

Freedom Movement in Karnataka: A Focus on Davanagere District

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Abstract:

Davanagere District, located in central Karnataka, played a significant role in India's freedom movement, marked by its rich cultural heritage, socio-political activities, and economic development. Originally part of Chitradurga, Davanagere emerged as a major textile center during the colonial era, earning the nickname "Manchester of Karnataka." The district actively participated in key movements such as the Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience, and Quit India Movements, with notable contributions from leaders like G. R. Ramaiah and Rangappa. Women's participation was also significant, with figures like Kamalamma, Gowramma, and Ballari Siddamma playing crucial roles. The freedom struggle led to the promotion of local industries and crafts, fostering economic self-sufficiency and laying the foundation for post-independence development. Today, Davanagere is known for its vibrant cultural traditions, educational institutions, and economic activities, reflecting the resilience and dynamism of its people.

Keywords: Freedom Movement, Karnataka, Davanagere

Introduction

The Indian freedom movement was a collective struggle that saw participation from various regions across the country. Karnataka, known for its rich cultural heritage and historical significance, played a crucial role in this movement. Among its districts, Davanagere stands out for its unique contributions and active involvement. This paper aims to shed light on the historical context, key events, and prominent figures of the freedom movement in Davanagere District. Davanagere's historical journey is marked by its rich cultural heritage, active participation in the freedom movement, and continuous development post-independence. The district's contributions to the freedom struggle and its subsequent growth reflect the resilience and dynamism of its people. By understanding these historical events, we gain a deeper appreciation of Davanagere's role in Karnataka's and India's history.

Davanagere District, located in central Karnataka, covers an area of approximately 4,924 square kilometers and has a population of over 1.9 million as per the 2011 Census. The district experiences a tropical savanna climate with distinct wet and dry seasons. Historically, it was influenced by several ancient and medieval dynasties, including the Chalukyas, Hoysalas, and the Vijayanagara Empire. The Chitradurga Fort, built by the Nayakas, is a significant landmark from this period. During the colonial era, Davanagere emerged as a major textile center, earning the nickname "Manchester of Karnataka." It played a crucial role in the Indian freedom movement, with active participation in the Non-Cooperation Movement, Civil Disobedience Movement, and Quit India Movement.

Economically, agriculture is a major activity in the district, with crops like maize, rice, cotton, and sugarcane being widely cultivated. The Tungabhadra and Bhadra rivers support irrigation. The textile industry, particularly cotton mills and spinning units, is a cornerstone of Davanagere's economy. The district has also seen growth in food processing and agro-based industries. Educationally, Davanagere is home to several prominent institutions, including Davanagere University, Bapuji Institute of Engineering and Technology, and JJM Medical College.

Culturally, the district celebrates various festivals such as Ugadi, Diwali, Dussehra, and Sankranti, along with local festivals like the Sri Anjaneya Swamy Rathotsava in Harihar. Traditional art forms, folk dances, music, and handicrafts are integral to its cultural heritage, with the district being known for its unique wooden toys and silk weaving. Davanagere's cuisine, particularly the famous Benne Dosa (butter dosa), along with Maddur Vada and various chutneys and pickles, is well-loved.

Modern developments in Davanagere include significant improvements in infrastructure, transportation, healthcare, and urban facilities. The National Highway 4 (NH 4) passes through Davanagere, connecting it to major cities like Bengaluru and Pune. The city of Davanagere, the district headquarter, has grown into a major urban center with enhanced civic facilities, public transportation, and housing. Tourist attractions in and around Davanagere include Santhi sagara, Santhebennur Pushkarini, and the picturesque Honnali, making the district a gateway to other destinations in Karnataka. This blend of historical significance, economic activity, and cultural vibrancy makes Davanagere a notable district in Karnataka.

Historical Context

Davanagere, originally part of the Chitradurga district, became an independent district in 1997. During the colonial period, it was an important center for trade and agriculture, which also made it a significant location for political

activities. The socio-economic conditions of the time, including the impact of British policies on local industries and agriculture, set the stage for the rise of nationalist sentiments.

Key Events and Movements

• Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922)

The Non-Cooperation Movement, led by Mahatma Gandhi, saw widespread participation from Davanagere. Local leaders organized rallies, boycott of British goods, and non-violent protests, emphasizing the need for self-reliance and swaraj (self-rule).

• Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-1934)

Inspired by the Salt Satyagraha, the people of Davanagere actively participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement. Salt marches, protests against the salt tax, and boycotts of British goods were common in the district. The movement saw significant involvement from students, women, and farmers.

• Quit India Movement (1942)

The Quit India Movement marked a pivotal moment in Davanagere's freedom struggle. The district witnessed large-scale protests, strikes, and demonstrations. The British response was harsh, with numerous arrests and crackdowns on freedom fighters. Despite this, the commitment of the people remained unshaken.

Prominent Figures

The freedom movement in Karnataka was marked by the contributions of numerous dedicated leaders who played crucial roles in India's struggle for independence. These personalities not only fought against colonial rule but also worked towards social reform, upliftment of the marginalized, and the promotion of education and indigenous industries. Their legacy continues to inspire generations in Karnataka and across India.

Personalities of the Freedom Movement in Karnataka

▪ Karnad Sadashiva Rao (1881-1937)

Karnad Sadashiva Rao was a prominent leader in the Indian National Congress and a key figure in Karnataka's freedom struggle. Born in Mangalore, Rao was deeply influenced by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and played a significant role in promoting the principles of non-violence and civil disobedience in Karnataka. He was instrumental in organizing the Salt Satyagraha in the region and worked tirelessly to mobilize the mass against British rule. Rao was also known for his efforts to uplift the socially and economically disadvantaged sections of society.

▪ Hardekar Manjappa (1886-1947)

Hardekar Manjappa, often referred to as the "Gandhi of Karnataka," was a social reformer and freedom fighter. He was deeply influenced by Gandhian philosophy and dedicated his life to the cause of India's independence and social upliftment. Manjappa worked towards the eradication of untouchability, promotion of khadi, and rural development. His efforts in mobilizing the rural mass for the freedom movement was significant.

▪ Kengal Hanumanthaiah (1908-1980)

Kengal Hanumanthaiah was an influential leader in the Indian National Congress and played a vital role in the freedom struggle in Karnataka. He was a key organizer of the Quit India Movement in the region and faced imprisonment for his activities. After independence, Hanumanthaiah became the Chief Minister of Mysore State and was instrumental in the construction of the Vidhana Soudha, the state legislative building in Bengaluru.

▪ S. Nijalingappa (1902-2000)

S. Nijalingappa was a prominent leader in Karnataka's freedom movement and a close associate of Mahatma Gandhi. He participated actively in the Quit India Movement and was imprisoned for his role in the struggle. Nijalingappa later became the Chief Minister of Mysore State and played a significant role in the political and economic development of Karnataka.

▪ Gangadhara Rao Deshpande (1871-1960)

Gangadhara Rao Deshpande was a leading figure in the Indian National Congress from Belgaum (now Belagavi). He was a key organizer of the Non-Cooperation Movement in Karnataka and worked closely with other national leaders. Deshpande was known for his efforts in mobilizing the youth and promoting nationalist sentiments among them.

▪ Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay (1903-1988)

Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay was a freedom fighter, social reformer, and women's rights activist from Mangalore. She played a crucial role in the Salt Satyagraha and worked towards the emancipation of women. Kamaladevi was also a pioneer in the revival of Indian handicrafts and handlooms, contributing significantly to India's cultural renaissance.

▪ Shankar Rao Dev (1901-1971)

Shankar Rao Dev was an active participant in the freedom movement in Karnataka, particularly in the regions of Hubli and Dharwad. He was a key organizer of the Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement. Dev was known for his efforts in promoting education and social reform in the region.

▪ M. N. Jois (1912-1986)

M. N. Jois was a prominent freedom fighter from Mysore who played a significant role in the Quit India Movement. He was known for his organizational skills and his ability to mobilize people for the cause of independence. Jois also worked towards the promotion of khadi and village industries.

▪ **H. S. Doreswamy (1918-2021)**

H. S. Doreswamy was a veteran freedom fighter and social activist from Bangalore. He participated in the Quit India Movement and was imprisoned for his activities. Doreswamy continued his activism post-independence, fighting against corruption and social injustices.

▪ **H. C. Dasappa (1894-1964)**

H. C. Dasappa was a prominent freedom fighter from Mysore (now Mysuru) who played a crucial role in the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Quit India Movement. He was actively involved in organizing protests, strikes, and boycotts against British goods. Dasappa later served as a Union Minister in independent India, contributing to the development of the nation.

▪ **G. R. Ramaiah** Another notable figure, G. R. Ramaiah, was instrumental in mobilizing the masses in Davanagere. His efforts in promoting khadi and indigenous industries were significant in fostering a spirit of self-reliance among the people.

▪ **Rangappa**

Rangappa, a prominent freedom fighter from Davanagere, Karnataka, was born in the late 19th or early 20th century. His formative years were shaped by the socio-political environment of British colonial rule in India, which sparked his commitment to the nationalist cause. Rangappa's active involvement in the Indian freedom movement can be broadly placed from the early 1920s to the mid-1940s. This was a time of intense political activity and various mass movements led by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of figures like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Rangappa, a significant figure in the Indian freedom struggle, hailed from Davanagere in Karnataka. Born into a modest family, he was deeply influenced by the socio-political changes occurring in India during his formative years. The oppressive British colonial rule and the growing nationalist sentiments inspired Rangappa to join the freedom movement. Rangappa was known for his ability to mobilize grassroots support for the freedom movement. He worked extensively in rural areas of Davanagere, educating farmers, laborers, and the common people about the importance of the struggle for independence. His efforts helped create a strong base of support for the nationalist cause in the region. A staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi's principles, Rangappa promoted the use of Swadeshi (indigenous) goods and khadi (hand-spun cloth). He encouraged the establishment of local spinning and weaving centers, providing employment and fostering economic self-sufficiency within the community. Rangappa's life and legacy serve as a powerful reminder of the sacrifices and struggles endured by countless freedom fighters in the quest for India's independence. His contributions to the freedom movement in Davanagere and his efforts to mobilize grassroots support played a crucial role in the larger national struggle. Rangappa's unwavering commitment to Gandhian principles, his promotion of Swadeshi and khadi, and his dedication to social reform continue to inspire generations to work towards a just, equitable, and self-reliant India.

Women in the Freedom Movement

Ballari Siddamma's life is a testament to the power of determination, courage, and selfless service. Her contributions to the Indian freedom movement and her efforts in social reform have left an indelible mark on Karnataka's history. Siddamma's legacy continues to inspire generations to work towards a more just, equitable, and independent society. Her story serves as a reminder of the countless unsung heroes who played pivotal roles in shaping India's path to freedom and progress.

Women from Davanagere also played a crucial role in the freedom struggle. Leaders like Kamamma and Gowamma organized women's groups, participated in protests, and contributed to the nationalist cause through their writings and speeches.

Ballari Siddamma was born in the early 20th century in the town of Bellary (now Ballari) in Karnataka. Coming from a humble background, she was deeply influenced by the prevailing socio-political environment and the burgeoning nationalist movement led by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

Involvement in the Freedom Movement

1. Non-Cooperation Movement

- Siddamma actively participated in the Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920. She was instrumental in organizing local protests, boycotts of foreign goods, and spreading the message of Swaraj (self-rule) among the masses in Ballari and surrounding areas.

2. Civil Disobedience Movement

- During the Civil Disobedience Movement in the 1930s, Siddamma took part in various forms of civil disobedience, including the Salt Satyagraha. She encouraged people to produce salt locally and boycott the British salt, directly challenging the colonial government's monopoly on salt production and sales.

3. Quit India Movement

- The Quit India Movement of 1942 saw Siddamma's most significant contributions. As part of the movement, she played a crucial role in mobilizing the local population to demand an end to British rule. Despite facing arrests and imprisonment, she remained undeterred and continued to inspire others to join the struggle.

Social Reforms and Community Work

Women's Empowerment

- Siddamma was a staunch advocate for women's rights and empowerment. She organized women's groups and worked tirelessly to promote education and social awareness among women. Her efforts were instrumental in encouraging many women to step out of their traditional roles and participate actively in the freedom struggle.

Education and Literacy

- Recognizing the importance of education in achieving true independence, Siddamma worked towards improving literacy rates in her community. She established schools and adult education centers to ensure that education was accessible to all, especially the underprivileged sections of society.

Eradication of Social Evils

- Siddamma was deeply committed to eradicating social evils such as untouchability and caste discrimination. She advocated for equality and worked towards creating a more inclusive society. Her efforts were crucial in bringing about social change and fostering a sense of unity among the people.

Legacy and Recognition

• Post-Independence Contributions

- After India gained independence in 1947, Siddamma continued her work as a social reformer and community leader. She remained actively involved in various social and political activities, advocating for the rights of women, the underprivileged, and the marginalized.

• Recognition and Honors

- Ballari Siddamma's contributions to the freedom movement and her work as a social reformer have been widely recognized. She is remembered as a fearless leader who dedicated her life to the service of the nation and its people. Various institutions and organizations have honored her legacy through awards, memorials, and educational programs.

Socio-Economic Impact

The freedom movement had a profound impact on the socio-economic landscape of Davanagere. The boycotts of British goods led to the promotion of local industries and crafts. The emphasis on education and political awareness during the movement laid the foundation for the district's development in the post-independence era.

Conclusion

The freedom movement in Davanagere District was marked by active participation, resilience, and a strong sense of patriotism. The district's contribution to the national struggle for independence is a testament to the collective efforts of its people, who stood united against colonial oppression. By examining the historical context and key figures of this period, this paper underscores the significance of Davanagere in the larger narrative of India's fight for freedom.

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