the cause of socio-economic and educational development and even for the cause of unification of Karnataka. He championed the national cause and was a well-known freedom fighter. He was a great social reformer also. He took active part in the socio-political affairs of Mysore region. His role in Mysore politics for over three decades was considered as the guiding force, a leading factor, a source of inspiration and the symbol of unity. He played gallant, heroic and unique role in the sphere of national movement and unification of Karnataka.⁴ Thus, he occupied a place of honour in the history of Mysore.

His was a unique personality, who was meak and sober in his temper. He believed in, and practised the principles laid down by Mahatma Gandhi. Being very simple and sincere, devoting his whole life to the noble cause of serving mankind, he never craved for publicity. Those who came in contact with him were

very much impressed by his rare simplicity, sincerity and honesty. He was looked upon as a man of virtues, because of which he became popular figure in the political life of both the country and region.

He was born in Kerur of Badami taluk, in a family belonging to a noble, cultured and a rich family of Ilkal, in Hungunda taluka of Bijapur district. It can be stated that such a family is a blessing to shape a man of character and principles like Sri. S.R. Kanthi. With a bent of patriotic mind he straightaway plunged into the Freedom Movement, when Mahatma Gandhi gave an earnest call to the youths of the country, to fight for the cause of liberation from the British rule. He was a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi. He rendered his services to the country by playing an important and dynamic roles, in various capacities. He carved for himself an important place in the field of politics in the pre-Independence as well as in the post-Independence period.

His exemplary life serving the State for nearly 30 years is enough to convince us that he was never a victim of aggrandisement and selfish ends. We clearly discern in him a man of sacrifice and a true son of India. No wonder such a person could win the affection of the people. Though he was always mild and calm in nature, he always stood by his frank opinions. He was straight forward and fearless in all his activities. His belief in the precepts, duty is divinity and work is worship inspired him for social service.

He was a 'Karmyogi' in the true spirit,⁵ because of his Gandhian approach towards socio-economic and political issues.

Sri. S.R. Kanthi's name has been associated with all good causes and good institutions in Mysore. He was ever ready to serve the poor, downtrodden, and common people. His role in spreading education in Mysore State is most conspicuous. His services as Education Minister of Mysore has left a great impact on the development of education in Mysore. He rendered immemorial service, he introduced various radical changes and reforms in the sphere of education. He brought miraculous reformation in that field. Apart from a social reformer, a great organizer, a saint politician he was also a great humanitarian. He was essentially a man of the people. He had an un-bounded faith in them. He got elected for five times as Member of Legislative Assembly, which points his popularity. By his simplicity, sincerity, devotional service and through his frank approach he persuaded even his worst critics on his side.⁶ Thus, a pure and 'Sharan' politician Sri. S.R. Kanthi can be recognized as a multifaceted man. He worked and achieved success in every walk of life. He was a thinker, philosopher, educationalist, a social reformer and above all a good administrator.

This dissertation is an attempt to evaluate the political profile of Sri. S.R. Kanthi, as a prominent politician and leader of Mysore. This study is an attempt to understand the life and mission of an extraordinary person about whom there is very little literature available. Sri. Kanthi never wrote an autobiography, nor there is ample

literature about him. Though he was one of the foremost freedom fighters, renowned personality of Mysore not much is written on him, nor he was quoted often. In fact he believed in creating history rather than in writing it. Though he has not maintained his records useful for a biography or a book, the history of Mysore has kept the records of his public work and great achievements. As no study has been made on Sri. Kanthi, a study of his contribution to Mysore politics is essential, and hence this dissertation is an effort to fulfil this need. His role in various capacities is examined, analysed in details and estimated in a historical and analytical perspectives. A study of his political profile is made very exhaustively. His great, valuable and immemorial contribution to Mysore in its various manifestations like organizations, associations, institutions and ideals are evaluated. Efforts are made here to examine his role on the rare literature is herein attempted.

Besides the present generation has ignored, overlooked, underestimated and forgotten the contribution made by Shri Kanthi. Hence the study intends to depict the proper role of Sri Kanthi. The study also tries to reveal the quality of the public life led by the politicians then.

The life of Sri. Kanthi appealed to me because of which the subject is selected for my dissertation. His very life was like the *Karmanyē Vadhikarasthe Ma Phaleshu Kada Chana*, the great sayings of Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Geeta. The lives of such people are worthy,

they stand as the beacon lights for the generations to come, guiding and shaping the course of future history.

The work is based on historical methods and would be purely a library-oriented work. Though the area is too vast and varied, the sources are very rare and few. Even then an effort is made to do justice to all the aspects. With the help of contemporary records like articles published in newspapers, his speeches, his letters, press materials, proceedings of legislature and interviews etc., this study has been possible. Persons who were closely related and associated with Sri. Kanthi were interviewed. Thus, convenient research methods are adopted here. I have interviewed some ten leaders who have been associated with Sri. Kanthi, who are spread in Bangalore, Chitradurga, Hubli, Bagalkot, Hungund and Ilkal. They have helped me in developing the required insight, and with some rare literature on Shri Kanthi.

The dissertation is arranged in 4 chapters. Each chapter has its own title and sub-titles. Those are:

Chapter One: Introduction and Brief Biography.

Chapter Two: S.R. Kanthi Before Independence:

- A) Role of Karnataka in National Freedom Movement
- B) Political Awakening in Bijapur District
- C) S.R. Kanthi as a Freedom Fighter and His Imprisonments
- D) S.R. Kanthi as a Social Reformer

- E) S.R. Kanthi as a Parliamentary Secretary
& S.R. Kanthi as a Deputy Speaker
- F) His Role in Unification of Karnataka

Chapter Three: S.R. Kanthi After Independence:

- A) S.R. Kanthi as a Speaker (1956-1962):
His Foreign Tour and His Impressions on
Parliamentary Democracy
- B) S.R. Kanthi as a Chief Minister (9.3.1962
to 20.6.1962)
- C) S.R. Kanthi as an Education Minister (1962 to
1966)
- D) S.R. Kanthi as a Law and Parliamentary
Affairs Minister (14.3.1976 to 24.4.1968)

Chapter Four: Conclusion

Thus, it is in general an attempt to study the dynamic role of Sri S.R. Kanthi, which tries to bring forth the contributions of Sri. S.R. Kanthi to the socio-political development of the Karnataka State.

Brief Biography of S.R. Kanthi:

Karnataka State has played a remarkable role in the freedom movement of India. Often it has stood up against the alien powers especially in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries, and the State did not lag behind in taking such a stand in the National Freedom Movement. Innumerable men and women of this area have played a notable role, took active part in the national movement

like Kittur Rani Chennamma, Sangolli Rayanna, Kengal Hanumanthayya, Hardekar Manjappa etc.. Sri S.R. Kanthi was also one of the freedom fighters of Mysore.

Independent India has never faced the scarcity of political leaders and statesmen, but only a few of them are remembered. Most of them were interested in amassing wealth, to occupy high positions of profit, to have a cheap popularity or to achieve some selfish ends. Sri. Kanthi was above all these, he was a class by himself.⁷

There is no necessity to introduce Sri Kanthi to the people of modern Karnataka. Because till his death he actively served the public life of Karnataka. He was the man who rendered distinguished service to Karnataka. He had risen from a volunteer to an organizer, a social worker, a lawyer, a member of Legislative Assembly, a Parliamentary Secretary, Deputy Speaker, Speaker, Minister and even as Chief Minister. He was a self-made leader, unlike others who took the help of 'Godfathers' for each and every move. He held the posts and positions, not because of anybody's influence, but because of his sheer calibre, intellect and his hard working nature. Thus, Sri Kanthi, one of the great nationalists of Karnataka, known to have followed and preached the great ideals and principles of Mahatma Gandhi. Rest, leisure, lethargy, luxury and comforts never had a place in the life of Sri. Kanthi, though he rose up to the position of Chief Minister; he was not the man to waste

his precious time for the common bureaucratic games, who worked round the clock like a disciplined soldier. He was always away from unnecessary, unworthy, chats, crocodile tears, lip sympathy etc. As a born fighter he fought for the cause of common good, for justice and for the social-cultural value of life.⁸

Sri Shivalingappa Rudrappa Kanthi was born at Kerur, a tiny village in Badami taluka of Bijapur district on 21 December 1908. Though he was born in Kerur, he belonged to Ilkal, a small town in Hungund taluka of Bijapur district. Thus, Kerur is his birth place, Ilkal is his native place, his home town; his name is interrelated and intermingled with this town.

Rudrappa was his father and Rudravva his mother; it is but natural that their son was a 'Rudra' in shouldering the responsibility and in fulfilling the responsibility with full zeal and sincerity. Shivalingappa was the second amongst six sons to his parents. He had no sisters.

Shivalingappa's parents were too generous, too pious, too disciplined and charitable persons. Rudrappa, who was popularly called 'Yajaman', who had great respect and reverence towards 'Math' and 'Gadduge' of Mahantswamiji of Chittaragi-Ilkal. The association of Shivalingappa with Swamiji since boyhood instilled in him a sense of moral and spiritual ideas. Throughout his life he had blessings of His Holiness. Shri Mahantswamiji of Chittaragi-Ilkal, Jagadguru of Moorusavirmath of Hubli, Sharanamma of Sajjalgudda and even

Swamiji of Sutturmath.⁹

Shivalingappa's father Rudrappa, who was popularly known as 'Yajamanaru', was also a social worker. He used to help the poor, needy and downtroddens. Because of his liberal and helping nature he was selected as the President of Ilkal Municipal Council from 11.10.1919 to 12.1.1923. This had influenced or inspired Shivalingappa Kanthi to enter into the public field or political arena. Yajaman Rudrappa lost his property because of his liberal and helping nature. Sri Shivalingappa appears to have inherited some character-traits, like the habit of hard work, honesty and the habit of devotional or selfless service for others, from his father Rudrappa.¹⁰

Shivalingappa's elder brother Shri Siddalingappa was popularly called as 'Annavaru'. Like his father he was also kind hearted, liberal minded and of helping nature. He was a writer, a literary person and a dramatist. He was a close friend of Sri Shivaram Karanth, a famous figure in Karnataka, a Dnyanapeeth Awardee. He wrote many dramas, one of the important of them being Viragini¹¹ (a drama about Akkamahadevi).

Sri Shivalingappa was born and brought amidst rural surroundings. He was brought up not in a bed of roses, but through hardships. Though his father was called Yajamanaru, he was not financially sound. He was unable to provide educational facilities to his sons, even to Shivalingappa. This shows that Shri Kanthi's contributions an

immemorial service, a invaluable service, a miraculous reform in the sphere of education was due to the bad experience he had in his childhood. It seems that, it was then that he decided that he should try to provide educational facilities to the rural areas and to the poor people of Karnataka and so he did.

In securing education Sri Shivalingappa is much more indebted to his mother Rudramma, rather than his father Rudrappa, who, due to financial restraints was not in a position to educate his sons. Rudramma got the support from her parental home. It is told that Shivalingappa and his elder brother spent their childhood with their mother at Kerur, and later he was educated at Ilkal.¹²

Shivalingappa strove more for his education. Unlike today there were no opportunities and facilities earlier to complete primary, secondary and college education at Ilkal itself. He toured around for completing his education.

Ilkal was a small town with ten thousand population. It was a backward area where only three persons were knowing English. Although many small villages were progressing in educational sphere, Ilkal was lagging behind. It was largely because of the following reasons:

- (a) Geographical conditions of Ilkal. It had no railway contacts. It was out of rail communication, etc.
- (b) The main occupation of Ilkal was weaving, which continues

even today. Weavers were not interested in educating their children. At the most children were taught upto I or II standard.

- (c) There were no Highschools and colleges near Ilkal, which meant that higher education was costly and time-consuming. Therefore, Ilkal lacked in the educational sphere.¹³

In 1920's Yajaman Rudrappa Kanthi and Sri. Shankarappa Sakkari came forward to establish an institution, viz., Shri Mahantesh Vidyavardhak Sangh. That Sangh established a school in 1923 "Anglovernacular" This school had a very capable teacher named Sri. R.S. Jahagirdar who served from 1923 to 1927; as this school at Ilkal could enroll only 10 to 12 students, it could not get recognition from the Government, because of which it remained a private school imparting education from Sts. I to III only, in which Sri. S.R. Kanthi had his education. Later Sri S.B. Bandargal, a classmate of Sri. Kanthi, was appointed as the teacher of it. They moved havean and earth to improve the school. In 1944, Government permitted it to conduct IV Standard. Later it was developed into a Highschool. The first batch of S.S.C. came out in 1951. Today this has been developed into a Government Junior College.¹⁴

Snivalingappa got his primary education upto III-Standard at Ilkal. Later he went to Hungund to complete IV-Standard. At Gadag he completed V-Standard. For VI-Standard he had to go to Dharwad. He joined the K.L.E. Society's R.L.S. Highschool. Great personalities like Sri. Katti, Basanal, and H.F. Kattimani were the teachers

in this school. Later, for his VII-Standard he came back to Bagalkot's Basaveshwar Highschool, where he completed his matriculation in 1927.

Shivalingappa started his higher education at Bagalkot itself. He joined Basaveshwar College for his F.Y. Arts. During his financial difficulties, Sri. Yajaman Rudrappa received the help from Malagi Veerabhadrapa of Ilkal. This shows the ordeals which Sri. S.R. Kanthi had to suffer in his educational career. After completing his F.Y. Arts at Bagalkot, he joined Rajaram College of Kolhapur, for his intermediate. He successfully completed the intermediate at Rajaram College. Because of his ill health he was unable to continue education. Later Sri. S.R. Kanthi came back to Dharwad and joined Karnatak College to complete his graduation in 1933.¹⁵

Shivalingappa was a mediocre student and he was very shy and timid. His school records gave no indication of his future greatness. He was not brilliant, but was a hard worker in his college days. He had a gift, that was envied by many. It was his tremendous memory, which later became proverbial among his friends, who often finding their memory missing, exclaimed 'Oh', for the memory power of Shivalingappa. Later, in his career as Speaker and Minister, this memory power was exhibited on many occasions. Though he was not a popular orator, his speeches were informative and full of facts and figures.

After his graduation in Arts, with an ambition to become

an advocate, he went to Kolhapur and joined the Skyes Law College. He got his LL.B. degree from this college in 1935. At this college he had friends and classmates like Sri. B.D. Jatti, who later became the Chief Minister of Karnataka and Vice-President of India, and also an Acting President of India, Sri. Y.B. Chavan, who later became the Deputy Prime Minister of India.

After securing LL.B. Degree, Sri. S.R. Kanthi adopted Bagalkot for his practice. Slowly his profession was progressing. In 1935-1936 he got married to Maribasamma of Kanavinhalli of Bellary district. As a companion for life Smt. Maribasamma was a good match for Sri Kanthi in all respects and was really responsible for the name and fame of Sri. Kanthi. Sri. Kanthi became the successful father of two sons viz., Chandrashekhar and Mahendra.¹⁶

While Sri. Kanthi was striving hard in the field of law, he was inspired by the call of Mahatma Gandhi. He left the profession and joined politics. He became the member of A.I.C.C., worked as the president of B.D.C.C., worked as organizer, social reformer, president of Rayat Sammelan, as a Parliamentary Secretary, as a Deputy Speaker, as a Speaker, as an Education Minister, as a Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister and above all as a Chief Minister he rendered yeoman's service to the whole State. For 5 times he was elected as M.L.A. from Hungund Constituency. Due to heart attack he expired at Kittur on 24 October, 1969 at the age of 60.

His biography has been very interesting and it is worth narrating, because all that he contributed and practised has deep roots in the ordeals which Sri Kanthi had suffered. Besides, it also brings forth the rural problems in India in the early 1900's, under the impact of British rule. This narration is based on discussions which I have had with Sri. S.B. Bandargal, Sri. S.S. Kavishetti, Sri. B.A. Bijjal, Smt. Manbasamma Kanthi, and Sri Mahantayya Shivapujimath etc., on which literature is not available, and hence it is based on discussions only.

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