

Movement for unification of Karnataka a qualitative analysis

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Abstract

“Cauveryindama Godhavarivaramirda nadada Kannada” says the Kavirajamarga, a 9th century Kannada work, describing the extent of Kannada territory. Though Kannada language is not spoken on the banks of the Godavari today, between sixth to 13th centuries C.E. Kannada dominated major parts of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Goa. The numerous Kannada inscription found in all these places testify to the fact that Kannada was the spoken language of the people of those areas. Kannada poet Pampa was from Vemulavada, a place now in Andhra Pradesh. Famous scholar and researcher, N. S. Rajapurohit wrote several articles in Kesari (the Marathi paper of Tilak) about the prevalence of Kannada language in several areas of Maharashtra and also the influence of Kannada on the literary composition of saints like Jnaneshwar. This resulted in a setback to Kannada as the latter two dynasties began to patronize Marathi and Telugu respectively. Kannada regions north of the subsequent decline in the former’s fortunes saw the Marathas supplanting their hold over major part of North Karnataka.

After the fall of Tipu Sultan in 1799 and during the period of British rule, areas that now comprise Karnataka were under as many as 20 different administrative units with the princely state of Mysore, Nizam's Hyderabad, the Bombay Presidency, the Madras Presidency and the territory of Kodagu being the most important ones. In effect, nearly two-thirds of what is now Karnataka fell outside the rule of the Wodeyar kings of Mysore. This meant that the Kannadigas in these regions in spite of their large numbers they did not have an administrative patronage. Kannadigas in the Hubli-Karnataka region for example, came under the rule of the Bombay Presidency where Marathi was the official language. Those in the Hyderabad-Karnataka region came under the Nizam's rule where Urdu was the main language. It was in these conditions that the movement that first started as a protest against linguistic oppression, began demanding the creation of a separate state consolidating all Kannada-speaking regions. This was called the Ekikarana or 'Unification' movement. 2 The Unification of Karnataka refers to the formation of the Indian state of Karnataka, then named Mysore State, in 1956 when several Indian states were created by redrawing borders based on linguistic demographics. Decades earlier, during British rule the first demands for a state based on Kannada demographics had been made.

Key word: Ekikarana, Karnataka, Unification, Mysore State, integration, Wodeyar kings of Mysore

Introduction

The formation of separate provinces like Assam, Bihar, Orissa on linguistic basis after the divided Bengal were united into one in 1912, publication of books on Karnataka’s history, the freedom movement and the inspiring writings of Alur Venkata Rao, Huilgola Narayana Rao, Kuvempu, Bendre and others created a thirst for independence and also Unification of the Kannada-speaking regions. Alur Venkat Rao, who was called “Kannada Kula Purohita”, for awakening the consciousness of Kannadigas, rendered yeoman service for the cause of Unification.

In 1916 he founded the Ekikarana Sabha at Dharwad, with unification of Karnataka as its goal. As early as in 1903, Benagal Rama Rao delivered a lecture at Dharwad, stressing the need for the unification of Kannada speaking regions into a single Presidency. In 1920, a separate Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee was constituted for the Kannada speaking regions. In 1924, the all-India Congress session under the Presidentship of Mahatma Gandhi was held at Belgaum. At the session, the Kannada anthem, “Udayavagali namma cheluva Kannadanadu”, calling for the creation of beautiful Kannada state, composed by Huilgol Narayana Rao was sung. The first Karnataka Unification Conference was held at the same venue and presided over by Sir Siddappa Kambli. The Karnataka Ekikarana Sangha was founded at the conference and it held its conferences time and again. In 1926, the Hindustani Seva Dal, founded by Dr. Hardikar conducted a signature campaign in favour of Unification and collected 36,000 signatures. But it was not an easy task to bring people who were under 20 different administrations in a single province and it was felt that with the country attaining the freedom, unification could also materialize. The Karnataka Vidyavardhaka Sangha, Dharwad was established in 1890 by R. H. Deshpande with the objective of working for the resurgence of the Kannada language which had been marginalised under the rule of the Bombay Presidency where Marathi was the official language.

The Vidyavardhaka Sangha became the aegis under which 276 leaders from all over Karnataka gathered to further their agitation. The influence and success of the Vidyavardhaka Sangha soon lead to more such organisations being set up throughout Karnataka. The most notable of these were the Kannada Sahitya Parishat (Bangalore) that was set up in 1915, the Karnataka Sangha (Shivamogga) that began in 1916 and the Karnataka Samithi in Kasaragod in 1955

Objective

Present paper aims to review Karnataka unification in

- a. Historical context to detail the efforts of Kannada thinkers
- b. Social and Cultural ambience of divided state after partition

THE ORIGIN GROWTH OF UNIFICATION MOVEMENT

Starting with Aluru’s call for a Kannada linguistic state, the movement had slowly started gaining momentum and following. It was also around this time that the Indian independence movement was gathering momentum. Organisations in the movement began organising rallies and conferences where demands for a separate state for Kannada speaking people were made. Apart from Aluru, supporters like Gudleppa Hallikeri, Siddappa Kambli, R. H. Deshpande, Rangarao Diwakar, Koujalgi Srinivasarao, Srinivas Rao Mangalvedhe, Kengal Hanumanthaiah, Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar, S. Nijalingappa, T. Mariyappa, Subramanya, Sowcar Chennaiah, H. K. Veerangowda, H. C. Dasappa, H. Siddaiah, K. R. Karanth, B. S. Kakkillaya, B. V. Kakkillaya and Anakru were by now prominent in the movement. Anakru in particular, was influential with his writing and orator

The movement for Unification of Karnataka had originated in Dharwad. Alur Venkata Rao was the man who floated the idea and nurtured it. In 1928, a Committee headed by Motilal Nehru was appointed by the Congress to draft a constitution for India. Dr. Hardikar with the help of Sevalal collected 30,000 signatures supporting unification and submitted a memorandum in support of Unification. Diwakar wrote a book entitled “A Case for United Karnataka” for submission to the Committee. The Nehru Committee opined that Karnataka can be a viable province. Even the Simon Commission too had accepted the idea of Linguistic States. But the Karnataka Congress did not submit any memorandum to the Commission, as the Congress had

announced the boycott against Commission, it pressurized non-congress groups too, not to submit any memorandum. This resulted in the delay of Unification, which could have been approved by the commission itself. The Sixth Karnataka Unification Conference was held at Dharwad in 1936, and Dattopant Belvi of Belgaum presided over it

Eminent literatures like Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar and K. V. Puttappa and leaders like S. Nijalingappa and K. Hanumanthaiah inspired the people to strive harder to achieve the goal. Meanwhile leaders like K.R. Karanth who advocated a more aggressive approach formed an organization named Akhanda Karnataka Rajya Nirmana Parishad. Nothing concrete was done even after the elections of 1951-52. Meanwhile in Andhra, Potti Sriramulu died (15-12-1952) on the 58th day of his fast and Minister to appoint a States Reorganization Commission (SRC) in December 1953. It consisted of three member's viz., Fazl Ali (Chairman), K.M. Panikkar and H. N. Kunzru. This Commission is also often referred to as the Fazl Ali Commission. This Commission, which submitted its report about two years later, favored the formation of a much enlarged Mysore State on the basis of language. The re-constituted Mysore State came into existence on the first of November (Rajyotsava Day) 1956 with the Maharaja as its Governor and S. Nijalingappa as the Chief Minister. But unfortunately all Kannada speaking areas were not included in it. The state was renamed Karnataka on the first of November 1973. Devaraj Urs was the Chief Minister at that time.

After 1952 Karnataka saw formation of an aggressive body called the Akhanda Karnataka Rajya Nirmana Parishat which started an agitation in which over 5000 person's courted arrest. Within the Congress party there was conflict. Meanwhile Potti Sriramulu had died fasting demanding the formation of Andhra and this resulted in riots in the Andhra area. Consequently the State of Andhra came into being in 1953 and under the report of Wanchoo Commission; several talukas of Bellary district were merged with Mysore state. This was the first step towards formation of Kamataka.

"A meeting of Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee was held at Hubli on April 13-14 (1953). On that occasion there was an unprecedented gathering of people, and demonstration in favour of unification which turned violent causing lot of damage. Under these circumstances, the Central Government appointed a three-member Fazl Ali Commission to look into the issue of Linguistic States. The Commission recommended for the formation of Linguistic States including Karnataka"⁴

Finally the central government appointed the States Reorganization Commission (SRC) in 1953 under Fazl Ali which reported in favor of immediate setting up of new Mysore state, among others. Its report was implemented in 1956 and thus was born the new Mysore state comprising of almost all the Kannada-speaking regions.

The Conferences and Committees in Pre- Independence Period:

Various Conferences were held and committees were constituted for re-organisation of Indian States on linguistic basis they were; The Nagpur Conference. Due to the efforts of these organisations and leaders, the movement not only gained in momentum but also attained a quasi-political influence. In 1920, Karnataka State Political Conference was held at Dharwad. At this conference, which was presided over by V P Madhav Rao, a unanimous resolution was passed demanding the unification of all Kannada speaking areas.

The conference also advised Kannadigas to attend the Nagpur Congress to be held later that year in large numbers. Almost 800 delegates attended the Nagpur conference where the Indian National Congress made the decision to create the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee. This aided the movement and leaders of the Congress like S Nijalingappa and Kengal Hanumanthaiah (both of whom went on to become Chief Ministers of Karnataka) and Gudleppa Hallikeri also served as active members of the movement.⁵ The Belgaum Session of Indian National Congress 1924. In 1924, the Belgaum congress was held

under the aegis of the newly formed Karnataka Pradesh Congress committee arm of the INC. Mahatma Gandhi presided over this historic conference. This conference was attended by Kannadigas from all parts in large numbers. The first Karnataka Unification Conference was also organised at the same venue. This was presided over by Siddappa Kambli.⁶ These two conferences were attended by a significant number of leaders, writers, poets and intellectuals from Karnataka. It was here that Huilgol Narayana Rao first sang his Udayavagali namma cheluva kannada nadu, which meant Let our charming Kannada land dawn!. The INC lent formal support to the cause; this was the first time the movement had explicit political support. As a result of these conferences, the Karnataka Ekikarana Sabha which was to work in collaboration with the KPCC began with the objective of the unification of Karnataka. The Karnataka Ekikarana Sabha later came to be known as the Karnataka Ekikarana Sangha.

The Nehru Committee Report.

In 1928, due to the efforts of Gudleppa Hallikeri, the formation of a single province by uniting all Kannada speaking areas was recommended by the Nehru Committee. It was stated by the committee that there was a “strong prima facie case for unification”. It also went on to state that it believed Karnataka could also be a financially strong province. This recommendation aided the movement. There was later support from literary figures like Kuvempu, Bendre, Gokak, S B Joshi, Betgeri Krishna Sharma, M Govinda Pai, Shivarama Karanth and Kayyara Kiyanna Rai. There was also widespread support growing from the newspapers and media. Several smaller public and college organisations also began, notably in Bengalur, Shivamogga and Raichur.

The 1937 Elections.

Following the Simon Commission, elections were held in 1937. The Congress said it would favour the formation of the separate Karnataka and Andhra states. This was met with some resistance from the British and also some of the princely states. While the princely states feared that they might stand to lose some territory, the British themselves were unsure of how they would handle the reorganisation. Siddappa Kambli sensing the reluctance, decided that the movement had to approach the Simon Commission with their case. But the other leaders of the movement like Gangadhar Deshpande, Rangarao Diwakar, Koujalgi Srinivasarao and Aluru advised him not to do so as they had boycotted the commission. Gudleppa Hallikeri invited the Maharaja of Mysore to tour the Kannada speaking provinces of Bombay and Hyderabad. After the tour and several discussions the movement gained his active support.⁹ The 1946 Unification Conference. The tenth conference of the Ekikarana movement was held on 10 January 1946 in Bombay. This conference was inaugurated by Sardar Patel and attended by the likes of B. G. Kher, the then Chief Minister of Bombay presidency.

In his speech at the conference, Sardar Patel stated that the interests of all linguistic groups would be high on the list of priorities for the new government of independent India. This served to reduce the apprehensions of the movement's 279 leaders and the common people. This was also to have a bearing on the constituent assembly that met in the same year.¹⁰ In the same year, the All-Karnataka convention, a gathering of Kannadigas was held in Davanagere, in central Karnataka. This was presided over by Mr. M P Patil, the revenue minister of Bombay. This convention attracted tens of thousands of Kannadigas from Karnataka. Leaders like Gudlappa Hallikeri, Kengal Hanumanthaiah, T Mariyappa, Subramanya, Sowcar Chennaiah, H K Veerangowda, H C Dasappa and H Siddaiah attended this convention and urged the constituent assembly to create the linguistic states.

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Dr. Hardikar with the help of Sevadal collected 30,000 signatures supporting unification and 280 passed in the Bombay Legislative Assembly. But as the Quit India Movement saw all Congress leaders either underground or behind the bars, in 1944 the 9th Karnataka Unification Conference could take place only in 1944, at Dharwad. Advocate S.S. Malimath was the Chairman of the reception Committee and K.B. Jinaraja Hegde presided over the conference. All-Karnatak Unification Association (Sangha) was reorganized with Jinaraj Hegde as the President and writer Sriranga as one of the Vice-Presidents. Sriranga in turn toured all over Karnataka, delivered speeches and organised local committees.¹³ In 1946, Unification Conference was held at Bombay, with B.G. Kher presiding over it. But when the new Constitution for India was framed, the issue of forming a new Kannada State did not find a place in it. Karnataka Ekikarana Mahasabha was organised at Davangere in 1953 M. P. Patil presided over it, and it resolved that the concepts of Unification and Linguistic States must be incorporated in the new Constitution. Later, Karnataka Ekikarana Mahasamiti with S. Nijalingappa as the President was founded with A. J. Dodmeti and Mangalvedhe Srinivasrao as its Secretaries. It was a unit of the Congress party. By then the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee Office had been brought to Hubli from Dharwad. G.V. Hallikeri was the Secretary of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee from 1938 to 1960.

Mangalvedhe Srinivasrao came to stay at Hubli from Bagalkot and looked after the Movement for Unification. Basarigidada Veerappa and Shantappa Yalamali of Gadag generously helped the Unification movement, with generous pecuniary contributions. To convince the Constituent Assembly, of the need for Unification, a delegation with Sriranga as the leader visited Delhi. A Search Committee to report on the feasibility of creating the linguistic states was formed with eight members in it. But over the issue of Bombay, whether the city should be a part of Maharashtra or Gujarath being a bone of contention between Shankar Rao Dev, the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee President and Central Home Minister Sardar Patel, the proposal of creation of linguistic states was dropped for the time being says Diwakar Jawaharlal Nehru was also opposed to the division of Hyderabad State on linguistic basis. Karnataka Unification Conference was held at Kasargod in 1947 with Diwakar presiding over it

THE POST INDEPENDENCE EVENTS OF UNIFICATION MOVEMENT:

India soon 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. Liberation of Hyderabad-Karnataka. 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 celebrated by the Karnataka government as the Hyderabad-Karnataka liberation day. ¹⁶ The Dhar and JVP committee. In the same year (1948), 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 Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhai Patel and Dr. Pattabhi Sitaramayya on the board. This committee examined the demands again and created a report. The JVP report, however, favoured only the creation of the 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. The movement now formed the Karnataka Ekikarana Paksha to contest the 1951 polls. This was supported by literary figures as well as politicians like Gudlappa Hallikeri, Kengal Hanumantayya, S Nijalingappa and C M Poonacha, the Chief Minister of Kodagu The Fazal Ali Committee. In January 1953, at the Congress session in Hyderabad, a resolution was also passed favouring the creation of Andhra Pradesh but not Karnataka. A. J. Dodmeti, a senior Congress leader and the member of the Bombay assembly, immediately resigned from his seat and launched a hunger strike at Jakkali in Dharwad. This was widely supported. In the riots at Hubli that followed, many people were injured and several courted arrest.

In the Hubli-Dharwad by-elections that followed, the Congress were defeated while the Karnataka Ekikarana Paksha's candidate won by a landslide. Under pressure, Prime Minister Nehru constituted the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC), also known as the Fazal Ali commission due to being headed by Justice Fazal Ali. At the same time, the Mysore government appointed a fact-finding committee, headed by M. Sheshadri. The SRC opposed the unification but its findings were ignored due to overwhelming support in favour from Mysoreans such as Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya. Congress leader Gudlappa Hallikeri furthered the cause of unification within his party by advocating for states based on linguistic demographics. He also represented and urged unification in front of the SRC.

Conclusion

The SRC eventually recommended the reorganization of the states based on linguistic demographics and this was soon ratified in parliament. The ratification in parliament of the recommendations of the SRC was reacted to positively by Kannadiga people, although there was also disappointment at the non-inclusion of certain parts of Mysore state. Most notable among the excluded areas was Kasargod, which had been one of the centers from which the Ekikarana movement had launched its agitation. This is an issue that continues to affect those who fought for the unification of Karnataka. On 1 November 1973, under Devaraj Urs as Chief Minister, Mysore state was renamed as Karnataka

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