

Historical Role And Contribution Of S Nijalingappa: A Study With Reference To Davanagere

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ABSTRACT

S. Nijalingappa, a prominent leader in India's freedom struggle and a key political figure in post-independence Karnataka, played a significant role in shaping the socio-political landscape of the region. This research article examines his early life, his involvement in key movements against British rule, and his contributions as a political leader in the post-independence era. From his active participation in the Non-Cooperation, Civil Disobedience, and Quit India movements to his tenure as Chief Minister of Mysore State, Nijalingappa's dedication to the cause of independence and social reform is highlighted. His efforts in promoting education, rural development, and economic self-sufficiency have left a lasting legacy, making him a pivotal figure in Karnataka's history. By understanding his contributions, we gain insight into the broader narrative of India's struggle for independence and the development of modern Karnataka.

Keywords: S. Nijalingappa, Indian freedom movement, Karnataka, Non-Cooperation Movement

Introduction

S. Nijalingappa, a prominent leader in the Indian freedom struggle and a significant political figure in post-independence India, played a crucial role in shaping the political landscape of Karnataka and India. His contributions to the Indian National Congress, his involvement in key movements against British rule, and his leadership in the post-independence era mark him as a pivotal figure in India's history. This research article delves into the life, role, and contributions of S. Nijalingappa in the Indian freedom movement and beyond.

Early Life and Background

S. Nijalingappa was born on December 10, 1902, in Haluvagalu, a small village in the Bellary district of Karnataka. He hailed from a modest family, and his early life was marked by the socio-political changes occurring in India during British colonial rule. The oppressive policies of the British government and the growing nationalist sentiments greatly influenced his formative years.

Literature Review

The role and contributions of S. Nijalingappa to the Indian freedom movement and post-independence development, particularly in Karnataka and his home district of Davanagere, have been explored by several scholars and historical texts. This literature review delves into the various aspects of his contributions as documented by different sources.

Rice (1982), in his comprehensive study on the *Freedom Movement in Karnataka*, outlines the early political activities of S. Nijalingappa. Rice details Nijalingappa's involvement in the Congress sessions, his leadership in the Chitradurga District Congress Committee, and his participation in the Forest Satyagraha of 1939, which resulted in the loss of his bar license. This text provides a foundational understanding of Nijalingappa's early political engagements and his commitment to the independence movement.

Government of Karnataka (1995), in the *Karnataka State Gazetteer: Davanagere District*, provides an in-depth look at the socio-economic developments in Davanagere, highlighting Nijalingappa's contributions to the district's growth. The Gazetteer emphasizes his role in infrastructure development, particularly the Sharavathy hydroelectric project, and improvements in irrigation facilities that greatly benefited the agrarian

economy of Davanagere. It serves as an essential resource for understanding the long-term impact of his policies on the district.

Basavaraj (2001), in his work *Indian Freedom Struggle in Karnataka*, expands on Nijalingappa's political journey, including his election to the Constituent Assembly and his subsequent roles in the state and national politics. Basavaraj's analysis covers Nijalingappa's efforts to build the Congress movement in Mysore, his election to the Mysore Representative Assembly, and his presidency of the Mysore Congress Working Committee. This book is crucial for comprehending Nijalingappa's broader political influence in Karnataka.

Kaur (1985), in *Women in India's Freedom Struggle*, while focusing on the contributions of women, also acknowledges the support provided by male leaders like Nijalingappa. Kaur discusses Nijalingappa's support for social reforms, including his advocacy for women's education and empowerment, which were integral to the freedom movement and post-independence societal development.

Manor (1978), in *The Making of Modern Karnataka*, offers a detailed account of Nijalingappa's later political career, including his tenure as the Chief Minister of the linguistic state of Mysore. Manor highlights his achievements in resolving factional issues within the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee, his election to the Lok Sabha, and his pivotal role in national politics as the President of the All-India Congress Committee. This source is invaluable for understanding Nijalingappa's strategic political maneuvers and his leadership during critical periods of the Congress party's history.

Involvement in the Freedom Movement

Nijalingappa's involvement in the Indian freedom movement began in the early 1920s. He was deeply inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's principles of non-violence and civil disobedience. His active participation in the Indian National Congress and his commitment to the cause of independence marked the beginning of his political career.

Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-1922)

The Non-Cooperation Movement, led by Mahatma Gandhi, saw significant participation from Nijalingappa. He was actively involved in organizing rallies, boycotting British goods, and encouraging local self-reliance. His efforts helped to mobilize the masses in Karnataka, especially in rural areas, to join the movement against British rule.

Civil Disobedience Movement (1930-1934)

During the Civil Disobedience Movement, Nijalingappa played a crucial role in the Salt Satyagraha. He led numerous protests and demonstrations against the salt tax imposed by the British, inspiring many to join the cause. His leadership during this period was instrumental in strengthening the movement in Karnataka.

Quit India Movement (1942)

The Quit India Movement marked a pivotal moment in Nijalingappa's political career. He was one of the key organizers of the movement in Karnataka, calling for an end to British rule. Despite facing imprisonment and repression, he remained steadfast in his commitment to the cause. His efforts significantly contributed to the momentum of the movement in the region.

Post-Independence Contributions

After India gained independence in 1947, S. Nijalingappa continued to play a significant role in the political landscape of Karnataka and India. His contributions in the post-independence era were marked by his efforts to strengthen the Indian National Congress, promote development, and address social issues.

Political Leadership

Nijalingappa served as the Chief Minister of Mysore State (now Karnataka) from 1956 to 1958 and again from 1962 to 1968. During his tenure, he implemented several developmental projects, focusing on education, infrastructure, and industrialization. His leadership was instrumental in laying the foundation for the modern state of Karnataka.

Role in Indian National Congress

Nijalingappa held significant positions within the Indian National Congress, including serving as the President of the party. His tenure was marked by his efforts to maintain the unity of the party and address internal challenges. He played a crucial role in shaping the policies and direction of the Congress during a critical period in India's political history.

Social and Economic Reforms

Throughout his political career, Nijalingappa was committed to social and economic reforms. He worked towards improving the conditions of the marginalized and underprivileged sections of society. His efforts in promoting rural development, education, and healthcare were significant in addressing the socio-economic challenges of the time.

Legacy and Recognition

S. Nijalingappa's contributions to the freedom movement and his role in the political development of Karnataka and India have left a lasting legacy. He is remembered as a dedicated leader who tirelessly worked for the betterment of society. Various institutions, memorials, and awards have been established in his honor, recognizing his service to the nation.

Role in the Independence Movement

Influenced by iconic leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Rajendra Prasad, S. Nijalingappa's political journey began with his attendance at Congress sessions during his youth. His official political career took off in 1936 when he was elected President of the Chitradurga District Congress Committee. His participation in the 1939 Forest Satyagraha in Mysore, a significant act of defiance against British colonial policies, led to the loss of his bar council license, highlighting his commitment to the independence cause.

In the political landscape of the Princely State of Mysore, dominated by the anti-Congress Mysore Praja Paksha, Nijalingappa played a pivotal role in strengthening the Congress movement. Elected to the Mysore Representative Assembly from Chitradurga in 1937, he further served as President of the Mysore Congress Working Committee from 1938 to 1950, laying a strong foundation for the Congress in the region.

Contribution to Constitution Making

S. Nijalingappa was elected to the Constituent Assembly from Bombay on a Congress Party ticket. Although he did not actively participate in the proceedings of the Assembly, his election to this significant body underscored his prominence in the political landscape of the time.

Later Contributions

Nijalingappa's political influence extended beyond the independence movement into both state and national politics. As President of the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee, he was tasked with resolving factional disputes within the state. In 1952, he was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Chitradurga constituency.

Following the reorganization of states on linguistic lines in 1956, Nijalingappa resigned from Parliament to become the first Chief Minister of the newly formed Mysore state. His tenure was marked by significant achievements, including the completion of the Sharavathy hydroelectric project, the enhancement of irrigation facilities in northern Karnataka, and the settlement of Tibetan refugees in the state.

Despite political turbulence, including factional conflicts with B.D. Jatti and electoral defeats, Nijalingappa's resilience saw him reclaim the Chief Minister's post multiple times. His governance is remembered for its developmental initiatives that significantly benefited Karnataka.

National Politics and the Congress Split

In 1968, Nijalingappa ascended to the national stage as President of the All-India Congress Committee. His term was marked by intense intra-party conflict, particularly with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Divergences on economic policies and the balance of power between the party's organizational and governmental wings culminated in the 1969 Presidential election crisis.

The Congress was split over the presidential candidates: the official nominee Neelam Sanjiva Reddy, supported by Nijalingappa's Syndicate faction, and V.V. Giri, backed covertly by Prime Minister Gandhi. Giri's victory, followed by Gandhi's dismissal of Syndicate-aligned ministers, led to a dramatic showdown. Nijalingappa's expulsion of Gandhi from the Congress Working Committee underscored the deep fissures within the party, ultimately leading to the formation of Congress (O) under his leadership, which later merged with the Janata Party in 1977. Nijalingappa gradually withdrew from active politics, resigning from the Janata Party in 1983. S. Nijalingappa's political career, marked by dedication to both the independence movement and the development of Karnataka, reflects his significant contributions to India's socio-political evolution.

Contribution of S. Nijalingappa to Davanagere

S. Nijalingappa played a pivotal role in the socio-economic and political development of Davanagere, a key district in Karnataka. His contributions are multifaceted, spanning infrastructure development, political stabilization, and socio-economic advancements.

Davanagere, located in the heart of Karnataka, is a vibrant district known for its rich cultural heritage, agricultural significance, and industrial growth. Spanning an area of approximately 4,924 square kilometers, the district is characterized by its tropical savanna climate and fertile plains, making it a hub for agriculture, particularly in the cultivation of crops like rice, maize, and cotton. Historically, Davanagere has been influenced by various dynasties, including the Chalukyas and the Vijayanagara Empire, which have left a lasting impact on its cultural landscape.

The city of Davanagere is often referred to as the "Manchester of Karnataka" due to its thriving textile industry, which played a crucial role during the British colonial period. In addition to its economic contributions, the district is also known for its educational institutions and vibrant cultural festivals, reflecting the dynamic spirit of its people. With ongoing developments in infrastructure, healthcare, and education, Davanagere continues to evolve as a key player in the socio-economic landscape of Karnataka.

Infrastructure Development

One of the most significant contributions of Nijalingappa to Davanagere was in the realm of infrastructure. During his tenure as the Chief Minister of Karnataka, he prioritized the development of irrigation projects, which were crucial for an agrarian economy Davanagere. The completion of the Sharavathy hydroelectric project not only provided much-needed electricity to the region but also facilitated the growth of industries, thereby boosting the local economy.

Agricultural Advancements

Nijalingappa's efforts in improving irrigation facilities significantly benefited the agricultural sector in Davanagere. By ensuring adequate water supply for farming, he helped in increasing agricultural productivity and thus improving the livelihoods of many farmers in the district. His initiatives in promoting modern farming techniques and supporting cooperative movements were instrumental in transforming Davanagere into an agriculturally prosperous district.

Political Leadership and Stability

As a prominent leader from the Chitradurga district, which includes Davanagere, Nijalingappa's political leadership brought stability and coherence to the region. His role as the President of the Chitradurga District Congress Committee and later as the Chief Minister helped in addressing local issues effectively and in implementing policies that were beneficial for the district's development.

Educational and Social Initiatives

Nijalingappa also placed a strong emphasis on education and social welfare. He supported the establishment of schools and colleges in Davanagere, which played a crucial role in improving literacy rates and educational standards. Furthermore, his commitment to social justice and equality was evident in his policies aimed at uplifting marginalized communities and ensuring their participation in the socio-economic progress of the district.

S. Nijalingappa, during his tenure as Chief Minister of Karnataka, inaugurated several major projects in Davanagere that contributed to the district's development. Some of the significant projects include:

1. **Sharavathy Hydroelectric Project:** This was one of the key projects initiated under his leadership, which aimed to improve the power supply in the region, benefiting both agriculture and industry.
2. **Irrigation Projects:** Nijalingappa emphasized improving irrigation facilities, particularly for northern Karnataka. Projects aimed at enhancing irrigation in the Davanagere district were implemented, ensuring better water supply for agriculture.
3. **Rural Development Initiatives:** He launched various rural development schemes to promote agriculture and improve living standards in rural areas. This included infrastructure development like roads and schools.
4. **Educational Institutions:** Under his government, several educational institutions were established in Davanagere, aiming to enhance educational opportunities for the local population.
5. **Cooperative Movement Support:** Nijalingappa supported the cooperative movement, leading to the establishment of cooperative societies in agriculture and dairy farming, which played a crucial role in the economic upliftment of farmers in Davanagere.

These projects and initiatives reflect Nijalingappa's commitment to the socio-economic development of Davanagere during his time in office.

Legacy and Impact

The long-term impact of Nijalingappa's contributions is still evident in Davanagere's development trajectory. His vision for a self-reliant and prosperous district laid the groundwork for various developmental initiatives that followed. The infrastructural and agricultural advancements initiated under his leadership have continued to benefit the region, making Davanagere one of the key districts in Karnataka's growth story.

Conclusion

S. Nijalingappa's life and legacy serve as a powerful reminder of the sacrifices and dedication of the leaders who fought for India's independence and worked towards its development. His contributions to the Indian freedom movement, his leadership in the Indian National Congress, and his efforts in social and economic reforms have left an indelible mark on India's history. By examining his life and contributions, we gain a deeper understanding of the pivotal role he played in shaping the political and social landscape of Karnataka and India.

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