



## **A Note from the Board of Trustees (BOT) on the History of Kaveri Kannada Cultural Association.**

Dear Honorable Members of Kaveri:

Some time back, some members of Kaveri who reviewed the contents of Kaveri Web site observed that the history of our organization has not been documented properly. In response, I personally reviewed the information and found some inconsistencies. It is well established that Kaveri's birth year was 1972; therefore I tried to gather information about the origin of Kaveri from those who were in the area during that period. Among them, some are living away in India; and unfortunately, some are no more. Fortunately however, we still have some who were actively involved from day one and who are still active members of Kaveri even today. Among the list I looked into, Mrs. Vimala and Dr. Channabasappa and Mr. Magal Rao are no more. Dr. Belavadi Shankar, Mrs. Bhagya and Mr. Rangachar have settled back in India. Mrs. Uma and Mr. Doddanna Rajashekar, Mrs. Raju and Mr. S.Krishnamurthy, Mrs. Barthy and Mr. Bogi Setty, and Mrs. Nirmala Rao are still serving as Kaveri members. I have communicated with Rajashekar, Krishnamurthy, Barthy and Nirmala who were kind enough to provide me details of what they remembered of the events in 1972.

Rajashekar had written an article about the origin of Kaveri which was published in "Amerikannada" magazine in December 85/January 86 [Edited and published by (the Late) Harihareshwara] and that happens to be the first documented source of Kaveri history to the best of my knowledge (this article is also found on the Kaveri web site). Some of Kaveri's past presidents have provided some information about the history of Kaveri (some verbally in personal communications and some in writing which may be found on the web site under individual presidents' write-ups). The final piece of important information was found in an article published in "snEhasEtu" (2011) written by Dr. Belavadi Shankar who did the initial legwork of establishing Kaveri as the very first independent Community Organization of kannadigas in the United States. The article by Dr. Shankar (known to some people as Shankaranarayana in the seventies) is presented below for the benefit of those interested in Kaveri history.

I want to express appreciation and sincere thanks on behalf of the BOT to all those mentioned above for their kind cooperation in providing responses to my requests. I would also like to thank Sri. Suresh Ramachandran for helping us obtain Shankar's article. If any member has a different understanding about the history of Kaveri, I request comments along with supporting documentation.

Sincerely,  
M.S. Nataraja  
Chair, BOT

# “Kaveri” – Its Birth and Early History

(Belavadi S. Shankar)

At the time Kaveri was born my name was B. S. Shankaranarayana. I had just graduated from the Johns Hopkins University with a Master’s degree, and had joined the Maryland State Department of Health. One day I received a telephone directory of Kannadigas from a Kannada association in Ann Arbor Michigan. To my surprise my name was in that directory. Later, a friend of mine, Prasanna, told me he had given my name to that organization. That day itself I decided to start a Kannada association. I discussed the idea with my wife Sharada and friend of mine VA Sridhar who was a graduate student at the JHU. They both said it was a good idea and were ready to help me in that effort. My idea was to create an association for the whole of North-East USA. Towards that goal Sridhar and I went to New York to discuss with Dr. Chandrasekhar and his wife Dr. Sridevi. Chandrasekhar convinced me that my plan was not practical due to the distance and other logistics. So Sridhar and I started collecting telephone numbers of Kannada-speaking residents of Baltimore and its suburbs. Finally on the Labor Day weekend in 1972 we gathered a few interested people and met at the Graduate Club of the JHU Homewood campus. I invited some members of the executive committee of Ann Arbor Kannada Koota. Mr. Krishnappa, Mr. Prasad, and a couple others came. Besides me and the Ann Arbor guests, Sharada (my wife), Sridhar, Savitridevi Naidu, Dr. and Mrs. Bhagavan, Prafull Chandra, and Mr. DN Rajashekar (I think Sridhar invited him) from Washington DC suburbs, attended the meeting. Dr. Bhagavan suggested Kaveri as the name for the association and it was unanimously accepted. Thus, Kaveri was born as the FIRST community-based Kannada Association in the USA. (Ann Arbor Kannada Koota was University-based). For membership we decided to charge \$3 per family. Mr. Krishnappa of Ann Arbor suggested that Kaveri be a branch of Ann Arbor Kannada Koota. And, he also wanted \$2 of the membership fee be paid to that Koota. We decided to put off any discussion and decision on that matter. Any way we started collecting exhaustive list of Kannada people in and around Baltimore, and began planning the activities. Sridhar and Savitridevi Naidu became very active. We also decided to make Kaveri an independent association and I informed Mr. Krishnappa. The very first function was fixed soon, where a Famous astrologer and the publisher of that magazine from Bangalore Mr. BV Raman, was invited to speak. The date was fixed, and a room in a church was obtained. Mrs. Savitridevi Naidu worked very hard calling a lot of people both Kannadigas and Americans. My wife was working that day and my son was sick and with a baby-sitter. Mr. Raman was to fly from New Jersey. At the last minute he cancelled his appointment. I put up a ‘Cancelled’ sign in front of the church, and went home to care for my sick son. I am writing all these because this incidence changed the history of Kaveri. I wanted to make Mrs. Savitridevi Naidu as the first President. She was a well-known Kannada writer. But since I did not

inform her of the cancellation in time and she had to learn from reading the sign in front of the church, she became so upset that she decided to have no part in Kaveri.

I wanted Kannadigas living in Washington suburbs be a part of Kaveri. Mr. Rajashekar told me that a few families meet often at a picnic and invited me to attend. So Sharada and I went there and requested them to join Kaveri. At that party Mrs. and Mr. Krishnamurthy, Mrs. and Mr. Rangachar, Mrs. and Dr. Channabasappa, Mrs. and Mr. Bhogaram Shetty and Mrs. and Mr. Mogal Rao were present. Dr. Channabasappa was gracious enough to extend his full support for the success of Kaveri.

I called the first 'General Body' meeting in Baltimore. I obtained a room in my son's school – Grace and St. Peters Episcopal Church and School. At that meeting we decided to form an Executive Committee. I wanted no part in the committee. So, I suggested Mrs. Vimala Channabasappa as the President, Prafull as vice president, which was unanimously accepted. But then, Mr. Sridhar and Mr. Rajashekar insisted that I be the Secretary, which I accepted. I hope this background and the first Executive Committee are documented with other records of Kaveri. We also decided that there will be 4 major functions in a year, two in Baltimore and two in Washington suburbs. Mr. Sridhar and I then worked on the by-laws for the association as well as goals. We wanted to conduct Kannada classes for children as well as the non-Kannada spouses. Initially, I started Kannada classes in our apartment with a lady from England and a lady from Canada. I requested Mrs. YS Indira (a famous singer and wife of my friend Y Subramanya) at Bangalore to be Kaveri's representative. Mr. Subramanya sent us a beautifully made printing slab for Kaveri Logo. Mrs. Indira negotiated with the Kannada Sahitya Parishat to send us some Kannada books in exchange for 10 reel-to-reel recording tapes we sent to the Parishat. She also arranged to publish all Kaveri's functions in Praja Vani and Deccan Herald newspapers.

Our first major function was the concert by Chitti Babu in collaboration with the Telugu association, and a talk by Mr. Gopala Krishna Adiga, in association with the Indian association in Baltimore. Both were held in Baltimore. Mr. Adiga read his Kannada poems and Prof. Srinivas of Philadelphia translated into English. An exclusive Kaveri cultural function was held at Baltimore county school where we performed Kolata, etc. and passed the by-laws. Mr. Sridhar and I then met with the IRS officials and obtained Tax-exempt status under 501(C) 3. I ran Kaveri for two years. Then in addition to the full-time with State of Maryland I started part-time study for my Doctoral degree which necessitated my withdrawal from Kaveri. I am very delighted to hear that Kaveri has fully grown-up and doing very well. I consider her to be my Daughter.

[Note: Inaccuracies, if there are any, are not intentional.]