

## Prof. P. Gururaj Bhatt's Contribution to Education and Historical Research

It is a matter of great pride and honour for me to stand before you all to pay oral tribute to my great teacher Dr. Gururaj Bhatt on this auspicious occasion of the 'Teachers Day'. Let me first pay my respects to the great soul of Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan the first teacher-philosopher President of our nation in whose memory we are celebrating the teacher's day every year. It is also my duty to pay respectful tribute to the great founder of this college, Very Rev. Monsgr D.J. D'Souza, but for whose efforts this institution would not have come into existence. Standing on the threshold of its 40th year. I am happy to note that Milagres College, my alma Mater is celebrating the teacher's day this year in memory of its founder-principal Prof. Dr. Paaduru Gururaja Bhatt. I being the first batch student of this college, am blessed with this unique honour to recollect his contributions to education and historical research. Let me at first, place on record my heart felt gratitude to the Principal and all the organizers for honouring me with this opportunity.

It may not be out of place, I think, if I use this microphone for a while for my 'soliloquies'. Way back in 1961-62, I stepped into the Milagres High School campus as a student of VIth std. From then on to 1969-70 I had my education here in this 'Education Complex' of Kallianpur till my graduation. I had the good fortune of studying under the able and experienced teachers moulded by Fr. Tellis, the then Head Master of Milagres High School. Fr. William Gonsalves taught us not only in P.U. Class but also in Milagres College which was opened in 1967. I was a science student in my P.U. class, but turned to Arts stream not because I didn't score well in the Board examination, but because Udupi was quite far from Mudukudru, my native place and B.Com in the newly opened Milagres College was already full. For hundreds of middle class girls like me, perhaps, even today, higher education is not a choice but a chance.



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Here in Milagres College everything was new to me, the subjects of study, the way they were taught, the faculty and the disciplined atmosphere. All these shaped my future. We, the first batch of students were really fortunate to have a band of committed teachers and a resourceful researcher, Principal, Prof. Gururaj Bhatt. Today, if I have achieved something in the academic and professional field, it is because of his influence and inspiration. By then, he was already recognised as a great researcher of Tulunadu. The way he walked into the class with bulky books like 'Western Civilization' by Easton or Will Durant's classics, the way he lectured on 'Culture and Civilization' for months together, the way he looked at us through his thick glasses mesmerized us all and it was then that I decided that if given a chance for post-graduation, I'll opt for History and if further blessed with a chance to pursue higher education, I'll take up doctoral study in History. Thus he was my icon, my role model, my mentor and perhaps for others too.

Before I venture upon the pen-picture of this great scholar's multifarious achievements, I would like to make a humble submission that this work was possible only because of the help I received from Mr. P. Parashuram Bhatt, son of late Dr. P. Gururaj Bhatt who had preserved many of the articles of his father with utmost care and affection. With indulgence, he permitted me to go through these to make my notes

for this lecture. I thank him profusely for this magnanimity.

Prof. Bhatt was a teacher of convictions and a researcher with commitment. His contributions to education and historical research cannot be separated, because as we all know, education is the root and research is the fruit. As a teacher, he used to come well prepared for the classes and recommend the standard books for reference. If today, the Milagres College Library has classics on History, I am sure, it is because of his initiative and enthusiasm. The surveys he conducted in this region and the epigraphs and antiquities he unearthed, saw light in the articles and books which he got published for dissemination of the history and culture of Tulunadu among the people. The Institute of Indian Studies he founded at Kadiyali in Udupi was his dream-child to train scholars in Indology while its Quaterly Journal was to be its mouth piece. His articles on non-historical themes include 'The University Bill' (wherein he wrote that the Vice-Chancellors should not be the puppets of politicians) 'The duties of an ideal teacher', 'Importance of libraries in primary schools', 'Medium of Education', 'Education and research', 'Student community and Police' etc. These articles speak about his concern for the cause of education, One of his articles published in 1973 reflects on the need for a University in South Kanara at a time when the parent University was still the University of Mysore.

As a teacher he was a disciplinarian who would never compromise with his principles. His quest for knowledge knew no bounds. That was why, the students of my generation could get the opportunities to see and hear the great contemporary Kannada writers like Bendre, Ta. Ra. Su and Shivarama Karanth in the College. I have also learnt that Prof. Bhatt had inspired many of his colleagues to do post graduation in History and had enthused a few to write small books on historical themes for the IBH publishers, Bangalore.

As far his contributions to History and Historical Research are concerned, these were more than the work of an individual. Like a lone fighter for a cause, a one-man army, he toiled in the field of historical

research for nearly two decades out of sheer passion. He writes that inspired by his colleague Dr. K.B. Ramakrishna Rao, he started research roughly from 1960. Dr. G.S. Gai, the-then Chief Epigraphist for the government of India and Sri Manjeshwara Mukunda Prabhu initiated him into the study of Epigraphy and iconography respectively. Way back in 1975 in a felicitation function presided over by Late Dr. T.M.A Pai, he opened up his mind and analysed the path of research he had chosen. He said, 'The concept of history is the life of man. It is like the inner sight. The language you speak, your thoughts, day to day affairs, things we use, buildings we construct, roads we tread, our vision, God, we worship, rituals we perform etc. did not evolve all of a sudden. If we realise this and believe that there is a meaningful background to these, then only we can do research on the culture. Our youngsters should develop this aptitude- This is my desire. A new interpretation of conventionally accepted issues with substantiating evidence proved in a scientific manner and enlightening the society is as good a research as an unearthing of the remains of old monuments or epigraphs. A serious thinking and rethinking on the above thought is essential for the survival of History as a subject of study in the days to come. He wrote, 'It was by accident that I took to the historical research of South Kanara popularly known as Tulunadu. This accident meant a chance reading of the work 'Dakshina Kannada Jilleya Praachina Ithihasa' by Sri M. Ganapathi Rao Aigal. He turned this accident into an opportunity which developed as a challenge and ended as an adventure. Though he had to sacrifice everything for this cause, it ushered in rich dividends to the discipline of historical research in Tulunadu.

More than 700 research articles of Dr. Bhatt are said to have been published in various English newspapers and journals like 'The Deccan Herald', 'The Hindu', 'The Indian Express', 'The Kanarite', 'The Manipal Record' and Kannada dailies and weeklies like 'Samyuktha Karnataka', 'Udayavani', 'Kannada Prabha', 'Navabharata', 'Prajavani', 'Rayabhari', 'Navayuga', 'Vikrama', 'Prajamata',

'Sudha', 'Krishikara', 'Samghatane', 'Lokavani', 'Manobhumi', 'Manavika karnataka', souvenirs and college magazines of the District and outside. He wrote a scholarly article on 'Antiquity and Significance of Gavi Gangadharaeshwara temple-Bangalore' in 'Prakashike', a fact which proves the recognition of his scholarship outside South Kanara. There was no place which he had not visited from Gokarna to Kannada areas of Kerala Sahyadri ranges to Arabian Sea. He was nicknamed or fondly called 'Kallannu Maathadisuva Bhattaru'. He instilled academic interests and moulded the lives of students while on the other, he searched for life in the stone images of Tulunadu and made them speak about the culture of the land.

His most popular articles were 'Tulunadina Ganesha Bimbagalu', 'Paschima Karavaliyalli Sri Krishna Pantha', (with reference to different idols of Sri Krishna), 'New light on Polali Rajarajeshwari temple' based on the discovery of one line epigraph on the top of its entrance belonging to 8th - 9th century, 'Ancient Idol of Mahishamardini of 7th - 8th century' in Aila near Mangalpadi, 'Pajaka Kshetra', 'Rattadiya Narasipura', 'Tulunadina Eradu Krodashramagalu', 'Cave temple of Gujjadi', 'Wooden statues of Mekkekatte', 'A study of Mahishamardini Statues', 'Dwadasha Shilpagala Prathima Vaishistya', 'Masterpieces in sculptures', 'A study in Iconography' etc. In all these one can see the quest of an original investigator, the systematic collection of all available data on them, personal visit and verification of the site or sculpture, photographic documentation and in the presentation which is invariably pictorial, a probable chronological dating of the same with an explanation of the architectural style and his justification for his conclusions.

The iconographic details that we get in his writings are perhaps the first of its kind in South Kanara. He had identified some of the rare icons like 'Trishoolini in Balpa (Sullia Tq.), Lingatmaka Durga, Adi Murthy, Mritunjaya Rudra in Bola, Sreedharamurthy in Siryara, Lokeshwar in Kadri, Buddhist icons in Moodabidri and Puttige, various Naga icons etc.

Many of these were brought to the limelight with the descriptions of their styles for the first time. He was indeed, the pioneer as far as the iconographic study in their region is concerned.

The researchers in the history of this region are highly indebted to Dr. Bhatt for his rich contribution to Epigraphy. He had unearthed hundreds of epigraphs in various parts of erstwhile South Kanara like Kota, Japthi, Balkur, Varanga, Kadandale, Muchchuru, Kervase, Karnadu, Murur, Basrur, Hattiyangadi, Airodi, Udayapura or Udyavara, Jain inscriptions in Moodabidri etc. A stone epigraph in the compound of Assistant Commissioner's office in Kundapura was discovered by him along with his student late Dr. B. Vasantha Shetty proving that Harihara II lived till 1413 not 1403 as believed earlier. Nalluru in Karkala was proved by him as an ancient Jain Centre on the basis of the discovery of an epigraph of 1296 A.D. The Belmannu copper plates of the lime of Alupas dating back to 8th C.A.D. discovered by him is a very significant contribution to the history of Alupa rule in South Kanara. His discovery of megalithic remains in Parkala and prehistoric remains in Badakojekaru near Karkala placed South Kanara in the map of prehistoric sites in Karnataka. No wonder, he was selected as a member of the Karnataka State Archaeological Advisory Committee. Dr. Javare Gowda, the then vice chancellor of the University of Mysore rightly referred to him as 'the father of South Kanara Archaeology'.

In 'Tulunadu', a collection of Dr. Bhatt's research articles on social history published in 1963, one can see the impersonal and impartial insight of a researcher in the analysis of the origin of the communities, Dr. B.A. Saletore, M. Govinda Pai, N.S. Kille, Sham Ba. Joshi, K.K. Kudva, Polali Sheenappa Heggade, Ganapathi Rao Aigal and Dr. K.V. Ramesh have worked on the socio-political history of South Kanara before Dr. Bhatt and some of them even on the origin of the local communities. Some of Dr. Bhatt's views in this book shocked those who had accepted the traditional thinking regarding the genesis of these. One will be surprised by the vast canvas of

this book which includes themes like 'Origin of Tuluva', 'Who are the Tuluvas', 'Aluvas are Nadavas', 'Brahmanya in Tulunadu', 'History of Sthanikas in Dakshina Kannada', 'Classification of Brahmanas in Tulunadu', 'History of Tulunadu as revealed in Place names and Clan names' etc. The attempt to elicit information on Tuluva Society and Culture on the basis of proverbs shows that nothing is insignificant for a researcher. The reading of Sahyadri Kanda, Tulugrama Paddathi, Lokaditya Samskriti convinced him about the futility of depending on these as sources of Tuluva history, but, at the same time, he designed a framework for an integrated study of Tuluva history and culture which was to be his dream work, a lifetime work. No wonder, for this book 'Tulunadu', he was honoured with the Devaraj Bahadur Charities First Award by the Government of Karnataka.

His articles on various communities in Tulunadu like Sthanikar, Gowda Saraswaths, Shivalli Brahmins, Nadavas, Parivara Bunts etc. triggered further research by himself and others subsequently. But all these studies are still incomplete and hence there is ample scope for researchers in History and Sociology to work on. Historians of eminence believe that any study or research should not end with conclusions but should open up more and more questions and hence should provide greener pastures for further academic pursuits. I honestly believe that my esteemed teacher belongs to this school of eminent historians with a message to kindle one lamp so that it would lit many more.

He edited 'Ithihasa-Ondu Vimarshe' - a collection of articles by different scholars in 1971 some of which had been already published in Rayabhari and Navayuga. It was in the form of a reply to many of the questions raised and criticisms levelled against him in the book 'Ithihasadalli Yatharthathe' authored by Seetharamacharya Narayanacharya Udupa regarding the history of the Brahmana Community in South Kanara as written by Prof. Bhatt in 'Tulunadu'. After eight years of the publication of his work 'Tulunadu', Dr. Bhatt was strongly criticized by Seetharamacharya Udupa in the above-said book. A scholarly debate like this, well-documented, also serves as a reference material.

Yet another discipline of historical research enriched by Prof. Bhatt is the study of place names. In his article, 'Sthalanamagalalu Heluva Tulunadina Kathe', thirty-one classifications of place names based on common prefixes and suffixes are given with numerous examples. For example, prefixes of names of animals like Giliyar, Nandikoor etc., of plants like Nellikaru, Hoovinakere etc., of limbs like Kaiyara, Molahalli etc., of articles like Haladi, Belladi, Uppuru etc., of colours like Kemmannu, Belmannu etc., of numbers like Arooru, Aivarnadu etc..... and of suffixes like Padi... e.g Bellippadi, Ambalpadi, Gopadi etc., of ooru like Paadooru, Ellooru etc., of Katte like Kukkikatte, Thekkatte etc... and so on. A study of different communities as revealed from these place names like Kolas, Mundas, Panis, Mallas, Gujjaras etc. is also attempted. What is quite interesting is the key he provides to the decoding and understanding of these place names. Yet, he confesses that the meanings he furnished many a time might have been contextual and not conclusive.

His monographs on Mandarathi temple, Kadri Manjunatha temple, Ambalpadi, thousand pillared Basadi, Barkur, Udupi, the Alupas, Saptakshetras of Tulunadu, Hosuramma temple of Bellary, Chamundeshahwari temple Mysore etc... inspired many temple authorities to bring out similar works in the later years. These contain not only mythological and historical information but also geographical data regarding their location.

His 'Antiquities of South Kanara' published in 1969 was the first phase of his post-doctoral research in unraveling the historical truths of South Kanara. In this work he has attempted to reconstruct the chronology of feudatory states of Tulunadu on the basis of copper and lithic records. But then he had submitted that 'there may be room for revision in the light of fresh evidence'. I am very proud to say that despite the great work he had done, Dr. Bhatt never showed any intellectual audacity to say what he said was right. In all his published works I have seen this submission repeatedly and this itself is an all-time answer to whosoever says that his chronological dating was wrong and his findings are untrustworthy. The sociological description of the numerous social



denominations of South Kanara, the archaeological surveys and the numerous plates of bronzes and sculptures with description have made this work invaluable for the study of antiquarian remains of South Kanara.. A letter of appreciation about this book he received from a Professor of Archaeology from Amsterdam in Holland itself speaks about the archaeological importance of this work.

His magnum opus 'Studies in Tuluva History and culture' published in 1975 is a classic in area studies. It has more than 1000 pages with more than 1000 illustrations and hundreds of sketches. Dr. Bhatt in this work, has acknowledged that he had used the early writings of the various scholars on the history of South Kanara along with his own researchers in bringing out this work. But he has submitted humbly that this work is not the final word on Tuluva history. The study of the history, polity, economy, art and architecture of Tulunadu and interpretation of the present day cults and cult images, religious and social institutions in the light of the new archaeological evidence collected and studies by him makes this work the first extensive, exhaustive and integrated survey of the history of Tulunadu. Dr. Suryanath Kamath writes that after Dr. T.A.Gopinath Rao's 'Indian Iconography' this work of Dr. Bhatt is a significant publication Dr. Bhatt wrote that this mega work was the fulfillment of his soul's desire to enlighten the people of the region of its culture and history, the study of which has become the mission of his life. The enormous human labour, huge personal financial investment, depth of details, love for knowledge, impressive narration and above all, the dedication to the cause of historical research behind this work are simply incredible and yet, amazing. If today, every taluk and district of Karnataka produces a Bhatt like scholar and researcher, many missing links in the history of Karnataka can be discovered, many gaps can be filled up and the dark corridors of the history of Karnataka can be illuminated. May his tribe increase.

With regard to research in the history of south Kanara he had felt the paucity of archaeological excavations. He wrote that archaeological excavations are to be conducted in sites like Barkur, Basrur, Kukke Subramanya, Udyavara etc. and these

would definitely throw new light on the history of this region. He wrote this in 1963 and even after 40 years of this observation, except at Barkur, archaeologists spades have not yet reached the other sites.

From his bio-data it appears that he had undertaken five research projects- three sponsored by the U.G.C., One personal undertaking and another by Bharathiya Jnanapitha, New Delhi. He had also selected the following as themes of immediate research. These were : 1) The Pre-History of coastal Karnataka, 2) Iconography of Cult Deities (with texts), 3) Naga as the center of worship in Tulunadu, 4) Evolution of Daivaradhana and 5) Origin and development of communities in Tulunadu Only a tireless, indefatigable investigator could dream of such projects. It is the misfortune of South Kanara that fate planned otherwise and he left this world without completing his mission.

Before I conclude, I would like to make a humble appeal to all colleagues of Prof. Bhat, his admirers, his old students and the authorities of this institution he had served. Hundreds of his research articles published in various newspapers of Karnataka of the Sixties and Seventies of the 20th c. will be lost if they are not collected and preserved. Hence attempts should be made to publish a collection of these articles at the earliest. Otherwise, his son Parashuram's attempt to preserve them in the present form will be a waste. Already these are very brittle and cannot last long. If this institution can think of erecting a monument in this form to its founder Principal who brought laurels to the institution he served, it will definitely enhance the reputation of the college as having brought out a 'great publication'.

Let me once again thank the organizers and the Principal in particular, for giving me this unique opportunity, Mr. Parashuram for providing me the research articles and publications of his father Prof. Bhatt and all the audience for their patient hearing. Thank you, one and all.

*(Dr. Malathi K. Moorthy belonged to the first batch of students of Milagres College. She was a meritorious student at all levels. She secured IV rank in BA in the year 1970.)*