



EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ARTICLE 371J IN KARNATAKA

By:

Ambika

Research Scholar,

Department of Development,

Kannada University,

Hampi (Karnataka)

And

Dr. Padmaraj Jain

Research Guide

P.C.B. Education Trust's

Arts and Commerce Degree College

Lingasugur (Karnataka)

ABSTRACT:

This article contributes to the broader discourse on regionalism and its political implications by examining the implementation of Article 371J of the Indian Constitution in Karnataka. Introduced in 2012, Article 371J was intended to provide special provisions to the Kalyana Karnataka region to address historical disparities and promote regional development. The analysis evaluates both the effectiveness of Article 371J in achieving its intended goals and the political manoeuvring and controversies that have emerged in its application. It further explores the political debates surrounding its implementation, particularly issues related to inconsistencies in reservation policies and eligibility criteria. The paper also reflects on the influence of federalism on the region and how it shapes the broader regional dynamics.

Keywords: Article 371J, Kalyana-Karnataka, Regional Development, Special Provisions,

1. Introduction:

The United Nations (UN), as an international organization, also grapples with issues of regionalism, and similar challenges are reflected within India's own governance framework. India is a country characterized by immense diversity, where regionalism has taken multiple forms, including demands for greater autonomy, separate statehood, and special constitutional provisions. These provisions represent asymmetric federalism, wherein different states—and sometimes specific regions within states—possess varying degrees of autonomy and distinct administrative, political, and fiscal relationships with the central government. This ethos is embodied in the Indian Constitution, particularly in Article 371J. Inserted through the 98th Constitutional Amendment Act of 2012, Article 371J seeks to address the historical backwardness of the Kalyana Karnataka region by extending special provisions in areas such as education,

employment, and resource allocation. This paper examines how Article 371J has been implemented and assesses its impact on the region's development.

2. Article 371J:

The Kalyana Karnataka region—comprising the districts of Gulbarga, Bidar, Raichur, Koppal, Yadgir, and Bellary—has a unique history that reflects its longstanding socio-economic challenges. Formerly part of the Hyderabad State under the rule of the Nizams, this region was integrated into the then Mysore State in 1956 during the reorganization of states along linguistic lines. The roots of regional inequality in Karnataka can be traced back to the British colonial period, when the territory was administratively divided into distinct units such as Mysore State, Bombay Karnataka, and Hyderabad Karnataka. These historical divisions contributed to uneven patterns of development, the effects of which continue to influence the socio-economic landscape of Kalyana Karnataka today.

The Mysore kings had introduced several social welfare initiatives that contributed significantly to the development of their region, whereas the other two parts of the present-day Karnataka remained comparatively underdeveloped. Even after unification in the post-independence period, Karnataka continued to experience pronounced regional disparities, which at times triggered protests and demands for separate statehood. The Kalyana Karnataka region, which had been under the rule of the Nizams of Hyderabad, faced prolonged neglect and lagged behind other regions in terms of socio-economic development. Following the integration of Hyderabad State into the Indian Union in 1948, this region became part of the Mysore State, which was later renamed Karnataka in 1973. Nevertheless, despite being united under a common administrative structure, the region continued to underperform across various development indicators. It is this troubled historical trajectory and persistent backwardness that ultimately paved the way for the introduction of Article 371J.

3. Provisions of article:

Article 371J was added to the Indian Constitution in 2012 to provide special status to the Hyderabad–Karnataka region, now officially known as Kalyana Karnataka (districts: Bidar, Kalaburagi/Gulbarga, Yadgir, Raichur, Koppal and Ballari).

It gives special provisions for the development of this backward region.

1. Establishment of a Separate Development Board

- The Central Government must create a **Kalyana Karnataka Regional Development Board (KKRDB)**.
- It ensures:
 - 1) Special funds for the development of the region
 - 2) Monitoring and reviewing development works
 - 3) Reducing regional imbalances in Karnataka

2. Reservation in Government Jobs

- Local candidates of Kalyana Karnataka region get special reservation in:
 - a) State Government posts
 - b) Local government jobs
- A certain percentage of posts are set aside only for local people.

3. Reservation in Educational Institutions

- 1) Local students get reservation in:
 - a) Medical colleges
 - b) Engineering colleges
 - c) Other state-run educational institutions in the region
- 2) Helps improve access to higher education for rural and backward communities.

4. Local Cadre System

- 1) Creates separate job cadres for the region.
- 2) That means many jobs in Kalyana Karnataka can be filled only by local candidates(similar to the Telangana–Hyderabad local cadre system earlier).

5. Equitable Allocation of State Funds

- 1) State Government must ensure fair distribution of funds for:
 - a) Roads
 - b) Industries
 - c) Health
 - d) Education
 - e) Infrastructure
- 2) Priority is given to backward taluks in the region.

6. Special Provisions for Administrative Efficiency

- 1) The Governor has powers to ensure:
 - a) Proper implementation of development programmes
 - b) Adequate budget for the region
 - c) Monitoring of progress

4. Education:

Perhaps the most tangible outcome of the implementation of Article 371J since 2018 has been the significant increase in opportunities for local students to access professional education. The provision has notably expanded admissions for students from the Kalyana Karnataka region into professional courses such as medicine and engineering. As noted by Priyank Kharge, the minister responsible for overseeing Article 371J, “Article 371J was implemented to provide students from our region with better educational opportunities in medical and engineering colleges.” Over the past decade, 7,757 students from the region have secured seats in medical colleges, while 25,683 students have been admitted to engineering institutions. In the long term, this increased access to higher education is expected to positively influence human resource development in the region.

However, despite these advancements, significant challenges remain. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education for the region stood at only 15% in 2019–20, compared to the state average of 32%. Similarly, the region’s literacy rate of 63.71% lags behind the Karnataka average of 75.36%. These disparities indicate that the Kalyana Karnataka region still has considerable ground to cover in achieving educational parity with the rest of the state.

5. Employment:

Article 371J has also expanded employment opportunities for local candidates in government services. Owing to the reservation policy, hundreds of individuals from the Kalyana Karnataka region have secured government jobs that might otherwise have remained inaccessible. The state government has released a departmental list identifying approximately 1.1 lakh posts earmarked for local candidates. However, concerns remain regarding the effective implementation of these reservation provisions and the extent to which vacant posts are being filled. According to data from 2014, nearly 29,500 government positions in the region remained unfilled, raising questions about the government’s commitment to fulfilling the intent of Article 371J. Moreover, inconsistencies in recruitment notifications across various departments have led to legal disputes and considerable confusion among aspirants.

6. Economic And Social Development:

Article 371J has undoubtedly contributed to infrastructure development and improved access to education and employment in the Kalyana Karnataka region; however, its overall impact on the region's economic and social progress remains a subject of debate. Over the past ten years, the state government has approved funds amounting to ₹19,778 crore for the region, while the Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board (KKRDB) has allocated an additional ₹11,174 crore. The current government has further committed ₹5,000 crore annually for the next four years to support the region's development. Despite these significant financial outlays, several studies argue that the region continues to lag behind in human development indicators. Critics contend that government expenditure has disproportionately focused on infrastructure, such as road construction, rather than investing in human resources and addressing core issues like poverty, malnutrition, and health disparities. To assess the development trajectory of the region more comprehensively, it is necessary to examine its Human Development Index (HDI). Comparisons of HDI scores across the five best and worst-performing districts in Karnataka reveal that the Kalyana Karnataka region continues to rank among the lowest, underscoring persistent developmental challenges.

7. Debates And Controversies of Article 371J:

Politics surrounding Article 371J has also been marked by significant controversy. One of the central issues relates to the interpretation and application of reservation policies. Discrepancies in recruitment notifications across different government departments have resulted in legal challenges and widespread confusion among aspirants. For instance, the Karnataka High Court recently issued a notice to the state government on a petition challenging an amendment to Article 371J that granted reservation in promotions to individuals from the Kalyana Karnataka region with retrospective effect. Ambiguities within the state secretariat regarding implementation procedures have further contributed to these disputes.

Another contentious aspect concerns the eligibility criteria for availing benefits under Article 371J. In 2024, the Karnataka High Court ruled that Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cardholders are not entitled to reservation under Article 371J, even if they were born in the Kalyana Karnataka region. This judgment reignited debate over the definition of "local" and the intended scope of the special provisions. A notable case is that of Meghana Kuruvalli, a UK citizen born in Secunderabad and educated in Ballari. The court dismissed her plea for reservation benefits under Article 371J, clarifying that OCI cardholders constitute a distinct category of applicants and are therefore ineligible.

Simultaneously, political debates have emerged regarding whether Article 371J is adequate to address the region's longstanding disparities. Critics argue that the article has not led to meaningful socio-economic transformation, while supporters emphasize the opportunities and incremental progress it has facilitated. These divergent perspectives highlight the complex and often contested nature of regionalism and its political implications.

8. Conclusion:

Article 371J represents an important national policy intervention aimed at promoting equity, growth, and development in the Kalyana Karnataka region. While its implementation has expanded access to education and employment, concerns persist regarding its broader implications for human development and the pace of progress. The article also offers valuable insight into emerging patterns of regionalism and the tensions such pursuits may generate within a federal structure, particularly when special provisions are perceived as potentially challenging national unity. Although Article 371J is a commendable attempt to address deep-rooted regional imbalances, it is not a comprehensive solution, and meaningful transformation will require time.

A long-term perspective, supported by both qualitative and quantitative indicators, is essential for a holistic assessment of the article's impact. Evaluating the outcomes thus far will help determine its effectiveness and identify areas where implementation can be strengthened. A comparative analysis with similar special

provisions in other states may also provide important lessons for tackling regional disparities across India. Ultimately, the success of Article 371J will depend on sustained government commitment, effective governance, and active participation of local communities in the development process.

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