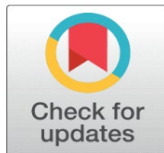
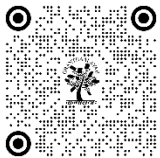


THE POLITICS OF REGIONALISM: ASSESSING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 371J IN KARNATAKA

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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.4235](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.4235)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

This article contributes to the broader discussion on regionalism and its political implications by analyzing the implementation of the Article 371J of the Indian Constitution in Karnataka. This article was introduced in 2012 to provide special provisions to the Kalyana Karnataka region in order to correct historical inequities and promote regional development. This analysis examines both the efficacy of Article 371J in fulfilling its purpose as well as the political maneuvers and contention it has invoked within its application. It examines the historical background of the region, its deprivation under the Nizams of Hyderabad, and the demand for special status thereafter. It discusses the salient features of Article 371J including creation of separate development board, equitable distribution of funds, reservations in education and jobs, etc. This study examines the influence of Article 371J on education, occupation, and economic & social development in the region through analysis of research papers, government reports, and news articles. However, although there have been many notable achievements in terms of infrastructure development and women's education and employment opportunities, progress is perceived to be limited, and a number of human development indicators show a slowing down of progress. This paper also discusses the political discourse and controversies with regard to the implementation of Article 371J such as inconsistency in reservation schemes and eligibility criteria. The impact of federalism on regional inequalities: A comparative study of special provisions in other Indian states.

Keywords: Article 371J, Kalyana-Karnataka, Regional Development, Special Provisions, Regionalism Federalism, Social Development, Economic Development, Reservations, Regional Inequalities

1. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations (UN) being an international organization also faces the regionalism dilemma. India is a country of great diversity, and the manifestation of regionalism has manifested itself in different ways, including demands for greater autonomy, separate statehood and special provisions in the Constitution¹. These special provisions are an aspect of asymmetric federalism, in which different states have different levels of autonomy and different relationships with the central government, accounting for fiscal, political, and administrative features. This is precisely the ethos that the political landscape of Karnataka is governed by, where APC is one of the glaring examples of regional politics, as seen

¹ Biradar, S. G., & R. R. (2014). Regional disparity in comprehensive composite development in Karnataka: What does emerging evidence indicate? *Review of Research Journal*, 4(1).

through the lens of the Indian Constitution, now, Article 371J. Article 371J, inserted through the 98th Constitutional Amendment Act in 2012, aimed to address the historical backwardness of the Kalyana Karnataka region by providing special provisions regarding education, employment and resource allocation. Article 371J is implemented and how it has also affected the development of the region, and what is political dialogue around its promulgation and implementation is the major focus of this study.

2. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND THE BIRTH OF ARTICLE 371J

Having a unique history that reflects the socio-economic problems of the Kalyana Karnataka region — comprising the districts of Gulbarga, Bidar, Raichur, Koppal, Yadgir and Bellary. This region, which was part of Hyderabad state that was ruled by the Nizams, was merged with the then Mysore state back in 1956 during the formation of states on linguistic lines. Regional inequality in Karnataka has historical roots during the British colonial rule when the region was divided into parts such as Mysore state, Bombay Karnataka, and Hyderabad Karnataka. The Mysore kings also started several social welfare schemes which brought development to the area, in contrast to the other two areas remained relatively underdeveloped. Karnataka — which was unified after independence — is still confronting significant regional differences, leading to historical protests and demand for a separate state. This region, under the rule of the Nizams of Hyderabad, was relatively neglected and underdeveloped compared to other parts of the Karnataka. After Hyderabad State was integrated into India in 1948, the Kalyana Karnataka region was included in the Mysore State. Karnataka (which until then was called Mysore) was given that name in 1973. But rather, the region underperformed in several development indicators, despite being integrated into a commonwealth state. It was the troubled history of the region which ultimately led to the genesis of Article 371J. By the late 1990s and 2000s, the demand for Kalyana Karnataka special status began to pick up pace amid increasing awareness of regional development issues and a push for greater autonomy. Realising the need to rectify these concerns, the Karnataka government in 2001 constituted the Dr. D.M. Nanjundappa Committee to examine regional disparities in the state. The committee report, submitted in 2002, pointed to the substantial gap between the Kalyana Karnataka region and the rest of Karnataka in per capita income, literacy rates, and human development indicators. The recommendations of the Nanjundappa Committee report, along with continued political mobilization and public demand, culminated in a demand for special status for the Kalyana Karnataka region under Article 371 of the constitution, as a result of which a resolution was passed in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly in 2010, which sought special status for the Kalyana Karnataka region. This resolution paved the way for presenting Constitution (118th Amendment) Bill, 2012 in the Parliament and resulted in inclusion of Article 371J into the Constitution².

3. PROVISIONS OF ARTICLE 371J

The need for Article 371J was felt when the demand for a separate State was voiced in the Parliament for the development of Kalyana Karnataka region, which entitles the President of India to confer special responsibility to the Governor of Karnataka. Features of this Article inherently include:

- Creation of separate development board — Article provides for creation of separate development board for the Kalyana Karnataka which shall be responsible for planning and supervision of developmental activities. This board has to provide an annual report of its working to the State Legislative Assembly.
- Fair Distribution of Funds: There are mechanisms in the Article 371J which determines how much funds can be allocated for developmental expenditure in the Kalyana Karnataka region so that the needs of the state as a whole can be addressed.
- Reservations in Education and Employment: The article provides for the reservation of seats in educational and vocational training institutions in the region for students who hail from that region by birth or domicile.

² Biradar, S. G., & R. R. (2014). Regional disparity in comprehensive composite development in Karnataka: What does emerging evidence indicate? *Review of Research Journal*, 4(1).

It also provides for the identification of posts in state government services and the reservation of a proportion of such posts for persons belonging to the region.

On 18 December 2014, the Parliament of India amended the Constitution of India to add Article 371J to provide for the establishment of a development board for the backward areas (IAFBAA). While the broad objectives of the Board were clearly written down, its implementation and impact will take time to materialize.

In all of this, the impact of Article 371J in the Kalyana Karnataka area has been mixed. Although there exist substantial advances in the fields of infrastructure and opportunities in education and employment, there are questions about the cumulative effects on human development parameters and its trajectory. This is to say that the invocation of Article 371J itself is not enough, it needs strong executive implementation.

3.1. EDUCATION

Perhaps the most concrete impact from the 2018 introduction of Article 371J has been that local students now have many more opportunities in professional colleges. This article aided a rise in admissions to professional courses like medical and engineering schools for locals from Kalyana Karnataka region. "Article 371J was implemented to provide students from our region with better educational opportunities in medical and engineering colleges," said Priyank Kharge, minister responsible for Article 371J. "In the last 10 years, 7,757 students from our region got admissions in medical colleges and 25,683 students entered engineering colleges. Long-term the higher number of accesses to higher education will have a positive effect on the human resources development of the region. Yet with those changes come continued challenges. (The Gross Enrolment Ratio) in higher education in the region was 15% in 2019-20 against a state average of 32%. Likewise, its literacy percentage of 63.71% is much lower than the state percentage of 75.36%. Such statistics suggest that Kalyana Karnataka still has a distance to cover in terms of achieving parity in education³.

3.2. EMPLOYMENT

Thus, Article 371J has also led to more job opportunities for locals in government services. Hundreds of candidates from the Kalyana Karnataka region have been able to avail of government jobs due to the reservation policy. The state government has come out with a list of all departments, identifying around 1.1 lakh posts available for local candidates. Yet concerns persist over the proper implementation of reservation policies and the number of vacant posts filled. As per the figures of 2014, there were almost 29,500 vacant posts in the region which brings the credibility of the government, on fulfilling the purpose of Article 371J, into question. Inconsistency in the recruitment notifications by different departments has resulted in a legal battle and confusion between the aspirants. The uncertainty at the secretariat-level on how to go about implementing reservation has also been a sore point.

3.3. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Article 371J has facilitated infrastructure development and improved access to education and employment, but its effects on the overall economic and social progress of the Kalyana Karnataka region is still debated. A fund of Rs 19,778 crore has been approved for the region from the state government in 10 years and an amount of Rs 11,174 crore through Kalyana-Karnataka Region Development Board. This government has announced Rs 5000 crore a year for the next 4 years for the development of the region. Some studies argue that, despite the special status, the region is still lagging behind in human development indicators. The critics consider that the government has spent funds on roads rather than in developing good human resources, and addressing issues in poverty, malnutrition, etc. To help understand the development of the region, we can look at the Human Development Index (HDI) of the region. Despite the corresponding change, a comparison of different HDI indexes of five best & worst performing districts in Karnataka indicates that the Kalyana Karnataka region, yet again, finds itself at the bottom and has a long way to cover in terms of matching up to other high-performing districts.

³ Hanagodimath, Shiddalingaswami V. 2014. "Critical Analysis of Dr . D M Nanjundappa Committee Report." (9).

Composite Development Index: Ranking of Districts in Karnataka⁴

District	1960-61	1976-77	1998-99
Bangalore	2	1	1
Dakshina Kannada	1	2	2
Shimoga	3	3	3
Mysore	5	5	4
Chitradurga	11	7	6
Hassan	13	14	9
Bellary	14	10	11
Bidar	17	15	19
Gulbarga	19	19	20
Raichur	18	18	16

Source: Report of HPCFRRI, June 2002.

Approximate number of rural families in each district (based on socio-economic trends and rural development patterns of Karnataka):

District	HDI Rank	Life Expectancy (Years)	Literacy Rate
Bangalore Urban	1	75	88.00%
Dakshina Kannada	2	74	88.00%
Udupi	3	73	86.00%
Chikkamagaluru	4	70	79.00%
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Bidar	19	66	70.51%
Ballari	25	64	67.43%
Kalaburgi	27	63	64.85%
Raichur	29	61	59.56%
Yadgiri	30	59	51.83%

Notes: HDI Rank: Karnataka's most developed districts are Bangalore Urban, Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Chikkamagaluru, which appears from their top ranks. The northern districts (Bidar, Ballari, etc.) score low, because of worse infrastructure and socio-economic parameters.

- Life Expectancy – Above-average in urban/coastal districts (e.g., Bangalore, Dakshina Kannada) and below-average in northern districts due to healthcare disadvantages.
- Literacy Rate: Coastal and urban districts tend to have high literacy, while northern districts lag behind (ex: Yadgiri at ~52%).

Data is approximate, based on historical trends. For the exact numbers, see the latest Karnataka Human Development Report. So, Karnataka has been progressing continuously.

⁴ Report of HPCFRRI, June 2002.

In order to set the context for these regional disparities presented in this paper, it is essential to understand the overall economic and fiscal development of Karnataka. Karnataka has seen some years of solid economic growth lately, but... The per capita income is estimated as Rs. 3,32,926 in 2023-24 showing a growth of 9.3% at current prices as compared to Rs. 3,04,474 in 2022-23. It is quite a bit related to the growing of the service sector which is expected to grow by 8.7% in 2023-24. Karnataka accounts for 5500+ IT/ITES companies, 750 MNCs, over \$58 billion of exports, direct employment to 12 lakh+ professionals and 31 lakh+ indirect jobs. The total receipts of the state for the year 2023-24 are Rs. 324477.81 crores as against Rs. 279539.58 crores for the year 2022-23, there is an increase of 16.08%. These numbers show an auspicious sign of overall economic growth of Karnataka.

4. SOCIAL ISSUES, POLITICAL DEBATES AND CONTROVERSIES

Politics over Article 371J has also been controversial. Interpretation and application of reservation policies have also been one of the key issues. Legal challenges and confusion among aspirants Due to these discrepancies in recruitment notifications across departments, legal challenges from aspirants and confusion among aspirants arose. The Karnataka High Court, in for example, on Wednesday, issued a notice to the Karnataka government on a petition challenging the amendment to Article 371J granting reservation in promotion to people from the Kalyana Karnataka region with retrospective effect. The ambiguity at the secretariat level on how to implement reservation has been another point of contention. Another controversy with the Article 371J is the eligibility criteria for availing its benefits. The Karnataka High Court, In 2024 had held that Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) Card holders were not entitled to reservation under Article 371J even if they were born in the Kalyana Karnataka region. This created controversy over the meaning of "local" and extent of the special provisions. One such instance was of Meghana Kuruvalli who is a UK citizen but born in Secunderabad and studied in Ballari. The court, however, dismissed her plea, observing that OCI card holders are not entitled to be considered for the Article 371J quota as they belong to a different class of applicants. At the same time, political discussions have also taken place on whether Article 371J is sufficient to resolve regional disparities. On one hand, they say that the article has not accomplished anything, socio-economic situations in the region have not changed, on the other hand, they claim that it resulted in opportunities, advancement. These debates point to the complex and often contested nature of regionalism and its political implications. For example, in the Karnataka Assembly, legislators from the region in the northern part of the State expressed fear of the repeated neglect of their region, with some of them warning that it could revisit the demand for separate statehood⁵.

5. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS WITH OTHER STATES

The comparative examination of Article 371J with similar provisions across other Indian states offers a lens into the complexities and potentials of combating regional imbalances within the realm of federalism. Certain special provisions in the Constitution confer a special status on a few states in India. These apart, at first sight the provisions may seem unconstitutional and discriminatory against other states which are not provided with the special provisions, but a thorough examination of these special provisions is enough to show the need for these provisions in those states. Similarly, according to Article 371 of the Indian Constitution, special provisions have been provided to Maharashtra and Gujarat to develop certain parts of those states. In a similar vein, Article 371A allows for special provisions to be made for Nagaland with the objective of preserving and protecting the social practices and cultural identity of the Naga people. Part 9 of Article 371D extends the special provisions for Andhra Pradesh/Telangana, empowering the President to make sure of adequate opportunities for people in public employment and education. These unique implementations are based upon individual state requirements to ensure that state imbalances are addressed and development is balanced across each state. These provisions must be implemented as such, and their effectivity would differ from state to state in relation to political will, administrative capacity, and socio-economic context. Thus, we develop a comparative study of these provisions, in order to identify best practices and challenges in addressing regionalism in India. As an illustration, a study with respect to what has gone on with national renewable energy projects across different zones in India

⁵ Gopal Kadekodi, Ravi Kanbu, Vijendra Rao, *Governance & 'Karnataka model of Development'* (Feb 24, 2007), *Economic & Political Weekly*, pg 649-652.

established that while states such as Gujarat and Tamil Nadu have done well in terms of renewable energy promotion, the others have faced regulatory challenges and lack of political will⁶.

6. CONCLUSION

Article 371 (J): An important intervention in a national policy for equity, growth and development of Kalyana Karnataka region of Karnataka. Despite increased access in education and employment resulting from implementation of this article, many express concern about its implications for human development and the rate of acceleration. This article helps us understand the ongoing trends towards regionalism and the challenges arising from such pursuits in the face of regimes such as 371J that threaten the national unity. While this is a laudable effort to correct regional imbalances, Article 371J is not a silver bullet and it will take time before real difference is seen on the ground. A long-term perspective and both qualitative and quantitative indicators are required for a holistic assessment of Article 371J. The results of this article need to be assessed in order to determine the effectiveness and explore ways of improving implementation. A comparative overview of similar special provisions in other states can also shed important lessons for addressing regional inequalities in India. In the end, crucial to the success of Article 371J are the government's sustained commitment, good governance, and the involvement of local communities in the development. The Karnataka experience under Article 371J may serve as an essential lesson for other states that are challenged with regionalism and aspire to promote inclusive growth in a federal architecture. No less important is not just the introduction of special provisions but their effective implementation through quality governance and policy formulation towards human development, balanced with economic growth.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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⁶ Dev, Vanu (19 December 2012). "Karnataka wins 4-decade-old battle; gets special status for Hyderabad-Karnataka region". *India Today*. Retrieved 28 April 2013.

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