

Khwaja Garib-Un Nawaz Welfare Centre Kannada Rajyotsava 2003

Kannada Rajyotsava is the festival of Karnataka State. This festival is to commemorate the formation of the new state of Karnataka on the basis of Kannada language. This festival is celebrated on 1st November of every year. All the residents of Karnataka are expected to observe this festival which has nothing to do with religion. It is purely a secular function.

Muslims generally live in social and also physical isolation. When they live in separate areas, their socialization process becomes retarded. They tend to believe that Kannada Rajyotsava is a Hindu festival. Thus, the concept of Hindu-Muslim divide stems from a gravely mistaken notion.

No attempts have been made to have a break-through so that Muslims also feel that Kannada Rajyotsava is also their festival. This would also promote Hindu-Muslim unity and understanding.

Keeping this in mind, Khwaja Garib-un Nawaz Welfare Centre, a member-group of IARF, took a bold initiative to arrange Kannada Rajyotsava on December 5, 2003 in a Muslim residential area called Rahmatnagar in Bangalore City. Before the programme was held, some of the graduates and undergraduates were asked to say some thing about this Rajyotsava. Their mind was shockingly blank.

Banners were prepared in Kannada and displaced in prominent areas. The organizers expected around 100 persons to attend the evening programme. But surprisingly the gathering had about 400 persons women outnumbering men. Female youths and also children were present. This type of participation of Muslim women in particular exploded the myth that Muslim women do not participate in such social functions.

Prof. A. Lakshmi Sagar, Former Law Minister and former M.P was the Chief guest. He spoke in Kannada about the need for Muslims to join the mainstream. Mr. Jameel Ahmed, the Leader of the opposition in Bangalore City Corporation and who represents Rahmatnagar presided over the function. He also made a strong appeal to Muslims to observe this festival every year and he would extend his co-operation and support. He thanked Khwaja Garib-un Nawaz Welfare Centre for having started this programme.

Earlier 2 Muslim students spoke in Kannada about kannada Rajyotsava. One Miss. Zarina who graduated in Arts taking Kannada medium right from primary 1 year was given an award in the form of silver plate. She spoke in chaste kannada about the encouragement she got to study in Kannada medium and how she now feels that this language had promoted better understanding with Hindu students.

Prof. Dr. Mumtaz Ali Khan, the Exe-Director of Khwaja Garib-un Nawaz and Chairman of South Asia Co-ordinating Council welcomed the gathering and referred to the message of Islam 'be a Roman when you are in Rome'? He also appealed to the Muslims to take active part in arranging and participating in all functions which bring Hindus and Muslims closer and get rid of wrong perceptions.

The programme ended with National anthem and later on distribution of sweets.

Asma Khanum

Secretary
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