

## A Forgotten Freedom fighter Hanumantha Rao Kaujalgi Suryakanth Kokatanur

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### ABSTRACT:

India's long struggle for independence was shaped by countless patriots—both famous and unsung—who dedicated their lives to the nation's freedom. Among these lesser-known heroes was Hanumantha Rao Kaujalgi, a devoted leader from Karnataka inspired by Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi. He actively participated in the Swadeshi, Non-Cooperation, and Salt Satyagrahaa movements, promoting khadi and serving the poor, especially the depressed classes and weavers of North Karnataka. His relief work during the Bijapur drought and his efforts to mobilize people against the princely states of Mudhol, Jamkhandi, and Ramdurg were remarkable. As founder of the Praja Paratinidhi Sabha and participant in the Gandhi Cap incident, Kaujalgi demonstrated courage, organization, and literary skill—earning admiration from Gandhiji himself. His life exemplified selfless service and the spirit of true patriotism.

### KEYWORDS:

Swadeshi, Salt Satyagrahaa, Charaka, Drought, Non-Cooperation, Depressed, Upliftment

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### Introduction:

Many patriots devoted their lives to India's freedom, inspired by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose, Vallabhbhai Patel, Tilak, and others. Among the lesser-known heroes was Hanumantha Rao Kaujalgi, a lawyer, freedom fighter, and ardent follower of Tilak and Gandhi. He played an active role in the Swadeshi, Non-Cooperation, Salt Satyagrahaa, and Quit India movements, promoting khadi and national unity across North Karnataka. Committed to social upliftment, he worked for drought relief and the welfare of the depressed classes, establishing khadi centres and spreading the Swadeshi message from village to village. Fearless against both British and princely rulers, he continued his struggle through writings and activism. Deeply admired for his dedication, Kaujalgi lived and died in service to the motherland, embodying the spirit of

true patriotism.

### **Early Life and education:**

He was born on 30th December, 1891, at Mudhol, in Bagalkot district of Karnataka. Shripatirao and Yamunabai were his parents. It is said that, his mother was follower of God, Hanuman of Mudhol, he was named after Hanuman. During his childhood, he was physically weak and one Maratha teacher Narayana, use to take Hanumantha on is shoulder to the school. This teacher was very kind towards Hanumantha. He got his primary education in Mudhol in Marathi language. Baburao Bhakshi, Sukharan Modak, Basappa Patil were his close aides and in 1906, he went to Bijapur for high school education. He was graduated from Ferguson College, Poona and completed his LLB degree from Government Law College, Bombay. He started practicing law in 1916.

### **Early works:**

From childhood, Hanumantha Rao Kaujalgi was deeply inspired by national leaders and devoted to the Swadeshi movement. At just sixteen, he wrote Marathi poems promoting Swadeshi, sung during Prabhatperis in Mudhol with Ramachari Katti. While studying in Poona, he came under the influence of Tilak and other nationalists, actively joining anti-British activities in Poona and Bombay. Along with friends like V.H. Masurkar and Bhakshi Babu, he celebrated Shivaji Jayanti despite the British ban, leading to their expulsion from Ferguson College hostel. Undeterred, they formed the “Friends Club” to continue their nationalist efforts. Though he suffered from tuberculosis during this time, timely help from Malojirao Ghorpade saved his life—allowing him to continue his patriotic mission.

### **Swadeshi Movement:**

During the height of the Swadeshi Movement, Mudhol became a hub of nationalist activity led by young patriots like Hanumantha Rao Kaujalgi and his associates—Ramacharya Katti, Taty Tasagonkar, and Anantha Rao Belavadi. They launched a handwritten paper Vagbana, organized Prabhat Bheris, collected Paisa and Mushti Funds, and formed youth associations to promote Swadeshi ideals. Hanumantha Rao wrote inspiring Marathi poems urging people to boycott foreign goods. In 1906, during Deepavali, his group pasted notices across Mudhol urging citizens to reject imported items like Johnson Sugar and foreign bangles, a movement that soon spread to nearby towns. To encourage self-reliance, he

began producing local substitutes—brushes, fans, chalk buttons, and other items—with the help of craftsman Gangaram Panter. Their efforts popularized Swadeshi products, replacing foreign goods and strengthening the spirit of economic independence.

### **Incident of bombing:**

During the Swadeshi Movement, Hanumantha Rao Kaujalgi and his associates turned to revolutionary activities after Tilak's arrest, believing armed resistance was necessary. In Mudhol, Hanumantha Rao, Gangaram Painter, Shivappa Patil, and others secretly prepared bombs using stolen gunpowder from a local factory contractor. Their first test explosion near the Social Club caused panic, but thanks to a friend's quick intervention, Hanumantha Rao escaped suspicion, though Shivappa Patil lost a finger. Encouraged, they attempted another bombing to seize mail from a postal runner, but it failed to detonate. The incident alarmed the Mudhol and Jamkhandi states, forcing Hanumantha Rao and his brother into brief exile in Bijapur. Suspecting the Shivaji Club's involvement, the ruler of Mudhol banned both the club and Ganesh Festival celebrations in 1910, marking an end to this phase of radical activism.

### **Non-Co-operation Movement**

On August 1, 1920, the day Bal Gangadhar Tilak passed away, Mahatma Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement, which quickly spread across India, including Karnataka. Inspired by the Nagpur Congress session, Hanumantha Rao Kaujalgi of Bijapur district embraced Gandhi's call to boycott British institutions. After learning of the movement's momentum, he publicly renounced his legal practice at a meeting in Bagalkot and dedicated himself fully to the cause. Traveling frequently to Belgaum, he helped organize local non-cooperation activities and personally gave up tea and coffee as symbols of foreign influence, exemplifying total commitment to national self-reliance.

### **Gandhi cap incident:**

During the Non-Cooperation Movement, Hanumantha Rao Kaujalgi actively opposed colonial policies and mobilized the masses. The British, intolerant of his activities, charged him under Section 108 for inciting the public. When brought before District Magistrate Handerson, Rao wore a Gandhi cap, angering the magistrate, who repeatedly fined him ₹200 and demanded he remove it. Rao persisted, justifying the cap,

and the case was eventually transferred under Section 268 to Hiremut's bench.

Advocate Panduranga Rao Desai defended him, and the incident gained widespread attention in newspapers like Karnataka Vaibhava and Lokasangraha, which praised Rao's patriotism and criticized Handerson. Gandhiji, in Young India, highlighted the magistrate's high-handedness and commended Rao's polite defiance. The case was later moved to Sholapur, where Rao was prepared to face imprisonment but was released after his uncle Govinda Rao Belagal intervened. Rao's Gandhi cap episode became historic, inspiring leaders like Lala Lajpat Rai to adopt the cap as a symbol of resistance.

### **Khadi Prachar:**

As I have already told, Kaujalagi Hanumantha Rao engaged in the propagation of Khadi in the company of Praneshacharya and travelled in Amingad, Ilkal, Kamatagi, Gudur etc. and created awareness among the public. All India Congress session was held at Belgaum in 1924. Gandhiji was the chairman of the session. During the session, propagation became the main objective as a part of Swadeshi movement. Exhibition was held there under the leadership of Hanumantha Rao. That as a part of village industry eradicates problems poor. He convinced the people of villages to use charaka and produce Khadi as part of rural employment. After the formation of the All-India Khadi Board in 1925, the charkha gained great popularity in Karnataka. Khadi work was rendered easier by the fact that north Karnataka is a great cotton-growing region. Hanumantha Rao Kaujalgi was elected as Secretary of the Khadi Association set up at Belgaum in 1926. The drought condition Bijapur district he took active role. Assistant the people to produce Khadi find other village best activities eradicate vulnerable conditions draught. In 1925 Khadi Kendra at Galagali was started. Later he was also nominated as a secretary Karnataka Charaka Sangh. During this period in Karnataka was not produced large scale. This problem started Khadi centres at Hosakoti, Hunagunda Savadatti, Gurl hosur. He was very much fond of Khadi reflex his patriotism, for this he was called as Khadar Hanumantharaya.

### **Solving of weavers Problem:**

About August 1941 the weavers of Ilkal had faced many problems. Due heavy production cost, the weavers suffered lot. The weavers of the

Ilkal met the Mamlatdar of the area to supply subsidized raw material. But the problem was not solved. The weavers were thus affected by many difficulties, and they looted the cloth and cloth shops in Ilkal, shops were destroyed. The Police arrested 350 weavers and sent to jail. Hanumantha Rao was in Mudhol due to his ill health. After hearing this incident, he rushed to Ilkal immediately. As a result, many weavers got arrested. Hanumanth Rao tried to convince the government authorities. With the help of Sir Rozar Rumle, Governor of Bombay, out of 350, 200 cases were withdrawn. Since, he renounced his practice of advocacy and cannot plead in this situation. So requested Sarvashri Govindarchar Jahagirdar, S.V. Habbu, R.B. Kulkarni to take up the matter in the court. With help of these lawyers, 118 weavers were released. Out 350 weavers, 32 got sentenced for six months. Hanumantha Rao, never lost his hope, on April 17, 1942, he approached C.H. Bristo, advisor to the Governor once again and requested to release 32 wearers. Bristo convinced and with his intervention other 32 weavers too released. So, with the great effort of Hanumanth Rao Koujalagi, all 350 weavers were released.

### **Salt Satyagrahaa:**

The Lahore session of the Indian national Congress in 1929 approved the salt satyagraha and civil disobedience movement proposed to be undertaken by Gandhi and incidentally that session was presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru. Salt Satyagraha Hanumantha Rao Koujalgi and others met Gandhiji at Jambusara, on his way to Dandi march. The leaders of Karnataka also decided to organize the same Satyagraha. A meeting was held at Dharwad to select a place for staging Salt Satyagrahaa. A committee consisting of R.R. Diwakar, Karnad Sadashiva Rao and Sri. Hanumantha Rao Koujalagi was constituted to select a place for “Uppina Satyagraha”. Sri. Hanumantha Rao Koujalagi insisted that Ankola is the suitable place to organize the Salt Satyagraha. It was decided that on 13th April Salt Satyagraha to be organized in Ankola. Accordingly, thousands of people gathered there. It is said more than 40 thousand masses participated there. The people who had assembled there were called upon to disobey the laws as part of civil disobedience. The call was given by Koujalagi Hanumantha Rao and along with Kaka Karakhani, Thimappa Nayaka etc. 25 satyagrahis were arrested and sentenced to undergo three months of imprisonment and pay a penalty of rupees 100.

### **Sansthani Chaluvali:**

Kaujalagi Hanumantha Rao had played a very important part in organizing the Praja Parishat movement of the samsthans. He inaugurated the Jamakhandi Praja Parishat in 1939. Important Many Inam lands were confiscated by the Mudhol government. He demanded the Mudhol Rajasheb Maloji Ghorpade, not to harass the innocent farmers. No one was dared to protest against the Rajesheb of Mudhol. Hanumantha Rao desired to reform the evils in the administration of the Mudhol Samsthan. Well-known Marathi paper "Samsthane Swarajya" was publishing from Poona. He contacted the editor of the paper wrote a series of articles on harassment of the Mudhol ruler. He composed all article in a book called "Mudhol Santhan Prajечи Kahani" in Marathi and decided to supply to the public. Nobody knew that, who was the author of that article. The officials of Mudhol state were stunned by these articles. Rajesaheb who became angry on account of those articles tried his best to find out its author but could not succeed. Once he even tried to bribe the editor, but it was a failed attempt, because the editor was firm not to disclose the information. Such an attempt naturally helped to bring reforms in administration. At the 1934 Mumbai session of the Congress, it was resolved to implement responsible government in the Samsthanas also and towards that end, a decision was made to establish the all Samsthanas Praja Parishad.

### **Social service:**

As we have already mentioned, Hanumantha Rao was influenced the Gandhiji, Hanaumnatharao decided to establish a mandir (school) for Harijan girls (kanyamandir) at Vijapur, and it was decided that Kaka Karkanis to look after this madir. The money was collected from general public run this mandir. Hanaumantha Rao out of monthly payment Seventy-five rupees, twenty-five rupees was paid to Karkanis every month to maintain this mandir. Many of Devadasis of Bijapur insisted Kaka to give shelter in this kanyamandir. With the intervention of Hanaumantha Rao Kaujalgi, the Devadasis were allowed to reside in the Kanyamandir. But a later, a separate institution 'Ahalyadhar mandir' was established for Devadasis. He tried his best to stop this Deavadasi practice. He even wrote an article in English and it was considered an eye opener. He strived hard to up liftment of Harijan community.

He also worked for the welfare of the Lambanis. It was believed that the Lambanis involved in unlawful activities. They use to bring the

forest wood and other materials and sold them it to public without the permission of forest Department. Few of them involved in illegal liquor production. Colonial authorities then unjustly branded the community as a “criminal tribe”. In this juncture, Hanumnatha Rao decided to educate them regarding their illegal activities. For the welfare of the Lambanis, in 1937, he had organized the ‘Lambani Parishad’ in Bagalkot and he himself became president of it. With his great effort many Lambani hostels were opened and scholarship facility was made available to them. He also urged to provide land for them. He instated Lambanis to take active part in weaving and made them economically empowered.

### **Service during the Bijapur drought:**

During 1943 the Bijapur district worst effected by severe drought. Even his health was not in a condition to serve the people. Many people migrated to nearby places Without caring his illness he came to Bijapur and made many arrangements for the drought hit people. The conditions of animals were very bad; they died due to lack of fodder and water facilities. Many farmers sold their animals to the butchers. The Secretary, Charaka Sangha, Karnataka, many weaving centres were started in drought hit areas at Badami, Kerur, Muddebihal, Bijapur and other places. He requested to send five thousand charakas to Bijapur district. With his effort many public works were started. Middle class people and some Muslim women stated to work with charaka. Hanumantha Rao worked very hard to facilitate the people even in deteriorated health condition. Thakara Bapa also suggested Hanumantha Rao to take rest. But the restless man, Hnaumatha Rao never bothered his life and served the people.

### **Conclusion:**

Hanumanatha Rao Kaujalgi worked lot for the benefit of the motherland. He always thought about welfare of all caste and creeds. Even with his illness, worked day–night for the upliftment of many needy people. He always opposed British policies and created awareness in general public. Even he tried to eliminate the problems of farmers in the states of Mudhol, Jamkhandi, Ramdurg and many more. With the help of his comrades tried his best to serve the society. This great leader’s works were appreciated by Mahantma Gandhiji, Gangadharrao Deshpande, Rajendra Prasad, Lala Lajapat Rai and others. His ‘Gandhi cap’ incident was an eye opener for many national level freedom fighters. He came out of social barri-

ers of the day and helped the Depressed. His work for Lambani people is unparalleled. He even tried to eradicate the social evil, 'Devadasi' system. This multifaceted personality left great memories. Many of his writings and speeches thrilled the general public. We should salute this great soul for his sacrifice and dedication towards the nation. He died on 9th June, 1945, the man who could not see the 'Day of Independence' of the nation. Before his death on 31st May 1945, he writes final word "may pass away at any time, few Khadi yarn left with me, make it 10 X 36-inch national flag. Still, I have 36500 yards of yarn with me". These were the last words of Hanumantha Rao. Even on his death bed he "breathed the nation".

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

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