CHAPTER VI

CASTE ASSOCIATIONS, PEASANT MOBILISATION AND NATIONALISM

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INTRODUCTION

The Indian social system is beset with the phenomenon of caste. When one looks at the European society or even the other Asian societies, one normally finds only racial or ethnic differences. But in case of India, in addition to racial or ethnic or linguistic differences, one also finds caste as a major dividing factor, within the society. This division leads to differences and differences lead to inequalities as well as for its practices of discriminations. Much has been written on Varna concept and the Jati framework. Historians, sociologists and social scientists working on the Indian social issues have been debating on these questions. These debates have thrown up a lot of fresh light on our understanding of the social situation around us. The caste remained a factor for exploitation and distinction in traditional India, and also in pre-modern India. In subsequent years also, caste continued to be a factor of great socio-political and economic importance in innumerable ways. When basic socio-economic base of society underwent certain dramatic changes during colonial period, it had its own impact on the existing caste relations. In this chapter, a detailed study of the role of caste associations their involvement in politics and their achievements, has been made. The structural changes at the state level led to mobilisation of mass support for political issues. The agrarian society underwent dramatic changes as well. The role of caste as a fact and factor was pre-eminent and this has been widely attested here through references from sociologists, anthropologists and economic historians.
One of the most obvious features of South Indian political scenario has been the modernisation of politics through emergence of caste associations (1). By about 1900, the provincial political arena became crowded with organisations claiming to represent the interests of different caste groups (2). The caste association frequently undertook to upgrade to position of the caste in the social hierarchy. They pressed for the extension of privileges and rights to their caste by turning to the state machinery. Initially, such a pressure only meant raising the caste status in terms of the values and structure of the particular caste order, but gradually as liberal democratic ideas penetrated to wider sections of the society, the caste association started demanding positions in administrative and educational institutions.

A majority of the castes which were under various disabilities, suffered an economic stagnation and were keen to improve their hierarchy. Even the bureaucratic services were fully monopolised by the Brahmin caste because they were the first to benefit from the English education. The bipolarisation between Brahmins and non-Brahmins communities gradually increased and some of the non-Brahmin leaders began to voice against it. Besides, some of the sympathetic officers of the Government started alarming the imperial Government about the dangers of such a rift between major communities. At this juncture, some of the non-Brahmin leaders sought the help of those sympathetic officials and began to demand special treatment for their fellow community men. This led to census re-classification and by 1901, social precedence of the castes and their representation in total social system had altogether changed (3).
The culmination of this procedure by 1901 aroused ambitions among many lower and middle castes and they perceived this opportunity as an unique chance for raising their status. They started organising conferences of their caste workers and formed associations and Councils. This was the beginning. Soon, hundreds of associations mushroomed all over South India.

All these caste associations were competitive in character. They exploited the factor of caste in order to fight their backwardness. They advocated the breakdown of economic and social dependence on other castes and attempted to extend the caste ties over a wide geographic area. The men who established and led these associations were in no sense representatives of the caste to which they belonged. Most of the founders were public servants, and professional men or wealthy businessmen or landlords. These associations pledged to work for the educational advancement and the general betterment of the community people by raising funds for scholarships and student hostels. The caste associations were confined to urban areas and only urban educated people became members. The political changes during 1920s showed them that, rural support is most essential to remain in power and position. Only then, the associations started mobilising masses.

CASTE ASSOCIATIONS AND STATE LEVEL STRUCTURAL CHANGES

Economic

Brahmins were the first to benefit out of the spread of English education. In 1901, there were 68% Brahmin literates, and in 1941 it had risen to 87%, while
corresponding figures for Lingayat caste were 14% in 1901 and 32% in 1941, and for Vokkaliga caste were 4% in 1901 and 15% in 1941 (4). This high literacy rate enabled the Brahmins to establish themselves in the urban occupations which were, though novel to Mysorean society, offered a well paid cash payment as salary. In 1921, 37% of the total workers in new urban literate occupations were Brahmins, while the other major communities shared 4.5% and 1.5%, respectively (5). The literacy rates among Brahmins not only enabled them to find positions in urban centres, but also gave them a fathom support to move to bureaucracy. The administrative service of the Mysore Government was fully and wholly manned by brahmins. Forming only 3.8% of the total population, brahmins monopolised nearly 65% of the gazetted posts and 3.61% of the subordinate posts. Vokkaligas had even lesser proportion, being only 1.1% and 2.4%, respectively.

This Brahmin supremacy led to resentment among other castes. At the dawn of 20th century, there were already attempts to organise themselves to fight Brahmin dominance (7). This was confined to urban context only. Lingayat and Vokkaliga castes were considered only as rural elite of Mysore (8). The necessity to sanskritize their culture through education was pressed hard, because without it, their claim to higher position was not fully effective (9).

Necessitated by these changes at structural level, Lingayats started Mysore Lingayat Education Fund Association and Vokkaligas started the Vokkaligara Sangha. Mr Totadappa and T.Byanna who started these two associations, respectively declared the avowed aim of their associations to gain acess into educational institutions in the same footing as Brahmins. These associations pledged to work for the
educational advancement and the general betterment of their people by raising funds for scholarships and student hostels and by petitioning to Government for concessions in the form of scholarships and appointments to civil service. The membership was voluntary (10). But being confined to urban locality, the scope of associations did not extend beyond Bangalore and Mysore. The rural, illiterate masses of these two communities were left untouched by these associations.

The increasing solidarity of castes slowly began to involve wide geographic areas and led to strengthening of caste spirit (11). This spirit was competitive (12). Caste became a basis of economic and political competition which was the inevitable consequence of its slow geographic expansion (13). These associations began to demarcate corresponding gradations of caste with their socio-economic gradations (14). This was the result of rising new middle class consciousness in which caste associations began to pursue equality by forming caste lobbies (15).

In Mysore, a redistribution of land ownership, i.e., from upper caste Brahmins to that of upper middle caste Lingayat and Vokkaligas brought about a corresponding redistribution of occupational roles in different castes including those mentioned above. This redistribution was confined to only those sections of the caste who came to acquire the ownership of land in quick succession, such as Vokkaligas and Lingayats. These castes effectively controlled their productive resources through direct participation and this raised their economic status and led to their economic dominance (16). In due course of time, these castes came under the impact of sanskritisation and began to move towards cities (17). The tenants working in
the lands of these caste land owners, slowly began to gain access to ownership of the lands they cultivated. But this was a very slow process.

This process of caste degradation and upgradation was termed as stratum degradation and upgradation by Tarabhai (18). This was the procedure which resulted in the proliferation of certain upper castes into the category of middle and lower ones and vice versa. This economic struggle for an upward movement led to establishment of castes and sub-castes in due course of time. Whenever the movement was blocked or resisted by the upper strata of society, it led to social tensions, and there was a close relationship between the status of a caste and its economic position (19). Caste displayed an increasing sense of solidarity and cohesion in demanding privileges. The concessions thus gained helped these castes which were numerically stronger and better organised to enhance their political power (20). Rudolfs opined that these caste associations came to specialise in politics (21). After demanding scholarships for the students and funds for hostels, these caste associations found a new area of activity - politics, and they found it as a means to advance their ends. Besides, the caste strengthened itself and the traditional system of society.

Socially the structural level changes were spontaneous. A large number of families comprising many communities of Mysore were organised on a joint family system and many of them grew into very unwieldy social structures devoid of internal cohesion and in due course of time, they split into elementary family units. In case of lower castes, since a
great number of them did not own any land, their changeover to elementary family units was relatively easier. Due to mobility and urbanisation, joint family property system disappeared and it naturally compelled the members to take up occupations other than the family occupation and this led to formation of individual families. By the beginning of 20th century this process of break up of joint families was evident. The Brahmin caste surfaced this situation as early as 1870s (23), and they were the first to benefit out of English education and find themselves in various urban jobs. The Vokkaliga and Lingayat, the second most economically active sections in the society found it hard to emerge themselves as individual family units, because they were not only the actual cultivators of the soil but also the main participants in non-agricultural occupations such as agriculture, trade, etc. With the income earned from these, they were able to acquire the landed properties that were being alienated by the superior caste Brahmin joint families. But, the gradual realisation of the importance of education in raising for urban standing, these castes also began to move towards urban centres (24).

Another factor which played a prominent part in the splitting of joint families was the relative ease with which new lands could be acquired on account of the differences in land ownership and the state ownership of arable waste lands. Any new property could be acquired and enjoyed without Legislative interference. Thus, patrilineal propertyship broke loose. Besides, the lifting of prohibition on outright sale of family properties further helped the partition of family assets. Economically advanced lower castes acquired such properties initially through mortgages and later on through outright purchases.
The Christian and Muslim communities who were not affected by the partition regulations maintained an upward trend in acquiring more and more land from other communities, though on smaller scale. This caused reduction in land concentration proportion in the hands of superior castes who initially dominated.

Thus, the old and the outmoded family organisation which was hindering the economic improvement of certain communities gave way to progress. The change in the family organisation resulted in the removal of several obstacles, hampering the free play of economic forces (25).

The change in the family organisation also helped the women to emerge as a force to reckon with. In the urban areas, female literacy was promoted (26). The induction of women as teachers, nurses, tutors, etc, began. The suffrage to women was deemed necessary. Social Legislations regarding child marriage, sati, widow remarriage, child labour, etc came to force. Gradually, rural sector also imbibed the change. Here, woman who had always helped her husband on field, became a full time casual worker. When plantations emerged, planters were forced to implement women and child welfare measures on their estates (27).

**Political**

Mysore state was divided for administrative purposes into 8 districts. Each district was under a Deputy Commissioner. Each district was sub-divided into 7 to 10 taluks, each taluk was under an Amildar. The taluk was further subdivided for revenue purposes into hoblis, which were solely controlled by a revenue officer called Shikdar.
The Amildar had an assignment to look after not only the revenue administration of the taluk, but also the judicial and police work. He was pre-occupied with the taluk level overall administration of the area and he could not extend it beyond this level. Only during annual jamabandi, Amildar confronted the hobli level revenue officers for the presentation of their records of land transactions and revenue dues of the year. The occasion of jamabandi was the only occasion where all villagers joined together for a common purpose. In the words of Manor, the jamabandi was more in the nature of a joyous festival as thousands of people from surrounding villages came to celebrate the end of the harvest season (28). Amildar was anything but a chief guest in these occasions and he could hardly look into the documents concerning revenue details and he accepted all of them without verification. Sometimes, the revenue collection accounts were also agreed upon without any explanation. Thus the single most crucial item of business between the state Government and the local level was reduced to a formality (29).

Here, the Amildar, though had power to detect irregularities in village accounts, overlooked them at the cost of peasantry. He was well aware of the Shikdars' powers to fraud and cheat. A rigorous examination of the revenue records would have produced results in favour of peasantry. But, such a tight control was not sought because princely Government never wanted such a tight control. The Government had an informal understanding with men of the local level that as long as a semblance of law and order was maintained here and a reasonable revenue yield is forthcoming, local arenas would remain free from intrusion from state officials (30).
At the hobli level, Shikdar was not a member of the regular gazetted cadre of Government service. Unlike the Amildar who was a state Government gazetted employee, with a handsome salary, Shikdar was never paid and he had little education. But despite these defects, he was an important Government official at the local level. He had under his control whole revenue accounts and he could manipulate them if he wished. Local rich peasant families tried their best to keep him in good books in order to have a considerate and moderate revenue rate. Though princely Government was aware of this, it did little to alter the situation. He acted as mediator between state level and local level political arenas, and state maintained a grand silence regarding this.

As early as 1880, Mysore had an experimental local self-Government model. Municipal, taluk and district boards had moderate autonomous powers. Elected members controlled these boards (32). Until 1918, no elected member of any local board possessed real power. Government officials were able to maintain firm control over local board. Naturally non-officials lost interest in contesting board elections which had almost become a formality. Attendance to board meetings was anything, but below quorum (33). In 1923, certain reforms were introduced. In this year, certain constitutional reforms were introduced. The Government proclaimed that local boards would henceforth enjoy responsibility and autonomy. The boards could choose an elected member as President. But, certain reforms were more archaic than real and electing a President was to be done only when Government deemed it necessary. Such necessity was not at all confounded in majority of cases. By 1936, only 6 out of 100 municipalities could choose their Presidents.
Only, Bangalore could boast of an elected Council President before 1947. Besides, finances of local board were also not allocated properly (34).

This bleak future of local politics further dissatisfied the aspiring local leaders. The resources of local boards were very less besides the power conferred to the local board was more nominal than real. The local politics became very weak and unattractive (35).

The Assembly had two sittings. It discussed all matters concerning administration. Individual members could represent their problems. Dewan presided over the sittings. Initially, the delegates were appointed by the Government, but in 1891, provision was made for the election of members. In 1907, a Legislative Council was created with limited powers to vote on proposed Legislations. But, the Council consisted of an overwhelming majority of Government officials. It remained under official control until 1947. In 1923, Assembly was given the right to pass resolutions on the Legislations including taxation. It had the right to pass amendments to Legislations and to move Legislation on administrative matters. But, these resolutions were not binding upon the Government. Even though franchise was extended, the size of electorate was very limited. Mysore Legislator had very less power. His post was anything but ceremonial. As he had less or no influence over the administrative matters, including the resolutions, his status in the eyes of the public was less. The public knew that the grievances, if redressed, in the Assembly would never find a solution because the voice of the Assembly members could never change the decisions of the Government. The same was the condition in taluk levels. Hence, state level
Representative Assembly members had no power or influence over local level politics (36). But Representative Assembly acted as a periodic gathering of the men from every part of the state who became aware of the problems faced by the peasantry and people. They came to know the hollowness of reforms and amended regulations which the Government passed periodically. By 1935, many of these men had clearly understood the fundamental differences of the political nerve centre.

The rural-urban distinctions in the electoral local self institution was minimised in 1919. In the same year, the strength of rural members was increased. The rural constituencies were also restructured by increasing the strength of the rural district. In place of two district electing one member as a unit, each district was entitled to elect one. The bureaucracy began to shed urban soft corner and started showing a rural bias (37). The achievement of caste, associations in securing 25 allotted seats in the Assembly was commendable and opportune. Another important rural change was the conceding of voting rights to women in local board elections. Membership in the Assembly was fixed at 250 (38).

| Rural areas: | 163 |
| Urban | 73 |
| Special interest | 15 |
| Minority communities | 35 |
| Total | 286 |

When the strength of rural constituencies was less than 150, the membership was extended to 163 which was a clear
indication of the Government's policy to arrest rural mobilisation. By reducing the qualification of ers from 28,000 to over 1,00,000, Government was indirectly attempting to woo the rural masses who had already shown signs of protest. The mushrooming of agricultural associations such as Mysore Vanik Sangha, Mysore Weavers' Society, Gopada Agricultural Association, Veerashaiva Varthaka Sangha, Krishi Shilpabhi Vriddhi, Sangha, etc was a development unique to Mysore economic system. The Arehalli Vyavasaye Sangha, for instance which was opened in 1915 tried to educate peasantry in the art of cultivation. Besides, it acted as a forum for exchanging grievances of the peasantry. Likewise, the Weavers' Society at Melkote associated itself with the weavers of the area and discussed the problems of weavers (39).

The annual sittings of the Patels and Shanbhogs Conferences discussed matters concerning their declining position, diminishing influence, etc (40). Besides, as early as 1906, industrial and agricultural associations were established in order to promote industry and agriculture. By organising industrial and agricultural exhibits, these associations tried to promote agriculture and industry. By 1920, there were 9 mutual cooperation sanghas, 16 sanmitra krishi sanghas, 12 vanik and varthaka sanghas, 18 Vyavasaya sanghas in Mysore. Their sphere of activity was limited with limited financial sources and membership. But the trend towards formation of such associations was all the same a welcome feature in the otherwise stagnant economic life of Mysore.
CASTE ASSOCIATIONS AND THE AGRARIAN SOCIETY OF PRINCELY MYSORE

Mysore, which was largely an agrarian society, comprising mainly of subsistence farming lot, had never seen a heavy volume of trade and commerce. Neither was there any industrialisation. Urban centres were handful. Resident rural population outnumbered urban educated population. Except agriculture, which served as the main stay for vast numbers of population, there was no room for development of non-agricultural avocations. The complete absence of agro-based industries never stimulated extra employment in slack season. Agriculture, which itself was dependent upon erratic monsoons, had become a kind of state sponsored occupation, besides being hereditary. The 16 thousand and odd villages had a caste structure of their own. Most of the villages were tended to be dominated by two major communities, handful of well-to-do peasants from these two communities held accession to large landed properties in the village. They also pursued other jobs such as money lending, mortgaging, etc. They were also prime employers in the village because they employed lower caste people as labourers in their field, thereby providing subsistence and livelihood to the poorest sections of the society.

The Mysore Commission which was a caretaker Government for nearly 50 years, began to develop agrarian Mysore into an export oriented economy. Necessitated by the surplus demand for commercial crops, the economy was geared up to grow commercial crops. The cultivation necessitated finding markets and hence roadways connecting railway networks were laid down.
The construction of railways stimulated commercial agriculture which, in turn, promoted external trade. As a result, small market centres cropped up and many rural markets became connected to central markets in urban centres. The disposal of marketable surplus in rural areas which, thus, became connected to forces of demand and supply from export markets. The linear marketing habits got widened and through market mechanism, ryot came into contact with a wide range of business techniques beginning from financing sowcars to purchasing landlord. The whole process involved the ryot's evolution from a closetted, petty farmer into a full fledged free, producer cultivator.

In this type of economy, where economic relations underwent heavy changes, social relations were also bound to change. Where initially one rich peasant family controlled the whole market mechanism, now there were multiplicity of peasant households independently disposing off their surplus. Where initially the rich peasant family controlled a ryot's debt, employment and obedience, now there was a change. Where initially there was no specialisation of skills, now there was a switch over to specialisation. There was more stratification in the society on the basis of economic inequality. Society developed many layers of classes within castes. New social groups came to be established and distribution of economic benefits interlinked in course of time, necessitated by the slow development of caste consciousness among dominant castes. This drew all castes into the orbit of change. A sense of economic deprivation was felt and organisational support was thought necessary. The demographic changes and the consequent pressure on land necessitated the economically deprived classes to think of reasons for class struggle and to mobilise class on caste lines into a form of a group. This channelisation in thinking led to establishment of caste associations.
Mysore saw the opening of two caste based associations called Veerashaiva Mahasabha and Vokkaligara Sanga in 1906 and 1907, respectively. These two castes though they did not form the majority, were numerically very strong and were referred to as 'dominant' caste and major communities (41). According to Manor, this dominance was not based upon the control of huge landed estates (42). A combination of factors led to such a dominant position (43).

1. Their land holdings were substantially big.

2. This gave them superior wealth which enabled many of them to engage in small scale agricultural entrepreneurship and money lending

3. Thus, they were able to develop a patron client relationship with other classes and castes

4. This patron-client relationship helped them to find positions of influence in local self institutions

5. This influential position involved resolving disputes, punishing local criminals, passing judgement on questions of violation of caste rules, etc

6. This influence sometimes extended to those castes as well which were considered superior in the caste hierarchy

7. These super castes mainly Brahmins had already lost their power and influence in the rural scenario (44)
8. With the spread of education, Brahmin castes moved out of rural areas to urban centres in search of urban jobs by selling or mortgaging their rural land holdings. Being numerically very weak, this caste lost its economic base resulting in a marked decline in the economic power and political influence in rural areas. Since their rural belongings were often sold to other dominant castes of the area, these dominant castes scaled up in the socio-economic hierarchy.

These two major communities of Lingayat and Vokkaliga constituted nearly 33% of the population (45):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>% of population to the total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Brahmins</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Lingayats</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Vokkaligas</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Kurubas</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Adikarnatakas</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Muslims</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Vaishyas</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. Others</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vokkaligas controlled nearly 47.3% of the total village headships in 1935, while the percentage for Lingayats for the same period was 30.5 (46).
COMMERCIALISATION OF AGRICULTURE AND THE RELEASE OF AGRESTIC LABOURERS FROM THE CASTE SYSTEM

The introduction of cash crops turned the land owners from subsistence agriculture to more capitalistic profit maximising agriculture (47). The introduction of state and district level democratic politics reoriented the dominant castes and local elites. The dominant castes were usually much less concerned about the yield of agricultural produce from the land than maintaining and extending their power and territory. This forced them to depend upon other castes for support (48). As Barrington Moore Jr. has pointed out, the stationary character of economic development in India did not stimulate very greatly the rural cultivators to produce cash crops (49). As an alternative, the commercial bourgeoisie themselves became capitalists by buying land as it happened in case of Tamil Nadu (50). The generally low yields meant that there was little agricultural surplus available to convert into capital for reinvestment. Besides, there were very few modern industries to stimulate them to produce more. According to Moore the caste system was a barrier to this. Untouchables did most of the agricultural labour and large farmers took very little interest in cultivation process. This spelt a demise of patronage systems of caste society (51). There was no close network between landed dominant castes and agrestic servants (52). There was a breakup of the traditional social order. This was less evident in the areas which followed labour intensive techniques and more in machine operated extensive agricultural areas (53).

Urban jobs never required caste denominations (54). The break up in rural caste order helped the urban employees. Urban mill owners and factory owners used to talk to anybody
and everybody who sought jobs. Harold Gould has spoken of
this as "ethnic cooptation" where the modern occupations and
professions dominated above caste hierarchy. Thus educated
Brahmins, Vokkaligas and Lingayats sought migration to urban
areas in search of jobs. Their initial dominance in rural
sphere was of no help in urban centres. The caste monopoly
over special occupations and purity of caste and race became
irrelevant in the urban context. The urban factories took
any worker, irrespective of his caste and creed.

Besides, caste-wise division of labour forced different
castes living in a local area to come together in the task of
growing and harvesting. Land owners were forced intercaste
ties not only with artisan and serving castes, but also with
castes providing agricultural labour. These ties tended to
be enduring in a minimally monetized economy which had very
little spatial mobility. The economy was divided into a
series of "production pyramids", as M.N.Srinivas puts it,
with landlords at the apex, the artisan and servicing castes
in middle and landless labourers in the bottom (55).

Caste constituted one of the important dimensions
determining the process of migration. Many research findings
suggested that the propensity of migration was higher among
high castes than the lower ones (56). It was argued that
sociological barriers restricted the mobility of untouchables
(57). But recent studies showed that mobility was high among
low castes (58). The continued urban-ward migration was
augmented on the lines of caste, business, linguistic and
regional feelings. It acted as a bridge, it helped the
peasantry to come out of traditional society and semi-feudal
bondage and helped them to improve economically and socially.
Migration created a rural residential class in a society which was static and traditional. The influx of new migrants from neighbouring places stirred the existing social structure (59). But, this process was not uniform, because areas experiencing heavy out-migration or in-migration were strongly affected. Migration facilitated mobility, leading to creation of new economic forces. Lower castes which were considered as highly immobile, began to emulate the superior castes in their fight for social upgradation (60). This led to break up of joint family system and the obstacles hampering the free operation of economic forces were at once removed. Traditional hereditary occupation was no more favoured. New jobs and new environments created through this. As a result, cultivation expanded. All types of lands came under plough. Surplus produces found new domestic markets. Inter-marketing led to new types of occupations. New occupations led to division of labour into categories creating economic disparity (61).

The expansion of agriculture on commercial lines brought in its wake, monetisation of rural sector. The introduction of cash crops such as cotton, sugarcane, coffee, spices, etc, led to scramble for arable lands among local landlords. Higher income from the cultivation of such crops in a quick time induced the reinvestment of accumulated agricultural capital into agriculture. As a natural consequence, credit and commercial institutions such as banks, cooperative societies, joint stock companies, grew up. The expansion of credit rediffused security in the minds of cultivators, who earlier relied on uncertain monsoons. The land was considered as a secured and safety asset and the urban rich also started investing their additional income in land.
THE DEVELOPMENT OF PEASANTS' MOBILISATION POTENTIAL

The inability of the institutions of an existing political system to absorb increased participation or accommodate demands for participation of groups within society, previously excluded from such participation gave rise to revolution. A rise of political party which could use the new participatory demands to reorganise the system lent extra strength (62). Donald Zagaria (63) stated that peasants mobilised when family size tenancy systems exerted severe pressures on the land due to commercialisation of rural system. The emergence of new authoritative structures involved two stages - elite mobilisation and mass mobilisation or the rural and urban phases. The lack of proclivity of the peasantry towards mobilisation depended on their socio-economic status. Socio-psychological facts of traditional peasant life had kept them in isolation. This point was first emphasised by Marx, who provided the basis of his explanation for the political impotence of the French peasantry in the 19th century. Such isolation was a combined by-product of self-sufficient mode of production, poverty, illiteracy and poor communications. As a result, the traditional peasant found it extremely difficult to achieve class consciousness, i.e., to free political parties or to develop any kind of national associations (64). P. Sorokin and C. Zimmerman argued in similar tone, that distinctive characteristics of rural side-isolation, limited mobility, greater homogeneity, slower rates of social change, combined to keep peasantry away from change (65).

One potent force in overcoming peasant isolation in the country side was education. But, the steady and slow development of education in Mysore further helped the
peasantry to stay in a subdued position. Besides education, modern transport and communication facilities helped to overcome this isolation. The poor peasantry in densely populated rural areas were receptive to change than poor peasants in sparsely located areas, because populous areas were more closer to cities, markets and were influenced more easily by new transport facilities. In the more crowded rural areas, there was more trade, a greater division of labour, more urbanisation and higher levels of communication (66). Thus the areas where trade and economic activity was more, they naturally witnessed a psychological change in their peasantry and this facilitated organisational establishment.

To the question why rural peasantry involved themselves in protest marches only in 1920s and 30s and not earlier, the answer was the rural elite order which controlled the socio-ritual and politico-economic aspects of village was too strong and effective. This had placed peasants in an almost stationary condition. When this elite order weakened, with the spread of local self institutions, they also lost their former control over caste Panchayats and village Councils. Society experienced a new political order. The local boards, the Councils etc were elected and suffrage was given to rural masses though on a limited scale. Through these Councils and boards, a new power elite arose (67). The policies formulated by the power centre and implemented by these local officials in the country side gave way to associational networks. The slow realisation of the fact that biased execution of economic and political Legislation was the cause for their economic and political serfdom instigated the peasant to protest, initially under the banner of the caste association and then, under the banner of a Legitimate political party.
Caste associations and mobilisation of mass support in Mysore

The interplay of the social organisations and political power in the traditional society of Mysore was slow and steady till the British intervention. Village Panchayats which had taken care of administering people in terms of accepted principles of village community lost their initial power and influence. Similarly, the close association between political power and the Varma division was greatly disturbed. But British introduced modern education, creation of secular jobs and urbanisation, led to monopolisation of all these facilities by the Brahmin caste. This necessitated the introduction of politics in respect of caste system. The lower castes were called on, to shed their immobility and rigidity inherent in their castes and to avail of the new avenues of progress, prosperity and power provided by the British model, which did not recognise caste as a unit of power. Caste was shorn-off of all its important functions and caste stopped functioning as a community. Caste Panchayats among dominant peasant castes were dead by the end of 19th century. Further, among the agricultural classes, religion was organised only at the level of village, and only few castes possessed mutts and other religious institutions. There was no religious centre whose authority could bind them into a unit uniformly. This absence of a tangible organisation and declining importance of village communities imposed pressure on a caste and as a result, caste associations took birth (68). Rural social system expressed differences in wealth and prestige in terms of caste differentials. Though caste had lost its importance in actual organisation, it remained critical as a status concept (69).
These factors led to mobilisation. The caste associations among predominantly rural castes in Mysore which grew out as a product of extending material status in terms of education and urban jobs, gradually became a power centre and a centre for activity. By 1920s, a number of such associations had been founded. The press saturated with communal inventive and important public figures started specifying on the role and importance of their communities (70).

1. Some of the castes tried to claim recognition of a status equivalent or superior to that of other forward castes. For example, Brahmin caste. Their urge to maintain a separate identity led to the establishment of caste associations through which they attempted to mobilise a section of their community living in urban areas.

2. Due to rapid changes in economic status, some castes attempted to raise their status. The ladder of mobility was put under great pressure within the caste system. By their numerical strength and the new caste consciousness, some of these castes were able to organise themselves against the resistance of old dominant castes in the agrarian society of princely Mysore.

3. With the brutal revelation through census of the status differentiation, the movement for the general raising of status was promoted by the association leaders by appealing for support to the fellow community members.

**Caste associations and political mobilisation**

Caste associations and their leaders played an important role in the mobilisation of masses in the national
They acted as mediators between national leaders and an unhappy, depressed lot of peasantry. They described their goal as solving concrete problem of the peasantry through a broad national channel. A nation-wide consciousness was promoted by these leaders by appealing to their community men to join hands with them. Thus, these associations were helpful in making an agrarian society responsive and adoptable to the changing political sentiments then in the air. Thus, they developed a political style of their own (71).

Between 1916 and 1930, nationalist politicians mainly derived from Brahmin caste, were challenged by a group of non-Brahmins, who had newly begun to take an active part in the Mysore politics (72). The traditional rivalry between these castes was developed into a Brahmin and non-Brahmin conflict (73). In course of time, a political party was organised to inaugurate non-Brahmin interests in the state level politics. But, the pre-occupation of these leaders in local level politics cut off their involvement in national movement which was looming large in Mysore by 1930s.

Baker considers the friction that existed between Brahmin and non-Brahmin in 1920s as a typical by-product of the demand for more political, social and educational privileges by any backward group (74). The development of non-Brahmin movement was one of the ways in which these demands were manifested in modern India (75). Out of social conflicts, rose scramble for political conflicts.

This brings us to the vital question, why the peasantry decided to mobilise under the banner of caste? Or why the large mass of peasantry were brought to involve politically
in the national movement? The peasants' participation in politics beyond the confines of village limits explains the reason for peasants' inherent sentiment to respond to a change (76). A mass of people who were generally poor and had little time to think beyond agricultural pre-occupations were quite pessimistic about their abilities to manipulate social and political environment. Besides, their political ties were very limited.

But, a peasant was involved directly or indirectly in a cash-oriented market economy, whose structure and base were controlled by a political system, i.e., the market relations were controlled by a bureaucracy which was, in turn, subordinate to centralised Imperial Government. This involved subjection to the demands and sanctions of power holders were naturally outside the comprehension of an ordinary peasant. He was bound by a series of political policies and regulations which delimited his economic role in the market economy (77). The colonialism sponsored economic policies exploited the peasantry. The margin of profit to the traders and imperial agents was more. The experience of exportation further helped them to involve in an organisation which claimed to end the exploitation and free the peasantry (78).

These associations uniformly started influencing the state Government for support through the establishment of a political party called Praja Mitra Mandali (PPM). The Mysore royal family secretly assisted this party (79). The leaders of this party vociferously demanded educational and job concessions to their community. Dewan Vishweshvaraya followed a rigid policy of merit consideration and did not yield to communal consideration. This led to friction between Dewan and the non-Brahmin classes (80).
This was the time when national Swaraj agitation was gearing up and fearing that dissatisfied non-Brahmin would plunge to political movements sponsored by Indian National Congress (INC), the Mysore Government decided to satisfy the non-Brahmin sections which was in majority, forming 97% of the total population, by sanctioning Rs 1 lakh as special educational grant. The disapproval of this proposal by the Dewan led to enstrangement between Raja and Dewan. As the rift deepened, the non-Brahmin leaders making use of this opportunity demanded the appointment of a Committee to go into the question of communal representation in public services. Dewan Vishweshvaraya opposing the demand then resigned (91). This opened up new vistas in the Brahmin-non-Brahmin strife. Kantharaja Urs, uncle of Maharaja who became the Dewan was the first non-Brahmin to occupy that coveted post.

Princely Mysore was the first state to appoint a Committee to look into the demands of the backward classes. The non-Brahmin majority of this Committee headed by Justice Sir Leslie-C-Miller recommended liberal concessions to backward classes (82). The report could not be implemented immediately because the whole bureaucracy, manned by Brahmins who were in charge of its implementation resisted it (83). The non-Brahmin political platform - the PMM suffered a setback during this period. It lost most of its leaders. Besides, the national political arena attracted most of them. The Sultanpet disturbances came in handy for Brahmins because this created a rift between state and non-Brahmins. Vishweshwaraya who inquired into this pointed out the crucial role played by some of the non-Brahmin politicians to satisfy their interests (84). The disturbance and its aftermath brought in a new class of persons interested more in the
national level political development than the state. It let loose a band of men, armed with unique strategies to fight the colonial serfdom. This period also marked the close of the Brahmin-non-Brahmin fight. The visit of Gandhi to Mysore created a new ground for state political leaders (85). This gave rise to a radical group in PMM which started criticising the Durbar for denying them their rights and started a new faction called Praja Paksha (86). This led to their demanding a responsible Government. The Brahmin leaders also by this time realised the need for broadening the involvement in national level politics instead of fighting with a resenting Raja and his autocracy which in no way could neither change nor modify and neither resist nor reform (87).

The organising of industrial labour force was also undertaken by Brahmin leaders who had now realised the need of support of all castes to fight Mysore durbar. The Binny Mill agitation of 1926 was the natural outcome of mass mobilisation process. The appeal to masses to resist police high handedness in this case, besides embarrassing the Government, created a ground for such fights against injustice. The demand to repeal factory acts, demand for high wages and bonus, demand for housing and sanitary conditions etc followed in order. In 1930, the workers of KGF raised their banner of protest.

The realisation by workers that introduction of finger print system of identification to bind them permanently to the mines was a major agitation in Mysore which lasted for 24 days. The fact that all these mines were European managed, lent further air. The agitation ended only when the authorities abandoned the system. These agitations were
carried on without any leader. The masses were by this time aware of their grievances and had found a suitable way for redressing it - "strike and agitate".

By 1931, these agitations became organised. The dismissal of workers who appeared in Gandhi Cops and Khadi Clothes infuriated the workers of a small mill in Bangalore. This was organised by Textile Labourers Union, headed by Sharma, a Brahmin. Sensing a congress involvement in the mass organisation, Mysore Government ordered that all organisations and the people who had their roots outside Mysore were not to enter Mysore. But workers were successful in getting enhanced workmen’s compensation in case of death or injury and in 1941, Mysore Labour Bill, recognising trade unions was passed which allowed workers to become members of trade unions.

The mobilisation of agricultural workers was also undertaken during this phase. The non-Brahmin leaders started focussing their attention towards gaining some power and influence in the rural areas. The case of Shikaripur ryots was a major protest movement which came in handy for these leaders. Close on the heels was Kolar ryots' case and the Irwin canal agitation, followed by the case of Srirangapattana ryots and Kagebore Nala case of T.Narasipur district. These were a stout display of general distrust of peasantry in Government policies. The open hostilities clearly demonstrated that the Government had failed to keep pace with the demands of enlightened peasantry.

ACCELERATED ECONOMIC CHANGES AND PROTEST MARCHES

The Indian National Movement for independence began to gather momentum after the First World War. It got further
impetus from the depression which started at the end of 1920. In India, the depression was felt by all sections of the economy in the form of declining prices, decline in effective demand for agricultural produce, indebtedness caused by low profit fetched through marketing, etc. In major industrial cities, several strikes took place. It was during this period (1930-4) that the Civil Disobedience Movement was launched by Mahatma Gandhi. This unleashed a new spirit of nationalist struggle and awakening among the masses, particularly the middle classes. Although Gandhi was not against mass struggle on a larger canvas, he disapproved peasantry directly clashing with authorities and abruptly announced its withdrawal. It was in this atmosphere of dissatisfaction that some socialist-minded nationalists within INC started the socialist party. This was followed by factions at the provincial level by the radically thinking younger elements of Congress. Jawaharlal Nehru argued during this period that only a socialist programme could save the impoverished millions of India. Princely Mysore, where nationalist activities were an arrested fact, new forces demanding the changes and reforms cropped up. Landlords were hard hit because they had to pay land revenue within a fixed period, otherwise their properties were attached. Agricultural workers suffered because their wage levels reached the lowest ebb. They felt pauperised because, except agricultural wage, there was no other income to livelihood. The tax on the salt, toddy and tobacco proved burdensome. The plantation labourers suffered because coffee industry had lost its overseas market and export trade became standstill. The seasonal labourers became unemployed and annual farm labourers also suffered from the same situation. The establishment of Praja Samyakta Paksha with an avowed objective of mobilising rural support by organising ryots
conference in every taluk and to catalyse agrarian grievances followed as a natural corollary of these economic events (88). The strategy, and mobilisation techniques included mass demonstrations, processions, and petitions with nearly the whole rural area participating. The mobilisation was confined to economic issues only. To bring home the cause and effects of economic policies to the rural masses, youth organisations were set up. Many young workers with their rural base joined hands together. The protests demonstrations described here that grew out of this political and economic discontent represent only the major ones, which stirred the Government to the roots.

**Shikaripur cases**

The vociferous accusations levelled against the highhandedness of local revenue officials in a famine-hit area of Shikaripur of Shimoga district revealed the discontentment brewing among peasantry. Besides scanty rainfall, procurement prices of food crops went down on account of general economic depression. As a result, ryots found it difficult to pay their share of land assessment. Revenue officials without any sort of inquiry into the real conditions of peasantry, began to harass them by putting up the lands for sale, by attaching movables etc. Peasants held several meetings between April 1929 and May 1931. Their demands for 50% reduction went unheeded. In July 1931 a big public meeting was organised to be addressed by Mr T.T.Sharma amidst prohibitory orders (89). Things went out of order when an amicable settlement sponsored by Mr T.T.Sharma failed to take off and ryots stopped paying the land revenue. The Dewan lent a deaf ear to the problems of peasantry. The demand for appointment of an enquiry Committee into the
atrocities committed allegedly by the revenue officials, came in as a rude shock to the Government. Government accused the people of the area to have been influenced by the no-tax Campaign which had struck the Indian country at the time (90), and hence declared that peasantry did not deserve any remission.

The Shikaripur taluk, a remote rural hamlet, inhabited mostly by the illiterate peasantry was successful to a extent in resisting Government high handedness. This act of protest though was influenced by the general protest movements of 1930s, prevailing in India (91), was a natural by-product of pure economic stagnation caused by the combined factors of Government economic policy and general depression. This was also an utter failure for the revised remission policy of 1928 (92) which limited the grant of remissions to individual tanks instead of all the affected village tanks. The deplorable state of affairs was further utilised by local revenue officials to curb the popular tide. But, at the same time, the case acquired prominence because the docile and illiterate classes organised under the banner of a Common Cause to fight a common enemy, with a common objective.

Kolar case

The demand for reducing the assessment rates in Kolar district rocked the Assembly and shook the Government to its roots. In spite of Government's stand for no-change in assessment rates (93), agitations in favour of reduction continued spontaneously (94). A Committee of enquiry consisting of all official members was instituted (95). There were several meetings after this resolution. Speakers at the meeting urged the Government to meet the peasantry
individualy. When Government officials met the people, there were many representations regarding abolition of railway cess, reduction of dry assessment rates, etc. The Committee found that the taluk had heavy fragmentation and there were nearly two land holders per survey number. As there were 2,84,360 survey numbers, a recommended reduction of assessment would only give benefit of only a one-fifth of a rupee per year and such a concession can hardly cure the gradual impoverishment complained of. The committee kept on insisting that ryots needed no relief as any change of settlement rates would embarass the integrity of settlements (97). The Kolar issue induced the representatives to demand setting up a Committee of official and non-official members to go into the land revenue policy and make suggestions to place it on a statutory basis. The report on taxation in Mysore stated that there was no sound basis on which land revenue assessment was levied in Mysore.

But the case of Kolar ryots were successful in making the Government set up a Committee to inquire into the excesses of land revenue. The whole episode gained historical prominence because it motivated the peasantry in other parts of Mysore to protest and to resist high taxation.

The case of Srirangapattana ryots

The leading men of this taluk organised a meeting of all the people under the presidency of H.C.Dasappa. The cause of discontentment brewing heavily in the air then was the effect of a steep fall in the prices of agricultural produce and the consequent difficulty in paying the high rates of revenue assessments. They vehemently criticised the enhancement of revenue rates as unjustified. They strongly
pleaded with the Government to take up a proper economic survey in the taluk and assess the causes behind the economic stagnation affecting the people. Their demand for an enquiry Committee to look into these matters roused the Government (98). When peasantry severely demanded, Government fearing a non-payment of taxation, promised a reduction in the land assessment rates immediately (99). The tiny island of Srirangapattana with a overwhelming majority of poor and illiterate ryots boldly faced the Government and demanded justice. The all-India wide stir to non-cooperate with the Government officials had no direct influence here the masses were all the same enlightened to the fact that heaviness of taxation was the sole cause for their poverty and indebtedness.

The case of Kage bore Nala (T. Narasipur taluk) ryots

In this case, representatives of the people in the Assembly questioned the authority of the Government to enhance the contribution rates from Rs 100 to 180/- without the consent of ryots (100). Government had taken a separate "Muchalika" from willing ryots to surrender one-third of the holdings in lieu of tax contribution. This was agreed upon by some of the ryots, but in case of others this was subsequently given up in favour of an acreage contribution of Rs 100/-. The point which raised the voice of dissent was that a general "muchalika" included persons other than ryots (101). Government asserted that the increased levy was necessary because the majority of ryots denied to surrender one-third of their lands and Government victoriously adopted the new rates. The protest by peasantry and ryots did not find a redressal. But at the same time, this proved that peasantry was becoming conscious.
Irwin canal ryots agitation

In the early 30s, the ryots of Irwin canal area started an agitation against the Government policy of irrigation. The block system of irrigation was introduced to secure economy in the use of water. For this purpose, canal was divided into blocks varying from 50-150 acres and water was supplied for each block so as to suit a trennial rotation of paddy, semi-dry crop and sugar cane. The system of rotation with sub-blocks soon found to be unworkable (102). Besides Government’s stand to raise the levy of contributions from Rs 75/- as advised by Vishweshwariah to Rs 100/- became a bone of contention between ryots of the area and Government. The increase was looked upon with disgust because it came at a time when peasantry were hard hit by the depression. Besides, ryots had to pay the whole contribution amount in 10 instalments and if they failed, they had to pay an interest of 6.25% on unpaid instalments. But, Government had reserved to themselves the power to revise the contribution rates. Many ryots signed up "muchalikas" without knowing the motives behind this (103). Many public meetings were held to discuss the difficulties of ryots (104). When Dewan was approached, he agreed to constitute a Committee to investigate into the matter. The Committee recommended a contribution levy of Rs 90/- per acre, which was no better a solution and ryots decided to march on foot to Bangalore and redress the grievances directly to the Dewan. It was of great historical significance, because Mysore had never witnessed such a perfect organisation (105).

The march of ryots had four important effects. First, peasantry could ventilate directly their grievances to the authorities which gave more weightage; secondly, peasantry
came to know the real motives behind Government's intentions; thirdly, peasantry came into direct tussle with the Government; and fourthly, it showed to the Government, the unified and effective strength of peasantry in organising a protest march.

Thus, the protest marches and agitations revealed to the Government that peasantry no more played a subdued role in the fast-changing economic scenario. Any attempt to curtail their participatory behaviour would result in protests (106). The peasantry with new found consciousness that unity of action only could secure them their justice, strengthened the protest movements by joining it in larger number (107). Their involvement scared the Government and prompted them to undertake Legislative measures to subside the geographic expansion of such discontent. The Government learnt a lesson that in the wake of prevailing ferment national consciousness, the cause of peasantry could not be neglected (108). Above all, the national leaders started using the argument of the impoverishment of peasantry by colonial domination to advance the cause of Indian independence (109). By 1920s, many of the national leaders had begun to uplift the village image. There was a heavy emphasis on promotion of village handicraft industries and small scale production. By forcing this argument, these leaders were successful to a greater extent in mobilising the rural support for freedom movement.

SUMMING UP

Caste system in agrarian economy of princely Mysore was not static in its structure but its mobility was slow. The colonial Government generated a series of new forces in this
economy, such as western education, improved communication, a cash oriented economy, an expanding bureaucracy, Legislative bodies, and local self institutions. Their introduction upset the old equilibrium and set the static society on the path of modernity and change. The process of change did not affect all castes uniformly. As and when new economic and educational opportunities were created and utilised, growing mass of public realised that their traditional occupation did not assist them in keeping a status quo in the social hierarchy. The slow realisation of this idea made them demand provisions for their brethren through an organisation. Thus, a chain of caste association was born. This was a novel experiment. It brought two ideals of politics and social tradition face to face. It acted as a buffer between rigid traditional values of kinship and emerging super power. It acted as a social adapter. It unified two self complementary factors of politics and caste. In course of time, a caste association became a stage for local, rural, public men to voice the grievances of their fellowmen and to find a solution. By cementing local level political cadres with those of state level policy makers, it attempted to create a fertile ground for effective leadership in the national movement. It preached unity of action among the community even to combat occupational diversity and economic disparity. The caste associations were funded generally by western educated, urban elite men. Though Lingayat and Vokkaliga never had a united plan of action, outwardly they boasted the support of a vast majority of people. The modern devices of "demand and appeal" politics - the newspapers printing press, conferences, petitions and deputations, etc, helped them to create a caste lobby.
In the first two decades of the establishment, they were highly successful because they were a novel experiment in a society which was not only orthodox and tradition bound but also stationary. The much publicised Brahmin dominance issue which had spread in the neighbouring Madras presidency, created a fertile ground or establishment of such associations in Mysore. When they spread out geographically they embraced a wider sphere of action. The extension of suffrage also minimised the importance of caste association as a vehicle of politics. This helped them to emerge as a caste party. The absence of one single dominant caste was in a way responsible for the absence of caste-based resistance to organisation of the peasantry at the local level. Later on, caste and political parties merged together and forged ahead to fight a common evil.
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