

The Quit India Movement in Bombay Karnataka: Role of Undivided Dharwad District Bharateshagouda S. Shiriyappagoudar

Associate Professor of History and Archaeology, Government First
Grade College, Kundagol, Dharwad.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17408478>

ABSTRACT:

The Quit India Movement was a Movement launched at the Bombay Session of the All India Committee by Mahatma Gandhi on 8th August 1942, during Second World War, demanding an end to British Rule in India. After Britain failed to secure Indian support for the British War effort with the Cripps Mission, M K Gandhi made a call to “Do or Die” in his Quit India Movement on 8th August 1942 at the Gowaliya Tank Maidan.(Ground) Viceroy Lithlithgow described the movement as “by the most serious rebellion since 1857” The Quit India Movement in Bombay Karnataka (Now Kitturu Karnataka) was marked by widespread protest, attacks on Government property like post offices and railway stations and the formation of a parallel government in Dharwad and Belagavi Districts. Initiated on in August the Movement was a direct result of the failure of the Cripps Mission and future the “Do or Die” decision given by Mahatma Gandhi in Bombay. The local response included the destruction of Government property, and despite harsh British suppression, the Movement showcased immense local commitment to achieving Independence.

KEYWORDS:

Quit India, Gowaliya Tank Maidan, Pancha Committee, Underground Agitation, Underworld, Martyrs.

.....

Introduction:

During the national freedom movement Dharwad district was remarkable and played an important role. It has been rise to many freedom fighters, Journalists, Social workers, Intellectuals and others participated in early nationalist movements such as Quit India Movement of 1942. In this time important leaders were involved such as Mailara Mahadevappa, Andanappa Doddameti, Sardar Veeranagouda Patil and his wife Nagamma Patil, Venkatesh Magadi, Paramanna Hosmani, Siddappa Hosamni, Adiveppa Hasabi, Rajashekarappa Hoskeri, Venkanagouda Shiriyappagoudar,

Gadagayya Honnapurmath, Timmanagouda Menasinahal, Narasimharao Tato Dabade, Venkaraddi Hooli and his brother Govindaraddy Hooli, Kariyappa Yerershime and many others prominent persons were joined in Quit India Movement.

Quit India Movement Begins in Dharwad District

Before the movement began, the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee met in Dharwad on 4th August 1942. Following Gandhi's "Do or Die" call at Bombay on 8th August, arrests began immediately across India. Leaders such as Dr. N. S. Hardikar, Sayyad Bandar, R. V. Kargudari, and Veeraktamath were detained in Hubballi. Despite police opposition, students held processions singing patriotic songs. Public meetings and arrests spread across Dharwad, Hubballi, Gadag, and Shirahatti between 9th and 12th August.

By 15th August, news of Mahadev Desai's death in detention enraged the public. A massive procession in Hubballi led to police firing, killing student Narayan Doni and injuring Ishwar Thakur. Agitations followed in Dharwad, Gadag, Haveri, Hirekerur, and other towns between 15th and 17th August. The British used severe measures to crush protests, but Gandhi's call "Do or Die"—deepened public resolve.

For two years, Dharwad and Belagavi districts witnessed riots and underground activities, later described by Jayaprakash Narayan as the "Karnataka pattern" of resistance. Arrests of top leaders like G. V. Halikeri, Andanappa Doddameti, and Veeranagouda Patil soon followed. R. R. Diwakar, escaping arrest, coordinated the underground work. The Pancha Committee, formed under his leadership with Channabasappa Ambali, D. P. Karmarkar, R. S. Hukkerikar, and Srinivas Mallya, organized resistance across Karnataka.

Printing presses in Bombay and Kundapur circulated cyclostyled bulletins, and local leaders such as Bindumadhav Burli, Shankar Kurtakoti, and Narasimha Dabade maintained links between activists. The editor of Samyukta Karnataka also aided coordination and financial support. Shiranga Kamat and Govindaraddy Hooli managed underground operations in northern Dharwad, while Venkatesh Magadi, Venkanagouda Shiriyappagoudar, and others mobilized rural units in Navalgund, Nargund, and Konnur. Leaders like Kariyappa Yareshime, Timmanagouda Menasinahal, and Mailar Mahadevappa led local cells in Hirekerur, Rane-

bennur, and Haveri.

Underground and Mass Activities

The resistance included:

1. Sabotage of communications and railways
2. Burning of government records, post offices, and police stations
3. Boycotting schools and colleges
4. Public protests and strikes

The underground volunteers avoided vehicles, traveling on foot through forests and fields, often without food or medical aid. British authorities placed bounties of ₹1000–₹5000 for their capture. Schools and colleges in Dharwad, Hubballi, Gadag, and Haveri became hubs of agitation. Teachers like K. G. Joshi and Rudrappa Pattar went underground to spread the movement. Students of Karnataka College and High School joined in large numbers, leading processions, hoisting flags, and facing arrests.

On 25th September 1942, the Karnataka College office was burnt. Many students, including women, were jailed. Vimala Gulwadi and teacher Shinolikar were imprisoned for hoisting the tricolour on the district court building. By October, schools reopened, but student unrest continued. Similar strikes and arrests occurred across Hubballi, Gadag, Haveri, and Shiggaon.

On 15th September 1942, several railway stations, including Amargol, Hebasur, and Byadagi, were set ablaze as part of coordinated action. Secret police reports confirmed large-scale sabotage in Dharwad and Belagavi districts, including seizure of mailbags and attacks on public buildings. Venkatesh Magadi's group burned railway stations and bungalows and symbolically declared independence at Morab, earning the village the name "Thuggu Moraba."

From mid-September to December 1942, postal lines were cut, police attacked, and public works offices burned. Around 130 villagers from Hirekerur were arrested. White soldiers were deployed to suppress rural uprisings. Between November and December, barbed wire fences and telegraph poles were damaged, and weapons were seized from local authorities.

By early 1943, agitators destroyed revenue ledgers and panchayat

offices in dozens of villages, including Amminabhavi, Gudisagar, Kunnur, Shelavadi, and Byahatti. Revenue records were burnt to hinder tax collection. Gandhi, hearing reports of violence, began a fast in Poona prison on 10th February 1943, leading to mass prayers across Dharwad, Gadag, and Haveri for his recovery.

Martyrs

Despite access to arms, the agitators avoided bloodshed. Kariyappa Yareshime was gravely injured while handling grenades at Sunakal–Bidari in January 1943, resulting in the amputation of his hand. Timmanagouda Menasinahal died after an accidental explosion during an underground operation at Kuppelur.

The most notable martyr was Mailar Mahadevappa, who, along with Tirakappa Madiwalar and Veerappa Kamatar, was shot dead by police on 1st April 1943 at Hosaritti while attempting to seize government funds. Mahadevappa forbade his followers from returning fire and embraced martyrdom.

Hundreds were arrested throughout Dharwad. To force surrenders, the British detained family members of underground workers—parents, wives, and even children. The families of Mailar Mahadevappa, Timmanagouda Menasinahal, Mohammed Gouse, and Goresab Nadaf were imprisoned.

Following Gandhi’s instructions, the Action Committee ordered the suspension of underground activities. On 26th January 1944, the tricolour was again hoisted at Karnatak College, Dharwad. Women from Tirlapur and Byalihal who participated were arrested. Similar arrests occurred in Ron and other places.

By mid-1944, leading underground figures, including R. R. Diwakar and Channabasappa Ambali, surrendered. Over 1,000 people from Dharwad were imprisoned in Hindalga and Vishapur jails; several perished due to disease and harsh conditions.

The movement in Dharwad and Belagavi was second only to Bombay in intensity. The “Karnataka pattern” of organized underground activity between 1942 and 1943 stood as a model of disciplined and regionally coordinated resistance. R. R. Diwakar, associated with both the Aruna Asaf Ali and Sucheta Kripalani factions of the All India Congress Committee, remained active until his arrest. Many leaders continued to lan-

guish in prison until 1945.

Conclusion and Findings

The Quit India Movement in Dharwad district, though brutally suppressed, ignited powerful nationalist sentiment and demonstrated that British rule had lost legitimacy. By 1944, widespread uprisings across rural areas, mass arrests, and the resilience of underground networks reflected deep-rooted patriotism.

The British administration responded with violence—deploying European troops, conducting police firings, and burning villages. Thousands were arrested, including leaders like R. R. Diwakar and D. P. Karmarkar. In Dharwad alone, 124 residents of Morab and Koganur were detained. The government’s harsh tactics—torture, collective punishments, and imprisonment of families—could not break the spirit of resistance.

Ultimately, the Dharwad phase of the Quit India Movement revealed Karnataka’s unique contribution to India’s independence struggle. The courage and sacrifice of its leaders and common people proved that freedom could not be withheld for long. When India finally achieved independence on 15th August 1947, the martyrs and freedom fighters of Dharwad, Belagavi, and surrounding districts stood vindicated in history.

References:

1. Bipin Chanra, Indian National Movement, The Long Term Dynamics, Vikas Publishing House, Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1996,
2. B.N.Datar, Shape of the United Karnataka, in Karnataka Darshana, R.S.Hukkerikar, Bombay, 1955.
3. Collected Records from Bombay Govt. Secret Abstract of police department. Bombay 1943.
4. D.P.Karamakar, Nationalism in Karnataka, in Karnataka Darshan, R.S.Hukkerikar Bombay, 1955.
5. G.S.Halappa Freedom Movement, in Karnataka Vol.-II Government of Mysore, Publication, 1964
6. K.R.Basavaraj, History and Culture of Karnataka, Chalukya Publication, Dharwad, 1984.

7. Karnataka State Gazetteer, Dharwad District, (Kannada) Parishkrit, Govt. of Karnataka Publication, Bangalore, 1995.
8. Karnataka State Gazetteer, Dharwad District, Kannada, Parishkrit, Govt. of Karnataka Publication, Bangalore, 1984.
9. N.P.Shankarnarayan Rao., Swatantrya Gangeya Savira Toregalu Navakarnataka Prakashan Bangalore,1991
10. Raghuvamsi, V.P.S., Indian Nationalism Movement and Thought, L.N., Educational Publisher, Agra, Edition- II, 1959.
11. Samayukta Karnataka Kannada Daily Newspaper collected Report of 12th January 1942.
12. Shiriyappagoudar B S., Freedom Movement in NaragundaTaluka: A Study, Unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation-2004, Karnatak University, Dharwad,
13. Suryanath Kamat, (Ed). SwatantryaSangramadaSmritigalu (Kannada) Vol.-I Geeta Book House Publication Mysore, 1947.
14. Sundarraj, H.R. "Chalejav Chaluvaahliyalli Karnatakada Patra", Samyukta Karnataka Kannada Daily Hbuli, 9-8-1987.
15. Ramaswamy, S. R., Swatrayodayada Mailugallu, Rashthrothan Sahitya Publication. Bangalore, 1997.

Funding:

This study was not funded by any grant.

Conflict of interest:

The Authors have no conflict of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.

About the License:

© The Authors 2024. The text of this article is open access and licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.