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Political Scenario In Karnataka

Political History Of Karnataka:

Pre – Independence Era:

The origin of the rise of the Karnataka region as an independent power dates back to the fourth-century, the birth of the Kadamba Dynasty of Banavasi, the earliest of the native rulers to conduct administration in the native language of Kannada in addition to the official Sanskrit. This is the historical starting point in studying the development of the region as an enduring geopolitical entity and of Kannada as an important regional language. In the southern regions of Karnataka, the Western Gangas of Talakad were contemporaries of the Kadambas.

The political history of medieval Karnataka spans the 4th to the 16th centuries, when the empires that evolved in the Karnataka region of India made a lasting impact on the subcontinent. The medieval era can be broadly divided into several periods.

The earliest native kingdoms and imperialism; the successful domination of the Gangetic plains in northern India and rivalry with the empires of Tamilakam over the Vengi region; and the domination of the southern Deccan and consolidation against Muslim invasion.

The Kadambas and Gangas were followed by the imperial dynasties of the Badami Chalukyas, the Rashtrakuta Dynasty the Western Chalukya Empire, the Hoysala Empire and the Vijayanagara Empire, all patronizing the ancient Indic religions while showing tolerance to the new cultures arriving from the west of the subcontinent. The Muslim invasion of the Deccan resulted in the breaking away of the feudatory Sultanates in the 14th century. The rule of the Bahamani Sultanate of Bidar and the Bijapur Sultanate from the northern Deccan region caused a mingling of the ancient Hindu traditions with the nascent Islamic culture in the region. The hereditary ruling families and clans ably served the large empires and upheld the local culture and traditions.

The fall of the Vijayanagara Empire in 1565 at the Battle of Talikota started a slow disintegration of the region into minor kingdoms, the largest of which were the kingdoms of Kingdom of Mysore, the Keladi Nayakas and the Nayakas of Chitradurga. These kingdoms continued to owe support to a diminished Vijayanagara Empire ruling from Penukonda in modern Andhra Pradesh, followed by a brief period of independence.

However, large areas in north Karnataka came under the control of the Bijapur Sultanate who waged several wars in a bid to establish hegemony over the southern Deccan. The defeat of the Bijapur Sultanate at the hands of the Moguls in late 17th century added a new dimension to the prevailing confusion. The constant wars of the local kingdoms with the two new rivals, the Moguls and the Marathas and among themselves caused further instability in the region. Major areas of Karnataka came under the rule of the Moguls and the Marathas, until the rise of local Muslims, Hyder Ali and his

son Tipu Sultan. Under them the Mysore Kingdom reached its zenith of power but had to face the growing English power who by then had a firm foothold in the subcontinent. With the death of Tipu Sultan in 1799 in the fourth Anglo-Mysore war, the Mysore Kingdom came under the British umbrella. More than a century later, with the dawn of India as an independent nation in 1947, the unification of Kannada speaking regions as modern Karnataka state brought four centuries of political uncertainty (and centuries of foreign rule) to an end.

Post – Independent Era:

Karnataka consists of 28 parliamentary constituencies from which 28 members of parliament got elected to the Lok Sabha. Several politicians and bureaucrats from Karnataka have served at the center at various times in different capacities. Deve Gowda, who hails from Hassan served as the Prime Minister, B. D. Jatti from Bijapur served as the Vice President of India and also as acting President in the past. S.Nigalingappa was Congress (I) President.

There are three distinct phases in the political history of Karnataka. The first phase was marked by the Congress dominance. This was followed by a phase in which two parties alternately held power. The third phase is the era of coalition governments.

Congress dominance: Karnataka, like many other states in India, had Congress dominance since Independence till 1983. Even when the rest of the country voted against the Congress in the 1977 elections in the aftermath of the Emergency, the Karnataka electorate stood firmly behind the Congress.

Bi-polar politics: From 1985 onwards, the Janata Dal (originally the Janata Party) and the Congress held power alternately. In 1983, the Janata Party, supported by the BJP from the outside, formed the first non-Congress government headed by Ramakrishna Hegde. Following the rout of the Janata Party in the 1984 Lok Sabha elections, Hegde dissolved the Assembly, paving the way for mid-term polls in 1985, which returned the Janata Party with an absolute majority. In 1989, the Congress wrested power from the Janata Party only to lose it to the Janata Dal in 1994. It was the Congress which won again in 1999.

Coalition politics: The BJP, which had for long been a marginal force in Karnataka, began to rise from 1994 onwards, ending the bi-polar nature of the state's politics. Though the elections in 1994, 1999 and 2004 were triangular contests among the Congress, the JD and the BJP, it was only in 2004 elections paved the way for a hung Assembly, with the BJP emerging as the single largest party. The result was the formation of two unstable coalition governments.

The first one (2004-2006) was a Congress-led Government in partnership with the JD(S). N. Dharam Singh of the Congress was the chief minister. The government collapsed after a faction of the JD(S) withdrew support. The BJP joined hands with the JD(S) in the second coalition (2006-2007). The JD(S) led this government with H.D. Kumaraswamy as chief minister. The JD(S) was to hand over the chief minister's post to the BJP in

November 2007. It refused to do so, resulting in President's Rule and eventually the 2008 mid-term elections.

2004 State Elections:

The 2004 elections in Karnataka led to extremely unusual results. No party gained enough seats to form a government of its own. Out of a total of 224 seats, the BJP won 79 seats, the Congress 65 and the JD (Secular) 58. The only possibility then was a coalition government and the two largest parties were politically not inclined to form a coalition. JD(S) President and former Prime Minister Deve Gowda decided to partner with the Congress to form a government just to keep the BJP out of the government. The coalition headed by chief minister N Dharam Singh (Congress) and Deputy Chief Minister Siddharamiah (of JDS) lasted till 2006. Deve Gowda's son HD Kumaraswamy, of the JDS, brought in a new twist when he garnered support of 46 ministers and withdrew support from the Congress. Kumaraswamy struck a deal with the opposition party, the right wing BJP, to form an alternate government. The new coalition had H.D Kumaraswamy as the Chief Minister and B. S. Yeddyurappa of the BJP as deputy chief minister. Before forming the government, the two parties had entered into a power sharing agreement. Both parties would enjoy Chief Minister ship for a period of 20 months each (which would cover the time left for the next elections). This has created a unique situation where a government has been headed by three different political parties with no elections between them.

2008 State Elections:

In 2007, a sudden dispute occurred between HD Kumaraswamy and Yeddyurappa over the abdication of powers which threw the state into emergency and the intervention of Presidential rule. During the elections on 10, 16 and 22 May 2009, the BJP defeated both the local party as well as the Congress making Yeddyurappa the undisputed Chief Minister of the state. The BJP nearly achieved a majority, and came to power in a state for the first time in South Indian political history. Political commentators claim that the main reason for the defeat of the Congress was due to its failure of the promises to the people of Karnataka in matters of development programs, inflation and severe drought in Karnataka. Besides infight in Karnataka Congress party lead to uncertainty in matters of Chief Ministership. But within one year, BJP also became very unpopular due to corruption charges against the ministers and due to its partisan attitude towards various sections in the society.

Summary

Karnataka after Independence:

- After Indian independence, the Wodeyar Maharaja acceded to India.
- In 1950, Mysore became an Indian state, and the former Maharaja became its rajpramukh, or governor, until 1975.
- After the States Reorganisation Act of 1956, parts of Coorg, Madras, Hyderabad, and Bombay states were incorporated into the state of Mysore.
- Mysore state was renamed Karnataka in 1973.

Political Consolidation:

- There are three distinct phases in the political history of Karnataka. The first phase was marked by the Congress' dominance. This was followed by a phase in which two parties alternately held power. The third phase is the era of coalition governments.
 - Since Independence till 1983, it was the Congress Party which was dominant.
 - In 1983, the Janata Party, supported by the BJP from the outside, formed the first non-Congress government.
 - In 1985, the Janata Dal returned to power with majority.
 - In 1989, Congress came back to power, then lost it to the Janata Dal in 1994 and won back again in 1999.
 - The first coalition was between 2004 to 2006, when Congress wrestled to power with partnership from JDS which then collapsed after JDS withdrew support.
 - The second coalition was between 2006-2007 when BJP joined hands with the JDS.
 - JDS refused to handover the chief minister's post to the BJP in November 2007 which resulted in President's Rule and then re-elections which resulted in a victory for BJP.
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Attempts of successive governments:

- The first chief minister of Karnataka K. Chengalaraya Reddy worked towards developing a stable government.
- His successor Kengal Hanumanthaiah aimed at uplifting the rural population of the state and promoting economic growth. His major contribution was the construction of the "Vidhana Soudha", the largest legislature-cum-office building in India at that time. He also played a pivotal role in uniting the Kannada speaking areas within the boundaries of a single state.
- Kadidal Manjappa, the third chief minister played an important role in initiating land reforms in the early fifties by introducing laws related to the abolition of absentee landlordism and recognition to the right of cultivators. He is remembered for introducing the Tenancy Act. Several other progressive acts like the Inam abolition act came into being because of vision.
- He was succeeded by Siddavanahalli Nijalingappa who is also known as the Maker of Modern Karnataka. The state owes much to him for development of agricultural, irrigation, industrial and transport projects. He also gave land to Tibetan refugees for the purpose of resettlement.
- Basappa Danappa Jatti who succeeded Nijalingappa was the Chairman of the Land Reforms Committee, which paved the way for the 1961 Mysore Land Reforms Act.
- He was succeeded by Shivalingappa R. Kanthi who was then succeeded by Nijalingappa.
- Veerendra Patil who succeeded Nijalingappa went ahead with the irrigation projects in the Cauvery basin that led to the Cauvery water dispute even though the Central Water Commission refused to clear them in order to protect the interests of the farmers. It was he who promoted the Karnataka Power Corporation and separated the state electricity board from the responsibility of generating power.
- Devaraj Urs, who succeeded Veerendra Patil laid stress on the education of the people belonging to the backward classes and establishment of the backwards and minorities hostels for the students hailing from those sections of society. He absorbed 16,000 unemployed graduates in the stipendiary scheme whose services were confirmed later, he abolished carrying night soil by Dalits and bonded labour. The land reforms spearheaded by him, in which the tiller of the land became the owner, was exemplary. It had reduced the chasm between the rich and the poor, doing away with social inequality. His contribution in the irrigation sector helped the farmer community tremendously.
- The next chief minister to come to power was R. Gundu Rao. He was responsible for the construction of the Majestic bus station in Bangalore. He also sanctioned numerous Medical and Engineering Colleges in Karnataka. The Cauvery IIInd Stage was completed within a year and half during his tenure. He was also responsible for the construction of the "Kala Mandira" in Mysore.

- Ramakrishna Mahabaleshwar Hegde who succeeded Gundu Rao was the first non congress chief minister who was an active votary of State rights within a federal set-up, but one who made no concession to regional or linguistic chauvinism. He took innovative initiatives in expanding the federal principle within the State, primarily in the area of devolving power to local bodies and in trying to enforce accountability. During his Chief Ministership, Karnataka pioneered legislation on Panchayat raj that devolved a substantial degree of financial and administrative powers to a three-tiered structure of local government. He supported the tireless work of his Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Abdul Nazir Sab, in promoting devolution of power to the gram panchayats in the state, and the Karnataka implementation became a role model for the rest of India. In 1984 he introduced legislation to deal with official and administrative corruption through the institution of the Lokayukta. Also, he started the 'Kannada watchdog panel' to oversee the implementation of Kannada in administration. He has the rare distinction of presenting thirteen finance budgets in the State assembly.
- After Hegde quit, Somappa Rayappa Bommai took charge as Chief Minister of the State but his government was dismissed by the then Governor on the grounds that his government had lost its majority.
- Bommai was succeeded by Veerendra Patil who was then succeeded by Bangarappa.
- Sarekoppa Bangarappa promoted three popular programmes: Aradhana (to revive and rebuild 36,000 religious shrines), Ashraya (to build houses for the poor) and Vishwa (financial aid for rural artisans and cottage industries).
- Bangarappa was succeeded by Marpadi Veerappa Moily who helped maximize the irrigation potential of Karnataka. He formulated and implemented various drinking water schemes and employment guarantee schemes and housing schemes. He also initiated various projects such as the International Airport in Bangalore, International Convention Centre, Konkan Railway, and National Games in Bangalore.
- He was succeeded by Haradanahalli Doddegowda Deve Gowda who was instrumental in bringing foreign investment to the State.
- Deve Gowda was succeeded by Jayadevappa Halappa Patel. The most significant achievement of Patel's government was the formation of seven new districts in the State which was a long-delayed decision. His administration also gave impetus to Information Technology and attracted foreign investment.
- JH Patel was succeeded by Somanahalli Mallaiah Krishna (S M Krishna). He was instrumental in creating power reforms with ESCOMS and digitization of land records (BHOO MI) and many other citizen friendly initiatives. He encouraged private public participation and was a fore bearer of the Bangalore Advance Task Force.
- SM Krishna was succeeded by Dharam Singh Narayan Singh who was then succeeded by H. D. Kumaraswamy.
- Kumaraswamy was succeeded by Bookanakere Siddalingappa Yeddyurappa.

- Devaragunda Venkappa Sadananda Gowda who succeeded Yeddyurappa introduced various schemes such as Sakaala, aimed at providing time bound services at government offices.
- Sadananda Gowda was succeeded by Jagadish Shettar who was succeeded by Siddaramaiah.

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