



The Emergence Of New Social Movements In Karnataka After Globalisation: A Study

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ABSTRACT

Globalisation has transformed the socio-economic landscape of India, influencing political behaviour, civil society participation, and collective action. Karnataka, with its diverse social groups and dynamic political history, has witnessed the evolution of new social movements that reflect the changing aspirations of marginalized communities. Dalit movements, farmers' movements, and women's movements have gained renewed relevance in the post-globalisation period as structural reforms, market-driven policies, and rapid socio-economic shifts created new inequalities as well as new opportunities for mobilization.

This study examines the emergence, growth, and transformation of these movements in Karnataka after the 1990s. It analyses how globalisation reshaped their organisational structures, leadership patterns, mobilization strategies, and ideological frameworks. The study draws from secondary data, academic literature, reports, and case analyses to understand how these movements contributed to democratic deepening, social justice struggles, and policy debates in contemporary Karnataka.

Keywords: Globalisation; Karnataka; Social Movements; Dalit Movements; Farmers' Movements; Women's Movements; Civil Society

INTRODUCTION

The advent of globalisation in India during the early 1990s marked a major shift in the economic and social structure of the nation. Liberalisation policies, integration with global markets, technological expansion, and new forms of communication facilitated rapid changes across states. Karnataka emerged as a significant beneficiary of economic reforms due to its strong technological base, skilled workforce, and favourable investment climate. However, along with economic opportunities, globalisation produced tensions related to inequality, displacement, cultural identity, and unequal access to resources.

Social movements in Karnataka have historically played a critical role in shaping democratic politics. Prior to globalisation, the state witnessed struggles centred on land rights, caste discrimination, linguistic identity, and workers' rights. The post-globalisation phase introduced new complexities that altered the nature of collective action. Growing disparities between rural and urban areas, increasing corporate influence on agriculture, the rise of information technology, and changing social aspirations directly affected marginalized groups such as Dalits, farmers, and women.

Dalit movements in Karnataka strengthened their mobilization by drawing from Ambedkarite ideology, challenging caste-based exclusion, and asserting socio-political rights. Farmers' movements expanded due to agrarian crises, unstable market prices, rising debt, and environmental challenges intensified by global market dynamics. Women's movements took new forms as globalisation influenced education, employment, gender roles, and exposure to global feminist ideas.

These movements reflect a significant transformation in Karnataka's political culture, shifting from traditional protest methods to more organised, network-driven, and media-supported strategies. The study explores how these three movements evolved after globalisation, shaped new identities, resisted structural inequalities, and engaged with state institutions to demand justice and reform.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the impact of globalisation on the emergence and transformation of new social movements in Karnataka.
2. To examine the development and contemporary relevance of Dalit, farmers', and women's movements in the post-globalisation period.
3. To analyse the role of these movements in promoting social justice, political participation, and democratic strengthening in Karnataka.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to examine the emergence of new social movements in Karnataka after globalisation. The analysis relies primarily on secondary sources such as academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, movement documents, media reports, and earlier research studies conducted on Karnataka's social movements. Historical accounts of Dalit, farmers', and women's organisations were used to trace their evolution, ideological foundations, and forms of mobilisation.

The study also applies a thematic approach to understand how globalisation influenced socio-economic structures, identity formation, and political participation. Comparative insights are drawn to highlight similarities and distinctions among the three movements. The methodological framework emphasises descriptive and analytical interpretation, ensuring that each movement is examined in

relation to changing economic reforms, technological shifts, and the broader socio-political environment of Karnataka after the 1990s.

DALIT MOVEMENTS IN KARNATAKA AFTER GLOBALISATION

Dalit mobilization in Karnataka has deep historical roots, but globalisation significantly reshaped its direction, strategies, and ideological expressions. The expansion of education, urban migration, and access to new communication networks enabled Dalit communities to articulate their demands through both traditional and modern platforms. The influence of Ambedkarite thought expanded during the post-globalisation period as younger generations engaged with global discourses on human rights, equality, and constitutional rights.

The rise of organisations such as the Karnataka Dalit Sangharsha Samiti (DSS) remained central to the movement's growth. The DSS, originally formed to fight for land rights and social dignity, adapted its agenda to new challenges related to urban exclusion, employment discrimination, and caste-based violence. Globalisation accelerated economic growth in Karnataka, but its benefits were unevenly distributed, deepening inequalities for Dalit communities in both rural and urban areas. This led to renewed mobilisation demanding equitable access to education, employment, and public resources.

The cultural assertion of Dalits became stronger during this period. Literature, theatre, and cultural festivals emerged as powerful tools to express identity and resistance. Dalit writers and intellectuals used global ideas of social justice to highlight local experiences of discrimination, creating a hybrid intellectual movement. In addition, Dalit women gained increasing visibility within the movement, challenging both caste and gender oppression.

Political participation also intensified as Dalit leaders engaged more actively in electoral politics, civil society activism, and human rights campaigns. Legal rights, reservation policies, and constitutional safeguards became central themes in post-globalisation Dalit mobilisation. These efforts contributed to a broader redefinition of caste relations and democratic participation in Karnataka.

FARMERS' MOVEMENTS IN KARNATAKA AFTER GLOBALISATION

Farmers' movements in Karnataka entered a new phase after globalisation due to the agrarian crisis intensified by market-oriented reforms. Liberalisation policies exposed agricultural producers to volatile international prices, reduced state support, and increased dependence on commercial crops. Karnataka, with its diverse agro-climatic zones, witnessed severe disparities in farm incomes, irrigation access, and rural livelihoods. These conditions provided fertile ground for renewed farmers' mobilisation.

Organisations such as Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) played a central role during the post-globalisation period. Known for its strong ideological foundation and grassroots presence, KRRS opposed multinational corporations, seed monopolies, and patent regimes that threatened farmers' autonomy. The movement gained international visibility through its resistance to genetically modified

(GM) crops and its critique of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Globalisation thus transformed Karnataka's farmers' movement into a significant actor linking local grievances with global struggles for agricultural sovereignty.

The agrarian distress caused by increasing input costs, declining soil fertility, erratic rainfall, and debt burdens further strengthened farmers' protests. The rise in farmer suicides in regions such as North Karnataka brought national attention to the human cost of economic reforms. Loan waivers, minimum support prices, irrigation access, and rural credit reforms became key demands voiced by farmers' organisations.

In addition to economic grievances, cultural and identity-based elements also shaped the movement. Farmer leaders emerged as influential voices in public debates concerning food security, environmental protection, and sustainable agricultural practices. The movement adopted new strategies such as mass rallies, legal petitions, media campaigns, and alliances with global peasant movements. The post-globalisation phase marked a shift from traditional agrarian protests to more sophisticated, globally connected forms of rural activism rooted in Karnataka's socio-economic context.

WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN KARNATAKA AFTER GLOBALISATION

Globalisation significantly impacted women's lives in Karnataka through shifts in education, employment, family structures, and social aspirations. These developments contributed to the growth of diverse women's movements advocating for equality, safety, economic independence, and political representation. The increasing presence of women in higher education and the labour market created new spaces for awareness and collective mobilisation.

Women's organisations in Karnataka expanded their activities by addressing issues such as gender-based violence, workplace discrimination, political underrepresentation, and unequal access to resources. The post-globalisation period witnessed the rise of NGOs, self-help groups (SHGs), and community-based organisations that focused on economic empowerment, microfinance, and livelihood security. These groups played an important role in integrating rural and urban women into broader networks of support, activism, and development.

The movement also engaged with emerging debates surrounding reproductive rights, health care access, digital literacy, and representation in governance. Several campaigns addressed sexual harassment, domestic violence, dowry, and trafficking through awareness programmes, legal interventions, and coordination with state institutions. The Karnataka State Women's Commission and other official bodies emerged as important platforms for women to voice their concerns.

Cultural change also contributed to the movement's evolution. Global exposure enabled young women to articulate their aspirations more openly, leading to new conversations about autonomy, education, and public participation. At the same time, the movement faced challenges from patriarchal norms, economic inequalities, and caste-based hierarchies. Despite these constraints, women's

activism in Karnataka expanded significantly after globalisation, influencing public policy debates and contributing to wider societal transformation.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of new social movements in Karnataka after globalisation reflects the dynamic interplay between economic reforms, identity politics, and democratic participation. Globalisation produced both opportunities and challenges, altering the social fabric of the state and reshaping the concerns of marginalized communities. Dalit movements gained new momentum through cultural assertion, constitutional mobilisation, and expanded political engagement. Farmers' movements adopted global frameworks to challenge corporate control, agrarian distress, and environmental degradation. Women's movements diversified in scope, addressing issues of empowerment, rights, and social safety in a rapidly changing society.

These movements collectively contributed to strengthening democratic discourse in Karnataka by giving voice to communities affected by inequality and exclusion. Their evolution demonstrates how global forces intersect with local realities to create new forms of collective action. Understanding these movements is essential for comprehending Karnataka's social transformation in the post-globalisation era and for shaping public policies that promote justice, equality, and inclusive development.

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