

History of Tulunadu and Dr Paduru Gururaja Bhat(1925-1978 A. D.)

If anyone has to know in depth the history of the coastal region of Karnataka with a special reference to the mosaic of society and culture, the most authentic source, may it be in Kannada or English language is the writings of late Dr Paduru Gururaja Bhat today. No doubt, he is not the only one who dealt with this area of knowledge either prior to him or later than him, but it can not be gainsaid that, no other's research probes as deep comprehensive and holistic as his, transcending the conventional boundaries of the history and entering and enquiring the necessary fields such as the cultural anthropology, sociology, linguistics and prehistoric archaeology. It is for this reason, Dr Bhat is more authentic than others than his predecessors like E.A. Turston, F. Buchanan and Sturrock. His holistic approach to the study of society, religion, language and culture is the reason that we consider him and consult his works not merely for history but even to the study of language and culture as linguists, sociologists and anthropologists.

The contributions of Dr Gururaja Bhat starts from his first published work in Kannada----“Tulunadu-An enquiry into the research of its social history”. This work proceeds to survey the works on this field done by earlier scholars, and then enters into the detailed analytical probe on the topics like a) Who are the Tuluvas b) The place-names, origin of bunts and Nadavas, Alupas, Brahmins, Sthanikas, inscriptional evidences, the classification of Brahmins of the region, clan-names, Jainism in Tulunadu and finally the analytical description of Tuluva culture. The variety of aspects which he chose to probe itself makes apparent that his approach is a clear deviation from the conventional path of historians, who usually focus more on the chronology of dynasties and authority system than the socio cultural milieu. His next work was on the Sthanika Brahmins of Tulunadu (1966) which is a splendid analytical piece of sociology probe of a caste, which for obvious historical reasons, has to continuously wrestle with the priestly class of Shivalya Brahmins for equality of status in the caste hierarchy.

Dr Bhat's next intellectual expedition was to expose the political and cultural history of Tulunadu from the earliest times to 1600 A.D. i.e. the period of the beginning of the history of the British on the coastal region. This when completed under the able guidance of the noted historian Dr. Sheshadri of Mysore University and the scrutiny of the leading historian of South India, Dr Mahalingam was accepted as an unusually exceptional work for awarding Ph.D. to Dr. Bhat. The contents of this work came out in the published form with the title-“Antiquities of South Canara” in 1969.

During this period of over two decades Dr Bhat was writing a series of articles on varied topics of society, language, religion and culture of the region in a number of periodicals and commemoration volumes which run into hundreds. But his “magnum Opus” is the work published in 1975, with the title “Studies in Tuluva History and Culture”. There is no other work which deals so comprehensively and in such incisive analytical method on the history and culture of Tulunadu and Tuluvas, with 500 photos and more than 500 pages of descriptive analysis of the castes, clans, language and religion of this coastal region.

I am happy to say that all these works ,which are not available in the market at present,started seeing the light through a newly established Trust,namely “Dr Paduru Gururaja Bhat Memorial Trust”. The trust has already released to the market his first work”Tulunadu”(kannada) and its English translation is in progress.Subsequently all his other works also will be published soon,including even the stray aricles which he wrote for periodicals.

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