

## INDIPENDENCE MOVEMENT JIN CHIKAMAGALUR DISTRICT:

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### **Abstract:**

Chikkamagaluru—known as Kadur district until 1947—played a distinctive role in India’s freedom struggle, shaped by its Malnad ecology, coffee economy, and a vibrant network of local leaders, student volunteers, and religious and civic institutions. Drawing on district records, gazetteers, newspapers, and oral histories, this paper reconstructs Chikkamagaluru’s multi-sited participation across phases: early resistance in the nineteenth century; Gandhian mass movements (Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience); social reform and Harijan uplift; the spread of Congress organization; and the region’s contribution to the Mysore Chalo/Responsible Government movement that bridged the transition from princely rule to a democratic state. It foregrounds places—such as the District Office grounds (today’s Azad Park) and the Gandhi ‘Gudi’ at Nidaghatta—where national currents were localized, and highlights district leaders including Hosakoppa Krishna Rao, K.T. Satyanarayana (Birur), and others whose activism linked plantation districts to wider swadeshi politics. The study argues that Chikkamagaluru’s experience exemplifies how provincial towns and rural taluks transformed all-India campaigns into everyday civic action, leaving a durable spatial and institutional memory of freedom

**Keywords:** Chikkamagaluru/Kadur, Malnad, freedom struggle, Gandhian movements, Harijan uplift, coffee plantations, Mysore State, local history

### **1. Introduction**

India’s anti-colonial politics was not merely metropolitan; it was enacted across districts where local economies and social structures reshaped national agendas. This paper examines Chikkamagaluru district (Malnad region, southwestern Karnataka) as a case study of such localization. The analysis places district-level events within three scales: (i) Mysore State politics under princely rule; (ii) all-India movements of the Congress and allied organizations; and (iii) micro-histories of taluks such as Kadur, Tarikere, Koppa, Narasimharajapura, Sringeri, and Mudigere. Methodologically, it synthesizes archival materials with commemorative sites and oral narratives to chart a bottom-up history of the freedom struggle.

#### **1.1 Questions and Objectives**

1. What were the key sites, organizations, and personalities through which national movements took root in Chikkamagaluru?
2. How did local social reform—especially Harijan uplift and civic associational life—intertwine with anti-colonial politics?
3. What legacies (memorials, institutions, civic spaces) preserve this history today?

#### **1.2 Sources and Method**

Primary sources include district and state gazetteers, district administrative histories, contemporary newspaper reportage, and commemorative records. Secondary sources include scholarly essays on Mysore State politics and Karnataka’s freedom movement. Field observation of sites (e.g., Azad Park/DC Office grounds; Nidaghatta Gandhi shrine) and selective interviews (where feasible) inform the spatial analysis.

#### **2. Historical Background: From Kadur to Chikkamagaluru**

Until 1947 the district was officially known as Kadur; the headquarters shifted from Kadur to Chikkamagaluru town in 1865. The region formed part of the Mysore kingdom and later Mysore

State under the Wadiyar dynasty. Forested hills (Western Ghats) and the emergence of commercial coffee cultivation from the nineteenth century onward produced a social landscape of planters, peasantry, and forest-dependent communities, shaping both the social reform agenda and the repertoire of political protest.

### **3. Early Currents of Resistance (19th–early 20th centuries)**

Local memory and district records trace resistance to colonial and intermediary authority to the Pālegārs (chieftains) of the Malnad—such as those of Aigur and Tarikere—with episodes of confrontation and repression in the early nineteenth century. While predating the organized Congress-led struggle, these episodes form part of the district’s longer tradition of autonomous assertion and provide a pre-history to later nationalist mobilization.

### **4. Congress Organization and Civic Spaces**

By the 1920s, Congress committees and allied associations had active branches in the district. Public grounds near the District Office in Chikkamagaluru town became a focal venue for mass meetings addressed by visiting national/state leaders. The same precinct—recalled locally as Azad Park—emerged as a commemorative space in independent India, symbolically anchoring the district’s connection to the national movement.

Key organizations included local Congress committees, the Hindu Seva Dal (youth wing), student volunteer corps, and civic associations working on education, sanitation, and temperance. These bodies facilitated boycott campaigns, khadi promotion, relief drives, and the logistics of mass meetings and satyagrahas.

### **5. Gandhian Mass Movements in the District**

#### **5.1 Non-Cooperation and Social Reform**

The Non-Cooperation phase catalyzed swadeshi and social reform across taluks. Leaders from Koppa, N.R. Pura, Sringeri, and Mudigere promoted khadi, Hindi propagation, and anti-liquor campaigns, while mobilizing students and youth for volunteer service (seva dal). The movement also intersected with efforts toward Harijan uplift and temple entry, laying foundations for broader civic participation.

#### **5.2 Civil Disobedience and Salt Satyagraha**

During Civil Disobedience (1930–34), district activists participated in prohibition and salt law agitation, facing arrests and short-term incarceration in sub-jails across the Malnad. These episodes, though smaller in scale than coastal centres, helped consolidate local Congress networks and politicize plantation towns and weekly markets.

### **6. Leaders, Networks, and Institutions**

#### **6.1 Hosakoppa Krishna Rao (Koppa taluk)**

A prominent planter-public figure, Hosakoppa Krishna Rao leveraged his resources and networks to support Congress work, Harijan uplift, and associational life. He encouraged publicity, convened public meetings, and helped convene reform gatherings that linked Malnad issues to all-Mysore debates on representative government.

#### **6.2 K.T. Satyanarayana (Birur, Kadur taluk)**

From the railway town of Birur, K.T. Satyanarayana emerged as a key organizer and orator during Gandhian campaigns, mobilizing volunteers across Kadur and Tarikere. His role exemplifies the importance of smaller rail/market nodes in disseminating national politics inland.

#### **6.3 Prisoners of the Struggle and District Jail**

The sub-jail at Chikkamagaluru housed several satyagrahis and state-level leaders during different phases of agitation, underscoring the district’s place in Mysore’s political policing and repression apparatus.

## **6.4 Religious and Cultural Institutions**

Mathas and temples in Sringeri and Balehonnur spheres, along with Kannada literary circles, provided moral capital, venues, and leadership for civic campaigns, including spinning/welfare drives and meetings aligned with nationalist objectives.

## **7. Landmark Visits and Public Meetings**

### **7.1 Mahatma Gandhi (1927)**

Gandhi addressed a mass meeting at the District Office grounds in Chikkamagaluru in August 1927, a visit that galvanized local organization, khadi sales, and fundraising. The site is commemorated today through the public park and related civic memory.

### **7.2 Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Captain Lakshmi (1940s)**

Local recollections and district records note visits by Subhas Chandra Bose and Captain Lakshmi to the Malnad belt, including a public address in Chikkamagaluru where regional leaders translated for wider audiences. Such events reveal the district's connectedness to diverse strands of the national movement.

## **8. Coffee, Labour, and the Freedom Struggle**

Coffee estates—some European-owned—shaped class relations and labour mobility. While large, unionized plantation politics matured more fully in coastal and Coorg districts, Malnad towns saw boycotts of foreign goods, khadi promotion, and petitions against discriminatory practices and levies. Planter-public men like Hosakoppa Krishna Rao straddled agrarian, civic, and political arenas, illustrating complex alignments in a plantation frontier.

## **9. Responsible Government and Mysore Chalo**

Alongside all-India campaigns, Mysore State witnessed intense agitation for Responsible Government. Chikkamagaluru volunteers, students, and leaders participated in demonstrations, petitions, and conferences pressing for constitutional reform, elected cabinets, and civil liberties—struggles that culminated in the democratic integration of Mysore State after 1947.

## **10. Sites of Memory: Azad Park and Nidaghatta's Gandhi 'Gudi'**

Two prominent memory-spaces anchor the district's freedom narrative: (1) the Azad Park/DC Office grounds in Chikkamagaluru town, associated with mass meetings; and (2) the Gandhi shrine (Gudi) at Nidaghatta (Kadur taluk), consecrated by local youth in early 1948 as a devotional-civic response to Gandhi's martyrdom. These spaces blend sacred and civic idioms, sustaining the ethical vocabulary of the freedom struggle in everyday ritual and public culture.

## **11. Discussion: Localizing the Nation**

Chikkamagaluru's story illuminates how national movements were translated into local repertoires—processions, spinning, temple-entry, public lectures, and student seva. The district's heterogeneous social base (planters, peasants, traders, students, matha networks) produced a capacious political culture where reform and resistance reinforced each other. The durability of public memory in parks, shrines, and annual observances testifies to the rootedness of the freedom ethos beyond metropolitan centres.

## **12. Conclusion**

The district's participation in India's freedom struggle was less about spectacular confrontations and more about sustained civic work: institution-building, social reform, disciplined volunteerism, and the patient normalization of dissent. Chikkamagaluru thus exemplifies the granular geographies of Indian nationalism—where taluk towns, weekly shandies, and plantation hamlets functioned as theatres of democratic pedagogy. Documenting and teaching these histories can deepen regional heritage and inform contemporary civics