S1 · Post-Independence Karnataka: Consolidation, Social Justice and Regional Questions

Model Answers

PYQ | KAS 2025

Land reforms under Devaraj Urs were a landmark in Karnataka's agrarian history. Analyse the impact of these reforms on tenant farmers, landowners, and rural society.

10 M | 150 w

APPROACH: DECODING THE QUESTION

- **Directive 'Analyse':** break the impact into parts and weigh each. The question hands you three parts: tenants, landowners, rural society. Make them your dimensions.
- **Test 'landmark':** open the body by showing what made 1974 different from earlier land laws (the tribunal route), and close each dimension with its limit.
- **Impact, not provisions:** two lines on the Act are enough. Marks lie in who gained, who lost and what changed in village life.
- **Karnataka evidence:** Kagodu, Land Tribunals, Form 7, Sections 79A/79B, PTCL Act and the 2020 amendment turn a general answer into a KAS answer.

MODEL ANSWER

INTRODUCTION

In 1951, tenants of Kagodu in Sagara taluk rose against landlords who lent grain in a small *kolaga* (measure) and collected it back in a bigger one. Twenty-three years later the Devaraj Urs government answered that grievance with the slogan *'Uluvavane bhoomi odeya'* (the tiller owns the land): the 1974 amendment to the Karnataka Land Reforms Act, 1961 abolished tenancy from 1 March 1974 and vested all leased land in the State.

BODY

What made it a landmark

- **Tribunal, not courts:** taluk-level Land Tribunals, chaired by the Assistant Commissioner with non-official members, heard claims on a one-page Form 7. Local, quick and cheap, unlike civil litigation.
- **Burden reversed:** leased land vested in the State automatically; the tenant had only to apply, and the landlord had to disprove the claim.
- **Social-justice package:** it came with the Havanur Commission (1975) on backward classes and the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, so land reform was part of a wider redistribution.

Impact on tenant farmers

- **Ownership at scale:** lakhs of tenants became owners, especially in Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada and Shivamogga, where leasing was most common.
- **Credit and dignity:** an occupancy certificate ended *geni* (crop-share rent) and made land usable as collateral, replacing the moneylender with the bank.
- **Second-generation mobility:** secure ownership let families invest in schooling; the coastal backward-class tenant families who gained land are a commonly cited example.
- **Left-out tenants:** oral tenants without records were often evicted before they could file Form 7, or pressured into 'voluntary surrender'.

A tenant's journey after 1974



Impact on landowners

- **Absentee exit:** non-cultivating owners lost leased land for modest compensation and moved capital into education, trade and urban professions.
- **Ceiling diluted:** family partitions and benami transfers meant owner-cultivators kept most land; surplus land redistributed under the ceiling was small compared with tenancy conferrals.
- **Land market frozen:** Sections 79A/79B barred non-agriculturists from buying farmland. This protected farmers but bred litigation: 13,814 cases were pending under these sections by 2020.

Impact on rural society

- **Patron-client break:** the tenant no longer depended on the landlord's goodwill each harvest, weakening an old hierarchy in Malnad and coastal villages.
- **New political bloc:** new owners from the backward classes joined Dalits and minorities in Urs's coalition, the social base later called AHINDA, loosening landed elites' hold on rural politics.
- **Dalit land security:** the Karnataka SC/ST (Prohibition of Transfer of Certain Lands) Act, 1978 voided sales of land granted to SC/ST families without government permission.
- **Concealed tenancy:** because leasing was banned, it went underground. Official data put formal leasing at under 7% of area; field estimates put informal leasing near a fifth. Such tenants rarely access crop insurance and stay outside PM-KISAN, which pays landowners.

WAY FORWARD

- **Legalise leasing:** adopt NITI Aayog's Model Agricultural Land Leasing Act, 2016, which recognises tenants for credit and insurance without threatening ownership. Andhra Pradesh's Crop Cultivators Rights Act, 2019 shows the law must also reassure owners to work.
- **Record the tiller:** Karnataka's Bhoomi land-records system can carry a field for the actual cultivator, so benefits reach the person farming the land.
- **Watch distress sales:** after the 2020 amendment removed 79A/79B, track land transfers from small farmers to non-farmers district by district.

CONCLUSION

Most Indian states wrote tenancy laws; Karnataka, alongside Kerala and West Bengal, was among the few that enforced them on the ground. Urs moved land and, more importantly, power. The 2020 amendment allowing non-farmers to buy farmland shows that the question he opened, who should own the soil, is still being answered in the spirit of Articles 39(b) and (c).

SAME DEMAND, DIFFERENT WORDING: HOW ELSE THIS CAN BE ASKED

1. "Karnataka is one of the first states to bring in a paradigm shift in the realm of land relations by introducing different land reforms." How far is this true? Critically analyse. *(KAS Essay 2014)*
2. Evaluate the role of Land Tribunals in implementing 'land to the tiller' in Karnataka. Why did tenancy survive in concealed forms?
3. Has the Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, 2020 diluted the spirit of the 1974 reforms? Examine.

DIKSOOCHI PREDICTED QUESTION

From the Havanur Commission to the 2025 socio-educational survey, Karnataka has repeatedly relied on data to define backwardness. Examine whether this evidence-based approach has resolved or deepened the politics of caste in the State.

15 M | 250 w

Why probable: *Havanur was asked in 2015 and KAS repeats its themes. The State accepted the 2025 survey report in May 2026, revised SC internal reservation in April 2026, the High Court struck down the 2022 quota hike in October 2026, and Census 2027 will count caste.*

APPROACH: DECODING THE QUESTION

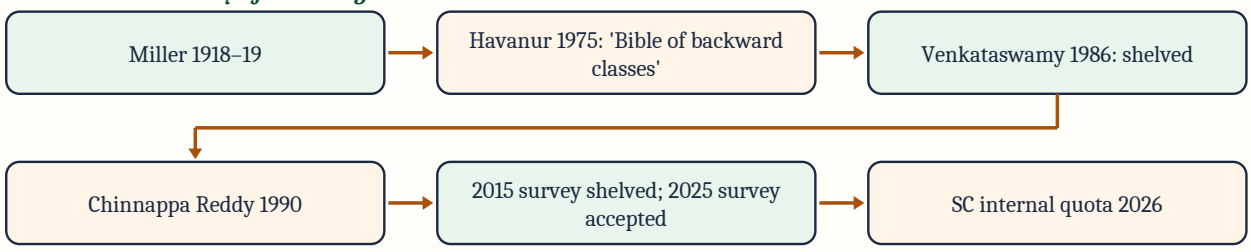
- **Two demands:** (i) show the evidence-based approach at work; (ii) give a verdict, resolved or deepened. A one-sided answer loses half the marks.
- **Chronology as a flowchart:** put the commissions in a timeline and spend your words on analysis, not on dates.
- **Recent hooks:** Davinder Singh (2024), SC internal reservation (2026), the High Court verdict (October 2026), the 2025 survey report and Census 2027.
- **Neutral tone:** state what each community demanded; never judge which community was 'right'.

MODEL ANSWER

INTRODUCTION

In 1918 the Maharaja of Mysore appointed the Miller Committee after non-Brahmin groups pointed out how few government posts they held; by 1921 Mysore was reserving jobs, three decades before Article 16(4). Since then Karnataka has counted backwardness again and again. Its latest count, the 2025 survey of the State Backward Classes Commission, was accepted in May 2026, just as Census 2027 prepares to enumerate caste nationally.

Karnataka's century of counting



BODY

Where data delivered justice

- **Criteria over patronage:** Havanur (report, 19 November 1975) ranked castes on educational and government-job data. Urs called it the 'Bible of Backward Classes', and it is said to have informed the Mandal Commission.
- **Graded categories:** Category 1, which includes nomadic communities, has its own share and does not compete with Categories 3A and 3B, so the most backward are not crowded out.
- **Sub-classification:** after the Supreme Court allowed it in *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh* (2024), the Nagamohan Das panel's data led to the April 2026 split of the 15% SC quota: 5.25% each for left- and right-hand groups and about 4.5% for others, including nomadic communities.
- **Budget by population:** the Karnataka SCSP-TSP Act, 2013 earmarks 24.1% of plan outlay, the SC/ST population share, for their development. Data thus decides money, not only jobs.

Where data deepened the contest

- **Lists redraw status:** Havanur excluded Lingayats and was challenged in court; the Venkataswamy report (1986) drew objections from Vokkaligas and Lingayats and was shelved; the 1994 order based on Chinnappa Reddy sparked rallies.
- **Upgrade demands:** once ranks are numeric, communities bargain over them. Panchamasali Lingayats seek a move from Category 3B to 2A; Vokkaligas seek a larger 3A share.
- **Ceiling collisions:** the 2022 hike of SC/ST shares to 17% and 7% took total reservation to 56%. The High Court struck it down in October 2026 for breaching the 50% ceiling of *Indra Sawhney*.
- **Trust deficit:** the Rs 162-crore 2015 survey covering 1.06 crore households stayed unpublished for a decade, was tabled only in April 2025, and was then replaced by a re-survey amid objections from several communities.
- **National echo:** Bihar's 2023 survey found OBCs and EBCs at 63% and led to a 65% quota, which the Patna High Court struck down in 2024.

Verdict: both, in different ways

- **Language has shifted:** claims now cite survey tables and court-tested criteria, not only street strength.
- **Core question unresolved:** data shows who is behind, but not whether caste or household income should be the unit, or when a group should exit.

WAY FORWARD

- **Statutory periodicity:** a decadal State survey synchronised with Census 2027 caste data, so no single count becomes a decade-long dispute.
- **Open, audited data:** publish anonymised tables with an independent methodology audit before policy decisions.
- **Exit criteria:** clear creamy-layer and graduation rules so benefits move to groups that are still behind.
- **Outcome metrics:** measure learning levels, health and income by category, not only the share of posts filled.

CONCLUSION

Data has not ended Karnataka's caste debate; it has changed its language from 'who deserves' to 'what the numbers show'. Article 16(4) promises adequate representation, not permanent categories. Numbers can deliver that promise only if the people being counted trust the count.

SAME DEMAND, DIFFERENT WORDING: HOW ELSE THIS CAN BE ASKED

1. "The L.G. Havanur Commission report is a Bible for backward classes in Karnataka." Do you agree? Discuss. *(KAS 2015)*
2. Examine the significance of sub-classification of Scheduled Castes in Karnataka in the light of the Supreme Court's 2024 judgment.
3. Caste surveys are instruments of social justice as well as of political mobilisation. Critically examine with reference to Karnataka.