Post Independent Karnataka

Post Independent Karnataka- Political Consolidation, Reports and Disputes

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Political Integration

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India gained independence in 1947. The new government soon began delaying concerning the *Karnataka Ekikarana* movement. Kannada speaking areas were now grouped under five administrative units of the Bombay and Madras provinces, Kodagu, and the princely states of Mysore and Hyderabad. The *Akhila Karnataka Ekikarana Parishat* met in Kasargod and reiterated the demand for a separate state for Kannadigas.

While Karnataka became independent with the rest of the country on 15 August 1947, this did not occur in some parts of the state that were under the rule of the Nizam of Hyderabad. Hyderabad consisted of large portions of what were later to be the north eastern districts of Bidar, Gulbarga and Raichur of Karnataka state. The Lingayat minority in these regions also largely believed that they had been neglected and resented the oppression of the Nizam and the Razakars. The Nizam refused to accede to India until his rule was overthrown by force. Following the 'police action' against the Nizam, Hyderabad province and its citizens became independent on 17 September 1948. This day is celebrate

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d by the Karnataka government as

the *Hyderabad-Karnataka liberation day*.

On November 1, 1956, the state of Mysore was formed following linguistic re-organization. It included four districts from the former Bombay state, three districts of Hyderabad state, a district and a taluk of the Old Madras state, the state of Coorg and the princely state of Mysore.

In the same year, the government appointed the Dhar commission to look into the demands of the *Ekikarana* movement as well as those of the other parallel movements in the other states. The Dhar commission in its report, opposed any reorganisation of the states. This was criticised by all quarters including the Jaipur Congress.

The government now formed the 'JVP' committee. This committee had **J**awaharlal Nehru, **V**allabhai Patel and Dr **P**attabhi Sitaramayya on the board. This committee examined the demands again and created a report. The JVP report, however, favoured only the creation of the

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Andhra state while the *Karnataka Ekikarana* movement was deliberately ignored.
The *Ekikarana* movement saw this as a betrayal of the Congress which had declared the creation of linguistic provinces as one of its goals in its 1951 manifesto.

It was only in 1973, under the chief ministership of Devaraj Urs that the state was renamed as Karnataka. The term Karnataka has its roots in terms that find mention in literary texts that are several hundred years ago. According to UR Ananthamurthy, the Kavirajamarga refers to the land from Cauvery to Godavari where Kannada is spoken as Kannada desha. "It is probably one of the earliest instances of defining a land in terms of a language spoken by a people," Ananthamurthy says.

Although there was a demand for the unification of all Kannada-speaking areas, there was opposition too, mostly from the Mysore region.

The demand for unification in the 1950s and before came from the inequality that Kannada-speaking people faced in other administrative regions. They felt that their social economic development was ignored in these regions because of their lack of numerical strength.

However, it was felt by some in the Mysore region that merging the Kannada-speaking regions would place strain on Mysore's resources. In his essay titled "Kannada and Mysore" author KN Subrahmanya notes that there was a demand to have two Kannada states, one with areas adjacent to Mysore and the other comprised of areas to the north of Mysore. There was also a fear among Vokkaligas – who are concentrated in the Mysore region – that they would be numerically outnumbered if all Kannada-speaking areas were united.

Nijalingappa had played an important role in the Unification of Karnataka. Hence after the Unification of Karnataka in 1956, Nijalingappa became the natural choice for the post of Chief Minister.

Karnataka has a parliamentary system of government with two democratically elected houses, the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. The Legislative Assembly consists of 224 members who are elected for five-year terms. The Legislative Council is a permanent body of 75 members with one-third (25 members) retiring every two years

Finally, The states were reorganised based on the linguistic and other criteria and thus the divided areas of Kannada speaking population came together to form the present day Karnataka under the name of Mysore. On 1973 November 1, the name Mysore was changed to Karnataka. The state choose the city of Bangalore as its capital and gave Kannada the status of administrative

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language. The Vidhana Soudha build by Kengal Hanumanthya became the state parliament house. The Attara Kachery was made the state high court.

Politics in Karnataka has been dominated by three political parties, the Indian National Congress, the Janata Dal (Secular) and the Bharatiya Janata Party. Politicians from Karnataka have played prominent roles in federal government of India with some of them having held the high positions of Prime Minister and Vice-President. Border disputes involving Karnataka's claim on the Kasaragod and Solapur districts and Maharashtra's claim on Belgaum are ongoing since the states reorganisation. The official emblem of Karnataka has a *Ganda Berunda* in the centre. Surmounting this are four lions facing the four directions, taken from the Lion Capital of Ashoka at Sarnath. The emblem also carries two *Sharabhas* with the head of an elephant and the body of a lion.

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Backward classes and Devaraja Urs reforms

After Independence, a successful agitation was launched by the Mysore Congress to wrest political power from the royal family, thereby making the state a systematic part of the larger political system, that is, Indian Union. The Constitution of India with subscribing to a parliamentary democracy and universal adult franchise was introduced in 1950. These developments further strengthened the power and influence of numerically dominant non-Brahmin communities of Karnataka like Vokkaligas and Lingayaths and lessened the political significance of minority Brahmin community. Among them, it was the largest Vokkaliga caste-group, which exercised political dominance till the reorganisation of states and formation of Greater Karnataka in 1956.

Regarding the reservation policy, up to 1956, Miller Committee recommendations were implemented in Mysore state, without any increase in reservation quota given to the backward castes. The government too was not in a position to reduce backward class benefits since they already secured intellectual and social support for their movement by that time. When Kaka Kalelkar Report was published reaction to it was quick and pointed. He had suggested in his

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covering letter that all women as a class, all villagers as a class etc. should be treated as Backward Classes. On 22nd May 1956, a Conference of Backward Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was held at Ranebennur to protest against the recommendations of Kalelkar.

The Mysore Government, in fact, reduced the Brahmin dominance indirectly by introducing a legislation for tenancy abolition that made the Brahmins lose their inam lands to the tenants. In 1956, under the State Reorganisation Plan, the State of Mysore was enlarged to include the Lingayat dominated districts of Hyderabad Karnataka and Bombay-Karnataka region along with Coorg, making Lingayat community the largest caste group in Karnataka. In 1961, the relative share of Lingayat community in the population of Karnataka rose to 15.57 percent reducing the dominant Vokkaliga community that had 12.98 percent population, to the third position, the second position being occupied by the Scheduled Castes.

The unification further increased the heterogeneity of the general social composition of Karnataka State, particularly that of backward class category, demanding a reformulation of reservation policy. The Government issued an order in July 1958 treating all non-Brahmins except Christians and Muslims as backward, specifying 57 per cent reservation. When this order was disapproved by the Court, the Government issued another order in 1959 . The 1959 order divided the population of the state into 14 groups and compartmental reservation to each group was introduced, providing 45 per cent reservation in educational institutions and 57 per cent in government jobs.

After the High Court struck down the orders, the State Government appointed a “Mysore Backward Classes Committee” under the chairmanship of a backward class political leader Nagana Gowda to identify socially and educationally backward people and to recommend the extent of reservation to them.

The Nagana Gowda Committee:

The Nagana Gowda committee submitted its ‘Interim Report’ in 1960 identifying backwardness on grounds of literacy in relation to caste or community and the representation of the latter in services. Accepting the interim recommendations, the Government issued an order treating very few castes and communities as Backward Classes and reserving only 25 per cent of seats in

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