

Governance And Public Welfare in Princely Mysore: A Historical Analysis of Maharaja Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV's Speeches During His Visits to Kolar District (1900–1920)

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Abstract—The reign of Maharaja Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV (1894–1940) is widely recognised as an important period in the history of princely Mysore because of its emphasis on administrative reforms and public welfare. Among the valuable historical sources for understanding his ideas on governance are the speeches delivered during his visits to different parts of Kolar District between 1900 and 1920. These speeches provide direct evidence of the Maharaja's views on administration, development, and the responsibilities of government. They also reflect the concerns expressed by local communities regarding irrigation, agriculture, education, sanitation, transport, and municipal administration. This paper examines the speeches as primary historical sources to understand the nature of governance in the Mysore State. Using a historical and descriptive method, the study analyses the major themes found in these speeches and relates them to the social and economic conditions of Kolar District during the early twentieth century. His speeches show that government policies were based on careful planning, financial responsibility, and consultation with local people rather than on ceremonial promises. The study shows that these speeches are valuable documents for understanding the relationship between the ruler and the people in princely Mysore. They also demonstrate how provincial visits became an important means of identifying local problems, explaining government policies, and promoting regional development.

Index Terms—Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV, Kolar District, Mysore State, Governance, Public Welfare, Administrative History, Provincial Tours.

I. INTRODUCTION

Princely Mysore occupies an important place in the history of modern India because of its contribution to

administrative reforms, economic development, and public welfare during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Under the rule of Maharaja Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV, the state gained a reputation for efficient governance and progressive policies. His administration promoted irrigation, education, industry, public health, transport, and local self-government, making Mysore one of the most well-administered princely states in British India.

Many historical studies discuss the achievements of the Mysore Government through official reports, administrative reforms, and the work of distinguished Diwans such as Sir M. Visvesvaraya and Sir Mirza Ismail. However, the speeches delivered by the Maharaja during his visits to different districts have received comparatively less attention. These speeches are important because they present the ruler's own views on governance and reveal how the government responded to the needs of local communities.

Between 1900 and 1920, Maharaja Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV visited several places in Kolar District, including Kolar, Kolar Gold Fields, Robertsonpet, Mulbagal, Malur, Chintamani, Srinivasapur, Sidlaghatta, Bowringpet, and Chikkaballapur. During these visits, municipal councils, public associations, mining authorities, and local residents submitted addresses describing the problems faced by their regions. The Maharaja replied to these addresses by explaining government policies and discussing future plans for development.

These speeches are valuable primary sources because they provide evidence of the interaction between the ruler and the people. They explain the government's priorities in areas such as irrigation, agriculture,

municipal administration, education, public health, industrial development, and transport. They also show that provincial visits were not merely ceremonial events but important occasions for understanding local conditions and encouraging public participation in governance.

This paper studies these speeches from a historical perspective to understand the principles that guided the administration of the Mysore State. Instead of describing each visit separately, the study examines the speeches thematically to identify the major ideas related to governance and public welfare. In doing so, it highlights the contribution of the Maharaja to the development of Kolar District and to the broader administrative history of princely Mysore.

II. OBJECTIVES

The study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the speeches delivered by Maharaja Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV during his visits to Kolar District between 1900 and 1920.
2. To analyse the ideas of governance and public welfare reflected in these speeches.
3. To understand the major developmental issues discussed during the Maharaja's visits.
4. To examine the administrative measures proposed for irrigation, agriculture, education, public health, transport, and municipal administration.
5. To evaluate the historical importance of these speeches as primary sources for the study of princely Mysore.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on the historical research method and uses both primary and secondary sources. The principal primary source consists of the published speeches of Maharaja Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV delivered during his visits to different places in Kolar District between 1900 and 1920. These speeches have been analysed through qualitative content analysis to identify important themes related to governance, development, and public welfare.

Secondary sources such as books, gazetteers, administrative reports, biographies, and research publications on the history of Mysore have been used to provide historical background and support the interpretation of the primary evidence. The

information collected from these sources has been compared and organised to understand the administrative priorities of the Mysore Government during the early twentieth century.

The study follows a descriptive and analytical approach. It does not merely summarise the speeches but examines their historical significance in explaining the relationship between the ruler, the administration, and the people of Kolar District.

IV. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The beginning of the twentieth century marked an important phase in the development of the Mysore State. Although Mysore functioned under British paramountcy, it enjoyed considerable internal autonomy, enabling its rulers to undertake administrative reforms and developmental programmes. Maharaja Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV, who ascended the throne in 1894, encouraged modern administration while preserving the state's traditional institutions. His reign witnessed significant improvements in irrigation, education, public health, industries, transport, and local self-government. These developments earned Mysore recognition as one of the most progressive princely states in India.

The success of the administration was also supported by capable Diwans and officials, including Sir K. Seshadri Iyer, Sir M. Visvesvaraya, Sir V. P. Madhava Rao, and Sir Mirza Ismail. Together, they promoted policies that combined economic development with social welfare. New irrigation projects increased agricultural production, industries generated employment, educational institutions expanded learning opportunities, and improvements in public health contributed to better living conditions. These reforms reflected the government's belief that the prosperity of the state depended upon the welfare of its people.

Kolar District occupied a special position within the Mysore State because of its diverse economic character. Large parts of the district depended on agriculture supported by tanks and seasonal rainfall, while the Kolar Gold Fields developed into one of the most important mining centres in Asia. This combination of agriculture and industry created different administrative challenges, including irrigation, labour welfare, sanitation, municipal services, transport, and urban development.

Recognising these needs, Maharaja Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV frequently toured Kolar District. During these visits, he met local officials, representatives of municipalities, mining authorities, and ordinary citizens. The addresses presented to him reflected local expectations, while his replies explained the government's policies and plans. These speeches, therefore, serve as valuable historical records that reveal how the Mysore administration addressed regional problems and promoted balanced development. They also demonstrate that the Maharaja regarded direct contact with the people as an essential part of effective governance.

Governance and Public Welfare in Princely Mysore: An Analytical Discussion

The speeches delivered by Maharaja Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV during his visits to Kolar District provide valuable evidence for understanding the administrative policies of the Mysore State in the early twentieth century. Although each speech was delivered on a different occasion and in response to local needs, they reveal a consistent approach to governance. The Maharaja regarded administration as a means of improving the living conditions of the people through planned development, responsible financial management, and cooperation between the government and local communities. His speeches demonstrate that public welfare was not treated as an isolated objective but as the foundation of good governance.

Governance through Public Interaction

One of the notable features of the Maharaja's provincial visits was his direct interaction with local people. Whenever he visited a town or village, municipal councils, public associations, and local leaders submitted addresses explaining the needs of their region. These addresses often included requests for irrigation facilities, educational institutions, roads, railway connections, hospitals, or municipal improvements. Instead of giving formal ceremonial replies, the Maharaja discussed these issues in detail and explained the government's position.

This practice reflects an important feature of governance in princely Mysore. The provincial tour served as a means of communication between the ruler and the people. Through these visits, the government became aware of local conditions, while the people

gained an opportunity to understand the practical difficulties involved in administration. The speeches, therefore, indicate that consultation and public communication formed an essential part of the Mysore administration.

Irrigation and Agricultural Development

Agriculture was the principal occupation of the people in Kolar District, but agricultural production depended largely on seasonal rainfall and irrigation tanks. Many civic addresses presented before the Maharaja requested the construction of new tanks, canals, reservoirs, and irrigation schemes. The repeated demands for projects such as the Mavattur Project, Alahalli Project, Kodiballa Anicut, and improvements to existing tanks show the importance of water management in the district.

The Maharaja acknowledged these demands and accepted that irrigation was essential for agricultural prosperity. At the same time, he explained that every project required careful engineering surveys, technical examination, and financial approval before implementation. His responses show that development projects were not undertaken merely to satisfy public opinion but were planned after considering their long-term usefulness and economic viability.

The speeches also indicate the government's concern for farmers during difficult years. References to drought conditions, well-boring schemes, remission of certain land revenues, and modifications in assessment demonstrate that the administration recognised the challenges faced by cultivators. These measures reveal an effort to balance the financial interests of the State with the welfare of the agricultural population.

Municipal Administration and Public Health

Another important subject discussed in the speeches is municipal administration. During his visits to towns such as Robertsonpet, Chintamani, and Kolar, the Maharaja appreciated the work of municipal bodies while encouraging them to improve civic facilities. He stressed the importance of clean streets, proper drainage, safe drinking water, and sanitation as essential services for growing urban centres.

The rapid development of the Kolar Gold Fields and surrounding towns created new challenges in housing, public health, and sanitation. The Maharaja recognised that urban development required careful planning and active participation by local authorities. His speeches

show that municipalities were expected to work in partnership with the government to improve the quality of life of the people.

Public health also received considerable attention. The Maharaja supported measures to improve hospitals, drinking water supply, and sanitary conditions. He regarded these services as essential responsibilities of the government because healthy citizens were necessary for the economic and social progress of the State. His emphasis on preventive measures rather than temporary solutions reflects a practical understanding of public administration.

Education as an Instrument of Social Progress

Education occupied an important place in the Maharaja's vision of development. During several visits, local bodies requested the establishment or expansion of schools and educational institutions. While responding to these demands, the Maharaja emphasised that education should not only increase literacy but also contribute to the intellectual and moral development of society.

His speeches show that educational expansion should be accompanied by improvements in quality, trained teachers, and efficient administration. Rather than approving every local request without examination, he explained that educational institutions should be established according to public need and available resources. This approach reflects a balanced educational policy aimed at ensuring both accessibility and quality.

Industrial Growth and Urban Development

Kolar District occupied a unique position because of the presence of the Kolar Gold Fields, one of the most important mining centres in Asia. The mining industry generated employment and contributed significantly to the economy of the Mysore State. During his visits to Kolar Gold Fields and Robertsonpet, the Maharaja recognised the importance of industrial development while also drawing attention to the welfare of the surrounding communities.

His speeches indicate that industrial progress should be supported by adequate public services such as roads, hospitals, housing, water supply, and municipal administration. He viewed industries not merely as sources of revenue but as centres that required planned civic development. This balanced approach helped connect industrial growth with broader social welfare.

Transport and Communication

The development of transport infrastructure formed another important aspect of the Maharaja's administrative policy. The expansion of railway lines and roads was considered essential for improving communication between different parts of the State. During the inauguration of the Bowringpet–Kolar Railway and on other occasions, the Maharaja explained how improved transport would encourage trade, strengthen agriculture, and support industrial development. The speeches show that transport was viewed as an important investment that contributed to long-term regional development.

Financial Responsibility and Administrative Efficiency

A significant feature of the Maharaja's speeches is the importance given to financial discipline. Although he appreciated the aspirations of local communities, he repeatedly explained that public funds had to be used carefully. Development projects could be undertaken only after considering technical reports, financial resources, and the overall needs of the State. This approach reflects a responsible style of governance. Instead of making promises that could not be fulfilled, the Maharaja openly explained the reasons why certain proposals required further study or had to be postponed.

A Balanced Approach to Public Welfare

Taken together, the speeches reveal that Maharaja Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV viewed public welfare as the central purpose of governance. Irrigation, agriculture, education, public health, municipal administration, transport, and industrial development were treated as interconnected aspects of progress rather than separate government activities. His responses to public demands reflect an administration that valued planning, consultation, accountability, and financial prudence.

The provincial visits therefore served a larger purpose than ceremonial functions. They enabled the ruler to understand regional needs, assess the progress of government programmes, and explain administrative decisions directly to the people. This close relationship between the government and local communities contributed to the reputation of Mysore as one of the most progressive princely states in India.

V. OBSERVATIONS

The speeches delivered by Maharaja Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV during his visits to Kolar District reveal a practical and people-oriented approach to governance. They show that the Maharaja considered public welfare as the primary responsibility of the State. Rather than making general promises, he discussed local issues such as irrigation, agriculture, education, sanitation, transport, and municipal administration with reference to the actual conditions of each region. This indicates that government decisions were closely connected with the needs of the people.

Another important observation is the consistent emphasis on careful planning and responsible administration. The Maharaja repeatedly explained that development projects should be supported by technical studies, financial feasibility, and long-term public benefit. His speeches show that administrative decisions were based on expert opinion rather than immediate public pressure. This approach ensured that public resources were used efficiently while maintaining steady progress in different sectors.

The speeches also demonstrate the importance of provincial tours as a means of communication between the ruler and the people. Local representatives used these occasions to present their demands, while the Maharaja explained government policies and administrative limitations. This exchange of ideas strengthened public confidence and encouraged cooperation between the State and local institutions. The speeches therefore provide valuable evidence of how governance functioned in princely Mysore during the early twentieth century.

VI. FINDINGS

The study leads to the following findings:

1. The speeches of Maharaja Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV are valuable primary sources for understanding the administrative policies of the Mysore State.
2. Public welfare formed the central objective of governance, with equal importance given to agriculture, irrigation, education, public health, transport, municipal administration, and industrial development.
3. Irrigation remained the highest developmental priority in Kolar District because agriculture

depended largely on seasonal rainfall and tank irrigation.

4. Municipal institutions played an important role in maintaining sanitation, water supply, roads, and other civic services, reflecting the growth of local self-government in Mysore.
5. The administration encouraged educational expansion while maintaining standards of quality and efficiency.
6. Industrial centres such as the Kolar Gold Fields were viewed not only as economic assets but also as areas requiring planned urban development and improved public services.
7. Railway and road development were considered essential for economic growth, trade, and administrative integration.
8. The provincial visits strengthened communication between the government and the people by providing opportunities to discuss local problems and administrative policies.
9. The speeches reflect a balanced model of governance based on public welfare, financial responsibility, administrative efficiency, and direct public engagement.

VII. CONCLUSION

The speeches delivered by Maharaja Sri Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV during his visits to Kolar District between 1900 and 1920 are valuable historical sources for understanding the nature of governance in princely Mysore. They provide direct evidence of the Maharaja's administrative ideas and his commitment to the welfare of the people. Unlike official reports, these speeches reflect the interaction between the ruler and local communities and show how public demands influenced government priorities.

The analysis demonstrates that the Mysore administration adopted a balanced approach to development. Agriculture, irrigation, education, public health, transport, municipal administration, and industrial growth were treated as interconnected areas that contributed to the overall progress of the State. The Maharaja believed that development should be based on careful planning, technical knowledge, and financial responsibility. His willingness to explain government decisions openly helped build trust between the administration and the people.

The speeches also highlight the importance of provincial tours as instruments of governance. They enabled the ruler to understand local conditions, review ongoing projects, and encourage cooperation between government departments and public institutions.

The study therefore, concludes that Maharaja Krishnaraja Wadiyar IV's speeches are not merely records of ceremonial occasions but significant documents for understanding the administrative history of Mysore. They illustrate how responsible leadership, public participation, and planned development contributed to the socio-economic progress of Kolar District during the early twentieth century. Their historical value extends beyond regional history and contributes to a better understanding of governance in princely India.

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