

Growing up in Mysore State



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Bindu was born, grew up, and educated in Bangalore. Resident of Nagasandra Road (now DVG). Attended Thippagondahalli schools, Basavanagudi Boys Middle School, Bangalore High school, National College and the University Engineering College (now UVCE) and graduated with Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Mechanical Engineering. Having worked in India and USA for over 50 years, he is retired and resides in Houston, Texas, USA.

When I was growing up, most of India was ruled by the British. There were pockets of Portuguese and French rule. We in Mysore State had heard of them but not experienced it first-hand.

When I was a small boy, the Second World War was going on. My father, who was an engineer in the Mysore Public Works Department (PWD), would talk about it. I saw the effects of the war on us - the ration cards, shortages of goods and kerosene, etc. I have to add that our family was middle class and did not suffer from the effects of ration cards, etc. My father earned a decent salary, and even owned a small British built Ford car for many years.

I used to hear that some leaders of the Congress Party were fighting for independence. We in Mysore State were not involved too much in this, as we lived in a Princely State, and were almost independent. As a young boy, I saw military lorries rolling by, mainly in Bangalore. The Cantonment in Bangalore was the military headquarters for South India even then. The military Southern Command is based in present day Bengaluru.

My father used to be transferred every 3 years, and the family moved with him. We lived in Bangalore, transferred to Hirebhaskar - Jog Falls, then to Thippagondanahalli, 20 miles west of Bangalore. Here the Arkavathi river is dammed for supplying drinking water to Bangalore. I attended school here. When we were near Jog Falls, as a young boy, I used to hear the word Bombay quite often. The elders used to say that the opposite side of the falls from where we were belonged to Bombay. I did not understand what it meant then.

School in those days was taught only in Kannada, the Mysore state language. All my elementary and middle school education was in Kannada. Come to think of it, I did not know a word of English. Those were the days.

When I was in middle school, one day I heard they would start teaching English ABC. Unfortunately, I was not well and did not attend the first day of this English learning. Next day, when I went to school I was so lost. I thought I had lost everything - it turned out to be nothing. Life went on, and I also learnt the ABC ...

We used to hear the ARP sirens often; ARP means Air Raid Precaution. The Japanese were bombing the east coast of India, and ARPs were issued in Bangalore area also.

Another thing I remember from those war days was shortage of anything you think of - electricity, chemicals, food, etc. Chemicals were in such short supply that all Indian cars were painted in only one colour - BLACK. Also, the lights were dimmed and shut off after dark to prevent the enemy from locating the towns and cities for bombing.

One other thing I remember very well - all the automobile head lights were blackened with paint in the top half. Safety precaution.

I remember that all lights in Mysore State were switched off and on, exactly at 9 PM, every night. This was a time signal. This practice went on for a long time until the tube lights were introduced. The switching off/on created havoc with the new tube lights. Most of these would never come back on when power was switched back on. Finally this action was discontinued. Life went on and so the war too.

We used to hear talk of Independence and read that in newspapers. Finally, the Second World War was over in May 1945. Now, we were reading that Britain still continued to talk with the Indians regarding Indian independence. We had a radio station for the entire Mysore state and it was in Mysore city. It was called *Akashavani*. Every morning the station would start with Kalinga Rao's song - [Udayavaagali Namma Cheluva Kannada Naadu](#), written by H Narayana Rao). This was the most famous Kannada song in those days, and P Kalinga Rao was the most famous singer.

1945 rolled over to 1946. All this time we in Mysore State did not feel much about what was going on in the rest of India. However, no independence yet. Mysore kings were benevolent and most of the people were happy. The Diwan of Mysore at this time was from Madras, forced on the king by the ruling British. His name was Arcot Ramaswamy Modaliar. Mysore people hated him so much such that by 1947 signs saying "Arcot – Boycott" were all over Mysore state. We continued to go to the middle school.

Back in Bangalore, and specially in Basavanagudi, our family lived a normal life. One point of note here is that the name Gandhi Bazaar did not exist then. This road, the only road with shops and stores was called *Angadi Beedhi* in Kannada. Bangalore, and also Thippagondanahalli, had electricity and water - twenty four hours a day. We also used to visit Magadi, a taluk town 30 miles west of Bangalore. Here there was neither electricity nor regular water supply, and sanitation was a nightmare.

Meanwhile I noticed the organization called Rastreeya SwayamSevaka Sangha (RSS) conducting drills and promoting discipline to mostly younger people all around town.

Another thing – every day when we started school we used to pray, and our prayer was [Kaayowshree Gowri - Karunalahari](#). I don't know how many still remember this. This was a sloka by our Maharaja Shri Jaya Chamraja Wadiyar. This was sung in every school in Mysore state. Jana Gana Mana, India's current national anthem, had not been introduced yet.

1947 came and life continued. We were reading and hearing that independence was coming to India. The first signs for us in Mysore was that the Maharaja had to give up his kingdom and accede to the New India. The Mysore Maharaja acceded to this demand, and we would soon become part of the new India. We were also hearing that the same demand has been made to all other Princely States to choose and become part of New India or the new state of Pakistan, which will be created for Muslims.

I had heard that most of the Princely States had decided to join India excepting for Hyderabad, Junagadh in Gujarat, and Kashmir. Then came 15th August 1947. India became a smaller sized country but an independent one; smaller because it lost areas to the newly created Pakistan.

Mysore became part of the new independent India. Now we were in independent India. Jawaharlal Nehru became the first Prime Minister with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel becoming deputy prime minister and home minister. M K Gandhi did not join the government.

Mysore Maharaja continued to rule Mysore state with the title of Raj Pramukh.

I need to mention the geography of India at this time. India was like a mosaic of states and provinces. The states were divided into different categories by alphabets: The A, B, C & the D states.

'A' states were the former British controlled states like, Bombay, Madras, and Bengal, run by Governors.

'B' states were the former princely states like Mysore, Hyderabad, and Travancore-Cochin, governed by Raj Pramukhs etc.

'C' states were smaller states like Coorg.

'D' states were those administered by the Centre, such as Delhi and Pondicherry.

Our central leaders requested the last Viceroy Mountbatten to continue as the first Governor General. I was reading we did not have the right person to take over and Mountbatten would continue for one more year. We were also hearing and reading that problems existed in Junagadh, Hyderabad and Kashmir as they had not agreed to join new India. Also we heard Junagadh Nawab had acceded to Pakistan, but was forced to renege that and join new India. Kashmir and Hyderabad were sitting on the Fence.

India had become independent from Britain but was still under the King's control as the Governor General reported directly to the King. Later on in 1948 an Indian was appointed as Governor General; he was C. Rajagopalachari, from Madras.

In Bangalore, we came to know Mr. Rajagopalachari when he came to Bangalore to inaugurate the new locality in South Bangalore - Jayanagara. You can see his inaugurated Ashoka Pillar and the inscriptions even today in Jayanagara First Block. He continued as Governor-General till India became a Republic in January 1950. He then moved to Madras and became the Chief Minister of Madras State.

India was not a Republic yet. It would be two more years - 1950 January 26 - until it became a republic.

I have to add that our family was middle class and did not suffer from the effects of ration cards, etc. My father being an engineer in Mysore PWD earned a decent salary and even owned a small British built Ford car for many years. Our family consisted of five children beside our parents.

Here are some other things I remember.

We were using the British system of units, inches, feet, yards, imperial gallons for petrol etc. I remember my father paying about Rs. 3 per imperial gallon at the petrol bunk in front of National College in those days.

However, for local use we had the *mana* (mound), *vise* (visa) etc. for weights. For grain measurement, it was the *seru* (almost 1 kg), *paavu* (a quarter *seru*), *chataku* (one-sixteenth of a *seru*) etc.

The currency was rupees, annas and paise. One rupee had 16 annas, and one anna had 12 paises. The British King George was pictured on all Indian currency.