

The Unification Movement in Karnataka : Twin Logics of Cultural and Economic Consolidation

**Manu Devadevan
Veena Naregal**

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Author(s) Manu Devadevan, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT
Mandi.

Veena Naregal, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi.

Abstract

The significant work on regional identities that emerged around the new standard vernacular forms in the 19th century has shown how these had offered possibilities of subsuming sectarian and hierarchical markers of belonging such as caste, religion. As imperatives towards territorial reorganization gained momentum in the years after the Bengal Partition and its revocation in 1912, these radical possibilities around the new form of the regional languages were rapidly transformed as possibilities of territorial reorganization, now imagined around the hitherto unprecedented notion of linguistic boundaries.

Thus even as possibilities of linguistic mobilisation were bolstered through the enunciation of core democratic values positing that governance must be in a language intelligible to the majority, the mapping of territorial reorganization around linguistic boundaries and the ensuing production of linguistic regions set in motion a twinning of cultural and economic energies logics and processes unprecedented ways. This paper is an effort to explore the twinning of the logic of cultural and economic consolidation in the unification of a Karnataka as a linguistic, cultural, territorial entity that was both politically and economically viable. In examining the twin logics of cultural and economic consolidation, we note how while the embracing of developmental agendas was prefaced by full, formal political acquiescence to the logic of linguistic territorialisation, actual linguistic reorganization of states occurred in 1960, a whole decade after economic planning became the centre-piece of the national mission.

The Unification Movement in Karnataka : Twin Logics of Cultural and Economic Consolidation.

Manu Devadevan¹ and Veena Naregal

Introduction

From the Bengal Partition onwards, concerns about territorial reorganization in colonial India had been articulated in tandem with political reform towards a more representative administration. Significantly, however, concrete moves towards limited avenues of self-government at the provincial levels saw territorial reorganization being rapidly linked to the possibility of linguistic provinces. Strikingly, within a polyglot polity characterized by immense linguistic diversity as obtains within the South Asian subcontinent, such direct identification between region and 'its' linguistic identity seems peculiarly incongruous.

Given the complexities and tensions in the unification movement, the mobilization and consolidation towards eventual unification needs to be studied from different perspectives and on different planes. An important thread taken up for exploration elsewhere within the project examines the trajectories of the movement in the smaller princely states of northern Karnataka—such as Mudhol, Jamkhandi, Savanur, etc. The significant work on regional identities that emerged around the new standard vernacular forms in the 19th century has shown how

¹ Dr. Manu Devadevan, Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Mandi, Uttarakhand, was a team member of the ICSSR-funded project headed by Prof. Veena Naregal at IEG entitled, 'Framing Inter-regional Comparisons: Historical Demarcations and Developmental Transitions in South Asia 1905-1960. An earlier version of the paper was presented at the Project workshop, Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, April 29 2019. Dr. Devadevan is the recipient of the **Infosys Prize in Humanities, 2019.**

these had offered possibilities of subsuming sectarian and hierarchical markers of belonging such as caste, religion. As imperatives towards territorial reorganization gained momentum in the years after the Bengal Partition and its revocation in 1912, these radical possibilities around the new form of the regional languages were rapidly transformed as possibilities of territorial reorganization, now imagined around the hitherto unprecedented notion of linguistic boundaries. Thus even as possibilities of linguistic mobilisation were bolstered through the enunciation of core democratic values positing that governance must be in a language intelligible to the majority, the mapping of territorial reorganization around linguistic boundaries and the ensuing production of linguistic regions set in motion a twinning of cultural and economic energies logics and processes unprecedented ways. This paper is an effort to explore the twinning of the logic of cultural and economic consolidation in the unification of a Karnataka as a linguistic, cultural, territorial entity that was both politically and economically viable.

Bengal Partition and a new Kannada Nationalism

Materials collected as part of this project are extensive, and large volumes of it are in Kannada. Books like Alur Venkata Rao's *Karnatakada Gata Vaibhava* and *Karnatakatvada Vikasa*, R.R. Diwakar's *Karnataka Ekikarana Kathe*, which is a history of the unification movement by one of its advocates and participants, and *Kannada Ekikarana Kaipidi*, which is a handbook of the movement, are important sources. Select parts of these works if made available in English would enable comparative studies with other regions. The presidential addresses at the annual Kannada Sahitya Sammelana and the resolutions passed by the sammelana are again important sources that help us chart the contours of the unification movement from 1916 to 1956. A number of articles published during this period in the *Kannada Sahitya Parishat Patrike* have been consulted here, and others remain invaluable for further analysis and translation as the basis for further comparative work.

The movement for the administrative unification of Kannada-speaking areas of southern and central Deccan made earnest beginnings in 1916, when Alur Venkata Rao established the Ekikarana Sabha in Dharwad. It gave the idea of linguistic unification of the region the visage of a political initiative to be launched and accomplished in all earnest. The demand for bringing under a single administration all areas with Kannada as their lingua franca was itself not new. As early as 1903, Benagal Rama Rao had suggested that areas where Kannada was spoken should be administered under the same Presidency, a suggestion which S.S. Setlur reiterated in 1906. Both proposals were presented in public addresses made in Dharwad, the nerve-centre of the unification movement. Benagal and Setlur were not presenting a novel idea. Already in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, demands had been made for carving out Orissa, and later, Bihar, from the Bengal Presidency on linguistic considerations.

Alur's thoughts began to take shape in 1905 following a visit to Hampi, the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire now in ruins. The visit left him overwhelmed, much as the remains of the Indus Valley Civilisation would touch Nehru a few decades later. 1905 was also the year when Bengal was fatefully partitioned. Its echoes resonated with early thoughts of the unification of Karnataka, and catalysed it in ways that were fervid as it were. Inspired by the mass mobilisation in Bengal against its partition, Alur made a passionate appeal for unification of Karnataka in a piece that he wrote in 1907 in the *Vagbhushana*, a monthly magazine published from Dharwad of which he had taken charge as editor only a few months after the Bengal partition had come into effect.

New Literary/Theatrical Circuits and an Enlarged Kannada Sphere:

Long before Benagal, Setlur and Alur spoke of a unified administration for the Kannada-speaking areas, parts of northern Karnataka had shown signs of anti-Marathi consolidation of public opinion. Pioneered among others by Deputy Channabasappa in the mid nineteenth century, this inchoate campaign positioned itself against what it termed as the imposition of Marathi through the existing school

curricula under the Bombay Presidency. The colonial administration had already taken cognisance of the disadvantages that Kannada had been facing. Among those who championed the cause of Kannada were Europeans such as the civil servant, Indologist and naturalist, Walter Elliot, and the lexicographer and missionary, Ferdinand Kittel. A Normal School was established in Dharwad in 1856 to offer teacher's training to Kannada speakers, but as it turned out, most candidates who enrolled for the programme were speakers of Marathi. The school was moved to Belgaum in 1861. Channabasappa took over as Principal of the school in 1864. He took it upon himself as a mission to enrol Kannada speaking trainees and produce textbooks in Kannada.

Establishment of schools dispensing education in the Kannada medium was the most vocal of the campaign's demands. As the century drew to a close, there arose another grievance: that the Sindhi/Urdu-inspired Marathi professional theatre troupes had monopolised the drama industry in northern Karnataka to the detriment of Kannada drama. The company theatres, as they were called, served the cause of ideology—i.e., historical, religious, nationalist and linguistic consciousness—more effectively than the schools could, and were imbued with economic prospects that far outweighed the latter's. The turn of the century found entrepreneurs from Karnataka registering their presence in the drama industry. Shivamurthy Kanabargimuth established the Konnur Company (Kadasiddhesvara Sangita Nataka Mandali) in 1901, which seems to be the first Kannada professional theatre troupe. Venkobarao Hulagerikar's Shirahatti Company (Mahalakshmi Prasadika Nataka Mandali), set up in 1903, was the next troupe to register its presence. Soon, several other troupes made their appearance in different parts of Karnataka, Vamanarao Master's Vishwagunadarsha Sangita Nataka Mandali, Gubbi Veeranna's Gubbi Sri Channabasaveshwara Nataka Company, and Garuda Sadashiva Rao's Sri Dattatreya Sangita Nataka Mandali, being the most successful among them. These early grievances were articulated in the name of Kannada, but there was a manifest economic component to it, viz., vocational avenues for the Kannadigas.

Print and performance worked with overlapping but also separate constituencies in mobilizing the twin logics of cultural consolidation and economic integration, a truth that political elites and cultural agents could not afford to disregard. Consider the preoccupation with shaping a new language and a new community around language in the 1870 preface to *Ushaharan* and how print and performance are integrally related to this task of create a modern Kannada community in which everyone had an equal stake and the Kannada reading public; both language/political community and reading public are imagined as apparently identical. Calling upon ‘O lovers of the Kannada language’, the text continues:

...Henceforth, if we are able to shed our moldy existences, be rightfully employed for the cause of the language, only then are we fit to be called human beings.

If we have to bring language to a prosperous state, first of all abundant texts on various topics need to be generated. If texts have to be abundant, a readership has to be ensured. If readers have to multiply in number, they should have a taste of the language. To appeal to readers, at least for starters, the language should have a profusion of writings which will have a flavour that will appeal to them, please the mind and entertain. As these works catch the imagination of the readers, texts pertaining to astrology, medicine, chemistry, archery, mechanics, arts and crafts, agriculture and other sciences have to be generated and a taste for reading has to be inculcated amongst the people.²

² Sakkari Balacharya (1856-1920), popularly known as Shantakavi, established the Kritapura Nataka Mandali at Gadaga in 1874, wrote several plays in Kannada. A Kannada teacher at a very young age, theatre was his deepest passion. He wrote his first play Ushapaharana (Abducting Usha) in 1870, which he also brought on stage with his group in 1872.

Furthering our argument of simultaneous advancing the logic of cultural and economic consolidation, we note that touring theatrical troupes may have been the real pioneers in establishing links and contact between cultural elites of North Karnataka and the Mysore region. In the 1890s, there had been tours of the Palace company to north Karnataka, where an avid following was emerging for forms of a modern Kannada theatre practice. However, for a while the two Kannada theatrical circuits saw only infrequent exchanges. That began to change in the years after 1912, after the revocation of the Bengal partition. The apparent reunification of Bengal along linguistic lines in 1912 created political ripples throughout colonial India. The Shirhatti company was the first North Karnataka troupe to tour the Mysore region in 1916, in the year following the establishment of the Kannada Sahitya Parishat in Mysore in 1915.

In the princely state of Mysore, the preference for Tamils in appointments made to the bureaucracy after restoration of power to the Wodeyar family in 1881 had come in for serious criticism by the early years of the twentieth century, leading to a strong anti-Tamil campaign. With newspapers championing the cause of Kannada speakers, a powerful public opinion emerged among the literate classes, urging preference for locals in the administration.

The demand for linguistic reorganisation was grafted on to these early grievances against Marathi and Tamil. The Karnataka Vidyavardhaka Sangha, Dharwad, founded by Ramachandra Hanamantha Deshpande in 1890, had an important part to play in the crystallisation of what would in the coming decades be called the Ekikarana Chaluvali (Unification Movement). With Marathi as the 'other' which it sought to arraign against, it adopted a resolution in 1895 to publish a monthly magazine, and the *Vagbhushana* began to reach subscribers from November 1896.

On 2 and 3 June 1907, Alur, the then editor of the magazine, organised the All Karnataka Authors' Conference in Dharwad with an important objective in mind: to

promote sales of Kannada books in all parts of Karnataka by devising a standardised print language. Print capitalism's thinly disguised presence at the meet did not in any ways preclude the reification of Kannada and its history in articulating the emerging linguistic identity. Nevertheless, the participants in the meet were authors and publishers who could, with their facility in Kannada, monopolise the print market in ways that trans-regional capital—which controlled the emerging commodity market, especially the textile market—could scarcely aspire to do at this stage. The meet was regarded a success, and held again on 30 May 1908. From these pioneering writers' conferences arose the idea of an organisation devoted to Kannada letters, resulting in the establishment of the Karnataka Sahitya Parishat in Bangalore in 1915 (which has since been renamed Kannada Sahitya Parishat). It would be imprudent to call the establishment of the Parishat an economic initiative, had it not been for the fact that the decision to constitute this body was taken at the annual Mysore Economics Conference in 1914 as part of its educational initiative. The Parishat was primarily meant to take control of the emerging Kannada print market through a range of initiatives. A year after the Parishat was founded, in 1916, another organisation that sought to campaign for Kannada was born in Shimoga, the Karnataka Sangha.

Since its inception, standardisation of Kannada was a major concern of the Parishat and came up for regular discussions in its annual meets (sammelana). Entangled in procedural niceties, little progress was made, though. Upset over this state of affairs, Deshpande wrote in the October 1919 issue of the Parishat's periodical, *Kannada Sahitya Parishat Patrike*:

It's beyond me to describe the importance and use of this subject; and it is impossible to say how lethargic we are. Our speech cannot attain uniformity without a universal effort; and we are in no mind to take up this effort; such being the case, how can our language find unification? From the first meet held in 1915, this subject comes up for consideration in the meetings and lies asleep in the

resolutions, with no results to be seen other than in the expenses incurred on paper and ink (p. 142).

The Parishat's initiatives in the initial years might have been lacklustre, but whether Deshpande's concerns were genuine or overblown is for the linguist to tell. What can be said in the context of the larger developments concerning unification of the region is this: that it may not have been a mere coincidence that the founding of the Ekikarana Sabha occurred at the same time as the rise of the Parishat in Bangalore and the Sangha in Shimoga.

Insofar as language, literature and education formed the avowed *raison d'être* behind these developments—in spite of their strong economic undercurrents—one must also take cognisance of a momentous event that took place in July 1916 for promoting them. This was the founding of South Asia's seventh university as an initiative from the princely state of Mysore. The emphasis on higher education in Mysore was driven by considerations that were more pragmatic than emancipatory; it was meant to produce personnel for the white collared bureaucracy. The proceedings of the Mysore Representative Assembly for 1915 observed,

There was an increase in the number of candidates that graduated both from the Central College and the Maharaja's College, but the number is inadequate for *the requirements of the State* (p. 11, emphasis added).

The same report also recorded:

His Highness' Government fully recognise [*sic*] that the educational system will be seriously defective without a local University, and necessary steps are being taken to prepare a working scheme. Government hope [*sic*] to be able to place the scheme before the public before very long (p. 13).

There were only five universities in the subcontinent until the end of 1915, the sixth, Banaras Hindu University, founded only in the February of 1916. The coming of the University of Mysore, and the other coeval developments that we have taken note of, placed the demand for unification on a firm footing, if not give it a shot in the arm, so to speak. The momentum that the demand had gained, especially after the coming of the Parishat and the Ekikarana Sabha, is evident from the fact that the Vidyavardhaka Sangha adopted a resolution in 1917, recommending administrative unification, this being the first resolution of its kind from an institution of repute.

A similar resolution was adopted in 1920 at the Karnataka State Political Conference held in that ubiquitous city in our story, Dharwad, where it was decided to bring the matter to the national attention. Close to 800 delegates from Karnataka went to the Nagpur session of the Indian National Congress later that year. It was here that the formation of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee was formally announced.

Resolutions adopted by the Kannada Sahitya Parishat suggest that the movement for unification was informed by powerful entrepreneurial interests in education and print industry. Here, for instance, is a resolution adopted in the twelfth annual Sahitya Sammelana held in 1926 in Bellary:

The order of the Nizam's government that existing private schools and those that shall be started in the future should not function without the government's permission will not only have an adverse affect on the education in vernacular language offered now, and will also not only lead to the lapse of primary education in Kannada and other vernacular languages that are all too rare, but *creates hurdles for the natural rights of the people*. Therefore, this meet recommends the Nizam's government to withdraw the said order as quickly as possible (*Kannada Sahitya Parishat Patrike*, July 1926, p. 67, emphasis added).

At the same time, the Parishat's eleventh annual report, published in the same month, took note of the demand for a Kannada college for the Mumbai Karnataka region and a separate university for the territories in Karnataka administered by the British (Annual Report of the Year, Krodhana, p. 13). Enterprise in language and education was expected to have strong institutional foundations. An appeal was made to the Parishat and the Vidyavardhaka Sangha to this effect in a resolution at the ninth Sahitya Sammelana held in 1923 in Bijapur (*Kannada Sahitya Parishat Patrike*, January 1924, p. 221).

1924 Belgaum Congress and the Economics of Khadi Nationalism

Within a year of the Bijapur meet of the Parishat, the character of the unification movement began to undergo a marked shift. The monopoly of the educational and print entrepreneurs continued, but with its increasing integration with the national movement that was now guided by Gandhi, the entrepreneurial and vocational concerns of the unification movement expanded beyond the sphere of letters. The Belgaum session of the Congress, held in 1924, was the harbinger of sorts for this shift. A flurry of activities marked the session, which included the first meeting of the Karnataka Unification Conference and the first meeting of a body that the Conference formed, the Karnataka Ekikarana Sabha. Details of these developments are available elsewhere, if in far from satisfactory forms. What is often lost sight of, however, is the new dimension that the presence of Gandhi as President of the Belgaum session gave the movement. At this session, Gandhi moved a resolution on 27 December, which sought to integrate the national movement with khadi,

The Congress is strongly of opinion that the hope of the future of the country lies in its youth and therefore trusts that the Provincial Committees will strive more vigorously than they have done to keep alive all national educational institutions. But whilst the Congress is of opinion that existing national educational institutions should be maintained and new ones opened, the Congress does not regard any such institution to be national which does not employ some Indian language as the

medium of instruction, and which does not actively encourage Hindu-Muslim unity, education among untouchables and removal of untouchability; which does not make hand-spinning, carding and training in physical culture and self-defence obligatory; and in which teachers and students over the age of 12 years do not spin for at least half an hour per working day and in which students and teachers do not habitually wear khaddar (*Collected Works*, Vol. 30, pp. 6-7).

In his opening address to the session on 26 December, Gandhi had made the famous declaration, turning swaraj in effect into an economic programme:

I am convinced that swaraj cannot come so long as the tens of millions of our brothers and sisters do not take to the charkha, do not spin, do not make khadi and wear it. So long as this does not come about, the utter poverty of India cannot be eradicated. There will be no swaraj so long as the tens of millions of the country's destitutes [*sic*] have not got their bread (*Collected Works*, Vol. 29, pp. 483).

It fell to the lot of the khadi missionaries of Karnataka, Gangadharrao Deshpande and Hardekar Manjappa, to turn the call into a mass movement in Karnataka. Deshpande established a khadi unit at his native village, Hudli, near Belgaum, and took over as the Karnataka representative of All India Spinners Association formed in 1925.

Northern Karnataka was particularly receptive to the khadi movement, because as a black soil belt—parts of which fell within the Deccan trap—the region had a long history of cotton cultivation. New strains of cotton from America were introduced in Dharwad after 1830, and their successful acclimatisation to the terrain opened up great avenues for investment in textiles. Five gin houses functioned in 1843 to rid the cotton of seeds. The Bombay Presidency administration promoted cotton cultivation, paying for wages and rent on land, and cotton was sown on over 1000 acres in 1845 at a cost of Rs. 2 per acre. By the end of the nineteenth century, Mexican and Nanking strains of cotton were introduced in the Dharwad region. As it turned out, new strains showed better signs of adaptation

in other parts of the Deccan region after acclimatisation in Dharwad than when they were introduced directly. This geographical advantage enabled Dharwad to develop a seed market of its own. Thus, the Bombay Presidency areas of Karnataka were more than prepared when Gandhi gave the call for khadi in Belgaum.

The Congress Working Committee had formed the All India Khaddar Board in 1922, and the board had gained phenomenal prominence in little time, offering Rs. 3,000,000/- worth of assistance for khadi promotion in 1923 and 1924 (Lisa Trivedi, *Clothing the Nation: Homespun and Modern India*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2007, p. 13). The Belgaum session gave the khadi movement the much needed fillip within Karnataka. Integrated with the national movement and the khadi movement that it promoted, the unification movement came of age in a big way, and like the national movement under Gandhi, assumed the form of a programme that was economic in its bare essentials even when at the level of representation, it was all about language, literature, education and territory, and their unification under a common administration.

The emphasis on a unified administration had to do with the changing perception of the state in the course of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century in India. In an intellectual scenario that the introduction of western education had lent currency to in the subcontinent, the promotion of education, language and literature came to be appreciated as responsibilities of the state. The state's failure to fulfil its responsibilities was cause for concern. In the April 1934 issue of the *Kannada Sahitya Parishat Patrike*, R. Narasimhacharya wrote:

It is but natural that the Government's encouragement is necessary for the development of language. Monthly magazines such as 'Kavyamanjari' and 'Granthamale' must take birth and develop. The education department had set aside an amount of Rs. 4,000/- for authors. This amount has disappeared now. When the University of Mysore was established, it was declared that "measures

have been taken for specifically encouraging Kannada literature.” This has not been fruitful. Kannada was the second language, but it isn’t anymore. Essay-writing alone remains. It is true that Kannada has been kept as an optional subject for M.A. and B.A. exams. But it is true that very few candidates appear for these subjects. The scope of language will increase if Kannada is made the second language (p. 3).

Dependence on the state’s bureaucratic deliberations with their flair for planning and economic development on the one hand and the expansion of the unification movement in the course of the spread of the khadi movement with its insistence on economic self-reliance on the other, fortified the economic contours of the demand for unification.

Nevertheless, khadi nationalism in northern Karnataka, which had embraced the anti-colonial struggle’s emphasis on economic self-reliance, did not dovetail with the process of economic development in Mysore, which was planned and guided by the state’s bureaucracy and didn’t draw inspiration from the *swadeshi* movement that commenced with the partition of Bengal. Besides, khadi’s popularity in Mysore was not of an order that stood comparison with the one in the cotton cultivating belts of northern Karnataka. The Mysore State promoted cotton, but its flagship initiative in textiles was the Mysore Silk Weaving Factory, which began operations in 1912 with thirty-two power looms imported from Switzerland. This contradiction between the north and the south was to cause friction in the movement for unifying Karnataka.

Post 1947: Economic Development Trumps Linguistic Unification?

The divide between Mysore and northern Karnataka began to appear after the World War II, when the Cabinet Mission began its deliberations for transfer of power. Dissent against unification came into light when the dominance of the Lingayats in the north and the Okkaligas in the south placed in relief the question of the fate of either groups in a unified Karnataka as far as economic and political prospects were concerned. A section of the Mysore intelligentsia chose not to unite

with northern Karnataka, while another section held that the Maharajah of Mysore should be the head of a unified Karnataka. This latter opinion was expressed by T. Subrahmanyam in the Karnataka Ekikarana Parishat meeting held in Gulbarga in 1949, which came in for criticism from the President of the meet, K.B. Jinaraja Hegde.

In the 22 October 1955 issue of the *Economic Weekly*, K.G. Subrahmanya wrote:

Since the publication of the report of the Commission, a section of the people in Mysore State have voiced their opinion against the formation of a single State of Karnataka. Fissiparous tendencies have become apparent even inside the Mysore Cabinet, which so far, had maintained a sphinx-like silence behind a facade of unity. The facade has now been pulled down and three ministers have come out with a categorical statement opposing the formation of a single State of Karnataka by joining the Mysore State with the other areas. Curiously enough, the Chief Minister, who had consistently taken a favourable stand on the formation of a United Karnataka, now seems to be vacillating on the brink of a cabinet crisis (p. 1253-4).

Subrahmanya also observed, "Considering that the movement is of *very recent origin*, it does not seem to have any sizable [*sic*] following in the countryside," taking cognisance of the observation made in the State Reorganisation Commission [hence SRC] report that "there has grown up *in the last two or three years* opposition to the unification of Mysore with other Karnataka areas" (p. 1254, emphases added). The SRC held that the recent origin of the view and its tentative character offered no solution to the problem (SRC Report, p. 91). As it turns out, the opposition to unification was not as recent as Subrahmanya or the SRC would have had us believe. Already in 1947, the progressive writer and a leading figure in the unification movement, A.N. Krishna Rao, had expressed apprehensions about Mysore leaders moving away from the movement:

It is meaningless to look at the bond of Karnataka from a purely business perspective, as the peoples leaders of Mysore (Congressmen and others) have been doing. The profit and loss of a nation is not confined to the present conditions. Politicians should focus on its bright future. Other parts of Karnataka have not had industrial progress comparable to Mysore. But Mysore requires the raw material available from north Karnataka and the district of North Canara, the port facilities at Bhatkal, Kumta and Malpe, and cooperation from the business resources of north Karnataka. When all facilities in Mysore and the non-Mysore areas of Karnataka are brought together, there will be no province richer than Karnataka (*Kannada Ekikarana Kaipidi*, Vol. 1, Dharwad, 1947, p. 15).

Opposition to unification seems to have been rife what with the political prospects of state reorganisation. The *Economic Weekly* observed in 1953:

There are still difficulties in the formation of linguistic States. Travancore-Cochin may not be eager to coalesce with Malabar to form United Kerala. United Karnatak must necessarily mean Mysore's merger with Coorg and the. [*sic*] Karnataka districts. Vishala Andhra, United Karnatak and United Maharashtra raise the problem of contiguous linguistic areas of Hyderabad State. Mahavidarbha is not keen on joining Bombay Maharashtra (26 February 1953, p. 79).

The question of economic development—and its political and entrepreneurial prospects—had become an essential component of the unification question by the time of independence. Integrating areas that were less developed with those that had made substantial advances on the industrial front was now a cause for concern in ways that it was not in the early 1920s. When the Linguistic Provinces Commission (S.K. Dar Commission) submitted its report to the Constituent Assembly in 1948, its assessment was framed in terms of revenues, assets and liabilities of the provinces. Linguistic reorganisation, the report suggested, would leave most provinces with a deficit, with Gujarat and the cities of Bombay and Madras alone registering surpluses. The unification of Karnataka would generate a

revenue of Rs. 423.75 lakh, but with an expenditure of Rs. 647.02 lakh, the province would face a deficit of Rs. 223.27 lakh (Report of the Linguistic Provinces Commission, 1948, p.20). “Advocates of Linguistic States,” wrote the *Economic Weekly* in a comment entitled ‘Tyranny of Languages,’ “must be told firmly that they will have to pay in taxation the price for what they want” (26 February 1953, p. 80).

Economic development would weigh in heavily on the State Reorganisation Commission, when it made its recommendations in 1955. Consider, for instance, the SRC’s observations on the railway network in Karnataka:

Rail communication in northern Karnataka, it has been. [sic] stated, is now unsatisfactory. It is, however, unsatisfactory also in the Malnad area of the existing Mysore State; and in view of the, scale on which railway expansion is now planned, it is hoped that northern Karnataka will soon become more easily accessible front Bangalore than it is at the present time (States Reorganisation Commission [henceforth, SRC] Report, p. 92).

Concerning the arguments for the backwards of northern Karnataka, the SRC had this to say:

the assumption which has sometimes been made that the Karnataka areas outside Mysore are, particularly backward seems to us to be quite unwarranted. Bombay Karnataka in particular has enjoyed for a sufficiently long time the benefits of a progressive administration which has provided in this area educational facilities up to the University stage, cheap and adequate transport services run by one of the more important road transport corporations in the country and other amenities for the population. The extra cost, if any, of uniform standards of expenditure on the social services cannot, therefore, in our opinion, be, very great (SRC Report, p. 92).

It further allayed misgivings from Mysore on the economic liability that its integration with northern Karnataka would cause:

Northern Karnataka is now on the eve of large-scale and rapid economic development. The Tungabhadra, Upper Krishna, Bhima, Ghataprabha and Malaprabha projects, when they have been completed, will convert a parched and *dry [*sic*] area into one of the best irrigated agricultural regions in the country. The increased production of food and other commodities, after irrigation has been extended, will meet the needs of Mysore, which in years of scarcity suffers from a serious deficiency of food supplies. It is not, therefore, only northern Karnataka which may hope to benefit from the unification of the two Kannada-speaking areas north and south of the Tungabhadra (SRC Report, p. 100).

When it came to the question of Kolar, which had a majority Telugu population, the SRC's decision to award it to Karnataka was governed by considerations related to the Mysore state's stakes in gold-mining:

One such area is Kolar district, which has a Telugu majority of fifty-four per cent. and a Kannada-speaking population [*sic*] of barely twenty-one per cent. It has intimate ties with Mysore which are of such long standing that they cannot easily be ignored. The major industry in this district is gold-mining. This, has been fostered and built up by the Mysore Government, which has a direct interest in the continued existence and prosperity of this industry. The industry for its part gets the benefit of cheap hydro-electric power from Mysore (SRC Report, p. 93).

Considerations other than the purely linguistic informed the recommendations of the SRC to a large extent. As a matter of fact, the SRC stated in so many words that language alone was not adequate in deciding on areas where the population was not pronouncedly uni-lingual. In the case of Bellary, it took note of the benefits accruing from a specific development project, the Tungabhadra project:

linguistic consideration only should not, in our view, be the decisive factor, especially in settling the future of a border tract which cannot be regarded as predominantly uni-lingual. What has weighed with us in arriving at the conclusion

to which we have referred is the cumulative effect of three main considerations, namely, administrative convenience, economic links and the importance of the Tungabhadra project to the Rayalaseema districts of Andhra (SRC Report, p. 94).

It would seem from the SRC report that the purpose of linguistic reorganisation was rapid economic development.

Two important multi-purpose projects, namely, the Tungathadra [sic] and the Upper Krishna irrigation-cum-hydro-electric projects are, or are likely to be, border projects as the boundaries of the States stand at present. In both these cases, the unification of Karnataka should, facilitate the rapid development of the areas concerned (SRC Report, p. 100).

The exploration of the literature concerning unification of Karnataka opens up several important avenues for analysis. Existing studies began their account from the mid nineteenth century and trace a linear teleological history leading to unification in 1956. Our study suggests that grievances against Marathi and Tamil in the later half of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century had developed conditions for assertion of Kannada by entrepreneurs in print, education and theatre. The unification movement was grafted on to these antecedent developments. The associations forged between Kannada entrepreneurship and the national movement will make for an instructive study.

The economic dimensions of the unification movement that arose following its intertwinement with the khadi movement at the Belgaum session of the Congress in 1924 needs to be duly recognized. The idiom of economic self-sufficiency that the khadi movement made popular resonated in strong ways with the demand for linguistic unification and lent this otherwise elite demand a popular character. That this development led to contradictions in the movement because of the pro-industrialist strategies of development adopted by Mysore makes the problem considerably complex, especially in the light of the reluctance that Mysore

expressed for unification from the time when the British had initiated the process of transfer of power. Representations made to the Dhar Commission, JVP Committee and SRC also shed interesting light on this aspect of unification.

The divide between Mysore and northern Karnataka were also articulated in terms of economic and political prospects of the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats in the event of unification. The tension between the two groups have continued into our times with greater involvement of religious establishments (mutts) of both groups in political and economic decision making. The additional dimension that this tension gives to the question of unification will make the understanding of the politics of unification richer. In spite of unification in 1956, northern Karnataka has continuously expressed misgivings about Mysore's dominance in the political and economic life of the region. Threats have been issued on a number of occasions that failure to address the grievance might lead northern Karnataka to demand separate statehood.

After a separate provincial Andhra Congress Committee was conceded at the Lucknow Congress of 1916, Andhra leaders like Patabbhi Sitarmayya had helped Kannada nationalists in their efforts to influence Congress leadership to accord more legitimacy to the Kannada movement and give it greater visibility within the Congress structure by accepting the demand of Kannada nationalists for a separate Karnataka Provincial Committee within the Indian National Congress. Andhra Pradesh was the first state to be unified on linguistic grounds after independence. Its bifurcation in 2014 on grounds of economic underdevelopment has important lessons for exploring a set of underlying issues which the politics of language may not always be able to contain. A comparative study of the unification movement in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, it seems will for this reason be rewarding.

Concluding remarks

The paper has sought to initiate an analysis, with reference to the unification of Karnataka, how the 'regional' in the Indian context historically evolved as part of the modern political imagination on the subcontinent through very distinct processes in the period between the Bengal Partition in 1905 and the linguistic reorganization of Indian states in 1960. Strikingly, through this period, demarcations of the 'regional' proceeded mainly through foregrounding the identification of distinct 'regions' with a single linguistic marker/identity.

Furthermore, even as the contours of the 'region/regional' within the Indian nation-space were being worked out, the ensuing linguistic-territorial entities thus formed, paradoxically and rapidly lent themselves to be discursively and tellingly recast as targets of an ahistorical developmental vision, whose prestige rested on its claimed abilities to transcend regionalist/culturalist perspectives tied to specific geographical locations.

In examining the twin logics of cultural and economic consolidation, we note how while the embracing of developmental agendas was prefaced by full, formal political acquiescence to the logic of linguistic territorialisation, actual linguistic reorganization of states occurred in 1960, a whole decade after economic planning became the centre-piece of the national mission.

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INSTITUTE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH

University Enclave, University of Delhi
(North Campus) Delhi 110007, India

Tel: 27667288/365/424

Email: system@iegindia.org