CHAPTER II

POLITICS AND THE ROLE OF CASTE IN KARNATAKA
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Karnataka is one of the 28 States of the Indian Union. It has an area of 1,91,791 Sq.Kms with a population of 4,49,77,200 according to the Census of 1991. The State is bounded by Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu in the East, Kerala in the South, Arabian Sea and Goa in the West and Maharashtra in the North.

THE GENERAL POPULATION OF THE STATE AND SCs/STs

POPULATION (State-wise and District-wise ) are given below:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year/District</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Scheduled Castes Population</th>
<th>Percentage to total population</th>
<th>Scheduled Tribes Population</th>
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<td>7369</td>
<td>16</td>
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1991

1. Bangalore
2. Bangalore (R)
3. Belgaum
4. Bellary
5. Bidar
6. Bijapur
7. Chikmagalur
8. Chitradurga
9. Dakshina Kannada
10. Dharwad
11. Gulbarga
12. Hassan
13. Kodagu
14. Kolar
15. Mandya
16. Mysore
17. Raichur
18. Shimoga
19. Tumkur
20. Uttara Kannada

A BRIEF SKETCH OF CASTE AND POLITICS TILL 1947:

“In stark contrast to feudal, autocratic Hyderabad, Mysore State represented the epitome of reformism among the Indian Princely States: reformism in taking up Gandhian ‘Constructive Work’, including untouchable upliftment programmes; reformism in providing for limited electoral participation; and reformism in its tradition of state-guided economic development. Inspite of the very unGandhian implications of industrialization, Gandhi himself, who was state guest several times, called it the nearest approximation to ‘Ram-raj’.

The Princely State of Mysore was ruled by the Wodeyars who had originated from Yadava Caste. The Kings of Mysore who were called “Maharajas” were benevolent rulers. The Maharajas were keen on improving the economic conditions of the people in general and promoted agriculture with irrigation projects. The state was also in the forefront with regard to the efforts to promote industrialization. In the field of education also they made progress as early as 1905 and conscious efforts were made to promote education among the SCs.

By 1904-1905 there were 76 schools for Depressed Classes. 37 government schools, 36 government-aided mission schools and three unaided schools. In 1915 there was a famous test case in which the government ordered a school master in the Sringeri Jahagir to admit untouchables; there was protest from both caste Hindus and Muslims who withdrew students, but C.R. Reddy, the

then administrator of schools, prevailed upon the Maharaja to declare that education was everyone's right. In 1919 the order was generalized to allow Panchamas into all schools, again inspite of protests, the Maharaja was firm. By 1920s a small educated section was making a limited entry into government employment. Statistics showed that there were 165 SCs in 1918 of a total of 4,234; after the Miller Committee Report, they were only 13 of 1,051 new appointees upto 1924. 

Karnataka is perhaps the first state in the country to have a democratic institution associating the representatives of the people in the administration of the state. The first Lower House known as the Representative Assembly first met on 7th October 1881, under the chairmanship of Diwan Sri.C. Rangachar and was attended by 144 members. Since then, though it continued to be a Princely State, it had traversed several milestones in the process of establishing responsible government till the first General Elections, after Independence.

While maintaining cordial relationship with the British, paying them the subsidy from the State, the Maharaja was also supporting the nationalist movement and contributed to Congress funds. The Diwan of Mysore, Mirza Ismail represented the State in the Round Table Conference held in 1930 and initiated certain federal principles for the relationship between the Princely States and British India, which were incorporated in the Government of India Act of 1935.

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3 From the book Karnataka Legislative Assembly – A Review of the Tenth Assembly (1994-1999), compiled and edited by Research and Reference Section, Karnataka Legislative Assembly Secretariat, Vidhana Soudha, Bangalore.
There was a politically dominated conflict between the Brahmans and non-Brahmans during 1920s. But this was urban and elite-based. The dominance of the Brahmans in Mysore administration was questioned by the caste associations like the Veerashaiva Mahasabha, The Vokkaliga Association, The Adi-Dravida Abhivruddhi Sangha, the Kuruba Association and the Central Muslim Association. These associations submitted a memorandum to the Government and Miller Commission in 1918 and the Commission submitted its report in the same year which was accepted in 1919. On the recommendation of the Commission, representation was given to Backward Castes but the interests of the Scheduled Castes were generally ignored.

Inspired by the non-Brahman movement in Madras, an organization called Praja Mitra Mandal was started representing the interests of the non-Brahmans (primarily Lingayats and Vokkaligas) and the Muslims with direct or indirect encouragement of Dewan Mirza Ismail. The Bangalore disturbance between Hindus and Muslims during 1927-28, became handy for the Brahmans who used the anti-Muslim communal sentiments to force Mirza Ismail to resign. In the meanwhile, another party by name Praja Paksha, with nationalistic outlook emerged in 1930, and merged with the Praja Mitra Mandal to form the People's Federation. This Federation ultimately merged with the Congress in 1937. From then on it is the Congress Party which had been playing a very dominant role in the politics of the State, for more than four decades continuously.

From the development of socio-political events in the State, it is evident that the so-called non-Brahman movement was not a movement to be reckoned with, and it had no plans and programmes for protecting the interests of the
Scheduled Castes. Besides, there were no ideological components available in the State, like Phule-Ambedkar principles in Maharashtra, the Marxist dogma in Andhra and the rationalist ideologies of Periyar (E.V. Ramaswamy Naikar) and others in Madras. This paved way for the hegemony of the Congress among the masses in general and also among the Scheduled Castes. As a result, 'Gandhism' was the only ideological component that guided the politics of the State and the welfare 'activities' of the Scheduled Castes.

There were, of course, a few Scheduled Caste organizations which came into existence like the Adi-Dravida Abhivruddhi Sangam led by Murugesh Pillai and the Adi Jambara Sangh with Chennigaramaiah and Chikkahanumanthaiah as their leaders, which were functioning mostly in Bangalore and Mysore for the upliftment of the Scheduled Castes. A political conference of panchamas was organized in 1920 by the Scheduled Caste organizations, with the support of G. Gopalaswamy Aiyar, a Brahmin devoted to the cause of the Scheduled Castes. Dr. Ambedkar was invited for this conference, but he did not attend due to the state ban on his entry. In 1921 an organization called the Adi-Karnataka Sangh was registered with Gopalaswamy Aiyar as the President and majority of the executive members were non-Scheduled Castes. The activities of this Sangh included admitting the students to educational institutions, access to tank water and temple entry. They organized conferences in 1923 and 1925, which were attended by the Scheduled Caste leader from Madras, M.C. Rajah, who was also the spokesman of the Scheduled Castes in the Round Table Conference and a close associate of Dr. Ambedkar.
The conferences of panchamas passed resolutions on using the terminology 'Adi-Karnataka' and 'Adi-Dravida' and also on other programmes for educational and economic progress of the Scheduled Castes. These organizations, supported by Gopalaswamy Aiyar, made representations to the Maharaja for starting educational institutions and hostels for the students and for grant of agricultural lands and inputs to the suppressed people. Subsequently, it was the Gandhian ideology which became a predominant factor in the State, particularly with regard to the problems of the Scheduled Castes then, now called as 'Harijans' by Gandhiji. The Harijan movement emerged soon after the Poona Pact and the Sevak Sangh started functioning. Anti-Ambedkarite S.C. organizations like the All-India Depressed Classes League was started against Dr. Ambedkar, though this organization was not started in Mysore, as Ambedkar movement was not strong here due to the powerful Gandhi-Congress leadership.

Dr. Ambedkar opposed the All-India Depressed Classes League and Harijan Sevak Sangh on two grounds: one – he insisted that the goal of any organization on the problems of the Scheduled Castes should not simply be the 'removal of untouchability' but the eradication of Chaturvarnya, the caste system itself; and two – the leadership should be in the hands of the untouchables. These demands were not acceptable to Gandhiji, for whom the primary purpose of the Sangh was not to be organization of the SCs for emancipation but a body for the reform of Hinduism. With these differences, the split between Dr. Ambedkar and Gandhiji was complete and the Gandhians in Congress went ahead with their 'Harijan Programme'.
The 'Harijan Tour' taken up by Gandhiji nation-wide from 7th November 1933 to 2nd August 1934, led to several activities in the State and Kannada speaking districts in other provinces. Branches of Harijan Sevak Sangh were started in the State and in Bijapur, Belgaum, Karwar, Mangalore, Coorg and Bellary with Hubli as the headquarters. When Gandhiji toured Mysore State in connection with the movement, he met with great enthusiasm everywhere. There were several activities like conducting 'Harijan' Bhajans with local caste Hindus, participation, temperance and sanitation activities in the 'Harijan Colonies' and slums, starting of some schools, night schools for 'Harijan children', etc. But nothing substantial was achieved either in the eradication of untouchability or caste system. The untouchables continued to suffer the ill-treatments and harassments at the hands of the dominant communities which were powerful socially, economically and politically.

Gail Omvedt\(^4\) quotes the report of a Maharashtrian Mahar who visited Bangalore with a group of engineering students in 1937. "He described impressive educational and employment achievements, including four hostels for untouchable students, two special colonies, two medical clinics, free education for untouchables from primary school to the time of gaining employment and a good number of SCs in high-level employment. After seeing this, he was reluctant to ask the students of the Harijan Sevak Sangh hostels what their views were on Ambedkar, assuming their expressed 'love for the Maharaja' would be carried over to a warmth for the Hindu religion itself. But the militancy of the response surprised him".

\(^4\) Omvedt, Gail, Dr.Ambedkar ar.d the Dalit Movement in Colonial India, pp.267-268.
“When Ambedkar said two years ago that we can’t get any rights in Hinduism and got support from all parts of India, what was the reaction of people and other Hindus in the State? We not only agreed with conversion, but at that time we all decided to become Muslims. Though other Hindus fear untouchables’ conversion, still they don’t have the strength to prevent it. Mysore officials themselves don’t agree that temples should be open to untouchables. Then what need do we have for a religion that has no humanity? So it seems that not only in Maharashtra but in the most progressive Hindu State in India, you can find Ambedkar’s followers”.

Thus the patterns of politics in Mysore State set from 1930s continued even after Independence till 1970s by political parties with their dominant caste factors, in the place of the royal regime.

(2) DEVELOPMENTS FROM 1947 TO 1979:

Before Independence and even after Independence and the States Reorganization in 1956, the term Karnataka was not the name often used to refer to this land. It continued to be called Mysore State. As a matter of fact, it was the Princely State with the status of ‘B’ State under the British Rule. The Wodeyar rulers were the benevolent monarchs, as already seen. The territory of the Mysore State covered the so-called Old Mysore Districts.

With the States Reorganization that took place in 1956, Mysore State became Greater Mysore, including the four districts that were in Bombay Presidency, i.e., North Canara, Bijapur, Dharwar and Belgaum, the three districts from Hyderabad State, i.e., Raichur, Gulbarga and Bidar and the two districts
which were in the Madras Presidency, i.e., South Canara and Bellary and the 'C' state Coorg. In November 1972, the State assumed the present name KARNATAKA, under the leadership of Sri. Devaraj Urs.

Right from the beginning of Independence, caste is playing a very significant role in the politics of Karnataka. During the 50s and 60 Congress was the single dominant party in the then Mysore State and the two dominant castes, i.e., Vokkaligas and Lingayats ruled the State. The State was ruled by Vokkaligas upto 1956. When the new districts mentioned above were added, as the result of States Reorganization, the Lingayats out-numbered the Vokkaligas and the State was ruled by them with successive Chief Ministers from that caste, till March 1971.

This trend of major caste domination in the State politics and the chain of Lingayat Chief Ministers ruling the State, was broken, when Sri. Devaraj Urs, from the most minority community, became the Chief Minister of the State on 23.03.1972, after the General Elections in 1972. Devaraj Urs was considered to be the champion of the Backward Classes in the State and it was during his regime the Backward Classes, Minorities and SCs/STs were given substantial share in the governance of the State. He had taken many people from these castes as ministers of his Cabinet and Council of Ministers.

It is observed that the regime of Devaraj Urs (1972-80) represented a break with the pattern of Karnataka politics because of his populism and building of a kind of alliance with small, minority castes including the SCs and STs and other Backward Classes against the peasant based Vokkaligas and Lingayats who
dominated politics till then. However, Congress politics in Karnataka had some
element of populism from the beginning and building of a base among the
Scheduled Castes, minorities and high castes to confront a political ‘opposition’
basing itself among the middle peasant castes, was a strategy which began during
1930s and solidified with Smt. Indira Gandhi’s leadership during the late 1960s.
Urs represented only the specific Karnataka version of this\textsuperscript{5}.

The political developments leading to Devaraj Urs becoming the Chief
Minister of the State took place as a result of cleavage in the Congress party, as
the old Congress (called Syndicate) headed by the veteran political leaders (in the
State they mostly belonged to the Lingayats) and the new Congress, which was
also called Indira Congress (Congress I), headed by Indira Gandhi. Devaraj Urs
was the staunch supporter of Smt. Indira Gandhi. The Congress I victory in the
1972 General Elections, enabled Devaraj Urs to become the Chief Minister of the
State, with the blessings of Indira Gandhi. It was during his regime many
devotional and progressive schemes were taken up for the welfare and well
being of the farmers, agricultural labourers, tenants, weaker sections and so on.
Karnataka Land Reforms Act which was meant to help the tenants on the
principle of "Tillers are the owners of the land" which adversely effected the
landed gentry mostly from the dominant castes, was implemented with full
vigour, throughout the State. There was a Minister of State exclusively meant for
the effective implementation of Land Reforms. The Twenty Point Economic
Programmes of Indira Gandhi which included the abolition of bonded labour

\textsuperscript{5} Omvedt, Gail, \textit{Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India}, p.261.
system, debt relief and many other programmes meant for the benefit of the common man, were implemented with all seriousness.

(3) DEVELOPMENTS FROM 1980

The downfall of Devaraj Urs, who was at the zenith of his fame and popularity, came in the wake of his parting ways with Smt. Indira Gandhi and waging an open war against her. He was over confident that he would continue to be the Chief Minister of the State despite his exit from the Congress (I) and he started his own party. The General Election to the Parliament held during 1980, conclusively proved that the people of Karnataka had unflinching faith in Smt. Indira Gandhi. Not only that Sri. Devaraj Urs did not get the expected number of candidates elected from his party, even his followers who were from his new party, deserted him and defected to Congress (I), when R. Gundu Rao, a close associate of Sanjay Gandhi announced that he was going to form the ministry. Thus the rule of a Chief Minister who was from a minority community and who was the champion of the backward classes and weaker sections came to an end and R. Gundu Rao became the Chief Minister of the State on 12.1.1980. This also marked the beginning of the rule of a Chief Minister belonging to Brahmin Caste (Of course during the reign of Maharajas of Mysore, there used to be Diwans and advisors from among the Brahmins). However, the single party domination of the Congress continued and Gundu Rao toed the path of his predecessor in supporting the cause of the Backward Classes and weaker sections and in vigorously implementing the 20 Point Economic Programme. Gundu Rao, unlike the traditional leaders of any forward community was more cosmopolitan, more outgoing and more committed to the cause of the poor, weak and the needy.
As a matter of fact, it was he who got the imposing statue of the Chief Architect of Constitution, Dr. Baba Sahib Ambedkar installed in front of the historical monument of the country, Vidhana Soudha, the Government Secretariat of Karnataka and got the portrait of Baba Sahib Ambedkar unveiled in the Assembly Hall, renamed Vidhana Veedhi as 'Dr. Ambedkar Veedhi’ and also sanctioned Dr. Ambedkar Medical College to an SC organization. All this contribution of Gundu Rao remain evergreen in the minds of the followers of Baba Sahib Ambedkar.

The General Election that took place in the year 1983, saw yet another major change in the politics of the State. Before the General Elections, Bangarappa, a popular Backward Class leader came out of Congress Party and started his party 'Karnataka Kranti Ranga’ with his supporters and the supporters of the former Chief Minister Devaraj Urs who was no more by that time. While the Congress leaders were overconfident about their victory, they were vying with each other for the Chief Ministership which they thought was a cake walk for their party and that they were wishing and working, as it was thickly rumoured at the time, for the defeat of their own colleagues. The Karnataka Kranti Ranga on the other hand entered into an election alliance with the Janata Party in the State, which used to always sit in the opposition.

The result of this election presented altogether a different political scenario. The Congress, for the first time in the history of Karnataka, was defeated. Many of its top leaders, including Gundu Rao, who was the Chief Minister, were defeated. The Karnataka Kranti Ranga, The Janata Party and their allies formed the majority in the Assembly. Now the crucial problem they faced
was, 'who should be the Chief Minister of the State'? There were three strong
claimants: Bangarappa, the leader of the Karnataka Kranti Ranga; S.R. Bommai,
leader of the Janata Party, belonging to Lingayat caste and H.D. Deve Gouda.
leader of the Janata Party, belonging to Vokkali ga caste.

There was a deadlock in the matter and this impasse was to be resolved by
the veteran leader of the State and the old Congress party, S.N. Nijalingappa
(former Chief Minister of the State, representing Lingayats) who, though
practically retired from politics, was the supporter of Janata Party and who was
held in high esteem by the party. He had to play the role of Jayaprakash
Narayan, in the formation of the Union Cabinet after the General Elections
following the National Emergency. In his political wisdom, Nijalingappa did not
favour any of the three contenders. Instead, he brought altogether a new face,
who was nowhere in the State politics, after he was a minister in the Nijalingappa
Ministry, Ramakrishna Hegde, as a compromise candidate to be the Chief
Minister of the State. To placate Bangarappa, who was a force to reckon with
for the victory of the allies against the Congress and who was a strong contender
for the Chief Ministership, he was offered the Deputy Chief Minister’s position,
which he declined after being evasive and indecisive for some time.

Under the Chief Ministership of Ramakrishna Hegde, the popular 20-
Point Programme of the previous regime was substituted by Karnataka
Development Programme (K.D.P) and the focus was shifted to rural development
and decentralization of power. They wanted to take democracy to the grass root
level and strengthen the panchayat raj institutions. The three tier system of
panchayat raj: Mandal Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat and Zilla Parishat (which was
termed as Zilla Panchayat at a later stage) was introduced. With this democratic decentralization, the caste-politics, which was at the State and Municipality levels went to the grass-root level, creating political animosity and rivalry.

The constitution of the Assembly and the Council of Ministers underwent a sea change, particularly with regard to the SC/ST members. Before the Janata Party rule, it was the SCs/STs, who were mostly from the untouchable categories, were given seats in the reserved constituencies and they were returned to the Assembly and consequently the ministers were also chosen from these categories, by and large.

When the Janata Party fielded their candidates in the General Elections held in 1983, the veteran politicians and experienced leaders of the SCs/STs from the untouchable categories remained with the Congress. Though there were new faces and youth leaders available from the Janata Party belonging to these categories, for the reasons best known to them, they supported many candidates from the touchable SC/ST categories, particularly from Lamani and Bovi communities. In the wave, many new faces got elected and they were also given ministerial berths, which was more to the ire of the untouchable SC/ST categories.

Another development that took place was, though Bangarappa declined to become the Deputy Chief Minister, he could not prevent the other leaders elected from the Karnataka Kranti Ranga, from joining the ministry. Since many of them were becoming ministers for the first time or after a long time, they were very enthusiastic and jubilant to join the ministry. Though some of them tried to
cajole Sri. Bangarappa to accept the offer, ultimately since majority of them were with Janata Party, they got Karnataka Kranti Ranga gradually merged with Janata Party. Bangarappa, who was singled out along with a few of his supporters, was left with no alternative but to go back to the Congress party. At that time, the feeling of the backward communities was that, though Bangarappa who was responsible for the victory of the Janata Party allies, yet he was denied of the chance of becoming the Chief Minister because of caste politics and he was isolated and deserted because of power politics.

Elections were conducted to the Mandal Panchayat and Zilla Panchayats. Even in these elections the SCs/STs from the touchable groups were encouraged more, sidelining the untouchable categories. Assault and atrocities on SCs/STs, as an aftermath of the Parliament, Assembly and Municipal Elections also started with these Panchayat elections.

Another noteworthy development made during Hegde’s Government was, intensifying the rural developmental works and providing drinking water to most of the villages in the State. It was Nazeer Saab, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj who was mainly committed to this cause and he was successful as in most of the villages borewells were rigged for providing drinking water. He was fondly called by the people of the State as ‘Neeru Nazeer Saab’ (‘neeru’ in Kannada is water).

Ramakrishna Hegde became a popular leader not only in the State but also at the national level. He was rated almost equivalent to Rajiv Gandhi in certain polls conducted by popular magazines like ‘India Today’. It was his
ardent desire to give a ‘clean administration’. But his resolve remained an illusion.

With all their strength and weaknesses, plus and minus points, like any other party, the Janata rule (which later became Janata Dal and Bharatiya Janata Party at the national and state level) continued under Hegde’s leadership. In the beginning of 1988, Hegde chose to resign from the Chief Ministership and S.R. Bommai became the Chief Minister on 13.8.1988. The expansion of the ministry which he made after six months of his tenure, brought an end to his Chief Ministership, since his ministry became an unwieldy one, as everyone clamoured to become a minister. He was also charged of inducting more number of Lingayat ministers in an unprecedented and disproportionate manner. The dissidents withdrew their support to his Government Signature campaigns were started both for and against his ministry; demonstrations and agitation were made in front of Raj Bhavan by the prominent leaders and legislators of the party. There was utter chaos and confusion. As a result, the Governor recommended the dissolution of the Assembly and for the imposition of President’s Rule in the State. The Government at the centre imposed President’s Rule in the State on 21.4.1989. Thus the Janata Dal regime and the tenure of S.R. Bommai, which is perhaps the shortest one in the State, came to an end. The Governor’s rule continued till 30th November 1989 and in the General Election conducted during November 1989, the Congress Party came back to power, with Veerendra Patil as the Chief Minister of the State.

The General Election that took place in 1989 was a simultaneous election for both the Parliament and the State Legislature. Though Congress Party
returned to power in Karnataka, the Janata Dal got majority in the Parliament and formed the government with V.P. Singh as the Prime Minister of India. Though the main focus of the study here is Karnataka, the developments that took place during the Janata Dal regime under the leadership of V.P. Singh, have a bearing on the issues of SCs/STs and Backward Classes, throughout the country, including Karnataka and therefore, are necessary to be highlighted.

Ram Vilas Paswan, a dynamic leader of the party, belonging to the Scheduled Caste became an important Cabinet Minister. As a matter of fact, though V.P. Singh hails from a royal family, he was also committed to the causes of Backward Classes, Minorities and weaker sections of the society. With their joint efforts, an historic decision was taken by the government and the constitution was amended to extend the reservation facilities to the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes converted to Buddhism, which was till then restricted to the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes belonging to Hindu and Sikh religions only. This was a landmark resolution made by the Government during the year of centenary celebration of Dr. Baba Sahib Ambedkar (which was celebrated throughout the country and in many parts of the world) to help lakhs of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes who had converted to Buddhism and whose social, economic, political conditions were in no way better than that of the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes who were Hindus and Sikhs. As a matter of fact the demonic stigma of caste and untouchability haunts them wherever they go and whichever religion they follow.

The daring decision taken by the Government in implementing the Mandal Commission Report in letter and spirit, extending reservations to the
Backward Classes, created a big hue and cry throughout the country and the communal fanatics, fundamentalists and the reactionary forces had free-for-all, indulging in arson and looting. The demonstrations were very violent in the northern states causing loss of lives and damage to the public properties, to the extent of crores of rupees. In the southern states also there were agitations and demonstrations though they were not too violent. Somehow, V.P. Singh had to step down from power mostly on account of all this.

Now coming back to Karnataka State politics, Veerendra Patil continued as the Chief Minister for about one year. When he was hospitalized due to ill-health, the state administration was affected considerably. The violent agitation throughout the State created serious law and order problem, which necessitated President rule for a week and the appointment of another person as Chief Minister of the State. This time the choice of Congress Party High Command was Bangarappa, a leader from the Backward community. At last, the long cherished dream of Bangarappa, of becoming the Chief Minister of the State, came true. He became the Chief Minister of the State on 17.10.1990. But his rule did not continue for long, though he was committed to the causes of Backward Classes and weaker sections, on certain charges he was replaced by Veerappa Moily, another leader of the State from the most backward community on 19.11.1992. Another strong contender S.M. Krishna from the Vokkaliga community became the Deputy Chief Minister. Sri. Moily continued as the Chief Minister till 10.12.1994.

The next General Election to the Legislature was conducted during December 1994. The people of Karnataka, in this election chose to vote the
Janata Dal to power. In the race for power to become the Chief Minister of the State, H.D. Deve Gouda become the Chief Minister on 11.12.1994 in a dramatic way, by show of power by thousands of his supporters, who thronged in Bangalore, diffusing and pre-empting the efforts of the contenders from other communities for the Chief Ministership. His close contender J.H. Patel became the Deputy Chief Minister of the State. H.D. Deve Gouda resigned his post on becoming the Prime Minister of India. There were two strong contenders for Chief Ministership: J.H. Patel belonging to the Lingayat caste and Siddaramaiah, a strong supporter of H.D. Deve Gouda, belonging to the Backward Caste. As a compromise, J.H. Patel became the Chief Minister and Siddaramaiah became the Deputy Chief Minister.

After completion of the full tenure by the Janata Dal, the General Election to the Assembly was conducted during October 1999, in which the Congress Party was voted to power. Regarding the selection of candidate for Chief Ministership, along with S.M. Krishna, the main contender from the dominant Vokkaliga caste, two other veteran Congress leaders, Mallikarjuna Kharge, representing the Scheduled Caste and Dharma Singh from a Backward Caste were also in the race. The thinking of some people was, hitherto the power was alternately enjoyed mostly by the dominant castes, why not this time a person from the Backward Class become the Chief Minister. But ultimately, it was S.M. Krishna, who is considered to be known for his efficiency, became the Chief Minister on 11.10.1999. It was strongly commented by the people and the press, because Mallikarjuna Kharge and Dharam Singh both from Gulbarga district, aspired to become the Chief Minister, with a view to reduce their importance to
insignificance in their own district, in all eight ministers from Gulbarga district including these two, were chosen, which was unusual, unprecedented and also disproportionate. However, the Congress Party is continuing in power.

It is the general impression of the people that administration of the State has been improving under the able leadership of S.M. Krishna. The State is competing with other States in the country in several developmental activities and the progress in the field of science and technology is considered to be remarkable. The decision to fill up about 6000 backlog vacancies meant for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, through special recruitment, is commendable. However, there is much to be done in the area of social change and transformation.

From the brief analysis of the facts made above, the following generalizations are drawn:

1. Caste and politics are inextricably interwoven in Karnataka, each impacting and influencing the other.

2. Karnataka is ruled mostly by the two dominant castes, Lingayats and Vokkaligas and also by the so-called superior caste i.e., Brahmins and Urs, rarely by Backward Classes despite their party allegiance, and never by a person belonging to Scheduled Caste / Scheduled Tribe or from the religious minority.

3. It is Congress, the single most dominant political party in the State, which was in power right from the beginning till 1983.
From 1983 till date, political power keeps tilting alternately from Congress to Janata Dal.

4. The SCs/STs and the backward classes are used as vote banks.

5. Every political party talks of the welfare of the SCs/STs, Minorities and the Backward Classes, whether they are genuinely interested or not.

6. It is the general impression among the Backward Classes, Minorities and SCs/STs that, though all the political parties more or less have the same agenda for these categories of people and all the leaders vociferously swear to be dedicated and rededicated to the cause of the common man, it is the Congress Party that has done something for the welfare of these people.

(4) SCHEDULED CASTE LEADERSHIP IN KARNATAKA

Most of the writers and scholars use the words Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the term ‘Dalits’ synonymously and indiscriminately. They go to the extent of writing articles and books entitled, for example, ‘Dr. Ambedkar and Dalit Movement in Colonial India’6, ‘Dalit Heritage’7. (In this book, the authors call some of the personalities starting with Gods and Saints in the puranas down to the swamijis in the modern age as the ‘Heritage of the Dalits’ and some of them as ‘Dalits’).

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The researcher has great respect to the writers and scholars who are expressing their concern for and contributing to the upliftment of the marginalised sections of the society. He also acknowledges and expresses his gratitude and appreciation for their yeoman service to humanity. But in his modest view, in all fairness and justification, without any bias or prejudice to anyone, the movement called after ‘Dalits’ like the Dalit Panther, the Dalit Sangarsh Samities, alone could be spoken of as Dalit Movements, from the date of inception of these Movements, may be from the 1970s. Otherwise, we will be distorting the historical facts and confuse the people and also the posterity. With regard to the leadership also it is felt most appropriate to clearly demarcate the ‘Dalit’ leadership referring to leaders of the organizations called after the name ‘Dalits’, from the other leadership of people from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes belonging to political parties and other social organizations, for the simple reason that all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes could be considered as ‘Dalits’ and all Dalits are not Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Now, coming to the leadership of SCs/STs in Karnataka, to be precise in Mysore State, during the early pre-independence period, it was conspicuously absent. There were non-SCs/STs leaders who were taking up the cause of the weaker sections, then called “Depressed Classes”. There was the Brahmin – non-Brahmin conflict during the 1920s in Mysore State. The Brahmins were outnumbered by the non-Brahmin (as it is the position even today). The non-Brahmins were either silent or opposed to the problems of the panchamas. The Brahmins made the best use of this and took up the issues of the depressed
classes by bringing them under the Congress fold, with Gandhian ideology called ‘Harijan Uplift’. This was a strategic move of the Brahmins with a dual purpose: one, to countervail the non-Brahmins with whom they could not compete otherwise for power and two, to show off that they were taking up a noble cause of social reforms.

In addition to this ‘Harijan’ movement, there emerged two Scheduled Caste organizations in the State. One was the *Adi-Dravida Abhivruddhi Sangam*. This was led by Murugesh Pillai, a Tamil non-Brahmin who was working in Binny Mills, Bangalore. He was supposed to be the spokesman of the Scheduled Castes for a period of three decades. The other one was *Adi-Jambava Sangha*, which was started by two leaders from Scheduled Castes, Chikkahanumanthaiyah and Chennigaramaiah. As a matter of fact, this should be considered as the first Scheduled Caste organization in the State, started by the people belonging to Scheduled Castes of the State.

There was another committed, devoted social reformer, Gopalaswamy Aiyar, a Tamil Brahmin, who was championing the cause of the depressed classes. His services and sacrifices, particularly in the promotion of education among these people, are remembered and spoken of highly by the people, even today. Many students who studied in the hostels run by Gopalaswamy Aiyar became doctors, engineers, officers and leaders.

These two Scheduled Caste organizations, along with Gopalaswamy Aiyar and others, organized a ‘Political Conference of the Panchamas’ in 1920, 1923 and 1925. Resolutions were passed in these conferences on using the terms Adi-
Dravida and Adi-Karnataka. Adi-Karnataka Sangh was registered in 1921, with Gopalaswamy Aiyar as its President.

The activities taken up by these organizations for the uplift of the panchamas was termed as 'The Politics of Petitions and Patronage', for they could not demand anything from the rulers as a matter of rights. They could only submit 'petitions' for certain 'favours' like grant of land and admission to educational institutions, to improve the economic and educational conditions of these people. 'Patronage' was the general trend of the time and all the people in the State were loyal to the Maharajas. The 'panchamas' had no choice but to follow others. They never spoke for themselves, particularly on the social problems encountered by them like untouchability, discrimination, denial of entry to temples, public roads, tanks and wells, etc. These issues were taken up mostly by the Brahmins, as their spokesmen, under the banner of Congress and Gandhian ideologies. There was ban on entry of Dr. Ambedkar into the State and, on the contrary, literally royal welcome and treatment were given to Gandhiji and his retinue. This state of affairs continued throughout, till Independence.

Even after Independence, Mysore State did not see any radical change either in the emergence of leadership among the Scheduled Castes or in the spread of Dr. Ambedkar's thoughts and movement. The only exception to this was the Kolar Gold Fields and a few areas in Bangalore where the working force was from the bordering Districts of Madras State. In these places, Scheduled Castes Federation, an organization started by Dr. Ambedkar, struck its roots. The ideologies of Dr. Ambedkar, the Dravidian Movement of Periyar E.V. 75
Ramaswamy Naikar, and the role played by Prof. N. Shivaraj, President of the Scheduled Castes Federation, his wife Meenamba Shivaraj, and Rajbhoj (eminent leaders and strong lieutenants of Dr. Ambedkar) gave a great impetus to the success of the Scheduled Castes Federation in K.G.F. It was only from this reserved constituency in the State that candidates from the Scheduled Castes Federation got elected in the First General Election and in many subsequent elections also, as the candidate of Republican Party of India. From the other reserved constituencies in the State, mostly the SC candidates sponsored by Congress Party got elected.

The first M.L.A. of K.G.F. who was elected in 1952, from the Scheduled Castes Federation was P.M. Swamy Durai. C.M. Arumugam is another popular leader who was also elected as an M.L.A. of K.G.F. from the Republican Party of India. He held important positions in the party and he was very vociferous in fighting for the cause of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in general, in the State. He had very good equation with the Chief Ministers Devaraj Urs and Gundu Rao. J.C. Adimoolam was another leader of the Scheduled Castes Federation in K.G.F. The party also was functioning as Labour Union in K.G.F. Congress Party also had its share in the leadership when its candidate S. Rajagopal was elected as M.L.A. from K.G.F. With the demise of C.M. Arumugam, the RPI has lost its power in K.G.F., though, S. Rajendran, the candidate from Bharath Republican Party was elected as an M.L.A. in 1994 General Elections. Now the AIADMK candidate Baktavatsalam is the M.L.A. who was also a rival candidate to C.M. Arumugam and defeated him twice.

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8 After the I General Election, Dr. Ambedkar formed the Republican Party of India (RPI) in the place of Scheduled Castes Federation.
The Scheduled Caste leadership in K.G.F. was discussed above, just to highlight the influence of Dr. Ambedkar and his party in the earlier years of Independence. Otherwise the leadership of this place has not been of much significance in the State.

The Scheduled Castes Federation and later the R.P.I. Party started by Dr. Ambedkar had some following among the SCs in Gulbarga, Dharwar and Belgaum Districts, but not to the extent of returning any candidate to the Assembly or Parliament. When Dr. Ambedkar addressed a rally organized by the Belgaum District Branch of the Scheduled Castes Federation, there were 50,000 people in the rally. There would have been better leadership and powerful movements among the Scheduled Castes, had Dr. Ambedkar lived for some more time.

However, though the Congress Party was the single most dominant party in power, from the dawn of Independence till 1982, there emerged powerful leaders among the Scheduled Castes, who had the orientation and influence, directly or indirectly of Dr. Ambedkar and his thoughts and ideologies, inspite of the fact that they belonged to the Congress Party. The chief among them are: R.Chennigaramaiah, N.Rachaiah, B.Rachaiah, Mallikarjuna Swamy and B.Basavalingappa, who are not alive now.

R. Chennigaramaiah, the seniormost among the leaders, played a significant role in building up the Scheduled Caste organization and in championing their cause during the pre- and post-independence period. He was a Minister in K.C.Reddy Ministry in 1947 itself and Deputy Speaker of the

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9 Keer Dananjay, Dr.Ambedkar: Life and Mission, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1971. P 446
10 This is the unique feature found among the Scheduled Castes, in the State and perhaps all over the country, that though they might belong to same political party or not, they are all Ambedkarites and the followers of Dr. Ambedkar.
Mysore Legislative Assembly from 1952-1956. Later also he worked as a Minister. He became the Member of the Mysore Public Service Commission and later became its Chairman during the sixties.

Out of the remaining four leaders, N. Rachaiah and B. Basavlingappa were the most powerful leaders and ministers, committed to the cause of the weaker sections. At times they were very vehement and even aggressive with regard to the issues of the poor, needy and weaker sections. Their contribution to the State in general and to the exploited people in particular are most outstanding and exemplary.

As Social Welfare Minister, N. Rachaiah, made several lasting improvements in the hostels and educational institutions monitored by the Department of Social Welfare. To cite one example, when there was a move by the Government of India to transfer all the hostels and the educational institutions run by the Social Welfare Department, to the Education Department, it was he who fought tooth and nail against this move and succeeded in continuing the maintenance of these institutions by the Social Welfare Department. This was a great service not only for the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe students of Karnataka, but also to the students of these categories throughout the country.\footnote{Sri. K.M. Koti, IAS, former Member of the Karnataka Public Service Commission who happened to work with Sri. N. Rachaiah in the Social Welfare Department, reminisced and narrated this unique contribution of Sri. N. Rachaiah, among others, to the researcher.}

In his premature demise, the State lost a great leader.

B. Basavalingappa, became Deputy Home Minister in the Cabinet of S. Nijalingappa in 1957. In 1974, when Basavalingappa was the Minister, he was
involved in a controversy called “Bhoosa Prakarana”, which sparked state-wide agitations both for and against him. Though he was forced to resign, on account of this episode, he bounced back with redoubled vigour as the Revenue Minister occupying the second rank in Devaraj Urs Cabinet. He was a person with courage and conviction. He used to be very curt and matter of fact in dealing with men and matters.

Some of his unique contributions to the State are: abolition of the obnoxious practice of carrying night soil, strict and speedy implementation of the Karnataka Land Reforms Act, promulgation and implementation of The Karnataka SCs and STs Prohibition of Transfer of Lands Act, (as a matter of fact, he was the author of this Act) gearing up of the Revenue Administration in the State, and so on. Even when he was given an ordinary portfolio like Science and Technology and Pollution Control, he made that Department a very important one and made a big difference. His demise came all of a sudden, when he was not taken in on the newly formed cabinet by the Chief Minister, Veerappa Moily.

Mallikarjuna Swamy was a scholarly type of politician. He served the State efficiently as a legislator and Minister from 1957. He met with untimely death. His wife Smt. Jayamma Mallikarjuna Swamy was made an M.L.C. for one term.

B. Rachaiah was a seasoned, veteran politician, of a sober type. He became a legislator in 1952 itself and he was a Minister during the sixties and

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12 Sri. Basavalingappa made a remark that Kannada literature is “Bhoosa Sahitya” (Bhoosa in Kannada means cattle feed meaning that the literature is not progressive and revolutionary. This was considered as a damaging remark and there were state-wide agitations.
later during the Janata regime holding very important portfolios like Agriculture, Education and Home. He was a champion of the cause of the weaker sections for a very long time. In recognition of his meritorious service, he was appointed as Governor of Himachal Pradesh and later as the Governor of Kerala. After a few years of his retirement as Governor of Kerala, and retirement from active politics, he passed away.

Hiriyur of Chitradurga District has produced three eminent leaders G.Dugappa, K.H. Ranganath and D. Manjunath, from Scheduled Caste, the last two being rivals. Dugappa, a veteran congress worker and a committed leader and champion of the weaker sections, had long innings in public life serving the people in the State. He was appointed a member of the Karnataka Public Service Commission and later became its Chairman. K.H. Ranganath and D. Manjunath were in Congress in the early years. Manjunath was the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly from 1967 to early 1971. Later he joined Janata Party, while his opponent became his political rival, as he continued to be in Congress Party. K.H. Ranganath became the Cabinet Minister during Devaraj Urs regime. During Gundu Rao’s tenure as Chief Minister, he was the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. He used to get a ministerial berth whenever Congress used to come to power, except for a short while when S. Bangarappa was the Chief Minister. Manjunath, likewise, held posts of high offices, whenever Janata Dal came to power. He was Minister in Ramakrishna Hegde’s regime and was Chairman of the Karnataka Legislative Council from September 1987 to May 1992. He became a Cabinet Minister during H.D. Deve Gowda’s Chief Ministership and again was in the Cabinet of J.H. Patel, for the last one year.
Now it is the turn of K.H. Ranganath to be a Cabinet Minister, in the present regime of S.M. Krishna.

There was another powerful leader from Davanagere, Chitradurga District, Dr.B.M. Thippeswamy, a medical doctor-turned political leader. A very straightforward person who had a lot of concern and commitment for the welfare of the deprived people, was an unfit to politics. However, he became a Member of the Karnataka Public Service Commission and later became an M.L.A. He was a close associate and friend of the prominent leaders like Basavalingappa, K.H. Ranganath and D. Manjunath, and others.

Another eminent leader of the State, hailing from Chitradurga is H. Hanumantappa, a Congress leader and a close associate of many leading personalities in Delhi. He was the Member of the Rajya Sabha for three terms and he had the honour of working as the Chairman of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and did excellent job. Though a Congress leader, he follows the footsteps of Dr. Ambedkar both in perseverance, hard work and in his commitment to the cause of the deprived sections. Presently, he is the Vice Chairman of the State Planning Commission.

In addition to Bangalore, Mysore, Chitradurga and Kolar Gold Fields, where there has been an awakening among the marginalized sections leading to the emergence of leadership among them, Gulbarga is another area which has also contributed in its own way to this cause. The person who gave leadership to the weaker sections in the Hyderabad-Karnataka area, particularly in the early days is Shyam Sunder. He was a very staunch, devoted Ambedkarite, who was
very much influenced by the teachings and writings of Dr. Ambedkar. He was a Urdu scholar and worked for unity among the Scheduled Castes and Muslims, who have many things in common, to fight the casteist Hindus. It was he who had started the movement called “Bhim Sena” after the name of Dr. Ambedkar, i.e., ‘Bhim Rao’. In fact, the movement was started on 29th April 1968, at a big rally in Jagat in the heart of the city of Gulbarga, coinciding with the 77th Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Dr. Ambedkar. The organization succeeded in striking terror among the caste Hindus and the landed gentry and showed that they will not brook with any discrimination and atrocity on the weaker sections. Though this movement had spread to States like U.P., Haryana and Punjab, it did not have much influence on the Southern Districts of Karnataka. However, it was the precursor of the Dalit Panther Movement in Maharashtra and also the forerunner for the emergence of militant Scheduled Caste movement in Karnataka, in later years.

The first Scheduled Caste leader to become a minister from Gulbarga area was B. Shivanna, from Deodurg (Raichur District) Constituency, in 1972, during Devaraj Urs regime. As a leader with Master’s Degree in Law, who was working as a Professor in Gulbarga Law College, he could not continue long as a Minister. He again became a Minister when Congress came to power in 1989. He was the Social Welfare Minister during the Centenary Year Celebrations of Dr. Ambedkar and was responsible for starting and implementing of several new

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13 V.T. Rajashekar Shetty, Dalit Movement in Karnataka 1974, p.12. Also see the biography on Shyam Sunder, They Burn, Dalit Sahitya Academy, Bangalore, 1987.
He could not get elected in the elections held during 1994, when there was the Janata Dal wave. In his untimely death, due to illness, just a few years ago, the weaker sections have lost a very committed leader.

There is another prominent leader who has created a record in the political history of Karnataka. He is Sri. Mallikarjun Kharge from Gulbarga District, Gurmitkal Constituency. He has the record of being a legislator continuously getting elected right from 1972, without any break. He has also been continuously a minister, whenever Congress Party used to be in power, except for about two years when Veerendra Patil was the Chief Minister. His silver jubilee on this score, was celebrated on a grand scale in Kanteerava Stadium by his followers. The function was attended by very large gathering of people. He also worked as the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly from December 1996 to July 1999. He was a contender for the Chief Ministership and missed it after the General Elections in 1999. It has been already discussed earlier, how, though he has been made the Home Minister, by appointing many more people as ministers, his importance as a leader of the District (also that of Sri. Dharm Singh) has been reduced.

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14 The researcher has the unique, life-time opportunity of working as the Director of Social Welfare (SCs/STs Welfare) for two years during the Centenary Celebrations of Dr.Ambedkar and was instrumental in grand and meaningful celebrations of the Centenary and also in launching several new schemes, including starting of the Ambedkar Research Center, four Divisional Residential Schools, installation of Dr.Ambedkar’s statue at Mysore, financial assistance to the institutions run by SC/ST organizations, sanction of Residential Schools for SC/ST organizations, etc.

15 This is one classic case which shows the unique feature of politics in general that the leaders of dominant castes do not tolerate active, dynamic leaders from the weaker sections. They would rather prefer the mild, meek ‘yes-men’ to people who are assertive.
During the formation of the Ministry, soon after the General Elections to the State Assembly in October 1999, there were rumours and expectations, that if not the Chief Ministership, Kharge will get the Deputy Chief Ministership in accordance with the tradition started from S.M. Krishna himself when he became the Deputy Chief Minister of the State for the first time during January 1993 as a compromise. This tradition was continued, rather consecutively, till July 1999 during the Janata Dal regime also, when J.H. Patel and Siddaramaiah were the Deputy Chief Ministers, one after another. Perhaps, the time has not come for a leader from Scheduled Caste to become the Chief Minister or Deputy Chief Minister of the State, as it has happened in Uttar Pradesh and Pondicherry.

Bijapur, one of the backward districts in Karnataka with the SCs/STs being still backward, has produced a few leaders who played their role in State politics. K.T. Rathod was one such leader who also became a Minister during the early regime of Devaraj Urs. L.R. Naik, a civil servant-turned politician is another leader who was also an M.P. It was these two leaders who were responsible for inclusion of Lamanis, a touchable caste, on the list of Scheduled Castes, while this caste is categorized under S.T. category in Andhra Pradesh and other States.

Ramesh C. Jigajinagi is another leader from Bijapur who was Minister in Ramakrishna Hegde’s Ministry and also in the Cabinet of H.D. Devegowda and J.H. Patel. In 1998, he resigned his post as Cabinet Minister and joined Ramakrishna Hegde’s Lok Shakti Party and got elected as an M.P. and continues to be an M.P.
Thimmapur is another Congress leader from Bijapur District who was an M.L.A. elected in the General Election held during 1989, and worked as the Chairman of Karnataka Handloom Development Corporation in 1994. Now he is in Krishna’s Ministry as one of the Cabinet Ministers.

T.N. Narasimha Murthy, a Congress leader and younger brother of N. Rachaiah, was also in active politics, particularly as M.L.C. for many years, serving the cause of the Scheduled Castes. He was the Deputy Chairman of the Karnataka Legislative Council from August 1972 to June 1976 and Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council from June 1983 to June 1989. He became a Cabinet Minister for the first time when Congress Party came to power after the General Elections during 1989. For the first time he contested in the General Elections held in 1999 for the Legislative Assembly. His defeat in this election was a big shock to him and due to restless activities, he succumbed to the heart attack a year ago. In his death the State and the SC/ST population have lost an active, committed leader.

Apart from leaders like B. Rachaiah and D. Manjunath, the Janata Party, later Janata Dal has produced an active, dynamic, young leader, who is committed to the cause of the weaker sections, B. Somashekar, from Malavalli Constituency of Mandy District. Though he was elected for the first time when the Janata Party came to power in 1983, he became a Minister and proved himself to be an able leader and minister, on account of which some of his own party men were jealous of him and started giving him trouble. As a sensitive person who strongly values self-respect as foremost aspect in life, he resigned his position as Minister, faced the C.O.D. enquiry and came out without any blemish in the
C.O.D. enquiry, while some of his colleagues who were charged with serious lapses, etc., continued in power. After five years of service, nurturing his constituency, he was again elected to the Assembly in the General Elections held during 1994. Though H.D. Devegowda took many people who were Somashekhar’s colleagues and even juniors as ministers, he was side-lined, for the reasons best known to Devegowda.

However, it was only when Devegowda left State politics and became the Prime Minister of India, that Somashekhar could become a Minister in the Cabinet of J.H. Patel in June 1996. Inspite of working sincerely and making several improvements and revolutionary changes in the field of Higher Education, which was the portfolio given to him, Somashekhar was not allowed to function peacefully as a Minister. Within one year, he was forced to resign just to prove that the charges of copying in an examination, levelled against him, were false. When he came out clean in the judicial probe, he became the Revenue Minister, of course, an elevation, in recognition of his sincere and efficient service.

While many of the stalwarts of Janata Dal were miserably defeated, including former Chief Ministers and ministers, Somashekhar got elected to the Assembly in the General Elections conducted during 1999. Now he is working as the member of the opposition in the Assembly.

G. Basavanappa, from Shimoga District, Holehonnur Constituency, is also a leading personality in Janata Dal, representing the weaker section. He was

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16 This episode of copying falsely alleged against Somashekhar is discussed in the 3rd Chapter, as it is a classic case of political atrocity at the highest level.
a Cabinet Minister during the regime of Ramakrishna Hegde, also when Janata Dal came to power in the General Elections conducted during 1994.

Y. Ramakrishna was a strong leader of the State from the Scheduled Caste. He was a Minister in the Cabinet of Devaraj Urs. After a long spell, he became the M.P. from Kolar Constituency in the General Elections held in 1989.

From Nelamangala, Tumkur District, there are two leaders, Anjanamurthy, Congress and Dr. M. Shankar Naik, Janata Dal. Anjanamurthy was the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly when Veerappa Moily was the Chief Minister. In S.M. Krishna's Ministry he is made the Chairman of Karnataka SCs/STs Commission recently. Shankar Naik was a Minister in the previous Janata Dal rule.

Dr. G. Parameshwar, son of Gangadharaiah, an educationist who started several educational institutions for the SCs/STs in Tumkur District, is another promising leader of the weaker sections. Elected from Madhugiri Constituency, he worked as a Minister in Veerappa Moily's Ministry. In S.M. Krishna's Ministry he was a Minister of States and elevated to the Cabinet rank, recently.

Though there have been M.L.As and M.L.Cs from among the women folk, representing SCs/STs, Lalitha Naik was a leading personality who became a Minister also. But due to the involvement of her son in a case of defiling the statue of Dr. Ambedkar in Dr. Ambedkar Medical College, Bangalore, she had to lose her position.

Motamma, who is presently working as a Minister in S.M. Krishna's Cabinet, was also M.L.A. during the Congress rule from 1989 to 1994. She is an
active, powerful leader, serving the cause of the people of Karnataka including women and the weaker sections. Her political rival from Janata Dal is Sri. B. B. Ningaiah, who was a Minister in Janata Dal rule.

Srinivas Prasad, a powerful leader from Mysore District, is active in National politics rather than in State politics. He used to get elected as an M.P. from Chamrajnagar Constituency. Now he is in the Union Cabinet as a Minister.

Similarly, Shankaranand, a veteran Congress leader from Karnataka (Chickodi Constituency, in Belgaum District) has been in national politics for a very long time and worked as Cabinet Minister several times. He has also not played any significant role in the politics of the State. In the last Parliament Election, he lost his seat to Sri. Ramesh Jigajinaji.

Out of 224 M.L.A. seats in the State, 33 and 2 seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, respectively. These 35 seats are filled up during every General Election by the people from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, elected from different political parties. Some of the people among them become Ministers and hold some other positions, depending upon the Party that comes to power, i.e., either the Congress Party or the Janata Dal. The other elected members work as M.L.A.s. Those who are defeated wait for their opportunity in the next General Election. There are many such leaders from these categories. Other than those mentioned above like: H.C. Mahadevappa (T. Narsipura), K.B. Shanappa (Gulbarga), Smt. Suma Vasanth (Virajpet), D. Narayanadas (Harapanahalli), Shiva Murthy Naik (Chitradurga), Beelagi
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is considered by most of the weaker sections, to be a political party which is not favourable to the interests of the weaker sections, minorities and backward classes. On the contrary, most of these categories of people believe that BJP is antagonistic towards them. However, BJP also has an SC/ST Cell and it has the SC/ST members as its office bearers. The BJP also organizes rallies and celebrates the Birth Anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar. From Karnataka there are a few SC/ST leaders like L. Shivalingaiah and D.S. Veeraiah, who have joined the Party.

Bahujan Samaj Party founded by Kanshiram, which has become a powerful political force in the northern parts of the country, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, is slowly growing in Karnataka. Its ideological base is Ambedkarism. The members work with two main objectives in mind: one, spreading the ideology of Dr. Ambedkar and uniting the people belonging to the weaker sections, minorities and other backward classes and two, to capture political power, as they have done in Uttar Pradesh.

During the General Elections in 1994, the Dalit Sangarsh Samiti joined the BSP. Only one candidate got elected from the Party to the State Legislative Assembly. He was Syed Jalfekar Hashmi (Baba Patel) from Bidar constituency. After this election, the DSS came out of BSP, when the latter had an alliance with BJP in Uttar Pradesh. However, after the split in the DSS in 1996, the Jayanna Group, who were the followers of Prof. Krishnappa have again joined the BSP.
Though the Party fielded its candidates in the General Elections held in 1999 also, none of them got elected. The BSP is striving hard to establish itself as a strong political party in Karnataka, as it has done in Uttar Pradesh. Its leaders from Karnataka, M. Gopinath, N. Mahesh, Mohan Kumar, Deekaiah and others who are committed to the cause of the weaker sections and minorities, and who have been working in the field for many years now, are working hard, by organizing seminars, workshops, rallies, meetings, publishing magazines, books, etc., to make the party strong.

Though politically the party has not made any head way, it has created awareness among the weaker sections, minorities, most backward classes, students and also the officials.

The emergence of leadership among the weaker sections is mainly on account of the political reservation guaranteed in the Constitution which is the result of strenuous efforts of Dr. Ambedkar. Otherwise, there is no scope for development of leadership at all among these people. Even Ministers' posts are given to them only on this criterion. Broad-minded and generous Chief Ministers like Devaraj Urs and Gundu Rao had given more representation to the weaker sections in the Ministry and in other posts, while others had confined to the required number of posts to be given mandatorily.

Every political party has got an SCs/STs Cell to which people from these categories are appointed as members and office bearers. Very rarely other party positions are given to them, however efficient and highly qualified these SCs/STs might be. Further, these people are given tickets by the political parties only to
contest in the reserved constituencies, never in a general constituency. The number of seats to be reserved for them is 33 and 2 as mentioned earlier, which is the minimum and which is also the statutory requirement. But this does not bar any one from contesting in the general constituency and getting elected, increasing the number to more than 35, in all. The political parties and the leaders never think and never want to do anything in this direction.

Another striking feature in respect of the leadership among the weaker sections is that, it is entirely at the mercy of the dominant caste leaders in the party the Scheduled Caste leadership could emerge and thrive on. The top positions in any party are dominated by the people who are socially forward, economically rich and politically powerful. These dominant leaders from dominant castes, prefer the mild, weak, meek, docile people as leaders to the educated, active, assertive leaders among the SCs and STs.

These 35 members of the Legislature, on any given issue, never speak in one voice. There will be as many as thirty five or more views and voices. They very rarely unite themselves even in the case of serious issues affecting their community interest. The British have left behind a few legacies, both good and bad. One of these legacies which is being used by the dominant castes is, "divide and rule". This is the position throughout the country.

These are some of the impediments in building up more powerful and dynamic leadership among the SCs and STs.
EMERGENCE OF DALIT ORGANIZATIONS IN KARNATAKA

Bhim Sena which was started by Shyam Sunder in Gulbarga in 1968, as we had already discussed earlier, was the fore-runner of militant organization in Karnataka at a later stage. B. Basavlingappa, a valiant, dynamic leader was, in a way, responsible for the emergence of the militant organization of the Scheduled Castes. When his observation that Kannada literature as ‘boosa’ (cattle feed) for its status-quo ideology, the caste protagonists and his political opponents who were up against his atheistic and revolutionary attitude, incited the innocent masses to agitate against him for this remark. In fact prominent intellectuals and literateurs like U.R. Anantha Murthy, Kalegowda Nagawar, D.R. Nagaraj, Ki.Rum. Nagaraj, K. Marulasiddappa, P. Lankesh, K. Ramdas and others came out openly in support of the views of Basavlingappa on Kannada literature, which had no relevance to the plight of the humiliated sections of society. But, the misinformed and misguided people were agitating violently against Basavlingappa that he should be removed from the Ministry. This resulted in a series of well organized attacks on the SC students mostly in Bangalore and also in other parts of Karnataka.

At this time, the Scheduled Castes in the entire State became aware of the situation. They started organizing themselves to support Basavalingapppa, by revolting against the unjust agitations. This marked a symbolic beginning of a non-political movement, which created awareness and awakening that the exploited people should no more be passive sufferers and that they should revolt against any injustice and fight for their rights. The intellectuals and young

militant leaders among them, started an organization called the DALIT SAGARSH SAMITI and it was registered in Bhadravati with the Registrar of Societies in 1974, under the leadership of F. B. Krishnappa. The other founder-leaders of this organization are: Dr. Siddalingaiah, a renowned writer and poet in Kannada, Mavalli Shankar, Shreedhar Kalaveera, Jayanna, N. Venkatesh and others. 

After this, nothing happened for almost two years. In 1976, a convention of the writers and artists belonging to Scheduled Castes, was held in Bhadravati, which was inaugurated by B. Basavlingappa, who became Minister at that time and was attended by Devanooru Mahadeva, Dr. Siddalingaiah, B. Krishnappa, K. Ramayya, and others. The activists who were committed to the cause of the exploited people like V.T. Rajashekar Shetty, O. Sridharan, K. Narayana Swamy, Chennanna Valikar, N. Venkatesh, O. Rajanna and others also attended the conference. This was a historic event in the process of creating a state-wide network among the writers and artists who played a significant role in the birth and growth of a powerful movement in Karnataka.

On June 10, 1977, a conference of similar nature was organized at Chikkamagalur and the name Dalit Sangarsh Samiti (which was the name registered in 1974) was unanimously adopted for the SC/ST movement in Karnataka. Different organizations like Dalit Kriya Samiti, Dalit Kriya Vedike, Dalit Okkoota Samiti and so on were merged with the DSS. The conference also elected B. Krishnappa as founder-state-convenor and about ten others including

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D. Siddalingaiah, Devanoor Mahadeva were elected as convenors. Therefore, this event is considered to be the real beginning of the DSS in Karnataka.

The ideological basis for the organization was Ambedkarism. Particularly greater emphasis was made on "agitation", one of the principles of Ambedkar's dictum "EDUCATE, AGITATE and ORGANIZE". The politics of petition and patronage followed by the Depressed Classes, during the pre-Independence period, with the Maharajas, was found to be outdated and redundant. The policy of compromise and cooperation with the political bosses in power, did not yield the desired result. Hence, the policy of 'conflict and confrontation' was considered to be the best solution. The ideological conviction that has shaped the conflict-confrontation strategy was based on the strong belief that the rights of a community should be earned and established by force. Underneath all these developments, the major compelling force for the emergence of the DSS was the ever increasing atrocities on the SCs and STs. The main objective of these organisations, therefore, was to secure social justice and socio-economic and political rights for the weaker sections, by assertion and if necessary by force.

On these principles the DSS started organizing itself at the State, District and Taluk levels. Even in the villages there used to be units of the DSS. Whenever and wherever there used to be injustice, discrimination, or atrocities on the SCs and STs, the DSS used to take up the issues with the authorities concerned, at all levels. They also used to take up the cause of very poor, desperate people among the most backward communities. It is admirable that the organization has reached the grass root level and through much experience evolved its own strategy to uphold and protect the rights of the weaker sections.
However, there were some splits in the DSS, in subsequent years. Venkataswamy who was an active DSS leader started his splinter group called ‘Samata Sainik Dal’. This group was further split into ‘Praja Vimechana Chalavali’ and later into ‘Janandolana Samiti’, led by Jigini Shankar. There is another group known as Dalit Human Rights Forum led by M. Gopinath, supported by V.T. Rajashekar, editor ‘Dalit Voice’. ‘Dalit Kriya Samiti’ is yet another splinter group led by D.M.Thimmarayappa.

A major split in the DSS took place in December 1996. The State Organizing Convenors Jayanna and Mavalli Shankar convened a State Committee Meeting in Chitradurga, and expelled D.G. Sagar, State Convenor and Devendra Hegde (State Convenor, Dalit Student Federation), and the State Executive Committee Members. The general body ratified this action and elected Jayanna as State Convenor and Mavalli Shankar as State Organizing Convenor and other office-bearers. After a few days, D.G. Sagar expelled Jayanna and Mavalli Shankar from DSS. There was a tussle for the possession of the DSS State Office in Bangalore between these two rival groups which is yet to be solved. The Punashchetana Rally organized by the Jayanna group under the leadership of B.Krishnappa on 20th February 1997 in Bangalore brought a formal split. However, B. Krishnappa, Jayanna and Mavalli Shankar maintain that it is not a split but only a consolidation of the committed cadres and of the movement20.

The moot point for the cleavage of the DSS was, whether it should continue as a cultural and social organization, fighting for the cause of the exploited people, or it should become a political movement. The difference in this regard emerged as early as 1983 when some of the DSS leaders, under the convenorship of Devanooru Mahadeva, had decided to support the then Janata Party rule in the State. Those who wanted it to continue as a cultural organization were irked by this. Again in the subsequent General Elections, the DSS supported the Janata Dal. The political parties, particularly the Janata Party and later the Janata Dal tried to woo and lure some of the leaders of the DSS by giving them some positions, with the main motive of gaining their support. For instance, Ramakrishna Hegde made Siddalingaiah an M.L.C. Similarly, when Devegowda became the Chief Minister of the State, he appointed M. Chandra Prasad Thyagi, another DSS activist from Hassan as the Chairman, Karnataka Slum Clearance Board.

Ever since the DSS started supporting Janata Party and later Janata Dal, there has been a serious debate among its rank and file, whether it should get involved actively in party politics or whether it should stay away from party politics and function as a pressure group. On the one hand, the intellectuals, litterateurs and activists do not wish to entangle themselves in politics, as all the political parties, they feel, are basically interested in capturing political power by using the weaker sections as mere vote banks, once they are elected and come to power, they never bother about these people. Prior to the cleavage in the DSS, Prof. Krishnappa took a decision to join the Bahujan Samaj Party, before the General Elections in 1994. When BSP did not fare well in the General Elections.
the DSS came out of BSP on the pretext that BSP’s alignment with BJP in Uttar Pradesh was against their principles. Again after the split of the organization, the DSS led by Jayanna group who are the followers of Prof. Krishnappa again joined the BSP and they are continuing to be with BSP.

The DSS faction led by D.G. Sagar group had aligned itself with the Congress in the 1999 Elections to the Assembly, one member of the DSS. Raja Alagur, who was sponsored as Congress candidate, got elected from Balloli constituency in Bijapur District. This D.G. Sagar-led-DSS has again seen a split in July 2002, when Haraharanda Swamy, Keragodu Guruprasad and a few others came out of DSS, claiming that their group is the real DSS. D.G. Sagar claims that these dissidents have been expelled from their organization and their organization is in tact.

Intellectuals and founder members of the DSS like Dr.Siddalingaiah and Devanoooru Mahadeva are not identifying themselves with any of these factions and they continue with their literary and other activities in a non-controversial manner. However, of late, they are trying to unite and strengthen the DSS led by Sagar group to work as a powerful pressure group without any political leanings, as before. Apart from these groups in DSS, there are also other groups who call themselves DSS, N. Murthy an S.C. leader from Nelamangala has his own DSS called ‘N.Murthy DSS’, similarly there is ‘V. Nagaraj DSS’.

Despite the split and insights among the leaders of the DSS, it is a fact that DSS has played a major role in the awakening of the weaker sections in Karnataka, particularly in rural areas. They have strong base at the grass-root
level, with their Taluka, Hobli and village units. Since the inception, the members of the DSS are opposed to social, economic and political discrimination and they are also against the hegemony of the dominant castes and Brahminical Hinduism. They have also been fighters against any discrimination, injustice and atrocities committed on the SCs and STs. Through their literature, songs, plays, demonstrations, rallies, processions and public meetings, they have created awareness among the lower strata and brought home to them the message that they should fight to establish their rights, and that they should not allow themselves to be exploited in the name of God and religion. They also spread the teachings of Dr. Ambedkar and other social reformers. Every political party, whether it is in power or not, has realized the importance of the DSS and the cause they are fighting for. Their demands have been: starting of residential schools in each village with a population of 50 to 100 SC/ST families, on the pattern of Sainik Schools and Kendriya Vidyalayas, posting of teachers to single-teacher schools, strict implementation of the reservation policies and probe into the activities of SC/ST institutions run by non-SCs/STs organizations.

Whatever be its struggles and achievements, the DSS could function only as a pressure group, not as a powerful authority which could decide matters, formulate policies and programmes. It is possible for the DSS to become a decisive force only when they transform themselves into a political force and acquire the political power. They have the potential to become a mighty political force. Then, what comes in the way of accomplishing this? The first and the foremost hurdle is the disunity among the splinter groups. Instead of fighting
unitedly against their common enemies and working for a common cause, they
fight among themselves, which make them only weak.

Absence of a strong, powerful and charismatic leadership is another
important stumbling block. There is no leadership like that of N. Rachaiah or B.
Basavalingappa, if not as that of Dr. Ambedkar or Bapuji Jagjivan Ram, to unite
the SC/ST people and to lead them. Collective leadership worked for sometime
in the past. However, this has led to the birth of splinter-groups. With more of
splinter groups, even the parent DSS has become weak and ineffective. BSP
could capture political power in Uttar Pradesh on account of the powerful
leadership given by Kanshi Ram and Mayavati. Leaders with intellectual calibre,
dynamism, commitment, vision and missionary zeal are required to unify and
lead this powerful movement.

DSS does not have a strong ideological base. Though Ambedkarism is
said to be their guiding light, doctrine and philosophy, they should crystalize and
encapsulate certain ideologies and have a concrete set of principles to be acted
upon, apart from fighting against the two main anti-SC/ST issues of casteism and
capitalism.

Next, the cadres of these organizations consists of young college students,
educated men and women who are mostly unemployed and also rural youth from
the families of landless labourers, marginal farmers and from rural informal
sector. While giving greater importance to agitation, conflict, confrontation to
secure social justice and economic equality, the most important principles of self-
help, self-esteem, auto-emancipation, motivation and empowerment, which Dr.
Ambedkar strongly believed in and followed in his life, are given a go by. The organization has to follow these principles not only for building up strong cadres, but also for ordering emancipation of the exploited people.

The future of the DSS depends on building up itself into a strong united force, uniting all its break-away groups and by providing a dynamic, charismatic leadership, capable of inspiring millions and millions of young SC/ST youths into able and dedicated cadres who would inspire and ignite the deprived masses to 'agitare and unite' for securing their rightful place in the polity of the State and the Nation.