



The Unification Movement Of Kannada-Speaking Regions: A Comprehensive Historical Overview

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Abstract

The unification of Kannada-speaking regions into a single state was a transformative movement that began in the late 19th century. This effort, initially driven by cultural and literary figures, evolved into a significant political struggle supported by a range of leaders and organizations. The eventual formation of Karnataka in 1956 was a milestone in this process, reflecting both achievements and ongoing regional disparities. This article provides an in-depth exploration of the historical context, key figures, major milestones, and the enduring impacts of the Kannada unification movement.

Key words : Kannada Unification , Linguistic Nationalism, Aluru Venkata Rao , Karnataka Gatha Vaibhava , Karnataka Vidya Vardhaka Sangha , Political Mobilization, Regional Disparities , ndian National Congress , Karnataka Ekikarana Sangha , State Reorganization , Post-Independence Challenges

1. Introduction

The unification of Kannada-speaking regions into a single administrative entity is a notable chapter in India's post-colonial history. Emerging from a backdrop of colonial division and linguistic nationalism, this movement sought to consolidate regions where Kannada was predominantly spoken. This article delves into the origins, development, and consequences of this movement, highlighting the socio-political dynamics that shaped its trajectory.

2. Early Cultural and Literary Efforts

The seeds of the Kannada unification movement were sown in the late 19th century, primarily through the efforts of literary and cultural figures. The Karnataka Vidya Vardhaka Sangha, established in Dharwad in 1890, was among the first organizations to champion the cause of Kannada language and literature. This organization played a pivotal role in fostering a sense of regional identity and cultural pride.

Aluru Venkata Rao, a seminal figure in this movement, significantly contributed through his seminal work, *Karnataka Gatha Vaibhava*. Published in 1901, this work provided a comprehensive historical narrative that celebrated the cultural and historical contributions of various Kannada-speaking dynasties. Rao's efforts were instrumental in raising awareness about the rich heritage of Kannada-speaking regions and in galvanizing support for linguistic unification.

3. Political Mobilization and Organizational Growth

As the 20th century progressed, the movement for Kannada unification gained momentum, transitioning from cultural advocacy to political activism. Key organizations, including the Kannada Sahithya Parishat (founded in 1915) and the Kannada Ekikarana Sabha (established in 1936), became central to this struggle.

The Karnataka Ekikarana Sabha, initially focused on cultural and linguistic promotion, evolved into a political force advocating for the unification of Kannada-speaking regions. This transition was marked by strategic meetings and conferences, such as the All-Karnataka Writers Conference (1908) and the Karnataka State Political Conference (1920), which mobilized public and political support for the cause.

4. Nationalist Influences and Regional Responses

The anti-partition sentiments in Bengal, particularly the opposition to British policies of divide and rule, had a profound impact on the Kannada unification movement. This period of heightened nationalist consciousness encouraged Kannada speakers to demand a separate state, mirroring similar movements in other linguistic regions of India.

Aluru Venkata Rao's leadership during this period was crucial. His vision for a united Karnataka integrated Kannada-speaking regions from the Bombay, Madras, and Hyderabad states into the Kingdom of Mysore. Rao's calls for unification resonated widely, but the movement faced internal resistance, particularly from Mysore, where there were concerns about resource allocation and the integration of less developed regions.

5. Key Milestones and the Path to Statehood

The journey towards the formation of Karnataka saw several key milestones. The resolution passed at the 1920 Indian National Congress session in Nagpur, advocating for linguistic states, laid the groundwork for future developments. The formation of the Karnataka Ekikarana Sangha and the subsequent advocacy by leaders such as S. Nijalingappa and A.J. Dodmeti were instrumental in pushing the cause forward.

By the 1940s, the demand for a separate Kannada state gained considerable traction. The Karnataka Ekikarana Maha Samithi, established in 1947, played a significant role in advocating for unification. Despite resistance

from some quarters, including concerns about Mysore's resources and regional rivalries, the movement persisted.

On November 1, 1956, the state of Karnataka was officially formed as a result of linguistic reorganization. This new state amalgamated territories from the former Bombay, Hyderabad, Madras, and Mysore states, as well as the princely state of Coorg. This reorganization aimed to address the demands for a unified Kannada-speaking state, though it also highlighted existing regional disparities.

6. Post-Independence Dynamics and Regional Disparities

The formation of Karnataka marked a significant achievement in linguistic and administrative consolidation. However, the integration of diverse regions exposed underlying disparities. The Old Mysore region, with its advanced infrastructure and development, was contrasted with the less developed regions of Mumbai-Karnataka and Hyderabad-Karnataka.

These disparities have continued to influence state politics and development. Issues such as resource allocation and regional development have been sources of contention, as seen in debates over water resources like the Mahadayi and Cauvery rivers. The coastal Karnataka region, with its distinct linguistic and cultural identity, has also faced challenges related to its development and representation.

7. Conclusion

The Kannada unification movement represents a complex interplay of cultural, political, and regional forces. While the formation of Karnataka in 1956 was a significant milestone, the state continues to grapple with issues of regional inequality and development. Understanding the historical context of this movement provides valuable insights into the ongoing challenges and opportunities for Karnataka's diverse population.

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