

MALAME;THE DWINDLING TONGUE OF KASARAGOD

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Kasaragod is considered to be the Linguistical Hotspot of Kerala. This region is often hailed as the *Saptha Bhasha Sangama Bhoomi* or the juncture of the seven languages. Malayalam, Kannada, Tulu, Konkani, Beary, Marathi and Urdu are the main languages spoken here. Malayalam serves as the official language in terms of documentation as well as education. Kannada has a subsidiary official Language status in terms of education and other fields along with Malayalam. As Kasaragod was a Taluk in the erstwhile South Canara District of Madras Province, Kannada was used for official purposes. This region also consisted of the present Dakshina Kannada and Udupi Districts of Karnataka too. Tulu is widely spoken in the District. Kasaragod falls under the historical Tulunadu region. Kalyanpura River in Udupi and the Payaswini River in Kasaragod were the boundaries of the historical Tulunadu. Kasaragod is called as *Thenkayi Tulunadu* or Southern Tulunadu.

When it comes to the Konkani Language in Kasaragod, the prescience of The Konkani speakers can be found in the region along the Konkan Coast. Mainly two communities speak Konkani in Kasaragod-Gouda Saraswat Brahmins who escaped from Goa during Portuguese Invasion and Konkani Catholics who settled here after being released from Mysore. Marathi is also spoken by a sizable minority who resides in the eastern hilly- regions of the district. Their dialect of Marathi differs from the modern day Marathi spoken in the state of

Maharashtra.Urdu came into being as a by product of the Mysorean invasion. Urdu speakers settled in the district after the invasion.

When it comes to the Beary language, it is spoken throughout the coastal district of Kasaragod, Dakshina Kannada, and Udupi. It is mainly spoken by Bergsman ethno linguistic community found throughout Tulunadu, who practice and profess Islam. Beary is a language made of Malayalam idioms with Tulu phonology and grammar. They share relations with the Mappilas of Malabar and Kodava Muslims of Coorg. Earlier Beary was considered as a dialect of Malayalam, but later it became accepted as an independent language. Literature in Beary language is in its dawn. A Karnataka Beary Academy was established by the Government of Karnataka in order to propagate and encourage Beary literature. Beary like Tulu, seems to have different dialects around the region where it is spoken. Beary spoken in Mangaluru differs from the variety spoken in Kundapura. Malame is considered as either a variety of Beary or of the Malayalam Variant spoken in the Kasaragod District.

LINGUISTIC TUSSLES OF KASARAGOD

After Kasaragod merged with Kerala in 1956, the district had witnessed a linguistic tussle. There was a strong opposition from diverse groups in merging Kasaragod Taluk to the newly formed state of Kerala. Kasaragod was one of the early centers of the Karnataka Unification Movement. After the merger the Movement led different protests in favour of joining Karnataka. Mehr Chand Mahajan committee had recommended joining the region north of river Payaswini to Karnataka. Government of Kerala had given subsidiary official status to Kannada in the district and established Kannada medium schools. Kannadigas linguistic minority is being used as a safeguard by several linguistic minorities. Tulu forms a major group among the minorities. Imposition of Malayalam is a concern for the linguistic minorities. It has been the

subject of several literary works like “Benki Biddie Manege” by Kayyara Kinhanna Rai. A Kannada movie with the Title *Sarkari.Hi.Pra.Shale,Kasaragodu,Koduge Ramanna Rai* was released in 2018,directed by Rishab Shetty projecting the closure of The Kannada Medium Schools in Kasaragod.The concerns of Linguistic Minorities including Beary and Malame speakers are seem to be swallowed into a Single Kannadigas identity.

MANE MATHU OR THE SPEECH OF THE HOUSE

‘*Mane Mathu*’ is a Kannada phrase meaning ‘speech of the house’. It refers to the multilingual tradition of Kasaragod and adjoining Districts of Karnataka. As most of the people are multilingual, they tend to speak any of the seven tongues or any other minor tongue in the house but use either Kannada or Malayalam when it comes to outside communication. This is generally termed as ‘*horagina Mathu*’ or the ‘speech of outside’.

MALAME

Malame tongue is spoken in the border area of Kasaragod District especially in the Manjeshwar Taluk and in Vittla, Puttur, Bellare, Kadaba, Sullia regions of Dakshina Kannada district respectively. As it is not considered as an independent language,the exact number of speakers is not known, but it is roughly estimated that around one Lakh Malame speakers may be there.It is my estimation that only a few thousand of Malame speakers exists. It is mainly spoken by people from Muslim community and also certain Hindu castes such as Belchada,also known as Malayali Billavas,Vaniya and Ganika etc.

It is a long standing controversy regarding the linguistic status of Malame as an independent language.It shows a relation towards Beary as well as Kasaragod Variety of Malayalam.Malame Speakers are generally considered as Bearys. But the variety spoken in other

parts and Malame have clear cut differences. In Kasaragod, this language is considered as a dialect of Malayalam.

Beary is spoken by an ethno religious minority, but in the case of Malame, the boundary of religion is broken as certain Hindu Communities also speak this language. According to Prof. B M Ilangod, Former Member of the Karnataka Beary Sahitya Academy, Malame may be the earliest form of Beary. When it comes to the Kasaragod Variant of Malayalam called Kasaragod Malayalam, it was in contact with other languages such as Tulu, Kannada, Urdu and Arabic for centuries. No further research had been carried out in this field regarding the Linguistic status of Malame.

LANGUAGE LOSS

Malame, just like any other language in the historical Tulunadu region is facing endangerment. Perhaps when compared to other languages like Tulu, Beary, Konkani etc, Malame is facing the worst scene of extinction. According to the observations made during the field work on the basis of case study analysis, the following were found to be the motivating force behind the language becoming forgotten.

1, ASSIMILATION

Assimilation is the process wherein a linguistic group gradually gives up its own language, culture and social values and take on others. Here, Malame speakers are surrounded by different linguistic communities. Community and region wise difference is observed here during this assimilation process. Four cases are to be noted here;

A. Case 1, In Dakshina Kannada District, the contact languages are Tulu, Beary and

Kannada. The Muslim Community in the region leans mostly towards the Beary variety

whereas the younger generation is exposed to Kannada and English as mediums of instruction in schools. Beary is used in religious sermons in Mosques and other religious events. Another important thing to note is that as most of the Malame speakers are bilingual they shift their conversation either into Tulu or Kannada when outside, during formal situations.

Case 2, when it comes to the Hindu community in Dakshina Kannada District, there are trends to be observed concerning the language shift. Tulu has become the medium of communication among these native Malame Speakers as they are influenced from surrounding Tulu Speakers.

B. Case 1, In Kasaragod District the Muslim Community seems to be exposed to standard Malayalam and Malame is understood only as the corrupted version of Malayalam.

Standard Malayalam is fast replacing Malame.

C. Case 2. The Hindu Community like their Muslim counterpart tends more towards standard Malayalam, as it is becoming the dominant language in education and public sphere.

ACCULTURATION

It is a process in which changes in language, culture, and system of values of a group happen through interaction with a different language, culture and system of values. Acculturation of Malame speakers can be associated with the neighbouring cultures. Tuluva and Malayali culture dominate the region. Both these cultures have direct influence upon Malame speakers.

LANGUAGE CONTACT

When two languages come in contact they interact and influence each other. Malame is evidently distinct from Beary as well as Standard Malayalam. The Mutual Intelligibility between

Malayalam speakers towards Beary is 75 %. There also arise difficulties when it comes to the mutual intelligibility between Standard Malayalam and Kasaragod Malayalam. Malame is often considered as a variety of Kasaragod Malayalam. The languages of Kasaragod were in mutual contact for centuries causing extensive convergence. This distinguished them from their standard form. Similarly, Malayalam spoken in this area was also influenced by other languages in contact with it and evolved as a new variety. This convergence can cause formation of variants within a dialect.

“Many sub-dialects are also found in Kasaragod Malayalam. To certain extent the reason for these sub dialects can be explained based on the degree of convergence with the contact language. For example Manjeshwaram Malayalam had been influenced by Tulu. Vitti Malayalam shows affinity towards Kannada, Mappila or Muslim dialect of Kasaragod has many Arabic and Urdu usages and words in it. This convergence also can be a reason for the development of Malame during the centuries.

IGNORANCE OF MALAME

As a separate dialect, Malame never came under the eyes of researchers or linguists. Under the banner of Beary, it became dwindled to a mere dialect. The case in Dakshina Kannada district where, majority of Malame speakers in Karnataka are concentrated witnessed the revival of Beary language through the establishment of a Karnataka Beary Sahitya Academy in 2007. It is a government body established in order to propagate and encourage Beary language and literature. Beary Sahitya Academy didn't recognize Malame as an independent tongue. The academy had only concentrated on encouraging Beary. Thenegligence could be viewed in the activities of the Academy. No books in Malame were published nor were any Native Malame speakers present in the Board of the Academy. As Beary Muslims form the majority among the

Native Malame speakers, the Government also doesn't pay any heed to the demands raised by the Malame Speakers.

In Kasaragod District, The situation of ignorance has been present from the state reorganisation in 1956. Kasaragod was a part of the erstwhile south Canara district of then Madras presidency. It was one of the linguistically diverse regions in the entire southern India.

“In South Kanara, the northern Taluk of Coondupur was predominantly Kannada whereas the southern taluk of Kasaragod was predominantly Malayalam speaking. As far as Tulu linguistic group, they constituted a sufficient number throughout the South Kanara district. Kannada was the court language of South Kanara. It was not an easy matter to divide these areas on linguistic basis without taking the wishes of the Tulus. From the side of Tulu linguistic groups there was absence of proposals, regarding their desire to merge with Kerala or Kamataka. Yet the Fazl Ali Commission, following the footprints of the Dar Commission, proposed the Kasaragod taluk of the South Kanara district to the Kerala State”.(134)

According to the census affidavit submitted by Travancore-Cochin to the State Reorganization committee clearly shows the dominance of Malayalam in the region north of river Payaswini.

Language	Percentage
Malayalam	73%
Tulu	14%
Kannada	5 %
Marathi	4%

Konkani	1%
Others	3%

Table 1.1

It is important to note here that Malame, and not even Beary had been included even though Beary had been considered as a dialect of Malayalam then. Beary speakers also could be counted as Malayalam Speakers as well as Malame speakers.

Mohammed Shareef Kattumada, A Mangaluru based journalist in an interview observes “Inorder to save a language, it is wrong to trim the nearest language, but it usually happens in society. There Beary Language didn’t had a specific name before the Beary Sahitya Academy was approved. it was called *Nakk-Nikk*. The other communities called the Muslims of the coastal area as Bearys. The same Name had been given to the Academy also. in fact its sfter the Academy the language was extended in to a literary culture. But among the 70 % of who are called Bearys speaks Malame. According to Prof. Vivek Rai had identified Malame to be different from Beary and started to distinguish both. I who used to write in Kannada is now started to write Malame. Still there were no further studies regarding the specificity of this language. Baeary Scholars inorder to establish the dominance of Beary over Malame had argued this too as Beary Language. But both these languages differs each bother. Malame is close to Malayalam while Beary is not.”

The native Malame speakers are trying to identify themselves as being different from the Beary speakers. A language overlapping can be viewed in this case. Beary as an umbrella term is

trying to overtake Beary as a dialect, resistance to this is becoming fiercer, which is dealt with in the language revitalization section.

LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

Language Revitalization or reverse language shift is a process in which efforts to halt the decline or reverse the decline of an already extinct language happens. There are examples from around the world with the most important one being Hebrew, revitalized only after the establishment of Israel as a nation in 1948. Further there are other examples like the Celtic languages from the British Isles like Scottish, Gaelic, Manx and Cornish which were extinct at a point of time. Malame literature consists of not more than a couple of poems. A separate identity and consciousness from the rest of the Beary speakers are visible among the native Malame speakers now days. More and more writers tend to write in Malame.

CONCLUSION

The Malame language had been submerged under the identity of Beary language. But the effort to regard the identity of Malame as an independent one is at its dawn. Due to motive forces like assimilation and acculturation along with the language shift had caused a threat to the existence of Malame as a tongue. Efforts are active in order to conserve the tongue in to a mere dialect of either Beary or Malayalam. The native Malame speakers face many challenges as any other linguistic minority. In Kasaragod district especially standard Malayalam is being widely used. This language may also be degraded into a mere dialect of standard Malayalam in the near future as a part of standardisation.

The influence exerted by the contact languages is another important reason for the language shift. As the medium of education is Kannada, Malayalam or English; the younger generation is more exposed to these languages than their 'Mane mathu'. This is justified by a statement given by Yogisha, a degree student- "We speak Malayalam at home to our parents and within us siblings. Our parents both of them speak each other in Tulu. We only speak Tulu while talking to the elders."

The language shift here is from Tulu to Malayalam. Malayalam being the dominant language and the medium of instruction in schools, it becomes the first language for the younger generation while the elders use their own respective 'Mane Mathu'. The children shift their speech into Standard Malayalam, but speak Malame to their parents. This is a common case when it comes to the linguistic minorities of Kasaragod. This has a special effect on Native Malame speakers as the linguistic status of Malame is debateable. As the famous historian Amrut Someshwar had quoted "*Moonamma makanayi valarnnu, pettamma Malayalam, pottamma tulu, kalthadhu kannada*". The Linguistic diversity of Kasaragod had survived for centuries and it will continue to flourish.

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