

**STATE AND SOCIETY IN KARNATAKA :
SHIFTING PATTERNS OF DOMINATION
AND RESPONSE BETWEEN SOCIAL GROUPS**

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Certified that this dissertation entitled "State and Society in Karnataka : Shifting Patterns of Domination and Response between Social Groups", submitted by Mr. M.A. ARUN, is his own work and has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other university. We recommend that this dissertation be presented before the examiners for their consideration for the award of M.Phil Degree.

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Chapter - I

**Introduction: A conceptual Framework for
the study of State, Society and Power
Structures in Karnataka.**

INTRODUCTION : PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

This study makes an attempt to present a political profile of the State and society in Karnataka from the perspective of the power struggle between social groups, particularly the dominant castes and dalits.

Lingayats and Vokkaligas, the two important dominant castes of Karnataka dominate the village level political arena through their concentration of land power, high social status and numerical strength. Dalits are the ex-untouchable castes that overwhelmingly fall into the category of the landless labourers. Given the obvious contradiction of interests between landowners and landless labourers, Lingayats and Vokkaligas have used their domination to prevent dalits from effectively articulating their interests.

The supra-local political structures, viz., state apparatus, patronage, political process etc., have important implications for grass root domination and response. Dominant castes have tended to mobilise to gain control over macro-political structures, which is crucial to reinforce their dominant positions. Though dalits have been generally less successful in the same process, the macro-political structures, provide them opportunities which they lack at grass root level, to gain political strength.

At this backdrop, the following study tries to focus upon: Firstly, the changes in state and society in colonial and post colonial Karnataka and their implications on the power struggle between dominant castes and dalits. The shift from the autocratic state to 'democratic' state and general changes in the rural society and production process in post independent Karnataka due to the introduction of democratic politics and capitalist developmental strategy are covered.

Secondly, the impact of these changes on dominant castes and dalits and how their respective positions are either strengthened or worsened are dealt with. The attempts of the dominant castes and dalits to get organised and mobilise to promote their interests in the context of general changes in state and society are also covered.

It should be noted that no attempt is made to present a comprehensive or exhaustive account of the general changes in state and society in Karnataka and their impact on dominant castes and dalits. Rather, the topic is approached selectively by focusing on particular issues and case studies, which enable some degree of generalisation.

II. A. Theoretical clarification of concepts and Review of Literature:

The term 'power structure' constitutes of two elements 'dominance' and 'response' which are in binary opposition with each other. Domination entails from concentration of

land power, social status and numerical strength¹. The power of the dominant groups is measured in terms of action (their capacity to do things which others cannot do, and to persuade or compel others to act in ways that suit them) or in terms of structure (the impediments to life chances, the actions and aspirations of poorer groups)².

The concept of 'resistance' indicates the class consciousness, organisations and class for itself actions by the dominated groups. The term 'response' is chosen over resistance as it encompasses both class for itself actions and much weaker reactions of the dominated groups.

Domination and response are two inseparable elements of power structures, which constitute the political relationships between social groups. State and society are the arenas in which the power structures operate or the social groups engage in power struggle.

An analytical distinction is made between the concepts state and society. Society refers to the institutions and processes including those related to production that 'lie outside the state'³,. Corollarily, state is not reducible to the social structures and processes. Though exposed to the 'structural constraints' emanating from latter, state is fairly autonomous and can function as a third actor⁴, though not necessarily neutral, in the power struggle between social groups. These positions are drawn from a brief review of literature on state presented below.

II. B. State autonomy and recent theories of state:

After the banishment of the State by the Committee of comparative studies from the American Political science, the gravity of scholarship on state shifted to the European continent. The Neo-Marxist school emphasising the 'relative autonomy' of state to counter the criticisms of crude determinism imputed to Marxism, made basic contributions to the scholarship on the capitalist state.

Miliband⁵ employed an instrumentalist approach to understand the capitalist state by stressing the primacy of the individuals or social forces in charge of the state system. He studied the social background, personal ties and shared values of economic and political elites to show the capitalist inclinations of a relatively autonomous state.

In contrast the structuralist approach of Poulantzas⁶ stresses on the primacy of structures on agents and their intentions.

He derives the form of the capitalist type of state from the nature of capitalist relations and shows how this form both permits and problematises a distinctive political role for the state in organising a balance of forces favourable to capital accumulation. The state is neither directly subordinated to capital nor is it a simple instrument of class forces. But also the state has no power of its own, that is, state power must be analysed as the

power of the social forces which act in and through it. Finally, state as an institutional ensemble is not neutral among these forces but helps to produce a distinctive class biased balance among them.

The neo-Ricardian theorists^{7A,B} in contrast to the political focus of Miliband and Poulantzas are concerned exclusively with the economic dimensions of state. They focus on the influence of state on the distribution of income between classes and on how it intervenes in the economy to maintain corporative profits at the expense of wages. In sum, they argue that though the state is subjected to the contradictory pressures of capital and labour, the dominant position of capital in the state ensures that 'it is the capitalist solution to economic crises that is imposed'.

Bob Jessop⁸ argues that all the neo-marxist theories assume that the class nature of the capitalist state depends entirely on factors external to itself. State subjected to the domination of capitalism functionally reproduces the conditions favourable to it and also its class nature in the process.

In contrast, the recent theorists of state argue that there are distinctive political pressures and processes, which shape the states form and functions and endow it with a real and important autonomy vis-a-vis, all pressures and forces located in civil society.

They reject the Marxist, liberal and the functionalist theories of state which deny autonomous powers to the state and reduce it to pre-existing structures of civil society.

The State theorists identify two dimensions of state: military, international aspects of state and the domestic economic/ideological aspects. They accept that domestic analysis would likely centre upon class relations. As states would be responding to two types of pressures and interest groups, a certain space would be created in which a state elite could maneuver, play off classes against war factions and other states, and gain an area and degree of power autonomy for itself.⁹.

Skocpol¹⁰ identifies two determinants of state organisation: the structure of social classes and the external ordering of the states - their position relative to each other and their overall position in the world. The state addresses to these two basic tasks by a 'set of administrative, policing and military organisations headed, and more or less well coordinated by, an executive authority, for whom resources are extracted from society. These resources supported administrative and coercive organisations are 'the basis of state power as such'. This power can be used with a degree of autonomy against either the dominant classes or against domestic war or peace factions and foreign states.

Mann¹¹ argues that societies need some of their activities regulated over a centralised territory. States derive their autonomy by their unique ability to provide a territorially centralised form of organisation.

Nordlinger¹² identifies state with 'those individuals who occupy offices that authorise them....to make and apply decisions that are binding upon any and all segments of society'. The State is autonomous to the extent it translates its preferences into administrative actions and the state functionaries can adapt specific strategies to increase its autonomy.

The state theorists in their anxiety to stress the autonomy of state make a simple minded separation between state and society. Levine¹³ states that Skocpol never looks behind existing state structures to explore their origins in earlier class conjectures. Hall and Ikenberry¹⁴ argue that the statist overlook the crucial difference between despotic power (the ability state elites to ignore other social actors or to impose their will on society) and infrastructural power (the capacity to work through and with other centres of power). The latter is increasingly important and requires the state to coordinate and guide societal actors as well as its own apparatuses.

Thus a working model of the state has to recognise both its autonomy and the constraints on its exercise. The focus on autonomy leads analysis to the leadership, ideological

and organisational aspects of state and its policy initiative. The focus on structural constraints takes analysis to nature of classes, developmental strategy followed by state etc., which interacts with the autonomous variables in deciding the behaviour of state.

This study employs the concept of state in the framework presented above. For practical utility state is considered as an ensemble of coercive and administrative institutions, formal functionaries, policy decisions and compulsions of class relations. But as the focus of the study is on the power structures between social groups, no attempt is made to provide a complete profile of the state. The treatment of state is largely conjectural and ignores many of its crucial aspects.

III. Evolution of State and Society in Karnataka:

In the evolution of state and society as arenas for power struggle between social groups, two phases viz., colonial and post-colonial can be identified.

The colonial state and society were insulated from other regions of India and hence had certain distinct features. After independence the state and society in Karnataka were integrated with other parts of India and were commonly affected by the national process of state formation and developmental strategies.

A: Evolution of State as a Political arena:

The princely state of Mysore was an autarchy created by British in 1882. It functioned as an independent entity with a distinct interest and tried to resist all attempts by the various social groups to penetrate it. Most of its policies and behaviour were largely an attempt to promote its distinct self interest. Even then the dominant castes were more powerful than the dalits in gaining concessions from it.

In contrast, the post independent Indian state of which Karnataka was a part, was an open political arena accessible for the social forces to penetrate and struggle. It was formally a democratic system whose positions of power could be gained and operationalised through electoral politics based on universal adult franchise. It also possessed a formal ideology to legitimise itself, which committed it to social justice or to protect and advance the interests of the weaker sections of society.

There were two important factors which decided the disposition of state towards power struggle between social groups, viz., the mode of state formation and the capitalist developmental strategy it pursued in a few sectors.

A (i): State Formation and Developmental strategy after 1947:

The Independent Indian state was a legacy of the national movement and congress party which led it. The

congress party to achieve its primary objective of independence sought to create a wide social base by incorporating and aggregating diverse and even contentious social classes into its fold.¹⁵ Its attempt to accommodate various social groups limited its ability to carry out redistributive programmes in favour of the weak and deprived. Frankel finds in Gandhi's theory of trusteeship, and in his emphasis on reconciliation of landlord-peasant and industrialist-labour conflicts, evidences on to why the national movement eschewed redistributive programmes and accommodated cleavages.¹⁶

The Indian state inherited this accommodationist character and had little strength or will to rectify the traditional inequalities in the society. This enabled the traditional dominant elements to sustain their hold even after the introduction of democratic politics.

It further contained many provisions in it to promote a capitalist developmental strategy that would accentuate the existing inequalities.¹⁷ The constitutional and legal frameworks of the State protected the rights of the capitalists. Its mixed economy approach involved it in building infrastructure in support of private capital.¹⁸ The capitalist strategy was more explicit in agriculture. Various writers like Frankel have argued that the Green revolution strategy effected a retreat from socialism.

The democratic politics and the capitalist developmental strategy initiated after Independence brought about a transformation in rural society. While the land owning dominant castes benefited from these changes significantly, the conditions of the landless dalits improved only marginally, if any.

Thus the state political arena evolving in the formal democratic accommodationist capitalist frame work was not neutral in the power struggle between social groups but was favourably inclined towards the stronger of them.

B: Evolution of society as a political arena:

The society in Karnataka has been traditionally described as cohesive as the economic and social disparities in it are relatively less severe. For instance, none of the two dominant castes claim to be twice born, thus reducing the social distance between castes. The state has an overwhelming proportion of small owner cultivators. In 1950s, in the old Mysore region, 65.2 per cent of agricultural labourers possessed some land and derived an average of about one-third of their income from it.¹⁹

During the later part of the 19th century, Manor remarks that marriage networks or the area that could be covered by foot in a day constituted primary political fields. In the same period, society was experiencing the 'artificial construction of the dominant castes' (Chapter two). By early parts of the present century a group of

elites and associations had emerged from all the communities and they had begun a struggle to promote the interests of their members.

After Independence, the rural society experienced many significant changes due to the introduction of democratic politics and later the capitalist developmental strategy in agriculture, particularly after green revolution. The impact of the democratic politics was limited as the traditional dominant elements continued their domination in the new system as well. Penetration of capitalism in agriculture, changed production methods, differentiated classes and brought about a structural transformation in their forms and relations as well. It created new political needs in classes and influenced formations of new organisations to meet them. Power structures or patterns of domination and response too evolved in response to changing contexts, taking on new forms. It is shown below that these processes made a differential impact on the dominant castes and dalits.

B(i): Rural transformation in post Independent India

In 1947, the agrarian structure constituted important social classes like landlords, money lenders, peasantry landless labourers and artisans and craftsmen.²⁰ Majority of land was cultivated under some form of formal or informal tenancy, even formally, area leased in as a percentage of total land was 35.7 percent in 1950-51.²¹ Landlords were

split into two categories absentee landlords and cultivating proprietors were at the apex of the agrarian structure. The peasantry class though differentiated constituted the largest segment at the middle layer of the rural society. They were largely the top tenants of landlords, showed traits of accumulating capital, market orientation etc., and are hence described as 'proto-capitalists',²² Daniel Thorner states that 'the maintenance of a hierarchical structure of interests in the land required reservation of a substantial proportion of the produce to persons who performed no agricultural labour. This gave no incentive to either the cultivating peasants or the owners who were removed from production while benefiting from it to increase the productivity of land, thus creating a built in depressor in agriculture.'²³

In terms of caste the landlords belonged to the 'twice born' varnas and other high castes. The cultivating peasants came from middle castes like Kurmis, Jats, Lingayats, Vokkaligas etc., while landless labourers were drawn from the untouchable castes.

The political weakness of the landlords who had collaborated with British was exploited by the Indian state, which passed the Zamindari Abolition acts and Tenancy acts in the 1950s. These were not intended to benefit the landless but to transfer land to the bigger tenants and rich peasant cultivators who consequently emerged as the

capitalist peasant proprietors and as the most dominant rural segment.

In the mid-1960s due to food crisis, and declining electoral support for the Congress Party the state adapted the New Agrarian or Green Revolution strategy to increase agricultural production. This involved capital intensive and technological advancement measures like Introduction of HYV seeds, tractors, fertilisers etc.,. creation of infrastructure like roads, irrigation etc. These measures had specific targets like irrigated regions and capitalist peasant proprietors which were identified as engines of growth. The agricultural production as a result increased from 0.5 per cent per annum between 1904-50 to 1983-84.²⁴

There are differences among scholars on the overall impact of the capital penetration into the rural society. T.J. Byrce reviews evidences on the structural transformation of the classes brought about by the green revolution particularly on the class in itself and class for itself changes among the rich peasantry and the landless labourers.²⁵ The rich peasantry consolidated as a powerful dominant class, became economically stronger and took on the characteristics of a class of capitalist farmers. The superior resource endowment of the rich peasants.²⁶ easy access to the Institutional Credit²⁷ etc., were behind their consolidation.

Regarding the landless, even writers like Theodore Schultz, David Hopper, John Mellor, Raj Krishna, Inderjit Singh, S. Bhalla and Montek Ahluwalia who reject the immiserisation thesis and support the new agricultural strategy recognise that larger farmers have benefited more than the smaller farmers and tenants, and that improvements in the well being of the rural poor remain marginal at best. Byres argues that poor peasantry are adversely transformed into partial proletariats.²⁸ The poor peasantry has lost an increasing share of the operated area to the rich peasants and thus are increasingly pushed out of self-employment into wage labour. This process is partial as many poor peasants still hold on tenaciously to their small plots.

The structural transformation of the classes have given rise to their distinct political or class-for-itself actions. The political actions of the landless is varied as they are subjected to the determination of context specific structural factors like the level of consciousness, influence of external for example left forces, strength of rich farmers, caste etc., Their political actions are varied from clashes with rich farmers in Gujarat, and Tanjore to being subjected to passive coalitions constructed by the rich farmers as in Maharashtra.

In contrast, the political actions of the rich farmers^{vs} are uniform across the regions, revealing their strength that enables them to override the contextually limiting factors and pursue their structurally formulated

interests. Unlike the landless labourers whose struggles are localised, the rich farmers have emerged as a national political force.

The rich farmers emerged in the national scene in 1970s and largely articulated themselves in the mainstream political parties. This meant that they had to accommodate or compromise with the interests of contending sections like urban bourgeois, rural poor etc.

By 1980s, they had gained sufficient strength intrinsically and also due to the organisational weaknesses of the political parties in rural areas, to 'break compromises and throw up their 'endogenous political formations' to pursue their distinct interests singularly. Militant agitations led by these farmer associations erupted simultaneously in various parts of the country. The thrust of the political action of the rich farmers has been towards fighting the urban bias by fighting for better terms of trade and hegemonising the rural poor to keep the labour market under their control.²⁹ There are wide differences depending upon the structural conditions in the strategies employed by the rich farmers in controlling the rural poor. In Gujarat, the halpati tribal landless labourers are harshly oppressed by them through violence.³⁰ In Punjab, Haryana etc., they have employed debt bondage to sustain precapitalist exploitative relations with the labourers.³¹ In Maharashtra and Karnataka they have sought to a subsume

the landless by imposing a rural coalition on them overriding contradictions.³².

The Maharashtra-Karnataka model of controlling the labour is sophisticated and more effective as it deals with the landless at the level of consciousness without coercion. It deflects their attention from the contradictory nature of their interests and merges them with larger identities and coalitions. Though effective, subsumption does not preempt the use of other strategies of labour control. The importance of the subsumption strategy lies in the fact that it is congruent with the other emerging features of new-agrarians viz., growing education, diversification into urban occupations, mobility etc.

The political implications of the rural transformation are more explicit in the new evolving power structures at the village level.

B(ii): Rural transformation and evolution of new power structures at the micro-level:

The traditional pattern of village domination was ably captured by M.N. Srinivas in his concept of dominant caste, which concentrated ascriptive status, landed power and numerical strength. The introduction of democratic politics did not make any difference either in the dominant political actors or in the sources of power. In contrast, the new agrarians are seeking domination in a different context marked by increasing general political awareness, shift

towards capitalist relations and modes of production, growing differentiation among different rural classes etc. Here domination instead of being merely ascriptive or inherited has to be acquired and reproduced through new strategies.

The new agrarians are resourciful, possess influence, are increasingly educated, entrepreneurial³³ and diversify into urban occupations. Various micro-studies have assessed their features and attitudes and sense the emergence of modern forms of leadership in the rural areas.³⁴

They are best interpreted as rational actors with distinct economic interests. They make use of their faculties to realise their interests, as explicit in their production for market generation of surplus and political organisation.

They are embedded in a social context which is an ensemble of various discrete elements many of which like caste, religion, attached labour etc., are procapitalist or traditional in nature. The new agrarians are found to make instrumental use of these to promote their interests.

Their innovativeness finds an efficient expression in their political organisations viz., the farmers associations. Though these associations have units in villages, they are primarily supra-village networks in terms of concerns and operations and run across regions. They

possess highly mobilised members in formal roles who can achieve instant mobility and concentrate at any point.

Dalits and other backward classes are in contrast localised, lack any of the resource, influence, entrepreneurial and organisational strength of the new agrarians.

The village panchayats and other grass root democratic or communitarian institutions are captured by the new agrarians inevitably. Even when other segments gain them by virtue of their numerical strength, they come under the influence of new agrarians as the true political focus lies with the resources and macro-networks of new agrarians. The backward sections found it difficult to break the alliance between the new agrarians, bureaucrats and politicians. Where the new agrarians fail to control the local institutions, they obstruct their functioning and try to render them defunct.³⁵

The arguments of the preceding sections can be summarised as follows:

- (1) An analytical distinction is made between the state and society in Karnataka. State is seen as an autonomous entity though exposed to the 'structural constraints' from the society.
- (2) Independence marked a shift from an autocratic to democratic state in Karnataka. But the nature of state formation and the developmental strategy followed after

1947 has widened the traditional inequalities in society.

- (3) The transformation in the rural society due to the initiation of democratic politics and penetration of capitalism has benefitted the landed dominant castes at the cost of dalits.

IV These arguments are further explored in the following Chapters:

Chapter two deals with the State and Society in colonial Karnataka. It covers (a) the autocratic princely state in Mysore between 1882 to 1947 and its distributional policy between competing social groups; (b) the emergence of various caste associations and movements that sought to promote the interests of their members. The non-Brahmin movement of dominant castes and dalit movement are comparatively assessed from this perspective.

Chapter three deals with the post Independent Karnataka. The nature of the political process, participation of various groups in it and the distributional policy between competing social groups, emanating from it are covered.

Chapter Four, deals with the mobilisations of dominant castes and dalits to promote their interests in the context of post independent rural transformation. The farmers movement led by landed dominant castes and dalit movements since 1970s are comparatively assessed from this perspective.

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Chapter - II

State, Society and Power structures in Colonial Mysore.

CHAPTER TWO

It was argued in the previous Chapter that the state should be treated as autonomous, though exposed to the 'structural constraints' emanating from the society. Though this position was drawn from the studies on modern capitalist states, it is useful in understanding the nature of state and society in colonial Mysore and the associated power struggle between social groups.

The princely state of Mysore was created in 1882 by the British. It was an autarchy removed from popular politics. If tried to function as an Independent entity, to pursue its distinct interests. But it had to contend with social groups, which with increased political consciousness were trying to penetrate it to draw patronage.

This Chapter deals with:

- (1) The nature of the political system in colonial Mysore, its ideological, organisational and leadership aspects, its distributional and developmental strategies etc.
- (2) The nature of society, emergence of organised social groups and their mobilisations to draw patronage from the state, to promote the interests of their members.

The power struggle between social groups is studied with reference to their organisations and mobilisations to influence or capture supra-local political structures. These mobilisations are intended to strengthen the power

position of the mobilising social groups in relation to other social groups. They aim at gaining certain resources from the supra-local political structures that will strengthen the overall power positions of the group.

The non-Brahmin and dalit movements are studied from this perspective.

I. THE NATURE OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN COLONIAL MYSORE

The political system of Mysore included the bureaucratic machinery, the instrument by which the rulers sought to control affairs within the state level sphere; policies of the authorities in raising and allotting government revenues and the legislature and local self government institutions. This political apparatus was presided over by the Maharaja, the formal Head of the state; Diwan, the Executive Head of bureaucracy and the British Resident who represented the British interests in the state.¹

The nature, functioning and policies of the system were influenced by two important factors viz., the 'Instruments of Transfer', which embodied the extent of power granted by the British to the Mysore Prince and its social base.

Ia. INSTRUMENTS OF TRANSFER OF 1881

The 'Instruments of transfer' transferred very limited powers to the Mysore Prince and created a dependent regime

in Mysore.² For instance the transfer of power was ad-hoc in nature. The British could resume direct control under certain conditions like disorder, non-payment of subsidy, etc., Neither was the transfer hereditary as each succession had to be approved by the British and which would be granted only if the successor did not show a 'manifest unfitness to rule'. The 'Instrument' embodied a unilateral statement from British and there were no negotiations or agreements which granted any legal status to the Maharaja. The Maharaja lobbied incessantly to improve his position and succeeded in signing the Treaty of Mysore in 1913 with the British on the issue. Though the new treaty secured his position and limited British interference, the attempts of the Maharaja to increase his power vis-a-vis British continued and in turn constituted one of the important factors which influenced the nature of functioning of the system.

Ib. SOCIAL BASE OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM.

The Wadeyars of Mysore came from a tiny caste, the Arasus, who numbered less than 1,000 in 1881 and possessed little power apart from that derived from their connection with the Maharaja.³ The Wadeyars did not seek to convert the Arasus into a landed aristocracy as such an attempt would have generated some resentment among the powerful forces on land. Further, in the absence of caste or kinship ties with the dominant groups on land, it was impossible to make staunch loyalists of them. Therefore, the princely authorities exercised great restraint to keep them happy by

limiting the penetration of the state administration into the local centres of power.

The control of the British as a paramount power and the weak social base constituted the limiting external and internal contexts of the system. It separated its interest from that of its contexts and sought to pursue it distinctly through a strategy of cultivation of 'twin discontinuities'⁴ with regard to both of its contexts. In other words, the political system sought to gain strength by insulating itself from the limiting influences from its contexts. Much of its ideological, organisational leadership and policy performance aspects emanated from this objective.

Ideologically the system operationalised two sets of ideas which aimed at creating an autonomous place for itself at the state level. Firstly, it employed a progressive ideology committed to modernise and transform Mysore into a model state, which pre-empted any interference from British or Nationalist Leaders. For instance, a Congress report prepared in 1938 found that the Government was repressing the demand for responsible government made by politically awakened sections. But in general, the report was sympathetic towards the Government and even complimented it for building Mysore as a model state. The princely authorities, to create a progressive image, spent enormously on electrification of cities, industrialisation, public buildings, roads etc.

Secondly, the authorities employed an organic theory of Hindu kinship to separate themselves from the rural masses without alienating them. The Maharaja was projected as a divine character with immense prestige, absolute power and presiding over the masses. This enabled the system to incorporate the masses symbolically while desisting from any administrative or developmental intrusions into their affairs. The seal Committee which went into the question of constitutional development in Mysore in 1923 emphasised on the 'unitary' character of the state under the Maharaja, but simultaneously recognised that 'India had always had intermediary groups between the State and the individual, such as village communities, assemblies, guilds, castes etc. The state, hence, should recognise the actualities of Indian social and rural organisation and not completely assimilate their quasi-Independent character.⁶

Organisationally, the political system was limited to the state level sphere of politics, which in spatial terms, embraced only the urban areas of the state. The authorities were reluctant to build links with the local arenas and therefore, desisted from making any heavy expenditure on the education, medical care and other rural development projects which were directly required by the people.⁷

But no political regime could survive by delinking itself completely from its people. A certain degree of responsiveness was a political necessity, as a Government

dependent on a superior authority, could not afford to appear to be lacking in popular legitimacy.⁸ Caught in paradoxical situation, the government followed a strategy of creating formal institutions of representation, but without delegating any powers to them. Though the representative institutions were established as early as 1881, they remained as mere 'talking shops' without voting rights and under the majority of the Government officials and nominees.⁹

The leadership of the system comprised of three competitive elements viz., the British, Diwan and the Maharaja. The British acted through a resident to promote their commercial and political interests. The second element of the leadership was the office of the Diwan or the actual Executive Head of the State.¹⁰ The initial Diwans were recruited from the bureaucratic segments of the Tamil Brahmins, who without any social base of their own were dependent on British to exercise their power.

The third element was the Maharaja who had to struggle to realise his symbolic powers substantially against the other two actors. To cut the power of the 'Madrassi Brahmins',¹¹ he encouraged the struggle of Mysore Brahmins against them and later non-Brahmins against latter to undermine their influence.¹²

Thus, in spite of its explicit endeavour the system's organisational and leadership aspects provided openings for

the penetration of the social groups which challenged its autonomy incessantly. The contention between the system trying to preserve its autonomy and the various social groups trying to penetrate and control was an important political development before 1947.

Ic. DEVELOPMENTAL STRATEGY AND REDISTRIBUTIONAL POLICY OF THE PRINCELY STATE

The developmental strategy of the princely state was shaped more from its concern to build a progressive image than to meet any genuine needs of the people. Vishweshwarayya tried to give more substance to the developmental policies by starting many heavy industries like Iron and Steel, Hydel Power Generation etc., and economic institutions like Mysore Bank.¹³ Hettne argues that Vishweshwarayya's attempts to establish large scale projects, economic institutions through pioneering role of the state were immature. The reluctance of a merchant community to become modern and the sheer backwardness of Mysore marked by complete lack of indigenous capital, expertise, entrepreneurship and necessary economic foundation, made the social foundations of the government's economic policy extremely weak. Thus it is not only failed to make any impact on the rural life but also was contrary to the articulated demands of the rural people, who were more concerned about gaining education and employment opportunities from the state.

These demands were articulated by various non-Brahmin associations which came up around 1940 to challenge the hold of Brahmins over state bureaucracy. The system responded to these mobilisations more as a measure of political expediency than any genuine concern for social justice. Particularly, the Maharaja sought to control the support of the non-brahmin sections to undercut the influence of the brahmin lobby in administration. Thus the 're-distributive policy' of the state aiming at a wider dispersal of educational and employment opportunities was lacking in substance and ignored the claims of really depressed but politically weaker sections of the society. These issues are elaborately discussed in the following section.

To sum up, the princely Mysore State was a limited political arena for power struggle between social groups, as in its ideological, organisational and policy aspects it tried to insulate itself from the penetration of social groups. But the contention between different elements of its leadership created a limited opening for the social groups to penetrate. Even in the few instances where the state did cultivate the social groups, it favoured the dominant castes whose support was more important than the politically weaker dalits.

II. COLONIAL SOCIETY IN MYSORE ; EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL GROUPS

The economic and social structures in the later part of the 19th century Mysore, contributed to the princely

authorities attempt to cultivate discontinuities between State and local arenas. Land holdings tended to be small and the state had one of the highest proportions of owner-cultivators in the sub-continent. The economic integration of some local arenas with market towns via road and rail had begun to gain momentum only in the 1930s. Social linkages tended to remain congruent with the rather localised economic ties and until the late 1940s, and early 1950s, marriage networks extended no further than a day's walk from home. Until Indian Independence, the most crucial political, economic and social unit for Mysore's landed elite was spatially quite small.¹⁴

The gradual improvements in administration, transportation, communication, education etc., provided opportunities for the social groups to integrate and promote the interests of their members.

The important social groups or castes in Mysore were brahmins (3.6% of total population), lingayats (12.5%), Vokkaligas (20%), Kurubas (7%), Muslims (8%), and two important dalit castes Holeyas and Madigas (16%).

Manor argues that Lingayats and Vokkaligas were artificial categories created by the 1891 census, which for the lack of space clubbed many similar endogamous groups, under common heads.¹⁶ Later those groups similarly situated in society and commonly classified by administration, integrated themselves politically to bargain

with the state and promote the common interests of their members. The dominant castes took lead in forming caste associations to act as their pressure groups. These were followed by other communities as well, gradually.

IIa. THE NON-BRAHMIN MOVEMENT IN MYSORE

The non-Brahmin movement in Mysore was primarily a struggle for state patronage in the form of educational and employment opportunities, launched by the dominant castes. Unlike its counterparts in Tamil Nadu, it was lacking in any cultural significance. It represented an attempt by Lingayats and Vokkaligas to translate their numerical strength and land power into political power.

The 'Mysore Lingayat Education Fund' (MLEFA) established in 1905 and the 'Vokkaliga Sangha' formed in 1906 were two important associations that struggled for the betterment of their members. They worked for the educational advancement and the general betterment of their members by raising funds for scholarships and student hostels. They played an important role in the creation of an educated elite bearing strong identification with the broader categories of lingayats and vokkaligas. They also sought to break the brahmins hold over administration by lobbying for preferential recruitment of their members to the state administration. By 1917, their efforts intensified with the setting up of the Mysore's first political association the 'Praja Mitra Mandali' in which the

lingayat, vokkaliga and Muslim leaders joined hands together under a prominent non-Brahmin leader C.R. Reddy. Under their pressure, the Maharaja appointed the first non-Brahmin Diwan of the State and more importantly a commission under Sir Leslie Miller to 'lay down a definite policy governing the recruitment to subordinate services and also to find out ways and means to provide adequate representation to the backward classes'. Using the literacy in English as the criterion for the identification of forward and backward castes, the Miller Commission listed all the non-brahmin castes as backward without bothering to further differentiate among them.¹⁷ The Commission suggested that within 7 years, non-brahmins should hold at least 50 per cent of the higher appointments and 2/3 of lower appointments.

Though the non-brahmin association succeeded in getting the Commission appointed, they lacked the strength to force its implementation. The Government policy on recruitment continued to be adhoc in nature and a Public Service Commission which was required for making systematic recruitments never came into existence.¹⁸ By 1928, it had become clear that the changes introduced by the Commission were only marginal.¹⁹

The non-brahmin caste associations were purely urban bodies which articulated the demands of the urban middle class. They were led by urban notables who politely

petitioned the authorities and used other moderate loyalist tactics for preferential treatment in education and admission to Civil Services, in the name of the non-brahmin masses. But they possessed neither popular support nor the will to develop it. Whatever little gains they got from government, were distributed not among their advertised mass constituencies, but privately along personal channels of patronage. With their limited strength, they failed to make compulsive demands on government and the non-brahmin movement after its success in 1918 declined.

The second phase of the non-brahmin movement started around 1928 with the emergence of a new generation of non-brahmin leaders. They were more ambitious and did not share the veneration of their predecessors about the princely authorities nor their distrust of the rural folk. They converted the representative assembly from a submissive body by abandoning the moderate tactics of their elders into a forum for airing the grievances to the Government aggressively. They also threatened to build a mass based party to bargain with the authorities on the basis of their strength of the social groups they represented.²⁰

In 1930, they established a new non-brahmin political association called the 'prajapaksha' which rejected the autocratic theories upon which the princely rule was based and demanded a more responsible government'. Some of the members of the Prajapaksha captured the presidencies of

district bodies and used their offices to build links with the local level.

But the impact of these activities were also extremely limited. Though they demanded responsible rule from the government, they were not enthusiastic about adult suffrage or in building a political movement based upon wide popular support. To retain their hold over prajapaksha they refused to enlarge its membership nor to allow the election of the association office holders. But gradually realising that the government would yield only to the pressures of popular politics, they started a new political party called the 'People's Federation' to mobilise rural support., But the Government reacted sharply and tried to repress it by banning many of the activities of the association. This pushed the non-brahmin leaders to join the congress party which had until then remained under brahmins hold. The Congress party strengthened by the inclusion of new forces launched a rigorous struggle against the princely authorities demanding a responsible government.

IIb. THE DALIT MOVEMENT IN PRINCELY MYSORE STATE;

In the pre-Independence period, anti caste anti brahmin Dalit movements occurred in various states like Maharashtra, Punjab, Western Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Coastal Andhra etc., attacking the system of Dalit exploitation at all levels - cultural, economic and political. Dalit movement in Mysore state in contrast, was

weaker and unorganised due to certain reasons like weak leadership, incorporation by mainstream forces, moderate socio-economic hierarchy in society and relatively better position of dalit castes.

Dalit movements have been interpreted in various ways. For example, many marxist scholars and nationalist historians have termed these movements as diversionary as they stood apart from both economic class struggle launched by communists by stressing equally on its social or status dimension and for putting the needs of the oppressed prior to the needs of the national movement. For instance, Bipan Chandra²¹ argues that the 'nationalist movement stood at the centre of the broad democratic revolution in India, while the communal and castist movements formed an alternative stream of politics not nationalist or anti-imperialist but with loyalist pro-colonial tendencies.

Arguing from the perspective of neo Gramscian theorists like Laclau and Mouffe who qualify the revolutionary or progressive struggles as 'over articulating, in a context of general emancipation' Gail Omvedt states that 'the dalit movement, and the overall radical anti-caste movements were a crucial expression of the democratic revolution in India, more consistently democratic....than the elite controlled Indian National Congress'.²²

STATUS OF DALIT CASTES IN MYSORE;

Dalits in Karnataka were relatively better off economically and freer socially compared to other parts of India. The 1891 Census report states that 'though dalits are mainly labourers, many Holeyas and Madigas held the status of landholders and as sub-tenants were found everywhere. It also noted that many were revenue payers as Independent cultivators and that they contributed a total of Rs. 3 lakhs towards land revenue, with holeyas accounting for two-third and madigas for one-third.²³ The 1921 Census listed 35.95% of the Holeyas and 45.13% of the Madigas as cultivators of land .

The Mysore state had undertaken many untouchable upliftment programmes as part of the Gandhian constructive work. Particularly, it had started numerous 'Panchama schools' to spread education among dalits. Hence by 1920s a small educated section of dalits was making a limited entry into the administration.²⁴

DALITS AND THE NON-BRAHMIN MOVEMENT;

The non-brahmin movement ignored the interests of dalits though they had tried to participate in them.²⁵ It remained as a movement of dominant castes and was intended to benefit their members. The dominant caste leaders in the movement spoke on behalf of the non-brahmin masses, claiming to represent all of them and treating non-brahmins as a homogenous category. This put dalits in a disadvantageous

position as they were clubbed together with the more powerful sections and were forced to compete with them.

It was primarily due to the political weakness of dalits that their claims could be ignored (discussed below). Dalits had no representation in the Miller Commission which in turn classified all non-brahmins as backward without further differentiating between them. Dalits failed to get preferential treatment from the government also. They had no representation in the Central recruitment Board' which was established on the recommendations of the Miller Commission to make recruitment for the subordinate services. Many of the government policies made no distinction between dalits and 'other backward classes'. For instance, an important Government order numbered 5771-830-C.R.B. - 5-26-1, dated 10th June, 1927, laid down that in Departments in which representation of backward classes had not reached the prescribed limit of fifty per cent, seventy five per cent of the appointments, to be made should be reserved for the backward classes.²⁶.

It became transparent for the Dalit groups that the changes initiated by the non-brahmin movement had no relevance for dalits. Therefore, they tried to distinguish themselves from the non-brahmin movement and were even apprehensive about it. The Adidravida Abhivridi Sangham feared that the Millers recommendations might benefit other backward classes but not them.²⁷. Later in 1938, in a

statement made before the Srinivas Iyengar Committee on constitutional reforms, Dalit representatives feared that responsible rule in the State would lead to the predominance of certain communities.²⁸.

By 1920s, various Dalit organisations like Adidravida Abhivridi Sangha, Adi Jambhava Sanga, Adi Karnataka Sangha, had come into existence under leaders like Murugesh Pillai, Chikka Hanumanthiah, Cheeniga Ramiah, Gopaldaswamy Aiyer, etc. These organisations tried to organise dalits and articulate their demands through campaigns, conferences, petitions etc. They focussed primarily at promoting the educational and economic rights of dalits. Using representative assemblies as effective forums for articulating their demands, they asked the government to distribute land, start schools for dalits and increase their representation in the services. They also spoke of the ancient greatness of the dalit community and tried to promote a distinct Panchama identity drawing from their own cultural resources.²⁹.

The nature and limitations of the Dalit Movement in Karnataka is best understood in relation to its two important weaknesses:

Firstly, the Dalit Movement in Karnataka was strongly marked by the control of brahmins over it. Brahmins tried to cultivate the Dalit movement as a strategic reaction to the threat of non-brahmins political domination. Hettne

'states that the harijan movement had not been a movement of the harijans, but a movement among caste hindus, primarily brahmins, with Gandhian leanings, who devoted themselves to the upliftment of the depressed classes. The movement had brought harijans within the Congress fold.³⁰ After 1930, Dalit movement came under the explicit control of the Congress party which was jointly commanded by both brahmin and non-brahmin leaders. Karnataka was forefront in the Harijan movement launched by Gandhiji after 1931.³¹ Harijan Sevak Sanghs was established in various centres like Bijapur, Belgaum, Karwar, Mangalore, Coorg and Bellary. They worked actively for the moral and spiritual upliftment of Dalits by creating awareness in them and among upper castes through legal reforms on temple entry issue, land rights etc., organising meetings, campaigns etc.

Gail Omvedt interprets the early brahminical and later Congress hold over the movement as effecting an incorporation of dalits into the folds of brahminical hinduism. For instance, she quotes a dalit representative Doddiah who pleaded in the assembly that 'the government should grant free sites and building material for bhajan mandalis to promote the principles of hindu sanathana dharma and bhakti among adikarnatakas and adidravidas³²".

This was the key difference between dalit movements in other parts of the country which had revolted against a social order usually called brahminical to promote the interests of dalits and in Mysore which had emerged within

the folds of the existing system. The question that arises and is relevant even today, is whether Dalit upliftment is possible within the present social order or only by creating a radical alternative to it? Without fully answering this question, it can be stated that dalit movements have a greater chance of realising their objectives by assuming a radical than moderate form, as evident from its experience in Mysore.

Radical movements can raise defiant issues, mobilise masses raise their consciousness and convert them into a political force while moderate movements may perform less impressively in all these fronts. The brahminical hold over the dalit movement prevented it from raising disruptive issues, acquiring a radical rejectionist ideology and mobilising the masses. The influence of the Congress over the movement reinforced brahminical domination after 1930s. Gail Omvedt argues that the Congress campaign involving bhajans, harikathas, exhortation against drinking alcohol, animal sacrifice etc., were an attempt to sanskritise dalits and a continuation of the strategy of brahminical incorporation.³³ Secondly, the weaknesses of the leadership of the dalit movement fully bear out the impact of the brahminical influence over them.

The dalit leaders represented the first generation of educated dalits, like their politically active non-brahmin counterparts. They modelled their movement on the lines of

non-brahmin movement making same demands and using same tactics to realise them. They reduced the dalit movement primarily into a fight for political patronage in the form of educational and employment preferential opportunities. These issues though crucial particularly for the emerging dalit middle class, were next to irrelevant in addressing to the basic socio-economic exploitation of the toiling dalit masses. They did not raise any basic socio-economic issues like temple entry, land redistribution etc., forcefully, as that would have put them in confrontation with the existing social order. Preferring to work with in the existing order, they adapted loyalist and petitionist strategies and did not make any attempt to mobilise the masses. Thus failing to realise the political strength of dalits, they remained loyal to the princely rule even after Congress had launched a formidable struggle against it.

In short, the dalit leaders in colonial Mysore failed to grasp their historical task. Their movement had an agenda, form and used tactics which was irrelevant to the toiling masses it claimed to represent. There was neither an Ambedkarite (as in Maharashtra) nor a Marxist (as in Andhra) challenge to the Congress hegemony over dalits. Mysore is even taken as a test case to discern the pattern of bourgeois brahmin incorporation of dalits in modern India.³⁴

III. CONCLUSION

The discussion of colonial state and society and associated power struggle between social groups provides a useful background to study the same, in the post Independent period. Certain continuities and discontinuities can be identified between the two periods.

The colonial state was non-intrusive and its developmental strategy made limited impact on the society. In contrast, post Independent state was an open political arena for power struggle between social groups. Its developmental strategy sought to bring about a transformation in rural society.

The colonial state though non-intrusive in society, when it did interact with social groups, it was favourably inclined towards the dominant castes. The nature of state formation further entrenched the power position of dominant castes in the Independent Indian state at the cost of Dalits. The development strategy of independent state, thus, responded to the interests of dominant castes and not of Dalits.

More powerful continuities exist between the two contexts with regard to the abilities of the dominant castes and dalits to get organised and mobilise to promote their interests.

The non-brahmin movement was a success because it articulated the interests of the dominant castes, accurately and milita^{antly} (after 1930s). It represented the attempts of the dominant castes who had economic power in the rural areas to modernise and gain political strength by demanding employment and educational opportunities from the state.

The dalit movement failed to articulate the real interests of toiling dalit masses, which lied in countering their grass-root socio-economic exploitation. It imitated the non-brahmin agenda irrelevant to the large sections of dalits. Also, it remained essentially a moderate force.

In sum, the non-brahmin movement promoted the interests of its members more successfully than the dalit movement. Thus, when the Independence came the dominant castes were prepared to capture the supra-local political structures.

But even the non-brahmin movement was elitist and benefited the upper class members of the dominant castes than the commoners.

Chapter four shows that the social mobilisations by dominant castes and dalits in the post Independence period have generally followed the same pattern. The farmers movement representing the interests of dominant castes have aggressively promoted their interests. While the dalit movement is again found to be lacking in the agenda and political strength.

NOTES

- 1 Manor, James. 1977, 'Political Change in an Indian State' (New Delhi: Monohar) p.11
- 2 Rao, Shama. 1936, 'Modern Mysore: From the Coronation of Chamarajawodeyar in 1868 to the present time'. (Banglore: Higginbothams) pp. 54-67.
- 3 Manor, James, Op. Cit., pp. 10-13
- 4 Manor, James, ibid., pp. 1-27
- 5 Sitaramayya, Pattabhi and Mehta, Balvantray. 1938. 'A Report on the Present Political Situation in Mysore Submitted to All India States Peoples Conference in Karachi, 1939' (Nehru Memorial Museum and Library Collection)
- 6 'Report of the Committee on Constitutional development in Mysore' 1923. Karnataka State Archives, Banglore. Section 1. Chapter 1. Page 2.
- 7 Manor, James, Op Cit., P.16
- 8 Hettne, Bjorn, 1978. 'The Political Economy of Indirect Rule. Mysore 1881-1947.' (London and Malmo: Curzon) pp.365
- 9 For details on nature of development of representative institutions in Colonial Mysore, see, Gowda, Mune, K.S, 1988. 'Development of Karnataka Legislature.' (Mysore: Prasaranga) p.266
- 10 For a brief discussion of rule of different dewans, see, Murthy Srinivas and R. Ramakrishan. 1977. 'A History of Karnataka' (New Delhi: Srichand) pp. 329-340
- 11 For the significant role played by Tamils in diferent sectors of Karnataka, see Narasingarajan, B, 1984. 'Essays on Karnataka'. (Banglore: Mayflower) pp. 65-95
- 12 Hettne, Bjorn, Op. Cit., pp. 72-121

- 13 For a list of Vishweshwarayyas economic Programmes, see, Rao, Shama, Op Cit., pp. 261-270.
- 14 Manor, James, Op Cit., pp. 1197-8
- 15 Hettne, Bjorn, Op Cit., pp. 138-140
- 16 Manor, James, Op Cit., pp. 28-48
- 17 Dushkin, L, 1974. 'The Nonbrahmin Movement in Prinlely Mysore, University of Pennsylvania Phd. Thesis
- 18 Halappa, G.S., 1970. 'History of recruitment in Mysore State' in G.S. Halappa (Ed) 'Studies in Administration' (Dharwar: Karanataka University) pp. 151-161
- 19 Manor, James, Op Cit., pp. 64-65
- 20 Manor, James, Op Cit., pp. 65-72
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- 22 Omvedt, Gail, 1994. Dalits and the Democratic Revolution: Dr. Ambedkar anel the Dalit Movement in Colonial India' (New Delhi: Sage) pp. 348
- 23 Census of India, 1881, Volume XV, Mysore, Part I, Report (Banglore: Government Central Press) pp. 250-53
- 24 Shekar, Chandra, 1983. 'Social Background of Mysore Politics: Some Insights' Kannada. (Banglore: Ankara)
- 25 Hettne, Bjorn, Op Cit., p.146
- 26 Hallappa, G.S, Op Cit., pp. 151-161
- 27 Hettne Bjorn, Op Cit., pp. 108-109.
- 29 Omvedt, Gail, Op Cit.,
- 30 Hettne, Bjorn, Op Cit., p. 341.

- 31 Halappa, G.S, 1966. 'History of the Freedom Movement in Karnataka' Vol. II, (Mysore: Government of Mysore).
- 32 Omvedt, Gail, Op Cit., p. 131.
- 33 Omvedt, Gail, Op Cit., pp. 260-279.
- 34 Omvedt, Gail, Ibid.

Chapter - III

**State and Power structures in Post
Independence Karnataka**

CHAPTER THREE

In the evolution of state structures in Karnataka, the independence of the country in 1947, was a crucial watershed. The state that emerged after Independence differed from that of the colonial state in most of its aspects. The colonial state had functioned as an independent entity, resisting penetrations by its macro and micro contexts. It had developed its ideological, organisational and leadership aspects to serve this primary objective.

The state after Independence, in contrast, was integrated with the macro Indian state and as such was subjected to the national processes of state building and formulation of developmental strategies. Ideologically, it was formally committed to the upliftment of the deprived groups and had constitutionally incorporated many measures like protective discrimination in employment education etc., in their favour. It was democratic and popular in character and as such was an open political arena for the social groups to penetrate it and draw patronage in proportion to their political strength.

It was pointed out in Chapter one that, due to the nature of the process of state formation, the Indian state after Independence was in an implicit alliance with the dominant forces. Hence, its political ability to implement

re-distributional reforms outside its constitutional obligations was limited.

In Karnataka, the dominant castes had launched the non-brahmin movement to draw patronage from the princely state. When their efforts failed, they turned against it and merged with the congress in 1930s, thus entrenching themselves in the power structure of future. Thus, when Independence came, they dominated the new state that was receptive to their influence and controlled the political process. Meenakshi Jain¹ has stated that "By the time of Independence, dominant agricultural castes had displaced the brahmins in the Congress party. Because of their overwhelming superiority over the twice born castes, both in terms of numbers and economic power, the Lingayats and Vokkaligas in Mysore had emerged as new political ~~castes~~^{masters}."

Dalit leaders and organisations in contrast remained loyal to the Maharaja until the end. For two decades after Independence the Congress party and hence State in Karnataka was dominated by the Lingayats and Vokkaligas.

Dalits could assert in the state politics only in 1970s and that too in an alliance with 'the other backward classes', a category which includes most of the castes outside brahmins and dominant castes. Some of these castes like Kurubas approximate to the features of the dominant castes very closely.

This Chapter studies the power struggle between social groups in the context of the Independent state in Karnataka. The focus, among other things, is on the nature of political process, political actors dominating it and the distributional policies emanating from the process. The Encyclopedia of social sciences defines the term 'political process' to refer 'to the activities of the people, in various groups pertaining to the struggle for and use of power to achieve personal and group purposes. It generally appears in the shape of conflicts of political parties, factions, cliques and leaders to attain formal positions of legitimate authority at the various levels of government viz., national, state and local. Thus, political process is taken here as an indicator to study the power struggle between social groups in the context of the evolution of state after independence.

I. Political Process in Karnataka in the post-Independence period:

The political process after Independence can be classified into three phases:

Phase one was marked by the domination of lingayats and Vokkaligas upto late 1960s.

In Phase two, the other backward classes including dalits were organised by Devraj Urs, who mounted a challenge on the dominant castes in 1970s.

In Phase three, since early 1980s, a new model of multi-cornered political process is emerging.

IA. Phase one : Lingayat Raj with Vokkaliga support

The present state of Karnataka was formed in 1956² by joining the four Kannada speaking districts of Bombay, three districts of Hyderabad, one district of Coorg and two districts of Madras to the Mysore state.

The vokkaligas formed about 13%, of the total population of Karnataka and whose strength is concentrated in about seven districts of the old Mysore area, were the dominant group in the former partB of Mysore state. After Independence upto unification of state in 1956 all the three Chief Ministers of old Mysore viz., K.C. Reddy, Kengal Hanumanthiah and Kadidal Munjappa were Vokkaligas.

The Lingayats constituting about 17 per cent of population are concentrated in the districts of Bombay, Karnataka, Hyderabad Karnataka, Madras Karnataka and a couple of peripheral districts of Mysore Karnataka as well.

The other caste groups include brahmins, scheduled castes, Reddis, Kurubas, lambadis, Bants, Namdharis etc.

Many scholars have like Patil-Okalay, wood and Hammond, Manor, Munegowda etc., have analysed how the formation of the expanded Mysore state in 1956 affected the numerical strength and hence the political power balance of the different caste groups.

After 1956, the centre of political gravity shifted to the newly integrated areas of the State.³ In the Part B state of Mysore, the lingayats too had been a political force, but second only to the Vokkaligas. The reorganisation, by bringing in the heavy lingayat districts of Bombay and Hyderabad areas, and Bellary, tilted the political balance in favour of that caste group. For the next 16 years, it enjoyed the political primacy in the state. In the erstwhile Bombay state, the Kannada areas never had more than one cabinet Ministership and a couple of deputy ministerships. From 1956 to 1971, the Bombay and Hyderabad areas together, had around 6 to 8 ministers, a substantial section of whom were lingayats.⁴ After 1956, the Vokkaliga share in the ministership was reduced.

Thus Congress politics in Karnataka between 1956 and 1972 came to be dominated by the two numerically large caste groups of Lingayats and Vokkaligas, with the former having an upper hand. All the four Chief Ministers during this period, Nijalingappa, Jatti, Kanthi and Veerendra Patil belonged to the lingayat caste groups.

In this period the major share of political spoils went to lingayats and vokkaligas. Though these two castes constituted together only about a third of the population of the state, the Congress party could rely upon the leverage which vokkaligas and lingayats derived from land control and key positions in the villages. It also carefully cultivated ties with select leaders of other social groups to be able

to contain the grievances of these excluded and dominated sections of society.⁵

Political relationships in Karnataka can be grasped by applying the patron-client model developed by James Scott⁶, as has been done by Atul Kohli,⁷ explicitly. The leader as patron bestows patronage on his client followers in exchange for their mobilising support for him. Under Lingayat raj, both patrons and clients, came predominantly from the dominant castes, though other caste leaders were selectively co-opted. Even within the dominant castes, political spoils flowed exclusively to their elites and the exclusion of masses from the patronage was the 'great skeleton in the closet of vokkaliga and lingayat raj'.⁸

Thus, the lingayat raj based primarily on patronage networks, which in turn was limited to elites of dominant castes was inherently weak ; Devraj Urs exploited its weakness and demolished it by building a broader ruling coalition by diversifying patronage to the propertied of the non-dominant castes and by operating the patron client mechanism more intensely.

I.B. Phase two: The Urs regime 1972 - 1979.

After the Congress split in 1969 while much of the Congress machinery in the state stayed with Congress (O), Urs joined the Congress (R) under Indira and in 1972 propelled it to power. His regime is credited to have

heralded structural changes in state politics by breaking the power of the traditional communities and building a broader ruling alliance primarily from the deprived groups.⁹

This 'pragmatic progress' increased the representation of the backward castes in legislature and bureaucracy and introduced many reformist programmes in housing, credit, minimum wages, child care etc., for the poor.¹⁰

Kohli has analysed the leadership organisation and ideological aspects of the Urs regime.¹¹ Coming from a minority caste, he had to create organisational support in areas and sections of society outside the dominant caste. Wood and Hammond have argued that 'he accommodated those 'younger leaders' who had been kept out by the Old Congress.¹² His wider organisational base comprised mainly of 'third and fourth level' leaders.¹³ or 'taluk level politicians',¹⁴ from the dominant castes. He made his organisational machinery a crucial mechanism through which he implemented his reformist programmes.

He was also the first Chief Minister of the State to use ideology albeit a populist one as a political strategy to realise his objectives.¹⁵

He tried to shift political focus from caste to class issues which were 'more important' and concerned with 'redistributive justice'. He tried to undermine the legitimacy of dominant caste rule and create an atmosphere conducive for the promotion of rights of lower classes.

Recognising the failure of the trickle down of production, he wanted the state to involve in redistributive programmes to benefit the lower classes.¹⁶ But being a pragmatist he ruled out any radical measures and justified private property. Hence his commitment to the poor was within the framework of existing class structure.

In spite of his ideological proclamations, the strength of Urs' leadership derived primarily from his control over political spoils which included distribution of party tickets in elections, appointments in district, taluk developmental boards and cooperatives etc. He sustained in power, primarily through intense operation of patron-client relationships. As Grover Commission found out the role of money and the distribution of patronage was greater than ever before, in his regime.

Two major weaknesses of the Urs regime emerge out of Kohli's analysis. Firstly, he presided over a machine that remained loyal to him as long as he had the capacity to grease it generously.¹⁶ Secondly, though he incorporated the deprived classes into the state political structure, within his commitment to the poor was not marked by a simultaneous commitment against the propertied classes.¹⁸ The dominant castes though excluded from political power temporarily, remained as a potent force in the civil society waiting to make a come-back (as they did under the Janatha regime) at an opportune moment.

In spite of its limited impact, the Urs regime changed the complexion of state politics, the impact of which formally crystallised in the 1980s. Firstly, in spite of his postures Urs did not introduce any ideological or committed ideological dimension to state politics. He merely intensified the pre-existing pattern of political actors operating primarily for patronage by increasing the stakes.

Secondly, though he failed to institutionalise lower class power in the state, genuinely, he incorporated new political actors 'representing' them in the political process, but without undermining the old ones. Thus politics from 1980s onwards appears as a multi-cornered contest between multiple political actors representing divine sections of the society, ranging from the dominant to deprived. These actors operate without any ideological or organisational barriers, and move between parties freely in search of patronage.

IC. Phase three : Post Urs Phase

Urs left the Congress to form Congress (U) in 1979 and lost Parliamentary election in 1980. After a spate of defections carried Gundu Rao into power, Urs sought to make a common cause with the opposition against the Congress (I). This created a strange alliance between Kranti Ranga under Urs based among the disadvantaged groups and the Janata party dominated by lingayats and vokkaligas. Gundu Rao also

to consolidate his power, tried to cultivate both the dominant caste and backward class legislators together. Thus the clear links which had always existed between major parties and distinct socio-economic bases blurred.¹⁹ in the 1980s.

The 1983 election indicated the resurgence of the lingayats and vokkaligas who together won 96 seats from both Congress and Janatha as compared to 61 seats won by the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes block (SC/ST-OBC)²⁰

In contrast, in 1978 elections the dominant Caste had won 91 seats from both Congress and Janatha, against 144 seats won by the SC/ST-OBC block. It should be noted that in spite of their resurgence, the two dominant castes could not completely dominate the Hegde Government. Though Hegde had to meet the demands of their key leaders, he could cultivate the minority and backward class leaders as counterweights.²¹

The SC/ST-OBC block improved their performance in 1985 election by winning 98 seats from both the parties, while the dominant castes maintained a negligible margin by winning 104 seats. The dominant castes improved their position within the Janatha party, from 53 seats in 1983 to 83 seats in 1985 elections. The impressive performance of the SC/ST-OBC block was due to their improvement in the Congress, from 28 to 53 seats in 1983 and 1985 elections.²²

But the Congress, reading that dominant caste support was crucial in winning elections, elevated Veerendra Patil to the Presidentship of the Pradesh Congress Committee. This, coupled with the fact that Hegde was succeeded by two lingayat Chief ministers Bommai and Veerendra Patil brought back anticipations of another round of lingayat domination. These expectations were fast belied as Veerendra Patil was succeeded by two backward class Chief Ministers - Bangarappa and Veerappa Moiley.

To sum up firstly, a dominant caste resurgence has taken place in the 1980s. But they have had to contend with new political actors, as a result of which, politics has become a multi-cornered contest, in which no political actor appears to have any overwhelming advantage or disadvantage over others. The backward class leaders may have an added advantage viz., the 'due to the 'legitimacy' inherent in their claim of representing the depressed sections. It was for the legitimacy factor perhaps or their plain political strength, the Congress Party chose Bangarappa and Moily over the claims of dominant caste leaders. But in the existing circumstances no backward class leader can be expected to effect a radical change in the complexion of the regime. All one can expect from them is either to cut down the flow of patronage for the dominant castes as Bangarappa did or acquiesce to them by sustaining it as Moily appears to be doing. This is because there appears to be a limit beyond which any social group cannot be alienated. Manor links the

rise of BJP in Karnataka to the alienation of dominant caste by the Congress and Janatha, due to which they have turned towards BJP.²³

The multi-cornered intense contest for patronage without any ideological or organisational barriers appears to be the cause of instability that has rocked the state politics of late. After the shuffling between the parties was shut down by the anti-defection act, political actors had to find patronage within their parties. This appears to be behind the violent explosions of dissident activities in all the parties in the recent years.

II. State Political Process and Policy distribution

It was shown that the State in post-Independent period has been an open political arena for power struggle between social groups. Different political actors have entered political process overtime and operated in it competing for patronage.

This section looks into the state policy on distributing resources between competing social groups, as shaped by the nature of the political process. A brief case study of the State policy of reservation of employment and educational opportunities between various social groups is undertaken, for this purpose.

The Constitution has provided for the reservation of scheduled castes, tribes and other backward classes (OBCs),

unlike the SC/ST castes, which are listed by the Constitution, the determination of OBCs is subjected to the political strength of different communities.²⁴

The first Committee to look into the issue of reservations after Independence was the Nagana Gowda Committee, which submitted its report in 1961. The Committee made a radical recommendation of removing the Lingayats from the list of the backward classes. But the Lingayats saw to it that the government modified the report and re-included them among the backward classes.

Urs used the reservation policy as a tool to strengthen the deprived groups against the dominant castes in politics. He appointed the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission in 1972 (KBCC-1), which submitted its report in 1975. It recommended the exclusion of lingayats from the list of beneficiaries of protective discrimination while it retained benefits for the vokkaligas and classified the OBCs into three groups - backward community, backward caste and backward tribe. For the latter three, the distribution of reservations was recommended at 16, 10 and 6 percent respectively.

Urs though compromised with many recommendations of Havnur for political expediency, managed to implement his most radical recommendation viz., the exclusion of lingayats from the beneficiaries list.

The lingayats went to the Supreme Court against the Report (Vasantha Kumar Vs. State of Karnataka) and in the arguments to the petition the state government committed itself to appointing a Commission to examine the question of listing beneficiaries for reservation.²⁵

The Janatha Government appointed the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission II (KBCC-II) under the Chairmanship of T. Venkataswamy which submitted its report in 1986. It divided the OBCs into two groups, A and B, communities, each with reservation benefits of 14 and 13 per cent respectively. The report significantly excluded both lingayats and vokkaligas from the list of OBCs. The dominant castes reacted by launching a violent agitation against the recommendations of the report.

The State Government withdrew the report and formulated an adhoc list of OBCs until a new Commission examined the question. The adhoc list classified the beneficiaries into 5 groups, which covered both lingayats and vokkaligas.

The Third Karnataka Backward Classes Commission headed by Justice O. Chinnappa Reddy has met with the same fate. The Chinnappa Reddy Commission determined backwardness in terms of economic, cultural and social deprivation; that is, poverty, low-level of literacy and inferior status and treatment. Applying this formulation, it excluded both the dominant castes from the list of beneficiaries. Though the approach of the Reddy Commission has been appreciated as

'scientific' and 'rational',²⁶, the implementing orders of the Moiley government made drastic modifications in it and significantly failed to delete lingayats and vokkaligas from beneficiaries list as recommended.

To sum up, policy of preferential discrimination is generally seen as a crucial instrument in realising social justice. But in Karnataka as Prof. Upendra Baxi has argued, the politics of preferential discrimination for the socially and educationally backward classes have in effect become "pockets of caste privileges."²⁷ The two dominant castes, in spite of persistent attempts to delete them, have been the prime beneficiaries of reservation.

This reveals the limitation of political process as a source of radical redistributational reforms as well.

III. CONCLUSION

The post-Independent state was accessible to the social groups attempts to draw patronage from it. But due to the nature of state formation, it was favourably inclined towards the dominant forces. By the time of Independence, the dominant castes had entrenched themselves in the Congress Party and were able to dominate political process for two decades after independence. The dominant caste political actors operated primarily to garner patronage and were bereft of any ideological and organisational imperatives. The flow of patronage too was largely restricted to the elite members of these castes.

The backward class movement under Urs exploited the weaknesses of the dominant caste regimes and removed them from political power. But their domination in the civil society was left unchallenged. Also, Urs failed to introduce any lasting ideological or organisational dimensions to state political process.

Thus, the backward class coalition built by Urs collapsed in his own life time, allowing the resurgence of the dominant castes in the political process. But they could not regain the almost monopolistic position they had held previously and had to contend with the new political factors introduced by Urs into the political process. Due to this, in the post-Urs phase, political process is emerging as a multi-cornered contest between political actors operating primarily for patronage.

But the backward class leaders have failed to achieve an ideological and organisational unity against the dominant castes. This has allowed the dominant castes to sustain their overall dominant position in spite of the entrance of new interests into the political process.

As the case study of the policy of preferential discrimination illustrated the dominant castes have been able to thwart any attempt to undermine their dominant position.

To sum up, the state in the post independent Karnataka from the perspective of the power struggle between social groups:

- (1) Political process and hence the state has been reduced to a mere struggle for patronage between multiple political actors representing a diverse section of social groups. In spite of the multiplicity of actors, the dominant castes has been able to sustain their overall dominance by successfully countering any challenge to it.
- (2) It was argued in Chapter one that the support of state was sought by different social groups as it had implications on the grass root power struggle. Of late, certain developments in the state and societal processes may force a revision in this statement.
 - (a) In the multi-cornered patronage based political process it is difficult for any social group to gain a long term control over the state. In contrast with the earlier implicit alliance between the state and dominant forces, the dominant castes have been able to retain their position in the new context, more from their relative strength and lack of unity among the opposing forces, than from any predetermined favourable disposition of state towards them.
 - (b) More importantly, the grass root changes in the society has thrown up organisations with unprecedented resources and organisational strength. (Rich farmers

association, See Chapter 4). These new organisations comprise of a supra-local political network that runs almost parallel to the state. The thrust of these organisations is towards taking an anti-State position. They have tended to bargain with it on the strength of their position on specific issues than to select its overall support. Sharad Joshi is most explicit when he calls for the rolling back the state from the rural society and getting the prices right. This indicates the confidence of these organisations in their own strength.

In contrast, the dalit organisations without the matching resources or organisational strength still require the state support. But as due to the nature of political process, it is not forthcoming, much of their political success lies in building their own supra-local political structures.

These issues are further explored in the next Chapter.

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Chapter - IV

**Society and Power structures In Post
Independence in Karnataka**

CHAPTER IV

This chapter makes a comparative assessment of the farmers movement led by dominant castes and dalit movement in the context of the general changes in the state and society in Karnataka after Independence.

It was mentioned in Chapter one that the behaviour of the supralocal political structures has implications on grass root dominance and responses. But certain changes that have occurred in the state and society might force a reformulation of this position.

It was argued in chapter three that the political process in Karnataka has shifted from the earlier pattern of monopolistic hold exercised by the dominant castes to a multicornered contest between political actors representing diverse social interests. The dominant castes have been able to maintain their overall dominant position more by their relative strength and lack of ideological and organisational unity among the backward class leaders than by an predetermined disposition of state towards them, as it was in the initial phase after independence.

The political process has been reduced to a merely an arena where different political actors are operating for

patronage and hence its ability to intervene in the grassroots processes of domination and response may have declined.

The declining relevance of state is more due to certain important grassroots changes that have taken place since independence and in bringing about which the state had played a major role.

In the 1960s to boost up agricultural production, the state entered into an implicit alliance with the rich farmers in the irrigated regions of the country. Identifying them as 'engines of growth', the state under the green revolution strategy provided them with modern inputs and other conditions for capitalist farming. These farmers have gradually harnessed enormous economic resources and political strength to emerge as a major structural constraint on state action regarding the rural society. Unlike the earlier pressure groups that sought state support, their position is distinctly antistatist. They see all state intervention in rural society as actions to extract surplus from rural society and hence demand the state's withdrawal from all activities pertaining to the rural society including that of making public investments.¹ They argue that farmers can meet all their investment needs if the only state allows them to get remunerative prices.

Sharad Joshi² welcomes the breakdown of license raj, trade restrictions and subsidies. He justifies his antistatism and free marketism by arguing that the Indian primary produce is generally in a position of comparative advantage in the international market despite fragmentation of land, low capital formation and sustained state repression. The rich farmers have rejected mainstream political parties, formed their own political organisations and launched effective movements promote their interests.

The experience of the dalit landless labourers in the process of capitalist rural transformation has been different. Their interests are in contradiction with the attempts of the rich farmers to hegemonise the rural society and control the labour market. Without the matching economic and political resources of the new agrarians their organisations and movements have been generally weak.

This chapter, in this background, looks into the rural transformation in Karnataka and its differential impact on land owning dominant castes and dalit labourers. The focus is on the organisations and movements of these communities, which are trying to promote their interests in the wake of the rural transformation.

I Agrarian Structure and Rural Transformation in Karnataka

Historically, the agrarian structure in Karnataka has shown strong intraregional variations. But certain similarities, like the existence of ryotwari land revenue system,³ predominance of small sized owner cultivators can be discerned between these regions.

The 1971⁴ census shows that the largest concentration of land was in the holding size between 1 to 5 hectares (52%) which covered an area of 38%. The large holdings were proportionately less in Karnataka than elsewhere in India. The average area of holdings 10 hectares and above was 16.43 hectares in Karnataka while it was 18.10 hectares for India as a whole.

The various land reforms have transferred land from absentee landlords to their tenants, while the distribution of land to the landless labourers has been marginal. The proportion of land under tenancy in Karnataka has been less than the total holdings covering 7.4 per cent of the total cultivated area, was under tenancy, as against the corresponding figures of 7.9 per cent and 8.5 per cent respectively, for the whole of India.

Thus the ideal pattern of land holdings in the form of large proportion self cultivated medium to large sized

holdings, which was essential for the successful implementation of green revolution strategy has existed in Karnataka.

Nadkarni⁵ has argued that only holdings greater than 5 acres (arrived at clubbing both irrigated and unirrigated areas) can generate marketable surplus, which is crucial in participating in the capitalist agriculture. He then shows that Karnataka has more area under holdings producing marketable surplus than rest of the country.

Given these ideal conditions green revolution strategy has made its impact on Karnataka.

For example the area under the High Yielding variety increased tremendously from 5.3 lakh hectares to 24 lakh hectares between 1970-71 to 1980-81.

As elsewhere the green revolution has made differential impact on regions, crops and segments of population.

Irrigated districts like Shimoga with 8.25 per cent of net irrigated area of state, Belgaum (11.77 per cent), Mandya (6 per cent) Mysore (6.15 per cent) Raichur (8.42 per cent) Dharwad (5.90 per cent) have been the prime beneficiaries of green revolution. Rice, sugarcane, cotton etc. are among the important crops promoted by the new technology.⁶

The rural transformation brought about by the green revolution is more explicit in the differential impact it has made on the landed dominant castes and landless dalit labourers.

IA. Dominant Castes and Capitalist Rural Transformation

Different regions of the country including Karnataka have undergone similar comparative experiences regarding capitalist rural transformation, differentiation of classes and distinct political actions associated with them.

In Karnataka as elsewhere, dominant peasantry is drawn essentially from the dominant castes viz., lingayats and vokkaligas.⁷ Members of these middle level castes before independence either held land independently or were top tenants of absentee landlords who were mostly brahmins. They have benefited from the various level reform programmes which have usually targeted the tenants and not the landless labourers as beneficiaries.

The middle and large sized self cultivating farmers of these castes were targeted by the green revolution, as a result of which they emerged as the new agrarians. They improved their production methods and produced marketable

surplus, produced distinctly for markets and hired labour. They came to command enormous resources, some of which was entrepreneurially invested in the urban sector.⁸

Diversification of occupation⁹ and even residence into the urban areas has been a distinct feature of new agrarians. They are increasingly educated, as many of the recent case studies show that the largest block of the grassroots political leaders usually come from the category that has education between 10th standard to graduation. They have attitudes, behaviour etc., that correspond to their education and resources and many of these case studies^{10 a,b} conclude that a modern form of leadership is emerging in the rural areas. The new agrarians, in sum, are acquiring features comparable to the urban middle class.

The new agrarians have emerged as a national social class with distinct political needs.¹¹ Their interests are in contradiction with the urban sector over the issue of prices and with the agricultural labourers over the issue of wages. Until 1980s this class was still in its formative period and had to articulate itself through mainstream political parties making all the compromises or accommodating with interests that diverge from them. But after 1980s partly due to their increased strength and partly due to the organisational weakness of the mainstream

political parties they have thrown up their own 'Endogenous Political Formations in the form of various farmers associations, which singularly pursue their interests and against the antagonistic sections.

These associations are trying to build a large coalition including all sections of rural society and directing it on a struggle against urban bias.¹²

The strength of the new agrarians is growing with the increasing spread of the green revolution. According to C.H. Hanumantha Rao,¹³ the improved production performance of Indian agriculture during the 1980s as compared to the green revolution era of the 1960s, is due to increased use of fertilizer and the spread of new technology to new areas. This has considerably reduced regional imbalances. Further, the diffusion process has reduced the gap between small and large farmers in the adoption of new technology.

The trajectory of development of new agrarianism in Karnataka is similar to the over all development of the same at the national level. But certain peculiarities or distinct features can be discerned in the New Agrarianism in Karnataka, though an empirical comparative study of New Agrarianism in different regions is yet to be attempted. It can be deduced from certain factors that the new agrarians in Karnataka are weaker than their counterparts elsewhere,

for example in Maharashtra and Gujarat. For instance, the new agrarians in Karnataka do not seem to share the confidence of their counterparts in Maharashtra regarding the globalization of agriculture and participation in the international market. This is evident in their opposition to the Dunkel draft and entry of multinationals in agriculture.¹⁴

**IB. Political Action of New Agrarians in Karnataka:
Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sanga**

The Karnataka rich peasantry had emerged within the spheres of the colonial and the princely Mysore state.¹⁵ They had behind them a chequered history of peasant uprisings in Karnataka. These were sporadic, localised, caste oriented and weak. In contrast, the farmers movement in the 1980s were marked by a distinct political consciousness, spontaneity and integrativeness. It is qualitatively different and was caused due to the development of capitalist mode of production.¹⁶ Its political objectives are also different. Importantly it is fighting against the 'urban bias' and seeking to hegemonise the rural society and control the labour market.

The political action of the new agrarians first became evident in 1980. In July of that year, a militant movement of peasants in the Malaprabha irrigation project in north

Karnataka against the Gundu Rao government in imposition of a betterment levy, exorbitant water taxes and irrigation less was met by heavy police repression resulting in five deaths.¹⁷

It elicited the support of the local associations in Shimoga, Hassan, Belgaum etc. all of which came together, formed a state level Coordination Committee and submitted a memorandum with 19 demands to the government. The Committee signified the emergence of the 'Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sanga' (K.R.R.S.) and the memorandum, the issues on which it would launch its future struggles.

The memorandum demanded the formulation of a scientific agricultural policy based on man hours spent, rural bias in planned expenditure, crop insurance, waiving of loans, treatment of agriculture as industry etc. Of 19, only 2 demands mentioned agricultural labourers. The first demand simply stated that the agricultural labourers should be given wages at par with the industrial workers. The second one demanded the government to provide free educational, housing and medical facilities to the labourers and transfer its land to the raithas.¹⁸

Since then, the K.R.R.S. has mobilised farmers, campaigned and launched agitations around these general and

certain specific issues. The important agitations launched by the K.R.R.S. are :

- 1) opposing the recover, attachment of property - no tax agitation.
- 2) Agitations for gram swaraj
- 3) Agitations for remunerative prices and arrear issues.
- 4) Agitations for political purposes.
- 5) Anti-Dunkel Agitation.

How has the farmers movement sought to protect and promote the interests of dominant castes or new agrarians?

Firstly, it has crystallized the political strength of the landed sections of these castes. The constant agitations, campaigns launched by K.R.R.S. has made the government sensitive to the demands of the rich farmers. K.R.R.S. has further acted as a skillful negotiator bargaining favourable actions by the government to meet various needs of the rich farmers in prices, investment, loans etc. The K.R.R.S. has acquired the form of a professional trade union which makes its arguments on 'scientific calculations' on production, expenditure, remuneration aspects in agriculture. In spite of its severe anti-government rhetoric it has shown pragmatism in its interactions with government by making compromises and being flexible. For instance while negotiating with the government

on its memorandum of demands in 1980 out of 19 demands it classified only 3 viz., 'scrapping of loans, land revenue, betterment levy' as primary demands, which required immediate settlement.

Secondly, the farmers associations have also served as useful institutions for the rich peasantry to control the labour market. While the rich peasantry has most commonly reacted violently to the assertiveness of landless dalit labourers, there is evidence to state that, their associations are working towards the same objective but through more sophisticated means.

These associations, as evident in the approach of K.R.R.S. are trying to build a rural coalition encompassing all segments including the landless. Basic to this is their attempt to erase all contradictions with in the coalition, by arguing that all rural segments share a common interest. While all producers including even the petty ones share a common interest in gaining remunerative prices the landless as wage earners and not consumers are adversely affected from it. Though K.R.R.S. has argued that high prices will trickle as high wages, this has occurred nowhere in spite of rises in prices.

Behind the political action of the new agrarians with

regard to state and the landless labourers lies their organisational strength and mobilisational strategies.

They have built elaborate organisational network linking the villages horizontally across the regions and vertically with different levels moving upwards viz., Hobli, taluk, district, state etc. The organisation consists of functionaries in formal roles. Though there are provisions for democratic elections to select the functionaries they are usually appointed from above, indicating the centralisation of power at the top leadership. The members of the organisation are highly mobilised and can concentrate at any point quickly, at the direction of the leadership.

The K.R.R.S has employed Gandhian ideology and mobilisational strategy, stressing on class collaboration, swadeshi, nonviolence etc.

It identifies government and the urban sector as 'enemies' external to the villages and tries to mobilise all rural masses against it. It is trying to create a homogenous village community on various symbols like green caps, self respect of villagers etc.

Its local units try to encompass the whole village and control all aspects of its life. It has put green boards outside the villages prohibiting the entry of officials

without the permission of its leaders. It is trying to emerge as the only medium through which villagers can interact with the external world.¹⁹

To sum up, in the process of capitalist rural transformation the dominant castes have emerged as the prime beneficiaries. They have amassed economic surplus and political influence that enable them to deal with both the state and other sectors of the rural society effectively. and purs up their their interests.

IIA. Capitalist agrarian development and the landless labourers

There is no unanimity among scholars on the prospects for the landless who constitute the major portion of dalits under new agrarianism. Gail Omvedt²⁰ and others have recently argued that all the diverse sections of the rural society including the landless have uniform interest due to their common participation in petty commodity production. Thus they include even the landless as one of the beneficiaries of new agrarianism. Many other scholars like Kalpan Bardhana, Byres, Brass etc., have argued that the landless as wage earners have a divergent interest from that of producers. No detailed case studies have been done on the status of landless under new conditions in Karnataka, as Breman²¹ has attempted in Gujarat. Nadkarni²² argues that

rural labour households with land increased by 78% in Karnataka between 1950-51 to 1970-71 as compared to the all India increase of 56% thus hinting at a marginalisation process affecting the lower classes. Thus new agrarianism do not appear to be an unmixed blessing for the lower classes particularly dalit landless labourers.

Here it is assumed that the landless labourers have specific divergent interests of their own (say wages) and the strength of their political activities in pursuing it, is analysed, below.

II B Political Action of Dalits in Karnataka; Dalit Organisations and Movement :

During field work the researcher covered a few grassroot or village level dalit organisations²² of Mysore district, that appear to have emerged due to the structural changes, however marginal, among the rural dalits. The formation of the 'Ambedkar Sangas' is positively correlated with a few variables like numerical strength, spread of education, improved economic prospects, etc. of dalits. In many organisations employed professionals or government officials particularly teachers were found to be active. Where these conditions are not prevalent, dalit organisations cannot be formed overcoming the hostility of dominant castes.²³

The activities of these organisations are varied: they range from providing a meeting place for the youth to gather, organising ceremonies around dalit symbols like Ambedkar, to conducting positive programmes like antiliqour campaign, promoting education, etc. The overall thrust of even the most active organisations is towards issues linked to improve the status of dalits, demanded by virtue of improving education, economic positions of 'dalits' (It has been mentioned that quite a few of the activists are employed professionals). The inability to articulate structural interests of dalits on wages, claims over common properties, etc. owes more to the weaknesses of these organisations than the nature of their leadership. Their resource base is scanty and their organisations are rigidly localised in contrast with the surplus generating dominant castes who have built macro political networks. For instance, it was found that the dalits of the village Allattur reported that they are quite contented with their landlords and wanted to keep aloof from the dalit organisation in a neighbouring village Hosakote which was seen as creating disturbances.

But the influence of these associations are not to be underestimated. The lingayat Patel of the Allattur village stated that the number of the dalit organisations in different villages and their 'mischiefs' were both

increasing, affecting even some dalits of his village.²⁴

The relationship between dominant and dalit castes is an ensemble of many elements - social, economic, normative, etc. which cannot be practically separated from each other. The challenge mounted in one of the elements makes an impact on others as well and more importantly signify the overall challenge mounted by dalits on the dominant castes. This explains extreme violent reaction by dominant castes even to the trivial issues raised by dalits. Social scientists commonly trace the dominant caste-dalit clashes to economic contradictions but in actual conflict situations these may or may not be expressed immediately. More important in grasping the clashes, is the overarching changes in all the elements of the ensemble that provides an immensely provocative background to fight out the immediate issues.

Thus even the minor demands made by the dalit organisations are perceived as major threats by dominant castes. The dalit organisations comprising only of local initiatives do not have adequate strength to defend themselves against the attacks by dominant castes.

Hence inputs from a regional or state level political force is crucial to strengthen and integrate them. The

potential of the macrolevel dalit movement in meeting this need, is analysed below.

II B(ii) Dalit Movement in Post Independence Period:

There were two important factors behind the emergence of dalit movement in Karnataka : Firstly the early development that had taken place largely due to the policies of princely regime and dalit pressure groups before independence had created an important segment of urban middle class among dalits. The leadership for the dalit movement came from this class. Secondly, the operation of democratic-electoral politics had enabled the dalits to sense the political potential inherent in their numerical strength. The backward class movement under Urs provided them a conducive atmosphere to realise their potential.

Dalit movement formally began in the early 1970s with the formation of 'Dalit Sangarsha Samithi'(D.S.S.) by prominent writers, intellectuals, academics from both dalit and non dalit castes at the backdrop of the Basavalingappa controversy.²⁵ DSS provided the organisational nucleus for the dalit movement.

Two important phases can be identified in the dalit movement :

In the first phase between early 1970s and early 1980s the struggle launched by DSS was primarily cultural. It organised numerous cultural troops which toured the villages and towns performing plays, songs, dances, etc., to create awareness among dalits.²⁶

Dalit writers created a new school of writing called Bandaya Sahitya (Rebel literature) that articulated dalit experiences and anguish. These activities fought dalit inhibitions, disorganisation and provoked their consciousness.

In the 1980s D.S.S. made a controversial decision of joining electoral politics and ironically aligned itself with the Janatha Party dominated by lingayats and Vokkaligas. Devanur Mahadeva a highly acclaimed Kannada writer and Convenor of D.S.S. argued that dalits should use parliamentary democracy to gain political power due to their numerical strength.²⁷

But political issues and spoils accentuated the already existing divisions within the movement and forced many splits fragmenting the movement. This is generally perceived as the decline of the movement.²⁸

The nature and limitations of the dalit movement can be grasped through an analysis of its leadership, ideological

and organisational aspects.

The leadership of the movement primarily comprised of artists, writers and intellectuals. These leaders were more 'emotional' than 'intellectual'; while their talents accounted for the success of the movement in cultural sphere their inabilities caused its failure in politics.²⁹ They were unable to give concrete programmes and take pragmatic decisions. Their political experience made them vulnerable to mainstream politicians who easily manipulated them and ³⁰

The most serious lacuna of the leadership which extremely limited the organisational base of D.S.S. was their failure to develop an agenda relevant to the toiling dalit masses. The problem of the landless, dalit women etc. were hardly utilised as issues for struggle.³⁰ Their grassroots political activity was mostly in the form of adhoc reactions to atrocities on dalits. Dalit leaders made no attempt either to build a programme or organisation for rural masses due to which it lacked any rural organisational base and was confined to urban pockets. It failed to build linkages with grass root dalit organisations that emerged through independent local initiatives.

The ideology of DSS had elements of Ambedkarism, Marxism and Gandhism. Most importantly it was noted by an

idealistic vision and objectives that failed to give movement a sharp focus. For example, it defined the term 'dalit' to refer to the poor and deprived of all Castes and religions. It sought to mobilise a class than a caste of dalits to restructure the society radically.³¹

In accordance with its broad ideology it took up many issues pertaining to non-dalit castes and struggled for them.

The splinter groups of D.S.S. attribute its failure to its loose ideological hold. They have, accordingly, narrowed down the definition of dalits and use it to denote only ex-untouchable castes.

III Conclusion

The Capitalist rural transformation has brought about structural changes in the dominant castes. They have emerged as a distinct social class of Capitalist farmers with enormous resources and influence. Their political organisations structured into an elaborate regional network is encompassing the whole village at the local level. They have used their organisational strength and ideology to create a homogenous village community under their leadership. They are projecting their interests, that is essentially of Capitalist producers as the interest of the

whole village and using their power to hegemonise other sections to accept it.

Though a continuity of interests exist between all producers from big to the petty ones, the interests of the landless labourers as wage earners and net consumers is divergent.

An empirical study of the impact of the new agrarianism on the landless labourers is yet to be attempted. At present, the structural weakness of the dalit landless labourers can only be deduced from their feeble political actions.

The grass root dalit organisations are localised, spontaneous and sporadic. The interlinkages between the macro dalit movement and grass root organisations are weak. In sum, there is intense disparity between the resource base and organisational strength of dalits and dominant Castes.

As in the earlier nonbrahmin movement in colonial Mysore the dominant castes have been able to articulate their interests more successfully than dalits in the post independent farmers movement. The changes in the rural society has not only benefited them, they have also shown a resilience in adapting to it and promoting their interests aggressively.

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17. For a detailed account of farmers movement in Karnataka see, Nadkarni, M.V., 1987, Op. Cit.
18. Assadi, Muzzaffar, 1991, Op. Cit.
19. Ibid.,
20. Bremen, Jan, 1993, 'Beyond Patronage and Exploitation', (New Delhi: Oxford University).
21. Nadkarni, 1987, Op. Cit., pp. 38-40.
22. Villages Visited are Allattur, Hosakote, Badanavalu, Sargur, Jwalalli, belonging to the Nanjangud and H.D.Kote Taluqs of Mysore district.
23. Govindiah, Former editor of 'Panchama' Journal, interviewed on February 21st, 1994.
24. Doreswamy Patel, interviewed on March 2nd, 1994.
25. For a discussion on the Role of the Basavalingappa episode in the dalit movement, see. Shetty, Rajashekar, 1978, 'Dalit Movement in Karnataka', (Bangalore: C.I.S.R.S.), pp. 20-56.
26. Harakumar, Convener of Samatha Sainika Dala, interviewed on March 7th 1994.
27. Ramalingam, Close associate of Devanur Mahadeva former Convener of D.S.S., interviewed on March 5th 1994.
28. Prof. E. Ramachandre Gowda, University of Mysore, Farmer and Dalit Activist, Interviewed on February 22nd, 1994.
29. Dr. Lakshminarayana, of Indian People's Front and Dalit Activist, Interviewed on 29th February, 1994.
30. Ibid.,p

Chapter - V

**Conclusion: State, Society and Power Structures
in Karnataka: Shifting Patterns.**

CONCLUSION

This study has dealt with three important variables, viz., state, society and power structures and the inter relationships between them.

The focus of the study is on 'power structures' which are treated as dependent variables. State and society are treated as independent variables which provide the context for power structures to operate. The changes in the independent variables bring about changes in the dependent variables.

The power structures have two important dimensions: Firstly, it involves the relationships of dominance and response between social groups. Secondly, these relationships are located in concrete situations or grass root conditions where they actually lie. Here, some groups try to control the common resources, behaviours of other groups etc., to establish their dominance, in realising which, their interest lies. The other social groups respond to counter it and their interests lie in overcoming the dominance.

This indicates that dominance and response is (a) Multi-stranded, (b) far from being a static fact, is a dynamic process in which dominance is imposed and countered

or responded to, incessantly. The relationship between the power struggle between social groups, and power structures is that of between the actual manifestation and theoretical construct of a phenomenon.

Power structures do not lie in abstraction but are embedded in larger state and societal conditions. As the focus of the study is on the dimensions and evolutions of power structures, no attempt is made to present a comprehensive analysis of the state and society. They are treated as contextual factors for power structures and also as sources change for the later. Only those aspects of the state which have bearing on the power structures are selectively chosen and dealt with.

State is seen as a supra-local political apparatus with power, patronage etc. The autonomy of the state to take independent ~~initiatives~~ and the restrictions posed on its autonomy by the 'structural constraints' in the society are recognised simultaneously. The behaviour of such a state has implications on the grassroot power structures and hence induces social mobilisations by various groups to capture or influence it.

Various aspects of the state that are covered are; organisation, leadership and ideology (Chapter 2) Political

actors and process (Chapter 3) distributional policy between social groups (Chapter 2 and 3), **initiatives** in bringing about social transformation (Chapter 4) etc.

It should be noted that the state is not merely an ensemble of these aspects but that these aspects of state are chosen to present a context compelling on the power structures.

In our theoretical position state emerges as a factor external to the power structures. Unlike the state, **the society cannot be separated from the power structures.** The social groups in relationships of dominance and response are an aspect of the society.

Society is seen as a structural arrangement of different social groups. That is, it is an ordering of various social groups made on factors like land possession, status, numerical strength etc. The ~~organised~~ social groups and their mobilisations emerge from this order. (Chapter 2). Society also encompasses the production process and the specific forms in which the different social groups are related to it. The changes in the production process produces a corresponding change in the social groups related to it and hence has implications on the power structures.

To sum up:

- (1) Power structures are seen as dependent variables and state and society are independent variables. Power structures are **embedded** in state and societal contexts and evolve in response to the changes in the latter.
- (2) State power is seen as external to the power structures, which hence **induces** social mobilisations **seeking** to influence it. Social mobilisations are one form of structural **constraints** on state behaviour.
- (3) Social groups in the power struggle constitute one aspect of society. The relationships of dominance and response between them are shaped by many other aspects of society most important of which is the production process.

Thus state power and production process constitute the **matrix** in which the power structures evolve.

As an analytical distinction is made between state power and society or production process, inspite of the possibilities of interaction or intermixing between them, as sources of change on power structures, they may act independently of each other. The actual evolution of the power structures, among other things, is determined by the

relative strengths of these divergent sources of influences.

Two models of power structures emanate from these dynamic **matrix** of interactions.

In **Model one**, social groups are arranged **hierarchically** in terms of inherited possessions and **ascriptive** values. As means of production is pre-capitalist, there is no generation of surplus nor a further differentiation among social groups. The resource base, organisational strength of the social groups are weak and therefore, state power and patronage become attractive, to gain which social mobilisations takes place.

The power structures in **Model one** was **admirably** comprehended by **M.N. Srinivas's** concept dominant caste. In the societal context of **Model one**, certain social groups gain dominance because of **concentration** of inherited land power, **ascriptive status** and **numerical strength**.

Patron-Client relations with extra economic rights and obligations characterise the relationships between dominant and dominated social groups. As the concept of **Sanskritisation** indicates even the normative order is controlled by the dominant castes and has the effect of reinforcing the structural aspects of relationships between social groups.

To sum up, in Model one,

- (a) The dominant groups control the structural and normative aspects of other groups.
- (b) But their dominance entails from inherited and **ascriptive** factors.

Model two is characterised as a capitalist mode of production. Capitalism breaks traditional patron-client relationships and makes their relationships contractual. It has generated surplus, increasing the resource base and organisational strength of the social groups enormously. It has differentiated between classes, **increased** their political **consciousness** and created new political needs in them.

The social groups deal with the state primarily to realise their political needs than to draw patronage.

The power structures in the Model 2 are no more merely **ascriptive** nor inherited: They are primarily shaped from (a) the ability of the social groups to participate and benefit from the capitalist mode of production (b) the relative political ability of the different social groups to deal with the state.

The empirical and theoretical dimensions of the study are interrelated. Theoretical positions have guided the

empirical study, while the empirical data have modified the theoretical positions.

The state, society and power structures of colonial Mysore are explained by the theoretical Model one.

The Lingayats and Vokkaligas were the dominant castes, whose position of power emanated from inherited possessions and ascriptive values. They had enjoyed patron-client relationships with other social groups. The creation of the princely regime in Mysore coincided with the emergence of organised consciousness and activities especially from the dominant castes. They took lead in forming caste associations to promote their interests and launched the non-Brahmin movement to draw patronage from the state. Though the movement had an urban middle class form, given the unity of identity between the tiny urban and vast rural sections of the dominant castes, the achievements of the movement would increase the overall power position of the communities, benefiting all sections of it.

The dalit movement imitated the non-Brahmin movement and failed to address to the needs of the toiling dalit masses. It further suffered from brahminical sponsorship and weak leadership.

Both the social mobilisations achieved little as the

autocratic princely state resisted all attempts of penetration. Thus, non-Brahmin movement turned against the princely state and merged with the congress entrenching the dominant castes in the power structure of the future. Dalits on the contrary, continued to be loyal to the princely authorities and their presence in the congress was weak.

In sum, (1) The power structures in colonial Mysore were inherited and ascriptive; (2) In their supra-local political action the dominant castes were more powerful than the dalits in promoting their interests. Thus the inherited inequalities were politically widened.

The theoretical **Model two** of power structures explain the evolution of state, society and power structures in the post-Independence Karnataka.

The state, inspite of the introduction of democratic politics and due to the nature of state formation was controlled by the dominant castes in the initial phase. Other social groups asserted gradually, turning political process into a multi-cornered contest for patronage between different political actors. In a political process lacking in any organisational or ideological dimension, the other social groups opposing dominant castes find it difficult to

turn it in their favour. Even the dominant castes have been able to maintain their lead due to their relative strength than to any pre-determined disposition of state towards them.

The reduction of state and political process to a mere struggle for patronage between political actors, none of which can muster up overwhelming power over others and more important changes in the society may have reduced the relevance of the state on grass root processes of domination and response.

Capitalist social transformation has differentiated the social groups particularly the dominant castes and dalits and brought about a structural transformation in them.

The dominant castes as capitalist farmers have gained enormous resources and organisational strength. They have built up organisations that are structured into an elaborate political network integrating different regions horizontally and vertically. They have used their strength to bargain specifically with the state on specific issues than to seek patronage from it. Further, they are seeking to build rural coalition including all sections of rural population under their leadership.

The dalit landless labourers have a divergent interest from that of farmer producers. But without matching resources and organisational strength of the latter their political has been weak. Their grass root organisations have been weak, localised, spontaneous and sporadic. The Macro dalit movement has no agenda for the dalit masses and has made no efforts at mobilising them. The interlinkages between dalit grass root organisations and macro movement has been weak. This illustrates that the power structures in the new context are less inherited or ascriptive. They are formulated according to the abilities of the various groups to participate in the new processes and the resource base and organisational strength they can muster up from it.

In this the dominant castes have been more successful than Dalits.

To sum up:

- (a) The state in Karnataka has transformed from an autocratic to a formally democratic form. But the political changes since independence has constrained its autonomy both internally and externally.
- (b) The society has transformed from a pre-capitalist to a capitalist form in many of its aspects. Many of the unextinguished pre-capitalist elements

coexist with the new emerging processes of capitalisation. But from the perspective of the formation of power structures latter processes though nascent appears to be more important.

- (c) The power structures coinciding with the changes in the society has transformed from traditional to new forms. The new forms are neither ascriptive nor inherited, but constitute in conscious acquisition of resources and organisational strength.

The new power structures overlie the emergence of a new class of capitalist agrarians who are overwhelming other rural classes. The new agrarian are primarily drawn from the dominant castes. This shows that the shift in the power structures is only in its form. The hierarchichal arrangement of specific social groups in particular positions has remained unaltered. In short, dominant cases have been able to recast their dominance over other groups in line with new emerging conditions.

Scholars and activists concerned with the upliftment of the deprived sections need to further investigate the new processes and its implications on various social groups especially dalits.

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