CHAPTER – 5
THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT IN MYSORE

In the previous chapter of the present thesis we have seen a detailed discussion on the emergence of Marxist philosophy and the socialist ideas not only in Europe but also in India. The discussion also focused on different strands of socialist thought.

From the thirties of the twentieth century, leftist ideas began to spread in Karnataka also. N.D.Shankar, C.B.Monnaiah and Savoi Aswath Rao were the leading leftists who tried to provide a new orientation for the freedom struggle in Mysore State. These leaders did not specifically use either the name of the Congress socialist party or the communist party. Instead, they raised the banners of mass awakener union and other fora.

It was Dinakara Desai, a well known Kannada literary person and a freedom fighter who first organized the tenancy movement in North Canara district¹ [Mumbai Karnataka], and thereby started the socialist activity in the Mumbai Karnataka area. He encouraged the tenants to rise against the landlords with a demand to reduce the land rent. He called a meeting of all the tenants who mostly belonged to Halakki Vakkalus, Kammara Paikas and

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¹ Gopala Krishna KL (Translated), Samaja Vadhadha Parichaya, Prarasarnga, Bangalore University, Bangalore, 1982.
Namdharis at Ankola on 16th March 1940 and he formed the Ankola Taluk Raitha Sangha which was influenced by M.N. Joshi a famous trade union leader of Bombay.

The main demands of Ankola Taluk Raitha Sangha were; enactment of law to restrict land rent to one third of the gross yield of the particular land. And the application of the Bombay Agriculture debt Relief Act of 1939 to relieve the poor peasants in the district from the shackles of debt.

Tenants actively participated in the movement. They protested against the exploitation by holding the red flags and singing the songs composed by Dinakara Desai which exposed the evils of landlordism at Ambara Kundla. Tenants also refused to pay land rent. Later, they formed an organization to unify all the peasants. This extent and the depth of Desai’s popularity and his tenant movement under Ankola Taluk Raitha Sangha shocked the landlords. Most of these landlords belonged to Congress. They accused Desai of sowing the seeds of class struggle and pressurized the Government of Bombay to extern him. Because of the pressure of this powerful class, Bombay government arrested Dinakar Desai in May 1940 and externed him from Uttar Kannada for a period of 59 years.

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2 Keerthinatha G.S. *Shivamogga District Samajavadha Chaluvaligalu*, Kannada University, Hampi, 1995.
3 Ibid.
4 Chandrashekara S. *Samajika Hinneleyally Mysore Rajakeeya*, Ankana Prakashana, Bangalore, 1983.
After the externment of Dinakara Desai, the movement lost its intensity and depth because of the lack of proper leaders. Later the movement was reinitiated by S.V. Pikle, a cousin of Dinakara Desai⁵.

During the same period, socialist ideas emerged in the district of Shimoga also. Though Shimoga District was under the rule of Wodeyars of Mysore, it was influenced by the socialistic thoughts that began in its neighbouring province of North Canara.

It was first started among the “Vidyarthi Congress” a students forum of (CSP) congress socialist party⁶. Prominent among them were Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya, Gopala Gowda, Y.R. Parameshwarappa, Kadri Shamanna, Ba Su Krishnamurthy, G. Sadashiva Rao, K.N. Karantha, B.S. Chandrashekar, Shankar Kartu Kote and others⁷. As many of these leaders were from Shimoga District, we can see the influence the district on the socialist movement of Karnataka in the later years.

Shivapura Congress Satyagraha of 1938 and the tragedy of Vidhurashwatha had great influence on the Vidyarthi Congress. But, it was during Quit India Movement of 1942, the Vidyarthi Congress was greatly

⁵ Keerthanatha G.S. Shivamogga District Samajavadhi Chaluvaligalu, Kannada University, Hasmpi, 1995.
⁶ Ramasharma Basavani and T.D. Shankara Narayana. Shivamogga District Swathanthra Horatagarara Nenapu, Shivamogga District Horatagarara Sangha, Shivamogga, 1992
⁷ Ibid.
influenced by the socialistic thoughts and it emerged as a powerful force. And later the Isur tragedy made the forum more organized.

Many intense and successful agitations were organized in and around Shimoga District under the leadership of Y.R. Parameshwarappa. They participated aggressively in Quit India movement by removing telegraph cables, blocking the road and railway transport and attacking the Thahsildar’s office in the year 1942. The Malenadu Tenants Association was founded in 1945, under the leadership of Kadidal Manjappa a well known congress leader. This association helped the socialists to group together, Malenadu tenants association which was founded to fight for the rights of tenants, was an ideal forum through which the socialist ideas could be spread. S. Gopal Gowda took active part in the activities of the Association, that helped socialists to organize peasants movement in the state.

The first state level Vidyarthi Sammelana was held at Nanjangudu in the year 1946. Nagabhushan, a young student of Mysore organized it. He had his education from the Banaras University. Many National level socialist leaders like Ashok Mehta, Kamaladevi Chattopadyaya and others

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8 Bagavan (S. SDathatri), Shivamogga Chenthane, Avadilat Prakashana, Shivamogga, 1999.
participated in the conference. Kamaladevi Chattopadyaya, a member of central executive committee of CSP was the major force behind the emergence of socialist party in Karnataka. Because of her proximity, many national leaders visited Karnataka.

Another state-wide conference of Vidyarthi Congress was held in the same year at Shimoga which was presided over by M.P. Eshwarappa. Several prominent leaders like J.P. Narayan, Kamaladevi Chattopadyaya and others participated in it. Later they carried out many meetings at various parts of Karnataka like Hubballi, Belgaum, Mysore and Mangaluru and the books “My picture of Socialism” and “My Socialism” which were written by J.P. Narayan were translated into Kannada and they were distributed in the form of pamphlets. By all these activities, they succeeded in attracting youth towards the socialist ideology and they succeeded to a great extent in mobilizing them.

In the year 1948, the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was separated from the parent body and organized an independent socialist party. The first meeting of the State Socialist party was held at Korapali Chatra in

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10 Hanumanthu (Ed.). Samajavadha, Janaprabhakshana, Bangalore, 1981.
12 Socialist Party, Pamphlet, Shivamogga, 1946.
Many prominent socialist leaders like S. Gopala Gowda, G. Sadashiva Rao, Y.R. Parameshwarappa, M.P. Eshwarappa, N.K. Seetharam Iyengar, H.M. Shivanna, D. Ravalappa, Gundappa Naraboli from Dharwad participated in the meeting. This was an historic event in the progress of socialistic ideology in the state. In this historic meeting they chalked out the policies and the programme of the state socialist party. They also decided to support Sagara taluk Raitha Sangha (Sagara Tenants Association) which was founded under the leadership of H. Ganapathiyappa, when Ganapathiyappa submitted a memorandum to the state government, which consisted of many demands like fixing of the tenancy rate, enactment of law to regulate land relations, introduction of permanent tenancy act etc. They extended their support, because of the demands of the Sangha also reflected the demands of the socialists.

The socialists became very active after the first student conference. In the same year, socialists took up the issue of land which was a major issue of the party. Hence they decided to organize and support the right causes of peasants against all type of exploitation, be it landlords, rich peasants or the state. In this regard, the socialists actively participated and supported the

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organizations like *Malenadu Genidarara Sangha* which was organized by the congress leader, Kadidal Manjappa at Thirthahalli in 1946, and the Sagara Taluk Raitha Sangha which was organized by H.Ganapathiyappa at Sagar in 1948.

In the year 1949, Hind Kisan Panchayat, the peasant wing of the socialist party of India, *Malenadu Genidarara Sangha* and the Sagara Taluk Raitha Sangha jointly organized farmers’ convention at Shimoga\(^{15}\). which was attended by Socialist leaders like Ramananda Mishra, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya and others. This convention laid a strong foundation for the further activities of socialists in the state. In the same year, S.Gopala Gowda attended farmers’ convention at Bihar and met many national socialist leaders. Especially his meeting with Lohia helped greatly in the growth of socialist activities in the state.

The Kagodu movement of 1951 was a major event in the progress of socialist party in Karnataka. Though the movement was started by Sagara Taluk Raitha Sangha under the leadership of H.Ganapathiyappa, later the movement entered a new phase with the entry of the socialists. Kagodu movement got a new perception and wide scope because of the involvement

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of socialists. And the socialists of Karnataka got a state-wide recognition because of the movement\textsuperscript{16}.

The first general election of 1952 played a dominant role in the empowering of the socialist party. Out of the 99 seats for the state legislative assembly, Kisan Mazdur Praja Party and Socialist Party won 10 seats. They fought the election with major issues like land reforms, free and compulsory education, formation of Malenadu Development Council, etc.\textsuperscript{17} These issues popularized socialism among the common people.

In the second general election of 1957, the Praja Socialist Party (PSP) won 18 seats out of 208 for the state assembly. They fought the election with major issues like decentralization of power, the ownership of land, for the tiller more encouragement for co-operative farming, formation of land army, introduction of appropriate technology\textsuperscript{18} and small-scale industries etc. Because of these progressive issues, the people of Karnataka supported the socialist party and hence the party was strengthened.

Hebballi peasant struggle was another major movement which gave a wider acceptability for the socialist party in the state. The movement started in the year 1958 under the leadership of socialist leader Neelagangaiah Pujar

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Election Pamphlet of Socialist Party}, 1952.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Election Pamphlet of Socialist Party}, 1957.
at Hebballi in Dharwad district. The movement started over the question of
distribution of 2,500 acres of excess land that was acquired by the
government from the *Jagirdhars* of Hebballi. It was just 11 days of
agitation. After the successful conduct of the agitation, 8,500 acres of land
was distributed among the peasants and 2,500 acres of land was distributed
among the landless agricultural labourers\(^\text{19}\). From the point of immediate
result, Hebballi was very successful movement of the socialists in the state,
and it made their position very strong.

The third general election of 1962 boosted the socialists in the state.
They won 22 seats for the State Legislative Assembly. This clearly indicates
the emergence of socialist force in the state politics.

The 1965 Raitha Morcha under the leadership of S.Shivappa was
another major peasants struggle of socialists in the state for the first time
socialist organized the peasants from different parts of the Karnataka and
demanded to stop the collection of levy and land revenue immediately and
distribute the agricultural land among landless peasants\(^\text{20}\).

\(^{20}\) Nanjundaswami, M.D. (Ed.), *Manava Paper*. 

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The fourth general election of 1967 also further strengthened the position of the socialists in the state, despite the fact the socialist parties underwent splits and realignment several times at the national level.

The land grab movement of 1969 was another major movement organized by the socialists in the state. The main intention of the movement was to provide lands for the landless agricultural labourers. A committee was formed to monitor the land grab movement by the socialists, which included S. Gopala Gowda, Y.R. Parameshwarappa, B.S. Chandrashekar, S.S.Kumta, T.T.Madavan, S. Bangarappa, Kagodu Thimmappa, M.D. Manjundaswamy, Dayananda Biradar and Paonnammal\textsuperscript{21}.

The Sandur struggle of 1973 was the another major movement of the socialists in Karnataka. Under the leadership of Shivakumarappa Yeligar Thimmappa, K.G.Maheshwarappa and others played a major role in this movement\textsuperscript{22}. For the first time socialists from all over the stat, and outside the state took part in this movement. This was, perhaps, the last major land struggle of socialists in the state.

The Samajavadi Yuvajanasabha (The Socialist Youth Association) was the another forum of the socialists in the state which was founded by

\textsuperscript{21} Puttaswamy, C. \textit{Masnava Paper}, 1969.
\textsuperscript{22} Arun Joladakudigi. \textit{Sanduru Bhohorata}, Kannada University, Hampi, 2006.
Siddalingaiah, D.R. Nagaraj, Agrahara Krishna Murthy and Kalluru Megharaj who had been influenced by the thoughts of Marx, Gandhi, Ambedkar and Lohia. This forum played a vital role in promoting the socialistic thoughts in the state.

Later with the entry of M.D. Nanjundaswamy, P. Lankesh, Poornachandra Tejaswi, P. Ramdas, Devanuru Mahadeva, B. Krishnappa, Klegowda Nagavara and others in the forum helped greatly in the growth of socialist thoughts in the state\textsuperscript{23}.

The establishment of the Karnataka \textit{Barahagara Mathu Kalavidara Okkuta} in the year 1973 which involved the writers and artists who were greatly influenced by the thoughts of Rammanohar Lohia was another event that strengthened the socialist thinking in the state\textsuperscript{24}.

All these factors led to the spread and consolidation of socialist ideology as a major influence in the state. And over a period of time, socialism became a dominant force in the intellectual, literary, cultural and artistic fields of the state.

The historic Land Reform Act of D. Devaraj Urs in 1974 was the result of the continuous peasant struggles of the previous years in the state in

\textsuperscript{23} Hanumantha (Ed.), \textit{Samajavadha}, Janaprakashana, Bangalore, 1981.
\textsuperscript{24} Gopala Krishna K.L. \textit{Samajavadhada Parichaya}, Prasaranga, Bangalore University, Bangalore, 1987.
a way, socialist demands were institutionalized by Devaraj Urs through his land reforms. However, this also prevented further socialist sponsored struggles in the state.

The JP Movement for Total Revolution was another important phase in the history of the socialist movement. In 1977, when JP founded the Janatha Party, the socialists, Congress (O) and the Jan Sangh became part of it. It is interesting that the socialists dominated the Janata Party. Several Chief Ministers of Karnataka such as Ramakrishna Hegde, Deve Gowda, J.H. Patel, S.R. Bommai and S.Bangarappa were identified with at least one faction of the socialist party or the other for same period.

The Kagodu Tenants Struggle

Since the days of the freedom struggle there had been demand to give land to the tillers. After Independence many political organizations tried to take up the issue of land reforms and initiated tenant movements. Among them Kagodu Sathyagraha of 1951 attracted considerable interest. It was a brain child of the socialist party, which had its own success and failure, made considerable impact on the future land reforms in the state.

Kagodu struggle had spread over 20 km in and round the jurisdiction of Sagara taluk, Shivamogga district. Kagodu, Hylalpura, Manigadde,
Sagumane, Soragapura, Yalakundi, Thadagundi of Hirenalluru grama, Kansi, Athrisalu, Horakoppa village of Sidduru grama, Masuru, Masighatta and Kanle could be considered the SPI centre of the struggle. Besides, peasants from the neighbouring Keladi, Talaguppa were also participating and supporting the struggle.

The social system of the village was typical of any other South Indian village. Social hierarchy as usual played a significant role in all the events and happenings connected with the economic conditions of the rich and the poor classes in the village.

Socially Kagodu may be divided into Lingayaths and Gowda (means village headman usually from Vokkaliga community) in southern part of the district, and lingayaths in the northern part of the district along with the Brahmins. Deewars (tenants or vokkalu and also called as genidharas or the tenants. Madivalas, Kumbaras and Harijanas formed the landless agricultural labourers. Except Lingayaths and Brahmins all other communities belonged to economically weaker sections. This was the social background of the Sagar taluk. Kagodu incident gave the socialists of

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Karnataka as platform to spread the ideology of socialism and to launch a socialist campaign in Karnataka\textsuperscript{26}.

Since the Indian National Congress leaned more towards freedom from the British, the land question and other local problems were left untouched. In this regard Malenadu Tenants Association which was founded in 1946 under the leadership of a well known congress leader and freedom fighter Kadidal Manjappa, Basavani Ramasharma and others played a significant role. G. Karibasappa was the first president and Basavani Ramasharma was the founder secretary\textsuperscript{27}.

On a similar line, Sagara Taluk Rytha Sangha (Sagara Taluk Peasants Association) was founded under the leadership of H. Ganapathiyappa, a enthusiastic young school teacher in 1948 at Sagara town of Shimoga district. He played an important role in organizing tenants of Sagara taluk and gained considerable success. STRS\textsuperscript{28} submitted a memorandum to the state government, pressing the following demands:

\begin{itemize}
\item[a)] the tenancy rate should be fixed and it should not exceed $1/3$ of the total production;
\item[b)] the law should be made to regulate the transactions in accordance with land regulations, receipt for the payment of rent and other documents between the tenants and the land lords;
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{27} Suvarna Samputa Samithi, \textit{Kagodu Chaluvali}, Sagara, 2002 p. 65.
\textsuperscript{28} The Sagara Taluk Raitha Sangha, here in after called STRS.
c) the auction system of lands should be stopped;

d) government should introduce a permanent tenancy Act;

e) gun licence should be given to the Malenadu tenants to protect their crops from wild animals;

f) bitty or unpaid labour of tenants should be stopped;

g) government fertilizer and loan should directly reach the tenants, without intermediation by land lords\(^29\).

Association created awareness among the tenants, the 90 per cent of whom belonged to the Deewaru (Ediga) community.

The dispute between tenants and landlords over the issue of the size of kolaga ignited the spark of Kagodu sathyagraha. Kolaga (A kind of measuring vessel used in these region). Usually three Seru (another kind of measuring vessel) is equivalent to one Kolaga. But landlords at the time of receiving rent from the tenants used a bigger size Kolaga which sometime measured three and a half quarters (3¼ ) three and half (3½ ) Seru of grains. Landlords had two different size vessels to measure paddy. The one used to receive the paddy was bigger and one used to give wages was smaller. One K.G. Odeyars’ family was also collecting rent in the bigger size kolaga. This practice of receiving rent with a bigger kolaga was opposed by the

Sagara Taluk Rytha Sangha. Most of the landlords accepted the demands of the Sangha, but Odeyars family refused to do so. This dispute between the tenants and landlords over the issue of the size of Kolaga ignited the sathyagraha. When the tenants of K.G.Odeyars family refused to pay more rent, they were evicted forcefully from the land and not allowed to prepare the land for monsoon cultivation.

On 17th April 1951, STRS called for a meeting to resolve the dispute between Kagodu landlords and tenants but failed to resolve the dispute. On the same day Sangha took a decision and on 18th April 1951 they decided to enter the land by force from morning 9 to 12 noon, and that struggle should be very peaceful[^30].

The famous Kagodu Sathyagraha was started on 18th April 1951. The peasants entered the land with their agricultural implements. But they were not allowed to do so. With the help of police force, landlords stopped the peasants and police arrested 51 people and sent to Sagara Jail. On the next day, 25 people were arrested, police even arrested D. Mookappa, the President of the Sangha, who visited Sagara town on that day. The Thahasildar’s attempt to resolve the problem ended in failure and the struggle was continued. On 16th May 1951, editorial in the Parajavani[^30]

[^30]: From the dairy of H.Ganapathiyappa.
newspaper attracted the attention throughout the state regarding the movement. Another attempt was made on 17th May 1951, at Shimoga. Government organized a meeting between the members of the Sangha and the landlords, government accepted to release the arrested tenants and the leaders. And an alternative arrangement was made for their re-habilitation at Kenjigapura but the attempt ended in a failure, because the struggle was organized mainly to restore the occupancy rights of the tenants who were evicted from the lands which they cultivated.

On 18th May 1951 a well-known socialist leader S. Gopala Gowda and Y.R.Parameshwaappa met H. Ganapathiyappa and expressed their full support and called for the joint struggle of Sagara Raitha Sangha and the socialists. In this regard, the comment of H. Ganapathiyappa is noticeable, he remarked “until then, the movement looked like a dispute between Deeveru and the Lingayaths. But with the entry of the socialists, the Kagodu movement became a socialist movement”31.

The next day on 19th May 1951, G. Sadashiva Rao, the Secretary of the socialist party entered the land at Kagodu and got arrested with five other peasants. It is very interesting to note that even before the direct entry of socialists in the movement they had already supported the movement and

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campaigned in favour of the movement. They printed a pamphlet “the genesis of Kagodu” in support of the movement. C.G.K. Reddy, the state president of the Socialist Party, wrote a letter to the Home Minister and put forward certain demands and threatened a state-wide agitation if their demands were not met.  

1. Release of all the prisoners with immediate effect.
2. Withdrawal of police force from Kagodu grama.
3. The rent (geni) that was collected by revenue official on behalf of landlords should be given back.
4. An enquiry on police atrocity should be conducted.
5. All the agricultural equipments which were forcibly taken by police and landlords should be given back immediately.
6. Government must enact a law immediately with regard to the eviction of peasants. This clearly shows the active involvement of the socialists in the Sathyagraha.

On 20th May 1951 Ramayya, a local socialist leader was arrested with six others. Next day S.Gopala Gowda and H. Ganapathiyappa jointly addressed the farmers at Kagodu and declared the joint struggle. Several newspapers, including the Prajavani gave with coverage for the struggle. The movement soon became a state-wide movement, getting wider support from different sections.

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33 Ibid.
The visit of Dr. Lohia, the national socialist leader on 13th June 1951, gave a new twist to the struggle. He supported the movement and met the peasants at Sagara Jail and addressed a huge gathering of 2000 peasants\textsuperscript{34}.

Lohia was arrested along with the state socialist leaders like Khadri Shamanna, Mulka Govinda Reddy, Eswarappa and others. Later, Lohia was brought to Bangalore Central Jail. Government of Karnataka withdrew all the cases against Lohia and released him on 22\textsuperscript{nd} May 1951\textsuperscript{35}. The visit and address of Lohia made an immense impact on the movement and got nationwide publicity.

On 22\textsuperscript{nd} June 1951, Ramasnanda Mishra, the Secretary of the Hind Kisan Morcha, the present wing of the socialist party, visited Kagodu. Later he also met chief minister and home minister and discussed the approaches and means of settling the Kagodu issue with him. In a meeting of on 22\textsuperscript{nd} June 1951 at Shimoga he said that if the Congress president assured them to act impartially we would be prepared to refer the Kagodu issue to his arbitration\textsuperscript{36}.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Prajavani} report on 16\textsuperscript{th} June 1951.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Prajavani} report on 24\textsuperscript{th} June 1951.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Prajavani} report on 26th June 1951.
The chief minister assured that he would appoint a committee to investigate into the nature of the conflict between the parties at Kagodu.

The pressurize the government C.G.K. Reddy, the President of the State Socialist Party declared that the sathyagraha would not end till every tenant was handed back the land sized from him.

After these incidents, State Congress president Kengal Hanumanthaiah visited Kagodu on 27th June 1951, but failed to find a solution. The government was not convinced with the argument of the socialist leaders that Kagodu issue was an economic one. The whole issue had been considered as a fight between Ediga tenants and Lingayat landlords, by the State administration, giving it a casteist colour. Many congress leaders like Kengal Hanumanthaiah, H.M. Channabasappa and others were of the opinion that it was more a communal than economic. For the government, it was just a law and order problem. Kadidal Manjappa, asked the government to intervene in this conflict. His mediation also failed to find a solution. Meanwhile Jayaprakash Narayan also visited Sagara on 21st September 1951 and extended his support. On 6th October 1951,
government released all the tenants from the prison and cases against them were withdrawn. By this time, the movement had lost the momentum\textsuperscript{37}.

There are so many reasons for this such as, the first general election of 1952. Socialists concentrated more on the election. Expectations from the Kagodu tenants was too high. It clearly shows that tenants were going to get immediate benefits (land) and that they were not a laboratory of experiment for socialist party. Weakness of the Socialist Party was that, it had not enrolled a strong cadre. It did not have strong organization or resources to carry out the struggle for a long period. The attitude of the state government, was unfriendly. And another reason for the failure was the movement did not involve land less labourers.

Though the movement did not reach a logical conclusion immediately, it made a huge impact on future land reforms in the state, and provided a major opportunity for the socialist party to launch its activities in the state. Many socialist leaders who took part in the struggle such as Santaveri Gopal Gowda, S. Bangarappa, J.H. Patel, Kagodu Timmappa and Konandur Lingappa became successful in electoral politics.

Several writers like U.R. Anantha Murty, P. Lankesh, Poornachandra Tejaswi, K.V. Subbanna and several others came to the limelight and continued to espouse the socialist ideas in their writings. People like Ch.K. Reddy and Khadri Shamanna later became successful journalists.

The socialists of Mysore State concentrated mainly on the agrarian issues. Right from its inception, despite its shortcomings in men and material, its imaginative leadership under the spell of socialist ideology, proved to be a powerful force over the years in espousing the cause of the peasantry. That was the reason why the socialists organized several struggles for the cultivating classes even after the Kagodu Satyagraha. The following were the major struggles organized by the socialists. They were the following:

1958 – Hebballi Bhoohorata
1965 – Raitha Morcha
1969 – Land Grab Movement
1969 – Sandur Movement
Hebballi Bhoohorata

Although the struggle had taken place during the pre-unification days, when Hubballi was part of Maharashtra, its discussion becomes necessary in the context of the socialist movement under the 1952 Geni Act, the Maharashtra government took possession of 15,655 acres of Hebballi Jaghirdars lands. Out of these, 3020 acres were given back to the Jaghirdars, 9555 acres were given to the original genidars, who were the occupancy tenants.

Around 2500 acres of excess lands that remained were not distributed to any one. Most of the beneficiaries of the Genidar Aboliton Act were Lingayats, Brahmins and others. None of the agricultural laboring classes were benefitted from these land reforms. They belonged to Harijans, Nekaras, Pinjaras and Chaluvadis.

Therefore, the socialist party took up the issue of the agricultural workers and demanded that the 2500 acres of excess lands should be distributed among the agricultural labourers. Therefore, on 18th April 1958, Neelagangiah Pujar and Gangahdara Padaki, two socialist leaders addressed a gathering of 500 labourers and demanded the following:

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1. The government should issue an authenticated recognition letter (*Pahani Patra*) with respect to the excess 2500 acres favouring the agricultural workers who are working in those lands,

2. To issue *pahani patras* to those who are already cultivating these Jahagirdari lands.

On 20 April 1958, under the leadership of socialist leaders, more than 300 landless agricultural labourers went on a long procession from Hebbal to the office of the Deputy Commissioner of Dharwad. They submitted a written petition, urging the District Revenue authorities to fulfill their demands in 15 days. Since there was no positive response from any authorities even after 15 days, Pujar and other socialist leaders again held a meeting of the agricultural labourers in Hebbal. The labourers, who were daily wage workers found it difficult to go for a lengthy period of struggle. It was difficult to stop the daily work, because they will be forced to starve. Secondly, if they participate in the struggle, the upper caste farmers may not give them any daily work. Hence, it was decided that the struggle should take place without any harm to the laboring class. Ultimately it was decided to go for relay picketing of the D.C. Office daily with 10-15 agricultural workers.

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39 *Samyukta Karnatakas* Newspaper, 21st April 1958.
They shouted slogans, such as “Land is for the cultivators”, “tiller is the owner of the land”, “Samajavadi Party Jayavagali etc”. On the first day, 11 labourers picketed the D.C’s office and got themselves arrested. On 12, 13\textsuperscript{th} May 1958, 12 peasants courted arrest. From May 7 to May 16, totally 90 workers were arrested\textsuperscript{40}. In fact, those who were arrested on the first three days were not released at all for a long time. Neelagangaiah Pujar and Gangadhara Padaki, the two leaders of the movement continued the agitation in a peaceful, non-provoking manner. When B.D. Jathi became the Chief Minister, he immediately made enquiries about the agitation and talked to the leaders\textsuperscript{41} over telephone through the D.C’s office and requested them to withdraw the agitation by assuring that the government would meet their demands. The Chief Minister also assured that steps would be taken up to withdraw the cases against the agitating labourers. Thus, the \textit{Hebballi Bhoohorata} became a successful agitation.

\textbf{Raitha Morcha – 1965}

During 1965 there was severe famine and drought in the State. But the collection of land revenue continued unabated. In addition to the regular land revenue there were additional levies also. To protest against the

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Samyukta Karnata Newspaper}, 19\textsuperscript{th} May 1958.

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Samyukta Karnata Newspaper}, 19\textsuperscript{th} September 1958.
revenue collection, the Praja Socialist Party under the leadership of S. Shivappa, member of the Assembly from Shravanabelagola and A.H. Shivananda Swamy organized the small and medium farmers and the agricultural labourers and took out a massive Raitha Morcha in Bangalore. Farmers from the entire State was mobilized and around 5000 farmers participated in it. The Morcha had raised slogans and held placards demanding the immediate stoppage of the collection of land revenue and other levies.

The Land Grab Movement

In 1969, the socialists decided to start the land grab movement to satisfy the demands of the landless peasants of Karnataka. Three leftist parties - the Praja Socialist Party (PSP), the Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) and the Communist Party of India (CPI) – decided to launch a nationwide land grab movement in the month of August 1969. The ultimate objective of this struggle was to draw the attention of the government towards the plight of the landless agricultural labourers and marginal peasants. Despite certain land legislations and ceiling laws the landlords could get the tenants evicted from their lands which they cultivated as occupancy peasants.

\footnote{Prajavani, 16\textsuperscript{th} April 1965}
The permanent threat of eviction forced the occupancy peasants into the status of landless agricultural labourers. The problem was more acute in the former zamindari areas. Each in the erstwhile ryotwari areas, the rich peasants could always manipulate and get the tenants lands evicted or transferred to their hands. In the beginning of independent India, movement was partly successful. But after the historic Vinoba movement there was practically nothing towards the solution of the problem of land-hungry peasants.

According to the Report of the National Commission\(^\text{43}\) on Labour, the eviction of tenants and share croppers following the resumption of lands by the landlords was on the increase in several states. It was against this background that we should look at the Land Grab Movement of 1969 by the PSP, SSP and the CPI. The Samyukta Socialist Party (SSP) meeting at Raichur passed a resolution which stated thus\(^\text{44}\):

“On the occasion of the birth centenary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Party has decided to grab government land for landless peasants, agricultural labourers, SCs and STs”.

A State level committee was formed to monitor the land grab movement in the state, which included Santaveri Gopala Gowda, Y.R.


\(^{44}\) Manav (Local Daily), August 15, 1969.

This state-wide movement was quite stronger at Shimoga. The local socialist party workers organized the land grab movement on a large scale in Shikaripura, Sagar, Soraba, Shimoga and Thirthahalli taluk. The movement started on August 15, 1969. The struggle began and within a short span of time, they grabbed almost 10,000 acres of government land. Local Committee\textsuperscript{45} distributed the 10,000 acres of land which was grabbed by the socialists. The beneficiaries were the landless agricultural labourers. At Shikaripur taluk nearly 4,700 acres of land was grabbed and distributed. Thousands of agricultural workers became the beneficiaries and the movement began to spread to other parts of the state also. The struggle helped the socialists politically. Three important leaders were elected from the Shimoga district, namely S. Bangarappa, Kagodu Thimmappa and Konandur Lingappa.

**The Agrarian Struggle of Sandur – 1973.**

The last, but the most significant agrarian struggle was organized by the socialists at Sandur in the Bellary District. On 18 February 1971

\textsuperscript{45} Manav (Daily) August 20, 1969.
peasants of Narasapura who had lost lands due to the establishment of the National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) staged a non-violent protest. These peasants were not given any compensation nor alternative land. Although the NMDC was a central government enterprise, the Sandur Royal Family held its lease. When the project was established, most of the cultivators lost their lands. In the beginning these cultivators were given some employment mainly for the construction work. But subsequently, they were retrenched from the employment, saying that they were inexperienced. In their place workers from north India were brought and appointed. The peasants of Narasapura thus lost their lands as well as the employment to sustain themselves and their families\textsuperscript{46}.

The affected peasants initially organized a local level struggle for two days, opposing the ex-ruling family of Sandur. The water supply for the NMDC plant was made from a huge well, situated near the house of one Shanmughappa Desai. Villagers cut of the water supply to the NMDC. Around one thousand peasants participated in the satyagraha. Ghorpade, the ex-ruler promised that they would be compensated adequately. But people had no faith in him and they continued to shout slogans against him. Shanmukhappa Desai led the movement by providing the peasants

courageous leadership. On the 19th February, the second day, thousands of peasants joined the movement. Police charged them with canes. But the peasants were determined and they did not allow the restoration of the water supply. Even the reserve police entered the fray, to threaten the peasants but they were resolute to get justice.

Later, the Deputy Commissioner of Bellary and the police officials of Kudlige promised to settle their grievances and the strike was withdrawn. Although this struggle was not a great success, it provided courage and enthusiasm for the peasants of the entire Sandur area. With the inauguration of the Vijayanagara Steel Plant, there was fear of losing lands.

In the beginning, both Yajman Shantarudrappa and Yeligar Thimmappa, two local leaders, who wanted to mobilize the people in greater numbers and make the struggle at Sandur a success. Therefore, they decided to request the Socialist Party President, K.G. Maheswarappa for a statewide struggle and sought his assistance. K.G. Maheswarappa in turn consulted George Fernandes, the National President of the Party and decided to start struggle at Sanduru to protect the interests of the peasants. “Tiller is the owner of the Lands. The land you cultivate should be yours. For this struggle you should stand firmly”, George Fernandes, the President of the

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Socialist Party declared. The speech of George Fernandes was given wide publicity in the press, because he had raised charges against Mr. Ghorpade with facts and figures. When Fernandes raised the issue, Ghorpade was disturbed and he feared that he might even lose his ministership.

As per the request of the state unit of the Socialist Party, Shri. George Fernandes wrote a letter to the President of India Shri V.V.Giri, requesting him to drop Finance Minister Ghorpade from the cabinet for his false statement and for illegally possessing 10,000 acres of land. On March 3, 1973 prior to the commencement of the Sandur movement, the Sandur villagers under the auspices of the Socialist Party took out a procession in Bangalore. It was a massive protest march led by K.G. Maheswarappa, J.H. Patel, M.P. Prakash, Yajman Shantarudrappa, Yeligar Thimmappa, S.S. Kumata, and Kagodu Thimmappa.

It is interesting that to enquire about the welfare of the Sandur villagers, the then Chief Minister Shri D. Devaraj Urs arrived at Cubbon Park. The agitators welcomed the chief minister and presented a memorandum, listing their demands.
The main demand was that the lands\(^{48}\) to the extent of 10,000 acres, illegally kept by Shri Ghorpade, the Finance Minister and the erstwhile ruler of Sandur. These lands should be distributed among the peasants. They also demanded that the tenancy of 29 miles granted to SM & Co should be quashed and that tenancy should be granted to either the National Mining Development Board or to the Mysore Metals Ltd. Another demand was that 1000 acres of lands formerly tenanted by Tobacco Co., situated at Nandihalli, Siddapura and Raghapur shall be distributed to the landless. Another 2,000 acres of land reserved for sport and poaching for the royal family, should be cancelled. Another 150 acres held by the Royal Family for the Skands Industries should be taken over by the government\(^{49}\).

Despite the assurance of the Chief Minister, nothing had actually happened. Hence the socialist party decided to start the movement. The national executive of the Party entrusted the work to Messrs. George Fernandes and Madhu Dandavate on 10.9.1973 the Socialist Party took out a procession at Sanduru\(^{50}\).

Ghorpade and his men had threatened the peasantry by sending rowdy elements. They brought out Pamphlets against the struggle. The royal

\(^{50}\) Peer Basha, Samajavadi Horatagarara Sandarshana, Hampi, 2007.
family also issued an open call to oppose the movement. According to Nagappa Lakshmipura “The men of Ghorpade, went to each and every one’s houses who participated in the struggle and threatened them”\(^{51}\).

Next day, Buddamma, a Dalit woman inaugurated the land grab movement at Siddapura. Ten Dalit workers participated in the movement. In Bangalore on March 3, 1973 they held a massive rally, demanding the Abolition of *Inams*. A motion for the introduction of *Inam* Abolition Bill was moved\(^{52}\) in the Assembly on 7.4.1973 by Konandur Lingappa, seconded by Kagodu Thimmappa\(^{53}\). The then Revenue Minister Hutch Masti Gowda introduced the Inam Abolition Bill on September 12, 1973. But the inam abolition only partly addressed the problem of Sandur. On September 13, 1973 George Fernandes\(^{54}\) issued a statement in Bangalore criticizing the Congress government for its pre-landlord policy and declaring that the national leaders would soon join the Sandur movement. On September 15, 1973 M.P. Prakash, the President of the Bellary District Socialist Party led the movement in front of the taluk office. M.P. Prakash and 30 people were arrested. On 15 September, the Socialists captured excess lands at three different places and forced the government to redistribute these lands.

\(^{51}\) *Samyukta Karnataka*, Sept. 8, 9, 10, 1973.
\(^{52}\) Hanumanthu, *Sanduru Horata*, Op Cit.
The issue was again raised in the Assembly by Konandur Lingappa and severely criticized the government. In his reply, Devaraj Urs said, the socialists selected a wrong place for the movement and this led to serious provocations. On September 21, Bandre Somanna and 30 people conducted satyagraha in front of the taluk office and courted arrest. On 21st October 1973 the Inspector General of Police arrested and kept Yaligar Thimmappa in lock-up and tortured. When this issue was raised in the Assembly, Urs was totally silent.

However, in 1974, the Inam Abolition Act was passed. The tiller became the owner of the land. It was a historic movement. Later on the State government received applications from the landless cultivators and distributed nearly 20,180 acres of land pattas were also issued.

Thus, it was the socialist led Sandur movement that led to the introduction of a major land legislation in Mysore, which benefitted several thousands of agricultural workers and landless peasants.

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