



"Karnataka Rajyotsava is not just about celebrating our state's formation; it's about celebrating our unity in diversity. It's a day that reminds us that despite our differences, we are all Kannadigas at heart."

SIDDARAMAIAH,
Chief Minister



Udupi


Vidan
Soudha


Savandurga



"November 1 is an important day for Karnataka. It's a day that reminds us of our roots, our language, and our shared identity as Kannadigas."

DK SHIVAKUMAR,
Deputy Chief Minister


An archival image of
the Mysore Maharaja

A LEGACY OF UNITY

**A day of colours,
culture, and pride,
Karnataka's
foundation day
rekindles the
memories of a
journey to unity**

Bindu Gopal Rao

Yesterday, the landscape of Karnataka transformed into a vibrant sea of yellow and red flags, the unmistakable colours of the state flag. This date commemorates a pivotal moment in history—the unification of all Kannada-speaking regions, marking the birth of Karnataka.

The significance of this day is profound, as it not only celebrates the merger of these regions in Southwestern India in 1956 but also aligns with the formation of other states such as Haryana, Kerala, and Punjab. For the people of Karnataka, this occasion is a joyous celebration filled with pride and festivity.

The roots of this celebration extend back to the erstwhile Madras, Bombay, and Hyderabad states. In 1973, the visionary Chief Minister Devaraj Arasu officially proclaimed November 1 as Karnataka's foundation day. "The state of Karnataka emerged from the unwavering determination of countless freedom fighters. A crucial visit by the States Reorganisation Commission, led by Justice Fazal Ali in 1955, finally set the stage for the establishment of Mysore State on November 1, 1956, comprising 22 districts," explains Rajeev Nrupathunga, founder of Revival Heritage Hub.

Looking back

The day is a public holiday, celebrated



Hampi

with the proud hoisting of the state flag, filling the air with the resonant notes of the state anthem, *Jaya Bharata Jananiya Tanujate*. In the early years, the celebrations were modest, but everything changed in 1963 when Kannada writer and activist Ma Ramamurthy introduced the vibrant yellow-and-red Karnataka flag. These colours symbolise *haldi* (yellow) and *kumkum* (red), both auspicious tokens of prosperity and joy.

"It is said that the first grand celebrations took place in Bangalore in 1963, drawing over one lakh participants. On this momentous occasion, a statue of Goddess Bhuvaneshwari was venerated, and traditional dance performances like Dollu Kunitha and Somana Kunitha captivated the crowd, sparking the festive spirit that continues to thrive today," adds Nrupathunga.

Interestingly, the Rajyotsava celebrations have expanded to encompass the entire month of November, featuring a rich melange of musical soirées, folk art performances, and cultural programmes that celebrate Kannada in all its glory.

Changing vistas

In 1973, when the name of the state was changed from Mysore to Karnataka, the occasion was celebrated with grandeur and enthusiasm. Rajachandra Urs, a longtime Mysorean, reminisces, "The last Maharaja of Mysore journeyed to



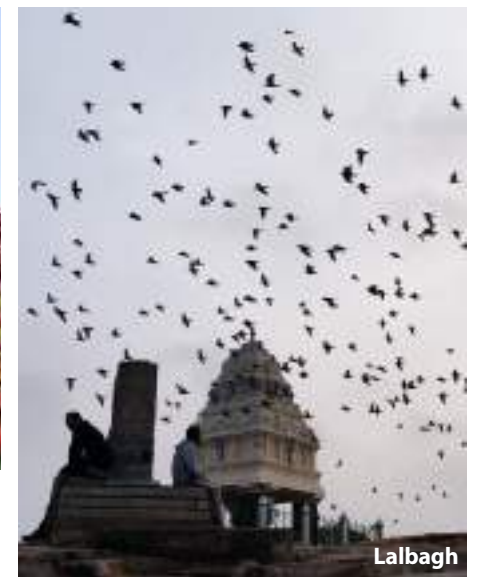
State Central library

Gadag to proclaim that, despite losing his throne, he was overjoyed to be in the hearts of the people of Karnataka—what we call *hurdaya simhasana* in Kannada. This sentiment resonated deeply with everyone at the time. It was one of the grandest celebrations I can remember, brimming with pomp and gaiety. The Maharaja, revered as the Raja Pramuk of the erstwhile Mysore kingdom, was appointed the first Governor of Karnataka."

However, times have changed, and today's celebrations also centre around presenting the Rajyotsava Prashasti, the second highest civilian award in Karnataka. This year, a new mandate encourages the hoisting of the Karnataka flag in all commercial and educational institutions. This initiative aims to promote the language and preserve cultural identity. "I've noticed that now the festival resonates more with Kannadigas living abroad; they celebrate the day with remarkable enthusiasm, often surpassing the festivities in Bangalore," Urs observes.

Looking back to look forward

Dr. Gayathri from Mysore, who served as Deputy Director at the Bangalore & Mysore State Archives, recalls that Bellary was among the first districts to



Lalbagh

join the former Mysore state in 1953. "The part played by journalists is often overlooked. Indian historian, writer, and journalist Aluru Venkata Rao, who edited the monthly magazine Vagbhushana, championed the virtues of Kannada as a language. Institutions like the Karnataka Vidyavardhaka Sangha and Kannada Sahitya Parishat played unparalleled roles in advocating for Kannada."

She fondly recalls how theatres in Mysore would screen Kannada films on this day, with Mysoreans joining the celebrations with fervour. "In fact, in 2010, a procession featured a grand tableau from the Archaeological Department, with government officials marching alongside," she adds.

Though some aspects of the day may be fading, the underlying enthusiasm endures, even as time passes. More importantly, while traditions evolve, this day serves as a reminder of identity and pride for the true-blue Kannadiga—a spirit that can be embraced by anyone, whether born into it or having come to call Karnataka home.