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Original Article

Koppal District in the Hyderabad-Karnataka Liberation Movement: A Historical Study of Freedom Fighter's Contributions

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Abstract

The liberation of Hyderabad-Karnataka from the rule of the Nizam in September 1948 constitutes an important but comparatively underexplored chapter in the history of India's integration after independence. While India became independent on 15 August 1947, the territories of the erstwhile Hyderabad State, including the region that later became Koppal district, remained under the authority of the Nizam until September 1948. Consequently, the political struggle in this region acquired a distinctive character: it was simultaneously a movement against autocratic princely rule, a struggle for responsible government, and a movement for the integration of Hyderabad State with the Indian Union. Koppal occupied an important geographical and strategic position within this struggle because several of its villages and activists were connected with the border-camp network operating against the Nizam's administration and Razakar forces. This article examines the historical background of the Hyderabad-Karnataka liberation movement with particular reference to Koppal district. It analyses the emergence of nationalist consciousness, the role of border camps, the participation of local leaders and youth, the activities associated with the Mundargi camp, the raid on the Kuknoor police station in December 1947, the movement's organisational structure, popular participation, repression, and the eventual significance of the Indian military intervention of September 1948. Particular attention is given to personalities and activists from the Koppal-Yelburga-Kuknoor region who participated in the wider border movement. The study argues that Koppal's contribution should be understood not as an isolated local episode but as part of a wider network of political mobilisation, underground activity, border resistance and popular participation that contributed to the integration of Hyderabad State into the Indian Union.

Keywords: *Koppal, Hyderabad-Karnataka, Hyderabad Liberation Movement, Nizam, Razakars, Freedom Fighters, Mundargi Camp, Kuknoor, Yelburga, Border Movement, Integration.*

Introduction

The history of India's independence cannot be fully understood merely through the transfer of power from British colonial rule to an independent national government on 15 August 1947. The political integration of the princely states constituted another major historical process through which the territorial and political unity of India was consolidated. Among the princely states, Hyderabad occupied a distinctive position because the Nizam sought to retain the state's separate political status after the termination of British paramountcy.The Hyderabad State encompassed a large multilingual and culturally diverse territory. Its Kannada-speaking areas included the region historically referred to as Hyderabad-Karnataka. The present-day Koppal district formed part of the erstwhile Hyderabad administrative region through the Raichur district. The Government of Koppal records that the region remained under the Nizam even after India's independence and that its people continued their struggle until Hyderabad-Karnataka was liberated from Nizam's rule in September 1948.The experience of Koppal is particularly significant because the region became connected with the network of border camps established outside the Nizam's territory. These camps served as centres of political mobilisation, refugee assistance, intelligence, communication, training and, in some cases, armed resistance. Scholarly research on the border movement identifies Mundargi and several associated camps as important centres of resistance, with activists from areas around Yelburga and Koppal participating in their activities.The present study therefore seeks to place Koppal within the larger historical narrative of the Hyderabad-Karnataka liberation movement.

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Rather than treating the liberation as solely the result of the final military intervention, the study emphasises the preceding popular and nationalist mobilisation that created political pressure and challenged the authority of the Nizam at the local level.

Objectives of the Study

The study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the historical and political background of the Hyderabad-Karnataka liberation movement.
2. To analyse the political conditions prevailing in the Koppal region under the Nizam's administration.
3. To examine the role of Koppal-area freedom fighters in the border-camp movement.
4. To analyse the significance of the Mundargi camp and its connections with activists from Koppal and Yelburga.
5. To assess the contribution of local resistance and popular participation to the liberation and integration of Hyderabad-Karnataka.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a historical and analytical methodology based primarily on secondary sources. Relevant books, government records, district gazetteers, scholarly articles, newspapers, and historical documents are examined to understand Koppal District's role in the Hyderabad-Karnataka Liberation Movement during 1947–48. The collected information is critically analysed to assess the contributions of local freedom fighters, border camps, and communities to the liberation struggle.

Review of Literature

K. M. Munshi – The End of an Era: Hyderabad Memoirs Munshi's work provides a significant account of the political situation in Hyderabad during the final years of Nizam's rule. It discusses the Nizam's political position, the growing demand for integration with India, the activities of nationalist forces, and the circumstances that eventually led to Hyderabad's integration. The work provides a broader political framework for understanding the conditions within which the Hyderabad-Karnataka liberation movement developed.

P. Nagabhushana Goud – Border Movement in Hyderabad-Karnataka for Liberation and Integration (1947–48) Goud's study is particularly relevant to the present research because it focuses on the border movement in Hyderabad-Karnataka. It examines the establishment and functioning of border camps, especially the Mundargi Camp, and documents the participation of local activists in resistance activities. The study provides valuable references to activists connected with Koppal, Yelburga and surrounding areas, as well as the Kuknoor police-station episode. It therefore offers an important basis for examining Koppal's regional contribution to the liberation movement.

Government of Koppal District – Official Historical Records The official history of Koppal provides important information about the district's historical and political background under the Nizam. It records that the region remained under Nizam's administration even after India's independence on 15 August 1947 and that the struggle continued until the liberation of Hyderabad-Karnataka in September 1948. These records help establish the broader historical context of Koppal's liberation and provide a foundation for examining the participation of local freedom fighters and communities.

Hyderabad State and the Political Context of 1947

Hyderabad and the Question of Integration : The independence of India on 15 August 1947 created a new political situation for the princely states. The Nizam of Hyderabad, Mir Osman Ali Khan, sought to maintain Hyderabad's separate political status rather than immediately joining the Indian Union. This created a prolonged political crisis between Hyderabad and the Government of India. The issue of Hyderabad's integration subsequently became closely connected with the demand for political rights and responsible government within the state.

Rise of Political and Nationalist Movements : During 1947, political mobilisation increased within Hyderabad State. The Hyderabad State Congress demanded responsible government and greater participation of the people in administration. Nationalist activists in the Kannada-speaking areas also became increasingly involved in the struggle. Political mobilisation gradually developed into organised resistance in several border regions, providing an important foundation for the later liberation movement.

Razakars and Increasing Political Tensions : The growing activities of the Razakars, associated with the Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen, intensified the political crisis in Hyderabad. Their activities and the government's response contributed to insecurity and confrontation in several parts of the state. In the Hyderabad-Karnataka region, these developments encouraged the formation of resistance networks and border camps. The Koppal region subsequently became connected with such activities, particularly through the Mundargi border camp and the resistance around Kuknoor and Yelburga.

Koppal under the Nizam's Administration

Administrative and Political Conditions : Before the formation of the present Koppal district, the Koppal region was administratively associated with the Raichur district of the erstwhile Hyderabad State under the Nizam. The administration was characterised by the dominance of the princely government and limited opportunities for popular political participation. After Indian independence in August 1947, the region continued to remain under Nizam's authority, creating a distinct political situation for the people of Koppal.

Social and Economic Conditions : The people of the Koppal region experienced the broader social and economic conditions prevailing in Hyderabad State. Rural communities depended largely on agriculture and traditional occupations, while administrative authority remained concentrated within the state structure. The political uncertainty after 1947 further affected everyday life, particularly in areas where resistance activities and tensions between nationalist workers and supporters of the Nizam increased.

Growth of Nationalist Consciousness : The continuation of Nizam's rule after India's independence contributed to the growth of nationalist consciousness in the Koppal region. Local activists, Congress workers and sections of the population became associated with the wider

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Hyderabad-Karnataka liberation movement. Koppal, Yelburga and Kuknoor subsequently became connected with border resistance networks, including the Mundargi Camp. This mobilisation eventually contributed to the wider struggle that culminated in the liberation of Hyderabad-Karnataka in September 1948.

Emergence of the Liberation Movement in Koppal

Growth of Nationalist Consciousness : The liberation movement in the Koppal region emerged within the wider political awakening of Hyderabad-Karnataka. After India attained independence on 15 August 1947, the Koppal region continued under Nizam's administration. This situation encouraged nationalist activists, Congress workers and local leaders to mobilise people against the continuation of Nizam's rule and to demand political freedom and integration with India.

Organisation of Local Resistance : As political tensions increased, resistance gradually became more organised. Local activists established communication networks and maintained contacts with nationalist organisations operating across the Hyderabad border. Koppal, Yelburga and Kuknoor became associated with this wider network. Volunteers provided information, shelter, food and other forms of support to activists involved in the movement.

Development of Border-Camp Activities : The establishment of border camps, particularly the Mundargi Camp, gave greater organisational strength to the liberation movement. Activists from the Koppal-Yelburga region participated in the camp's activities, while some became involved in command, intelligence and logistical functions. The Kuknoor police-station raid of 23 December 1947 represents an important episode in the development of organised resistance in the region. These activities contributed to the broader struggle that culminated in the liberation of Hyderabad-Karnataka in September 1948.

The Mundargi Camp and Koppal

The Mundargi Camp emerged as a significant centre of the Hyderabad-Karnataka border movement during 1947–48 under the leadership of Alavandi Shivamurthy Swamy. It played an important role in organising volunteers, communication, intelligence, training, and resistance activities against the Nizam's administration. The Koppal region was closely connected with the camp through freedom fighters and activists such as Dambal Somappa of Koppal, Panchakshri Hiremath of Bisanalli, Prabhuraj Patil of Yelburga, and Shankrappa Yerasi of Bannikoppa, who are documented in accounts of the border movement. The strategic location of Koppal, Yelburga and Kuknoor facilitated communication, mobilisation and logistical support for the resistance. The Kuknoor police-station raid of 23 December 1947 further illustrates the operational connection between the Koppal region and the Mundargi network. Thus, the Mundargi Camp served as an important organisational link through which Koppal-area freedom fighters contributed to the wider struggle for the liberation and integration of Hyderabad-Karnataka.

Kappatgudda and the Preservation of Arms

Kappatgudda as a Strategic Centre: Kappatgudda occupied an important place in the network of the Hyderabad-Karnataka Liberation Movement. Its relatively difficult and secluded terrain offered the freedom fighters a suitable environment for maintaining secrecy, organising communication, and protecting movement-related resources. The geographical setting therefore became an important supporting factor in the activities of the border resistance.

Preservation of Arms: The events surrounding the Kuknoor Police-Station Raid of 23 December 1947 demonstrate the importance of arms and logistical resources to the resistance movement. Accounts of the border movement associate the subsequent movement and safeguarding of weapons with the Kappatgudda area. The preservation of these arms was significant because it prevented the immediate recovery of the weapons by the Nizam's authorities and helped sustain the resistance network.

Contribution of Freedom Fighters: The freedom fighters' contribution extended beyond direct participation in raids and confrontations. They were involved in transporting resources, maintaining secrecy, establishing communication, identifying safe locations, and protecting fellow activists. Such activities required discipline, coordination, and considerable personal risk, demonstrating the wider organisational character of the liberation movement.

Local Cooperation and Resistance Network: The protection of arms could not have been undertaken by individual activists alone. It depended upon networks of local supporters who provided shelter, information, transportation, and other forms of assistance. This cooperation connected villages and border camps and enabled the movement to continue despite surveillance and repression by the Nizam administration.

Link with the Mundargi Camp: Kappatgudda was associated with the broader activities of the Mundargi border camp, which served as an important centre of resistance. The safeguarding of arms and other resources contributed to the camp's organisational capacity and strengthened the wider network of activists operating in the Koppal-Yelburga region.

Historical Significance: The Kappatgudda episode reveals that the Hyderabad-Karnataka Liberation Movement was sustained not only through public political mobilisation but also through organisation, logistics, communication, secrecy, and local cooperation. The contribution of freedom fighters in protecting resources therefore forms an important part of the history of Koppal's participation in the liberation struggle.Research note: The precise details of who transported or concealed particular weapons should be attributed to specific archival or oral-history sources in the final article rather than presented as established fact without documentation.

Kappatgudda and the Contributions of Leaders

Alavandi Shivamurthy Swamy – Leadership of the Mundargi Camp: Alavandi Shivamurthy Swamy provided important leadership to the Mundargi border camp. Under his guidance, volunteers were organised, resistance activities were coordinated, and links were maintained with activists in neighbouring areas. His leadership helped transform scattered local resistance into a more organised movement.

Dambal Somappa – Organisational Contribution: Dambal Somappa of Koppal was associated with the organisational structure of the Mundargi Camp. His contribution represents the involvement of Koppal-based leadership in planning, coordination and mobilisation. His association demonstrates that the Koppal region was

connected to the wider border movement at an organisational level.

Prabhuraj Patil – Role in Command: Prabhuraj Patil of Yelburga is identified in accounts of the border movement as a commander. His role illustrates the participation of leaders from the Koppal region in directing resistance activities and coordinating volunteers during the struggle against the Nizam administration.

Panchakshri Hiremath – Protection and Logistics: Panchakshri Hiremath of Bisanalli was associated with the Mundargi network and is linked with activities concerning the safeguarding of arms following the Kuknoor Police-Station Raid. His contribution highlights the importance of local leadership in protecting resources and maintaining the continuity of the resistance movement.

Collective Leadership and Local Mobilisation: The contributions of these leaders demonstrate that the liberation movement in the Koppal region depended upon collective leadership rather than the efforts of a single individual. Through organisation, mobilisation, communication, logistics, protection of resources and coordination with border camps, local leaders helped connect village-level resistance with the broader Hyderabad-Karnataka liberation struggle.

Historical Significance: The leadership provided by activists from Koppal and surrounding areas demonstrates the regional character of the liberation movement. Their activities helped sustain resistance during the period between Indian independence in August 1947 and the integration of Hyderabad State in September 1948, making their contributions an important part of Koppal's political and historical legacy.

Discussion and Analysis

The Koppal region occupied an important place in the Hyderabad-Karnataka Liberation Movement through the combined efforts of local leaders, freedom fighters, border camps, and supportive communities. The leadership of Alavandi Shivamurthy Swamy, along with the participation of Dambal Somappa, Prabhuraj Patil and Panchakshri Hiremath, reflects the organised nature of the resistance network associated with the Mundargi Camp. The Kuknoor Police-Station Raid and the subsequent preservation of arms around Kappatgudda indicate the importance of coordination, secrecy, logistics, and local geographical knowledge in sustaining resistance activities. The movement was therefore not limited to prominent political leaders; ordinary villagers and local activists also contributed through communication, shelter, transportation, intelligence, and protection of resources. From a historical perspective, Koppal demonstrates how local leadership and community participation were connected with the wider regional struggle for the liberation and integration of Hyderabad State. Thus, a district-level examination of Koppal provides a deeper understanding of the diverse actors, networks, and forms of resistance that shaped the Hyderabad-Karnataka Liberation Movement during 1947–48.

Findings and Recommendations

1. Koppal played an important role in the Hyderabad-Karnataka Liberation Movement.
2. Local freedom fighters made significant contributions to organisation, mobilisation, and resistance.
3. The Mundargi Camp served as an important centre for coordinating regional resistance activities.
4. The Kuknoor raid and Kappatgudda episode reveal the strategic and logistical dimensions of the struggle.
5. Local communities provided essential support through shelter, information, transportation, and cooperation.

Recommendations

1. Historical records concerning Koppal's liberation movement should be systematically preserved.
2. The contributions of all identified local freedom fighters should be comprehensively documented.
3. Oral testimonies of participants, families, and local historians should be collected and preserved.
4. Important sites associated with the liberation movement should be identified, protected, and developed as historical heritage.
5. More scholarly studies should examine village-level resistance and the contributions of lesser-known freedom fighters.

Conclusion

The Hyderabad-Karnataka Liberation Movement was a significant phase in the struggle for political integration and freedom from the Nizam's rule. The Koppal region made an important contribution through the participation of local leaders, freedom fighters, border camps, and supportive communities. The activities associated with the Mundargi Camp, the Kuknoor Police-Station Raid, and Kappatgudda demonstrate the organisational, strategic, and logistical dimensions of the local struggle. Leaders and activists contributed not only through direct resistance but also through mobilisation, communication, protection of resources, and coordination among different centres of the movement. The participation of local communities further strengthened the resistance and sustained the movement during a difficult period. Therefore, the history of Koppal provides an important district-level perspective on the wider Hyderabad-Karnataka Liberation Movement and highlights the need to recognise and preserve the contributions of both prominent and lesser-known freedom fighters.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of thesis paper.

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