

# **THE JANATA GOVERNMENT IN KARNATAKA : SOCIO-POLITICAL BASE AND POLICIES**

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the award of the Degree of

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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**JUNE 1987**

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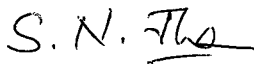
DECLARATION

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled:

"THE JANATA GOVERNMENT IN KARNATAKA: SOCIO-POLITICAL BASE AND POLICIES" submitted by Anthony T.P., in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Philosophy has not been submitted to this or any other University.

It is to recommend that this dissertation be placed before the Examiners for their consideration for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy.

  
(DR. BALVEER ARORA)  
Supervisor

  
(PROF. S.N. JHA)  
Chairman

To  
My  
Revered Parents and  
Family members

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I owe my great indebtedness to Dr. Balveer Arora, for supervising this thesis. He has shown great enthusiasm and understanding throughout my period of study. In the absence of his valuable suggestions and moral support this work could not have materialised. I am indebted to Professor S.N. Jha, the Chairman of the Centre for Political Studies, JNU, for his keen interest in my academic career. I would also like to express my gratitude to the members of the faculty who had rendered their cooperation and encouragement at various levels.

I am grateful to the Department of Information and Publicity, Government of Karnataka, New Delhi, the Janata Party Offices, in Delhi and in Bangalore, Vidhana Soudha Library, Bangalore, Teen Murti Library, New Delhi, for allowing me to consult the necessary documents and reports.

I owe special obligation to Mr. Valerian Rodrigues, a faculty member of Department of Political Science, Mangalore University, Mangalore, for his earnest interest shown in my academic career and prospects.

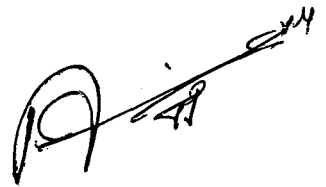
My special thanks are due to my friends: Lakshmanan, Babu Jose, Mahendra, Himakara, Muzaffar, Edward, Jayaraj, Subrahmanya, Chandrashekar and Jagpal who have rendered me



their help in one way or the other.

My greatest debt goes to my family members who have ungrudgingly borne the difficulties and helped all through the preparation of this dissertation.

Last but not the least, I thank Taneja for typing my script neatly. However, the limitations, if any, in this work are entirely mine.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'A' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that ends in a small flourish.

(ANTHONY T.P.)

ABBREVIATIONS

AIADMK	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
BJS	Bharatiya Jana Sangh
CMC	City Municipal Corporation
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPI(M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CSR	Centre State Relation
CWC	Congress Working Committee
DMK	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
EPW	Economic and Political Weekly
FC	Finance Commission
INC	Indian National Congress
INC(I)	Indian National Congress (Indira)
INC(O)	Indian National Congress (Organisation)
IND	Independent
JNP	Janata Party
KBCC	Karnataka Backward Classes Commission
KPCC	Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee
LKD	Lok Dal
LSS	Lok Sevak Sangh
MES	Maharashtra Ekikaran Samithi
NCO	Indian National Congress Organisation
NDC	National Development Council
OBC	Other Backward Classes
PC	Planning Commission

PRI	Panchayati Raj Institution
PSP	Praja Socialist Party
P&WP	Peasants and Workers Party
RPI	Republican Party of India
RPI(K)	Republican Party of India (Khobragade)
SC	Scheduled Caste
SCF	Scheduled Caste Federation
SOP	Socialist Party
SMSS	Sanyukta Maharashtra Seema Samithi
ST	Scheduled Tribe
SWA	Swatantra Party
TMC	Town Municipal Corporation

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I N T R O D U C T I O N



## INTRODUCTION

The politics of India is so dynamic that it remains an enigma to political scientists; it is diverse and discrete. It is a conglomeration of diverse interests which are expressed in terms of culture, language, states and regions. In other words the politics of India is multi-dimensional in its ramifications. These interests are, variously described as regional, parochial, linguistic, chauvenistic and so on, depending on the nature of their articulation in the regions.<sup>1</sup> These terms fail to convey the real meaning of the dynamics of Indian politics whose complexities are difficult to resolve by the language of chauvenism or regionalism, used to analyse its working given the socio-cultural diversity of the country.

The form of politics that is seen today in India at the centre and states, is the by-product of the historical circumstances going back to the colonial period when the British Raj attempted to bring the various regions under one central power. The British attempted this unification primarily for the exploitation of India's

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1 Similar views were expressed by P.K. Sharma, who argues that "Regionalism has been generally considered as anti-system, anti-federal and against the basic interests of a well integrated and well developed polity". For details see Sharma, P.K., Federalism and Political Development; Developed and Developing Areas, New Delhi, 1979.

wealth. The interests of the British were basically economic, but administrative unification was a prerequisite for any economic achievement. However, under the British Government uneven development in various parts of India, economic, administrative and educational produced a reaction from the Indians, in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The formation of the Indian National Congress was a reaction to this uneven development and exploitation.<sup>2</sup> The ideology of nationalism encompassed diverse interests and got reflected in the various political forms.

Alongside the spread of nationalist ideology in the early twentieth century, emerged divergent socio-economic interests in various regions, claiming particular advantages.<sup>3</sup> The formation of regional parties was a reflection of these diverse interests, for example, the Justice Party (South Indian Liberal Federation)<sup>4</sup>, Akali Dal, etc.,. The interest of these regional groups came to conflict with the nationalist ideology of the anti-colonial movement, in the third decade of the present century. Nevertheless, the activities of the regional groups were by and large

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2 Chandra, Bipan, Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India, New Delhi: Peoples Publishing House, 1982.

3 See Dutt, R.P., India Today, Calcutta: Manish, 1970.

4 See Irschick, E.F., Politics and Conflict in South India: The Non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separatism, 1916-1929, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1969.

confined to the regions, as they had appealed only to particular groups in these regions. Nationalism not only kept those regional forces under control, but also overcame the differences within Congress movement, thus, subordinating the diverse interests of the conflicting groups to its overriding ideology.<sup>5</sup> Despite this what are called the nationalities, emerged and became stronger even before independence, in the context of mass awaking let loose by nationalist forces.

In the post independence period, however, the Indian National Congress had to compete with the nationalities represented by regional forces like DMK; it had to contend with the regional interests which sought to base themselves on language and other socio-economic needs of the regions which they represented.<sup>6</sup> The pull of these regional forces was so strong that the Congress Government was forced to institute the States Reorganisation Commission to look into various aspects of the regional demands.<sup>7</sup> The outcome

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5 See Kaviraj, Sudipto, "On the Crisis of Political Institutions in India", Contributions to Indian Sociology, Jul-Dec., 1984; also see Kaviraj, Sudipto, "Indira Gandhi and Indian Politics", EPW, 21(38-39), Sept. 20-27, 1986, pp. 1697-1708.

6 The demand for Andhra Pradesh based on its distinct language was put forward by a section of the nationalists within the Congress organisation even in the second decade of the twentieth century.

7 India (Government), Report of the State Reorganisation Commission, 1956.

of the commission was significant for the regional interests; their demands for states reorganisation on language was conceded and the states were reorganised on linguistic lines in 1956.<sup>8</sup> Yet the conflicts between the centre and the regional groups remained unresolved. The federal structure, which vested more power in the centre as against the states was considered disadvantageous to them economically and socially.<sup>9</sup> But, the problem did not become acute till the whole country remained under Congress rule. The structure of the Indian politics came under stress in the mid and late sixties. The Congress had not made any significant dent in the regions where regional forces became strengthened such as in Tamil Nadu. Above all it had lost even monopoly control in power by its various unintelligent acts which tended to antagonise regional interests contributing to strengthening of the regional interests.<sup>10</sup> Even before the regional forces in

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8 Ibid.

9 Tamil Nadu (Government), Report of the Centre-State Relations Inquiry Committee, (Chairman, Rajamannar), Director of Stationary and Printing, Madras, 1971.

10 Such sensitive questions as language were given no serious consideration by the Central Government under Lal Bahadur Shastri whose proclamation of Hindi as a national language in 1965 triggered off state wide reaction in Tamil Nadu, leading differences of opinion with in the Congress. For details see, Forrester, Duncan B., "The Madras Anti-Hindi Agitation, 1965: Political Protest and its Effects on Language Policy in India", Pacific Affairs, (Columbia), 39(1-2), Spring-Summer, 1965, pp. 19-36; also see Hardgrave, Robert L., Jr., "The Riots in Tamil Nadu: Problems and Prospects of India's Language Crisis", Asian Survey, 5(8), Aug., 1965, pp. 399-407.

Tamil Nadu emerged, a major threat to the Congress monopoly had come from the Communists in Kerala. They dislodged the Congress from power in 1957 and emerged as the first Communist Government in the State.<sup>11</sup>

A greater threat came from regional forces to the Congress in the fourth general elections in 1967. Different conflicting interests coalesced and threw the Congress out of power in Tamil Nadu. In West Bengal the Communist Party, in collaboration with other left democratic parties, formed the government. Despite this electoral setback, the Congress remained a predominant party in India, as there was no alternative opposition party at the national level, despite dissensions within the Congress.

However, the simmering dissension in the organisation erupted leading to the split of the Congress in 1969 into the Congress(O) and the Congress(R).<sup>12</sup> This major split had a denable impact on the Indian political process. Political developments after 1970-71, however,

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11 See Sathyamurthy, T.V., India Since Independence: Studies in the Development of the Power of the State, Vol. I, New Delhi: Ajantha, 1985; and also see, Lieten, G.K., "Progressive State Governments: An Assessment of the First Communist Ministry in Kerala", EPW, 14, 1979, pp. 29-31.

12 Kochanak, Stanley A., The Congress Party in India: The Dynamics of One Party Democracy, Princeton, 1969.

reflected the Indian politics, a crisis manifested in poverty, underdevelopment, and later on emergence of powerful opposition groups which contested the Congress legitimacy to rule the country.<sup>13</sup> The hidden differences within the Congress organisation surfaced and took a new dimension of threat to the government. The misrule of Mrs. Indira Gandhi helped the opposing groups to come closer as the contenders for power. To contain these opposing groups which became a force to reckon with in various parts of India, the government declared internal emergency in June, 1975 on the pretext of a threat to internal security.<sup>14</sup>

The Congress' justification for the declaration of emergency was that it was an inevitable product of the crisis which began in the Indian political arena in the early 1970's. This major crisis of the Indian politics was however focussed on the acquisition of power at the centre. The main national forces that joined together to emerge later, as a major opposition to the Congress received massive support from the people who were disenchanted, resulting in the overthrow of Congress Government at the centre and its replacement by the Janata Party.<sup>15</sup> And

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13 Naik, J.A., From Total Revolution to Total Failure, Delhi: National, 1979.

14 Ibid.

15 See Bhambhri, C.P., The Janata Party: A Profile, New Delhi: National, 1980.

for the first time opposition groups under the loose Janata Party captured power in various parts of India. Those were nevertheless neither regional nor national in ideological orientations. In other words, the Janata Party which came as a national party at the centre was not able to retain power for a long time, being riven by ideological differences among the different aligned parties, factionalism and competition for power among leaders.<sup>16</sup> This conflict led to the collapse of the Janata Party and subsequently to the major defeat in the 1980 general elections at the hands of the Congress. The debacle of the Janata Party revived the monopoly power of the Congress. Except in Kerala, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Tripura, the Congress swept the elections and once again proved to be a major organisation in the country. In this context only the forces of regional parties are to be seen. The Congress is not able to make a dent in those states where regional forces of themselves emerged as a strong reaction against the Congress misrule which supported particular groups and tended to antagonise the majority of the population such as the agriculturists.<sup>17</sup>

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16 Ibid.

17 See Vakil, F.D., "Congress Party in Andhra Pradesh: A Review". In Mathew, George, ed., Shift in Indian Politics: 1983 Elections in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, CIRS, New Delhi: Concept, 1984, pp. 61-93; and also see, Shatrugna, M., "Emergence of Regional Parties in India: Case of Telugu Desam", in Mathew, George, ed., ibid., pp. 95-112.

The emergence of the Janata Party Government in Karnataka in 1983 in such a context becomes relevant.<sup>18</sup> But the national ideology of the Janata Party by itself did not sufficiently appeal to the people of Karnataka. Its ideology of opposition to the Congress had a popular appeal and it had to align itself with other regional forces in Karnataka to become an alternative contender for power. Thus, the ideology of the Janata Party in collaboration with regional groups, for example, the Kranti-Ranga, was bound up with the question of opposition to the misrule of the Congress, analogous to similar developments in 1977 at the national level. The Janata Party in Karnataka bases itself on reconciliation of national and regional interests, without succumbing to regional pressures, at the same time not giving the impression of ignoring the interests of the Karnataka state. Nevertheless, the conflicts between the Congress and the Janata Party continue to get reflected in the Centre-State relations, as are characteristics of the regional parties ruling in the states and the Congress,

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18 For a detailed analysis of fall of the Congress and the emergence of a Janata Party into power in Karnataka, see Manor, James, "Blurring the Lines between Parties and Social Bases: Gundu Rao and the Emergence of a Janata Government in Karnataka", in Wood, John R., ed., State Politics in Contemporary India: Crisis or Continuity, Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984, pp.139-166.



at the centre.<sup>19</sup> The Centre-State relations continue to worry the state governments, whether of national parties confined to states or of regional parties.

### Scope, Objectives and Methodology

The study aims at covering different socio-political dimensions and policies of the Janata Government since its inception in Karnataka in 1983. In the first chapter an attempt is made to study the political developments of the post reorganisation of states period and the subsequent emergence of Janata Party as a major political force in Karnataka. The second chapter deals with the question of how far the Janata Party in Karnataka has consolidated its socio-political base in a multi-dimensional culture through its populist measures.

The aim of the third chapter is to unearth the factors leading to the introduction of a unique Panchayati Raj system and the practical implications of this system on the Janata Government and also in developing a 'new socio-political culture' in the state. How far the Janata as a regionalised party in Karnataka is in recent years striving to play a dual role of reconciling state as well as national interests in the given context of relations

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19 These issues were dealt with in chapter IV.

between the centre and state is analysed in the subsequent chapter. Lastly, an attempt is made to focus on Janata Government's experiment in restructuring society through the policy of reservations in Karnataka.

The main thrust of the study is to find out the factors that led to the emergence of the Janata Party and subsequently widening up of its socio-political base. And the study also aims to find out whether the Janata Party's interests in Karnataka are localised or the reflection of its national interest.

In this study the analytical, historical, and statistical methods have been widely made use of. In spite of the scarcity of published materials in the form of books and constraints in translating the newspaper reports from Kannada to English, in the course of the study almost all the source materials available including government reports, state publications, party publications, books, leaflets, articles and newspaper cuttings have been utilised.

Chapter I

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN KARNATAKA  
1956 - 1983

## Chapter 1

### POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN KARNATAKA, 1956-1983

The present state of Karnataka, one of the four states in south India, has 20 administrative districts<sup>1</sup> and an area of 191,171 square kilometres that is 5.2 per cent of the country. According to the 1981 census (provisional), the population is 37.04 million or 5.4 per cent of the total population of the country. The people of Karnataka belong to four major religious groups - Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Jains. Hindus constitute 86 per cent of the total population. As elsewhere in India, the Hindu population of Karnataka is composed of different caste groups, of which the most important are Brahmins, Lingayats, Vokkaligas and Harijans and other minority "backward" communities. The distribution of the state's population to their caste/community can be seen in the following table.

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1 The enlarged present Karnataka came into existence after the Linguistic State Reorganization Act of 1956. The state has been divided into 20 districts. They were: Bangalore Rural, Bangalore Urban, Belgaum, Bellary, Bidar, Bijapur, Chitradurg, Chikmagalur, Kodagu (Coorg), Dharwad, Gulbarga, Hassan, Kolar, Mandya, Mysore, North Kanara, Raichur, Shimoga, South Kanara (Dakshina Kannada) and Tumur.

Table 1.1

Caste/Community Wise Distribution of  
Population in Karnataka

S.No.	Caste/Community	%age of the Total Population
1	Beda	2.75
2	Bestha	2.80
3	Brahmin	3.81
4	Kuruba	6.92
5	Lingayat	16.92
6	Muslim	10.97
7	Vokkaliga	11.68
8	Urs (Arasu)	0.08
9	S.C.	15.86
10	S.T.	2.86
11	Christian	1.89

Source: Karnataka (Government), Report of the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission, vol. III, Bangalore: Government Press, 1986, pp. 28-30.

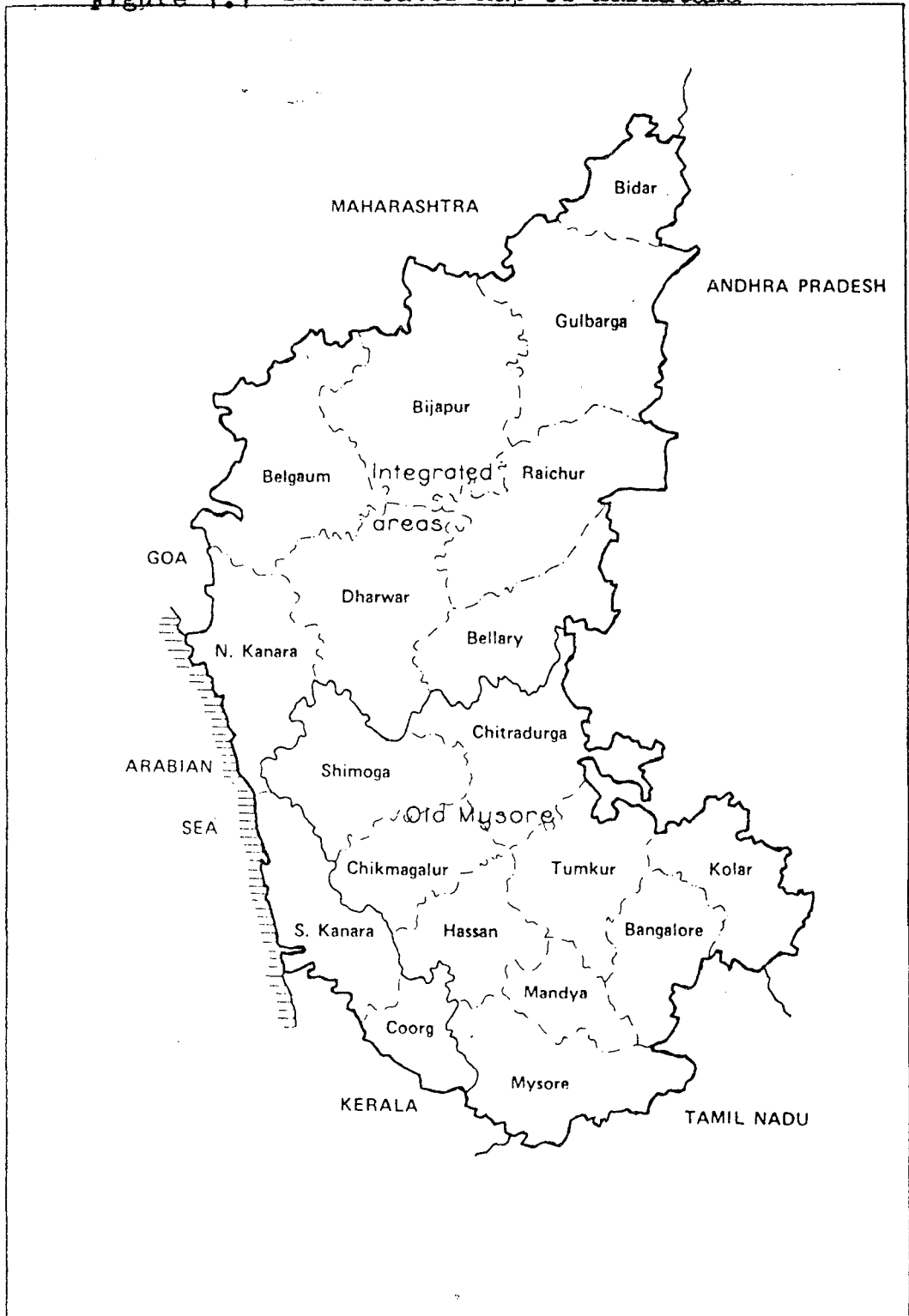
Brahmins constitute about 4 per cent of the state's population and are considered as 'dominant minority'<sup>2</sup> group because of their leading role in education and public services. Vokkaligas and Lingayats make up about 29 per cent of the population and own most of the cultivated land. By virtue of their numerical strength and land ownership they have been the major contenders for political power<sup>3</sup> and they are considered a 'dominant majority'. Other backward castes like Kurubas, Naiks, Yadavs and others constitute about 39 per cent and are considered as 'non-dominant' minority groups because of their social and economic backwardness. The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes constitute about 18 per cent of the population. They do not own much land and have been economically depressed and socially suppressed. Muslims account for

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2 This term was coined by Thimmaiah, G. He divided the Hindu population into five socio-economic political groups: (1) Dominant minority castes, (2) Dominant majority castes, (3) Non-dominant minority castes, (4) Depressed castes and (5) Other unspecified groups. In his article "Caste and Class in Karnataka", Social Scientist, 11(2), Feb. 1983, pp. 31-42.

3 After 1972, the "Backward" communities and other "minorities" have also been in the race for power. For a detailed account of the power politics of the state see, Manor, James, "Pragmatic Progressives in Regional Politics: The Case of Devaraj Urs", EPW, (5-7), Feb 1980, pp. 1865-9. Also see, Wood, Glynn and Hammond, Robert, "Electoral Politics in Congress-Dominant State: Mysore 1956-1972", in Weiner, Myron and Field, Osgood John, eds., Electoral Politics in the Indian States: Party System and Cleavages, Delhi: Manohar, 1975, pp. 143-60.

Figure 1.1 The Greater Map of Karnataka



about 11 per cent of the population and are considered economically backward. Christians and Jains together constituting about 3 per cent are considered as religious minorities.

Political Developments From  
1956 - 1977

Caste has been the determining factor in state politics. As Rajni Kothari has rightly pointed out, "The political parties mobilize groupings and identities in order to organize their political power. They find in it an extremely well articulated and flexible basis for organisation, something that may have been structured in terms of a status hierarchy but something that has a basis in consciousness".<sup>4</sup> The Linguistic Reorganization of States and the emergence of the greater Karnataka in 1956 (see the figure 1.1) tilted the numerical strength and hence the political power balance of different castes.<sup>5</sup> In the Princely Mysore as well as in the pre-1956 Karnataka we can see a domination of Vokkaliga caste in the politics

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4 Kothari, Rajni, ed., Caste in Indian Politics, Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1970, p. 5.

5 For details see Gowda, Mune, K.S., "The Influence of Caste in Mysore Politics", in Narain, Iqbal, ed., State Politics in India, Meerut: Meenakshi, 1967, pp. 588-95; also see Okalay, Patil, B.B., "Karnataka: Politics of One-Party Dominance", in Narain, Iqbal, ed., State Politics in India, Meerut: Meenakshi, 1976, pp. 129-45; Manor, James, art. cit.; Wood and Hammond, art. cit.



of the state. Caste was the deciding factor in the case of the selection of candidates for the legislature as well as for the parliament elections. For example all the three Chief Ministers from 1948 to 1956 - K.C. Reddy, K. Hanumanthiah and Kadidal Manjappa - were from the Vokkaliga community. But a shift in the power politics in favour of the Lingayats can be seen from 1956 to 1972. In this period, the Lingayat community enjoyed the majority status in the state politics. It was because the reorganised Karnataka in 1956 had integrated the districts of Lingayat dominance. This period witnessed the numerical dominance of the Lingayat in the legislature as well. All the four Chief Ministers, S. Nijalingappa, B.D. Jatti, S.R. Kanthi and Veerendra Patil - belonged to the Lingayat caste groups.

The Congress politics in the state up to 1972 came to be dominated by these majority dominant caste groups - the Lingayats and Vokkaligas - so far as the selection of higher positions was concerned. The caste factor was proved valid in the state assembly elections of 1957, 1962 and 1967. The Congress Party, with its wide multi-caste mass base, was able to retain majority status in all the elections.

The table 1.2 shows the continuous success of the Congress Party in all the three elections bagging a

Table 1.2

Party-wise Break-up of Seats in the Assembly Elections  
Held in 1957, 1962 and 1967 in Karnataka

Parties	1957	% of the Total seats	1962	% of the Total seats	1967	% of the Total seats
INC	149	72.33	139	66.82	127	58.79
PSP	17	8.25	19	9.13	20	9.25
SWA	-	-	8	3.84	16	7.40
CPI	1	0.48	3	1.44	2	0.92
BJS	-	-	-	-	3	1.38
MES	-	-	6	2.88	-	-
SOP	-	-	1	0.48	-	-
RPI	-	-	-	-	1	0.46
P&WP	2	0.97	-	-	-	-
SCF	2	0.97	-	-	-	-
LSS	-	-	4	1.92	-	-
IND	35	16.99	28	13.46	41	18.95
	206	99.99	208	99.97	216	99.95

Source: Karnataka (Government), 25 Years of Elections in Karnataka: 1952-1977,  
Cabinet Affairs (Department), Bangalore: Government Press, 1977.

majority of seats. In the 1957 assembly election which followed the reorganisation of states, the Congress polled almost 52 per cent of the total valid votes and won 149 out of the 206 seats in the assembly, which constitutes about 72 per cent of the total seats. Nijalingappa, a Lingayat, who had the majority support from his own caste i.e. 47 out of 149 Congress MLAs<sup>6</sup>, was selected to form the ministry.

The remaining 57 seats were shared among the opposition parties. The PSP, which won 17 seats, was the longest single opposition party. The Peasants and Workers Party and the Scheduled Caste Federation bagged two seats each. Though the Scheduled Castes and workers had an independent political organisation, they were not able to continue their independent identity, and merged with the Congress before the 1962 assembly election.

The Nijalingappa Congress also retained its control on the State Assembly by a substantial margin in the 1962 election. The Congress won 139 seats constituting about 66 per cent of the total of 208 assembly seats. Compared to the 1957 elections the Congress was weakened in the 1962, but still it had an edge over the opposition. The

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6 Thirumaiah, G., and Aziz, A., art. cit., p. 816.

opposition parties who shared the rest of the seats included the PSP, SWA, CPI, MES, LSS and SOP. The CPI improved by winning 3 seats as compared to 1957 elections in which it had won only one seat. The new parties like the MES and LSS secured 6 and 1 seat respectively. The independents became the second largest party.

The electoral success of the Nijalingappa Congress in the 1967 elections had given Karnataka the reputation of being solidly pro-Congress.<sup>7</sup> His party won 127 seats which constitutes about 59 per cent out of the total of 216 assembly seats. In this election Congress performance was weakened as compared to the previous elections.<sup>8</sup> Nijalingappa, with the majority support of the MLAs formed the ministry in March 1967.

The PSP with 20 seats became the major party among the opposition. Despite the political swing in favour of

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7 It was in this period that the Congress faced a severe setback in most of the states. Many states had thrown Congress out of power. The opposition came into power in the states: Bihar, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Orissa, Punjab and West Bengal. But in spite of the opposition swing in Karnataka Congress Party under Nijalingappa's leadership retained its majority position. This ultimately made Nijalingappa the logical choice for All India President of the Congress in 1968.

8 For details of the 1967 elections, see Thottappa, K.B.Y., and Jangaon, R.T., "General Elections in Mysore State", in Narain, Iqbal, and Sharma, S.P., eds., Fourth General Elections in India, vol. I, Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1968, pp. 325-48.

the CPI in Kerala, it did not have any impact in Karnataka in the 1967 assembly elections. All the opposition parties together bagged the rest of the 89 seats out of total of 216 seats which constitutes about 41 per cent of the total seats. Initially the Congress Party faced a tough battle with the opposition. All the opposition parties formed anti-Congress United Front with the electoral alliance at many districts.<sup>9</sup> The opposition parties, as in the case of the Congress, concentrated on Lingayat, Vokkaliga and the Scheduled Caste votes since these communities were expected to play a crucial role in the election. But the internal as well as the factional fights between the opposition parties contributed to the electoral success of the Congress and consequently the weakening the opposition.<sup>10</sup>

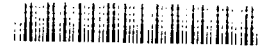
The distribution of the ministership in the Nijalingappa's Cabinet in 1962 and 1967, shows the role played by the elites within the state. The cabinet had 15 members in the 1962 and 14 in 1967 out of which 4 members served in both.<sup>11</sup> During these periods the Bombay Karnataka and Hyderabad Karnataka areas together had around

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9 Thottappa and Jangam, art. cit., p. 332.

10 Ibid., p. 335.

11 Wood and Hammond, art. cit., p. 147.



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6 to 8 cabinet ministers, a substantial section of whom were Lingayats.<sup>12</sup> Occasionally there were a couple of ministers from the old Mysore as well. In the popular image, the Lingayat hegemony had been little exaggerated.



The Chief Ministers, as Manor argues, had to "accommodate Vokkaliga demands".<sup>13</sup> The cabinet showed a clear cut domination of the dominant castes - the Lingayats and Vokkaligas - representing 54 per cent in 1962 cabinet, sharing 4 ministers each. In the 1967 cabinet the Lingayat represented 36 per cent and Vokkaligas 21 per cent and the former had a majority position.<sup>14</sup> The cabinet formed by Veerendra Patil in 1968<sup>15</sup> included 7 members of the Nijalingappa coterie.

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Table 1.3 presents the summary of the composition by caste of the State Legislature from 1952 to 1967 and shows that the Lingayat and Vokkaliga communities, the traditional land-owners in the state, hold the majority position in the Legislature. The Brahmins as usual continued to have a representation which has been quite

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- 12 Hebsur, A.R., "Karnataka", Seminar, 224, Apr. 1978, p. 22.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Wood and Hammond, art. cit., p. 148.
- 15 Veerendra Patil succeeded as Chief Minister in 1968 as a result of the selection of Nijalingappa as the AICC President, Patil continued as the Chief Minister till his resignation in 1971.

Table 1.3

Composition of the Legislative Assembly by Caste,  
1952 to 1972 Elections in Karnataka

S.No.	Caste/Community	1952		1957		1962		1967		1972	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Brahmins	14	11	9	6.75	8	6	8	6	11	4
2	Lingayat	45	35	47	33.0	45	34	49	36	43	24
3	Vokkaligas	33	26	35	25	35	27	36	26	52	29
4	Other Hindus	12	9	22	15	20	14	17	12	37	22
5	Scheduled Castes	20	16	22	15	21	16	24	17	23	12.5
6	Scheduled Tribes	-	-	2	1.5	1	1	-	-	2	1
7	Christians	-	-	1	0.75	-	-	1	0.75	5	3
8	Jains	2	2	3	2.25	1	1	1	0.75	1	0.5
9	Muslims	1	1	1	0.75	1	1	2	1.50	4	2.0
Total		127	100	142	100	132	100	138	100	178	100

Source: Karnataka (Government), Report of the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission, vol. IV, Bangalore, 1975, pp. 822-23.

out of proportion to their numerical position. The Scheduled Castes, though numerically second largest (14%) did not wield much influence in proportion to their number.

The analysis of the General Elections to the Legislative Assembly held from 1952 to 1967 in Karnataka shows the following trends:

- (1) In all the elections the Congress Party won the majority number of seats in the legislature.
- (2) The landed traditional castes - the Lingayats and Vokkaligas enjoyed dominant position in terms of their representation in the legislature, ministry and chief ministership with the Lingayat predominance.
- (3) Praja Socialist Party remained the only major opposition party.
- (4) Selection of the Chief Ministers was mainly determined by the numerical strength of caste in legislature.

A drastic change in the history of Karnataka politics can be noted since 1972, the political power shifted from the stranglehold of the landed majority castes, the Lingayats and Vokkaligas, to the minorities.<sup>16</sup> Before

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16 The term 'minorities' is used in the relative sense, comprising of the backward classes comprising of the non-dominant castes, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and religious minorities like Christians and Muslims.



that the people who worked for and benefitted from the Congress system at all levels were drawn predominantly from the two dominant castes of the state.<sup>17</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the first Congress split of 1969, most of the members of the Mysore Congress were initially in the anti-Indira Gandhi camp because her main opponent S. Nijalingappa was from Mysore. Thus, the reorganization of the Mysore Congress was necessitated. Mrs. Indira Gandhi's main supporter in the MPCC was Devaraj Urs and his strategy was to organize a grand alliance of all the 'minorities' against the Lingayat-Vokkaliga rule.<sup>18</sup> This alliance proved to be extremely successful in 1971 parliamentary elections and the trick worked again in the assembly election in 1972. As the President of the Pradesh Congress, Urs reduced the representation of the major dominant groups, and gave a larger representation to Backward and Scheduled Castes.<sup>19</sup> As Wood and Hammond have argued, "Urs accommodated those young leaders who had been kept out by the old Congress".<sup>20</sup>

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- 17 Manor, James, "Structural Changes in Karnataka Politics", EPW, 12(44), Oct. 29, 1979, p. 1865.
- 18 Hettne, Bjorn, Political Economy of Indirect Rule: Mysore 1881-1947 London: Curzon Press, 1978, p. 337.
- 19 Nataraj, L., and Nataraj, V.K., "Devaraj Urs and Karnataka Politics", EPW, 18(37), 11 Sept. 1982, p. 1503.
- 20 Hebsur, R.K., art. cit., p. 23.

In the 1972 assembly election, the Urs' Congress won a majority number of seats. It polled 52 per cent of the total valid votes. The party won 165 seats out of the total of 216, which constitute about 76 per cent. It had retained the deposits of all the candidates contested (Table 1.4). The Congress(O), the major contender against Congress polled only 26 per cent of votes. And it bagged 24 seats out of the total of 176 contested out of which 32 forfeited their deposits. The Jana Sangha polled only 4 per cent of votes without winning any seat. The CPI, Socialist Party and the independents bagged the remaining seats. Devaraj Urs became the Chief Minister in March 1972.

Urs' tactical handling of the situation, his alliance with the minorities in the 1971 parliamentary elections and the vote catching slogan 'Garibi hato', etc. contributed to an unprecedented success of his party in the assembly election in 1972.<sup>21</sup> The general explanation for the success of Congress(R) in the assembly election was national in scope and it stresses the importance of Indira Gandhi's strategy of delinking state and national elections in 1971. Secondly, the 1971 result was limited to state of Mysore. It was because of the caste identifi-

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21 Ibid.

Table 1.4

Number of Candidates Contested, Elected  
And Forfeited Deposits in the Assembly  
Elections Held in 1972 in Karnataka

S.No.	Parties	Contes- ted	Elec- ted	Forfei- ted Deposits	% of the Total valid votes polled	% to the Total Seats
1	INC	212	165	-	52.16	76.38
2	NCO	176	24	32	26.21	11.11
3	BJS	102	-	80	4.30	-
4	SOP	29	3	19	1.69	1.38
5	SWA	28	-	26	0.57	-
6	CPM	17	-	13	1.02	-
7	CPI	4	3	-	0.98	1.38
8	IND	250	20	189	12.86	9.25
Total		820	215	359	99.79	99.50

Source: Mysore (Government), Mysore State Election Statistics of General Elections to Legislative Assembly, 1972, Law and Parliamentary Affairs, (Department), Bangalore, n.d.

cation as a major organizing principle of Karnataka poli-  
tics that the victory of Congress(R) was seen as the end  
of Lingayat dominance in the state. Selig Harrison argues

that caste identification and loyalties are central to any understanding of Indian politics.<sup>22</sup>

But in 1972 election we find a shift in the power balance. However, it was neither Lingayats nor Vokkaligas who were estimated to contribute more than a fifth of total population. It has been only a matter of organisation for other caste groups to win with a minorities candidate.<sup>23</sup> Urs being a minority-man built himself a solid base among the minorities. This can be gauged from the fact that in the 1972 election, his party put up 31 scheduled caste candidates and 26 were returned. As Urs himself used to say that the elections had not been won on the basis of castes, but classes<sup>24</sup>, by equating the minority castes with roughly poor classes.

The difficulty in establishing caste as the organising principle of Karnataka politics apparently disappears when the analysis include the entire cabinet. Table 1.5 reports the caste composition of ministers in the cabinet of Nijalingappa in 1962 and 1967 and of Urs in 1972.

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21 ibid.

22 Wood and Hammond, art. cit., p. 149.

23 ibid.

24 Hebsur, R.K., art. cit., p. 23.

Table 1.5

Caste Identification of the Karnataka  
Cabinet, 1962 - 1972

Caste	1962	1967	1972	Population
Vokkaliga	4 (27%)	3 (21%)	2 (15%)	13%
Lingayat	4 (27%)	5 (36%)	3 (23%)	17%
Brahmin	2 (13%)	2 (14%)	1 (8%)	3%
Minorities				
Scheduled Caste	1 (7%)	1 (7%)	2 (15%)	14%
Muslims	0	1 (7%)	1 (8%)	10%
Others	4 (27%)	2 (14%)	4 (31%)	43%
Total	15 (101%)	14 (99%)	13 (100%)	100%

Source: Wood and Hammond, art. cit., p. 151.

The strongest point was the under representation of the minority groups in the cabinet prior to 1972. Whereas Urs ministry did move the balance towards equal representation. In 1967, we find a clear-cut majority representation of Lingayats. The overall pattern in 1962 and 1967 was the careful negotiations and ticket balancing aimed at building a winning coalition across the three dominant groups. Urs not only reduced the representation of dominant caste group, the Lingayats and Vokkaligas and Brahmins, but also shifted the

entire of political gravity to the old Mysore region.<sup>25</sup>

A comparison of the cabinet formed by Nijalingappa in 1962, 1967 and by Urs in 1972 shows the importance given to the region by Urs, and his emphasis on the old Mysore area.

Table 1.6

Regional Representation of the Ministries  
in the Cabinets Formed by Nijalingappa in  
1962 and 1967 and of Urs in 1972  
in Karnataka

Region	1962	1967	1972	Population
Princely Mysore	7 (47%)	6 (43%)	9 (70%)	49%
Northern Mysore	6 (40%)	8 (57%)	2 (15%)	39%
Other annexed area	2 (13%)	0	2	12%
Total	15 (100%)	14 (100%)	13 (100%)	100%

Source: Wood and Hammond, art. cit., p. 153.

The above data on the cabinet representation shows stronger consideration for the Mysore region than for caste. Urs reduced the northern influence in his ministry

i.e. the integrated parts of the present Karnataka. The Congress faced its strongest opposition in the old Karnataka during the 1962 and 1967 elections. But in the 1972 election Congress(R) was able to draw upon anti-Nijalingappa forces in the region.

But the regional considerations do not overrule the importance of caste factor. The caste remained to be the main ingredient of the political culture of the state. Politicians take similar position in making public pronouncements in order to show their non-casteist stand. But indirectly they intended to identify with a particular caste thereby to attract the fellow caste support. As for example, the former Chief Minister K. Hanumanthiah publicly argued, 'I am a Vokkaliga, but I did not become the Chief Minister on their support. In fact, many of their leaders were opposed to me. Neither would it be true to say that Nijalingappa enjoyed the support of all Lingayats'.<sup>26</sup>

The progressive policy measures introduced by the government during the chief ministership of Devaraj Urs deserves importance which ultimately boosted his image as well. A few months after assuming office as Chief Minister in 1972, Urs appointed the Karnataka Backward

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26 Deccan Herald (Bangalore), 11 Jun. 1972.

Classes Commission (KBCC) with L.G. Havanur as its chairman in December 1972. The Commission's report in November 1975 excluded the Lingayats, Bunts, (a forward sub-group among Vokkaliga) and Brahmins from the backward classes group thereby denying reservation to these groups. An important contribution of the Commission report was the consciousness it created among the other backward classes. The modified report included Muslims into the backward group. The government order added a new category called the 'backward special group', which included economically weaker sections without reference to caste, fifteen per cent reservation of jobs and seats in the educational institutions were included.<sup>27</sup>

The Land Reforms Act passed in 1974 constitutes the second important measure introduced by the Urs government, made the following provisions: (1) all tenancy lands, including the disputed ones, were vested in the governments, (2) decrees of eviction of the tenants made on certain grounds were stayed, (3) all pending tenancy cases had to be disposed of as if the Act of 1974 was already in force

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27 For details of the Commission, see the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission Report, vol. I and II (Bangalore, 1975); and also for an analysis of the Backward Classes see Nataraj, L., and Nataraj, V.K., "Backward Classes Minorities and Karnataka Politics", George Mathew, ed., Shift in Indian Politics, 1983 Elections in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, New Delhi: Concept for Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1984, pp. 35-60.



in 1965, (4) ceiling was fixed relatively high and took into account the irrigation facilities and (5) the occupancy disputes were to be decided not by the civil courts, but by special tribunals for each taluk set up by the government.<sup>28</sup>

The land reform measures had come under severe attack from several analysts. In helping the landless the land reforms Act was an abject failure.<sup>29</sup> It was accused that most of the tribunals were corrupt<sup>30</sup>, and gave judgements in favour of the land owning rich landlords.<sup>31</sup> The retired Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court, G.K. Govinda Bhat openly accused that the tribunal members were making money. He also complained that a concerned Karnataka Minister had advised a member of a tribunal to 'earn' as much as he can, but to give half to Indira.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, the Act had its profound impact in two coastal districts - Dakshina Kannada and Uttara Kannada - which together account for over one-third

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28 Hebsur, R.K., art. cit., p. 24.

29 See Manor, James, "Pragmatic Progressives in Regional Politics, Karnataka", EPW, 15(5-7), Annual Number, Feb. 1980, p. 205.

30 Hebsur, R.K., art. cit., p. 24.

31 Melchoir, James, "Land Reforms in Bantwal", EPW, 18 Aug. 1979, pp. 1412-13.

32 Hebsur, R.K., art. cit..

of the applications filed in the entire state.<sup>33</sup>

Other than the backward classes policy measures and the land reforms, the measures like the abolition of bonded labour and debt liquidation, special provisions for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes deserves attention. All the above measures introduced by government increased Urs' popularity and legitimacy. Until Urs' deposition by the centre on the last day of December 1977, he ruled the state and controlled the legislature party without much challenges.

Political Developments From  
1978 - 1983

The period 1977-78 witnessed a drastic change in the Indian politics, because of the lifting up of the emergency and the consequent formation of the Janata government at the Centre. In spite of the Janata wave in many of the states, Karnataka did not deviate from her Congress path. Devaraj Urs continued as the Congress(I) chief minister again after the electoral victory of his

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33 Ibid. For the detailed analysis on Land Reforms see Thimmaiah, G., and Aziz, A., Land Reforms in Karnataka, Bangalore, 1983; Thimmaiah, G., and Aziz, A., "The Political Economy of Land Reforms in Karnataka, a South Indian State", Asian Survey, 23(7), Jul. 1983, pp. 810-29; and also see Rajan, M. A. S., Land Reforms in Karnataka: Contexts and Relationships, Bangalore, 1979.

party in the 1978 assembly election. His party won 149 seats out of the 214 contested, constituting about 66 per cent of the seats and 44 per cent of the total valid votes polled. The main opponent to the Congress, Janata Party won only 59 seats out of the 222 constituencies it contested. Table 1.7 shows the party position in the legislature.

The Congress(I) Party had put up 117 candidates belonging to the backward classes and only 72 from Lingayats and Vokkaligas. The party obtained a resounding affirmation of Urs' policies. The successful candidates generally won with a comfortable margin i.e. 144 candidates won with a margin of more than 1000 votes. The electoral performance of the Congress considerably proved the grip of Indira-Urs team over the electorate in the state.

The Janata Party which initially dominated by Congress(O) had failed to win more than two seats in the March 1977 Lok Sabha elections. It tried to outbid the Congress(I) in the state assembly election by promising not only "a clean administration", but also speedier implementation of the land reforms which Urs had initiated. In the selection of candidates, like the Congress, Janata also followed the tactics of giving importance to the backward classes. But all this turned to be futile, Janata failed to prove its credentials among the electo-

Table 1.7

Candidates Contested, Elected and Forfeited  
Deposits in the 1978 Assembly Elections

S.No.	Party	Contes- ted	Elec- ted	Forfeited Deposits	% of the Total valid votes polled
A. National Parties					
1	INC (I)	214	149	3	44.25
2	JNP	222	59	5	37.95
3	INC (O)	212	2	176	7.99
4	CPI	6	3	-	1.19
5	CPI(M)	10	-	9	0.50
6	RPI	2	1	1	0.18
7	RPI (K)	7	-	7	0.12
B. Regional Parties					
1	DMK	3	-	2	0.13
2	AIADMK	4	-	4	0.16
C. Independents					
		485	10	461	7.53
Total		1165	224	668	100.00

Source: Karnataka (Government), Karnataka State Election Statistics of General Elections to Legislative Assembly, 1978, Personnel and Administrative Reforms (Department), Bangalore, n.d.

rates.<sup>34</sup> The party had started election campaign with the hope of emerging as a single largest party. For example, the then Union Minister Raj Narain after a campaign tour of the state expressed the hope of winning not less than 150 seats.<sup>35</sup>

A number of reasons can be pointed out for the failure of the Janata Party in the election fray. Unlike Bihar and Gujarat, the Karnataka electorate were unaware of the message of JP's "total revolution".<sup>36</sup> It was generally believed that the rigours of the emergency were not much experienced in the state. The cases of tragic demise of Snehalatha Reddy, Salam Saheb and torture of Michael Fernandes had not cut much ice with the rural electorate.<sup>37</sup> The charges put forward by the Grover Commission of Inquiry<sup>38</sup>

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34 Karnataka, "Urs Rides Again", EPW, Feb. 1978, p. 441.

35 Karnataka, "Verbal Battle between Parties", Link, 22(29), Feb. 26, 1978, p. 7.

36 Bapu, Heddur Shetty, "Whither Karnataka Janata Party", Janata, 20 Nov. 1977, pp. 5-6.

37 Ibid., p. 5.

38 A concrete evidence of Urs' corruption was provided by the committee headed by Justice Grover. This Commission was set up by the Janata government at the centre after it came to power in 1977. The Commission did find Urs guilty of some of the charges listed against him. On the basis of this report the centre dismissed the Urs ministry and imposed President's rule in the state on 1 January 1978. In the subsequent election he came back to power.

concerning the emergency regime's nepotism, corruption and misuse of power etc. was not perceived by the rural electorate, as a crucial factor.

It was believed that in the 1978 elections, the Muslims who constituted about 10 per cent of the votes, had not voted for the Janata Party. Because it was these groups who had benefitted considerably from the progressive policies of Urs. Secondly, the Muslims were reluctant to support Janata Party because of its alliance with Jana Sangh. The Janata Party had failed in appealing the urban masses as well. The polling percentage and electoral success of the Congress in the constituencies like Bangalore, Udupi and Mangalore with a high literacy rate shows that the Congress party not only had the support of the illiterate backward classes but also the urban electorates.

On analysing the reasons for the poor performance of Janata in the 1978 assembly elections we can arrive at two general explanations.

First, the Janata Party failed to penetrate into the villages and to popularise the repression let loose on the people by the Congress government elsewhere. Second, Devaraj Urs ministry had built up a progressive facade by programmes like land reforms, debt relief, relief of bonded labourers, and etc. so that Janata could not easily

out-win the popular image of his government.<sup>39</sup>

Even though in the 1978 assembly election Urs was elected with the thumping majority, the political turmoil with in the Congress(1) led to the unexpected split between Indira Gandhi and Devaraj Urs in June 1979. When many states saw an anti-Congress wave, Karnataka remained the winning ground for Congress under the leadership of Urs. In order to strengthen its base Urs relied upon the backward classes since 1972 to 1980. The emergence of Devaraj Urs as the powerful Chief Minister from Karnataka and his intention to form a rival Congress contributed to the split. He spurned all suggestions to promote the members of Sanjay Gandhi coterie in the KPCC.<sup>40</sup> Because of this, pro-Sanjayits like F.M. Khan, Jaffer Sherief and Gundu Rao became troublesome and tried to malign Urs' name by propogating that he was hob-nobbing with Janata Party. Indira Gandhi doubted that Urs' proposal for the unity of the different Congress factions was intended to weaken her position in the party.<sup>41</sup> Added to this, there was enough ground for Mrs. Gandhi to

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39 See for details, Babu, Heddur Shetty, "What Went Wrong with the Janata Party", Janata, 8 May 1977, pp. 9-10.

40 "Disintegration of the Congress(1)", Link, Jun. 24, 1979, pp. 8-9.

41 Ibid.

believe that Devaraj Urs' contact with the Janata Party leaders was aimed at escaping from the consequences of 'Grover Commission's' findings.<sup>42</sup> Mrs. Gandhi finally took the decision to expel Urs from the KPCC and to appoint Bangarappa as an ad hoc KPCC(1) President.

This led to the emergence of one more political party in the state having the name of Congress. The new party under Devaraj Urs - Congress(U) - had 140 MLAs and 25 MLCs. The Congress(U) contested in all the 28 seats in the 1980 Lok Sabha elections. But surprisingly the election results came as a crushing blow to Urs. His party was not able to win even a single seat. The Congress(1) bagged all but one out of the 28 seats improving its earlier performance of 26 out of the total 28 seats. Most of the Congress(U) stalwarts like the then Union Minister T.A. Pai, V. Krishnappa and B.B. Rachaiah were trounced in their home constituencies. T.A. Pai was among those who forfeited their deposits.

The defeat in the election compelled Devaraj Urs to tender resignation of his ministry. Soon followed the defection of 146 MLAs to Congress(1) and Gundu Rao became the Chief Minister. He succeeded not only in luring defection from Congress(U) but also from the non-Congress

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42 Ibid.



and independents. He was able to do this with the support of the party high command at New Delhi. While encouraging such defection, Gundu Rao often claimed that he was acting according to the interest of the Congress High Command. For instance, once Rao said: "I am an obedient servant of Indira and Sanjay Gandhi and that I would remain Chief Minister as long as I have their blessings".<sup>43</sup>

But, despite Centre's support Rao's regime could not survive for a long time. In the 1983 assembly election, the Janata Party came into power. A number of factors accounted for the defeat of the Congress Party, led by Gundu Rao. The administration was characterized by over centralization, corruption, patronage and unsympathetic attitude towards the riots and the status of Kannada language. It is the two latter issues which brought down the administration of Gundu Rao.

The farmers movement began as a localized agitation of the farmers in the Malaprabha development area in the Dharwar district in April 1980. When the government did not respond to the demands<sup>44</sup> of the farmers, the leaders of

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43 Shetty, Rajashekhar V.T., "Gundu Rao in Blundering Land", Mainstream, 18(37), May 1980, p. 30.

44 The Charter of the farmers included demands like abolition of water tax, better procurement prices, abolition of agricultural income tax, abolition of taxes and other fees on tractors, cancellation of all debts owned by farmers to banks and cooperatives etc. See, Srinivas, M.N., and Panini, M.N., "Politics and Society in Karnataka", EPW, 14 Jan. 1984, p. 73.

the movement organized a massive 'long march' of kisans from all over the state to press their demands, in February 1981. Several cultivators' protests met with draconian police action resulting in the death of more than 120 people.<sup>45</sup>

The language issue was a creation of Rao's own act. Soon after assuming office he announced the first language status to sanskrit. Rao's pro-sanskrit stand antagonized the Kannada protagonists. To deal with the issue, a committee was appointed headed by V.K. Gokak in 1980, which came out with the proposal of making Kannada as a compulsory language. Lack of enthusiasm on the part of the government to implement the proposal roused the Kannada protagonists and they organized demonstrations and dharnas which resulted in the death of many persons.<sup>46</sup>

Gundu Rao publicly admitted that his party had the support of the Dalits and Muslims. But he failed to sustain the support of even these sections. A number of communal clashes had taken place during his reign. The Hindu-Muslim riot at the places like Kolar, Chitradurg, Gowribidanur, Ramanagaram, Kollegal, Hunsur, City Market in Bangalore

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45 Manor, James, "Blurring the Lines Between Parties and Social Bases: Gundu Rao and Emergence of a Janata Government in Karnataka", EPW, 19(37), Sept. 15, 1984, p. 1626.

46 Srinivas, M.N., and Panini, M.N., art. cit.

etc., a number of Muslims and their properties were affected. Another example was the clash between the Dalit students and Lingayats at the Gulbarga post-graduate study centre at Gulbarga, the government's refusal to intervene in the matter upset the Dalits.<sup>47</sup> The shock came to the Dalits when Rao undermined reservation in promotional vacancies in the Government.<sup>48</sup>

Gundu Rao's casteist nature of functioning, his patronage to the Brahmins in administration, appointment of various commission chairmen from his own caste etc., had an adverse impact on the public. In a state level meeting of the Brahmins, Rao expressed his identification with his fellow castemen in clear terms: "If you want me to lead an agitation against our critics, you call me, I am ready".<sup>49</sup>

More than that the Congress(1) Party was rocked by internal differences over public issues. For instance when a number of Congress(1) MLAs demanded a probe into the death of nearly 300 people due to their consumption of adulterated liquor in Bangalore and Mysore in 1981, the Rao government turned a deaf ear to the legislators.

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47 Shetty, Rajashekhar V.T., art. cit.

48 ibid.

49 See India Today, 31 May 1984.

Similarly when a member of his cabinet, C.M. Ibrahim, was allegedly involved in the abduction and molestation of a young woman and when demands for probe into the incident mounted up, the Gundu Rao government slighted the issue. Rao's ministry suffered also from rampant corruption. The whole cabinet was involved, with a few exception, in fund raising for party and other purposes.<sup>50</sup> The extent of the corruption is summed up by following observation of a newspaper: "Under Devaraj Urs there were two or three ministers who became involved in scandals while under Gundu Rao there were only two or three who did not."<sup>51</sup>

Gundu Rao conforms to one of several divergent types of Chief Ministers which emerged under Indira Gandhi since 1972. One of the divergences was the emergence of regional parties. But another was that the increasingly varied value of the state units and the Chief Ministers in Mrs. Gandhi's own party, Gundu Rao's centralization of power and his adoption of civil servants raj at the expense of the Congress organization was similar to that of the trends in Maharashtra under S.B. Chavan in the mid 1970's and to the Congress(1) government in Punjab in the early 1980's.

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50 Manor, James, "Blurring the Lines ...", art. cit., p. 1626.

51 Indian Express, 20 Sept. 1981, quoted in Manor, James, "Blurring the Lines ...", ibid., p. 1632.

Other than the factors that we dealt with in the preceding pages, the absence of Devaraj Urs from the political scene at the 1983 assembly election greatly facilitated the emergence of two internally heterogeneous electoral blocks. They were the Congress(I) and the Janata-Kranti Ranga alliance in confrontation with one another. The alliance would have been virtually impossible had Urs lived to fight the election. Second, after the Urs' death in 1982, the coalition of disadvantaged groups, that he had assembled, could not find a leader for replacing him.

It was for the first time, the Karnataka politics came out from the stranglehold of the Congress dominance and a new party called Janata Party came into power in 1983 since independence. The defeat of the Congress(I) came as a matter of surprise. Ramakrishna Hegde, the then Secretary of the Janata Party, had conceded the likelihood of the Congress(I) retaining its hold over the state.<sup>52</sup> It was because Janata Party and its allies did not contest for all the assembly seats in the state. They aimed at improving their position as an opposition party. A section of academicians like Manor, Narendra

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52 See Sunday, 11-12 Jan. 1983, The Herald Review (Bangalore), 27 Jan. 1985.

Pani and others expected the success of Congress(1) with a reduced majority.<sup>53</sup>

The Congress(1) contested for the majority number of seats in the assembly election of 1983. It had put up 221 candidates out of which 82 were elected whereas Janata contested in 194 constituencies and bagged 95 seats. Both the parties secured 40 per cent and 33 per cent of the total valid votes polled. Out of the total of 19,813,088 eligible voters only 12,919,458 persons exercised their franchise constituting about 65 per cent of the votes.

Table 1.8 shows the summary of the party-wise distribution of the candidates contested, elected and forfeited deposits.

Gundu Rao and several of his ministerial colleagues lost their seats and Congress candidates were beaten in almost every constituencies which had been visited by Indira and Rajiv Gandhi. In spite of the unpopularity of the Rao regime, the Congress had managed to emerge as the single largest opposition party in the assembly. Bharatiya Janata Party secured 18 seats and rest of the seats had been shared by Communist parties, AIADMK and independents.

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53 Srinivas, M.N., and Panini, M.N., art. cit., p. 73.

Table 1.8

Party-wise Seats Contested, Seats Won and Votes Polled  
in the 1983 Legislative Assembly Elections in  
Karnataka

S.No.	Name of the Party	Contested	Elected	Forfeited Deposits	Votes Polled	% to the total valid votes polled
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>A. National Parties</b>						
1	Janata Party*	194	95	44	4,275,355	33.09
2	Indian National Congress <sup>o</sup>	221	82	4	5,221,419	40.42
3	Bharatiya Janata Party	110	18	69	1,024,892	7.93
4	Indian Congress (Socialist)	18	-	17	16,392	0.13
5	Lok Dal (LKD)	27	-	26	69,008	0.53
6	Republican Party of India	6	-	5	17,982	0.14
7	CPI	7	3	1	161,192	1.25
8	CPI(M)	5	3	-	116,768	0.90
<b>B. State Parties</b>						
1	Indian Congress <sup>£</sup>	28	-	28	11,116	0.09

Cont'd...

Table 1.8 Cont'd ...

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	2 AIADMK**	1	1	-	11,234	0.13
	3 DMK**	1	-	-	11,806	0.09
C.	Independents	747	22	682	1,977,292	15.30
	Total	1365	224	876	12,819,458	100.00

\* Kranti Ranga contested under the symbol of Janata Party and merged with it after the election. Six of the Kranti Ranga legislators with the leadership of Bangarappa kept their separate identity.

@ include the seat won by Congress(I) on 27 February 1983 in Tarikore, earlier countemanded because of the death of Congress(I) candidate.

\*\* State Party of Haryana

£ State Parties in Tamil Nadu

Source: Karnataka (Government), Karnataka State Election Statistics of General Elections to the Legislative Assembly, Bangalore, 1984, pp. 7-9.



The Janata Party formed the government with the support of the other opposition parties under the leadership of Ramakrishna Hegde on 10 January 1983.

Though certain similarities can be traced in the emergence of Janata Party as a ruling party in the national and at the state level, it is the specific socio-political background that have paved the way for the Janata's coming into power in Karnataka. This is well-evident from the fact that even in the post-emergency period, for five years Karnataka remained under Congress rule. It was as a result of the infamous rule of Gundu Rao and absence of a reputed leader in the ruling party that "the alternative" Janata was necessitated. Once the Janata Party became the ruling party, it managed in developing its social base among different sections of people and in different areas. This is evident from Janata Party's continuance in power in Karnataka even at present, while it could not survive in any other state or at the centre for more than a couple of years.

## Chapter 11

### JANATA GOVERNMENT AND ITS SOCIAL BASE

## Chapter 11

### THE SOCIAL BASE OF JANATA PARTY

It was as a result of the political climate prevailing in the state that the Janata Party came into power in 1983, so at that time it did not possess a dominant social base. Initially the party formed the government with the alliance of Kranti Ranga and with the support of other political parties. But its later electoral victories without coalitions and the continuance in power denotes that its social base have been broadened substantially. In this regard, The Hindu remarked that "The mandate transcended the traditional narrow confines of casteism and communalism. Admittedly, the sinew of the Janata's electoral base were Lingayat and Vokkaliga phalanx, together constituting a big chunk of electoral and state's total population, just as the traditional Congress(I) plank was made up of the scheduled castes and tribes and minorities. In the March assembly poll (1985), the Janata overran this plank, resulting in the Congress(I)'s rout, if not decimation".<sup>1</sup>

The institution of caste has been playing increasingly important role in the Indian politics. This particular

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1 See The Hindu (Madras), 28 Sept. 1985.

political phenomena of the caste is an important feature of the state politics. As we have seen earlier, the Vokkaliga caste in the old Mysore (present southern Karnataka) and the Lingayat caste in some of the northern districts of Karnataka are dominant politically as well as economically, and shared the political power for a few decades. However, no single caste is dominating the Karnataka politics, instead we find a multi-caste dominance. Raghavendra Rao calls this phenomena as a "primordial pluralism in contrast to a modern pluralism."<sup>2</sup> Along with the 'primordial plural structure' there is also an emerging 'class' trend. His contention is that the Marxist explanation tended dogmatically to by-pass the dominant role of the primordial structure like caste and the recent non-Marxist explanation have tended to overrule the relevance of class.

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2 Rao, Raghavendra, "Social Structure and Political System in Karnataka", in Mathew, George, ed., Shift in Indian Politics; 1983 Elections in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, New Delhi: Concept, 1984, p. 17.

### Caste and Class Analysis

The literature on caste and class<sup>3</sup>, though it has not overruled the importance of caste factor in understanding the Indian politics, seems to be emphasising the class structure and its role in politics. But the specificity of Karnataka's politics is that the people with high income and higher economic status are placed in a dominant position in the social hierarchy, thereby wielding much influence politically, as compared to the others.

An analysis of the caste and class and their association between income, occupation and representation in the political institutions is essential to know the social bases of Janata Party in the state. Here the term 'class' is used to denote the economic status in terms of their annual per capita income. It is said that Karnataka

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3 For a detailed discussion and analysis on the caste and class see, Srinivas, M.N., "Future of Indian Caste", EPW, (Annual number), 14(7-8), Feb., 1979, pp. 237-42; Patil, Sharad, "Dialectics of Caste and Class Conflict", ibid., pp. 279-96; Roy, Ajit, "Caste and Class: An Interlinked View", ibid., pp. 297-312; Lieton, Georges Kristoffel, "Caste in Class Politics", ibid., pp. 313-28; Namboodripad, E.M.S., "Caste Conflict vs. Growing Unity of Popular Democratic Forces", ibid., pp. 329-36; Ranadive, B.T., "Caste and Class and Property Relations", ibid., pp. 337-48; Pandit, Nalini, "Caste and Class in Maharashtra", ibid., pp. 425-36; Sivadasan, P., "Caste, Class and Economic Opportunity in Kerala", ibid., pp. 475-84; also see Mantri, Ganesh, "Caste Class and Politics: Some Aspects", Samata Era, 3(8-10), Jan-Mar., 1984, pp. 3-7; and also see Thimmaiah, G., "Caste and Class in Karnataka", Social Scientist, 11(2), Feb. 1983, pp. 31-42.

state in consonance with the rest of the country, became increasingly industrialized and urbanized. It is tending in the direction of "a predominantly class society and decreasingly caste society".<sup>4</sup> However, for a better understanding of Karnataka politics, the thrust must be on a class-caste framework in which class may be seen to articulate structurally along with caste, the latter becoming increasingly subordinated to the former.

As for the religion-wise break-up of the state population, Hindu dominant state can be classified under the following major groups:

- (i) 'Dominant minority castes', which refer to economically and socially powerful castes that are however numerically not significant enough for the purpose of wielding political influence;
- (ii) 'Dominant majority castes', which refers to economically and socially powerful castes that are also numerically significant for the purpose of wielding political power;
- (iii) 'Non-dominant minority castes', which refer to the castes whose economic and social status is lower and weak and who are numerically not significant;

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4 Rao, Raghavendra, art. cit., p. 19.

- (iv) 'Depressed castes' are the economically and socially depressed (exploited) castes, though numerically significant and politically weak;
- (v) Other unspecified groups whose social and political status cannot be clearly identified.<sup>5</sup>

The class character of the Karnataka society can be seen from Table 2.1 which indicates the distribution of the land holdings in the state. Nearly 14 per cent of the households own less than 0.5 hectares of land. On the other hand about 13 per cent of the households own more than 50 per cent of the total land area, varying from 5 hectares to 30 hectares. Majority of these groups are from the dominant caste groups like Brahmins, Lingayats and Vokkaligas.

It can be observed from Table 2.2 that the Brahmins are the dominant minority group in terms of their economic status. Their annual per capita income ranges from Rs. 800 to Rs. 3000. The table also shows that there is hardly any destitutes among the Brahmins (whose annual PCI income is below Rs. 250). The dominant majority castes like Lingayat and Vokkaligas enjoy a much higher status and among them a smaller proportion belongs to a middle class. There is also a high proportion of people under the poorer

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5 Thimmaiah, G., art. cit., p. 33.

Table 2.1

## Distribution of Land Holdings in Karnataka 1976-77

Size of Holding (Hectares)	No. of Holdings	Area Hectares	Percentage of Total Holdings	Percentage of Total Area
Below 0.5	648,078	174,336	14.31	1.60
0.5 - 1.0	626,096	463,622	13.82	4.25
1.0 - 2.0	888,023	1,318,978	19.61	12.06
2.0 - 3.0	509,893	1,238,820	11.26	11.33
3.0 - 4.0	308,177	1,048,676	6.80	9.59
4.0 - 5.0	939,607	938,607	20.72	8.59
5.0 - 10.0	420,459	2,919,633	9.28	26.70
10.0 - 20.0	165,170	2,248,030	3.65	20.56
20.0 - 30.0	25,030	581,984	0.55	5.32
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,529,533</b>	<b>10,932,686</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Thimmaiah, G., and Aziz, A., Political Economy of Land Reforms, New Delhi: Ashish, 1983, p. 20.



Table 2.2

Association Between Caste and Income in Karnataka  
1974 - 75

S.No.	Caste Category	Income Category				Annual per capita income in Rs.				
		0-250	250-500	500-800	800-1000	1000-1200	1200-1500	1500-3000	3000+	Tot.
1	Dominant majority caste: Brahmin	16 (1.22) (0.25)	112 (8.54) (4.79)	234 (17.85) (5.60)	180 (13.73) (9.49)	162 (12.36) (82.23)	237 (18.08) (19.85)	272 (20.75) (22.74)	98 (7.48) (34.63)	131 (100) (10.0)
2	Dominant majority caste: Vokkaliga, Reddy, Lingayat, Kunchitiga	60 (0.97) (23.44)	1037 (16.76) (44.34)	2197 (35.50) (52.62)	1130 (18.26) (59.57)	197 (3.18) (29.62)	722 (11.67) (60.47)	736 (11.89) (61.54)	110 (1.78) (38.87)	618 (100) (51.0)
3	Non-dominant minority caste: Kumbara, Banajiga, Golla, Naik, Darji, Barbar, Goldsmith, Potter, Thigala, Ganiga, Naidu	53 (2.30) (20.70)	498 (21.61) (21.29)	930 (40.36) (22.28)	313 (13.59) (16.50)	159 (6.90) (23.91)	141 (6.12) (11.81)	145 (6.29) (12.11)	65 (2.82) (22.97)	230 (100) (19.0)
4	Depressed caste: Scheduled caste, Scheduled Tribe	127 (6.02) (49.61)	666 (31.56) (28.47)	797 (37.77) (19.09)	269 (12.75) (14.18)	135 (6.40) (20.30)	86 (4.08) (7.20)	23 (1.09) (1.92)	7 (0.39) (2.47)	211 (100) (17.0)
5	Other caste group (unspecified)	0 - -	26 (28.57) (1.11)	17 (18.68) (0.41)	5 (5.49) (0.26)	12 (13.19) (1.80)	8 (8.79) (0.67)	20 (21.98) (1.67)	3 (3.30) (1.06)	9 (100) (0.0)
Total		256 (2.13) (100.0)	2339 (19.48) (100.0)	4175 (34.78) (100.0)	1897 (15.80) (100.0)	665 (5.55) (100.0)	1194 (9.95) (100.0)	1196 (9.96) (100.0)	283 (2.36) (100.0)	1200 (100) (10.0)

Source: Thimmaiah, G., Caste and Class in Karnataka, Social Scientist, art. cit., p. 36.

category i.e. their PC income ranges below Rs. 800 annually. But this group weilds a dominant position in the state politics. In the urban areas, about 65 per cent of the rich people are from the Brahmin castes.<sup>6</sup>

Now let us turn to the association between the caste and occupation. The caste has been associated more or less with the traditional occupation. Table 2.3 shows that Brahmins have among them a high proportion of those who are professionally employed. The Lingayat and Vokkaliga as compared to other castes are professionally better placed and a majority of them are agricultural workers. Among the backward castes, the Kuruba, Kunchitija, Naidu and Bunts are emerging as the powerful groups in terms of their representation in the professional lines. A high representation of agricultural workers, and landless labourers is from the depressed castes like the Scheduled Castes and Tribes. Though the Brahmins are the minority group, they represented substantially in the state bureaucracy. They have retained their dominant position both in the urban and rural levels and a majority of them are economically well off.

Noel P. Gist in his study of 2377 families in Bangalore and Mysore arrived at a similar conclusion that

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6 Ibid., p. 37.

Table 2.3

Association Between Caste and Occupation in  
Karnataka, 1974 - 75

S.No.	Caste Category	Occupation Category						Total	
		Agricul- tural labourers	non- Agricul- tural labourers	non- manual emplo- yees	Students/ Dependents	Culti- vators	Profess- ional/ Tehmical		Others
1	Dominant minority caste: Brahmin	7 (0.53) (0.54)	26 (1.98) (2.15)	98 (7.47) (23.38)	975 (74.37) (6.59)	67 (5.11) (2.49)	119 (9.07) (15.69)	19 (1.44) (6.83)	1311 (100.0) (7.28)
2	Dominant majority caste: Vokkaliga, Reddy, Lingayat,	314 (4.61) (24.30)	269 (3.94) (22.28)	127 (1.86) (30.41)	4453 (65.37) (39.23)	1334 (19.58) (49.70)	192 (2.81) (25.32)	122 (1.79) (43.88)	6811 (100.0) (37.87)
3	Non-dominant minority caste: Kuruba, Banajiga, Golla, Darji, Naik, Besta, Goldsmith, Baker, Potter, Thigala, Guniga, Naidu	156 (6.77) (12.07)	151 (6.55) (12.51)	33 (1.43) (7.87)	1508 (65.45) (13.28)	304 (13.19) (11.32)	124 (5.38) (16.35)	28 (1.21) (10.07)	2304 (100.0) (12.80)
4	Depressed caste: Sche- duled caste, Scheduled Tribe	312 (14.78) (24.14)	304 (14.40) (25.18)	32 (1.51) (7.63)	1158 (54.88) (10.20)	242 (11.46) (9.01)	40 (1.89) (5.27)	22 (1.04) (7.91)	2110 (100.0) (11.73)
5	Other caste group (unspecified)	503 (9.22) (38.93)	457 (8.38) (37.86)	129 (2.36) (30.78)	3256 (54.72) (28.68)	737 (13.51) (27.45)	283 (5.19) (37.33)	87 (1.59) (31.29)	5452 (100.0) (30.30)
	Total	1292 (7.18) (100.0)	1207 (7.71) (100.0)	419 (2.32) (100.0)	11350 (63.09) (100.0)	2684 (14.92) (100.0)	758 (4.21) (100.0)	278 (1.54) (100.0)	17988 (100.0) (100.0)

Source: Thimmaiah, G., art. cit., p. 40.

there is some relation between caste and occupation in the state. The study reveals that " ... Brahmins ... in their occupational deviations ... have remained in a high status occupations that are considered respectable for man of high birth. This tendency applies also to high caste non-Brahmins such as the Rajput, the Mudaliar and the Naidu castes. On the other hand, lower caste Hindus ... are the day labourers, sweepers, servants or even skilled workers. But rarely does one find them in the occupation that carry prestige".<sup>7</sup>

It is difficult to categorise the Brahmin, Vokkaliga and Lingayat communities as a whole as 'dominant class' in the economic sense. The majority of the people belongs to a high socio-economic status and constitute a majority dominant class. With the higher economic status and their numerical strength the Vokkaligas and Lingayats have an edge in the state politics.

Tables 2.4 and 2.5 show that Lingayats constituting about 20 per cent of the total members represented predominantly in both the Panchayat as well as the urban institutions. Other communities like Brahmin, Vaisya, Devanga, Balija and Neygi have secured much more than

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7 Gist, Noel P., "Caste Differentials in South India", American Sociological Review, Apr. 1954.

Table 2.4

Caste/Community Representation in the Village  
Panchayat in Karnataka 1983

S.No.	Caste	Members	Percentage to the Total Members	Percentage to the Total Population
1	Brahmin	2,336	3.22	3.81
2	Lingayat	15,769	21.72	16.92
3	Vokkaliga	12,634	17.40	11.68
4	Other Hindus	22,020	30.33	34.99
5	Scheduled Caste	13,246	18.24	15.86
6	Scheduled Tribe	1,779	2.45	2.85
7	Christian	779	1.07	1.87
8	Jain	348	0.48	0.84
9	Muslim	3,694	5.09	10.97
	Total	72,605	100.00	99.79

Source: Karnataka (Government), Report of the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission, vol. III, Bangalore, 1986, pp. 60-62.

Table 2.5

Caste/Community Representation of Councillors, Corporators  
of TMC\*, CMC\*\* and Corporation in Karnataka 1984

S.No.	Caste	TMC	CMC	Corporation	Total	% to the Total	% to the Total Population
1	Brahmin	290	40	17	347	8.40	3.81
2	Lingayat	680	102	52	834	20.19	16.92
3	Vokkaliga	200	44	48	292	7.07	11.68
4	Other Hindus	1073	134	107	1312	31.76	34.75
5	Scheduled Caste	355	59	31	445	10.78	15.86
6	Scheduled Tribe	64	2	2	68	1.65	2.82
7	Christian	33	6	20	59	1.43	1.89
8	Jain	64	6	6	76	1.84	0.84
9	Muslim	549	106	39	697	16.88	10.87
Total		3308	499	322	4130	100.00	99.44

TMC\* = Town Municipal Corporation, CMC\*\* = City Municipal Corporation

Source: Karnataka (Government), Report of the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission, vol. III, Bangalore, 1986, pp. 68-69.

their percentage of population. Whereas the scheduled caste and tribe, Vokkaliga, Kuruba, Maratha, Idiga and Beda and Christians, though have got a higher percentage of representation other than the Lingayats, were not adequately represented. The Vokkaliga and Kuruba communities basically predominant in the rural areas are making a rapid entry into the urban sectors too.<sup>8</sup>

The representation in the state legislature as well as in the union parliament (Table 2.6) shows that the dominant castes like Brahmins, Vokkaligas and Lingayats are over represented. They constituted 26 per cent of the total population. The other Hindus being about 30 per cent of the total population represented only 21% of the seats. The Idiga and Bunt communities are as well over represented. The communities like Muslim, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe, have better representation. The common feature is that in terms of political power the Brahmins, Vokkaligas and Lingayats enjoy a dominant role. There are many communities who were totally unrepresented.

On the caste and class relation in the state the following observations can be made:

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8 See for a detailed statistics, Karnataka Backward Classes Commission Report 1986, vol. III, op. cit., pp. 60-62 and 68-69.

Table 2.6

Caste/Community Representation of MLAs, MLCs and MPs  
in Karnataka 1977 - 1985

S.No.	Caste	No. of MLAs		No. of MLCs			No. of MPs			Total	% to the total	% to the Total Population
		1978	1983	1984-5	1978	1983	1977	1980	1984-5			
1	Brahmin	16	16	11	10	8	4	2	3	70	8.17	3.81
2	Lingayat	53	66	64	12	10	8	4	6	223	26.06	16.92
3	Vokkaliga	42	48	49	11	6	7	6	5	174	20.30	11.68
4	Other Hindus	52	50	47	13	8	3	7	6	186	21.67	30.90
5	Scheduled Caste	35	33	35	3	3	4	4	5	120	14.00	15.86
6	Scheduled Tribe	4	5	6	1	1	-	-	-	17	1.98	2.82
7	Christian	3	3	3	2	2	-	2	1	16	1.87	1.89
8	Jain	3	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	8	0.93	0.84
9	Muslim	17	2	9	4	4	2	3	2	43	5.02	10.97
Total		225	225	225	56	42	28	28	28	857	100.00	95.69

Source: KBCC, vol. III, Bangalore, 1986, p. 71.



- (i) The Brahmins are the 'dominant minority class' because they enjoy a dominant role in terms of their socio-economic and political status. With more or less an urbanised base, they represented considerably in the state bureaucracy and other professional jobs. Even their political representation outnumbered their total percentage of population.
- (ii) Much influential and powerful caste i.e. Lingayat and Vokkaliga categories are the 'majority dominant class'. They enjoy a predominantly higher status both in rural and urban areas. With the higher socio-economic and political power as well as their numerical strength they succeeded in weilding a political power. Nearly 60 to 65% of the legislators are from these communities.
- (iii) The other backward classes and the Muslims though enjoy numerical strength they are politically and economically less powerful.
- (iv) The Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and other religious minorities with their low socio-economic status, are politically weak.

In spite of the change from caste to class relations in the Karnataka politics, the dominant castes also become increasingly a dominant class. But on this marginal change one cannot overrule the importance of caste. It is said

that " ... today behind the facade of modernity, the under-current of caste consciousness moves powerfully in politics and administration, education and commerce, and not only in traditional but also in modern occupations. Political parties have wilted. Their places have been taken by political camps of various castes ..."<sup>9</sup>

The Electoral Performance And  
Janata Party's Base

The Janata Party in the initial two years after coming to power suffered at different levels. With a narrower social base and simple majority in the legislature it strived hard to keep different interests under its control. The stress and strains within the party, and the Congress(I)'s attempt to topple it by wooing the Janata Party legislators and a humiliating defeat in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections however did not weaken its popularity and social base. Its tremendous victory in 1985 assembly elections and subsequently success in the Panchayat elections have proved beyond doubt that it has broadened its electoral base substantially. The comparative analysis of the electoral performance of the party in the assembly and panchayat elections since 1983 is essential to locate its social base.

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9 Mantri, Ganesh, "Caste, Class and Politics; Some Aspects", Samata Era (Delhi), 3 (8-10), Jan.-Mar. 1984, p. 4.

Despite the Gundu Rao factor, which led to a swing-away from it, the Congress(1) emerged as a single largest opposition group in the 1983 assembly elections winning 82 seats out of 224. The Janata Party had 62 seats with its electoral ally Kranti Ranga's 33 seats, it formed the government (see Table 1.8). There was all possibility that the Congress(1) would have formed the government had the Janata and Kranti Ranga not merged overnight. But within two months after the formation of the government Bangarappa, the then leader of the Kranti Ranga bowed out of the ruling government when he was denied the Chief Ministership. But only 9 MLAs followed him.

The bulk of the Kranti Ranga leaders continued to stay with the Janata Party. This was reflected in the initial Hegde's ministry which had 10 Kranti Ranga members.<sup>10</sup> It was believed that there were pulls and pressures within the dominant castes i.e. the Lingayats and Vokkaligas, for a bigger share in the ministry. There were 65 Vokkaliga and 51 Lingayat members in the 1983 assembly.<sup>11</sup> The Congress Party, which had polled 40 per cent of the popular vote, as against the Janata's

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10 Manor, James, "Blurring the Lines between Parties and Social Bases: Gundu Rao and Emergence of a Janata Government in Karnataka", EPW, 19(37), 15 Sept. 1984, p. 1628.

11 Balachandran, P.K., "Behind the Janata Facade", Herald Review, 27 Jan - 2 Feb. 1985, p. 33.

33 per cent, made all possible attempt to overthrow the Janata government. About 6 MLAs were offered inducements to defect. In this regard the "Molly tape episode" became widely known as a major political scandal, even at the national level.<sup>12</sup>

During the first two years of the Janata rule it faced severe factional problems. The language policy resulted in the disharmony among the minorities, which was followed by the resignation of the social welfare minister Chandrababha Urs, Labour Minister Aziz Sait, on the charge of discrimination made by the government for the backward classes and minorities. This charge proved constructive because nearly 60 per cent of the seats in the assembly were held by the dominant or forward classes/castes. The Muslims had only one member. Out of 33 appointees to the chairmanship of boards and corporations 24 belonged to the forward or dominant classes/castes. Even the Hegde cabinet continued to be upper caste/class dominated and pronouncedly urban oriented with 6 out of 12 MLAs from Bangalore in it. The weaker sections together represented only 7 ministers.<sup>13</sup> The ministry consisted of

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12 See for details, The White Paper on the Toppling of State Governments, A Janata Party Publication, 1984, pp. 48-53.

13 Balachandran, P.K., art. cit., p. 34.

one Brahmin, i.e. the Chief Minister himself, five Lingayats, four Vokkaligas, four Scheduled Castes, two members of Muslims and one each from the various sections, namely, Arasu, Kuruba, Naidu, Jain and Maratha.<sup>14</sup> To a certain extent the Brahmin stature of Hegde helped in balancing the Vokkaliga-Lingayat rivalry for dominance.

The electoral performance of the Congress(I) in the 1983 assembly election shows that it had retained hold in many districts like Belgaum, Bidar, Bellary, Bijapur, Kolar, Kodagu and Raichur. In these districts the Congress(I) bagged about 70 per cent of the total seats, won by both the parties. The Janata Party won all the seats from the Bangalore urban sector. It had won a majority in Chitradurga and Chickmagalur whereas both the parties shared equally in D.Kannada and Mandya. However, it can be seen that the Janata Party had a strong base in the old Mysore area. Out of 45 seats from Mysore, Tumkur and U. Kannada districts, it bagged 23 seats, which constituted 61 per cent of the total seats (see figure 2.1).

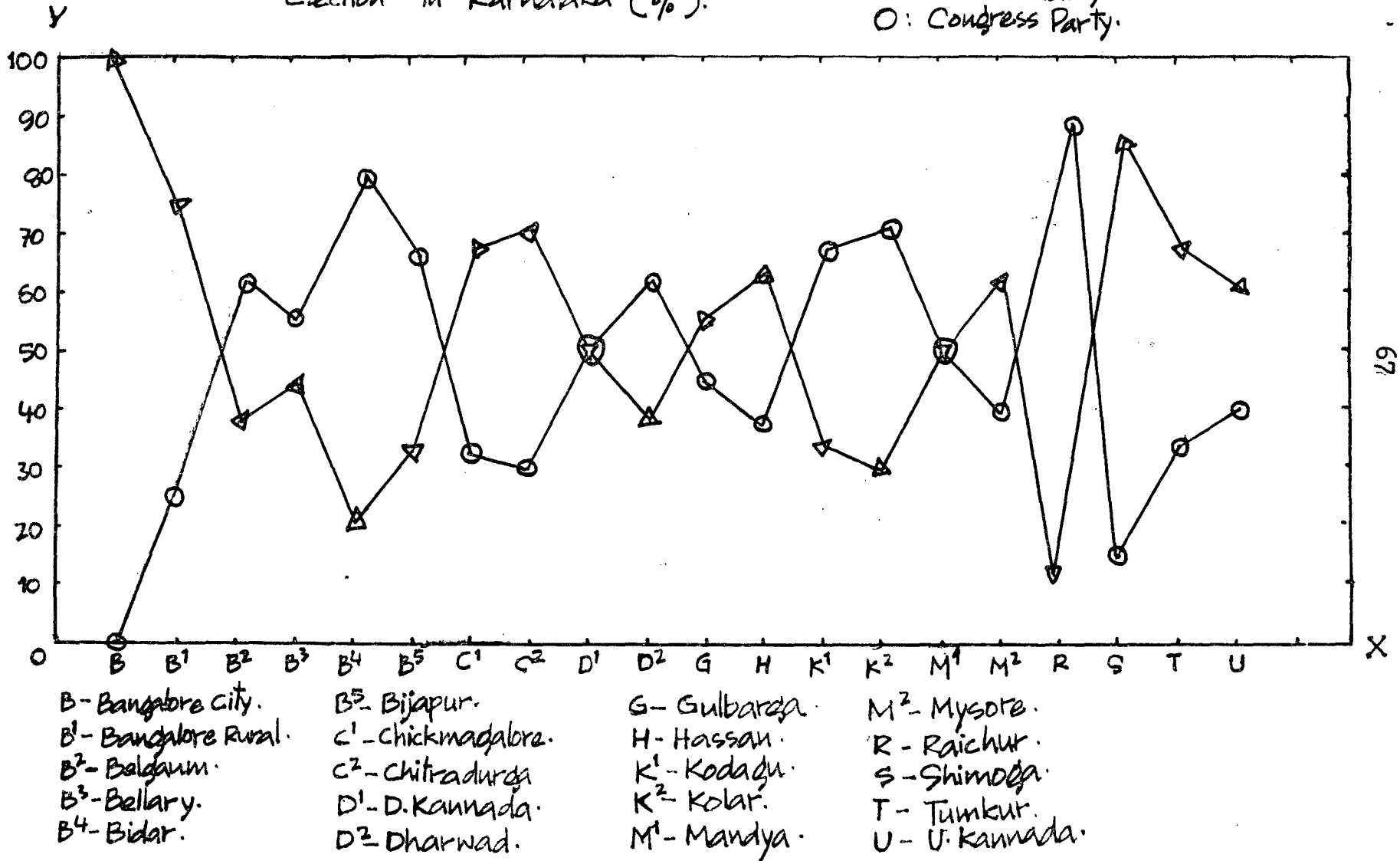
The humiliating defeat of the Janata Party in the Lok Sabha elections (it won 4 out of 28 seats) was followed by the resignation of the Hegde ministry and a fresh

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14 Manor, James, art. cit.

Figure: 2.1 Partywise (Congress (I) and Janata) seats secured in the 1983 Assembly Election in Karnataka (%).

'x'-axis : Districts  
 'y'-axis : Seats - 1cm = 10%  
 Δ : Janata Party.  
 O : Congress Party.



assembly election was held in March 1985. As compared to the previous Lok Sabha elections there was an increase in the percentage of votes polled by the Janata Party. It had polled 41 per cent in 1984 as against 22 per cent in 1980 in which it had won only one seat. On the other hand the Congress(I)'s vote dropped from 56 per cent in 1980 to 51 per cent in 1984. Though the Janata Party got majority of votes only in 50 assembly segments as against Congress(I)'s in 170, in many constituencies it lost by a low margin. For example, in Mandya, K.V. Shankar Gowda got a majority votes of 3,19,176 as against 1,98,780 of Congress(I)'s S.M. Krishna.<sup>15</sup> Both of them are from Vokkaliga caste. The post Lok Sabha election opinion survey had shown that the prospects of Janata Party was not at all tarnished<sup>16</sup> and it proved to be correct in the 1985 assembly elections.

The 1985 assembly election verdict marked a new departure in the state political arena. The electorate not only surprised Hegde and the Janata leaders but also political pundits including Congress(I) and Rajiv Gandhi. Within a short period of two months, there was a sharp shift in the electoral behaviour. Ramakrishna Hegde was

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15 See Bharatan, Raju, "The Irrelevance of being Ramakrishna Hegde", Illustrated Weekly of India, 10-16 Feb. 1984, p. 52.

16 See Deccan Herald, 30 Dec. 1984.

prepared for the worst in the elections.<sup>17</sup> Contrary to this the electorate rejected the Congress(I) candidates in 158 of the 224 constituencies, winning 140 seats,<sup>18</sup> out of 209 contested (see Table 2.7). The Congress bagged only 66 seats as against 82 seats it had in the dissolved assembly. The BJP was rooted out from the state. It won only 2 seats out of the 117 contested. The CPI and CPI(M) shared 4 and 2 seats respectively. The former chief minister Gundu Rao remarked that "the Congress had been thrown into the dustbin by the people of Karnataka".<sup>19</sup> The Deccan Herald analysed the electoral verdict in the following way: "the voters have demonstrated their ability to distinguish intelligently between the issues in a Lok Sabha election and assembly poll and have thereby displayed a high degree of political acumen".<sup>20</sup>

There is a substantial increase in the electoral performance of the Janata Party between 1983 and 1985 elections. It polled 45 per cent of the popular votes in the 1985 as against 33 per cent in 1983. Whereas there is a marginal increase in case of the Congress(I) which polled 41 per cent in 1985 as against 40 per cent in the 1983 elections.

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17 See India Today, 31 Mar. 1985.

18 See Telegraph, 10 Mar., 1985.

19 See India Today, op. cit.

20 See Deccan Herald, 24 Mar. 1985.



Table 2.7

The District-wise Performance of the Janata And Congress  
in the 1983 and 1985 Assembly Elections

S.No.	Districts	Janata		Congress(I)		Total No. of Constituencies
		1983	1985	1983	1985	
1	Bangalore	20	19	3	5	25
2	Belgaum	5	12	8	2	18
3	Bellary	4	4	5	4	9
4	Bidar	1	4	4	2	6
5	Bijapur	4	12	8	3	15
6	Chickmagalur	4	4	2	-	6
7	Chitradurga	7	7	3	3	11
8	D. Kannada	3	1	3	13	15
9	Dharwad	5	12	8	4	18
10	Gulbarga	6	3	5	8	13
11	Hassan	5	8	3	-	8
12	Kodagu (Coorg)	1	1	2	2	3
13	Kolar	2	9	5	1	12
14	Mandya	4	6	4	2	9

Cont'd...

Table 2.7 Cont'd ...

S.No.	Districts	Janata		Congress(I)		Total No. of Constituencies
		1983	1985	1983	1985	
15	Mysore	8	11	5	4	16
16	Raichur	1	8	8	3	11
17	Shimoga	6	5	1	4	10
18	Tumkur	6	10	3	3	13
19	U. Kannada	3	3	2	3	6
Total		95	140	82	66	224

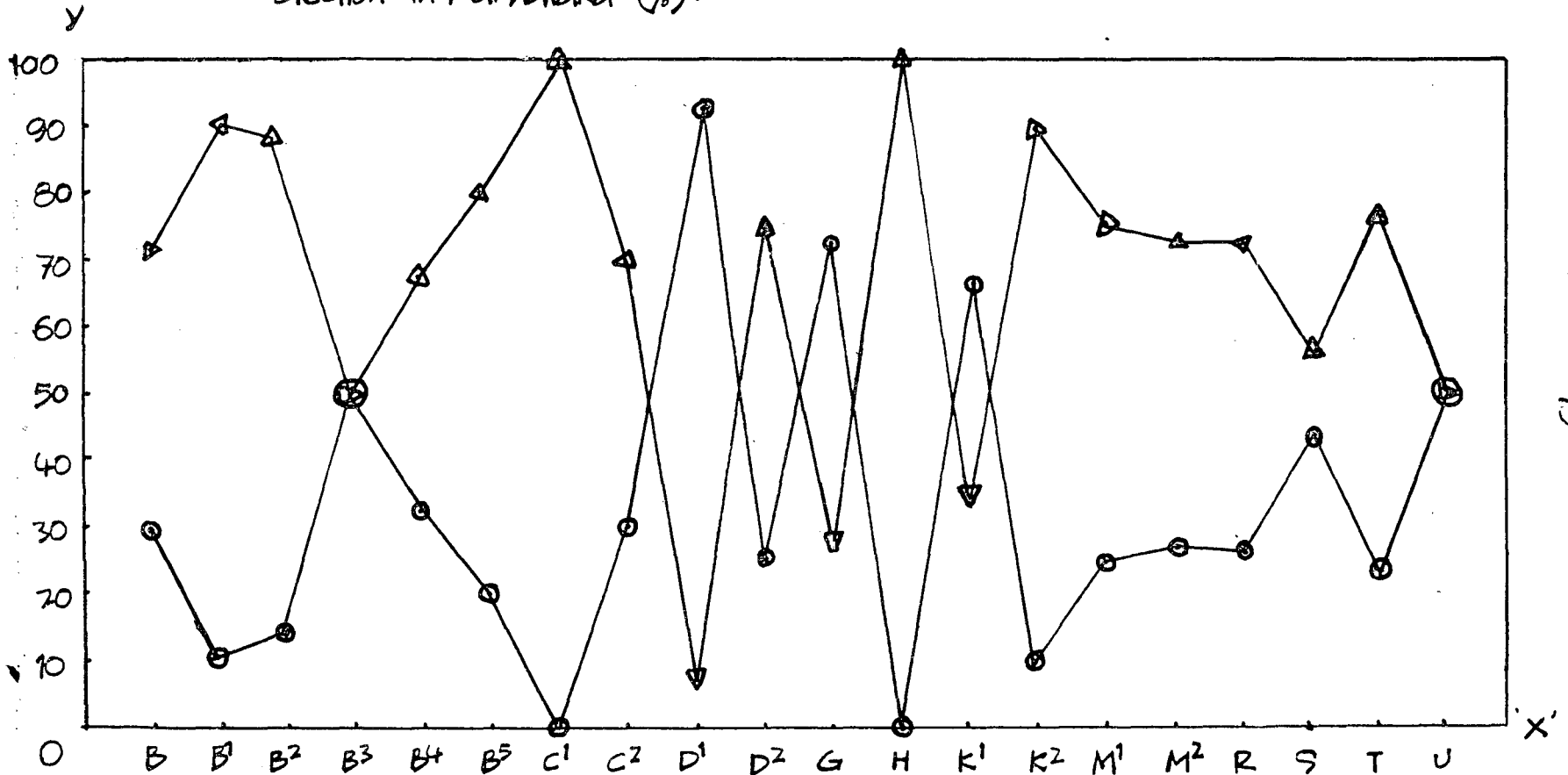
Source: Karnataka (Government), Karnataka State Election Statistics of General Elections to Legislative Assembly, 1983 and 1985, Personnel and Administrative Reforms (Department), Bangalore, Government Press, 1984 and 1986.

The district-wise performance of the Janata Party and the Congress(I) in the 1985 elections and the percentage of the seats won are given in Table 2.7 and Figure 2.2.

The Congress(I) won a majority of seats in D. Kannada, Kodagu and Gulbarga districts. In D. Kannada it won 13 out of 15 seats, most of them were at the cost of the BJP which had 8 seats in the dissolved assembly. In the Congress(I) stronghold district of Gulbarga, the Janata Party made a clean break, winning 8 of the 13 seats which constitute about 73 per cent of the total seats won by both the parties. On the other hand both the parties shared equally in U. Kannada and Bellary. The Janata Party put in a record performance in the Northern Region of Karnataka which has been the Congress stronghold. In this area it won 58 out of the total 95 seats. Belgaum, Dharwad and Bijapur, altogether returned 36 out of 51 seats. Surprisingly the Vokkaliga dominant Chickmagalur, once the stronghold of the Congress(I) supported Janata Party by giving 4 out of the total 6 seats.

It can be observed that the performance of the Janata Party was remarkably fair in the constituencies which recorded a high vote turn out. Of the seats that registered over 70 per cent polling, Janata Party captured 73 per cent and of the constituencies registered between 60 to 70 per cent voter turn out, it captured 58 per cent.

Figure: 2.2 Partywise (Congress(I) and Janata)  
 Seats secured in the 1985 Assembly  
 Election in Karnataka (%).



'x'-axis : Districts  
 'y'-axis : Seats - 1cm = 10%  
 Δ - Janata Party.  
 O - Congress (I) Party.

This became significant since in 180 of the 224 constituencies the voter turn out was in excess of 60 per cent. Whereas the Congress(I) by and large seems to have scored over the Janata Party in the districts where polling was less than 50 per cent.<sup>21</sup> This has not come true in the state as a whole, since there are exceptions.

The Janata Party was able to draw its support substantially from the dominant forward classes/castes like the Lingayat and Vokkaligas. It is evident from the 1985 elections. The party allotted 60 per cent of the tickets to these communities. And the composition of the legislature provides that almost 2/3 of the party's legislators belong to these groups. In contrast, their representation in the Congress is only 21 per cent.<sup>22</sup> Thus the party has a strong base among these communities. It can be said that the party did not intend to antagonise these sections by bringing about any progressive or radical policy measure which would mean self destruction to its very survival in power. The negative approach of the government with regard to the passing of a new land reform policy is said to be exactly a compromise with the interests of

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21 See Deccan Herald, 24 Mar. 1985.

22 Jain, Meenakshi, "Mr. Hegde's Dilemma: Dominant Caste versus the Others", Times of India, 11 Mar. 1985.

these dominant landed class interests. Except attempting to bring about new laws, the government has not shown any interest in implementing the existing land reform law.

The Janata Party with its governmental capacity, have the power to pass its own land reform law in the state, but the Janata government has not taken the risk of passing such a law which would result in the dismantling of the existing class structure. Instead it had attempted in restructuring caste through the reservation policy. It has been nullified due to the state-wide agitation led by the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats. The Karnataka Backward Classes Commission (second) was formed by the Janata government when it came to power in 1983 with Venkataswamy as its chairman. The Commission, with its methodological as well as structural weaknesses<sup>23</sup> in its Report, (21 March 1986) came out with the bold stand in excluding the Lingayat and Vokkaliga castes from the backward list. It was commented that keeping in mind the forthcoming zilla parishad and mandal panchayat elections, the government was forced to yield to the demands of the Vokkaliga communities, who hold 57 seats out of 140

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23 See for details, Thimmaiah, G., "Analysis of Methodology and Contradicting Findings", (a two-part article) on Second Backward Classes Commission, Deccan Herald, 30 Sept. 1986 and 1 Oct. 1986; also see, Nair, Janaki, "Fighting for Backwardness", EPW, 21(42), 18 Oct. 1986, pp. 1837-8.

Janata legislators in the 224 member assembly.<sup>24</sup> The government declared a new reservation policy on 13 October 1986 which has included the Lingayat and Vokkaliga castes in the backward classes and it will cover a population of 89 per cent of the seats for the purposes of reservation in educational institutions and 92 per cent in governmental jobs (although with an income limit of Rs. 10,000).<sup>25</sup> Thus, the benefits of reservation again would be reaped by the forward dominant castes like the Vokkaligas and Lingayats. Though the government is having enormous political power, for its very survival in power, it has to compromise with these dominant castes interests.

It is generally believed that the party was also able to broaden its base among the other backward classes and among the weaker sections as well. As the Chief Minister Hegde remarked "now that the backward castes and minorities and scheduled castes in Karnataka have given their support to the Janata Party, we should take

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24 See Sunday Observer, 28 Sept. to 4 Oct. 1986, and also see, Murthy, Sachidananda, "Every one Wants Backward Tag; Hegde bows to pressure from powerful caste Groups", The Week, 19-25 Oct. 1986; see Nair, Janaki, "Fighting for Backwardness: Venkataswamy Commission Report and After", EPW, 21(42), 18 Oct. 1986, pp. 1837-8.

25 See the Times of India, 8 Oct. 1986; also see for details, The Government Order, on Reservation, dated 13 October 1986, in A New Deal for Backward Classes in Karnataka, Government of Karnataka, Bangalore, Nov. 1986, Appendix III, pp. 92-102.

this opportunity to concretise their faith in us by giving them more opportunities of sharing power".<sup>26</sup> This can be seen from their representation in the legislature as well as in the ministry. Out of 29 backward class MLAs 8 members represented in the cabinet so also scheduled castes with 22 MLAs have 6 ministers.<sup>27</sup>

However, in a bid to woo the backward castes, minorities, scheduled castes and tribes who formed the majority of the population - the government implemented a number of "populist" measures like safe drinking water to every village, Anthyodaya programmes, special concessions to women and children, old age pension, distribution of rice at Rs. 2 per kg., saree-dhoti mangalsutra programme, the text-books and uniforms programme (most of these are the pre-1985 election assurances) etc. have tremendously helped in the 1985 assembly elections. Besides, the large expenditure on draught relief, the diverse concessions for all sections in the 1986 budget, a controversial stand on Kannada issue, played an important role in widening its base among the weaker sections.

Most of these measures were superfluous and "popular" in content. The party and the government failed in bringing

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26 See Indian Express, 24 Mar. 1985.

27 Jain, Meenakshi, art. cit., 11 Mar. 1985.



about any structural changes in the social set up. As a "middlist" party, Janata Party aimed at spreading its base among all sections of the people irrespective of any class, caste or any particular section. The party in order to broaden its base among the cross-sections of people irrespective of class, caste, sex and region and to bring its clean image to the grass-root level, implemented some of the measures like electoral reforms through bringing down the voting age limit from 21 to 18, special provision for nomination of the members from backward classes, scheduled tribe and castes and a 25 per cent reservation for women etc. in the grass-root electoral bodies. Its strategy of recruiting fresh youngsters into politics succeeded in bringing a new "political ethics" in the state politics. As one of such policy measures and part of Janata Party's election manifesto, the Janata Party implemented was, that by "giving power to the people", through conducting the zilla parishad and mandal panchayat elections in the state, as a new experiment on grass-root democracy.<sup>28</sup>

The election result shows that the Congress(1) has staged a come back into the state politics. While in the

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28      Though the Karnataka Zilla Parishad Taluk Panchayat Samithi, Mandal Panchayat and Nyaya Panchayat Act was passed in the state legislature in 1983, it was finally passed with the Presidential assent in the mid 1985. As a new experiment on grass-root democracy, the elections to these bodies have been held on January 2 and 20, 1987. For a detailed analysis of the Act see Chapter III.

assembly elections held in March 1985 it had won only 66 out of 224 seats, the party could secure 395 seats out of 887 zilla parishad seats. The Janata Party in contrast had a tally of 449 seats. The Janata Party lost a significant part of electoral support in districts such as Tumkur, Mandya and Kolar where its performance in the assembly elections was very impressive.

The electoral performance of the Janata Party and Congress Party brought about a new balance of power at the district level. The Janata Party had a clear lead in 11 districts while the Congress(1) won a majority seats in 4 districts. In the district like Chitradurga, the Congress(1) tally of 23 seats was more than the Janata Party score by only two seats, the situation did not appear settled. An important source of such uncertainty lay in the specific statutory provision under which local MLAs, MLCs, and MPs are ex-officio members of the zilla parishads. Therefore, in ultimate analysis, the Congress(1) can hope to dominate only 2 districts, the clear electoral choice in four districts, notwithstanding. On the other hand, the Janata Party will control 17 zilla parishads. However, a healthy outcome of the elections is the emergence of a powerful opposition in 17 districts, the exception being D. Kannada and U. Kannada, where the Congress(1) and Janata Party had secured 51 out of 59 seats and 21 out of

29 seats respectively.<sup>29</sup>

It can be observed from Table 2.8 and Figure 2.3 that the Congress(1) had a majority position in all the four districts i.e. D. Kannada, Chitradurga, Chickmagalur, and Kodagu. All these districts are agriculturally 'developed', while the two of them, Chickmagalur and D. Kannada are ranked 'developed' on the basis of available rural facilities. It is observed that the Congress(1) had secured a majority seats in the highly developed or 'fairly developed' districts.<sup>30</sup> The less developed and 'backward' districts either elected the Janata Party or gave indecisive verdicts, with the exception of two highly developed districts like Shimoga and Hassan, where the Janata Party's performance was impressive. It shows that the Janata Party, by and large, succeeded in wooing the illiterate rural masses.

It is alleged that the Zilla Parishad and mandal elections gave rise to the reestablishing of the caste factor at the grass-root level. In spite of the Janata Party's strategy by sticking to caste while selecting candidates for the contests<sup>31</sup>, it was not able to make

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29 See Deccan Herald, 23 Jun. 1987; also see Ray, Amal, "New Panchayat System in Karnataka: Elections and After", EPW, 22(7), 14 Feb. 1987, pp. 262-4.

30 Ray, Amal, ibid., p. 263.

31 This point is based on the interview with a minority Janata MLA, Roshan Baig (Bangalore), 11 Jan. 1987.

Table 2.8

Party-wise Distribution of Seats in the Zilla  
Parishad Elections in Karnataka 1987

S.No.	Zilla Parishad	Total Seats	Results Declared	JNP	INC(1)	BJP	CPM	IND.	Others
1	Bangalore	39	39	26	13	-	-	-	-
2	Belgaum	73	72	36	20	-	-	9	7
3	Bellary	33	33	19	14	-	-	-	-
4	Bidar	29	27	14	11	-	-	1	1
5	Bijapur	62	62	38	23	-	-	1	-
6	Chickmagalur	26	26	11	14	1	-	-	-
7	Chitradurga	45	44	21	23	-	-	-	-
8	D. Kannada	59	59	6	51	1	-	1	-
9	Dharwad	68	68	39	28	-	-	1	-
10	Bulbarga	55	55	31	23	-	1	-	-
11	Hassan	38	38	25	13	-	-	-	-
12	Kolar	49	49	25	22	-	-	2	-
13	Kodagu	31	31	10	17	1	-	3	-
14	Mandya	40	40	19	19	-	-	2	-

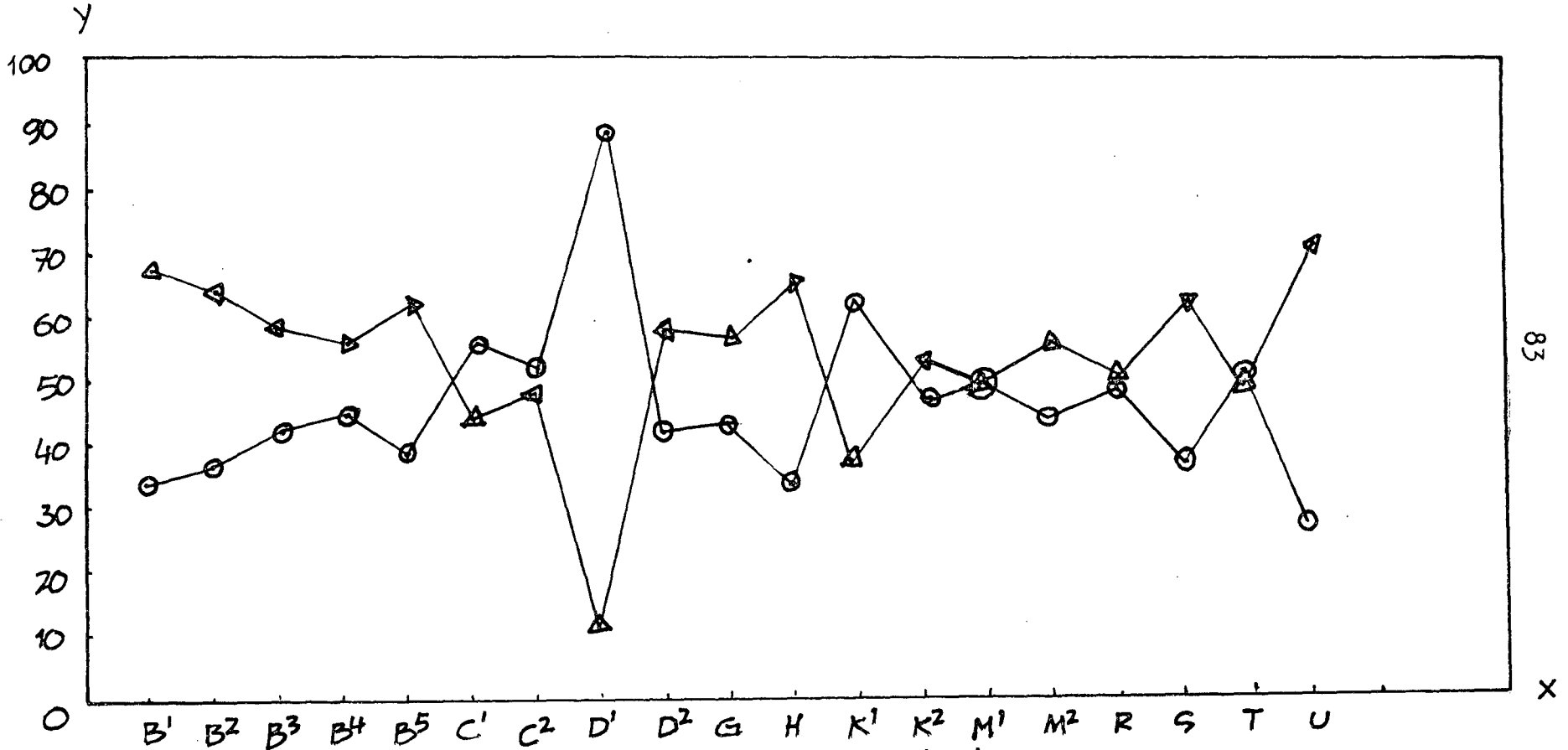
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Table 2.8 Cont'd ...

S.No.	Zilla Parishad	Total Seats	Results Declared	JNP	INC(1)	BJP	CPM	IND.	Others
15	Mysore	64	64	34	27	-	-	3	-
16	Raichur	49	49	24	23	-	1	1	-
17	Shimoga	41	41	24	14	3	-	-	-
18	Tumkur	57	56	26	27	-	-	3	-
19	U. Kannada	29	29	21	8	-	-	-	-
Total		887	881	449	390	6	2	27	8

Source: Prajavani (Bangalore), 4 Jan. 1987.

Figure : 2.3 Partywise (Congress and Janata)  
 Seats secured in the Zilla Parishad Elections in Karnataka, 1987  
 (%)



'X'-axis : Districts  
 'Y'-axis : Seats - 1cm = 10%  
 Δ - Janata Party  
 ○ - Congress Party.

a mark in the districts with a high rural literacy rates. For instance, Dakshina Kannada and Kodagu which have the highest literacy rates elected Congress(I). All the literacy wise 'backward' districts either chose the Janata Party or voted indcisively. Gulbarga with lowest rural literacy rate (18.19) gave the Janata Party a clear majority, whereas Raichur and Bidar with very low literacy rates (20.97 and 21.79) were found equally divided in terms of their support between two main rivalries.<sup>32</sup>

The communities Scheduled Caste/Tribe and Muslims seem to have voted indecisively. The districts Chitradurga, Kolar, and Bellary and Gulbarga, where the district-wise percentage of SCs/STs among the rural population range roughly from 30 to 37.<sup>33</sup> The alienation of a major chunk of SC/ST voters from the ruling party in places like Kolar and Chitradurga can be attributed to local rather than general factors. Similarly in case of the Muslims, no general voting pattern emerged. In Bidar with a highest Muslim concentration among all districts the Congress(I) gained, but this was offset by its loss in Gulbarga where too this section is numerically significant.<sup>34</sup>

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32 Ray, Amal, art. cit.

33 Ibid., p. 264.

34 Ibid.

The electoral performance of the parties in the mandal panchayat shows no significant change in the inter-party equations in the rural Karnataka as brought in earlier by Zilla Parishad polls. The overall Janata Party's lead had been maintained and was improved and the Congress(1) came as a close second (see Table 2.9 and Figure 3.4). However, in many of the constituencies the local factors played a decisive role.<sup>35</sup> The emergence of BJP as a third force in rural politics, especially in three districts D. Kannada, Kodagu and Shimoga is a new development. In the earlier zilla parishad and assembly election it had performed badly. The Janata Party had made a significant dent in the Congress(1)'s traditional support-bases in D. Kannada and Kodagu, although the latter won a majority of seats in both.

In Dakshina Kannada Janata Party's improvement was remarkable in that in 18 days it recovered from a trouncing to a respectable 1,300-odd seats to the Congress(1)'s 1800 odd. Another view was in the mandal elections, other than the local factors, the personal background of the candidates played an important role in spite of the party affiliations of the candidate.<sup>36</sup> This proposition may become more

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35 Baig, Roshan, op. cit.

36 The interview with the elected members of the Indabettu Mandal Panchayat (Dakshina Kannada District) 10 Feb. 1981.



Table 2.9

Party-wise Distribution of Seats in the Mandal  
Panchayat Elections in Karnataka 1987

S.No.	Districts	Total Seats	Total Declared	JNP	INC(1)	BJP	Others	Stayed Repoll
1	Bangalore	2515	2513	1474	903	3	133	2
2	Belgaum	4877	4802	2149	1241	-	1412	75
3	Bellary	2017	2013	1046	879	-	88	4
4	Bidar	1782	1772	820	608	-	344	10
5	Bijapur	3986	3889	2171	1362	4	352	97
6	Chickmagalur	1602	1509	743	556	16	194	93
7	Chitradurga	2838	2810	1442	1187	7	174	28
8	D. Kannada	3913	3743	1300	1787	264	392	170
9	Dharwad	4058	3951	2078	1599	-	274	107
10	Gulbarga	3615	3615	1853	1451	8	303	-
11	Hassan	2424	2415	1408	800	8	199	9
12	Kolar	3067	3033	1590	1177	-	266	31
13	Kodagu	853	852	342	345	68	97	1
14	Mandya	2523	2517	1232	1040	1	244	5

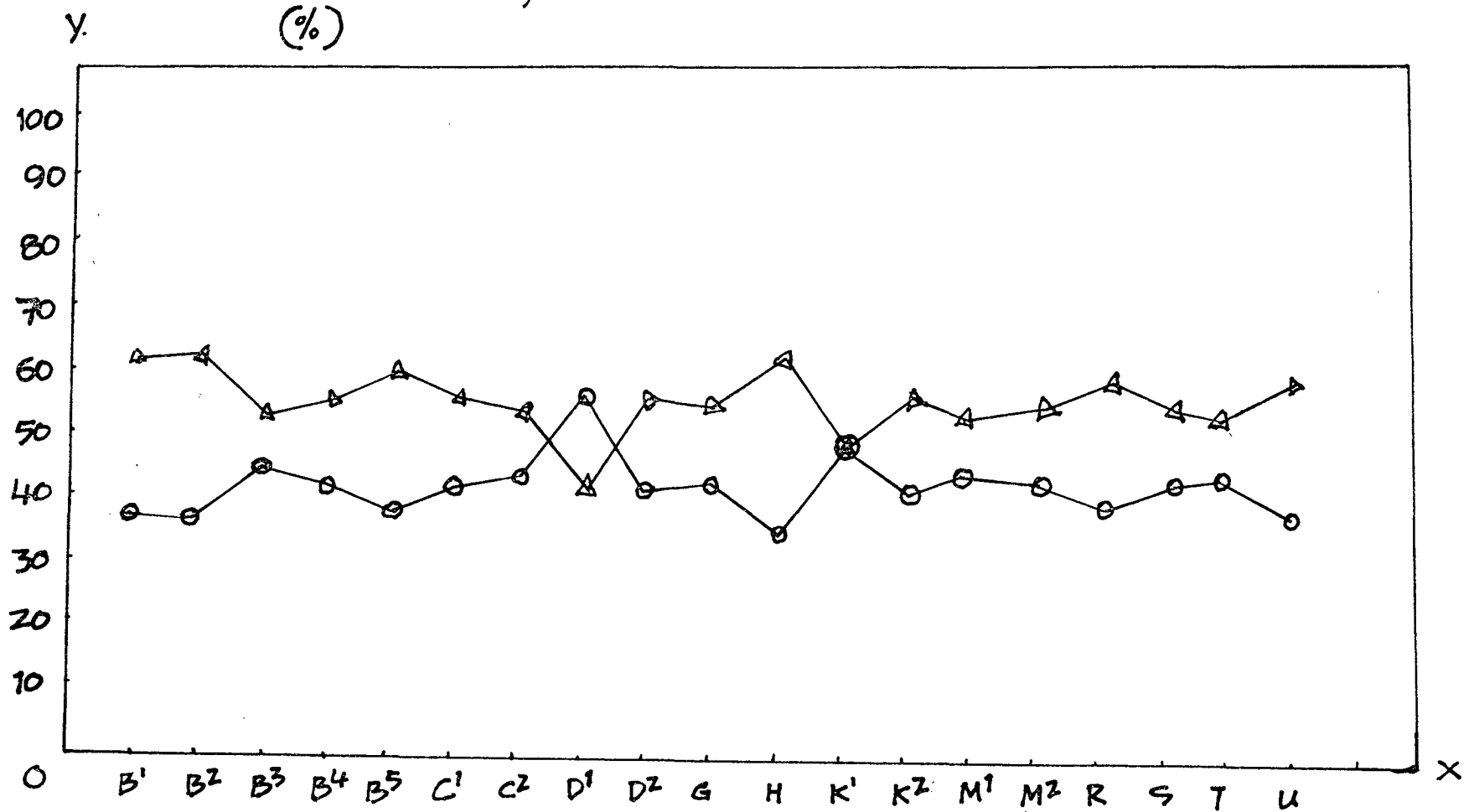
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Table 2.9 Contd...

S.No.	Districts	Total Seats	Total Declared	JNP	INC( I)	BJP	Others	Stayed Repoll
15	Mysore	3937	3929	2047	1590	-	292	8
16	Raichur	3099	3024	1679	1134	-	211	75
17	Shimoga	2540	2534	1209	933	171	221	6
18	Tumkur	3650	3648	1789	1449	16	394	2
19	U. Kannada	1673	1656	911	580	10	150	17
	Total	54894	54371	27333	20679	576	5783	523

Source: Prajavani (Bangalore), 23 Jan. 1987.

Figure: 2.4 Partywise (Congress and Janata) seats secured in the Mandal Panchayat Elections in Karnataka 1987.



X axis: Districts  
 Y axis: Seats - 1cm = 10%  
 Δ - Janata Party.  
 O - Congress (I) Party.

sound if we are taking into consideration the performance of the independents. The election result further shows that the voting behaviour of SCs/STs or of Muslims in mandal panchayat elections was influenced by essentially the local abovesaid factors than any other considerations.<sup>37</sup>

Though there was no radical change in the voting pattern between the Zilla Parishad and mandal elections, the Janata assigned new political roles to the newly recruited workers which helped in getting substantial support in the areas of Congress(1) dominance. It is observed that the Janata Party recruited its candidates afresh who are known locally and their uncorrupt and non-controversial stature helped the Janata Party in developing new bases in the rural areas.<sup>38</sup> This can be seen, in the Zilla Parishad elections in the districts Dakshina Kannada and Dodagu where the Janata Party won only 37 and 11 per cent of the total seats, whereas in the mandal elections it improved significantly by winning 57 and 42 per cent respectively.

However while finally examining several bases of the Janata Party, it may be observed that the party has not shown much enthusiasm in broadening its base among

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37 Ray, Amal, art. cit., p. 263.

38 Interview with Valerian Rodrigues, Mangalore University, Mangalore, 6 Mar. 1987.

the working class and among the students in a systematic way. The Janata government's reluctance in passing labour legislation also shows that it has not aimed at broadening its base on a cadre basis among the youth, student and among the working class, thus sticking to a parochial position.

Being in power for nearly four years, the Janata Party in Karnataka succeeded in broadening its base among a cross-section of the society to a considerable extent. The absence of a land reform and the failure of the reservation policy shows the grip of the class/caste dominance of Vokkaliga and Lingayat over the Janata Party government. But the various measures like the provision of safe drinking water to all villages, old age pension, Anthyodaya programme, special concessions to the women and children, supply of rice at Rs. 2 per kg., the saree-dhoti-mangala-sutra programme, etc., helped in broadening its base among the weaker sections and minorities. The successful attempt of the party in decentralising the political power through the introduction of new political institutions like zilla parishads and mandal panchayats, helped the process of political recruitment. The analysis of the various elections shows that the Janata Party, instead of sticking to a particular district has substantially percolated into the areas of Congress stronghold

both at the regional as well as at the local level. It is to be noted that there was no enthusiastic attempt by the party leadership in developing its bases through either cadre building or through front organisations like the youth, student and trade union. In short, avowing to its middlist's nature the Janata Party in Karnataka possesses a "popular" base rather than that of any particular class, caste, regional or cadre one.

Chapter 111

PANCHAYATI RAJ AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION  
IN KARNATAKA

## Chapter 11I

### PANCHAYATI RAJ AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION IN KARNATAKA

#### A. Panchayati Raj in India

There is no socio-political programme launched by the government in independent India which generated as much enthusiasm and participation of the people, as the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).<sup>1</sup> The introduction of panchayati raj which associates the representative of the people with the decision making process to ensure greater popular involvement in developmental process has been described not only an innovation<sup>2</sup> but as a revolution.<sup>3</sup> The "Panchayati Raj", to quote the Third Five Year Plan document, "constitutes fundamental and far reaching change in the structure of district administration and in the pattern of rural development".<sup>4</sup> These institutions are looked upon as agents to enhance political awakening and

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- 1 Mathew, George, ed., Panchayati Raj in Karnataka Today, New Delhi: Concept, 1986, p. 1.
  - 2 Narain, Iqbal, and Mathur, P.C., Old Controls and New Challenges, A Report on Pattern of Controls and Supervision of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Madras, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, Dept. of Political Science, Jaipur, 1967, p. 121.
  - 3 Meddic, H., Panchayat Raj - A Study of Rural Local Government in India, London: Longman, 1970, p. 305.
  - 4 Sah, B.L., "Panchayati Raj: Its Functioning and Difficulties", Kurukshetra, Apr. 1986, p. 13.



accelerate economic development. It is observed that "self sustaining institutions should be created to ensure public participation and to give development coherence and meaning in political life".<sup>5</sup>

Article 38 of the Indian Constitution laid down that "the state shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as efficiently as it may, a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of national life".<sup>6</sup> For reviving the ancient system of self-governance, Article 40, further obligates the state to "take steps to organize the village panchayats and endow them with such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government".<sup>7</sup>

Thus, keeping Article 40 of the Indian Constitution in accordance, the Balwantrai Mehta Committee (January 1957) recommended for 'democratic decentralization' of administrative machinery at the village, block and district level by formation of village panchayat, panchayat samithis, and zilla parishads respectively. Accordingly, a three-tier system came into existence in many states including

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5        Ibid.

6        Singh, Sita Ram, "Revitalisation of Panchayats", Kurukshetra, Apr. 1986, p. 4.

7        Ibid.

Karnataka in 1959. Though the panchayats had been functioning in Karnataka (the then Mysore) before the independence<sup>8</sup>, it was through the passing of the Mysore Village Panchayats Local Boards Act of 1959 that the entire state was brought under the uniform pattern of Panchayati Raj Institutions.<sup>9</sup>

A three tier Panchayat Raj structure, Panchayat at village/group of villages level, the Taluk Development Board (TDB) or councils at the taluk level and District Development Council (DDC) at the district level, came into existence in many states, including Karnataka (see Figure 3.1).<sup>10</sup>

These Panchayat Raj structures did not last long in many states. Except in Gujarat and Maharashtra, the PRIs in other states were not successful in achieving their objectives to a desirable extent. The Asok Mehta Committee<sup>11</sup> recorded that "the story of panchayat raj has been a story of ups and downs. It seems to have passed through three

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8 For a brief history of the self-government in Mysore, see Rajashekharaiyah, A.M., "Local Self-Government in Mysore", in Halappa, G.S., ed., Studies in State Administration, Karnataka University, Dharwad, 1970.

9 Bhargava, B.S., Panchayati Raj Institutions, New Delhi: Jackson, 1982, p. 26.

10 Ibid., p. 28.

11 The Janata Government appointed on 12 December 1977 a committee headed by Asok Mehta, to enquire into the working of PRIs and to suggest measures to strengthen them. It came out with its report entitled Report of the Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions, New Delhi, 1978.

Figure 3.1

District level	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">           District Development Council DDC         </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Dy Commissioner is the Chairman</li> <li>(b) Local MLAs, MPs and MLCs with right to vote</li> <li>(c) President of the TDBs</li> <li>(d) District level officers nominated govt. (upto 15)</li> <li>(e) Nominated SC and women members</li> </ul>
Taluk level	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">           Taluk Development Boards TDBs         </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) 15 to 19 members elected by the electorate of the taluk</li> <li>(b) Local MLAs and MLCs without the right to hold office</li> <li>(c) Two women</li> <li>(d) Representatives of SCs and STs in proportion to their population</li> <li>(e) The President is elected by the members</li> </ul>
Village or group of villages/ town level	<div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">           Village Panchayat VP / TP         </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) 11 to 19 members elected through secret ballot</li> <li>(b) The Chairman is elected by the members.</li> </ul>

phases: the phase of ascending from 1959 to 1964; the phase of stagnation from 1965 to 1969 and phase of decline from 1969 to 1971".<sup>12</sup> The different surveys of the functioning of the Panchayati Raj made by various committees set up by the Centre and state governments pointed out some of the drawbacks, which accompanied the constitution of the panchayati raj. Among other some of these drawbacks were:<sup>13</sup>

- (i) a very largest number of elected leaders belonging to upper class/caste discriminated against the lower class/caste and poor people.
- (ii) the leadership at the block and village levels had not shown enough awareness and capacity to give priority to development functions.

The Asok Mehta Committee observed that "a number of developments in the past have conspired to undermine the panchayati raj structure and made them ineffective. In fact, except in Maharashtra and Gujarat, the panchayati raj institutions have been rarely given an opportunity to take up planning of implementational work on a sizeable scale .... In fact there was a movement in the opposite direction".<sup>14</sup> The Committee further stated that "The panchayati raj institutions are dominated by economically

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12 Bhargava, B.S., op. cit., p. 4.

13 Singh, Sita Ram, art. cit., p. 6.

14 ibid.

and socially privileged sections of society and have as such facilitated the emergence of oligarchic forces yielding no benefits to weaker sections. The performance of PRIs has also been vitiated by political factionalism rather than developmental thrust either warped or diluted. Corruption, inefficiency, scant regard for procedures, political interference in a day to day administration, parochial loyalties, motivated actions, power concentration instead of service consciousness - all these have seriously limited the utility of panchayat raj for average villager".<sup>15</sup>

The studies by Etienne and Desai revealed that a small group of people possessing social, economic and political leverage used panchayati raj institutions to gain substantial economic and political benefits to themselves.<sup>16</sup> Vyas, Chaudhary and Shama have also brought out that the weaker sections of the rural population were not making use of the educational facilities.<sup>17</sup> Most of the central and state governmental policies, it was the dominant minority which captured it. The services did not percolate down to the majority of the rural poor. In this regard, the Sixth Five Year Plan 1978-83 admitted:

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15 Ibid., p. 7.

16 Shah, B.L., art. cit., p. 13.

17 Ibid.

Much of the benefits from infrastructure have occurred largely to the relatively affluent .... Many areas of the country remain backward and regional disparities in agricultural development have increased. Many segments of population like the scheduled castes and tribes have not shared fully in the benefits of the growth. (18)

Keeping all these inadequacies in mind, the Asok Mehta Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions made the following important recommendations:

- (i) the creation of a two-tier system of Panchayati Raj - a district-zilla parishad and a Mandal Panchayat (instead of three-tier system in vogue).
- (ii) Open participation by the political parties in panchayati raj elections. The recommendations for adoption of two-tier system, however did not find favour with the Chief Ministers' Conference in 1979. But a set of guidelines were issued on the basis of consensus reached regarding the village committee, gram sabha, nyaya panchayat and participation of the political parties, devolution and delegation of powers and authority, more finances and safeguards etc. for strengthening panchayati raj institutions.<sup>19</sup>

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18 Ibid.

19 For detailed analysis of the Asok Mehta Committee Report, see Bhargava, B.S., "Asok Mehta Committee Report - Major Recommendations; Issues and Problems", Quarterly of LSGI (Bombay), 19(4), Issue no. 196, Apr-Jun. 1979, pp. 239-48; also see "States disagree with Asok Mehta Report", Deccan Herald, 24 Apr. 1979, p. 9.

## B. Objectives

The major objective of Panchayati Raj Institutions is based on the principle of democratic decentralization of power, i.e. 'power to the people'. Even in the Indian national movement for political freedom village panchayats were central to its ideological framework. Gandhiji had categorically stated his vision of village panchayat in the following words:

My idea of village swaraj is that it is a complete republic independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity .... The government of the village will be conducted by the panchayat of free persons annually elected by the adult villagers, male and female, possessing minimum prescribed qualifications. There will be no system of punishment in the accepted sense, the panchayat will be the legislative, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its own officer. Here there is perfect democracy based upon individual freedom. (20)

It is generally considered that the panchayati raj institutions are the "living creature of the local government"<sup>21</sup>, sincerely believed in its immense potentiality for democratic decentralization. When the states

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20 Gandhi, M.K., "My Idea of Village Swaraj", Harijan, 26 Jul. 1942.

21 Datta, Abhijit, "Decentralisation and Local Government Reform in India", Indian Journal of Public Administration, 31(3), Jul.-Sept. 1985, p. 562.

of Rajasthan inaugurated the PRIs for the first time, Nehru hailed it as "the most revolutionary and historical step in the context of new India".<sup>22</sup>

The Karnataka Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayat Act (1985) was more or less based on the principles enumerated in the Asok Mehta Committee report. The major objectives of the Act were to give highest priority to rural development, increase agricultural production, create employment, eradication of poverty and bring about all round development of village population through a decentralized planning and implementation.<sup>23</sup> Baxi considered that major objective of the Act has been the progressive extension of administrative state power<sup>24</sup> to the village level.

C. The Karnataka Model of Panchayati Raj Institutions

The Karnataka Zilla Parishad, Taluk Panchayat Samities, Mandal Panchayat and Nyaya Panchayat Act passed in the legislature in 1983, received the presidential assent on 10 June 1985. For the first time in the country,

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22 Mathew, George, art. cit., p. 5.

23 Sab, Abdul Nazir, "Towards a Four-Pillar State", in Mathew, George, ed., Panchayat Raj in Karnataka Today, art. cit., p. 50.

24 Baxi, Upendra, "Participatory Justice: A Critique of Nyaya Panchayat in Karnataka, in Mathew, George, ed., op. cit., p. 80.



all functions and functionaries of the development at and below district level are proposed to be transformed to the new institutions of the people's representatives.<sup>25</sup>

In 1956 when the Karnataka (the then Mysore) came into being, the state had inherited different local self government laws. The Karnataka village Panchayat and Local Boards Act of 1959 was only an attempt at uniform legislation. There was no effort to confer real powers and resources on the panchayati raj institutions. On the basis of the Kondaji Basappa Committee report (1963) a Bill was introduced in 1964 to establish a three-tier structure. The Bill was referred to a joint select committee of the legislature. Though the committee enhanced powers to the Panchayati Raj Institutions, nothing came out of it since the then government and the ruling party were not prepared to experiment with all the recommendations.<sup>26</sup>

The important features of the Karnataka Act are:

- (1) District Rural Development Authorities constituted for implementation of poverty alleviation programmes

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25 Mukarji, Nirmal, "Karnataka District Government: Federalising the State Polity", Indian Express, 14 Apr. 1986.

26 Bhargava, B.S., Panchayat Raj Institutions, New Delhi: Ashish, 1979, p. 49.

- shall be abolished on the setting up of the Zilla Parishads and their functions, assets and liabilities stand transferred to the Zilla Parishad. All the district level officers and their functions are brought under the control and supervision of the Zilla Parishads. A chief secretary of the status of a district commissioner will be in charge of all the executive functions of the Zilla Parishad.
- (ii) Below the state, there will be a Zilla Parishad with the directly elected members and its chairman is elected from among the members.
- (iii) At the grass-root level there will be a Mandal Panchayat with independent executive functions. The role of the middle tier - the Taluk Panchayat Samithi - composed of the nominated members by the government with the function of supervision and coordination.<sup>27</sup>

According to Nimal Mukarji, there are two important aspects of the Karnataka Act. Firstly, the total transference is visualised in the development field. Secondly, the government's intention is to form a full-fledged district government. He views the Karnataka model

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27 Karnataka (Government), Karnataka Zilla Parishads, Taluk Panchayat Samities, Mandal Panchayat and Nyaya Panchayat, Act 1983, Bangalore.

as a first step in the structural reform of the politico-administration system.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, B.K. Chandrashekar observes that it was clearly not revolutionary. What was important about it was its context, that is, this was the first time that a government in Karnataka had displayed the political will to confer real powers and resources on panchayati raj institutions.<sup>29</sup>

The Gandhian approach to Panchayati raj institutions visualises self-governing villages where power would be concentrated. This concept containing are elements of revivalism is intended to free the self government villages from politics and politicians. Jayaprakash Narayan's writings on Panchayati Raj further representing development of the Gandhian concept, suggested that Panchayati Raj Institutions should not be regarded as agencies of national bodies or organisations. Gram Sabhas comprising all the adults of the village shall form the foundation of local self-government and the village committees should be the executive organs of the general meetings of the Gram Sabha.<sup>30</sup>

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28 Mukarji, Nirmal, "The Karnataka Model of District Government", in Mathew, George, ed., Panchayat ..., op. cit., p. 68.

29 Chandrashekar, B.K., "Panchayat Raj Law in Karnataka; Janata Initiation in Decentralisation", EPW, 19(16), 21 Apr. 1984, p. 683.

30 Ibid.

Another approach emphasises decentralisation as an important value in that it enables people to participate in the decision making and to accept responsibility. Planning functions and resources should be taken to the district centre and to the local level. The theory of participatory democracy is similar to this approach as well as Gandhian thinking. Therefore the political pressure from below upwards is sought to be promoted.<sup>31</sup>

#### Panchayat Tiers

The Karnataka Panchayati Raj Act 1985 provides a three-tier panchayat raj set up establishing the Zilla Parishad, Taluk Panchayat Samithi, and Mandal Panchayat, based more or less on the principles of Asok Mehta Committee Report. The major departure between the present act and the previous reports, as Nazir Sab rightly points out is that "Karnataka not only separated planning at the district level, but also integrated the plan. For example, a District Rural Development Society (DRDS) was created to implement poverty eradication programme at the district level. The DRDS does not at all come into the planning process at the district level. Now in the act DRDS programmes will be totally merged in Zilla Parishad. The whole planning

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31      ibid., p. 684.

process will be integrated at the district level".<sup>32</sup> The act also provides for the institution of Gram Sabha at the village level of the revenue village and Nyaya Panchayat at the Mandal level. The latter will come into force in Karnataka after five years.

### Gram Sabha

#### Composition

Clause 3 of the Act provides for a Gram Sabha. All those on the electoral rolls of the Zilla Parishads pertaining to the village will constitute the Gram Sabha. It will meet twice in a year, where the following items shall be discussed: (a) the implementation of the development programmes within the village; (b) the proposals for any new programmes for the development of the village and unity and integration of all sections of the society in the village; (c) building up of Land Army of all able bodied persons in the village; (d) programmes of adult education within the village, and (e) such other matters as may be prescribed.<sup>33</sup>

The Gram Sabha is also expected to discuss a report, which will be placed before it by the Mandal Panchayat, of

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32 Sab, Abdul Nazir, art. cit., p. 56.

33 The Karnataka Zilla Parishad, Taluk Panchayat Samithis, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats Act, 1983, Clause 3, subclauses 1-8, pp. 6-7.

the development programmes relating to the village undertaken during the previous year and those that are to be taken up during the current year. Every meeting of the Gram Sabha will be presided over by the Pradhan of the concerned Mandal Panchayat. It is also required to prepare and promote development scheme of the village; to organise sanitation and drainage; to mobilise voluntary labour and contributions in kind and cash for community welfare programme and to assist the Mandal Panchayat in the implementation of developmental schemes.<sup>34</sup>

However, this is not a new innovation. Even the Act of 1959 provides this kind of provisions.<sup>35</sup> The institution of Gram Sabha has not been successful. It did not evoke substantial public participation and there has been almost total failure in fulfilling the prescribed functions because of inherent weaknesses, say for example, lack of proper publicity and scheduling of meetings; apalling of the chief of the Gram Sabha; lack of finance and trained people.<sup>36</sup> And lack of political interest and administrative indifference.

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34 Chandrashekar, B.K., art. cit., p. 684.

35 See for details, Bhargava, B.S. et al., op. cit.

36 See Shivaiah, M., Panchayat Raj: An Analytical Survey, Hyderabad: NIRD, 1976, pp. 123-5.

Mandal Panchayat

Chapter 111 of the Act deals with the establishment and constitution of the Mandal Panchayat. A Mandal Panchayat is brought into existence upon a declaration by the Deputy Commissioner of any area comprising a revenue village or a group of villages having a population of not less than 10,000 to 11,000 as a mandal. It is however provided that in Malnad districts of Chickmagalur, Dakshina Kannada, Kodagu, Shimoga and Uttara Kannada, a population of 5,000 is sufficient to constitute a mandal panchayat. The area of a mandal may be enlarged or reduced but not the stipulated population.

Composition

The membership of the Mandal Panchayat will range between 20 to 22, and in case of Malnad district Panchayats the members will be 10. One member is elected for every 500 population. Once so constituted mandal 'panchayat' will become a 'body corporate', i.e. it will acquire a legal personality of its own so that it can hold property, sue and be sued by its name and so on.<sup>37</sup> Seats are reserved for women, backward classes and SCs and STs. Twenty five per cent of the seats are reserved for women.

Two persons shall be nominated from the backward classes by the government in case they are not represented.

### Candidates and Selection

Any person whose name is in the list of voters is qualified to be a candidate.<sup>38</sup> A person will be disqualified from being elected as a member, (or being a candidate) if he is below 21 years of age or if he is not ordinarily a resident in the mandal or if he has been dismissed from government service etc. A member will lose his membership if he absents himself from more than three consecutive ordinary meetings without the leave of the Mandal Panchayat or is absent from the mandal for more than four consecutive months.<sup>39</sup> All the usual provisions found in the election law of the country - the Representation of People Act 1951 - are reproduced to govern the conduct of elections, the making of an election petition and its trial by Munsiff.<sup>40</sup>

### Pradhana and Upa-Pradhana

The Mandal Panchayat shall elect two members to be pradhana and upa-pradhana. Any dispute regarding the validity of the election will be decided by the Munsiff.<sup>41</sup>

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38        Clause 10, p. 13.

39        Clause 12(iii), p. 15.

40        Clause 19.

41        Clause 42-43, p. 31.



They will be in office till the expiry of their term of office as a member of the Mandal Panchayat. The Pradhana and Upa-pradhana are paid a monthly salary of Rs. 300/- and Rs. 150/- respectively.<sup>42</sup>

The act lays down elaborate mandatory provisions empowering the Deputy Commissioner to monitor the process of resignation or adaption of motions of no-confidence against, the Pradhana and Upa-pradhana.<sup>43</sup> A written notice of the no-confidence motion, signed by not less than half of the total members should be delivered to the Deputy Commissioner. He shall then convene a meeting at which he will preside but shall not speak or vote on the motion. At least 2/3 of the total number of members of the mandal panchayat need to support the motion to unseat a Pradhana or Upa-pradhana.<sup>44</sup>

The implication of involving the Deputy Commissioner in this area is that where as the higher body, Zilla Parishad may be able to supervise or control budget and development programmes of the mandal panchayat he may find it awkward

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42        Clause 44, p. 32.

43        The Panchayati Raj Amendment Bill passed on 6 March 1987 adopted the provision that the power of the Assistant Commissioner, instead of the Deputy Commissioner, to chair the Mandal Panchayat meeting convened for the purpose of passing no-confidence motion, see Deccan Herald, 7 Mar. 1987.

44        Clause 46-47, pp. 32-33.

to exercise disciplinary control. It is because of the presence of a representative of Mandal Panchayat in the Zilla Parishad and his possible role in maintaining a balance of power in the Zilla Parishad. There is some merit in this method and in any case the motion of no-confidence has to be discussed in the Mandal Panchayat.

### Functions and Powers<sup>45</sup>

Chapter IV of the Act provides a broad picture of the powers and functions of the Mandal Panchayats. They are classified as obligatory, discretionary and transferred functions. Thus, first, it shall be the duty of the panchayat to make reasonable provisions within the village regarding sanitation and health, which include construction and maintenance of wells, tanks and supply of water, sanitation, provisions of public latrines etc., and some regulatory functions such as regulation of building and shops, of the curing, tanning and dyeing skins and hides.

The Mandal Panchayat will have three standing committees, through which it functions. The committees are: 'production committee', concerned with agriculture, animal husbandry, and rural industries, a 'social justice committee', to look after the interests of scheduled castes, tribes

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45            Clause 56-59, pp. 38-44.

backward classes and women, and an 'amenities committee' to perform functions in respect of education, public health and public works.<sup>46</sup>

A look into the functions, i.e. 'implementational', 'promotional', 'conventional' and 'municipal' functions - to use the classification of the Asok Mehta Committee, represent nothing new or path breaking. They are all largely an amalgam of what the Act of 1959 contains, with an exception of agriculture and animal husbandry.

#### Mandal Panchayat Finance

The act provides a 'Mandal Panchayat Fund',<sup>47</sup> which consists of allotment of funds by the government or the Zilla Parishad; grants and loans by those agencies, proceeds from tax on buildings, entertainment, markets, water cess etc. Further the government will be contributing a substantial part of the mandal panchayat fund. Accordingly, there will be a finance commission to decide about the division of economic and other sources. In addition to the plan resources, the government will transfer Rs. 30 crores to the Mandal Panchayats annually, out of which

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46        Clause 60, p. 44.

47        Chapter V of the Act, Clause 114, p. 73.

75 per cent will remain with the Mandal Panchayats and 25 per cent goes to the Zilla Parishads.<sup>48</sup>

### Administration

The Mandal Panchayat's financial as well as personnel matters are subject to the supervision of Zilla Parishad. The annual budget estimate after approval by the Mandal Panchayat should be forwarded to the Zilla Parishad for its approval. Similarly the secretary of the Mandal Panchayat, whose task is to maintain accounts, shall send to the Zilla Parishad the annual statement of accounts and the yearly reports of the administration of the Mandal Panchayat.<sup>49</sup> The accounts have to be audited by an auditor of the state government and he should send a copy of it to the Mandal Panchayat and to the Zilla Parishad. The Zilla Parishad has far reaching powers in case of irregularities.<sup>50</sup>

The Mandal Panchayat will have a secretary who shall be appointed by Zilla Parishad. As regards other administrative personnel, the panchayat has to prepare a schedule of employees for submission to the Zilla Parishad for information. However, it is free to appoint its

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48 Sab, Abdul Nazir, "Towards ....", art. cit., p. 58.

49 Clause 126, p. 82.

50 ibid.

employees and to pay their salary from the panchayat fund.<sup>51</sup>

In fine, as far as the area, size, population and financial sources of the Mandal Panchayats are concerned, it is beyond the capacity of Mandal Panchayats to perform all the specified functions. Most of the developmental functions in the taluka level were hitherto done by the block development boards, but are now assigned to the Mandal Panchayats. Secondly, it is an subordinate body to the Zilla Parishad as well as to the Gram Sabha. Regarding its accountability to the Gram Sabha, Nazir Sab observed:

A more powerful weapon ... for the sake of accountability is a Gram Sabha which will not be elected nor has it been vested with any executive power. But the Gram Sabha is going to play a crucial role in real politics because the Mandal is elected from the village area. Whoever is elected to the Mandal is accountable to the Gram Sabha. It is mandatory on the part of the mandal and the Zilla Parishad to explain their activities within the jurisdiction of the village. (52)

#### Taluk Panchayat Samithi

In the Act there is a provision for a Taluk Panchayat Samithi at the taluk level.<sup>53</sup> It consists of members

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51 Clause 121-123, p. 80.

52 Sab, Abdul Nazir, "Towards ...", art. cit., p. 59.

53 The Act 1983, Chapter VII, Clause 135, p. 93.

of the Zilla Parishad, and State legislators representing the whole or part of the taluk whose constituencies lie within the taluk, Pradhana of Mandal Panchayat, Presidents of Primary Land Development Bank and Taluk Agricultural Produce Cooperative Marketing Society and 5 co-opted members of the SCs, STs, backward classes and women. The MLA representing the major part of the taluk will be the Chairman of the Samithi and the Block Development Officer will be the secretary.

The Samithi shall perform the following functions<sup>54</sup> viz. supervision, review and coordination, supervision over the acts of officers and servants of Zilla Parishad working in the taluk level in their executive or administrative role and inspect any work or development scheme in progress, reviewing of the work of Mandal Panchayats, and co-ordinating their work where it relates to more than one mandal.

Although Clause 137 speaks of guidance or assistance to the Taluk Panchayat Samithi by the officers working in the taluk, there is no clear mention of how this can be done or with what expertise. The samithi is, therefore, a clumsy compromise and result of a tension

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54            Clause 136, p. 94.

between the unwillingness of the government to bring back to existed Taluk Development Boards within the new framework and the insistence of the opposition Congress(1) to continue the TDB status quo. It has been assigned a 'post office's' status<sup>55</sup> thereby becoming a 'toothless wonder'.<sup>56</sup> There is no link between a village and taluk panchayat samithis.

### Zilla Parishad<sup>57</sup>

#### Composition

There shall be a Zilla Parishad for each district and it will be a corporate body like the Mandal Panchayat. It is composed of (i) elected members, (ii) associated members and (iii) nominated members.

One member is elected for every 35,000 population from the taluk. In the district of Kodagu where each member will represent a population of 15,000<sup>58</sup>, the election to Zilla Parishad, both territorial and population criteria are employed. The chairman/president of the District Co-operative Bank will be an associate member. He will be entitled to take part in the meetings of the parishad

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55 Chandrashekar, B.K., art. cit., p. 687.

56 Sab, Abdul Nazir, "Towards ...", art. cit., p. 56.

57 See the Act 1983, Chapter VIII.

58 Clause 140, p. 96.

but cannot vote. Nominated members will be the MPs, MLAs and MLCs representing a part or whole of the district whose constituencies lie within the jurisdiction of the Zilla Parishad. Those MLCs not elected from territorial constituencies but ordinary resident in the district will also be entitled to participate in the proceedings and to vote.<sup>59</sup> Unlike the suggestions of the Asok Mehta Committee, the act excluded the provisions to include the nominees from bigger municipalities, persons with special interest in rural development, university teachers in social sciences etc.

The MPs and legislators carry a lot of weight and one wonder whether their direct association with Zilla Parishad will not discourage the emergence of local leadership. Similarly, the presence of a large number of indirectly elected/nominated members will prevent Zilla Parishad's direct responsibility. As a critique of this provision, E.M.S. Namboodripad had said: "I am for purely elected bodies at all levels of panchayati raj. Having co-opted members, as suggested in the report Asok Mehta, is a hang over of the idea that Panchayati Raj Institutions are concerned with development alone and not the elected organs of administration at all appropriate level".<sup>60</sup>

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59        Clause 139, pp. 95-96.

60        India (Government), Report of the Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions, 1978, Chairman Asok Mehta, and see the dissent note by Namboodripad at p. 156.



Twenty five per cent of the seats are reserved for women.<sup>61</sup> A reservation of not less than 18 per cent of the seats has been provided for the SCs and STs. Every Zilla Parishad will have its own electoral roll. All persons with 18 years of age are eligible to vote.<sup>62</sup> A candidate for election, on the other hand, should be 25 years of age.<sup>63</sup> On the conduct of elections and disputes arising out of elections, the provisions applicable to Mandal Panchayat election will apply in this caste also, except that here it will be the civil judge who will hear the petition.

Adhyaksha, Upadhyaksha and Secretary

The Adhyaksha, Upadhyaksha will be elected amongst the Zilla Parishad members for a term of 5 years. They will be paid a monthly salary as equal to a minister of state and of a deputy minister respectively.<sup>64</sup> A resolution of no-confidence passed with 2/3 majority in the Parishad shall remove the Adhyaksha or Upadhyaksha.<sup>65</sup> The office bearer may be removed, again by the government,

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61 Clause 142, p. 97.

62 Clause 147, p. 99.

63 Clause 153, p. 103.

64 Clause 166, p. 109.

65 Clause 167(3), p. 110.

for misconduct in the discharge of his duties or being persistently remiss in the discharge of his duties.

An officer not below the rank of the Deputy Commissioner of a district will be the Chief Secretary of the Zilla Parishad.<sup>66</sup> All the executive functions are done by the secretary. There will be an chief Accounts Officer and a Deputy Secretary to assist executive works of the secretary.<sup>67</sup> As a chief executive officer, the chief secretary, will be the link between the Zilla Parishad's bureaucracy and its political executive; the hyphen in the term 'political-administrative system'.<sup>68</sup> His position as a liaison officer between the Zilla Parishad and the state government at the bureaucratic level, makes him to be a 'one-man think tank' for the Zilla Parishad.<sup>69</sup> The other personnel of Zilla Parishad will consist of grade I and II officers and the officers of All India Service who will work on deputation from the government. The state government has the power to transfer these officers from one Zilla Parishad to another.

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66 Clause 173.

67 The recent Panchayati Raj amendment bill on 6 March 1987 incorporated a provision of appointing more than one Deputy Secretaries to the Zilla Parishad. See Deccan Herald, 7 Mar. 1987.

68 Mukarji, Nimal, op. cit., p. 72.

69 ibid.

Functions of Zilla Parishad <sup>70</sup>

The following functions have been assigned to the Zilla Parishad. They are: supervision, co-ordination and integration of development schemes, preparing district plans, measures to increase agricultural production, maintenance of seed farms, establishment of agricultural schools, animal husbandry, welfare of SCs, STs and backward classes, management of hospitals and dispensaries and public health schemes, irrigation and horticulture, promotion of rural industries, educational activities etc.<sup>71</sup>

A government officer or expert will be deputed to assist, if need be, the Zilla Parishad officials in charge of execution of works. The most important executive function of Zilla Parishad will be the formulation and execution of district plans. Thus, the Zilla Parishad have adequate developmental functions, but it did not have the regulatory power i.e. law and order jurisdiction except those linked to developmental functions.

The act also provides 9 standing committees - as on the model of the Act 1959 - to implement and monitor the multifarious activities of the Zilla Parishad.<sup>72</sup>

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70 See the Act 1983, Chapter IX.

71 Clause 182, p. 121.

72 Clause 177, p. 117.

They are: (1) General Standing Committee; (2) Finance and Audit Committee; (3) Planning and Development Committee; (4) Social Works and Amenities Committee; (5) Social Justice Committee; (6) Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Committee; (7) Education Committee; (8) Health Committee; and (9) Industries Committee. Nimal Mukarji considers that the Social Justice Committee will give a new meaning and content to the Karnataka model and it should be headed by the Zilla Parishad Adhyaksha himself so as to give it some kind of primacy.<sup>73</sup> Apart from this the social justice committee is meant to promote the interests of SCs, STs, women and backward classes.

### Finance

The Zilla Parishad's fund is composed of:

- (i) the amounts transferred to the Zilla Parishad fund by appropriation from the consolidated fund of the states;
- (ii) all grants, assignments, loans and contributions made by the government;
- (iii) all fees and penalties paid to or levied by or on behalf of the Zilla Parishad under this act and all fines imposed under this act;

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<sup>73</sup> Mukarji, Nimal, op. cit., p. 75.

(iv) all rents from lands or other properties of the Zilla Parishad;

(v) all interests, profits and other money accruing by gifts, grants, assignments or transfers from private individuals or institutions;

(vi) all proceeds of land, securities and other properties sold by the Zilla Parishad; and

(vii) all sums received by or on behalf of the Zilla Parishad by virtue of this or any other act;

provided that sums received by way of endowments for any specific purpose shall not form part of or be paid into the Zilla Parishad fund.<sup>74</sup>

It is an innovation to set up a 'Finance Commission' for the Zilla Parishad to recommend how much finance should be granted and in what manner it should be distributed among the districts and lower down.<sup>75</sup> This will become another point on which Karnataka is on test<sup>76</sup> viz. what kind of financial dispensation it makes to back the federal experiment it is embarking upon. At present the state government allocates, on an average, about 2 crores for each district for spending on the schemes prepared

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74 Clause 191, p. 129.

75 Clause 210, p. 138.

76 Mukarji, Nimmal, op. cit., p. 71.

and approved by District Development Council. Once the Bill becomes law, the finance commission will determine the allocation of resources.<sup>77</sup>

The Zilla Parishad has the power of superintendence and control over the functioning of the Mandal Panchayats. It may call for submission of proceedings, documents, reports, account etc. of the Mandal Panchayat, for examinations. The Zilla Parishad can also dissolve a Mandal Panchayat on the following grounds: (a) where it exceeds or abuses its power or (b) is not competent to prepare or makes persistent default in the performance of its duties.<sup>78</sup> However, there is reasonable opportunity given to Mandal Panchayat to defend itself against dissolution.<sup>79</sup> According to the clause 271, the Zilla Parishad can dissolve a Mandal Panchayat, including on the ground of its "incompetence". And the state government can similarly dissolve a Zilla Parishad on five grounds including on that of "incompetence". Default in performance of duties imposed by law is another ground for dissolution. As Baxi remarks that, the document provides the same kind of power to the state as that of the power

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77 Chandrashekar, B.K., art. cit., p. 688.

78 ibid.

79 Clause 271, p. 156.

of the Centre under Article 356 - that the grass root bodies can be dissolved by the state.<sup>80</sup>

Nyaya Panchayat<sup>81</sup>

Nyaya Panchayats are local judicial self-government institutions meant to give quick and inexpensive justice. In the Karnataka Act Chapters XI to XIV deal with the establishment and working of nyaya panchayats. Clause 211 of the Act provides that the government may by notification and on the recommendations of the Zilla Parishad, establish a Nyaya Panchayat for every Mandal Panchayat. A Nyaya Panchayat consists of five members elected in accordance with the system of proportional representation by single transferable vote by the Mandal Panchayat of which at least one member shall be a woman, one shall belong to the SC or ST and one from backward class. A member must have completed forty years of age<sup>82</sup> and should

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80 Baxi, Upendra, "Participatory ...", op. cit., p. 78.

81 The institution of Nyaya Panchayat is not a new creation of the Karnataka Act, the attempts have been made by several states earlier, e.g. Maharashtra, Gujarat and West Bengal. For details see, Pillai, Chandrashekar, "Nyaya Panchayats", Journal of Indian Law Institute, 1977, vol. 19, p. 438; Mysore Panchayat Raj Bill, 1964, part V; Unapathy, M., and Devappa, M.R., "A Case of establishing Nyaya Panchayats in Karnataka", Journal of University of Mysore, 35, Mar.-Sept. 1975, pp. 25-38.

82 Clause 213, p. 140.

be a resident of the Mandal Panchayat with the ability to read and write. The term of office of the members is twenty months.<sup>83</sup> They are eligible for re-election. Mukhya Nyaya Vicharika, elected among the five members shall preside over the sittings. Secretary of the Mandal Panchayat shall be the secretary of the Nyaya Panchayat also.<sup>84</sup> The act, however, is not clear on what kind of staff and how much fund the Nyaya Panchayat will have at its disposal.

### Jurisdiction

The Nyaya Panchayat are conferred both social and criminal jurisdiction. Civil jurisdiction is confined to pecuniary claims of the value of Rs. 1000/- involving money due on contracts, recovery of any moveable property or its value, damage by cattle trespass, etc. The government may by notification try suits of this nature not exceeding the value of Rs. 2000.<sup>85</sup> No suits can be entertained where the matter has been decided in another Nyaya Panchayat or court between the same parties.<sup>86</sup>

The jurisdiction of the Nyaya Panchayat extends only within the local limits of the Mandal Panchayat.

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83            Clause 216, p. 141.

84            Clause 222, p. 142.

85            Clause 224, p. 142.

86            Clause 227, p. 143.



Accordingly, the clause 235 says that the Nyaya Panchayat may impose on any person convicted by it a fine not exceeding Rs. 50 but it cannot impose a sentence of imprisonment.

#### Procedure and Judicial Supervision

The Nyaya Vicharika may constitute benches of Nyaya Panchayat, each bench consisting of three or more members.<sup>87</sup> At the same time the sub-clause (2) of article 231 says that, so far as practicable, such bench shall include a member from the village in which each party to a proceeding before the Nyaya Panchayat ordinarily resides. This shows a contradictory clause as to how this is feasible when the maximum number of members in a Nyaya Panchayat will be five. Lawyers are forbidden from appearing before a Nyaya Panchayat,<sup>88</sup> where a Nyaya Panchayat is of the opinion that any suit or criminal proceedings before it is of such a nature or difficult or important that it ought to be tried by a Court, it may refer the matter to the district court or the court of session. The Act does not provide for an appeal but provides for revision by the district court in both civil and criminal cases.<sup>89</sup>

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87 Clause 239, p. 147.

88 Clause 245, p. 149.

89 Clause 250 and 251, p. 150.

### Objectives

The objectives of the Nyaya Panchayat are commonly understood to be (i) the local settlement of petty disputes cheaply and expeditiously by providing easy access to the dispute settlement machinery; and (ii) to encourage public participation. It is constituted to make a serious alternative beginning in indigenisation of judicial administration in the state.<sup>90</sup> In this regard one can agree with what Gandhiji said in 1946:

The poor peasant need not go out of his village, spend hard earned money and waste weeks and months in towns on litigations. He can get all the necessary witness in the village and fight out his own case without being exploited by lawyers .... (91)

In Karnataka, the Nyaya Panchayat will come into being after five years. It may create an alternative focus to the mandal panchayat and Zilla Parishad, particularly the former.

The electoral performance of the Janata Party in the Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayats, for which the election were held recently, showed a marked difference as compared to its electoral performance in the 1985 assembly elections.

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90 Baxi, Upendra, op. cit., p. 83.

91 Quoted from Chandrashekar, B.K., art. cit., p. 690.

It is now possible to arrive to some general inferences. The Janata Party's electoral reverse in some districts can be attributed to its failure to convert a large number of essentially floating voters who supported the party in 1985 assembly elections, into its core following through appropriate organisation building. The party even now has a loose organisation and its incompatible leadership structure emanating mainly from discrete caste and pre-existing political backgrounds in several districts is an important source of its organisational weakness. Secondly, an important part of the Congress(I)'s gain could be attributed to mobilisation against the Janata Party by a section of the rural rich who were possibly scared by the Janata leaders' talk of revolutionary change for the poor through the new panchayati institutions. Thirdly, a new young and educated leadership seems to have emerged at the district and mandal levels. At the same time, the traditional rural leadership was not wiped out of existence through elections. An important segment of such leadership was elected to the new local bodies and is likely to be elected to authority role as Adhyakshas and/or Upadhyakshas in several districts. Thus, the new grass root institutions will start operating under a certain built-in-strain. It is difficult to say what exact shape this strain will take or what effect, it

will have. It is also difficult to say whether this strain will continue to exist or there will eventually be a coalition building between the old and the new leaders for their mutual benefit.

The Karnataka Zilla Parishad, Taluk Panchayat Samithis, Mandal Panchayat and Nyaya Panchayat Act 1985, is one of the single piece of legislation the state has ever seen in the field of panchayati raj. The implementation of the act has made a revolutionary change, at least politically, in the local leadership in Karnataka. Once the new bodies start functioning, several important problems are likely to crop up. As has been already mentioned, the Zilla Parishad has comprehensive planning authority. But some of major difficulties have to be sorted out. As it is, there is no adequate planning machinery at the district level, although Karnataka is one of the few states where important steps such as appointment of district planning officers, creation of district planning cell in the planning department, etc. have been undertaken. But even then there does not exist at the district level an appropriate skill base for the purpose of comprehensive planning as intended by the act.

Secondly, the bureaucrats, especially those belonging to the Indian Administrative Service do not seem aware

of implications of the concept of local responsibility which has been institutionalised under the new panchayati system. They are now responsible to their superiors in their administrative organisation. Under the old system they had a dominant role in the district development boards and had practically no local responsibility. It is therefore difficult to say how they will imbibe the new culture of discharging their main responsibilities to the local people and their elected representatives. Thirdly, there may arise a critical problem of adjustment between the two segments of the new district government, the development administration under the Zilla Parishad and the regulatory administration under the deputy commissioner.

Fourthly, notwithstanding 18 per cent reservation for SCs and STs in both Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayats, it is not certain to what extent these institutions will really work for their benefit. Their political mobilisation at the grass roots level is minimum, and many of them are in the ranks of poor agricultural labourers, related to the rural gentry in a web of subordinate relationships. Besides, in several districts they are widely dispersed, and hence, are unlikely to create any significant impact upon the functioning of the new panchayati institutions.

It may be possible to change the situation if the ruling Janata Government initiates a sustained political

movement for accelerating the pace of land reforms as the left movement did in West Bengal. The latter recovered some four lakh acres of vested land and secured their redistribution.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, the left parties have taken much initiative in the implementation process. This resulted in an extensive political mobilisation of the rural poor, which in turn significantly weakened the rural dominance of jotedars. So when the left front started implementing in the later 1970's the West Bengal Panchayat Act 1973, actually a Congress Government's creation, the situation had changed to prevent the rural rich from dominating the new grass roots institutions. Besides, the left front could count upon the support of about 16.9 lakh households who had been benefitted by land reforms in West Bengal.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, the Janata Party in Karnataka is required to use land reforms as an agency of political mobilisation, firstly, to change the social and economic reality for the poor, and secondly, to acquire an enduring rural power base for its maintenance in power.

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92 See The Statesman (Calcutta), 11 Dec. 1986.

93 Ibid.

## Chapter IV

### JANATA GOVERNMENT AND CENTRE STATE RELATIONS

## Chapter IV

### JANATA GOVERNMENT AND THE CENTRE STATE RELATIONS

The Indian constitution reflects unitary features with the centre in a dominating position over the states. The problem of centre-state relations is manifest in the states that are ruled by opposition or regional parties in contra distinction to the party at the centre. All major controversies between the centre and the state, interpretations of the constitutional bonds of centre-state relations emanating from a state capital, which run to contrary to that of the centre, invariably fail to gain acceptance. In such cases, the struggle between the two parties takes on a more or less explicitly political dimension.<sup>1</sup> The Janata Party in Karnataka faces the same problems as other states in centre state relations in terms of financial allocation and the suspicious role of the governor. The Janata Party, once a ruling party at the centre which maintained the status quo in the centre state relations and benefitted from such a stand, is now confronted with the similar problems. The Janata

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1 Sathymurthy, T.V., India Since Independence: Studies in the Development of the Power of the State, vol. I, New Delhi: Ajantha Publications, 1985, p. 26.



government's approach towards the problems of centre state relations can be seen at two levels in contrast to other regional and opposition ruled states. Janata Government, being a regional power today in Karnataka has to strive to fulfil the regional demands of the state. Secondly, as an opposition and national party it has to look into the centre state relations in a national perspective. Thus a study of centre state relations in relation to Karnataka takes on a new dimension.

#### A. Financial Relations

The finance is one of the major constraints in the successful working of the federal system. As K.C. Wheare observed that "both general and regional governments must each have under its own independent control financial resources sufficient to perform its exclusive functions".<sup>2</sup> The Karnataka government maintained that the centre has violated the constitutional provisions pertaining to finance to a considerable extent. The financial institutions and planning commissions instead of operating objectively, has tended to weaken the state autonomy.

The politics of finance placed the centre in a dominating position. The transfer of resources from the

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2 Quoted in Perumal, C.A., Centre State Relations in India, Bangalore University, Bangalore, 1978, p. 15.

centre to the states has become discretionary. Thus power of the centre was used to buttress the ruling party at the centre and the states. The allocation of finance to the states is politically decided. For instance, the Karnataka government's demand for financial assistance to overcome the acute situation of drought and the subsequent visit of the Prime Minister to inspect the drought situation, has been widely commented in the opposition circles as well as by the press that it was a politically motivated visit. The accusation has been made that official visit of Prime Minister turned into a mere political propaganda to oust the ruling party out of power.

A national newspaper, like Indian Express, made a similar observation on the Prime Minister's visit:

On a hurricane 14 hour visit to the state, Prime Minister Rajeev Gandhi took on the Janata Government as he had never done before. At one level, he asked the Chief Minister Ramakrishna Hegde to quit over the Arrack bottling scandal. At another, he said the state government's drought relief work was both inadequate and irregular. (3)

After a long debate in the parliament between the ruling party and opposition party members, the opposition in parliament went to an extent of boycotting the session as

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3 See the editorial, Indian Express, 13 Apr. 1986.

a mark of protest against the Prime Minister's remark.<sup>4</sup>

The centre state financial flows have not been equitable and this has been true that the greater discretion is enjoyed by the centre. Nowhere is the weakness of the federal character evident than in the provisions of constitution relating to financial relations. This is basically due to the imbalance in their resource raising power of the states built into the constitution itself. The financial transfers from the centre to the states in the form of shares, grants and loans are provided in Articles 268, 269, 270, 272, 273, 282 and 293 of the Constitution. Besides, article 280 of the constitution provides the constitution of a Finance Commission, to review and make recommendations every 5 years. As Hegde observed, in spite of the recommendations of the Finance Commission, the distribution of tax powers, sharing up of actual tax and other government receipts, continued to till in favour of the centre.<sup>5</sup> Even in the distribution of finance between the centre and the states, the former enjoys dominant position. The centre's share constitute about 70% whereas as states receive 30 per cent. The

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4 See Times of India, 17 Apr. 1986.

5 Hegde, Ramakrishna, Strong States are imperative for a powerful centre, (speech made in New Delhi on 16 Sept. 1985), Karnataka Informations, Bangalore, 1985, p. 12.

taxing power of the state is limited as compared to the centre. Karnataka Janata government argued that the items like sales tax has become inelastic by the manner in which the centre has weilded excise duties for resource mobilisation. But on the other hand, when the Janata Party was in power at the centre, it tried to substitute the sales tax by additional duty of excise, even though it was also the part of the Janata Party's manifesto in 1977 election.<sup>6</sup> The move of the Janata government was categorically opposed by non-Janata ruled states on the ground that it would encroach upon the financially autonomy of the state.<sup>7</sup> The seriousness of the issue made the then Finance Minister, L.K. Advani make the following remark in his budget speech of 1978:

... sales tax constitute the main source of revenue of the states .... Since sales tax is a state subject the task of persuading the states to give up sales tax calls for persistence and patience. It certainly cannot be regarded as something which can be accomplished in the immediate future. (8)

The stand Janata Party in Karnataka has taken shows its contradictory position to the stand of the party which

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6 Prasad, Anirudh, Centre State Relations in India, New Delhi: Deep and Deep, 1985, p. 338.

7 For the details of the opposition Chief Ministers' remarks, see Patriot, 3 Feb. 1978, and Indian Express, 3 Feb. 1978.

8 Statesman, 1 Mar. 1978.

was taken in 1978. The Congress Party which replaced the Janata at the centre continued to adhere to the principle of replacing sales tax by additional duty of excise. Even the Chief Ministers' Conference on May 28, 1984 was ostensibly called to discuss the issue of the situation of sales tax by additional excise duty. But it instead decided the imposition of consignment tax by the centre.<sup>9</sup>

The 7th Finance Commission suggested that grants-in-aid under article 275 of the Constitution should aim at - (i) filling the gaps which were left after devolution of taxes and duties; (ii) narrowing disparities in social services between developed and less developed, (iii) enabling the states to meet special burdens on their finances because of their peculiar circumstances or because of matters of national importance. The Constitution nowhere lays down any guidelines for the Finance Commission. The provisions in the Constitution which envisages discretionary grants by the centre for any public purpose can not be taken to reduce in any way the importance of either the grants-in-aid of revenues, or the Finance Commission's power for developing additional central funds to the states in need of assistance. The centre's assistance to the Karnataka was meagre. The 6th, 7th and 8th Finance

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9 See the editorial, The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 3 May 1984.

Commission (FC) have not granted any financial assistance. This is shown in Table 4.1.

The centre's export policy has impinged adversely on sales tax yield. The surcharge on income tax, substitution of public duties by administered prices for producers of public enterprise etc. have diverted a larger proportion of divisible revenues to the central budget. The Chief Minister Hegde viewed that because of the replacement of sales tax by additional excise duty on sugar, tobacco and cloth Karnataka has suffered a loss of Rs. 1000 crores per year.<sup>10</sup> There has been excessive centralisation in the matter of devolution of resources. As Maheshwari observes that "the states have the power to collect and use taxes within the spheres allotted to them. But such resources are meagre and hardly sufficient to meet even a part of the finance requirement by the states to fulfil their obligations".<sup>11</sup>

The state government's contention is that the transfers through divisible pool as well as the revenue gap grants, the finance commission has generally followed a gap filling approach. The process of commission's dispensations have often led to severe penalising the states which

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10 Telegraph (Calcutta), 4 Nov. 1983.

11 Maheshwari, Shriram, State Governments in India, New Delhi, Macmillan, 1979, p. 221.

Table 4.1

Grants-in-aid to Karnataka According to the Article  
275(1) of the Constitution

(Rs. in crores)

I (FC) General	Special Deve. of Education	II (FC) General	III(FC) General	Special Deve. of Communi- cation	IV(FC) General	V(FC) General	VI(FC) General	VII(FC) General	VIII(FC) General
2.00	-	3.00	25.00	2.00	62.46	17.79	-	-	-

FC = Finance Commission

Source: Prasad, Anirudh, op. cit., p. 362.

have raised more resources by additional taxation. Transfer of divisible pool should increase in conformity with the functions and responsibilities of the states. Here the Janata government's accusation towards the centre seem to be unsound enough. All other parties which are in opposition took a similar position. The Janata party when it was in power at the centre nowhere recognised and welcomed the opposition demands. The Janata government's approach was negative, in spite of the pressure brought out by the opposition Chief Ministers. For instance, during the Janata rule at the centre, Chief Minister, Devaraj Urs claimed with the 7th Finance Commission that the centre should place sufficient funds at the disposal of the states. He demanded, the entire divisible pool or income tax should go to the states.<sup>12</sup> Similarly the Karnataka government's request with the Janata government at the centre for the special assistance to deal with uneven situation in the state resulted by drought, the Janata government's response was not positive. The centre has discarded the Karnataka chief minister's proposals.

In spite of a gradual increase in central transfer of funds to the state through the divisible pool, the states' financial requirement was not fully meted out

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12 The Statesman (New Delhi), 1 May 1978.



(see Table 4.2). The corporation tax, which was previously included in the divisible pool was left out by an amendment to the Finance Act in 1959 by which income tax paid by the companies was excluded from sharing with states. The centre has also imposed surcharge on income tax, the proceeds of which are kept out of divisible pool.

Another area through which the autonomy of the states have been curtailed is the centralized planning commission. Justice Subba Rao, considered the Planning Commission "functions in violation of the provisions of the Constitution". The centre through the Planning Commission controlled not only the state sector of the plan but also their implementation.<sup>13</sup> Karnataka demanded that the planning commission should be an autonomous body both from the centre and the states. It should be made responsible to the NDC, rather than to the centre.<sup>14</sup> A similar stand has been taken up by Congress ruled states like Haryana and Gujarat and suggested that Planning Commission should sufficiently represent from the states to give close involvement on rational basis.<sup>15</sup>

The emergence of Planning Commission as a super government has disturbed the concept of autonomy of the

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13 Quoted in Palkhiwala, N.A., We the People, Bombay: Strand Book Stall, 1984, p. 255.

14 See Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 11 Sept. 1986.

15 Ibid.

Table 4.2

## States Share in Union Income Tax Revenue

Finance Commission	Existing 1950	I(FC) 1952-1956	II(FC) 1956-1961	III(FC) 1962-1966	IV(FC) 1967-1971	V(FC) 1972-1974	VI(FC) 1974-1978	VII(FC) 1978-1984	VIII(FC) 1984-
% of States share in the divisible pool	50	55	60	66 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	75	75	80	85	85

FC = Finance Commission

Source: Prasad, Anirudh, op. cit., p. 338.

states in matters vital to its administration such as education, health and other welfare services.<sup>16</sup> Even the matter in which states should have full freedom, rigid adherence to specific patterns of expenditure has seriously eroded the autonomy. For example, to Karnataka, the Planning Commission had approved a total outlay of Rs. 2265 crores for the sixth plan period (1980-85). The Congress government had spent Rs. 1372 crores till 1983. Therefore the balance Rs. 894 crores was too small an amount left out to the rest of the 2 year plan period. When the Janata government came to power, it had to go for deficit financing to an amount of Rs. 388 crores by revising the total plan outlay into Rs. 2652 crores, as against the approved 2265 crores.<sup>17</sup>

Other than the plan outlay the Karnataka government demanded for a special assistance from the centre in the form of grants-in-aids in which the union government enjoys the discretion. This demand of the state was not taken into consideration by the centre.

The Janata Party's approach with regard to the financial relations, in Karnataka, it is in no way differed

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16 Chanda, Asok, Federalism in India, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1965, p. 186.

17 Karnataka (Government), The Dawn of a New Era: Karnataka 1983-85, A Profile in Development, Aug. 1985, p. 1.

drastically with the Janata Party's stand at the national level. There is no fundamental difference between Karnataka and other Congress ruled states. Its demand for wider financial autonomy is confined to constitutional framework in contrast to the other opposition and regional parties. The significant achievement of the Janata Party in Karnataka is that it succeeded to some extent in mobilising the opposition ruled states to come to a common platform to discuss the problem of centre-state relations. It is reflected in the form of opposition Chief Ministers' conclaves - Vijayawada conclave (1983), Bangalore conclave (1983), Srinagar conclave (1983), and Calcutta conclave (1984). All the conclaves stressed the similar points with regard to the financial relations. They are -

- (i) Residuary taxing power should be vested in the states instead of the centre;
- (ii) Stamp duties in respect of Bills of exchange, cheques of insurance, transfer of shares, debentures, proxies and receipts and excise duty on medical and toilet preparations containing alcohol are at present imposed by parliament but are collected and appropriated by the states under Article 260 of the Constitution. The suggestion is that the state should be authorised to levy these duties.

- (iii) Divisible pool should be broad based and corporation, custom and export duties and tax on capital value of assets should form part of the divisible pool. All excise duties and cesses, special regulatory or otherwise which are shareable at the option of the union, should be made compulsorily between the Union and the states;
- (iv) Grants by the centre to the states, both for plan expenditure and non-plan expenditure, should be made only on the recommendation of an independent and impartial body like the Finance Commission or some other similar statutory body. Finance Commission should be a permanent body with its own secretariat. The Commission should not be merely a 'non-plan gap filling body' taking into consideration only revenue accounts. It should adopt the total budgetary needs criterion in recommending the transference of resources from the centre to the states;
- (v) The recommendations of the Finance Commission should be made binding on all the parties - centre as well as the states;
- (vi) 75% of the total revenues raised by the centre from all sources for allocation to different states be distributed among the states on the recommendations of the Finance Commission or on the basis of the principles devised in the Commission;

(vii) Surcharge on income tax should be merged with basic rate of income tax so that it can be shared with the state.

The analysis of the position of the Janata Party in Karnataka with regard to financial relations, and its stand is in no way dramatically opposed to the Janata Party stand of 1977. It upholds the constitutional provision. Its approach is in the form of a consensus rather than a confrontationist. Even the Congress ruled states like Haryana, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh apart from the opposition ruled states, have followed the same position as that of the opposition conclaves propositions.

B. Janata Government on the Appointment of Judges

The constitution of India provides an integrated judicial system with Supreme Court at its apex and respective High Courts at the state level. The centre's involvement in to the judiciary through party in power at the centre prevented the independence and autonomy of the judiciary. This has become a problem in the administrative relations between the centre and the states. It has been widely commented that the judicial appointments are made on the party lines. The politicisation of the judicial appointments has resulted in the erosion of judicial autonomy and its

impartiality. It has been confirmed from the very statement of the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, when she said:

My partymen come and tell me that the Chief Justice wants that man to be appointed. I know you the Chief Justice have no politics in you. But I am a political leader. I have to carry my people with me. I cannot displease my own people. My difficulties are political difficulties. (18)

The important area in which the intervention of the Union on the states hampered the judicial autonomy are primarily in the process of appointment of judges of the High Courts. Secondly, through the transfer of judges of the High Court from one state to another. The constitution made it clear that the High Court is a part of the state judicial machinery. It also finds the provision that the President of India, while appointing a High Court Judge shall consult a State Governor. And also the Chief Justice of a state in appointments other than the Chief Justice of the High Court itself.<sup>19</sup> Hegde pointed out that the "consultative process is rendered a farce if the voice of the judiciary is not heeded or if the judges are appointed on extraneous considerations".<sup>20</sup>

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18 See Sunday, 21 May 1985.

19 Article 217(1).

20 Hegde, Ramakrishna, Judiciary Today: Disturbing Trends and Suggestions for Reform, Government of Karnataka, (1986), p. 1.

On the appointment of the judges, the Karnataka government's position is similar to that of what the Report of the ad hoc committee on Supreme Court observed on 21 May 1947:

... the President shall, in consultation with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (so far as the appointment of puisne judges is concerned), nominate a person whom he considers fit to be appointed to the Supreme Court and the nomination should be confirmed by a majority of at least 7 out of a panel of 11, composed of some of the Chief Justices of the High Court of the constituent units, some members of both the Houses of the Central Legislature and some of the law officers of the Union. The other method is that the panel of 11 should recommend three names out of which, the President, in consultation with the Chief Justice, may select a judge for the appointment. The same procedure should be followed for the appointment of the Chief Justice, except of course, that in this case there will be no consultation with the Chief Justice. To ensure that the panel will be both independent and command confidence, the panel should not be an ad hoc body but must be one appointed for a term of years. (21)

On the basis of the comprehensive report of the Committee, the constitution has incorporated the similar provisions. However, in the appointment of judges, the above proposition is not strictly followed. There are instances, where the union has by-passed the constitutional provisions while appointing judges to the Supreme

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21 Rao, Shiva B., The Framing of India's Constitution Select Documents, vol. II, pp. 589-91.



Court.<sup>22</sup>

There is inordinate delay in the appointment of judges and filling up of vacancies in the Supreme Court and High Courts. For instance by September 1980 there were as many as 4 vacancies in the Supreme Court and 64 vacancies in the High Courts. Though the centre had approved the proposal of appointing 4 permanent judges and 2 additional judges to the Karnataka High Court in 1984, recently three judges have been appointed.<sup>23</sup> Even the union law Minister, A.K. Sen remarked that "I am sorry about this, I agree that Karnataka's is the most acute case as far as the vacancies are concerned".<sup>24</sup>

This particular delay, in the judicial appointment resulted in a confrontation between the centre and the states. The recent confrontation between the Union Minister

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22 The Government of India appointed Justice A.N. Ray as the Chief Justice of India on 25 April 1973, superseding three senior most judges - Justice J.C. Shelat, Justice K.S. Hegde and Justice A.N. Grover. Similarly, on 30 June 1977, Justice M.H. Beg has been appointed as the Chief Justice superseding Justice H.R. Khanna. In both the cases the Union Government overruled the established constitutional norm of seniority while selecting the judges. And also see "Lawyers Protest at Judges' Supersession", Times of India, 4 Jul. 1986.

23 The Government of India appointed three judges to the Karnataka High Court on 6.3.1987. They were: Justice K. Shivashankar Bhat, Justice P.K. Shyamsunder and Justice K.B. Navadgi.

24 Indian Express, 28 Jun. 1986.

of state for Law and Justice, H.R. Bhardawaj and the Chief Minister Hegde in the Bar Council of India Conference in Bangalore is the clear manifestation of the political confrontation, Bharadwaj remarked the Chief Minister is making 'Anti-Centre propaganda'. The allegation was that the list containing the names of persons recommended by the Karnataka government for the judges appointment to the High Court is not only faulty, but are the kinsmen of some of the state ministers.<sup>25</sup> The Karnataka government not only refuted the law minister's allegation, but it pointed out that none of the names recommended for appointment of the judges are in any way related to any one of the ministers and the recommendations are made with the concurrence of the Chief Justice of India.<sup>26</sup> Similar remark has been made by the Prime Minister that "I understood that the Government of Karnataka had utilized this opportunity [Bar Council Conference] to prepare and circulate a lot of propaganda material, a good part of which was political in nature."<sup>27</sup> The centre as well as state accused each other on the question of appointment of

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25 Indian Express, 29 Jun. 1986.

26 See the Chief Minister's letter to the Prime Minister dated 7 Jul. 1986 and 12 Aug. 1986, in Hegde, Ramakrishna, Judiciary Today, op. cit., pp. 73-75, and 77-78.

27 See Prime Minister's letter to the Chief Minister, dated 21 Jul. 1986, ibid., p. 76.

judges to such an impartial body as the Supreme Court or High Court.

Karnataka contended on the centre's violation of the constitutional provision under Article 222, which empowers the President with the consultation of the Chief Justice of the High Court transfer or sitting judge of a High Court from one state to another. Though, the article does not at all contemplate that the President will take into account the views of the affected states, yet it is generally alleged that this provision has been used by the ruling party at the centre to influence the judiciary. Even a national newspaper like the Statesman observed that " ... the legal circles are perturbed mainly on the score that this weapon of transfer could be wielded by the Government to influence the judiciary".<sup>28</sup>

There is a continuous unstability of the position of the judges of the High Court. On April 11, 1983, Justice Bhimaiah retired as the Chief Justice of the Karnataka High Court and Justice V.S. Malimath became as acting justice and was after sworn in as Chief Justice on 6 February 1984. But he has been transferred to Kerala High Court as the Chief Justice in October 1985. Justice

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28 See Statesman, 12 Sept. 1980.

K. Jagannath Shetty assumed office as acting Chief Justice and continued to do till August 1986 when Justice Prem Chand Jain was sworn in as Chief Justice. However, Karnataka Janata government's position seems to be not against the transfer of judges. But it suggested that the frequent change of judges of the High Courts is resulted in denigration of the judiciary. The transfer of judges should be aimed at public interest rather than a punishment transfer.

On the mass transfer of the judges of the High Courts in 1976<sup>29</sup>, by the Government of India, the then Union Law Minister A.K. Sen had repeating the assurance, that he had made in the Lok Sabha in 1963, said:

... we have found it extremely difficult to get a good judge's consent to a transfer unless we make it worth his while .... (30)

The Union Government pronounced that all the transfers were made on the primary objective of public interest. However, it was widely commented that all the transfers made by the Congress Government during emergency was a mere political decision in the form of punishment.<sup>31</sup>

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29 The Government of India transferred 16 judges of the High Courts during the emergency, in 1976. Though the transfers have been made by the President with the consent of the Chief Justice of India, it was believed that in none of the cases the consent of the concerned judge is taken. For details see Indian Express, 2 Jun. 1976.

30 Rajya Sabha Debate, 43(9-17), 1-11 May 1963, col. 2602.

31 See Indian Express, 2 Jun. 1976.

The 'politics of transfer', and the objective of having one-third of the judges being appointed from outside the state has been made use of by the centre to strengthen the party ideology of National Integration. This is clear from the very words of the Law Minister, A.K. Sen in the Lok Sabha: " ... for the purpose of national integration to have judges drawn from different states, so that the highest judicial tribunal in every state contains elements from other states ..."<sup>32</sup> Even the Janata Party's ideological stand is in no way drastically different from the Congress in terms of national integration. The Karnataka's Janata Government has suggested that in order to maintain the judicial independence and to get respect for judiciary from the public, it is necessary that instead of transferring a sitting judge from one high court to another, the initial appointment itself may be done from outside the state.

C. Janata Party and the Role of the Governor

The 'Governor has become one of the controversial' constitutional provision in the field of centre state relations. The constitution empowers him as the executive as well as constitutional head of a state. The actual

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32 Lok Sabha Debates, 3rd series, 18, 25 Apr. to 7 May 1963, cols. 1306-7.

functioning of the Governor in Indian federation over the years has clearly showed that his position has been reduced to a mere ceremonial constitutional machinery of the centre in the state. The institution of the Governor is of crucial importance, it is on whose impartiality and integrity, the autonomy of the states and the soundness of the Union State relations are stated to depend on. This institution has been dragged into a major controversy in partisan manner at the behest of the centre, and this has been resulted in the erosion of the state autonomy.

The Governor functions for most of purposes as a part of the state apparatus, but he is meant at the same time, to be a link with the centre. This link and his responsibility to the centre flows out of the constitution mainly because of the provision that he is appointed and can be dismissed by the President ... The constitution thus specifically provides for a departure from the strict federal principles and it is relevant to observe that this departure is not fortuitous or casual".<sup>33</sup> Thus, the constitution makers did not intend the Governor to be only a component of the state machinery. They meant him to be an important link with the centre.

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33 ARC Report, vol. 1, Sept. 1967, pp. 272-73.

The Governor, as the constitutional head of the state enjoys executive powers of the state. And with him that all the appointment has been done.<sup>34</sup> According to Article 164(1) of the constitution, the Chief Minister will be appointed by Governor and will hold office during the 'pleasure' of the Governor. This provision has been subjected to different interpretation. Constitution did not specifically define what constituted the pleasure of the Governor. Ambedkar had viewed that 'during pleasure' is always understood to mean that the Ministry has lost the confidence of the majority. The moment the ministry has lost confidence the confidence of the majority, it is presumed that the Governor will exercise his 'pleasure' in dismissing the ministry.

As far as the powers between the centre and states in relation to the institution of Governors are concerned the differences have arisen between the Chief Minister and the governors with regard to his power of pardon, appointment of judges of the High Courts, appointment of Vice-Chancellors, nomination of members of the university to the Legislature Council, his confidential report to the President, provisions in Bills under legislation etc. But the most controversial function of Governors which affected the centre state relations are :

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34 Article 154.

- (a) under Article 200 of the Constitution which empowered the governor to reserve a state Bill passed by the state Legislature for the consideration of the President;
- (b) Under Article 356 of the Constitution which empowers the Governors to make report to the President recommending Presidential rule due to failure of constitutional machinery.<sup>35</sup>

The Janata Government in Karnataka has remarked that in most of the cases the above provisions have been used arbitrarily on the advise of the Union Government. In using this discretionary power, Governors should act impartially. In Raghukul Tilak's case, the Supreme Court has said quite categorically that the Governor is 'not amenable to the directions of the Government of India, nor is he accountable to them for the manner in which he carries out his functions and duties'. He is an independent constitutional office which is not subject to the control of the Government of India.<sup>36</sup> But there are instances when the Governor acted as a mere agent of the

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35 Jacob, Alice, "Centre State Relations: Some Tension Areas in Administrative Relations", in Sanjiv Reddy, ed., Basic Issues in Centre State Relations, Omson, New Delhi, 1986, pp. 74-75.

36 Karnataka (Government), White Paper on the Office of the Governor: Constitutional Position and Political Perversions, Bangalore: Government Press, Sept. 1983, p. iii.



ruling party at the centre. In appointing the Chief Minister and in case of dissolution of the Legislature Assembly, Karnataka government argued that constitution should be suitably amended to ensure the independence of the office of the Governor. There are instances where the Governor is actively supporting the ruling party at the centre or participating in election campaign etc.

A survey of the manner in which the presidential rule has been imposed on the states on the reports of the Governors shows that the Governors have not often acted in a neutral and non-partisan manner, but have acted to ensure the political ends of the party to which they owed their allegiance.<sup>37</sup>

The interventionist character of the governor's power to return bills passed by the State Governments on matters other than money votes for consideration or re-enactment in amended form has become more and more pronounced over the years. This is specially true in its application to states which are ruled by the opposition parties.

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37 See for details, Dhavan, Rajeev, President's Rule in the States, Indian Law Institute, New Delhi, 1979; Siwach, J.R., Politics of President Rule in India, I.L.I., New Delhi, 1979; Maheshwari, S., President's Rule in India, 1977; Siwach, J.R., Office of the Governors: A Critical Study, 1950-73, Simla, 1977; Jacob, Alice, "Centre-State Relations: Some Tension Areas on Administrative Relations", op. cit., pp. 71-83.

Most of the times this power of centre through Governor is used to kill or to delay state legislation. For instance, the Land Reform Act passed by the Communist ministry in Kerala in 1957-59 has been given a decent burial by the centre due to the pressure from Congress party and other Congress Chief Ministers of other states.<sup>38</sup>

Similarly the Karnataka Zilla Parishad, Taluk Panchayat Samithi, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayat Bill is passed in both the houses of the state legislature in 1983. But the Governor forwarded the Bill for the Presidential consideration. The Bill finally was given consent by him only in July 1985. There is no provision to overrule the Presidential vote in respect of state Bill.

The use of political strategem was for the first time, tried in Karnataka in 1983. But the ignominious failure of the centre and the Congress(1) in Karnataka to topple the Hegde ministry has not prevented the same tactic being applied in Jammu and Kashmir and later in Andhra Pradesh. Thus, the role played by Governor, Ram Lal, in Andhra Pradesh and Jagmohan in Jammu and Kashmir, are the live examples where the popularly elected governments had been overthrown. On the action of Jagmohan on

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38 Lieten, G.K., "Progressive State Governments: An Assessment of the First Communist Ministry in Kerala", EPW, 14, 1979, pp. 29-31.

2 July 1984, Indian Express, commenting as "clearly illegal" made the remark: "Further evidence available now puts beyond dispute the fact that Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Jagmohan, usurped the reins of government well before the Chief Minister, Mr. Farooq Abdullah, was dismissed by him on the afternoon of July 2, itself an act of dubious propriety ..."<sup>39</sup>

Similarly, Governor Ram Lal dismissed the NTR ministry in Andhra Pradesh on 16 August 1984 in spite of the majority support he enjoyed in the Legislature. In both the cases, it was alleged that Governor acted on the advice of the centre.<sup>40</sup> This has been confirmed from the remarks made in the Lok Sabha by the then Union Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, and P. Venkatasubbaiah who blatantly asserted a claim to topple governments by the same method in future which should serve as a warning to the country.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, the essence of the Governor's role lies not so much in what has been formally laid down in the constitution but rather in the political dimension that this office has acquired.<sup>42</sup>

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39 Indian Express, 10 Jul. 1984.

40 See for detail Press statements in Indian Express, 20 Aug. 1984, The Hindu, 21 Aug. 1984, Statesman, 23 Aug. 1984.

41 Quoted in the "White Paper on the toppling of state governments", New Delhi, Janata Party Publication, 1984, p. 36.

42 Sathyanurthy, T.V., op. cit., p. 32.

The declaration of President's rule on the report of the Governor has been made many a time in a partisan manner. The Janata Government in Karnataka emphasized on the argument put forward by Ambedkar in the Constituent Assembly, on the use of Article 356 to declare President's rule. Ambedkar has expressed hope that the President of India will take precautions to ensure that Article 356 is not misused. He said "(1) whether there is a good government or not in the province is not for the centre to determine, (2) before imposition of Central Rule, the President must issue a warning to delinquent state. If that fails, an election must be ordered. It is only when these two remedies fail that he would resort to this article".<sup>43</sup>

The Janata Party election manifesto in 1977 had categorically stated that recourse to President's rule to dissolve an opposition government in power in a state would not be used if it were given the mandate at the centre.<sup>44</sup> But when it came to power at the centre while dislodging opposition ruled state legislature the Janata did not stand up to its principles. Contrary to the assurance it has made in the election manifesto, the

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43 Constituent Assembly Debates, vol. IX, p. 127.

44 Lal, Kanwar, Election Extraordinary, Delhi: Jeet Publications, 1977, p. 112.

then Union Home Minister, Charan Singh wrote to the chief ministers of the opposition ruled states to advise the government to dissolve the assembly, on the ground that "there was uncertainty, difference and disrespect to all levels of administration giving rise to serious threat to law and order ...."<sup>45</sup> Even the suits filed by these states have been outrightly rejected by the Supreme Court saying that the court cannot interpret constitutional provisions under Article 356.<sup>46</sup>

The Congress Government which replaced the Janata in 1980 repeated the same game of dissolving the opposition ruled states, on the ground that "law and order machinery had broken down, prices were going up, the people had lost confidence in their representatives ...."<sup>47</sup>

The Janata Party, when it was in power at the centre, had not fundamentally deviated from the Congress with regard to the provisions of constitution pertaining to the role of the Governor. The Janata Party in Karnataka has taken a different stand than that of Janata Party when it was at the centre. The Janata Party in Karnataka today had not demanded the deletion of any articles or amendment to the constitution on the role of the governor, as compared

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45 Times of India, 19 Apr. 1977.

46 ibid., 30 Apr. 1977.

47 Indian Express (New Delhi), 20 Feb. 1980.

to the other regional parties. Though the Janata Government has taken a critical stand on the politicisation of the institution of governor's by the centre, it seems to be upholding the constitutional provisions. It is sticking to the provision that the role of Governor, in the state is to be exactly the same as the position of the President.

D. Inter-State Relations

Another important area in the discussion on centre-state relations generally overlooked, is that the relation between states. Even in the area of inter-state relations it has been alleged that centre's intervention has snatched away the state autonomy. The Union under article 3 of Constitution can even alter the boundaries between the states and also can create new states. The important areas to which the Centre has become a party are the question of distribution of river water and construction of river projects, the question of boundaries etc. Therefore, the inter-state relations have become the part and parcel of the centre state relations.

Though the Constitution under article 263, empowers the President to establish an inter-state council, for the consideration of subjects of common interest between the Union and state on the one side, and between states on the other, the central government has not yet taken a comprehensive plan for the setting up of this Council.

A seminar organised by the Government of Karnataka has come to the conclusion that a Inter-State Council should be established. The Council has to deal with the problem relating to centre-state relationship, appointment of National Commission to review the expenditure of the centre and states to ensure effective use of resources and provide for basis of division of resources between them. It also suggested the setting up of administrative tribunals as contemplated under Article 323 of the Constitution. And the planning commission should be an autonomous body functioning under a restructured National Development Council.<sup>48</sup> A similar suggestion has been made by all the opposition conclaves of the chief ministers and by the Rajamannar Committee Report on centre state relations.<sup>49</sup>

The Constitution assigns primary role to the states in planning and development of rivers.<sup>50</sup> But at the same time the union government has also given the responsibility of regulation and development of inter-state river valleys.<sup>51</sup> The centre's involvement in state in these areas has been necessitated because - (1) most of the rivers run through

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48 Sarof, B.P., "Centre State Financial Relations", in Sanajaoba, N., ed., Basic Issues in Centre State Relations, op. cit., p. 138.

49 Rajamannar Committee Report, 1971, op. cit., p. 215.

50 See Entry 17, State List Schedule VII.

51 Entry 36, Union List Schedule VII.

more than one state, thereby disputes are becoming intensified between the states, (ii) river projects require huge outlays which is beyond the state's resource capacity.

The Janata Government in Karnataka argued that the agricultural development, land use and irrigation all are closely inter-linked and therefore all these aspects must be brought under the state responsibility. It also viewed that disputes relating to inter-state rivers have to be resolved either through bilateral negotiations or through tribunals set up under the Inter State water Disputes Act 1956. And the decision of the tribunal should be binding on both - the parties. The existing statutory provisions in this regard should be maintained.<sup>52</sup> The Karnataka Government also opposed the Centre's move on the water resource control. It contended that the powers of the state, delegated under the constitution should not be curbed.<sup>53</sup>

In spite of Centre's initiative and several rounds of negotiations between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu on the distribution of Cauvery River water, no significant result has come out. The then Chief Minister Devaraj Urs, had

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52 See Hegde's speech delivered at the 1st meeting of the National Water Resource Council at New Delhi, 30 Oct. 1985, Government of Karnataka.

53 The Hindu (Madras), 29 Jul. 1986.



prepared a draft agreement but it proved of no avail as a result of refusal of then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, K. Karunanidhi. The Janata Government in Karnataka argued that due to the severe drought Karnataka faced a severe water scarcity and it also pleaded that Karnataka has the largest percentage of dry land as next to Rajasthan and therefore the Cauvery water legitimately belongs to Karnataka.<sup>54</sup>

Another area in which the Karnataka and Maharashtra is in confrontation is on the issue of Belgaum i.e. a border district of Karnataka. This particular border dispute becomes an unsolved riddle between the two states over the decades. The Linguistic Reorganisation of States in 1956 and later the Mahajan Commission's recommendation (1967) failed to satisfy the demands of Maharashtra. Both the commissions included the Belgaum in the Karnataka state as against the demand of Maharashtra.

The reopening of the boundary issue and the Maharashtra proposal of establishing one more commission and subsequent appointment of Mahajan Commission, has been opposed by Karnataka. But on an agreement both the governments agreed that the Commission's verdict will be final and binding on both the parties. The then Union Defence

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54 See Deccan Herald (Bangalore), 5 May 1985.

Minister, Y.B. Chavan had said that "the proposed one-man commission would have to be accepted by both the sides."<sup>55</sup> A similar statement was made by the then Maharashtra Chief Minister V.P. Naik when he said: "We are confident of our case and we are satisfied, because it is going to be final decision".<sup>56</sup> The report submitted by Mahajan Commission on 25 August 1967 has been welcomed by Karnataka. The award of the commission was hailed from all corners including the press.<sup>57</sup> Maharashtra, though initially accepted the report, later rejected it on the ground that the commission not only made injustice but was also 'unprincipled' and 'partial'. Maharashtra's stand on the report became increasingly questioned.

All the previous Congress governments in Karnataka demanded the centre that the Mahajan Commission Report should be treated as a final award and implemented in toto. The Janata Government in Karnataka also in no way deviated from the Congress Government's position. Chief Minister

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55 The Hindu (Madras), 15 Aug. 1966.

56 See The Hindu and also the Deccan Herald, 10 Oct. 1966.

57 See the editorials of the Indian Express, 5 Oct. 1967; The Hindu, 6 Oct. 1967; The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 7 Oct. 1967; Opinion (Bombay), 10 Oct. 1967; The Times of India (Bombay), 10 Oct. 1967; The Tribune (Ambala), 11 Oct. 1967; Deccan Herald (Bangalore), 20 Oct. 1967; The Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), 21 Oct. 1967; The Commerce (Bombay), 21 Oct. 1967; The EPW, 21 Oct. 1967; The Statesman (New Delhi), 8 Nov. 1967; and The Western Times (Allahabad), 9 Nov. 1967.

Ramakrishna Hegde expressed his dissatisfaction to reopen the border dispute. In a letter to the Prime Minister, he said, " ... if Belgaum issue is reopened and Mahajan Report is discarded, a grave injustice would be done to Karnataka .... There is no advantage in reopening the boundary dispute".<sup>58</sup> The centre's dilemma was that even after a lapse of over two decades the Report of Mahajan Commission was not placed on the table of the parliament for discussion. The continuous pressure from both Karnataka as well as Maharashtra made the Prime Minister, Rajeev Gandhi, to take the decision not to reopen the border dispute. He said: "The Commission Mahajan Commission had given its report. How can we go on reopening the issue? If we do so there would be no sanctity of the institution we set up".<sup>59</sup> The leaders of Maharashtra accused the Prime Minister that he had done injustice to Maharashtra and the Marathi-speaking and other linguistic minorities residing in the border areas.<sup>60</sup> Karnataka not only welcomed the Prime Minister's stand but also appreciated the decision of the centre.<sup>61</sup>

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58 Ibid.

59 See The Hindu, 28 May 1986.

60 Ibid.

61 See the letter written by Ramakrishna Hegde, to Prime Minister, Rajeev Gandhi on 28 May 1986, published in Maharashtra in Belgaum; The Needless Agitation, Government of Karnataka, 1986, p. 14.

The Karnataka's Janata Government's stand on the question of border dispute, is as similar as that of the erstwhile Congress governments. The Janata government, nowhere took a confrontational stand with the centre.

Karnataka's stand on the language policy is not against the centre. Like Congress the Janata Party also welcomed the three language formula of the centre. Though Karnataka government's language policy, unlike that of Tamil Nadu, was not anti-centre, it has turned into a language confrontation between the borders of Karnataka and Maharashtra. The recent agitation in Belgaum led by the Samyukta Maharashtra Seema Samithi was believed to be a protest against the imposition of Kannada language by the Karnataka government. The Government of India has appointed special officer for Linguistic Minorities under Article 350(B) of the Constitution to safeguard their interests. The Karnataka government not only made Kannada as the official language of communication in the borders, but circulars are also issued in other languages in the border areas. Kannada has been made as an optional language in the border schools. The Karnataka Government's order issued on April 30, 1982 has clearly said that Kannada would be introduced from first standard and there will be no examination upto third standards. The order nowhere used the word that Kannada should be made

compulsory.<sup>62</sup> Maharashtra has also followed a similar pattern of teaching Marathi which has been made compulsory from the third standard onwards in the border areas.<sup>63</sup> The Maharashtra government also passed orders banning opening of new minority language schools.<sup>64</sup>

It was alleged that the agitations led by SMSS was a step to exploit the emotional issues. It was also reported that agitations have not been led with the support of the local people, but by the people brought from Maharashtra.<sup>65</sup> There is all the reason to believe this. The Karnataka Government order on the language policy was passed in 1982 but it was only in 1986 that SMSS and MES leaders realised that the Kannada has been imposed on the Marathi students. The opposition leader of the Maharashtra legislative assembly Sharad Pawar and other leaders on the language issue argued that they are politically motivated. The Congress and other opposition parties like the communist parties, and Janata party have not supported this

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62 See, the Government Order issued by the Karnataka Government, regarding the implementation of Gokak Committee report dated 30 April 1982, in Maharashtra in Belgaum: The Needless Agitation, Government of Karnataka, 1986, p. 70.

63 See Deccan Herald, 6 Jun. 1986.

64 See the Government order passed by the Maharashtra Government on 6 Jun 1979, op. cit., p. 65.

65 Statesman, 11 Jun. 1986.

agitation. Even the public opinion was not against the Karnataka language policy.<sup>66</sup>

The recent agreement between the Chief Ministers of Karnataka and Maharashtra, to solve the language problem and problem of the linguistic minorities was a welcome development. They agreed to appoint a joint panel of senior officials from Karnataka and Maharashtra to suggest measures to redress the grievances of the linguistic minorities along with the boundaries. It was also decided that this panel will tour the border areas every 6 months and suggest necessary measures. The unanimous recommendations of the joint panel would be implemented by the respective states.<sup>67</sup>

There are other areas of conflict between the centre and the states. The Janata government in Karnataka argued that the centre has not used the All India Services in a non-partisan manner. Regarding the use of government media particularly Doordarshan and All India Radio, the Chief Minister pointed out that "there is need to take the following steps immediately to break fresh ground and to make programmes more innovative and interesting - (1) There is a case for granting greater autonomy to Doordarshan

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66 Indian Express, 16 Jun. 1986.

67 Times of India, 12 Jun. 1986.

than it presently enjoys, and (2) there is also a definite case for the setting up of a second channel of television for exclusive use by the state government.<sup>68</sup> The Karnataka government has been arguing that the over centralisation in all areas of administration leads to stagnation. The autonomy should be given to the states in the spheres which are exclusively allotted in the Constitution. In this regard Mukarji observes that the autonomy to states "would enable the union to give more attention to the remaining matters which rightly needed to be left with the union and in this sense the union would become stronger rather than weak".<sup>69</sup>

The Chief Minister, Ramakrishna Hegde pointed out that the Indian Constitution provides for a system of cooperative federation with a slight bias in favour of the centre. It was necessitated by the conditions which prevailed in India immediately after the independence. It is necessary to have a new approach to the problem of centre state relations. The new approach should include -

- (1) A national consensus should clearly remind the centre that it has not inherited the Viceroy's mantle of

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68 See Pachauri, Pankaj, "Why Doordarshan has no autonomy", (News item), Sunday Observer, 28 Sept. 1986.

69 Mukarji, Nimal K., "Karnataka Model of District Government", Indian Express, 14 Apr. 1986.

paramountcy. What is needed at the centre today is not an authoritarian government, but the moral authority to govern. And the centre would have no moral authority to government unless it displays a sense of constitutional morality, particularly the attitude of equity and fairness towards the states;

- (2) Strong states are in no way inconsistent with a strong centre. Strong states can definitely ensure that the writ of central government can run in these states and the task of national reconstruction can be attended to in the right earnest;
- (3) Wherever a paramount national interest dictates a line of action, the narrow view point of a state or parochial act of a municipality must not stand in the way;
- (4) Whenever the situation demands certain things in national interest the states will subordinate their interest to the national interest;
- (5) The grievances of the state should be redressed by building up salutary conventions which are in conformity with the true spirit of the constitution.<sup>70</sup>

The analysis of the overall position of the Janata government in Karnataka and of the Janata Party shows that

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70 Hegde, Ramakrishna, Strong States, op. cit., pp. 16-17.



it has not made any marked difference, other than its demand for decentralisation and autonomy or administrative and legislative matters, in the centre-state relations, as compared to the Congress ruled states. However, as compared to other opposition and regional party ruled states, it has not outrightly demanded the constitutional amendments pertaining to the centre state relations. Like the Congress Party, the Janata government in Karnataka favoured the functioning of Indian federation according to the Constitution. The Janata Party did not escape from the earlier phases of Congress rule at the centre as well as in the states, partly because an influential section of the Janata Party leadership had been accustomed to the federal functioning of the Congress mould.<sup>71</sup>

As a national party, the Janata Party in Karnataka has a double mission to perform. It has to strive for the regional demand at the state level, and to have an alternate strategy at the national level. The party in Karnataka has therefore taken a non-confrontationist stand. It has been trying to establish an amicable working relationship with the centre. Even during the national political crisis i.e. the operation of Blue Star in Punjab and crisis following

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71 Arora, Balveer, "Party System and Federal Structure in India: Linkages and Issues", in Bose, T.C., ed., Indian Federalism: Problems and Issues, Calcutta, K.P. Bagchi, 1987, p. 179.

the assassination of Indira Gandhi, Ramakrishna Hegde, as a spokesman of the Janata Party extended full support to the centre which shows the national character of the Janata Party. The position of the Janata Party in the field of centre-state relations reflects more or less a national character whereas the regional parties like the Telugu Desam, AIADMK and DMK etc. demanding much more regional autonomy is confined to the respective states.

Chapter V

JANATA GOVERNMENT AND THE BACKWARD CLASSES

## Chapter V

### JANATA GOVERNMENT AND THE BACKWARD CLASSES

The special concessions and provisions through reservation to the backward classes is not new to Karnataka. It is the manifestation of the caste divided society. The fight for backwardness and demand for reservation in Karnataka has got a long history. The Janata Party has not shown any enthusiasm in bringing about any structural changes in the state, either through land reforms or such radical measures. It has taken initiative in restructuring the social set up through appointing the Backward Classes Commission i.e. popularly known as Venkataswamy Commission. The Janata government in the state was failed in implementing the Commission report due to the state-wide agitation and protest led by the dominant castes or communities within the party and outside. As a result of this, Janata government was forced to scrap the Commission report and announced an ad hoc reservation policy for three years in order to maintain its status quo. Before going to the details of Commission's report and the new Government Order it is necessary to discern the historical background of the backward class movement in Karnataka.

The fight for the privileges began in the first quarter of this century with the emergence of the non-Brahmin

movement<sup>1</sup> and was essentially a conflict between the elites, a tone not entirely absent from the recent agitation. Even during the days of the British, reservations were in vogue in the princely state of Mysore for the non-Brahmins. The Maharaja of Mysore appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Sir Leslie Miller, the then Chief Justice of Mysore Court in 1918. The Committee defined backward class to include all Indians except Brahmins and Anglo-Indians and suggested a minimum proportion for the backward classes in the selection to the government jobs. In its recommendation it said:

We recognise that population is not the only factor to be taken into consideration and that one important factor is the maintenance of the efficiency of the services. Efficiency, however, is not to be measured solely or even mainly by academic qualifications and it will not be denied that there are many important branches of administration in which other qualities such as sympathy, honesty of purpose, energy and common sense go as far to make an efficient officer as literacy superiority. We do not wish to suggest that the Brahmin community is deficient in these qualities, but it cannot and does not claim a greater share of them than other communities, while its superiority

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1 For a detailed discussion on the non-Brahmin movement in the state, see Dushkin, Lelah, Non-Brahmin Movement in Princely Mysore (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1974); also see Hettne, Bjorn, The Political Economy of Indirect Rule - Mysore, 1881-1947, London: Curzon Press, 1978; Chandrashekhar, S., Dimensions of Socio-Political Change in Mysore, 1918-40, New Delhi, 1980; Manor, James, Political Change in an Indian State - Mysore, 1917-1955, Delhi: Manohar, 1977.

at present in the capacity to obtain academic distinctions can hardly be questioned. (2)

There is a significant observation of the report that "We think that a large increase in the proportion of officers drawn from communities other than the Brahmins may safely be advocated without any fear that the efficiency of the services as a whole will thereby be materially reduced".<sup>3</sup> In 1921 based on the Miller Report, 75 per cent of the vacancies were reserved for the backward classes. Thus, the Brahmin hegemony was soon brought down. Since then the Vokkaligas identified as the landed gentry of the princely Mysore, have been enjoying the backward status. This Vokkaliga domination has been tilted as a result of the reorganisation of the states.

Consequent to the reorganisation of state in 1956, the Government of Mysore issued an order in 1959 listing out the backward classes as applicable to the entire state. This order was, however, quashed by the High Court. Thereafter, the Government appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of Nagan Gowda in January 1960. The Committee in its report in May 1961 recommended preferential treatment

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2 Report of the Committee appointed to consider steps necessary for the adequate representation of communities in Public Services, Sir Leslie C. Miller, 1919, p. 2.

3 Ibid.

for 214 castes under Article 15(4)<sup>4</sup> and 185 castes under Article 16(4).<sup>5</sup> It recommended 50 per cent reservation in educational institutions, and 45 per cent reservation for government jobs.

The Committee had treated both the Lingayat and the Bunts (the latter are concentrated in Dakshina Kannada district) as forward. Whereas the Government order treated them as backward. The logic behind this apparently was that the committee was unanimous in regard to these two groups. The government order stated that the Lingayats were largely rural engaged mainly in agriculture and manual labour and that they suffered from poverty and illiteracy. It also stated that the Bunts were largely indistinguishable from the Vokkaligas.<sup>6</sup> The inclusion of the Lingayats into the backward classes list is not far to seek. After the 1956 political power had effectively passed into the hands of the Lingayats and it would have

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4 Article 15 of the Constitution of India prohibits discrimination by the States against any citizen on grounds of religion, races, caste, sex, or place of birth. But this does not prevent the state, under clause (4) from making special provisions for socially or educationally backward classes or for the SCs and Tribes.

5 Article 16 provides for equality of opportunity in government employment. But under clause (4), the state can make reservation for any backward class which in its opinion is not adequately represented in its services.

6 Nataraj, Lalita, and Nataraj, V.K., "Backward Classes, Minorities and the Karnataka Elections", in Mathew, George, ed., Shift in Indian Politics, New Delhi: Concept, 1984, p. 43.

been a bold step if the Lingayat demand for the privilege of being declared backward were ignored.<sup>7</sup> The government order issued in this regard which included Lingayats in the backward list was challenged in the Supreme Court in the case of Balaji versus State of Mysore of 1963.<sup>8</sup> The Supreme Court struck down the order on the ground that the caste has been treated as the only criteria for determining backwardness. The Court also held that the special provision of reservation shall not be in excess of 50 per cent.<sup>9</sup>

The Supreme Court's judgement in the Balaji case put the state government in a quandary. In order to get over this there came another government order which sought to use occupation and income as the test for determining backwardness. Children of agriculturists, petty businessmen, artisans and menial servants, with an income of less than Rs. 1200 per annum were treated as backward. This order of the Government holds the field from 1963 to 1977.

Though there are poor peoples in all communities, it must be noted that they are all not of the same intelligent-quotient. The Hindu caste system trained a few

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7 Ibid., p. 44.

8 See for details, Karnataka (Government), Report of the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission, vol. I, Bangalore, 1975.

9 Nataraj and Nataraj, op. cit.



privileged castes in brain work and the rest in manual castes in manual work, with the result that the poor of the upper castes easily beat the poor of the lower castes in any intellectual test.<sup>10</sup> It is noticed that the working of this occupation-cum-income tests, the communities that benefitted most were the Brahmins, Lingayats and the Vokkaligas. "This ostensible scheme of reservation", states R.K. Hebsur, "began in 1963, continued till 1977, but in reality jobs and the seats went on the basis of the political dominance of different communities particularly the Lingayats, and Vokkaligas".<sup>11</sup> Since its working was not upto the satisfaction of all the sections of the society the Devaraj Urs Government appointed the first Backward Classes Commission under the Chairmanship of L.G. Havamur in 1972.

The Havamur Commission submitted its report in November 1975. It listed 15 backward communities, 128 backward castes and 62 backward tribes. In addition, it mentioned 396 castes/communities and tribes whose population could not be ascertained. The criteria adopted for determining backwardness were income, education, occupation, caste and ritual status. It suggested the following

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- 10      Karnataka (Government), Report of the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission, vol. I, Bangalore, 1986, p. 27.
- 11      India (Government), Report of the Backward Classes Commission (Chairman, B.P. Mandal), Part II, New Delhi, 1980, p. 153.

percentage of reservation for the purpose of Articles 15(4) and 16(4):

Backward Communities	16%
Backward Castes	10%
Backward Tribes	6%
	<hr/>
Total	32%
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The above said three categories whose students population is below state average (i.e. 1.69 per thousand population) are "(1) Backward Communities whose student average per thousand of population is below state average, but above 50 per cent of the state average; (2) Backward castes, whose student average per thousand of population is below 50 per cent of the state average, and (3) Backward tribes whose student average is below 50 per cent of state average, except Dombars and Voddars and who are Nomadic and Denotified Tribes".<sup>12</sup> It also maintained 18 per cent reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The government order passed on 4 March 1977 stressed that only citizens of these backward classes, whose family income from all sources is Rs. 8000/- (subsequently raised to Rs. 10,000) and below shall be entitled to special treatment.

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12 Karnataka (Government), Report of the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission Report, vol. I, Bangalore, 1975, pp. 315-16.

One of the most significant features of the report was that the Lingayats and Bunts were both declared forward group. This deprived the Lingayats for the first time since the beginning of reservation of the privilege of backwardness. This has created a furore in the state politics.

The Hanamur Report included the Vokkaligas among the backward communities. It is difficult not to heed the criticism that the Commission made a political rather than a well reasoned recommendation in this respect. It is interesting to observe that the Havanur Report recommended 16 per cent reservation for the backward community group consisting of just 15 communities among which Vokkaligas easily account for more than 50% of the population in that group.

The most important contribution of the Havanur Report is the consciousness it created among the other backward classes (OBCs). While this was obviously not the doing of his report alone, it played a crucial role at the appropriate time in making OBCs specially the non-Vokkaligas, conscious and in mobilising them, to press their claims for a greater voice in the state's politics.

The Chief Minister Devaraj Urs made the following changes while implementing the Havanur Report:

- (i) The government included the Muslims among the backward communities. Similarly the Scheduled Caste converts to Christianity up to the second generation in the second category of Backward Castes.<sup>13</sup>
- (ii) The government order brought in a new category called the backward special group. Entry into this group is determined on the basis of occupation and income without reference to caste. Fifteen per cent of jobs and places in educational institutions are reserved for this group.
- (iii) The government order imposed an income limit on those seeking reservation under the backward community and backward caste categories.

In political terms the striking effect was that the Lingayat-Vokkaliga hegemony was disturbed. The OBCs could no longer be ignored. They became politically active. It would be incorrect to argue that Urs was able to break the Lingayat-Vokkaliga hold on the state once and for all. It is clear to state that their dominance has been counter-checked by alternative OBC equation. The denial of the privileges and benefits of backwardness through reservation to the Lingayat has been protested for many times.

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13 See Report of the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission, vol. I, Bangalore, 1986, p. 32.

The order of the government based on the Havanur Commission Report was challenged before the High Court of Karnataka. The court upheld the various provisions of the order except directing deletion of certain communities included by the Government and suggesting consequential reduction in the quantum of reservation. The High Court also had justified reservation beyond 50 per cent. But the government order, thereafter has been challenged before the Supreme Court by the Lingayats in writ petitions during 1979, 1980 and 1981. During the pendency of the case, K.C. Vasanth Kumar and others vs the State of Karnataka, the then government headed by Gundu Rao undertook the appointment to review the problem through a fresh commission. The court's judgement was delivered in 1985. The court was requested not so much to deliver judgements, but to express its opinion on the issue of reservation which may serve as a guideline to the Commission which the government of Karnataka had appointed. All the 5 judges delivered separate judgement and the general agreement was on the use of caste-cum-means test.<sup>14</sup>

The second Karnataka Backward Classes Commission (KBCC), headed by T. Venkataswamy, a former district and

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14 For details of the 1985 judgement of the Supreme Court on the subject, see, Second Karnataka Backward Classes Commission, Report, vol. 1, Bangalore, 1986, pp. 88-115.

sessions judge and Law Secretary to the government, was appointed in April 1983 by the Janata government. It is to be noticed that it was not due to any major socio-political compulsions, but due to a specific legal undertaking made by the previous government that the Venkataswamy Commission was appointed. It has submitted its report to the government in March 1986.

The recommendations of this Commission were based on a state-wide survey conducted by covering 90.49% of the population of the state in 1984. To identify educationally backward it has taken the particulars of students who appeared and passed in April 1985 SSLC examination by covering about 94 per cent. Taking into consideration the state average of passes (i.e. 33.4% of the population) as the cut-off point and caste and communities having pass percentage above or same as the state average were considered as educationally forward and those with percentage below the state average were taken as educationally backward. However, the final identification of social and educational backwardness was made with the SSLC pass statistics as the basic indicator and the socio-economic and educational indicators derived from survey has been taken as corroborative evidence. A caste or community was treated as a backward if it satisfied more than 9 of the 17 indicators pointed towards backwardness. Accordingly, the Commission

identified 35 caste/communities were backward for the benefits under Article 15(4). Again it was further divided into two groups depending on whether the SSLC pass percentage was below the state average but above 50% or below 50% of the state average.<sup>15</sup>

The removal of the Vokkaliga community from the backward classes list along with 33 other caste groups, reduction of the total number of backward classes, and the abolition of the backward special group were the important findings of the Commission. It brought down the number of groups in the list from 205 castes (as specified by Havanur Commission) to 68. Of the 35 communities, considered backward under the Article 15(4) has been grouped into two - group A with 20 castes or communities and group B with 15 castes or communities including Scheduled Caste converts to Christianity. Accordingly a reservation of 14 per cent for group A and 13% for group B making a total of 27% has been recommended.<sup>16</sup>

For reservation under Article 16(4), 31 caste/communities were identified. These communities were brought under two groups - group A with 12 castes and group B with

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15 For details see, Report of the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission, vol. 1, Bangalore, 1986; also see Deccan Herald, 30 Aug. 1986.

16 See Deccan Herald, 30 Aug. 1986.

19 castes - and were assigned 14 per cent and 13 per cent reservation respectively. It also stressed that this list was to be made applicable to promotions also. The candidate's pay and allowances were not to be included while computing the family income for purposes of such reservation. While fixing an income ceiling of Rs. 15,000 per year as eligibility the Commission has recommended the abolition of the Backward Special Group which enjoyed 15% reservation as specified by Havanur Commission. The gross abuse of the facility was the Commission's rationale for cutting out the special group category. It was observed in the report:

We have tried to look into the matter impartially and do not recommend any category like this Special Backward Group where economic test is the only criteria and which ultimately becomes a sort of double reservation for the forward classes, which dominate not only the merit group, but also take the major share of the cake available under Backward Special Group category of reservations, as amply proved through statistics collected by us. (17)

The Commission pointed out that the existing 15 per cent reservation benefitted the economically better off communities like the Brahmins, Lingayats and Vokkaligas to some extent, who have taken the major portion of the

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17      See the Report of the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission, vol. 1, Bangalore, 1986, pp. 223-4.



benefits under this category in terms of getting admission to the professional courses or in securing employment in the state.<sup>18</sup> In this regard Justice Chinnappa Reddy observed that "an unhappy and disquieting situation", in Karnataka, wherein "the two premier (population-wise) caste-community, classes of Karnataka, the Lingayats and Vokkaligas each claiming that the other is not a socially and educationally backward class and each keen to be included in the list of socially and educationally backward classes. To them, to be dubbed a member of socially and educationally backward classes is a passport for entry into professional colleges and state services".<sup>19</sup> The Commission recommended that if the benefits under the two relevant articles had been available both to the grand parent and parent of the candidate, that person would not be eligible for inclusion in the list. Also no caste or community would be allowed to take double benefits in the reservation provision under economic criterion.<sup>20</sup>

The Commission included a package of eighty-one recommendations<sup>21</sup> for the benefit of the backward classes.

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18 Ibid., pp. 222-3.

19 Ibid.

20 See Deccan Herald, 30 Aug. 1986.

21 For details see Report of the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission, op. cit., pp. 268-300.

They included the establishment of more hostels for the backward class students and at least 25 such grants-in-aid hostels with a minimum strength of 50 should be sanctioned every year. The Commission also recommended that a monthly grant of Rs. 15 as compensatory educational allowance should be given to the parents of the poor income group students among the backward classes as an incentive to send their children to school regularly.

It also recommended a pre-matric scholarship to an additional 50,000 backward class students and post-matric scholarship to 5,000 students. The constitution of an advisory board with the Chief Minister as Chairman for the betterment of the backward classes was recommended. Adequate representation was also suggested in the Public Service Commission and other recruitment bodies.

The Commission contended that a uniform income ceiling of Rs. 6000 must form the basis for entitlement to the various benefits and schemes of the development of backward classes. The Commission suggested that the board of directors of the Backward Classes Corporation, should be composed of members from the backward class communities, whom to be appointed on a rotation basis. It also urged that the problem of backward classes must be reviewed once in ten years, if possible along with the national consensus. The Commission also asked the state government to press

the Centre for the implementation of the Mandal Commission's recommendations.<sup>22</sup>

The Commission Report had many of the positive features. It had recommended that the reservation for the backward classes be reduced to 27 per cent from 50 per cent as per government order of 1979. It had suggested for raising income ceiling for eligibility for reservations to Rs. 15,000, thereby abolishing the backward special group. It recommended that the reservations and other benefits should not be granted to those whose parents and grand parents had benefitted from it. It pointed out that the policy on reservations could be reviewed once in ten years. It has suggested for a scientific, rationalistic spirit to be inculcated to fight obscurantist and superstitious belief and also intercaste marriage to fight and eliminate the caste system from its roots. Finally, though it had unjustifiably excluded certain genuinely backward communities like the Devangas, Nayaks, Ganigas from and included Muslims as a whole in the backward list, it had rightly excluded the Vokkaliga and Lingayat as a whole from the perview of reservations for the backward classes.<sup>23</sup>

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22 In accordance with Article 340 of the Constitution, the government of India appointed the second Backward Classes Commission in 1978 under the chairmanship of B.P. Mandal. The Commission produced its report to the Government in December 1980 and it was placed before the Parliament in April 1982.

23 See "A Showed Populist Move" (editorial), Deccan Herald, 9 Sept. 1986.

The Commission report contained the references to observations made by several judges of the constitution bench of the Supreme Court (in the Vasanth Kumar vs. the State of Karnataka) on the Vokkaliga-Lingayat caste dynamics, their impact on socio-economic affairs of the state and their eagerness for inclusion in the reservation list as a passport for entry into the professional colleges and government service. The Commission pointed out for the exclusion of the Vokkaliga from the backward classes list along with 33 other caste group as a part of a progressive step in the elimination of caste and communities which had been reaping the reservation benefits for decades. It expressed the hope that after 10 years a few more communities would go out of the list when the next Commission would be appointed and finally there would be only open competition.

In spite of the positive features and the progressive content of the Commissioner's report, it had become a matter of controversy when it gave rise to a state-wide agitation against its recommendation. A strident agitation was launched against the report by the Vokkaliga and subsequently by the Lingayats leaders and politicians. The agitation also threw up leaders ostensibly unconnected with any political party such as K.S. Rame Gowda for the Vokkaligas and I.S. Megdum for the Lingayats, both

ex-bureaucrats.<sup>24</sup> The Health Minister and a prominent Vokkaliga leader H.T. Krishnappa, called for a total rejection of Venkataswamy report and demanded for the appointment of a fresh Commission. Whereas, another leader Deva Gowda expressed his anger and dismay with the report and accused Hegde's handiwork in the exclusion of Vokkaligas.<sup>25</sup>

The Lingayats who had been fighting against the existing reservation scheme found it as the suitable circumstance to take up the political arena. The All India Veerashaiva Mahasabha demanded the government to reject both the Havanur and Venkataswamy Commission reports on backward classes. The legislators belonging to Lingayat communities from all the parties actively supported their demand.<sup>26</sup> Fifteen Janata legislators from the Lingayat castes urged the Chief Minister to review the reservation policy and frame a new policy which would determine backwardness on the basis of caste, occupation and income.<sup>27</sup>

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24 Nair, Janaki, "Fighting for Backwardness", EPW, 21(42), 18 Oct. 1986, pp. 1637-8.

25 See, Murthy, Sachidananda, "Every one wants Backward tag; Hegde bows to pressure from powerful caste Groups", The Week, 19-25 Oct. 1986.

26 See Deccan Herald, 21 Sept. 1986.

27 Ibid., 25 Sept. 1986.

Other than these two dominant caste or communities, the other 33 Backward communities sought to be delisted by the Commission, also joined the fray. The caste or communities like Devanga, Viswakanna, Ganiga and Balija etc., are also agitated over their omission from the Commission's new list.<sup>28</sup>

The opposition Congress(I) Party was very much behind the agitation.<sup>29</sup> The party organized state-wide protests against the report, including a relay hunger strike. Especially the Vokkaliga leaders in the party were vociferous on their attack on the Commission's report.

There were severe criticism from other sections as well. For instance a prominent academician, G. Thimmaiah find fault with the methodology adopted and the contradictory findings of the Commission's recommendations.<sup>30</sup> Whereas the erstwhile Backward Classes Commission Chairman L.G. Havanur questioned the very validity of the findings of the report on the ground that by manipulating, the Commission has eliminated certain castes from the backward

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28 For the mixed responses of the various caste/communities against the Report, see, Deccan Herald, 16, 19, 20 and 21 Sept. 1986; Times of India, 16 Sept. 1986; Indian Express, 11 Sept. 1986; The Hindu, 21 Sept. 1986.

29 See Deccan Herald, 9 Sept. 1986.

30 For details see, Thimmaiah, G., "Analysis of the Methodology", Deccan Herald, 30 Sept. 1986 and "Contradictory Findings", Deccan Herald, 10 Oct. 1986.

classes list.<sup>31</sup> Besides, four members from the Commission itself registered their dissent with the Commission's recommendation. Their dissenting note stated that the Commission's approach was negative and intended to eliminate the caste from the backward list.<sup>32</sup>

The agitators concentrated their attack both on the Chief Minister and Venkataswamy. A large number of students, particularly the Vokkaliga castes by boycotting classes from the schools and colleges led a militant agitation which continued for three weeks, demanded for the total rejection of the Commission report. The agitation had disrupted life in some of the districts of southern Karnataka which mainly belonged to the most affected dominant community like the Vokkaligas. Thus, taking the issue of reservation into the streets marked a clear departure from the earlier legal constitutional appeals against various government orders. The government's soft handling up of the agitation encouraged the Lingayat who had hitherto confined themselves to the constitutional path, to adopt a militant course against the Havanur and Venkataswamy Commissions.<sup>33</sup>

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31 See Deccan Herald, 12 Sept. 1986.

32 For further details of the dissenting note of the members of the Commission, see Report of the Karnataka Backward Classes Commission, vol. 1, Bangalore, 1986, pp. 307-68.

33 Times of India, 19 Sept. 1986.

As a result of the controversial agitation and widespread protest, the government finally decided to invite leaders and heads of various institutions representing different castes or communities to discuss the reassess the recommendations of the Commission.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, the Chief Minister admitted that the report was full of flaws and conceded that the cabinet would be taking the task of identifying the backward castes and no harm would be done to those who left out by the Havanur and Venkataswamy Commission. The pressures from dominant members of the Vokkaliga and Lingayat castes or communities and others within the Janata Party as well as outside had forced the government to surrender. On 6 October 1986 the cabinet took a volte-face turn - the outright rejection of the Commission report. Justifying the later cabinet decision, two reasons have been put forward:

- (i) The Commission's inability to proceed according to the guidelines laid down by the Supreme Court as the decision was received in May 1986 by which time the Commission had completed most of its work;
- (ii) Lacunae in the methodology, data collection and indicators and conclusions arrived by the Commission.<sup>35</sup>

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34 Ibid., 14 Sept. 1986.

35 See Deccan Herald, 8 Oct. 1986.



And finally the government announced an ad-hoc Reservation Policy for the Backward classes for a period of three years.

The new government order on reservation covered 89 per cent of the state's population, including the dominant castes like Lingayat and Vokkaliga, for reservation in educational institutions and 92 per cent of the population for the government jobs.<sup>36</sup>

The Government order has grouped the listed backward classes into five i.e. A, B, C, D and E groups - for the purposes of Articles 15(4) and 16(4) and prescribed varying reservation percentage within the 50 per cent limit. In the Group 'A' 62 castes or communities have been listed with a reservation of 5 per cent. They have been considered as the most backward groups and are exempted from the income ceiling. In group 'B' 128 castes or communities have been listed with a reservation of 15 per cent. Similarly a reservation of 16 per cent and 9 per cent has been given to C and D groups. In case of the latter three groups an income ceiling of Rs. 10,000 per annum has been fixed. Group E represents the Backward Special Group. It is having the constituents as shown in the Havanur Commission

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36 Ibid.

based government order. And it has been given a 5 per cent reservation instead of 15 per cent. The income limit fixed for this group has been raised from Rs. 4,800 to Rs. 8,000 a year. All the above percentage of reservation is applicable under both the Articles 15(4) and 16(4).<sup>37</sup>

The government's new order has been criticized from several angles. It has been said that the government has clearly motivated by the short-term political gains at the Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayat elections.<sup>38</sup> The executive committee of the CPI has remarked that a new system of grouping of castes "helped only people who were 'less backward' if not forward. Hence it was political motivated".<sup>39</sup> A similar position has been taken by the BJP.

The opposition Congress(I) dubbed the new formula as a "stab in the back for the genuine backward classes".<sup>40</sup> Oscar Fernandez, KPCC(I) President, accused the government order on the ground that it was "highly a political and

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37 For the details of the ad hoc reservation policy, see Deccan Herald, 8 Sept. 1986; also see, "A New Deal for Backward Classes in Karnataka", Government of Karnataka, Bangalore, November 1986, Appendix III, pp. 92-102.

38 See Nair, Janaki, op. cit.; also see Deccan Herald, 9 Oct. 1986; New Time, 19 Oct. 1986.

39 Deccan Herald, 11 Oct. 1986.

40 See Deccan Herald, 8 Oct. 1986.

opportunistic and neither based on the criteria or statistics set out by the Havanur Committee".<sup>41</sup> While vehemently criticising the new formula Mooly said, "by bringing more number of castes in the backward list without increasing the percentage of reservation, the government had practically crushed the weakest among the weaker sections".<sup>42</sup>

Most of the national newspapers strongly criticized the new government order on reservation. The Deccan Herald in a common editorial blasted the government taking the easy populist way out.<sup>43</sup> The Indian Express described the formulae as a "step backward".<sup>44</sup> Criticising the new formulae, Times of India remarked that it is an abject surrender by the Janata government to the pressure of the dominant castes.<sup>45</sup> The Hindu while criticising the Chief Minister, noted that Karnataka had reduced the whole idea of reservation to a "farce" and attacked him for "bulking under pressure" from both within and outside the party.<sup>46</sup>

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41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 See Deccan Herald, 9 Oct. 1986.

44 See Indian Express, 9 Oct. 1986.

45 See Times of India, 9 Oct. 1986.

46 See The Hindu, 9 Oct. 1986; also see the editorials of The Tribune, 9 Oct. 1986; Free Press Journal, 9 Oct. 1986; The Newstime, 10 Oct. 1986 and 19 Oct. 1986.

The Chief Minister claimed that while framing the interim policy the government had tried to give justice to all the communities. He said that the principal factor that guided was that "practically in every community there were backward as well as forward people, that was also the reason for imposing a income ceiling on all but one group".<sup>47</sup>

Whatever may be the justification provided by the Janata government, one fact remains to be over exposed as far as the intention of the government towards the reservation is concerned. In order to appease the dominant sections, the government designed such a formula in which the dominant sections were also brought together with the socially backward sections. Thus, resulting the absence of the exclusion of any community from the benefits of reservation. This "magical formulae" helped in nullifying protests and opposition from the various sections and saved the government from a major and sensitive political turmoil.

Finally it is to be noticed that the Janata government in Karnataka has taken the issue of reservation for Backward classes out of the context in which it has been debated nationally. The Janata Party when it ruled at the centre was enthusiastic in reshaping the reservation

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47 See The Deccan Herald, 9 Oct. 1986.

policy. Consequently there was the Mandal Commission Report which provided the empirical basis for reservations. The report which was placed after the Congress(I) came to power in 1980 was put on the shelf and it was left to the state governments to do what they found politically convenient. Accordingly, the Janata Government in Karnataka, could only be expected to be more definite in its response to the complex issue of reservations. But the Janata Party leader, Hegde did not try to deal with the issue in such a fashion. The Chief Minister made use of the executive power to pander to all those sections which he considered to be helpful for the government's political survival.

C O N C L U S I O N

## CONCLUSION

In a given context of political development primordial factors like caste play an important role, i.e. retaining caste identity and maintaining social status through political power. These factors are not unknown to the state of Karnataka, where Vokkaligas till the Reorganisation of States on linguistic lines in 1956, and Lingayats till 1972, enjoyed the privilege of being the dominant caste groups in terms of economic and political power. However, this balance tilted with the installation of the Devaraj Urs government, who for the first time changed the edifice of the dominant majority caste in Karnataka politics. During the Urs period these caste groups tried to subbotage his efforts to become the champion of the underdog. Their attempt to destabilise the Urs government and establish a new power equation favouring the OBCs met with failure. The suicidal step of using Mrs. Indira Gandhi's name in his popular measures became the cause of toppling and routing of his party from the political scenario. Measures like land reforms and reservation policy for the backward classes were nothing but the reflections of the then emerging trends within the Congress at the national level and its earnest attempt to consolidate its base after the first Congress split in 1969.

Gundu Rao, the king pin behind the toppling of the Urs government had hardly shown enthusiasm in introducing developmental/populist measures or even carrying out the measures that Urs had already introduced. However, Rao's regime left behind the black mark of corruption, nepotism, red tapism, caste and communal riots, scandals and all sorts of vices in Karnataka politics. This state of affairs get reflected in the form of mass protests and movements like the Peasants movement and Gokak agitation. All these factors contributed to the total shift of public allegiance from the Congress(I) to the newly emerged Janata-Kranti Ranga alliance. Thus, the corrupt regime of Gundu Rao became responsible for the shattering of the strong citadel of Congress(I) in Karnataka for ever.

However, till 1983 Janata Party in Karnataka was in an embryonic stage. It is interesting to note that the Janata wave in national politics in 1977, and the Indira wave in 1980 did not alter significantly the Janata Party's base in Karnataka. The emergence of the Janata Government as an alternative to the Congress(I) was not primarily due to its ideological stand but was a negative vote transfer due to the 'notorious' rule of the Congress(I) government under Gundu Rao. The initial set back to the Congress(I) did not positively widen the social base of the Janata Party; but the subsequent elections to the



assembly proved beyond doubt that its socio-political base has expanded substantially.

However, the absence of any progressive policy like land reform, and its total failure to implement an effective reservation policy are manifestations of its class/caste alliance base. Further, this policy became a means for the Janata Party to penetrate into different segments of the society thereby widening its socio-political base. This particular phenomenon was further accentuated by other measures like providing safe drinking water to every village, Anthyodaya programme, financial assistance to the poor, old age pension, maternity and other benefits to women, supply of uniform and text-books to the students of backward classes, sari-dhoti mangalasutra, programme etc. Even the counter measures like the salamela of the Congress(I) did not considerably change the Janata's base among the rural populace. Although the Janata Party has not shown any enthusiasm in building its base on cadre based organisation, yet in fact the electoral analysis as well as the new experiment in decentralisation and political reforms has proved that the backward communities, minorities and the forward communities have shifted their allegiance to the Janata Party considerably.

No democratic institution can function effectively without the transfer of power to the people. The Gandhian idea of decentralisation of power get reflected in the Balwantrai Mehta Committee and later in the recommendations of Asok Mehta Committee. The hitherto prevalent Panchayati Raj System in Karnataka based on the Balwantrai Mehta Committee was not different from that of the systems prevailed in other states where these institutions utterly failed to deliver the goods, due to inbuilt constraints. To overcome these lacunae, the Janata Government appointed a committee under Asok Mehta in 1978. The new Panchayati Raj experiment in Karnataka is based on the recommendations of this Committee and has been attempted as part of the Janata Party programme on decentralisation. Despite the recommendations in favour of a two-tier system i.e. Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayat, by the Asok Mehta Committee, in Karnataka the Janata Government, due to pulls and pressures from the opposition and as part of the spoils system, retained the existing middle tier, the Taluk Panchayat Samithi. This middle tier when compared to the other two tiers, is the most ineffective and defunct body, as it is not a popularly elected body.

Despite the fact that the Zilla Parishads and Mandal Panchayats have given an opportunity for new political recruitment of local leadership and special representation

to women and backward classes, the experiment is not free from constraints and defects. The foremost constraint for the successful functioning of Panchayati Raj is paucity of finance. Besides, the domination of local landed interests, caste politics, inexperienced and untrained local leadership are likely to hinder the smooth functioning of these grass root institutions. Meantime the new bureaucracy and the heads of these institutions may come into conflict with each other, leading to the stagnation of developmental functions as well as maladministration. However, on the one side Mandal Panchayat is answerable to the Grama Sabha, the sovereign body, which has the power to recall any elected member and enquire into the matters. The practicability of these devices are debatable. On the other the Zilla Parishad has overruling supervisory power over the Mandal Panchayat. Though the Nyaya Panchayat which has been assigned the judicial functions with in the jurisdiction of a mandal level, the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act (1985), is silent regarding the administration of the Nyaya Panchayat and the qualification of the Mukhya Nyaya Vicharika. In Karnataka this institution of Nyaya Panchayat will be implemented only after five years. One of the notable point of Janata Government's programme in the state is its stand on regional autonomy and decentralisation of power, through creating a state

which rests on four-pillars : village, district, state and Centre. As a part of its election manifesto, the demand for autonomy is reflected in Janata government's relation with the centre.

The present day debate on the relations between the centre and the states, which has taken a confrontationist turn, is basically confined to the role of Governors, financial relation and the role of the judiciary. On the role of the Governor the Janata Government argues that as a constitutional head of the state, the Governor should act according to constitutional provisions. The Janata Government also condemns the politicisation of the institution of Governor. It further argues that in a given federal structure the Governor should not be a barrier between the state governments and the centre, but he should be a link between the two. Though the Indian Constitution vested vast financial powers with the centre, the Janata Government has demanded greater financial autonomy for the state. It also stands for the revitalisation of the NDC and the creation of a State Finance Commission. The Planning Commission should be an independent body and free from domination of the ruling party at the centre. Nevertheless the Hegde Government is in no way opposed to the transfer of judges from one state to another,

provided the transfer is done in consultation with concerned judge and in the public interest. The existence of an independent and impartial judiciary is a prerequisite for democracy. The Karnataka Government argues that the appointments are made according to the constitutional provisions in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Courts and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. It is however opposed to the denigration of judicial institutions by politicisation.

The politics of reservations, which underline the policy of appeasement and compromise, is not a new phenomenon in Karnataka. As early as 1918 the then Princely State of Mysore appointed the Leslie Miller Committee for the proposal of reservations. However, the subsequent Commissions like Nagan Gowda Commission, Havanur Commission and the recent controversial Venkataswamy Commission used different criteria for determining backward classes and reservation. Till the adoption of the government order on reservation in 1977 based on the Havanur Commission report, the two dominant class/caste groups like the Lingayats and Vokkaligas enjoyed the privileges of being backward and reservation benefits. The deletion of Lingayats from the backward list by the Havanur Commission was challenged in the High Court and later in the Supreme Court. As a result, the then Gundu Rao government gave

assurance of setting up of a new Commission to reconsider the question of reservation.

The Venkataswamy Commission, which was appointed by the Janata Government when it came to power in 1983, came out with a report excluding both the dominant caste/class categories of Lingayats and Vokkaligas from the backward list. This led to dissatisfaction among the dominant sections who constitute about 75 per cent of the Janata legislators, with the report as well as with the government. Further the Venkataswamy Commission's reduction of the quantum of reservation and doing away with the special group category, intensified the criticism of the report from the other sections as well. The total rejection of the Venkataswamy Commission and adoption of an ad-hoc reservation policy for a period of three years is a clear indication of the surrender of the Hegde government to the pressures brought to bear by the dominant classes. The new order on reservation covers 92 per cent of the population including the dominant Lingayat and Vokkaliga class/caste groups for the benefit of reservation. The Hegde Government's total surrender to the dominant pressures and the politically motivated new ad-hoc order "solved" the immediate controversy but this reservation policy will have an adverse impact on genuine backward classes in the long run.

The Janata Government which came into power in Karnataka as an alternative to the Congress(1) misrule, has sustained and broadened its socio-political base through the policy of appeasement and 'populist measures'. The subsequent electoral success of the party shows the emerging tendencies of alignment of different caste groups favouring the Janata Party. Its projection of a 'centrist' position has further helped in consolidating its base. However, the national turned regional Janata Party has been striving earnestly to fulfil the dual interest, both national and regional. The Janata Party's stand in many ways is in not diametrically opposed to the other Congress(1) ruled state governments. Unlike the other regional opposition ruled states, the Janata government in Karnataka reflects both national as well as regional character and interests. In spite of its successful experiment on decentralisation, implementation of 'populist measures' and the restoration of a new political morality in the state, the Janata Government has totally failed to bring about any structural changes, either through progressive land reform or through restructuring of Karnataka society.

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