

His Highness Jayachamarajendra Wadiyar, the Ruler of Mysore from 1940 ceded his kingdom to the Dominion of India in 1947, but continued as the Maharajah until India became a Republic in 1950. He became the Raja Pramukh – a constitutional position – as the head of Mysore State from 1950-1956, and in a rare gesture, even after the reorganization of the state on a linguistic basis, he was appointed Governor of the integrated Mysore state in 1956 and held the post until 1964, after which he was nominated as the Governor of Madras state (now Tamil Nadu) for two years.

The acceptance of the Wadiyars in the democratic polity of India is best explained by the cardinal principles upheld by their dynasty – political accommodation, enlightened governance and proactive reforms which anticipated and defused any possibility of social unrest. Thus Mysore had a representative Assembly from 1882. Although the franchise was limited and powers were minimal, it marked out this princely state as the most progressive in India.

Mysore was also the first state to make reservation on the basis of domicile and caste; the first demand came from the Mysore Brahmins, who were finding it difficult to compete with the Madras Brahmins who had a virtual monopoly over the upper tier of the state's civil service until 1920. This soon led to demands from other groups as well. When Wadiyar IV appointed the Justice Miller Committee to look into the issue of reservation for Backward Classes

(which meant everyone except Brahmins, Anglo-Indians and Europeans), Visveshvaraya resigned his Dewanship in protest. However the Miller Committee recommended 75% reservation in the long run and a time-bound programme to ensure at least 50% posts were kept for the Backward Classes. Thus, seven decades before the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations, Maharaja Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV opened the public service to less exalted groups in the caste hierarchy.

Meanwhile the popular upsurge against the Curzon's Partition of Bengal had an all-India impact, and linguistic groups everywhere started their movements. It also galvanized the Kannada speaking populations living outside Mysore to come together under the leadership of Aluru Venkat Rao. He called for a movement for uniting Karnataka. He was known as the 'Kannada Kula Purohita' or the 'High priest of the Kannada family. He made a case for integrating all Kannada regions of Madras and Bombay presidencies, besides those under the Nizam of Hyderabad into the kingdom of Mysore. This demand received a fillip when the idea of separate Karnataka state was also ratified by the INC committee led by Motilal Nehru in 1928. According to this, there was a 'strong prima facie case for unification' of all the Kannada speaking areas, and it was believed that Karnataka could also be a financially strong province.

However, it is interesting to note that unlike language movements elsewhere which looked for an external scapegoat, Aluru Venkat Rao turned the gaze inwards. He wanted the Kannadigas to measure their inadequacies, not against the overarching triumphs of the imperial power, but against the modest successes of other linguistic nationalisms within India itself. Aluru Venkat Rao's anguished cry in 1920: 'we don't have a history! we must have a history!'

implied that it was only through a recast of history, that Kannada people could find their identity and their role in Indian history. He deplored the fact that his effort came five decades year after Bengali, Marathi and Hindi counterparts had made their heroes and historic triumphs a part of the Indian nationalist narrative.

Yet it must be placed on record that the impetus for shaping the Kannada identity came not from Mysore, but the Bombay Karnataka region where the Marathi national identity was being reinforced. It was R H Deshpande, who strove for the revival of Kannada in a region where Marathi was the language of administration. On the other hand, Mysore was noticed throughout the colonial period for its achievements in statecrafts and industrialization.

With the merger of Mysore into India, there was a clear divide in the Kannada movement. While the Mysoreans felt that they were far more advanced in almost all spheres: education and culture, agriculture and industry, health and education. They felt that the merger of the 'backward areas, starting with the six talukas of Bellary, would actually prove to be a drain on the exchequer. They wanted the Kannada speaking areas outside of Mysore to be constituted into another Kannada speaking state. This change of attitude is best characterised by D V Gundapa (DVG). At the Karnataka Sangha Rajothsava in 1944 at Bangalore's Central College, he called for the consolidation of the Kannada-speaking areas within one, two or more states, however by the time of the SRC in 1955, DVG had become a staunch opponent of a single Karnataka. Others opposed to the ideas of linguistic unification while supporting the idea of two states, namely Karnataka and Mysore, were ex-Dewans Vishweshvarayya and M Mirza Ismail, scholars such as M P L Shastry, Congressmen such as A G

Ramachandra Rao and T Channaiah (who had also earlier supported unification), and members of caste associations such as Vokkaligara and Kuruba Sanghas. This assortment of cultural “royalists”, non-dominant castes, and technocrat-administrators wanted to preserve Mysore’s formidable reputation as a “model’ state and tried to prevent the linguistic consolidation of the Kannada speaking people.