

The Backward Class Movement In Princely State Of Mysore 1916-35 – A Study

Dr SMITHA M BHAVIKATTI

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

GOVERNMENT FIRST GRADE COLLEGE VIJAYANAGAR

BANGALORE 104

EMAIL smitha.bhavikatti@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

Princely state of Mysore was under direct rule of the British chief commissioners for nearly fifty years from 1831 to 1881. The state has been recognized as “Progressive” and “Model” in the British colonial period. The native rule in Mysore ensured that the transfer of power was one of the form rather than one of the substance. The British controlled the administration of Mysore indirectly through their Resident. After rendition in 1881 it was found necessary to have popular support and that was why the representative’s institutions emerged that was Representative assembly in 1881 under the Dewanship of Rangacharlu. Mysore was the first state to have institution in which the local elites were the first members. The wants and grievances of the people were expressed in the assembly and government gave them due consideration. These developments created a new awareness among the socially marginalized sections of the society resulted to organized backward class movements in Princely state of Mysore. The Back ward class movement in Princely state of Mysore, which began at 20th century, has taken different dimensions. It is interesting to note that Back ward class movement mainly centered round the recruitment to government posts at various levels. This paper focuses on the emergence of Back ward class movement in Princely state of Mysore twentieth century towards Nationalism and to take part in Indian National movement.

Key words: Non- Brahmin movement, Praja Mitra mandali, National movement, Lingayats, vokkaligara Sanga.

Introduction

The Back ward class movement first started in the former Madras Presidency at the beginning of twentieth century and spread to princely Mysore. It was an Off shoot of the anti-Brahmin movement which first started in the then madras presidency and later spread to the other states of South India including Karnataka. The anti Brahmin movement originated as a protest against dominance of the Brahmin in the social, economic and political life of the state. The intention of the movement was to secure government jobs for the Non Brahmins. The

spread of education made Non Brahmins realize how they had been relegated to play a secondary role in the socio-economic life of the country. It created a sense of deprivation among them and took the form of anti Brahmin feelings. The Brahmin power monopoly was challenged for the first time by the Back ward class movement. The non Brahmin movement as Hetine points out was All- India phenomenon, but it was more intensive in the South and was encouraged by the British as a point of the divide and rule strategy.

Background

The controversy regarding recruitment of government jobs began a few years before Rendition. The conflict centered round "Mysorean verses Madrasi". The British government established three important universities on the module of Cambridge University in three presidencies of India that was Madras, Bombay and Calcutta in 1857. Since then the Brahmins in the neighboring madras province were better qualified, a large number of them got into the service of Mysore at all levels. During Dewanship of sir K. sheshadri Iyer most of the higher services were filled by the Brahmin from neighboring Madras provinces as a result agitation started with the slogans "Mysore for Mysoreans" and this ended with the appointment of M. Viswesaryayya as Dewan. The spread of education made the non Brahmin realize how they had been neglected to play a secondary role in the socio economic life of the country. For a long time since rendition all the Dewan s were Brahmin and a new awareness arose among Non Brahmin and the controversy "Mysorean Verses Madras" transferred itself into "Brahmin verses non Brahmin" in second decade of the twentieth century. The rule of the dewan in the Mysore state, which in effect was looked upon a rule by the Brahmins, provided a place for an attack on the Brahmins.

Discussion

The Non-Brahmin mounted their attack on the Brahmin in two areas. One was their dominance in economic and political life. The Brahmins were the first to have taken advantage of modern education and by virtue of which government into state services and enjoyed political powers and got the benefits from state. Another area in which the non Brahmin made their attack on the Brahmin was the social dominance of the Brahmins- the practice of their that they were the first among the humans had a special place in the society and this factor led to start of Back ward class movement. As far as Mysore was concerned, the non Brahmin movement was only a reflection of the developments that were taking in Madras.

The Back ward classes, who constituted about 90% of the total population of the state by and large, remained uneducated and did not have proper representation in the legislative bodies or in government service. There were signs of awakening among them early in the present century and they started organizing themselves on communal basis. They were

influenced to a large extent by similar movements in the neighboring British Indian provinces of Madras and Bombay.

The aristocratic class in Mysore was the Arasu or urs to which the maharaja of the wodeyar dynasty belonged. They supported the backward class movement as they resented the Brahmin dominance in the government services. The Backward Class included the two dominant castes in Mysore namely the Vokkaligas and the Lingayats who took the lead in the state politics. Among the important religious minorities were the Muslims and Christians who also decided that they too belonged to the Backward Classes.

As a First step to improving their position, the Lingyat and Vokkaliga communities had founded in 1905 and 1906 respectively, the Mysore Lingayat Education Fund Association (1905), and the Vokkaligara Sangha (1906). These organizations had pledged to work for the educational advancement and the general betterness of these communities which was sought to be accomplished by raising funds for scholarships and student hostels.

Dewan V.P.Madhava Rao's address to the Representatives Assembly on 19th October of 1907 stated that "The Vokkaligara Sanga tried to promote the material intellectual and moral interest of the great vokkaliga population. "Vokkaligara patrike" a Kannada weekly in 1909 was started. This weekly paper created a sense of awareness among the vokkaligara community. Following the lead many associations other communities established their own associations. Aryavyeshya a maha sabha in 1915 and the Indian Christian association in 1920, Adi Dravida Abhivridhi Sanga in 1920, the Jain Education Fund Association in 1921 and Kurubra Sanga in 1922.

All these associations were striving hard to secure the betterment of their respective communities in sphere of administration, public service social and economic growth. In the year 1916, the budget debate in Mysore legislative council was delivered by a speech by Mr. H. Narsinga Rao. He argued for scholarship for these communities in order to make them more self-reliant. Almost all the Backward Class Representative Assembly members demanded educational reforms.

In 1909, C.R.Reddy, an ardent champion of the Non Brahmin movement in Madras was appointed professor in Maharajas College in Mysore. He was very popular in the intellectual circles. He created new leaders from Back ward communities. Mr. Reddy directed his non Brahmin campaign to get special treatment for non Brahmins and gradually forged the leaders of Vokkaliga, Lingayats and Muslim Communities into formal political association. This campaign gained momentum on 18th November 1917 when the Non Brahmins organized the state's first political meeting in Bangalore called Praja mitra mandali.

PRAJA MITRA MANDALI

The founding of Praja mitra Mandali was the first Non- Brahmin party in the same time as the Justice Party in Madras (1916). The latter aim was to put an end to Brahmin dominance in the administration of the province. The Praja Mitra Mandali was formed on 6th December 1917 with the leadership of the M. Basavaiah, Mahammed Kalami, H. Chennaiah, Mahammed jafar, M. Subbaiah, Mahammed Abbas Khan, A.V. Nanjudashetty, Moganna, Thimmaiah, Mahammed, Banumaiah, M. Narayanaiah, Dhanakotishetty, Nanjappa and others were the members of the Mandali. After the emergence of Mandali the Star of Mysore was started by Yajaman Veerupakshaiah from Mysore for spreading the aims and objectives of Praja Mitra Mandali. As pointed out by Dushkin the leaders of the praja mitra mandali were self appointed spokesmen for their rural community fellows but appear to have been particularly active in asserting the interests of town dwellers like themselves.

In response to the demands made by backward class people, the government decided to set apart a sum of rupees one lakh to the education of backward classes. The backward class leaders submitted a memorandum to the Maharaja in June 1918 to undo the injustice caused to them. The maharaja expressed his deep sympathy with the demand of the backward classes and assured them of special facilities at their advancement. Some facilities like fee concessions, scholarships were given to backward class students and the recruiting authorities were directed to give preference to them.

On the resignation of M.Viswesvaraya in 1918, M kantharaj Urs was appointed the dewan and he was the first non-Brahmin. The question of adequate representation of all communities in the state in the public service had engaged the attention of the government for some time. In 1918 the government felt the need for a comprehensive review of the situation and for taking more definite measures for the increased representation of backward communities.

Miller Committee – 1918

The Constituent of Miller Committee in 23 August 1918 by Krishna raja Wodeyar IV was a landmark event of the history of the Princely state of Mysore. The Princely state of Mysore was the first state to appoint a committee to go in to the demands of backward classes, the realization of which would break the monopoly of dominant minority in intellectual field. The committee consisting of both Brahmin and non-brahmin members under the chairmanship of Sir Leslie C.Miller, chief judge. Other members were C.Srikanteswara Iyer, Rao Bahadur, M.Muthanna, H.Chennaiah, Gulam Ahmed Kalami, and M.Basavaiah.

The terms of the Committee were i) changes needed if any, in the existing rules of recruitment to the public service, ii) special facilities to encourage higher and professional education among members of the backward communities, iii) any other special measures which may be taken to increase the representation of the backward communities in the public service without materially affecting efficiency. The committee submitted its report in July 1919 and the government obtained the opinions of heads of departments. The civil servants oppose the report.

After careful consideration, the government decided to attempt “at a definite standard of representation of the backward communities in the public services,” and decided “that the proportion of the members of backward communities. Should be gradually raised to fifty percent of the total strength within seven years”¹. The committee defined the backward communities as “all communities other than Brahmins who are not now adequately represented in the public service”². In fact as early as 1892, while considering the question of recruitment to the civil services, K. Sheshadri Iyer had recorded in a minute to the necessity “to maintain a proper proportion of all classes in the services” and had remarked that Brahmin community was well represented.³ In spite of that, the Miller committee report and the government order there on had been the subject matter of severe criticism at the hands of those who had dominated public opinion from the vantage point of official position which had been exclusively in their possession”⁴. Even the Hindu Of madras upheld the orders on Miller committee report and criticized the opposition voiced by the Brahmin groups in Mysore⁵.

IMPACT OF THE MOVEMENT

Orders were passed providing many facilities for the amelioration of weaker sections. Fees was abolished up to middle school level and backward class students were given scholarships which were allotted to deserving students by committees consisting of both official and non official members. Additional facilities like writing materials were supplied to panchama boys. All schools were thrown open to panchamas and it was opposed by the orthodox groups who demanded the withdrawal of that order. But the Maharaja showed statesmanship in taking a firm stand by declaring that they were also his subjects and thus silenced the opposition of the orthodox groups.⁶

¹ Proceedins of the goverement of his highness the maharaja of mysore, may 1921.p1

² Ibid.p.2

³ Addresses of the Dewans,p.13,165

⁴ Letter to editor,mysore star, 31st july 1921

⁵ The Hindu,22 and 23 june1921

⁶ Proceedings of Mysore legislative council – 1926 p.165

As a result of a number of measures taken by government, representation of backward classes in government service increased from 30% in 1921 to 42% in 1926. Dewan Mirza Ismail followed a conciliatory policy and the government ordered to give three out of four to backward class candidates in departments where representation had not reached the stipulated fifty percent and to give two out of three in the departments where fifty percent had reached.⁷

The Prajamithra Mandali and the backward class movement in princely Mysore reached a definite stage of its agitation, when they held the first statewide non-brahmin conference at Mysore in October 1929 under the presidentship of Arcot Ramaswamy Mudaliar. As the president pointed out that “there is some cardinal principle of truth and justice on which it is based, some rocky foundation of equity from which it cannot be shaken... equal opportunities to all and of justice to everyone and injustice to none”⁸

Praja Paksha or people's party -1930

The establishment of Praja Paksha in 1930 in the princely state of Mysore is also very significant event which was also influence on the organization of backward class movement. Liberal and progressive members felt that programme of Praja mitra mandali was not dynamic to include all groups of people. They left the party and formed a new party known as Praja Paksha with a flexible programme in 1930. The leaders were H.B. Gundappa Gowda, Venkatappa, K.C. Reddy, B.N. Gupta, H.C. Dasappa, D.S. Mallappa, D.H. Chandrashekaryya, and H. Siddya. The first session of the party was held at chennapatna in September 1931. D.S.Mallappa presided over the meeting. All criticized the state administration and pointed out the defects of the system and suggested remedy only by the establishment of responsible government in the state. They strove hard for establishment of responsible government.⁹

PRAJA SAMYUKTA PAKSHA -1935

These two parties continued to work side with the same objective and started organizing the peasants by holding peasant conferences in the rural areas and also planned to start a no tax campaign.¹⁰ The conference of Praja Samyukta Paksha was inaugurated by swamy venkatachala settee of Madras in January 1935 at Hassan K.C. Reddy a vokkaliga leader presided over the session. Dewan Mirza Ismail by his ruthlessness towards the activities for the Non Brahmins Praja Samyukta Paksha forced them to demand and his dismissal.¹¹ The people's federation continued to demand a fair representation for non- Brahmin in the administration.

⁷ Proceedings of legislative council June 1927, p74

⁸ Mysore star, 19th October 1929

⁹ Dr. Smitha Bhavikatti-Role Of Dewan Mirza Ismail In Mysore History –A Study, unpublished M.phil thesis, p-22

¹⁰ Proceedings of Mysore legislative council – 1935, p-134

¹¹ Veeranna gowda H.K, badaku meluku, Bangalore, p-158

Though it was not anti- Brahmins, it opposed the congress candidates in the election to representative assembly and legislative council held in March 1937 and was successful to a large extent. Ultimately the Praja Samyukta Paksha merged with Mysore Pradesh congress and majority of the leaders of the backward classes joined to congress party .

CONCLUSION

To sum up the emergence of the backward classes movement in princely Mysore, in early twentieth century led to formation of the caste association in the princely state of Mysore. After Miller Committee report, the situation in regard to representation of backward classes in government service improved substantially. The government instructed the heads of departments to give adequate representation to all communities and directed them to furnish annual returns of appointments made. The English education opened up new opportunities and led to formation of the caste associations in princely Mysore. The backward class movement was born to do away with the social tyrannies and obstacles to progress and to elevate the masses. The movement was a “social revolt against the fossilized India of Manu”¹²

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. B.Kuppuswamy, Backward class movement in Karnataka 1978.
2. D.V. Gundappa, Mysoorina Dewanaru (in kannada) 1978.
3. Proceedings of the Mysore legislative council.
4. Proceedings of the legislative council.
5. Mysore star.
- 6.Veeranna gowda H.K , badaku meluku , Bangalore, p-158
- 7.Modern history of Mysore – K. Veerathappa.

¹² Mysore star 12th October 1929